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## The Journey to Justice Newham Music & Freedom Project, March & April 2018

Report by Carrie Supple, Director, Journey to Justice

### Introduction

Working with Newham based Living Song and thanks to your funding we were able to bring our travelling exhibition to Beckton Globe Library, Newham. The project included music and other arts events, workshops, training, talks and local stories of struggles for social justice. Our exhibition was open daily to local and visiting communities. It was a **catalyst** for all other activities and we reached approximately 1,700 people directly and many more indirectly via friends and families and publicity. The project was conceived on 10th December 2016 when Jane Wheeler, Director of Living Song attended the launch of Journey to Justice Tower Hamlets and was inspired to bring JtoJ to her borough, Newham. After months of planning and fundraising together with members of the community we are delighted to have had music at the heart of our project and with its outcomes. The project connected with local people and our mission in a most profound and lasting way.

Please see our Newham web pages with photos:

<https://journeytojustice.org.uk/projects/journey-to-justice-newham/>

### Main partners - we all signed a Memo of Understanding outlining roles and expectations

**Journey to Justice** is a national human rights education charity, an alliance of hundreds of volunteers across all age groups, sectors and regions of the country who believe that learning about human rights movements, the arts of social protest and the factors which make change happen can inspire us to become active citizens ourselves. Our travelling exhibition tells little known stories of people involved in the US Civil Rights Movement and makes links to historic and current UK movements for change. Before Newham we'd been on Tyneside and Wearside, in Yorkshire, Nottingham, Tower Hamlets, Lambeth and Bristol – in each place sharing local histories and running linked activities that continue after the exhibition has left. A major focus of what we do is with schools and youth groups using powerful stories, music, poetry, art, film and hands-on activity: [www.journeytojustice.org.uk](http://www.journeytojustice.org.uk)

**Living Song** is an East London based Community Interest Company working locally and nationally to help young people shine and develop through musical activity, in particular singing and creative vocal work. Their team includes skilled and experienced artists who are in turn supported by a diverse community of young apprentices offering a model of lifelong learning: [www.livingsong.org](http://www.livingsong.org)

**Beckton Globe Library** hosted our travelling exhibition in its spacious rotunda at no cost. With thanks to the staff for all their help and encouragement and to Newham Council for their support.

## **Aims of the Newham Music and Freedom Project**

*"Even though news items are tragic, there is nothing I could do. I have no power."* (exhibition visitor)

1. Empower participants and those in their sphere of influence to know they can effect change, channelling any sense of injustice. Develop the skills of young artists to run workshops.
2. Provide spaces for collaborative working and reflection in order to learn about the role of 'ordinary people' in non violent social justice work through local, national and international stories and songs. Provide opportunities for public performances and new projects.
3. Focus on disadvantaged communities, offer educational opportunities, encourage peace building, recognising our strengths and raising aspirations across cultures, ages and abilities.
4. Public audiences will enjoy the exhibition and choirs' performances and share stories and listen to their songs and the many visitors we expect will also benefit from the project.
5. Newham participants become part of a national network of people who have hosted the travelling exhibition programme. We train practitioners so our approach is embedded. The project will feature on our websites and the recordings and films will be used as part of a national dissemination of JtoJ's work.

## **Community partners**

We held two major community meetings to consult local people about which stories they wanted to tell, which issues were of concern to them and what sort of events they wanted to see. The meetings were attended by teachers, artists, local councillors, historians, health workers, library staff, youth and community workers and housing activists. In Newham we worked with: Solid Harmony, Newham Vlc, Beckton Globe Library, Custom House and Canning Town Community Neighbourhood Centre and Library, Stratford Library, Newham Council, Newham Libraries, Applecourt Arts, Forest Gate Youth Action Zone, Gerry's, BTL Jazz, NewYVC, Newham Music, Stratford Circus, Forest Voices, ASTA Singers, Isle of Dogs Community Choir, Community Links and Active Newham.

## **Newham**

Newham is one of the most economically deprived boroughs in the country using indices of child poverty, homelessness, low pay and unemployment. Many children and young people, in particular those from BME backgrounds grow up with little sense of their own potential and few opportunities.

Local people we consulted identified the following as priorities of concern: debt, poverty, housing, Hate Crime, disability rights, community silos, 'gentrification', public services.

A community partner wrote: "Often Newham is badged as poor and deprived. I think this can give the community a dogged attitude, which needs to change. The rich, diverse community is something to be cherished and celebrated. Although there is a pretty harmonious community existing within the borough there is a strong feeling of division with the North of the borough having a better profile

than the south. Areas south of the A13 (particularly Beckton and Royal Docks) feel abandoned and left out whilst they see areas such as Stratford booming and blossoming."

We asked: ***What do you hope the project will achieve?*** Responses included: "For people of Newham to discover new stories of ordinary people just like them, standing up to injustice, and to feel inspired and empowered that they could do the same. For new lasting connections within the community to develop – diverse groups of people from across the borough coming together for the first time. For ideas, solidarity, connections, inspiration etc from past struggles to impact and influence current struggles and help them to succeed."

"Often people feel that it is 'someone else' who will take things on when really we are all capable. I hope that it will educate people to understand how the rights and freedoms they have, have been secured over the years by the actions of ordinary and extraordinary people and make us all feel proud of what has been achieved in this part of London."

### What we did

**1. Young artists** 20 local artists were trained to lead or co-lead workshops. 24 young leaders and 8 young artists gained considerable experience leading 10 sessions with ASTA Community, 10 sessions with Stratford Library Choir, 2 workshops for women at Beverley Lewis House and Powerhouse. 38 young people and over 30 adults performed as part of the project events.

**2. The JtoJ main exhibition** was at Beckton Globe. See: <https://vimeo.com/169562985> (short film)

**3. Seldom told local stories** were chosen at community meetings and researched by Bethan Rigby, Martin Spafford, Ilona Aronovsky and Satnam Singh. There are many more stories to tell.

For a summary of the stories we chose, with Factsheets and a list of credits, see:

<https://journeytojustice.org.uk/projects/newham-history/>

- The Poor Man's Lawyer, 1891
- The Land Grabbers of Plaistow 1906
- Asquith Xavier – overcoming the 'colour bar' at Euston Station, 1966
- Ronan Point disaster and safety campaign, 1968
- Stardust Asian Youth Club and Newham 8, 1982-86
- Powerhouse and Beverley Lewis House, 1991

There are important links between many of the stories, for example without free legal aid the achievements on tower block safety, women's refuges, Newham 8 campaign would have been difficult or impossible. It is striking how many of the cases involve grassroots action by people in Newham which resulted in significant change nationwide.

**4. Programme of events** (see website for details of events and names of young artists and choirs)

The JtoJ exhibition is always accompanied by a complementary arts and education programme. We planned to hold an event each week in Newham throughout our two month project. Some were 'co-badged' with community partners and we made sure they were held in different venues throughout the borough. See Appendix B for the full events programme and see our website for details.

**The launch** was very special even though our main exhibition had not arrived due to the snow. Our local stories were on display and they were much appreciated. The library was packed with standing room only and a rich programme of local artists and activists. Please see Appendix A for the programme (all funders' logos were on the printed version) and web for a description and photos.

#### **5. Volunteers** (for names of exhibition & event volunteers see our website, address above)

We recruited 22 volunteers from Active Newham, the University of East London, London International Gospel Choir, JtoJ members and Solid Harmony to be on duty at the exhibition. They were briefed and given T shirts and certificates as thanks and are invited to our volunteers' picnic.

#### **6. Publicity and marketing**

The JtoJ London team planned PR with the help of Newham partners' networks. We used social media (Twitter, FaceBook, Instagram, Whats App, websites), printed flyers and posters and word of mouth. The *Newham Recorder* and *Newham Mag* printed articles about us. We connected events with anniversaries including March 8th International Women's Day and April 4th, 50 years since the assassination of Martin Luther King. As always, we could have done more PR if we'd had capacity.

#### **7. Training and workshops**

We invited local schools and youth and community groups to visit the exhibition and/or to book members of the team to run themed workshops at their venues. We were pleased to have run 11 such sessions though of course would have liked to see all Newham schools and colleges take part.

We ran two **Train the Trainers** events which are key to sustainability. January 4th was a training day for local artists and young artists, introducing them to local, national and international historical stories and techniques for facilitating group discussion about human rights. They explored methods for facilitating collaborative song making to deliver to school and local community singing groups.

On March 26th we ran a Train the Trainers event for teachers, students, youth and community workers and artists. The aim was to teach the JtoJ approach to human rights education, combining history, arts and social change. Attendees can then use the resources and activities in their settings.

#### **8. Monitoring and evaluation**

To gauge impact on participants, volunteers, visitors and audiences, we used questionnaires, comment tags at the exhibition, interviews, observation and statistics. Please see outcomes below.

#### **9. Outcomes & legacy **the difference your funding made. The exhibition was a catalyst for all this:****

a. Our JtoJ partners from Resource for London, Islington, the International Slavery Museum, Liverpool and Recognize Black Culture and Heritage, Birmingham came to the exhibition and events for advice and ideas. The exhibition programme is going to their communities in the next year.

b. Across the project there have been eight compelling songs focused on social justice composed collaboratively in groups at workshops or in Newham community choirs as part of this project. One, by Forest Voices, is called 'Let Natasha Stay' in response to learning about Forest Gate school students' campaign to prevent the deportation of one of their peers. We still hope to acquire

funding to record them on a CD and to tour the country with Journey to Justice. The choirs have added their songs to their performance repertoire so they will be sung as part of the project legacy.

c. Some community and youth choirs which had lost impetus revived and the number of participants increased in all groups who were part of the project. ASTA Community group rose from 4 – 12 participants, Stratford Library Singers rose from 15 up to over 24 on roll, four more young leaders have been delivering workshops directly as a result of this project.

d. Galvanised local activists who are now re-engaged and their stories recorded and widely told, for example Nasreen Siddiqui who recorded and reported the racist attacks on her family in the 80s. She was featured in the Daily Mirror and John Pilger's book 'Heroes'. She is willing to be a speaker for us.

e. The project led to longer term partnerships e.g. Living Song delivering workshops at Powerhouse.

f. School students at Rokeby School plan to ensure refugee children are made more welcome.

g. Pupils at Elmshurst School, Croydon delivered an assembly about their visit to the exhibition and they are in touch with Keshia Thomas a US civil rights activist whose story we tell in the exhibition.

h. Young artists are role models for members of the groups they worked with.

i. We created resources about local stories and new materials for exhibition visitors to share.

j. A greater understanding of local history and stories of people overcoming adversity through resilience and peaceful protest. Living Song plans to apply for a larger grant, possibly from the Heritage Lottery Fund to build on this work.

k. Offered a valuable experience for the JtoJ and LS teams and volunteers and developed our learning. It also strengthened links between artists and community organisations in Newham.

l. 30 practitioners are trained in the JtoJ/LS approach and can use our approach and resources in their work long term - artists, teachers, business people, students and activists.

m. The project inspired an idea for JtoJ's next major project focused on economic injustice and class and the power of community choirs (as an example of action for social justice) to inspire people.

n. The Asquith Xavier story about challenging the colour bar is now part of our main exhibition.

o. "All the young people involved have 'grown an inch taller', learning about how local, ordinary people through time have done extraordinary things to challenge injustice, including Goga Khan, Maria Xavier's father and young students at Forest Gate school." (Jane Wheeler, Director, LS)

p. Approximately 1700 people either directly attended sessions, workshops, or performances or visited our exhibition. We estimate 700 saw either the whole or part of the exhibition. Footfall was lower than we usually see when in city centres but we are interested in quality and each visitor, alone or in a group was a 'result'! Beckton is at the end of a Docklands Light Railway branch and the library is not on a busy thoroughfare. Nevertheless we thoroughly enjoyed being in a community library and the responses of those who did visit are invaluable.

q. We gained new and active members at our events. People signed up to get involved, they invited us to their organisations to run workshops or speak and they attended our subsequent events and came to visit the exhibition at Beckton Globe Library. Our Newham project was extremely fruitful.

## **IMPACT QUOTES**

### **The launch**

" It was **so** sincere, **so** persuasive. A great, great success. I was hugely inspired by the people and the stories and songs they communicated....Very heart-warming." (audience member)

"I'll remember the launch event which was genuinely uplifting, inclusive and interesting. It was great to see and hear choirs from all over Newham including youth choirs and mostly older people and listen to speakers who had firsthand experience of standing up for their rights." (choir member)

"A lovely event. I was struck by how effortlessly it was such a representation of different ethnicity, class, gender & age. So warm and festive. It created so much curiosity for the exhibition." (audience)

### **The exhibition**

"The project made me see how ordinary people could make a difference. The combination of US civil rights and local examples made making a difference seem possible and is empowering." (Visitor)

"It is very relevant. Injustice comes in many forms - US civil rights is similar to S. Africa's apartheid and Rhodesia's before they gained freedom in Zimbabwe. Today the Aborigines tribe in Australia and the Myanmar displacement show that civil liberties are still under threat today." (visitor)

"I think of it as a moving and thought provoking exhibition, very well and clearly presented for many kinds and ages of viewers. The Civil Rights Movement was personalised in a way that showed how the participation of individual activists and the sacrifices they made contributed to the movement as a whole - making a difference and challenging injustice. I like the way in which the exhibition was set out, with the bus stops, the lunch counter, Ruby's desk and its contents, the audio and televisual elements and the general attractiveness of the permanent display." (volunteer)

"It's excellent! I was not aware of the tribulations of ordinary people in Newham - they had their own fight for civil liberties! .... Completely empowering and I had no idea there were so many unsung heroes in my community." (visitor)

"Actions no matter how small can have a huge impact..You have a voice - use it!" (exhibition tags)

### **Young artists and choir members**

"Journey to Justice highlighted key aspects of what it meant to work together for the social justice of those who are vulnerable within our community. The most interesting thing about this project is that I was learning a lot from the students I lead in this project. They were extremely enthusiastic which helped create a great piece of music in which they had the opportunity to perform. Young people demonstrated a clear understanding of what social justice means and expressed clear views and opinions about how they feel. They can and will work together within their own community to support human rights movement through song and other talents such as drama.

One of the examples the young people expressed and had great knowledge about was the Ruby Bridges story and they related this to some of the immigrants who have a hard time being accepted in a particular case in a college in Newham and how they believe it is their responsibility to ensure they stand up for their peers to ensure they receive fair treatment." (young artist)

" A lot of people went through a lot to make it better for us in education, rights and with the police...Goga Khan shows how if we as a community join together, we can go far, we can make a difference, if you believe in something stand for it!" (Solid Harmony choir member))

"JtoJ shows how Newham has been affected by different events..I can't let others speak for me I have to speak up for myself if there are issues in the community." (Solid Harmony choir member)

"I'm more aware of my country and I need to get others to understand what's going on and what people of different religions/races are going through and make the world better." (choir member)

### **Training**

Participants' feedback: "I think it is a good way to critically think about controversial topics and I can try to incorporate some of the tactics such as expressing myself through art or by observing the art of others as well as going directly to the source to understand their voice."

"I loved the collective creativity and music making connections with the stories and feelings. I'm fascinated by Newham's history of social justice and regretting the gap in our education, that these stories are not known. I was especially struck by the Forest Gate School anti-deportation campaign."

"The approach would work well with undergraduate students - using stories of real campaigns to support thinking about the ingredients of successful action for social change." "It was lovely to be able to interact with others about issues that are far too often overlooked."

### **Workshops**

"The project excited our students with stories of local change makers and being part of compiling and singing justice songs. I will remember the students' performance at the NewVic Future London event where their hard work culminated in an inspiring performance of justice songs" (teacher)

"The first thing about this visit I will remember is about Bayard Rustin and what he achieved through his hard work." " I will definitely remember the amazing story of Elmore and Peggy Nickleberry which really touched me. I will also not forget the people who guided us in this trip telling us interesting stories about what happened in the past. Things we aren't taught at school." (student)

"It was homecoming and very interesting. Intriguing, a great experience to learn." (student)

"We came back aglow from the music & debate. The boys & adults genuinely enjoyed it." (teacher)

**Events** for details and write-ups and more impact quotes please see our website (address above). For example after our hugely successful April 4th event marking 50 years since the assassination of Martin Luther King at which local people talked about their own stories of challenging racism:

"Loved hearing a personal account of Asquith Xavier – a story I knew nothing about." "Very special to bear witness to important stories and wonderful music." "Brilliant spirit!" "I learnt a great deal. I have my own Journey to Justice and I will take strength from this evening." "To get that many to such an event is a real achievement. It was compelling, a great balance of music and talk and film."

## **Volunteers**

"It was amazing to help Journey to Justice. The local stories were interesting, important and useful. It was really fantastic joining in and telling stories. It was nice to meet new people in the friendly library. It was a pleasure to meet you all. I would like to help again or to stay in touch."

"It was fun and fascinating but frustrating not to have had more visitors. The library staff were fabulous. It was an eye-opener and thought-provoking."

"I remember the few but deep and fruitful conversations with members of the public living in Stratford which is a completely different 'world' from where I live in Barnet, the new friendships made and the Newham 8 story told by Goga Khan himself."

"I have felt very supported as a volunteer throughout my time in Newham with Journey to Justice because of the trainings, the opportunities I have had to work with young musicians at New VIC college and the trust and platform given to me to express my thoughts, ideas and emotions to a range of diverse audiences at a couple of events including at an Open session at Stratford Circus."

## **Partners**

"Very well organised and professional, we liked having audio-visuals - it was a new experience for Beckton Globe, the first time we'd hosted something so big. The exhibition looks swish. It was very positive to have local stories - visitors responded well to them. They were truly untold stories and powerful. The events were 'really lovely'. The engagement of choir members was great in itself and the involvement of some local people was key e.g. Maria Asquith. The group visits, workshops when they ran, and tours were great, good quality. Volunteers were great. But we expected more primary school visits. Was the low sign up due to the curriculum or timing or pressure?" (library staff)

"Though I have lived in Newham for over thirty years, I know more about the socio-political history after these two months than before. Living Song built new relationships with local organisations like Kingsford Community School and Powerhouse for women with learning disabilities. The choirs and young artists have experienced a new light shed on the purpose and power of song and singing in community. Human rights and how artists can choose social responsibility, as part of the way they express their art form have been central to learning from this project." (director, Living Song CIC)

## **Funding THANK YOU ALL VERY MUCH INDEED**

**Big Lottery Fund, Awards For All** - £9,700 (deinstallation, administration, Solid Harmony workshops)  
**Newham Council Go For It** - £2,000 (training young artists) **Let's Get the Party Started** - £250 (launch)  
**Melly Still**, ran the San Sebastian marathon - £1,100 (website development, publicity design& print)  
**Prudential Small Donations Fund** - £1,000 for installation  
**Donations via Just Giving** £500 (installation)  
**Edith M. Ellis Trust** - £500 (curation and display of our local stories)  
**Aviva Community Fund** - £100 (travel) and **Newham Music** £100 (training)



## APPENDIX A



### Music and Freedom Project, Journey to Justice Newham

Launch on March 3rd 2018 at 15.00: Beckton Globe Library

*Oh Freedom* led by Amina Gichinga and Itoya Osagiede, all sing.

Welcome - Lisa Taylor, Community Neighbourhood Manager, Beckton Globe

*Journey to Justice* - an introduction, Carrie Supple, director

Amina Gichinga - Renters Union, Organiser

Forest Gate campaign film '*Save Natasha*'

Forest Voices *Let Natasha Stay* written by the choir

*Maria Xavier* - on her father Asquith's campaign against the colour bar at Euston in 1966

NewYVC sing *Lineage* by Andrea Ramsey & *Imbakwa (Sing From the Heart)* by Jim Papoulis

Leyla Hussein - JtoJ patron, anti-FGM campaigner

*Justice For All* by Solid Harmony, a young people's vocal collective, guesting Randolph Matthews

Halima Hamid - Health is Wealth, a Newham based mental health project

*Jodi tor dak shune* led by Gouri Choudhury - all sing

Martin Spafford, JtoJ trustee - stories in the exhibition

Goga Khan, one of the Newham 8

ASTA singers - *We Have a Voice* written by the choir

*Mighty River* by Mary J. Blige - all sing

**Close and all move to the rotunda (first floor) for refreshments and ribbon cutting to open the exhibition by Stephen Timms MP and Peter Mawengi, a member of NewYVC**

## APPENDIX B

**Music & Freedom Project March and April 2018, in association with Journey to Justice Newham- events**

**Friday 9th March International Women's Day** to celebrate women's past, present and future.

from 5pm at Forest Gate Youth Action Zone. Inspirational speakers representing our diverse community, art exhibition, choirs, performances, workshops for all ages and delicious refreshments. FREE. All comers. 1 Woodford Road, Forest Gate, London, E7 0DH Contact Zahra.Maalow@newham.gov.uk

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**Sun 18th March OPEN MIC - Newham Night - Music & Freedom** 7 - 10pm at Gerry's. Hosted by Abena The Actress! FREE. 2 Gerry Raffles Square, E15 1BN Contact: abenaadofo@yahoo.co.uk

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**Wednesday 21st March A City of Unity?** 7pm at **New Vic** Performing arts students from NewVic reflect on what 'being united' means, through art, dance& music. **Closed event for parents and friends of the students.**

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**Friday 23rd March A night of Jazz with the Robert Mitchell Band** 8pm and 9.45 pm at Stratford Circus including reflections on social justice through Jazz music. £10 per ticket. All comers Theatre Square, E15 1BX Contact [www.btljazz.co.uk](http://www.btljazz.co.uk)

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**Monday 26th March Journey to Justice Train the Trainers** 5-8pm at St. John's Church. An opportunity to learn about the Journey to Justice approach to human rights education – inspiring action for social justice through stories, history& the arts - workshops, discussion, films and resources. £15 including refreshments.

Stratford Broadway E15 1NG

Contact:

musicandfreedom@journeytojustice.org.uk

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**Wednesday 4th April 50 years since the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. we will remember stories of Black and Asian British people who took a stand against racism and won.**

6-8 pm at Custom House and Canning Town Community Neighbourhood Centre and Library.

In 1966, Asquith Xavier, a porter at Marylebone station, applied to be a guard at Euston and was rejected because of the 'colour bar' which was legal at the time. Hear his daughter Maria Xavier talk about how he challenged the authorities. In 1982 Goga Khan was one of the Newham 8, a group of young Asians whose case upheld the right of self defence and highlighted racism in the police force. Hear Goga Khan tell the Newham 8 story. FREE. 18 Rathbone Market, Barking Road, *Canning Town* London E16 1EH. Contact: musicandfreedom@journeytojustice.org.uk

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**Friday April 6th** - Family workshop at Beckton Globe Library. FREE. No need to book.

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**Thurs 12<sup>th</sup> April Music and Freedom Sing-A-Long for Senior Citizens** 11am-1pm at Stratford Circus, Theatre Square E15 1BX FREE.

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**Wednesday 18th April** Newham Music& Kingsford School present: **The Beckton Groove Choir& Special Guests** 4pm at Beckton Globe Library **FREE. All comers** 1 Kingsford Way, Beckton, E6 5JQ

Contact: Jane.Wheeler@livingsong.org

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**Tuesday 24th April Open session with NewYVC for 10 - 18 year olds** 4.30-6.30pm at Stratford Circus singing songs of freedom and collaboration in song-writing, dedicated to human rights. FREE.

Contact jane.wheeler@livingsong.org to confirm your child's place. Theatre Square, E125 1BX

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**Thurs 26<sup>th</sup> April 'A Singers Tale' with Carol Grimes** "The Edith Piaf of British Music" (Camden Review) 7-9pm at Applecart Arts. Tickets: £1 and £2

Please contact [info@livingsong.org](mailto:info@livingsong.org) for further information. 170 Harold Road, London E13 0SE.

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**Saturday 28th April A night of Jazz with the Timepiece Trio** 5-7pm at Beckton Globe including reflections on social justice through Jazz music. FREE All comers. Kingsford Rd, E6 5JQ.

Contact [www.btljazz.co.uk](http://www.btljazz.co.uk)

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See: [www.journeytojustice.org.uk/projects/journey-to-justice-newham](http://www.journeytojustice.org.uk/projects/journey-to-justice-newham) for details of additional events