

Biography

Lucinda Roy was born on December 19, 1955 in Battersea, South London. Her father was Maroon Jamaican artist, sculptor, and writer, Namba Roy. Her mother was English--a former actor who went into teaching later in life. Her biracial heritage and her experiences living and working on three continents have had a profound influence on her writing and her art. An author, professor, and artist, she is married to Larry Jackson, a computer systems network engineer. They have one son, and live in Blacksburg, Virginia.

Roy graduated from King's College, London with a B.A. (hons) in 1977. She was the recipient of the Jelf Medal. She then left England to work for V.S.O., the British equivalent of the Peace Corps. She was assigned to a convent school in Sierra Leone, and taught English there from 1977-79, returning briefly in 1980. During that time, she worked at Our Lady of Guadalupe Secondary School for Girls, in Lunsar. In a 2006/2007 visit back to Sierra Leone, following the brutal civil war there, she tried to locate the family she was close to and some of the students she had taught. She is working on a book about Sierra Leone and its struggle to recover from the devastating effects of the war.

In 1980, Roy began attending the graduate program in education at King's College, London, and was awarded a post-graduate certificate of education in 1981. After her marriage to a former Peace Corps volunteer from Arkansas, she enrolled in the Creative Writing MFA program at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, where she studied with Jim Whitehead, Miller Williams, Heather Ross Miller, Carolyn Forche, and Bill Harrison. She graduated in 1985 and was appointed as a lecturer at Virginia Tech. A few years later, following the U.K. publication of her book of poems, *Wailing the Dead to Sleep*, she was moved to a tenure track position.

Roy has held three endowed professorships. President Paul Torgersen appointed her as the first Gloria D. Smith professor in Black Studies at Virginia Tech, a professorship she was invited to name and help shape. (The late Gloria D. Smith was a dedicated African American counselor at Virginia Tech, and Roy requested that it be a rotating professorship rather than a permanent one in hopes that it would benefit the Black Studies program, which has since become Africana Studies.) Roy was also the Margaret Bundy Scott visiting professor at Williams College. Currently she is an Alumni Distinguished Professor at Virginia Tech, the first woman and the first person of African descent to be appointed to as a distinguished professor at that institution.

A novelist, poet, and writer of nonfiction, Roy had published two novels, *Lady Moses* and *The Hotel Alleluia*, the first set on three continents, the second set during the time of civil war in Sierra Leone. *Lady Moses* was a Discover Great New Writers selection. She has two collections of poetry, *Wailing the Dead to Sleep* and *The Humming Birds*. *The Humming Birds* was selected by Lucille Clifton as the winner of The Eighth Mountain Poetry Prize, and contains the long slave narrative poem "Needlework," which received the Baxter Hathaway Prize in Poetry from *Epoch*. In 2009, her nonfiction memoir-critique, *No Right to Remain Silent: The Tragedy at Virginia Tech*, was published by Harmony Books. An attempt to learn from what happened and to communicate openly about the issue of troubled students, the book details Roy's interactions with Seung-Hui Cho and the with the Virginia Tech administration, and warns of the likelihood of similar attacks if the fundamental issues relating to severely disturbed students are not addressed.

Like her father, Namba Roy, Lucinda is also a visual artist. Two of her paintings have been featured on the covers of her poetry books, and she is currently working on a series of oil paintings depicting the trials and triumphs of the Middle Passage.