

What has worked (and what hasn't) in anti-stigma activism?

A “Stigma and Poverty Design Team” Literature Review to help inform our work together

Thanks to the whole team who have directed shaped and informed this Literature Review:

Alana Avery; Nkechi Adeboye; Steve Arnott; Stef Benstead; Sarah Campbell; Heather Coady; China Mills; Alex Guy; Hal Khanom; Nasrat Tania; Patrick Toland; Sarah Whitehead

Brief and Scope of Lit Review



Overview of Literature Review

Section 1

What is Stigma? Stigma and Social Norms

Section 2

Civil Rights and Anti-Stigma Protest and Activism: *Anti-Racism; Disability Activism; Mental Health Survivors Movement; Queer Pride; HIV & AIDS Activism*

Section 3

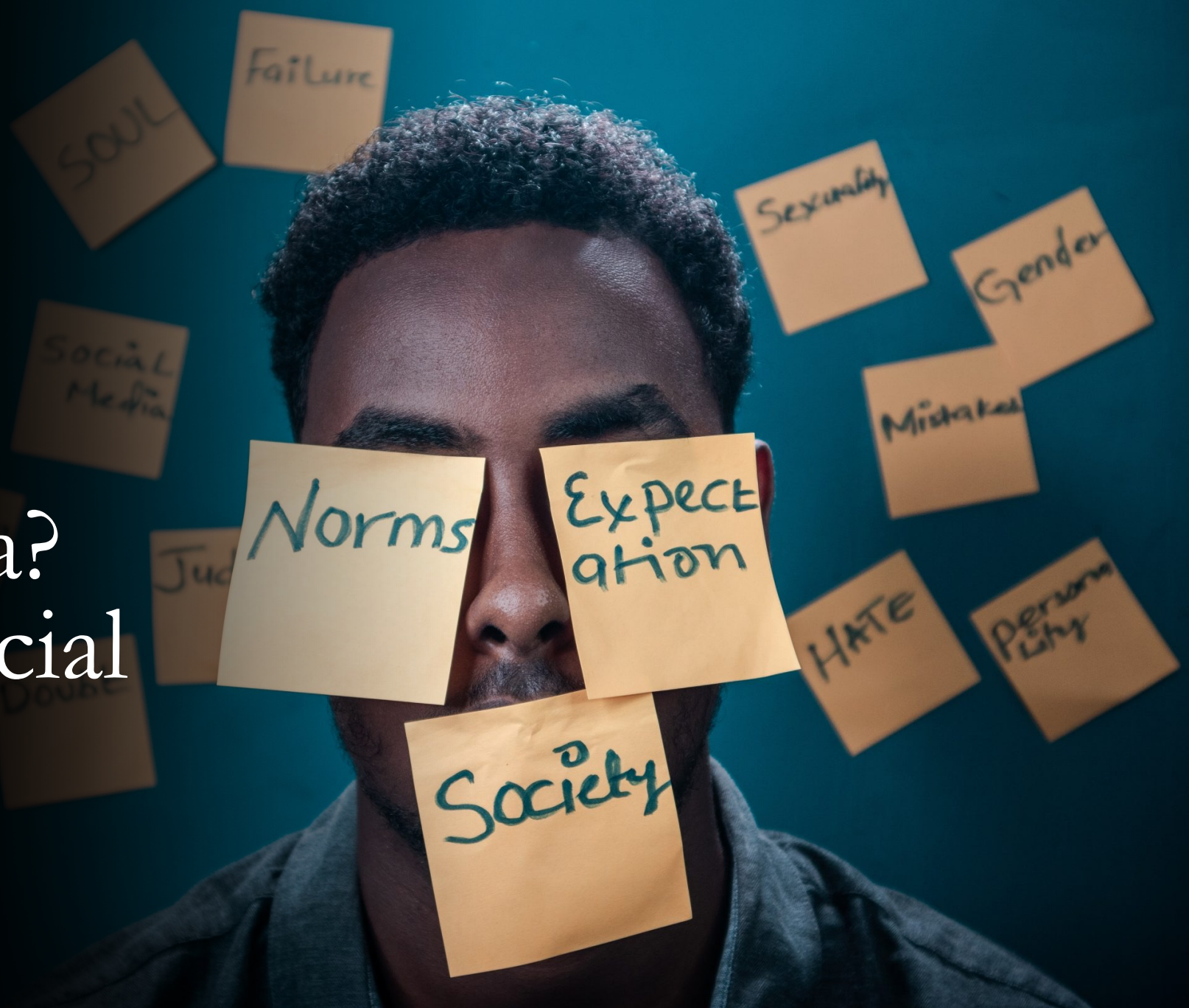
Anti/Stigma in Public Health Campaigns: *The strange case of mental health*

Section 4

Our Challenge: Stigma and Poverty

Section 1

What is Stigma? Stigma and Social Norms



'A stigma is what falls upon a person in the judgement of others; it is the black mark which is set upon a person by the public, and is consequently the strongest of all marks, which everyone most dreads and every good man seeks least to observe.'

George Crabb, *English Synonyms Explained* (1816)

Stigma...

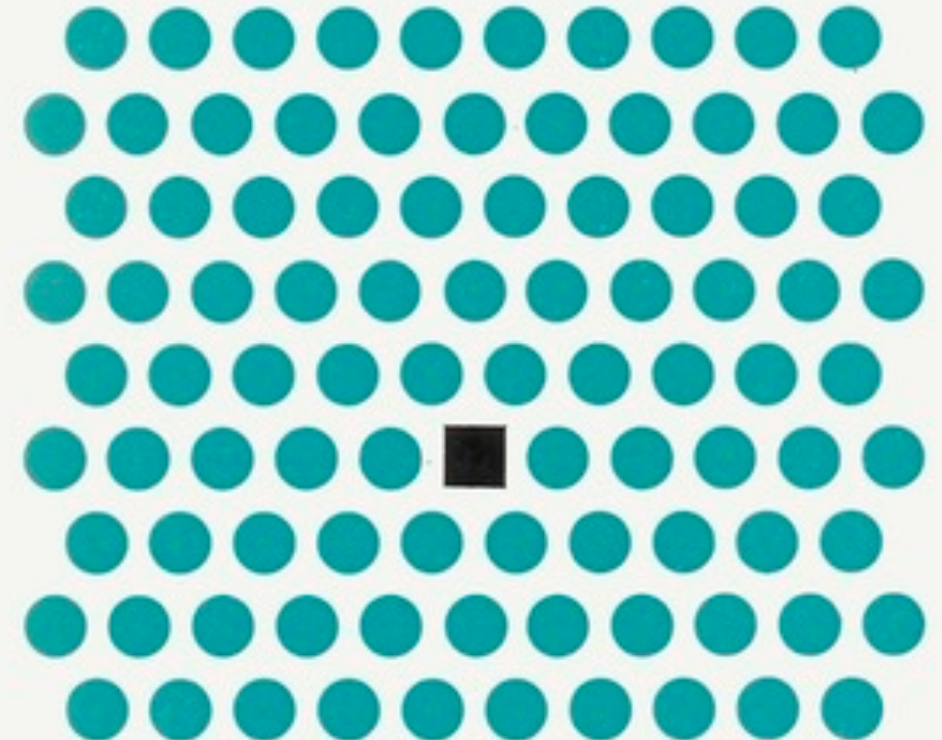
- Is used to classify people
- Is used to devalue & dehumanise
- It plays a role in rationing resources.
- It is tied to other social hierarchies (gender, class)
- It is most effective when people can be blamed (morally condemned) for their 'condition'
- Impacts most on those (for want of economic or cultural capital, or "public voice" (are unable to defend themselves).
- Stigma can be devastating
- But isn't passively accepted - is a site of struggle



Image from The Sassy Mums art activist project

Goffman (1963) & the modern idea of stigma

- Offers a working definition of stigma as: ‘an attribute that is deeply discrediting’ and ‘the situation of the individual who is disqualified from full social acceptance’.
- Stigmatisation takes place in social interactions. I.e. that people *acquire* stigma in their exchanges with other people – be this a look, a glance, a comment or a more overt form of discrimination such as name-calling.
- Stigma is a relationship between people.
- A stigma arises (or is attributed) when an individual fails to realise ‘a particular norm’.
- His understanding of stigma pivots on the existence of a social consensus about what is ‘normal’. I.e. what is or isn’t stigmatising is determined by prevailing social norms and attitudes.
- Society functions because there are social rules, and there is an expectation that we play the role assigned to us.



“Normals” and “Stigmatised”

Public stigma = collective prejudice and discrimination toward a specific group of individuals

normals

‘There is only one complete unblushing male in America’ and ‘Every American .. tends to look out upon the world’ from ‘the young, married, white, urban, northern’ male (Goffman)



the stigmatised (potentially anyone who doesn't fit the norm)

- the physically disabled
- people with ‘blemishes of individual character’ such as ‘weak will, domineering or unnatural passions, treacherous, mental disorder, imprisonment, addiction, alcoholism, homosexuality, unemployment, suicidal attempts’
- those tainted by ‘tribal stigma of race, nation, and religion’ (Goffman)
- radical political behaviour
- people from lower social classes



From Public/Social Stigma to Self-Stigma

Through processes of *socialisation* an individual 'learns & incorporates the standpoint of the normal' (Goffman)

And comes to anticipate 'the standards against which they fall short' (Goffman)

We will all have examples of how this works ie. how stigma gets under the skin, and can become a self-limiting barrier, from care-experience, to poverty, to disability, to racism, to classism, to homophobia

		Type of stigma	
		Public-stigma	Self-stigma
Level/Aspect ↓	Stereotype (Belief)	Negative belief about a group (e.g., dangerousness, incompetence)	Negative belief about the self (e.g., weakness, incompetence)
	Prejudice (Emotion)	Agreement with the belief and/or negative emotional reaction (e.g., anger, fear)	Agreement with the belief, negative emotional reaction to themselves (e.g., upset, self-distrust)
	Discrimination (Behavior)	Behavioral manifestation of prejudice (e.g., avoidance, help-withholding)	Behavioral response to prejudice (e.g., self-isolation)

Matrix of public-stigma and self-stigma (adapted from Corrigan et al., 2005; Corrigan & Watson, 2002).

How do we shift the dial on stigma?

- ‘shifts have occurred in the kinds of disgrace that arouse concern’ (Goffman)
- stigma can function ‘as a means of formal social control’. (Goffman)
- His “anti-stigma” is limited to “advice” to the stigmatised on how to manage interactions with “normals”
- How can oppressive social norms might be challenged or transformed?
- 1960s - millions of people began explicitly contesting social norms



Striking Sanitation Workers in Memphis 1968, protesting decades of racism, exploitation and indignity.

Section 2

Civil Rights Movement: Anti-Stigma Protest and Activism



1960s - contesting oppressive social norms & rules

In USA and Europe...

- Civil Rights: Black Liberation Movements
- Women's Rights (second wave feminism)
- Disabled Peoples Liberation Movements
- LGBT+ Queer Liberation Movements

& many more...

In the wider world...

- Decolonial liberation movements for independence in India (against caste discrimination and British rule),
- In Africa & Caribbean (against Apartheid & colonial rule),
- and Australasia (indigenous peoples' movements, (ie. Polynesian Panthers).



ANTI-STIGMA as ANTI-RACISM



Racism is a 'National Stigma' (Du Bois, 1916)

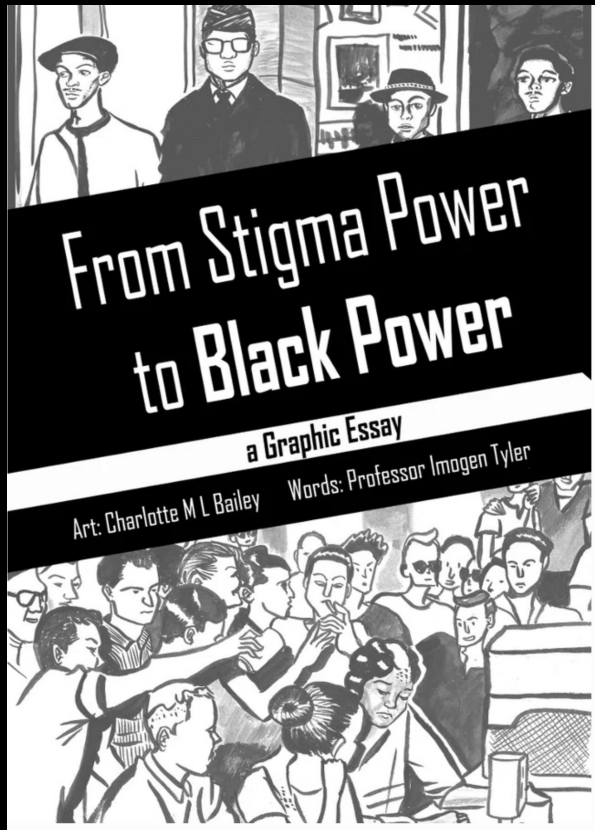
- Being black in America is to be 'badged' by colour, to be marked out 'for discrimination and insult', *W.E.B Du Bois*
- Living as a person racialised as black in the US in the 60s meant daily confrontation 'with the realities of racism, not simply as individual acts dictated by attitudinal bias' but with an entire society organised through 'racial terrorism', *Angela Davis*
- How can white society begin to move to see black people as human beings? *Stokely Carmichael*
- In order to challenge what Du Bois termed 'the stigmata of degradation', young people broke the social rules and refused to play the roles assigned to them.



The civil rights movement was *reanimated* by young peoples' protests in the 1960s

Through acts of *stigma dramaturgy*, the Civil Rights activists publicised, revolted against & transformed the stigma of blackness into black power.

Click below to download graphic essay.



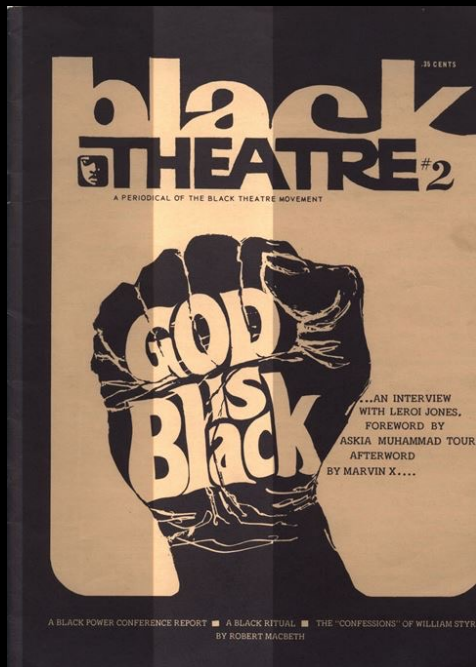
“as a general rule, one form of revolt, and undoubtedly the primary form of revolt against stigmatization ... consists in reclaiming the stigma, which then becomes an emblem of resistance.”

Abdelmalek Sayad

Raising Consciousness
Reworking Stigma
Claiming Power



Creative Methods: The Black Arts Movement



"The night is beautiful,
So the faces of my people.
The stars are beautiful,
So the eyes of my people.
Beautiful also, is the sun.
Beautiful also, are the souls of my
people."
-Langston Hughes, "In My People"



From poetry to hip-hop

Still I Rise

By Maya Angelou

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops.
Weakened by my soulful cries.



Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own back yard.

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?



Beats Bus working exactly
in this tradition of anti-
racist/anti-stigma praxis

The contemporary Black Lives Matter
movement marks another resurgent
moment in the long history of resistance
against the stigma politics of racial
capitalism



4 News

**Slaver statue
pulled down
in Bristol
BLM protest**



Disability activism & Anti-Stigma



In April 1977 disability rights activists organised the longest ever occupation of a federal building in the history of the US.

Disabled Peoples Liberation Movements

rights not charity

- It is stigma, which allows disabled people to be perceived as ‘unfortunate’, ‘useless’, ‘tragic’ and ‘abnormal’ and thus undeserving of the rights or considerations of ‘normal’ able bodied citizens.
- ‘we who are disabled are deeply affected by the assumptions of our uselessness that surround us. But it is vital that we should not accept this devaluation of ourselves’ (Hunt).
- stigma should **not** be theorised from the perspective of so-called normals but from ‘the uncomfortable, subversive position from which we act as a living reproach to any scale of values that puts attributes or possessions before the person’ (Hunt).

Paul Hunt, *STIGMA. The Experience of Disability* (1966)



“Piss on Pity” protest 1992, UK

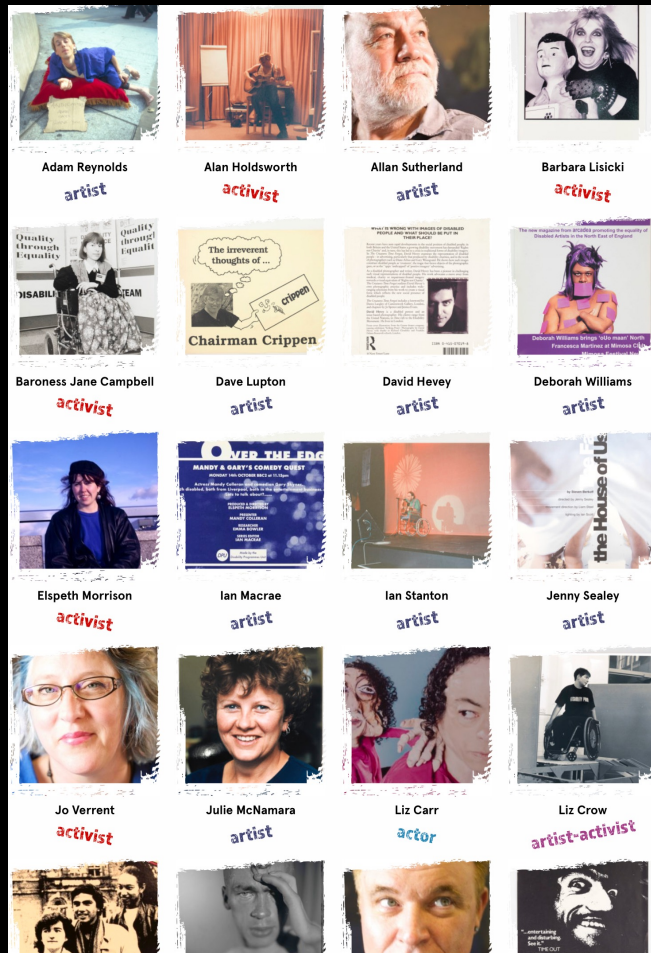
British Disabled Peoples' movement directly inspired by civil rights, anti-racist & anti- apartheid movements



“It’s often said that British society ‘discovered’ disabled people in the 1960s... The truth is that disabled people forced themselves into public view; a group who’d been set apart from society in hospitals and asylums, excluded from education, work, & decent housing, & who had stayed poor while most people got richer, finally stopped keeping quiet. They would no longer be grateful for whatever they were given.”

Luke Beesley

Disability Arts Movement central to *turning the dial* on disability stigma



Massive Impact on popular culture but...

- Massive inequalities and injustices compounded by the pandemic reveal limits of representation without redistribution
- *Change is possible but without constant struggle rights won are lost, & stigma returns*
- Many disabled people feel they are LOCKED OUT of society

Mental Health Stigma and Survivor Movements



Mental Health: Histories of stigma & survival



BBC Mental: A History of the Madhouse

“Antipsychiatry” movements emerge in 60s e.g. [Philadelphia Association](#) (UK) that offered an alternative to what its advocates view as ‘confrontational’ treatment methods and medical interventions.



Mad People against sanist oppression

- Mad Pride originating in the 1990s (inspired by 70s Mental Patients Association (Canada))
- work with & organise around highly stigmatised attribution of ‘madness’
- A social approach to understanding distress
- Reject normalizing imperatives of the state and medicine,
- Call out collusion of pharmaceutical corporations and professional associations within psychiatry
- Challenge representation(s) of madness in media

The Inmates Are Running the Asylum



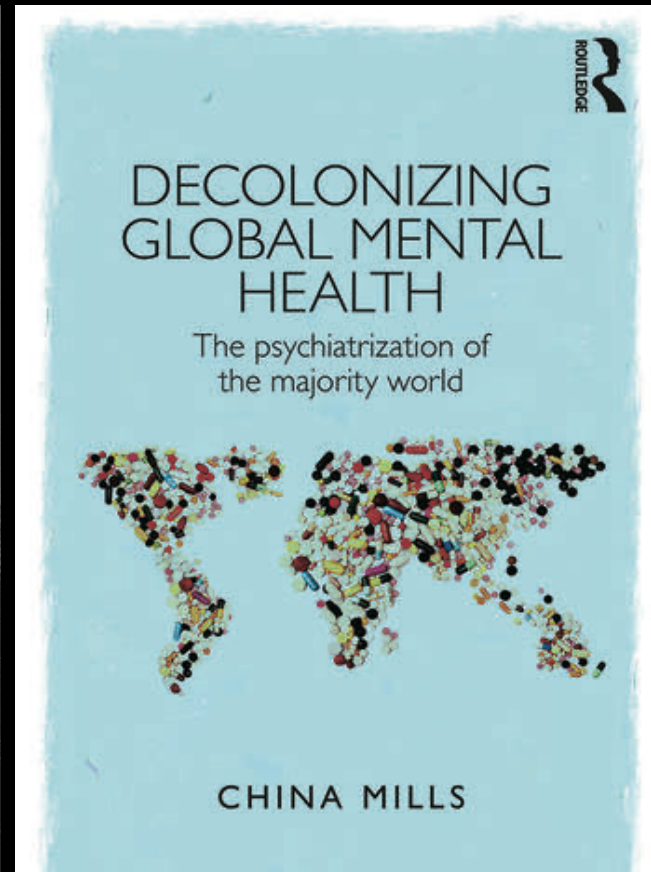
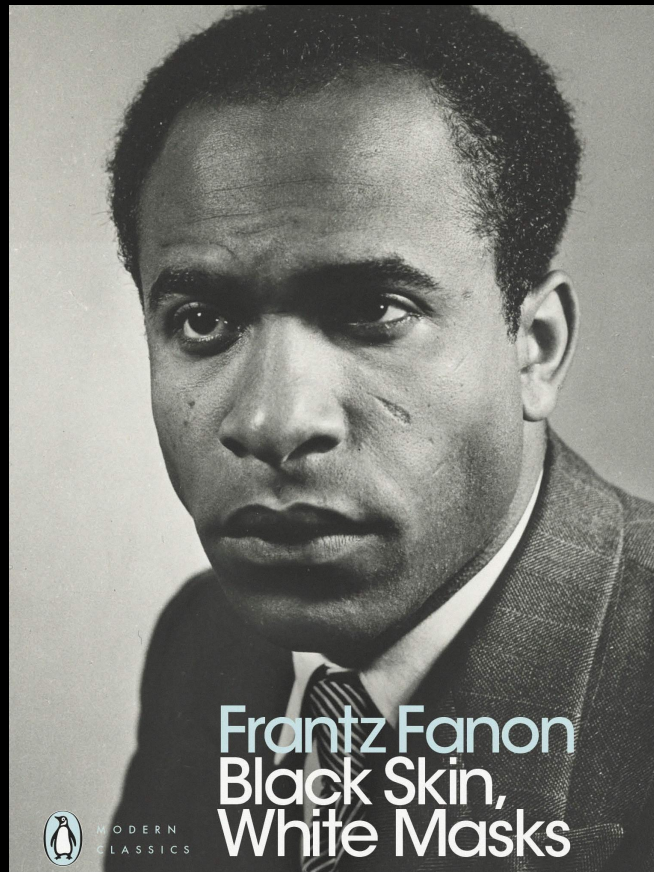
Institutional Support:
Carnegie Community Centre, Vancouver
Gallery Gachet, Vancouver
Kickstart Disability Arts & Culture
MPPA, Society, Vancouver

BC Archives: GR-2678, Box 7, File 31,
June 16, 1976 letter; Copyright Province of BC,
courtesy of Royal BC Museum, BC Archives;
GR-2678, Box 7, File 32, October 14, 1977 letter;
Copyright Province of BC.



Links between colonialism, racism and mental distress

Racism, alienation, segregation and dehumanization as central to the psychology of colonialism & colonial rule & devastating emotional trauma of this.



**We build
community-led
health and
healing
that creates
capacity for
transformation.**

Our healing spaces centre communities that have been marginalised, to shift states of trauma and ill-health produced by oppression and to support futures free from intimate, interpersonal and structural violence.

Anti-stigma praxis

A photograph of two men kissing at a Pride event. Both men have rainbow-colored face paint on their cheeks. The man on the left is wearing a rainbow flag draped over his shoulders. The man on the right is wearing a rainbow flag around his neck and holding a bottle. The background is a blurred crowd of people.

Queer Pride Against Stigma

The Queer History of Stigma

Illegal to engage in homosexual behaviour in public, which included holding hands, kissing, or dancing with someone of the same sex.

Bring Gay was considered a medical disorder and mental illness. The American Psychiatric Association listed it as a “sociopathic personality disturbance” in 1952. In 1968, it was recategorized as a form of “sexual deviation.” The classification of homosexuality as a mental illness was finally removed in 1973, but the stigma continued.

Stigma explicit “faggot, sissy, queer” - violence explicit




Stonewall uprising (June, 1969) & 1st Gay Pride Liberation March (Manhattan, 1970)

Gay Liberation Front UK (1970)

Again direct links to civil rights (Black panther party explicitly supported gay liberation (Huey Newton aligned Black Civil rights with women's liberation and LGBT liberation))



“To you, our gay sisters and brothers,  Steven Dryd
we say that you are oppressed; we intend to
show you examples of the hatred and fear
with which straight society relegates us to
the position and treatment of sub-humans
and to explain this basis.

We will show you how we can use our righteous anger to uproot the present oppressive system with its decaying and constricting ideology, and how we, together with other oppressed groups, can start to form a new order, and a liberated lifestyle, from the alternatives which we offer. “

“Truly profound societal stigma transformation is possible”

Brewis and Wuitch



We believe that apathy & fear are the barriers that imprison people from an incalculable landscape of self awareness

That they are the elements of prejudice, & the enemies of truth

That every person has the right to develop & extend their character & explore their sexuality through relationships with any other human being, without moral, social or political pressure

That no relationships formed by such pressure, or not freely entered into, can be valid, creative or rewarding.

To you, the others, we say We are not against you, but the prejudice that warps your life, and ours

It is not love that distorts, but hate.

On your behalf, and ours, we demand:

to expressions of hate & scorn

The right to believe, without harm to others, in public & private, in any way we choose, in any manner or style, with any words or gestures, to wear what we wish, to go naked, to draw or write or read or publish any material or information we wish, at any time & in any place.

An end to the sexual propaganda that distorts the innocence of children, conditions their image of human relationships, & implants guilt & nurtures shame for any sexual feelings outside an artificial polarity.

An end to the centuries of oppression & prejudice that have driven homosexuals from their homes, families & employment, have forced them to cynicism, slyness & self hatred & have led them, so often, to imprisonment or to death.

In the name of the tens of thousands who wore the badge of homosexuality in the gas chambers

Transphobia: new frontline of LGBTQ+ stigma & civil rights struggle

- We are constantly questioned on our existence, treated hostilely and ridiculed in the name of debate. We are constantly exposed to hate and criticism in media and daily life as the public respond to the media's attitudes





HIV (& AIDs)

Activism

"Everyone detected with AIDS should be tattooed in the upper forearm, to protect common-needle users, and on the buttocks, to prevent the victimization of other homosexuals."

(William Buckley, 1986)

July 14, 1982



The SILENCE=DEATH logo 1987 & adopted by the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP)



Arts & Creative methods

HIV (and AIDS) activism-led to Global Campaign for healthcare, drugs, rooted in anti-stigma activism



The Memorial Quilt 1987, each a hand made memorial to a life lost to AIDS.

WORLD AIDS DAY

ROCK
THE RIBBON

1 DECEMBER 2022

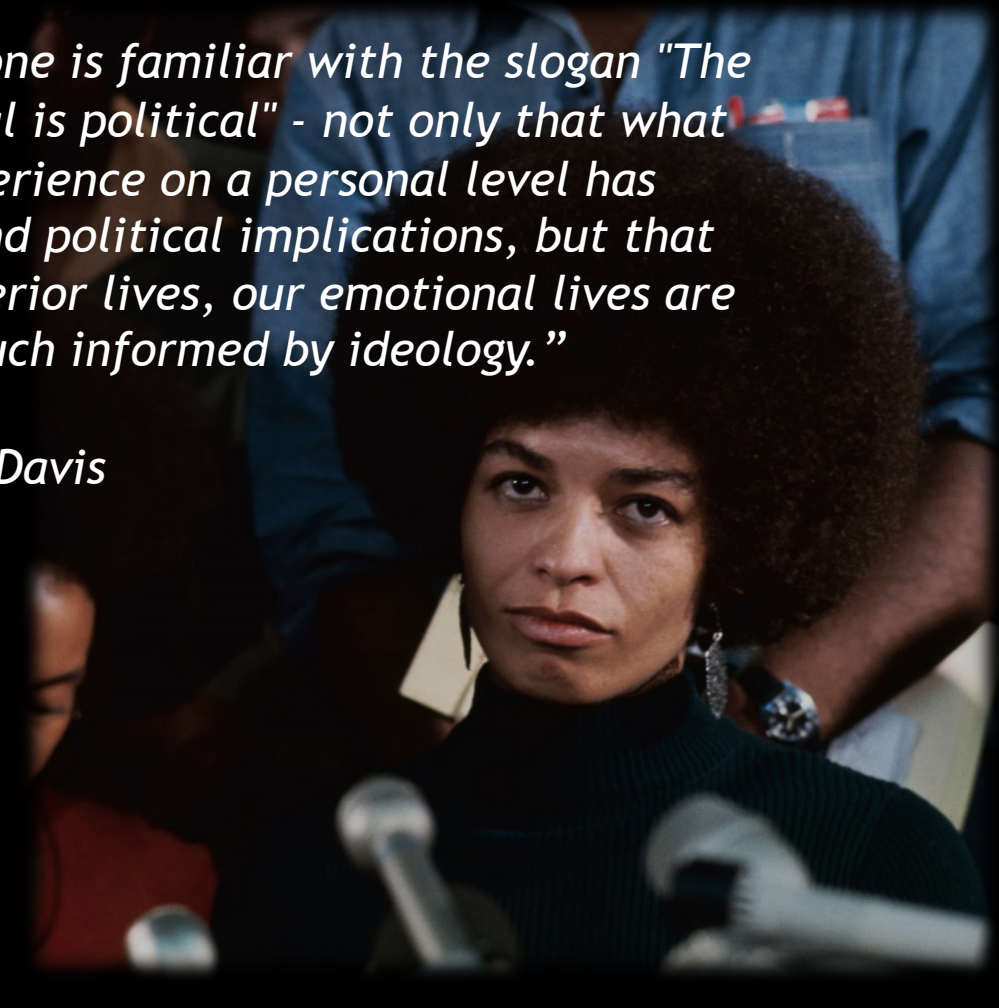
1991 the red ribbon adopted - worn to signify awareness & support for people living with HIV - but limits of this? Again, we come up against recognition versus redistribution - needs to be both at once and ongoing?

Anti-stigma methods & themes within these connected movements – What works?

- Consciousness raising
- The personal as political
- Challenging stigma by creating new languages & representations (often by transcoding stigmatized terms & images)
- Grassroots, Solidarity, Community & Care focused
- Social Justice /Rights based
- Concerned with recognition and redistribution of resources & services

“Everyone is familiar with the slogan “The personal is political” - not only that what we experience on a personal level has profound political implications, but that our interior lives, our emotional lives are very much informed by ideology.”

Angela Davis



Stigma on the return?

- Mid 20th century welfare capitalism = emergence of post-war social which challenged ‘stigma politics’ by exposing, for example, how Colonial and Patriarchal systems of exploitation structure capitalist systems of accumulation.
- 21st century ‘authoritarian neoliberalism’ = neoconservative **stigma backlash** against human rights, and against the social and political gains made by women, disabled, black, ethnic minority and LGBTQ populations



Section 3

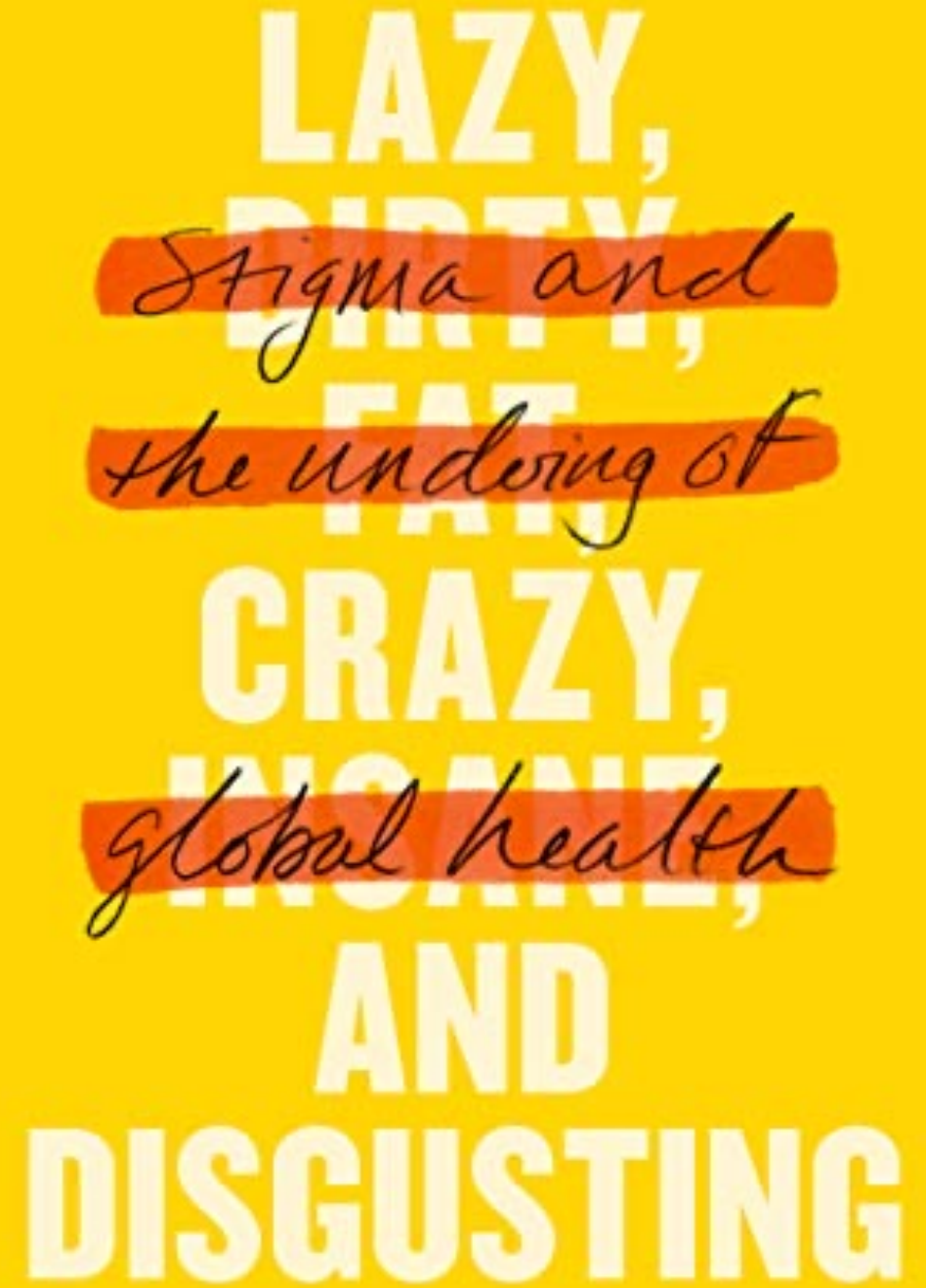
Anti-Stigma in Public Health



Anti-Stigma in Public Health

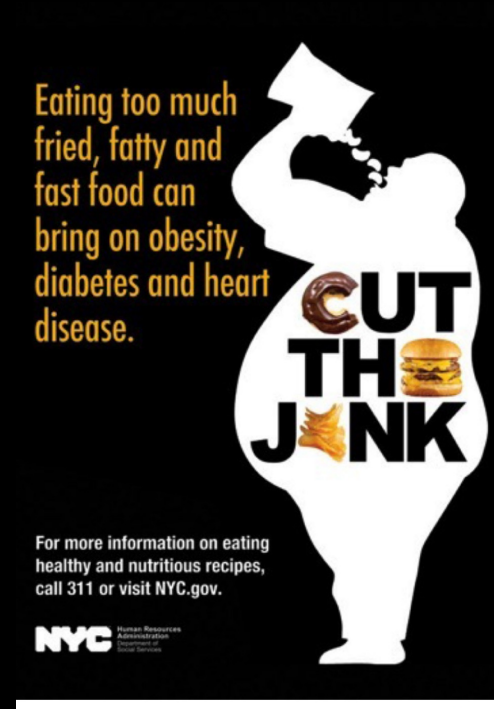
“Stigma doesn’t just sicken us by blocking access to health services & discouraging us from seeking help. It does much more, It makes us vulnerable to poverty & its effects... stigma, once attached to conditions & groups of people -and most especially to those living in poverty & otherwise marginalized- is incredibly hard to shift. It can trigger anxiety, depression & other mental illnesses that can lead to waves of suicides”

Brewis & Wutich, 2019



Using stigma to shame people into being healthy *doesn't work.*

- Conclusions of Brewis & Wuitch
- Shame in all its forms needs to be removed from the public health tool kit.
- Producing more stigma deepens & entrenches massive, systematic injustices, harming our health, our economy and the quality of our lives



i.e. Stigma in anti-smoking campaigns was effective in smoking cessation in higher socioeconomic groups (who had access to support to quit), but further marginalized those in lower socio-economic groups -now almost unreachable - *heaping blame on shame*

Failure of National Anti-Stigma Campaigns Mental Health

“The damage created by public stigma onward those with mental illness is widely appreciated & understood by the mental health profession. .. Destigmatization has long been a major element of global mental health promotion efforts. But despite decades of hard work, the removal of sustained stigma around mental illness has proved elusive.”

(Brewis & Wuitch)

- *Closed Ranks (Canada)*
- *Open Doors (WPA)*
- *Like Minds Like Us (New Zealand)*
- *See Me (Scotland)*
- *EU Ministers' Council Resolutions*
- *Stigma and Mental Illness (WPA)*
- *Hjärnkoll (Sweden)*
- *Opening Minds (Canada)*
- *See Change (Ireland)*
- *Time to Change (UK)*

Top-down campaigns funded by global corporations

Some of the very systems and arms of government - political, corporate and media that *produce* stigma and *profit from* stigma - bank roll *anti-stigma* mental health campaigns.

Anti-stigma *washing*?



Virgin Care (now rebranded as [HCRG Care](#)) £40m gross profit in 2022 through NHS (state) contracts

**TALK ABOUT IT.
YOUR STORY COULD
CHANGE A LIFE.**



Anti Stigma Campaigns in Mental Health-winning the battle but losing the war?

A cynical take from Anthony David, Director
of the new Institute of Mental Health at UCL



Marketplaces in 'well-being'

the commodification of personal stories of psychiatric distress and recovery in mental health and wellbeing 'marketplaces' that are increasingly dominated by powerful corporate actors. (Costa et. al, 2012, p.86).

Recognition v. redistribution ?

Cuts to Mental Health Services



Approaches to mental health stigma (reviewed by Brewis & Wuitch)

Relabeling: Can sometimes work? Neurodiversity?

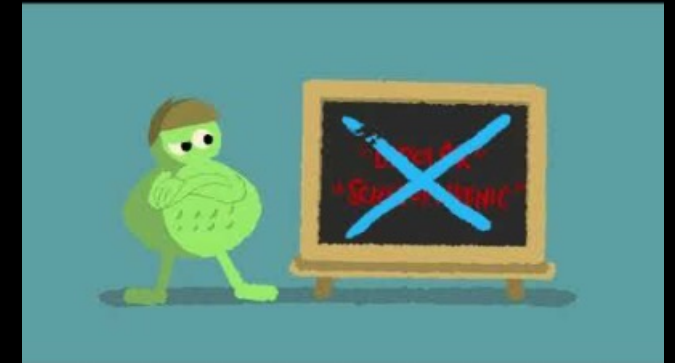
Reframing: Medicalisation? mental health & distress as a disease “like any other” or as “genetic” hasn’t worked.

Reeducate: Interventions seems to be short-lived as longer term shifting of social norms & beliefs so hard

Connect: Bring stigmatized groups into contact with others. Has worked for some groups & conditions but not others

Advocate: i.e. campaigns often led by public figures, can shift public attitudes, but again impacts are short-term

Activism: works best directly challenging stigmatizing beliefs & behaviors, boycotts/lawsuits/protests/civil disobedience - aimed at disrupting power structures. Led by “communities of suffering” & centre's lived experiences



[Stigmawatch program](#) to help communities fighting mental illness to challenge damaging media depictions



SANE We're people like you.

What *doesn't work* in public health anti- stigma

- Campaigns which are “top-down”
- Corporate funded (often celebrity led), PR type campaigns without grassroots activism, and decoupled from services
- Which are focused on “recognition” (identities etc & practices such as “talking”) but that are divorced from questions of “redistribution” (resources & services)



STIGMA & POVERTY

JRF JOSEPH ROWNTREE FOUNDATION

GROUP

Section 4

Our Challenge: Stigma and Poverty



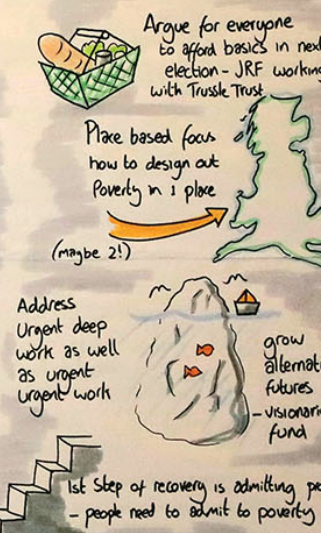
If Stigma didn't exist...



Impacts of Poverty on whole person



Opportunities for change



Stigma Deeper Dive

Care

Our Personal Coat of Arms

Who/What gains from the production of Stigma in poverty



Would there still be poverty if Stigma didn't exist?

What's in a name?

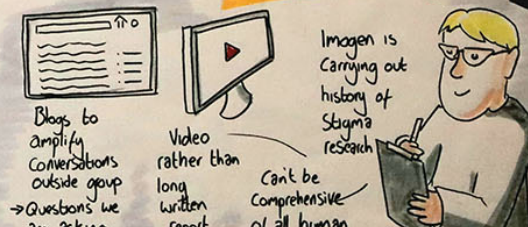


Who/what Creates Stigma in poverty + How is it Created?

- growth economics + downturn economics
- All Creators/perpetrators
- fear
- less connection to each other
- inequality



Next Steps



Some Key Findings of Scottish Parliamentary Group on Poverty Related Stigma, Feb 2023

Poverty-related stigma is extensive and deep-rooted - impacting people's mental health and wellbeing; erecting barriers to accessing support; restricting educational attainment; and influencing the design and resourcing of policies that can tackle poverty

Specific groups experience multiple forms of stigma and discrimination - an intersectional double-whammy of disadvantage which intensifies the impact of stigma on the lives of individuals and communities.

Societal perceptions and treatment of those experiencing poverty have become ingrained, not only among the broader population, but in how people experiencing poverty perceive themselves

Poverty-related stigma negatively impacts the mental health and self-esteem of people experiencing poverty by reinforcing feelings of shame and self-blame.

Exacerbated by narratives that present poverty as an individual choice, rather than structural issue

The causes of poverty-related stigma are multi-faceted, including media narratives and coverage of poverty, the use of language by people in position of influence and power, and policy design.

Top-Down Stigma Politics of Austerity

Scapegoating...

- ‘millions of people’
- ‘languishing on out of work benefits’
- ‘unproductive’ residuum
- ‘persistently playing the system’
- ‘something for nothing culture’
- a ‘shameful’ ‘dependency culture in Britain’

The promise of Austerity...

- ‘unleash billions of pounds’
- ‘restore the health of the public finances’
- liberate those ‘stuck on benefits’
- ‘transform’ the ‘life chances of millions of families’.



George Osborne, 'There Is a Dependency Culture', 28 February 2008,



‘Bring back the welfare stigma’: A neoliberal crusade to “bring back welfare stigma”

‘stigma is the way out’ the device required to break ‘a cradle-to-grave system of government-decided support’ (Charles Murray, 2009).

‘Keeping welfare firmly in the stigmatized realm is not merely a conservative crusade; it’s good policy, too’ (Payne, 2014).



We All Pay Your Benefits



Benefits Britain 1949



Benefits Street



On Benefits and Proud



Britain on the Fiddle



Famous, Rich and Hungry

One constant cycle of judgement

“You only have to watch any programme and there is evidence there that your kind are hated. These people are stealing your taxes and you’re thinking ‘that is me they are talking about’. It is yet another channel into you. Trapped in this cycle of being hated by everybody. It keeps coming, it keeps on coming. It’s relentless. Never ending. One constant cycle of judgement. Until you are ashamed to do anything.”

Mum interviewed in 2019



‘Being Poor is Not Entertainment: Fuck Benefit Street!’ Red Faction Demonstration at Riverside Stadium, Middlesbrough, August 30th 2014.

The challenge – questions for us


What does *shifting the dial on stigma and reclaiming power* look like in terms of poverty in the UK?



What would grassroots social movements against poverty look like?



What does creative activism in this space look like? If nobody identifies with poverty, can poverty be “reclaimed” as an identity or collective intersectional identity movement in pride and with dignity- as was in the case in other civil rights movements ?



Should *rights* be a framework for shifting the dial?



Thinking of movements like *act-up* would a multi-pronged creative mass movement look like for anti-poverty ?

“Stick Your Labels”



STICK YOUR LABELS PLEDGES

THE ORGANISATIONAL CHALLENGE



- 1 Poverty is not inevitable:** it is a problem of political choices, it is neither natural nor acceptable. We all have a role to play in addressing poverty: **We will set out our contribution to tackling poverty in Scotland.**
- 2 Attitudes matter:** How we talk about poverty and how we portray it can stigmatise and harm people: **We will never use language that may stigmatise people experiencing poverty.**
- 3 Actions change attitudes:** To change beliefs about poverty requires action across our whole society: **We will develop actions that help address negative attitudes towards people experiencing poverty.**



JRF Framing Tool Kit

- Dismantling the Myths
- Post-poverty: people don't believe poverty exists today, in this country.
- Self-makingness: people blame individuals for being in poverty, & believe they should try harder and work more.
- The game is rigged: people think there will always be poverty and nothing will ever change.
- Reframing as a way to challenge



This is poverty.



Enough is Enough Campaign

Our five demands are clear:

- A real pay rise
- Slash energy bills
- End food poverty
- Decent homes for all
- Tax the rich



The #RightToFood campaign



Hunger Is A Political Choice

Food poverty affects children's health, life expectancy, educational and life chances and can even cause lasting damage to a child's DNA.

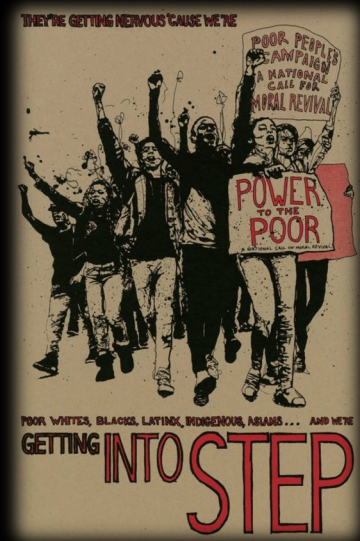
We are calling time on hunger. Join us.

Join the Right To Food campaign: www.ianbyrne.org/righttofood
#RightToFood
#HungerIsAPoliticalChoice

Inspiration: Intersectional Poor Peoples Movement - MLK

“We have moved into an era where we are called upon to raise certain basic questions about the whole society. We are still called upon to give aid to the beggar who finds himself in misery & agony on life's highway. But one day, we must ask the question of whether an edifice which produces beggars must not be restructured and refurbished. That is where we are now.”

Martin Luther King



King calls for a radical redistribution of economic and political power

31 May 1967

4 December 1967

Launches the Poor People's Campaign - a 'multiracial army of the poor'

MLK assassinated

Apr. 1968

