

AL-HASANIYA

MOROCCAN WOMEN'S CENTRE



الحسنية

مركز النساء المغربيات

Press Release

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Moroccan migrant women living in London share their life stories

Al Hasaniya Moroccan Women's Centre announces the launch of its Heritage Lottery funded oral history project *Dardasha* on Thursday 30th June 2011 at the Kensington Town Hall in Horton Street at 10am.

Dardasha has captured the emotional realities of female migration by documenting the individual testimonies of a group of Moroccan women who arrived in the UK between 1960 and 1985 and settled in the Portobello area of London. Oral testimonies have been recorded and edited into written bilingual English and Moroccan-Arabic stories, which have been collected and printed in an illustrated booklet. At the launch people will also see the amazing and heart rending stories of some of the women captured in a short documentary film and a photographic exhibition.

A large number of the Moroccans who first migrated to the UK were in fact women and many of them settled in Portobello. All of these women had in common the desire to better themselves and earn a decent living for their families. They arrived in the UK knowing nothing of what awaited them and many of them suffered and endured hardship as they worked to make a new life here. As Yatou B (age 61 living in Portobello) tells us in her story:

'I had no idea where this place was or what it was like there, but I knew that it offered opportunities to work and earn a decent living.'

Dardasha can loosely be translated as 'chit-chat'. Moroccan women enjoy telling stories and within the context of migration the sharing of stories is a healing process. *Dardasha* has given these women a voice for the very first time. In the words of Fatima S (age 58 living in Portobello):

'I never learned to read or write, so I have to speak my story. If I could write I would have written my story long ago. Thank you so much for giving me this opportunity.'

Samantha Herron the Project Leader of *Dardasha* explains the important legacy of the material collected:

'The stories which these brave women have shared with us celebrate, illuminate and preserve for future generations a vital piece of our shared London heritage, which would otherwise have remained hidden until it eventually disappeared.'

ENDS

