



Youth doesn't have to be alienated

By Daniella Ekundayo

A key problem facing today's youth in society is the lack of interest in politics and current affairs. As a young person you may ask yourself "How does this affect me?" or "What can I do to bring about change?" It is easy to mistake voting as the only forum to express your political views and often feel alienated because you are unable to do so.

Ed Miliband recently attended Wren Academy for a Q&A session where a number of students aged 11-18 were given the opportunity to ask questions. He began with the phrase "Politics is about how we change things" and he touched upon current political issues.

The Labour leader answered a number of questions from students who were concerned with the coalition government's stance on issues such as tuition fees, GCSEs and A-levels. Most importantly, he touched upon plans to create opportunities for young people to engage in politics and avoid a gap between the older and younger generations.

Young and politically aware

Politics is important to young people for a number of reasons. It has a major impact on future

generations. It is due to politics that there has been such rapid social change in terms of women's rights. It is essential that we encourage political discussions among the creative and open-minded youth of society, because this is the only way to ensure that the political world keeps growing and society continues to change for the better.

As a young person it is often difficult to see where you fit in, how you can be politically active or which party best suits your own political beliefs. Even at 16 or 17 there are ways to be politically active. Some of these ways include: volunteering with your local MP, watching the news regularly, keeping up with current affairs on social media and joining campaigns or protests which best suit your ethical beliefs.



Ed Miliband joins students at the Wren Academy.

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Shadow Education Secretary, Tristram Hunt, centre, visits the Archer Academy with Sarah Sackman, top right, and Mick Quigley, head teacher, extreme left. Photo Mike Coles

History lesson for visiting MP

A group of Year 7 and 8 students at the Archer Academy shared their love of the past with celebrated historian and Shadow Education Secretary Tristram Hunt MP when he visited the school on 24 November.

The MP spoke to staff and governors about the school and its origins before taking a tour with headteacher Mick Quigley. He then took part in a session with some of the Archer young historians, who talked to him about their favourite periods of history, including topics as diverse as Ancient Egypt, the origins of the East India Company and the French Revolution.

After asking the students some incredibly challenging questions, which they tackled admirably, Mr Hunt was quizzed by the students in turn, both on historical matters (such as what his own favourite period of history is – the 1870s, he answered) and why he decided to be a politician.

Mr Hunt said afterwards: "I was delighted to visit the new Archer Academy and really enjoyed hearing the students talk about their favourite periods in history. I was enormously impressed by their knowledge of and approach to the subject and how well they understood the importance of assessing and recording the evidence."

At the end of the session the

MP, accompanied by Finchley and Golders Green Labour candidate Sarah Sackman, presented the school with a bound set of

The War Illustrated, journals dating from the First World War. The books were donated by East Finchley historian Peter Hart.

Help children learn to read

Was one of your New Year's Resolutions this year to do something rewarding and that makes a real difference to your local community? If it was, you might consider volunteering as a Beanstalk reading helper, to help primary school children learn to read.

Beanstalk is a national charity that gives one-to-one literacy support to children in primary schools with pupils who have fallen behind with their reading. The local branch covers the boroughs of Barnet, Brent, Haringey and Enfield. At the moment it has 178 volunteers helping 534 children but always needs more volunteers.

Each Beanstalk reading helper works with three children and sees each child for two 30-minute sessions a week, during term-time, for a whole year. Together they read, play and talk. To find out more, call Harriet Watson on 020 8349 8095 or visit www.beanstalkcharity.org.uk/reading-helpers.

KALASHNIKOV KULTUR

By Ricky Savage, the voice of social irresponsibility

Who needs books these days?

Hi there, hipsters, welcome to the newly hi tech world where a man is not a man without a beard and a coffee. Welcome to the world of downloads and instant gratification. Welcome to reading War and Peace on your smartphone as you surf your way to Crumbs, the new cutting edge pop-up breakfast bar where you can get toasted sour dough with mango marmalade for two quid a slice. Welcome to the future because the future is now.

Time to say goodbye to the has-beens with their weird ideas about paper and pens who think that The Hobbit is a book. Goodbye to those weirdos who measure out their lives in bookshelves and think that every town should have a library. The future is only a download away and a library is a waste of a hip new pop-up opportunity.

Yes, that's right, time to reach for the ground glass and vitriol, you're not going blind, in hipster land a library is a waste of space in their hi tech world. Today's future means turning the library into a Costabucks espresso bar and Peruvian restaurant specialising in pulled guinea pig and roasted lettuce.

Now is the time to get rid of books and save forests for the future. Time to stop cluttering up the world with libraries and bookshops that the future doesn't need. Time for hipsters to rule the world and for texting and sharing to replace this weird desire to hold conversations. Time to shut the library and open up the future? No, time to shave their beards, shut their coffee shops and stop them.

Back in 1953 Ray Bradbury wrote Fahrenheit 451, a novel set in a world where books had been banned and firemen burnt them. Some may think you don't need books or libraries. In truth, I'm not one of them. I've read Fahrenheit 451 and I think Goethe was right. It's a short step from burning books to burning people. And where did I learn to love books? My local library.