

THE COMICS YOUTH <sup>CIC</sup>

# NEWSPAPER PROJECT



FESTIVAL OF  
HOPE

# HOPE

# Welcome...

**A wise woman by the name of Robyn Rihanna Fenty once sang.** “We found love in a hopeless place.” And please know, dear reader, that this song and this sentiment – cheesy and completely uncool as it may be to admit – has been the petrol in the tank of this newspaper’s engine.

We’re not going to acknowledge the scorching trash fire of this year. 2020 has been rough. You know it. We know it. All of us deserve a trophy for making it this far without storming Parliament in our pyjamas and proudly screaming the long list of injustices and anxieties we’ve all been forced to endure this year.

We decided that the theme of this issue of our newspaper long before lockdown and the pandemic made Hope an essential daily mantra. The world, and our respective lives and experiences within it, can be difficult and unfair. But we can never lose sight of the fact that everything has the opportunity to get better. Difficulties can ease or stop altogether. Fairness can be fought for and achieved.

Nothing is beyond us.

You’ll find this sentiment repeated lovingly throughout this newspaper, which is full of artwork and writing made by young people aged 8 – 25 all serving reminders that life can and does get better – and how.

Interviews with creative, outspoken, and uplifting trailblazers such as Divina de Campo and Jacob Edward offer guides on navigating this big bad world whilst fighting injustice, celebrating niche interests, and keeping our heads held up high. Meanwhile, our self-care and wellbeing section offer reminders of how to maintain strength and resilience in the face of ill-health and mental exhaustion (and when to step back, breathe, and do something nice for yourself).

Our writers even found the courage to stare into the harsh abyss of world issues like systemic racism, the environment, and the current refugee crisis to find nuggets of hope in proposing potential solutions – and why they’re so necessary.

Further in and you’ll find poetry and prose, illustrations and puzzles, and an entire section dedicated to the uplifting joys of Dungeons and Dragons (so we hope you have your D6 ready to roll!) – entire worlds worth losing yourself in on days where you may feel a little lost in this one.

Basically, this paper is built from love: One that spreads deep from the self to an entire community. And though we found it in a hopeless place, we leave it in a hopeful one.

Pick it up and keep it for yourself – and when in doubt, sing some Rihanna. Stay safe, stay strong, and my goodness – stay sassy,

from all your pals at Comics Youth x



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# Hope, as the Voyage.

*The real voyage of discovery, as Marcel Proust famously said, consists not just in seeing new sights, but in looking with new eyes. Join Florence Brigitte on her journey of self-discovery and wanderlust through Dubrovnik, the City of Stone and Light*



I asked my mum what hope meant to her. She said, 'Hope has a momentum of its own. Hope is motion, like wind. You can't see it. It's invisible. Hope is in transit. Like a train, hope is where you're going, where you'll be and where you once were. For me, hope is the voyage.'

In July of 2019, my friends and I went to Dubrovnik in Croatia after we finished school. This was my first official holiday. My friends, between them, had travelled all around the world: New Zealand, Italy, Poland, Ireland, Canada, and the United States, to name a few. To me, travelling is the epitome of living, so you can understand my absolute bewitchment when I stepped off the airplane, looked up and saw, for the first time in my eighteen years of living, a star-spattered sky.

I felt as though I had never truly seen ever before; Every blink was wasted before that moment. Dubrovnik is on the coast of the Adriatic Sea, with waters bluer than the skies, which surrounded me.

On one of our last nights, we were dining at a restaurant that lies at the very edge of the sea, and it began to rain. This rain was something I had never seen before, it was torrential. The skies that had faded slowly into a lilac-y/pink concoction were now black and been sprayed with lightning by a thunder-wielding hand. I was enthralled.

I had read books and poems, seen films, admired maritime paintings, all of which depicted phantasmagorical, epic scenes of the wonders and dangers of the natural world. This moment was significant for me, and my poetic emotional experience. I had never felt so awe-inspired and so hopeful.

However, I had also never felt so small, so insignificant, redundant and obsolete. It dawned on me, in that very moment, that to have hope and understand what it truly means, is to experience a certain element of hopelessness; the two co-exist. In order to truly experience hope, or even seek it out in a world full of the rarest

kinds of enchantments and the common occurrence of disaster, one must be exposed to the mediocrity of hopelessness.

Looking back, I take into consideration what my mum defines as hope. She said hope is invisible, and yes, in a way it is. But I have seen hope, sprawled out in the skies, like the veins in a transparent arm. "Hope is the voyage"; I travelled to a distant place, saw things I had only ever dreamt of or read in books. Every painting in every colour, every word, written or spoken, will not suffice in searching for the true meaning of life – except one.

I believe hope is an ideal, a continuum of desire. It isn't obtained by denying reality, but accepting it, appreciating it to the heights of retrieving a deeper understanding of oneself, and the universe in which we exist in.

*Florence Brigitte*

# Divina De Campo

*In February 2020, Comics Youth took a riotous trip to The Atkinson to watch UK Drag Race runner-up Divina De Campo in Cinderella – a panto for those of us of more mature (yet immature) minds. Rafael Dyas snuck backstage with us to chat to the iconic queen before they hit the stage and ooh mama, we served some anti-Tory tea piping hot and got to enjoy Divina's legendary cackle first-hand...*

## What did you want to be when you grew up?

You know, what I really wanted to do? I wanted to do musicals. I grew up watching people like Michael Ball and my mum was always listening to Barbara Dixon and that sort of stuff in the car. So, I thought okay, What am I? - you know? - What is my face? What is my body? What do I look like and what do I sound like? And there's not much choice in terms of musical theatre-land - or at least there wasn't 15 years ago. So, the only thing I could do was either be a dancer, which I worked as for a long time working in community settings, and then performing all over the place. And then the other option was being a drag queen. I think now I'm going to end up doing more musical theatre than I would've done before.

## What then inspired you to go into drag and performing?

Performing has always been something that I did. Like, as a three-year-old in reception I remember the headmaster saying, 'Oh, we've got a Pavarotti in the audience!'. But I've always sung. The one thing I've always been kind of naturally pretty good at was singing. The world tells you things. It gives you information. And if you're listening you can do stuff with that information. And so, I feel like that was the world giving me this information early on and saying, 'You should be doing stuff like this'. But, in terms of really moving into drag, that was my husband. He was like, 'You're earning no money as a dancer, so why don't you try drag? You can sing, you're almost funny, and you can dance, so?'. And that's where it sort of started.

## What does performing mean to you?

I don't know? Like, all of life is a performance anyway. We're all given these weird little parameters where you have to live. Society says that if you're this then you have to perform this way, you know? So, every part of your life is a performance. And I think the act of getting up on stage for me is about highlighting how ridiculous those things are. The whole thing about drag for me is that, actually, these parameters and the performances that go with them are ridiculous – like, this is not what makes a woman. But society says women should have long eyelashes or wear makeup or have long hair and big breasts or have hips or wear heels. The whole thing about drag for me is about challenging these ideas that society places upon us.

## Where do you find hope in everyday life?

You know, it's the little things where people are kind or nice. Like, I went into a café today and they were doing a pay it forwards thing. And that's the stuff that gives me hope where people go out of their way to help others and for no reason. I've been given this incredible platform which – and Katya (Zamolodchikova) and Trixie (Mattel) sort of summed it up - where people come up to you and talk to you and they want a picture and da-da-da-da. I'm incredibly grateful for that because to me – and this is what Katya and Trixie said - it's like a superpower. Give that person 10-20 seconds of time and for the whole day that person will feel better or that they've had a nice experience or want to talk to their friends about it. And they put their picture up of the experience and they're like, 'Oh my God, I met this person today'.



## What do you think the future of drag will look like? And the future of the world?

I think that the future of drag will become evermore all inclusive. We already have a real long tradition of not discriminating about who can do drag and who can't. So, I think drag as an art form is a really important way of teaching society as a wider population about gender as a construct.

I also think that drag has a really important role to play in understanding the gender spectrum and understanding that this is a societal idea that has been placed on top of all of us, and that we all live inside this spectrum.

There's this really simple exercise we've done in educational settings where you write down ten things that are a woman and ten things that are a man - and I've done this with 7-12-year-olds and they've written down a lot of things. Before you can even ask the kids to read their things out, they'll be going, 'Yeah, but this isn't real is it?' and 'I don't know anybody who is like this' and you go, 'Oh okay, so what does this mean to you?' and they say, 'It's made up, it's not real, a man isn't those things and a woman isn't those things'.

So, if a 7-year-old can grasp that actually these things are not real - that they're not a fundamental truth - then actually what is the effing big deal with 40-year-olds getting that into their head? Just because you've lived that way forever doesn't make it a fundamental universal truth - it's just the way that you've been conditioned. So, I think drag will help to inform more people who will then be able to say, 'Actually, you know what? This doesn't fit with my experience of the world.'

## If you could change one thing about the world, what would it be?

I would change that we give a platform to people who are intentionally divisive and intentionally damaging to people who are already so marginalised. Like, why? This doesn't affect your life so why are you even talking about it? You are talking about it because the way that our media operates it means you can make money by spreading that division because the people who are in power and are running the media don't want us to be united. Because, if we are, actually, it is far too easy for us to see that you are trying to screw us all over. So that is what I would change is that we stop platforming these people. Because, ideas in and of themselves are not dangerous. But it's dangerous that we give these people credence.

## Do you have any advice for young people who want to go into drag or performing?

Yep. Do it. Do it, but don't expect it to be easy, don't expect everyone to like it, and don't expect everyone to be helpful. But, do it the way that you want to do it and decide how it is you want to do it. So! Get educated well because drag is all about politics. If you want to do drag then you have a responsibility to be keyed into politics and you should understand it! Especially because it rules everything in your life - everything from your taxes, to how much you pay in the supermarket, to what you learn in school, and to whether the police are on your side or not. So, you have a responsibility as a drag artist to find out about that stuff - and to not vote tory! \*hysterics\*

## Introducing BBC Radio 1 & Gaydio's

# JACOB EDWARD

*Jacob Edward made history by becoming BBC Radio 1's first non-binary presenter.*

*Like it or not, we live in a world whose mainstream media is unanimously produced for straight cisgender audiences. Despite a few token efforts to include LGBTQIA characters, story lines or current affairs, every major broadcaster fails to deliver meaningful, every day, inclusive content. Meanwhile, Gaydio - a UK based digital radio station proudly flies the flag for LGBTQIA people, delivering inclusive content and catchy bops for all gender-identities and their friends.*

*For us, Gaydio has always been the UK's most responsive radio station. They welcome new listeners, chat to regular guests, and concentrate on highlighting LGBTQIA current affairs which mainstream news avoids. One of our favourite Gaydio presenters is Jacob Edward. They are a regular producer and host for the station, a podcaster, and a Youth Worker. With that in mind, we're thrilled to welcome Jacob to our paper...*

### Tell us a little bit about yourself

Hey!! I'm Jacob, a 22-year-old nonbinary radio presenter and podcaster from... well, that's the tricky bit. I grew up in Birmingham, before moving to Manchester, but as time went on things got a bit more blurry and now, where I live is a bit of a mystery, which I'm kind of into!

I'm also autistic, meaning I operate on a different wavelength to pretty much everyone else on this planet, which is a massive challenge in an industry like radio, where 'networking' (e.g. talking to people and appearing interesting to them whilst also low-key selling yourself) is key. And yeah, that's really not my area, and I could high key go on for weeks about how radio & the wider world could do better for autistic people like myself.

Apart from radio, I love trains. It's hard to describe why, but they are just so fun to ride, they're fascinating and awesome! My main hobby when not working on audio things is video games! I lived for video games all throughout my school life and that love still exists now, despite having way less time to play them (until Animal Crossing came out and then all adult responsibilities were dropped for a few weeks).

### How did you get into radio?

Getting into radio for me, was sort of an accident... as a teen me and some friends set up a gaming YouTube channel and we all decided to buy these cheap USB microphones with our savings so the videos sounded a bit better. Overall it was fun. But I really wanted to play my favourite songs in

the videos and they would get flagged for copyright if we did. So, using the USB mic I ended up joining an internet radio station and started doing a weekly show from my bedroom. It was full of my favourite music and roping my friends in on skype to play genuinely terrible games!!

After a year of doing that I craved to see a real radio studio and found out about a local community radio station which was looking for volunteers. I sent them an email and before long I got to visit them and signed up to do a Sunday afternoon show focusing on new music! Sadly, the station no longer exists but it's the place I really found my feet working a radio desk and presenting a show, as a whole.

After this I moved to Manchester for uni and joined Gaydio on what felt like the same day I moved - this pandemic is the longest I've been away from those studios! I started as a producer on the local show for Manchester called The Exchange, then became a panellist/producer, and then got a shot on air becoming a sort of unofficial last-minute cover person for a good few months! When my demo got picked up by Radio 1 last Christmas, it was links from The Exchange that made it! #Dreams

### Who is your inspiration?

Forever and always Scott Mills. He was the first presenter I really started to regularly listen to on the radio. He's the BEST at what he does, and I got to shadow his show when I was learning the systems for my show over Christmas. I was so overwhelmed I barely said anything or moved from where I was sat, it was magic! Harry Styles was in the Live Lounge that day too but seeing him didn't really put a scratch on meeting Scott!

I also want to give a notable mention to Jacob Rickard, the producer who was co-ordinating the Christmas presenters project last year at Radio 1. His kindness, patience, understanding, and passion for his job is everything I aspire to be. He's just brilliant, a real inspiration!

### How did it feel to be featured on Radio 1?

The first words I said on the station were, "Morning! You join me on the greatest day of my life" which really sums up how I felt. This was the station I've loved for years and not only did I get to present on it, I was also making history as the first nonbinary person to be a presenter there too. Honestly, it was such a huge mix of emotions over those two days that when it was all over, I cried like never before. They weren't the sad kind of tears. It's hard to explain what kind of tears they were, but I feel like it must have been a combination of achieving my dream, having massively over socialised compared to my usual amount, and just a release of tension I'd been building up for months knowing about what was coming. It's something I'm not sure I'll ever feel again but I'm still so proud of those shows!

### How important do you think representation in the media is?

One of the most important things! Having someone like you in the spotlight can help you feel less alone, but it also helps those around you to understand that identity beyond stereotypes, which for both LGBTQ+ people and autistic people, still plays a big part in public perception of both groups.

Seeing more representation lately has been good, but we need different stories. I'm nonbinary, and I was on Radio 1 - a really positive step and a lot of people were so happy to hear me mention it on air - but my voice is just mine and my experiences being nonbinary will differ from say a non-binary person who isn't autistic, or a black nonbinary person. The more of our voices out there from different intersections the better.

### Do you have any advice for your younger self or other young non-binary folk out there?

I guess what I'd say to my younger self and to other young nonbinary people out there is: This world is still very binary, even outside of gender, a lot of narratives are still presented in a 'them and us' kinda way. It's a very restrictive way of seeing the world but one we have all been taught, and it can be hard to unlearn those things - including our internal thoughts about our own gender and how valid it is. So, I'm here to tell you it's okay to be you, it's okay to question, to try new names, labels, everything! It's all part of unlearning things that wider society has pushed on all of us. Remember: It can take time, but you're doing amazing!

### Where do you find hope in everyday life?

I'll admit hope is hard to find these days in everyday life. Living through a once in a lifetime pandemic, a second once in a lifetime financial crash (sure, Jan), and a world that is very literally on fire isn't an easy place to find hope in. But I find talking to my Mom helps - she's my best friend and biggest support. And I also find comfort in doing what I can to help, learn, and understand the world and how we got to this state. Not to mention looking at the upcoming generation and how amazing they are! They are my hope at the moment.

### What are your plans for the future?

Right now my plan is to stay safe - not a big fan of viruses to be honest! It's been weird returning to my roots doing radio from my bedroom, except now with actual people listening! That said, as someone who does find going out socially draining, it's been quite okay for me to just not have that pressure in my life. I know a lot of people won't agree with me and are gagging to go back to some kind of normal. The main thing I've learnt from this time though is how my social exhaustion presents itself. I'm hoping this means that when I do start going out again and seeing people that I'll have a better understanding of my limits.

Right, so plans for the future in this kinda work are hard to predict, so I'll go with my #DREAM scenario. Eventually I'd love to return to Radio 1, cover some shows, really have some fun on air and do the one thing I'm actually good at! Failing that I'd love to find some stable radio work (three words that aren't common in this industry) and if all of that just doesn't work out, I've decided I want to start a queer society on Mars (for real, I wanna do this)

### Any advice for anyone wanting to follow in your footsteps?

Radio is a weird one because there isn't a set way to get in. If you enjoy audio then make audio for the fun of it, build up your skills and follow people on social media who work in radio. Networking is one of the musts, which sucks so bad for us neurodiverse folk, but hopefully I'm proof it is possible to do even when you're the worst at social interaction with other humans?

I won't pretend radio is accessible, because it's not for a lot of people - myself included - until I was given the shot of a lifetime on Radio 1. Which now means people take me seriously, which is weird since I haven't changed that much...

Look out for schemes like the one I applied for at Radio 1, and find allies in the industry who get YOU! Oh, and prepare for egos and enemies! For some reason you get lots of those when you're different and trying to improve things for others like you.

Negatives aside, radio, audio, podcasts, all of it is so much fun, if you've got time and resources then play about, if you're a student, look out for student radio stations at uni or college, and if not, community stations! The only way I've survived all the rejection and hate is because I genuinely love doing this, it's so much fun and I would stop if it wasn't.

### Proudest moment/achievement so far?

I don't think I'll ever top being the first nonbinary person to present on Radio 1. I've said it to a lot of people since that I'm worried I've peaked! I'll try to be less predictable and pick another moment, which I think has to be the time I was invited to speak on a panel of role models at Stone-wall's Young Campaigners: Disability and LGBTQ+ Identities Programme. I'm not a fan of speaking in front of people (radio is different I'm in a box alone!) so it was a big step for me but also really inspiring to meet the incredible young people on that programme, they are the future!

### Anything that you wished we'd asked about that you want to add?

I just wanted to say thank you for having me, Comics Youth is one of my favourite accounts to follow on Twitter, you're all genuinely lovely and give me so much hope! This Newspaper is an awesome project and I'm so excited you wanted to include me!



# Eva Carroll

## Revolution Grrrl Style Now! Raising our Voice for Eva Carroll's Street Harassment Campaign

Our Newspaper team meets inspirational Activist, Eva Carroll, and discovers her passion for politics, dedication to women's rights and grassroots organising. Eva is calling on more young people to get involved in politics to help bring about positive change and hope for the future.

My name is Eva Carroll, I am 18 and currently studying English at the University of Cambridge. I am an activist for equality, and part of various organisations which enable me to enact the change I want to see, as well as going it alone on occasion. I was a member of UK Youth Parliament for Liverpool last year and also an ambassador for Plan International UK, a women's and children's charity.

### What motivated you to start a street harassment campaign?

I have seen first-hand (like so many other girls) the damage inflicted by misogyny in our society. The problem women and girls are facing is that over 66% of us have experienced unwanted sexual attention or sexual physical contact in a public place, and 1/3 of us take steps that we think may protect ourselves, including limiting our own freedom.

These events also have a tendency for escalation, echoed by the fact that female homicides are at their highest rate in 14 years. Furthermore, we are experiencing danger in a range of landscapes, with 46% of women receiving abuse online. And the salient thing to remember is that behind each of these statistics are people, who have their lives changed by these incidents.

Just last year I was walking along a relatively busy street in broad daylight, holding my boyfriend's hand when a group of boys on bikes came past and one slapped my bottom. My experience made me feel shameful, embarrassed and truly disheartened but was not unique. I proposed a motion to the UKYP to stop street harassment, and it was voted as one of the top 10 issues effecting young people today. I wrote an article for the Liverpool Echo chronicling the incident, which led to my appearance on ITV's This Morning to tell my story.

### What benefit has your campaign been able to provide to the community?

As a result of the campaign coverage, hundreds of women and girls got in touch with me to tell me their own ordeals and how they had to process alike emotions after similar incidents. They said that my speaking out inspired them to do the same and start to question and call out everyday sexism when they saw it.

A sense of solidarity became palpable, and the empowerment that resulted from connecting with others created a great unity. The fact that each of these people could have had just one conversation with a friend, partner or parent to make them question their own attitudes and encourage them to call out their own circle of contacts meant that a ripple effect of unwillingness to tolerate subjugation in our own public spaces took place in the local community. We have support from Metro Mayor Steve Rotherham and PCC Emily Spurrel to look into the problem in the city region and work to find solutions.

### Who is your inspiration?

My biggest inspiration is most definitely my mum. I am an only child and she raised me as a single parent which created an immense bond between us. It wasn't always easy and seeing her determination and love for me made me realise that anything is possible. I think being in a house with just women also gave me a sense of solidarity, and we always talked openly about issues of injustice meaning I felt I had a duty to make the changes I want to see in the world.

I always remember two lessons in life which she impressed upon me as salient points: to never, ever say I "hated" anyone and to always "be human". Both of these pieces of advice ultimately meant that we are all the same deep down, so be kind in life and look after people. This made me always strive to be compassionate, and to also exhibit radical empathy to those around me - I simply have to call out injustice when I see it.

### What is your proudest moment/achievement so far?

My proudest moment so far would be speaking at the Prime Minister's dispatch box in the House of Commons about the importance of tackling hate crime. I felt so proud to bring an issue of such magnitude and relevance to national attention; the number of hate crimes reported to police has more than doubled since 2013, with more than 14,000 reported in the aftermath of the EU referendum.

I vehemently believe that divisive rhetoric from our politicians cannot be excused from the hostility they create, which trickles down into abuse on our streets. I felt an empowerment, which I hope all young people can find, as I stood where Boris Johnson stands and called out his labelling of veiled Muslim women as "bank robbers" and "letter boxes", after which a 375% increase in Islamophobic incidents was recorded.

As a child of a single mum, who he also called "ignorant, aggressive and illegitimate", I felt a real sense of pride in being able to platform an issue which effects so many of the minorities who Boris Johnson has made despicable comments about.

### Where do you find hope in everyday life?

I find hope in everyday life in humanity. It is hard a lot of the time to see the good in the world, when the bad is so prevalent and hurtful, it can be very easy to despair. However, I ultimately believe that humanity can be a force for good, kindness, and strength. We need only open our eyes to the inspirational things going on around us, such as all the amazing young people standing up for what they believe in - recently evidenced in BLM protests, as well as those standing up for the environment and forcing change over the exam results algorithm.

I always think back to the starting sequence of the film Love Actually made after 9/11: real footage of families and friends reunited at airports, delighting in love and seeing their loved ones. Hatred and resentment are destructive forces, whereas compassion and love help to strengthen us individually and as a community. They are the emotions that are left in our core when the semantics of arguments are stripped away. In the words of Jo Cox, we have far more in common than that which divides us.

### What are your plans for the future?

My plans for the future are to study English Literature at King's College, Cambridge, whilst keeping up my activism and looking forward to being able to do so in a different sphere. After that I hope to go into a job where I can help people. I am not sure whether that be investigative journalism (because media transparency is so paramount in an age of falsity), politics, or humanitarian work.

### Any advice for anyone wanting to follow in your footsteps?

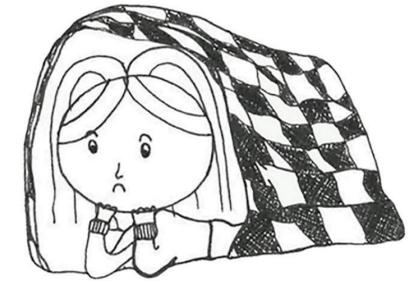
Some advice for anyone wishing to follow in my footsteps would be to follow your instincts. If something makes you feel a sense of unfairness or injustice there's probably a reason for it, and you can make a difference. Whether it be talking to your family at the dinner table, your friends, or your teachers, you have the potential to change the world around you through raising your voice.

Each conversation is like a ripple on water, and if enough are had then we can make a tidal wave of change in our local community and around the world. For creating your own campaign around an issue, I would highly recommend the charity Plan International UK's Act for Girls Toolkit; it contains everything you need to organise a campaign, create your own resources, target decision makers and amplify your campaign through the media.



today I felt  
lost and  
and a little bit  
scared about  
nothing in  
particular

and i wanted  
to hide  
under a  
blanket



then I talked to my friend...



she didn't make  
it all  
go away

but she joined  
me in it...



and that  
felt  
nice

# Discovering the Wonders of The World's Smallest Rock Museum\*

*\*We cannot confirm or deny that Noah's Rock Museum is indeed the smallest in the world!*

Tucked away in a suburban Wirral village, the shed sized, aptly named 'World's Smallest Rock Museum' is one of our region's newest curiosities. It is a work in progress but will soon be open to the public! The museum has a wide collection of fossils, rocks, and gems from contributors across the world and is a museum of much sedimental value (don't take us for granite, book yourself a visit!)



**Tell us about yourself:**  
Hi, I'm Noah Bennett from the Wirral. I am ten years old and I am interested in rocks and fossils and also love watching Steven Universe.

**Tell us about your project and how you started it:**  
I started collecting rocks and fossils about five years ago, but the project itself has only existed for about two years. After starting out with about 20 rocks me and my clueless dad decided to go out fossil hunting in old quarries in North Wales. Upon returning fossil-less we reached out to the internet for help. It turns out we unearthed a rare pocket of extreme internet kindness. With people not only giving tips and advice but also sending rocks and fossils from across the globe. We had enough rocks to start a museum, next thing you know our garden shed was, 'The World's Smallest Rock Museum'! We are lucky to have some amazing specimens from a mammoth's tooth to a pufferfish's mouth plate (around 55 million years old).

**What/who inspired you to be interested in rocks/geology?**  
Ever since I was small, I've always been drawn to rocks. When people in my class would've been watching shows like Peter Rabbit, I'd be watching Walking with Dinosaurs: Sea Monsters. I'd always talk about dinosaurs to calm myself down. As I got older, reality hit...most of the fossils of these beasts were miles away in far away continents, so I settled for the next best thing: Amazing rocks and more local fossils.

**What is your favourite part of the museum and why?**  
The donations section is my favourite because it stands as a monument to human kindness and the willingness of people to go out of their way to encourage other people. Some of my favourite donations: A petrified cyprus wood from Delaware, a megalodon tooth from Savannah River and Two fossilised fish from Wyoming

**What makes you feel happy and hopeful?**  
The ocean, and EVERYTHING to do with it! I love swimming in the sea and body boarding. I am interested in sea wildlife.

**What are your plans for the future?**  
I'm not sure where the rock museum will take me but I'd love to start welcoming more visitors after these crazy times pass. I'd love a career where I get to educate people about the world that exists around, above, and under them!



My favourite shelf



At the very start... beginning to build my collection.



My most recent find. A carboniferous fossil fern found at a riverbank in Offerton.



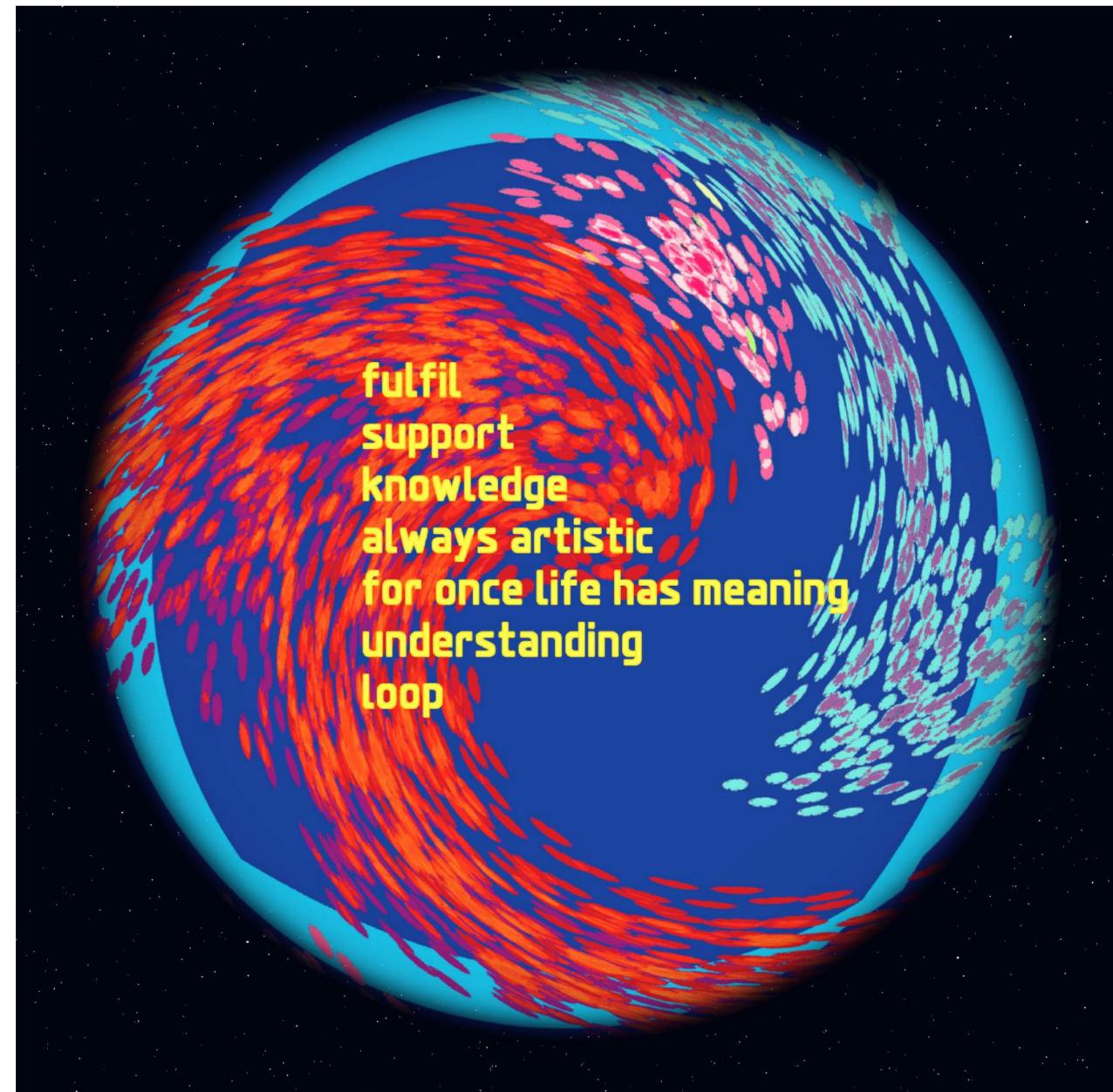
The rock museum as it looks now



Petrified Cyprus Wood



Fossil Fish



fulfil  
 support  
 knowledge  
 always artistic  
 for once life has meaning  
 understanding  
 loop

*The universe communicates hope to us in a variety of ways. Keep your senses sharp and alert, because it can arrive anywhere and at any time: On TV, in music, amongst the panels of a comic book, glooping out of a really great donut, in the face of a pal, within a held hand or a kindness observed from afar. When it arrives, use it as a fresh root from which you can grow and thrive. And when you're feeling heavy, just sharpen those senses again and pay attention to the world: The good will always find you if you keep yourself open to it. Wash, rinse, and repeat.*

## Harry's Hope

Hi, my name is Harry, I'm 12 and I was diagnosed with Williams Syndrome when I was about ten weeks old. Williams Syndrome is a genetic condition. It means I don't like loud noises, I find it hard coping with my anger, I have anxiety and I'm kind of small for my age. Good things come in small packages! I'm good at sport and keeping fit. I am really friendly. You should see how nice I am! I love singing in an operatic style, especially "Nessun Dorma".

Life has been hard for me because of the stress and my anxiety. Coping in school can be tough because sometimes people are horrible to me because of my size. Life can be tricky because I can get so mad and it affects my family.

For the future, I hope for a good life. I hope there will be no stress and no anxiety. I hope, with the right help, my problems will just go away. A good life would be nobody making fun of me. If anyone looks at you and says "Oh, you're different compared to everyone else" just walk away and tell someone you trust. Hopefully, in the future, people will be kind to people like me who are different and have disabilities.

Writing this has made me feel so emotional because of the way people treat me. I just hope for a happy life.

Harry has Williams syndrome, a rare condition which has limited his muscle movement his whole life. It is a rare congenital disorder that affects around one in 18,000 people in the UK. Symptoms include cardiovascular issues, development delays, and a distinctive facial appearance (including a 'Starburst' eye pattern). Harry hopes for a good life. To be seen as Harry first, disability second

## When all other lights go out: Hoping for Hope

Every life contains darkness, but it is possible to find a kernel of light, keep it close and let it be a beacon of hope, even in those darkest hours. When Stephen's mental health reached an impasse, his family's support became a light in the darkness

**CONTENT WARNING:** This piece contains references to mental health trauma which some readers may find triggering. If you're currently experiencing mental health difficulties, please don't struggle alone. Reach out to someone you trust or to one of the many resources listed on the back cover of this paper for support. Take everything a day at a time, remember that you're loved and you're going to get through this (we promise).

Two months after my 18th birthday I was sitting at a train station in Huyton fully prepared to take my own life. My mum and my girlfriend were frantically calling and texting me and I was convinced that in a matter of minutes I'd be gone. Fast forward 11 months and I'm preparing for my first holiday with my girlfriend and I'm moving forward with what I consider to be a happy and joyful life, and I have hope to thank for that.

Hope is something that most people search for and desperately try to find in their lives, whether that's through religion, through other people's success stories, or through just trying to find positivity in the human race. But if you're hoping for hope, then you'll be hopeless: Hope is something that finds you.

The feeling you get that everything will be okay before a job interview, the moment of optimism before a tough exam, even the insanity of gambling companies and the national lottery all stems from the hope of people desperate for a change in fortunes.

Spend time doing what makes you happy and hope will appear. Spend time with people you love and hope will appear. Spend time learning what makes YOU so amazing and hope will appear. Your struggles will pass but hope will remain and with that hope you will completely own whatever it is you're pursuing in your life.

It may be hard for people to find hope when the world seems so devoid of empathy and compassion. Some people might not have the luxury of a loving support system around them, or they may feel alone. My advice would be to look for one positive in everything you do - a positive when you look in the mirror, a positive in what someone has done for you today etc.

And even if you can't see hope right now, I'm certain that it will appear for you in the same way it appeared for me, someday.

Love yourself first and everything else falls into line.

Leeds Arts Union

# 10 Day Self-care Challenge

DAY 1

## drink 8 glasses of water

It's recommended that you drink 8 glasses of water a day, but so many of us struggle with actually doing this. Some people don't like water, some people just prefer other drinks. There are ways to make drinking water easier for you, such as flavouring with lemon or fruit. We all know how important it is for both our physical and mental health and it's one of the most basic forms of self-care. You can keep track of this in your planner or bullet journal to make sure you get it done!

DAY 2

## listen to a positive podcast

There are tons of podcasts out there on pretty much every topic under the sun. Self-improvement is a wonderful form of self-care, so listen to a podcast that will help you make positive changes in yourself or in your life. A great one to start with is Andy J Miller's Creative Pep Talk which covers a whole range of topics but with a focus on life as a designer.

DAY 3

## spend time in nature

Nature is a calming place for most people. The fresh air, the beauty, and the solitude of nature can help you clear your mind, increase your creativity, lower your stress levels, and become more mindful, among other benefits. Take some time to go outside and take a walk or just sit in nature and take note of your surroundings. If you suffer from depression or anxiety, this can also help keep your symptoms at bay. Not sure where to go or what to do? Check out the Benefits of Nature cards in the Leeds Arts Union which cover a whole host of ways to invite more nature into your life.

DAY 4

## pamper yourself

Pampering yourself is probably the most popular form of self-care, and for good reason. Pampering not only helps you relax and take a break, but it can also help you feel good about yourself. When you take the time to use a face mask, make yourself a hair mask, paint your nails, or take a nice bath, you're telling yourself that you're worth the effort. You're putting time and energy into yourself and letting yourself know that you're worthy.

DAY 5

## go to bed early

It's recommended that an adult gets 6-8 hours of sleep a night, but this is yet another thing most people struggle with. Getting too little of sleep can leave you feeling groggy, low on energy, grumpy, and it can even cause a cold or illness. If this is something that you struggle with, go to bed early and try to sleep for 6-8 hours. If you're someone who over-sleeps, you could set your alarm for a bit earlier to make sure you're only getting 6-8 hours. Either way, you'll feel better in the morning.

DAY 6

## write in your journal (or start one)

Journaling is a lot of peoples favourite form of self-care, probably because of the massive amount of benefits that it can bring into your life. It can help you process your emotions, feel calmer, be more mindful, achieve your goals, stay organized, and way more. So, start a journal or make it a point to write in one that you have. You can use a traditional journal, a bullet journal, a computer document, or even a journaling app.

DAY 7

## do a random act of kindness

Few things make us feel as good as doing something kind or generous for someone else, plus it spreads some positivity around - which the world sorely needs. So, donate items or money to a charity, give someone a genuine compliment, purchase someone a gift, or do something else that you can think of.

DAY 8

## practice mindfulness

Mindfulness and meditation is a great form of self-care that can help you learn how to handle stressful situations or simply just take a break. There are loads of great apps out there like Headspace or Calm that offer guided meditation if you have no clue where to start!

DAY 9

## write a list of things that bring you joy

Or make a list of things you love about yourself. It may seem silly or pointless, but this can do so much for your subconscious and it can help you more than once. Be descriptive and detailed add in things like your favourite colour. Just write as many things as you can think of. You can put this note or list away to read whenever you're feeling low.

DAY 10

## declutter

When your house is a mess, your brain can feel like a mess, plus your mood and motivation can go downhill too. Decluttering whatever room that you spend the most time in doesn't take much time, but it can give you a load of benefits. Your brain will feel more organized and you will feel more calm and focused.

## Checklist

- day 1 - water
- day 2 - positive podcast
- day 3 - nature
- day 4 - pamper
- day 5 - early night
- day 6 - journal
- day 7 - random act
- day 8 - mindfulness
- day 9 - list
- day 10 - tidy

# MEDITATION

**Here at Comics Youth, we've always strived to celebrate the amazing efforts and achievements of our local community.** As this past year has been a source of uncertainty and worry for many, we wanted to take the time to raise the spirits of other readers in Liverpool by sharing the admirable stories of our local heroes. Those who have inspired hope, joy, and resilience within us and have never wavered in going above and beyond in our area.

Local Mindfulness Therapist Amanda Eves has left such a tremendous impact within the Prescot area in helping others with their mental as well as spiritual journey. What is Mindfulness exactly? Why can it be so beneficial for our mental wellbeing? And how did Amanda start a career in it?

## What is mindfulness and how do we practice it?

Basically, I would describe it as living in the present moment, neither looking ahead nor looking to the past. This quote is a good way to sum it up.

"Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way on purpose in the present moment and non-judgmentally" - Jon Kabal Zin

What's your career background and what made you want to run mindfulness classes?

From a very early age, I've always been passionate about helping others especially young people. At just 14 years old, I helped out at after school clubs and play schemes. When I reached 18, I had then progressed on to contributing further to youth organisations.

I have worked under the NHS for 23 years now, with various roles ranging from a medical clerk to a stop smoking advisor for young people. Throughout these roles, I learnt about CBT (cognitive behavioural therapy), motivational interviewing, and many more skills. However, I still felt that something was missing in my career path. Therefore, I started to look into alternative therapies which would offer more than just writing someone a prescription.



First, I came across hypnotherapy. I was immediately intrigued by the power of the subconscious mind and wanted to know more and subsequently qualified as a hypnotherapist. Whilst learning about hypnotherapy, we touched upon the art of mindfulness which I found to be a simple strategy which can help people with so many issues. After then acquiring a mindfulness qualification, I started running my own mindfulness classes as I wanted to help as many people as I could to discover and use mindfulness.

Now I run my own successful hypnotherapy/mindfulness business called Lime Therapies alongside working with young people who have autism, ADHD and behaviour problems. I bring all my knowledge and skills to this job to help support and improve the lives of the young people I meet.

## Why is mindfulness so important to you?

Well, it's very easy to do - anytime, any place, anywhere - it's always at hand. It helps to immediately calm and ground you, thus helping your mind to see things more clearly. Practicing mindfulness on a daily basis can help with depression, anxiety, concentration, and many other issues. I myself have suffered with mental health issues and I can see the benefits every day from practicing it. I just want everyone to get the same experience as I do.

How do you think your mindfulness classes have benefited not just yourself but the local community?

Firstly, it has brought people of all age groups together both young and old which in itself has shown how similar we all are and that anyone can suffer from mental health issues. We could easily start talking more openly about our issues in a non-judgemental manner.

But the main benefit for me is seeing the gradual change in people. Seeing how they loved learning mindfulness. Seeing how much more relaxed they were after leaving the sessions.

And hearing many people say how their sleeping had improved, how they were coping better, and just how generally calmer and happier they are with themselves. This feeling of actually changing people's lives is priceless.

## You ran some classes with local mental health youth organisation The Lee Cooper Foundation. Could you tell me about your experience?

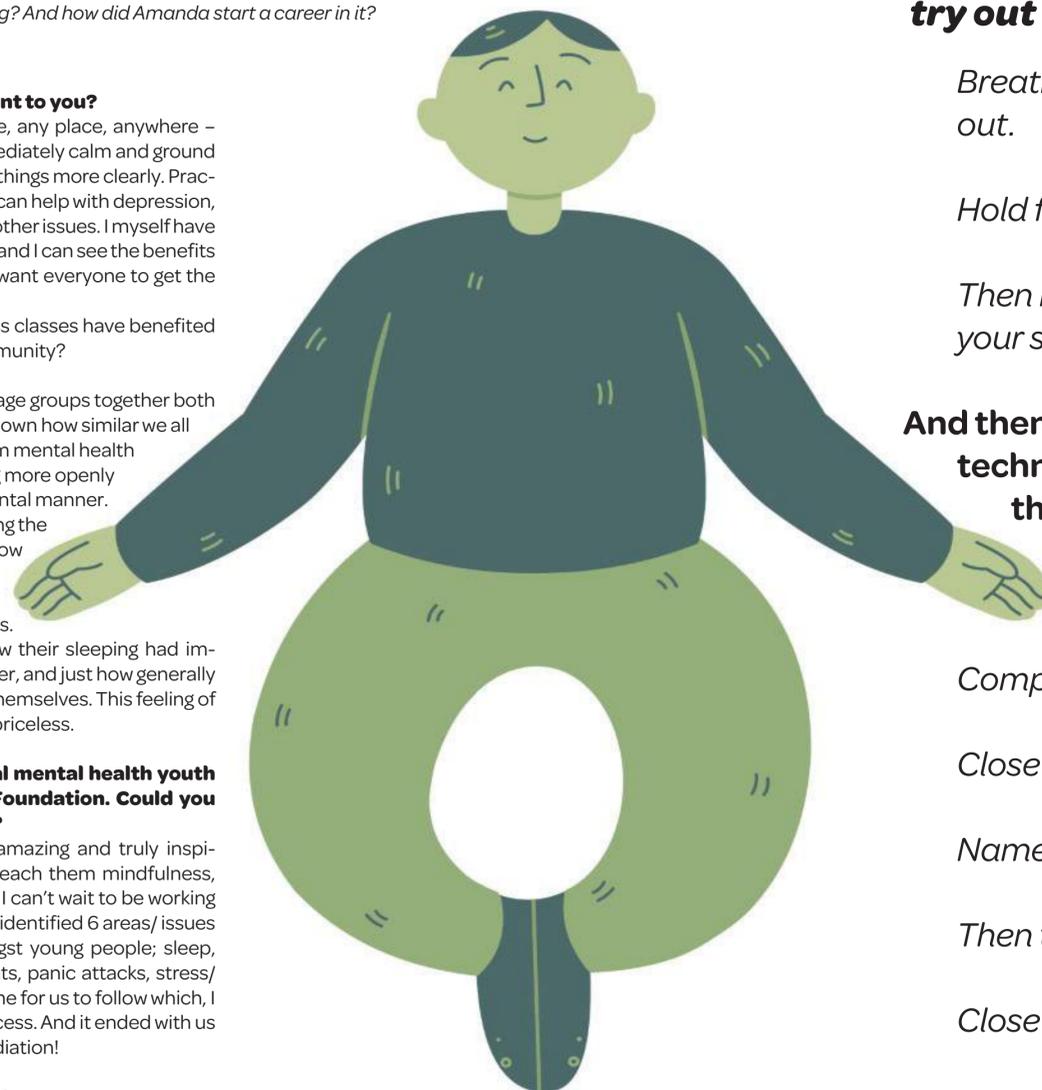
This group of young people are amazing and truly inspirational! Although I was there to teach them mindfulness, they have taught me so much too. I can't wait to be working with them again. Together we have identified 6 areas/ issues which are most prominent amongst young people; sleep, depression, OCD, negative thoughts, panic attacks, stress/ anger. I wrote a bespoke programme for us to follow which, I am pleased to say, was a great success. And it ended with us all in our PJs doing some sleep mediation!

## Your proudest moment to date?

My proudest moment has to be time spent with my daughter Abbie. She inspires me every day to carry on with my work and I love seeing how proud she is of me just as I am of her.

## What advice do you have for anyone out there beginning their mindfulness practices?

It's hard to start with and you may think this is not for you, but persistence will pay off. Soon you will be reaping the benefits mindfulness can bring and a new, calmer you will start to appear.



## Amanda also gave us tips for anyone who wanted to get started with YOGA!

### try out this basic breathing exercise!

*Breathe in through the nose for 4 seconds, pushing your belly out.*

*Hold for 2 seconds.*

*Then breath out for 8 seconds or as long as you can, feeling your stomach deflating.*

### And then you could move on to completing the 5 distraction technique! This exercise in particular can help to prevent the onset of a panic attack, calm anxiety, and ease off negative thoughts. A very good mindfulness skill to have in your tool-box!

*Complete 3 mindful breaths (see above).*

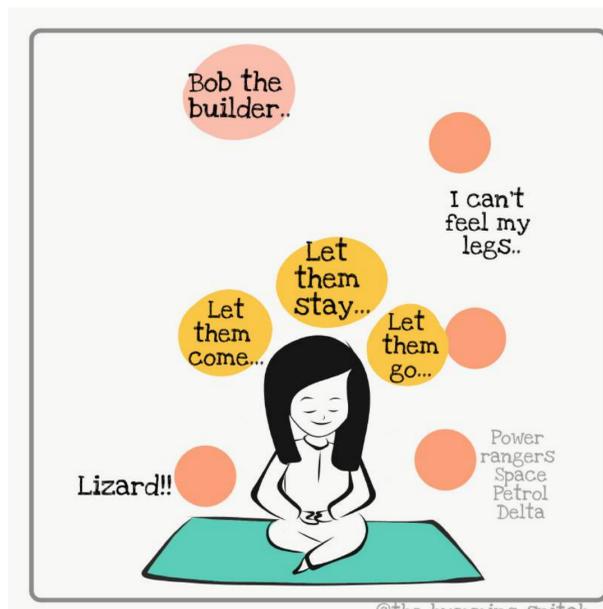
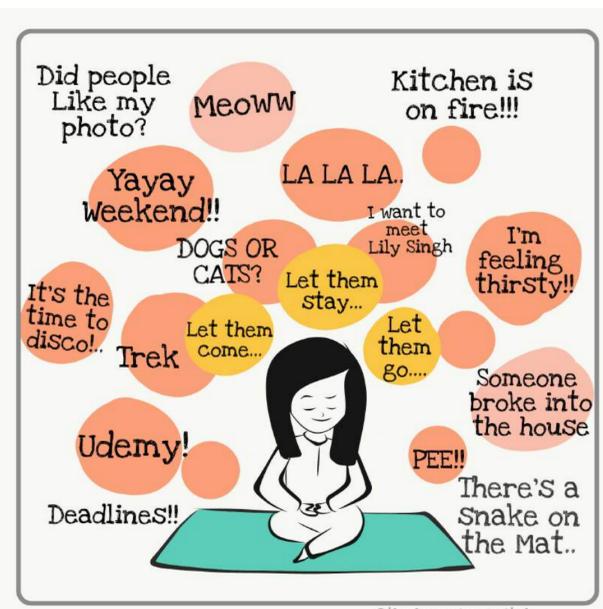
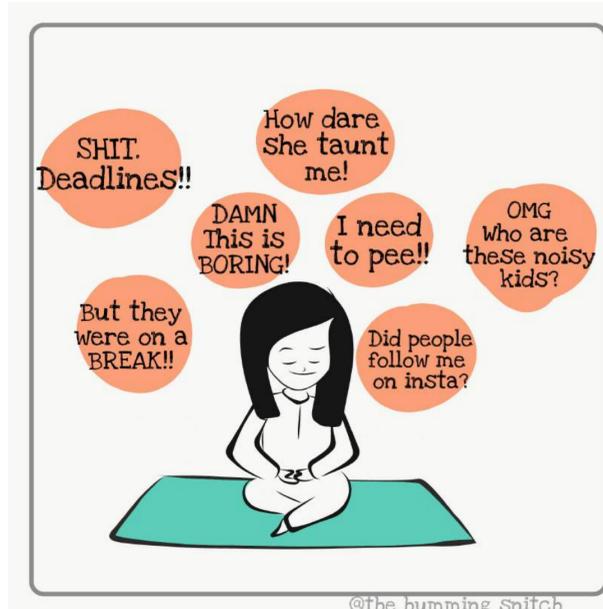
*Close your eyes then open them.*

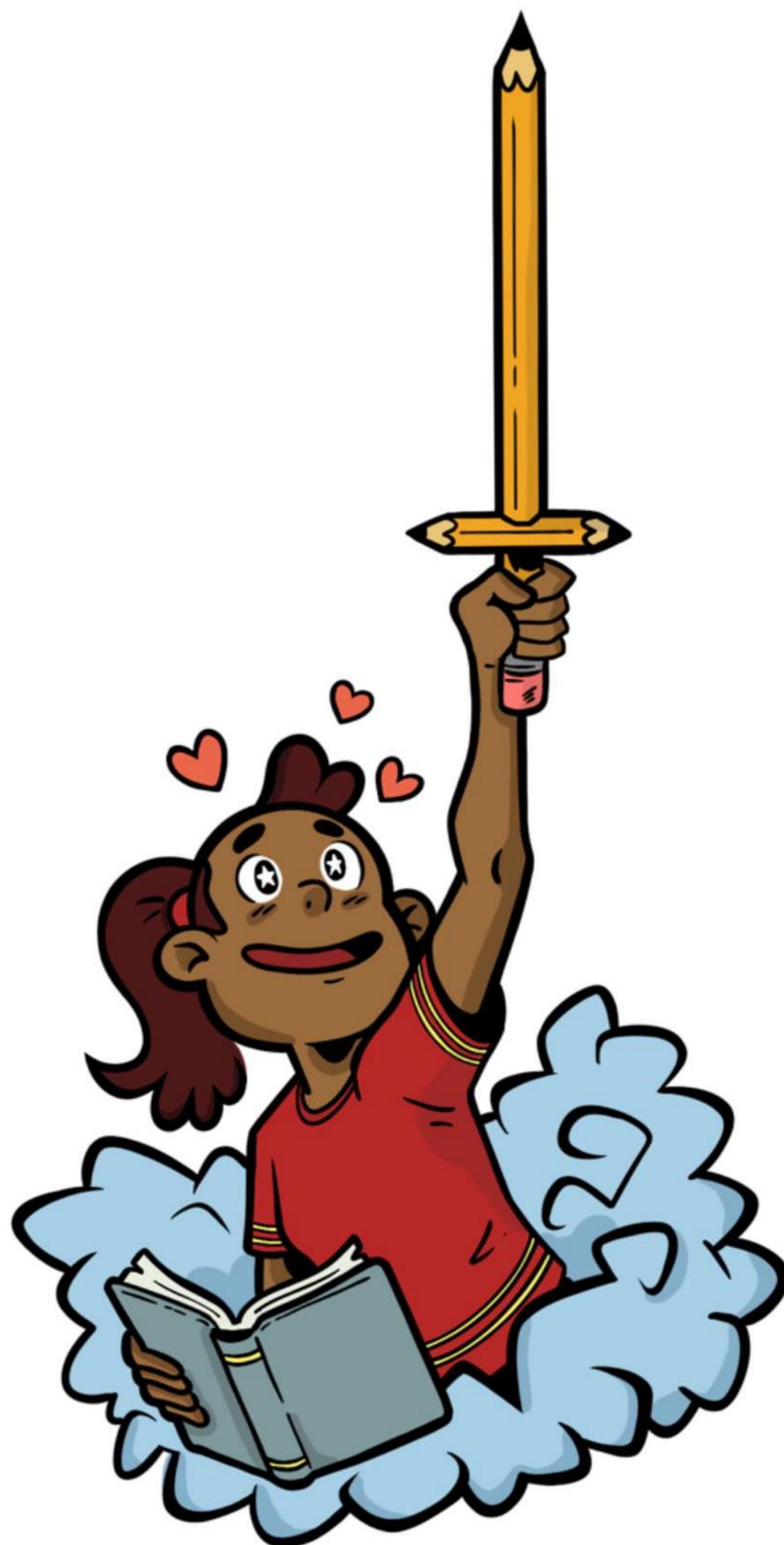
*Name five things you can see.*

*Then take a deep breath in and out.*

*Close your eyes again and keep them closed.*

*Then proceed to name 5 things you can hear, touch and smell.*





## Dismantle Institutionalised Racism: Why Our Education System Needs to be Decolonised.

***A colonial curriculum is characterised by its unrepresentative, inaccessible, and privileged nature. The discussion around decolonising our education system has been recharged by the recent spate of Black Lives Matter Protests. Jenny gets to the heart of what this movement is about.***

As Angela Rayner, former Shadow Secretary of State for Education put it in February 2019; "Like much of our establishment, our universities are too male, pale and stale and do not represent the communities that they serve or modern Britain."

It is perhaps not so surprising that 21st Century education remains dominated by white men. Ethnic minority groups, in particular, are marginalised and chronically underrepresented within Universities, colleges and earlier schooling systems. In the aftermath of Brexit, Britain is experiencing yet another identity crisis in which we cannot decide whether our past is something to be proud of or ashamed of. Our history; one of imperialism, colonialism and subjugation, has served only to further institutionalised racism.

The year 2020 has brought many obvious challenges but has also revealed many ignored, concealed and suppressed social issues. The murder of George Floyd in May has reignited the Black Lives Matter movement in a way that has sent shockwaves across the world. Of course, the movement has always been prevalent and revolutionary, especially to Black Americans living in a country run by a system of institutionalised racism. With support reverberating from the UK, across the pond to the US, the younger generation especially has bolstered BLM's presence in Britain and called for the re-education of society.

Despite our attempts to dissociate ourselves from US institutionalised racism and police brutality, the UK faces similar problems. As this country's first black female MP, Diane Abbott has been subject to racist abuse for her entire career. In the run-up to the General Election in 2017, 45% of all abuse tweets against female MPs were received by Diane Abbott. The Windrush Scandal of 2018 saw at least 83 cases of British citizens of Caribbean descent wrongly deported by the Home Office. Many more lost their jobs or homes, wrongfully detained and denied medical care as a result. More recently, Coronavirus has illuminated forms of racism within local communities – black people being 54% more likely to be fined by police for breaching COVID-19 restrictions.

ing COVID-19 restrictions.

The murder of George Floyd is also mirrored within British history. In 2008, Sean Rigg was suffering a mental health crisis and was subsequently pinned down by multiple police officers and left to die in police custody. The officers in question remain free of any charge. Other people of colour along with Sean, including Sheku Bayoh, Mzee Mohammed, Leon Patterson, Cynthia Jarrett, Joy Gardner, Christopher Alder, and many others have died after contact with UK police. As Wail Qasim so powerfully states in his article regarding the UK's role in institutionalised racism, "we must acknowledge that this is our shared history." The UK is far from innocent.

It wasn't until my first year of University as a History student that I studied and understood the extent of Britain's racist and oppressive history. Given the longstanding issue of institutionalised racism, recently reignited by consistent US police brutality, this is unacceptable.

I should not have arrived at university surprised to learn about the extent of the destruction, rape and murder of native peoples overseas by British powers. I should have already known of colonial atrocities as a result of essential primary and secondary education. Instead, I had to learn these things as an adult and subsequently educate my parents, grandparents and family members.



A tweet from @MrAhmednurAli particularly resonated with me recently: ‘it’s a privilege to learn about racism instead of experiencing it your whole life.’ I hope to use this platform and my privilege as a white person to support and actively promote the decolonisation of our education and an end to discrimination of all kinds. This is well overdue.

As white people, the primary ways we can support the movement is to recognise our privilege and use this to re-educate, reform and create change. I believe change begins with education and the destruction of systematic racism can only be achieved by rebuilding the system.

**“Humanities are about human stories, and we are all human. If you don’t have diversity, you don’t have the full human experience.”**

*Carys Nelkon, Head of Programmes at Arts Emergency*

A theory as to why white Brits imagine the UK to be ‘not as bad’ as the US is because black history is noticeably absent from the curriculum. The brutal colonial past of our country is unacknowledged and hidden from the younger generation. Maybe out of embarrassment, maybe out of the ignorance of the older generations, maybe due to the romanticised image of our past that we like to project as our identity.

‘Britannia rules the waves.’ ‘The sun never sets on the British Empire.’ ‘We used to run the biggest empire the world has ever seen.’ Though these may seem distant from modern-day Britain, the latter quote came from Boris Johnson in 2016 regarding Brexit trade deals. Surprised? You shouldn’t be. The Leave Campaign for Brexit was littered with anti-immigration, xenophobic and racist rhetoric to appeal to British nationalism. Nigel Farage’s anti-migrant poster is a particularly striking example of scaremongering tactics and the attempt to incite racism to further a political campaign.

These tactics could be explained by our inability to accept our loss of global influence and power since the height of colonialism. The British Empire remains the centre of the ‘anglosphere’ fantasy and a key element of the identity crisis primarily felt by Baby Boomers and Generation X.



The repeated nationalist and patriotic rhetoric of ‘take back control of our country’ added to the Us vs Them discourse of modern-day racism. Implying that our presence in the EU would contaminate British identity and prevent us from doing things ‘our way.’ When, if we are thinking historically, our way is to raid, invade and enslave far off lands. Though this aspect of our identity is hidden and replaced with the romanticised image of imperialism, strength and wealth.

This ‘historical amnesia’ (Ward and Rasch, 2019), serves institutionalised racism and promotes division. After recognising our ignorance, we can then begin to decolonise the curriculum and ourselves.

**“If a powerful knowledge curriculum means recreating the best that has been thought by dead, white men – then I’m not very interested in it.”**

*Mary Bousted, joint general secretary of the National Education Union (NEU)*

The British school curriculum is a primary example of our self-centred and self-congratulatory view of history. Michael Gove, former Secretary of State for Education, initiated a new curriculum designed to ‘provide pupils with an introduction to the essential knowledge that they need to be educated citizens.’ These changes were felt most within the Humanities curricula, including History and English Literature.

Gove’s view of ‘essential knowledge’ was limited, nationalistic and primarily white. He suggests history lessons should be focused on British history and how we have impacted the world – of course, he did not mean the parts we should be ashamed of. Instead, he suggested we should ‘celebrate’ the role of the British Isles in world history and initiate a ‘rebalancing, not an erasure’ of our imperial past – yet maintaining the jingoistic view that ‘this trashing of our past has to stop.’

It is the ‘trashing’ of British history that needs to be more prevalent in the classroom. Not only should the curriculum recognise a diverse ethnic heritage of the UK so children can see themselves represented throughout history, but it should also acknowledge and teach our young people about the colonial atrocities of the not-so-distant past.

This requires the decolonisation of our education system. Though this is supported by most academic staff, some have differing opinions. Jeremy Black, Professor of History at the University of Exeter, suggests that decolonising the curriculum recasts the role of a historian as someone who wishes people in the past thought differently – apparently making history a ‘platform for socio-political activism in the present.’

Another Professor of History at Exeter, Doug Stokes, suggests that the campaign focusses on the horrors of Western colonialism and the slave trade, thereby ignoring the West’s role in abolishing slavery. He thinks that the majority of university humanities departments are progressive and offer a wide range of critiques on past values such as imperialism, whilst there are barely any courses celebrating the ‘achievements of Western civilisation.’

I see both Black’s and Stokes’ viewpoints as missing the point. Their jump to the conclusion that decolonising the curriculum is some socialist/feminist plot to silence white male voices is a predictable defensive response to progressive campaigns. Not only would decolonising our teaching allow the youth of today to learn about the evils of Western imperialism, but it would also give a voice to BAME academics and allow students to see themselves reflected in history.

**“To diversify our curriculum is to challenge power relations and call for deeper thinking about the content of our courses and how we teach them.”**

*James Muldoon, University of Exeter*

Fortunately, the campaign for diversifying the humanities also has the backing of many reputable academics. James Muldoon clarifies that decolonising universities does not mean the complete eradication of white male perspectives but is about broadening ‘our intellectual vision’ and challenging outdated values. He also identifies that diversifying academic staff would go on to legitimise people of colour as equal intellectual authority and creators of knowledge.

Jonathan Saha shares this view and goes on to suggest that history in the UK is damaged and tarnished by the lack of ethnic diversity. Advance HE’s Equality Challenge Unit for 2017-18 found that 93.7% of historians are white. To me, this is unsurprising given that I have only ever had a non-white lecturer once or twice during my time as a history student, despite having multiple lectures a week for almost two years.

The statistics don’t end there. Only 22.7% of undergraduate students across all disciplines are

BAME, only 22.3% of all master’s graduates are BAME, and 14.2% of BAME students attain a first-class undergrad degree as opposed to 22.8% of white students. For history, only 0.5% of academics in history are black and a mere 11% of history students are BAME. This means that along with facing discrimination in their day-to-day lives due to the ignorance and ingrained racism of some Brits, students of colour are likely to face these obstacles within their academic career too – severely limiting the likelihood that they will continue to higher education. Therefore, the curriculum becomes overwhelmingly white-washed, with a large proportion of white staff to match.

Along with these shocking figures, a culture of division within humanities departments is very much alive in UK universities. A report by the University and College Union found that black female academics faced systematic racism and discrimination within their departments – identifying that white men outnumbered black women as professors 560 to 1. Another survey showed that historians of colour were expected by white colleagues to study and teach ‘their’ culture and heritage. Saha points out how this is incredibly limiting and racially marginalises BAME staff by defining their academia by their ethnicity. Yet, white male academics like Jeremy Black and Doug Stokes see the decolonisation of our education system as a threat to them.



Claire Alexander and Debbie Weekes-Bernard profoundly summed the issue in their study of inequality within the national curriculum. The teaching of History in the UK is exclusionary and aiming to defend ‘Britishness’, subsequently erasing our ‘controversial and contested past’ and placing BAME groups ‘firmly on the margins of British history.’

Though incredibly important, the expansion of reading lists and BAME representation in students and staff needed to successfully decolonise the curriculum are small steps in a larger programme of reform. An examination of our education system as a whole – who it favours, what it teaches, who teaches and how – are essential is rebalancing power relations and deeply interrogating the intricate inequalities at play.

I cannot say it better than the academic and activist Gus John of Coventry University, who suggests that the decolonisation rhetoric should be used to impact public policy and social understanding of racism and be used as a ‘tool of liberation’ within communities across the UK. Change begins with knowledge in the minds of young people and grows to influence a generation. That’s what education is, after all – the most powerful weapon against ignorance and injustice.

*Jenny Speakman (She/Her)*

# A Hope More Powerful than the Sea: We Must Do More to Support Refugees

*Seeking refuge: Almost 7,000 refugees are believed to have made the journey to the UK by boat so far this year. Hannah Coldwell recounts her experience of a school trip to France and calls for compassion for refugees and migrants within the UK.*

Imagine being in the middle of an unknown sea, on a frail little boat, with far too many people on it. You can't go back from where you came from, and you have no idea if where you are going will welcome you. This, unfortunately, is the reality for many refugees.

Two years ago, I was happily enjoying the Year 7 French trip with my classmates. Because of the size of our year, the trips were split into two. On the first trip, five immigrants were found in the wheel arches of one of the coaches on the journey back. The service station they were at was surrounded by helicopters as they immediately arrested the refugees.

On my trip, our teachers had decided to take the ferry instead of the Eurostar back to England as they believed the security was tighter so therefore there wouldn't be any issues like the previous trip. Everything was fine until it came time to show our passports before boarding the ferry. Through border control, everything was still fine, and the border control workers were very welcoming. However, this seemed like a distraction for what was about to happen.

When a coach goes through security, sniffer dogs are taken into the coach and it is searched. The dogs only bark if they detect trace of contraband or people. They won't bark for any other reason, as they have been trained that way.

We were in a line, waiting to get back onto the coach, when the dogs started barking like crazy. Something was on that coach and the security people were desperate to find it. As we sat in the hot, stuffy border control room, the carpets on the coach were ripped up and the inside of the coach was teared out. After police flocked the coach, we were finally allowed to get back on, with no one having any idea what was happening, and our teachers telling us nothing. Though shaken up and confused, the rest of the journey went off without a hitch.

A week or so later, our parents received an email. An email that was very upsetting. We were informed that immigrants were also hiding in the wheel arches of our coach back to England.



Imagine being so desperate that you risk your life in the hope you will be granted entry to a foreign country. People in privileged living situations who don't have to flee their countries for something completely out of their control don't understand the hope those refugees have for the prospect of a safe country.

That hope is what drives them to risk their lives on dinghies not built for prolonged journeys across the ocean and to hide in wheel arches of vehicles. Not only that, but they only have a few of their most valuable possessions in their perilous journey to a safer place. That hope is less hope and more desperation. It's life threatening, and yet it's almost mandatory for survival. It's ironic the danger these poor people have to face to get to somewhere safer.

It shouldn't be like this. We should welcome everyone who needs help into our countries with open arms and offer them help and shelter. After all, we can't begin to fathom what they've been through to get here.

The promise of hope is beginning to ebb away for refugees, and their struggle is still an ongoing problem. Furthermore, stories such as this one are being ignored by or misrepresented in the media – all the while the refugee crisis remains very prevalent in Europe and other places of the world. We need to restore their hope in our countries by offering shelter to these vulnerable, desperate people, and a safe passage to get there too.

*By Hannah Coldwell, age 13*

# Litter Picking: A Powerful Tool in the Battle to Beat Plastic Pollution

*Armed with bags, gloves, litter pickers and a strong sense of purpose, Kieron Gordon set up 'Keep Widnes Tidy', a voluntary litter picking group in Widnes 7 years ago. Keep Widnes Tidy aims to bring the community together to tidy-up, clean and green-up Widnes by organising and carrying out litter picks. The Group also aims to raise awareness of the impact litter has on the environment and the planet by creating cleaner communities.*



Hi, I'm Keiron, 22 and from Widnes. 7 years ago, I got fed up of the litter around my home and decided I was going to do something about it. Back then for someone so young to do something like this it was quite different, but I enjoyed it. I did it after school and then in the summer holidays. When I joined sixth form, I was able to do even more litter picking. My passion for this and the environment took over my life and when I left sixth form and I took a whole year off doing nothing but litter picking.

I thought I would start posting my work on social media to see what reaction it would get, and I was blown away by the support I received. It was at this point I realised there is still hope out there and that people do care about the environment and keeping their community tidy.

From here, I wondered where I was going to end up as I needed to find paid employment. However, I really hoped I could find a job which incorporated my hobby. Luckily, my dream came true! I landed myself a job at Halton Housing as a caretaker and loved every minute of it: I had a full-time job and I could still do my hobby.

I'm now 22 and my litter picking hobby has grown into a passion and another job completely. I now run Keep Widnes Tidy, a successful page on Facebook, and I carry out my own clean-ups of local grot spots and organise group litter picks.

I am also a #Litterhero ambassador for Keep Britain Tidy and part of ROC, which is a local initiative set up to end the loneliness in the elderly. I'm now also going into schools and clubs to give talks on the environment and the planet and I hope that doing all this work really does contribute meaningfully to combating the issue of global warming.

When I started my hobby there was not the awareness we have now on the planet or climate change. And where we are now is a massive step in the right direction. We all need to wake up and realise that we only have one Earth and so far, we haven't done a great job of looking after it. You may be wondering what one person from a small town in the Northwest can do. But me doing what I'm doing is helping future generations to take similar steps that may also save their future - I hope you can likewise take something from this article to help save our planet, too.

**Twitter:** @Keiron160  
**Instagram:** keiron\_gordon  
**Facebook:** Keep Widnes Tidy

## Finding Hope at the Bottom of Pandora's Box

*When Pandora's box was opened, seven deadly sins emerged and began to plague the earth one by one. However, hope was the only thing that remained.*

A warped, pessimistic perception on reality makes everything so much more somber. With our hectic lives and the amount of pressure we face as teenagers, constant negative thoughts can just about become an involuntary reflex.

Conflicting thoughts always find a way to cloud your mind as you try your best to sleep, and low moods can slowly fade in and out like a small tide. Some days, however, they can feel like they're crashing down on you, swallowing you whole.

Sometimes it is difficult to discern a light during the days, weeks, and months where you slowly find yourself sinking, pulling away from friends and the people you love, and overthinking or stressing about the near future.

It can be easy to feel yourself starting to slip, but the main thing to remember is that you are not alone and that you are loved.

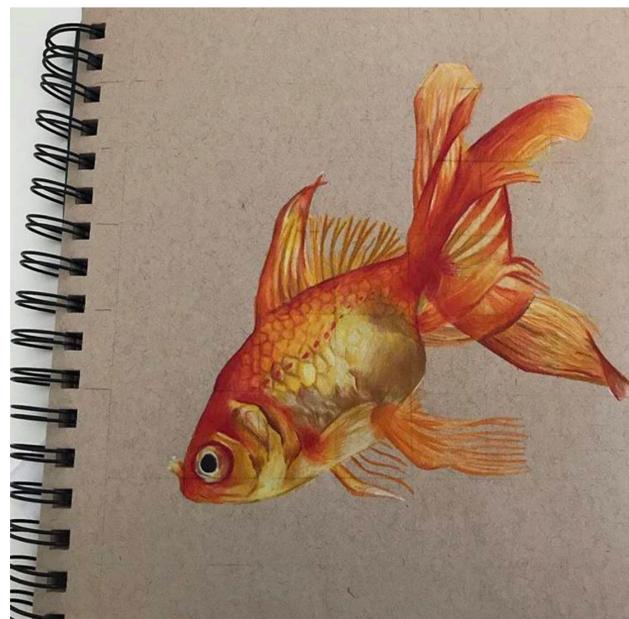
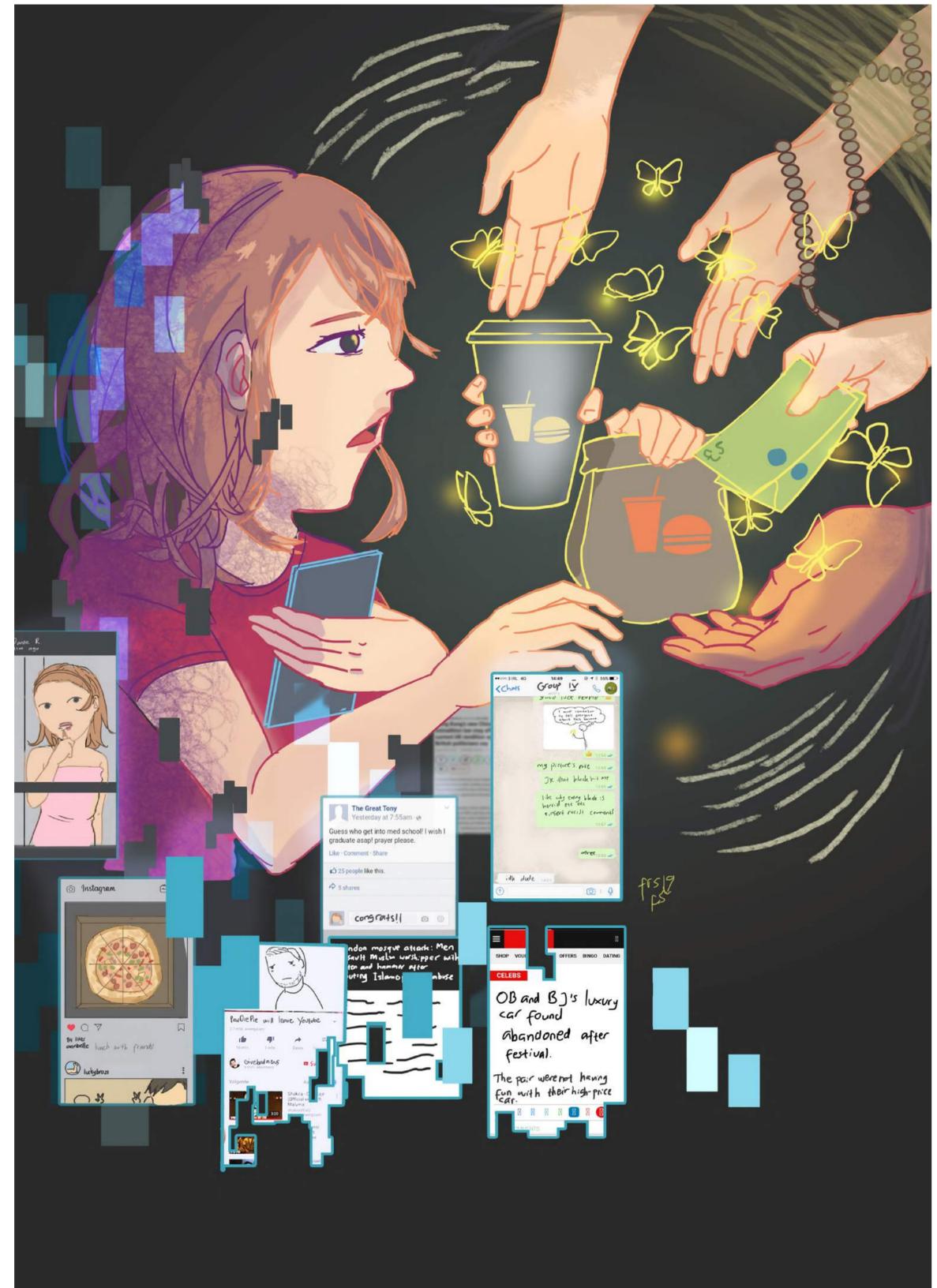
Whilst there can be multitude of difficulties that you shall face in your lifetime – like the opening of Pandora's Box – hope will always remain. Allow it to envelope you and to spark your soul with a sense of freedom and empowerment and keep persisting.

Think back to the last time you were overthinking or feeling dejected – you got through it! You were strong enough then, and you're strong enough now. You will get through your current struggles, and inevitably your future ones too.

We are all a myriad of people, lives, emotions, and souls. However, there is one element in all of us that remains constant: hope. Make sure you relish the changing nature of life as well as learning from all the consequences of curveballs that you experience.

And remember: That even a small glimmer of hope can get you through your darkest days.

*Giselle*



There have been obvious exceptions (thank goodness), but 2020 has regardless thrown up some less than terrific examples of humanity. The less said about these people, the better. But what we do know is that one thing that helps to restore our hope in the universe – besides frantically Googling ‘wholesome stories about Keanu Reeves’ ad nauseum – is focusing our gaze away from humanity and at nature instead.

Losing ourselves in the beauty of the world and the animals who inhabit it can be a pure way to remember that Hey, everything can be pretty nice and nifty, really! And that’s precisely what Jodie’s gorgeous still life portraits of animals serve up: A moment of tranquillity and hope. A reminder that life continues and flourishes – even amongst the greatest challenges and chaos.

We all have our phone habits: The social media or websites we wish we could spend less time on. The profiles and pages we automatically lurch our fingers towards to doom scroll or waste an idle few minutes – or hours, in some cases (we’ve all been there). And like a diet that subsists solely on junk food, we might get temporary satisfaction from the quick fix of it all, but in the long term the over-use of our phones can make our brains feel as sluggish and ouchy as a bucket of 50 popcorn chicken can be on our guts. Just because you can do it, doesn’t always mean that you should. But it can be hard to stop once you start.

Use your phone. Love your phone! But remember to look up and around you and at people IRL from time to time too. You never know – you might discover a little hope right in front of you (and it might not be on a screen)

# LOCAL HEROES

'Hero' is a word that gets tossed around fairly casually these days. And you know what? We're here for it. You don't need a cape and superpowers (or a trust fund and a deep fear of goth mammals – looking at you Batman) in order to be a hero – you just need to be kind, show a little love, and spread a little hope.

*We asked for nominations of local heroes – people who have made a massive impact on our local community with small or major acts – and good grief, did you lovelies deliver! We were inundated with loving tributes to wonderful people of all ages, and this is but a small selection of the local hero nominations we received which gave our hearts a little squeeze...*

## Sam Davies

(nominated by Kellea Turner)

Sam dressed as a dinosaur and entertained younger children in his community by walking and dancing around in his local community to entertain younger children. "Sam" the dinosaur became the highlight of the day for many young children who would eagerly wait for him to arrive on their street.



## Giammarco Di Gregorio

(Nominated by Jude Hanlon)

In response to the Covid-19 Pandemic and an even larger number of children experiencing disadvantaged education, Durham student Giammarco founded Learn With Us Summer Camp 2020.

He recruited 18 staff members and supported them through outstanding leadership. He is supportive, ethical, creative, and extremely hard working. Giammarco thinks of others before himself and works to create equal opportunities for those most disadvantaged.

This volunteer-led organisation has provided free inspiring educational content for children across the summer, particularly in the North East of England. They create fun, inspiring lessons on subjects, including the environment, the human body, space, foreign languages and cultures, psychology, Harry Potter and world news.

## Brian Mutton

(Nominated by Daniel Ryder)

Brian is retired but does anything for anyone that he can, and is often giving up his time to build ideas for community projects that bring people together from all walks of life. He's built a pirate ship for our local community event which engaged lots of children and has also built a veg cart for MyClubmoor which distributes free fruit and veg to the community (all grown on his own allotment!).

He's not only good with his hands but his computer skills are also incredible and he'll often do CAD drawings for projects which help a team to visualise what a space could become. Overall Brian's actions have endless impact on lots of local projects around North Liverpool.

## John Burton

(Jayne Greaves)

John is the founder of Inside Connections who help and support individuals released from custody with help and support in things from housing through to sustainable employment. John has completely turned his life around to support others like him after spending many years involved in criminal activity. Being well known in the city, John has the respect of many as he has been on the same journey and is empathetic to what those individuals will be going through. He is fully supportive of someone who wants to change their life around and a great advocate for working with ex-offenders.

## Timo Tierney

(Nominated by Anonymous)

Timo has organised activities at The Florence Institute for some years now. I first met him when he started the Florrie Guitar Group, where he helped me fulfil a lifetime achievement of learning how to play guitar. Every Tuesday for four years I've gone along to the group and in this time he has never not turned up.

He helps so many people in a positive way. Throughout lockdown he was messaging people, dropping food off, and making phone calls to ensure people were ok. I have seen Timo more than anyone over the pandemic – including picking litter up in my local park. He always has time to stop and ask how I am and I and so many people appreciate him.

## Mason McMillan

(Nominated by Alfie Smith)

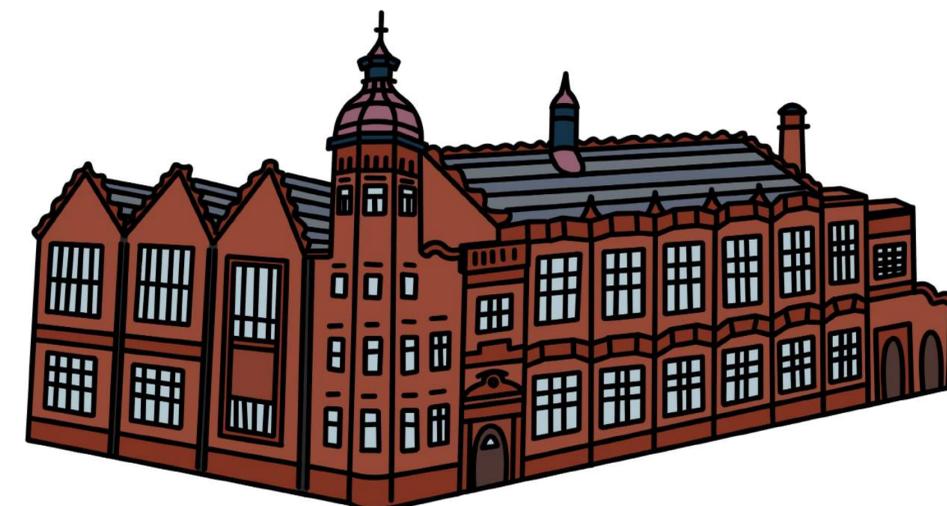
Mason is a Year 4 school boy who has Type 1 Diabetes and he has been a Super Hero throughout this difficult time. He's always completed all of his schoolwork and has come back to school every day even though his body is having to adjust and he is suffering with extreme highs and lows, Mason just smiles and always tries his best. His positive attitude and determination shines through no matter how he is feeling making this young boy an absolute local hero.

## Zeena Iysha Begum

(Nominated by Shana Begum)

Zeena is the 16-year-old director of St. Helens The Best Me CIC, an organisation dedicated to making positive changes in the community. She's a domestic abuse survivor and champion for the youth voice who continues to deliver empowering art therapy classes for young people throughout the pandemic.

She isn't your average 16-year-old, is a hero to many in her community, and has overcome bullying, racism, and domestic abuse to support 100's of people during her short time in St Helens. On top of working endlessly, she raised her two younger brothers, Isaac and Sammy, and was the birthing partner for her mother after the whole family fled honour based abuse. Zeena is an exceptional star and asset to her new town.



## Sophie Blakemore

(nominated by Kellea Turner)

Sophie basically climbed Everest during Lockdown – that's 8842m or 3582 flights of stairs or 46568 steps! She walked up and down her staircase 110 times 5 days a week for 7 weeks without fail to cover the distance and wouldn't go to sleep until her daily quota was done, raising a huge £1300 for CAMHS to support children and adolescents who struggle with their mental health.

Sophie really struggled with lockdown, however she was a real shining light and a positive role model for her entire year group. Many of her peers followed her lead and also went on to do something amazing for their community during this time!

## Faith Mulhall

(Nominated by Peter Bull)

Faith single-handedly raised over £5300 in memory of her friend Broghan, who sadly passed away during the early days of lockdown. Faith Mulhall met Broghan Hughes in Year 7 at Alsop High School and they instantly made a very special friendship. It was so easy to love Broghan as she was an amazing, young lady who lit up the room with her smile and touched not just Faith's heart but every other student and member of staff with her warmth, kindness and determination.

From the day they met, they made so many memories in a short time together, enjoying school lessons, treats after school and weekend trips. Broghan was beautiful inside and out and such an inspiration. When Broghan died, Faith decided she wanted to raise funds for the family in memory of her cherished friend. Everyone is exceptionally proud of Faith for the support love and friendship she gave Broghan. Her values of kindness, compassion and friendship are an inspiration to our school community and the wider area.



## Nathan Fernyhough

(Nominated by Caroline White, Thomas Wilkinson, Joseph Bliss, Amani Magdoubi, Saoirse Redmond, Chloe Foran, and Mercedes Redmond)

Nathan is an employment support coach who works for LCC. He works with a group of unemployed young adults aged 16 –29 (some of whom with SEND) to help support them into employment. A lot of these young people were already isolated before Covid-19 – something that was worsened by the additional stress of lockdown and furlough.

However, Nathan recognised this and quickly adapted his work to support the group via daily Zoom sessions and activities like quizzes, seated exercises, journaling, therapeutic drawing, bingo, and job sessions. His support has provided these young people with a daily routine and something to look forward to on a daily and weekly basis during a difficult time, boosting the confidence of his group while helping them all to develop new skills and to reach their full potential within their community.

## Layota Likambi

(Nominated by Anonymous)

At 13-years-old, Latoya is Liverpool's youngest author (her third book was published in September!) and has consistently proven herself to be a positive role model, inspiring Liverpool young people (especially disadvantaged BME) to maximise and attain their potential.

Prior to and during lockdown, Latoya has been supporting young girls online to build their confidence and self-esteem, and has also supported those experiencing mental health struggles to know how worthy and valuable they are. Latoya stands up against bullying and supports those being bullied and has even been a guest speaker at the House of Commons in encouraging young people to follow their dreams and to unlock their full potential – no matter their background or how old they are.

## Rossie Stone

(Nominated by Tracey Dickens & Dr. Tony Lloyd, respectively)

Rossie is the MD and Founder of Dekko Comics based in Glasgow, Scotland – however his work has greatly supported neurodiverse young people across Liverpool. Rossie turns curriculum information and other important messages into fun and easily accessible comic stories for those with dyslexia, autism, and other forms of neurodiversity.

As well as creating these resources, Rossie also runs study-technique workshops which help boost learner confidence and give young people of all learning-types a chance to access and enjoy education. During lockdown, he made a lot of his resources available for free to support children with SEND during home schooling. By sharing his own story of how he struggled in school and overcame these challenges, he's also given many students and adults alike hope that they can overcome their own learning and accessibility obstacles too.

## Alfie Smith

(Dot Fowell)

Although Alfie is only 12 he often helps out at a local tenants and residents group office. The tenants group also run a food bank for the local area and during lockdown Alfie helped at the food bank, mostly with the lifting and carrying during deliveries. He is always willing to help the group and sets a great example to other young people in the area.



## Charlotte Crowder

(Nominated by Donna Shaw)

Charlotte is a Progression Coordinator for Mencap Liverpool & Sefton, an independent charity that promotes equality for people with a learning disability. Since lockdown, she's worked tirelessly to engage with Mencap members in Liverpool & Sefton and has delivered weekly sessions including Crazy Crowder Bingo, Chair yoga, Zumba, Women's Group, 1 to 1 mindfulness, chair exercises and much more.

People with a learning disability are socially isolated without a pandemic, so Covid 19 brought their isolation to a whole new level. Charlotte has not only made sure every member is included in activities, she is also the first person they contact if there is an emergency or crisis. This can be from something as simple as a washing machine breaking, to a mental health episode or hospital admission. Whatever the members need she's there and they all know they can depend on her. She really is a Wonder Woman

## Raise Your Voice

*When I wake up, I wish. I wish for a place where people were treated equally. A place where poverty doesn't exist. A place where climate change isn't a crisis. But there is hope.*

*A tight feeling in your chest, a burning passion throughout your body, a slight joyful glimmer in your head. It's all hope.*

*You don't have to feel hopeful. You don't have to want more. You don't have to challenge society. You can watch, be a bystander. Look on at everyone else gaining fame just because they spoke out.*

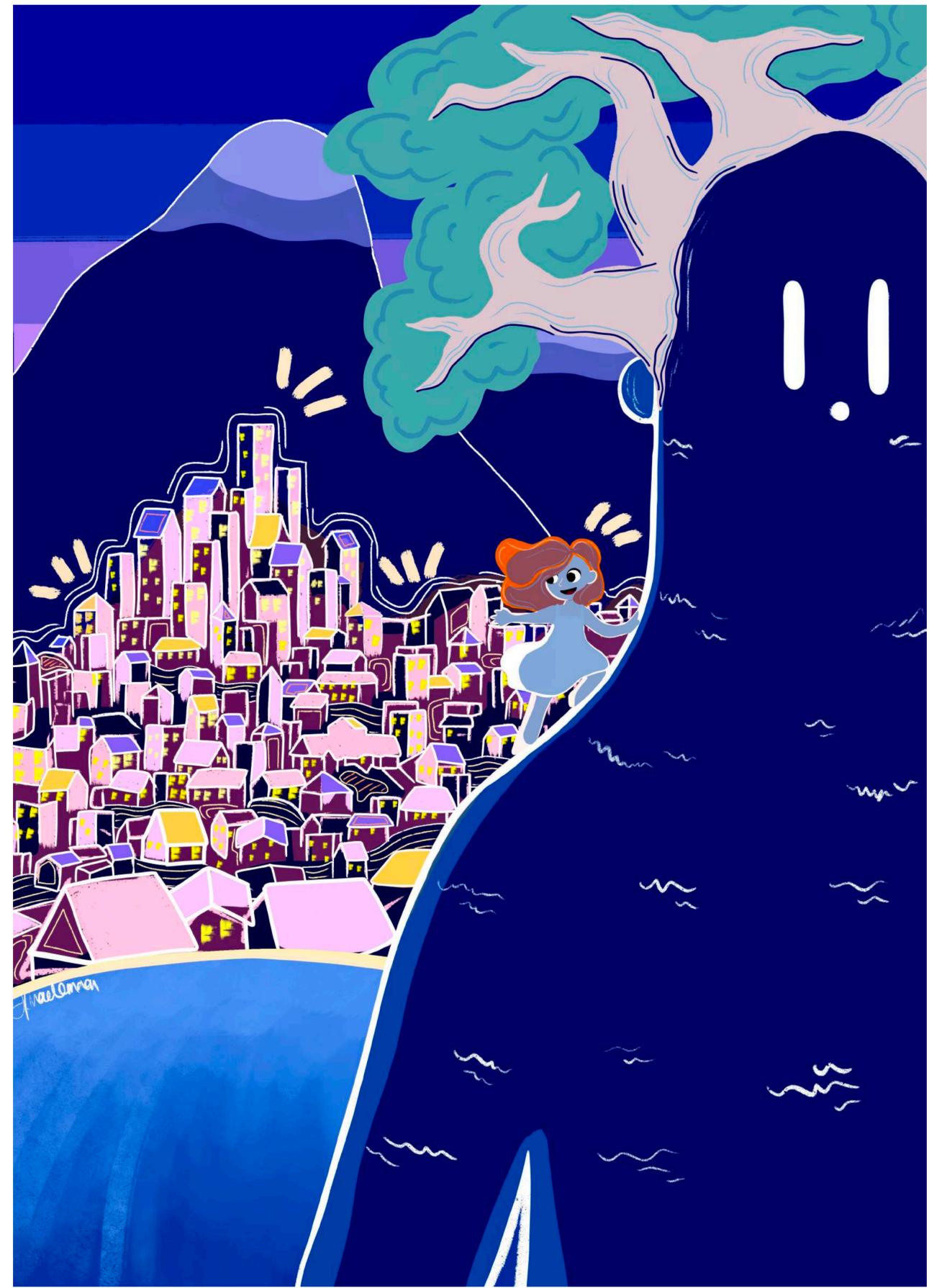
*That could be you. You could be there, asking why and helping those in need.*

*Everybody has hope in some way, shape or form. Hope is needed to help impoverished or sick people, victims of crime, and victims of wars.*

*So go and speak out about what you believe. Whether one person hears you or 1,000 people hear you, it makes a difference.*

*Niamh O'Hara*







Art by Hannah Mac  
instagram - @a\_simple\_illustrator

# On A Sunbeam

A short story of 'Hope' by Ripley Cook. We hope this story inspires you to transform your fear into hope, fill your mind with positivity and inspire you and find the sunshine in your life.

The girl rolled out of bed energetically and pulled the curtains open to reveal a brand new day, filled with sunlight. The Sun seemed to see her beaming smile and moved the clouds away; all the girl could see was a blanket of blue opportunity. She danced into the kitchen, her body filled with a happiness that she hasn't always known.

Breakfast time was her favourite as it meant she could eat as much fruit as possible with cold yoghurt over the top. Her Mum had bought her cutlery that was bee themed, and the girl was so glad she was here to eat a fruit salad in a bowl with tiny bees fluttering. She made a cup of tea for her and her partner, in the Bee mug and her partners Sloth one. The tea seemed to taste nicer, maybe it was just the sun that had woke her up in such a good mood. Or maybe it was the happiness that today she was a year free.

She ate with her partner who was still napping in bed. When she looked over at their scruffy hair and the duvet that wrapped half-heartedly around them she couldn't help but feel so grateful for their existence and hers. Her partner offered a smile that lit up every corner of the room. How lucky I am, she thought.

Once the girl ate she played her music quietly and went through her morning routines: a shower where the soap seemed to smell so much sweeter and although it would run over the white marks on her arm she didn't care about them anymore, and simply moved on to shampooing with her favourite strawberry scented soap. This was followed by a face routine where her spray was just the right amount of coolness on her hot skin, and a blow-dry of her hair which sat perfectly.

The girl got dressed in her favourite outfit, a floating pink flowery dress that made her feel as though she was living in a cottage with a garden full of fairies. That was just another future she could look forward to, when they had money and could buy a Ginger cat called George to have adventures with. She decorated her face with pink glitter and blush that ran over her nose. Her eyes were pink and sparkling. She grabbed her bag for she had a lecture, and she dropped a soft kiss on her Loves cheek.

I am happy, she thought.

And I am here to stay

Ripley Cook

# Hope is Located Within Stardust

Hope is everywhere in our world of galaxies.  
The fuel of optimism which is a reflection of our integrity.

Hope is more than a wish, for it's also an action.  
The catalyst that keeps us gravitationally balanced and content.

As we are made of stardust, our brains are the conscious universe.  
Hope is guiding us through our own space discoveries.

Hope is a sustainable source throughout our stages of life.  
We later find hope manifests into love.

We see hope everywhere, hope is our infectious internal force.  
So, keep it held high, shining like the radiant stardust which you are.

Elle Lapin

# See You Later

Hope isn't knowing everything will be okay  
But hope holds my hand until it's over.  
She puts my face in her lap  
so, I can't see the worry in her eyes.  
Hope is the way my mum hugs me goodbye  
and the way my dad never does,  
always, "See you later",  
speaking into existence that this isn't the last time he sees me.  
Hope is my friends making plans  
months from now,  
something to keep me here until February,  
then June,  
then September.  
Hope is the way my boyfriend smiles  
when I tell him I'm going back to therapy.  
Hope is me actually writing my essay  
thinking that maybe I should look out for future me  
because there will be a future me.  
Hope is me giving away my too-small clothes,  
hoping I will never fit into them again.

Olivia Storey

# Magic Shop

We hope this short story by Bangtan Virus provides you with a sense of comfort and whimsy on your journey to finding hope.

Once there was a girl. This girl was lost, she had no hope. A relative of hers had just died, two of her friends had left her and she felt lost. To her, there was no point in even living anymore.

But one day the girl was walking alone through a dark forest. There was not even the slightest whisper of birdsong or even a breath of wind. It was completely silent. Then out of the corner of her eye, she saw a bear and a rabbit sitting together. This made her smile a little to herself. After the girl had walked a little further, she realized something. The heart locket she was wearing had turned from black to a silvery colour. She continued to walk onwards.

As she got closer to the centre of the forest, it got slightly lighter. The weird thing was the light was purple. When the girl reached the centre of the forest, she saw a small house. Outside of the house was a sign that read, "Magic Shop".

The girl walked up to the door of the house and knocked. Immediately the door opened. Inside of the house was a whole other world, full of the colour purple. Then she looked up and the sky was a galaxy.

Standing in the centre of this new world were seven figures. The girl walked up to them. When she got there, the figures pulled down their hoods and revealed themselves. They were all male. The first figure had a distinctive face, fuller than average lips and a warm smile. The second figure, who was much smaller than the first, had a gummy smile and resembled a cat. The third figure's smile shone out of his face like sunbeams. The fourth figure, who was also the tallest, had dimples and one of the warmest smiles that the girl had ever seen.

The fifth figure was the smallest and had a distinctive smile and fuller lips like the first figure. The sixth figure was the one that the girl felt more of a connection to, he had a warm and boxy smile. The seventh figure looked sort of like a rabbit and had deep brown eyes.

And then all of a sudden, the girl felt hope. She felt a reason to live, she felt love and warmth. Most importantly, she wasn't alone anymore. Then she looked down at her heart locket again. It was completely purple and had the words, "Hope for better days" engraved on it.

The girl looked back up at them and saw that they were all smiling warmly at her. "Come on, take my hand and it'll be alright" the one with the boxy smile said. The girl took his hand and then she was suddenly back in her bedroom again.

From that moment on, the girl always had hope. She had happiness and was no longer alone. It was all thanks to those seven people. She never saw them or the magic shop ever again, but she had hope and that was what mattered.

**There is always light at the end of the tunnel.**

# Be Your Own Hero: How Dungeons & Dragons Helped my Mental Health.

*In the game Dungeons and Dragons (D&D), you can be whoever you want to be. Other players will tell you the same thing—it's more than just a game. It is a place where you can go to escape, a place where you feel fully accepted and a place where you feel you truly belong. Your party aren't just people you meet with every once in a while, they become your family.*

*With the recent resurgence in popularity of roleplaying games like Dungeons and Dragons, we asked Comics Youth D&D aficionado, Rafiel D to write about how playing games helped his mental health.*

I found the first few weeks of lockdown really hard. I was really anxious about going back to college and stressed out by the idea of going out with people again after we came out of quarantine. It was really scary. But one of the things that helped me cope was having a very similar routine – and one such thing was playing D&D Every Friday with my people.

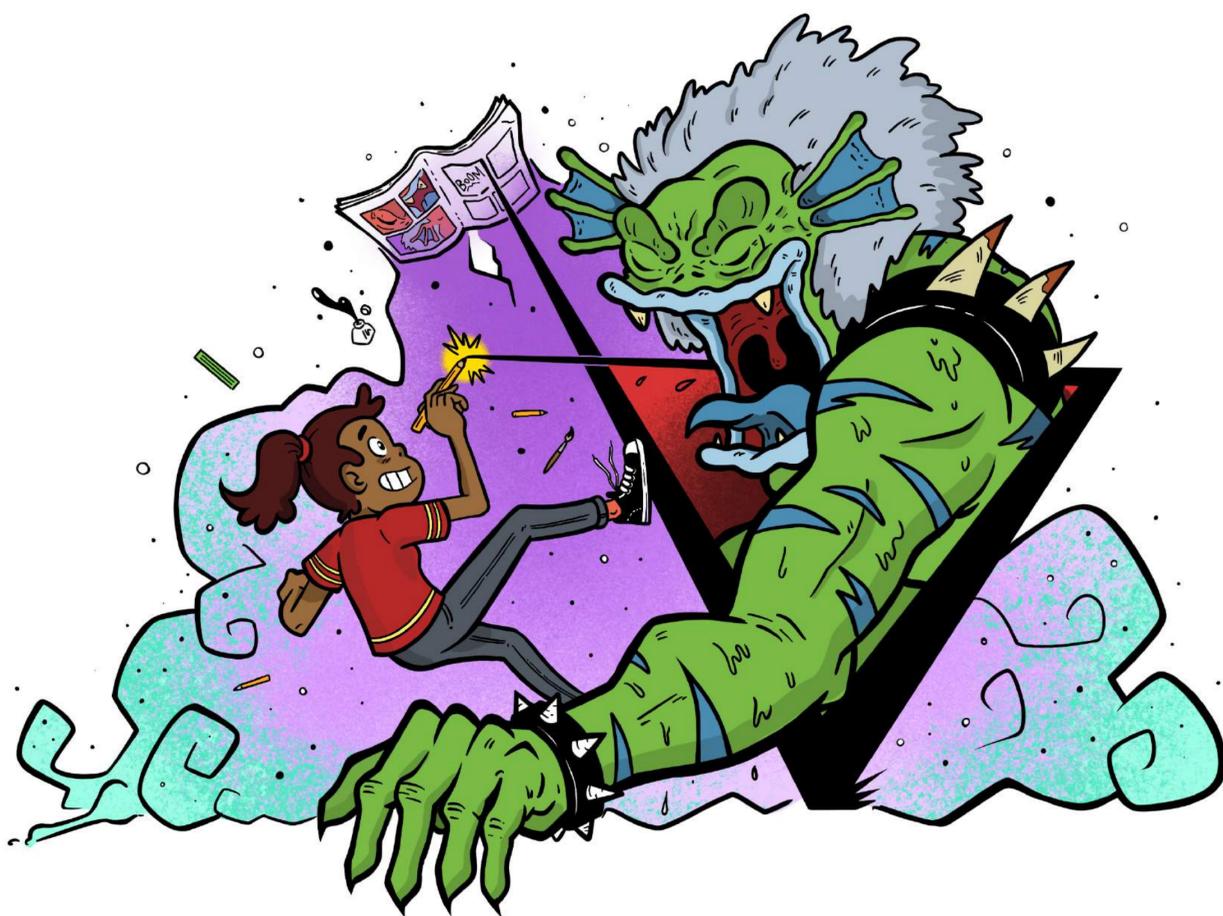
It gave me a sense of normalization and happiness, because I got to embody somebody else. By playing D&D with pals, I'd become so immersed in the fantasy world that it would take my mind off everything that's going on and all of the endless global negativity (even when a campaign devolves into one ruled by murder hobos! But that's just D&D in general anyway...).

D&D makes me feel so hopeful because it gives me an opportunity to chat to people. And all the while, during every game, we know that we're still going to be playing even when lockdown is over and we can all start hanging in larger groups again. And, like most people, I cannot wait for that to be the case.

Playing D&D has also helped me to become more creative as it's given me the opportunity to work on new art projects that I wouldn't have thought of taking such, as creating different campaign stories. I've even been able to think of a few stories of my own when DM'ing my own campaigns for the first time! I really loved doing this because it gets my creative juices flowing.

I also bought a fair few sets of dice because I am, in fact, a goblin. I can't wait to show them off to everybody when we can all meet up again as the full D&D party.

Rafiel D



# What Got Me Into DnD...

On my birthday, about five years back, my father got me the starter set and player's handbook for a game I'd only ever heard of, but never quite understood. I read through the rulebooks and was enamoured by the world of possibility at my fingertips. Several years went by before I actually got a chance to play but the wait was certainly worth it.

What tickled my mind reading the books was the way D&D resembled board games and video games. However, a lot of the restrictions I had come to expect from both mediums were gone.

On the side of the player, you get infinite dialogue options as the Dungeon Master running the game is a real person, able to respond to you like only a real person can. When I was first behind my DM screen, I become a game designer, referee and, storyteller.

One birthday was what got me into D&D but it's intrigue, my friends, and a bunch of damn good adventures are what keep me sticking around for more.

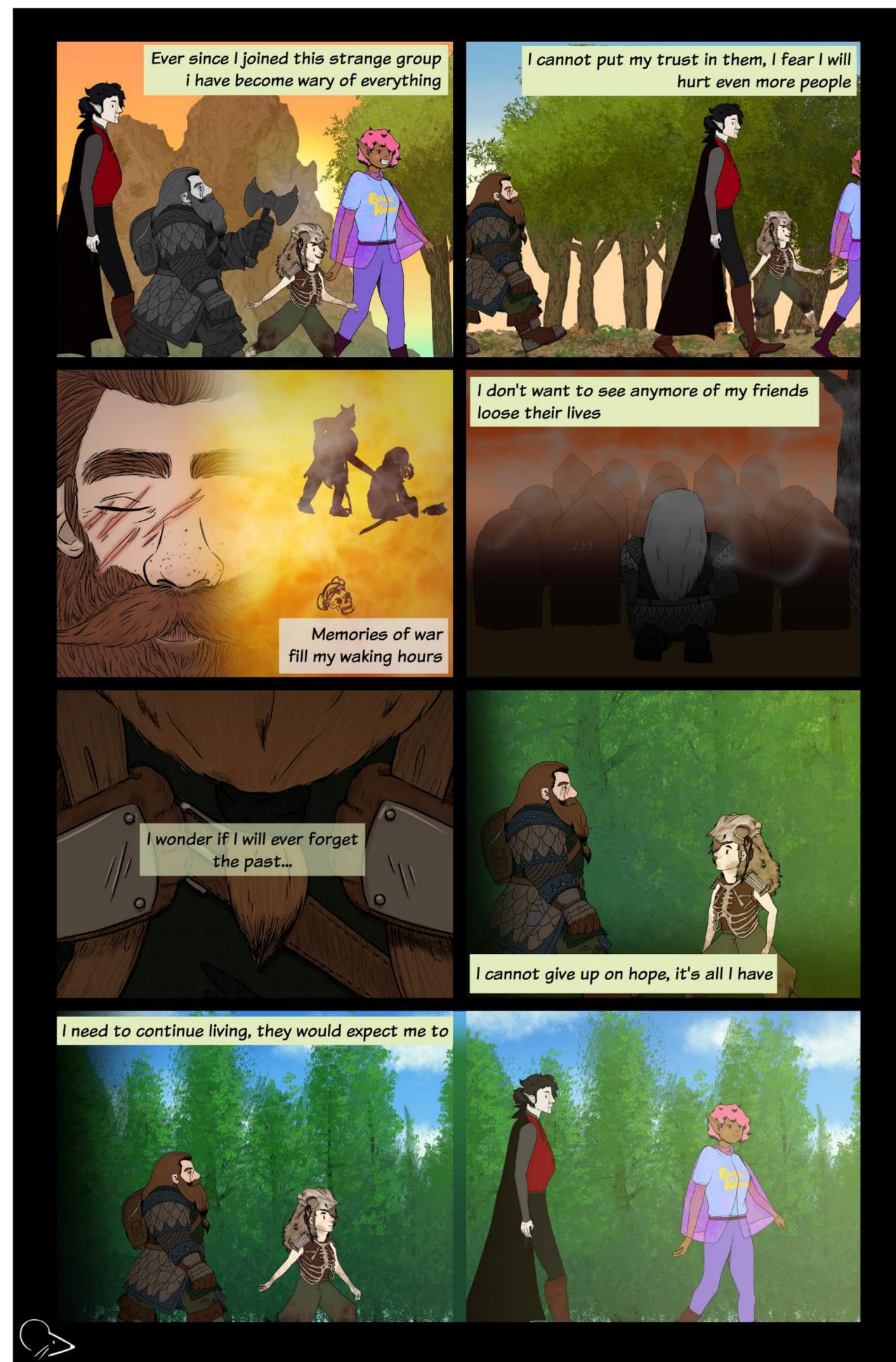
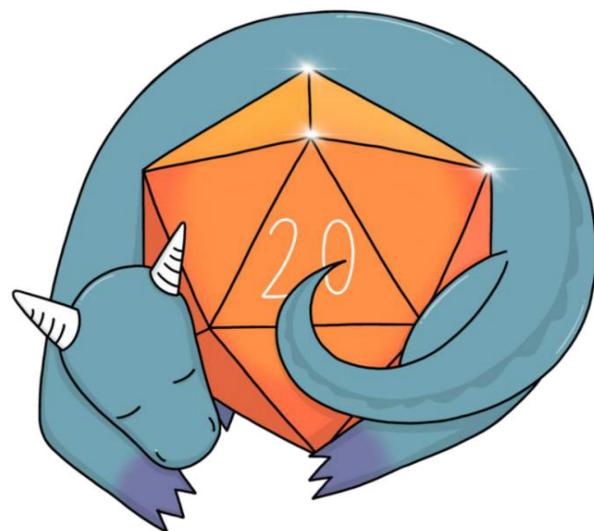
--A.J. Cheevers

## DRAGONS!

I have loved Lord of the Rings since I was a child so that kinda kick started my love for fantasy. I was introduced firstly to D&D by a friend.

The concept of creating a character and being able to tell their story, while also being able to explore different religions, creatures and races in a fantasy setting is intriguing and a new adventure for me.

--Jake McCrea



# HERE BE GOBLINS

## So, you want to play dungeons and dragons? But where should you even start?

Maybe you've seen Stranger Things, love Critical Role or The Adventure Zone or maybe you just love fantasy? There is no end of really great content about D&D to consume out there right now! But what if you want to start playing yourself? There are many different ways to go about it and this advice may not be right for you but here's some suggestions!

Getting into DND can seem extremely daunting at first as it's such a vast open world and there is so much rich history! Plus, looking at the prices of DND books, starter packs, and dice sets can be enough to put you off. But we are here to tell you that you can delve into this world of fantasy for free! (Although if you're like the CY crew the shiny dice sets are hard to resist collecting... so many colours... so shiny!)

Thankfully, there are tonnes of resources at your fingertips. You can download the latest pdf of the rules set online but depending on how you learn a big wall of text might not be for you! There are lots of great YouTube videos, podcasts and websites about how to play, how to write your own adventure, and how to be a dungeon master, so we recommend you have a solid route around on there to find some killer tutorials about it!

Once you feel ready to dive in, here are all the other elements you'll need to get a DND game on the go!:

## Pals

Grab some friends between 3-6 people is what we have found works best. More people are welcome but smaller groups feel cosier and easier to manage so each player can be part of the action.

*NB\*During this time of Corona, it might not be possible to get a group of people together to play IRL but during lockdown, our Comics Youth crew played over voice and text chat using our discord server. Pick a chat platform you are comfortable with - there are some DND specific ones if you want to explore them! - and the pandemic can't stop you from going on a fantasy adventure!*

## DUNGEON MASTER

Someone in your crew needs to volunteer to be the dungeon master. The dungeon master is the one in charge of the adventure for the group. They will often, with the help of the dice, decide the outcome of any given task or battle and steer the story as the players suggest their actions.

## ADVENTURE

The DM will need to be prepared with an adventure for the players. You can write this yourself (see recs for guides) or find a pre-written adventure. There are plenty of free one-shots available online that you can play as is or customise to your own liking! If using one written by someone else read the whole thing through (maybe more than once) before starting to play.

## CHARACTERS

The players will need to create characters; this can take a little time so it could be good to do this beforehand. You can use DND Beyond or similar sites to create an online character sheet. Maybe print one off to fill in, or create your own in a notebook?

## DICE

Dice! There are websites that you can use to digitally roll all the dice that you might need to play the game, however as we said before if you get into DND, a dice habit is easy to pick up because a D20 is so iconic. Having your own set is nice. But if you only have one set for the group, the DM can roll for characters. If you can access the websites you can use the digi-ones or use a random number generator.

## Play!

Seems like you are ready to go...  
Get some snacks, get comfortable, get into character and have some fun!

### Glossary:

DND - dungeons and dragons  
DM - dungeon master  
Campaign - an on-going epic adventure that can last many weeks with the same crew  
One Shot - a short adventure intended to last one or just a couple of sessions  
D20 - 20-sided dice! The most used dice in the game



# ROLL-A-CHARACTER

GRAB A D20 DIE AND GET ROLLING TO CREATE A RANDOMISED CHARACTER TO START PLAYING WITH. (OR PICK A NUMBER BETWEEN 1-20 IF YOU DON'T HAVE A DIE YET)

## RACE

1 11		2 12		3 13		4 14		5 15	
	DRAGONBORN		DWARF		TIEFLING		GNOME		AARAKOCRA
6 16		7 17		8 18		9 19		10 20	
	ELF		HUMAN		HALF ORC		HALFLING		ORC

## CLASS

1 11		2 12		3 13		4 14		5 15	
	WIZARD		BARBARIAN		BARD		FIGHTER		DRUID
6 16		7 17		8 18		9 19		10 20	
	PALADIN		RANGER		SORCERCER		ROGUE		CLERIC

## BACKGROUND

1 11		2 12		3 13		4 14		5 15	
	ACOLYTE		CRIMINAL		FOLK HERO		NOBLE		SAGE
6 16		7 17		8 18		9 19		10 20	
	SOLDIER		CHARLATAN		ENTERTAINER		PIRATE		HERMIT

# Trivia to Restore Your Faith in The World

Jenny Speakman lists 5 life-affirming bits of trivia that will help you get through this year. Sometimes you need a reminder that the world is a mysterious and wholesome place.

## Cows have best friends!

A study by the University of Northampton found that cows make friends within their herd and experience less stress when they hang out with their best mates! Over 50% of the cattle were found to spend time with one specific cow, not influenced by biological relation.



## A place in California has a dog for their mayor!

Mayor Maximus Mighty-Dog Mueller II took office in Idyllwild, California, at 11 weeks old. He's an adorable golden retriever and an amazing mayor - his main goal being to spread 'peace on Earth.' Although he has no real political power (disappointingly) he has his job for life and intends to promote unconditional love while supporting local businesses and charities.

## Squirrels are helping to save the forests!

We all know that squirrels store nuts for the winter. But unfortunately, they do not have a 'mental map' that enables them to remember exactly where they stashed their food. They use their strong sense of smell instead, but this doesn't always serve them well. As a result, millions of trees are accidentally planted worldwide. Another wholesome fact about squirrels is that they will adopt abandoned baby squirrels as their own (heart eyes)!



## There is a 'world's largest collection of the world's smallest versions of the world's largest things'!

Yes, this took us a while to get our head's around! Kansas-based artist Erika Nelson created the World's Largest Collection of the World's Smallest Versions of the World's Largest Things. She travels across the US, photographing roadside attractions known as the 'world's largest.' She then creates a miniature version of the thing to add to her museum.



## The singular word for 'spaghetti' is 'spaghetto'!

This is pretty self-explanatory but completely mind-blowing and hilarious. In Italian, words ending with i indicate a plural whilst an o or a on the end is the singular version. Applying this to spaghetti to make spaghetto is adorable but my personal favourite is creating the singular for ravioli - 'raviolo.' You can have too much fun with this in the pasta section of the supermarket!



# PUZZLE CORNER

## WORDSEARCH

S G T I B N G G S C I M O C P  
 I T S E A N Y W J I I Q Y D H  
 H R G T I K R G S S D R X H D  
 J S U K N U F E A U X X C X X  
 X R L K Z E S R A M F A Q J E  
 E A U I F B K E C D E K E X D  
 W W K V S J L H I B I S F F N  
 K J Q N M U C T R V B N K L R  
 C O M F Y O G E X I O X G O T  
 X E A V Z U K G V X C M A W V  
 T K Q Y J F B O A M H R U E R  
 Q I H B W R Z T H T S S R R O  
 S G J X Z D C T O J K I H S N  
 F R I E N D S W P E I A W F J  
 L F O P F N U L E I U R A H A

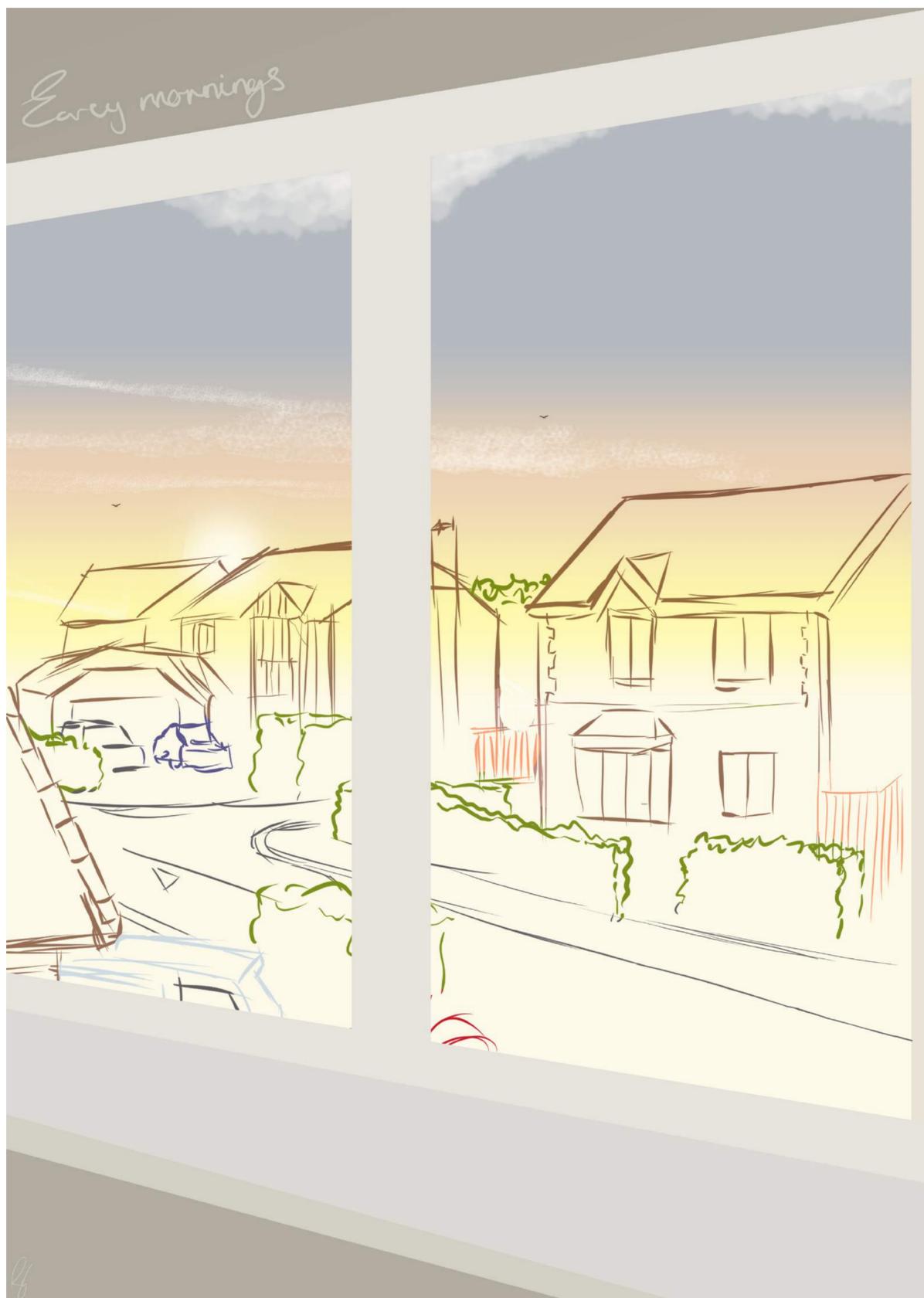
BEACH  
 COMFY  
 COMICS  
 COZY  
 FLOWERS

FRIENDS  
 FUN  
 GAMES  
 HOPE  
 MOVIES

MUSIC  
 NATURE  
 READING  
 TOGETHER  
 WALKING

## SUDOKU

4		8		6				
	7	2		1				
			3	8	2	9		
		3	8		9			5
	1	4				7	8	
5							6	
6					5			
			1			6	4	
	9			7		2		3



*During the height of lockdown (version 1.0), many of us found our sleep patterns sliding - if they even existed at all. When sleep becomes a chaotic stranger - drifting in and out whenever it chooses to snooze us - the sunrise can become the climax of a day, rather than the bright yawn that begins it. Meanwhile, a sunset can close the blinds on the day when we're only just waking up. Either one can arrive in a disorienting twist of time.*

*As Raf reminds us with his stunning portrait of the dazzling stillness of sunrise, however, it doesn't matter whereabouts in your sleep schedule the sunrise arrives, it always brings a blaze of hope and harmony in its wake (even if you're only just about to sleep). Oh, and it beats the heck out of the sunset just FYI (don't @us). "Sunrise > Sunset: The vibes are so much calmer"*

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## IMPORTANT CONTACTS

If you currently need support for your mental health or wellbeing, these are some of the organisations who are happy to listen and help.

### **Anxiety UK**

03444775774 (helpline)

075374160905 (text)

### **Childline**

0800 1111

Free 24hr helpline

### **Papyrus Hotline**

0800 068 41 41

07786209697 (text)

Under 35's at risk of suicide or concerned for another.

### **The Mix**

0808 068 4994

85258 (text THEMIX)

Support and advice for under 25's

### **Young Minds**

0808 803 5544 (Parent Helpline)

85258 (Free 24hr crisis messenger, text YM)

### **Young Stonewall**

0800 050 2020

Information & Support for young people  
who identify as LGBTQ\*

### **Samaritans**

116 123 (call)

Support for anyone who needs to talk

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