



GIRLS ON TOP OF THE WORLD

Journey to Justice partner Girlz United in Shadwell, Tower Hamlets has been working with a diverse group of teenage girls from London and Essex for several years, hosting social events, interfaith conversations and residential weekends. The group was keen to learn about the local East End history of struggles against racism, and to understand more about each other's cultures and personal experiences of discrimination. Julie Begum, Chairperson of the Swadhinata Trust, talked to the girls about her role in Women Unite Against Racism (WUAR) in the 1990s and about the racist murder of Altab Ali in 1978. In July 2016, a group from Girlz United went away with members of Hawkwell Girls Brigade, Essex and Brandon Baptist Church, Camberwell for a residential weekend in Danbury, Essex. Led by youth workers and facilitators, Liz Anderson, Sally Claydon, Parul Motin and Leanne Sedin, they learnt more about this local history, discussed questions of identity and social justice, did team building activities, and produced searing poetry.

Automatically you lead? I think NOT!

*I'm at the bottom, you're at the top,
You automatically think I am something,
That you're not!*

*RACISM is history and you are the future,
Yet you lack the ability to ensure justice for the minorities,
Whether my hair is curly or straight, my skin is DARK
And yours ain't!*

*I wear trainers and trackies and automatically,
You have no faith, you're the 'U' in corrupt
The 'R' in racism,
you fail to speak out, to talk about the truth,
To avoid any misconceptions that may be political*

*You think it's just the Youth.
How hopeful and ethical?*

*Blind to the world around you,
The money shades you,
And stops you to do good,
Like you should.*

*A rich boy chilling in parliament.
Knowing you're a part of the decisions,
that don't believe in our visions.*

Just the money and rich surname.

*NOW I'm at the top and you're at the bottom,
Across the world and in society.
The tasks I complete, while you wear masks,
And fail to be real, to make a deal
Behind the scenes to never be just.
Please do, take action beyond your words,
So you can own the world as it turns around.*

by Tobii Aina

'My topic was racism – I was inspired by the many problems that exist within our communities, but are often not spoken of. I want my poem to make a difference'.

Dear Murderer

*Death is brought upon us all,
We don't know when, where or by who.
My death was cruel.
My death was vicious
By you know who.*

*Dear murderer,
What did I do to endure such a cruel ending?
Should I be ashamed of who I am, an Asian man,
The colour of my skin? Orange with a tan,
A decent brown man.*

*I was murdered at 25 because of who I am,
The religion I believed in had no ground to stand,
It was despised.
The stare,
The dagger!
The knife to my neck,
Yes murderer!
These were your entire actions.*

*Bloodshed.
Blood gushed out piercing my veins,
I could feel the pain through my whole body,
I knew it was the very end.
I was left for dead,
Damaged, dangling on my doorstep.
I could hear the sniggering and laughter spraying through their mouths.
My body left for dead,*

How could you commit something like this?

*Dear murderer,
I wonder how you feel now?
Ashamed, ambushed with embarrassment?
Of course not – No remorse. Excused of crime.
"We're back" lives in your eyes,
bleeds on those very hands that ended mine.
Mindless murderer.
Yes you are.*

by Nadia Ishmail

'My poem was inspired by the murder of Altab Ali. It is to stand up to racism because it needs to stop. I want my poem to emphasise the importance of equality regardless of your skin colour or religion'.

Scars

*Scars are not always visible,
sometimes they're invisible.
A scar of the body heals with time,
a scar of the mind takes much longer.
They say time heals all wounds—but that suggests the source
of your pain isn't constant, it's there day after day,
unrelenting, untiring, never leaving.
A scar of the mind can't be seen,
but it can't be ignored either.
A scar of the mind is personal,
it belongs to me.
Me, myself and I.
What makes my scars personal?
A scar of the mind can wake you in the dead of night, tossing turning screaming.
No one understands it; no one has been through the same as you.
A scar of the mind is a constant remind,
and it will stay with you forever.*

by Summer Jai Robinson

'My poem is based on the idea if someone gets hurt on the surface it will heal, but it can run so much deeper and for that reason they'll never be same, even after healing'.

It's Time, It's Tough

*Racism. Racism. Racism.
All in one line!
Do you know what it is?
Of course you do.
We all do.*

*But we choose to turn a blind eye to it, like the opticians isn't available.
Why?
Because it doesn't affect us, me or you? so we refuse to make an appointment
Why is it if it doesn't affect you directly?
It's okay to sit back and relax?
I never get that...*

*Racism is laziness,
It is the uneducated and stems from hatred
A lot comes under racism, prejudice, and xenophobia, Islamophobia, anti-semitism.
It is only a matter of time before the stress causes the ticking bomb to erupt
seconds early and we're all under one umbrella.
Well it's time.*

*It's time for People to stand up and do the right thing.
The democratic thing.
When people are being racist they know it's wrong,
Yet they still choose to practise a system that is fairly wrong.
So we are just as shameful to watch,
Choosing to ignore it puts you in the same shoes as the offender.*

*It's time
To turn off the ticking bomb.
It's time to understand human kind
Where difference is acknowledged,
Racism is recognised
Religion is power and not a problem
Now is the hour.
To empower time and the tribulations we see
By standing together in solidarity.*

by Nada Takkal

'The story of Julie Begum and women coming together encouraged me to write my poem about the blatant racism. Achievement has no colour, we have a right to own it and feel safe about it too'.

Nobody Came

*The scars are no fantasy.
An infliction of Pain, brought upon women,
Does not allow unity, for that is trespassing supremacy.
The men who need to hold.
No unity! No rights!
GET THE MEN OUT OF OUR SIGHTS!*

*The brutal attacks leaving
The long legacy of scars that are no fantasy,
I repeat no fantasy.
For they are left behind, bruised and battered to democracy*

*Why attack women?
Why sexually harass them?
Why choose the vulnerable?
Because they are weak you say!?
Because they are unworthy of your chivalry?*

*What will it take to be noticed?
My screams?
My tears.
My LIFE.
Death on my doorstep?*

*With no peace, there will be no justice
With no justice, there will be no peace.
And with the world like this
How can this be the calling of justice?*

by Chorouk Takkal

'I was inspired by Julie Begum's campaign WUAR. I read about a Somali woman who was brutally attacked by a group of yobs, it was a powerful moment then that I'd write about what I believed. I believe in the righteousness of women, I believe in fairness and want to protect women's rights'.

To the Future

*The scars are no fantasy
Cuts.
Bruise.
Words.
BANG!
Past. Present or future?
A repetitive History never goes a miss.*

*Day by day our unity fails.
Victim after victim.
The truth prevails it is not long before the lies are front page,
In our eyes,
BANG!
A 25 year old man lay dead.
Stabbed, blood spilled.
Wounds left to rot
Another family left with a void.
Who will comfort their pain now?*

by Amber Streamer

'I was inspired by the stories we were exposed to at the residential about history that repeated itself. I am not naive to the issues around us. It bothers me that [they] are over looked and so I felt inspired to speak out in the hope I'll be a part of the resolution'.