

Speaker - Clare Christopher Wordsmith - Dr. Olu Taiwo

My name is Clare Christopher.

Speaking at this event is so out of my comfort zone. Although I like to be involved in big events, I don't like the limelight, preferring to be a support in the background. My perspective revolves around doing pragmatic things to make things happen, to affect the lives of people in my immediate surroundings. I prefer ethical pragmatics than speaking platitudes theoretically because actions speak louder than words.

I was born here in Salisbury. Although lots of events revolve around the Cathedral, I'm more interested in what occurs in social periphery of Salisbury. The culture, the community the connections.

On any weekend here in Salisbury you might find me...

Drinking and debating with my merry mates at the Wyndham Arms
Dancing to Ska Music at the Winchester Gate
or producing a live Irish Music gig

I really like planting ideas in the community, building my sense of what Salisbury can really be. It's a practice of care and nurture, so that community can flourish and have meaningful experiences. And my goodness, we need community now more than ever.

I am keen for people to see Salisbury in different ways. We are here gathered in the ICON of Cathedral, but Salisbury is so much more. When people think of Salisbury they think of the Cathedral, the Market, and Stonehenge. But what of the history of the ordinary working people of the city? Community and my connection to Salisbury has informed one of my key passions, which, is planting the seeds for the construction of murals and in order to bring light to forgotten spaces, places, peoples and times. Our collective past and the individuals who have built our community.

One passion project is the Murals under the Milford Street bridge. This project started with local artist Fred Fieber's desire to paint a mural on the walls under the bridge.



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Fred is the most local of the local artists and I was drawn to his vision, which started the whole project. Fred takes pride in documenting the lost buildings in Salisbury and painting various parts of the Salisbury's urban landscape. Honouring people and places from this area that you wouldn't first think should be celebrated. After an informal conversation, I agreed to turn his vision into a community project and to gather stories and memories about the area before they built the bridge.

We interviewed many people who had lived and worked in Salisbury and collected a great archive of memories and pictures.

This provided the starting point for the scenes in the two murals. The Milford Street Bridge Mural, on the south side of the bridge, which shows scene from life in the area before the Ring Road was built. The Jubilee Mural opposite shows how Salisbury celebrated royal events.

The buildings depicted in the Milford Street Bridge mural no longer exist. Places of pride for the local community such as:

Number 16 Rampart Road. The close community of Rampart Road were torn apart when bulldozers destroyed more than bricks and mortar, as residents were rehoused all over Salisbury. The remains of Number 16 is lying beneath the concrete of Churchill Way, all but a memory of the houses and people who use to live there.

Foster's Bakery, Hub of the community....and the best jam puffs in town! Mr and Mrs Foster's are remembered by nearly all the people interviewed for this project and emerges from the interviews as a real focus of people's everyday lives.

Invicta Leatherworks Occupying a site between Culver Street and Rampart Road. Made quality leather goods, which includes a pair of mauve shoes for the Queen Mother. The factory provided local employment for nearly 70 years until 1969. It was demolished a year later, the rubble used as hard core for the new ring road.



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These people and places may seem, small or insignificant, especially as we gather in this giant civic space. But they do mean something to so many who were affected.

I am interested in preserving these memories in visual form. I am gradually working my way around Salisbury, working with different community groups; well, when I say 'I', I actually in truth, mean 'we'. We couldn't have achieved the two murals, without extensive and diverse team of people.

What I like about working with different groups of people in these projects, are the different reasons they have for taking part in a community process. I see my role as holding space for very different parts of the community to work together as part of a creative process. The arts can unite, build empathy, and reduce misunderstanding, and try and find what we might all have in common. I am also passionate about who and what we celebrate here in Salisbury. Who gets to make these choices and why? What about everyday heroes?

My whole speech comes by way of a paradox, you see I don't believe in universal pronouncements, because personal perspectives are always relative, they are always subjective. I try my best to avoid universal statements and generalisations. I try to avoid starting with, "Everyone is!"; "Everyone does!" "Everyone has!" and "Everyone see!" However, my speech is framed with a universal suggestion, suggesting that everyone should plant the seed...

As well as nurturing public art, I am a keen gardener and I believe that so much can be learnt from nurturing a plant, from seed. It is much like working and growing local community. This process requires care for the small details and providing space to facilitate growth. If we all planted 'a seed' today, think of the good for our collective future. The act of nurturing and observing growth, develops the patient skills required to facilitate the struggles of life. When I had an allotment, an allotment Elder said something profound to me, 'Nothing wants to die'.



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If you plant a seed, it will promote your mental well-being.
If you plant a seed, you will understand the importance of diversity.
If you plant a seed, you might be able to eat your own produce.

In this way, my mantra echoes the green slogan: Think globally and act locally.

Just like when Charles Dickens helped the campaign to transform the working and living conditions of the working classes in Victorian England. Charles Dickens focused on these universal issues focusing on personal stories and transformations. Like Charles Dickens, the Milford Street bridge mural, depicting Children playing in the street, are drawn from local stories that is part of the national memory.

So, this speaking thing has be more than enough for me. So, I would like to finish but ask you one question, what seeds are you planting and watching grow? I'm currently working with Fred on the idea for a mural at Culver St Car Park. A trompe l'oeil showcasing what use to there. I'm just waiting for Country Council approval. Anyone here that can pass that through?

Remember, Actions speak louder than words.

