

WORDS FOR ESSEX BY ELSA JAMES

What would Essex look like if the norm got turned on its head,
And the 'Othered' became the norm,
If it wasn't so scared to embrace its differences,
If the 'Essex girl' and 'Essex man' terms never came about,
And it led the world into becoming a better place for all humanity.

VERSE 1

**WHAT WOULD ESSEX LOOK LIKE IF ALL CULTURES WERE CELEBRATED AND INTEGRATED?
IF QUEER SPACES WERE PROMOTED AND PROTECTED,
IF SECTION 28 NEVER EXISTED,
AND WE ALL FELT AS IF WE WERE WANTED.**

VERSE 2

**WHAT WOULD ESSEX LOOK LIKE IF YOU WERE NOT JUDGED ON THE COLOUR OF YOUR SKIN?
AND IF ALL THE RACISTS AND HOMOPHOBICS HAD A 9 PM CURFEW,
AND BLACK, BROWN, AND QUEER PEOPLE RAN THE COUNCIL.**

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VERSE 3

**WHAT WOULD ESSEX LOOK LIKE IF IT DIDN'T HAVE A BOUNDARY OR BORDER?
AND IT WASN'T SO CLOSE TO LONDON?
AND SITTING ON PIER HILL FELT THE SAME AS JAMMING IN NOTTING HILL,
AND IT WAS A THING TO EAT JERK-COCKLES WHILST DRINK WHITE RUM BY THE SEA.**

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VERSE 4

**IMAGINE IF ALL THE 'OTHERS' MOBILISED AND CAME TOGETHER TO SET THE TONE,
IF ALL THE CANDIDATES ON THE BALLOT PAPERS WERE NON-BINARY OR WOMEN OF COLOUR?
OR IF WE WEREN'T SO FEARFUL TO WALK INTO ANY PUB ALONG THE SEAFRONT,
OR ASHAMED TO SAY YOU LIVED HERE.**

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VERSE 5

**WHAT WOULD ESSEX LOOK LIKE IF BLACK FOLKS MOVED TO THE COUNTY,
BECAUSE IT WAS THE PLACE THAT LIBERATED THEIR SOULS,
AND GROUNDED THEM IN ANCESTRAL WISDOM?
AND ALL THE BLACK STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY,
WERE ALLOWED TO BE REBELS LIKE THEIR WHITE PEERS,
AND THEY DIDN'T HAVE TO THINK ABOUT HOW TO WEAR THEIR HAIR,
AND THEY COULD ALL TRULY EXPRESS THEMSELVES WITHOUT WORRYING ABOUT ASSIMILATING.**

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VERSE 6

**WHAT WOULD ESSEX LOOK LIKE IF ALL THE PASSENGERS ON THE EMPIRE WINDRUSH
SETTLED IN TILBURY?
AND THEY GAVE BIRTH TO THE FIRST BLACK BRITISH GENERATION,
WHO ROAMED THE COUNTY FREELY?
AND THE TERM 'ESSEX GIRL' AND 'ESSEX MAN' CONJURED UP IDEAS OF
STRONG BLACK WOMANHOOD AND POWERFUL BLACK MEN.**

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What would Essex look like?

What would the world look like?

Devised from focus groups held with individuals from the Black Student Societies at the University of Essex and the south Essex LGBTQIA+ community.