

# Journey to Justice

In this article **Carrie Supple** shares information about a new project she is leading to promote social justice and empower young people to take part in the on-going struggle for social justice and rights. This resonates with our on-going concerns about 'active citizenship' and also shows how to make the most of the KS3 reference to 'precious liberties'. As Carrie shows here, once young people understand how those rights were won, they can understand the relationship between them and political action.

**“Change happens slowly and it takes persistence, perseverance and sacrifice. Some of the battles were won because innocent blood was shed. Freedom was not free!”**

*Janice Kesley who took part in the Birmingham, Alabama, school children's march in 1963 when she was 14*



## Introduction

Talking to young people throughout the UK as we set up Journey to Justice, there was disenchantment but also a desire to be constructive. Citing the 2011 riots one young man in South London told us, 'We had the attention of the world and all we asked for was a pair of trainers'. They realised that in order to achieve meaningful change, we need to learn how to organise in a strategic way - you could call it 'informed action'. The iconic example for them was the US civil rights movement which has inspired so many other liberation movements and is not yet won.

**“As a young person with autism, I identify with the struggle of the civil rights movement. I have been excluded, judged and not seen as a 'normal' human being. Journey to Justice would inspire me and give me hope with my own struggle for acceptance.”**

*(Max Ferreira, Barnet & Southgate College)*

Journey to Justice combines studying human rights movements in history and today, the music and arts of protest and the tools of social change. Our mission is to inspire and empower people to take action for social justice. Our work provides opportunities for beneficiaries, especially those who feel marginalised, to see themselves as part of a powerful story of social change. We aim to show how 'ordinary' people can achieve extraordinary things together. The principles underlying the project are based on 30 years of participatory work with young people.

We embrace all subjects and enable cross and extracurricular opportunities for primary, secondary, SEN, alternative provision, FE, HE and adult education teachers and students. And our approach suits youth and community organisations as much as it does schools. Our aims strike a chord with people of all ages, whether they are concerned about poverty, racism, care of the elderly, unemployment or domestic violence.

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**Without music the civil rights movement would have been a bird without wings.**

**John Lewis,  
US Civil  
Rights leader**

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**Journey to Justice aims to:**

- Reawaken public awareness of the long history in the UK and globally of individuals and movements who take a stand for freedom, equality and human rights;
- Stimulate debate through creative arts and multimedia programmes;
- Motivate people to see that injustice can be challenged and that they have the support and skills to play an important role in bringing about change;
- Equip people to take practical action for social justice with an intergenerational approach;
- Build networks of people working for social justice and human rights.

**Journey to Justice was founded in response to:**

- i) Increasing inequalities of income, education and

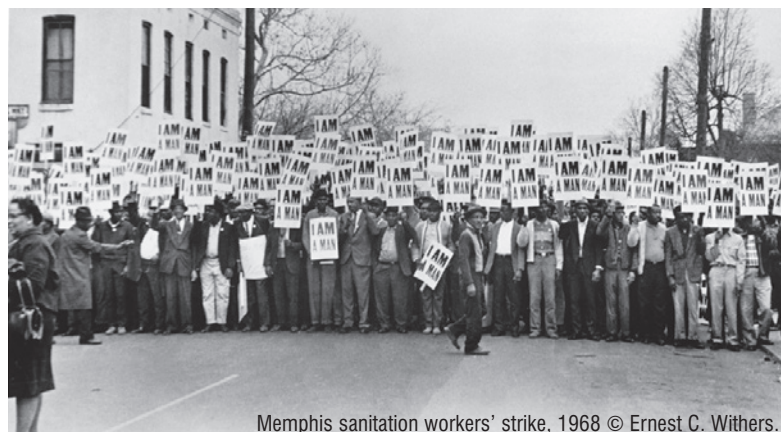
Carrie Supple was a teacher of History, Sociology, Citizenship and SEN and a project director at the Citizenship Foundation where she ran Youth Act, training intergenerational groups to campaign. In 2013 Carrie founded Journey to Justice. See her website: [www.teachingforsolidarity.com](http://www.teachingforsolidarity.com)



- employment opportunities;
- ii) A substantial number of citizens feeling powerless and disconnected despite a wealth of social change organisations;
- iii) A lack of public memory about the role of people who worked and still work for human rights. We stand on the shoulders of people like us who struggled for freedoms many take for granted;
- iv) An attack on the concept of human rights, the threat to scrap the UK's 1998 Human Rights Act and a sense that many of the institutions founded on principles we thought were secure (the NHS, the welfare state) are crumbling.

### Background

In 2013, after visiting some of the civil rights movement museums in the USA which brought that compelling history alive, I came back to the UK wanting to find a way for people here to learn about the civil rights movement. I contacted colleagues I'd worked with in education, youth and community, human rights and anti-racism, law, the arts and faith work and heritage, history and trade union activity and they led me to others. The response was



Memphis sanitation workers' strike, 1968 © Ernest C. Withers.

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**The travelling exhibition is a catalyst for a public programme of education and arts activities with young people and, crucially, for the adults who work with them so our work is embedded and sustainable**  
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overwhelmingly positive and we formed as a national community organization in October 2013.

The vast majority of people involved are volunteers and we have active groups in London, Newcastle, Sheffield and Sunderland with new ones developing all over the UK. For details of our management committee, patrons, volunteers and advisers see: <http://journeytojustice.org.uk>

We raised enough funding to launch and run projects and are going from strength to strength since our launch last year in Newcastle. We're planning JtoJ in: Sheffield, Middlesbrough, Sunderland and Tower Hamlets (2016), Slough, Nottingham, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee (2017), York, Bristol, Manchester, Leicester, Brighton, Dorchester, Leeds and Plovdiv, Bulgaria.

### The travelling exhibition programme

Our flagship project is a multi-media, interactive travelling exhibition focused on the US civil rights movement, its universal significance and its links to the UK including the 1963 Bristol bus boycott and Claudia Jones' and Pearl Prescod's march in solidarity with the DC March for Freedom and Jobs in 1963. We tell stories of less well-known men, women and children who were involved and we explore factors essential for a human rights movement to succeed (and how some 'fail').

We have chosen: Ruby Bridges and Barbara Henry (New Orleans school desegregation); Bayard Rustin (phenomenal organiser); Jean Stallings (National Welfare Rights Organisation); a Memphis sanitation worker and his wife, Elmore and Peggy Nickleberry (economic justice and racism); a Freedom Summer Voter Registration volunteer, Marcia Saunders and Janice Kesley from the Birmingham Children's Crusade. We also tell the story of the Greensboro lunch counter sit-ins at a lunch counter where visitors

# Feature

## Journey to Justice



The Journey to Justice exhibition

can take part in activities and watch our audio visual collection.

Our juke box of freedom songs plays throughout and the exhibition includes art and poetry by children we have worked with. We quote civil rights leader, John Lewis, “Without music the civil rights movement would have been a bird without wings” and we make links to the tradition in the UK of struggles for fundamental rights and freedoms. We display stories of times when local people challenged injustice, as part of our main exhibition.

Our model begins a year ahead of the exhibition’s arrival which means JtoJ is more likely to be embedded. We work with key partners including schools, to establish where the need is greatest in their community, which issues are not being addressed and whose voices are not heard. We run taster days and consult, asking how our approach complements what is already happening. From there we form a steering group and ensure JtoJ is ‘owned’ locally. The travelling exhibition is a catalyst for a public programme of education and arts activities with young people and, crucially, for the adults who work with them so our work is embedded and sustainable.

### Outcomes

Using information collected during and after the project through questionnaires, observations, blogs, films, group and individual interviews, the key outcomes we expect to see from our work are:

- Increased awareness of the history in the UK and globally of individuals and movements who have taken a stand for human rights and what makes them work including the role of the arts;
- As a result of participating in Journey to Justice activities, participants are inspired and empowered to take action for human rights whether by campaigning or other means;
- The Journey to Justice exhibition programme creates

a lasting network of people committed to social justice.

### Links to the curriculum and policy

JtoJ fits naturally with the requirements of Citizenship’s programmes of study – most obviously when teaching about ‘precious liberties’ – how they were hard won. We elevate the strong tradition of struggles for freedom and rights in the UK. The travelling exhibition includes a map visitors can add to, highlighting less well-known movements such as the 1915 Glasgow Rent Strike.

The role of law in establishing human rights is central and we examine the limits of the law and how it is only as effective as its implementation. “The law may not make a man love me but it can stop him from lynching me” (Martin Luther King, 13th November 1967, speaking at Newcastle University on receiving an honorary degree). We debate the meaning of ‘responsible action’ - by citizens and the state and we invited one of the women from the Police Spies Out of Our Lives campaign to talk.

Community organisers from Movement for Change worked with our groups and explored: how power works; teamwork; understanding power; planning; strategy and negotiation, complementing PSHCE programmes of study. We focus on the power of collective action - when ‘citizens act together and pool their skills to solve society’s problems.’ After a recent taster session, one participant wrote to say she had been inspired to offer help to local refugees for the first time.

Working with Facing History and Ourselves, we make the links from history to participants’ lives. After our training, young people at Children North East chose to lobby school meals’ providers to introduce a fairer practice for those on free school meals who are absent through illness, as part of their anti-poverty campaign. And young people in Leyton asked for representation in their school’s exclusions process because no young people’s voices are heard.

JtoJ makes clear the value and strength of links between subjects. Understanding human rights movements inevitably involves a mix of the arts, Citizenship, English, Drama, Geography, RE and PSHCE whether we study the Mangrove 9 campaign in 1969-71 or the 1989 Craigielea care workers’ dispute in Gateshead when sacked workers recorded a song as part of their campaign.

We can start with History and its numerous opportunities to examine themes of social justice

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**George Mitchell  
School student**

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- change, cause and consequence or within the objectionably named KS1 and 2 'achievements and follies of mankind'. JtoJ's Pat Boyer's Year 5 class at Michael Faraday Primary School, Southwark researched the story of Ruby Bridges after their teaching assistant read them her story.

**Ruby Bridges was just a six year-old child going to school when she made history in 1960. She was the first African American child to be given a place at an all-white elementary school as part of desegregation in the Southern states. Taking her place at school caused such hatred and hostility from members of the local white community that, for the whole of Ruby's first year, she had to be escorted by four armed US federal marshals when entering and leaving the school.**

**Barbara Henry, a young teacher newly-arrived from Boston, was the only member of staff willing to teach Ruby as part of an integrated class. However, in protest against Ruby's presence, all but three white families removed their children from the school and by the end of Ruby's first week, she was the only child in class. Neither Barbara nor Ruby missed a day of school that year.**

The London children wrote poems for Ruby decorated with placards showing the positive messages she should have seen as she walked into school every day, such as "Freedom to be Together" and "Black and White Unite". They sent them to her and were thrilled she wrote back. Their poems and Ruby and Barbara's story are now part of our exhibition and it moves, outrages and inspires visitors.



*Dear Ruby Bridges,  
This is a poem I wrote for you. I hope it impresses you. Even though you were a little girl, you were fierce.*

**As I walked through the resentful crowd  
My heart is beating fast like a deer being  
chased by a cheetah  
I want to run away from all this.**

**I am heartbroken. I have no friends at school.  
The other teachers won't teach me  
Every day people shout at me in the street  
I want them to stop.**

**Will the other children come back?  
I feel sorry for Mrs Henry,  
All alone as well.  
I am anxious and worried  
"Why do you hate a six-year old so?"**

*By Izabella. I come from China and I live with my grandma. She is very nice. I am 9 years old.*

In Geography we examine access to resources and the mass displacement of people; social justice themes, values and beliefs are considered in RE, including the central role of faith in the civil rights movement; and in English we consider stories and poetry, for example by exploring the themes in *Purple Hibiscus*, *Rabbit Proof Fence*, and Maya Angelou's writing; and, despite the heinous squeezing of the arts, in Drama, Dance, Music and Art there are endless possibilities for responding to injustice and expressing hope, solidarity and resistance.

**“ I found confidence to speak out. I learned about who changed history and that there are ways to fight back without using violence. ”**

**George Mitchell School student**

We work with schools as part of their Drop Days and to complement Enrichment work whether around Holocaust Memorial Day, Black History Month, Gypsy Roma Traveller History, LGBTQ History, anti-bullying, social action, assemblies or bringing in expert speakers on aspects of human rights. Last year at Northumberland Park Community School in Tottenham's 'Be the Change Day', Y7-Y10 students helped plan our communications, fundraising and launch event. Young people help with filming, social media, meeting and greeting, they have written to football clubs to support us and raised funds for JtoJ as part of their Bat mitzvah preparation. We hope to take the exhibition to a school with a Museum Studies specialism where we'll work with staff across the curriculum.

# Feature

## Journey to Justice



JtoJ Live at George Mitchell School, Leyton  
In 2015 we piloted our teaching approach. This was originally a two month project but continued for seven months and has a powerful legacy. Every week from 3-5 pm, JtoJ's Parul Motin, Martin Spafford, Ros Lyons, Fatima Elmi and I worked with young people identified as in some way vulnerable. They researched struggles for human rights led by young people: The Burston School Strike, 1914; Ruby Bridges and Barbara Henry and US school segregation 1960; the Soweto school students' protest of 1976 and Malala Yousafzai's campaign. In groups they prepared presentations for each other and for a House of Lords celebration event. They met and interviewed people who are activists for decent housing and people who have campaigned against racism in the UK and the US. They discussed music and poetry of social protest and wrote and performed their own poems - some of which were published and are now a permanent part of our travelling exhibition. They visited the Adopting Britain exhibition at the South Bank Centre. They attended a preview screening of *Selma* and shared a platform with our patrons Baroness Helena Kennedy and Lord Herman Ouseley and Chi Onwurah MP. They also performed poetry at a community event for families. The group saw a searing production of *The Scottsboro Boys* and an actor from the show, Brandon Victor-Dixon, visited and advised them on communication skills as they prepared for the House of Lords. One poem, by Alexandra Letu, Year 8 had a devastating effect on the audience because of its imagery and delivery.

National Welfare Rights Organisation marching to end hunger as part of the Poor People's Campaign, 1968 (Jack Rottier photograph collection)

**I left there so proud. I never saw myself making a speech. I think we got their attention and we got them to feel they want to follow the campaign**

**George Mitchell School student**



### Dried Flower

I'm fat, but do you know why?  
It doesn't matter if I'm fat, large or big,  
I will never lose my soul.  
Just maybe my heart at times.

I'm innocent, fresh like a blossomed flower.  
The nature protects me but you  
Look at me and insult me,  
'Fat elephant, ugly whale, fat shit'

Have you ever looked in my eyes?  
Have you seen the sea reflecting in them?  
Have you noticed the sun disappearing in the  
darkness of my pupils?  
How would you feel if your bones were aching  
every day?

Imagine your empty stomach, so hungry,  
But your mouth makes everything taste lifeless.

I was thin as a tree branch, losing its leaves.  
My bones were as fragile as a bird's bones,  
crushed by a lorry.  
I was leukaemia, but leukaemia never beat me.

*By Alexandra Letu (Year 8), George Mitchell School*

### We launched our exhibition programme in

Newcastle-upon-Tyne in April 2015. The month-long education, arts and social change programme was planned with a local co-ordinator, steering group and volunteers. 3,300 people came to the exhibition at Discovery Museum and we attracted 500 participants to our other events and courses. We worked at grassroots with 40 organisations including Crossings who bring refugees and local Tynesiders together to make music.

### Impact

90% of the group achieved an ASDAN qualification. All the Leyton participants reported a deeper understanding of key concepts such as social justice, human rights and activism and, most vitally, of their own ability/right to be heard:

"Our voice is the next generation, there are people too scared to say what they think and we have to be role models."

"I found the confidence to make a change and speak out. I learned a lot about who changed history."

"I was proud of myself."

"Justice is important. We need to be treated fairly

and be happy.”

“It’s making me understand more about life and society. I can get things off my chest. I can help younger people understand better about gangs.”

“I left there so proud. I never saw myself making a speech. I think we got their attention and we got them to feel they want to follow the campaign.”

“I found confidence to speak out. I learned about who changed history and that there are ways to fight back without using violence.”

Our evaluation of the Newcastle pilot showed that 80% of visitors to our exhibition said it increased their knowledge and understanding of the US civil rights movement and the UK’s history of struggles for freedom. 65% of visitors, volunteers and participants said involvement with Journey to Justice had inspired them to take action for social justice, “My involvement in Journey to Justice has inspired me to focus more time and energy into researching and campaigning for marginalized peoples whether immigrants across Europe or the LGBT community.” “I intend to carry on the JtoJ legacy wherever I go. It has inspired me to pursue a career in the charity and community sector.” We contacted participants four months later and 75% of respondents said they had become active or more active as a result of JtoJ. The Children NE campaign, ‘Poverty Ends Now’ was empowered after our training “[JtoJ] was incredibly relevant, useful and effective - we now have a strategy.”



Bayard Rustin

### Links

For more information and to discuss booking the exhibition programme contact: Carrie Supple, director, Journey to Justice carriesupple1@gmail.com Tel. 07711199198.

You can see the exhibition in Sheffield at The Art House, Carver St, S14JH from May 28th – June 25th 2016. For further information about the Sheffield JtoJ programme and to volunteer, contact Mark Hutchinson, JtoJ Chair and Sheffield co-ordinator, email: mark.hutchinson52@gmail.com

Visit our website: [www.journeytojustice.org.uk](http://www.journeytojustice.org.uk) for details of the travelling exhibition, projects, events, people, blogs, films and more. You can also follow us on Twitter @freedomandjobs

For information on the North East pilot visit the website <http://journeytojustice.org.uk/projects/footsteps-to-freedom/> or view the film made by Hugh Kelly, and edited by Prof. Steve Hawley here: <https://vimeo.com/152543133>

Winstan Whitter has also made a short film about the work with George Mitchell School, Leyton: <https://vimeo.com/127012579>



Paul Robeson singing in Glasgow