



Into the world of conspiracy theories

By Geoffrey Davies

Anthony Fauci is the son of Mother Teresa, the Rothschilds own the Red Cross and children's blood is used to make matzo balls - just some of the beliefs of the main characters in Liz Smith's documentary film The Conspiracists.



Film makers: Liz Smith, left, and Noelle Cook flank moderator Pragna Patel at the Phoenix Cinema screening. Photo Geoffrey Davies

Shown at the Phoenix at the end of April, the film was followed by a Q&A with the director and co-producer Noelle Cook, who was studying women in far-right movements.

The film focuses on Yvonne, who was convicted for taking part in the January 6th riots at the Capitol in Washington, as the three women take a 2,500-mile road trip across America. In a constant stream of conspiracy-think, director Liz Smith listens intently, helped by Noelle providing additional detail.

"It is my style to listen. Yvonne never stopped talking. I think being English helped," Liz Smith told the Phoenix audience. "At no time did Yvonne ever ask me about my politics." Yvonne, a former US Marine drill instructor, is seen on video as she live-streams from the barricades at the Capitol. Sentenced to 30 months in prison - at her trial she refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of the court - she served half her sentence before President Trump pardoned the rioters.

Liz Smith told the Phoenix moderator Pragna Patel that she thought a lot of the women in the conspiracy movement became involved during Covid, when they were isolated and had

self-educated through the internet. Issues like vaccination contributed to feelings of "pain, anger and hopelessness." "This is a film about middle-aged women made by middle-aged women," she said. Noelle Cook added that 17% of those arrested on January 6th were women, who were predominantly Gen X (aged 46-61) with a wide range of educational achievement.

"Influencers raised questions about vaccination," she said. "Then these people brain-wash themselves. It's not about fact, but how you feel. It is a faith-based system."

Asked about the future, Liz Smith said that while Yvonne has not moderated her views, another interviewee Tammy had moderated hers, but as for turning against President Trump she was: "not ready to go there yet." She added that it was important to engage with conspiracists as it was essential to try and re-establish trust and that could only happen by talking. "I'm not convinced we will do that, but we have to try."

The Conspiracists is made by Page75 Productions. The trailer can be found here: <https://page75productions.com/the-films/>

Walkathon fundraiser

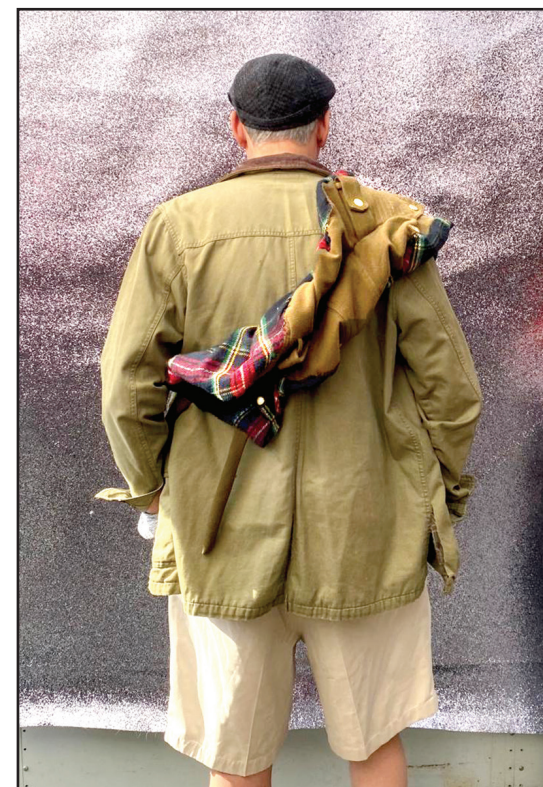
The Our North Finchley campaign is organising a Walkathon to raise funds for its work and for local charities. The event will be at the Glebelands Playing Fields behind the Hollywood Bowl, N12, on Sunday 14 June at 2pm.

The course is 5 km, consisting of five laps around the open space, next to Great North Leisure Park and Glebelands Nature Reserve.

Organisers stress that those preferring to take fewer than five laps are more than welcome. Book at: www.zeffy.com/en-GB/ticketing/gnlp-walkathon

The campaigners have been opposing the redevelopment of Great North Leisure Park by the developer Arada.

They say it is an over-dense scheme of very tall blocks that will harm local character and deprive the community and young people of entertainment.



Ready to wear: People who are homeless model some of the fashions created for the Off the Street Fashion Show

Fashioned from living on the streets

By Gail Norcliffe

Homeless Action in Barnet hosted a unique and inspiring fashion show on last month. Led by individuals who have experienced homelessness, the Off the Street Fashion Show was a powerful expression of creativity.

A case worker had floated the idea some time ago but it didn't come to fruition until Night Shelter Coordinator Marcin Nocek was helping a client with new clothes and they agreed the guest looked good enough to be on the catwalk.

This chance remark prompted Francesca, another client, to start planning and stitching outfits for a possible fashion show. Other guests, previous clients, volunteers and case workers joined in to work together on the idea.

One of the designers created over 40 original outfits, using repurposed second-hand clothing and unexpected materials such as sleeping bags and

mattresses. Through upcycling and reimagining everyday items, the collection was a reflection of real-life experiences and the resourcefulness needed when living on the streets.

Models included guests and their pets, which can be so important to people experiencing homelessness. In addition to the fashion show, the event on Sunday 17 May included community stalls selling a range of food, cakes, jewellery and cards.

Marcin said: "The fashion show has sparked motivation, imagination and a shared sense of purpose. Our guests demon-

strate tremendous resilience in rebuilding their lives and some of that bravery was evident as they proudly modelled the fashion creations to our audience. This was about much more than fashion to everyone involved. It's about confidence, creativity, and having the opportunity to be seen in a different way."

The Homeless in Action Barnet website at www.habcntr.org provides information on how to help through volunteering and/or making financial and other donations. To stay connected with HAB's work, subscribe to the monthly email updates here: <https://mailchi.mp/habcntr/newsletter>

A connection for women in business

By Lynn Winton

It's exciting to be building a fledgling business on your own and yet at the same time unnerving to feel cut adrift and alone, especially if you've always enjoyed the camaraderie of an office full of co-workers.

Now there's a solution for women who are embarking on what's been coined "solopreneurship". The Switch Network currently has 150 members, and they have a whole programme of meetings, walks and talks based in and around East Finchley or online via a WhatsApp group.

Its founder Susie Weisberger explained why she came up with the idea: "For many women running their own businesses, the hardest part isn't the work, it's too many hours spent on their own at their desk, no one to bounce ideas around with, to share the wins or the challenges. "I started my career in big-brand advertising and marketing, thriving on the team energy, the collaboration and

the constant creative banter that came with it. When I stepped away to raise my daughters and began exploring what came next, I knew I wanted to build



Members of The Switch Network

something of my own, I just didn't want to lose those 'can I run it past you' moments."

As she began meeting other women who had made the leap into self-employment, she noticed the same pattern again and again: bold, ambitious

women building impressive businesses, but spending too many hours alone in their own heads, all missing the same thing, the team. So she decided to build it herself, on her doorstep.

Results have been palpable. One of the members is Zoe, a photographer in Muswell Hill. "My first meet-up completely changed my view of networking. I made genuine connections. The woman I sat next to even booked me for a brand photo shoot that week."

The Switch Network is open to new members, and information about the joining fees and the latest list of events can be found at theswitchnetwork.co.uk