

East End life & love

Novel about a local girl's growing pains earns rave reviews

By Claire Rudd

A NEW novel by a life-long Eastender that tackles love, drugs and racism in the East End is winning praise from all quarters.

Life, Love and Assimilation, by Kia Abdullah, looks at the battles faced by an Asian girl growing up in London.

The book's heroine, Kieran Ali, tackles her brother's drug addiction, her mother's constant disapproval and the patriarchal nature of her culture along the way.

The book, which was published this month, has already drawn comparisons with Brick Lane by Monica Ali and won rave reviews from readers.

Author Kia, 23, from Stepney Green, is delighted by her debut novel's success.

She told East End Life: "Growing up in the East End I was aware of lots of issues such as drug abuse and I included them in the book as I know it is a part of life here and people can relate to it."

And Kia knows her book will especially touch a nerve with Muslim girls.

"Muslim girls probably have a harder time than white or black girls as there is pressure

Outandabout
Arts and events in Tower Hamlets

on them to have an arranged marriage and they are not able to stay out late like other girls.

"I am 23 and I got a first in my degree, but I still live with my parents because a Muslim girl living on her own would raise a lot of eyebrows. All you would hear is 'oh my gosh a Muslim girl living on her own'.

"Respect and reputation are still very big things in the Muslim community, and even

though I consider myself a modern woman I would never want to do something that brought shame on my family as I would feel too guilty."

But that doesn't mean Kia will conform to all expectations and, so far, she has resisted an arranged marriage.

"A few years ago my parents wanted me to go to Bangladesh to get a husband but I refused and put my foot down. I am not necessarily

opposed to arranged marriage, but I wouldn't marry someone who couldn't speak English and hadn't been well educated as we would be on a different wavelength."

And that is the message she hopes her book gives to all young people: "You have to stand up for yourself and be strong. I'm not saying you should disrespect your family, but at the end of the day it's your life and you've got to make yourself happy. I will probably be in trouble for saying that, but it's true."

Life, Love and Assimilation (ISBN 1-897312-00-8) is available from bookstores or at www.kia-abdullah.com

Inbrief

Hospital fair

THE London Chest Hospital is opening its doors for a fun-packed summer fair on Sunday, June 4.

This year's event includes children's rides, a bouncy castle, raffles, tombolas, craft stalls and reiki sessions. Food and drink will be available from a BBQ and beer marquee.

Entertainment includes the Ebony steel band, line dancers and Morris dancing. The fair runs from 12 noon to 5pm in the grounds of the hospital at Bonner Road, Bethnal Green. There is free parking in the Raine's School car park opposite the hospital. Proceeds will go to the Heart Cells Appeal.

For more information call Pat Gray or Antoinette Martin on 8983 2345.

Labyrinthine plot