



Quaker Peace  
& Social Witness

# Peaceworker journal letter from London

**Wayne Sharrocks, June 2018, No. 2**

## GLOBAL JUSTICE NOW

Dear Friends

I ended my previous journal entry by speaking about my time working with the Peace Pledge Union on their campaigns to combat militarism in universities and their white poppy campaigns.

Having just re-read the entry I can feel proud that I managed to achieve a lot during my first six months of the peaceworker scheme. But under the surface there were sharks circling.

Something that has popped into my mind a lot over the last few months is something Steve Whiting, the Peaceworker Programme Manager at the time, said during the preparation week for the scheme. He mentioned to me and the other peaceworkers that “you will encounter challenges”.

At the time of him saying this I was in a very good place. I had secured a place on the peaceworker scheme. This was the ticket out of working in factories and warehouses (Not that there is anything wrong with any of

that, it just wasn't for me) on zero hour contracts. I was finally on a track to working on something that I was passionate about. I also now had the opportunity to live in London and move in with my girlfriend, something I had been dreaming about over the course of our four and a half year long distance relationship.

So when Steve said I would encounter ‘challenges’, I was thinking “I don't think so Steve, I don't have to work in a job I hate for so little money that the choice of the month is to pay rent or eat properly. And I get to see my girlfriend every day! Thanks but my challenges are over”.

However lying dormant under the surface of all the positivity and opportunity were underlying issues caused by my military career waiting to creep back into my head. Imagine it like an idyllic surfers' beach. On the surface it looks beautiful and a surfer is enjoying riding the perfect waves (I would be the surfer) but under that water there are great white sharks (underlying issues) looking for something to feed on. The shark only needs one drop of blood to be alerted to you and if those drops build up the next thing you know the shark is lined up for

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attack. You only know about it when it's too late. But when you look back all the signs were there.

During those six months I was working full time on issues of militarism. Spending days, weeks and months looking at a computer screen filled with military reminders. Then I would go home and work on my Veterans for Peace south east coordinator role, where again I would be deeply involved in military reminders. I also spent a lot of time reliving my experiences by giving talks to schools, Quaker meetings and even a parliamentary meeting. Each of which is a drop of blood to the shark.

While this was all great for the campaigns and the pursuit of peace, for me things started to get very dark. With advice from Quakers and doctors I decided to make the tough decision to leave the Peace Pledge Union and change placements to something non-military focused.

I first saw this as a massive failure. I thought I had blown my opportunity. Visions of going back to work in jobs I hated started flooding my mind. But on reflection (as it always is with these things) I now see this experience as a positive. I now know that working on militarism campaigns full time isn't for me, at least for now anyway. I now have a unique opportunity to branch out and explore brand new campaigning issues. I feel lucky that the peacemaker scheme offered me the opportunity to do this.

So here is the positive bit.

I am now working with Global Justice Now (GJN) on the communications team. Communications is an area of campaigning that I am naturally drawn to. This brings

together my skills in filmmaking and storytelling to help deliver campaign messages.

GJN is a social justice campaigning organisation concentrating on three main areas: trade deals, access to pharmaceuticals, and migration. I have been able to contribute directly to GJN quickly with my knowledge of video making. A highlight for me was an early morning demonstration against the hostile environment policy outside the home office. I filmed the event and a few interviews then went away and produced a video for social media which was published the same day. You can find the video here:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=0UfgcDA7BIM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0UfgcDA7BIM)

I was also recently selected to attend [Campaign Bootcamp](#), a one week residential course designed to teach all aspects of campaigning from start to finish. The course was made up of an amazingly diverse set of people who campaign on a wide range of issues. The course was intense, challenging and pushed me outside of my comfort zone at times. I went away from the course feeling exhausted but confident that I had had taken away a lot of valuable skills that I can now use and develop, and a community of people to draw from in the future.

I used to think that my personal testimony of military experience was all I had to offer to the world of peace campaigning. I was wrong and the last six months have proved that to me that that I don't need to constantly relive the past to move forward.

That, and you should listen to Steve.

Wayne