

Letters TO OUR Daughters



Mulberry
Schools Foundation



FOREWORD

This performance poetry anthology was inspired by a book I was given when students of mine returned from a civil rights study tour in the United States. It was by the then President, Barack Obama, and it was called 'Of Thee I Sing: A Letter to my Daughters'. The book contains a very beautiful poem by President Obama, describing the contribution of great women to our world – not just the work they have done but the values they have shared.

The poem is addressed to his daughters. It is a letter of hope, love and care for them. It is a letter of confidence in all that they can become and the choices they will make as they take their place in life. It is a letter from a father who celebrates the fact that his children are girls and who commits to standing by them as they grow.

Girls and women often talk about the formative influence of their mothers in their lives. Fathers, however, are just as important. Good fathers want their daughters to have the same opportunities as their sons. As a headteacher, I have heard this said by many fathers – yet, the inequalities are hard to shift and there are pressures for boys as well as girls. The conversation needs to be a joint one.

We decided to explore together – the boys and girls, women and men involved in this project – some of the challenges of the world around equality, your gender (and for some, its fluidity) and your identity as you grow. As a parent, carer, teacher, grandparent, uncle or aunt – as a person with a responsibility in the shaping of a young person's character or the gatekeeper of opportunity – how might you respond? Some of the poems are triumphant; some present a challenge to society; some are painful. All are moving in different ways.

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The style is designed for performance and so the poems need to be read in this way. A panel of judges which included two students chose five poems for performance at our conference. You can view the performances on our conference website www.partnershipofequals.org along with an electronic copy of this book.

I would like to thank the performance poets who led the workshops, in particular David Neita and the team at Mulberry who led the project and put together the publication. I would like to thank the panel of judges, in particular Kate Pakenham. I would like to thank all the student poets and their schools for such thought-provoking contributions. A list of all those involved in the project and the schools who contributed can be found at the end of the anthology.

Dr V J Ogden,

Headteacher of Mulberry School for Girls
& CEO of the Mulberry Schools Trust.

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ALL BEFORE

Before you stand a proud parent,
With a son and daughter of different heights,
Will both future's be clear?
Or will you have to think twice?

Before I leave my house,
Is my skirt too short?
My mother told me skin should hide,
But that won't stop me from getting caught.

Before I say what I think,
Will you make sure I hear,
That the world's a scary place,
And working home is safe and near.

And once I lie in my grave,
And my eyes will close shut,
When you can't see my legs,
Will my skirt make me a s***?

Molly Tuckwell

Coombe Girls' School

A NEW BORN

They sat there patiently waiting for the result.
Is it a boy?
Is it a girl?
'If it's a safe child, that's all that matters', he said.
But did society believe in him?
It's a girl,
again
and
again.

They cried with joy for what they have
They cried with joy for what they'll have
But when everyone laughs for what is dull
Is joy still a safe child
Or is it a boy?

The situation grew bigger and bigger
And the situation grew no better.
She locked her tears up in a jar
To keep the pain away,
But there were no jars for scars.

Boy or Girl, they are just a child
They stood up strong and clear.
Nothing will stand up against for what they think is clear.

Great women raise great girls they say,
and with that power she didn't have to obey.
She carried on her mother's accomplishment
Dreaming of a world with gender pay gap abolishment
Of a world where women working is not seen as
an astonishment
A world where acting like a girl is complement.

Ruwsan Abdul Majeed

Mulberry School for Girls

ANON

A smattering of clouds like smoke
Float over the pale sky,
Gently swaying trees of oak
And a vibrant sun shines up high.
The shopping bag weights down her arm,
Cutting into her tightly balled fist.
The sunny day is working its charm,
And she's bought everything on her shopping list.
She finds the walk home delightful,
The distance from the shops to her house isn't far.
She doesn't expect anything frightful,
So she's completely surprised by the car.
It rolls up beside her, and she can do nothing when a man shouts
"Nice t***, love!"
So she just grips her shopping bag tighter and keeps on walking.

Abi Lightbourne
Wycombe High School



A WORLD WORTH THE WHILE

There could be freedom for us all to do what we love.
There could be a life worth living if we never give it up.
There could be beauty in the struggle if we open our eyes.
There could be a world full of truth if we never believed the lies.

Our women should be praised for the courage they have shown.
Our women should be held up high because of how much they
have grown.
Our women should be mechanics and doctors if that is what they
aspire to be.
Our women should be able to live in a world full of freedom and joy
and that is a world that we should be happy to see.

A world full of dreams and hopes for our future women is what we
should be fighting for.
A world where our future is full of educated women, no matter
how rich or poor.
A world that is not blind to the strength of a woman
that has a heart of a lioness with no show of fear.
A world that is not deaf to the voices of the women with passion
which they never want to hear.

We are no longer locked up in the shadows, so here comes
the light.
We are no longer afraid to stand up for what we believe is right.
We are no longer living in misery, so you can watch us smile.
We are standing together as one for all and all for one, so
we can make
A world worth the while.

Syed Hussain
Mulberry UTC



BEAUTIFUL

Everyone is beautiful.
Men, women, race, religion,
we're all unique.

But what is beautiful?

Beautiful is the wrinkles in the depths of
your cheeks when you laugh.

Beautiful is your dark chocolate eyes
glistening in the light.

Beautiful is when you're expressing yourself.

There is beauty all around us,
realise it.

Sammy Dearing
Coombe Girls' School



BECAUSE YOU TOLD ME

Red lights spell danger but
I was raised colour-blind to trust that you
Yell at me out of love
And so I'll cry out of adoration for you.

Your plush voice with words that spill out like venom
I was always given the part of the coastline swallowing the tide
All your white lies rotting like strings of seaweed and brine.

And I know what love is because you told me
At least I think that's what it was
And I always took your messages as
pixelated billet-doux's
Is that not what they are?

You say keep to the left no
Keep to the right
Right where Gabriel sits on my shoulder
Right where your fingertips press
You paint me prettier than I am
The saint illustrates the sinner
coughing up in an opal dress
Not as I am but how you wanted me to be.

Lucy Sutton
Ursuline High School

BOYS AND GIRLS

If he works, he does it for a day.
If she works, she gets 70% of the pay.
If his favourite colour isn't blue, then he is gay.
She has a voice, but words she doesn't say.

He loves to play football,
But so does she.
Her parents tell her just to stay home and read.
She has high ambitions, but she cannot be.
She feels she is trapped and the boy is free.

Mohammad Humza Jahan
Mulberry Academy Shoreditch

BOYS DON'T CRY

Boys don't cry.
Boys don't cry;
not because they don't want to,
but because society says so.

Girls can't yell because it's
"unladylike".
Even if they want to,
they will hold it back as they
scream inside their minds
and pray for silence.

Boys won't cry.
Boys won't cry
because it makes them weak.

To show emotion, it makes
them lesser
and they get told to be a man.
But a girl can cry a river
as long as she's not heard.

But we have the right to cry and
scream.
We have the right to show our fear,
our anger, passion and tears
because showing emotion isn't
weak.
And the strongest thing to do
is wear our hearts upon ourselves
because
boys CAN cry and girls CAN scream.

When society says to dry your eyes,
let the tears keep flowing.
When they say "keep quiet",
shout until your voice is heard.
Because if we don't fight the
stigma,
they will never hear a word.

Stay strong, hold on, we'll win
this fight.
We are ALL human beings.
Emotion is our right.

Freya Walsh-Wells
Wycombe High School



CAN I WEAR A SKIRT?

I'm a boy, so what?
Oh, I have to be strong,
I have to be brave,
But I am not society's slave.

Can I wear a skirt?
I don't want to follow trends
And I don't want to lose friends.
I am not a boy,
I am me.

So, can I wear a skirt?
A gendered cloth
Not meant for me,
But I want it,
It's a part of me,
I want it to shape my identity.

So, can I wear a skirt?

Maymunah Chaudhry
Central Foundation Girls' School

CHESS

What's a queen without her king?
Well, historically speaking, more powerful
So why should she defend her king...
If she would end up with the rule?

Oh sure, you could lose your soldiers
But never your king 'cause
Where would you be without him?
With a queen who can't make laws.

The Queen makes the moves
And handles the situation at home
But she asks to have one chance...
And all you say is no!

Implore a change in not only you
But children's games everywhere
Oh, dear chess, why won't you bend
And let the Queen and King share.

Kulsoma Khatun

Mulberry Academy Shoreditch



COLOURS

Black and red?
Or white and gold?
Pink and grey?
Who cares what you're told?

A colour's a colour
and nothing more.
Girls like pink and guys like blue
Oh, that's such a bore.

I tell myself this constantly,
But do I actually believe it?
I want to wear skirts,
How can I believe it?

But then she approaches me,
I know what she's going to say.
"Sorry, are you lost Sir?"
"The men's section is this way."

I look up and sigh.
Now I'm all flustered
She just won't understand.

I'll wait till the night
Where I can slap on some makeup
All purple and gold
A colour's a colour
Who cares what you're told?

Ruhaniyah Park Jimin
Mulberry School for Girls

DEAR FUTURE DAUGHTER

Dear future daughter,
I hope you grow up to be strong, caring and understand
your rights.
I will bring you up to be educated and know your beauty.
I hope you are taught what roles you deserve in order to
stand up for what you believe in.
I will teach you that you are no less than a man, and to
be able to cry if you are ever hurt.
I hope you stand up for change as I teach you.

Jessica Degnen
All Saints Catholic College

DEAR SOCIETY...

Are we really bedtime toys,
To just play with the boys?
If we're spoilt or if we're poor,
To be left empty on the floor?

We are pretty, duty-bound,
Taught to smile, not a sound.
Set as an ornament on your stage,
And to just, turn the page.

You are proud, we are shamed,
You're successful, we're underpaid.
We both have images set and made.
Would you really want to trade?

So dear society, hear me out,
Don't look away, have no doubt.
Listen well and listen good,
Before I become what you knew I would.

Iona Briody
Ansford Academy

DO YOU WANT TO?

You are fed up of the stereotypes that weigh on your shoulders
You are finally freeing yourself from society's limitations
And you hope they can do the same.

Do you want
To turn up to your next meeting
In a dress

Do you want
To say, yes,
You do cry.

Do you want
To tell them
That you played with dolls as a child

Do you want
To tell them
That you like the colour pink

Do you want
To tell them
That you enjoy cooking, in fact, love cooking.

Scream, shout
Just make sure you let them know...

Make sure you tell them.

Rahima Akther
Mulberry School for Girls



ENQUIRING OUT THE WORLD

My brother, a mini me
walking across the bridge
a sense of curiosity in his eyes
has questioned the world since
today, he gawks at a couple
twice his age and height
hands meeting, punches thrown
words spoken eyes locked.

The lovers argue
throwing themselves into the street
oblivious to my brother
he's hurting her, he finally utters.

I wanna shield him from this
while he's still lukewarm and light
he gulps forward.

Has this ever happened to you?

I wanna tell him, tell him it's wrong
I can't protect him forever.

Wahida S Rahman
Mulberry School for Girls

EQUALITY

Equality is the perfect dream.
We all want the same thing
That heaven, that Utopia.
However it comes at a price

it is not at all about rebellion
or sacrifice or war.
But on uniting and forming
Something bigger than hatred.

So keep on dreaming
that perfect dream is almost here.
So close and close and yet
so far.

Don't give up
Cherish your dreams
And share them with everyone to see.

But for now keep dreaming for that Utopia
It is coming
You will see it when it does.

Freddie Sanderson
Mulberry Academy Shoreditch

FAITH OVERCOMES FEAR

I respect women for the power that they have and hold.
I respect women for being like the eagle, so brave and bold.
I respect women for standing up for their right.
I respect women for bringing inequality and men the fight.

The world would be better if everyone got a chance.
The world would be free if we didn't always follow the plans.
The world would be unique if we all took off our mask.
The world would be equal for us all if we weren't afraid to ask.

My future daughter will be a leader and break through the chain.
My future daughter will be a champion because her hopes and
dreams cover up the pain.
My future daughter will be the captain of the team because she
knows how to lead.
My future daughter will become the resolution that the injustice
will need.

Women have always been the backbone that makes the world
go round.
Women have been living in silence but it is time to make a sound.
Women will live in an equal era because your time is near.
Women will become queens on thrones because...
Faith overcomes fear.

Anonymous

FORTUNE FOR HER FUTURE

I dream of a world for my future daughter;
Where her human rights won't go to slaughter,
Where she won't be judged and won't be told;
That her attitude is way too bold.

I want her to be born into a world,
Where pen and paper overcomes the sword,
Where whoever you are, you can be heard,
So her licit rights won't become shred.

I want my daughter to live in this place,
Where they look at her face,
And they won't identify her worth,
On whether her eyelashes are curled.

In this world I seek for my daughter,
She could be a dancer, an artist or a boxer,
I want her to live doing what gives her pleasure,
Because her beauty isn't her worth's measure.

My sweet, future child, I don't want you to care,
If your outfit doesn't match your hair.
I want to build you a world,
Where you can choose jeans over skirt.
And even if you shorten your shirt,
They won't have the power to push you to dirt.

Flora Allapy
Mulberry UTC

GENDER

Gender is a box
A stereotype
With a lock
It's a confinement
Something we try to stop.
I'm an explosion, you know
We campaign
Trying not to refrain
Because we will escape
That is our fate.

Tahiya Kamuss
Central Foundation Girls' School

HUMAN

I am a human.
I may be a boy.
I may be a girl.
Regardless, I am a human.
I am free to be who I am.

I may love English
I may love dance
I may cry
Knowing this, how can you tell
who I am?
Am I a girl?

I may love Maths
I may love football
I may not cry
Knowing this, how can you tell
who I am?
Am I a boy?

I am a human.
I may be neither.
At the end of the day, I am
a human.

Be proud of who you are,
regardless of the gender.
What matters is what's in your heart!

We are all beautiful in our own ways.
Words can't bring us down,
no matter the place.

You are you, and I am me.

You shouldn't have to
limit yourself to not be judged,
hide away for not being accepted,
change yourself to make others
happy.

Just be you and that is good
enough!

Neha Mohit
Mulberry School for Girls



I AM A WOMAN

You punch like a girl, no I am a woman.
You walk like a girl, no I am a woman.
You kick like a girl, no I am a woman.

Why is being 'like a girl' such an offence,
Maybe that's why Parliament is such a mess.
1 in 3 MP's are female, 1 in 3.
But hey, we can't blame all men.

Help each other,
Be proud women and girls.
Bond through sisterhood,
Let us unite and bring equality.

So, next time someone says
she punches like a girl,
say no – she punches like a woman.

Because that's who she is.

Afsana Haque
Plumstead Manor

INEQUALITY

Inequality is injustice
opportunities stolen as rapid as they avoid.
Perhaps it was a figment of imagination,
a sham.
Most certainly not, it was most certainly there
Oh yes, it is only the long established
belief of inequality.

There's no place for pedestals, but
there they are.
Superiority is like a stain
It has been taught, not engrained,
conceivably to mask a tone of fear.

Of what, though?
We are under the appreciation of
being treated equivalently, after all.
The fear of equality, is the fear
of what you may not know.

We are not equal if it is not for us all.

Jumayrah Hussain
Mulberry School for Girls

I WANT TO SEE

I want to see happiness
 People to feel imperfect
 and still smile
 and be confident
 and support others.

Everyone can get along,
 You can utter a word,
 It can change a life,
 For the better.

You just need to say the right thing.
 And do the right thing.
 And sing the right song.

Rahimah Warsame
Mulberry School for Girls

I WAS TOLD

I was born to be customised and tailored fit for
 society's expectations
 I was told to wear this but not that
 confined within a fashion
 I was told to weigh this much and no more
 confined with a choice that is not mine
 I was told to do this but not that
 confined within a character
 I was told, I was told, I was told.

Aisha Noor
Mulberry School for Girls



I WONDER

I wonder what this world would be
If every child was treated equally.

I wonder what this world would be
When men and women share their dreams.

I wonder what this world would be
If every smile was a comfort of sympathy.

I wonder what this world would be
When all these things turn into reality.

Mehtaab Begum

Mulberry School for Girls

MS. PRINCESS CHARMING - THIS IS MY LIFE AND I GET TO CHOOSE

At birth people melted at the sight of my adorable face
 Many men pursued me as if I was their personal goal
 As if I was a prize to be won.
 But I asserted my independence and vowed to pursue the man
 of my dreams
 I pushed against boundaries and stereotypical, fairy-tale themes
 I am Ms Princess Charming
 whether I marry or not - that's my story.
 Not being able to be an independent woman, well that's pure history.
 Me? I am currently on an adventure to the tallest tower
 I seek to find an innocent young man locked away
 I introduce myself with the gift of a flower
 / rescue *him* from the dragon that kept him locked away
 We will get married and live happily ever after
 I am Ms Princess Charming and in my kingdom no woman
 has a master.
 THIS IS MY LIFE AND I GET TO CHOOSE.

Christina Aidoo
Ursuline High School

MY DARLING DAUGHTER

Always remember you are strong
 you are beautiful
 you are worthy
 you are capable.

Don't listen to their criticism
 don't hear the negatives.

Believe in yourself
 you will achieve
 you are strong
 you are determined.

Choose what makes you happy
 but choose it for yourself.

There are no rules
 you can be a mum
 you can be a president
 it really shouldn't matter,
 you can be a wife
 or a professor
 chase dreams, they are yours
 to be had.

Don't listen to the old school
 they have other ideas:
 Women should accept their status
 they should forget their lofty
 ambitions.

Remember the suffragettes
 Malala and the rest,
 all of them are strong women
 who stood up, shouted
 and refused to be ignored.

So, no sweet daughter
 do as you wish
 you are a warrior
 aim high with a loud voice
 you are equal to all.

Alice Chainey
Ansford Academy

NOTHING

He sits, curled up, quietly sobbing in the corner, afraid of the possibility that someone will walk in on him. He wonders how long he will be able to live like this and questions his purpose in life. An 11 year-old boy contemplating suicide without even knowing what it is. He holds himself up and walks to the bathroom discreetly, his eyes crimson, his cheeks soaked. The boy splashes his face with cold water attempting to hide his hurt. He fidgets out with a heavy heart and when his sister asks what is wrong, he replies, lying, 'nothing', straining the corners of his mouth into a beautifully choreographed smile to hide his injured soul.

Faizah Ahmed
Mulberry School for Girls



REAL

The clock reads one minute to twelve.
As her child yells,
Cars pass by, tyres humming along
to the city music.
Dull murmurs carry themselves
through the wall,
wrapping around her like a comforting hug.
Her eyes fall on the child held in her arms,
a smile lingering on her lips.
She watches as he begins to settle,
she watches as a final tear falls
onto his delicate cheeks.
And she wonders.
She wonders how many tears he will
shed silently, because real men don't cry.
She wonders how many times his kindness
will be confused for weakness, because real
men are tough.
She wonders how many times her son
will be told to 'man up.'
She places him besides his sister as she
stirs gently in her sleep.
And she wonders.
She wonders how many times she will
feel uncomfortable in her own skin,
because real women have perfect features.
She wonders how many times she will
be told to 'stop being dramatic', because real
women are emotional.
She wonders how long it will be before
her daughter feels insecure about herself.
She gazes at her children sleeping
silently.
Distant sounds echoing around them
like a melody.

She knows she will raise her son to
not be part of the 'real men' but
as a real man.
She knows she will raise her daughter
to not be part of the 'real women' but
as a real woman.
And she knows she will raise her children,
the people of the future,
as equals.
Lights blink through the window,
casting shadows against the walls.
Voices carries themselves through the floors,
flowing from ear to ear.
Night lies still above the ground as
change is beginning.
A mother whispers goodnight to her
two sleeping children.
And the clock reads twelve.
A new day has come.

Maryam Naasir

Mulberry School for Girls



STOP, WE ARE EQUALS!

Stop,
Stop complaining about what we wear,
say or do.

Stop,
Stop shaming how we look,
think or feel.

Stop,
Stop harassing us in our schools,
parks and work,
where we go to
have fun and receive pay checks,
not unwanted opinions.

We may all be individuals in this world,
We may be women but together,
We are fearless,
And we stand,
There's no sitting down,
Until you stop and start treating us as
Equals.

Not until boys can cry
and girls can feel tough.
We won't stand down
because we've had enough!

Niamh Richards

Bonus Pastor

SUPERHEROES

A woman, no... A superhero. A person capable
of true miracles. Miracles that are the
fundamental element to humanity. A mother...
no a life giver. One of the only superheroes
that can cook up a three course meal
and still make it back on time for work.

From time to time, I sit and wonder and
my mind starts to ponder about what's so
bad about being a woman.

I mean it's a life-time gift of awesomeness
and empowerment.
But then I remember
it's all about being a WOMAN.
I have to punch like a woman,
walk like a woman and
talk like a woman...

So much for being a superhero.

Hannah Osman Saeed

Plumstead Manor

THE BARRIER

Surely freedom is merrier, meritorious and enlightening
You can easily climb the mountain
One can exit this bigotry
And enter an equal world,
One of recognition far from this brutal prejudice
Emotion is all that makes us ourselves
The library of equality
Contains many surprises
You can easily climb the mountain
One can exit this bigotry
And enter an equal world,
One of recognition without this brutal prejudice
You'll enter an equal world.

Jack Byrne
Forest Hill School



THE FLY

The spider catches the fly.
Fear. Anguish. It spreads the lie
That men are superior to women.
Mind, Wit, Muscular strength.
And the fly becomes the one to relent.
Fly free, spread wings, birds set free
Overcome the spiders' web and schemes.
The web that is the sky today
The fly flies through that and away
It becomes a silhouette till shadows breathe
Then die and suns' grief
Is gone. Women are happy, equal and fine
The spider no more spreads the lie.

Sumaiya Firdows

Mulberry School for Girls

THE ONLY ME

I walk down the hall
with my head down low
scared to be me.
The voices inside me try to
speak but fail.

I look around and try to be the
same as everyone near,
But I seem to stand out.
In everyone's eyes I'm just
a girl.
I'm the only one that has
questions which will never be
answered running wild in my head.

Should I change or should I not,
which way – left or right?
Why I am not treated
equally?

Aneesah Mahmud

Mulberry School for Girls

THE ROAD TO EQUALITY?

As I opened the closet door, I noticed a dusty, maroon cloak hanging. My hand reached out- why was this cloak here?

No note, just a piece of embroidery that read;

'Equality.'

Without much thought, I draped it over my shoulders. I felt like I was floating, until I landed harshly on a cobblestone pavement.

I was outside the Houses of Parliament on the end of a picket line – Women around me shouting for the right to vote, whilst men screamed back that they were unworthy.

I tried to get their attention, only to realise that I couldn't be seen or heard. I had seen enough. I was ready to go home.

Draping the cloak over my shoulders once more, I was transported.

This time I found myself on the streets of Mingora. Girls were running and hiding all around me. My Urdu told me that the booming voice was shouting that girls did not need an education. I saw the rebellious face of Malala Yousafzi.

I knew what was going to happen.

Suddenly, I felt the scene shift.

I was at the White House where I could see the American flag waving proudly. News reporters were stationed everywhere. There was one phrase being repeated over and over again –

“Today marks the day of our fifth female President.”

I got closer to one presenter, hearing her mention that all countries across the globe have equal representation of women and men in government. That the gender-pay gap no longer existed. That every girl has the right to an education.

And hearing those things brought hope to my heart. That one day, someday soon even, barriers preventing the world moving forward would no longer exist.

I knew that change was coming, and I was ready to go home to make it happen.

Nazeefa Ahmed

Mulberry School for Girls

TO THE FUTURE GENERATION OF WOMEN

You have potential.

It's in you
- I know it -
I can sense
it bubbling
fizzing, twisting, turning
in that glorious heart
of yours.

But I must tell you,
that there is
only
one
rule.

To not follow any.

You must
must must must must
be you.

Unashamedly
bravely
beautifully
strongly
you.

And you will shine,
brighter than any star,
bolder than the sun,
and you will be
kinder than the stars,
and sheltering like
the sky.

Rule the world.
I know you can.

Sawda Khan
Mulberry School for Girls



TO YOU

To you.
In the future,
whether we all have electrical implants or are part-cyborg
whether A.I. and aliens really exist, and we can teleport to
Mars in the blink of an eye,
One thing will always be the same: bullies.

Those that make you cower and hide behind your fringe,
make you look both ways, thrice, before turning a corner.

Have you weeping beneath your duvet.
Hiding,
from the glares, snarls and snickers.
That deafen you,
and the whispers that chase you
through the white hallways, and glass doors.
Past your gate and then,
they leap.
Into your dreams.

They make you dread closing your eyes at night.
They make you dread living,
to wake the next morning
and the one after that.

They watch you, their prey,
fumble about,
trying so hard to block them out.
Trying but failing
and they sneer.

You know you're being watched, but what can you do.
What can you do but grin and bear it?

Know that things always get better
And at the time, it seems as if life will continue to be a black hole.
Your life, a star, winking out of existence,
trust me, I know.

But don't worry,
Life goes on, just as stars are reborn.
Just keep calm, take a deep breath,
And you can stand up for yourself.
Don't let anyone get you down.

Isra' Shorif

Mulberry School for Girls

WE ARE

We are who we want to be
Who we are right now
Not who we were
Not who we are going to be
Not who people want us to be
Not who people tell us we are
We are who we want to be
Only we can decide.

Uzma Chowdhury
Mulberry School for Girls

WHAT SHOULD I DO? WHAT SHOULD I SAY?

He looks up at me
Confusion painted on his face
My heart raced
The awkwardness lurched around us
He watched them.
The girl tried to escape his clutch
Rude words as bad as his touch
Tears dripped down her face
Like rain dripping on my forehead.

Is he hurting her? The child says

Yes.

Leana Waigo
Mulberry School for Girls



WHEN YOU STARE AT ME

When you stare at me, I don't feel uncomfortable
I don't mind all the things that you say.
Perhaps, to understand you need to be in my position
Even if it is just for a day.

They'll tell you to wear makeup
They'll tell you to brush your hair
They'll tell you to lose weight
And yet it's them who yell 'w****' as they stare.

He'll tell you that you're beautiful
He'll say it to your mum and dad
He'll also be the one to whip you at night
And say its cos you made him mad.

She'll tell you about the day she gave birth to you
She'll tell you that you're the cause of her pain
She'll tell you that you're the reason she's a monster
You know, I know to her you are no gain.

So stranger, before we part ways
There is something that I'd like to say
I hope you don't cry, I won't make you pay
I just want to know how it was to be me for a day.

Ruhaniyah Abdin
Mulberry School for Girls

WHERE HE IS FREE

Given the life sentence of a life of silence from birth
 His emotions locked in solitary confinement
 Until he is driven insane
 Trying to express his emotions
 But they are locked away
 He tried to break out
 He tried to escape
 Taught to keep them away
 Her people asked how he was
 He put a mask on and said he was okay
 As showing weakness was not permitted in this modern day
 This is how things have always been
 And this is how they must stay
 He dreams of a day where his voice is heard
 And they let him be
 Where he is allowed to be who he wants to be
 Where he can express his dreams
 Where he is free
 Where he is free.

Alexander Kemmeni
Forest Hill School

YES!

YES! I may care about what people think about me
 YES! I may think about my looks a lot
 YES! I may be emotional
 But that doesn't stop me from fighting for what's
 RIGHT!

GIRLS out here are fighting to get their
 VOICES HEARD!
 PEOPLE, THIS IS NOT 1918. IT'S 2018.

If you think being a 'girl' is weak,
 then I think you need to be more MINDFUL!
 Because I know for a fact that being a 'girl'
 or should I say 'WOMAN'
 is the best thing in the WORLD! And no-one
 should make you feel DIFFERENT!

YES, I AM A WOMAN!

Clara Nanozi
Bonus Pastor Catholic College

YOU

Excuse me for upsetting you.
Is it the way that I walk or talk?
I did not mean to make you
choose to act
defensive.

Excuse me for being a grey in a world of suit and tie.
In the corporate world
your kind reigns high.

I am
a comet of fire instead of ice.

I am an engine that needs no
fuel to function
but friction and doubt.

Is it my warmth or my
icy stare
that drove you over the
edge?

Is it that I march to the beat of
my own drum and hymn of a song
of songs?

Or is it that I am a woman
and you
are
intimidated?

Umama Afia
Mulberry School for Girls





Participating Schools:

All Saints Catholic College
Ansford Academy
Bonus Pastor Catholic College
Bow School
Central Foundation Girls' School
Chingford Foundation School
Coombe Girls' School
Forest Hill School
Frances Bardsley Academy For Girls
Mulberry Academy Shoreditch
Mulberry School For Girls
Mulberry UTC
Plumstead Manor School
Ursuline Catholic High School For Girls
Wimbledon College
Wycombe High School

Judges:

CHAIR: Jill Tuffee, Associate Headteacher, Mulberry School for Girls
Dave Neita, Poet
Jennie Montgomerie, Deputy Headteacher, Mulberry Academy Shoreditch
Kate Pakenham, Film Producer
Maisha Zainab, Student, Mulberry School for Girls
Suraiyah Uddin, Student, Mulberry Academy Shoreditch

Please visit our website at: www.partnershipofequals.org

Artwork

Front cover: 'What does it mean to be a Mulberry girl?' by Eva Azad and Tasnima Jahan.

The design is rich in symbolism, as the artists from Year 10 explain: "The hair represents Mulberry girls' creativity because of the vibrant colours we used. The bird represents freedom and also their journey from Year 7 to Year 11. The henna pattern on the face represents cultural diversity and the intricate pattern on the clothing conveys the individuality of each Mulberry student. The heart symbolises devotion, passion and self-confidence." The painting inspired designs for the school's Fiftieth Anniversary Community Tapestry, made by members of our valued community, in partnership with The Big Weave.

The artwork within this anthology was created by Year 8 and Year 9 students at Mulberry School for Girls, as part of a cross-curricular arts project that explored the lives of inspirational women from around the world, who were either pioneers in the world of sport, or stood up for themselves to make a change within society: Malala Yousafzai, Rosa Parks, The Mirabel Sisters, Kate Sheppard, Nicola Adams, Simone Biles, Rafaela Silva and Yusra Mardini.

Mulberry

Schools Trust

The Mulberry Schools Foundation is the charitable arm of the Mulberry Schools Trust. The Mulberry Schools Trust is a flourishing multi-academy trust and through its founding school, Mulberry School for Girls, it has pioneered outstanding education in East London stretching back over 50 years. Mulberry Schools Trust currently includes Mulberry School for Girls, Mulberry UTC and Mulberry Academy Shoreditch. The Trust believes in the power of partnerships with families, other local schools and the communities that it serves.

www.mulberryschoolstrust.org



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