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Interview to Poulomi Basu: a member of the Jury of the GC Visual Contest 2017

Interview to Poulomi Basu, an Indian storyteller, artist and activist. She is a member of the Jury of the [GC Visual Contest 2017](#).

Your project “Ritual of Exile” exposes the rituals of normalised violence against women in Nepal. How important are women issues to you?

I grew up in India and much of my work springs from the struggling of women I observed as a child. Both my mother and grandmother were child brides and became very young widows. My grandmother never wore any color. I always saw her wearing white until the day she died. And then the same thing happened to my mother after my father died. Till now she doesn't wear red. Color has a particular cultural and metaphorical importance in Indian culture, where the wearing of bright colours signifies happiness and celebration, while a widow can only wear white, the color of death and mourning. Serious restrictions were imposed upon me as soon as I grew. When I was 17, my mother told me to leave home and helped me to follow my dreams. All my work revolves around the role of women pushed to extreme situations, victims of violence or superstitious practices such as Chaupadi in Nepal that consider menstruating women impure and banish them. Women issues do not receive enough attention from the media. I try to give voice through photography to stories that are otherwise unreported and forgotten.

How important is the collaboration between photographers and NGOs on human rights?

Photographers are not the ultimate heroes; you need to combine your work with others to have an impact. For example, I worked with Water Aid to document the lives of women, whose access to clean water is crucial

both in terms of sanitation and raising their status within the community. Through the [To be a Girl campaign](#) it was possible to make things moving and improving women' life in different communities.

Through “Just Another Photo Festival” you take photography to the people and make it accessible for different audiences. What have been the reactions?

[Just Another Photo Festival \(JAPF\)](#) is a travelling visual media festival through which we find audiences that are far away from the world of photography and we seek to learn from them-the way they react and interact. We want to show to people and communities that would not have otherwise access to this work and make them discover other contexts, cultures and discuss about similarities. For example, people in India were surprised when we show them a cricket game in Rwanda or, a girl after having seen the photos of Eugenia Arbugaeva's work on the Arctic said it was the first time in her life she had seen snow. We show to people the conditions of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, of LGTB groups and many other issues. If you change the perceptions and understanding of a few people in a community, you can have an impact on the others. JAPF is not a monolithic institution, but changing every time format and template and adapting to new audiences. The new edition of JAPF is going to happen in November in Bombay.

Which advice you would give to young photographers willing to document on human rights issues?

The most important is to be committed to what you want to do and be the voice for what you stand for. Commitment, vision and emotion are elements that if combined together in a balanced way can make you very powerful. Not everyone is a visionary but you must be a visionary if you want to be a human rights activist.

You can follow the visual contest with the hashtag **#GlobalCampusVisualContest** on Facebook, Twitter, Google + and Instagram. **Website:** www.globalcampusvisualcontest.org