FOREWORD
by Elinor Chohan MBE
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I have been eagerly awaiting this book. From initial discussions with author Dr Saskia Warren at various charity and arts events in Greater Manchester during the research, I knew that it would offer new understanding and perspectives on British Muslim women in the cultural and creative industries through asking: what limits participation and representation in these industries?

Dr Warren discusses how available data suggests Muslims are less likely to apply for higher or further education in creative arts and design, preferring more traditional vocational courses such as medicine and law. While Muslim women are more likely to obtain higher education degrees they are under-represented in the workplace and Muslim females aged 18–24 years are much more likely to be economically inactive in comparison to all females.

Equality is the common thread that runs through my work, all of which I am truly passionate about – a trustee of the British Muslim Heritage Centre, member of the Greater Manchester Race Equality Panel, Deputy Lieutenant for Greater Manchester and founding director of Miri Roshni – a charity assisting vulnerable and destitute to achieve their full potential through education.

Of Welsh heritage, I have lived in Manchester for over thirty years following my marriage to Mohsin whose family were economic
migrants to the UK from Pakistan arriving in the 1960s. I converted to Islam and I have been submerged in the south Asian community learning and experiencing much about the religion, culture, traditions and challenges facing this community.

In his last sermon Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) clarified equal rights for all. ‘All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also a white has no superiority over black nor a black has any superiority over white except by piety and good action.’

Every individual has the fundamental right to be treated fairly without fear of discrimination based on gender, age, race, belief, sexuality or disability. Sadly, this right is not always realised and Muslim women in particular experience much discrimination.

It is my view that this book addresses key issues in relation to equality and diversity. Why are the cultural and creative industries not deemed appropriate for many British Muslim women, and why are these sectors undervalued by the British Muslim community? In turn, how does the lack of diversity in industry effect British Muslim women in the sector? Are non-Muslim colleagues conscious of their biases and behaviour or are elitist attitudes of the dominant culture unconsciously acted out to discriminate and maintain an unequal power balance? Why is it that diversity in the cultural and creative industries fails so significantly to reflect the diversity of the population?

British Muslim women are significantly underrepresented in this sector and Dr Warren in her research explores the multifaceted reasons for why this is the case, while also addressing intra Muslim indexes of inequality and discrimination. The Social Mobility Commission was established in 2013 to set and monitor social mobility targets; sadly barriers remain and Britain’s record is not measuring up especially well against other countries.

The book addresses together the lack of diversity and equality in the British cultural and creative industries and the failure of social mobility. It is a truly eye-opening account, and presents significant
research on British Muslim women in the cultural and creative industries to further evidence the harsh reality and notions we must all acknowledge in order to impact change, creating a society where every member has the same opportunity to prosper and flourish equally.