



Royal Star & Garter

Care with courage

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Black History Month: Royal Star & Garter staff explain how upbringing and heritage influenced their care

Staff at Royal Star & Garter have discussed how their culture and background has impacted their lives, and the effect it has on their work at Royal Star & Garter.

Dineo Malatji, Lisa-Marie Burke and Suzie Bignall were speaking during Black History Month. They discussed growing up in African and Caribbean communities, their role models and the impact this had on their decision to work in the adult social care sector, and at Royal Star & Garter.

Royal Star & Garter is a charity which provides loving, compassionate care to veterans and their partners living with disability or dementia, with Homes in Solihull, Surbiton and High Wycombe.

This year, Black History Month is recognising the achievements and contributions that black people make every day, with an emphasis on people working on the Covid frontline, including care home staff.

DINEO MALATJI



Dineo is a lead Healthcare Assistant and has worked at the Solihull Home for 13 years. He is from South Africa, and moved to England in 2001. He said: "Growing up, our role model was Nelson Mandela. There was segregation and racism in South Africa and black people were treated terribly.

Nelson Mandela was fighting to stop that, and we grew up with him as our hero. It sent a very powerful message to me at the time, to stand up for what you believe in, no matter what it cost. My mum told me to always be proud of who I was, and not let anyone make me ashamed of who I was. It's something I'm now trying to instil in my children.

"I was the youngest of a very big family. When others went out to play, I would stay at home and help my mother care for my grandmother. When I came to England I



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worked in retail, but as a favour for a friend, I did some agency care shifts. Memories came flooding back of looking after my grandmother and I realised that was the work I wanted to do. Working at Royal Star & Garter reminds me of that time caring for my grandmother. We treat residents like they are our own parents or grandparents. If any of my family member ends up in care, I would like them to be treated the same way as I am treating others.”

LISA-MARIE BURKE



Lisa-Marie is Dementia Care Manager at Surbiton, and has worked at the Home for a year.

Her parents came to England in the 1950s and 1960s from Trinidad and Jamaica, and she was born in north London.

She said: “My parents came here during a time when it was very difficult for black people from the Caribbean and Africa. My mum remembers signs saying ‘No Irish, no Blacks, no dogs’. When she went for a job, the interviewer said they would check if other people ‘would mind working with a coloured person’. Knowing what they had to go through instilled in me the importance of acceptance, hard work and overcoming obstacles. My father used to say to me there was nothing I couldn’t do, that nothing was impossible.

“My mum was my role model – she was a very strong person who came here when she was 16 and managed to forge a good career for herself. Now my role models range from Michelle Obama to Lizzo. I respect the message that Stormzy and other black artists are bringing to mainstream media. They are not being viewed by the colour of their skin, but by their talent. Any ethnic minority who is trying to make, and change, for the better, and to develop, in whatever walk of life, is an inspiration and role model.

“Coming from the Caribbean, we were always taught to be humble and respectful to our elders – we called them ‘aunty’ and ‘uncle’ for example. We were taught to be kind, to care, to have empathy, to have patience. These qualities have stayed with me, I bring them to work every day, and they are on display at Royal Star & Garter.



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"There is so much diversity in the Caribbean islands, much like there is in the UK. And there's a lot of diversity in Royal Star & Garter. The care sector is a multi-cultural sector and gives you the ability to learn so much from others - things that you can only learn from sitting down and talking to someone. I think Royal Star & Garter is such a melting pot and we have a diverse workforce that reflects our local community.

"I think you should celebrate who you are every day, not just during one particular month. My daughter doesn't see colour when she looks at people and that makes me realise how times have changed from the signs that greeted my mother when she first came to this country."

SUZIE BIGNALL



Suzie works in High Wycombe as a Healthcare Assistant. She was born in High Wycombe to parents who came over from St Vincent in the West Indies.

She said: "My role models are my mum and dad. I get my work ethic and drive from them. I also learned to cook delicious West Indian food from them! My mum still works six days a week and she's 82. She also used to work in a care home, and I've always been a very caring person. I go to work and put 100% into my job.

"I don't need Black History Month to celebrate who I am. I'm a black person, I'm proud of who I am and I'm proud of the colour of my skin.

"I love working at Royal Star & Garter. It's good because we have lots of people from different backgrounds, working together and learning from each other. We have so many different nationalities here, we all get on and we're a big happy family."

Black History Month takes place in October each year, and celebrates the continued achievements and contributions of black people to the UK and around the world. It also calls for action to tackle racism, reclaim black history and ensure it is represented and celebrated all year round.



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Anyone interested in working for Royal Star & Garter can visit
<https://starandgarter.org/work-for-us/>

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About Royal Star & Garter

Our charity provides loving, compassionate care to veterans and their partners living with disability or dementia.

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Website: www.starandgarter.org



Royal Star & Garter
is a member of the
National Care Forum