



The thousands of people who moved to the city from the Commonwealth and other counties, settled with their families, worked and built communities. Many of these people rose to prominence in the city and also nationally and internationally. Others had children, born in Birmingham, who became well known celebrities in many different areas of life. Meet some of these inspiring people on the next pages and use the internet to discover more about them. Use what you have learned to make a presentation, assembly, drama, piece of creative writing, musical composition or artwork about these Birmingham greats, their lives and achievements.

Reverend Peter Stanford (1860-1909) was Birmingham's first Black Minister. He had been born enslaved, his parents were both slaves captured in Africa and taken to Virginia in America. His life is like a story, full of events - many harsh and challenging. He became a Christian and campaigned for equality. He arrived in Birmingham from Canada in the late 1800s and established a strong church and community.

Mahmood Hashmi (b1920 - ?), was a writer and teacher who arrived in Britain from Pakistan in 1953. He established the first Urdu newspaper in Britain and set up an Urdu interpreting and translating service and edited a bilingual newspaper, The Saltley News. His work would have benefitted many who had settled in Birmingham from Asia.

George Saunders arrived in Birmingham from St Kitts in the Caribbean in 1958 and ran a successful tailor's shop in Hurst Street in what is now the National Trust's Back to Back buildings. People would come from London to have a suit made by him. Despite his later success, like many other people who came from Commonwealth countries, George experienced racism and prejudice when looking for work, but eventually, through hard work, saved enough money to set up his business. George was awarded a prestigious order from the Queen's Guards for his work.

Cyrille Regis (1958-2018) was a professional footballer who played for many Midlands teams and England. He was born in French Guiana, the son of a Saint Lucian father and moved to England in 1963. He was a popular footballer and as a coach and agent, an inspiration for generations of black players. He was awarded Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) in 2008. His Legacy Trust continues his mentoring work for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Henry Gunter (1920-2007) campaigned for racial equality in Birmingham and beyond during the 1950s. He wrote a report called A Man's a Man in 1954, regarded as a key anti-racist text. Henry was born in Jamaica and moved to America for a time, experiencing racial segregation and becoming involved in the fight for the rights of black people. He settled in Birmingham in the late 1940s and worked hard to stop the 'colour bar' in the city - in other words policies that stopped black people accessing the same opportunities as white people, including jobs and leisure activities.

Malala Yousafzai (b1997). In some parts of the world, children are not as lucky as you - they do not have regular schools to go to or a good education as you do here. Malala Yousafzai is a significant supporter of educating women. She was educated in Birmingham after leaving Pakistan as a child and is still based in the city. She supports, champions and actively works to improve access to education for girls around the world. She used her personal experience to show the world that in many countries girls need a good education and start in life. She is very well known and through her charity, important people listen to her.

Dr Benjamin Zephaniah (b1958) is popular and successful writer, dub poet, actor and musician. He was born in Handsworth, his parents having moved to England from the Caribbean. His poetry is heavily influenced by Jamaican poetry and culture and he uses his art and spoken word skills to highlight many causes including anti-racism, animal rights and oral tradition. He has written for children and young adults; realistic novels that have inspired young writers. He holds sixteen honorary doctorates and recently appeared in the TV show *Peaky Blinders*.

Shabana Mahmood (b1980) was born and brought up in Birmingham. Her family roots are in Mirpur, Pakistan. After school in Small Heath and Camp Hill, Shabana went to Oxford University to study Law. She then qualified as a barrister. In 2010, she was elected as a Member of Parliament for Birmingham Ladywood and became one of the UK's first female, Muslim MP. She has served in a number of high profile positions and is currently the Labour Party's National Campaign Coordinator.

Denise Lewis (b1972) was born in West Bromwich to Jamaican-born parents. She won a gold-medal in the 2000 Sydney Olympics in the heptathlon event. She has since received many awards for her services to sport, and as a presenter, including runner up in the Sports Personality. In 2023 she was awarded the very significant title of Dame Commander and is listed as one of the 100 most influential Black Britons.

Vanley Burke (b1952) is described as the godfather of Black British photography (*The Guardian*). He was born in Jamaica where he was given his first camera, and moved to England aged 14. From his studio in Handsworth, he began documenting the lives of black people and communities in England. He has held many acclaimed exhibitions and his work has appeared on television, in books and on vinyl record sleeves. Vanley travelled to South Africa in the 1990s to photograph black South Africans after Nelson Mandela's release from prison. Birmingham's Vanley Burke Archive is an incredible photographic and documentary resource that describes the developments and activities of Black British people.

Joan Armatrading (b1950) is an award winning singer-songwriter who has worked in the music industry for 50+ years. She was born in St Kitts and Nevis in the Caribbean and moved to Hockley, Birmingham in 1958. She began writing songs at the age of 14 and had her first concert at Birmingham University at 16. A full career has followed with Top Ten albums, appearances and concerts. She was the first Black British singer to gain international success. Her last major tour was in 2015 but she says she will never retire from song-writing.

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