

## £100,000 Met compensation for Stephen Lawrence's friend

*Rosie Cowan*

Duwayne Brooks, best friend of the murdered teenager Stephen Lawrence, has received £100,000 and an apology from Scotland Yard over his claim that police treated him like a criminal after he witnessed the racist killing 13 years ago.

The settlement, believed to be the largest of its kind, marks the end of a six-year legal battle by Mr Brooks, 31, who suffered severe post-traumatic stress after the murder in April 1993.

The two friends, then both 18, were at a bus stop in Eltham, south-east London, when they were set upon by a gang of white youths. Mr Brooks phoned the emergency services as Lawrence was knifed to death. But he claimed officers regarded him as a suspect rather than a victim and witness, dismissing his account of the murder, described by Lord Bingham as the "most notorious racist killing our country has ever known".

In his book, *Steve and Me: My Friendship with Stephen Lawrence and the Search for Justice*, Mr Brooks gives details of the attack and his desperate efforts to save his friend's life.

Mr Brooks started legal action against the Metropolitan police in 1999. But yesterday Scotland Yard announced that he had agreed to drop his case in return for £100,000 compensation and a written apology.

A statement from the Met said: "This has been a protracted and difficult period for all persons involved and was initially born out of the tragic racist murder of Stephen Lawrence and the attack on Duwayne Brooks." No one has ever been convicted of the Lawrence murder. Three men - Neil Acourt, Gary Dobson and Luke Knight - were acquitted when a private prosecution brought by the Lawrence family collapsed in 1996, and charges against two others, Jamie Acourt and David Norris, were dropped before the case came to court.

A public inquiry, chaired by Sir William MacPherson, castigated the Met investigation and concluded that the force was "institutionally racist", resulting in landmark reforms to try to eradicate police discrimination.

Mr Brooks was unavailable for comment yesterday. But his solicitor, Jane Deighton, described the settlement as "sensible" and said it would enable her client to put the past 13 years behind him and get on with his life.

"He suffered a great deal because of the murder and the way he was subsequently treated," said Ms Deighton. "It's a very large sum of money, which marks how serious it is to discriminate against victims of crime because they are black."

In 2002, the court of appeal ruled that Mr Brooks could sue police for wrongful arrest and negligence and 13 officers for breaches of the [Race](#) Relations Act. Last year, the House of Lords struck out the claim for negligence but said Mr Brooks was free to pursue the racism claim.