

ART EXHIBITION

20th-31st May



Mental Health
Foundation

**Mental Health
Awareness**

**International
Women's Day**



**International
Women's Day**



**International
Boy's Day**

P YUSEF MCCORMACK

Artist, Poet, Writer/Author (Working Towards Accreditation, Putting The Pieces Together: A Workbook for Child and Family Social Workers), Trainer, Dad, Adopter, Foster carer, a wearer of many hats who spent the first 18 years in the care of children's institutions. Here he was taught the lessons of shame, rejection, fear, silence & retribution...Remarkably not only did he survive, he thrived.

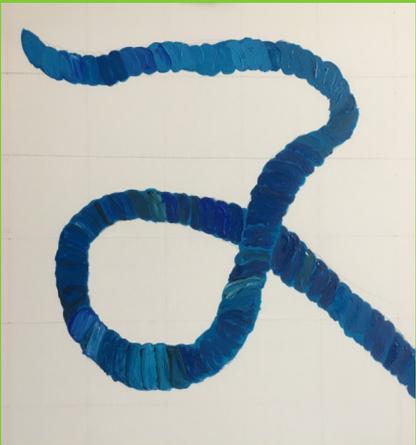


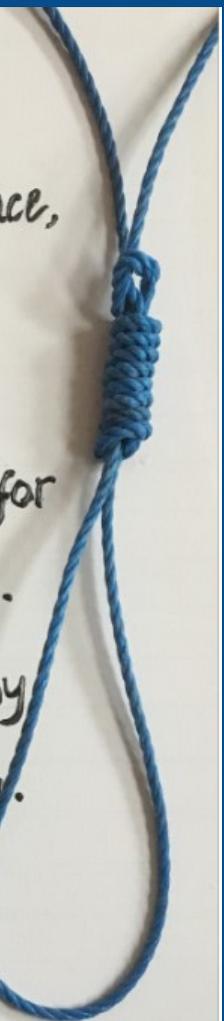
"It's been painful, but honest, reflecting a world that is talked about, just not fully understood & where those that grow up in it know that something isn't right, yet often remain unheard & unable to do anything about it"

I ain't mad, bad or sad

My silence, my refusal to speak became my chambers of horror,
nightmare thoughts in my head.
I don't need to share it, I can't share it
...cos then they'll see me, then they'll know me.
Fear is my struggle, my incompleteness,
The fear of me, my fear of you....What if it's all true?
A wide berth is given., a gift of 'lonely' space.
The threat of contamination, the threat of reprisal
becomes the daily reality, and acceptance feels like a Shangri-la,
a utopia, always out of reach....
But you sat with me,
and in that quietness...in that moment, we shared a space.
You allowed me to talk, you let me ramble,
you let me cry, you let me scream n' shout,
you allowed me to rock and sometimes whisper,
so silently, I mistook it for a heartbeats breath.....
You sat by me, and YOU listened,
and when I looked into your eyes,they spoke back without words,
without judgement, without scorn, without anger.
My lifetime of silence was woken,
it's fears no longer held it back.
I ain't afraid no more, my child within ,is strong.
He found his voice in the quiet darkness...
It won't be tamed any longer, it's silence can't be quashed,
doors to his soul have burst open, chains unlocked, shattered,
shackles are broken....I am free
My need to scream and shout out aloud,
knowing this time I will be heard,
this time I will be listened to, this time believed.....
and I know I ain't bad, mad.... I ain't sad

copyright@pyusuf10





Blue nylon rope,
Offering its everlasting embrace,
holding you firmly,
tightly,
and never letting go....

An intimacy
denied to you as a child.
Something you desperately craved for
now wrapped around you,
so you can touch the breeze.

Gently rocked,
easing you to your final lullaby
Softly, gently squeezing,
easing all your pain away.

Cut free, it falls into its coils
ready to offer its solace,
.... for its next victim.

KIM CORMACK

Kim is an actress, director and writer who is also the Rees Foundation's Arts Project Coordinator. Although she has always been "good" at art, it has never been her outlet of choice; preferring performance and creative writing. Kim was in foster care in the West Midlands, her file was closed after she finished her MA Classical theatre in 2012. Kim has been commissioned to design Christmas cards for The Eve Brook Scholarship Fund, has owned her own craft company and has taught art, drama and English to children and adults for the last 10 years.

"I am passionate about the arts. Painting, sculpture, poetry, short stories, spoken word, music, dance or drama... they are all a form of expression. We all have something to express; our truth."



MARILYN MONROE

EMANCIPATION

COCO CHANEL



PULLING ME BACK

HIM

Here Comes The Imposter

The truth is that
She does not belong
To any one group
To any one song.

She cannot be a child in care;
That's a note off key
She does not belong there
In that little box,
A beat out of sync.
In that mailing tray,
She's a quiet, amelodic.
In that dark corner
Where they store things away...
That are not wanted.

Plus
She can speak the Queen 's English
She has a Master's Degree
She wears clean clothes
"Yes" they agree
Here comes the imposter.

(EXTRACT)

DAVID GRIMM

David, 30, is from Glasgow, Scotland.

He is the oldest brother, with 4 brothers and 3 sisters, growing up in Foster care. Currently studying towards social work degree.

He has volunteered for *Who cares? Scotland, Life changes trust* and *the Independent Care Review*.

His primary focus is to make life better for young people being raised by the state in future.

“What I love about David’s writing is how vibrant it is. He can skilfully change the linguistics he uses express whatever he needs to for each piece he writes. What was so powerful (during the exhibition) was that members of the public were drawn to David’s piece concerning the nature of love. Everyone can relate. Then on learning the reality that many care experienced people were never shown love... very powerful.”

- Kim Cormack



LOVE IS ...

Encouraging, Encompassing, BEWILDERING.

LOVE IS ARTISTIC! DELIGHTFUL, DELERIOUS!
A SENSE OF INTREPID EXPLORATION, IT'S AS
THOUGH TO BE AN ADVENTURER ^{IN}
UNCHARTED LAND.

LOVE CAN BE SUBTLE, BOLD, ENERGETIC,
SAD, ENGULFING + INDESCRIBABLE!

IT IS A FEELING OF PRIDE SWELLING,
LIKE 10 OUNCES OF JOY IN A 5 OUNCE
GLASS.

I HOPE ALL WILL FEEL THIS CONFUSION
I KNOW. I HOPE YOU WILL EXPERIENCE
THE LOVES I ENJOY.

.David GRIMM.

Long lasting pain: David Grimm

**A child steeped in grace and the warmth of
embrace, hasn't realised his face would
make burdened his fate**

**Broken by stance and unconscious
pains, ripped from the roots that plant
our brains.**

**Blessed may be cut cursed all the same
for the child laid tortured by his very
own brain.**

**One day it stopped, No echoes, No
strain, or voices of pain, just love in
abundance to drown out betrayal.**

**Enamoured by love and a shift in
his face, fights never to stray, never
embracing that old face again!**

FACELESS

REF NO:
S7040912

BROKEN

WEAK

HOPELESS

SCUM FILTH



JACQUI ADAMS

Jacqui Adams – *In her own words*

Born to French mother and a Cockney father. I had an unhappy childhood in England. I never felt loved or wanted, except with my Grandparents in France. I ended up in care homes and a wonderful secure school with Good Shepherd Sisters. I was taught to sing and play piano. Eventually became a double qualified nurse, married and had two wonderful children, then two grandchildren. It was assumed I would get nowhere in life. I developed M.E. thirty-five years ago and still fighting it. I love playing my flute and Saxophone and always having animals around me and the support of my family.



Jacqui Adams' portrait was painted for our International Women's Day exhibition. This was because she truly is an inspiration.

- Kim Cormack

A letter to Myself.

I call you by your given name but when you get older you will change it I am sure. I want to tell you that you will feel safe eventually and will get the love and attention you crave for. You will feel wanted.

I see you walking home from school from an early age, dragging your feet, dreading going in the back door and wondering whether the look on your face is right for your Mother. But, I want to tell you that your life will change. There will be good and bad times, one day you will be singing top Soprano in Handel's Messiah and you will be so happy in the school you go away to. You will be surrounded by people who respect and love you and accept your 'weird' behaviour. But, miracles won't happen overnight, and you must try to ignore the negativity around you.

I know you that in your future you will dig deep inside of you and fight for your independence and a voice. Some people do care about you. Life will improve, and you will achieve far more than you ever thought possible. You will teach yourself many more musical instruments than the precious recorder Mr Woodcraft gave you at Infants school.

Timmy, the family cat and your confidante, will have gone but be followed by many more animals to tell your secrets to.

I want you to know that you will survive, and it gets better. You will have a better life.

Tattoos

My life has been made unhappy by one thing.

Tattoos!

Why, oh, why must I be stupid?

I have to hide my body to undress

Dreading contact with men,

For fear what they will say.

She must be easy, try and see.

I want to be commonly happy,

Can't.

Why?

Tattoos.

Jacqui Gold aged 16.

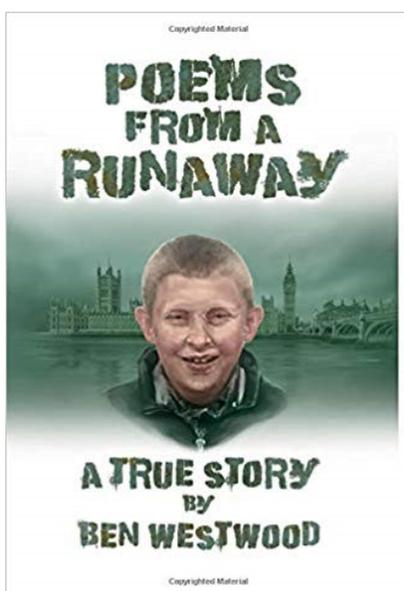
BEN WESTWOOD

Ben Westwood – *In his words*

I was born in 1985 in Norton Canes, Cannock in Staffordshire before moving to the nearby small former-mining town of Rugeley.

From the age of ten years old I was running away from home and going missing from several days to weeks at a time whilst sleeping rough and wandering around Staffordshire.

In 2016 I wrote my childhood story 'Poems from a Runaway' and self-published it a year later which I now read to social workers, safeguarding and missing children's charities and is for sale on Amazon.



TOBY SYCAMORE

(Poem 14 of 60)

My methods of staying undetected in areas social services thought I might be at 12 years old.

Again I'm in London, and I'm back on the run,
and because I was grassed up before,
I need to stay undetected, so that nobody finds me,
I'm going to have to try more.

No-one can know that my real is Ben,
and that I've ran away from care.
Folk will be asking for me around Whitechapel,
so it's best they think I've not been there.

So I speak a fake accent, a pretend East End Cockney,
from the moment I wake until night.
For the whole next four months, with everyone that I
meet, just so I know that I'm alright.

Or else they might find me, when the old bill ask
questions, someone might say "I know him."
So if everyone thinks that I'm from round here,
the chances I'm caught are quite slim.

(EXTRACT)

CHRISTOPHER MARSHALL

Christopher Marshall – *In his own words*

I'm Chris and I'm 19 I'm a care experienced young person who is looking to make change across the system. I take photos to think about something else other than my mental health. I use the time I can to escape from the world.

"Chris's work is really special. Spectators who were not aware of the context of the images were initially drawn in by the photos themselves. Nature is such a universal subject. When the public read that Chris engages with nature through photography to combat mental health issues and low mood, they were astonished. His work started so many conversations about the taboo subject of Mental Health and the aftermath of being in care. Well done, Chris."

- Kim Cormack

Christopher's work is available to purchase. Please contact Kim.cormack@reesfoundation.org
Rees Foundation does not profit monetarily from the sale of any of Christopher's work. All monies go straight to the artist





JAKEB ARTURIO BRADEN

Jakeb, 50, was in the care system for 16 years, leaving in 1987. He is based in Manchester. His passions include: gym, LGBTQ + rights, Care leavers rights and being creative.

“Jakeb’s use of colour and brush strokes is so expressive. When he first told me that each individual canvas represented time he’d spent engaging with painting as a form of healing for PTSD etc; I could completely relate. It became obvious very quickly, that the public related too.”

- Kim Cormack



Jakeb has kindly donated all 12 mini – canvases to any care experienced individual who would like one. For more information please contact: kim.cormack@reesfoundation.org

JACKIE MCCARTNEY

Born in Birmingham on 13th November 1966. In care from 5 years old to 16 years old. Now an activist and spokesperson for helping care leavers and care experienced access their records.

Believe in yourself, have faith in yourself, there is always hope. You are beautiful, you are strong an you will get through this.

Why am I inspirational.....

Parental rejection, sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, 14yrs in residential care, unemployed, hungry, cold, domestic abuse, failed marriage, 5 miscarriages, fertility treatment, alone, unwanted, unloved, attempts on taking own life

Believe in yourself, have faith in yourself, there is always hope. You are beautiful, you are strong an you will get through this.



"Jacqui's honesty and courage is nothing short of inspiring."

- Kim Cormack

TYCHIQUE CIAMALA

Ty, 24, was in care for three years and a care leaver for six years.

Ty is a published writer, poet and currently working on a novel.



"Tychique is one to watch. He at the beginning of an amazing writing and spoken word career. "

- Kim Cormack

Follow Tychique:



Poet_the_Ty95



Writtenbyty.wordpress.com

Wish and Pray

There are times when things get really hard. The tides viciously push against me and the winds beat me from side to side.

I get laughed at, spat at and shouted at. Sometimes there is no opportunity to turn my misfortunes around and the devil urges me to cry.

When it gets to this point, I start to pray and when I pray, I kneel.

I pray because I remember being told to do so in times of need on the grounds that the Father offers out his help willingly.

Then I rise to my feet as there's a whole new productive energy inside me.

I begin to believe that I can accomplish anything and everything.

I see things getting really difficult for other people then when they ask, they get offered little help. As result of this they start to struggle.

Not just with poverty but with mental health, physical illness and grief.

Sometimes we eagerly scan the floor, not just for a note or change but for a lucky cloverleaf.

Not just because we believe in its power but because we desperately desire a change in our fate.

I feel it and I get it. When I feel it, I pray for it and when I pray, I kneel.

(EXTRACT)

SAIRA-JAYNE JONES

Saira is 36, an artist, poet, speaker, trainer and social worker who spent time in kinship care, foster care and hostels during her teens. Saira is committed to improving outcomes for those involved with social care services, taking on roles in youth services, advocacy, children's residential care and independent fostering provision. More recently Saira has re-discovered her creativity and is developing an extensive visual arts portfolio, collection of poetry and spoken word pieces; which she uses to raise awareness of the impact of trauma, childhood adversity and provide insight into the care experience.

"As a care experienced adult, I am learning that my past does not define me."







Frown Lines and Bruised Minds

My face is a map traced with journeys.

Happenings endured with time.

The climbs of arduous mountains, the beds of rivers I've cried.

History etched into every line, every furrow and crease of my brow.

Events that have long since faded leave an ache in the here and now.

Shame secreted in shadows, horrors hidden from view.

My eyes a glimpse into depths of despair, where my once innocence became skewed.

My face keeps all of my secrets, only in its reflection revealed.

A battle to express my distress, adorn my cheeks with the pain that I feel.

Each ridge of flesh each deepened fold.

Reflect meanderings of memories of the fears that I hold.

With passing years my face grows old.

Beneath lives a burning reminder of everything they stole.

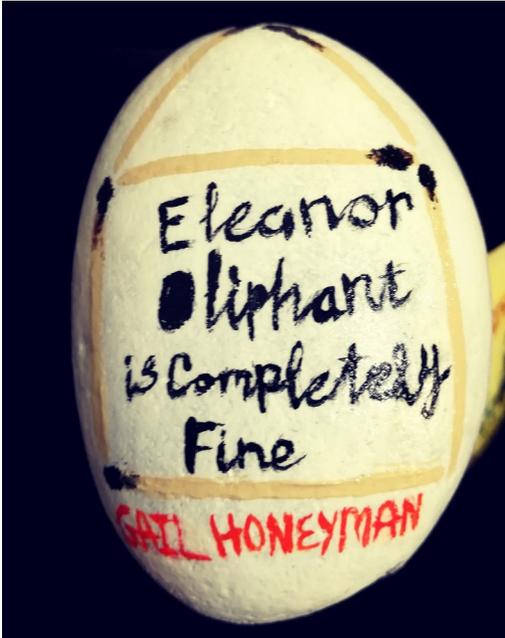
My face no longer compliant no longer told or controlled.

Now I'm the one with the power to tell.

To share all the stories I hold.

-Saira-Jayne Jones

#orphanstones



Saira also paints stones (paperweights). These are sold, with profits going to charity.

You can follow Saira:



@PoisonPinkDaisy



PoisonPinkDaisy

PRINCESS BESTMAN

Princess is 21 years old. She was in foster care for 7 years and is now a drama student in London.

In her own words;

“I am an actor, so a lot of my life revolves around theatre. I love seeing fringe theatre shows whenever I am not rehearsing, as I can always find inspiration whilst enjoying my down time. I have recently started writing poetry and possible show ideas as well.”

“Being free to express your thoughts, feelings and experiences without fear of judgement”- *Princess, on what being creative means to her*

“Following a movement session based on breaking boundaries, I began analysing the significance of touch. This resulted in the creation of this piece that explores how a simple act can impact someone throughout their life.”

(POEM EXTRACT TO FOLLOW)

Why are you touching me?

**Touch can be so simple.
So understated and futile.
But why are you touching me?**

**A simple action.
Yet not so simple.
A "simple action".
But oh so complex.**

**This thing so common in our society.
That's so ingrained in the way we live.
We touch when greeting, when conversing and leaving.
But why are you touching me? This common motion that fries my
brain.**

**That my distaste for is near insane.
The sense that makes no sense.**

**Why is that with every touch I've felt a universe of emotions and
come to a plethora of conclusions?**

**Anger, pain and fear.
Silence gain and control.
Control of emotions.
Control of reactions
Control of my mind
And Control of me.**

**Till I can't laugh
Can't feel, Can't live.**

**My body is a temple
Or so they say
But where is the peace?
Where are my offerings?**

Where are the worshipers who cleanse till they're worthy of entry?

(EXTRACT)

AMANDA ASHTON-BOOTH

Amanda is 34 and resides in Scotland. She is an artist, reiki practitioner and member of a charity which helps care experienced individuals in London.

In her own words;;

“I have battled with my mental Health my whole life. Between the ages of 0-16 years old, I had already moved more than 30 times. This included foster care, living with relatives and a child’s Psychology Unit.

In 2018, around Christmas I found out that I am Autistic. And it has changed my life.

I am more accepting of me and able to find therapy in jewellery making, crafting, digital art and poetry.

I have found that accessing support for my Mental Health has been challenging at times, but creativity has always helped me. When you finish a creation, it gives you a great sense of achievement.”

This Little Girl

**It all started with a little girl,
This little girl was lost,
This little girl was scared.**

**You see,
This little girl only ever wanted to be
loved.**

But only ever miss-understood.

**Things happened to this little girl,
Things that were out of this little girls
control.**

**As the walls close in,
She opens her mouth,
But no one can here her screams.**

**People leave, trust gone.
Adults come but never for long.**

**This little girl 'WAS' broken
And life went on!**

"This little girl was me!"

-AMANDA ASHTON-BOOTH



HELENA TONKS

Helena is 43 years old. At the age of seven, she was removed from the family home and put in foster care. From this point to the age of sixteen, Helena's childhood was consistently disrupted by placements both in and out of care.

Helena is the Manager of the award-winning Rees Community Café in Redditch.

In her own words;

“I never believed in myself. I still struggle with that. But I am taking small steps to deal with that self doubt. I'd like to say to other Care experienced people out there: follow your dreams and keep believing. Small steps. “



“Being creative is nothing but positive. It's good because you can express yourself, focus on what you are doing, focus on creating. You can forget yourself and your doubts for a while.”

Someone does love me.....

A burden I carry, a label I'm named
No room for me and always blamed
This bag is too heavy I wish I put it down
Why does nobody love me I think with a frown
The shouting the screaming the beatings that came
All the things I didn't do but still got the blame

Many nights I cried myself to sleep
Doesn't anybody want me just for keeps
I'm moving away I come home to find
Hope I find a family who is happy and kind
I remember my first dinner like yesterday
Thinking I hope I will be living here everyday
Found myself happy I can smile
this hasn't happened in quite a while
I feel safe, happy and free
Feel that somebody does love me
No more beatings or pain received no more
My life is nowhere near like before
This is how life should be
To feel someone does love me

-Helena Tonks