

## GREAT BLACK BRITISH FIGURES



### Ade Adepitan

Having survived polio as a youngster, Ade went on to compete as a wheelchair basketball player on an international level.

Ade has been a trailblazer and advocate for the black and disabled communities. He has represented Great Britain at the Olympics in Athens and Sydney, and competed in European and World Championships.

His sporting achievements have led him to presenting roles on BBC Two's Grandstand and the Holiday programmes, as well as being appointed an ambassador for London's 2012 Olympic bid. He featured in the high profile poster campaign and was an integral part of the delegation that went to Singapore to present to the Olympic Committee to help bring the games to Britain.

Ade was awarded an MBE for his contribution to disabled sport.



### Sislin Fay Allen

made the headlines when she became the Metropolitan Police's first Black female officer in 1969.

An unassuming follow-up to a newspaper advert for police officers led Sislin to be interviewed and then, to the surprise of her husband and family, her selection.

The first prejudice Sislin encountered

came from within the Black community because she had joined the Met whose track record of policing the Black community was rife with racial prejudice. This was followed by abuse from the white British community who refused to be policed by a Black officer.

Sislin's tenacity was a source of great courage and inspiration for other Black people to join the police and try to bring about a fairer criminal justice system.



### John Archer

was born in Liverpool and moved to Battersea where he became involved in politics. He was a progressive who supported the creation of public baths and protested against animal vivisection.

On his election as Mayor of Battersea in 1913, Archer spoke with dignity and pride about his Blackness. He said of his accomplishment: "My election marks a new era. For the first time in the history of the English nation a man of colour has been elected mayor of an English borough. That will go forth to all the coloured nations of the world. They will look to Battersea and say, 'It is the greatest thing you have done. You have shown that you have no racial prejudice, but recognise a man for what you think he has done.'"



### Linda Bellos

is best known as a gay and political rights activist, and former leader of Lambeth Council. Linda was the first Black woman to join the Spare Rib feminist

collective and was vice-chair of the campaign to select Black candidates in the Labour Party. On being elected Leader of Lambeth Council, she became the first Black woman to hold such a post.

As chair of London's Strategic Policy Unit in the 1980's, she helped introduce Black History Month. Her work on mainstreaming equality within the British Army and Metropolitan Police gave her an insight into some major institutions, which she used to benefit other public authorities and set up her own specialist equality company, *Diversity Solutions Consultancy*.

Linda retains an active involvement in the voluntary and community sector which keeps her work relevant and valid to grassroots communities.



### **Jayaben Desai**

Thirty years ago, Jayaben Desai led a long-running strike at the Grunwick photo-processing factory in London. The workforce was predominantly made up of East-African Asian women. The wages and conditions were poor and there was no union recognition.

In a dispute over compulsory overtime, Desai led a walk out, and demanded union recognition. Up to 8,000 workers from across the country joined the picket. When the union movement did not offer the support the strikers wanted, the organisers began a hunger strike outside TUC headquarters, and won their demands.

At a time when the public perception of Asian women was dominated by notions of a passive, subservient group, Desai

and her colleagues forcefully challenged stereotypes.



### **Beryl Gilroy**

made her name as a leading Caribbean writer, although her major impact was as an educationalist, and Britain's first Black head teacher.

Much of her writing conveyed the way in which generations of West Indian families were affected by life in Britain. Her later work explored the history of the African and Caribbean Diaspora through slavery.

Having trained as a teacher in Guyana, Beryl found employment in inner London, where she soon rose to head of a primary school. Beryl later joined the Institute of Education and the Centre for Multicultural Education, during which time she applied her psychological knowledge to her teaching experience. Beryl went on to secure a doctorate in counselling psychology and a fellowship at the Institute of Education.



### **Peter Herbert QC**

is a barrister and judge, and the chair of the Society of Black Lawyers.

A longstanding campaigner and human rights advocate, Peter is one of two Black members on the Metropolitan Police Authority with a range of contemporary interests from employment discrimination to deaths in custody and child care law. Away from the MPA, Peter has chaired a number of mental health homicide inquiries, and is a member of the Attorney

General's Race Advisory Committee. Peter was appointed one the first Black judges in Britain in 1996.

He was awarded the American Bar Association diversity award in 2002 and was recently appointed an Employment Tribunal chair and a recorder in the Crown Court. Peter also chairs the independent Race Hate Crimes Forum, helping to combat racial violence.



**Sake Dean Mahomed**

grew up in India in the late 1700s to serve in the English army as a trainee surgeon. Aged 25 he moved to Ireland where he wrote his first book, 'The Travels of Dean Mahomet', becoming the first Indian to write a book in English.

Sake then moved to London, where he opened the first Indian restaurant in England: the Hindustani Coffee House. He then moved on to Brighton, where he opened the first shampooing vapour masseur bath as a cure to many diseases. So successful was Sake's treatment that hospitals referred patients to him, and King George IV appointed him his surgeon.



**Gloria Mills**

UNISON spokesperson on equality, recently completed her term as TUC President, the first-ever Black woman to hold that position.

Gloria's involvement with trade unions began as a steward in 1978. It was not long before she was appointed UNISON's director of equal opportunities. Since that time she has been responsible for a range

of campaigns on equal pay, childcare, women, employment, race and human rights issues.

Gloria was also the first Black woman elected to the TUC's General council, and is chair of its race committee and a member of the women's committee. She is a CRE Commissioner and sits on the editorial advisory board of Equal Opportunities Review. Gloria was awarded the CBE in 1995 for services to trade unions and then the MBE in 1999.



**Garrett Morgan**

The son of former slaves, Garrett Morgan was born in Paris, Kentucky. While his formal education did not take him beyond primary school, he hired a tutor to continue his studies in English grammar. In 1920, Garrett moved into the newspaper business, establishing the Cleveland Call, and became a prosperous businessman.

While driving along the streets of Cleveland, Ohio he was inspired to invent the fore-runner to modern day traffic lights. Others had experimented with, and marketed, traffic lights but Garrett was the first to acquire a UK patent and set the standard for the traffic lights we use today.



**Lord Bill Morris**

Bill Morris's trade union life began in 1958 when he joined the Transport and General Workers Union. He held a range of elected positions, from shop steward and General Executive Council to Deputy General Secretary. In 1991, he was elected General Secretary of the T&G. Bill was the

first Black general secretary of a trade union and used his many skills to promote community cohesion and the trade union cause to workers across the UK. In 1995 he was re-elected General Secretary, and in 2006 was invested into the House of Lords.



**Shapurji Saklatvala MP**

was born in India but moved to Britain where he got involved in politics, joining the Independent Labour Party. In 1921

Saklatvala joined the Communist Party, and with the support of the local Trades Council, won Battersea in the 1922 General Election, becoming the earliest Black Member of Parliament.

In the 1923 General Election Saklatvala lost the seat to a Liberal Party candidate by 186 votes, but got his revenge by beating the same candidate by 540 votes in the 1924 General Election.

During the General Strike of 1926 Saklatvala was a strong supporter of the miners. In one speech he urged the army not to fire on strikers, for this he was found guilty of sedition and imprisoned.



**Mary Seacole**

Undeniably, Mary Seacole's reputation after the Crimean War (1853-1856) rivalled Florence Nightingale's. Unlike

Nightingale, Seacole also had the challenge to have her skills put to proper use in spite of her being Black.

A born healer and woman of driving energy, she overcame official indifference

and prejudice. She got herself out to the war through her own efforts and at her own expense; risked her life to bring comfort to the wounded and dying soldiers; and became the first black woman to make her mark on British public life.

UNISON has been a key architect behind the annual Mary Seacole Leadership Development Award which recognises nurses, midwives and health visitors, who make positive contributions that promote high quality patient and client-focused care. For details visit the UNISON web site.



**Arthur Wharton**

The first Black professional football player in the UK was Arthur Wharton who joined Preston North End in 1886, trailblazing against

the racist attitudes of fans and football authorities.

Born in Ghana in 1865, Arthur was half-Grenadian and half-Scottish. In 1882 he moved to England to train as a missionary but soon got bored and set out for a sports career. He competed in athletics competitions and set a new 10 seconds world record for the 100 yards dash in 1886 which brought him to the attention of football clubs.

His first professional team was Preston North End where he was goalkeeper. A high point of this career was playing in the FA Cup semi-final. There was speculation at the time that Arthur was a good enough to play for England but he was never considered, due in part to the racial prejudices of the time - it would be another 90 years before a Black football

player represented England.



**Dr. Daniel Williams**

Williams found that Black patients were routinely subject to second-class medical care while opportunities for Black doctors were limited, while admission to medical and nursing schools was restricted because of institutional racism. When Dr. Williams met a woman who'd been refused admission by every nursing school in the area it prompted him to launch a Black owned hospital, where he also opened a Black nursing school, but he employed Black and white doctors to emphasise the need to give the best care to everyone.

When in 1893 a man was rushed to hospital with a stab wound to the chest, Dr. Williams decided to open up the man's chest to see what could be done. The surgeons found a pierced blood vessel and a tear to tissue around the heart which they managed to repair. It was the first successful open heart surgery ever performed.