

# Southern Africa Quaker News

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## Southern African Quaker News

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# Editorial

One thing I always liked about Quakers and that drew me to them, was the focus on equality. No matter what sort of person you are, you could come to meetings and be safe without discrimination. I think it is fair to say most of us have been horrified by anti-LGBTI+ laws passed in Uganda earlier this year. Though further south in Namibia there is some hope, where same sex marriages from outside the country are now recognised, even if this is a little shaky. We are trying to do what we can to protect the safety and dignity of LGBTI+ members of our own community. The Quaker community also continues to Support the Basic Income Grant and hope for financial equality.

There is also a reflection on our continued concern for the environment and living sustainably, in a very interesting piece on Biodigesters, which taught me a good bit. I am always glad when we make time for creativity and Quakers have been kind enough to submit some poetry and prayer as well. These pages are a little later than I would have hoped and a little thinner too. The statements therein, however, I feel are bold and true to our Quaker values and to living adventurously.

*Bronwen Ellis*



Image: clipart.com

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# QUAKERS IN ACTION

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## Quakers Statement regarding the LGBTQIA+ Community

We, the Quaker Community of Western Cape, South Africa, feel that it is extremely important for us to state publicly our stance on sexual orientations and gender expressions.

We are aware of the negative views held by many religious groups and would like to be clear that we do NOT subscribe to these beliefs. In our faith community we have Friends with varied gender identities and sexual orientations. We have seen the deep love shared between individuals of different and the same sexuality, and those identifying as genders across the spectrum. We recognise this love as something rich, generative and healing, not sinful, as some violent, religious rhetoric would have people believe.

We believe that there is that of God in everybody, and that this comes in all the wonderful variety of expressions that are represented in our diverse and inclusive community, as well as in the human community at large.

In our recent, lived history in South Africa - under

apartheid – we had laws governing who people were allowed to love, and criminalising relationships that fell outside these bounds. We are still recovering from a regime that sought to divide humans on characteristics they are born with, and the legal subjugation of rights, physical movement, and identities of those deemed lesser by those in power. We believe that equal treatment by the government of all people is a basic human right, fundamental to the integrity of the law.

But we also believe that this goes deeper than law. As Quakers in Southern Africa, we subscribe to the principles of Ubuntu. We believe deeply in the spiritual principle that when one person or group of people are dehumanised, all humanity suffers. In the same breath, when all humans are given the opportunity to bring and express the fullness of who they are in all interactions, including places and communities of worship, we believe that all humanity benefits, and we all become more human together.

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## Namibian Quaker Community Statement on Same-Sex Marriages

We, the Namibian Quaker Community, feel it is important to raise our stance on the rights of the LGBT+ community, in the wake of recent Supreme Court decisions, and statements in Parliament and on social media.

The Quakers, also known as the Religious Society of Friends, is a spiritual group rooted in Christianity. We are devoted to the principles of peace and justice.

Some of our concerns are:

- As a religious society we support the human rights and inherent dignity of everyone, including LGBT+ people, as it is our belief that there is ‘that of God in everyone’. We believe this is also in line with the principles of Ubuntu.
- The Quakers have often viewed the Bible as a document to be interpreted anew by each generation, bearing in mind its deeper meaning and the social context in which it was written and the different translations available. We acknowledge that respect for heterosexual marriage is important and do not wish to devalue marriages between men

and women. We merely would invite faith leaders to consider a more open-minded interpretation of the Christian Scriptures than is often quoted in judgment against those in same-sex relationships.

- In any secular state, a decision by government to recognize civil marriages does not compel any religious institution to bless same-sex marriages among its members, and we accept that each church and faith community will have to make its own decisions in this regard, should same-sex marriage ever be legalized in Namibia.
- We are saddened by the hate speech that has been uttered at some recent public gatherings and protests in Namibia, on social media, and in Parliament, and would urge our leaders to reconsider these statements.
- The language that has been used by some politicians and public figures, for example comparing human homosexual relations to those of animals, or falsely accusing LGBT+ Namibians of spreading HIV or ‘grooming’ children, is especially concerning to us.

- We do not support the criminalizing of homosexual behavior, and we do not agree with so-called ‘conversion therapy’, which has been shown to be harmful.

Going forward, we acknowledge that communities of faith will have difficult discussions on same-sex relationships. Such discussions are a process, similar

to those around mixed-race relationships in Namibia’s not too distant past. Hence, these discussions should be conducted with regard for the dignity and safety of everyone, especially of LGBT+ people, and while listening to LGBT+ people within our congregations, families and communities with the intention to genuinely understand and seek ways forward together.



*The Quaker Community in Windhoek, Namibia, September 2023*

## Progression on Basic Income Grant in Namibia

*Helen Vale, Namibia Quaker Community*

Some Friends will recall that the last session of SAYM in January this year dealt with the issue of a Universal Basic Income Grant (UBIG) in Southern Africa when the motivation for this was given by George Ellis of Cape Town Meeting and discussed. SAYM agreed that the dire poverty levels evident in our countries are a threat to peace and stability and we encouraged Friends to spearhead Quaker participation in the national campaigns in their respective countries. George and a key group of Friends in South Africa finalised and sent a strong and comprehensive letter to the South African government and to the churches which has received press coverage.

Meanwhile Namibia has the advantage of having had a BIG pilot project in 2008 for one year in the Otjivero-

Omitara village in the Omaheke region which had been characterised by unemployment and hunger. The results were overwhelmingly positive – household poverty dropped significantly, economic activity increased including self-employment; school attendance increased and drop-out rates fell; child malnutrition, household debt, crime and dependence of women on men for their survival all reduced while increasing alcoholism did not occur (taken from Executive Summary of BIG pilot project Assessment Report 2009).

The BIG coalition in Namibia is a campaign, which aims at achieving the introduction of a Basic Income Grant in Namibia, and it has to date been the biggest civil society project in Namibia united in fighting poverty. This ‘conditional basic income grant’ is aimed to replace

the food bank, and this has created much controversy. On the one hand, it is a concession that a BIG is needed, but on the other hand, by limiting it the government has also avoided the basic argument.

The Namibia Quaker Meeting has joined this campaign which is run under the auspices of the Social and Justice Trust. In the past year there has been much discussion in the media on the pros and cons of introducing a national BIG.

In his inaugural speech in 2015, President Hage Geingob declared 'war on poverty' with the aim to eradicate and not just reduce it. Comparing the Namibian nation with a house, he said that under his rule "Nobody in this house must be left out". Moreover, Article 95 of the Namibian constitution confirms that the government has a moral and constitutional obligation

to uphold all human rights by promoting the well-being of its citizens (ProBono info about Namibia law. UBIG Social Justice for All. Legal Assistance Centre, Windhoek. October 2022). However, the World Bank in 2022 stated that 800,000 (of a population of around 2.5 million) are starving and in need of humanitarian assistance. This is a stark and shocking figure. The BIG coalition advocates the restoration of dignity to all Namibians. BIG is urgently needed in a depressed economy where the cost of living and unemployment has soared since the COVID-19 Pandemic.

See the letter by our two co-clerks, Gregory and Benonia in the Daily Maverick at <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2023-05-03-quakers-urge-government-to-implement-universal-basic-income/>



*Good Shepherd Primary School, Huntley Street, Makhanda*

## Quaker bookcases find a new home

*Helen Holleman, Eastern Cape Quakers*

For many years the Eastern Cape Quaker Library was housed in Rosemary and Lorraine Mullins' home in Grahamstown in bookcases that had been skilfully and lovingly made by Talbot Elliott, husband of long-standing Quaker and activist, Rosemary Elliott.

All these stalwarts have died, leaving our Meeting sorely depleted. The books were divided between Port Elizabeth (Gqberha) and Grahamstown (Makhanda) and kept in boxes for easy transfer between venues, and the bookcases languished in storage.

What to do with these beautiful, strong bookcases? We agreed to give them to one of the local schools and selected the Good Shepherd Primary School which is almost in the grounds of Victoria Girls' High School.

The school is one of the oldest schools in the area. Although it is situated in the centre of the business area of Grahamstown, it is populated predominately by disadvantaged learners, who receive their teaching and learning through the medium of English. The School caters for both girls and boys from Grades 1 to 7 (ages 6 - 13).

The Good Shepherd School was established in October 1884 by Sister Cecile (later to become Mother Cecile), Founder of the Community of Resurrection of our Lord, and was originally located in a building near St Peter's building on the Rhodes University campus. In 1918 the CR Sisters purchased the current building in Huntley Street (which had housed the Cathedral Grammar



School, forerunner to St Andrew's College from 1849) and the Good Shepherd School moved in to its current home.

In 2010, PetroSA provided funds to build a new classroom block, to refurbish the Administration block and to provide for a Staff Room, Library, Computer Lab, Kitchen (from where the School Nutrition programme is run) and Meeting Room. The Library staff were delighted to have more shelf space, and the Elliott bookcases were delivered, each with a plaque indicating their provenance.

Library classes seem to be almost constant (what a joy!), and we delivered and fixed the plaques to the bookcases, carefully stepping over the legs of little people engrossed in reading. It felt like a fitting home for items that had belonged to Talbot and Rosemary, two people who had devoted so much of their lives to improving the lives of others.

*Left: Plaques on each of the three Elliott bookcases commemorate Rosemary and Talbot Elliott*



*Right: Rosemary Elliott, 1931-2018*



*Library class at Good Shepherd. Two of the Elliott bookcases are visible (centre and right)*

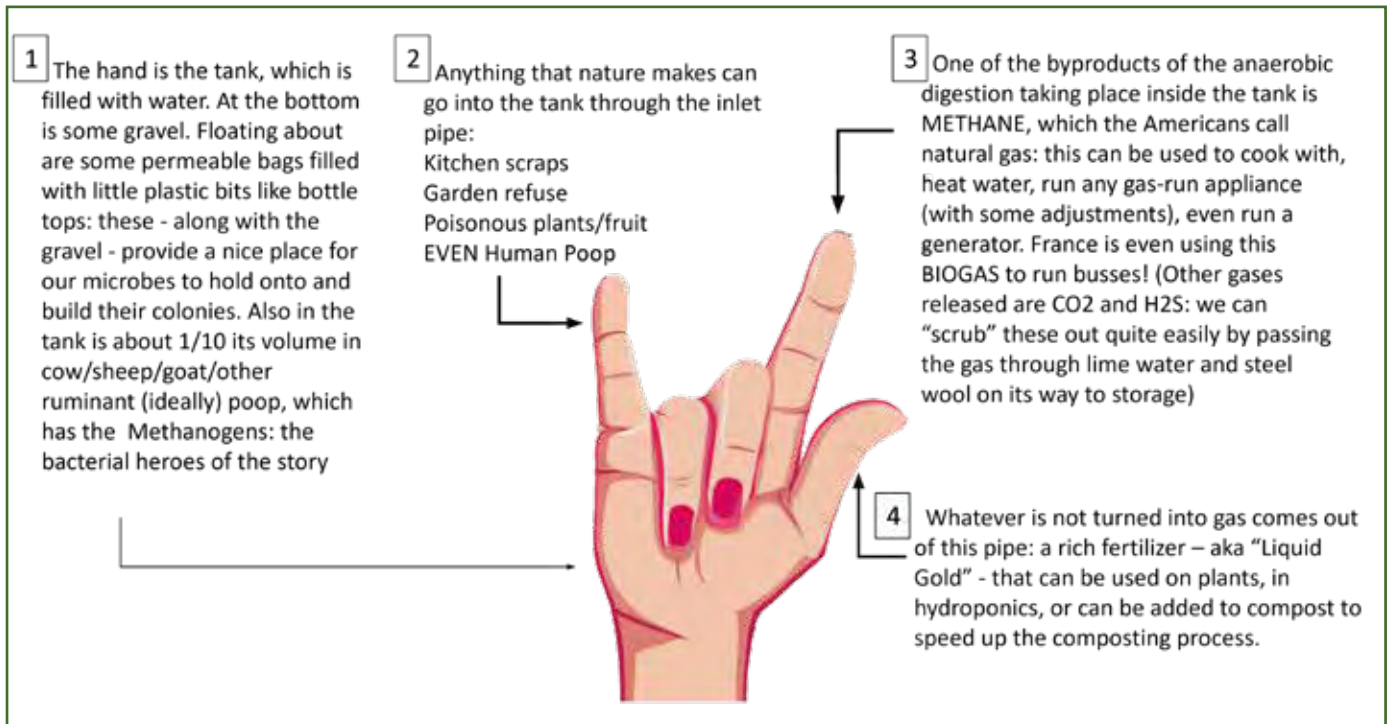
# QUAKERS THINKING

## Why every household should have a biodigester

Heather Tuffin, Quaker Community of the Western Cape

### Firstly: What is a biodigester?

Here's my 2-minute schpiel that I'll give to anyone who stands still long enough, now attempted in writing. The easiest way to explain is using the I Love You sign.



### Why we should all have one

Did you know that if organic waste was a country, it would be the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest producer of greenhouse gasses after America and China? Most food and garden waste goes to landfills, where it produces methane which is released into the atmosphere. We could be drastically cutting down on greenhouse gas emissions AND getting free energy all in one go.

Sanitary disposal of human waste is a major problem and a growing problem. Diarrhoeal diseases are the 5<sup>th</sup> most common cause of death in children under 5 world wide, with 90% of deaths occurring in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. In a study published in 2021, 15% of children living in the studied formal and informal settlements in Cape Town, were reported to have had diarrhoea in the last week.

Our City's sewage infrastructures are currently not coping with the load, and urban population growth rates in Africa are the highest in the world. Raw sewage is running in the streets in some areas, as well as running into our rivers all over the country.

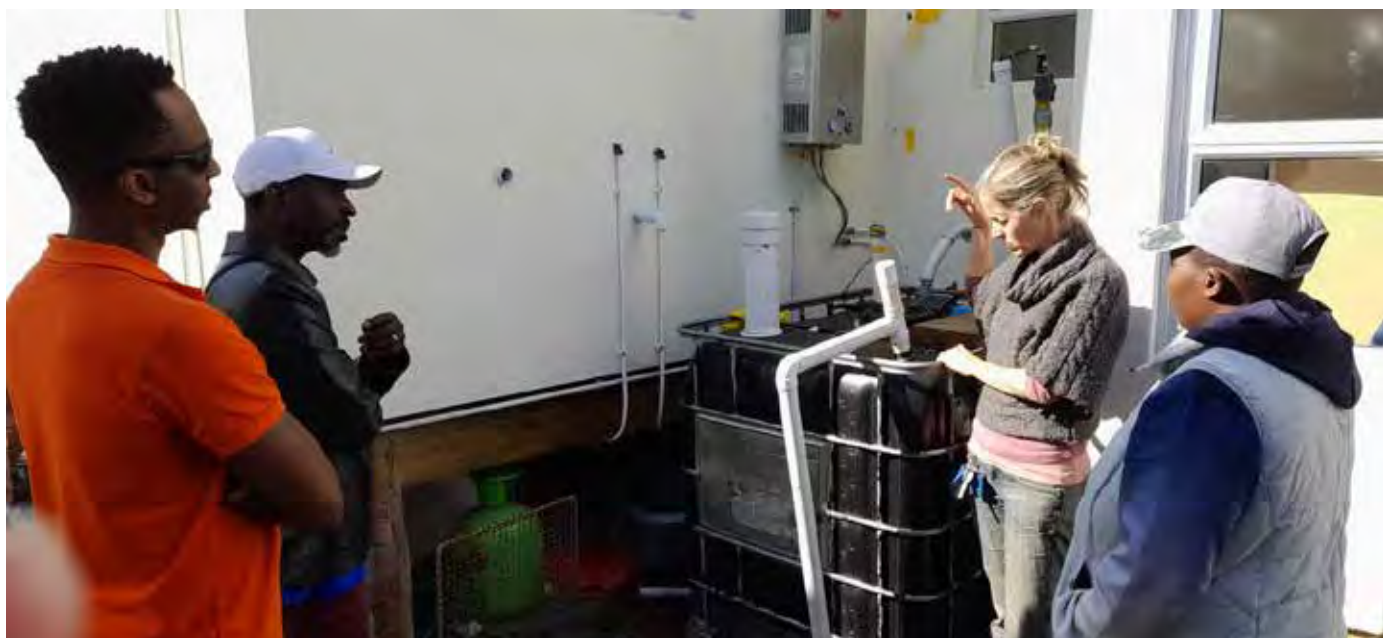
Biodigesters break down human waste into usable energy and in the process any pathogens (disease-causing bugs) in the waste are out-competed by the resident bacteria and do not make it to the other side, with the possible exception of intestinal worm eggs.

The digestate from a biodigester does not attract flies, rats, cockroaches or other vermin that are drawn to organic waste in bins or compost heaps.

Methane is a clean-burning gas, which would make a highly preferable substitute for the wood fires that are currently being used for cooking and light and which cause an increased burden of lung disease in those using it. Every summer there are hospital admissions of kids with aspiration pneumonia who have mistaken the liquid paraffin for water and drunk it, vomited it up and then breathed it in. Biogas gives a valid and free alternative to paraffin.

We are also at the mercy of load-shedding, which won't let up any time soon. Biogas from biodigesters is a free energy source which can be made anywhere, and is thus a key contender in the fight for energy equity.





## Some FAQs

**Q:** *How much work does it take?*

**A:** It helps to think of a biodigester as something living rather than as something more chemical/mechanical. In the biodigester community they are known as “Baby Dragons”: “baby” because they prefer their food mashed, “Dragons” because they breathe fire. Like any living animal, the biodigester does need to be looked after: it needs to be fed, watered and kept at a temperature close to the temperature of the initial host (the ruminant). There will be times where it suffers from a little bit of an acid stomach and will need nursing. The narrative regarding keeping biodigesters working seems to swing to extremes: one group, in trying to say how easy it is for anyone to do this (the tagline is “DO try this at home”) may make it seem like it’s a plug-and-

play exercise. In response to this, others will try to emphasise that it’s not as easy as that, and tend to give the impression that it’s a full-time job and not worth the hassle. My experience is that after initial set-up, which needs a bit of TLC, it takes about as much work as caring for any pet!

**Q:** *Won’t the gas explode?*

**A:** No. It is not kept under any more pressure than a brick or three placed on the storage bag to create positive pressure for the cooker or whatever you’re using the gas on. Even if there’s a leak, it’s actually quite a wet gas and dissipates quickly, so only lights very close to the source. That said, if a bag of biogas were to get penetrated by a flame, it might go “WHOOOF” as a large volume of gas is quickly burned up, so don’t do that!



**Q:** *How much do you need to feed it and how much gas will it make?*

**A:** In warmer months you would feed it about 1/50<sup>th</sup> of the tank's volume, when it's colder, it will take about 1/100<sup>th</sup> of the tank's volume. If it's at the ideal temperature (about 30-34 degrees) and it's being fed well, it can produce up to the tank's volume in gas a day, but in reality it's about half that volume that you can reliably hope for. For example, I have a 1000-litre biodigester, so if I'm feeding it correctly, which is about 20l a day in summer, it should produce about 500-1000l of biogas. 100l of biogas will give about 15 minutes cooking time, so we can expect just over an hour to 2,5 hours a day.

**Q:** *Do you need cookers and other appliances that are especially made for biogas?*

**A:** There ARE biogas stoves, generators, lamps etc., for sale (Kenya and Nigeria seem to have these, and you can order from China), but there are also numerous YouTube videos about how to make your own stove, and/or how to adjust appliances made for propane or other gases so that they can work with methane.

**Q:** *Can you cook with it inside?*

**A:** Yup. Best to have some form of ventilation while doing so (e.g., open a door or window to the outside).

**Q:** *But doesn't burning methane produce CO2, which is also a greenhouse gas?*

**A:** Yes, but CO2 is far less of a problem than methane. Methane can hold in 80 times more heat than CO2. If you think about it, it's just completing the entire natural cycle: plants pull CO2 from the air and, with solar power, convert it into sugars and O2. Animals eat the plants, and then animals eat the animals, and we eat the plants and the animals, and then all left over plants, meat and digested plants and meat (aka poop) are put into the biodigester which makes methane ...

There is loads more to explore about this on the internet. Have a look at <https://solarcities.eu/> They have been pioneering small scale biodigesters around the world and have shared plans for making all sorts of different-sized digesters: there's a size for every household.

We will be installing one at Quaker House, Mowbray, Cape Town in the upcoming weeks: invites to follow when we know exactly when. Meanwhile, DO try this at home.

# Some Thoughts on Slavery

*Helen Holleman, Eastern Cape Quakers*

A visit to the island of Bali in 2009 was mind-bending for a variety of reasons. How do you get your head around a place that uses three calendars simultaneously: the saka calendar, which is lunar based and ‘approximately’ the same length as the solar year (354 or 355 days long); the pawukon calendar which is 210 days long, and – for the masses of tourists who frequent the island – the Gregorian calendar as well? Ask any Balinese what the date is, and the response is often simply a smile, or perhaps the name of one of the numerous festivals most Balinese are compelled to attend.

Quite apart from the delightful insights to life on the island, there were darker sides to my visit. One of them was the frequent depictions of mass suicide on the insides of roofs of open-sided shelters – one of the most vivid of which was in the last Balinese battle of Klungkung (1908) against the Dutch, which ended the rule and family of the Raja of Klungkung, and the independence of the island. The other startling fact was a throwaway line in a small museum that I visited: “In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, 25% of the slaves at the Cape of Good Hope were from Bali”.

This had been no island paradise. The steep-sided valleys had isolated groups from one another and created suspicion and jealousy. It was not uncommon for people from one valley to raid the people on the other side of the ridge, capture them and sell them off to one of the Dutch East India ships that plied between Java and the Cape. So, many of the ‘Cape Malays’ might well have originated in Bali.

Recently, there’s been a growing movement calling for reparations for slavery, calls directed largely at the descendants of the buyers of slaves. But I wondered, “What about the sellers of the slaves? Who were they? Are they not just as responsible for the horrors of the system?”

As early as the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE, long before European navigators sailed down the west coast of Africa, a highly developed, very active trans-Saharan slave trade flourished, trading slaves captured from Senegal, the Gambia, Mali (where slavery still exists to some extent, today) across the desert to north Africa, the Sudan (which, with its access to the Red Sea, was itself was a huge slave-trading centre), the Iberian peninsula,



*The Battle of Klungkung depicting the mass suicide of the Raja, his family, and his court.*

Tunisia, Libya, Algeria, Egypt and the Ottoman Empire. The advent of European traders by sea provided an opportunity to extend the trading network and acquire guns, ammunition, knives, tools, alcohol, beads, cloth from European traders in return for gold, ivory, and slaves.

*“The slave trade was the horrific trafficking of Africans as slaves to the Americas, Europe and Middle East. Between 1500 AD and 1890 AD, over twenty-two million (22,000,000) Africans were sold into slavery (R.A. Austen, 1979). Seven million (6,856,000) were sold east: 3,956,000 were sold across the Sahara and 2,900,000 were sold across the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean (R.A. Austen, 1979). Fifteen million (15,000,000) were trafficked across the Atlantic. 70% of all Africans sold into slavery in the Americas were transported by Portugal and Britain. Sadly, a few African nations took part in this Atlantic slave trade” (Think Africa, 2021).*

Where did all these slaves come from? African unity was not a reality then any more than it is now, and fierce inter-tribal and intra-tribal wars raged on a regular basis. The sale of people is as old and as universal as people themselves, and from the African point of view, the European slave trade provided untold opportunities for riches and power. It shifted much of the economic and political activity from the Sudan, where the history of slavery stretches from ancient times right up until the Second Sudanese Civil War (2005). The shift of trade to the bulge of Africa enriched places like the interior of Guinea, Dahomey, Benin, Senegal, Nigeria, Cameroon, among others, on the bulge of Africa and the Bight of Benin.

The wealth generated by trade (in slaves, ivory, gold, copper, hides, timber) led to the appearance of a new class of African merchants who accumulated personal wealth and power that allowed them to free themselves from the restrictions of traditional power and to challenge the king. In fact, some of them set themselves up as kings.

At the same time, some Europeans settled more or less permanently in Africa, married local women and set up merchant dynasties. The pain of that trading still echoes in the voices of their descendants.

Close to Ouidah, the main port of Benin, stands a statue of Francisco Félix de Souza, whom many regard as the father of the city. A Portuguese slave trader from Brazil, he settled in Benin in the 1700s, married a local woman, established a dynasty, and has come down in Benin history as one of the biggest slave traders in the country. Today his name ‘graces’ a plaza and a museum, but the darker side of his history has left its wounds. Although the slave trade had largely stopped by the end of the 19th century, the kingdoms that captured and

sold slaves still exist today as tribal networks, as do the groups that were raided, and the influence of the de Souza family lives on – they are still among the nation’s most influential people and have a degree of control over how Benin’s history is portrayed.

*“For over 200 years, powerful kings in what is now the country of Benin captured and sold slaves to Portuguese, French and British merchants. The slaves were usually men, women and children from rival tribes — gagged and jammed into boats bound for Brazil, Haiti and the United States” (Washington Post, 2019).*

The memory of slavery lingers in many ways: In the 2016 presidential election in Benin, one of the candidates pointed out in a televised debate that his opponent (Patrice Talon, who won the election) was a descendant of slave merchants. In the villages where people were traditionally abducted for the slave trade, people still answer a knock on the door, asking if the visitor is “a human being” (or a slave raider). Even today, some descendants of slaves have forbidden their children from marrying the descendants of slave traders.

In an interview with the BBC (July 2020) Nigerian novelist, Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani acknowledges that one of her Igbo ancestors sold slaves, but argues that he should not be judged by today’s standards or values. A businessman, he sold tobacco, palm oil, and human beings captured by agents and brought to him, then sold through the port of Calabar in the Bight of Bonny in what is today Nigeria. More than 1.5 million Africans were shipped through this port, making it one of the largest points of exit during the Trans-Atlantic trade. However, the Igbo could not manage the trade on their own and relied on ethnic groups along the coast – the Efik and Ijaw – who acted as the stevedores and middlemen for Igbo traders.

Adaobi Nwaubani sheds a different perspective on the slave trade from the point of view of the African slave traders: her great-grandfather, Mwaubani Ogogo, “lived in a time when the fittest survived and the bravest excelled.” The concept of “all men are created equal” was completely alien to traditional religion and law in his society.

Buying and selling of human beings among the Igbo had been going on long before the Europeans arrived. People became slaves as punishment for crime, in payment for debts, or prisoners of war.

The successful sale of adults was considered an exploit for which a man was hailed by praise singers, akin to exploits in wrestling, war, or in hunting animals like the lion.

Ibo slaves served as domestic servants and labourers. They were sometimes also sacrificed in religious ceremonies and buried alive with their masters to

attend to them in the next world, as were the slaves of Chinese emperors, Viking heroes, Ottoman rulers. Slavery was so ingrained in the culture that a number of popular Igbo proverbs make reference to it:

- Anyone who has no slave is his own slave.
- A slave who looks on while a fellow slave is tied up and thrown into the grave with his master should realise that the same thing could be done to him someday.
- It is when the son is being given advice that the slave learns.

“It would be unfair to judge a 19<sup>th</sup> Century man by 21<sup>st</sup> Century principles,” says Adaobi Nwaubani. “Assessing the people of Africa’s past by today’s standards would compel us to cast the majority of our heroes as villains, denying us the right to fully celebrate anyone who was not influenced by Western ideology. Igbo slave traders like my great-grandfather did not suffer any crisis of social acceptance of legality. They did not need any religious or scientific justifications for their actions. They were simply living the life into which they were raised.

“That was all they knew.”

Indeed.

So, who is responsible for reparations to the descendants of slaves?

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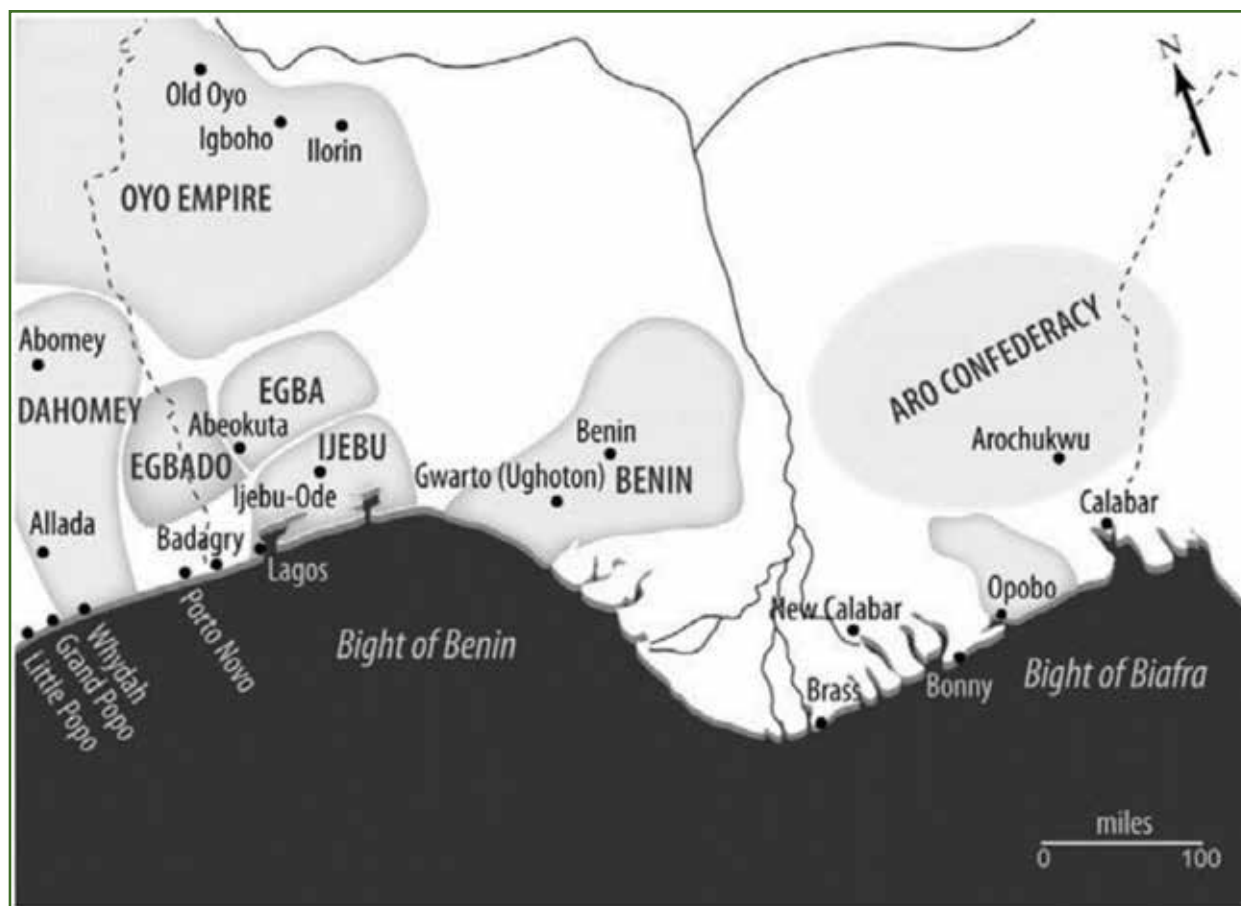
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Editorial Team (2021) 10 African Countries involved in the Slave Trade. *Think Africa*. <https://thinkafrica.net/african-nations-involved-in-the-slave-trade/>



Some of the African Slave Trading Countries (Source: Think Africa)

# Should municipal salaries be capped?

Consequences of non-delivery evident in deepening poverty and citizen distress – Quakers

*Rosemary Smith, Jennifer Bowler, and Helen Holleman, Eastern Cape Quakers*



The proposed salary scales which appeared in a Government Gazette last year struck a chord, given the levels of poverty in our small city of Makhanda. If we take the amounts on face value at about R1.2 million a year, we then deduct tax of R368 867, we are left with an income of roughly R70 000 per month.

If we then use the income comparison indicator at the Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU) website and we assume a family of five, this equates to an individual income for each member of the household of R14 000.00 per month. This puts these individuals in the top 3% of income earners in the country.

SCHEDULE 4					
REMUNERATION LEVELS WITH EFFECT 01 JULY 2022					
LOCAL GOVERNMENT					
GRADE	PAY LEVEL	POSITION	01-Jul-21	%	01-Jul-22
MA	1	Executive Mayor	1 409 079	3.8	1 462 624
		Mayor	1 409 079		1 462 624
MB	1	Deputy Executive Mayor	1 137 998		1 181 242
		Speaker/Chairperson	1 137 998		1 181 242
		Deputy Mayor	1 137 998		1 181 242
MC	2	Member of Executive Council	1 071 977		1 112 712
		Member of Mayoral Committee	1 071 977		1 112 712
		Chairperson of a Sub-council	1 071 977		1 112 712
		Whip	1 071 977		1 112 712

About 97% of individuals in SA have a smaller – much smaller – monthly income. This makes tragic sense: we are one of the most unequal countries on the planet, and these figures show it – as do the huge differences between chief executive officers (CEOs) in the private sector and their lowest-paid workers. Way back in 2010, then Minister of Economic Development, Ebrahim Patel proposed capping the salaries of all who earned more than R550 000 per year. He was shouted down.

From a Quaker perspective, we find this imbalance disturbing because it flies in the face of the values we hold dear:

1. Firstly, we favour a more equal society. Equality is about seeing that of God in everyone so all people are equal. But it also means that we favour greater equality of income. While we accept that absolute equality is unrealistic, we do believe that we must strive for greater income equality. This means raising the level of the lowest paid and putting a constraint or cap on higher-income earners.

As Quakers, we have already publicly proclaimed our support of the UBI (universal basic income) grant to raise the income of the poorer members of our society, and equally, we intend to champion wage constraint for high earners in both the public and private sector. We know how damaging high-income inequality can be – it is well documented around the world, and we see evidence of it in our society in every headline that deals with violence, corruption, crime, mental health issues, and teenage pregnancy – all issues that are found to be worse the higher the income inequality.

2. Secondly, as Quakers we value integrity – with this comes the sense that if we are paid for a task, we need to provide value for that payment. Can officials and councillors within Makhanda truly claim that they are delivering the services to the town for which they are being paid? The consequences of non-delivery are evident in the deepening poverty and distress of the citizens; in the failing infrastructure, in the lack of supervision of work and workers, in the breakdown of the social contract between the owners of the town (its citizens) and the people employed to care for them (the Municipality and Council).
3. Thirdly, as Quakers we value sustainability. Sustainability applies to all our systems, the economic system, the political system, and the environmental system. The financial system in the municipal sector cannot sustain the salaries being paid to officials – municipalities around the country are in a state of financial collapse, which further exacerbates the inequality and poverty of the citizens.
4. Fourthly, as Quakers we value simplicity: can we live within our means? Do we need expensive cars, expense accounts, flashy clothing, etc?
5. Fifthly, as Quakers we value community, the collective, the understanding that I should do unto others as I would have them do unto me, or the notion of ubuntu which embraces the responsibility we each have to the collective and the collective good. To excessively reward myself at the expense of others goes against the moral principles laid

down by African spirituality and all other major religious traditions.

6. And finally, as Quakers, we strive for a peaceful world – and there can be no peace where there is injustice. There can be no peace where a few are rich, and many are poor; where the few extract from the community and so ensure a lack of development and sustainability. Peace is brought through working

towards greater equality and ensuring the welfare of the collective.

If nothing else, municipal officials should see that there is a strong moral case for income constraint, as well as a strong self-interest imperative for income constraint.

<https://grocotts.ru.ac.za/2023/06/29/should-municipal-salaries-be-capped/>

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## QUAKER CREATIVITY

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### A Quaker Ubuntu Prayer

*Justin Ellis, Namibia Quaker Community*

**Creative Spirit of the Universe:**

**Make us even more wonderful, compassionate, kind human beings,**

Rejoicing as we are continuously and mysteriously moulded in your likeness

Valuing our interdependence on all people and the whole of creation

Seeking your daily guidance and strength to work for the good of all people and all creation

Using the earth's resources sparingly

And giving priority to those most in need

**Make us healers and peacemakers**

Opening ourselves to love, as friends, beyond our families, communities and nations

Reaching for an end to suffering, violent conflict and warfare

Rejoicing in the equal worth of all persons

Denying all forms of discrimination and exclusion

Welcoming strangers, migrants, refugees, victims and enemies

'Answering that of God in every one'

And forgiving those who have done us harm

**Make us responsible contributors to the circles we belong to**

Collaborating with seekers after truth and wisdom

Reflecting carefully on trends and experiences

Not accepting honorific titles

Not guided by fear

But moving forward boldly as you lead us

Even when we cannot see most of what is to come.

# African Boy

*Joan Kerchhoff, KZN Monthly Meeting*

Joan explains: I live in an African city, Msunduzi. 50 years ago my husband, Peter, and I founded the Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness. We were Anglicans but the agency (PACSA) was ecumenical and became well known as working for human rights. Peter was detained without trial in

1986 and in 1999 died in a car crash (accidental or maybe not). Some time after his death I began to attend Quaker meeting for worship. I was drawn to the Quaker tenets, particularly that of simplicity, as we had given up our jobs and savings to found PACSA.

He was born in the hills  
of his native land,  
and thought it was his  
to roam –  
the dusty earth  
where the mealies grew  
and the rain pools shone  
and the high grass  
blew in the wind.

But  
when he became  
a man  
the truth –  
like a hungry lion –  
devoured  
his dream.



Image: clipart.com