

The 'Express Event', held on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> May marked a culmination of months of preparation by some very dedicated School of Sanctuary representatives and passionate BBA students. Since the Academy's recognition as School of Sanctuary in October 2021, interest from students on the theme of 'sanctuary' and their wish to share personal experiences with one another became paramount.

The natural consequence – dictated by regular meetings and weekly rehearsals, - was to showcase who our students are and give them the opportunity to reveal their identities and interpretation of sanctuary in a single performance. This would be a perfect moment to exhibit roots, heritage and personal journeys as each act came together to produce a very touching and inspirational display of cultures. Each word, expression and movement was inspired by personal experience and the creative imagination. Through music, poetry, dance, art, song or a short speech, the message the students chose to deliver was one of diversity and a heartfelt aspiration towards togetherness and welcome. There were a number of brave individuals among the 26 performers who took the stage for the very first time and did a remarkable job. It was wonderful to see how friends and family in the audience supported this, but also how fellow performers expressed their camaraderie cheering others on and dancing along to some amazing, self-taught choreographies.

Big themes were uncovered with elegance and sensitivity: speeches on stereotypes and the hardships of refugees; poetry on acceptance, identity and injustice; art depicting techniques across continents; music to express hope and unity and dance to transport our minds to vibrant and colourful places!

Among the 26 performers was the representation of an incredible 19 nations: Ghana, Iran, Eritrea, Italy, Kashmir, Nigeria, Jamaica, Dominican Republic, Afghanistan, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Egypt, Kuwait, Bangladesh, USA Native America, Romania, Pakistan, Liberia and Angola. With each story that was told, a new journey emerged, just like the beautiful images behind them that accompanied their acts. Through the images (taken from 'Journey' by Aaron Becker) the audience was reminded that though life presents obstacles, we can find comfort, relief and hope in the generosity and kindness of others. Exactly as we hope to continue sharing with students through the stories and encounters we disseminate on refugee and asylum seeking experiences.

Express Event has been a moment of great pride for BBA! We hope many more students will feel inspired to share more of who they are within our community.