

The e-bulletin for the North West, linked to the National Justice and Peace Network (NJPN), is produced jointly by the dioceses of Lancaster, Liverpool, Salford, Shrewsbury and Wrexham. Please send diary dates to anneoc980@hotmail.com

GOOD FRIDAY REFLECTION

Jesus's suffering and death on the cross was not only something that happened on Calvary but something that unites Himself to His people who suffer each and every day in the here and now is a bold and consoling truth, one that gives many the world over the strength to go on amidst incredible hardship and challenges.

God who has experienced this pain, suffering and death is one who will be present to His people whenever and wherever they face the same.

This truth is one Jesuit Refugee Service has recognised in its own charter, stating "To accompany refugees is to affirm that God is present in human history, even in the most tragic episodes."

Whilst sometimes in accompanying we may expect that we will be a sign of God's presence to those in need and, indeed, this is true, we are called to be signs of God's love.

However, we also discover that God is already present, alive and active in the lives of our refugee friends.

He is there in the refugee camp.

He is there in the detention centre.

He is there on Calvary. For us.

<https://www.jesuit.org.uk/jesuit-refugee-service-uk>

EASTER SUNDAY

On Easter Sunday morning the women take centre stage. Without their witness little or nothing would be known of the resurrection. In those final days of the Easter story it was the faithful group of women who stood at the foot of the cross, who went to prepare Jesus' body for burial, who discovered that his body no longer rested in the tomb - and it was a woman, Mary Magdalene, to whom Jesus appeared after his death.

In his book *Lenten Adventure* David Rhodes says: "How different things might have been if the Church had been structured not around the male headship of Peter, but the courageous person of Mary Magdalene."

The role of the women in the Easter narrative has been confined to the margins. In the 21st century, although women may have broken the glass ceiling in many ways, especially in the Western world, in the Catholic church they remain on the margins. Even though women make up more than 50% of the congregation they are still not permitted to read the gospel, preach or serve as ministers.

Anne O'Connor

HOLY SATURDAY

This is a day of silence and stillness. A kind of limbo or waiting between the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. We still mourn the death of our Lord but wait in hopefully anticipation for His rising to new life.

This day seems an appropriate one to remember those refugees who have faced the same fate as Jesus.

Those who have died in their homelands at the hands of their persecutors.

Those who have died travelling through dangerous regions.

Those who have died crossing deserts.

Those who have died in rickety boats unsuitable for high seas.

Those who have died in camps waiting for the chance to start a new life.

Those who have died dreaming of the places and people they have been forced to leave behind.

Those who have died without ever being found.

It estimated over 40,000 refugees have died making perilous journeys since 2014. We may not know their names but we know each and every one of them is known to God.

Today in the silence and stillness, we pray in the hope and trust that they will rise again to new life with Jesus.

EASTER MONDAY

Heather Kiernan, Pax Christi UK writes: We don't really know that there was a maid in the kitchen at Emmaus. Luke doesn't mention her in his post-resurrection dinner story. But it's the genius of artistic imagination to express an unspoken truth.

She listens, listens, holding her breath.

Surely that voice

is his—the one

who had looked at her, once,

across the crowd, as no one ever had looked?

Had seen her?

Had spoken as if to her?

Surely those hands were his,

taking the platter of bread from hers just now?

Hands he'd laid on the dying and made them well?

Surely that face—?

The man they'd crucified for sedition and blasphemy.

The man whose body disappeared from its tomb.

The man it was rumoured now

some women had seen this morning,
alive?

Those who had brought this stranger home to their table
don't recognize yet with whom they sit.

But she in the kitchen,

absently touching the wine jug she's to take in,

a young Black servant intently listening,

swings round and sees

the light around him

and is sure.

The Kitchen Maid with the Supper at Emmaus

Denise Levertov

CAMPAIGNERS CRITICISE GOVERNMENT RACE REPORT

A government-commissioned report which found that the UK "no longer" had a system rigged against minorities has been accused of ignoring black and ethnic minority people's concerns. The Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities said family structure and social class had a bigger impact than race on how people's lives turned out. Campaigners said it laid the blame for inequality on individuals and families. And Labour has accused the government of downplaying institutional racism.

The commission was set up after Black Lives Matter (BLM) anti-racism protests across the country last summer - triggered by the killing of George Floyd in the US. But its report has been met with criticism from campaigners.

Jabeer Butt, chief executive of the Race Equality Foundation, said: "The report seems to go out of its way to deny that there's anything that's been the result of policies we've put in place and instead puts the blame at individuals' decisions or at family's doors."

The GMB's national officer Rehana Azam said it "feels like a deeply cynical report", calling it "completely irresponsible and immoral" and accusing it of ignoring black and ethnic minority workers' concerns.

Boris Johnson said the government would consider the implications of the report's recommendations for future policy and remained "fully committed to building a fairer Britain".

The commission's 258-page report concluded that the UK is not yet a "post-racial country" - but its success in removing race-based disparity in education and, to a lesser extent, the economy, "should be regarded as a model for other white-majority countries".

In his foreword to the report chairman Tony Sewell, an education consultant and ex-charity boss, said while the "impediments and disparities do exist", it continued, they were "varied and ironically very few of them are directly to do with racism".

Black Lives Matter UK tweeted that it was "disappointed" that the report overlooked disproportionality in the criminal justice system. Black people in England and Wales are nine times more likely to be imprisoned than their white peers, it said.

The report thanked the "mainly young people" behind the BLM movement for putting the focus on race but said progress could not be achieved by "cleaving to a fatalistic account that insists nothing has changed".

Among the main findings of the report were: Children from minority ethnic communities did as well or better than white pupils in compulsory education, with black Caribbean pupils the only group to perform less well; This success in education has "transformed British society over the last 50 years into one offering far greater opportunities for all"; The pay gap between all ethnic minorities and the white majority population had shrunk to 2.3% overall and was barely significant for employees under 30; Diversity has increased in professions such as law and medicine; But some communities continue to be "haunted" by historic racism, which is creating "deep mistrust" and could be a barrier to success.

Labour's shadow women and equalities secretary Marsha de Cordova labelled the report a "divisive polemic" that downplayed institutional racism. Her colleague David Lammy, who led a review on racial bias in the justice system, tweeted that Britain's black community was being "gaslighted" and said he was "tired of the endless debate about whether structural racism exists with little desire to actually address it".

Institutional racism was defined in the Macpherson report, commissioned after Stephen Lawrence's murder, as "the collective failure of an organisation to provide the appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin".

Commission member Samir Shah, chief executive of a TV production company, said the commission did not believe there was no institutional racism in Britain but said the term had become "divisive". Racism was only one of the factors which caused disparities between ethnic groups, he told BBC Radio 4's PM programme. "People do have choices, they do have agency, it's not always that they're just victims of some miasmic racism that's in the air," he said.

When setting up the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities during the Black Lives Matter protests last summer, Boris Johnson said he wanted to "change the narrative, so we stop the sense of victimisation and discrimination". But reaching a settled view on the question of racism in the UK was always going to be a struggle.

Critics were concerned by the prime minister's assertion that he wanted "to look very carefully at the real racism and discrimination that people face". There was further unease among anti-racism groups at the reported involvement of Number 10 policy advisor Munira Mirza, because she had previously written of how institutional racism was "a perception more than a reality".

The appointment of Tony Sewell to lead the inquiry once again disappointed anti-racism activists. One London-based organisation, Monitoring Group, considered seeking a judicial review to prevent his selection on the grounds that he had "a longstanding record of public statements rejecting or minimising" the impact of institutional racism in Britain. The accusation that this report is the result of a hand-picked committee, designed to say what ministers wanted to hear, will have some traction, whatever the commission and the government insist about its independence.

The commission said unemployment differences between ethnic groups had declined and the pay gap between ethnic minority workers and white workers was also falling and at its lowest level for almost a decade. But TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady said "institutional and structural racism exists in the UK, in both the labour market and wider society", and said black and minority ethnic workers were far more likely "to be in low-paid, insecure jobs" compared to white workers.

Prof Kehinde Andrews, a professor of black studies at Birmingham City University told BBC news the report was "not a genuine attempt to understand racism in Britain" or "make a substantive change". He said the fact there was a discussion over whether institutional racism existed was the problem, "because it does exist, it clearly exists and the question should be 'how do we address this'".

Liberal Democrat equalities spokeswoman Wera Hobhouse said the report must not be used as an excuse to continue "shameful inaction" on issues of racial injustice. She called for an end to "hostile environment" immigration policies and the "disproportionate" use of police stop and search tactics.

The commission found not enough information was given to the public about why police used stop and search, saying the focus was on drugs rather than knife offences. In its recommendations, the commission also called for the term BAME, which stands for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic, to be dropped, calling it "unhelpful" and "imprecise and often misleading".

Dr Maggie Aderin-Pocock, a member of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, said the report was not denying institutional racism existed but said the commission had not discovered evidence of it in the areas it had looked.

Equalities minister Kemi Badenoch said she "warmly welcomed" the report and was impressed by the analysis within the report, but added she was "looking forward to understanding fully" the issues that had been raised and "what can be done" to address them.

Chancellor Rishi Sunak said progress had been made to tackle racism. "That's not to say there aren't instances of racism that of course exist in this country," he told ITV. "But if I think about the things that happened to me when I was a kid, I can't imagine those things happening to me now."

The report's 24 recommendations included: Extended school days to be phased in, starting with disadvantaged areas, to help pupils catch up on missed learning during the pandemic; Children from disadvantaged backgrounds should have access to better quality careers advice in schools, funded by university outreach programmes; More research is needed to examine why pupils perform well in certain communities, so this can be replicated to help all children succeed; Organisations should stop funding unconscious bias training, with government and experts developing resources to help advance workplace equality.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-56592331>

Doreen Lawrence and her solicitor Imran Khan spoke at a public event organised by De Montfort University's Stephen Lawrence research centre on 31 March. She said that the new report sought to undermine and deny progress since her son's death. "Those people who marched for Black Lives Matter? It's denying all of that. The George Floyd stuff? It's denied all of that. So those who sit behind this report [saying] that racism doesn't exist or it no longer exists need to speak to the young boys who are stopped and searched constantly on the street. They need to speak to those young people. "They [the report authors] are not in touch with reality, basically. That's what it boils down to. When you are privileged you do not have those experiences," she said.

Lawrence and Khan fought for 18 years to get convictions against two of Stephen's murderers. The Macpherson report concluded the police investigation into the killing had been "marred by a combination of professional incompetence, institutional racism and a failure of leadership".

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/apr/01/doreen-lawrence-says-no-10-report-gives-racists-the-green-light>

See also: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/31/deeply-cynical-no-10-report-criticises-use-of-institutional-racism>

Read the prizewinning essays in the Columban Schools Competition, 'Let's create a world without racism' announced in the lead up to the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on 21 March 2021 – all featured in the Easter issue of the NW NJPN E-Bulletin.

<https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/cms/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NW-NJPN-Justice-and-Peace-E-Bulletin-Easter-2021-1.pdf>

LINK: Columban Competition: www.columbancompetition.com/

THE NEW INQUISITION MUST NEVER WIN

'There is more at stake in the case of Batley Grammar than the fate of one teacher' says **Andrew Doyle** 29 March 2021:

Picture the scene: an idyllic summer landscape populated by those much-loved icons of goodwill, the Care Bears. These instantly recognisable figures, fluffy and colourful and surrounded by butterflies and tiny floating hearts, are indulging in a rare bout of wanton depravity. ...This particular image appeared in an issue last September, and was satirising the practitioners of what has become known as "cancel culture". The censors of our time, the artist reminded us, are acting au nom du "bien". People are harassed and threatened, livelihoods and reputations obliterated, and all by those who believe themselves to be allied with the angels. Their language is that of "inclusivity" and "compassion", even though their ruthlessness and intolerance betray the insincerity of their stated goals — or, at the very least, the way in which self-righteousness can blind people to the evil they commit in the name of a noble cause. The furore at Batley Grammar School in West Yorkshire is the most recent example of how the lexicon of "social justice" has been weaponised in the name of progress. A teacher who had shown a caricature of the Prophet Mohammed — either from Charlie Hebdo or the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten (reports differ) — has been suspended for causing offence, and has now gone into hiding. Protesters outside the school have stated that they will not disperse until he is sacked. Given that blasphemy laws no longer exist in the UK, these protestors have largely couched their complaints in terms of "safety and wellbeing". On Friday, a man arrogantly claiming to speak on behalf of "the Muslim community" read out a statement in which the school authorities were accused of failing in their "duty of safeguarding", and the teacher himself was charged with "threatening and provocative" behaviour. The Muslim Council of Britain has deployed similar tactics, suggesting that the teacher "created a hostile atmosphere".

As much as I prefer to take people at their word, it seems unlikely to me that the protestors or the MCB seriously believe that the children's safety has been compromised by a Religious Studies lesson about free speech. Certainly, the pupils don't appear to agree with those who are speaking on their behalf, which is why some of them have created an online petition to have their teacher reinstated. What's striking, though, is that despite all their talk of "safeguarding", the protestors seem to be oblivious to a far more dangerous trend: that as a result of the various Islamist terrorist attacks in France in recent years — from the massacre at the Charlie Hebdo offices in January 2015 to the beheading of schoolteacher Samuel Paty last October — the right to criticise and ridicule religion has been increasingly under threat. It isn't simply the prospect of violent retaliation; it is the climate of intimidation that is fomented by the kind of protests we have seen in recent days. Cancel culture is sustained predominately by self-censorship, by those who see the consequences to others when they step out of line. After the events at Batley Grammar, how many teachers are likely to include the Charlie Hebdo cartoons in their lessons now?

Yet there has never been a more pressing time to engage with these issues in the classroom. If I were a teacher of Religious Studies, I would find it difficult to justify ignoring the question of the perceived conflict between religious faith and free speech, or not to discuss the murders of Samuel Paty and the satirists of Charlie Hebdo. While there is nothing wrong with acknowledging the potential offence that depictions of the Prophet Mohammed might cause, it is not a sufficient reason to avoid the topic altogether. I am sure that many pupils are disturbed by the anti-Semitic Nazi propaganda cartoons that are routinely included in history textbooks, but they serve an important function in the learning process. We know very little about the context in which the images of Mohammed were shown at Batley Grammar, but it is implausible that the teacher's motives were anything other than educational.

Still, the protest itself is not all that surprising. As someone who attended a convent school as a child, I am all too aware that religious conservatives are often displeased at the contents of school curricula. When I became a teacher, there were often complaints from parents who disapproved of certain books or plays, either on grounds of religious belief or sheer prudishness. Angela Carter's novel *Wise Children* was a particular bugbear for some parents, although at no point was the possibility of substituting texts or withdrawing pupils from class ever entertained. They had a right to be offended, but their offence was their own problem. I even taught briefly at a school run by an evangelical Christian who attempted to prohibit the teaching of novels that featured gay characters. It's the reason I resigned from my post.

Teachers cannot be in the business of tailoring their pedagogic practices in order to appease the most intolerant elements of society. Nor should we be indulging those who feel that their particular worldview should be imposed on society at large. That is why there is more at stake in the case of Batley Grammar than the fate of this one teacher. With the immense publicity this event has generated, the outcome — whatever it is — will no doubt set an important precedent. If the school continues to capitulate to the demands of protestors, it will have a chilling effect on teachers in other schools who might wish to explore tendentious subjects.

But in the coming days, that won't prevent the usual politicians, commentators and activists from emerging from their dens in Care-a-Lot, thirsting for the blood they can smell in the air. They will be saying things like "freedom of speech doesn't mean freedom from consequences", and other mantras that act as surrogates for thought. They will assert that the teacher is "Islamophobic" and "hateful", because they are invariably convinced of their own telepathic capabilities. They will accuse the teacher of "bullying" as they sidle up to theocrats calling for his ruination. Already the protestors have demanded that he face criminal prosecution for "stirring up hatred", a favoured formulation of today's "progressives". Cancel culture is the Inquisition of the digital age; it is how blasphemers are subdued, whether religious or secular. We mustn't let the Care Bears win.

[https://unherd.com/2021/03/the-new-inquisition-must-never-win/?tl_inbound=1&tl_groups\[0\]=18743&tl_period_type=3&mc_cid=5590bceafe&mc_eid=477d46da2c](https://unherd.com/2021/03/the-new-inquisition-must-never-win/?tl_inbound=1&tl_groups[0]=18743&tl_period_type=3&mc_cid=5590bceafe&mc_eid=477d46da2c)

A STATEMENT FROM THE BOAZ TRUST FOLLOWING THE GOVERNMENT'S ANNOUNCEMENT FOR A NEW IMMIGRATION SYSTEM

24 March 2021: The plans announced today by the Home Office to introduce a new immigration system undermine the fundamental human right to seek asylum, and ride roughshod over the lives of people forced to flee their homes owing to conflict, instability or persecution. Under new proposals, only people seeking asylum who enter the country through a 'safe and legal' resettlement route will be considered for indefinite leave to remain. Those who enter through a means that the government considers to be 'illegal' (such as via boat, through a third country) will not be granted refugee status and will instead be subject to the constant threat of removal. For the first time, under the new proposals, a person seeking asylum will have their claim considered on the basis of their means of entry into the country, not on the merit of their asylum claim.

Ros Holland, Chief Executive of the Boaz Trust, said: "Seeking asylum is a human right, not a crime. Yet under these proposals, the Home Office seeks to claim that it is illegal for a person seeking asylum to do so, except through a very narrow scope of refugee resettlement programmes, for which very little detail has yet been provided. The Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme has ended and the government voted down an amendment which would have allowed vulnerable child refugees to enter the UK. What are these 'safe and legal' routes? Without broader and effective routes, the government's proposals will only push people further into the hands of smugglers.

"The reality is that desperate people are forced to make desperate decisions – be that travelling on fake documents or putting themselves and their families in a boat. To try to criminalise people for attempting to save their own, and their families lives, is inhumane. The idea that such people will no longer have their claims to asylum fairly heard, and that they can expect to live in constant fear of deportation, is a particular kind of cruelty. We know from our work with clients the deep mental health wounds that are caused not only by the experience of fleeing a country, but also from the culture of disbelief that exists within the Home Office, which leaves people in a perpetual state of distress.

"Priti Patel is right to describe the UK asylum system as 'broken,' but not as a result of people seeking sanctuary within it. Rather the system is broken because it refuses to recognise the legal rights of sanctuary seekers and chooses to demonise people in an increasingly abhorrent way."

<https://www.boaztrust.org.uk/articles/332-a-statement-from-the-boaz-trust-following-the-government-s-announcement-for-a-new-immigration-system>

You can join us in speaking out for a fair and just asylum process and keep in touch with our wider work to end asylum destitution, by clicking here to receive our monthly newsletter: <https://www.boaztrust.org.uk/pages/19-stay-in-touch>

A MORAL FAILURE: UNDERSTANDING THE GOVERNMENT'S NEW PLAN FOR IMMIGRATION

Amy Merone, Advocacy Manager the Boaz Trust 30 Mar 2021

The recent government proposals to introduce a new immigration system attempting to criminalise people seeking sanctuary who do not arrive in the UK via an official resettlement route are inhumane and unworkable. Those of us working in the asylum sector have witnessed a deteriorating landscape over the years, coupled with the slow erosion of rights for people forced to flee their homes and seek safety in another country. Yet even we were shocked by the tone and scope of the proposals recently announced.

The majority of people forced to seek asylum do so in a country neighbouring their own. Despite the rhetoric and misinformation that abounds, 86% of the world's refugee population are hosted by developing countries. Turkey, Colombia, Pakistan, Uganda and Germany host 39% of the world's refugee population between them (UNHCR). The UK accepts less than 0.5% of the world's total refugee population. There is a growing trend in our society - and in other societies alike - to distort reality, manipulate language, and present false information as fact. We are repeatedly told that the UK is being overwhelmed by the constant arrival of people seeking asylum. In reality, the number of people seeking sanctuary in the UK fell by 18% in 2020. The perpetuation of untruths stirs and stokes hatred, diverting attention away from the responsibilities of those in political office and scapegoating those most marginalised by society.

When the Government announced plans to create a new immigration system, it did so by telling the British public that people who enter the country through 'illegal means' will not have their asylum cases considered on merit and instead can expect to be deported at any time. It is not illegal to enter another country to claim asylum. That right is enshrined in the 1961 Refugee Convention: <https://www.freemovement.org.uk/refugee-convention/> (and the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 protects against the prosecution of refugees entering the UK).

Announcing the Government's new plan, the Home Secretary spoke of proposals to prioritise and protect vulnerable women and children in refugee camps. If this was the case, we could have expected a far different set of proposals for asylum reform. As it is, the attempt to criminalise people entering the UK by boat or other means will not deter people from seeking sanctuary in the UK, but instead push people – including vulnerable women and children – further into the hands of smugglers. The reality is that desperate people are forced to make desperate decisions.

There are very few established 'safe and legal' UK resettlement programmes. The Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme has ended and the Government's proposals do not indicate the implementation of any immediate replacement schemes. If the Government truly cares about vulnerable children, surely it would not have voted down the Dubs Amendment, which would have allowed unaccompanied sanctuary seeking children in Europe to come to the UK to be reunited with relatives.

And what of the asylum-seeking children already in the UK? A recent report from Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit has shown that children are 'falling apart' because of delays by the Home Office in accessing their asylum claims: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/mar/25/child-asylum-seekers-falling-apart-due-to-home-office-delays>

GMIAU reports of children who have turned to self-harm, are experiencing persistent insomnia, hair loss and hopelessness about the future because of the Home Office's inaction. Likewise, if the Government truly cares about vulnerable women, it would surely not have detained hundreds of them in Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre in Bedfordshire - 77-85% of whom were found to be survivors of abuse, according to research carried out by Women for Refugee Women. <https://helprefugees.org/news/innocent-abused-and-imprisoned-the-women-of-yarls-wood/>

The facts speak for themselves. For those of us working and campaigning in this sector, what we see is a grim and ever more hostile reality for people seeking asylum – and a deteriorating landscape for anybody, seemingly, who this country considers to be other than British. Clients of ours have waited months (up to a year, even) to access copies of their asylum papers from the Home Office, preventing them from being able to progress their legal cases. We have witnessed a decline in clients' mental health, leading to serious conditions such as post-traumatic stress, depression and anxiety. Women and men who we support still bear the scars of being detained in, and by, this country.

Across the UK the picture is equally grim. Unsanitary and overcrowded army barracks used to house people, hotels operated by private contractors imposing curfews and serving substandard food, and cases of government contracted housing infested with rats and damp. The UK is one of the richest countries in the world, but tells its people that there is not enough to go around. The reality is that there is enough, but for the unequal distribution of resources and wealth.

The former director of the Institute of Race Relations, Ambalavaner Sivanandan, speaking about post-colonial migration, once said: "We are here because you were there." Knowledge of UK history and our footprint in the world is severely lacking. We too often refuse to face hard truths about our history, and are reluctant to acknowledge or take responsibility for the roles that we have played in destabilising countries and regions. The UK talks of its proud history of offering sanctuary to refugees, yet these proposals do not communicate welcome or refuge. They fail to convince of their humanity or heart. They lack interest in allowing people to be seen. They represent a moral failure and turn away from suffering. Join us to take action and speak truth to power. <https://www.boaztrust.org.uk/articles/333-a-moral-failure-understanding-the-government-s-new-plan-for-immigration>

MIGRANT SUPPORT IN MANCHESTER

- How to work WITH people to build dignity & power?
- How do we protect and rebuild dignity and power, with people who feel powerless and small?
- How do we nurture personal agency among people who, right now, need help?

Groups such as Migrant Support actively respond to those questions day in day out, as they work not merely to walk alongside people marginalised by society, but to end that marginalisation. Migrant Support, based in Manchester, is a lifeline and first port of call for many, providing practical support and social encouragement. People arriving in the UK are often denied access to employment or support, but if our national systems don't always reflect the compassion of our society, groups such as Migrant Support do.

Sally Hilton, Migrant Support volunteer, says Migrant Support helped her immensely. In a video for the organisation, she said: "The first time when I came here I was very scared about my life, so when I came into Migrant Support I told them my problems. I didn't understand English so Sandra taught me I needed to learn English. She said 'You have a second life in this country, so don't be scared – I'll help you for everything'."

Co-founder Sandra Rice says, "For Migrant Support, dignity has a very strong meaning. People who come to us feel they have no value or they have not been heard. At Migrant Support we encourage people to come together, to feel that this is a family for them. We create a safe place where friendly staff help them to move forward a little bit closer to employment, to formal education as well.

"Getting involved with projects that actually help you to feel a bit better might sound very easy or simple, but to feel better about themselves is a big thing on the road to getting that dignity back, to a feeling of fulfilment or feeling of identity, and being part of something. That's a process that doesn't come in one meeting or by meeting only one person or solving a problem. It's a long journey and having people around them or in a group during this journey means a lot, because you not only gain the dignity of one person, but the whole group gains."

"One of the key projects we do is the befriending, and peer support. People who come to Migrant Support are mainly looking for very specific needs or problems they want to solve, like calling the doctor or struggling for housing, or maybe they've been fired or they haven't been paid. Once the main problem is solved, the next thing is to reduce levels of dependency. They feel that because they can't do things for themselves they need somebody else and in most cases that is because of the language, or because they do not know how to do things or are scared to have a phone call with somebody.

"We have some students who speak English but when you give them the phone to speak with somebody, they just freeze; they can't move forward. They say it's a matter of being able to rely on their own skills and feel confident, and therefore they increase their levels of English and communication skills. By being able to know how to do things, practical stuff, then they become

themselves – they don't need to ask anybody else; they feel confident enough themselves to call the city council to solve a problem, or call the school and solve a problem. We know this is happening when with their list of asks and they're not calling us anymore, because they are getting more confident."

"It's slow steps. First, people have to feel the power to make change for themselves in a very small scale. Then it's obviously being part of a community or volunteering or feeling they're powerful, then it's having their own community.

"An idea of Migrant Support is to help people be aware that with any decisions that could be taken in the community, they have the power actually to raise their voice and the power to join other groups – not only or always with Migrant Support; they could join their own communities. If there's an issue that matters to them, they could be able to talk about it.

"Again, we go back to confidence... if they feel able to talk about issues that matter to them and they have the power to do it, they will. For instance, Self-Reliant Groups help them save money and then they think they could cook, or sell the products and get a little more income for themselves. The idea is that small changes can make a big change. That could be individually but also collectively, when voices are heard stronger and louder."

Migrant Support helps people in many ways. Beyond the language, it helps people address past traumas, works with children who have arrived in the country, and helps people rediscover themselves, resurrecting hobbies, for example.

The pandemic has been a lonely and difficult time for many, but the language barrier can make it even harder for people new to the UK, when it comes to introducing oneself to neighbours or getting involved in neighbourhoods. What's more, many of the people Migrant Support helps were working in zero-hours contracts and in hospitality work, so felt the economic impact especially severely.

Samira Chaudry is lead teacher at Migrant Support, and she too was interviewed for the charity's recent video. She said: "There's something very special about Migrant Support. The door is open for everyone regardless of their background and we accept people exactly for who they are. As a migrant myself who came here without the language and was able to go through the British education system and acquire the qualifications I needed to become a teacher, I so want to give something back. The gift that I can give to the migrants and asylum seekers is the gift of education.

"At Migrant Support, what we do is we value every single learner as an individual. We care about their past, their present, as well as their future. We build strong lasting relationships. The first most important thing is to build that friendship and trust, so they know we accept them for who they are, whatever their difficulties may be. We support them in terms of offering guidance and advice; we obviously direct them to services like housing and welfare, and we have someone who can offer legal support and we offer them friendship so they can relax. It's so fantastic to see them having come with nothing and then, after a few weeks, able to say who they are, where they came from and learning the very basics of what they need. I've not met a learner yet who hasn't wanted to succeed and get somewhere and we are they people that are actually giving them that avenue so they can make a success and integrate with the community."

https://www.church-poverty.org.uk/migrant-support-how-to-work-with-people-to-rebuild-dignity-power/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=engagingnetworks&utm_campaign=dignity+agency+power&utm_content=2021+30+03+migrant+support+blog+email

'LIFE ON THE BREADLINE' ANNOUNCES THEIR END OF PROJECT CONFERENCE, 24-25TH JUNE 2021

'Life on the Breadline: Christianity, Poverty and Politics in the 21st Century City' - a two-day online conference from the Life on the Breadline project team is the culmination of three years of research (based at Coventry University) into Christian responses to UK poverty in the context of austerity.

The conference will combine sessions with presentations and Q&A, and interactive workshops. Sessions at the conference will include presentations from the Life on the Breadline project team – Chris Shannahan, Robert Beckford, Peter Scott and Stephanie Denning – on the research findings, plus interactive workshops on researching poverty, asset-based community development, and Black Church responses to austerity, and guest speakers Dr Naomi Maynard (Together Liverpool) and Professor Anthony Reddie (University of Oxford and University of South Africa). At the conference we will also be launching the Anti-Poverty Charter which is being developed in consultation with research participants in the Life on the Breadline research.

The anticipated audience for the conference is theology and social science academics, church leaders, and practitioners in church and poverty response settings. The majority of sessions are aimed at all three audiences, and the target audience is noted alongside each session in the provisional conference programme.

Conference Programme: <https://breadlineresearch.coventry.ac.uk/events/end-of-project-conference/>
Register here: <https://coventry.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/life-on-the-breadline-end-of-project-conference-reg>
Follow project updates on Twitter at #BreadlineResearch

Life on the Breadline is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. It represents one of the first major fieldwork-based theological analyses of Christian action on UK poverty during the 'age of austerity'.

LORD DEBEN ON 'CLIMATE CHANGE - THE GOSPEL IMPERATIVE'

Ellen Teague 25 March 2021: The Rt Hon Lord Deben (John Selwyn Gummer), chair of the UK's committee on climate change, told an online gathering this week that Catholics must take climate change more seriously, following the inspirational lead of Pope Francis in *'Laudato Si'* and in the context of November's UN Climate talks in Glasgow. He particularly called for Catholics to be active in their churches and put pressure on their bishops to place this issue at the centre of the Gospel they preach. The former prominent Conservative MP, whose roles included serving as environment secretary under John Major said: "Creation must be at the heart of the Gospel, but "there are some bishops in Britain from whom I have never heard a word on this topic." He felt there was "too much focus on sex than creation", in fact, he suggested, tongue in cheek, "more about procreation than creation".

His talk, 'Climate Change: The Gospel Imperative', was organised by the Catholic Union on 23 March. "The Church has got it right on this" he said, "and I am missionary about it." He told participants he used *'Laudato Si'* insights even when talking to secular audiences and that they were very appreciative. "Pope Francis has brought us back to the Gospel imperatives, particularly to help those less fortunate," he said.

Lord Deben urged participants to regard climate change as "a symptom of what we have done to the world." Climate change is urgent, in his view, and we have "a short window" to ensure that its impacts - such as more severe weather and displacement of peoples, "do not become disastrous." He pointed to nomadic peoples in Northern Nigeria suffering the effects of desertification, populations of Pacific islands which are sinking beneath the seas, and communities in low-lying Bangladesh needing resettlement as early victims of climate change impacts. He applauded Pope Francis for linking issues of social justice, peace and climate change, and calling for the need "to help those less fortunate".

Lord Deben described the government's recent decision to cut aid as "a moral outrage". He also criticised major fossil fuel companies which have devoted significant time and money to climate denial. Exxon Mobil, the multinational oil and gas corporation, was singled out as "a terrible example of wickedness" for "they knew and spent vast sums pretending it wasn't happening." "Catholics must be clear", he said, that "action on climate change is part of Catholic Social Teaching" and "this battle is for all of us." He urged Catholics to bring the issue "into our prayers and our liturgy," and preach the gospel "in a way that is relevant". He felt young people understand our duty to the environment, and we must support their desire not to inherit a world that is impoverished. "All stewards hand back something better and that is our duty" he said; "our duty as Catholics too." Lord Deben urged participants to remember that, "climate change makes extreme weather and pandemics more likely."

Watch a video of the talk: <https://catholicunion.org.uk/2021/03/webinar-lord-deben/>

and here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=tKIR9MZrhKs <https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/41845>

UK AID AND OUR COMMITMENT TO 0.7%

Evie Gilbert from **Sale Spreads Hope** writes: The world had already been facing struggles such as climate change, global poverty and widespread inequality before COVID-19 hit, but the pandemic has exacerbated these issues while adding a list of its own. Globally, we are all facing huge challenges and now more than ever, it is true that no one is safe until everyone is safe. This year is incredibly important for the planet and for the UK. The G7 will be hosted in Cornwall this June, and in November the UK will also host the COP26 climate summit. The conversation on the UK's role in tackling global challenges continues to grow in importance. In recent months we have heard of dramatic cuts to the UK's overseas aid, through which we can predict the worsening of humanitarian crises such as that in Yemen.

Towards the end of 2020, Devex reported that the UK's aid budget fell by £2.9 billion. Charities across the UK continue to condemn the government's decision to cut aid to the world's most impoverished areas. The shortfalls in funding of overseas humanitarian work will have devastating impact of the world's poorest people. The impact of COVID-19 only makes this situation worse. The UK can and should play a pivotal role in turning this around.

We are reaching out to people across the North West who want to start a conversation in their local community about why international development matters, how we can all play our part to tackle climate change, and to think about how we care for our own communities as well as those further afield. If you are interested in meeting like-minded people, talking about how your community can make a difference locally and internationally please get in touch. The movement has already started, more and more people are realising that their opinion matters, and that they can have a positive impact on communities across the globe. Below are the links to just 2 community groups that have recently been established in the North West, but there are many more!

Here's some action you can do right now:

1. Find a local group - contact egilbert@bond.org.uk to hear about the movement going on in your community!
2. Write to your MP - let your MP know that their position on the 0.7% matters to you! For more information on how to do this please contact egilbert@bond.org.uk
3. Start a conversation with family and friends on an issue that matters to you and how UK Aid plays a role in this issue!

Sale Spread Hope: <http://bit.ly/SaleSpreadsHope>

Warrington Wants Better: <http://bit.ly/WarringtonWantsBetter>

To find out what is happening in your own local area and how you can make a direct impact please email Evie Gilbert: egilbert@bond.org.uk

NORTH WEST EVENT 15 April at 7pm. Register here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/north-west-watch-party-and-introductions-tickets-148750764541>

WHAT POPE FRANCIS' MESSAGE OF FRATERNITY MEANS TO IRAQ'S CHRISTIAN HEARTLAND

Xavier Bisits 23 March 2021: At a glance, Qaraqosh and Bartella are similar: ancient, Aramaic-speaking towns first evangelized by St. Thomas. In 2014, both were majority Christian towns before the population was displaced, enslaved or killed by ISIS. Both lie only 20 minutes away from Mosul, where ISIS declared its caliphate in 2014. That, however, is where the similarities end. One of these towns has kept Muslims out, and the other has not. With fraternity at the heart of Pope Francis' trip to Iraq, the question that Iraqi Christians are asking themselves strikes at the core of Christianity: Who is my neighbour?

Pope Francis had his most enthusiastic reception in Qaraqosh, Iraq's de facto Catholic capital. Addressing the crowd in a restored church that had been burned by ISIS, he told attendees: "As I look out at you, I can see the cultural and religious diversity of the people of Qaraqosh." In fact, there was relatively little diversity in the audience the pope was addressing. With the exception of a few Muslim and Yazidi leaders, most belonged to a single ethnoreligious group: Syriac Catholics.

Qaraqosh's homogeneous population of 23,000 is no coincidence. Muslims from the poorer surrounding villages, including the Shabak — a Shia minority that ISIS also persecuted — struggle to buy homes in the town. Through an informal consensus, Christians in Qaraqosh rarely sell their homes to Muslims, an arrangement that has the tacit agreement of the Iraqi state, which condemned the phenomenon of demographic displacement in 2013. As a result, Qaraqosh is able to protect its Catholic identity. The church is the centre of communal life. The most admired local leader is the archbishop, not the mayor. The town is protected by a mostly Catholic militia, the only Iraqi militia not routinely accused of human rights violations. This militia, whose guardhouses feature statues of the virgin Mary, has successfully protected the town from terrorist attacks since 2016, mostly by limiting access to Qaraqosh natives.

To Western eyes, it can be unusual for a community that professes fraternity to pin its future on keeping out its neighbours. To locals, however, survival is a prerequisite for fraternity. Most say that without a predominantly Christian population, the town would lose its Christian militia, falling prey to an Iran-backed competitor that circles the town. Without a Christian militia, many locals would emigrate to the West.

Miriam Warda, 63, a Qaraqosh native who asked to use a pseudonym given her job at a public hospital, says that the pope's message resonates, but Christians have to be mindful of their own interests. "Fraternity is good. I work in a hospital and serve Christians and Muslims equally, without discrimination. As Jesus says, we have to forgive those Muslims who betrayed us to ISIS. We will, however, always remember what happened to us because of them." Warda, a health professional, refers to stories of betrayal at the hands of Muslim neighbors when ISIS arrived. Her trust was broken and she says she cannot forget. "If you invite a Muslim to lunch, they will eat with you. If you turn your back, however, they will not hesitate to take control, as they did in Mosul."

To Abbas al-Qasim, 20, a Shabak local who along with 100,000 Christians was displaced to Kurdistan by ISIS, these concerns are overblown. "Muslims don't want anything from Christians." He said he welcomed the pope's visit and was particularly impressed by his meeting with Shia leader Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani. "The pope wants us to be brothers. To be honest, though, the relationship between Christians and Muslims isn't great."

Rihaab Saadoun, 26, one of the few Shabak who lives in Qaraqosh, blamed ISIS for any remaining tensions between Christians and Muslim. "ISIS made it this way. ISIS harmed the Muslim religion, but as Muslims, we want to change that image. We have been living in Qaraqosh for a long time and we don't have problems with anyone here." Christian concerns around having Muslim neighbours can appear paranoid to Western ears, but locals from Qaraqosh are determined to avoid becoming their neighbour, Bartella, which they point to as a cautionary tale.

Today, Bartella, a town of 18,000, is predominantly Muslim, with only 3,000 mostly Syriac Orthodox Christians. As late as the 1990s, Bartella was almost exclusively Christian. After 2003, however, as al-Qaida took over Mosul, some Christians began emigrating from Bartella. As Christians packed their bags for the West, many sold their homes to Shabak Muslims from neighbouring villages. By 2014, although the town remained majority Christian, it had a substantial Muslim minority, and after ISIS was expelled from the town in 2016, this minority became a majority.

Some clergy say that the Shabak purchased or illegally repossessed homes with financial support from Iran, which plans to build a Shia corridor from Iran to Syria. The change has been accelerated by other factors, including a higher fertility rate among Shabak and the need for some Shabak to find new homes after persecution by al-Qaida, and then ISIS, in neighbouring Mosul. The result of that demographic displacement has real security implications for remaining Christians. Today, the town is now controlled by an Iran-backed Shia militia accused of torture, rape, murder, extortion and kidnapping. For this reason, several thousand Christians from Bartella are afraid to return to their homes.

Daniel Hadaya, 25, a native of Bartella, spoke to NCR under a pseudonym, concerned about the implications of talking about the local militia. "We need to have our own Christian community. Today, Bartella is controlled by Iran through the local militia. Some of the Shabak are happy that the pope visited. The ones who follow Iran are not happy about him coming, though. This group makes up most of them." Asked about the pope's message of fraternity, Hadaya says that Christians already understand fraternity: the ones who don't are Muslims. "Muslims have stolen our land to build houses. This isn't peace. We are tired of building bridges." Local Christians like Hadaya, who say they are fed up with sectarian tension, hope that Pope Francis will do some of the heavy lifting to build bridges with Muslims.

Consistently, Christians find the most optimism in Pope Francis' ground-breaking meeting with al-Sistani. They hope that this image will inspire local Shia Muslims to support a more quietist version of Islam, instead of the theocratic variant promoted by Iran, including through its local militias. For themselves, Christians are focused on Pope Francis' message of forgiveness during his visit: a prominent theme in Pope Francis' address in Qaraqosh. Forgiveness, he said, is "key" to remaining Christian. Many Christians acknowledge they need help to forgive crimes as heinous as those committed against them since 2003. "The road to a full recovery may still be long, but I ask you, please, not to grow discouraged," the Pope told Christians. "What is needed is the ability to forgive but also the courage not to give up." While Christians are divided on how exactly to secure religious diversity in Iraq, all agree that the situation is urgent. Iraq's Christian population has nosedived from 6% a century ago to far less than 1% today, according to data from the World Christian Database. At this point, there's little room for error.

[Xavier Bisits previously worked in Iraq and serves as vice president of Democrats for Life of America.]

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/people/what-pope-francis-message-fraternity-means-iraqs-christian-heartland>

NEW REPORT CALLS ON UK GOVERNMENT TO ACT ON 'GREEN' MINERAL MINING

Ellen Teague 30 March 2021: A new report has exposed the potential widespread environmental destruction and human rights abuses unleashed by the extraction of transition minerals - the raw materials needed for the production of renewable energy technologies. It has been produced by the London Mining Network and War on Want. 'A Material Transition' explores supply and demand solutions for renewable energy minerals and highlights what can be done to set out a pathway for a globally just energy future. It calls on the UK government to critically question resource use in any green recovery plans.

Human rights abuses must be abolished from mineral supply chains and issues of over-consumption urgently addressed. Our high-intensity, wasteful and growth-oriented economy must be transformed so that humanity can thrive within ecological limits. The report author, Andy Whitmore, says: "Although we must rapidly transition away from fossil fuels to tackle the climate crisis, we cannot do this by expanding our reliance on minerals. Any increase in the extraction of energy transition minerals threatens to create new 'sacrifice zones', in the Global South, North America and Europe - destroying communities and causing environmental destruction. The transition to green energy must respect human rights."

Asad Rehman, Executive Director of War on Want, said: "Our call to the UK government is to join the dots between tackling the climate crisis and the critical question of unsustainable resource use. The goal must be to transform our energy-intensive, wasteful and growth-orientated economy to one that can meet everyone's needs within ecological limits. The first steps are ending human rights abuses from mineral supply chains and urgently addressing issues of overconsumption."

Regarding the supply of minerals, investors and the end-users of transition minerals - such as battery or electric vehicle manufacturers which use huge quantities of Lithium - are increasingly recognising the need to eradicate human rights abuses from their supply chains. However, the number of new laws and different assurance initiatives means that consolidation and coordination are desperately required. On the demand side, there are a number of practical solutions which could be initiated or accelerated to enable better-informed choices about our energy and resource consumption.

Andy Whitmore from London Mining Network, said: "A focus on more efficient, or green, growth is not enough. A radical reduction of unsustainable consumption is the most effective solution, based on a fundamental change to Global North economies and lifestyles. Such a change could be considered the creation of 'a circular society' based non-resource-intensive solutions for people and planet." The report contains in-depth case studies from communities in the Philippines and Indonesia on the frontlines of conflicts arising from transition mineral mining. <https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/41881>

Read the Report at: <https://waronwant.org/resources/a-material-transition>

London Mining Network: www.londonminingnetwork.org Facebook and twitter @londonmining

War on Want: www.waronwant.org Facebook and twitter @WarOnWant

AS DEBT PILES ONTO THE BACKS OF POOR COUNTRIES, CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY CALLS FOR RELIEF

World Council of Churches 1 April 2021: In dialogue with the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, representatives of the global Christian community shared lived experiences from countries grappling with heavy debt burdens as well as concrete proposals to tackle the current debt crisis at a 29 March side-event titled, "The impact of debt on poor countries and proposals for fair and green recovery financing." The side-event was organised by the World Council of Churches together with CAFOD, ChristianAid, Jubilee USA and other faith-based organisations at the Civil Society Policy Forum. Eugene Kabilika, executive director of Caritas Zambia, said that "increased debt servicing has reduced the amount of money available for government to adequately fund education, health, water and sanitation."

Noting that poor countries cannot afford lifesaving COVID-19 vaccines, Rev. Suzanne Matala from the Independent Commission for the Reform of International Corporate Taxation, called for debt cancellation to "free up resources for governments to respond," adding that there is "an urgent need to stop illicit financial flows from our mineral-rich countries." Jeronim Zettelmeyer, deputy director of the International Monetary Fund's Strategy, Policy and Review Department, shared current efforts to respond to the debt crisis. At the same time, he said civil society organisations should "put pressure on their own domestic authorities" as the problem does not only lie with the international financial architecture. Marcello Estevo, global director of the World Bank's Macroeconomics, Trade and Investment Global Practice said that their "goal is to enlarge the breathing space for poor countries" in a time of economic crisis. Eric LeCompte, executive director of Jubilee USA, cited the lack of private sector participation and inadequate coverage of middle-income indebted countries as key challenges to current initiatives to tackle debt. Moving forward, "there is a need to expand debt relief to middle income countries."

<https://www.oikoumene.org/news/as-debt-piles-onto-the-backs-of-poor-countries-christian-community-calls-for-relief>

STEPHEN LAWRENCE DAY 22 APRIL

Founded in 2019, Stephen Lawrence Day takes place annually on 22 April, the date of his death. The Day is a celebration of Stephen's life and legacy. Stephen's story is both challenging and inspirational. He was a normal young person who made the most of everyday opportunities. Although his life was short, Stephen provides a positive role model of a life well lived.

Stephen Lawrence was born and grew up in south-east London, where he lived with his parents Neville and Doreen, his brother Stuart and sister Georgina. Like most young people, he juggled an active social life, school work, family commitments, and part-time employment. But he also had ambitions to use his talent for maths, art, and design to become an architect, and wanted to have a positive impact on his community. Tragically, his dream was never realised. On 22 April 1993, at the age of just 18, Stephen was murdered in an unprovoked racist attack. He didn't know his killers and his killers didn't know him.

After the initial police investigation, five suspects were arrested but not convicted. A public inquiry into the handling of Stephen's case was held in 1998, leading to the publication of the Macpherson Report, which has been called 'one of the most important moments in the modern history of criminal justice in Britain'. It led to profound cultural changes in attitudes to racism, to the law and to police practice. It also paved the way for a greater understanding of discrimination of all forms and new equalities legislation. <https://stephenlawrenceday.org/stephens-story/>

Baroness Doreen Lawrence, founder of the Stephen Lawrence Day Foundation, said: "The events of 2020: George Floyd's death, and the subsequent resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement, along with societal inequalities exposed and exacerbated by COVID has made us reflect how we engage with our communities. This brought a sharp focus on what I want to be achieved in Stephen's name. I want Stephen Lawrence Day to be a reflective learning experience, and a celebration and a journey toward greater equality and inclusion for all."

The Stephen Lawrence Day Foundation, established amid unprecedented growing global awareness of racial inequality, exists to inspire a more equal, inclusive society, and to foster opportunities for marginalised young people in the UK. The Foundation has been working tirelessly with stakeholders in education, business, and government to develop a framework that will become the bedrock of the foundation's future work. <https://stephenlawrenceday.org/stephen-lawrence-day-foundation/>

This includes: **Classrooms** - to inspire children to dream freely without barriers and to realise the absolute importance of education to attaining those dreams. <https://stephenlawrenceday.org/classrooms/>

Communities - to support and create new connections within all types of communities. The pandemic has shown us why our local communities are so important and how we can pull together to create real, meaningful change. <https://stephenlawrenceday.org/community/>

Careers - to give marginalised young people access to careers in the world's leading companies and organisations. Because Stephen never got to realise his dreams for a professional career as an architect, our ambition is to create career opportunities for thousands of young people. We want under represented young people to be able to access, progress and succeed in whatever career they choose. Now more than ever organisations around the world want to implement effective diversity and inclusion recruitment strategies so as to create new careers and opportunities for young people. Research shows that diversity in business isn't just good business it's also smarter and more profitable business. Our ambition is to be at the heart of matching thousands of under-represented individuals to all kinds of careers, according to aspiration. The Colour of Power 2020 survey, reveals that just 52 out of the 1099 most powerful roles in the country are filled by non-white individuals; just 4.7% of the total number compared to the 13% proportion of the UK population. In partnership with employers and Creative Process Digital the Stephen Lawrence Digital Apprenticeship fast track programme will help to change this. <https://stephenlawrenceday.org/careers/>

The Stephen Lawrence Project; KickOff@3

KickOff@3 is a collaborative initiative set up by two passionate men with the goal to inspire, motivate, engage and support young people from all backgrounds through the medium of sport, music and other imaginative ideas. Founded in 2017, Michael Wallace and Ashley Leven have seen their non-profit organisation grow into an established youth diversion strategy where long-lasting relationships between young people and their local police forces are being built. The organisation has gone from strength to strength, positively impacting hundreds of young people across various communities in the UK through its many initiatives, campaigns and workshops. The pair, along with KickOff@3's youth volunteers, ambassadors and partners, work hard to educate young people, diverting vulnerable youth from criminal activity and violence. KickOff@3 aims to see less youth violence and hate crime and an increase in mental health awareness, physical fitness and inclusion in sports across the UK.

The Stephen Lawrence Project; KickOff@3 aims to inspire young people across the UK to produce a creative piece of work (such as a poem, song, spoken word or drawn/digital piece of art) inspired by Stephen Lawrence's legacy. We hope this project ensures young people are either reminded of Stephen Lawrence and what his death meant to society, or, become newly educated of his legacy and are motivated to live in a kinder and more accepting society by it. On April 22 we ask young people to upload their artwork onto social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn, tagging KickOff@3's handle in the process. We hope to flood these social media platforms with inspired, motivational and moving pieces of creative artwork on Stephen Lawrence Day. <https://www.kickoffat3.co.uk/projects/stephen-lawrence-day-2021/>

RECOMMENDED READING

Silence is Not an Option: You Can Impact the World for Change Stuart Lawrence

"I'm a very optimistic person. Without optimism and hope, I wouldn't be able to do the things I do," says Stuart Lawrence, the author of the uplifting and motivating *Silence is Not an Option: You Can Impact the World for Change*, which will be published by Scholastic in April. Lawrence is the younger brother of Stephen Lawrence, the young man killed in a racist attack in south London in 1993, and he has spent a large chunk of his life working to inspire young people to be the best versions of themselves they can possibly be, formerly as a teacher and now as a trustee of The Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust and motivational speaker.

Aimed at readers aged 10 and above, *Silence is Not an Option* is filled with advice and asks young people questions such as: Why do you want to be successful? Who are you doing it for? If you don't champion yourself, who will? Lawrence shares anecdotes from his own life, including the death of his brother, but also his early desire to become an actor and his love for cooking, and he encourages readers to see failures as learning opportunities in disguise. "It's not failing that's dangerous. It's being scared of failing that stops us from trying to do things. Like all fears, you beat it by facing it head on," he says in the book.

Lawrence wrote the book partly because he missed the interaction that he had with young people when he was a teacher — he says he really enjoys encouraging them to do the right thing — and partly for his son. "These are the things I want my son to remember and have in his mind when he's living his own life," he says. "[Being young] is a confusing time, and aged 10 and up you are going to meet new people, and form relationships with adults who want you to behave in different ways." In the book he encourages readers to write down what makes them unique and find their passion, and asks them to really think about what success means to them. As a young teenager, he was keen on the theatre and harboured ideas of being an actor. Those dreams were discouraged by adults in his life, but he now wants his son to reach for any dream he wants. He also teaches readers to adopt a growth mindset, and to explain this he uses a football analogy: a player who can do tricks at home might go to pieces on the pitch. A player with a growth mindset would not give up, however, and would instead realise that it would be better to practise against real people instead of on their own. They might become a brilliant footballer in the future. This is an analogy he gives his son at home, he says. "My mantra with my son is, hard work beats talent. He's pretty nippy at the moment and plays [football] at a good level, but I tell him that if he doesn't practise and just sits on his mobile phone, some of the kids who weren't as good as him will get better." Reducing screen time, exercising the power of self-control and having a strong moral compass are explored in his book, too.

Lawrence was 16 when his brother was murdered. Before then he was, he says, a happy child, and didn't even know what racism was. After, he wanted to be the role model for his sister that Stephen was to him, and applied himself to education seriously. At both college and university (where he studied graphic design), lecturers told him he would make a good teacher and he eventually decided to go into education after 9/11, another event that made him ask "what am I doing with my life?" He began working in a school to set up graphic design lessons and was instantly at home in that environment, he says. "I loved making a difference and ensuring young people's education was the best it could be. We started a GCSE course at the school, then an A-Level course, and then some kids went on to do the same university course I did."

When asked if children today are growing up in a less racist society, he says: "No child is born a racist person. I want my son to be judged on who he is. Is he a good person? Is he polite? Is he contributing to society? That's it. There should be no judgements on the colour of his skin or what he wears." We should have a better understanding of how history has been shaped, he says, because history has been shaped to highlight one section of society, which is why the older generation has a misconception of equality. Publishing has a role to play in this, he adds, by ensuring everyone who has a story to tell gets to tell that story. "The fabric of our society is a patchwork quilt, that's what makes it so great... I feel honoured and blessed, but I know I'm in a privileged position. I hope people who want to do things like this are allowed to tell their stories."

In the introduction to *Silence is Not an Option*, he talks about inspiration and lists the people who have inspired him, such as John Barnes, Nelson Mandela and his brother Stephen, who he says "set the bar" as a role model. "He was a super-cool guy and I always try to emulate him," he says. "Lots of adults think I'm going to say 'life is bad because Stephen died', but I explain that my life took a path at that point, then show all the positives that came later," he explains. "If I can shape hearts and minds, I want to show that we should all like each other at some level. We are all human beings."

Review: Charlotte Eyre 15 January 2021 <https://www.thebookseller.com/profile/stuart-lawrence-without-optimism-and-hope-i-wouldn-t-be-able-do-things-i-do-1233437>

RESOURCES

Made in Britain: 'Now more than ever, we must involve and empower people'

In the first of a new short film series supported by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, created in collaboration with local communities, three working-class women from Doncaster take us on a journey through 2020. With Brexit, the pandemic and the lingering effects of de-industrialisation as a backdrop, the film follows three women as they try to turn around their own fortunes and those of their communities. For Rachel that is Doncaster, and its cultural scene. For Lindsay, that community is online as she fights back against bullying and discrimination, all while doing the underpaid and challenging work of being a carer. Pam is fighting for women's pension rights. Collectively they embody the tensions and hopes of past and future, just as those are colliding in modern Britain.

<https://www.theguardian.com/membership/2021/mar/29/made-in-britain-video-series>

DIARY DATES

APRIL

12 'Mekong River' – Zoom talk by professional photographer Jim Holmes for Chester World Development Forum 7– 8pm. Jim's illustrated talk is about the Mekong river and how climate change and hydro dam construction is affecting the livelihoods and sustainability of this great river and the people who rely upon it for their living and survival. For the Zoom link please email bernard.payne691@btinternet.com

19 Online conversation on "The Politics of Division" 7pm - 8.30pm hosted by Church and Peace in Britain and Ireland. "Is the UK government pursuing a "white nationalist" agenda to split our communities?" Join us on zoom to discuss this issue! After a short introduction to "unconscious bias" we will hear from Simon Barrow (Director of the ecumenical thinktank Ekklesia) and Bishop John Perumbalath (Chair of Churches' Refugee Network). There will also be opportunities for small-group discussion. Register here: <https://www.church-and-peace.org/en/2021/02/online-conversation-politics-of-division/>

21 International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination un.org/en/events

22 World Water Day worldwaterday.org

22 Stephen Lawrence Day <https://stephenlawrenceday.org/stephen-lawrence-day-foundation/>

26 Chernobyl Day chernobyl-day.org

27 Earth Hour www.earthhour.org

MAY

4 Day of Prayer for the Victims and Survivors of Abuse <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/new-date-for-the-day-of-prayer-for-the-victims-and-survivors-of-abuse/>

10-16 Christian Aid Week Virtual events:

- **Quizian Aid** 7pm Saturday 8 May. A fun-filled online quiz has returned from last year, suitable for all the family. It'll be hosted by some special guests, who will be announced soon.
 - **Song of the Prophets** Join us on Tuesday 18 May to witness the debut performance of a new orchestral work *Song of the Prophets: A Requiem for the Climate*. There will be an address from Dr Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury, and a panel discussion with climate campaigners. Christian Aid has collaborated with Chine ke! Orchestra - Europe's first majority-BME orchestra - and St Paul's Institute, on this new piece of music based on Christian Aid's climate change work.
- Further details:** www.christianaid.org.uk/appeals/key-appeals/christian-aid-week/virtual-events

15 International Conscientious Objectors Day. Every year on May 15 we remember those who have established and are maintaining the right to refuse to kill, both in the past and today. Hundreds of people across the world are imprisoned or forced to flee their home countries for refusing to join the armed forces. On May 15 we stand in solidarity with them, as well as celebrating the memory of all those throughout history who have resisted conscription.

<https://www.ppu.org.uk/international-conscientious-objectors-day>

JUNE

24-25 'Life on the Breadline' End of Project Conference.

Conference Programme: <https://breadlineresearch.coventry.ac.uk/events/end-of-project-conference/>

Register here: <https://coventry.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/life-on-the-breadline-end-of-project-conference-reg>

NJPN continues to have a weekly column in *The Universe*, and some of these are uploaded onto our website at www.justice-and-peace.org.uk

• Many items taken from the daily e-bulletin Independent Catholic News www.indcatholicnews.com an invaluable free resource for up-to-date J&P news, events and in-depth articles.

• Sign up for regular news and information from NJPN including **a new fortnightly e-bulletin with a comprehensive round-up of current events, campaigns, e-petitions and resources** (plus copies of this newsletter & back issues for NJPN North West) at www.justice-and-peace.org.uk or contact bulletin@justice-and-peace.org or admin@justice-and-peace.org.uk 020 7901 4864

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