For Hilary and Ari

I am an activist artist. I am also a survivor. When I was born, my family lived in one room and because my mother is black, we found it difficult to find anywhere decent to live. I hope to never forget my beginnings because it empowers me to struggle to help others and make the world a kinder, more just place for everyone. In the words of Alice Walker, “Activism is my rent for living on the planet.” My art engages with issues of social and climate justice, using a range of media and being led by the subject matter and my activist principles. My practice is collaborative and community based and I am a member and founder of several community organisations including Rebel Arts, Sew Angry and Artists Mutual Mentoring. I am also an organiser and member of many activist organisations both nationally and locally including the Artists’ Union England which campaigns for fair pay and better working conditions for artists.

I work part-time at Corona House which provides residential accommodation for women who have been homeless or at risk of homelessness. I also have an outreach remit, to work with women in need in the wider community. My main role is to work with groups and individuals through the arts broadly, this can include anything from visual arts, writing and music, to gardening, yoga and cookery. I feel very fortunate to be able to work in this way with many wonderful women. Creativity enables them to express feelings, thoughts and ideas, build confidence and self-esteem, recover in part from trauma and regain power and control over their own lives. I have also taught and lectured for many years. Currently, I am working one to one with a young autistic man who is a gifted artist and also with a young woman who has experienced trauma, mental health issues, exclusion and isolation.