

BOB CLARKE - BIOGRAPHY



I was born in Paddington General Hospital on August 24th 1958 to a Jamaican Dad and a Cuban Mum who moved to England from Jamaica in 1956. As with my older sister, at only three months old, my childminder was asked to look after me permanently. She and her husband therefore raised me and my sister as their own and they became mum and dad.

I had an unusual upbringing as my “adoptive” parents were white, but the area (Kensal Green, NW10 London) was rapidly becoming a predominantly black area and so I never felt out of place. I had always known my other biological brothers and sisters as they only lived around the block with my biological parents, the two families were friends and when they moved out to a more affluent area, we still saw them. As well as having 7 biological siblings, I had 5 siblings from my white family.

When I was eleven, we stopped all contact with my biological parents when they demanded I live with them. They had already taken my sister back three years earlier. My biological parents came to my school without warning to take me away with them. I asked my white teacher in the corridor as we were walking to the school office “what colour are they”. In a bemused manner he told me they were black. I immediately ran home to my Mum and Dad. My biological parents arrived soon after I got home. There was then a huge argument and struggle between the parents and unfortunately that was the last I saw of my siblings for twenty years. I have in recent years established contact with my brothers and sisters including travelling to New York and seeing a brother I have never met before.

From the age of thirteen I rarely went to school but at fifteen I decided I wanted to be a policeman, so during my final year at school I really tried to get my head down. At the time, however, the relationship between black youths and the police was very bad. ‘Suss’ law gave the police the freedom to do what they wanted to us; I was often taken to police stations, beaten, then dumped on the street. This affected my attitude and as a result I went off the idea of wanting to be a policeman.

With low expectations after teachers told us we will not make anything of our lives, at seventeen I got into some trouble with the boys that I hung around with. Things got so bad we knew we had to leave the area; otherwise we may end up dead or in jail. My friend and I decided to join the Territorial Army (TA) part time, however we enjoyed it so much that we soon became full time. The army gave me the self discipline which plays a big part in my success today. The training and experience I gained in the army is very much used in training young people in MAMA Youth Project.

It was during a period when I was in the TA, part time, I started working in the warehouse of a video duplication company, where I met my wife, Caroline. After 3 months I asked for a job in their technical area. I think the boss gave me a chance because of my cheek in asking as I had no qualifications to be a VT Operator. After 5 years I became an editor for British Forces Television which was an ideal job for me as I could be a full time soldier and work within the media as well. Through British Forces television and their unique connection with the BBC, I was lucky enough to receive full BBC training. This was unusual because at the time only BBC employees received training and generally you needed a good educational background, which I did not have.

I started work as a freelance editor, working for TV3, LWT, Central TV and various Soho post production houses such as PMPP, Ocean Post, and Oasis. I also did some freelance work for Sky TV, who has now been a client of mine since 1996. I have broadcast credits in many genres of programming from quiz shows to hard hitting documentaries.

In 1998 I started my own Post Production facility, which became a production company, MAMA Productions, in 2003. My clients included Endemol, Ginger and BBC to name a few. So far my work has won several awards and I feel very privileged to still be enjoying what I do.

I hope that through MAMA Youth Project I will be able to give young adults enough self confidence, belief, respect, discipline, and pride in them selves to make them believe that they can achieve anything they want in life, even when it’s against all the odds.

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WHO WOULD BELIEVE THAT A GHETTO CHILD COULD RISE TO THE HIGHEST ELEVATION
KNOWING I AM A GHETTO CHILD, WELL I CAN SEE THE BEST IN ME COS I’M A GHETTO CHILD
AND PROUD TO BE ME”**

Ghetto Child by Joe