



# 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*



# 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*



# 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*



# 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*



# 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*



## Postcard reflection activity

Following the poetry anthology competition, the winning poems were transformed into postcards for our reflective activity at the end of the conference. The reflection activity allows students to quietly process the learning they have had from the day and enables them to decide on one action that they will commit to, to create a more gender equal world.

The reflection activity takes place while the slideshow of inspiration people is being played and is accompanied by a student pianist playing reflective music. At the end of the slideshow, we play homage to one inspiration woman who has campaigned all her life for equality – and who has recently passed away. That woman is Aretha Franklin, a black civil rights activist and musician. The reflective activity lasts around 7 minutes.

The students fill in the postcards to help them reflect. These are postcards to their future selves. They are collected in and posted back to the students in their schools in three months' time to remind them of their commitment.

**One thing I have learnt today...**



**Name:**

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**Name of School and School's Address:**

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**One thing I am going to do to make a more gender equal world...**