



#ITMATTERSTOUS

LIONHEART'S GLOBAL ISSUES CURRICULUM SERIES: #ITMATTERSTOUS



Director of Curriculum, Alex Petrie, on why our curriculum must be broader and deeper than ever, to help students understand how to make a difference and to give them a voice to make positive change for the future.

On an overcast Saturday in June 2020 my two young daughters were drawing at the kitchen table. As was frequently the case during the turbulence of recent times, BBC news was on mute flashing from the television hanging from the wall, reporting the latest shockwave from around the world. Looking up, my seven-year-old queried the sight of a man in tears cradling an older woman with a backdrop of flames and sirens.

"Is he sad because of the Coronavirus mummy?"

"Is he...? Er.. No.. no, he isn't sad because of the virus." I focused. "He is sad because..."

How could I finish that sentence? I scanned the screen as I saw downtown New York ablaze, banners in bold boasting 'Black Lives Matter', 'Justice 4 George', 'Stop Killing Black Men', 'We Never Left Jim Crow'.

"He's sad because the world can be a very unfair place. He's sad and he's angry because he knows that people of colour, especially in the black community, are treated unfairly because of how they look, their culture, race and who they are.

But he has come together with other people who feel the same to protest. All the people there have come together to show the people in charge, and everyone else, that they have a voice. They are saying 'No' to being treated unfairly. They are saying Black Lives Matter. They are saying 'this matters, it matters to us'. They are saying 'No' to racism."

An exchange ensued whereby I explained, as plainly as I could, what the word 'racism' meant.

After a contemplative second or two, the reply rang like a bell: "Racism is stupid", she said. Out of the mouth of babes, I thought.



And then we talked a bit more, about how it matters to us too, and about how it should- and could- change forever and about how it's down to everybody to stand up for unfairness and about how it's important that we talk and learn about unfairness at school and about how that would help because the younger people will be in charge one day.

And as twas ever thus, I ended up astonished and wrought by the heady mix of innocence and wisdom tumbling out of them...

And then, in April 2021 I was absorbed by TAGs. Like schools, colleges and trusts nationwide we felt an acute moral imperative to ensure that our students- and our teachers - where given the fairest possible deal. Across Lionheart we were systematic and thoughtful. We were organised and collaborative. We shared expertise and supported each other.

And then suddenly, I was wiped sideways by a wave of dissent that hit the corridors that summer term. Our Year 11, tired, bubbled and restricted, were angry. But it wasn't the pandemic and all its distressing consequences that was the source of their anger. It was the outbreak of violence in Palestine. The ugliest display had closed in on them. On Instagram, on Twitter, in violent snapshots and in shocking posts.

I realised that our students had a grievance bigger than the cancellation of their GCSEs. They wanted to know more about this issue than we had told them. It mattered to them. They wanted to be heard. We had a duty to apologise and we had a duty to respond. And our response took me back to my kitchen table, in the wake of the murder of George Floyd.

Put simply, I believe it has never been so important that we learn and talk about the issues that matter. In an ever-changing world, reduced by the pandemic, globalisation and 24 hour media, the words of Marian Wright Edelman focused my thinking: **'Education is for improving the lives of others and for leaving your community and world, better than you found it'**

Our curriculum must be broader and deeper than ever before. We must teach our students to understand how they can really make a difference, how they can learn to read- and read widely. How to talk and how much words matter. How to listen and how to really hear. We must encourage them to be hopeful, to be upstanders and to channel their passion and energy in the fight against injustice to make positive change for the future.

At Lionheart in 2021 we have launched our Global Issues curriculum series. Beginning with a focus on Afghanistan and the plight of its people, we talked about history, conflict and learnt about victims. We wore green from the flag, representing hope and the future. We raised money for UNICEF.

We have also focused upon the gobsmacking realities of climate change; realities like we are losing 1.2 trillion tons of ice each year and that we can now attribute natural disasters to human-driven climate change with certainty. We explored the responsibility held by the world's leaders learning about the COP26 summit. We made pledges to fight against climate change as individuals and as schools and we went on protests and marched to show support for our world.

In January 2022, we will focus on the traumatic realities faced by some of the most desperate of humankind exploring the Refugee Crisis. We will organise a trust-wide silent protest pledging our support and standing up for those in need.

In this way, we promise to work to fulfil our role as educators and as humans. In this way we will work to build a better community and fight to improve the lives of others.

And why? Because it matters, it matters to us.

Alex Petrie
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