

**RADICALS**

**OF LEEDS**



# David MAKOFSKI



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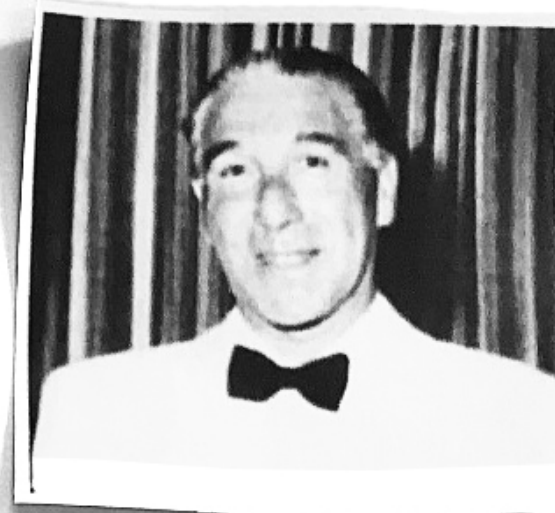
Born in Leeds in 1895, David Makofski was a prominent member of the Leeds Jewish community. His story is truly remarkable.

Leaving school at 14, he worked at the Leeds factory of Montague Burton.

David joined the army during WW1 and saw the horrors of battle, fighting on the Somme battlefield.

During the war he was badly injured, leaving him with arthritis. After the war he frequently visited the Czech Spa town of Karlsbad to be treated... it was during his time in Europe that he saw and experienced the dangerous and mounting persecution of the Jews.

'Yorkshire's  
Schindler'



After his experiences, during WW2, Makofski headed the 'Trainee Scheme', which sought to provide employment to Jewish refugees fleeing persecution from the Nazis. It is estimated that he arranged for the travel to England and the employment of almost 700 Jews during the Holocaust, as a result, saving many lives!

# RECLAIM THE NIGHT

**"We will walk without fear"**



**NOVEMBER 12th 1977**

The 'Reclaim the Night' marches are a series of ongoing international feminist marches which 'assert the right of women to occupy public spaces from fear of rape and sexual violence'. The first 'Reclaim the Night' march was organised in Leeds on 12th November 1977 - an initiative of the Leeds Reclaim the Night group - with simultaneous marches organised in Brighton, Bristol, Lancaster, London, Manchester, Newcastle and York.

Whilst often recorded as a direct response to the ongoing 'Yorkshire Ripper' murders and the widespread atmosphere of fear surrounding them, Al Garthwaite - a member of the original organising group and now a local councillor - stresses that they were equally a culmination of years of anger at male harassment and violence which made the city streets essentially 'off-limits' to women after dark.

They were a reaction, not merely to the murders themselves, but the societal inertia and hypocrisy with allowed such violence to be perpetrated, and police's response: its instruction to women to 'stay at home at night', essentially placing them under curfew; and the seemingly lesser value assigned by it - and the media - assigned to the vulnerable women and sex workers whose murders it initially failed to seriously investigate and report upon.

There were two marches in Leeds: one starting at Chapeltown Community Centre, the other at Hyde Park. Both routes were chosen deliberately, as areas with large populations of students and young independent women and for their proximity to Woodhouse Moor which was - and still is - 'notorious as a place where men lay in wait for women'.

The initial inspiration came from West Germany, with a night-time march proposed at a feminist conference in Edinburgh and carried back to Leeds - then home to a significant Revolutionary Feminist group. The march was publicised in the WIRES women's-lib newsletter, feminist magazine Spare Rib, and through 1700 leaflets to offices, factories, hospitals, shopping centres and pubs.

The two marches, around 60-strong, set off around 10pm. This is Al Garthwaite's account:

"We marched down Chapeltown Road shouting, "Women Unite - Reclaim The Night", across the Sheepscar intersection (smaller then) and up North Street, a dark and seedy place compared with today. As I recall, the sole police officer who turned up at the Chapeltown march rapidly radioed for assistance when she saw our numbers, and our flaming torches. Men coming out of a North Street pub shouted obscenities and tried to harass, but reeled back in alarm as we advanced on them, flaming torches at the ready: a satisfying moment. The Hyde Park contingent had similar experiences in Woodhouse Lane. We then marched together to City Square, for a rally and speeches."



Media coverage of the marches grew over subsequent years, but was not without criticism - including among feminist activists, who suggested they lacked a clear focus in failing to call for legislative or administrative change. However, participants such as Magda Yates stress that the marches served, as much as anything, as a cathartic and consciousness raising exercise, empowering women towards further activism and giving them one night in which they could feel safe to walk the streets of their own towns and cities and assert their right to public space.

**The next Ripper victim could be anyone's wife, daughter or girlfriend**

This was a savage attack on an innocent young woman. Josephine, who had no regular boyfriend, was once engaged to electrician Craig Aldridge, 28, of Giff Street, Halifax. The engagement was mutual consent last night. Josephine was struck down on a busy street near her home in Ivy Street, Halifax - well away from any 'haunted' by vice girls.

The point of Reclaim the Night was "to be a celebration, not just a protest", showing that

"women can be safe if we are together...I see it as night for throwing off our powerlessness. A night for confidence. Reclaim the Night is not the be-all-and-end-all"

**- it is the beginning**

Reporting on the Ripper murders, for example, focused on the 'virtue' of the victims, contrasting the deaths of "good time girls offering sex for sale" with that of "innocent and respectable" Jayne McDonald, a 16-year-old whose murder in June 1977 significantly changed the tone and volume of media coverage.

The case of one Leeds rapist, highlighted in the Spare Rib article, was largely prosecuted on the basis that the victim was menstruating - so, essentially, she could not have been 'asking for it', as no man would wish to touch a woman in such a condition unless his intentions were perverse. The article notes trends whereby cases tended to provoke police sympathy and prosecution only when the victims was viewed as lacking sexual value which would make rape 'understandable' - where the victim was very old, very young, 'unattractive' or disabled.



The marches were part of the continued challenge by Leeds feminists - including in an extensive article in Spare Rib the year before - to societal attitudes which accepted endemic male violence as inevitable and placed the blame for rape, harassment and sexual violence on women themselves for being 'irresponsible enough' to leave their homes alone or at night, essential reinforcing the idea that 'public' spaces were 'off limits' to women in such circumstances.

RECLAIMING THE NIGHT  
we are walking for  
all women -  
all women should be  
free to walk down  
any street night or  
day without fear  
WOMEN JOIN US!



The movement itself has not been without controversy – its organisers, the Leeds Revolutionary Feminist Group were the progenitors, in the 'infamous' pamphlet *Love Your Enemy?*, of the philosophy of 'political lesbianism', which advocates abdication of women of all sexual persuasions from sex with men on the basis that such relationships inherently reinforce patriarchal structures and the promotion of lesbianism as a political and feminist 'choice'. The Leeds group, radically, proclaimed men to be 'the enemy' and denounced women who were in relationships with them 'collaborators' and complicit in their own oppression. Such attitudes to sexuality and gender, which underlay the RTN movement, are highly controversial today.



Annual marches across the country petered out in the 1990s but were revived in Leeds and in London by activist Finn Mackay – also a historian of the movement – in 2001. The issue of male participation – long contested – has been revived in recent years, along with that of non-femme non-binary individuals and trans women, as part of larger and increasingly fractious debates about the role of gender in participation in feminist activism. RTN was originally and deliberately a female-only space to enable women – including women who have experienced sexual violence – 'to have one night where they felt safe on the streets'. The Leeds march was mixed gender in the 2000s; but from 2013 switched to being exclusively for women-identifying and non-binary individuals, ending in an all-gender rally.

The Marches have arguably involved in recent years, losing some of their 'revolutionary' ethos and focus on opposing individual male violence, to more directly challenging structural systems of government, the media and the judiciary system in which sexual violence is perpetrated. There is also a push for greater emphasis on intersectionality – particularly in light of criticism of the original Chapeltown march by mostly white feminists through a predominantly black area.

Even if their meaning has evolved, however, the continuing relevance of the marches in the era of #metoo is evident in a culture where – according to CSEW – one in five women, and 3% of men, will experience sexual assault in their lifetime, and where over 500 violent sexual assaults were recording in Hyde Park in 2018 alone.

The streets of Leeds are still not safe from many people.



# THE LEEDS ANTI-SLAVERY & Wilson Society Armistead

The Leeds Anti-Slavery Society played an important, but largely unheralded, role in the campaign to abolish the American slave trade and was arguably on of the most significant British antislavery societies to emerge in the period of agitation proceeding abolition.

The society grew out of a long tradition of social and political activism among the middle and working classes in Leeds, particularly within its strong non-Conformist community. One of Leeds' most notable antislavery activists was Quaker Wilson Armistead: African American abolitionist campaigner and former slave William Wells Brown commented that 'few English gentlemen have done more to hasten the day of the slave's liberation than Wilson Armistead'.

He was responsible for the publication of huge body of anti-slavery literature: his early work, undertaken as a teenager, included the compilation a number of biographies by former slaves and prominent black people including former slaves Paul Cuffe, Zangara and Maquama and the Rev. J. Asher, a Pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church, all which sought to prove their 'intelligence, piety, integrity, industry and benevolence'.

His 1848 publication, 'A Tribute for the Negro' was hugely influential, consisting of 560-pages of biographical sketches and argument referencing contemporary 'racial science' and phrenology, refuting the 'evidence' of physical attributes frequently cited as 'demonstrating' intellectual and moral inferiority of black people and supporting his case with examples of the achievements of black people. He observed that science and literature had started in Africa and had been disseminated among the Greeks and Romans.

Although Armistead's writing is an exercise in the kind of pious paternalism which would be ill-received today, his work was nonetheless radical for its time – especially in its identification of the structural basis of racial inequality, attributing the supposed inferiority claimed by pro-slavery advocates and pervasive in public opinion to be the result of many centuries of prejudice, degrading treatment, lack of access to fit accommodation, healthcare, education and opportunity.

*'Prejudice and misinformation have,'* he wrote in the preface, *'for a long series of years, been fastened with unremitting assiduity by those interested in upholding the slave system.'*

Many people subscribed towards the publication of the Tribute – including Queen Victoria – with Armistead remarking that its subscription list "embraced nearly a thousand of the most conspicuous characters in the walks of benevolence and philanthropy, including the Sovereign of the most enlightened country of the world".

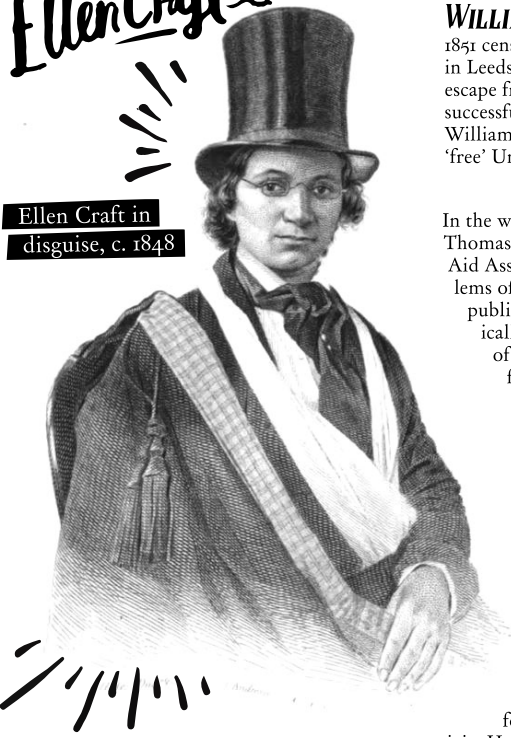
The text has been reprinted many times, lastly in 2005, and is still used extensively as an academic text in US universities teaching about the abolition of slavery. Armistead also visited America, meeting with notable antislavery activists including, most significantly, William Lloyd Garrison (1805-79), leader of radical antislavery activism in America and advocate of the need for immediate emancipation.



An emblem of the Leeds Antislavery Society a variation on the traditional Wedgwood icon

**Ellen Craft**

Ellen Craft in disguise, c. 1848



**WILLIAM AND ELLEN CRAFT** later travelled to England - the 1851 census records that they were being sheltered at Armistead's home in Leeds, recording their occupations as 'fugitive slave[s]'. Their initial escape from was achieved by Ellen - who was fair-skinned enough to successfully disguise herself as a white man - posing as a 'master' while William played 'his' slave, joining the antislavery movements in the 'free' Union and later in England.

In the wake of emancipation, Armistead and fellow LASS member Thomas Harvey were responsible for founding the Leeds Freedmen's Aid Association in 1865, conscious that emancipation involved problems of and relief and rehabilitation for the slaves. Several appeals were published in the Leeds Mercury. Armistead's house - somewhat ironically named 'Virginia Cottage', after the location of the plantations of its former slave-holding owner - became the receiving centre for clothing, blankets and other goods. From Leeds, the goods were sent to Liverpool where they were shipped free of freight and customs duties to America.

Wilson Armistead's influence was undoubtedly significant, and works with reference to the Leeds Antislavery Society - including Irene Goodyear's seminal essay - commonly attribute its inception almost exclusively to him, presenting the histories of both often without distinction.

However, research by Clare Midgley suggests that the impetus for the group can be traced to correspondence between local activist Harriet Lupton and American abolitionist Sarah Pugh. Pugh and

Lupton initially formed a ladies' committee to collect signatures for the Stafford House Address, and their hopes of then founding an independent ladies' society developed into a plan for a mixed group.

**SARAH PUGH** was a Quaker supporter of William Lloyd Garrison (1805-79) - the leader of radical antislavery activism in America and advocate of the need for immediate emancipation - who had led the American women's delegation to the 1840 World Anti-Slavery Convention and who had acted as treasurer of the mixed-sex Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society since 1843.

**HARRIET LUPTON** was a member of a prominent local family with abolitionist links. She later gave a public lecture in London in support of the antislavery cause - a radically public display of political influence for a woman of her time.

The Leeds society is a significant example of the role of women's activism in social movements in the 19th century: many Leeds antislavery supporters had long-established correspondence with American abolitionist-feminists, and radical and influential women's suffrage societies nationwide tended to emerge in areas particularly active in abolitionism - a phenomenon seen in Leeds' numerous well-known suffragettes and suffragists such as Isabella Ford, Leonarda Cohen, Mary Gawthorpe, Frances Garnett, Alice Cliff Scatcherd, and Harriet Lupton herself. While Midgley urges caution in suggestions that the society was 'female-dominated' - men proposed motions which women seconded, suggesting a tendency for patriarchal authority and the sexual division of labour to be replicated in the society, likely linked to the familial basis of its support - their influence cannot be discounted.

The American Garrisonian abolitionist J. Miller McKim reported in 1854 of his British visit:

*"The most active abolitionists were, with few exceptions, to be found among women. In Bristol, Leeds, Edinburgh, Belfast, the principal work was performed by ladies, and on them everywhere the cause seems to depend for its life and vigour."*

|                   |                  |         |     |    |                                  |                 |
|-------------------|------------------|---------|-----|----|----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Springfield Place | Wilson Armistead | Head    | Mar | 54 | Seed Cruder & Hel Munch          | Yorkshire Leeds |
|                   | William Craft    | Visitor | Mar | 56 | Cabinet Maker Fugitive Slave     | United States   |
|                   | Ellen do         | do      | Mar | 24 | Wife of Wm. Craft Fugitive Slave | do              |

1851 England Census for Wilson Armistead and William and Ellen Craft at Springfield Place

The female impetus of antislavery activism in Leeds despite being central to what made the Leeds society notable. The society, established in 1853, was the only antislavery body in England to apply Garrisonian principles to its structure by establishing a committee consisting of both men and women. Of the twenty members appointed to the Association's first committee, twelve were women. The initial subscription list of the society consisted of 110 women to 77 men. The new association adopted an emblem, a variant of the famous Wedgwood plaque, which included a female slave and the slogan 'Am I not a woman and a sister' alongside the traditional 'Am I not a man and a brother'. This particularly impressed Harriet Beecher Stowe, a visiting speaker to the society in 1853 - the desire to capture the strength of feeling following the publication of whose book, Uncle Tom's Cabin, contributed to the impetus for the formation of the Leeds society

Other speakers include **WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON**: African American lecturer, abolitionist, human rights and women's suffrage activist **SARAH PARKER REMOND**, who later qualified as a physician in Italy; **MARTIN DELANY**, who later became the first black officer in the United States Army; and **FREDERICK DOUGLASS**, a former slave who had become an influential anti-abolitionist and famous orator. Their public talks provided new perspectives and reduced misinformation circulating among the British public.

The society, surprisingly, initially had good relations with British and Foreign Antislavery Society - despite the latter's history of opposition to women's rights: its ethos seems to have been to collaboratively and in solidarity with many different antislavery groups as possible, in contrast with the fractious factionalism elsewhere in the movement.

Meetings were usually held in the Town Hall and were presided over by the Mayor. The society established an Antislavery Library in Leeds which, by March 1854, contained over 100 volumes and 200 distinct works, and organised the publication of numerous works, including as series of tracts aimed at German emigrants bound for America as they passed through Leeds on their journey to Hull or Liverpool. The society's most ambitious project, instigated under Wilson Armistead's tenure as president, was a compilation of tracts, The Leeds Antislavery Series, considered to be "the most ambitious project yet attempted by any antislavery society in England... a Herculean, utopian task". Well over a million copies were distributed, varying in length from one to twenty-four pages, comprising slave narratives, testimonies and opinion pieces in graphic, emotive language, accompanied by engravings of slave branding, a slave owner shooting a fugitive slave and a slave hunted by bloodhounds.

Slave owners were deemed the *"greatest tyrants that ever dripped with blood,"* while slave traders were declared to be *"brokers in human flesh and butchers of human hearts."*

**Leeds Anti-Slavery Series. No. 59.**

**HUNTING SLAVES WITH BLOOD-HOUNDS.**

A page from the Leeds Anti-Slavery Series



FUGITIVE SLAVE ESCAPING THE PURSUIT OF BLOOD-HOUNDS.

*Fugitive Slave*

The Leeds Antislavery Association was disbanded after, in December 1865, the 13th amendment to the United States Constitution abolished slavery. Wilson Armistead's efforts in the Leeds Freeman's Aid Association were supported by former members of the LASS. The energies and networks previously channelled for abolitionism and Freeman's Aid were later utilised by female activists in the controversial campaign against the Contagious Diseases Acts, in which women abolitionists' traditional concern for the 'degraded' woman was transferred from slave to prostitute. Anti-slavery also provided local and national networks of reformers, predominantly Quakers and Unitarians, from which Leeds feminism and suffrage activism drew much of its leadership.

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