

= Paul Stephenson (civil rights campaigner) =

Paul Stephenson OBE (born 6 May 1937 in Rochford , Essex) , 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 1963 Stephenson led a boycott of the Bristol Omnibus Company , protesting against its refusal to employ Black or Asian drivers or conductors . After a 60 @-@ day boycott supported by thousands of Bristolians , the company revoked its colour bar in August . In 1964 Stephenson achieved national fame when he refused to leave a public house until he was served , resulting in a trial on a charge of failing to leave a licensed premises . His campaigns were instrumental in paving the way for the first Race Relations Act , in 1965 . Stephenson is a Freeman of the City of Bristol and was awarded an OBE in 2009 .

= = Early life = =

Stephenson was born in 1937 to a West African father and a British mother . His maternal grandmother Edie Johnson was a well known actress in the 1920s . He received his secondary education at Forest Gate Secondary School in London , where he was the only black child in the school . Service in the Royal Air Force followed from 1953 to 1960 . Stephenson gained a Diploma in Youth and Community Work from University College Birmingham in 1962 and then moved to Bristol to work as a youth officer for Bristol City Council .

= = Bus boycott = =

In January 1955 the Passenger group , that is the section representing those working in Passenger Transport , of the local branch of the Transport and General Workers Union had passed a resolution that " coloured workers should not be employed as bus crews " by the Bristol Omnibus Company . The Bristol Evening Post ran a series of articles in 1961 exposing this colour bar . The union publicly denied the bar , but the company general manager , Ian Petey , did admit it . He attempted to justify the company policy by stating in a meeting with the city 's Joint Transport Committee that he " had ' factual evidence ' that the introduction of coloured crews in other cities downgraded the job , causing existing (white) staff to go elsewhere . "

Several members of the city 's West Indian community set up an organisation , the West Indian Development Council , to fight discrimination of this sort , aided by Paul Stephenson who was the city 's first black youth officer . In 1963 Stephenson established that the bus company was indeed operating a colour bar and inspired by the example of Rosa Parks ' refusal to move off a " whites only " bus seat in Montgomery , Alabama , leading to the Montgomery Bus Boycott , a Bristol bus boycott was organised .

As an articulate and university educated person , Stephenson became spokesman for the boycott , which soon attracted nationwide media interest and the campaign grew to receive support from Bristolians of all colours , Tony Benn , MP for Bristol East , and Harold Wilson , leader of the Labour opposition . After 60 days , on 28 August 1963 , the bus company capitulated and in September Raghbir Singh became Bristol 's first non @-@ white bus conductor .

In August 2014 FirstBus unveiled a plaque inside Bristol Bus Station commemorating the bus boycott .

= = Further career = =

In the following year Stephenson achieved national prominence when he refused to leave a public house without being served . He was charged with failing to leave a licensed premises and was tried in a magistrate 's court . The case was dismissed and the barman was dismissed by his employers .

Following this , Stephenson left Bristol to work in Coventry as a Senior Community Relations Officer

. In 1972 he went to London to work for the Commission for Racial Equality . While in London he worked with boxer Muhammad Ali setting up the Muhammad Ali Sports Development Association in Brixton , and also set up the Cleo Laine Schools ? Music Awards from 1977 to 1982 with Cleo Laine and John Dankworth . In 1975 he was appointed to the Sports Council and campaigned prominently against sporting contacts with apartheid South Africa . Stephenson became honorary president of Bristol 's West Indian Parents ' Association in 1979 and in 1981 was appointed to the Press Council .

On his return to live in Bristol in 1992 , he helped set up the Bristol Black Archives Partnership (BBAP) , which " protects and promotes the history of African @-@ Caribbean people in Bristol . " It was initiated when he placed his own personal archives with Bristol Record Office for safekeeping .

= = Awards and honours = =

In 1988 Stephenson received the Bristol City Council Community Award for Achievement and Services Rendered to the Black Community and the West Indian Community Publishers Award . Further awards include the Bristol West African and Caribbean Council Community Achievers ' Award (1996) , and the city council 's One Person Can Make a Difference Award (2006) . In 2007 Stephenson was granted the Freedom of the City of Bristol , being the first person of Black origin to be so honoured . The citation stated : " Paul Stephenson has devoted his life to improving race relations and encouraging community involvement and is a founder member of the Bristol Black Archives Project which has contributed greatly to an understanding of the history of the City and has helped to build closer relations between all the communities of Bristol . "

In 2009 he was given an OBE " for his services to equal opportunities and to community relations in Bristol " . He received honorary degrees from the University of the West of England (Master of Education) in November 2009 , " in recognition of his substantial contribution to pioneering work in race relations and the extension of opportunity to socially excluded young people " , and the University of Bristol (Doctor of Law) in July 2014 " for his dedication to fighting for equality and civil rights across Bristol and around the world for over 60 years " .

= = Archives and personal papers = =

Photographs , newspaper cuttings , letters and other miscellaneous items relating to Paul Stephenson and the 40th anniversary commemorations of the Bristol Bus Boycott campaign are held by Bristol Record Office (Ref . 42840) (online catalogue) .

The Bristol Black Archives Partnership collections are held at Bristol Record Office (A Guide to African @-@ Caribbean Sources at Bristol Record Office , multiple collections noted)

= = Work cited = =

Dresser , Madge , Black and White on the Buses , Bristol : Bristol Broadsides , 1986 . ISBN 0 @-@ 906944 @-@ 30 @-@ 9 .