

# The Story of H.O.P.E

Helping Other People Everyday

How a group of Black and Brown women reshaped domestic abuse support networks in lockdown.

01 March 2021





Without community, there is no liberation

- Audre Lorde -

# Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the many wonderful people involved in the H.O.P.E network meetings that were launched during the first COVID-19 lockdown in 2020. The insightful speakers, engaging attendees, and the constant support of people, including Sarah Wigley, Yasmin Khan, April Dawn, Hannah Hoare, and many others, who made these meetings the success that they were.

Many thanks also to Suzanne Jacob OBE at SafeLives, for her encouragement and support, and Paul Morris at onEvidence Ltd, for editing and design of this report.

Not least are the countless victims and survivors of domestic abuse trapped between a rock and hard place during lockdown. We do this for you.

# **Authors**

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This report was commissioned by H.O.P.E and funded by Lloyds Bank Foundation and SafeLives.

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# PROTECT THE NHS

# **Foreword**

As a practitioner, I knew I had to use my voice and platform to do something to help



Meena Kumari

# "STAY HOME. PROTECT THE NHS. SAVE LIVES."

On 23 March 2020, Prime Minister Boris Johnson told the country that people 'must' stay at home. Lockdown had begun.

I remember watching Johnson deliver the hard-hitting slogan on TV. This slogan was, as it was no doubt designed to be; simple, memorable, unavoidable, ...and scary. I asked my husband if we were going to be okay, relieved that our children were in bed and not here with us to witness this beginning of Coronavirus lockdown.

My thoughts quickly turned to the many \*Black, Asian and other minoritised victims of domestic abuse living with abusers, and how they might be feeling right now.

It was at this moment I knew that, as a practitioner, I had to use my voice and platform to do something to help.

#### \*Note on language.

We have chosen to use the terms Black and Brown, as a nod to the women featured in the pages of this report. We use the term 'Black, Asian and other minoritised communities/people' as we share the view of various Black and Brown feminists that; while ethnically and culturally diverse people are not a minority, they have been 'minoritised' in society due to wider social prejudices. We have used the word victims and survivors interchangeably as both terms have been used in the discussions during H.O.P.E meetings.

Would people be interested in attending a call focused on domestic abuse within Black, Asian and other minoritised communities? At a time when people were fearing for the safety and security of their own families and friends, would they be prepared to spare some time to help others?

"Try it and see" suggested my good friend and colleague Sarah Wigley. So, I did. On 16 April 2020 I launched the first national H.O.P.E network meeting.

The idea was to create a safe environment for front-line workers, activists, survivors, academics, policy makers, students, and others, to come together during this pandemic to discuss issues impacting them and, where applicable, the victims they support. I hoped that the calls would foster a spirit of cooperation and comradeship during the crisis, and motivate attendees to expand their learning, and to increase their knowledge to improve their practice.

What happened over the next few months changed the shape and dynamics of domestic abuse networks during lockdown, for the better, by placing Black, Asian and other minoritised women and girls, men and boys, at the centre of discussions.

### "DISCUSSION. REFLECTION. ACTION."

To capture the ethos of H.O.P.E. network, I offered this new, more optimistic slogan, without the 'scary' element. This optimistic outlook and a shared resolve became the foundation of this dynamic network, where people from all backgrounds felt comfortable to discuss important issues about the reality of domestic abuse in Black, Asian and other minoritised communities.

The following pages illustrate the story of H.O.P.E. – a snapshot of what we all learned, what we want readers to hear, and a celebration of what we have achieved.

This report and my work are dedicated to my children, Mia and Aidan. I hope I make you proud.

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# Introduction

# "YOU'RE NOT STUCK AT HOME, YOU'RE SAFE AT HOME."

This is a bold claim, undoubtedly intended to reassure British citizens. But it was clear to domestic abuse victims and the people working to safeguard them that the opposite was more likely to be true. It was safe to say that, for many people stuck at home with an abuser, this slogan was a fiction.

It is now known that the impact of COVID-19 lockdown on victims of domestic abuse has been catastrophic - a fact starkly illustrated by the 700% increase in calls to mainstream charity helplines such as Refuge.<sup>1</sup> While domestic killings increased two-fold in the first three weeks of the March 2020, police arrests for domestic abuse-related crimes increased 24% between April and June 2020, compared with the same period in 2019. <sup>2,3</sup>

Part 1 of this report chronicles the myriad discussions about Black, Asian and other minoritised victims of domestic abuse that took place at H.O.P.E network meetings, between April 2020 and December 2020, during the national lockdowns.

Part 2 of this report showcases some of the dynamic research and creative outputs, empowered and generated by the H.O.P.E network. This collaborative work centrestages Black, Asian and other minoritised voices, and their experiences of domestic abuse.

This report should be read in the tone of a collective, proud, and courageous voice; dignified in the face of continued adversity, resolute despite wider social prejudice, and holding strong against the backdrop of an increasingly hostile environment.

<sup>1.</sup> Refuge (2020) https://www.refuge.org.uk/refuge-sees-700-increase-in-website-visits/

<sup>2.</sup> Karen Ingala Smith (2020) https://kareningalasmith.com/2020/04/15/coronavirus-doesnt-cause-mens-violence-against-women/

<sup>3.</sup> Nicole Jacobs, Designate Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales (2020). https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/22154/pdf/

I am passionate about assisting survivors of domestic abuse to take steps towards a safe and free life. Domestic abuse is harmful to the individual and destructive to the community. We all have a responsibility to challenge the behaviour.



# 1. Discussion & Reflection

- Context
- Key themes
- Black and Brown voices
- Recommendations

#### Context

Four weeks into the first national COVID-19 lockdown, at midday on 16 April 2020, the first H.O.P.E network meeting took place via Zoom. Attendees included over 50 domestic abuse sector practitioners, activists, charity leads, researchers, mental health and emergency service workers, experts by experience, and students. The aim of this meeting was to discuss women's experiences of domestic abuse during COVID-19, and how best to protect them.

From the outset, the focus of the meetings was on the experiences of victims from Black, Asian and other minoritised communities. There was no monopoly on the microphone – everyone was welcome, and anyone present, camera on or off, was encouraged to speak or share their thoughts.

Sixteen meetings and eighty-four speakers later, plus a thousand attendees from across the UK, Europe, Asia and Africa (see appendix 2), these H.O.P.E meetings had established a community, a safe space to share concerns about domestic abuse during the COVID-19 storm. A place of H.O.P.E where seldom heard Black and Brown voices were neither forced to whisper or were hushed by more prominent voices already seated at the decision-making table. Hidden and grassroots voices were empowered, because they were heard and understood without fear of judgment or reprisal.

For many people from Black, Asian and other minoritised communities, this sense of togetherness matters; indeed, community identity is how they may define themselves. Yet this community-voice is largely overlooked in the discourse on domestic abuse in the UK. Ultimately, White women's experiences are the default by which all victims' experiences are understood. Frustration about this 'one size fits all' perspective crystallised during these meetings. As the stories told by Black and Brown voices took centre-stage, they painted a new picture of the domestic abuse landscape that looked very different from the one that had been painted for them.

## Key themes

The following narrative captures the key themes that emerged from the H.O.P.E network meetings, during the global COVID-19 pandemic. Part 1 of the report was guided by two focus questions:

- 1. What are the main issues & barriers facing services that support domestic abuse victims from Black, Asian and other minoritised communities?
- 2. What actions were suggested by attendees and speakers?

The range of topics discussed at these meetings were wide-ranging. Issues such as the Domestic Abuse Bill, depleted funding of support services, no recourse to public funds for migrant women, racial discrimination in the domestic abuse sector as well as within services, were all covered. Victim experiences, including rape, sexual abuse and exploitation, hidden harms in faith-based communities, spiritual abuse, witchcraft and Devi Desi, coercive control, male victims, and housing issues, were also examined in the discussions.

To identify core themes, a methodological approach was used that captured patterns in the data (see appendix 1). Some of the issues that emerged, though long-established, were brought back into sharp focus due to the dramatic rise in domestic abuse cases during lockdown.

Three key themes that emerged were (1) domestic abuse policy, (2) domestic abuse practice, and (3) barriers to reporting and help-seeking.

The central tenet of the discussions was the belief that racial justice is critical to achieving an inclusive and diverse domestic abuse sector; essential if we are to improve outcomes for victims. The collective message was clear: the marginalisation and blotting out of voices of Black, Asian and other minoritised victims/survivors and practitioners in the sector must be vigorously and continuously challenged.

# **Key themes**



# Domestic abuse policy

 Black, Asian and other minoritised voices underrepresented in domestic abuse policy space

# Domestic abuse practice

- Lack of staff diversity within domestic abuse services
- Poor levels of cultural competence
- Specialist services undervalued

3

# Barriers to reporting/help-seeking

- Lack of trust in police
- Language barriers
- Racism
- Ethnic 'lumping' (BAME labelling)

#### Black and Brown voices

**Dr Shola Mos-Shogbamimu, Lawyer, Political & Women's Rights Activist** (on structural inequality)

"Structural and systemic inequality is a big contributor to the increased violence experienced by Black, Asian and ethnic minority women. Unfortunately, any change that occurs feels incremental. It always feels as though we have not been listened to."

#### Naomi, SafeLives and Survivor (on invisibility)

"Black girls can be invisible within communities. They cannot turn to the police for fear of the community turning against them. Some BAME families will try to keep issues within the community."

#### **David Lammy, MP** (on the hostile environment)

"This is a desperate time for migrants and minority women across our country who are facing domestic violence. These women feel badly let down by the delayed Domestic Abuse Bill and are worried that it does not address the concerns, the vulnerability, and the fragility of migrant women. What we need towards Black, Asian, minority ethnic women or migrant communities is hospitality and generosity, not hostility."

**Hibo Wardere, FGM Survivor and Campaigner** (on the need for grassroots voices to steer policy)

"Policies and decisions are being made by people who do not understand how deeprooted FGM in some communities. Our voices are not represented most of the time when these policies are being made."

#### Baroness Sandip Verma (on barriers to help-seeking)

"One of the biggest concerns is that women and young girls within the ethnic minority communities do not know where to reach out for help."

#### Salim Khalifa, Trade Sexual Health (on the need to understand intersectionality)

"When people have had issues trying to prove to their families, communities and friends that it's okay to be gay, when it comes to domestic violence, they struggle to access help and won't seek support from their families, because they cannot face being told "see I told you it's wrong to be gay". It is important for agencies, policy makers, governments and everybody to really understand that just by saying 'BAME' it does not cover a whole community."

# **Janine Davies, PhD Researcher, Co-Director of Listen Up Research CIC** (on the need for more Black-led research)

"In the UK there has been no systematic research on the needs of African Caribbean children who have experienced sexual abuse. When the term BAME is being used it assumes a common experience. However, it loses the recognition of the heterogeneity of just being Black. Another challenge is the normalisation of sexual abuse, for example when the perpetrator is somebody within their own community and it's assumed it's part of their culture."

#### April Dawn, Creating Equalz (on the lack of discussions on, and funding for, FGM)

"There have been difficulties with regards to getting FGM on the table as part of the conversation around domestic abuse. We have been told that FGM does not meet the criteria for COVID-19 funding, even though it's a safeguarding issue."

#### **Yasmin Khan, Halo Project** (on the role of shame and dishonour)

"Trauma-based services for victims needs to be addressed. You can't send them on generic counselling courses when their culture, the shame and the dishonour is the main reason they haven't come forward in the first place."

#### **Ngozi Fulani, Sistah Space** (on valuing Black women and girls)

"We need to emphasise the importance of talking about Black women and girls of African and Caribbean heritage because our experiences are continuously devalued."

There's really no such thing as the 'voiceless'. There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard.

- Arundhati Roy -



#### Recommendations

Key stakeholders in the domestic abuse sector would benefit from considering the following areas as a route to positive, inclusive growth.

#### · Cross-cultural training

Cultural competence should be a core requirement across the sector, helping organisations better understand and respond to the needs of Black, Asian and other minoritised victims of domestic abuse.

#### Trauma-informed approaches, grounded in intersectionality

It is fundamental to understand that Black, Asian and other minoritised peoples experiences of domestic abuse are intersectional. That they are more likely to suffer the impact of intergenerational and complex trauma resulting from social inequality (race, class, and gender prejudice), social attitudes (victim-blame and normalisation), and the internalisation of shame and self-blame.

#### Reclaiming space in the domestic abuse sector

Many Black, Asian and other minoritised people working in domestic abuse services are excluded from key decision-making processes. It is important to offer a seat to 'who is missing at the table'. Additionally, the lack of staff diversity in the sector is a potential help-seeking barrier that impacts on victims' vulnerability - the initial fear of seeking help from external organisations such as the police may be exacerbated by fears and lived experiences of racism.

#### Sustainable funding provided to specialist 'by and for' organisations

Many specialist organisations are structured differently to larger national charities. Funding is crucial to support these grassroot, often local organisations that encourage and enable community integration and provide a safe setting for victims to disclose abuse.

# 2. Action

The open conversations that took place at H.O.P.E network meetings were both cathartic and a catalyst for action. Section 2 of this report shines a spotlight on seven collaborative activities, from the many activisms, academic work, and creative enterprises, that capture the 'Discussion. Reflection. Action.' spirit of H.O.P.E during lockdown.

- Open letter to Home Secretary
- Digital Art Project
- Emma Humphreys Memorial Prize 2020
- Research briefing & APPG on domestic abuse perpetrators
- Lifeline film
- Police FOI report
- Cross-cultural webinar series



## Open letter to Home Secretary

Open Letter: Hidden Harm Summit for Domestic Abuse, 21 May 2020.

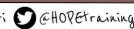
On 21 May 2020, Dr Roxanne Khan, Meena Kumari, and Dr Olumide Adisa wrote an open letter to the Home Secretary, the Right Honourable Priti Patel MP.

The letter asked that the Government take urgent steps to reduce the impact of domestic abuse within Black, Asian and other minoritised communities. Additionally, that they recognise the impact of 'honour' abuse, forced and child marriage, and female genital mutilation (FGM) in their agenda.

This letter was delivered by Baroness Sandip Verma (House of Lords, Ministerial Champion for Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Overseas), to the Home Secretary, at the Hidden Harm Summit for Domestic Abuse, Chaired by Prime Minister Boris Johnson, as reported in <a href="https://doi.org/10.1001/jha.2007/">The Independent</a>.

# H.O.P.E DIGITAL ART PROJECT

Curated by Meena Kumari O @HOPEtraining





# **Digital Art Project**

## H.O.P.E Digital Art Project.

On 22 June 2020, the H.O.P.E Digital Art Project was launched.

This creative initiative, commissioned by Meena Kumari and designed by artistactivist Daisy Meredith, celebrated Black, Asian, and other minoritised women working, advocating, and campaigning within the domestic abuse and sexual violence sector. The following four installments were released.

- #12Women 22.06.2020
- #25Women 03.08.2020
- #38Women 05.10.2020
- #50Women 11.12.2020

Digital artwork created by Daisy Meredith. For full gallery see Appendix 3.

I want us to live in a society that recognises the cycle of trauma caused by domestic abuse and prioritises pathways to emotional healing and recovery.





## Emma Humphreys Memorial Prize

H.O.P.E - Shortlist - 2020.

On 7 October 2021, H.O.P.E was shortlisted for the prestigious Emma Humphreys Memorial Prize and Centre for Women's Justice Awards (2020).

H.O.P.E was in the remarkable company of fellow nominees: Zinthiya Ganespanchan (founder of the Zinthiya Trust), Coleen Dion (founder of AGITATE), Rosie Lewi (Deputy Director of the Angelou Centre), Sophie Campbell (author of Breakfast at Bronzefield), The Holly Project (the first specialist peer CSE support service in the country).



# Research Briefing & APPG on domestic abuse perpetrators

Increasing safety for those experiencing family and intimate relationship harm within Black and Minority Ethnic communities by responding to those who harm.

This rapid research is a collaboration between the University of Suffolk and H.O.P.E. Training and Consultancy to explore family and intimate relationship harm within Black and minority ethnic communities and how we might best respond to the issue.

This research fed into national domestic abuse and perpetrator meetings, and the Home Office, with the findings picked up in the Home Office's criteria for their first ever perpetrator response fund, launched in September 2020.

Leading on from this research, Meena Kumari was invited to speak at the APPG on domestic abuse perpetrators and perpetrator strategy, hosted by Respect on 21 January.



#### Lifeline film

# <u>Lifeline - Short Film (2020)</u>

On 30 November 2020, Lifeline was launched online by co-directors Professor Eylem Atakav and Karoline Pelikan.

This powerful short film features a range of interviews, over Zoom, during and at the end of the first lockdown period. It provides first-hand accounts of keyworkers and key players in the domestic abuse sector. They give their frank and honest thoughts about their experiences of supporting victims of domestic abuse, whilst themselves coming to terms with the implications of the pandemic.

The film featured H.O.P.E founder Meena Kumari, and speakers including, Jess Philips MP, Dr Roxanne Khan (HARM network), Natasha Rattu (CEO Karma Nirvana).

The film has been selected for best short documentary at Global Lift-off film festival, February 2021, and Official Selection for the 4th International Women Filmmakers Festival, March 2021.



## Police FOI Report

'Honour' abuse, violence, and forced marriage in the UK: Police cases (incidents and charges) and specialised training: 2018 and 2019.

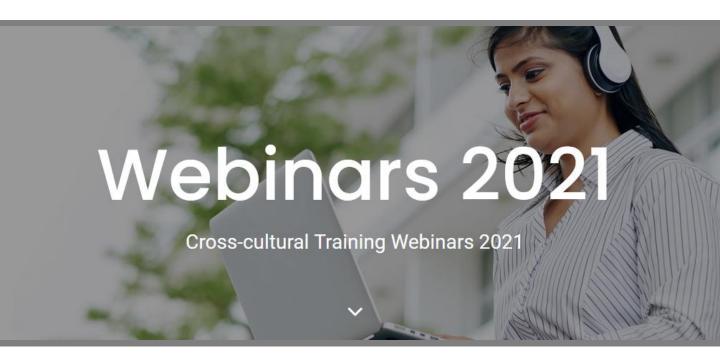
On 24 January 2021, this report was launched to coincide with the 15th anniversary of the tragic death of Banaz Mahmod, the victim of Britain's most notorious so-called 'honour' killing.

This report is the result of a collaborative effort to provide updated information on police recording of 'honour' based abuse and violence in the UK. The report was funded by Halo Project (Yasmin Khan), written by Dr Roxanne Khan (HARM) and Dr Olumide Adisa. Data collected/analysed by Dr Katherine Allen (University of Suffolk), and instigated by H.O.P.E founder, Meena Kumari.

With thanks to Payzee Mahmod and Caroline Goode QPM for valuable input in this report.

I want to live in a world where there is equality, a world free from abuse, this is what I strive for every day.





#### Cross-cultural webinar series

# Cross-cultural training webinars.

Throughout 2021, H.O.P.E is delivering cross-cultural training webinars - all speakers have been guests on the national H.O.P.E calls in 2020. These webinars aim to enhance cross-cultural interaction.

Webinars are especially open to those working within the domestic abuse, sexual violence/abuse and safeguarding sector.

H.O.P.E would like to thank Lloyds Foundation Fund for enabling H.O.P.E to run these sessions through a grant.

## Webinars 2021:

23/03/2021: Natasha Broomfield-Reid – Race and Privilege

15/04/2021: Hibo Wardere - Why Female Genital Mutilation needs to be discussed

29/04/2021: Naomi Donald – <u>From reporting domestic abuse as a survivor to gaining a successful prosecution</u>

18/05/2021: Ngozi Fulani- In conversation with Sistah Space

08/06/2021: Jahnine Davis – <u>Strong Black girls also experience abuse</u>

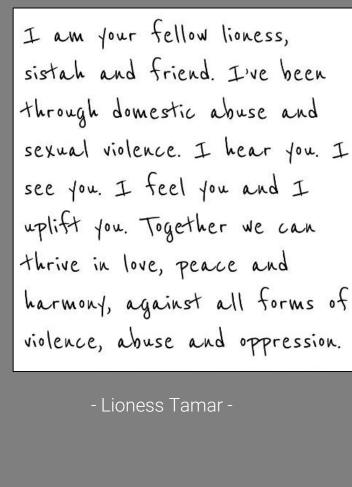
01/07/2021: Dr Prospera Tedam – <u>Witchcraft and Spiritual abuse is not just a hidden issue</u>

27/07/2021: Sahdaish Pall BEM Sikh Women's Action Network (SWAN) - Discussing Sexual abuse/exploitation/ grooming within the Sikh Community

02/09/2021: Salim Khalifa - LGBT+ Communities and Domestic Abuse

28/10/2021: Bal Kaur Howard - Discussing Modern Slavery

11/11/2021: Craig Pinkey – Working with Black Men and Boys





# Looking ahead

H.O.P.E is an ongoing commitment to build a supportive community. The preceding pages and the storyboard in appendix 4, summarise the beginning of this journey.

This report reflects the remarkable things that can happen when we hold space together; to be heard, to be listened to, to heal, and to create a society that respects and values Black, Asian and other minoritised people.

The discussions and reflections presented in this report suggest that there is a lot still to do. That 'the fight is not over'. However, the actions captured in this report demonstrate a collective strength that is building momentum in dismantling power structures and inequalities that constrain Black, Asian and other minoritised people.

Each person that has engaged with the H.O.P.E network has the responsibility to seize this moment.

To quote Audre Lorde, "In the transformation of silence into language and action, it is vitally necessary for each one of us to establish or examine her function in that transformation and to recognize her role as vital within that transformation."

#### **Appendix 1.** Methodology.

This research project used qualitative research methods and data visualisation techniques to identify the key issues, experiences, and actions, from the important conversations that took place at the H.O.P.E Zoom calls.

The data source has been 'boundaried' to the H.O.P.E network discussions, to identify these significant themes. This does not mean that these are the only issues that are confronting 'by and for' services in the ending Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) sector, but the robust representation of the services on the H.O.P.E calls mean that these are the most pertinent issues raised.

The main themes were identified using an initial content analysis of the minutes and chats for patterns. The meetings were held between April 2020 to Dec 2020. A qualitative analysis software (Atlas Ti) was used for this aspect. We created codes based on the statements that featured the most from the docs analysed.

Due to this diversity of topics, it was challenging to undertake a mapping exercise of survivors' experiences using this evidence. Therefore, our focus was to depict the importance of developing dynamic networks such as the H.O.P.E in collectively voicing the experiences of Black, Asian, and other minoritised communities to disrupt the mainstream agenda, which exclude minoritised voices.

We also identified the 'discussions, 'reflections' and 'actions' that have emerged from the engagement with the H.O.P.E network. Verbatim quotes have been used to enrich the themes identified.

Two questions guided this investigation:

- 1. What are the main issues & barriers facing services that support domestic abuse victims from Black, Asian and other minoritised communities?
- 2. What actions/recommendations were suggested by attendees and speakers?

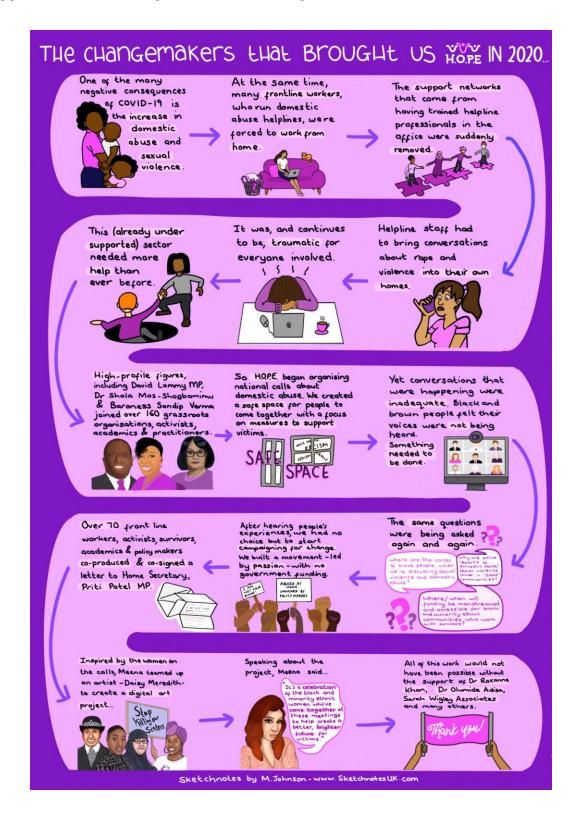
# Appendix 2. Speaker List.

1.	Al- Hasaniya	43.	Kyla Kirkpatrick
2.	Al- Hasaniya Alison Inman	43. 44.	Kyla Kirkpatrick Lioness Tamar
3.	Allen Davis	44. 45.	Listen Up Research
3. 4.	Annie Gibbs	45. 46.	Lori Busch
4. 5.	Asma	40. 47.	
			Lucy Martindale Mark Trewin
6. 7	Bal Kaur Howard	48. 40	
7.	Baroness Sandip Verma	49.	Marsha de Cordova MP
8.	Brenda Fraser	50.	Meena Kumari
9.	Claire Waxman	51.	Min Grob
10.	Craig Pinkney	52.	Myira Khan Counselling
11.	Creating Equalz	53.	Naomi Donald-PODs
12.	Dame Vera Baird QC	54.	Natalie Page
13.	David Lammy MP	55.	National Crime Agency
14.	Djan Headley	56.	Nazir Afzal OBE
15.	Dope Black Dads	57.	Nicole Jacobs
16.	Dope Black Women	58.	Nin Jhall
17.	Dr Charlotte Proudman	59.	Nogah Ofer
18.	Dr Emma Katz	60.	Polly Harer
19.	Dr Marie Lefebvre	61.	Pragna Patel
20.	Dr Mohammad Mazher Idriss	62.	Priya Patel
21.	Dr Olumide Adisa	63.	Professor Aisha Gill CBE
22.	Dr Prospera Tedam	64.	Professor Marianne Hester
23.	Dr Roxanne Khan	65.	Rachel McDonald
24.	Dr Shola Mos-Shogbamimu	66.	Rianna Raymond-Williams
25.	Dr. Ravi K. Thiara	67.	Rob Richardson
26.	Geeta Nanda OBE	68.	Senior Manager
27.	Hibo Wardere	69.	MSHT Threat Leadership
28.	Imran Manzoor	70.	Rosie Gakhal
29.	Ippo Panteloudakis	71.	Ryan Butler
30.	Jain Lemom	72.	Sahdesh Pal
31.	Jasbinder Kaur	73.	Saima
32.	Jermain Jackman	74.	Saranya Kogulathas
33.	Jess Philips MP	7 <del>5</del> .	Shagufta Khan
34.	Jo Todd	76.	Sharon McLoughlin
3 <del>5</del> .	Jon Ashworth MP	70. 77.	Sistah Space
36.	Kadra Abdinasir	77. 78.	The Halo Project
30. 37.		70. 79.	The Nia Project
38.	Kafayat Okanlawon Karen Geddes FCID	79. 80.	Trade Sexual Health
39.	Karma Nirvana	81.	Umme Imam
40.	Kelly Henderson	82.	Victim Support
41.	Kira Pooni	83.	West Midlands Police
42.	Kirit Mistry	84.	Yasmin Rahmin

# Appendix 3. 50 Women.



Digital artwork created by Daisy Meredith



# Find out more: <u>hopetraining.co.uk</u>

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