

The Honorary Graduand: Roger Griffith

The Orator: Myra Evans

Roger Griffith is to be awarded the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Art.

Roger is a writer, social entrepreneur, lecturer and activist. He has been a diversity trainer and champion for over 30 years. His work in Bristol on scores of community projects he's led, have changed the lives of many. At UWE Bristol he's been central to work to decolonise the curriculum.

Born in North London he moved with his mother to Lawrence Weston, Bristol and after leaving school without qualifications. became a champion for life-long learning. The 1980s were a time of high-unemployment, turbulent race-relations and social divides. This lived experience would become integral to his writing and teaching.

After years of unemployment, working on building sites, he took his English 'O Levels at night-school. At 25 he joined CEED a community organisation in St Pauls, determined to change his life and make a difference. They placed him at Bristol City Council in Hartcliffe as a positive-action trainee housing officer. This was the opportunity he had sought and a template for his career by gaining trust amongst his peers and the communities he served alongside study. On a tutor- training course aged 27, he saw his first Black teacher, providing an inspiration to his future career.

He gained management, counselling and coaching qualifications learning how to get the best out of people. Roger rose through the ranks to become a Senior Housing Manager and also worked as a race and equalities advisor on the Stephen Lawrence inquiry and staff development schemes.

In 2007 the community radio station Ujima launched and Roger became a volunteer- broadcaster and Chair for 11 years. During his tenure Ujima became a National Diversity champions and

won national radio station of the year. Roger co-founded with his former-mentor Paul Hassan the Black and Green Programme. This offered paid opportunities for community members to connect to the environment.

During this time he met Mandy Bancroft and Dr Emmanuel Aduke starting community engagement projects for UWE Bristol. He also worked with Lynn Barlow and Mayor Marvin Rees in the bid to bring Channel 4 to Bristol with his colleague LaToyah McAlister-Jones at Ujima. Roger also set up the Windrush Generations Project with Alisha Airey to celebrate Caribbean elders and champion their contribution to British society. The project provides opportunities for students to work with organisations such as St Pauls Carnival and Vocalise Magazine.

In 2015 Roger published his first book 'My American Odyssey From the Windrush to the White House during the term of the first Black president, charting his families ancestral history through the Black diaspora.

In 2018 Roger was awarded the Lord Mayor's Medal for his community and voluntary work and in 2019 he was awarded an MBE for his work in Diversity and Culture.

He has a diverse portfolio of roles including CEO of his community consultancy Creative Connex providing opportunities for student talent and community groups. He is a creative producer, film curator and continues his passion for sharing cultural stories, published in several local and national publications and sits on the Arts Council England South-West board.

Throughout his ups and downs he cites his family, friends and partner Stacie for a foundation on which to build his success.