

PRESS RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release



Paul Stephenson Lecture returns to Bristol, UK City of Civil Rights

To mark the 60th anniversary of the Race Relations Act 1965, equality charity Diversity UK passed on the beacon of the annual Paul Stephenson Lecture on race equality to Curiosity UnLtd, a Bristol based think-and-do-tank. This symbolic handover will ensure that the legacy inspired by Dr Paul Stephenson OBE and the city's Bristol Bus Boycott, which led to the creation of the Act, continues to thrive.

The Diversity UK Paul Stephenson Lecture was established in 2016 in honour of Dr Paul Stephenson OBE, the pioneering British civil rights campaigner. It was inaugurated by Helen Grant MP, the first Black woman elected as a Conservative Member of Parliament, who spoke about race and diversity in Britain. Since then, the lecture has become a respected platform for leading voices, including Lord Simon Woolley on race equality, Professor Chris Jackson on *Why Ending Racism in Science is Everyone's Business*, and Lord Marvin Rees, former Mayor of Bristol, on urban regeneration and the city's pandemic response, among others.

PRESS RELEASE

At this year's Paul Stephenson Lecture the theme of '*Blueprint for Change*' explored *Dreams from My Mother*, the memoir of Professor Dame Elizabeth Anionwu OM DBE FRCN FQICN, Emeritus Professor of Nursing at the University of West London. Dame Elizabeth is a pioneering figure in sickle cell and thalassaemia care, conditions that are more prevalent among people of West and Central African and African Caribbean heritage, and she is widely recognised as one of the UK's greatest ever nurses.

Speaking in London, **Lopa Patel MBE, Chair of Diversity UK** said, "*we are delighted that Curiosity UnLtd has accepted the beacon to carry forward the annual Paul Stephenson Lecture. Bristol is rightly recognised as the UK City of Civil Rights and we were so pleased that the light of progress that Dr Stephenson lit way back in 1963 is still shining brightly today. It shines a path for the next generation to follow and we look forward to seeing it going from strength to strength.*"

Julz Davis, Founder of Curiosity UnLtd spoke about how the Bristol Bus Boycott came about in 1963 and the legacy of youth worker Paul Stephenson in initiating this boycott with support from four young West Indian men, Roy Hackett, Owen Henry, Audley Evans and Prince Brown, who formed an action group, later to be called the West Indian Development Council. The group decided that the articulate Paul Stephenson would be their spokesman. Their actions in 1963 led to the first UK Race Relations Act of 1965.

On accepting the beacon, **Julz Davis, Founder of Curiosity UnLtd** said, "*we are pleased to pick up the beacon of the Paul Stephenson Lecture. Last year, we hosted the Paul Stephenson Lecture in Bristol for the first time, and it is fitting that it will be held in this city in future given Bristol's rich history of protest and activism.*"

Ends

Press Images: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/4zJRQAhfTP1qu4ut8>

PRESS RELEASE

About Dr Paul Stephenson OBE

Paul Stephenson

6 May 1937 - 2 November 2024 (age 87 years)

Paul Stephenson OBE was one of the leading black civil rights activists of his generation. Born in 1937 shortly before the outbreak of World War Two he spent much of his early childhood brought up by white middle-class families as an evacuee and because his mother had joined the war effort as a member of the Women's Royal Army Corps. Paul's mother and grandmother were both British-born, making him at least a third-generation black Englishman.

Paul seemed destined for a career in the RAF, but left the forces to become a youth worker in Bristol. In 1963, a young man from Jamaica called Guy Bailey went to apply for a job at the Bristol Omnibus (Bus) Company as a conductor. He was turned down on the grounds of his colour.

Guy turned to community youth worker activist Paul Stephenson who led a boycott of the Bristol buses. Paul was joined in this boycott by many local Caribbean community leaders including Roy Hackett, Owen Henry, Audley Evans and Prince Brown, who formed an action group, later to be called the West Indian Development Council.

With the support of the Jamaican High Commissioner Sir Learie Constantine, local MP Tony Benn, the Labour Party leader Harold Wilson and others, after 60 days the Bristol Bus Company finally relented and later employed its first non-white bus conductor, an Asian, Raghbir Singh. That was a major victory for Paul. The day the Bristol Bus company lifted the colour ban, 28 August 1963, was also the same day Martin Luther King made his famous inspirational '*I have a dream*' speech.

Those were the years when posters displaying signs of 'no Blacks, no Irish, no Dogs' were not uncommon and in 1964, Paul achieved national fame when he refused to leave a public house, the Bay Horse Pub, until he was served, resulting in a trial on a charge of failing to leave a licensed premises. He was later acquitted of this offence but a 'sit-in' commemorates this act. Paul's campaigns were instrumental in paving the way for the first Race Relations Act, in 1965 in the UK.

After the success of the boycott, Paul moved to London returning to Bristol in 1992, where he played a central role in founding the Bristol Black Archives Partnership, dedicated to preserving the history and achievements of Black Bristolians. In recognition of his enduring impact, he was awarded the Freedom of the City of Bristol in 2007. Dr Stephenson's unwavering commitment to racial equality, his leadership in the Council for Racial Equality, and his dedication to empowering young people have left an indelible mark on British society.

About Curiosity UnLtd

Curiosity UnLtd is an award-winning, Bristol-based think-and-do-tank that co-creates racial and social justice initiatives with corporate, civic and community changemakers. The organisation is working to transform Bristol from the seventh worst to the best UK city for people of colour.

<https://www.curiosityunltd.com/>

About Diversity UK

Diversity UK is an equality charity that researches, advocates and promotes ideas to improve diversity and inclusion in Britain. The charity aims to advance public understanding of diversity and inclusion in the workplace by conducting research for public benefit and by publishing the results.

<https://diversityuk.org/>