

HM The Queen recognises Nova Scotian volunteer with Commonwealth Points of Light award

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II has today recognised Rebeccah Raphael, representing Canada, as the 147th Commonwealth Point of Light in honour of her exceptional voluntary service supporting the educational needs of young people during the COVID-19 pandemic.

His Honour The Honourable Arthur J. LeBlanc, Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia, and the UK High Commissioner to Canada, Susan le Jeune d'Allegeershecque conducted a virtual ceremony in which they presented the award to Rebeccah. A video of the full ceremony can be found [here](#).

Rebeccah is the founder of '[The Halifax Helpers](#)', a free online-tutoring service providing educational support to students in Nova Scotia during the Covid-19 pandemic. Under Rebeccah's leadership, the group has grown to 50 tutors, hosting 300 sessions a week in English, French, maths, science, and music. Rebeccah is planning to continue the project beyond the pandemic, expanding to students outside Nova Scotia.

As part of the legacy of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in London 2018, Her Majesty The Queen – as Head of the Commonwealth – is thanking inspirational volunteers across the 54 Commonwealth nations for the difference they are making in their communities and beyond, by recognising one volunteer from each Commonwealth country every week. By sharing these stories of service, the Commonwealth Points of Light awards celebrate inspirational acts of volunteering across the Commonwealth and help inspire others to make their own contribution to tackling some of the greatest social challenges of our time, including the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Susan le Jeune d'Allegeershecque, UK High Commissioner to Canada, said:

Rebeccah richly deserves this award for her exceptional work to support students during very difficult times. In the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, she has inspired us all by stepping up to ensure students have access to the learning support they need from the safety of their own homes. Her work will help to ensure that no student is disadvantaged, or loses out on opportunities in the future because of the pandemic. 'Halifax Helpers' is a fantastic initiative, and a great example of what young people can contribute to society in even the most difficult circumstances. I am delighted that her work has been recognised by Her Majesty the Queen.

His Honour The Honourable Arthur J. LeBlanc, Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia, said:

I am delighted to participate in the Commonwealth Points of Light Award presentation to the founder of 'The Halifax Helpers', Rebecca Raphael. During the difficult time of the COVID-19 pandemic, she chose not to sit-out the period of isolation and social distancing and she established a wonderful online tutoring program that has made a difference in her community. 'The Halifax Helpers' group of volunteers has led to elementary and junior high school students receiving educational support during uncertain times when schools were closed. Rebecca's leadership is indeed inspiring and truly reflects the intention of the Award that was created by Her Majesty The Queen.

Rebecca Raphael said:

I am so honoured to be receiving this award which has been given to many inspiring people before me. Working with the volunteers at 'The Halifax Helpers' has shown me how much we can accomplish with passion, drive and kindness. The youth who make up our team are some of the most dedicated and genuine folks out there. I'm incredibly proud of the way together we've maximized our impact in our community and beyond. The Commonwealth is a diverse community of 54 nations that work together to promote prosperity, democracy and peace. The Heads of Government meeting brought together leaders from all the 54 Member countries to reaffirm common values, address shared global challenges and agree how to work to create a better future for all citizens, especially young people. Voluntary service is a vital part of this agenda, which is why Her Majesty The Queen has chosen to recognise outstanding volunteers across the Commonwealth in this special way.

Please see Rebecca's recognition on the Commonwealth Points of Light website [here](#).

Further Information

About the Commonwealth Points of Light award

1. The Points of Light awards recognise outstanding volunteers every day of the week – people whose service is making a difference in their communities and whose story can inspire others to creative innovative solutions to social challenges in their own communities and beyond.
2. Points of Light began in America under President George H. W. Bush and today over 6,000 US Points of Light have been recognised. The scheme has the support of all living US Presidents.
3. Since 2014 the UK Prime Minister has been recognising a daily Point of

Light from the UK, with over 1,200 volunteers now recognised.

4. Commonwealth Points of Light is a continuation of this programme with a special series of awards recognising inspirational volunteers throughout the Commonwealth, coinciding with the UK being the Commonwealth's Chair-in-Office for the next two years. One volunteer from each of the 53 Commonwealth countries was recognised in the days leading up to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in April 2018. Following the success of this programme, Her Majesty The Queen decided to continue this work and award one volunteer from each Commonwealth country every week.
5. More information, including details of other Commonwealth Points of Light recipients, can be found on the website: www.pointsoflight.gov.uk

About the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting

In April 2018 the UK hosted the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, where leaders from across the Commonwealth gathered in London and Windsor. With the theme of 'Towards a Common Future' they will work to create a more prosperous, secure, sustainable and fair future for the Commonwealth's 2.4 billion citizens, particularly its young people.

For further information visit www.chogm2018.org.uk or follow on Twitter [@commonwealth18](https://twitter.com/commonwealth18).

About the UK High Commission in Canada:

The British High Commission in Ottawa, is the UK government's main diplomatic mission in Canada. Along with Consulates-General in Montreal, Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver, we work closely with the Canadian government and partners across the country to develop and maintain a wide range of substantive partnerships of real value to both countries. These partnerships cover business, defence, climate change, science and innovation, education, and culture.

[Social Mobility Commission: interim chairs appointment](#)

News story

Sandra Wallace and Steven Cooper appointed as interim chairs of the Social Mobility Commission.



Sandra Wallace and Steven Cooper were appointed as interim chairs of the Social Mobility Commission (SMC) on a jobshare basis from today (10 July 2020). The appointment will ensure accountability and strong leadership are maintained until the conclusion of an open recruitment process to appoint a substantive chair following the resignation of Martina Millburn on 29 April 2020.

Sandra and Steven will continue the work of the SMC as we look to a period of national recovery, working collaboratively on shaping the government's commitment to levelling up across all areas of the United Kingdom.

Sandra is a current SMC commissioner and is a Managing Partner UK and Joint Managing Director Europe at DLA Piper. She is one of the most senior female lawyers in the UK and has previously headed DLA Piper's UK Employment group. The Powerlist 2020 recognised Sandra as one of the top 100 most influential black people in Britain.

Steven is a current SMC commissioner and is chief executive officer (CEO) at C.Hoare & Co. He has 32 years' banking experience, most recently as CEO of Barclaycard Business. He was CEO of personal banking at Barclays for both the UK and Europe and prior to this, CEO Business Banking. Steven sits on several advisory boards. He is a non-executive director at Robert Walters plc and the Financial Services Compensations Scheme and is an Alumnus of Harvard Business School.

The appointment was made by exception without competition under paragraph 3.3 of the Governance Code on Public Appointments, following consultation with the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

This interim appointment will not exceed 9 months. It will involve a commitment to attend SMC meetings, sub-committee meetings and other ad-hoc meetings as required.

Remuneration is £350 per day for 2.5 days per month for each interim chair.

Neither Sandra or Steven have declared any conflicts of interest or political activity.

Published 10 July 2020

Reflecting on the genocide in Srebrenica, 25 years on

Good morning. The United Kingdom is honoured to co-sponsor this event in commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the genocide in Srebrenica. I would like to begin by thanking the President of the General Assembly, the Special Advisor of the Secretary General on the Prevention of Genocide, and the Director of the War Childhood Museum for their insightful briefings today.

Tomorrow, as we mark the 25th Anniversary of the genocide, the world will mourn the victims of Srebrenica. While we remember those who lost their lives, our thoughts are also with their families, who have endured unimaginable suffering. But we also think of their strength and bravery in the fight for justice. The UK will continue to stand with them.

Just 50 years after the horrors of the Holocaust, and 50 years after the founding of the UN, whose purpose it was to stop such heinous acts ever happening again, our fellow Europeans endured a genocide. Over 8,000 mainly Muslim men and boys lost their lives and tens of thousands more were forcibly expelled from their homes. We owe it to the victims and their families always to remember what happened in Srebrenica. We must reflect and learn from these events, to ensure similar crimes never happen again. On the 15th anniversary of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), the commitment endorsed by all UN Members States in 2005 to protect populations from genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and ethnic cleansing, the lessons for the UN remain as relevant today as they were 25 years ago.

In this year of important anniversaries we must remember victims on all sides of the conflicts of the 1990s. People from across the region are still living in divided communities, they are still missing loved ones, and they are still pursuing justice.

It is gravely concerning that revisionist rhetoric is still so prevalent. Individuals often distort established facts, including through the denial of war crimes and other atrocity crimes, for their own gain. We owe it to the victims to be clear: what took place at Srebrenica was a genocide, the UK stands by the verdicts of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and International Court of Justice in this definition.

Overcoming the legacies of the past is vital for countries in the region to achieve their Euro-Atlantic ambitions. It was a pivotal moment when Leaders at the Western Balkans Summit in London in 2018 signed three landmark joint declarations, underlining the importance of identifying the missing, bringing perpetrators to justice, rejecting hate speech and the glorification of war criminals while promoting a culture of respect for and solidarity with all victims. Western Balkans leaders also agreed that verdicts from international and domestic courts must be respected. The UK is proud to support the

reconciliation agenda in the Western Balkans, politically and practically, and will continue to do so.

There are also lessons for us, as the UN family. We should mark here the important role the UN has played through the ICTY and its Residual Mechanism, which continues the ICTY's legacy by fighting to end impunity. The verdicts of genocide against Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic showed that the international justice can succeed, even if it takes time, in delivering justice. And as we also heard from Amina Mohammed, this justice is critical for the victims' closure, on both the individual and national level.

And as we pause to reflect and learn from the events of Srebrenica, we are reminded of the necessity to resource and mandate peacekeeping missions effectively to ensure such loss of life never occurs again.

The scars of Srebrenica will always be present. We must support those who seek to heal the wounds of the past. We owe it to all those who lost their lives in the conflicts to work together to help build a safe and prosperous future for all.

Thank you.

UN Human Rights Council 44: Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression

Thank you, Mr President

The United Kingdom would like to thank the Special Rapporteur for his work and his recent reports. The report on 'Disease pandemics and the freedom of opinion and expression' highlights a number of concerns that the UK shares during this time of COVID-19.

Like the Special Rapporteur, the UK believes that freedom of expression and a free media are essential qualities of any open society. People must be allowed to discuss and debate issues freely, to challenge their governments, and make informed decisions, including during this pandemic. We deplore attempts to restrict freedom of expression arbitrarily, including blocking access to the internet, through shutdowns and other means, the intimidation and abuse of journalists and interference in their ability to operate freely.

Mr President,

The UK calls upon States to ensure that all human rights are respected, protected, and fulfilled while combatting the pandemic. Any restrictions must be lawful, non-discriminatory, targeted, time-limited, and subject to regular review. Restrictions must remain strictly necessary as a response to

COVID-19.

What steps does the Special Rapporteur believe that states can take to ensure their responses to COVID-19 do not arbitrarily infringe upon the right to freedom of expression?

[UN Human Rights Council 44: Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression](#)

Thank you, Mr President

The United Kingdom would like to thank the Special Rapporteur for his work and his recent reports. The report on 'Disease pandemics and the freedom of opinion and expression' highlights a number of concerns that the UK shares during this time of COVID-19.

Like the Special Rapporteur, the UK believes that freedom of expression and a free media are essential qualities of any open society. People must be allowed to discuss and debate issues freely, to challenge their governments, and make informed decisions, including during this pandemic. We deplore attempts to restrict freedom of expression arbitrarily, including blocking access to the internet, through shutdowns and other means, the intimidation and abuse of journalists and interference in their ability to operate freely.

Mr President,

The UK calls upon States to ensure that all human rights are respected, protected, and fulfilled while combatting the pandemic. Any restrictions must be lawful, non-discriminatory, targeted, time-limited, and subject to regular review. Restrictions must remain strictly necessary as a response to COVID-19.

What steps does the Special Rapporteur believe that states can take to ensure their responses to COVID-19 do not arbitrarily infringe upon the right to freedom of expression?