

Bulletin

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This Is Where I Live – on Video

In 2003, Runnymede embarked on a ground-breaking arts project designed to give young people a voice – This Is Where I Live: The past, present and future of multi-ethnic Britain. Runnymede's Director, **Michelynn Lafèche**, explains how the outcomes are being made ready for a range of audiences.

TIWIL, as we've come to refer to it, has engaged a diverse range of young people, through the arts, in a countrywide debate about heritage, identity, nation and citizenship. Now, in November and December 2004, the project has entered its final phase, and we are engaged in creating a 'virtual exhibition' and teaching resource in the form of a CD-Rom, website and video presentation.

In the June issue of *The Runnymede Bulletin* we reported on what we then expected to be the main elements of the final phase of TIWIL. After some



THIS IS
WHERE
I LIVE



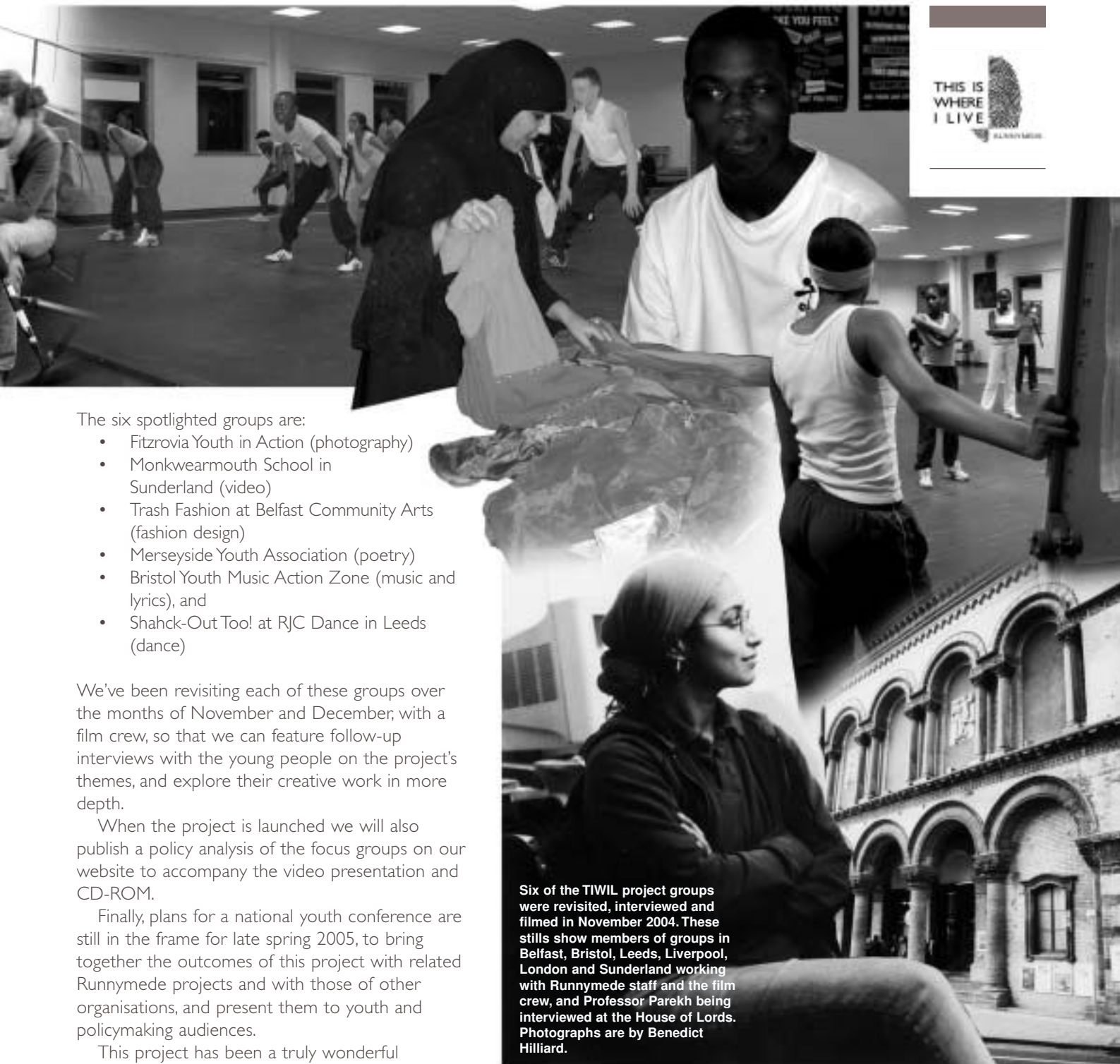
chance to relate the outcomes to the National Curriculum through support materials for teachers, youth workers and other education practitioners, enabling them to raise the issues of belonging, identity, racism and heritage in a variety of settings and with confidence.

In spring 2003, Runnymede put out a call to young people's groups (formal and informal) to invite their participation in TIWIL. Our aim was to identify groups of young people, aged anywhere between 11 and 25, who would be interested in using the arts to talk about citizenship and how this relates to where they live. Some groups were already running activities that could incorporate this theme; others were excited by the challenge and designed a project from scratch. Twenty-seven groups expressed an interest and 14 groups, involving 150 young people, were selected to take part. They mixed independent artistic activity with structured discussion groups, conducted with the support of Runnymede. These discussion groups have enabled us to compare the experiences, ideas and beliefs of young people across the country.

This Is Where I Live reflects the diversity of young people in Britain. It has offered the participants an opportunity to be involved in a local project, which has enlarged their skills and interest in the arts, while supporting the development of their understanding of citizenship, self-identity, 'race' and racism, combined with active membership of communities and being able to contribute to a nationwide policy debate. A significant proportion of the creative projects produced work that lends itself to a 'virtual exhibition' format such as our proposed CD-ROM, including photography, video/film, multi-media arts and writing. The CD-ROM, spotlighting six of the participating projects and including a special segment in which Professor Bhikhu Parekh FBA elaborates his thinking on the themes, will provide a space in which to demonstrate the diversity of young people's ideas around these themes, and allow for the widest possible number of people to engage with, learn from and be inspired by the project.

reconsideration and the establishment of a new partnership with Skillset, the Sector Skills Council for the Audio Visual Industries, we elected to transform our idea of creating various forms of paper-based output – an exhibition and a large-format illustrated book, for example – into a video and CD-ROM package, accompanied by guidance for teachers on classroom use of the resources.

This transformation enables us to create an engaging record of the activities undertaken as part of the TIWIL project, and to present the outcomes to a policymaking audience in a fresh and innovative way. In addition, the CD-ROM format allows us the



The six spotlighted groups are:

- Fitzrovia Youth in Action (photography)
- Monkwearmouth School in Sunderland (video)
- Trash Fashion at Belfast Community Arts (fashion design)
- Merseyside Youth Association (poetry)
- Bristol Youth Music Action Zone (music and lyrics), and
- Shahck-Out Too! at RJC Dance in Leeds (dance)

We've been revisiting each of these groups over the months of November and December, with a film crew, so that we can feature follow-up interviews with the young people on the project's themes, and explore their creative work in more depth.

When the project is launched we will also publish a policy analysis of the focus groups on our website to accompany the video presentation and CD-ROM.

Finally, plans for a national youth conference are still in the frame for late spring 2005, to bring together the outcomes of this project with related Runnymede projects and with those of other organisations, and present them to youth and policymaking audiences.

This project has been a truly wonderful experience for all of us involved. We are most grateful to all of the participating youth projects, without whom we could not have undertaken this work. Also, our thanks go to: the supporters of Phase 1 of our project, the Lloyds TSB Foundation; to the Paul Hamlyn Foundation for support in developing and initiating Phase 2; and to Bloomberg who have supported the production of the video and the CD-ROM.

We also want to thank Carol Jacobs, Film Producer from Skillset, and Shabazz L. Graham, Creative Director of Heart Vision, who worked with Rob Berkeley and Michelynn Lafèche to develop the storyboard for the video and CD-

Six of the TIWIL project groups were revisited, interviewed and filmed in November 2004. These stills show members of groups in Belfast, Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool, London and Sunderland working with Runnymede staff and the film crew, and Professor Parekh being interviewed at the House of Lords. Photographs are by Benedict Hilliard.

ROM, and led the filming sessions. Thanks also to Benedict Hilliard, Photographer, for donating his time to the project and producing still shots of the sessions, some of which are reproduced here.

Finally, our very special thanks go to all the young people who took part in the projects and the filming. These young people 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 vibrant to inhabit and grow up in. Their words, thoughts and creativity are our future. Indeed, that future is now. □