

## Enoch Williams

Enoch Williams was born in Sweets Village, Antigua on 21<sup>st</sup> April 1940. In 1958 He left his Homeland Island of Antigua and headed to Barbados where he boarded the cruise ship Sorrento, and sailed for two weeks before landing on the shores of Genoa, Italy. Thereafter he travelled by train to France, then a ferry to Southampton and finally arrived at London Waterloo station by train. He lived with his mother and was eventually joined by younger siblings who made that same journey to England several years later.

Enoch had no academic qualifications and his only intention was to simply find himself a job that would pay enough to sustain himself and save something for a rainy day.

It wasn't long before Enoch was employed in a wood moulding factory as a machine operator. After a short time he moved on and gained employment with The Post Office as a postman.

Whilst there Enoch says he had a strong desire to make something more of his life. Whilst his workmates would head off down the pub or club for drinks after work, Enoch would be studying hard at evening classes where he successfully attained GCE's in British Constitution, History and Economic History from The University of London. At that time he was still unsure what career path he wanted to take but was very clear that he wanted to work with people face to face in an animated type of environment.

While searching for ideas as to what he might do to make use of his qualifications and interpersonal skills, he decided to study sociology where upon he came across a book called *The Hidden Persuaders* by American Sociologist, Vance Packard. Enoch was particularly fascinated by what the author revealed about the psychological factors behind common purchasing decisions made by women. Enoch was now certain that he did not want to just work with people but he wanted to specifically sell to or interact with women.

Perhaps somewhat serendipitously, Enoch stumbled across another book called *Living in Britain* in which it explored how people from the Caribbean were settling and adapting to the British way of life. Enoch realised that the mind-set of people who came from the Caribbean had shifted from thinking of only being here for five years or so to having a more long term view. The book highlighted that cottage industries were now emerging catering specifically for Black people and one of the fastest growing areas was home hairdressing. Enoch instantly recognised the opportunity this presented.

In 1970 Enoch embarked upon his hairdressing career at the world famous Morris School of Hairdressing School in Tottenham Court road London. Enoch was unfazed by being the only black male on the course. He was not a naturally talented hairdresser but he studied and practiced day and night. His effort was justly rewarded when Enoch passed the course with honours.

Having mastered European hairdressing Enoch was keen to master Afro hairdressing however the only established schools offering training in Afro hairdressing were in the USA.

Enoch was determined to pursue his dream but had to consider the risk he was taking as he would be away from his wife and children for over a year with no financial back up. He and his wife Genevieve worked hard and saved up enough to pay for Enoch to train at Maco School of hairdressing in New York. It took a lot of courage, sacrifice and determination but Enoch learned well and was eager to put his skills into practice on his return to London.

It was a short time after his return in 1973 that Enoch opened his first salon close to Ridley Road Market in Dalston, East London. Unable to initially pay staff the salon was run by Enoch and his wife alone, however Afro Glamourland (the name of the salon), was an instant success and it wasn't long before they were only working by appointment only. After only 18 months Enoch moved location to larger premises less than half a mile away. Within a year of moving into the new location Enoch purchased the neighbouring premises expanding the salon significantly and earning it the title of the largest and most popular Afro Salon in East London.

Afro Glamourland brought a professional standard of service, with a trendy and vibrant energy into the UK hairdressing industry. The salon was set over three floors and included a reception and waiting area, a barbering area, shampoo section, chemical processing area and styling section. By 1977 Enoch was being hailed as a major business leader and trail blazer by the community and industry alike. Afro Glamourland was a regular sponsor and supporter of community projects, beauty pageants, and black owned enterprises. Enoch received letters from cross the globe, from many who had heard or read about the success of the salon and wanted to train to become professional hairdressers with him.

In 1978 Enoch established The Ebony School of hairdressing and became to the first Afro Salon in the UK to provide a universally recognised professional qualification. All students were examined by Sydney Morris of The Morris school of Hairdressing and the school was endorsed by the World Federation of Hairdressers.

Enoch recognises that there were many other pioneers of the industry in the 1970's who encouraged and supported him through the good and difficult times, such as, Winston Isaac of Splinters, Cislín Parry of Aquarius and Dyke and Dryden, and Anthony Wade to name a few.

Enoch travelled frequently to America to attend hair shows and learn about the latest hairdressing trends and hair care products.

It was on one such trip to America that he was introduced to a new style called 'the Jerry curl' which had become all the rage in New York. Enoch was one of the first hairdressers to bring the style to the UK and was appointed the UK's senior technician for a brand called Lustrasilk. Through the hard work of Enoch's friend, the late Earl Bruce (the UK distributor for Lustrasilk), the brand became the market leader.

It was around this time that Enoch decided to venture into manufacturing his own line of hair care products. His first product was called Sahara Oil which was a scalp and hair treatment. Initially only sold through the salon demand grew and the product was eventually distributed all over the country by Dyke and Dryden. Over the subsequent years Enoch added more products to the Sahara brand and also ventured into manufacturing products such as Hot Picks and Steam Caps under the brand name of Deck products. He also developed and produced a range of products for permanent waving afro hair and hair maintenance under the brand name of Ace products.

As the business expanded in many directions two of Enoch's sons Emile and Karl, joined the salon in 1980 on a full time basis. Following the riots of 1981 Enoch against the advice of many respected business colleagues opened a salon in Brixton literally located on top of Brixton tube station. This salon was named Ultimate Salon and Enoch spared no expense in the design and fitting out of the salon.

Enoch created a state of the art salon that modelled the organisational structure of leading European salons. He employed 28 staff members consisting of receptionists, a floor manager, and staff training instructors, an administrator, barbers, juniors, colourists and stylists. Customers flocked from near and far to enjoy the high end salon experience.

In 1984 Enoch helped his sons Cordell and Duncan launch New Wave Hair and Beauty Products. New wave was the first Black owned factory in the UK, manufacturing and packaging hair and beauty cosmetics. The Stoke Newington based factory not only produced their own product lines, which included the Sahara Single Bible brand, it also manufactured cosmetics under contract for individuals and small businesses.

When a close friend of Enoch decided to move his salon from Brooklyn New York to Manhattan, he seized the opportunity to purchase the Brooklyn salon to further expanding his business empire.

Throughout the 1990's Enoch continued to be a major player in the UK Afro Hairdressing industry.

As hair weaving became more and more popular Enoch turned his attention to the hair weaving market. He worked alongside Trinidadian American, master hairdresser and inventor of The Interlocking Weave, Clem Lue Yat to train professionals in the latest weaving techniques. He also went on to develop a unique bespoke hair refining service. This service provided high quality human hair wefts, custom made to clients individual specifications.

In the early 2000's Enoch began to sell up his various businesses and has since been enjoying the fruits of his labour. He still continues to encourage and share the secrets of his success with the young entrepreneurs of this generation. Giving back to the community that helped him to achieve so much, remains very dear to his heart.

From postman to hairdresser, salon owner and manufacturer, Enoch has made a huge impact not only in the UK hairdressing arena but his vision and pioneering attitude has inspired many business entrepreneurs around the world. Enoch's humility, humour and genuine love of people will always be remembered by those who have had the pleasure of being in the presence of one of the true greats of The Black British Hairdressing Industry.