

# THE BLACK CARE EXPERIENCE NETWORK NEWSLETTER

Our Bi-Monthly Newsletter

## WELCOME TO THE BLACK CARE EXPERIENCE NETWORK NEWSLETTER

If you've received this as part of being a member of our Network, or if you've taken the time to download it, we want to Thank You for being a part of our story and legacy.

As you read we hope that you will be inspired and challenged to help play your part in making sure that Black Children and Young People remain connected to their Culture, Identity and Heritage as they journey through the Care System.

### WHAT TO EXPECT

With National Care Leavers Week and the UK's Black History Month both taking place in the month of October, we've featured the Stories of 3 Black Care Leavers, articles on Inspirational Role Models, a Letter to all Care Leavers, Give Aways and some information about our Conference.

Once read, if you have any comments, thoughts or suggestions, please feel free to email us, at [office@thetransformedyou.co.uk](mailto:office@thetransformedyou.co.uk)

Also feel free to let us know what is working well and where you may need some help, as together we join forces to continue to make a tangible and lasting difference in the lives of Black Children and Young People in Care.

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BLACK HISTORY  
MONTH

&

NATIONAL CARE  
LEAVERS WEEK

[www.theblackcareexperience.co.uk](http://www.theblackcareexperience.co.uk)

Twitter: [@TheBlackCareExp](https://twitter.com/TheBlackCareExp)

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# OUR STORIES

**I am an Associate Professor in Criminology. I teach Criminology at a University. I do not have the exact information but I believe I am Mixed-Race White-Black African.**



At age 1 years old I was placed in foster care, with a white foster family. This information I only found out very recently. That said, I cannot remember my time in foster care, but I can distinctly remember being fetishized by my white adoptive parents, who adopted me at the age of 3. They adopted me after returning from working in Nigeria, and they described me as a souvenir.

Despite the numerous African artefacts in the house, I did not feel as though my culture was promoted or celebrated. Indeed, I was never told what my exact ethnicity was, just that my biological father was 'suspected to be from Africa.' The African city would vary whenever I asked. All my adoptive siblings were white, and we lived in a rural area. I was the only mixed-race child in my school and village. All of this exacerbated my feelings of alienation.

I struggled a lot as a child. I was not provided with the necessary tools to address the racism I experienced in primary school or the way I was fetishized. For example, people would touch my hair and comment on my skin colour as though I was something exotic and unusual.

I did not identify with my race or ethnic identity. I just tried to blend in and be invisible.

Several people have supported me over the years. Despite the toxic environment in my adoptive family home, my eldest adoptive sister was a great source of empowerment. She celebrated and promoted my difference and helped with practical issues, such as hair products and make-up. These were very hard to come by in the area that we lived. There were others along the way who believed in me and pushed me. I would not be where I am today with their support.

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## BLEND IN AND BE INVISIBLE

I think Children's Social Care should do their best to provide as much information about the ethnic and racial identity of the child in Care, so the family they are placed with can help celebrate and promote their culture.

Not having this information is disempowering and can impede a person's ability to develop their identity. I also think that more thought needs to be given to the implications of placing a mixed-race or black child in a rural area where there is little to no racial diversity.

Reflecting on my care journey, I would encourage all black people in care to embrace their identity and to ask questions about their cultural heritage. Ask that those who care for you make the effort to answer your questions. And if you can, speak out and explain how you are feeling if people get it wrong or you feel unheard.

And if you can,  
speak out and explain how you are feeling if people get it wrong or you feel unheard.

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# OUR STORIES

**My name is Kaira Ahmed and I'm 19 years old.  
I was born in Belfast but ethnically, I come from Tanzania.**

I am a current student at the London School of Economics studying BSc Accounting and Finance. I also own a small business providing revision resources to GCSE and A-level students, as well as creating content surrounding finance tips.

My life has come a long way from where I started in the foster system, and I'm completely blessed to be able to tell my story from such a different place.

I was placed into foster care when I was 8 years old, on the 6th of October 2011. I remember every single detail about that day, a Thursday, and it was nothing less than a nightmare. I didn't have the easiest journey throughout my time in the system, and I wish I could say I found a family I was happy with for a long period of time.

I was initially placed with a white British couple, this lasted one weekend. Although I can barely remember my time with them, I do remember how hostile they were towards my sister and I. From then, I jumped from placement to

placement. I stayed with an entire variety of races and ethnicities. From white British to Caribbean, African, Bangladeshi, and more. I eventually settled long-term with a white British couple.

There were many challenges that came with being black in care.



I remember being mis-diagnosed with eczema, for what turned out to simply be a lack of moisture upkeep. Or when my younger sister was diagnosed with scalp folliculitis/ring worm due to improper haircare.

Being black in care went beyond a cultural disconnect.

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## MIS-DIAGNOSED WITH ECZEMA

It was how my sisters and I were physically, emotionally, and mentally taken care of. I hate to say that the system failed me as a black child in care, but that's exactly what happened.

Unfortunately, I wouldn't say I had much support in terms of being able to get in touch with my culture or learn how to look after myself. There was no one to really fall back on and trust in that sense. I spent my teenage years battling heavily with my identity. It was difficult enough experiencing this internal battle with my identity

and heritage, but when that became something people chose to point out about me, the battle only became more difficult.

I spent a long time feeling out of place with both my black and white friends. Amongst my white friends, I was still always going to be 'the black girl'. I would always have to endure the *'I'm not racist but...'* statements, or being treated like I wasn't from the same planet.

Amongst my black friends however, I was the white-washed outcast. An Oreo, too well spoken, not quite black enough to get them. The foster system left me with on-going issues I still deal with on a day-to-day basis.

And so to the next black and in care generation, don't ever shy away from asking for help, reaching out to anyone that looks like you and could guide you, and embracing your culture despite being cut from it.

You have every right to know and celebrate where you came from.

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# OUR STORIES

**My Name is Annie Aichata Gibbs.  
I am black mixed race and was born in Mali, West Africa.**



I am Women's Rights/Diversity Advocate and use my lived experience of being affected by Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence, to improve the responses to this for the National Domestic Abuse Charity Safe Lives.

I am also the founder of Amour Destine, a grass roots organisation that unites, inspires and empowers black/black mix race women, that are care experienced survivors of Trauma such as Domestic Abuse/Sexual Violence.

I was taken into the care at the age of 18 months due to concerns that I was being abused. This was the beginning of my care journey, going back and forth between living in care and with my mother, until she passed away when I was 8 Years old.

I was initially placed in short-term foster care, before being moved in to a children's home, and then placed in various other foster placements with white British foster carers. At age 10, I was eventually placed in long term foster care with a Black foster mother from Zimbabwe and White foster father from Winchester. This match was much closer to my mixed heritage.

My culture and identity were neither seen or promoted during my care journey. However, there is one person during my time in care that I am grateful to have met. She was a therapist that worked with me for what seemed to have been for about a year and was the first person that I can remember showing me the true action of care and love for my heritage.

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## MY MOTHER TONGUE, BAMBARA

She took her time to take me to a museum for our end of therapy day out in London and I remember seeing artifacts, textiles and sculptures from my country and surrounding African countries. I will never forget this person for her acts of love shown during my care journey. If she happens to read this, I want you to know how grateful I am and thank you so very much. On a whole, I feel that my heritage could have been better supported whilst growing up in the care system. I lost my mother tongue, Bambara, due to having nobody to speak with

me in this language and also French. My Muslim faith was not maintained. This had a massive impact on me. Growing up, I was extremely confused about who I was and also at times very ashamed. I had very low self-esteem and saw myself as less than important in many of the placements that I lived.

I found it incredibly difficult to express myself, and in doing so I created a fictitious world for myself, after my mother passed away, so that I could just cope and exist through the pain of losing her.

My elder foster sisters were the ones that poured into me as a child, even when I pushed them all away. There is one in particular that never ever gave up on me. Even after the placement broke down and I lived independently, she taught and showed me unconditional love and she is now one of my greatest friends, who still encourages and celebrates me.

During my time in Care, I think Children's Social Care could have worked harder to maintain my family connections.

After 30 years, this summer I met with majority of my birth family in Mali. I can say it has been one of the best experiences of my life. Just being with people that love you, who you can see you resemble, that have similar hearts and characters to you, is an experience I always wondered how this would feel for those who have a family.

But never in my wildest dreams believed I could ever experience.

Knowing that I am the youngest sibling of 8 children has been so hard to process over the past 10 years. But now I am at better peace with it, knowing that we now have the rest of our lives to grow together and create beautiful memories. I have now reconnected the missing parts to my soul and no child should ever have to go through this.

To the current and next black and in care generation, know that you are amazing and everything that you have been through in life is not your fault. You have every possibility to not let it stop you from becoming the greatness that you are destined to be. Make mistakes, and truly see them all as lessons that you can so learn and grow from.

Do not put pressure on yourself to be perfect or like anyone else that you may be living with. You being you is just perfect as you are. Your voice matters and belongs to you, whether you are African/Caribbean or a mix of them all. You let your voice be heard and stay connected to your culture and heritage.

When you feel as though it may be hard to hold onto who you are. Please remember to centre yourself in love and be kind to yourself. Remember that there are people who understand how you may be feeling right now, so please, please know that we are all here to listen and support you through if you need us.

So please do reach out. Reach out to black care experienced communities you are a part of us and will find a safe space to seek connections and guidance.

Your care journey, the next chapter belongs to you. So, never forget that only you hold the rights to define your future. How you want this to be for yourself. Never let anyone take this away from you!

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LOVE & LIGHT  
AMOUR DESTINE

Love & Light

Amour Destine

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# YOUR STORY

If you are a Black Care Experienced Care Leaver and would like to share Your Story in our Newsletter, please contact us at [Office@thetransformedyou.co.uk](mailto:Office@thetransformedyou.co.uk)

We understand the sensitivity around sharing your Story and want to let you know that we will guide you through the process and you have the option to share Anonymously or with your Name.

With the view that 'Representation Matters', please feel free to [Join Our Network](#) to help Black Children and Young People who are currently in Care, SEE that THEY ARE NOT ALONE.

Thank you in advance for getting in Contact and Joining Our Network, as together we use our Voices, Experience and Expertise to make a difference for the current and next Black and In Care Generation.



# INSPIRATIONAL ROLE MODELS

**A 'Role Model' is a person other people look up to in order to help determine appropriate behaviours.**

I am writing this article about my role models, I became very aligned to these role models as a young person in care, and as someone who experienced oppression and poverty. My role models are strong woman and are often from the black community, as the experiences of these woman resonate with me.

When I was 12yrs old one of the only gifts given to me by my mother was the book 'I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings' by Maya Angelou (1969). This book is powerful and is an autobiographic representation of Maya Angelou's childhood experiences of being moved from the family home to live with relatives and the subsequent challenges this presented.

The strength that was shown by Maya in this book helped me to identify my strengths and develop a resolve to overcome the barriers that I faced in education, social standing and understand a society that often views difference with indifference.

There are others within the black community who have also been influential in my development, Steve Biko who showed bravery and courage when campaigning for anti-apartheid, Tracey Chapman, Aretha Franklin, Nelson Mandela, all of whom stepped out and stated the need for change in how the black community is supported, valued, and viewed and subsequently becoming the voices for so many more fighting for freedom, equality, and justice.



Together we can learn a different way of being, with strong role models to help guide us, so we can support our young people through their childhood and adolescents. I am so grateful for the brave contribution made by the black community to help me recognise how I should treat others with respect and the sharing of experience to inform my continued understanding of discrimination & racism.

*'You may shoot me with your words, you may cut me with your eyes, you may kill me with your hatefulness but still like air I rise' - Maya Angelou.*

**Anita Beckett**  
**Black Care Experience Network**  
**Steering Team Member**





# INSPIRATIONAL ROLE MODELS

## John Small

Social Reformer, Humanist, Author, Academic and Practitioner

We pay tribute to John Small.

He was among the first people with an African Caribbean background to hold the post of deputy director of social services and acting director of social services in Hackney in the 1980s. Before that he was a founding member of the Association of Black Social Workers and Allied Professionals.



Much of the legislation in the UK owes much of its anti-racist awareness to his endeavours, and his prolific writings on the topic have shaped contemporary practice.

Among John's achievements, was the creation of the New Black Families Unit to recruit Black foster and adoptive parents to be matched with Black children. The unit was influential in showing that Black children placed in white families needed strong links with Black communities.

He demanded that Black children in the care system were treated with respect, dignity, and the right to know and hold their cultural heritage.

John passed away aged 74 on the 29th May 2022

His Legacy Lives On

RIP

(Credit) Social work mourns loss of pioneering anti-racism leader  
[Published by Professional Social Work magazine, 13 June, 2022](#)



# A LETTER TO ALL CARE LEAVERS

**Dear Care Leaver, I hope this letter finds you well!**

As you may or may not know National Care Leavers Week is from 24th - 28th October 2022. It's a Week where Organisations focus on Care Leavers by either ramping up their campaigns with a # to make things better for those who will one day become Care Leavers or make a conscious effort to amplify our voices and give space for our stories through their various platforms and events or use this week to celebrate Care Leavers who are deemed as successful.

Whilst the above has it's pros and cons, however you choose to be or not choose to be a part of the week, I write to encourage YOU.

Now I don't know about why you came into Care, what you experienced whilst you were in Care or what life is like for you now that you are no longer in Care, but one thing I want you to know, is that your Care Experience is a Chapter in your book and is not the end of your story.

I understand, for whatever reason, there are stigma's and labels attached to being in Care, which has left some of us not wanting anyone to know that we were in Care. I also understand that for some of us, this Care Experience has left us either better off or in a worse condition in comparison to how we entered the System, with some no longer with us.

As you read this, from whatever race, ethnicity, background and experience, I encourage you to Keep on Living.

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NOT THE  
END OF  
YOUR STORY

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# KEEP ON LIVING

So many times we hear the statement, 'We want to see Care Leavers Thrive and not Survive', this statement I too have used, but today I want to encourage you to 'Keep Living and Live Your Life to the Full'.

Keep Living, by doing the things you enjoy doing, this could be listening to music, riding a bike, going for a walk, watching a movie, going to a party, hanging out with friends, taking a break or anything else you can think of.

Keep Living by having new experiences, doing positive things you've never done before.

Keep Living, by surrounding yourself with people you feel safe with and truly have your best interests at heart (believe me they are there, trust your gut feeling to guide you to them).

Keep Living, without comparing yourself to others or allowing others to compare you to others.

Keep Living, with the understanding that true success isn't the measure of wealth, fame or social status, but that success is the big or small things that you have accomplished and will continue to purposefully accomplish because this life is a journey.

All, I know is easier said than done, because life is filled with twists and turns, and ups and downs that will trigger you back to an experience in your past; and when it does, don't stay down for too long.

Ask for help, heal from the trigger, get up and back on track and keep on living, because as I said earlier your Care Experience is a Chapter in your book and is NOT the end of YOUR STORY.



**Judith AM Denton**  
**Founder of The Black Care Experience**  
**Care Leaver**

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# GIVE AWAY

We have 3 Cocoa Girl Magazines to GIVE AWAY!!

Inspired by her daughter, founder Serlina launched the UK's first magazine to celebrate Black girls, Cocoa Girl. Giving Black children a voice whilst educating the community about the Black culture.

Cocoa magazine is filled with inspiring and empowering content for children aged 7-11 years old.

Cocoa is an educational tool that teaches children about black culture whilst profiling black role models.

These magazines help to build a strong community for young Black girls and boys who are often misrepresented by mainstream media.



Do you Foster or Support Black Girls aged 7 - 11 Years old?

If so, we'll send the Magazines to the **FIRST 3** people who email 'GIVE AWAY' to [office@thetransformedyou.co.uk](mailto:office@thetransformedyou.co.uk)



# THE BLACK CARE EXPERIENCE CONFERENCE 2023

## WHEN?

Saturday 11th February 2023

## WHERE?

ARC Forest Gate, 66A Sebert Road, London, E7 0NJ

## THEME?

"The Culturally Competent Workforce"

REGISTRATION?  
CONFERENCE DETAILS?  
COMING SOON!!!





Your financial gift will help to make  
a big difference to the lives of  
Black Children and Young People  
who enter the Care System.

Your donation will go towards our work of creating Newsletters and Hosting our Conferences to make sure the Children's Social Care Workforce and Sector, understand how they can keep Black Children and Young People connected to their Culture, Identity and Heritage as they journey through the Care System.

Your donation will also help us to keep campaigning and not have to wait another 40 years to see a change in the Care, Outcomes and Life Chances of the current and next black and in care generation.

Thank you for standing with us.  
Together we can make a difference.

[DONATE HERE](#)



# NOTICE BOARD

## JOIN OUR NETWORK

As part of our [Network](#), you'll be a member of a Diverse Community, willing and ready to learn from the Lived Black Care Experience and share best practice, to improve your systems and practice, to ultimately make a difference in the lives of the current and next Black and in Care Generation.

Check out our [Black Care Directory](#). It's a Consortium of Black Owned Businesses with Products and Services to help us all care for the Black Children or Young People in our Care.

## OUR DIRECTORY

## TRAINING & CONSULTATION

We deliver [Training Courses](#) to Empower you with Knowledge & Insight into The Black Care Experience and provide [Bespoke Consultancy Packages](#) to help help your Service achieve its aims and objectives, of making a difference in the lives of black children and young people in your Care.