

Celebrating a rich and diverse culture

Wade Lyn CBE

High Sheriff of the West Midlands 2023-24

Becoming the first African Caribbean High Sheriff in the West Midlands has been an honour. My shrieval year has coincided with the 75th anniversary of Windrush and has allowed me to participate in events and shine a light on a subject that is particularly close to my heart.

The Mayor of Sandwell hosted a Windrush event where local people were invited to come in and talk about their Windrush stories. A young lady brought her grandma and once behind the lectern the most amazing lady called Eunice recounted her life story. Eunice had come over with her husband in the 60s and ended up working in a city centre hotel in Birmingham. She told us how the manager couldn't bear to look at her when she spoke to her; this manager would keep her eyes closed and bark orders at her. Eunice eventually left and became a stay-at-home mum. After her talk I found out that one of those children she stayed home to raise ended up crowning Her Majesty Queen Camilla. Eunice's daughter was none other than the Bishop of Dover, the Right Reverend Rose Hudson-Wilkin.

This story, for me, represents how the Windrush generation contributed and shaped British society into what we have today, a rich and diverse culture. As I write, I am soon to embark on a schools' tour throughout October, Black History Month, to deliver assemblies on the role of the High Sheriff as well as the history of Windrush and the impact the generation had on the modern world.

Another highlight of my year has been working with the West Midlands Police Cadets. They started off at my inauguration, providing help, assistance, and directions as well as a guard of honour. After I facilitated a media workshop, the cadets interviewed me, and I was very impressed with the high calibre of questions they were asking! The cadets have accompanied me on numerous visits throughout the West Midlands. At my Excellence Awards the cadets played an integral role in the ceremony. The drum division drummed everyone in, which the audience were delighted by. Following on again from the media workshop

Below left: With Ninder Johal DL, Cllr Bill Gavan (Mayor of Sandwell) and Eunice
Below right: With Liz Calder, cadet leader at West Midlands Police

the cadets read out the nomination for everyone receiving an award on the night and they were fantastic. Special thanks to Liz Calder, who does such a fantastic job of coordinating the cadets all year long. St John Ambulance also appointed a High Sheriff's cadet this year and they too have attended many events with me – their professionalism and dedication to their office is very impressive.

I've been able to attend our local courts on several occasions to see the great work that everyone is doing there. The judges, lawyers, and clerks all work hard to uphold and dispense justice in this country. I've also been to prisons and have seen for myself all the work going into reforming and helping prisoners get a new start once they have served their sentence. I've met some genuinely amazing people who have dedicated their lives to helping others. Across the whole of the West Midlands there are some fantastic schemes running from community food stores to youth clubs to training programmes; it has made me immensely proud to represent the county and I hope that in my role, in some way, I've helped shine a light on the dedicated and talented people that live and work here.

