



Curtain falls on another busy year at the Migrants Forum

THE year 2025 will live long in the memory of everyone connected to the North West Migrants Forum

The standout moment was, arguably, the launch of our Hidden History Project exhibition. After two years in development, it was finally unveiled on July 1 and has been viewed by over 1,500 people in the months since.

The exhibition, researched by Chantelle Lunt and Dr Naomi Green and overseen by Project Manager Aynaz Zarif, has prompted important conversations about Ireland's growing multiculturalism. No doubt it will continue to do so as the collection moves to Belfast in 2026.

There were other significant markers for us as well, including our annual Advancing Race Equality Awards which attracted over 250 people to the Ebrington Hotel in March.

In late July we returned to Brooke Park for our annual fun day. With the sun doing its best for us, hundreds of people came together to enjoy food, bouncy castles, face-painting, circus activities, dancing, singing and more.

Our Summer Club was once again a roaring success. Under the guidance of youth workers Cathy Malcolm and Cara Gilliland, around 50 young people from all backgrounds participated in a list of activities including fishing, wall climbing, water sports, a day out at the bowling alley and a trip to Portrush.

And in October we held our fifth Black History Summit. For the first time ever we had contributors from all regions of the United Kingdom, underlining the Summit's growing national significance.

Sandwiched in between all that were our two PEACEPLUS projects which continue to move forward at pace.

The Intercultural Cross-border Inclusion Programme - a partnership with four other grassroots groups - will be launched in Monaghan on January 21 while the doors on our Intercultural Community Café should be open in the coming months.

Those were just some of our 2025 highlights but equally as important were the day-to-day activities like our English classes, mothers and babies group, our workshops, welfare and support services, our educational programmes and our campaigns.

As the page turns and 2026 dawns, we have much to be grateful for and much to look forward to.

To all our volunteers, supporters, allies, facilitators and funders, thank you and have a lovely Christmas and New Year.



We held our annual Christmas party on December 10 with upwards of 75 people in attendance. As you can imagine, there was much excitement as Santa Claus paid us a flying visit!

**In this edition
of your
NWMF
newsletter...**

- Hidden History Project exhibition to continue touring in 2026
- ICI Programme to be launched on January 21 in Monaghan
- Migrants Forum helps put East African cinema in the spotlight
- Condemnation follows attack on Sudan family home
- Lived experience gives community groups food for thought



Thank you for everything Eva

ALMOST everyone who has come through the doors of the North West Migrants Forum will have encountered her in some capacity.

Now, sadly, Eva Kasmetli has departed our organisation in pursuit of a new challenge. On paper Eva was our Finance Officer. But in reality she was much more than that - she was a campaigner, an organiser, a cook, a source of advice and wisdom, a shoulder to cry on. But above all that she was a humanitarian, someone committed to improving people's lives and reducing their troubles. Eva is a huge loss to the Migrants Forum and we wish her only good things for the future.



Eva Kasmetli (left in frame) who has sadly moved on from NWMF

ICI Programme to be launched next month



PEACEPLUS
Northern Ireland - Ireland

Co-funded by the



European Union



UK Government



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Northern Ireland
Executive
www.northernireland.gov.uk

OUR Intercultural Cross-Border Inclusion Programme (ICIP) will be launched in Monaghan on January 21.

Funded by SEUPB through PEACEPLUS, the ICI Programme is a collaboration between ourselves as Lead Partner, Donegal Intercultural Platform, Multi-Ethnic Sports and Cultures NI, Rural Community Network and Dublin-based Irish Network Against Racism.

We are delighted that ten jobs have already been created through ICIP with further recruitment possible during the programme's lifespan.



Among those invited to our launch are Northern Ireland's First and Deputy First Ministers Michelle O'Neill and Emma Little-Pengelly and the Republic's Minister of State for Rural Affairs

Jerry Buttimer.

The ICI Programme's overall aim is to foster a more inclusive and welcoming society by challenging institutional and structural racism, supporting intercultural understanding and enhancing participation of minority ethnic communities across borders. The ICI Programme will be launched in Monaghan Peace Campus on January 21 at 10.30am.

The ICI Programme is supported by PEACEPLUS; a programme managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB)

Hidden History exhibition to continue touring in 2026

WITHOUT doubt our Hidden History exhibition - a component of our Black Heritage NI: The Hidden History Project - has been one of our greatest success stories.

Since being launched on July 1 2025 it has been viewed by over 1,500 people in libraries and colleges across Strabane and Derry.

It is currently on display in the Limavady campus of the North West Regional College but will move to the Museum of Free Derry in early January. After that it is on its way to Coleraine Library before moving to Dungiven.

In June a Belfast audience will get to see it for the first time when it goes on display in Shankhill Road Library.

We will keep you posted about its travels beyond June.

In other exciting news, work has begun on the second phase of the exhibition which will focus more on the present than on the past.

Thank you as always to our researchers Naomi Green and Chantelle Lunt for their exemplary work.

Black Heritage NI: Hidden History Project is made possible through The National Lottery Heritage Fund.



Top left: Our Board Member Beverly viewing the exhibition. Above: Researchers Naomi and Chantelle. And left: Our funders, National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Anti-Racism Charter takes flight

THE North West Anti-Racism has really taken off since its official launch.

The three organisations involved in co-ordinating the document - the North West Migrants Forum, Bloody Sunday Trust and Irish Network Against Racism - have been inundated with requests from businesses, schools, community groups, public sector organisations and sports clubs looking to adopt it. For those who don't know, the Anti-Racism Charter is, essentially, a statement of intent, providing a way for society to push back against the rise of racist messaging and actions we are seeing and hearing both on our streets and online.



A packed Guildhall for the launch of the North West Anti-Racism Charter.

Speaking at the Charter's launch in the Guildhall, Mayor of Derry and Strabane, Ruairi McHugh revealed that he has a copy hanging proudly in his office.

Encouraging others to follow suit, he told the audience, "The people of Derry and Strabane have a long and proud history of standing together against division and

standing up for civil rights. This charter is a continuation of that legacy.

"By endorsing it we are sending a clear message that our city and district is a welcoming place for everyone.

"It is a testament to the strength and unity of our community that organisations, schools, businesses and

individuals have come together to take a stand against racism."

Over 30 charters have been adopted to date with requests coming in almost daily for more. We, along with our partners, are working to get one to everyone who wants one but please do be patient, the demand is very high (which we are delighted to report!)



Audience enjoys ‘meaningful and memorable’ Black History Summit

DOZENS of people gathered in Ulster University’s Magee campus on October 24 for our annual Black History Summit. The theme this year was ‘Standing Firm in Power and Pride’ and attendees listened to speakers from all regions of the UK as they reflected on current debates surrounding migration, race and identity.

The Black History Summit is an element of the North West Migrants Forum’s wider ‘Black Heritage NI: The Hidden History Project’, supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund. Thanks to National Lottery players, the project is able to shine a light on the often-overlooked contributions, experiences and resilience of Black communities in Northern Ireland.

Opening what was our fifth Black History Summit, our CEO, Lilian Seenoi Barr, described the event as an opportunity to “pause, learn and connect”.

Mrs Barr said, “Today, people of colour and migrants still face discrimination. “We remain invisible in spaces where we are more than capable of leading and contributing meaningfully. And far too often we continue to be met with hostility, especially in times like these when both global and local tensions are rising. “That is why our theme this year is powerful

and intentional, Standing Firm in Power and Pride.

“It is a reminder that while we honour our injustice and erasure of the past, we also stand tall in the pride, strength, creativity and resilience that defines both Black history and Black future.”

Among the contributors to the day of discussion was Zita Holbourne, a writer, artist and community activist. Joining her on the podium was Lisa Williams, founder of the Edinburgh Caribbean Association.

Alongside them was Rajvi Glasbrook, senior implementation manager for the Welsh Government’s Anti-racist Wales Action Plan. Ms Glasbrook worked on the ‘Cynefin’ report which made the teaching of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic histories mandatory in the Curriculum for Wales.

PANELLISTS

Among the panellists was our former colleague Naomi Green, now a researcher on our Black Heritage NI: Hidden History Project.

Dr Green was joined by Ulster University researcher Seun Owanuga and Daniel Sanusi, organiser of Ulster University

Students’ Union’s first-ever Black History Month.

MUSIC AND DANCE

On hand to counterbalance the rich programme of knowledge-sharing were Maasai traditional folk singer Nelson Ngotiek and Irish country star Ritchie Remo who united for a unique cross-cultural fusion of music and dance.

It was left to Liverpooldian activist, author and politician Chantelle Lunt to bring Black History Summit 2025 to a close. Speaking afterwards, Manager of the Black Heritage NI: The Hidden History Project, Aynaz Zarif described it as a memorable and meaningful day.

“We are delighted that everything came together so well for the Black History Month Summit,” Ms Zarif said.

“The event was a day filled with great conversations, performances and powerful voices that highlighted the importance of representation and shared history. We are already looking forward to next year’s event.”

NWMF would like to thank to National Lottery Heritage Fund, the Housing Executive, Ulster University and British Council for supporting Summit ‘25.

NWMF helps put east African filmmakers in the spotlight

VOICES and creative talents from east Africa were front and centre at Derry's Nerve Centre as part of our Black History Month programme. Seven short films from Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia and Réunion Island were shown prior to a question and answer session with the curating team of Fibby Kioria of Manyatta Screenings and Wanjeri Gakuru of Mengi Mengi Film Club. Asking the questions was Cinematic Arts Lecturer at Ulster University, Dr John Kavanagh. The screenings were part of the British Council's UK Kenya Season. In partnership with the Africa Centre, the British Council collaborated with the North West Migrants Forum to bring the captivating series of shorts to the north west. From the gritty street violence of Rolex to the hilarious Love and Brain to the moving drama of Transaction, themes such as identity, desire and mortality were explored. Speaking following the screenings, Wanjeri Gakuru, who directed Transaction, one of the films shown on the evening, said the showcase was only a very brief snapshot of the huge amount of talent emerging in eastern African cinema right now. Ms Gakuru said it was unfortunate that the west still tended to see Africa through a lens of poverty and "flies on faces" when the reality was that there was so much amazing work going on in her native Kenya and right through the continent. "I think we are in a really wonderful time in our lives when equipment is much cheaper to access and tools and skills are much easier to access. But as well as that, people now have the daring and I think there is a real hunger for these kind of stories because there has never been as much coming out of our space as there is today. "As members and champions of that new ecosystem we are incredibly pleased and proud to present the topics and visual language representative of the region. It was a joy to create and we were thrilled to share it with a Derry audience."



Some of those who attended the screening of east African films in Derry's Nerve Centre.



Fibby Kioria and Wanjeri Gakuru with NWMF's Media Officer Conor Sharkey at the evening of African movies.



Fibby Kioria and Wanjeri Gakuru with Dr John Kavanagh, Cinematic Lecturer at Ulster University.

NWMF welcomes show of solidarity after home targeted



The shameful graffiti that was daubed on the home of the Ahmed family. The family has however been lifted by the outpouring of support they have received.



Above: Jeanette Warke and below, our CEO Lilian, both condemning the incident in media interviews.



THERE was much anger within the North West Migrants Forum family after the home of some of our members was targeted in a racist attack last month.

Days after they moved into their new house in the Fountain Estate, Hala Ahmed and her family awoke to find the words 'Local Only' daubed on their property along with a painting of a target.

The threat attracted blanket condemnation, including from within the Fountain where community leaders assured us it was an isolated incident.

Programmes Director and Manager of Cathedral Youth Club Jeanette Warke and Brian Dougherty, Chief Executive of North West Cultural Partnership, met with Hala Ahmed to offer their support.

"It was a shock to us because Hala and her family have become part of this community and have involved themselves in the various activities and programmes here at Cathedral Youth Club," Mrs Warke said.

"We welcome their contribution to the

community and the artistic talents they are bringing give us all a better understanding of their culture.

"We hope they will stick with us because the last thing we want is to lose them."

Brian Dougherty stressed that the Fountain has become a diverse area where everyone is welcome. "There is a wide variety of cultures here now and we do our best to make sure they all feel part of the Fountain.

"We do feel this was an isolated incident because it certainly doesn't represent this area as a whole."

Mr Dougherty added, "It also further raises a concern of ours regarding the issue of broader community safety in the Fountain.

"The community has unfortunately been subject to a higher level of sectarian attack in the past year and we will continue to work with both the PSNI and CCI to ensure that long standing issues with CCTV cameras are repaired and

that incidents are fully investigated."

North West Migrants Forum CEO Lilian Seeno Barr said the support and solidarity was heartening.

"There has been such an outpouring of anger and condemnation at what has happened and no doubt that will be of comfort to the Ahmed family.

"Having spoken to Hala, I know how distressing this incident was for her, her husband and their children.

"But hopefully the support they have received will be enough to convince them that they are welcome here.

"They are such a lovely, private and humble family and I would just appeal to everyone to let them live in peace and let them continue with the good work they are doing in the Fountain."

Sudanese community calls for international response to atrocities

DAYS before the attack on Hala Ahmed's home, members of the Derry public stood in solidarity with the city's Sudanese community to highlight the atrocities taking place in the east African country.

The gathering, co-ordinated by the North West Migrants Forum and supported by the local branch of United Against Racism, was called as Sudan's civilian population continues to face murder, rape, kidnap and starvation on a daily basis.

Reports suggest that up to 150,000 people have lost their lives in Sudan in the past two years, with the Sudanese Government describing what is happening as a genocide. Our volunteer, Farida Hassan, who fled her native Sudan in March, told Guildhall Square that the war is not a civilian war but a military conflict. "Today, we raise our voices to say - Enough war," she said. "Enough blood. Enough rape. Enough killing of our children.

"We call on all warring parties to immediately stop the fighting. We demand protection for civilians and accountability for all perpetrators of crimes against humanity.

"And we urge the international community - the United Nations, the African Union, and the Arab League - to wake up from their silence, to see Sudan not as a headline, but as millions of human lives in agony. Peace is not a privilege - it is a human right. And we will not stop calling for it until Sudan is free, safe and whole again," Ms Hassan added.

Further contributions were made by Davy McAuley of United Against Racism and People Before Profit Councillor Shaun Harkin.

The North West Migrants Forum would like to thank them for their support and would like to express its gratitude to everyone who attended the vigil.



People in Guildhall Square who turned out to support the city's Sudanese community.



Farida Hassan addressing Guildhall Square and below, people from Sudan enjoying a chat. Photos: FGG Pictures



A photographic sprint through the last three months...

The old saying goes that a picture speaks a thousand words. Here are images of just some of the things we have been up to since our last newsletter.



Our staff members Anastasiia Shevchenko and Gaëlle Gormley at a PEACEPLUS networking event in The Everglades Hotel.



Ulster University students during a visit to North West Migrants Forum. Our Integration Officer Gaëlle Gormley supplied important information while our members Hala and Sahar told their incredibly powerful personal stories.



International Men's Day was a busy one for NWMF. Thank you to the Western Trust for providing lots of useful information to our members.



The North West Anti-Racism Charter has kept us busy since its launch in the summer. Over 30 have now been adopted by organisations and businesses, including these two which our Media Officer Conor Sharkey presented to Life Cycles and Ardmore Cricket Club.



Caroline and Andrew at Repair and Share Foyle presenting NWMF with laptops for our members.



Our volunteers Farida and Beverly visited Strabane Academy recently to deliver a workshop on intercultural consciousness and Black history.





NWMF twinkles with festive cheer

We held our annual party on December 10 here in NWMF headquarters. And what a lovely evening it turned out to be with friends, food and Christmas fun all around. Oh, and Santa Claus as well!





Community groups get to hear first-hand what it is like to be a migrant living in Northern Ireland

THE experiences of asylum seekers and refugees were front and centre of two workshops the North West Migrants Forum was invited to participate in recently. Our Welfare and Integration Officer Gaëlle Gormley gave a presentation to members of the public in The Gasyard Centre as part of the Neighbourhood Management Team's 'Did Ye Hear About...' series.

Aimed at getting people to engage with different perspectives and have difficult conversations around contentious issues, Did Ye Hear About... takes on the format of a 15-30 minute presentation before former Derry Journal editor Pat McArd conducts a short interview. After the interview the conversation is opened to the floor.

The following day we were in Seán Dolans GAA Club, speaking with members of the Creggan Neighbourhood Partnership.

On both occasions Gaëlle gave a detailed presentation on the work of the North West Migrants Forum and the support we offer. She also attempted to dispel many of the myths that have grown up around those seeking sanctuary in the UK and Ireland.

It was though our volunteers, Farida Hassan from Sudan and Anastasiia Shevchenko from Ukraine, who drew the greatest reaction when they spoke of their personal journeys



Our Welfare and Integration Officer Gaëlle Gormley with former Derry Journal Editor Pat McArd in The Gasyard Centre as part of the 'Did Ye Hear About...' discussion.



Some of those who joined the Creggan Neighbourhood Partnership talk on migration.

and what it was like to have to leave their homes and their countries due to war. As was the aim, the discussion was informative, educational and at times challenging as members of the public posed questions such as how much financial support asylum seekers receive and how they get from mainland Europe to the UK in the first place. Gaëlle Gormley said the engagements were worthwhile and that she hoped audience members left armed with a greater insight into migrant life and the struggles people often face.

She added, "Sharing expertise about migrants and refugees' journeys with lived experience explanations and facts is essential when it comes to counteracting the harmful effects of the far right lies spread on social media. "Meeting with the general public, answering their questions and providing them with concrete educational information is the best way to transform our society and move towards a more peaceful and respectful environment where different cultures can create long-lasting friendships."



Left: Mogahid showing no sign of 'tyre-ing' as he works on a bike that will soon be returned to the local community. And on the right: Mohammed with a stylish bike that was given a second chance by the Life Cycles crew.

NWMF members help put discarded bikes back on the road

AN environmental campaign group has described the volunteering efforts of North West Migrants Forum members as "inspiring".

For several months now members of the Migrants Forum have been helping Zero Waste North West, through its Life Cycles initiative, give unwanted and discarded bikes a new lease of life.

Life Cycles is a non-profit social enterprise committed to sustainability, wellbeing and inclusion through cycling. Members of the Migrants Forum have been assisting and learning from Life Cycles' qualified mechanics in their mission to repair and refurbish bikes to make sure they are safe,

reliable and ready to be rehomed.

At the organisation's first annual general meeting held in October, a special thank you was paid to North West Migrants Forum's volunteers and others who help keep the project's wheels turning. Emily O'Brien of Zero Waste North West said Life Cycles was hugely grateful for the help it has received from members of the city's migrant community. Ms O'Brien said, "It was an honour to collaborate with the North West Migrants Forum on our Pedal Powered programme and getting to work alongside Mohammed and Abraham, to name but a few, was truly inspiring.

"These people have faced serious hardships in the face of war and persecution and have come together as a united front to not only help us in our mission of diverting bicycles from landfill, but also to support the ethos of our community project in giving bikes a second lease of life. For that we are truly grateful.

"We are wishing safe and happy cycling to all our friends at the Migrants Forum, come back and visit us anytime."

• **Life Cycles is located inside Derry Train Station and is open Wednesday to Saturday 1-5pm. Bike repairs every Saturday 1-4pm.**

All the best Faye and Ahmed...

Some of our members following an information workshop in Strabane, two of whom have moved on to pastures new. Front centre is Faye Troke who, in her role with the Western Trust, was a familiar face at NWMF. And to her right, our former English tutor Ahmed Al Wasebi who has reunited with his family and moved to Glasgow. We wish them only good things in the future.



Where possible, we always try to shop local...

These are just some of the stores and businesses we have worked with and supported in recent months

Danske Bank

Holiday Inn

Post Office

Poundland

Centra

Tesco

Musgrave Market Place

Manor Construction

Exchange Matters

Able & Flinn

Doherty's Bakery

Foyle Taxis

Translink

The Works

Embassy Property Ltd

Hillbilly Chicken

Sports Direct

Ulster University

PNP Solutions Ltd

O2

Ulster Image Photography

iPrint

NICVA

Nerve Centre

Gordon's Chemist

Boots Chemist

Asda Strabane

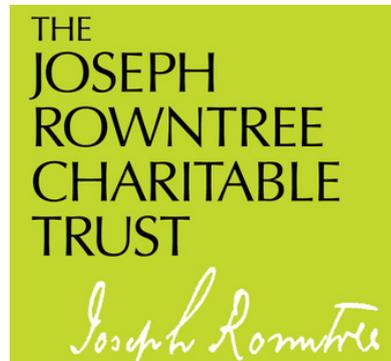
A huge thank you as well to those who made donations directly to our organisation. You know who you are.

We rise by lifting others ❤️

Thank you to our funders and sponsors. Without your continued support none of our work would be possible



Housing Executive





We hope you enjoyed our
Christmas newsletter!

Remember, you can always
contact us on **02871 362184** or
07912295571

Our website is www.nwmf.org.uk
and you can keep up to date with
our work on...



We'll leave you with this festive quote from Rev David Justin Lynch:

'Tonight's Gospel reading should open our eyes and hearts to those most vulnerable, those whose only hope is to travel for days in search of a liveable life. Many of them are Middle Easterners, just like Mary and Joseph. Let's make room for them in the inn of our hearts.'

