

# Windrush Generation celebrated in portraits at the palace

**At the Palace of Holyroodhouse the Windrush Generation is celebrated in a series of ten new portraits.**

These will go on public display for the first time from Thursday for visitors to Edinburgh's royal palace.

The portraits were commissioned by His Majesty The King in 2022 when he was still Duke of Rothesay, and the special display commemorates the positive contributions the pioneering men and women have made to the United Kingdom.

***Windrush: Portraits of a Pioneering Generation*** honours the accomplishments of the Windrush Generation, the name given to the men and women who arrived in Britain on HMT *Empire Windrush* 75 years ago in June 1948, and the generations who followed.

The people arrived here in a time of political change while the country emerged from the Second World War, and some took up jobs in construction, with the NHS, and on the railways. Many experienced discrimination as they navigated their new lives in a new country which they hoped would be a better life for their families. The portraits have become part of the Royal Collection, and are a powerful reminder of not just personal resilience and determination, but also of the legacy of these individuals, representing the positive impact of diversity across Britain.

In the foreword to the book which accompanies the exhibition The King writes: "It is, I believe, crucially important that we should truly see and hear these pioneers. I dearly hope, that though we might all be different, every individual, no matter their background, has something unique to contribute to our society in a way that strengthens us all."

The ten sitters, who are now in their 80s and 90s, are:

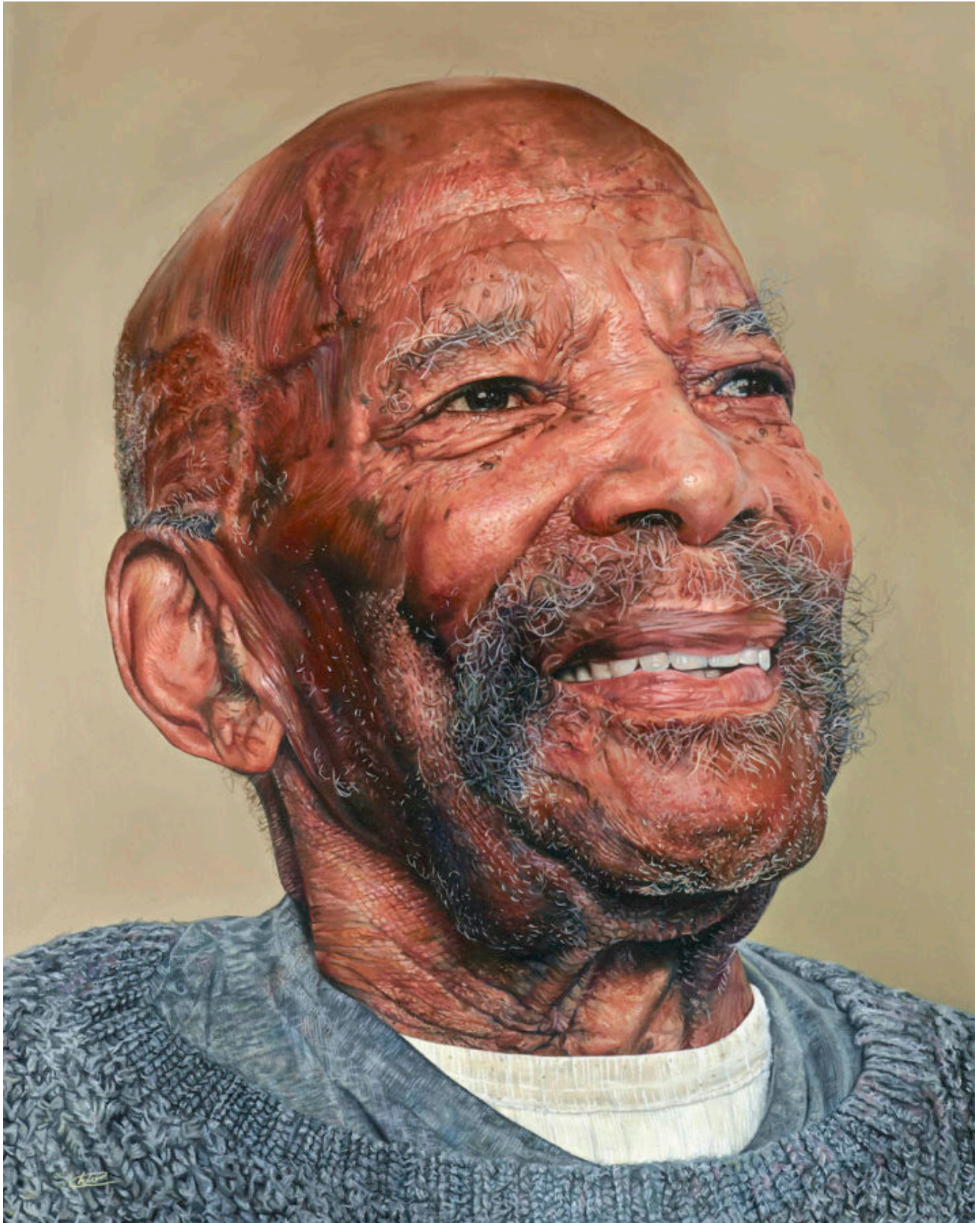
- **Delisser Bernard** painted by **Honor Titus**. RAF veteran Delisser was optimistic about his future when he boarded HMT *Empire Windrush*. He stayed at a military hostel before settling in Wolverhampton where he met his future wife Marjorie Wildey at a dancehall. A good work ethic was important to Delisser, and he instilled that in their four children, including Olympic sprint champion Verona Elder.



- **Alford Gardner** painted by **Chloe Cox**. Alford's portrait shows a sense of reflection and contentment as he looks

back on his life. He arrived in the UK on HMT *Empire Windrush* a determined RAF veteran and overcame obstacles to find work as an engineer and helped establish the first Caribbean Cricket Club, which still exists today and promotes equality and anti-racism.





- **John (Big John) Richards** painted by **Deanio X**. John, known affectionately to his family and friends as Big John, arrived in London on HMT *Empire Windrush* knowing no one. But after a short time, he found his first and

only job – working for British Railways (later, British Rail), where he stayed for over 40 years. Big John was one of the founding members of the Learie Constantine West Indian Association in north-west London, which aims to continue the work of his friend, the late cricketer and human rights campaigner Learie Constantine, to advance integration and eradicate discrimination.





▪ **Carmen Munroe, OBE**, portrayed by **Sonia Boyce, OBE**.  
Carmen began drama classes after she came to England in



1951 with her sister. She made her West End stage debut in 1962, before taking on roles in film and TV and co-founding the Black theatre company *Talawa*. It has gone on to become the country's leading group for nurturing talent of African and Caribbean heritage and in 2007, Carmen was given an OBE for her services to drama.



- **Gilda Oliver** painted by **Clifton Powell**. Gilda, a former NHS support worker, travelled to Birmingham in 1955. She provided care to both patients and people in her community – whether by cooking meals for those in need, being a motherly figure or through establishing Grace in Age, a group encouraging seniors to be active. Throughout her life, Gilda has found strength in her Christian faith.





▪ **Professor Sir Godfrey (Geoff) Palmer, OBE**, painted by **Derek Fordjour**. Sir Geoff's love of science and

botany developed after he arrived in the UK in 1955. His degrees in botany and grain science led to major innovations in the brewing industry, and in 1977 Sir Geoff became Scotland's first black university professor.





- **Jessie Stephens, MBE**, painted by **Sahara Longe**. Jessie left St Lucia aged 28. Arriving in London in 1955, she became a strong and dedicated member of her community, playing important roles in creating a cultural hub and



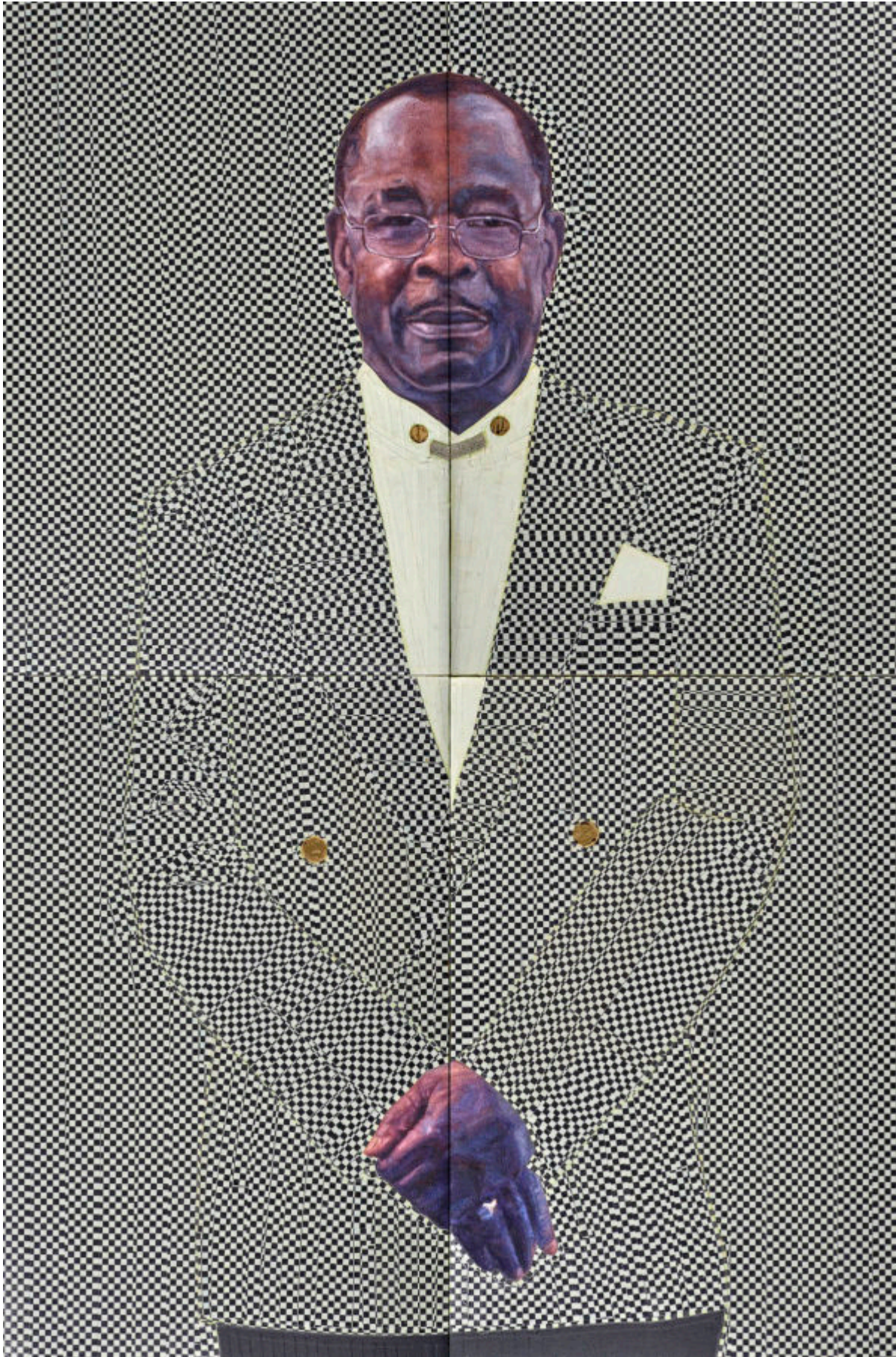
campaigning for better relationships with the police. In 1982, she was honoured with an MBE for her services to the St Lucian community in the UK.



- **Laceta Reid** painted by **Serge Attukwei Clottey**. Laceta's large, mostly monochromatic mixed-media portrait was inspired by African lifestyle photography. After

arriving in Britain in 1957, Laceta settled in Newport, Wales where he was employed at Crompton Batteries for most of his working life. In his free time, he enjoyed tending to his allotment when he was not travelling around the country for dominoes competitions.





▪ **Linda Haye, OBE**, painted by **Shannon Bono**. Linda worked for the Civil Service in Jamaica before her mother



persuaded her that she would have more opportunities in the UK. She arrived in October 1958, setting her sights on her lifelong dream of studying sociology and graduated in 1972. Linda dedicated her life to youth and community services and was the first woman of colour to be a full-time member of the Police Complaints Authority.



- **Edna Henry** painted by **Amy Sherald**. Edna arrived by plane in 1962, following her brother to Cardiff. Edna found life in the UK hard at first – the food was very

different, she was not used to the smoke and cold and she experienced discrimination. But through her Pentecostal Church community, Edna developed an inner strength. Edna's portrait is vibrant, showing her as a woman with dignity who persevered to give her family the best opportunities.





The portraits were undertaken by black artists personally selected by His Majesty. The sitters were invited to take part by the Windrush Portraits Committee, appointed by The King and chaired by Baroness Floella Benjamin, OM, DBE, which included

Paulette Simpson, CBE, the Right Reverend Bishop Rose Hudson-Wilkin, MBE, and Rudolph Walker, CBE.

A BBC Arts documentary which follows the creation of the portraits with the sitters and artists will be broadcast on BBC Two on Thursday, 22 June 2023 at 7.45pm and will be available on BBC iPlayer.

**The *Windrush: Portraits of a Pioneering Generation* display is included as part of a visit to the Palace of Holyroodhouse from 22 June to mid-September 2023. The portraits will then go on display at the National Portrait Gallery from October 2023 for approximately six months.**