



NEWSLETTER

# COLLECTIVE MEMORY

## KOMOLA COLLECTIVE - BANGLADESH



The Komola Collective is an arts company in London dedicated to telling stories from women's perspectives that often go untold. Under the direction of Leesa Gazi, the collective has produced various pieces of art shedding light on the experiences of the Birangona women ('Brave Woman') who faced conflict-related sexual violence during the 1971 Liberation War in Bangladesh. These artworks function as vital pieces of collective memory, memorialising the struggles of the Birangona women and unveiling the sexual violence they faced.

One of these artworks is the theatre play 'Birangona: Women of War'. The play tells the story of Moryom, a woman living in a village in Bangladesh during the 1971 war. She fearfully awaits the arrival of the violence in her hometown as women are disappearing from streets and homes across the country. Through the play, the audience is presented with an intimate portrayal of the struggles and the power of the Birangona women during and after the war. This way, the play breaks the decades of silence and secrecy around their experiences. The play was researched, co-written, performed by Leesa Gazi and directed by Filiz Ozcan.





After watching their own stories on stage, the Birangona told the Komola Collective: "You heard us, but now we need you to know us." This led to the production of the documentary 'Rising Silence' directed by Leesa Gazi, released in 2019. The film documents the stories of the Birangona firsthand, showing the strength and resilience of these women in their journeys of healing and survival. Furthermore, the documentary is an important tool to build awareness of and advocate for survivors' rights to reparations and dignity. The trailer of 'Rising Silence' is available [here](#).

The Komola Collective has joined a new initiative to establish an officially recognised 'Birangona Day' in Bangladesh. The Birangona Day will be a national holiday to remember the struggles

of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, commemorate their strength and resilience, and remind the community that such suffering should never be repeated.



Learn more about the Komola Collective:

