



**OUR
HOME,
OUR
RIGHTS!**

**A POETRY COLLECTION
BY BRIGHTER FUTURES**

BRIGHTER FUTURES

We are Brighter Futures, a group of young people aged 18 to 30 years old who have migrated to the UK and who come together, have fun, build a family in London and speak up for the rights of young people like us. We are fighters for justice and change. We want to transform the way the UK sees young migrant people and challenge the effect of the hostile environment upon our lives.

Brighter Futures is a partnership project led by Praxis Community Projects and Kazzum Arts. Our Home, Our Rights! has been supported by Praxis, the AHRC Stay Home Stories Project, the Centre for Public Engagement, Queen Mary University of London, Kazzum Arts, Teresa Hare Duke and the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and abr.dn.

We believe it's time for change:

While our housing experiences might vary, we have all experienced similar struggles with our accommodation and know first-hand how it can impact our wellbeing and ability to build a future. We will continue to advocate for change and seek solutions to build a brighter future.

Further details of the issues experienced can be found in our Housing Manifesto at www.brighterfutureslondon.co.uk/projects/our-home-our-rights

INTRODUCTION

The effects of the housing crisis can be felt across the UK population, however communities who have migrated to the UK are disproportionately affected. With plans to deport people to Rwanda, expand detention camps and accommodation estates, the government is focused on policies that are increasingly hostile and force young people to live in unsafe and inadequate conditions.

We believe that there must be safe housing for all, that the unique needs of young people should be considered, and that solutions that provide opportunities for people to integrate and thrive, rather than cause further harm, are within reach.

This poetry collection explores all our experiences of housing in the UK and introduces the core housing issues we would like to change, which you can explore in further detail in our Housing Manifesto at www.brighterfutureslondon.co.uk/projects/our-home-our-rights

We believe that:

- Everyone has the right to privacy and should not be forced to share a room.
- Everyone should have a safe and clean home, with access to a working kitchen.
- Young migrant's should not be forced to move from one accommodation to the next and away from their support network.

This collection of poems was created in a series of collaborative workshops, whereby we worked as a group to build a collection that reflects our diverse voices. We have been inspired by the work of Keith Jarrett, Reginald Harris and Lorna Crozier. We want to use our creativity to increase awareness about the reality of housing experiences for young people who have migrated to the UK; challenge decision makers in government who are pushing an increasingly hostile housing policy; and inspire others to join our cause and find tangible solutions that do not include mass accommodation centres.



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RULES FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS LIVING IN THE UK

After Reginald Harris

Your home is not your sanctuary
It is your assigned battlefield

You can be here but you're not welcome here

You do not have the right to remain

You do not have rights

Do not complain

Have proper ID or don't expect a place to live

Do not complain

Don't make friends, you could be moving tomorrow
Don't grow roots you could be moving tomorrow

You want safe housing?
You need terminal illness
You need poor mental health

You're lucky we gave you this room

You have no choice

Your 6 weeks wait will stretch to 56 weeks

Yes, I saw your email, I'm too-busy to reply

You are not the priority

We get to choose what you eat

Eat it or starve

Your bed is not yours
These walls are not yours
This mind is no longer yours

You have nothing to say

You're lucky to have a roof over your head

Don't expect comfort
Don't expect hygiene
Don't expect safety

You're lucky to be here
Why should you have the right to study, to travel
You're lucky to be here

You don't have the right to live on our land

Take your £39 a week and go build a mansion in Soho

You're an asylum seeker, you get what you're given



A MAN'S BEST FRIEND

I want to be a dog
I never saw a dog in the street alone
I never saw a dog without food
but I did see one, with a man
and that man came to the door
that man stroked that dog
carried that dog on his shoulder
that man hugged that dog
that dog had a home
but me?



ANT

You may not see us

but we are there

in the garden

in the house

in the cabinet

underneath the fridge

we move in groups

working together

some days we are

in a restaurant

you prominent

people in suits

busy working

well, we are busy too

feeding on your meals

storing for the future

preparing for what might

come next



ADVICE TO THE NEWLY ARRIVED

After Lorna Crozier

Take your strength wherever you go
There may be waves
Sometimes calm, sometimes tough
You will survive
There will be doors nailed shut
There may be darkness behind
Without any food
You may feel hopeless
Without any support
You may feel lonely
Leave room for another language
Or two or three
Human beings change overtime
Because they don't understand you
But you can't always cry
So take humour with you to find laughter



CAGED CHEETAH

Have you ever run from your country?
Have you ever been chased by a fire?

I thought I was brought here to help
I thought I was brought here to defend a family in London.

Moving in the wind, sniffing at danger,
sending these ROAR signals,
pouncing these big paws.

But can you spot me?

I'm being hung up by my legs

Can you spot me?

Screaming like the world is going to end,
stripped of my skin,
carried as a bag on display.



MICROWAVE

I love my microwave
Always reliable
Spinning to remind me
Even in loneliness
I can feel warm.
Heating, cooking
or baking in time.
As fast as possible
Microwave, don't
leave me in limbo.
Ding! Ding! Ding!
One day I will be ready for you.



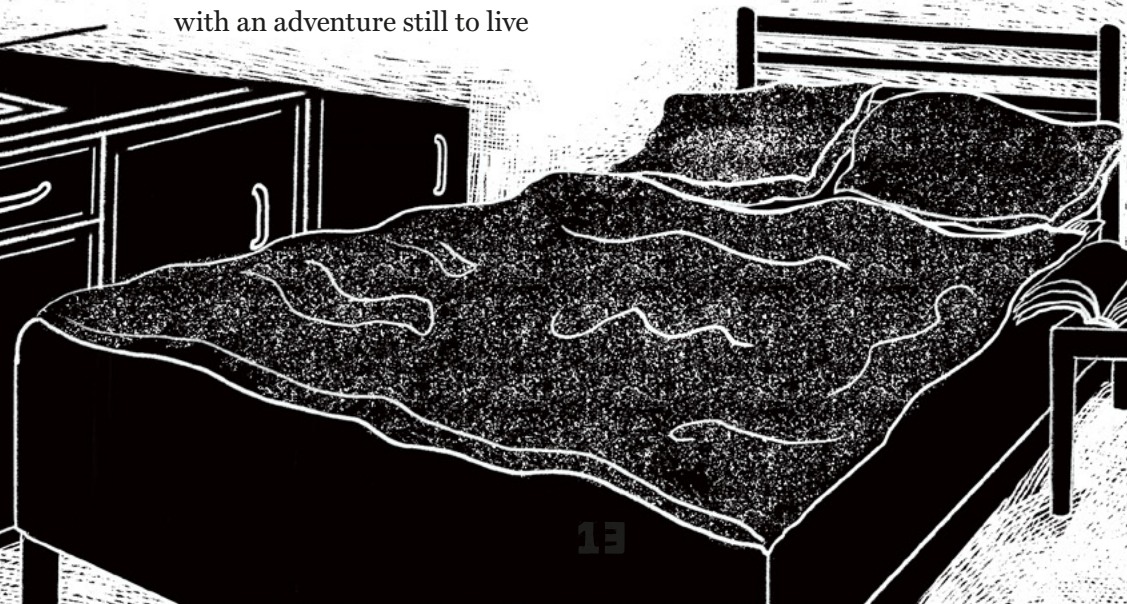
BED

My place to rest
ጥሩ ህልምቶች (good dreams)
Holding me above the ground
Dreaming of my family
ማጽናኛ (comfort) wake up to a new day
Dreams I can't reach in real life



BOOK

Sometimes loneliness visits the house
a room so silent the pages sing to me
a tale of friendship in this time of loss
in these pages I find companionship
in these pages I skydive
from Tokyo to Paris to Brazil
in these pages I am a mother and a lover
and an advocate for change, a symbol of growth
In these pages I scream for the past
I cry for today, tomorrow is a folded page
with an adventure still to live





FLOWERS

When sadness blooms in my home
the flowers you gave me
bring me happiness

the petals may fall
but the love you gave me
lives on

PLANT POT

I give you warmth
you give me beauty and citrus smells
I dream in evergreen
knowing there are many winters to get through first



WE ARE MORE

We are more than just migrants
We are determined
We are simple as the changing of the season
We are human with goals and ambitions
We are strong men and woman
Responsible for each other stronger together
We are fighters like our countries
We are our history, years of war and struggle
We are here
We are more than you make us
More than it seems
We are this society
We are the sun in the sky
The torch in the dark
More than a cover on a book
We are more than you see
We are the future

DON'T TALK TO ME

Don't talk to me about fairness
when dogs are treated better than humans

Don't talk to me about rights
when mine were stripped from me

Don't talk to me about your new house
when I'm living on the street

Don't talk to me about illegal migration
when your ancestors travelled by boat to our countries

Don't talk to me about patriotism
when your country brought war to our country

Don't talk to me about your unpaid taxes
when the price of food is still rising

Don't talk to me about other wars
when I'm still fighting my own war

Stop talking to me about traveling to Mars
when I can't afford the bus to my job interview.



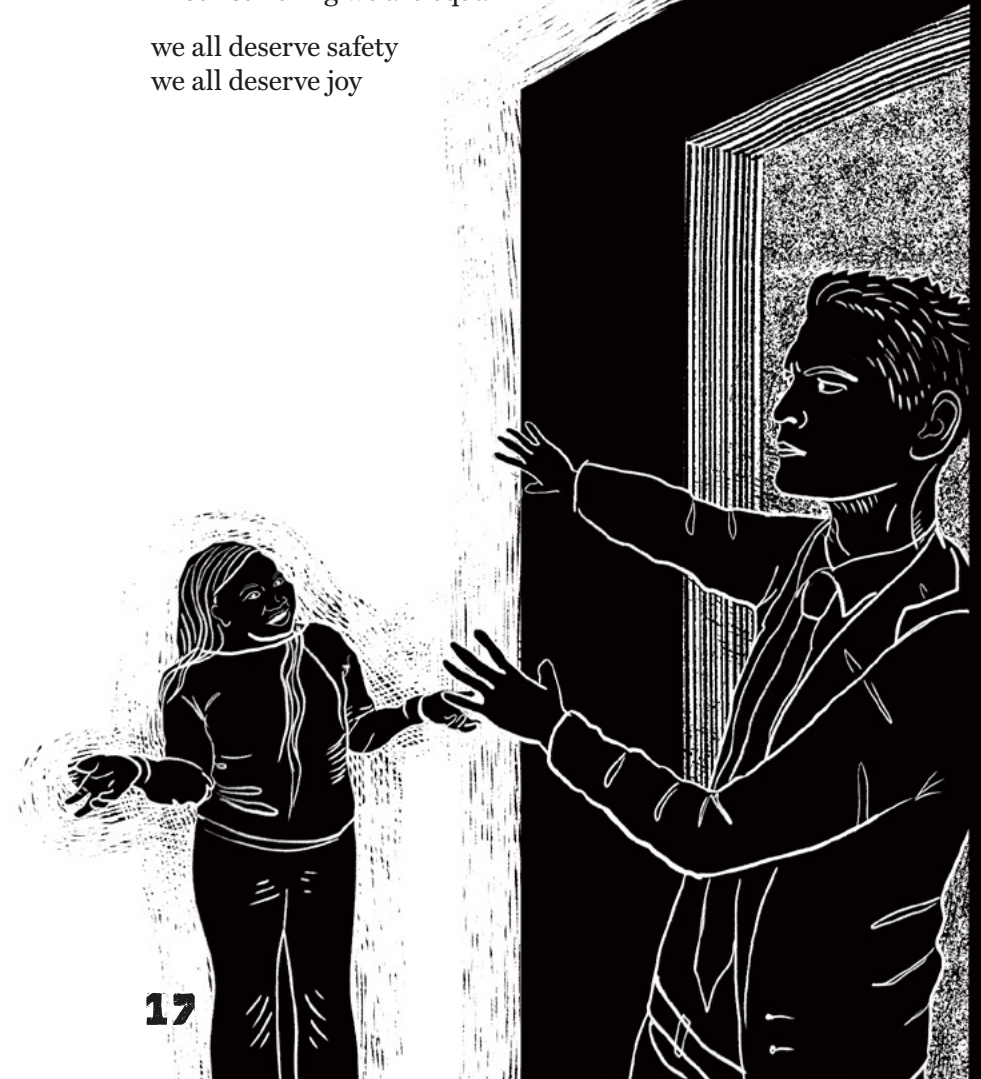
WE STILL HAVE RIGHTS

we are all human
as humans we have rights

we are all different
in our difference we are human

we are all suffering
in our suffering we are equal

we all deserve safety
we all deserve joy



WE ARE BRIGHTER FUTURES

After Keith Jarrett

We who have built bridges
We who have burnt bridges we didn't choose
We who have put our lives at risk

Stripped of our humanity
Stripped of our choices
The body is hollow without the heart

Clothed by our struggles and doubts
We who have picked up pieces of ourselves
Stitched them with our ancestors hopes and dreams

We who have learnt to protect ourselves
Over and over, we who never gave up
We who built strength from years of fighting for our children

We who have slept in jungle not eating food for days
You claim diversity but separate us by number
We who have been made to feel different, discarded

4 walls

no window

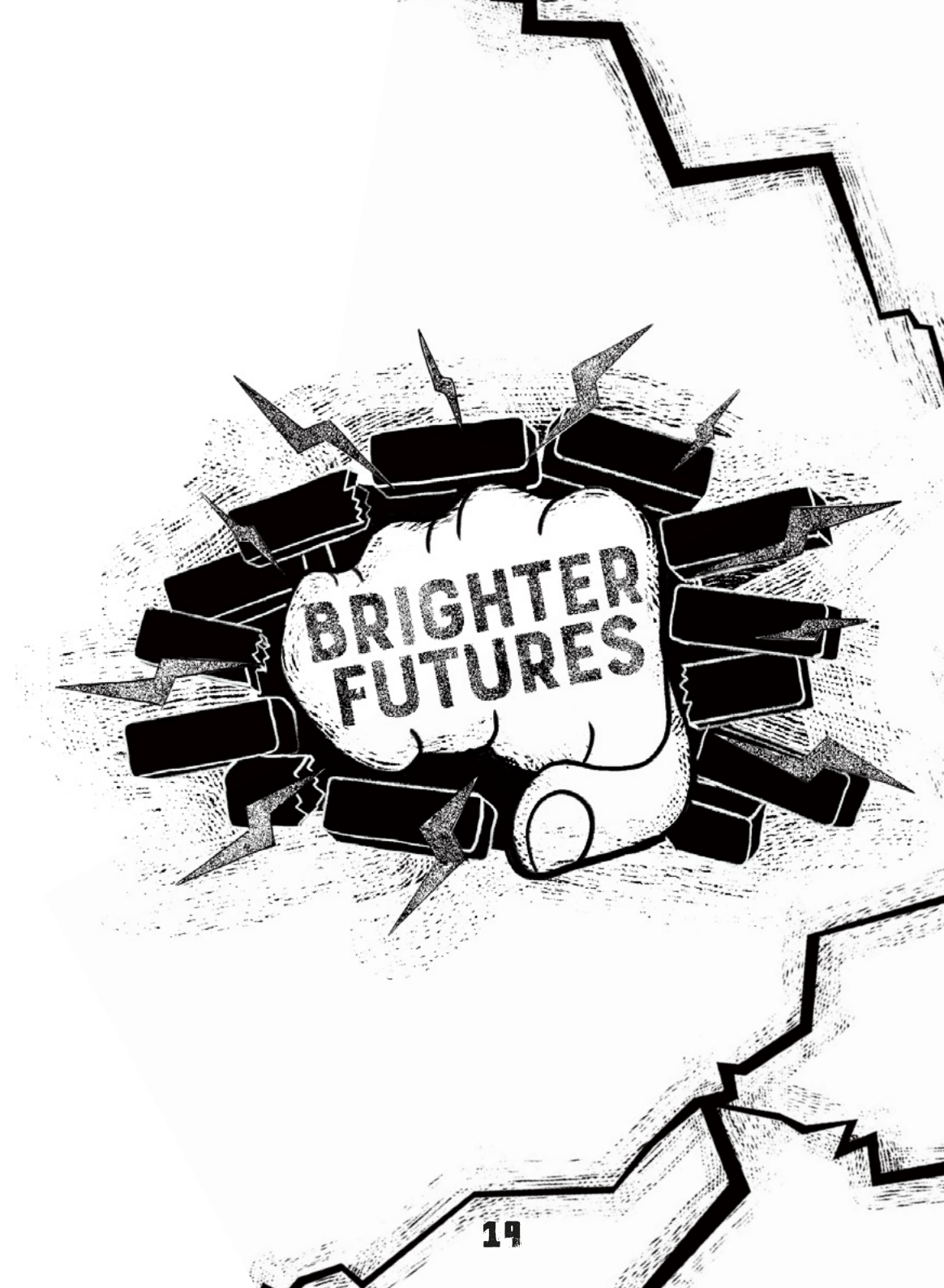
1 meal

no escape

We are growing like crystals in your hostile environment
our names tasting bitter in the mouths of the powerful
We cannot impose you to love us

But respect us
Standing in dignity in fury and happiness
We have something to offer

We will triumph
we will survive
We are the future of this world



OUR HOME, OUR RIGHTS!

A POETRY COLLECTION BY BRIGHTER FUTURES

This collection of poems has been collaboratively written by members of Brighter Futures as part of a series of workshops reflecting the diverse voices of the group. The poems provide an insight into the lives of young people on the sharp end of hostile immigration policy and gives control and agency over how their experiences are told, and by who.

The group were inspired by the work of poets Keith Jarrett and Lorna Crozier and created their original work in collaboration with poet Arji Manuelpillai. The collection has been designed and illustrated by Kathryn Corlett.

“We are here to build a brighter future. ‘Ki akoko aḷe wa sàṅ ju owuro wa lo. May our nighttime be better than our morning.’ This means that no matter how hard things are now, your life and future can be better, and you should never give up”.

– Brighter Futures

