**READING WINDRUSH PARADE AND FESTIVAL**

The Reading Windrush Parade and Festival is an event that pays homage to the Reading Carnival which was first showcased in 1977 as a Caribbean style carnival celebration of the Queen’s Silver Jubilee. It represented: the struggles and enforced displacement of African people through slavery; the migration of the descendants of those people from the Caribbean islands to the United Kingdom with promises of work and a better life; the hatred and aggression toward those migrants from the nationals of the United Kingdom; and, the loneliness, isolation, and psychological damage that these Caribbean migrants had to endure and overcome.

The labours of these “unwanted” migrants help to rebuild the United Kingdom after the devastation that two world wars had inflicted on the country yet these people were still viewed unfavourably by the natives. Caribbean people continued to build their lives in a country whose people continually told them this is not your home, “Go back to your country”

When these migrants first came to the UK, they were neither given or needed any documentation to enter and live however changes to legislation in the early 1970s, based on the fact that many of these Caribbean countries had become independent. Many thought that they were British as they were residing in the country before these changes when in fact, they had become Commonwealth citizens with limited rights in the UK.

The subsequent “hostile environment policy” that came into effect in October 2012 meant that by 2013 many Caribbean born people who had spent the majority of their lives living in the UK were now: receiving deportation orders; having their benefits stopped; losing their jobs; refused medical services; being placed in deportation centres; and, being deported and refused the right to return to the UK when returning from holidays.

Today, in 2024, a surge of racism has started to gain traction in the UK based on unfortunate events in Southport and the loss of life of three young girls.

This Windrush Parade is to commemorate the struggles faced and overcome not just of Caribbean people but the Commonwealth.

It honours the generational journey of all Commonwealth citizens and proudly announces that the smaller ethnic communities are all part of the Greater Reading community which we invite to celebrate our similarities whilst respecting our differences.