***Hopscotch***

**A film by Roxana Vilk produced by Amina – Muslim Women’s Resource Centre (MWRC) with support from Edinburgh Rape Crisis Centre.**

What happens when you walk down the street…if you’re a young woman of colour…who may or may not wear a hijab? ***Hopscotch***, a film by Roxana Vilk based on Nadine Aisha’s, ‘*Hopscotch’*, produced by Amina MWRC with support from Edinburgh Rape Crisis Centre, explores just that. Based on the true account of the harassment and violence experienced by women of colour and Muslim women in public spaces, ***Hopscotch*** aims to highlight the lived reality for many women across Scotland today.

The film shows us what many women, and what practitioners at Edinburgh Rape Crisis Centre and Amina MWRC, already know: that the harassment women experience on the street forms part of their experience of racism, of Islamophobia, and of men’s violence against women. Through following the figure of one woman walking through Edinburgh, and listening to the voices of many, the film aims to illustrate the violations and violence women experience from street harassment.

‘Street harassment’ is one of the most pervasive forms of gender-based violence, and yet least legislated against.[[1]](#footnote-1) A 2013 study by anti-street harassment group Hollaback! Edinburgh found that 80% of young people aged 12 – 25 had experienced street harassment in Edinburgh – the majority of respondents being young women and LGBT young people. In 2017 the same campaign group released a second survey, this time asking respondents – the majority of whom were women - if they felt the attacker was targeting aspects of their identity. Of the 86% majority who said yes, Hollaback! Edinburgh found that:

* 51% (the majority) felt that their attacker was targeting their gender,
* 8% - the second biggest majority in the survey – felt they were attacking their race.

Further, research published by anti-Islamophobia charity, Tell Mama UK, discovered that of the 300% increase in Islamophobic hate crimes in 2015, **the majority of incidents were targeted at Muslim women, by white men, in public places.**[[2]](#footnote-2) It is within this context that Amina MWRC and Edinburgh Rape Crisis Centre have come together; to shine a light on an experience which is all too familiar for many Muslim women and women of colour, but which too often goes ignored or undiscussed.

As a society, we often hear attitudes which dismiss the harassment women receive on the street; women are told to ‘take it as a compliment’, to ‘ignore it’ or to change their behaviour to avoid it. Further, women do not experience this abuse in a two dimensional setting; rather it is multi-layered with other aspects of their identity including gender, sexuality, ethnicity, disability and religion.[[3]](#footnote-3) Via ***Hopscotch****,* Amina MWRC and Edinburgh Rape Crisis Centre aim to challenge the notion that street harassment is benign or indeed complimentary – and instead highlight the violence present in the sexist, racist and Islamophobic abuse featured in the film. The responsibility and blame for street harassment lies with the perpetrator; and if we continue to blame those women and girls who are targeted, or misrepresent it as complimentary or harmless, we disregard the basic human rights of the women in Scotland today who are experiencing this abuse and living with the impact of it.

Street Harassment forms part of a continuum of violence against women; with sexist and misogynistic language at one end of the spectrum, and the rape and murder of women at the other. When women move through public spaces - to which they should have the same rights to access as everyone else – and are told to ‘Go Back Home’, called ‘Sluts’ or ‘Black Bitches’ and experience sexual assault, this sends a powerful message both to women and to perpetrators about what can and cannot be done to them. When we dismiss or normalise the violence that women experience, we further embed that message and contribute to the inequality and diminished sense of freedom which women, Muslim women and women of colour face when moving through public spaces. This is why films like ***Hopscotch***, need to be seen and discussed. ***Hopscotch*** adds to the much-needed campaign to raise awareness of this type of violence against women and make spaces for women to speak out, and have their voices heard.

**PARTICIPATION WORK WITH YOUNG WOMEN**

In association with the project and the creation of the film, Edinburgh Rape Crisis Centre and Amina MWRC delivered creative participation and education work with young women of colour and young Muslim women in Edinburgh with our sister agency, Saheliya through their Young BME Women’s Group. In order to ensure the continued investment in making space for young Muslim women and women of colour’s voices to be nurtured and heard, we will continue to develop and produce creative work with the young women in the coming months. Young women involved in the project thus far have said:

 *‘I enjoyed writing about how I feel and sharing my stories. It relieves stress in something I’m not able to talk about as a subject often.’ – Young woman*

 *‘I’m taking away courage’ – Young woman, age 14*

*‘It’s been really good to talk about something deemed taboo… it has created a platform for people – where they can feel safe and not judged – to talk’. – Young woman*

*‘Writing this I feel I can scream and say I have a voice.’ – Young woman*

*‘I have more of a voice’ – Young woman[[4]](#footnote-4)*

1. Hollaback Edinburgh, <https://edinburgh.ihollaback.org/about-us/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Tell Mama UK 2016 *The Geography of Anti-Muslim Hatred* <https://tellmamauk.org/geography-anti-muslim-hatred-2015-tell-mama-annual-report/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The poem, Hopscotch, was created by a poet based on her lived experience as a young woman of racism, sexism and Islamophobia. However we recognise that street harassment is not restricted to these three categories and affects other groups also, including disabled people and the LGBT community. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Taken from ‘I have more of a voice* *because of your voices.’* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)