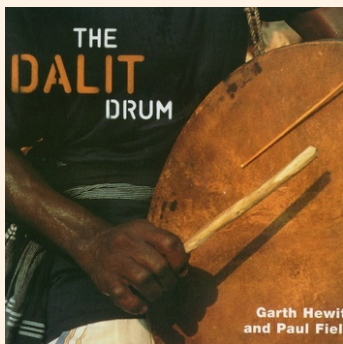


The Dalit Drum

Hello again.

Recently I've been encouraged by Varaprasad Dolla from India. He has been contacting us over a period of months and his desire and concern is for **The Dalit Drum** album to be rereleased in India. I have been heartened by his enthusiasm and his attitude - not least because he wanted our contract for this to be signed on the 4th of April to commemorate the day of Martin Luther King's death - I was delighted to find that we both have a commitment to the witness of Martin Luther King.



The Dalit Drum is an album I did while I was at Christian Aid - CA put up the funding for the album and I invited **Paul Field** to join me. Paul is a very creative songwriter - I knew that by bringing him in on the project we would get something quite special.

Paul and I went off to India to get material for the album and were immediately struck by the level of abuse that Dalits receive day by day. If I were to talk to you about Dalits, those previously known as 'Outcasts', you might think, "Oh yes, the caste system - something in the past". But it still has a huge impact on those known as Dalits. "Dalit" is the word they have chosen, it means crushed or broken.

In the Varna system there are four major castes, and then there are those who are literally Avarna - outside the caste system. Certain jobs are reserved for those people - they slaughter animals, they do the tasks that others don't want to do, of the most menial and unpleasant nature.

In India I particularly valued the work and influence of Paul Divakar and Annie Namala. Paul is the General Director of the **National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights** and Annie is head of the **Centre for Social Equity and Inclusion**. They were very helpful in showing us projects which gave us insights into the day to day life of the Dalit community.

We ended up with an album of 11 songs and called it **The Dalit Drum** because the drum of Thappu has become a symbol of liberation for them. As Dalits, they are the only ones who can touch the skins of dead animals and this is intended to be part of the indignity they suffer - however they have turned this into a symbol of liberation by making drums out of the hide of animals and playing them with a ferocity that is stunning to hear - all the pain of centuries you can hear as they thunder away on this instrument of liberation.



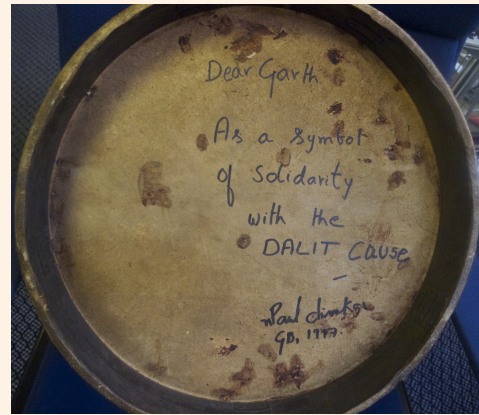
Garth with his Dalit drum, which is never far away in his studio

It was receiving the drum that made me realise I had to do this album. Paul Divakar was speaking at Greenbelt one year and he came up to me and gave me a Dalit Drum and wrote on the back of it, "Dear Garth, as a symbol of solidarity with the Dalit cause" and then said "we need an album that tells the story".

Having Paul Field with me on the journey was particularly important - he started writing songs almost as soon as we hit the ground and also he recorded the Dalit drummers - and every track on the album has the sound of Dalit drummers playing behind what we are doing.

A little film was made of the production of the album and we had some extra singers come in - Cliff Richard did one track, 'Indian Sun', Rubita Ajanthakumar did the vocal on 'Raise the Flag' and my daughter Abi did the vocal on 'Shadows of the World.'

You can see the film 'The Dalit Drum - Behind the Album' by [clicking here](#)



Below is a prayer that I wrote sparked off by the time when Jesus met a woman at the well, and it reminds us that Jesus broke rules of gender, religion and race and always respected people's dignity. Jesus, the friend to the outcasts, is a friend to the Dalit. Indeed Dalits see him as "Jesus the Dalit".

He Broke the Rules

What a wonderful moment when Jesus reached through the divisions that hold people back.

Jesus affirmed the woman at the well in a world that would not treat women as equal;

he touched the 'untouchable' - reached out to the outcast,

broke through the barriers of racism, of class, of gender and of caste.

This prophet was the great rule breaker.

he broke the rules that bind people and hold them back.

May we courageously follow this example and exclude no one and welcome all.

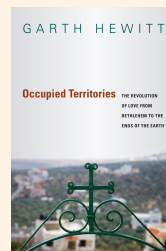
May our churches be communities that welcome all and may we understand the deep joy of a gospel that nails our prejudices and human divisions to a cross of shame

and awakens us to a resurrection of community, love, equality and joy.

Garth Hewitt

Garth's Prayer for Good Friday - on his website here

**The Dalit Drum album is available to download
from Paul Field's website here**



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