
Diversity Champion Awards for Bristol's race equality campaigners

[26 April 2024]: Two of Bristol's contemporary race equality campaigners, Marvin Rees OBE and Julz Davis, were yesterday recognised by equality charity Diversity UK with Diversity Champion Awards for their outstanding efforts in improving diversity and inclusion in Britain. The charity worked in association with Curiosity UnLtd, independent UK law firm Burges Salmon and ethical bank Triodos Bank, to honour the anniversary of the Bristol Bus Boycott and its legacy by bringing the annual Paul Stephenson Lecture on race equality to its ancestral home city of Bristol for the first time on Thursday 25 April 2024.

Ramesh Vala CBE, Deputy Chair of equality charity Diversity UK that set up the Paul Stephenson Lecture, said, *"We are proud to have brought this seminal lecture on race equality to Bristol for the first time: the city plays a large part in Britain's civil rights movement which has been ongoing since that first Bristol Bus Boycott on April 29th, 1963. Given Bristol's rich history of protest and activism, it's with great pleasure that we honour the work of Marvin Rees OBE who has skillfully led the city as its Mayor for the past 8 years. During his tenure, his approach to inclusive growth will ensure Bristol transforms from the 7th worst UK city for people of colour into the best.*

Mayor Rees' two terms as Mayor have seen £95 million secured to build 10,000 new homes to tackle the housing crisis and he secured the world-first Bristol City Leap deal, which plans £630 million of clean energy investment by 2028. He led Bristol through the pandemic, steered the city through the aftermath of the toppling of the Colston statue, and supported Bristolians through the cost of living crisis, with 105 Welcoming Spaces opened across the city's communities last winter. As a founding member of both 3Ci and the Mayors Migration Council, he continues to advocate for cities to be at the heart of global policy around climate change and migration – including on a Ted Talk viewed by more than 1.6 million people.

Marvin has declared Bristol a City of Hope, built on ambition, inclusion and social justice and it is with renewed optimism and enthusiasm that we honour him with our Diversity Champion Award 2024."

Presenting the second award to Julz Davis, **Diversity UK Trustee, Sareeta Vala** said *"I would like to say a heartfelt 'Thank you' to Julz Davis who has today shown us the power of activism and resilience in campaigning. It takes enduring grit and energy to make people care deeply about the past and Julz has done this brilliantly with the Bristol Bus Boycott Takeover 360 program. It is my generation that is benefitting from the efforts of all those who protested against the Bristol Bus Company's colour bar in 1963 and it is my generation that will benefit from the work of Julz Davis who makes sure that we never forget.*

But Diversity UK is about looking beyond the past to what can happen in the future - for the next generation to be valued at an equitable level, to enjoy the freedom that our forefathers and foremothers did not - in a vibrant and healthy democracy.

Themed around 'Standing on The Shoulders of Giants', it is not only Marvin Rees and Julz Davis who stand on the shoulders of those early pioneering giants, but also the millions of others like myself who stand on the shoulders of contemporary pioneers like them. It is therefore an honour to present this award to Julz for championing race equality and inclusion throughout his life."

For a comprehensive overview about the #PaulStephensonLecture, visit [DiversityUK.org](https://www.diversityuk.org)
#DiversityChampion #raceequality #equality #diversity #inclusion

Notes for Editors:

Images: <https://bit.ly/4aWKBZB>

About Dr Paul Stephenson OBE: Paul Stephenson, OBE, is a community worker, activist, and long-time campaigner for civil rights for the British African-Caribbean community in Bristol, England. As a young social worker, in April 1963, Stephenson led a boycott of the Bristol Omnibus Company, protesting its refusal to employ Black or Asian drivers or conductors. In August 1963, the day the Boycott defeated the 'Colour Bar', Martin Luther King gave his iconic 'I Have a Dream' speech. In 1964, Stephenson achieved national fame when he refused to leave a public house until he was served, resulting in a trial for failing to leave licensed premises. His campaigns were instrumental in paving the way for the first Race Relations Act in 1965. Paul Stephenson is a Freeman of the City of Bristol and was awarded an OBE in 2009. In July 2014, Mr Stephenson was awarded an honorary degree (Doctor of Law) by the University of Bristol "for his dedication to fighting for equality and civil rights across Bristol and around the world for over 60 years".

About Marvin Rees OBE: Standing on the shoulders of giants, Marvin Rees was first elected Mayor in May 2016. During his term, he has overseen the building of over 14,500 new homes, announced the development of a mass transit system, and, through Bristol WORKS, provided almost 30,000 quality work experience activities for young people. Marvin worked with partners to secure £95 million to unlock 10,000 new homes and 22,000 new jobs in Temple Quarter, one of Europe's largest regeneration schemes. Working with partners, including through the award-winning One City Approach, he coordinated Bristol's response to the coronavirus pandemic. He planned its recovery – while also steering the city through the aftermath of the toppling of the Colston statue. The mayor also led the successful bid to bring Channel 4 to Bristol. He led the city's response to climate and ecological emergencies.

About Curiosity UnLtd: Curiosity UnLtd is an award-winning, Bristol-based think-and-do-tank. It co-creates racial and social justice adventures with corporate, civic, and community changemakers. Curiosity UnLtd is working towards transforming Bristol from the 7th worst to the best UK city for people of colour. <https://www.curiosityunltd.com/>

About Diversity UK: Diversity UK is an equality charity that aims to research, advocate and promote ideas for improving diversity and inclusion in Britain. It is an evidence-based initiative that seeks to influence policy, enhance civic engagement, and improve the perception of the minority ethnic community in Britain. Diversity UK aims to advance the public's education in diversity and inclusion in the workplace by conducting research for the public benefit and publishing valuable results. <https://diversityuk.org/>

About Ramesh Vala CBE, Deputy Chair, Diversity UK: Ramesh Vala CBE is a law and business consultant and Deputy Chair of equality charity Diversity UK. Graduating from the London School of Economics, Ramesh went on to achieve a distinction in his finals at Lancaster Gate College of Law. He became a partner within eighteen months of qualification and soon became one of very few Asian equity partners in a top UK law firm. In his personal life, he is dedicated to improving the lives of those less fortunate by fundraising for various charities. In 2001, Ramesh was appointed an OBE for his charitable work and in 2022, he was honoured with a CBE in recognition of his services to the community and to the Covid-19 Response.

Sareeta Vala, Trustee - Diversity UK: *Sareeta Vala is a qualified NLP (Neurolinguistic Programming) Master Practitioner and Coach. Having received training under esteemed mentors, including the renowned Robert Dilts and Ian McDermott, Sareeta possesses a deep understanding, enabling her to guide others in overcoming challenges and embracing positive change. With a background of 7+ years in fashion retail, product design, and procurement, Sareeta brings valuable insights into the dynamic world of retail management. Her understanding of customer psychology, business intricacies, and product procurement makes her a valuable asset in the industry. By blending NLP techniques with her retail acumen, Sareeta offers personalised solutions that inspire transformation and drive success. Whether it's personal growth or optimising business strategies, she is committed to guiding individuals and organisations on their journey to excellence.*

About Burges Salmon: *Based in Bristol, Burges Salmon is a market-leading independent UK law firm providing the best proposition for its people and clients. By focusing on the markets and areas of expertise, they have extensive knowledge and experience to achieve the best outcomes for their clients, who range from large organisations, entrepreneurial businesses and public sector bodies to individuals, families, and their global wealth. <https://www.burges-salmon.com/>*

Roxanne Ratcliff, Head of Corporate Responsibility at Burges Salmon said: *"It's an honour and a privilege for our firm to be hosting the 9th Paul Stephenson Lecture, taking place for the first time in Bristol, the home of the UK's first Bus Boycott, an event that will forever remain in history with the brave actions of those involved paving the way for the Race Relations Act 1965, the UK's first-ever anti-racist law.*

"For many years, Burges Salmon has been campaigning to broaden access to the legal profession in a bid to better reflect the diverse make-up of the UK and we're proud to lead on pioneering diversity and mentoring initiatives with leading organisations across the city. Diversity and Inclusion sits firmly in our firm's ESG priorities, with a focus on ensuring that our progress towards greater diversity is underpinned by real inclusion too."

About Triodos Bank

Headquartered in Bristol, Triodos Bank's mission is to help create a society that protects and promotes quality of life and human dignity for all. Since 1980, our sustainable financial products have enabled individuals and organisations to use their money in ways that benefit people and the environment. <https://www.triodos.co.uk/>

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