

Song lyrics for Chapter One of 'Othered in a region that has been historically Othered' (2022) film
by Elsa James

Would never have chosen to leave our country,
But war leaves no choice when you're weak and hungry.
Took a lot of beating with the boot and the strap,
Slavery hasn't ended please go check out your map.

Standing for your rights should never be contested,
But it's hard when you're continually subjected and detested.

When they strip-searched us where do we complain?
Such a cruel and barbaric way it made us feel insane.

Waiting so long for our claims just to be accepted,
Knowing that our story will certainly be neglected.
Worrying about how they will decide to judge we,
Knowing in our hearts we will never be set free.

Times in the detention centre thinking hard all day,
Not allowed to claim state benefits - that's what they say.
They say five pounds-a-day is what we're worth,
But surely no one can think that on this earth.

Border agency footsteps at the door,
Not long after that they put us on the floor.
They come to check our status,
But feels like they've raped us.

Destitution is an option when you fear you'll be deported,
But that's how low the mind will go when you're exhausted and unsupported.

How are we really to survive?
When all we want to do is stay alive.
Take one illegal job after another,
Missing all the times we spent sitting with our brothers.

The councillors voted to oust us from the town,
Left us so depressed and feeling very down.
Lord, how did we end up in the city of Southend,
Tell us this is not where our story ends.

Ashamed our children view us as the failed and the weak,
Barely had the strength sometimes to even smile or even speak.

A school should be a safe space, but they are bullied every day,
How are we to stop them, we are left to kneel and to pray.

Fearful of seeing a doctor when you have no legal right,
Pretending you're not in pain keeps us worrying throughout the night.

Mental health is a thing that we hide under the carpet.
So hard to hide it when you're inside the supermarket.

Devised from the stories and accounts of African asylum seekers and refugees based in Southend.