

# UNISON *Aberdeenshire*

## Equality Matters

### Update and introduction to the Equalities working group

I thought it would be good to have a Branch Equalities Briefing come out mainly to update all of you and introduce you to the Equalities working group which you are welcome to join – please let me know if this interests you. The group comes from various employers/past employers in Morag’s case, so we welcome everyone who would like to be part of the working group – next time I will ask some of them to supply photos! Whether you can spare an hour, a year or a lot more you are welcome.



Kathleen Kennedy

The Branch would really be delighted if one of our younger members – i.e. under 27 years old came forward to be our Young Members Officer, and the other positions we would like is a LGBT+ Members Officer!

We have included 2 reports and up and coming events which we hope to will be involved with if this interests you.

**Hello, my name is Donna Scott.**

I am the Disabled Members Officer. Having spent most of my life down south, I moved back to Aberdeenshire in 2007, entered full time education and gained a BSc in Countryside Management. I currently work for Aberdeenshire Council as a home carer. In addition to work I run The Happy Bookshop Ltd, an online bookshop selling new books and gifts. In December 2020 as a mature adult I was diagnosed as an autistic.

My interests include walking, reading and the insect world.

**My name is Morag Lawrence.**

I was a UNISON steward for around fifteen years and for most of them also Magazine Editor. Since 2015 I have been the Branch’s Pension Champion and am now retired and still involved with them all apart from workplace steward. I am interested in all equalities issues with a particular interest in helping members

form SOG’s (Self Organised Groups). I enjoy meeting people and working with them as they strive towards a particular goal! I was brought up in Aberdeen and have 3 grown-up children and 6 grandchildren.

**My name is Benson Mugenyi.**

I was born in Uganda and I came to Scotland in 2000 initially to study and ended up working here up to now. I am married to Margaret and the Lord has blessed

us with 4 children: one boy and three girls.

Currently, I work with Cornerstone Community Care as a Support Worker. I am also a UNISON steward as well as Black Members Officer in Aberdeenshire Branch.

I prefer jogging and cycling as my hobbies. I am an elder in my Church which makes me a lot busier with Church meetings in addition to my work. I am quite keen to set up a Black Members Self Organised Group.

## My name is Kim McIntosh.

I have worked for Aberdeenshire Council for 8½ years and am an Administrator within a Primary School. After meeting Kathleen Kennedy through the Union and having several chats with her I decided I would like to try and help other Women in the Workplace and thought I would attempt the role of Women's Officer. I have stayed in Aberdeenshire all my life, so far anyway. My husband and I have 2 boys and 2 dogs, I am not sure which are the most work! I enjoy walking with our dogs, baking, catching up with friends and trips/holidays to the beach – the simple things in life, which I think we are all appreciating more nowadays.

## My name is Martha Stewart.

I was born into a travelling family but was not brought up with them. I am an honours graduate from Aberdeen University and did a taught post-graduate diploma in Ethnology and am at present finishing off my Masters dissertation. I work as a day time responder with Aberdeenshire Council.

I am a single parent of one son who is soon to be thirty and lives and works as a research coordinator at Kings College, London. My hobbies are: swimming, cycling, reading, art & crafts and travelling. My interests include Oral History, Labour Histories stories and songs, Black Lives Matter, Gypsy/Traveller community and LGBT community.

## My name is Segun Adebayo.

The setting of the novel Macbeth in Inverness endeared me to Scotland. Easily the bagpipe nation became the choice of destination to further my education. I was an oil and gas expert, having obtained a master's degree in Oil and Gas Law at Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen. I am a qualified lawyer in Nigeria and am currently in the process of re-qualifying in Scotland as a Scottish solicitor.

Following my own racism and discrimination experience, I became a steward with UNISON in 2018 in order to use my skill sets to help workers facing workplace prejudice and other workplace misdemeanors.

## My name is Jackie Roy.

I was brought up in Nassau and Grand Cayman before returning to the UK to study at the age of 18. I am married with one daughter and reside in Aberdeenshire. I work for Aberdeenshire Council as an Administrator and am a UNISON steward. I am well-travelled and enjoy meeting people from the countries I visit and learning different cultures. I am enjoying being part of the "UNISON Family" and am determined to support, represent and campaign for equality for all genres as equality matters to me. I am keen to become "active" within the branch and hope to help make a difference.

The other UNISON self organised groups (SOGs) are shown in this diagram



\*The fact that retired members are no longer part of the current workforce exempts them from some internal committee membership

As I have been around the branch a while and get around so to speak I haven't written anything about myself but personally recommend each of the Equalities working group as they are all friendly and very hard working - any questions don't hesitate to ask. [kathleenunison@gmail.com](mailto:kathleenunison@gmail.com)

# Black History Month Celebration



The full report of the Black History Month events "Black lives matter in face of hostility" are to be found [here](#). This years' Black History Month (BHM) virtual events were celebrated on 30th and 31st October 2020. These were organised by Benson Mugenyi (Black Members Officer), Kathleen Kennedy (Equalities Coordinator), and Segun Adebayo (Steward).

The events were successful as they attracted about 22 people (both black and white) attending both events and who all participated in answering the fundamental question as to what BHM means to them in Scotland. All participants expressed a common view that any form of racism and unjust treatment should be got rid of because they are inhuman, and they make communities unsafe and hostile.

Dr. Davena Rankin is an active member of UNISON and is the Branch Secretary at Glasgow Caledonian University and on UNISON National Executive Council. She said " Black History Month allows everyone to stop and reflect on the continuing impact that the legacy of slavery has on modern day society. Myths that were developed to justify the inhumane treatment of slaves continue".

Kebba Manneh is a committed Trade Unionist, Branch Equality Officer and he chairs the National Black Members Committee as well as Cymru/Wales Union Black Members Committee. Kebba is also a practicing Senior Magistrate with experience on the Gwent Bench for nearly 20 years. Kebba called for Black History to be taught as part of the National Curriculum throughout UK.

Rakiya Suleiman is a trained registered nurse and midwife. Rakiya is also the Union Chairperson for Scottish Black

Members and Vice Chair for UNISON National Black Members. In her presentation, she said that there is one human race; and that black or white is a political terminology. "Racism", she said, "is learned".

Lewis Macdonald (MSP) spoke of the discrimination he witnessed about Gaelic speaking people in the highlands. He said he took interest in Black racism after studying East African history. He said we owe each other the same duty and that racism must be on the agenda.

He said, " I was attracted to African history as a student because of the importance of oral history, something which is also true of my own heritage in the Western Isles of Scotland. Those who are denied literacy in their own language keep their history in their heads, and the oral history of Africa and of people of African descent is rich indeed. The relationship between Aberdeenshire and Africa is long and complex, some of it positive and some of it negative, and our young people should have the chance to know more about it".

**UNISON Aberdeenshire**

**Fighting Racism in the Workplace**

Join us virtually on [GoToMeeting](#)

**19 March 7pm**

**Speakers – Margaret Greer and Wilf Sullivan**

**The meetings will be chaired by Benson Mugenyi**

# Disability History Month Event

We made history as we celebrated Disability History Month and the International Day of People with Disabilities with an on-line event on 3rd December, as the first branch to hold such an event.

Those in attendance heard from a great line up of speakers, including Scottish Convener, Lilian Macer, Scottish Organiser Peter Hunter, Angela Hamilton, NEC member and Kay McKerrill, Orkney Local Government Branch. We were also privileged to have UNISON Vice-President Sian Stockham with us and we heard some beautiful music from well-known local musician, Joseph Long.

Kathleen Kennedy, Aberdeenshire Branch equalities coordinator chaired the event which also saw the launch of a booklet, Disability History: Fascinating Facts, penned by Kathleen.

[Disability-History-book-web-1.pdf](#).

Scottish Convener, Lilian Macer welcomed everyone and hoped everyone would enjoy the event.

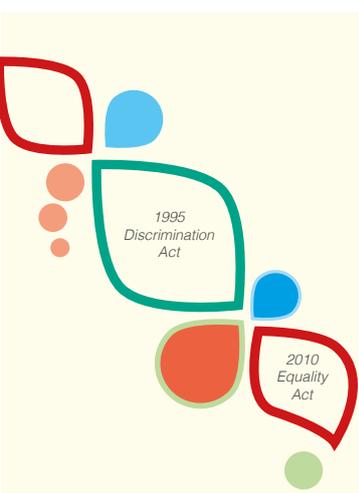
Kay McKerrill, a solicitor by trade, looked at the changes to disability rights over the past 75 years and said it was hard to see significant improvements. She particularly criticised the changes to the benefits system for people with disabilities saying, "It was

difficult to read about the impact of benefits changes and the flawed assessment process on disabled people". She called on the UK Government to commit to the UN Convention on Disability Rights.

Peter Hunter, who is a North East 'laddie' himself spoke about remembering, when he was young, seeing disabled people in Aberdeen being car park attendants as that was the only work they were able to gain for employment. He called for more events like this and urged, "Approach the issue of discrimination with your heart as well as your head".

Angela Hamilton spoke about the violence and abuse suffered by disabled people pointing out that disabled women are twice as likely to be raped than non disabled women. She also challenged disabled people not to hide their disabilities to encourage others. "It is society that disables us", said Angela, "Everyone must commit as allies to supporting equality for all disabled people. When the world is a better place for disabled people, it will be a better place for us all".

Joseph Long, a lifelong friend of Kathleen's then spoke about his disability and how he has overcome that to be the beautiful and renowned musician that he is today.



## Are you disabled? If so this meeting is for you

Meet Donna our new Disabled Members Officer and help develop a plan on how we develop this group

**Meet at 1800 hrs on Thursday 15th April**

Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/454110517>

You can also dial in using your phone. United Kingdom: +44 20 3713 5011

Access Code: 454-110-517

