

Platanos College News

Friday 14th September 2018

'Shequality' workshop and Old Vic Theatre trip

On Thursday 13th September, members of the Platanos College **Shequality** Group, a group of pupils with a particular interest in feminism and equal opportunities, went on a trip to the Old Vic Theatre for two linked events. Firstly, they watched 'Sylvia,' a cutting edge hip-hop and soul musical which celebrated the life of the famous suffragette, Sylvia Pankhurst, and her personal and political struggles that tore her family apart.

'It was amazing and captured my attention right from the start. I love plays like this because they show you what the world is really like.' – **Mikhi Fearon**



Mikhi loves theatre trips and has been saving his tickets over the last 6 months

After the show, pupils returned to the auditorium to take part in a discussion with Helen Pankhurst, women's rights activist and campaigner, great-granddaughter of Emmeline and granddaughter of Sylvia. Pupils actively participated in a workshop to discuss continuity and change in women's lives over the last one hundred years since the first women in Britain were given the vote.

'Despite huge progress, the fight for equality continues.'

Doctor Pankhurst drew from her recently published book *'Deeds Not Words: The Story of Women's Rights, Then and Now'* to focus on how much women's lives have changed in a century and how far she believes we still have to go. She told our pupils, 'The Suffragette's story is about collective sisterhood. It's about people brought together across religious backgrounds, political persuasions and orientations. It's also a story about agency; it's about a few women saying enough is enough. You can have a role and ambition outside expectation.'

The pupils found Dr Pankhurst's talk fascinating. This led to a Q&A section where one of our group took the opportunity to take the floor and ask Dr Pankhurst her own question.

Precious N'Gbale, Year 10, said: 'As a young feminist, to what extent do I need to raise awareness amongst my peers about gender and equality?'

Dr Pankhurst: 'There have always been dinosaurs but there are now so many people who believe it's up to you to choose your own path. Progress can sometimes be like an elastic band. You think you've moved on but when times get tough the elastic pulls you right back again. Right now, you can't afford to sit on the fence. We need activism now more than ever.'

This was a highly valuable experience for our young people, both the boys and the girls, with many opening up to ideas about gender roles, power and politics.

Feedback from pupils:

'Trips like this are important. As Drama pupils you get to see professional acting to work towards and different creative styles to consider.' – **Mara Costa**

'It was history with a twist. Theatre is a great way of explaining important issues and history to people in a form they'll want to listen to.' – **Mia Adeoboye**

'I got to see confident, powerful women so that's important because it makes me feel inspired to want to be like them.' - **Jania Christie**

