

Interview with First Chapter Award winner, Muminah Koleoso

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SPEAKERS

Muminah Koleoso, Gemma Jackson, Speaker 1



Speaker 1 00:04

Welcome to this episode of Inside Publishing, the series where we interview industry experts on everything publishing.



Gemma Jackson 00:21

Hi everyone. My name is Gemma, and I'm the UK podcast lead for the SYP. In this episode, I'm joined by Muminah Koleoso. She is a first chapter award winner, as well as a poet, writer and the founder of the Sister Station podcast we discuss her career journey, the growing online poetry community and the challenges of a London centric publishing industry. Muminah also shares insight into her creative process and how her love of reading and storytelling motivates her daily. I hope you enjoy.

M

Muminah Koleoso 00:54

Hi everyone. My name is Muminah, and I'm a multi award winning, multi hyphenate writer, poet, journalist and founder and host of the Sister Station podcast and youth advocate as well. And in my work, I use storytelling to amplify the voices of Black and Muslim women. And as I grow in my career journey, I hope to inspire others to achieve their creative goals as well. And in terms of my career journey, so I started off studying computer science and maths at university, and I initially was going to pursue a career in STEM so that was, that was the pipeline I was on. But then as I graduated, I reconsidered the industry I wanted to go to, and considered multiple different fields, including marketing and comms and also research as well. So my first couple of roles when after I graduated, were with my university, working in the marketing and comms department, and also working in my the department that I graduated from, School of Informatics, but in research and teaching as well. And during that time, balancing these different roles and exploring these different opportunities, I was still trying to figure out where I wanted to go, and I had also recently rekindled my love of reading, because I've always read since I was a child, but then during sort of school years and uni years, my my reading habits went up and down. And so it was towards the end of my university degree, and then after graduating that, I'd started reading more again and getting more curious about the publishing industry, and thinking about, Oh, how are books actually made, and what's the behind the scenes aspect, so to speak. And so as part of that, I started taking short courses and learning more about publishing, since I was quite keen to break into the industry as well, and so as I was finishing up my work with my university, I also then interned at Booksta. So this was my first sort of work experience in publishing, albeit in an online sense, but being able to get more experience researching and writing about books and publishing and literature, and also improving my editorial skills as well, and as I interned with Booksta. I also went on to start freelancing and writing articles for various other publications as well, and also as part of gaining more knowledge about the publishing industry, I attended lots of literary events, including the London Book Fair and the Black British Book Festival. And through all of these experiences of networking and really building up my experience and knowledge of the industry, I eventually went on to start freelancing full time as of 2025 and so this involved, still freelance against a journalist, but also I started to lead creative writing workshops as well, and I started hosting my own open mic. So before that, I'd mainly been attending other open mics and performing my poetry there as well. And this experience inspired me to start hosting my own and I've been sharing content online, sharing my experiences as I've been learning as I've been upskilling in the industry. And after launching my open mic, I launched my podcast Sister Station, which is all about amplifying the voices of Black and Muslim women and exploring themes of faith and culture community and creativity. So as well as sharing my own personal reflections, I bring on guests as well to share their different experiences and insights as well. And last year, I also was privileged enough to intern with the Blake Friedmann literary agency. So this was my first insight into working in the traditional publishing side of things, so learning more about the publishing pipeline from sort of acquisition all the way up to publication. Since then, I also freelanced for Blake Friedmann for a bit as well. And now if we kind of fast forward to what my day to day looks like more recently. I say it's sort of between writing a lot, so either writing articles, writing poetry and also producing episodes for my podcast, leading workshops, creating content, and engaging in advocacy work with various organizations as well, and including, for example, the young women's movement, which I joined a couple of years ago, and I've been involved with in various projects instead, and on top of all of this, trying to work on my novel in the background. So yeah, that's where I am now.



Gemma Jackson 06:14

So have you been like writing creatively throughout? So you said you did like a computer, computer and maths?



Muminah Koleoso 06:20

Yes.



Gemma Jackson 06:21

Computer science and maths degree. Were you writing creatively throughout your degree there, or was it when you began to fall in love with reading that that spark kind of?

M**Muminah Koleoso 06:30**

so I have been on and off reading and writing essentially my entire life, and I think it's just that where before, it was very much a private thing and something that only existed in sort of my journals and my online archive, Google docs! and, yeah, it's, it's been something that was very much an integral part of my creative expression from from a young age, and it was just a case of, sometimes it came more to the forefront, other times it would kind of go back. So for example, sometimes I forget that even in school, I had started entering writing competitions with my little poems and short stories. And part of I think what discouraged me in those earlier days was just because I didn't win anything. I entered a lot of competitions. I oftentimes I didn't even get shortlisted, and that convinced me. I was like, wow, I must just be bad at writing. So I retreated into my shell a little bit because of that. And so, yeah, I didn't feel like I had the skill in order to pursue it more beyond just being my my hobby. And then at uni, I found that writing also took on a different meaning for me, because uni was quite was quite a challenging time for me in terms of academics and socially and a lot of other things. And so I ended up writing a lot more as a form of helping me sort through my emotions and my experiences. And it was a useful outlet for me in that way. And then towards the end of my final year, as I started reading more again, because, yeah, during sort of having to balance lots of assignments and exams, all these things, I wasn't reading as much, but I still wrote. And yeah, I started as I started reading a bit more again, this was inspiring my creativity in a similar way to how things were when I was younger, so I felt like I was almost reconnecting with my childhood self in that way. And I started getting a bit more inspired to reconsider pursuing writing again and as a professionally and trying to trying to reach the goal of becoming a published author one day as well. And I think I'd say there were two key things that really motivated me in this way. And one was both the lack of representation of Black and Muslim authors and stories, and also when I say, yeah, so both the lack of representation, but also the representation that I did find. So these two things inspired me. So one, seeing more Black and Muslim writers and like reading their stories, I could now see almost I could, I could now more clearly envision a future where this could be me writing the story and publishing what I want, but then at the same time, also coming across more stories that I felt that were lacking this representation. I thought to myself that there's still very much that gap in the market, so to speak. And I instead of thinking and sitting and waiting and hoping that, oh, in the future, things will change. Things will get better. I realized that I wanted to work towards contributing to being the change that I want to see. So not just working on my own creative works, but also, inshallah, inspiring other people to also, yeah, pursue writing and creative careers as well, so that there is a future that is more of us from similar more of us of people from similar backgrounds to be Black, Muslim, you know, other minorities as well, working in the industry. And, yeah, that's something that I'm really passionate about. So it's a big it's a big motivation for for my work.

G**Gemma Jackson 10:43**

Do you think that's like a reflection on the publishing industry, and I don't know, the maybe the editorial or acquisitional process of that favors a less diverse list, like it's harder to kind of pitch your ideas or or be taken, I don't know, seriously by some, some publishers,

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Muminah Koleoso 11:06

I'd say, to an extent, especially now that I know a lot more writers in the industry, especially writers from similar backgrounds to me and hearing of people's experiences. So there's two sides of the coin. There's, yeah, there's, sorry, there's two sides to the story. So there's one the statistics of the facts that we see of only x percent of books published per year are written by Black writers, for example, and how we've seen in particular, more recently, there was a dip in children's books published that had representation of Black characters in the last year or two as well. So they're the they're the numbers, as they say, the cold stats. But then also in terms of lived experience, anecdotally, a lot of Black writers have such varying experiences in terms of how they were able to get their books published, and also navigating how their books are marketed, and these sorts of aspects of the publishing process. And I've definitely had a lot of experiences of writers finding that they were coming up against barriers to even getting their books acquired, like you said, in terms of especially the pitching process, that there's always a lot of sort of, I'm trying to think of the best words to describe it, but there could be a lot of conversations around sort of market demand and considering things like, Oh, we're not sure if how well this book is going to fit in a particular genre, how we're going to position it and market it to the audience. And it just constantly reinforces this, this cycle of publishers being hesitant to publish work from underrepresented authors because they're worried that the work is not going to sell as well, and then the work not selling as well, in some cases, because they're not putting the marketing and the power and the backing behind it to help support it, to do well, which then reinforces, oh no, look, this book that we just published on underrepresented it didn't do well, so that we're not encouraged to do this in future. So you see that it just kind of, it doesn't help itself. So the way I see is that if we don't publish these works, and we don't give them a good chance and put the marketing power behind them, put the the effort into really trying hard to make sure that the book has a good chance and that the author has a good chance of launching their career and sustaining that. Then of course, we're just going to continue to perpetuate the cycle. And yeah, I think that is, is a is a recurring issue, unfortunately in the industry at the moment, but yeah, Inshallah, things will get better in future, because we are seeing more authors, more Black authors, specifically, but authors from other racialized groups getting published more, and their books and their careers taking off More. So hopefully we'll see, we'll see more of that in future, and things will change and improve.

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Gemma Jackson 14:25

Yeah, definitely. Do you think your poetry and your activism have inspired each other?

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Muminah Koleoso 14:32

I would say, I would say as much, especially because with my writing, so I touch on various different themes, but I do draw a lot on my lived experience of being a Black and Muslim woman, and in particular my background as a Nigerian immigrant to the UK and so my experience of navigating different cultures different identities as well, and how this has reflected in my experiences of growing up in this country and navigating different spaces, both from school, uni, work, etc. And I would say, as well as drawing a lot of my lived experience, I also just generally write about social issues that I'm passionate about as well, more generally, and so in particular, recently, I was commissioned to perform a poem in the Scottish Parliament, and this was for a launch event for the young Scot vision for the next six years, I believe. So this was an event all about celebrating youth perspectives and youth voice and youth advocacy as well. And so I wrote a poem that was about highlighting the power in using our voices to advocate for causes, to speak out against societal issues such as racism and discrimination, and also, especially in a world where there is a lot of a lot of negative media influence, so to speak, so from the way stories are portrayed, sometimes through a very negative lens that can reinforce stereotypes and harmful ideologies. And also with the rise in lots of misinformation as well, that now more than ever, it's really important that we continue to take control of narratives and share our stories and share things from our perspectives and lived experiences, and also speak openly addressing certain issues as well and not letting things get swept under the rug, so to speak. And yeah, I would say that definitely writing about social action and activism is a really big part of of my poetry and my creative work.

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Gemma Jackson 17:00

Do you think that like poetry and the like maybe the online and offline poetry communities are getting more popular in recent years, maybe like through sharing on social media or through your own like hosting, like open poetry mics? Do you think that it's growing?

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Gemma Jackson 17:18

I'd say as much, especially given the fact that there's the term that's been coined, Insta poetry, and I know that depending on who says it and how it's said, it can go both ways, in the sense that some people are really into this concept of essentially, I say, I say Insta poetry in like it can be considered a separate, quote, unquote, poetic concept in and of itself, but in a way, I guess the definition of it is somewhat debatable, because in my head, I think of potentially more, sort of shorter, snappier concepts that are packaged in a sort of way that does well online, and quote, unquote, is more is the type of content that will easily go viral and these kinds of things. But in a way, there's also just the way of looking at it, that any poetry that you post online could be considered is the poetry. But there's definitely been a rise I have seen in terms of both the poetic community growing and more poets sharing their content online, but then also more people who maybe didn't really consider themselves into poetry also engaging with poetry online and through socials as well. And it has been an interesting trend to see, and like I said, it has generated a lot of conversation and debate about whether or not, for example, some people who their their poet poetry career, or their career as a as a writer, essentially, was built on social media versus other poets and writers who built their careers offline and maybe just used their socials as an avenue to put that work out, and essentially looking at how this has even influenced, for example, who gets published and how easily people get published, because now publishers are considering people's in social media profiles and the size of them a bit more in these decisions as well. And yeah, this has been generating a lot of conversation and debate, and it's been interesting to see these changes, and I am curious to see how things develop for the next 510, years, especially as social media changes and evolves as well. So it's been an interesting development,

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Gemma Jackson 19:44

yeah, because it all changes so quickly.

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Muminah Koleoso 19:46

Definitely.

G

Gemma Jackson 19:48

Do you think it's changing, social media is changing the relationship between spoken word and written word poetry as well, because of reels and talking to being able to like perform and have that shared widely. Do you think that's sort of changing anyway, or staying quite constant?

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Muminah Koleoso 20:06

To to an extent, because I think before, at least in my experience, I used to see poetry shared more as sort of screenshots or little, little photos of a written poem and shared that way. And so people still do that, but I'd say it's now becoming more and more common, like you said, to share spoken word and to share more videos of speaking a poem to the camera or reading to a camera, and I think there is an element of maybe interactivity and engagement that can be more increased via that method, rather than sharing the written work. And in a way, I do think, in my experience, from what I've seen, spoken word can be a bit more, a bit more appealing, I think, especially to quote, unquote, non poetry fans, so to speak, than written poetry. But at the same time, there's beauty in both. And I think even as much as spoken word has taken off, more that I do hope that written poetry doesn't, doesn't decrease in prominence or importance, because there's, there's unique qualities to both, I think, for example, especially somebody like me who's really into puns and word play. And sometimes the only ways that you can get these across, get these across when you write them down, that is lost when you when you speak a poem or when you read a poem, and vice versa. There are certain unique aspects of tone and intonation that you can have when you are doing spoken word rather than when you write a poem down. So my conclusion is that I love both and I I very much like being able to switch between both, but I know that, for example, there are some people that only write their poems or only spoken word, and I think there is, there is a beauty in the versatility of being able to sort between both that I'm grateful that I have the ability to do. And yeah, Inshallah, I want to continue to be able to do that as well.

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Gemma Jackson 22:24

What's your creative process like when writing poetry? Do you like speak it while you write it? Or, I don't know, does it come to you during the day and then you're like, write it down in or say into voice memos?

M

Muminah Koleoso 22:38

I'll be honest, this question, I always sit. Always it always has me sort of glitching, so to speak. I'm there trying to rack my brains. Even, I think another time, somebody asked me a similar question about my creative process and to some way tough in one word. And I just said chaotic. Because where some people, I think, have a very when I say tried and tested, step 123, this is how they rinse and repeat and do the same thing every time. I have multiple methods, different things, this today, something else tomorrow, and essentially, practically everything you said is something that I do. So whether sometimes I will start saying something out loud, I'll be like, Oh, that sounds cool. And I'll start recording it on my phone, and I'll say, Okay, I'll take a note of it later, as in, like, write it up later. Sometimes I'll just start writing random lines in my notes app or Google Docs, and I'll say, Okay, I'll come back and edit this later and put this into a proper thing. Sometimes I will be reading something, so it could be reading a book, or reading some poems, or sometimes even watching a movie, and I just get some inspiration. I'm like, Okay, I need to pause write this down. So it's essentially almost a lot of note taking, a lot of drafting and almost collecting. I'd say my poetry writing post process, I'd say my, wow, I feel like that's a tongue twister poetry writing process! yeah, I feel like that process, for me, is very much, I'm collecting all of these little pieces, and then at some point later on, I will then sit down and arrange it into a more cohesive story, poem, that sort of thing. And I do tend to write sometimes how I would speak or say things, which I think is why a lot of my poems naturally lend themselves to spoken word, but at the same time, there are some that don't really translate. So yeah, it very much depends. And like I said, I very much flip between the two modes as well.

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Gemma Jackson 24:54

So yeah, I love that image of like, collecting little fragments of things. How is your perception of the publishing industry changed over the last few years, maybe through while your careers kind of been developing?

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Muminah Koleoso 25:07

So I would say that my perception of the industry has definitely changed a lot. It's waxed and waned over the years, also kind of coinciding with periods where I was reading or writing more and less, and in the in the beginning, so to speak. If I take you way back to childhood, me and I can think at that point, when I say publishing industry, who I genuinely did not think beyond, beyond beyond the books I was reading to me that that was publishing. I just read a book, and I read another book, and that sort of thing. I was a very avid reader. And as much as now, I'd say I read at a similar pace and level as I did when I was a kid, even, even with that comparison, I think kid me honestly would out-read out-read me! But yeah, in the beginning it was more just, I love reading books, and the publishing industry was a bit of a black box of writers go in, books come out. That was that was it. And it was only, like I said back in my final year of university, when I had another sort of spike in reading, and this was especially because I was reading a lot more ebooks and audio books. So where as a child, I read more physical copies, and you could only carry so many with you at a time, so to speak. But now, if I had dozens of ebooks, and I am somebody that I read multiple books simultaneously. I help between them. And so now that I was reading at a much more increased level, and I was starting to see a lot more trends and sort of genre, and I was starting to analyze what I was reading more, and thinking beyond the just reading for leisure, reading for entertainment, and thinking more in terms of how books are positioned in the market, and commercial awareness and all these things were just kind of building naturally at the at the rate I was reading, and I guess also because I was I was looking at things from a more mature mindset Now that, now that I am older, and in this period of time, I started getting a lot more curious. I started looking at reading author bios. I was reading things like the acknowledgements, and I was I was now starting to peer under the hood and wonder a bit more about the mystery of, oh, how books are made,

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Gemma Jackson 27:39

all the different logos on the spines!

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Muminah Koleoso 27:41

exactly, thank you, because I didn't even know much about publishing houses at this point as well. So that was really starting to Yeah. It was really starting to raise a lot of questions that I was starting to investigate online, and especially when I realized that, okay, if I really seriously want to become a published author, I need to know more about this problem, this process, so that I can successfully, yeah, I can successfully get published and navigate the industry better. And so it was in this process of learning more, upskilling, like I said, through all the work experience that I've done, and the internships and attending more literary events and workshops, and also networking and learning more from authors who are published and hearing about their experiences and stories that I really started to feel like, Okay, I'm getting more into the industry now. I'm learning things in a lot more depth and where before, publishing was just this black box. Now, things had been demystified, and I could I really understood more of the behind the scenes, how we get from A to Z. But then, as much as this process was somewhat more encouraging, because now I understood more about okay, when I finish my manuscript, this is the step 123, what I do to get published. It was simultaneously a bit discouraging and overwhelming, because now I had it where before, you know how they say ignorance is bliss, I just had this dream of, oh, one day I'm going to write a book, and then it's going to be out there in the world, on the shelves. Now, understanding just how many years it can take, just how much work goes into it, and it's also becoming a bit disillusioned, especially as a black and Muslim writer, and now hearing from the experiences of other writers from underrepresented groups, and hearing the barriers that they've faced and the challenges that they've had To overcome, I was starting to think, in a way, who am I to think that I can also go through this in the sense that it was, it was starting to become more of a daunting task that I wasn't sure that I would be able to overcome. And so in all of this, I realized that maybe a bit of distance could do me good. So where I was consuming so much publishing related content I was eating, sleeping, reading, publishing, I think at that point it was just getting too much. I realized that maybe it's time to peel back a bit and focus more on what it is that drew me to publishing in the first place, and fundamentally that is my passion and my love of reading, writing and storytelling, and so focusing a bit more on leaning into that interest, leading into that passion, and worrying a bit less about the commercial and the business side of publishing, which I was starting to get very much caught up in, I realized that it was important for me to essentially go back to my roots in that way, so that I could really maintain my creativity and ensure that I'm able to write the way that I want to and create the stories that I'm passionate about telling and sharing with the world. And so now I think my perception of publishing has become a bit more balanced in that way that now I am equipped with more industry knowledge and insight, but at the same time not letting that overshadow the creativity and my passionate interests as well.

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Gemma Jackson 31:40

So you went to Edinburgh University, and you're based in Scotland. How does the industry feel there? Does it feel very like interwoven with the overall like British publishing industry? Or does it feel because of the whole like London-centricity of the publishing industry. Does it feel? Do you feel that at all?

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Muminah Koleoso 32:05

I definitely feel the London centricness. And in the being based in Scotland, it has made things a bit more difficult. So where I feel, I have, I've been able to find a lot of generally literary opportunities and creative ones. So from performing at various festivals, from the Edinburgh International Book Festival, push the boat out Chiara, there are a lot of literary events and ways to get involved in the book publishing creative world up on the side of the border, so to speak, but in terms of work opportunities, in terms of trying to get a position working in a publishing house, because so many of them are concentrated in London, and even even beyond publishing houses, also in terms of literary agencies and just on whichever in whichever aspect of the publishing pipeline you are. So many of them are based in London specifically, and that has made it a bit challenging to access opportunities there as well. So I was quite fortunate when I did my internship with Blake Friedman that I was able to go and work with them, and they also sorted out accommodation for me and travel. And so that was one way that I was able to overcome these barriers in terms of location, for that, for that experience. But unfortunately, there are many experiences like that. A lot of roles are wanting people to relocate, which is one thing, but then some of them don't even necessarily give people the chance to they might be prioritizing already London based applicants during the process. So it's like the sometimes they're not even giving people the chance to say, Oh, I would like to relocate and come and work in this role. But then it's like, no, actually, you're not. You don't have a London postcode, so we're going to go with a London based candidate. So I definitely do feel that that could be, that that could be a challenge, but fortunately, I think another thing that's definitely helped me in my journey so far apart from attending lots of literary events, it's also been joining writer communities, and also communities of publishing industry professionals, so communities like the black Writers' Guild and also the Scottish B POC Writers' network and similar organizations where having more connections and knowing more people beyond the beyond the London sphere of publishing, I'd say it's definitely helped connect me to opportunities as well. So hopefully, hopefully things will will improve in future, especially as more of of us in based in different parts of the country, are trying to pursue more publishing industries. I'm hoping that that sort of increase in demand, so to speak, would also help publishing companies to expand a bit, because there are some that have that have bases across the country. So for example, Bonnier books has an imprint that's based up here in Scotland. And there's also a couple of publishing companies, I think, have bases in northern England as well. So we are seeing a bit of a shift, but it would be nice of that.

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Gemma Jackson 35:42

More of that, please,

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Muminah Koleoso 35:44

honestly, yes, thank you.

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Gemma Jackson 35:48

Earlier, you mentioned that you've been doing freelancing. How has that? Have you like managed that with the like flexibility of it, finding, I don't know, like a work life balance, I suppose, like balancing all different clients and things like that?

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Muminah Koleoso 36:07

it can be difficult. I have seen, I can't remember who it was or which profile I saw this from on socials, but I remember seeing something that was saying along the lines of, I traded my nine to five for a 24/7! and this is in reference to starting freelancing. And to an extent, it can, it can be difficult in that way, because not having any set hours, and being in charge of when I work, how I work, and having to set my own deadlines, it can mean at times that maintaining that work life balance, the the lines can get a bit blurred, because maybe I'm checking emails on weekends and I'm doing work at times when other people, like, for example, in the evenings, where a lot of people clock out, maybe I'm still trying to type something and reach a deadline that I have that day. And it has, it has been, it has been a learning process of trying to figure out what works for me and when to schedule my work and my meetings in a way that still allows me to have free time and to meet my deadlines and meet my goals, and also, yeah, make time for myself and make sure that work isn't just overshadowing everything. So yeah, it's been an interesting process, but I think also especially learning from other freelancers as well and seeing how they do things, and I both online from attending workshops and also just learning from freelance content, like the freelance side of LinkedIn, if you haven't been there, it's a fun time. There are so many sometimes the freelancing memes are just what keeps me going. Like, okay, it's nice to see I'm not the only one that's kind of stuff and things like that. So yeah, it's been really it's been really helpful, accessing that knowledge, accessing that expertise from others to help me in my journey, and where I can I try and share tips and insights of my own.

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Gemma Jackson 38:14

What advice do you have for people aspiring to work in the publishing industry?

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Muminah Koleoso 38:19

My main piece of advice would be to make use of the resources that you have available to you. So I know that both in my experience and some of my peers as well, who are very much in the job hunting process and tried to get their first role in the industry or another role in industry that we are, the competition has increased, and there are a lot more people interested in a lot fewer roles. So there might be longer periods of time where you might not necessarily be able to find paid opportunities and get into internships and roles as well. So in that time, I would say that it's important to try and use the resources that you have that are easily accessible and available to you. So even if, for example, you can't find a particular role in the industry, to try and find ways that you can work on projects that allow you to build similar skill sets. So for example, if you want to get into marketing and work in the marketing department of a publishing company, then maybe try starting your own books the gram and sharing your own insights and takes on publishing trends and talking about books and really leading into what interests you about books and writing and publishing. And in that experience, you can build up your skills. You can learn more about even which aspects of the industry that you're interested in, and you're also simultaneously building your portfolio and showing that this is your this is what you know of the industry. This is the skills that you're capable of, that sort of thing. And I'd also say that in doing all of that, it's also a good idea to network and see if you can find ways to talk to people already in the industry and build those connections. So one of the ways that I've been able to do that was through attending events such as the blackbridge Book Festival, London book fair, other similar events, Edinburgh International Book Festival, and through through industry events, through literary literary festivals and functions that can be a really good way to gain more insight and also meet people and learn from their experiences as well. So yeah, I'd say the to summarize the main two points would be using resources you have and also finding opportunities to network and connect with people as well.

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Gemma Jackson 41:00

So final kind of fun question is like, what are you reading at the moment, or what books or poetry do you recommend for listeners?

M

Muminah Koleoso 41:10

So in terms of books and poems, I would recommend number one, I ever since I read *The Translator* by Leila Aboulela. I recommend this book to everyone, because it is just one of those books that you read that really stays with you. I know it really, it really changed my perspective on a lot of things, and it's just so beautifully written. The writer has a really lyrical style, and also the way that she explores themes like death and grief and the main characters relationship with her faith as well. It's just with it was just done with such depth and nuance. And I just thought it was really, beautiful. And yeah, I would recommend the book to anyone. And also in terms of poetry, I so some poets that I really like, David Larbi, Sophie Thakur and Salmah Salam Oiza and David Larbi also is a poet that shares a lot of his poetry on Instagram. A lot of people might have come across his work, and I just really like how optimistic and how very hopeful his work is. And I think especially in the times that we're in now, it can be, it could be rough trying to find that sort of to find more of the joys and the the positive side of things. So I like the fact that he's really good at sharing those little joys in life and a very happy and positive outlook on on life. And also, Sophie Thakur is just a really, really cool poet in the way that she particularly performs her work, and I've been privileged enough to see her her work live, and she's just really good at creating an atmospheric vibe with her words and the way that she explores themes In her work as well, and with Salmah, I recently started reading her debut pamphlet *Foreign in a Long-Familiar Leap Year*, and she explores themes mostly based on her experience of migrating from Nigeria to the UK and navigating different cultures and all the different experiences related to that as well, and in terms of what I'm reading right now, aside from the poetry pamphlet I recently started reading *Weavingshaw*. And I was really curious about this book, because I love gothic romance, and so when it came up on my feed, and I was like, oh, new Gothic romance from a Muslim author, I said, Okay, I'm running. I'm not going to walk, I'm going to be there immediately! So I started listening to the audio book for that as well. And yeah, so far so good. I'm still in early stages. Still have to come back and ask me again when I finished it for my full take, but I'm enjoying it so far. So yeah.

G

Gemma Jackson 44:20

Thank you for listening to *Inside Publishing*. I've been your host, Gemma. If you enjoyed this episode, please rate and review us on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or wherever you listen to your podcasts. It really helps us reach more people. Also feel free to let us know your thoughts on social media or send suggestions our way at podcast.syp@gmail.com See you next time!