

The Bicentenary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act



A wreath commemorating those on board the 2704 slave ships that sailed from London is carried on the Thames between Lambeth and Westminster.

This year's bicentenary promises to be a landmark in Britain as we mark the anniversary of the Parliamentary Act to abolish the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.

For those not familiar with this prolonged event in history, between the 15th and 19th century between nine to twelve million Africans were taken to the Americas to work as slaves on sugar, cotton and tobacco plantations. This still remains one of the greatest forced mass migrations of people the world has witnessed: one in which Britain played an indelible role both by encouraging it, and finally by ending it.

Why, you may ask, is this event of importance to churches in particular? The simple truth is that Christianity played an important role in slavery and abolition. History reveals that Christians were the prime movers in the ending of slavery and practically all leading abolitionists, both Black and White, were men and women of faith. Moreover, the first anti-slavery societies were established by the Religious Society of Friends, and evangelical

Christians were in the vanguard of this campaign. Similarly, Christianity was the motivation for many Africans to confront notions of racial inferiority and question their enslavement. It would be true to say that the 'Black' church in the West was born during slavery. Likewise, Gospel music, so beloved by many, has its roots in the slave songs sung on plantations.

However, there is a less pleasant side to this story which saw Christians owning enslaved Africans or teaching them a distorted version of scripture which argued that their enslavement was God-ordained. Moreover, churches were built above slave forts in Africa with clergy often praying for safe journeys for slave vessels.

All these issues fall within the sphere of activity of "Set All Free" established by Churches Together in England to commemorate the bicentenary and to look at ways in which churches can honour and continue in the footsteps of Christian abolitionists to tackle the legacies of Trans-Atlantic slavery and modern forms of enslavement.

"The Truth Sets All Free" calls on

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History for the sake of **the future!**



Andy Bruce
Manager of CCRJ

In 1999, a local church where half of the congregation were of Jamaican origin had an outing to the Museum of the Transatlantic Slave Trade in Liverpool. It was surprising how controversial the trip proved to be.

Some members, both black and white, felt that to make the visit was an unhelpful move. The church had been working hard at achieving a good ethnic mix, and particu-

larly at maximising the contribution of black people to ministry and leadership. Some believed that to shine the spotlight on the painful and repugnant history of slavery would emphasise differences in perspective between blacks and whites, encouraging white people to feel guilty and making black people more conscious of the evils inflicted on past generations. It was feared that the cause of race relations in the church would be set back. However, a group of members who had been specifically looking at how the church might become more multicultural believed that only by becoming more aware of historic slavery would its continuing impact be recognised and overcome.

As the coach set off for Liverpool, only five of the 53 seats were occupied by white people, and many of the black people who went were disappointed at how few of their white friends felt it was important to make the journey. "They don't come to our funerals either" was one pained comment. Perhaps the unease of those who were against the trip was justified? Once at the museum, however, the exhibits had a powerful impact on everyone. Some were in tears as they saw the appalling conditions of the slave ships, scenes of the slave auctions in the

colonies brought home the brutalising effect of the institution of slavery, while the realisation that so much of the nation's wealth was built upon the infamous triangular trade in people, produce and manufactured goods led many people to reassess their view of Britain as a world power.

Just a few months later, the church found itself having to deal with a sharp issue of racial justice. A number of black candidates for office had been defeated in a vote at the church's AGM and a some of the black members felt that the result betrayed unacknowledged racism in the church. The same thing had happened in previous

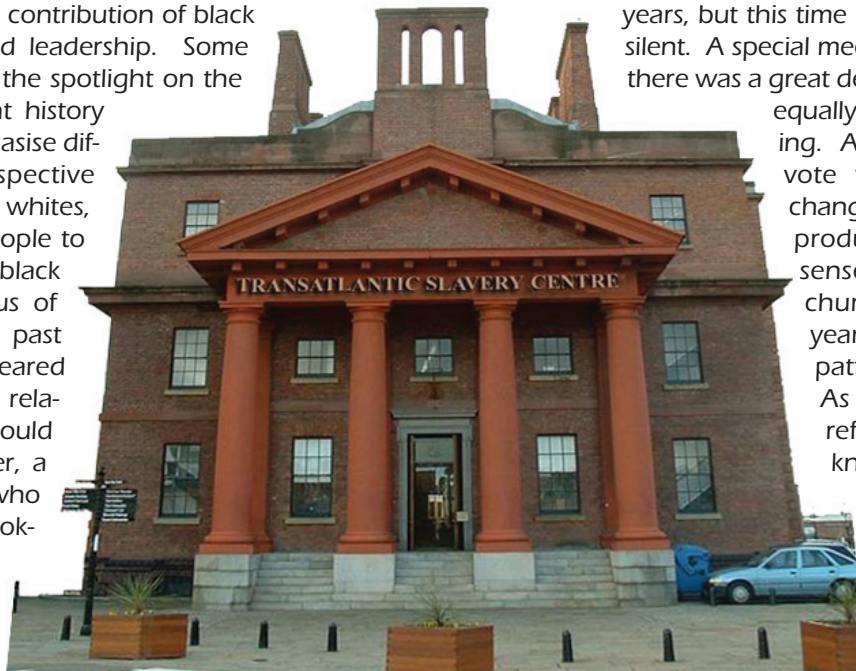
years, but this time people refused to remain silent. A special meeting was called at which there was a great deal of plain speaking, and,

equally important, honest listening. Although the result of the vote was allowed to stand, changes were put in place that produced a much greater sense of inclusion in the church and in subsequent years that unhelpful voting pattern was not repeated. As one senior black member reflected afterwards, "You know, that wouldn't have happened unless we had been to Liverpool."

Remembering the past had equipped the church to deal with the present – and the future was brighter as

a consequence. That's why it is sometimes important to consider history in order to find a way forward.

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Pause for thought:

- 200 years on, is an apology for slavery necessary or helpful? What do you think? Who, in your view, should apologise to whom?

Liverpool will mark the bicentenary of the abolition of the British slave trade with the opening of the International Slavery Museum in August.

The galleries at the International Slavery Museum will feature dynamic, new, thought-provoking displays illustrating the story of the transatlantic slave trade. It will include crucial

Liverpool Remembers Slavery

new displays about the legacy of slavery and address issues such as freedom, identity, human rights, reparations, racial discrimination and cultural change.

The museum will also address ignorance and misunderstandings by looking at the deep and permanent

impact of slavery on black people, particularly from the Caribbean, South America, Africa, the USA and Europe.

The opening of the museum will coincide with Slavery Remembrance Day on 23rd August 2007.

A second phase due to open in 2010 will include the

development of a new visitor-focused education centre with performances, public lectures and debates.

Venue: Merseyside Maritime Museum, Albert Dock, Liverpool.

Info: 0151 4784499.
www.merseysidemaritimemuseum.org.uk

By Rebekah Bradberry-Evans



Richard Reddie

churches and Christians to remember, reflect and respond: REMEMBER, the horrors of the Trans-Atlantic Slave

Trade, REFLECT on the consequences of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and slavery, e.g. racism, poverty and under-development, RESPOND by working to end the legacies of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, affecting healing and reconciliation and by taking action to end modern forms of slavery.

"Set All Free" is aware of almost a thousand bicentenary-related activities taking place around Britain in 2007 with museums, libraries, schools, community groups, as well as a raft of others planning events to mark this significant historical event. Moreover, the BBC is scheduling a raft of programmes for March 2007.

As a whole host of groups and organisations are planning bicentenary activities, it is important that the Christian perspective is clearly heard in all these events and "Set All Free" is encouraging Christians to hold "Set All Free" events: from conferences, debates, services of healing and reconciliation, exhibitions, dramas or book clubs focusing on the slave trade, its legacies and modern day slavery.

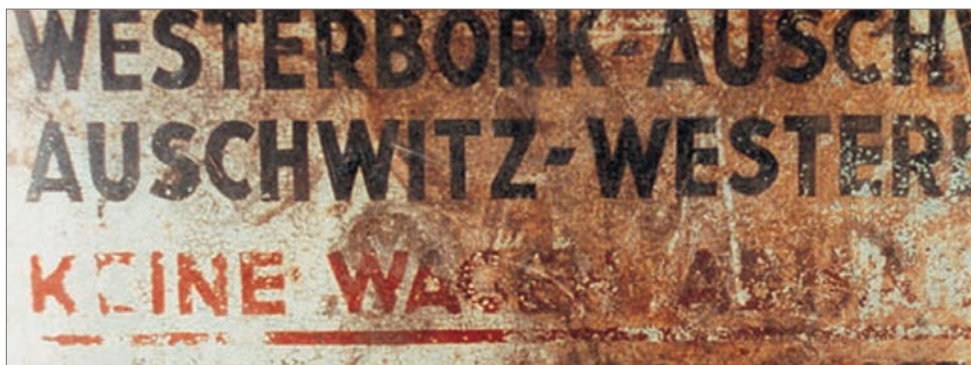
Churches planning an event should use the "Set All Free" "What's on" web diary to promote their activity. "Set All Free" has also created a local history project (see website), which enables Churches to find out more about past and present slavery in their areas.

For more information see: www.setallfree.net

By Richard Reddie
Director, Set All Free



The Dignity of Difference



Earlier on this year (27th January) the country marked "Holocaust Memorial Day". This arose out of the need to mark and to remember what happened to the Jewish people in Europe during the first half of the 20th century, when the Nazis sought systematically to exterminate the Jewish people. Not only were millions tortured and killed but millions more were displaced, changing the entire character of Europe.

The Holocaust did not suddenly 'come from nowhere' – over many centuries Jews were portrayed in negative and pejorative ways in art, literature, music and philosophy. The most famous example is the character Shylock in Shakespeare's 'The Merchant of Venice' but we sometimes overlook Fagin in Dickens' classic novel 'Oliver Twist'. The music of Richard Wagner is often associated with anti-Semitism, especially given Wagner's own anti-Jewish attitudes that can be read in many of his letters and writings. The philosopher Nietzsche too is vitriolic in what he said about the Jews of Europe. All of this created the backdrop for one of the most heinous blights on human history.

But Holocaust Memorial Day is not just about the plight of the Jewish people. It also draws attention to other 'holocausts' such as the Armenian Holocaust at the end of the

First World War when thousands of (mainly Christian) Armenians were massacred in Turkey, and more recent events in Cambodia, Bosnia and Rwanda.

The theme of this year's Holocaust Memorial Day was 'The Dignity of Difference'. This title is borrowed from a book by Dr Jonathan Sacks, the Chief Rabbi, who has been a strong advocate for dialogue between the faiths and between cultures and civilizations.

Holocaust Memorial Day is an important occasion to remember atrocities of the past and to re-commit ourselves to overcoming the ignorance, fear and hatred that leads to such inhumanity. But as we say "never again" we also affirm and celebrate the great diversity of humanity and that within that richness there is an immense dignity.

For further information visit the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust's website at: <http://www.hmd.org.uk>

By Peter Colwell
Interfaith Secretary CTBI

Pause for thought:

- Is the way we tell the stories of Jesus sometimes unnecessarily anti-Jewish? What could we do to correct this?

CONGRATULATIONS

Editor's Accolade

CCRJ was pleased to learn that their editor Barbara Campbell had won the prestigious award: International Women of Excellence in March this year. This comes just months after she had picked up the Gathering of Africa's Best (GAB) which is the UK's most high-profile African award ceremony.

The award was given to her for her outstanding contribution to the publishing and media industry.



Roundtable on Migration

Migration is one of the hottest topics in international relations, yet a distinctively Christian approach has yet to be articulated. In 2006 CCRJ convened a Roundtable to attempt that task. Assisted by Prof. Paul Weller of Derby University, the Roundtable has included very broad representation from the denominations and from the four nations of Britain and Ireland, and is due to be published in early summer 2007 under the auspices of CTBI. Here are some extracts from the document.

"Historically, in our countries, many migrants have secured access to life opportunities not available to them in their countries of origin. But suffering has also been experienced by many of those who seek entry to Britain and Ireland as either asylum claimants or as migrants/immigrants.

Migration is intimately connected with the stories of the foundational documents of the Christian tradition, as well as among Jews and also other faith traditions. The scriptural traditions of these religions evidence the fact that the movement of individuals and groups has been a constant feature of historical reality.

The phenomenon of nomadic migration; of migration from condi-



tions of economic and social servitude in one land to settlement in freedom and promise in another; together with the experience of exile from that land and then return to it, frame much of the recorded history of the Jewish people. These experiences interact with what became key themes in Jewish tradition and, through this, in ways that

also inform Christian theology and practice.

Churches and Christian organisations are composed not only of people who are themselves citizens and/or settled members of our societies and states, but also of migrants/immigrants, people seeking asylum and refugees. We do not, therefore, debate the development of a migration policy from a dispassionate or "observer" perspective. Rather, we take our stand in a way that is informed by the life stories of those of our own members who have experience of being migrants."

For latest news of publication dates and press launches please see the CCRJ website.

By Andy Bruce - Manager of CCRJ

Pilgrimage to a homeland

Twenty two members of High Cross United Reformed Church, Tottenham, recently returned from a pilgrimage to Ghana. The group comprised four Ghanaian members, thirteen members who were born and grew up in the Caribbean and have lived in the UK for between thirty and fifty years, six black British-born members including three from 18 to 25 years, and two white British-born.

The purpose of the pilgrimage was to develop awareness of life in Ghana, past and present; to understand better the effects of colonialism and trans-Atlantic slavery on the peoples of Africa, the Caribbean and white Europeans; to engage with the Presbyterian churches through dialogue, worship, and visits to church development projects and also to develop our own faith and reflect on the experiences encountered as we travelled far and wide.

The experience of being part of such a group and the learning of

what took place cannot fully be put into words. However, we hope and pray that this whole experience not only stays within the group which went to Ghana, but also manifests itself in deeper appreciation and understanding of one another within our growing multicultural congregation of High Cross United Reformed Church.

The highlights included people's discoveries of their roots in different ways and places, especially in Akropong where Jamaican missionaries really got the Presbyterian church in that region off the ground and where the great-great granddaughter (86) of Peter Hall, the first Jamaican missionary and first moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, still lives alongside other Jamaicans.

Painful moments included seeing so much continuing hardship and poverty especially connected to unjust trade rules, although it was

heartening to see positive development in some places through debt cancellation projects. The most painful times were experienced on the visit to Elmina Castle on Cape Coast and to Osu Castle in Accra.

Walking into the slave cells and listening to the story of what happened to African slaves kept there was horrific. Much of our reflection time involved exploring slavery's particular significance in 2007. Words written on the wall by the condemned in Elmina Castle reminded us, as people of faith, of the importance of not sitting back and doing nothing while old and new forms of slavery continue to degrade, demean and destroy human beings.

By Sandra Ackroyd - High Cross United Reformed Church, Tottenham



Stop the deportations!

Over 100 asylum seekers and campaigners recently gathered outside the Home Office Reporting Centre in Glasgow, Scotland, to protest over the removal of 42 Congolese nationals back to war-torn Kinshasa.

In Gatwick protestors objected to deportations as 11 members of the DR Congolese community chained themselves to the railing outside the Tinsley House detention centre. One man had locked himself by the neck to the gates of the centre to prevent Congolese detainees from being transported to this state of violence and insecurity. Their calls were not answered and 23 adults and 19 children were returned to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

They went by chartered flight; the result of a secret Memorandum of Agreement between the UK and the DRC.

The problem with charter flights is that they have been carefully prepared in cooperation with DRC diplomatic staff in Kinshasa and London, so all travellers are already known to the Congolese Directoire Générale de Migration, the organisational partner of our own Immigration Repatriation Service. The DGM service, posing as an innocuous immigration service, is interchangeable with the dreaded Agence Nationale de Recherche. So those repatriated end up in the hands of the very security services they so fear.

To these underpaid, lawless officials, whether you are a politico or an economic migrant you will be interrogated, and, mostly but not only, if a woman, raped; you will be asked for a bribe of about \$250. and to get it they'll stick you in prison for as long as they please, ignoring any legal procedure. Politicos end up at the secret police torture centre of Kin Maziere, or 'disappear' in hidden cachots. Since the elections, Kabila is 'settling scores' against opponents.

The Home Office stonewalls with standard answers for the sake of the coveted political prize of being seen as 'tough' on unwanted foreigners.

In the DRC any intelligent person engaged in civic action is by definition an enemy of the regime. The possible return penalties are only the start of the hazards facing families sent back. Human rights organisations estimate that conflict-related deaths are presently run-



ning at a rate of 1,200 a week, while recruitment of child soldiers and rapes are commonplace.

In the DRC alone each week sees deaths resulting from fighting in the Kivu region, which has a longstanding reputation for ethnic conflict, and human rights violations. Towards the Angolan border there are several thousand Congolese brutally sent back from Angola, without food, water, emergency aid or protection, vulnerable to rape and extortion by the Congolese military. Some 134 were recently murdered there by the Congolese army.

The real conundrum is that in the UK 500 families certified as refugees by UNCHR staff running the vast Internally Displaced Persons camps in the wild Katanga province, have settled in the Hull area under the Gateway Programme, a planned international resettlement programme.

How can we settle this smallish group from internationally run refugee camps, yet fail to accept that individual Congolese fled because they too were at risk from the same persecution as those camps full of IDPs?

It is clear from such actions that our own individual identity and rights only apply to 'our own' nationals; anyone else is part of a collective, faceless problem either be denied or to disappear. Of course those international NGO's, with their high ideals, are member state-funded.....hence politically shackled.

Human rights organisations estimate that conflict-related deaths are presently running at a rate of 1,200 a week

By Puck de Raadt,

Administrator of the Bail Circle

This project under CCRJ auspices provides sureties to help some asylum detainees obtain bail. It also participates in the debate on strategic issues concerning asylum legislation and practice in the UK, such as legal obstruction of access to fair procedure under international law, and the frequent detention of torture victims or families and children, of minors, and of those persecuted for their religion or their gender.

Contact: open_sesame@btinternet.com

THE Consultant's VIEW

Who wants to be a millionaire? ...I do!

For many charities and voluntary organisations their overriding habit is to seek more and more project funding to do bigger and bigger projects, and to pay larger and larger salaries to more and more people. So in effect they may in a short time reach the magic one million in terms of revenue generated. In far too many cases the way adopted in order to finance all of this 'growth' is by seeking project funding through grant applications. In my opinion this is not good habit as you very soon reach the 'juggling' stage as staff are supposed to split their time working on different projects which invariably both overlap and contradict each other.

The other thing about this approach is that in fairness, if handled well (and I mean really well) it can get an organisation quickly where it wants to go in the short term. However, one of the main down sides is that trustees or management committee members begin to get a feeling that the priority in taking on new projects is staff retention as opposed to service delivery. This can very soon lead them to see themselves as solely rubber stamping the continuous wage increases of employees, while they themselves continue to give their time voluntarily.

Of course when the dust really settles we wake up to the fact that the organisation has not actually grown because regular unrestricted income has not increased. This in turn means that at the end of each project we are faced with a mini (and sometimes major) crisis as jobs need to be cut or re-defined and beneficiaries must also be cut.

I am going to suggest seven ways to grow your organisation in a sustainable manner. However, fundraisers also need to make sure they meet and share ideas with others in the same profession, and ensure their organisations develop a well thought out and comprehensive fundraising strategy.

Here are my suggestions:

1. **Target the recruitment of trustees with appropriate experience and influence;**
2. **Develop a robust volunteer recruitment strategy including use of the internet;**
3. **Invest in ongoing and relevant training for staff and volunteers, including trustees;**
4. **Build the corporate profile of the organisation (see website);**
5. **Ensure you have a generic fundraising statement known, accepted and adopted by everyone involved with the organisation;**
6. **Develop a modern and robust communications strategy;**
7. **Use non-grant funding techniques to raise unrestricted income;**

By Amal Douglas

Senior Consultant at the DMC Consultancy. Amal Douglas, runs fundraising workshops around the country for charities, voluntary organisations and social enterprise. For more information: office1@dmconsultancy.co.uk/www.dmcconsultancy.co.uk



Embracing Racial Justice

EMBRACE is a voluntary group of Christians from different denominations in Northern Ireland, whose primary role is to provide information and resources for churches and individuals in order to help make Northern Ireland a more welcoming place for minority ethnic people.

These include residents, migrant workers and people who have been forced to flee from other countries. Embrace's stated aim is "to help build a community that has moved beyond racism".

While there may still be a way to go before reaching this objective, Embrace succeeds in gathering together a number of important church-related organisations in a highly effective network.

The organisation recently launched *Once We Were Strangers* a CD Rom that consists of a collection of nine first-hand accounts of the experience of arriving and settling in Ireland.

Alongside the CD, Dr Scott Boldt has written a booklet entitled 'Intercultural Insights - Christian reflections on racism, hospitality and identity from the island of Ireland'. This consists of 16 short pieces on the theme, suitable for personal reflection or use in sermons and talks, published under the aegis of the All-Ireland Churches' Consultative Meeting on Racism, part of the Irish Inter-Church Meeting.

On their visit to Belfast in early spring 2007, CCRJ's Claudette Douglas and Andy Bruce examined with Embrace how CCRJ's resources could be made more useful in a Northern Ireland context and how the capacity-building programme of the Racial Justice Network might be extended to include Ireland. CCRJ has a worthy track record of encouraging racial justice work in the island of Ireland, and the current challenge is to respond effectively to the rapidly changing demographics both north and south of the border.

EMBRACE Copies of both resources are available from EMBRACE, 12 - 24 University Avenue, Belfast BT7 1GY, or phone Scott at 028 90 686933. Or visit: www.embraceni.org

By Andy Bruce - Manager of CCRJ

Civilized World yet to abolish Primitive Slavery!

200 years after The British Parliament Act to Abolition Slavery, 2007 is regarded as one of the proudest years for individuals and institutions claiming the legacy of this great movement in history, but for four centuries the enslavement of nine to twelve million victims had flourished until it began to be seen as a crime 'against humanity and God'. Vehement campaigns were launched, forcing the British Parliament to abolish the Slave Trade then slavery itself from all its colonies. From then on the British public's awareness grew that keeping fellow human beings in 'involuntary servitude' was wrong.

This created curiosity about modern forms of slavery, definitions of the criteria of slavery, calculations of the numbers of slaves (12 - 20 million) and international agreements to tackle it. Although the above effort is a commendable achievement for the British Parliament, Church communities and the general public, there is still an ignorance of the existence of millions who continue to live a life worse than that of slaves. They are subjected to primitive slavery in a modern world and form 1/3 of the global poor.

"The information about the daily discrimination, humiliation and brutality experienced by Dalits is concealed from the outside world"

Their number is 20 times that of slave trade victims, 10-15 times that of apartheid victims, and 60 - 80 times that of Holocaust victims. Some UK NGOs / Churches group their plight under modern forms of slavery, without including their number in it, thereby creating an image of escaping

responsibility. Who are they? They are the 'Dalits'.

Dalits are the single largest section of the global poor. They are the former "Untouchables" of India, the victims of caste mindset of over 30 centuries. According to a report by the Department for International Development (DFID) entitled "Reducing Poverty by tackling Social Exclusion", caste causes poverty.

Caste is sanctified by ancient civilization and Hindu religion. The information about the daily discrimination, humiliation and brutality experienced by Dalits is concealed from the outside world as higher caste members dominate most of politics, business, government, media, Church-related organisations, academia, NGOs, international development, and so forth.

The same forces continue shielding their plight from the 'Christian and humanitarian spirit of British society', which worked to abolish the Slave Trade and slavery.

Recently, the Prime Minister of India, where the majority of Dalits reside, equated caste to apartheid. According to Dr. Ambedkar, the architect of the Indian Constitution and the emancipator of 1/4 billion Dalits and an equal number in similar conditions, "the world owes a duty to the Untouchables as it does to all suppressed people to break their shackles and set them free," he said. Convinced that once the British public was informed of the true horrors of the caste system and the brutality of Dalit's treatment in societies with caste mindset, their anger would be translated into action in Parliament, and then internationally, Voices of Dalit International (VODI) was formed as a registered Charity in the UK in 1999.

Realizing the tremendous ignorance of the Dalit's plight in the West coupled with counter propaganda, VODI initi-



Voice of Dalit International meets with senior church leaders.

ates various national and international level seminars, conferences and discussions, constantly campaigning for Dalit development, awareness and human rights under Dalit leadership. The formation of Castewatch UK is one such example.

The recently held international Conference in the UK on Dalit Christian Rights is an attempt to draw the attention of Western Churches to the plight of Dalit Christians, who constitute 60% of Christians in India and are further discriminated on the basis of religion.

This year VODI is proposing to have a national Conference of UK Aid / Church agencies with the objective of involving them in the liberation of Dalits from their primitive slavery as they did in the fight against the slave trade, anti-apartheid and in the civil rights movement. In this process we are happy to be part of CCRJ's network and look forward to their associate Church communities' involvement in the liberation of Dalits.

By Eugene Culas
Voice of Dalit International

Pause for thought:

- We want to tolerate and respect all cultures, but still challenge injustice where it appears. How can we observe both sensitivity and justice?



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Churches Together in Britain and Ireland,
Bastille Court, 2 Paris Garden,
London SE1 8ND

MEET THE COMMISSIONER

Racial Justice Today meets Rev Anthaparusha, Church in Wales

What is your background?

I am a self-made man. I came up in life by dint of hard work through the encouragement of God's people and by the mercy and grace of God. I was born to Christian parents in Karnataka, South India where I did my initial studies. Living in a Hindu and Muslim milieu helped me develop broader vision, secular outlook and appreciation of traditions, cultures and values of all faiths and races.



How did your career begin?

After my graduation, I set out to North India as a missionary within my own country where I pursued my post-graduate studies along with working in a social organisation where I was deeply initiated into the task of the rehabilitation of resettlement colonies of Delhi. I finally responded to God's call and joined the Diocese of Chandigarh, the Church of North India. (The union of six major denominations).

What stirs your consciousness?

From the very early age, I have realised that being poor is not a curse but a blessing in a real sense of the word. May be what Jesus means when he says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit". In the context I was brought up being poor means being simple, content, generous, hospitable and peaceful. It is this consciousness that stirred me to get engaged in social and racial justice issues both in South and North India mostly among the Dalits (oppressed and untouchables)

How did you become a Commissioner in the CCRJ?

I came to know about prospects of ministry in ecumenism and interfaith in the Diocese of St. Asaph, the Church in Wales. The Bishop of the Diocese of St. Asaph was kind enough to offer me the job of a parish priest, as his advisor for interfaith relations in the Diocese and also to set up an ecumenical Church in Mynydd Isa where I live and work. It was inaugurated three years ago by the coming together of four denominations, and meets once a month. At the same time with help and coordination of ecumenical partnership I was able to set up North Wales Interfaith and Racial Justice Forum which meets quarterly at Newi, Wrexham. I also initi-

ated All Faith Leaders Gathering at Newi, Wrexham which deals with social, religious and racial issues. Due to my background and experience in the concerns of interfaith and issues of racial justice, I was appointed a commissioner on CCRJ and CCIFR in 2003 to officially represent the Church in Wales.

How does the role make you feel?

What excites me about being a commissioner is the opportunity of meeting, interacting and dialoguing with God's people of various races, creeds, cultures, languages and ethnicity. On the invitation of the Church of Scotland, I served the Church as India Link Facilitator. My main remit was to establish twinning partnership relationship between Presbyteries of Scotland and the Diocese of Church of North India, speaking to Presbyteries, Churches, schools, prisons and groups and forums. This provided me with new insights and focuses so as to mould and sharpen my ideas further and enhance my understanding and implementation of policies governing the issues of racial and religious discrimination that afflict and confront every aspect of society today.

What can Wales offer the Commission?

The Welsh Assembly has initiated policies to cover good practices of religious and racial equality, integration and inclusion. Cytun - the churches together in Wales, is co-operating and coordinating not only with the Welsh government but also working closely with all the Churches establishing racial justice networking in Wales. Many voluntary organisations and groups are engaged with refugees, asylum seekers and migrant workers especially in cosmopolitan cities of Wales.

On the whole, what have you learnt about yourself and the area you represent?

In many quarters of Wales there is a disturbing trend of English, Scottish and Irish separate identities talked about even today. The rural areas of Wales have not been fully exposed to the outside world and still continue to remain a closed community. It has not familiarised itself with people of other faiths, cultures and races. The first and foremost task is to awaken the consciousness of people to the understanding of racial justice issues, social inclusion and religious harmony of diverse cultures, languages and nationalities. With the sweeping re-structuring and reform of CCRJ, Cytun, the national instrument of Wales is confident and hopeful of implementation of policies of cohesion and inclusion of minority ethnic communities in order to strive for their transformation and cohesion.

HELP US WORK FOR RACIAL JUSTICE!

Since 1991 the Racial Justice Fund of CCRJ has helped to translate our passion for racial justice into practical action. Grants up to £5000 (for local projects) or £10000 (national) have had a major impact across Britain and Ireland.

But the Fund is shrinking, and

we urgently need to reverse this trend. That is where YOU can make a difference. By organising a fundraising event in your church or local community or by making a personal donation, you can help to ensure that groups at the front line of work for racial justice have the

resources they need.

Please send your donation to CCRJ, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, Bastille Court, 2 Paris Garden, London SE1 8ND. (Cheques payable to CCRJ Racial Justice Fund, please!)

We would also like to hear about your local fundraising event. Please write to Claudette Douglas at the above address, with photos if possible.

UNHCR welcomes draft bill allowing refugee doctors to practise in Ireland

The UN refugee agency welcomes draft legislation in Dublin, Ireland which will allow refugees who are qualified medical doctors to register and practise in Ireland for the first time, good news, as there is a shortage of doctors in Ireland.

UNHCR estimates that some 100-200 doctors have gone through the asylum system over the past decade, but most have been unable to practise.

The new proposal, included in the draft Medical Practitioners' Bill, is aimed at modernising the profession. Presenting the draft in the Irish parliament recently, Health Minister Mary Harney said it included provisions "to help doctors holding refugee status to become registered".

UNHCR Representative in Ireland Manuel Jordão urged members to support the initiative as it moves through its various stages in the Dail. He said: "Integration of its migrants and refugees will be a number one priority for Ireland in the next few years."

Refugee doctors frequently have

problems acquiring or producing original documents and certificates and often face limited opportunities to upgrade their skills. At a recent integration conference in Dublin, UNHCR's Guy Ouellet promoted a system for recognising them, as "a concrete example of a positive step towards refugee integration".

Ouellet, deputy director of UNHCR's Europe desk, said Ireland had put in place important integration measures in areas such as welfare, education, employment, naturalisation, and non-discrimination, but warned that public attitudes were hardening as the number of immigrants increased and said it was critical "to pre-empt this intolerance by supporting a system where the skills and potentials of foreigners, including refugees, could be put to best use".

Pilot programmes showing the value and skills of refugees could benefit everyone. "One example of such a programme," he said, "would



be to contact doctors who initially entered as refugees and find out how they have fared, organise them in a group and upgrade their credentials through a specialised programme."

The 100-200 doctors estimated to have passed through the asylum system would be a "good initial target group to focus on re-equipping with the necessary upgrades to their already acquired medical skills."

By Steve O'Brien

Church takes the lead on Gun Crime

Church leaders are taking a stand to end gun crime as the Black Christian Leaders' Forum (BCLF) teams up to create strategies and long-term solutions for the growing problem.

The BCLF, a consortium representing African and Caribbean Christians in the UK, is calling on politicians to avoid a knee-jerk response.

Instead, the group is asking the government to consider all aspects surrounding the problem. This starts with strategic, long-term partnerships between politicians, parents, schools, community groups and the police. It is also important that statutory authorities are aware of and understand the work that volunteer organisations, especially churches, do with young people. And finally, there must be long-term and sustainable partnerships to address some of the worst problems faced by young people and families.

"Gun crime and knife crime is a national issue that concerns all of us," said Rev Katei Kirby of the African and Caribbean Evangelical Alliance. "It is not a 'Black issue' - it is a social issue that is destroying families and communities."

Churches have already implemented programmes to fight gun crime - such as Gunzdown, Street Pastors and the Peace Alliance - all efforts to inspire the youth to take a different path.

One minister in particular, Mark Liburd of Ruach Ministries, works with a youth group within his church in Brixton, where he

uses the strategy of "positive peer pressure" to help young people put down their guns and get off the streets.

"Peer pressure doesn't always have to be negative," Liburd said: "We're just changing their mindsets."

The 32 year-old (pictured) believes that because the majority of the participants in the youth group are practising positive behaviours - the troubled young people are put in different kinds of situations than they're used to - they experience a place where their negative actions will be looked down upon. "It's bringing a new kind of culture in the way they think," said Liburd.

Through working with these young people, Liburd has come to believe that the gun problem erupted out of their fear and a need to belong in a group.

With many of them coming from dysfunctional homes, they turn to the brother/sister bond the gang seems to offer, no matter how superficial and dangerous that kinship may be.

"We can't just say it's the parents' or the government's fault, but culturally in this country something's going wrong," he said. "It's something we all have to engage in to try and help change things around."

Youth programmes like Ruach's are one step in the right direction. So far, Liburd has seen quite a few young people turned around by the positive influences of the group. He is proud and impressed by the change he sees in them. "They usher in on Sunday in their suits and ties, and you think 'wow, this is someone you would never guess the sort of background they're coming from.'"



Networking in Ireland

Andy Bruce and Claudette Douglas of CCRJ met recently with members of the All-Ireland Churches' Consultative Meeting on Racism (AICCMR) to discuss future joint action.

AICCMR was formed in 2003 following a visit to Ireland by the then Executive Secretary of CCRJ, Arlington Trotman. It draws together

people from a wide range of church traditions who are engaged in transcultural ministry throughout Ireland. Working closely with the Irish Council of Churches and the Interchurch Meeting, it seeks to respond to the fact that Irish society has become markedly more diverse over the past decade, working collaboratively on issues of identity and inclusion under the auspices of the Inter-Church Committee on Social Issues.

AICCMR is currently preparing a

worship event reflecting a variety of worship styles new to the island of Ireland, to be held on 19th May at St Comicilles Catholic Church, Ballyhackamore, Belfast.

An important current initiative, funded by the Department of Justice in Dublin, is the Parish-Based Integration Project. A project worker, Adrian Cristen, was appointed in January this year to work with parishes and groups of parishes to promote integration, as well as putting together support and training.

Welcome to

Immigrants in Northern Ireland are getting a helping hand as the Welcome Project lends support to struggling workers.

The Welcome Project, located just off the Falls Road in Catholic West Belfast, was initiated as a response to the needs of street drinkers. It quickly developed into a drop-in centre and has recently expanded with City Council funding of a major outreach project.

Since 2004, the Welcome Project has increasingly found itself offering support to migrant workers. Many people have arrived in Northern Ireland perfectly legally, but lacking



Sectarian symbols abound in Belfast

family support or social networks, they can be left destitute if the job for which they came evaporates, as it often does. Lacking the street wisdom to survive in sectarian Belfast, workers from Eastern Europe often suf-

The Project

fer racial attack. In these circumstances the Welcome Project has become a trusted source of practical help and advice.

As sectarian tensions have eased in Northern Ireland, the arrival of significant numbers of migrant workers has pushed race relations up the agenda. Church-related groups such as the Welcome Project, linked to the Ireland Inter-Church Meeting by the Embrace network, are in the forefront of work to create a more just and integrated community.

By Andy Bruce
Manager of CCRJ

Abolition of an Era

Although slavery did not end for another 30 years or so after the 1807 Parliamentary victory Britain is celebrating the bicentennial of one of its most transformative pieces of legislation through an exhibition following the stories of the pressures and influences both at home and abroad.

The exhibition, *The British Slave Trade: Abolition, Parliament and*

People, will mark one of Britain's most successful public campaigns in history. The free public exhibit will display tokens of the times, the original 1807 Act itself and a seven metre-long petition signed by the people of Manchester lobbying Parliament to abolish the slave trade.

Momentos from significant figures will also be shown, including the famous wooden chest and its contents used by Thomas Clarkson in his

nationwide campaign for abolition, as well as a first edition of Olaudah Equiano's biography.

The British Slave Trade: Abolition, Parliament and People, opens 23 May and runs until 23 September 2007 in Westminster Hall, London SW1. For more information about the exhibit and surrounding events visit www.parliament.uk/slavetrade.

By Sarah Bultema



The PEERS Project

The PEERS Project, CCRJ's training and development programme for young people aged 11-25 years, recently celebrated the graduation of one of its pilot groups in Camberwell, South London.

Initiated after the murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1993 to develop guidance that would help young people to know their rights, particularly regarding policing issues, the programme provides young people with a practical toolkit of resources to empower them to develop their roles as active citizens and stakeholders in their local communities and society in general.

For more information or to find out about running the PEERS project with your group visit the website www.peersproject.org.uk

Harvesting The Spirit



Peace - God's constant standard

Any able follower of God must firstly become a servant of peace. Peace may seem like the last thing possible amidst the increasing pressure of the world's obsession with the need to acquire more.

The need to acquire more status, material substance, bigger congregations, or to more targets and deadlines, leaves many gifted people over-stretched and therefore less able than they might otherwise be. How we choose to resolve our daily challenges, conflicts and changes will be predicated on how we view the purpose of our lives and the degree to which we understand the value of the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

One of the greatest challenges that those in leadership positions face, is the physical demand on their time, the need the world has for their gifts. The more time we give to cultivate our ability to access God's guidance, the more we become able to raise his standard in every area of our life and find excellence, authority and peace in all things.

The Bible teaches us that peace is not the absence of war, rather it is the presence of the Holy Spirit as manifested through those who serve God. The story of Abigail, in the book of *1 Samuel* illustrates how the presence of courage averted great carnage as well as how one woman's humility resolved a tense situation and saved the face of a King!

Reading through the books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles we see that the morality of the day fell very short of God's standards. Human behaviour was at a low level as very few had human rights or protection from exploitation. The poor and vulnerable were routinely traded as "servants", women were subjugated, and acts of indiscriminate violence were commonplace. This was a time in which the majority of people had their lives controlled by others and circumstances seemed to conspire to limit their own ability to take personal authority over their destiny.

The startling similarities between the Biblical times and today's world, cannot be

missed, neither also, can the sense of personal isolation, limitation and lack that is so prevalent in a world of unlimited abundance. Often a sense of lack can blind us to the power we have at hand. The world's inability to recognise and realise the power of Heaven in their lives results in mediocrity, lack of physical realisation and the absence of inner peace – a life not lived at its best.

In *1 Samuel 25* we see a beautiful woman named Abigail being used by God to raise the standard of morality. Through her efforts to intervene in a dangerous situation- she turned a potentially violent crisis into a peaceful and constructive outcome.

David's conflict with Nabal had arisen from Nabal's refusal to support the very troops who were defending his life and property. Knowing King David as we do, we are not surprised to learn that the indignant King, saddled up his horse, girded his sword and took his armed militia, ready to confront Nabal and leave him and his household in a pool of blood! One of Nabal's servants took news of the impending situation to Abigail, Nabal's wife. She, however, refused to remain passive in a tense situation, but loaded herself with provisions and went out to

Whilst Abigail's role did not change all the negative aspects of her society, she showed the true position of God's standard.

God always offers us an alternative to strife, conflict and lack of fulfilment. Heaven or "expanding Good" is always at hand, always available to those who continue to surrender to guidance.

Jesus seemed to have a problem convincing his listeners of this fact and therefore made countless references to Heaven and oft repeated his illustrations of the state of unparalleled understanding that is Heaven itself. It is important to remind ourselves that Jesus never once gave any indication that heaven was a place located in the universe, rather a state located through the activity of faith and love.

Often when we are called to lead, it becomes more and more difficult to surrender ourselves to God. Pressure, work, expectations, and ever more demanding life-styles obscure the choices that we need to make. Always to choose God's standards is the primary requirement of our spirit; to allow the spirit to realise itself with confidence and energy, will eventually reconstitute the soul, and give deeper meaning and purpose of our every day lives

Reverend Claudette-Athea Douglas:
Research and Development Officer, CCRJ.

RACIAL JUSTICE TODAY
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CCRJ works with the churches of
Britain and Ireland to promote
racial justice. Among the many
strands of its work are the
Racial Justice Fund and Racial
Justice Sunday, both highlighted
in this publication.

We are always looking for new
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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Sat 19th May
DOWN BUT NOT OUT:
THE NEEDS OF
STRANGERS

Churches Refugee
Network Conference
Chaired by The Revd Canon
Dr Nicholas Sagovsky - Canon
Theologian, Westminster Abbey.

Venue:

Holy Apostles Church Hall,
47 Cumberland Street, London
SW1V 4LY.

Time: 10.30am - 4.15pm.

Topics:

- Strangers into Citizens: A Path to Citizenship for the excluded - Austen Ivereigh;
- The Needs of Strangers:
- Global Citizens and the Nation State - Ethics of Asylum;
- The Health of Asylum Seekers: Statutory Provision for those in and out of detention.

Reports from asylum projects
and national initiatives;
Workshops; Grassroots and
campaign news; live music;
worship.

Adm: £15; concs £10, free to
refugees and asylum seekers.
Bring Own Lunch - Soup and
rolls available.

Info: Wendy Cooper 020 7916
8632
wendy.cooper@urc.org.uk

GLASGOW UNIVERSITY CENTRE
FOR THE STUDY OF ISLAM:

COMING EVENTS

Tuesday 15th May

ISLAM AND THE
SCOTTISH MEDIA
With Ms. Arifa Farooq.
(BBC Scotland)

Tuesday 22nd May

GENDER AND SEXUALITY
IN ISLAM
With Amanullah De Soudy.

Tuesday 5th June

JERUSALEM:
THE HOLY LAND & ISLAM
With Amanullah De Soudy.

Tuesday 12th June

ISLAMIC ART:
THE BEAUTY OF ISLAM
With Noorah al-Gailani MA.
Islamic Civilisations Curator
for Glasgow City Council
Museums.

Venue:

Upper Seminar Room, 4 The
Square, University of
Glasgow.

Time: 7pm - 8pm

Info: www.gla.ac.uk

RACIAL JUSTICE SUNDAY IS COMING!

Each year, the second Sunday in September is set aside by many churches to celebrate diversity and work for racial justice. This year the theme is "Go to a land I will show you!" (Genesis 12:1) and it's all about the movement of peoples around the world. Six different "Signposts" invite us to focus on major topics such as Abolition of the Slave Trade, Economic Migration, and Refugees. In addition to offering resources for worship, there are testimonies, all-age activity ideas and discussion topics.

Racial Justice Sunday is a wonderful opportunity to showcase racial justice in every local congregation. We are also asking every church to raise money for the Racial Justice Fund as a practical response to God's call to justice. The pack has ideas and suggestions.

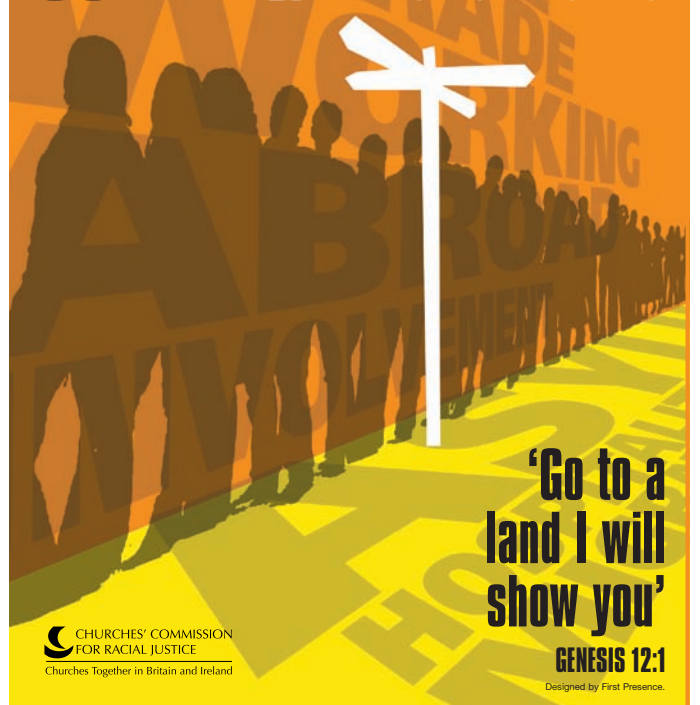
Resource packs can be ordered from CTBI Publications, 4 John Wesley Road, Peterborough PE4 6PZ and are priced at **£3.50**. Prayer leaflets are also available.

**MAKE SURE YOUR LOCAL CHURCH CELEBRATES
RACIAL JUSTICE SUNDAY ON 9th SEPTEMBER 2007.**

**RACIAL
JUSTICE
SUNDAY** 9 September 2007

**A WORLD ON
THE MOVE**

UN HIL — YR HIL DDYNOL
ONE RACE — THE HUMAN RACE



**'Go to a
land I will
show you'**

GENESIS 12:1
Designed by First Presence.

**CHURCHES' COMMISSION
FOR RACIAL JUSTICE**
Churches Together in Britain and Ireland