



dignity

Students read poems about equality and discrimination – and can watch performances by the poets bringing their words to life. This will inspire them to write a poem from the perspective of someone who has experienced hate crime.

dignity

AIMS

- To understand social justice issues and human rights in the UK
- To read poems which speak powerfully on equality and discrimination
- To create a poem from the perspective of someone who has experienced hate crime

HUMAN RIGHTS FOCUS

Right to equality, dignity and safety

YOU'LL NEED

PowerPoint, speakers and internet access

Scrap paper (one per student, to scrunch up and throw)

Computer or mobile device with speakers (one per group)

Notebooks or folders (for students to keep their poetry in)

Resource Sheet 1 Universal Declaration of Human Rights summary version
(one per group)

Resource Sheet 2 Hate crime in the UK case studies (one case study per student)

Film clip

Jan's story (on PowerPoint)

Poems

Take Up Space by Vanessa Kisuule (Women's rights)

A Gay Poem by Keith Jarrett (LGBTI rights)

Foreign by Hollie McNish (Xenophobia)

Being British by Deanna Rodger (Racism)

Bedecked by Victoria Redel (Gender)

Back in the Playground Blues by Adrian Mitchell (Children's rights)

This is not a humanizing poem by Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan (Islamophobia)

Poems with Disabilities by Jim Ferris (Disability)

Glasgow Snow by Jackie Kay (Refugee rights)

Dwellings by Sarah Crossan (Social and economic rights)

I Am A Man by Jay Hulme (Trans rights)

STARTER

Explain to the class that they are about to undertake a short experiment in social justice.

- The classroom represents a country.
- Each of them represent a citizen in the country.
- Each of them wants to thrive in life.

Ask what we need to thrive in life (eg education, healthcare, housing, employment). Give each student a scrap piece of paper and instruct them to scrunch it into a ball. Explain that the ball represents opportunity. Place a recycling bin at the front of the room. Students must each remain seated and try to throw their ball in the bin. Explain that to access the opportunities discussed their ball must land in the bin.

- Did everyone manage to get their ball in the bin?
- Did anyone feel disadvantaged because of where they were sitting?
- Did anyone complain about the disadvantages faced by some? Where were they sitting?
- How does this reflect the reality outside of the classroom? In the UK? In the world?
- Do you think everyone should have equal access to opportunities?
- What opportunities should be protected by law?

ACTIVITY 1

Watch the film Jan's story (slide 2). **Teacher note** Jan suffered from multiple sclerosis and used the Human Rights Act in the UK to secure a better quality of life for herself.

Show slide 3. Explain human rights are universal and that many people in the UK enjoy most of their rights – yet violations do still take place here.

Arrange students into groups. Give each group one of the following poems and explain that each one addresses a human rights theme.

Students can watch powerful performances by most of the poets bringing their words to life.

[Take Up Space by Vanessa Kisuule \(Women's Rights\)](#) (YouTube, search 'Take up Space exclusive')

[A Gay Poem by Keith Jarrett \(LGBTI Rights\)](#) (YouTube, search 'A Gay Poem TSC')

[Foreign by Hollie McNish \(Xenophobia\)](#) (YouTube, search 'Foreign Hollie')

[Being British by Deanna Rodger \(Racism\)](#) (YouTube, search 'Deanna Tilt Spokenwd')

[Back in the Playground Blues by Adrian Mitchell \(Children's rights\)](#) (YouTube, search 'Back in the Playground Blues')

[This is not a humanizing poem by Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan \(Islamaphobia\)](#) (YouTube, search 'This is not a humanising poem Roundhouse')

[Glasgow Snow by Jackie Kay \(Refugee rights\)](#) (YouTube, search 'Jackie Kay stop destitution')

[Dwellings by Sarah Crossan \(Social and economic rights\)](#) (www.clpe.org.uk/files/sarah-crossan-dwellings)

[I Am A Man by Jay Hulme \(Trans Rights\)](#) (YouTube, search 'Jay Hulme SLAMBassadors the poetry society')

Now ask the group to discuss:

- What did you notice?
- What did you like/dislike?
- Is there anything that puzzles you?
- Did you notice any patterns? Pace? Rhythm?
- Who might be speaking?
- What experiences are they trying to convey?
- Does it trigger any feelings in you?
- Do you relate to anything in the poem?
- Did it make a difference seeing the poet perform their own words? How? Why?

Hand out Research Sheet 1 Universal Declaration of Human Rights summary version to each group, and ask them to identify human rights articles violated in their poem.

Explain that in 1948, in the wake of World War II, world leaders created the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which declares we are all equal. It contains 30 articles that set out the rights every human should have. They include our freedom of religion and belief, our right to be treated fairly and without discrimination, and our right to have a family and spend time with whoever we choose.

ACTIVITY 2

Ask the class:

- Who should be responsible for protecting our human rights?
- What can we do if our rights are not being upheld?
- What protects our rights in the UK?

Hand out Resource Sheet 2 Hate crime in the UK case studies. Please check suitability for your class. Explain that each student will write a poem in the first person from the perspective of the person in the case.

Encourage students to pick out words and phrases from the case sheet to use or adapt. Show slide 4. Use mind-maps or post-it notes to imagine:

- 1 What that person is feeling
- 2 What they are thinking
- 3 What the person wants to happen next

Poems should be three stanzas addressing the above.

While students are writing, create your own poem on the board or the visualiser to model making choices and editing as you change your mind. Keep revising until it feels done.

Ask students to add poems to their notebook/folder.

EXTENSION

Explain the art and rise of performance poetry. In groups, ask students to make a short film of themselves reading or performing their poem.

TAKE UP SPACE

By Vanessa Kisuule

Take up space
Don't wait for permission or approval
Don't let ghostly question marks
Haunt the ends of your sentences
You don't always have to be the one
Laughing at the jokes
You can make them, too
And not just about sex or diets or tampons
You are not the wing tip tick on a quota list
A fleeting footnote on the final page
A decorative nod to 'equality' on the stage
Push at the brackets choking your voice
Your potential cannot be pressed
Between thumb and forefinger anymore
Take up space
Wear pink skirts or black Doc Martens
Know that souls can dance unchecked
Beneath the fortress of a burka
As well as baggy t-shirts and ripped jeans
Shave your legs or don't
Smile from ear to ear or don't
Liberation has no dress code
Ettiquette or secret dialect
Give yourself the space to be fickle
To fumble with your faith, to fail
To fluff up your lines and make things up
Your shabby, slipped stitch mistakes
Make you miraculous
A goddess of spit and sweat
Stumbling in a pit of phoenix ashes
Take up space
Believe the compliments you are given
Give yourself the benefit of the doubt
Don't doubt the benefits
Of being the brightest shade of you
On the spectrum
You
You with the slouching shoulders prone to shrugs
And the throat full of half formed whispers
You are indispensable
Celebrate the women you share life, love, liquor
Or the occasional tube journey with



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POEMS

Exchange small smiles like a secret handshake
 We are walking pillars of defiance
 In every exhale of breath
 And assured step of foot towards threshold
 Run your tongue along the swords
 Of the women who fought before us
 Wear the legacy like a pair of box fresh trainers
 Lean in close
 Rest your head on each other's shoulders
 The journey has been long
 But now you can
 Take up space
 In any way you choose
 Maybe you will knock patiently at the door
 Or flex your knuckles
 Before karate kicking it down
 It does not matter
 As long as you know that you
 Don't belong outside
 In the chill of indifference and fear
 Don't wear your body
 As if this sacred package of skin
 And nerves and blood rush restlessness
 Were an accident, a graceless misstep of fate or fortune
 When you hold yourself with joy and purpose
 No misguided man can ever
 Make a wounded elegy of your flesh
 Step into the room
 When asked for your name
 Pronounce it with all the music
 You can squeeze from its syllables
 Don't shrink yourself
 Like a slither of self loathing soap
 When you walk down the street
 Don't cower in anticipation of cat calls and stares
 It is they who should skulk
 And slouch and shrivel in shame
 Not you
 You go ahead
 And take up some more space
 Laugh for longer and louder
 Than what's deemed appropriate
 Let your cackles rise up into the sky
 Like a chorus of homesick angels
 When your favourite song comes on
 Don't be fearful of an empty dance floor

Unzip the stillness with your teeth
Let rip the punk rock in your gut
The hunger of your castanet hips
Eat with relish
Chase at every stray crumb with your fork
Lick the icing off each prong
With ironic porn star gusto
The revolution starts small
At your dining table
The newsagents
The Friday night club queue
Your mirror reflection
Take up space
Love beyond the confines of your arm span
Learn wider than the textbooks on your shelves
So as the world oils the hinges of its doors for us
We can take our rightful place
Behind the steering wheel of the future
And finally, rightfully, gloriously
Take up space



POEMS

A GAY POEM

By Keith Jarrett

They asked me if I had a gay poem
So I said “Straight up, no!
“My words don’t deviate between straight lines
My poems don’t mince their words
Or bend
Or make queer little observations”

They asked me if I had a gay poem
So I answered honestly
That, no, I didn’t have any gay poetry
And even if, unthinkably, I did
What would it say about me?

I mean, even presenting the question
Puts me in a precarious position
And how would I even begin to broach the subject
With my own creation?

Like... “Excuse me, poem, are you gay?
Have you grown up contrarily to what I wanted you to say?
I most certainly didn’t write you that way
Was it something I said, something I did that turned you?
Maybe I should have peppered your verses
With sport, girls and beer
Maybe as your author I deserted you...
Or did another writer turn you queer?”

Ok, let’s say, hypothetically, that this poem is gay
Maybe it’s just a confused poem that needs straightening out
Maybe I could insert verses from Leviticus
Speak over it in tongues
Douse it in holy water
Recite it the Qu’ran
Give it a beat, beat, beat
Boom box blasting out in the street
“Batty poem fi dead, batty poem fi dead
Rip up chi chi poem inna shred”

They asked me if I had a gay poem
And I answered “No”
But the truth is I didn’t know
Until one of my very own poems stepped up



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POEMS

And tapped me on the shoulder
 It said, "Look here Dad/Author
 I'm now that much bolder
 And I'm not confused
 And not alternative
 And even though the words I choose to marry with
 Make me different
 It don't make me any less eloquent

"I don't need to be overly elegant
 So maybe that's why I stepped under your gaydar
 But why are you so afraid to embrace it?
 Face it! It's just another part of me
 You can't erase it

"The more you try to label me with your twisted synonyms
 The more you say you hate the sinner
 And despise the sin
 The more you try to clip my words
 And stifle my expression
 The more I know it's you, not me,
 Whose morality should be called into question"

They asked me to read out a poem
 They said, "Choose one of your strongest
 One of your best
 Choose a poem that don't stand for any foolishness"
 And they asked me if I had a gay poem...
 So I said
 Yes.



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FOREIGN

By **Hollie McNish**

I find it strange when people complain about foreign people in the UK so much
and ignore all the foreign stuff that we use.
I find it strange the way we treat foreign people and families so differently than the
way we
treat foreign money or products or food,
Let foreign ships sail to our shores filled with things we can take
But turn them away if the foreign people who make them want to come too.
I find it strange we're ok with chewing on foreign food
Chinese carry out bags and Indian too,
kebabs and pizzerias and foreign tropical fruit juice.
We're ok with eating foreign sugar cane sugary treats,
Munching on foreign cocoa bean chocolaty sweets,
Complaining between every bite about the foreign folk down our street.
We're ok with wearing foreign clothes,
Stuff we love to buy cheap because foreign wages are so low,
Our whole household comes from Shanghai and Tokyo and I know,
that we're ok with driving foreign cars, so fast,
filling up our buses with foreign petrol piped from their parts,
foreign heating gas extracted by digging up their plants,
watching foreign TVs as we sit on our starts complaining to each other about the
foreigners in
our kid's class.
We're ok with going on holiday to a foreign beach,
lying in foreign sunshine,
swimming in foreign seas,
sipping sangrias and Cuban cocktails much as we please.
We're ok with using foreign places to get away from UK rainy days,
watching programmes on TV showing British families as brave,
buying cheaper foreign properties and showing what they save,
we're buying up entire Polish villages for English resorts and greasy spoon beach
breaks,
complaining in Spain there's no ketchup with the chips and covering Ibiza's shores
with booze
and teenage sick as we complain about the foreigners that come to us to work and
live.
We're ok with buying foreign goods we love to from abroad, then dumping all our
rubbish on
foreign people's shores,

filling foreign landfills over-spilling with our household cans complaining about the
foreign
people with accents we can't understand
and how our British culture is being killed by the foreign man
and all the foreign families
While we keep eating our Ugandan chocolate treats,
Keep watching our Chinese TV, our Korean MP3, our Taiwanese DVD,
posing in our Indonesian jeans,
going on holiday in our Spanish seas,
biting down on our scones and jam and cream,
sipping at what we proudly call our English Breakfast tea, forgetting as we sip that
those are
Indian leaves, made from Indian seeds, shipped across in ships that sail from
Indian seas.
So please, do not tell me foreign people are a burden to our economy, I feel it's
time we sipped
a little bit of our hypocrisy and thought about how differently we treat the
nationality of
Foreign money, products, goods and food to
Foreign people and their families.

BEING BRITISH

By Deanna Rodger

I always get asked,
'Where do you come from?'
My repeated reply is
'London.'

The town that sheltered a mother fleeing from war-torn land,
baby in belly given chance to be a man,
a city of prosperity.
She sought jobs allowing her to keep her dignity, independently
living in a state,
not off it.
Her benefit,
one son,
a bright boy of renewable energy.
He knew all he'd ever be
was a product of the city that changed his destiny.'

'OK,'
they say,
'but what country?'
I breathe deeply,

swallowing sarcastic syllables, and exhale,
'Great Britain.
The island
throned in seas that channelled safety.
She carried men to defend
countrysides scattered with towns full of factories.
The curator of colonies
voiced view to keep view,
exploit used to heavily recruit
natural warlikes
to fight aggressively,
with strength and bravery.
Fifty-two thousand casualties,
Ghurkhas' support
over two world wars.
Nearly half a million fought for
Great Britain.'
I'm teasing them,

because although it's not a lie
I know it's not the desired response



POEMS

and so am not surprised when they reply,
'Where are your parents from?'

See, I can't hide pigment skin within words,
whether fact or fiction.

So I tell them

I'm a product of miscegenation.

That my parents' parents are from Jamaica and Scotland.

Raised in England,

they found love and made life in London

to birth and breed a British girl.

So while I'm an addict for hard food,

I fiend for the smell of 'eggs an' ba'on' in the morning,

I'm a sucker for a cuppa

and I'll batter a fish and chips in less than fifteen minutes.

I was raised by the church and educated by EastEnders.

Friday nights of teenage life were spent going on drink benders.

I can't pretend, 'cause

all I know is GB

and I suppose on paper I could quite possibly read as

an ideal recruit in the BNP,

wear my balaclava too high so my eyes can't see

the route of my journey to the RWB,

ticket's the qualifications on my CRB,

five for hate crimes would get me VIP.

But a face-to-face interview

would refuse my application

on the grounds that those I walk on are not my birthright nation,

profile is proof of racial integration,

defies the silent slogan of skin-based segregation

and as the tick box of White/Caribbean is crossed

my rights are wrong and I should politely get lost.

Pack bags,

try to find where I belong.

But before I'm forced to leave

I'll leave thoughts to ponder on.

Where do you, your parents

And your ancestors come from.



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BEDECKEDBy **Victoria Redel**

Tell me it's wrong the scarlet nails my son sports or the toy store rings he clusters
four jewels to each finger.

He's bedecked. I see the other mothers looking at the star choker, the rhinestone
strand he fastens over a sock.

Sometimes I help him find sparkle clip-ons when he says sticker earrings
look too fake.

Tell me I should teach him it's wrong to love the glitter that a boy's only a boy
who'd love a truck with a remote that revs,
battery slamming into corners or Hot Wheels loop-de-looping off tracks
into the tub.

Then tell me it's fine—really—maybe even a good thing—a boy who's got some girl
to him,
and I'm right for the days he wears a pink shirt on the seesaw in the park.

Tell me what you need to tell me but keep far away from my son who still loves
a beautiful thing not for what it means—
this way or that—but for the way facets set off prisms and prisms spin up
everywhere
and from his own jeweled body he's cast rainbows—made every shining true color.

Now try to tell me—man or woman—your heart was ever once that brave.



BACK IN THE PLAYGROUND BLUES

By **Adrian Mitchell**

I dreamed I was back in the playground, I was about four feet high
Yes I dreamed I was back in the playground, standing about four feet high
Well the playground was three miles long and the playground was five miles wide

It was broken black tarmac with a high wire fence all around
Broken black dusty tarmac with a high fence running all around
And it had a special name to it, they called it The Killing Ground

Got a mother and a father they're one thousand years away
The rulers of the Killing Ground are coming out to play
Everybody thinking: 'Who they going to play with today?'

Well you get it for being Jewish
And you get it for being black
You get it for being chicken
And you get it for fighting back
You get it for being big and fat
Get it for being small
Oh those who get it get it and get it
For any damn thing at all

Sometimes they take a beetle, tear off its six legs one by one
Beetle on its black back, rocking in the lunchtime sun
But a beetle can't beg for mercy, a beetle's not half the fun

I heard a deep voice talking, it had that iceberg sound
'It prepares them for Life' - but I have never found
Any place in my life worse than The Killing Ground.

THIS IS NOT A HUMANIZING POEM

By Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan

Some poems force you to write them
the way sirens force their way through window panes in the night
and you can't shut out the news even when you try

“write a humanising poem”
my pen and paper goad me
show them how *wrong* their preconceptions are

Be relatable,
write something upbeat for a change, crack a smile
tell them how you also cry at the end of Toy Story 3
and you're just as capable of bantering about the weather in the post office queue
like everyone, you have no idea how to make the perfect amount of pasta, still.

Feed them stories of stoic humour,
make a reference to childhood,
tell an anecdote about being frugal
mention the X factor

Be domestic,
successful
add layers

Tell them you know brown boys who cry
about the sides of Asad's, Amir's and Hassan's they don't know
the complex inner worlds of Summayyah's and Ayesha's
tell them comedies, as well as tragedies
how full of *life* we are
how full of *love*

But no

I put my pen down
I will not let this poem force me to write it
because it is not the poem I want to write
It is the poem I have been reduced to

Reduced to proving my life is human because it is relatable
valuable because it is recognisable
but good GCSEs, family and childhood memories are not the only things that count
as a life,
living is.



© Suhaiymah
Manzoor-Khan

POEMS

So this will not be a 'Muslims *are* like us' poem
I refuse to be respectable

Instead

Love us when we're lazy

Love us when we're poor

Love us in our back-to-backs, council estates, depressed, unwashed and weeping,

Love us high as kites, unemployed, joy-riding, time-wasting, failing at school,

Love us filthy, without the right colour passports, without the right sounding English,

Love us silent, unapologizing, shopping in Poundland,
skiving off school, homeless, unsure, sometimes violent

Love us when we aren't athletes, when we don't bake cakes

when we don't offer our homes, or free taxi rides after the event,

When we're wretched, suicidal, naked and contributing *nothing*

Love us then

Because if you need me to prove my humanity

I'm not the one that's not human.

When my mother texts me *too* after BBC news alerts

'Are you safe? Let me know you're home okay?'

She means safe from the incident, yes,

but also safe from the after-affects

So sometimes I wonder

which days of the week might I count as liberal

and which moments of forehead to the ground am I conservative?

I wonder if when you buy bombs

there's a clear difference between the deadly ones that kill

and the heroic ones that scatter democracy?

I wonder if it should rather be 'guilty, until proven innocent'?

how come we *kill* in the name of saving lives?

how come we illegally detain in the name of maintaining the law

I put my pen away

I can't write it

I can't write

I won't write it

Is this radical?

Am I radical?

Cos there is nowhere else left to exist now.

POEMS WITH DISABILITIES

By Jim Ferris

I'm sorry -- this space is reserved for poems with disabilities. I know it's one of the best spaces in the book, but the Poems with Disabilities Act requires us to make all reasonable accommodations for poems that aren't normal. There is a nice space just a few pages over -- in fact (don't tell anyone) I think it's better than this one, I myself prefer it. Actually I don't see any of those poems right now myself, but you never know when one might show up, so we have to keep this space open. You can't always tell just from looking at them, either. Sometimes they'll look just like a regular poem when they roll in -- you're reading along and suddenly everything changes, the world tilts a little, angle of vision jumps, focus shifts. You remember your aunt died of cancer at just your age and maybe yesterday's twinge means something after all. Your sloppy, fragile heart beats a little faster and then you know. You just know. And the poem is right where it belongs.



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POEMS

GLASGOW SNOW

By Jackie Kay

You were found in the snow in Glasgow
Outside the entrance to Central Station.
Your journey took you from an Ethiopian prison
To the forests in France where luck and chance
Showed you not all white men are like the men
In *Roots* - a film you watched once.
The people smugglers didn't treat you like Kizzy
Or Kunta Kinte, brought you food and water by day,
Offered you shelter in a tent, and it was sanctuary.
And you breathed deep the forest air, freely.

But when you were sent here, Glasgow,
In the dead winter: below zero, no place to go,
You rode the buses to keep warm: *X4M, Toryglen,*
Castlemilk, Croftfoot, Carbrain, Easterhouse,
Moodiesburn, Red Road Flats, Springburn,
No public fund, no benefit, no home, no sanctum,
No haven, no safe port, no support,
No safety net, no sanctuary, no nothing.
Until a girl found you in the snow, frozen,
And took you under her wing, singing.

Oh... would that the Home Office show
The kindness of that stranger in the winter snow!
Would they grant you asylum, sanctum,
For your twenty-seventh birthday?
On March 8th, two thousand and thirteen,
You could become, not another figure, sum, unseen,
Another woman sent home to danger, dumb, afraid,
At the mercy of strangers, no crib, no bed,
All worry: next meal, getting fed, fetching up dead.
And at last, this winter, you might lay down your sweet head.



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POEMS

DWELLINGS

By Sarah Crossan

Mama rented a room
In Coventry.

This is where we'll live
Until we find Tata:
One room on the fourth floor
Of a crumbling building
That reminds me of history class,
Reminds me of black and white photographs
Of bombed
out
villages.

There is a white kitchen in the room,
In the corner,
And one big bed,
Lumpy in the middle
Like a cold pierogi
For Mama and me to share.
'It's just one room,' I say,
When what I mean is
We can't live her.
'It's called a studio,'
Mama tells me,
As though a word
Can change the truth.

Mama stands by the dirty window
With her back to me
Looking out at the droning traffic,
The Coventry Ring Road.

Then she marches to the kitchen and
Plugs in the small electric kettle.
She boils the water
Twice,
And makes two mugs of tea.
One for her,
One for me.
'Like home,' she says,
Supping the tea,
Staring into its blackness.



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POEMS

Mama found the perfect home for
A cast-off laundry bag.
Yes.
But not a home for us.



POEMS

I AM A MAN

By Jay Hulme

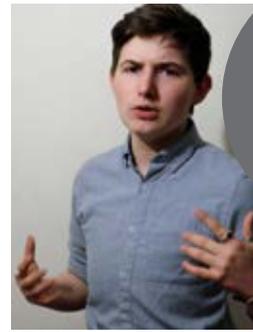
I am a man.
A touch too short
In children's clothes,
Rows of yellow teeth
Open like doors into nowhere
To correct a pronoun - or twenty,
Plenty of mistakes are accidents.
Plenty are not.

I hold my head bowed
In public places,
Feeling so strongly
The gaps and the spaces
Where parts of my body should be,
For though the man within
Belongs here,
He belongs in fear
Of the actions of others.

Brothers,
I stand in fear of you -
Of the fists you hold beside you.
Of the fists you hold inside you.
Of your pistol lips,
Issuing words like pistol whips,
Swear words crack
And the pretence slips,
And I am always falling.
One syllable at a time.

The line is always the same:
I'm not a man
They say.
I tell a lie
They say.
I'm a freak
They say.
I should die
They say.

Words.
They never quite leave you.
My life is traced in scar tissue,



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Along the paths these shrapnel syllables
 Have scorched into my history.
 The symmetry of my skin
 Is broken by the past within
 And I cannot begin to name

The cause of every wound.
 But here is birth,
 And here is worth,
 And here is fear,
 And fault, and earth,
 And here is girls' PE class,
 And gendered groups,
 And bras, and pants,
 And shirts with scoops
 For necklines.

And here are my fault lines,
 First times, rewinds,
 Here are long hairdos,
 And women's loos,
 And how to choose
 A knife or noose.

And here is self-hatred.
 I created a hedonistic horror show
 Out of my own torso.
 Tore my skin into cobwebs
 To capture my demons,
 Bloodied fists in fights
 About rules and regulations,
 And tried to hide
 The scars upon my skin.

I was born to never win,
 To never sin,
 To quietly sit
 And never sing.
 Never express myself,
 Never search for wealth,
 Never care for health.

I was born to be a blank canvas
 For my parent's failed dreams,
 And it seems to me that I

Failed in that duty,
 And the beauty of it all
 Is I don't care anymore.

My fists forget my own face.
 When, out of place,
 I erase my morals
 In a fight for morality.
 The shattered skin of me
 Is draped on every shaking tree,
 Like the breaths I take,
 Breaking when no-one can see me.

I left my family.
 In the shadow of that skin,
 In the shadow of the person
 That could never let them in,
 In the shadow of the person
 They could never see the truth within,
 I left them shouting.

Pitchforks raised to chase away
 The man I have become.
 I left them, on a hurricane Tuesday.
 When the weather broke against me
 Like the wrath of a God
 Others told me existed.

I left my family without hesitation,
 Without breaking my stride,
 Without breaking my pride,
 Without looking back,
 Because the lack of regret on their faces
 Would have written my gravestone.

I walked alone
 Into the alleyways of life,
 Knife tucked into my jacket
 To fight for my future,
 Palms pressed bloody
 Over scar and suture,
 Wishing my mind was as easy to fix
 As my skin.

Sometimes I think of a world of lies,
 Of family, and brevity,

Of lightness, and of levity;
A world where I can stand as me
Unburdened by this mask you see,
It sends me down to purgatory
And hides my shining soul.

But whenever it breaks,
Is less than whole,
I fix it.
For it hides more than me,
You see,
It hides a bullet shot
The moment I was born,
Worn smooth
From years of probing.
It says,
A word
That has never been
My name.



POEMS

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS SUMMARY VERSION

1 We are born free and equal, and should treat others in the same way.

2 We have all these rights in the Declaration, no matter who we are, where we're from or what we believe in.

3 We have the right to life, and to be free and feel safe.

4 Nobody has any right to make us a slave. We cannot make anyone else our slave.

5 Nobody has any right to hurt, torture or humiliate us.

6 Everyone has the right to be protected by the law.

7 The law is the same for everyone. It must treat us all fairly.

8 We can all ask for the law to help us when we are not treated fairly.

9 Nobody has the right to put us in prison, or to send us away from our country, without good reasons.

10 If we are accused of breaking the law, we have the right to a fair and public trial.

11 Nobody should be blamed for doing something until it has been proved that they did it.

12 Nobody has the right to enter our home, open our letters or bother us or our families without a good reason.

13 We all have the right to go where we want to in our own country and to travel abroad as we wish.

14 If someone hurts us, we have the right to go to another country and ask for protection.

15 We all have the right to belong to a country.

16 When we are legally old enough, we have the right to marry and have a family.

17 Everyone has the right to own things or share them.

18 We all have the right to our own thoughts and to believe in any religion.

19 We can all think what we like, say what we think and share ideas and information with other people.

20 We all have the right to meet our friends and work together in peace to defend our rights. It is wrong to force someone to belong to a group.

21 We all have the right to take part in the government of our country. Every grown up should be allowed to vote to choose their own leaders.

22 The place where we live should help us to develop and to make the most of all the advantages (culture, work, social welfare) on offer. Music, art, craft and sport are for everyone to enjoy.

23 Every grown up has the right to a job, to a fair wages and to join a trade union.

24 We all have the right to rest and free time.

25 We all have the right to a decent living standard, including enough food, clothing, housing and medical help if we are ill. Mothers and children and people who are old, out of work or disabled have the right to be cared for.

26 We all have the right to education.

27 We have the right to share in our community's arts and sciences, and any good they do.

28 There must be peace and order to protect these rights and freedoms, and we can enjoy them in our country and all over the world.

29 We have a duty to other people, and we should protect their rights and freedoms.

30 Nobody can take away these rights and freedoms from us.

This version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has been simplified by Amnesty International UK and is especially useful for younger people. Download a full version at www.amnesty.org.uk/universal

HATE CRIMES IN THE UK CASE STUDIES

Bijan

Bijan Ebrahimi was an Iranian refugee who had learning difficulties and a physical disability. Despite being a quiet man who loved his garden and his tabby cat, he was abused and harassed for years by neighbours. He decided to take photographs of the young people who harassed him outside his flat, hoping the evidence would convince the local council to move him to a safer location. One of his neighbours mistakenly thought that Bijan was taking pictures of his daughter, and forced his way into Bijan's flat and threatened Bijan. Terrified, Bijan dialled 999 and reported physically and racial abuse. The call was flagged as a hate crime and an incident requiring an immediate response.

By the time the police arrived, an angry mob of around 15 people had gathered. The police wrongfully detained Bijan for breach of the peace whilst the crowd cheered and chanted 'paedophile'. Upon release, Bijan contacted the police on numerous occasions by telephone and email, stating that his life was in danger. In the hour after his final call to the police, his neighbour and another accomplice, attacked and killed Bijan.

Despite constant interactions with the police in the six years leading up to his death, Bijan was regarded as a 'pest', 'idiot' and a 'pain in the ass' and this clearly led to the police force failing to protect someone who was extremely vulnerable. Similarly, although the neighbour pleaded guilty to murder, the prosecution found no evidence of hostility towards Bijan's disability when the offence was committed.

Cathleen

Ever since Cathleen Lauder transitioned from a man to a woman, verbal abuse, intimidation and unwanted physical contact became a part of everyday life. Due to concern about how the police would respond and lack of proof, she never reported abuse.

However, a friend bought her a mobile phone so she could record hate crimes when they happened. In April 2015, Cathleen was on a bus in Edinburgh when two men and a woman started calling her names, singing offensive songs and making rude gestures at her. Scared that the abuse could escalate, Cathleen began recording on her phone. She reported it to the police as soon as possible. The Crown Office and the Procurator Fiscal decided to prosecute one of the perpetrators. A court date was set for December 2015 and Cathleen welcomed the opportunity to receive justice. It was a shock to find the court hearing cancelled because the evidence had been lost. She had to wait another eight months for her case to be heard, bringing trauma and frustration. Cathleen is convinced that 'Historically the police and other authorities have been prejudiced towards LGBT people and this has prevented LGBT people from reporting'.

Since the court case, Police Scotland have set up a network of LGBTI liaison officers trained by the Equality Network, a Scottish LGBTI charity. It will be important to monitor how this improves the confidence of LGBTI people in the police.

Hanane

In October 2015, Hanane Yakoubi, who was 34 weeks pregnant, was travelling on a bus in London with her two-year-old child and two friends. Another passenger began harassing Hanane and her friends for not speaking English.

For five minutes, a woman continuously abused Hanane and her friends, calling them 'sand rats' and, accusing them of supporting ISIS and hiding bombs in their clothing. The woman told Hanane that she didn't like Hanane and her people because they were 'rude' and had no manners, and said that they should go back to their own country. The woman then declared: 'You're lucky I don't kick you in the uterus and you'll never have a baby again'.

No one on the bus intervened, but one passenger filmed the attack on a mobile phone and uploaded it to Facebook, where it went viral. After the offender saw the footage, she handed herself in to police. After pleading guilty to causing racially aggravated distress she was sentenced to 16 weeks in prison, suspended for 18 months, and 60 weeks of unpaid work.

Monique (not her real name)

Monique and her children, originally from Ghana, had lived in the UK for approximately 10 years and had settled in well in the West Midlands. The children learned English quickly and their immediate neighbours were welcoming. Monique found a job working at a local school and was happy that she was living in the UK to provide a better life for her family.

Things began to change in the weeks before the EU referendum in June 2016. The children experienced racism at school, and were told by other children that they would be kicked out of the country. The bullying had a huge impact on their emotional wellbeing – they became quieter and less confident at school and at home.

The situation temporarily improved when the school intervened with a local hate crime partnership taking disciplinary action and delivering workshops about bullying and its impact to several classes.

However, once the EU referendum result was revealed the family suffered further hate crime. For the first time since coming to the UK, Monique experienced racist abuse and was sworn at in public. On one occasion, she was spat at and told to go 'back home where you belong, we don't want you here anymore'. Monique began to lose faith in the friendships that she had developed over the years. She grew increasingly anxious, stopped going out on her own and lost her job because her physical health had gotten worse.

The racist abuse that Monique and her family experienced cannot be separated from the toxic political climate that was created in the weeks leading up to the EU referendum. By encouraging fear and hatred for political gain, some politicians failed Monique and thousands of Brexit related hate-crime victims.

After initially trying to ignore the abuse, Monique decided to report the incidents to the police. She felt she was dismissed by officers because she had not reported the incidents at the time in which they happened. Monique continued to report hate crimes as and when she experienced them but, again, she was disappointed by the response she received. The police failed in their duty because they did not take Monique's statement or investigate due to lack of witnesses. They didn't even try to collect any evidence such as CCTV footage. Because of her victimisation and her experience with the police, Monique has been left feeling isolated, unwanted and worthless.

Paul

In January 2015, Paul Finlay-Dickinson lost his long-term partner Maurice to cancer. In the 18 months leading up to Maurice's death, the couple were regularly subjected to homophobic abuse, their house was vandalised and faeces was pushed through their front door. The torment continued when a memorial card announcing Paul's death was posted to the house and opened by Maurice who was terminally ill at this stage. Even the rainbow flag that Maurice had wanted draped on his coffin was defaced with faeces.

After Maurice died, Paul was unable to fully grieve his death because he was being harassed with unrelenting homophobic attacks and threatened by local youths. No longer feeling safe, Paul was getting ready to move into a new house, which he thought would bring an end to his long-term harassment. However, before Paul could move in to the property a group of young people smashed the windows and daubed 'pedo' beside the front door. Paul was too afraid to move in. 'I am being attacked because of my sexual orientation', he said. 'I cannot take much more'.

Homophobia is still widespread in Northern Ireland and gay rights campaigners have expressed concern that politicians and faith community leaders continue to reinforce prejudiced attitudes towards gay people. Some political and religious leaders in Northern Ireland have regularly referred to same sex relationships and to gay people as 'sinful', 'evil', an 'abomination' and 'intrinsically disordered'. This discourse has helped to create a climate in which homophobic hostility is considered acceptable and legitimate.

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Note from Adrian Mitchell: 'Educational Health Warning. None of these poems or any other work by Adrian Mitchell is to be used in connection with any examination or test whatsoever. But I'm glad if people who like them read them aloud, sing them, dance them or act them in schools. And even happier if they choose to learn any of them by heart.'

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