

Children
into
Citizens
An Anthology

Citizens UK cares deeply about citizenship. As our name implies, we value the connection to country and community, the security, and the pride that comes with being a citizen and we actively encourage young people to participate in public life and contribute to the common good.

We are angry about the barriers children face in fulfilling their potential and becoming citizens. From our listening campaign in communities, we heard that one of the biggest barriers to British Citizenship is the application fee of over £1000 for children. This is also a barrier to broader forms of citizenship - without it children will struggle to vote in elections, study at university, or feel part of their society.

That's why we are doing everything we can to break down these barriers and help turn children into citizens.

On National Poetry Day 2018, over 100 children wrote poems depicting their struggle and delivered this anthology to the Immigration Minister Caroline Nokes MP calling on her to:

- Reduce the British Citizenship application fee for children to cost price (£372)
- Waive the fee for those who can't afford it and looked after children

As the poet Sonia Sanchez put it "all poets, all writers are political. They either maintain the status quo, or they say, 'Something's wrong, let's change it for the better.'"

Something is wrong with citizenship fees, let's change it for the better.



To the British children blocked from being British.



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HOME

By Daniel
Year 5

H aving a passport is important to people

O nly if I had one to explore the world like other people

M y mum has to go through a long process to get us one

E ither way, my mum was not born here...so I am not a British citizen!

CITIZEN

By Jadon
Year 5

Caring parents finding £1012

It's a huge amount of money

Tomorrow, more expenses

It's unfair

Zzzzz.....waiting for change

Enduring all the pain of feeling stuck

Never giving up hope!



CITIZENS

By Caleb
Year 5

C itizenship citizenship oh how it's changed

I never considered the expense

T il I came for a better life to England

I nsanely high prices

Z imbabwe to England

E verything so costly

N ever getting easier

S ky-high, ever increasing pressure

Make it change



Accepted

By Lucy Webb
Year 9

We are culture, change, difference
Forming our nation
Bringing different creations to the world.

We are colours
Painting the canvas in greens,
Reds, blues, blacks, whites
Creating images of pride.

We are people
Male, female, LGBT+, old and young
Living in a changing world.

There are those who bring culture
Reform cities and yet...

There are those who bring new colours
And paint different scenes and yet...

There are those who are human and belong in the world
Influencing it and yet...

Some aren't accepted
Different from the group
Part of the world
But not given the credit
Changing the world
But not being allowed to live in it.
Needing only a small document
To be a part of something bigger.
We all belong.
But we're not all accepted.

POTENTIAL

By Samuel Adeyinka

Year 11

P ower to change

O pportunity to learn

T alented

E mpowering others

N ever giving up

T ime to work hard

I nput from family

A mbition

L ove and comfort

All these things are needed

To fulfil your potential

Without the O for Opportunity,

You will never reach your full potential.

British

By Cecil Okoro
Year 11

I'm British whatever you say,
be angry if you may.
You can try and try to take away my nationality,
but guess what? It's part of my identity.

Scared. Petrified.
I'm not terrified.
I'm standing for everyone with this problem.
I'm standing for people who don't have a voice.
I'm standing for people who are dumb; crippled.
I'm standing for my loved ones and the ones who support me.

We're British and you know it.
You can't wake up one morning and say that's gonna change.
That's it.
We make this country what it is today.
So don't push us away.

Money Money Money – is that all you see?
We know you make money from the fees.
But what does it profit a man to gain the whole world
But forfeit his soul?
What does it profit a man to take money from those
that need it most? It's foul.

We are smart, strong and steady.
We are ever ready.
THINK because living in Britain has never felt so painful.
THINK because we are supposed to be a family.
THINK because you don't need that money.
THINK
Because we are British.



Untitled

By Akeim St Aubyn –William
Year 11

As the sun sets in the Middle-East
a battlefield continues to sound the
bell of death and despair.

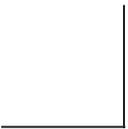
Families day after day repair their
minds, living between the lives of
life and death.

Relatives torn apart at the very
seams by association with the people
who said they would help.

Children denied the same opportunities
as their peers due to a fee they themselves
cannot afford to pay.

People fed by the silver spoon
decide the future of a ten year old child
and his right to deserve citizenship.

Making a profit -
whether they are accepted or denied.



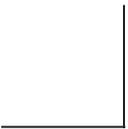


Kept and Left

By Jelena Metikos
Year 9

It's a cruel world
It's an evil world
Her dad is at work
Oh, and her mum too.
You've kept our money.
Everyone's struggles.
And now you're keeping us
from our hopes and dreams
from our rights.

It's a cruel world
It's an evil world
You've left us drowning in your expectations
Which keep our dreams hidden
As we bow down
to your cynical ideas.
You're keeping us
from our hopes and dreams.
From our rights.



Unnamed

By Karsinn Conteh
Year 10

A community is a place where people should belong,
A place where people should feel like home,
Feel free, and have a place to stay,
So please explain why we have to pay?

We all have the right to be a part of a community,
To feel like part of a family,
So why does a piece of paper need to be sold
Just so we can feel involved?

One thousand pounds! One thousand pounds!
To process a piece of paper!
And this is only for one person,
And that person is a minor.

One Grand! One Grand!
This is way too much!
The price is silly; it's way too much!
So please be considerate and change this way.
Please change the amount we have to pay.

Three Unnamed Haikus

By Noah Black
Year 7

Qualified people
No hope for citizenship
Can't afford to stay.

Home office profits
From misery and from loss
Thousands feel displaced.

Left out in the cold
British people lost, lonely
An alien home.

Entity

By Kira Spencer
Year 11

Forged in morbid lands,
Ancient songs from mother's tongue,
As putrid flames coalesce,
Aromatic cinders rise, swirling,
From broken homes.

Mauled flesh, infants' wails,
Ignored, desperate, terrified.
Love's armoured embrace does
Steadily beguile the clouds
Who exeunt in celestial Sin,
Whilst those below are burning.

Part the rocks,
The spirits from rampant pesticide
Shiver and quake –
But pesticide it is not
As all but insects here lie.
Dead.
I belong.

Not in cursed vaults or
A laughter cured home but here.
On the soil from which I bloomed.
Red rituals incanted on cloth
With open skies and seas and
Milk squeezed tenderly for a mother's babe – all here.
Illicit words – catalysts of lies
Encapsulate a world so tainted.

Among speckles of dirt
Arisen from spewing tempers
We must be clean.
I belong.

Just as you and
She, sitting in that black'ning fortress –
A temple of a 'utopia'
Tainted with our discretion – belong.

O condemning forces that bear down.

You!

Mortal material, fees and papers, barriers to spirit and family.

Let these thieving ravens not
Blind you from earthly truths.
You and I belong.

Love.



Untitled

By Victoria Flermond
Year 10

Laughter fills the room,
Their smiles run and hug each other.
There wasn't any sign
Of mercy, though.
They said you must

'Buy your welcome'
You won't just receive it.
They'd given up, but
Clutched hope in their hearts.
There wasn't any sign
Of mercy, though.

We must accept and love,
We weren't born to Hate.
Though we didn't know love,
It is instinct.
To embrace someone.
To help through hard times.
There wasn't any sign
Of mercy, though.

'You make us feel
Like we belong
NOWHERE!
They shout at the top of their lungs.

There wasn't any sign
Of mercy, though.

You belong here,
You have the right.
You belong here in our hearts,
And you belong at the heart of this country.
Have mercy.



Reach for the Stars

By Lucy Webb

Year 9

Growing up as a little girl, completely British, I didn't appreciate my citizenship. The papers that told me I could belong and reach for the stars so filled with opportunities.

I didn't appreciate the fact I can go to university and work hard. That I can push my talent to make myself a person in the world.

But there's another little girl like me, of different nationality, though born here, growing up smart and strong but without money to pay the fee of the British government.

A talented little girl with a bright future, reaching for the stars and beyond. But university brings her back to earth, since she doesn't have the money and can't take or make the bigger opportunity.

And there is no difference between us. Both smart and young. But I can reach for the stars because I'm a British Citizen. And she can't because she's not.

And now as a teenager I understand that the world doesn't run on dreams, but on hard cash. That the fee for British Citizenship is a way to make money from kids just like me. That fee has become the price of the future, not just citizenship. I finally understand that something free for me; a human right, has been turned into a money-making industry.

Don't think, as a kid, I don't understand, because I do. Lies and deceit cannot hide the truth from youths like me. We can understand even though we're not adults. We know what's going on. The future is limited, don't you see?

I can reach for the stars, but others can't. That little girl may not be able to touch the sky, but she will try, and I will help her.

Outcast
By Tyrell Tucker
Year 10

Adapting is brutal,
Accompanied by a feeling of non-acceptance,
Not having paper citizenship is brutal.
I am an outcast!

Mesmerising smells of home,
Pulchritudinous sights to behold,
White water cascading over rocks,
Now I am here.
I am an outcast!

Fear, shame and isolation,
Things I can now comprehend,
My biggest challenge has been my paper citizenship.
I am an outcast!

I yearn to go back,
Yet I cannot,
I am trapped in an endless void,
Being denied my rights.

The money I cannot afford,
The time I cannot afford,
You have made me an outcast.

Was I a fool to have hope?
Maybe I should just give up.
Is that what you want? Would you?
You have made me an outcast.

That's all it is

By Leila Lempek
Year 9

A document

A couple pieces of paper

Black ink

All worth around a third of what you are charging us.

'It's only a thousand pounds,' you find yourself saying

Maybe to you

Comfortable and righteous in your unethical fee.

A document

A couple pieces of paper

Black ink

So many of us

Adults, children, pensioners

Cannot afford our right

Cannot afford the price of belonging.

A document

A couple pieces of paper

Black ink

Your fees, indescribably unattainable for many,

Should not, should never

Be a barrier of belonging

Are you so heartless?

A document

A couple pieces of paper

Black ink

Nothing comes for free these days

Not even our thoughts

Not even our sense of belonging, of home

Who are you to take that from me?

A document

A couple pieces of paper

Black ink

You see our struggle

Whether you purposely blind yourself

Or not

You are the one who can end our suffering

So why won't you do it?

A document

A couple pieces of paper

Black ink

We are asking politely

For you to accept us, to love us

Scrap the fees with opening arms and say

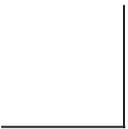
'Welcome home'



Chances

By Nihmatalai Olajojo
Year 8

Chances of university gone
Chances of voting gone
How can they fit in with their friends if they're gone?
Gone to university
Gone to vote
They'll be sitting there wondering
Could I be with them if I had the money?
If my parents were born here?
If life was fair.
Life isn't.
But things can be made fair
Can be made fair, if the people act together
and those in charge pay attention.
Won't you?
Please.
Because money doesn't grow on trees
It comes from hard work and good jobs.
Jobs you need a degree for.
A degree that is only available to some.
By coincidence.
By accident.
By chance.



Untitled
By Jeza Adem
Year 7

Caroline Nokes. Please say it's a joke?
Making money out of children.
Why would you do that?
We are a family.
A family of British Citizens whatever your background.
And children are the future.
A future limited by expensive paperwork.
Getting those papers through for free
would open doors;
a chance to go to university
a chance to contribute fully to the country.
Don't limit a child's ability
because they can't afford the papers.

Close to Home

By Hadeal Abdelatti

Year 11

I am going to start this poem a little close to home
And to do that we are going to take a roam
In the iconic red double decker bus through London
But first

Democracy
The rule of law
Individual liberty
Mutual respect and Tolerance
The 5 British values we are taught about in school
A fundamental tool which has permitted
Us to become committed in making our country community and society
Accepting towards the variety
Of people that live around us
Because we in the UK are pioneering advocates for acceptance and human rights

Yet
As you pay close attention to the journey all of a sudden
You begin to notice the people that get on and off
The crying babies or a person with a cough
Someone coming home with shopping
And then you notice a person who looks tired from cleaning and mopping of
Our streets
The key word being our

Our country sadly refuses to recognise identity on the basis of means
So what this really means is people cannot claim an identity which is rightfully theirs
An identity which most families and individuals can't afford
Because the cost is set at a high £1020 when it really only costs £300
So now our journey to improvement as a country has been put to a halt
Because generations upon generations of young hardworking and outgoing girls and boys
cannot attend university
And personally I believe this requires a sense of urgency
Because nobody should have to aspire to a future that they can admire being lived by
someone else

So as we begin to neer our destination
I would like to base this poem on one aspiration
Because what British values have taught me is that we must work together and appreciate
the sense of community
But most importantly
We bond through unity
Because we cannot have British values if we don't simply value the talent and diversity
within it
By putting an extortionate price which will permit us from being able to acquit ourself
from a charge

For something so fundamental:
Our British identity



Untitled

By Jessica Sebuwufu
Year 10

Money...

That's the secret.

Money.

What has the world come to?

The secret to our rights,

The secret to our survival,

Is cold, hard, cash.

'It's only £1000',

How fortunate you are,

Living in a perfect world.

Your eyes shielded

From the struggles of the poor, the homeless, the vulnerable.

Do they deserve to suffer?

Don't you see the injustice

In intelligent, hard-working people

Knocked off the pathway to success,

Just because of their bank accounts?

Minister Nokes,

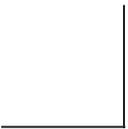
Uncover your eyes.

Thousands of British people,

Without the paper to prove it.

You have the power to make a positive change.

Our lives rest in your hands.





Citizenship

By Jessica Sebuwufu
Year 10

A British citizen.

Legally a British citizen.

I was born here.

Raised here.

This is my culture.

This is my identity.

Ten years.

Finally applied! University fees

Right to vote

Those rights will be mine.

Legally mine.

Easy, right?

It's just an application.

£1000.

The number dances in front of my eyes.

My parents work hard.

But...

It's just not enough.

Permanent residence.

Affordable university fees.

The right to vote for those who represent me.

Balloons, floating away in the wind of bias.



To Caroline Nokes

By Margret Aruna

Year 7

A melancholy world can never lead to happiness,

Your lips, giving ignorance a voice.

We shall have our say.

We are British.

Our say can make a difference,

So let's not chance it,

Let's take it, and make it.

Every street, every corner,

A river of culture,

Leading to a sea of different habitats.

China, Ethiopia, Holland, Sierra Leone, Sweden, Zimbabwe.

More nations and cultures than you can ever think of.

Like they say in America,

'it's a melting pot' of ethnic soup,

From every square centimetre of the spice cabinet.

Citizenship is like being in a family, full of love and warmth,

Our family should all be equal, given rights and responsibilities,

Michael Jackson said it best,

'If you want to make the world a better place,

Take a look at yourself and make a change.'

Unwanted beggars on the street,

Can't afford £1, £2, £3,

Everything is gloomy as the world is ruled

By greed.

You think £1012 isn't a lot of money,

In what world?

You think people are made of money –

Oh look, its raining money, quick, quick, grab some!

Think again.

We shall have our say.

We are British.

Citizens

By Sienna Thompson
Year 9

Being a citizen
is not just about growing up in a particular country.
It means you are a citizen.
Part of this country.
A person that belongs.
Being a citizen means different things
to different people.
Different values.
Different ideas.
Different lives.
But as people we're the same.
Don't you think?

So doesn't it anger you
when you're denied an education?
Denied the possibility for further education.
Because the paperwork says we're not the same.

I'm talking about university.
I'm talking about equality.
No one should have to worry about this
but they do.
They have to.

So what happened to us being the same?
Citizen



£1, 012

Josephine Ayodele

£1012 is what the government requires
£1012 is how much a parent has to pay to keep their
child safe but I know this s not always the case
The government thinks they know best
Saying that they're trying to keep Britain safe again
But immigrants aren't to blame for this

I mean this is ridiculous
Like why can't they put themselves in other people's
positions
Imagine having to tell your child
They have to go back home
Leave their friends and family
And all that they know

When they turn 18
When you are meant to be telling them at that age
Go university and have fun
But stay out of trouble
And stay strong

I mean imagine a single mother
Who has very little to live on
Working very hard everyday
To provide for 2 young children
Making up excuses
To why she can't afford those school trips
But what they don't know is
Mummy is saving up for their British citizenship

The government is so inconsiderate
Barely thinking about others
But have all the time in the world
To make decisions
That put more money in their pocket

Did you know?
That the home office has made
Nearly £100 million from charging children

The right to stay
In what they call a 'free country' like I am tired of this
I am tired of hearing the government
Saying it is in our best interest
When all they do is make laws that make everyone
but themselves unhappy

Now we need to stand up and have a say
Because there is no way
That this law is gonna stay
And we need to show them
We are not gonna stop
Until we get our way.





Untitled
By Oluwatimilehin Sallu
Year 9

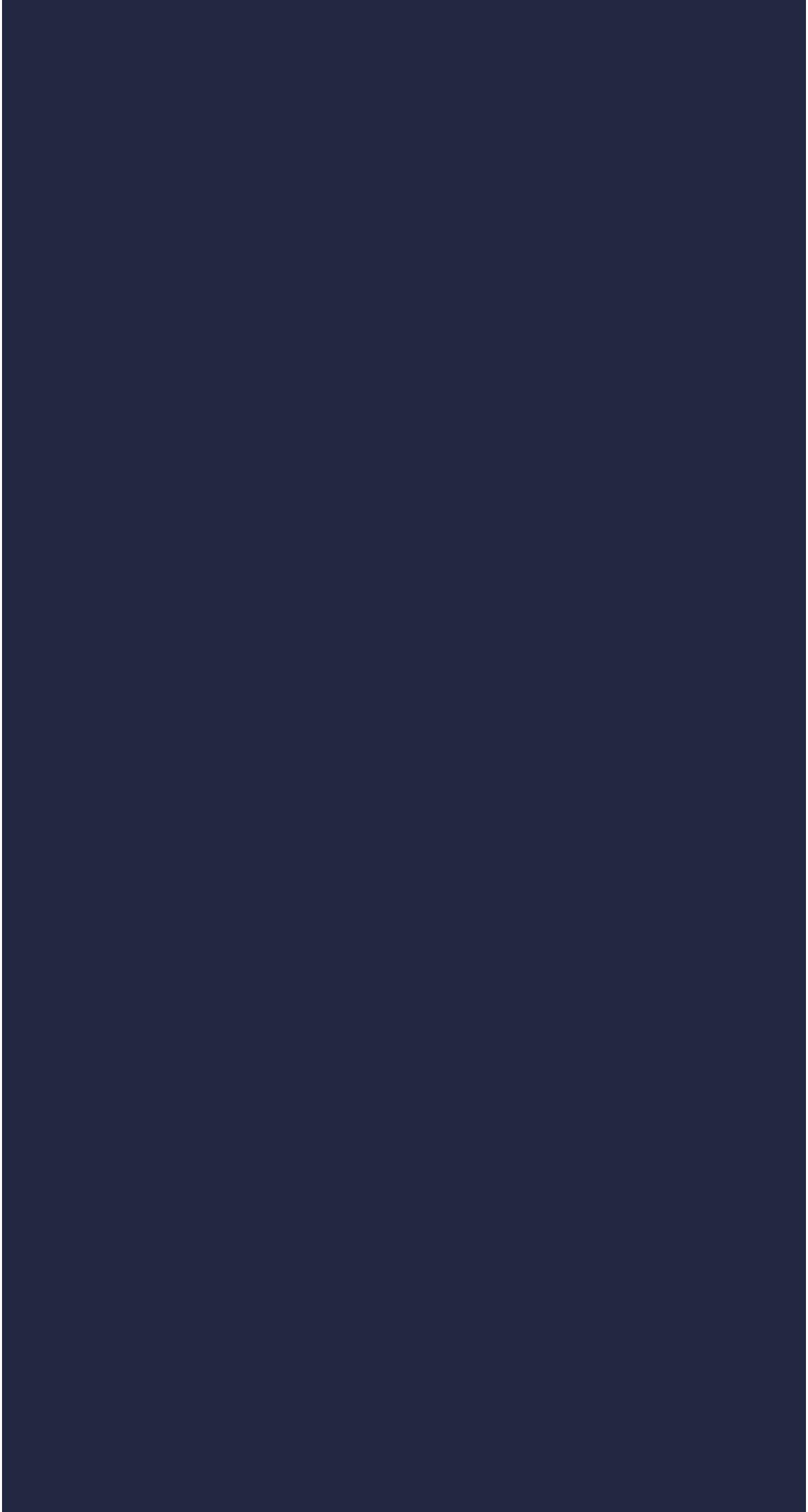
To belong is human,
It defines us, as naturally loving creatures,
We are not bound to our own teachings about others,
There are too many, an endlessly vast ocean.

We cannot live in fear of others because of their difference, however,
'terrorists', 'foreigners', 'pests', 'leeches',
Black, white, blue, green, what does British even mean?
What matters is inside,
The emotions and character and values,
The love and individuality and difference.

Belonging is not an excuse to be cruel,
People judge others because of their actions,
They are entirely right to.
The saying 'love your neighbour as you love yourself',
Is not subjective to culture or race.

To belong isn't a want it is a need,
To belong is to share an experience with someone,
Not ruin it,
To belong is to be important to someone.
To have a home.





No Human is Illegal

Extract taken from play
Leyton Sixth Form College

Class Teacher: Everyone inside please come on sit down on the carpet

Kids come in, some run, others skip lots of commotion.

Class teacher: Now we have a new friend joining us today which is really exciting. His name is Mukta and he is from a place called Sudan.

Enter Mukta one by one the kids turn their heads. Some look and stare some look and then look away. The school scene freezes. Mukta is small and vulnerable. He enters this space an unknown world far removed from the refugee camp he has known. Far removed from a sea of tarpaulin, tents, open fires, fear and sadness. He is in a new place. He is in a school somewhere in England.

Enter two headteachers; They are formal, smiley, stiff and some what forced in their delivery.

Head Teacher 1: Receiving the children of refugees as they begin to arrive in the UK is a realistic possibility for many schools. It is likely that these children will face many challenges as they integrate.

Class Teacher: Mukta?

Silence

Head Teacher 2: As teacher and educators we may wonder what can schools do in advance of refugee arrivals. Be proactive: It is important to note that while many schools have experience of welcoming students newly arrived to the UK, it is likely that political and media influences of recent weeks will have generated a range of perceptions about refugee families and children.

Mukta: I arrived on Thursday. It was so bright and quiet. No crowds, no noise just faces, eyes, looking fixed on me. Fixed everything fixed, solid and strong. Not me.

Headmistress 1: A good welcome and introduction can work wonders in the process of getting to know a new student.

Headmistress 2: Finding out key information such as the child's name, first language and current home circumstances will help teachers to include him or her sensitively. Remember to always be..

Mukta: Kind. Kind faces. Kind smiles. Arms leading me through corridors into rooms. People talking slowly at me. Through me. Their words wash over me like warm milk.

Headmistress 1: Refugees/ Asylum seekers may be unfamiliar with UK systems and mistrustful of anyone in authority, including teachers.

Mukta: It's cold in England it rains every day.

Headmistress2: Even once the families reach their destination country, children may feel the stress of being temporarily housed, waiting for Home Office decisions, poverty, discrimination in the community.

The school children sitting at the back remain with their backs to the audience and raise up union jack flags as the dialogue down stage continues.

Mukta: The rain is their greatest blessing.

Grey rain and concrete, tower blocks and bus stops, the bookies and chicken shops...

Teacher: Mukta?

Mukta: and no sign of the Queen or David Beckham.

Silence

Headmistress 1: A basic outline of the asylum and refugee process and policy is available online and may be helpful.

Teachers exit.

Mukta: They say new start, new life and a new beginning. But I can't sleep. I can only remember.

Rule Britannia is sung by kids in three part harmony.

The children holding flags march patriotically forward singing our national anthem. They raise their union jacks as they sing and then stop mid song, look at each other with uncertainty the audience aren't sure if this is a mistake or not. The atmosphere is tense. They then turn their flag over to reveal an array of other flags from different countries.

These are the flags of their home countries.

Mukta watches on and is then led away by the hand by a boy.



If you have been inspired by these poems to change things for the
better, get in touch

#ChildrenIntoCitizens

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