



# Hope for the world

## Hope For The Ignored And Forgotten

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The advent of the birth of Christ is also the advent of hope for all mankind. Every year we can celebrate anew the springing of light into the darkness, rejoicing like children in the hope that innocence can triumph again.

I am always touched by the Christmas spirit that overtakes most of us. We tend to smile more at strangers, sing the same songs, and share food together. It is always the perfect time to think of others.

For me, hope is the Christmas spirit in all of us that believes that all people can be forgiven. And there can be a time when all people will look after each other, acknowledging each other's pain, and helping to ease it.

Over the last few years, I have worked on two particularly thought-provoking areas. I sat on the committee legislating against modern day slavery, and I helped on a report into UK detention centres.

What shocked me was how easy it was for some people to see human lives only in terms of their own financial or circumstantial gain, becoming willingly oblivious to the pain of those abused. It is not only the victims that have to struggle to remain hopeful. To be filled with such indifference to the suffering of others must be to be without all hope.

And it is not just active mistreatment. The inquiry into detention centres highlighted how quickly we can become used to turning a blind eye. Those held in detention centres are not criminals – but frequently vulnerable. And yet often enough they can be denied the basic and normal rights that we proudly afford people in the UK, from privacy to access to methods of communication. They can become the ignored and the forgotten.

The process has also revealed, though, how much people can care – how a few people who believe and hope for better can make others stand up and take notice, and right wrongs that exist. It is thanks to charities and organisations that modern slavery and detention centres came to the forefront in government.

But I am also always filled with hope by the determination of members of all political parties to unite to try to return hope to dark corners when exposed. Both the modern slavery act and detention centre inquiry were cross-party.

It is the duty of all of us to look out for each other, to smile at strangers, and to reach out to those in our community, and give each other hope that society does and will care for each person.



MP Caroline Spelman was Chairman of the Conservative Party from 2007–2009. She is currently a Vice President of Tearfund.

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