



# MACFEST Muslim Arts & Culture Festival



## *Celebrating Arts and Connecting Communities*

Evidence for Qaisra Shahraz MBE JP FRSA



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# 1. Qaisra Shahraz MBE JP FRSA, Founder and Executive Director of MACFEST, Muslim Arts and Culture Festival



Qaisra Shahraz is the Founder, Curator and Executive Director of MACFEST. She is a prize-winning and critically-acclaimed novelist, scriptwriter, peace and gender activist. Qaisra was born in Pakistan and has lived in Manchester since childhood. Qaisra has gained two Masters Degrees in English & European literature and scriptwriting for television.

Qaisra has won the prestigious National Diversity, 'Lifetime Achiever Award' for her services to 'Literature, Education, Gender and Interfaith Relationships' in 2016. In 2018, she gained the University of Salford 'Alumni Achievement Award' for having achieved distinction in her multiple careers and for contributions to the arts and community cohesion. In 2017, Qaisra was recognised by Lovin Manchester as number 1 in a list of '50 Most Influential Women in Manchester'. Similarly she has been recognised as one of 100 influential Pakistani women in 'Pakistan Power 100 List' and included in the 'Muslim Power 100' list (2018).

She is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, a literary judge, a former Director of Gatehouse Books, an advisor to International Journal IJRHS and Asia Pacific Writers and Translators partnership. Her novels, *The Holy Woman*, *Typhoon*, *Revolt* and collection of short stories, *A Pair of Jeans* and other stories and *The Concubine & The Slave Catcher* - stories from around the world, have been translated into several languages including Mandarin. Her book, *Holy Woman* won the Bradford Waterstones' title of 'Best Book of the Month' and has been a bestseller for 15 years in Indonesia. Her novels and stories including, *A Pair of Jeans* are studied in schools and universities. A critical analysis of her works has been done in a book entitled *The Holy and the Unholy: Critical Essays on Qaisra Shahraz's Fiction* (2011). She has appeared in many international writers' festivals and book fairs. Her award-winning drama serial *Dil Hee To Hai* was broadcast on Pakistani Television in 2003.

Qaisra has enjoyed a successful career in education as an Ofsted inspector, a quality manager, assessor, education consultant and international teacher trainer including working under the auspices of the British Council. She is highly committed to promoting community and social cohesion through her roles as MACFEST's Executive Director, a trustee of Manchester Multi Faith Centre, Co-Chair of Faith Network 4 Manchester' Co-Chair of 'We Stand Together,' Executive Member of Manchester Muslim-Jewish Forum and a UK partner with New York's Foundation for Ethnic Understanding. Qaisra has a wide range of skills and expertise necessary to oversee all aspects of the festival.

## 2. MACFEST: Context and Background Information



Qaisra set up Macfest as a social enterprise, registered as a Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG) with company number 10951781 with 1 Executive Director who oversees all governance and operational matters. The company's address is registered with Madisons Accountants in Manchester.

### Funders

MACFEST is funded by the Arts Council, Greater Manchester Combined Authority, and Foundation For Ethnic Understanding. In addition we have been amply supported in sponsorship in kind including by University of Salford and BBC Radio Manchester.

### Directors and Advisors

The Executive Director works closely with a Board of Directors, a panel of national advisors, a marketing specialist and volunteer festival assistants. All share her passion, vision, ambition and enthusiasm. They bring with them vast knowledge, skills, expertise and achievements in their various fields of work on a local, national and international scale.

## 2.1 Mission

Successfully making its debut in Autumn 2018 MACFEST, an International festival, is the only one of its kind in the UK. Its primary mission is to bring Muslim and non-Muslim communities together in not only Greater Manchester and the North West area but also beyond the UK. MACFEST's purpose is to raise awareness of Muslim heritage, the richness of Muslim arts, literature and culture. In particular, the festival aims to break down barriers, debunk stereotypes about Islam and celebrate the Muslim world at large.

'Celebrating Arts and Connecting Communities' is MACFEST's tagline. We aim to promote the message of tackling hatred through our slogan 'Spread Honey Not Hate'.



## 2.2 Aims

- To promote peace, harmony and respect for other cultures including Muslim heritage.
- To bring together Muslims and non-Muslims to celebrate the positive aspects of Islam, its rich heritage and lifestyle.
- Enhance interfaith relationships including those between the Muslim and Jewish community and tackle anti-semitism through twinning events.
- Enhance community engagement and cohesion amongst the citizens of Greater Manchester and beyond. We want to engage people of all ages and denominations, including school children, local communities, migrant and refugee communities and colleges/universities.

Salford alumni encourage...     
salfordnow.co.uk



— An award-winning novelist and Salford Alumni is holding an art festival in Manchester to unite the ...

**Salford Now, Salford alumni encourages community cohesion through art festivals:**  
<http://www.salfordnow.co.uk/2022/12/15/salford-alumni-encourages-community-cohesion-by-through-art-festivals/>



## 2.3 Here is a brief history of MACFEST’s growth over 5 years:

**2018** - 10 days festival taking place in a variety of places in Manchester: partners/ venues and hosted 7 schools and Manchester College.

**2020** - 3 weeks Greater Manchester festival hosted in Manchester, Oldham, Stockport, Trafford and Rochdale. Hosted in various venues, as well as partnership with Rochdale literature Festival, Manchester Science Festival & schools & colleges.

**2021** - Throughout the year festival kept our audiences/communities engaged. Due to Corona Virus - mainly digital, global, hosting international live events i.e. from Baku, Turkey, Morocco, Dubai etc. We were also digitally hosted in Liverpool, Oldham, Bury and Bolton. More colleges and schools came onboard & new festival partnerships developed with Tameside, Salford and Dewsbury.

**2022** - 8 month long festival, with themed monthly festivals, (women, Youth, Ramadhan, African and Arab festival etc) live & digital platforms and global-engaging international artists & bringing entertainment, cultural feasts to our UK audience.

**2023** - we are offering offer 70+ hybrid events for 6 months (Feb–July 2023); a rich feast of art & cultural activities from Muslim diaspora: art exhibitions ( 4<sup>th</sup> March), panel discussions, poetry readings, cultural hubs, musical performances & themed festivals: Women (25 women events), Youth & Libraries; schools/colleges MACFEST days.



Macfest 2023: massive c... manchesterworld.uk



The Muslim Women's Arts Festival is also happening for the second time this year.

**Manchester World, Macfest 2023: massive celebration of Islamic culture in Manchester returns with more than 75 events:** <https://www.manchesterworld.uk/whats-on/macfest-2023-massive-celebration-islamic-culture-manchester-returns-75-events-3978631>



**We offer events, in a variety of contexts, (live & digitally) & in partner venues eg for exhibitions, art workshops, international panels, poetry gatherings, children's calligraphy workshops; cultural heritage hubs in schools and colleges (hosting Macfest days).**

We celebrate books, creativity with children (calligraphy, batik painting, paper cutting) etc reading, arts exhibitions, artists, poets and multilingual poetry and dance performance. We have discussions on global issues ie Islamophobia, racism, Black Lives Matter, history, gender issues & climate change (2022).

**CELEBRATING 5 YEARS OF MACFEST!**

**CELEBRATING ARTS AND CONNECTING COMMUNITIES**

Art • Literature • History • Photography • Culture • Architecture • Music • Film

**Mrs D Hawkins JP LLB**  
His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Greater Manchester

**Qaisra Shahrax MBE JP**  
Executive Director of MACFEST

**WELCOME!**

#spreadhoneyothate

in @ f w

**Cordially Invite you to the MACFEST 5th Anniversary Celebration!**

**Saturday 4th March 2023 | 12.00 - 1.30 pm**  
The Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester

**Book Via our Eventbrite Page!**  
Tickets £10, Refreshments Included

#spreadhoneyothate

Muslim Arts and Culture Festival  
Winner of the Queen's Voluntary Award for Service

f @ in | @MACFESTUK | #spreadhoneyothate | WWW.MACFEST.ORG.UK | HELLO@MACFEST.ORG.UK

MACFEST 5th Anniversary Celebration - 12 pm

- ◆ **Host:** Sandra Wong, solicitor at Silverdale Solicitors, Manchester.
- ◆ **Welcome by:** Ed Watts, Head of Learning and Engagement, The Whitworth Art Gallery.
- ◆ **Tilavat by:** Lamar Babiker.
- ◆ **Welcome by:** Muslim Women from Greater Manchester.
- ◆ **Welcome by:** Chief Guest: Mrs D Hawkins JP LLB, His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Greater Manchester.

f @ in | @MACFESTUK | WWW.MACFEST.ORG.UK | HELLO@MACFEST.ORG.UK



**MACFEST is celebrating 5 Years of Art, Culture and Muslim Heritage nationally and globally.**

Welcome to MACFEST 2023, a ground-breaking and award-winning international Muslim Arts and Culture Festival. Hosted in several towns and cities, theatres, art galleries and libraries, schools and colleges across the North West it is celebrating its 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on 4th March at the Whitworth Art Gallery. Manchester.

Founded after the Manchester bombings of 2017, Qaisra Shahraz MBE, its founder and executive director had a vision of united communities, free from division and accepting of differences. To fight back against racism and Islamophobia, MACFEST began in 2018, to help to introduce the city into the world of Muslim culture, hoping to fight ignorance with cultural awareness.

MACFEST's mission is: celebrating arts, diversity and connecting communities. MACFEST offers a rich feast of over 75 events from 18th February to July 30th, celebrating the rich heritage of the Muslim diaspora communities. Nearly all the events are free. The festival is themed; youth, women, Ramadan, Museum and libraries mini Festivals. The international feast, includes events being hosted from Afghanistan, Dubai, Tunisia, Kuwait and USA,

This year's festival is set to be their biggest. There is something for the whole family: literature, art, history, music, performance, photography, culture, comedy, art exhibitions, demonstrations, debates, women and youth panels, children's activities, and art workshops. We are bringing you a great line-up of local, national and international speakers: performers, writers, academics, photographers, comedians, poets, film makers, actors, artists and singers: from Manchester - to USA.

This year's instalment of MACFEST is set to be their biggest. Joining forces with the newly formed Muslim Women's Arts Foundation and Festival, this year's instalment promises a greater diversity of speakers and artists, shedding more light on women's experiences and contributions to culture that often go unnoticed. There are many highlights, 'Poetry and Cuisine from Andalusia', Ramadan in Tunisia, Afghani women artists from Kabul art workshops, 'Arabic Weddings' 'Eat like a Sultan: cooking in the Muslim Medieval Ages' Turkish folk dance, and an 'In Conversation session with Fatima Manji, the Channel 4 News reader and reporter, launching her new book.

Focusing more on culture instead of religion and politics, MACFEST draws cultural fragment from across the Muslim world; Afghani women artists, Turkish folk dance, Kuwaiti photography, Palestinian embroidery, Andalusian poetry, as well as British Muslims contributing their art and experience. An international festival with collaborators from all corners, coming with a massive 64-page brochure that boasts a dizzying number of events available.

Book on MACFEST [Eventbrite](#) page or on the website: [www.macfest.org.uk](http://www.macfest.org.uk)

## 2.4 Activities & Services

We are a community-led art & culture festival. Only one of its kind in the UK, MACFEST is a unique, award winning, multi-art forms festival, hosted across the North West. it's aim is to celebrate arts, Muslim Heritage, culture and connect communities of all faiths. MACFEST is a local, national & international festival; it has 4 distinct strands; heritage, education, culture and arts.

We deliver MACFEST through multi-art forms; Literature/poetry, arts (exhibitions), photography, fashion, film making, performance, talks, cuisine, history panels.



*Turkish and Bengali Performers*



*Eld Picnic in the park*

**CREATIVITY & CREATIVE PEOPLE** lie at the heart of MACFEST. We reach & work with young people, women, families & local organisations; through collaborative working we enable them to plan, deliver, create & showcase their work with us.

We celebrate **MULTI-ARTS** forms:

- **LITERATURE:** poetry, books, travel writing, manuscripts, Mushaira, author panels, writing workshops.
- **Arts:** (exhibitions), commissioned artwork, demonstrations (Palestinian embroidery & textiles).
- **WORKSHOPS:** calligraphy, batik & marble, silk painting, paper cutting, mandala making, card making, & doodling.
- **PERFORMANCE,** eg Arab Dabka, Sudanese, Indonesian, Turkish & Uighur folk dance. Wedding ensemble by Bengali Anamika Group.



We have a proven track record of delivering successfully 5 festivals including the year long digital 2021 programme of events across Greater Manchester during the pandemic.

## 2.5 Themed Festivals

We offer themed festivals ie Arab,( September 2021 week long) South Asian,(August) and African Heritage ( October, to tie in with Black History Month & 2022); Youth & Children,( February 2022) Muslim Women Art Festival ( March 2022 to tie in with International women week and in partnership with Muslim Women Arts Foundation.), Ramadan & Eid Festival ( April,), National festival (May to August) ie hosted in Bolton, Bury, Rochdale, Stockport, Oldham, Trafford, Liverpool.



**MACFEST festival promotes community cohesion** - engages 1000s of people of all ages. MACFEST UK is a great social, cultural 'connector' of diverse communities. We have a high percentage i.e. 50% of hard to reach or socially/economically excluded groups taking part. Through its art and cultural activities it plays a significant role in developing stronger and inclusive communities and improving the quality of life of its residents.



*Indonesian Festival*



*Celebrating Nigerian/African Heritage*





Live Azerbaijan Festival from Baku



Our Cultural Hubs



## 2.6 Supporting communities during the pandemic 2021

To support our communities feeling isolated during lockdown MACFEST, had a strong commitment to engage with communities, using digital platforms, and various strategies.

MACFEST reached out to local people, those who were hard to reach or felt isolated especially during the pandemic, lasting 2 years. When other cultural organisations and community groups closed down, we kept going. We delivered 75 digital events in 2021. Through our festival we continued to engage local & national communities, using digital platforms to offer many events in 2021. Thereby breaking barriers, and promoting social & emotional well-being.

During the pandemic we joined students from Greater Manchester schools and colleges and heard their perspective about life during the pandemic, racism and Islamophobia, and celebrated their cultural heritage of their country of origin. MACFEST hosted a special panel with students from six countries: from Gambia to the USA. School students shared their thoughts about how the pandemic affected their lives and education during the last few months.



*Our digital Youth Panels during the pandemic*

**Mancunión, Macfest: The power of Community over isolation:**

<https://mancunión.com/2021/01/27/macfest-2021/>

## 2.7 Diversity, Inclusion and Disability

MACFESTUK key strength is in strengthening community relationships and enhancing social inclusion; it reduces divisions & feeling of ghettoisation; challenges racism, Islamophobia, & anti-Semitism; whilst encouraging and developing intergenerational and positive relationships, including between different groups of Manchester residents.

We adopt a very positive approach towards DISABILITY and are committed to our festival being accessible to all. We host 2 artists ( blind & deaf & 5 disabled staff/volunteers & make reasonable adjustments to enhance their participation.



*International Women's Event with Raabia Hussain, deaf filmmaker*

## 2.8 Engaging marginalised communities and breaking barriers

**Mancunión, Macfest: The festival we need in a divided Britain:**

<https://mancunión.com/2019/12/05/macfest-the-festival-we-need-in-a-divided-britain/>

## 2.9 Community Led Festival

MACFEST whilst international is very much a community led festival by engaging diverse local communities and working with Manchester citizens offering community-led, cultural events in a variety of settings & venues; in schools, mosques, universities, local colleges, Museums, British Muslim Heritage Centre, Central library & local communities centres (Turkish, Bengali, Arab, Nigerian/Pakistani).

MACFEST is a great social connector for migrant communities, enabling not only learning to take place but forming of new friendships, excellent social interactions, and above all enhancing integration of migrant communities and refugees communities into British society and way of life, who otherwise might feel isolated.

We engage at least 10 Muslim diaspora groups/migrants/refugees, from all backgrounds, engaging 100s from each community i.e. taking part in activities as well as attending i.e. musical performance etc.

Each year we showcase the cultural heritage of various Muslim communities living in the North West including Bengali and Uyghur (Chinese). See Brochure attached, programme of 74 events with global reach.



## 2.10 Community Empowerment and Development

We provide fab opportunities for communities to develop, share their love of arts & sample cultural life of different Muslim communities and also to develop employability skills resulting in volunteering and paid work. At least 1000 people from various communities have taken part to showcase talent & their cultural heritage ( Bengali, Uighur, Indonesian, Bosnian, Pakistani, Turkish, Moroccan, Nigerian, Somali etc) hosting cultural evenings, curating cultural hubs or delivering art workshops ie batik painting by Indonesian, Marble Ebru painting by Turkish artist.

MACFEST is totally dedicated to developing people: artists, volunteers, team members as well as students & school children. We recognise the experience and expertise of communities by providing excellent platforms to both aspiring and established artists, poets, performers to showcase their talent, work & develop new skills of team and our volunteers.



macfestuk



macfestuk



## 2.11 Paid Opportunities

Our festival has sustainable outcomes; generating work opportunities for communities (INCLUDING university students), companies, catering, media, printing & marketing industry and volunteers – who progress to work. We have created additional jobs for our team of volunteers. MACFEST progressed 10 members from volunteer roles to offering them part time paid work. Their progression is well celebrated and our Queen’s Award for Voluntary Service is an excellent testament to that.

Employed over 150 artists each year to offer their services, sometimes for 3 paid events. Engaged community groups ie Anamika (20 People) or Turkish folk dance ( 15 women) to perform for us – paid.

## 2.12 Women empowerment resulting in work experience

Macfest is female led. Director is devoted to women’s rights, and celebrates female artists, up-skills women, & puts them at the forefront of the festival.

We host 25 events in which we celebrate women creative, explore gender issues, & celebrate International Women Week with a number of women events. In the 2023 festival on International Women Day, 3 events celebrated Muslim women e.g. (deaf filmmaker, Kuwaiti journalists as well as past women travel writers).

Part of MACFEST, Muslim women art project aims; to debunk myths about Muslim women; actively engages & empowers migrant women of all ages & backgrounds; They plan & deliver events.

Through different activities: public performance i.e. poetry, writing of stories/recipes, art exhibitions, cultural hubs, women develop and in long term will enhance their employability skills.

MACFEST has developed director skills by successfully delivering 5 festivals. Via a good network of supporters, advisers who continue to ameliorate risk associated with running a large festival & supporting her work, eg. in fund raising & become driven, well-networked festival organiser with clear vision, dedication to improve social & community relations & promote peace amongst communities.

## 1.13 Partnerships

We work with many partners, community organisations & are hosted in a variety of iconic settings/cultural venues across NW including with Manchester Science Festival & Huddersfield lit festival. ( see partners section <https://macfest.org.uk/partners>)



**Macfest and the Huddersfield Literature Festival:** <https://www.huddlifest.org.uk/event/online-muslim-women-travellers/>



*Celebrating Eid at Whitworth Art Gallery*

## 1.14 Community Engagement

These people have accessed the festival or been engaged in some way – i.e. numbers of artists, speakers, active participants and attendees of digital events.

- **600 CREATIVE** – poets, artists, writers, performers, singers, culture champions– e.g. from Manchester, Bolton, Bury, Tameside, Kirklees & those working in schools & colleges delivering art, calligraphy, writing workshops. As well as solo participants we hosted musical groups and dance groups i.e. up to 20 people per group.

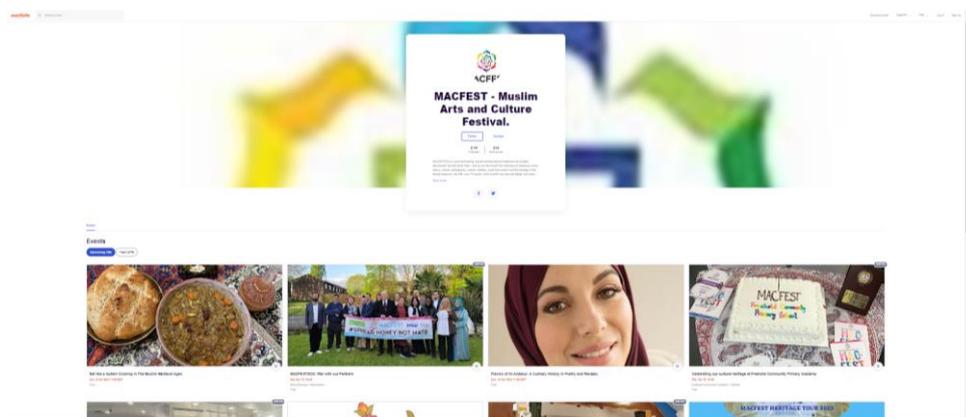
- **11,000 TAKING PART/CONTRIBUTING** - Youth fest (25 events) with (17) whole schools/colleges-1000s of studs/teachers create, host for 3-4 days.

## LIVE PRESENTATIONS

- **1300 MCR** ie musical (300), dance (300), 10 art workshops x 25=500, poetry (200)
- **2000 NW** (Bury, Bolton, Tameside) -Community groups hosting MACFEST ie Bury Bame Project, Bolton Sunnyside Club, Tameside Khushamdeed women’s group, Yaron NW and Sheba Arts
- **12,000 EDUCATION** (schools)-(Fashion, art /poetry workshops) 17 providers engaged.
- **60 VOLUNTEERS** –eg 25 MACFEST team NW events (25) & partners eg Whitworth (10)
- **15000 HYBRID – LIVE** presentation watched via live streaming-(MCR, & NW events.
- **50,000 DIGITAL -25 events**– ie ave. attendees bet. 30-100 per event plus live streaming/ fb. Eg 2022 You tube views -Myriam Francois’s panel had (30,000) views.
- **50 Professionals & academics** ie chairing/hosting/introducing panels



*Bury Macfest hosted by BAME Project*



See all past and upcoming events on Eventbrite: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/macfest-muslim-arts-and-culture-festival-27374899249>

## MACFEST panel on Islamophobia, a great conversation on an important topic

February 7, 2022

An honour to be invited on a panel of distinguished speakers as part of the **MACFEST** Muslim arts and culture festival, a programme of cultural events designed to celebrate, break down barriers and bring communities together. This festival was first developed by Qaisra Shahraz MBE to tackle Anti Muslim feeling and behaviours by raising awareness of Muslim arts and culture and bringing people together to celebrate. The programme now has a national and international reach, thanks to the lockdowns and having to take to Zoom.

Terrific opportunity to hear Professor Ahmed, a renowned academic and former diplomat, poet and film maker, now based in the USA and Baroness Warsi, who has led the charge in developing policy to tackle Islamophobia in Parliament, debate issues and possible ways forward to tackle Islamophobia. Hosted by Dr Myriam Francois, a writer and broadcaster, this led to some lively questions and answers. Connecting communities is key and at the heart of our work so delighted to be a part of this programme.

The **MACFEST** programme is rich and diverse and covers so much ground. Do check it out. A wonderful opportunity to learn and enjoy!



Read full article here: <https://www.highsheriffofgreaterlondon.com/macfest-panel-on-islamophobia-a-great-conversation-on-an-important-topic%ef%bf%bc/>

**MACFEST 2021: The Black Queens of Islam**  
blackhistorymonth.org.uk



Celebrating International Women Week: A presentation on 'The Black Queens of Islam' by I...

### Black History Month:

<https://www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk/article/listings/region/online-event/macfest-2021-the-black-queens-of-islam/>

## 3. Collaboration with Community and Cultural Organisations

Working with other organisations across the North West is central to MACFEST.

In order to reach communities, including non-Muslim and have the highest impact, MACFEST's mission is to be hosted by other organisations.

Our name 'Muslim Arts & Culture Festival' indicates a strong focus on celebration of culture. We achieve this through wide ranging strong partnerships.

We are highly ambitious & innovative in our collaboration with the cultural and education sectors. We are proud to be hosted in a variety of iconic settings/venues. We benefit from extensive & quality mainstream partnerships with years of experience; to explore ideas, plan and co-host events.

# Engagement of ethnic minorities and Muslim migrant communities in Manchester

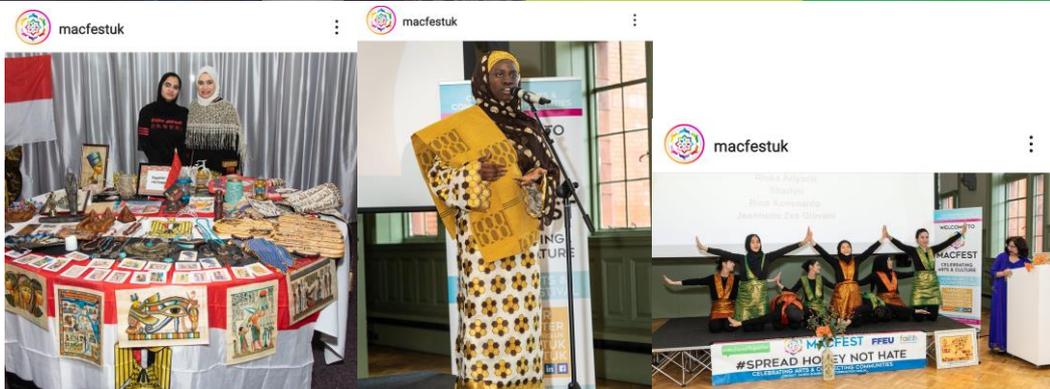
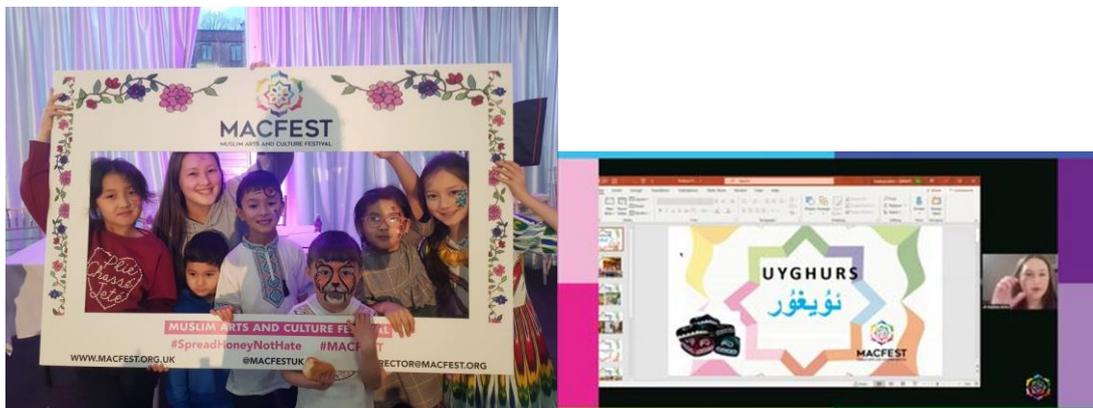
In 2022 we engaged the following Muslim community groups in Manchester (Pakistani, Nigerian, Turkish, Somali, Moroccan, Egyptian, Bengali, Iranian, Indonesian, Indian, Afghani, Libyan, Uighur, Iraqi, Palestinian, as well as international artists from Uzbekistan & Azerbaijan)

-Macfest's uniqueness is in bringing diverse Muslim communities together under one roof, as they very rarely meet, thus promoting integration between these different groups and spreading peace messages with slogan, 'spread honey not hate'.

-The director uses all her contacts, influence, excellent and wide ranging communication as an international author, community interfaith and peace activist, educationist with good links to schools and colleges to reach out to people, to curate and produce a fast growing award winning festival.

We are delighted to have achieved our goal of bringing Muslim communities together via the cultural hubs, displays and the culture celebration events such as, Bosnia, Turkey, Nigeria. We successfully engaged with non-Muslim communities including Jewish, Sikh and Christian as speakers, participants and attendees.

- Nigerian
- Indonesian
- Turkish
- Sudanese
- Bengali
- Palestinian
- Uyghurs



- Egyptian, Nigerian and Indonesian Communities

# 4. List of our Partners: Schools, Colleges, Venues

## 4.1 Local and National Partners

This year, we have more partners coming on board to support MACFEST. These include the prestigious Royal Exchange Theatre, John Rylands and the Portico Library.

We are supported by 4 North West Universities: University of Salford, University of Manchester, Metropolitan University and Bolton University, all are sponsoring MACFEST. In 2023 we partnered with the University of Western Australia.

New community organisations have come on board ie Yaron North West, Khush Amdid of Tameside and Sheba Arts.

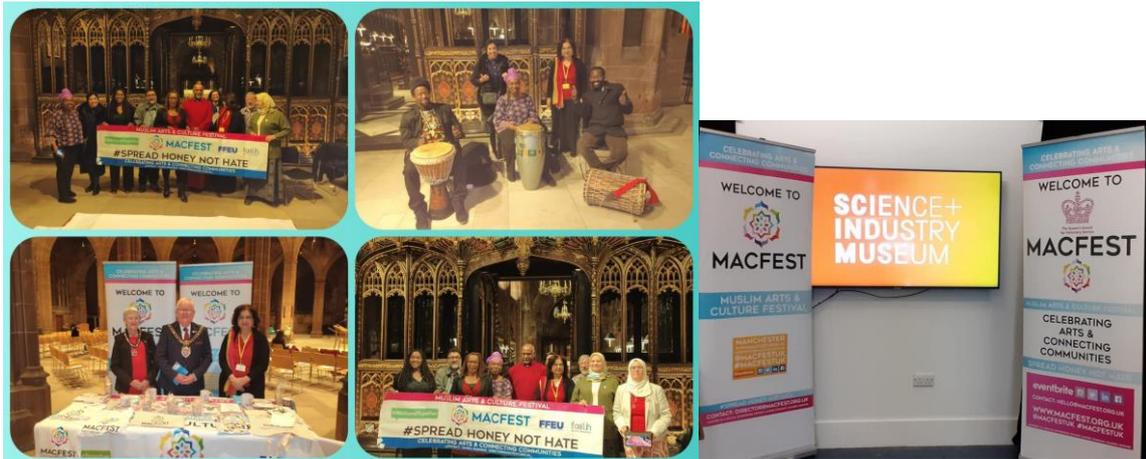


Celebrating Eid at The Lowry

Bolton Macfest 2021



Bolton MACFEST with the Lord Lieutenant Diane Hawkins and MACFEST in Bolton News:  
<https://www.theboltonnews.co.uk/news/20246051.macfest-celebrate-boltons-diverse-muslim-culture/>



*Hosted by Partners across the North West at Manchester Cathedral and MOSI*



*Literary Centre of Kirklees, Manchester Central Library and Stretford Public Hall*

## 4.2 Youth Festival: Engagement with Local Schools and Colleges

Hosting of macfest days is now well embedded in many schools' curriculum nationally. Teachers & heads host MACFEST DAYS -working with students to produce & host art /cultural activities. Eg. Stockport/Trafford College hosted a mini festival. Levenshulme High school celebrated famous Muslims i.e. Mo Farrah, Nadyia Hussain.

All our events have an excellent impact, with excellent feedback received -eg with 1000s of school children & college students celebrating diversity, learning about other cultures, discussing issues of identity, racism, cultural heritage & harmony.





Levenshulme High for Girls



Whalley Range 11-18 High School



KD Grammar School



Abraham Moss Community School



Cheetham CofE Community Academy



The Manchester College



Bosnian Supplementary School



Manchester Arabic School, Chorlton

- ❖ Stockport College
- ❖ Liverpool College
- ❖ Cheadle and Marple College
- ❖ Manchester Academy
- ❖ The Albion Academy
- ❖ Freehold Community Academy
- ❖ Levenshulme High School for Girls
- ❖ Whalley Range High School
- ❖ The Manchester College
- ❖ Manchester Grammar School
- ❖ Manchester Health Academy
- ❖ Bosnian School and Society of Manchester
- ❖ The University Of Manchester, Creative Writing Department
- ❖ Hopwood Hall College, Rochdale
- ❖ Manchester Arabic School, Chorlton
- ❖ Manchester Metropolitan University
- ❖ Newman Roman Catholic School
- ❖ Canon Slade Sixth Form College, Bolton
- ❖ The University of Salford
- ❖ Trafford College
- ❖ Altrincham Grammar School for Girls
- ❖ Manchester Islamic Girls Grammar School
- ❖ Withington Girls' School
- ❖ Loretto College
- ❖ Marple Sixth Form College
- ❖ The Cheadle College
- ❖ Dean Trust Ardwick
- ❖ Burnage Academy for Boys
- ❖ The Radclyffe School
- ❖ The Blue Coat School



Hosting German Students as part of Youth Festival and Altrincham Girls Grammar School Art Workshop



From Altrincham Grammar School: <https://aggs.bright-futures.co.uk/2023/03/09/macfest-art-workshop/>



From Stockport College: <https://stockport.ac.uk/macfest-celebrating-muslim-arts-and-culture-festival/>



## 5. Engagement of Women Creatives: MWA Foundation and MWA Festival

Throughout the festival we had excellent engagement of women as speakers, performers, and attendees. We had 13 Muslim women open the festival at the opening ceremony with the word welcome in their native language. Our aim to debunk stereotypes about Muslim women was successfully achieved.

Speakers at the event included House of Lords Member Baroness Sayeeda Warsi, Labour MEP Julie Ward and Baroness Uddin.



# Muslim Women's Arts Festival

Celebrating & Elevating Muslim Women



Women and Moroccan weddings

**MUSLIM WOMEN AND POLITICS**  
**Celebrations and Challenges**  
 13th March @ 16:00 GMT

Join us for a special International Women Week panel about 'Muslim Women and Politics' with speakers from Greece, Pakistan and the UK.

Speakers include:  
 - Anna Stamou from Greece,  
 - Munaza Hasan from Pakistan,  
 - Julie Ward, Yasmine Darr and Dzidra Noor from the UK  
 - Dr Amina Easat-Daas, a lecturer at Leicester De Montfort University

Moderated by: Councillor Yasmine Darr  
 Chief Guest: Julie Ward

**MACFEST**  
 MUSLIM ARTS AND CULTURE FESTIVAL

Women's Festival



Launch of Muslim Women's Arts Festival and Hosting Afghani women artists to provide them with an artistic platform

**Afghani Women Artists:  
 Freedom of expression  
 through art**

Sunday, 12 March 2023,  
 14:00 - 15:30

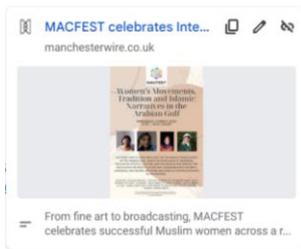
Join us for an exciting panel with 4 female artists from Kabul: Saira Sarwar, Samira Azimi, Marial Ahmad, Sadaf Danish. The Afghani women artists will share their individual exhibitions of paintings. They will also discuss what it is like as artists, as women creatives, living in Afghanistan under the Taliban rule.

Hosted by: Angelika Hoff, M.A., Teacher Training College, Stuttgart, Germany, Chief Guest: Chris Sacarbay, Executive Director of Foundation for Ethnic Understanding and MACFEST advisor.



## MEN about Muslim Women's Arts Festival:

<https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/whats-on/arts-culture-news/muslim-womens-art-festival-launches-26290745>



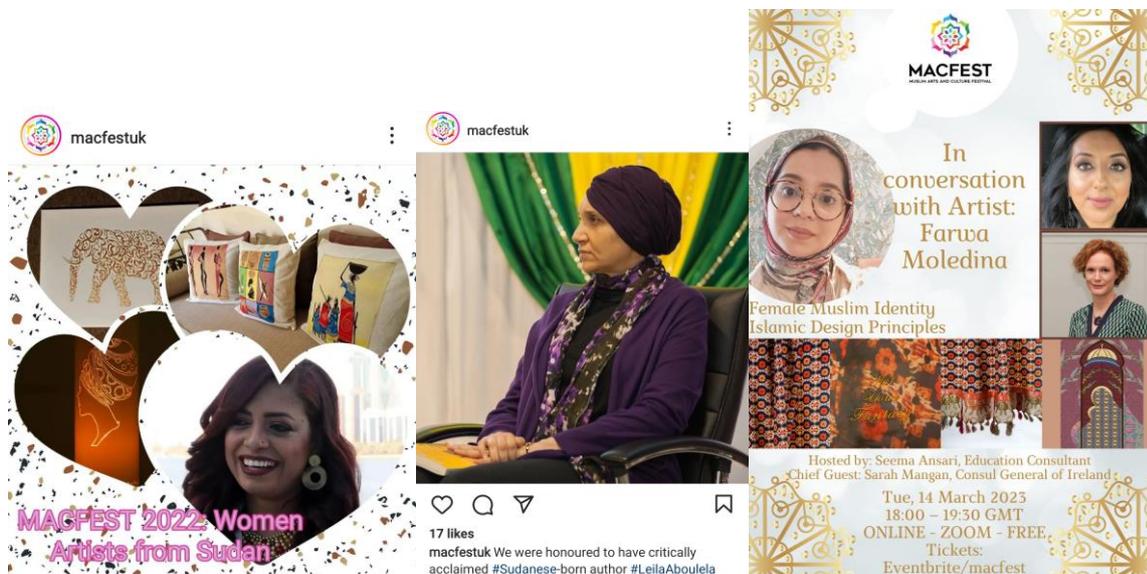
**MANCHESTER WIRE International Women's Week:**

<https://manchesterwire.co.uk/macfest-celebrates-international-womens-week-with-a-range-of-incredible-free-events/>



**Manchester Wire, MACFEST celebrates Muslim women around the world on Sat 4 Mar at the Whitworth:**

<https://manchesterwire.co.uk/macfest-celebrates-muslim-women-around-the-world-on-sat-4-mar-at-the-whitworth/>



## 6. MACFEST Heritage Tours

In 2022 MACFEST launched a new initiative MACFEST Heritage Tour. Its Aim: to connect Muslims and non Muslims to spend time together in countries celebrating Muslim heritage, art and culture. Also it provides an invaluable service to take Muslim women who would not normally go on trips by themselves to join our groups. Thereby we are meeting the needs of those women who are isolated and in need of support and friendship.



*Macfest Heritage Tour: Morocco*

More information and videos here: <https://macfest.org.uk/macfest-tours>

## 7. Awards

Qaisra Shahraz MBE JP, Founder and Executive Director of MACFEST won the Culture Champion Award She Inspires Awards, highlighting and celebrating inspiring women trailblazers, women's skills, teamwork and Community spirit.

### Culture Champion Award



**Manchester World, What Manchester Means To Me: why author, educator and festival organiser Qaisra Shahraz loves the city:**

<https://www.manchesterworld.uk/news/what-manchester-means-to-me-why-author-educator-and-festival-organiser-qaisra-shahraz-loves-the-city-3474548>

**Asian Leader, Manchester woman wins “Culture Champion award”:**  
<https://asianleader.co.uk/manchester-woman-wins-culture-champion-award/>

## Queen’s Award for Voluntary Service



**The Queen’s Award for Voluntary Service**



Home The Lieutenantcy Deputy Lieutenantcy Honours and Awards The Royal Family Services Boroughs Contact us

**GREATER MANCHESTER LIEUTENANCY**

**Queen's Award for Voluntary Service Winners 2021**

Website to the Greater Manchester Lieutenantcy website

### MACFESTUK

MACFESTUK commenced in 2017 in the wake of the Manchester Arena terror attack. It is a passionate project, the brainchild of Qaisra Shahraz (a Mancunian Muslim author and award-winning activist) to bring together and celebrate solidarity and communities of all faiths (and none), races and ages. The initial idea was to create a festival aimed at building bridges, confronting negative stereotypes and to give Muslim heritage a platform in a way that engages people from a wide variety of backgrounds. MACFEST shows that Islamic communities are not just alive but rich with culture. The festival is usually held in a variety of venues: schools, colleges, universities, galleries, museums, theatres and libraries. The mission is to celebrate arts, connect communities and to spread sweetness and positivity, hence their slogan 'Spread Honey Not Hate'.

<https://manchesterlieutenancy.org/queens-award-for-voluntary-service-winners-2021/>

**MACFEST wins Queen's Award for Voluntary Service:**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qgG\\_H067XbM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qgG_H067XbM)

**The National News: British Muslim cultural charity wins prestigious Queen's Award:**

<https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/british-muslim-cultural-charity-wins-prestigious-queen-s-award-1.1234852>

## Making a Difference Award

In recognition of contribution to social responsibility at The University of Manchester



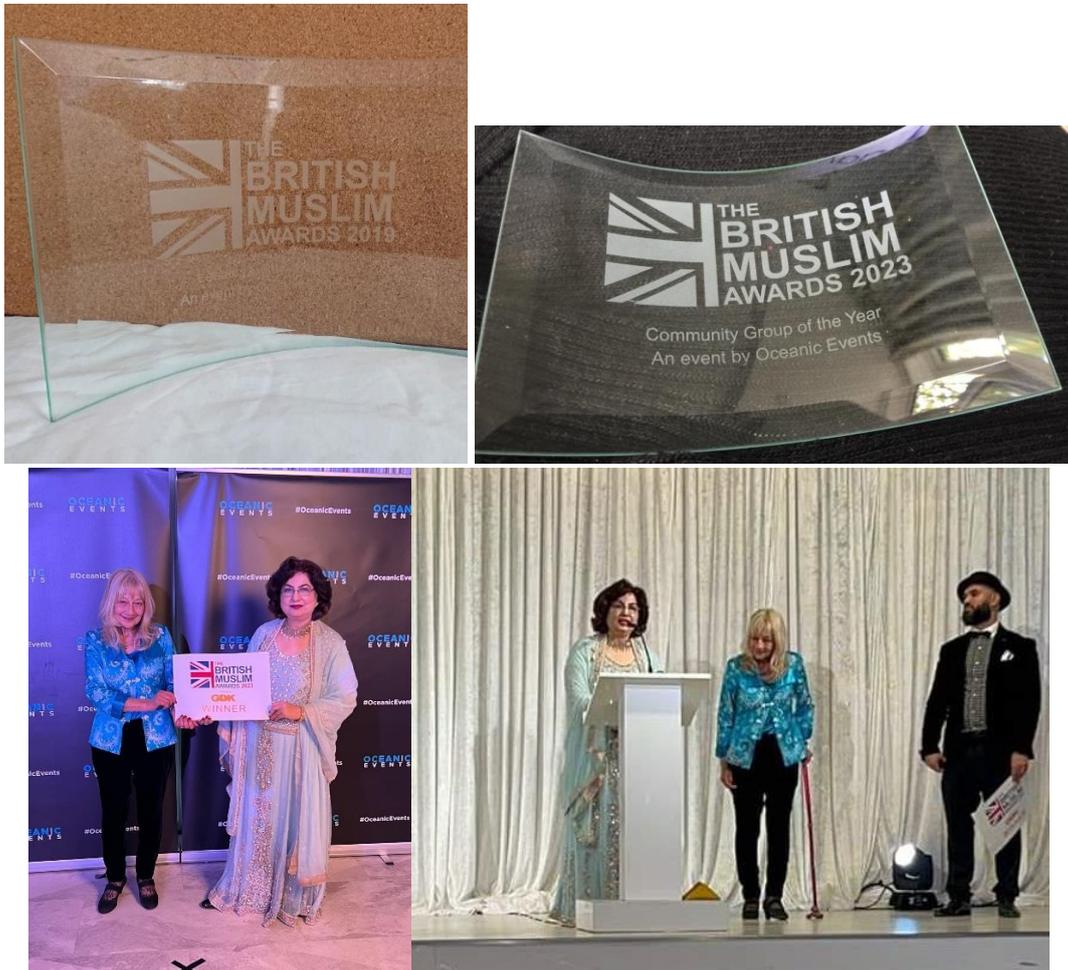
## The High Sheriff Award

In recognition of the amazing work in celebrating arts and connecting communities in Greater Manchester



# Muslim Awards

MACFEST won twice one of the most prestigious awards in the British Muslim community, recognizing and celebrating outstanding contributions and significant achievements of Muslims in the UK, as well as inspiring future generations of Muslims to excel in various fields. First awards was gained in 2019 as being the 'Leading Light of the Year', second in 2023 in the category 'Community Group of the Year Award'.



# The Manchester People's Culture Award

Qaisra Shahraz MBE, won the Manchester Culture Award 2023 in the Category: "The Manchester People's Culture Award". She was recognised for her initiatives, Muslim Women's Arts Festival and MACFEST (Muslim Arts and Culture Festival), a groundbreaking festival that connects communities, tackles Islamophobia, and breaks down barriers. She is well known for her lifelong passion in championing and celebrating women, youth, community cohesion, & building intercultural bridges through literature, arts and cultural heritage.



## 8. Media Coverage

Qaisra Shahraz and MACFEST enjoy wide media & positive coverage nationally and internationally i.e. in The West Australian, in Dawn (Pakistan), in Manchester Evening News, and listed in Guardian as 1 of 5 'events not to be missed.'

We were widely covered by the local, national and international media including in Dubai, Poland and Turkey. We received both print and media coverage of the festival. see our media page on [www.macfest.org.uk](http://www.macfest.org.uk)

Here is a small sample of links including winning the Queens Award for Voluntary Service, Macfest UK.

Manchester Culture Awards 2023 winners announced at 'incredible' event

Factory International, inclusive theatre collective and Hulme poet SuAndi OBE were among the winners

By [Liv Clarke](#) Tourism writer

12:46, 7 DEC 2023

Bookmark

Facebook Twitter YouTube

This year's Manchester Culture Awards ceremony was held at Aviva Studios (Image: Handout)

Factory International, [Manchester Museum](#) and Hulme poet SuAndie OBE were among the winners at this year's Manchester Culture Awards. Celebrating the best of [culture and the arts](#) in the city, the glamorous awards ceremony took place at Manchester's newest cultural venue, Aviva Studios on Monday evening.

First launched in 2018 by the [city council](#), this year's event featured more than 400 nominations, chosen by the public and arts professionals, for awards spanning twelve categories including best event, best exhibition and young creative of the year. There were also three special recognition awards to recognise the cultural contributions three individuals have made in Manchester over the years.

This year's ceremony also saw the announcement of The Manchester People's Culture Award, a special award made in partnership with the Manchester Evening News, with the winner chosen entirely by public vote. The award was given by the judges to novelist and activist Qaisra Shhraz MBE

The judging panel this year included Jackie Kay, writer and Professor of Creative Writing at the University of [Salford](#); Yandass Ndlovu, Artistic Director of I M Pact Collective; Pete Courtie, former Senior Relationship Manager Arts Council England; Councillor Luthfur Rahman OBE, Deputy Leader Manchester City Council; and John Rooney, Director of Neighbourhood Delivery, Manchester City Council.



**The awards celebrated the city's arts and culture scene** (Image: Handout)

Councillor Luthfur Rahman OBE, Deputy Leader of Manchester City Council, said: "Manchester is a city that literally mops up culture in all its many forms and its audiences positively embrace every cultural and artistic opportunity that comes their way.

"Once again, the sheer number and breadth of nominations made shows just what an incredible cultural scene we have in Manchester and just how much talent, potential and excitement about culture there is here.

"We're a city that champions culture and the arts and that recognises both the point and the value of creativity. They deliver real social and economic benefits to the whole city, bringing visitors and new business to the city and play a massive part in making Manchester the vibrant, exciting and world-class city it is."

### The winners on the night were:

- Best Business Partnership - The Bruntwood Prize for Playwriting
- Best Exhibition - South Asia Gallery, Manchester Museum
- Best Event - Black Gold Arts x Whitworth Takeover
- Best Performance - Grandad Anansi, Z-arts
- Independent Creative of the Year - Abel Selaocoe
- Promotion of Culture & Education - Pushing Boundaries, Community Arts North West and Curious Minds
- Promotion of Environmental Sustainability - The History of Climate Change, Manchester Histories Festival 2022
- Promotion of Equality & Social Justice - Stanley Grove Primary Academy
- Promotion of Health & Wellbeing (x 2 awards are being made in this category) - Create+ Lime Arts
- Promotion of Health & Wellbeing - String of Hearts
- Promotion of Talent & Leadership - Factory Sounds, Factory International
- The Made in Manchester Award - Cold Chips and Pick N Mix by Sonia Jalay, Royal Exchange Theatre
- The Manchester People's Culture Award - Qaisra Shhraz MBE
- Young Creative of the Year - Sally Hirst

Special Recognition Awards were also announced on the night. The recipients were John Summers OBE, the former CEO of the Halle Concerts Society, Music Director Sir Mark Elder, and poet and performance artist SuAndie OBE.

## Author Qaisra Shahraz wins lifetime achievement prize at National Diversity Awards

October 5, 2016 | Microsoft reporter



Prize-winning author [Qaisra Shahraz](#) has won the Lifetime Achievement Award at the UK's largest diversity event.

The novelist and scriptwriter, whose work focuses on women's rights, was handed the prize in recognition of her services to literature and education, as well as her interfaith activities, which aim to promote tolerance in the UK and abroad.

The annual [National Diversity Awards](#), which have been sponsored by [Microsoft](#) since they began in 2012, aim to support positive role models, community organisations and entrepreneurs from across society, regardless of gender, sexuality, age or religion, and help them effect change in areas where they feel passionate.

### Hosts Richard Blackwood and Charlene White

Shahraz, whose 2001 novel [The Holy Woman](#) won the Golden Jubilee Award, was given her award at Liverpool Anglican Cathedral by former England footballer Sol Campbell and Microsoft representatives Sarbjit Sahota and Damian Stirrett.

Liam Kelly, General Manager of Developer Experience at Microsoft and one of the judges of the Lifetime Achievement Award, said: "The diversity of each nominee's journey is in itself incredible; every person on the shortlist has their own unique reason that kick-started their compulsion to help, and they have all shown a remarkable passion and commitment over many years to help people and make a difference to the lives of others...however, the raw emotion and heartfelt words from people who wrote in to say how they themselves, their family or their friends lives have been transformed by their work really brought home the impact one person can have on so many people. It was a privilege to get a glimpse of the profound impact each nominee has had on the lives of others."

# Interview: Manchester's most influential woman – Qaisra Shahraz

Qaisra Shahraz was 2017's most influential woman in Manchester according to [lovinmanchester.com](http://lovinmanchester.com). Though the author admits she is "bemused" at the prospect, she undeniably has influenced many through the power of her stories, and is taking the recognition as a "humbling experience."

With her published short stories and novels gaining international recognition, I wanted to talk to Qaisra and see where it all began, and what the most influential Manchester woman of 2017 has planned for 2018.

Qaisra has lived in Manchester since the age of nine, and her Pakistani roots and dual nationality became a source of inspiration for the stories she began to write. Through her school years right up to her becoming a student at the University of Manchester, "writing has remained my soulmate" Qaisra smiles.

It was here, at our very own University, that Qaisra was published for the first time. She remembered cheerfully her glee at the sight of seeing her name in print.

"I had joined Michael Schmidt's creative writing workshops and enrolled on a writing course resulting in my debut full two page feature piece in *She* magazine about Greek Vases. I bought nearly half a dozen of the magazines, for my family and friends! Seeing your name in print for the first time is magic. The excitement wears off over the years!"

Qaisra's novels *The Holy Woman*, *Typhoon*, *Revolt* and collections of stories are studied at a multitude of other universities, as well as *A Pair of Jeans* being studied in German and English schools. Qaisra's appeared in literary festivals and book fairs around the world, including Jaipur and Beijing and her drama serial has appeared on Pakistan Television. Despite all this undeniable global success, Qaisra never forgets about the love she has for her home city, with her connections to the University of Manchester remaining strong.

"In recent years I have organised two multi-faith university events celebrating diversity. Our aim was to bring students and community members of various faiths and those of none together in order to celebrate our shared values, promote peace and cohesion" Qaisra tells me.

After leaving university Qaisra's creativity projects began to blossom. She was published numerous times as an author, then eventually found her way into screenwriting.

"Writing for television came much later and was much more challenging. Creatively, I have found writing of film and TV scripts in its use of imagination the most demanding. In order to learn the craft of script and screenwriting I ended up doing a Master's degree course in scriptwriting for TV and Radio and adapted my novel *The Holy Woman* into a 90 minutes film screenplay."

When I asked Qasira what her writing process was like, she admitted that she has "no standard writing ritual or process as such" but that for scriptwriting "the jig sawing and stitching of separate scenes to create exciting episodes and embedding as much conflict and drama as possible is quite a task. I was taught on my degree course in scriptwriting to 'milk' each scene for drama — otherwise it is redundant."

And as for writer's block, the sickness that every author fears suffering from, Qaisra won't even entertain the idea.

"I have no time to have a writer's' block!" She laughs. "However, there is a new distraction on the scene which often lures me away from my creativity quite significantly — online social media!"

Lovin Manchester NEWS - EVENTS - FOOD AND DRINK - LIFESTYLE - TRAVEL

Food and Drink | Sponsored | Feature

## The 50 Most Influential Women In Manchester Right Now

They're making a difference

Lovin Admin 1 year ago 3068

### 1. Qaisra Shahraz

The British-Pakistani novelist and scriptwriter has won awards for her work and was recognised as one of the most influential Pakistani women in the 'Pakistan Power 100 List'. As a public speaker and humanitarian, she has become globally known, but her adopted home city, she is a trustee of Manchester Multi Faith Centre, Co-Chair of Faith Network 4 Manchester and Executive Member of Muslim Jewish Forum and We Stand Together. She devotes a lot of her time to interfaith activities to promote messages of tolerance, peace and community cohesion - which is exactly what Manchester needs so much.

## ALUMNI CELEBRATION

Date - Thu 13 Dec 2018  
 Time - 6.00 pm  
 Duration - N/A  
 Cost - free  
 Disabled access? - Yes  
 Venue - Media City Campus



### Summary

Join us for an evening of festive entertainment and to help us celebrate this year's Alumni Achievement Award winners and our alumni volunteers

### Event details

Date: Thursday 13 December  
 Time: 18:00 - 20:30  
 18:00 - Registration and drinks  
 18:30 - Performances and awards  
 20:00 - Drinks reception  
 20:30 - Event close

Venue: Media City Campus, The University of Salford

Join us, as our award winning comedian compere Jack Gleadow (Television & Radio, 2018), leads us through an evening of comedy, festive entertainment and performances. We'll be enjoying an acoustic set from James Holt (Music, 20015), singing a carol or two with the Salford Choral Society and hearing the incredible stories of our Alumni Achievement Award winners, as Vice Chancellor Helen Marshall presents their awards. We'll also be celebrating the work of our alumni volunteers with the touching stories of some of our Industry Advice mentors. And of course, the evening wouldn't be complete without a mince pie or two and the chance to enjoy a steaming mug of mulled wine.

Alumni Achievement Awards are presented to former students of the University of Salford who have achieved distinction; in their profession, through exemplary service to the University or the wider community, through service of a personal or humanitarian nature, or through contributions to the arts, charities or business. This year, we will also be awarding two Rising Star Awards, to celebrate our upcoming alumni talent.

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#### Alumni Achievement Award Winners 2018

- Jason Manfred\* (Media & Performance, 2004) - Comedian and Presenter
- Neill Ricketts (Engineering, 1993) - Chief Executive, Versarien
- Foluke Michael (Project Management, 2016) - CEO, CYIAC
- Qaisra Shahraz (Television and Radio Scriptwriting, 2001) - Director, MACFEST
- Brendan Rendall (BA Fashion, 2004) - Fundraiser
- Karen Dawber (Nursing: Professional Studies, 1994) - Chief Nurse, Bradford Teaching Hospitals

#### Rising Stars

- Yasmin Evans\* (Television & Radio, 2012) - Presenter, BBC Radio 1Xtra
  - Karl Falconer (Television & Radio, 2012) - Artistic Director, 'Til This Night
- (\*Jason and Yasmin are unfortunately unable to join us at the event but we'll be sharing Jason's special video message at the event)

To save your place, register for your tickets below. If you need any further information, please contact the Alumni Engagement Team at [alumni@salford.ac.uk](mailto:alumni@salford.ac.uk) or call us on 0161 295 6287.

## COLUMN: HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS

Claire Chambers | October 08, 2017



I recently met up with British-Pakistani author Qaisra Shahraz at her house in Manchester to discuss *The Concubine* and the *Slave-Catcher: Stories From Around the World* — her new cosmopolitan collection spanning 25 years of Shahraz's writing life, covering various timelines and countries.

In the collection's first story 'The Escape', Samir, an elderly Pakistani man living in Manchester for decades, dreams of his previous life. Yet on returning to Pakistan he realises he's no longer sure where home is. Much of Shahraz's writing is about home and homecoming, belonging and unbelonging. She tells me that being a migrant with multiple identities — "British, Pakistani and Muslim" — home and the sense of belonging naturally interest her. In 'The Escape', she focuses on the first generation of migrants, "people like my father who have lived in the United Kingdom for 50 years or so." The collection's epigraph by Madeleine L'Engle evokes the disorientation of "not quite knowing where home is." Shahraz explains how relevant this notion is to Samir's story of loss and confusion. "Where does this person belong?" she enquires. "Where is his homeland? The place of birth or where he has spent a big chunk of his life? I believe it's the latter, despite the fact that one maintains emotional links with one's country of birth."

Certainly, 'The Escape' manifests Shahraz's love for Manchester where she's lived since her parents moved there from Pakistan when she was nine, and seen it expand and "change over the decades with the arrivals of refugees and migrants from around the world."

In 'Our Angel', the male British protagonist catches a glimpse of the precarity of Afghan migrant workers in the Gulf. Fascinated with the confluence of cultures brought together by the Gulf's oil industry, Shahraz shares that 'Our Angel' is based on a conversation with an Afghan taxi driver on her way to the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair. The man's insights into his working life in the Emirates intrigued her. "I focus on the plight of Asian migrants separated from their families for decades. There are clearly economic gains for their families, but this can hardly compensate for the pain of separation from fathers, husbands and sons."

The pain of separation is also explored in 'The Journey' which Shahraz wrote 15 years ago about a Muslim boy, Riaz, tragically abandoned by his parents in India as they flee to Pakistan during Partition. Riaz is later adopted by a Hindu family. Shahraz describes learning about the bitter realities of Partition from an aunt who "wept for days after parting from her best friend Gopi, a Hindu whose family had to flee southeast to India." The process surrounding Partition horrifies Shahraz to this day: "Imagine a line being drawn on a map of India, thereby making millions of people refugees overnight. I had to write this story, as I was gripped by the scale of the human tragedy."

Several years ago, Shahraz visited the concentration camps at Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum in Poland with some Jewish friends. This glimpse of the Nazis' premeditated, industrial-style extermination of six million Jews impelled her to write 'Last Train to Krakow', about a young pregnant woman, Hela, who writes a letter to her mother urging her to buy train tickets for resettlement in Krakow.

*Published in Dawn, Books & Authors, October 8th, 2017*

The titular story similarly demanded intense historical research. 'The Slave Catcher' was conceived when Shahraz watched a film about slavery in Boston's Museum of African American History. The experience was epiphanic: "Within 10 minutes I had the idea, the characters and the storyline in their entirety!" It was challenging enough to write about the 19th century Boston context — never having examined the United States before — let alone discussing slaves' histories. "In Boston, black people lived free lives," says Shahraz, "but the southern states' plantation owners were chasing them decades later. They would enslave entire families, forcibly taking those born and working as free people in Boston to work in their cotton fields."

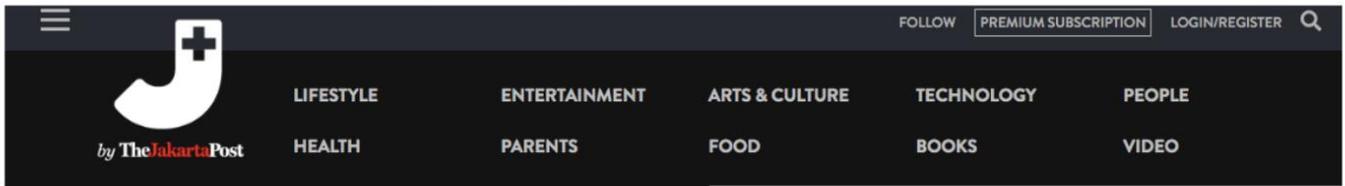
'The Concubine' was completed just three months before publication. Shahraz wrote the first scene of this panoramic story while sitting on the summit of Macchu Picchu, Peru, with a group of women writers. It is set in Cusco in the 16th century when the Spanish conquered the Incan empire. Shahraz was intrigued by the fact that Spanish brides travelled to join their men in Peru, and adumbrated what life was like for Peruvian concubines.

Shahraz recalls that in 1990 the first story she ever wrote, 'A Pair of Jeans', was picked up by German academic Dr Liesel Hermes. Impressed by the exploration of themes relating to migrants' lives and culture clash, Hermes decided to add it to the literary curriculum in German schools. It is still very popular almost three decades later, and Shahraz continues to be inundated with invitations to German schools. "A Pair of Jeans' provided me with a platform for intercultural dialogue. My aim has always been to raise awareness and debunk some stereotyped myths about Islam, Muslim women and extremism. I remind German and English students that there are extremists in all faiths. My parting remark is: 'I am a Muslim. I love my faith, but I am not a terrorist. Please connect with ordinary Muslims like me.'"

'The Evil Shadow', set in a fictitious Pakistani village, was originally written nearly 20 years ago and explores what happens when two women transgress the draconian and illogical rules that shroud miscarriage. This issue of the woman who has miscarried being ostracised as the bringer of bad luck fed into a subplot of Shahraz's third novel *Revolt*. She fearlessly breaks the silence and superstitions around miscarriage that exist across cultures, both Western and Eastern: "I abhor how superstitious beliefs can hurt, victimise, or stigmatise people," she states, imparting her strong feelings about the impact of superstition on women's experiences of childbirth and miscarriage.

We end by speaking about Shahraz's new projects. She's writing a new novel set in Morocco, and also holding the ambitious Muslim Arts and Culture Festival (MACFest) in Manchester from 2018 to highlight literature, education, art and culture. "I have devoted my life to building cultural bridges," Shahraz declares, "and such work is of utmost importance in current times when Islamophobia is on the rise. The mission is to bring all faith communities together, remove barriers, educate, raise awareness and celebrate the rich Muslim heritage." I hope to work with her on this exciting venture.

The columnist teaches global literature at the University of York and is the author of *Britain Through Muslim Eyes: Literary Representations, 1780-1988*



BOOKS  
**Qaisra Shahraz: A voice for the struggle of women everywhere**

DYLAN AMIRIO  
 THE JAKARTA POST

Jakarta / Mon, October 30, 2017 / 10:38 am



Qaisra Shahraz: The issues of inequality, feminism and the empowerment of Muslim women feature heavily in her works, as well as the need to bring people together in harmony. (Mizan Publishing House/File)

Being lucky enough to pursue her dreams of writing that she had since she was 15 years old, 59-year-old Pakistani-British author Qaisra Shahraz weaves a literary world that is incredibly relevant and connected with female struggles across all cultures in which they would be treated unequally.

Shahraz's stories reflect the effects of invisible, sometimes unnecessary barriers that human beings tend to build. The issues of inequality, feminism and the empowerment of Muslim women feature heavily in her works, as well as the need to bring people together in harmony.

Her books – 2002's *The Holy Woman*, 2007's *Typhoon*, 2013's *Revolt* and her most recent book, *Train to Krakow* – as well as dozens of short stories she has written for various publications as a freelance journalist, have earned her the distinction of being one of the most influential women in her hometown of Manchester, United Kingdom, and made her an indirect advocate for women's rights.

As a Muslim living in a Western country, and having been raised there since the age of 9, she acknowledges that each woman has their own struggles in basically trying to navigate their lives in different societies.

In the UK, women are very much free to dress and go about their daily activities as they please without the burden of oppressive laws. But she explains that the impression many Western countries have toward Muslim women tends to be demeaning. Demeaning in the sense that the religion does not allow women freedom of any kind.

"There's a mythical view that's been maintained [in the West] that sees all Muslim women as being oppressed. They think that Muslim women wear veils and headscarves because they have to. In reality, women wear these as a matter of choice. It's not a sign that we're oppressed by the religion itself," she said passionately.



Power of words: Author Qaisra Shahraz (right) and moderator Christian Putra speak during a meet and greet event at the Kinokuniya Bookstore in the Plaza Senayan mall in Central Jakarta. (Mizan Publishing House/File)

Her short story *A Pair of Jeans*, from her 2013 short story collection *A Pair of Jeans and Other Stories* explores this very topic of victimization and the harsher judgments that Muslim women are subjected to regarding what they choose to wear. Shahraz argues that oppression might be the case in some extreme examples such as Iran, Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia, where the West tends to get their perceptions from.

## 2012: The Hindu Times (India)

THE HINDU

10 11 12 13

10 100 years on, legacy of Bauhaus design lives on

11 11hrs Kolkata Opposition rally: Rahul Gandhi backs Karata

12 12hrs Karnataka row echoes at Kolkata

13 13hrs Woman in Srinagar delivers stillborn baby by

HOME NEWS OPINION BUSINESS SPORT CRICKET SCIENCE ENTERTAINMENT LIFE & STYLE THREAD

METROPLUS

### From the woman's point

Anasuya Menon

FEBRUARY 01, 2012 19:35 IST  
UPDATED: FEBRUARY 01, 2012 19:35 IST

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**MORE-IN**

**METROPLUS**

Sometimes, writers fall in love with some of their characters. So much that they are carried over to another novel. That is how 'Typhoon' was born, says Pakistani-English author Qaisra Shahraz. A compelling story woven around the lives of three Muslim women in Pakistan, 'Typhoon' (2003) is a sequel to her first and best-selling novel, 'The Holy Woman'. For Qaisra, it was more than a love affair with her characters. It was the life of ordinary people living in extraordinary situations in her homeland, Pakistan that egged her on to write.

Qaisra was in Kochi recently to launch the Malayalam translation of 'Typhoon'.

Though she has never lived in Pakistan, Qaisra's writing holds a mirror to the country's social terrain. "I have early childhood memories of the place and I have always been in touch with it. I used to visit my grandmother," she says. Her heroine Zarri Bano, the dashing, young, educated Muslim woman who gives up her love for a cruel custom in 'The Holy Woman' (2001) shocked the western world as she surrenders to the norm.

The book flew off the shelves in Europe, found its way to the syllabus in Germany and interestingly, generated encouraging responses from Pakistan. The Mandarin version of it will soon be released at China's Bookworm festival.

### Not just religion

But ask Qaisra and she says her novels are not just about religion. "All I was trying to do was introduce a Muslim woman to the world. The life she leads, the struggles she goes through," she says, especially in the post 9/11 world where Muslims are looked upon with suspicion. "I am trying to tell the world that I am just a peace-loving Muslim and not a terrorist," she says.

With a vast collection of short stories to her credit, Qaisra believes that it is important to educate through her work.

Her television drama 'Dil Hi to Hai', which was translated to Urdu and telecast in the Pakistan Television, won her two awards. The show had a viewership of more than 80 million people, what she calls real success. She is working on another TV drama series on domestic violence.

'A Pair of Jeans', her first story, published in 1988, topped popularity charts, and was published 12 times. It was also included in the syllabus in Germany. The UGC Academic Staff College, Aligarh Muslim University, recently released "The Holy and the Unholy: Critical Essays on Qaisra Shahraz's Fiction".

### More than writing

However, Qaisra says she is not a full-time author. "Writing is not my life. It is just a strand among the many roles I have," she says. "My real life is with my family. I do the laundry, the dishes,... I am a mother, a homemaker, a wife, a daughter."

Most of her works have women as protagonists—women victimised by society, but who fight back with an unyielding spirit. "I never forget that I am a product of a privileged society, having lived in Britain all my life, I am extremely aware that there are women out there for whom writing a book is a luxury. Forget a book; they can't afford a scrap of paper."

Qaisra's third book, tentatively titled 'Revolt', delves into the complex realm of mixed marriages. Her fourth novel, which she would name 'Silence' will be on honour killings. Set in Morocco, the story seeks to explore the lives of women trapped in an unjust society.

Wendlinger Zeitung  
**Nürtinger Zeitung**  
Sunday, January 20, 2019

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display

**REGION**

## See cultural diversity as enrichment

22.11.2008, - PRINT  

See cultural diversity as enrichment



At the Fritz Ruoff School in Nürtingen, British author Qaisra Shahraz read texts from her books. The reading in English offered the 150 high school students the opportunity to test their language skills. Her story "A Pair of Jeans" plays like her novels "Typhoon" and "The Holy Woman" in the Muslim-Asian culture to which Shahraz himself belongs. Born in Pakistan, she came to England at the age of eight with her parents. She lives in Manchester with her husband and two children today. Her texts and her biography conveyed that a girl does not have to be oppressed, but can go his own way with the help of good education. Shahraz does not see immigrant background as a problem for students, but as an opportunity for diversity and creativity. That's why she asks students and teachers to come out of their little boxes. One should throw the old reservations overboard and understand cultural diversity as an enrichment. "I am a Muslim and I love it," assures the modern power woman. She creates the multiple balancing act between the cultures as well as between her role as mother and career woman. The event was organized by the school librarian Brigitte Eppinger-Haslbauer together with the English faculty. pm The event was organized by the school librarian Brigitte Eppinger-Haslbauer together with the English faculty. pm The event was organized by the school librarian Brigitte Eppinger-Haslbauer together with the English faculty. pm

## 14.09.18 Muslim Obsession

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# Unite Muslims and Non-Muslims, Qaisra Shahraz Holds the MACFEST Festival

Editor **Iqbal Ramdhani** - Friday, September 14, 18 | 9:45 a.m. WIB

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**Manchester, Muslim Obsession** - British-Pakistani novelist Qaisra Shahraz will hold a multi-arts festival titled 'MACFEST' with more than 40 events, which will last for ten days.

Qaisra Shahraz, hopes that the 'MACFEST' festival will unite the Muslim and non-Muslim communities. At this festival will present Muslim art and culture through a program packed with food, music, art, film, comedy, literature, and performances.

"The event will take place in various places throughout the city, including Whitworth Art Gallery, Elizabeth Gaskell House, Manchester Museum, Manchester University, British Muslim Heritage Center, Manchester Central, and Longsight Library," he said as quoted by **About Islam** on Friday (9/14) / 2018).

Not forgetting the event there will also be a stand-up comedy night with Abdullah Afzal, a Manchester star who also appeared on *Celebrity MasterChef* last year. In addition, the event will be full of leading thinkers, entertainers, artists and writers.

Not only that, this famous writer will present a book that was once published, and Shahraz has also ensured taking part in the event in discussions with award-winning fellow writer Leila Aboulela, moderated by Libby Tempest of Elizabeth Gaskell's House.

"The festival will also have poetry, inspirational reading, panels and lectures, all of which celebrate are Muslim writers. 'Direct music will come from artists from various Muslim countries, and from students at the University of Manchester,' he said. **(Bal)**

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What's On - What's On News

## A new city-wide festival celebrating Muslim arts and culture is coming to Manchester

MACFEST will take place over ten days this November



A brand new multi-arts festival is coming to Manchester this November, with more than 40 events taking place over 10 days.

MACFEST will celebrate Muslim arts and culture through a programme packed with food, music, art, film, comedy, literature and performance.

Events will take place at venues across the city, including the Whitworth Art Gallery, Elizabeth Gaskell's House, Manchester Museum, the University of Manchester, the British Muslim Heritage Centre and Manchester Central and Longsight Library.

Founder Qaisra Shahraz, a British-Pakistani novelist and journalist who has lived in Manchester for most of her life, hopes that the festival will bring together both Muslim and non-Muslim communities and break down barriers.

The bill is packed with leading thinkers, entertainers, artists and writers.

As a published author herself, Shahraz has ensured a lengthy programme of literature events for MACFEST. She will personally take part in a discussion with fellow award-winning writer Leila Aboulela, moderated by Libby Tempest of Elizabeth Gaskell's House.

There will also be poetry, inspiring readings, panels and lectures, all celebrating Muslim writers.

Live music will come from artists from different Muslim countries, and from students at the University of Manchester.

A highlight of the festival will be the historical insights provided by Manchester's local communities.

Visitors will get to hear the story of Robert 'Reschid' Stanley from his great great grandchildren, a man who was the Mayor of Stalybridge and "a Victorian secret Muslim". Stanley is thought to have been the first Muslim mayor.



Revolutionary Women Around the World will be an art exhibition and discussion with Faiqa Uppal and Sairah Yassir-Deane.

## MACFEST 2018 – across Manchester

Sara Jaspan, Exhibitions Editor

Last Updated 1 October 2018

MACFEST 2018 at [British Muslim Heritage Centre](#), Manchester, 17–25 November 2018, free entry - [Visit now](#)

This April, the UK's first festival dedicated entirely to Muslim culture, literature and ideas opened at the British Library in London. And following not far behind comes MACFEST – a new 10-day celebration of art, literature, culture, music, film, food and heritage relating to the Muslim diaspora, which will take place in venues across Manchester this November, launching on the 11th at [Whitworth Art Gallery](#). As the brainchild of the city's resident critically-acclaimed author and prize-winning peace activist, Qaisra Shahraz FRSA, who has dedicated her life to fighting Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and all forms of discrimination; we're expecting great things. The programme is wide-ranging, with over 50 events announced so far. Here are just some of the things we're most looking forward to...

The ambitious festival aims to bring Muslim and non-Muslim communities together, promoting social inclusion and helping to overcome barriers. With a surge in Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crime reported throughout the West over recent years, such an intention seems worthy of applause in itself. Yet, judging by the breadth and quality of the events we have to look forward to, we're expecting MACFEST to go beyond an exercise in cultural inclusivity and deliver a special occasion for the city to remember, and build upon.

A talk by the great, great grandchildren of Robert 'Reschild' Stanley will tell the only recently recovered story of how the Mayor of Stalybridge (1874-76) became 'A Victorian Secret Muslim', reverting to the faith 120 years ago after learning about the unfair foreign policies of the British government, later going on to become Vice-Chairperson of the first mosque in the UK (Liverpool). Turning to the present, Baroness Manzila Pola Uddin (the first Muslim and second Asian woman to sit in the UK Parliament) will join others to discuss the political challenges facing Muslim women today. And internationally-renowned Sudanese writer Leila Aboulela (recently interviewed on BBC Radio 4's *Open Book*) will join Shahraz for a discussion moderated by Dr Claire Chambers, Senior Lecturer in Global Literature at University of York.



Elsewhere, the poetry of the great 13<sup>th</sup> century Muslim Sufi mystic Maulana Rumi will be explored through an afternoon of music and sound at the British Muslim Heritage Centre. Stand-up comedy will come from local Muslim comedians. An exhibition of art and photography will document 'everyday life on the Curry Mile'. And a programme of screenings including the British rom-com *Finding Fatimah* (2017) and *Being Muslim Today: Travels in Europe* – a documentary by the award-winning author, broadcaster and former diplomat Akbar Ahmad – will cover a wide range of contemporary issues.

The bulk of MACFEST will take place over the weekend of 17-18 November at the iconic [British Muslim Heritage Centre](#) in Whalley Range. Venues also include The Manchester College, [Whitworth Art Gallery](#), Manchester Central & Longsight library, Abraham Moss High School, Levenshulme High School for Girls, Manchester Central Mosque, Khizra Mosque, University of Manchester, Elizabeth Gaskell House, [Manchester Museum](#), Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Resource Centre & Star Centre.

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MACFEST 2018 at [British Muslim Heritage Centre](#), Manchester

17–25 November 2018

Free entry

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October 17, 2018

## 'Spread honey, not hate': New UK multi-arts Muslim festival wants to engage segregated communities

Global Islamic Economic Gateway

October 17, 2018

Heba Hashem



Photo: Muslims attend Friday prayers at Manchester Central Mosque where they prayed for the victims and injured in the Manchester Arena bombing, and also recited a special Prayer for Manchester on May 26, 2017 in Manchester, England. Photo by Christopher Furlong/Getty Images

Last year, three terrorist attacks targeting the public in London and Manchester were perpetrated by Muslims who were mostly British. After the Manchester Arena attack on May 22 that killed 23 people, including the suicide bomber, Greater Manchester Police reported a 130 percent rise in hate crime, including a 500 percent surge in Islamophobic-related hate crime compared with the same period a year earlier.

One Manchester resident decided she needed to do something to address the "real problems" of "hatred and divisions".

"I've spent the last 15 years promoting peace and harmony, connecting communities and in particular tackling hatred aimed at Muslims," said Qaisra Shahraz, whose deep community involvement includes being a trustee of Manchester Multi Faith Centre, Co-Chair of Faith Network 4 Manchester, We Stand Together Executive Member of the Muslim Jewish Forum of Greater Manchester and a partner of the Foundation For Ethnic Understanding.

"With the rising extremism, Muslims have been targeted and demonised regularly, and I got really fed-up after the Manchester Arena attack," she added.

Naturally, the international novelist and screenwriter turned to culture and the arts. Shahraz has spent more than a year programming and organising a new multi-arts festival.

"My whole mission is to have the festival mainstream, educating people and connecting Muslim communities within themselves," the founder and curator of new festival MACFEST told Salaam Gateway.

Manchester's different Muslim communities, said Shahraz, "live in their own little groups". "For example, the Turkish hardly interact with the Somalis, [neither do] the Pakistanis with the Nigerians. We want to engage as many of these communities and help them get to know each other. So first, we want to bring Muslims and non-Muslims together and then the Muslims among themselves," she said.

The aim of the festival, which will run from November 17 to 25, is to break barriers. "Hatred and divisions are real problems. In fact, we'll have a banner that says 'spread honey, not hate'," said Shahraz.



Photo: A Jewish woman named Renee Rachel Black and a Muslim man named Sadiq Patel react next to floral tributes

in Albert Square in Manchester, Britain May 24, 2017, after the May 22 terrorist attack on the Manchester Arena. REUTERS/Darren Staple

### 'DIVERSITY IS KEY'

2.8 million people live in Greater Manchester, a county of ten boroughs including the biggest city Manchester. According to the latest population census in 2011, 8.68 percent identified as Muslim, a rise of around three percent from 2001. The majority of the county's Muslims are of Pakistani and other South Asian descent but as Shahraz alluded to earlier, the population is ethnically and culturally diverse.

Overall, it is estimated that 16 percent of the county's residents are of black, Asian and minority ethnic origin, said a Greater Manchester Combined Authority report released in July this year.

Drilling down further, the Office of National Statistics estimated that in 2017, around 376,000 of Greater Manchester residents, equivalent to 13 percent of the county's population, were not UK-born. Of this group, 124,000 came from the EU and the rest were born in non-EU countries.

Amidst this huge diversity, Shahraz wants MACFEST to engage as many Mancunians as possible. "I've been very strategic about it and involved as many nationalities as possible. Diversity is key. A quarter of my volunteer team are non-Muslims; people who are enthusiastic to be involved and I want them to be the face of the festival, because it's for everyone," Shahraz said.

Barbara Dresner, a Jewish-Catholic MACFEST volunteer who learnt about Muslim cultures during her travels to Malaysia and Indonesia, told Salaam Gateway she has always looked out for opportunities to get to know people from other backgrounds.

"I met Qaisra at an All Faith Network women's picnic in Manchester this summer, which I'd attended with my Hindu friend and neighbour. Qaisra and I had already met several times before at Manchester's Muslim Jewish Forum events. It was at the picnic when she asked if I'd be interested in working with her on setting up MACFEST.

"I hope the festival will enable people to learn more about the diversity of Muslim arts and culture – and one of those – will be me," said Dresner.

Similarly, Sophie Jones, a student at the University of Salford, said being a part of MACFEST is a "unique opportunity". Jones is volunteering her time to help with the filming of the festival.

### STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS

For the hosting venues, which include schools, universities, libraries, museums and galleries, the festival is an opportunity to strengthen ties with Manchester's Muslim communities.

"Over the past several years Manchester Museum has been developing relationships with Muslim communities across the city and we're looking to strengthen these by supporting MACFEST," Stephen Welsh, curator of Living Cultures collection at Manchester Museum told Salaam Gateway.

The schools and universities that are hosting the festival, which include the University of Manchester and Manchester College as well as Levenshulme, Whalley Range, Birkfield, Dimsay and Abraham Moss high schools, also hope to make a similar impact.

"As a school, we are delighted and honoured to take part in MACFEST to celebrate the art, literature, music, film, and heritage relating to Muslim culture," Pascal Beaudon, head of languages at Whalley Range High School told Salaam Gateway.

The school is home to 1,700 students who collectively speak 46 languages, according to Beaudon.

"We hope that by taking part in this festival we can promote our values and support Qaisra Shahraz in her effort to bring communities together to celebrate what makes Manchester unique: our people"



Photo: Members of the Muslim community attend a candlelit vigil, to honour the victims of Monday evening's terror attack, at Albert Square on May 23, 2017 in Manchester, England. Photo by Jeff J Mitchell/Getty Images

### FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS

## Muslim-led arts initiatives tackling Islamophobia, promoting interfaith harmony among UK children

A record number of anti-Muslim attacks and incidents of abuse were reported in the United Kingdom last year, according to monitoring group Tell Mama in its annual report released in July.

Many were triggered by four incidents between March and June 2017, which a police review said “were the most deadly terrorist attacks on British soil since the 7/7 London tube and bus bombings of July 2005.” Three attacks targeting public places in London and Manchester were perpetrated by Muslims who were mostly British, and the fourth was carried out by a non-Muslim Briton on a London mosque.

A year later in April, a three-day festival of culture and ideas dedicated to Muslim communities was held at the British Library in London. In November, a ten-day event will open in Manchester. Both aim to bridge cultures and tackle Islamophobia.

### REACHING COMMUNITIES, YOUNG PEOPLE

MFest in London and the Muslim Art and Cultural Festival (MACFest) in Manchester are big multi-day, multi-arts events in the two cities directly affected by last year’s four terrorist attacks. Where MFest was held at central London institution The British Library and targeted the general public, the much bigger MACFest will be more widely distributed and also involve museums, galleries, universities and schools.

“The reason why I wanted to [have some events] in schools is because with the rise of extremism, there’s been a lot of negative backlash and children suffer in schools if they are Muslims because they get bullied,” critically-acclaimed novelist Qaisra Shahraz, who is founder and curator of MACFest, told Salaam Gateway.

The rationale behind this aspect of Shahraz’s MACFest programming is backed by data. Tell Mama’s report found that 72 percent of the perpetrators of reported anti-Muslim incidents last year were white men, with younger men, including teenagers, being some of the main perpetrators. There’s clearly a need to reach young people with issues related to Islam and Muslims.

## 17.10.18 Salaam Gateway

“I want these [Muslim] children to feel proud of who they are. And for the children who bully them to learn that those are the actions of extremists – the rest of us are normal peace-loving people,” said Shahraz, whose community involvement includes being a trustee of Manchester Multi Faith Centre, Vice Chair of Faith Network 4 Manchester and Executive Member of the Muslim Jewish Forum of Greater Manchester.

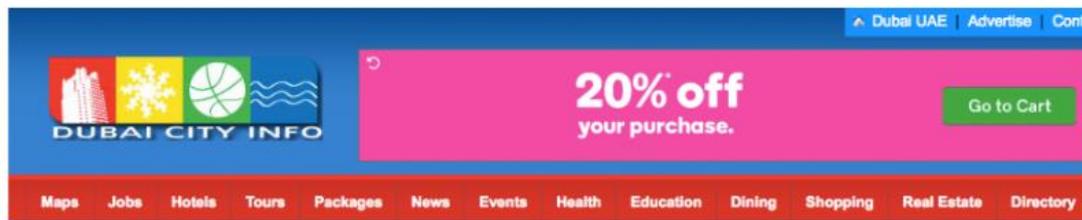
MFest and MACFest are not by any means the first focusing on Islam and Muslims in the UK. Shemiza Rashid, a social and cultural entrepreneur working in the interfaith, Asian, and Islam and Muslim creative industries, pointed out smaller community arts and cultural events that have been organised in recent years.

“A lot of Muslim arts organisations across the country are reaching out and working alongside non-Muslim galleries to help make Islam more accessible,” said Rashid, who hosts a faith-inspired creative arts and lifestyle show for a community radio station based in Luton, a town just northwest of London.

“Events like the Kinara Festival [in July 2016] by the Love & Etiquette Foundation and Milton Keynes Eid in the Park hosted by Milton Keynes Islamic Arts, Heritage and Culture (MKIAC) have successfully reached out to communities around them to share and bridge an understanding. More festivals are emerging with a similar theme,” said Rashid. Kinara The impact of such initiatives is tremendous, said Rashid, not only for Muslim children but also for non-Muslims and adults. However, more needs to be done to truly bring Islamic art and literature to a mass audience - more investment and mainstream partners, she said.

“It is vital that creativity in Islam is nurtured to regenerate and recharge the values, and to adapt to new eras and landscapes. Islam is pure in its essence; it’s people who change with the times. So it’s about making sure we keep that connection thriving,” said Rashid.

## 2010: Dubai City Info (Dubai)



### British Council To Host Renowned Author Qaisra Shahraz At Abu Dhabi International Book Fair 2010

Award winning author, Qaisra Shahraz to hold a series of workshops and discussions during the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair 2010

Abu Dhabi, UAE, March 2nd 2010: As part of its commitment to enhancing cultural understanding and knowledge exchange between the UK and the UAE, the British Council is proud to host award winning author, playwright, and educator, Qaisra Shahraz, to take part in a series of educational workshops, cultural activities, and a much anticipated one-on-one discussion with acclaimed journalist Philippa Kennedy at the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair (ADIBF). Shahraz has already held educational workshops at the British Council Offices, entitled "Excellence in Teaching and Learning", on 28 February in Abu Dhabi, and 1 March in Dubai, which witnessed a number of attendants, including teachers, and inspectors .

The overall aim of these workshops is to improve standards in teaching and learning, to familiarise participants with the criteria and features of excellent teaching & learning, and to provide the opportunity for participants to engage in a professional dialogue on teaching and learning. "Qaisra Shahraz is an accomplished educator and an award winning novelist." said Michel Bechara, Director of Projects, British Council UAE.

"The British Council has long endeavoured to enhance understanding between cultures through the exchange of knowledge and creative ideas, and Shahraz's extensive educational background and experience makes her workshops a milestone in British Council's mission to bring educational opportunities to the forefront of each country in which we operate." Two workshops will run as part of the Education Chapter of the ADIBF on 'Lively Language Learning', and Shahraz will be visiting universities and institutions around the UAE to take part in cultural activities with Students, Educators and other Literature enthusiasts. On Friday March 5th, Shahraz will be interviewed by Philippa Kennedy at the ADIBF's Book Sofa, from 5 to 6 pm, to discuss her career as an award winning author, holding numerous literary awards, including the Golden Jubilee Award for her first novel, *The Holy Woman*.

Furthermore, Shahraz will take part in a panel discussion of the Al Multaqa Reading Club for Women – one of UNESCO's reading clubs in the world – at the ADIBF, to talk about her book 'The Holy Woman', which was previously read and discussed by the club's members. "We do give great importance to sharing experience with, and handing over Literature expertise to, established and emerging novelists and other Literature enthusiasts, in the UAE.

To deliver this, a series of cultural activities are scheduled to take place with various institutions and organisations in the United Arab Emirates, as we see these activities as a very important part of our continued commitment to fostering relationships, and initiating long-term cultural dialogue, between people in the UK and in the UAE," concluded Bechara. Qaisra Shahraz was born in Pakistan, and has lived in the UK for most of her life. She has more than 20 years experience of teaching, examining, assessing and training in British schools, universities, and various other educational institutions. She is currently a college inspector for Ofsted and Estyn (Wales), international education consultant and trainer.

Arts & Culture / November 11, 2018

## The Muslim Arts and Culture Festival which is “Spreading Honey Not Hate”



MACFest is the first festival of its kind, putting the spotlight on Muslim arts and culture from around the world. The festival will be a celebration of the richness of Muslim culture, showcasing the art, music, cuisine, history and literature of 10 different countries.

The aim of MACFest is to unite communities; throughout the festival social inclusion is promoted between Muslim and non-Muslims in order to break down barriers and encourage conversations.

It is led by Qaisra Shahraz: a critically acclaimed British-Pakistani novelist who – amongst a long list of awards – was the winner of the National Diversity Awards ‘Lifetime Achiever Award’ in 2016. In an interview, Qaisra described how the scale of MACFest will be “groundbreaking” promising a diverse schedule of events and venues, 30 of which are free to attend.

MACFest will engage people of all ages and denominations, including school, college and university students using venues within the local community for the events. Venues include The British Muslim Heritage Centre, as well as our own Manchester Academy.

Having examined the enormous list of events, we have selected three free events which seem too exciting to miss.

On the 17th November is the panel event, ‘Celebrating Famous Muslim Writers from Around the World with Ajmal Masroor’, which will include an Authors’ Reading, as well as a Book Launch. Writers include Leila Aboulela, Ajmal Masroor, Yasmin Alibhai Brown, General Aamar Aftab, Rabia Avcı, Hussam Haj Omar, Sahar.

If the fantastic line-up alone doesn’t excite you, Arts and Film editors Bella Jewell and Aisha Al-Janabi will be introducing the Sudanese author, Leila Aboulela, whose writing explores identity and the stories of Muslims in Europe.

On the 18th November the 13th Century poet and philosopher, Rumi, will be celebrated at the British Muslim Heritage Centre, where Gulcin Bulut, Pasha Abdollahi, Masoud Ghasemi, Farshid Mahyari and the Sahba Ensemble will perform ‘The Alchemy of Love’.



© 20th November 2018 . By Bouliant Mustafa

## Celebrate Turkish and Ottoman Muslim culture at Manchester's new MACFEST

MACFEST Manchester Muslims Ottoman art Ottoman heritage



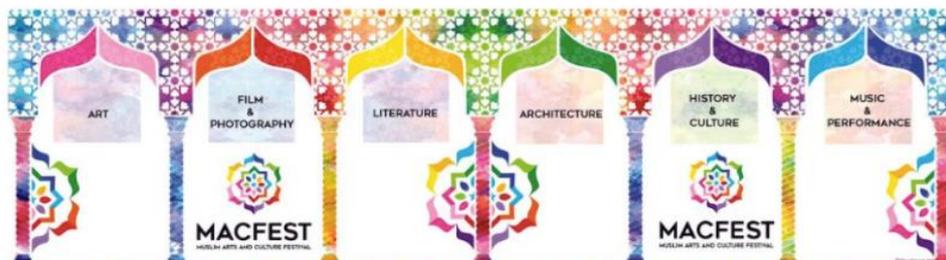
MACFEST is a ground-breaking new 10-day festival in Manchester celebrating the diversity and richness of Muslim heritage through art, literature, music and culture.

It kicked off at the weekend, with the festival aiming to engage people of all ages and denominations, including school, college and university students and local communities.

Some 50 events are taking place across Manchester, and the majority are free to attend. Turkish Muslims and their arts and culture are represented too.

On Sunday 18 November, artist Ashfia Ashrif held a workshop called 'An Introduction to Turkish Motifs in Ottoman Times', to allow participants a chance to explore the artistic themes that were popular across the Ottoman Empire. Under the Ottomans, Muslim civilisation thrived and there was an abundance of traditional arts such as calligraphy, as well as decorative motifs such as the tulip, and geometric patterns, which were typical of Islamic art of the time.

This weekend, on Saturday 24 November, there will be a 3-hour free event celebrating Turkish and Ottoman culture at the Star Centre in Ardwick. Details about the programme on the night remains vague, but it would be strange if it did not feature food and music...



### Event Details

Title: MACFEST: Celebrate Anatolian/Turkish Culture

Date: Saturday 24 November 2018

Times: 6pm-9pm

Address: STAR Centre, 116 Hyde Road, Ardwick, Manchester, M12 5AR

Admission: the event is free, but the organisers ask guests to **pre-register via Eventbrite**.

More information: visit their **MACFEST website** for more details about the festival.



## A vibrant launch party for MACFest

WRITTEN BY [BELLA JEWELL](#) AND [AISHAALJANABI](#) ON 15TH NOVEMBER 2018. POSTED IN [ARTS](#), [FILM](#)

By Aisha Al-Janabi and Bella Jewell

Walking into the opening gala was like being welcomed into a friend's home; we were immediately hit with the intense fragrances of cumin, saffron, and garlic. By the entrance there was a generous spread of food, next to which people of all ages gathered.

We gleefully ate baklava, the likes of which we enjoyed with our own families during celebrations. This launch event was perfectly suited to the intentions of the [Muslim Arts and Cultures Festival](#); bringing together different communities and sharing diverse cultures and traditions.

This event was held on the 11th of November – Remembrance Sunday – and gave the perfect opportunity to bring awareness to the foreign soldiers who fought for Britain during World War I. Despite WWI being taught as early as primary school, we are often too nation-centred and insular in our teaching. We overlook the contributions of those we relied on, Colonial subjects, Muslims included, who gave their lives for our future.

The audience was presented with a short film created by The British Muslim Heritage Centre. It recounted the input of Muslim soldiers, acknowledging that 400,000 Muslims from different countries fought for Britain during the Great War. This Sunday, they were finally given the respect of a minute's silence and commemoration that we regularly provide to British Soldiers.

What followed was a variety of speeches, including a spine-tingling address by [Qaisra Shahraz](#) – the festival's driving force, and "trailblazer" as described by Rusholme MP and Director of the Festival, Councillor Rabnawaz Akbar. Akbar praised her rejection of social expectations regarding gender; she threw off the stereotype of women being a housewife, instead pursuing writing and activism.

Qaisra called out the media for scapegoating the Islam following recent terror attacks, claiming: "I am fed up of reminding people that we have extremists and nutters of all faiths." She went on to describe the need to acknowledge the beauty of Islamic cultures, saying, "enough is enough. I want to celebrate being a Muslim."

The performances that made up the afternoon – from Sufi singing to Palestinian dance – gave a insight into the rich jam-packed schedule of MACFest. The festival will support and give a platform to artists of different nationalities, ages, and backgrounds, bridging the gaps between the internal communities of the Islamic Faith.

MACFest is putting Islamic culture at the centre of discussions, shedding a positive light on a community which is often villainized. As Qaisra Shahraz summarised, the festival will "use the arts to bring communities together."

MACFest's schedule can be found on their [website](#).

Tags: [art](#), [culture](#), [Islam](#), [MACFEST](#), [terrorism](#)



Opening Ceremony - planting the MACFEST tree

## Muslim arts and culture festival welcomes 3000 visitors

Last month, MACFEST a groundbreaking Muslim Arts and Culture Festival made its successful debut at venues across Manchester with more than 3000 attendees.

The festival took place over 9 days (17 -25 Nov) with 50 events. Its mission was to celebrate the diversity and richness of Muslim heritage in the UK and engage people of all ages and backgrounds including school children, college students and local commu-

nity groups.

Founder and curator, Qaisra Shahraz said: "Through this unique festival, we managed to break down barriers, celebrate arts and bring both Muslim and non-Muslim communities together under one roof.

"We are incredibly proud of what the festival has achieved in the city of Manchester and hope to continue the work we are doing."

MACFEST worked closely with seven local schools to explore Muslim arts and

culture projects. Student from Whalley Range High School, Cheetham Primary, KD Grammar and the Bosnian Supplementary School took part in events with diverse art and performance: Levenshulme High School, Abraham Mos Community School and Manchester College hosted their own MACFEST cultural days with staff and students.

The festival celebrated art, literature, music, culture and heritage of th



Muslim arts and culture festival welcomes 3000 visitors across Manchester FULL STORY ON PAGE 8

### Muslim diaspora.

There was something for everyone with debates, panels, book launches, art and photography exhibitions, presentations about Islamic civilisations, Nasheeds, art workshops and lots of food.

Laila Aboulela, MACFEST attendee and critically acclaimed Sudanese-born author said: "I had a great time at MACFEST, it is a new arts festival with a warm community spirit.

"Congratulations to Qaisra for organising so many wonderful events. I was thrilled to meet writers whose work I greatly admire including, Sayeeda Warsi and Yasmin Alibhai-Brown. For the first time ever I signed a copy of one of my books for a policewoman!"

Popular events from the festival included the opening ceremony at The British



Qaisra Shahraz with the Turkish and Persian Sufi Ensemble

Heritage Centre. The opening ceremony had 13 Muslim women from Manchester welcome guests in their native language. A planting of the MACFEST tree also took place at the ceremony.

Other events included a multi-lingual poetry and Mushaira performance at Longsight Library. This event featured local Mus-

lim poets from Pakistani, Bengali, Arabic and Somali heritage recite poems in their native tongues and in English.

The festival ended with a musical finale at the Whitworth Art Gallery. An outstanding musical extravaganza with performances from artists from various Muslim countries.



Staff and students at The Manchester College



Award for the Bosnian Alternative School Manchester

**MANCHESTER** - A ceremony of acknowledgment for participation in the recently held MACFEST was held at the Bosanski School School in Manchester. Award ceremony is a great acknowledgment for the Bosnian school, as the Bosnian school in Manchester has managed to survive for almost 18 years, mostly thanks to Mrs **Sadiji Muminović** , who is really fighting for this school.



Rerezent.ba



The ceremony was very much visited. Representatives of various communities came to acknowledge the first organizer of the event, Sadiji Muminović, as well as all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina. At this event, the first children, the former and present students, conducted a short program, who prepared and prepared the right surprise for everyone present. Subsequently, Sadija Muminović gave a short introduction to Bosanski school, from its beginnings to the present day. All the guests were positively surprised that this school has a long tradition. Representatives of the Manchester Council, Bosnia UK Network and BH Embassy in the UK sent congratulations on the acknowledged acknowledgment with the apology that they could attend the inaugurated ceremony.

Then **Qaisra Shahraz**, director of MACFEST addressed all the participants, stressing that it was extremely important for the Bosnian School to participate in this festival and to present the tradition and culture of Bosnia and Herzegovina. She emphasized that Sadiji Muminović and other teachers at school were extremely difficult at first, but after a visionary presentation about the history of the school, she was amazed at how and what was achieved. In the end, awards were given to the Bosnian school, as well as the division of testimonies for the pupils of this school.



After painting, guests could serve Bosnian specialties, salad and sweet dishes, as well as traditional Bosnian cafe. Everyone was delighted with this event and all congratulated Sadija because they are proud of her success, as well as the success of all the teachers and students of the Bosnian School in Manchester. The Bosnian-Herzegovinian Supplementary School Manchester started its work in 2000. This school year has eight children and two with special needs. There are two teachers at the school, **Dr. Belma Muhamedagić** and **Rasema Bakkali Alajmović** who works with children with special needs. We have two of our students who attended the Bosnian school from the first to the last grade and went on coming.

Teachers also help former students **Nabila Čohadžić** and **Umma Elkramts** who successfully completed the BH supplementary school but are still coming regularly to help the school work.

Prepared by: **Dr. Belma MUHAMEDAGIĆ / Bosnia UK Network**



Award-winning Muslim organisation Macfest launches Arab Heritage Festival in UK  
The event in northern English city Manchester will feature  
[www.thenationalnews.com](http://www.thenationalnews.com)

**Award-winning Muslim organisation Macfest launches Arab Heritage Festival in UK:** <https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/uk-news/2021/09/10/award-winning-muslim-charity-macfest-launches-arab-heritage-festival-in-uk/>

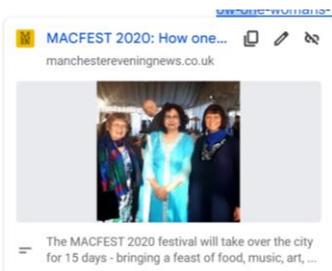


**MACFEST tackling Islamophobia:**

<https://www.manchesterworld.uk/whats-on/macfest-the-massive-manchester-based-festival-using-art-and-culture-to-tackle-islamophobia-3519494>

**Mancunian, An interview with Qaisra Shhraz: founder of MACFEST:**

<https://mancunian.com/2018/10/05/an-interview-with-qaisra-shhraz-founder-of-macfest/>



**MACFEST 2020: How one woman's mission to end divisions after Manchester terror attack became a celebration of community:**

<https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/macfest-2020-how-one-womans-17541290>

In partnership with



Image courtesy of British Muslim Heritage Centre

MACFEST 2020 at [British Muslim Heritage Centre](#), Manchester, 11–26 January 2020, free entry - [Visit now](#)

Following the huge success of its launch in 2018, the second edition of Manchester's award-winning Muslim Arts and Culture Festival is about to take place across the city and wider north west region, with over 50 events spread across 16 days. The largely-free programme features literature, art, music, food, history, comedy, film, performance and culture, celebrating the diversity and richness of Muslim heritage in the UK. MACFEST is led by the prize-winning author and peace activist Qaisra Shahraz FRSA, who has dedicated her life to fighting Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and all forms of discrimination.

Make sure you catch the opening weekend (11-12 Jan), held at the [British Muslim Heritage Centre](#) (itself a striking, Grade II listed early Gothic Revival building) in Whalley Range. Highlights will include stand-up comedy from Tez Ilyas (of Channel 4's 'The Tez O'Clock Show'), and a series of talks and panel discussions exploring themes such as the experiences of Muslim women, the relationship between faith and science, and the representation of Muslim people within the British media. These events will run alongside several film screenings and exhibitions over the course of the two days, plus creative workshops covering Persian carpet design, papercutting, mandala patterns, Indonesian Batik painting, calligraphy and more.

Turning to the rest of the festival, an afternoon exploring [John Bylands Library's](#) substantial collection of Islamic miniature paintings and manuscripts with curator and archivist Elizabeth Gow makes the top of our list (16 Jan, book ahead). We're also looking forward to a special lecture on Islamic Geometric Design delivered by artist Eric Brough at [Manchester Art Gallery](#) (18 Jan); an evening of poetry by Manchester-based writers of Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Iranian and Somali backgrounds at [Manchester Central Library](#) (21 Jan); and an exploration of the misrepresentation of Western and Eastern culture through [The Portico Library's](#) 'Voyages and Travels' collection, led by Professor Zahia Smail Salhi (24 Jan).

Finally, head to [Whitworth Art Gallery](#) for the closing event of MACFEST 2020, featuring live music performed by artists from different Muslim communities around the world, including SOAS SILK Road Collective and the Iranian Classical Moulana Music Band (26 Jan). Altogether, the festival is intended to bring Muslim and non-Muslim communities together – and in this spirit, everybody is welcome.

### Creative Tourist, **MACFEST 2020 – across Manchester:**

<https://www.creativetourist.com/event/macfest/>

- **Macfest in Southampton:**  
[https://www.solinked.org.uk/community\\_services/macfest-muslim-arts-and-culture-festival-march-to-july-2023](https://www.solinked.org.uk/community_services/macfest-muslim-arts-and-culture-festival-march-to-july-2023)
- **Mancunion, Interview: Manchester's most influential woman – Qaisra Shahraz:**  
<https://mancunion.com/2018/01/30/interview-manchesters-most-influential-woman-qaisra-shahraz/>
- **Manchester Wire, MACFEST 2020 celebrates Muslim heritage in Manchester:**
- <https://manchesterswire.co.uk/book-now-macfest-2020-celebrates-muslim-heritage-in-manchester/>
- **Manchester World about Ramadan and Macfest:**  
<https://www.manchesterworld.uk/whats-on/ramadan-2023-manchester-iftar-meals-4076701>

**FFEU NEWSLETTER:** <https://myemail.constantcontact.com/FFEU-Highlights-March-2023.html?soid=1102054005496&aid=qMmv9C3-FL8>

**FFEU**  
FOUNDATION FOR ETHNIC UNDERSTANDING - FOUNDED 1989

**FFEU**

**RAMADAN MUBARAK!**

"My hope is that we will have peaceful and blessed Ramadan to all our Muslim friends and partners around the world."  
- Rabbi Marc Schneider

**"MOST INFLUENTIAL MUSLIM LEADER IN THE MODERN MUSLIM WORLD"**  
- Times of Israel

2023, 11:17

FFEU Highlights March 2023

March 15, 2023 marked the first-ever International Day To Combat Islamophobia. FFEU stands with our Muslim brothers and sisters, celebrating our common faith and common fate. Our organization was proud to sponsor the first rallies in U.S. history, in the streets of Times Square, to speak out against Islamophobia. These rallies held in 2011 and 2017 launched FFEU's Muslims Are Speaking Out campaign. Since then, FFEU has supported and continues to support initiatives such as the international MACFEST and many other global and national programs and activities aimed at stemming Islamophobia.

**GLOBAL MUSLIM ARTS AND CULTURE FESTIVAL 5TH ANNIVERSARY AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT PANEL**



FFEU Executive Director **Chris Sacarabany** participated as the honored guest in a most moving and powerful panel discussion in honor of 4 young courageous Afghani women artists based in Kabul. The event, organized by award-winning Muslim Arts and Culture Festival (MACFEST), led by FFEU UK partner **Ms. Qaisra Shahraz MBE JP**, was hosted by **Ms. Angelika Hoff M.A.**, teacher Training College Stuttgart, Germany.

Watch the powerful and touching conversation here:  
<https://www.facebook.com/MACFESTUK/videos/16283279947624/>  
A few days earlier, Chris Sacarabany addressed MACFEST with a congratulatory message on behalf of FFEU on the occasion of the Festival's 5th anniversary.

Ms. Qaisra Shahraz MBE JP FRSA, Founder, Curator and Executive Director of MACFEST – an award-winning festival celebrating art, music and culture that brings Muslim and non-Muslim communities together – received the distinguished MBE order of the British Empire Award and the Cultural Champion Award, from the Prince William of Wales for her outstanding work in MACFEST.

ffeu@mail.constantcontact.com#FFEU-Highlights-March-2023.html?sk=1102054005496&aid=Qmrv9C3\_FL8

2023, 11:17

FFEU Highlights March 2023

Since its inception in 2017, with the support of FFEU, MACFEST has organized, on a yearly basis, over 70 events in its hometown of Manchester, UK, the United Arab Emirates, the Kingdom of Morocco and Azerbaijan, among other countries.



Follow us FFEU



Follow Rabbi Marc Schneider



Foundation for Ethnic Understanding | 1 East 93rd Street, Suite 1C, New York, NY 10128

Unsubscribe: [chris@ffeu.org](mailto:chris@ffeu.org)

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**FFEU Sponsored MACFEST**

FFEU was a proud supporter of **MACFEST**, the groundbreaking **Muslim Arts and Culture Festival** held from **November 17th-25th, 2018** in Manchester, England. Thousands of Mancunians attended the 9-day festival celebrating art, music, culture and the heritage of the Muslim diaspora.

MACFEST was led by our **UK coordinator Qaisra Shahraz**, Founder and Curator of the Festival, who was recently featured in the Power 100 list of the most influential Muslims in the United Kingdom. **FFEU European Coordinator Samia Hathroubi** attended the Festival as a keynote speaker.

MACFEST is sponsored by FFEU as part of FFEU's **#MuslimsAreSpeakingOut** campaign launched in 2016 to fight Islamophobia, extremism and fanaticism, and to support Muslim speaking out against misconceptions of their faith and culture.





macfestuk

10 Asian LEADER

www.asianleader.co.uk

18 January 31 January 2023

# Earth's protective ozone layer 'on track' to recover by 2066, according to UN



The Earth's protective ozone layer is 'on track' to fully recover by 2066, according to a new assessment backed by the United Nations. A scientific assessment found that by around 2066, over the Antarctic, by 2045 over the Arctic, and by 2040 for the rest of the world, levels should return to what they were in the 1980s.

While Meg Seki, executive secretary of the United Nations Environment Programme's ozone secretariat, added that the report delivers "fantastic news". Scientists and environmental advocates have contributed these latest efforts to the ongoing success of the 1989 Montreal Protocol, which banned 99% ozone-depleting substances. Having first come into force after scientists raised the alarm over a "hole" in the Earth's ozone layer chemicals that were found to deplete the upper stratospheric layer were banned. Mr Newman went on to explain that the two chief chemicals that "munch away" at the ozone - bromine and chlorine - have "stopped growing" and levels are "coming down," another testament to the effectiveness of the Protocol. In a 2016 update of the Protocol, known as the Ki...

## MACFEST is celebrating 5 Years of Art, Culture and Muslim Heritage nationally and globally



Welcome to MACFEST 2023, a ground-breaking and award-winning international Muslim Arts and Culture Festival. Hosted in several towns and cities, theatres, art galleries and libraries, schools and colleges across the North West it is celebrating its 5th Anniversary on 4th March at the Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester. Founded after the Manchester bombings of 2017, Qalira Shahraz MBK, its founder and executive director had a vision of united communities, free from division and accepting of differences. To fight back against racism and Islamophobia, MACFEST began in 2018, to help to introduce the city into the world of Muslim culture, hoping to fight ignorance with cultural awareness. MACFEST's mission is celebrating arts, diversity and connecting communities. MACFEST offers a rich feast of over 75 events from 18th February to July 20th, celebrating the rich heri...

## New funding given to victim support services to help with cost-of-living pressures

The Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester has announced new funding for local organisations across the city-region that support victims and survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence. The funding will help organisations respond to the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, assisting them to continue to provide support to those accessing their services over the winter months. The funding has been provided in part by the Ministry of Justice through the victims' core grant funding. The money will go towards practical measures, such as care packages, additional capacity within services, peer mentor sessions, group counselling, costs to support people accessing services and interpreter costs. Organisations that will receive funding responded to an expression of interest process which specified priority support for communities of identity, no recourse to public funds, older people and people with disabilities. The funding started reaching organisations in December 2022, to ensure help and provision was available over the holiday period. Speaking about the announcement, Kate Green, Deputy Mayor for Policing, Crime, Criminal Justice and Fire said: "I'm happy that we're able to allocate this funding to our local organisations to help with rising costs due to the cost-of-living crisis. "Over what can be difficult winter months, this funding will help them continue their good work to support victims and survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence. "We remain committed to keeping people safe, supporting victims and survivors, and continuing to tackle gender-based violence and abuse in all its forms."

## Up to 4 million children in Pakistan still living next to stagnant and contaminated floodwater

Continued from Page 1 To provide immediate life-saving support, UNICEF is calling for the international community to urgently provide additional humanitarian assistance, and ensure the timely release of funding to save lives before it is too late. As the world looks to recovery and rebuilding, UNICEF urges countries to prioritize both the immediate and longer-term needs of children through the provision of principled, sustained and flexible assistance that is based on needs and allows for a response and recovery that moves with children as they return home, while building and strengthening climate-resilient infrastructure and services that can reach children and families in need with healthcare, nutrition, learning, protection, hygiene and sanitation services. UNICEF Pakistan has permanent field offices in all four provinces and has established four hubs to bring UNICEF operations and programmes closer to the hardest hit areas. We have been working with the Government of Pakistan, UN agencies and NGO partners to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable populations in 62 casualty-affected districts, both for displaced populations and those returning to the location of their destroyed villages. UNICEF's current appeal of US\$17.6 million to provide life-saving support to women and children affected by the floods remains only 37 per cent funded.

# 9. Video Links

MACFEST International  
 @macfestinternational2023 1,226 subscribers 192 videos  
 MACFEST is a ground-breaking award winning year long festival hosted at...

HOME VIDEOS LIVE PLAYLISTS COMMUNITY CHANNELS ABOUT

FFEU congratulatory message to MACFEST 5th anniversary celebration

Delectating Ramadan and Tunisian Cultural Heritage into Food Range 63 views · 1 day ago

MACFEST 2023: Delectating Oudina at Wharfedale Girls' School 17 views · 6 days ago

Children books with Khalid Muhammad 32 views · 10 days ago

Teachers speak out Celebrating Arts, Culture and Heritage in Schools and... 17 views · 10 days ago

MACFEST 2023: Women and Weddings- Hello from Egypt, Morocco and Sudan 25 views · 12 days ago

MACFEST 2023: International Youth Speak Out on Environment 12 views · 12 days ago

Celebrating Poetry and International Mother Language Day 62 views · 2 weeks ago

In Conversation with Artist: Fania Miskinia 59 views · 3 weeks ago

**FFEU congratulatory message to MACFEST 5th anniversary celebration:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2PX-Nuxg-wc>

**Macfest YouTube channel with over 190 videos:**

<https://www.youtube.com/@macfestinternational2087/videos>

## 10. Social Media

 <https://www.facebook.com/MACFESTUK/>

 <https://www.instagram.com/macfestuk/>

 <https://twitter.com/MACFESTUK>

 <https://www.linkedin.com/company/macfest-uk>

 <https://www.tiktok.com/@macfest0>

#SpreadHoneyNotHate

#MACFEST2023

<https://macfest.org.uk>

<https://mwafoundation.org>

# 11. Letters/Testimonials

We are delighted that we have received resounding positive feedback from our attendees, artists, partners, school teachers and sponsors.



Katarzyna Jablonska  
MACFEST  
Marketing, Programming and Personal Assistant  
196 Albion Road  
New Mills  
SK22 3JR

15 September 2023

To whom it may concern,

## **Testimonial of support for Qaisra Shahraz MBE FRSA for the Top 100 Influential People Award**

My name is Katarzyna and I am currently working for Macfest as Marketing, Programming and Personal Assistant to Qaisra Shahraz. I've started as a volunteer and progressed to a paid role. I am managing three websites, social media, emails, graphic design, organising training days for Macfest team and I am introducing panels on Macfest zoom events. I am very grateful for all the excellent opportunities Qaisra creates continuously for her team members, for local and national aspiring writers & artists, community groups to showcase their work, exhibitions and performances. For some of the speakers and artists Macfest means performing publicly for the first time! I would never think I could meet and greet the international public on such popular events, and yet here I am!

My life has changed for the better since I met Qaisra Shahraz. She is such an inspiring, driving force, she is acting as a catalyst for truly wonderful moments and meetings all over the world.

She is creating a beautiful legacy not just for the Muslim Community around the world but for all the communities, who choose to join this movement of peace, kindness, respect, education, and arts. It's especially important for the next generation of young people. Because here we are not just giving speeches or performing for social media videos on diversity and inclusion, Macfest is the very definition of diversity and inclusion just by being itself. So naturally the 20000 students from North West taking part in Macfest activities and panels, are embodying these values and making a difference in their lives.

The annual festival is always carefully crafted, it's never about the money, but always about the quality of each event. Every speaker is thoughtfully selected and brought together with Chief Guests and hosts to create a unique flavour of personalities and interests.

My role is the work in the background, taking care of communication and information display. And yet I feel that I am a part of something much bigger, a family. I took part in many arts festivals in the UK and internationally, and I can't point to another one, being so meaningful and memorable.

Qaisra unites people of all backgrounds and cultures, of different age and gender, making them feel special and appreciated, whether they are artists, presenters, or members of the public. And the cake-cutting ceremony is in my eyes an expression of that – one cake for everyone, whoever we are, wherever we come from.



Katarzyna Jablonska  
MACFEST  
Marketing, Programming and Personal Assistant  
196 Albion Road  
New Mills  
SK22 3JR

She is a mother figure to all her Team members too, you can really feel it in the way she talks to us (and my mother, for example, never talked to me like that). She takes care of everyone, always, and she gives us a great example how to take care of ourselves too. And even in the middle of the busiest time, she still encourages the right work-life balance.

Every year she brings in a new addition to Macfest, and then let all the right people gather around to make it happen. It is such an exciting process, to meet all these interesting people, brainstorm and plan together, and then look at how it's all taking shape. We now have for instance Muslim Women's Arts Foundation and Heritage Tours, and there is more yet to materialise, for instance we are working on launching Muslim Arts Awards, celebrating local artists in the North West in 2024.

There is always so much work and time needed to put every piece together, that I am starting to suspect, Qaisra is also working in her sleep. Because she is always up to date with every detail, and she never complains, ever! I have also noticed that she never judges, blames, gets angry or criticises, and this is such a rare positive and optimistic approach to life, that makes everything feel just delightful.

Qaisra is a visionary and a social entrepreneur and a community leader, also: a mother, a sister, a friend, and a community figure. And she fulfils all these roles with a smile, huge dedication, humour and a sense of pride. She genuinely cares about the people in her life, making everyone feel like they are really alive and appreciated just the way they are. She has this gift of identifying the best ways possible to make people feel good – hence such a successful career and such enthusiastic and dedicated Macfest's audience and team.

Yours sincerely,

Katarzyna Jablonska

Marketing, Programming and Personal Assistant

Email: [kjablonska92@gmail.com](mailto:kjablonska92@gmail.com)

# 11.1 Dignitaries and Sponsors



Manorama Venkatraman, PhD  
Clinical Assistant Professor  
Biobehavioral Nursing and Health Informatics, School of Nursing  
University of Washington, Seattle, WA 98109  
USA

Email: [mano@uw.edu](mailto:mano@uw.edu)

August 29, 2023

## LETTER OF SUPPORT

It is a great pleasure and privilege to write a letter of support for Qaisra Shahraz, MBE, JP, FRSA. I sincerely believe that she is uniquely qualified to be considered for Manchester Awards in the category of 'Community Individual Making a Difference'. She has indeed made a significant positive impact within the local community, socially, culturally and economically-making a huge difference to society, to women and young people's lives.

Qaisra combines a breathtakingly wide array of talents and roles. She is a critically acclaimed novelist and prize-winning peace activist with a long list of prestigious awards. Her remarkable accomplishments include those in the field of education; social justice; highly significant contributions to English literature; facilitating intercultural dialogue; empowering women; and being a tireless crusader and ambassador for women's rights. She is an active and passionate proponent of peace and harmonious coexistence among people of all faiths.

Her short stories have gone a long way in promoting intercultural dialogue and community cohesion. Her books like 'A Pair of Jeans', have been adopted as literary texts for German students. She has been invited to numerous literary festivals across the world to talk on literary arts, women's issues, and peace building among global communities. Prominent writers from around the world have used the historical and cultural context of her work and its significance for understanding some of the problems that plague society today, including religious and racial intolerance and gender inequality.

Her many areas of expertise may seem to be disparate, but in fact they are interwoven into a beautiful and complex tapestry, influencing and enriching each other. It is a testament to

her brilliance that she has managed to intertwine all these different aspects into one cohesive entity that is her life's work and calling.

The culmination of all her various talents and issues close to her heart is seen at its apex in MACFEST (Muslim Arts and Culture Festival), the first festival of its kind which was launched in 2017. MACFEST grows richer in its offerings with every passing year, winning several awards and accolades.

MACFEST, Qaisra's brainchild, is based on her untiring years of work on community cohesion. It is an ongoing celebration of the amazing richness and variety of Muslim culture, showcasing the art, music, cuisine, history and literature of several different countries; this serves to highlight the fact that Muslims are not one homogeneous group, but a culturally and ethnically diverse population from all over the world.

The peace building literature emphasizes the important role music and culture can play in bringing people of different faiths, races, and nationalities together. In MACFEST, she has managed to do just that, very successfully and grandly.

What sets MACFEST apart from other culture and arts festivals is its underlying aim of promoting diversity and breaking the barriers of ignorance, hatred, and division among people of different faiths. MACFEST participants reflect the diversity that Qaisra has always supported and strived to achieve. From the highly positive press reviews MACFEST continues to receive, she has succeeded admirably.

It must be noted that her team consists of many non-Muslim British volunteers, who work tirelessly alongside their Muslim counterparts in her team to make this a resounding success. This is evidence of her ability to bring people together, bridging religious and racial divides. So, MACFEST has been a great success on so many fronts.

She is a path breaker and trailblazer, using her skills and talent to reach out to other faiths, races, and nationalities. What she has accomplished in various facets of her life and particularly with MACFEST, has the potential to spark a process of social change, interconnection, and healing which could make an enormous difference in the world for our children and future generations.

She is a great role model and source of inspiration not only for Muslim women, but all women, regardless of nationality or religion. She has shown by example that there are no limits to what one can achieve if one's heart is in the right place.

She is an exemplar of how it is possible to interact respectfully and lovingly with people of different faiths and ethnic backgrounds as human beings first. I can attest to this from personal experience.

She has managed to reach great heights in so many fields while striking a harmonious balance among her family responsibilities, her demanding professional life, and the social issues close to her heart.

I believe that her remarkable achievements, which are already changing how people perceive each other across the artificial divides of gender, race, and religion, deserve to be celebrated and emulated. I recommend her nomination wholeheartedly for the Manchester Awards.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Manorama Venkatraman, PhD

Mrs Qaisra Shahraz  
133 Old Hall Lane  
Fallowfield  
Manchester  
Greater Manchester  
M14 6HL

**Professor Helen Marshall**  
Vice-Chancellor  
University of Salford  
The Old Fire Station  
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M5 4WT  
United Kingdom

t: +44(0)161 295 5050  
e: [vice-chancellor@salford.ac.uk](mailto:vice-chancellor@salford.ac.uk)

Friday 25 May 2018

Dear Qaisra,

**University of Salford Alumni Achievement Award 2018**

Each year we present a small number of Alumni Achievement Awards to outstanding graduates from the University who have achieved distinction, either in their profession or through their contribution to society.

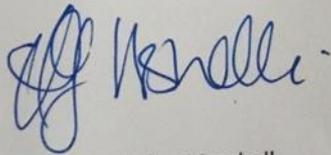
It is my great pleasure to inform you that this year you have been selected by our committee to receive one of these prestigious awards. This award presents us with a wonderful opportunity to recognise your exceptional contribution to society through your tireless work to promote the importance of equality and diversity in every cornerstone of your life and to celebrate your amazing literary and educational career to date. We believe you are an incredibly inspirational figure for our current students and other graduates.

I would be honoured if you would join us on **Thursday 13 December** at a special celebratory evening to receive your award alongside our other winners.

Please do let us know at your earliest convenience, whether you will do us the honour of accepting your award and if you believe you may be able to attend the event in December, by contacting Lorna Pontefract, Alumni Engagement Officer on **0161 295 6287** or [l.j.pontefract@salford.ac.uk](mailto:l.j.pontefract@salford.ac.uk). Please do also let us know if you have any further questions at this stage?

In closing, let me extend my warmest congratulations and my hope that I will have the chance to meet you soon.

Yours sincerely



Professor Helen Marshall  
Vice-Chancellor

Manorama Venkatraman, PhD  
Clinical Assistant Professor  
Biobehavioral Nursing and Health Systems, School of Nursing  
University of Washington, Seattle, WA 98109  
USA

Email: [manora2@gmail.com](mailto:manora2@gmail.com)

January 20, 2019

## LETTER OF SUPPORT

It is a great privilege and pleasure to write a letter of support for Qaisra Shahraz. I sincerely believe that she is uniquely qualified to be considered for the British Muslim Award.

I have had the great pleasure of knowing Qaisra for more than fifteen years now. She combines a breathtakingly wide array of talents and roles. She is a critically acclaimed novelist and prize-winning peace activist whose long list of awards include being the winner of the National Diversity Awards' Lifetime Achiever Award in 2016. Her remarkable accomplishments include those in the field of education; highly significant contributions to English literature; social justice; facilitating intercultural dialogue; empowering women; and being a tireless crusader and ambassador for women's rights. She is a proponent of peace and harmonious coexistence among people of all faiths.

Her many areas of expertise may seem to be disparate, but in fact they are interwoven into a beautiful and complex tapestry, influencing and enriching each other. The culmination of all her various talents is seen at its apex in MACFEST, the first festival of its kind which was celebrated in November 2018, shining the spotlight on Muslim arts and culture from around the world. This festival was a celebration of the amazing richness and variety of Muslim culture, showcasing the art, music, cuisine, history and literature of 10 different countries. This offering served to highlight the fact that Muslims are not one homogeneous group. What made this festival different from other culture and arts festivals was the underlying aim of promoting diversity and breaking the barriers of ignorance, hatred, and division among people of different faiths.

It was not only non-Muslims that Qaisra wanted to include, but the different communities of Muslims in Manchester who hardly interacted with each other. The list of participants in MACFEST reflects the diversity that Qaisra has always strived to achieve. From the highly positive press reviews MACFEST has received, she has succeeded admirably.

Although I have always admired Qaisra and been in awe of her many and varied accomplishments, talents, and accolades, nothing prepared me for the sheer magnitude and scope

of her latest accomplishment, MACFEST. I cannot even imagine how many challenges she must have faced and how much of painstaking planning, organization, and perseverance must have gone into making this amazing idea into reality.

To be able to visualize and carry out her mission successfully required a great deal of teamwork. It is of interest to note that her team consists of many non-Muslim British volunteers, who worked tirelessly alongside their Muslim counterparts in her team to make this a resounding success. This is evidence of her ability to bring people together, bridging religious and racial divides. So, the festival has been a success on many fronts.

The peacebuilding literature emphasizes the important role music and culture can play in bringing people of different faiths, races, and nationalities together. In MACFEST she has managed to do just that, so successfully and grandly. All that she has been working on to bridge the gap between communities, both within the Muslim world as well as between Muslims and people of other faiths found its culmination in this marvelous festival.

As they say, ignorance gives rise to hatred and violence. This festival has promoted understanding and given much-needed exposure to the amazing cultural arts and music of the Muslim world. People of different faiths and races came together to celebrate diversity for ten days. That in itself is amazing in this day and age.

She is a true pathbreaker, using her skills and talent to reach out to other faiths, races, and nationalities. What she has accomplished all her life and particularly with MACFEST has the potential to spark a process—a process of social change, of interconnection, and of healing which could make an enormous difference to the world for our children and future generations to come.

My hope is that this remarkable achievement inspires others everywhere to follow her lead in bringing peace to this world. In today's world, filled with misconceptions about Muslims, this positive approach, appealing to the heart, may work wonders. After all that is what today's humanity needs desperately, not only for us in the present day, but for generations to come, including the children growing up.

Qaisra tells me that she has already been approached by organizations in other countries, wanting to have their own version of MACFEST.

She has shown that one need not be a man to effect change in complex situations which seem to be hopeless. Qaisra has broken so many social barriers in her own life as an immigrant and a Muslim woman to reach the exalted position she occupies in British society today. She is a role model not only for Muslim women, but all women, regardless of nationality or religion.

She is an exemplar of how it is possible to interact respectfully with people of different faiths and ethnic backgrounds as human beings first. She practices what she preaches by having close friends from all religions. I have been the recipient of her amazing hospitality on many occasions. She gives of herself so generously and completely in friendship and it does not matter to her that I am of a different religion and nationality. She calls me "sister", and that is exactly how she makes me feel.

The remarkable way in which she negotiates living in two cultures effortlessly and has transcended her immigrant roots and its strictures without sacrificing her Muslim identity, makes her someone to look up to, and emulate. She has managed to reach great heights in so many fields while striking a harmonious balance among her family responsibilities, her demanding professional life, and the social issues close to her heart. She has raised three fine young sons. They have had the rare opportunity to see how effective and successful a woman with roots in a traditional culture can be.

As a result of putting my thoughts together for writing this letter, I am even more in awe of all that she has accomplished in the fields of education, interfaith relationships, social justice, women's rights and education, and literature. I support her nomination wholeheartedly for this prestigious award. She is indeed a leading light.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Manorama Venkatraman, PhD

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## AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

WASHINGTON, DC

19 January 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

I was delighted to learn that Muslim Art and Culture Festival 2018 (MACFEST) was shortlisted under the *Leading Lights of the Year* category at the 7th British Muslim Awards and am delighted to recommend it for this award. Organizing this November 2018 festival was an ambitious undertaking, with more than fifty events that involved: literature, art, history, music, films, performance, culture, comedy, art exhibitions, demonstrations, book launches, debates, workshops, and cultural hubs. Its success should be commended.

MACFEST was the brainchild of Manchester resident, celebrated novelist, and peace activist Qaisra Shahraz FRSA who sought a forum to celebrate the rich heritage of the Muslim diaspora community. Notable highlights of MACFEST were Baroness Manzila Pola Uddin (the first Muslim and second Asian woman to sit in the UK Parliament) discussing the political challenges Muslim women face and esteemed Lebanese author Leila Aboulela joining Shahraz for a moderated discussion. I was also honored to have my documentary film, *Journey into Europe* screened at the British Muslim Heritage Centre as part of this festival.

MACFEST 2018 proved itself to be an important part of a bigger discussion on Muslim society by bringing together multiple communities to celebrate this diverse and rich heritage. The breadth of issues covered should be recognized and I am pleased to MACFEST for this award without reservation.

Best Regards,

Ambassador Akbar Ahmed  
Ibn Khaldun Chair of Islamic Studies  
American University  
Washington, D.C.

4400 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE N.W. WASHINGTON, DC 20016 202-885-1641  
IBN KHALDUN CHAIR OF ISLAMIC STUDIES

Testimonial - Joyce Kellett- Florida - USA

I first met Qaisra Shahraz in the Spring of 2017 whilst visiting friends in the Manchester area. My friends invited me to a Women's All Faiths Group in Oldham and I must say that I was most pleasantly surprised and impressed, it was there that I met Qaisra and I have followed her stories and travels around the world ever since. She is a most prolific and talented writer, has authored many books and won many literary prizes for her work. She is a great humanitarian and does so much to bring people together, not just in her own faith but all faiths. The recent program that she orchestrated MACFEST was deemed a great success but then no surprise there as it seems that everything she touches turns to gold. I so admire this wonderful lady and wish that there were thousands more like her in the world promoting Peace and Harmony as she does so well then maybe the world could live in Peace. Personally I think Qaisra Shahraz deserves the Nobel Peace Prize for all her humanitarian work throughout the world. Keep up the great works Qaisra. I look forward to following your progress and travels in the near future. Yours sincerely.

JOYCE KELLETT Florida USA -lpoolmaggiemay@gmail.com

**Testimonial Jane Camens, Byron Bay, Australia, author and former Director of Asian Pacific Writers & Translators Partnership**

MACFEST is the brainchild of author and humanitarian Qaisra Shahraz, one of the most generous, caring, community spirited people I've met. This is a great achievement and a necessary cultural learning for all of us still unfamiliar with the great arts that have been inspired by Islam.

---

Director

Ph.D. (Alig.), Ph.D. (Leicester, UK)



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UGC Human Resource  
Development Centre (HRDC)

Aligarh Muslim University  
Aligarh – 202002 UP (India)

Dated: 20 July 2019

### LETTER OF SUPPORT

I write this to endorse whole heartedly Ms. Qaisra Shahraz's nomination for the Leading Lights of the Year for services to Literature, Women's Rights, Education, community cohesion & interfaith relationships, particularly through her organization, MACFest.

In my considered opinion, Ms. Shahraz is eminently suitable for this Award in view of her sterling contribution to public life. Her outstanding achievements are that both her writings and academic visit around the world have brought into sharper relief the multicultural, pluralistic facet of the British life and culture. As a first-rate creative writer and a Muslim lady she has been a remarkable cultural ambassador of the noble ideals of the British polity. Equally amazing and highly relevant accomplishment of her is her recontextualization of modernity with Islam in today's context. She has shown the way of the perfect peaceful coexistence between the West and Islam in our time. For this she deserves much credit in that in today's emotionally surcharged world there are few voices of sanity.

Her organization MACFest is also to be lauded for its efforts at multicultural understanding, and its significant and positive contribution to Muslim art and culture in Britain. The MACFest attempts to create an environment of mutual respect and understanding. It is remarkable for its reach, goals, and its success, all of which commends its founder for the Leading Light of the Year Award.

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Visit us at: [www.ascamu.ac.in](http://www.ascamu.ac.in)



# Indian Pluralism Foundation

indianpluralism.org  

47A, Shakespeare Sarani, Kundalia Tower. 2B, Kolkata - 700 017, India.

info@indianpluralism.org

+91 9051312323

**Subject: Letter of Support**

**14<sup>th</sup> January 2019.**

**Dear Distinguished Friends,**

We wish to draw your attention towards the recent MACFEST, which is an extremely estimable step taken up to promote interfaith harmony and social cohesion between various faiths.

Indian Pluralism Foundation is based in India and we are overwhelmingly impressed by the MACFEST, a resoundingly remarkable Muslim Arts and Culture Festival in, UK. We look forward to organising the MACFEST in India as well to honour & celebrate the plethorically rich historical heritage & thriving vivid culture of the Muslim diaspora communities.

We strongly believe and advocate that it is events such as MACFEST which possess the ideal positive ingredients as well as message to promote interfaith religious dialogue and amity.

The tsunami of hate spewing Ultra Nationalism which has engulfed our societies can only be deracinated through meaningful constructive peaceful means and building bridges of mutual understanding based upon the mutual language of love and logic.

At a time when the world is faced with many simultaneous problems — security, environmental, humanitarian and economic. There is an imperative need, therefore, to further reaffirm and develop harmonious cooperation between the world's different faiths and religions which is being successfully undertaken by MACFEST.

We at Indian Pluralism Foundation lend our full support to MACFEST & thank them for their continuing efforts to sustain the promotion of interfaith harmony and world peace.

With Respectful Regards Faithfully and Sincerely Yours

**Owaiz Aslam,**

**Secretary India Pluralism Foundation.**

Secretary

**INDIAN PLURALISM FOUNDATION**

*Working Towards an Irenic and a Prosperous World. Based Upon Gandhian Principles.*



Ms. Shahraz has been widely acclaimed for her creative work across the globe, as is evident from the translation and publication of her novels in world languages brought out from such distant places as Indonesia, India, Pakistan and Turkey. Her stories feature as the prescribed literary texts for German students. Scores of distinguished literary critics, once again, from all parts of the world have placed on record their glowing tributes to her creative excellence in a book that I have edited, *The Holy & the Unholy; Critical Essays on Qaisra Shahraz's Fiction* on her work used by University staff and students around the world. (2011)

She has been actively involved in interfaith and intercultural dialogue and on the forums of women's rights and the Muslim life in the UK. She has to have credit for many prestigious literary awards.

Through her very active interfaith work as a trustee of Manchester Multi-Faith Centre, executive member of *Muslim Jewish Forum*, Vice-Chair of *Faith Network 4 Manchester* and *We Stand Together* police project to tackle racism and Islamophobia and anti-Semitism Qaisra has been promoting better relationships between Muslim and Jewish people and of different faiths.

In view of her very many achievements which have projected the British society in a highly positive way in the Muslim world, Ms. Shahraz qualifies as a very suitable personality for the Leading Lights of the Year Award. It will go a very long way in promoting a better intercultural understanding between the West and the Muslim world. I therefore unhesitatingly support her nomination for the Leading Lights of the Year Award.



Vice Lord-Lieutenant of Greater Manchester  
Paul Griffiths DL

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

15<sup>th</sup> January 2019.

Dear Sirs,

**Re: MACFEST 2018-Leading Lights of the Year...**

I write in support of the nomination as finalists of Qaisra Shahraz, Founder and Director of MACFEST and the outstanding team who worked tirelessly to stage the UK's first Muslim Arts and Culture Festival, held in Greater Manchester in the autumn of 2018.

It gave me the greatest possible pleasure to attend and provide a few words of encouragement to the launch event audience on the 11<sup>th</sup> November at the Whitworth Hall.

The determination and sheer energy required leading the team and to secure the financial backing was immense. The vision that Mrs Shahraz had to create a festival designed to celebrate the rich Muslim history and culture and bring it to the masses was inspired. It was a very good idea!

MACFEST used some of Manchester's finest and important buildings, involved schools, colleges and the University of Manchester. It brought together hugely diverse communities throughout the county to celebrate the best of Muslim Arts and Culture.

People from teenage years to senior citizens enjoyed something for the whole family: Literature, art, history, music, films, performance, culture, comedy, exhibitions, demonstrations, book launches, debates, workshops and culture hubs.

At a time when so much is made of community collaboration, of celebrating diversity and of challenging hatred, MACFEST 2018 was able to satisfy all those requirements and more.

The British Muslim Awards are in place to recognise initiatives such as MACFEST. I commend them to the judges.

Yours Sincerely

% The Monastery Gorton Lane Manchester M12 5WF  
Telephone: 0161 223 3211 Mobile: 07710 337906 Email: paul.griffiths@themonastery.co.uk  
Web: www.manchesterlieutenancy.org Web: www.themonastery.co.uk Twitter @GMVLL\_UK



**Chris Sacarabany**  
Executive Director

April 3, 2023  
Attn: British Muslim Award Committee  
Community Award Category

1 East 93rd Street, Suite 1C  
New York, New York 10128

Tel: 917.492.2538  
Fax: 917.492.2560

www.ffeu.org  
Twitter: @ffeunyc  
Facebook: @ffeuofficial

Dear Sir, Dear Madam:

The Foundation for Ethnic Understanding (FFEU) has the great privilege to partner with Ms. Qaisra Shahraz, Founder and Director of the Muslim Arts and Culture Festival (MACFEST), in promoting interfaith and intercultural programs.

I strongly recommend MACFEST and Ms. Shahraz for the British Muslim Awards' *Community Award*. An acclaimed author, Ms. Shahraz is a source of inspiration for younger generation, a voice of reason and tolerance standing up against extremism of all forms. MACFEST which organizes more than 70 events every year, features Muslim and non-Muslims artists, scholars, faith leaders, social justice activists from all over the world and provide a unique platform and a warm environment for thought-provoking and heartfelt conversations that debunk stereotypes towards Islam. Additionally, through MACFEST, Ms. Shahraz offers local British communities a unique access to discover the Muslim world and its diversity. In this spirit, she sets up heritage tours to take local communities, especially women, on cultural trips abroad.

Launched in 2018 with FFEU's support, MACFEST has already won a plethora of awards including the Queen's Award for voluntary service. The festival successfully connects and hosts communities across the United Kingdom (Manchester, Bolton, Bury...) and celebrates diversity, pluralism and unity. It remarkably brings together people of different faith, ethnicity, age, and gender and provides efficient tools to combat anti-Muslim bigotry.

I am confident that MACFEST's indefatigable efforts services to arts, women and community cohesion will be rewarded by the British Muslim Award for the 'Community Award' category.

Sincerely,

Chris Sacarabany  
Executive Director

**Testimonial from Diane Hawkins JP LLB**

"As a former High Sheriff of Greater Manchester, I have been delighted to support MACFEST since 2021. Since they started with the admirable goal of bringing communities together and spreading honey not hate, in the aftermath of the Manchester Arena bombing, the MACFEST team has had an enormous impact locally, nationally and internationally.

My personal involvement has been both virtual, appearing on Zoom calls across the world, and in person. MACFEST have connected communities within Greater Manchester and helped schools (pupils and teachers) to host and organise events across the world. It is a delight to join an online MACFEST event and hear the voices of young people in so many countries. Part of their programme includes teaching about Islam and the Muslim way of life in many countries, including art, cookery, music and poetry. They are one of the most diverse groups I know and they have a powerful impact upon many people."

**Diane Hawkins JP LLB**  
**HM Lord-Lieutenant of Greater Manchester**



Tel: 0161 222 0557  
116 Hyde Road | Manchester | M12 5AR



Dear Sir/ Madam,

MACFEST is a fabulous idea to keep different background people together in one place. Providing chance to different cultures to perform their beauties to public was a great idea. We learnt about so many different cultures throughout the festival. Hosting an event as an Turkish Centre was an honour under this big umbrella. Thank you very much for giving this opportunity to us.

Director  
Fatih Segmen  
Summit Education Society  
Known as Star Education Centre

## Sponsors and Funders



Chris Sacarabany  
Executive Director

January 14, 2018

**To whom it may concern:**

The Foundation for Ethnic Understanding is delighted to hear that MACFEST has been shortlisted into the finals under *Leading Lights of the Year* category at The 7th British Muslim Awards. I personally recommend to select MACFEST as the winner of its category.

1 East 93rd Street, Suite 1C  
New York, New York 10128

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www.ffeu.org  
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Facebook: @ffeunyc

FFEU supported MACFEST as part of its #MuslimsAreSpeakingOut campaign, an initiative showcasing how Muslims advocate for unity and tolerance and fight extremism of all forms.

MACFEST has completely fulfilled its missions to breaking down barriers, celebrating arts and more importantly bringing both Muslim and non-Muslim communities together. As a bridge between culture, talents and background, the festival presented the many expressions of Muslim cultures undermining the common stereotype that Islam is a monolithic religion.

MACSFET welcomed more than 3000 attendees with 50 events in a 10-day festival. I commend its curator and Director Qaisra Shahrzad for being able to gather so many different people and groups from various backgrounds and ages.

MACFEST's accomplishments and impact in the UK and beyond, combined to the efforts deployed to organize such an amazing series of events deserve the honor of being the recipient of the prestigious British Muslim Award.

I am confident that your indefatigable efforts for the promotion of tolerance and harmony will be rewarded at the next BMA ceremony.  
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Sacarabany', written in a cursive style.

Chris Sacarabany  
Executive Director

MACFEST was a thrilling and exciting festival that helped bridge the gaps between communities and foster a better understanding. I helped to organise the event as a delegation from the Somali community, and we were pleasantly surprised with the diversity of the crowd, and how people managed to get along given the right spaces. It was professional, interesting and a tolerant environment, and the organisers should be over the moon with the result

Yasin Mohamed (SSCOPE Media)

### **Mark Adlestone OBE DL Sponsor & Guest Speaker**

I am the Chair of Beaverbrooks The Jewellers and we are very proud to sponsor, work with and support this unique festival for the last 3 years. MACFEST, Muslim Arts and Culture Festival is an outstanding Community Group, committed to engaging Muslims and non-Muslims. Its' mission is to challenge islamophobia, break barriers and celebrate migrant Muslim diaspora community groups across the North West. MACFEST slogan is 'Celebrating Arts and Connecting Communities'. Through their work they promote peace and harmony, as MACFEST slogan aptly describes: 'Spread Honey Not Hate'.

MACFEST works locally, nationally (across the North West) and internationally,. Using arts, culture and heritage of the Muslim diaspora it brings people of all backgrounds under one roof; in theatres, art galleries, libraries, schools, colleges and Universities. It has excellent partnerships with cultural and community organisations and venues. For example, it hosts its musical events at the Lowry theatre in Salford, the women festival in Whitworth Art Gallery and Ramadan Iftar at Khizra.

MACFEST works with North West community organisations to promote their work and provide them with a platform to host their MACFEST by engaging their local communities and creative artists, writers; this includes BAME project in Bury, Sunnyside Club in Bolton and Khush Amdid in Tameside.

MACFEST is outstanding in reaching out to and engaging people of all ages, nationalities and faiths and celebrating diversity. MACFEST team replicates that mission. Three of its team members are Jewish. One third are non-Muslims. This includes working in schools and colleges with thousands of students across the North West. I was delighted to take part in one MACFEST event with Trafford College Group during the Pandemic in 2021. When other organisations closed down, MACFEST delivered 75 events during the Pandemic in a bid to keep communities engaged, prevent isolation and promote emotional well-being.

In 2021 for its excellent work with communities and its outstanding team, including volunteers it was awarded the prestigious Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. Similarly, during my year as High Sheriff of Greater Manchester, I was delighted to award MACFEST with the High Sheriff Award for its excellent work in working with communities and promoting community cohesion.

A personal passion for the Director Qaisra Shahraz MBE, MACFEST also champions women from local communities as well as established creative; and it excels in working with women across all minority groups, representing women from all continents. I was delighted to launch the Muslim Women's Arts Foundation and Muslim Women Arts festival in 2022. I fully appreciate that it provides a unique platform for Muslim women to showcase their art and cultural heritage and thereby bringing them into the mainstream of British live.

I believe they are highly deserving of British Muslim Award for the Community Group of the Year.

**Mark Adlestone OBE DL**  
**Chair of Beaverbrooks The Jewellers**  
**Chair of The Jewish Representative Council of Greater Manchester and Region**

# 11.2 Artists, Creatives and Speakers



"The festival was joyous, informative, people centred and important. British Muslims need space and time to talk about changing cultures and lost histories. Such conversations give us a sense of who we really are and can be in this society."

**Yasmin Alibhai- Brown- Leading Journalist & author**



"Sister Qaisra and MACFEST are a breath of fresh air in Greater Manchester. Their projects and events engage many people from diverse communities with the utmost professionalism. Especially women and the youth are always catered for efficiently. Their approach consistently inspires me and empowers numerous stakeholders in communities. They strategically promote community cohesion and challenge hate on a regular basis.

MACFEST is the best thing that has happened to Greater Manchester."

**Ismael Lea South  
The Salam Project CIC**

"Taking part in this Year's Macfest 2023 Festival has been a very enjoyable and extremely supportive experience. Their team is simply wonderful not forgetting Qaisra herself! I have been a huge admirer of Macfest, and an avid attendee of their brilliant past events, particularly their creative workshops. So to be able to take part in this year's Macfest activities as a visual artist, by delivering my creative workshop has been sublime!"

**Amina.S Art & Design**



Brussels, January 15th 2019

Object: Letter of support for the Muslim Arts Festival

To whom it may concern,

The first ever Muslim Arts Festival in Manchester, MACFEST, was a tour de force of Islamic cultural expression covering the whole gamut of art forms and cultural traditions with something for everyone to enjoy. Manchester and the wider north west region has a significant Muslim population with a rich cultural heritage, that both celebrates the homeland and also expresses a British Muslim way of life. In the current climate with rising Islamophobia it's crucial to create opportunities for positive stories and inter-action between diverse communities. MACFEST proved to be a perfect vehicle to act as a showcase for local, regional, national and international Muslim cultural achievements whilst also providing a mechanism for intercultural dialogue.

Sincerely,

Julie Ward MEP

## **Testimonial for MACFEST - Muslim Arts & Culture Festival**

My warmest congratulations to Qaisra and her team for being nominated as a finalist for the British Muslim Awards. I am not at all surprised by this accolade. MACFEST was a wonderful experience for me. I found it to be a festival with a warm community spirit. It succeeded in showcasing the best in British and Muslim cultures, bringing together people in a harmonious and nurturing atmosphere.

I was impressed by the enormous amount of work that Qaisra put in launching the first edition of the festival. I hope that the festival continues to grow from strength to strength. I participated in a number of panels that were thoughtfully put together and captured the imagination of the audience.

As a writer, the festival provided a tremendously valuable opportunity for me to meet readers from very different background. I was also delighted to meet, for the first time, other Muslim writers whose work I have often admired. The variety of panels on different subjects also captured my interest, educated me and made me pursue new directions.

The festival was a truly welcoming environment. In all my dealings the organizers were highly professional and a delight to work with. I will certainly be recommending MACFEST to other writers and visitors.

Many thanks,

Leila Aboulela (Author)

**Participant/speaker at MACFEST**

## 11.3 Volunteers

**Name of Volunteer: Tehmina Ahmed**

### **Reason why I joined MACFEST**

I had moved to Manchester the same year Macfest started, I wanted to meet new people and share my knowledge and experience and be part of a community. I have done volunteering in the past and this has been the most enjoyable and best experience ever.

### **Roles, responsibilities and activities that I have undertaken**

- Over seeing PPT for all the artist's work, collating, branding and helping to host technically.
- Ordering of merchandise ie mics and also selfie frame etc.
- Overseeing technical side of macfest- with 2 other people- during weekend festival
- PowerPoint presentations for the weekend programmes
- Keeping an overview of technical needs ie laptop, ppts in both rooms with another volunteer.
- Films for You Tube, promo video etc.
- Main link for speakers/artists for technical help
- Programme tables templates to be printed.
- Attend week events and supported as and when throughout
- Go to person for new Volunteers

### **Impact of MACFEST and why it's so important**

A multicultural Muslim event bringing all communities together is such a wonderful platform for Muslims and non Muslims to learn about the wonderful arts, literature and music of the Islamic world. It gave a platform for everyday people to have close interactions with highly valued people from artists, writers, politicians and many more.

To have such platform, also allows local artists a platform to showcase their work and volunteers such as myself to gain experience and meet new people.

### **Impact on me, my social and working life**

Allowed me to use my experience for a good cause, meet new people, work with various people, background and also the artists and speakers. Gaining new knowledge and experience. Making new friends from various cultures. It's allowed me to think about other causes and projects, even perhaps follow new dreams and paths that I never thought about.

### **Skills and personal development including for employability**

Project Manager.  
IT support  
Communicative  
Creative

**Signed: Tehmina Ahmed**

**Dated: 09/12/20**

Volunteer Testimonial - Isabella Jewell, University of Manchester

"I became involved with MACFEST following an interview I conducted with Qaisra Shahraz, the founder of the festival, for the University of Manchester student publication, The Mancunian. Having heard more about her vision for the 2018 Muslim Arts and Culture festival, I became enthused by the concept, which sought to shine a spotlight on the richness and diversity of Muslim culture.

One part of our interview really stood out to me; Qaisra's enthusiasm to involve all parts of the Greater Manchester community in the festival, MACFEST was established to reach out and unite all. The festival's slogan 'spread honey not hate' was a perfect summary of how MACFEST brought unity and positivity back, following the divisive discourse which has pervaded since the Manchester Arena attack in 2017.

To reach out to both student and non-muslim communities, Qaisra invited me to provide coverage of several of the MACFEST events in my role as Arts Editor, whilst also being involved with the presenting of a literary panel alongside another editor of The Mancunian. The warmth of the welcome at this event was touching, and provided a fantastic experience to us both, as second year students.

Having attended the festival's launch, as well as several of the events on the timetable, I can say with certainty that MACFEST brought vibrancy, atmosphere, and a strong sense of inclusivity. Families and students, Muslims and non-Muslims, came together to celebrate diverse cultures and art forms. Highlights for me were meeting renowned author Leila Aboulela and hearing her views on the importance of language when hosting the literary panel, as well as seeing school girls perform a beautiful Palestinian dance at the launch event.

If the vast array of events on offer weren't enough, the delicious accompaniment of Middle Eastern cuisine elevated the festival to new levels. Overall, I'd summarise MACFEST as being the sharing of culture, foods, and stories in the beautiful surrounds of the Whitworth Gallery and the Muslim Heritage Centre."

**Isabella Jewell, Arts Editor of The Mancunian, Chair of the Women In Media Conference 2019**



**MACFEST**  
MUSLIM ARTS AND CULTURE FESTIVAL

Testimonial for Muslim Arts and Culture Festival, held in Greater Manchester in November 2018 from Barbara Dresner, Festival volunteer

As a non-Muslim, I was delighted to be invited to join the volunteer group assisting with MACFEST 2018. I wholeheartedly support the Director Qaisra Sharaz's aims for the Festival, particular given that there had been a tragic bomb attack at Manchester Arena the year before, which might have resulted in tensions between differing communities in the city. Sadly today, we never seem to be free of people who try to encourage suspicion and mistrust between people from different backgrounds.

My prior contact with Qaisra was through the Muslim-Jewish Forum and Faith Network for Manchester. Manchester has a rich mix of residents from all over the world, some who have lived here for generations, and some who, like my Jewish father, were or are former refugees or asylum seekers.

The festival shared many of the positive contributions Muslims from all over the world have made over time - and are making today, including in Greater Manchester. It was therefore a very effective learning experience for all who attended. It was deliberately very inclusive: many of the events were free, and any charges modest. Meeting other participants at the events was one of the benefits of attending. Seeing the different Muslim communities in Manchester mixing together was a real joy, as well as the mix of ages and of all backgrounds. Every event seemed to me to be a positive experience for all, together with the excitement of knowing you are partaking in a ground-breaking event. Some examples would be the Somali evening in Manchester's Central Library, and the gathering at the Turkish Star Centre, both packed events, full of enthusiasm and warmth.

The use of many iconic buildings was a real bonus, again adding to the learning experience: I had never visited the British Muslim Heritage Centre before. This was an ideal opportunity to welcome newcomers to such buildings, including the many museums and libraries in the area. MACFEST has I believe, stimulated some of those institutions into reviewing how they can highlight Muslim culture more in the future.

It now seems very likely that the aim of making MACFEST an annual event will be achieved. Qaisra's wide connections means that there are far more potential contributors than could fit in to the first one! One example is that just this week (January 2019), a related workshop on Sufi whirling (semazen) took place, showing yet another aspect of Muslim practice, which was a moving experience to others of different faiths – or none, as well.

Some events were aimed at giving women their own space, which again was to me a welcome aspect of MACFEST. The Foundation for Ethnic Understanding 'Twinning Event' with Faith Network 4 Manchester and We Stand Together was held in a mosque and attended mostly by Muslim and Jewish women, who celebrated their shared cultural



**MACFEST**  
MUSLIM ARTS AND CULTURE FESTIVAL

On a personal level I really enjoyed observing aspects of Muslim arts and culture from countries I had never visited. The sheer variety of music, art and dance was a revelation to me. The purpose of the festival was to involve all Manchester's communities in activities which promoted understanding, friendship and bonding. I think Qaisra and her team successfully achieved a sense of fellowship across Manchester's vibrant communities. This is of vital importance in today's global village as it promotes acceptance and indeed embracing of diversity. This is essential for social cohesion and economic development on the global stage.

Qaisra Shahraz is the Founder, Curator and Executive Director of MACFEST, Muslim Arts and Culture Festival. She is a critically-acclaimed novelist, scriptwriter, peace and gender activist. Qaisra was awarded the National Diversity Lifetime Achiever Award for services to literature, education, gender and interfaith relationships in 2016. She has shown an absolute commitment to promoting community and social cohesion through her roles as: MACFEST Director; Trustee of Manchester Multifaith Centre; Co-Chair of "We Stand Together"; Executive Member of Manchester Muslim- Jewish Forum and a UK Partner with New York's Foundation For Ethnic Understanding.

ALIA ARIF, BOOKKEEPER

14/01/2019

## 11.4 Partners and Friends

Jzk, thank you soooooooooo much, we really enjoyed the event!!!! It was very inspiring. I'm sorry that I had to leave early because I'm doing a football youth project in Stretford. Thank you for the honour.

**Ishmael Lea South, Rapper**

"Thank you so much I did watch this evenings event.... interesting to hear the views re mother tongues. Interesting that there was a bit in the guardian today saying different accents in English sound like a foreign language to those not versed in the differences. I think those of us brought up with a strong regional accent must sound to others similar to those hearing a language they dont know and also I'm aware of a strong feeling of affinity with fellow speakers. I know I feel instantly at home with broad geordie speakers. All fascinating. Again congratulations on facilitating such interesting topics and giving voice to many communities."

**Barbara Heron**

#### **Testimonial from Andrew Nowell**

As a member of the regional press it is a great pleasure and privilege to have been involved with Macfest in the last couple of years as a volunteer. Qaisra's idea of having non-Muslims taking part as hosts or introducers to events about Islam and the lives of Muslims across the globe is, I feel, an excellent way of building bridges between communities and combatting misconceptions about the religion and believers. Macfest's approach to this very much chimes with my own feelings about diversity and tolerance, which are things I hope to promote in my own writing.

Macfest puts on an astonishing array of events each year. More than 70 different events introduce people to cultures and art traditions from around the world, whether it is music, fine art, visual art, cuisine or crafts. The Ramadan programme brings non-Muslims and Muslims together by inviting them to share in iftar meals or go on walks for Eid. This is an excellent way for different communities to get to know each other and for people to get an accurate picture of a religious belief which is often poorly understood or, sadly, made subject to deliberate misinformation. I have also hosted a panel on diversity in the classroom, which was really inspiring to see how different beliefs and backgrounds are being respected to help children thrive in education.

Macfest does an astonishing job, through its mixture of live and digital events, of taking people to all corners of the Islamic world and showcasing the variety of lives that are lived within it. At the same time, it carries an important message as it urges people to: "Spread Honey Not Hate". In my opinion, Macfest would be a worthy winner of this award.

**Andrew Nowell**  
**Reporter, ManchesterWorld**

**'The festival was joyous, informative, people centred and important. British Muslims need space and time to talk about changing cultures and lost histories. Such conversations give us a sense of who we really are and can be in this society.'**

**Yasmin Alibhai-Brown (leading Journalist & author)**

Dear Sir or Madam,

I became involved with MACFEST following an interview I conducted with Qaisra Shahraz, the founder of the festival, for the University of Manchester student publication, *The Mancunion*. Having heard more about her vision for the 2018 Muslim Arts and Culture festival, I became enthused by the concept, which sought to shine a spotlight on the richness and diversity of Muslim culture.

One part of our interview really stood out to me; Qaisra's enthusiasm to involve all parts of the Greater Manchester community in the festival, MACFEST was established to reach out and unite all. The festival's slogan 'spread honey not hate' was a perfect summary of how MACFEST brought unity and positivity back, following the divisive discourse which has pervaded since the Manchester Arena attack in 2017.

To reach out to both student and non-muslim communities, Qaisra invited me to provide coverage of several of the MACFEST events in my role as Arts Editor, whilst also being involved with the presenting of a literary panel alongside another editor of *The Mancunion*. The warmth of the welcome at this event was touching, and provided a fantastic experience to us both, as second year students.

Having attended the festival's launch, as well as several of the events on the timetable, I can say with certainty that MACFEST brought vibrancy, atmosphere, and a strong sense of inclusivity. Families and students, Muslims and non-Muslims, came together to celebrate diverse cultures and art forms. Highlights for me were meeting renowned author Leila Aboulela and hearing her views on the importance of language when hosting the literary panel, as well as seeing school girls perform a beautiful Palestinian dance at the launch event.

If the vast array of events on offer weren't enough, the delicious accompaniment of Middle Eastern cuisine elevated the festival to new levels. Overall, I'd summarise MACFEST as being the sharing of culture, foods, and stories in the beautiful surrounds of the Whitworth Gallery and the Muslim Heritage Centre.

Many thanks,

Isabella Jewell

Arts Editor of *The Mancunion*, Chair of the Women In Media Conference 2019

It is fantastic to hear that MACFEST has been shortlisted under 'Leading Lights of the Year' category at The 7th British Muslim Awards. After working with the festival, and seeing the work Qaisra has done, I can confidently say that MACFEST and Qaisra Shahraz should be selected as the winner of this category.

Qaisra is an award-winning author and internationally renowned for the work she is doing to celebrate Muslim culture. It is great to see how her contributions are impacting local communities and bringing people of all denominations together.

It has been a fantastic opportunity to be involved in a festival which celebrates diversity, peace and compassion. As a non-Muslim, it was wonderful to be surrounded by individuals who shared the same drive and determination to bring communities together and bridge gaps.

Each and every MACFEST event was a celebration of different traditions, cultures and people. Throughout the festival, Muslims and non-muslims got involved and enjoyed art workshops, exhibitions, Mushaira performances and lots of delicious food.

Manchester has a unique and warm community spirit which was highlighted even more so by the work Qasira has done to bring MACFEST to the city. Qasira has put Manchester on the map for celebrating Muslim arts and culture and dispelling myths on Islam. I am certain that MACFEST and Qasira will go far beyond the city of Manchester and continue to celebrate many Muslim communities across the UK.

MACFEST has given attendees, including myself, the opportunity to learn things that may have never crossed their paths. Each event, venue and speaker welcomed attendees regardless of race, religion, gender or age.

Sincerely



Caitlin Boag

# 11.5 Schools and Colleges



Professor Yaron Matras  
School of Arts, Languages, & Cultures  
The University of Manchester  
Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL  
yaron.matras@manchester.ac.uk

January 2019

I was very pleased to be invited to take part in MACFEST. It was an opportunity to share my interest in language, and my work on language diversity in Manchester, and the languages of people from so many Muslim communities, with a wide range of languages and cultures. The well-designed programme gave opportunities for many aspects of Muslim culture and life to be expressed and discussed, including people of all ages and backgrounds. The atmosphere was welcoming, it was clear that considerable effort had been made to reflect creative, artistic expression from many countries of origin.

I would be pleased to see this as the start of a significant annual contribution to bring together people of different communities, Muslim and non-Muslim, to share, celebrate and learn together. This was an ambitious beginning, and is a testament to the vision of the Director and her support team who have skilfully coordinated so many events across a variety of venues, with the involvement of a large number of presenters.

Professor Yaron Matras

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## Withington Girls' School testimonial

On Friday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2023, six of our pupils took part in the Muslim Arts and Culture Festival (MACfest) as part of the 'Celebrating Poetry and Mother Tongue' panel. MACfest is a huge celebration of art, diversity and culture and aims to bring both Muslim and non-Muslim communities together. The festival's main goal is to tackle islamophobia and was established following the Manchester Arena attack and the subsequent spike in islamophobia. Through embracing and celebrating a wide range of cultures, the festival hopes to eradicate hate, a sentiment which is reinforced by the festival's core slogan, 'spread honey not hate.'

The 'Celebrating Poetry' panel was a great platform for students to share more about their culture/heritage and offered pupils the opportunity to perform poetry in their native tongue. The following WGS students took part in the event:

Zainab Mazhari (Year 12), Ariba Tasnim (Year 12), Manal Nasir and Haleema Ashraf (Year 11), Hana Ahmed (Year 9), Dalia Mahmood (Year 7)

The pupils very much enjoyed taking part in this panel and commented on how special it was to be able to perform poetry in their mother tongue.

Please see below pupils' comments:

*MACFEST has been a great experience for me. Sharing my passion for my culture and learning about other people's backgrounds has made me understand how unique and different everybody is.*

*MACFEST has given me the chance to also connect with my identity as a Pakistani and has shown me different ways people can connect with their roots. MACFEST has been an amazing experience, it has presented me with a lot of opportunities to bond with my community and I am very honoured that I got the chance to take part!* **Hana Ahmed (Year 9)**

*It was my first time participating in the 'Celebrating Poetry and Mother tongue' panel and I thoroughly enjoyed it. After reciting a poem in my mother tongue alongside my friend, I loved listening to all the other pupils perform poetry in their own mother tongue ranging from Arabic and Urdu to Bengali. MacFest has allowed me to share my culture and heritage with others and allowed me to recognise the importance of what different languages mean to different people. The environment in the panel was overwhelmingly positive and friendly, supporting the vast array of languages performed by the pupils. I would also like to say a huge thank you to Hanane and Qaisra for organising the event and making it an unforgettable experience. I look forward to working with MacFest in the future and I commend them for their dedication and hard work.* **Haleema Ashraf (Year 11)**

*This year was the first time I had participated in the MACFEST mother tongue panel, and I found the experience to be extremely enjoyable. After performing a poem in my own mother tongue with a friend, I was able to listen to pieces performed by other pupils just like me. It was such an encouraging environment, with everyone's spoken word being appreciated and celebrated. Overall, It was a wonderful opportunity to share my part of my cultural identity with others and I thank MACFEST for creating such an opportunity.* **Manal Nasir (Year 11)**

*MacFest has always been something that I have great admiration and respect for. This being my second year participating in the Mother Language and Poetry Panel was as incredible as the first time. Its ethos is simple, share your heritage with one another. It is unlike anything I've ever done before, and I am so privileged to have been a part of it. Qaisra and Hanane have worked extremely hard in organising this and should be very proud of themselves. I am looking forward to future opportunities provided by Macfest and I will continue to support and take part in their excellent events.* **Zainab Mazhari (Year 12)**

The above comments clearly demonstrate the huge impact that MacFest has had on our students. This is an excellent organisation which enables young people to connect with their culture, religion and ethnicity. Both Qaisra and Hanane should be congratulated for holding such a successful series of events across the year.

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The Trafford College Group is proud to host MACFest each year.

We are a rich and diverse college group and for the last three years MACFest has played a significant role in supporting our aims to introduce the art and culture that comes from a muslim heritage. We are committed to community cohesion and so the "spread honey not hate" aspiration is at one with our own values and aims as an organisation.

Our festival each year has developed and grown and is completely student led. Students decide on activities and are proud to showcase art and culture which encompasses all our student groups, bringing different cultures together to celebrate.

We are delighted to know and support Qaisra and MACFest as we look to create a community for all in the celebration of Muslim Arts and Culture.

**Michelle McLaughlin MBE, Student Experience Manager  
The Trafford College Group**

## Schools



مدرسة مانشستر العربية  
*Manchester Arabic School - Chorlton*

### السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

Having learned of the nominations for this year's British Muslim Award, I am writing today to recommend a highly, respectful and pioneering idea, MACFEST.

In many ways exceeding the challenging requirements and expectations for the award, MACFEST's ambitions, activities, and accomplishments complement precisely the stellar community of the past festivals and makes highly deserving of the honour and opportunity bestowed by the British Muslim Award.

To further support MACFEST, I would be pleased to express in more detail my personal insights into MACFEST's unique aims and the so many different people and groups from all different backgrounds, languages, ages, and talents. As an Arabic Language School who works very hard to revive the Arabic language, Islamic values, culture and heritage of our pupils, MACFEST was the magic wand that brought all this together at the same time same place. MACFEST gave us the chance to show our identity and to be known.

Given the chance to perform a "Palestinian Dabkah" at the festival was like a dream coming true for the children and for the school. Thank you MACFEST.

The mammoth efforts in planning and delivering this festival, without any doubt succeeded brilliantly.

MACFEST was a bridge that connected cultures, backgrounds and talents together. It was an excellent example of bringing people together and it should continue. Inshallah you will win this prestigious award simply, because you deserve it.

Best Regards

Munira Alsusa

Headteacher

Manchester Arabic School/Chorlton

*"The best way to learn Arabic"*

[www.macfest.org.uk](http://www.macfest.org.uk)



## The East Manchester Academy

Executive Headteacher: Ms P. Kane M.A.

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PKA/CHU

January 2019

### TESTIMONIAL

#### MACFEST 2018

MACFEST 2018 had a profound personal impact as well as embodying wonderful values and being a very positive experience for the students, staff and parents in our trust schools, who enjoyed participating.

There was a spirit of positive and respectful appreciation of different cultures within the Islamic world. A spirit which is so sorely lacking globally at the moment. The settings in prestigious locations meant the festival and celebration of culture was high status for the city of Manchester and civic leaders were keen to support it. This was, in itself, an important educational and cultural message for our school communities.

The festival was run with a sense of passion, joy and community and it was a pleasure to attend events and to feel so welcomed there. The generosity of spirit, such as the closing dinner, which was donated by a local Turkish restaurant, infused the festival.

The level of organisation was superb and the friendship, sharing of cultures and food was a tremendous contribution to civic life in our great city of Manchester. I am already looking forward to next year's festival. MACFEST would be a very worthy winner for its lasting contribution to diversity and culture in the UK.

Patsy Kane OBE  
**Executive Headteacher**  
Education and Leadership Trust

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## Whalley Range 11-18 High School

Academy Headteacher: Mrs E. Hole Executive Headteacher: Ms P. Kane M.A.

Whalley Range 11-18 High School, Wilbraham Road, Whalley Range, Manchester, M16 8GW  
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It has been an honour and privilege for my colleagues and I to take part in the first MACFest in November 2018. Nineteen of our students, aged between 13-18, performed the Nasheed at both the official opening ceremony and on the weekend of the festival. At Whalley Range High School, more than 45 languages are spoken on the corridors daily and in the midst of this linguistic diversity that different cultures come together to co-exist and through intrinsic forces, create new social and cultural identities which reshape the forces at play in our community.

In the hope of creating and promoting social inclusion, our role as teachers and carers is to provide a safe platform for these young people to experience the richness of their cultures and realise the positive impact they can have on their everyday life as young British citizens.

When Qaisra Sharaz came to visit us last October we could not resist the opportunity to take part in the MACFestival as its aim is to bring Muslim and non-Muslim communities together to promote social inclusion by celebrating the diversity and richness of the Muslim heritage. On that Thursday morning, Qaisra touched our heart by her sheer belief in promoting peace and tolerance through a festival dedicated to art and culture. We felt excited and proud to be part of this ambitious but nonetheless laudable enterprise.

The festival, which successfully hosted 50 Macfest events in 9 days across the most prestigious venues of the city of Manchester, had certainly a huge impact on its communities but most importantly on its children.

The festival offered a precious platform from which children from different schools presented their work and listened to each other. As they celebrated their differences, they become more aware of their similitude and thus going beyond the stereotypes they touched with their mind and eyes the very essence of our humanity.

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By attending and taking part in the festival, our students become more aware of the magnitude of their Muslim heritage and its impacts through mankind. That it could be in Mathematics, Physics, Biology, Medicine, poetry, sculpture or architecture, no one can deny its positive impact across the world. From the enchanting Alhambra in Grenada to the mesmerizing Taj Mahal in Agra, no one could deny their sublime beauties.

On a more personal note; as a non-Muslim I realised how little knowledge I had about the Muslim world and more particularly the support that it offered to Britain and France during WWII and the period of re-construction that followed it. During the festival, I had the chance to listen to some very interesting debates, beautiful music and poetry. Having my mind full of Rumi beautiful verses, I can only regret not having had enough time to explore more and learn more.

Our students felt proud to sing the Nasheed and to talk about the beauties of the Muslim world but above all they will never forget that their hard work, anxiety and participation was part of something bigger; a beautiful and unforgettable festival which promoted understanding, peace and tolerance across our city.

We hope that this testimony will reflect Qaisra Sharaz's incredible work to successfully deliver the Macfest although she faced many impediments and obstacle on her way. Her sheer determination to eradicate fear and promote tolerance and peace is remarkable and belong only to the very best peace activists that history will remember.

Pascal Beaudon  
Head of the Modern Foreign Languages Faculty

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Testimonial from Nigerian Community – Madinah Toyosi Afolabi

“Since early 2020 when I relocated to England, MACFEST has been a household name in my family. This came about by virtue of the fact that my child had a great opportunity to volunteer her services with the Executive Director – Qaisra Sharaz, who would later on become a mentor to my two girls and a close family friend to the family.

Under the able leadership of Qaisra and her wonderful team, MACFEST activities have been an outstanding event my family always look forward to attending. The first MACFEST activity I attended with my family, saw different cultures, ethnic groups, and traditions team up under a humongous umbrella to celebrate our Islamic faith. It was an exciting and amazing moment for my family and I, to have an opportunity to interact with diverse people from all walks of life.

Interestingly, we also had the opportunity to display some of our Nigerian heritage, our Nigerian food, cultural wear, home décor, as well as express some greetings in my tribal language. It really was a memorable occasion, which is not commonly experienced in the British environment. MACFEST was the eye-opener for my family to know where to go for socio-cultural events, how to build interpersonal relationships, and networking with diverse groups.

Personally, attending MACFEST events have expanded my knowledge of different cultures, languages, and even appreciate more about my Islamic faith. I have tasted different cuisines and delicacies from all over the world, I have watched how religious festivals are celebrated in Syria, Morocco, Pakistan, India, Malaysia, etc. I have listened to different music from these countries and been able to identify our points of convergence and MACFEST and its organisers have proved to the world that there is unity in diversity.

Further to this, lecture topics have been delivered to further explain that there is no room for hate crimes and Islamophobic acts against Muslims. Under the banner of “Spread Honey and Not Hate” slogan, people from various races, cultures and backgrounds have been invited to come together to raise awareness on the importance of peaceful coexistence and establishment of a unified and strong Islamic bond among the Islamic community.

Without doubt, I sincerely make this submission that MACFEST and its organisers deserve to be awarded for their magnificent role in ensuring the community is engaged in positive and development events.”

## 11.6 Community Groups

Testimonial from Chinese Community – Sandra Wong

I have been working with MACFest since the beginning in my capacity as a volunteer. I have had the honour of being asked by the team to host their annual celebration of the festival at the Whitworth Art Gallery over the last 5 years and have also hosted the event online during the pandemic.

It’s a wonderful festival with more new and diverse events being held every year, the festival continues to grow and has international events hosted online. It’s a wonderful experience and opportunity for Muslims to showcase their talents and beauty of their artistic culture and rich history and non Muslims to learn about arts and culture and the diversity of Muslims around the world.

The whole team but especially the founder Qaisra are committed to making the festival bigger and better every year and I’m honoured to be a part of the volunteering team. The wide variety of events held in person and online makes it accessible to the Manchester community it aims to reach and the team work very hard to ensure that there is something for everyone.

**Sandra Wong, Participant/speaker at MACFEST & Community Servant, Associate Solicitor**

Testimonial from Sikh Community – Sukhbir Singh

“Congratulation on the success of MACFEST in being nominated as a finalist for the British Muslim Awards, Well done to the team.

I was truly amazed with the enormous amount of work Qaisra, the Founder/Director and the team put into this! In addition, not only that there was so much but everything that I saw, was extremely professionally delivered but in a polite and humble way.

There were number of specifics that impressed me immensely, the contents – there was so much, the brochure , professionally produced, contents amazing and I love the logo – the simple way you managed to link to Islam as Asian countries.

I was asked to be part of the “Partition of India & Pakistan: ‘from Lucknow to Lahore’ panel – this was very well attended and the fact MACFEST had people on the panel from different faiths and countries made it inclusive of other faiths and cultures – well done for this!

I would sum up MACFEST festival as a Professional, inclusive, welcoming, friendly and with full content festival, that had something for everyone!

Thank you and well done.”

**Sukhbir Singh, Participant/speaker at MACFEST & Community Servant**

**Bosnian Community Champion - Rasema Bakkai**

"When the idea of MACFEST was first presented to me in early Spring of 2018 by it's director Qaisra Shahraz, I was intrigued to say the least.  
A festival to celebrate art and culture, and Muslim culture while at that. I liked that idea very much from the word go.  
I found it so innovative, so interesting and so refreshing. I love art, I love music, I love culture and I am very spiritual, so this was all so suitable for me.

I honestly do not remember that I ever agreed to anything so readily, so promptly and so wholeheartedly as I did to this.  
My family life and dynamics are complex, they require all of my time, my attention and all my energy as I have two disabled children.  
It has been very few if any occasion where I was able to make any firm commitments to spare time or to take part in any projects or activities that were not directly linked to me taking care and helping my lovely boys.

This project was different though, I loved the idea of it, and I really wanted to be part of it. Without further thought or fear as to how am I going to find time, energy or babysitter I agreed to take part.  
I am so glad I made that on the spot decision, as it has truly changed and enriched my life. I truly enjoyed looking through and reading my dad' s diaries, this was topic that Qaisra and I both agreed would be interesting for me to cover and talk about.  
I thoroughly delighted in doing my little research and reminding myself of Bosnian, history, art, music, culture and language.  
My all time favourite part of my involvement was guiding and supervising our lovely girls and boys( my own daugther included), from our Bosnian Supplementary School  
In their rehearsals and later their actual performance of Traditional Bosnian Dance.  
I in my enormous enthusiasm even took to the stage with them much to my husband' s dismay.

I thoroughly enjoyed; every talk I heard at the festival, every art piece and exhibition, every performance, from the beginning to the end.  
My sense of achievement and delight at mine but also all other's participants efforts and endeavours was complete. I was most privileged and honoured to be asked by the director to contribute an article on Bosnian Culture to her new brochure.  
Both myself and other ladies involved in this wonderful project are relishing at this wonderful opportunity and experience.

I can honestly say that in a very long time I did not find anything so educational, inspirational but also so enjoyable as I found MACFEST.  
I Can only say that I pray and hope that this amazingly entertaining and interesting project continues for many years to come, and that I am fortunate enough to be invited to take part again."

**Rasema Bakkai - Bosnian Speaker and Participant of MACFEST -15/1/19**

**Volunteer Testimonial: Alaa Ali - Egyptian Community Champion**

**Reason why I joined MACFEST**

I found it a great chance for me to be a part of a good community such as MACFEST, which would be useful and have good impacts on me as on society too.

**Roles, responsibilities and activities that I have undertaken**

2020

-As a part of MACFEST in JAN 2020, I organised an Egyptian culture table.

Sharing on International Women Day by showing an Egyptian Traditional Women Accessories and Pharaoh's pieces.

-I took part in Stockport festival showcasing a cultural hub relating to Egyptian heritage and helped to organise this festival.

-I am taking in Muslim women's art group, written a recipe, contributed artefacts and we meet regularly to plan the book about 'Our Cultures:Our Heritage'

-I have contributed to admin and other chores and attended many events, helping to set up merchandise table and collecting feedback from attendees.

-Attended many events including Batik painting at Elizabeth Gaskell house and Manchester literature festival.

-During lockdown I organised a zoom Iftar event and 'Women Get Together during Ramadan.'

Attending MACFEST Eid celebration.

Attending zoom meeting about BLM ( Black Lives Matter )

Attending 'MACFEST together with Rehan Khan zoom historical literary fiction event' (ref to tutor and othman history)

2021

-Now for next festival 2021, I am organising, planning and will host an event for Macfest 'celebrating Egyptian Culture and heritage; I will prepare all PPT on various topics relating to Egyptian heritage.

-I am organising and helping the team to plan our international women day event where we female volunteers plan and deliver the whole event with art and cultural activities.

**Impact of MACFEST and why it's so important**

In my opinion, MACFEST is a great and unique community that gathers muslims and non-muslims together, sharing ideas, skills, and hope to show or give out their best in all events. Also, gathering people from all ages from different schools, colleges, universities, with different backgrounds to form a fabulous picture of cultures and arts. A big diverse family.

**Impact on me, my social and working life**

It's an honour to stand as an Egyptian woman in MACFEST, and to speak about my country and it's civilization. This builds more self-confidence and makes me more proud of myself and my country. Also, knowing new people from different backgrounds and making new friends. MACFEST gives me hope and joy to be a part of the big British community.

**Skills and personal development including for employability**

I gained new experience by knowing how to communicate better with people especially as I am a newcomer in the UK. As a part of MACFEST, I also gained new work skills (team work, planning for events, and reliability).

I do use my skills, experiences, even some of my hobbies to share in this event. Finally, it helps me practise my English all the time.

**Signed: Alaa Ali, Dated: 6/12/2020**

**Testimonial from Christian Community - Bob Day**

"As a Christian and a Trustee of Faith Network for Manchester I attended the opening ceremony for MACFEST with my wife. It was a vibrant, multicultural event that involved both younger and older people with much colour, fun and excellent activities, especially the dancing from the Arabic school. This was a foretaste of much to come over the next two weeks.

I was privileged to join in many events at the British Muslim Heritage Centre that were thought provoking and entertaining as well as giving insight into the local Islamic communities in Manchester. Some of the talks were also challenging in terms of advocating a greater involvement of the Muslim community in local events and issues; this was a good way to promote community cohesion. The artwork on display was also very enjoyable and the artists were good communicators about the themes of their creativity.

The food supplied by Human Appeal at the events was also much appreciated. Over all the sense of welcome and meeting old and new friends made the whole festival very worthwhile and I was really pleased for it to be part of my wider learning and engagement with the Muslim community in Manchester.

I do hope that MACFEST will be supported and repeated in 2023."

**Bob Day, Trustee of Manchester Multi-Faith Centre and Faith Network  
4 Manchester**

### **Jewish Community - Barbara Dresner**

"As a non-Muslim, I am delighted to have re-joined the volunteer group assisting Qaisra Shahraz with the second Muslim Arts and Culture Festival, held in and near Greater Manchester in January 2020 - with some additional events taking place through to May.

The opportunities MACFEST provides, to learn about other cultures and meet people with very different backgrounds are as important now as in 2018, when the first MACFEST took place. This year Oldham, Rochdale, Stockport were included: it is extremely rewarding and encouraging to see people of such varied backgrounds working, socializing and laughing together. Tez Ilyas's comedy event drew 400 people to the British Muslim Heritage Centre.

MACFEST gives voice to Muslim refugees from and survivors of persecution and their children, from several countries: I value this highly, as my father was a 14-year-old Jewish refugee from Nazism in 1939. Amongst others, two sisters from Bosnia took part this year.

Qaisra thoughtfully gave prominence to members of cultural backgrounds who had not appeared at the first MACFEST, eg the Uighur and Indonesian communities made several different contributions this year. She also included in the programme schools such as the Manchester Health Academy, where the vast majority of pupils are not Muslim. Pupils at this school designed a MACFEST poster, so needed to research Muslim art and culture for this prominent aspect of the festival. They also held a MACFEST Day, including particular focus on Turkish, Moroccan and Saudi Arabian culture. The children and staff had clearly also enjoyed producing food and poetry for this special day: their passion and dedication clear.

The use of various media was again very evident, including social media to advertise the festival and share the events widely across the Greater Manchester area - and wider, eg in Huddersfield in Yorkshire. Local newspapers, television and radio were also involved. The festival has again showcased many contributions Muslims male and female, from all over the world, have made over time, and still do, including in Greater Manchester. It was therefore a very effective learning experience for all attendees, myself included. Many of the events are free, and any charges modest: MACFEST is very inclusive.

Many iconic buildings again became involved, adding to the learning experience: as many Greater Manchester residents have never visited the Portico or John Rylands Libraries before. Another venue new to many: the Lowry Theatre in Salford, where a delightful musical evening took place, which was filmed - as are several MACFEST performances, so that even those not able to attend on the day will be able to experience the immersive atmosphere these created. The Lowry event with Spanish, Turkish and Persian music was sold out, a sign that such events could occupy larger theatre spaces in future. The Royal Exchange Theatre was also a new and special venue this time, providing a striking environment for the introduction to Persian motif painting, as did a branch of Blackwell's bookshops, for a Literary evening with readings of prose and poetry. New partnerships at MACFEST included Manchester Metropolitan University and Manchester Literature Festival. I look forward to future MACFESTs, knowing they will provide many more and varied memorable experiences to this area's residents and visitors."

**Barbara Dresner, Festival Operational Team volunteer member 28TH MARCH 2023**

## 11.7 Other Testimonials

### Speakers

Rasema

*"Many congratulations Qaisra for such careful planning and so professionally and beautifully put together such great educational but also entertaining festival. You are big inspiration to the rest of us.*

*Best wishes from Rasema"*

Munira (Headteacher at Manchester Arabic School)"

*"Dear Qaisra,*

*Thank you so much for the lovely idea, it will be our pleasure and I am sure the girls would be over the moon!*

*It was an honour to take part at the festival, it was an enjoyable experience, very privileged to meet you and your team.*

*Inshaallah I will let you the date and time ASAP.*

*Warm Regards*

*Munira (Headteacher at Manchester Arabic School)"*

Leila Aboulela

*"I had a great time at MACFest, the new arts festival with a warm community spirit. Congratulations to Qaisra Shahrzad for organizing so many wonderful events. I was thrilled to meet writers whose work I greatly admire- Sayeeda Warsi and Yasmin Alibhai-Brown. And for the first time ever I signed a copy of one of my books for a policewoman!"*

Prof. Yaron

*"Dear Qaisra*

*Thank you again for the invitation to contribute to MacFest. I very much enjoyed the comments and questions to my session as well as the other events that I attended. I'm sorry I was unable to join you again on Sunday, I'm sure the day was as much a success.*

*This is a great activity and a huge enrichment for the city, and I hope that this year's festival will be then begin of a long tradition. I would be delighted to contribute again in the future."*

Noora Gailani

*"Thank you so much for inviting me to contribute to your MACFEST programme. I enjoyed the challenge, and hope that those who attended my lecture found it interesting too."*

Andrea Milne

*"The 'meet the authors' session was inspirational. I've reserved Leila Aboulela's and Qaisra Shahraz' latest books from Manchester Libraries attendee"*

Salim Ayduz

*"Such a great experience to be hosting a workshop at this year's Macfest event. #macfest #manchester #arabiccalligraphy#muslimartsandculturefestival #art#works hop"*

Razwan Haq

*"All welcome at the BMHC Marquee on Saturday afternoon in Manchester, where I will be reading from my new book Phobiastan, sharing the platform with award winning authors Leila Aboulela and Qaisra Shahraz, as well as Sayeeda Warsi and Bradford 12 Activist, Tariq Mehmood. #macfest 2018"*

#### Attendees

Ahmed Nadim

*"MACFEST was a wonderful project and brainchild of a lady of indomitable spirit. Qaisra thank you and may you never tire for there is not another one like you."*

Anne Tucker

*"I so enjoyed last Sunday at MACFEST. I was with my friend Shaista and we stayed all morning. I had to get back for another commitment but she went back again in the afternoon (as her mother inlaw had her children for the day.) many congratulations - I really hope it grows."*

@sammy123165

*"An excellent festival of arts and culture in Manchester. A 10 Day Festival, Manchester's first MACFEST, 'Muslim Arts and Cultural Festival', to kick start the week of 50 events. The events will cater for everyone's interest, covering arts, film and photography, literature, architecture, history and culture, music and performance. Speakers: Salma Yaqoob, Baroness Manzila Pola Uddin, Leila Aboulela, Yvonne Ridley and Yasmin Alibhai Brown #macfest #islam #culture #arts#muslims #women #empowerment"*

@bespoke\_arabic\_calligraphy

*"Hope MACFEST went well. Sorry we missed this past weekend. It was our Thanksgiving and we had 20 people for dinner on the sat. Blessings to you as you make big things happen in our city. Kathy"*

#### Volunteers

Fadi

*"I have met so many lovely people this week. My pleasure."*

Tehmina

*"What a day, absolutely amazing! Macfest festival over at the British Muslim Heritage Centre....InshAllah I met some awesome people, artist, writers, poets, mp's, all amazing people. I am thankful for this opportunity and for Macfest, Qaisra Shahraz the director of Macfest, for trusting me to do a good."*

Jackie

*"Salaams Sister,*

*Thank you very for your kind e-mail regarding Zahra's issue. At the end of the day, she is happy and she was part of our colorful festival.*

*I am very grateful for your payments. It was an amazing festival and I believe you and your team was very successful and I hope we will continue many years together.*

*All the best,*

Sponsors

@naeemaamer

*"Very proud of Qaisra Shahraz for her amazing effort and dedication to get #macfest off the ground. Had a great day at the Muslim Arts and Culture Festival here in #manchester. Highlights included 'in conversation with Baroness Wasi', a narrative report of the evolution of The Curry Mile in Rusholme, an analysis of language and dialect, and a special showing of British Muslim TV's feature film Finding Fatimah. Well done to all who have worked hard to put this all together."*

Artists

@siddiqajuma

*"It is an absolute delight and honour to be in Manchester with the Right Honourable Baroness Uddin of Bethnal Green for MACFEST To everyone in the North West, MACFEST is a truly fantastic celebration of Muslim arts and culture and the programme today has been excellent and thought provoking, featuring some of the most interesting lectures I have heard in a long time. I strongly urge everyone to throw their support behind this event."*



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17 January 2019

**Supporting Statement**

I am founder and chief executive of QED Foundation since 1990. Its Bradford based national charity supporting the social and economic position of minority ethnic communities. I have known Qaisra Shahraz for over twenty years and been an advisor/director of Muslim Arts and Cultural Festival (MACFEST) since inception.

I can highly commend the achievement of Qaisra Shahraz and her team for creating a ground-breaking new festival for Northern England that can be a shining example to the rest of the country. MACFEST shows how it is possible to draw together people from all backgrounds and talents, professional and non-professional, from school children to people with a great amount of experience in their careers - and all in between.

The range of subjects, workshops and displays demonstrated the Director's ability to bring together people who normally do not have such a rich opportunity to work, celebrate and enjoy themselves together. I am sure that this experience will open the eyes of many, to the great variety of ways there are to express joy in our heritage and how it is possible to demonstrate that in today's world. Space was also given to debating: there being many views about the past and present, and MACFEST gave space for different opinions too. I look forward to future MACFESTs.

Yours sincerely,

Mohammed Ali OBE  
Founder and chief executive  
QED Foundation



Chief Executive: Dr Mohammed Ali OBE  
QED Foundation is a company limited by guarantee. No share capital.  
Registered in England No. 2553828  
Registered Charity No. 1004608



**MANCHESTER  
CITY COUNCIL**

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Culture**

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Date: 17th January 2019

Our Ref: Muslim Arts and Culture Festival

Dear Qaisra,

This is a short letter to congratulate you and the MACFEST team on the success of your first festival celebrating the range and diversity of Muslim arts and culture in Manchester.

We were proud to host two events at Central Library. We felt it was important to support the festival and showcase Muslim artists at one of the city's flagship cultural venues.

The two events, hosted by Manchester Libraries and our partner Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Resource Centre, were 'Exploring our Roots' - celebrating the rich cultural heritage of Manchester's Muslim diaspora communities' and 'The Manchester Muslim Poets Bonanza'.

Both were very successful and the events beautifully highlighted writing and poetry from artists with a wide range of backgrounds including Pakistani, Turkish, Arab, Somali, Bengali and Iranian.

Congratulation on being shortlisted as a finalist for the British Muslim Awards. I look forward to working with the MACFEST team on the next festival.

With best wishes,

Danny Middleton

Service Development Officer (Events and Reader Development)  
Libraries, Galleries and Culture.

[www.manchester.gov.uk](http://www.manchester.gov.uk)

## **Testimonial for MACFEST - Muslim Arts & Culture Festival**

Congratulation on the success of MACFEST in being nominated as a finalist for the British Muslim Awards, Well done to the team.

I was truly amazed with the enormous amount of work Qaisra, the Founder/ Director and the team put into this! In addition, not only that there was so much but everything that I saw, was extremely professionally delivered but in a polite and humble way.

There were number of specifics that impressed me immensely, the contents - there was so much, the brochure , professionally produced, contents amazing and I love the logo - the simple way you managed to link to Islam as Asian countries.

I was asked to be part of the "Partition of India & Pakistan: 'from Lucknow to Lahore' panel - this was very well attended and the fact MACFEST had people on the panel from different faiths and countries made it inclusive of other faiths and cultures - well done for this!

I would sum up MACFEST festival as a Professional, inclusive, welcoming, friendly and with full content festival, that had something for everyone!

Thank you and well done.

Sukhbir Singh

**Participant/speaker at MACFEST & Community Servant, Vice Chair Faith Network 4 Manchester & We Stand Together.**



The University of Manchester

Professor Yaron Matras  
School of Arts, Languages, & Cultures  
The University of Manchester  
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January 2019

I was very pleased to be invited to take part in MACFEST. It was an opportunity to share my interest in language, and my work on language diversity in Manchester, and the languages of people from so many Muslim communities, with a wide range of languages and cultures. The well-designed programme gave opportunities for many aspects of Muslim culture and life to be expressed and discussed, including people of all ages and backgrounds. The atmosphere was welcoming, it was clear that considerable effort had been made to reflect creative, artistic expression from many countries of origin.

I would be pleased to see this as the start of a significant annual contribution to bring together people of different communities, Muslim and non-Muslim, to share, celebrate and learn together. This was an ambitious beginning, and is a testament to the vision of the Director and her support team who have skilfully coordinated so many events across a variety of venues, with the involvement of a large number of presenters.

Professor Yaron Matras

### Testimonial by Rasema Bakkali - Bosnian speaker & participant

When the idea of MACFEST was first presented to me in early Spring of 2018 by its director Qaisra Shahraz, I was intrigued to say the least.

A festival to celebrate art and culture, and Muslim culture while at that. I liked that idea very much from the word go.

I found it so innovative, so interesting and so refreshing. I love art, I love music, I love culture and I am very spiritual, so this was all so suitable for me.

I honestly do not remember that I ever agreed to anything so readily, so promptly and so wholeheartedly as I did to this.

My family life and dynamics are complex, they require all of my time, my attention and all my energy as I have two disabled children.

It has been very few if any occasion where I was able to make any firm commitments to spare time or to take part in any projects or activities that were not directly linked to me taking care and helping my lovely boys.

This project was different though, I loved the idea of it, and I really wanted to be part of it. Without further thought or fear as to how am I going to find time, energy or babysitter I agreed to take part.

I am so glad I made that on the spot decision, as it has truly changed and enriched my life.

I truly enjoyed looking through and reading my dad's diaries, this was topic that Qaisra and I both agreed would be interesting for me to cover and talk about.

I thoroughly delighted in doing my little research and reminding myself of Bosnian, history, art, music, culture and language.

My all time favourite part of my involvement was guiding and supervising our lovely girls and boys (my own daughter included), from our Bosnian Supplementary School

In their rehearsals and later their actual performance of Traditional Bosnian Dance.

I in my enormous enthusiasm even took to the stage with them much to my husband's dismay.

I thoroughly enjoyed; every talk I heard at the festival, every art piece and exhibition, every performance, from the beginning to the end.

My sense of achievement and delight at mine but also all other's participants efforts and endeavours was complete. I was most privileged and honoured to be asked by the director to contribute an article on Bosnian Culture to her new brochure.

Both myself and other ladies involved in this wonderful project are relishing at this wonderful opportunity and experience.

I can honestly say that in a very long time I did not find anything so educational, inspirational but also so enjoyable as I found MACFEST.

I Can only say that I pray and hope that this amazingly entertaining and interesting project continues for many years to come, and that I am fortunate enough to be invited to take part again.

Rasema Bakkai - Speaker and Participant of MACFEST -15/1/19

## Rusholme Heritage Project

*'Documenting everyday life in The Curry Mile'*



### Testimonial for Qaisra Shahraz the director of the Manchester and Muslim Arts Festival by Phil Portus

To whom it may concern,

The Rusholme Heritage Project team, were delighted to hear that MACFEST had been shortlisted under Leading Lights of the Year category at The 7th British Muslim Awards. I would like to express my personal recommendation for MACFEST as a worthy winner in this category.

I was very pleased to be asked by Qaisra, along with my two project colleagues, Michael Baker and Della Batchelor, to take part in MACFEST. Several months ago we had been asked by Hanif Bobat, from the Ethnic Health Forum in Rusholme, to make a photographic documentary record of everyday life along the "Curry Mile". The Wilmslow Road area of Rusholme, which for many years had earned the title through its preponderance of curry restaurants, was now changing in composition and character, through natural demographics, to a more middle eastern flavour and perhaps should now be called "Shisha Mile".

Qaisra involved our small group in some planning meetings and was keen for us, as non-Muslims to contribute our photographs and dialogue about Rusholme into MACFEST. We set up an exhibition of our mounted photographs in the main marquee over the weekend and observed it being a focus of attention for many visitors including BBC radio, Baroness Warsi and local MP Afzal Khan. This exhibition was very important in promoting this new project by, for example, our being asked to take part in local radio interviews and generating an article in a south Manchester community magazine, Open Up.

Qaisra invited us to give an illustrated talk at MACFEST about our Rusholme Project during the weekend which was followed with a lively Q&A session. This resulted in other contacts being made such as a Rusholme councillor and a local Muslim youth coordinator, which we will follow up at a later date.

I was also asked to be an event photographer over the weekend and was pleased to experience the opening session and some of the keynote talks in the marquee. The festival brought together Muslims, non-Muslims, people of different nations, different customs, ages and gender. It was a joy to see this mix of people and families interacting and enjoying themselves in this peaceful and creative environment initiated and created by Qaisra Shahraz.

**Phil Portus** (21/01/2019)

(Team member of the Rusholme Heritage Project)

Phil Portus Photography

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[www.flickr.com/photos/philportusphotography/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/philportusphotography/) (Jazz etc)

[www.creativespacejazzclub.co.uk](http://www.creativespacejazzclub.co.uk) The Slug & Lettuce, Didsbury Jazz Club

[www.rusholmeheritage.org.uk](http://www.rusholmeheritage.org.uk) "Documenting everyday life in the Curry Mile"

## **Testimonial from Waqaas Ali Poet - who took part in MACFEST**

The inaugural Muslim Arts and Culture Festival has been a success and is a splendid idea. Auntie Qaisra along with other people have been working tirelessly around the clock to bring this festival which blends arts from all over the Islamic world and history into numerous shows under the umbrella of MACFest.

As a performer myself I approached the organisers through email about performing at one of the events and the response was quick. I managed to attend the show to see various performers from different backgrounds come together in support of this festival and showcase their abilities. The whole festival has been eye opening for me as certain arts I have not seen live before was delivered in a cohesive and authentic fashion.

I would thoroughly recommend if a person has not seen any of the Islamic Arts to come and join next year. This year ample food and cakes were present and I am sure next year will be the same if not even better.

Waqaas Ali Spoken Word Artist

## **Testimonial from Bob Day, Trustee of Manchester Multi-Faith Centre and Faith Network 4 Manchester**

### **MACFEST- Muslim Arts & Culture Festival**

As a Christian and a Trustee of Faith Network for Manchester I attended the opening ceremony for MACFEST with my wife. It was a vibrant, multicultural event that involved both younger and older people with much colour, fun and excellent activities, especially the dancing from the Arabic school. This was a foretaste of much to come over the next two weeks.

I was privileged to join in many events at the British Muslim Heritage Centre that were thought provoking and entertaining as well as giving insight into the local Islamic communities in Manchester. Some of the talks were also challenging in terms of advocating a greater involvement of the Muslim community in local events and issues; this was a good way to promote community cohesion. The artwork on display was also very enjoyable and the artists were good communicators about the themes of their creativity.

The food supplied by Human Appeal at the events was also much appreciated. Over all the sense of welcome and meeting old and new friends made the whole festival very worthwhile and I was really pleased for it to be part of my wider learning and engagement with the Muslim community in Manchester.

I do hope that MACFEST will be supported and repeated in 2019.

Bob Day

# 12. Photos

## Photo Gallery: Qaisra Shahraz







# Photo Gallery: MACFEST





