

Zahrah and 'The Place'

all equal
all different

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All Equal All Different
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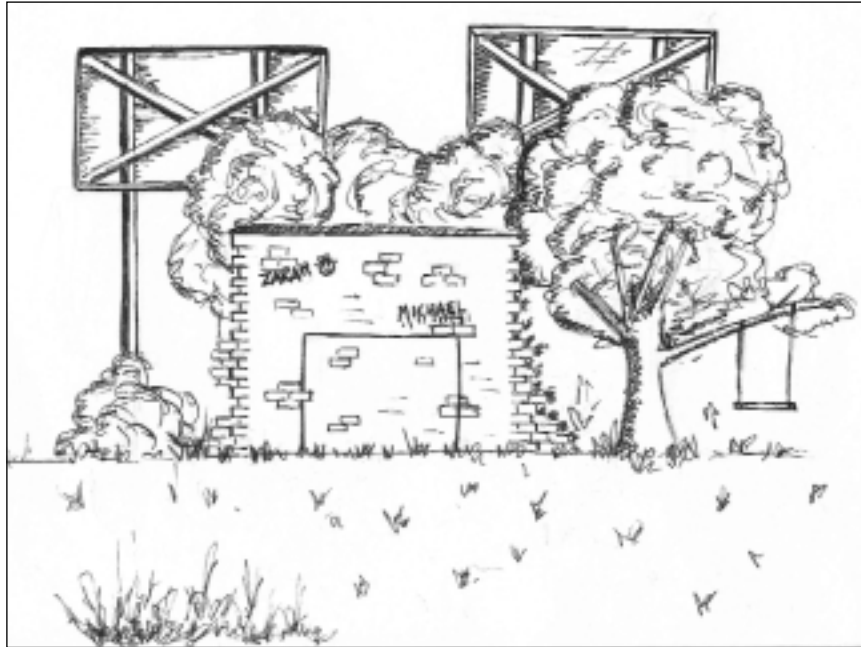
DEDICATION

This story is dedicated to Zahrah and her mother Preethi Manuel who have battled tirelessly for Zahrah's Inclusion, thus paving the way for other disabled children. Richard Rieser has been disabled since he was 9 months old, when his leg and arm were effected by polio. He has been a teacher for 25 years and is currently the Director of DEE. Santi Rieser who illustrated the text is Richard's son. Santi is 16 and currently doing his GCSE's He likes to draw, surf and play the saxophone.



UK Disability Forum
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It was a perfect day in the middle of the long summer holidays. The sun was up and, by 6 in the morning, it was hot. The early morning sun cast long shadows across 'The Place'.



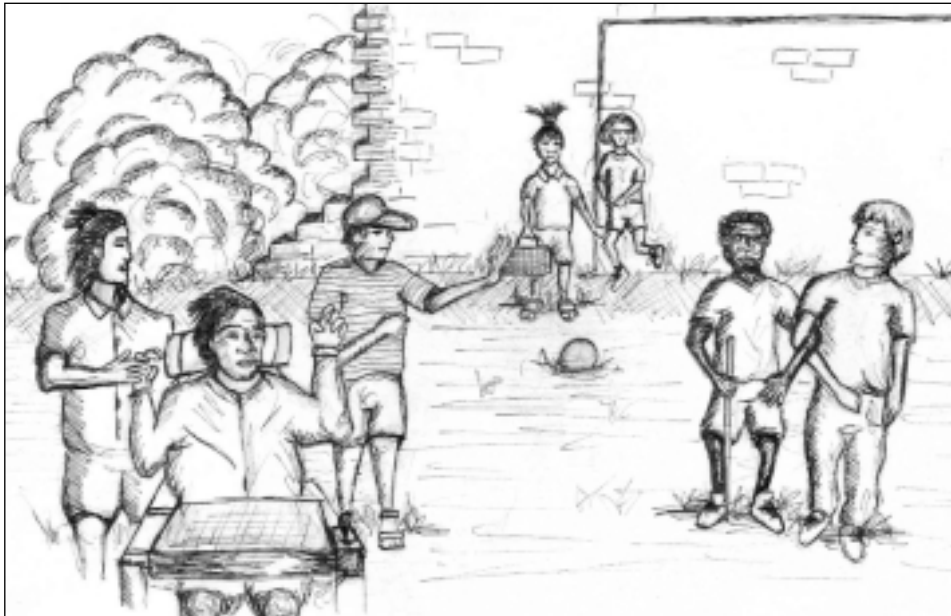
In the middle of 'The Place' was a tall thick old wall. At each end the brickwork had worn down to make steps up to the top. No one could remember how long this old wall had been here, but everyone agreed it was very old and very strong.

The wall was in the middle of what grown-ups thought was waste ground, hidden by large advert boards. That summer the wall had seen the local children coming to play everyday. They invented all sorts of games. They built platforms and swings in the trees, created a mountain bike and wheelchair racing track and dug out and filled a swimming pool with water. 'The Place' was theirs. It was where the children could do what they wanted without grown ups getting in the way. Because they were able to do what they liked they treated each other well. They planned, worked and played together to make it their wonderland.



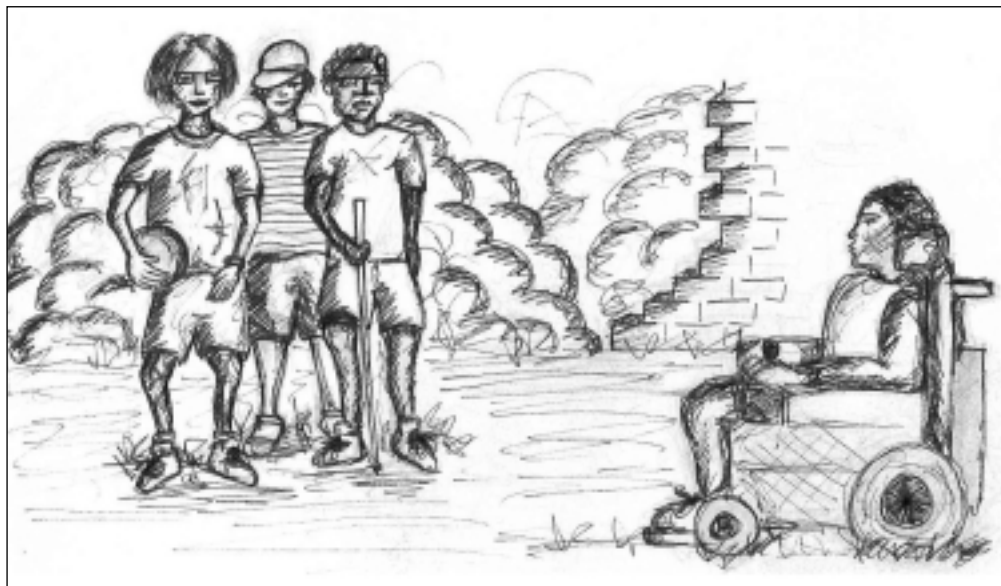
**Zahrah came in her wheelchair with her friends Annie and Anil.
Zahrah had a talker on her chair.**

Wayne came with Michael.



When Tania and Mogfura arrived, there were already lots of children playing together. Excitedly, carrying a picnic basket, Mogfura shouted “We’ve got a cold curry, sandwiches and juice, enough for everyone!”

“Let’s all play ball first, ” said Tania.



**“I’m hungry now.
Let’s eat,” said
Michael.**



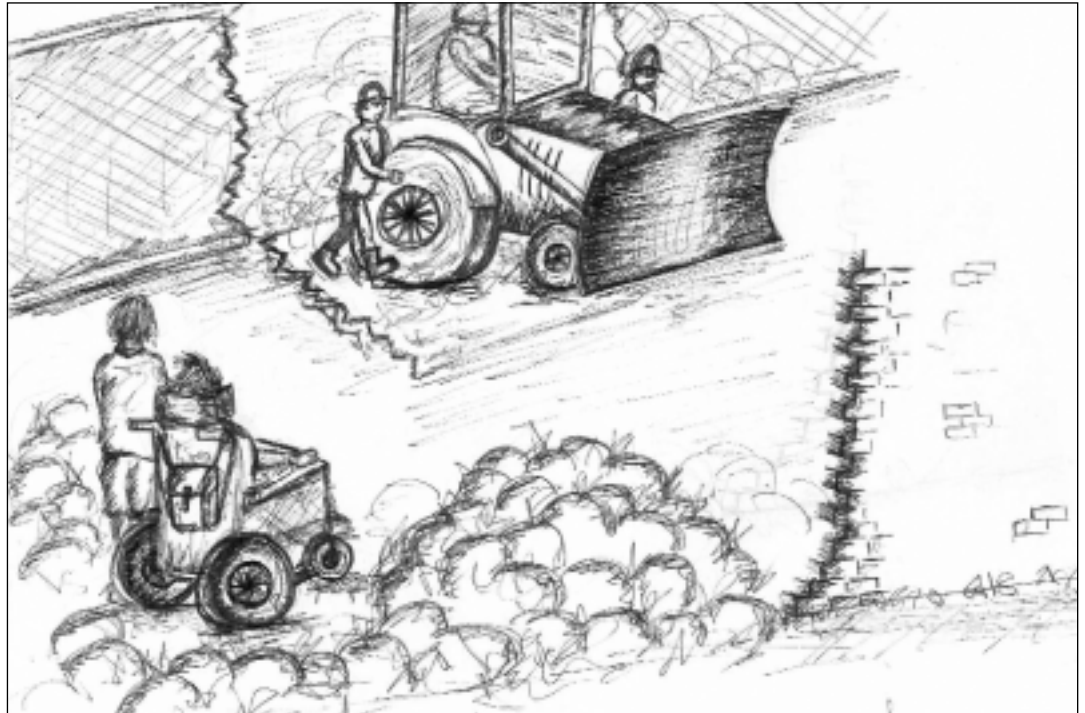


They all sat down in the shade of the wall on an old piece of canvas they had found.

As they were eating, they heard a loud banging noise. Zahrah and Annie went to see what it was.



A large excavator rumbled into 'The Place' and began to move towards the old wall. The workers looked at the children. The children looked at the workers.





Seeing what was about to happen Zahrah shouted “No!” through her talker and quickly placed herself between the wall and the excavator. She was soon joined by all the other children.

“What’s going on? I thought this was waste ground,” said John, the foreman.

“No it’s an adventure playground. We made it! Go away!” shouted all the children.

“We have to make a car park for the shopping centre,” said John.

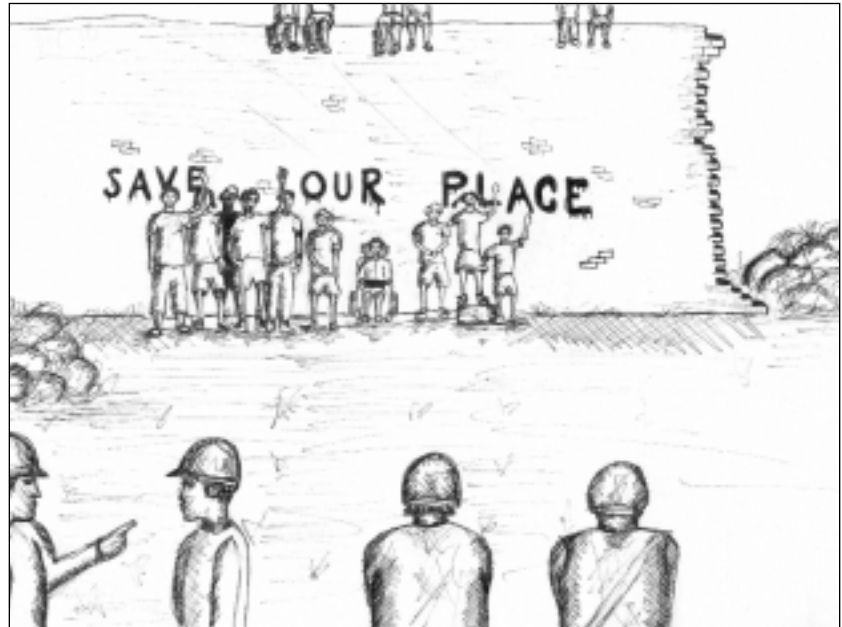
“No – this is our place!” “We’re not going.”

“Leave us alone!”

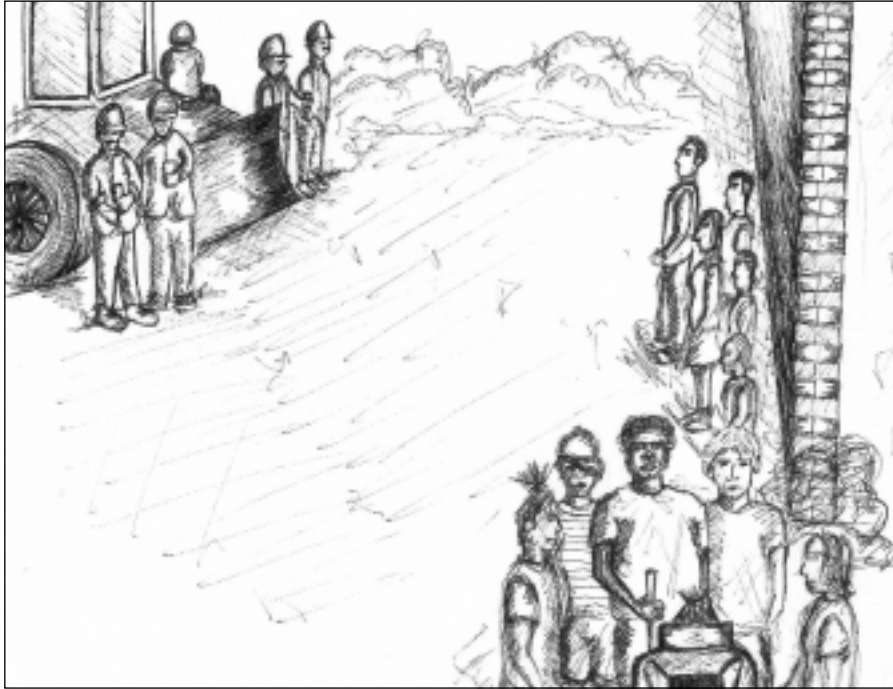
“Aren’t there enough car parks?” “This is our only place!” cried the children.

John called his boss with his mobile, “The place is full of kids. They’ve made it a playground.”

Meanwhile some of the children were ringing their friends on their mobiles telling them “Get to ‘The Place’ quickly”.



Soon John’s boss came. More children came. Some of the children painted ‘Save Our Place’ on the wall.



The workers had a cup of tea. The children had a meeting and decided what to do. “Let’s get the papers and TV here,” said Michael. Zahrah was picked to prepare what they wanted to say on her talker.

Then the Mayor arrived. "You are not meant to be here. Nobody is meant to be here!" He shouted at them to go home but they just stayed where they were. The press and TV came.

Michael pointed out "This is a good place for children. Shouldn't you think about us for a change?"





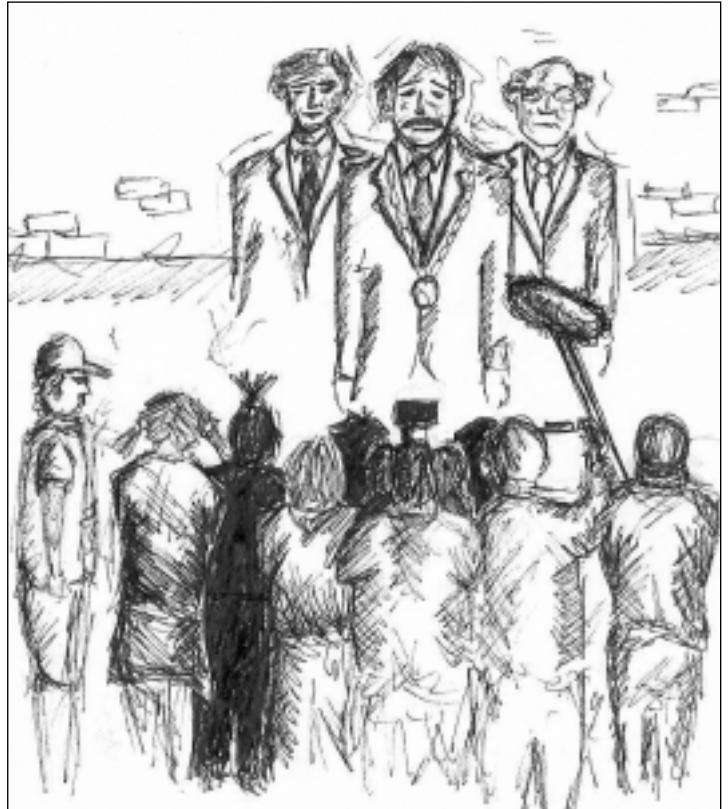
More children came and some parents came as well, wanting to know what was going on. The Mayor called the police. The police arrived. The Mayor said again “You must all go. The Council have decided to make this into a car park for the supermarket.”

Zahrah made a statement to the reporters and the Mayor. “We are staying. This is our place. We are happy here. There is nowhere to play round here. We don’t need a car park. Cars knock down children, and make traffic jams and pollution! We want an adventure playground.”

**The children cheered Zahrah.
The adults cheered Zahrah. The TV cameras rolled.**

A reporter asked the Mayor how the idea of building a car park worked with the Green Policy of the Borough- to encourage people to use bikes and buses. The Mayor looked embarrassed and said “I think there may have been a mistake.”

The Mayor looked at the large crowd and TV cameras and said, “The children want to keep the playground. We have to change our plans. We did not plan for this but we will make an adventure playground.” The Mayor looked relieved when everyone cheered him.





Then everyone had a big party and barbecue .

**Zahrah was on the telly.
“You are a star Za.
I’m so proud of you!”
said her mum.
“Thank you, mum,” said
Zahrah through her talker,
as they had a big hug.**



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