

Race for role models

Government launches search for role models to inspire black kids

A major search in Manchester to recruit black male role models has begun following the government's call for motivational black and mixed heritage men to take a lead in inspiring the next generation.

The creation of the first ever Black Boys' National Role Model programme was announced by Communities Secretary Hazel Blears in August as part of a package of measures to help raise the aspirations and attainment of some of today's young black men. Blears wants Manchester's black community to encourage black and mixed heritage men from all walks of life to come forward and play a part in lifting the sights of young black boys.

A national role modelling programme was one of the recommendations made

to government by an independent panel made up of members who had an understanding of the realities of the lives of black boys and the barriers they face.

Too often role models can be celebrities and those who glamorise a world of crime, drugs, guns and gangs. The national role modelling programme will seek to challenge stereotypes and shine a light on positive images of black male achievement, from businessmen to doctors, lawyers, artists and community workers.

Hazel Blears said: "It is crucial that we improve the life chances of young

black boys. Too few black men and boys are achieving their full potential and the consequences of that are being seen socially and economically.

"There needs to be a collective effort to combat underachievement and low aspirations amongst our young black men.

These kids need realistic alternatives to show them that every opportunity is available to them.

"There are thousands of role models out there who offer great examples to follow and I am calling on the black and mixed heritage men of



100 Great Black Britons

The 100 Great Black Britons list was compiled in 2003 as a response to the BBC's 100 Greatest Britons debate. Patrick Vernon, founder of black heritage website Every Generation, pointed out that no black people had made it to the Top 100, saying that this was due in part to many people being unaware of the achievements and contributions of black people over the centuries.

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|--|----------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Mary Seacole | 21. Arthur Wharton/Andrew Watson | 41. Herman Ouseley | 72. John Archer |
| 2. Wilfred Wood/ O.A. Lyseight | 22. Linton Kwesi Johnson | 42. Craig David (pictured) | 73. Baroness Scotland |
| 3. Mary Prince | 23. Nana Bonsu/Len Garrison | 43. John Barnes | 74. Baroness Amos |
| 4. Olaudah Equiano | 24. George of Lydda | 44. Martin Offiah | 75. George Bridgetower |
| 5. Queen Phillipa | 25. Septimus Severus | 45. Des'ree | 76. Samuel Coleridge Taylor |
| 6. Courtney Pine | 26. Baroness Rosalind Howells | 46. Randolph Turpin | 77. Zadie Smith |
| 7. Sir Bill Morris/Sir Trevor McDonald | 27. Harold Moody | 47. Paul Boateng | 78. Jazzy B |
| 8. Shirley Bassey | 28. Lennox Lewis | 48. Cleo Laine | 79. Ira Aldridge |
| 9. Bernie Grant | 29. Diane Abbott | 49. Lord John Taylor | 80. Colin Jackson |
| 10. Professor Stuart Hall | 30. William Cuffay | 50. Ottobah Cuguano | 81. Yvonne Brewster |
| 11. Elery Hanley | 31. Francis Barber | 51. Trevor Phillips | 82. Duonne Alexander |
| 12. Sade | 32. Ignatious Sancho | 52. Ian Wright | 83. David Case |
| 13. Stephen Lawrence | 33. Phil Lynott | 53. Linford Christie | 84. Tessa Sanderson |
| 14. Ms Dynamite | 34. Moira Stuart | 54. Bruce Oldfield | 85. Seal |
| 15. Queen Charlotte | 35. Frank Bruno | 55. Peter Herbert | 86. Errol Brown |
| 16. Henry Sylvester Williams | 36. Niger Val Dubh | 56. Mike Fuller | 87. Rudolph Walker |
| 17. Daley Thompson | 37. Leary Constantine | 57. Lee Jasper | 88. Gabrielle/Naomi Campbell |
| 18. Lenny Henry | 38. Elizabeth Barrett Browning | 58. Beverley Knight | 89. Goldie |
| 19. Joan Armatrading | 39. Robert Wedderburn | 59. Oswald Boateng | 90. Mica Paris |
| 20. Benjamin Zephaniah | 40. Claudia Jones | 60. Viv Anderson | 91. Angie Le Mar |
| | | 61. Desmond Douglas | 92. Ben Okri |
| | | 62. Patrick Berry | 93. Denise Lewis (pictured) |
| | | 63. Brendan Batson | 94. Jeremy Guscott |
| | | 64. Floella Benjamin | 95. Paul Ince |
| | | 65. Lord David Pitt | 96. Nigel Benn/Chris Eubanks |
| | | 66. John Edmonstone | 97. John Conteh |
| | | 67. Kanya King | 98. Janet Kay |
| | | 68. Val McCalla | 99. Jenette Arnold |
| | | 69. Dame Jocelyn Barrows | 100. Carroll Thompson |
| | | 70. David Lammy | |
| | | 71. Oona King | |

Who was Mary Seacole?



Mary Jane Seacole (1805-1881), sometimes known as Mother Seacole or Mary Grant, was a

Jamaican-born multiracial British nurse best known for her involvement in the Crimean War. She set-up and operated boarding houses in Panama and Crimea to assist in her desire to treat the sick. Seacole was taught herbal remedies and folk medicine by her mother, who kept a boarding house for disabled European soldiers and sailors.

Confident that her knowledge of tropical medicine could be useful, and after hearing about poor medical provisions for wounded soldiers during the Crimean War, she travelled to London to volunteer as a nurse. Relying on her experience in the Caribbean, she applied to the War Office and asked to be sent as an army assistant to the Crimea. She was refused, mainly because of prejudice against women's involvement in medicine at the time.

The British Government later decided to permit women to travel to the affected area, but she was not included in the

party of 39 nurses chosen by Florence Nightingale. Instead, she borrowed money to make the 4,000-mile journey by herself.

She distinguished herself treating battlefield wounded, often nursing wounded soldiers from both sides while under fire. When the conflict ended in 1856 she found herself stranded and almost destitute, and was only saved from adversity by friends from the Crimean War who organised a benefit concert. In later years, she expressed a desire to work in India after the Indian Rebellion of 1857, but was unable to raise the necessary funds.

Seacole was lauded in her lifetime, alongside Florence Nightingale, but after her death was forgotten for almost a century. Today, she is noted for her bravery and medical skills and as "a woman who succeeded despite the racial prejudice of influential sections of Victorian society".

Her autobiography, *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole in Many Lands* (1857), is a vivid account of her experiences, and is one of the earliest autobiographies of a mixed-race woman.

Source: *Wikipedia*

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Manchester to take a lead in inspiring the next generation."

At least twenty national role models from across the country will be selected by an independent panel comprising of fashion designer and businessman Ozwald Boateng; entrepreneur Tim Campbell; founder and Director of Operation Black Vote Simon Woolley; and Metropolitan Police Superintendent Leroy Logan.

The panel want the programme to have as big an impact as possible and are keen to see applications from a diverse range of backgrounds, professions and areas of the country.

Once recruited the national role models will share their stories in a variety of ways, including events and visits to meet with young black men across the country. This will be community led, but might include schools, youth clubs and young offender institutes. As well as these specific visits the message and story of the role models will be amplified through use of podcasts, webchats and wider media activity. ■

