



# New Town Voices



**Belinda Zhawi**

and

**Claire, Ife, Juhee,  
Kaitlyn, Millie, Priscilla,  
Sadiya, Samantha  
and Samirah**

This zine belongs to...



.....



Zines made by young people during the New Town Voices workshops

## New Town Voices

New Town Voices was a project by writer and poet Belinda Zhawi, in collaboration with a group of young women accessing social care services in Barking and Dagenham.

Through a series of workshops at The White House in 2020, the group created a safe space to reflect on personal experiences of the year and imagine alternative futures, using the power of spoken word to mobilize their voices for personal and collective empowerment.

This zine is a resource toolkit for young people and social workers, inspired by the New Town Voices workshops. Inside, you will find examples of poems made in the sessions, and a collection of creative writing exercises to try yourself.

To coincide with this zine, The White House is launching a series of podcast minisodes recorded with Belinda Zhawi and the young poets in 2021. Scan to QR code to find out more and listen!





## Exercise 1 - Letter To Yourself

Do you know what an epistle is? Writing a verse note, also known as a verse letter, may be intimate and personal. Make the epistle your own by doing the following:

Choose to write a letter to your past or future self, a self in an alternate universe, or some other version that can help you better understand your various sides and facets.

Dear me

- Gain some confidence, don't lose hope,
- Keep trying hard and succeed in life.
- Don't let others bring you down
- Rise up like a skunk ~~star~~ Starr
- Be the person you want to be.
- Don't be a failure, try hard for the best.
- work hard and achieve your dreams.
- Negativity can struck you like lightning but come on keep a smile on you face.
- my dreams of being a well known vocalist may melt down.
- Be nicer to everyone around you..
- make your mum happy by being a doctor if you can otherwise be a vocalist.
- Don't lose hope.

Juhee



Dear me  
are you in the army yet?  
have you and your sisters got along?  
do you and your brother get along?  
do you talk to your dad?  
have you got a car? the lamborghini?  
do you cosplay?

Claire



## A LETTER TO MY 24-year-old SELF

Dear me. I just want to tell you that in 10 years time, you will ~~must be~~ will feel confident in your body, pretty and beautiful and healthy. (You will succeed!)

Don't let others negativity towards you affect you. No one deserves to make you feel like you are nothing, even if they are joking or not.

I ~~rem~~ remember the time when you were always insecure and upset with your body and weight, but you don't have to worry about that. If you want to lose some weight, eat healthy (not dieting) and exercise (don't overdo-over-do it) ~~(eat not every single day)~~

I also remember the time when ~~you~~ you were always ~~worried~~ worried of what others would think of you.

Plz don't worry about that. If they don't accept you for who you are, then they are not worth being in your life.

There is also my favourite quote that I love to say, which is "people are not thinking about you, they are ~~just~~ thinking of themselves." - Mia Fizz

~~Stop~~ Stop wasting your time on impressing people, if they are always going to put you down.

Stop wasting your time on people

Stop wasting your time on impressing people, if they are always going to put you down.

are ~~at~~ always saying that you're not good enough.

(You were meant for great things)

Be yourself!

Be BRAVE!

Priscilla



## Exercise 2 - Acrostic Poem

An acrostic poem is one in which each line of the poem begins with the letters of a target word or phrase. In the poem's left hand, the word or sentence is written down. Beginning with the given letter, each letter in the focus word begins a full thought (sentence or phrase) about the subject. In an acrostic poem, all of the lines revolve around the poem's main focus.



*An acrostic poem  
Can be about anything,  
Really.  
Of course, some people like to  
Start each line as a sentence,  
Though  
I prefer weaving words into a  
Creation that is more freeform.*



Choose one or more of the below to make your acrostic poem...

### **Acrostic Poems of Alliteration:**

Each line's first word begins with the line's first letter.

### **Verb Acrostic Poems:**

Each line contains verbs that can be performed during a particular season, festival, event, or place.

### **Adjective Acrostic Poems:**

Each line contains adjectives that identify a particular subject.

### **Personal Experience Acrostic Poems:**

Each line contains a recollection of a significant event that is the acrostic poem's subject term. For instance, a field trip, graduation, or a birthday.

### Exercise 3 - Recipe for Self Love

Writing a recipe poem is a common activity because it encourages authors to embrace an interesting structure, active sentences, and a built-in metaphor scheme. We also have different self-care habits that are highly personalised. What are the components of your recipe? What about their sequence, pacing, and expected outcomes? Make a meal and promise to make it as much as you make your favourite comfort snack.

Take one cup of...

Add a pinch of...

Mix in some...

### My Recipe for Self Love

## Exercise 4 - Blackout Poem

You will need: Some pages with words on them (from a magazine, newspaper, photocopied text or a page from an old, falling-apart book), a pencil, a black felt tip or marker pen.

1. Find words that stand out to you. Try to notice patterns, look for ideas that connect, try to capture a mood or feeling.
2. Using pencil, box or circle the words that you're thinking of using.
3. Remember you can create meaning by stringing together separate words into a complete thought or idea.
4. Do not feel pressure to circle many words. Sometimes a simple blackout poem is the most powerful.
5. Challenge: To create a simile, look for the words 'like' or 'as'. Then, look for words before and after to compare.
6. Once you've chosen your words, you can begin to blackout your page.
7. Use heavy dark marks to box or circle your words and create art and poetry from the pages of a book!

You can also try the Cut-Out method: cut out, mix and rearrange your words to create your poem!

*The sea is as shimmering, sparkly and shiny like a crystal glistening under the radiant moonlight...*

- Sadiya

Over the traffic of cities  
—over the rumble of  
Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!  
terrible drums—  
wheels in the streets;  
of things unknown  
but longed for still  
you thump O  
no sleepers must voice be heard.  
Let not the child's and his tune is heard  
sings of freedom. Make even the trestles  
for the caged bird on the distant hill  
The caged bird sings bugles So strong  
bird leaps —so loud you sleep in those beds,  
at night in the houses? Are beds prepared for sleepers  
Would the lawyer rise in the court to state his case before the judge?  
bloughing his field. Nor the peaceful farmer any peace,  
or gathering his grain, with a fearful trail

Caged

bright

joy

Sadiya

A free bird leaps  
down his narrow cage  
sings of freedom.  
and floats downstream  
on the back of the wind  
fireworks at dawn  
first son of soil  
a mother's joy  
gods of shovels & black veils

Priscilla

## The System

Why?  
Just why?  
Why did you put me in such poverty?  
Why did you put me in such pain?  
My eyes are now water like I was making an ocean.

Why?  
Just why?  
Why does it feel like it's all a lie?  
Why are you making me feel like I am dirt on the ground?  
Can't I go back, no, I want to go back.

Why?  
Just why?  
At least there's some good things but yet it's still hard.

You built anger inside of me but I kept it locked.  
There's sad inside but I force a smile.  
Will I ever get over the past that haunted me?  
Only time will tell.

Let's go back to that day:  
Despair, anger, hatred, were shown on that day.  
When they said, welcome to the system.  
This is what you go through when your journey has begun.

IA

## THE PAIN OF RACE

Life is unfair when things don't go our way,  
This is why people are <sup>cut there</sup> protesting about this today,  
Like a lion that's in its cage,  
People are always bursting their feelings out in rage.

Being treated unfairly just because of the colour  
of your skin.

waking up people by giving them a hint. Priscilla

## Feelings

- People are happy
- People are sad
- It might be mixed emotions
- Sometimes bad
- Somewhere ~~can~~ deep in my heart
- there are alot of stress, Anxiety
- but mainly Jealousy ~~for~~ and loneliness
- ~~because~~ my friend have everything
- I have barely nothing ~~and~~
- life is nothing to some people
- life is everything to more
- People may think it doesn't exist
- People may think it does
- loneliness is something
- so is depression
- life is something
- but mainly to others
- people should have fun
- not sad and lonely
- Please live life as a happy family.

Kaitlyn

Negativity = Positivity

when i grow up you know what i wanna be  
~~I wanna rap yeah~~

take a seat let me tell you my ridicules  
dream I wanna rap yeah I know it's hard  
to be a and I can see you drink i will  
never suckseed but im ok I admit  
I or my friends are weak but I work on them  
I'll be good eventually I understand  
you gotta cruc before you get to your  
feet but I've been running for a while and ready  
for me!  
anybody wanna hear me rap? (no)  
come on I can spit it really fast (no)  
you think I should throw this in the  
trash? (no)

Lae

Claire

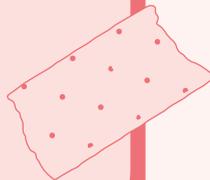
condiments <sup>an analogy</sup> - A mix of blue, green and yellow - It would  
sound like ~~raindrops~~ raindrops dripping on a warm sunny day.  
It would smell like soya sauce that has been left  
open for <sup>many</sup> days. and the saltiness aroma spreads.  
This would taste like a <sup>stale</sup> ~~stale~~ and mouldy left over  
crumbs of ~~bread~~ bread.  
It would feel like a bath filled with water but  
there is nobody there.  
It would also feel like a sense of despair  
and agony mixed together.  
It looks like a soft cuddly teddy that  
has been torn and destroyed.



Juhee

## Exercise 5 - Doodle Page

Set a timer for 20 minutes and start free doodling. Don't overthink it, just draw!



## Exercise 6 - Freewrite

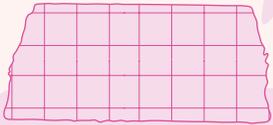
Set a timer for 15 minutes and start freewriting using this prompt: In this memory/ photograph/ story...

Make sure you don't stop, no matter what! Even when you feel like you've run out of ideas. Again, don't overthink!



## Exercise 7 - Personal Affirmation

With the help of the internet - write down 10 affirmations to say to yourself every morning. You can even just start with one!



*(you were meant for great things)*

*Be yourself!*

*Be BRAVE!*

*Priscilla*



*Gain some confidence,  
don't lose hope...*

*Rise up like a shining star...*

*Negativity can struck  
you like lightning*

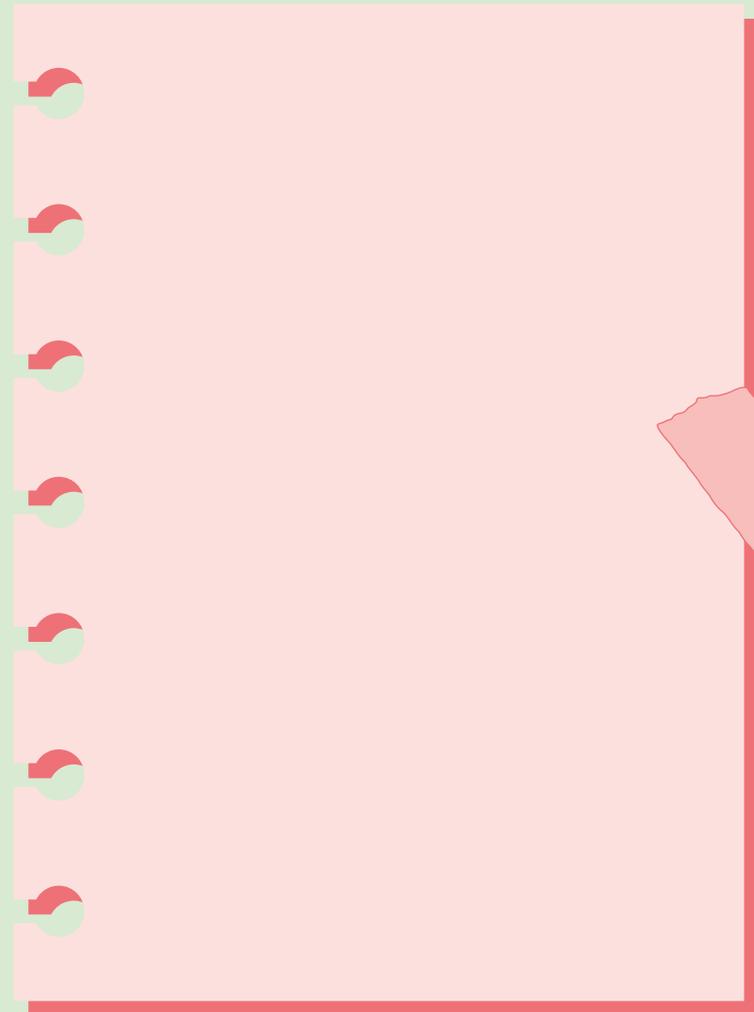
*but come on keep a  
smile on your face*

*Juhee*



*Don't let anyone get to you and put you down... go out there and be an inspiration for the young people of the world and never stop achieving. Be the best you can be and never stop doing more for this world*

*IA*



## Freedom is...

### Freedom

Freedom is something to feel,  
without feeling trapped or ill.

As bright and green as a nature's  
breeze,

People start to smile with a sign  
of glee.

Like the scent of fresh leaves dashing  
away,

Kids can have a free will to play.

Feeling chains which are being slipped away  
from sweaty hands,

People can finally celebrate freely in their  
own land.

Priscilla

Freedom feels fresh like wildflowers  
in Spring, fresh ground coffee... a  
breath of fresh air that lasts forever.

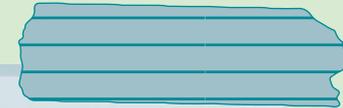
Freedom tastes like an orange,  
all flavours of ice cream, and  
morning dew upon your tongue.

Millie and Kaitlyn



You cannot bully, for I am me.  
Freedom, to be free.  
I was born in a democracy.  
Freedom, to be free.  
I was born free.  
Freedom, to be free.  
I am me.

Millie



### Freedom

The colour of freedom is like all different  
shades of green

It sounds ~~like little children~~ like laughter  
of little children playing in large groups

It smells like ~~the~~ a barbecue lingering  
~~to sit in the air~~

It feels like laughter

~~freedom~~ feels like warm and sticky like your  
finally safe

It looks like the sun shining and people  
running free

### Freedom

### Freedom

The colour of freedom is like all different shades  
of green



It tastes like ham and cheese toasties.  
 It looks like the sea without plastic in it.  
 It feels like being able to sleep as long as you like.  
 It smells like a white and red rose.

Claire

Freedom -  - pink and yellow/orange  
 It looks like a parade of people that are  
~~joyful~~ joyful.

It sounds like a yell of "woohoo".

It ~~feels~~ feels like a warm and soft  
 heart being able to do whatever is right.

It tastes like ~~sweet~~ sprinkle of sweet sugary  
 powder.

It smells like a sweet birthday cake  
 that is being shared to everyone.

Juhee



Freedom is amazing, exciting, it's  
 happiness. It looks like a dog in a  
 park that has no lead on it, it is wild  
 and running around. Freedom is a  
 joyful thing, it is like a bird which is  
 flying in the sky... the bird is flying  
 so high because it has no limit.

Samantha

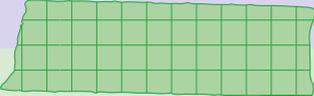
Freedom is...



Freedom 29th October  
2020

Freedom is amazing, exciting, it's happiness. It looks like  
 a dog in a park that has no lead on it, it is  
 wild and running around. Freedom is a joyful thing  
 it is like a bird which is flying in the  
 sky because it free, so the bird is flying  
 so high because it has no limit. Freedom smells  
 like your favourite perfume or cologne. Freedom  
 tastes like any of your favourite sweet treats.  
 Freedom is like a yellow rose that has been  
 pulled out of the ground with the stem  
 still there with it. Freedom is like going to  
 your favourite place with no fear of  
 something bad going to happen.

Samantha



**Belinda Zhawi: New Town Voices** was commissioned by The White House as part of New Town Culture, a programme of artistic and cultural activity taking place in adult and children's social care and curated by the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham.

New Town Voices forms part of a broader programme that marks the centenary of the Becontree estate in 2021. This commission is funded by the GLA's Young Londoners Fund, the MOPAC Violence Reduction Unit, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, and the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

#### About Belinda Zhawi

Belinda Zhawi is a Zimbabwean born writer and educator currently based in London. Her work explores Afro-diasporic research and narratives, and how art and education can be used as intersectional tools. Zhawi also experiments with sound as MA.MOYO, heavily collaborating within the ever growing South East London jazz and beat-making scene.

[www.whitehouseart.org/belinda-zhawi](http://www.whitehouseart.org/belinda-zhawi)

#### About The White House

The White House was set up in 2016 on Dagenham's Becontree estate by Create London. We invite artists to live and work in the house, exploring new ways to collaborate with the local community, by becoming their neighbours. Our programme acts as a tool to address social, political and culturally relevant issues to our site and community, adopting approaches that challenge traditional hierarchies and aim to democratise decision-making.

[www.whitehouseart.org](http://www.whitehouseart.org)

#### About New Town Culture

New Town Culture is a pioneering programme building new connections between art, culture and frontline social care services in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. We work with artists, social care staff and carers to develop creative ways to support systemic change in social care and to unlock the value of art and culture for all communities.

[www.lbbd.gov.uk/new-town-culture](http://www.lbbd.gov.uk/new-town-culture)

Think about why other people say this

Ambitions for the future

Get a house

Inspire young people

Letter to my 22 year old self

Dear me - first of all



Dear future me

I wish I could see the future me...

And maybe it is better than 2020...

Just maybe the future is better.

Millie

