



**Black & Minority  
Ethnic Project**

Syma Ahmed  
BME Development Officer

Hello. My name is Syma and I coordinate the Black and Minority Ethnic project at the women's Library. I joined the library just over 10 years ago to support the library in developing **learning** which is relevant, accessible and sensitive to the needs to BME women in Scotland.



A group of diverse women are gathered in a room, likely a workshop, at Kingsway Court Health & Wellbeing Centre. They are all looking towards the camera and holding up their hands, which are decorated with colorful paint designs. The women are dressed in a variety of styles, including traditional headscarves and modern casual wear. In the background, a banner reads 'WORKING TOGETHER' and a sign identifies the location as 'Kingsway Court Health & Wellbeing Centre'. A logo in the top left corner of the image shows a stylized figure in a red circle.

Working with diverse women's group's across Scotland.

Kingsway Women's Group  
Glasgow

Over the years I have worked with diverse women's groups across Glasgow with the focus of connecting the women with the learning at the library. Some groups are made up of women who have settled in Scotland for many years while others are new migrants including those from the refugee communities.

Some are hard to reach women who are facing isolation, some have language barriers while others have more complex needs. We try our best to develop programmes to meet the needs of all women we work with.

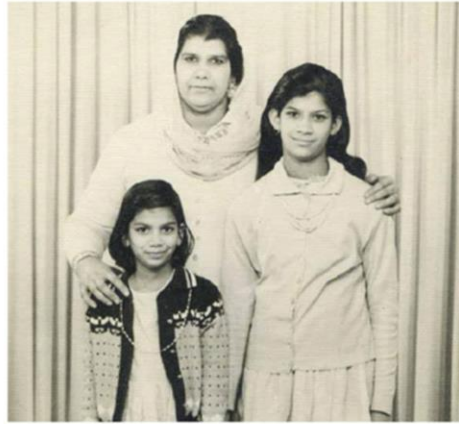
This is the image of one of the refugee women's group in Glasgow who took part in creative workshops exploring Body Image.



Documenting and celebrating the history of BME women in Scotland

SHE SETTLES IN

# THE SHIELDS



UNTOLD STORIES OF MIGRANT WOMEN IN POLLOKSHIELDS

- She settles in the Shields Oral History project is one of my first ventures at the women's Library. We were keen to document stories of our migrant women who brought along their wonderful culture and heritage to Scotland. Stories of over 30 women alongside their wonderful images and artefacts came together in a book and travelling exhibition.



Launch event for She Settles in the Shields



“I often thought my story wasn’t important but now having shared it with you and being included in this wonderful book is just amazing!”

*Project participant*



- At the launch event we invited families of the women involved, local councillors and local community organisations. Women were presented with a free copy of the publication. The women said that this was the first time they truly felt their story was valued and celebrated. The books were also distributed throughout the Glasgow libraries thus adding positively to the Arts and Culture Sector.



Developing innovative projects to meet the needs of BME women



Dixon Women's Group  
Model House Reminiscence Project

- This is the Model House Reminiscence project where we worked with women from South Asian countries to share their stories of home and how they lived before migrating to Scotland. Then they worked with a local artist to build their house and as result were introduced to new arts techniques working with wood, clay and leather carvings. The house has become an exhibition item which often gets loaned out and currently displayed at our Mezzanine floor of the women's library.





## Lifelong learning through creative interaction

- Empowering women
- Increasing confidence and self esteem
- Promoting health and wellbeing
- Involving BME women with Arts and Cultural events/festivals in Scotland
- Learning new skills and artistic techniques



As you can see we are very creative at the women's library. I enjoy developing new innovative projects which has a blend of the GWL learning coupled with engaging in the Arts. In general the programmes we develop offer a feminist, and supportive framework which recognizes individual strengths, abilities and potential We offer a pathway for women to engage with their local community and have their voices heard

We offer a safe space and a sense of belonging where women are supported in self-development

We help the women to gain confidence in challenging inequality and for them to become leaders in their own lives



Lifelong learning  
through creative  
interaction



ASRA Women's Group, Glasgow

Creating a banner for 16 Days of  
Action Violence Against Women

We often get many requests from external organisation to undertake partnership work because the love our ethos and way of working. We work together to connect women to take part in various events and festivals in Scotland such as:

International Women's Day

World Book Night

Scottish Mental Health Film Festival

Scottish Refugee Festival to name a few



Working with  
partners to organise  
events for various  
festivals

International Women's Day  
Book Week Scotland  
Black History Month  
Scottish Refugee Festival  
Scottish Mental Health Film Festival  
16 Days of Action  
World Book Night  
Aye Write

- Here's an example – this is the ASRA women's working with local artists to create a banner highlighting the issues of domestic abuse within BME communities - part of 16 Days of Action Violence against Women





“I cant believe it’s my first time visiting this place (St Mungos Museum). I’ve been in Glasgow for almost 20 years. I loved all the objects and the atmosphere was buzzing. Thank you Women’s Library for organizing this trip!”

*Project participant*

## Connecting BME women to the Arts & Cultural Sector



Another thing we found was that many BME communities were not accessing museums and Art institution. This was due to a variety of reasons. We are very keen for women to learn about the Scottish History and Culture through organised and supported visits to these places.

In the above picture you can see women enjoying the objects at the Glasgow Science Centre and image below is of women visiting the St Mungos Museum for religious arts



## Raising Awareness of Women's History in Britain



International Women's Groups, Glasgow

Women's History Timeline Workshop

We run a number of creative workshops to help women explore gender inequality, gender stereotyping and highlight the journey taken by women to gain rights and equality in this country.

This is an image of the International Women's Group engaging in a women's history timeline workshop.



### Consultancy:

- Scottish advisory panel for BAME women
- Supporting diverse women's groups with governance, developing innovative projects and funding

I also take part in various consultancy work - I am a part of the Scottish Advisory Panel for BME women where we try and make positive change for minority ethnic women at policy level

I provide consultancy support to emerging BME women's group in governance, service planning and helping them to access funding.



Book Week Scotland Focus Group

Advising and assisting  
external organization to  
create more diverse and  
inclusive services

Since GWL is well connected to BME groups we often get asked to do various call outs targeting these communities.

As result my work often involves taking part in consultations to help diversify the Arts and Cultural Sector.

Here we have supported Book Week Scotland to run a focus group with BME women to find out why the take up of their services is low from the BME communities and what adaption can be made to make their work more inclusive.



## Collect:if

### Network of Women of Colour Creatives in Scotland

“Until today, I hadn’t  
seen so many BME  
women creatives in  
one room together in  
Scotland!”

*Collect:if member*



- Over the past year we have under taken new and exciting ventures which has taken us to another level. For example our new initiative called Collect:if - a network bringing together for the first time Women of Color Creatives based in Scotland. We provide a safe and private space for the members to meet quarterly where they can share information, support one another and also help us diversify the GWL collection. We keep them informed with monthly newsletter and a FB page where they can continue to share and collaborate out with the network meetings.





## Collect:if Herland



A landmark evening where Women of Colour took to the stage, called the shots and showcased some of the best in performance, music, and food, blended with the welcoming, uplifting Herland flavour.



- Last Year Collect:if members hosted one of the GWL Legendary Herland events where Women of Colour called all the shots, took to the stage and showcased some of the best in performance in Music, dance, spoken word and food!



- Another project that has really taken off is Creative Writing for Muslim women with our national partners - The University of Sheffield. It all started from a few years ago where a handful of Muslim women wanting to start a book group AND now moving onto creative writing such as play writing, blogging, writing for fiction and more. It is also amazing to see the transition of these women who are now engaging in various literature events.



“Not what I expected in a good way. Everyone was so welcoming and it was great to work with local Muslim writers! The workshops has given me an insight into different types of writing and I will definitely be coming back for more!”

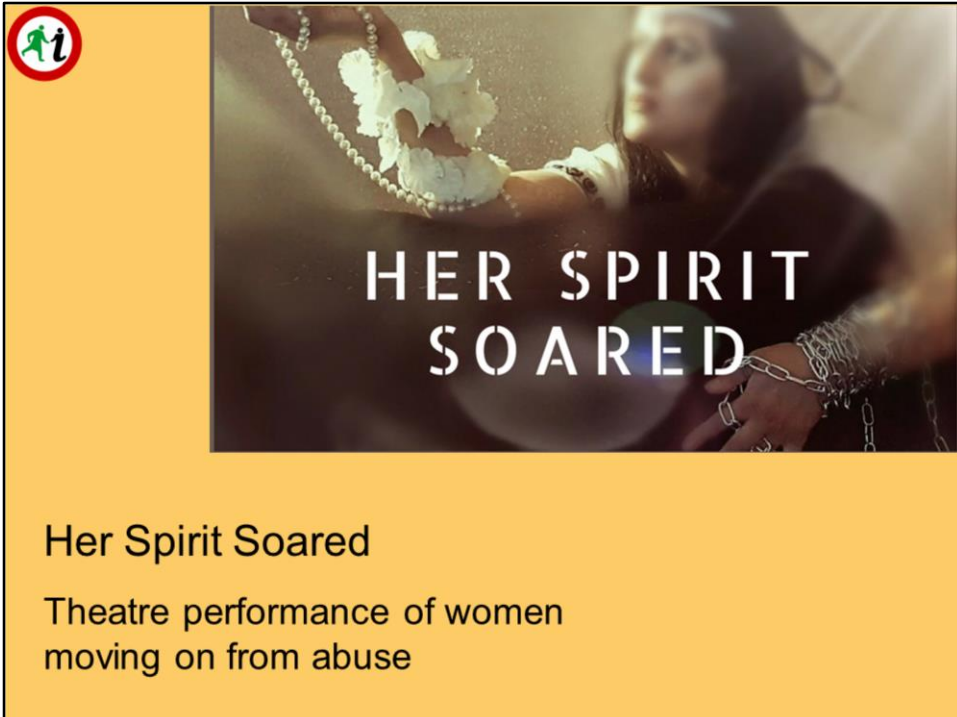
*Workshop participant*



## Creative Writing for Muslim Women



We have also tapped into some of our Collect:if members who are emerging and established writers to facilitate these workshops. The writings produced by the group will be included in an anthology of Muslim women’s writing. We will be organising a celebratory event in September showcasing the amazing writings created by the women



Another great achievement in this past year was the Her Sprit Soared Theatre play which was performed during 16 days of action violence against women. This play tells true stories of local women moving on from abuse. Again BME communities rarely take part in the performing arts sector and project achieved many positive outcomes.

The workshops were carefully planned to ensure women were able to take part in all aspects of project from storyboarding, script writing, creating props with local artists and performing on stage



“I never imagined I would ever be on stage. This play has to be the best thing I have achieved in my life! I truly wonderful experience working with such a fabulous team”

*Participant*



## Her Spirit Soared

Committed to Equality,  
Diversity and Inclusion

This project a great piece of integration work bringing together women from diverse backgrounds and from all walks of life - from local women, survivors of abuse, amateur actors and a few professionals and even a GWL board member. This was the first time we got local BME women to perform on stage in front of 300 people – something they never dreamt of.







“I am glad I took part. I wanted people to understand my feelings when I felt at my lowest. At first I thought I wouldn't be able to perform on stage as it would bring back bad memories, however I was supported well by all the women involved”

*Participant*




This project also allowed me to explore my own creative interest in theatre work, in particular stage direction is where my strength lies apparently!  
We received amazing feedback. People were especially curious about how came up with the creativity process. They said we should definitely tour the play around Scotland and nationally! We are currently looking into funding to make this happen.



## National projects

First Waves: Arts project exploring the Race Relations Act in the UK



As I mentioned in the past year there has been a rise in our work with national partners.

We are thrilled to be working with the House of Commons to undertake an arts project exploring the impact of the race relations act in the UK. We have the London based artist Scarlett running a series of workshops with the BME women's group. She is also running a workshop today in the events space and will be happy to say hello. We are excited that the art works produced at these workshops will be exhibited at the House of Commons alongside art works produced by other cities