

# Festival of debate

22 April - 30 May 2025



Welcome to our 2025 programme, celebrating ten years of Festival of Debate

In 2015, a committed team at Opus launched the first-ever Festival of Debate. Like many others, we felt despair and anger at the inadequate visions for change being offered by politicians and commentators during that year's general election.

We knew the discourse needed to be more plural, more innovative, and less rooted in the status quo. We felt a need to bring people together in Sheffield, to learn from and to be alongside communities, citizens and movements leading change in their streets and their neighbourhoods.

Our focus this year is on systems change. People around the world are starting to recognise that our current trajectory as a planet is self-terminating – that we need to make a radical transition away from dominant systems of neoliberalism, white modernity and colonialism. The net result of these extractive ideologies is that we are effectively at war with future generations of all living things.

We believe places like Sheffield can start demonstrating alternatives to these dominant systems – new ways of thinking that might guide us towards liveable futures for all. We know Sheffielders can do this: we've instigated radical change countless times before.

Across this year's festival, you'll hear many people talking about systemic change and what it might look like. We hope that you will come with an open mind and be respectful of all that you encounter.

In this moment, we're all more connected than we ever have been before and yet we reinforce systems which by design separate us from each other and from the natural ecologies which sustain all life. This is something we can change.

Join the conversation.  
The Festival of Debate team.



[www.weareopus.org](http://www.weareopus.org)  
[www.festivalofdebate.com](http://www.festivalofdebate.com)



# Festival of Debate

22 April - 30 May 2025

## CONTENTS

- 4 ABOUT THE FESTIVAL
- 6 FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS
- 11 APRIL EVENTS
- 16 MAY EVENTS
- 42 FESTIVAL AT A GLANCE
- 46 ACCESSIBILITY
- 47 VENUES
- 48 FUNDERS, SPONSORS & PARTNERS

## ARTWORK

FRONT COVER & ILLUSTRATIONS:

Lisa O'Hara  
[lisaohaha.com](http://lisaohaha.com)

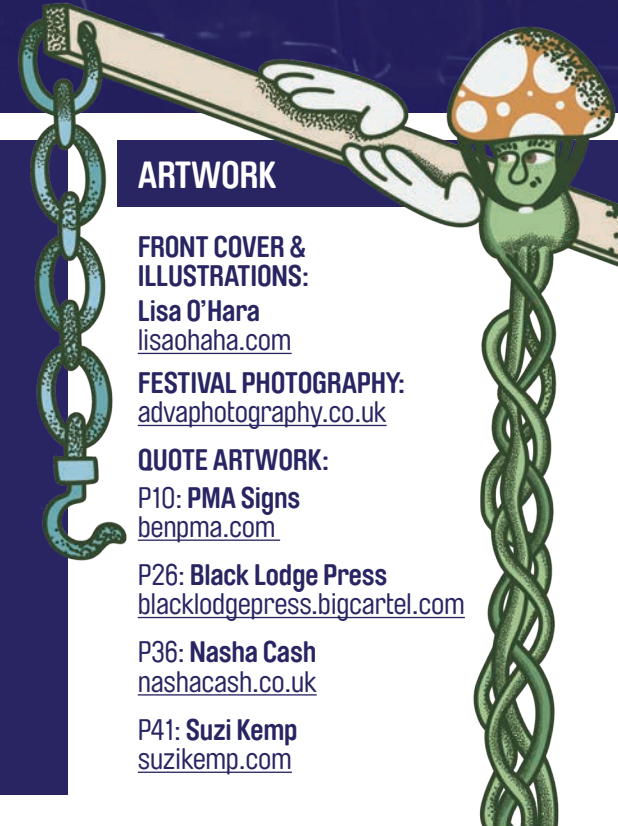
FESTIVAL PHOTOGRAPHY:  
[advaphotography.co.uk](http://advaphotography.co.uk)

QUOTE ARTWORK:  
P10: PMA Signs  
[benpma.com](http://benpma.com)

P26: Black Lodge Press  
[blacklodgepress.bigcartel.com](http://blacklodgepress.bigcartel.com)

P36: Nasha Cash  
[nashacash.co.uk](http://nashacash.co.uk)

P41: Suzi Kemp  
[suzikemp.com](http://suzikemp.com)



Coordinated by Opus, Festival of Debate is a non-partisan programme of events that asks us to explore the most important social, economic, environmental and political issues of the day.

The festival is run in collaboration with over 50 organisations and features over 100 individual speakers. As such, the views and opinions expressed during the festival are those of the speakers, and do not necessarily reflect the views or positions of the festival, or any of our partner organisations.

Festival of Debate is a broad, open, public debate programme which anyone can join but we do not pretend to be representative of all viewpoints. Festival of Debate is against discrimination and harassment of all kinds. If you would like to help us improve our work, or if we got something wrong, please tell us at [hello@festivalofdebate.com](mailto:hello@festivalofdebate.com)

**This year the festival has been programmed to explore three core questions:**



How can we reimagine our citizenship and our democracy?



How should our society overcome inequalities of race, gender, sexuality, income and disability?



How can we respond to the climate crisis and biosphere collapse?



**TICKETS & ACCESSIBILITY**

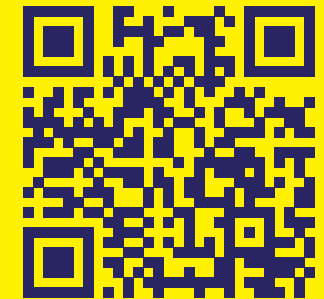
Tickets for Festival of Debate events are mostly available through our main ticket outlet Ticket Tailor. To buy tickets for paid events or to sign up to attend free events visit [festivalofdebate.com](http://festivalofdebate.com), click 'Events' and find the relevant link. All paid ticket prices are subject to a booking fee.

A guide to this year's venues can be found at the back of this brochure. If you have any questions regarding ticketing, accessibility or how to get to venues, please email [access@festivalofdebate.com](mailto:access@festivalofdebate.com).

Festival of Debate is a non-profit event. Events have been made free to attend wherever possible, and the festival team have made sure ticketed events are as cheap as possible so that as many people as possible can get involved.

If you enjoy the programme this year, we'd really welcome any donations to help us continue to make Festival of Debate happen.

Visit [festivalofdebate.com/donate](http://festivalofdebate.com/donate)





**JOHN HARRIS:**  
**MAYBE I'M AMAZED**  
 Thu 24 April | Workstation



**JASON HICKEL: DEGROWTH –**  
**A 21ST CENTURY REVOLUTION**  
 Tue 29 April | Pennine Lecture Theatre



**LANRE BAKARE:**  
**WE WERE THERE**  
 Thu 1 May | Workstation



**IN CONVERSATION WITH**  
**KATE RAWORTH & INDY JOHAR**  
 Fri 25 April | Pennine Lecture Theatre



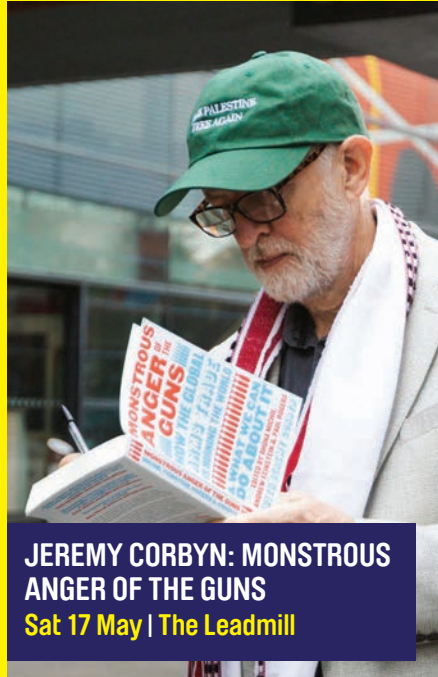
**SHON FAYE:**  
**LOVE IN EXILE**  
 Thu 8 May | Workstation



**ALL THE PEOPLE:**  
**AN INCLUSIVE PARTY**  
 Thu 15 May | The Leadmill



**LAURA BATES: THE NEW AGE OF SEXISM**  
Fri 16 May | Pennine Lecture Theatre



**JEREMY CORBYN: MONSTROUS ANGER OF THE GUNS**  
Sat 17 May | The Leadmill



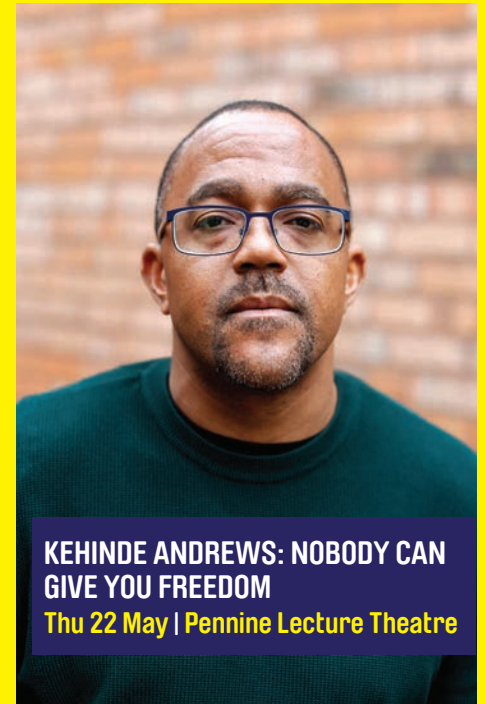
**NAT RAHA & MIJKE VAN DER DRIFT: TRANS FEMME FUTURES**  
Wed 21 May | Soft Ground



**ANDY BURNHAM & STEVE ROTHERAM: HEAD NORTH**  
Mon 19 May | Octagon Centre



**JOYCELYN LONGDON: NATURAL CONNECTIONS**  
Wed 21 May | Workstation



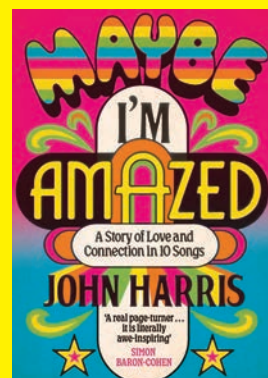
**KEHINDE ANDREWS: NOBODY CAN GIVE YOU FREEDOM**  
Thu 22 May | Pennine Lecture Theatre

# CARE IS THE ANTIDOTE TO VIOLENCE



**JOHN HARRIS: MAYBE I'M AMAZED**

Thu 24 April | 7 - 9pm  
 Workstation - Creative Lounge | £9 / £7



Veteran journalist John Harris has long been an obsessive gig-goer. When his son James was born, and three years later diagnosed with autism, music became something even more important: their main form of communication.

Join John for an evening in conversation with Melissa Simmonds about *Maybe I'm Amazed*, which charts the struggles of raising an autistic child in a prejudiced world, and which combines the personal and the universal to uncover a hidden history of neurodivergence and creativity.

**Festival of debate**

- SAIDIYA HARTMAN

APRIL 22ND -  
 MAY 30TH 2025

## Sheffield City Goals



### SHEFFIELD CITY GOALS: NEXT STEPS

Tue 22 April | 5:30– 9pm  
Workstation – Creative Lounge | Donations

In partnership with Sheffield City Goals

How do we turn our love for Sheffield into action that tackles the challenges we face? Join us on 22 April at 5:30pm in the Creative Lounge, Workstation, as we explore next steps for the 18 Sheffield City Goals.

In this participatory session, engage in co-design conversations, shape accessible progress metrics, empower neighbourhoods, and inspire young change-makers.

Be part of the movement to build a stronger, more connected Sheffield through innovative, city-wide collaboration. Doors open 5pm.



### CHALLENGING NEOLIBERALISM IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Thu 24 April | 5:30 – 7pm  
City of Sanctuary Donations

In partnership with University of Sheffield

In this workshop, we explore the dominance of neoliberalism in early childhood education and engage in an interactive visual activity where we reimagine the purpose and objectives of early years education.

We'll invite you to think about how early childhood education can help raise empathetic, creative thinkers who imagine new solutions to transform society, tackling social inequalities, the climate emergency and many of the other crises we face.



### IMAGINING A WORLD WITHOUT FOSSIL FUELS

Sun 27 April | 2 – 4pm  
Soft Ground | Donations

In partnership with Stop Rosebank Sheffield

Climate change is one of the most pressing issues of our time. In this workshop, we'll focus on the urgent need to abandon fossil fuels and move to a greener, more sustainable economy.

Aimed at experienced activists as well as those new to the climate movement, we'll encourage you to imagine a world without fossil fuels and consider the role you might play in creating this new society.

Photo: Graeme Robertson



## IN CONVERSATION WITH KATE RAWORTH & INDY JOHAR

Fri 25 April | 7 – 9pm | Pennine Lecture Theatre  
£14 / £10 (£5 for online live stream)



### In partnership with the River Dôn Project

We face a complex entanglement of crises – economic, social and environmental – and the coming decade will test our collective ability to respond. But by working together, we can chart sustainable social and ecological paths to safeguard human and more-than-human life on this planet. Join Indy Johar and *Doughnut Economics* author Kate Raworth as they explore the scale of the challenges we face, their complexity, and how understanding their entanglement is critical to our future.





**PUBLIC FINANCE  
BLACK HOLE – THE  
BIG LIE**

**Mon 28 April | 6:30 – 8:30pm | Central United Reformed Church  
£5/£2**

After more than 900,000 British soldiers died in WWI, the shocked remainder returned to unemployment and an annual tax bill of more than £1 billion for interest on loans to the government. Today, following 200,000 Covid deaths, the Chancellor is closing a claimed “£22 billion blackhole” by punishing pensioners and the poorest in society. We’ll debate these injustices as well as alternative approaches to public finances based on wellbeing and equality.



**WHAT IF HEART  
OF THE CITY WAS  
REPLICATED IN  
CASTLEGATE?**

**Wed 30 April | 10am – 4pm  
| Department (formerly  
Kommune) | Donations**

**In partnership with  
Sheffield Society of  
Architects**

As the massive Heart of the City II regeneration project comes to a close, this event will look at both its positive impacts and what lessons can be learnt, considering how these might be applied to another city centre area which is about to undergo transformational change: Castlegate. The day will encourage debate within Sheffield about high-quality urban development and place-making, focusing on two of the most talked about parts of our city centre.



**SHOULD MUSEUMS  
RETURN OBJECTS?**

**Wed 30 April | 6 – 8pm  
Weston Park Museum | Free  
/ Suggested donation £5**

**In partnership with  
Sheffield Museums &  
TALKSHOP**

Museums around the world hold objects acquired in different ways, including through colonial appropriation. In this interactive discussion, we explore what historic acquisitions mean for museums today and how they should be approached. You’ll be given the character of a leading player in these debates, discussing in groups the different arguments and working towards finding a shared way forward.



**JASON HICKEL: DEGROWTH  
A 21ST CENTURY REVOLUTION**

**Tue 29 April | 7 – 9pm  
Pennine Lecture Theatre | £12 / £6**



**In partnership with Global Justice Sheffield**

World-leading political economist Jason Hickel will present a compelling strategy for the democratic transformation of society. Our current obsession with limitless growth drives ecological breakdown, yet our leaders insist it is the only way to create social benefits. Jason will debunk these myths, outline the limits of “green growth”, expose the costs to the Global South, and put forward policies that provide good standards of living for everyone on the planet while keeping us within our planetary boundaries.





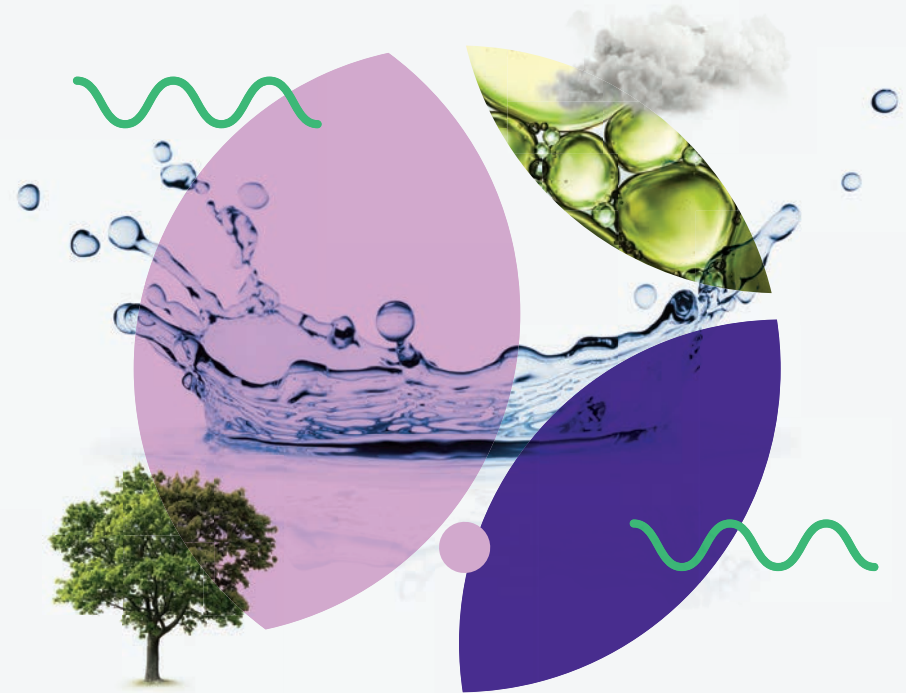
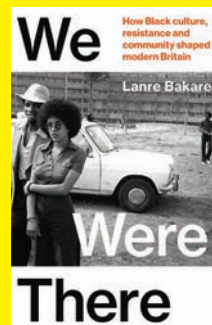


## LANRE BAKARE: WE WERE THERE



Thu 1 May | 7 - 9pm  
Workstation - Creative Lounge | £9 / £7

In the 1980s, Britain was in turmoil. With anti-immigration policies in the political mainstream, Black lives were on the frontline of a racial reckoning. It was also a time of unrivalled Black cultural creation, organising and resistance – not just in London but across the UK. Join Sheffield writer Désirée Reynolds for a conversation with Lanre Bakare about *We Were There*, a compelling portrait of modern Britain that weaves Black stories far away from the capital into our national narrative.



## Grantham Centre for Sustainable Futures

Our 2025 partner the Grantham Centre for Sustainable Futures will be hosting a series of events throughout the festival covering topics such as reimagining plastics, alternative economies and the dark art of greenwashing.

The Grantham Scholars have also produced a series of online panel discussions exploring solutions to the global polycrisis.

Find out more  
and reserve  
your ticket





### CATCALLS OF SHEFFIELD: HOW MANY TESTIMONIES DO WE NEED?

Thu 1 May | 7 - 9pm  
Broomhall Centre  
Donations

In partnership with  
Catcalls of Sheffield

How many testimonies do we need to hear for harassment to be acknowledged? How many stories do we need to collect to trigger institutional and cultural change? Since beginning our campaign last April, we've received more than 200 reports of harassment occurring all over the city. Join us to explore how, and why, testimonial injustice happens and how we can create community-wide changes in attitudes and responses towards all forms of harassment in Sheffield and beyond.



### ACTIVISM ACROSS BORDERS

Tue 6 May | 7 - 8:30pm  
Lecture Theatre 2,  
Diamond Building,  
University of Sheffield  
Donations

In partnership with  
SYMAAG

Join South Yorkshire Migration and Asylum Action Group for a panel discussion with three local activists: Manuchehr Maleki Dizaji (Iran), Maria Vazquez-Aguilar (Chile) and Boucka Koffi (West Africa). For all three, activism in their home countries led to their exile, and all bring that experience to the fight against the 'hostile environment' in the UK. Supported by the University of Sheffield's Migration Research Group, this session will explore the complexity, resonances and value of these experiences.



### PURPOSE: A WELLBEING ECONOMIES FILM

Wed 7 May | 7 - 9pm  
Department (formerly  
Kommune) | £5 /  
Donations

In partnership with the  
Grantham Centre for  
Sustainable Futures

Martin Oetting's film *Purpose* asks the central question of our time: what is the purpose of our economies, and how can we change it? The film follows two individuals who develop groundbreaking political projects designed to shift our economic systems away from endless GDP growth and towards wellbeing for people and planet. They imagine a world in which we no longer serve the economy, but the economy serves us. Followed by a panel discussion and Q&A.

## SHON FAYE: LOVE IN EXILE

Thu 8 May | 7 - 9pm | The Leadmill | £14 / £10



Shon Faye  
**LOVE**  
  
**IN**  
**EXILE**

In her new book *Love in Exile*, Bristol-born writer Shon Faye shows how love is much greater than the narrow ideals we have been taught to crave so desperately that we are willing to bend and break ourselves to fit them. The author of acclaimed bestseller *The Transgender Issue*, we're thrilled that Shon is returning to Festival of Debate to make the case that love is as much a collective question as a personal one.



## FRAMED: THE DEMONISATION OF DISABILITY

Thu 8 May | 6 – 7:30pm  
Online | Donations

In partnership with  
MediaNorth

Keir Starmer is planning to unveil more than £6 billion of welfare cuts which will see far tougher tests imposed for a key disability benefit. The right-wing press is full of rumours of draconian proposals such as removing fraudsters' driving licences. These plans, reports and leaks are framed to hit a group scapegoated as 'skivers', promoting charges of 'fraud' and high benefit bills. This online event will explore how these ideas fuel the politics of resentment and prejudice, and how we can fight back.



## ASSISTED DYING – PANEL DISCUSSION

Thu 8 May | 6 – 7:30pm  
Dorothy Fleming Lecture Theatre | Donations

In association with  
Compassionate Sheffield

In November last year, MPs voted to allow a proposed law on assisted dying to progress to the next stage in Parliament. This topic is both complex and shrouded in disinformation, so join us for a facilitated panel discussion featuring local care professionals as well as prominent community figures. You'll have a chance to get the facts about the bill's current form, as well as the opportunity to ask questions to our panel.



## FREE PARTY: A FOLK HISTORY- FILM SCREENING

Fri 9 May | 6 – 9pm  
Showroom | £10

In partnership with Gut Level & No Tags

No Tags and Gut Level present a film screening and panel discussion exploring the transformative power of underground dance music. *Free Party: A Folk History* is a unique look at how, years before the internet, a radical and unifying youth culture exploded outside the commercial mainstream entirely through word of mouth, and how that creative energy is seeing a huge resurgence in the challenging political times we find ourselves in.



## OFFERS & ASKS: SHARING, ABUNDANCE & COMMUNITY

Sat 10 May | 10am – 12pm  
The Circle | Donations

In partnership with  
Flourish Economics

Do you want to learn how radically sharing our passions, knowledge, resources and needs can create powerful, resilient communities with care, acceptance and vulnerability woven into their core? Join us for this heartfelt, empowering and participatory experience that encourages us to rethink how and what we value; challenging mainstream ideas of worth, and giving us space to reflect on our gifts and recognise the collective abundance in our communities.



## WORKING WELL: AVOID BURNOUT AND CREATE BALANCE AND JOY

Sat 10 May | 10am – 1pm  
Soft Ground | £5 / £2

Burnout can often feel like a cliff edge – the point of no return. This session is for those who've been there and stepped back, and those on the brink. If you work (paid or unpaid) in a demanding role that expects total commitment, this session is for you. We'll share experiences, learn from each other, discover our inner resources, and move forward by stepping back.



## BUILDING WORKER POWER: TROUBLESHOOTING UNION ORGANISATION

Sat 10 May | 3 – 5pm  
Soft Ground | Donations

In partnership with  
Sheffield Transformed

This workshop will explore how trade unionism can boost workers' power, showcasing organising successes and looking at the challenges workers face. Whether you're new to trade unionism or an experienced activist, this session will provide practical guidance on protecting your rights and organising in your workplace. You'll leave with a greater understanding of how, as workers, we can use our collective strength to fight for better pay, treatment and conditions.

# Sheffield City Goals

Living in Sheffield means different things to different people but we share a lot in common.

The Sheffield City Goals aim to bring these different meanings together so everyone, no matter who they are or where they come from, can live well and be part of Sheffield's story on terms that make sense to them.

They aren't meant to offer solutions to the problems we face, but instead serve as Sheffield's 'North Stars' for where we're trying to get to.

They are a platform for anyone and everyone – city and regional institutions, businesses, charity and community organisations and individual citizens – to play a role in tackling the challenges we face and making change happen in Sheffield.



Photo: Benjamin Elliott

**Sheffield City Goals lay out six stories we want to be able to tell in 2035 that describe the city we aspire to be. They represent what we are working towards and the values we hold dear.**

**Sat within each of these stories are the Goals. They outline what is needed to make the stories a reality and represent a shared responsibility for how things should happen in Sheffield.**

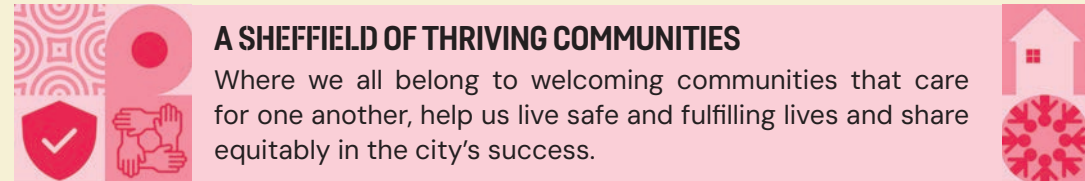
Read all the goals and learn more at [sheffieldcitygoals.uk](https://sheffieldcitygoals.uk)



**A CREATIVE & ENTREPRENEURIAL SHEFFIELD**  
Where we all have opportunities to invent, make, create and build in ways that grow shared prosperity, create high-quality jobs and enrich our communities and ourselves.



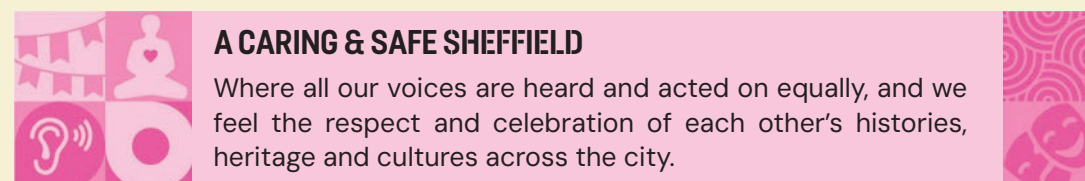
**A GREEN & RESILIENT SHEFFIELD**  
Where we all act urgently on the climate and environmental crisis, prepare for a changing future, and prioritise the health and wellbeing of our city's people and nature.



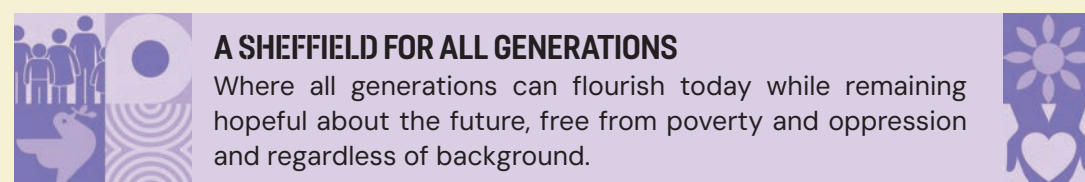
**A SHEFFIELD OF THRIVING COMMUNITIES**  
Where we all belong to welcoming communities that care for one another, help us live safe and fulfilling lives and share equitably in the city's success.



**A CONNECTED SHEFFIELD**  
Where we all have opportunities to form lasting, positive relationships in our neighbourhoods and across the city, through technology, great transport and common causes.



**A CARING & SAFE SHEFFIELD**  
Where all our voices are heard and acted on equally, and we feel the respect and celebration of each other's histories, heritage and cultures across the city.



**A SHEFFIELD FOR ALL GENERATIONS**  
Where all generations can flourish today while remaining hopeful about the future, free from poverty and oppression and regardless of background.

**If you're doing something that moves us towards the goals, we'd love to hear about it.**





## EXPLORING FRONTIERS: A RIGHTS OF NATURE JUST TRANSITION

Tue 13 May | 6:30 - 9pm  
Dorothy Fleming Lecture Theatre | Donations

In partnership with the River Dôn Project

This event will explore the entangled nature of change-making, creating space to discuss some of the approaches taken by the River Dôn Project as we try to navigate the complex relationships between humans and nature that we all live in every day. After a brief introduction framing the space we're holding, there'll be opportunities to join sessions on pushing the boundaries of arts and culture engagement, exploring microbial frontiers and decoding our entangled systems and structures.



## SHARING STORIES FOR MORE INCLUSIVE AGEING

Wed 14 May | 11:30am - 1:30pm | The Circle Donations

In partnership with University of Sheffield, Lora Krasteva & Utopia Theatre

Not everyone reaches old age with the same degree of wellbeing. Throughout a lifetime, some people are prevented from accessing basic services, good working conditions, or fully participating in society because of who they are. These issues disproportionately affect many, if not all, racially minoritised communities. In this event, racially minoritised older people will tell stories through theatre, song, dance and poetry, exploring what needs to change to foster inclusive ageing in South Yorkshire.



## CONVERSATIONS THAT DISRUPT DIVISION & BUILD DEMOCRACY

Wed 14 May | 6 - 7:30pm  
The Circle | Donations

In partnership with Compass & Who Is Your Neighbour?

Democracy suffers when we avoid tough conversations. Join Compass and Who is Your Neighbour? (WiYN?) to explore how we can foster healthier democracies and build inclusive communities. We'll discuss both big-picture strategies and individual actions to disrupt anti-migrant narratives, drawing on WiYN?'s experience of facilitating difficult conversations in South Yorkshire on race, immigration, and cultural change. You'll leave with examples of how to have meaningful conversations that disrupt division and safeguard democracy.



## ALL THE PEOPLE: AN INCLUSIVE PARTY

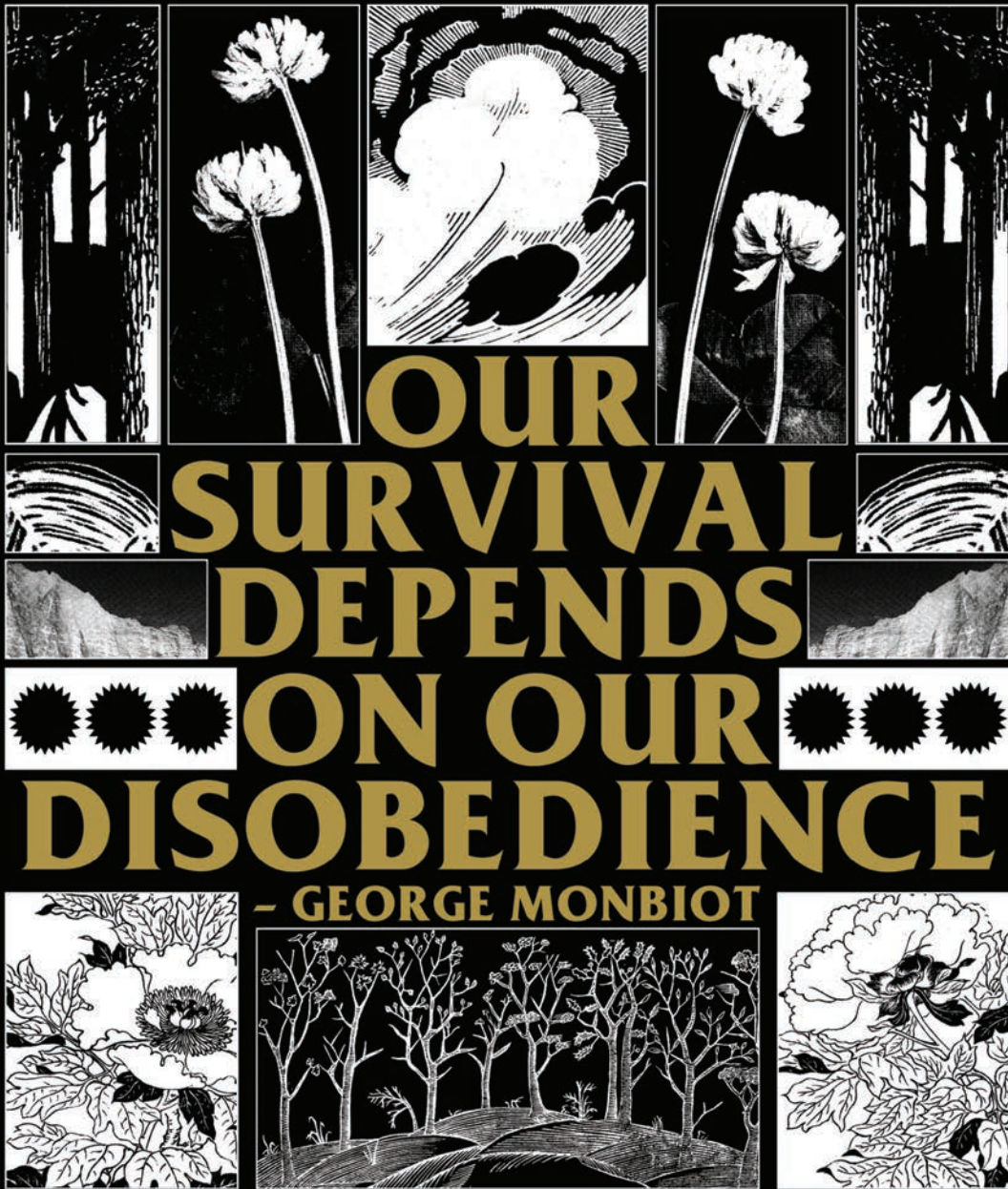
Thu 15 May | 6:30 - 10:30pm  
The Leadmill | £5 / £10 / £15



In partnership with Under the Stars, ArtWorks & Heart n Soul

Join us at the legendary Leadmill for a new, collaborative event that brings together artists with and without disabilities. This is an inclusive party for all the people! Headlined by jangly nightmare pop band SHRUB, it will feature Sheffield legends and multi-instrumentalists The Stars Band, gutsy girl group Sparkle Sistaz, and "egg funk" pioneers Electric Fire making the trip from London. ArtWorks will also host an inclusive live drawing jam.





# OUR SURVIVAL DEPENDS ON OUR DISOBEDIENCE

- GEORGE MONBIOT

**Festival of debate**  
JOIN THE CONVERSATION



**22 APRIL - 30 MAY 2025**



## FAITH, CLIMATE JUSTICE AND GLOBAL SOLIDARITY

Wed 14 May | 6:30 – 8pm  
Online | Donations  
In partnership with Hope For The Future & USPG

Tackling the climate and nature crises is one of the greatest challenges we face, and people of faith have a vital role to play. Join us for this online session to learn about the disproportionate impacts of climate breakdown on communities in the Global South and find out how faith-based communities are pushing politicians for stronger climate policies here in the UK.



## CREATING RESILIENT PLACES THROUGH THE BUILT AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Thu 15 May | 9:30am – 12:30pm | Green Estate Donations

In partnership with SY Ecofit & Green Estate

Join The Green Estate and SY Ecofit for an exciting interactive event exploring how we can create greener, more resilient urban spaces. This half-day forum brings together practitioners, community groups, and anyone passionate about sustainable places. Through expert talks, interactive discussions and networking, we'll explore practical solutions for integrating nature and retrofit to tackle climate challenges. Be part of the conversation – learn, share, and help shape the future of South Yorkshire.



## TOURETTESHERO'S RADICAL READING GROUP

Fri 16 May | 10am – 1pm  
Adelphi Room, Crucible Theatre | Donations

In partnership with Touretteshero

Join Touretteshero for a reading group with a radical twist! We'll be taking a well-known academic text and making it available in different accessible formats including audio, British Sign Language and Easy Read. If you're a disabled, neurodivergent or chronically ill person with an interest in connecting to ideas in different ways, then come along to this free event and experience the paper in whichever way suits you best.

## LAURA BATES

### THE NEW AGE OF SEXISM



Fri 16 May | 7 – 8:30pm  
Pennine Lecture Theatre | £14 / £10

New AI-driven technologies, with misogyny baked into their design, are putting women in danger. In *The New Age of Sexism*, author and campaigner Laura Bates takes us deep into the heart of this rapidly evolving world. She confronts deepfake pornography, travels to cyber brothers, and hears from schools in the grip of online sexual abuse, showing how our lives are being infiltrated by easily accessible technologies that are changing the way we live and love. Chaired by Helen Mort.



### YOUR VOICE, YOUR VISION: CO- DESIGNING SHSC'S FUTURE

Sat 17 May | 2 – 4pm  
Workstation – Creative  
Lounge | Donations

In partnership with  
**Sheffield Health & Social  
Care**

Adult autism and ADHD diagnosis, talking therapies, community, inpatient, perinatal, and older adult mental health services, and gender reassignment services. These are just some of the NHS services that have an immeasurable impact on people's lives. Join us for an interactive session to shape the future of health and social care in Sheffield. Your voice matters – come and have your say about topics ranging from local care and digital health to prevention and equity.



### WHY ARE SOME REFUGEES ERASED? CHECHEN DIASPORA'S STORY

Sat 17 May | 6 – 9pm | City of  
Sanctuary | Donations

Why can't some refugees speak freely about their homeland? And how does this lead to disinformation, fuelled by the far right? You'll find answers to these questions in the Chechen diaspora – one of the least visible diasporas in Europe. In this unique event you'll meet prominent Chechen activists and take part in a workshop exploring how we can make Sheffield more inclusive for communities for whom it is not safe to speak for themselves.



### FOD X GUT LEVEL CLUB NIGHT, FT. PLANTAINCHIPS & SAVANNA BOYS

Sat 17 May | 9pm – 2am  
Gut Level | £5 / £8 / £10

In partnership with **Gut  
Level**

Powerhouse producer and DJ Plantainchips has been crafting and delivering high-energy sets for years, tugging at the heartstrings, moving the hips, and bringing contemporary Black club music back to its rightful place on the dancefloor. Their repertoire spans genres, yet their joy lies in seamlessly blending styles as diverse as afrobeat, house, and dancehall. They'll be joined by Savannah Boys, a Sheffield-based collective playing amapiano, gqom and afro house.



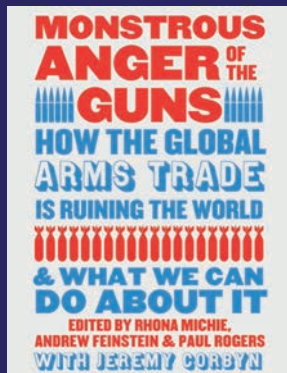
## JEREMY CORBYN

### MONSTROUS ANGER OF THE GUNS



Sat 17 May | 7 – 9pm | Leadmill | £14 / £10

We're seeing injustice caused by war, occupation and the ongoing genocide in Gaza unfold in real-time. Millions are speaking out against these horrors, yet from Palestine to Ukraine the bombs continue to fall. We must understand why this is happening if we are to end it. Join Islington North MP Jeremy Corbyn in conversation with special guests including Ahmed Alnaouq about *Monstrous Anger of the Guns*, a new book which lays bare the dark and deceitful world of the global arms trade.



### COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP WALKSHOP

Sat 17 May | 2 – 4:30pm  
Outdoors, City Centre – meet at 18–20 Union St | Donations

In partnership with Sheffield Community Land Trust

Join Sheffield Community Land Trust for a playful and provocative walk through the city, using a game-like series of prompts to discuss and explore approaches to community ownership and creative (re)use of a number of city centre sites. Collectively we'll ask how we might create affordable spaces to live and work in a climate emergency, and how these spaces can facilitate wealth-building and long-term placemaking. The walk will be 3–4 miles. There will be a number of stops and a gentle pace but we can't guarantee wheelchair accessibility or suitability for those with limited mobility.



### LISTENING FOR CHANGE: THE ART OF STORYTELLING

Tue 20 May | 9:30am – 12:30pm | The Circle  
Pay as you feel

In partnership with Voluntary Action Sheffield

How can the simple act of hearing and telling stories build trust? Hosted by a group of local facilitators, in partnership with Voluntary Action Sheffield, this experiential workshop will centre on a collective 'story harvest'. This technique allows us to track many threads or aspects of a single story simultaneously, which we'll then use to practice targeted listening, group learning and collective meaning-making. Join us if you want to share your story.



### PUBLIC RESEARCH FOR PUBLIC GOOD: CLOSING THE HEALTH GAP

Tue 20 May | 5 – 6:30pm  
Cantor Lecture Theatre  
Donations

In partnership with Knowledge for Public Health

Join us for a conversation chaired by Sheffield's Director of Public Health, Greg Fell, who will speak to some of the team behind Knowledge for Public Health. This exciting new project is dedicated to improving how research is used to tackle health inequalities at a local level. You'll discover how the team works with councils, policymakers and communities to ensure public health decisions are based on the best available evidence, leading to healthier lives across the UK.





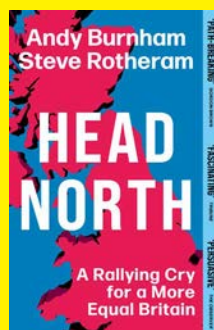
## ANDY BURNHAM & STEVE ROTHERAM

### HEAD NORTH



**Mon 19 May | 7:30 – 9pm**  
**Octagon Centre | £18 / £13**

Britain is more unequal than ever before, and if we're going to fix this, we must take the power out of Westminster. Join Andy Burnham and Steve Rotheram, the mayors of Greater Manchester and the Liverpool City Region, as they share their experiences on the frontline of British politics and talk about their new book *Head North*, which outlines how we can spread political and economic power throughout the UK and push forward for a fairer future.



### WHO CONTROLS THE MONEY? LOCAL WEALTH & POWER TO DECIDE

**Tue 20 May | 5:30 – 7:30pm**  
**Cubo | Donations**

**In partnership with Purple Shoots**

In a world where investment decisions are made in distant boardrooms, who really controls the future of our cities? This session explores how models like local wealth funds, democratic finance and community-driven investment can shift economic power away from the few and into the hands of the many. Can Sheffield take control of its own economic destiny or are we locked into a system that serves the status quo?



### REASSEMBLING OUR CLIMATE FUTURE: WHAT'S NEXT?

**Wed 21 May | 2:30 – 4:30pm** | The Wave  
**Donations**

**In partnership with South Yorkshire Sustainability Centre**

At this interactive event you'll work together to create new visions for climate action, inspiring hope in the face of a seemingly insurmountable global issue. Drawing on lived experiences and knowledge of where you live, you'll take part in scenario-building exercises inspired by an interactive documentary and a series of animations produced by a team of citizen researchers, showing a range of possible 'climate futures'.



### COLLABORATIVE POLICY MAKING FOR THRIVING PLACES

**Thu 22 May | 2 – 4pm**  
**Showroom Workstation**  
**Donations**

**In partnership with Centre for Thriving Places**

Through an interactive game and discussion, we'll explore how different ways of making decisions can achieve benefits for people, place and planet. Using housing and retrofit as an example of a 'thriving places' approach, we'll be stepping outside of rigid 'policy areas' to look at how using people and place as a starting point can help us imagine – and get on with – better ways of making local decisions.



## JOYCELYN LONGDON: NATURAL CONNECTION



Wed 21 May | 7:30 – 9pm  
Workstation – Creative Lounge | £7 / £5

*Natural Connection*, the new book from University of Cambridge environmental justice, AI and bioacoustics researcher Joycelyn Longdon, illuminates the wondrous awe of the natural world and reveals how marginalised communities and ancient wisdom help us create a sustainable mindset and future for generations to come. Join Joycelyn and special guests, as they celebrate the histories and extraordinary acts of ordinary people who have paved the way for today's environmental change.



# we're telling stories of resistance and hope.

At Now Then, we're modelling a different kind of journalism – one that plays an active role in building the better world we so desperately need.

We're using our platform and our storytelling to explore the transition to a just society and a liveable planet, asking how exactly we'll get there and what that means for our city of Sheffield.

We're uncovering alternative futures and exciting opportunities for systems change – from food, housing, and energy to decision-making, democracy, and economics – at the same time celebrating and raising up the people resisting present-day systems of oppression.

**But we can only do this with your help.**

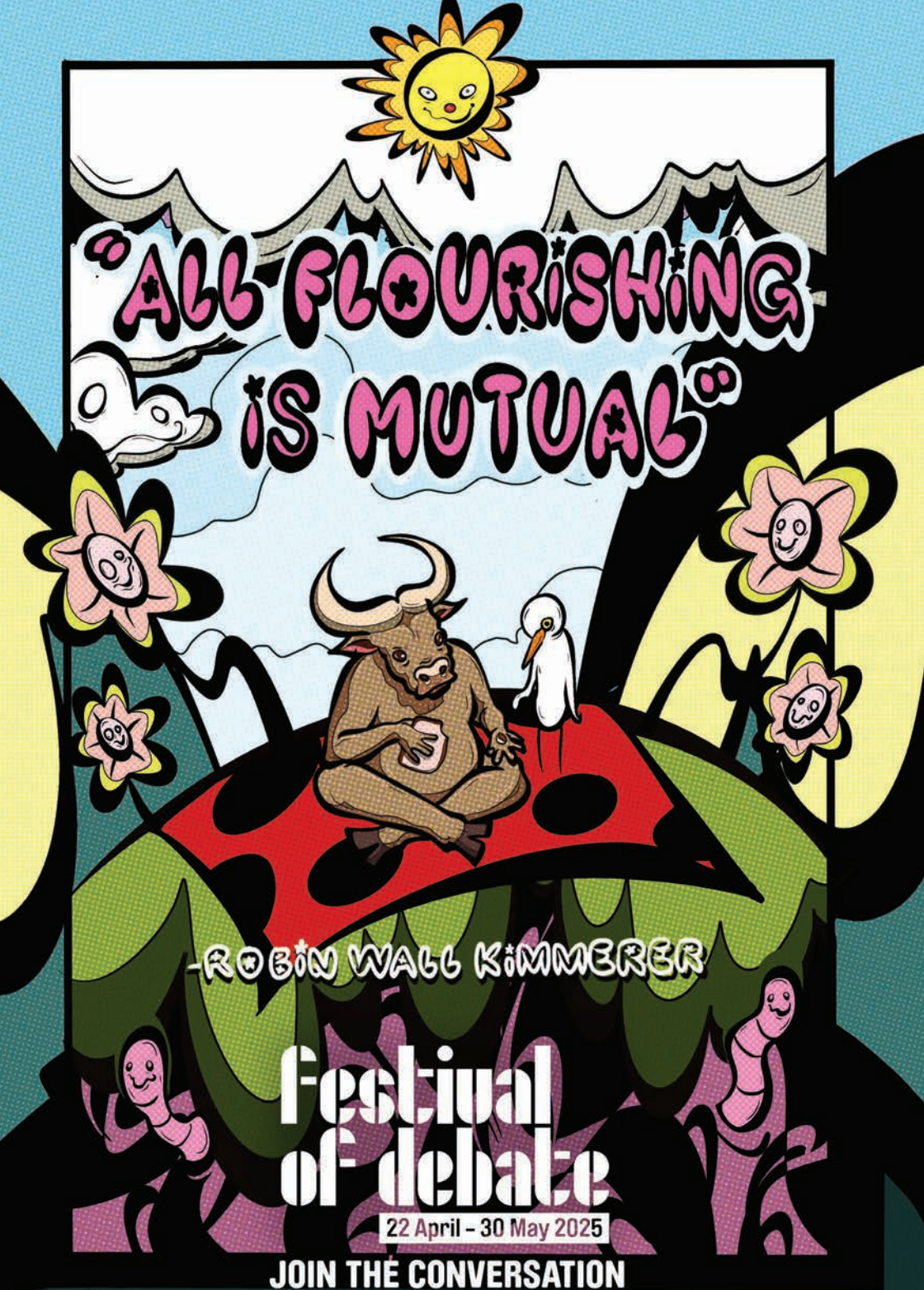
Unlike most media, we're not owned by billionaires – we're hosted by the not-for-profit, worker-owned social enterprise Opus, which also coordinates the Festival of Debate.

Support us for the cost of a pint, a streaming subscription or an hour's wage.

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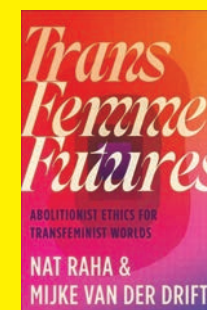
## NAT RAHA & MIJKE VAN DER DRIFT

### TRANS FEMME FUTURES

Wed 21 May | 7 - 8:30pm |  
Soft Ground | £5 / Donations



Nat Raha and Mijke van der Drift's new book *Trans Femme Futures* envisions the future through everyday actions that revolutionise our lives. At this event, they'll discuss struggles around trans healthcare, the need for collectives over institutions, the importance of mutual care, and trans feminism as abolition. The authors show how social change can be achieved through transformative practices that allow queer life to thrive in a time of climate, health, political and economic crises.



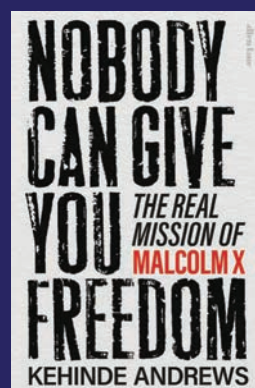
## KEHINDE ANDREWS

### NOBODY CAN GIVE YOU FREEDOM



Thu 22 May | 7 - 8:30pm  
Pennine Lecture Theatre | £14 / £10

Malcolm X is a titanic figure in political history, but also one of the most misunderstood. Kehinde Andrews, the UK's first professor of Black Studies, argues that in a world shaken by decades of injustice and racism, Malcolm's political mission is more urgent than ever. In his new book *Nobody Can Give You Freedom*, Kehinde reveals the real revolutionary programme of a man who, if he were alive today, would tell us to overturn this wicked system for good. Join us for an in-conversation with Kehinde, followed by a panel featuring local anti-racist activists.



### THE POVERTY TRUTH COMMISSION: "THE SYSTEM"

Thu 22 May | 4:30 - 6pm  
Com.Unity, Westfield Centre | Donations

In partnership with Sheffield Poverty Truth Commission

Sheffield's Poverty Truth Commission has been meeting for over a year, listening to the stories of local people and their experiences of poverty. "The system" is a theme that comes up time and time again. In this event we'll explore what it is and whether it works. Hear local people share stories and have your say, with a panel facilitated by Ryan Wileman (Salvation Army), Andy Freeman and Zara Makinta (Space to Breathe).



### PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY AS A TOOL FOR SYSTEM CHANGE

Thu 22 May | 6:30 - 8pm  
City of Sanctuary Donations

In partnership with Cooperation Sheffield

In this exciting session we'll introduce you to the work of Cooperation Sheffield. We are a recently formed participatory democracy movement working to rebuild democracy from the ground up, whilst fostering a solidarity economy in the city. Learn about the principles, strategy, and radical roots of our movement, our use of people's assemblies as democratic tools, and how you can get involved in the work we are doing right now.



### TRIBE TALKS X THE ODE TO PARTITION

Fri 23 May | 7 - 8:30pm  
Workstation - Creative Lounge | £5 / Donations

In partnership with Tribe Arts

For the first time in Sheffield, award-winning theatre company Tribe Arts bring their flagship participatory format *Tribe Talks* to Festival of Debate. Using the partition of India and its historic impact as a backdrop, this event, which includes a screening of long-form spoken word film *The Ode to Partition*, will unpack the realities and hard truths of racism and Britishness in what is set to be a lively conversation.



## REVOLUTION OF THE IMAGINATION: LETS PAINT OUR FUTURE

Sun 25 May | 3 – 6pm  
Venue TBC | Suggested donation £10 / £5

In partnership with ANTIPARTY

Revolution of the Imagination was the theme of last year's Boomtown Festival alongside the slogan "Bang Goes Normal", blowing up our status quo and fuelling systems change through sheer imagination. As Boomtown and ANTIPARTY share the core values of 'Connection', 'Creativity' and 'Community' with Boomtown's added 'Celebration', this event promises to make a festival of the everyday. Let's celebrate life and paint our ideal shared future together using our collective imagination.



## SHEFFIELD CITY GOALS: EXPLORING DRAFT BLUEPRINTS

Tue 27 May | 5:30 – 9pm  
Workstation – Creative Lounge | Donations

In partnership with Sheffield City Goals

Explore Sheffield's future with the next phase of our City Goals. This participatory session examines early proposals to transform the 18 Goals across six stories into tangible action. Join neighbourhood conversations, shape relatable progress metrics, empower young leaders, and assess innovative investment options to drive change. Experience how collaborative, city-wide, and neighbourhood-deep efforts unite our community to create a more connected, transformative Sheffield for 2035. Doors open 5pm.



## SOCIAL ENTERPRISING THE TRANSITIONS AHEAD: FILM AND Q&A

Wed 28 May | 5:30 – 7:15pm  
Showroom Workstation Donations

In partnership with Sheffield Social Enterprise Network

Join us for a screening of this powerful documentary exploring how Sheffield's social enterprises are furthering systemic change in response to the interconnected social, economic, and environmental challenges of our time. This film, followed by a Q&A, will showcase the innovative work of social entrepreneurs across the city – those pioneering inclusive employment, circular economies, and community-led solutions that challenge traditional economic narratives and offer a vision for a fairer, more sustainable future.



## EXPLORING COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP

Wed 28 May | 6 – 8pm  
Soft Ground | Donations

In partnership with Sheffield Community Land Trust

What would a community-owned future look like in Sheffield? And what resources, experiences and people will help get us there? Hosted by Sheffield Community Land Trust, this workshop will explore what needs community ownership can meet and look at local perspectives and questions around its benefits and challenges. We will ask how we can collectively create new affordable spaces to live and work that facilitate local wealth-building and long-term placemaking. Doors open 5:30pm.



## REBIRTH OF MOTHER EARTH: TO ACT OR NOT TO ACT?

Fri 30 May | 6 – 8pm  
Utopia Theatre | Donations

In partnership with Utopia Community Ensemble

This newly-devised performance from the Utopia Community Ensemble highlights the untold stories of ordinary 'champions' around the world who are creating change in their local environments and communities. Drawing on insights from the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the show will offer inspiration and demonstrate how the determination and actions of individuals can create lasting change for all humanity.



Date	Title	Event type
Tue 22 Apr	Sheffield City Goals: Next Steps	Workshop
Thu 24 Apr	Challenging Neoliberalism in Early Childhood Education	Workshop
Thu 24 Apr	<b>John Harris: Maybe I'm Amazed</b>	In conversation
Fri 25 Apr	<b>In Conversation with Kate Raworth and Indy Johar</b>	In conversation
Sun 27 Apr	Imagining a World Without Fossil Fuels	Workshop
Mon 28 Apr	Public Finance Black Hole – The Big Lie	Discussion
Tue 29 Apr	<b>Jason Hickel: Degrowth – A 21st Century Revolution</b>	In conversation
Wed 30 Apr	What if Heart of the City Was Replicated in Castlegate?	Conference
Wed 30 Apr	Should Museums Return Objects?	Workshop
Thu 1 May	<b>Lanre Bakare: We Were There</b>	In conversation
Thu 1 May	Catcalls of Sheffield: How Many Testimonies Do We Need?	Discussion
Tue 6 May	Activism Across Borders	Panel / Q&A
Wed 7 May	Purpose – A Wellbeing Economies Film	Film screening
Thu 8 May	Assisted Dying: Panel Discussion	Panel discussion
Thu 8 May	<b>Shon Faye: Love in Exile</b>	In conversation
Thu 8 May	Framed: The Demonisation of Disability	Online
Fri 9 May	Free Party: A Folk History – Film Screening & Panel	Film screening
Sat 10 May	Offers & Asks: Sharing, Abundance & Community	Workshop
Sat 10 May	Working Well: Avoid Burnout and Create Balance and Joy	Workshop
Sat 10 May	Building Worker Power: Troubleshooting Union Organising	Workshop
Tue 13 May	Exploring Frontiers: A Rights of Nature Just Transition	Workshops
Wed 14 May	Sharing Stories for More Inclusive Ageing	Performances
Wed 14 May	Conversations that Disrupt Division & Build Democracy	Workshop
Wed 14 May	Faith, Climate Justice and Global Solidarity	Online
Thu 15 May	Creating Resilient Places Through the Built and Natural Environment	Forum

Date	Title	Event type
Thu 15 May	<b>All The People</b>	Party
Fri 16 May	Touretteshero's Radical Reading Group	Reading group
Fri 16 May	<b>Laura Bates: The New Age of Sexism</b>	In conversation
Sat 17 May	Community Ownership Walkshop	Walk
Sat 17 May	Your Voice, Your Vision: Co-Designing SHSC's Future	Workshop
Sat 17 May	<b>Jeremy Corbyn: Monstrous Anger of the Guns</b>	In conversation
Sat 17 May	Why Are Some Refugees Erased? Chechen Diaspora's Story	Discussion / Workshop
Sat 17 May	FoD x Gut Level club night, ft. Plantainchips & Savanna Boys	Club night
Mon 19 May	<b>Andy Burnham &amp; Steve Rotherham: Head North</b>	In conversation
Tue 20 May	Public Research for Public Good: Closing the Health Gap	Panel discussion
Tue 20 May	Listening for Change: The Art of Storytelling	Workshop
Tue 20 May	Who Controls the Money? Local Wealth & Power To Decide	Panel discussion
Wed 21 May	<b>Nat Raha &amp; Mijke van Der Drift: Trans Femme Futures</b>	In conversation
Wed 21 May	<b>Joycelyn Longdon: Natural Connection</b>	In conversation
Wed 21 May	Reassembling Our Climate Future: What's Next?	Workshop
Thu 22 May	Collaborative Policy Making for Thriving Places	Discussion / Game
Thu 22 May	The Poverty Truth Commission: "The System"	Panel / Q&A
Thu 22 May	Participatory Democracy as a Tool for System Change	Interactive panel discussion
Thu 22 May	<b>Kehinde Andrews: Nobody Can Give You Freedom</b>	In conversation
Fri 23 May	Tribe Talks x The Ode To Partition	Film screening / conversation
Sun 25 May	Revolution of the Imagination: Let's Paint Our Future	Workshop
Tue 27 May	Sheffield City Goals: Exploring Draft Blueprints	Workshop
Wed 28 May	Exploring Community Ownership Workshop	Workshop
Wed 28 May	Social Enterprising the Transitions Ahead – Film & Q&A	Film screening
Fri 30 May	Rebirth of Mother Earth: To Act or Not To Act?	Performance

“ The ultimate, hidden truth of the world is that it is something that we make, and could just as easily make differently ”

DAVID GRAEBER



fostering  
with Sheffield



“ I’m learning not to doubt myself anymore ”

Sheffield child looked after

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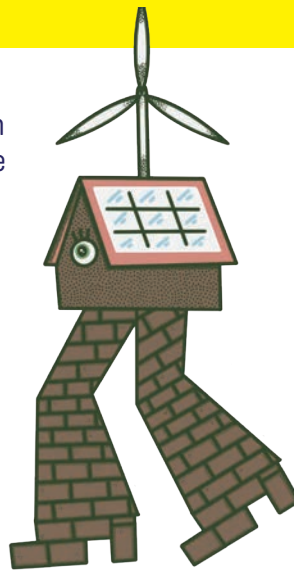
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We've tried to make this venue guide as accurate as possible with the information available to us, but on our website you'll find more specific information about venues, as well as more details about what to expect at our events e.g. timetables. Unreserved seating will generally be available as standard at events, but if you'd like us to reserve a seat for you or you have specific requirements please get in touch.

You can contact us at [access@festivalofdebate.com](mailto:access@festivalofdebate.com) if you have any access requirements or additional needs – for example knowing how to get to and from a venue or bringing someone to support you at the event – or if you have any other questions about the accessibility of an event or venue.



Please visit [www.festivalofdebate.com](http://www.festivalofdebate.com) for more detailed and up-to-date accessibility information about our venues and events.

**ACCESSIBILITY KEY**



**Level Access and Automatic Doors** – Level access to entrance, sensor or push pad-operated automatic doors (or no doors), space for wheelchair (75cm).



**Access by ramps, slopes and/or manual doors** – Easy/moderate ramp/slope with manual or automatic doors at entrance or inside venue. Space for wheelchair (75cm).



**WC Accessible** – Step-free access to accessible toilets, with grab rails, drop-down rails and space for wheelchair (75cm).



**Parking 3\*** – Venue has its own car park.



**Parking 2\*** – Blue badge on-street parking, or venue can provide parking to blue badge holders with prior warning.



**Parking 1\*** – Public car park within 200m of venue.

**BROOMHALL COMMUNITY CENTRE**

BROOMSPRING LN, S10 2FD



**CANTOR LECTURE THEATRE**

CANTOR BUILDING, SHEFFIELD HALLAM UNIVERSITY, 153 ARUNDEL ST, S1 2NU



**CENTRAL UNITED REFORMED CHURCH**

60 NORFOLK ST, S1 2JB



**THE CIRCLE**

33 ROCKINGHAM LN, S1 4FW



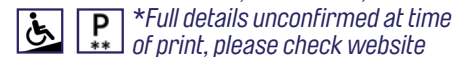
**CITY OF SANCTUARY**

37-39 CHAPEL WALK, S1 2PD



**COM.UNITY CENTRE\***

32 WESTFIELD CENTRE, WESTFIELD, S20 8ND



**CRUCIBLE THEATRE (ADELPHI ROOM)**

55 NORFOLK ST, S1 1DA



**CUBO**

38 CARVER ST, S1 4FS



**DEPARTMENT (FORMERLY KOMMUNE)**

CASTLE HOUSE, ANGEL ST, S3 8LS



**THE DIAMOND, UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD**

32 LEAVYGREAVE RD, S3 7RD



**DOROTHY FLEMING LECTURE THEATRE**

CHARLES STREET BUILDING, SHEFFIELD HALLAM UNIVERSITY, S1 2NE



**GREEN ESTATE**

SHEFFIELD MANOR LODGE, 197 MANOR LN, S2 1UJ



**GUT LEVEL**

32-34 CHAPEL WALK, S1 2PD



**THE LEADMILL**

6 LEADMILL RD, S1 4SE



**OCTAGON CENTRE**

UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD, CLARKSON ST S10 2TQ



**PENNINE LECTURE THEATRE**

OWEN BUILDING, SHEFFIELD HALLAM UNIVERSITY, HALLAM SQUARE, S1 2LX



**SHOWROOM WORKSTATION**

15 PATERNOSTER ROW, S1 2BX



**SOFT GROUND**

37-41 THE MOOR, S1 4PF



**UTOPIA THEATRE\***

11 ROCKINGHAM GATE, S1 4JD



**THE WAVE**

UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD, 2 WHITHAM RD, S10 2AH



**WESTON PARK MUSEUM**

WESTERN BANK, MUSHROOM LN, S10 2TP





The Opus team is deeply grateful to all of the communities, citizens, organisations and generations of thinkers from across the world, without whom this work would not be possible. A special thanks to our supporters, partners, funders, and to Lisa O'Hara for the amazing artwork; alongside the countless hours of work from many, many people to bring this together.

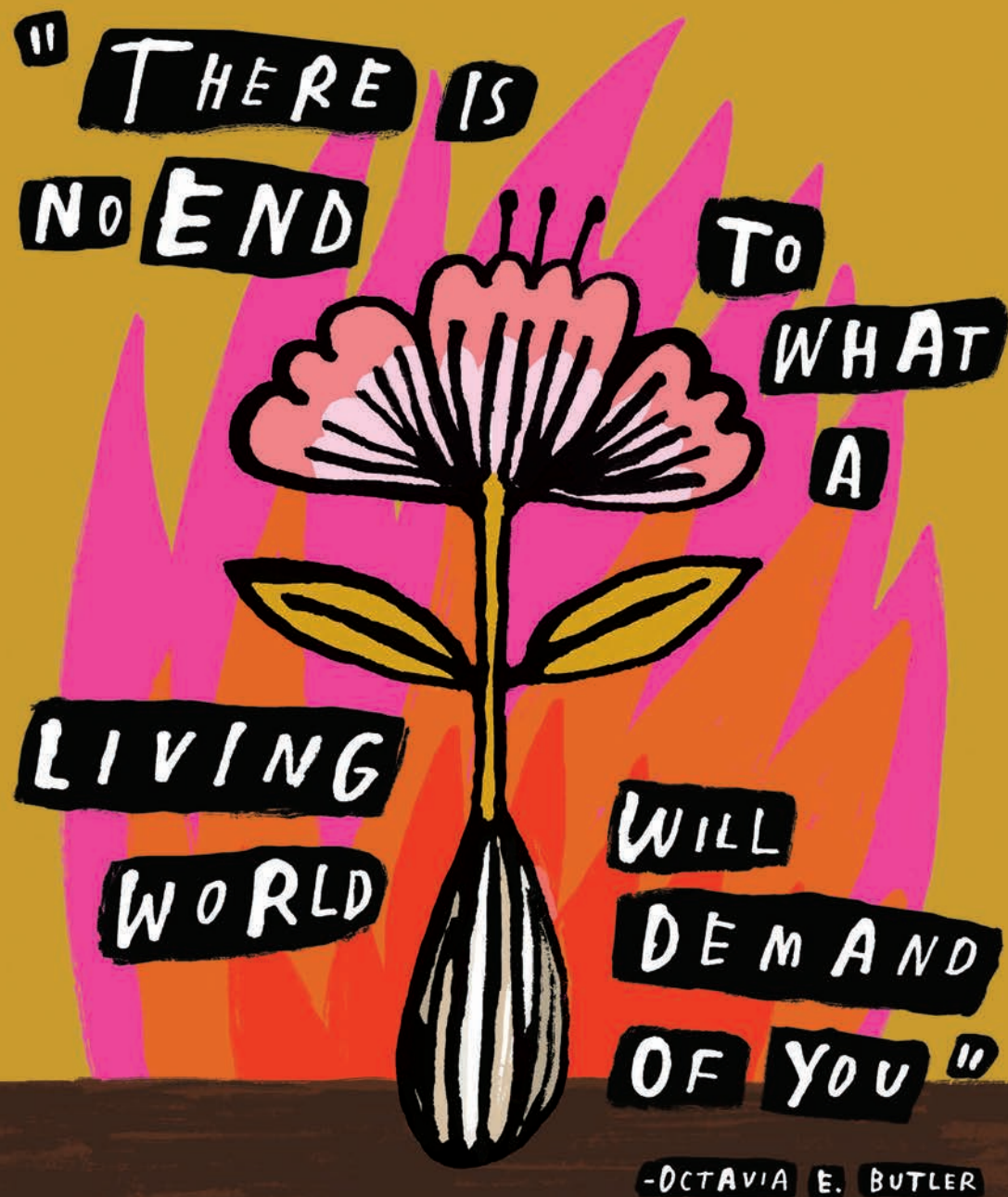


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Opus works to create and support responses to achieve urgent systemic change.

We do this by telling stories, bringing people together and demonstrating proofs of possibility.

Opus is a worker-owned social enterprise with the aim of finding systemic responses to society's most complex problems. We're based in Sheffield, northern England. Since 2008 we've hosted projects in the city that further the conversation around issues like poverty, inequality and climate breakdown.

Our work recognises that the problems faced by our city, the UK and the wider world are complex and intersecting.

We can't solve these problems one at a time – that's why we're involved in dozens of different projects seeking to make change in areas such as climate, poverty and marginalisation.

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