



West End Refugee Service
strength through support



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Welcome Sean!

We are all delighted to announce that Sean Gladwin has been appointed to be the new Director of WERS. He will be starting at WERS on Monday 29th April. Sean says:

'I have been working and volunteering in the public and third sectors for more than 20 years and have held several senior management positions over the last 14 years. For the last three years, I have been working as an independent consultant, supporting organisations across the country to evaluate their services and measure their social impact. I am very much looking forward to joining the team at WERS so that we can work together to continue to build on their amazing work and successes.'

The Rwandan Genocide remembered

'We hold each other up. Our bodies and minds bear amputations and scars, but none of us is alone.'
(Paul Kagame, President of Rwanda)

This month sees the 25th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide. Commemoration events are being held across the world. In the Rwandan capital, Kigali, a flame was lit at the memorial which will burn for 100 days – the time it took for about a tenth of the country to be massacred by Hutu extremists - some 800,000 men, women and children.

The world just stood by as thousands of innocent Tutsis were slaughtered. The United Nations and Belgium had forces in Rwanda but the UN mission was not given a mandate to act and the Belgians and most UN peacekeepers pulled out.

We at WERS have been privileged to have Musa Hassan Ali, a survivor of the genocide, as a member of the team since 2003. Back in 2004 Ali gave an interview to the local press and here is an extract from that article:

'Losing 13 members of his family, including his parents, Ali survived and eventually fled with his wife and children to seek asylum in the UK. Now living in Newcastle and working for the West End Refugee Service as a support worker, Ali says the nightmares are still with him. 'Every single day I remember that terrible time,' says Ali, who lives with wife Innocente and his children. 'I remember the family I lost, the family I left behind and the terrible memories of what I saw. It is unimaginable this should have happened just 10 years ago and it is so important that we never let it happen again. We must learn our lessons from all those lives that were lost.' Like most Rwandans, Ali says his life has been moulded by his 'identity'.



15 years later, Ali reflects on the 25th anniversary:

'Although it's 25 years ago, in my mind it is still very fresh, but living here in the UK and

having lots of support has helped me to be able to commemorate and remember all our loved ones who perished in the genocide against the Tutsi. Keeping their memories alive – that's what makes us cope.'

There are 6 films on Ali's story on our website:

<http://www.wers.org.uk/videos/>

Show solidarity with the Rwandans who have made the north east their home and join them for their commemoration event, supported by Newcastle: City of Sanctuary, on 27th April:

‘Newcastle: City of Sanctuary is proud to support the commemoration event marking 25 years since the Rwandan Genocide. The event will provide an opportunity to honour all the victims and survivors of this genocide and for us to reflect on how we use the lessons of the past to ensure that we work together to create a safer, better future.’
(Rowenna Foggie, Migration, Refugee and Asylum Lead, Newcastle City Council)

**North East Rwandan Association invites you to their 25th anniversary commemoration event:
Saturday 27th April
Newcastle City Library
1-3pm**

Everyone most welcome!

Newcastle University students raised over £300 for WERS!

In March the Feminist Society collaborated with local artists Becky Tuck and Louise Brown to hold the Feminist Art Market, when work by the artists went on sale in aid of WERS. They also made a collection of sanitary products for our clients. A huge thank-you to everyone concerned!



Refugees from 7 countries enjoy ‘Penrith Experience’

In January, the Penrith and Eden Refugee Network (PERN) organised a five day programme of intensive English language tuition, trips around Penrith and cultural and social activities. Two of WERS’ clients were able to attend and very much enjoyed exploring a different area of the UK. PERN are always keen to enable refugees to explore the option of living and working in Penrith.

www.penrithandedenrefugeenetwork.org



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