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## Help us fight the racists

17 October 2007



**Billy Bragg**

THE BARD of Barking returned to his former school for the first time in 33 years for the launch of a groundbreaking anti-racism CD.

Singer-songwriter Billy Bragg addressed more than 250 Barking Abbey students on the power of music in the fight against racism, last Tuesday.

His emotive talk accompanied Love Music Hate Racism's massive CD giveaway, featuring exclusive tracks by 29 artists such as Roll Deep, The Charlatans and MIA.

The CD comes free with the Oct 17 issue of NME and will be distributed to schools across the country thanks to the added support from the National Union of Teachers.

At last week's presentation, Bragg mixed song, schoolboy anecdotes and tales of his musical success to keep the 15 and

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16-year-olds captive.

He broke the ice by divulging naughty secrets from his days at the Sandringham Road school, including a report that read 'Bragg uses obvious intelligence as a disruptive force' and the fact that he left school after failing most of his O-levels.

But Bragg also admitted to unthinking prejudice and racism - before music came to the rescue.

He said: "There was a lot of racism here, and looking back I'm ashamed about some of the things I did, but none of us is born with fully formed views.

"It was only when I went to see Rock against Racism when I was 19 that I really started thinking about it."

Having identified music as the best way to win hearts and minds, Bragg called on the students to continue the fight.

He said: "You represent the future. You are much more hip than I am. Take that belief in the power of music and use it to break down the barriers the racists are trying to construct.

"Racists and their politics are based on lies, and we have to fight those people with our music.

"I want this town to be famous because it is the home of a classic song writer, not because it's the home of racism."

Student Daniya Ismail, 15, was impressed with Bragg's message.

She said: "I enjoyed listening to him. Racism is a very serious issue and using music we all love is a great way to make the point."

The LMHR CD comes free with the Oct 17 issue of NME music magazine, and will also be distributed to schools across the country thanks to the added support of the National Union of Teachers.

Donna Guthrie, of Love Music Hate Racism in Barking and Dagenham, added: "We want students to know it's cool to be anti-racist, through the actions of musicians they look up to and admire."

LMHR will also be sending out half a million empty CD sleeves - interactive tracks with exclusive videos can be downloaded from [www.nme.com/lovemusicchateracism](http://www.nme.com/lovemusicchateracism).

For more information about LMHR campaigns visit [www.lovemusicchateracism.com](http://www.lovemusicchateracism.com)