# Media Release from Coventry Lord Mayor’s Committee for Peace and Reconciliation

### For immediate Release

## Coventry Lord Mayor’s Peace Lecture 2023 - Lessons from the Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda

**Marc J Gwamaka will fly from Rwanda to the UK to deliver Coventry Peace Lecture on 10 November in St Mary’s Guildhall, bringing with him vast experience of developing programs to fight against genocide.**

When we hear the word “genocide” most people think about the Nazi’s attempt to exterminate Jews during the Second World War. But the world does not seem to have learned the lessons of that terrible crime against humanity. Attempted genocides have continued to happen and are still occurring today.

Perhaps the most well-known occurrence was when up to a million of the Tutsi minority indigenous people of the African country of Rwanda were killed by Hutu militias in 1994, which was the tragic culmination of the Rwandan Civil War, which had started in 1990. But there are many more examples. Here are just a few of them.

Acts of genocide were committed against the Yazidi people of Iraq by Daesh in 2014. The Chinese government has committed a series of ongoing human rights abuses against Uyghurs and other ethnic and religious minorities in Xinjiang that are often characterized as genocide. In 2023 Armenian Americans demonstrated in California against what they called a genocide happening in Nagorno-Karabakh. Several people have accused Israel of gradual genocide in Gaza.

Marc J Gwamaka has been active in the fight against genocide most of his life. As a teenager in 2007 he and his friends founded Peace and Love Proclaimers, a dynamic peace-building youth organisation based in Rwanda that aims to inspire young people from around the world and teaches them the underlying principles of hope, unity, and social responsibility.

Genocide affects more than those people involved in the conflict. The lives of young people born in Rwanda after 1994, for example, were forever changed by the genocide. They felt themselves victims of something that none of them had created.

Marc wants to show these young people that they can either choose to be prisoners of that history and always see themselves in its light, or they can take a stand and ensure history doesn't repeat itself.

In 2009 he initiated **Walk to Remember**, an international education programme based in Rwanda which is followed in over ten countries. The programme educates and mobilises youth to fight against genocide.

How did he come up with the idea? Marc explained:

“It was a Wednesday, after facilitating a program called 'Forgiveness: A Step Towards Reconciliation' within the Peace and Love Proclaimer initiative. I realised that we often say the words 'Never Again' and it struck me that we had taken insufficient action to transform these words into meaningful actions.”

“It bothered me so much so I thought, why not do walks so that people could always ask why we walk and hence keep the memory of what happened. When we forget, we reap the fruit of forgetfulness and hence repeat the same mistakes.

“This concern weighed heavily on my mind, prompting me to consider the idea of organising a significant gathering of individuals. I envisioned a collective event where people could come together in unity and, when approached by curious onlookers, we could openly share our raison d'etre. My intention was to create something impactful and attention-grabbing, a platform that would naturally invite questions and discussion. I firmly believe that, by commemorating and preserving the memory of past events, we can help prevent the repetition of historical mistakes that result from forgetfulness.”

**Walk to Remember** now brings together young people from all over the world to end mass atrocities. The walk has taken place in 25 countries around the world and has been attended by heads of states and diplomats including dignitaries such as Paul Kagame, President of Rwanda.

In 2013, Marc and Andrew Fearn founded the **Aegis Youth Champion Leadership Program** in Rwanda, where children of survivors and perpetrators have to live together. Marc has worked with over 2,300 individuals, including those in active conflict, enabling them to become role models and powerful voices of humanity in their communities.

He has led programs in places of extreme conflict, such as South Sudan, Central

African Republic and Adamawa (north eastern Nigeria). Marc is a powerful voice of humanity who has trained in South Africa, Zambia, Cook County Jail (Chicago, USA), Gambia, Uganda, Kenya and his native Rwanda.

Marc currently heads the international training and education program at Aegis Trust, where he imparts valuable knowledge on peace and values education to a diverse audience from both local and international communities. Furthermore, Marc has had the privilege to lecture at renowned institutions such as Harvard Law School, Tufts University, William and Mary, and the University of North Carolina Wilmington, among others.

The doors of St Mary’s Guildhall will open at 6pm on 10 November when light refreshments will be available. Marc’s talk starts at 7pm.

“We advise people to book their seats in advance,” said Paul Maddocks, Chair of Coventry Lord Mayor’s Committee for Peace and Reconciliation which is organising the event. “Otherwise they may find themselves standing at the back of the hall which we would like to avoid.”

To book seats, people should visit bit.ly/covpeacelecture2023

Marc’s visit to Coventry will be generously funded by Coventry University’s Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations.

# Information for Editors

## Photograph of Marc



Photo be downloaded from:

<https://coventrycityofpeace.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Marc-Gwamaka.png>

## References

**Peace and Love Proclaimers**: <https://peaceloveproclaimers.org/>

**Aegis Youth Champion Leadership Program**:

<https://www.aegistrust.org/what-we-do/activities/students-youth/rwanda-youth-programmes/>

**Gradual Genocide in Palestine**: See for example <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13642987.2022.2065261>

## Coventry Lord Mayor’s Peace Lecture

Coventry Lord Mayor’s Peace Lecture is organised every year by Coventry Lord Mayor’s Committee for Peace and Reconciliation during Coventry Peace Festival.

It has included high-profile speakers such as politician, barrister, and human rights activist Baroness Shami Chakrabarti, previous Chief Scientific Advisor to the UK Government Professor Sir David King and BBC energy and environment analyst Roger Harrabin.

For more information see <https://coventrycityofpeace.uk/?s=peace+lecture>

## Coventry Lord Mayor’s Committee for Peace and Reconciliation

This Committee of about 20 peace activists has been organising events promoting peace and reconciliation both within the City and beyond since 1980. It currently organises a range of events including the Lord Mayor’s Peace Lecture, Hiroshima Day Commemoration, Young People’s Peace and Reconciliation Conference, Children's Peace Poem and Children's Peace Song Competitions. It also publishes books and pamphlets. 

We also work to make the people of Coventry more aware of peace and reconciliation, for example by maintaining the website https://coventrycityofpeace.uk

## More information about the Committee

Website: <https://coventrycityofpeace.uk/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/CovCityOfPeace>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/coventrycityofpeace/>

Logo and other Hi Res images: <https://coventrycityofpeace.uk/lmpclogo/>

## Contact

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