



# VOICES THAT SHAKE!

SHAKE! THE SYSTEM

## RESEARCH REPORT

A DECADE OF SHAPING CHANGE 2010–2020



I've asked them frequently. In different ways. Sai. Farzana. Others. 'Tell me about the impact of Voices that Shake!?' They never told me the answer I wanted to hear.

I know that many Shake!rs have gone on to do great things. Many of them are renowned researchers, artists, and activists.

This is what I wanted to hear but it didn't happen. They didn't claim these names as their own. They didn't talk about attribution. They didn't refer to employment destinations. American musician Sly Stone's words at Woodstock chimed, 'It is not a fashion in the first place, it is a feeling.' They talked about feelings and how this relates to process, practice, centring the marginalised, liberation, and justice. About how this relates to connectedness, to self and other peoples' struggles.

They spoke of transformative justice. Shake! has rejected the NGO world's narrow and vogueish frameworks and pioneered a way we may need to be if we genuinely want to contribute to fundamental change. I am glad they are telling their story— a story about a journey towards a more critical destination.

DEREK A. BARDOWELL, London 2020

*CEO, Ten Years' Time*

*Author of No Win Race: A Story of Belonging, Britishness and Sport*

First published in the UK in 2021 by Voices that Shake! [voicesthatshake.org](http://voicesthatshake.org)  
This edition published by Voices that Shake! 2024

This publication forms part of a trilogy of work to mark 10 years of Voices that Shake!

- i) *Voices that Shake! An Anthology of Creative Movements*
- ii) A youth-led *Shake! the System Research Report: A Decade of Shaping Change 2010-2020*
- iii) A youth-led *Shake! the System Guidebook: Rituals, Tools & Practices*

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Research Report ISBN 978-1-8383931-1-3

Anthology ISBN 978-1-8383931-0-6

Guidebook ISBN 978-1-8383931-2-0

Copies of the Research Report and Guidebook are available to freely download from [voicesthatshake.org](http://voicesthatshake.org)

To order printed copies of these publications please contact [www.voicesthatshake.org](http://www.voicesthatshake.org)

Design by Tiff Webster & Liquorice Fish

A CIP catalogue record of this Report together with the corresponding Voices that Shake! Anthology and Rituals, Tools and Practices are available from the British Library

Printed and bound in UK by Swallowtail Print



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Shake! is hosted by Platform.

Shake! the System is created in partnership with Healing Justice London.



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**VOICES THAT  
SHAKE!**

**SHAKE! THE SYSTEM**

**RESEARCH REPORT**

**A DECADE OF SHAPING CHANGE 2010–2020**

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## **The Politics of Language and Imagery: A Guide to Shake!'s Terms and Images**

### **Language and Terms**

Shake! reaches towards building a full recognition of the cultural heritages of Shake!rs and those in our communities that captures our specific richnesses. The struggle to be named and reflected on our own terms, rather than to be described and racialised by white supremacy culture, is ongoing.

In our trilogy of publications – *Anthology*, *Research Report* and *Guidebook* – we use the phrase ‘Black people and people of the global majority’.

In using this phrase we want to acknowledge both the specific harms of anti-Black racism – which is not only a phenomenon of whiteness – and to embrace the breadth of international cultural heritages which are racialised by white supremacy. The phrase ‘Black people and people of the global majority’ is not perfect. Language is political, but in and of itself not our liberation. Terms and language are ongoing, constantly moving as power and resistance to oppression evolves.

By the time these bodies of work reach you, the terms we use may have become outdated or even redundant. We encourage you to engage with these texts in a dynamic way that follows less the form and more the substance.

### **Photographs and Contributions**

The people who are visible throughout Shake!'s publications and online consented to their visibility.

However for many Shake!rs, allies, mentors, artists (Black people and people of the global majority, of diverse sexualities and sexual identities, from precarious economic circumstances, with varying cognitive, physical and mental health capacities) being visible puts us at daily risk of harm and abuse in oppressive cultures.

We recognise not everyone we want to honour and acknowledge from the Shake! community can be visibilised or made known, so we make an effort to uphold and remind ourselves that we travel with and protect those seen, unseen, known and unknown. As you make your way through these pieces of work we encourage you to hold the entire constellations behind Voices that Shake!

To read more on language and framing visit: [www.voicesthatshake.org](http://www.voicesthatshake.org)

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# Foreword

In the 10 years since its first intensive course, Voices that Shake! has become a powerful force in grassroots art and activism, radical pedagogy, youth work and community organising. It seems that Shake! dared to go where few others went. It dared to speak truth to power, unapologetically. It dared to imagine and enact other ways of existing.

In October 2019, we initiated an 18-month programme to document the legacy of Shake! and share the learnings from a decade of influential work through this youth-led research, alongside *Voices that Shake! An Anthology of Creative Movements*, *Shake! the System Guidebook: Rituals, Tools and Practices* and a series of events and workshops. It was steered by Shake!'s Strategic Director Farzana Khan and Co-Director Sai Murray, Programme Manager Rose Ziaei, Research Mentor Paula Serafini and Associate Art Director Tiff Webster, alongside Researchers Annick Météfia and Haneen Hammou.

*Shake! the System Research Report, A Decade of Shaping Change 2010–2020* aims to document, analyse and share the approaches, methods and practices developed by Shake!'s facilitators and participants throughout the years. The knowledge and practice generated have had transformative impacts and we know that this can multiply and spread, nurturing the movements of now, and movements to come.

In building a research project about Shake!, we have approached the task in the Shake! way. Our process began with conversations about research ethics, positionality and the notions and frameworks underpinning Western academia and research practices. It also began by sharing our experiences of research, education and youth work, the barriers and challenges each of us have encountered and the ways we had navigated those oppressive structures in the past. We knew that carrying out a Shake! research project of this kind would entail tearing down a practice that has historically been used in oppressive and extractive ways, in order to build it back up in a way that centred our values, and that served the aims of Shake!, as well as the needs and interests of the communities we are part of.

As Programme Manager and Research Mentor, we were in the exciting position of helping set the foundations of this research project, in order to support the researchers, Annick and Haneen, in building a rich, powerful, wonderfully creative and deeply reflective report. This publication not only honours Shake!, but also offers a much needed critique of youth work practices. Accompanying this, the *Shake! the System Guidebook: Rituals, Tools and Practices* proposes a set of tools for generating radical, creative spaces for transformative change.

We hope you are as inspired by it as we both are.

**Paula Serafini, Research Mentor**  
**Rose Ziaei, Programme Manager**

# Introduction

For the last 10 years, Voices that Shake!, a youth-led project based in London, has organised arts-based political education and courses, youth-led skillshares, mentoring, youth-led campaigns, showcases, reading groups and care spaces with a clear mission: to make a place for Black people and people of global majority, and other marginalised young people to explore, express and strengthen their voices to better speak truth to power. This unique organising space was born in the context of the politically hostile environment of the UK, of normalised structural violence against Black people and people of global majority, migrant, working-class, LGBTQI+, disabled and/or neuroatypical people and/or D/deaf people, and funding cuts to youth and community services.

We, the researchers, Annick Météfia and Haneen Hammou, are young Black and mixed women, and we are Shake!rs.<sup>1</sup> In this research project, we position ourselves as part of the Shake! family, part of the Shake! community, and so we research our own experiences as well as those of others in the Shake! family. This makes us research participants as well as researchers.

We recognise we are not ‘alone in the room’, as we talk about ourselves, our methods and principles and share our references. Through its decade of practice, Shake! has decentred whiteness and brought to the centre what is usually confined to the margins. Our approach in this report is the same. Shake! appeared and grew in a context where the appropriation of radical grassroots wisdom by the charity sector and NGOs was already a major issue, and it remains an issue today. We are talking to and sharing with communities of global majority and other marginalised groups first and foremost. Our centre is the margins. We believe that everyone is welcome to take inspiration from this work, citing, uplifting and honouring practice from a broad and vast community.

This research report is by us; the *Guidebook: Rituals, Tools and Practices* and recommendations section is for us. Our intention in writing this report and producing the Guidebook is to support our communities, to honour Shake!’s work and impact, document it and support fellow people of global majority in creating and organising spaces of art, activism and healing, using what we term the ‘Pillars’ of Shake!

Our intended audience is wide. Primarily, it will be those leaders and people in anti-oppression practice and organising, and more broadly with Black people and people of global majority.

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1. See Afterword to read Annick and Haneen’s personal journeys with Shake!

Secondly, this report aims to engage people and institutions outside our communities, which knowingly or unknowingly create, uphold and benefit from structures of oppression and power inherent to the NGO, climate, funding, arts, activism and youth work sectors.

We hope this will also contribute to generating greater accountability across sectors; exposing and naming the appropriation and commodification of Black people's and people of global majority's knowledge; addressing uneven power dynamics; rethinking youth work as a holistic practice supporting transformation on individual, collective and structural levels. We hope you will access this report as an intervention in your complicity with oppression, and that it will galvanise you to do better.

In this report, we:

- **Situate ourselves in the research traditions we value**
- **Present the research methodologies**
- **Contextualise the emergence and growth of Shake!**
- **Map and identify the core elements of Shake!'s practice through the 'Pillars' of Shake!**
- **Explore five holistic impact areas of Shake!**

The artistic and cultural processes and creations by Shake!rs in the last decade deserve their own full analysis and review beyond this research report. For a full experience and discussion of the acclaimed, rich, artistic work of Shake!, see our companion publication: ***Voices that Shake! An Anthology of Creative Movements***. The anthology highlights Shake!'s practice as an art production space, and the power of the arts as integral to transformative movement-building and personal liberation. Meanwhile, this research focuses on other dimensions of the social impact of Shake!, while maintaining creativity and arts are at its core.

**Annick Météfia, Lead Researcher**  
**Haneen Hammou, Secondary Researcher**

# Context

We worked on this research report between May and October 2020. Prior to March 2020, a research project by Shake! would have prioritised methods that brought people together in a physical community. The Covid-19 pandemic limited physical meetings and brought us, like many people, new challenges. We adapted our research methodology to be responsive to these challenges, and continued to centre our accessible, non-extractive and caring practices. As the researchers, we first met online on the 15th May, and then only met each other in person on the 16th September.

Alongside this extreme context, this research was carried out in the midst of uprisings of ongoing brutal racialised deaths by the state including Breonna Taylor in the US and Belly Mujinga in the UK. In particular, in May 2020, an African American man, George Floyd, was murdered by a white police officer in the US. Millions watched the footage of Floyd's killing, triggering a global uprising led by Black people fighting police and state violence. In the context of a pandemic killing predominantly working-class Black people and people of global majority in Western countries, this highlighted more than ever the structural inequalities and racist violence that threaten our lives, every day. With the added loss of some Black icons including actor Chadwick Boseman and musician Manu Dibango, 2020 feels like a year of profound grief.

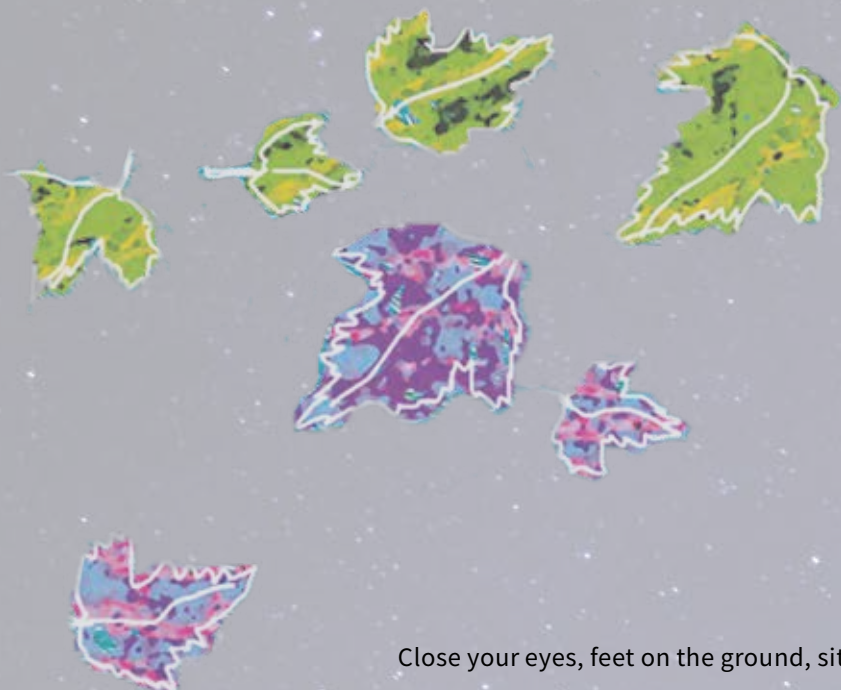
We continued this work in the reality of exhaustion, anxiety, stress, fear, sadness, but also of love and care for our people, of rageful pride, of believing this work showed beauty and truth that needed to be documented, even more so in these times. We made sure to prioritise our mental health and well-being. We respected our own and other people's requests for time and space, we took into consideration people's capacities. We scaled back the scope of the research, meaning we did not speak to everyone we intended to. We accepted this reality as an opportunity to document this unique moment through its impact on our lived experience, history and this research too, and what it means to do this work with the lived and daily realities of oppression.

Our use of 'we' and 'our' throughout this report refers to the Shake! family and community we are part of; the collective and communal 'we' that moves in opposition to Western, eurocentric and neoliberal logic, which continues to dismember our interdependence.



*'Our communities are the ones who have a final say on the validity and impact of the research.'*

**Rose Ziaei**



Close your eyes, feet on the ground, sitting or lying down.

Make sure you are in a comfortable position where you can feel the ground.

Breathe in and out three times.

The first breath is for yourself,  
thanking yourself for being here.

The second breath is for each other,  
thanking each other for holding this space together.





The third breath is for the Earth.

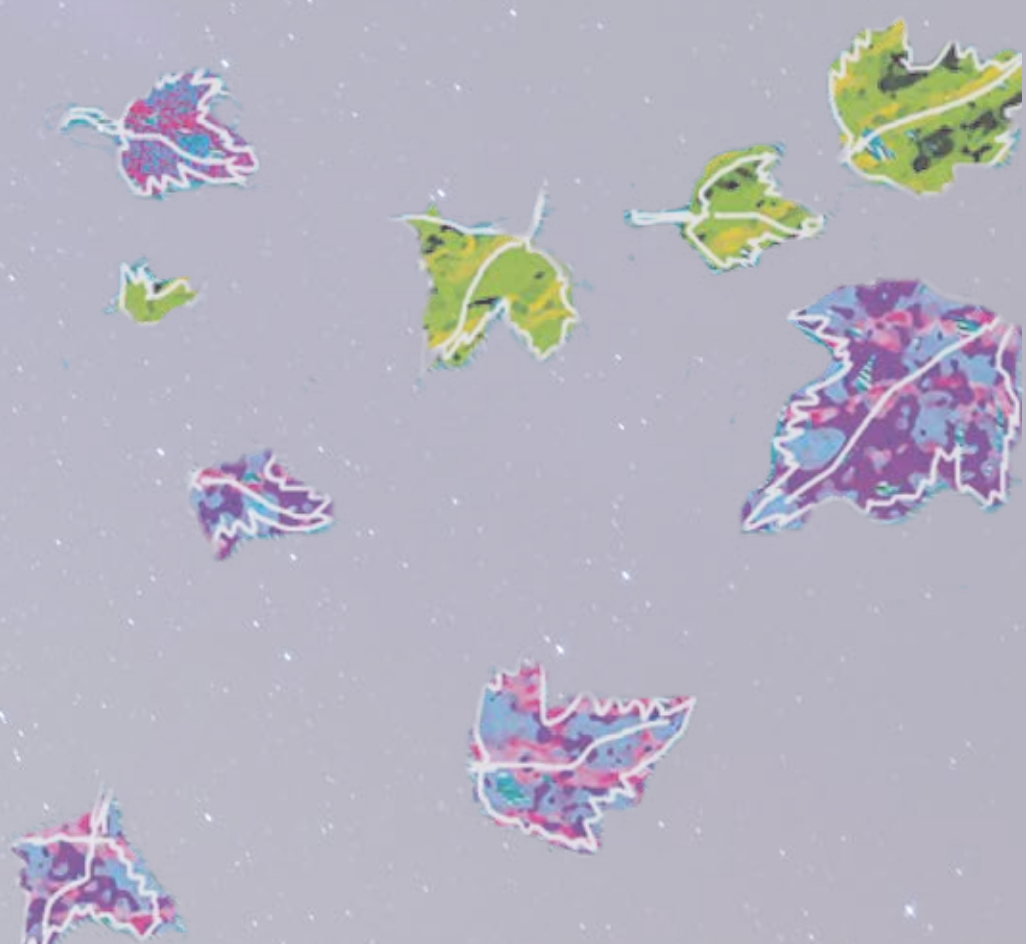
For our interconnectedness.

It serves as a reminder that we are part of a legacy that neither begins nor ends with us.

Roll your shoulders back a few times,  
making space in your ribcage, around your heart.

Keep breathing deeply,  
come back to this space

and open your eyes when you feel ready.



# 1. Methods & Framework

This section discusses the values and ethics that form the framework of the research and describes our data capturing methods.

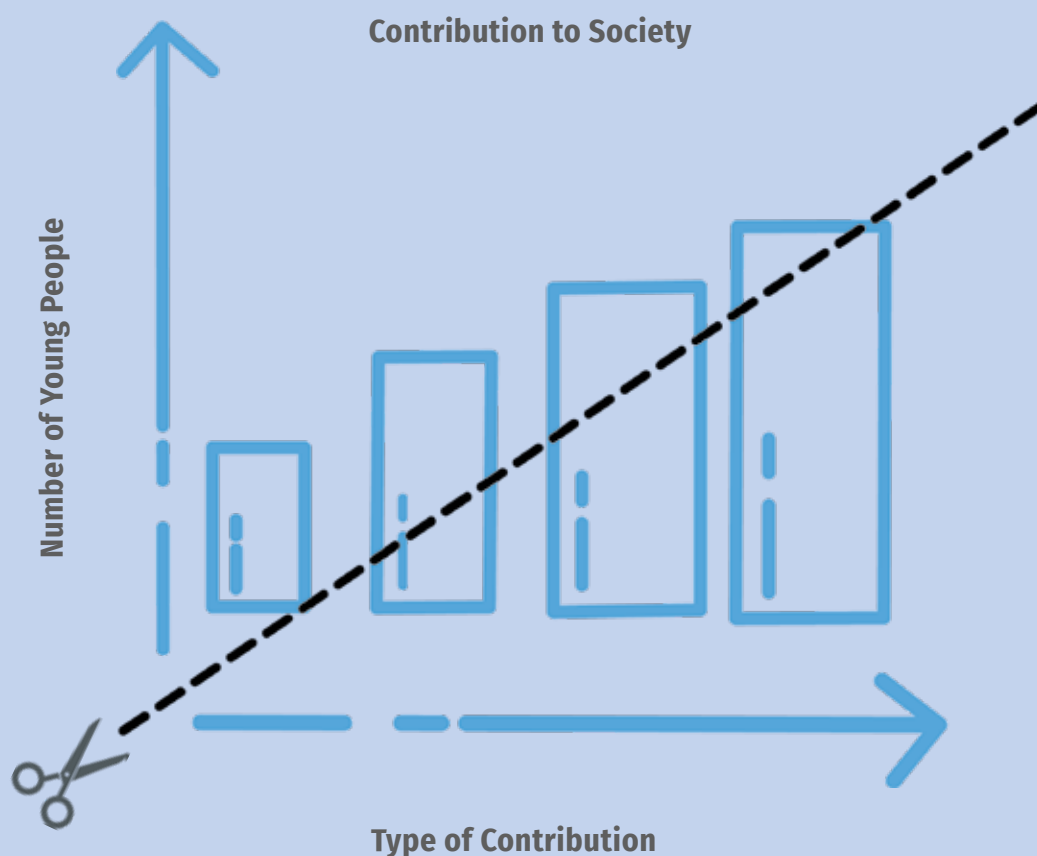
The research methodology was grounded in the principle that the process of the research is just as important as the results. This is something to note as you access this report; **the research process aimed to create a commune for critical reflection, introspection and celebration for our Shake! family.**

We undertook the task of reframing the conversation around ‘reporting impact’, and this informed our choices of methodology, our approach to analysis and how we presented our data. It is important to show how we undertook this task through, firstly, defining what this report *is not and cannot be*.

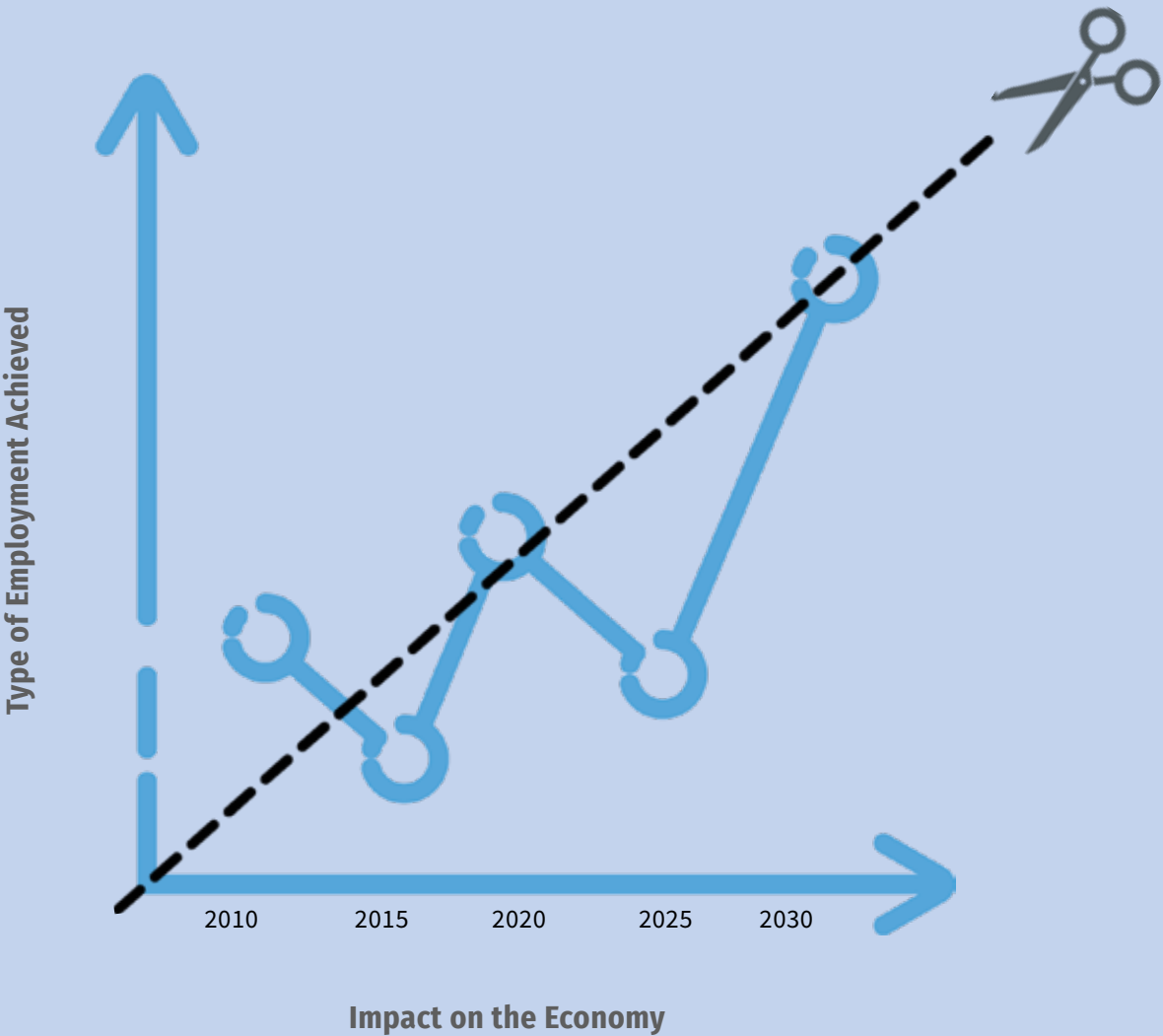
**This report is not about quantitative outcomes.**

**It is not about monetisation of new skills gained.**

**This report is not about large numbers ‘helped’ through programmes.**



Data is political. The methods of measuring impact, often transferred from corporate spaces by many in the funding, youth, charity and civic sectors, tend to focus on young people as project targets and numbers, and as working-class and racialised ‘problems’ to be solved or fixed. These framings become mainstreamed with little interrogation. As a result, key elements such as transformative practices are often unrecognised as a measure of impact in the constrictive, inaccessible structures of mainstream sectors and bodies. Therefore at Shake!, we put forward our own methodologies by reclaiming the definitions of impact to centre both personal and collective transformative processes as indicators of social change. Our framing holds the importance of the lived experiences of marginalised young people, and embeds our own communities’ ideas of fulfilment, meaning and value, as success.



# 1.1 Research Approach & Values

Shake!'s overall practice forefronts and values the experiences and wisdom of Black people in the UK and internationally. Here we want to acknowledge some of the people whose vision and work uplifts us: **adrienne maree brown, Olive Morris, Steve Biko, bell hooks, Stuart Hall, Audre Lorde, Claudia Jones, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Assata Shakur, Marielle Franco, Marsha P. Johnson, June Jordan, Mariame Kaba, Betty Collier Thomas, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Esther Stanford- Xosei, Toni Morrison, Angela Davis, Ken Saro-Wiwa, James Baldwin** and many more.

Our approach also draws and builds upon other people of global majority and marginalised voices such as **Gloria Anzaldúa, Ambalavaner Sivanandan, Mia Mingus, Arundhati Roy, Alice Wong, Aurora Levins Morales, Vandana Shiva, Shira Hussein, Paulo Freire, Silvia Federici, Irene Fernandez, Mahmoud Darwish, Nelson Maldonado-Torres and Ramón Grosfoguel**. We are influenced by indigenous knowledge, and Latin American literature on decoloniality, and by feminist, decolonial approaches to qualitative research. We honour and acknowledge all the other artists, practitioners, carers, healers, social workers, mothers, parents and elders who move with us. We develop and advance our research from this foundational context and imaginative landscape.

In alignment with Shake!'s anti-oppressive values, purpose, aims and trajectory over the last decade, we created a Research Ethics Guideline and a Code of Conduct for researchers.<sup>2</sup>



2. See Annex A.

The following describes how each Shake! characteristic informs different aspects of our research approach and methodology.

**Decolonial:** *We challenge the pervasive, hierarchical and historical dualisms that take white, male, straight, able-bodied experiences and perspectives to be more valid than the experiences of women, Black people and people of global majority, queer, non-binary, intersex and trans, and disabled people. We challenge the separation of mind and body and of nature and humans, as constructed in the modern paradigm and imposed through coloniality and the totalisation of ‘rational thought’. We uplift embodied forms of knowledge that break away with such distinctions. We challenge universalist approaches, and instead create knowledge from situated positions, embracing pluriversality as crucial to our knowledge production processes.*

Our research approach explicitly acknowledges and defies the hegemonic, Western ideology that states that objectivity, neutrality and lacking emotional or personal connection are the conditions for accurate and reliable information gathering.

**Creativity:** *Creativity is in everything we do – our pedagogical approach, our art, our activism. We recognise that creativity is moving and it moves us; we know that in order to enact change we need to do things differently. The education system has failed us, the arts sector has failed us, mainstream activism has failed us. Therefore, we embrace creativity and our imagining of different futures and possibilities.*

This report and its accompanying *Shake! the System Guidebook: Rituals, Tools and Practices* are built on creativity and collaboration. They are about creating and transmitting multisensory knowledge to be shared with different audiences in diverse modalities. Our research is reconfiguring traditional methodology and approaches to model and innovate more authentic and creative research practice.

**Anti-oppression:** *We challenge oppression at all levels, understanding power and privilege are dynamic and exist in conscious and unconscious planes; we speak truth to power; we interrogate our privilege and positionality; we work with allies and expect them to build capacity and show up for those oppressed; we are ‘hard on ideas, soft on people’; we are intersectional in our approach.*

Our research approach acknowledges the inherent power dynamic that exists between the researchers and the research participants, and works towards creating equity. As researchers we were paid, and all the young people and anyone unemployed or unsalaried who contributed to the research was paid a freelance fee. We facilitated interviews and community gatherings in ways that encouraged accessibility and meaningful participation, as exemplified later.

**Prefigurative:** *We work towards personal, collective and structural change and liberation, and are prefigurative in our approach. This means we build structures and ways of working with others to enact the kind of world we want to see in the now.*

How we do the work is informed by why we do the work. In this report we take up space, and set the terms on how research about us and for us should be conducted, putting forward approaches and methods that are in line with our values and our visions of a more just world. Furthermore, with Covid-19 exacerbating oppressive systems while also changing the way our world functions, our prefigurative approach enabled us to respond to the emerging emergencies, risks and harms which often occur and are aggravated during times of crisis, uncertainty and urgency. We did this by prioritising our well-being, health and relationships through community care and sustainability practices over outputs and deadlines.



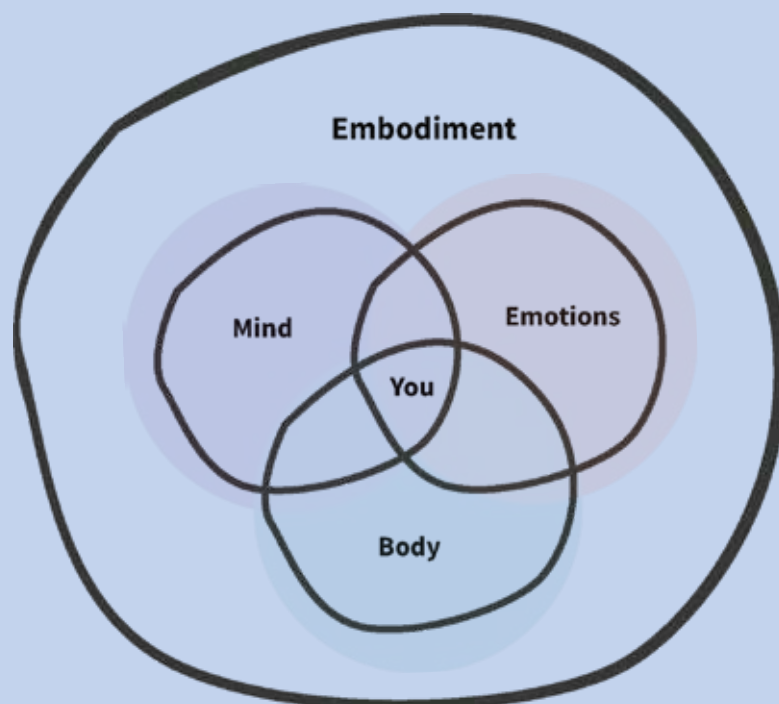
**Healing Justice:** *The personal is political and community healing is resistance. Healing justice is concerned with finding collective ways of responding and intervening on the trauma and violence we experience to transform the effects of oppression on our bodies, hearts, souls and minds. Healing justice repairs, remembers and activates non-eurocentric understandings of health and healing rooted in our cultural, spiritual, ancestral and indigenous knowledge systems.*

**Healing Justice views:** *wholeness = whole self (mind/body/soul) + ecological self (spirit/community/nature).*

In our research, the framework of healing justice underpinned the design of our research methods, interactions, collaborations and spaces. In practice, this meant thinking about research as embodied, and incorporating tools like grounding exercises and aftercare support, understanding trauma and its impact on racialised and marginalised groups' capacity for participation. We encouraged and embraced participation, re-remembering<sup>3</sup> body, emotions, mind and soul, and all aspects of our beings that work (or don't work) together as we redefined wholeness.

**Embodiment:** *We acknowledge and allow our full selves to participate, emotionally, mentally and physically. We view the body as a site of knowledge, and value the connection to it as an important part of liberation.*

We began and concluded interviews and research gatherings through grounding exercises, where appropriate. We honoured that both researcher and interviewee bring energy, thoughts and emotions into the space and that we could hold space for each other's lived and embodied experiences and knowledges too. This was particularly important with heightened mental health struggles at this time.



3. We use 're-member' because we know remembering is not just a cognitive process, but it is also a part of the decolonial process of seeking wholeness as part of our life's work as those who have been dismembered; drawing from ancient indigenous thought such as the myth of Isis.

**Accountability:** *We support working with and being fluid around people's needs, and we believe this will only be possible if there are habits and cultures of self and collective accountability. This includes honouring boundaries, timelines, plans, labour. We seek to have a culture where we don't reproduce harm.*

We sought accountability to everyone who took part in the research by being transparent about the research aims and objectives, offering different kinds of support to participants and implementing mechanisms that would facilitate participant agency in the project. This included and encouraged a shared understanding that it is because we love something that we can also create a capacity to critique it and work to build and improve it.

**Intergenerationality:** *We centre the voices of young people and we honour and respect the wisdom of elders. We understand intergenerational work is difficult in societies that rely on the compartmentalisation of generations and among diaspora with legacies of generational separation. We know it is essential. We are committed to it.*

As a legacy report, our research approach honours our ancestors as knowledge producers, as aforementioned, while simultaneously making sure that we document this generation's knowledge production, and safeguard it to be accessed by future generations. It was integral to our approach to value and record the insights of young Shake!rs', elders', older team members' and mentors' voices with equal legitimacy and validity. Intergenerationality is embodied in the make-up of the Shake! team leading the research, as it is made up of Shake! facilitators and Shake!rs sitting across various generations. We know that our work is situated among a continuum of work that has allowed us to be here, and much more work yet to come.

**Centring and Being Led by Lived Experience:** *We believe that those of us most marginalised by society are better prepared to lead movements and strategies for challenging and transforming systems that are inherently unequal and oppressive. This is because we have felt and experienced the cruellest workings and effects of those systems on a daily basis. We work alongside allies and centre the voices of the marginalised simultaneously.*

We, as researchers, were employed and prioritised on the basis of the intersections of our lived experience and Shake! experience to lead this research. Our approach ensured paid capacity was created for those with lived experience to be resourced to participate meaningfully. We validated lived experience as genuine knowledge production throughout the research to disrupt hierarchies of knowledge found in the mainstream which ignore and erase these legitimate sites of knowledge.





**Emergent Practice:** *Our practice is emergent as we embrace change and innovate new ways of being outside of the norm. We value and trust nonlinear processes. In this way we choose to challenge dominant oppressive ideas through process as well as through outcomes.*

In this research, we relied on our reflexive practices to guide our research approach and methodology. Our emergent approach meant that at each stage we reflected, reviewed and adapted based on Shake!'s values and principles, and the feedback of participants. We held the integrity of our research findings by maintaining our research guidelines and code of conduct.

**Radical Connection:** *We acknowledge and honour our interdependence. Our connections expand beyond the time and space of our activities. We put care and attention into authentic radical relationship building.*

Our approach involved facilitating spaces for introspection and reflection which included holding a range of emotions from joy to nostalgia. Our pre-existing radical connections, fostered through a decade of this approach, enabled a deeper sense of trust. Many participants were eager and excited to talk deeply about Shake!, and more so with a fellow Shake!r. We nourished multiple types of spaces for Shake!rs to connect and come together from digital WhatsApp spaces to community gatherings.



## 1.2 Methods of Data Collection

Our research prioritises participants' well-being over the imperative to find 'data', and we put in conscious measures to minimise the harms of reproducing exploitative dynamics throughout the research. As well as our research approach being rooted in non-extractive research values, we also followed our research ethics, code of conduct, safeguarding and consent policies, which include a discussion with each participant about the options of named and anonymous contributions, and various consent withdrawal options. This explains why some names have been anonymised to 'Shake!r', to safeguard the young people and respect their choice in the level of consent they felt comfortable giving.

In this section we will describe the three **methods of data collection** we employed in our research, collaborating with 33 people through research gatherings, interviews and a WhatsApp group during the period July–September 2020.

### **Researchers' Community Gatherings**

We launched the research project by holding a 'Community Consultation' on the 5th June 2020 (the first of two). This was framed as a group meeting among Shake!rs to discuss how best to do this research. The research team received feedback on our initial ideas as well as being given new ideas, fostering a space for collaboration in creating the research. Nine Shake!rs from across the ten years of Shake! collaborated with the team at this first event, and eight at the second on the 11th September 2020, with three of the same Shake!rs taking part in both meetings.

### **Interviews**

We wanted to centre orality and speaking directly, and we chose interviews as one of our primary methods. Most of our interviewees were former Shake! course participants. We interviewed sixteen Shake! participants, as well as the current Shake! Team, two people from Platform,<sup>4</sup> and through written responses a former core Shake! team member. We also interviewed three people working across both the youth funding and civic sector who could speak of Shake! and the sector more broadly. With regards to Shake! participants, we aimed to engage with Shake!rs from across a mix of Shake! courses over the last ten years in terms of different generations to grasp the evolution of Shake! as well as the central practices and values that it emerged from. Eight of the Shake!rs interviewed have facilitated at Shake! or have been employed by Shake! at some point.

During interviews we asked a series of questions.<sup>5</sup> As part of the interview process, we asked participants to begin the dialogue by sharing a piece of art they connect to Shake!. By doing this, the interview was shaped by something creative that was personal to each interviewee. It gave us and the interviewees the opportunity to witness each other's wholeness, and participate in an intimate, emotional and creative way.

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4. Platform has hosted Shake! from its beginning in 2010.

5. See Annex B.

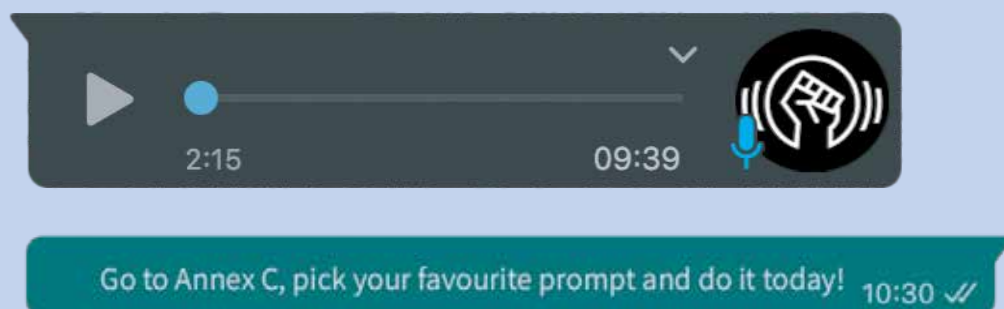
## WhatsApp Group

A WhatsApp group was recommended as an effective research method by two of our collaborators at the community gathering in June: Shake!r and former facilitator Dhelia and Shake!r Georgia. Inspired, we introduced a WhatsApp group to hold a safe space, where we could ask ‘hard questions in a soft environment’. It was a creative and informal solution to virtual adaptations and realities and was supported by our WhatsApp brief/guide, encouraging different forms of creativity and accessibility.

The group was made up of four Shake!rs plus the two researchers. We sent two prompts weekly, a **#TuesdayThought** and a **#FridayFun**.<sup>6</sup> The prompts were questions to encourage reflection about the Shake! experience and how it has impacted Shake!rs’ lives. We focused on Headspace, Heartspace and Body as themes, reflecting the core Shake! value of embodiment.

The **#TuesdayThought** encouraged deep analysis through answering questions directly into the group, sometimes through writing and other creative practices. The participants/co-researchers were invited to investigate themes and recommendations coming from Interviews and Researchers Gatherings.

The **#FridayFun** centred on a creative activity such as taking a nap and finding a music video that represents or connects you to your Shake! experience. One was sharing your most memorable Shake! activity such as a ‘freewrite’ with someone who is not a Shake!r, explaining the exercise to them and encouraging them to participate in it.



6. See Annex C.





## 2. Shake!'s Definition, Evolution & Pillars of Practice

Shake! was initiated by Platform, the London-based arts, environmental and social justice charity, partly as a project to take a stand against overwhelmingly white environmental, cultural campaigns and NGO sectors, as representative of widespread racist inequality and inequity in British society. It also emerged from the desire to encourage young people to connect themselves to international stories of struggles, such as the murder of writer Ken Saro-Wiwa in Nigeria and the murder of student Stephen Lawrence in London. Since its pilot in 2010, Shake! has developed into holistic social justice, trauma-informed, localised and globally connected community repair and cultural practice, connecting climate and social justice. In this chapter, we begin by defining Shake! through the findings of the research, before placing it in its historical context and highlighting its evolution. We then draw on Shake!'s key practices and systemically organise them into the 'Pillars of Shake!'.

*'A community of people who act for what is right through different medias, and they value every kind of person and they uplift, empower people who don't have a voice, so that our voices come together and they shake systems [...] It's like a group, a community, a family.'*

**Shake!r**

*'A week-long workshop for young people that empowers us to use art as a form of activism and self-care.'*

**Shake!r**





## 2.1 Defining Shake!

What defines Shake! inevitably varies from one person to the next. The findings of the research are informed by participants' definitions and experiences of Shake!, as well as Shake!'s own meta-narrative. The findings show how Shake! is simultaneously a physical space, a practice and an approach. The following documents a range of perspectives from Shake!rs, facilitators, collaborators and people who worked or are still working on and with Shake! to define it.

*'An opportunity/space to challenge the norm and create alternative ways of being and existing, especially if you're from a marginalised group. And in some ways it was about activism and social change, but a large amount of it was about us and how we felt about ourselves and doing the internal work.'*

**Shake!r**

*'An arts-activism collective that runs educational courses for young people but it's led by Black and non-white people in a non-hierarchical manner.'*

**Shake!r**



*'A space where you can talk about things that you may not be able to talk about in your everyday life, maybe. For me, like, the word 'safe' always comes to mind. [...] And you don't even have to use words. Like, there are so many ways you can express yourself - so I think it's just a safe space to express yourself. And maybe look at things in an alternative way ... or a different way? Yeah.'*

**Facilitator**

*'A course for young people on arts and activism but also, a space, a movement, a community. It's an approach to things as well, I think Shake! has developed its own approach to everything we do.'*

**Paula, Facilitator**

*'An uncompromising space of the mind, body, soul coming together in connection with other beings on a journey to personal and collective transformation, to be able to show up as the best versions of themselves to deal with the wounds so it doesn't reproduce harm and do that collectively, and do that in a way that takes into account the systems that are in place, not removed from them, in order to be able to bring about transformative change.'*

**Rose, Facilitator**

*'Shake! is a programme for, and led by, young people who are facing systemic and structural injustice in terms of race, class, gender identity, sexuality, but with a focus on young people of colour and with a special attention to class. It is a meeting place of creative, artistic, political, reflective, self-caring, collective-caring work. It is a place that honours the need to understand the self as constructed and created by systems and using that to put oneself in a place to act collectively as well as taking care of one's own needs. And it is a place to meet other people who are passionately convinced that they know at a level of the body, at the level of the cell, that this is not okay, this has to change, [...] yet we have to sustain it and cherish each other and not burn out.'*

**Jane, member of Platform**

*'It facilitates space to become skilled at personal and structural transformation work [...] A deeply responsive programme that centres young people who are marginalised, those with lived experience [...] and it is also a space that is thinking about radical pedagogy, radical education, transformative education practice [...] led by people with lived experience.'*

**Farzana, Facilitator**

## 2.2 Contextualising the Evolution of Shake!

As mentioned, Shake! was initiated by Platform, a horizontally organised arts and campaigning organisation. Platform combines art, activism, education and research to focus on the social, economic and environmental impacts of capitalism and colonial legacies such as the global oil industry. Jane Trowell, part of Shake!’s founding team, described Platform as:

*'A group of artists, researchers, activists, change-makers, educators who work together to envisage new ways of tackling structural problems facing our planet but also our society, so ecological issues at the widest level such as climate change, but how that also intersects with social justice issues, and being based in Britain, the legacies of imperial racism and land-grab are very much at the centre of how we think about the politics as well and what we do to undo or challenge or confront these legacies.'*

Jane and another Platform interviewee, James Marriott, described how in 2010, Ben Amunwa (see Annex D), a Platform campaigner, was working on the campaign ‘Remember Saro-Wiwa’ on Shell’s ongoing destructive activities in Nigeria. At the time, Platform was a majority white, middle-class organisation. Ben initiated an educational project for young people, stating:

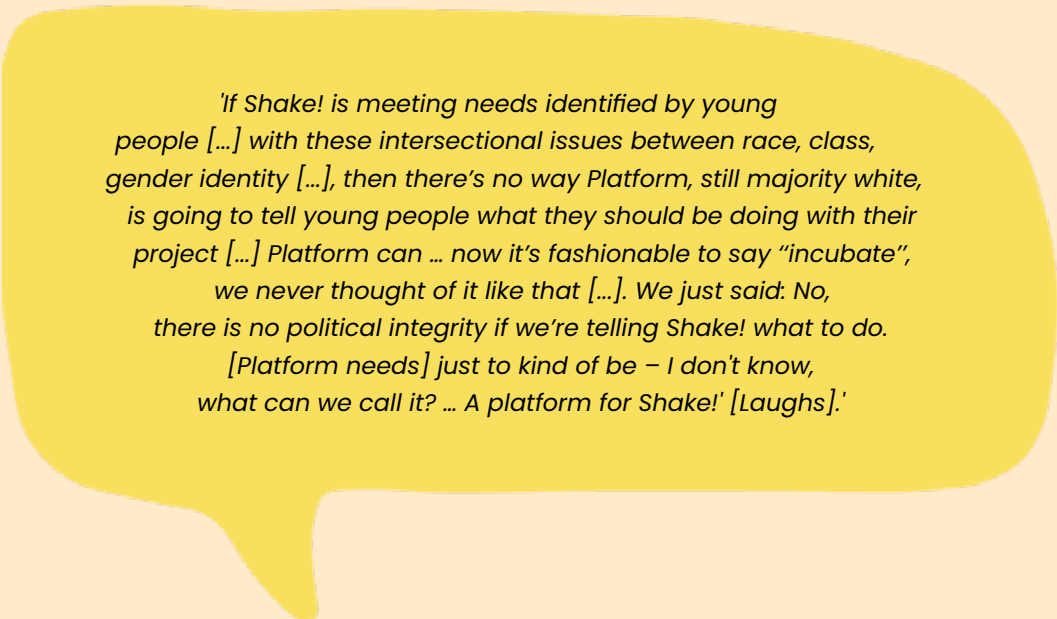
*'Legacy was important to us. I wanted young people from untraditional backgrounds to be engaged by Platform’s message and to feel at home there long after I left. To achieve that, we had to take Platform out of its comfort zone of mainly white, professional middle-class Oxbridge colleagues.'*<sup>7</sup>

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7. See Annex D for Ben Amunwa’s piece ‘Starting Shake!’

Platform colleagues were very much aware of the need to disrupt whiteness, a symptom of a larger systemic issue in the charity world.<sup>8</sup> They recognised it was long overdue to address the contradiction between Platform's stated aim of tackling systemic issues and the lack of inclusivity and representation of communities affected by these issues in its very own teams and projects.

The creative autonomy of Shake! and the crucial recruitment of Black artists and people of global majority to lead this project came from that awareness. Jane explained:



*'If Shake! is meeting needs identified by young people [...] with these intersectional issues between race, class, gender identity [...], then there's no way Platform, still majority white, is going to tell young people what they should be doing with their project [...] Platform can ... now it's fashionable to say "incubate", we never thought of it like that [...]. We just said: No, there is no political integrity if we're telling Shake! what to do. [Platform needs] just to kind of be – I don't know, what can we call it? ... A platform for Shake!' [Laughs].'*

The desire was also to create a new pedagogical art-activist project, deepening the work Platform had created previously for adults. Ben approached partner Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust, and recruited facilitators, some of them having worked with Platform before through the project 'Remember Saro-Wiwa'. In 2010, the first Shake! intensive course took place in partnership with the Stephen Lawrence Centre in south-east London with 14 young people aged between 16 and 25. The pilot's artistic team were made up of poets/facilitators Sai Murray and Zena Edwards, DJ Eric Soul, Ana Tovey of Chocolate Films, along with Ben Amunwa, Jane Trowell and volunteer politics educator Ed Lewis.

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8. See Andrews, Olivia (n/d) *Anti-racism and true inclusion within the charity sector in references for more on this issue.*

The pilot version of Shake! was a five-day intensive course centred around artistic creation, with participants selecting their preference between writing, filmmaking or a DJ/music workshop. Materials from the 2010 course in Platform's archives at the Bishopsgate Institute showed us a sequence of sessions from participants' self-grounding and experience, to power and politics, to what art can do, and the connections between all of these.

Then, the week moved into artistic production. The Shake! pilot culminated in a showcase at The Albany, Deptford (south London) which took place in early 2011. Meanwhile fundraising continued into 2012 and beyond, to enable Shake! to grow into a full programme.

In 2012, after finally securing further financial support to extend Shake!, Platform recruited Farzana Khan to lead and relaunch the project. Shake! was now fully led by people of global majority and an intergenerational team, autonomous and self-determined, while hosted and supported by Platform. Between 2012 and 2018, the core team included: Farzana Khan, Sai Murray, Zena Edwards, Paula Serafini and Dhelia Snoussi.

Since the pilot in 2010 and relaunch in 2012, Voices that Shake! was followed by nine courses with showcases, and many standalone events, including: *Voice, Verse & Power; Remembering, Reimagining & Reparations; States of Violence; New Narratives; Headspace; Power Propaganda Perceptions; Food Fight; Healing the Cuts; Movement Medicine; Surviving the System; Rep the Road – Making Home, Mapping Violence*; and *Britain on Trial*, working in-depth with over 200 young people.

Internationally, a group from Shake! participated in and created COP 15 climate justice events for the conference on climate change in Paris in 2015. Shake! facilitators ran training workshops for educators and young people on the topic of art and radical pedagogy as part of the 1er Encuentro de Ciudadanía y Educomunicación (First encounter of Citizenship and Educommunication), at the University of Santiago de Compostela.<sup>9</sup> In 2016 Shake! made a skill-share visit to the Allied Media Conference, Detroit, meeting US-based movements and organisers, and they took time together to re-evaluate objectives and processes. Rolling throughout these 10 years, Shake! and Shake!rs created, curated, collaborated and were part of multiple events, campaigns, festivals and organising efforts on a national and local level such as: *On Whose Terms? Conference; Gentrification: Where are We Now?; Black Cultural Activism Map; Shakarings; Deadline Festival; Continent Chop Chop; Numbi Arts Festivals; Black Words Matter; Primary Artist Residency; Rebellious Media Conference; Our Prayer is Protest; Fighting SUS*; to name just a few.

It is important to note a defining characteristic of Shake!, like many doing grassroots, revolutionary, provocative work, is insufficient resources. Shake!'s capacity, reach, ambition and content (such as fewer showcases in the later years) were directly linked to the struggle of fundraising. Options were already limited in terms of only considering ethical funding that didn't compromise the values of Shake! or Platform.

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9. *Santiago de Compostela, Galicia, Spain, 2017*

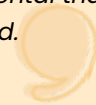
Shake!'s bold, uncensored stance encountered repeated rejection from the funding world, forcing Shake! to operate when chronically under-resourced, and to remain accountable to young people regardless of limited funds. More enlightened funders trusted Shake!'s youth-led approach and enabled Shake! to develop, but financial precariousness is draining. To confront this, Shake! has also been active in challenging funders who resource youth and racial justice work to make the funding environment more supportive and less hostile, more driven by youth need and less driven by hoop-jumping and auditing.

Derek A. Bardowell is a writer, philanthropy advisor and former Director of Programmes at Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust. He has been a long-term friend of Shake! since his work at Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, and generously agreed to be interviewed for this report:



*'Here you had an organisation or movement that was done in the right way. It wasn't a charity, it was kind of incubated by a charity [Platform] which meant it had a bit more freedom to not be put into different boxes and be narrowed really early. It couldn't be what funders wanted it be or would have wanted it to because it was slightly incubated ...The difficulty for me was of course watching the trajectory of organisations [like Shake! and Manchester-based Reclaim<sup>10</sup>] and watching other organisations emerge two, three, four years afterward who ended up scooping up the money, because they were able to misappropriate that language and monetise it in a way that some of these organisations were not able to monetise it.*

*What you have seen over the last five, six years are a number of organisations which I'm sure are doing really good work, but they've done that off the back of the labour of organisations like Shake! and Reclaim. I think it is just really important that Shake! tells this story because no one will do it for them. Organisations that over the last five years have gained huge amounts of money and publicity have the resources to erase this story ...Shake! has bridged the gap between movement building and the mainstream. Sure other organisations were doing it but not to the scale and success that I saw with Reclaim and Shake! ...I think it is fundamental that the legacy [of Shake!] is captured.*



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10. Reclaim is a youth leadership and social change organisation. A small but bold charity, using their experience and platform to support and amplify the voices of working-class young people. (from: [reclaim.org.uk/about-us](https://reclaim.org.uk/about-us))

As we contextualise and highlight Shake!’s movement-building approach, it’s important to remember that we did not do this work alone. We built many long-lasting relationships to work towards transformative change. It was our original intention in this research to speak to partners about their experiences of this collaboration and the learning that potentially took place between Shake! and partners. Unfortunately, in the context of Covid-19, with many grassroots organisations facing limited capacities and resources, we encountered difficulties in our own capacities, and in securing speaking time with partners. Thankfully, their collaboration with Shake! has been documented in the past and so here we will name them as a way to honour their creativity, work and contribution to Shake!. This is, of course, a non-exhaustive list. Some have been with us throughout, some for short periods of time and some in a rotary and seasonal way:

**AFROGROOV**

**Bernie Grant Arts Centre**

**Brady Community Arts Centre**

**Conversations: Verse in Dialog**

**Free Word Centre**

**Granville Community Kitchen**

**Globe Poets**

**Healing Justice Ldn**

**Liquorice Fish**

**Nawi Collective**

**Numbi Arts**

**Nuwave Pictures**

**Raven Row Gallery**

**Rich Mix**

**Stop the Maangamizi**

**Rep The Road**

**Stephen Lawrence Centre**

**Stuart Hall Foundation**

**The Albany**

**The Rainbow Collective**

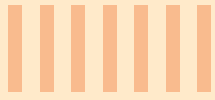
***and many more ...***<sup>11</sup>

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11. See *Gratitude* section in *Voices that Shake! An Anthology of Creative Movements for fuller list of acknowledgements.*

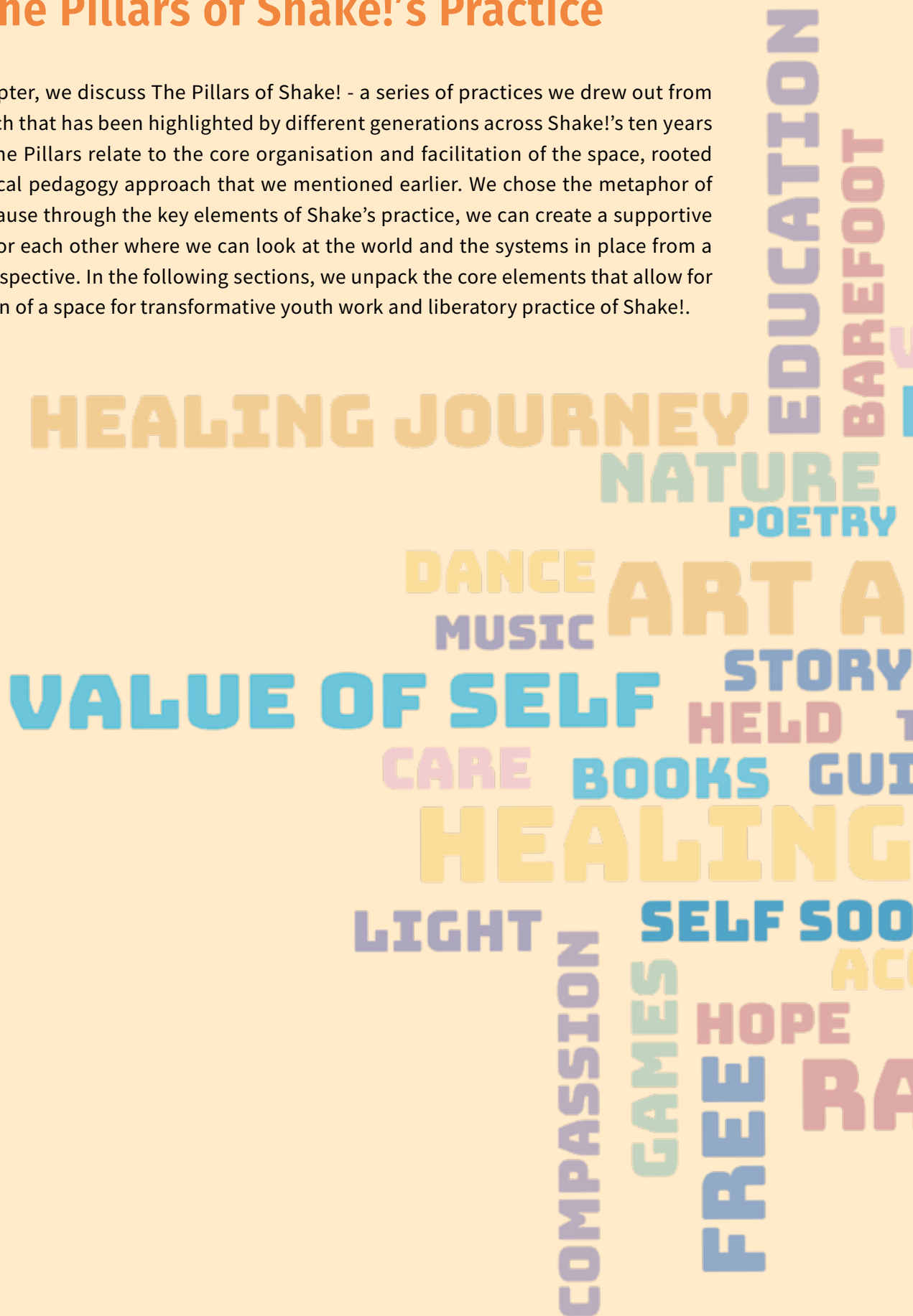




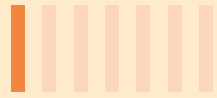


## 2.3 The Pillars of Shake!'s Practice

In this chapter, we discuss The Pillars of Shake! - a series of practices we drew out from the research that has been highlighted by different generations across Shake!'s ten years of work. The Pillars relate to the core organisation and facilitation of the space, rooted in the radical pedagogy approach that we mentioned earlier. We chose the metaphor of Pillars because through the key elements of Shake's practice, we can create a supportive structure for each other where we can look at the world and the systems in place from a unique perspective. In the following sections, we unpack the core elements that allow for the creation of a space for transformative youth work and liberatory practice of Shake!.



VOICE CRY **FOOD** CREATION  
LOVE TRUST INTERVENTION  
SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY **EMBODIED**  
**S ACTIVISM** HEAVINESS  
WRITING NON-HIERARCHICAL  
TIME LEARN LIBERATORY PRACTICE  
IDE FUN BEING PRESENT  
PROCESS LISTEN  
THE FRIENDS COMING HOME  
CESSIBLE INTERCONNECTEDNESS  
TRUTH  
**ADICAL** ENERGETIC  
FAMILY  
PLAY



## Unapologetically Political

### – Black People & People of Global Majority-led

Despite the emergence of many more Black people and people of global majority-led spaces since Shake!'s inception, we are still not properly represented in sectors dominated by white-led organisations and white leadership, which are disproportionately resourced and platformed. There is a wide acknowledgement that Shake! remains a unique, uncompromising space to date:

*'I wanted something that had that decolonial consciousness and I could be in [...] a room with people that I didn't necessarily have to explain all of that to.'*

**Grace**

*'Shake! specifically, explicitly ... was open about being a people of colour space, being a working-class space, using art as a tool for transformation [...] Being explicit about what it was at the time, I thought it was quite rare ... and I remember looking into a lot of spaces and thinking there were not many around ...very specific art-activism, people of colour, working-class.'*

**Rose, about discovering Shake! in 2016**

*'Being on the other side as a funder at that particular point, I can say that from firsthand experience there wasn't anything coming onto my desk that was about "environmental justice" –which is a lovely popular term now– "racial justice" and "arts", there wasn't anything, let alone anything that was Black and brown-led doing it ...it was the fact that it was being explicit about race. It was the point that there was so many programmes at the time that were trying to do leadership for young people, targeting Black and brown kids that were not led by Black and brown people.'*

**Derek A. Bardowell**

*'You don't sugarcoat the pill and that's been really really useful.'*



**Naima Khan**

**Former Programme coordinator at Act for Change Fund (Paul Hamlyn Foundation); currently Director at Inclusive Mosque Initiative.**

Shake! has been an innovative space in the landscape of youth work. Shake! stood firm, firstly by being led and designed by Black people and people of global majority and intergenerationally, and secondly by communicating explicitly and politically about the intersectional issues that impacted our communities, which attracted many young people. As a Shake!r puts it:

*'It felt like at Shake! it was enough for me to have my own experience, being a woman of colour, being a Black woman and not having to be like "Oh have you read this book?" It didn't feel elitist.'*

**Anisa**

Since its inception, being overtly political in its content, processes and practice, Shake! has differentiated itself from the majority of youth projects which are often promoting employment and skills development without interrogating and addressing the systemic barriers that fail marginalised young people. Many projects self-censor, feeling forced to present a non-political, or 'apolitical' approach on very political issues (poverty, housing, access to food, racism, mental health for Black youths and youths of global majority). On the other hand, as one Shake!r remarks, Shake! is powered by an:

**'unapologetic recognition of politics in everything'**



## Radical Pedagogy – Centring Arts and Culture

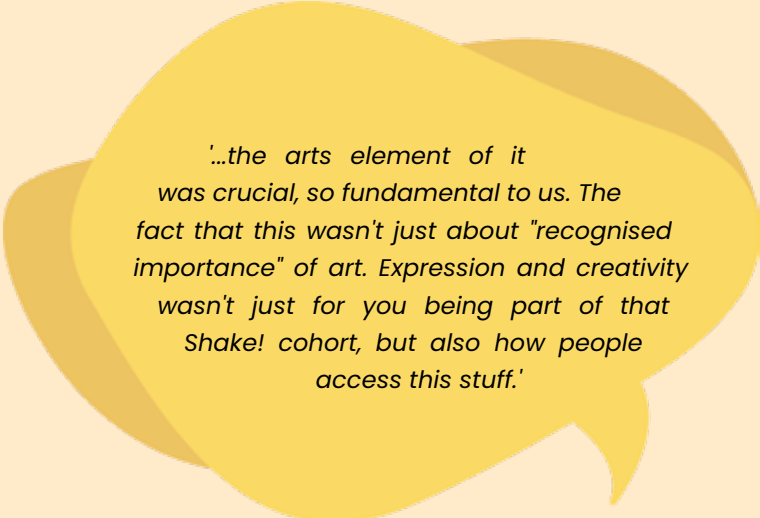
Other features which distinguish Shake! from many other youth spaces, both in 2010 and still today, are the explicit connections between art and activism, and the radical pedagogy approach. This approach refuses the hierarchical nature of most of our society's learning spaces and instead invests in the practice of freedom, through critically and creatively exploring young people's realities, uncovering root causes of the injustices we face, and sharing tools to engage in its transformation.

Shake!'s radical pedagogy is rooted in the understanding that:

- a) Young Black people and people of global majority have limited access and opportunity to engage with the exclusive white-privileging art world, even though we are shaping culture everyday.
- b) Systems of oppression thrive when our imagination and creativity are destroyed.

The more we disengage with our creative energies, the less likely we are to re-imagine<sup>12</sup>, sustain our creativity and hope for a future that holds all of us with care to thrive.

Using art as a tool to bring about transformative change has been at the heart of Shake's practice. During the courses, artist facilitators engage young people with creative methods such as art, poetry, film, zine-making, bodywork and music to process, heal, dismantle and respond to systems of oppression, and at the same time to make sure young Black people and people of global majority are put at the centre of re-imagining, dreaming and creating future possibilities. As Derek highlights, Shake! was pioneering in how it framed art practice for education and activism:

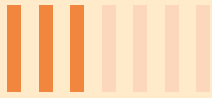


*'...the arts element of it was crucial, so fundamental to us. The fact that this wasn't just about "recognised importance" of art. Expression and creativity wasn't just for you being part of that Shake! cohort, but also how people access this stuff.'*

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12. 'Re-memembering' our ancestral connections in the context of our erased histories and 're-imagining' which requires re-imagining imagining as part of liberation, in order to imagine outside of the context of oppression.





## Radical Cultures of Kindness – Co-Creating through Trust

Shake! emphasises kindness to oneself and kindness to others by honouring individual worth as well as the relationships that are to be honoured with others. Shake! focuses on kindness as a pedagogy as something to get smarter at and to practice. People described this feeling presenting itself as ‘being met where you are’, not feeling like you ‘were not read up enough’ or ‘not enough of an activist’, of being listened to and respected, and pushing for everyone to show that level of respect. It is a key safe space-building practice of Shake!, and that so many people reflect on it is a testament to its successful impact.

Shake!rs told us that being listened to and being actively encouraged to use our voices are two of the ways that kindness is communicated at Shake!. In this way, listening and speaking are made equal, in a society that thrives on vocal dominance. The idea of being present and listening, being empathetic and comfortable within yourself without having to prove anything is something that many Shake!rs find very supportive and in defiance of what society rewards. Nathaniel, in the WhatsApp group, explained:



*'From day one meeting, [Shake! was] just so accepting and understanding'*

Another Shake!r explained:

*'Being heard, I remember Farzana saying  
"You are heard here, you don't need to over assert yourself."  
It is something that I carry with me ... thinking about after Shake!,  
seeing how healthy it can be to interact with people,  
I try to be like that when I am in the presence of other people.'*

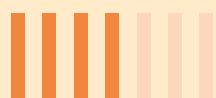


Further, the radical culture of kindness foregrounds Shake!'s co-creation and co-facilitation practice. Shake! made strong bonds with those who facilitate, for example: Dershe Samaria and Patrice Etienne of Nuwave pictures, The Rainbow Collective and musician Marcina Arnold, and they would visit more than one course throughout the decade. Shake!rs are supported to become facilitators themselves – forming lasting partnerships.



Creating this family means that sharing resources and knowledge is shown to be an act of kindness, directly opposed to the ways in which knowledge is competitively guarded in its ivory towers, in the formal educational system or the arts.

Furthermore, for young people to see Black people and people of global majority who have had similar life experiences, and who have cultivated this radical culture of kindness is invaluable. This community of arts practitioners regularly attends showcases to support and celebrate Shake!rs – support is a key way of showing kindness and consistency. They also offer work and collaborative opportunities for Shake!rs and help those learning about new ideas to keep learning and growing past the intensive course.



## Community Care – Solidarity through Shared Lived Experiences

Giving space for others to share their story and own their experiences, and in doing so, creating a feeling that an experience is shared, that it is collective, was a process many described as a key experience at Shake!. The power of sharing their stories was very impactful as we highlight in Chapter 3. The pain and solidarity of being in a space where people could voice similar trauma rooted in systems oppression was a new experience for many Shake!rs.

People who recognise their space and stake in collective struggle show up for each other in solidarity and protect each other, and for many of our interviewees, Shake! was the first place they experienced this. Shake!rs describe the overwhelming feeling of someone having your back when you've been dealing with something alone for so long, coupled with the pain and frustration of realising how many people close to you have this same experience. Sharing their stories helped young people understand that they are not defined by their circumstances or experiences, and Shake! highlighted for many the collective power that comes from putting these experiences into a context of structural oppression as opposed to individual 'burden'.



## Trauma-Informed Practices – Encountering our Wholeness

From about 2020, it has become the norm in general charity and youth work funding applications, to use keywords such as ‘mental health informed’, ‘mental health aware’, ‘co-design’, ‘youth-led’, ‘well-being’. These terms often describe mechanisms trying to compensate for the power dynamics inherent to the charity world and its youth programmes, rather than a conscious political positioning and systemic action on the part of the organisations. Shake! took a different stance, back when the language of ‘well-being’ and ‘mindfulness’ had not been fully integrated to the corporate and mainstream world.

*‘... like 2014, it’s not like long ago but people wouldn’t really talk much about “mindfulness”.’*



**Sahar**

Researcher Annick, as a youth worker who started practicing in 2013, observed these dynamics herself and how the funding and charity world slowly started being more welcoming of well-being-centred language, even though it is more of a change of language, with often no real questioning of the problematic nature of the structures, aims and means of mainstream youth intervention. Following on from the co-option of ‘well-being’, in researching Shake!’s evolution we have seen a gradual shift where post-trauma work becomes more and more a defining Shake! practice. This happens as the political context around Shake! becomes more severe, with austerity tightening its grip, more and more funding cuts to youth and frontline services and the disproportionate racialised impacts of Covid-19.

As discussed before, doing youth work in 2010 and doing youth work in 2017, 2018 and beyond is very different. External events such as the murderous fire at the Grenfell Tower in west London on the 14th June 2017 brings Shake!’s 2014 theme of ‘States of Violence’ for Black people and people of colour more than ever to the forefront of Shake!’s mission: surviving the state in the mind, in the body, and in the soul as a self- and collective-care strategy. Non-eurocentric spiritual practices, self-care language formulated by the most marginalised, and movement work show up more and in a more direct way in the last few years of Shake!’s decade, while at the same time building on the learnings and traditions of the previous years. For example, participant Sahar in ‘States of Violence’ described how the poetry workshops supported her to process her own experiences and access her own emotional landscape and capacities.

Another Shake!r talks about how at Shake! we confront:

*'the horrible oppressive system, while having all the care. Shake! had this special thing that other spaces don't.'*

This connects to later conversations led by Farzana Khan **on the physical impact of oppression on the body** (leg muscles, kidneys, solar plexus, breath ...). Looking back on a decade of work, you can see how embodiment, healing practices and the connections between race and mental health are present all throughout, but show themselves in a more explicit and intentional way in the latter years. Farzana observes:

*'after-care, trauma practices weren't really talked about [...] it was still unusual [...] the field of trauma ... It's still an emerging field. So I think we used what was best available to us in that time, which was grounding, doing breathwork and making sure it wasn't an add-on, it was integrated into the work [...] and also knowing our boundaries around it.'*



**We invite you to try this:**

**Unclench your jaw.  
Drop your shoulders.  
Take three deep breaths and roll your shoulders back 3 times.  
Choose at least two other places to do this throughout reading the report.  
You decide when you feel the need to pause or in response to what you've read.**

Derek A. Bardowell's interview with us, further highlighted how Shake! championed this approach of linking race, oppression and their impacts on mental health, particularly on young people:



*'[Shake!] was explicit about race ... there definitely wasn't anything [else I saw] around the impact on racial discrimination in our lives, the traumas it causes and how we carry those experiences with us and how that manifests into the different spheres we go into.'*

Opening a Shake! space means welcoming people and their bodies, and the things they carry with them now and in the past, acknowledging trauma. This is why grounding the work is crucial. To witness young people's whole selves properly and offer them the possibility of creative exploration, community healing tools, unlearning and learning. To support our presence, Shake! shares exercises that connect young people to their bodies, the space, and to each other in ways that feel comfortable and also support them to opt-out and adapt those practices.

Freewrites, grounding and breathing exercises were mentioned by all of the Shake!rs we talked to as a fundamental element of their Shake! experience and of the Shake! space, and in ***Shake! the System Guidebook: Rituals, Tools and Practices*** we will give examples of exercises that anyone can lead and offer.

Shake! amplifies and makes sense of the intersections of the political strategy and liberatory value of healing and repair for communities that are marginalised. Shake! creates space to understand traumas, contextualises them in regard to oppressive systems and accesses/provides access to tools to support individual and collective wellness. Shake! holds space in a way that destigmatises mental health conditions. It supports Shake!rs to identify when they are not receiving meaningful care or being harmed in structural oppression, supports young people to identify what can be done, and creates space for these conversations in their personal lives and relationships as the impact findings highlight in Chapter 3.



**We invite you to take an intentional pause.  
Consider moving away from where you are right now,  
sip some water or a warm drink.**



## Embodied Liberatory Practice – Movement Work

In Shake!, facilitators intentionally choose different types of movement work. Movement activities are woven into a general flow over the course of the two, three or five days, to create openness and space, and the opportunity for exploring collective and individual healing through non-eurocentric modalities. Shake! brings in spiritual tools, methods and traditions of centring the body in the process of healing. All Shake!rs we spoke to, talked about movement work in some capacity. As Shake!r Jethro explains:

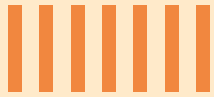


*'[movement work] was intentional to facilitate conversation. We would do yoga and have some tea to relax and disconnect from everything outside the space. We may have come from work, taken a stressful journey during rush hour and it would ease us into a deeper discussion.'*

During our second Research Gathering, another Shake!r said:

*'The point about the healing trip (a journey of healing throughout the Shake! course) really resonated with me. I focus on embodiment, we all do the "Oh my body hates me so much", and Shake! helped me with that. We did exercises and I felt my legs after years! The importance of having people your own age who understand (a Shake!r's experience). Everything was intentional, the yoga, the grounding. Healing is very much connected to reconnecting to your body, and this is intentional in Shake!.'*

Movement work reconnects us to a way of communicating that is often neglected. It can foster self-soothing: you may have realised you felt down or heavy but been unable to hear the body connect to where it was originating from. Shake! supports young people to engage with their own bodies through calming and anxiety-reducing movement practices which they could take with them beyond the course to self-regulate. Anni explained in their interview that 'the squeezing method', a form of self-massage, and the fact that it is so accessible, are helpful in regaining autonomy (see *Shake! the System Guidebook: Rituals, Tools and Practices*).



## Nourishment – Nurturing through Nature and Food

Most Shake!rs acknowledged green spaces as something they needed in their lives but were unable to access due to structural injustices, and they described connection to nature, to ‘green’, as a core part of Shake! practice. Shake! actively chose community centres with access to green spaces that were representative of the community and working against the exponential violence of gentrification that took place during Shake!’s first decade of work.

Incorporating nature and green spaces, and reconnecting with food in a meaningful way, highlights the mental health impacts of having access to green spaces, and the politics of accessibility to green space for groups affected by urban planning and oppressive living spaces. For example, Shake! collaborated with May Project Gardens – a grassroots organisation reconnecting communities that are marginalised with nature for personal, social and economic transformation.

Similarly the Brady Arts Centre,<sup>13</sup> with its community garden, was used as a way to connect young people to nature and food to experience its healing impact, as well as have discussions about gentrification and the lack of green spaces for working-class and Black people and people of global majority communities, the food/medicinal industry and the compounding disconnection they inflict on our communities. It highlighted the structural ways that food was made inaccessible and encouraged Shake!rs to deepen understanding around food justice after recognising the ways in which food deserts and advertising targets create unhealthy conditions in our communities. At places like the Brady Arts Centre, the May Project Gardens, the Granville Community Kitchen, all London based and at Primary, in Nottingham. Shake!rs spent time cooking outside from fresh grown produce despite being in gentrified, congested city spaces.

In particular, Granville Community Centre<sup>14</sup> provided home-cooked warm meals for Shake!. Their hospitality was representative of communities working together and different branches of revolutionary work being combined. Food and the practice of sharing food were also mentioned in an overwhelming majority of the interviews with Shake!rs and facilitators as an intentional and meaningful part of the Shake! process that nurtures young people. For many Shake!rs, the traditional, integral, active relationship with food and communities was revived. Jethro, a Shake!r, explains the encompassing impactful experience of it in '#Foodfight reflections', his blogpost on [voicesthatshake.org](http://voicesthatshake.org).<sup>15</sup>

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13. *The Brady Arts and Community Centre Centre in London is home to Tower Hamlets Council arts, parks and events team and 'A' Team Arts, the council's youth arts team. (Read more at: [towerhamletsarts.org.uk](http://towerhamletsarts.org.uk))*

14. *Granville Community Centre, south Kilburn, London. A facility dedicated to serving the people of south Kilburn. (Read more at: [thegraville.org](http://thegraville.org))*

15. *Read Shake! blog post: '#Foodfight reflections' by Jethro Jenkins on [voicesthatshake.org](http://voicesthatshake.org)*







**We invite you to take a pause.  
Have you had a snack or a warm drink?  
During this pause, think of your  
Home/Community space.**

**What would be the Pillars of your  
Home/Community space?  
Explore on these pages and name them here**









## 3. The Impact of Shake! on Shake!rs, Facilitators & Wider Movements

As highlighted in the Methodology chapter, in order to explore the direct impact of Shake! as a space, a community, a course and a practice on its participants, facilitators and some partners, we asked a series of targeted questions in research interviews, the research WhatsApp group and in the Researchers' Community Gatherings. It's important to note the impact areas we discuss below are deeply interrelated and, in this chapter, as much as we highlight them in individual sections, inevitably, there will be some crossovers.



*'For me it was ... like, the first one, it was intense. It was extremely intense.'*


**Shake!r**

### 3.1 Supporting Mental Health & Emotional Well-being

Shake! kickstarted a journey of resilience, acceptance and healing for many young people. The impact on Shake!rs' well-being was three-fold: people became more aware of their mental health, what impacted them and identified their traumas in relations to the systems that create them. They used these insights and began transforming and healing themselves to transform other spaces they occupied, dissecting and then building those spaces back up (see section 3.5).

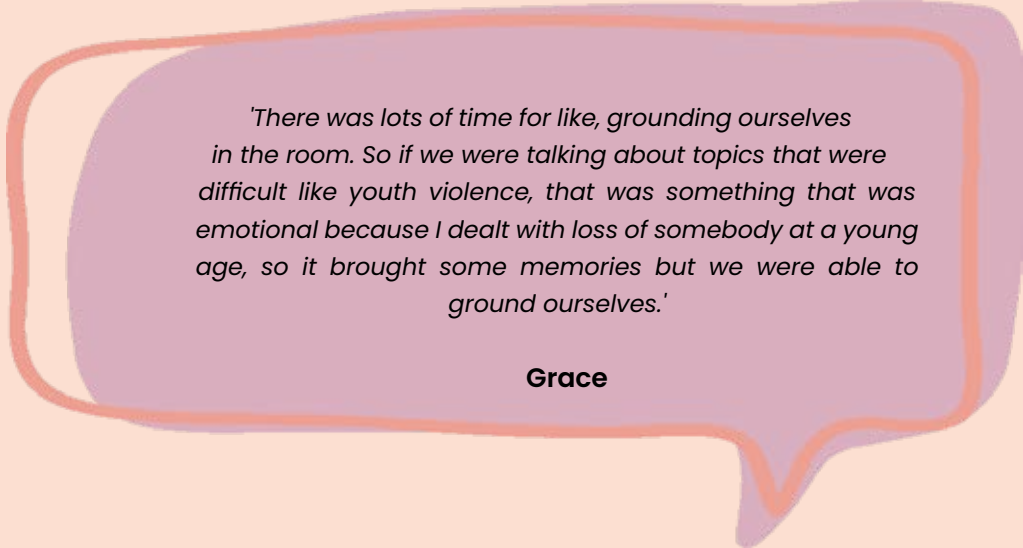
Most Shake!rs describe their first Shake! experience as 'intense'. They also describe it as 'beautiful', 'life-changing', but several of them felt the need to specify that it was not a 'fun' experience, 'it was just... it was beautiful. Sad but beautiful.' Most people describe feeling 'tired', 'exhausted' during the Shake! course, because of the intensity of the topics being brought up in the space and because of realising, often for the first time, their own traumas as a result of their lived experience of oppression.

However, all of them specify that the Shake! space and the facilitators' practice were designed in a way that took them through a journey of healing. It allowed them to take time to process what was coming up to the surface, and offered them the option to take time out or for a caring one-to-one space with a facilitator. Sameer and Holly at a Researchers' Community Gathering summed it up as:



*'It broke us down in order to build us up.'*

The feeling of discomfort was not shied away from, with grounding practices and an understanding of disassociation being introduced explicitly to address the myriad of reactions people had to each other's stories and to what was being unfolded personally. Shake!'s practices in the space allowed for what felt like a safe exploration of lived and real issues and topics with practices that Shake!rs were able to take on:



*'There was lots of time for like, grounding ourselves in the room. So if we were talking about topics that were difficult like youth violence, that was something that was emotional because I dealt with loss of somebody at a young age, so it brought some memories but we were able to ground ourselves.'*

**Grace**

Shake!rs such as Tiff and Sky talked about how 'being present' was encouraged where possible and safe, but also that Shake! acknowledged and affirmed how normal and appropriate it may be as part of our survival and our coping mechanisms to dissociate, not be present, and that being okay. In practicing it explicitly, and being asked to be truly present, they recognised the ways that so many other spaces didn't want their real engagement with all the complexity it brings. The Shake!rs 'experience of their bodies' need for connectedness links directly to another effect of Shake!: access to 'words' and concepts to talk about their feelings and experiences. Encouraging a space to honour and make space for all types of emotions, including discomfort, pain and anger, is a key part of facilitating Shake! while also holding what the boundary around this work needs to be, so people are safe and not retraumatised.

This was done through different processes fostered by experienced facilitators such as Sai Murray:

*'Another group that I was working with regularly was the mental health arts charity, Artists in Mind (AiM) ... It was inspired by a model in New York called the "Living Museum" and the idea of creative sanctuaries ... I facilitated a writing workshop with AiM for several years, which was beautiful ... we would begin each session by doing a freewrite together and from this one freewrite, with very little prompting, we had enough for the whole session. People in the group were obviously suffering with their mental health, but also, because they had been able to break the shackles and constraints of the daily 9 to 5, you know, beat the grind, people's minds were very open ... The writing was so powerful and we created a real community who really valued that space [...] I learnt a lot facilitating that group and the ethos of that group, some of the facilitation techniques of freewrite, group writing ... applying it for healing, was one of the things I tried to bring in as well.'*

The freewrite<sup>16</sup> is an exercise in uninhibited, uncensored writing, usually timed for only a few minutes. It has been one of the most quoted tools by Shake!s in our interviews with participants, as a self-care and facilitation practice they learnt and kept. One of the many things that Shake!rs describe leaving Shake! with is a self-care 'routine', 'practice', 'hygiene', including rituals to take care of their mental health (freewrite as mentioned above, journaling, grounding and breathing exercises, reading, drawing, walks). Most of them actually describe this practice as a 'skill' they had learnt on the course.

*'When I went to Shake! and it was "States of Violence" and we looked at different forms of violence: State-wide, national, global and personal. And I joined the poetry section and ... by writing ... it was the first time I had written in a good five or seven years [...] and it was terrifying writing it. But by them giving me the tools to be able to express myself, it was just an amazing healing process and it really changed me and allowed me to grow. I felt like I was able to put my past ... I was able to close the door and move on. A door that I am happy that is there, like it allowed me to build that door. A door that I can open and close whenever I want but that door was built from that poem. And I would have never been able to write it if I hadn't been involved in Shake!.'*

**Sahar**

*Zine Artwork from Movement Medicine,  
2017 - Sai Murray*

16. See Shake! the System Guidebook: Rituals, Tools and Practices for more on facilitating a freewrite.



xii

The sadness becomes so

great, I hear it in my clock



inch TV

the TV is on.

there is no one watch

how happy they are to have this TV.

Shake!rs frequently described finding appropriate and unique words, concepts and theories to describe their reality, their communities' experiences and connecting them to others going through the same thing which often remain outside of mainstream discourse. This had an impact on their confidence and ability to voice their concerns and needs. This emboldening of voice was described as a first time experience:



*'I feel like going to Shake! gave me the language just to talk about how being a person of colour in the UK is [...] You can't call out things if you don't have the language to.'*

### **Anisa**

Framings such as 'All oppression is Interconnected', a mantra and poster by Jim Chuchu, inspired by the poetry of Staceyann Chin,<sup>17</sup> were part of the resources to support Shake!rs in connecting struggles and experiences. Likewise, the Restoration Space – a relaxing library and display area in the corner of the meeting space – showcases work of Black authors/artist and authors/artists of global majority on resistance and healing. This helped situate Shake!rs in a continuum and reduced feelings of isolation and disconnectedness. Three Shake!rs describe leaving the Shake! space feeling 'empowered' and most of them described a general state of feeling 'inspired', and like they could 'take on' more things, or like they could 'change the world' (Promi). Some Shake!rs explain they returned to spaces where they previously struggled (education, work) feeling more confident and like they had more agency. Tasnima acknowledges how Shake! helped her build a response to inappropriate remarks from privileged people regarding her mental health:

*'I remember at school, I had to be given this counsellor, and telling her like, I had a lot of financial issues, a lot of issues with like food and stuff like that, and basically telling her how it was affecting my mental health – and her just being like [...] "Oh you shouldn't focus on material things", something stupid [...]. I can tell when people are chatting shit about my own mental health. I'm still going through it but I'm just like "Nah you don't know. Yo, you're not broke, you can't chat, basically."*

17. Chuchu, Jim (n/d). All oppression is connected [artwork].

# ALL

## OPPRESSION IS CONNECTED!

"ALL OPPRESSION IS CONNECTED"

MURAL BY JIM CHUCHU  
INSPIRED BY THE POETRY OF  
STACEYANN CHIN

Four Shake!rs also explained experiencing a dip in their mental health, either through the course or right after, due to becoming ‘aware’ of the systemic mechanisms that affected them and their communities, the breadth, the history and the relentlessness of these oppressive systems. After experiencing this moment of being hyper-aware and realising that, in a way, ‘ignorance is bliss’, this dip is always followed by the realisation that ignorance is actually being an unarmed target on the battlefield of systemic oppressions. So Shake!rs who have talked about experiencing this ‘dip’ all explain that ultimately, they were thankful for the knowledge and awareness they had gained, making them more able to want to, and feel more confident to, bring about change.

For facilitators, supporting Shake!rs through understanding racialised trauma and the impact of oppressions on lived experience was intense, and also had impacts because of their own lived experiences. Facilitators needed to put some time and capacity for their own self-care, self-preservation, ‘unlearning’ and healing journeys. We see this increasing awareness and need become more apparent in the evolution of Shake!, which responds by building in pastoral support and healing and mental support in each course. Also with the sabbatical Shake! took in 2016 to create respite and space for reflecting and building more sustainably. Shake! even dedicated whole courses to collectively reflecting and growing from these issues and making space to be honest about the need to think on this together: *Surviving the System – Building Alternative Ecologies and Economies of Resistance; Healing the Cuts; Movement Medicine; Rep the Road – Making Home, Mapping Violence and Headspace.*



## 3.2 Deepening Agency – Connection to Body & Physical Self

All of the Shake!rs who participated in the research described an overall positive impact on their bodies and their physical sense of self. This could be in terms of perceptions of and relationship to their own body, any ongoing health issues or symptoms or their general state of health and energy during their time in the Shake! space. While Shake!rs described different impacts on their bodies, their answers clearly showed a shared experience of bodies living through structural and systemic violence, policed, pathologised, medicalised, submitted to a white cis-heteronormative gaze, constantly in the process of freeing themselves and staying free from that gaze and oppression.

Orla directly described the feeling of becoming aware, in the Shake! space, of her own disconnection to her body. Half of the Shake!rs interviewed recall this too. They shared that the process of initiating a reconnection was not easy or comfortable, but necessary, which explains the paradox in their description of the overall impact on their body. For many, while at times intense, Shake! was a space to become free. Shake! as a people of colour majority space contributed to many Shake!rs feeling released and comfortable in their body. In response to the question about her sensory experience on the course, Anisa explains:



*'I think honestly because it was predominantly people of colour, that made a huge difference to me. Because ... knowing that there's one aspect of my identity that I don't have to explain or I don't have to be on the lookout for like a white person touching my hair, or any of the nonsense I dealt with at uni ... so I think that in and of itself already put me in a better space.'*

Promi also shared how this impacted the rest of her life:

*'Honestly, it felt like you're not in a terrestrial plane, you're in another plane of existence where what you look like isn't being perceived, what you sound like isn't being perceived [...] It's like a vacuum but a vacuum of goodness and love. It's very anchoring. You carry that vacuum with you wherever you go, you can extend the vacuum to people around or you can keep it to yourself but it's always there.'*





As an example of making this space, during sessions, everyone is encouraged to hold themselves in the position that is most comfortable to them, including lying down, standing up, drinking water, generally prioritising their body. Young people noticed this and described it as radically opposed to what they experienced in school or mainstream white-led spaces where the body is policed, neglected and seen as being there to control, perform or be productive.

As we explained in the Pillars of Practice chapter, an important factor in the sensory impact of Shake! are activities centring or using the body. One Shake!r mentioned the games at the beginning of each day as a big element of her feeling comfortable and being able to 'loosen up'. Grace described enjoying the 'variety' of it and feeling 'activated', not sitting at a table all day. Orla highlighted appreciating the opportunity to release the 'social anxiety' she came into the space with thanks to the 'Rubber Chicken' game, which involves shaking your limbs out one by one and then all together.

Turning to facilitators, Paula described a toll that Shake! had on her body and health. Because of internal pressures such as the struggle to secure funding, working for Shake! often involved unpaid extra hours. After courses, facilitators all used the word 'exhausted' to describe how they were feeling, including physical exhaustion, from holding the space and facilitating. At the same time, the tiredness went alongside their deep commitment to the work. Sai used the words 'heaviness', 'excitement' and 'peace' equally, which show this paradox. Farzana explained she remembers feeling 'invigorated and tired at the same time'. There is a constant tension between the toll that the need for responsiveness, including to Shake!rs' crisis situations, takes, and yet how the work feels important and how the pay-off is 'always worthwhile', in the form of a 'deep love'. Farzana described this tension as typical of frontline work, but not sustainable or to be normalised. Sai also talked about the contrast of returning to 'normal life' where unfortunately maintaining some practices such as meditation is difficult. Shake! can become, even for facilitators, 'a space to breathe', a space specifically dedicated to sharing those practices.





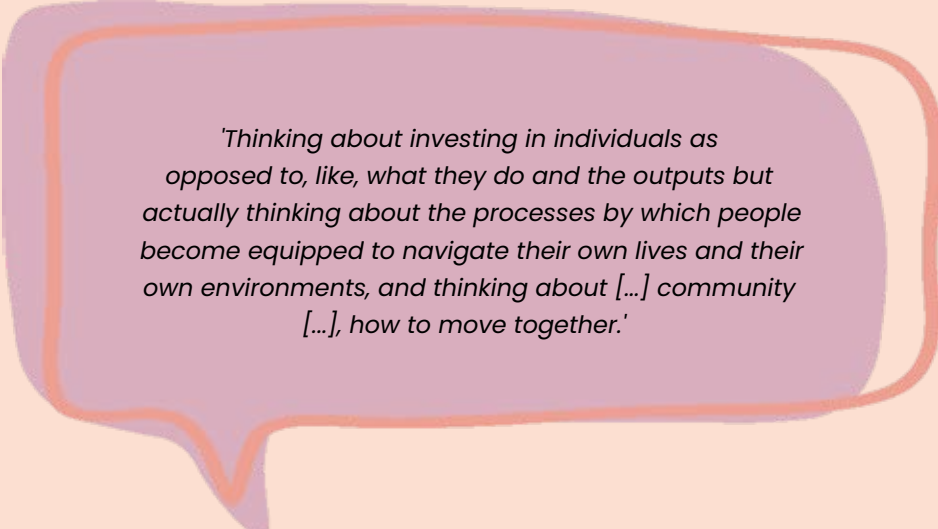
**We invite you to take an intentional pause.  
Consider moving away from where you are right now,  
sip some water or a warm drink.  
How about practicing a freewrite from our  
Shake! the System Guidebook: Rituals, Tools and Practices.<sup>18</sup>**

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18. See more on freewriting in Shake! the System Guidebook: Rituals, Tools and Practices.

### 3.3 Developing Skills, Professional Practice & Opportunities

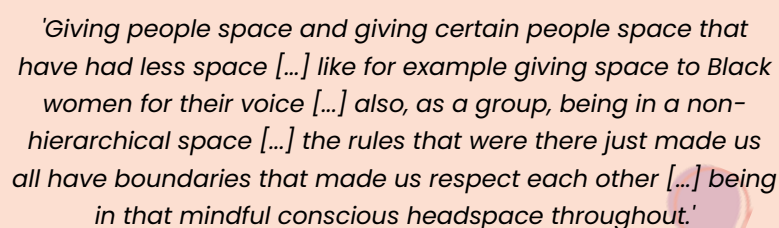
Here, we should specify that we do not want to focus on skills that would only be seen as valuable by the neoliberal capitalist system we exist in. Our definition of skills is expansive and covers any form of practice that requires a learning process and becomes a tool in the life toolbelt of a person (for example, 'skills' in self-care that Shake!rs mentioned in previous sections). Contrary to most formal education spaces, Shake! refuses to place its participants in a passive, disempowered position, and centres their capacity for action and restoring agency, for emboldening existing skills and expertise, for active listening, learning and solidarity. As Farzana explains, it is about:



*'Thinking about investing in individuals as opposed to, like, what they do and the outputs but actually thinking about the processes by which people become equipped to navigate their own lives and their own environments, and thinking about [...] community [...], how to move together.'*

Nonetheless, we did investigate the professional skills that Shake! teaches and allows people to develop, as it is a highly skilled space with an explicit purpose of group work and art production. In our questions, we rejected the corporate differentiation between 'soft' and 'hard' skills and instead let Shake!rs describe what skills they had gained through Shake!, starting with whatever came to their minds and what was most meaningful to them.

Many Shake!rs spoke about creating a supportive space, and how that space created capacity to imagine different paths opening up:



*'Giving people space and giving certain people space that have had less space [...] like for example giving space to Black women for their voice [...] also, as a group, being in a non-hierarchical space [...] the rules that were there just made us all have boundaries that made us respect each other [...] being in that mindful conscious headspace throughout.'*

**Grace**

### Skills developed through Shake!:

Very often, Shake! enabled young people to connect with their/a purpose and explore a different path. Two Shake!rs we interviewed changed careers or subjects of study and linked their decision to Shake! because it emboldened them to prioritise what they were curious about or what they felt made more sense for them:

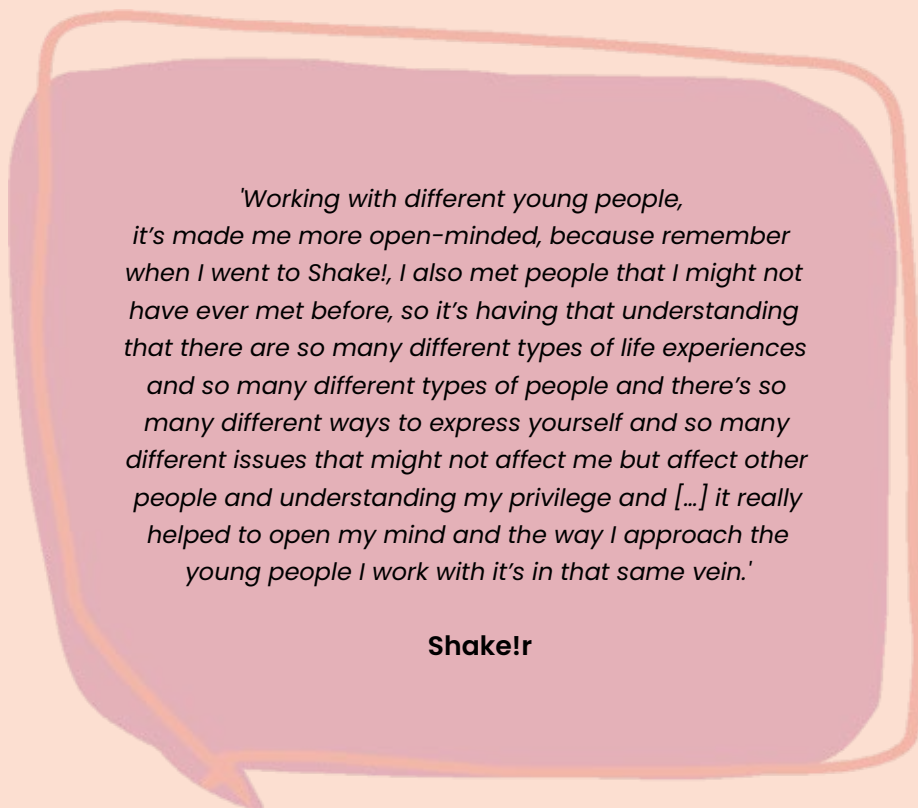


Some Shake!rs spoke about how they learnt to build equity in professionalised spaces, particularly in white- and middle- class dominant spaces, and developing boundaries, valuing own work, and requesting to be paid for their labour, etc.



*'I thought a lot about going into youth work or curation or the space between the two following Shake!.'*

**Shake!r**



*'Working with different young people, it's made me more open-minded, because remember when I went to Shake!, I also met people that I might not have ever met before, so it's having that understanding that there are so many different types of life experiences and so many different types of people and there's so many different ways to express yourself and so many different issues that might not affect me but affect other people and understanding my privilege and [...] it really helped to open my mind and the way I approach the young people I work with it's in that same vein.'*

**Shake!r**

All the Shake!rs we talked to valued the 'Opps' (opportunities) newsletter that Shake! sent and still sends around regularly. The Shake! programme offered continuity through mentorship and follow-up workshops with alumni, and this enabled many to become facilitators for Shake! themselves after their experience as a participant; for example, Dershe, Dhelia, Tasnima, Rotimi, Haneen, Nathaniel, Annick, Tiff, etc. For example, through Shake! Christianah met facilitator Dershe who mentored her to make connections in the legal field.



Shake! had a particular impact on young people who are/were in the process of becoming youth workers and facilitators. Sahar explained she used facilitation techniques and activities she learnt through Shake! in women-only groups in Palestine. Facilitators like Dershe comment:

*'It's helped me in every single part of my career. A lot of the stuff I learnt I practice as a life coach with my young people. A lot of the young people I work with, I send them to Shake! [...] it's become a good resource.'*

Shake!rs take on opportunities in other spaces, and more and more spaces that are not made for us; white-majority cultural institutions, media and charities begin to value their artistic work, as it gets recognised, shared and celebrated. Young people such as Dershe, Nathaniel or Rotimi, as mentioned before, experienced their first public speaking events, including outside of London, representing themselves and Shake! and training people very quickly after their first Shake! course. Other Shake!rs accessed paid public speaking, poetry, singing and writing gigs. These include Rotimi Skyers' debut book launch *Have you ever seen a sistah blush?*<sup>19</sup> and Dershe Samaria's executively produced documentary *Standing Among The Living: One Man's Journey Through The Ebola Crisis*<sup>20</sup>, screened at the Miami Film Festival and now on BBC Africa. Selina Nwulu's first book of poetry *The Secrets I Let Slip*<sup>21</sup> was published in 2015. Selina participated in the first Shake! in 2010, and in 2015 was honoured with Young Poet Laureate for London.

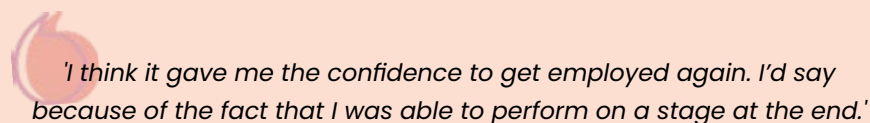
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19. Have you ever seen a sistah blush? – words, illustrations and designs by Romey Sky (2017)

20. Standing Among The Living: One man's journey through the Ebola crisis – Dershe Samaria, Executive Producer (BBC Africa, 2019). Available to watch at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Los50Inuh0w](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Los50Inuh0w)

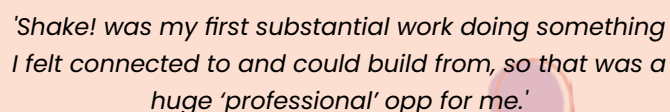
21. The Secrets I Let Slip – Selina Nwulu (Burning Eye Books, 2015)

This is in a context where, as mostly Black working-class and people of global majority working-class, many of them experience the job world as exploitative and violent or at best disappointing and not fulfilling, or not directly linked to things they care about, on art and social justice in particular. The Shake! pedagogy and experience supports young people with this experience of adversity in the job world. As Grace recalls:



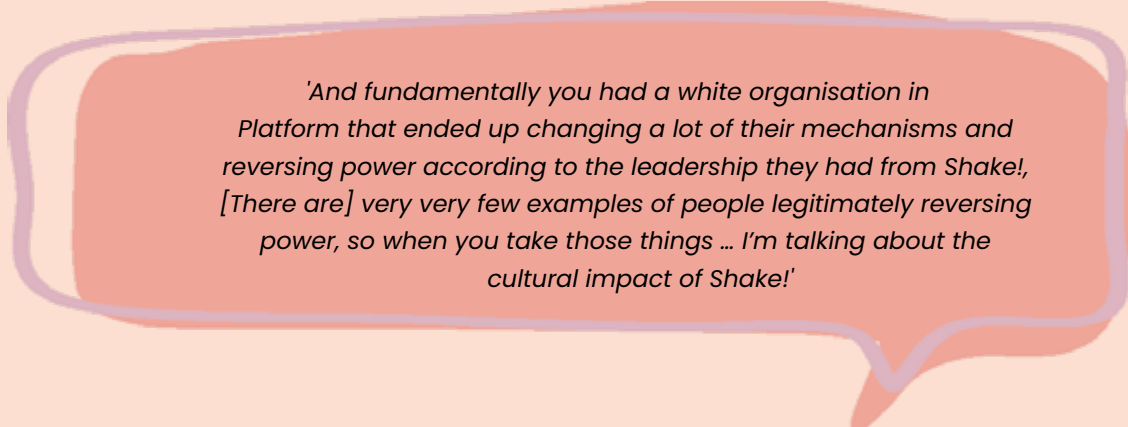
*'I think it gave me the confidence to get employed again. I'd say because of the fact that I was able to perform on a stage at the end.'*

Some Shake!rs went on to run training sessions for Platform staff and other charities/NGOs in the sector, and they are supported by the team to do so, while others became directly employed by Platform. Some took up contracts with Shake! and commission-based work for Platform like Khadiza, Samia, Nathaniel and Shezara:<sup>22</sup>



*'Shake! was my first substantial work doing something I felt connected to and could build from, so that was a huge 'professional' opp for me.'*

Further, Platform staff members Jane and James talked about Shake!rs working in the Platform office, and how the presence of mostly young Black working-class and people of global majority working-class inherently changed Platform's course away from the mostly white middle-class space it had been ten years ago.<sup>23</sup> Shake!'s existence demanded momentum for structural changes in recruitment in Platform, and today Platform's staff make-up is far different and diverse across race and gender identity and sexuality. Shake! has created a unique culture of allowing and encouraging young Black people and people of global majority to take up spaces, and demand seats at strategic tables, and create their own tables that went far beyond an intensive course, and Platform is the first organisation to have been positively transformed, also at governance level: one Shake!r was a Trustee of the charity for two years. Derek A. Bardowell also talked about Shake!'s pioneering approach in shifting power in his interview:



*'And fundamentally you had a white organisation in Platform that ended up changing a lot of their mechanisms and reversing power according to the leadership they had from Shake!, [There are] very very few examples of people legitimately reversing power, so when you take those things ... I'm talking about the cultural impact of Shake!'*

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22. See Shezara's Shake!r Profile in *Voices that Shake! An Anthology of Creative Movements*.

23. For more on Shake!'s impact on Platform, see Jane's essay 'A platform for Shake!, A shake for Platform', in *Voices that Shake! An Anthology of Creative Movements*.

## 3.4 Meaningful Relationships & Helpful Networks

All of the Shake!rs interviewed described forming meaningful relationships through Shake!. In the previous section, we mentioned relationships and Shake!'s opportunity-sharing being helpful to professional development, but here we focus on friendships and community care. Every single interviewee, including facilitators, describe developing strong relationships during the intensive course. The research findings highlight how facilitators continue to support Shake!rs outside of the intensive course. Shake! engenders community and spreads its impact into more communities, supporting Shake!rs in becoming leaders. The Shake! family's strong relationships turned into active networks, and these connections have made big impacts beyond Shake!. Many Black-led and people of global majority-led resistance and healing projects appeared throughout the decade 2010–20, where often, Shake!rs are involved, or people who met through Shake! are organising together in a different space. Shake! and Shake!rs are proud to be in the community with **Rainbow Collective**, **Nawi Collective**, **Globe Poets**, **Fighting SUS**, **Skin Deep** and **Nuwave Pictures**.

However, maintaining relationships after the course proved more of a challenge for a small proportion of Shake!rs. Sky mentions for example that a WhatsApp group would have helped her after it ended, also as a way to 'cope' with the 'intense journey' she had just been through. Yet even the 3 different Shake!rs who said that they didn't stay in close contact with people from their course stated that the quality of the bond they created is strong enough to re-establish that connection easily, knowing they could reach out at any point. Several people, like Promi, used the vocabulary of a 'Shake! family' to encapsulate the internal dynamics of the Shake! network and it is a term that Shake! embraces and uses to communicate about the feeling of connectedness. As Farzana describes, there is a sense of:



*'A deep community.  
I love the Shake!rs [...] They'll tell me when  
they've broken up with someone [...], one Shake!  
introduced me to their partner before their parents [...]  
It's not just about this, oh this career thing, or this work  
thing or this activism, but about their lives and these  
monumental stages in their lives [...] people feel  
they can reach out.'*

# 3.5 Building Social Justice Movements & Community Organising

The majority of Shake!rs we talked to had not been personally involved in explicit ‘activism’, community organising or campaigns prior to Shake!. Interestingly, Shake!rs who were not involved in activism before Shake!, often describe it as linked to a lack of capacity due to mental and physical health issues, difficult living conditions and traumatic circumstances. However, Shake! enabled them to see their existence, resilience, the radical practice of prioritising themselves and self and community care as activism in itself. Alongside this, Shake!rs reported learning about a wide variety of themes connected to activism and community organising, such as:







For all of the Shake!rs we talked to, Shake! changed their expectations, standards, definitions of activism and community organising, and 'expanded [their] knowledge of activism happening in Britain' (Shake!r) at the time of their course. For example, Anisa explained that she went into her final year at university and sought out a support network. Anisa was a science student who learnt at Shake! about the exploitation of African American woman Henrietta Lacks through her cancer cells. Through this, she recognised that her curriculum was built on racism, and her experiences of university as a young Black woman had been structurally racist. In 2014, the same year that Anisa attended her Shake! intensive 'Headspace', the 'Why is my curriculum white?' campaign was born. On her return to university, Anisa explicitly through the impact of Shake! sought out Black women at university as a support system and was more confident to be engaged in student activities. In her interview, she talked about actively making her mental health a priority and increasing her own resilience to deal with daily institutional racism by creating a community around her which she learnt through the impact of Shake!'s practice.

This connects to the ways that many Shake!rs experienced their world after attending Shake!. Returning to an educational institution was a common experience for Shake!rs. Two layers that are interconnected around education are: Shake!'s pedagogy and Shake!'s pursuit of support systems. Shake! provided an education model, system and practice that allowed young people of global majority to experience a nourishing and transformative education model.



This education model allowed them to then understand and analyse their own disillusionment with the education system in a different way: the problem is not them but systemic, because, as Shake! courses showed, alternative practices are possible. This was a consistently shared story. Shake!rs found that being with a collective who understand what you were going through helped them reframe their experience and become more active in organising against injustice.

Anni explained that after experiencing Shake!, they wished they had known and been introduced to ideas around politics and art earlier in life. As an artist, musician and illustrator, Anni's experience at Shake! was politicising and highlighted to them that their art was a tool of expression and political activism. After Shake! and with the space held to share stories, Anni wanted to share their experience with students they worked with as an art technician. It was troubling for them to see the effects of the education system on young Black artists and young artists of global majority, and more so to feel like a collaborator in the structures. Their experience of art school which was white and violent and "devoid of politics", and their experience at Shake!, were starkly juxtaposed.<sup>24</sup>

They merged these experiences and understood that again, like Anni, pragmatism was key. They felt an urgency to do something and started where they could. They saw their role as intervenor and mentor, taking inspiration that Shake! facilitators gave them, gently and consistently guiding their students through one on ones. They felt able to guide students to be acutely and explicitly aware of the inherent politics in art, and of whiteness in school. They encouraged students to think about how their positionality is affecting their choices of art projects or tutors' responses to their ideas. They actively introduced students to artists outside of the curriculum, Black artists and artists of global majority who were sometimes also activists, to show, not tell, the ways that art is a healer and tool for justice. Sharing with other young people right at the heart of oppressive systems was Anni's way of appeasing a sense of urgency and continuing the impact of their Shake! course.

Tasnima explained how Shake! helped her to actively share the impacts of sexism on her mental, emotional and physical health with her older brothers. She spoke about teaching them and learning with them to actively dismantle gender dynamics within their household and how they were learning about their privileges and re-learning and then using their positionality to support her. She explained that it was the beginning of an ongoing mission with her brothers and this type of impact is what makes Shake! invaluable. It was poignant, inspiring and familiar to hear this from Tasnima, a younger sibling changing the dynamics with her older brothers, and knowing the long-term effects generationally.

Further, Tasnima reflected on how Farzana unpacked the motivation for the Shake! team to include some white young folks in the space, the intention in creating allies, and on how she learnt useful processes over the years from the way the Shake! core team considered and managed the presence of white participants:

*'I remember feeling uncomfortable in the first Shake!, there were like white people with dreads [...] I don't think they understood their own position in that space [...] In the last one there was hardly any white folk at all [...] except this one person who was there in the capacity of an ally, and who was essentially doing labour. He was still an active member [...] but he was modelling what allyship looks like in that specific space, I remember finding that so interesting [...] He was white, cis and male and I remember that being, like, mad. He really upheld the space in the ways he needed to [...] and like sometimes that just looks like cutting up fruits for us [...] In the first ones there were definitely times where white people would be crying and I remember me and my friends being like... [...] And it was nice to see how Shake! actively worked on the issues of that.*

Further, Shezara said:

*'From what I can remember about my experience, there were white people and it was managed, intentionally, so certain people took up more space and others less. I was also on a later Shake! course so this practice may have been honed and white participants more familiar.'*

However, it is important to note here that one of the Shake!rs we interviewed felt differently about this topic:

*'I felt that white people often centred themselves and their feelings took up too much space. It wasn't always managed as well as it could have been, but I guess it was a learning process for Shake! too. I didn't bring it up because I thought it would come across rude and hostile. I also didn't engage in poetry because I felt like I would have to "showcase" trauma for the white gaze.'*

**Shake!r**

On the other hand, Holly spoke about family conversations following Shake!. She explained how after Shake!, she began decentring whiteness and having educational conversations with her parents about their own whiteness and privilege. The emotional journey was reframed, her white feelings were reframed, she acknowledged the ways in which her feelings are always paramount in society and how this is structurally violent for Black people and people of global majority. Holly learnt how to hold space for feelings and address privileged feelings. She shared that Shake! was the moment that she acknowledged her own white privilege and power, and she left with tools to have transformative conversations around race and bring about change. She continues to do so. Further testimonies include:

*'I've been involved in [...] activist groups when I was like really young with my old man [...] And it was cool, it's still cool, I still dip my head in now and again, but I guess before Shake!, the places I was going to ... I'm not gonna like take a shit on them because I guess it's different times and now it's a lot more different but back then ... I wouldn't say the word inclusive would be used per say, you know ... it just wouldn't ... I just wouldn't use that word. It was like you know "We're Black but certain type of Black" [...] As I got older and with Shake! I realised that there are some spaces I just won't go to no more. Or if I do go I speak up and state a point, it doesn't matter if I get backlash or not. I'm a Black man, I literally got so many privileges in our community, it would be a crying shame if I don't speak out about the things that are said, or not said.'*

**Rotimi**

*'It really changed my relationship to activism and community organising. So I'd been [...] like seriously involved in activism for about a year when I joined Shake! And watching the way that spaces were facilitated in Shake! made me really think about the way that other activist spaces were facilitated ... and it gave me space to be much more critical of things that were going on in other spaces that I was in and [...] much more aware of how I deserve to be treated in spaces like that. Because I went into a lot of spaces as like a child, 16 years old. I was very vulnerable and I think that had a really complex impact on my relationships with the other people I was organising with who were, like, adults – and I think Shake! gave me the skills to sort of understand how I deserve to be treated in those spaces and sort of name problems that I felt I had and I think Shake! also really cemented how I felt about wanting to be more involved in community organising. Also gave me connections to other community organisers in London that helped with campaigns.'*

**Shake!**

As we see through these two testimonies, Shake!'s impact on the young people's relationship to the activism world manifests in many different ways. It armed them with strong expectations and standards regarding the politics of the spaces they would get involved in, through showing them truly inclusive, intersectional and holistic activist spaces exist. Learning from Shake!'s perspective and practice, they occupied other spaces with their new understandings of activism, and in particular, they introduced community accountability systems.

Not all the Shake!rs we talked to became 'active' activists involved in campaigns. Several of them described a limited capacity even following Shake!. However, their testimonies all converge towards an increased interest and knowledge in social justice issues, having more context and a wider perspective on connecting local and global struggles. They felt an overall feeling of empowerment, even when dealing with feelings of sadness and overwhelmed when contemplating the extent, depth and gravity of the struggle.

Further, the majority of Shake!rs explicitly talked about the opportunity to learn and contextualise the global implications and connections of the struggle they personally experienced or knew their communities were facing. In this way, Shake! acts as a two-way mirror and a two-way magnifying glass. It connects the hyperpersonal, hyperlocal to the hyperglobal and back, from climate justice struggles led by Indigenous people to the quality of air in London affecting first and foremost the lungs of poor Black people and people of global majority, to governmental funding cuts, to young people experiencing multilayered violence as part of their daily life.



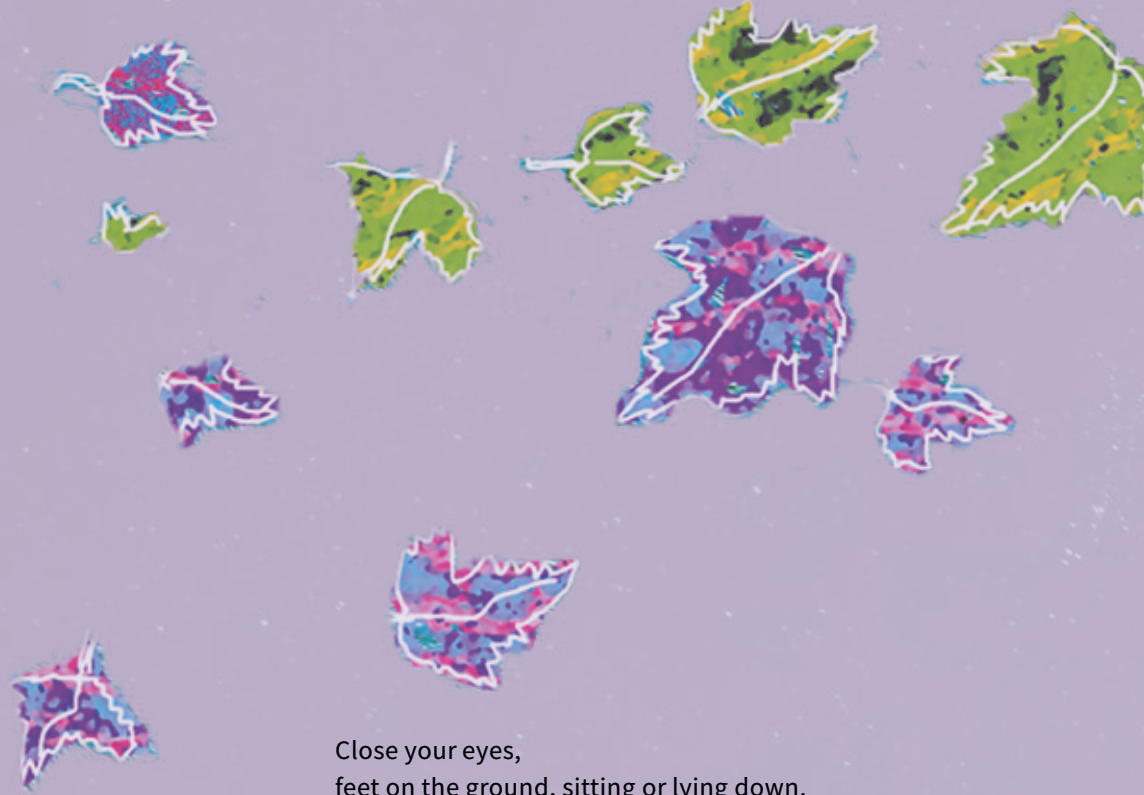


Lastly, it's important to also note Shake!'s impact in terms of introducing others to a new lens of looking at youth work, art and activism, beyond the cohort of Shake!rs. For example, Vivienne Jackson, Programme and Learning Manager for the Act for Change Fund for youth activism, talked to us about the impact of Shake! on the funding and youth sector:

*'... as an organisation doing radical critique of youth work, arts, and also funding, in a way that doesn't always make it easy for Shake!'*

Vivienne's former colleague Naima Khan explained:

*'... the resources you produce and the website, I have found invaluable to my thinking in general and (like Viv said) you don't sugarcoat the pill and that's been really really useful ... Something I've learnt from Platform and Shake! together and what has been quite radicalising for me has been your take on economic justice both within your organisation and the wider economic justice visions.'*



Close your eyes,  
feet on the ground, sitting or lying down.

Make sure you are in a comfortable position where you can feel the ground.

Take a deep breath in and out.

With the next breath think about how you are held, physically and emotionally.

If you are able to and want to, hold yourself now, that's fine.

Think about everything that goes into that embrace,  
how you are holding more than just you  
– a sum of generations, of survival, of dreams.





Even if you don't know their names, their faces,  
loving ancestors are here and they are holding you back.

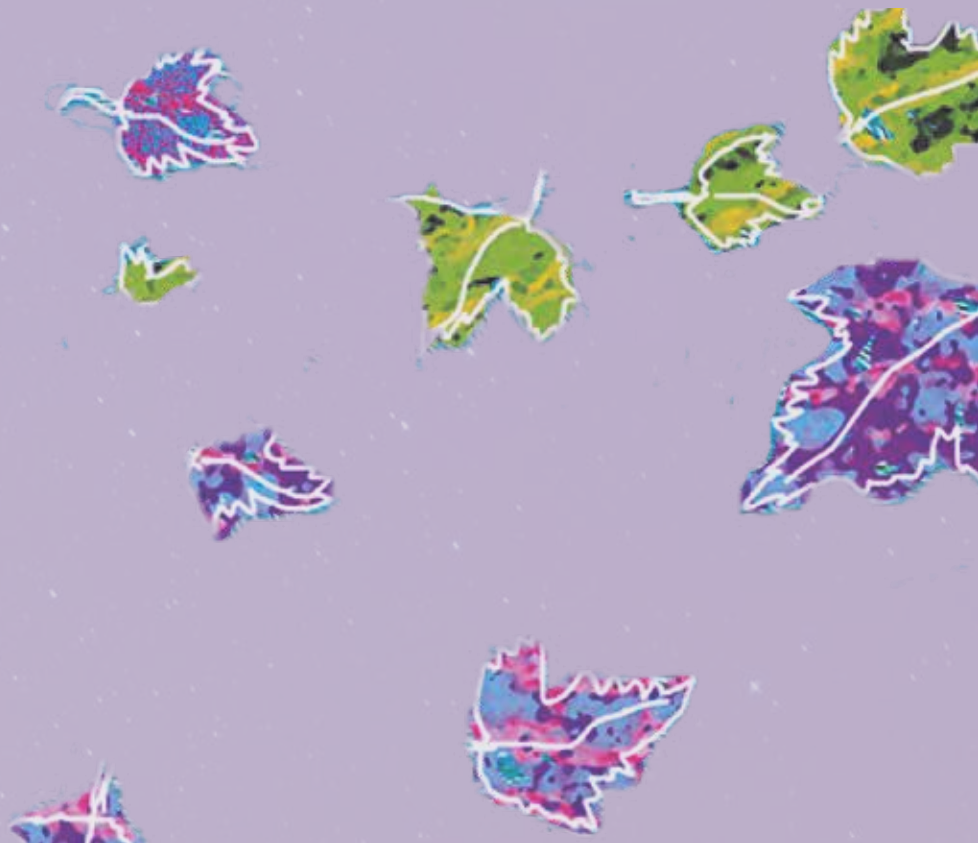
Let a smile rise to your face, slowly, naturally.

Imagine a warm light emanating from that smile.

This light is like the Moon during the day:  
even if it's invisible, it is there, and it will stay with you after this.

Slowly come back to your body with one last big breath.

Come back to your environment slowly through your senses,  
and open your eyes when ready.



## 4. Conclusion

In this Research Report we have explored what makes Shake! a unique youth, creative movement-building and community building space, according to the young people who have experienced it.

Through analysing the impact Shake! had had on our lives, we can get a better idea of how young Black people and people of global majority who took part in/became part of Shake! have been supported in navigating this decade shaped by austerity and systemic violence. In a context of institutions and spaces not made for us, and refusing to acknowledge the context of oppression shaping our relationships, Shake!rs have testified that Shake! centres young people's lived experiences and reinforces the work that many of them are already doing or are on the way to doing, carving out space for ourselves and each other. From our research, we affirm that Shake! has developed a transformative practice centring healing, interconnectedness and community accountability, building on the direct legacy of Indigenous, Black feminist, people of global majority, queer and grassroots traditions of community organising. If you want to understand the cultural and creative impact and legacy of Voices that Shake!, you can look at the anthology that goes alongside this report, which dedicates itself to the cultural and art practice within Shake!.

This is at a time when visibility for these groups' work and existence is even more threatened than ever in the UK. Shake! is part of a pioneering generation disrupting the exclusive culture of the art world and the charity and NGO sector, first of all simply by existing, then by equipping groups of young people with movement-building skills, to then take them into places not made for them to take up space and highlight their oppressive and exclusive nature.

**The overall positive impact on Shake!rs' lives shows a creative youth-led space, explicit about racial justice, concerned with the social and political issues that affect them, is possible and is necessary.**

The ways that Shake! has disrupted these sectors signals a trajectory for those doing transformative justice work more widely. If you work in the mainstream sector (civic, arts, educational, campaigns, NGOs, funding), question your mechanisms: are you obsolete? Analyse what needs to be unlearned and dissolved. Resistance against Shake! and other grassroots organisations and their methods highlights the radical and visionary nature of Shake!. If Shake!, or projects like us, threaten to destabilise your position in power and your response is to resist it, recognise that. This is crucial in this moment where there is heightened awareness of the tension between the ways that innovation is being resisted by mainstream institutions, including state apparatus maintaining the status quo by not devolving/ distributing power, and acceptance of the **community-focused response** that demands equity.

This current moment of the Covid-19 pandemic starkly shows the way oppressive systems are interlinked and exacerbated. This current moment in terms of the end of the first decade of Shake! is symbolic of a generation passing on the mantle, of investing in youth leadership and trusting in where that will take us. It is a time of collective ending of systemic oppression, and renewing collective innovation, young people reimagining and remaking our futures. This is a call to join us from where you are, and understand that the universalisation and supremacy of cis, able-bodied capitalist patriarchal whiteness is human construct and will be unmade. It's a call to you to take on your responsibility in the unmaking, and in the re-making.



**We invite you to take an intentional pause.  
Consider moving away from where you are right now, sip some  
water or a warm drink.**

## Afterwords

# Researchers' Journeys with Shake!

### **Annick Météfiá, Lead Researcher**

In December 2016, I came to London for the first time, for three days on my own. At that stage of my life I had been living in Paris for a few years, switching between different social and youth work jobs, trying to survive in a city I didn't enjoy anymore and dealing with mental health issues. I needed a change, desperately. I felt like there was a place where better things were waiting for me, and I had this weird inkling it might be London.

I remember telling myself these three days were about exploring and seeing if London would convince me I needed it.

At this point I had already been living vicariously 'in London' through social media. By that I mean that I (desperately, once again) was looking for and following what seemed to be good London-based grassroots social justice projects on social media, and made the mental note to try and get in touch with them when I would (finally) go there.

One of these was Voices that Shake!.

I don't remember how I found it exactly, but I had been following Shake! for a few months when I booked this trip to London. And then the 'Breathing Out' showcase at Rich Mix suddenly appeared on their socials, right on that weekend. I was so excited to attend.

It was a life-changing experience. I had never heard poetry like that, delivered in such an authentic, open, vulnerable, truthful, dignified and simple way, by people who looked like me, and talked about things I had experienced. Each poem was a fresh and unique take on trying to survive oppressive, maddening systems, on the constant ongoing, never-finished work of freeing yourself and trying to take your community with you. I remember Farzana's closing words. They felt like clear water I could drink, like pure air for me to breathe - like truth. At a time in my life where connecting with my emotions and letting them show was particularly difficult, the showcase made me cry five times in about two hours. At the end I came up to Farzana and Rose, tripping over my words, struggling to express how moved and inspired I was. I remember them responding in their typical humble and thankful way.

I moved to London on July 28th, 2017. In a notebook I had at the time, you can see the date of my first ever Shake! Workshop – August 15th. I did not waste any time to find Shake!.

I attended workshops and courses that changed how I view life, justice, mental health, youth work, the body, history, trauma, boundaries, spirituality and healing forever. Today I work for Shake!. I'm proud to call many of the Shake!rs I saw perform that night my friends, and I'm writing this at my desk in London, with the 'Breathing Out' showcase poster right above my head.

## Haneen Hammou, Secondary Researcher

Shake! was a healing space for me when I didn't really know what was particularly wrong. I went to my first course 'Headspace' in 2014 and I didn't have any expectations. Because of that everything I experienced was both more poignant and casual at the same time. The way Shake! ran and how it did things was as though this was 'normal'. Nothing was over emphasised. They didn't shout about how different or great everything was, we just experienced it. Like the nourishing home-cooked meals we shared – we understood them as something we should expect and not as a luxury. But no one ever said this to us. There's a casualness I can't pinpoint. And that's a big factor for Shake!'s imprint on me, the 'Be how you want things to be', the pursuit of the utmost 'radical' joyful things, simply because that's how it should be. But not even in a disheartened way, where due to oppression basic provisions have become radical, but in a way where 'I will curate what I want because I exist outside of these systems, so I will curate my space outside of it too... and with ease.'

Even my journey to attend the course was a ritual. I started reading for the first time in years on that train journey, reading for enjoyment, something that I had become detached from and had really upset me. So I link and owe that to Shake!, going back to reading. I only read Black women writers for a year after Shake! which was beautiful. Shake! is a space that made me think so much and introduced so much newness to me. Revolutionary, light, both in weight and brightness. And something I connect to laughing. Also it is the most erudite space I have ever encountered which has the energy to make me comfortable about not knowing, about feeling and saying that I don't know.

Shake! showed me that being listened to is one of the most loving things we can experience. I'm very good at being guarded without seeming to be and I am shy but confident in public-facing spaces. So, I can host an event, I can be really hospitable and friendly to, say, a friend's friend that I'm meeting. I can take on those roles well, but I can find it difficult if I'm genuinely trying to have a real conversation and develop a friendship. So when I'm very comfortable, it signals a lot to me. It's very reciprocal and I know I'm responding to my environment.

Something I wrote in one of my first freewrites is 'What am I without that which makes me shake?'. I come back to this often, all these years later. It means, what am I without the things I respond to or the things that society forced me to respond to. Shake! made me feel like I shouldn't always be up against something, trying to defend something or do something about it. This was loving – that's the best way I can describe it, and again it was shown, not told. My Shake! barometer is what guides me when I am encountering new political organisations/concepts/work. It 'feels Shake!-like', is the highest accolade I can give.

# Gratitude & Acknowledgement

This project was created by the group of Shake!rs that worked together in the Interviews, Research Gatherings and WhatsApp Group as research collaborators. We have listed them here, as well as other people we worked with and interviewed.

<b>Anisa Rashid</b>	<b>Naima Khan</b>
<b>Anni</b>	<b>Nathaniel</b>
<b>Annie</b>	<b>Orla Price</b>
<b>Christianah Babajide</b>	<b>Paula Serafini</b>
<b>Denielle Noel</b>	<b>Promi Ferdousi</b>
<b>Derek A. Bardowell</b>	<b>Rose Ziaei</b>
<b>Dershe Samaria</b>	<b>Rotimi Skyers</b>
<b>Dhelia Snoussi</b>	<b>Sahar</b>
<b>Farzana Khan</b>	<b>Sai Murray</b>
<b>Georgia</b>	<b>Sameer</b>
<b>Grace</b>	<b>Shezara</b>
<b>Holly Lubran</b>	<b>Sky Kelly Caesar</b>
<b>Jane Trowell</b>	<b>Tasnima</b>
<b>James Marriott</b>	<b>Tiff Webster</b>
<b>Jethro Jenkins</b>	<b>Vivienne Jackson</b>
<b>Laura Barker</b>	

## **Special thanks to:**

Platform for supporting Voices that Shake! for over a decade.

Jane Trowell for editorial assistance and project coordination.

Aruna Vasudevan of The Literary Shed for editing and proofreading.

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# Glossary

Many of the definitions provided in this glossary come from the knowledge we learnt directly from Shake!, and from the descriptions provided by participants and collaborators in this research project. Others, those marked (\*), we have incorporated from the *Our Prayer is Protest Glossary*.<sup>25</sup>

## **Being Present**

... is a two way fluid practice between being connected with yourself and being present in situations you are in. It is self-checking and regulating, in terms of emotional absorption and emotional draining. It is replenishing yourself before you are giving energy and checking that you move from a place of abundance. It is showing up for yourself like you do for others. This is implemented in the micro and macro, inner and outer work of movement building and resistance.

## **Colonialism (\*)**

Colonialism is the process of invasion and theft of land and resources, death and subjugation of the original inhabitants, and destruction of original/indigenous knowledges, languages and cultures.

## **Healing Justice**

A framework that connects health and wellness inequities to systemic and structural oppression. It reimagines health, wellness and wholeness determined by those most impacted. It builds their visions healing and health outside of the medical industrial complex.

## **Holding Space**

... interlinks with being present. It involves being intentional and recognising the energy and effort it takes to listen and engage. We hold space for our own emotions, and for those of others. We hold space for energies and for the depth of stories shared. It is an intentional, active act, to hold space for trauma to rise up to the surface and be named as trauma, and therefore follow that with a call for healing. Understanding that holding space is in itself a healing.

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25. *Shake!, Healing Justice London and Inclusive Mosque Initiative at Brady Arts Centre, curated by Farzana Khan. (2018) Our Prayer is Protest Glossary produced for Our Prayer is Protest festival [event]*



**Prefigurative Politics**

... is about enacting in the now through the way we relate to each other and organise politically, the kind of world we want to live in. In other words, 'practising prefigurative politics means removing the temporal distinction between the struggle in the present and a goal in the future; instead, the struggle and the goal, the real and the ideal, become one in the present.'<sup>26</sup>

**Self-led/Lived Experience Leadership**

For the liberated futures we seek, leaders of anti-oppression work must be those who experience oppression. All work should be geared towards these groups stepping into their power. Structures and systems of revolution and healing justice must be led through this type of leadership.

**State Violence (\*)**

Violence perpetrated at the hands of or on the behalf of the state. This can include police violence, military violence, the types of punishments and uses of control by schools, etc.

**Trauma (\*)**

A sense of emotional and/or physical overwhelm and distress which often follows exposure to frightening events, processes or stories, characterised by reliving the distressing events or situations, avoidance of cues/clues evoking the event, hyperarousal and/or a sustained sense of unsafeness.

**Trauma-informed (\*)**

An approach that recognises and responds to the reality and impact of trauma. It holds the prevalence of trauma, the signs and symptoms that inform behaviour and seeks efforts that do not lead to re-traumatisation, through safe and appropriate design, response and environments.

**White (\*)**

A historical system of power privileging white people's bodies, knowledge and supremacy labour, maintained through the exploitation and repression of people of global majority.

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26. *In M. Maeckelbergh 2011, 'Doing is Believing: Prefiguration as Strategic Practice in the Alterglobalization Movement.' See Bibliography*

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# Credits

## ARTWORK (By order of appearance)

- Front Cover Design: Tiff Webster, Liquorice Fish (2021)  
P.14–15: From original piece ‘Body’(2020) – Grace Lee  
P.23: Artwork by Sameer (2018) based on photography by Sana Badri  
P.25: Surviving The State & Healing The Cuts (2016-17) – Anni Movsisyan & Sai Murray  
P.28–9: ‘Seeds’ (2020) – Grace Lee  
P.30–1: Extracted from original artwork ‘Constellation’ (2020) – Grace Lee  
P. 58–9: ‘Roots’ (2020) – Grace Lee  
P.63: Zine Artwork from Movement medicine (2017) – Sai Murray  
P.65: All oppression is connected (2014) – Jim Chuchu  
P.86–7: From original piece ‘Body’(2020) – Grace Lee  
P.91: Shake! Team Illustrations (2020) – Anni Movsisyan

## PHOTOGRAPHY (By order of appearance)

- P.8: Shake! #SurvivingTheSystem (2016) – Voices that Shake!  
P.20: Shake! Showcase #ResistancelsFertile (2016) – Nadyah Aissa & Randa Toko  
P.32–3: Shake! Remembering!Re-Imagining!Reparations! (2014) – Voices that Shake!  
P.39: Shake! Remembering!Re-Imagining!Reparations! (2014) – Voices that Shake!  
P.45: Shake! Showcase #ResistancelsFertile (2016) – Nadyah Aissa & Randa Toko  
P. 52–3: Shake! Healing The Cuts (2017) – Voices that Shake!  
P. 55: Shake! #Foodfight (2015) – Voices that Shake!  
P.67: Shake! Showcase #Shakaring (2018) – Voices that Shake!  
P.69: Our Prayer Is Protest (2018), Healing Justice London – Wasi Daniju  
P.75: Shake! Showcase; Voice! Verse! Power (2013) – Media 4 Youth & Anarchy Photography Ltd  
P.79: Shake! #SurvivingTheSystem (2016) – Voices that Shake!  
P.80: Shake! Healing The Cuts (2017) – Voices that Shake!  
P.84: Shake! #SurvivingTheSystem (2016) – Voices that Shake!  
P.85: Shake! #SurvivingTheSystem (2016) – Voices that Shake!  
P.104: Shake! Pilot (2010) – Voices that Shake!

# Annex A

## Research Ethics Document

### **Shake!'s Theory of Change**

Voices that Shake! brings together young people, activists, educators and artists to challenge social and climate injustice, with a focus on addressing racial inequality.

We use a model of personal transformation and structural change, to challenge established imbalanced power-bases and re-imagine new infrastructures in opposition to capitalism and colonialism.

We build holistic decolonial educational programmes and creative campaigns to foster a catalytic and self-determined community of creative organisers/leaders embedded in and led by the grassroots. Together we work towards and cultivate transformative justice, systemic change and community accountability.

We work collectively to centre the leadership and solutions of the vulnerable and marginalised, to uplift and politicise the role that young people of global majority have, to prefigure the world we would like to live in: diverse, just, sustainable, community-led and resilient.

### **Doing Non-extractive, Decolonial research**

Non-extractive research should centre the voices of participants, it should do no harm to those involved, and it should benefit all parties. As researchers, we are responsible to participants and marginalised communities for the decisions we make, and these communities (which we are a part of) are the ones who have a final say on the validity and impact of the research. Benefits to participants can take different forms, and can be nested under three areas:

1. Benefits from the process: the kind of research we are doing provides researchers and participants with opportunities to reflect on experiences linked to Shake! and their own work. By centring care in our approach and generating a safe and stimulating space of discussion and reflection, we aim for participants to benefit from the experience of taking part in the research process, gaining new perspectives on their past and present projects.
2. Benefits from the outcome: the report and *Rituals, Tools and Practices* emerging from the project will benefit Shake! and the wider sector, and this includes the research participants. We will make clear to participants how they can potentially use the outputs of the project in the future to uplift their own work and the work of their communities.
3. Other kinds of support we can provide: we are engaging in this project as paid workers for an organisation, backed by funders. This means we have access to resources and contacts. We will discuss what kinds of support we can offer participants within and beyond the scope of the project, and within the possibilities of our roles and the organisation we work with. This includes setting up structures for continued support beyond the end of this particular project.

Our approach to research is decolonial. We challenge the pervasive, hierarchical dualisms that take white, cis-het male, able-bodied experiences and perspectives to be more valid than the experiences of women, of Black people and people of global majority, of LGBTQI+ and of disabled people. We challenge the separation of mind and body and of nature and humans as constructed in the modern paradigm and imposed through colonialism, and uplift embodied forms of knowledge that break away with such distinctions. We challenge universalist approaches and instead create knowledge from situated positions, embracing our subjectivities as crucial aspects of our knowledge creation processes.

### **Shake! Code of Conduct [excerpt]**

When conducting research, we will subscribe to the following principles:

**Being transparent and accountable.** We will inform participants of the objectives of the research. We will make sure to obtain their consent to participate and to the inclusion of their contributions in the report, and explain how they can withdraw that consent at a later point if they wish to.

**Respecting boundaries.** We will be conscious of participants' boundaries when soliciting their contribution to the research and in our interactions. For some participants, revisiting their experiences before/during/after Shake! could bring up existing trauma.

**Being responsible in how people's personal information and data is used and stored.** In line with GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation),

- We will only collect the information we need.
- Participants will be informed of what their data will be used for.
- We will keep to the original purpose, and if this changes we will inform participants.
- The processing of data will be fair and transparent.
- We will only use project folders for storing information and make sure no one outside the research team has access to data or participants' personal information.

**Being conscious and respectful of other team members and of the collective project we are building together.** We will respect team member's time and boundaries, expressing our opinions, disagreements, and our own boundaries in ways that are honest, clear and kind.

**Revisiting our approach and methods as the research moves along.** We will be open to making changes to our research methods and approach when necessary, acknowledging the unpredictable nature of social research. We will check in with the rest of the team in order to make sure any changes adhere to the project ethos.

**Being conscious of the potential effects of the research.** We will be aware of how participants may be affected by contributing to the project, keeping in mind the possible effects (both positive and negative) of exposure. We will take time to discuss with each participant the options of named and anonymous contributions and keep records of those decisions.

**Prioritising participants' well-being over the imperative to find things.**

**Being conscious of not reproducing exploitative dynamics in our research.**

**Doing research during a Pandemic.**

We will contemplate the difficulties that participants and our fellow team members might be experiencing during this time. We will be flexible within our possibilities, and place safety and well-being first. We will be reflexive about how our research and the results we obtain are shaped by the current circumstances, which disproportionately affect marginalised groups and communities.

If at any point during the research any matters of ethical concern arise, researchers will bring these up with the Research Mentor and Programme Manager.



# Annex B

## Research Interview Questions

**Here are the main questions the interviewer is planning on asking you during your interview for the #ShaketheSystem research project.**

This is just a general roadmap and obviously extra questions might emerge from your answers. If you have any concerns about a question, don't hesitate to let us know before your interview- but remember, as specified in the consent form: at any point, you can choose not to reply to a question without having to explain why.

We have one hour for this interview which means we have about two mins per answer if we want to respect your time.

1. Could you introduce yourself? Could you tell me your name, age, pronouns, where you are from, where you are based now, and if you have an occupation at the moment?
2. Can you show me the piece of art you brought along and explain why you chose it?
3. How would you define/describe Shake! to someone?
4. How did you first hear about Shake!?
5. How was the process of going to attend your first event/course? Did you encounter any difficulties to attend/access it (accessibility needs, fears, concerns, money, transport, capacity ...)? Were these accessibility met by Shake! (e.g. paying for travel, covering lunch)?
6. What was the name of the first course you attended?
7. Why did you want to attend?
8. Headspace: can you give examples of things you learnt during the course?
9. Heartspace: how would you describe the emotional experience of the course?
10. Body: how would you describe your sensory experience in the course, your experience of it in terms of your body?
11. How did you feel after taking part in the course?
12. Did you stay in touch with Shake!/? If yes why, and how? If no, why? Did you get involved in Shake! after your first course? If yes how (attended more courses, became a facilitator, attended public events?)

13. Would you say that being part of Shake! has had an impact on any skills you have? If yes, how? Did you reinforce or transform existing skills, did you develop new skills? How?
14. Would you say that being part of Shake! has created professional opportunities for you? If yes how/which ones? If relevant: would you say that being part of Shake had an impact on your professional practice/how you view your job/occupation?
15. Would you say that being part of Shake! connected you to activism and community organising? If yes, how?
16. Would you say that being part of Shake! has had an impact on your mental health? If yes, how?
17. Would you say that you formed meaningful relationships through Shake!/? If yes how (professional, collabs, friendships)?
18. The aim of this research is to create a multisensory toolkit that centres the knowledge and expertise of Shake!rs and non-corporate, decolonial ways of transmitting information. Basically we don't want it to be a dry report with just text to read but to be interlaced with self-care tools, sensory breaks, etc. If there was one tool/activity/exercise that you experienced as a Shake!r that you think should go in a toolkit, which one would it be? Why? What sort of soothing or stimulating visual would you like to see in a report like this?

# Annex C

## WhatsApp Group Prompts

### Week 1 :

**#TuesdayThought:** What was the most impactful activity/game/exercise task that you took part in at a Shake! Space and why?

**#FridayFun:** Share the activity you picked with at least one other person that you haven't shared it with before and do the activity together.

### Week 2:

**#TuesdayThought:** It's been 10 years of Shake! Why do you think Shake! has been needed over this past decade?

– Think inward with hindsight to 'you' before attending Shake! and your needs, and 'you' right after attending Shake! based on what you gained from it.

– Think outward to what Shake! was responding to in society and about the contents of Shake! courses.

**#FridayFun:** Pick and share a music video that you can link or connect to your Shake! experience.

### Week 3:

**#TuesdayThought:** What do you find frustrating with Shake! in your experience?

What do you think are the limits of Shake!?

What would you do differently if you were in charge of Shake!?

**#FridayFun:** Didn't send one, instead encouraged people to continue with sending music videos, reply to each other and planned virtual meet-up times.

### Week 4:

**No prompts sent this week.**

Difficulty in arranging convenient time for all participants for virtual meet-up. Originally planned for this week to be a virtual meet-up encapsulating both #TuesdayThought and #FridayFun. Took a pause and rearranged.

### Week 5:

**#TuesdayThought:** Catch-up and reply to each other.

**#FridayFun:** Shake!r Denielle Noel also known as The Creative Nomad took over Shake! social media platforms for a week. This week's #FridayFun was a link to an Instagram post with the theme 'Celebration' posted by her on the 2nd of September 2020 .

Three questions posed by Denielle about Celebration, respond to them personally by writing down answers and share with the group what you feel comfortable with sharing.

**Week 6:**

**#TuesdayThought:** What word/language/vocab have you learnt in a Shake! space that made a big difference for you in terms of articulating a personal experience/that helped you express a reality you were going through?

**#FridayFoodFun:** Describe your ultimate favourite food/self-care food, eating it and/or making it? And why?

**Week 7:**

**#TuesdayThought:** Did Shake! connect you to a global movement/issue that is particularly relevant to you and how?

**#FridayFun:** Take a walk and have a nap! Let the group know you've done this and send pictures of the walk.

**Week 8:**

**#TuesdayThought :** Are you confident to create and facilitate a Shake! inspired space and what two/three points would be the politics to guide your space?

**#FridayFun :** Write a letter to you in March 2021.

**Week 9:**

**Last Prompt:** What would you definitely want to be included in the research report to describe your WhatsApp Group experience and its impact

## Annex D

# Starting Shake! by Ben Amunwa

The idea was simple: to use education as a vehicle for social change. In particular, we wanted to tell the story of international human rights abuses by multinational corporations.

By 2010, I'd been working with Platform for several years on a project called Remember Saro-Wiwa which I was drawn to after attending the launch event featuring Angela Davis and other artists/activists at London's City Hall.

The project created a 'living memorial' to the late Nigerian writer and activist, Ken Saro-Wiwa. After mobilising a mass protest movement against Shell's environmental devastation in the oil-rich Niger Delta region of Nigeria, Ken, together with 8 other environmental activists from the minority Ogoni ethnic group, was hanged by the Nigerian military dictatorship on 10 November 1995. Shell is widely believed to have been complicit in their murder and associated human rights abuses by the Nigerian police and military.

Remember Saro-Wiwa asked questions about the purpose of memorials in urban centres – about who gets remembered and why. A decade before #BlackLivesMatter protests would topple slavers' statues, we toured the 'living memorial', a double-decker sized Battle Bus created by artist Sokari Douglas Camp, across London, Liverpool's International Slavery Museum and Bristol's Arnolfini Gallery. This was just yards from the harbour into which the statue of Edward Colston – a trader in enslaved Africans – was eventually pushed in 2020.

Remember Saro-Wiwa helped confront the paleness of the UK's environmental movement and its failure to understand the concerns and cultural differences of Black communities.

Legacy was important to us. I wanted young people from untraditional backgrounds to be engaged by Platform's message and to feel at home there long after I left. To achieve that, we had to take Platform out of its comfort-zone of mainly white, professional middle-class Oxbridge colleagues.

I cycled to Deptford. There I met Doreen Lawrence and her team at the Stephen Lawrence Centre. They had all the resources, contacts and local expertise that we lacked. They were excellent partners who were instrumental in the creative and project management work that followed.

With Platform's educator and activist Jane Trowell and teacher and organiser Ed Lewis, I started working with schools and colleges in and around Lewisham. We devised a pilot project together which secured funding from Arts Council England. The pilot brought together young people, facilitators, celebrated spoken word artists Sai Murray and Zena Edwards, and DJ Eric Soul to create art on issues of race, power and social justice. Jane came up with a title – Voices that Shake! – that resonated for all of us.

That Shake! continues this vital work under fresh direction is inspirational. I remember the beauty and impact of the artwork created by the participants in the pilot. I remember sharing a stage with Doreen Lawrence, who supported the project so generously. I'm grateful that Shake! has provided a space for young, Black creativity to flourish and to reflect on themes of race and power that continue to be so relevant today.



## Annex E

# Questions for White-Dominated Organisations

Some questions from Voices that Shake! for organisations which are attempting to journey away from classist, heteronormative, binary, ablebodied, neurotypical whiteness towards transformative practices for equity.

? How connected are we to the communities most impacted by the issues we are trying to address? To which communities are we responsible and accountable?

? Whose voices are shaping the ideas underpinning the work we do?

? How is the work uplifting, resourcing and enabling working-class people and particularly working-class people of global majority? Are they in the room, driving the accountability from the start?

? How is the work amplifying diverse forms of knowledge beyond Eurocentric cultural domination, to boost cognitive and knowledge diversity?

? Who are the best people to be carrying out the work for long-term, deep impacts that challenge structural inequity?

? How is our work benefiting/impacting those most harmed, and according to whose testimony?








? What is our analysis of the role we can play in bringing about transformative change?

? How much do we question and apply an analysis within our organisation that understands how race and class as well as racial capitalism show up in our workplace?

? In what ways do we contribute to undoing the domination of resources and power by the 'nonprofit industrial complex'?

? How is our daily work, policies and practice inside the organisation aligned with our longer term visions and strategies?

? What space is there to question inequitable structures inside our organisation, and whose voices do we listen to? How do we repair, redress and reimagine these structures?

-  How are we actively working to level power dynamics between everyone involved?
-  What does an equity-based approach to pay structures look like in practice? Including staff, freelancers and community. Are we paying community members for their expertise?
-  How do we reconceive staff pay structures to raise up people who have been systemically economically disadvantaged? How do we redistribute budget from those with disproportionate economic security that comes from privilege?
-  What are the mechanisms by which accountability can be practiced, while safeguarding and uplifting those most vulnerable and subject to marginalisation? This is for staff, participants and community.
-  How do strategic goals, processes and timescales support the journey towards transformative practice in equity? Are we listening to advice or experience that will get us to the heart of challenging injustice?
-  How are we building and fostering a culture where conflict around equity is held as generative and an opportunity for growth?
-  What pastoral support and advancement is built-in for Black colleagues and colleagues of global majority to counteract the burden of systemic racism, in order to refuse marginalisation or tokenism in the workplace and to enable an equity-based workspace?



Shake! the System has been funded by:



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**



Thanks also for support from the #iwill/Act for Change Fund, Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, Polden-Puckham Charitable Foundation,  
The Lipman-Miliband Trust and individual donors.







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Published by Voices that  
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ISBN 9781838393113



design:

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