

## **Taking the Mic: Black British Spoken Word Poetry Since 1965 and Housing Justice**

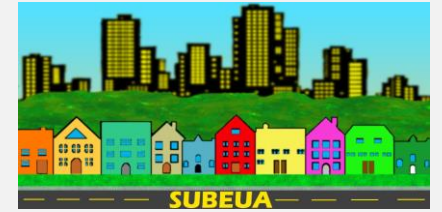
**Title:** Political Engagement in Benjamin Zephaniah's poetry

### **ABSTRACT:**

Auden claimed that "poetry makes nothing happen" whereas Shelley insisted that poets were "the unacknowledged legislators of the world." Benjamin Zephaniah testifies to Shelley's view as his work has always shown public engagement. His poetry, especially his collections *Too Black, Too Strong* (2001) and *We Are Britain!* (2002) highlight domestic issues of institutional racism. Their vocality represents poetry that is loaded with political and social concern. The article intends to show that his poetry in general and his poem „What Stephen Lawrence Has Taught Us“ in particular represent a work of political activism that leads to civic action. Due to his „street politics“ when he produces, performs and improvises his poetry in public spaces, the political dimension of black presence in Britain had to be discussed at the highest level of British political representation. With the help of performances, Zephaniah has been able to active the public to respond vehemently to social injustice in relation to the human rights and housing conditions. Based on the poetry initiated by Stephen Lawrence case, British police, government and Parliament had to readdress the themes of cultural diversity, unity, and the continuing process of cultural assimilation in Britain.



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