

Recognise the heroes in your own community

Wednesday 23 October, 2024

As we mark [Black History Month 2024](#), Leila Thomas, CEO & Founder of Urban Synergy admits she is deeply moved by this year's theme of reclaiming narratives.

"For me, it resonates with a profound truth: the stories we tell about our history, past and present, how we see the world, and more importantly, how we see our place in it.

"Too often, the rich, diverse history of Black people is overshadowed by a narrow set of narratives. Our campaign on social media takes new narratives and stand-out moments from our role models. [Be inspired by them](#).

"Now more than ever, it's time to tell new stories that connect us with our past while inspiring the next generation of young Black leaders to carve out their own future.

!This was brought home to me during a recent event I attended in Ypres, Belgium, to honour the fallen soldiers of the [British West Indies Regiment \(BWIR\)](#)."

Some never returned

The pilgrimage, organised by the [British West India Regiments Heritage Trust \(BWIRHT\)](#), commemorated the contributions of thousands of West Indian soldiers who fought bravely in World War I, many of whom never returned home.

Standing at the memorials with Lewisham Mayor Brenda Dacres, surrounded by veterans dressed with such dignity and respect, Leila felt an overwhelming sense of generational connection. "It was a stark reminder of the sacrifices these men made, not just for freedom, but for the legacy they left behind—a legacy that we must reclaim and pass on to future generations."

This Black History Month, Leila reflected on how much young people today need heroes like these. "Not just the admittedly brilliant footballers or influencers they see in the media, but real role models—people who stood for something larger than themselves.

"These veterans, and many others like them, represent strength, resilience, and commitment to a cause greater than personal fame or wealth. They are the stories we need to be telling more often".

New heroes

The charity Urban Synergy is committed to creating new narratives by empowering young people to succeed and thrive in fields where they've traditionally been underrepresented, such as STEM or STEAM (science, technology, engineering, the arts, and mathematics).

One recent success story is Angel, an incredible 18-year-old software engineer working in the heart of Canary Wharf. "Angel's journey is nothing short of inspirational. Through our mentoring programme, she was able to unlock her full potential and break through the barriers that often stand in the way of young Black girls pursuing careers in technology" says Leila Thomas.

"Angel is a hero. Not just because of her achievements, but because of the example she sets for other young people, particularly Black girls, who might not see themselves reflected in STEM (science, technology, engineering, the arts, and mathematics) industries.

"Her story proves that when young people have the right support, opportunities, and connection to their history, they can overcome any obstacle.

"And yet, many of our young people are still looking to celebrities and athletes as their only source of inspiration."

What grounds us

While there is much to admire in the talents of today's stars, the charity's CEO believes that true growth

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comes when young people begin to see the everyday heroes around them—people like Angel who are breaking barriers, or like the veterans of the British West Indies Regiment who gave everything for a future they would never see.

"The connection to our history, to those who came before us, is essential. It grounds us and gives us a sense of pride in our heritage," she says.

"This Black History Month, let's show our young people that they come from a lineage of strength, courage, and brilliance. When they understand this, they thrive. They no longer feel limited by stereotypes or systemic barriers, but empowered to rise above them.

"That's why during Black History Month, I'm calling on all of us to look around and recognise the heroes in our own communities."

Something bigger than us

"Celebrate the young people who are working hard to succeed, the mentors who guide them, and the ancestors who paved the way. Let's not wait for history books to validate their contributions. Let's start telling their stories now."

Urban Synergy is proud to play a role in reclaiming these narratives, fostering generational connections, and helping young people see that they are part of something much bigger than themselves. "We believe in the power of mentorship, the power of community, and the power of our collective history to inspire future generations.

"As we move forward, let's ensure that the next generation of Black leaders knows not only the famous faces but also the unsung heroes who helped build the world they now have the opportunity to shape. In doing so, we will create a future that reflects the full depth and richness of our past.

"Thank you to all our role models who inspire young people, and can be seen on our Black History Month Campaign, and to you for joining us on this journey."

Find out more about [partnering with Urban Synergy](#), or you can [Contact Us via the website](#).

About Urban Synergy

Urban Synergy is an award-winning early intervention mentoring charity that aims to empower young people from underrepresented backgrounds to reach their full potential. Through a combination of mentoring, role model seminars, and work experience opportunities, Urban Synergy provides the support and skills necessary for the next generation to thrive in today's competitive environment. Since its inception, Urban Synergy has positively impacted the lives of thousands of students, thanks to the dedication of volunteer mentors and corporate partners.

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