



Paul Richards, Creative and Educational Director of UpRise c/o
Long Live Southbank
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Shân Maclennan (Creative Director, Learning and Participation)
Southbank Centre
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Ref: LLSB-SBC-28
19^h March 2014

Dear Ms Maclennan,

I am in receipt of your reply to Long Live Southbank relating to Southbank Centre's 'Word Search' publication and, on reading your response, have asked that I be able to make a considered response on their behalf.

The letter from Long Live Southbank on 14th March was clear that it referred to a singular phrase, and directly to the context in which it was used in the 'Word Search' publication. It was not in any way directed at either the original poem or its author, whose work I am very familiar with.

Your letter focuses heavily on defending the poem's author – whose intention and artistic expression was clearly not under scrutiny or question. An explanation of your interpretation of his intention was not required and personally, I found your attempt at explaining the concept and notion of poetry particularly patronising - especially when considering that skateboarders are creative expressionists and physical poets in their own right.

Given the aforementioned, and thus leaving John Agard aside, I shall focus on the issue at hand in detail, in the hope you do not miss the point a second time.

The Word Search resource is aimed at children of primary school age and features 2 poems, the first by Michael Rosen called 'I Spy With My London Eye' – which was written in conjunction with schoolchildren in October 2008. Taking this into consideration, I'm unsure as to how the booklet could have been used since '2007' as per your claim.

The section on the skate area then features an excerpt from John Agard, which you have published as a direct quote. However, the line has been altered by you thus compromising and corrupting the integrity of the artist's original intention. The original is written:

*'Where many elderly meet for warmth and tea and cake
and skateboarders were delinquent swans on a concrete lake'*

It has been manipulated to:

'Where skateboarders are delinquent swans on a concrete lake'

You are therefore paraphrasing John Agard and it should have been written:

Where skateboarders are 'delinquent swans on a concrete lake' - and should not be credited to the author as a direct quote.

Additionally, you have provided no background by which context can be given.

More importantly, the choice of a phrase containing the word 'delinquent' is a particularly odd one for primary school students, as your attempts to explain further highlight. This is a word that, without question, would need an interpretation and explanation to those who are unfamiliar with it, and you are seemingly expecting the teachers and group leaders to leave 'dictionary definition' and to provide your analysis.

You have additionally sought to accentuate the words 'delinquent' and 'concrete lake', creating yet further changes to the intended imagery, as it is the word 'swans' that would emphasise the metaphorical truth and intention of the artist's visual depiction. These are fundamental and basic literary errors that will undoubtedly lead to unquestionable misinterpretation.

I am baffled as to how you came to equate the writer's use of the adjective 'delinquent' and the noun 'concrete lake' as equal allegories. They are neither comparable literally, symbolically or otherwise in this piece.

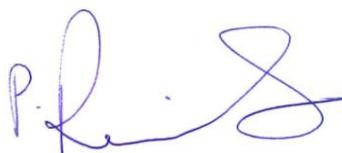
Furthermore, it is false and misguided that you should reach the conclusion that somehow the Undercroft skateboard community would no longer 'welcome school groups', or that school groups would be unable to have an equally educational and enjoyable experience without 'Word Search'. As the letter from Long Live Southbank stated, and I myself have often personally witnessed, school groups regularly visit the QEH Undercroft skate area, mostly independently of Southbank Centre.

It is concerning, given the responsibility of your position, that you cannot see the issue here, regardless of current sensitivities. You have misquoted John Agard and allowed an interpretation that lends itself to a negative and inaccurate stereotype of skateboarders that you should be keen to rectify, rather than perpetuate.

I sought consultation and input from my peers in the poetry and literary world before writing my response and all were in agreement. I fully support Long Live Southbank's request to have the 'Word Search' materials you produced be withdrawn in their current form.

To rectify your errors and ill-thought-out judgement, you have been provided with a clear and simple resolution to this matter: to revisit the original artwork and edit and reprint the booklet minus the quote in question. I hope there is no need for a lengthy communication rally on this matter.

Yours sincerely,



Paul Richards
Creative and Educational Director of UpRise