



LIVERPOOL
everyman
& PLAYHOUSE



Loops

Self-care Toolkit

For individuals who have seen, or are about to see the show

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Introduction

This self-care toolkit is designed for individuals who have seen, or are about to see our show, LOOPS.

Within it, you will find information about the show (a detailed synopsis of what happens) and information about the themes. You will also find tips on how to look after yourself during the piece, and some signposting to organisations who can help if self-care is not enough.

About 20 Stories High

20 Stories High is an award-winning theatre company that believes “everybody’s got a story to tell... and their own way of telling it.”

We co-create with culturally diverse, working-class young people, emerging artists, and world-class professionals to tell stories that are challenging, authentic, and uplifting.

Experimenting with rap, dance, beatboxing, music, and puppetry, we mash up art forms to make new kinds of theatre that empowers and enables social change.

Our shows happen in loads of different spaces from theatres, schools and youth clubs to digital spaces and living rooms.

Our heart is in Liverpool, but our reach is universal.

About Liverpool Everyman & Playhouse

Our mission is to use the power of theatre to inspire, entertain and nurture positive social change.

Our two iconic theatres (one a state-of-the-art 440-seat thrust, the other a Grade II* listed 670-seat proscenium) have proud histories, national significance and are united by a passion for our art-form, a love of our region’s culture and its people and a belief that theatre can transform lives. The Playhouse, an integral part of the mid-scale touring network, has been entertaining audiences since 1866 and the Everyman has been renowned for its innovation and new writing since 1964. Between them, both theatres have welcomed millions of audience members and launched the careers of thousands of creative professionals. We carry on a long, proud tradition of producing and presenting ground-breaking work for the widest audience across the LCR and beyond.

Liverpool and Merseyside Theatres Trust (LMTT) is known nationally as a hub for artistic innovation, talent development and new work creation. Core to our work is our partnerships; forged within our LCR communities through an extensive and innovative outreach and education programme. We nurture and develop the artists and creative workforce of tomorrow through our award-winning Young Everyman Playhouse (YEP) programme. YEP offers free weekly sessions and production experience to 120 16-25 year olds every year who are interested in building vocational skills in writing, directing, producing, technical, marketing and acting.

About LOOPS

LOOPS is a brand-new Hip-Hop Theatre show from 20 Stories High, co-produced with Liverpool Everyman + Playhouse, bursting with heavy beats, beautiful lyricism, and raw energy.

Following a day in the life of Djibi - a young Black man living in a largely white area of Liverpool - LOOPS grapples with *Stop and Search*, institutional police racism and how it affects Djibi's relationships with his family, friends, and wider community.

As well as exploring challenging themes, LOOPS is also a show full of activism, uplifting music, and practical strategies on how to deal with ongoing police encounters.

Accompanied by a pulsating live original score by rapper and producer Man Like Mally (*BBC's Rap Trip*) and starring actor/rapper Winston Branche (*Peaky Blinders*, *The Streets Where We Live*), LOOPS is a vital piece of theatre for modern times.

Written by Keith Saha, the play was developed with the cast - as well as a group of local Black and Global Majority activists and artists.

Content Warnings:

LOOPS is challenging, but also aims to be hopeful and empowering.

Contains strong language and explores institutional racism, microaggressions, encounters with the police, family relationships and physical abuse.

Also contains loud music.

Age Guidance 14+

Self-care

We are really pleased that you have chosen to watch this show. In this performance we are dealing with difficult subjects. However, we hope that you will, in the end, find it a personally empowering experience. This toolkit has been designed to offer support to anyone engaging with the show, especially anyone who might be impacted by its content. We hope this toolkit provides you with specialist resources and tools from professionals that may help.

Take action if anything personal comes up for you

Theatre can bring us face to face with our own joys and struggles. This piece of theatre contains moments that may trigger difficult emotions. Here are some tips for things that you can do to look after yourself if this happens.

Tips – how to look after yourself

Make space for feelings: There may be times in the show where you feel strong emotions towards the characters or because of the content. This is understandable. Notice when this happens and take deep breaths to get you through those moments.

Remember your breath: If you become triggered, breathing is a great way to bring yourself back into a state of calm, lower your heart rate and create space in your brain to start thinking things through at an easier pace. Try breathing in for four seconds, holding your breath for four seconds, exhaling for four seconds and holding again. Repeat this for as long as you need until your breath feels in control again. Lots of mobiles and smart watches offer apps which can help you with this.

Watch with someone: Watch the show with someone that you would feel able to discuss the themes in the play with. Preferably someone who understands you well enough to notice what things might get to you the most. If you can't watch the show with someone you could make a plan to chat with someone about it afterwards.

Read a summary of the show: If you would like to know the content before you watch, so that there is nothing unexpected, you will find an overview of all the show and full synopsis of the piece on the next page.

Get help: If you need to take time out there will be a mental health first aider at every venue who you can talk to before, during or after the show.

There is also a signposting section at the end of this document for helplines and organisations who can help.

Synopsis

Introduction

The play is mainly a monologue, played by Winston Branche as the character of Djibi, accompanied by musician/rapper Mal. Mal plays music to underscore the piece, and there are moments of rap, spoken word and song from the duo. The play is pop-up – there are three banners at the back of the space setting up our stage, and two mics. Mal can be seen to one side operating his musical equipment.

Djibi is a Gambian, Muslim character aged 26.

Note: the following description contains details of the show. Please see the content warning for information about subjects that may be mentioned.

The show

The play starts with a welcome to the space by Mal (musician). Mal addresses the audience to ask how everyone is feeling, then goes into a rap (accompanied by music) that sets the scene. He is soon joined by Djibi in the rap. We hear about the sunny day, the optimistic outlook of the characters and their determination to improve their lifestyles. Mal introduces that this story is about Djibi.

After this initial song, Djibi begins his monologue. The first scene talks about a hot, July day in Everton – at Djibi’s family home. The family are preparing to go to Africa Oyé festival in Sefton Park. Djibi also mentions that this is his ‘send off’ – as he’s leaving for Hong Kong tomorrow, for a three-month internship at a tech firm. Djibi talks about the Gambian food being cooked in the kitchen, his nephew, Omar, who is helping, and his Dad, who is leaving for work at the pharmacy soon. We hear dialogue from the characters in Djibi’s house (his Mum, sister, Omar) – Djibi plays these characters using different voices. Djibi describes an argument he’s having with his sister, Bintu, about the best Mario Kart character. Accidentally, Djibi calls ‘bullshit’ on Bintu, and his nephew Omar overhears the word, and repeats it. Djibi details that his Mum hits him with a wooden spoon for this.

Djibi receives a call from Matty, his best friend. Djibi offers that Bintu can pick Matty up on the way to Africa Oyé. Once he puts the phone down, Djibi describes how much his Mum and Dad like Matty – which Djibi thinks is because Matty is White. Djibi recalls how in high school, their teacher used to call Djibi & Matty ‘salt and pepper’ – referring to their light and dark skin tones.

Djibi describes how in the house, he goes upstairs to change into his outfit for the day. His Dad comments on his outfit, comparing Djibi to a drug dealer and a peacock. They load Bintu’s car with the food they have made, but in doing so, Djibi gets a gravy stain on his t-shirt. Djibi realises that Bintu is not going to wait for him to get changed, so he lets Bintu know he will meet them there and get the bus. He texts Matty to meet him on the way – rather than Bintu picking him up.

Djibi walks to the bus stop – feeling good about his life – where he’s at, that he’s just graduated, that he’s really excited for the day – and tomorrow – when he goes to Hong Kong.

Djibi gets on the number 26 bus, which crosses from North Liverpool to South Liverpool. He likens this to ‘crossing a border from one country to another’ – that the first time he took this bus to South Liverpool (aged 6) he saw ‘people that actually looked like me’ for the first time – alluding to the cultural diversity that he saw.

When he steps off the bus, Matty is there waiting for him. Djibi playfully insults Matty, who he has not seen in a while, but asking ‘what’s happened to your belly lad?’ – Matty jabs straight back – ‘at

least I can lose the gut Djibs. What are you gonna do with that dome lad?’ – referring to Djibi’s bald head.

Djibi describes how the two of them buy some beers from a local shop and walk down Lodge Lane towards the festival in the park. As they are walking and chatting, Djibi describes how they suddenly ‘stop dead in their tracks’ as the police come out of nowhere. Djibi states he knows exactly what’s coming.

Djibi details the two police officers who get out of the police car – No-Neck (male, ‘all muscles and no neck’) and Freckles (younger woman, early 30s, kind face, freckles). Djibi talks us through what No-Neck says to him – the officer pretends not to understand the ‘Oyé’ festival. No-Neck begins to ask Djibi to lift his arms so he can empty his pockets. Djibi asks why he has been stopped. No-Neck states that they have had a call in the area about someone drug dealing, and that Djibi fits the description. Djibi notices that Matty is being spoken to by the other officer, Freckles, and that passers-by have begun to stop and watch. He notices that there are a group of young men filming, and although he is embarrassed, he is relieved that there will be some evidence. No-Neck continues to make micro-aggressions to Djibi, about his appearance, heritage and his personal belongings being expensive.

Djibi sees that Matty is getting aggravated. Djibi notes his worry: he knows that if Matty causes trouble, it will have repercussions on Djibi as a Black man, alluding to the institutional racism within the police. As Djibi is stood there, he recollects the first time he was stopped and searched by the police, at the age of 11.

Djibi takes us back to that time, when he was again playing with Matty. The scene is done in spoken word/rap, and we hear how Djibi was afraid that time – how he felt powerless, scared and upset. Then the police let them both go, and Matty ran straight home. 11-year-old Djibi ran home and straight to his room. He notes that he doesn’t know how, but that he knew that his Mum and Dad knew what had happened – how he was hoping his Dad would come in, give him a hug – recollecting a time after nursery when a girl had called him the N word – but that his Dad didn’t, instead he physically hurt him as punishment.

He talks us through how Bintu asked his Dad to stop, and that his Mum wanted to hear what Djibi had to say, but that his Dad was adamant that Djibi must have done something wrong. Djibi tells us how this interaction with the police and his Dad was a moment of realisation for him – and how the fear of police would stay with him.

We return to the present day, where Djibi recalls information his sister had given him around stop and search – what to do, what to ask for, and what to say. Djibi senses that Matty is getting more aggravated and tries to shout him to calm him down. Djibi spots a version of the union jack on the No-Neck’s uniform, and grapples with what it means about No-Neck.

Matty kicks a bin over, which causes two officers to cuff him. Djibi moves one step – to intercept – and No-Neck cuffs him for causing an obstruction. Djibi and Matty are taken to the station in separate cars, and Djibi reflects on what his family might think if they see him – or when they find out.

In the car, Djibi reflects on what’s happened – the situation he’s in, Hong Kong, Matty – and his family. Djibi recalls the racism he faced when he was younger – in high school – as well as others he knew. He realises that he never really spoke to anyone about what he went through. Djibi talks about his Dad’s views when Djibi was younger – that Djibi must have done something wrong if the police stopped him. He recalls when Bintu told him about internalised racism, and how

their Dad might have reached the views he did through his want to align with the values of the British Empire.

Next, Djibi arrives at the station. He sees Matty in the other car on the way in, and they are brought into the same holding cell. Djibi confronts Matty – reminding him that Djibi will not get the same treatment as Matty. He confronts Matty about the jokes he makes, that they aren't funny to Djibi, and Matty responds defensively, asking '*so I'm the racist one now?... Is this because of your new Black uni mates?*'

Djibi grapples internally with what Matty is confronting him with. They are interrupted by a police officer who takes Djibi to the front desk. On the walk, Djibi notices a police officer who is mixed race. He hopes that the officer might help in some way, but the officer leaves. Djibi is taken to a cell, where he tries to calm down his nerves. He takes us back to a recollection of being aged 15 – his first visit to Gambia. He recalls the weight that felt lifted from his shoulders, being in a country where everyone is Black. He remembers how this feeling was quickly shifted when his Gambian Auntie introduces him to the Gambian family as the '*English*' boy. But, alongside this, he enjoyed the feeling of the culture – the clothes, the music, his family.

Djibi describes the moment one of his cousins asked, '*what is a tag?*' relating to the ankle tag Djibi had at the time. Djibi goes on to explain of the time he was stopped by the police when he was once in a rush, aged 15. He confronted the police in a frustrated tone and tried to leave the situation, but they cuffed him for aggravated assault. Djibi remembers overhearing his Dad talk to his Uncles about how Djibi was a '*delinquent*'.

Moving back to the present moment, a police officer enters Djibi's cell and offers him his phone call. He calls Bintu. Bintu lets him know that she has seen the stop & search on instagram. Bintu says that her and their Mum are going to come to the station, but Djibi says that they shouldn't, and that he doesn't want his nephew, Omar, seeing him there. Bintu agrees but says that if he's not out by 6pm, she will be down there. She reminds Djibi to hold the police to account and lets him know that she has not yet told their Dad.

In the next scene, Djibi is taken for an interview with the police. Djibi is initially greeted by a lawyer. His lawyer advises Djibi to take the charge and accept a caution, as otherwise he could end up in court – where he would get a big fine or prison sentence. Djibi is then greeted by No-Neck and another older, female officer.

No-Neck begins the recording of the interview and formally asks Djibi if he accepts the caution. Djibi thinks carefully, before declining. He states that he was not obstructing the arrest, and that his intention was to calm Matty down and diffuse the situation. No-Neck replies that it could have been Djibi's intention to flee the scene or harm an officer, and again recommends him to take the caution. Djibi thinks. He responds that he wants the case to go to court – that the bodycam footage will show that he has done nothing wrong. He also realises, and states that No-Neck had asked him to remove his shoes and socks in a public place, which is illegal. He backs up this point by suggesting that this would have also been caught on any witness filming – so if the body cam footage did not work, that would be his evidence. No-Neck concludes the interview and Djibi returns to a cell whilst they *deliberate*.

In the next scene, Djibi is taken by a Black police officer back to his cell. Djibi tells the audience about his confusion at this – a Black police officer – wondering if he is an undercover activist. Djibi also reflects on what racism the police officer might have faced in his job. Djibi asks him what happened to Matty, the officer responds that he was let go a few hours back. The police officer lets Djibi know that his Dad is in the waiting room.

In the next scene, after a few hours have passed, Djibi is taken to the front desk where he is told he is free to go with no further action. Djibi then goes to the waiting room, where his Dad is. He is hesitant at first, as his Dad is not saying much. Djibi is unclear if his Dad is angry or upset. As they leave and get in the car, Djibi's Dad admits that he knows Djibi did nothing wrong, that he had seen the footage and that the police treated Djibi unacceptably. Djibi's Dad begins to question his understanding – his previous beliefs around the police, Djibi's previous encounters and more generally, his views on British society and culture. Djibi comforts him and lets him know that he will be there for him, and that they have each other.

In the final scene, Djibi is reunited with his family at Africa Oyé festival. He receives a text from Matty, who apologises and asks if Djibi wants to play football tomorrow before he leaves for Hong Kong. Djibi acknowledges that he knows he needs to have a bigger conversation with Matty, but that it might not happen for a while.

The play ends with a duo song between Djibi and Mal.

Signposting

Y-STOP

For:

- resources related to your stop & search rights
- recording (video/audio) your stop & search experience
- support in submitting a complaint about your stop & search experience

www.y-stop.org

STOPWATCH UK

For:

- Support after you have been stopped & searched by the police
- Information about complaints, procedures and advice around stop & search
- Research, data and insight about stop & search in the UK

0208 226 5737

www.stop-watch.org

NETPOL

For:

- Information around your rights when interacting with the police and how to set up community monitoring of the police
- Support to find a solicitor
- Reporting interactions with the police

www.netpol.org

STOP HATE UK

For:

- Reporting a hate crime after an incident (not directly to the police)
- Support following a hate crime

0800 138 1625

www.stophateuk.org

TELL MAMA

For:

- Counselling and wellbeing support to victims of anti-Muslim hate or Islamophobia

counselling@tellmamauk.org

www.tellmamauk.org

SAMARITANS

For:

- A listening ear, to support your general mental health and wellbeing, any time of the day

116 123

www.samaritans.org

Join Us Online

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.

#LOOPSPlay



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Credits

Special thanks to the Everyman Playhouse, Unity Theatre, and all the touring venues.

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