

The background is a solid green color with large, expressive, darker green brushstrokes or paint splatters that create a textured, artistic feel.

NOTTINGHAM C.A.N PRESENTS

*I Come From
A Country Where*

#communityartistsforcommunityaction



I Come From

Project Overview

Funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, the 'I Come From' project is the debut project from community arts organisation, Nottingham C.A.N (Community Arts Network). Inspired by the poem 'Where I Come From' by Elizabeth Brewster, the project worked in partnership with Rising Issue magazine and illustrator Raphicdesign, producing a trilogy of printed anthologies that explored identity, people and place through poetry, with a diverse range of participants.

The project began with a series of online workshops facilitated by poetry specialists exploring the themes of 'Race & Immigration', 'Gender & Sexuality' and 'Mental Health'. Supporting individuals to reach their creative potential, we shared stories, held discussions around specific questions within our themes and set a range of creative writing challenges that encouraged poets of all ages and abilities to express themselves and develop their creative writing skills.

The final session saw participants working with an illustrator; producing live, visualisations of the poetry as it was performed, this process helped our participants to build confidence in their performance skills and gave the poets an idea of how their work would be interpreted by wider audiences.

In terms of project legacy, the anthologies, containing our participants' work will act as a stimulus to provide community groups and educational institutes with a toolkit that attempts to break down barriers and misconceptions of the issues raised and encourages further conversations within the wider community.

As well as being taken on a series of roadshow events around Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire, the work has also been showcased at a celebration and launch event, and a selection of poems have been filmed so they can be accessed by community groups. To view these, please visit our youtube playlist via a [QR](#) code at the back of this anthology.

We would like to thank everyone involved in this, our debut project. It has allowed us to connect with so many people and to develop a learning resource that we feel will be so beneficial to our partnering community groups. We feel strongly that in order to tackle the issues that we have explored it is important to open up dialogue and communication. We feel that these anthologies and our video toolkit is a great way to facilitate these conversations. We welcome anybody to get in touch with us to discuss the project further.

Our inbox is always open.

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Content Warning

This anthology explores the topic of race and immigration, there may be themes and language that some readers might find triggering or offensive. Discretion is advised.

Dreading The Truth

by Ty Healy

I come from a mind that transfers ideas out and travels in the air through my hair
 I sit in a meditative space twisting each dreadlock
 In attempt to tighten and refine the roots of the ideas that grow in different directions

Patience, Practice, Preservation

Self medicating on nothing more than water and time
 Even a thought that passes through that could throw me of kilter because it was unfiltered
 Can be compartmentalised as to, why
 What if you don't know where you come from?
 That root was cut from the soil of the homeland
 Does this stop the seed from reaching its full potential?
 The only photosynthesis is photographs from the past
 Black and white or sepia tone yet no nostalgia
 "So thats where we came from"

Im stuck on the fact that family isn't familiar
 To the land of my soil I'm a foreigner
 I pulled a dread lock too tight accidentally
 I wasn't paying attention because of the tension
 and a part of the root snapped as I did
 The fear that I would be unwelcome in my original home
 Walking and wondering like the unknown nomad

Patience, Practice, Preservation

I grab The broken Lock hanging by a thinner thread
 Slowly retwisting it and relocking it around itself
 Sometimes I lose my grip and the hair un tangles
 I thought my thoughts would spin out the same way

I stayed calm for the second attempt
 Third, then forth, eventually I lost count
 Each time getting better grasping stronger
 My thoughts did the same
 I can learn, I have time



Babcia

by Charlie Sanderson

Clearing the room before bed, an old card falls out, cobwebbed at the edge. Blue glittered, white and recognised.
 My heart-head hurts and eases, all at the same time.
 Grandma's shaky hand writing sits inside.
 Looking at it, I feel the cut of my name missing letters.
 Feel her shame at her English illiteracy.
 Shame.
 Five letter words.
 Slave.
 Worked to the bone.
 On the camp. Just a child when they took her there.
 "A good girl," she said.
 "We had food, we were lucky," only one time she told me. One meal a day.
 For six years. Never spoke about it again.
 People who survive their stories can't always be the storytellers.
 That's my job. Our job. The ones that come after.
 She loved me best we'd say in jest,
 I was favoured, famed, the first grandchild out.
 Not the prettiest, not the cleverest but, first.
 I was hope.
 The first hope.
 The third generation.

But I put a stop to her too. To her heritage. Our heritage.
 Grandad said, we would be good English girls. No Polish.
 He wouldn't make that mistake again.
 Teaching the mother tongue to the children, walking counting the cracks in the pavement. Don't say a thing.
 Silence to hide the foreign.

Passport white skin, holding us in.
 Foreignness. Hidden. Hidden away in me.
 Stamped out. The first hope. The first assimilation.
 Grandad was an educated man; cut throat clever.
 Grandma was beautiful and hard.
 Easy maybe, to manipulate.
 But, I don't know, I was only a child back then.
 A dream. A possibility.
 Inside the card her blue biro makes two pieces of crumbling written bread around the neat generic printed English text.
 Text, she maybe never read.
 Words that made dreams inside her head.
 Words like 'wishes' and 'thoughts' and 'wonderful'.
 'Sincere' and 'new' and 'happiest'.
 Words she possibly did not know were even there.
 I imagine her hands holding the stubble texture of Christmas wishes and sparkles.
 Fingers cut and shaped just like mine,
 DNA matched,
 like twins made separate by savage generations.

Prints that ran along festive glitter lines, gripped a cheap plastic pen and wrote my name.
 Charlotte.
 "Shah – Lot," her lovely voice in my head. From far beyond the grave.
 How I have flown from her.
 How I have loved her.
 How I have become something 'better'.
 Safe. Educated. Free.
 How unknown she is to me.
 Grandma: Babcia.
 I never once called her by her proper name.
 Babcia, thank you.
 For all this possibility, for my good life that you made from rubble.
 I put the old precious card away in a secret, quiet place.

And I write, I write, I write,
 And I speak, I speak, I speak,
 And I live, I live, I live.

Because that is the path she made for me.
 Because this is the path she made for me.
 Because I am incarnate possibility.

I dream, I create, I thrive.
 They are my five,
 letter words.

Race Equality

by Annie Alleyne

Race equality... does that include me?
 A black, gay, woman in her forties!
 Where do I sit within the guidelines?
 My culture puts me squarely on the outside!
 On the outside of what's acceptable,
 Who's in, who's out and who gets a seat at the table.

Equality, like all things, starts close to home,
 Being treated fairly and accepted by your own.
 Your family, your friends, your colleagues and community,
 Not being outcast and left pleading for impunity.

Equality should give my life the same value as yours.
 Not more, or less or something to be fought for.
 My race shouldn't be a topic of conversation,
 Debated in the Commons or classrooms across the nation.
 Nor should my race divide opinion, about my worthiness as a human being.

Crimes are committed against me every day,
 But I'll live and I'll love and I will not be swayed.
 I'll stay true to myself, my values and my opinion,
 That all lives are worthy of love and compassion.

I Say

by Deanna El Khoury

They can't make sense of my name at the airport: *El K- K-houry?*

My surname has its roots in a Northern region of Lebanon called Koura.

They touch my hair, label it *black* and *afro*.

I see my hair in my Lebanese and English father.

I see my hair in my Pakistani mother.

They say, *I would never have guessed you were from there.*

I say –

There is not one way to look Lebanese.

There is not one way to look Pakistani.

There is not even one way to look English.

Mental Welts

by Ty Healy

In the past my ancestors had welts on their back

This pain has been passed down

And now it travels up my spine and reside in my brain

And the scares still remain its just now mental

Rally with our ally's What matters is the black lives

They've endorse the outcries

Finally!

We've been crying out since 1619

If you love my art, food & culture don't neglect the history

It may be uncomfortable to read, but not as bad as to live

To say the UK isn't as bad as the USA regarding race

Just know, miles of water does not change trauma.



I am 3

by Plentiful Poet

I am so proud that I finally embraced every side of me.
 It took a long to find that peace within,
 Figuring out where my mixed skin... fitted in.
 I can finally say out loud that I am proud, that I am different.
 Two sides of my races came here on boats
 Came her to the British lands for a better life,
 Came here to be discriminated NO IRISH NO BLACKS.
 Imagine...
 I'm in the middle of that, I'm IRISH AND BLACK
 And for me to be able to write that without any fear within my heart,
 I am blessed, the ancient history that is within me, the cultures that birthed the seed that is
 now me I say out loud: I AM BLESSED.
 I didnt see.. those similarities until I started to break away and finally see me for me.
 Perceive me in a place that I could truly be.
 So yes I am different, and Lord knows I am proud to be..
 Both of my history came from the deepest parts of the sea and it created me.. I smile as I
 write this
 I am not just one colour!
 I am not just one religion!
 I am not just one race!
 I am 3!
 And I am now free because I let go of discrimination that the British colony put on me, the
 home I was born in, discriminated me just like my family in ancient of days.. it seems like
 nothing has changed.

England has never felt like home, but its only because I have more than one
 Maybe one day I get to chant a song with Nigeria family,
 Let my aunties wrap my hair in a GELE and dress me
 with the beautiful fabrics covering my brown skin,
 my uncles banging..
 on the drums the rhythm so perfectly in tune,
 It doesn't matter about the hard ground on our bare foot because
 Gods got us!
 The African songs that take your soul into a trance, we dance the dance of the ocean it's
 called Ekombi, Spirit free.

Or maybe
 I could Riverdance with Irish blood
 I don't think the line dance will be as soft as Ekombi
 I but I'm sure after a few Guinness beers
 I could get my feet moving as fast as theirs!
 The country where magic happens, southern Kells right near the raw nature of the sea,
 how strange is that?
 The dances that are apart of my ancient history are inspired by the deep depths of the sea,
 two different country a whole world apart, but connected..
 that's something that you don't see
 I guess that's why I'm a Pisces
 We don't need to smoke trees to feel that Jamaican universal love, the music touches each
 part to the world,
 pass me that scotch bonnet and thyme
 and I will cook suttin nice,
 all I need is a dutch pot and some meat and we can create a feast and... stir it up, we don't
 need to worry about a ting,
 because redemption is coming
 I can feel it every time them 3 little birds come see me in the marnin,
 I'm blessed I have 4 lands in my heart my ancestors were warriors, fighters, believers and
 achievers
 So, when they where do you come from?
 Imma say where shall I start...

I Born a Gaulin Woman

by Xan Xi

"I came down on a lightning bolt/ nine months in my mama belly/ when I was born/ the midwife scream and shout/I had fire and brimstone comin' outta my mouth." Tony Mckay

I come from heavy bottom women
who stand up and pound fufu
in the hot sun.

I come from big face fighter people
on my mother side,
revolution people
Dutty Bookman kind
who call down fire
from the sky—

Carlota seed
who slice man head
clean off
with big machete,
dig graves
with their fingernails
to put down dead babies.

I born of bush, rum, and goat blood.

I come from hard heel women
who grind unholy men
to dust and
sprinkle ashes
under the bedroom windows
of their enemies



— Evelyn chirren who salt their thighs
before laying down wit' man,
walk with frayed, yellowing bits of bible verse
tucked in their bosoms,
hang black bottles
from the branches of the Casuarina tree

listening for sperrit.

I come out of Albear and Rosina house
on Palm Avenue in the Grove
(not the white Grove, the black Grove).
The one with the hog plum, sour cherry
twelve hens,
one yard cock.

I am Viola Sands stock
who get chop up and burn at supper time
in Sandy Point Eleuthera.
But the man who did it,
he'en no kin to me, thank God.
Viola call down thirteen generations of tormentation for his ass.

I born where pink sand lay like sheen over dry bones.

I born in deep night
in the last settlement
at the end of Queen's Highway
where Miss Sweetie still does shape shift
into black-eye cat to
terrorize Sister Dinah
"that renk bitch"
since she did teef
her good-good husband
almost forever ago.

I born where the okra fingers never tough.

I Understand Why

by Plentiful Poet

“I remember when I was young when people asked me what colour I was I would say half caste. Until I read a poem in school called “half caste from John Agard” and since then the word was casted off. I stopped hearing it wherever I went, I stopped calling it myself too, the word just disappeared. I never felt home with the black side of my family I felt like I wasn’t dark enough, and I always felt like I wasn’t light enough to be loved by my white side. All my life I was casted without even knowing. So even though the word disappeared the feeling of it... well it was always there”

AM I meant to stand on one knee to show you that I care about my race?

DO I need to hold one hand in the air and shout from the roof tops to show you that I respect my brown skin?

In the present *I* am so unsure,
of the doors that haven’t been left opened,
or shut after the next generation.

I always felt love between you and *I*,
Black and white.

And *I* look myself in the eyes and try and

Comprehend my feelings towards my own skin.

And as *I* stand in the mirror, *I* look at my face and *I* only see one side and it isn’t dark.

I have lost a lot of love for you, and *I* held my hand out in the dark, but no one picked me up

I have had to find closure and empowerment through my own pain of race, and its *Tiring*.

Forcing myself to over explain *how I* feel to my own race to people that are the same as me.

And then explaining to white people I have in white in *Me too*.

In my present *I am* trying to be true... to both sides of my race.

I look at myself straight in the face, and sometimes *I* only see one side, and most of the time it’s never the side *I* look,

I was raised by Irish blood,

But my other people’s dem call *Blud*.

Black and white mixed together and it made me up..

And only now in my present *I* understand the word *half caste*.

I thought that the time had passed, that label don’t run anymore

.. but more than ever in my life as mixed *raced women* it finally makes sense to me.

A word *I* will NOT stand for, but the term seems to make me understood more.

I understand why they said half caste.

Indo-Brit

by Natasya Lund

My homeland – a dream holiday destination,
Yet a country forgotten when I tell them ‘where I come from’...
And questioned, doubted until
It becomes a dream honeymoon.

My homeland becomes dismissed,
When people ask ‘is that near Phillipines?’.

Becoming 1 land – China, Japan, Thailand is all they seem to know.
Yes we are 1 continent but did you know 48 countries fill Asia?
..... Nah didn’t think so.

My homeland questioned, once again.... OH! So you’re from India!?
I said I was half indo and that means...

actually never mind.

Always fading in the background – but how?!
How can a country with 6000 inhabited islands,
a home to beautiful wildlife and jungle friends.
The largest nation in South-east Asia, which influences a multitude of religions – Buddhism,
Christianity, Islam and more!
The ground of tropical fruits, flavours and aromas.
A home to tastes of Indo mie, Satay and nasi goreng...
All of this – erased in little minds.

My homeland ridiculed for our broken English, our native tongue...
But did you know there are 300 native languages in Indonesia?
People are so quick to stereotype and fetishise... from little knowledge of a vast continent.



How so you ask?
Through assumptions and lack – I hear...
‘Small eyes’ ‘Can you speak English?’ ‘Take covid home’ and that dread C word.

Through fetishes and stereotypes – I’m told...
‘You’re so exotic’ or that they’ve never been with an Asian girl before...
as if I was part of a bucket list.

All these novelties – don’t you get bored?

Nobody takes the time to truly learn the truth... the beauty... the culture... the story of
Indonesia – The richness of our heritage – but will freely become a tourist of it.

My homeland – others won’t know but will happily tell me to ‘go back where I come from’.
But does anyone really know where I come from?

Do they know my father was British? Do they know that my homeland is the UK too...
Or is that just too much to ask? Too much for your ‘Great Britain’ mind to grasp onto.

The battle with race continuing – centuries later, people seem to struggle to understand..
Actually nevermind...

My identity isn’t up for discussion, it’s time for you to do the education.

Missing Its Mark

by Courtney Shaquille Scott

I come from a country where...
Was this missing a question mark,
Was that line too,
?? = __

Uncertainty-riddled in ambiguity-
Laced in policy - masquerading as diversity, equality, fairness;
A fan of batman,
The dark knight hiding inside the hegemonic and privileged,
Robin the innocent of life,
Feels like a side kick to progress,
But where i come from it's DC,
"Doesn't count",
So to answer the riddler's villainous question,
From the start,

I come from a country where...
'A' question, '
'The' question,
always missing its mark,

A country where - the luxury of the Victor
Means falsified history stands strong,
Where we know nothing of moors that contributed so much,
Where we teach Kunta got caught but not Kizzi learned to read and Chicken George earned
his walk,
Ahhh oui,
We never get to the roots

Yet ask why our youth can't grow,

A country where -
POC should not be 'people of colour' but:
Politically obscured correctness,
Where the most ignorant and disgraceful
are forced... no
Taught
To hide

See i come from a country where...
We, no they stop and torture (i mean search) but can't search within themselves,

I come from a country where a poem like "I come from a country where" is needed.

I come from a country where... The negative far outweighs the good.

Yes.

I come from a country where...
Any multi-cultural person will refer to their mother's or father's land as "Home"

Yet the country in which i come from
Is the country that will undoubtedly own that offshored "Home"
Through foreign aid and political slavery;
Neo colonialism,
Condoning the mental prison,

See I come from a country where... we draw the picture but can't see the vision,

Where we dont ask questions that will never be answered,
Taerg Bri(s)tain(ed).
___?

A Journey Into The Unknown..

by Natasya Lund

I come from a country where..
Well, I don't know, you know.
Like many who don't know where I'm from,
I myself can't identify with my own identity.
Pieces of me everywhere, but still so out of reach.

Checking into the world...

I was born in Indonesia – yet my journey began in British schools.
Before I could begin to learn, the west had already taken my race..

Before I could even get to know it.

Jumping onto flights,

Moving through continents...

I lost my mother tongue as my identity became whitewashed,
Before I knew what whitewashed meant.

Landing our feet on 'Great Britain'.

I became trapped by the west world... A destination far from what was expected.

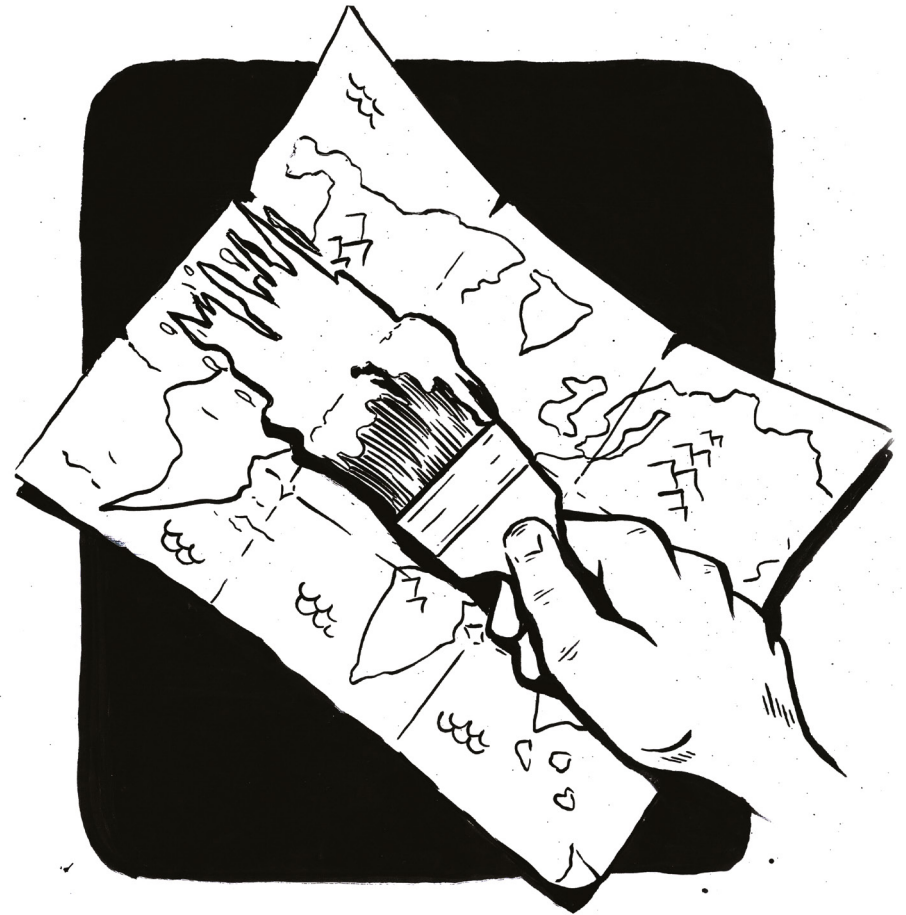
The development of who I was became everyone's responsibility but my own.

Everyone told me how to be, where to be... So I did what I told. I continued to live life as
'should' be.

Until – I became a concept of the unknown.

My sense of belonging... disappeared.

My sense of identity... questioned.



Am I not who I thought I was? Have I been lied to? Who am I?

Moving west – my family said this was for the best. So why am I being treated like less....
Than the best?

Targeted for nothing but my race – something I hadn't even had a chance to explore.

Why is this happening? Are we not the same? The human race has turned into a human
chase...

Towards those who have no where else to hide.

Question from a mate

by Jay Sandhu

Carlton/Gedling somewhere. 2 housemates, known each other for around 80% of their lives. Weren't just house mates, they were best mates. After a games of Fifa, a few ciders and few more Rums. As always they moved into the kitchen...

You need stop one be the other definition of differentiate
Ascertain what makes some different
Become different in during the process of growth and development

Yo bro where you from?

Like Mapperley, you know that

Nah Nah like where you from??

Ohhhh right yhyh born in Derby init

Noo Bro Where You Really From???

I know what you want, but I don't know if I
should give it

Like you knoow, Where you from from????

Nah I'm sick of it all the time,
You don't care you think you eat jerk
cause you dip reggae reggae

Nahh bro it's not that deep just tell me where you from?????

You don't wanna know about my Kirpan, my sword or my wordplay
Things like this make some of us down play our heritage disappear quick like
exponential decay

There's just so many of you I don't wanna say something and offend *your* kind

What does it matter? You won't even notice the difference
Like you're bothered if pick the pulled pork or the steak
Or how many times a day I pray

For fucksake, you're all the same, I only asked a question.
You're moving like your lifes at stake!

Nah it's not even that, it's the assuming; the bias;
the judging; towards not even my race
Blaming me for Al-Qaeda and ISIS like I should've caught a case

Bro ain't no one blaming you for that shit

Yeah not you, but I've had plenty of shit thrown at me,
sometimes literally

But they're idiots, doesn't even make sense
for how could've you been in that cockpit?!

You get me, unless I'm wolverine or something.
Serious though it's hard to heal
with that constant negativity

You always joke about it though, brush it off with bare wit

Of course. I do that deliberately, in that moment what can I do;
act timidly? Show my irritability?

Serious?! Yo next time, you know I'll back you! Tell them idiots about it

Trust I know you would, but I've been getting this since 7, ain't nuttin' change.

Unless people are going to willingly

Yeah, yeah - there's got to be a bunch willing?
I know there's bare twats but how can we flip it?

The deeper issue is man don't even realise their doing it.
That shit is soooooo ingrained in society. We a need a major shift and quick

Alright alright yhyh I get you, but I've not said anything bad...right?!

You never directly,
but those unconscious micro-aggressions help accentuate

How can I help? I don't want to be part of societies blight?!

Fighter of justice, dark knight, that you yeah?
I'm joking, step one educate

Then I stop the spread? Then I might understand?

Spread love not judegment or hate,
that you need to habituate

Just having the convo...with my...got me feeling contrite...

You might be finally getting it

You need stop one be the other definition of differentiate
Ascertain what makes some different
Become different in during the process of growth and development

Survivor

by Benjamin Ziec

I would like to say this was all for you
But at the time I didn't have the time to think of you
We just fled.

I've seen too many dead that I had to leave our lands
And put our fate in unknown hands
And who would of thought that the path that I travelled would lead to you.

Lay down your roots
Just don't forget our roots

Enjoy the fruits
But don't forget the fruits of our labour
Of our sacrifice and pain.

Don't forget our name

Rubber Dinghy Rapids

by Shikamoo Speaks

We have come from a country that is ravaged by war
 Both internally and internationally, now we're poorer than poor
 We have walked a thousand miles
 To leave the worst of lives behind
 We have followed footsteps of the person in front
 No clue where we going or if we're welcome or not
 Now we're facing a journey on an inflatable dinghy
 Clinging to the hope we will get to some safety
 "Gotta get on the boat kids
 It will be a perilous night
 You gotta wrap up warm, gotta hold on tight
 Are you listening to me? I said hold on for your life!
 It's gonna be rough, you gotta be tough
 If you don't hold on you will fall off!
 Hold onto the rope kids
 Watch for the waves coming on
 Remember the water is strong, very strong
 You gotta hold on, really hold on!"
 There's too many people clinging to this boat
 OMG how on earth is it going to stay afloat?
 "Hold on tight! Don't let go, damn it!
 OMG! Don't fall off, damn it!"
 How on earth did it come to this?
 Taking such a risk with three young kids
 "Hold on tight! Don't let go, damn it!
 OMG! Don't fall off, damn it!"
 Scattered like ants on the might of the waves



Helpless, small & tiny... can we be saved?
 A mother's cry, the child no reply
 "Kids, kids, kids, how many are we?
 Headcount – me and one, two... where's three?
 "Kids, kids, kids, how many are we?
 Headcount again – me and one, two... OMG where's three?
 A mother's cry, the child no reply
 "Where have you gone? I said 'hold on!'"
 A child's cry, the mother no reply
 "Please don't leave me here to die!
 I tried to hold on, tried to hold on tight
 But the boat was sinking, I went over the side!"
 We have walked a thousand miles
 To leave the worst of lives behind
 Lost our home, lost all we own
 And now I've lost a child!

This is British

by Deanna El Khoury

British

*from Old English Brettisc 'relating to the ancient Britons', from Bret 'Briton',
from Latin Britto, or its Celtic equivalent*

City of Cantabrigians steeped in blue sky, off
a road lined with trimmed bushes
lives my grandfather.

He moves from Arabic to English as swiftly as he travels the globe on business trips
Portugal, Monaco, Lebanon
Morocco. It takes him a full day to adjust to the dialect.

Under the sunset, the Lebanese mix Arabic French English together like mixing the
ingredients of *tabbouleh*¹.
Pass the *khòbuz*², *s'il te plaît*³.

My grandmother. In drizzle-grey Oldham, she used to translate Urdu for her neighbours.

My grandmother tells me she speaks not Urdu not Punjabi but Punjabi-Urdu Mix —
both languages both Pakistan & the Punjab are central to her identity. Why separate them?

Dear boris johnson,

Immigrants should not be forced to learn English.

Immigrants define what it means to learn English, not you.

Immigrants do not need to give up their languages to belong to the UK. Remember
we use Arabic numerals. Remember
our Celtic language family
branches of Gaelic, Welsh, Cornish, Breton

I am only British if I am Lebanese and Pakistani.

I will eat *zaatar*⁴ with *labneh*⁵. I will listen to *dubkeh*⁶ music while wearing a *shalwar kamiz*⁷. I
will read *Surah Yasīn*⁸ in memory of my dear great grandmother. I will dream *dil se*⁹. I will
*raqsi*¹⁰ among languages as wind dances among trees

*Āhlen!*¹¹

This is British

1. Arabic: Levantine vegetarian salad
2. Arabic: bread, usually refers to the large round flat loaves
3. French: please (informal)
4. Arabic: mixture of the powdered leaves of thyme, which grows on the mountain slopes of the
Levant, and other ingredients such as *summaq* (spice) and roasted sesame seeds. It is used for
snacks with bread, olive oil and *labneh*
5. Arabic: yoghurt
6. Arabic: traditional folk dance used especially for weddings
7. Urdu: traditional outfit of loose tunic (*kamiz*) and trousers (*shalwar*) worn by both men and
women
8. Arabic: *surah* (or chapter) of the Quran that Muslims may read when they lose a loved one
9. Hindi: from the heart
10. Arabic: dance
11. Arabic: welcome

Warped Perceptions

by Samuel Gosrani

In today's day an age, the beard is seen as an attractive thing.
 That hipster vibe, for a guy that strives, to own in time, and flirt with the fling.
 A fashion that won't necessarily last, but will create manhood and lust under the mask, and
 hey that's cool.
 You see beards are great, they're cool and rough,
 an attractive asset making every man chuffed by conforming.
 But here's the issue.
 It's the misconception and the expectation that every brown Asian man needs to be clean
 shaven, because otherwise they become a terrorist. A threat to society, a criminal in the
 world we live, a red alert to humanity is all they give.
 But wait.
 These men have families. Children who adore them, wives who cherish them, friends who
 love them. So what goes through their head when they know daddy walks out the door every
 single morning, ready for a fresh batch of abuse.
 But they conform to this stupid stereotype that we as a society have created, impossible to
 escape. Loved and loving men bound up in this facist, racist world we have created, which we
 know as 'home'.

Here's another thing -

Why does it take a shooting to create the hashtag 'Black Lives Matter'?
 It's almost as if they didn't before.
 What kind of a world do we live in to only realise the issue when an innocent man falls.
 You see that may have sparked up a tonne of racist issues,
 but at the end of the day it's our terms misused.
 To us what is a joke, to that kind, innocent black man,
 is the third racist comment he's heard since he sat down.
 What people don't get is that it's not always obvious,
 It's just the little things, normally coming from cockiness.
 A joke about a gun, or him smelling of weed.
 Hang on. This mans t-total - his family and his job his greatest need.

I took a quote from my friend,
 a black man from the Sound End.
 When spoken to he couldn't even pretend to hide the tension that people hold towards him.
 He says racism is just becoming subtle, but it is still there.
 People get worked up about political propaganda but they don't actually care. They will still
 live their lives instinctually secluding black people,
 yet the first on Twitter and Facebook to say fuck the American police force.

You see what we have here is something from the generations passed down.
 Unfortunate but true, all for the sake of that crown,
 in society, to feel like the most popular group,
 with an abusive attitude, a racist troupe.
 So for an ethnic minority, be proud of who you are,
 because the prejudice you get, doesn't have to scar.
 Because we are all are human, with a beautiful story,
 and stunning ethnicity, never at all boring
 Now I'm not saying we are all racist, but what I am saying is that we are all human.

Love.

What even is British-ness

by Jay Sandhu

Apparently not me
 I wasn't born with an opinion of the world
 But it already had one of me
 By 7 racism was normal
 By 9 I understood I'd never be treated equal
 I've been called all sorts
 Al-Qaeda
 Terrorist
 Black illegitimate
 Not British though
 A paki
 A monkey
 A nnnNah you know what, I ain't giving that falice the satisfaction
 Not letting him rent free in my head
 I'm gonna flip the script instead
 Gonna use that pain to educate and explain
 I've been called all sorts
 But never British though
 Even got asked why I (yes me) blew up the twin towers
 Trying to explain the logistics of that at age 11
 But I'm so confused how can I not be British
 Discounting the fact I was born here, as were my parents



And you bought my grandparents
 I mean you have;
 A German royal family
 A Norman ruling elite
 A Roman/ middle eastern religion
 With Indian national dish
 An Arabic/ Indian numerical system
 And a Latin alphabet
 And you forget
 Alot of you were Eastern Europeans or speaking Hebrew
 The racists don't realise the swastika was Indian too
 And remember you'd have no empire if your army was all Mr Whippy and no flake
 What about the "British immigrants", sorry I mean expats
 And I'm the one that needs to 'fuck off back home'

Where you really from

by Jay Sandhu

They ever ask you, "Where you from?"

Like, "Where you really from?"

The question seems simple, but the answer's kinda long

I could tell 'em notts or derby, but I don't think that's what they want

But I don't wanna tell 'em more, 'cause anything I say is wrong

It's not what they want, anything I say is wrong

Britain's where I'm born, and I love a cup of tea and that

But tea ain't from Britain it's from where my DNA is at

And where my genes are from, that's where they make my jeans and that

Then send them over to LDN, that's where they stack the P's and that

Skinheads meant I never really liked the British flag

Tattoos of Indian swastikas, but they didn't know that,

And I walk a bit quicker if it's not the world cup and I see St George's flag.

I'm still getting angry when I get racism, but in reality it's not even a tenth of what my Baba went through daily,

But in reality it's not even a tenth of what my Grandad went through daily,

And through all of that and he was always calm,

We're still wanting to fight back, some heads I wanna crack, some of these ignorant idiots need a smack,

Can you blame us?

Generation after generation,

Subject to diaspora, then gentrification,

Now having to protest a nation,

I said - Can you blame us?!

Generation after generation,

Subject to diaspora, then gentrification,

Now having to protest a nation,

If we all came together we'd build a new nation,

Forgetting you came and literally split our nation,

Not only split but, pillaged our nation,

Then bought us...here to build their nation,

I was raised by bhangra, grime, garage and halal Southern fried chicken shops

I was raised by bhangra, grime, garage and halal Southern fried chicken shops

A junglist, a jungli, I'm Mowgli from The Jungle Book

Seeing me in Aladdin, realising it's a whole new world for us,

We making it, finally we're on TV, relating to that comedy, Big up

Goodness gracious me

The racists can kiss my chudees, while I collect that cheque please

Trying hard to assimilate, but at what cost?

Never once...did I want to be light, if I don't fit, forget you I don't give a toss

I see you making a quick judgement, my heritage you chose to toss,

Never once...did I want to be light, it's my heritage you chose to toss,

Physically, mentally, verbally attacked,

by thick ignorant cats,

Used to call me nerdy pak,

Drop an N bomb then say I was dirty black,

Never once got called a Jatt,

If you didn't know that's my cast,

I know it's outdated but that's my past,

Uneducated morons living in the past,

Sometimes I think would my life be easier,

Living in India before the empire, you know in the past,

Now air your opinion you finish first I'll finish last,

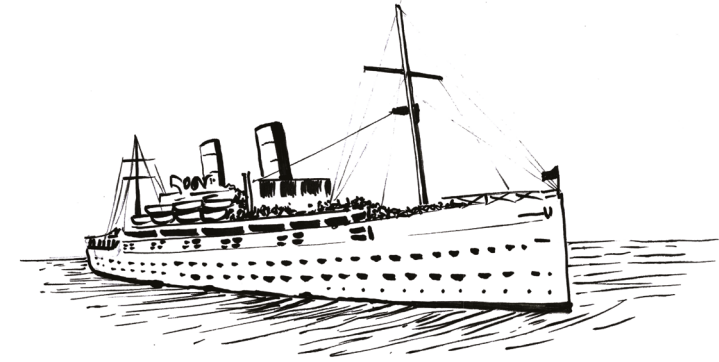
My tribe is a quest to a land that was lost to us

And it's name is dignity, so where I'm from is not your problem, bruv

Wired For Bollywood

by Deanna El Khoury

8 years old and I'm sitting at the back of the car with my then-best friend.
 My curly dark brown hair against the seat, her straight red hair not even brushing the leather.
 I wanted to share the music I love, I wanted us to listen to it together.
 Disco dance beats alongside the *dhhol*. Percussion and violin strings. Ghostly piano keys and opera
 in *Om Shanti Om*. Mellow voices of Shreya Goshal and Javed Ali. *Qawwali*-inspired love ballads.
 I was sure she'd love it!
 "No,"
 said my mum. I begged. But still, "no."
 "Millie won't like Bollywood music."
 Why was my mum being so hesitant? Doesn't she also have pride in the music we blast
 out loud at home?
 Bhangra beats. Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan. Metaphors about the *chand* in love songs...
 So I insisted.
 I will never forget how Millie laughed,
 how *long* she laughed.
 I didn't share my music for a long time after that.
 16 years old and I was in school early.
 Now I had the confidence to play my music with my earphones in. *Dard-E-Disco*. *Jashn-E-*
Bahaara. *Marjaani*. And *Twist* from *Love Aaj Kal*.
 I let myself fade into the background of the classroom.
 I let myself become invisible while classmates played their music out loud before lessons.
 I look to a future awash with sunlight
 in which I can share my music with friends and we can enjoy it together



When the Wind Rushes By

by Plentiful Poet

You are the original stems that flew across the oceans of life,
 followed by beautiful black patterns that birthed seeds onto this British ground,
 But for some reason, my stem was pulled out.

My seed blew into the hands of a white queen's life
 and it was never her job to teach me about my black roots on the ground...
 I guess that's why
I'm oblivious when the wind rushes by

I was a lonely black rose suffering racism from the people that are the same race as my mum,
 Why do you love me, and they don't?
 my black roots were gone
 and the other side of family...
 Well they didn't really like my complexion much...
but shh don't tell anyone.

Where did my light brown skin fit in all this?
 Trying to find my way home, but I think my root chakra is broke
 Generations of faces that look just like mine,
 I see them in my mind but....

I'll never felt there presence in my life..

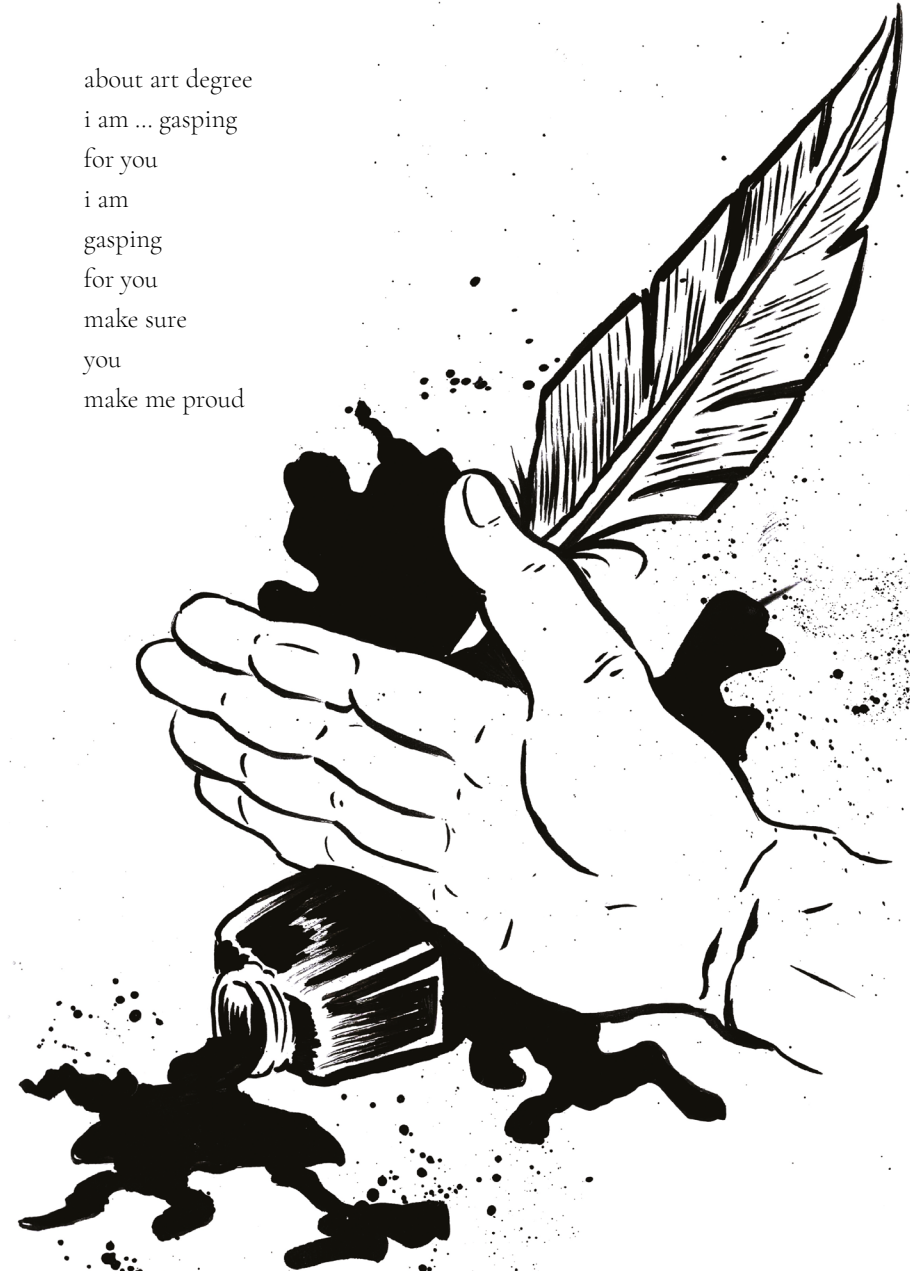
Writing Is Not Job

by Deanna El Khoury

A Letter From My Pakistani Grandfather

i worked ... long nights for you
 damaged ... my lungs for you
 now ... i struggle
 to breathe
 from all the years ... of working
 in that cotton factory
 i was so
 tired ... during the days
 trying
 to rest from ... nights at work
 that i barely see your mother ... grow up
 but it was ... money i earned
 sacrifice i made ... that gave your mother
 opportunity
 to get ... good job
 and she did
 your mother ... my daughter
 doctor now
 you better ... get good job
writing?
 writing is not job
 i got art degree ... in Pakistan
 but when i come to this country
 they ... didn't care

about art degree
 i am ... gasping
 for you
 i am
 gasping
 for you
 make sure
 you
 make me proud



My Beautiful Brown Skin

by Plentiful Poet

I felt the tension as soon as I walked in the classroom,
 The teachers introduced me, but my name got lost in the energy.
"Shes different, be kind"
 As they stared at my frizzy hair and whispered so loud it burned my mind.
 Nottingham had become a war zone for me,
 My dad committed a crime and was sent to the bin
 My friends bullied me for his sin.
 As I was sat back in history learning about *black history*,
 A note that was rolled up and sent me...
 Abusing me because of my race.
 Hypocrites, discriminate.
 Made me think that I had to impersonate a white girl that I
Dismissed my long black curly hair and ironed it straight.
 I felt I had to hate the colour of my skin that I got on my knees and prayed to him
Please God just give my white skin.
 I cried and cried that I wanted to be *white*.
 And when I woke up in the morning and looked in the mirror,
 and noticed that God didn't change my colour...
 I hated him so much I stopped believing.
God doesn't exist, God didn't grant me with my wish and change the colour of my skin.
 I remember my brother running downhill,
 Being chased, being hated for this race
 And stood in front of him like I was the strongest person in the world.
 And that's when the *stone slapped against my face*
 Blood shot felt like a gun shot in my chest
 And then when they said it
~~"N*GGA N*GGA N*GGA! GO BACK TO WHERE YOU CAME FROM, DIRTY SKIN, COTTON~~
*FIELDS BLACK B*TCH"*

In their strong Scottish accents
 My grandpa was Scottish
 And even made look at him different because we was different
 My grandpa can't be the same as me
 Apparently...
 Because that's the way my mind was destroyed to be!
 My mum was white with two black kids in a village
 We had to move to two schools because we didn't fit in
"Why did you bring us here mum?"
 I would have rather been at my old school and being bullied cause my dads a murder than
 being here and being called the word you ~~dirty n*ggas~~.
 The days got darker.... Like my eyes
 I met a few friends but to fit in I had to do what they said.
 I moved to Scotland a innocent girl and I left with an advancement on how cruel the world
 really was.
 But now *black Is the trend!*
 The people that used to cuss the colour of my skin have got kids that look more like me than
 dem.
 mmmmm....
 Curly hair sun beds, darker foundation bigger bums like *DAT* curvy black women's
 Even though that time destroyed my innocent heart I will breathe in this *peace* because this
 black girl isn't just black.
I have Irish, English, Jamaican and Nigerian
 I just wish I knew that back then
 So, embrace the time my ears heard nothing but hate,
 Because that set me up to fight harder be harder be the best
 You think they could bully me now?
 They would get lost in the crowd of BLACK LIVES MATTER because now my skin
 Rephrase that,
Our skin
 Matters more than ever
My beautiful brown skin.

My Country

by Jaya Sharma

I have never fit neatly anywhere I have gone,
like the perfect final jigsaw piece.
Because no-one I have met understands the conflict in my heart,
constantly pulling me between the east and the west.

I am not allowed to forget the country that defines me,
The one I have never known.
Because my coffee-coloured skin has me branded for life,
And people won't like it if I claim this country is my home.
The strangers in the street read my skin for my rich history,
My differences they cannot always accept.
So, I must remember my roots,
because some people will never let me forget.

One foot in the present, one foot in the past.
I am tethered to what I am not, because no-one wants to see the real me.
I come from a country where it rips apart my identity.



Scan Me



To continue the legacy of the project and to provide a toolkit for community groups to explore the topics covered in this anthology, we have compiled a playlist of a selection of the poems to act as a stimulus to aid group conversations and learning.





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