



St.  
**Augustine's**  
Centre

## Intro

Welcome to the St Augustine's Global Fashion Project – you are about to see outfits that are made and inspired by the stories of the people in this show.

If you don't know us, St Augustine's Centre is a refugee centre just up the road.

One of the things we do, is run a 'Free Shop' in the cellar – its full of donated clothes and shoes that people can take. The outfits you are about to see have been created and upcycled from second hand clothes gathered from our FreeShop.

We love to breathe new life into things that feel useless.

Now, as each of our performers come on stage, I'll be speaking their words, written by them, so they can be free to move. Please show your appreciation and support by making as much noise as possible... let's go!

## 1. Sofyane

A-hlan, my name is Sofyane.

Today marks a truly special day for me. After exactly a year of seeking asylum and safety in the UK, I heard yesterday that I have been granted the right to live in this country! Finally I can be safe and protected.

My journey in the last year was about more than just finding refuge - it's also been about discovering peace, embracing my true self and healing from past traumas.

In creating this outfit, I aimed to transcend the traditional extremes of femininity and masculinity often seen in my Moroccan heritage.

Inspired by a traditional North African garment; it represents a dream I have long held - clothing I wished to wear at celebrations back home, but felt constrained by societal norms due to my gender expression.

Today I feel reborn, and I want to proudly present my own version, a blend of culture and identity that feels authentically me. This process has been liberating; it's given voice to the

silenced parts of myself and helped me heal from mental challenges imposed by restrictive gender rules and norms that try to box us in.

We seek only the freedom to express ourselves and our art without judgement or boundaries. There is no harm in being who we are. Let us spread peace, love and be our true selves fully and unapologetically.

## 2. Stacy

"Bonzour - my name is Stacy, and I'm from the small island of Mauritius.

I love dancing, though sadly I haven't put a foot on a stage for three years – until now!

Being involved in the Fashion Project has helped me break that fear of dancing again and to walk on a stage with all eyes on me – this time without feeling judged.

The music I'm moving to now is my own; I wrote it and sing it, and it's based on a traditional rhythm called Sega.

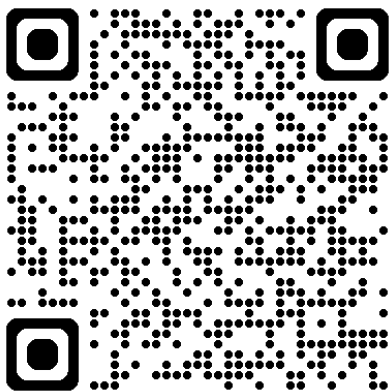
My dress represents the Creole community on my tropical island; it's a Sega dance costume which we wear to celebrate the memory of our ancestors.

I found the process of making this dress, made me realise that whatever you have been through, inside you can still find your place and happiness. I finally feel safe now, which is something I hadn't felt in a long time.

Today, I feel powerful as a woman and determined to reach my goals.

My message to everyone is: Don't ever give up!

If you want to hear more of Stacey's music and see her music video, please, after the show, use the QR code below.



### **3. (Tiara)**

Stacey's second outfit, is modelled here by 10 year old Tiara, and is inspired by her dreams of becoming a bright light, like Rihanna's song 'Diamonds.'

### **4. Julio**

There will be no music for this garment designed and created by Julio.

Julio is deaf and doesn't hear music or clapping - so we will appreciate Julios work how he does - visually. So please celebrate by raising your arms and wave your hands to show your support.

Ola! My name is Julio and I'm from El Salvadore. I love art and sport; and I play with the Halifax Panthers Wheelchair Rugby team.

Making this jacket has taught me a different approach to my own artwork and I'm excited to redesign more garments and experiment more with colours. Researching Artists at college, I realised that the pattern on my jacket resembles a cubist style like Picasso; who also spoke Spanish like me! You can see the logo on my T-shirt is inspired by lip-speaking in Spanish and my journey of learning British Sign Language more recently.

Throughout this project I've felt happy and made new friends. What an amazing diversity there is in this group.

### **5. Besara**

Përshëndetje! My name is Besara, and I'm from Albania.

When I started this project, I just picked up pieces of fabric and couldn't imagine how I would make a dress. But with each hour of practice on the sewing machine, I was soon creating one outfit after another. I felt like every piece of fabric was calling out to me, saying, 'Take me, cut me up, and make me into something beautiful.'

So I made five outfits! But I've chosen to wear this one, made from curtain fabric because when I wear it I feel like a princess. My journey here hasn't been easy, with uncertain health and feelings of great loss from leaving my home country - to me, this is the deep blue in this material.

But then the big, bold flowers signify my arrival here and the beauty and flashes of happiness I have found.

The process of designing clothes in the way we want, has made me think about life. Just like fashion, life starts with an idea, and then we take it step by step. One foot in front of

the other. It's been a bit like a dance; dancing and singing with one another, and I'm so proud of everything I've made.

## **6. Naghmeh**

"Salam, I'm Naghmeh, from Iran. As a mother, this project has meant a lot to me as I build a new life with my family here in Halifax.

My dress is a blend of painting and fabric, bringing together my love for art and storytelling. Back in Iran, I was an art teacher, so painting has always been a part of my life. The images in this dress tell traditional Iranian folk stories. I wanted to share the beauty of Iranian paintings - especially the flowers and birds. The Simorgh is a legendary Iranian bird that is a sign of wisdom and truth. His nest is located high on a mountain. Most of all for me, it means the freedom of the people of my land, and the victory of good over evil.

This project has given me a space to be myself. In these moments, I can just be Naghmeh – no labels, no status, just me.

Thank you for being here, and I hope you enjoy seeing a little bit of my story through this dress and my tail feathers.

## **7. Zahra**

I am Zahra, also from Iran.

I was born in Persepolis and my outfit is inspired by designs from 2500 years ago; a kind of Iranian Paisley. The golden shoulder is a sign of hope and the victory of light over darkness. The people sewed into the border of my dress are women. They are free, holding hands, united in their collective strength.

It was 2 years ago that Mahsa Amini was killed by the Iranian regime for not complying with modesty laws. Since then, many protests have happened in Iran, but the regime continues to target women like me. I hope one day all women in my country will be safe and free to choose the life they want.

The song that I have chosen, talks about all women and men living in freedom. Every single lyric in this song is taken from the voices of women though the singer of this song has since been arrested for creating it.

Every time I hear this song I cry. I am not crying because we are weak, my tears are for all the powerful women in the world. You. You. You. Me, all of us.

#Woman\_life\_freedom

## **8. Melvina**

Kusheh! my name is Melvina and I arrived in the UK nine months ago. I now live in Bradford with my 6-month-old daughter.

The Fashion Project has given me the opportunity to promote my beautiful birthplace: Sierra Leone in West Africa. Have you been? It's full of amazing beaches.

My red dress is a reminder of my culture and its brave people.

Red is the colour of the political party I support back home. Seashells and feathers are used in traditional ceremonies and social gatherings. All this reminds me of the special place I left and gives me strength to embrace my new life in the UK.

I am determined to make a good life for my daughter, and give her all the opportunities I can. I hope to work with children and the elderly in the future. Thank you for being here and for sharing in this celebration of culture, strength, and new beginnings.

## **9. Salma**

Asslamoalaikum, my name is Salma, and I'm from Pakistan. I've always been passionate about fashion and completed a dressmaking course back home, but I always wanted to learn more about global design and culture. To me, fashion has no boundaries of culture or country. My family back home are not rich, so I thought it would remain just a dream, but joining St. Augustine's Fashion Project has changed that. Here, I've met people from all over the world.

The gown I'm wearing is a symbol of the Palestinian people with added colours to reflect sorrow, grief, darkness and blood. But the other side is a white colour showing a bright day of hope, and the bird is for peace and safety.

Palestinian people are victims of a genocide right now. They do not deserve this cruelty. Human rights are being eroded and the world is watching. So I stand strong in this dress as a symbol of truth. People of Palestine, and all victims of persecution across the world - we are with you. And we will not stop. We will raise our voices on every platform we can. Including here, right now.

## **10. Hazel**

"Dumelang, I'm Hazel from Botswana, and I'm excited to be here tonight. As part of the trans community, my designs are deeply personal, reflecting my journey toward self-

acceptance, appreciation, and finding sanctuary in my own body and mind whilst seeking asylum in the UK.

Let me tell you a little about my creations:

First, there's the \*'Timbuktu Toga.'\* It represents the freedom I've found – the wisdom and bravery it took to trust my own decisions that led me here.

Then there's the \*'Foumban Body Snatcher.'\* which is inspired by the Foumban tribal pattern from 1909, mixed with the Versace logo as an act of reclamation in a decolonial context. This piece celebrates my roots, my body, and my identity. It's a reminder of the work I've put in to feel at home in my own skin. I'm at peace now, and I celebrate my body.

I'm proud of what I've created, and I hope my work speaks to the importance of self-acceptance and personal growth. Thank you for sharing this moment with me.

## **11. Hindu**

Oli otya! I'm Hindu and I come from the Pearl of Africa: Uganda.

My outfit proudly shouts out my heritage, blending traditional East African with a touch of Calderdale. I've incorporated pearls to represent Uganda, black for Africa, and red for brotherhood and togetherness. The flowers in my design are inspired by the ones I've seen in the gardens at St. Augustine's, reminding me of how much English people love their gardens.

My appreciation goes to the fashion team. I was not a designer when I started—my background is in makeup artistry and modelling — but this project has built my confidence and taught me how to sew and create my own outfits. I've loved working with everyone.

God bless you all.

## **12. Virginia**

Ola! My name is Virginia, and I'm from Nicaragua.

Through my fashion design I have tried to reinvent my identity as a human being. Can you see the volcano I've made?

When I left my country to protect my husband and daughter's lives, I felt very unconnected - I lost my spark. I was physically in this country, but my mind was trapped in a broken place I find difficult to describe.

Starting the Fashion Project, which at first felt like a simple coincidence of being around at the time, became something more important. I started to remember my colours, my narrative, my dreams, my identity. I am building myself again with every stitch. I am dressing myself with new dreams, a new culture, new friends, and a new me!

I wake up feeling proud now, like the volcanic eruption embroidered on the back of my shirt! Did you know there are 50 volcanoes in Nicaragua, and 7 of these are currently active. They can be both fierce and tranquil at the same time. Thank you everyone!

### **13. Sabbah**

Our stunning finale dress was designed by Sally who has led this project, and made by Sabbah, a master tailor from Kurdistan seeking asylum in Halifax. They collaborated, using techniques that were new to Sabbah. It was also a great opportunity for him to learn English words that are used in the fashion trade, and for Sally to learn about Kurdish tailoring techniques and this incredible shoulder style!

The arms of the dress feature individual embroidery pieces that the whole group worked on, with words like community, kindness, togetherness and synchronicity.

Ultimately this dress represents a coming together of many cultures.

### **Sabbah**

Let's meet Sabbah, whose volunteering at St Augustine's was the inspiration for this whole project!

Hello - my name is Sabbah and I am from Kurdistan.

I spent 18 years sewing clothes in my hometown, and have been in England for more than 2 years. I had no choice but to flee my homeland. I felt that my life was over, but when I met St. Augustine Centre, things started to improve.

When we are waiting for asylum in the UK and to start a new life, we are stuck. Did you know we're not allowed to work?

So, I came to St Augustine's centre to learn English, and then I started volunteering to pass the time in a more useful way. St Augustine's Centre is a beautiful mix of many different people. Everything we do there is inspired by the combination of colours and culture and the music of life and freedom.

All the things that make us human.

The clothes we sew here, are made from recycled fabrics and clothes and that's why we started this project. It's about our love for Mother earth, and art without borders, made from old and unusable clothes.

Let's make them live them again.

### **Ending**

Let's bring on all our incredible performers one last time.

And give thanks to the project team leads: Sally, Duncan, Vic, Sabbah, Eve and Mani!