Social Action at the Palace

Amina Tayyab, 10U

The Step Up To Serve campaign was launched by HRH, Prince Charles of Wales in November. Out of the many talented students from our school, I was invited to attend.

The goal of the campaign is to increase the number of people taking part in social action to over 50% by 2020. I was exceedingly lucky to meet The Prince of Wales, who hosted the event and who was friendly and funny. I also met current political leaders such as Ed Milliband, David Cameron and Nick Clegg.

I also met young people of all ages who had also been nominated to attend this special event to tell a social action story. The stories that they told were inspiring and the amount they have contributed to the community is truly amazing.

Buckingham Palace itself was the highlight, everything being so elegant and beautiful; the architecture and interior design was very intricate. Once Dr Ogden and I arrived, we were presented with refreshments and I was provided with the chance to speak on stage.

Then I was interviewed by Newsround, which was a seriously daunting experience as I was surrounded by various cameras and reporters. Overall the day itself was a remarkable experience.
SLAMming to the Final

Samilah Naira, 10B

SLAMbassadors is the only national youth slam for twelve to eighteen year olds in the UK. Poetry slam is a type of spoken word or performance poetry, that allows you to use your voice in any way you choose to bring your words to life. I was part of a SLAMbassadors workshop which ran for three days. This inspired me to enter the national competition.

I then became one of the six winners and I performed my winning piece to a packed audience at the Southbank Centre on 1st November 2013. Every year there is a topic which gives you the starting point for your poem and this year it was the theme of identity. Although slam poetry is usually competitive I wasn’t thinking about how to win when I wrote my poem. The most important thing I realised when I first tried poetry last January is that no one can tell you you’re wrong. Poetry isn’t meant to be fixed or structured with a perfect rhyme scheme. The most important thing to realise is that it’s about what you want to say.

When I wrote the poem ‘Society’s Influence: Branded Unauthentic’ in July, I attempted to talk about the overall issues girls have to face in the modern world today. In my piece, I talked about body image, peer pressure and embodying a different persona other than our own. When it finally sunk in that this was a competition, all that mattered to me was the feeling I would get when I went on the stage. It’s the feeling of an entire room being silent, knowing that everyone in the room is going to listen to you. I took my glasses off because at that moment I didn’t care about what people thought of me, I just wanted the chance to speak.

Through poetry slam I managed to communicate my voice to an audience. I wanted to try my best to reach for the stars. It didn’t matter that I hadn’t been writing poetry for a long time.

I got through to the top thirty-three spoken word finalists before I found out that I had won. Sometimes trying isn’t about winning or losing or even doing something for your own personal gain, it’s about doing something that didn’t seem possible. I still don’t feel I deserved to win because the real winners are those who are still writing with no awards but just passion to drive them. The winners are those who learn never to give up.
TeenTech City

Jannath Ara Rahman, 8U

On 27th November, nine other Year 8 students and I attended ‘TeenTech City of Tomorrow’ along with other schools. Students visited display stands from a variety of companies such as JVC, Samsung and The London Transport Company. We took part in various activities such as welding chocolate together, trying out gadgets and designing our own app. This event widened our aspiration to pursue technology or engineering in the future.

Furthermore the experience developed our thinking and teamwork skills. We also had the chance to participate in a range of challenges and activities in which we could win prizes. I won a Boom Blaster from JVC for correctly answering a few questions! Students from other schools won prizes from other competitions. Overall, we all enjoyed the event and knew it was something we would remember for a long time to come.

International Day of the Girl

As part of the International Day of the Girl celebrations, six Year 9 students visited Southbank Centre and took part in self esteem workshops.

The highlight of the day was the speed mentoring event held on the London Eye with women from fields ranging from media to business.

Inspiring Women

The ‘Inspiring the Future: Inspiring Women’ launch event was attended by eighteen Year 11 and Sixth Form students on 17th October.

The event was led by Miriam González Durántez, Partner at Dechert LLP and the wife of the Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg, at Lancaster House.

Students took part in a career mentoring event where they talked to high profile women including Fiona Bruce, BBC journalist, and Caroline McCall, CEO of Easy Jet. The students were at the centre of attention during the reception where they exercised their networking skills with flair.

Mulberry on BBC Radio 4

Promee Reza, 11R, was invited to BBC Radio 4 to take part in Woman’s Hour, where she expressed her views about people’s perceptions of teenagers and her role models, including Malala Yousafzai.

Lauren Aquilina (pictured left with Promee), singer-songwriter, also featured on the programme.

Above: Mulberry Students at the Inspiring Futures Launch event at Lancaster House.

Below: Maria Amrin 11Y with Miriam González Durántez.

Speed Mentoring on the London Eye.
US Ambassador Visit

The US ambassador to the UK came to Mulberry School on 5th March to speak with students on US foreign policy and education.

The students took part in an interactive presentation, which consisted of polls on key and controversial US policies over the past ten years.

It was an engaging presentation, which generated an open discussion on the UK-US friendship.

The ambassador was very interested in the students’ concerns and worries over US intervention and foreign policy, and addressed their concerns in a warm manner. This was a fantastic opportunity for our students to engage in a discussion with a senior diplomat and present their thoughts.

US Embassy Trips

Meeting Mary Wilson from The Supremes

On Monday 24th February 2014, students at Mulberry School for Girls were invited by the US Embassy to attend a special afternoon with Mary Wilson, member of The Supremes, Cultural Ambassador of the USA and champion of civil rights.

Students who regularly attend the out of hours clubs visited the Tricycle theatre to meet with Ms Wilson, who talked about her experience of being part of a successful female singing group in 1960s America.

They were then treated to a live performance of the classic hits of The Supremes as well as songs from Mary Wilson’s solo album.

Students had an enjoyable day out and felt inspired after listening to Ms Wilson’s personal story of success.

Discussion With Web Series Creator and Director Issa Rae

Mulberry was honoured to host actor, producer and filmmaker Issa Rae for a discussion with students about representation of women and race in the media. Ms Rae is the creator of the popular web series The Misadventures of an Awkward black Girl which has recently been turned into a show for HBO.

She has also recently been named in the Top 30 under 30 list in Forbes magazine.

Miss Representation and The Interrupters Film Screening

On 3rd March 2014, Mulberry students attended a screening of Miss Representation at Southbank Centre, a film which explores how mainstream media contributes to the under-representation of women in positions of power and influence in America.

The film was written and directed by Jennifer Siebel Newsom, who visited Mulberry School prior to the screening for a question and answer session with students.

On 17th March, 6th form students also visited the US Embassy in London to see the film The Interrupters which tells the story of three violence interrupters who try to protect their communities in Chicago. Students met with Ameena Matthews, one of the “violence interrupters” documented in the film and were inspired by her courage and passion to instill peace within her community.
The 2014 Youth Conference took place on 27th February. This award-winning conference brings Sixth Form students together from a range of backgrounds to seriously explore key social and political issues in contemporary life.

This year’s theme was ‘The Power of Voice’. We explored the ways in which media, arts, activism and political influence can be used to make a positive difference in the world. Speakers included Lucy-Anne Holmes, activist and founder of the No More Page 3 campaign, Fiona Anderson, journalist and former producer of Newsnight, Mohammed Ali, graffiti artist and Rahima Begum, founder of Restless Beings.

We were pleased to welcome students from Northern Ireland and from Somerset to the event, which added to the diversity of perspectives in the day’s discussion.

One of the highlights of the day was when visiting students were given the opportunity to take the floor to share their points of view on the topics raised.

Students also shared their points of view in discussion groups, facilitated by Mulberry students, and in afternoon workshops.

The conference was also treated to a performance by Spoken Word Artist, Bridget Minamore.

The Model United Nations conference took place on 16th and 17th December at the International Maritime Organisation in Lambeth, which offers students the chance to experience a real diplomatic environment.

MUN offers students the chance to play the roles of ambassadors of the UN’s member states in simulations of United Nations committees.

The theme of this conference was ‘The Elimination of Poverty: Freedom and Fairness for All’, and committees explored the issue of poverty in relation to health, women, children, the environment, human rights and debt.

Over 400 students attended the December conference from thirty-five schools, including international students from Japan and Lebanon.

Training was given to new schools participating in the conference this year by Global Classrooms: London alumni.

An international social evening was also held for students visiting from abroad on Friday 13th December to welcome them to the UK.
International Women’s Week at Mulberry took place this year on Thursday 6th March at which students and staff celebrate the achievements of women, as well as highlight the political and social struggles of women worldwide in a hopeful manner.

This year’s theme of Wonder Woman was explored through arts performances at the IWD assemblies which included a dance performance telling the story of education activist Malala Yousufzai and a play called “Blue Stockings” which focused on the struggle of Cambridge’s first female students to be given the right to graduate along with their male peers. Heads of Faculties as well as the Senior Leadership Team wore “Wonder Woman” capes which pictured an image of their own inspirational woman on the back.

Students were asked to think about who their “Wonder Woman” would be and lessons were focused around women who made a significant contribution to each subject.

A special screening of the film “Wadjda” directed by the first female Saudi Arabian filmmaker was also shown after school.

To carry on with the festivities of International Women’s Day, students took part in the Women of the World Festival weekend which took place between 7th-9th March. Students watched and took part in panel discussions on the topics of feminism, current affairs and religion.

Sadika Begum 12KD earned a seat on the Paper Review on Sunday, sitting alongside Jude Kelly, Artistic Director of Southbank Centre, Shami Chakrabarti, Director of human rights charity Liberty, as well as Baroness Doreen Lawrence. This was an insightful discussion on recent developments with a particular criticism of governmental and military institutions and the call for greater transparency and stronger checks and balances to enforce justice.

Other students including Kawsara Choudhury 12RA and Maria Amrin 11Y took part in WOW Bites where they presented to an audience of fifty on why feminism is relevant to young people.
Foreign and Commonwealth Visit

Four AS Level students had the great opportunity to visit The Foreign and Commonwealth offices on 3rd March. This was a fantastic experience organised by Pinky Lilani, who has been a great friend to Mulberry School for Girls. Students took part in an essay writing competition, submitting their essays before the event, which announced the winner and runners-up of the competition. Sadika Begum in Year 12 was runner-up with her essay on the importance of equal access to education. This is a great achievement, and Sadika, as a prize, will have the opportunity to shadow a Foreign Office official for half a day.

The students who attended the visit also submitted essays on the topics of global studies, access to education and the importance of the Foreign Office. These were thought-provoking essays that displayed a great deal of independent research and creativity.

Students also had the opportunity to meet senior members of the Foreign Office including the ambassadors to Nigeria and Hong Kong, and the Governor of British overseas territory.

Politics Trip to Brussels

Year 12 Politics students have taken part in a mentoring programme with staff from the European Parliament. They have been learning about EU politics, which is a module in their AS studies, and about careers at the European Parliament through supervised email contact with their mentors.

This class, and selected students from the Year 12 Geography class, who are studying European economics, visited Brussels on 16th and 17th February to visit the European Parliament.

The students met with their mentors from the EU Parliament, who all represented the main political parties in the EU. They discussed current political processes as well as different careers in European politics.

Medical Challenge Day

Naema Begum, 9E

Year 9 Science students were given the opportunity to participate in a medical challenge day, held at Tower Hamlets College. The event took place on Wednesday 12th March where students were able to get involved in three practical medicine related activities.

Workshops included anatomy, physiotherapy and an ethics role play interconnected with medicine. It was an extremely enjoyable day competing with another school as well as gaining advice on applying to medical school and the life of medical students. Some students are now even inspired to pursue a career in the industry and hopefully go on to become doctors and scientists! Mulberry School won the overall challenge and other workshops.

Thank you to Ms McFadden for organising the trip, as it was an experience we were all very lucky to have!

Farewell Dame Julia

On Wednesday 27th January, Mulberry School for Girls hosted the Teach First farewell celebration for Dame Julia Cleverdon DCVO CBE who stepped down as Chair of Teach First this year.

The event was carried off in true Mulberry style as the Dame was welcomed with a line of Mulberry School prefects who applauded as she entered the newly built Mulberry and Bigland Green Centre.

Samila Naira 10B and Naphysa Awuah 9B performed a personal spoken word poem which highlighted the wonderful achievements that Dame Julia made in education for young people.

Dr Vanessa Ogden, Headteacher at Mulberry School for Girls, also made a speech and noted that six former students of Mulberry are on the current Teach First programme. The Dame was awarded with Mulberry’s signature henna artwork.

The hospitality and catering students made impeccable canapés which were very well received and the evening ended with Dame Julia cutting her cake specially made Mr Osbourne and Ms Woods.

We wish Dame Julia every success with this new chapter in her life.
Mulberry Wins BASE Competition

On 6th March, Mulberry students won the regional finals of Business, Accounting and Skills Education competition for students aged 16-19.

Students competed with other school in London and South East and were presented with information about a business scenario which outlined a range of challenges. They then had to work through these challenges by analysing and assessing the information and produced a presentation in which they presented their recommendations to a board of directors.

The students will go on to compete in the National Finals in Birmingham which will take place in June.

Business at British Airways

Abida Rahman, 13DC

Five students from our Business Studies class were selected to visit the British Airways Headquarters in Uxbridge to develop further our communication skills and customer service.

The journey to the British Airways Community Learning Centre was the highlight of the whole trip: on our way there we were shown various sites in and around the area. The best bit was seeing a plane take off at Heathrow Airport.

We were split into groups of three to act out a particular scenario. Some of us were asked to imitate flight attendants by rehearsing the safety instructions in the plane. Others were asked to handle a difficult situation that could potentially arise on the plane.

The trip proved to be an invaluable experience as it gave an insight into the constant movement and customer service required in the travel and tourism industry.
Saiyata Mobasshara-ton 9RA

The world of science, technology and computing has been opened up to me and twenty-nine other students from Year 9 through Little Miss Geek, a computer coding club new to Mulberry.

Firstly, we wrote a letter explaining why we wanted the chance to contribute to this amazing after school club. The main reason that was expressed by all of us was that there is a lack of women in the technology industry which is not right! Women should be visible in any workforce and in any opportunity.

During these remarkable weeks, we’ve met new people from different technological industries, from gaming and coding, to photography, filming and lots more!

It was absolutely fabulous meeting inspirational leaders, for example, the employees from Bank of America Merrill Lynch.

I also won a competition for the best game trailer and was awarded with a camera. It was an amazing experience and I’d like to thank the school, Little Miss Geek and their sponsors that helped my peers and I have this wonderful opportunity.