

## ‘Social Exclusion and Urban Youth Spiritualities’ – Graffiti Art Project 2012



My current work (2009-2012) as a Research Fellow in Urban Theology at the University of Birmingham explores the impact that the experience of social exclusion has on the ways in which unemployed young men on an urban housing estate in Birmingham think and talk about identity, meaning and spirituality.

The project is intended to facilitate social inclusion, to find ways of enabling socially excluded young men to express their own ideas, hopes and spiritualities and to resource the work of faith and community groups working alongside similar groups of young adults in different urban contexts. Since I began my fieldwork on the Bromford estate in east Birmingham in November 2010 I have learned and written about the complexity of social exclusion and the significance of spirituality amongst young unemployed men. During fieldwork it has become clear that young men on the estate express

themselves articulately through rap music and graffiti art. With this in mind I have established a relationship with a Birmingham based Muslim graffiti artist Mohammed ‘aerosol’ Ali who has a great deal of experience working alongside socially excluded Muslim, White and Black youth on graffiti art/mural projects. Following my introduction the Theology and Religion Department are now working with Mohammed as an ‘artist in residence’.

The ‘Bromford Dreams’ graffiti spirituality project has now drawn to a close, but this is not the end of the story. As [the ‘Bromford Dreams’ images](http://www.flickr.com/photos/chrisshannahan/) (<http://www.flickr.com/photos/chrisshannahan/>) imply this is a story that needs to be shared - and it will be....The challenging images, ideas and questions of young men from one of the UK’s most socially excluded estates will be brought to the University of Birmingham in a few weeks time before challenging others in Birmingham city centre and visitors to the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery - Through the passion and commitment of the Worth Unlimited youth organisation and the skill of the artist Mohammed Ali young men who are more often written about and written off are beginning to raise their voice.

Adobe Flash Player or QuickTime is required for video playback. [Get the latest Flash Player](#) [Get the latest version of QuickTime](#)

- [video transcript \(/accessibility/transcripts/artsandlaw/ptr/bromford-dreams.aspx\)](/accessibility/transcripts/artsandlaw/ptr/bromford-dreams.aspx)

### Bromford Dreams latest

- [The Birmingham Brief: Troubled families or broken in Britain? \(/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2012/06/Troubled-Families-Or-Just-Broke-in-Britain.aspx\)](/news/thebirminghambrief/items/2012/06/Troubled-Families-Or-Just-Broke-in-Britain.aspx)
- [View the BBC West Midlands news report on the Bromford Cube project \(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mz4IjYrABs&NR=1&feature=endscreen\)](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mz4IjYrABs&NR=1&feature=endscreen)
- [BBC news article on the cube project \(http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-birmingham-17043075\)](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-birmingham-17043075)
- [The Free Library article \(http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Estate+gets+graffiti+project.-a0279982254\)](http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Estate+gets+graffiti+project.-a0279982254)
- The project was also featured in the Birmingham Mail on the 15th February
- Podcast: Chris Shannahan on ‘[Social exclusion and urban youth spiritualities](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Audio/news/dr-chris-shannahan-podcast.mp3)’ (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Audio/news/dr-chris-shannahan-podcast.mp3>)
- [Bromford Dreams Facebook group \(https://www.facebook.com/groups/226489937449314/\)](https://www.facebook.com/groups/226489937449314/)
- [Project report for Arts Council England \(/Documents/college-artslaw/ptr/theology/research/bromford-arts-council.pdf\)](/Documents/college-artslaw/ptr/theology/research/bromford-arts-council.pdf)
- [Urban Theology Forum: Bromford Dreams seminar \(/Documents/college-artslaw/ptr/theology/research/Bromford-Dreams-Seminar-Powerpoint.ppt\)](/Documents/college-artslaw/ptr/theology/research/Bromford-Dreams-Seminar-Powerpoint.ppt)
- [Urban Theology Forum: Life of a young person in Bromford \(/Documents/college-artslaw/ptr/theology/research/Life-of-Young-Person-in-Bromford.ppt\)](/Documents/college-artslaw/ptr/theology/research/Life-of-Young-Person-in-Bromford.ppt)

### The people

- [Dr Chris Shannahan’ \(/staff/profiles/tr/shannahan-chris.aspx\)](/staff/profiles/tr/shannahan-chris.aspx) – Research Fellow in Urban Theology
- [Mohammed ‘aerosol’ Ali’s web site \(http://www.aerosolarabic.com/v2/index.php\)](http://www.aerosolarabic.com/v2/index.php) shows a number of examples of his work. Mohammed’s work also figures on the School of Philosophy, Theology and Religion web pages under the heading ‘[Diverse Birmingham](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/ptr/about/diverse-birmingham.aspx)’ (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/ptr/about/diverse-birmingham.aspx>).
- [Worth Unlimited \(http://www.worthunlimited.co.uk/index.html\)](http://www.worthunlimited.co.uk/index.html)

### Music

Performed by Tyronne:

- [Part ov my life \(http://soundcloud.com/tek90121/part-ov-my-life-1\)](http://soundcloud.com/tek90121/part-ov-my-life-1)
- [Wot’s going on? \(http://soundcloud.com/tek90121/wots-goin-on-tek-9\)](http://soundcloud.com/tek90121/wots-goin-on-tek-9)
- [Move ya body \(http://soundcloud.com/tek90121/move-ya-body-tek-9\)](http://soundcloud.com/tek90121/move-ya-body-tek-9)

## Photography

[Social Exclusion photoset on flickr \(http://www.flickr.com/photos/chrisshannahan/sets/72157626696065552/show/\)](http://www.flickr.com/photos/chrisshannahan/sets/72157626696065552/show/)

[Bromford Dreams Graffiti Art project photoset on flickr \(http://www.flickr.com/photos/chrisshannahan/sets/72157629401165041/show/\)](http://www.flickr.com/photos/chrisshannahan/sets/72157629401165041/show/)

[The Bromford Dreams Cube on campus \(http://www.flickr.com/photos/artsatbirmingham/sets/72157629597014955/\)](http://www.flickr.com/photos/artsatbirmingham/sets/72157629597014955/)

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