



# A Writer In a Library

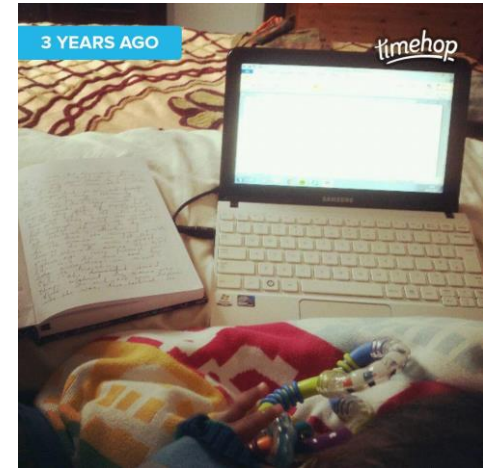
A Year as  
Southampton  
Libraries' Writer in  
Residence, June 2017  
– July 2018

# BEGINNINGS

Although I've written creatively since I was very young, I always shied away from calling myself a writer. It was for other people, not those like me. I pursued an academic career instead, all the time reading children's literature voraciously. In my academic role as a researcher at UCL, I worked with creative writers and artists, furiously wishing to be on the other side, to pursue a creative career, to be the artist, not the academic. I just did not know how I could make that change.

In 2016 I submitted, on a whim, the beginning of a children's novel I had started on maternity leave in 2013, to Penguin Random House's Write Now Live mentorship programme for underrepresented writers, and I was selected in early 2017. Not long after, I met Matt West, of ArtfulScribe, just as he was about to advertise the Libraries residency. I stammered out, for the first time, the words "I am a writer." I applied for the residency despite being convinced I would never be chosen. I was selected.

The residency has given me the skills, knowledge, contacts and confidence I needed to become the creative artist and writer I always wanted to be. Not least, because it enabled me to call myself a writer every day, a term I have struggled to own my whole life. I have been encouraged to take risks, to learn from others, to develop my creative practice through all the things I've done over the course of a year, with the support and mentorship of So:Write UK. It's been an incredible year.



# WORKING WITH ANXIETY: CHALLENGES OF BEING A PUBLICLY ENGAGED WRITER

A few years ago I was diagnosed with General Anxiety Disorder. It is a fixture in my life: one that ebbs and flows in intensity, but coupled with perfectionist tendencies, in its most severe phases, also sometimes seriously hampers my ability to function, particularly in social and/or unfamiliar situations

I was undergoing treatment for a severe phase when I was selected for the residency. I found certain situations challenging over the year: particularly workshop settings. However, I persevered, and with support from my therapist and my mentors, I have grown immeasurably in confidence. Being placed in uncontrollable situations, working with often unfamiliar organisations and people are things I often struggle with: however, reflecting on the challenges and outcomes through my residency blog has also enabled me to realise that whilst I may always have GAD, it doesn't have to prevent me from doing things I want to, well. I've learnt in particular, to relax in workshop settings, to become more flexible in my planning, and to have faith in the unpredictable workshop process and the outcomes that will be produced. Overall, my anxiety has improved as well as my confidence.

A PERFECT(IONIST) VIEW OF THE WORLD



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## Generalized Anxiety IS:



Often characterized by "WHAT IF" thinking, generalized anxiety neither PREPARES nor PROTECTS the worrier. From what it is they fear, and usually ends up causing more trouble than solving it.

# RESIDENCY VISIONS: ARCHIVES, MIGRATION, EMBROIDERY

The proposal that I pitched in interview derived from my experiences working in academia, thinking about migrant community histories in the UK. On the UCL project *Fabric of Faith*, for example, we used the creative method of embroidery to bring women together to discuss the role of faith in their lives.

For the residency, I wanted to develop the methods I had used academically, further in two creative directions. Having written a novel inspired by archival sources I wished to experiment with archives as writing prompts with a group of creative writers, focusing particularly on the migrant history of Southampton. I also wanted to establish a sewing group at Central Library, which would embroider titles and quotes from books, to start conversations about reading and books across the city.



# JULY – AUGUST 2017 SUMMER READING CHALLENGE WORKSHOPS: TEA PARTY TAILS

In July – August 2017 I ran six storytime sessions at various libraries across Southampton. These were for children aged 4-11.

I had never run creative sessions for younger children prior to these storytimes. As an emerging writer for a slightly older age group (11 upwards) designing and running these workshops was an illuminating experience, through which I learnt a great deal. I had to adapt my original ideas for outside reading picnics, due to health and safety considerations. As a result, I designed an one-hour tea party-themed session, held across ten libraries in Southampton over the summer holidays in 2017, inspired by one of my favourite children's books, *The Tiger Who Came to Tea*, to complement that year's animal-themed Summer Reading Challenge theme.

I learnt how to make workshops for younger children interactive and fun, by using story sacks, different kinds of picture books, a tea-party themed craft and a treasure hunt.

I reflected on what I learnt in this blog post on my residency blog:  
<https://sowritestories.wordpress.com/2017/09/14/tea-party-tails-what-i-learnt/>

**Number of workshops: 6**  
**Numbers engaged: 150**



# TEA PARTY TAILS



# TEA PARTY TAILS FEEDBACK

“The storytelling – excellent. The storyteller – also excellent.”

“I liked making the teapot.”

“We enjoyed taking part in the story.”

“Visit a little more often! Thank you for a lovely morning!”



# WRITTEN OUTCOME: THE TIGRESS' INVITATION

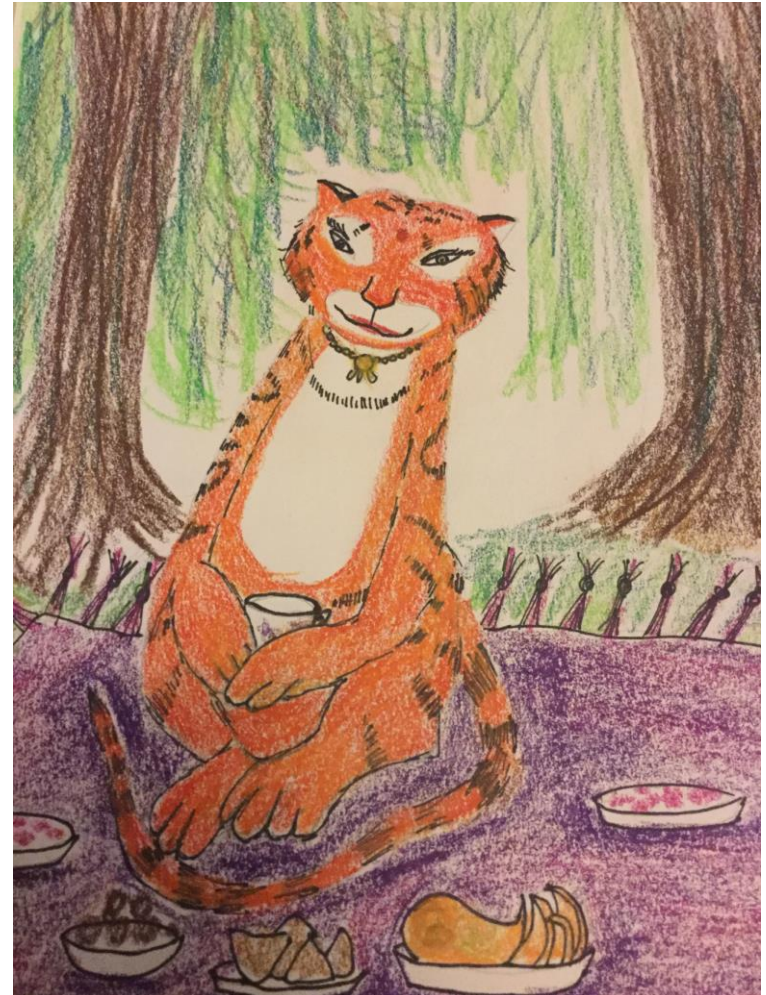
Inspired by reading *The Tiger Who Came to Tea* as part of the sessions, I wrote a decolonial response and personal reflection on the story, thinking about diaspora, hospitality, and my childhood experience of reading stories across cultures.

In contrast to my long novel in progress, it is a concise piece that speaks in a playful way to my passion for inclusive children's literature, and I have shared in several public readings over the course of the year since writing it.

The piece and the reflection are both on my residency blog:

<https://sowritestories.wordpress.com/2017/08/14/the-tigress-invitation-to-tea/>

<https://sowritestories.wordpress.com/2017/08/02/tigers-and-tea-nasta-and-diaspora/>





# JUNE — DECEMBER 2017

## WORKING IN SCHOOLS: OBJECT BASED FANTASY WRITING SESSIONS,

Alongside Tea Party Tails, I was offered an opportunity by So:Write to work in two local secondary schools, Hounslow School and Noadswood School. I was asked to design a set of creative writing sessions. Drawing on my novel's genre, I designed a fantasy writing-based set of workshops, around the theme of objects, aiming to enable students to use their senses to produce original descriptions and to develop worlds and characters using objects as imaginative prompts.

I also gave a full school assembly speaking about my writing career trajectory, applying to the Write Now Live scheme, and the residency. I spoke about my struggles with confidence and perfectionism, and the strategies I use to keep writing despite them.

I was extremely nervous when running my first writing sessions with teenagers. I felt like an impostor, as an unpublished author, whom I thought they would see through. I also feared that “fantasy” as a genre would be considered too young by the Year 9 and 10 groups. However, I discovered that any scope for creativity, and any break from the syllabus, is generally welcomed, and I was supported greatly by staff at the school. By the end of the sessions I was far more confident, and had developed a great bond with even the initially reluctant students.

**Number of workshops/sessions: 6**

**Numbers engaged: 695**



# OCTOBER 2017

## SO:TO SPEAK SHOWBOAT

In October, I participated in the So:Write Showboat spoken word event held as part of the annual So:To Speak literary festival in Southampton. As part of the event, a group of local writers were invited to perform pieces of work. I read poems and an extract from my novel. It was one of my first public readings, and my first in the city. It was a well attended event. Participating in it made me start to feel like part of the city's literary community.

**Number of sessions: 1**

**Numbers engaged: 50**



# NOVEMBER 2017

## HANDS ON HUMANITIES: MULTI AGE MULTI SKILLED DROP IN SESSION

The session I found most challenging to design and which I found most stressful to plan, was my open drop-in session for the University of Southampton's Hands-on Humanities public engagement day. While the opportunity perfectly fitted my practice as humanities academic/creative practitioner, the fluid, flexible drop-in structure and unknown number of attendees made it particularly difficult to plan.

I offered three activities: I reproduced quotes from migrant oral history transcripts for creative writing exercises; a quick sticky-gem/colouring creative activity where quotes could be written out and decorated on doilies; and an embroidery table where quotes or words from the interviews could be embroidered.

The activities were extremely popular, with many attendees spending more than an hour at the workshop. I was mildly amused by all the comments praising the peacefulness of the space, given how anxious I had been in designing and preparing the session. The project acted as a useful pilot for the longer termed sewing and writing projects I would launch in January 2018.

**Number of workshops: 1**

**Numbers engaged: 50**



# HANDS ON HUMANITIES FEEDBACK

“Simple but effective crafts and a relaxed atmosphere.”

“Tranquil, peaceful atmosphere. Very helpful, engaging host.”

“The quotes were fascinating and inspiring. The creative exercise was relaxing and enjoyable.”

“I enjoyed the embroidery and the conversation. The quotes were fascinating.”

“Informal atmosphere and knowledgeable staff.”

“I liked the fact that it was chilled ... It was great.”

“Peacefulness.”

“I liked the opportunity to read the stories of people who have travelled to the city and reflecting on comparisons with my own story. It was lovely, and so relaxed.”



# JANUARY — JULY 2018

## SO:WRITE SEW SEWING GROUP

Every other Wednesday morning from January to July 2018, in the hush before the library opened, I made a large urn of hot water, filled a biscuit tin and laid out embroidery supplies on a circular table in the Entertainment and Biography section of the Central Library, in readiness for participants in the So:Write Sew group.

We focused on making pieces of embroidery that celebrate books: either the many wonderful lines in books that celebrate reading or literature, or our own favourite books. We have chatted and got to know another along the way, but the joy of reading has woven through our fortnightly conversations like an anchoring thread.

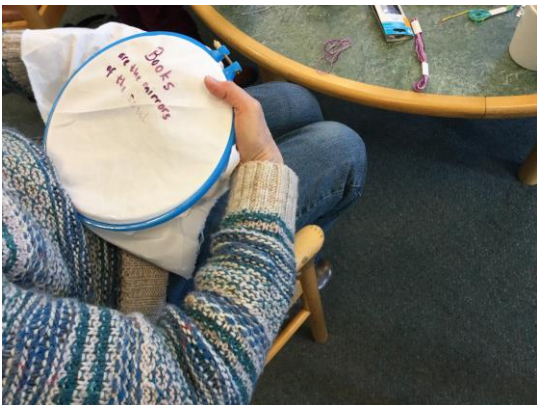
Alongside the library sessions, I also undertook some breakout embroidery sessions at Black Heritage Association in Northumberland Road. I was also delighted when, inspired by our presence in the space, some of our lovely librarians also decided to take part. I knew that our librarians are wonderful people, but they are also incredibly talented and creative embroiderers too! The group has proved very meaningful as a social space for my predominantly older, retired, socially isolated female participants, and will continue on a monthly basis in the future.

**Number of workshops: 10**

**Numbers engaged: 60**



# SO:WRITE SEW



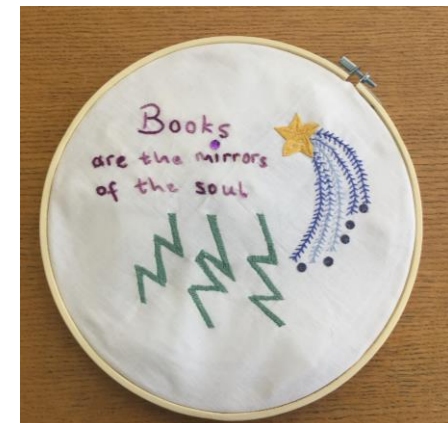
# SO:WRITE SEW FEEDBACK

“I joined the Sewing Group so I could get a bit of time out for myself. I have found the group to be very relaxing and therapeutic and have enjoyed group chats.”

“The sewing group has taught me new skills and has been an enjoyable way to spend a couple of hours, with interesting conversation. A really good initiative by the library service – thank you.”

“I have greatly enjoyed participating in the sewing group. The encouragement and appreciation of my crude efforts has been a great boost!”

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# JANUARY – JULY 2018

## SO:WRITE STORIES WRITING GROUP

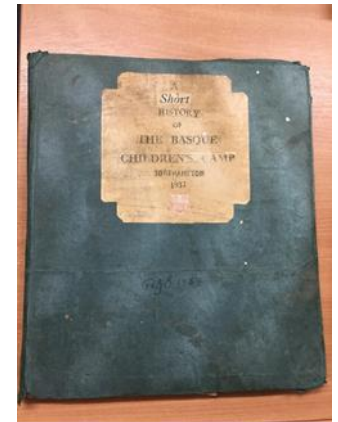
I ran So:Write Stories, a creative writing group, fortnightly between January – July 2018. This was a writing group with a slight difference, as I had envisioned in my proposal. Drawing on my own experience as a historian who was inspired to write creatively by archival material on migration, I selected material from Southampton City Archives for use as writing prompts.

Over the six months, we covered three main historical areas in relation to migration and Southampton: Oral History Unit transcribed interviews with Polish and African Caribbean residents; evacuation and the Blitz causing forced movement during the Second World War; and the experiences of the refugees who arrived from the remote island of Tristan de Cunha in the 1960s. Alongside these topics, we also undertook excursions to the City Archives, the Local History Centre, and we went to see The Shadow Factory play and installation at NST City.

The group, held on Tuesday mornings, has, like its sewing counterpart, attracted a predominantly older, retired, membership, who have greatly appreciated the opportunity to meet together to discuss migration and the way it impacts lives and cities. I've felt that my experience as a historian and a creative writer have been equally useful in leading this project. The writers in the group passionately wish to continue working together, and the project has been successful in gaining follow-on funding from Southampton City Council to continue on a fortnightly basis for another year.

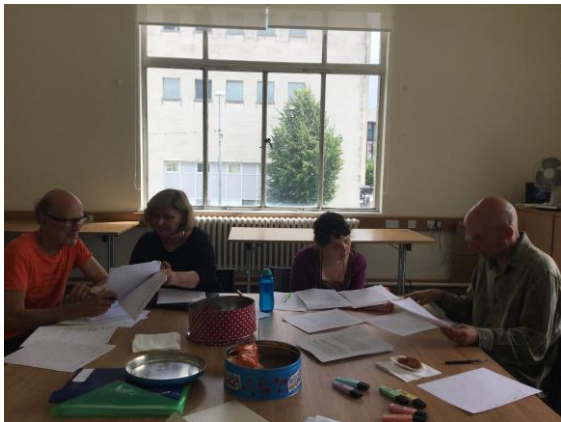
**Number of workshops: 13**

**Numbers engaged: 104**





# SO:WRITE STORIES WRITING GROUP



# SO:WRITE STORIES FEEDBACK 1

A POEM from THE NETLEY THREE

“I only arrived  
Because the others were going to  
Come without me  
I didn’t want to be left out  
On my own  
It was all very different  
I was nervous  
And a little afraid....

I had never been in a building  
like this before....

We were asked to learn about  
Southampton.....

What it was like to be bombed  
During the Second World War....

I was encouraged to go to the  
theatre  
He thought about refugees and  
migration  
She went to research the Archives  
They (gender non-specific) spoke  
as though  
We had become a local place  
We also wrote about Islands and  
We tried turning prose into  
poetry

Six months on  
The Group has gained confidence  
It has learnt how to give and  
Receive feedback  
We now look forward with  
excitement  
To our first published Anthology

And it’s all thanks to  
Nazneen Ahmed  
(And her funders)  
Her warm welcoming style  
Made us feel that...  
‘Here be a home now’

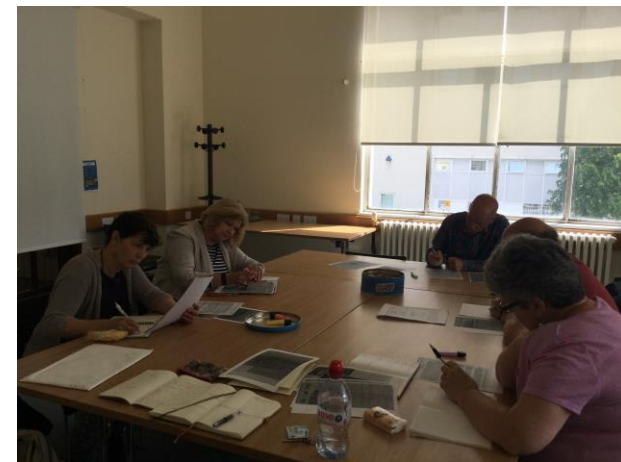
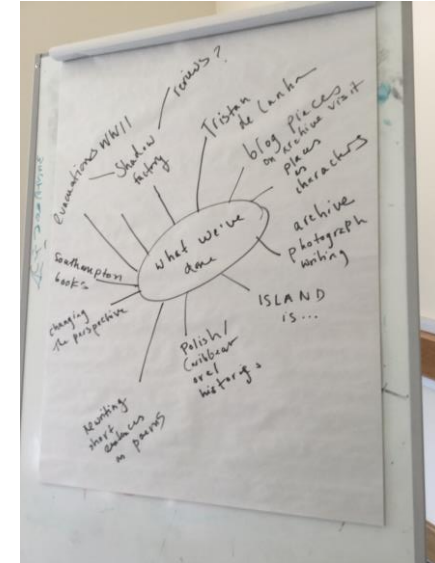
And unlike the Tristan da  
Cunhans  
But just like the Windrush  
generation  
We’ve decided to stay !”

Peter, Judy and Val

# SO WRITE STORIES FEEDBACK 2

“The SO: WRITE STORIES workshops have exceeded my expectations [...] Nazneen Ahmed is a skilled and enthusiastic teacher and facilitator and proved adept and supportive in harnessing and building the confidence of participants in both their oral and written contributions and, as a result make the workshops lively and stimulating sessions.” - Richard

"I have really enjoyed the way Nazneen has used material from Southampton archives to encourage us to get inside someone else's shoes to see how the world looks or looked from their perspective. This has opened up a whole new perspective for me and had made it different from writing classes and workshops I have attended in the past because she encourages different ways of thinking rather than just concentrating on writing techniques." - Judy



# JANUARY 2018

## TOUCH NETWORK SOUTHAMPTON: LIVE STORYTELLING

In January, I was invited to speak at a Touch Network event, an organisation in Southampton that holds live storytelling events. As part of this, I was asked to speak in an unstructured, informal way about a challenge I had overcome. I spoke about alopecia, and how losing my hair had a dramatic impact in particular on the structure and characterisation of my novel. I reflected on how that life-changing, appearance-altering event impacted upon my own values and how it contributed to me reconfiguring my career to incorporate creative elements I had previously neglected, leading to opportunities including the residency.

As an academic, I am used to public speaking, but in a formal, structured, analytical format. Speaking so personally at Touch Network was daunting, but also empowering. The talk is being edited into a podcast which will be available on the Touch Network website.

*Photographs by Joe Hudson Photography.*

**Number of sessions: 1**

**Numbers engaged: 50**



# MARCH 2018

## STAND TOGETHER, SOLENT SHOWCASE GALLERY: A RESIDENCY WITHIN A RESIDENCY

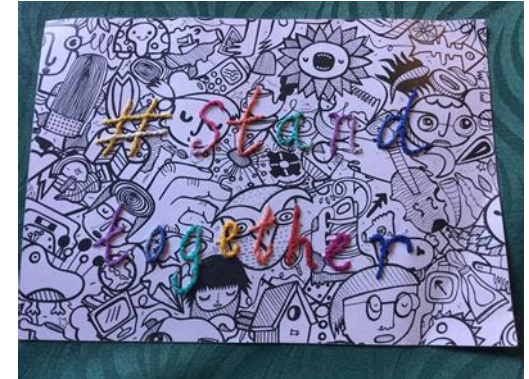
I was invited by Solent Showcase Gallery to be a guest curator for one week during the Kev Munday exhibition, Stand Together. The exhibition, an uplifting celebration of community in the face of Brexit, fitted well with the themes I'd been working on in my residency in terms of migration, sanctuary, community and Southampton. I decided to undertake three elements:

1. Sew Together: a cosy drop in environment, inspired by Afghani communal living traditions, where people could sew responses to "Stand Together" on a community quilt
2. Tell Together: a performance event bringing together my So Write Stories writers with the Mayflower Young Writers to perform pieces I had worked with both groups using the Oral History Unity transcripts
3. Making Community Together: an event for all creative makers in the city to come and share their making practices with one another

I also read a poem at the exhibition launch, and ran an embroidery workshop for the SEEDS: Home Education group.

**Number of workshop days: 4**

**Numbers engaged: 403**



# SEW TOGETHER



# TELL TOGETHER



# MAKING COMMUNITY TOGETHER





# APRIL 2018 WRITERS IN CONVERSATION

In April, So:Write UK hosted a showcase event for the project's three writers in residence to present their work and discuss their residencies, as part of the University of Southampton's Writers in Conversation series.

This was an opportunity to share some reflections on the residency, as well as read work, and also to learn from the experiences of Iain Morrison and Dinos Aristidou, writers in residence at the John Hansard Gallery and Mayflower Theatre.

**Number of sessions: 1**

**Numbers engaged: 30**



# MAY 2018

## WRITING IN THE COMMUNITY COURSE SESSION: SHARING MY EXPERIENCE OF THE RESIDENCY AS A LEARNING TOOL

I shared my learning experiences on my residency with a group of aspiring writers in a session on the Writing in the Community Lifelong Learning course at the University of Southampton.

This was an invaluable opportunity to reflect on my personal and professional development over the course of the residency. I made the workshop interactive by sharing some of the making and writing activities I had found most successful over the course of the residency: in particular, the writing/decorating activity using doilies, sticky gems, and glitter pens that I had first deployed in my Hands on Humanities workshop.

I found it quite stressful to plan this session: as an inexperienced writer, I felt like an impostor in this context, but feedback I received following the session indicated that my session was helpful for participants:

“This is just a quick note to thank you for the honest and informative talk you gave at the Writing in the Community course last night. It was really inspiring, I have thought that I did not have the experience or ability to apply for residency posts, I am still not sure that I have, but your enthusiasm has made me think I should gain additional voluntary experience so that in the future I might be ready to apply. Once again thank you, the talk was most inspiring.”

**Number of sessions: 1**

**Numbers engaged: 10**



# MAY 2018

## TEDX SOUTHAMPTON: WHY WE NEED INCLUSIVE HISTORIES

I was invited to speak at May's TedXSouthampton, held at NST City on . I spoke about the intersection between my creative work and academic work, and inspiration behind the So:Write Stories writing group: the surprising histories of migration to the UK. As one of the examples I highlighted of unseen, surprising migrant histories, I used one of the Southampton Oral History Unit interview transcripts which I had been using as a prompt with the writing group. In the questions, I was asked how people could learn more about Southampton's migrant histories, and I flagged my residency and the writing group as one such place.

I was initially very nervous, but I found the audience warm and receptive and I loved having a platform from which to share the material I have uncovered in Southampton City Archives and in London archives. The talk was recorded and will be uploaded to TedX website in due course, where it will be available to be watched by a global audience.

**Number of sessions: 1**

**Numbers engaged: 450**



# JUNE – JULY 2018

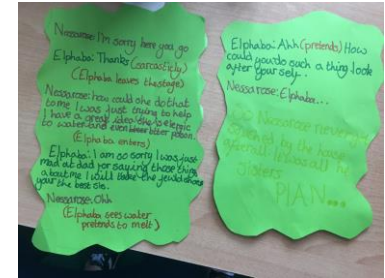
## WICKED SCHOOLS WORKSHOPS

In June-July 2018 designed and ran a series of schools workshops in collaboration with SO:Write UK and Mayflower Engage related to the musical Wicked, which is coming to the Mayflower Theatre in October 2018. I designed 2 sets of 2 workshops: 2 45 minute sessions for years 2-4, and 2 90 minute sessions for years 5-9, which were run in schools across Southampton, Dorset, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight over the course of three weeks. Sessions were attended by 30-45 students. I incorporated a visual element in the workshops for younger students so that some students were “writers” and wrote Emerald City-themed poems and stories, while “artists” focused on designing Emerald City skylines. For the older participants, I designed a more challenging writing exercise, pushing the students to use Wicked as a starting point for new stories or monologues.

The sessions were challenging to design, in particular due to the range of age and ability levels, and due to the fact that many students would not be familiar with the complex plot of the musical. However, the workshops were effective and enjoyable, in particular due to the amount of sharing time and feedback I built into the second workshops.

**Number of sessions: 25**

**Numbers engaged: 495**



# JUNE 2018

## OUTPUT: SO:WRITE SEW EXHIBITION

The So:Write Sew group sessions culminated in an exhibition of all the work that had been produced by participants and librarians that was launched at the Central Library in Southampton on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2018.

Participants were invited for a celebratory tea at the library to launch the exhibition, and reporters from the Daily Echo came to photograph the participants and their work for an article that was published on the online edition.

The exhibition is being displayed for a month, and has attracted many appreciative comments from library users, according to the librarians. It was a wonderful way to showcase the talent of both librarians and participants, many of whom had never had work in an exhibition before.

**Number of sessions: 1**  
**Numbers engaged: 200**

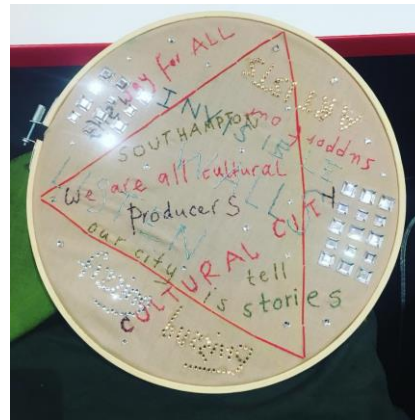


# JUNE 2018

## CULTURAL CITY CONFERENCE: REPRESENTING ARTISTS IN SOUTHAMPTON

At the end of June, Southampton Cultural Development Trust organised a conference to launch the city's City of Culture bid. As part of the conference, they awarded eight artist bursaries for artists to attend the conference and produce creative responses. I applied and was successful. The conference invited artists, academics and creative practitioners from across the country to Southampton to speak about community cultural participation and to begin conversations about Southampton's City of Culture bid. I participated actively, particularly in conversations around diversity and participation, as well as co-running an interactive workshop with illustrator Susanna Edwards on narrative placemaking and Southampton. I produced two creative responses: a piece of embroidery and a poem, which were presented in a plenary session at the end of the conference. It was empowering to feel like a recognised contributor to Southampton's cultural community.

**Number of sessions: 2**  
**Numbers engaged: 150**



# JULY 2018

## 12/48 PORTRAITS: USING VISUAL ART TO TALK ABOUT CHILDREN'S LITERATURE AND REPRESENTATION

In July, I was invited to contribute to a series of talks organised by the John Hansard Gallery called *12/48 Portraits*, as a response to the *48 Portraits* piece in the Gerhard Richter exhibition on display in the gallery. 12 women from the creative and professional communities of Southampton were invited to respond to the piece, which features 48 portraits of famous German men painted in a monochrome, flat photographic style.

I used several pieces in the exhibition, including *48 Portraits*, as visual prompts to consider the theme of cultural representation and children's literature. I spoke about my own struggles to identify as a writer, and the absence of diverse representations in classic and contemporary children's literature. It was a wonderful opportunity to raise awareness of the role of children's writing – as both mirrors and windows for children's identity formation – and I greatly enjoyed developing and sharing the talk. Though attendance was not large, the talk was filmed and will be uploaded to the John Hansard Gallery website.

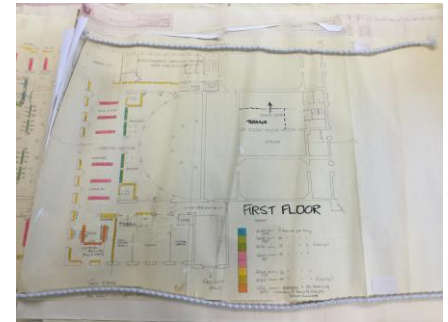
**Number of sessions: 1**

**Numbers engaged: 10**



# FORTHCOMING OUTPUT: POEMS FOR A LIBRARY

The year of the residency has been focused predominantly on facilitating workshops for library users and throughout the city. However, as it has been coming to an end, I have also been reflecting on the Southampton Central Library as the space I have been connected to and worked in over the past year. In my academic work and poetry I am interested in architecture and the built environment, particularly the beauty and creative design of everyday spaces, and the ways in which they accrue layers of emotional meaning and beauty over time. To me, Central Library is one such space. In the last two months of my residency I have been undertaking research on the history of the Central Library, looking over the architectural plans for its 1990s refurbishment. From this research I have been developing a set of poems, for publication in the So:Write Stories group anthology, which focus on the library as an emotional, affective space.





# FORTHCOMING OUTPUT: SO WRITE STORIES ANTHOLOGY

In the final months of the So:Write Stories group writing sessions, we have been working towards producing a collective anthology of the work that was begun in the sessions. The final sessions have therefore focused on editing and rewriting, and I have given writers individual editorial feedback and support to produce work for the published pamphlet. For some of the less confident writers, that support has been crucial in encouraging them to consider their work as good enough for publication.

The anthology will be titled *I Just Make Here Be a Home Now*, a quotation from one of the Oral History Unit interviews, which I also embroidered as a way to connect the sewing project So:Write Sew to the writing project. The piece of embroidery may be the cover illustration of the pamphlet, which will be published and launched during the forthcoming 2018 So:To Speak Festival in November.



# SUMMARY

From having never run a creative writing workshop on my own at the start of the residency, I have:

Run over **70** workshop days

Undertaken **15** Days in research and writing

Engaged with **1250** children in schools

Engaged **738** children and adults directly in workshops outside of school

Engaged with **786** children and adults through readings and talks

Had broadcast reach of over **243,000** in media interviews and articles

Total engagement (excluding media): **2774**

# CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

## BEING INEXPERIENCED

From never having designed or run a writing workshop before this residency, I have become familiar with a range of different kinds of workshop setting: from drop-ins, to one-hour one-off sessions for teens, to storytimes for ages 3 upwards, to working with adults developing work over fortnightly sessions over the course of six months. It's been an invaluable learning process: I now feel confident I can deliver writing workshops to a broad section of the community, and meet different kinds of needs and expectations. In terms of my anxiety, although I continue to find workshops stressful in advance, in the actual running of them, I am increasing in confidence and I find them immensely rewarding to deliver. And in being invited back to work at schools such as Hounslow, and in the feedback I have received, I have discovered that I'm good at delivering them, too. Sharing my experience in the Writing in the Community session was particularly empowering and valuable in this respect: in showing a group of aspiring community writers that an inexperienced writer can be successful in applying for and delivering a residency, it proved that professional arts opportunities do not only exist to bring published/already successful artists in from London to Southampton.

## BEING LOCAL

Being based locally has been invaluable in developing productive ongoing links with local groups and individuals, and in particular, in engaging meaningfully with groups who do not ordinarily engage in arts activities. Because I lived nearby, I was able to invest significant time weekly in developing links with the Black Heritage Association and the local Afghani women's group prior to my Solent Showcase project. I would pop in to both on a weekly basis, building trust through conversation. An investment in a local artist, even an inexperienced one, is likely to have a wider impact on the local community and arts ecology through the forging of these connections that will continue even after the end of the project.

# CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS 2

## BEING A MUSLIM WOMAN OF COLOUR

As a result of my residency, I've realised just how few working, visible artists of colour there are in Southampton. In work such as my TedXSouthampton, John Hansard Gallery and school assembly talks, I've focused on how the lack of artistic role models for me growing up contributed significantly to my inability to call myself a writer and an artist. In engaging with young people in the city and beyond, I've been particularly keen to offer them what I didn't have: to share my experience, and to open doors for others, even as I continue to learn and gain experience myself. Recently, I met with a young British Nigerian writer living in Southampton, who has applied to the Penguin programme, and we shared our experiences of writing despite cultural pressures to pursue other, traditional career routes. He found out about me through the residency and emailed me to meet up. Being local, being at the beginning of my career, and being of colour: the residency, in my opinion, has had triple symbolic, empowering value for the cultural landscape of Southampton.

## LIMITATIONS

Although I am working on some poems as an output, perhaps the scope for my own writing development has not been the greatest during this particular residency. I have found writing the blog to be a creative process itself, however. It's been a space where I have developed a sense of my creative practice which has been incredibly important: before this residency, I didn't even know I had such a thing as creative practice.

## GOALS

I went into the residency with the aim to learn how to deliver workshops. In a library setting, my residency was primarily from the outset, a publicly engaged one. I feel that in delivering such a wide range of workshops, across the city, in library and non-library settings, the residency, for me, personally, has been tremendously successful. And I enjoyed (almost) every minute of it.

# OUTPUTS

## **Articles**

“An Interview with Writer Nazneen Ahmed”.

<http://www.sotospeakfestival.org/2017/09/30/an-interview-with-writer-nazneen-ahmed/>

“Gallery takeover invites participants to a sew-in.”

[http://www.dailyecho.co.uk/news/16102277.Gallery takeover invites participants to a sew-in](http://www.dailyecho.co.uk/news/16102277.Gallery%20takeover%20invites%20participants%20to%20a%20sew-in) 39 /

“Women to Talk About Gerhard Richter”. <http://www.dailyecho.co.uk/news/16260435.women-to-talk-about-gerhard-richters-work/>

“Southampton Writer Nazneen Afroza Pathak shows off work in new exhibition.”

<http://www.dailyecho.co.uk/news/16327866.southampton-writer-nazneen-afroza-pathak-in-residence-shows-off-work-in-new-exhibition/>

## **Exhibitions**

So: Write Sew exhibition, Southampton Central Library, 27<sup>th</sup> June – 30<sup>th</sup> July 2018.

## **Writing**

Poems for *I Just Make Here Be a Home Now: Collected Writings on Southampton* by the So Write Stories group, forthcoming

## **Funding**

Southampton City Council Adult Learning funding to continue So Write Stories writing group for 2018-2019

# WHO I'VE WORKED WITH

Hounslow School  
- A Science College



**Black Heritage  
Southampton**



**Southampton archives**

**J H  
G**



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