

ECYC GAZETTE

Anniversary Special!

1977 - 2022

...For your ins and your outs, and your whereabouts!

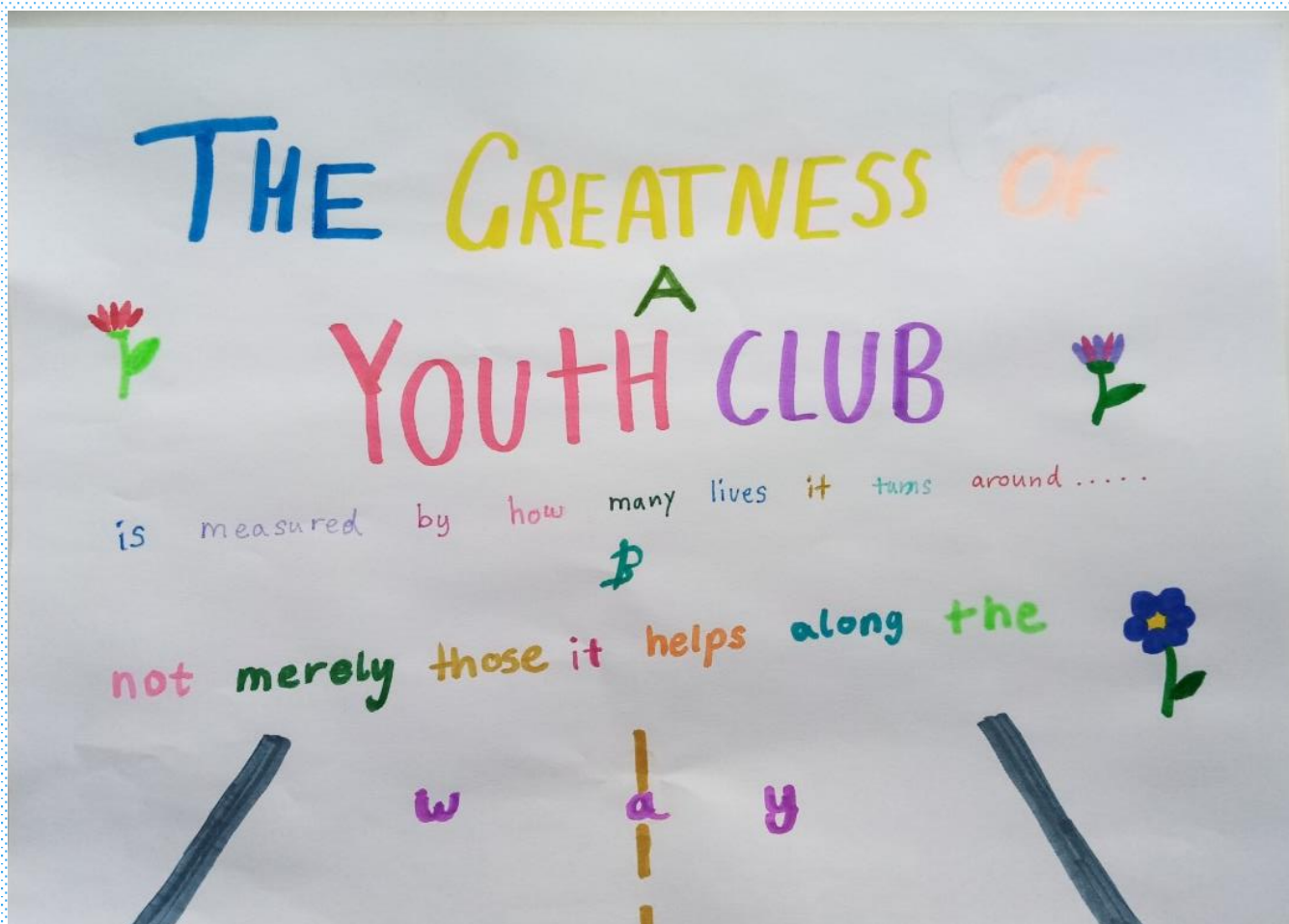
1977 - 2022

Welcome back!

Friends...members....family! We are delighted to bring to you our most ambitious tome yet. Indeed, and in keeping with jubilees and the like, this summer marks 45 years since the founding of our club and we've spared no expense!

Get ready to be stimulated, amazed and inspired more than ever before as we delve through the years, glean from the present and showcase the very best of ECYC!

There's simply too much to include in our contents box this time, so just jump in and, **Enjoy....!!**



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How the wonder begun

Sometime in the mid 70s, amid recessions, abject discontent and the three-day week, was a strip of land in the middle of Ifield Road. England was different then, London even more so. Salaries were a fiver a week, kids still played on bombsites, and the silver jubilee was round the corner. So, in the spirit of Great British philanthropy, a local collective came together to bring to the community a gift which would last long into the next Millenium. They said it started in a caravan, on a bombsite, in a shack. But like many great things, the origin's truth is often inauspicious.....



Ifield Road, around the time ECYC was founded



West Brompton station- mid 70s, a stone's throw from ECYC's original site.

Terrence Bendixon- *The Fixer*



Writer, Urbanist, and former RBKC councilor, Terrence Bendixon recalls the first ever site to call itself the 'Earls Court Youth Club'. *'It was in fact my old friend from Oxford (and daughter in law of former cabinet minister Rab Butler) who started the very first 'Earls Court Youth Club' which was based first out of what is now the Old Brompton Road, RESPONSE office. Later we moved to the current site on 120 Ifield Road, which was then just a playground with a caravan. Unfortunately, the caravan was set on fire (no one was hurt) which then prompted plans to build a permanent structure.* Terrence Bendixon was chairman of ECYC from 1978 to 1983, today he is a writer and environmental consultant and, still lives in the area.

Lil Butler- *The Activist*



Lil Butler had known Terence through her sister who'd gone to Oxford with him in the 1950s. Twenty years later, when Terence was running for the councillorship of Redcliffe Ward, Lil was active in the area as a vocal proponent of Homosexual rights- Earls Court being a prominent Gay 'village' at the time. As an offshoot to her community work, Lil decided to start something for local kids and, in 1977, the very first ECYC was opened at the premises of 300, Old Brompton Road, which is today the **Response community project**- Earls Court.

John Davan Sainsbury- *The Grocer*



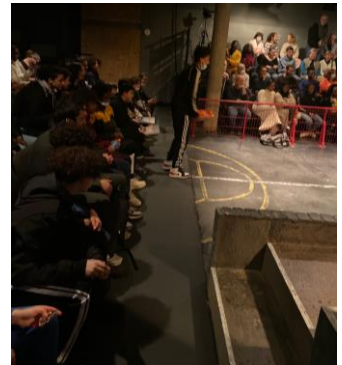
Great grandson of the founder of the famed supermarket chain, JD Sainsbury was a longtime resident of Earls Court, and the source which Terrence Bendixon, secured the funds to build a permanent site for the youth club. A generous and active patron of the arts, it was with pleasure that JD arranged for the entire £40,000 needed to build the Earls Court youth club, as it stands today. In his professional life, John Davan served as chairman of Sainsbury's for 42 years, during a period which enjoyed wide expansion. With his wife, he also started the **Linbury Trust**, which among other things, funded the cost of ECYC's 4G football pitch, completed in 2017. John Davan Sainsbury, sadly passed away in January of this year, at the age of 84.

Most recently, a corner of the Old Brompton Road got a face-lift, sort of. As part of the Earls Court Development Company's mammoth regeneration of the area, the hoardings around the site of old exhibition center were decorated with portraits- 3 of which were produced right here at ECYC. Back during lockdown, a series of workshops were delivered by a group of professional artists. Each participant was given an outline of a head and invited to fill in the blanks!

ECYC's hoards lord along the road!



ECYC's Ballers Paint the pitch RED



Beside the famous Shepherds Bush Market, sits the namesake theatre and cultural gem of W12's Arts scene. Following the pandemic, the fate of the Bush- like many theatres- was precarious at best. But they made it through, thank God, and those familiar with the area may recall large banners reading *'The Bush Is Back!'*

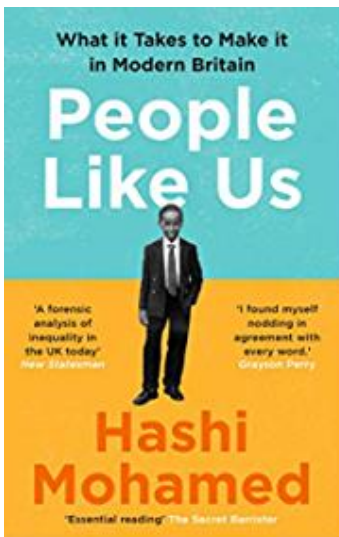
Amongst their program for the 2022 season (also the Bush's 50th year anniversary) was the heartfelty original **'RED PITCH'**. The 90-minute piece takes us into the world of three aspiring footballers, **Omz, Joey** and **Bilal**. Almost entirely set within the eponymous caged football pitch, the three young men grapple with everything from gentrification, existentialism and what may happen should the game end- or even if it ever started. It would be inaccurate to call the Bush a fringe way-off West End joint, yet it does proudly market itself as a theatre for folks who don't usually go to the theatre. And that's precisely the chaps we coerced to attend a Saturday Matinee, half-way into the shows run. The boys of ECYC's Senior football club have seldom partook in anything that wasn't sports related. And it may be equally flippant to suppose only a play about football could make them take a dip in the cultural waters.....but it certainly was a sweetener.



'...When Hashi brought down the house...!!!



We'd like to think fate saw this next piece wind up in our anniversary issue. The truth is however, far more practical. The visit of **Hashi Mohamed**, one freezing, windy evening, was the culmination of over six months planning, emails, build-ups, let-downs, and unforeseen occurrences. For the pitiful few who have not heard of our guest, Hashi Mohamed is a renowned barrister and, author of the seminal tome- '**People Like Us**' which instantly made waves upon its release in 2020. In meticulous and painful detail, his book explores what it takes to make it in modern Britain. Over several chapters, Hashi traces his life from an idyllic childhood in Kenya and Somalia, to his traumatic transition to the UK, and ultimately the long and arduous journey which took him to the top of an elite profession.



Back in October, some may recall a box bearing the eye-catching yellow and aquamarine of Hashi's book. Within days, the whole stack had been dispensed- ahead of the first planned visit.....in late November of last year. Whether they'd read through Christmas or confined it to shelves, most had to be reminded of our speaker ahead of the new March appointment. Nevertheless, the team scrambled feverishly to get the word out to those who'd long been waiting, as well as those who'd jettisoned hope. But lo' on Monday, March 7th, on the year of our lord 2022, the stage was set.... There was the Banquet- supplied by 2 different caterers, and 40 chairs, 10 of which were kindly leant by the folks at St Luke's Church. And so, at a little after 6pm, arrived Hashi himself.

The crowd had been gathered for sometime, when our speaker took his position before an audience including a handful forced to stand. A barrister with the reputable 'No.5 Chambers', mister Mohamed's expertise lay in environmental law and planning and, we're sure he would have approved of our elaborate preparations. Still, things started off cagey. Perhaps no one could quite believe the moment had arrived. Calm and collected, Hashi began with an introduction on himself, punctuated with questions to the floor, '*...I was raised in Wembley, North-West London, anyone know where that is? NOT the stadium.*' Hashi's oration was loose, and even informal at times- a choice which surely relaxed some of the more frosty in attendance. Throughout, his talk was complimented with excerpts from chapters with titles like '*Identity and Imagination*' and '*Getting on and getting along*' .

Truly, it was an evening to remember and inspire. Dare say it, maybe the most profound session in the club's illustrious history. The audience was as chequered as the persons in a tube carriage. Infant and adolescent, teenagers of all stripes and temperaments, were one in their awe of Hashi's story which whether they could identify with it or not, conveyed nothing is impossible.





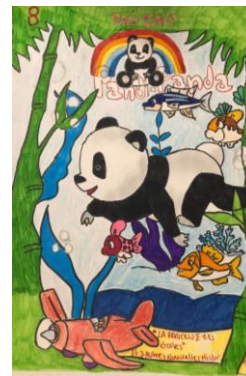
The verdict from the brief....

ECYC Double Profile!!!

For this special edition profiles feature, we bring a double header. Of course, all our members are exceptional, including the two beacons up next, who though very different, are one in personifying what ECYC is and strives for.

Selma Zamzam- 15

Kicking off is the disarmingly delectable Selma Zamzam- Artist, bookworm, brilliant. A relatively new addition to the family, Selma joined ECYC exactly a year ago, and along with her elder sister, Essia, completed the unit which included younger brother, Suleiman – who'd long been a member of the club's junior football team. Shy and heartwarmingly reserved, Selma typically owns the trait of the 'overlooked' middle child. It's easy not to notice her when she's around, but for sure, none can fail not to notice her extravagant portraits hanging on our display boards. Selma is an artist of remarkable talent, and this is the tool she communicates with best. Upon a glance, her skill seems instinctively innate, displaying incredible refinement for someone still learning their craft. *'...caricatures has always been something I enjoyed. Playing and dissecting a personality and transforming them into something which even if it may not resemble the individual- accurately illustrates their being. I think they may've even been the first pictures I ever drew.'*



The origins of the artist in question, could've come out of a classic romcom. Born to a Tunisian mother, and Palestinian father, both of whom were recent arrivals in London where they met by chance outside Notting Hill Gate Tube (incidentally a stone's throw from Holland Park School- where all three children would go to study) Her mother grew up in Southern France and indeed, the gallic element is there as Selma says *'...mum made sure we visited her hometown every year. And till today I still think in and ad-lib in French!'* But it's her father's Palestinian heritage which she openly admits has shaped the way she views herself, and the world. *'...My father grew up in the Rashideh camp, in South Lebanon, but his family originally came from the port city of Acre.'* Selma has never seen Palestine, yet it is an intrinsic part of her being, more than a flag, a cause, a non-existent spot on the map. Its why she believes her art is inherently political, citing Mexican actor, Gael Garcia Bernal, *'...you can't separate art from politics. Art doesn't happen in isolation. Every movie or piece of art takes a political stance, and when it doesn't take a political stance, that's a political stance, too.'* Although charmingly aloof, Selma does not see herself as an antisocial. *'...I just prefer to observe.'* Human interactions and streetscapes inspire her most, and she does intend to glean more from the culture around her. *'...I first went to a gallery on a primary trip, and last visited one with ECYC in December.'* It's also encouraging to hear that Selma does see a career in Art for herself, albeit with a strong activist bent. *'...Art is my mode of communication and I certainly believe it can change the world. It performs and connects in a way nothing else can.'*

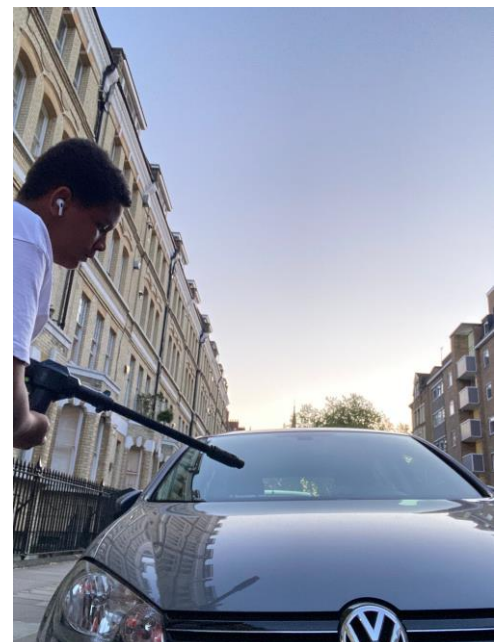
Karim Keita- 14



While still in year 6 at Bousfield Primary, Mr. Keita first walked through our doors, and the club ain't quite been the same since. *'...I heard about ECYC because my best friend Ellis's older sister was a member. At first the place was just a space to chill and play football.'* Nearly five years later, the concrete pitch had been replaced and the club has become so much more than a place to simply 'chill'. Since then, Mr. Keita has blossomed into a cook, a baker, an actor, and a businessman. *'...The first program I signed for was cooking and baking, its where I learnt to make my famous lemon drizzle's!'* Karim's constitution is that of a junior polymath- adept at numerous skills with seemingly careless effort. Proving himself a whizz in the kitchen, the club arranged a one-day stint at luxury restaurant, COR, in Notting Hill. Of the Michelin Star experience, Karim said, *'...I was assigned to the team preparing the starters. I thought a 3* restaurant would be a calm and smooth operation, but it was anything but!'* Although short and sweet, the insight allowed Karim to see just how much work and effort goes into producing a fine dining experience. *'...I felt honored to be around world class chefs, and would definitely pursue it further, however, more on the pastry side.'*



Karim's twin passion also includes business. In the summer of 2021, ECYC helped him get funding from the RBKC Youth Grant. With his £250, Karim was able to purchase material for his car-washing venture. Despite it essentially being a seasonal business, Karim's PRISTINE CLEAN, has thrived throughout the winter and into spring. He offers a variety of services, including valet and washing. And he's also a bit of thespian, having featured in the ECYC film *ROLLERCOASTER 2020*, where he played Master of Ceremonies, in the award-winning 3minute piece which takes a serious and whimsical take on the eponymous year. A larger than life personality, even those who don't know him, know of him. He is exuberant, without being overwhelming, a loudmouth, without being abrasive, and always, is willing to speak up where he encounters wrong. He freely admits without ECYC'S commitment to nurture his talents, he would not be the stalwart that he is. *'...In five years I want to be making at least £1000 a week, which I intend to save up and buy the house we live in, for my mum.'* And on that subject, we asked Karim what the youth club meant to him, *'...for me, ECYC represents one big home, where all are welcomed and encouraged to become the best version of themselves.'*





**Special
guest
express
interview**

She's the lady with a movie camera as well as Chairperson of the board, meet **Daisy Gili!**



Who are you...and what do you do?

I'm Daisy, and I'm a filmmaker as well as joint principal of LONDON FILM ACADEMY - a Fulham based film school

What's your connection to ECYC?

I was born on the top floor in a house on the same road of ECYC- where my mother still lives! My father was one of the signatories of the club building back in the 70s. As a child I used to walk past the club every morning on my way to Bousfield Primary School. I was always shy to enter the building myself but, was nonetheless intrigued by the place. Later as an adult I was invited to join the committee, which I was delighted to do. That was fifteen years ago and I'm happy to say last Autumn I was voted chairperson of the youth club.

What's the best thing about our community?

The diversity of our community helps us to be inclusive and dynamic. I am delighted by the different number of languages spoken, the different cultural influences, the different cuisines and all this can be seen in a microcosm inside the Earls Court Youth Club. I love the way that when our community needs change, and we adapt with them with integrity, care and ambition. I have always loved how friendly the neighborhood has been, and in particular how ECYC has been at the heart of who we are.

What's the most rewarding part of your job?

Making a difference to the local community and working with the center manager to find new and imaginative ways our services can meet ever-growing demands. I always cherish visiting the club and witnessing the infectious kinetic energy that is always alive inside.

How would you advise young people to realize their potential?

Dare to dream, aim high, ask for help and advice, and expect nothing but the best. And finally, always know ECYC 's got your back!

Meet The Crew....!

In this edition of our staff profiles, we introduce the special man behind the scenes, we know you've been waiting for it....**Abdi Aden!**



'Community Hero' is a term that gets bandied around often. Of course, local heroes exist- local champions , even. Community legend's, however, are so few and far they may as well be myths. Beyond the numerous accolades and widespread admiration, the reason for Abdi's greatness lies in the simple profundity that his own life could have been something else at so many different points. Like many of his constituents, or mentees if you like, Abdi was born elsewhere. His formative years were spent in not so far Olympia (via Mogadishu and Naples). His secondary schooling took place at Holland Park which in the 90s was still the only comprehensive in the Royal borough and still wore the crown of, '**The Socialist Eton**'. *'I wasn't a bad or malicious kid...'* says Abdi, reclining on his desk chair as he recalls the years which seem another lifetime ago. *'...when I was growing up London wasn't as multicultural as it is now. I was a refugee, from a country most had never heard of. I would definitely say I was an angry kid, unable to reconcile the trauma of the past with the uncertainty of the present.'* Minor mischief and teenage hi-jinks notwithstanding, some of that energy yearned to be utilized into something productive, and with that intuition Abdi volunteered at a local youth club. *'....at that time, **Third Feathers** was another youth center operating in Earls Court, and it was through them that I actually got introduced to ECYC for the first time.'* That, dear readers was the summer of '98, when France had just won the World Cup, Blair had clocked a year in office and, the Good Friday Agreement looked to settle three decades of the 'troubles'. *'...I was first put in charge of Football and Table Tennis. And all these years later, I still see myself fundamentally as a coach. It's the one aspect of my job I treasure most. Later, as I got more experience I was given the responsibility of running a community café which catered for the homeless and drug afflicted. At the time, Earls Court was known in the popular consciousness as an epicenter of vice. The first piece of advice I ever dispensed, in the sense the first time I felt like a 'mentor' was when I came across a young person who was about to be tried for a charge of 'Joint enterprise'. I remember telling them if ever they were to process this problem, they had to take 'ownership', not just of the mistake, but more so, the steps she must take to ultimately progress.'*

In the subsequent decades, Mr Aden has been a coach, shepherding generations of kids into sporting excellence. He has been an administrator, building ECYC into the reputable behemoth of the community it is today (Mr Aden also worked many years at RBKC housing department, lobbying for the rights of citizens in the most deprived pockets of the community) And, he has mentored hundreds, if not thousands, who at least had their lives turned around, and at most, were saved from being yet another sorry statistic. But what of the man? How does he measure his achievements and, what of the many milestones mean most to him. *'...My job, simply, is to make a difference in people's lives. This could mean anything between securing funding for cooked meals during all days the club operates, to lobbying for a club member to get a scholarship to Oxford. The job is hard and demanding, and requires one wear multiple hats in order to deal with multiple situations, but, we are investing in the future and, such an endeavor necessitates nothing short of total commitment. In a nutshell, I just feel blessed for having been able to influence the lives of so many exceptional people, yesterday, today, and tomorrow.'*



**We want to thank the people who have been influential
in the development of the Earls Court Youth Club:**

*Lord Sainsbury of Preston Candover
Terence Bendixson OBE
Jonathan Gili OBE
Willie Rushton
Dame Diana Rigg
Lady Arbuthnot DBE
Roy Amlot QC
David Robins*

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London Sports Trust
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The Linbury Trust
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Young K & C*

**Who have worked very closely with us over the years to
deliver vital services for a diverse range of people.**