

Remembering Resistance: A Century of Women's Protest in the North of England

Supported by funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, we spent 2018-19 capturing, sharing & celebrating women's efforts to bring about political change in the North of England over the last century, here's what happened.



The most rewarding part was meeting and re-meeting so many marvellous women and remembering just how much has been done by so many women at so many levels, in so many places, and on so many issues ... One thing I will take away is how important recording women's history is for so many different reasons.
Remembering Resistance volunteer

Collaboration & community

We engaged

37 volunteer citizen researchers contributing 164 days to the project
12 cultural organisations
6 community groups
Dozens of schoolchildren in Bradford and Sheffield

Learning & preserving

We collected

104 oral histories of women activists
395 protests to create an extensive map of women's protest in the North
A catalogue of archives which hold material on women's activism
Our virtual museum spotlights 16 activist movements

Sharing stories

We shared

13 events across the North of England welcomed 370 people
Our exhibition at Sheffield Museums attracted 1617 visitors
Over 500 people visited www.rememberingresistance.com each week
As many as 10 million people heard about our project in the media

Heritage

Our aim was to work with communities, museums & community-based organisations to develop the most complete picture of women's activism in the North of England & make sure the history of women & protest was not lost.

- We collected a **huge amount of information about women's activism** that would have been forgotten or gone unrecorded. Many women's voices, experiences and stories are now **preserved for future generations** so they can learn how women fought for change.
- All the **oral histories and information about women's activism is freely available** on an attractive website. We believe this is the **most comprehensive record** of women's activism in the region and is an invaluable resource for communities, schools and historians.
- **Recording the oral histories was really rewarding** for volunteers and participants. We had an amazing response to our call for women to share their stories and the process of **learning what they had done was inspirational.**

The most rewarding part for me was the oral history interviews. Hearing women's really inspiring and sometimes deeply personal stories and knowing that we were helping to preserve these stories was most rewarding. *Volunteer*

Community

Community was at the heart of the project. We wanted to engage with a wide range of people to help them learn about women's history of activism & inspire them to see the possibilities for positive change in their area.

- **A community of people** developed around the project. Collaborating with community organisations, arts and heritage bodies, and activist groups meant we **reached more people and supported others whilst building a network of people** united by a commitment to capturing, celebrating and sharing the rich history of women's activism.
- Our exhibition, **Empowering Women, Empower Women** at Museums Sheffield was a huge success, attracting many more visitors than expected. It enabled **volunteers, partners, visitors, and the women who contributed their stories to see the power and persistence of women's activism.**
- The **original scope of the project expanded** considerably. From our initial focus on Manchester and Sheffield, we engaged with communities in Durham, Newcastle, Cumbria, Lancashire and across Yorkshire. **We reached more people and raised awareness about women's history of activism across a much wider swathe of the country.**

It's very emotional to see your life and your friend's lives in an exhibition, because while you were being an activist and part of the campaign you just get on, on a daily basis, and just do it. Actually, to take a step back and look at it in the context of so many fantastic campaigns, and so many strong and amazing and empowered women, It's quite overwhelming.
Visitor whose activism was part of the exhibition

People

Remembering Resistance is committed to collaboration. We wanted communities & volunteers to be actively involved in developing the project. By developing skills in oral history & research, we wanted people to benefit from engaging with such an important part of our history.

- **Collaborating with volunteers** was one of the most important parts of the project. Their enthusiasm and belief in the ethos of the project made a significant contribution to its success. The volunteers told us they **developed skills and confidence and had been inspired** by learning what women had done as they recorded the oral histories.
 - Throughout, the project was **co-developed, flexible and agile**. Our volunteers and partners were actively involved in shaping the project, **creating a sense of ownership** and **bringing brilliant new ideas** which we put into action to increase the project's reach.
 - **Remembering Resistance has created a legacy**. Four follow-up projects have begun, benefiting from partnerships developed through the project. These have produced resources from the material we collected, grown the community of project friends, and inspired new partnerships, including with a local development education charity.
- Volunteers and partners have also been inspired to pursue new opportunities.**

Meeting and working with a brilliant supportive team – staff and volunteers – and getting the chance to really engage with the material and be involved in lots of aspects of the project. It has also given me knowledge and inspiration to pull together a successful bid for an oral history project in my own area and I've been very grateful for the support on that. *Volunteer*

We're pretty proud of what we achieved, but here are a few things we'll do differently next time

- Give ourselves more time & resources to meet our aims & be realistic about what's possible!
- Be more proactive about finding & celebrating diversity through building collaborations with hard-to-reach communities & women from Black & Minority Ethnic communities.
- Develop strong partnerships with museums & galleries as early as possible.
- Dedicate more time to brokering relationships and building trust with partners.
- Devote more resources to face-to-face meet ups to bring together a geographically dispersed team.
- Embed our values of empowerment, diversity, optimism, creativity, & collaboration from the start & ensure all those we work with respect those commitments.

