

**20
STORIES
HIGH**

contact



**“I told my Mum I was going on
an R.E. trip...”**

National Tour 2017
Resource Pack



Supported using public funding by
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ENGLAND**

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About the Show

A 20 Stories High and Contact Co-Production

“So I told my mum I was going on an RE trip and I needed to be at Piccadilly Bus Station for seven o’ clock in the morning, in order to get to the clinic by half past eight...”

With 1 in 3 U.K. women having had an abortion “I told my Mum I was going on an R.E. trip...” explores what seems to be one of society’s last taboos.

A multi-talented young female ensemble use verbatim voices, live music, beats and rhyme to portray the stories of real women who’ve experienced pregnancy and abortion. This funny, frank, and moving new play is about as far from a worthy sexual health lecture as is imaginable.

The show is written and directed by Julia Samuels drawing on over 50 interviews with young women, boyfriends, parents, doctors and campaigners.

Age Advisory/Content advisory

Suitable for ages 13+

Contains some swearing and graphic language about abortion

Director’s Note

“Quite often at 20 Stories High we start developing our ideas with young people through a ‘Dinner and Debate’ evening where we all sit and eat ... so we had a Dinner and Debate about abortion and there were some really strong opinions in the room but people were really respectful of each other’s opinions and actually one of the young people told us about her own abortion ... and other people told other stories that were really, really personal. And so these, sort of like, doors had opened and these stories started coming out.

“And then the next night I took a group of 3 young women to the theatre and, in the car on the way there, one of them said actually she hadn’t wanted to say in front of everyone but she’d had an abortion 2 years ago and she had really felt burdened by keeping it a secret and she suddenly felt better, sort of talking about it. And another one of the young women had been pregnant when she was 16 and she had actually had a miscarriage but she hadn’t told people about that and we realised that these stories were everywhere and we realised we needed to make a play about it.”

Julia Samuels, Writer and Director

Creative Team

Writer & Director	Julia Samuels	(20 Stories High Co-Artistic Director)
Designer	Miriam Nabarro	
Musical Director	Keith Saha	(20 Stories High Co-Artistic Director)
Lighting Designer	Douglas Kuhrt	
Sound Designer	Jon Everett	

About 20 Stories High

Founded in 2006, 20 Stories High has established itself as one of the leading young people's theatre companies nationally, and has won a series of prestigious awards and commissions. 20 Stories High tours to theatre venues and community spaces and runs a range of participatory projects. We are part of the Arts Council's National Portfolio of funded organisations, and are a registered charity.



The Elasticated Sound System, 20 Stories High Youth Theatre

20 Stories High make theatre with young people from excluded communities, emerging & world-class artists to tell stories that are...

contemporary, youthful, authentic, melodic,
gritty, jumping, rebellious, cheeky
original, visual, challenging, tender
anarchic, diverse, surprising, booming,
political, funny, collaborative...
and heart-felt.

We believe everybody's got a story to tell...and their own way of telling it...

www.20storieshigh.org.uk

Awards and Nominations

Broke 'N' Beat Collective by Keith Saha and Sue Buckmaster
2016 HSBC Young Critics Award, On the Edge, ASSITEJ

The Company
2016 Jenny Harris Award, National Theatre Foundation

Whole by Philip Osment
2013 Writers Guild of Great Britain Best Play for Young People

Ghost Boy by Keith Saha
2011 Brian Way Award for UK's Best New Play for Young People
2010 Liverpool Daily Post Arts Award for Best Touring Production

Blackberry Trout Face by Laurence Wilson
2010 Brian Way Award for UK's Best New Play for Young People
2009 Shortlisted for Manchester Evening News for Best New Play

"There are few, if any, writers and companies around that can compete with this bunch: catch them while you can"

Liverpool Echo on *Melody Loses Her Mojo*

"...there are breathtakingly inventive moments, some of which pack a startlingly powerful emotional punch."

The Times on *The Broke 'N' Beat Collective*

About Contact

Contact is the leading UK arts organisation to place young people's leadership and decision-making at the heart of everything. Young people aged 13-25 work alongside our staff to decide and deliver our artistic programme in our venue, and make staff and board appointments. Our vision is a world where young people are empowered by creativity to become leaders in the arts and in their own communities.



No Guts, No Heart, No Glory, a Contact and Common Wealth Co-Production

Contact commissions and produces up to 10 new shows each year for national touring, most with a focus on pressing social or ethical issues. Recent shows include *No Guts, No Heart, No Glory* (Common Wealth), *Rites* (with National Theatre Scotland), *Faslane* (Jenna Watt), *The Spalding Suite* (with Southbank Centre and FUEL), *Big Girl's Blouse* (Kate O'Donnell), *Credible Likeable Superstar Role Model* (Bryony Kimmings), *The Shrine of Everyday Things* and *Under the Covers* (Contact Young Company).

Contact presents a pioneering year-round programme of theatre, dance, spoken word, music and comedy for all ages, alongside free weekly skills development activities and flagship young leadership programmes, including *Future Fires* (community arts leaders) and *The Agency* (young social entrepreneurs).

Contact is funded by Arts Council England, Manchester City Council, The Association of Greater Manchester Authorities and the University of Manchester.

'The most successful example of participatory decision-making in the arts'

International Journal of Arts Management

'Manchester's most progressive theatre programme'

Creative Tourist

'Contact's hidden strength is its superlative young company, the facilities it offers them and the shows they get to devise with leading professionals'

What's On Stage

'A unique and progressive community of and for 'diversity' in all of its meanings'

Ria Hartley, Flying Solo Commission Winner

Background to the piece and its development

20 Stories High and Contact are passionate about making work with and for young people, that unpicks the complexities and nuances of social topics, in an accessible, exciting and honest way. Recent examples of such work includes *BLACK* by 20 Stories High (interrogating racial tensions in the UK) and *Under the Covers* by Contact Young Company (exploring young people's attitudes to sex).



BLACK, 20 Stories High



Under the Covers, Contact Young Company

Having worked together on projects for a decade, 20 Stories High approached Contact in 2014, with an idea for a new show - a verbatim piece about young people's experience of abortion. Both organisations and our young companies agreed conclusively that the conversation felt important and we began to think about how we would make the piece together.

Through the generous support of The Wellcome Trust for the show, we had the opportunity to work with academic Dr Jayne Kavanagh, who is a Principal Clinical Teaching Fellow at University College London (UCL). Jayne's experience in lecturing and researching in medical ethics supported the exploration of the scientific and moral concerns around abortion. Our research process was a rich and interesting journey, and during developing the piece we engaged with a number of other academics, doctors, religious leaders, and sexual health care providers. Director Julia was also invited to present a paper around '*Challenging Prevalent Narratives in Debates around Abortion and Young People*' at The University of Ulster to a conference of medical professionals. In June 2016, Julia visited Belfast to meet with young people and campaigners to learn about the impact the difference in law has (abortion is illegal in Northern Ireland).

Through our early research we learned that 1 in 3 women will experience an abortion in their lifetime and through reading work such as Dr Jeni Harden's study outlined in *Young People's Knowledge, Beliefs and Attitudes to Abortion*, we discovered that young people often lack information about abortion, leaving some young people to only consider their choices at the stage

of encountering an unplanned pregnancy and potential moment of crisis.

We began to think about how this fairly common experience remained largely taboo- stories of abortions were often absent from social conversations and when presented in mainstream media, often seemed simplified or biased in reporting. Therefore it felt crucial that the piece presented diverse voices- from varied social and geographical demographics. Director Julia Samuels gathered over 50 interviews with young women, young men, parents, doctors and campaigners from across the UK, Northern Ireland, Canada, Zimbabwe and Nigeria.

Our chosen theatrical style - verbatim theatre - also allowed us to preserve the nuances of opinion and background. Verbatim means that we feature the exact words as were used originally by our interviewees. This technique allows us to share real stories and honour the interviewee, by representing them as true-to-life as possible, while offering anonymity to the real person.

We also use a technique called recorded delivery, where the actors listen to the real interviews via headphones in performance, relaying the words from the interviewees as they hear them. The immediacy of the delivery method creates a direct and authentic sense of performance.

We believe the research process and chosen performance style has resulted in a playful, honest and insightful piece that presents voices and experience that are not often shared.

Roxanne Moores, Creative Producer, Contact

[A note from Dr Jayne Kavanagh, Principle Clinical Teaching Fellow at University College London, Academic collaborator on the project:](#)

From the first moment Julia spoke to me about involvement in R.E. trip, I was excited at the prospect. From being interviewed about my personal experience of working in sexual health and teaching medical students and healthcare professionals about the legal, ethical, clinical and practical aspects of abortion, to advising on the medical and ethical content of the script and giving feedback on the sharings, it's all been an immense privilege for me and has gone on to influence my teaching and clinical practice.

Dr Jayne Kavanagh

Blog by Director Julia Samuels

Featured in The Big Issue North, 17 November 2016

The US election makes political theatre more vital than ever

In June, I was lucky enough to go to Washington DC as part of an Arts Council group attending a US not-for-profit theatre conference. The conference focused on diversity – how was the theatre sector responding to the urgent issues around race and gender in the USA today?

The timing of the conference coincided with the Brexit referendum. The day after a long night of watching the result come through, many American theatre colleagues approached our group of depressed Brits to talk about what had just happened. They were scared. They were scared that if Britain can be that isolationist, that hostile to immigration and immigrants, well, what did that mean for the USA? They could see Trump on the horizon. They'd assumed that he'd never win a majority of votes, but our result made them realise that the things that you think might never happen actually can happen; that there was an international pattern to a new extreme right wing way of seeing the world – and it was gaining momentum.

Amidst these feelings of trepidation, I heard lots of amazing artists talk about lots of amazing work that's happening in the States, celebrating diversity and challenging racism. This included a national collection of short plays exploring #BlackLivesMatter and a verbatim theatre performance by Anna Devere Smith about young black men and the police. It reminds you of the incredible role that the arts can play in societies in crisis.

And today we need them more than ever.

One of the things I was talking about to people I was meeting at the conference was a show I'm developing at the moment called *'I told my mum I was going on an R.E trip...'* I had to explain the title as, interestingly, they don't have any state religious education and didn't know what I was on about. But what they did get was the subject matter.

The show is about abortion. It's a verbatim theatre show using real-life testimonies told to me in over 50 interviews by young women, health practitioners and campaigners from both sides. One in three women in the UK, and in the US too, will have an abortion in her lifetime. And if we think we have an issue with abortion stigma here, things in the States are a whole world away. And as for politics and abortion – well, I still can't believe that it's a crucial vote-winner or loser for US candidates, that their pro-life or pro-choice perspective is often one of the first things that's stated in a manifesto. The right to abortion is only a millimetre away from being taken away – whether that's through a change in the law or in the practical ways US states are trying to undermine the law by closing clinics and making it impossible in practical terms for many women to access abortion at all. There are now, for example, only two abortion clinics in the whole of Louisiana.

And that of course brings us straight back to Trump and his vice-president, Mike Pence – a self-described “evangelical Catholic”. Anti-Mexican, anti-Muslim but pro-life. Domestically they have threatened to stop funding Planned Parenthood, the non-profit reproductive health service, and consequently activists are now urging women to stockpile the morning-after pill. And the choice of a new Supreme Court judge could threaten the famous *Roe v Wade* decision that legalised abortion back in 1973.

Internationally the aid budget is threatened with over £480 million of support for reproductive

health rights at risk – money that is absolutely vital to provide support for African women like Cousin, whose story features in our play.

I had always hoped that we would take our abortion play to the US to share it with the people we met at the Washington conference but just four months ago I did not anticipate how politically important the content of the play might become.

Creative Team



Julia Samuels – Writer & Director

Julia is Co-Artistic Director of 20 Stories High. For 20 Stories High Julia created and directed verbatim theatre show *Tales from the MP3*. She has also directed *HEADZ* by Keith Saha, *Whole* by Philip Osment (winner of the Writers Guild Best Play for Young People Award 2013), and Laurence Wilson's *Blackberry Trout Face*, (winner of the Brian Way Award 2010 for the UK's best new play for young people). For 20SH Youth Theatre, she directed *Rain*, created in collaboration with 84 Theatre (Tehran), *A Private Viewing* and co-directed *The Elasticated Sound System*, *Dark Star Rising* and *On Me Onez* with Keith Saha. Previous to her work with 20SH, Julia worked in the Education departments of the National Theatre and Theatre Royal Stratford East. She has also worked extensively as a freelancer for a range of organisations including North West Playwrights, RSC, Z-Arts and Theatre Centre.



Keith Saha – Musical Director

Keith Saha is Co-Artistic Director of 20 Stories High. He started acting in the Everyman Youth Theatre in Liverpool before going on to be an actor, working for companies such as, Theatre Royal Stratford East, Contact, Graeae, Red Ladder and Birmingham Rep. He then became a composer and Musical Director for theatre before focusing on being a playwright and director. Since 2006, he has been focusing on writing and developing wide variety of plays using different forms – spoken word, verbatim theatre as well as pioneering the form of Hip-Hop Theatre with Puppetry and Mask. In 2010, he was awarded The Brian Way Award for the UK's Best New Play for Young People for his play *Ghost Boy*, a co-production with Contact and Birmingham Rep which championed this form. More recently his play *The Broke 'N' Beat Collective* won the young critics' award at ON THE EDGE FESTIVAL 2016.

Miriam Nabarro - Designer

Miriam Nabarro is a London based theatre designer and artist. She often works with new writing, verbatim and performances of a political and international nature. For 20 Stories High include *The Broke 'N' Beat Collective* (20 Stories High/ Theatre Rites, Unity + tour), *Tales from the MP3* (Everyman + Summerhall) and *BLACK* (tour). *My Name Is...* (Tamasha Theatre Co, Arcola, Tron + tour). Other recent shows include *War Correspondents* (Helen Chadwick Song Theatre, Birmingham Rep, GDIF + tour), *Anne and Zef* (Company of Angels/ Salisbury), *Bang Bang Bang* (Out of joint/ Royal Court +tour), *Mad Blud* (Theatre Royal Stratford East) and award-winning productions *Palace of the End* (Royal Exchange/ Traverse), *Dr Korzak's Example* (Royal Exchange/ Tron), *The Great Game*, *'Afghanistan'* (Tricycle + US tour including the Pentagon) and *Prima Doona* (Edinburgh Fringe First), *A Winter's Tale* (Headlong/Chichester + tour), *Sabbat* (Dukes + Orange Tree), *Snow Queen* (Polka), *Quicken Tree* (Edinburgh Botanic) *Macbeth*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Twelfth Night*, *Cupboard of Surprises*, *Word Alive!* (all National Theatre Education), *Tombstone Tales* (Arcola), *St George and the Dragon* (Lyric/ WAC + tour), and large scale community productions such as *The Fear Brigade* by Adrian Mitchell and *ID 1000* for NYT. Miriam has run creative projects with young people and artists around the world, often in areas affected by conflict, with various NGO's, UNICEF and the British Council. She regularly exhibits as a photographer and printmaker and is the first artist in residence for the Development Studies Department at SOAS.

Jon Everett – Sound Designer

Previous sound designs include: *The Tempest* (Bristol Old Vic Theatre School); *The Broke 'N' Beat Collective* (Theatre Rites / 20 Stories High); *Cinderella*, *101 Dalmatians* (Travelling Light/Tobacco Factory Productions); *Walking The Chains* (Show Of Strength); *World Cup Final 1966*, *The Last Days Of Mankind*, *Does My Society Look Big In This* (Bristol Old Vic); *Twelfth Night* (Moving Stories); *The Grimm Brothers' Circus* (Theatre Royal Bath). Associate Sound Designs include: *Goodnight Mister Tom* (Fiery Angel, West End & UK Tour); *My Perfect Mind* (Told By An Idiot, New York Transfer). Jonathan also worked on many other productions whilst running the sound departments at Bristol Old Vic and Theatre Royal Bath. He is delighted to be working with 20 Stories High again on this project.

Douglas Kuhrt – Lighting Designer

Credits include: *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Aladdin* (Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse); *Tales From The MP3*, *Melody Loses Her Mojo*, *Whole* (20 Stories High); *All Creatures Great and Small*, *Last Of The Duty Free*, *Black Coffee*, *Fallen Angels*, (Bill Kenwright Ltd); *The Pitmen Painters* (National/West End/Broadway/Tour); *Take Me With You*, *Road Movie* (Starving Artists); *Jiggy* (Edinburgh); *Rain Man* (English Theatre Frankfurt); *Little Voice* (Hull Truck); *The Deranged Marriage* (Rifco); *Piccadilly Revisited* (Linbury Studio); *Educating Rita* (Citizens, Glasgow); *Geoff Dead: Disco For Sale* (Live); *Depth Charge* (Lyric Hammersmith); *Running The Silf Road* (Yellow Earth); *King Lear* (Shanghai); *Tom, Dick and Harry* (Duke of York's, West End); *ZIPP!* (Duchess, West End); *The Beast Market* (Chol); *The Talisman* (Drum, Plymouth); *Fascinating Aida* (Haymarket, West End); *Home and Beauty* (Lyric, West End); *Dreaming, The Hobbit* (Queens, West End); *Naked Justice* (West Yorkshire Playhouse) and *Scissor Happy* (Duchess, West End).

Roxanne Moores– Creative Producer, Contact

Roxanne works on Contact's commissions and co-productions. This has recently included *RITES* (NTS and Contact Co-Production), *Spalding Suite* (Southbank, FUEL and Contact Co-Production) and *Under The Covers* (Contact, Wellcome Trust Funded). Roxanne also works with Contact's Flying Solo commission winners across their year-long relationship, offering producer support, manages RE:CON (Contact's Young Programmers and Producer's Team) and produces Contact's key festivals such as WHY? Festival (produced in collaboration with The Southbank Centre). As a freelance producer Roxanne worked for Eggs Collective, The Future producing team and Dep Arts. Roxanne previously worked for Channel M and Oldham Coliseum.

Cast



Aizah Khan

Aizah is a young, Midlands based actress of British Pakistani heritage. Having trained in Theatre and Professional Practice at Coventry University she is now beginning to develop her Circus/Aerial skills. Her recent credits include tackling the idea of radicalisation of young people in the UK working with TIE for The Playhouse Theatre (Birmingham) before travelling to Poland to create *SILENCE* with Teatr Biuro Podrozy, a show that highlights the struggle faced by refugees and migrants. This show has seen her travel across Europe performing in Greenwich and Docklands International Festival, Freedom Festival Hull, Cornish Exchange in Newbury, as well as Wroslaw & Poznan, Poland and Oberhausen, Germany. In connection with Imaginner Productions Aizah was able to travel back with a group of English actors to also perform *The Winter's Tale* in Poznan.



Dorcas Sebuyange

Dorcas is a Congolese Creative Artist based in Liverpool. She specialises in drama, music, poetry and dance. She started acting at 15 and has trained with 20 Stories High, Frantic Assembly, PurpleCoat Productions and Collective Encounters. She graduated with a Higher National Certificate in Acting at the City of Liverpool College. Her performances with 20 Stories High include: *Elasticated Sound System* (2016), *Animals* (2015), *Promises* (2015), *Standard* (2014), *Crashed* (2013), *The Universe and Me* (2012). She has been writing and performing music and poetry since she was 10 and has supported the likes of Akala, Lady Leshurr, Yasmin, Sway, Bashy, Lowkey, Cherri V, Mz. Bratt and was part of a young writer's group nominated for a MOBO award in 2010. "*I told my Mum I was going on an R.E. trip...*" will be her first national tour as a professional actor.



Emma Burns

Emma studied performing arts at Hugh Baird College, Liverpool, where performances included: *The Wizard of Oz* (2010), *Oh What A Lovely War*, *the Caucasian Chalk Circle* (2011), *Murder Mystery Night* (2011), *Mother Courage and Her Children* (2011) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2012). After finishing college in 2012, Emma joined 20 Stories High Youth Theatre And Young Actors Company, performing in: *Future Jam* (2013) at The Royal Exchange, Manchester; *Standard* (2014) at The Bluecoat Arts Centre, Liverpool; *Animals and Promises* (2015) at The Unity Theatre, Liverpool and *The Elasticated Sound System* (2016) at the Everyman Theatre, Liverpool for which Emma wrote a number of scenes. Emma also dances, loves spoken word and poetry, is writing her own screenplay and plays the ukulele. This is Emma's first professional tour and she is "excited, but proper nervous."



Jamie Lee O'Donnell

Originally from Derry, the Irish actress Jamie-Lee O'Donnell started performing from a young age in professional theatre productions such as, *Me Da's Suit* and *The Seagull*. She gained experience in musical theatre in shows including *Fame* and *Aladdin* before studying on the performing arts course at De Montfort University and working as a professional dancer. She appeared in the BBC Northern Ireland television drama *6degrees* as Eva Maguire for all 3 series and can also be seen in the upcoming feature film *Urban* and the *Shed Crew*, based on the true story and bestselling novel by Bernard Hare.

Interview with the Writer & Director

We managed to grab a minute to chat to the writer and director Julia from 20 Stories High. Here's what she had to say about the process of creating "*I told my Mum I was going on a R.E. trip...*"



In a nutshell, tell us what "*I told my Mum I was going on an R.E. trip...*" is about...

It's about trying to start a conversation. It's about saying 1 in 3 women have abortions, and that is an incredible number. But they don't feel that they can share these experiences. Some women don't want to and that is fine, they have a right to privacy. But for many women, it becomes a massive secret that they are carrying. Some of them feel fine about their abortions. But some have very complex feelings about it, and the fact that they don't feel that they can talk about it, makes these feelings even more complicated and difficult. And for people who are in the situation of needing to make a decision about a pregnancy, they just don't know that so many of their friends, family and peers have gone through this too. They don't have the people to turn to to ask for advice, as everyone is keeping quiet. And that makes an already difficult situation much more difficult.

Despite its prevalence – 1 in 3 women is a massive number - it's one of society's greatest taboos.

What inspired you to create the show?

I tell a story at the beginning of the show which goes like this...

"A few years ago I was in a pub erm talking to an actor that we were working with, and erm I can't remember what we were talking about. But anyway, whatever the conversation was for some reason - and it was appropriate - I entered... I said in the conversation, erm 'Oh yeah when I was in my early twenties I had an abortion', and erm he just... this look came across his face like I'd

just said that I murdered my Nan. And then like in the next moment he sort of realised that that wasn't really the face that he was expected to pull, so he sort of righted his features and sort of was like, looking to carry on with the conversation. And erm... which we did.

“And erm it was afterwards I thought ‘well of course, of course he'd look like that, erm people probably don't go around saying that. Er...Probably people don't go around talking about this’, and I thought maybe that would be something we could do a play about.”

Following that conversation, we had a ‘Dinner and Debate’ evening with the young people in our Youth Theatre. We had a very diverse group of young people, with very differing opinions. They expressed their opinions with confidence and passion, they challenged each other, they listened respectfully to people's experiences and stories, they stuck to their guns and they were also prepared to change their minds. And they were absolutely convinced that a play about abortion was something they and their peers would be interested to see.

A couple of days after the Dinner and Debate, I took 3 young women who had been there to the theatre. One of them said to me that she hadn't wanted to say anything in front of everyone, but she'd had an abortion a couple of years ago, and she had felt so guilty since. She said that even speaking about it now, she started to feel less guilty. She could see that the guilt was actually wrapped up in having to holding this ‘dirty’ secret – not so much about the actual abortion itself. A second young woman then told us about how she was about to have an abortion, but actually miscarried at the last minute. She'd never told anyone about that other than her ex-partner. I could see these stories were everywhere, and I was determined to do something to help break this silence.

You chose to use verbatim theatre, why have you chosen this particular way to perform the material?

I had made another verbatim play – *Tales from the MP3* – a couple of years previously and fell in love with making a play from the real words of real people. People express themselves in ways that writers would never write. And I became fascinated by the authenticity and creativity of people telling their own stories.

And with this subject matter in particular, it felt that the most important missing thing in society, was people being able to take the space to tell their own abortion stories and share those experiences, so it felt that verbatim was the perfect form for the play.

How did you go about obtaining the interviews and was it difficult getting people to talk?

Mostly, people really wanted to talk. They had these experiences, which they had usually only shared with a very small number of people and they were really pleased to have the opportunity to speak openly about them.

One of the only challenging things was finding religious leaders who would talk to us. Religion became a key theme in the piece and we wanted to get a range of perspectives, but not many religious leaders were prepared to be interviewed and/or have their interviews included in the script. In the end, we didn't end up using the interviews that we did do anyway (we had much too much material – there are hundreds of hours of recordings), but it was interesting to see how hard that road was.

Also, we had challenges around Cousin's story. Because of the incredible stigma around abortion in Nigeria (like other parts of the world), her immediate family didn't feel able to talk to us in case they were identifiable. We had to do alternative research to find an authentic version of her story, and actually finding factual information about illegal abortion in Nigeria was really tricky.

Tell us a bit about your writing... How does your writing process work? And how do you get all your ideas down on the page?

Writing verbatim is different to writing a conventional play. Firstly, it was about collecting lots of varied material, interviewing a diverse range of people, finding a range of texture and content. There was then lots of time spent listening and listening and listening. I often listened as I went on long walk, which I found really helpful. Gradually it became clear who the main characters should be – who we needed to follow throughout the whole piece; what the main themes were; what the arc of the piece should be and which additional voices we needed.

I always edit the audio from the original interviews. This is accompanied by making lots of notes, lists and spreadsheets as I try to order the material and play with the theatrical conventions I'm using in the play. Transcribing only comes later, so it only actually gets 'on the page' at the last minute.

How would you describe your directing style?

Collaborative, playful, yet very precise. I'm always striving for authenticity. I believe in empowering the actors to keep the show fresh and full of life. I don't like to tell actors what to do, I'd rather they found their own truths, based on the objectives of the characters they are playing. (I'm very influenced by the work of Mike Alfreds.) My job is also about pulling everything together, to make the piece feel coherent.

Directing when I'm also the writer is a particular challenge. In many ways, you have to be your own sounding-board, which is quite complex.

Can you tell us a bit about the rehearsal process? What's a typical day like in the rehearsal room?

Warm ups: stretches, vocal exercises and games.

Then the day is divided usually into sections. They will be something like:

- character work
- exploring staging
- music

Doing a verbatim show with the recorded delivery technique (where the actors repeat the real audio in the show, which they are hearing via headphones) is actually really different to rehearsing a regular play. With a written play, there would be lots of time spent looking at the text and analysing the information it gives us, breaking it down into units and objectives. With a recorded delivery piece, somehow having the audio makes you not need to do this in the same way, as you absolutely understand the intentions and the rhythms in what you hear. So actually, there's a lot less textual analysis than I'd usually find myself doing.

What has been the biggest challenge in creating *'I told my Mum I was going on an RE trip...'*?

The editing took me so long. It was so hard to pick and choose from so many amazing contributions and interviews. At times I thought'd never finish. And every day there's something I think about that somebody said told me, that I wish was in the show!

And what excites you most about the show?

I can't wait to get all these conversations about abortion happening!

Key Themes and Artistic Style

"I told my Mum I was going on a R.E. trip..." explores a wide range of themes and issues relevant to many young people in the UK today. The show can be an excellent starting point for young people to safely explore, discuss and debate how these issues affect their lives.



"R.E. trip..." in rehearsal

The main issues tackled in the show are:

- Abortion
- Culture & religion
- Health and healthy choices
- Mental health
- Self image
- Parenthood & family
- Sex and relationships
- Politics
- Truth

What is verbatim theatre?

The word verbatim is just a fancy way of saying word for word. If you copy something verbatim you use the exact words that were used originally.

When creating verbatim theatre, the playwright or company interviews people that are connected to the topic that the play is focused on and uses their responses to construct the piece.

There are two main types of verbatim plays:

- A play that focuses on people's testimony of a particular event (e.g. a natural disaster, a murder or other tragedy)
- A play that focuses on a group of people's responses to a particular topic (e.g. what it's like to be a child or how people feel about their bodies)

Because verbatim plays contain real testimonies and stories, they are often very powerful tools for social change. Verbatim plays are a type of documentary theatre, documenting a very precise moment in history and giving an insight into the political, social and cultural make-up of that particular moment.

What is recorded delivery?

Recorded delivery is one way of creating Verbatim Theatre. Instead of transcribing the interviews into a script, the interviews are edited into audio tracks. Performers then listen to the tracks through headphones live onstage and simply speak the words as they hear them.

Recorded delivery allows the performer to recreate the original interview in a more authentic way – every cough, splutter and hesitation is recreated in the performance. The actors do not learn the lines during rehearsal allowing them to remain accurate to the original recordings and stopping them from slipping into their own patterns of speech.



"R.E. trip..." in rehearsal

Verbatim Theatre inspiration

Alecky Blythe, founder of Recorded Delivery Theatre, has pioneered the innovative verbatim technique, originally created by Anna Deavere Smith.

Deavere Smith was the first to combine the journalistic technique of interviewing her subjects with the art of interpreting their words through performance.

Find out more at: www.recordeddelivery.net.

Top tips for interviews

20 Stories High Associate Writer Philip Osment has worked closely with Julia Samuels as a dramaturg (the 'writers friend'), helping to bring together the interviews. Here are Philip's top tips when creating Verbatim Theatre...

- Make sure you ask open questions so that your interviewee talks about their lives rather than just giving you opinions - opinions are two a penny, anecdotes about personal experiences are gold-dust
- Mistakes, mispronunciations, stammers, stutters, random expressions are part of the way we talk - writers forget to include them - verbatim Theatre allows us to hear how people really express themselves.
- Don't assume an interview is boring before you've seen it performed

Research - other verbatim theatre performances

Tales from the MP3 (2014) by 20 Stories High Young Actors, Directed by Julia Samuels

With unflinching honesty the actors discuss religion, sex, race, friendship and family. Boys and girls play each other and cultural identity is swapped, revealing challenging and insightful perspectives.

rites (2015) by Contact and National Theatre Scotland, Created by Cora Bissett and Yusra Warsama, Directed by Cora Bissett

A powerful and provocative production, exploring the deep-rooted cultural practice of Female Genital Mutilation and the complex reasons behind the practice.

E15 (2016) by Lung Theatre Company

A truthful retelling of the Focus E15 Campaign, Britain's housing crisis, gentrification and how one group of women refused to be marginalised.

My Name Is... (2014) by Tamasha, Sudha Bhuchar and directed by Phillip Osment

The story behind a story that fleetingly hit headlines in 2006 when a Scottish girl's disappearance from her Mother's home was assumed to be an abduction by her Pakistani father.

Monkey Bars (2012) by Chris Goode and Company, dialogues originated by Karl James

An insight into the world as seen by children, *Monkey Bars* uses adults to re-frame the dialogue into adult world situations to poignant and often hilarious affect.

London Road (2011) by Alecky Blythe and Adam Cork

An innovative musical verbatim play set in and around London Road in Ipswich, Suffolk during the serial murders and subsequent trial of killer Steve Wright in 2006 - 2008.

Unprotected (2006) by Esther Wilson, John Fay, Tony Green and Lizzy Nunnery

A response to Liverpool's proposed legal zone for street sex workers. Four Liverpool writers exhaustively researched all viewpoints in the debate allowing the real people involved and their stories to speak for themselves.

Black Watch (2006) by Gregory Burke and the National Theatre of Scotland

Based on the interviews of former soldiers in the Black Watch regiment of the British Army that served on Operation TELIC in Iraq during 2004.

My Name is Rachel Corrie (2005) by Alan Rickman and Katherine Viner

Based on the diaries of Rachel Corrie, a member of the International Solidarity Movement who was killed by an Israel Defence Force operated bulldozer whilst apparently acting as a human shield in front of a Palestinian home in the Gaza strip.

Talking to Terrorists (2005) by Robin Soans

Discusses the importance of resolving terrorism not with violence or conflict, but with negotiations and peaceful discussions

The Laramie Project (2000) by Moises Kaufman and Tectonic Theatre

Based on interviews with the people of Laramie, Wyoming, USA in the wake of the horrific homophobic killing of Matthew Shepard, an event which captured media attention across the globe. The Laramie Project was also made into a film by HBO.

Exploring difficult subject matter with young people

The resources in this pack are intended to broaden young people's understanding and perspectives of some of the difficult themes in *"I told my Mum I was going on a R.E. trip..."*

Challenging subject matter may cause prejudice and stereotype to surface. Some young people may express this through anger, frustration, distress or sadness and may have difficulty accepting opposing viewpoints.

It is important to spend time before going into activities ensuring that all participants and facilitators feel safe and comfortable. The best way to do this is by setting ground rules or drawing up a working contract. Here are some example ground rules we use during workshops:

Respect others

You may hear opinions that are very different to your own. Allow people to express these and explain why they feel that way. Try not to talk over each other.

Own your own values

Speak from the standpoint of 'I' – 'I think that'/'In my opinion'. Avoid 'you' – 'you should'/'you all think that'. If you wish to challenge, challenge the opinion or the behaviour, not the person.

Be open and honest

There is no such thing as a silly question! You could allow young people to write down things they don't wish to ask out loud and then deal with the questions anonymously later on.

Respect confidentiality

People may reveal things about themselves or express opinions that they don't wish to go any further than the people in the room. Uphold the mantra: what is said in the room stays in the room!

Share the air

Foster an atmosphere where everyone gets a chance to speak. Encourage everyone to get involved but respect someone's right to not do so if they find it uncomfortable or distressing.

No personal revelations required

There is no expectation that anyone will reveal information about their personal life or experiences. We definitely shouldn't disclose personal information we know about others whether they are in or out of the room.

Workshop ideas

The following ideas can be used to explore the themes in *"I told my Mum I was going on a R.E. trip..."* in a workshop or drama-based setting. Activities can be done individually or as part of a fuller workshop.



20 Stories High puppetry workshop

Agree/disagree

At 20 Stories High we often use this exercise to engage young people in debate. Using the same principle, of dividing the room into 'Agree/Disagree' try some provocations relating to the issues in the show...

- Abortion should not just be the woman's decision
- I sometimes feel torn between the views my family have and the views I have
- Having an abortion does not make you a bad person
- Keeping secrets from people is OK sometimes
- If you have an abortion you can still go on to have a child later on in life
- Not having support from your partner/family is a valid reason to get an abortion
- Abortion is legal, and therefore women should be able to choose to have an abortion without being judged

These are just ideas. Remember to tailor the provocations to your group. Some groups will be able to debate more complex or provocative statements whilst for other groups taking a broader approach is more appropriate.

These statements could also be used as discussion starters in groups.

Spectrum exercise

During the development of the play, this exercise was used with a range of young people to explore the complexities of opinions and facts about abortion.

1. Explain to the group that the room is going to be a spectrum of opinions, with one wall being a place representing the view 'a woman should always have a right to choose an abortion' and the opposite wall representing the view 'abortion is never acceptable'
2. Ask them to choose a place to stand in the room that reflects their personal opinion.
3. Ask members of the group to volunteer to describe why they have chosen to stand in that place
 - Make sure that you keep asking for contributions from different places on the spectrum to give a variation of views
 - Encourage the group to challenge each other respectfully
 - Encourage them to defend their opinions and positions, but also be prepared to move if something that someone says at any point makes them want to change position in the room
 - If anyone moves, ask them to explain why
4. Debrief. What did we learn? How did we feel hearing other opinions or being challenged on our views?

In your shoes

One of the most exciting parts of "*I told my mum I was going on a R.E. trip...*" for the actors was bringing to life the audio recordings. This exercise will get your group to think about how body language can bring a character to life.

1. Get your group to walk round the space in a neutral manner, continue this until the group seems relaxed.
2. Ask them to choose someone else in the group to study whilst they are walking round the space, think about what it is like to literally walk in their shoes! Prompt them to take note of what part of the body they lead from, where do they hold tension as they walk? Do they lean as they walk? What speed they are walking at? How they react when passing other members of the group? Do they make eye contact? Even those little details like which part of their foot hits the floor first as they walk?
3. Once this is done, the group should try and walk like the member of the group they have chosen. After a few minutes ask the group to exaggerate those movements using a scale of 1-10 (1 being very small movements 10 being huge movements) Encourage your group to push their boundaries and really use their bodies.
4. Invite members of the group to volunteer to show the walk of their chosen person, invite the other members of the group to call out numbers 1-10 and guess which member of the group has been copied.
5. Debrief with your group. How did moving in a different way make you feel different? How can you incorporate this when you're bringing your audio recordings to life in the next exercise?

Verbatim workshop plan (2hr)

Through this verbatim workshop participants will:

- Learn the 'recorded delivery' performance technique: copying real dialogue as accurately as possible, through both spoken word and MP3 recordings
- See a short excerpt of verbatim theatre
- Create and share your own verbatim piece



20 Stories High verbatim theatre workshop

Resources needed

1. MP3 player/recorders or smart phones (enough for one per pair)
2. Headphone Splitters (small adapter that allows 2 sets headphones to plug into the same MP3 player socket, easy and cheap to purchase - you need one per pair)
3. Head/ear phones

Plan

1. Welcome and explanation of workshop aims
2. Warm up as a group
3. Introduce group to verbatim theatre and the recorded delivery technique. Show "*I told my mum I was going on a RE trip...*" footage to illustrate the technique if people haven't seen the show.
4. Agree on an interview question(s) as a group. The question(s) needs to be accessible and personal. For example: Tell me about a time you've felt angry? Or tell me about a time

you've been happy?

5. Ensure each pair has one recording device, a pair of earphones each and a splitter to share.
6. In pairs conduct a mini interview (2-3 mins each). Each pair is asked to take it in turns to ask the question(s) to their partner, whilst recording the entire interview on a smart phone or MP3 player on a specified theme which could be a serious topic (e.g. why I feel the way I do about a woman's right to choose and abortion or is the age of consent appropriate), or something more playful just to learn the technique (e.g. parts of my Body I like or don't like or a time I've been embarrassed).
7. Listen back to the interview through the headphones.
8. Listen again and this time, as you hear what your partner is saying – repeat their words, word for word. So person A repeats what person B is saying in the interview, and vice versa.
9. Each pair presents their interviews back to the full group, word for word.
10. Discuss the impact of the stories, technique and performance. What have we learnt? What did we find interesting/ challenging? How would we like to use this in the future?

Links to the Curriculum

"*I told my Mum I was going on a R.E. trip...*" supports the Citizenship, PSHE and Drama/English at KS3/4 and Drama GCSE, as well as Religious Studies and Ethics for young people aged 13+. Here are some examples of how the play can inspire exercises in the classroom.



FutureJam, 20 Stories High at The Royal Exchange, Manchester

Drama and Theatre studies

Going to see live performance is a great way to get ideas for devising and improvisation. It allows students to explore theatrical devices and interesting themes. An original piece of theatre can also be a great inspiration for creating discussions or writing a review.

Starter

- What was unique about "*I told my mum I was going on a R.E. Trip...*"?
- What techniques did the director, designer and cast employ to create the show?
- Why do you think the companies chose to use the Recorded Delivery technique?

Discuss

- Compare and contrast verbatim theatre/recorded delivery with another theatrical form you are familiar with (e.g. scripted play or devised physical performance etc.). What makes each style of theatre effective in terms of storytelling?
- Write a list of pros and cons of the techniques used each on flip-chart paper

Do

- Have a go at recorded delivery – check out the verbatim theatre workshop section of this resource pack
- Create your own mini verbatim show!
- Create a blog/ short film of your experience: what did you discover? What did you find challenging? What did you learn?

English

"I told my Mum I was going on a R.E. trip..." is a fantastic starting point to explore the English language and its uses in colloquial and everyday settings. All the words spoken are direct copies of original conversations and are performed in the most naturalistic way possible.

Starter

- Read the below extracts from the show (or for the full script play texts can be purchased from 20 Stories High) and discuss the language used by the interviewee and interviewer
- Think about formality of language, regional and cultural dialect, fillers and connectors as well as how the person uses these to express their attitudes, values and beliefs

Discuss

- Choose a section from *"I told my Mum I was going on a R.E. trip..."*
- Get into groups and discuss the language used and how it reflects the speakers' attitudes, values and beliefs and their social, political, economical and cultural background

Do

- Write a review of *'I told my Mum I was going on a R.E. trip...'*
- Decide what type of reader you are writing for and find ways to reach out to this type of reader - it might be useful to look at reviews in different papers/ platforms for inspiration
- Evaluate the style of writing and language techniques you have used and explain why

Religious Studies, Citizenship and Ethics

"I told my Mum I was going on a R.E. trip..." explores differences between people's attitudes, values and beliefs – with a particular focus on religion and abortion.

Starter

- In groups, list different factors that influence a person's attitudes, values and belief systems – this could be anything from cultural influences, political influences, where people were raised, faiths, popular culture (film, TV and music), the press and country of origin etc.

Discuss

- Most of the extracts from the show (below) link to a personal's view point, and often link to their religious beliefs. Select an extract from the play and as a group discuss which view point or perspective you relate to most or find most interesting

Do

- Draw an outline of your body
- On the inside list your attitudes, values and beliefs (e.g. I respect all people equally, I dislike the killing of animals for food) – be honest!
- Then write the influences in your life that have informed your attitudes values and beliefs around the outside (e.g. I was bullied for being gay/for wearing a hijab, I grew up in Africa, I was raised by Jewish parents)
- Take time to reflect on the person you are and what has made you this way - if you wish to share this with others

PSHE, Sex and Relationship Education

Government Sex and Relationships guidance says that 'when abortion is covered within a programme, the challenge is to offer young people the opportunity to explore the dilemmas, enable them to know and understand about abortion, and develop the communication skills to discuss it with parents and health professionals.'

Starter

- Think about the different reasons women might get pregnant when they don't want to be?

Discuss

- Discuss how you would feel if you or your partner got pregnant. Who you would talk to and how sympathetic they would be? Where could you go to get confidential professional help with making a decision about continuing pregnancy or having an abortion?
- Think about how much you really know about abortion and where you get your information and messages from. How much of what you know is fact, how much is rumour and how much is opinion? Where can you go to get accurate information?

Do

- List all the ways people can prevent unwanted pregnancy including different contraceptive methods, how easy you think they are to use, and how effective each method is.
- Imagine you are a 16 year old girl and have just discovered you are pregnant. Make a list of the pros and cons of continuing with this pregnancy and having a baby.
- Get into pairs. One of you play a pregnant girl telling her parent/carer she is pregnant, and one of you play the parent/carer. How do they react? Are they sympathetic, angry, judgmental, helpful?
- Swap roles. But instead of playing a parent, imagine you are a school nurse. How do they react? What advice and information do they give you? Do they react differently to the parent/carer character?

Music

The play offers the chance to analyse the use of live music within a theatrical setting, what its purpose is and how it can be used to enhance the telling of a story. In the show, it is not possible to tell Cousin's story in her own words, so we have used music. This activity will give your group the opportunity to explore story telling through music.

Starter

- Ask your group to choose a piece of music that they enjoy that tells a story through its lyrics
- Invite members to discuss which lines of the song are really good at telling the story and what that made them feel

Discuss

- What did the use of live music in "*I told my mum I was going on a R.E. trip...*" do?
- How was it used at different sections of the show?

Do

- "*I told my Mum I was going on a R.E. trip...*" uses live music to tell stories that could otherwise not be told
- Ask your group to try having a go at writing a song that tells a story that people would not otherwise have known (use the poems within the piece as inspiration)

For further ideas/viewing...

Mike Leigh's British Drama film ***Vera Drake*** (2004). It tells the story of a working-class woman in London in 1950 who performs illegal abortions. (cert. 12).

Gillian Robespierre's American romantic-comedy drama film ***Obvious Child*** (2014). The story follows Donna (Slate), a stand-up comedian, who has a drunken one-night stand with a man named Max (Lacy) after breaking up with her boyfriend. She subsequently finds out she is pregnant and decides to have an abortion. (cert.15)

Extracts from the play

The following is a transcript of some extracts of the play. The full play text is available to buy from 20 Stories High.



'R.E. trip...' in rehearsal

/ indicates where lines overlap.

Track 1a: Dirty Dancing

a. *TANAYA* holds her MP3 recorder between her and *BRYONY*. They are in a drama workshop. She sets it up to record and looks at it to check that that's working.

Tanaya: Yeah it's recording

Bryony: Peachy

b. *PAIGE* is sitting on a smart sofa in her living room.

Paige: We never...we never had like sex education, or I think in some schools you learn about it in like PSHE and stuff like that, but we didn't, in Bellrive literally it did not get talked about.

c. *TANAYA* and *BRYONY* are in the workshop.

Tanaya: Did you learn anything in school?

Bryony: No.

Tanaya: No?

Bryony: Not at all. Never. Never did anything about it in science. Never did anything about it in, you know, social health or anything like that/

Tanaya: /Yeah.../

Bryony: I never did anything about it.

d. LEAH is sitting on the grass, outside Belfast City Hall.

Leah: Like any girl over here would be like uneducated about it, really. There's nothing over here for them, other than Google, and then when you type, of course when you type it into Google the horrific stories come up, you know and pictures come up but other than that, that's all they would have.

d. CARL and ANNA are in a group interview.

Anna: You know, I went to Catholic school, and I... in R.E. I was shown an abortion video, not only did it have a video of what looked like full term baby shown on-on the screen, but it had like horror music, with like a piano noise. Do you know like/

Carl: /Yeah set to psycho music.

Anna does the psycho knife sound.

Carl: Yeah, psycho music.

e. TANAYA and BRYONY are in the workshop.

Tanaya: So erm, do you know what the abortion process involves?

Bryony: Not a clue. Like... there's a pill I think.

Tanaya: Yeah, yeah, that's one of them.

Bryony: Is that right? Yeah, erm there's a pill, there's... I have no idea, I have no idea at all what it does involve.

h. AYESHA and PAIGE are on PAIGE's sofa together.

Ayesha: I've always said beforehand 'oh I'd never get an abortion', and stuff. I don't even think I really knew much about it, I think I've just followed the crowd when you have talks, and you're like 'Oh I'd never get an one...an abortion, me and... you haven't even really got a clue what you're going on about (laughs). So I don't think it was my opinion, I just think I followed what everyone said in my school, because we was like an all-girls school and you get into them chats/

Paige: Run by nuns/

Ayesha: /and we was run by nuns, it was Catholic, so I think it's forced into you basically.

i. Ky and DANIEL are in the same workshop as BRYONY and TANAYA.

Ky: It wasn't a very openly talked about thing, unless it was sort of in the nervous kind of joking sense. I know like a lot of young males like to joke about a lot of things, but especially when it's a serious topic like this, I know certainly my group of friends like to turn everything into some sort of comedy. So even though it's a pretty serious topic with very, very serious consequences, the only thing I'd ever really learn about it from friends was jokes about like... like promiscuous girls getting abortions and whatnot, which is obviously false, but I think that's about it from like from/

Daniel: from friends/

Ky: Yeah, narrow-minded friends!

g. TANAYA and BRYONY in the workshop.

Bryony: I remember when I was with my boyfriend and I had a pregnancy scare. I wasn't pregnant/

Tanaya: /Yeah/

Bryony: /But I was talking to my sister, and I was going 'oh my God, oh my God, I'm going to have to get an abortion, I'm going to have to get an abortion', and everything like that. And I was going 'Is it like how they say on like Dirty Dancing?'

Tanaya laughs.

Bryony: She was going 'what?' I was like, 'like is it like that?' like, like because she gets dead sick on it.

Tanaya: Yeah, yeah, yeah. (She Laughs)

Bryony: No, I was like 'oh God!'

Tanaya: That's a brilliant scene that actually, yeah, I've just remembered that.

Bryony: I was just absolutely convinced that I was like going to end up like Penny just like on the bed, with like Patrick Swayze next to me (as Penny) 'What you doing?'

Tanaya laughs.

Bryony: To be fair, I think if I had Patrick Swayze next to me, I would have gone through the process!

Tanaya: Yeah me too!

Track 2g: Northern Irish Workshop

Some young people are in a drama workshop in Belfast, emotions are running high. The group have been asked to stand on a spectrum of how they feel about abortion. ELLA, CHLOE and NAIMH are at one end of the space. AOIFE is right at the other end.

- Niamh: I just think that if it becomes legalised here, then I think more and more people will become more careless and then more people will have abortions, just because they were careless and didn't use protection whenever they were having sex. And, I just think it's wrong, I'm just 100 percent against it.
- Chloe: I just feel like it's murdering someone, like I just don't understand how you could just kill something so precious that's living inside of you.
- Ella: And it's technically your fault unless it was due to something with rape or something like that, that you're having the child. And if people don't have to live with the consequences they're not going to change their actions.
- Aoife: Er, I'd really like to say that...everyone can... is entitled to their own opinion, and everyone should er have a choice, which is ...hence the 'pro-choice'. I feel like if you're on the pro-choice end you're saying 'yes' to both; you are entitled to have a child if you want, and you're entitled to abort the child if you want. If you're on the pro-life end, you're just taking that choice away, and I feel like a choice is a human right.

Scene 16: Partners

LEAH is outside City Hall, PAIGE is on her sofa, TANAYA is in her office. AIDEN stands on the stage and speaks to the audience.

- Aiden: What I found is, I know it sounds bad, but I thought I would get some support, do you know while I was going through it? And they don't care about the lads at all. It was fucking like 'oh it's her choices', it's all her... You can't even go in the room and have a confidential speak, and I think if you're going through that both of youse, do you know what I mean? You're just as affected, not just as much, but maybe just as affected as the girl. That's what I sort of found, and it was like... it was a shock to me, thinking they didn't actually ask me anything, it was all about what the girl wanted to say about it. It confused me a bit.

My dad, he's a Catholic, well he thinks he is, and he completely disagrees with abortion and I wouldn't tell him but my mum told him. And I got kicked out for it and that was one of the reasons I got kicked out for getting an abortion. So I was made homeless through my choice, and I thought that was interesting.

Track 5a: Dr 3

- Dr. 3: I'm a Christian and so I strongly believe that we're all made in the image of God, and that we're all equally precious to him. Erm, so I've always not been keen on abortions, I have no intention of judging people who choose to have an abortion, or clinicians that perform them; but I suppose I feel quite passionately about the developing foetus, that that's a developing life, that I don't feel I would want to stop.

I realise that when a woman is pregnant and doesn't want to be, any choice she makes is likely to be difficult. But personally, I don't do abortions. I've chosen to be a gynaecologist, as I'm passionate about the community side of the job, I'm passionate about helping people use the right contraception, so we have fewer unwanted pregnancies, and so we don't have such a need for abortion provision.

Track 5b: Dr 2 part 2

Dr. 2: Erm, I think now people... particularly from Muslim backgrounds coming into the profession for whom abortion is unacceptable. And the problem becomes if you work in a hospital where two or three doctors say 'No, I won't do abortions because it's against my religion', the burden then falls on a small number of others, who then become fed-up with being asked to do all the abortions. And then they eventually react by saying 'well, I'm not going to do them any more either'. Er, so eventually you end up with very few gynaecologists prepared to do abortions.

Track 6d: Faith

Tanaya: You know, I am religious. And I'll always say that I don't think I made the wrong decision, like from a Muslim perspective, because why, why would my God want me to suffer? Why would my God want my unborn child to suffer? You know. It's not, you know, it's not what anyone wants.

Facts on abortion



Information courtesy of Brook, and written by Education for Choice as available free on Brook's website.

Who has abortions?

Lots of women have abortions – white women, black women, Asian women, mixed race women, rich women, poor women, young women, older women, women who have children, and women who don't. So there's no such thing as the kind of woman who has an abortion! By the time they're 45 almost one in three women in the UK will have had an abortion. That means that although it's not spoken about very often, everyone already knows someone who's had an abortion.

Why do women have abortions?

Women have abortions because they don't want, or are unable to have a child (or another child) at this point in their life. This could be for many different reasons. Some common ones are:

- She wants to carry on with her education/job/career
- She feels too young to be a parent right now
- She already has children, and feels too old to start again
- She does not have the support she needs from her partner or family
- She cannot provide for a child right now
- She does not feel this is the right relationship in which to start a family
- She does not want to have children

If women don't want to get pregnant why don't they use contraception?

Most methods of contraception are not 100% effective, so there is no guarantee that a woman will not become pregnant, even when she uses contraception carefully.

Accidents happen too. Despite people's best intentions, sometimes people don't use contraception properly every time they have sex – condoms can be put on too late or taken off too soon; sometimes they're not used at all. It is easy to forget to take the contraceptive pill, and sickness, diarrhoea and antibiotics can all affect how well the pill works.

There are now Long Acting Reversible Contraceptive (LARC) methods which are extremely safe and don't rely on being used perfectly every day or every time a couple has sex and these often suit women who can't remember to use contraception regularly.

Sometimes the woman's ability to use contraception is affected by her partner – he may not want her to use contraception or to use condoms himself. Lack of information might mean she didn't know where to go to get contraception or that she could have a confidential conversation with her doctor about it.

Three forms of emergency contraception are available for women who have unprotected sex, the most common - the 'morning after pill' - is most effective if taken within 24 hours. If contraception has failed and a woman becomes pregnant unintentionally, it is important that she has the space to make up her own mind about the outcome – and whether or not she wants to become a parent at this point in her life.

Can you have an abortion if you're under 16?

Women under the age of 16 can have an abortion. Health professionals will always discuss with the young woman the benefits of involving her parents or careers in her decision, but will respect her wishes if she does not want to involve them.

So long as the young woman understands fully the decision she is making, and it is her own choice to have an abortion, a doctor can arrange one without parental involvement. However, if she needs a general anaesthetic the doctor will ask that another adult (for example another family member), accompany her to help support her and look after her.

Is there a time limit for abortion?

The legal time limit for abortion is 24 weeks. However, the vast majority are carried out when the woman is less than 12 weeks pregnant.

If a woman wants an abortion, it is important that she acts quickly to arrange one. The longer the pregnancy goes on the harder it is to obtain an abortion because fewer clinics provide them. This often means that the woman has to travel outside of her local area for an abortion, and may need to find her own way of getting there.

In exceptional circumstances, such as where the pregnancy threatens the woman's life, or where the foetus is at risk of serious disability, an abortion can take place after 24 weeks.

Where do you go if you want an abortion?

A young woman can visit her local young people's clinic (such as Brook) or a family planning clinic if she wants to be referred for an abortion. Staff there will be used to talking to young people and supporting them in their choices about pregnancy and abortion. They will arrange the necessary paperwork and make an appointment for the young woman at the abortion clinic.

Some independent pregnancy advice centres, which offer free pregnancy testing and advice, won't help women to get an abortion, so it may be better to go to an NHS service or talk to someone you trust about where to go.

GPs can also refer for abortions, and most are happy to support a woman in the decision she makes.

Some GPs won't do this though, because they choose to opt out of being involved in abortion services. It's usually a good idea therefore to ring ahead and ask the receptionist if doctors at that practice will refer.

Remember, the decision a woman makes about her pregnancy is hers alone. If a doctor refuses to help a woman obtain an abortion when that is what she wants, she has the right to ask for help from another doctor.

How do they do abortions? Can you just take a pill? Does it hurt? Are you asleep when it happens?

The vast majority of abortions take place before 12 weeks of pregnancy, when one of two methods may be used:

- **Medical abortion**

If the woman is less than 9 weeks pregnant, she may be able to have an 'early medical abortion', which means she will be given medicine to end her pregnancy.

When a woman has an early medical abortion, she will need to visit the abortion clinic at least twice. On the first visit she will be given a tablet that blocks the hormone that makes the lining of the uterus (womb) hold on to the pregnancy and causes the pregnancy to end. At the second visit, two days later, she will be given another medicine that causes her uterus to start to cramp.

The pregnancy will then be lost in the bleeding that follows. This is similar to how a woman experiences natural miscarriage, and the woman can take pain relief to help ease the cramping that she feels.

It is normal to experience some bleeding on and off for around 7-14 days after the abortion.

If the woman stays at the clinic until after most of the bleeding has subsided (normally after about six hours), she will be able to go home afterwards and will not need to go back to the clinic for a post abortion check-up.

- **Vacuum aspiration**

This method is usually used up to 15 weeks into pregnancy. It is the most commonly used method and is really another term for suction. A narrow tube is inserted into the uterus and suction is used to remove the pregnancy.

It can be performed under local anaesthetic, or if the woman prefers to be asleep, under general anaesthetic. The procedure itself takes about 10 to 15 minutes to perform. If the woman has had a local anaesthetic she will be able to leave the clinic an hour or two afterwards. With a general anaesthetic she will be able to leave the clinic after about three hours, and she will be advised not to drive for about two days.

How will you feel afterwards?

How a woman feels after her abortion will depend on the circumstances in which she had it, her reasons for having it, and how comfortable she felt with her decision. She may feel relieved or sad, or a mixture of both.

It is unusual for a woman to have lasting problems after an abortion – the vast majority of women are able to incorporate a decision to end a pregnancy into their lives well, and to move on. However, it is really important that the woman is confident in her decision to have an abortion and that it is her choice. Women who have been pressured into having an abortion or feel ambivalent about the decision may be more vulnerable to feelings of regret.

Women who have experienced mental illness before they became pregnant maybe more

vulnerable to distress and depression following abortion, but research evidence demonstrates that abortion is not itself a cause of mental health problems.

How many abortions can you have?

On average a woman is fertile for around 35 years. If she is sexually active (in a heterosexual relationship) for most of her fertile life she is likely to experience a number of pregnancies some of which she may choose to end in abortion. It is not unusual for women to have two or three abortions in their lifetime.

Whilst abortion is safe and commonplace it is a bigger intervention than using contraception. It is much better for women to use a regular and reliable contraceptive method and avoid unwanted pregnancy in the first place.

If you have an abortion can you still have children in the future?

Yes and lots of women do! Abortion does not affect fertility and women are often fully fertile within just two weeks of having an abortion. So it is essential to choose a suitable form of contraception for immediate use following abortion.

Are all religions against abortion?

The Roman Catholic Church, some Evangelical Christians and Jehovah's Witnesses are the only religions that oppose abortion in all cases. Most religions allow for abortion in some situations – for example, if continuing with the pregnancy will endanger the woman's health.

Is abortion safe?

Abortion in the UK is safe and is in fact safer than pregnancy and childbirth.

It is rare that complications from abortion arise, but if a woman experiences lasting pain, a high temperature or ongoing abdominal tenderness, she should see her doctor immediately as these could be signs of an infection. If an infection does take place it is very important that it is treated with antibiotics as soon as possible. Untreated infections can cause complications that can lead to infertility.

There are no links between abortion and breast cancer, and abortion itself does not affect the chances of becoming pregnant in the future, or carrying a pregnancy to term.

About Education for choice (authors of the above information)

Education For Choice is the only UK charity dedicated to ensuring young people are supported to make and act on informed choices about pregnancy and abortion. We call for young people to have the FACTS about abortion whoever they are, whoever they ask, wherever they go.

Read our blog:

www.educationforchoice.blogspot.com

Follow us on Twitter:

www.twitter.com/edforchoice

Original information source:

www.brook.org.uk/attachments/Abortion-FAQs.pdf

Signposts

Brook

Confidential young people's sexual health clinics providing pregnancy decision making support and referral for ante-natal and abortion services.

www.brook.org.uk

Best practice toolkit on pregnancy decision-making support (a guide for practitioners, managers and commissioners)

www.brook.org.uk/our-work/category/education-for-choice

www.brook.org.uk/our-work/supporting-resources

Family Planning Association

Support and information on local family-planning clinics including for young people only.

www.fpa.org.uk

www.fpa.org.uk/sites/default/files/abortion-your-questions-answered.pdf

Young Minds

Emotional wellbeing and mental health children and young people.

www.youngminds.org.uk / 0808 802 5544

Abortion Support Network

Financial assistance and information on abortions for women in Ireland and Northern Ireland

www.asn.org.uk

BPAS Action Line

Confidential information and advice on pregnancy and abortion and appointments.

03457 30 40 30

Marie Stopes International Information Line

Confidential information on NHS and private abortions and appointments.

0345 300 8090

NHS Direct

For help and advice on any medical issue

111

Childline

Free helpline for children and young people

0800 1111

Signposts for more information on views of different religions on abortion:

Education For Choice religion and abortion leaflet:

https://www.brook.org.uk/attachments/Abortion_and_religion_leaflet_2011.pdf

For more in depth discussion in a broader sexual health and teenage pregnancy context:

<https://www.brook.org.uk/attachments/efcabortioneducationtoolkit.pdf>

Glossary of terminology

Abortion (legal)	When someone chooses to end a pregnancy. Sometimes also called 'termination'.
Abortion (illegal)	The ending of a pregnancy when forbidden by law.
Birth control	The practice of preventing unwanted pregnancies using contraception.
Conception	The action of conceiving a child or of one being conceived – when the precise moment that life begins is contested by different people.
Contraception	Prevents unwanted pregnancies. Common forms of contraception are condoms, the morning after pill and the coil.
Condom	A thin covering of latex that is worn on the penis during sexual intercourse to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. See also female condom.
Emergency Contraception	Forms of contraception, especially contraceptive pills that are effective if taken within a specified period of time after sexual intercourse.
Pre-Embryo	The ball of cells that develops from the fertilized egg until after about nine days, when it attaches to the lining of the uterus and the embryo is formed.
Embryo	A fertilized egg up to eight weeks after implantation.
Foetus	A fertilized egg implanted in the womb that has grown beyond eight weeks.
General anaesthetic	An anaesthetic that affects the whole body and usually causes a loss of consciousness.
Gynaecology	Specialist medical care relating to women's reproductive health.
Period	A flow of blood and other material from the lining of the uterus, lasting for a few days and occurring in sexually mature women who are not pregnant at intervals of about one lunar month.
Pro choice	An opinion in favour of each woman being allowed the choice to have an abortion if she wishes. A person who is pro choice may not wish to have an abortion themselves but believes every individual should have the right to choose what is right for them.
Pro life	An opinion that is against abortion in all circumstances and which believes in the rights of the foetus over the rights of the woman.
Verbatim	In exactly the same words as were used originally.

Participation Opportunities

Participation is at the heart of everything 20 Stories High and Contact does. There are a whole host of ways young people and groups can engage with the show, including...

Post-show discussions

Young people can participate in a discussion with the actors, creative team and health professionals (where available), exploring further the themes and issues in the play, and the making of the production. Partner organisations will when possible be involved in discussions – offering young people key expert advice and signposting information. Please get in touch to find out what evenings post-show discussions are happening in your local area.

Workshops

Professional artists will lead workshops, introducing participants to verbatim theatre and the recorded delivery technique. Workshops can last between 1-2 hours, for up to 30 young people aged 13-25. Please get in touch to find out what events are happening in your local area. Please get in touch if you are interested in booking a workshop.

Post-show performance events

20 Stories High and Contact in partnership with host venues will be setting a variety of post-show performance events for their young people. Each event is bespoke and is organised and performed by young people. Previous Post-Show events have included open mic nights, jam events and poetry slams. Please get in touch to find out what events are happening in your local area.

Programme and signposting

A programme will be handed out at every performance, with information about the show, and how to get involved with 20 Stories High and Contact in the future. This also features information about key support organisations and services.

Bronze Arts Award resource

The pack takes young people through the Bronze Arts Award sections, linking it to their interaction with *'I told my Mum I was going on an R.E. trip...'* This pack can be downloaded directly from 20 Stories High or Contact's website.

We are keen to connect with our audiences, partners and participants. With *"I told my Mum I was going on an R.E. trip..."* there are a whole host of ways you can connect with us artistically and also engage in conversations about the show.

Social Media: #onanREtrip

“Like” our Facebook community pages: facebook.com/twentystorieshigh and facebook.com/contactmcr

Or follow us on Twitter @20storieshigh @Contactmcr

Getting into theatre

There is no one set path to get a job in theatre, but working hard and loving what you do is definitely essential. Here are some of our top tips...

Make something

Try writing or devising a play, you could do this on your own or with a group of friends. By putting on a scratch performance to showcase your ideas to family/friends/local theatre groups you can gain valuable experience and ask for their advice and feedback.

Youth theatre/Participation programmes

Many theatres provide some sort of youth theatre - a great first step for acting experience and performing. If acting isn't for you, look out for other youth schemes in theatres such as ones for young directors, writers or technicians.

Study

College, University & Drama School all offer courses in theatre. Think hard about what you want to do: Acting? Design? Dance? Directing? Writing? Do your research and find out which is the best course for you. Check out www.dramauk.co.uk/courses for the low-down on courses available in the UK today.

Casting opportunities

Look out for casting opportunities. You could even put together an acting CV and approach a casting director or follow companies on Twitter/Facebook and look out for open casting calls. There are a number of big casting websites in the UK. Why not check out www.castingcallpro.com/uk, www.castingnetworks.co.uk and www.spotlight.com?

Volunteer

By offering to volunteer you will gain valuable experience and broaden your skills. You may also get the chance to work alongside professional actors/practitioners in the workplace. Many youth theatres and community arts organisations provide opportunities and support volunteers.

Experience theatre

Watch as many plays as you can, read new local writing, support local and visiting regional theatre companies and engage with the theatre scene in your area. This is a great way to gain ideas and engage with people of similar interests.

Get some experience

Theatres are not just for actors. Getting a job in an arts organisation can give you a wealth of skills and still allow you access to the theatre. A job such as a front of house usher or an admin role is an excellent way to learn how theatre works and engage with all the different departments that are involved in live production.

Join us online

At 20 Stories High & Contact we are keen to connect digitally with our audiences, partners and participants. There are a whole host of ways venues and individual audience members can connect with us artistically and also engage in conversations about the show.

Website

Visit our website to find out more about our work and our previous shows. There are videos of our work and information about the directors, company members and associate artists and the whole staff teams.

Encourage your young people to sign up on the website to the 20 Stories High & Contact's newsletter to stay in touch with all our work. The sign up forms can be found on the front page of both websites.

www.20storieshigh.org.uk / www.contactmcr.com

Facebook

Like our pages to keep up to date with the tour, see pictures or video of rehearsals and be notified of reviews. We will share your venue posts about the show to alert our friends in your locality.

www.facebook.com/twentystorieshigh / www.facebook.com/contactmcr

Twitter

Follow us and use #onanREtrip to comment on any aspect of the play. We will be sharing rehearsal pictures and video from the cast, re-tweeting audience feedback and venue updates.

YouTube

On our YouTube channels, there are trailers and digital content from all of our previous productions. This show's trailer will launch January 2017.

www.youtube.com/20storieshighTV / www.youtube.com/contactmcr

Instagram

Follow us, like our show shots, tag us and use #onanREtrip

[@20storieshigh](https://www.instagram.com/20storieshigh) / [@contactmcr](https://www.instagram.com/contactmcr)

Flickr

Production shots will be uploaded to both 20 Stories High and Contact's Flickr accounts

Getting involved with 20 Stories High and Contact

At 20 Stories High and Contact we don't think the show ends when the curtain comes down, in fact, it's only just begun!

20 Stories High



If you live in Liverpool and want to get involved with 20 Stories High get in touch!

info@20storieshigh.org.uk / 0151 708 9729

20 Stories High, Toxteth TV, 37-45 Windsor St, Liverpool, L8 1XE

www.20storieshigh.org.uk

Contact



If you live in Manchester and want to get involved with Contact get in touch with Roxanne Moores.

roxannemoores@contactmcr.com / 0161 274 0634

Contact, Oxford Road, Manchester, M15 6JA.

www.contactmcr.com

Credits

Special thanks to the Wellcome Trust and Arts Council England.

And thanks to our other funders and partners: Esmee Fairburn Foundation, Granada Foundation, Eleanor Rathbone Trust, Henry Smith Charity, Paul Hamlyn, Liverpool City Council, Manchester City Council, The Association of Greater Manchester Authorities, the University of Manchester, BPAS and the Brook.

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