

THOMAS CAULKER: DCL

Mr Chancellor,

As we commemorate the 50th anniversary of Dr Martin Luther King receiving his honorary degree in this very room, we celebrate individuals who work to create a fairer, more tolerant and equal society.

Tom Caulker's work certainly embodies all of these things, and today we celebrate his contribution to Newcastle University, its students and the wider community. The values and enjoyment he has brought through his work and the legacy of institutions like World Headquarters and the Trent House deserve recognition.

To understand Tom's dedication to music and social change, one must go back to Bensham in Gateshead in the 1970's, where a young Tom Caulker, born to a mother from Southern Ireland and a father from Sierra Leone, grew up on a musical diet of Northern Soul, Funk and Jazz.

A self-confessed 'mad record collector', Tom had a close relationship with music from a very early age.

Whilst this music was such a positive part of his childhood, Tom also recalls life as a mixed race child in the comprehensive school system in the 1970's, exposed to the racial prejudice in society which he has spent his professional life fighting against.

It was in this context of musical vibrancy but societal division that Tom received a copy of Dr Martin Luther King's 'I have a dream' speech; a day which he says altered his perspective forever.

THOMAS CAULKER: DCL

To summarise Tom's achievements into a single speech is impossible, but in all of his work, there is a constant thread of multi-culturalism, tolerance and a huge sense of fun.

Perhaps the best place to start is in 1984, when Tom started managing the Trent House pub which stands just 321 metres south of here. There were racists who could not bear the idea of a pub being run by Newcastle's first black publican, and that young mixed race people, with intolerance to racism and sexism, had the power to bar them!

Under Tom, the Trent House became legendary and much featured in Viz.

From first years to football fans, this vibrant and charismatic pub has offered the community a place where people of different generations can come together, away from the glossy gastropubs and £5 pints of 2017.

Photos stretching back to the mid 1980s outside the Trent truly reinforce its place as the 'student common room', and the students of Newcastle University continue to love it as much now as back then.

It was in 1993, however, when Tom truly shook up the Newcastle nightlife industry by launching World Headquarters. It was another example of Tom's commitment to creating spaces across the city for communication, music and expression. Indeed, in the modern days of 'the diamond strip' and widespread media perception of Newcastle nightlife, a club with such a strong social conscience was a much needed institution.

THOMAS CAULKER: DCL

World Headquarters has been remarkably successful, and in a city where some clubs may struggle to last for one year, World Headquarters is stronger than ever after 24 years, and is now Newcastle's longest running nightclub.

Tom's contribution to peace and equality in the region stretches far beyond the walls of the Trent House and World Headquarters.

His organisation of the Unity festival in 2015 was incredibly successful, bringing people together from across the country, continent and world. Most importantly, this was not just a music festival, but a response to extreme right wing factions marching across the city. Tom led an 8,000 strong response that did not involve violence or aggression, but simply harnessed the power of music as a unifying force.

Tom's work has also extended onto a national scale, with his vocal support of the Football Association's campaign 'Show Racism the Red Card' warranting a reception at 10 Downing Street.

His creative approach at promoting equality was also exemplified when he helped create and support Fresh, a project allowing young people with disabilities to enjoy Newcastle nightlife in a safe and welcoming environment.

For an individual of such extraordinary commitment, Tom lives an ordinary life. His two grown up children, Buster and Sunshine, are ever present, and Tom has always been committed to being a positive role model for them.

What is also clear is that Tom is an individual who has been heavily influenced by the sentiments of Dr Martin Luther King's words. In fact, not only has this

THOMAS CAULKER: DCL

informed his political and social views, but Tom has transitioned these thoughts into positive actions which have benefitted thousands across the city.

Mr Chancellor, in recognition of his achievements in improving the social diversity of the nightlife of this city and for living by the principles expressed in this room on the 13th of November 1967, I present to you, Tom Caulker, as a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Civil Law, *honoris causa*.

Citation by George Reid, President of the Students' Union

13th November 2017