Doing them Justice

Open Curriculum: Susannah Haslam in conversation with Apex Zero.

Apex Zero is an emcee, primarily, and a filmmaker, beatmaker, producer, an activist and an educator.

Apex Zero

My work focuses fundamentally on creating music and using words to explain, interpret and process my life and the world around me; the histories, present, futures, linear and non-linear, organised and unorganised, conscious and subconscious experiences that I have been through, and that my people and my family have been through. Through this work I'm trying to find ways to live that do each of those things justice and allow me to be in a position to do right by my Ancestors and my people, and strive to help to create a better world. I think that's how I would describe my work.

Susannah Haslam

Will you expand a bit more on how some of those practices — performing as an emcee, producing films and beats — or activisms, or education forms, become spaces within and through which you can do justice.

Apex Zero

For a long time I struggled to understand what those things are, and how those things do the things that they do. When I first started spittin', it wasn't necessarily about explaining or processing things, or doing anything justice. I did it because I enjoyed it, I loved it. Black music, Hip Hop most significantly, spoke to me in ways that helped me realise who I was, and who I am. That world and culture that I was already part of drew me in further. I don't think that I consciously started doing it to achieve what I try to achieve now, but over time I think we unearth the things that we do and are.

I'm also really unsure about whether time is linear. I think the arrow of time representation is incredibly reductive and limited. I don't think I know what causality, destiny, or fate are, and think we do have agency, but I also think there are forces at play, potentially underpinning or playing roles across numerous universes that may be guiding me. I think this could help explain why I do what I do; there's a possibility that people are drawn to something because they enjoy it, or they are good at it, or it might be easier to progress at due to this type of guidance. I never really enjoyed trying to do the things I wasn't very good at.

Whether that's a genetic thing or an environmental thing, I don't know. I think, for a combination of those reasons, these are the practices that speak to me the most, I enjoy the most, and I feel like I can do. The more I learned to understand what they are, and understand the lineage of Hip Hop, spoken word, and storytelling, specifically cultural storytelling, I realised these things have been practiced for millennia, in African Indigenous cultures, from the Griots and Djeli, to the warrior priests and priestesses of our uprisings, to spirituals and other important storytellers.

When I studied philosophy, I was told a lot that it is a European tradition, as a field. It's similar to how art history is often taught. One reason for this is that there's almost a ready-made imperial narrative to explain these phenomena; that they're rooted in Greek and Latin cultures, often separating these from Egypt, Egypt from Africa, and this line from other cultural influences. I've heard this logic used to say, problematically, that, for example, *Japan had no art until Europeans arrived.* This is of course ridiculous and could only be said when defining art using European standards and ideals and this imperial logic. But I like to flip that a bit, and think that on one level, in the Japanese tradition, or anywhere non-European, what might be called "art" is its own distinct thing and doesn't need validation from reductive colonial and European categorisation. What African people have practiced for millennia, from the position we stand in now, could be seen as akin to philosophy, but might not be philosophy in the way that European people describe it, do you know what I mean? There is arguably a closed box around philosophy and art when considered by colonial European standards, logic and values.

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I was often told in university that Africa didn't *have* philosophy in the same way as Europe, despite the tradition of passing on knowledge and information through storytelling having been practiced for millennia. They would say this is because the oral traditions were "less accurate" than writing things down, therefore they had less credence, less reliability, and were less important. I think this is the case for many Indigenous cultures, who are denigrated in the same way.

As I became more aware of who I am and where I'm from, and the power, the necessity, and the strength of the oral tradition — the need to tell stories verbally, with charisma, and skill to engage people to listen to those stories and to repeat them and to debate them — its importance became extremely clear. That is what I am doing, what we do as a culture, regardless of where we are in the world, and what we have been through since landing somewhere like London.

Rapping and hosting events, using word, sound, power and vibration to evoke feeling and movement, to inspire and encourage and heal, are the best ways I know how to do what I'm trying to do. Expanding to other mediums like film is just a continuation of those responsibilities in order to influence productive change for my people, primarily, but all people, potentially. And beyond people, actually; all life and being.

I had to wrestle for a long time with the idea that writing, rapping, talking and making art, as opposed to being on the ground, linking with people, organising, protesting or fighting, was not a waste of time. There is a very important tradition within Hip Hop that if you're going to say you're about something, you need to live that, you can't just say you live that, you have to live it. I struggled to understand if rapping about change was not living it, or if the time spent creating or interpreting stories into music and film was just more talking, and not more doing.

I've come to terms with it now. Which might be typical of me hitting my thirties: Tupac says 'You don't see no live 30-year old motherfuckers' on Kendrick's 'Mortal Man' on *To Pimp A Butterfly.* You have to have a revolution before twenty-five because that's when your energy and fire is high. I think there's truth in that, but I do also think it'd be wonderful to see what Tupac would have made of that in his thirties and forties, to see how much more wisdom he'd have had.

At thirty-five, I feel a lot more confident in the coherence of my dialogue, which now speaks through a lot more love, and a lot less anger. The anger is there, definitely, it's just not forefronted in the same way. I think that does come with mellowing and I don't think that's a bad thing, though I used to think it was. My conviction remains the same, I have learned more, and there is more to what I overstood than just the anger. Momentous change takes time. I now try to take time to do bigger projects, but also balance this with not wasting time, to keep an overstanding of how precious time is, as I've lost some important people in my life. I see time as a gift that is limited, at least in a single lifetime.

Susannah Haslam

The tensions that you describe between speaking and doing really resound with some of the wider conversations of the SDNP project; what work is ever enough, and how is *enough* reconciled against life, the stuff that you know, and hope to achieve in justice work. There's something so huge in your question of time and movement together through, with, and against the insistence of capital which tells us we must strive for total completion, and end point, which marks time in such a reductive way. I think storytelling in this way feels radical; in stories' capacity for continual life, a passing-on continuum.

What is also striking in what you mention is the total complex of language in relation to this, as subject and object as well as medium in your work. There's a lot bound up in it, which sets a bit of ground for the first question: what is Carbon?

Apex Zero

I think the short answer is, I don't know — one of the concerns I had when you first approached me was that I'm not a scientist. I'm also not involved in climate justice. This is not because I am actively ignorant, but primarily it's because in my positionality, I have other concerns that feel, and are, more pressing to me, and more within my control or sphere of influence.

To go back to what I previously said, I do what I do; I wasn't ever good at science in school. I know climate justice concerns types of activism far beyond school level, but it's important to break down what education is in state schools. I'm sure I wasn't taught what was necessary to know the answer here — I'm sure schooling in the early 2000s and the late 1990s was not set up to educate someone like me, at the worst school in the borough, about the basics needed to hold a position on climate change founded in criticality and discourse. At best I'd have been told what climate change is, to keep it in forefront of my concerns, and taught what my prescribed role is and how to live in a way that plays it, to recycle, turn lights off etc. Even if there were elements of something more, I didn't tap into the science classes in my school or pursue a life that is concerned with it necessarily. It's not that I don't care; I think I should, and, many people do care, but state education has a specific purpose, which is at odds with what I think it should have been if the goal of those in control of state education was for someone like me to have an informed, critical perspective and answer to this. It's really important, to me, to remember that the purpose of state education is to prepare a certain class of people to do a certain class of job, to play a certain class of role within british society. Private schooling is designed to train leaders of industry and politics; grammar schooling to play a managerial role; and with state schooling, it's almost like we are trained to know *just enough* for more basic employment, or if you're deemed *smart enough* or can conform to certain standards, you can go to university. It's all fit for those purposes.

In terms of what we're talking about, with that in mind, maybe I'm not supposed to know what Carbon is. Again, I'm not trying to be wilfully ignorant, blaming my schooling for not doing the research to know what Carbon is, but I think the point remains that I, and I think I can go so far as to say maybe the majority of people, don't truly *know* what it is. So, when I'm told 'this is what needs to be done to solve this climate crisis', I don't have the knowledge base to be able to say, 'right, I understand. I will do X to achieve Y…' The majority of people are at the behest of *experts* to tell them what needs to be done about a given concern: just do it, and don't question it. This is a problem. Maybe because of my personality, my heritage, because I'm Hip Hop, my education in sociology, philosophy and critical theory, I question this. People who create policy, action, propaganda are also at the behest of agendas; for better or for worse, populations act in ways that are aligned to these agendas. And unfortunately powerful people have agendas that could be to legitimately and genuinely tackle climate change, or to find ways to continue to profit from a transition into other forms of energy, or whatever else their aim is. I'm also very suspicious about whether the goals of people at the heights of power and influence are ever genuinely what they say they are. And this is a problem.

The mis/disinformation wars that we have seen escalate over the last couple of decades are also sold to us as a new problem; this isn't true. Propaganda wars have existed for centuries. Narratives are controlled and distributed in order to achieve agendas, and this is the ground on which various perspectives, and discussions based on these are shut down. By the time it filters down to mainstream news, we're encouraged to pick a side. Then we have this, or numerous, dualistic binaries that aren't even necessarily opposites: you're either for tackling the crisis, and everything that comes with it, or you're not, which makes you an ignorant bigot. Or equally, you're either a radical questioner of everything who never swallows what the mainstream spout, or you're not, which makes you a naive follower. Legitimate concerns and nuance become lost.

The majority of people are never really told what any of the agendas of the most powerful and influential people, companies, organisations, agencies are in full, which I think are often based on maintaining power, capitalist expansion, domination of nature and people, and profit, which ultimately are contrary to what climate justice actually calls for. I remember hearing the BBC's new environment editor reporting from a helicopter over a melting glacier to announce his place in this newly created role. Following the sentiment that we need to take *this* seriously, he stated it was also an opportunity for the "new Bill Gates", or "new Elon Musk" to make their billions in green energy. This is a problem: it felt as though he, and the BBC, was framing climate change as an economic opportunity, rather than an environmental, species-ending crisis. There is a clear reason for that editorial decision, beyond one person's choice or opinion.

And yet, if you were to criticise that in a less-nuanced way than I have attempted to, and just say something like, 'that's some bullshit', or, 'that's a lie', you might be called a conspiracy theorist. So my ignorance about Carbon means I have to be told by someone else what it is, and what I should do, and this is a problem,

especially for people around the world suffering at the sharpest end of the agendas and decisions of people in power. Even saying that, I'm also sitting here informed that this is happening by a propaganda machine: I haven't encountered drought myself, so I don't *know,* with absolute certainty, if it's happening or why — have there been other decisions, or factors, that are leading to this? Is there a possibility that this is also tied to the agendas of the charity and aid industries, which are also problematic? I have a friend who was orphaned and would be routinely sought out by charities and Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs), positioned in front of a trash heap to have their photo taken, then, would never see them or any of the things they promised again. They would use that image and they would receive nothing.

Then there's the recycling industry; there are recycling boxes outside my block for the whole neighbourhood's plastic and cardboard. I know that some people meticulously wash all their plastic and make sure that it goes into the right box. There are also people who don't do that. But on collection, it all goes into one big pile. Then I hear reports that it's being transported across the world to be incinerated. What's the narrative? What's the agenda? I think if we're expected to trust experts or those in positions of power, then we must also be able to critique them. I'm also not anti-expert. I'm an advocate of those with expertise leading discussions, but expertise is not singular, and different forms of expertise are important and should be platformed. We can't just be presented with a singular view or a "for-or-against" dichotomy for something so important and complex.

When I think about it like this, the true problem is not Carbon, or Lithium, if Lithium is the next Carbon. Sunlight doesn't need a pipeline, but it does need wires that will be buried into the ground which might disrupt mycelium networks, and Indigenous, or rural, communities and estates. So whatever the new Carbon is, the problem remains to be neoliberal capitalism, and its need to produce more, to grow unendingly, to profit unceasingly. Even the conversation on climate change seems to be playing entirely into the hands of that logic, into the hands of those who control the narrative around it, the agenda of whom is to continue to profit and sustain power.

Susannah Haslam

The short answer to that question landed on education and the long answer demonstrated that it's not Carbon that we should be focussing on necessarily, but rather the systems that control the narratives about Carbon. As Araceli Camargo impresses, Carbon, plurally, are also in pain; without Carbon we don't have this conversation. The SDNP project concerns itself with the *what else* of climate justice, as it intersects with the future of arts work and labour, and then in the enactment of meaningful change at the point of the work that we do together, in organisations, as part of institutions. So in the light of this, and what you have set up, what is solidarity for you in the work that you do.

Apex Zero

My understanding of the definition of solidarity is working together in order to achieve a set of goals, even if all of those goals aren't necessarily going to benefit me personally. So it is working at something that will benefit us collectively, because a world, institution, or place that is better for others as well as for myself benefits all involved, except maybe those whose goals are contrary to that. You play the role that you can within that, and I think it's a choice to play a role within the capacity that you can, to bring that aim about. There is a certain level of responsibility, but there also has to be a freedom in that to choose to play a role, or not — there wouldn't be a choice to if there wasn't a choice not to.

There's something in the process of changing something, that necessarily needs to strive to manifest the end goal an action is trying to achieve, as much as possible. So if we're trying to create an institution, or trying to create something that's not an institution, trying to create a space where people are empowered to have choices, there needs to be a choice inherent in that process through which it was created. If we're trying to create a space where love and dialogue and confidence and coherence are the goal, then they also need to be part of the process of getting there. If those things are put into the process, the reality of those things need to also be accepted, which is that some people won't choose to do the most, they will do what they can, and some people who maybe could do more won't do more. That is part of the process of solidarity.

If we take that initial definition, and return to what we were just discussing, then maybe solidarity doesn't exist in relation to climate change, insofar as it would demonstrate a collective view and a collective benefit. There isn't a collective view: the people who don't profit from climate change, who are at the sharpest end of it, are told 'you have to fix the problem' through recycling, giving to/receiving from charities/NGOs, adapting etc. Those who do profit from it, who gain the most from it, and who have the ability to stop doing what might be causing it from happening, actively choose not to do that. They might have a level of solidarity between *themselves* because their goals are about individually and collectively maintaining profit and power. But to me that's not solidarity, at least not the solidarity that is being peddled, sometimes, by those same people on either side of the dichotomy, that this is a species- or planetary-level issue. For me it's not collective work. I think that people with power could make the necessary changes tomorrow and shift things significantly, if they chose to, but they would lose power and the opportunity to continue to profit. That's not solidarity with people, or Carbon.

From my experiences working within the Royal College of Art (RCA), the people who experience racism, homophobia, gender-based violence, or lack of care around access and disability, are often doing the most work in solidarity. They're also the people who are at the most risk, and the first out of the door. I feel that for the people at the top of the institution, these things don't appear as a primary concern, as it doesn't always affect them directly, and if they become a concern, they're not prioritised over profit and prestige. Their goal doesn't seem to be to create a place that is habitable and hospitable for the widest range of people, but instead to further profit. Broadly, even if those in power did care about the livelihoods of people, if they issue apologies, there's very rarely much done in practice to demonstrate this remorse or desire to create change. For example, even if the institution states that it fully supports Black Lives Matter (the organisation), and I know that it doesn't; I know, as an institution, it has done little-to-nothing to actually actively support Black Lives Matter, and more importantly, has done very little to actively try to improve the conditions for Black lives within the institution, until Black lives working within it forced it to.

So if I see this at the micro level of one institution, I think that as the institutions get bigger, the higher the power, and the profit, it surely only gets worse. There are literally people starving in the world and there are people who are multi-billionaires. That imbalance is so clear. The drive for power, control, and wealth is inherent to the same ethos and the value systems that were and are created through empire and colonialism, specifically industrialised colonialism and industrialised slavery. This drive encourages a specific mentality by equating it to success: to be successful, you must be that — powerful, in control, and wealthy. To be the most successful you must be uncaring and ruthless.

To tie this to climate change, even by its own colonial, capitalist logic, there's extreme hypocrisy at a geopolitical level in that the global north (or west) feels it is in a position to tell Indigenous populations, or at least relatively younger, poorer and, or, newly independent nations, often former colonies around the world, to stop activities that pollute. They tell Brazil, India, China that they need to stop mining, or burning down forests, at the expense of their people's livelihoods and development by capitalist standards — this is the opposite of solidarity. Especially when European power is cultivated through practices of imperialism, of extraction and colonialism. That Emmanuel Macron, who is so dedicated to invigorating the French economy has the nerve to advise Brazilian farmers not to burn down the Amazon, demonstrates this hypocrisy. He called the Amazon "the lung of the earth" and said it was vital to the whole world's atmosphere and future; and as arguably true as that is, that burden lies on the shoulders of the Amazon and its peoples because barely any of France, or Europe, is wild anymore; it has been farmed and urbanised to death. The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) states that according to the International Union of the Conservation of Nature, wilderness protected areas cover between 1.7% and 4% of Europe. Through colonisation and neocolonisation the same nations and their resultant companies have directly set about destroying the majority of the wild ecosystems globally, and if any other nation wants a seat at those tables of power, they must play this game and do the same. So one reason why the Amazon is so vital for the global climate is because much of the rest of the globe is industrialised. I think this is deliberate — part of the reason the west tells Brazil, India and China to cut pollution is not to save the planet or species, but to prevent them from seizing power.

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So, therefore, to me, solidarity in this context could look like a shared set of goals being set collectively to prevent further damage to the planet; those who can, should choose to do what they can; those nations and companies and families who are responsible should do the most, and those who aren't responsible, should also do what that they can to the capacity they are able. At the moment, the opposite is being suggested. Instead of solidarity, profit is centred: it's the majority of people in the world who need to wash their plastic (instead of it not being produced), use a tote bag (instead of plastic bags no longer being made and sold), stop driving a car (instead of petrol cars being replaced wholesale by electric cars), and stop flying (when politicians and executives constantly fly private jets to summits to talk about this); someone who could never fly should spend their time transforming their farm with permaculture, or use a different type of feed, when the lives, health and wellbeing of their family and their community is entirely dependent on that specific crop not failing. And they're given barely any help to do any of this — the risk is all on them, and, or, they're coerced by price hikes, inflation and *incentives.* If people like this need to use some kind of chemical feed that's bad for the planet but will increase their odds of survival in a local and global economic system entirely stacked against them, who am I, or anyone else, to tell them they shouldn't do it to "save the planet." You could even go further to say they *should* use it if their people depend on it, especially when there are people in the world who could just distribute an environmentally better feed for free, or subsidise it, if their goals and agendas were truly to "save the planet" or "save the human species" from extinction.

I'm probably not going to stop drinking out of plastic bottles, and probably not going to stop driving a car with petrol — not because I'm on some childish *people in power won't stop so I won't either* thing — because the water that comes out of my tap is brown sometimes, and because I'm an independent filmmaker, and need to carry equipment around for a living so I need a car — them bikes with the carry case on them won't cut it on a motorway, and I can't afford four return tickets and a hotel stay to carry it on a train. I will also go on holiday, because I need one to deal with the stress of living in London, and travel is the thing that I enjoy most in life; I can't afford (in time or money) to take a train through Russia if I'm going on tour in China. I also think, as someone on the sharper end of colonial history, I deserve a holiday if I have earned enough to take one, or I should be able to travel to see my family back home in Grenada or go and connect to my roots in Africa. And if I can justify saying that from my incredibly privileged position, that person on that farm whose family and community's existence depends upon them ensuring that their crops don't fail, definitely should be able to farm however they choose. The biggest problem with all these points, is that it is other people like us, or even worse off than us, who will suffer most, and quicker, because of these attitudes. The people who will suffer least and last are those with the power to fix it.

To enact solidarity, we need to figure out actions that acknowledge this imbalance, and the history that has led us to this point, for the very least.

Susannah Haslam

In what you describe solidarity is so starkly conditional on so many varied circumstances and contexts, and demands such a shift in consciousness, specifically from powerful individuals. It has made me think about the role of collectivity here too, which is very difficult to think about in the context of an institution, before we even begin to imagine it on a global scale. What you map out initially is actually really straight forward, it's about putting others before the self. For many, this is also just not possible, but it is scalable, at least, it's easy to imagine it to be. You return again to time and space, the complex of colonial history, and the political and economic affordances of Europe; when you have industrial power shaped by imperial power and colonialism, the juggernaut of these intersecting narratives creates ground impossible for solidarity to occur; all that seems to be possible is the continuation of the theatre, gaslighting, and violence, and there is no other language for it.

Dani Admiss has mentioned that we exist in a stifling moment of industrial and cultural collapse when we are talking about something as specific as how an art organisation can actively fold practices of climate justice into its working and ethical life. In your response to what solidarity is, you describe a similar collapse, in the heart and in time, in capacities to care and capacities to acknowledge and repair, minimally. Can you directly speak to the responsibilities of art and arts work and labour here?

Apex Zero

There is something about needing or choosing to make a difference wherever you are at any given moment, and with the capacity that you have. But sometimes you need to remove yourself from one place and be in another place to do or produce something different or new. I think it depends on capacity a lot of the time. It's important to acknowledge that solidarity shouldn't always be reactive. Speaking specifically about working within an institution, a lot of the time the situation we find ourselves in is that we arguably have a longer-term strategy in terms of the fact that many of us involved in the work being done in trade union organising, for example, have visions for a world we would like to see that go far beyond the institution. Potentially, in that world, people are treated with care and respect, they feel this in and for the work that they do, are empowered to do certain work and make certain decisions and are treated as people as opposed to numbers on a spreadsheet.

I think in the past I've often tried to view the world from a macro perspective, because I feel that so much that affects the things we're talking about operate and are done at that level. When that filters down to a micro level, so much can be explained by the macro but you also miss a lot of detail. If that bigger vision I described is part of the worldview of some of the people doing the work on the ground, then solidarity is not just reactive. But we must react to certain things done to us, actions that are done to achieve the opposite of our vision and maintaining the status quo, because we could choose not to react, and that would be detrimental to us. The reason we must react is because we have this bigger worldview, motivating us to say, 'no, we're not going to let you just do that.' On one level, that is reactive, but if you're in a fight, you have to react to the jabs that are being thrown, or you'll get knocked out. If you're in the fight, you've got to be in the fight to win, and eventually we want to be the ones controlling the pace, reacting when needed but dictating the course of the battle. Unfortunately I'm constantly having to use the language of military conflict to describe the situation that we're in… but more unfortunately, it's also pretty apt.

Our actions — strategies for engaging in this battle — is driven by a different ethos and value system, beyond the institution, in playing roles that we have chosen to play in creating a better world (community, department, school, institution). Using industrial action to carve out more secure employment contract for precariously employed workers, for example, becomes necessary in order to attain the necessary mechanisms of protection to sustain ourselves longer within this war of attrition. One of the reasons why so many people in education institutions have recently been ousted is because when they start to fight back, the infrastructure of the workplace allows that to happen, so there's a lot of risk attached to fighting back. The more secure contract creates a little bit more space to fight a little bit longer.

I think the amount of battles that you have to fight in institutions burns you out, and people don't want to have to constantly fight when they don't necessarily have to. The amount of energy that I expend in trying to make the institution I teach at hospitable for my people could definitely be better spent in creating a non-institution that is inherently hospitable for my people. But unfortunately that's going to take a lot of money, through, for example, the backing of many organisations or the support of a self-sufficient community. This is the constant bind. Three or four days out of my seven days a week are spent putting energy into this institution, and I'm not in a position to just cut out and use those four days to create a different non-institution, because I have bills to pay and people to support.

With that said, there are people who do it and there are organisations that are alternatives. Maybe those people are in a position to do it, maybe they're braver than me, maybe they have safety nets, or maybe they don't, and are willing to do it anyway, or must, out of necessity. Maybe falling on hard, painful ground is the motivation to not fall. For a long time, the only way that I could overstand why I was here in this country, with everything that had been done to my people, was to be in a position where I could fight from within the heart of the beast. But maybe I'm just here and am choosing to fight. Maybe I see the enemy in this institution, or see it as part of the beast, so I feel like I need to fight, and so choose to fight here. And we have made a difference and that makes it worth it. I think it's part of a bigger fight to create a hospitable space for those I consider to be my people, and myself, and then, potentially, other people as well. It goes back to what Bex Tadman says about ableism and disabled activism; how if the world were designed to accommodate all the differently-abled bodies, then the world would be better for everyone, not only those who are currently not

designed for. I think this ethos is deeply important and I wish more people would think in this way. Equally if most people in positions of power thought like that, places like the RCA wouldn't exist. The value system in England is not set up like this; instead it encourages competition, to fight for power and over limited resources, which actively encourages us to not think in this way. When that's the framework, people who do the work on the ground tend to not make it to those powerful positions, because the methods that get someone there, and the aims inherent to the position are contrary to their worldview, to that bigger vision.

For example, if I was put in charge of an institution, it would likely be gone in weeks, because I'd just make it free. As soon as it becomes free, there's no way for it to continue to exist because it depends on a capitalist model of profit, which is reliant on prestige and status. And so I think the balance we must strike here is trying to improve the institution with the hope that it might become something of genuine worth in the long run, while also potentially destroying it, if need be, while keeping what it is now from potentially destroying what we might create instead of it, or in its place.

These three modes of activity are the point of the work that I do and of the life that I choose to live.

Susannah Haslam

Something that really struck me in your answer is about being hospitable; in many ways it is easy for me to say, 'oh isn't that what we all want?' Actually naming it in the context of solidarity and work is really important, in that much of the work that we do in institutions is about building hospitable places. Hospitable in the sense that is both something like a provision, in this case, a curriculum for people to move through, and in, like atmosphere or infrastructure, but also in the sense of relationships and their being positioned in time and space, and what that represents in an institution. The relationships I refer to are those between things, people, ideas, histories, and structures — components of the lives of institutions, and I believe that they can be put to work better.

We often talk about alternatives, and the assumption of creating in those alternatives something new. However alternatives are often borne through necessity, and are conjured from what we already have at our disposal, whether that be struggle, or resources, in a similar way to how you mentioned that something we might strive for, necessarily has to be made up of the things it aims to be. Which comes back around to this experimental curriculum, what it might be, and how it might move, or not, how it tries to depart from that didactic way of thinking.

Equally, committing these words in dialogue in this way is not going to speak to everyone in arts work addressing climate justice — configuring this as a mode of learning about climate justice in totally discrete contexts that we each might not have experience of means it has to be able to shape shift itself, to reflect people's experiences in a specific time and place. And that's as far as we can go in its facilitation, so that idea of building a hospitable place is really important to this curriculum of dialogues.

And I think that very idea about being with people in a hospitable place is also an assemblage of ideas, which is actually at the heart of this work, and encompasses its set of principles — love, dialogue, confidence, coherence. I think these necessarily need to drive something like an *open* curriculum for climate justice for arts workers. Things don't change without a love ethic. But the default is to assume that the responsibility here lies with an institution (of education, art) to evolve to make whatever changes, ideally, but your responses demonstrate the discrepancy between this expectation and the realities of it; that most of the transformative work is done in solidarity, by the people who are at the most risk in those places, not those at the top.

Apex Zero

To speak to that assumption you mention, I feel that too many times when doing work like this, that assumption manifests in attitudes that suggest or believe that responsibility lies with those who "manage" or "lead" an institution to make whatever changes are needed, and that is why they must be appealed to or fought against. Recognising that discrepancy you mention, to me, creates an opportunity for a shift in thinking, perceiving, strategizing and acting, by acknowledging that genuinely transformative work is done, as you say, in and through solidarity, by those people most at risk, when they insist on and commit to forcing

that change. Those "at the top" rarely choose to make change, not change for a collective benefit; they only contribute to doing so when forced to, when those who truly hold the power find ways to use it effectively.

This is why multiplicity is so central to this. My overstanding of multiplicity and care, in a curriculum or other actions or movements, is rooted in the Black feminist tradition, in the work of Audre Lorde, bell hooks, Sylvia Wynter, Hortense Spillers and Alexander G. Weheliye building on of the latter two in his paradigm *Habeus Viscus.* Striving for multiplicity, as opposed to the singular — multiple perspectives, options, ideas, answers, interpretations — is key to me in the creation of any kind of curriculum or collective action. It's not a coincidence that so much of what those scholars' work does sounds similar to what is, and has been, practiced for such a long time by so many Indigenous communities around the world. A multiplicitous approach holds views that are bigger than the individual, their ego and, or, goals. A multiplicitous Oneness, not a reductive "sameness", that all beings are of, and born out of, is the essence of so many Indigenous spiritual perspectives. I feel that if those perspectives were not attacked, and instead were practiced more widely, humans might be able to achieve some semblance of living that doesn't bring destruction of the human species, or the majority of the species and many others, which at the moment feels very much like the direction we are heading in.

To bring it back to this curriculum and what it might be, paraphrasing Frantz Fanon, he says in *The Wretched of the Earth* that those who fight the revolution, or to remove the colonisers, create the skeleton of the new country, or world that is being fought for, but it's the generations who come next who will give it flesh, make it a full, functioning body; give it life. This curriculum, should it be brought into existence, will be rooted in what we have now, what we have learned from what has been, and in what it may be, or become, or is, in another temporal space. For it to be valuable, or to succeed in its goals, to me, it must not only be a hospitable space for those now, but those who might live and be in it in other times and spaces must feel welcome, empowered and able to extend it, morph it, mould it, utilise it, be it, in accordance with their needs and visions. It might need to also consider if it would have been hospitable to our Ancestors; maybe it is them, or even those who are ahead of us, who are making this curriculum through us now.

To me, a curriculum, or organisation, or movement that's going to achieve its goals, would aim to build from that ethos and that value system; acknowledge its failures when it fails; learn from those failures when it fails; be able to respond to those failures, and to its successes, and learn from those too. Honesty is so key. So much of what so many institutions claim to do is so different from what they actually do. So much of the organisational work we do within them is to hold institutions accountable to those claims and promises they put in their public statements, or private correspondence with violated workers, students, etc. If they say they are doing something, they must *actually* be doing it.

Any curriculum that is made from this project, that I could get behind, would never make empty, performative statements. That's not to say aims or goals can't develop or change, but any claims or promises must always be intended to *actually* be followed through on, with a *genuine* commitment to do so. It would be what it says it is; it would do what it says it does. In the same way that in Hip Hop culture, as I have long interpreted it, if you saying you're gangsta, you have to *be* gangsta. If you saying you're revolutionary, you have to *be* revolutionary. If you saying you're a hospitable space for African, Caribbean, Asian, Middle Eastern, First Nations, Indigenous people, you need to *be* a hospitable space for our people.

Any curriculum that is made from this project that I could get behind would need to be Hip Hop. It would need to be honest in its artistry and craft. And if that artistry, that craft, is education around climate, it needs to *be what it's saying it is.* Ensuring that would be the responsibility of all who are in and of it.

Refrences

Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*
Oneness
Habeus Viscus
Alexander G. Weheliye
Hortense Spillers
Sylvia Wynter
bell hooks
Audre Lorde
Bex Tadman
Amazon rainforest, Amazon River Basin
International Union of the Conservation of Nature
World Wild Fund for Nature (WWF)
Emmanuel Macron
China
India
Brazil
Black Lives Matter
Royal College of Art
Mycelium
Lithium
Carbon
British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)
Elon Musk
Bill Gates
Kendrick Lamar and Tupac Shakur, 'Mortal Man', *How To Pimp A Butterfly*
Indigenous cultures
Africa
Djeli
Griot
Spoken Word
Hip Hop

Sunlight Doesn't Need a Pipeline is a collaborative literacy and climate justice project in search of transformative and regenerative repair for the art sector and beyond. It was initiated and led by Dani Admiss. Commissioned by the Stanley Picker Gallery, Kingston University. www.sunlightdoesntneedapipeline.com