

# HOPE IN THE CITIES



Working towards an inclusive society

*Hope in the Cities* has been involved in many different initiatives over the last months. We include a number of these in this, our July 2006 newsheet – but you may have other news, feelings or experiences, which we should include. Please let us know by emailing us on [hopeinthecities@uk.iofc.org](mailto:hopeinthecities@uk.iofc.org).

A new flyer for *HiC* has also been produced (see Page 4). The latest facilitators' training course has just been completed with participants coming from the Somali community in London. Would you consider hosting a course, so that "honest conversation dialogues" can be an integral part of your work, community or family life?

*Hope in the Cities* is not, however, just about the tools we can offer, it is about how we are as individuals. How can we support each other to do the work of community building and create a society where we can model the change we want to see in the world? It must not belong to a few people, it must belong to all of us if it is to be really effective.

We are concentrating this news sheet on the subject of **dialogue**. But what does dialogue mean for each one of us? Do we know what it feels like to have real, honest dialogue? We begin with a report from *Gerald Henderson*.

## LIVERPOOL

Recently a leading black community leader commented to me that she had become more aware that she and her community were not the only people who carry pain from their experience and history. She mentioned the Irish community and those in North Liverpool, who experienced unemployment. She acknowledged how many of us are ignorant of the others' pain.

I acknowledged that I as a white person was becoming increasingly aware of the growing sense of exclusion in some areas, especially felt by the black and minority communities in the city regarding employment and promotion opportunities.

There was also alienation because of the climate of fear, fanned by events locally and the way the media report them. Mental barriers are being erected on all sides causing increased breakdown of trust and the risk of confrontation.

It was in this context that a diverse group of local citizens in Liverpool, white and black, decided to take part in a Hope in the Cities 'honest conversation' Dialogue, as part of a process to start to tackle this breakdown of trust and find ways to both heal the legacy of the past and find common ground to deal with what is causing the sense of exclusion, frustration and injustice.

The dialogue took place on June 10 in South Liverpool, close to Toxteth. Among those taking part included people working in local government, education, housing, employment advice and in the voluntary sector. As is the case in such dialogues there is an agreed ground rule of confidentiality that enables people to speak from the heart of what they deeply feel and think, in a safe environment.

### *Learning Process*

A wide range of issues came up in the context of people's very real experience. In education there were experiences of low expectations of young black children. There were experiences of covert and overt racism. There were unfulfilled promises by people in authority in community development and in some cases playing safe out of fear rather than engaging in honest dialogue with those at grassroots.

All agreed that the dialogue was a learning process and a first step on a journey. The next step was to bring to the table those who were not yet there, but who needed to be part of the conversation and who could help make a difference, if they were included."

## **NOTTINGHAM**

We gathered on Saturday June 17 in the Robin Hood Chase, St. Anns a district in the city of Nottingham for the third "Holding Hands in St Anns" occasion.

The sun shone; there was entertainment, information and vibrant activity, which reflected the diversity of both the people present and the local area.

A variety of events were organised by many of the community centres including The Pakistan Centre, Islamic Centre, Stonebridge City Farm, St. Anns Community Orchard, Sycamore Millennium Centre and St. Anns Play Centre. Representatives from the Black Police Association and other public bodies were also in attendance to add their support to the occasion.

The common factor which drew people together was that they live, work in or want to support the community of St. Anns

Late in the afternoon events culminated into an outdoor festive gathering outside The Chase Neighbourhood Centre built by local people for the local community. The Centre has a history, which symbolizes people in the community working together and is currently involved with issues surrounding regeneration & social inclusion.

"The event seems to be growing with community interest and getting better each year", said one participant.

Later that afternoon The Sheriff of Nottingham joined the people who gathered in growing numbers in the shopping precinct outside the Chase Neighbourhood Centre. People formed a huge circle and held hands spanning the whole square.

A call was made to observe two minutes silence in memory of Barrie Brazier, a resident of St Anns who sadly passed away last November. Barrie believed in the power of dialogue and called it “the quiet revolution”.

### *To realise a Dream*

Holding Hands In St Anns is an initiative which came out of a dialogue. Barrie Brazier and I co-facilitated three dialogues in Nottingham, I remember Barrie quoting a visionary inscription from a mural on the outside walls of the Chase centre which read, “*To realize a dream*”. Barrie saw this as a kind of affirmation and a vision for those who had gathered for a dialogue to discuss some of the pressing issues - gun crime, fear of crime and the stigma about St. Anns being a bad place to live - to try together to find the participants’ dream for St Anns. This dialogue resulted in the first “Holding Hands in St Anns”.

Ironically it was at a gathering I had attended a few years ago in Nottingham that a local authority official asked the question, “is this just another talking shop?” St. Ann’s shows this is not the case and is an example of dialogue between people, who hold different points of view, acting as a catalyst for trust building and from there real community cohesion can be started and collective action taken.

Plans are being laid to continue strengthening this initiative with a fifth “Hope in the Cities’ Dialogue in the area being planned.

Lawrence Fearon

## **INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE**

Recently Lawrence Fearon and Phoebe Gill visited Cape Town, South Africa to explore the concept

of dialogue in an international setting.

We learned of the initiative of the then Executive Mayor to create a “Solution Focussed Social Dialogue on Racism, Diversity and Integration in Cape Town”. The dialogue took place under the banner “Let’s Talk and Fix” and started by asking the question “Who Owns Cape Town?”

The Mayor’s mission was to “collaboratively prepare a plan of action, by which all forms of discrimination can be eliminated and the appreciation of diversity advanced”.

The first open discussion was attended by 350 people. Some of the audience feedback included “How can we better understand the racial tensions here?” “How can a sense of pride be reintroduced into dejected communities?” “What are the differences in the quality of education between all the peoples of Cape Town?” “How can we improve our communication skills, at an individual level as well on a broader level?”

The outcomes/action points were

- The City must make the link between racial discrimination and structural inequality and all levels of government must continue to draft policies that recognise that link.
- The City must continue to organise events that bring people together, thus promoting integration amongst all Capetonians, and instilling a sense of ownership in all City residents.
- We must continue this frank exchange in our homes, communities, religious institutions, social clubs and other groupings.

We met with the Executive Mayor's team both in the City Hall and with Capetonians in Langa, one of the oldest townships in Cape Town. For us, it feels that the above issues and the action points are as appropriate for us here in our cities in the UK as they are for Cape Town. The second dialogue in Cape Town was entitled "What keeps Capetonians apart?"

As we listen to all levels of society in the UK, should we not be using honest conversation dialogues to ask, "What keeps people in Britain/London/Liverpool and other cities, apart?"

Now we are working with the Capetonians to look at the models of dialogue which Cape Town could use so that everyone has a voice.

If anyone would like to work with us on how to implement this kind of dialogue in UK, please contact us at [hopeinthecities@uk.iofc.org](mailto:hopeinthecities@uk.iofc.org).

Phoebe Gill

## **FACILITATION TRAINING**

The evening of 13th June marked the second certificate presentation for facilitators from the Somali Community, who had successfully completed the five-day training course in dialogue facilitation skills.

The course covers all aspects of facilitation – concentrating on listening and communication skills as well as a deeper understanding of how we take in and make sense of what is going on in dialogue. Much of the course is about our personal journeys and what we have to do to be true co-facilitators together. How do we build trust with each other and with the group so that we can enable others to talk honestly in a "safe" space?

Certificates were presented to 12 facilitators who now want to go on to adapt the model we are using

in the UK to fit the Somali situation both here in the Diaspora and at home in Somalia.

One of the participants who spoke at the presentation event said, "This training has been life changing for me." Another responded, "It has been very useful and affected me fundamentally". One man said that he came to the course as an experienced facilitator but found that there was so much more to learn. He said that being a facilitator meant personal change and then extending that change to the group and that changed group will "create change in society."

## **CAUX**

There is no official Hope in the Cities UK participation in the conferences at Caux, Switzerland this summer ([www.caux.ch](http://www.caux.ch)). However many people from HiC have been invited to take part in the session taking place from August 7-17 entitled "An Honest Dialogue for a Clean and Just Africa". We would welcome any of those people who have undergone HiC Facilitation Training and who will be at Caux at that time to contact us if they would like to practice their facilitation skills!

## **NEW LEAFLET**

A new leaflet/flyer has been produced to promote Hope in Cities and give more information. Please email or telephone HiC at the addresses below for copies of the leaflet. The text can be found on [www.hopeinthecitiesuk.iofc.org](http://www.hopeinthecitiesuk.iofc.org)

*Hope in the Cities can be contacted through*

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