

PREJUDICE & US



Perspectives on prejudice
in West London today

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www.protectionapproaches.org

+44 (0) 2036324545

 @IBVprev

For more information on the Prejudice and Us project, please contact Andy Fearn on andy.fearn@protectionapproaches.org / +44 (0) 7590041949

Protection Approaches is a charity registered in England and Wales with charity number 1171433 and registered address 88 Cambridge Gardens, London W10 6HS

Protection Approaches works to improve the protection of people from identity-based violence.

Through its Research & Policy and Learning & Outreach programmes, Protection Approaches seeks to strengthen UK understanding of and commitment to prediction, prevention and protection approaches to identity-based violence through research-led policy engagement and education outreach.

Protection Approaches is the only organisation in the United Kingdom that works to address the diverse challenges of identity-based violence, from hate crime to violent extremism and genocide.

Prejudice and Us would not have been possible without the generous support of:

**Hammersmith
United Charities**



The Project:

Every day across London, many young people face prejudice, discrimination, and at times violence because of an aspect of their identity: or rather because of how others interpret their identity. Young people face prejudice because of their race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, culture, their gender or sexual orientation, their political affiliation, economic status, disability, the way they choose to dress or simply because of where they live.

Prejudice and Us explored how prejudice affects the lives of young people in West London today.

Over the past year, Protection Approaches has run an innovative and interactive pilot project with young people who live in the Hammersmith area of London. Working with internationally renowned photojournalist Cinzia D'Ambrosi, Protection Approaches worked closely with more than 60 young people from traditionally marginalised socio-economic, ethnic, religious and cultural groups to explore their personal experiences of prejudice. Through multimedia skill-development workshops and educational discussion groups, the participants probed questions around identity, belonging, and responsibility. Using photography, film, drama, interviews, and other mediums these young people have shared what prejudice means to them and documented what it is like for many to be a young person in London today.

These stories and experiences form the basis of a physical and online exhibition, created by the young people alongside Cinzia D'Ambrosi, that the project participants presented to decision makers and decision shapers at London City Hall in December 2016. This review presents some of those stories together with key findings that emerged during the project.

Supported by Hammersmith United Charities Prejudice and Us aimed to increase the understanding amongst influential stakeholders in London of the prejudice faced by young people across the capital. It also created platforms that empowered young people from marginalised and underrepresented communities where they could address those who make and shape decisions about their lives, bringing the project participants to meet with the city's politicians, police, and the media.

The project was focused on the constituency of Hammersmith, a densely populated and diverse area of West London that experiences high levels of socio-economic inequality. In partnership with White City Youth Club, White City Youth Theatre, The Harrow Youth Club and Hammersmith and Fulham Youth Council, the participants were given access to a range of media and artistic trainings using photography, film, interview techniques and public speaking to support them in telling their stories.

What we have learnt:

London should be hailed as a city where diversity is not just tolerated but celebrated. However, our work has uncovered stories that demonstrate prejudice is an ever present problem affecting the lives of the young people in a variety of ways. Those we worked with come from diverse backgrounds, yet we found many shared experiences of being treated differently or targeted for abuse. We were shocked by the extent to which these shared experiences contribute to a normalisation of prejudice among the young people. Many see being treated negatively as part of their day-to-day lives. Below are some of our key findings.

Summary findings:

- Fear of islamophobia manifests in a sense amongst some young Muslims of not fully belonging in British or the capital's society
- Anxiety and frustrations around stop-and-search result in a mistrust of the police and the State, and a feeling amongst many of being victims of prejudice
- There is an awareness amongst young people that income effects opportunities. Perceptions of socio-economic inequality can foster frustration and at times a 'them and us' mentality
- Young people are aware that the way they dress changes the way they are perceived which in turn can lead to a sense of anger against those who judge them
- Some young people refrain from posting information on social media which might lead to online attacks from people all over the world who hold prejudiced views
- For some, hiding their sexuality, or bullying related to their sexuality, has led to serious anxiety or depression
- Many young people feel that whilst people tend to hide prejudice in public, it still exists behind closed doors. As a result, in London, it can be more covert and indirect but continues to divide and marginalise
- Young people fear that for the first time in their lives prejudice is on the rise not just in the UK but around the world

Islamophobia: The young people we worked with knew many stories of women being verbally or physically attacked because of their religious clothing. They believe that large proportions of the UK population think that all Muslims are terrorists. We repeatedly identified clear fears of falling victim to Islamophobic attack and anxieties of being viewed negatively by others. As a result there is now a very real anxiety felt by some young Muslims, especially women and girls, in wearing clothing viewed as Muslim dress in public. Moreover, these fears are manifesting a sense among a number of the participants of not fully belonging in British or the capital's society.

Stop-and-search: Raised again and again was the anxiety and frustration felt by the young people caused by the perception of being unfairly targeted by the police as a result of their identity. Young people feel victimised by stop-and-search and stop-and-account, believing that they are stopped because of what they are wearing, their race, their age, who they are with or where they live. It has become part of everyday life for many of the young people who believe themselves to be considered as little more than criminals by the state. This results in mistrust of the police and the State and a feeling amongst many that they are not equal members of our society.

Social-economic: Many of the young people who are from low income backgrounds repeatedly expressed anxiety that they would be offered, or have access to, far fewer opportunities throughout their lives than young people from higher income backgrounds. This perception of socio-economic inequality produces frustration and at times a ‘them and us’ mentality. It is clear to many young people from low income backgrounds that many people their age do not share their difficulties or experiences of prejudice. Some vocalised a belief that although they share a geographical space they “do not live in the same city”. The young people are aware that those from higher income backgrounds are far more likely to become the decision makers and decision shapers of the future and feel this means that their own perspectives will never be represented in politics or media.

Clothing: The young people are aware that the way they dress changes the way they are perceived. While Muslim dress is seen as bringing risks of anti-Muslim or Islamophobic prejudice, wearing hoodies and tracksuits is seen as a cause of being treated differently by shop security guards, by police, and by the public in general. Yet the young people see their freedom to wear what they want as a basic right and their clothing as a part of their identity. Many of the young people reported a sense of anger towards those who judge them for what they wear.

Online: The internet allows young people to experience hate in new formats and forums. A number of the young people recounted online attacks motivated by prejudice on platforms such as Twitter. These attacks can come from people anywhere in the world. For some this means refraining from posting information online which celebrates something that they see as an aspect of their identity for fear of the responses they might receive. This might mean that a young person who identifies as a part of the LGBT+ community may not post pro-LGBT+ content, or a young immigrant from a majority Muslim country might decide not to post something positive about their country of origin. These attacks do not usually come from people they know, but from people with prejudice views, often thousands of miles away.

Homophobia: The young people tended to reject nearly all forms of prejudice themselves, recognising the parallels and shared experience. However, the one exception was homophobia. Derogatory homophobic language was commonplace in day-to-day conversation. Some of the young people reported that homophobic bullying is rife in schools and that it is not taken as seriously amongst school authorities as other forms of prejudice. Some participants who identify as being a part of the LGBT+ community do not feel it is safe to be open about their sexuality with their peers. For some, hiding their sexuality, or bullying related to their sexuality, has led to serious anxiety or depression.

Hidden prejudice: Some of the participants believe that while more traditional forms of prejudice, hate speech, and hate crime are considered by the vast majority of the public to be inappropriate, this socio-political shift has simply pushed prejudice “under the carpet.” Many of the young people, from many marginalised groups, believe that behind closed doors people still hold racist, homophobic, anti-immigrant and other prejudices. As a result, prejudice in London can be more covert and indirect but continues to divide and marginalise. Moreover, some participants felt that rather than curtailing prejudice itself, a sense that people are ‘not allowed’ to say the things that they believe curtails debate which would help to eliminate those beliefs.

The rise in identity politics: Identity politics emerged throughout 2016 as a powerful force. Many young people vocalised a fear that for the first time in their lives prejudice is on the rise not just in the UK but around the world. The referendum on Britain’s membership of the EU, the election of Donald Trump in the U.S. and the rise of anti-immigrant sentiment across the West are all things that young people are discussing and care deeply about. There is concern about what the future might hold for minority communities, particularly immigrant and Muslim communities. For those who identify as a part of these communities there is a fear that the prejudice they face will likely increase over the coming years.



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Some of my friends have been treated differently because of how they look or for their disability. Some of them cannot do things up to standards of what other people can do and then they are thought of as 'rubbish'. I think we should give them time to improve.

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I have known four families, female families, where they are harassed and ended up splitting up. The general public is against it. This is why so many people are so afraid to come out. They still hide it, still scared to be themselves. Nobody should be living afraid of who they are. They end up pretending that they are something else and they are not and that is causing more harm to themselves and others around them. If you are in peace with yourself, you accept who you are, why would they need the approval of somebody else.

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My friend started to wear the hijab. One day she went to the post office. At the counter the clerk serving her began speaking to her loudly and very slowly... continuously asking her if she was understanding. My friend said *'there is no need to speak to me in this way.'* My friend was born and has lived in the UK for 30 years and ever since she has begun wearing the hijab people have been treating her as if she doesn't know anything, does not speak the language.

In terms of terrorism, I am more wary of certain areas I am going to. I wouldn't feel very safe in areas of predominantly white working class like the Docklands for instance or certain areas in Hounslow. I wouldn't feel comfortable if it is late at night or I am on my own because maybe it is just in my head but I hear of what is happening to Muslim women being stripped of their scarves off on the street, being shouted at, called names I just wouldn't feel the same. It happens frequently, I heard one lady was beaten up in Fulham and that's very west London. She was walking and a guy was very aggressive to her. She was wearing jilbab, the full cover, and he started to pull off her clothes and shouting to go back to her country, effing terrorist, it is more like people are encouraged to come out and feel hatred towards others.

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We were stopped because we were wearing certain clothes, tracksuits and Nike and stuff. They annoy you. They are annoying.

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Everyone sees someone that wears a tracksuit so that's where I am guessing they get the name from, but everyone calls me a Chav because I wear a truck suit. But I would rather wear what I want to wear to feel comfortable. Just because I wear a tracksuit it does not make me a Chav. Unemployed, on benefit – *'you are a Chav'* - that's what people think.

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It is usually when we are around in the estate the police stop us for absolutely no reason. It is more because they think we get up to stuff because of the way we dress because we cover ourselves up with hoodies. Let's say if I was to dress with tracksuit and hoodie I would have more chance to be stopped than a business look clothes suit, tie and everything. It depends on the officer that stops you if they are in bad or good mood. I have been in some situation where that made a difference. Some of them they actually marked me just for being out in a group... seven of us. They ask things like why are you out, just excuses for stopping. It is normal now. I don't know anybody that has not been stopped by the police.

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Photo Journalist Cinzia D'Ambrosi on what she learnt working on the *Prejudice and Us* project:

Over the course of this project I have been lucky enough to get to know a group of diverse, funny, intelligent, engaging and boisterous young people in the constituency of Hammersmith. Like many, it is an area in London of extreme wealth but also of poverty. For young people from marginalised groups growing up here, the inequalities are part of daily life. Throughout the past year, together with my colleagues at Protection Approaches, I have played table tennis, pool and football with so many young people from many different backgrounds, I have run drama and photography workshops, and taken part in outings. Throughout this time I have been a part of rich and sometimes shocking conversations about the patterns and processes of prejudice.

What became clear is that an awareness of being an object of prejudice comes early in the lives of many young Londoners. This project has opened my eyes to the extent that some young people in the capital live with a sense of being pushed to the sides of our society. It is shocking to realise how normal the experiences of prejudice are in so many young lives. Stop and search, racism, islamophobia, homophobia, judgements based on clothes and socio-economic status, for some these are day-to-day expectations rather than exceptions.

In group discussions the young people shrugged off experiences that left us completely stunned “really? That’s terrible” we would exclaim, as the rest of the group nodded along and offered up countless equally shocking examples. “when I go out, if I am hanging around with my mates and they are black, we are most certainly stopped. The police will stop and search them,” offered one boy. “Wearing a ‘hoodie’ is a call for being stopped. People judge you for the way you dress. I have been stopped wearing these clothes,” said another.

The correlation between poverty and marginalisation is clear. I came into this project with little doubt that this would be the case but the recognition amongst the young people of how their accents, clothes or background would affect the



rest of lives was troubling. Perhaps none more so than the young woman we worked with who at the time was living in a hostel for young homeless people. She explained is regularly called “Chav” as a term of derision, and knows that most people see her poverty before they see her.

I’m worried that the wonderful young Muslim women I met feel marginalised by a rhetoric that sees them as a danger to our communities rather than an asset, that they know many in our society consider them as somehow less British or indeed as little more than terrorists. How sad that they are considered a threat by many, while in reality they are the ones who are most vulnerable to physical and verbal attack.

And yet despite all the moving stories I heard and the shock of what so many of these young people deal with and have come to think as normal, there are some positives. The young people that I have come to know do not want to be part of a world where people are treated differently because of an aspect of their identity, they have a diverse groups of friends and in the most part reject prejudice.

I believe that projects like *Prejudice and Us* are important to shed a light on the many challenges faced by young people today from urban regeneration, media, social stereotyping and economic and political changes. By creating platforms where young people can express those struggles is a positive step for better communication on which to base stronger policies to tackle prejudice and better support the victims.

www.cinziadambrosi.com

 [@cinziadambrosi](https://twitter.com/cinziadambrosi)

The young people at White City Youth theatre developed scenes exploring prejudice to perform at the *Prejudice and Us* exhibition launch at London City Hall. Below is the script for one of those scenes

By Callum McArthur

A school classroom. Desks and chairs are dotted around and there is no teacher in the room.

GIRL: I'm kinda scared you know.

BOY: Scared of what?

GIRL: Everything. Everything that's happened in the last ten months. Do you not think it's all a bit too crazy? Like we've gone back in time instead of progressing forward?

BOY: What are you on about? We're alright aren't we? It's gonna be fine, you've heard the speeches. Pick up a newspaper once in a while.

GIRL: Well, yeah but he's affecting people everywhere. Not just politically but he's poisoning people's minds. I went on a website last night, like a blog, and I saw so much hate. Just disgusting things that were said. And it's all spurred on by that orange twat.

BOY: Can't be that bad. He's a businessman, he's gotta say it like it is. Besides, we're all thinking it, we just needed a push. I think it'll be good for us. Not just America. I say: build the wall! I'd build one between me and most of the people here if I could.

GIRL 2: By 'most' you mean me?

BOY: (turns around) By 'most', yes, I mean everyone like you. I mean don't get me wrong I'm not a racist. But any one of you lot could be dangerous. You just gotta look at history as evidence.

GIRL: What is wrong with you?

BOY: All I'm trying to say is; why bother accommodating a massive number of people when we know that some of them could potentially attack us, or, I dunno, like, do something bad?

GIRL 2: My God you're thick.

BOY: Praying to God again, love?

GIRL: Leave her alone!

GIRL 2: Are these your own beliefs? Or have you been watching too much telly? Maybe daddy's old-fashioned opinions have rubbed off on his precious little boy. (Pause) Or maybe you are just evil.

BOY: Well just maybe, I'm right. And it's not just me, everyone's thinking it. Otherwise he wouldn't have been elected. Can't be the only one out there eh? (moves closer) Maybe...your time is running out.

BOY leaves the classroom.

GIRL: Forget him yeah? He's an alright guy usually, he just thinks that's the way it goes. He's actually harmless.

GIRL 2: And you? What do you think of 'how it goes'? What do you feel when you look at me?

END SCENE





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With the war on terror, hate crimes are increasing. The laws that are currently being put in are even more marginalising the Muslim communities. [We] feel attacked instead of trying to work together to stop terrorism. But then, if we don't say anything, the government seems to perceive us as terrorists and wanting to protect terrorists.

Then there is the growing fear when you wear hijab, the fear that you might be attacked. My sister she was on a train and she had a lot of hate. She had headphones on and did not realise what was happening at first. When a commuter tried to stop a man talking to her, she took the headphones off. The man was not saying nice things, he was accusing her of being a terrorist. Thankfully, there were people defending her on the train.

Another friend of mine, she was told to go back to her home and then once I was at a bus stop and there was a lady wearing a hi jab with a push chair and someone asked her if there was a bomb in the push chair. It was really shocking.

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I could go to a shop and I would have the security guard following me. He/she wouldn't be following anybody before I entered the shop. I just get angry and I just leave the shop. It just does not make me want to buy anything because they don't trust me. They don't know me, but they judge me because the way I look or dress as usually I wear tracksuit.

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I am an Irish traveller and I have suffered a lot of injustices. Often, Irish people are the ones to be more prejudiced towards us. I can tell you one of my experiences. I have been going to a pub (it is an Irish pub) in the locality. One day the owner was behind the bar serving and as soon as she saw me, she asked me leave and refused to serve me any drinks. I asked the reason for this, but she could not give any justifiable answer. There was nothing that I had done wrong. I was told to leave the premises. It all went down to the fact that I am a traveller and she knew that I was. These racist attacks are a lot worse in Ireland. My family left because of the continuous abuse and lack of future.

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Being asked to pay before my meal... more things like that. Nothing so drastic. For me there have been more the small things. To be honest, I think it only effects people maybe in their work place more than anything. On the outside most people in Britain are rather friendly. It is only with work opportunities... that's when it's felt the most. For instance, not being able to move up on the work ladder, not given opportunities. That's were it effects the most. These are the things going on here in Britain more than the most drastic events like mass violence. That happens a lot less here. It is more economical here. Sometimes I think what does it take to be a Prime Minister? In my mind it is almost impossible to become a Prime Minister for anybody of my colour. I don't know why.

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When I was a younger... I used to wear hoodies and all that. People used to associate all this with gang violence, criminal activities... so when you wear a hoodie people seem to assume that you are going to something bad. I had a lot of that. For that reason after many years I stopped wearing hoodies and dress more formal.

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On Facebook... They are just threatening me. They wrote: '*I want to kill you.*' I did know these people. They are from my previous school. The police came to me to ask me questions. I did not call them. My mum called them.

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