

**MANCHESTER & WARRINGTON AREA QUAKER MEETING
NEWSLETTER NO 17 MARCH 2023**



**Picture in Manchester Art Gallery – see page 3
Image courtesy of Manchester Art Gallery**

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PICTURE OF ACTOR IRA ALDRIDGE IN MANCHESTER ART GALLERY

The first picture purchased by Manchester Art Gallery was bought in 1827. It was of the black actor, Ira Aldridge (1807-1867), who played many roles, including Shakespearian ones, not only Othello, which he played in Manchester in 1827, but also King Lear, Richard III and Shylock. Ira Aldridge made impassioned speeches demanding the end of slavery.

NEXT NEWSLETTER – EARLIER DEADLINE

The deadline for submitting items for the April newsletter will be earlier than usual, it will be Wednesday 29 March. (To be safe, I suggest you aim for 28 March.) Clare McCann is going on holiday at the end of March, so will distribute the newsletter by email on 30 March before she leaves.

LIST OF MEMBERS AND ATTENDERS

The 2023 LOMA is now available. Printed copies will be available from your local Meeting House

ERROR IN JANUARY NEWSLETTER

In the January newsletter, I published Ursula Sharma's article "Racism; a journey", but missed the last two paragraphs. Here is the whole article. Elizabeth Coleman - Editor

Racism; a journey by Ursula Sharma, South Manchester Meeting

George Floyd's brutal murder jolted me into troubled reflection on the nature of racism. Like many others I read the most recent books on anti racism, the testimonies of people of colour, and the Black History which I was never taught in school. I learnt much about ways in which I had doubtless perpetuated racism myself through the thoughtless repetition of racist tropes, unintentional micro aggressions and the very enjoyment of white privilege. I learnt that good intentions are not enough and have never been enough.

My first knowing experience of racism was fifty years ago when I married my Indian husband (now sadly passed away). Looking for accommodation in the London of the sixties was painful. I scoured the Evening Standard for adverts, ruling out any that explicitly or implicitly excluded 'coloured people'. We subsequently moved to Keele when I started work at the University there. I joined an 'anti racist group' whose main idea of combatting racism was trying to scrub out National Front graffiti and to keep an eye on the pub where the local fascists

met. -These were not bad things to do but at that time we regarded racism as something that wicked or ignorant people displayed - not of course ourselves. This all white group certainly did not conceive that they could be guilty of any kind of racism themselves. Later my husband and I joined a group of people , mainly South Asian and Caribbean, campaigning for a race relations officer for the Potteries. We were ultimately successful. But at that time we had a rather 'top down' approach to racism and saw institutional change and government policy as the starting point for addressing racism.

We lived on the campus which was a very nice environment for the children to grow up in. However when they went to school they had to deal with the usual childish forms of racism, and also racism from some of the teachers. The racism they were exposed to was perhaps less crude than it might have been in a different area, but it was hurtful nonetheless. For some time we belonged to a group of multi racial families (we called ourselves 'Harmony'). who shared information and gave each other support. It was painful to realise that as a white mother I had been giving my children a poor preparation for the racism they would have to deal with in life. Their father's response was to insist on high (sometimes unrealistically high) educational achievement on the grounds that 'when you look for a job you will have to be twice as good as a white person'. I often feel that I underestimated the racism that would make it hard for him to find permanent fulfilling work. Racism was not just something that the bad people had inside them but something that ran through the fabric of society..

Happily my three children have found work that interests them (

though it does not make them rich!) .They have all married people of colour with the result that I am the only white person in the immediate family apart from my sister. I have learnt much from my son and my two daughters . I am greatly indebted to those people of colour who have generously shared painful stories and fed them into ongoing public conversations about racism and the residue of colonialism. I have learnt so much from writers like Afua Hirsch , Akala and Sathnam Sanghera . They have written about both the brutal and the more subtle manifestations of 'everyday' racism' embedded in our language and practices. I had not previously recognised these and certainly not challenged them .Facing up to racism,(my own and other people's) is an ongoing learning process and does not have an end point. Different people will find themselves on the same journey, travelling from different starting points and via different routes. I am indebted to all those who have helped me pick my way among thorns

But Quakers are not just a collection of individuals. They are a collectivity and as such make some part of this journey together. Quakers have had to look at the history of the Society of Friends and how it has benefited from and even participated in the enslavement of African people. White Friends have had to reckon with the fact that our Society has colluded with the forces which have upheld white power and made white lives more comfortable. Our Area Meeting has declared its intention to be an anti racist Meeting. But this on its own will not make it one.

I learnt a huge amount from Helen Minnis's Swarthmore lecture— in fact I listened to it three times. Helen emphasizes that

Quakers need to step out of their comfort zones. Many of us live in a homogeneous white middle class bubble, so we need to diversify our social networks, interact with a wider range of people in terms of race, ethnicity, class. We need to listen to different voices. We might, for instance engage more closely with other faith organisations in our own area . We might look for other groups in our communities that are working against racism and see if there is scope for us to work together. Diversity, as Helen says, is essentially dynamic. Different groups all bring different things to the table and this makes for creativity. To my mind one of the most valuable resources that Quakers can bring to the table is our own special and spiritual tradition of non violent resistance and peaceful protest. An anti-racist Meeting has a lot to offer if we are prepared to swim into new waters, which, as Helen says, may be chillier but will open us to new understandings of racism.

Planning for your infirmity, old age and end of life

Over recent months the AM pastoral care team have encouraged Friends to share their plans / thoughts about the End of Life. We understand that people don't always want to put these onto paper, but of course that is eventually helpful to others, whether family or friends (and the Meeting)

If you haven't done this, you can obtain a form from your PCT or Admin.

Regional Gathering

Saturday 4th March 2023

Central Manchester Meeting House 10.00 Welcome – 16.00 Departure

Anti-Racism & Change from Within

All Welcome.

Open to everyone aged 11 and above.

Morning Programme In-person and on Zoom 10.00 to 13.00:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84717997717?pwd=MmtkK0wwdIY4cUMyZHNCYjZkc1k1Zz09>

10.30 Meeting for Worship

11.00 film ***Exposed*** Racism in the NHS

Link to the film <https://nursingnarratives.com/exposed/>

12.00 Panel Discussion ***Nursing Narratives Team***

13.00 LUNCH *Bring Your Own, Drinks and Cake Provided.*

Afternoon Programme In-Person only:

- Holy Play on the story of Ruth, with Wendy Hampton
- Exploring our Racism and prejudice, with Jude Acton
- Peace Building, with Philip Austin, NFPB

15.30 Worship Sharing

16.00 Farewell.

Booking requested via: admin@manchesterquakers.org.uk

Exploring a Quaker Commitment to Reparative Justice.

A Pendle Hill/Woodbrooke online course

presented during Saturday 28th and Sunday 29th January 2023.

by Margaret Calvert, Sale Meeting

Approximately 8 British Friends, and 40 Friends from different Yearly Meetings in the United States of America, attended from a range of time-zones. The customary mix of worship, presentations and opportunities to talk in small groups quickly brought the group together in trust.

Two strands linger in my mind, and I should like to share them.

1. A Black Friend invited all participants to think about the first two verses in the Bible.

In the beginning, God made the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was without shape and it was empty. Deep water covered the earth and everywhere was dark. The Spirit of God moved above the water.

<https://www.easyenglish.bible/bible/easy/genesis/1/>

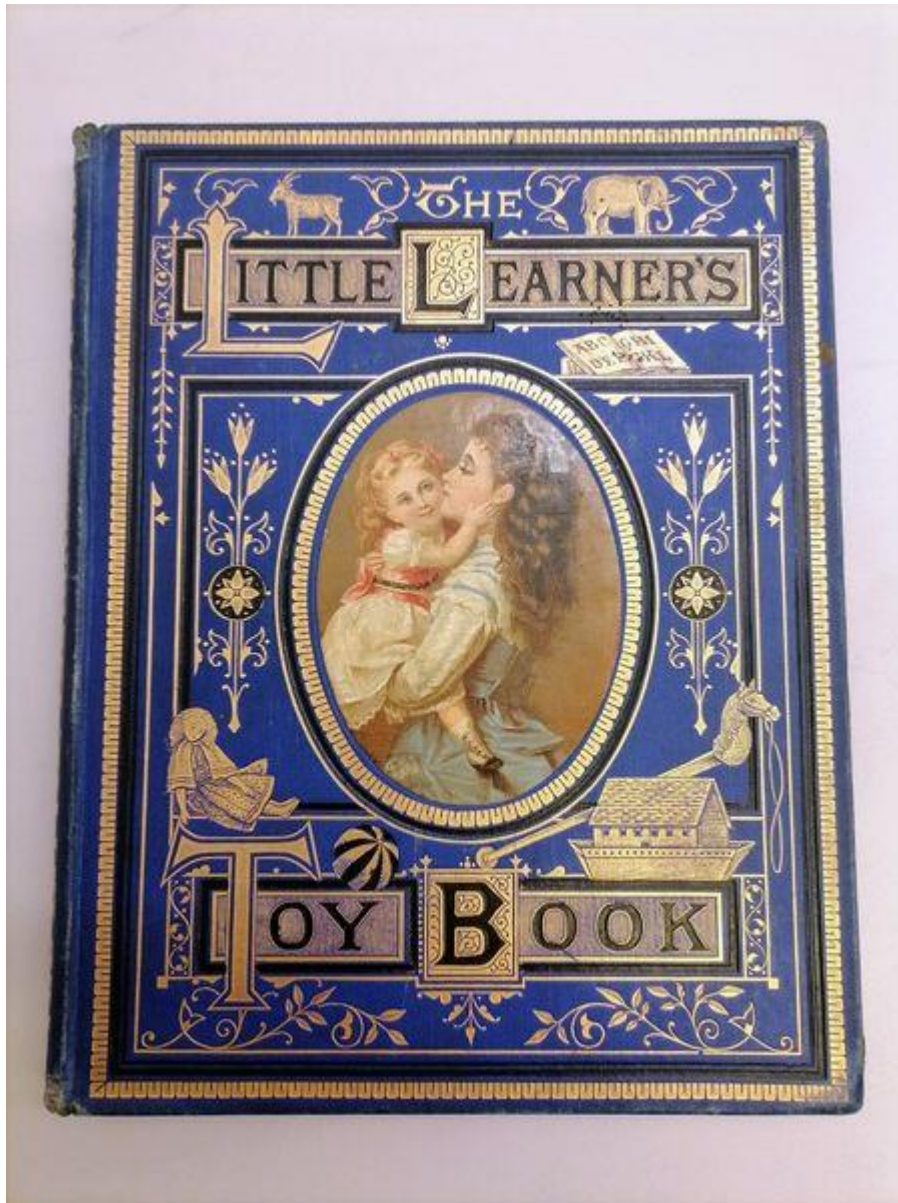
They emphasised that ‘everywhere was dark and the Spirit of God moved’ but we skip over the Darkness to read about Light. We often speak of God as Love, which means that Love moved above the darkness’. Imagine, we are asked, imagine Love moving, swirling, reaching, singing. But our society teaches that darkness is to be feared, and Black baby boys absorb the facts of their darkness, that they are to be feared because of their darkness. They defend them-

selves and are punished. Imagine Love, imagine God, in those Black babies and boys and men.

2. In answer to the question ‘*what contribution can I make*’, there were two main responses:
 - a. If right, look into your family history, speak to family members, pay Reparations directly to the descendants of those affected.
 - b. Assess your resources (time, ability, money, property) and dedicate those resources to Racial Justice.
 - c. If you, or any organisation you belong to, consider making a financial donation, find a Black partner organisation and listen to what they have to say. That’s the ‘No decision about me without me’ rubric.

The course added information and nuances to books, conversations, conferences, and articles encountered over the past decade: for me it was a worthwhile investment of time and money. I encourage other Friends to engage with others engaged in whatever interests you via Pendle Hill/Woodbrooke courses. Having viewpoints from varying traditions was stimulating and challenging.

**ONE OF THE BOOKS THAT DAVID BLAMIRE DONATED TO
RYLANDS LIBRARY**



Toy books were illustrated children's books that became popular in the Victorian era. This delightful one from our Alphabet Book Collection has ABC, bible and home pictures and first lessons in reading.

NOMINATIONS SCHEDULE

by Elizabeth Coleman

In the last Newsletter, I told you about the newly revised Trustees Handbook. There is another Area Meeting document to which I would like to draw your attention.

As Clerk of Area Meeting Nominations Committee, I rely a lot on an Excel spreadsheet known as the Nominations Schedule, which lists all appointments by Area Meeting, when the term of office is due to end, whether it is the first or second term, and highlights when someone needs to be reappointed or replaced. Clare McCann updates it after each Area Meeting. I think it would be of interest to other Friends, because it gives information such as who are Elders, members of Pastoral Care Team, Trustees, Quaker Trading directors, Area Meeting Clerk, Assistant Clerk and Treasurer and other roles.

It also makes one aware of the many and various roles that people take on, such as running the Summer School for young people, running Quaker Quest, being responsible for the Quaker Work Fund, being a Trustee of Quaker Congo Partnership, and serving on the Council for Christians and Jews.

If you are interested in receiving the schedule by email, please contact Clare McCann on admin@manchesterquakers.org.uk

MEETING FACE TO FACE **by Elizabeth Coleman**

During lockdown, we missed seeing each other face to face. Now we are happy to be attending our local meetings for worship in person, but we still miss seeing people from other meetings, as most contact with them is by Zoom. We miss the informal conversations that cement friendship. Here are some opportunities for seeing each other face to face in March:

Regional Gathering - 4th March 10am to 4pm at Central Manchester Meeting House, M2 5NS. This is an opportunity to meet Friends from our own Area Meeting and from other Area Meetings in our region. The theme is “Anti-Racism and Change from Within.” See page 8.

Sometimes Friends meet for a coffee or a meal and would be happy for others to join them.

The Environment Group will be meeting socially for lunch on Sunday 19 March at 1pm, at Waganama, St Peter’s Square, not far from Central Manchester Meeting House. You are welcome to join us.

Elizabeth Coleman and Ina Vogelsang are meeting for coffee on Wednesday 22 March at 11am at North Star Deli Chorlton, 418 Wilbraham Road, Manchester M21 0SD, (near Chorlton metro stop). You are welcome to come.

On Saturday 25 March at 2pm there is a Northern Friends Peace Group event on “Rethinking Security” at Central

Manchester Friends Meeting House – a chance to meet Friends from our own and neighbouring Quaker meetings face to face – see page 43.

If you're planning to meet a friend for a coffee, or doing something like visiting a museum, and would like to invite others to join you, send me the details and I'll put them in the newsletter.

For these meetings, there's no need to notify anyone, you can just turn up, but if you want to make contact before coming, you can look for contact details in the LOMA (List of Members and Attenders), or email admin@manchesterquakers.org.uk who will forward your email.

LOVING EARTH DISPLAY OF PANELS AT SALFORD UNIVERSITY by Sandra Dutson

Owing to a flood and consequent damage to some electrics in the building, then delays in securing replacement parts, there has been a problem in finalising plans. However it does now look like some kind of display will take place starting March 13th and continuing to March 24th in the Hub at the Salford University Media city campus, with a panel making workshop on the afternoon of Wednesday March 15th. We are hoping that there will be confirmation of the event on Monday March 6th and so we can then release publicity. Once that is available I hope Clare may be able to circulate the more detailed information.

QUAKER QUEST – AN APPEAL FOR HELP

Quaker Quest sessions have been organised starting on March 6 with the last session on April 3 (see page 16). The organising group have done all they can, but they need our help. The sessions need a good number of people new or relatively new to Quakerism to make them a success. Few people come because of advertisements or information on social media. Most come because they are personally invited to do so. Please encourage new(ish) people in your local meetings to attend as many sessions as possible, and invite other friends and contacts who might be interested – perhaps come with them. Then there can be good discussions where people explore on a relatively equal basis. The problem if you mix experienced Friends with newcomers is that the newcomers may ask a lot of questions about Quakerism to the experienced Friends, and listen to their replies, and the exploration together will not happen.

If you are a new(ish) Friend, please try to attend. If you are an experienced Friend, please encourage new(ish) people and others to attend. (Of course, you are also welcome to come.)

Quaker Quest will take place on Mondays in March and April at Central Manchester Meeting, starting at 7pm, with tea and coffee served from 6.30pm.

Quaker Quest takes the format of three people sharing their stories linked to the themes with opportunity to ask questions and share a short meeting for worship.

Quaker Quest 2023

Want to learn about a spiritual path that is simple, adventurous and radical?

Come to any of these free events that will welcome anyone to meet, share discussion and learn more about Quakers and our values.

Monday 6 March
Quakers and Worship

Monday 13 March
Quakers and God

Monday 20 March
Quakers and Peace

Monday 27 March
Quakers and Equality

Monday 3 April Quakers
and Sustainability



7pm to 9pm, Arrive 6.30pm for refreshments

Where? Friends Meeting House 6 Mount Street Manchester M2 5NS



For more information and to book your place, please visit <https://bit.ly/QuakerQuestManchester> or email quakerquest21mw@outlook.com

NEWS FROM CONGO POPE VISITS DRC

The Pope went on a 3-day visit to Congo, arriving in Kinshasa on 31 January. Below are extracts from a speech he made:

“... this country, massively plundered, has not benefited adequately from its immense resources.”

“It is a tragedy that these lands, and more generally the whole African continent, continue to endure various forms of exploitation. The poison of greed has smeared its diamonds with blood.”

“Political exploitation gave way to an economic colonialism that was equally enslaving.”

“Hands off the Democratic Republic of the Congo! Hands off Africa! Stop choking Africa: it is not a mine to be stripped or a terrain to be plundered.”

See video www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_D0B1kL5NY

UN REPORT CONFIRMS RWANDAN SUPPORT OF VIOLENT GROUP IN DRC

According to a report by a group of UN experts obtained by Le Monde (The French newspaper), Rwandan soldiers have participated in attacks against the Congolese military, in support of insurgent group M23.

MEMBERSHIP

We are asked by Area Meeting to discuss membership. Robert Wilson asked for this item to be put in the newsletter as a contribution to the discussion.

The history of membership by Ben Pink Dandelion

Formal membership was introduced only in 1737 but for the first eighty-five years of Quakerism in Britain it was clear who was and who was not a Friend. The distinctive behaviour, customs and witness of Friends made them stand out even before these 'peculiarities' became more formally part of what it is to be a Quaker. Membership was only introduced as a way of clarifying which Friends belonged in which area so that poor relief could be handed out by the appropriate Monthly Meeting. In this way, membership was not about defining who was a Quaker but where you were one.

However, the eighteenth century saw a tightening of Quaker discipline: with the concept of membership came a concept of 'disownment' and many Friends had their membership removed in this way for a whole range of 'spiritual delinquencies'. Most common was 'marrying-out', that is marrying a non-Quaker, but Friends were disowned for bankruptcy, adultery, drunkenness, even for owning a piano! Membership had come to denote that you knew how to be a Quaker.

By 1859, membership was at its lowest ever. From an estimated 60,000 Friends in 1660, London Yearly Meeting had shrunk to some 13,000. The zealous enforcement of the discipline and the lack of inducement to join a group so different from 'the world' were seen as the main contributing factors. Yearly Meeting in 1859 decided Friends could marry non-Friends and retain their membership and in 1860 the part of the query on plain dress and plain speech was removed. Disownment is very rare these days. These changes did not redefine membership, simply what it took to be a member.

From the earliest days, membership had been automatically conferred on the children of Quakers, as you would expect given its first function. As more Friends joined as adults and as membership thus became more of a personal choice, rather than administrative tool, birthright membership began to be questioned. It was abolished in 1959 though parents can still opt for membership for their children. Children are typically asked about Quaker membership when they turn sixteen.

Today the meaning of membership is less and less clear. Whilst it does not mark a spiritual rite of passage, as, say baptism does, membership carries a great psychological value for many who choose it. There are legal considerations about the part non-members can play in the life of the organisation but in other ways, though, more and more attenders (those who attend regularly but have not yet joined) are deciding to contribute fully to the meeting without formalising their commitment. At the same time, dual membership is

increasingly common where a Quaker is also a full member of another church/faith. Disownment is now very rare and membership is today perhaps best described as a personal symbol of commitment to the Quaker way.

Part of Area Meeting Minute 2 Feb 2023

Meeting for Sufferings is asking all Area Meetings to consider the future of Membership and provide a minute with the results of our prayerful discernment by August this year. A call for discernment with additional information has been circulated and includes four questions:

- why do we have membership?
- what is it for?
- is it still necessary?
- if yes, what form(s) could it take?

We will plan a substantial discussion item on this subject at our July Area Meeting. In the meantime, Local Meetings, the AM Pastoral Care Team and AM Elders are invited to organise discussion groups or other activities that will help us explore the issue together and prepare for discernment. We ask Friends to inform themselves about Membership, read the relevant section of Quaker Faith and Practice and expect to use the newsletter to share information and views.

QUAKER FAITH AND PRACTICE 25.13

This was read at Area Meeting on 2 February:

That the sweat and tedious labour of the farmer, early and late, cold and hot, wet and dry, should be converted into the pleasure of a small number of men – that continued severity should be laid on nineteen parts of the land to feed the inordinate lusts and delicate appetites of the twentieth, is so far from the will of the great Governor of the world ... [it] is wretched and blasphemous.

William Penn, 1669.

ECOCIDE

At February Area Meeting, we asked our Clerk, Ben Lukey, to sign a petition on our behalf to make serious environmental damage an international crime. To sign the petition as an individual, google STOP ECOCIDE.

New Guide to Quaker Clerking

on the Woodbrooke website:

<https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/guide-to-quaker-clerking/>

A useful resource for Friends who are unsure about taking on being clerks – it's quite user-friendly. Here is an extract:

Having an ending time

People often wonder (perhaps even during a lengthy meeting) if it's OK to have a definite ending time to a Quaker business meeting. There is no guidance on that. The principle remains that the meeting is being led by the Spirit, however I have frequently found that God is pretty good at accommodating train times, end of rental time in a public building, children's needs and so on. A tricky call for both clerks and elders. On the other hand, seemingly tediously slow meetings often end up poorly attended and that is in nobody's interest. Sensing how the meeting is coping and whether focus is being lost through tiredness is part of the clerk's skill set. Body language will help you discern this if you look carefully – or you could just ask the meeting if it has run out of energy. They will tell you!

MORE NEWS FROM CONGO

An interview with Joel Amani, who lives in Bukavu, South Kivu, about 8 hours from N Kivu by boat on Lake Kivu.

by Elizabeth Coleman



How is life in Bukavu? Is it getting harder for people?

Life is not easy, and is becoming more and more difficult for people, because the value of the Congolese franc is falling, so everything is more expensive, even basic necessities, even transport, everything is revalued upwards .

Do you feel safe from violence in Bukavu?

I am very very scared, which is why I want to protect myself and the local population. If the rebels attack Goma, the capital of North Kivu, then we will be in danger in Bukavu, because North Kivu/Goma is very close to South Kivu/Bukavu. We ask the Quakers of Manchester to help us in prayer, lobbying and concrete actions so that peace

and security can be found in the DRC because not only is purchasing power galloping, life is becoming difficult, but also added to this is the insecurity orchestrated by the aggression of the DRC by Rwanda and its rebel movement M23. Please do not resign yourself to the violence that devours our people, the country is largely plundered and fails enough to take advantage of its immense resources. My country deserves a space of attention, to be respected and listened to.

What can you do to reduce the danger?

To reduce the danger, I refer to the words of the Holy Father during his visit to Kinshasa who said that we (Congolese) are diamonds (the best combinations of carbon), it is just necessary that each Congolese plays his role very well. That the rulers protect its population first, that the CSOs accompany the population and that the latter be much more vigilant in denouncing all the anti-values that plague the home state. Morning after morning, we are living a drama before which the international community closes its eyes, ears and mouths. The rebels rape, they kill, they loot in the DRC in full view of all. I ask the international community to open their eyes and to stop supporting the known enemies of the DRC (Rwanda and its M23) because reports support the involvement of certain States in favour of Rwanda, cowards and traitors which aim at the disenchantment, the warlike destabilization, the chaos and the balkanization of my beautiful country. Rather, we invite the international community and all its initiatives to support healthy actions

for the restoration of peace and security in my country. Finally, we ask our government to assume its responsibilities to protect its population.

I imagine you were happy that the Pope visited the Congo. (note – Joel is Catholic)

Of course I was happy because it has been almost 40 years since a pope arrived in the DRC. The coming of Pope Francis was a privilege, an enormous grace to receive him in the DRC. The pope's visit certainly contributed to strengthening the determination, he was the bearer of a message of peace, hope, comfort, strengthening and fraternity. In his speech, the holy father asked all the enemies of the Congo to withdraw their hands from the DRC and Africa, to stop suffocating the DRC because it is not a mine to be exploited nor a land to be robbed. His wish is that the DRC, my country, be the protagonist of its own destiny, that it breathes and lives in peace.

Did he specifically mention Rwanda?

He did not specifically mention Rwanda, but in a speech in the presence of the pope, our president Tshisekedi mentioned Rwanda as an enemy of the DRC which supports the M23 for its destabilization. As soon as the Pope arrived, His Excellency the President of the Republic and Head of State did not hesitate to present to the sovereign Pontiff the challenges facing the country, in

particular those related to security, the economy and to the protection of the environment.

Does the DRC have other enemies?

I would say Uganda, because some of the rebels currently in DR Congo are from Uganda. There is a rebel movement called ADF-NALU, and some of its soldiers are said to come from Uganda. They rape, steal, plunder the property of peaceful citizens. The military elements of the East African Community are now in North Kivu as tourists because they have not been able to stop our enemies or protect the Congolese population.

PHOTOS RECEIVED FROM GEORGE BANI



6 February - People in Goma, N Kivu, held demonstrations and blocked roads to protest at the failure of UN and East African Community troops to protect civilians. George says “We need your prayers.”



Here is the translation of the yellow placard by George:

"Congolese let us wake up the country is going". This is a call for a mass mobilization.

CMC WORKER MEETS MINISTER

Joel Amani met Koko Ciremwami, the Minister of Mines for South Kivu, at a meeting he attended in Bujumbura, Burundi, and again on February 26 in Bukavu, DRC, where Joel lives. He told the Minister about Conflict Minerals Campaign, and the Minister was very supportive, and said he would attend CMC meetings in DRC.

KATH HAWORTH VISITS ECCLES



Kath Haworth is the Trustee responsible for Safeguarding. She is visiting meetings to raise awareness of safeguarding issues. Kath is meant to work in a team of 3, including two Safeguarding Co-ordinators, but both these posts are currently vacant. AM Nominations Committee is trying as a matter of urgency to find people to serve in these roles. Kath's Trusteeship will end at the end of 2023.

APPEAL FROM AREA MEETING NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

Where someone is concerned about a safeguarding issue, whether major or very minor, it is not helpful to talk about it with others at the Local Meeting, as it could lead to gossip rather than resolution of the issue. However, it should not be ignored. The course of action that should be taken, according to Area Meeting's Safeguarding Policy, is that it should be reported to the Safeguarding Co-ordinators, who decide on what, if anything, needs to be done. The Co-ordinators can get confidential advice from 31:8, a safeguarding organisation of which Area Meeting is a paid-up member.

However, at present there is no-one in post as Safeguarding Co-ordinator. For the time being, concerns should be reported to Kath Haworth, the Trustee responsible for safeguarding.

But we urgently need to have Safeguarding Co-ordinators in post. They need to have good judgement, be able to assess when they need advice, they need to be calm and sensible, and they need to have knowledge of safeguarding.

If you are interested in learning more about the role, please contact Kath. If you don't have her contact details, contact Clare McCann on admin@manchesterquakers.org.uk and she will put you in touch.

If you have suggestions of people who might serve in this way, please contact Elizabeth Coleman or your local rep on AM Nominations Committee.

**INTERVIEW WITH YOLANDE AMANA-GHOLA,
A SALFORD LABOUR COUNCILLOR
by Elizabeth Coleman**

Yolande Amana-Ghola arrived in the UK from the Democratic Republic of Congo as an asylum seeker in 2002. She knew a bit of English, but it was very basic. She was granted Indefinite Leave to Remain in 2010, and now lives in Salford with her family and serves the community as a Labour Councillor.



Could you describe how you became a councillor?

I loved helping the community, and volunteered a lot, for 2 charities and for the Citizens Advice Bureau. I was a parent governor in my children's school. I was interested in politics.

Do you feel that you are able to help the people of Salford now you are a councillor? How can you do this?

In many different ways, advocating for them, for example if they have housing issues and I contact the council on their behalf, advising, sometimes interpreting. I'm on committees – Adult Health Scrutiny Committee, Licencing Committee and on SACRE (about religious education in schools). I attend full council meetings. I represent my residents in the ward.

What do you enjoy most about the work of a councillor?

I like supporting people and feel fulfilment and joy when I manage to resolve their problems, and when they say “Thank you for listening to me.” People have been trying to get a problem solved for a long time, but when I ring as a Councillor, people take notice and things get done.

What do you find most difficult about the work of a councillor?

It's a demanding but rewarding job, and it needs more time than I expected.

Could you tell me a bit more about your career?

I graduated in Health and Social Care with the University of Bolton in 2019 with 1st class honours. I went on to do my PGCE

(which I got with 1st class honours) as I like teaching and promoting education. I also work as a supply teacher. I am currently studying for my Masters in Health and Social Care with the University of Bolton. My aim is to do my PhD one day and to become a university lecturer.

Have you ever experienced racism in the UK?

Not very striking racism, but from time to time they make you feel that you're different.

Is there anything else you would like to say?

I'm happy to be in Salford, and am grateful to Greater Manchester and Salford for the opportunities they have offered me. My voluntary work is a way of giving back what they have given me.

Yolande's daughter, Rebecca has her picture displayed in the New Adelphi Exhibition Gallery in Salford University. It says:

On the wall we see Rebecca Ghola, from Warm Hut UK, requesting better education and information on Pre-colonial Africa. "We think that a better education and understanding of Africa and African people will change the way others look at us. It can help decrease racism and ignorance against African people.



We strongly believe that schools in the UK should include the pre-colonial history of Africa. We also think that we should start educating on black inventors and scientists.”

(Note – Warm Hut UK is a charity based in Salford)

Dancing over the globe

by Bonnie Meekums, Central Manchester LM

I returned from New Zealand in early December, having gone to teach Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) and see family.

When I arrived, it was still desperately cold at times, but by the time I left it was turning to summer. And then I hit Manchester in the middle of a fuel crisis. Deep joy. But back to teaching. I was teaching about trauma and the body for the Dance Therapy Association of Australasia. Sadly, they were not quite ready for face-to-face teaching so I taught online, but at least I was in the same time zone as some participants. Yay! It's always lovely to engage with colleagues.

One of the areas I focussed on is the importance of psychological safety, a key factor that emerged from my PhD research and which is supported by more recent work around the polyvagal theory.

Hybrids

As most of you know, I don't just teach DMT. I spend a fair bit of time engaged in creative writing.

One good thing that emerged from the pandemic is my willingness to work online, though I don't like spending too many hours glued to my computer. Through Twitter, I met a lovely poet called Nolcha Fox with whom I have been writing collaborative, hybrid pieces.

If you are interested to read them, they are very short and so don't take up too much time:

Nails and Spoons, Shutting in, Shutting out, and La Mer published by Roi Fainéant Literary Press, 16.1.23. Available

online: https://www.roifaineantpress.com/post/nails-and-spoons-fiction-by-bonnie-mee-kums-poetry-by-nolcha-fox?fbclid=IwAR2IWvIWSXW3jol5Op7DK53qA4ZtY9R6ps36gKZA1lvO6PiP_fl2DWLeqjY

IRL

In the rest of my life, I am walking this month (February) for Refuge, a UK charity that supports people who suffer domestic abuse.

Here's a link to my fundraising page:

<https://www.facebook.com/donate/1341378816701566/>

And that's kind of it, in terms of news. I'm off to Poland to teach DMT in June, and I have a few other writing irons in the fire, but my lips are sealed on that front. For now.

CLAIMING BENEFITS
INTERVIEW WITH 4 CLAIMANTS OR FORMER CLAIMANTS
BY ELIZABETH COLEMAN

While some Friends, such as those who claim benefits themselves, or who work as social workers, know about those struggling to survive on a low incomes, and often with no savings at all, others are more removed from this reality. I decided to interview anonymously four people I know who are claiming or have claimed benefits (JSA etc), asking them all the same questions.

When you go to the Job Centre, do you think that the person who deals with you there is trying hard to ensure that you get the benefits to which you are entitled as soon as possible?

INTERVIEWEE 1 – I only went there twice. The first worker was very good and helpful, helped me to get a job. The second person was also very good.

INTERVIEWEE 2 – No, they don't care about us, they don't work for our benefit. They're like opposition, they work for the government. They work against us, to make us sad. Every Job Centre is the same.

INTERVIEWEE 3 – No. They do a job, they read a script.

INTERVIEWEE 4 - No. They try to find reasons for you not to get benefits.

Were you always treated with courtesy and respect?

INTERVIEWEE 1 – The problem is if you don't get a job for a long time. But I got a job quickly so it was OK.

INTERVIEWEE 2 – Yes, but it's just a formality.

INTERVIEWEE 3 – No. If you turn up 10 minutes late, you get sanctioned. If you arrive 10 minutes early you are made to stand outside in the rain even if you have a broken leg. They won't let you in.

INTERVIEWEE 4 - Most of the time the person at the door will welcome you in. They make you come at a certain time, but you have to wait – they deal with you an hour, sometimes two hours later. I missed an appointment for a good reason, and came to see the person dealing with me, and he said “The decision will be made”, and the tone of voice was rude. They put things on the system so you don't get paid, like “He has no proof of looking for work” when you do have proof. I had changed my email address and they looked at the old emails and didn't give me a chance to explain.

Do you consider that the person at the Job Centre had the skills and training to give you the help you needed?

INTERVIEWEE 1 – Yes. They helped me to get a job.

INTERVIEWEE 2 – Some know, some don't. Sometimes they give you wrong information. I needed to know about cost of living money which I did not receive, and they did not give me information. The job centre was meant to refer me for training that I needed, and they did not.

INTERVIEWEE 3 – No, I don't think they've got a clue.

INTERVIEWEE 4 - Not always. Some lack interpersonal skills.

(The job centre employees can initiate a process of sanctions, whereby all benefits are cut, and the claimant is left with nothing to pay rent or buy food. This can lead them to become street homeless.)

Have you ever been sanctioned by the Job Centre? Why? How did you manage?

INTERVIEWEE 1 – No.

INTERVIEWEE 2 – I have never been sanctioned because I know it is quite difficult to get back to a normal position when you are sanctioned, so I always manage not to be at risk of being sanctioned. I used to work and my employer missed paying me, because they made a mistake in my bank details. My bank rejected the payment. In the meantime, I had 3 months before I received the pay. I explained to the Job Centre that I needed money to pay my rent. That has happened twice. They did not pay me anything. The Job Centre has to pay your rent if you are working but do not receive enough money. I went to complain 2 or 3 times, but they did not assist me. Only Citizens Advice Bureau assisted me.

INTERVIEWEE 3 – Yes. Because they made a mistake. I ended up taking them to court, and won. I was without money for nine months. I managed carefully.

(During my 9 months without money included ending up homeless in London. Met some great people "Carefully" was a pseudonym for living on the streets. Long story.)

INTERVIEWEE 4 - Yes, all the time. Because when I apply for jobs, they often say “You have to prove it.” How can I prove that I went into a shop and gave my CV? Am I supposed to take a video? Then my phone would be full of videos. Now I only look for jobs online so I have proof that I have looked for work. I appeal against sanctions, and usually the appeal works. Sometimes it doesn’t and the sanction continues. When I have to appeal, it delays the payment, so I am without income for up to 4 months, until they accept the appeal. I was helped by friends to buy food and pay the rent. I went into rent arrears and council tax arrears, and had to pay a lot of extra money to clear debts. When you don’t pay debts, you get penalties added, and the debts just keep going up

Is there anything else you would like to say?

INTERVIEWEE 1 – I don’t know a lot about it as I’ve only been there twice.

INTERVIEWEE 2 – The amount the Job Centre pay is a very small amount. They pay rent, and they pay me £301 a month. I have to pay for a bus pass, £76 a month, food, washing powder, everything. It only covers me for 2 weeks. The food is finished after 2 weeks.

INTERVIEWEE 3 – I think they try to degrade people, like being poor is a crime. I think that’s horrific. I get a limited work ability payment. There are 3 levels, I’m on the middle one. I don’t know if I should be on the higher one, the lower one, or none at all, but I don’t dare challenge, because I expect I would have my benefits cut.

There are no toilets for clients at Job Centres. I’ve asked a law professor if it’s legal for a public building not to provide toilets

to the general public. He had no idea. But I will get back to you. We could start a Quaker campaign for every Quaker to go to the Job Centre and ask to go to the toilet.

You have to have the Internet to claim Job Seekers' Allowance. You also need a mobile phone to log into the account. If you're on the streets in the middle of Manchester, this isn't going to work. It gets dafter over time, and more immoral.

INTERVIEWEE 4 – I want people at the Job Centre to show kindness and sympathy to people looking for jobs. Give help to those who don't know what to do. I've seen people with language issues, and they suffer more than I do. I can appeal and make complaints, but people who don't understand the language can't do this. A woman was with her child who didn't speak good English but was translating, and the woman at the Job Centre was yelling at the woman claiming benefits, and made her go back to the waiting area. She was still there when I left. There was another guy who didn't get paid, and he tried to explain to the man that he has been looking for work. He was told to leave. He said "I haven't been paid for months." The voices got higher and higher, and eventually security were called and they made the man leave. An old Somali lady was trying to get a loan. They told her to come in, but when she arrived they told her to go home as she wasn't entitled to a loan. She tried to explain that she had been told on the phone that she was eligible. The end result was that she got nothing and had to leave.

Discovering Quakers: A New Outreach Initiative

Discovering Quakers

(<https://discoveringquakers.org.uk/>) is a new grassroots outreach initiative created by Friends, with some funding from Britain Yearly Meeting. They have one simple mission: to engage more people with Quakerism. Since launching in January they have reached 130,000 people, had 12,500 website visitors and received 1,000 email enquiries, which was achieved with a data-driven digital marketing strategy, using social media ads, websites, emails and live Zoom sessions.

The Discovering Quakers team are now looking for more Friends to get involved, either by contributing content (blog posts, social media posts, photography, emails), or by joining their team. Discovering Quakers are also offering their services to help Local and Area meetings improve outreach and engage local communities. If you're interested, learn more and join their first forum event (<https://info.discoveringquakers.org.uk/digital-outreach/>).

REQUEST FROM KATE ARMITAGE – CENTRAL MANCHESTER

Hello Friends, as part of my studies to train as a person-centred psychotherapist, I am conducting a research project. I want to interview 3 Quakers who are also psychotherapists, or who have experience working as a psychotherapist. The semi-structured interview will be 20 mins long and conducted over Zoom. I will provide more information to anyone interested. If this is you and you are interested in helping me out, please get in touch.

My email is K.ARMITAGE83@GMAIL.COM

VIGIL ON 24 FEBRUARY TO MARK 1 YEAR OF WAR IN UKRAINE



**NORTHERN FRIENDS PEACE BOARD EVENT
FROM ALLISON CHALLEN OF PEACE PROMOTION GROUP**

Dear Friends

The Area Meeting Peace Promotion group invite you to an afternoon with Northern Friends Peace Board. Details are below. We hope you can join us for what should be a useful and interesting couple of hours. We may need some help on the day, please let us know if you would consider assisting.

SATURDAY 25th MARCH 2023, 1.30pm refreshments, for 2pm
start,

Central Manchester Quaker Meeting House, 6 Mount Street,
Manchester, M2 5NS

**RETHINKING SECURITY WITH NFPB (Northern Friends Peace
Board)**

Are current national security approaches working?
Are there underlying causes of conflict and insecurity not being
addressed by current strategies?
Does there need to be a change?
What can we do?

Northern Friends Peace Board (NFPB) Co-ordinator, Philip Austin will introduce the work of the Board, lead us in reflecting on current security issues, what a richer understanding of national security might entail and how it might be built. The afternoon is planned to be participatory and interactive.

Friends and non-Friends are welcome. Please email the address* below to confirm attendance (not strictly necessary but

numbers help with planning). The event is scheduled to finish before 4.30pm.

**E mail: should you require any further information contact mcrquakerpeacegp@gmail.com*

Northern Friends Peace Board was set up in 1913 to advise and encourage Quakers in the North in the active promotion of peace. The Board has many connections within the broader peace movement, acting as a catalyst for action and thinking on peace

<https://nfpb.org.uk/>

<https://rethinkingsecurity.org.uk/>

In Friendship Allison Challen

A KNOCK AT THE DOOR

Info from Diane Lewin, of Social Justice Group, a supporter of Freedom From Torture

This event is being held at the Manchester Central Library, jointly between FfT (freedom from Torture) and Amnesty International, on Monday 13th March at 6.00-7.30.

A talk, titled 'A knock at the door', will be given by Sergei Nikitin of Disley Quaker Meeting, a former head of Amnesty International in Russia.

Nikitin has recently been researching the historical role of the Quakers in Russia to write a book/pamphlet about this.



A KNOCK ON THE DOOR

SUPPORTING HUMAN RIGHTS AND PEACE IN RUSSIA



"A knock on the front door still fills me with dread... We had this strict rule in our family while we were in Russia: never open the door if you do not expect a guest."

SERGEI NIKITIN, former head of Amnesty International in Russia, recounts his experience being labelled 'a terrorist's aide', escaping Putin's regime and asks: **Are there human rights in Russia?**

MANCHESTER CENTRAL LIBRARY

Mon 13 March

6 - 7.30pm

Free event - no need to book

Further info - frandevine@yahoo.co.uk

Very Brief Facts about Wealth Inequality

The richest 10% of the world's population produce more than 50% of carbon emissions.

Individuals in the richest 1% of the world's population emit more than 100 times more than individuals in the poorest 50%. Climate Justice necessitates much greater equality of wealth.

Is an Aspiration to become a Low-Carbon Sustainable Community Compatible with Eating Beef?

Nearly 60% of agricultural land is used for beef production; but it produces just 2% of the calories humans consume.

Moving from beef production to plant food would release an area the size of the USA, Canada and China combined. For wildlife, forests, wetlands etc etc.

Jonathan Dale provided these figures when he spoke to Social Justice Group on 23 February about the book “Less Is More” by Jason Hickel. He will do his last presentation about this book at Social Justice Group on 23 March at 7.15pm by Zoom.

OUR DEMOCRACY IS IN TROUBLE

GOVERNMENT CRACKS DOWN ON PROTEST

By Jonathan Dale – Central Manchester LM

There are multiple attacks on our ability to protest from this illiberal Government.

New measures to restrict protest, requirement for photo ID for voting, restrictions on the right to strike, bonfire of EU regulations and much more.

But I want to draw your attention to the increasing refusal of judges in public order offences to say anything at all about why someone has sat down and glued themselves to the road or whatever. Much of the point of much direct action has been in the ability to publicise the reasons for taking such action and to argue that it is necessary because doing too little, as we are, is itself truly criminal.

If you still try to explain yourself, you will be charged with contempt of court.

This is a grievous limitation, which is likely to affect a good many Friends; it is demoralising the protest movement too – which, of course, is just what the powers that be have intended. *Is there any way round this. Tell the Newsletter if you hear anything; and watch out for any Friends who may be affected.*

QUAKER COUNCIL FOR EUROPEAN AFFAIRS



“Over the past years, QCEA has represented Quaker values and concerns to decision-makers in European institutions. This is a challenging time for Europe, and I look forward to building on this work to speak truth to those in power and create opportunities for people to discuss difficult issues in a safe and welcoming space.”

Tracey Martin, QCEA Director.

Our Peace Programme works to promote nonviolent alternatives and non-military approaches to conflict resolution. We challenge militaristic definitions of ‘security’ at the European level and promote alternatives such as mediation, dialogue and peace education.

www.qcea.org

MASS GATHERING TO DEMAND CLIMATE JUSTICE

Quakers across Britain are planning to meet in London from Friday 21st April as part of a mass gathering to demand climate justice. The gathering is organised by Extinction Rebellion who plan to bring as many groups across the UK as possible to unite and show the UK government that there are hundreds and thousands of people who want decisive change. The action is about demonstrating the number of people who are seriously concerned about the ecological and climate crisis. It is not about causing a disruption to raise awareness, but showing the world 'look how many people are concerned.'

Quakers will be meeting at Westminster Meeting House, near Charing Cross Station at 10am on Friday 21st April. We will have a meeting for worship at 10:30 - 11am and will then join the demonstration around the Houses of Parliament. We hope to have a period of silence during the demonstration. More details to be confirmed. There are additional plans being made for Quakers meeting up on Saturday 22nd, Sunday 23rd and Monday 24th.

Can you help with the following:

1. Spreading the word and telling everyone about this Quaker gathering - take to your local and area meetings
2. Supporting those in your meeting who would like to come, for example upholding them, paying for travel or sending snacks and cakes with them that we can share.

3. Coming to Westminster MH to support during the day as Quakers come back for rest and refreshment.
4. Bake and bring cakes for refreshments.
5. Helping to make Quaker banners or flags that people from your meeting can bring along.
6. Organising local in reach or outreach around climate justice over that weekend - the mass gathering will probably be on the news so it will be a good time to engage in discussions.
7. Offer of accommodation to travel into London over this weekend.

If you would like to be involved, please email:

Ailish Carroll-Brentnall AilishC@quaker.org.uk Faith in
Action Co-ordinator

This is a unique opportunity for Quakers to unite with thousands of other concerned groups and bear witness to our concern about climate justice. Let's join. We are stronger together. Can you play your part?

For more information about London The Big One: <https://extinctionrebellion.uk/the-big-one/>

Best wishes

Kerri Wright
Living Witness Trustee

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

If you are not on the mailing list, and would like to be emailed future copies of the Newsletter, please email Clare on admin@manchesterquakers.org.uk with your request.

Please send articles and photos for the Newsletter to elizcol@dialstart.net The deadline for the April newsletter is 29 March (earlier than usual because of Clare McCann's holiday plans). It can take time for an email to be received, so to be sure that your submission is on time, I suggest that you aim for 28 March. I put almost everything I receive into the newsletter, with very little editing. Items are mostly put in the newsletter in the order in which they are received.

When submitting items for publication, please be aware that the newsletter is a public document, posted on our website, and we do not control who sees it. So think before submitting personal information, email addresses and photos.

Please try to avoid sending text and photos that are under copyright, and get consent from people in photos if needed.

Look at the website <https://www.manchesterquakers.org.uk> under "News and Events" if you'd like to see back-issues of the newsletter.

Elizabeth Coleman
Editor