

# Reach Society

## Building Connections

**Patrons:** Prof. Sir Geoff Palmer, Prof. T. Williams, John Budu-Aggrey, Marva Rollins OBE & Dr N. Frater GP

### 2024 Recognition Awards Report

On Saturday, 26 October, at the Park Plaza Victoria hotel in Westminster a capacity audience of slightly more than 150 guests attended the 11th Recognition Awards dinner in the final month of Reach Society's fourteenth year. Everyone was delighted to support the event which has become part of the Society's tradition for marking the anniversary of the UK's Windrush Nation (defined as people of African, Caribbean and Dual Heritage backgrounds); and to thank the corporates and professionals for supporting this year's inspirational events. Once again this annual event attracted guests from across the UK from places such as Greater London, Birmingham, Durham, Luton, Essex and Scotland.

Early in the proceedings guests heard a tribute from one of the patrons, Professor Trevor Williams, to Lord Herman Ouseley who passed on the 2 October 2024 after a short illness. He was the first patron of the Society and he was a very active supporter of the development of the Society over 14 years.

Guests received a copy of the souvenir brochure which contained a written tribute to Lord Herman Ouseley; and scores of images from the 12 inspirational events which were rolled out in the year. In addition, it included articles about the diverse ways in which the Society had impacted hundreds of year-12 Black students via the Durham STEP programme since 2018; the impact of one founder on a female undergraduate who saw him, her first Black university lecturer, and wanted to emulate him by gaining a doctorate; the impact of the Society's role models on a young father who emulated their parenting skills in the way he nurtured his son who just started an undergraduate degree course at Durham University (which he obtained via the STEP programme); and the impact on many Luton young people who were brought by their mentor to the annual Careers Conferences where they encountered cohorts of Black role models, and all were working professionals. The brochure also carried an article on the induction of another four people into the Society's hall of fame entitled, the Lifetime Fellow of Reach Society (LFORS) for their years of contribution to the mission.

The three guest speakers – Mark Lomas, Head of Culture at Lloyd's of London, Dr Beverly Lindsay OBE OD DL, Director of Diamond Travel, and Nerima Wandera Assistant Director DEI, EY – made inspiring addresses and praised the Society for the innovative and essential work it is doing in the community.

The Society is grateful to the RAF for sponsoring the Fellows Awards which were presented to a cohort of 19 volunteer role models.

The Chiltern Academy was presented with a **Special Corporate Champion of Reach Society Award** for their hosting of three Luton Employability Days.

Six employers – British Army, Deloitte LLP, Durham University, Imperial College London, Lloyd's of London and the RAF – were presented with the **Corporate Champion of Reach Society Awards** for their contributions as outstanding collaboration partners.

In addition, eight employers - Alpha BSE Training, Amos Bursary, Callum Solutions, CTSI (London Race and Equality Group), Enfield Caribbean Association, Hannah Solicitors, RAFFA and Strong Soul Fitness – were presented with the **Corporate**

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**Fellow of Reach Society Awards** for their exemplary commitment to the work the Society is doing to inspire young people.

This report would not be complete without an expression of thanks to the many donors of the raffle prizes – Dr Wayne Mitchell, Imperial College; Park Plaza Victoria Hotel; Reach Society; the RAF; and Lloyd's of London.

Our thanks also to the raffle team of Paula Neil and Sonia Palmer; and to the new MC, Ralph Lewars. We thank also Dr Ashton Barnett-Vanes for his kind words about the previous MC (Rob Neil OBE) and for introducing the new MC. We must also thank Ralph's two assistants of Prof. Donald Palmer and Demani Jules-Carbon for their work during the presentation of the awards and medals.

The Society is also grateful to the musicians and DJ - the Ralph Lewars Jazz Trio and the DJ Ray Morris and his FASS crew - for keeping everyone in the mood. This year's list of professionals once again included some new 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 2024**.

Dr Dwain A. Neil OBE  
Chairman, Reach Society (Nov'24)