

AUDACIOUS WOMEN FESTIVAL

AUDACIART WEEKLY

One Child One Pen

24 April 2020



Photo: Never Too Young to Change the World
© Anne Conrad

An Audacious Women Publication



AudaciArt – One Child One Pen

This week's theme, *One Child One Pen* was suggested by a quote from Malala Yousafzai:

One child, one teacher, one book, one pen can change the world

Introduction

The Audacious Women Festival is a chance for women to break personal, political and institutional barriers, and to celebrate audacious women. The Audacious Women Collective would like to invite and support you to Do What You Always Wish You Dared and take your first steps on a journey to audacity.

AudaciArt provides a perfect opportunity to try something new. No pressure, no competition, no judgemental comments; just a weekly theme to get your creative juices flowing.

Physical Distance – Not Social

During these days of Covid we have all been asked to remain *physically* separate from each other. We at Audacious Women do not believe that this means *social* distancing is also necessary. Many of us will have started or been invited to neighbourhood WhatsApp groups, or to a virtual dinner party, or to continue with your regular dance sessions, book groups and movie nights, but to do so in one or other of the online forums. Some people are even reporting that they feel less lonely and isolated than usual. Nevertheless, this is a very difficult period for many people, especially those who are more vulnerable and unable to leave the house at all. Others are missing regular social contact and friendships.

While many of us are isolated at home and others - not only health workers but all those in key jobs - are putting their lives, literally, on the line every day, it is more than ever essential that we support and honour each other. So during this period of physical distancing Audacious Women is running a series of [online events](#) to help build women's community, and to keep in touch with each other and our audacious natures.

AudaciArt

AudaciArt is a weekly event: We publish a word or phrase suggested by a quote by or about an audacious women. Women are invited to create and submit any type of work inspired by the theme. A selection of the submissions is published weekly. This is the 3rd such publication.

Many thanks to all our contributors and to the Audacious Women Collective Members and volunteers who helped to make this possible.

Next week's theme: Nothing to Hold On To – Submissions by Noon on 1 May 2020.



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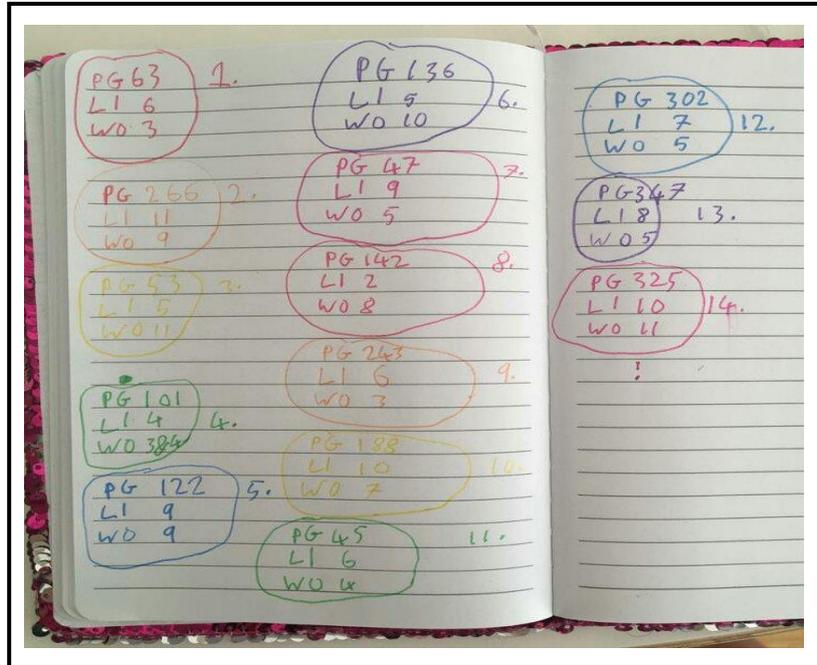
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Happy Remote (Grand) Mother's Day

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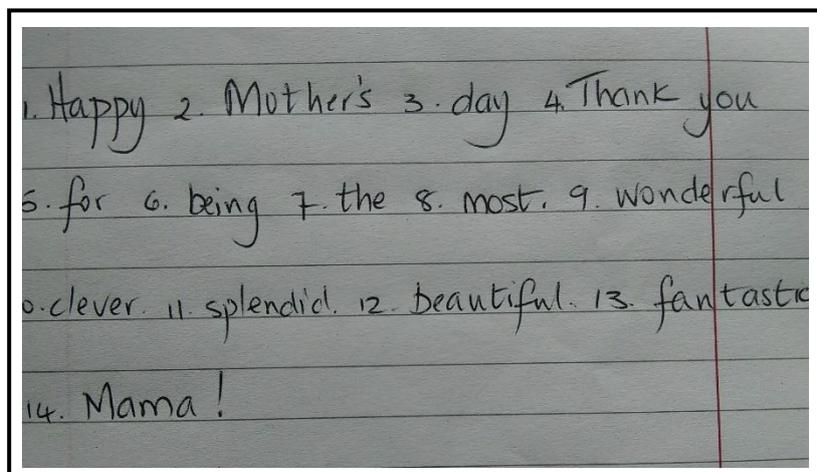
Iona Steeds Williams



Happy Remote (Grand) Mother's Day

Answer

Iona Steeds Williams



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The Handover

Emma Gibbons

Make haste ere the plastic tubes upon her face lose power
And force the last breath from her breast.
Her subjects expect her everlasting quiet fear and domination to stay.
Keeping us adhering to that which we know best and love.

'Mother dear, may I draw near
Into thy chamber alone?' said he,
The eldest of four.
But were these four plucked from her breast at birth
And offered to the nannies in waiting.

She can consent but lacks the strength to lift the gilded pen.
And so into her hand he dutifully places it
And resting his hand o'er hers
'Mother I love thee but trust me yet this once more ma'am,
His hand guides hers to make its mark.
Unyielding it flows in smooth rivers of ink to give its assent.
It is done. She exhales.

What now for this solid kingdom with its prince of doom?
What will he bring?
She signed as so many had signed in her name
Before their kittens were ta'en away too soon and cast upon the heap.
Will he write letters to his lady friends and gurus,
Seeking wisdom and forgiveness?
He arrives. The childlike king to be kept in aspic preserved for the near future.
Establishing the constancy of orders and never changing expectations to be signed off.

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Trick or Treat

Sally Wainwright

In June 2016 I made what was to be the first of many visits to volunteer with the refugees who were arriving in droves on the Greek shores. They sailed from Turkey in tiny overcrowded dinghies, far, far too many drowning in the Mediterranean Sea before ever reaching Greece. I spent a couple of weeks in Piraeus, the port of Athens, where around 1,500 refugees, mainly Syrian and Afghan, had set up a temporary camp on one of the quays.

An enormous number of the camp's residents – adults and children alike – were deeply traumatised by their experiences of war and persecution and of the dangerous and difficult journey to what they expected to be safety in Europe. They had arrived full of hope, with absolutely no idea that their reception into Europe would only add to their trauma.

Refugees' physical and mental health problems were greatly exacerbated by the conditions in which they were living – small festival tents pitched directly on the concrete, mostly with no protection from the elements, with inadequate food and little if any access to medical care.



The luckier families found a space for their tent inside an disused warehouse, where they at least had some shelter.

Most days I worked in the children's project. We had a container for storing the play equipment, but no indoor room. Our activities took place on the concrete ground outside the container, so we took a long break in the hottest part of the day. Sometimes we tied a tarpaulin between containers to provide a little shade, but it generally only lasted a couple of days before being destroyed by the wind. Or on one occasion by a child crawling onto it to retrieve a football.

We ran arts and crafts sessions – which were sometimes also attended by the children's mothers, many of whom had never had the opportunity to do anything like it before. The girls frequently drew pictures of thin, white blond haired girls in party dresses. And they all drew hearts with *I love you* written in English which they would then present to us – even me, a virtual stranger.

We played a lot of boisterous games. In the uncertain, dangerous and unpleasant camp conditions it was difficult for a lot of the children to sit still or concentrate for long. Unexpectedly, I found several of the most "difficult" children would come to sit quietly with me, maybe even lie down and have a rest, much to Helga (the project founder's) astonishment. She decided it must be because I was older so the kids treated me like a grandmother! Hmmm. I think it was because without planning it, I somehow offered them an opportunity to stop still for a moment and relax. Even just



for a few minutes, a calm space and a soothing hand was a precious and rare commodity in that chaotic and dysfunctional situation.

But there was one boy, Hussain, who wouldn't engage in any of the activities. He was a 10 year old Afghan and I'm ashamed to admit I thought of him as a bit of a nuisance. Mostly he ran around the outside of the group, disrupting it by squirting water on us. My main interaction with him was to chase him round the container. The times I caught up with him I would empty the water pistol before returning it with a hug. But I'd not been able to get him to join in any games or activities with the other children.

In the last couple of days he'd developed a new irritating habit of interrupting me when I was busy, by coming and putting his arms round my waist and giving me a slightly aggressive kiss on the cheek before running off.

I spent my last evening in the camp chatting to some of the friends I'd made, sharing food and stories about our lives.

All of a sudden Hussain appeared, giving me his signature rough hug and kiss. As he didn't speak English (and my Farsi was non-existent) I asked one of the men I was with to explain to him that I was leaving on the eleven o'clock boat. He hadn't been there when I'd said goodbye to the kids earlier. We'd sung Auld Lang Syne which I explained is a Scottish song that says we never forget our friends. "He says he wants to come with you." "I wish I could take him in my suitcase" I said, stupidly. No sooner translated than Hussain gets up and starts sashaying towards his tent, arms in air, bum wiggling and, I imagine as I can only see the back of his head, a big grin on his face. It was the first time I'd seen him acting happy. "He's going to get a suitcase". A moment of absolute panic. "Tell him I was only joking." "Don't worry, he knows it was a joke." Minutes later, Hussain is back, clutching a mercifully small holdall. "In you get then." His English was just about good enough to reply for himself "It small, me too big." I put my hand to my chest. "I'll carry you in my heart." Smiles all round and Hussain gives me another sloppy hug and leaves to return the bag to his mum.

Eventually the clock across the harbour chimed 10, by playing *Never on a Sunday* and it was time for me to leave to catch my boat. A quick round of goodbyes and promises to keep in touch on Facebook before I headed off to Gate 1, dragging my suitcase behind me conscious that nobody who saw me had the luxury of being able to do the same. But no sooner had I gone 100 yards than up popped Hussain, putting his arm round my waist and insisting on walking with me. Three of the girls from the project saw us and called over. They ran in the opposite direction, back to their tents then reappeared a few moments later with drawings for me.



An art session under the tarpaulin.



By this time Hussain was crying as I tried to untangle him from me. Mariam started to tell him I would be back tomorrow. “Don’t tell him that.” “Then he’ll stop crying.” “No,



Hussain outside the Stonehouse.

he knows I’m leaving.” I hadn’t expected to be at the camp then, my boat had been due to go from a Gate closer to town, and I had nothing to give them. Eventually I found a small notebook in my case. I tore out the used pages, and drew a big heart on the first page of what remained of the book. I gave it to Hussain and was rewarded with a brief cheeky grin as he reached out and grabbed my pen. I gave them all a quick hug goodbye before again heading to the boat. But Hussain wasn’t to be consoled. To my horror, when I looked back at the boy I thought I’d failed to connect with, he was standing on the tarmac in the dark, sobbing. I boarded the boat back to my old life, uncertain if I’d caused more hurt than good.

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New Worlds

Hilery Williams

Mrs Barstow holds up a picture of a boy. He wears shorts. His hands are on his hips. He stares out of the picture straight at me. He is drawn in black and white but it is clear his hair is blond. Dick's shirt is neatly tucked in. The glance we get of Dora is too rapid to assimilate.

Dick!, exclaims Mrs Barstow.

While others chant *duh, i, cuh, cuh*, I gaze intently at the pile of books on the teacher's table. Two whole weeks into school and at last we were to be allowed to read.

But it was not to be; not yet. Each of us is given a card inscribed *Dick* to be copied on to our chalk boards. We sit around red-topped tables on red plastic chairs which cause pain when we unpeel ourselves at the end of the sweaty day.

The other children tortuously make their way through the reading scheme, sentence by weary sentence. I am several pages ahead, with another book on the go underneath the table. I devour *Milly-Molly-Mandy*, *The Ugly Duckling*, *Daniel in the Lion's Den*, *My Naughty Little Sister*. I never deliberately learned to read before I went to school. I just did. All the time.

One day our task is to write a whole sentence, first in our jotters, then once corrected, on to sugar paper strips. Even though I impose upon myself the banal vocabulary used by Dick and Dora - *Nip the dog runs. I see Fluff*, this activity is astonishingly liberating. Ideas on paper, more or less permanent; created by me! The story world beckons even more enticingly than before when I had been merely a reader. Now I am an author too.

Words, stories, fascinate me. I see in them a key with which I can unlock a boundless world or create a safe haven. My favourite occupation when not actually consuming fiction is to organise my library. When this palls, I create newspapers with my John Bull Printing Outfit. Writing lets me imagine my way into all sorts of lives.

Putting the letters together is a whole new source of enlightenment. Letters make ideas! I can write a story made of words made of letters: ideas made of marks. It was the cleverest idea ever invented.

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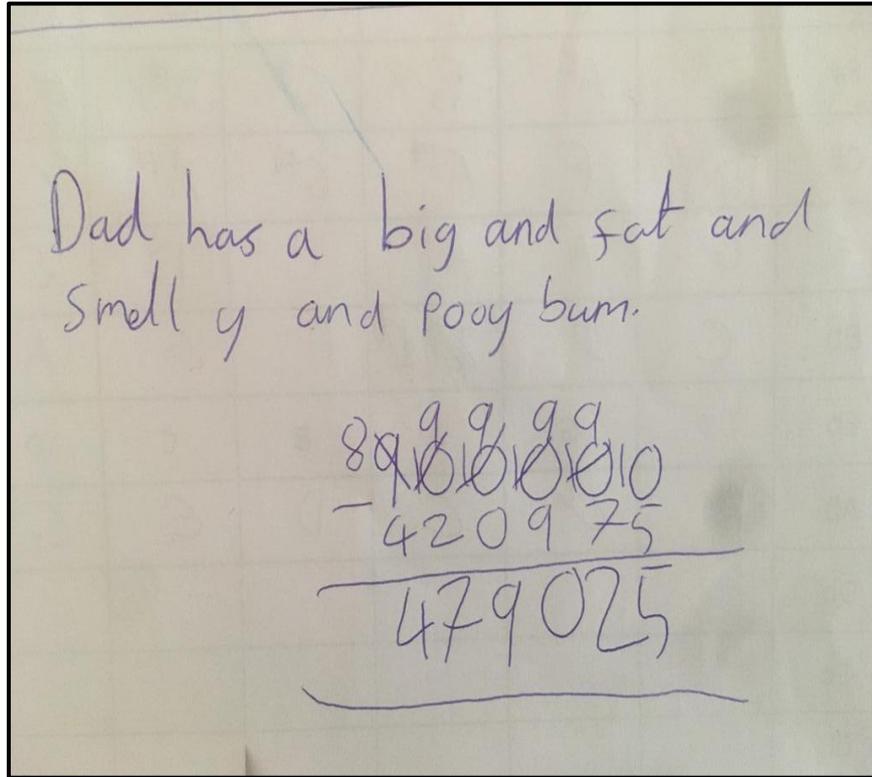
First day of Home School
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I Want to go Back to School
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