

Jacqueline Roberts, Hon DLitt

Tuesday 21st July 2026

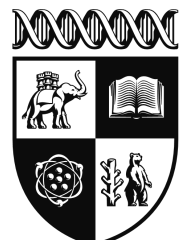
Orator: Professor Katherine Astbury, School of Modern Languages & Cultures

Chancellor

Our honorary graduand this morning is the Chief Executive Officer of the African and Caribbean Heritage Association, SV2G. I am delighted to introduce JACQUELINE ROBERTS.

Jacqueline co-founded SV2G (St Vincent and the Grenadines 2nd Generation) in 2003. Based in High Wycombe, which has the UK's largest Vincentian population, the Association has created new forms of learning through arts and heritage projects with an intergenerational audience. Under Jacqueline's leadership, it has developed flagship programmes encompassing African Caribbean music and history. In 2006, for example, SV2G established the Wycombe Steel Orchestra, which has been critical in raising the standard and status of steelpan in the UK, and in 2012 opened a School of Steelpan – the first such school in the UK to offer accredited courses for this instrument.

SV2G's history projects aim to illuminate African Caribbean history and colleagues in the School of Modern Languages and Cultures here at Warwick are proud to have been able to contribute to some of these over the last 4 years. Jacque first contacted me in 2021 after learning we were showing an indigenous Garifuna delegation around Portchester Castle in Hampshire where thousands of prisoners of war from the Caribbean were interred during the 1790s. She was keen to welcome them to the UK and asked if I had any research my team would be happy to share. I don't think either of us imagined how much we would achieve together since that first email – but I'm very glad she contacted me. Together, we have disseminated the stories of the Black prisoners of war at Portchester, we have upskilled SV2G members to undertake their own research and, in collaboration with teachers from the islands, we have developed learning resources on how the history of Portchester Castle intersects with that of St Vincent and the Grenadines during the late 18th century. When St Paul's Cathedral approached me for advice on a project exploring their monuments connected to the French Revolutionary Wars in the Caribbean, SV2G were the obvious community group for the Cathedral to work with, and Jacqueline the perfect project co-ordinator. Jacqueline and I have just published an article on effective and ethical cocreated research, drawing on the work we have done together. We still have a long list of projects we'd like to develop and, as Jacqueline has recently joined the university's Public, Patient and Community Involvement in Research Steering Group, Warwick is going to continue to benefit from her expertise and enthusiasm for some time to come.



I should make it clear, however that Jacqueline's personal contributions to sharing the history of St Vincent and the Grenadines began long before her collaboration with Warwick. She has curated numerous exhibitions on African and Caribbean history, such as 'Coming Back Home' – a migration and settlement oral history that was exhibited in Parliament. She has also published a book, *The Beautiful Spotted Boy*, describing the experiences of four-year-old George Alexander Gratton, one of the first Vincentians to arrive in Georgian Britain.

Jacqueline is also a passionate advocate for racial justice: for some 35 years she has supported local communities and played an active role in social enterprises and faith-based organisations. She has held advisory roles in the Criminal Justice sector and has served as a Home Office Adviser on the National Expert Steering Group for Serious Violence Reduction Units and on matters relating to Windrush. Under her leadership, SV2G addresses inequalities faced by African and Caribbean communities through its artistic and cultural programmes. As a result of its commitment to social inclusion, the organisation has won several prestigious awards, including the King's Award for Voluntary Service in 2024. Jacqueline herself won an Outstanding Achievement Award in 2017 and earlier this month she was awarded the CARICOM Diplomatic Missions Award for Small States Advocacy, recognising her work to create more inclusive African Caribbean communities in the UK.

It is a great pleasure to welcome her today, for the award of her honorary degree.
Chancellor: in the name of the Senate, I present to you for admission to the degree of Doctor of Letters *honoris causa*, JACQUELINE ROBERTS.

