

# Boycotted for a Knighthood

**G**EOFFREY Boycott is a BBC cricket commentator. He was an England cricketer for 24 years. Over that period, he scored 8,114 runs in 108 Test matches for England and was the first England cricketer to pass 8,000 Test runs. For this accomplishment, he received the award of Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) from Her Majesty The Queen, through the UK National Honours Committee. But, he clearly felt that the award was not of a sufficiently high rank and he merited more.

It is not a secret that Boycott hankers after a Knighthood and he has publicly expressed his disappointment that, though nominated twice, he has been rejected. His sense of dissatisfaction is understandable, given his intense yearning for the award.

However, to have remarked that he would have a better chance of being knighted if he "blacked up" was inexcusably stupid, deeply offensive and racist.

In a question and answer session (for which the audience was charged a hefty sum in order to pay him), Boycott said that knighthoods were handed out like "confetti" to West Indian cricketers, including Sir Viv Richards, Sir Garfield Sobers and Sir Curtly Ambrose. He added "Mine's been turned down twice. I'd better black me face."

The West Indian cricketers, who have been knighted by the two territories from which they originate - Antigua and Barbados, were outstanding cricketers. They contributed enormously to the thrill and excitement of the game. It might be argued that, in terms of service to cricket, each of them contributed much more than Mr Boycott. However, the award of their knighthoods



**GEOFFREY BOYCOTT**, whose comments about having a better chance of being knighted if he "blacked up" have caused widespread offence.

## World View

By **SIR RONALD SANDERS**



did not derive only from their excellent contribution to cricket; it stemmed much more from the unmatched pride and world standing that they gave to the small states in which they were born. Since cricket is the leading sport in both Antigua and Barbados - even now in the era of poor performances by the West Indies Cricket Team - it is natural that their higher awards should be bestowed upon their exceptional cricketers.

Further, the West Indians were awarded the dignity of

knighthood by the honours committees of their countries; not by the Honours Committee of the United Kingdom which is the body that would determine Mr Boycott's worthiness in their own context.

In the United Kingdom, there are many more sporting disciplines from which choices have to be made for the award of knighthood. Ten cricketers have been knighted by England; four more than by Barbados and six more than by Antigua. If volume is the measure of knighthoods be-

ing handed out like "confetti", Mr Boycott should have directed his objection to the National Honours Committee of the United Kingdom which, incidentally, is blameless in all this. What is more, unlike England, no country in the West Indies had granted knighthoods in any other sport. Britain on the other hand, has granted another 60 - 12 for Rugby, 12 for Athletics, 9 for yachting, 7 for motor-racing, 7 for football, 4 for Rowing, 4 for Mountaineering, 2 for Equestrians, and 1 each for boxing, Squash and Fencing - each of them judged to be fully merited by the UK Honours Committee.

Mr Boycott should have reserved his anger for the British National Honours Committee that has rejected him. Turning his ire on the West Indies and its cricketers by suggesting that he'd better "black" his face, demonstrates that racism is not very far from Mr Boycott's judgment. Further, he misses the point that it is not only exceptional cricketing abilities, and service to cricket, that led to the knighting of Vivian Richards, Garfield Sobers and others; it is the sense of dignity, of excellence and of strength that they gave to the people of the West Indies, who, until the emergence and ascen-

sion of these players, were marginal to the rest of the world. Only the more recent glorious athletic performance of Usain Bolt has occasioned the sense of pride, distinction and pure joy that these cricketers gave to the people of the West Indies. Bolt too deserves to be knighted.

Mr Boycott's comment has led many sports commentators, including Caribbean icon, Joseph "Reds" Perreira, to suggest that the BBC should remove him from its commentary team for the second test match between England and the West Indies. Lamentably, that will not happen. A BBC spokesperson said: "He has rightly apologized unreservedly for these clearly unacceptable comments. He will be part of the team for the West Indies Tests." The BBC position shows a lack of sensitivity equal to the ignorance displayed by Mr Boycott. Common decency should have advised the BBC to drop Mr Boycott for his offensive and uninformed remarks, particularly as his "apology" was given on Twitter and not at an event equivalent to the venue of his original comment where the media was in full attendance.

But Mr Boycott's presence in the BBC commen-

tary team on the England-West Indies test matches changes nothing. He remains "Mr" Boycott, denied a knighthood by his own country's National Honours Committee for coming up short when measured for his suitability for the award. In the meantime, the pantheon of West Indian cricketers sparkles brightly with men who were not knighted because their faces were black, but because their prowess was magnificent and their contribution to the West Indian people's sense of self-worth was great. From Barbados: Garfield Sobers, Frank Worrell, Clyde Walcott, Everton Weeks, Conrad Hunte and Wesley Hall; and from Antigua: Vivian Richards, Andy Roberts, Curtly Ambrose and Ritchie Richardson. They will forever be "Sir" - honoured by their people and richly deserved.

Responses and previous commentaries: [www.sir-ronaldsanders.com](http://www.sir-ronaldsanders.com)

The writer is Antigua and Barbuda's Ambassador to the United States. He is also a senior fellow at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies at the University of London and Massey College in the University of Toronto. The views expressed are his own.

**shoe creation** Men, Ladies & Kids Footwear. Balfour Ave & Charles Vincent St. Tel: 323-3505

**NIKE** Bags Starting @19.99 More styles & colors in available.

**ALL AVAILABLE IN WHITE/SIZES FOR MEN & BOYS**

**NIKE AIR FORCE 1** **NIKE HUARACHE** **NIKE AIR MAX**

**Hush Puppies** sizes 10-3 3-5-7 \$69.99 **Vikings** \$79.99

Starting from size 12 \$29.99 **\$39.99** sizes 4-9 **\$26.86** size 10-4

**Boys \$45.00** **Men \$64.99** **Clarks FUNNY DREAM \$124.99** **Special Brown only \$109.99**

YOUR **CHOICE** FOR THE FAMILY

**f** [WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/JOYFM1019](http://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/JOYFM1019)