

BULLETIN

of the Roach Family Support Committee

No. 3

TIME FOR WHITELAW TO STOP DITHERING

At the start of the campaign for an independent public inquiry into the death of Colin Roach, the Roach Family Support Committee wrote to Home Secretary William Whitelaw. RFSC called on the Home Secretary to set up a PUBLIC INQUIRY into all the circumstances surrounding the death of Colin Roach in Stoke Newington Police Station. Numerous other organisations and individuals also wrote to Whitelaw making the same demand.

In response, the Home Secretary accepted the need for a "full independent and public inquiry into the matter." However, he argued that such an inquiry would be provided by the inquest. This latter argument is fallacious and has been thoroughly discredited.

Firstly, the Coroner, Dr Douglas Chambers, publicly stated that his inquest was not a public inquiry, that the Home

Secretary was wrongly and badly advised. He demonstrated this by pointing out that in the case of Kevin Gately who was killed by the National Front, both an inquest and a Public Inquiry were held.

Secondly, when the Coroner went to the High Court over the venue of the inquest and the interested party Status of Hackney Black Peoples Association, he was rebuffed by Mr Justice Woolfe on both counts. In his judgement, Mr Justice Woolfe said, "Although AN INQUEST IS THEREFORE AN INQUIRY WHICH IS TO BE HELD IN PUBLIC, IT IS NOT INTENDED TO BE A PUBLIC INQUIRY, USING THAT PHRASE AS REFERRING TO THE TYPE OF INQUIRY WHICH THE HOME SECRETARY HAS BEEN ASKED TO SET UP."

Given those circumstances, the Home Secretary also has to bear in mind that over

100 members of Parliament have signed two Commons Motions calling for an Independent Public Inquiry.

The Home Secretary can not dither any longer. Now is the time for him to announce the setting up of the Independent Public Inquiry, regardless of whether it is held before or after the inquest.

RFSC calls on all individuals and organisations who support our central demand to write to the Home Secretary again on this matter.

Letters should be sent to:

William Whitelaw M.P.
Home Secretary
The Home Office
Queen Anne's Gate
London SW1



Picture Humphrey Nemar - Caribbean Times

**"MY SON DID NOT COMMIT SUICIDE. HE
HAD TOO MUCH TO LIVE FOR"
JAMES ROACH**

2592 672

THE INQUEST AND THE CORONER

The inquest on Colin Roach was resumed at 9a.m. on April 18th at St. Pancras Coroner's Court. The Coroner immediately adjourned it until Monday April 25th again at St. Pancras.

The family's lawyer asked that it should be adjourned as the family were all prepared for it to go ahead. The Coroner did not even consider this.

Lawyers acting for Hackney Council and Colin's family asked that the inquest be transferred to Hackney Town Hall so that all the people who wanted to attend the inquest could do so. The police opposed the transfer of the inquest but refused to say why in public. They would only give their reasons in secret. They said they would produce Affidavits later in the day.

After listening to the lawyers the Coroner decided that he would not transfer the inquest.

The lawyers acting for Colin's family were puzzled as to why the police were producing Affidavits. These were clearly not needed in the Coroner's Court as the Coroner had already announced his decision as to where and when the inquest would be held.

Later that day (18.4.83) summonses were delivered to the family's solicitors, to HBPA, to Hackney Council, and to the GLC. The Coroner was going to the High Court to seek a Declaration that the GLC could not order him to move the inquest. The police Affidavits were to be used by the Coroner to support his case that the inquest should not be moved.

This raises a number of questions -

How did the police know the Coroner was going to need the Affidavits?

Was there collusion between the police and the Coroner over the weekend before the inquest resumed?

Was the Coroner's application to the High Court a deal cooked up by him and the police before the inquest even started?

If so, that means the Coroner is colluding with the police and the hearing on April 18th was a charade because the police and the Coroner had taken all the decisions beforehand.

If so, that would mean the Coroner was in the pocket of the police, and the police were telling him what to do and what to say.

If so, have they already told the Coroner what verdict he has to produce at the end of the inquest?

If the Coroner is colluding with the police, how can he be regarded as independent?

If the Coroner is not colluding with the police, why did he go to the High Court to stop the inquest being moved? Why didn't he let the police do it?

After what has happened no one can have any faith in the independence of the Coroner and no one can have any faith in the inquest.

Why won't the Coroner let Colin's family see all the evidence he has collected?

What is the Coroner trying to hide?

Is he trying to protect the police by suppressing evidence?

The inquest is just another part of the cover up. Don't be fooled by it. It is not trying to find out the truth.

WHO KILLED ASETA SIMMS?

Reprinted from BLACK VOICE, VOLUME 2, 1971.



Mrs. Aseta Simms, while in the custody of police officers from Stoke Newington police station, received multiple injuries of which she later died.

These injuries must have been inflicted by someone inside Stoke Newington but unknown to the community, except the police.

At the Coroner's hearing on 10.6.71, a police doctor from the Wood Green area says this:

"I examined the body of Mrs. Simms and found that she was a well-nourished coloured woman. There was swelling and bruising above and below the right eye. There was deep bruising over her head but no fracture, but the brain was swollen. The heart was not the cause of death. There was no evidence of alcoholic poisoning. There was little evidence of inhaling vomiting. I cannot say what was the cause of her death."

With this evidence given by a police doctor. The racist Coroner, Douglas Chambers in his hasty quest to cover up the murder of this black woman; took over both roles in the hearing of Coroner and jury: claiming that he had the right to do so under some unknown

home office rules. He went and sat with the jury, returning a verdict of 'Death by Misadventure' meaning that this black woman murdered her own self.

The family of Mrs Simms is not going to allow her brutal murder to go unpunished, Black people in Britain and outside Britain are not satisfied either. We are determined that these murderers will be weeded out and be punished by the people. We, members of the Black Unity And Freedom Party shall give every assistance to the family in their struggle for justice.

This is a part of our general struggle against this rotten, racist, capitalist system. There is no force in the world more powerful than a determined people. If we allow the perpetrators of this brutal murder to get away with it. Then we all know surely as day follows day; they are going to murder us all the following day.

WE CHARGE WITH COMPLICITY OF MURDER:

- 1) Insp. Barton of Stoke Newington
- 2) Coroner Douglas Chambers who sat on the hearing as judge and jury.
- 3) Lord Chancellor, Lord Hailsham or Quintin Hogg.
- 4) Commissioner of Police, Waldron, under whose commission this crime was committed.
- 5) The two doctors who gave evidence in the coroners' hearing.

INQUEST SET FOR JUNE 6

Coroner Dr. Douglas Chambers who officiated in the Aseta Simms case is also the Coroner in the Colin Roach inquest. He has set the date for the resumed inquest for Monday June 6 at the Clerkenwell County Court 33 Duncan Terrace, Islington N1.

STATE CRACKS DOWN ON RFSC SUPPORTERS

For those people arrested while campaigning for the Independent Inqu-uiry, a hardening of attitudes by Magistrates at Highbury Corner is manifesting itself.

In particular, all those people who appear before Magistrate Mr. Johnson have no chance of being acquitted however diabolical the police evidence.

To date, every person who has come before Mr. Johnson have been convicted and sentenced very severely.

He appears to come into court with his mind already made up, with a blind faith in the total sincerity and total unemotional involvement of the police.

Two most disturbing cases are those of Merville Bishop, a RFSC Steward on the 12 March demonstration, and the case of Fred Chitole who was not taking part in the demonstration, was not taking part in it, but happened to be on his way home when police attacked the last RFSC March.

For performing his duties as a Steward, Merville was physically assaulted and arrested. He was sentenced to 28 days imprisonment by Mr. Johnson.

Fred Chitole was not demonstrating. He had been to Woolworths to buy batteries, then to Rumbellows to buy a cassette. He was on his way to Boots the Chem-ist to buy shampoo when he was arrested.

Fred Chitole was convicted by Mr. Johnson and sentenced to six weeks imprisonment.

Both cases are subject to appeal.

WIDESPREAD SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC INQUIRY

The campaign for an Independent Public Inquiry has received widespread local and National support. Here, we publish a sample of the letters received by RFSC.

Brothers & Sisters,

Hail I, and Greetings. I will be on the march on May 14th. I have participated in previous marches and have witnessed the provocative behaviour of the police. In my own case, I was pushed and dragged for no reason.

My previous experience with the police leads me to believe that the police are engaged in a cover up over how Colin Roach met his death. In November 1982, my brother was being arrested by the police - ten minutes after leaving home, for allegedly committing a mugging up the Narrow Way.

As a Youth Worker, I tried to explain to them my concern and the impossibility of him being involved.

They abused me verbally, used violence to arrest me, then charged me with assault, criminal damage and obstruction. My brother was released without any charge. I am now awaiting trial at Snaresbrook Crown Court.

The circumstances of my arrest and the charges against me are similar to what happened to a number of the people arrested on the previous marches.

We must not give up! We must continue to fight for our rights! We must keep on fighting until we get the independent public inquiry we are campaigning for. That is the only way we will know the truth.

Sister Asher

Dear Brother / Sister,

We are writing you in order to send our support for the aims of your committee. We have urged the Sunderland Polytechnic Students' Union to send a formal letter of support, on behalf of all its members, to you.

We would further like to show our support by marching with you in solidarity at your forthcoming national march. We therefore ask that you please send us the relevant information (date, time, place etc).

We are presently arranging a collection, among the students, for your financial appeal. If there are any other ways in which we could be of assistance, please let us know.

Radical Black Students Society
Sunderland Polytechnic

Dear Sir / Madam,

First of all, I would like to express my deepest sympathy to Colin Roach and his family, in what they have been through. I feel that we (meaning S.P.E.A.R.) would like to contribute our support in any way we can to help to promote your cause.

S.P.E.A.R. (which stands for, Solidarity of Pupils in Education Against Racism), is a political and cultural body in our school that was formed to promote the issues that affects Black people in general and Black interest as a whole. It is at present very successful, in that we have successfully amalgamated every Black conscious pupil as well as white sympathisers, into organising themselves on issues that arises such as your cause. I feel as the Colin Roach Committee is a newly set up committee, it is important that S.P.E.A.R. can play an important part in your campaign for justice, for Blacks in Britain, by opening the eyes of both the whites and Blacks of our school and our community, in order to do that, we need your help.

S.P.E.A.R. would like to help:

- (1) Distribute leaflets about the case of Colin Roach
- (2) Would appreciate a speaker to come up to our school and talk to us about the case
- (3) Would like to organise an activity e.g. sponsored walk in order to help fund your cause.

In order to do so, I feel that we need you to open our eyes to the realities that affects us all, and in doing so, I feel that we need your presence at our school.

Yours faithfully,

President of S.P.E.A.R.

Leyton Senior High School for Girls

Dear Friends,

The Students of Warwick University Students' Union, a considerable number of whom come from the south and east of London, have instructed me to write to you expressing our support for you in your fight to find the truth surrounding the death of Colin.

In recent years too many people, white as well as black, have died in similar mysterious circumstances while in police custody. It also can no longer be ignored that Black youth in many of our cities are continually harassed and intimidated by police officers.

Good Luck in your struggle.

Yours fraternally,

General Secretary
Students Union, Warwick University

Dear Friends,

Having recently learned of the tragic death of Colin Roach, we wish to extend our condolences to his family. We also wish to offer our support to your campaign.

We have discussed the leaflet which you have produced and would like to write to William Whitelaw to request that a full and proper inquiry (into the circumstances leading to Mr Roach's death) is carried out.

If you think it would be helpful to you we will write to the Home Secretary in support of you, and provide you with a copy of the letter. Please write and let us know.

Yours sincerely,

Helen Best
Secretary, Tameside Immigration Campaigns Support Group.

Dear Sir,

RE: COLIN ROACH

I am writing this letter to point out to you and your colleagues that I was particularly impressed with the measure of codification and discipline demonstrated on Saturday at the March and Rally re: the above-mentioned brother's death.

It is a fact of life and we have the ability and capacity to delineate concretely that we Blacks can expose the lie rather the mendacity and the myth, that we are unconstructive and un-productive.

As the Superintendent minister for Stoke Newington, I would like you to be assured of my Circuit support at all times. Not to mention my personal conviction, commitment and dedication to the total and whole liberation of oppressed and indigent people.

May the inner need and power of solidarity and that deep and penetrative love for each other motivate us at all times, to work, plan, demonstrate, and move towards that degree of human audacity, that when fully and truly translated means justice, freedom, unity, and liberation.

May the eternal light of love ie concrete human love and brotherhood keep you and your committee contiguous.

Please keep me posted and do feel free to call on me anytime for my support.

Yours in the struggle for the creation of peace, justice, love, brotherhood and manumission.

Yours sincerely,

Rev. Robinson Milkwood
The Methodist Church
Stoke Newington Mission Circuit

Dear Sir / Madam,

The following resolution was passed by the National Executive of the N.C.B.T in its meeting held at the Institute of Education, University of London, on Wednesday 16th March 1983.

The N.C.B.T give their full support to the Colin Roach Campaign in their fight against systematic

attempts on the part of the police to cover up and to obstruct any investigation in the event under which Colin Roach's death took place.

We support the demand for an official inquiry.

Yours faithfully,

Co-ordinating Secretary
National Convention of Black Teachers

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

I am writing on behalf of the Hackney branch of the Confederation of Health Service Employees to express our support for the PUBLIC INQUIRY and for the activities of the Roach Family Support Committee.

We wish to extend our sympathy to the Roach Family and to support the campaign in whatever they

We wish to extend our sympathy to the Roach Family and to support the campaign in whatever way we can. We have supported previous demonstrations and will have members on the May 14th March.

Could you please let us know if there are any other activities we can take to support you.

Yours in Solidarity,

Andrea Campbell
Branch Secretary

Dear Friends,

We are a West Midlands based Community Magazine, with Readership of about 1500.

The current issue as you see includes a short article about the death of Colin Roach, publicising your Committee and the 'suspicious' circumstances of Colin's death.

May I offer our support to your campaign and its aims. If there's any other way we can help publicise your activities etc, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Best Wishes

Abdul Sheir
For Musique
Moseley, Birmingham B13

A PERSONAL VIEWPOINT

It is very important for Black people to find out the truth of How and Why Colin Roach died.

I think there is going to be trouble or something big before there is a Public Inquiry.

I think everybody should know the truth. There have been too many deaths of Black people in mysterious circumstances. Colin Roach is one too many.

A Public Inquiry may help to settle the arousalment of some people even though the whole truth might not come out. But I don't see how even half the truth can come out at an inquest.

COLIN ROACH ARRESTS

Outrageous Sentences At Highbury

Since the untimely death of Colin Roach on 12 January, a total of 84 persons were arrested over five major demonstrations. Demonstrators have campaigned for and INDEPENDENT PUBLIC INQUIRY into all the circumstances surrounding the shooting of Colin Roach in Stoke Newington police station.

Eight persons were arrested on January 14, seventeen on January 17, twenty-five on January 22, ten on February 12 and a further twenty-four on March 12.

Magistrates at Highbury Corner Magistrates Court have bent over backwards to convict people. To date, there have been 18 convictions and 14 Acquittals.

The sentencing policy of the Magistrates is outrageous. In the case of Delroy Thompson, he was charged with threatening behaviour and having an offensive weapon. Despite being found not guilty on the offensive weapon charge, he was nevertheless convicted of threatening behaviour. He was sentenced to seven days imprisonment by a Magistrate who appears to have his eyes, ears and brains closed to anything but police witness statements.

An immediate appeal was lodged. Delroy is now on bail pending appeal. He told a reporter, "I knew Colin Roach. I don't believe that he would go into a police station to kill himself as the police would have us believe. I took part in the first demonstration because I support the demand for an independent public inquiry. I know the truth will never come out at an inquest."

Another outrageous sentence was that imposed on Chas Holmes, a young student at North London



Polytechnic. On January 22, he saw someone being arrested. He asked for the person's name and address. This is not illegal. He was arrested and charged with obstruction.

In their evidence, police claimed that Chas grabbed a policeman by the neck. If that was true, he would have been charged with assaulting the police. Despite pictures disproving the false evidence given by the police, Chas was found guilty of OBSTRUCTION, fined £100 with £125 costs. This case is also subject to appeal.

The Roach Family Support Committee is co-ordinating the defence of all the people arrested. RFSC has pointed out that the police strategy is to criminalise anyone who dares to protest publicly against the racism and violence which pervades Stoke Newington police. Their intention of driving the Roach campaign off the streets has failed. RFSC plans to begin counter charges

of conspiracy to arrest, to use violence against peaceful demonstrators and to break up peaceful protests against the local police.

Most of the seventeen people convicted are appealing against conviction. RFSC will meet the legal costs of these appeals where legal aid is not granted.

Defendants are appearing in court on the following dates and support and solidarity is needed at these court appearances.

MAY 17 Highbury Juvenile Court
 MAY 17 Old Street M.C.
 MAY 18 Highbury Corner M.C.
 MAY 19 Highbury Juvenile Court
 MAY 19 Highbury Corner M.C.
 MAY 23 Highbury Corner M.C.
 MAY 24 Highbury Corner M.C.
 MAY 25 Highbury Corner M.C.
 MAY 26 Highbury Corner M.C.
 MAY 27 Highbury Corner M.C.
 MAY 31 Highbury Corner M.C.
 JUNE 1 Old Street M.C.
 JUNE 1 Highbury Corner M.C.
 JUNE 2 Old Street M.C.
 JUNE 14 Seymore Place J.C.
 JUNE 20 Old Street M.C.

IN SUPPORT OF THE ROACH FAMILY

At this phase in our campaign because many of us have different levels of involvement and therefore different levels of understanding and consciousness, it becomes important that certain basic principles should be spelled out clearly.

A Black family - the Roach family - have suffered a devastating loss. The death of their son Colin Roach, killed by a shotgun blast in Stoke Newington police station on 12th January this year, has caused the Roach family great pain and distress and has fired anger and outrage in our community. This much we all know. But more times we have to remember the basis of the Campaign.

There can be no doubt that this Campaign is unique. Because of its various dimensions it is a major issue for Black and other people. And once this is over we will have learned how effectively Black people in this community can rally round and organise.

Many of us are aware that the first two demonstrations were organised by Black and white youths from Tower Hamlets and Hackney. Those demonstrations on 14th and 17th January called for an independent public inquiry. Those demonstrations were characterised by a mass presence and peaceful protest. Those demonstrations were mainly co-ordinated by members of Colin's family and friends. The family called for an independent public inquiry and initially took the demand onto the streets. This is how the Campaign began.

The Roach Family Support Committee was only launched after Mr and Mrs Roach, Pauline Roach and Patrick Roach had agreed with representatives of Hackney Black Peoples Association that there be a Campaign in and co-ordinated from Hackney. This means that from the beginning - the Roach family, a Black family decided the basic terms of how the Campaign should go. They wanted an independent public inquiry and as part of the Campaign for this, demonstrations were necessary. But only peaceful protest demonstrations would allow us to mobilize people, publicize our concerns and present our case. This is not to say that if we are attacked we should not defend ourselves - we should always defend ourselves when attacked. But it means that if we are to be successful in our Campaign we should not consciously cause any unnecessary confrontations.

WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE BLACK COMMUNITY AND A BLACK FAMILY IN THEIR HOUR OF CRISIS?

At any time in our life times there are always difficulties which confront Black people. This is because we are oppressed - downpressed. Oppression is the condition of our existence. This means that if we are seriously concerned about unity amongst Black people when any one of our families is under threat or suffers intense hardship, we must rally round. We must come together, we must organise, we must unify around that family.

That is unity and that is strength.

This is how we are supporting the Roach family in this Campaign. And every Black person, young and old, man and woman, should feel shame if they do not support the Roach family and support us. This is the only way the Black community can be strong because it is we who are taking the lead. This is why we have decided that no white individual, group, politician or political organisation will set the terms or tell us what to do in this Campaign. Although we respect the fact that there will be white people and their organisations involved in this Campaign - they must support us on our terms and not on their terms.

WHAT SORT OF CAMPAIGN ARE WE IN?

It must be said time and time again that we are campaigning for an independent public inquiry - this is one major and original objective of the RFSC. We have to make a case for an independent public inquiry. This is why we are campaigning for an independent public inquiry. What we are demanding exists in law. Under Section 32 of the Police Act 1964, the Home Secretary can exercise his discretion to authorise an independent public inquiry into an area of policing - the death of Colin Roach is an area of policing.

This is what we are campaigning for and it is clear that the police have been frightened by our campaign because they are eager to put a stop to us. But they will not put a stop to us because we intend to campaign and support the Roach family - a Black family - until we win.

RFSC BENEFIT

with

Saka Dedi & Stepaz Dance Group

UNKNOWN QUANTITY

SHARON FOSTER

K. K. KHAN

IMRUH CAESAR ASHER PLUMMER

Friday 20th May at 8pm

at Chats Place, Brooksbys Walk
 Homerton, London E9

Admission £2.00 Unwaged £1.00

VIDEO : WHO KILLED COLIN ROACH?

Three students from St. Martins School of Art Film School have made a film of the RFSC campaign. Entitled "Who Killed Colin Roach", it shows the campaign in its various dimensions, from marches to pickets, poetry, music, interviews, press conferences etc.

During the course of filming, all three members of the film crew were arrested. Two were charged and one was released without being charged.

The video is available from RFSC and can be used for showing at meetings, youth clubs, schools and colleges etc.

Details from RFSC, 50 Rectory Road, London N16 7PP
 Telephone: 01-254 74 80

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