

Chancellor Dharker,

Trinidad, Washington, Baltimore, Newcastle, London, Dallas...and Reading. This sounds like the touring dates for a rock band on the back of a T-shirt. Our honorary graduand and esteemed guest is certainly a music lover but is not a rock star. No, the venues for his art were the football clubs around the world that Shaka Hislop, whom we are honouring today, played for. His is a story, however, of not just the numbers that the world of sport loves, but words and deeds. It is the deeds that really matter. As Mahatma Gandhi said:

*"Manliness consists not in bluff, bravado or loneliness. It consists in daring to do the right thing and facing consequences whether it is in matters social, political or other. It consists in deeds not words."*

The numbers for Shaka Hislop's football career are easy. 371: the number of professional football matches he played in the UK, 26: the number of times he proudly played for the Trinidad and Tobago national team and 2: the number of seasons he played for Newcastle United in the middle of the glory years of Kevin Keegan's management and when he was a fans' hero and a fantastic role model! Sadly, there are two more numbers relating to that era. Zero: the number of times Newcastle won the premier league with Shaka and 12, the lead in points that Newcastle lost in finishing second to Manchester United in 1995/96.

It is not, however, these numbers that are the reason we are honouring him today. It is words and the deeds that spring from another number. The number one. One night. One night when leaving the football ground when he stopped to fill up his car with petrol and was racially abused in the vilest

possible way by a group of boys...until they recognised him as Shaka Hislop and then wanted his autograph. Hatred had turned to hero-worship in an instant, suggesting that it wasn't and couldn't have been real hatred. There had to be a way to empower the good in people to counter the bad.

John Stuart Mill said

*"Bad men need nothing more to compass their ends than that good men look on and do nothing."*

It would have been easy to go home to his beloved family and die a little on the inside. Instead he decided to do something, and so Show Racism the Red Card was born. With his colleagues he went into local schools to tell his story, to explain how it could be different. We live in a world where it is so easy to signal your virtue with a badge or a tweet and then move on and do nothing. Doing things that make a lasting difference takes work. It takes commitment. More than 20 years on, Show Racism the Red Card is known about and talked about wherever football is played. It takes passion and a lot of hard work to make a lasting difference. It is a sign of the man that when he talks about his work, he credits everyone else. His team mates who joined him, other national figures who helped take this movement across the country, the show racism the red card team. Everyone but himself. A university colleague's daughter works for Show Racism the Red Card. She said he is simply the nicest, most modest person she had ever met, and that everyone in the team loved him. We talk of "respecting" people, being in "awe" of them being "impressed" by them. Love is different. A higher level of admiration.

Sadly, the episode in the petrol station was not the first time that racism had an impact on his life and destiny. His father was a very bright man who also wanted to give something to people. To help the next generation. He studied at Loughborough University in the 1960s, and then went to work at a school

in London, teaching English. And then one night he met the Metropolitan Police. He and a colleague were walking to the station to catch the train home when they were arrested simply for being black men in London in the 1960s. When he objected to this they thrust his arm through a car window breaking the glass so that they could charge him with criminal damage.

He could have been consumed by bitterness but the mantra "don't get mad get even" came to the fore. This awful episode resulted in the largest ever compensation payment for a police racist attack made to that point.

Justice for Shaka's father was therefore achieved. What about other people though, others subjected to the same degrading and dehumanising behaviour. How could this episode, where some form of justice was obtained, help others? Simple, you use the money the police paid you to train as a lawyer so that you can help others.

Shaka was born in London in 1969, but went with his family to Trinidad and Tobago where his father practiced law and it was for this country that he proudly played international football. When he was young he was sports mad playing both cricket and football. At one stage he played in the same under 11 sports teams as Dwight Yorke and Brian Lara. For those of you not versed in international sport that is a terrifying array of talent to face if you are 11! They have no less than 528 senior international appearances between them.

I am sure Shaka won't mind me saying that professional footballers don't always have a reputation for academic prowess. One England international was called the professor in the changing room because he read a broadsheet newspaper. Not Shaka. He studied mechanical engineering at Howard University in the USA, supported by a soccer scholarship, graduating with

honours and eventually doing an internship at NASA (thereby, of course, proving that it actually “was rocket science”).

He was then drafted by the Baltimore Blast, an indoor soccer team. He played in two friendly matches against Aston Villa, for whom his friend Dwight Yorke played and was, in good comic book fashion, spotted by a visiting scout from Reading football club. The rest, as they say, is history.

To be a public orator has been one of the privileges of my life at Newcastle University. I have met many impressive people, but until now I have never met anyone like Shaka. He is being honoured today, but I too feel honoured. We spent a very enjoyable time talking about his life, his challenges and about the ceremony today. He knew that one of our previous honorary graduates, recognised for their anti-racism, was Dr Martin Luther King. What he didn't realise was that the ceremony was taking place in the same hall and using the same words...this truly moved him.

Chancellor Dharker, for his outstanding contributions to sport, and broadcasting, but most of all his contribution to the long journey of ridding football and society of the evil of racism, I present to you, Shaka Hislop for the award of Doctor of Civil Law, *honoris causa*.

*Citation by David Jones, Public Orator*

*13<sup>th</sup> July 2022*