



# Background

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## **History**

On the evening of 21 February 1991, 15-year-old Rolan and his younger brother Nathan, went to visit a friend on the Thamesmead estate but he was not at home or at the local youth club, and so they decided to make their way home. While standing at the bus stop they were confronted by a gang of approximately 15 white youths age ranging between 16 and 26, who taunted and jeered them with racial abuse in the unprovoked attack. Rolan was fatally stabbed from behind and started running, shouting to his younger brother to run. Rolan and Nathan were separated as they ran for their lives. Rolan was fatally wounded and did not survive the attack. Nathan having been chased across Thamesmead, including under some of the elevated bypasses and roundabouts, he eventually and fortuitously evaded the pursuing racially vocal gang. Nathan having rested and gathered his thoughts ventured back to the direction he perceived his brother would emerge from, only to find Rolan in a pool of blood dying along the way.

Many of the attackers were already known to the police as they regularly terrorised the local Black communities in the area. So it was easy for the police to identify who they were and they were quickly arrested. Mark Thornburrow was tried and convicted for murder. Of the other 14 perpetrators: four eventually faced trial, but for the lesser offence of violent disorder, after much plea bargaining by their defence team. They were convicted of the offence and sentenced to 120 hours community service. Whilst the motivation of the attack was put forward as “territorialism” the Judge in his summing up rightly identified that the murder was racially motivated.

In the meantime Rolan was buried on what would have been his 16<sup>th</sup> birthday (21 March 1991).

The family members of Rolan Adams set up the Rolan Adams Legacy Foundation (RALF) in 2014. Although the family have worked over the past 20 years to try to eradicate levels of inequalities at international, national and local levels, the family recently decided to formalise their work in the form of a Foundation and as a legacy to Rolan. The Foundation will strive to continue the fight for **equality for all** both in the UK and across the world in line with the recently published Global Goals.

We at RALF believe that **education is a route out of poverty** as education provides valuable knowledge and skills to improve people’s lives, which in turn means when children grow up their own children they will have a much better chance of sustaining themselves and of reaching their full potential.

Our goal therefore is to ensure that *Rolan, although tragically taken from us, lives on in others*. This will be achieved through our efforts to make a real difference in the lives of those who have been disadvantaged and or disenfranchised.