

## Archbishop of Canterbury welcomes Nigerian pioneers of reconciliation



LAMBETH PALACE

Pastor James Wuye (left) and Imam Muhammad Ashafa with the Archbishop of Canterbury at Lambeth Palace

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, received Imam Muhammad Ashafa and Pastor James Wuye from Nigeria at Lambeth Palace when they visited Britain to launch the film *The Imam and the Pastor* in December. 'Imam Ashafa and Pastor James, and the film that captures their honest and inspiring story, offer a message full of hope for those with hate in their hearts,' commented Dr Williams. 'They are a model for Muslim-Christian and inter-faith relations in Britain and abroad.'

The film, made by *FLTfilms* (the film-making arm of Initiatives of Change), tells their remarkable story of reconciliation and forgiveness in Kaduna, northern Nigeria. They had led opposing armed gangs in ethnic and religious conflicts. Pastor James lost his right hand in one of the battles and Imam Ashafa's spiritual mentor and two relatives were killed. Now they are co-directors of the Interfaith Mediation Centre in Kaduna.

The film's UK premiere was held in the House of Commons, hosted by John Battle MP, the Prime Minister's envoy to the faith communities. 'Our neighbours are those who are given to us to build community with,' Battle said. 'This film says "It can be done". This is a very special story that needs to reach every corner of our communities.' Imam Ashafa said: 'Religion is a candle to light the house or to burn down the house. It is an energy, and like nuclear energy, it can be used for good or destructive purposes. Our task is to see religion used for positive purposes.' Pastor James said: 'Nigeria is a very religious country. The conflict entrepreneurs use faith as the medium to inspire violence. We're using faith to de-programme violence.'

Nearly 300 people attended the film's first public screening in Friends House, Euston. After showing the 40-minute documentary film, the two men answered questions from people from several of the world's conflicts. 'Our story is about moving from the vicious circle to the virtuous circle,' Pastor James said, in response to a Palestinian woman's comments on the dangers of fundamentalism. 'The crisis in the Middle East has a great impact on Africa and Nigeria. Be careful in the global north what you say. Due to the Danish cartoons controversy more people died in Nigeria than anywhere else.'

Responding to another Palestinian, Pastor James acknowledged that it was a Herculean task to do what they are doing despite the wounds which continuously bleed. 'I challenge you to follow your heart and find a space in it for the others,' he said. 'Forgiveness is the weapon of the courageous, and the enemy will become your bosom friend and protector, because you will give him what he cannot give.'

'I am proud that something good is coming out of Nigeria and going out to the entire world,' said Rev Ben Enwuchola, Anglican Chaplain to the UK's Nigerian community. Prof Dawud Noibi, President of the Council for Nigerian Muslim Organisations, commented: 'Crisis has been transformed into reconciliation. It is a small starting point for a greater reconciliation.'

The two Nigerians were welcomed to Liverpool by the Lord Mayor, Councillor Joan Lang, at a civic reception in the Town Hall. She had been 'bowled over by their faith. It was a breath of fresh air,' she said. They were also welcomed to Liverpool Hope University by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Gerald Pillay. He joined them for a showing of the film at the university's Desmond Tutu Centre for War and Peace Studies, arranged by the Director, Dr Neil Ferguson, and attended by university and sixth-form students.

Dr Christopher Kolade, the Nigerian High Commissioner to the UK, gave a private reception to honour the partnership between the *FLTfilms* team and the Nigerian delegation.

The DVD is available from *FLTfilms*, 24 Greencoat Place, London SW1P 1RD, £15 plus postage. For institutions and other uses, please contact *FLTfilms*. Website: [www.fltfilms.org.uk](http://www.fltfilms.org.uk) Email: [info@fltfilms.org.uk](mailto:info@fltfilms.org.uk)



Welcome to *Initiatives*—published three times a year by Initiatives of Change UK to catch you up on what *iofc* is doing in and from the UK. We hope these four pages will give you information and inspiration—and a chance to share your own news of how you are making a difference. Please write to us at *Initiatives*, 24 Greencoat Place, London SW1P 1RD or email: [newsletter@uk.iofc.org](mailto:newsletter@uk.iofc.org)

## In the media

IMAM MUHAMMAD ASHAFI and Pastor James Wuye were interviewed on five BBC World Service broadcasts, reaching an estimated 700 to 800 million people, when they launched the film *The Imam and the Pastor* in Britain last December.

Broadcaster James Naughtie also interviewed them on BBC Radio 4's flagship news programme, *Today* (12 December), and referred to their 'remarkable story'. BBC Radio Five Live, the Islam Channel and Premier Christian Radio also carried interviews.

'New film promotes Middle East peace' was the headline in the *Church of England newspaper* (15 December), reporting the parliamentary launch of the film.

Maria Mackay wrote in *Christian Today* (7 December) about 'the amazing journey taken by two formerly bitter enemies on opposite sides of Nigeria's Christian-Muslim divide that became inspirational models of forgiveness and reconciliation'.

'Two former enemies can teach us love and tolerance' was the headline over a feature by Carole Woddie in *The Herald*, Glasgow (15 December). 'Beautifully shot, visually evocative and with a soundtrack provided by award-winning musicians, including Youssou N'dour and Femi Kuti, its content is never less than thought-provoking and carries potential lessons for us all..... The UK has need of the path along which they are now set.'

In her double-page review in *Africa Today* magazine (January issue), Bunmi Akpata-Ohohe wrote: 'The hope is that the work of the two former antagonists will inspire bold initiatives across communities... *The Imam and the Pastor* is a harrowing and inspiring story of gratuitous violence, but also of forgiveness and friendship. It brings a message of hope for the world on the volatile issue of Christian-Muslim relationships. Who says that good things don't come out of the most populous black country in the world—Nigeria? Such people should think again!'

## A rich experience

KILLY SÁNCHEZ recently returned to her home in Guatemala after working with lofC in the UK for two and a half years:



I heard about lofC while I was taking part in a *Gente que Avanza* (GQA) programme in Latin America. I had always been curious about MRA, through which the GQA founders had found change in their lives and inspiration to give their entire lives to work in Latin America. This touched many young people's lives, encouraging them to move away from their indifference and be part of building a new world.

I wanted the same for myself, to know more about lofC and to get involved. Thanks to many people's openness to different cultures, their love and caring for others, their global vision and big hearts, my dream came true. I arrived in the UK in August 2004, to take part in lofC's international website team, in charge of the Spanish section, based in Oxford. I was warmly received by the lofC team there and they gave me support, through love and friendship, to help me adapt to a new culture.

My time in the UK has been a very rich experience. Adapting to a new culture was a big challenge, which helped me to grow and appreciate the differences. I learnt more about lofC and its vision and principles are now part of my life. I participated in Caux, the lofC centre in Switzerland, three times and this helped me to widen my vision of the world and feel responsible for it. Being far away from my country I could recognise, affirm and be proud of my identity as a Guatemalan and Latin American. I learnt a new language and some website skills. I got in touch with many Spanish speaking people in Latin America and other parts of the world, providing them with lofC information. During this time I visited eight new countries and four that I already knew.

Now I am working for lofC from my home. I believe that Latin America needs lofC. I feel so small facing such huge needs in my continent; and it is so hard to be totally honest in the middle of big corruption. But now I know that my life, and how I live my values, can change my family, my community, and make an impact on my country and the world. It makes me feel responsible.

## End of a pioneering era

A FAMILIAR ITEM will be missed by thousands of trade unionists and officials in the UK and worldwide. The last issue of *The Industrial Pioneer* has just been published.

The paper, brought out by a small team of trade unionists and working people, has been one of the untold stories of British industry.

Launched on Merseyside in 1959, it took issue with adversarial, 'us-and-them' attitudes, whoever was showing them, at a time when class hatred was felt by many to be the best way to achieve social justice. Run entirely by volunteers, the paper spoke hard truths to management, labour, capital or government. Yet it also sought to recognise positive news and congratulate those

responsible. Its watch-word phrases were: 'Co-operation without confrontation' and 'It's not who is right but what is right'. And it looked at events with a global eye.

*The Industrial Pioneer* team are credited with helping to bring about radical improvements in industrial relations in Britain's ports, coal, steel and automotive industries. Its Action Committee for European Aerospace helped to build bridges of trust between French and British workers building the Concorde and the European Airbus. And, as detailed in the film *From Ironbridge to Longbridge*, the Llanwern Steelworks would have closed in 1980 had it not been for an unexpected change of attitude at the plant, following the intervention of the paper's staff.

The first two editors, Joe Hancock and George Walker, are no longer with us. Joe was a revolutionary seaman from Merseyside, and George an engineering craftsman and convenor of shop stewards from London. The paper's Secretary was Frank Abbott, a shop steward from Heathrow Airport, whose funeral I attended recently. We also owe a debt of gratitude to the last editor, Ian MacLachlan, and many other staff members.

They are still hard at work, in efforts to modernise attitudes in British industry, and in producing a new *Industrial Pioneer* website: [www.ipioneer.info](http://www.ipioneer.info)

Chris Evans

## Imam Sajid down under

Leading British Imam Dr Abduljalil Sajid, and his wife Jamila, visited Indonesia, Australia, New Zealand and Fiji during October and November, at the invitation of Initiatives of Change. During six days in Jakarta they met the leaders of several Muslim organisations. Dr Sajid gave an address at the Islamic State University which was prominently reported in *The Jakarta Post*.

In Australia they travelled from coast to coast on 'a mission to support efforts to build trust between Muslim and non-Muslim Australians'. In Perth, the capital of Western Australia, along with a busy schedule of speaking engagements, they had lunch with the State Premier in Parliament House. During a nine-day visit to Sydney, Australia's largest city, Imam Sajid spoke in four of the city's main mosques and Islamic centres; was warmly welcomed to the Great Synagogue by Jewish and interfaith representatives; and was received in the State Parliament of New South Wales by the Speaker where he spoke to a group of MPs. The visit received wide media coverage. In Sydney alone there were seven radio interviews, five press articles and three TV appearances.

Their five days in Canberra included talks with two government ministers who asked Imam Sajid penetrating questions about his experiences in Britain which could have relevance in Australia. A major article in *The Canberra Times* with the headline 'Imam calls for community to find cause of acts of terror' ended with a question from the Imam: 'Is it not time that we should see how the world's issues could be helped by faith communities?'

In Melbourne the Sajids had opportunities to engage with Muslim communities who were feeling the weight of bad publicity in the wake of a controversy over women's dress. Their packed programme included meetings with academics, students, journalists and local government.

Four days in New Zealand included lunch with the Governor-General and his wife and an interview on national radio. They travelled on to Fiji where they were guest speakers and major contributors at an IofC conference with participants from all over the South Pacific.

Campbell Leggat

## Greencoat Forums

### ADDRESSING THE ROOT CAUSES OF EXTREMISM AND TERRORISM

An aid agency executive, a university vice-chancellor and a director at the Commonwealth Secretariat have spoken recently at Greencoat Forums at the IofC centre in London.

- The Commonwealth has launched a new initiative to 'address the root causes of extremism and terrorism,' said Matthew Neuhaus, the Commonwealth Secretariat's Director of the Political Affairs Division, in his talk on 9 January. The Commonwealth's Commission on Respect and Understanding, 'will look at the communities that work well within the Commonwealth—those that really manage and respect understanding—and then replicate those successes across all member states,' Neuhaus said.



'Why is it that young people are particularly influenced by extremist philosophies?' he asked. 'We talk a lot about trade justice, political development, human rights justice, and the struggle against apartheid. So it's not just a struggle for economic development; it's a struggle for justice,' he said. 'We need to have respect for people, not to kick them when (they) are down and out.' Neuhaus made generous references to the founder of MRA/Initiatives of Change, Frank Buchman, who 'talked constantly about the moral factor'.

- In his lecture on 'the challenges facing higher education', 22 November, Professor Gerald Pillay, Vice-Chancellor and Rector of Liverpool Hope University, emphasised the need for spiritual values in higher education. Universities, he said, should be the conscience of society. His own ecumenical university was 'transcending secularism in higher education'.



Muslim students today had 'a confidence about their faith which I am afraid we [Christians] are losing', he said. We should not get hung up by 'Islamic extremism' which was not the real Islam. Tracing the growth of universal education for all, he also stressed that 'change has come from within, a kind of inner Damascus Road experience'. His university stopped all activity for one hour at 1pm every Wednesday, to give everyone space 'to reflect on first order principles'. The search for truth and meaning, alongside philosophy and science, included faith, he said.

- Peter Baynard-Smith, the Regional Director for Asia of the Irish aid agency Concern Worldwide, emphasised a commitment to poverty reduction in his talk on 7 November. As a young boy he had been exposed to African culture, as his parents had worked for many years in Africa with Initiatives of Change. He paid tribute to the influence this had had on his own career. Working with Tear Fund in 1994, Baynard-Smith became part of a two-year emergency operation on the Tanzanian border, where Rwandans fleeing from genocide were seeking refuge. It became the largest international relief effort prior to the Asian tsunami.



He moved to Ireland in 2005 to take on his current role, which has taken him to Bangladesh, India and Pakistan in the aftermath of the 2005 earthquake there which killed over 70,000 people. With 15 years of experience in international development, he concluded that 'the development sector needs leaders, visionaries, people prepared to put their religious, political, profiteering or nationalist position aside and focus on the needs of the extreme poor.'

- In his 'personal perspective' on peace-building in Sierra Leone, 13 February, Keith Neal spoke about the NGO Hope-Sierra Leone. This runs 'Moral Foundations for Democracy' training programmes for former combatants in the nation's 10-year civil war, which ended in January 2002. H-SL has now launched an anti-corruption 'clean elections campaign' in the run-up to next July's national elections.



For full reports see [www.uk.iofc.org](http://www.uk.iofc.org)

## For your diary

### AT ST ANDREW'S, EDENBRIDGE, KENT

#### Saturday 3 March

10.00am to 4.30pm

#### Walking with God

A Quiet Day to reflect on life's journey, using prayer, walks, art and silence.

Details from 24 Greencoat Place, SW1P 1RD.  
Tel: 020 7798 6000

### GREENCOAT FORUMS

#### Thursday 15 March

6.30pm for 7.15pm

**Baroness Howells of St David's** will speak on *Africa's contribution to the West*.

This will be an opportunity to reflect on the outcomes of the trans-Atlantic slave trade as we approach the 200th anniversary of the Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade on 25th March. Baroness Howells is a descendent of an enslaved African. Her career in community relations has been one of campaigning for the rights particularly, but not only,

of ethnic minorities. She is an adviser to the Home Secretary on matters of race and community relations and has served as Deputy High Commissioner of her native Grenada. Her theme reflects her desire to focus on a constructive and forward-looking aspect of a painful history which still affects our society today.

#### Tuesday 24 April

To be announced

#### Tuesday 22 May

6.30pm for 7.15pm

**Tony Burke**, who took part in the BBC2 TV series *The Monastery*, will tell his personal story.

### PLAY READING

#### Saturday 24 March at 3.00pm

**A Class of Their Own** a new play by **Hugh Steadman Williams**  
Directed by Elisabeth Tooms

24 Greencoat Place, London SW1P 1RD  
RSVP: 020 7798 6000 to reserve seats.

## NEW PRESIDENT OF INITIATIVES OF CHANGE INTERNATIONAL

The new President of Initiatives of Change International, Mohamed Sahnoun, took over from Cornelio Sommaruga on 1st January. A distinguished Algerian and United Nations diplomat, Sahnoun is a former Deputy Secretary-General of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and was Deputy Secretary-General of the League of Arab States in charge of the Africa-Arab dialogue. He served as Algeria's Ambassador to Germany, France, the United States and Morocco, as well as to the United Nations. Most recently he has been Special Advisor on developments in Africa to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. He lives in Geneva, and brings to his new role with IofC a wide knowledge of the developing world and a commitment to peacemaking.

His predecessor, Cornelio Sommaruga, became well-known internationally during his 12-year term as President of the International Committee of the

Red Cross. During his Presidency of IofC International he established valuable relationships with several international and interfaith organisations, and played a significant part in IofC's support of the peace process in Burundi.

IofC International is the short name for the International Association of Initiatives of Change (IA), created in 2002 and registered in Geneva, to federate the registered national bodies of IofC around the world. The British legal body, The Oxford Group, is one of the 20 affiliated members.

Campbell Leggat

Further details about Initiatives of Change International can be found on the global website: [www.iofc.org](http://www.iofc.org)

## RESPONSE FORM

NAME :

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I would like to receive more information about Initiatives of Change.

I would like to receive more information about Greencoat Forums.

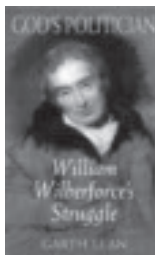
I would like to receive more information about a specific activity or programme of Initiatives of Change. Please specify:

Please send me a copy of the Caux programme for 2007.

I would like to make a donation to Initiatives of Change. Please find enclosed a cheque  (payable to Initiatives of Change).

Please post to Enquiries, Initiatives of Change, 24 Greencoat Place, London SW1P 1RD.

## Publications



### God's Politician

Garth Lean's classic biography of William Wilberforce, *God's Politician*, has been republished to mark the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the

slave trade. The book was relaunched on 25 January in the church on Clapham Common, London, where Wilberforce and his fellow campaigners worshipped. Actors read extracts from a speech by William Wilberforce and a book by Olaudah Equiano, a former slave who also took part in the British anti-slavery campaign. The Rector of Holy Trinity, David Isherwood, and the author's son, the journalist Geoffrey Lean, spoke. The foreword to the new edition has been written by Jim Wallis, the President of Sojourners/Call to Renewal. 'I hope that the lessons provided by *God's Politician* will inspire this generation of Christians to re-unite faith and social justice in our time,' he writes.

*God's Politician* by Garth Lean, Darton Longman and Todd, 2007; £10.95 ISBN: 0 232 52690 7

### Observing Silence

1,500 copies of the booklet *The Sound of Silence*, subtitled *How to find inspiration in the age of information*, have been reprinted in a third edition. Some 500 of these will be given to participants of IofC's training courses, 'Moral foundations for democracy', in Sierra Leone. The courses bring together the military, the police and civil society. Last year, the booklet was published in Arabic, on the initiative of Nagia Said in Cairo, and in Spanish. These editions are available at £1 each plus postage from 24 Greencoat Place, London SW1P 1RD. It has also been translated into Portuguese for publication in Brazil.



Initiatives of Change

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