

Sylvie

Photographer



What message did you want to give in contributing to the Creating HERstory Heritage Project?

We decided that we wanted to capture a wide range of women participating in various activities at MSA. My aim was to capture beautiful moments they experience during the sessions in the hopes of encouraging others to join. In past projects I did for MSA I wanted to also show the bond that is created in the group. For me sport or art is a great way to get people together and have fun, it often leads to beautiful friendships developing over time.

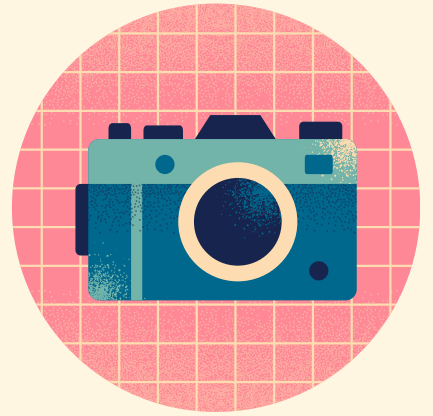


How has the role of women changed in Newham over the last 20 years?

Muslim women seem more visible and more on the forefront of decision making. Newham's mayor is a Muslim woman and some councillors are too. She has been very influential in my career and is very keen about supporting other women. When she saw my documentary about Newham, she invited me to do some work for the council and that's how I got to shoot my first magazine cover. I have also noticed Muslim women being more active in outdoor spaces, particularly on bikes and walking in parks.

How has MSA supported your journey as a photographer and Muslim woman?

When I joined my first MSA activity, I was going through a difficult time but felt very welcomed. I spoke to Yashmin about my interest in photography and started taking photos as part of our sessions – this gave me a safe space to practice. The MSA sisters encouraged me to carry on and gave me opportunities to collaborate with them on some projects. The support I received from Yashmin and the team was incredibly important, it built up my confidence and developed me personally and professionally.



How can Muslim women get started in photography?

I have seen quite a lot of Muslim women photographers recently. I would say find what you like and keep doing it even if you think the results are not great. Practice, practice, practise! I was also very grateful to have the help of a mentor at some point in my early career, it's a great way to improve and get the support to start a project.

What future projects are you working on?

I have just finished delivering a series of photography walks as part of Islamophobia Awareness Month. I invited locals to visit three different areas of Newham whilst thinking of identity, belonging and safety in public spaces. The results were documented and can now be seen at the Rosetta Arts centre. I'm also running a series of workshops as part of a heritage project at Stanley Arts in South Norwood and am working with the charity Living Streets. I love how photography can be used for research, open up discussions or improve mental health.

