

Creative activism during a pandemic: Creating zines focused on changing the odds

boingboing.org.uk/creative-activism-zines

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By Craig, Luke, Chris, Viktoria, Trinity and Sam

Throw together two Fashion Communication students and a Centre of Resilience for Social Justice (CRSJ) PhD student from the University of Brighton, five youth and adult co-leaders from the Resilience Revolution in Blackpool, a lot of craft materials, some social justice inspiring publications and.... oh yeah, a Global Pandemic and what do you get? Zines...

What you get is a bunch of people who were determined to take their odds-changing, Zine-making Masterclass online and continue spreading the Resilience Revolution during lockdown. In this blog we tell you what we did, why we did it and what we learnt along the way. Social justice and systems change are two of the Resilience Revolution's most valuable fundamentals. As a collective, we believe resilience is much more than an individual trait and more than mobilising a community response. We believe that inequalities exist in our society and that these inequalities can make things tougher for people than they should be.

Back in February 2020 we started exploring how Zines might help us to express our social justice ideas through creative activism. We thought it was an exciting way to campaign for systems change around issues and inequality we see in our society. As part of our plans, some of us were looking forward to a residential trip from Blackpool to Brighton and a chance to use the brilliant fashion and communication studio facilities at the university; but then the Coronavirus pandemic hit and we all went in to lockdown.

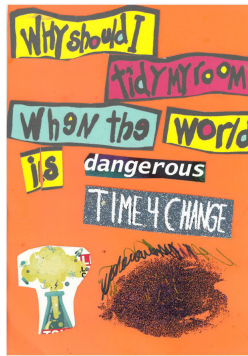
But this is the Resilience Revolution and as we said earlier, we were determined to adapt our ideas and stay connected during the lockdown. At a time when the voices of young people are rarely heard or prevented the opportunity to influence decision-making, we felt it was even more important to explore how activism can support us to share our messages of hope and concern to a wider audience. We knew that the pandemic was going to make this more challenging so we organised a load of Activism Packs to be distributed amongst our group (so we all had access to the tools and resources we would need), and then got on with using digital methods to take our ideas forward and continue our mission of changing the odds for our town.



Understanding Activism, Zines and Me-Zines

It was very clear from the conversations in our first online workshop in May, that as a group, we shared similar passions and views on a range of different topics, particularly: Votes at 16, paying at least the Real Living Wage, environmental issues, equality and LGBTQ+ rights. We set about exploring the underpinning societal causes and policies upon which these issues stand and how they contribute to the inequalities we see first-hand in our communities. The increased use of foodbanks claimed a hot topic amongst us; we discussed why there had been an increase in use and noted how those that find themselves on long-term benefits could not provide a sufficient amount of food for their families. Not enough money to live and a system that works against them, not for them, we felt were significant contributors to their hardship.

We found that completing a 'Root, Cause, Tree' activity helped us to explore this, and think about what actions or change we would need to focus on. Using the example of foodbanks, we explored the 'root' of the problem and found there to be entrenched class issues in society. The trunk (cause) of the problem we attributed to the welfare state and recent reforms to it. Finally, we acknowledged the things we see, 'the leaves', are things like increased use of foodbanks and upsurge in child poverty figures reported by local primary schools and authorities. Because the Resilience Revolution is as much (if not more) about 'changing the odds' as it is about helping individuals 'beat the odds', we need to focus our activism on the roots and trunk.



It was time to think about how to portray our ideas and messages in a Zine. However, we needed to understand what a Zine was and learn how to make one! Zines (short for magazine) have long been used to communicate activist ideas and actually started out in the Punk movement as a low-cost method of creating a self-published magazine to share ideas and thoughts. They come in all shapes and sizes and can also be digital. They can be sold in independent magazine shops, given away in communities and also published online. Zines often focus on a particular theme, they speak for their time, they are unedited and more significantly share personal content, relating to matters rarely seen in mainstream publications. Because the Resilience Revolution is a social movement and we are really focusing on our 'Changing the Odds' activity and campaigns this year, we thought the opportunity to try out and develop new ways of spreading messages via Zines would be helpful and fun!

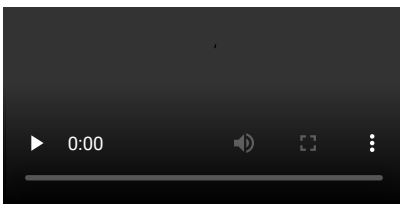
To get us started, we set ourselves a challenge to each create a Me-Zine. Using collage, drawings, crafts and text, we set about creating our Zines. This allowed us to explore the different methods of zine creation, sharing information about our identities, our hobbies and interests and things we are passionate about with each other. This proved to be very effective and enabled us to learn more about the issues that we are all passionate about.

Enlisting others



Enlisting the help of others was another vital cog in the success of taking our workshops online. As co-leaders of the Resilience Revolution, we are proud to be from Blackpool. Our original plans had involved ways to go 'out and about' in the town, to collect things and take images we could use in our Zine. But with lockdown, we needed to think a bit differently about how we could do this, and this is where contributions from Brendan Bunting and Claire Griffiths came in. They both have strong links to Blackpool and its activist community; Brendan is an Activism Artist, undertaking a number of art installations in the town with strong social justice messages and Claire has links to The Big Issue North and capturing the story of Anti-Fracking activists on the outskirts of Blackpool.

Brendan recorded a video for one of our workshops and after showing us round his workshop, spoke with great passion about activist artwork he has been producing for a number of years and about the importance of the arts in supporting people to express themselves.



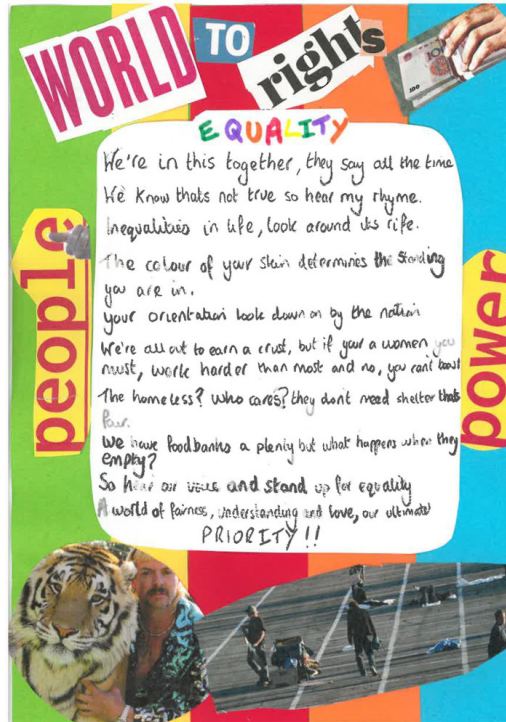
Brendan said, **"it was a real pleasure to take part in the Resilience Revolution by delivering an art workshop exploring activism in art. Creativity is an important part of children's development and building aspirations for the future. So it's great that the Resilience Revolution is offering so many of our young people the opportunity to get involved in creativity. Building stronger and resilient communities is key to any successful society so it's great to see young people be encouraged in community activism."**

You can check out part of Brendan's workshop video here. In this clip Brendan set us a challenge to make different activism posters / pieces of artwork, here are some of our results!

Claire also recorded some videos for our workshops and spoke about her involvement in activism and why photography was so important to her, going on to say; **"Young people's voices are so important at the best of times and especially for communities, especially like Blackpool to know that the town has opportunity. Creativity forms a visual language: the written word, a painting, music and photography which can be so accessible, documenting life and what you might see around yourself. A photograph can create a shared experience, a digital language to create a connection or a conversation of what has been before, what is happening now"**

and perhaps what the future holds. Photography in lockdown holds an invitation for a sense of belonging and what forms us all. The camera lens holds power whether a DSLR or a camera phone – you can tell your own story about change, labels, identity, place and that is powerful.”

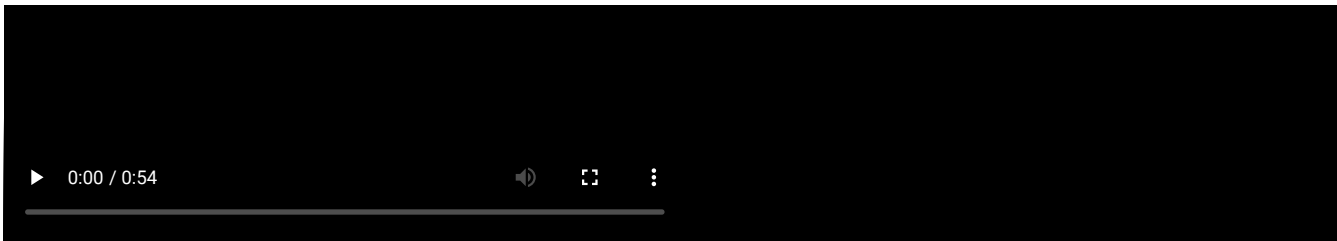
If you agree with Claire, you could have a go at completing one of the photography challenges that she shared with us as part of the collective Zine Project. You can find her clip here.



We Demand :

- A fair Wage .
- Policies for us and With us.
- A planet worth living in and one to be proud of.
- Votes at 16!
End Inequality !

123456789



The final product

Full of inspiration from Brendan and Claire, and a broader skill set reached from the challenges they set us, we began to plan our collective Zine. There were many decisions to make and this was helped by our growing confidence in working together over Microsoft Teams. Having learned collectively about the process of creating a Zine we set about choosing an issue that was important to us individually but centred on tackling inequality which was the theme that united us all. This led to some great contributions across our group about LGBTQ rights, Votes at 16 and the environment. We felt that a broad topic such as inequality gave greater choice and flexibility allowing all of us to show off our creative skills accompanied by the knowledge and learning we had shared across the four days.

We are proud and excited to present our collective zine [which you can see here](#). A piece of work achieved digitally, remotely and virtually during what has been a very challenging time for all.

Without a doubt, we all thoroughly enjoyed the workshops for a range of different reasons. Like a lot of things in the Resilience Revolution we have thought about this in the context of Resilient Moves, and here are a few we think we have particularly experienced and developed:



Not being judged



Socialise with others



Develop life skills



Have a laugh



Find time for your talents



Not feeling judged and having a safe platform to view and share our ideas was vital. One of our group thought “it was nice to speak to people outside of home given the lockdown situation” whilst another noted “taking part in different sessions without being judged and being able to focus on expressing my thoughts was really good”.

It was clear that each member of the group had learnt something and developed life skills. Being more creative with content, folding techniques and clever collaging are some of the things that stand out. One member of the group stated “I feel confident in my ability to be creative because a Zine does not demand perfection and that the main skill is how you get your message across in a thought-provoking way”.



We believe the Resilience Revolution providing important resources via the Activism Packs had a huge impact on our success, acting as a vital enabling factor. Freedom to enlist the support of creative types and form new relationships with Brendan and Claire helped us to bring different elements of the programme to life. Being brave and having a go with different digital methods was also really important – we learnt that using a mix of approaches like videos, time together in a digital space as well as setting challenges we could do in our own time worked really well. And like all group work, everyone chipping in, being willing to share and learn, and dedicate time and effort ultimately made it the positive experience that it was. In what we achieved, we have merely scratched the surface but as the famous saying goes, ‘you have to start somewhere to get somewhere’.

If you want to find out more about the Resilience Revolution or are interested in taking part in our future workshops please get in touch via our social media channels, or by emailing headstart@blackpool.gov.uk or calling 01253 476746.



The Resilience Revolution Final Research Report 2016-2022

Resilience Revolution’s Final Research Report 2016-2022

This report presents the research and evaluation of the Resilience Revolution programme (2016-2022).

The Resilience Revolution is an innovative whole town approach to building resilience, made possible by funding from The National Lottery Fund’s HeadStart programme. Funding was available between 2016 and 2022, across 6 areas nationally in the UK with the purpose of testing and learning new ways to support young people’s mental health (ages 10-16).

In Blackpool, the programme took the bold step of developing a vision for the whole town; giving everyone who lived, worked or volunteered in the town the opportunity to get involved. The Resilience Revolution embraced co-production as a way to design and test innovative projects. Co production meant a range of people, with different expertise, working together, as equals towards shared goals.

NIHR National Institute for Health and Care Research



The Research Ready Communities pilot continued

For the past year and a half Boingboing has been working on a Research Ready Communities pilot project in Blackpool alongside the National Institute for Health Research as part of their Under-served Communities programme. Typically, much of the funding for health research in the UK goes to universities in London, Oxford and Cambridge, but health research is needed the most in places like Blackpool, where the harmful impacts of health inequalities are worst felt.



Loops – a review

On 22nd February Grace and Lauren, members of the Activist Alliance, attended the show Loops at the Blackpool Grand Theatre. It was a play made in collaboration with Liverpool Everyman + Playhouse, 20 Stories High theatre company and, “a brilliant group of activists and artists who all shared important stories of what their experiences were, with courage, honesty and jokes”.



Watch our workshops: how to do community co-research on health equity.

Created as part of the ongoing Community Solutions for Health Equity project that Boingboing Foundation are proudly part of, we are pleased to share recordings of a series of workshops held recently in Blackpool. These workshops are free resources to be taken advantage of by any community members or organisations looking for a beginner’s guide to developing the research skills and knowledge needed to explore health inequalities in coastal areas.

Resilience Framework (Children & Young People) Oct 2015 – adapted from Hart & Stimpert 2007 www.boingboing.org.uk				
	BELONGING	LEARNING	COPING	COME SELF
BASICS	Find someone for the child/YP to belong to	Make school/college life work as well as possible	Understanding boundaries and keeping within them	Identify a sense of hope
Enough money to live	Tap into good influences	Engage mentors for children/YP	Being brave	Support the child/YP to understand other people's feelings
Being safe	Keep emotions in check	The more healthy relationships the better	Solving problems	Help the child/YP to know how/when
Access & transport	Take what you can from relationships where there is some hope	Map out career or life plan	Putting on one's best face	Help the child/YP take responsibility for 'their' health
Healthy diet	Get together people the child/YP can count on	Help the child/YP to organise themselves	Fighting their interests	Help the child/YP take responsibility for 'their' health
Exercise and fresh air	Responsibilities & obligations	Highlight achievements	Calming down & self-soothing	Proffer their talents
Enough sleep	Focus on good times and plans	Remember tomorrow is another day	Lean on others when necessary	There are tried and tested treatments for specific problems, use them
Play & leisure	Protect a good experience of someone or something new	Develop life skills	Have a laugh	
Being free from prejudice & discrimination	Make friends and mix with other children/YP			
	NOBLE TRUTHS			
	ACCEPTING	CONSERVING	COMMITMENT	ENLISTING

The Boingboing Resilience Framework

The Resilience Framework is a handy table that summarises ‘what works’ when supporting children and young people’s resilience according to the Resilience Research base. The Resilience Framework forms a cornerstone of our research and practice. On this page we have pulled together lots of useful links so you can find out all about the Resilience Framework.



Prevention in Health and Social Care Inquiry Submissions

Co-leaders of the Resilience Revolution made not one, but two submissions to the UK Parliament ‘Prevention in Health and Social Care’ inquiry last month. The inquiry is about preventing ill health, now and in the future.



A guide to becoming more eco-friendly in Blackpool and the Fylde Coast

Hi, I'm Maya, and I wanted to say a big thank you to you for reading. These guides were created to help people in Blackpool and the Fylde Coast become more environmentally friendly, without feeling too overwhelmed by climate issues. They were produced as part of the Boingboing Activist in Residence project, which gave me the opportunity to work as an Eco-activist in Residence at Blackpool Victoria Hospital. I decided that I wanted to use this role to make two guides: one for local residents, and another for Blackpool Teaching Hospitals' Green Champions.



An introduction to the Research Ready Communities pilot

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Online Resilience Forum – 3rd April 2023 – Psychological distress and resilience among a population affected by conflict

This Online Resilience Forum from CRSJ and Boingboing is for anyone interested in resilience research. This month's forum is on 'psychological distress and resilience among a population affected by conflict' presented by University of Brighton PhD student Omar S Rasheed.

[Older Entries](#)