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# **INSIDERS LOOKING OUT:**

**SOLUTIONS TO YOUTH  
VIOLENCE FROM PEOPLE  
WHO HAVE LIVED IT**

are our friends, brothers,  
boyfriends & girlfriends  
killed on our streets?

WELCOME TO THE SHED  
JAVIER SANCHEZ

## **TAKE BACK THE POWER 2019 A CALL TO ACTION**

# INTRODUCTION

Sadly those of us living it know that youth on youth violence is not a new issue, but the recent media interest has finally brought it to the wider public's attention, making now the best moment yet for change.

This Call To Action is the result of a nine-month project called **Take Back The Power**. We - 8 young people aged 15-20 from North London - were employed and trained as researchers at The Winch, a youth and community organisation in Camden. We were each recruited because we have experienced youth violence somehow, and so are the right people to understand why it happens, and what is needed to make it stop. Using a process called Participatory Action Research, we looked within ourselves to identify root causes and connections, we analysed media coverage, we poured out our stories to each other, and used the rawness of our emotions to create stories and poems. We spoke to friends, witnessed debates in parliament, considered solutions, and went away to Wales together, to have space to feel the things which are harder to feel in London.

By now anyone who reads the news will be aware of the statistics, the portrayal of the lifestyle, the pain and sorrow of family and community members. But in the face of such a systemic problem, it is hard to think of how this could ever end. That's why this document doesn't dwell on our lives, our stories, or the problem itself, but instead focuses on SOLUTIONS.

We may not be experts in the academic sense, but in reality we know more than 'the experts' because these findings are based on the stories of our own lives. Using our experiences of what helped us, our friends and family members on our journeys, we want to show you what could help others who might need support to get out.

We hope that people can use this report very practically. There are over 50 ideas for change which can be acted on immediately. The '**What Could That Look Like?**' sections are some ideas of real practical ways which these conditions can be improved or reversed. Rather than just saying "the narrative needs to change," we wanted to get one step closer to HOW the narrative could change, and WHO could change it. This is from our perspective, from what we know has helped us, so it is not exhaustive, and we know that there are plenty of things we don't know.

We present 4 calls for **COMMUNITY SUPPORT** focusing on things which can be done in the here and now, by friends or family or in community centres, schools, youth organisations or therapeutic settings. We hope that people can use these ideas to inform more useful interventions to help young people affected by youth violence.

We make 6 demands for **SYSTEMIC CHANGE** which set some bigger challenges. Youth violence is a direct product of where society is at right now, and systemic problems require systemic change. The Public Health Approach which politicians and the media keep citing as being the best solution to the issue will be close to useless without wider system change, or if it is implemented by the same bodies and services which currently exclude and shame young people. Systemic change doesn't only mean the government or public institutions; family, networks of kinship, the environment, private enterprise are all part of the system, and we can have power and influence in all of them if we act together.

These are our demands: for a society where no young person could grow up thinking that violence was the best option. We urge you to use whatever power you have and join with those around you to turn any one of these demands into a campaign for change. We need your help.

And we promise you - if these demands were met, the society that allows so many deaths in our communities wouldn't stand a chance.

**Take Back The Power - Summer 2019**

## WHAT WE LEARNED FROM OUR STORIES

- Youth Violence is a product of where our society is right now.
- The mix of motivations for involvement in violence are what society teaches us all to want; wealth, survival, protection, respect, recognition, pride, power, loyalty and a sense of belonging.
- We are expected to fit into a system that does not benefit us, and in some cases is set against us. We're punished if we don't. This is structural violence.
- Society's responses to youth violence usually make the problem worse by increasing exclusion and mistrust.
- The people who are talking about it often don't understand the mindset behind it.
- There is a lack of support and protection, we often don't have adults we can trust.
- Everyone has a backstory and a different reason for being involved, no two stories are the same.
- Being kicked out of school outcasts young people and pushes them towards bad influences.
- People don't know what the alternatives to the lifestyle are, and lack environments where they can be someone they are proud of.
- Whether you are involved or affected by the involvement of those around you, it's hard to talk about it.
- The stigma associated with this issue can make it feel like you are living a double life.
- It can feel like an addiction. It's hard to get out; even when you think you're out, you are only one phone call away from being back there.
- Getting out starts with a change in mindset.

## WHAT HELPED US ON OUR JOURNEYS

- Changing my mindset: that watershed moment where I wanted to get out.
- When my Mum started getting paid enough I didn't need to bring money home anymore.
- Doing something else that was productive, where I had an outlet, a structure, something that brought me joy, where I felt proud of myself, and I had something to lose.
- Having other ways to feel challenged and feel a sense of risk, adrenaline, competition, excitement, on my own terms.
- Having someone supporting me who held me to account, and didn't give up on me.
- Having responsibilities to people or groups I didn't want to let down.
- Meeting like-minded people who knew what I'd been through, who were not judgemental.
- Talking to people like me, who got it, not someone who just read a book about it.
- Building up trust over time.
- Being able to talk about it, be the whole of me, amongst people I trusted.
- Having the opportunity to get out and escape London, to push my comfort zone and have experiences outside of my area.

**THE LEARNING**

# CALLS FOR COMMUNITY SUPPORT



**1.**

## CRITICAL UNDERSTANDING:

YOUNG PEOPLE CAN TAKE CONTROL OF THEIR OWN LIVES WHEN THEY HAVE THE TOOLS TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IS GOING ON, AND KNOW THE POWER THEY HAVE.

**2.**

## EMOTIONAL AMNESTY:

YOUNG PEOPLE NEED TO TALK TO PEOPLE WHO 'GET IT', WITHOUT FEAR OR PUNISHMENT.

**3.**

## MINDSET CHANGE:

YOUNG PEOPLE NEED TO UNDERSTAND THAT THERE IS MORE TO LIFE THAN THIS.

**4.**

## HELP TO GET OUT:

YOUNG PEOPLE NEED LONG TERM, PRACTICAL SUPPORT TO 'GET OUT' OF THE LIFESTYLE, KNOWING THAT IT WON'T BE A SIMPLE JOURNEY.

**5.**

LISTEN TO YOUNG PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE OF YOUTH VIOLENCE AS EXPERT VOICES ON THIS ISSUE, AND INVOLVE US IN CREATING SOLUTIONS.



**10.**

STOP THE CRIMINALISATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHICH ONLY MAKES US MORE UNSAFE. TACKLE THE CORE ISSUES WHICH RESULT IN VIOLENCE, NOT JUST THE VIOLENCE ITSELF.

**6.**

STOP THE MASS EXCLUSION OF YOUNG PEOPLE FROM MAINSTREAM EDUCATION.

## DEMANDS FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE

**9.**

CHALLENGE STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE. YOUNG PEOPLE NEED TO FEEL THAT THEY ARE LIVING IN A SOCIETY THAT REPRESENTS, RESPECTS, INCLUDES AND PROTECTS THEM, AND ABLE TO SUCCEED IN A POSITIVE PATH.

**7.**

CHANGE THE NARRATIVE ABOUT YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE INVOLVED IN YOUTH VIOLENCE. RECOGNISE THAT THEY ARE PEOPLE WITH COMPLEX NEEDS WHO ARE NOT GETTING THE SUPPORT AND HELP THEY SHOULD BE ENTITLED TO.

**8.**

END POVERTY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR FAMILIES. PEOPLE NEED TO KNOW THAT IT'S POSSIBLE FOR THEM TO EARN A DECENT LIVING IN A LEGITIMATE WAY.

# OUR CALL TO ACTION



**CALLS  
FOR  
COMMUNITY  
SUPPORT**

# 1. CRITICAL UNDERSTANDING:

## YOUNG PEOPLE CAN TAKE CONTROL OF THEIR OWN LIVES WHEN THEY HAVE THE TOOLS TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IS GOING ON, AND KNOW THE POWER THEY HAVE.

Young people are at the heart of this issue; and if everyone in the lifestyle decided to stop this it could end. But if you are involved, it can feel like you are trapped in a cycle, in a bubble. Unless you have the tools to understand why this problem is happening, it can feel overpowering, like this is normal, like there are no other options but to continue. If this is all there is, then what is the motivation to get out?

Each of us - through the project, elsewhere, or individually - had a way to step outside of this life and look at the social situation that was making it happen. We saw that a young person getting stabbed is a symptom - the end result of a whole domino effect of other types of violence, fear and trauma. Once you can understand this, you can begin to understand your own position in it and redirect your energy towards change.

Society underestimates young people and our potentials are not valued, developed or taken advantage of. As a result many of us don't understand the power that we do have to change things for ourselves, let alone be part of wider social change. Life shouldn't be in reaction, you should be able to set your own path, but you have to feel like this is possible in order to decide to do that. Once you have taken control of your own life, you can become able to help others.

In order to know you have the power to change yourself or society, you need to experience the feeling of taking action, and seeing results. For that to happen, we need guidance and support to take a critical view of our lives and decisions, to build the confidence that we can make change for ourselves.

## WHAT COULD THAT LOOK LIKE?

“

**I DON'T THINK  
YOUNG PEOPLE  
KNOW THE POWER  
THAT THEY HAVE.**

- Projects, conversations and opportunities to think critically about what is going on and why - asking; 'the problems that I am facing; which are coming from me? and which are coming from outside?'
- Projects and conversations that work to build social intelligence with young people, helping them to experiment with different ways of being. You can't know the power you have unless you try doing something with it.
- Projects where young people are supported to take the lead towards positive change in their communities. This means getting paid for work where appropriate.
- Projects which push young people way beyond their expectations of themselves.
- One-to-one support which helps young people develop their own agency, judgement and ability to make good decisions on their own terms.

**WE'VE LOST IT.  
NO LONGER IN  
CONTROL OF  
OUR OWN  
LIVES, OUR  
OWN STORIES.**

”

# 2. EMOTIONAL AMNESTY:

## YOUNG PEOPLE NEED TO TALK TO PEOPLE WHO 'GET IT', WITHOUT FEAR OR PUNISHMENT.

Young people learn from a young age to not trust adults in professional roles; you don't feel you can go to them for protection, safety or comfort when you feel unsafe. Student-teacher relationships get burned early on in your school experience as young people get quickly categorised by teachers; e.g being branded as the "the misbehaved kid", and even the teachers you do trust are required by law to report things to parents, social services and even the police, which means it's better just not to say anything. Therapists are often older people from an entirely different background to you; this disconnect can make young people feel they will be judged and misunderstood.

Social workers too often feel irrelevant and intrusive. The same applies to youth workers, and other adults you come into contact with - why would you trust anyone with what's truly going on when they are going to pass it on and you risk getting branded a snitch, incriminating friends, or even splitting up your whole family?

Maybe your mum is on her own, or your parents/careers are working around the clock to make ends meet so you aren't getting the support you need at home. This can put you in a dangerous situation where the only adults you feel you can turn to are the ones who definitely don't have your best interests at heart. This leads to young people internalising negative stereotypes and beginning to live out a self fulfilling prophecy.

If young people had space for emotional amnesty, it'd allow them to heal and stop them bottling up emotions, because without healing, young people force themselves into a bubble and don't let anyone in which can be dangerous. Without healing, you can't let go of the anger you hold inside which prevents you from moving on to a more positive life. When there's no help and no guidance, when there's no one there for you it becomes 'every man for himself.'

## WHAT COULD THAT LOOK LIKE?

- Opportunities to talk to people who get it: mentors, youth workers, therapists who have lived it, who know about the issue from the inside. People who we can trust, who understand our reality enough to get where we are coming from.
- Emotional amnesties: spaces where we can be vulnerable, and seek help to heal from the things we have seen and done, without the fear of incriminating ourselves or our friends and families, so that cycles of violence don't repeat themselves.
- Long-term youth projects: instead of short-term, flashy, innovative projects, we need projects that are long-term, reliable, familiar, so that we can build trust to open up over time, and go back to someone you know in hard times.

**THE ANGER  
BUILDS UP. OUR  
FIRST EMOTION IS  
RETALIATION.**



**[WE NEED] YOUTH CLUBS  
AND SOCIAL WORKERS.  
AND I DON'T MEAN THE  
TYPICAL WHITE MAN THAT  
YOU GET; LIKE HAVING  
SOMEONE THAT REALLY  
UNDERSTANDS YOU.  
SOMEONE WHO EVEN  
COULD HAVE BEEN  
INVOLVED IN YOUTH  
VIOLENCE BEFORE.**



- Family support, after an incident has occurred: acknowledging that whole families are affected, and helping people find ways to cope with the situation, deal with what has happened, and be in a better position to support each other.

# 3. MINDSET CHANGE.

## YOUNG PEOPLE NEED TO UNDERSTAND THAT THERE IS MORE TO LIFE THAN THIS.

We are taught by everything around us to consume and buy - to equate happiness and self worth to materialism. You see the attention the older guy on your block gets for his new trainers, his new car, and you want that. You know you would never have the money to get those things, and you can't ask your mum as she is struggling to pay the bills, so what do you do? You find other ways to make the money you need. And it's fun! The attention, the adrenaline, the money, the glamour, the independence you gain, not to mention the sense of loyalty and belonging.

It's hard to remember who you are behind the reputation, or what you need to make yourself happy in a positive way. We need something else to be aiming towards beside a new pair of Nikes or a Canada Goose Jacket. Relying on materialistic things for validation from

other people is a dangerous mindset. One that can lead to gaps emotionally. A life focussed only on money and wealth is empty. If your object is money, life itself becomes less valuable.

Most of us had a mindset change, a moment when we realised that life was more than that. Having a taste of different ways to live, understanding that there was life outside of the roads, the chance to see things in another light, these were the things that pulled us closer to getting out. Having a sense of finding something else that we were really good at, that brought us purpose, another way of being successful, getting attention, getting that adrenaline rush, or a group of people that we liked who would miss us if we didn't show up. Mindset change is about understanding yourself and what you can be doing to do better.

## WHAT COULD THAT LOOK LIKE?

- Critical conversations about life and aspirations. Is that guy in that music video actually happy? Is that actually what you want for you?
- Opportunities to be busy and good at something else: creative outlets, recognitions of your skills, and teams who miss you if you don't show up.
- Opportunities to do things which test your comfort zone and get your adrenaline up which aren't overly supervised or controlled by adults.
- Projects that explore and challenge masculinity: run by male role models who we can relate to and look up to, and who inspire us towards different and more positive ways of being a man. Male spaces which aren't just about sport or competition, and where it is OK to be vulnerable (that's a hard one!)
- Trips outside of London. Trips to see life elsewhere can be life changing experiences.

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**I WAS GOING DOWN A SPIRAL, THERE WAS NO ONE THERE TO STOP ME, NO ONE THAT WAS LIKE, YO, DO THIS INSTEAD.**

**IT'S ABOUT TEACHING PEOPLE WHAT TRUE HAPPINESS IS... I JUST THOUGHT GETTING THE BEST TRACKSUIT WAS WHAT IT MEANT TO BE A MAN.**

”



# 4. HELP TO GET OUT:

## • YOUNG PEOPLE NEED LONG TERM, PRACTICAL SUPPORT TO 'GET OUT' OF THE LIFESTYLE, KNOWING THAT IT WON'T BE A SIMPLE JOURNEY.

So you had the mindset change, you realise you are in too deep, you don't want to do this anymore, you have had enough, you want out. But how? You owe someone money, you caused someone else trouble, and your friends need you to be there for them. Everyone will think you are a coward, and worse, if someone you are working for thinks they don't need you or trust you anymore, your life could be in danger.

**IF I PUT MYSELF AROUND OTHER PEOPLE I COULD GET OUT, BUT FOR NOW I AM STUCK IN THIS ROAD LIFE... YOU HAVE TO THINK BEFORE YOU LEAVE; DO IT PROPERLY. IF YOU CAUSED PROBLEMS, YOU CAN'T COME BACK.**



This is the hard part, where we need not to be criminalised, but to be able to reach out and work with adults who we can trust, to take the steps we need to get out without putting ourselves or our friends at risk. Like an addiction, there are barriers to getting out; the shame and stigma attached, the social pressure, the likelihood of relapse on the road to recovery.

From our stories we learned that the steps to getting out were gradual, they started small. The transition out can be terrifying, and isolating - you might be facing turning your back on your entire friendship group. But it is possible, with enough positive forces around you. Having someone stand by you during that transition - to instill hope, maintain the relationship, to make sure you don't feel abandoned - could change everything and be the difference between being stuck forever, or having your life back.

## WHAT COULD THAT LOOK LIKE?

- Positive, long-lasting relationships with adults who have your best interests at heart. Someone who pushes your strengths, believes in you, challenges your assumptions, holds you to account when you mess up, but doesn't give up on you.
- Support for families who are struggling to know how to be a good parent to a child who is involved.
- Job opportunities to earn decent money through meaningful work. Support to develop skills which can lead to a trade.
- The chance to escape, temporarily, or support to choose a fresh start, for those who want it.
- Learning from successful treatments for addiction. Understanding the links to trauma and inequality. These could be useful parallels to help find people the support needed to get out.
- More knife amnesties, especially in North London, and not filmed or in police stations.



**I GET CALLS AND MESSAGES CONSTANTLY ASKING ME FOR HELP. I AM ONLY EVER ONE PHONE CALL AWAY FROM GOING BACK THERE.**



**DEMANDS  
FOR  
SYSTEMIC  
CHANGE**

This issue has been getting louder and louder in the media. But still the voices we hear from are mostly the police superintendents, politicians, or at closest a grieving family member or a person at the scene. This means that people don't understand the mindset behind it; the solutions offered don't appeal to the young people in it, and don't address the core issues.

At the heart of the issue is young people! The circular narrative that young people are too young to understand is false and has to change in order to bring real effective change.



**IF YOU WANT TO LEARN ABOUT THE STARS, SPEAK TO AN ASTRONOMER.**

**I CAN ' T KNOW WHAT I KNOW NOW AND NOT USE IT TO HELP OTHER PEOPLE.**



If someone has found their own way out of the labyrinth, they are the best placed to help someone else out. Who could be more of an expert than the people who know the mindset inside out? But those young people who are involved are by nature hard to reach, and hard to engage. Systems and projects need to change to accommodate those voices and make it worth their while - if academic experts get well paid for their time, so should experts by experience.

Simply listening to a young person can give them a moment of release, a moment to unburden themselves of all the things weighing on their mind. You never know, that moment could stop them doing something destructive to themselves or others.

## WHAT COULD THAT LOOK LIKE?

- **EVERYONE:** Listen. Be available. Listen to what young people are telling us, verbally, non-verbally, in actions where words are too hard to say or haven't been heard.
- **SCHOOLS / COUNSELLORS / THERAPISTS / YOUTH WORKERS / SOCIAL WORKERS:** Advertise posts especially for people with lived experience of the issue. They might need extra care and support, but make it happen, it will be of benefit to all sides.
- **ORGANISATIONS / POLICY MAKERS:** If you want to benefit from the time, expertise and knowledge of young people, they should be paid for it, just as anyone else would be.
- **POLITICIANS / DECISION-MAKERS:** Ensure that any action taken to tackle youth violence is informed by young people with lived experience. Take steps to make your research inclusive - if they aren't fitting into your models, you need to make your models work for them.
- **JOURNALISTS / COMMENTATORS:** Include young people with lived experience in shaping the narrative. Consider writing with someone rather than about them.
- **FUNDERS:** Make long-term funding accessible to grassroots groups who know this issue from the inside. Outsiders might write flashier bids but often aren't coming from lived experience.
- **YOUTH INITIATIVES:** Put young people in the lead, there are some things they will know better than you if you give them the tools and self-belief to succeed. 'Youth-led' means young people making decisions, not tokenistically supporting someone else's agenda.

# 5. LISTEN TO YOUNG PEOPLE

**WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE OF YOUTH VIOLENCE AS EXPERT VOICES ON THIS ISSUE, AND INVOLVE US IN CREATING SOLUTIONS.**



## GOING TO [A PUPIL REFERRAL] UNIT MIGHT AS WELL BE A PRISON SENTENCE.



Each year a secondary school pupil will spend 714 hours at school. School moulds you – that’s where you spend most of your time, but it fails to teach us right from wrong when the basics are abandoned. What we learn from school feels irrelevant; the greater emphasis placed on securing grades than building character is worrying. After a while we stop trying because none of what we get taught in school is helping us to survive outside of school.

Schools give up on young people. Schools don’t address the needs young people have but exclude them instead. Being sent to a Pupil Referral Unit is like a dead end. Off the curriculum schools try to teach us that we are failures; to lower our expectations,

limit our ambitions; and that your race and class defines your ability and your potential. This is discriminatory structural violence – punishing young people who are valued less.

We need an education system that recognises the issues young people are facing, and has the capacity to support them to deal with these things, instead of excluding them.

Kicking a student out of school simply pushes them further on a path of negativity as they feel you have given up on them. Their anger towards a world that doesn’t understand them will heighten, ultimately leading to retaliation against all authority and rules.

## WHAT COULD THAT LOOK LIKE?

- **OFSTED:** Do not grant any school Good or Outstanding if they permanently exclude more than 3% of their students – this should only be a last resort. Schools should be responsible for what happens to students following exclusions and should be rewarded for managing to support difficult students to stay in forms of education which work for them.
- **SCHOOLS:** Less focus on grades and more on whole person development and students’ mental health. Instead of punishing young people, find out why they are failing and disengaging. Is someone misbehaving because they are just plain bad? Or because they didn’t eat breakfast, they are being manipulated by someone outside of school, or their mum is suffering and they have other things on their mind?
- **SCHOOLS:** Provide mental health support throughout all parts of school life. Understand the barriers to opening up, to speaking to someone unfamiliar, find responsive ways to support people at their own pace, in their own time.
- **DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION / FUNDERS:** Fund good respite provision for young people who need a break from mainstream education so that they can access the support they need and build good supportive relationships with people who can continue working with them when they go back into mainstream.
- **POLITICIANS:** Advocate for a more strengths-based education system, to help young people find their talents and passions rather than exam-based assessment which only serves one form of intelligence and squeezes out creativity from an early age.

# 6. STOP THE MASS EXCLUSION OF YOUNG PEOPLE FROM MAINSTREAM EDUCATION.

The media, politicians, schools and the criminal justice system needs to stop seeing young people who are involved in youth violence as criminals, as people to be scared of, as the enemy. A cycle of fear is built where young people get involved because they are afraid of being vulnerable, and then society responds to them with fear and punishment.

It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy; when teachers call you 'a threat,' 'a hazard,' 'a cause for concern' you start to think what's the point in not being that person that society assumes you to be? It was ridiculous to go to listen to a debate in parliament and hear them say, "some of these hardened criminals are as young as 12 years old". Did they not listen to what that sounds like? Young people in youth violence are a product of their surroundings - you can't point the finger solely at them. Minors are the responsibility of adults, and our young people will reflect the society they are raised in. People in power need to step up and take responsibility for a society which they are in a position to change and which systematically lets down our youth.

**IT 'S LIKE SCREAMING  
HELP TO THE DEAF!  
CAN 'T THEY SEE WE ARE  
HURTING EACH OTHER  
BECAUSE WE ARE NOT OK?**



This narrative has a knock on effect for others too - the stigma associated with youth violence also isolates family members who are fearful to talk about it. It can feel like you are living a double life; "there is the "me" my friends know, and the "me" that knows what is going on at home."

## WHAT COULD THAT LOOK LIKE?

- **EVERYONE:** Redefine what it means to be a victim of youth violence. We all need to consider the fact that 'perpetrators' are also victims of a broken system.
- **JOURNALISTS:** No more alarmist headlines about thugs and gangs, find out who is the person behind the story, what were their circumstances? Why were they forced to thinking this was their only course of action? What else plays a part in their story?
- **CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM:** Acknowledge that youth violence is often enacted by people who have experienced trauma, and find trauma informed ways of responding to violence in order to break the cycle.



**NO ONE WANTS TO  
TAKE  
RESPONSIBILITY;  
THEY PUT THE  
BLAME OF THE  
PROBLEM ONTO  
INDIVIDUALS,  
MAKE THEM  
VIOLENT  
CRIMINALS.**

# 7. CHANGE THE NARRATIVE

**ABOUT YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE INVOLVED IN YOUTH VIOLENCE. RECOGNISE THAT THEY ARE PEOPLE WITH COMPLEX NEEDS WHO ARE NOT GETTING THE SUPPORT AND HELP THEY SHOULD BE ENTITLED TO.**

“

## WHEN MY MUM STARTED GETTING PAID ENOUGH I DIDN ' T NEED TO BRING MONEY HOME ANYMORE . ”

You need a job, but you don't have experience. You need experience but you can't get a job. And the job options which are available to you - service jobs or in retail - are unrewarding, low-paid and boring. If you had the chance, why wouldn't you make money elsewhere, in your own time, with your friends?

Young people would benefit greatly from having paid jobs that are challenging, enticing & fun. Exciting and enjoyable jobs in a productive environment would consume young people's time doing something beneficial, and provide them the money they need.

We went to an event where a mother appealed to a police officer for better surveillance of young people as she was out at work too much and wasn't able to keep track of where her son was. She had stopped even expecting that she could ever earn enough to be able to be there herself when he got in from school.

Beyond good trainers or a nice car, we all just want to survive and to take care of those around us. Watching your mum struggling to pay the bills no matter how hard she works is a major motivation to accept other ways of earning.

## WHAT COULD THAT LOOK LIKE?

- **POLITICIANS:** Advocate for radical solutions like a Universal Basic Income to tackle engrained social inequality and poverty. People from all incomes should have the basics covered and the ability to become entrepreneurs, artists, community workers, or just have time outside work to be a parent.
- **EMPLOYERS:** Create jobs that pay for young people, first time employees, people with a criminal record, people who don't have the best grades, but have a spark. Create specific roles if you need to. Level out the employment process to make it more accessible to people.
- **CREATIVE INDUSTRIES:** Make the changes you need to be able to provide entry-level, paid work experience in creative roles and opportunities, not unpaid internships or offers which are only for graduates.
- **GOVERNMENT:** Provide funding so that apprenticeships pay. Encourage the creation of apprenticeships in diverse and creative roles, with good management and support. Ensure that the Apprenticeships Levy is well regulated to ensure the money goes to the young worker and not just to the organisation.

# 8. END POVERTY

## FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR FAMILIES.

PEOPLE NEED TO KNOW THAT IT'S POSSIBLE FOR THEM TO EARN A DECENT LIVING IN A LEGITIMATE WAY.



**WHEN YOU ARE GROWING UP, ALL YOU ARE DOING IS ABSORBING STUFF. SO IF YOU GROW UP IN A CRAP SOCIETY WHERE ALL YOU SEE IS BAD BEHAVIOUR AND MADNESS, WHAT ARE YOU LIKELY GOING TO END UP DOING?**



Have you ever noticed how it's easier to find a betting shop or a chicken shop in your area than it is to find a youth centre or fresh fruit and veg? Structural violence is where people are put at a disadvantage due to things which are out of their control, for example race, class, faith or age. In London structural violence has made young people see no options for them in the mainstream, leading them to feel forced to find their own ways of surviving.

Young people who experience racism and over-policing from the criminal justice system gain a sense of distrust and hatred for the system & feel the need to take justice and self-preservation into their own hands.

It's time to move on from "He Was In The Wrong Place At The Wrong Time" and start facing up to the fact that in London this issue disproportionately affects young people from low-income, black, brown, Asian, African or Arab backgrounds. It's not a coincidence that it was him, but nor does it mean that he started out looking to kill or be killed - these are the same young people who experience structural violence from the system.

If it isn't sport or music or doing something illegal, you don't see black people being successful or earning good money. You learn from an early age that this system isn't made for us to thrive. If you are consistently looked down on you have to find your own ways to be respected or powerful. If society constantly tells you you are scary or untrustworthy, what's the point in being otherwise if that's the only way to get by?

## WHAT COULD THAT LOOK LIKE?

- **EVERYONE:** Consider ways you are inadvertently recreating this problem. Do you admire your friends when they get into trouble rather than feel concerned for them? Do you tell your cousin to man up if he shows vulnerability? Do you teach your kid that wealth is the best way to show your status and happiness?
- **EVERYONE:** Examine and take steps against your prejudices against young people, people of darker skin tone to yours, people of a lower class background to you.
- **SCHOOLS:** Check yourself. Why is it that more black boys get excluded in your school. Are you more likely to punish the black or brown child in the argument? Or assume that the child from a lower income background will choose a different life path to the child from the middle class white background?
- **CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM:** Scrap the Gangs Matrix and over-policing of young people and black and brown people. Acknowledge and take radical steps against the racism that runs throughout law enforcement.
- **ARTS & CULTURE PROVIDERS:** Diversify your casts. Make sure that you have writers and producers of different ages, races, classes, genders, religions and backgrounds. Everyone needs to see themselves represented across popular culture.
- **UNIVERSITIES:** Make sure your classes are diverse, and if not, take action to ensure that they are. Offer extra support if needed, acknowledge how the education system up until University doesn't necessarily result in smart people getting the best grades.
- **POLITICIANS:** Lower the voting age to 16. Value young people as full members of our society.

# 9. CHALLENGE STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE

**YOUNG PEOPLE NEED TO FEEL THAT THEY ARE LIVING IN A SOCIETY THAT REPRESENTS, RESPECTS, INCLUDES AND PROTECTS THEM, AND THEY NEED TO FEEL ABLE TO SUCCEED IN A POSITIVE PATH.**

Most of the time when you ask people what needs to be done about youth violence they say that we need more police out on the streets. But the tactics used by the criminal justice system usually only make the problem worse.

**THEY 'RE JUST TRYING TO OBLITERATE THE PROBLEM, RATHER THAN TRYING TO SOLVE IT.**



Whether it's prison sentences, banning Drill videos, or increasing Stop and Search, government responses to youth violence focus on punishing individuals and only further alienate young people. They increase the problem rather than address the root causes. The new Knife Crime Prevention Orders target children as young as 12 for 'on the balance of probability' carrying a knife more than once. Rather than ask why children are feeling so scared that they have to leave the house armed, the response is

to bring them into a criminal justice system which will likely take them on a path further and further away from mainstream society. The Gangs Matrix runs on suspicion, creating a database which flags to schools and social services anyone who might know a 'gang member,' be related to one, or even just maybe look like one. Systems that claim to be there to protect you can turn against you very suddenly.

Prison sentences don't work, they just end up building people's reputations so that they pick up where they left off when they come out. Nobody listens or asks why, they shut people away without any rehabilitation and life inside is just another place to run your business and make connections.

That's not to say that leniency helps. Being strict can be positive, but only if its supportive and turned towards rehabilitation not punishment. Locking people up together with no intervention just makes prison a next step down a negative path of crime and violence.

## WHAT COULD THAT LOOK LIKE?



- **POLITICIANS:** Switch focus from punitive responses to symptoms and start addressing the root causes: poverty, lack of opportunity, lack of support for families, structural inequality.
- **CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM:** Abolish interventions which result in the criminalisation and alienation of young people: the new Knife Crime Prevention Orders, Joint Enterprise, the Gangs Matrix.
- **CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM:** Ask why. Turn your practices towards finding out what's going on for the person then towards restorative justice and rehabilitation.
- **CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM:** Establish better support for all victims of youth violence and their families. Trauma informed mental health support, protection, support through court cases, respect and sensitivity for the people around the victims whose lives are also destroyed by the violence. The trauma, fear, stigma and social isolation all serve to increase divisions, deepen anger and further alienate people from society.

**THEY'LL PUT AWAY 15 YEAR OLDS, OR FIRST TIME OFFENDERS OF ANY AGE, AND EXPECT THEM TO COME OUT UPSTANDING CITIZENS. EITHER THEY ARE REALLY STUPID OR THEY JUST DON'T CARE.**

# 10. STOP THE CRIMINALISATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE

**WHICH ONLY MAKES US MORE UNSAFE. TACKLE THE CORE ISSUES WHICH RESULT IN VIOLENCE, NOT JUST THE VIOLENCE ITSELF.**



# THANKS TO...

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# YOUR IDEAS HERE

# YOUR IDEAS HERE

# WHAT NOW??



THIS IS JUST THE BEGINNING. FROM NOW ON WE WILL BE WORKING ON TURNING THESE IDEAS INTO ACTIONS... IF YOU'D LIKE TO JOIN US, SUPPORT US, OR FIND OUT MORE, PLEASE DO GET IN TOUCH!

## AND YOU CAN ALSO:

**FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND SEND US YOUR THOUGHTS, IDEAS AND SUGGESTIONS**

**COME TO ONE OF OUR EVENTS TO HELP US PUT THESE IDEAS INTO ACTION**

**ORGANISE YOUR OWN EVENTS OR ACTION BASED ON THESE IDEAS AND TELL US ABOUT IT**

**REACH OUT TO SOMEONE ELSE YOU KNOW AND SHARE THESE IDEAS**

**LISTEN TO OUR PODCAST - SEE IF THERE IS AN OPTION TO COME AND JOIN US TO GET YOUR THOUGHTS OR YOUR STORY ON AIR**



## STAY IN TOUCH

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**#CHANGINGTHENARRATIVE**

**#TAKEBACKTHEPOWER**

**#TIMETOLISTEN**

# WHO ARE WE?

We are young women and men, aged 15-20 in 2019.

We have all seen first hand or been affected by youth violence.

We are North Londoners, and we all have a connection to Camden.

Some of us are Muslim, Catholic or Christian, some of us are just believers.

Some of us are black, some of us are mixed race.

We consider ourselves to be from working class families. For us, working class means the everyday person who takes the brunt of the decisions made by the Government - without the privilege to move away or disengage.

We are people of the world; our families have origins in Somalia, Spain, Ireland, Congo, Morocco, Scotland, Jamaica, Ghana, Kenya, Dominica and Canada.

We are self-aware learners, deep thinkers, ponderers, philosophers, free spirits, leaders, listeners, analysts, poets, artists and game changers.

We are the future.

**Take Back The Power 2019**