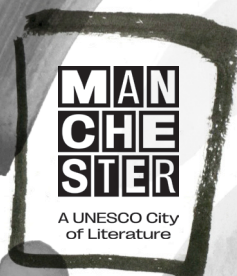


**Manchester
City of Literature**

OUR VOICES

Fatima Women's Association



**Festival
of Libraries
Oldham**



INTRODUCTION

Ella Otomewo is a poet who found her voice in the spoken word community. She now writes for both the page and the stage. Ella collaborated with Fatima Women's Organisation and Oldham Libraries on these selection of poems, as a part of the inaugural Festival of Libraries 2021, coordinated by Manchester City of Literature and funded by Arts Council England.

Fatima Women's Association was established in 1991 by the local Pakistani women who recognised the lack of facilities available to the ethnic minority women in the area of Glodwick. The association has women from the white, Bangladeshi, asylum seekers and refugee community.

Their mission is to empower disadvantaged women, young people and children in Oldham in order to improve their quality of life, and to provide education, training and recreational activities.



Oldham Libraries vision is to deliver a high-quality innovative library service that supports the community to be happier, healthier and more informed; making a positive difference to people's lives.

They ensure their libraries are rooted within and responsive to the communities they serve, have welcoming, animated and flexible spaces, offer a wide range of free accessible books, information and digital resources, and cultural experiences for all ages, and have skilled, knowledgeable, and happy staff.

FOR OLDHAM LIBRARY

Ode to a building made by men whose love
of books was confined to the bible and
bank book. These men, whose hands in silken gloves
seized tight to unearned power and the funds
to feed the minds of a community.
Capitalists never cared for libraries -
all the more reason to find unity
in shared history and all it carries.
How blessed are we to find ourselves within
a sacred space campaigned for by lovers
of literature, and archive, and learning;
of free access to books to discover.
A sonnet for the holy trinity;
of library, museum, and gallery.

~ Ella Otomewo

(Resident poet and facilitator)

*Inspired by a book in Oldham Library about the history of Oldham, and the initial
reluctance from the council to open its library.*

UNTITLED

I am not special, I don't have fame,
So my words won't matter to people. But I pray,
For the Palestinians, I will pray.
They are facing injustice,
So we need to stand out with them
They are getting attacked
And forced out of their homes
The only thing we can do is protest and pray
I'm not a Palestinian
But I stand for peace.
Free Palestine.
Free Palestine.

~ Yashab (14)

A POEM / A MANIFESTO

I wanna live in a world of imagination.
A city, a place, a country I can remember.
A world where everyone has rights.
A place where everyone can see the light.
A country of nature that can be treated fair.
A country where there's no word for "fight", only care.
No more begging or crying for money.
Because this is the quality Oldham needs.
A place of imagination.
A city I'll remember and a world of nature and peace.
In meadows I'll sway, dreaming about things my way.

~ Hibah

HIBAH

BROTHER

All siblings fight.
They hit each other,
But at the end of the day
We are blood.
I may not know
What the pain of losing a sibling is,
But I've seen my mother crying
For her brother.
She stands tall
And takes her brother's place
And becomes
the shoulder of her father

Brother

Brother

Brother.

~ Noorania Azkar (12)

NOORANIA AZKAR

AN END NEEDS TO BE PUT TO THIS GENOCIDE

It's not fair on the Palestinian people
for them to be getting kicked out
of their own country by the Zionists.
Palestine deserves to be free.

I hate Israel and the Israeli soldiers
who are committing these crimes,
and the zionists who are killing
innocent children for no reason.

It's not fair for these families
to be seeing such violence,
and for them to be worried
about dying or losing one of their family members.

An end needs to be put to this genocide,
with the Israelis carrying their pride.
We will soon rise
and defeat everything in front of their eyes.

~ Laiba

LAIBA

BEEES

Into the honeyed light of day,
in a meditative buzz of togetherness,
the bees sung their way through the summer haze
blessing each flower as they pass.

Nature fashioned her bees
as beautifully as her flowers;
together they were the finest of art.
The bees were as sweet as the nectar they sought.

They move as if to unseen instruments
to unheard music that send their tiny feet
scurrying over the hexagons of wax.
Their wings glimmer like the surface of ruffled ice
reflecting the bright August sunlight.
Together they make a larger organism that is their community.

~ Aizah Noor (12)

AIZAH NOOR

UNTITLED

Sitting alone,
my silence screams,
Help me.
I smile and say,
I'm fine. Don't worry.
But the scars tell a different story.
My suicidal thoughts look over me.
Yet still the hope in my heart
slowly fades.
Drowning in my self hatred.
And the bodies I see,
what I want mine to be.
The nervous energy
and no motivation
Trapped in my thoughts,
I cry out for help
but still cannot be heard.
Crying in the dark,
mixed emotions in my head,
irritation all around me.
No feeling in my heart.
Self harm marks
on my arm, fingers, and thighs.
Anxious thoughts in my mind.
Suicidal pictures have found me.
Heavy breathing and binge eating,
disgust in my looks.
Insecure about being me

My neighbours are strangers.
They always keep us in danger.
They are loud
I can always hear their sound.
They will never be our friends.
I HATE MY NEIGHBOURS!!!
We be dreaming,
While they be screaming
HELP ME ESCAPE
I'M TRAPPED HERE
We spread kindness,
They don't.

~
Rocky path under my feet
The smell of wet brick
Hitting me
The shouts of children from afar
Languages I've never heard of
Following me
Beeping sounds from a car
I see a house that looks like mine
I felt like it was there
The whole time

~ Hibah

UNTITLED

We are one.
We shouldn't judge.
We should accept that we are different.
We should be kind.
We should stay positive.
We should stay passionate.
We should equalise everyone.
We should end war.
We should ensure everyone is safe.
We should take action.

~ Saffa Pervaiz (12)

SAFFA PERVAIZ

12

NEIGHBOURS

Neighbours, they get more
mysterious each day.
Each time I find them in
the rear view of
my eye, passing by, I wonder
Who are they?
What are they?

HIDING

Can I do what I want
without being judged?
Whatever I do wrong, don't remind me.
I hide my sadness with a sugar coat.
A smile like candy, yet darkness afloats.
I hide my hobbies everyday
till I can finally smile and say,
"You are like me, no different,
I don't have to hide my hobbies anymore."

~ Huzaimah (12)

HUZAIMAH

13

13

RACISM

It's very inhumane
like heavy falling rain.
Its affect is strong,
but they don't see any wrong.
Flooding through the victim's mind
their souls so innocent, pure, and kind.

UNTITLED

Neighbours, our caring friends.
I hope this relation never ends.
Next door or down the road,
Here for us when we're down.
Neighbours are someone we can trust
Loving and caring for them is a must.

~ Alishba Kashif (14)

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