

The Great Jamaicans Project – Part 2

This series we will focus on Jamaicans, many lesser known, who have made an impact in their respective fields. Part One highlighted three individuals who made a mark in the areas of activism and law - John Russwurm, Hector Josephs and Robert Sutherland. Part Two will highlight two other noteworthy individuals: Harold Moody and Rosemary Brown.

Harold Arundel Moody

(1882-1947)

Harold Arundel Moody was born in Kingston, Jamaica, on October 8, 1882. He was the eldest child of a successful retail chemist, Charles Moody, and his wife Christine. In 1904, Moody migrated to London to study medicine at King's College. Moody won several prizes as a student, but was refused work as a young professional, because of racism (Fryer 1984:327). Therefore in 1913, he started his own practice in Peckham and became quite prosperous. Like other prominent black professionals in the 20th century, Moody was devoted to promoting racial equality and the civil rights of blacks. On March 13, 1931, he established the League of Coloured Peoples (LCP) in London, with the help of other prominent activists.

The LCP was an organization dedicated to improving the lives of coloured peoples across the globe. In his capacity as leader of the LCP, Moody lobbied for the elimination of the colour bar in the British armed forces, during World War 2 (Ibid:330). Due to his efforts in 1939, black service professionals became eligible for commissions in the armed forces. His lobbying also resulted in the overturning of the Special Restriction Order of 1925 in 1942. This law required “coloured” seamen to show proof indicating that they were British. Several blacks and Asian nationals could not verify their identities and as a result were made redundant. Throughout his life Moody was also a devoted Christian who served the community as a member of the Congregational Union. He died in 1947.

Rosemary Brown PC, OC, OBC

(1930-2003)

Rosemary Brown was a dynamic Canadian politician and activist. Brown was born in Kingston, Jamaica, in 1930 to a politically aware family. In 1951 she relocated to study social work at McGill University in Montreal. She also earned a Masters of Social Work at the University of British Columbia. As an activist, Brown was involved in the British Columbia Association for the Advancement of Coloured People and the Voice of Women. She was also a founding member of the Vancouver Status of Women Council (The Canadian Encyclopedia). Due to her

strong activism, Brown was encouraged to enter representation politics. Her foray into politics in 1972 was successful and she served as a Member of the Legislature in the British Columbia Legislature from 1972-1986. This achievement made her the first Black woman to be elected to a provincial legislature in Canada. Brown was also the recipient of a plethora of honours, including the Order of Canada for her contribution to promoting equal rights for women and minorities (Smith 2013:336).

References

- Fryer, P. 1984. *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (Pluto Press)
- Smith, J. C. 2013. *Black Firsts: 4,000 Ground-Breaking and Pioneering Historical Events*. (Detroit: Visible Ink Press)
- The Canadian Encyclopedia. Rosemary Brown. Available at: <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/rosemary-brown/> [Accessed 19 April 2018]

Lipton Matthews, Research Officer - Jamaica National Heritage Trust