

## **People Arise Now**

### **Creative Writing with Young People – Michelle Inniss**

Over a period of 10 one and half hour sessions I've worked with a small group of Young People in Years 8 and 9.

The aim of the creative writing sessions was to explore different topics that effect the young people in their daily lives and produce some writing in response to these topics. A space was created for the young people to express themselves freely. They were encouraged to speak openly and honestly about the things they were experiencing and have experienced in their daily lives using creative writing to capture this.

During the sessions the young people have looked at monologues produced by other young people in which they express how they feel about issues around race, school, family and their identity.

The young people also conducted interviews with a family member they wanted to know more about – they all chose their mothers! The aim of this exercise was to give the young people a different perspective on their parent's lives. To perhaps see their parents as people who were also young once and had faced their own struggles and triumphs as children and young people. An extract from Joanna's piece of writing, 'When I was Young' came out of this session.

We also looked at Acrostics, Ode To and Erasure poems, focussing on the topics of, home, their favourite things, (mobile phones was a definite favourite!) and finding poems in writing you wouldn't expect to find a poem in, for example, a newspaper article.

We also looked at, 'Thinking About Our History.' An interesting conversation about beauty standards, black hair and school came out of that session. Hannah's poem, 'Time Is Repeating Itself' and Amelia's poem, 'What Is The Difference Between You and Me?' Reflected some of the conversations from the session.

We also looked at the importance of our names, culturally, historically and more, reflecting on Article 7 from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, that each child from birth has a right to a name.

It was such an honour and joy to have worked with Hannah, Alesha, Joanna, and Amelia, who have also formed a lovely friendship group.

The sessions have enabled the Young People to engage in the breaking down of any perceived barriers between them. This has allowed them to appreciate and value their similarities and their differences, which has led to a better understanding of each other and their experiences.

## When I Was Young

By

Joanna

One of my earliest memories was of me in Shen Zhen. I was seven and summer felt like an eternity. When I was too little to understand all the Chinese characters on the news, so some characters were little doodles. When a trip to the shopping mall was like a pilgrimage to the other world. When I had no fear of consequences and no worries about the past or future. The future sounded cool to me, but that was too far away to think about. I was too busy watching (?) and listening to my grandma berate my aunt over buying the mantous instead of the lobaozis.

'They sold out already! What was I supposed to do?'

'You should have gone earlier! Why are you always? ... '

They were always like this. Strangers who just so happen to listen might think they hate each other. But if you listen long enough, you'll grow to hear the unspoken whispers of love.

## What is the Difference Between You and Me?

By

Amelia

I really don't understand the difference between you and me.  
I thought we could be friends but I guess there are some rules.  
Different places for everything.

Why can't we sit next to each other on the bus?

I just want to be friends.

'You don't have long, silky hair like I do.'

But I like my hair.

Now everything is different

Me and my friend can use the same toilet

And sit next to each other on the bus

And she likes my hair.

## Time is Repeating Itself

By

Hannah

You would think things are getting better for us, especially since it's 2022

But if you look at the details, actions are being repeated.

Black hairstyles are being banned in schools without a valid reason

When they are not disturbing for those who are learning

But the teachers instead of helping us to fit in to the society we live in and be accepted

Some of us are being embarrassed and rejected.

I would like us to be fully welcomed without given stares

So, we don't have to relate to the past.

By giving us Black History Month, it doesn't mean treating us like everyone else

just for a month

But for every day of the year.

## Me, My Names, and I

By

Alesha

My name is not very well known here.

If I'm asked my name I say 'that' one, my 'normal' one – the 'easy' one.

When I do say my name, the 'other' one, it comes with the flow of intrigued and confused stares.

Then the dreaded question – 'Where are you from?'

I have three names with different meanings and different stories.

I like them all and every time I say them, I'm reminded of who I am, the forced but sweet, satisfying story of my past, my family, my culture, and my country.

I have nicknames for each name, each one different and somewhat endearing and each in different languages, from different places.

I am represented by names meaning honour, peace, and nobility.

I am...

Adwsa

Awora

Alesha.

These are me, my names and I.

## Where Are You From?

By

Alesha

When I'm asked where I am from  
I say, West Africa,  
Not the whole thing, obviously,  
But I don't say much,  
Because what people are reminded of is poverty,  
But I'm reminded of home,  
I smell fufu  
Jollof rice  
Peanut soup  
And rice balls  
I see my grandma  
I see my pet chicken.  
I am from Ghana.

This was produced by Alesha at the Race Equality Conference.