

THE VERDICT

She shook. He wept. And their 19-year wait for a guilty verdict was finally over

By Paul Peachey
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Doreen Lawrence shed a single tear when, almost 19 years after her eldest son was knifed to death by a racist gang, the foreman of a jury handed her some measure of justice.

Mrs Lawrence had sat through seven weeks of evidence at the Old Bailey about the white gang which attacked Stephen at 10.35pm on 22 April 1993. Since that day, she has campaigned ceaselessly to bring his killers to trial.

As Gary Dobson and David Norris were found guilty of murder, her composure showed only the slightest signs of shaking. Ten feet to her right, her former husband, Neville, with whom she rarely shared a word during the trial, wiped away tears. He later pleaded with the convicted men to name the others who had murdered Stephen for being black.

After one public inquiry, five Metropolitan Police commissioners and a fundamental change in a British criminal justice system that had been found woefully lacking, two of the 18-year-old killers were served with their retribution at 2.36pm yesterday. Mr Lawrence, 69, said he felt "joy and relief" at the verdicts, but added outside court that he was conscious that five or six men had attacked his son.

Police revealed that nine other men - all members of the gang headed by Norris and his friend Neil Acourt - remain under suspicion for being part of the murder. Scotland Yard sources say that the nine comprise three of the men who have been previously accused of the murder - Neil Acourt, his younger brother, Jamie, and Luke Knight - and six other people linked to the gang.

Sixteen suspects have been arrested during the inquiry since 1993. But Alison Saunders, the chief Crown prosecutor for London, said: "The only evidence at the moment where there was a realistic prospect of conviction is with Dobson and Norris."

The verdicts came yesterday after nine hours of deliberation by a jury of eight men and four women.

As he was led away, Gary Dobson, 36, who was 17 when he joined the gang which stabbed Stephen in 10



Gary Dobson, above, and David Norris, below, will be sentenced today to at least 12 years in prison for their part in the 1993 killing



seconds of unprovoked racist hate, showed some of the snarling defiance for which the Lawrence suspects had become notorious.

He shouted to the jury, who learnt yesterday that he was already serving five years for drug dealing when arrested for the murder in 2010: "You have condemned an innocent man here today. I hope you can all live with it."

His fellow killer, a 35-year-old who was 16 in 1993, seemed to smile to himself as he was taken down. Norris, who was jailed in 2002 for racially abusing an off-duty police officer near the scene where Stephen Lawrence was murdered, is the son of a drug dealer who police say schooled the suspects on how to avoid justice for years after the murder. The pair will be sentenced by Mr Justice Treacy today, and will serve a minimum of 12 years, the sentencing taking into account the fact that they were juveniles when they committed the murder.

Scotland Yard insisted that it was "not the end of the road" and that shifting allegiances and new scientific breakthroughs could see more men in the dock.

REACTION THE PARENTS' STATEMENTS



Doreen and Neville Lawrence prepare to speak outside the Old Bailey yesterday REUTERS

THE FAMILY

Their son murdered, their marriage broken - but they refused to give up

By Paul Peachey

Stephen Lawrence was ambitious, loved art and excelled at sport - but had a cheeky, rebellious streak. He wanted to become an architect. The tragedy for his family is that he was not able to realise his dreams, but has instead become a byword for racial intolerance and violence in Britain.

The family's friends say Stephen was blessed with maturity and humour. He was a music fan and a talented athlete who was a member of Cambridge Harriers running club. He is now buried in Jamaica, the country his parents left in the 1960s in search of a better life.

His mother said she was pleased

she had buried her son in the home of her birth. "If he was buried in the UK his grave would have been desecrated so many times," she told the BBC's *Panorama*. "Nobody knows where he is and it's a peaceful place for him and the country didn't deserve to have him, because they took his life."

That two men were ever jailed for his killing was all down to the forcefulness of a reluctant public campaign in which Doreen Lawrence, 59, personally persuaded Jack Straw to hold a public inquiry that became a watershed for race relations in Britain and led to major police reforms.

Neville Lawrence, 69, and Mrs Lawrence, both moved to Britain

from Jamaica in the early 1960s and married in 1972. Stephen was born two years later and the family was living in Woolwich in April 1993 with Stephen's younger brother Stuart and their daughter Georgina.

Their unwanted status as fiercest campaigners came only because of the death of their son on his way to the family home in Woolwich. Two weeks after his death, already frustrated by the police failure to arrest anyone in the case, the family met Nelson Mandela at the start of their campaign for justice. She told him of her anger that the killers were at large while her son was lying on a slab.

Her anger was compounded

(i) As the Lawrence family stood outside the Old Bailey, a small crowd cheered them and traffic stopped. Before he drove off the white driver of a black taxi shouted: "Thank God, finally justice"