



The Writing Wrongs Schools Programme

Report on Activities during 2017-18
And Proposals for Expanding the Programme

Executive Summary

Funded by the Sigrid Rausing Trust



Writing Wrongs Schools Programme



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Acknowledgments

This report was authored by James Harrison, Reader in the School of Law and Co-Director of the Centre for Human Rights in Practice (CHIP). Becca Kirk, widening participation officer at the School of Law, University of Warwick drafted the materials on which chapter 2 is based. Chris Davis undertook the research and drafted a report upon which chapter 4 is based. The report was designed by Elena Teja, undergraduate student at the University of Warwick.

The Writing Wrongs Schools Programme (WWSP) involves collaboration between a wide range of academics, professional writers and students. The following individuals have been particularly vital to the programme in 2017-2018. Many of them have been involved since the programme first began in 2015:

Chris Davis (formerly Department of English, University of Warwick)

Mary Griffin (Lacuna Editor)

James Harrison

Becca Kirk (Widening Participation Officer, School of Law)

Jack McGowan (Creative and Professional Writing, University of Worcester)

Rebecca Omonira-Oyekanmi (Lacuna Writer in Residence and freelance journalist)

Lewis Smith (Department of History, University of Warwick)

Preti Taneja (Department of English and CHIP, University of Warwick)

Andrew Williams (Co-director of the CHIP, School of Law, University of Warwick)

Executive Summary

From July 2017 to June 2018, the [Centre for Human Rights in Practice](#) (CHIP) at the University of Warwick received £15,000 funding from the Sigrid Rausing Trust for the Writing Wrongs Schools Programme (WWSP). This funding was for CHIP to:

- Enhance and extend WWSP to the West Midlands area (previously it had operated only in Coventry)
- Explore the feasibility of, and interest in, a national network based on the WWSP model

This report (1) reflects on the activities undertaken over the last year; (2) sets out key findings from those activities; and (3) identifies proposals for how a national network could be further developed so as to build on this initial work.

The Writing Wrongs Schools Programme aims to:

- develop the writing and research skills of school students from disadvantaged backgrounds
- empower those students to produce their own pieces of writing on a social justice issue of their choosing
- give students from disadvantaged backgrounds important experiences and connections not usually open to them (e.g. access to professional writers, experiences of university life etc.)

Activities

Over the course of the year, CHIP has:

- Successfully completed the first Writing Wrongs programme for the West Midlands region. 47 students from 27 different schools participated in the programme during the year
- Held two inter-university workshops at the University of Warwick bringing together professional writers with representatives from Bath Spa University; University of Birmingham, University of Brighton; Bristol University; City, University of London; Essex University; Goldsmiths; University of London; Kingston University; Liverpool Hope University; Oxford University; Sheffield University; Southampton University and Worcester University. We also explored the possibility of expanding the project in Scotland by holding an event at the University of Strathclyde
- Worked with the University of Bristol and Goldsmiths, University of London to successfully pilot versions of the Writing Wrongs programmes in their local areas
- Designed a prototype 'curriculum' to assist universities who are looking to implement the Writing Wrongs programme
- Based on the findings of the Warwick workshops and the experience at Goldsmiths, looked at the feasibility and desirability of implementing WWSP directly into schools, thereby potentially reaching a far greater number of students and at younger age groups
- Created an outline programme and a draft set of materials that could be used by teachers in schools to teach WWSP
- Conducted focus groups with teachers to obtain feedback on the proposed programme and materials created for implementing WWSP directly into schools

Key Findings

- WWSP uniquely delivers important research and writing skills to school students from disadvantaged backgrounds while empowering and inspiring them to write about social justice issues they care about. It also gives those students access to professional networks and experiences of university life that are not normally open to them.
- All the university representatives encountered over the course of the year saw WWSP as a very attractive form of outreach for them to undertake with their local schools. For a variety of reasons, it was seen as offering significant benefits over some of the more traditional forms of ‘widening participation’ activity they currently undertake
- Focus groups with schools confirmed that there would also be a range of benefits for students and school teachers if WWSP could be implemented directly in and by schools. The draft materials produced were seen as extremely valuable for the realisation of the project aims; for developing a deeper understanding among young people of social justice issues; and for helping students to hone skills necessary for GCSE examinations
- There is, therefore, great appetite in schools and universities for rolling out the Writing Wrongs Programme on a much more widespread basis. Although there are resources and structures in both schools and universities that can be drawn upon, a centralised support programme is regarded as necessary to enable individual initiatives to succeed
- A national WWSP programme would create a wide range of important educational, social and professional benefits for students who normally lack such opportunities. It would also foster widespread writing about important social justice issues by young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Proposals for the Future

In order to maximise the continuing impact of the Writing Wrongs Schools Programme in schools and universities and to move towards the creation of a national programme, the following support is required:

1. Long term funding for a national WWSP co-ordination function which would:
 - Expand WWSP into new universities who wish to become involved in the network
 - Further hone and implement a Writing Wrongs Schools Programme *within* schools for younger age groups
 - Develop a range of educational resources for both universities and schools, building upon the resources that have already been developed, and further test and refine them
 - Offer ongoing support to universities and schools who wish to participate in WWSP including by; co-ordinating a national network of professional writers to participate in WWSP events; sharing evolving best practice from across the network; publishing the work of Writing Wrongs competition winners in CHIP’s [Lacuna Magazine](#); developing guidance around ethical and student welfare issues raised by participation in WWSP; undertaking further research into a range of pedagogical issues to help enhance the programme and further improve teaching practice
2. A fund to pay for professional writers to work with WWSP, allowing them to participate in workshops and other events in schools and universities.