

Black History Month 2022: Arlene's story



Arlene Morrison Allocations and Voids Officer



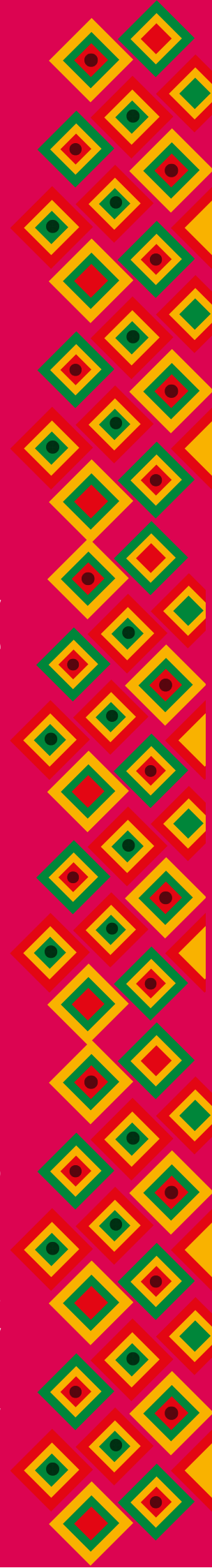
"This Black History Month I'd like to share my family story and why I believe Manchester is richer for being the diverse place it is today.

"My parents originate from the beautiful island of St Kitts in the Caribbean. My father worked as a Composer for a national newspaper as well as occasionally writing articles about island affairs and government issues...his opinions often raised an eyebrow or two!

"In the late 50s and 60s, the UK encouraged people from the Caribbean to come to England to help with the severe labour shortages in the wake of the second world war, to help build back the UK's infrastructure and economy. The people who came over during this time are often referred to as the Windrush Generation.

"My father saw this as an opportunity to find a better paid employment, so he saved up to buy his passage and left my mum with the promise that he would 'send for her' when he had earned enough money for them to live together over here.

"As a 27-year-old young man in a big city, he originally



stayed with a friend who had made the journey a year before. He got a job within the printing industry as a Compositor, firstly in Shudehill working on National newspapers, then for a company who worked in conjunction with the Manchester Universities. It was at this company where he rose through the ranks and became a 'foreman' - which for a young black man was quite an achievement at that time as there was widespread discrimination.

"He eventually paid for a ticket for my mum to join him and through hard work and perseverance bought his first home which he was very proud of.

"There was a small community of people from St Kitts in Manchester at that time. They regularly went to a local club to hear the sounds of 'back home' - the music and chatter. They also went to each other's houses a lot and shared food together which is a big part of our culture. One of the things they missed the most was the food from back home, especially the bread. My mum's cousin Billy decided to open a bakery and baked the wonderful bread the community was missing. It was very popular and was known as 'Billy Bread' and they people would buy it every Saturday. The bakery and their bread are well known in the Moss Side community, still trading today in Shrewsbury St Old Trafford but with a different family.

"Carnival was a major part of my childhood. My mother loved to dress us up in new clothes to attend the celebrations in the park and in the streets. She always tried to get me to wear the colourful costumes to join the procession but being a shy young girl, I was adamant it was a no no!

"I am so proud of my father taking the plunge, moving to another country, making it on his own in big city and working hard to achieve his dream of owning his own home and having a successful career.



"The Windrush generation played a major part in Britain's post war recovery by providing essential jobs and skills that were desperately needed at that time - such as nurses and construction workers; building the UK economy and helping it get back on its feet. I am extremely proud of my family part in this. And let's not forget, that the Windrush generation also brought you the beautiful Caribbean food the UK loves so much today!

"I am so proud of my heritage and culture and firmly believe that it has had a positive influence over the years and continues to do so today. For me, the UK is richer for having different diversities which we can all enjoy and learn from. "

