



DATE- THURSDAY 21ST
NOVEMBER 2024

ADDRESS-HOME THRE TRE
2 TONY WILSON PLACE
MANCHESTER

M15 4FN
TIME-5:30PM TO 7:30PM

**MY LIFE
MY SAY**

**#iwill
movement**

**young
manchester**

POLITICS AND POETRY

POEMS FOR CHANGE, BY YOUNG CHANGEMAKERS

#IWILL WEEK 2024

POLITICS ISN'T JUST WHAT THE GOVERNMENT DOES. POLITICS IS EVERYWHERE.

This collection brings together powerful poems and spoken word pieces created and performed by young changemakers across the UK. Curated by #iWill Ambassadors for #iWill Week 2024, these works stand as a testament to the resilience and rising voices of young people, who continue to rise above the challenges they face.

THE YOUNG LEADERS

POETS

Theo	#iWill Ambassador
Rowan	#iWill Ambassador
Hannah	#iWill Ambassador
Troy	#iWill Ambassador
Excelsis	BBC Children in Need
Teni	Young poet
Angel	#iWill Ambassador
Kamran	Young poet
Tia	TLNCF
Eddie	#iWill Ambassador
Lanai	#iWill Ambassador

PRODUCER

Pelumi #iWill Ambassador

POWERED BY



THEO

How can I engage in democracy?

How can I engage in democracy?
My wheelchair can't fit through the door.
How can I engage in democracy?
The lift has been broken for months,
but the meeting is on the second floor.
How can I engage in democracy
when the people who are supposed to do
what's best for the country
debate right in front of me—
but when my rights should be protected
anymore?
Some of them plan to scrap the 2010
Equality Act,
while the rest of the disability rights
points
and get a pat on the back.
How can I believe that you care about
my voice
when your feedback, surveys, and
questionnaires
aren't available in Screen Reader,
friendly Braille, or easy read?
How can I believe
that you care about my voice
when you ignore a whole community of
people—
while we beg and plead to be heard?
How can I believe you care about my
voice?
And this is the only one you'll listen to.
But if I communicate like this,
suddenly I'm too disabled for you.
What is it about my autism
that scares you off?
Why does my wheelchair
make your head turn?
We are not less than.
Disabled people are not less than.
And when we communicate like this—
like this—
Our voices matter.

TROY

The Forgotten Child

I was once the child they couldn't see,
Forgotten, but now I rise, free.
Inclusion's my fight, my voice, my
stand, For SEND youth, I'll hold their
hand. They said my culture, my faith,
my way, Couldn't define who I am
today. But here I am, a shining star,
Finding my place, I've come so far.

ROWAN

An unstoppable force, a shattering object

I am here with those who can't
Stuck at home
In pain, alone
Waiting years for their lives to start
Dying, waiting for their lives to start
Watching the news for another cut,
Another story
Of benefit scroungers leeching off the
working class
A drain on the economy
A sick note generation
Too lazy to try

Told they're
A burden on their friends
Their family
Their partner
Chained to mobility aids
Too depressing to be seen
Too needy, too loud
Undeserving of education
Undeserving of your time
You say I'm welcome here
But we can't fit a ramp
There's steps to the lift
It's out of order. Used as storage.
The doorway's too narrow
Could you leave your chair behind?

This is my one shot at life and I will not
spend it waiting
I will not spend it behind walls because
it's cheaper to leave them standing
I will not spend it proving to you over
and over that I'm human too
And my disability may stop me
There are things I just can't do
But that is not failure
It is only humanity
Messy, living, breathing
Lonely but never truly alone

Because there have been centuries of
people
Hiding us away
But we are here, in the light
Loud and unafraid
Taking up space
As a tide in the ocean
Slowly chipping away
And you can rebuild a cliff face
But that will only cause delay
For you cannot stop the moon
As it pulls up waves
And where there is struggle;
There will be change.

HANNAH

Different, that's me

Different, that's me
We all are you see
But mine has a name
And I don't fit the game
Yet I crave to be told
I belong and it's okay to just be

Different, that's me
We all are you see
While you see in colour
I view all in 4D
Yet I crave to be told
I belong and it's okay to just be

Different, that's me
We all are you see
Yet I'm too often misunderstood

And made to believe I'm really no good
Yet I crave to be told
I belong and it's okay to just be

Different, that's me
We all are you see
But my voice is replaced
By those who don't know my place
Yet I crave to be told
I belong and it's okay to just be

Different, that's me
We all are you see
However, I'm told I'm mad
Lacking emotion even when sad
Yet I crave to be told
I belong and it's okay to just be

Different, that's me
We all are you see
Yet I am accused of putting on an act
Or criticized for my lack of eye contact
Yet I crave to be told
I belong and it's okay to just be

Different, that's me
We all are you see
But in sad reality
the paved road is normality
Yet I crave to be told
I belong and it's okay to just be

Different, that's me
We all are you see
Yet we aren't all allowed too just be
For some inclusion is not a guarantee
Yet I crave to be told
I belong and it's okay to be me

Different, that's me
We all are you see
But mine gives me a thousand reasons
to die
And many more millions of tears left to
cry
Yet I still crave to be told
I belong and it's okay to be me

Different, that's me
We all are you see

But mine gives me a thousand reasons
to die
And many more millions of tears left to
cry
Yet I still crave to be told
I belong and it's okay to be me

Different, that's me
We all are you see
Those who matter don't mind
And those who mind should be left far
behind
Yet I crave to be accepted
To belong and feel selected

To those who don't step in our shoes
This all may feel ridiculous and like
some fake news
Yet until you've been silenced
Been forced to hide away due to
violence
Told you're the problem
That you make everyone else so solemn

We are inclusive they shout,
Everyone is welcome without doubt,
But it's the small print they forget to
inform
To succeed and be treated well you
have to conform
Different is uncomfortable
Our weirdness makes them feel too
vulnerable

So I put on my mask
And try to just focus on the task
Determined to be accepted
But in truth I will never be selected
I'll burn myself out
Broken, odd, hard work they'll still
shout

Different, that's me
We all are you see
How I am I meant to be authentically
me
When this is not what society wants me
to be
Is success just this singular road
Or are there other paths just slightly
less towed

Different, that's me
To fit into your world I must disagree,
I am here to make my own
acknowledgment,
To be myself really is the biggest
accomplishment.
Speak up, take a stand
Kindness and inclusion we will expand

The best kind of people,
Are those not stuck in medieval,
Who aren't afraid to be imperfect
Weird and wonderful is the verdict
They are special and so very rare,
Yet radiate happiness which does not
compare

Different, that's me
We all are you see
So, speak up even if your voice shakes
Regardless of the consequence or
stakes
I won't wait to be told- if or when
I will never apologise for being truly
myself ever again

EXCELSIS

Rising voice

In Scotland, a young black woman
Faces challenges every day
Discrimination and prejudice
Make it hard to find her way

She walks the streets with head held
high
But inside she's feeling small
The looks and whispers follow her
Like a shadow on the wall

She's seen the hate, she's felt the fear
Of being different in this place
And though she wants to speak up
She's afraid to be a disgrace

But fear and doubt hold her back
And her voice remains unseen
She wonders if they'll listen
Or just dismiss her like a dream

But she won't let them silence her
She'll speak up and make a stand
For justice and equality
In this beautiful Scottish land

She knows the road ahead is long
And the journey won't be easy
But she'll keep on fighting for what's
right
With a spirit bright and breezy

So if you see her walking by
With a fire in her eyes
Know that she's a warrior
And her heart is full of pride

For she's a young black woman
With a voice that needs to be heard
And though the road is rocky
She'll keep sprinting on ahead

TENI

Fuh-ree-duh-umm

What is family and how is it formed
solidly
before the penis and vagina cause
reckless destruction to life
and organisation

What is love if not the polishing of
words
sung from a sweet desirable, seeking
mouth
like the one out mother would sing us
to sleep

What is an British-African male or
female outside of their skin

Where does Black rage go
Where does Black sadness go

And most of all, how do you end up
consciously
or subconsciously, a whore, literally or
figuratively

a whore like your momma

I saw my generation descend into a
madness
in search of the answer.
F is for Fuh-ree-duh-umm.

ANGEL

Equality still we dream

In the heart of revolution,
where the suffragettes raised their
voices,
I stand before you,
a testament to resilience,
to the power of voting,
to the right to earn the same as men,
to the chance of education,
not as a privilege but as a birthright.

We honor the victories,
we give thanks to those who marched,
but still, we dream.
One day, we will see ourselves
reflected
in business, politics, media,
when discrimination based on the color
of our skin
becomes a relic of the past.
In this room, each of us deserves
the opportunity to break free
from society's constraints.

No longer will police stop my brothers
because they fit a profile,
no false stereotypes will dictate
the futures of my friends.

Young people are rising up,
shouting their truth at dawn,
we're in the halls of power,
we're taking to the streets,
we're filling our classrooms,
making noise,
questioning,
listening,
and demanding change.

We dream because equality isn't just spoken;
it's a life we are creating.
Still, we stand,
building this golden brick dream,
where people come to the UK
and witness love,
consideration,
and care.
Laws and acts that truly matter,
we are the architects of tomorrow,
and everything they say affects us,
everything they write signs a chapter in
our future.
The dream continues,
and I light the beacon of hope.

KAMRAN

A Theory is an Omen

There's something about this
environment that can't be replicated.
An air that brings a breeze and not a
shiver, because this is home.
Yes, a home can be loathed, but never
forever.
Home is where the heart is, so only
death can sever that tether.
A lonely feather, who fell from birds in
shades of colour that are no longer
worn.
To be sane here is to bask in the
gradient of transience and permanence.
A's got B squared, about to end the
love that C shared.
C shared his last grains but they want
more, now he's dead,
seeds lonely on the seashore.
Industrial imagination made omens out
of theories
Property leases out of peace treaties.
Now the tentacles of the conqueror's
lineage drip the ink blood of the
present
and force the thoughtful to exist only in
the future they write.
The past is so distant here it has
become a theory,
and a theory is an omen.

The celestial symphony is broken and
stifled.
The starry knight would suffocate if he
tried to guard a polluted sky.
I was told recently that Prince Harry
toured Afghanistan twice
I said I didn't know he made music.
I found out he's not a rockstar but he
was throwing rocks from the stars.
It was the night of the community
dinner.
When buried memories reappeared in
an aandi turned cauldron
Bubbling with expired venom
Only ripened by their hibernation.
But where did they go? Where did they
return from?
The pain's not allowed to exist from 6-
12
An 18 hour shift
Balancing three jobs and three kids.
But there's only so much you can
control
So much you can do to protect yourself
From a theory destined to become an
omen.
This was the night the conqueror drew
lines
At the edges of trees and seas
A glistening chalk in soft purposeless
hands
Scraping at four corners of the earth
Like a kitchen knife on four plates.
One china bowl
For themselves.
One twinkling gold baroque plate
For themselves.
One tiny bowl made of earth
For those who follow them.
And a naked weathered pair of hands
That hadn't felt softness since the
brown-eyed fruit of their labour
Was drawn over with a knife.
The conqueror shared nothing with you
Everything you have of his you had to
take.
You shared everything with the
conqueror
Everything you had, he took.

And anything he gives you now was
already yours
And he still hasn't given it all back yet.
All this Stockholm syndrome for a
crumbling bowl in your hands
Let me ask you: what will you do when
they come for your hands?
Kamraan minnu dasleh, keh karse jileh
tera aath vasti avsan?
Let me ask you: what will you do with
your hands?
Marrow Language
There's a marrow language for the
unbelievable. For dispositions of
mysterious origin; inherited
postures.
No one told you that integrity solidifies
in the stomach.
That truth in calamity has the
consequences of avoidance and
abandonment; of marvel and
respect.
Look: the lonely climes of the stomach
sighted; the guiding burden of
consummate listeners.
He(a)er: the hopes of the presently
rascalised, and the retroactively
realised.
Is there victory in the singing of the
song? That is, the stomach?
Injustice tickles and threatens the truth
with vomit.
There's calming in the instrumentation
of the integritous. It is the aftermath of
calamity.
For the song to travel, it must live in
the bones.

TIA

Youth Voice

Voice.
perhaps to you just sounds uttered by
mouth
but to us?
voice means something more
the expression of all we live and fight
for
the core
of
meaning
it's actionable dreaming
putting words to feelings that seem
unexplainable
it's the courage to ask for the
unattainable
it's the strength
to talk
proudly
to not cower
voice is power.

so what happens to those who don't
get the chance
to voice their stories
those who
at a glance
are stripped of their voice box
and not given the choice
to speak up
and make noise
deemed too young to voice

what if i told you someone saw the
value in our voices
and finally took the youth
off mute
and listened
and soon
realised what we do
is needed
to move
onwards

and in words

i'll tell you of a seed that was planted
some years prior
just a group of young people with
passion and fire
who through conversation and
dedication
grew into a groundbreaking tree of
creation
and with patience nurtured the fruits of
collaboration

it's amazing
what can come from connecting
young people from all backgrounds and
intersections
but coming together over a shared
interest in
putting an end to the constant
neglecting
of our voice

this organisation's accepting
and opened up the door to the rooms
we weren't let in
not to mention
inventing systems
that our protecting
our futures

£10million
suttin i ain't ever touched
massive responsibility
given to us
staff members and carers
we can actually trust
when we were never given much
it's nice to feel like enough

plus
my journey with the fund has been
nothing less than educational
whether vocational training
or more conversational
project visits one day
interviews the next
reading applications
and eating the best food
i've tasted

joining with a blank canvas
and leaving with a collage
populated of people, places and
projects
passion, pride of progress

this ain't no little youth project
it's a system change
changing the ways things have been
done for days
years
confronting fears
grabbing the wheel and choosing to
steer
in new directions
trying and testing
changing the message
and it works

don't take it from me
but from the direct quotes from the
beneficiaries
they say

"it's been really empowering"
"created young leaders"
"different to any grant i've had before"

clearly
an impact
in fact
more than that
i see the huge ripple effects both inside
and out
development being paramount
partnerships being found
but what i wanna shout about
is how
in a time where the world can be
unkind
and nothing seems to go to plan
through the power of young people's
minds
our future is in safe hands

voice.
without it we wouldn't be celebrating
without our interrogation and
braveness to question
without bringing our own stories,
experience and perceptions
i must highlight the importance of
representing
not just young people but representing
communities
bridging the gap between you and me
i fluently speak the mother tongue of
my culture
and i can teach it
so we can speak it to each other
and don't shy from adaptation,
interrogation and scrutiny
diversity is the key
it starts with community.

so let's continually build to be
embedded both grassroots and
institutionally
yes, we've left a legacy
but the work isn't done yet
what's next?
i ask, what's next?
we've had lasting effects
but there's still people out there who
silence our pleas
so i use this platform to share our
journeys
and invite you to pledge that

youth voice is a need.

EDDIE

Origami dragon

And we are here, now.
press your feet into the floor and trust
the ground to hold you.
learn to feel the presence of others and
most importantly, the presence of
yourself. breathe.

Outside this room we walk under the
shadow of the man that punches down /
that denies disabled people
benefits / that denies people in poverty
decent housing / that denies trans
people healthcare / that embraces
inertia against a backdrop of violence /
that fuels hate and withholds hope
from the hopeless /

But here, inside this room with warmth
for walls
we can exist only with each other for
company. So what next?

I realised recently that I was hiding
from the truth of the world by
projecting all my hopes into the future.
I sat in a room of found community and
realised I need to face the
fuckedupness of the world head on

plunge my fist into water
watch ripples spill between puddles
and
set my eyes squarely at the horizon.

Together, we have built momentum and
together, we can continue to build
momentum. an activist told me once
that hopelessness is manufactured and
community is a doing word - none of us
here have the power to
change the world but we can build
bridges and create connection and that
is how the world works

our revolution is good words in the
right place at the right time to send
wheels spinning -

So we rise:
to challenges facing us and placed in
our way / carefully and carelessly /
like truckfuls of paper-thick policy /
scattered across the eyes of illiterates
/

And still we rise, until all politicians
become public servants
and still we fold together stronger
each time,

until we are an origami dragon, a
fortress of layered paper

and still we push
still we climb higher
and build more scaffolding for our
friends,
and then scaffolding for everybody
because everybody is our friend.

Still we shoot for the moon and soar
through the stars, above air.
still, we rise.

So what next?

LANAI

What are we without each other?

What are we without each other?
How can we be quiet while others
suffer?
We might share similarities but that
does not make us the same,
That's why it's about equity not just
equality when we're striving for
change,
Learning about others struggles can
sometimes make you feel strange,
But you don't have to come in my shoes
to feel my affliction,

It would still be your soles in them so
use your soul to give me conviction,
It's like planting trees so others can sit
in their shade,
Cos the small seed you laid could
become something for which others
have prayed,
To be free while people are dying in the
sea trying to reach safety just to exist,
A world where all peoples human
rights are a given: to that I raise my
fist,
What do you dream of when u go to
sleep each night?
Do you remember that you are filled
with light?
Cos life can feel like this slippery slope,
But somehow...I'm still filled with hope
That's all thanks to the communities
that are my support system,
Listening to those around me to grow
my wisdom,
I learned we need to talk less and
action more,
Once you get power remember those
behind you waiting for you to open the
door
Change is a path to the future that we
have to build,
And the components to each brick is
within all of us already instilled,
You might be helping your younger
sibling with their reading every
Monday,
You might be picking up rubbish on a
Sunday,
You might be welcoming refugees,
Or trying to heal and find good
energies,
Or writing a poem about something
critical,
This is all political,
We need your commitment and
continued support,
Not waiting for another young persons
life to be cut short,
We have to grab each cause at the root,
And grow something that matters so
we can enjoy the fruit

ABOUT THE #IWILL MOVEMENT

#iWill is a movement comprised of over 1000 organisations and 700 young #iWill Ambassadors & Champions from across the UK. They are united by a shared belief that all children and young people should be supported and empowered to make a positive difference on the issues that affect their lives, their communities, and broader society.

#iWill is empowering, challenging, independent, collaborative and inclusive – it belongs to everybody.

#iWill Week is our annual celebration of the incredible work young people are doing across the UK to improve their lives and communities through social action.

This year, #iWill Ambassadors have reflected on the varied experiences of young people across the UK, while leading discussions on their right to participate in shaping our democracy. The #iWill Movement represents young people from all backgrounds, whose lives and contributions have been shaped in different ways by the events of 2024. From those who are empowered by their right to vote, to those who express their voice through grassroots action, all are united by a shared commitment to positive change. Despite everything, #StillWeRise.

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

Maya Angelou

ALL #IWILL
#I