

Reach Society

Building Connections

Patrons: Lord H. Ouseley, Prof. Sir Geoff Palmer, Prof. T. Williams, John Budu-Aggrey & Marva Rollins OBE

2023 Recognition Awards Report

On Saturday, 28 October, at the Park Plaza Victoria hotel in Westminster a capacity audience of roughly 170 guests attended the 10th Recognition Awards dinner at the end of Reach Society's thirteenth year. Everyone was delighted to be there because they wanted to mark the 75th anniversary of the UK's Windrush Nation (defined as people of African, Caribbean and Dual Heritage backgrounds); and to thank the supporters of this year's events – both corporates and volunteers. Once again this annual event attracted guests from across the UK from places such as Greater London, York, Durham, Luton in Bedfordshire, Essex and Scotland.

A cohort of 23 guests responded to a short survey of the Recognition Awards evening. They told us they had a highly enjoyable and uplifting evening, and rated the main parts of the evening. The main findings from the survey are shared hereby:

- ❖ **Re the Reception Experience – a majority of 65%** rated it as 'Very Good' (39%) and 'Outstanding' (26%); plus a further 22% as 'Good'.
- ❖ **Re the Guest Speakers – a majority of 73%** rated it as 'Very Good' (22%) and 'Outstanding' (52%); plus a further 13% as 'Good'.
- ❖ **Re the Chairman's Closing Remarks - a majority of 65%** rated it as 'Very Good' (13%) and 'Outstanding' (52%); plus a further 22% as 'Good'.
- ❖ **Re the Networking Experience - a majority of 70%** rated it as 'Very Good' (35%) and 'Outstanding' (35%); plus a further 13% as 'Good'.
- ❖ **Re the Dining Experience – a majority of 56%** rated it as 'Very Good' (30%) and 'Outstanding' (26%); plus a further 22% as 'Good'.
- ❖ **Re the Overall Value - a majority of 69%** rated it as 'Very Good' (30%) and 'Outstanding' (39%); plus a further 22% as 'Good'.

Guests received a copy of the souvenir brochure which contained scores of images from the 6 large inspirational events rolled out in the year. Additionally it included articles about the diverse ways in which this year, the 75th anniversary of the Windrush Nation, was marked: from King Charles' "The 10 portraits of a generation," he commissioned to the Royal Mint commemorative 50 pence coin; from the Royal Mail's set of 8 commemorative stamps to the Richard Dimbleby Lecture on the Windrush generation given by David Harewood (the first Black person so honoured); from the new song entitled, Windrush Nation, to the new poem entitled, Our Windrush Thanksgiving Gatherings, all were mentioned in the souvenir brochure.

It also recorded the induction of 7 people into the Society's hall of fame entitled, the Lifetime Fellow of Reach Society (LFORS) for their years of contribution to the mission; and a collaboration award for British Futures for their work with the Windrush 75 Network.

There were other noteworthy articles from Lloyd's of London about their Black community outreach work with the Society; from York University about their YCEDE programme; a profile of Dr Ashton Barnett-Vanes the founder of Javelo Health; and the soft launch of the Windrush Nation Awards.

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The Society's patron Professor Sir Geoff Palmer told the story of how he was invited by King Charles 111 to be one of the 10 sitters for a portrait to mark the huge contribution of the Windrush generation and their descendants; and the two guest speakers – Eric Collins, CEO of Impact X Capital and Ms Jo Scott, Head of Lloyd's of London Foundation – made inspiring addresses and toasted the Society for the innovative work it is doing in the community.

This year just one **Champion Supporter Award** was presented to Ritchie Neil for his extra-ordinary work in support of all inspirational events this year; and two employers – Durham University and Lloyd's of London – were presented with the **Corporate Champion of Reach Society Awards** for their contributions as outstanding collaboration partners.

On the night 14 professionals were honoured with **Supporter of Reach Society Awards** for their unselfish work to encourage, motivate and inspire hundreds of young people, and their parents, at the inspirational events in Greater London (in Enfield, Kensington and Uxbridge), Luton and Birmingham. In addition, 9 outstanding professionals picked up the **Fellow of Reach Society Awards**.

Corporate Supporter of Reach Society Awards were picked up by 11 employers: 42 London, Alzheimer's Society, Arup UK, British Army, Connect2Luton, Enfield Caribbean Assn, Hannah Solicitors, London Black Educators Network, Luton Council, Sompo International and York University.

In addition, 5 corporates picked up **Corporate Fellow of Reach Society Awards** for their exemplary commitment to the work the Society is doing to inspire young people, namely: Amos Bursary, Deloitte, Imperial College London, Life Radio UK and RAFFA.

This report would not be complete without an expression of thanks to the corporate donors of raffle prizes - Turtle Bay, Park Plaza Victoria Hotel, Enfield Caribbean Association and Reach Society; plus the individual donors - Sir Geoff Palmer, Eric Collins and Dr Velma McClymont; thanks to the raffle team led by Paula Neil; and to the master of ceremony, Rob Neil OBE - ably assisted by Prof. Donald Palmer on the Awards - for his skillful and provocative roll out of the programme.

The Society is also grateful to the musicians and DJ - the Ralph Lewars Jazz Quartet and the DJ Ray Morris and his FASS crew - for keeping everyone in the mood. This year's list of professionals once again included volunteers who chose to contribute to the mission; and the Society is enormously grateful to all of them, and we shall know them as the **Professional Class of 2023**.

Dr Dwain A. Neil OBE
Chairman, Reach Society (November'23)