



FIGHTING GLOBAL POVERTY

Cultural Resistance

youth at the frontlines



A resource pack for educators

**SPOKEN
WORD
EDUCATORS**

1. Introduction

War on Want works with communities whose everyday existence is blighted by poverty, militarism, and corporate greed. Communities who are repressed and brutalised as their human rights are violated in order to protect corporate profit. In our work, we see the strength of communities from Palestine to Colombia resisting every single day, showing resilience and dignity in the face of injustice and adversity. As they struggle and resist, communities often see themselves in a fight to protect their culture.

"Culture unites us, it's what makes us human. It is a sacred space for resistance, the basis of resistance. Culture feeds hope. That's why they attack it and that's why we must defend it"

Berenice Celeita, Colombian human rights defender

Around the world, we have witnessed the power of cultural production to speak truth to power, and to create and maintain hope where previously it had been extinguished. We believe that culture has a crucial role to play in the struggle for a better, socially just world.

Inspired by those we work with around the world, we wanted to share their experiences locally in the UK- to raise awareness about the injustices they face, but also to learn from their struggles. So we teamed up with the Spoken Word Education Programme in order to develop a methodology for working with youth groups, engaging participants critically and creatively with the issues facing the communities we work with.

This resource pack is a valuable tool for any educator who wishes to challenge people to look at the world around them with fresh eyes, and to apply their creative energy towards social justice issues. It includes workshop ideas and tools produced by experienced performance poets who are part of the Spoken Word Education Programme, as well as sample poems produced by workshop participants.

2. 'Through the Eyes'



by Cat Brogan & Pete the Temp

This workshop looks at the issue of child soldiers, and building empathy with characters in narratives that aren't our own. It explores the different voices involved in conflict, and different ways of perceiving and experiencing experiences through poetry. The workshop lasts 2 hours.

Warm Ups 15 Minutes

- In a circle, everyone goes around and introduces themselves by saying their name, and what they'd pick if they could choose a superpower.
- Everyone watches the Ismaal video:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ozsOLdgp_y0
- Discuss:
 - *What do you know about this issue?*
 - *How does it relate to you?*
 - *What do you know about the UK Arms industry?*

Gathering Ideas

Poem About Walk 15 Minutes

- Sample Poems (see back of pack) are placed on the floor or walls.
- Participants walk around the room and read as many poems as possible. In this time they pick their favourite poem(s).
- Group discussion of favourite poems:
 - *What struck you about it?*
 - *What lines did you like?*
 - *Why is it powerful?*

Photo Story Model 15 Minutes

- As a group, look at several of the Sample Photos (See 'Photos' Resource).
- Use questions to build a narrative within the photo, eg. What has happened to this man? Who is the other person in the background? How old is he? Who is it that has died?

Model Poem 5 mins

- Ask participants to each read a line out loud from 'Where is Home' by Cat Brogan:

*Through the window joy drips like honey
On to morning toast
My head comfortable on the pillow
My heart joyful beneath the blanket
My mother's whispers in the trees
My father's whistle dances on the water
Sun and sleep, small joys that iron out cares,
Light the troubles, give moonlight on a dark night.*

*Now my AK-47 is my family, my pistol is my home
Recruited to shoot humans as if they were bottles
To be broken and hung from walls to deter emotions
Nightmares filled by madness are destroyed by drugs
Say nothing, or a sack will be placed over your head
And you will be laced by bullets fired by your brothers
Carrying sticks, heavier and taller than they are
Don't run, you'll never find freedom from your head,
Every night trauma sits your table eating your rights.*

- Discussion:
 - *What struck you about the poem?*
 - *What lines did you like?*
 - *Is it powerful & why?*

Transcription 20 Minutes

- Invite poets to write from the perspective of one of the people in the prompt photos or an imaginary child soldier, commander, parent, politician or even themselves watching the news. Let all the poets choose one of the lines they have found striking so far, and challenge them to include it in their poem.
- Poems could follow the 'Before and After' model used in Cat Brogan's poem 'Where is Home?'
- Wordbank 1 (See back of pack) can be used to help build a picture of life before or after conflict and Wordbank 2 (See back of pack) can help build a picture of conflict.

Editing Poems 10 mins

- Below are some helpful tips/questions for editing poems:
 - *Look back over what you have written.*
 - *Decide what line should come first/last.*
 - *Can you add any similes or metaphors?*
 - *Could you start happy and end sad or the opposite?*

Performance Preparation 25 mins

- Get into groups of 3 or 4.
- Read what you've written to the group
- Groups should work out how to put their poems together & present them.
- Three things to think about are:
 - *Repeated chorus line / refrain*
 - *Lines or words spoken by everyone in unison*
 - *Body actions*

Share 15 mins

To finish the workshop, participants come together & share their work. After hearing each piece, they're asked if anyone wants to celebrate any lines or poems they especially liked.

3. 'Beautiful Trouble'



by Sarah Perry & Raymond Antrobus

This workshop looks at the idea of subverting oppression as a way of fighting it, & using beautiful things to highlight the ugly nature of oppression. We are curious about why dance and music are such a powerful part of protest and resistance. The workshop explores subversion as a poetic device, & channel fun and play in order to do so.

- Before the workshop starts, everyone is told that if they hear anything interesting in the course of the session - a sentence or phrase someone says that they find provocative or that resonates with them - they should write it down & keep it for an exercise later.

Warm Ups 15 Minutes

- In a circle, everyone is given a post-it note & asked to write down an object or image that -for them - represents 'freedom'. We go round the circle, introducing ourselves & sharing what's on our post-it. These are stuck on a big sheet & kept for later.
- Word (Dis)association Game. In pairs, each participant take it in turns to say a word. Each word is a response to the word they've just heard, and should be the opposite of it. This was modeled by the facilitators & an example of a chain of responses is below, with one voice in italics and the other in bold type.

Light. **Dark.** *Understanding.* **Confusion.** *Peace.* **War.** *A hug.* **A punch.** **Alienation.** *Acceptance.* **Turning away.** *Welcoming.* etc.

Building Images

Word Race 15 Minutes

- The participants are split into two teams. They pick a captain and a team name.
- Each team lines up in front of a flipchart; the person at the front of the line has a pen. The teams will have 2 minutes to write down as many concrete nouns (discuss what this is to ensure everyone understands) onto the flipchart as they can. Each team member writes one word, passes their pen to the person behind them & goes to the back of the queue to wait for their next turn. The team with the most words will win. NB All the words are in response to the prompt word given by the facilitator when the 2 minutes starts. eg. if the prompt is 'breakfast' participants might write 'toast' or 'alarm clock' or 'kettle'.
- Carry out a practice round with an easy, silly word (like 'breakfast' or 'zoo').
- Carry out the "real" competition. The prompt word is 'conflict'.
- After the two minutes is up, stop, count the words (cross out any that are duplicates or aren't concrete nouns) & declare the winning team. Spend some time looking through the words as a group & discuss and unusual or extra-creative ones.

Discussion of Graffiti from the West Bank, Palestine 10 mins

- Use a projector or some laminated images to show participants photographs of graffiti from the West Bank (attached).
- Discuss:
 - What do you see? (literally & metaphorically)
 - Why would you put art onto a partition wall?
 - What does it mean to turn a structure of oppression into a game (like with the goal posts image), or to subvert images of war/peace with their opposite?
 - A bullet proof jacket isn't the exact opposite of a dove; what is it they represent that puts them in opposition?

Drawing/Body Sculpture 15 Minutes

- In pairs, participants are asked to pick one or more of the 'freedom' post-it notes from the warm up & one or more of the nouns from the word race. They're asked to create a new image by putting them together somehow, either by drawing it, or by finding a way to act it with their bodies.
- After about 10 minutes, these are shared & discussed with the group. Participants are reminded that if they hear any interesting phrases or statements, they should write them down.

Writing to Subvert

Prompt 10 minutes

- Participants read Jon Sands' poem 'Rattle':
<http://www.rattle.com/poetry/decoded-by-jon-sands>
& discuss how opposites are working within it.
- The events surrounding Trayvon Martin's death & police racism & brutality are discussed. The participants are asked to identify whose voices are at work in the poem & how they are being subverted. The Obama quote embedded in the poem is identified & examined.

Preliminary Writing 5 minutes

- Participants are given prompt sheet (attached) & asked to pick one of the quotes on it OR one of the things they've heard being said that day OR to go on twitter & find a tweet they think is provocative.
- They asked to make each word in the quote into its opposite (like in the Jon Sands poem) to create a new phrase that subverts the original.
(*Ten minute break*)
- After the break students share their new subverted phrases.

Writing 25 minutes

Participants EITHER take their new subverted phrase & use it as the first line in a poem OR continue to work through the different quotes they've gathered to make a poem of mini-subversions. Before starting, students are reminded of the images they created earlier, in case any are useful to generate imagery within their poems.

Share 15 mins

To finish the workshop, participants come together & share their work. After hearing each piece, they're asked if anyone wants to celebrate any lines or poems they especially liked.

4. Wordbanks for Cat & Pete's workshop

Wordbank 1

Separated
AK47
Scrap
Rights
Running
Recruited
said with his eyes
say nothing
Home
Nightmares
Army
family
Last alive
Destroy
Table
Carrying
Alive
Fooling around
Transform
Sack
Embedded
Madness
lace
Govern
Freedom
Ear to the ground
Emotions
Drugs
Pistol
Trauma
Crisis
Bury
Abandon
Damage
Hammering
Vicious
Warrior
Tank

Wordbank 2

Window
Joy
Honey
Morning
Head
Comfortable
Heart
Joyful
Blanket
Trees
Dance
Water
Sun
Sleep
Agree
Forest
Dinner
Fresh
Interesting
Jumping
Warmth
Excited
Grass
Love
Stream
Dinner
Rest
Friend
Safe
Water
Small
Care
Light
Relief
Agree
Honest
Laugh
Safe

5. Sample Poems for 'Through the Eyes' workshop

2. Freedom Destroyed

Sun bursts in through my open window,
Transparent rays of warmth and joy,
My unmade bed probably still lies there,
Just like the boy next to me,
And I wish I was him.

A hot summer's day,
My friends being shot down,
By my pretend gun,
Flopping to the ground like fish,
Like my twisted present and nightmares of the future.

Never did I know how lucky I was,
I had the fine white clouds of freedom,
And the family and friends I loved,
Now I ruin other people's lives,
Child soldier boy.

Christy Fielder, Year 8

1.

My AK47

My emotion controller

For my pain and suffering from my family's death

Drugged and barely able to stand

My hand gets pulled across to my gun

In the background I hear my friend screaming

Where's my mum?

Then I hear hell itself

Bang ! bang ! bang!

The boy who I grew close to

While being enslaved has now met three bullets to his head.

Then I see beneath my feet

His blood surrounding me like a pool of red wine

I froze

My eyes watered

Is this the life I'm forced to live?

Jairus Theodorou

3.

Pistol in my hand

I smell the honey-suckle of my freedom,

I wear long drapes of satin and bathe in clean water.

I see the stars and feel the relaxation

Of not having to go back to that place I call trouble,

But as my heart slows down,

And every nerve in my body tightens and closes,

I feel the harsh winds of reality closing in on my face,

Then my eyes widen and I realise,

I am separated from my family after the bombardment of my village.

I see blood of rain and sun as fire,

I bear a pistol in my hand and target a young boy such as myself,

Only to spare him,

Resulting in him choosing an AK47 as his new family.

I don't have a home,

My house is the ripped drapes of a barely standing tent.

This is my life,

But I do not live like you.

I am a child soldier.

Anya O'Mahony, Year 10

4.

A free fearless butterfly,
No rules,
Just fun,
That was me,
Just me with my beloved family and friends,
Life was my best friend.

One morning I awoke,
With high spirits,
My family laying on the floor,
Blood trickling down my baby brother's forehead.

I ran,
I didn't know where I was going
But I ran.
I felt like my whole world was torn apart,
But little did I know,
Guns, battles, nightmares,
Is all that was seen in my fortune.

No family no friends,
But I don't care anymore,
Stripped of my freedom,
I'm still here in the trenches,
But my mind is lost,
And it seems my heart has drowned in battle.

Malaika Malik

5. Warrior

Apollo's light and warmth rained
Dowsing rocks and grains from east to west
The ravens freer than I'll ever be
Yet not as free as my mother
In a stone tomb
Awash with the blood of my elders
Blanketed in crystal yellow dahlias
Reminding her of the sun
A light I've lost the right to.

The gun in my hand was lead
Heavy like foggy memories of home
Just like my mother's dying words
"esse quam capi a capto"
Be a captor rather than be captured
I never want your blood to stain the sand
And make the oceans froth as pink as your cheeks hue
When you're father struck you

With her whispered orders embedded in my mind
I stared running
Towards my father aura
The dark berets and weaponised pins
Are home now
Nightmares displeased with night.

Amina Azong, Year 11

6. Child Soldier

All that I have gone through you could see it in my eyes,
It was terrible,
I hated it there,
No one wanted to talk to me,
I felt left out.

All I wanted was freedom to look at the trees,
Listen to the birds tweeting,
And watch the sun rising.

I always felt love,
Warmth,
And care from my family,
Especially from my mum.
I used to sleep until the light was showing.
When I usually woke-up,
I'm full of joy and I know it's going to be wonderful.

Suddenly I got taken away,
I didn't know what was happening,
Why did they want me?
I felt blood circling through my veins,
Turning red on my face,
Being so frightened
Didn't know what to do,
WAS IT GOING TO BE THE LAST SECOND OF MY
LIFE?

Klaudia Depczynska

7. Free

I am lost. I am scared
I feel the icy breath of wind strike me
Like the captain's cane on my back.
I miss my home, my family
I am running away from this place they call home
I haven't a clue where I am
What I am

They called me boy
Our names are lost forever like Al Capone's secret stash
I had a mischievous friend
Who just couldn't be bothered with life,
Didn't obey one day they took him
BANG!

Clean air
I breathe in deeply
Freshly oxygenating my lungs.
The sunlight blinding my eyes with its golden shine
My mother blurs up before me,
Tears welling up as I see her
My hero
I run as fast as my weak spindly legs can carry me
I am free.

Nafeesa Naeem

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