

Biography

Angel Akpovi is a freshman majoring in culture, advocacy, and leadership and cognitive studies, with a minor in cinema and media arts. Previously mentored by John Bernard, Coventry Poet Laureate, she is a writer and performer dedicated to the intersection of art and social justice. Akpovi's work includes a short film featured at the Royal Shakespeare Company's 100th year commencement ceremony and performances at the Fair Education Alliance Summit. She is passionate about how creative expression can serve as a tool for advocacy within academic and social structures.

Artist Statement

My work engages Blackness in higher education through the concept of the Black Border, a psychological space where cultural inheritance and institutional expectation converge and conflict. This idea emerges from my experience preparing to travel to Nigeria, where I found myself suspended between Black British identity and ancestral belonging. Within the university, this tension often appears as a negotiation between authentic selfhood and the quiet demands of academic respectability.

I interrogate what I call the institution's scientific telescope, a gaze that positions Black students as objects of scrutiny rather than authors of knowledge. Why are we so often observed, measured, and interpreted instead of recognized as intellectual agents in our own right?

Free verse poetry became my chosen form because it mirrors this condition. Its fragmentation and fluidity reflect the nonlinear experience of inhabiting multiple cultural worlds at once. The form resists containment, much like the identities it seeks to hold.

This process also revealed a deep vulnerability, raising an urgent question: What would an educational system look like if it did not require us to abbreviate our names, our languages, or ourselves to belong?

By centering these tensions, my work resists the ongoing erasure of Black intellectual and cultural traditions in higher education and insists on their visibility, complexity, and authority.