

Us, Here, Now.

A decade after the economic crash of 2008, we still live under the austerity measures of a Conservative government who have taken money away from our education and our youth services.

There is global unrest all around us, and fear of terrorism prevails. Nationalism, racism and Islamophobia are rife, and hate crime is on the rise. Racism and scapegoating have become acceptable and mainstream, as demonstrated by President Trump and Brexit.

We feel like we live in a self-serving culture, where people look out for themselves and have no interest in helping others.

We feel time poor, and under multiple pressures. We live in a world where social media dominates everything. We find ourselves in an efficiency driven education system which is becoming privatised and marketised, increasingly competitive, linear and results focused.

As young students of colour, we wanted to investigate our experiences of the education system, in the here and now. Does it really provide us with a 'way out' or does it recycle and reinforce patterns of inequality?

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Take Back The Power is a Participatory Action Research project run by The Winch, a youth centre in North London. Over four months, a team of eight young people were employed and trained to explore shared experiences of injustice. Using creative approaches including interviews, storytelling, poetry and collage, together we created an alternative space to research and take action around the issues affecting us.

Me, myself, I

Conversation

is

Starting from "go"

Reflections of ourselves



In our own hands

ANALIESE

CALL CALL CALL CALL CALL

Call it spies in a capitalist system
Call it our children are the state's science project
Call it the truth about your children's second home
Books, crooks and lies
Call it first world problems in the education system
Call it education in German means loss of identity
Call it losing our children to the government
Call it your version of what's important

Call it caged
Call it linear
Call it a straw
A tunnel
Call it 15 years a slave
Trapped
Lost in the system
Entrapped in education

Call it silence and "educate"
Minimal exposure to the truth
Call it outdated homework
Danger and the endangered
Simple "logic"
Call it Secrets of the Education System

Call it Play the game: An education of Rules
Call it Jumping Through Hoops:
How Education Taught Us To Conform
Call it The Sausage Factory
E to S
The Time Prison
The System
The Truth

IT

Call it Starting Point

Level 1

Call it Beginning

Call it Our Lives

Our Curriculum

Call it Faces of education

Define education

Depict education

Closed and open

Whose knowledge is power?

What is our education teaching us?

The necessary steps to success?

Whose agenda does the education system serve?

What is education?

Why us?

Call it Fuck the education system

Call it How to buss the system

Call it Set yourself free

Learn to unlearn

Reviving the forgotten meaning of education

Revolutionising the education system

Redefining the curriculum

Call it Reteaching

Call it Learning as the key to crack imperialism

I don't want to be educated I want to learn

Call it Let's educate ourselves

Call it Learn to learn differently

Call it Power, knowledge and voice

We are all teachers and all learners

From the root

Take back the power

- TBTP COLLECTIVE

WE ARE BASICALLY
TAUGHT THINGS THAT

DON'T
BENEFIT
US

AS HUMAN BEINGS,
BUT RATHER

THIS

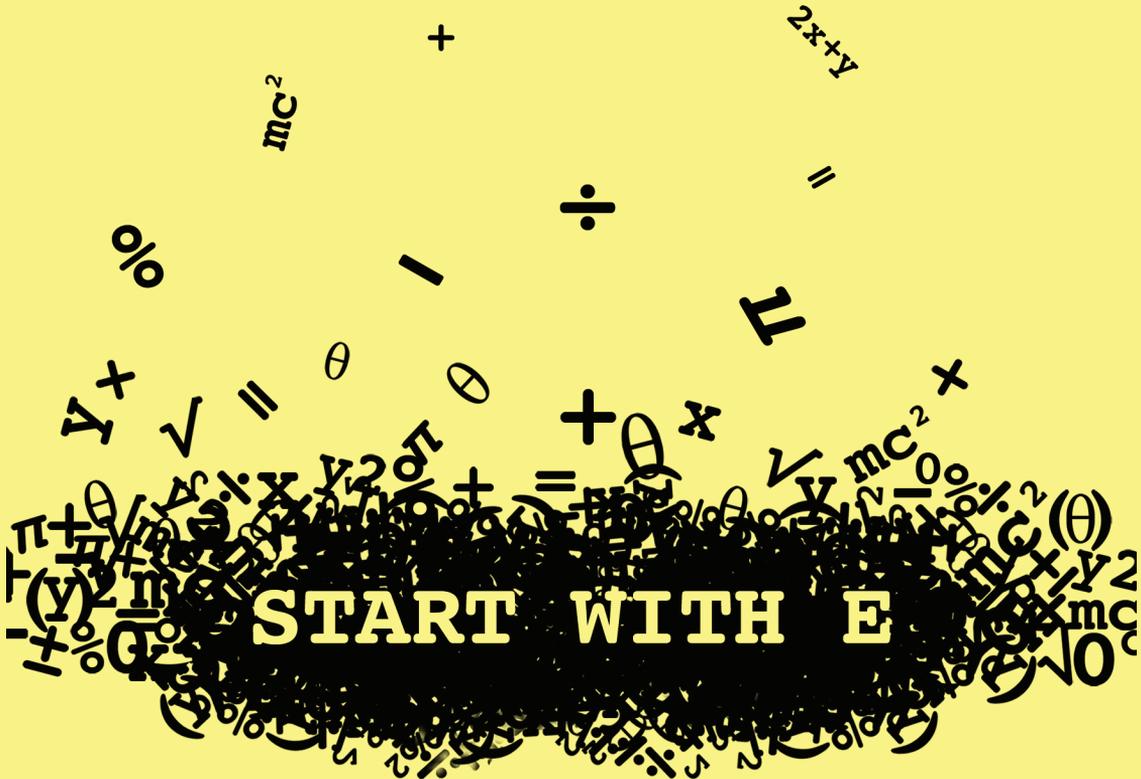
CAPITALIST

SOCIETY

I have to do
more
and

I have to try
harder.

We don't have the same
Chances or experiences.



START WITH E

Start with E equals,
Are we E-lectronically comprised to
see everything but what is right in front of our eyes?

Past comma has been comma
barely been a been comma decimals to education.
Now E to S equals system divided by humans is the world.

D forward slash danger colon.
Are we endangered minus fear
sums result underscore danger.

Fear equals failure, failure equals poor.
Poor square rooted gives you injustice.

You equals me equals us dot.
"You'll never make it" is the stigma that surrounds me,
So how possibly semicolon can you equal me?

Which means there was never an us,
For I am the representation of free in a lock e - d mansion.
However, you are the representation of binded creation
that defies expectation
Set up by this interpretation that nothing matters if you are not
blank blank the answer.

- RAWDAT Q

**THE
ANGRY
BLACK
WOMAN
IS
ANGRY**

I am doing more than well.
I have turned suffering
into an art form
I have been piled
into assumptions
that
can't
quite
contain
all of my soul;
Defined as stereotypes
that do not embrace
all of
my depth

I am NOT
your definition
of ME
I am
a deception
I will not fulfil
your expectations

I am
instead,
black magic
straining at the seams
of a human form

Answered prayers
moulded,
pressed
and embraced
by the hands
of a She-God
Into a body made
and ready to worship

I am not
something for you...
to pretend
to understand
only to distort
in your simplified
translation
of me
MY purpose is
not to be understood,
You will never understand
ME

You tell ME
to be MYself
yet refuse to except ME
No, you've not forgotten ME
You have simply rejected ME
What is it
about otherness
that you hate so much?
I once offered MY humanity
to you
as art
I made both
soul
and
magic
visible
for you
And all you gave back was
criticism
I felt that I needed
your appreciation
to validate
the inspirational being that
I AM
I have given up on you all
For my screams,
cries
and prayers
have too often
fallen
on deaf ears
Let you self-proclaimed
gods
that ignore ME
finally open your eyes
for this God WILL be made
visible
to you.
Appreciate
that
muthafucka!

- WENDY KIA

I
DON'T
SEE
MY
FACE

IN THE CURRICULUM

UNLESS

IT IS A
BRIEF ENCOUNTER
IN

BLACK

HISTORY

MONTH.

I feel that
teachers
already have this

misconception

of Students of my Profile

before

the lesson has started

before
the year
has started

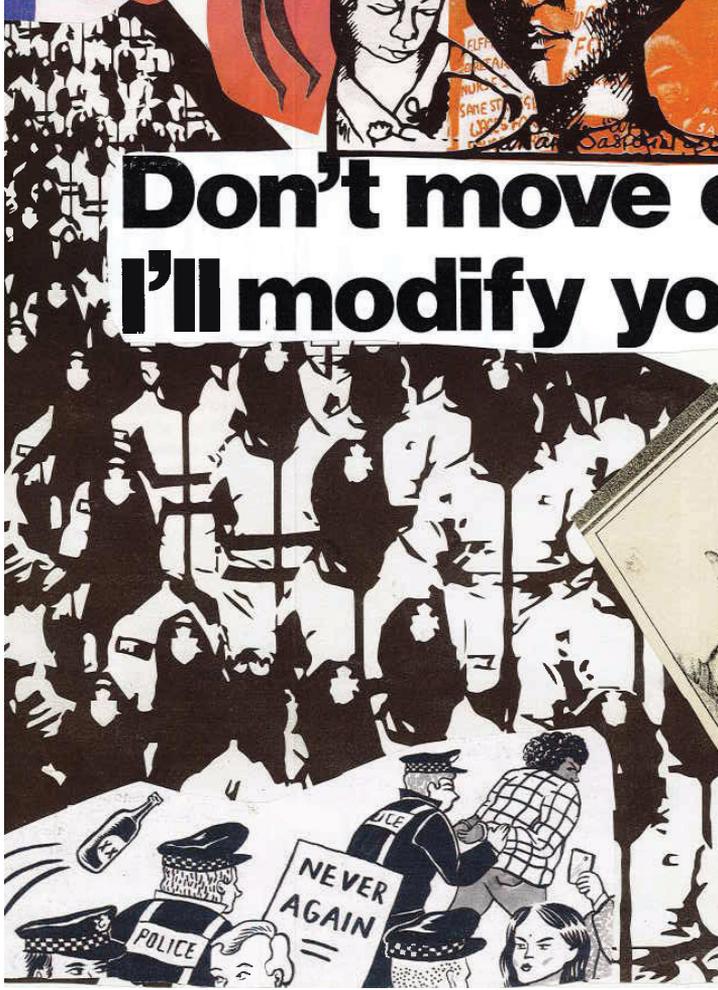
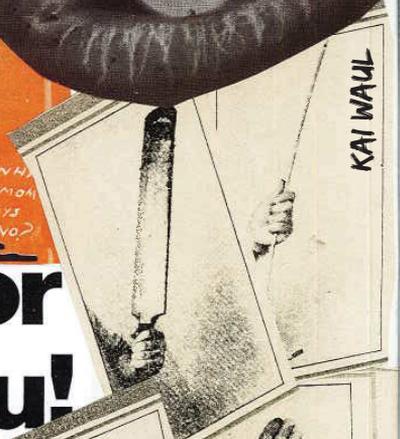
justice. 'No justice, no peace' ... or what?
The unity is powerful, beautiful even.

THE
MANDEMA

YOUNG



**Don't move or
I'll modify you!**



NOBODY TOLD ME

Nobody told me,
how stressful it would be to become an adult
and not to lose it.
Been emotional for way too long,
Yet again I have to pick myself up

Nobody told me,
How hard it would be
and that we never ask each other "how are you?"
and just for those six hours,
I felt happy and could be an infant
because I realised that I had to grow up too fast
and at the age of 12, while they had no care in the world
I worried about managing money and a family
and their response would just be
"Go to the school nurse in YOUR free time"
and I would question if there was
something wrong with me.

Nobody told me,
that it was okay to cry and even in front
of my loved ones, not one tear.
feeling vulnerable and not knowing
how to deal with it
every life lesson, I learnt on my own.

Nobody told me,
and that became normal and even if they tell me now
trust me, I already know
it gotten to the point that self-reliance has become
the norm and feeling exposed was exotic for me.

AS YOU GROW OLDER
YOUR HEART
STARTS TO GO

YOU START TO BELIEVE
IN LIFE LESS...

AND BY THE TIME YOU'RE OUT OF EDUCATION
IT'S JUST BECOME A THING OF:

I NEED
TO MAKE ENOUGH MONEY
TO SURVIVE.

AND I THINK SCHOOL KIND OF, YEH
FUCKS PEOPLE UP
MAYBE...
TAKES AWAY A LOT...

Homework

DISCIPLINE EXAMS

learning rubbish,

Very seldom are we encouraged to have any original thoughts indeed we are actively taught to devalue any personal feelings and observations.

being made to feel stupid



A Sussex school temporarily excluded two students for breaking school uniform rules. The boy had a beard, the girl was wearing a headscarf, both of which are signs of devotion to Islam. (Eastern Eye 16.11.93)

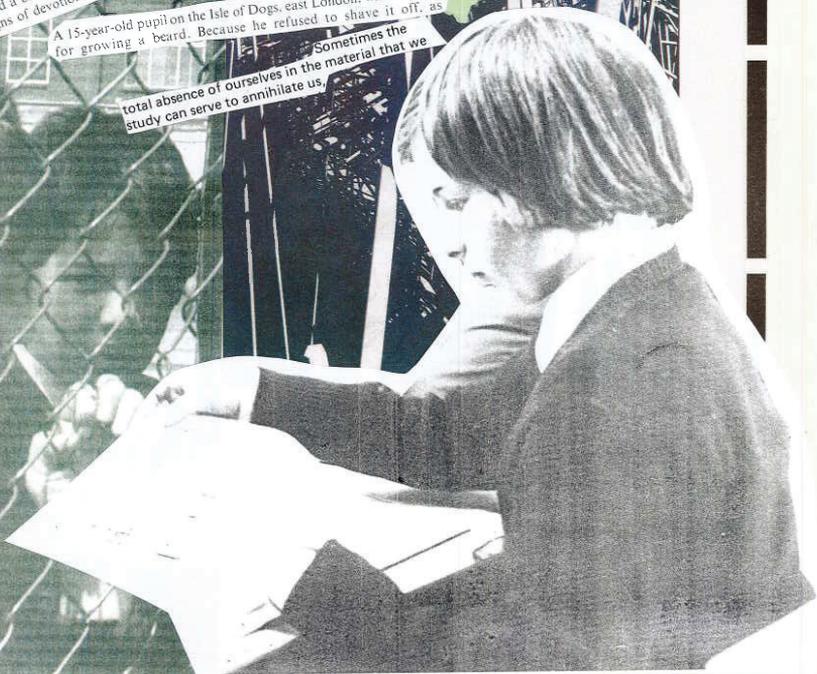
A 15-year-old pupil on the Isle of Dogs, east London, was excluded for growing a beard. Because he refused to shave it off, as

Sometimes the total absence of ourselves in the material that we study can serve to annihilate us.

I put in a lot of work for my exams - I was a right little swot. I reckoned that it was worth working hard for three or four weeks just before the exams, even though I'd pissed around for most of the term, so that I could get some good grades. And I did OK in my exams.

But I've forgotten everything now. I can't remember sweet FA about rabbits' bladders or dates of wars or stupid little authors who wrote pissy books about ten million years ago. So even if the people who set the exams reckon those were good things to learn about, me having good grades isn't gonna prove anything about me knowing about them.

It's great to learn about things that you're interested in and that are relevant - but the stuff I learned wasn't like that.



2 COLOURS OF THE RAINBOW

We are paint
Amazing in solitude
Explored with exchange
We are the brush in control of the brush stroke
Deciding what will be painted
We are artists painting the future
We hold in our hands a palette containing all the
colours of the rainbow
And yet we find a world painted white

Was this world made for us
Can we win here
(dear father lord)
or am I asking the wrong question
(the wrong person)

Instead of standing there staring at the white paint
Why not paint in your own colour?
Our creativity is diminished
Are the colours on my palette
forever to be oppressed?

- TBTP COLLECTIVE



I'm sick of being told I have the potential to be great because what you're implying is that I'm not already. You want to box me in and be your version of great but I'm here to tell you I'm too big for your box.

From the age of 14 you're setting the bar for us with your pathways. Deciding that we're not good enough to learn. But what you forgot to mention is that you believe we're just not able to remember well enough.

AND THIS IS WHY I REFUSE TO LEARN...

I refuse to learn and accept the idea that some of us aren't good enough.

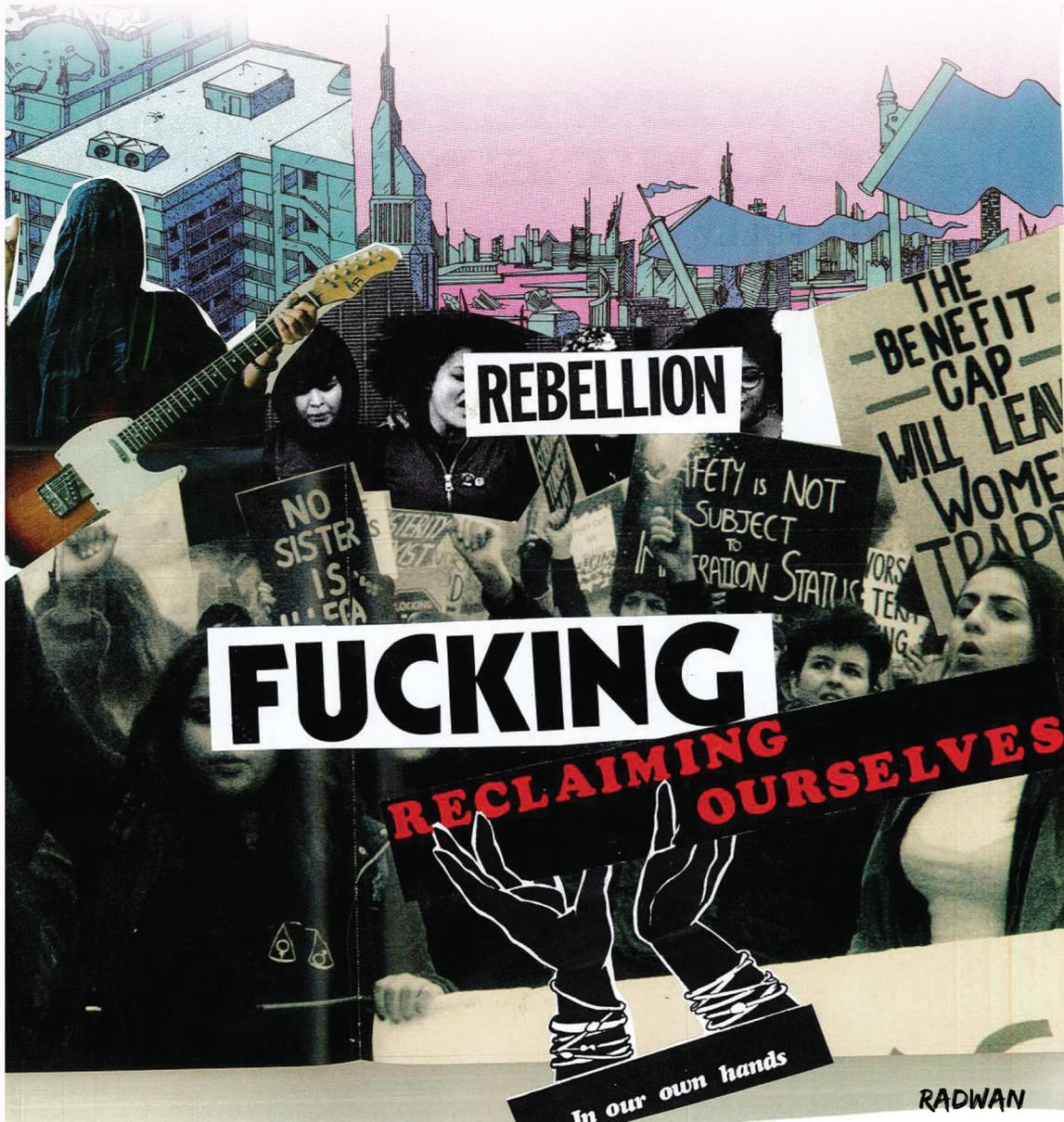
I refuse to learn that there are some people that deserve to be left behind to sit on walls just so you can make an example of them.

Refuse to learn that they aren't deserving of being taught how to climb over.

Refuse to learn about the bars you've set for our people.

Refuse to learn about the bars you've set for me.

- RADWAN



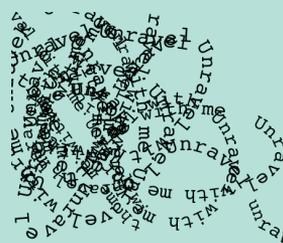
REBELLION

FUCKING

RECLAIMING OURSELVES

In our own hands

RADWAN



UNRAVEL WITH ME

Education is the loose thread to unravel the tapestry of the old world
But this tapestry is thick and layered
Hemming ideas in

And what happens if this thread I pull opens a Pandora's box?
And creates a problem I wont be able to stitch back up?
Are my materials valued enough to be considered for recovery?
Or will they just be forgotten

Will I forever be trapped in this maze of uncertainty?
The gravity of this tapestry is a weight I want to shed, to breathe
These questions overpower me, are a cage for creativity
I need to find the courage
To unravel and reveal the truth

- TBTP COLLECTIVE

question what you are learning

QUESTION

WHY

you make the choices you do-
IS IT

WHAT YOU WANT?

Or what you are being

TOLD

TO WANT??

Look critically

at the power structures

around us

before allowing ourselves

to be

divided

in competition

Youth criminalised

You wonder why we uprising

DISC...

Politically unrecognised
And you wonder why we uprising.

STRIKE!

REBELLION

RADICAL EDUCATION

Union
St
Incult

MASS MOVEMENT

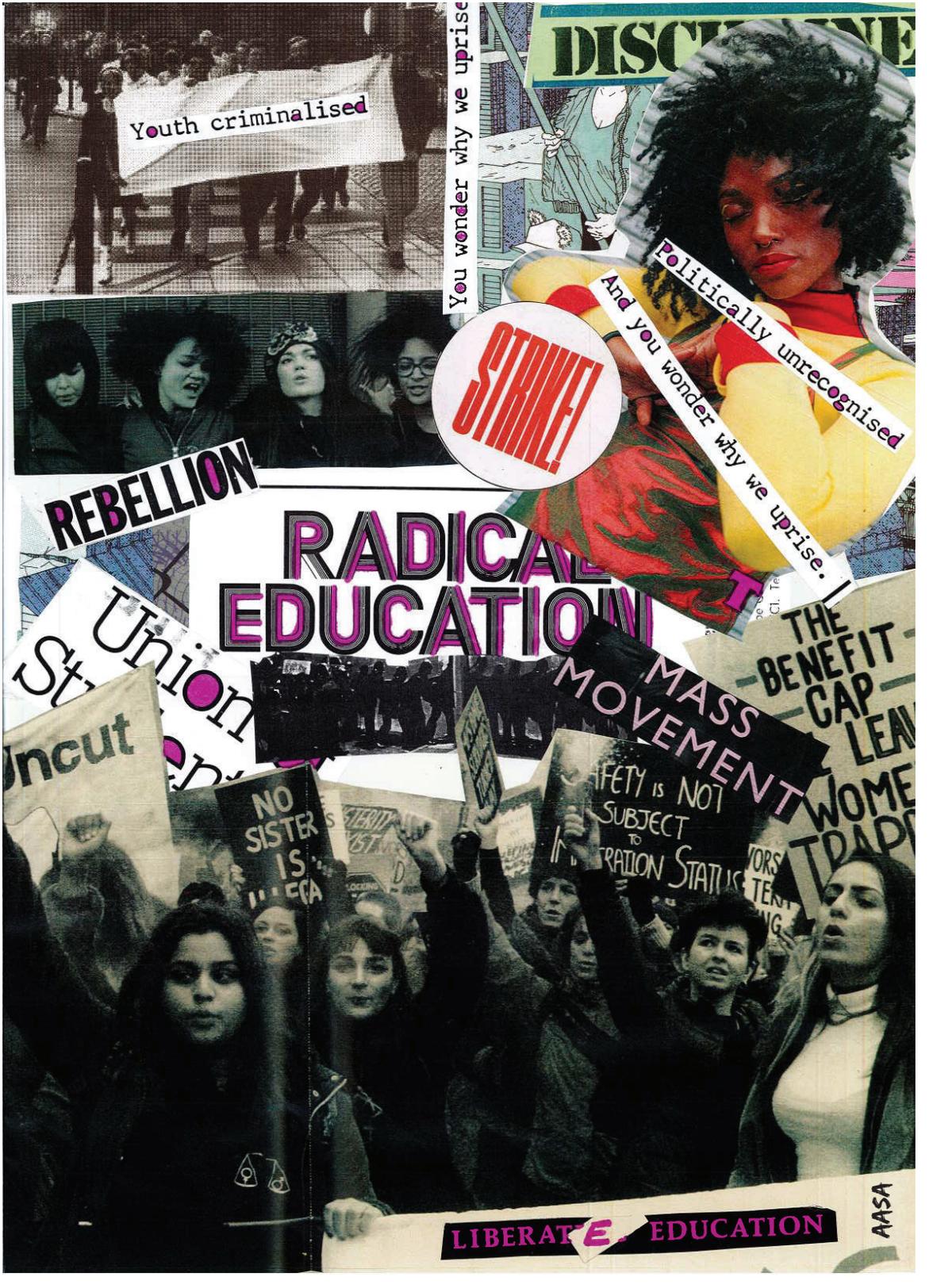
THE BENEFIT-CAP LEAV WOMEN TRAP

NO SISTER IS SAFE

SAFETY IS NOT SUBJECT TO IMMIGRATION STATUS TESTING

LIBERATE EDUCATION

AASA



TAKE A STAND
AGAINST INJUSTICE

INEQUALITY AFFECTS
ALL OF US

YOU

CAN

STAND

UP

IN

SOLIDARITY

EVEN IF
IT DOESN'T AFFECT YOU DIRECTLY

FOREIGN LAND TO FAMILIAR SOULS

We are immigrants to our own land
Familiar yet foreign
Can my tainted spirit
Make love to this land
Or do we repel you?

I come to you with a blind and open heart
Like a child
You take out nutrients
You leave us to rot on the side
Whilst taking our seeds
And removing our bulbs and roots
You sell us for less than we are worth

But we are surviving
Your version of my history says we were slaves
My history says we were enslaved
Taste the difference
Forced to unknot our tongues
Yet denied access to climb the rope

So now I invite you to climb the rope with me
For if we climb together perhaps one day we can all be free
Grab our roots and grow strong with the wealth of riches in our souls
In even the driest of lands
Just perhaps we are not too different you and I

- TBTP COLLECTIVE

TO INFINITY AND BEYOND

We are one version of the future
A future of infinite possibilities
Such possibilities within such infinities
Can leave one ill at ease
Should we live our dreams?
Or stay and please

"To infinity and beyond..."
I miss those days when I wouldn't overthink a phrase
But then life kicked in
And brought me back to reality
And now I'm struggling to maintain my sanity

Will I find a manual
To build an empire?
Or am I supposed to be suppressed?
They expect me to read the manual
From only one angle
How do I explore this life of infinity
Through such a narrow focal lens?

But, I say, maybe,
Together we can find another way
Let's smash the lens
Burn the manual
And invent our own definition of sanity

- TBTP COLLECTIVE

I FEEL LIKE A LOT OF
US DON'T KNOW THE

POWER

THAT WE ACTUALLY HOLD.

GET INVOLVED;

EDUCATE YOURSELF

AND ACTUALLY GO OUT AND

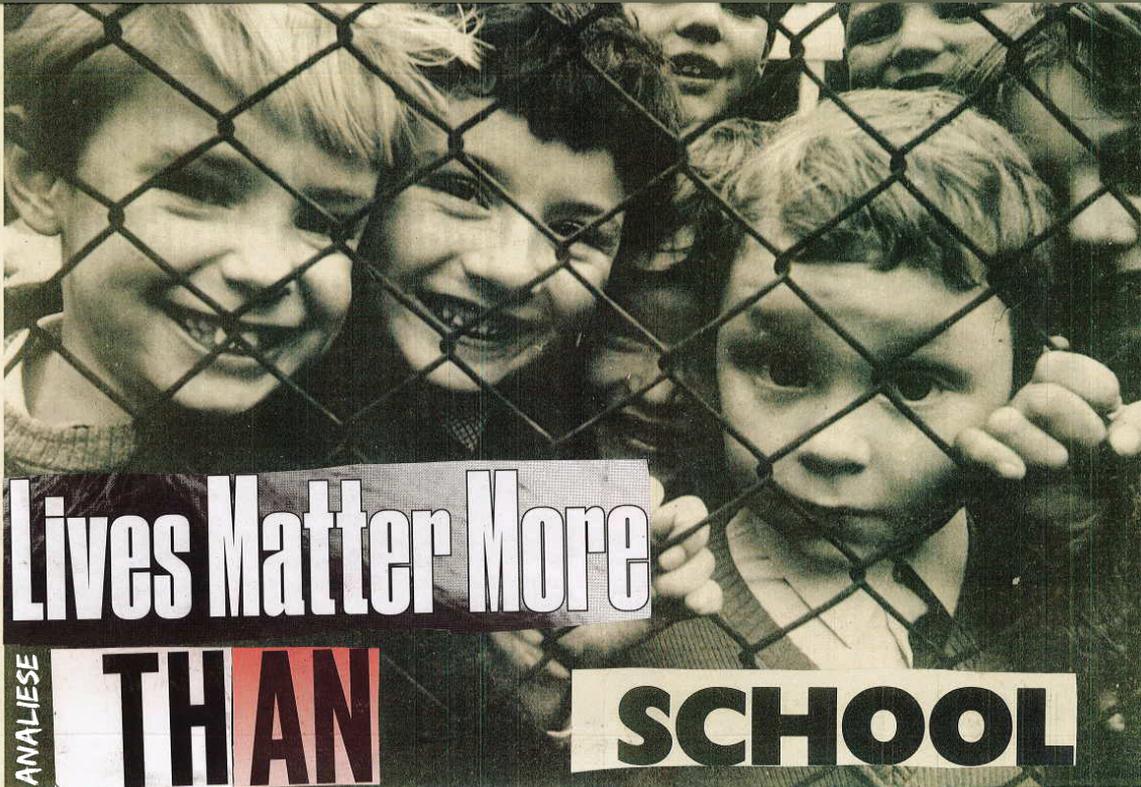
BE PROVOCATIVE

DON'T SIT DOWN AND JUST EXPECT IT TO HAPPEN.

YOU HAVE TO

GO OUT OF YOUR WAY

**TO EDUCATE
YOURSELF.**



Lives Matter More

ANALIESE

THAN

SCHOOL

Mary Elgin (Report)

Be radical

SHOUT OUT

In class when you feel like
the teacher is saying something wrong.

Speak up all the time

Challenge the curriculum, Challenge the teacher.

Be outspoken

have a voice and be a voice for others.

But do it with a degree of respect
so people can't tell you anything.

And dignity.

Yeah.

Try and keep going

don't give up

with anything you do.

You can change.

Even though you may not have the best grades,
the best family situation

you are you

and because of that you can get through anything.

Let that be a part of you
and a testament that you tell people.

Let it be part of your journey but
don't let that hold you back from doing
what you actually want to do

because you have got a brain.

And it's ok to be different

Who Are We?

We are a group of young people aged 15 - 18, a mixture of men and women.

Our parents are all from different countries; Congo, Angola, Nigeria, Somalia, Turkey, England and The Caribbean. We are all second generation immigrants, first generation British.

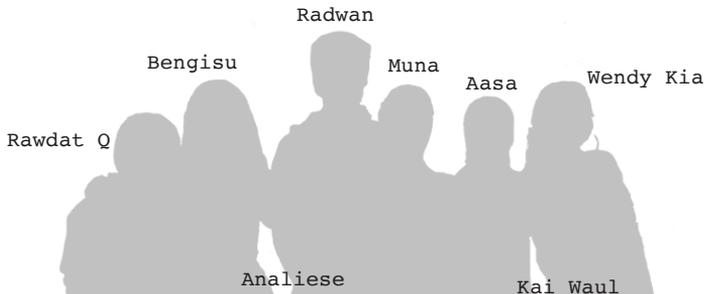
We are all currently in education, studying at schools and colleges in North West London. We are interested in and engaged with social issues. Some of us identify as activists, others as feminists, black feminists, and socialists.

Many of us feel we lack economic security, and for most of us our housing situation is precarious. We all identify as working class, or from a working class background.

We have complicated families, and many of us have caring responsibilities at home. Some of us are Muslim, some of us are Christian, some of us are atheist and some of us are spiritual.

We have many different skills and interests including spoken word, music, drama, art, sports, technology and social media

We are responsible, humble, passionate and open minded.



We are Take Back The Power.

with big thanks to:
Salma Istwani (design work)
Stephanie (Sonority) Turner (poetry facilitation)
Olivia Chessell (collage making workshop)
Lucy and Lita
The Winch
for their support in making this happen

Because...

Because competition, league tables, and the marketisation of education crush our spirits and turn us into robots

Because we are expected to conform to white middle class values and ideas of success

Because undercover racism is all around us; in the curriculum, expectations, exclusions, behaviour control and dismissing things as jokes and banter

Because the curriculum doesn't reflect us and the diversity of our history, cultures and experiences

Because many of the pathways out are closed to us who don't have the networks to get the right work experience, jobs, or opportunities for UCAS

Because all our time is taken up being trained to pass exams so we can't take a moment to imagine how things can be different, or take part in shaping society around us

Because we have to grow up too fast, under pressure to take on responsibilities at home and earn money to pay the bills

Because there are not enough spaces to think critically, do things differently and educate ourselves beyond the walls of school

Take Back The Power 2018

This was not made to make you feel comfortable. This was not made to make you feel comfortable. **This was not made to make you feel comfortable.** This was not made to make you feel comfortable. This was not made to make you feel comfortable. **THIS WAS NOT MADE TO MAKE YOU FEEL COMFORTABLE.** This was not made to make you

to make you
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to make
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