

## Roy Hackett

### ■ Biography

Date of birth: 18th September 1928

Place of birth: Jamaica

Date of arrival in the UK: 1952

Roy was born and went to school in Jamaica, but he held a British passport and he travelled to England to work in 1952.



Roy at home in 2007  
Photo courtesy of Paul Bullivant & Tony Gill

He lived in Liverpool and then London and started a job with the building firm, Taylor Woodrow. This brought him to Somerset to build roads for the new atomic power station, Hinkley Point near Bridgwater in 1957. Roy had several different jobs and at one time was the foreman of 52 employees, all of whom were white.

Roy visited friends in Bristol and found that he liked it, but it was difficult to find a place to live. There were often signs in the windows of houses with rooms to rent saying, “No Blacks, No Gipsies, No Irish and No Dogs”. Even when he called at houses displaying no signs, the owners would frequently slam the door in his face before he had even opened his mouth.

Eventually, he found a room to rent in Lower Ashley Road, St. Paul’s. He had to share the room with a friend, as it was too expensive to rent a room alone. When he had saved enough money he was able to send it to his sweetheart in Jamaica who came over to Bristol and they got married in 1959. They moved to Montpelier where they were pleased to rent a couple of rooms. They had to share the kitchen and bathroom with other tenants but since people worked different shifts this wasn’t too much of a problem.

As Roy and other Black people faced so much racism, they set up a committee called the Commonwealth Co-ordinated Committee to challenge the Bristol City Council and other bodies to make changes. At first, it met in Roy’s house in Easton in 1962. This later became the West Indian Parents’ and Friends’ Association, which Roy still attends today.

A major achievement of the Committee was their role in the successful Bristol Bus Boycott Campaign of 1963. They forced the Bristol Omnibus Company to lift their ban on employing Black people.

In 1968, the Committee set up the St. Paul’s Festival, which later became the St. Paul’s Carnival. The festival organisers had to ask local businesses

for funding and to lend lorries for floats. They managed to get a steel band from Bath, a rarity then, and festival costumes were made at Roy's house in Easton. In the early days of the carnival, the floats travelled from Eastville Market down Stapleton Road and Seymour Road in Easton, along to Lower Ashley Road, Sussex Place, and City Road in St. Paul's, eventually arriving in Portland Square. This was before the M32 motorway was built. The floats stopped before the Lord Mayor who would give a speech in Sussex Place. The Carnival is older than the famous Notting Hill Carnival in London and coaches of Black people from London, Birmingham, Gloucester and Newport would arrive each year. It is now one of the biggest annual events in Bristol.

Roy was a member of the Bristol Race Equality Council, which began as a community group in 1965 and closed in 2005. It was the oldest Race Equality Council in the country and acted as a good example to other councils. He remembers working with the first Race Equality Officer, Carmen Beckford. He was also Chair of the Management Committee of the Bamboo Club, owned by Tony and Lalel Bullimore, which welcomed people of all backgrounds and hosted bands like Bob Marley and the Wailers.

Roy was given an award from the Jamaican High Commissioner for his outstanding contribution to his community. In 1993, he also received Maundy Money from the Queen at Bristol Cathedral in recognition of all his good work.



Roy (far right) with Prince Brown (far left), the Director of the Pioneer Council housing in Bedminster for young offender boys. Roy was their Warden.

Photo courtesy of Roy Hackett

Roy's message is:

“ Always try your best and make the most of your education. Education is a way of proving that you can do well and it also enables you to develop. Think about your own future children and how to make a better place for them, too. ”

## Roy Hackett

### ■ Teachers' Background Notes

Roy was born in Jamaica and attended Hillside Education School, which was based on the British education system since Jamaica was a British colony until 1962. He was inspired by a young man called Edgerton Harris who went to England to study before coming back to live in Jamaica. Roy held a British passport and he travelled to England to work in 1952. He first settled in Toxteth, Liverpool, which had a large African-Caribbean community.

After four years, Roy moved to Notting Hill, London and started a job with the building firm, Taylor Woodrow. This brought him to Somerset to build roads for the new atomic power station, Hinkley Point, near Bridgewater in 1957. Roy worked there for a few years before finding a job with another building firm to build a steel factory in Newport, Wales. He also worked for the Gas Board before working for St. Anne's Board Mill where he became the foreman of 52 employees, all of whom were white.

Roy met many people from the Caribbean whilst building roads, and he would join them for weekends in Bristol. He liked Bristol and decided to move there but it was difficult to find a place to live. There were often signs in the windows of houses with rooms to rent saying, "No Blacks, No Gypsies, No Irish and No Dogs". Even when he called at houses displaying no signs, the owners would frequently slam the door in his face before he had even opened his mouth.

Eventually, Roy found a room to rent in Lower Ashley Road, St. Paul's. He had to share the room with a friend, as it was too expensive to rent a room alone. When he had amassed enough money he was able to send it to his sweetheart in Jamaica who came over to Bristol in 1958 and they married in 1959. They moved to City Road, St. Paul's and then to Montpelier where they were pleased to rent a couple of rooms. They had to share the kitchen and bathroom with other tenants but since people worked different shifts this wasn't too much of a problem.

The blatant racism faced by Roy and other Black people motivated them to form a committee to voice concerns to Bristol City Council and other bodies. The Commonwealth Co-ordinated Committee, as it was known, was set up in Roy's house at 5 Bellevue Road, Easton in 1962. This later became the West Indian Parents' and Friends' Association, which Roy still attends today.

A major achievement of the committee was their role in the successful Bristol Bus Boycott Campaign of 1963. Roy met with Owen Henry, Guy Reid-Bailey, Paul Stephenson and others to challenge the bus company's decision not to employ Black bus drivers or conductors. The Bus Boycott Committee members met to plan the campaign and to organise peaceful demonstrations against the bus company's racist policy. White people, in particular students and women, joined them in the demonstrations. The campaign attracted media attention and the support of Tony Benn, MP for East Bristol and later a minister in the Prime Minister's Cabinet. Within six months the Bristol Omnibus Company lifted their ban on employing Black people.

In 1965 Roy attended the Extra Mural Department of Bristol University to study family law. Unfortunately he couldn't continue as he had a wife and children to support.

In 1968 the Commonwealth Co-ordinated Committee set up the St. Paul's Festival, which later became the St. Paul's Carnival. The planning meetings were held in a house in Brigstocke Road, St. Paul's. Carmen Beckford joined the committee and she set up a dance group. The festival organisers had to ask local businesses for sponsorship and to loan lorries for floats. They managed to get a steel band from Bath, a rarity then, and festival costumes were made at Roy's house in Easton. In the early days of the carnival the floats travelled from Eastville Market down Stapleton Road and Seymour Road in Easton along to Lower Ashley Road, Sussex Place, and City Road in St. Paul's, eventually arriving in Portland Square. This was before the M32 motorway was built. The floats stopped before the Lord Mayor who gave a speech in Sussex Place.

The West Indian Parents' and Friends' Association (WIPFA) ran the carnival for 20 years. They decided to pull out when they thought that it had become commercialised – they didn't want to charge people to have stalls. The Carnival is older than the famous Notting Hill Carnival in London and coaches of West Indian people from London, Birmingham, Gloucester and Newport would arrive each year. It is now one of the biggest events in Bristol.

Roy met representatives of the Organisation for Sickle Cell Anaemia Research (OSCAR), on a trip to London and WIPFA brought them to Bristol. OSCAR was first based at St. Werburgh's Community Centre, where WIPFA still hold their meetings, but now has a branch in Stapleton Road, Easton. WIPFA also brought in a credit union to help people send money abroad and they sponsored matches played by the Bristol West Indian Cricket Club.

Roy was also the oldest member of the Bristol Race Equality Council, which began as a community group in 1965 and closed in 2005. It was the oldest Race Equality Council in the country and acted as a beacon to other councils. He remembers working with the first Race Equality Officer, Carmen Beckford. Roy was also Chair of the Management Committee of the Bamboo Club, owned by Tony and Lalel Bullimore. The club welcomed people of all races and hosted bands such as Bob Marley and the Wailers.

Roy was given an award from the Jamaican High Commissioner for his outstanding contribution to his community. In 1993 he received Maundy Money from the Queen at Bristol Cathedral in recognition for all his good work.

Roy's message is: **“Always try your best and make the most of your education. Education is a way of proving that you can do well and it also enables you to develop. Think about your own future children and how to make a better place for them, too.”**