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Author/Interview subject: Dave Hook (DH), Alex Wheatle (AW), Annie Cameron (AC)
Interviewed by: Janice Forsyth (JF)
Other speakers: Heather, Girl in audience, John, Boy in audience.

DH: [Rap music]. Listen, Scottish people can't rap they just cannae mate, you'd have to be half daft where I'm coming fae. Wee anes are more concerned with getting beved under age, summer rain, half Jake, chapping doors and run away.

We've got the gold watch, gold teeth, tin of juice. I've got the holie socks, cold feet, missing tooth. No diamonds, no swimming pools, just the reckless list of things that I can never do.

They've got their zoom box and lino on the ground. I've got my sport socks and lighters for a pound. They've got the low ride Cadillac hydraulics. I'm trying to find my bus fare in my anorak pocket, look at tax free, bow cut, no fresh garms, no fam, no block, no buzz, hashtag Benny was spending his 20 quid on a bevvy while contemplating my empty fridge.

You can't do that, you can't do that, you can't do that, you can't. Who can't? Aye, right, good one. You can't do that. I'm saying you can't do that. You can't do that. You can't. Who can't? Aye, right, good one.

People where we are from don't bother voting or speak up because nobody takes notice. We can't change our fates, we should concentrate on putting food on the dinner tae, our world would be great. Can't get past growing up centuries trapped behind the rough cast and peeling fences, pot holes and benches, bookies and offies and where's the time went to? It's a modern world with limitless ways to go. If you can imagine it, you can make it so. Keep telling us we could be anything we like as long as we can conform to the stereotype.

You can't do that. You can't do that. You can't do that. I'm saying you can't do that. You can't. Who can't? Aye, right, good one.

[Applause].

JF: What a start. Hello everybody, I am Janice Forsyth, a very warm welcome indeed to Authors Live, and as you can see and as you heard, we started things off just a wee bit differently from normal. You just heard the brilliant Scottish rapper, Dave Hook, performing Scottish People Cannae Rap, which clearly is not true. Dave is one of three guests here today to take part in the latest of our Authors Live team panel events. As you heard Dave's rap there is all about being repeatedly told that you can't do something because of various reasons, who you are, where you're from, what age you are or whatever. All of that is what today's event is all about.

We're going to explore why some groups and identities are under-represented still in mainstream music, publishing books, writing, and then together all of us will look at what is being done and what we can do, what all of us can do, to make sure that everyone feels that they have a voice in British culture. Of course we can't do that alone, so I'm really pleased that we're not here on our own talking, we're joined by student from Calderhead High school and Paisley Grammar School, a very warm welcome to all of you, I hope you enjoy what we're about to do.

We would love to hear from you, wherever you are watching, wherever you are listening, we're so pleased to have your company, hello by the way, and we would love to hear from you throughout the show and of course through Twitter we can do that. So, please, please, please, if you've got a question for anybody or you've got a statement you want to make or an opinion, whatever you fancy talking to us about please get in touch. Just thinking about your own experiences and this whole idea of unheard voices, we want to hear your voice. So, you can get in touch with us on Twitter, just use the hashtag BBC Authors Live, BBC Authors Live, and we will do our best to get through as many tweets as possible.

So, lets meet our panel, they are a brilliant trio, award winning author Alex Wheatle, is known as the Brixton Bard, he's the author of the amazing Crongton sequence. A series of books set on a fictional, imagined council estate in London. Bursting with brilliant characters and this brilliant slang, made up slang. that just keeps off the page. So, everybody wherever you are there and here, let's hear it for the brilliant Alex Wheatle.

[Applause].

JH: And, you heard rapper, Dave Hook, in action, Dave also performs with a band called, Stanley Odd Hip Hop group, they are really terrific, very popular, and he also performs sola under the name, Solareye. He's a busy guy as well as a performer, he works in all kinds of music as an engineer and as a producer and

he is a real champion for local voices and dialects in music. We've just given him an applause, but let's not leave him out, let's hear it again for Dave Hook.

[Applause].

JF: And Annie Cameron, is a 19 year old poet and photographer, she's based in Edinburgh, and Annie is very, very, busy, she's currently working on a new Zine project about young working class creatives based in Scotland. So, she's exploring how marginalised and under-represented people can overcome barriers to access and create, be creative with limited financial resources. It's such an important point. She's also working on a poetry collection about her experience of gender, race, class, mental health and other issues, and Annie is the hero of the day, she has stepped in at the last minute to join us today after Aisha Mallick was taken ill with the flu. So, Aesha, we hope you get better soon, it's a nasty bug that's going around, and we're really delighted, let's hear it for the fabulous Annie, for joining us today.

[Applause].

JF: Now just before we start our conversation, I just want to expand a wee bit so that you can start thinking about this, about what we mean by this phrase, unheard voices. I guess in a perfect world, in television, film, books, music, everything, all of these things and everything else in the world would reflect real life, the diversity of voices and people and the breadth of who we are. But, as we know it's not a perfect world, voices are lost, people do find barriers which are various, which stop them from being heard. So, that can be...because people discriminate against you because of your skin colour, your race, your religion your class, your gender, disability, ability, age, all of these things, and maybe you've experienced this. Maybe you've had opinions, thoughts, ideas, ignored, just because of any of those reasons. How does that feel? If you could start to think about that and share some of that with us that would be terrific.

Our guests today they know about publishing, about writing, about music and frankly lots of other stuff too. So, this is a great place to start talking about these ideas and listening to each other, which is maybe the most important thing of all.

So, let's dive in with the idea of barriers then Alex, and thinking back to when you were growing up, did anything leap out at you from the radio or music you were listening to or even books that was kind of like, yes, I can identify with this, this is me?

AW: It was a struggle to find those books or cultural references for me, especially as I was a Reggae fan, so Radio one, you know, sometimes you might hear the odd

Reggie track but it was very rare. But, it was mainly what awoke my literary inspirations was a dub poet called Linton Kwesi Johnson who was a [inaudible 08:50], you know, and he used to live just round the corner from me and he was a great inspiration.

I came out of prison, 1981, in the summer, after the Brixton uprising, and in prison I was encouraged to read a great deal to, you know, learn my education, because my secondary education was a disaster. So, I was encouraged to read. As I read Chester Hynes, Ralph Ellison, all these great Harlem Renaissance writers, I said to myself, well how come there's not a title or a text about my experiences?

JF: Because these are all American voices.

AW: That's right, all American voices, and I felt that my experience, my friends, my living, you know, it was all being ignored, and so I challenged myself, I said maybe I can fill in that gap. It was very hard at the time, because friends of mine who I grew up with said Alex, you have to go to university, you have to know the right people, you have to have the right contacts and, you know, you're working class, you come from a children's home, how can you seriously think you're going to be a writer?

But, I had this fury in me, if you like, from the way I was raised in a children's home and I needed to express that on the page. I felt that it was important, my voice was important, and I felt that my life, my experiences are just as valid as anybody else's in literary fiction. So, that's why I committed myself for a long time, because it didn't happen overnight, it took me five years to complete my first, my first model and that was handwritten. So, when I eventually arrived at a literary agency with my handwritten manuscript which was...had jam stains on it, had chocolate stains on it, had cigarette burn holes in it. The agent picked it up like this and she looked at it like this, like it was a bit of dog poo and said, Mr Wheatle, I think you're better to go home and to learn to type. But, you know, because those furies are still within I was determined.

JF: You were motivated.

AW: I was determined and motivated to see my voice in fiction.

JF: Yes, that's an incredible story and we'll flesh out some more of that later Alex. Annie, what about you, has there been anything that has spoken directly to you or have you felt that that has been incredibly limited actually in music or books?

AC: I feel like being mixed race it was kind of difficult even more so to see anyone that I could identify with, because I almost didn't identify with either half of me, and there is that horrible kind of in between phase of not really feeling like you belong anywhere. Then it's only been in the past couple of years when I saw like Charli XCX like on the TV, like and all her music videos where I was like, oh my gosh, there's someone that looks like me, because she's also mixed race. Then that was like really helped me to just come to terms with so much, just because I hadn't seen anyone who looked like me doing things ever. I also, when I discovered the Spoken Word seen on YouTube mainly in America, I saw a bunch of poets who were, you know, LGBT or people of colour, and it was like so refreshing to hear poetry coming from them, when the stuff I had been taught in school was just like the sort of traditional Scottish poets.

JF: Yes and it's...thank you Annie, and it's interesting just hearing the Spoken Word thing, because that absolutely feeds into what you're doing now Dave, but earlier on when you were a kid was there anything out there that grabbed you?

DH: Yes, well you're right the Spoken Word scene now is a really healthy and vibrant thing that's happening across Scotland. It wasn't something I was aware of until I had already started kind of being a rapper, I guess. When I started getting into hip-hop and rap what I found was I didn't know there was Scottish rap, I didn't know Scottish people rapped. Did you guys know other Scottish people rapped? I mean...

JF: Mostly shaking of heads.

DH: ...so it's like, it was an underground scene, it was a subculture and it had been going on since the 1980s, but it was something I was not aware of. So, when you start getting involved in that and getting inspired by it and the guys I started getting excited about in the first place were like sort of huge mainstream American artists like Snoop Dogg and Cypress Hill and stuff like that. Then that's what you imitate. So, I found myself sitting with my pals in a park and making rhymes up and rhyming in an American accent and because you're copying everything that we've seen and there were no Scottish voices I was aware of that were doing that. Very few even that you could hear from London or England at that point.

So, it was a process of gradually realising that people...getting closer to home, and at first I found the east coast rap, which I felt was a lot more lyrical and it had a lot more dents and interesting. Then I've found there were people in London that were doing it and finally realised there were people in Scotland that were doing it. Over that time I realised that if I was going to try and tell stories about

me and where I'm from and where I grew up and my background, then I can't do it in a false voice as well. So, you sort of wrestle with finding your own voice.

JF: Yes, and as you say, I mean it is an incredible scene now the Spoken Word scene, and hip-hop in Scotland is amazing. I think we're going to go to a question from one of our studio audience. We've got Heather here from Calderhead High School, who has a question. Hi, Heather. We'll just get our mike round to you there and here we go.

Girl: Do you see yourself or your protagonist as a role model for teenagers?

JF: So, that was Heather, do you see yourself, let's start with Alex, or your protagonists as role models for teenagers? Thank you, Heather.

AW: I wouldn't necessarily describe them as role models, but for me there is honest depictions of young working class people that I've come across in my experiences. I work at a youth club, so I get many of my reference points from there. I see the good, the bad, and the indifferent, and I think it's very important when you create characters that you include all of that in your characters, because everyone is not so nicey-nice, or everyone is not so bad, bad. You know, sometimes there's good and bad within a character and sometimes from what I do it's very important that you include that to make it more authentic and more real, you have to include all those different aspects that we all share.

JF: Yes, thank you Alex, and Annie just even when it comes to poetry and everything you're doing with the Zine, I guess you would be strange if you are going about your working thinking, I'm a role model.

[Laughter].

JF: But, you've talked about, we've all talked about, you know, seeing other people who do make a big impact on you. So, maybe how much are you aware of what you're doing is actually maybe a good example or inspiring other young women to do the same, or boys?

AC: I'm just aware of my peers and like what they're up to and how they're creating on their own terms and they're finding ways to do things, when so many people are trying to tell them that they can't do it because they don't have access to like, you know, the materials, and they're doing it anyway, and they're finding the time, the motivation, the, just the drive to do it. So, I just see my job as kind of like putting them all together in like the same publication to then be able to spread that out and then show that to other people so that then people who might identify with

the people in the Zine, who probably are more relatable than a lot of people they see in the media, then they'll say that they can do it as well.

JF: Yes, absolutely. It's the ripple effect isn't it, and again we talked about that spoken word and the hip-hop scene too. But, we absolutely get a sense of that that whole thing of barriers and voices coming from that first rap you did there.

DH: Yes, and I think it's interesting, because the role model question is an interesting one, I think people don't want necessarily to hear you tell them how to be or tell them this is a good example of something and this is a bad example of something, but do get excited about seeing your own things that you recognise in your life being reflected and that's the exact thing that Alex is talking about, the good and the bad of that, so less necessarily trying to create role models and more just trying to show people things they recognise in their own lives and bring that out so other people get to see it too.

JF: Yes, and thinking of barriers and class barrier. Is that still alive and kicking as far as you're aware when it comes to, you know, making your mark as a creative person?

AW: Yes, very much so, I mean institutions, I mean if you look at Oxford, Cambridge and so on, and many of our institutions they look to those institutions first for their, for people coming into those professions. Sometimes that carries an off balance, if you like. Like there's no reason, like someone who is educated at Hull University, Glasgow University or wherever, is not as valid, is not as intelligent as anybody else in the country. It doesn't matter if you're educated at Cambridge or Oxford, your voice is still valid. Your creative skills are still valid. They're still as equal as anybody else's, and sometimes that can be a barrier I believe. Where sometimes producers or whatever there may be, they say, oh, because it's Oxford, because it's Cambridge, they've got to be superior. That is not so in my case.

I mean, I've never attended one day of college, I've never attended one day of university. I've won an award, so that should show people that, hey, you don't have to tick those boxes to become the person you want to be, and for me that's the barrier, because young people come up to me all the time and say Alex, do I need to go to do this, do I need to go to do that? I say, you know, the best thing you could do is just create and express what you feel inside here, that will launch your career more than anything else, rather than trying to tick these different boxes.

JF: Yes, do you agree with that Annie...

AC: Yes.

JF: ...because I guess it is that thing if you're brought up in a household where maybe you do have access to books and music and all the rest of it and be taken out to places. It's almost at that poverty of opportunity for a lot of people, they're not presented with the possibilities, although it turns out they might well have the driver. Do you still see the class thing as a big barrier?

AC: I guess going back to university, like I'm only 19, I'm still trying to get there, I'm still trying to figure whether or not that's what I should be doing. Whether or not that is accessible, and the reason why I've not gone there straight out of school is because I haven't found it accessible so far. I navigate scenes where there are a lot of students and I've very aware of how they all come from different backgrounds than me. They all seem to have grown up quite well off, and it seems to have been a lot easier for them in that way. It doesn't mean that you can't go to university if you're from a working class background. But, like realistically it does make it that bit harder. So, as much as I personally do want to continue my education, I also really try to stress to all my peers, that like you can do so much without it. Like Alex is an example of that as well.

JF: Well, you're an example already with everything that you're doing.

AW: Yes.

AC: Hopefully.

[Laughter].

JF: I know, and what about, I'm just thinking with music, you tend to think of music being more kind of democratic, maybe people from all kinds of backgrounds coming in, is there a class thing there too?

DH: I mean, I think there are class issues across the board in the UK and further afield. Actually a Scottish rapper, Loki, has done a huge amount to raise issues of that recently and he is a brilliant example of that, because he comes from a very, very, difficult background and he's just written a now bestselling book called, Poverty Safari, which is all about the issues that he had personally growing up, but also talking about those more widely and about how you deal with that in a wider context.

Hip-hop lends itself to it as well as a subject matter, because hip-hop has always been about challenge and it's always been about being in a position other than the mainstream and challenging preconceptions of what people should be. So,

hip-hop lends itself to social commentary and to cultural critique and all these sorts of things.

JF: Yes. Thank you very much. Alex, you're going to give us a bit of a reading I think.

AW: I am.

JF: Will you do that?

AW: Okay.

JF: Do you want to hear Alex read? Yes, they shouted.

DH: Yes.

JF: Yes, out there you're shouting, yes. This is from your new one.

AW: Yes, straight out of Crongton, the third in the Crongton series, and this time I've decided that my main protagonist is going to be a female, 15 year old, and trust me, it was a nightmare trying to get into a 15 year olds mind-set.

[Laughter].

AW: I had to rely on my daughter for a lot of...many of this. Anyway, this scene is after my protagonist, Mo, she has had a very major fight with her mother and she's escaped home and she's gone to the home of her boyfriend, and she's speaking to her boyfriend's mother.

Lorna parked next to me, she swabbed away the tears on my cheeks, she took out a tissue and wiped my nose and she examined my right hand. She tried to smile. Oh Mo, she said, Mo, you, you better get yourself checked over, its badly swollen, Sam will take you to the hospital. Sam, nodded. She cuddled me and kissed me on my forehead. I'm not perfect, I said, but I don't deserve a mum like her. I locked Sam into my gaze. You're so lucky, I told him, you've got a mum who'd do anything for you. My mum doesn't give a crap about me anymore.

That's not true, Lorna said. Yes, it is, I insisted. I could hear Lorna drawing in a long breath, she placed her palms around my cheeks and held my gaze until I felt uncomfortable. Listen me good Mo, she started, your mum is not evil, just shattered. Shattered, I repeated. When you have lived a traumatic life such as she has it breaks you down. The glass front of your soul begins to fall part. I shook my head, I don't know what you mean Mrs Bramwell. Here me good Mo, when you're cracked and broken you lose the ability to deflect the badness that is

around you, you can't push it away so it penetrates and makes you lose all reason. Before long you think bad is good, you even think harm is love.

Before she stood up, she stroked my forehead and hair, that is where Sam got his affectionate side from. She smiled, I have to go to work she said, don't let badness crack you, take care of your soul mirror. What cracked and broke my mum I wanted to know. Lorna paused. She glanced at Sam and then switched her gaze to me, one day Maureen, I hope she tells you. Can't you tell me? No, it has to come from her, Lorna replied. But...before I finished Lorna left the room. What did mum have to tell me? Stabbing pain stopped me from trying to figure out an answer. I drifted into that space between ache, semi slumber and sleep. Thank you.

JF: That's super, thank you.

[Applause].

JF: Thank you very much, it's amazing just to have that little fragment of the book and it's so powerful, and just the power of writing where you can get deep within what's really making people tick.

AW: Yes.

JF: Just thinking about that, this whole idea of barriers again and people's expectations and we talked a wee bit about class, but there is also a whole thing about expectations, wrong expectations...

AW: Definitely.

JF: ...and stereotyping going on. I'm wondering for you, have you encountered that where people maybe think you should write about certain subjects or write in a certain voice, do you feel you still have to battle against that?

AW: Yes, I mean even this book, for example, Mo is a white character, and people say to me, oh Alex, shouldn't you be writing always about black character? I say to them, I was raised in a home, and in that home there was black, brown, white, whatever, and I grew up with all these people, so why should I be denied from writing about my experiences that inform me? For me, these are life experiences. All because Mo does come...does live in a council house, it doesn't mean that her experience won't reflect in other households that might be more wealthy, where mother and daughter fall out. They fight. I mean that happens in all families, so, I'm trying to reflect that. I mean sometimes the establishment try and say to us that our experiences are not worthy, we're not universal. But, they are, they definitely are, our experiences are universal, they are valid, they are

important. All of your experiences are important. You know, your life narratives, whatever you've gone through in your life they're all important. Those stories need to be heard.

JF: Yes, well I mean we're talking on Burns day, we'll be having our haggis, neeps and tatties later I hope Alex. But, thinking of Burns, we've got a wee bit of tartan here, but he was absolutely in so much of his work about that. A man's a man for all that, wherever you are, whatever your background. You've experienced, you know, people saying, yes, you're doing your poetry, doing your stuff, we're expecting you to do this kind of poetry or write from a particularly young point of view and you don't have enough life experience or being mixed race?

AC: I feel like there's whatever everyone else is saying and I feel like when you're trying to write and you're trying to understand your own experiences it's just beneficial to try and block out a lot of it. But, then within that you then have to navigate within yourself like what are you ready to write about? What do you feel you understand? A lot of stuff you're still trying to work through that's half the reason you write in the first place.

JF: I suppose there's challenges for both, because there's Alex saying it's really tricky getting into the head of a 15 year old girl, but here you are, you can absolutely reflect your life as a 19 year old or when you were younger. That's powerful actually isn't it?

AC: Yes, and I, a lot of what I'm thinking about right now has not necessarily, has made it on to the page yet, but it's going to get there. Is like when I was a kid I was very aware of the fact that I was mixed race and I maybe wasn't as well off as a lot of my friends. But, I didn't have the way to articulate that, I just had a gut feeling that I was different, and that's really difficult to navigate if you're just a child who is just, you know, trying to grow up in the most basic way without, you know, trying to understand everything else when you're at it.

So, now the more that I learn and the more that I read from like other women of colour, from other working class people, I'm starting to understand why the world is telling us what it does, and those feelings that I did internalise as a child I'm able to challenge and I'm able to articulate and write about.

JF: Here's a really interesting question from Sarah on Twitter saying, Alex, I'll go to you first, this is great. What can we do as readers to show that there is a demand for more diversity in publishing?

AC: By searching for those authors who do tell working class narratives. Borrow it from your library, buy them for your children. So, that gives a signal to publishers

that these voices, these narratives are important. I think that's the way we can drive this forward, definitely.

JF: Yes, there's reader power out there, that's for sure. We've got this from Kay on Twitter, thank you very much Kay. Let me ask you this Annie, is there a piece of music that's inspired you to write?

AC: I mean there is a lot of stuff I listen to and there will be a like a particular lyric where I'm like, oh, that's so smart, I wish I'd thought of that. But, I'm experiencing that constantly that I almost don't pay attention to like specifics, but there is so much great stuff out there that it's hard to say one thing.

JF: Yes, just thinking about the whole idea of voice and you illustrated it so brilliantly at the beginning, Dave, with that rap, and the whole idea of people being under-represented from different backgrounds. But, actually it's interesting with Scots, the whole Scots dialect, it lends itself brilliantly to that incredible directness and there's a real poetry in a lot of the words.

DH: Yes, I mean, I think speaking in dialect and writing in dialect is something that isn't necessarily when you first start out as easy to do as you would think, even though it's your own words and your own language. So, it takes a bit of getting used to feeling, figuring out how you sound and putting that down on a page and then actually performing it to people. Scots language lends itself really well to rhyme and to metaphor and simile in loads of the things.

One of the things that struck me when I got into hip-hop in my teens was the same things I was listening to in my headphones and geeking out on was the stuff I had been told about in school and not engaged with, right when I'd realised. So, when I was listening to Lauryn Hill go, don't you even go there, me without a rhythm is like a beat without snare. I was like hold on a minute, is that a simile? Is that what I was being told about in school too, but didn't get, you know. So, then finding these ways of doing them and then like you say in Scots language. So, using your own phrases in your own language is the best way to make sure of that. So, common phrases and Scots language plays with words all the time because it's a language that also comes from another language, proper English, that is then subverted, right.

So, things like saying, like the saying, as wide as the Clyde, is a brilliant phrase to use in a rap because first of all its similes, because you said this is like this. Second of all it references local geography, because it references the river Clyde, right. It uses the word 'wydo' in it, right, which means we're using our own common vernacular and it even rhymes itself internally, so like phrases like that,

it's about playing with your own language and your own words and then getting excited about them.

JF: Brilliant, I think we're going to go to our audience here for another question and this is from Paisley Grammar, hi there, what's your name?

Boy: John.

JF: Hi, John, so what's your question?

Boy: When did you first learn that language had power?

JF: When did you first learn that language had power? Who wants to go first with that? I suppose it could be music, it could be books, it could be anything.

AW: It was music for me I think. Bob Marley, before Linton Kwesi Johnson came along into my life it was definitely Bob Marley listening to, I think it was the Exodus album, google it and listen to the music, One Love and so many songs that tracked my life really that spoke of my experiences, get up, stand up and all that, just really affected me and I thought, wow. I would play it on a loop. In those days I had, you probably won't know about this, a record player.

[Laughter].

AW: And, I played it to death and I done all the lyrics and I would read it out late at night and like in reformations of my existence. I felt that at last somebody was actually singing about my living experiences. I think that taught me the power of the written word, or the spoken word or the song word, such an important point in my life.

JF: And, vinyl is coming back.

AL And, vinyl is coming back so you can...

JF: Do you have vinyl, do you listen to vinyl? Yes, a few, yes, so you've got record players. Yes, you see, you wait long enough and it comes back in fashion.

[Laughter].

JF: We talked there about that great question about what can readers do to effect more diversity? What do you think in terms of music, is there anything, do you need the consumers of music to do their bit as well?

DH: Well, I think we are in a really exciting place just now in terms of how easy it is to access music, so it just made it more available to everybody, and I think that's the

thing about being able to search for stuff and, you know, how you can start on one thing and it leads you to something else...

JF: Five hours later.

DH: ...and you disappear down a rabbit hole. So, the fact that we've got that resource available to us is phenomenal. To be able to educate yourself so quickly on like a whole back catalogue of artists and find out all the things like in the past with a record where you would sit and pour over the liner notes and you would read about who the producer was and loads of terms you didn't even know who these things were. I remember reading about Michael Jackson, Bad, who the middle production guy was.

[Laughter].

AW: Yes.

DH: I didn't know what that meant, but it was pretty cool. But, now you can find all that stuff out online, so being able to trace all that stuff back is cool.

JF: Yes, brilliant, I'm just thinking about our question there from John about language and first discovering that language had power, was there a moment for you?

AC: This might sound strange but like Twitter has been such a resource for me, because I feel like the vast majority of what I've learnt about like feminism and like stuff to do with race is coming from Twitter, and that information is so accessible and you can like communicate with other people who it turns out have had pretty much the exact same lived experiences you have, but you hadn't realised that anyone had because none of your peers maybe had your exact experience. There's people who have, and there is so much information there and people are challenging so much more now and it's just, it's exciting to finally feel empowered and like, you know.

JF: That's an interesting side of it isn't it, because it's good to actually talk about the good side of social media...

AC: Yes.

JF: ...because you've got that world opening up to you a bit like you were saying where you can find out online about all sorts of music. If you use it responsibly and carefully it can open up all sorts of doors, and as you say direct communication with other like-minded people.

AC: Yes, it's just like there is so much information out there that you wouldn't get taught in a classroom, there's so many perspectives that you might not hear on a day to day basis and if you're, I don't know what people do if you're in a coffee shop or something, so much there and it's free, and it's at your fingertips.

JF: Yes, and that whole thing of power of language was it for you music, Lauryn Hill's?

DH: Without a doubt, yes, and it was it was hip hop artists kind of teaching me about things I didn't know about, but it was also artists like Rage Against the Machine, like which got you so wound up and so engaged, and made you want to go and learn more about the things they were telling you about.

I also think the amazing thing about like what we were saying about Twitter and social media for getting information, is that it's interactive, so it becomes a dialogue rather than just one way information.

JF: Yes, just with that wider question of making, you know, fiction, music, more inclusive, what are your thoughts on that, do you think barriers are being broken down?

AW: Yes, at last I believe, I know publishers are, this is my world, I know that my publishers they now have started an intern programme where for many, many, years, you would have to do an internship six months and not get paid. So, really that, especially in London where it's so expensive to live anyway and where all the major publishers are housed. So, that's a barrier in itself for working class people to get involved, because what working class person is going to work for publishers in the middle of London, not paid for six months. So, you're only going to attract one demographic of people who want to be in that position. So, at last those barriers are now being slowly taken away. So, I think that will lead to more diverse publishing lists and so on. More diverse author lists. I'm really looking forward to that.

JF: But, it still is an issue because I know you've said over the years you've won awards and everything, but in terms of even coverage in newspapers...

AW: Definitely, yes.

JF: ...you have far less than other people.

AW: Yes, that's before I wrote my Crongton series I published, what, seven, eight, adult titles. I was always very well reviewed, critically acclaimed, and in fact I was going through my diary, my diaries for the last number of years, and I discovered that I had only been invited to one major literary festival at a time

when I was an adult author. I'm thinking, well, the establishment would say, okay, Zadie she is acclaimed everywhere, all over the world. But, I would say in argument to that, yes, she is, but maybe because she ticks that Oxford box and perhaps I don't. I don't know, is it easier for a black female or a mixed race female to access those privileges? It's more difficult for someone like myself, who even though I'm critically acclaimed I'm not quite considered at the top of my game because of my education.

JF: Yes. So, it's still a long way to go.

AW: So, it's still a long way to go.

JF: And, you're talking there about Zadie Smith who does get lots of publicity, you know, bestselling award winning writer. Just thinking about what you're doing, absolutely everything you're doing right now especially with the Zine, is driven by exactly what we're talking about, you're trying to address that head on?

AC: Yes, and like keeping it within the community of creators as well, because there is maybe the slight issue of like diversity being a trend right now and it becomes an issue, because it's like who is profiting off it at the end of the day? The amount of like videos I watch on like vice, where it's like in front of the camera the people are, you know, marginalised folks. But, then you look behind the camera and the crews predominantly well-educated middle class white people, and then it's just like, well who is truly benefitting from that? Then it's almost like if you are a marginalised person and you're given opportunities as much, you really, you do appreciate them, you're also kind of told like, hey, we're doing you the favour and it's kind of like, well do I not still deserve most basic sort of respect? There are like so many really great organisations out there who are offering, you know, mentoring and tuition for free. Like I owe so much to the Scottish Book Trust, to Stills Gallery in Edinburgh, because they have taught me and they have helped me develop and I've not had to shell out anything to be able to do that.

JF: So, that's an important lesson too, you look for the resources.

DH: Yes.

JF: Well, I can't believe it, I'm going to say it, we've run out of time. I can't believe it. Thank you very much wherever you've been watching, sorry I couldn't get through more questions. Big thanks to Alex, Annie and Dave, and could we please have a massive round of applause for our guests, ladies and gentlemen.

[Applause].

JF: How did that happen? You're just too blooming interesting, that's for sure. So that's Alex Wheatle, Annie Cameron and Dave Hook, buy their books, listen to their music, buy there Zine, spread the word. Don't forget you can do that actually, you can see this event if you want to watch it all over again or tell other people to watch it. Go to the website, Authors Live Watch on demand page, that's at Scottish Book Trust dot com forward slash authors live. You can also see there a really good three part blog series featuring each of our panellists. I really recommend that you watch that, which explores some of today's themes in a bit more depth along with teaching points.

Now we have to finish now, but just very quickly we would love to inspire you to keep reading after today's event, so I would like to ask, in a word, each of our panellists for a book or music recommendation that inspired them. Annie?

AC: My favourite poetry collection is Floating, Brilliant, Gone, by Franny Choi, she's great, she explores so much.

JF: Thank you very much indeed, Alex?

AW: The Hate U Give, by American author called Angie Thomas.

JF: Thank you. Dave?

DH: I would recommend checking out an American rapper called Pharoahe Monch for lyricism.

JF: Thank you very much indeed, there you go, three recommendations, keep those in mind, if you forget them you can look back at the broadcast. We would love you to share your recommendations too, if you're here or wherever you're watching just use again, the hashtag BBC authors live, please do that because even though we're going to say cheerio, Twitter is on the go all the time so we can catch up with that. We'll be back very soon with more Authors Live, I hope you can join us, but until then we're going to leave you. We're making them work very hard with another brilliant rap from Mr David Hook, this is Undefined. Let's hear it for Dave ladies and gentlemen.

[Applause].

DH: Hi again folks, right, this is just a really short thing, it's called Undefined.

Flip the script when some cat says he's like this and she's like that in case before the first act ends you find you've been typecast. All these labels just don't stick. Peel them off and get them binned. It's okay when they day begins to wake up in

another skin. Are people made to list your traits, two columns plus and minuses, leaves no room for light and shade that live among the binding.

Don't worry if from time to time you feel as if you lose yourself, because names that make a bruise can heal and the truth is I'm confused as well, so hoard your contradictions up. Fill them out with bricks and mud. A home to house the things you love from folks that are too quick to judge.

Don't let the poison few pigeonhole your point of view. Girls in pink and boys in blue, if the song gets old then coin a tune. Reinvent your voice anew to rise above these jealousies, find the note to buoy your mood and try another melody. One passage that they underline to highlight to a younger mind, change your stripes 100 times for clarity, stay undefined. Cheers.

[Applause].