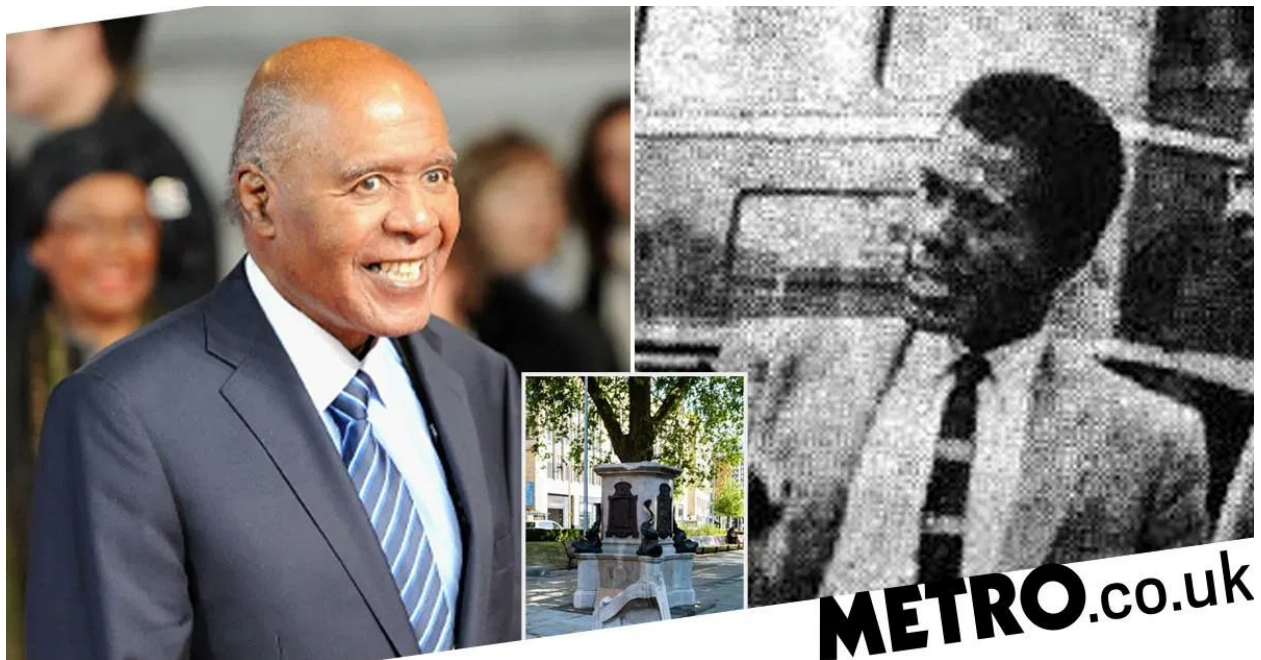


## Black History Month

I have been particularly inspired by these three people:

1. Paul Stephenson (Bristol Bus boycott)
2. Roland Butcher (Middlesex and England cricketer)
3. Viv Anderson (Nottingham Forest and England footballer)

### 1. Paul Stephenson OBE



I only became aware of Paul Stephenson recently, when, in the aftermath of the fall of the statue of Colston in Bristol, there was wider ranging media discussion over the city of Bristol, and one of the stories that came to my attention was the Bristol bus protests of 1963. The Bristol Bus company had previously refused to employ workers of black or ethnic minority backgrounds, and when the boycott gained momentum, the company was forced to drop the so called 'colour bar'. This helped me to understand that the story of Rosa Parks could just as easily have taken place in this country, and only 9 years before I was born.

Several members of the city's West Indian community had set up an organisation, the West Indian Development Council, to fight discrimination of this sort, aided by 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 same day that Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his historic "I Have a Dream" speech in Washington, DC), the bus company capitulated and in September Raghubir Singh became Bristol's first non-white bus conductor. In August 2014, a plaque was unveiled inside Bristol Bus Station commemorating the bus boycott.

Since hearing this story, I have also found out that Stephenson refused to leave the Bay Horse pub in Bristol, without being served. The bar manager reportedly told Stephenson, "We don't want you black people in here – you are a nuisance." Stephenson was arrested and charged with failing to leave a licensed premises. The case attracted media attention, and the Bristol Evening Post ran the story with the headline "West Indian leader made a fool of himself."

At his trial in a magistrate's court, prosecutors alleged that he had behaved aggressively, but witness accounts refuted this claim. The case was dismissed and the barman was dismissed by his employers.

Stephenson worked at the Campaign for Racial Equality, worked alongside Muhammad Ali, and campaigned against apartheid in South Africa. He was awarded an OBE in 2009 for his services to equal opportunities and to community relations in Bristol, and had a Great Western Railway intercity train named in his honour in 2020.

Another reason that makes his story particularly interesting and powerful to me is that he was born in Rochford, Essex in 1937 to a West African father and a British mother. His maternal grandmother Edie Johnson was a well known actress in the 1920s. At the age of 3 he was evacuated to a care home in Great Dunmow, Essex, where he stayed for seven years.

## 2. Roland Butcher



I remember watching Roland Butcher batting for Middlesex at Cheltenham, against Gloucestershire back in 1982. Gloucestershire were captained by John Shepherd, who played a bit for the West Indies, and they had the brilliant all rounder Franklyn Stephenson, both of whom were born in Barbados. Middlesex included in their side Wilf Slack (born in the Windward Islands), Norman Cowans (born in Jamaica) and Wayne Daniel (born in Barbados and who would go on to play for West Indies).

Both Slack and Cowans played for England, but Butcher, who was born in Barbados as well, beat them both to international selection, and made his test debut back in Barbados, becoming the first black cricketer to play for England. On that day in Cheltenham, he smashed a strong Gloucestershire attack for a breathtaking 173 out of 252 while he was at the crease. The next highest score was only 35.

At the time, I didn't really understand the significance of the West Indian influence on county cricket, the role of colonialism on the West Indian islands, or why cricket had become the national sport of many of these islands. Sadly, the influence these days of cricketers of Caribbean origins is on the wane, although we are privileged to get to see Jofra Archer and Chris Jordan (both Barbados) in an England shirt.

The political significance of a test series between West Indies and England in the 1970s and the 1980s was huge, and England were on the wrong end of every result between the sides when I was growing up, and grounds would get large numbers of West Indian supporters, especially at the Oval, where I watched the test match in 1983, and one whole stand was full of music and chanting at a time when English crowds were very reserved. These supporters were first or second generation immigrants to the UK from the Caribbean, and some would have come over as part of the Windrush Generation.

For Butcher, who came to England at the age of 13, making his debut in Barbados must have been a particularly emotional experience. He was good enough to score a 36 ball half century against Lillee and Thompson in an ODI for England, and also became the first black footballer to play for Stevenage Town. He went on to coach Bermuda at cricket, and works at the University of West Indies running their elite sports programme.

### **3. Viv Anderson MBE**



Viv Anderson was born in Nottingham in 1956, and after a year with Manchester United came back to play for Nottingham Forest in 1974, and was part of the start of the remarkable era under the management of Brian Clough. The team was in the second

division (Championship these days!) when he first played, and in 1977 they won promotion to the First Division, a league that they won the following season, along with the League Cup.

It was around this time that I started supporting Forest, lured by their success, and the unpredictable, but brilliant Clough as manager. England had undergone a poor time, failing to qualify for the World Cup in 1974, and then again in 1978, but in Ron Greenwood, they had a young, forward looking manager, who picked Anderson as his right back for a friendly with Czechoslovakia in November of that year. Football was not a welcoming place for black players at the time, and abuse from the stands was expected, while black players would even have bananas thrown at them by so called supporters.

I was too young to understand this at the time, but was just excited that one of 'my' Forest players had been picked for England (along with Trevor Francis and Peter Shilton, and then Stuart Pearce a bit later, among the more famous!). Anderson also played in both of Forest's European Cup wins (79 and 80) - an extraordinary feat for a small English club side that had not long before been in the second tier of English football. Anderson went on to win 30 caps for England in a 10 year career, but lost his place to Mick Mills and more often Liverpool's Phil Neal.

His career after Forest saw him play for Arsenal, Manchester United and Sheffield Wednesday. He held assistant manager roles at Barnsley and Middlesbrough.

Today football is such a global game, but Anderson was a real ground breaker, and some of the England stars of today pay tribute to what he achieved by getting England recognition. However, when people talk about the lack of black role models in coaching and management, Anderson is one who got away. With Bryan Robson at Middlesbrough, the team won both cup finals in a year, but were also relegated, and Anderson has not worked in coaching or management since.

He was awarded an MBE in 2000, and his son Charlie played at Macclesfield Town.