

# Women Working Class

## Young Hearts Programme

Young Women and Audience Development

Transcript

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SquadCast

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1:36

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**Fox** Hi I'm Fox Irving and welcome to these conversations, which form part of the Heart of Glass Young Hearts programme for Children and Young People. Funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Young Hearts has developed, and is informed by, an evolving understanding of young women as under-represented and under-served in St Helens. Wider to St Helens, Heart of Glass argues that a lack of attention is being paid to working class young women as audiences, participants and in relation to talent development and creative careers. The aim of the Young Hearts Programme is to explore and address the challenges of provision, access and engagement for young women in and with collaborative arts activities, arts experience and developing careers in the arts.

It comprises a range of artist commissions and resources that you can discover and explore via the Heart of Glass website at [heartofglass.org.uk](http://heartofglass.org.uk). As part of the programme I have worked with the Women Working Class Network to create a series of resources that reflect upon and consider co-production, class, and audience development in the context of young women. These resources take the form of two conversations with the Women Working Class Network, which focus on the lived experience of female working-class artists in the UK and investigate how art, space, and class interact to reinforce or subvert dominant values. If you are interested in more information about the groups and our members' work please visit our interactive Women Working Class resource at [womenworkingclass.com](http://womenworkingclass.com). Our North West resources will be added in 2022. I hope you enjoy these resources, there is humour, there's sometimes swearing and there is a wonderful richness in each of their stories, as told in their own voices. I hope you are as inspired by them as I have been.

**Fox** Hi, everyone, I'm Fox, you're joining in a chat group chat of how many of the six of us in this room today, and we're having a conversation between Women Working Class group. And we're going to be thinking about young women and audience development. And that is thinking about how do we engage young women in the Arts. And to start us off, I'd really actually like to bring our own experiences of how we entered the Arts and kind of reflecting on things that have come up for us when we kind of went into the arts. And I'll call on each of the women independently to introduce themselves, say a bit about their practice, and then share their experiences. So I'm Fox, you would have heard a bit about me in the intro before this, I've been asked to do this and reflect on arts engagement for young women, and especially thinking around class and audience development and what's always been important within my practice, is actually hearing voices that sound like yourself, sound like from where you come from, sound like people like you, and people that share the same experiences. So that's why I have invited the women from the working with Women Working Class group this today to have these conversations. Okay, so Kyra, I'm gonna start with you, would you like to introduce yourself, say a bit about your practice, and some reflections on your experiences of entering the arts.

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**Kyra** Hi, my name is Kyra Cross, I'm an artist, I make a lot of quite a different load of art. So drawing, digital performance, poetry, written word, lots of stuff. And my experience of going into the arts is a bit of a meandering sort of, like 20 year journey into becoming an artist and a big sort of catalyst of that was actually getting a job at an arts organisation, weirdly, in audience development, so. So yeah, I know a bit a little bit about it. But yeah, a lot of my journey, and sort of like getting into the arts was through pop culture. And teachers, very supportive teachers and also music. Music was a big thing. You know, meeting friends having access to spaces as well. Yeah and so that's me.

**Fox** Thank you, yeah and I forgot your role as job role is in audience development. So I might actually ask you some questions on that and bring you into the conversation. Yeah, and the interesting that you started off actually, that often entering the art is not a linear pathway. It's often very meandering kind of way into the arts. You may have heard before, but you know, when I was 16, and entered, asked my careers advisor about entering the arts, they actually laughed and told me I wouldn't make any money and I went on several different roles and routes and journeys, until I became an artist. And most of that fear was the fear of not having any money and trying to survive as an artist. So thank you for starting us off. Maria, are you able to come in? Tell us a bit about yourself, introduce yourself and about how your journey into the arts is?

**Maria** Yeah, sure. So hi, my name is Maria. And I my background is in theatre and drama and creating stage performances and performing as well. I also do workshops. So it's kind of, I've kind of grown to do a lot of different things within, within kind of theatre within the arts. And when I was younger, I just didn't think that the arts was something that was accessible. One working class, two a black woman or a black young young woman at that point, especially when I was a child, it was something that it just didn't, it just didn't happen in my world. It was something that you watched on TV, or it was something that you you've seen, you know, I did, you know, I knew that children went to drama schools and drama classes and stuff, I was really envious, because I always knew that I wanted to perform. But it's just, it was like that kind of hidden desire, that you know, that you shouldn't really talk about because it's just ridiculous. I mean, and that's how far fetched it was of all far removed, it was as a child to, to reach out to be a performer. In my world, as a, as a child, or role play was and play in Mary, Mary with a baby going to get her, to go the post office to get her, to get her family allowance, that was my role play. So you would play Mary's and everyone would be Mary Hiya Mary where you going Mary, Oh I am going the post office Mary, oh let's look at your baby Mary, we were only about five. I'll walk the post office with you Mary, you know, that was that was what you thought when you're older. That's what happens. And especially coming from an environment where my mother didn't work, I didn't really know a lot of people who did, who were in employment,

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if they were in employment, it you know, it was kind of working in a sausage factory. Or there was you know, there was nobody who I knew who had like, a professional career or was a teacher or so that just eliminated them type of jobs for me anyway. And I think as I got older, I didn't get any qualifications. I didn't particularly like school, because it just didn't speak to me. And there was nobody there that represented me. And so it was quite lonely. I remember wanting to be in a play. And I think somebody came into some drama classes after school. And he only chose like, the beautiful light skinned girls to be in the show. And the three that he chose, we're all very similar. And I was absolutely mortified, and it crushed me. And that was instilled into me at the age of what 10. So I had, there was a huge barrier that I had with the arts, it was one I just didn't think was accessible, two obviously, I'm poor as well, and I'm black. And so there's no way it's ever going to happen. And so, once I, once I got a lot older, I, I really had a passion for working in the community and community arts. And that was a way in for me. And I still do that today. And I found that an easy way in and then I went to university and then you know, a kind of built up my career and built my own confidence, within the arts doesn't need to say that it all came to me because it didn't, I had to go out and go, Okay, I want that. What I can have that. And being the only working class person in the room, and being the only black woman in the room was something that I just got used to. So that's how that's how I've just lived my life to be fair, and always be in the minority within Well, earlier on like the 90s always been the minority within the arts, like down to you know, workshops and going to do kind of performances and stuff. So that's that's me in a nutshell. I'll leave it there. Thanks.

**Fox** Thank you, Maria. I mean, you've just bought up a lot. Every time I have conversations with you, I think we have very similar backgrounds. Because when I, when the careers advisor said to me, you're not going to make any money from that. The thing was, I didn't want to queue up at the post office. Something. I mean, I didn't. It wasn't I didn't look at it as bad but I kind of knew there was something more because I, you know, for me, we were living week by week, and sometimes you just get to the Friday and you wouldn't have any money left for the weekend. And I used to walk from Norris Green which is a boot estate in Liverpool. I used to walk all the way to the Walker Art Gallery. When I was a teenager by myself, I don't know what that agency and I always try and figure that, that sit in that in that space that wasn't really meant for me with these beautiful paintings, but I knew there was something in me that made art exciting to me, or I want to do it like. And it's funny, you know, you talk about the art, you know, was not accessible. It wasn't for, these words, like far fetched. And something you just had to get used to. So that, you know, for me, as I call this group Women Working Class, but I'm actually benefit class. And there's not really some, you know, groups that that but a is working class seems to be an umbrella term that fits everyone in the arts, when we're talking about anybody that's not middle class, we'll just put you in there. But yeah, that kind of role playing, you know, going the post office and not role play and be an a, an artist, all these things, but it's these little things

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that keep us going. And we're, as you say, community and working with audiences is a way in for us. Thank you for sharing Maria. Jasmine, could you come in next and just tell us a bit, you know, who you are? Introduce yourself and tell us a bit about your journey into the arts?

**Jasmine** Yeah, so I'm Jasmine and I first? Well, I'm a performer and writer mainly. And my first experience with realising that I could maybe I wanted to work in arts is doing workshops at the Roundhouse venue, in Camden in London. So and I felt quite lucky to found that when I was a teenager, but I, when I first started that I felt quite embarrassed that I didn't I hadn't actually seen that much live theatre. So so even though it was going to learn something, I hadn't actually had the chance to see it before. Yeah, so and, but I guess, yeah, I think that it was at school, we never really had any chance to know about these things like the round house, or go and visit stuff. So I actually found out about it by going to the library. We didn't have internet at home or anything. So I could go there to use computers and see the adverts for all the, like free courses and stuff. Yeah, and then, but I guess, earlier on, when I was little, it was like, as you're saying, like a kind of roleplay stuff and like watching TV, and I would copy the TV a lot. And I was obsessed with, like sitcoms. And me and my sister actually had the script book for Buffy the Vampire Slayer. And we would actually, like just read along with it. So from an early age, we would do that kind of stuff like to entertain ourselves. But yeah, I wish we had more of it at school. Really?

**Fox** Thank you Jasmine, when I just you may have not seen you won't you obviously won't see our reactions. But I didn't know Buffy the Vampire script book actually was in existence. This is new knowledge to me. Now, what an amazing opportunity to have the Roundhouse. And to have to find that, you know, at that young age what age we were about about then?

**Jasmine** Probably about? Well, I was about 17 or 18 When I first did a writing course there first. And then I noticed there where performance courses there. And there was a thing called Camden some university. I'm not I feel like it's really small now and it's kind of been a bit cut, but this was, um, was this like 2007 or 8 or something like that. So yeah, I really did take advantage of a lot of the summer courses.

**Fox** So yeah, and that again was kind of not coming from influence from school is there was this agency you know, you went to the library. I used to in school spend a lot of time in the library because I never had internet. It was just when internet was coming up and it was the place where I could find internet and I got you know, a very friendly with the librarian, who was like the super knowledge where we I used to look at courses in books before they were in on internet, you know, and it's just these opportunities that you have to make for yourself, or there's something in there. And it's kind of when I think about it makes me worry, you know,

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what if what if somebody just misses these, these chances? And can I ask, you know, when you went into this, you know, would have been a new experience going into the Roundhouse, how comfortable, did you feel like navigating in those new areas?

**Jasmine** Yeah, I think that's quite interesting thing that I did feel very intimidated by it. And I think that looking back on it, one thing that I think is really, like questionable about the whole dynamic of those kinds of schemes is that often the, the people that are leading the workshops are not very reflective of like, people from working class background, they're very privileged leaders. And so yeah, it's difficult to feel that you could do that as a job because you don't have anyone to kind of look up to. But I did find a lot of inspiration from people who are like assistant workshop leaders, or like social workers that are working in the space, that are probably really getting paid really rubbish for it, or like trainees, as well. But yeah, and then looking back on it, also, I think that it's it's like questionable how like, much that these people who get into the positions of leading the courses, can then kind of, basically exploit the young people to get their funding. So although there were some really great artists who I really inspired me, there are also situations where like, yeah, I felt that the young people had a lot more better stuff to be saying, and they weren't given the main space, they were just given the kind of fringes but like studio theatre space, or like, not even so, yeah.

**Fox** I totally hear what you're saying. And, you know, we've talked about a lot in this group, kind of when you get these opportunities, or these mentor roles, they're often mentors that don't actually reflect your experience. And I went through, I didn't, I went back to Art school, I went over went, I didn't go to Art school, till I was 30. Because I felt like a had to, I felt like it was a passage that I needed to do before I could become an artist and didn't feel complete not doing it. And it wasn't until I finished art school that when I was in a room with someone in the arts, that actual talked like me, it just everything dropped into place, I could totally being me, I could swear all these things they talked like me, they sounded like me. And I could actually relax and make my performance. And it's interesting that those assistants, or you know, or the people or the social workers in those spaces, are the ones that actually make you feel comfortable and inspired. And yes, is, you know, kind of this is where they get the funding, you can say we're gonna work with people with low engagement. But it's a way to get your funding as well. So there's kind of a, you know, issue with that as well as, okay, we're getting we're definitely going to fund art in this area. So it brings artists in, but the way to get their funding is because it's low engagement, and it's working with the people from different classes. So thank you for that Jasmine. Amina, would you like to come in share your experiences say a bit introduce yourself and bit about your practice?

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**Amina** Yeah. Hi, everyone, yet feel very inspired just listening to everyone's journeys, it just shows you how different they are as well. And, yes, so even though class brings us together. So I'm a writer, and more specifically, I work around poetry. But over the years, I've worked in film theatre, producing and managing my own kind of like budgets and all of that. But I also work as a creative practitioner and delivering workshops in schools. And I've started to look at policymaking and like anti racism work so part of Curious Minds, I'm one of their members. So yeah, so the journey is taking me on like, various places and places where I didn't think I was ever quantified enough. When I think I went into the arts, really young, but being in the group, with the rest of the women and talking about our journeys over several weeks, I realise going into the Arts was never a choice. And it was never a choice at the time. Because it was the only thing I had. And what I mean by that, I think it's when we unpick what art means, you know, expression. And at the time I needed art for my own kind of, like, therapy and way of expressing, but also how do I have a dialogue with myself and the rest of the world. And obviously, that came, and I would say, my activism came before my art. And, and I think my activism can't be separated sometimes from my art, because I realised it was kind of like, why I turn up. And your activism is not just protesting or rallying, or it's not just talking about political or social affairs, sometimes it's you as the activist as an artist. And, you know, just listen to Jasmine. And, you know, you told us about how lucky you were. But when Fox asked you a little bit more about how you got into that opportunity, you said, I entered a summer class. And I think it's because we turn up, we do other things so that we can be seen and heard before we get the opportunity to feel lucky. And I think sometimes we miss that. And sometimes I hear myself and others and how they speak about themselves. And yet so I think that activism is about agency is about turning up is our commitment. And I think this is one thing that a lot of people underestimate about working class people is that because life just throws like loads of lemons at us, we just kind of like making loads of lemonade so that but so having that agency is actually our strengths. They actually turn up everywhere. And I was like, wow, you're actually everywhere, yeah, you know, it's my strength. I can be everywhere. So yeah, so I think entering the arts, I think it is something that I'm still unpicking why was never a choice. And what I mean by that is because you know, I got three year criminal record at the age of 15, which was unfair. And, and then obviously, my life kind of turned upside down, didn't understand why I started figuring out what racism and Islamophobia was having experienced, as well as my peers going to school. So art just became there. It was there, I used it and now the fact that I can make money out of it, I can express it. And it's sometimes I do feel lucky. But then sometimes I say to myself, You know what, I actually deserve to be here. And I say this humbly, because I think we were like so goddamn hard. And I think we deserve our places where we are. And sometimes I'm scared to move up the ladder, wherever, you know, whatever. I have a company one day, I'm a CEO of a company, and you know, that's an ambition. Well, that, like, makes me like, lose my working class such as well, I'm like, no, like, I'm sitting in my office with a chair that's got no

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leather on it. Like, I'm happy with that. And there's little things you know, I mean, I'm in L8, it's one of the most like, diverse places in Liverpool. There's loads of community and art, a lot of cultural centres in this building, and like, I feel lucky. I really do. And, yeah, so, but a bit of a journey. Sometimes I feel like, what advice can I give to my younger self, and I think there's nothing, there really isn't. I just wish I had known everything and the strength came from that working class resilience. I wish I'd known that a little bit earlier. Because it took me years later to sit with women who are working class to actually say, you know what, that resilience came from being working class.

**Fox** Thank you Amina, and so much is there in that what you fed back, you can't see this, that's a clap. You won't be able to save it as lots of claps and you know, from the women in the group and interesting in this kind of notion of being lucky. You know, kind But what I'm hearing is that we have to make all these opportunities we are doing, you know, we, we choose to turn up, we choose to experience these experiences, even if we don't feel like we belong in them and I'm, and my practice as always continuously thinking about how can you bottle that up, and give to young women to say, you know, this is what you need. And again, this working class, the, you know, this resilience that we've got, and I know me and Cath, other women in the group we talk, we talked about wheeling and dealing, you know, to do all the tricks, you know, how to navigate you know, how to do a lot of things at once. It's like a superpower that we have, but it can be exhausting. So the things we talk about is kind of self care and looking after ourselves when we're doing all this as well. And the thing we haven't, you know, talked about as well is imposter, imposter syndrome. I know, a lot of us have imposter syndrome. And I think you started that Amina with saying something like some I didn't think I was qualified enough. You know, but there you are in your in your Liverpool eight in a what looks like a very exciting studio with a professional mic, you know, but you may not have a leather chair, but you're there you're we're all in this spaces. Were here having a conversation together. You know, it's really, it's really interesting about how we can bottle this up more talk more about this kind of what advice you would give or what would we need to encourage young women to come into the arts. Okay, thank you, Amina, Adiam, last but not least, would you like to introduce yourself and tell us about your experiences?

**Adiam** Sure. Thank you. So I'm Adiam. I'm a multidisciplinary writer, artist, performer, producer. I've worked in theatre, film, TV and live events since I was a teenager. The arts have been a part of my life from a very young age, but in really informal ways. Like when my family moved, when my family and I moved to the UK, I was a preteen. But I already had like, I can't even remember several years of experience in performing and putting on short plays that I'd written or acts that I'd come up with, with my friends and family. But often it was for like, variety shows or fundraisers and cultural celebrations, I didn't think of it as something that I



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was doing, you know, I'm in the arts, it was just something I did. So my family that most of my family, they're very creative as well in different ways. And it's just not something that we look at. Well, I say we, I mean, culturally Eritreans, because I'm originally from Eritrea, Eritrea, and many other countries in Africa, or countries in Asia and South America, the arts aren't seeing really as viable career. So you're not really encouraged to do it. Ahead of other things like, you know, the sciences, you're encouraged to be a civil engineer, or a doctor or lawyer, something that will be stable, you know. So yeah, so even though I knew I'd been creative, as long as I could remember, I just didn't think of it as something that I was going to do for a career or do for money, if that makes sense for a living until a bunch of things happen. When I moved here to the UK, to the UK, specifically to Liverpool, different people I met and different opportunities I came across. I was like, okay, yeah, this is my calling this is, what I have to do I know is going to be a lot of sacrifice, it's not going to be as stable as the other jobs that I could be qualified for. Because, again, being of African heritage and Eritrean, specifically, you're encouraged to get the top grades, the best grades that you can, and the Science, you know, Maths, English, all of that. So I did get those grades, I worked my butt off to get those grades, but I knew that the arts were my vocation. So I decided to go for, you know, the arts in my GCSE performance in Visual Arts. And the same for uni as well. But all the way through, I had to prove not just to my family, but to my community, and often to a lot of people who are naysayers, that, actually the Arts are for me. The good thing is I never had to convince myself. So even though there were moments as you said, you know, we all get imposter syndrome. There were moments where I felt like, you know, at this stage in my career or my experience, am I really good enough for this? But then I'd say well, if I don't go for it, how do I know if I don't go for a how do I get the experience that I need to get there because everybody will says no matter what the, the area of work you're in, in order to get a job, you need the experience. But how do you get the experience if you don't get the job. So for me, I threw myself into all opportunities, literally all opportunities, I would volunteer to, whether it's to sew a button as a costume assistant, or to be a stagehand, or whatever, I just immerse myself in the arts, mostly Theatre and Film and TV and music, live events. So it to other people might have looked like, I didn't have a direction. But I've always had one, which is the creative, creative arts, that's my calling. That's my vocation truly is. So I was making sure that I was in the environment to get the opportunities to then be able to, you know, what was said before, like meander my way into the, into the roles that I wanted. And often, I would say to myself, if you don't ask you won't get. So I would ask people, anybody who came across? Can I have an experience with this? Can I shadow you this? Can I do it. So unfortunately, as you all know, our sectors, they thrive on people volunteering, or not being paid or possibly getting their expenses paid, if you're lucky. That's what our sector is built for. It's for people who can afford to do that I couldn't afford to do it. I worked while I went to college full time I worked part time, I would say but almost full time I, I did everything that I could to stay in the areas that I wanted to work, and I still do. Sometimes I'd have 44 jobs on

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the go like today, this is my third thing that I'm doing today. So the thing that we all have in common definitely is our passion allows us to go for opportunities other people wouldn't want to, because it is so precarious. There is no stability in this, unless you get really lucky and you get some incredible job, you know, if you're freelance or you get a great salary job in the venue or somewhere, this life is not very stable. It's our passion for it, that keeps us in it. It shouldn't have to be up. But unfortunately, that's what we're set up to be how it's set up to me. So I think if I hadn't had that desire, from a very young age, to, you know, create something with my hands to, to put on something that people enjoy. It doesn't have to be like a lecture that can be entertaining, but it can also be informative, can also be cathartic. You know, you know, it's like, if there's community that's struggling, and unfortunately, I've seen so many communities that have struggled around the world. And one thing I've noticed is that art is kind of like therapy. It doesn't have to be really formal, it doesn't have to be called Art Therapy. But it is therapeutic. And a large part of what I do is helping people through the arts. So I see the value of it, society often doesn't just see us as some, you know, add on thing, the entertainment that they do. But creativity and the creative arts and all of that it's, it's woven into our whole life. It's just that people don't value it in the same way. Luckily, since I was very young, I saw the value of it. And therefore I pursued every every single opportunity, sometimes to my detriment, but I mean, as a writer, I see the possibilities, I can imagine what things could be. So I always imagined things will be better when on those times when it's been really difficult. And I think that's what keeps me in the sector. So whenever I hear things, you know, our groups have talked about in the past the Women Working Class group, Northwest group, as well as this conversation today. It encourages me literally every everything I hear about how incredible some people, the experience that they've gone through, and they're still doing it and they're incredible people like yourselves and still doing it, it really encourages me and reminds me why I'm still doing what I'm doing. I could be in a very cushy job right now because I had a few opportunities by luck that I fell into, where I could have just done the same thing day in day out, had a regular salary. Had the weekends off, had the evenings off, had that stability that we often don't have, again, I keep saying that word, but it's key for me, which is the thing that stabilises me definitely is the arts is like therapy, it makes me happy. Even if I don't get paid for it. Unfortunately, that had been a lot of my early years. But now I'm trying to take care of myself where I try and prioritise things where I'm doing the arts, but I'm getting paid for in the right way. And the good thing is our sector is catching up to that of realising you need to pay people for their time. You need to pay people for their input, even if it's a small thing you're asking them to lend their expertise or experience to a project therefore you should be compensating them for the experience or for the for the exposure is no longer a line that can be accepted. It has been for a long time but yeah, so I have to remind myself not to do that I could waffle on I'm just gonna stop right there folks like

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**Fox** You are not waffling, I mean, so many things there that we've, you know, talked about as a group. And I really loved when he said, you know, you didn't have to convince yourself. And what I'm hearing very much from all of you this evening is that there was something we knew, when we were young. This was something we wanted to do, might not really understood what that was, or why that was. And we've also talked about it, you know, it is a form of therapy, it's how we express ourselves. And, you know, for me, I may not be able to kind of articulate my way around things or use big words, or kind of understand why the fear of not having money scared me so much. And you know, why everyone around me, you know, we'd all go to the post office, it kind of gives me a kind of a way into understand there was other possibilities, other ways of being, but you're right, it's not stable. Again, you know, I've come from another job today, different job, I know a number of us have got different things on that we do. And we're constantly kind of, you know, keep going from the next job to that next job. So it's not, you know, it's not something you do for the stability, it's something you do for the passionate passion. It's something to do with think about the possibilities. It's a way of kind of thinking, our activism and everything we do in a different way. And getting voices heard is really important to me. So thank you for sharing Adiam.

**Fox** Thank you so much for introducing yourselves and kindly given us an overview of your way into the, into the arts, which we know from, you know, these conversations is not a linear textbook, way to go into employment. And I'm just reflecting and thinking about now I will come to you individually and ask kinds of what you wished you had in place to support you. entering the art an any kind of advice you'd give to yourself and I know Amina, you'd say, you brought in that kind of thought about you wish you'd known, the thing that would get you through is your working class resilience? You know, you wish you would have had that as a thought. And yeah, kind of thinking about it just reflected on your journey and what you wish you could have had to encourage you to come into the arts, and to support you better, and to make you feel welcome. And what advice would you have give, give to your teenage self coming in? Kyra, I'm going to come to you.

**Kyra** I'll just warn you now, if you hear noises, it's my cat. Who's trying to get in! Yeah, I think the advice I'd give myself is to knows that, you know, you know how to do this, you know, Art, you can do this. And there's always stuff everyone can learn. But I think when we working class women, especially going to the arts, we feel that all those people who were cleverer than us who have, like university educated, I didn't have a university education, I barely, barely got a BTEC national in Art and Design. But I know a lot of stuff. And I actually know some stuff more than some people who've got master's degrees. And we've all got talents, and we all differ, and to be safe in the knowledge that I know my stuff. And it's not that I'm cocky about it, or I'm not yeah, I know everything. But it's like to be secure in the knowledge that you know, sometimes

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you get a gut feeling. And it's like, Yeah, this isn't right, or yeah, no, this is good. We should go for this is to trust that. And I think sometimes we second guess ourselves because we're like, oh, we haven't got the proper academic education and know stuff that you we know how to do this, and we know what to do. We can always learn more stuff as well, because I'm all for that. Education has been a lifelong thing. Just a thing when you're like, between a kid and 18. But, yeah, hold on to your, your self and trust in yourself, that would be my advice

**Fox** So trust in yourself. And, you know, you know how to do this and you often know and it's funny you talk about, you know, you didn't have an Arts education I thought going to art school was that, you know the passage in it would make it but you know, it it didn't give me much more than I was doing already. Can I ask when you first kind of knew you wanted to go into the arts? What do you wish? If you had like a magic wand? What do you wish you would have had there to welcome in?

**Kyra** Well, especially my job to have people and I have to say my job. I like my love my job. And I've been there five years. So. So I work for an organisation very similar to Heart of Glass as Creative People Places Projects. So it's more community based with communities rather than some posh art gallery, although that's fine, but posh art galleries are fine. But I think to have a network in place, like the Working Class Women, who there are people, you don't have to explain your situation. Like, like Fox, you know, what it's like to grow up on benefits like me. I don't have to explain anything. And we don't pity. We're empathetic, empathetic with each other and our situations. But it's not like oh, poor you. Which I've heard from some people in the arts, that kind of self pitying sort of oh, it must have been really hard. Yeah. And I got on with it. And I'm here, and I'm alive. So thank you very much. And yeah, and I think, yeah, pay as well pay people what they're worth, not like, a minimum wage, because that's, that's the low job. Pay people what they're worth, like, their knowledge. And their knowledge might not be on a bit of paper. It might be in their head, it might be their community links, and pay people for their time. But those are like, because that shows you value people from top to bottom.

**Fox** Amazing, thank you. Definitely kind of networks and not having to explain yourself, like, just be you, as is really important. Maria can I bring you in with those questions, kind of what you wish you had in place, and what advice you would give given to yourself?

**Maria** I think for me, what I would have loved to have been in place when I was young, is people around me, artists around me, and mentors around me who were creative. And who I could look up to, and who I could aspire to be. And because to me, it just seemed very out of reach. And they didn't speak the same language they were from my tribe. So for me, it would have been so wonderful to, to have a practitioner, even coming into the school and delivering

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workshops, or even having a community centre that you could go to where there was somebody there, that should go, wow, they've done it. You know, they're brilliant, and they could guide you. You know, that would have made a difference to my journey. However, I'm proud of my journey. It's not linear. And you know, I think most working class art journeys aren't linear. And, you know, that's the richness of that. And I think, yeah.

**Fox** And any advice you would have given yourself when you thought, Oh, this isn't for me?

**Maria** Oh, gosh, you know what, now looking back. It's like I did, I did what what you did Fox I went to university at 36. And I just thought that that's what I needed to do. Even though I'd already trained and not even trained yet. I had trained peers I trained, but I just didn't have that certificate. So in a way I felt like I wasn't, I wasn't worthy, and I couldn't be worthy until I got that certificate and got that big debt of going to university. For my younger me, I'd say you know, your life skills, and your creative creativity are enough. Trust that you are enough, and what you got so many other people would love to have, because it's our life skills and our journeys. That makes us unique. And also give us a very edgy, and different creative outlook. And the way we do deliver our work is very different. Because once I went to university, I just thought was that it? I thought it was something that was like, you know, like the Holy Grail. I was like, oh my word, I thought you had to be clever. Because I really, really complicated it all. And even when I was doing essays, never done essays in my life, I found out I was dyslexic, almost getting F's and F's, and then I took it to my sister, who done a degree and masters and she went to try it too hard. So you literally just have to do that, that that and I was going, really, is it that simple. A beginning the middle and end, a come on, if I would have known that. And then taboos need to be taken away for children. You know, you don't have to be super, super clever. Because I'm being honest with you . I never met anyone who was super, super clever in university. It's about being creative. And being honest with yourself. That's what gets, you know, that's what gets your far. So that's what I'd say to my younger self. Just be yourself, be proud. And be honest. Because whatever you've been through in life, that's going to give you a richness as an artist. And one day, you're going to look back and go, Wow, I'm glad that I had the journey that I had rather than I wish I had somebody else's.

**Fox** Yeah, definitely thanks Maria there's a lot there, trust in that, you know, trusting this kind of gut feeling the experience and yet, like, art school did feel like I felt like I had to do it. But I don't use it now or don't use my better paper than I've got it's. And it's got to move away from the emphasis of it. And actually, this understanding that like the richness of experience life experience gives our creative practises. Jasmine, do you want to come in and, you know, what do you wish you would have had? And what advice would you have given yourself?

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**Jasmine** I think that a big thing that I wish I would have had, and I still kind of want as well is that a long term mentorship from someone who, like, have similarities with maybe like an intergenerational kind of thing. Because things when I was younger, doing, joining workshops and stuff was always just temporary. So then you never really get that long term support, and you feel it felt quite up and down. Yeah, and then another thing would probably be having transparency with pay quite early on, like how much everyone gets paid how much you should value your work, because I did so much volunteering, and yeah, and that's also like, advice as well I give to myself is to like, be, you know, have the confidence to ask to be paid. Or ask, like, how much am I getting paid for this and like being, have, but yeah, finding out about that. And then also, advice I would want to give to myself is to be more critical, actually. Because I think when I was younger, I was very quiet and worried about making complaints, even if I thought that things. So things that could be improved or yeah, so I think and also been reading the book by Sara Ahmed complaint has just come out. So yeah, I've been thinking about that a lot recently. Yeah. And having like our group, like having a group of people that share the same feelings, to have that confidence to make those complaints or be vocal about criticising institutions.

**Fox** Thank you. Yeah. And you know, this kind of mentorships coming up a few a bit tonight and it's having someone there to support you like you to give you you know, I've got the same experiences of you to like role model. And again, this like, transparency around your worth, pay your value. We do you know it's expected me know, it's a long standing thing you're expected in the arts, if you want to get anywhere, you do things for free, because it's who you know. Yeah. And if you can get do that, but you know, as we know, women from our backgrounds, we can't afford to do things for free. And if you do things for free, it means we're doing a whole other jobs on top of that to pay the bills. So thank you Jasmine. Amina, would you like to come in? What do you wish? If anything?

**Amina** Yes. So, what was I wished I could have changed. I mean, firstly, I don't think my university degree did anything major, actually put me down because that's when I was diagnosed Dyslexic, so I had to drop to drop my English, because I was doing English and Creative Writing in, which was really unfortunate, because I really enjoyed English, and I was really good at it. But because of the how the system is set up, and I wasn't allowed to perform my best and my best ability, under the time restrictions to get the best grades or even to pass. And so I think, yeah, so I think I probably would have taken my time to think about my degree, if I want to pursue something that is art or literature base. And because there's so many other courses now, and I don't regret going to university, I think universe is great. And, but then I realised, you know, I was three years older than everyone else and so that made me one of the oldies. Which is a bit strange, because, you know, I was only 21 At the time, but everyone goes

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into university quite early don't they by 18. So that already felt isolated already. And then you like the only three, three out of like hundreds of scouse dialect in the whole lecture room. So that seemed a bit strange because it was like so university based in Liverpool. And you can only hear three scouse accents in the whole creative department. Your lectures one out of like so many are scouse. So it's like, I didn't feel like I was in Liverpool really. I felt like a really coming out of my own comfort. So yeah, I would definitely if I was to go back, I definitely take my time before running to go to university because I was already doing what I was doing outside. But with a better setup that was more accessible. And so that would be the first thing. The second thing I would say something that is really great that's happening now is to kick the Kickstarter scheme was, which was the only good thing that the Tory government ever did. That is so the Kickstarter scheme that if he's heard about it before, but it's great because it's allowing young people now to actually have experience in arts organisations quite early. And I just wish we had something like that. And because listening to everyone's stories before, you know, us went to your career advisors, and they didn't know, I didn't have a clue how to even talk about the arts. But now the fact that we have a kickstart scheme, where like young people now able to literally have, you know, a foot in the door before going into university, and actually have an experience in the arts. But even having said that, as you know, how do we get young people from working class backgrounds to even apply for the, how accessible is it? So that's another thing we could talk about what the advice that I would give to young people who have going to the arts or the advice I would give myself, I probably say as well as knowing my working class resilience, and actually claiming that as part of my identity through my work, I think that would have given me a bit of a place. And the second thing is I think I think asking for support is my biggest weakness. And I think that comes culturally because you never asked for support because it brings shame. Or I think it's also that disappointment. But also it's that in counterpart of like resilience I can do on my own. I've made it this far. But also, you'd never want to burden anyone. And I think now at the age of 26, I'm really unpicking and unpicking scars that I left open, because I hadn't asked for support when I was younger, and I think what's happening now is I've, especially under COVID, because we had a lot of time to think, all came crashing down at one point. So, and I think genuinely, if I ask all of you today, would you would you help someone now who's working class trying to get into the Arts? Who probably say Yeah, right. So I always say that to myself now. Like, there's always someone out there who is literally, passionately waiting to support you, you know, and I'm just trying to change my attitude towards asking for support. And what I mean by support, even now I just emailed an organisation said, Look, can you join a co produce this with me, I need your money, I will produce it. You know, and I've never ever had the confidence, unless someone told me he was a co director of a theatre and said, just ask, honestly, people are just waiting at their desk for people to email them with like, give me your money, and you can manage and produce the project. And you know what, I think something that we always kind of miss, we're good. We're

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literally good at our art. It's not like we've come and come with our resilience, or we're just here because we're working class. We like separate all of that. Like, we like art is good. Like, it's amazing. I've seen most of youse. And all of us and I've heard about your journey is like it's good. It's different. It's unique. But it's also coming from a territory that is like, like people are really curious about, especially now. Yeah.

**Fox** Thank you Amina, I mean, yeah, it's that kind of asking for support, spring shame. And I think, as you know, from our backgrounds, we do hold a lot of shame. But, you know, I think, Adiam also said, if don't ask you don't get but that takes a while for you to get there for some people to get there to get that confidence. So yeah, thank you for sharing Adiam can I bring you in which what support you wished you had or any advice?

**Adiam** I was gonna start with the support stuff that you've just said something that has given me a great segue to one of the advice bits, which was about confidence. So people ask me, you know, how do you deal with imposter syndrome? Or, you know, like, I've been on big stages, I've been in big movies, etc. And it's not that I'm cocky is that I try and convince myself to have confidence because that's the only thing that really helped you get over that feeling that you're an imposter. So I just jotted down a note before what what I was going to say about confidence was that, I think was Kyra said that can come across, or don't be afraid to come across as cocky. But it's not cockiness, when you own your own unique like skills and experience, and you see yourself as other people do, you realise that actually, you've got a lot to be proud of, you are right to be confident about your skills, or whatever it is. And if you've been if you don't feel it yet, if you don't feel confident, if you fake it till you make it, that's silly, saying but it's actually true. What you're doing is kind of like positive reinforcement, you convincing yourself, the more you act like you're confident, the more you're going to feel like you're confident, and that really helps with imposter syndrome. Anyway, that's one of my bits of advice. But going back to what you said about the what I wish I had growing up, so it's something I've actually said in one of our groups, I can't remember which group it was from the northwest working group, about wanting to have a big sister programme, because not having even one in person to encourage you or be a sounding board or guiding even if they their net, and they're not in the creative sphere. If they don't have any connections or networks to help you get into it. What they can do is encourage you to keep at it. Because a lot of times you feel so discouraged because you're not making money, or you don't have encouragement, or you're actually having active discouragement where people are saying to which I've had said to me, this is not for you, you know the arts are for people who don't look or act or speak or come from the background that you do, having that sounding board so even if it's just a best friend, a pen pal, I don't think that that's the thing anymore, but you know what I mean? Like a virtual friend on social media that you You have these conversations that really buoys you up and makes you feel better about



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staying. I don't want to stay in your lane because that's quite negative, but staying on your path, because there's quite a few people who will try and get you off that path. Because you know, if you trust your instinct, if you trust your gut that somebody else had said earlier, you know that this is for you, there's a reason why you know, it's for you, because it's your calling. So if people are trying to knock you sideways with, you know, they're not believing that you can do it, they don't think it's really a good choice for you, because of your background, or whatever it is. Just ignore it. Because genuinely, there's a lot more people a lot more people out there who want to be critics and than friends. And as Amina was saying, there's a lot of people who you don't know who are out there, who would be a good friend or encouraging person in your life. So I wish that I'd had that as a as a young person. But luckily I did have like, I think was two music teachers at school who really set me on the path to study the arts, because I kept being discouraged. But they found the resources they even knowing that I want to learn guitar, they sorted me a brand new guitar that I was lending for the whole school year. So one of the things I wish I had more of, and I wish everybody had was that schools and councils and other decision makers that they saw that the arts was something to prioritise, the same way that they prioritise things like sciences or so called serious subjects, I wish that they would prioritise it and and not do what they're currently doing, for example of cutting 50% of the funding, or telling Fatima to retrain in for cyber or any of that nonsense. The thing is, a lot of people don't see that the arts is necessary. It's a subject that enriches all of our lives. It's something that's a whole society can benefit from. And even if you want to see it as a black and white, you know, economy's wise, the arts bring so much money to this country it is ridiculous that they don't, then reinvest it and prioritise in the same way. So it's a big question to ask, you know, it's not something that you or any of us in our group can change society wise, or government wise, but I wish that the things that we had had in place years and years ago, hadn't been cut away. So that's the thing that I wish. One of the other advice, things I thought about was really to echo what others have said, is that you don't need a formal education or a qualification to consider yourself illegitimate artists, because there's no one right way to be an artist because there's no one definition of what an artist is. So when I do visual stuff, I still call myself an artist, when I'm performing, I'm still an artist, when I'm doing things when I have not been paid for it, I still consider myself an artist. And really, that's what it is, you have to trust in your gut, that what you're doing is right for you. And going back to what I said before, don't let people push you off that path. And especially when people are judging you, so like constructive criticism, it's fine, it actually helps you, you know, hone your craft, be better at what you do. Whether it comes from yourself or somebody you admire or mentor somebody, it's constructive. It's not the criticism part that we need to focus on. And unfortunately, as artists, our greatest credit is ourselves. So I think if you remind yourself, other people do that job, you don't need to be your own critic. So as long as feedback is something that you can, you know, act on, it's constructive, it's something that will help you. Yeah, listen to that. Otherwise, just go, okay, that's somebody

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else's opinion. I don't need to take onboard. Or if you admire that person, speak to them further, say, Okay, I don't get where you're coming from. Because to me, this is what I feel. And you might actually find something else. Those conversations might lead you to ways to paths you hadn't thought about, but genuinely, your gut is going to tell you what's right. So yeah, those are my bits of hope. And what I wish had been around support with.

**Fox** I mean, they're lovely, it's a lot of like, just like, going with your gut instinct, and, you know, learning to trust yourself. And, and you're right, you know, you've talked about, like, there's lots of cuts through the arts as subjects, but they are actually really vital. They're like, you know, I feel as you said, just as important to science and that we know these are being cut and cut and I'm glad to hear Amina talk about the Kickstarter programme, but is it accessible? Will it be accessible with, will me as a 16 year old I have felt confident enough to apply for those. But there you know, it's good to hear there are some things in place. So just following up on thinking about that is kind of we've talked about kind of what we wished we had to encourage us in the arts. And I know a few of us talked about, you know, you've we've worked with young women, we've worked with communities. You know, even as audience ourselves, yes, Jasmine, you know, being partaking in the Roundhouse workshops, how you wished you'd had a mentor. But much, what things do you need in place? If you're thinking about class? For audience development, and from, were talking the terms of working class, because, you know, there's always a big push for art to be developed in places of low engagement, which we know correlates with poor areas. Kind of what do you need in place to do good artists development, not artists, for audience development, sorry. For anybody want to come in? Kyra?

**Kyra** Well, this is my job should hopefully know how to do this, I think the most important thing is you need time. Because you need to have conversations with people, you need to get into those community groups. There are so many communities that have had, you know, Sure Start Centres shut, they've had community centre shut, youth clubs shut, that they feel like, you're just someone who's going to come in for six weeks, and then bugger off again. So you need time to make connections. And that, and I always say that the best type to do that is if you just go out and start talking to people, and like, don't sort of go in and say, Oh, hi, I'm an artist and that you say, Oh, hi, I'm Kyra, I'm doing this project, you know, blah, blah, blah. And to get to know those trusted groups, so like, go to food banks, talk to food banks go to H UK places. You need to talk to those people. Because if you just go on a street and say to people, Oh, do you wanna come and do art project? A lot of people say no, what's in it for me? And but it's like, if you, you're working with an organised, trusted organisation. And I think another thing is, is that arts funding is really short. So you get like, maybe six weeks to do a project, there needs to be more thinking about really longer term ones, and ones that are consistent so that you're not just applying for money, because a lot of arts funding, they're like, Oh, we want this to be

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innovative. We want this to be a new project. And it's like, what about those existing projects that are doing really well and engaging people, you need to invest in them and have it long term? And I think Creative People & Places Network. I mean, I would say this, I'm employed by one, but and you know, Heart of Glass are one, but they're a really good step, like step forward. But there needs to be more of that. And there needs to be more really ingrained in the community. Because the only the best people to do community projects to particular communities are those communities.

**Fox** Thanks and I will bring Maria in a moment. This parachuting in is often a problem in the arts as in your parachute in for a project, and then you're off. But there's no follow up. There's no kind of long term support. What if you know, you know, and what if you're doing it really well, right? Well, if the project's been doing really well, and suddenly there's no funding, how do you? Why start a new one? Why not foster that in what's working really well? And it needs to be, as you say, with communities? Do you have any top tips, I'm going to seeing you work in this for what you can do? Well, if you've only given a short amount of funding?

**Kyra** Always look for opportunities to do well, it's called legacy, but I always call it the and then what? So you do this, and then what? So it can come out of workshops themselves, because sometimes you'll do a project, you'll think, oh, I want this out of it. And then the people actually taking part will have completely different ideas, and they're often quite better than yours. So it's keeping your eyes open for those opportunities. Is the where there might be additional funding. And also, like, keep in touch with people, which I know is really difficult. It's, it can be difficult, you know, but keep in touch with people don't just drop them. Because you know, those communities. Really. People really like it if you keep you go in, what every so often say, Hello. Yeah, I think I also been on top tip is just keep talking to those places, because there's so many opportunities like, you know out there. You just have to be bit canny with it. And yeah, and start if there isn't an arts organisation where you are, start one, and you can literally start with like two people just saying, let's do some things. And let's beg, borrow, I was gonna say steal, maybe don't steal. But do the borrowing. But yeah, try try and start, you know, something, if there's nothing there. But yeah, my main sort of point is just talk to people about what they want, and how they want it.

**Fox** Okay, thank you. I'm just gonna bring Adiam in because they just want to add something, then we'll go to Maria. That's okay. Maria, Adiam, do you want to come in? oh have we lost you.?

**Adiam** Sorry. Hi.

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**Fox** That's ok.

**Adiam** Thank you. It's kind of like a comment slash query. So thanks, Kyra for the explanation. But what I wanted to say slash ask was audience development, do we see it more like a like a genuine sort of, you know, connecting with a group of people because we want them to regularly engage with the work that we do? Or? And I'm not asking you specific Kyra sorry, I just mean, as a sector is audience development really more towards, like a two way street? Whether you want the audience to be involved? Because it helps you with your funding? Because you're trying to reach those people? So is this meant to be like a circular thing? Or is it more like you won't get funding unless you engage with certain demographics of people? Because that's the thing I I really struggle with the very, if it's not authentic sort of connections, you're just doing it to tick a box. And again, sorry, Kyra. I'm not saying you. I'm just checking because your work in that area, I would love to have this answer of whether it's considered sort of a a necessity as part of the work that you have to do to get funding, or is it a longer term, as you say, you know, should be longer term, but is the aim to engage them now, if you don't have fundings for the next project. But once you do again, you will engage them again, or are you engaging with different groups of people? Sorry, if that's not clear, but it's just something that I was just thinking about?

**Fox** That's clear. And I think, Kyra, and if you want to speak. I mean, this is something I wanted to bring up. What does audience development actually mean? Is it just a tick box exercise for most arts organisations? And is it something that you do, because you know, there's funding in it? And I don't know the answer to that. I can't, when I do my own practice, and we're always thinking about the audience and how I engage them. But is that because of where my background is? I don't know, the bigger question, keep. Kyra, would you come want to come in?

**Kyra** Yeah. I mean, I think it depends on the organisation. It really does. Because sometimes it is they, you know, Arts Council, you know, every time you do an event, you have to fill out a postcard sort of thing that says, you know, and they like, you know, and I know, part of that is because they're giving you money, they want to know that you're actually spending the money where you say you're spending the money, but I think for me anyway, because when I tell people, like who aren't in the arts, like I do audience development, I see their eyes gloss over and they're like, What, but it's basically for me, it means that I am in the organisation, the advocate for our audiences, and the ones that may not be heard, and that might be different to any projects, but like, I'm really passionate that I want to hear from people who don't really get a voice in the arts and sometime, you know, sometimes it's people over 55 who who feel, Oh, I'm too old for this. Sometimes it's, it's people who, from communities that aren't mine, I'm

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white British. So I don't want it to be all people like me, because I want to hear those hidden voices, the voices that don't really get heard. But yeah, it is. I mean, it is literally like, for me, it is. It's communication and being for me as well being the translator, because there's the arts language, and then there's community language. And sometimes sometimes the arts language is very academic. But for me anyway, it is that being an advocate for communities, and, you know, yeah, it does. Sometimes you are like this funding nice for people over 55. But that doesn't necessarily mean if someone turns up to the workshop, and they're under 55. You're going to tell them to go away?

**Adiam** I see what you mean

**Kyra** Yeah. And then it's, it's, it's a natural sort of, sometimes things will you'll do run project into realises a totally different audience you should be going for. But, yeah, it's about being authentic as well. And I think the problems come when it's more a tick box in exercise, and chasing the money. Yeah. And being authentic and the looking about where you are and who you're working with, and who's in your community.

**Adiam** Thanks for that, especially that word advocate. I'm going to keep that in my mind whenever I think of audience development from now on. Thanks for that.

**Fox** Yeah, I've wrote that down. What is audience development? You do it well, if you're an advocate for the audience, and it's authentic. And you as you say, the problem comes when it is just chasing tick boxes for funding. Maria, I'm going to bring you in, I know you've been waiting to come in.

**Maria** Yeah, thank you for that, Kara, that was really, really interesting. And it reflects a lot of kind of what I do and what I believe in as well. I think audience development, depending on what the audience says, I think it's about doing things with the community rather than for the community. So asking what they want. And as she was saying, Kyra, you know, getting to know the communities, rather than just to have an, a) you have a consultation, what's the consultation, you know, it's about kind of, living their lives going in and sit in with them in their homes, it's building on top of rapport with people. And that's what it is for me, you build up that rapport your build up that respect, you're getting to know them as people, individuals, groups, community groups. And then I think in that way, you keep them there, not just for the project, but they'll come and watch other things as well, you know, a lot of the work that I do is a lot of the work that I do and other people I do work with, you know, it is about me, promoting them hidden voices within the communities. And that takes years. To be fair, you know, I still go for cups of tea and take these like elders out for a meal and stuff. You know, with the projects

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done, you know, I still I still do that, you know, there was one project I did and it took two years. And that's the way it should be but It's so hard to get funding for two years. So it was literally halfway through six months and you got no not finished applying for more funders apply for more funds, and then you get a richness. And what they did was they went on to cause legacies and important thing for me as well. And they went on to the set of theatre company these women. So they then they felt like they were empowered as well. And also, I know you don't like that word Kyra they were empowered. And, and they had ownership over their own voice because one of the things they said to me was Maria, we're really, really sick of people coming and just taken our stories, and then we never see them again. So you know, it was what what about, you tell your story then, you know, and creating work our people and young people will want to come and watch and feel like they've got a place on that seat as well. And to belong there. And so yeah, I guess that's what what it is for me in a nutshell really, very, very similar to yours Kyra, you know, it's creating a legacy. Because it does really make me cringe when I'm doing a project. And you know, it's only for a couple of weeks and you are just like yeah I feel like I'm going in, and I'm just robbing off them. Because I'm not with the legacy in that had also had that's not deep audience development here this was ticking a box and saying thank you. Bye. See you later. So yeah.

**Fox** Thanks for that Maria. Does anybody else want to come in any of these points? I'm just I guess, I mean, this is really interesting conversation, this about kind of being an advocate for the audience and this authenticity, about audience development and why we do it. But also legacy, right? there is a there's something with just not dropping in, and what can you do? You know, if you're in those situations to support something continuing to happen. I think, you know, those that is a big ask, you know, big question to ask in this in this space. But just to finish up the session, which has been amazing. And the conversation has just been, as always when I am with this group. really encouraging and really inspirational. I'm gonna go round to just to ask each of you. One thing we could do, thinking, again, back to yourself as a young woman, but one thing organisations or other practitioners could do to encourage young women to enter the arts. Okay, so just one thing we could do to support encouragement in the arts, and I guess I'm thinking of me in that career's advisors room. And so I went in, and I was so enthusiastic about what I was going to say and what I wanted to be and I knew and one thing for me is, I wish I wish I would have had, I think somebody else's talks about this, somebody to show that it was, it was a career, and it was sustainable. And somebody like me could do it. So be there. So if you're, if you're a kind organisation, or a practitioner, show it is a career it's viable. And it's an amazing you know, all these women in this group do amazing things and amazing experiences, and just showcasing that, showcasing that to this, these young women, and let them ask questions and be honest with them. You know, be frank and honest. Yeah, so that would be the one thing I would say, to encourage young women. Kyra, I'm gonna go I'm

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gonna go the same way round, as I've done all evening, Kyra, can I come to you with what would your one thing be?

**Kyra** My one thing would be, don't just let young women come to your organisation, and work, give them the power to make stuff and be creative. And own what they do, don't do it as part of a project where someone else or your organisation gets the, the sort of pat on the back. Let them own their stuff. And yeah, give them power to shape what you do.

**Fox** Thank you, Maria?

**Maria** I think the one thing would be working class mentors. Working class, as you say, like careers advisors, somebody will come actually come into schools and say, This is what I do. You know, I'm a visual artist, this is how much I get paid, you know, explains to young people as to do with lots of other careers advice in schools, explains to them that this is you know, this is accessible. This is what you get. This is what salary can earn. This is the work have done. But somebody who looks and is part of their tribe, or who feels like that, so it's just not another voice that just makes it you know, fairly far removed.

**Fox** Thank you, Maria. Jasmine?

**Jasmine** Um, yeah, along the lines of what everyone's saying, like somebody who I find it really hard to ask for help. And I think a lot of young women find it so hard to ask for the support. So if organisations and people that could offer the help, like, I've got a bit of time now that I'm happy to meet with people and look through applications and like, give references, that kind of stuff, I think would be very helpful.

**Fox** Right, and thank you, Jasmine, Amina?

**Amina** And I'm gonna, I'm gonna, like, look at this, like something that's like a bit more concrete. Because I was thinking about what is the biggest barrier. It's not, sometimes it's not even access to buildings like, you know, in Toxteth in Liverpool, all the theatres are quite close knit. And unless you're thinking, you know, what the biggest barrier would be language. So I'd love to create or an organisation to create, or maybe there's something up there already, but like an arts, like an art toolbox toolkit toolbox of language. So like, you know, I know, curious minds would listen. And, and they work around Northwest, they, they work around, basically breaking down language in the Arts. And there's actually more jobs in the Arts than actually in finance. Because we actually, and some, some jobs are actually developing as well. So I am just thinking of something concrete, I would say something around language, I'm breaking down the

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language. So I would expect theatre organisations culturalization, to actually have like a glossary of like, what what words in the arts mean, you know? Because yeah, I think that would have made life a little bit easier.

**Fox** Amazing, thanks Amina, you've got some claps you might be able to see on, on this recording. But yeah, that's language is really important. breaking down those barriers. Last but not least Adiam.

**Adiam** Hi, can you hear me?

**Fox** Yep, we can hear you

**Adiam** Just want to make sure. I think a big one that a lot of people in organisations don't realise is about listening. Because it's all well and good lecturing and telling people or working for the demographics or communities or whatever, if you don't work with them, as I think it was Maria, who said, If you don't listen to the needs that young people have young women have, how will you encourage them to, to engage and stay in the arts? Because if you're consistently shutting them down, often, I would say anyway, often, young people are able to express themselves, maybe not in the language that is relevant to all generations, but they can express themselves, in their own ways, kind of related to what Amina say, and it's about the opportunity to be heard. And I don't I don't mean like, literally just hear them and then walk away. But actions taken from what they say. Because if they're saying to you, we're not interested in this, and you consistently trying to engage people with something that not interested in doesn't always have to be young people, older people, or specific demographics, fit all demographics, if you don't listen to them, why would they ever engage with you again? Why would they feel encouraged to continue with a sector that doesn't listen to them? You can say all to your breath is your face is blue. Well, you can say, all the time, I am an advocate for I work for I am all about this. I'm all about that. But if you don't listen to the people who you're supposedly working to bring into the fold, then you're never going to take any steps forward in the right way. I was listening to what you guys were saying about careers advice, and it just reminded my right reminded me about the session I had with, you know, when they arranged the work experience when you're a teenager, the careers advice person said to me what you want to do me knowing I wanted to do something creative. I said, I want to work in the theatre. I don't even care if it's like the simplest job. I want to shadow somebody. I just want to be in a building and arts organisation building. I've never been in one except for to, you know, passing by, or looking at the posters outside. Until I went to school trip to the Everyman and also the Playhouse. I hadn't been to any theatres, anything that here in Liverpool. As I said, I just want that experience. I don't care what role you put me in within the organisation, but that's what I



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would want. The careers advice person said to me now, I think what would work for you is work experience in retail because that would, that's what would be useful for you and your probable career. I was insistent, I want to do something in the arts, I don't care what it is, again, as long as it's in the arts, I was sent to Mark and Spencer. So it just reminded me from what you guys said about careers, connections and advice and things like that. But at all levels, even now, in the levels we have reached, if people don't listen to you more or less likely to engage with them, you're less likely to want to work with them. Again, it's the same across the board doesn't matter what background you have. If people are consistently shutting you down, you don't want to engage with that person. So definitely the way to support people and young women is to listen to them. Because when you ask questions, they will answer. It might not be in the way you expect it. But then then to act on what you listen what you hear, when you ask those questions. Yeah, so that's my bit

**Fox** Thank you so much, for listening, oh again, you won't be able to see us there's lots of claps going on. Yeah, that's listening is really important. So thank you for that some really valuable kinds of reflections on the conversations. I'll just quickly bring Amina in then Maria.

**Amina** Yeah, I will just come in. So I was just gonna say, I think policymaking is really important. And I we don't realise how much policies affects us positively and negatively. And if we don't understand the language, and don't understand who it effects. So who it benefits, then I think it could really shift the change of how we are how especially working class women, and working class people access the arts. And I think that comes down, not because policy is written just is not reflective, or doesn't represent our communities. I think it's about accountability. Because when things go wrong, or there's harm to a community, or things are not being done, how do we assess it? And I think funders who give organisations this big large amount of money should really make it quite strict about should make it a lot more stricter when it comes to policymaking accountability, and how they sustain their policies. And just because we all want to be part of positive change, this is not about us anymore. This is about the young people who are going to come after us. And, and yeah, so I think funders should be a lot more stricter. When they ask for this evidence. I've ticked a box, because you've got all L8 postcodes. But L8, you've got different parts of L8, like really deprived, and you've got really, you know, people that are well off. So L8 doesn't mean, you know, because you've ticked the box that you're engaging with a working class. You know, there needs, there needs to be more accountability. And I'm talking about from a policymaking perspective.

**Fox** Really good Amina, thank you, Maria, would you like to go?

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**Maria** Just quickly, I was also thinking about, you know, big arts organisations and Liverpool we are talking about or in any area. And, you know, they have, I feel like they do have a responsibility as well, to young people, if we're looking at young women working class. I know that Amina was saying, you know, about policies that are in place, I mean, that as well. But also, they need to have, if you're going to the job centre as a young person, or, or careers advisor and saying, I want to work in the theatre, or what are trained in the theatre. I mean, most of the time, the careers advisor wouldn't even know what to do about it because it's not there. So you know, it, the first thing is, you know, can you go to the Philharmonic and go and do, you know, have a taster? If you're working class from, from different areas out, you know, can you do that? Is that something that's running every year, you know, to get more young people in these organisations, you know, doing their training, and so they can go out and have a really lovely experience. I don't you know, I don't think we're there yet. So that's something that I think we need to look at realistically, what is there for young people to if they haven't had any experiences to go in and actually have these real experiences. Thanks.

**Fox** Thank you, Maria. I mean, this is just such a big topic of conversation. It's so important and just being in this room together with the with the five of you is like you've got this wealth of knowledge, you've got this experience. There is that account, you know, the accountability. There's the kind of being the advocate, you know, for these young women and listening to them and doing it with authenticity and not a tick boxes. And when it is a tick box, have some accountability and make sure you know you are ticking those tick boxes and you're not just you know, doing, you're doing the funding in the right place. I'm just going to wrap up and say, Thank you so much this group tonight for this conversation, so much food for thought. I really hope whoever's listening to this finds it really finds it useful and important to hear these voices. So thank you to everyone in the room tonight for sharing. Yeah, and thank you and well, you'll be hearing from Women Working Class, I'm sure a lot more soon. So thank you, everyone. Take care