

Young people lord it up and shine.

There is a rumour going around – all that is reported in the press about young people lurking on street corners armed with knives and strong cider may not be wholly representative. In fact some young people are so frustrated with sweeping generalisations, that they got involved in a debate which hoped to voice this view and challenge stereotypes and society's appetite for sensationalism and negative news.

On Friday 10 July 2009, around 200 young people aged 13 to 25 had a unique opportunity to take over the House of Lords and conduct a debate around the issues that mattered to them. It was only the third time in its history that the doors were open to non members, and 4 members from Youth Voice - Josh Cope (Chair) Hannah Rachael Yates (Vice Chair) Andy Baker (PR and Media) and Liam Wooton (Secretary) - were there to see it. The event was part of Shine week which aimed to showcase young people's talents and highlight young people in a positive light.

The debate started with an introduction from the Lord Speaker Baroness Hayman, who welcomed everyone present and acknowledged that parliament was trying to bridge the gap with young people and allow their views and opinions to be heard. The debate consisted of 3 youth picked topics:

- 1) Perceptions about young people through the media and how it plays out in society
- 2) Celebrity – difference between celebrity and talent
- 3) What's my talent? Do schools recognise talent and nurture it?

The opening speakers introduced each topic with a 3 minute speech and then opened it up for debate to their fellow young persons. The young people shared their anger and frustration about how they are reflected in society by the press and discussed what talent means to them with energy, passion and conviction. It was clear that young people felt irritated by the fact that only specific newspapers (such as this one) reports on positive news about young people. The closing speaker stated "we know what the problems are, we need to find the answers" and encouraged all to approach local newspapers with positive news and also to use the internet to push forward ideas to highlight positive youth stories, using Facebook, youtube in order to challenge negative press and celebrate youth talent and achievement.

The day was a huge success with not a hoodie in sight or a sniff of strong cider. The event will be broadcast on BBC Parliament at 10pm on 18th July. A half-hour documentary by the Media Trust, 'Lording It!', showing three of the participants and their journey to the Lords, will also be broadcast on the Community Channel at 8pm on 28 July.