

International Nursery Songs Project

~ a Song Box initiative for York ~

It is too easy to label people into crude stereotypes. How frustrating is it to be dismissed with a single derisory label; “Women!”, or “Men!”, or by your race, religion, background or culture. Each of us is a unique individual with different strengths, weaknesses, ideas and experience.

In the current climate of heightened mistrust between groups of people it is more important than ever to recognise each other as individuals, not stereotypes, and to build on common values, concerns and interests.

Archbishop Sentamu's recent prayer vigil for peace was a wonderful example of enabling diverse people to share a common concern. I am Jewish and felt great solace in praying with diverse people in the Minster for the common desire for world peace. The experience answered for me the common question “but what can I do?”. Do what you can. An Archbishop can lead prayers. A musical play leader can sing nursery songs.

The idea of the International Nursery Songs Project is to make contact with York residents who have a different cultural heritage to that pervading our Song Box song book. I am inviting anyone with a different cultural heritage to share a nursery song or rhyme from their childhood with me. I hope they will also share a little of what their song means to them and what or who it reminds them of.

I and my staff will gather the songs, rhymes and stories into a teaching resource. There will also be free workshops for the contributors to develop their skills and confidence to share their heritage with others. Next summer we will participate in the YUMI inter cultural festival in York when contributors, with Song Box support, will have the opportunity to share their songs and stories with the public.

I hope that this work will produce personal friendships between people from many of York's minority cultures. Through these positive contacts I hope to encourage people who may feel isolated, excluded or unwelcome to try out the many activities in York that are open to all but not used by all. York City Art Gallery is actively involved in this project as it also wishes to encourage wider use and enjoyment of its services.

The teaching resource produced by the project will be of value to Song Box, YUMI, and local early years settings. Some project participants may go on to develop their involvement by offering to give presentations in early years settings or schools, as has happened successfully with other YUMI projects. This project is being delivered by Song Box and is funded and supported by Arts Action York, YUMI (York Unifying and Multicultural Initiative) and York City Art Gallery.

If you, or anyone you know, would like to be involved in this project please pick up a flier or contact Thea on 01904 634390 or email tjsong_box@yahoo.co.uk.