Welcome to Spotlight. I’m Colin Lowther. And I’m Liz Waid. Spotlight uses a special English method of broadcasting. It is easier for people to understand, no matter where in the world they live. It was 1738. A group of people were meeting together. Benjamin Lay walked into the meeting wearing a large coat. He was a very short man. So people did not notice him. But when the meeting began, he threw his coat off. Underneath, Lay was wearing a soldier’s uniform. He took out a sword and a book. It was a copy of the Christian Bible. Lay shouted: “So will God spill the blood of people who make other people slaves!” Then, he stabbed the book with his sword! A red liquid came from the cover. He had filled the book with juice from a fruit. It looked like the book was bleeding! People started to shout. Lay did not hurt anyone. But he wanted to give people a clear and strong message. He wanted the people to stop owning slaves. So he was showing the violence of owning people as slaves. Today’s Spotlight is this man who used extreme methods to fight against slavery - Benjamin Lay. Benjamin Lay was born in England. He was a very interesting and difficult man. He was only just over one metre tall. And he had some very extreme beliefs and practices. He lived around the year 1700. Many of the ideas he had were very strange in that time. He did not eat any meat. He made his own clothing without using any animal products. Benjamin Lay lived with his wife in a cave, underground. People call him an extremist or a radical. But Lay is most famous for his efforts to stop slavery among the Quakers. The Quakers are a particular group of Christians. Benjamin Lay was a Quaker. But he believed many things that other Quakers did not believe, especially about slavery. In this time, many people kept slaves. Most of the slaves were brought to Europe or the Americas from Africa. Lay worked as a sailor. He lived in Barbados. There, he saw the terrible effects of slavery. Later, Lay settled in North America. The American colonies also depended on the labour of African slaves. And many Quakers kept slaves. William Kashatus is a modern Quaker writer. He wrote in Philadelphia Inquirer newspaper: “I learned about Lay when I was a student. I learned that the Quaker’s anti-slavery movement took almost a century to grow. I learned that the wealth of many 18th century Quakers depended on slavery and the slave trade. And I learned that Lay truly believed God chose him to end slavery among the Quakers.” Benjamin Lay believed that Quakers should not own other people. He believed that it was against their faith. So he told people this as loudly as he could. Lay did not think that just talking about slavery was enough. Instead, he showed how it would feel to be a slave. He did this in unusual ways, so that people would pay attention to his message. These events were almost like modern protests. But his protests were very extreme. And sometimes they were dangerous. Once, Lay kidnapped a child for a day. The child’s parents owned slaves. And Lay wanted to teach them a lesson. Lay did not hurt the child. But Lay kept the child away from his parents, in his home. The parents became very worried. And when they came to him, Lay told them that they were feeling what many slaves felt. Many slaves were separated from their families. Lay hoped by making the parents feel like a slave, they would understand how much it hurt. We do not know if this protest worked. But we do know that the parents and other Quakers were very angry with him. Because of this and many other shocking protests, the Quakers disowned Lay. They said he could not be a part of their community. They disowned him three times for different reasons. Lay called himself a Quaker for the rest of his life. But the other Quakers did not consider him one of them. Lay was an extremist. Still, today, most of us would agree that he was right about his ideas. Slavery causes great suffering. But to stop it, Lay caused some suffering. And in doing so, he hurt himself too. He lost many friends. Over time, Benjamin Lay’s ideas became less extreme to other Quakers. More of them recognized that slavery was wrong. In 1758, a group of Quakers spoke to Lay in his home. They had decided something important: that Quakers could no longer trade slaves. Lay smiled at his friends. He was 76 years old and in poor health. He told them that he could now die in peace. A year later, he did. Today, more people are interested in Benjamin Lay. He did many extreme things and made many people angry. But he understood some things before many other people did. Today, many Quakers recognize that his cause was right. In 2017, the Quakers of Abington officially accepted Benjamin Lay. They declared him a “Friend of Truth”. And they changed their records to make him an official member of the community. Markus Rediker is a writer and historian. He wrote about Benjamin Lay’s life. He attended the official ceremony. He told The Beacon Broadside: “I was moved to tears. The ceremony was an act of justice. Lay had been disowned without good reason. It was a rejection of what a generation before had done. And it showed that Benjamin Lay’s values matter to the Quaker community. I learned during my research that Lay loved his fellow Quakers very much. His forced separation was very painful for him. It was very touching to know he has been brought back into the community again. This act would have meant everything to him." What do you think about Benjamin Lay’s protests? Were they good or were they too extreme? Are there groups near you that work in similar ways today? What do you think about their methods? Tell us what you think. You can leave a comment on our website. Or email us at radio@radioenglish.net. You can also comment on Facebook at Facebook.com/spotlightradio. The writer of this program was Dan Christmann. The producer was Michio Ozaki. The voices you heard were from the United Kingdom and the United States. All quotes were adapted for this program and voiced by Spotlight. You can listen to this program again, and read it, on the internet at www.radioenglish.net. This program is called: ‘The Extreme Methods of Benjamin Lay’. Visit our website to download our free listening app for Android or Apple devices. We hope you can join us again for the next Spotlight program. Goodbye.