



## Challenging Sectarianism Across Generations



West of Scotland Regional Equality Council

↳ Open Eye ▷

This book showcases work created through the youth initiative section of a wider Scottish Government funded WSREC project: Challenging Sectarianism Across Generations. In partnership with Open Eye Participatory Photography, a diverse youth team recruited in Maryhill has produced an outstanding, thought provoking piece of work collated in this book.

This work highlights the complexity of sectarianism, contextualising it historically whilst simultaneously highlighting its contemporary relevance within wider issues of prejudice locally and globally.

Through the youth team's young eyes, we are able to see the reality of sectarianism and prejudice clearly. It brings home the message that we all need to do more to challenge it effectively; something that WSREC is committed to in all its work.

Challenging sectarianism and prejudice has a key role to play in fostering good relations and a more equal Scotland. This book contributes to this goal, underlining the multi-layered nature of sectarianism and its relevance to our diverse society today.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hanzala Malik". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping underline.

Hanzala Malik  
WSREC Chair  
1<sup>st</sup> February 2016

## Sectarianism: will you take up the challenge?

We are a group of 12 young people living in and around Maryhill. Over the course of eight photo and journalism workshops with Open Aye – commissioned by the West of Scotland Regional Equality Council (WSREC) – we worked together to create images and text looking at sectarianism through the lens of our local area.

Coming from different cultural and religious backgrounds, we didn't all know each other before. Some of us go to Catholic schools, others to non-denominational; some of us are Protestant, some Catholic, others Muslim and some have no faith. Some of us were born in Glasgow, a few of us moved here from Central Europe, Africa or the Middle East. And we have ancestors from all over the place; Ireland, Wales, Poland, India, Syria - there's quite a list.

Most of us live in or have a strong connection to the Maryhill Corridor, a neighborhood in the North West of Glasgow with a population of 13, 234. In the last ten years or so the percentage of people from a minority ethnic group increased from 5 percent to 11 percent. There is a mix of Protestant and Catholic churches, and it's also home to Partick Thistle Football Club. Once Maryhill – with its network of canals – was a place of industry. Now that is long gone but it is still an area with a unique character.

During this project we have found that sectarianism in Glasgow is still alive and well. It's not always visible, often found in the shadows - but it is there none-the-less. We shared our own experiences, of uncomfortable comments in primary school or on the bus. We talked about football colours, marching bands and the way some of us feel we have to hide parts of our identity to avoid conflict.

Community leaders that we interviewed told us about their experiences and the work they are doing to challenge prejudice. And we researched the history of Maryhill and picked up clues on our cameras as part of a photo walk capturing everything from buildings to graffiti.

It struck us how different people's ideas were about challenging and changing sectarianism. Some said we should stop sending our children to faith schools; others that we should ban marching bands. Others still said we should be more tolerant and banning things wasn't going to wash.

But everyone agreed we had to start with young people and teach children that we were all the same, regardless of background, culture or faith.

Things do seem to be getting better and there were lots of reasons to feel hopeful about sectarianism gradually becoming something we'll study in history classes. But we also heard from those who worried that racism might still threaten the unity of our community.

So now it's up to you. Have a look and have a think. You *can* challenge prejudice and sectarianism – but nothing will change unless we all work together.



**Remzije Sherifi**  
**Co-ordinator, Maryhill Integration Network**

“When I arrived in this country it was very hard for me to understand what was going on. I was seeing boys from one side of the road fighting with boys from the other side of the road. I was coming from a place where there was a war between two different nations of different religions and different cultural backgrounds as well. But that was the first time I was seeing sectarianism; with young men fighting each other.”

“I think you need to challenge sectarianism by working with children from a very young age. And there should be less segregation between religions too. Let’s have a joint football club, a joint music band.”

“No matter where we’re coming from, we all love happiness and we all love to dream. We cry and smile and sleep and go through all our routines. Our bodies work in the same pattern no matter the colour of our skin.”



**Rev. Stuart Matthews**  
**Maryhill Parish Church**

“I think that whenever we say: ‘here’s me and I’m right and there you are and you’re wrong’ then we’ve got it wrong already. And I think that’s what Jesus teaches in the Bible; that we need to be more inclusive and caring with each other.”

“I would love us to do more things together as the Church of Scotland alongside the Roman Catholic Church and people of other faiths and denominations too. So whenever there is an opportunity to work with other people, I really enjoy taking it. ”

“I think it’s really symbolic when the Priest and the Minister can be seen together and that’s something I can offer and perform.”



**Deacon Jim Dean**  
**St Gregory's Roman Catholic Church**

"You live in Glasgow, you know about sectarianism. You live in Maryhill, Ruchill, you know about sectarianism. It's there. It's a fact of life for us."

"Mother Teresa said you can only do one wee thing yourself. That's how you start changing the world – if you do one wee thing. And you hope you change things."

"I'm afraid I don't have big powerful plans or answers. It's just all of us taking it step by step by step."



**Julie Webster**  
**Co-founder of Greater Maryhill Food Bank**

“They talk about non-denominational schools but I don’t really know what they mean by it. I don’t have a problem with people teaching my children religion. But I think the segregation of schools based on religion in 21<sup>st</sup> century Scotland? I would have thought that would have been phased out by now.”

“My partner is black African and some of my family members frown on that. My mum was in the same situation 50 years ago when she married my dad because he was a Protestant, and she was a Catholic. A lot of family members didn’t go to the wedding. Right up until my grandparents died some still condemned that marriage.”

“When Greater Maryhill Food Bank was formed one of the wonderful things that’s come out it is that churches of all denominations have worked together to make it what it is today. That’s been great to see. I think when we look back and hopefully food banks are gone, that is something that we’ll remember.”



“There are divides and barriers between the two different groups; Rangers or Celtic or Catholic and Protestant. It’s like you have to be one or the other.”

“I think people are still prejudiced. They put up barriers before they need to. They don’t give people a chance. I think having schools where there is just one religion, like Catholic schools, I don’t think that helps. I think we should all just be in together. It would mean that everyone would just be used to talking to each other.”

“I see it happening in school – boys will come in and talk about Rangers and Celtic. I think class is a big one too. People judge you about that. Even like private school or non-private school.”



“I strongly believe there is no place for sectarianism in our community in this day and age. All it does is segregate people. It is good to see a community where no matter what your background is – your culture, your race, your religion – they can come together and be as one. It’s much nicer seeing a community that’s got great colours, and backgrounds and heritage.”

“My ancestors had to deal with sectarianism during the partition between India and Pakistan where the country was split in two due to religious reasons. I believe what happened in that situation was not good. Whatever was going on, I believe that the country could have still come together as one: it did not require to be split into two. But that’s what happened and there’s nothing that can be done to change that now.”

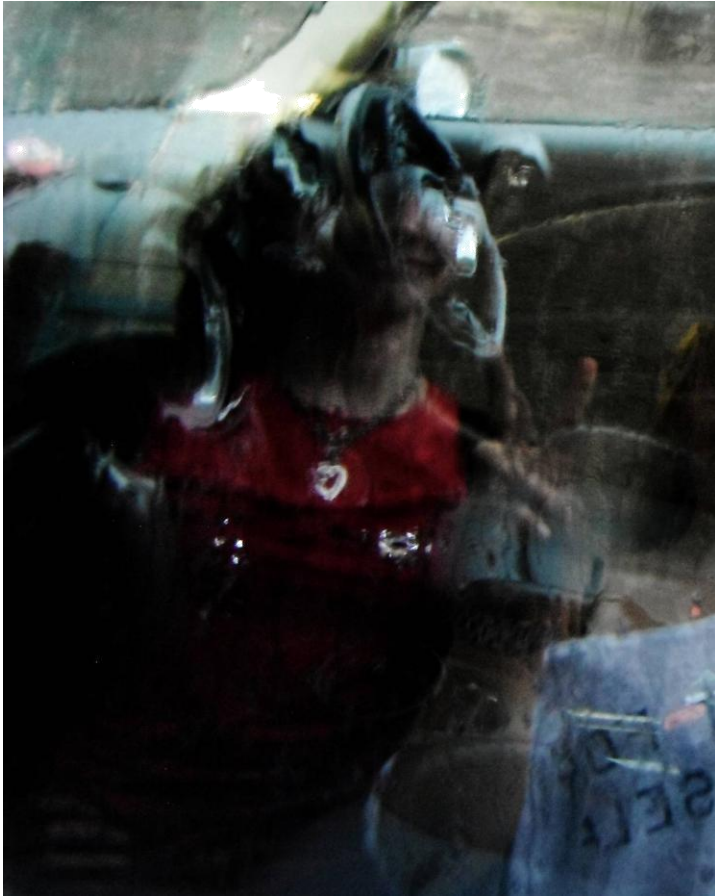
“When I was a kid there was a lot of sectarianism and prejudice in Glasgow. I remember hearing racial slurs walking down the street. But now so much has changed. Sure, there are some problems but it’s a lot more friendly a city. It matters less what colour you are, what race you are.”



“Well, I didn’t face any sectarianism in Glasgow. In my home country I have though and I think it’s a really bad thing to happen.”

“I think people feel really sad that this can happen. It’s a really big problem in a lot of societies around the world. In my home country, Syria, it used to be the same as this country; we were all different religions but there was no discrimination. We were all friends and stuff. But with the war situation the government started the discrimination. That makes people fight each other.”

“One of my family members experienced that. He was a Muslim and he was jailed just because he was going to his Mosque. It was just against humanity.”

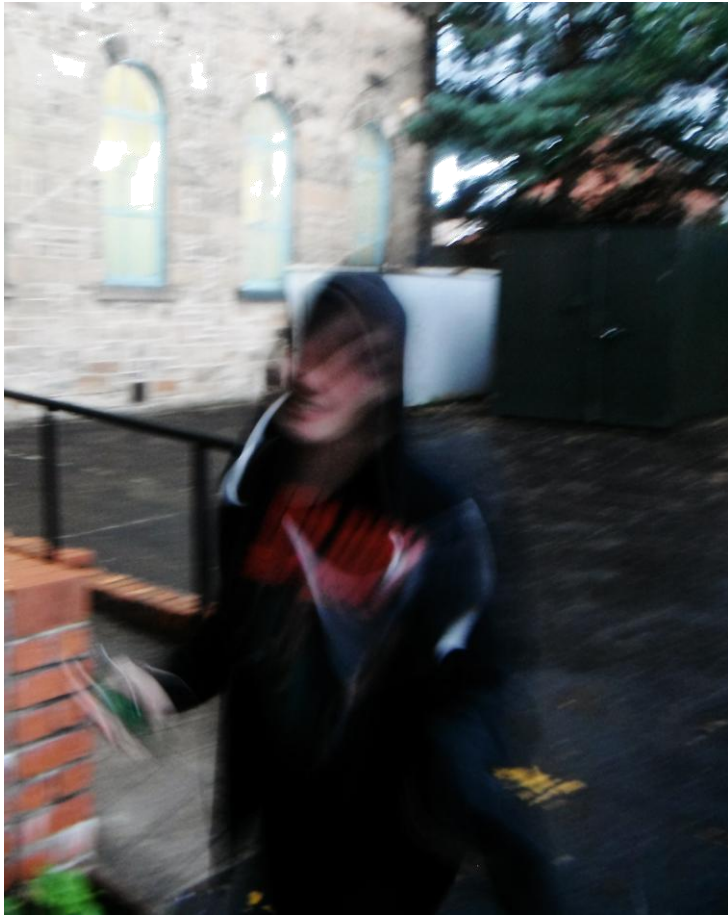


“To me, sectarianism is unnecessary division. It started in religion but it isn't really related anymore, even though people claim that it is. People who never set foot in a church or chapel argue strongly on both sides and believe that their "religion" is intrinsically linked to football and colours.”

“I almost don't see myself as Protestant because the word is quite linked to sectarianism, whereas ‘Church of Scotland’ isn't so loaded in that sense. It just seems crazy that this way of thinking has continued so long and is so concentrated within Glasgow.”

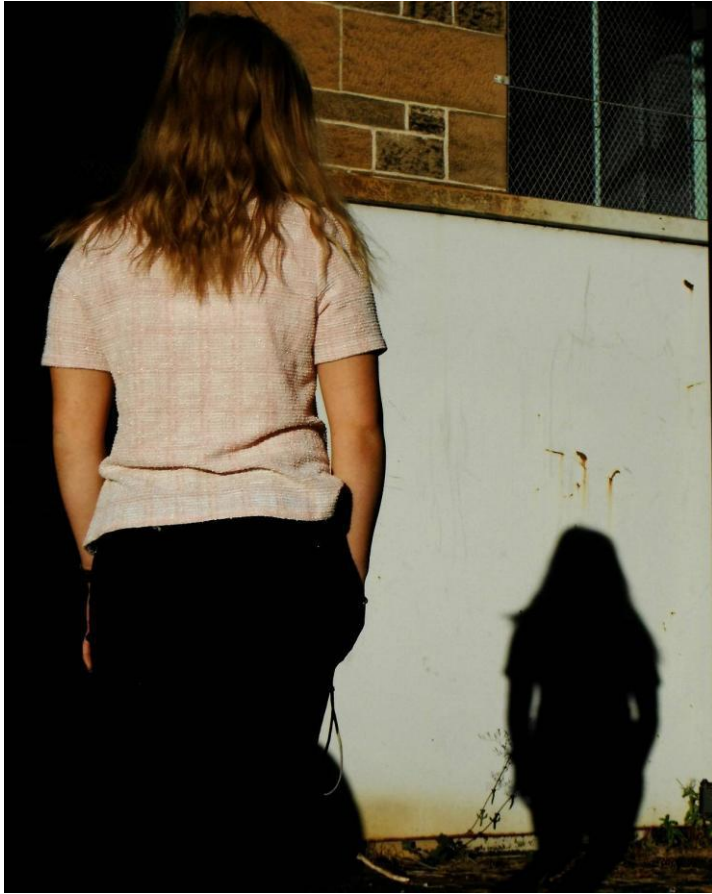
“I've witnessed a lot of loaded remarks and heard ridiculous comments, such as ‘I can't wear green, it's against my religion.’ Where in the Bible does it say that?”

“Sometimes I feel a little helpless when you see the scale of it during a march but I suppose you just have to do what you can and hope that eventually, with everyone doing a little, it becomes enough.”



“I think life would be a lot easier without sectarianism and if everyone just got along with each other. I think it’s like a war between different divisions of religion, which is really unnecessary.”

“My parents told me that going to church was the right thing to do; they raised me as a Catholic and I went through all the sacraments. But personally, that’s not me.”



“Sectarianism to me divides communities because of religion, or race or social class. And it’s when people who come from pretty much the same areas but have different views are separated just based on these reasons.”

“I’ve probably only experienced it through football teams and religion at school. I go to a Protestant church but when I was younger I went to a primary school that was full of Catholics and I didn’t tell anyone my religion or anything until I was at High School where it was a mix. I just kept it quiet and didn’t say anything. I was embarrassed and I felt like I shouldn’t let anyone know.”

“Even now I think there are fights and there is a separation between the two.”

“I think that there should be a mix within primary and secondary schools. They should all be non-denominational; it should be enforced that everyone is the same and they shouldn’t be divided because at the end of the day we’re all the same. There’s no need to be divided.”

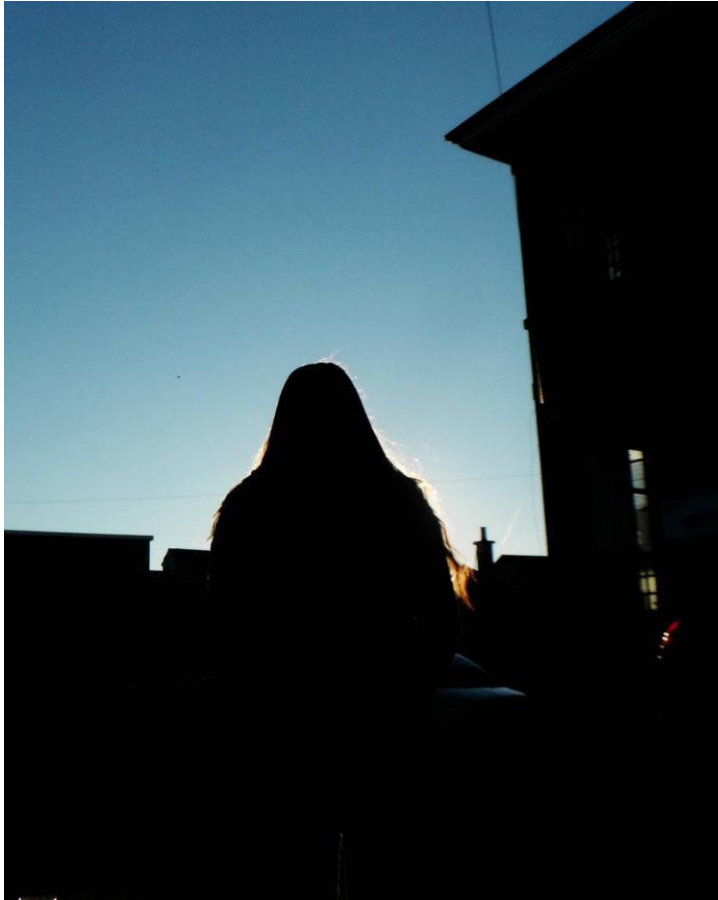


“I have experienced some sectarianism at primary school. I felt quite tense because some people would ask: ‘Are you Rangers or Celtic?’ I’d always try to avoid those questions but then they’d come back and say: ‘Are you Catholic or Protestant?’ and when I said Protestant they would assume I must support Rangers.”

“Another school quite close was closed down. The majority there were Rangers but in my class it was mostly Celtic so there was a bit of conflict when the schools merged. But I did manage to avoid that mostly.”

“Once in my primary school there was a group of kids from the Catholic Church and a group who were Protestant and it had snowed. They used pencils to cut out shapes like crosses and throw at the other groups. And they called insults and there was a bit of scrapping.”

“It didn’t ever get to hitting or anything like that. But I have heard of cases that have gone further.”



“Sectarianism – the word just means bad things. It brings out negative tension in the community and splits up people and no-one enjoys it apart from the people who are creating it.”

“In primary school there were little fights over Rangers and Celtic and different football teams; people being bullied and stuff. It made me feel angry. It’s a personal decision who you support – it’s not up to the bullies.”

“I think kids in primary school need to be taught about sectarianism in school, and taught that it’s not a good thing, and shouldn’t be happening. I think it should be taught by someone who has been through this sort of stuff. That would make the most impact.”



“Sectarianism is a conflict or schism between two religious sects. I have had family members who have had experiences relating to sectarian conflict in Glasgow between Catholics and Protestants. My family are somewhere in-between; most of my family are Protestant however I do have some family members who are Catholic.”

“I honestly believe there is not anything physical in terms of sectarianism going on any more; more than anything it’s verbal. But the fact is that some people still believe that one religion is inferior to their own.”



“Sectarianism is the conflict between two sects or two religions. I don’t have any experience of it here at all. I come from Syria and it was quite surprising when I heard that there was sectarianism in a country like the UK – more specifically in Glasgow – at all. I had no idea before I came here.”

“There are a lot of symbols with a sectarian meaning that are all around us, like graffiti on the walls, but I haven’t understood their meaning before.”

“Before the war started in Syria I had no experience of it there either but after the conflict started I did; political sectarianism though, not religious.”

“I think there are some things we can do to challenge it. The schools can play an important part about telling people about the experiences of sectarianism and the council can always make programmes that challenge it too.”



“I don’t have much of an opinion about sectarianism. I probably have experienced sectarianism but I haven’t realised it, if that makes sense.”

“Some of my friends from primary school have told me about experiences of sectarianism. They just said that they weren’t happy about it. They were being bullied, sort of thing.”

“Maybe we should stop teaching it to people. If the older people didn’t do it, then the younger people wouldn’t do it. Adults have a big influence on children.”



“Sectarianism affects a lot of people and it divides people, like families.”

“I think maybe educating people can help challenge it. The more people are aware of stuff the more they will understand it. If they know the history from back in the day between the Irish and the Scottish people that would help.”

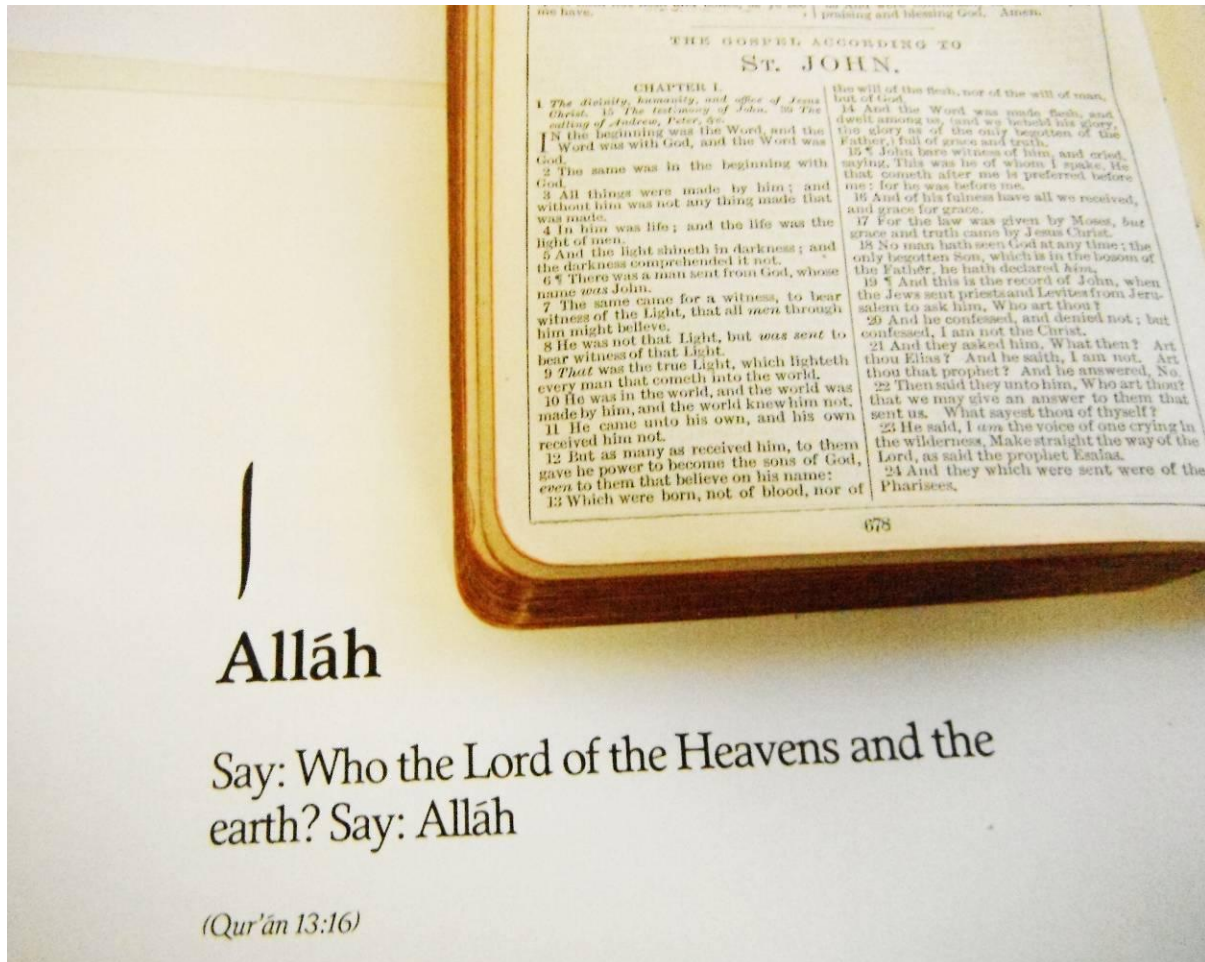
“The Scottish people thought the Irish people came to take their jobs and that wasn’t true. The Irish people came because they were in a bad situation where they didn’t have anything to eat and they were in starvation so they moved to Scotland just for a better life.”



Conflicts are caused by those who are supposed to forgive. Forgiveness is shown in many ways but it is not always at the right time or place.



Where there is light, there is hope for a better future. Where there is hope there is passion and love. And as Mahatma Gandhi said: "Where there is love, here is life".



Two books. Two religions. One Lord. One God.

Though written in different languages and telling different stories, the Bible and Qu'ran have very similar messages and share the goal of bringing people to God.



This represents the unity and co-existence between Islam and Christianity especially in Syria where I come from. The white colour, which appears in this photo, represents peace and love.



This bible symbolises open doors and an open community – doors open to everyone. This bible symbolises a neighbourhood living side-be-side; it says 'love thy neighbour', whether they be Catholic or Protestant, black or white, man or women.



Flute and snare drums are still beating in the hearts of Christians, both Protestants and Catholics.



I do feel annoyed when I hear the marching bands. I think there are better ways of expressing your views. Those drums are quite dominant; it feels like they are trying to say: "We are louder, we are the best". Some people are just trying to avoid it; it shouldn't be their problem.



The candle is the sign of an open heart. We can be strong for what we believe in. The darkness in the background describes the sadness that has passed.



The Goddess has turned her back away from everything negative. She doesn't have to be the same as everyone else; she doesn't have to have a religion or follow a particular set of beliefs. But she still respects all the other people's religion and that's the way it should be.



Sectarianism is really hard to fix it but it's not impossible. If people stop believing that we are different then maybe they would stop fighting each other.



This photo is about simplicity; that's how it represents Buddhism. One of its main spiritual goals is to rid oneself of material possessions.



We are all humans even if we have different views. In other words, we are all going to die: we have the same destiny.



The blue car on top of the green one is like Rangers FC and Celtic FC coming together. It might just come true; even if you come from different places, different backgrounds or different religions everyone can still be friends.



To me, the flag flying celebrates the end of the war.



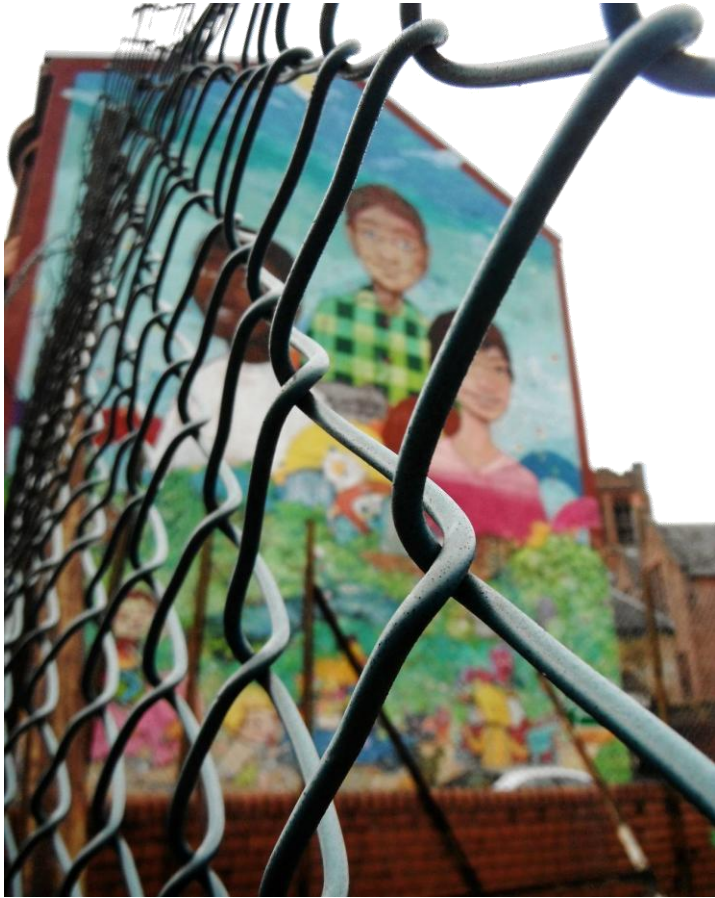
Although white may take up a large portion of this image, it's the bright colours of the elephant that draw you in. It's just like real life: nobody is going to be interested if everything is plain and boring. But when you introduce a little diversity, it's as if you've entered a whole new dimension.



This image is about hope; hope that for someone this is still a space worth breaking into, a space worth using, a space that might still be reclaimed by the community.



Despite the gentrification of Maryhill, there are still plenty of buildings left in derelict states. It's always been assumed that an unpleasant looking area harbours unpleasant problems, causing sectarianism and terrorism. Or is that just prejudice?



The biggest problem a society could face is being infected with sectarianism: it is a deadly disease. However, there is a vaccine that could stop it, and it is called unity.



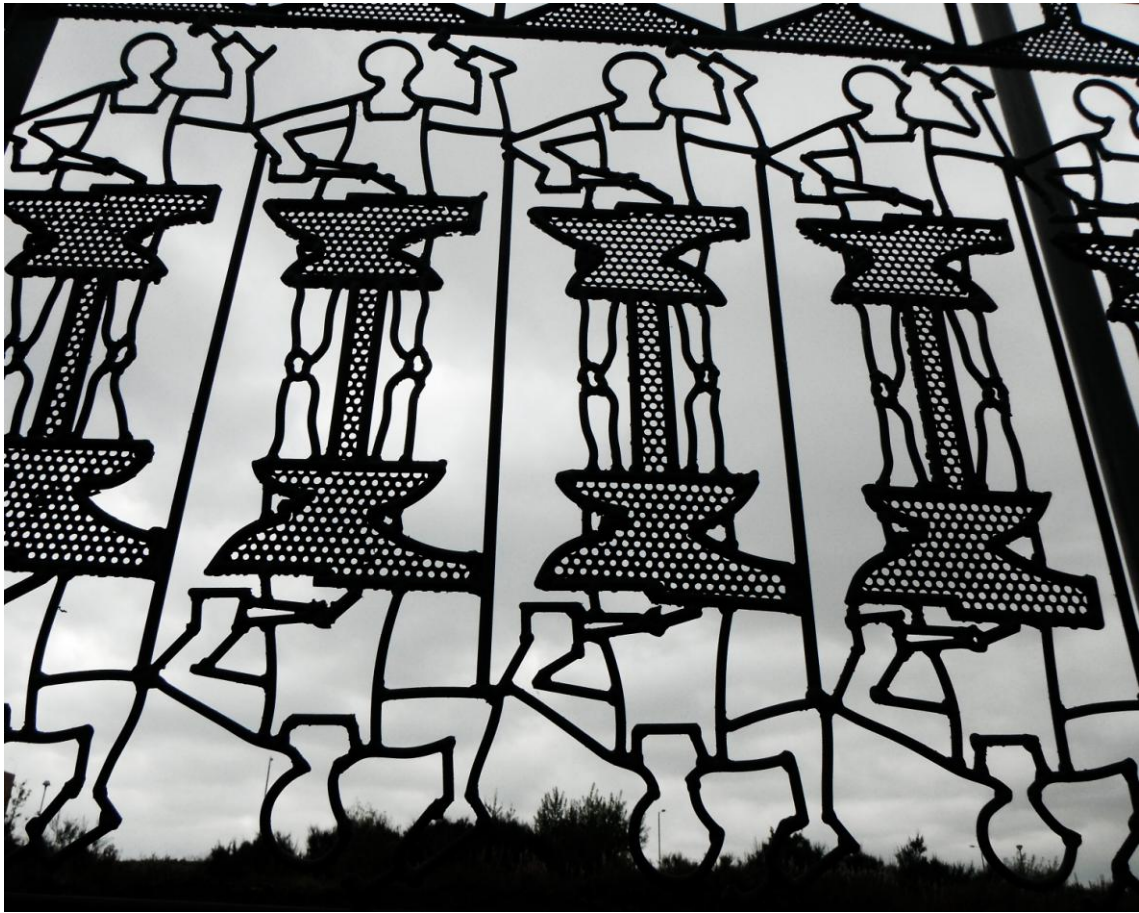
Beauty is perceived in many different ways. It changes over the generations. But no matter what's going on in society, there will always be a job for hairdressers.



Reminders of the Italian immigrants of the Great War litter our streets – like great cafes and ice-cream!



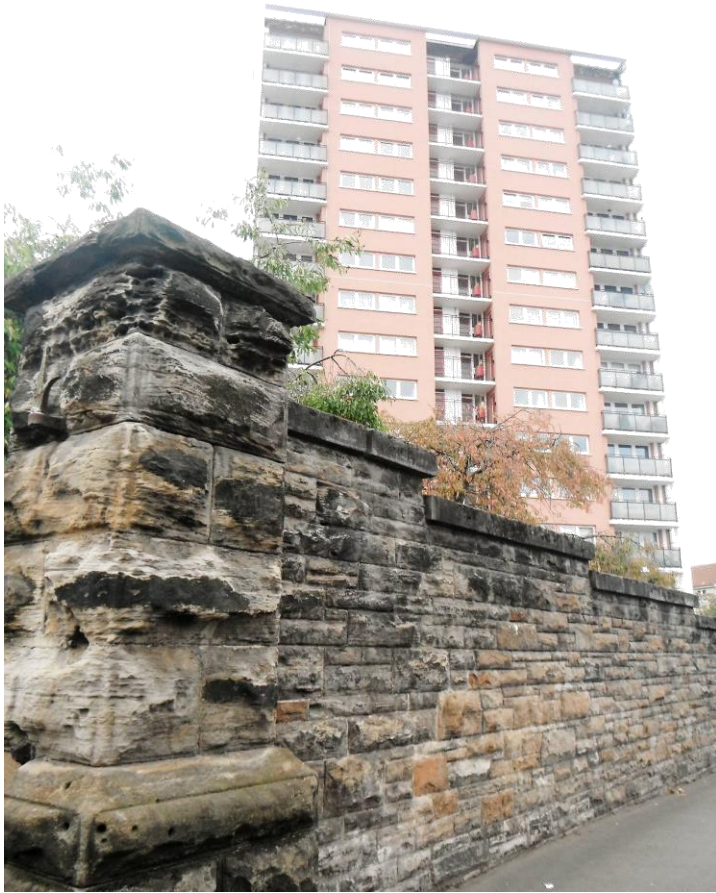
The stealthy black guardian stalks across the junction on Maryhill Road. Its yellow eyes gleam in the dark, overseeing everything. Further down the road a yappy terrier eyes a busy bee on a sunny day. It radiates a feeling of joy as people drive past; keeps us content during the daylight hours, until the panther-like night is with us again.



These railings represent the iron made and shipped through Maryhill in industrial times. For a long while Maryhill was considered the emerald in the crown of a shipbuilding city.



As these railings in Maryhill show, things get done by working together, hand-in-hand.



The old wall of Maryhill Barracks still stands in front of these high-rise blocks. Change is inevitable. The world has changed so much in the last ten years and who knows what is to come in the next ten? But even though lots of changes are happening, heritage and history are just as important as development.



The gate is open, welcoming newcomers. But that lies inside? From here the darkness is overpowering the light.



Is the shutter open or closed? Glasgow is a city that is always open and friendly but it still holds its secrets.



This road has been renamed. But why call it “Prince of Wales Gardens”, with its inference of a royalist establishment, when it’s clear that neither Prince Charles, nor any member of the Royal Family, has ever lived in Maryhill?



There is sectarianism in sport. There have been massive reductions in sectarian related violence between Rangers and Celtic but there are still some extremists on both sides who believe that violence must occur either during or after football games.

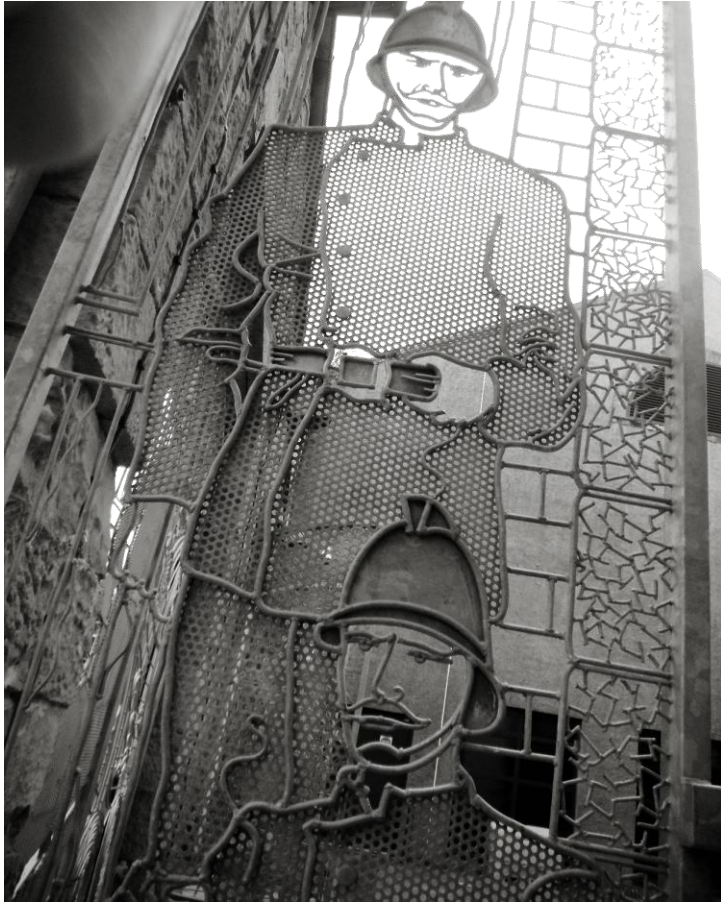


I like everyone to be equal; I'd like to think I've never discriminated against anyone but maybe I have without realising it.



I don't think they should have those walks through streets in the city centre; a lot of people can be affected by these things. I think that does need to be addressed and changed.

It does need to be challenged at school too. People who could be really good friends sometimes aren't just because of the way their parents feel about certain religions.



I can feel the strength in this picture.

Everybody has their own sense of security in their life. But this doesn't mean we don't need help from others.

We need to be equal and live in peace. We don't need worries in our life that can make us terrified and scared; fears like those I left behind when I came here.

If we can do this, I believe we will become stronger than we are now.



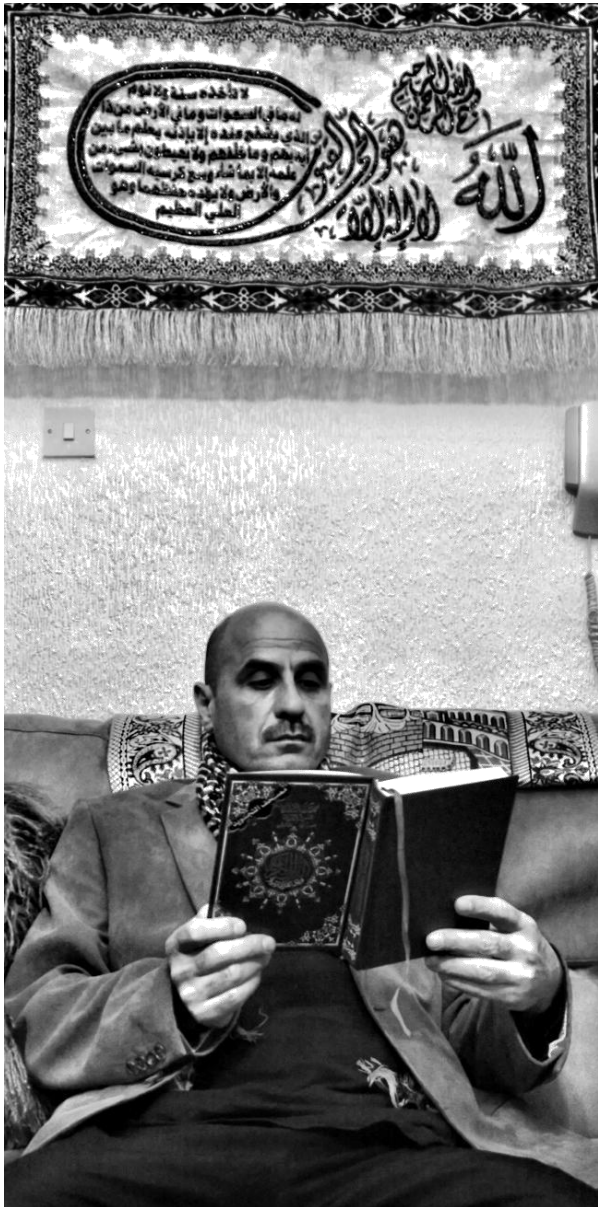
Here are two feet, fixed in two different positions; two different camps. The line in the middle shows the division of two sides. But the moving water surrounding them might bring them closer together.



The peacefulness of this image of Maryhill canal hides the busy industry of the past that was once the daily reality.



There is always a part of Maryhill that is hidden. But even the hills can be seen if you take the right turn.



“I think we could try and fight sectarianism maybe by telling people that this is really bad and impolite way to talk to other people who are no more or less than us; fellow humans. And explain to them that we are all humans and we have the same rights and we cannot talk to each other in these ways.”

## Interviews/profiles in full

### Reverend Stuart Matthews Maryhill Parish Church

It's a Sunday morning in the main hall of Maryhill Parish Church, and Reverend Stuart Matthews, the church minister, is explaining his views on sectarianism.

For Stuart bringing everyone together, both young and old, is very important. He says: "It's about people from all sorts of difference places and backgrounds." Stuart believes there shouldn't be a divide between cultures and faith. But he explains these divides happen, even within close-knit communities.

He finds it problematic that young people go to different schools. He says: "I think that makes it difficult for us all to be one family, looking out for each other. It creates a divide when I really wish there wasn't a divide in our community."

"It's a divide because our children grow up sometimes on the same street. They do not go to different schools only because of Catholic and non-denominational schools but also because of placing requests. It means there is less sense of community, less closeness and I think that makes community less strong."

He thinks it is vital for churches to work together to try to eradicate sectarianism within local communities, and looks out for opportunities to get involved in work that brings people of all denominations together. He tells us: "It's really symbolic when the Priest and the Minster can be seen together."

"I think that whenever we say: 'here's me and I'm right and there you are and you're wrong' then we've got it wrong already. And I think that's what Jesus teaches in the bible; that we need to be more inclusive and caring with each other."

But in this case, he won't preach. "People are welcome in churches and find faith and love there but the church cannot impose views on society in a way that it once did. People need to make up their own minds."



**Remzije Sherifi**  
**Maryhill Integration Network**

Remzije Sherifi was evacuated on humanitarian grounds from a refugee camp in Macedonia to Scotland with her children during the war in the Balkans. Before moving to Scotland all she knew was that there are two popular football clubs, Celtic and Rangers, but she had no idea that there was any tension between them.

She really believed there were no segregation problems. "Thinking about UK and Scotland, you think it is like a paradise where they are none of these issues," she says.

She shortly realised that she was wrong about this when she saw young males fighting with each other in the middle of the street. She explains: "I couldn't take it in, and it took me very long, in fact, to understand what was going on."

Remzije, who now co-ordinates Maryhill Integration Network, which is all about bringing the community together, believes that everyone in the world should be treated as equals.

"No matter where we're coming from, we all love happiness and we all love to dream," she says. "We cry and smile and sleep and go through all our routines. Our bodies work in the same pattern no matter the colour of our skin and our religious beliefs."

As a community advocate Remzije tries to be of assistance and spread the message of what sectarianism is and how it can be challenged. She says: "I think you need to challenge sectarianism by working with children from a very young age. And less segregation between religions too. Let's have joint activities such a football club, a joint music band."

Although she has experienced segregation while living in Scotland she has hope for a future which will be free of all discrimination. She thoroughly believes that Scotland is a flourishing country with lots to offer.

"Scottish people are really welcoming," she says. "Glasgow was the first city to accept Syrians to our city and this shows how open hearted people in Scotland are."



**Deacon Jim Dean**  
**St Gregory's Church**

"You live in Glasgow, you know about sectarianism. You live in Maryhill, Ruchill, you know about sectarianism. It's there. It's a fact of life for us."

Jim Dean is the deacon at St. Gregory's and St. Charles and also the chaplain at John Paul Academy. He re-trained as a Catholic deacon after retiring as a social worker. He grew up in Glasgow, which is why he has a strong understanding about sectarianism.

Nevertheless, Deacon Jim didn't come under attack as a child. He says: "I didn't experience it against myself and my parents would never have allowed me to be anti-Protestant."

Having parents who didn't promote sectarianism in the home has helped Deacon Jim to be open-minded to other denominations and religions. So how does he feel about marching bands? "I love the flute bands and the music," he says carefully. "I just wonder if people remember why they are walking."

He does not think they should be banned. It's about free speech. "Where do you stop?" he asks. "Where do you impose sanctions against free speech and people's ability to celebrate what they believe? It's a very fine line."

So what can be done? How can we move towards a balanced approach? Deacon Jim is inspired by Mother Teresa's worldview: "She said you can only do one wee thing yourself. That's how you start changing the world; if you do one wee thing. And you hope you change things. I'm afraid I don't have big powerful plans or answers. It's just all of us taking it step by step by step."

Step by step. If only the steps were always in the right direction.



**Julie Hyslop**  
**Greater Maryhill Food Bank**

Julie Webster is a name that the length and breadth of Maryhill knows well. She's the founder of the Maryhill Food Bank, a charity that feeds the mouths of over a thousand families as many households find it harder and harder to put food on the table.

"Being Catholic myself I didn't really have much to do with the Church of Scotland." Julie explains. But after opening the food bank, she requested the help from all the churches in Maryhill and found the barriers fell away. "The other co-founder of the food bank is Church of Scotland and I could work with him," she says. "And I think that's a really positive thing. I think when we look back and hopefully food banks are gone, that is something that we'll remember."

She holds the stance that segregated schools make social divides between Catholics and Protestants and are not an efficient way to battle sectarianism. "They say non-denominational schools but I don't really know what they mean by it," she says. "I don't have a problem with people teaching my children religion. But I think the segregation of schools based on religion in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Scotland? I would have thought that would have been phased out by now."

Julie believes the way to combat these problems is to educate children from an early age: "Starting from very early nursery age and trying to ensure that nursery teachers themselves are well educated and clued up about what's going on around them, that's really important."

But for Julie, prejudice is not just about sectarianism. Racism is a problem that she's all too aware of. She says: "My partner is black African and some of my family members frown on that. My mum was in the same situation 50 years ago when she married my dad, because he was a Protestant and she was a Catholic. A lot of family members didn't go to the wedding. Right up until my grandparents died some still condemned that marriage."

"It is very much about generational discrimination and prejudice because when children grow up with racism, or there's discriminatory behaviour of any sort like homophobia – they will learn like that. It's horrible to see that. And many of those children will carry that on to generations to come."

But there are plenty of positives in Maryhill too. She's rightly proud of the work, sweat and tears that the volunteers – from all faiths and cultures – put into the food bank. Their work helps people no matter what their religion or background. "We'll continue to be there for the community, as long as we need to," she says. "It's a sad thing that it needs to be there but it's nice too because it's brought groups together."



This project was part of West of Scotland Regional Equality Council's Challenging Sectarianism Across Generations Project. This aims to challenge the root causes of intergenerational sectarianism in the West of Scotland and place this within a global context.

It was funded by the Voluntary Action Fund, on behalf of the Scottish Government.

The project was administered by Open Aye.

For more information,  
visit [www.wsrec.co.uk](http://www.wsrec.co.uk)  
[www.openaye.co.uk](http://www.openaye.co.uk)



