



**SOUTH BANK  
SB\COLLEGES  
C**  
Part of **LSBU** | GROUP

**STORY  
VALLEY**

**POETRY  
ANTHOLOGY**

# STORY VALLEY

Story Valley is a collaborative project between four UNESCO Cities of Literature and the National Literacy Trust. It aims to inspire students to read, write, and speak about their own stories and cultures, encouraging reflection on personal heritage, peer experiences, and the wider community.

At South Bank Colleges, the English Department invited students to explore their cultural roots and personal histories through poetry — reflecting on identity, belonging, and the layered experience of what it means to be British, or to live in Britain today.

This collection gathers a selection of poems born from that journey — voices shaped by memory, place, and perspective. Each piece is a testament to the creativity, honesty, and effort of the students who took part.

With heartfelt thanks to all the contributors — your words resonate far beyond the page.

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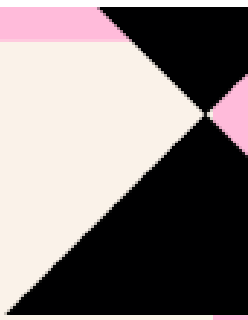
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# SW4

## BY MELVIN LELO-BALU

SW4 born and raised  
I feel safe when I walk on the mains  
kicking ball on the council flats  
knockdown ginger with my friends  
having a laugh  
Poundland headphones  
when I walk to school listening  
to Kennington where it started  
thinking im cool  
gloves and mask like im going to war  
really and truly im on the pitch tryna score  
cops and robbers  
but this ain't a game  
olders on the ends  
tryna make some change  
when it rains it pours  
this is what it means to live in SW4

# A POEM ON IDENTITY

BY JEREMIAH  
OYEDEMI



I am me —  
You cannot be me, and I cannot be you.

What I say I am, is who I truly am.  
The sky is not my limit —  
Aliming higher is where I set my sights.

Life may seem cruel and unfair,  
But I will overcome it.  
I am unique,  
Special in my own way.

People's words do not define me.  
I may feel stressed and tired from life's weight,  
But I will rise again.

The blue oceans, the green plants —  
They keep my mind at peace.  
When I feel weak,  
When life feels less than it should,  
Nature breathes me back to life.

I might seem unsure or afraid,  
Struggling to face life's challenges —  
But with time,  
I will grow confident and strong.

What the world thinks of me may matter,  
And though people's words may wound,  
The smiles and encouragement  
Of those who love me  
Will lift me up.

No matter the situation,  
I will prevail.  
Confidence is my stand,  
And resilience keeps me moving.

Though my weakness may pull me down,  
My strength will carry me forward.  
My culture and my faith  
Shape who I am  
And how I live.

What I say I am,  
What I love, What fuels my spirit —These  
define my identity.

# HAPPINESS BY FARAH ALABABEDI



Happiness,  
This is what my name  
means, and this is why I'm  
here.

To share  
Happiness from the land  
To the sky.

Every word is  
A different emotion.

I lived in Jordan

For a while

But the country, lives  
In me forever.

From the war to the  
Peace. Nobody


Forgets the first

Moment of the new life after  
Suffering from the dangerous  
feeling

Of deathly views.



# “HE” BY JHIAN ALACANTRA



A boy was once a vulnerable, cowardly guy,  
He felt anxious and too afraid to try.  
Living in the land of judgementals  
but He does not spit any rants.

He was born and raised with big mouths.  
Going inside through the tunnel of loud voices  
In seek of confidence.  
But unsure when will that journey end.

He was given several signs of light  
Yet He backs out of fright  
Lost and nowhere to go  
Curious and wanting to go out the  
Obnoxious Road. He tried to squeeze through  
The tightest light. He made  
Progress;  
But all thoughts of the journey will make him  
regress.

He is still out there, for change  
Digging deep through  
Boundaries of life.  
For them to believe they are not right.



# MY CULTURE IS MY PRIDE

BY GENEVIEVE  
AGYEMAN

As spring breaks, plants begin to regain their beauty.  
Why, you ask?

It's because their long awaited thirst is basking in  
Nature.

Flowers bloom

Leaves appear on trees

Signifying growth and this relates to our IDENTITY.

We adore ourselves with bright colourful garments  
and gold

ornaments in times of happiness.

Our gold symbolises our country (Ghana) being rich in  
resources

The brightful colours signifies our unity, beauty and  
joy.

This is Ghana, where one's emotions are shared  
among each other

Sympathy is our mayor, Our Language is our  
strength.

Our festivals are our heritage.

Our Anthem says:

"I promise to hold the high esteem

Our heritage won for us through

The blood and tore of our forefathers"

Therefore, I will carry Ghana! on my shoulders at all  
times.

My culture is my PRIDE.



# SOUTH SUDAN

I come from the world's youngest nation,  
South Sudan. Home of melanin, Home  
of 64 tribes. Home of giants.

In the heart of Africa, where rivers  
flow.

Lies the land of resilience, where  
the strong wind blows.

From the bank of river Nile to the vast,  
open plains,

From the food we eat like asida kiswa,

From Dinka to Nuer each strong and unique

In the dance of our heritage our  
voices speak.

South Sudan your spirits in our hearts remain.

BY NHIAL GATYUNG

# IDENTITY IS LIFE, AND MY IDENTITY IS ME

لهويّة هي الحياة، وهويّتي هي أنا

Identity is life, and my identity is me.

خلفت من التربة، لأموت وأعود إليها، إن رزعت في روحي زهرة، سأزدهر  
بالحياة.

I'm a being made of soil meant to die and  
return to it.

Plant a flower on my soul and I'll bloom with  
life.

وإن قست عليّ الظروف، وجعلتني قاحلاً كالصحراء، لا زلت أؤمن أن  
المطر سيأتي وسأزهر عامًا بعد عام.

And if hardship turns me dry... if I become a  
like a desert under heavy skies...

I still believe the rain will come, and I'll bloom  
again, year... after year.

هويّتي هي الأمل، كما قال الشاعر:

لا اليأس ثوبي ولا الأحزان تكسرتني

"جرحي عنيد بلسع النار يلتئم"

My identity is Hope, as the poet said:

"Despair is not my garment,

and sadness does not break me!

My wound is stubborn, it heals through the  
sting of fire."



# LONDON X NIGERIA

BY OLUWADAMILOLA  
ADEBO

In Nigeria, the sun shines luminously.  
A land of vibrant tinge, a lovely scene.  
Bustling markets, filled with traditional knowledge  
Different cultures to explore.

In London, a different story.  
A place where history gusts on every gale.  
Buildings standing gigantic, with untold stories.  
Blending new and old history.

Nigeria, a vibrant country, beating with drums and dancing on a joyful  
feet.  
London, a steady and busy country, bustling with crowds of a different  
grace.

Nigeria, espouses warm every soul.  
London, where ambition fuels the city's core.

Nigeria, a melody of laughter and unity,  
London, a symphony of innovation and dreams.

Nigeria, a land of promise beneath the sun,  
London, a beacon of opportunity, forever on the run.



# LIFE IS YOUR IDENTITY

BY GENEVIEVE AGYEMAN



We wake up each day with questions deep,  
Carrying dreams we barely keep.  
We smile through pain, we laugh through fear.  
Trying to find why we are here.

We learn from falls, we grow through scars,  
We search for lights beyond the stars.  
And in our steps, both slow and free  
Obra ye wo ahofadie.  
(Life is your identity.)

It's not the clothes or name you wear,  
But how you love, how much you care.  
The way you hold someone in pain,  
Or dance alone beneath the rain.

So live with truth, and let it be –  
that in your life, the world will see,  
Not just a face, but honesty-  
For life is your identity.



# **ONE PERSON, TWO PERSONALITIES**

BY JEREMIAH  
OYEDEMI

**ONE BODY, ONE SOUL—  
ONE MIND, DIFFERENT PERSONALITIES.  
FEELING LOST IN LIFE,  
DIFFERENT PERCEPTIONS ABOUT LIFE.**

**IN MY BRAIN, FULL OF MANY VOICES,  
LOST IN THOUGHT, DOUBT, HOPE.  
GOOD AND BAD—DON'T KNOW WHAT TO CHOOSE.  
NO PAIN, NO GAIN—IS THAT ALL? WHAT IS TRUTH,  
LIFE?**

**VOICES IN MY HEAD HAUNTING ME.  
ONE SIDE FEELS DEAD, ONE SIDE FEELS TRUE.  
IN THIS WORLD, IN MY HEAD,  
LOST IN THE JOURNEY OF LIFE—  
A THOUSAND MILES, NO MAP.**

**ONE SIDE IS HAPPY, ONE SIDE IS SAD,  
SOMETIMES FEELING DISCONNECTED FROM THE  
WORLD.  
SOMETIMES I FEEL DETACHED FROM MYSELF.  
LOSING MY SENSE OF FEELING—  
THE WEIGHT OF LIFE, DROWNING ME**



# TWO PLACES BY ASSANATU TARAWALLIE

## Then, (Freetown, SL)

We're going into town today,  
Each of us is given  
a weekly allowance  
money wired across oceans  
from parents who remember.  
It was my favourite part of the week:  
the vibrancy, the life.  
If, in the school, I felt like a ghost,  
in town, I came back to life.

We left Goderich  
in the early afternoon  
and took the half-hour drive  
to Freetown.  
I sat in the back, forehead pressed  
to the rattling window,  
as the world flared past  
in a blur of green and yellow.  
Plantain trees like dancers,  
dust rising behind market trucks,  
and goats grazing where no one asked  
them to.

Here was the heart.  
Here was the soul.  
Here, I began to remember myself.

## **Now, (Home?)**

I take the 345 to college  
through Vauxhall,  
down into Stockwell.  
I still sit by the window when I can,  
headphones in,  
eyes half-shut.

The blur here is grey and stone:  
bus stops, shuttered shops,  
council blocks crumbling  
like teeth.  
The street corners still sweat  
with last night's rain.

There are no mangoes.  
No women siloing between cars  
with sweet bread balanced on their heads.  
Just streets filled with chicken shops,  
And off-licenses,  
Littered with boys on bikes,  
cutting through traffic  
like they've got nothing left to lose.

Sometimes, I pass a tree,  
but no one prays beneath it.  
No one tells a story.  
The touch of nature  
glances no longer  
on hallowed ground.  
I doubt the audience notices.  
They just walk,  
phones in hand, eyes elsewhere.

I don't know if I'm alive here,  
not the way I was there.  
But I'm learning.  
Trying  
to feel the spark again.

Maybe  
in the hush between train doors closing  
and the tinny of bus doors shutting  
Maybe  
in the laugh of a girl beside me after class.

Maybe  
home is not a place I left,  
but one I'm still learning  
to carry with me.  
Maybe  
I'll find it  
in both places.  
Eventually.



# STORY VALLEY



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