

Racism: The Stephen Lawrence Case

On the 22nd of April 1993, Stephen Lawrence was murdered in London. The A-level student, who aspired to become an architect, was waiting for bus with his friend when he was attacked by a gang of white youths. During the attack, he was stabbed and later bled to death. The gang targeted him solely because he was black. In the following years, this would go on to become one of the most controversial crimes in British history.

The way the police dealt with the crime had many flaws. Stephen was not given first aid on the scene because the injury he had received was not properly identified. After Stephen's death, the police lost evidence and failed to gather witnesses properly. They also failed to properly investigate when some of the suspects were spotted dumping clothes that they may have been wearing when Stephen was killed.

Many of the officers investigating the case failed to recognise that the killing was racially motivated. At a later inquiry, the police were found to have been 'institutionally racist' in their investigation of Stephen's death. After this, the police changed many of its procedures and tried to recruit more officers from ethnic minority backgrounds.

The men suspected of killing Stephen were not brought to trial initially because of the problems linked to the crime's investigation. Stephen's parents were horrified by this; they had not only lost their son, but now knew the men they believed had killed him were free. In the years after Stephen's death, the police placed the suspected killers under surveillance and recorded them using racist language.

In 2008, a memorial was opened for Stephen. Within a few weeks, it had been vandalized in a suspected racist attack.

In 2012, nearly two decades after the murder, two of the gang who attacked Stephen were found guilty of his murder. A forensic reinvestigation of his case found evidence that allowed the police to arrest and charge them. Both of them remain in prison today. However, some of those suspected of the murder have not been rearrested.

