

This Is Where I Live – a Progress Report

Runnymede's arts-based policy project, *This Is Where I Live*, has been gathering momentum over the last few months.

Rajiv Anand, Project Coordinator, reports on how things are developing.

This is Where I Live is a project that is beginning to engage young people nationwide in a debate about heritage, identity, nation and citizenship. The project is to use focus groups and differing art forms, such as photography, music, drama and dance, to act as a creative springboard in helping young people from disparate background express their feelings and beliefs in such a way as to make an impact on local, regional and national policymakers, as well as to engage with each other.

Across Wales, England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, in urban, suburban and rural settings, the *TIWIL* project has started to gather testimonies from groups of young people. In cities such as Cardiff, Liverpool, Belfast, Bristol, Dundee and London, the young people involved are keen to showcase their creativity throughout the duration of the project, which will culminate in a conference to be held in London in June 2004.

In Cardiff, the Sherman Theatre is linking *TIWIL* to their *Acting Out* project – a new educational and performance initiative in collaboration with Cardiff Council's Schools Service. Here pupils from year 10 and 11 who are in danger of being excluded from the classroom will be given a hands-on experience in a professional arts environment. The 12 young people will work on live performance and video for *TIWIL*.

The work in Liverpool is with *The Merseyside Youth Association*, a charity which delivers a range of advice and information services to young people at their centre called The Door. Their work has enhanced young people's skills in circumstances where they face problems in housing, health,

disability, equality and employment. In this instance, we will work with the Association's disabled group of 10 young people, aged 11–22, on poetry and creative writing.

The groups of young people already involved are living testimony to the fact that the UK is an exceptionally diverse nation, and that communities bring with them their own lived experiences, thoughts and realities, all of which go towards making our society interesting and vibrant to inhabit and grow up in. We have focused on contacting groups which are made up of 'hard to reach' young people, including those from differing racial, religious, cultural and social backgrounds. Groups from the Hindu, Muslim and Baha'i religions, as well as young people in care, people who have been excluded from school, and groups from disadvantaged cultural and social backgrounds will be involved at a grassroots level.

This Is Where I Live will enable young people to contemplate issues they may not necessarily have had a chance to think about in the past and to respond to outcomes in a positive manner. Various art forms are coming to the fore, and a creative national pattern is being constructed through the mediums of drama, music and dance. The young people will be able to share their findings and art forms through a series of performances in each of the national countries.

A city venue will be selected in each UK country, and the young people will assemble there to showcase their works to one another as well as to audiences. This is scheduled to take place early in 2004. Accompanying the performances will be an exhibition,

developed from material reflecting how the groups developed their work, which will also tour nationally.

Project findings will also contribute to a policymaking publication which will voice the young participants' thoughts. This, along with a set of web-based resources, should be ready for early 2004.

This is Where I Live is a unique project that aims to effect tangible learning outcomes, which include: specific arts development training, along with reasoning skills, technical skills, team-building skills, management and personal development and general administrative competence. The project will also support and nurture young people's understanding of anti-racist thinking and will help foster respect, understanding and tolerance between peoples of dissimilar backgrounds, highlighting the importance of living in a community of communities and of individuals.

Plans for the next couple of months will take us to various parts of the UK, visiting Cardiff and Bristol in June, Liverpool and Mansfield in July. The work in London is ongoing, and involves focus groups with young people from which to develop their findings in related art works which will eventually feed into the project at a national level. □

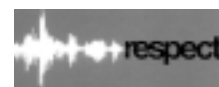


**MULTI-ETHNIC
BRITAIN**

Rajiv Anand is the Project Coordinator (Youth and Arts) for *This Is Where I Live*. If you want to get involved with the project contact Rajiv at Runnymede.

'respect' festival 2003

Dedicated to the memory of Stephen Lawrence, in the 10th anniversary year of his death, the third **respect** festival will culminate in a day-long event at The Dome, North Greenwich, on **19 July**. During **respect** week (12–19 July), London boroughs, arts and sports organisations and others will have come together to focus on anti-racism, anti-discrimination policies and partnerships. The free music and entertainment festival for Londoners that brings the week to a close keeps growing in scale and impact. Information from the respect hotline [020 7983 6554; email: info@respectfestival.org.uk].



Narrativiti 2003

One of a series of events to gather momentum around an initiative 'Each One Treat One' to address HIV/Aids in the black community, Narrativiti is a multi-media event showcasing the work of musicians, artists and designers. They will use it as a platform to clarify some widely held misconceptions in the black community regarding HIV/Aids. On Sunday 13 July (4.30–11pm) at STONE, 201 Liverpool Rd, Islington, London N1 [email: shaunart@onetel.net.uk].