

Reflections

By Eleanor Flack, Okehampton Quaker Meeting

Many people will have felt humbled and inspired by Gee Walker, whose 13-year-old son Anthony was murdered by two young white men because his skin was black.

The most common human reaction to unmotivated, deliberate infliction of such tragedy is demand for maximum retribution, even a life for a life, felt as justice, although nothing can bring back the loved person or mitigate the lifelong loss ahead for the family. Also hatred.

What was Gee Walker's reaction? 'At the point of death Jesus said "I forgive them, for they know not what they do." I have got to forgive them. My family and I will stand by what I believe – forgiveness. It will be difficult but we have no choice but to live on for Anthony.' She also said 'He must have some good in him to admit that he did something wrong. I admire him for that.'

Believing that there is something of God in everyone means that we believe there is potential for growth and change in everyone. If we have been deeply wronged we will carry the hurt with us unhealed until we are able to forgive. To accept the forgiveness of those we have wounded can free us to start afresh.

We can pray that Paul and Michael will be able to accept this mother's generous words, surely quite unexpected by them, so that doors can open for new beginnings in their lives ahead.

And we can thank God for the image to keep of that mother who throughout the trial seemed to have a quality that can only be described as a 'radiance of understanding' that went beyond simply accepting that justice had been carried out.

Okehampton Times, 15 December 2005