

Refugee Week's Spoken Word Event

Article by:

Lea Fanara

Support Worker in Wolverhampton

This month we attended an excellent Spoken Word Event held as part of Refugee Week 2016. The event, held at the Asylum Art Gallery in Wolverhampton, gave us the chance to watch poetry performed by a wide range of artists and backgrounds – and across three different languages! The night kicked off with a talk from the City of Sanctuary's secretary, John Catley, who shared with us his story of having worked with asylum seekers and refugees over recent years in the West Midlands area.

The poetry in the first half went down a storm! It began with a poem by Choman Hardi, followed by the incredible Syrian mastermind Nizar Quabbani. My personal favourite of his was the emotional 'A Lesson in Drawing', a poem read in both English and Arabic and equally emotional both times, despite so many in the audience being non-Arabic speakers! Dave Pitt then shared a few short poems of his with incredible pace and passion.

Following a short interval, we watched poetry read out in Farsi and a passionate poem by artist BONES. Tied in with the themes of Refugee Week, we heard an eccentric recitation of poems about migration closer to home – some from Yorkshire poet Steven Harrison, who recently learned that his ancestors some generations ago had migrated from the Midlands, and another set of poems by Giovanni Esposito, who recounted the migration of his Italian parents to the UK.

Perhaps the most emotional and impassioned poem was by Warsan Shire, entitled 'Home'. One line in particular stuck with me: "no one leaves home unless home is the mouth of a shark". This caused me to think carefully about how tragic and fragile the life of a refugee can be, and how grateful I should be for mine.

A massive thank you to Kate Penman (from City of Sanctuary and Hope in to Action) for her time and dedication to Refugee Week and the Spoken Word event!