

The Gymnasts of Fisherman Colony

مچھر کالونی
کے جمناست

A FILM BY
HABIBA NOSHEEN

FROM EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS
MALALA YOUSAFZAI
MARISKA HARGITAY
TRISH ADLESIC

2026 | Canada / Pakistan / USA | 92 mins

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LOGLINE

In a place where girls and sport rarely mix, **THE GYMNASTS OF FISHERMAN COLONY** is a coming-of-age documentary where joy, ambition, and quiet rebellion take root as three teenage girls carve out space for themselves, one somersault at a time.

SYNOPSIS

THE GYMNASTS OF FISHERMAN COLONY is an intimate coming-of-age documentary by 3X Emmy Award-winning filmmaker Habiba Nosheen that follows three teenage girls in Pakistan, offering a rare and tender portrait of girlhood, joy, and play told through the eyes of young Pakistani girls navigating the margins of society.

At its core, **THE GYMNASTS OF FISHERMAN COLONY** is a story of hope and quiet defiance. Through the intimate journeys of three teenagers we witness as their passion for gymnastics begins to clash with deeply rooted expectations around what girls can and cannot do. The film follows their journey as they find themselves straddling two polar opposite worlds as they push to make space for themselves through gymnastics. The result is a lyrical and deeply human portrait of three young girls from a corner of the world we rarely see on screen. These are girls who dare to dream.

PARTICIPANTS



KIRAN, gymnast



SONIA, gymnast



ANWARA, gymnast



FURQAN, coach



TAHERA HASAN
Founder of Khel School & Human Rights Lawyer



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

A few years ago, I found myself reflecting on the fact that we rarely hear stories about the amazing women and girls in Pakistan who are reshaping societal expectations with their boldness and determination. So I wanted to tackle a film that centred around the joy and depth in the lives of young women in Pakistan. That was the inspiration for *The Gymnasts of Fisherman Colony*. It is the film that I wish had existed in the world when I was growing up.

In some ways, I didn't find this story. It found me. The journey of this story started nine years ago when I first met Tahera Hasan, the lawyer in the film. She was my adoption attorney. She specialized in helping families adopt abandoned children in Pakistan who had been left at orphanages anonymously. My daughter was one of those children. It was only years after I returned from Pakistan that I learned about this girls' gymnastics team, and I knew I wanted to tell their story.

When I was growing up in Lahore, Pakistan as a little girl, I could never have imagined doing something like gymnastics. I grew up thinking that sports weren't for girls. It filled me with joy to know that a new generation of Pakistani girls is growing up with opportunities that I would have been too scared to dream of.

This film is not about a young girl who wants to make it to the Olympics. For me, the message of this film is that all girls should have the opportunities to participate in sports. It's about teaching girls to take up space. And part of the outreach that is really important to me is dismantling this myth that Islam and girls' sports don't coexist. That's simply not true. We need to empower the girls who are at the forefront of challenging that myth.

Not only are they pushing boundaries around social norms for girls by doing gymnastics in a place like Pakistan, but they are also using gymnastics to fight a larger societal battle for recognition as ethnic Bengalis who face enormous barriers to securing citizenship, even though they were born in Pakistan.

I will confess that, even as a Pakistani, before working on this documentary, I had no idea about the struggle of stateless communities in Pakistan. Although Pakistani law allows birthright citizenship for any child born in Pakistan, in reality, many children in ethnic Bengali communities are not able to obtain citizenship ID cards. When they go to get their documents, various bureaucratic offices will not issue them unless they can provide their parents' or grandparents' ID. As a result, you have a whole generation of children born in Pakistan, like the girls on the gymnastics team, who are proud Pakistanis but cannot obtain the proper paperwork to have their citizenship recognized.

Without those documents, educational opportunities are limited, work prospects are limited, and even the ability to obtain medical care at a public hospital is limited. That continues the cycle of poverty and marginalization. In that context, these girls have become trailblazers who are part of creating real change in what is considered acceptable for girls all the while becoming advocates for their communities' struggle with statelessness.

I previously directed the Sundance film *OUTLAWED IN PAKISTAN*, which won an Emmy. It tells the story of Kainat Soomro, a defiant teenager determined to fight her rape case in a patriarchal society despite all the odds being against her. In many ways, *THE GYMNASTS OF FISHERMAN COLONY* is similar to *OUTLAWED* as it challenges the stereotypes of Pakistani girls and women as passive and without agency, a false and one-dimensional narrative. There are brave young women in Pakistan, like the girls of this amazing gymnastics team, and their stories have the potential to create change, inspire, and entertain. If we want a better world for women and girls, we have to create space for the stories of girls who are at the forefront of creating that change.

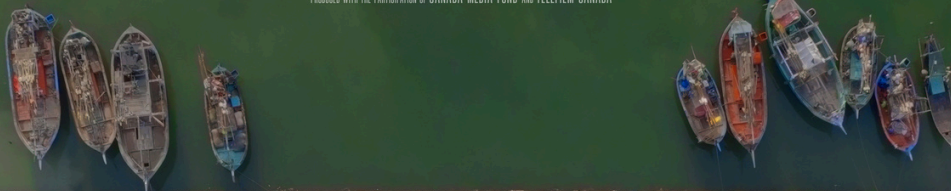
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The Gymnasts of Fisherman Colony

مچھرکالونی کے جمناست

A FILM BY HARIBA NOSHEEN PRODUCED BY AMAR LOHANA HARIBA NOSHEEN FEATURING SONIA ANWARA KIRAN TAHERA HASAN
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS MARISKA HARGITAY TRISH ADLESIC LAURAN BROMLEY MICHELLE MCCREE ASHLEY McDERMOTT ROBIN SMITH ELAISHA STOKES JENNI WOLFSON
CO-EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS RICARDO ACOSTA SHIZUKA ASAKAWA BINA SHUKLA EDITOR LAWRENCE JACKMAN
MUSIC KALAI SAN KALAI CHELVAN ORIGINAL SONG YEH BARRI BAAT HAI PERFORMED BY EVA B
AN AKELD MEDIA PRODUCTION IN ASSOCIATION WITH CBC DOCS CHICKEN & EGG FILMS AND MIGHTY ENTERTAINMENT
PRODUCED WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF CANADA MEDIA FUND AND TELEFILM CANADA



AKELD TELEFILM CBC DOCS MIGHTY ENTERTAINMENT BLUE ACE CANADA MEADOW FUND Canada

TEAM BIOS



Habiba Nosheen – Director/Producer

Habiba Nosheen is a Pakistani-born Peabody and three-time Emmy award-winning journalist and filmmaker. Her film “Outlawed in Pakistan” premiered at the Sundance Film Festival where it was called "among the standouts" of Sundance by The Los Angeles Times.

Habiba received the 2025 Chicken and Egg Award. Previously, she was named DOC NYC’s 40 under 40. Her films have been supported by PBS FRONTLINE, JustFilms, The Firelight Media, ITVS, The Center for Asian American Media, CBC, The National Film Board of Canada, Canada Media Fund and others. She has taught filmmaking at Columbia University. She splits her time between Toronto and New York. She is a proud adoptive mom.



Amar Lohana - Producer

Amar Lohana co-founded Akelo Media as a home for nonfiction storytelling, focused on character-driven stories by and about communities of colour. He produced the documentary Bodies for Rent for CBC Docs, an investigative documentary that exposes deeply troubling practices within the pharmaceutical industry in their treatment of human test subjects. He previously edited and produced the feature documentary The Devil’s Advocate (2021), a look into the American justice system through the lens of three lawyers who defend terrorists, which was funded by ITVS and Firelight Media. Prior to filmmaking, Amar spent 15 years working in technology and finance in New York.



Malala Yousafzai - Executive Producer

Malala Yousafzai is an education activist, the youngest-ever Nobel laureate, best-selling author and investor in women's sports. She was born in Mingora, Pakistan in 1997 and graduated from Oxford University in 2020.



Mariska Hargitay - Executive Producer

Mariska Hargitay directed and produced HBO's MY MOM JAYNE, about the life and legacy of her mother, Jayne Mansfield. (Critics Choice and Producers Guild Award).

Mariska Hargitay plays Olivia Benson on NBC's LAW & ORDER: SVU, where she also serves as a director and executive producer. (Emmy and Golden Globe Award).

In 2004, Mariska founded the Joyful Heart Foundation. Their “End the Backlog” campaign aims to eliminate the backlog of untested rape kits across America. Mariska produced I AM EVIDENCE, an HBO documentary on the topic. (Emmy Award)

Mariska also executive produced NUNS vs. THE VATICAN, about the victimization of Catholic nuns, and co-produced EMANUEL, about the Charleston church shooting, and MY BEAUTIFUL STUTTER, about a summer camp for young people who stutter.



Trish Adlesic - Executive Producer

Trish Adlesic is a two-time Academy Award–nominated, Emmy-winning, and Producers Guild of America Award–winning documentary filmmaker. She produced My Mom Jayne with Mariska Hargitay. The film had its world premiere at the Cannes Film Festival and its North American premiere at the Tribeca Festival.

Trish produced and co-directed The ABCs of Book Banning with Sheila Nevins for Paramount+, earning an Academy Award nomination. She also directed and produced A Tree of Life: The Pittsburgh Synagogue Shooting for HBO.

She co-directed and co-produced I Am Evidence with Geeta Gandbhir and Mariska Hargitay for HBO. The film received the 2019 Emmy for Best Documentary at the News & Documentary Emmy Awards.

Her collaboration with Josh Fox and HBO on Gasland and Gasland II earned an Academy Award nomination and an Emmy Award. She is a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Producers Guild of America, and Directors Guild of America.

CREDITS

A film by Habiba Nosheen

Produced by

Amar Lohana
Habiba Nosheen

Executive Producers

Malala Yousafzai
Mariska Hargitay
Trish Adlesic
Lauran Bromley
Ashley McDermott
Elaisha Stokes
Jenni Wolfson
Amar Lohana
Michelle McCree
Habiba Nosheen
Shelley Saywell
Robin Smith
Anna Maria Tremonti

Co-Executive Producers

Ricardo Acosta
Shizuka Asakawa
Bina Shukla

Editor

Lawrence Jackman

Cinematography by

Tess Girard
Nadir Siddiqui
Muhammad Asif Faraz

Original Music

Kalaisan Kalaichelvan

Original Song

“Yeh Barhi Baat Hai”
Performed by Eva B



An Akelo Media Production

Produced with the participation of
Canada Media Fund and Telefilm Canada

In association with
CBC Docs
Chicken & Egg Films
and
Mighty Entertainment

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[🔗 STILLS & KEY ART](#)

TECHNICAL DETAILS

Language (Dialogue) - Urdu, Bengali, English

Language (Subtitles) - English

Accessibility Features

- Subtitles
- Closed Captioning
- Audio Description

Sound: 5.1

Picture: Color | 4K UHD 1.85:1 | 24fps

Encrypted: Not Encrypted