Displaced Voices

Volume 2, Issue 1 (Summer 2021)

Twentieth Century Histories of Civic Society's Responses to Crises of Displacement:

A Special Issue to mark the 70th Anniversary of Refugee Council

Guest Editorial: Twentieth Century Histories of Civic Society Responses to Crises of Displacement

Anna Maguire[1]

It is our pleasure to introduce Volume 2 Issue 1 (Summer 2021) of *Displaced Voices*. This is a special issue to mark the 70th anniversary of Refugee Council, one of the primary not-for-profit organisations working with refugees and asylum seekers in the United Kingdom. Charities like Refugee Council and other voluntary organisations have worked to meet the practical demands of providing a safe haven for those who seek it in the United Kingdom, part of the vibrant voluntary landscape of modern Britain. From the selection of those who would be welcomed into Britain, their reception and arrival, ongoing work for refugees' welfare, education, employment and housing in Britain, to, later in the period, explicit campaigning for the rights of refugees and for governments to change their policies on refugees and asylum seekers, charities like Refugee Council, the Ockenden Venture, Save the Children Fund, Refugee Action, Christian Aid and others have been at the heart of designing and providing sanctuary.

The Refugee Council emerged from the merging of two organisations, the British Council for Aid to Refugees (BCAR) and the Standing Conference of British Organisations for Aid to Refugees. Both of these organisations take their start date as 1951, the year when the UN charter on the rights to refuge was established, when the International Refugees Organisation closed, and the newly formed United Nations High Commission for Refugees took over. The charity today views itself as a direct response to the charter, the national British response to an international moment, which still provides the anchor for the Council's work. As Dame Anne May Curwen – at the heart of the BCAR's activities for its first two decades – wrote to member organisations in a letter in September 1950,

> Here is a challenge to the voluntary societies of this country with their tradition of humanitarian service. We have gained as a nation by having the help of many displaced persons in our industrial drive. Let us see if we can absorb (this group of DPs) … and make them happy members of our community.

Over its seventy-year history, the Council's work has seen multiple changes in the work it has undertaken and the constituents it has served: the move from a broadly European focus to necessarily more global arrivals; mass resettlement schemes and individual arrivals; shifting government attitudes to refugees and the state's responsibility for them, from housing to healthcare; and the rise of a restrictive immigration regime.

This has not been without struggle or challenge. The archives of Refugee Council, held in the Refugee Archives at the University of East London, offer a litany of difficulties and complaints about how the settlement of refugees has taken place, not least from the perspective of refugees themselves. The rise of refugee community organisations, run by refugees for

[1] Anna Maguire, Queen Mary, University of London, a.maguire@qmul.ac.uk

refugees, working collaboratively, in critical tension or in competition (for increasingly smaller pots of money) with the larger agencies, recognises the expertise of experience and of communities building themselves.

The articles in this issue take up the theme of voluntary organisations support for refugees, from the local to the national, interrogating how volunteer and community work at various scales has the potential to support refugees, to build understanding and solidarity, and to develop connections between historically disparate refugee arrivals. In Refugee Week, this issue raises new questions about what it means to organise for refugees and the role and responsibilities we all hold.

Table of Contents

Guest Editorial: Twentieth Century Histories of Civic Society Responses to Crises of Displacement 1

Table of Contents 3

Contributors 4

Displacement and Emplacement of People in Our World: a brief reflection 8

Notions of Gender: Rehabilitating refugee women in Partition's aftermath 11

Refugee Organisations in London remembered 19

Arriving and Belonging: Stories from the St Albans Jewish Community 27

Qisetna: preserving Syrian oral heritage one story at a time 36

Meaningful participation as an approach to trauma healing? Reflections from the VOICES Network 39

Juan delGado's Drifting Narratives: injecting agency into refugee stories 44

Review: Eleuterio Toro, *Exiliado en Buckingham Palace (An Exile in Buckingham Palace)* 51

Confronting the homelands: The role of literature in second generation refugee identity struggles. 53

From women's rights lawyer in Pakistan to a precarious life in Australia: Learning from lived experience 57

'But You Don't Look Like a Syrian': Migrant Narrative Beyond the Dichotomous Divide in Migration Studies 61

Review: Becky Taylor, *Refugees in Twentieth Century Britain. A History* 66

Review: Annabelle Wilkins, *Migration, Work and Home-Making in the City. Dwelling and Belonging among Vietnamese Communities in London* 69

Creating Space in the Archive for an Anti-oppressive Community Project: Recording Border Control and Subversion 74

The Seventieth Anniversary of the Refugee Council: Voluntary Action, Living Archives and Refugee Voices 82

Contributors

Larysa Agbaso is a teacher of English to Speakers of Other Languages. She works with women who found their new home in the UK. Inspired by her learners and her migration-related trauma, she built a strong interest in researching the impact of trauma on second language learning and developing a trauma-informed ESOL classroom. She is the VOICES Network Ambassador passionate about raising awareness of the importance of education for the wellbeing of sanctuary seekers. She completed an MA TESOL at Cardiff Metropolitan University and PGCert TEAP at the University of Leicester as a scholarship recipient.

David Andrews is a freelance writer/researcher specialising in moving image art and its links with other cultural forms and the wider social and political context. In February 2016, following retirement from a career in education, he launched the blogsite mialondonblog.wordpress.com through which he has published over 120 articles covering artists inspired by a range of issues including colonialism, migration, nationalism and cultural diversity. He has a particular interest in supporting emerging artists.

Dr Ayar Ata is a freelance researcher and linguist working for Ministry of Justice in London. Ayar is an active member of Sustainability Research Group at London South Bank University (LSBU) and a member of COMMEET promoting positive communications on migration and refugee issues in Britain. Ayar served as ExCom member of International Association for the Study of Forced Migration (IASFM) 2018-2020, and now serves as the IASFM-Working Group as a blog commissioning author. Ayar has first-hand refugee experience and settled in London in the beginning of the 1990s; he now describes himself a Kurdish Londoner. In the course of his research, Ayar has also helped to establish a small voluntary group called Maheen Project in Croydon south London. This project is supporting unaccompanied refugee children to settle successfully in London (www.maheenproject.co.uk).

Mrs Babar is from Pakistan where she practiced as a lawyer working with women facing domestic violence. She is a woman of lived experience of seeking asylum who has been living in the Australian community for 6 years. She is passionate about contributing to her community and is actively working to connect professional women from migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds to relevant services and programs in Australia.

Sarah Barker is a freelance writer and researcher with a background in the arts, anthropology, and humanities based between Utrecht and London. She writes on behalf of Qisetna, which is an award-winning virtual archive that supports Syrian refugees in reclaiming their oral and cultural heritage.

Dr Rachel Burke is a Senior Lecturer and applied linguist at the University of Newcastle, Australia. Rachel's research and teaching focus on linguistically and culturally diverse contexts, with emphasis on strengths-based, praxis-driven approaches to education for learners from

traditionally underrepresented backgrounds, including people with refugee and asylum seeker experiences. Rachel is privileged to learn from a range of communities and seeks to support collaborative approaches to honouring linguistic diversity. Rachel is a steering committee member of the Refugee Education Special Interest Group (RESIG) and a convenor of the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) CALD Education Special Interest Group.

Dr Yusuf Ciftci is an experienced campaigner and researcher for migrant rights. He volunteers at the VOICES Network to improve the UK immigration system through his lived experience. Passionate about co-production and meaningful engagement with people with lived experience, he works as a Policy and Advocacy Manager at Doctors of the World (Medecins du Monde) leading participation projects with experts by experience of health exclusion and asylum system and coordinating policy programmes to ensure inclusive access to healthcare for marginalised migrant groups. He holds a PhD in International Relations from the University of Southampton and researches asylum policy.

Carole Concha Bell is a writer and PhD student at King's College London. She contributes to a range of UK media specialising in Chile, indigenous rights and current affairs. She arrived in the UK, from Chile as a toddler shortly after the Pinochet Coup. She tweets from @chiledissident.

Juan delGado graduated in Media Arts from the University of Westminster. In his practice, Juan explores themes of trauma, landscape, disability, and displacement. He has exhibited widely including at the End of the World Biennial, Argentina; Mardin Biennial, Turkey. His work has been supported by the Wellcome Trust, Arts Council England, Counterpoints Arts and ArtSchools Palestine. He was selected for the Jerwood Open Forest exhibition and awarded an Unlimited Commission in 2014. Recently he was awarded the INSIDE award by Dash Arts and the Finnish Institute London. He is the co-founder and creative producer of Qisetna, an award-winning initiative which aims to preserve the cultural and intangible heritage of the Syrian Diaspora.

Paul V. Dudman has been the Archivist at the University of East London (UEL) Archives for over 18 years, whose archives include the British Olympic Association Archive; East London People's Archive; Hackney Empire Theatre Archive; and the Refugee Council Archive. Paul's research interests are focused on refugee history and the role of archives in documenting and preserving the personal narratives and life histories of migration. Paul's research focus incorporates archival theory; oral history; narrative research; refugee studies and history. Paul is Editor for the journal Displaced Voices: A Journal of Archives, Migration and Cultural Heritage hosted on our Living Refugee Archive online portal. He is a co-convenor of the IASFM (International Association for the Study of Forced Migration) Working Group on the History of Forced Migration and Refugees: An International Working Group for Archiving and Documentation and Programme Affairs and Innovation Office for the IASFM Executive Committee. Paul is also a Lead Convenor for the Oral History Society Special Interest Group on Migration; and is a member of the International Federation of Theatre Research (IFTR).

Dr Lina Fadel is Assistant Professor in the field of research methods and a member of the Doctoral Centre and the Intercultural Research Centre at the School of Social Sciences, Heriot-Watt University. Her background is in languages and intercultural studies and her research is interdisciplinary and focuses on a number of related topics that might be summed up as ways of approaching issues of sameness and difference in multicultural contexts. Among these are liminality, home and place-making, race and othering in relation to identity negotiation and formation among members of ethnic and peripheral groups, with a particular focus on the Syrian diaspora.

Rebecca Field is a research and teaching academic across the Centre for Human Rights Education and School of Allied Health at Curtin University, Australia. Rebecca's research focused on refugee and migration, public policy, human rights and social work and human service practice. Rebecca has taught in the areas of social work and human services, human rights and sociology. She also has extensive social work experience working with children, young people and families. Her doctoral research compares how policies have impacted social work and human service provision and the experience of people with asylum-seeking backgrounds in Germany and Australia, with the hopes of advocating for better policy and practice.

Dr Lisa Hartley is a Senior Lecturer and Co-Director of the Centre for Human Rights Education at Curtin University, Australia. Her interdisciplinary teaching and research are focused on questions of social justice and social change and is driven by a desire to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Lisa's research cuts across the fields of refugee and migrant studies, sociology, and community and social psychology. She has extensive experience working with a range of community groups providing support and advocacy for human rights issues and her advocacy-led research is informed by my commitment to working with communities, including people seeking asylum.

Dr Rumana Hashem is a political sociologist specialised in the effects of bordering, gendered violence and conflict, and lived experiences of refugees in Europe and South Asia. She coordinates the Working Group for History of Forced Migration and refugees, an international research team for archiving and documentation of authentic history and ethical narrative on forced migration and refugees. Rumana is currently a Research Fellow at the University of Nottingham. Twitter @DrRHashem

Sandip Kana is a History PhD student at King's College London and an RHS Marshall Fellow. His research explores how non-state actors and organisations shaped and informed the nature of technical education in colonial and post-colonial India. His research argues that non-state initiatives formed part of India's wider voluntarist institution building framework, which sought to improve the productivity and efficiency of ordinary Indians. His research maps out how non-elite forms of technical education resulted in various non-state interventions in social welfare, women's education, and other initiatives that sought to 'improve' the lives of ordinary Indians.

Dr Zibiah Alfred Loakthar has twenty years' practical experience working with and learning from diverse refugee and migrant communities and front line and second tier charities in the UK in areas of advocacy, arts, community development, education, equality, health, heritage, oral history, policy and voice. She is Inclusivity Lead for the Department of Psychosocial and Psychoanalytic Studies at the University of Essex and Lecturer in Refugee Care, teaching modules on Contexts of Refugee Experience and Psychosocial Perspectives on Human Rights and supervising doctoral students. Zibiah facilitates cross-sectoral learning exchange. In creative collaboration with two inventive children, she is currently writing an adventure story.

Dr Anna Maguire is this issue's guest editor and a member of the *Displaced Voices* editorial board. Anna is a historian of migration and war at Queen Mary University of London where she is a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow. She is working on a history of 'sanctuary' as a concept and process in Britain during the second half of the twentieth century, through the work of refugee charities and refugee organisations, exploring its interrelationship with charity, hospitality and solidarity. Her first book *Contact Zones of the First World War: Cultural Encounters across the British Empire* is forthcoming with Cambridge University Press. She is a volunteer with Refugee Café in Lewisham.

Gloria Miqueles: a Chilean now living in London. A student at the time of the coup on 11 September 1973, Gloria was imprisoned and tortured by the regime for her activities. Gloria, a bioinformatics specialist working for NHS Blood and Transplant, is active in collaborating and organising conferences, workshops, exhibitions, documentaries among may other activities to maintain the Chileans multiple and diverse memories of the brutality of the dictatorship in pursuing justice for the disappeared and killed by the bloody civic-military dictatorship of Pinochet.

Helen Singer studied languages and then worked at the British Council before retraining as a librarian and working at the University of Hertfordshire until her retirement last year. Over the past few years, she has been involved with projects collecting family stories from her synagogue, St Albans Masorti Synagogue (SAMS), most recently the exhibition 'Arriving and Belonging: Stories from the St Albans Jewish community'. Helen also recently trained in the AMICI method of autobiographical digital storytelling and has been co-running courses online. She volunteers with Herts Welcomes Refugees and loves the idea that giving people a voice can aid understanding.

Displacement and Emplacement of People in Our World: a brief reflection

Ayar Ata[1]

According to the United Nations Refugee Agency, 'at least 79.5 million people around the world have been forced to flee their home, among them are nearly 26 million refugees, around half of them are under the age of 18'.[2] Now in 2021, an increasing influx of forced migration and displacement continues in our world.

This is a brief reflection about understanding the history of different forms of human migration including forced migration. I argue, standing in solidarity with fellow humans in times of crisis is not new; and that humanitarian protection is a hallmark of our modern civilisation. This historical progress and human rights principle need to be in our thoughts and should inform our positive actions for supporting all forced migrants today.

Looking at Europe, forced migration has a long history, but it has almost been 'forgotten' in the populist talks for political convenience. In a comprehensive study about the history of immigrants to Britain, Winder (2004) writes: "from Huguenot weavers and Indian shopkeepers to South African dentists, from polish fighter pilots to Jamaican fisherman, from refugee orphans to Russian aristocrats all put under one single category the bloody foreigners". Moreover, Winder also makes a positive suggestion, that is, the term 'British' should be used as an inclusive socio-political umbrella to embrace and encourage different communities both more established and new communities to feel included and equal and their contributions valued, regardless of when they have arrived or settled in Britain.

Well, refugee arrival often after painful and dangerous journeys is one thing, but their successful settlement and integration within the host society is quite another huge task. As someone with a first-hand refugee experience, and a Migration Studies scholar, I know for sure, that social integration is a slow and complex processes, and it is like a busy junction, and it requires lots of positive thinking, negotiations, and efforts from all parties.

Many Migration Studies scholars who have studied the lived experience of migrants in Britain found that right type of reception policy, right advice-training, at the right time are the keys for newcomers to making successful and positive settlement and finding right employment early. Therefore, free, and timely, access to initial trainings including acquiring English language proficiency is necessary to help the migrant's successful integration process into British society. However, a lack of clarity of responsibility between central and local government often leads to a shortage of good quality English language provision, for example, for refugee mothers. These shortcomings in turn would contribute to create a lose – lose economic situation as the migrants would enter the job market much later and thus, they remain dependent on welfare services. In

---

[1] Ayar Ata, LSBU/IASFM, ayarata@ymail.com
[2] ttps://www.unhcr.org/uk/figures-at-a-glance.html (accessed June 2021)

most cases the refugees do also form self-help groups and associations and they do put their own hard work and innovative plans against unwelcome attitudes, bad bureaucracy, or poor policies and eventually they manage to emplace themselves in the new society. The refugees also rely on good hearted local community's volunteers such as church groups, for example, a well-known charity in Peckham called Southwark Day Centre for Asylum Seekers.[3] There are some more established refugee support agencies operating as NGOs, some examples include: the Refugee Council, Refugee Action, the British Red Cross, Renaisi and Cara.[4]

It is always useful to have a glance at the history of human movements. This is to help us to better understand the past events and hopefully learn some good lessons, and more importantly do a better job managing the current forced displacement of millions of people. Modern history of human movements, encompassing both forced and voluntary types, could be put into the following five broad categories since the 17th century:

1. As two classic refugee cases show, the Huguenots in the 17th century were facing religious persecution and defined as the first 'classic' refugees in Europe. They crossed the English Channel and sought protection and settled in England. Similarly some 20,000 non-conformists also known as "pilgrim fathers" who were pushed out of England for religious reasons managed to build a new home in the USA and even called it "New England" (Winder 2004). Here, important progress was made within modern nation states: "the absences of religion persecution became the hallmark of civilized states" (Zolberg et.al 1989:8).
2. 10-20 million slaves from Africa were forced to serve the early capitalist system in the Americas and in Europe. This was a tragic forced movement of humans across land and sea.
3. A further 5 million temporary workers also joined this slave workforce from China and India. This was partially forced with no or little rights to settle and make a home of their own.
4. 60 million migrants from Europe went and settled mainly in the United States of America (USA), Australia, Latin America and some other places like South Africa. This was mostly voluntary movement with the promise of building new homes. The Unites States of America (USA) is indeed a home for millions from migrant backgrounds, but this does not mean the USA's national borders are now, in 2021, more open to new migrants and refugees.
5. The fifth movement, which could be described as the age of modern mass migration and perhaps the beginning of globalisation in the aftermath of the WW1 in the 1920s and the end of WW2 in the 1950s. This period is also very important for refugee problem to become legalised, internationalised, and controlled from above, and a UN agency then

[3] http://www.sdcas.org.uk/ (accessed June 2021)
[4] https://renaisi.com/about-us/; https://www.cara.ngo/ (accessed June 2021)

was assigned in 1951 to protect refugees through the UNHCR (Hathaway 2005; Hayter 2004; Roche, O.I.A 1965). [5]

On reflection all the different categories of forced migration, displacement, and migration in general are integral parts of our history. Apart from natural causes, the most common and well recorded cause of forced migration are the ongoing conflicts and wars which force people to flee the war zones. Every human deserves a safe place to call home or build a new home in order to live, work, and be productive, and happy in this World.

References:

Hathaway, J. C. (2005) *The Rights of Refugees under International Law* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Hayter, T. (2004) Open *Borders* London: Pluto Press
Roche, O. I. A. (1965) *The Days of the Upright: A History of Huguenots* New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc. (Archive material accessed at the Huguenots Library at The National Archives in Kew-London).
Winder, R. (2004) *Bloody Foreigners: The Story of Immigration to Britain* London: Little Brown
Zolberg, A. R., Suhrke, A. and Aguayo, S. (1989) *Escape from Violence: Conflict and Refugee Crisis in the Developing World* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[5]The Definition of a Refugee: International legal protection of refugees' centres on a person meeting the criteria for refugee status as laid down in the *1951 Refugee Convention*. Under Article 1(A)2, the term "refugee" shall apply to any person who:
"…owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it" (http://www.geneva-academy.ch/RULAC/international_refugee_law.php), (accessed June 2021)

Notions of Gender: Rehabilitating refugee women in Partition's aftermath

Sandip Kana[1]

This article seeks to recover the experience and agency of refugee women during the process of rehabilitation after Partition, focusing on technical training.[2] It explores the ideas that underpinned the process of rehabilitating refugee women in the immediate years following the Partition of India in August 1947, within the Bombay state. This article contributes to attempts in the historiography to challenge conventional histories of Partition that have marginalised women and focuses on recovering the agency of refugee women in rebuilding and reshaping their lives.[3] It will be argued that the Bombay state's notions of gender shaped and informed the type and content of rehabilitation that unattached refugee women[4] received. Whilst the state showed little evidence of any genuine concern regarding the welfare of refugee women, unofficial organisations designed and implemented various schemes to rehabilitate refugee women. This article will reveal the fraught and unequal relationship, between a relatively absent state, and these unofficial organisations.

On a broader scale, the purpose of rehabilitation was to transform the refugee into a productive labourer that actively and voluntarily worked to further projects of national development. This was part of a statist top-down ideal of 'productive citizenship' that was imposed upon refugees.[5] There is a distinction to be drawn here between the approach of the state and unofficial organisations. For the formers policies of rehabilitation were driven by a desire to transform 'useless'[6] refugees into productive agents of the state, whilst the latter sought to use rehabilitation to improve the welfare of the refugees. Despite the diverging aims, in both cases, technical training was entrenched into the rehabilitation process as it was the only means by which to equip the refugees with new industrial skills.

---

[1] Sandip Kana, History PhD candidate, King's College London, sandip.kana@kcl.ac.uk

[2] Vocational and technical training focused on rehabilitating able-bodied refugees (male and female) by training them in various cottage industries, with the aim of making them fit for absorption into industries.

[3] This literature has been referred to as the 'hidden histories.' The key texts of it being: R. Menon and K. Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India's Partition: How women experienced the Partition of India*, (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1998); Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*, (New Delhi: Penguin, 1998).

[4] 'Unattached refugee women' refers to widows who were not able to access rehabilitation and relief through male family members. They entered official records as 'unattached women', or women who quite literally were not attached by familial ties to an adult male. This article focuses on refugee women who fled from the Sindh province, and were resettled within Bombay.

[5] Uditi Sen has shown how a singular ideal of citizenship gradually came to be dominant within the regime of rehabilitation. In this framework able-bodied refugees (male and female) were increasingly recast as productive agents of post-colonial development. Refugees were required to demonstrate their willingness to engage in productive labour and to actively contribute to furthering projects of national development. See, Uditi Sen, *Citizen Refugee: Forging the Indian Nation after Partition*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 15 and p. 17.

[6] The term 'useless' to describe the refugees can be found in various state documents and correspondence on the refugee process that emerged within the refugee camps. The term was widely used by Sudhir Ghosh, Secretary of the Faridabad Development Board for the Faridabad refugee camp (East Punjab). See, Faridabad Development Board, Digitalised Public Records, National Archives of India, File No. 29(197)/50- PMS (Volume V), and Faridabad Township Scheme, National Archives of India, File No. RHB22(1)/49.

While the state sought to remain relatively absent, unofficial organisations took up the mantle, exhibited the necessary leadership, and ensured that refugee women were not marginalised from rehabilitation efforts. The absence of the state was not surprising and was in line with how welfare is pursued in India. David Arnold has shown how the idea that the state ought to be responsible for the provision of welfare was one that had not rooted itself politically within India.[7] Instead, in the absence of the state, Indians looked to forms of welfare that stemmed directly from unofficial indigenous voluntarist philanthropic organisations, to 'uplift' and 'improve' the 'backward' and marginalised groups of Indian society.[8] These colonial developments in how indigenous forms of welfare was pursued transitioned into the post-colonial period. This was visible in how the rehabilitation of refugee women was pursued outside the institutions and structures of the post-colonial Indian state. Unofficial organisations composed of a variety of voluntarist indigenous organisations, that were already operating within India's existing social welfare network.[9] These unofficial organisations were highly localised and geographically scattered given that they were operating outside the institutions and structures of the state.

The earliest historical narratives of Partition focused on an obsessive search for the root cause or genesis of it. In these histories Partition was defined as an entirely political exercise, and understood in terms of its constitutional history, inter-governmental debates, or the negotiations between political elites.[10] As a result, the experiences of ordinary people, on both sides of the newly drawn borders were ignored. This led to a firm shift to try to recover the subaltern perspective, with attempts to recover, largely through oral history interviews, the lived experience of Partition for millions of people, who overnight became refugees.[11] However, Uditi Sen firmly argues that, even a history of ordinary people tends to become a socio-economic and political history of ordinary men, where the experiences of women are marginalised. [12] In

[7] Arnold argues that in India private charity was mobilised to improve welfare standards by indigenous actors to fill the void left by the paucity of state relief. Therefore, creating a dependency and reliance on unofficial organisations, rather than the state to provide welfare. See, David Arnold, 'Vagrant India: Famine, Poverty, and Welfare under Colonial Rule', in A. L. Beier and Paul Ocobock (eds.), *Cast Out: Vagrancy and Homelessness in Global and Historical Perspective*, (Ohio: Ohio University Press), p. 118, p. 120, and p. 125.

[8] Carey Watt explores how Indian philanthropic and social welfare efforts, during the colonial and post-colonial periods, was concerned with 'uplifting' and 'improving' 'backward' and marginalised groups of Indian society, such as the so-called 'Depressed Classes.' See, Carey Watt, 'Philanthropy and civilising missions in India: States, NGOs and Development', in Carey Watt and Michael Mann (eds.), *Civilising Missions in Colonial and Post-colonial India: From Improvement to Development*, (London: Anthem Press, 2011), pp. 271- 316.

[9] The most prominent indigenous voluntary bodies included the Servants of India Society, the Social Service League, the Gokhale Education Society, and the Ramakrishna Mission. See table 1.0 in this article for an overview of the unofficial organisations operating rehabilitation policies for refugee women within Bombay.

[10] See, Rizvi Gowher, *Linlithgow and India: A study of British policy and political impasse in India, 1936-1943*, (London: Royal Historical Society, 1979); R. J. Moore, *Churchill, Cripps and India*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979); Anita Inder Singh, *The Origins of Partition in India, 1936-1947*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987); Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[11] See, Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000); Kavita Puri, *Partition Voices: Untold British Stories*, (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019).

[12] Uditi Sen, 'Spinster, Prostitute or Pioneer? Images of refugee women in post-Partition Calcutta', (Italy: European University Institute, 2011), p. 1. For a powerful example of the focus on the experiences of men, see, Prafulla Chakrabarti, *The Marginal Men: The refugees and the left political syndrome in West Bengal*, (Kalyani: Lumiere Books, 1990).

the last two decades there has been an emerging body of literature, referred to as the 'hidden histories', that has attempted to recover the experience and agency of women during and after Partition.[13]

For all its devastating consequences Partition had the capacity to transform lives in unexpected directions - this was especially the case for refugee women. Peter Gatrell has shown how fresh job opportunities became available to refugee women after Partition. The Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation created a Women's Section to train prospective teachers, nurses, and clerical workers. Female police officers were recruited from the ranks of refugees to help trace girls who had been abducted. Women went out to work to replace the income lost when male family members were killed.[14] Gargi Chakravarty argues that these social and economic changes brought about by Partition delivered an emancipation of sorts for refugee women. Partition had shattered the private world of the home that women refugees had inhabited before.[15] However, Sen has recently suggested that there needs to be a greater level of critical interrogation of these romanticised narratives of viewing Partition as 'a coming out' for refugee women in the public sphere.[16] This is evidently seen within the type and content of training that refugee women received, that were explicitly informed and shaped by notions of gender.

Technical training was used to train unattached women refugees in a new trade, to prevent dependency on charity, and the creation of economic migrants.[17] This included cottage industries such as spinning, weaving, embroidery, and toy and doll making as well as employment training in nursing, midwifery, and as teachers. These unofficial efforts were shaped by a dominant top-down gendered interpretation of citizenship. This ensured that the type and content of women's training was firmly entrenched within a gender discourse. The training offered to refugee women emphasised their 'natural' attributes as nurturers or taught them low-paid home-based artisanal skills which were considered 'appropriate.' They did not involve uprooting Indian women from their proper place in the home.[18] Thus, their rehabilitation, reinforced the vocational bias, which was to make them 'efficient home-makers, good mothers and successful housewives.'[19]

The State's Response

---

[13] See footnote two for the key texts that have underpinned the 'hidden histories.' The focus has been on moving away from depicting women's experience of Partition as a story of loss and victimhood. Instead, seeking to uncover the agency of women in rebuilding and reshaping their lives. For recent contributions see, Uditi Sen, 'Spinster, prostitute or pioneer? Images of refugee women in post-Partition Calcutta', (Italy: European University Institute, 2011), and Gargi Chakravarty, *Coming out of Partition: Refugee women of Bengal*, (New Delhi: Bluejay Books, 2005).

[14] Peter Gatrell, *The Making of the Modern Refugee*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 164.

[15] Gargi Chakravarty, *Coming out of Partition: Refugee women of Bengal*, (New Delhi: Bluejay Books, 2005), p. 101.

[16] Sen, 'Spinster, prostitute or pioneer?', p. 16.

[17] Hema Pinjani, 'Sindhi resettlement at Ulhasnagar', *Historicity Research Journal*, 3/4 (2016), p. 7.

[18] Uditi Sen, *Citizen refugee: Forging the Indian nation after Partition*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 210.

[19] Industrial and Technical Secondary Education Committee Recommendations, Box 3 File No. TEC 1050-I Part 1, 1950, Maharashtra State Archives, Chapter III.

From the outset the Bombay government firmly situated notions of gender within the training of refugee women:

> '[In] An overpopulated country like ours, where all active young and adult male workers are not fully and gainfully employed, and where even those who are workers are often underemployed, it would lead to greater unemployment among men, if women entered technical occupations beyond the "mother crafts" in larger numbers. It was therefore argued that the problem of employment of refugee women and giving technical training to them for procuring jobs is of secondary importance from the point of view of the national economy.'[20]

This statement is quite revealing about the intentions and motivations of the state. Firstly, it firmly situates the employment prospects of refugee women within the domestic sphere. Secondly, the state attempts to justify its policies, by arguing that increasing the employment of women would lead to greater levels of unemployment for men. It reveals how the state's policies emphasised difference, between men and women, in terms of the value of their economic contribution. This could go some way to explaining its absence in constructing practical policies for rehabilitating refugee women. In another statement by the government, we are given another possible reason for their absence.

> 'We have built up a democratic system of education and therefore it would be in the fitness of things that women should come forward to start educational institutions of technical character and administer them to rehabilitate the refugee women.'[21]

The rhetoric emerging here from the Bombay government was reflective of what the central government was advocating. This was a general reluctance to actively or directly implement policies to rehabilitate refugee women. Instead, the preference was to delegate such work to unofficial organisations.[22] There was no comprehensive state led policy of rehabilitation and economic reintegration devised for refugee women, either within Bombay, or more widely across India. This stands in stark contrast to the active intervention of the state in providing relief and education to male refugees and the children of displaced people through large financial investments.[23] Whatever help was provided towards economically rehabilitating refugee women emerged through the nature of localised, and geographically scattered interventions, by unofficial organisations - it was never accorded the status of state policy.[24]

Unofficial Organisations

For unofficial organisations, the overarching aim of providing unattached refugee women with technical training was to secure their long-term welfare by providing them with the opportunity

---

[20] Quoted in, Report of the National Committee on Women, Ministry of Education, Digitalised Public Records, National Archives of India, MINISTRY_OF_EDUCATION_B3_1958_NA_F-40-57_58, 1958, p. 116.
[21] Industrial and Technical Secondary Education Committee Recommendations.
[22] Sen, *Citizen refugee,* p. 206.
[23] Uditi Sen argues that in West Bengal within state discourse refugee women were 'economically unrehabilitable', thus they were marginalised from state interventions and reliant upon the efforts of non-state actors. See, Sen 'Spinster, prostitute or pioneer?', pp. 8-9.
[24] Ibid., p. 9.

to learn and master the technique of a trade. However, its type and content were clearly shaped by the state's notions of gender. For instance, one of the initial efforts to this end in Bombay was the establishment of the Nari Seva Sadan (1947) at Kurla (East Bombay). Here 1,700 unattached refugee women and children were housed. Whilst the children were provided with primary and secondary education, the women were provided with technical training in sewing, embroidery, and tailoring, according to their strength and aptitude.[25] The gendered nature of training was also reflected in the Ladies Section (1948), which was established within the Ulhasnagar Vocational and Technical Training Centre. Here technical training was offered to refugee women in textiles, tailoring, spinning, basket-making, soap-making, vegetable and fruit preservation and dressmaking.[26] These two cases are representative of wider localised efforts to rehabilitate refugee women that were firmly anchored in the 'mother crafts.' This was in stark contrast to the type of technical training that male refugees received at the Training Centre, which additionally touched upon light industries such as, electrical and wireman's courses, turning and fitting, basic mechanical engineering, carpentry and leather work etc.[27]

Table 1.0 provides a snapshot of the efforts of unofficial organisations operating within Bombay. It outlines the type and content of training they provided.[28]

[25] *The Times of India*, 17 November 1951, 'Refugee women's rehabilitation.'
[26] Cottage Industries Scheme, Box 21 File No. SCI 1056, 1956, Maharashtra State Archive.
[27] *Rehabilitation of Displaced Persons in Bombay State*, (Bombay: The Directorate of Publicity, 1958), pp. 18-19.
[28] It is important to note that activities listed here are by no means exhaustive as many local organisations may not have left a paper trail, and their efforts were unlikely to be recorded in official reports. The organisations in this table have been compiled from the following: Cottage Industries Scheme, Box 21 File No. SCI 1056, 1956, Maharashtra State Archive; *Rehabilitation of displaced persons in Bombay State*, (Bombay: The Directorate of Publicity, 1958), pp. 18-19; Industrial and Technical Secondary Education Committee Recommendations, Box 03 File No. TEC 1050, 1950, Maharashtra State Archive.

Social and welfare organisation/ institution	Type of technical training offered
Harni Cottage Industries Centre	Carding, spinning, and weaving
Kantra Stri Vikas Girha	Tailoring, textile, and embroidery work
Mahila Udyog Mandal	Tailoring, textile, and embroidery work
Nirvasit	Tailoring, textile, and embroidery work
Irwin Hospital	Nursing and midwifery
Shri Jain Hindu Mahila Udyog Griha	Basic craft work
Technical school (run by Nagrik Sewa Semiti)	Tailoring, embroidery work, and spinning
Sindh Seva Samiti Narishala	Tailoring and embroidery work
Ladies Industrial Cooperative Society Camp No 1.	Hand embroidery work and tailoring
The Sindhi Ladies Industries Cooperative House Camp No. 3	Tailoring and machine embroidery
Gamibai Nari Seva Sedan	Tailoring and embroidery work
Bharat Nabila Kala Mandir	Tailoring
H-Ranery & Sons	Plastic goods, raincoats, toys, and handbags
Government Narishala Vocational Training Centre Camp No. 5	Tailoring and embroidery work.

Table 1.0.

At first glance, it is abundantly clear that, across Bombay, notions of gender shaped and informed unofficial organisations activities, with few training opportunities beyond textiles. However, rather than this being a result of the organisations, this was determined by the state. The activities of these unofficial organisations, given their highly localised nature, were extremely, if not entirely, dependent on financial assistance from the state. The state did provide, where necessary, grants-in-aid to support the financial (recurring and non-recurring) costs of rehabilitation activities instigated by unofficial organisations. However, state funding was only provided for those activities, where it deemed that the training was 'appropriate', and conformed to their gendered interpretation of citizenship, which limited the role of women to the home. Unsurprisingly to secure funding for their activities, it was not uncommon for unofficial organisations to stay within the limits imposed by the Bombay state.[29] For instance, the Narishalla Industrial Training School for refugee women, focused its technical training on

[29] *Report of the National Committee on Women's Education*, (Delhi: Ministry of Education, 1959), p. 7.

tailoring, spinning, and embroidery. It was conscious that training outside of the domestic sphere, would have restricted its access to financial assistance from the state, for its activities.[30] The Bombay government's position was abundantly clear, it explicitly argued that 'any form of technical training in fields beyond "mother crafts" was a waste of money, energy and health.'[31]

Whilst the state was happy to delegate the implementation of schemes and policies targeting refugee women, it retained firm control over the direction of policy.[32] To this end the rehabilitation efforts for refugee women remained limited to the 'home industries' - this being trades where production could be carried out from the household. Thus, not interfering with the woman's role within the domestic sphere. In this way there was no need for elaborate factory buildings as production could be carried out in small shabby workshops, often situated in the front room of the house, an outdoor shed, or courtyard.

However, there were attempts at diversifying the type and content of technical training for refugee women within Bombay. The Pimpri Refugee Industrial Cooperative Society put forward plans to establish a match factory in Pimpri (south-east Bombay). By exposing refugee women, albeit to very basic scientific knowledge about the various chemicals involved in the production of the matches, the society was providing an alternative form of technical training. This did not go unnoticed by the state, who were reluctant to offer any funding for the factory.[33] As a result, the factory costs estimated to be Rs. 10,000, of which, Rs. 2,000 was donated by the society, with the remaining Rs. 8,000 coming from bank loans.[34]

The match factory was constructed on a plot of land that was lying in the middle of the Pimpri colony (north-west Bombay) where there were many refugee tenements constructed around.[35] This allowed the refugee women to be trained within the 'factory.' The technical training was provided in an enclosed plot that contained a shed with brick flooring and corrugated iron sheet outer walls and completed with partitions and a roof. The actual production of the matches was carried out from the women's tenements. The scheme of training lasted a month, with up to 100 women workers to be trained for a period of 25 days. The production of the matches was prepared from splints from bamboo and veneer from straw boards. The chemical raw materials and tools required to produce the matches were provided for the refugee women

[30] Industries in Ulhasnagar, Box 8 File No. INDU 1054, 1954, Maharashtra State Archive.
[31] This argument encompassed all types of technical education and vocational training for Indian girls and women, both within the school environment and beyond it. See, Industrial and Technical Secondary Education Committee Recommendations.
[32] Sen, *Citizen refugee,* pp. 208-209.
[33] Scheme 'D' Class Match Factory at Pimpri, Scheme of the Pimpri Refugee Industrial Cooperative Society to start Match Factory at Pimpri, Box 3 File No. INDP 1055, Labour and Social Welfare Department, 1955, Maharashtra State Archives.
[34] Ibid.
[35] The Explosive Department did deem the plot safe to construct the factory despite being in the centre of a residential area. Scheme of the Pimpri Refugee Industrial Cooperative Society to start Match Factory at Pimpri, Box 3 File No. INDP 1055, Labour and Social Welfare Department, 1955, Maharashtra State Archives.

by the society.[36] This meant that the capital investment required to support the home industry was minimal.

This match factory was representative of the localised efforts at providing refugee women with a diversified type of rehabilitation. Although these efforts were limited, it does reveal the fraught and unequal partnership between the official regime of rehabilitation and unofficial organisations. Ultimately, it was the former that retained control, due in part to its financial resources, over the rehabilitation process, allowing it to enforce a gender discourse that limited the training of refugee women, to trades where it thought their strength and aptitude was best suited.

Conclusion

Partition did bring about great historical changes. For the lives of uprooted women in its aftermath there were signs that their lives were gradually transformed for the better. However, this article has attempted to show the limitations of this 'coming out' for refugee women in the aftermath of Partition. The rehabilitation activities of unofficial organisations operating within Bombay was framed within a gender discourse. In this way ideas and policies of rehabilitation served to reinforce existing gender roles. Moreover, in the absence of accounts of how the refugee women perceived their own actions, it is difficult to argue how far Partition did represent a 'coming out' for them. For Rachel Weber, her interviews with the middle-class women of Bijoygarph (Calcutta), concludes that for many refugee women they viewed their new roles thrust upon them by Partition, as temporary and situational aberrations.[37] Even if the rehabilitation of refugee women was shaped and informed by notions of gender, their presence in the cottage industries would pave the way for future generations of young women to enter the workforce in larger numbers.

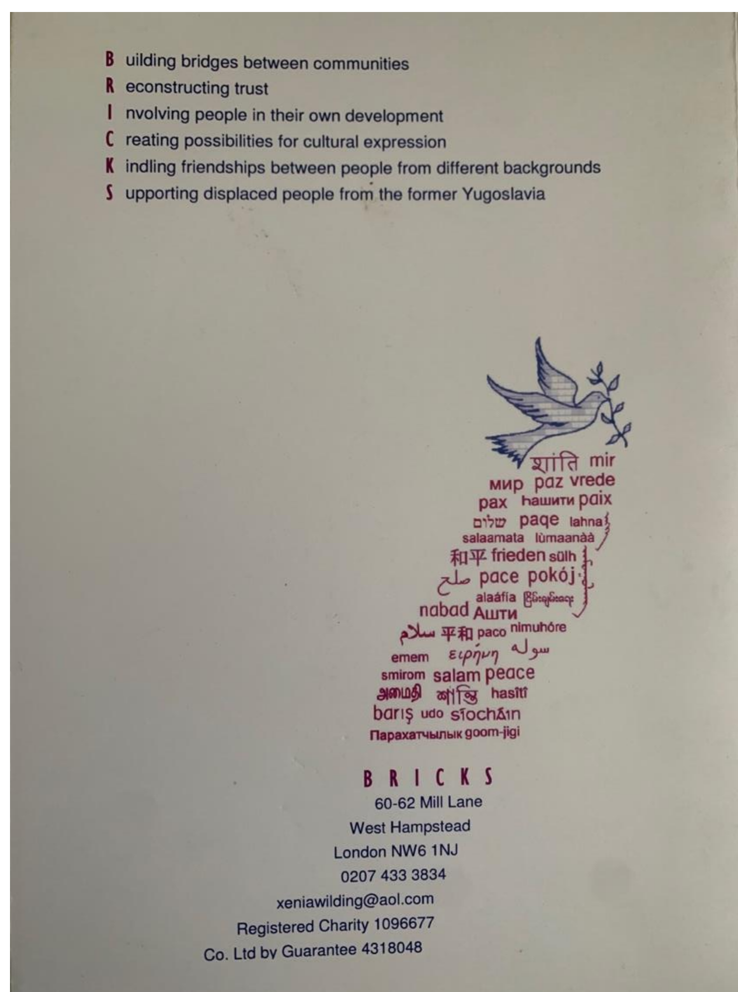
[36] Scheme of the Pimpri Refugee Industrial Cooperative Society to start Match Factory at Pimpri, Box 3 File No. INDP 1055, Labour and Social Welfare Department, 1955, Maharashtra State Archives.
[37] Rachel Weber, 'Re-creating the Home: Women's Role in the Development of Refugee Colonies in South Calcutta', in Jashodhara Bagchi and Shubhoranjan Dasgupta, (eds), *The Trauma and the Triumph: Gender and Partition in Eastern India*, (Kolkata: Stree, 2003).

Refugee Organisations in London remembered

Zibiah Alfred Loakthar[1]

Working within the charity sector in London for twenty years, I have seen refugee and migrant groups evolving, disappearing, big names forgotten, new names emerging.

Amongst this ebb and flow of refugee and migrant sector organisations in London, there are charities that had huge impact on the lives of refugees and migrants in their day, well-known within the sector and, in their time, well-connected with the Refugee Council. I reflect here on three organisations I worked with that have ceased operating but live on through their legacies and in people's memories.



BRICKS leaflet, courtesy of author.

The first charity I began paid work with, after a summer volunteering with the Refugee Council, was BRICKS. BRICKS operated for many years from a hut in the backyard of West Hampstead Community Centre in Mill Lane, London NW6. BRICKS was a registered charity, founded and led by Director Xenia Wilding, now a dear friend, generous in spirit, a whirlwind of creative

[1] Dr Zibiah Alfred Loakthar, University of Essex, z.loakthar@essex.ac.uk
All images courtesy of author.

energy, a wonderful linguist effortlessly able to switch between Serbo-Croat, English, Italian and Russian and connect with people on a human-to-human level. With a stroke of genius about her and a propensity to work late into the evening on people's cases, Xenia was affectionately referred to by some in the community centre as Insania Wild. Xenia worked for years as a talented illustrator and graphic designer in London but stepped up to offer her language skills as an interpreter to people arriving in London from all sides of the conflict within the former Yugoslavia as the crisis there unfolded in the 1990s. In response to need, Xenia found herself undertaking training, offered by the Refugee Council and others, to better understand and address the needs of refugees. She established the charitable organisation BRICKS.

BRICKS provided information to the organisation Sarajevo Charter on the ethnic and religious backgrounds of refugees from all over the former Yugoslavia and in 1998 participated in a large conference "Seeing the Other" to comprehend and counteract the pressures used to mobilise and sustain fear and hatred between different ethnic groups.

Over the years, BRICKS received funding from a variety of sources including Camden Council, the National Lottery, the Department for Education and Skills and the Home Office's Integration Fund and secured small grants for individual community members from the then Medical Foundations for the Victims of Torture (now known as Freedom from Torture)'s Millennium Awards scheme and from the Hampstead Wells and Campden Trust. BRICKS was the only charity in the UK that aimed to work with people from all sides of conflict in former Yugoslavia and bring people from different religions and regions together. It achieved some wonderful peace building work, fostering friendships and rekindling trust between people from the different sides of former Yugoslavia. It also courted controversy for daring to do so; those who became involved in supporting its work sometimes found themselves questioned by others holding polarised views about the conflict in former Yugoslavia.

The charity developed organically just like its name. It began as the Bosnian Refugee Information Centre, shortened to BRIC with connotations of bric-a-brac. Then as the crisis in Kosova developed, it took on a wider remit and became the Bosnian Refugee Information Centre Kosovar Support. However, a number of community members disliked being labelled as "refugee". Although "refugee" has a very precise legal meaning, at that time it often took on negative connotations in public discourse and amongst school children was sometimes used as a slur. Some people felt that being identified as refugees prevented wider recognition of their other identities as film makers, writers, professionals, parents, citizens and that this very label acted as an obstacle to moving forward with their lives. For these reasons, the organisation decided to liberate its community members from the label "refugee", changing name again to become Bosnian Resource Information Centre Kosovar Support. Then the focus widened from front line advice and advocacy work towards work to promote and support cultural heritage and it became Bosnian Resource Information and Cultural Centre Kosovar Support, shortened again to BRICKS.

The metaphor of building bricks, of colourful community mosaics and the importance of each person in a community was central to the charity's philosophy. BRICKS held several creative events in a local pottery café on the theme "Style the Tile", encouraging people to come together and create designs on tiles as a way of visually representing our diverse community. Some of these tessellated tiles featured in a key leaflet BRICKS produced about its work. These kinds of creative activities were good for bringing together people to work together on something collective; the task of working alongside each other to express artistic creativity in common purpose transcended the need for common spoken language.

Besides providing information, advice and interpreting, BRICKS engaged people to offer psychotherapy in different languages, reflexology and massage, and even tai chi activities.

My first role at BRICKS in 2003 was to manage a volunteering programme bringing people together from diverse backgrounds to learn from each other and exchange skills. Soon I became involved in supporting frontline advocacy work and developing cultural projects with the aim of creating spaces and opportunities for people to connect as people.

We had some fabulous events. Setting up opportunities for people to give community talks about topics of interest, one of the most memorable is a talk given by a dentist on the history of chocolate, accompanied by a community chocolate cake competition. We held many musical events and concerts, even an eco-fashion show where people dressed up in recycled and refashioned vintage clothes collected from local charity shops and cat-walked down the aisle of a very beautiful old church in Camden. Some of these events and activities are documented in local newspapers such as the Ham and High and Camden New Journal, others are recorded only in people's memories.

The spirit of the organisation was very much an outward facing one, welcoming in volunteers from diverse backgrounds and establishing connections with a broad base of supporters. Mainstream organisations such as Swiss Cottage Central Library, universities and a local Arts Centre donated venue and community exhibition space. We worked on partnership projects such as the Heritage Lottery and Trust for London funded Refugee Communities History Project with the Evelyn Oldfield Unit, Museum of London, London Metropolitan University and diverse refugee community organisations.

We were lucky to have the support of many volunteers over the years, from Yugoslav and English communities but also London residents from diverse countries such as Japan, Burma, Ireland and Italy. Volunteers helped in many ways, from offering interpreting support, to helping people develop conversational English skills, to accompanying people on a first visit to a museum or library, to creating publicity materials to performing music in BRICKS concerts. It was central to our philosophy to challenge the casting of refugees as simply recipients of help. We facilitated refugees to share time and skills within both BRICKS and the wider community and supported people to access education and employment opportunities.

Like many other refugee charities at the time, BRICKS' work was very much volunteer powered. Besides short-term volunteers, we were lucky to have long-term volunteers like Alan Wilding, Xenia's husband, who gave not only practical hands-on support but also helped with project idea brainstorming to keep the work of the organisation dynamic and resourced.

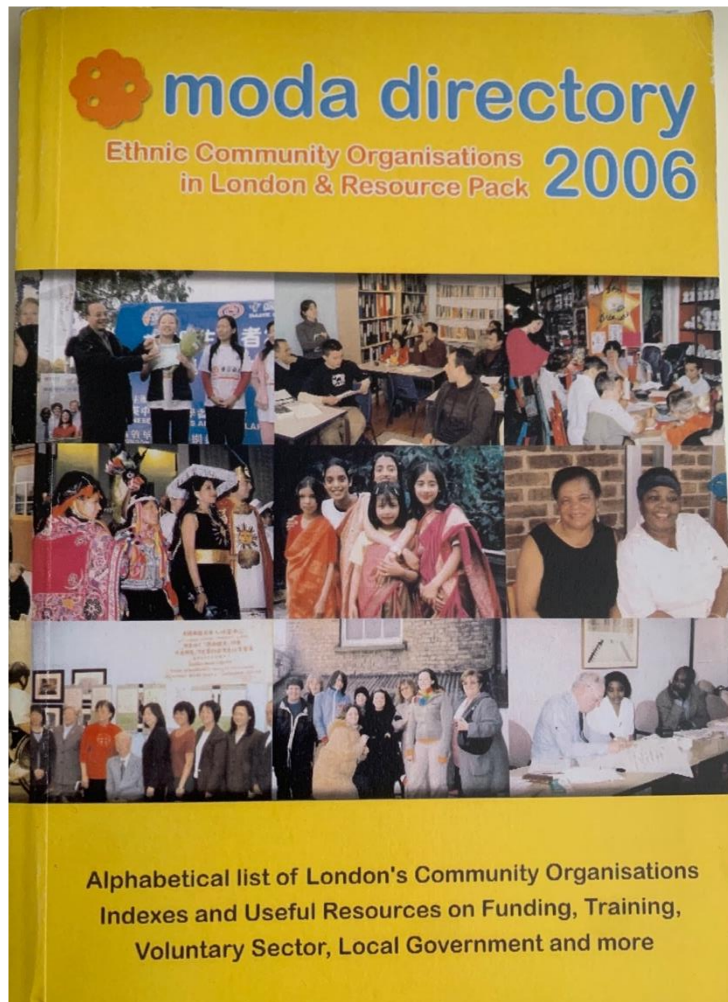
Many people were supported with urgent welfare and housing needs and with appeals to remain in London. Facilitating the building of friendships within and across their new communities was also an important tranche of BRICKS' work.

BRICKS supported community members to come together to produce bilingual books of short stories and recipes and community films. We held creative gatherings with poetry readings, film launches and traditional folk dance to bring people together. We even hosted a Cardboard Citizens' performance of Shakespeare's Pericles, generating moving discussion amongst community members about its themes.

As thinking in and about the refugee sector evolved, moving from the buzz word of multiculturalism to the idea of integration, ethnicity centred community support groups found it more challenging to source funding. As BRICKS supported people to feel more at home in their new communities and as people became more settled, more fluent in English and adept at navigating English systems and as the numbers of people arriving in the UK seeking refuge from former Yugoslavia dwindled, the need of an organisation like BRICKS to provide this kind of support reduced. West Hampstead Community Association dissolved in April 2010. BRICKS gave up the office base it had been renting from the Association in Mill Lane.

In so many instances, BRICKS acted as the catalyst for people to connect and form friendships. Many friendships have continued to flourish without the need for an organisation to provide ongoing friendship incubation spaces. Today, BRICKS' events are remembered with warmth and affection by many in the community and we have been talking about the shape a possible community reunion event could take. It is perhaps testimony to its pioneering work that, whilst remembered, the need for BRICKS no longer exists.

A second charity I worked with on and off for about five years from 2004 was MODA, the Migrant Organisation Development Agency. Migrating itself from St Pauls to Vauxhall to Stratford, MODA was a second-tier agency with the vision to work with both refugee and migrant groups. Its Director, Dr Kamal Rassul, a talented poet writing under the name Kamal Mirawdeli, was a writer and political activist who became second runner in elections for president of the Kurdistan region In Iraq in July 2009.



MODA material, courtesy of author.

MODA's aims were to provide information, coordination, training, technical support and other capacity building services to migrant and minority ethnic community organisations across London. It ran community development training, produced a regular printed newsletter to help groups in the sector connect with each other and shared much useful information to support community development. Unlike the Evelyn Oldfield Unit, another second-tier organisation which for a long time only supported established refugee organisations before adopting a wider remit, MODA was from the outset very much into supporting the development of emerging refugee and migrant groups, playing midwife to the birth of diverse new community groups and charitable organisations.

People would phone to discuss ideas, some tentative and half-baked, some passionate and urgent, for new organisations. We would invite people to discuss ideas over tea in our office and send people off to collect signatures of supporters, names of people willing to form a committee. MODA's role was one of advising people on how to conduct research to find out real community needs, with the aim of identifying sound, meaningful and worthwhile project ideas rather than entertaining one-man-bands and fantasists.

MODA won the support of diverse funders including the Association of London Government and the Lottery and worked on projects in partnership with a range of organisations including the School for Social Entrepreneurs SSE.

MODA was, our team at the time thought, the first organisation in the sector to move from printed newsletters to a regular weekly e-bulletin for our members. This helped to develop a very wide reach and we were a well-known name in the refugee and migrant sector. MODA produced two directories of migrant and refugee organisations in London in 2005 and 2006; flicking through these publications gives a flavour of the rich diversity of refugee and migrant groups at that time. These directories include many organisations, including BRICKS, that have changed name or have ceased operating.

West London Refugee Women's Forum material, courtesy of author.

The third charity to mention is West London Refugee Women's Forum with whom I worked between 2006 and 2010. This registered charity also changed its name to WLRWMF West London Refugee and Migrants Forum. Based in Wembley Park and working with refugee women's groups across six London boroughs, it was chaired by Hanna Field and shared office space with ICIC, the Iraqi Centre for Integration and Cohesion. We ran many different projects. Funders included Renewal, City Parochial Foundation and the Community Development Foundation. We produced an award-winning multilingual recipe book and worked collaboratively with the Women's Library, then housed in Old Castle Street, London E1, on a creative Women and Peace project. Hanna, the Chair for many years, was a community leader who inspired many creative ideas, for bringing together women from diverse backgrounds.

With all three charities, I had left my post some time before the organisations ceased operating. None of these charities had perfectly neat endings. It can be painful to wind down an organisation that you may have put much time and effort in over the years, painful to think

about organisations after they have ceased because of wistful loss. Where we may prefer associating ourselves with organisations still operating as they are perceived to be vital and successful, perhaps we may find ourselves rewriting private and collective memory, actively allowing memories of how we connected to dissolved organisations to dissolve too. Ironically, perhaps the stronger the connection we had with organisations no longer operating, the stronger our instinct to distance ourselves from remembering these after they have ceased.

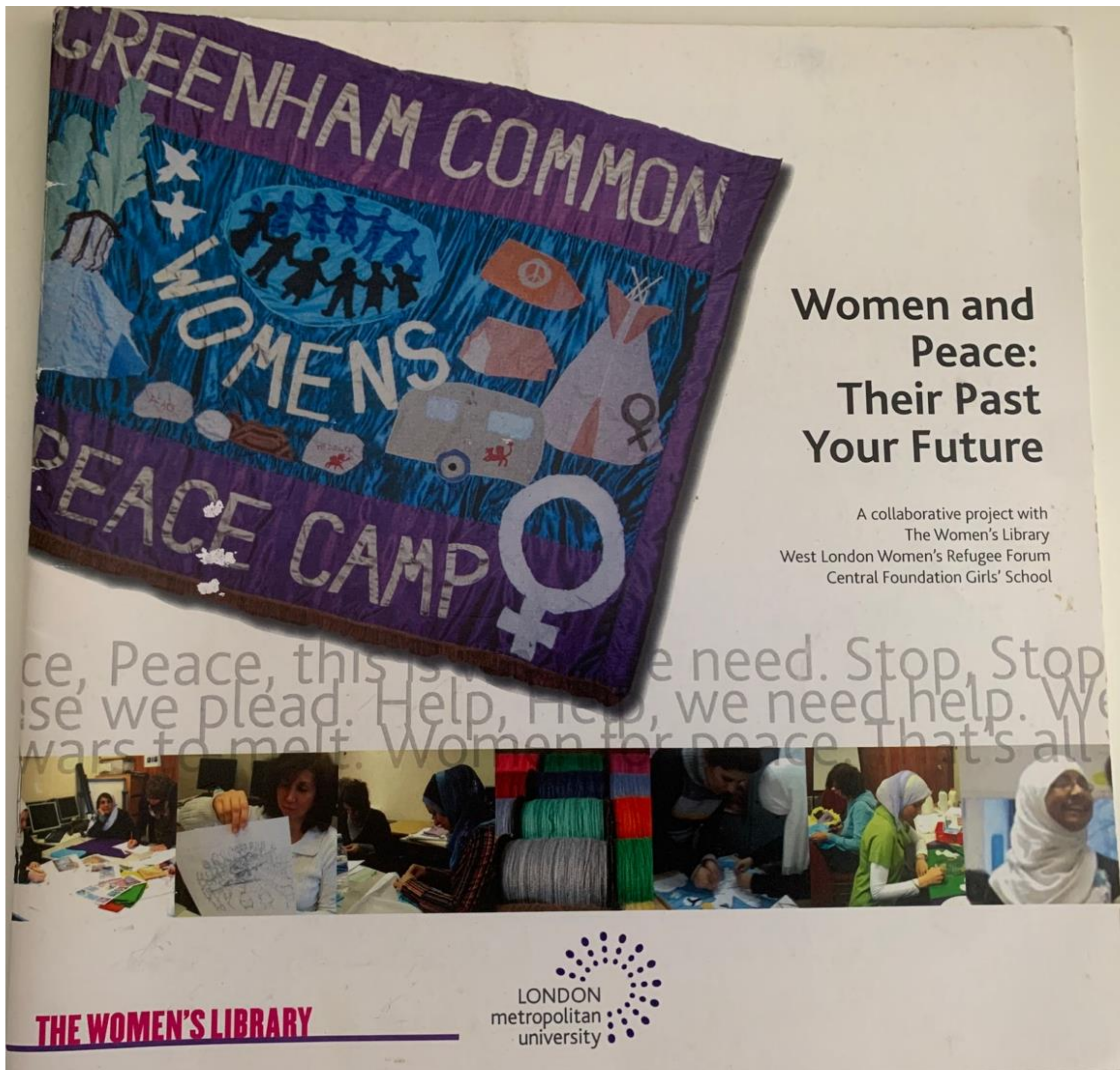
I have deposited charities' materials into the University of East London's Refugee Archives: I wish I had arranged to take across more. It is so easy to think that we will always have tomorrow to sort through boxes of material, next year to arrange to deposit pamphlets and leaflets in public archives. We may procrastinate, perhaps hesitating over which archive might be the most suitable for the items we are considering to deposit, or delay discussions with colleagues about what might be ethically permissible to deposit. Meanwhile, materials we may have been considering donating to archives may get moved, lost, destroyed by fire or water, accidentally sent to recycling. Speaking from this experience, I join those urging people to consider taking action to pass on items sooner rather than later to archivists pleased to welcome them into public collections.

Organisations that cease to operate may indeed live on for many years through their legacies and in people's memories. But where records are not passed on, they are prone to fading away in social memory. Like many refugee charities at that time, BRICKS and West London Refugee Women's Forum did not run websites and had a very light digital footprint. MODA had an active online presence in its time but did not archive its website. The information about these charities that can be collected by skimming the surface of the internet does not reflect the mighty work that these charities did and the huge impact they had within communities. Without archived material, and written reflections such as this one, they might all too easily become lost from public sight.

Archiving the records of charitable organisations' work is important not simply as some vanity project or as a nostalgic act. Those of us who work within the charity sector know how swiftly an organisation can be dismantled, yet how much work building an organisation from scratch can take. We cannot take the existence of an established refugee charity sector in the UK for granted. Who knows what our society might look like tomorrow, what the politics will be around welcoming and including people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in our communities.

We might archive our charity's materials, not out of fondness for the past but out of concern for the future. Archiving materials can be social justice activism! Archives can help us pass on our learning to new generations in society, inspire people with concepts and practical good practice ideas for future social justice projects, spark thinking about alternative ways of organising communities and free new generations from laboriously reinventing wheels, enabling energy to be thrown into taking new projects and ideas forward.

So this is a call for all of us engaged in the refugee charity sector to dig out brochures, leaflets, photographs, minute books, letters, campaign materials, artefacts, passwords to the back ends of websites, and explore the possible options we have with different archives to preserve these for future public access. We can be proactive here, reaching out to archivists, rather than waiting to be chased!



West London Refugee Women's Forum material, courtesy of author.

Arriving and Belonging: Stories from the St Albans Jewish Community

Helen Singer[1]

Helen Singer talks about her parents' refugee background and her involvement in the creation of the online exhibition: 'Arriving & Belonging: Stories from the St Albans Jewish Community'. Through testimonies, objects and family photographs, the exhibition reveals personal stories of migration and heritage, examining universal themes of sanctuary, courage, compassion and starting a new life in Britain.

I have lived in St Albans since 1985 and worked at the University of Hertfordshire as a Librarian from 1996 until last year when I retired. Over the last few years, I was involved with two heritage projects at our synagogue, St Albans Masorti Synagogue (SAMS) which led to the development of the Arriving & Belonging exhibition.

In SAMS Roots (www.e-sams.org/roots) (2015-2016) we received Heritage Lottery Funding for Caroline Pearce, a biographer and member of SAMS, to interview 12 members of the community about their family stories and what brought them to SAMS. The full transcripts and audio recordings are held in the University of Hertfordshire's Heritage Hub (https://www.herts.ac.uk/heritage-hub/oralhistoryarchive/sams-roots). This was followed by Mapping SAMS Roots (2017 to date, www.e-sams.org/mapping-sams-roots) where we received over 100 stories from community members. These are plotted onto a virtual map using software called Historypin and the collection contains stories from around the world.

With such rich material, we approached Sarah Keeling, Curator at the St Albans Museum + Gallery, and their Board agreed to an exhibition in the Museum scheduled for February – April 2021. We were fortunate to have funding, in the form of a legacy, which allowed us to employ exhibition designers and heritage professionals to design the exhibition. Devorah Moritz, a heritage consultant, helped us distil over 100 Roots stories down to 18 which represent universal themes. Simon Leach Designs worked on the visual concepts, including the artwork and fitting the objects and images to the 3D space. I was joined on the project team by Caroline Pearce and Pauline Symons, who had both worked on the previous projects. We spent over a year working with the designers and our very patient contributors to put the exhibition together. It was a massive learning curve and we were grateful to the designers for their

[1] Helen Singer, hsinger@talk21.com

professional input. Then, due to Covid, the in-person exhibition was delayed until 4 February – 15 May 2022. In the meantime, my husband Jon Meier, who is also a contributor to the exhibition, created the website for the online exhibition at www.arrivingbelonging.com. Whilst it is disappointing that the in-person exhibition is delayed, having the online exhibition increases the reach and hopefully the impact of the featured stories.

This article focuses on the impact of using personal stories from members of a local community to illustrate universal themes. These, along with maps and a timeline showing historic moments in Jewish history aim to deliver the following key messages:

- Jewish people are part of the St Albans community
- Jewish people living in St Albans have roots stretching across time and place.

The exhibition

From over 100 stories gathered in the previous projects, 18 were selected to represent universal themes. The Arriving section covers themes of Sanctuary, Courage and Community and in the Belonging section the themes are Setting Down Roots, Work and Community. We had the idea of introducing the contributors through the 'photography wall': photographs of the contributors outside their front doors, holding objects or images which illustrate their stories. The doorways reinforce the idea of Arriving and photographing the contributors outside was also Covid secure! The portraits are taken by Hayley Posener, a member of SAMS. Being 'greeted' by the contributors with the objects that tell their stories aims to draw the audience in by seeing them as individuals living in the local community.

Visitors will also see a world map showing that the stories come from around the world and a map showing Jewish businesses in St Albans between the 1930s and 1980s, as recollected by one of the contributors, Jennifer Taylor. The maps show both the wider stories of migration and local connections with the Jewish community. There is also a soundscape so visitors can hear some of the contributors' voices and feel that they are being directly addressed, making the stories more immediate.

The exhibition also includes a timeline of Jewish life in St Albans and England which reaches from Aaron of Lincoln who lent money for the building of St Albans Abbey, through the expulsion of all Jews from England in 1290 to Cromwell allowing them back in. One of the exhibition contributors can trace her ancestors right back to one of the earliest settlers from this time, linking an individual person to a historic fact. At a more local level, there were Jewish families working for the Nicholsons raincoat factory to the east of the city, including some who fled Russian pogroms at the turn of the century. Another contributor's grandfather worked at Nicholsons and her grandmother had a fur trimmings shop next door. The timeline also shows the founding of the St Albans United Synagogue and later SAMS. The final panel of the timeline poignantly refers to the traditional shofar, or ram's horn, being blown from the tower of St Albans Abbey at the Jewish New Year in September 2020 when Covid restrictions did not allow the congregation to gather in the synagogue. The Abbey is an iconic part of St Albans and this event demonstrates a real coming together of faiths and communities.

Stories

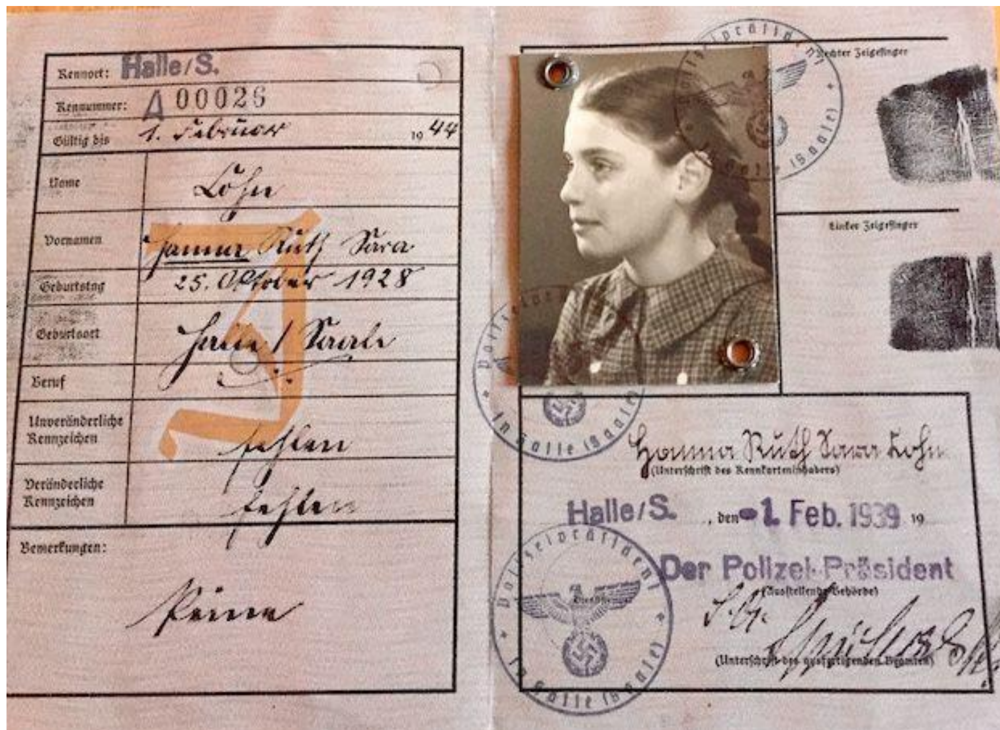
The exhibition includes some very moving and powerful stories of displacement and migration. In the *Sanctuary* theme, Andrew Hougie describes his grandparents' exile from Iraq. In the *Courage* theme, Kitty Hart-Moxon who was sent to Auschwitz at the age of sixteen, describes why she had her tattoo removed. This section also features Sylvia Schloss, whose step grandfather was Otto Frank, father of Anne Frank. Her story is about her uncle's paintings hidden under the floorboards in Amsterdam when the family were deported to Auschwitz, and how these were later found by Sylvia's mother Eva. You can see a reproduction of one of the paintings in the exhibition. In the *Compassion* theme, there is a poignant story from Evelyn Gold about her mother whose life was saved by a school friend's family in Poland. Evelyn's aunt was saved by Oskar Schindler: in the exhibition you can see a copy of Schindler's List with Evelyn's aunt's name at the top. In the *Setting Down Roots* theme, there is a naturalisation certificate signed by Winston Churchill and the story of Caroline Pearce's great-uncle who was killed in the First World War and who is commemorated at the Menin Gate. The *Community* section features the story of Darren Marks whose family originated in Spain and Portugal and came to London via Amsterdam. Darren restored furniture at Bevis Marks Synagogue, one of the oldest synagogues in London, and more recently took part in a community project cutting out wooden letters for the ark wall at SAMS.

These stories reflect the themes of the exhibition and key moments in Jewish history as illustrated in the timeline, so it is hoped that audiences will relate to the historic and geographic events through the personal stories.

My own story

My story is one of the 18 featured in the *Sanctuary* theme of the exhibition. Both my parents were child refugees from Nazi Germany. My mother, Hanna Cohn, came here on the

Kindertransport, her life and those of her brother and sister and my grandmother saved by an English friend, Mary Caro. You can see a photograph of my mother arriving at Liverpool Street Station in July 1939 in the exhibition, along with her ID card stamped with the 'J' for Jew and middle name Sara given by the Nazis to all Jewish girls and women.



Kennort: Halle/S.
Kennummer: A 00026
Gültig bis 1. Februar 1944
Name [illegible]
Vornamen Hanna Ruth Sara
Geburtstag 25. Oktober 1928
Geburtsort Halle/Saale
Beruf
Unveränderliche Kennzeichen fehlen
Veränderliche Kennzeichen fehlen
Bemerkungen: Keine

Rechter Zeigefinger
Linker Zeigefinger
(Unterschrift des Kennkarteninhabers)
Halle/S., den 1. Feb. 1939
Der Polizei-Präsident
(Ausstellende Behörde)
(Unterschrift des ausfertigenden Beamten)

My father Peter Singer was sent to England, to Farnham Grammar School. His parents, both dentists in Nürnberg, Germany, remained behind. At Kristallnacht, my grandfather was detained in Dachau concentration camp. After that the wonderful headmaster of Farnham Grammar School, Dr Morgan, arranged for my grandparents to come to England to join my father, so their lives were saved too.

These stories highlight huge acts of kindness and sadness as my mother's father perished in Auschwitz. We are so grateful that my family found sanctuary here. After our parents died, my sister and I found many documents, with some in a suitcase you can also see in the exhibition. I used the documents to write up our grandparents' stories and we deposited the family papers with the Wiener Holocaust Library. We feel it is important to make sure their stories are not forgotten, particularly because, as we know only too well, genocide and anti-Semitism did not stop with the Holocaust. I am grateful that these stories are included in the exhibition.

My parents' refugee background has influenced me in my voluntary work with refugees. I volunteered with the Refugee Council when they set up the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme in Hertfordshire, and now volunteer with Herts Welcomes Refugees. SAMS has established links with Herts Welcomes Refugees and has co-hosted family teas where local Syrian refugees have cooked together with SAMS members; last year due to Covid there was a virtual cookery swap instead. I am currently co-running an Erasmus + funded AMICI autobiographical digital storytelling course for the Jewish community and am convinced of the power of sharing personal stories to give people a voice and aid understanding. I feel desperately sorry for unaccompanied child refugees who are prevented from family reunion with relatives in this country. This stems from the fact that my parents were child refugees and found sanctuary here. My twin sister, Debora Singer MBE, has focused on human rights for many years, particularly for asylum seekers, and is an alumna of UEL. Our own family background has been a significant driver in her work.

Wider community

The exhibition seeks to show that the Jewish community is involved with the wider St Albans community. The contributors are all introduced with their professions and how long they have

lived in the area so that local people find out a bit more about them. I personally love St Albans and am proud that it is home to so many diverse groups of people.

The St Albans Life section of the exhibition has photographs of involvement with the local community, for example the Mitzvah or community day work carried out by local synagogues, including tidying the local cemetery, hedgerow planting in Verulamium Park, clearing the river Ver, tree planting in Heartwood Forest, cooking for a centre for the homeless. There are also many examples of multi faith work, such as a local toddler group run at SAMS for seven years until closed due to Covid and support for the St Albans Black Lives Matter movement. These activities represent one way of belonging to one's local community.

Response to the online exhibition

We wanted the stories to illustrate universal themes that apply to the Jewish community but could also apply to other groups of migrants as they settle in the UK. In addition, by telling the stories we hoped to explain a little about the Jewish experience to increase understanding and counteract prejudice.

Preliminary evaluation shows that the exhibition is well received by local people who appreciate seeing people they recognise (one contributor is a local GP) and the St Albans map. Others said that it made them appreciate the diversity that St Albans embraces. Someone else wrote that it 'underlined for me how little we know about some of the extraordinary stories behind people in our local communities', whilst another resident said 'I was fascinated to learn the moving stories and about my home town of 62 years'. Another visitor wrote 'It made me reflect

on my own family history, nowhere near so traumatic as those portrayed but still involving much change over the generations'.

As the exhibition is online it was possible to share it beyond St Albans. Positive feedback was received from those who liked the personal stories with comments such as 'the personal stories bring everything to life and provide the link with the present day,' 'I like the photographs of everyone outside their homes and the way that you've linked through the individual stories to the wider themes' and 'I love the way you combined the individual stories with broader historical and geographical contextualisation'.

Several visitors found the stories affected them emotionally: 'I was able to learn and feel so much in such a clear, simple way and, the universal themes really bring it emotionally to life.' The positive nature of the exhibition was also appreciated: 'some of the stories are so moving and yet the whole thing is very positive', 'So many incredibly moving stories, highlighting the remarkable courage and determination of people in the face of adversity.' This visitor reflected the idea of understanding more about each other: 'this valuable contribution will hopefully help bind our country more together.'

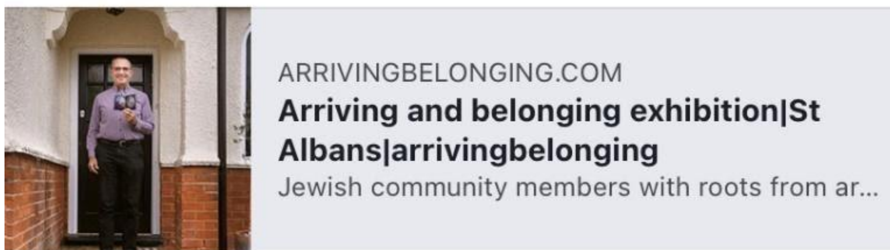
It is hoped that the online exhibition can be used in schools as recommended by this former teacher: 'The website is a really valuable historical database and I can… see it being a very valuable teaching and learning resource for schools across the country.' (The website contains links to activity sheets aimed at younger visitors, encouraging them to think about Judaism and wider issues such as migration, persecution and integration.)

The importance of continuing to share these stories was also highlighted in comments such as 'it's so important to keep sharing stories and history and this is such an interesting and personal way to do it' and 'It's so important that we remember, and to read your story and those of others from St Albans makes the Jewish history and suffering of the 20th century so much more personal and immediate.' A German friend wrote about the importance of 'passing on history and stories, especially with all the terrible things that have happened. And passing on the wonderful living traditions of Jewish culture.'

A panel event hosted by the museum where 3 contributors talked about belonging was well received, with this Catholic Priest even basing his Lent sermon on the discussion:

It was refreshing, then, to hear tonight heart-warming stories related by numerous families, each of whom have good cause to be thankful for the kindness and welcome their ancestors received when they came to our shores. They show their continued appreciation by involving themselves generously in many community-building and inter-faith projects, such as working with refugees and other vulnerable people. They hold an alternative mirror up to us, showing us a better side of ourselves. As we look at that aspect of our British identity we see how important it is today to strongly reaffirm the values of tolerance, diversity and social generosity we might otherwise be in danger of losing.

For more information on the exhibition, visit www.arrivingbelonging.com



We are grateful that the universal themes illustrated through personal stories in the exhibition seem to have resonated with the audience and hope that readers of this article will be inspired to visit the online exhibition. We feel strongly that everyone has a story and that it is important to share our stories to help us understand each other better. If you have feedback on the exhibition or would like help mapping your own community's roots with our Mapping your Community's Roots Toolkit, please contact the project team at arrivingbelonging@e-sams.org

For illustration credits please see https://www.arrivingbelonging.com/credits

Qisetna: preserving Syrian oral heritage one story at a time

Sarah Barker[1]

In *Wandering Old Damascus…,* Alaa remembers how she would walk to buy cups of lemonade to take home to her grandmother. She describes how the streets would carry a heavy scent of jasmine and oranges mixed amongst 13,000 years of history laced into the Roman stones.

In *The Smell of Nostalgia,* Tasar recalls her mother working hard in the heat on summer evenings over her clay furnace around sunset preparing fresh pies for the passers-by on the street. She thinks of her mother's fervent desire to give and feed those around her with pride now every time she sees 'made in Syria' on products in her local shop in the Netherlands.

Photo from *The Smell of Nostalgia*, Qiestna.

In *Syrian coffee shops*, Amr recalls finishing his master's thesis, sending job applications, and eventually meeting his wife within the familiar coffee shops that were such a fundamental part of the Damascene life. He describes how the waiters would have specific roles, which meant

[1] Sarah Barker, smbarker30@outlook.com, Qisetna: info@Qisetna.com

that asking for coffee, shaii, or zhourat from the waiter providing backgammon cards would be useless.

Photo from *Syrian coffee shops*, Qiestna.

In *Aleppo's Markets*, Yasser fondly remembers when his father would tell him stories. He described how the sellers in the souq's would share their trade whilst working in the small spice stalls inside the larger Mdayene market.

These are tiny fragments of some of the memories collected and preserved from the stories of refugees. Each of these is part of a wider piece that has been curated and published by Qisetna, which is a digital archive dedicated to preserving the cultural heritage of Syria.

Since 2013, Qisetna has worked to create a communal platform where Syrians who have been displaced across the world can share their stories. The purpose of the project is to support displaced individuals in reconnecting with their cultural heritage through the practice of sharing memories and stories. It has been noted that the next chapter of Syria's revolution will be digitised through the creation of online archives that could one day hold the regime accountable (Vice, 2021). In their award-winning work, Qisetna focuses on participatory contribution and collaboration in building a virtual platform that sustains displaced refugees located across the world in connecting with their oral heritage. Storytelling is a fundamental element of Syrian identity and culture which Qisetna wants to support through their promotion of an international community. Traditional archive formats are involved in this intention, but the use of an accessible virtual platform enables individuals to access and contribute remotely from wherever they are. This inevitably creates challenges with regards to language barriers,

collating material formats, and negative media narratives. Nonetheless, Qisetna works hard to maintain an active and creative engagement in the depiction of histories that move away from the representations of trauma given by the mainstream media.

The project has developed into an archive that preserves Syrian heritage through individual recollections. Furthermore, Qisetna operates not only as a platform for storytelling but in the initiation of projects involving outreach, advocacy, community involvement and research. The project acts as a catalyst for storytelling workshops, exhibitions, seminars, film screenings and other events that strives to create a community where Syrians can share and be promoted in their own work.

Qisetna is a place for memories, preservation and connection that aims to support individuals with reclaiming their cultural heritage. Within the scope of Qisetna's intention and work lies the reality of individual identity and narrative. Qisetna strives to move away from the rhetoric of labels and politics to provide a space for the assortment of cultures that have come to physically inhabit Syria. The priority is to provide individuals with the space to explore their own linguistic, social, and national sense of belonging and identity. The project is based in the United Kingdom and spearheaded by Juan delGado and Dima Mekdad with the support of a diverse voluntary staff. All published content is translated into Arabic or English with the hope that further languages will be available soon. Qisetna is active in their support of inclusivity and diversity in their efforts to unpin the complexities of individual identities within refugee narratives.

References

Aleppo's Markets by Yasser Fallaha, 28 March 2021 (https://www.Qisetna.com/aleppo-markets/)
Syrian coffee shops – our cultural identity by Amr Al-Faham, 22 April 2021 (https://www.Qisetna.com/syrian-coffee-shops/)
The Next Chapter of Syria's revolution will be digitised by Mohammed Rasool, 11 March 2021 (https://www.vice.com/en/article/jgqzz3/syrian-archive-war-crimes-database)
The Smell of Nostalgia by Tasar Isskreah, 2 May 2021 (https://www.Qisetna.com/the-smell-of-nostalgia/)
Wandering Old Damascus for frozen lemonade by Qisetna, 9 June 2019 (https://www.Qisetna.com/frozen-lemonade/)

Meaningful participation as an approach to trauma healing? Reflections from the VOICES Network

Yusuf Ciftci[1] and Larysa Agbaso[2]

Community-based projects working with refugees have the potential for both positive and negative impact on the mental health of participants. This article shows how embedding the principles of safety, affect management and the use of narratives while applying the co-production approach can have a healing effect on trauma, by drawing on the case of a UK-based participation project, the VOICES Network.

For those fleeing their homes to seek sanctuary, the arrival to the host country is supposed to be the happy ending. Yet it is just the beginning of a new chapter in life, often adding further damage to existing and complex migrant trauma. Months in refugee camps, bereavement, separation from family and friends (Morrice et al., 2019) in conjunction with the post-migration stressors such as a language barrier, limited access to healthcare and education, the complex legal system, uncertainty, isolation and social exclusion (Simpson, 2019; Stewart, 2012) make the effects of trauma more severe. Stigma, cultural aspects or difficulties with understanding how the support system works can prevent refugees and asylum seekers from seeking mental health support (Turrini et al., 2017; van der Boor and White, 2020). In addition, the extreme emotional and health needs associated with the physical or psychological trauma can require more holistic interventions than what counselling services can offer. It is not always possible that a person can feel safe talking about past and present traumatic experiences (Horsman, 2000). Moreover, not being able to articulate and share the experiences of social injustice can make that person feel voiceless and therefore, worthless. In the UK, the VOICES Network was set up as a safe platform to work with, not for, experts by experience of forced displacement to facilitate empowerment, integration and distribution of power, promoting self-awareness, confidence and wellbeing.

The VOICES Network was established in 2018 as a part of Amplifying the Voices of Asylum Seekers and Refugees for Integration and Life Skills (AVAIL) Project at the British Red Cross. The VOICES Network's aim was to speak out about the issues that affect forced migrants, advocate to change policy, use the media to change minds and use expertise from lived experience to improve services and practice. The network used the principle of co-production to enable people with the lived experience of forced migration to inform, shape and participate in the project delivery. Starting with a small number of participants, called VOICES ambassadors, the network quickly expanded with its branches in Birmingham, Derby, Glasgow, Leeds, Leicester, London, Sheffield, and across Wales and south-east England. To date, with training and support, VOICES ambassadors raised their voices at more than 300 different events. Apart from the project delivery objectives, one of the main results of the project was the new skills and

[1] Yusuf Ciftci, VOICES Ambassador, London, yusufciftci4@gmail.com
[2] Larysa Agbaso, VOICES Ambassador, Newport, agbasolora@yahoo.com

abilities demonstrated by participants particularly with positive outcomes for mental health and wellbeing. The adherence to the principles of co-production, safety, affect management and the use of narratives contributed to this project becoming therapeutic and bringing positivity and engagement into the lives of many participants.

Co-production approach

Agency plays a fundamental role in trauma healing and well-being (van der Kolk, 2015). In the context of the hostile environment and systematic discrimination, a sense of control over your own life and faith in your ability to cope with an issue can reduce trauma symptoms and maintain psychological stability (Levine, 2015). To facilitate the restoration of the sense of agency, the co-production approach oriented the project participants towards the activation of their transformative capabilities and a hopeful vision. This value-driven participatory approach gave space for the ambassadors to reflect on the material conditions of their lives and experiences, and, where appropriate, act to effect a change. Rather than treating people as passive recipients of a service, co-production ensured equal and reciprocal partnerships. Service providers and people with lived experience worked collaboratively to shape and deliver services and activities. Some of the activities included designing the VOICES logo, co-designing workshops of gender-based violence for migrant women and on improving communication with the Home Office, developing advocacy strategies, leading assemblies at schools about refugees, taking part in advocacy and media training, creating podcasts and videos and organising conference in Parliament. Thus, the ambassadors took initiative and worked together to co-design and -deliver these activities, which promoted the sense of gaining power and control contributing to mental health stability and well-being.

Safety and a sense of belonging to a like-minded community

Displaced people who have been traumatised see the world with different eyes. Their sense of security and trust can easily be destroyed by traumatic events and/or violated by a lack of fair and effective asylum and support systems. This is why safety is probably the most significant element for the well-being of the displaced people (Horsman, 2000). The provision of such space for safe connection and environment, fostering community-building among people who could truly understand the challenges and hardships of being a forced migrant was the priority of the network. This reciprocity created emotional safety and a comforting feeling of being in the mind and hearts of people who had similar experiences, which is fundamental for healing and growing.

Given that the issues shared or discussed during meetings or events could trigger traumatic memories, the opportunity to opt out of the activity was available at any time. Such flexibility ensured the ambassadors' experiences and feelings were respected and responsibility for their own well-being was promoted. Having a meeting agenda, optional attendance, financial support towards transportation costs, effective feedback and support mechanisms all contributed to building strong relationships, rebuilding trust and strengthening social support that is the most powerful protection against trauma.

Affect Management

The trauma caused through the experience of forced migration can be exacerbated by ongoing issues in the UK asylum system including uncertainty over a relatively long asylum period, striving to reunite with families, or combatting the impact of immigration detention. The huge human impact of such issues can make it very difficult for VOICES ambassadors to share and speak out at events or regular meetings, as it could easily trigger negative memories and lead to re-traumatisation. It was therefore vital to set up a provision of psycho-social support and the help of a caseworker to offer social, emotional or case-specific support. As part of the induction to the project, self-care sessions to educate the participants about mental health and promote taking responsibility for one's own well-being were provided. The ambassadors were constantly reminded about the voluntary nature of the participation, anonymity options and informed consent, and supported before, during and after each engagement to create an atmosphere of trust, respect, comfort, care and safety.

Healing through narratives

Emerging from the traumatic experiences while telling the personal stories can be a part of the healing process (Herman, 1992), the celebration of attained strengths, the reconstruction of safety, trust, attachment and hope (Nicholas et al., 2011). For many ambassadors, the VOICES network proved to be a safe place to open up rather than pretend that traumatic events did not happen. Throughout the project implementation, the majority of participants noted that connecting with people who understand or try to understand was one of the best ways to improve their well-being. Ambassadors expressed their pain, mourned together, disclosed personal stories, fears and worries. They believe it helped them accept their past and be understood and supported, rather than being in a cycle of victimhood. The participants valued the opportunity to share their stories with other ambassadors and the wider public. Expressing self through creative poetry, performing, music, songs or photos minimised the dependency on English language proficiency and helped avoid the speechlessness caused by trauma. The power of personal stories not only played the role of a therapeutic technique but also became a powerful tool in reaching the audience.

Challenges and recommendations

There are a number of challenges that can make participation in community-based projects potentially detrimental for mental health and wellbeing of both participants and the project staff.

- The time needed for changes in the system. As the collaborative aim of working towards a hopeful future depends on many elements, sharing voices is often not enough to bring a sustainable change for that future. The absence of any positive transformative impact and influence on the mind, policy and practice can make refugees and asylum seekers feel disheartened about their involvement.
- Tokenistic nature of some events. In the policy and public service context, the achievement of meaningful engagement and effective participation is not an easy process. Public bodies, including the media, have often shown opportunistic attitudes when it came to engagement with 'experts by experience'. An invitation to join a

stakeholder meeting can present a gesture of goodwill. However, it can have a subtle tokenistic nature when experts by experience are used by the bodies to promote their profile, rather than meaningfully collaborate. This can exacerbate ongoing frustration and disappointment, leading to desperation and a loss of confidence from the self and the collaborative aim.

- To prevent potential harm, effective management of expectations, continual reminders about keeping realistic expectations, a proactive policy analysis of how to make greater contributions, and the use of available tools and resources from existing campaigns have been applied and shown some positive effects. Achieving true co-production, especially in policy and public context where there are systemic imbalances, is vital, and it should be fully appreciated and implemented reciprocally.
- Building peer power and engagement within the network. Staff and ambassadors should show a dedication to upholding co-production principles, embodying a proactive stance over opportunities in the media, policy and service improvement work. As the underpinning aspects of the network are trust, safety and support, it is also important that ongoing support and communication with dedicated staff members is available beyond normal working hours. Building a meaningful engagement is more likely through fostering sustainable relationships within the network, and these relationships would benefit if staff member(s) have lived experience of forced displacement.
- Exposure to traumatic narratives. Indirect exposure to traumatic narratives can be overwhelming not only for participants, but it can also put staff members at risk of secondary or vicarious trauma, burnout or compassion fatigue (Guhan and Liebling-Kalifani, 2011). To prevent this, members of staff should be offered regular psycho-social support and be aware of the symptoms of vicarious and secondary trauma, and self-care strategies.
- Difficulties in meaningfully engaging online. As a response to COVID-19 pandemic, the network has made a shift to virtual meetings and activities. It created further challenges to meaningful engagement. These circumstances made it more important to put extra effort into the ways and mechanisms of building a like-minded community that will create conditions to promote mental health and wellbeing.

When participation becomes ‘therapeutic’

Our experience has shown that the achievement of the aim of a community-based project can be a relatively complex process. However, community projects create a suitable environment to enhance belonging to the society, create safety and reciprocity to address the emotional and mental health needs of participants. Thus, these projects have space for migrant trauma healing. Regardless of having expertise in trauma, the project facilitators can still embed the principles of safety, affect management, co-production (or at least an effective participation) to help the displaced people gain control over their lives. Allowing refugees and asylum seekers to advocate for themselves to be released from silence, offering participation choices, strengthening community ties present a platform for making a step towards trauma healing, finding meaning and purpose in life.

Creating a space for refugees to use their insights and expertise from their lived experience can turn meaningful participation into a 'therapeutic' activity:

> "I have the privilege to bring change to my own life and the lives of the many who do not have a voice. I'm grateful to be part of a group that understands my situation because we all have a lot in common when it comes to our experiences." (Isabella, VOICES Ambassador, Glasgow)

Acknowledgements

This article is written in a personal capacity and does not necessarily represent the views of any groups or organisations mentioned. The authors would like to thank Thomas Hoare, Alison Crawshaw, and Kieran Rustage for their helpful advice and guidance in the submission of this article.

References

Guhan, R. and Liebling-Kalifani, H. (2011) 'The Experiences of Staff Working with Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the United Kingdom: A Grounded Theory Exploration', Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies, 9(3), pp. 205-228.
Herman, J. L. (1992). Trauma and recovery. New York, NY: Basic Books.
Horsman, J. (2000) Too Scared to Learn: Women, Violence, and Education. NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
Levine, P.A. (2015). Trauma and memory: Brain and body in a search for the living past: A practical guide for understanding and working with traumatic memory. North Atlantic Books.
Morrice, L., Tip, L., Collyer, M., and Brown, R. (2019) 'You can't have a good integration when you don't have a good communication': English-language learning among resettled refugees in England', Journal of Refugee Studies. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fez023 (Accessed: 01 April 2021).
Nicholas, B. J., Rossiter, M. J. and Abbott, M. L. (2011). 'The power of story in the ESL classroom', Canadian Modern Language Review, 67, pp.247–268.
Simpson, J. (2019) 'Navigating Immigration Law in a "Hostile Environment": Implications for Adult Migrant Language Education', TESOL J. Available at https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.558 (Accessed: 01 April 2021)
Stewart, E. (2012). 'UK Dispersal Policy and Onward Migration: Mapping the Current State of Knowledge', Journal of Refugee Studies, 25(1), pp. 25–49.
Turrini, G., Purgato, M., Ballette, F., Nosè, M., Ostuzzi, G., Barbui, C. (2017) 'Common mental disorders in asylum seekers and refugees: umbrella review of prevalence and intervention studies', International Journal of Mental Health Systems, 11(51), Available at: https://doi.org/10.1186/s13033-017-0156-0 (Accessed: 30 April 2021)
van der Boor, C.F. and White, R. (2020). 'Barriers to Accessing and Negotiating Mental Health Services in Asylum Seeking and Refugee Populations: The Application of the Candidacy Framework', Journal of Immigrant Minority Health, 22, pp.156–174.
van der Kolk, B. (2015) The body keeps the score: brain, mind, and body in the healing of trauma NY: Penguin Books.

Juan delGado's Drifting Narratives: injecting agency into refugee stories

David Andrews[1]

Juan delGado, left, and still from Altered Landscapes (2015)[2]

Conventional approaches to capturing refugee stories document the often-dramatic circumstances of escape from devastation and the struggle to rebuild a life in a foreign country. This approach risks stereotyping the refugee as a passive victim prey to malign external forces which might include unscrupulous people - smugglers, hostile border forces and unwelcome host populations. The Spanish, London-based moving image artist, Juan delGado has avoided this trap by framing the refugee narrative as one of mutual involvement with the struggles of the communities they have joined.

His Drifting Narratives website is home to a number of films which demonstrate his philosophy of facilitating the "unfolding" of the migrant narrative. Altered Landscapes (2015) the first part of a trilogy of "creative documentaries" was made in the immediate aftermath of the mass dispersal of refugees following the Syrian Civil war and was first shown as part of a multimedia installation at Watermans art centre in West London in 2016. While it evokes the claustrophobia and loneliness of the search for a safe haven, the migrants themselves are absent from the scene. We see the transitory and fragmented world of urban anonymity and their trek to safety through their own eyes. The landscape acts as a dumb witness to the migrant's journey from Damascus to Calais via Athens.

[1] David Andrews, davidandrews2001@aol.com
[2] Images courtesy of Juan delGado, with gratitude.

Still from Altered Landscapes (2015)

A voiceover tells a poetic and impressionistic story of nostalgia for the war-torn country left behind. The unseen narrator is distressed and ambivalent about leaving Damascus ("this is where I belong") but he is impelled by the search for a loved one. The dissolution and reconstitution of his identity is signified in Kafkaesque style through a sequence of insect metamorphosis. The struggle to emerge from the chrysalis somehow conveys so much more than hours of documentary transit camp footage.

Still from Altered Landscapes (2015)

The second half of the film is a silent meditation on the windswept European landscape littered with detritus, the poignant signs of the improvised, chaotic lifestyle of refugees in flight from their homeland. We are required to fill the gaps (whose shoe, whose comb, whose bags?) and the reality of the refugee's precarious journey takes shape in our mind's eye. The final fleeting images of razor wire and lorries, a familiar sight from your comfortable Eurostar carriage as it speeds through Calais, is perceived very differently by the desperately hopeful asylum-seeker on the other side of the fence.

Still from Altered Landscapes (2015)

In the light of populist U.K media frenzy about the influx of “hordes of illegal refugees”, it needs constant reinforcement that comparative European statistics reveal a different story. Up to 2019, Sweden has welcomed 113,000 Syrian refugees while the U.K at the bottom of Europe’s league table has grudgingly accepted only 11,000. DelGado’s meeting with the Syrian writer Khaled Alesmael who first sought asylum in Sweden in 2014 triggered a partnership which led to extensive encounters with groups of migrants some housed in compounds following their unwilling transfer to Norrbotten, the northernmost region of Sweden.

He was struck by both the cultural and climatic shock of their arrival in Sweden. In months spent on research visits he was deeply affected by their alienated existence and its toll on their mental health. The climate, language and culture gaps between Sweden and Syria might have suggested a standard victim narrative emphasising trauma and alienation. Instead, delGado’s most recent project, In the Shadow of the Midnight Sun (2021) amalgamates two "outsider" perspectives of migrants and the local indigenous Sami population. The contrasting fellow

feeling engendered by their experience of cultural and environmental displacement deflects the imposition of a victim narrative while illuminating their shared distress of marginalisation.

Still from In the Shadow of the Midnight Sun (2021)

The 25-minute film traces the journey of the Syrian asylum seeker, Khaled Alesmael travelling on a sleeper train through the Arctic landscape, diarising his thoughts of his past life in Damascus and reflecting on his encounters with a range of individuals, some Sami (including deer herders, horse breeders and musicians) and some Syrian. The problems of assimilation with the dominant Swedish society that confront both migrant and indigenous peoples bring a global perspective to their plight. The common experience of climate change shared by Syrian and Sami is another link as their traditional agricultural and herding economies have both suffered from the impact of global warming.

Still from In the Shadow of the Midnight Sun (2021)

Anna Karin is a Sami horse farmer dispossessed by the landscape despoilment of the local ore mining. The narration shared between Anna and Khaled reveals their mutual experience of displacement and grief passing down the generations and flooding their thoughts. The dramatic images of the vast open-cast iron ore mine at Kiruna that has been worked for over a hundred years contrasts with Anna's resigned stoicism whose life, along with thousands of others, has been overturned by forced resettlement.

Still from In the Shadow of the Midnight Sun (2021)

The bleak sub-Arctic landscape scared by the incursion of mineworking is a brutal, closing drone-shot image. The fragility of the Sami homeland mirrors the vulnerability of their cultural identity in the face of westernisation. The mutual sense of rootlessness is summed up by a Sami woman:

> "It was like a kick in the stomach, I couldn't breathe. What shall we do? It was a shock. You don't just lose a home, a house, you lose your entire community, your people. This is my home; I don't have the right to my home anymore, but I still live here."

Review: Eleuterio Toro, *Exiliado en Buckingham Palace (An Exile in Buckingham Palace)*

(Eleuterio Toro, 2020). ISBN: 979-8687580625 (paperback), £14.99, 461 pages.

Gloria Miqueles[1]

Exiliado en Buckingham Palace (An Exile in Buckingham Palace) by Eleuterio Toro, is an autobiography which takes us through the amazing journey of a Chilean life. Beginning with his life in the countryside as a peasant child where poverty was abundant, it takes us through his time of political awakening, support of a progressive government, and his persecution by a brutal dictatorship, to his exile in the U.K.

Toro is a well-known and widely recognised mathematician, who has spent many years researching the construction of computational methods, with a long and impressive trajectory into areas that are a complete mystery to me. A prolific writer of scientific books, with hundreds of articles to his credit, this biographical book is far removed from what he is used to writing. But Toro is, above all, a Chilean with a long and tough political journey that forced him into exile.

This story of his exile reminds us how hard life is for people who have been forced to leave their country. It will make the reader pay close attention to the news that the Home Office has

[1] Gloria Miqueles. Email c/o displacedvoices@livingrefugeearchive.org Photograph courtesy of author.

published plans for 'new' legislation to change the UK's immigration system, measures that were previously rejected as causing grave harm to the people in need of asylum in the UK.

Toro's life in exile will sound familiar to other exiles from all walks of life, wherever they came from and whatever the circumstances that brought them to their country of destination. It helps us understand the psychological impact of not having a choice and of being forced to leave your home country to face the unknown. It also highlights the associated hardships in facing a different culture and an unknown language.

The author gives us an insight into his life before arriving in the UK. His nightmare started immediately after the coup d'état in September 1973, led by General Augusto Pinochet, that overthrew the legitimately elected socialist president Salvador Allende (1970-1973). Toro's name appeared repeatedly on a list read on the radio calling him to make his way to the barracks of the Tucapel Regiment in Temuco city. Despite avoiding arrest several times, he ended up being kidnapped and tortured twice. While under house arrest, he escaped to Santiago, fleeing for his life. He lived underground until he was able to leave the country via Argentina and make his way to England.

Life as a refugee is hard and includes a fair degree of discrimination, racism, and resentment (sometimes overt, sometimes hidden) from locals towards those 'bloody foreigners', and in his case from some, probably very jealous, colleagues. But what Toro emphasises in his account of exile in England is that you will also find English people with a big heart, who will give you the solidarity that helps to overcome obstacles. His example shows us that although it is not easy, refugees can achieve their potential and succeed in whatever path they choose to follow and they will be good at it, or excellent like Toro. But be warned: the journey is an uphill struggle.

This story of exile shows us that it was not only the opportunities presented to Toro that enabled him to succeed, for example the grant awarded by the World University Service, but also his resilience and determination. He achieved the highest professional accolade and was honoured with an OBE (The Most Excellent Order of the British Empire is a British honour presented by the Queen). His acceptance of the OBE was not well received by Chileans who are not keen on the Monarchy.

I would highly recommend this book to all generations of exiles. It is a bit long, and the author has left some gaps in the narrative which the reader might have liked included to satisfy their curiosity. Nonetheless, I believe it makes particularly good reading and is a source of hope and guidance for those who are starting their refugee journey in the UK. And for those who have gone through similar experiences it is a reminder of the importance of our own stories and will hopefully offer a stimulus to write them down and keep the memories alive. It is in remembering our stories that we can say, "never again!"

Confronting the homelands: The role of literature in second generation refugee identity struggles.

Carole Concha Bell[1]

In 1973 Socialist President Salvador Allende, democratically elected by the people and radical in his vision for Chile, was deposed by the military junta and his supporters hunted down, rounded up, and tortured or killed. During the 1970s and 1980s as the regime took hold of the country, it has been estimated that nearly half a million Chileans were exiled following the military coup. The families left Chile under traumatic circumstances, some vowing to return as soon as the dictatorship was over, others choosing to remain in their countries of exile. Most of the refugees were survivors of torture and persecution, and witness to the murder of their comrades and the massacre of a dream.

The onslaught of Chilean exile was profoundly political and distressing, made all the more difficult by the typical struggles faced by newcomers in foreign lands: learning new languages, taking poorly paid jobs and confronting cultures vastly different from their own. Caught between two worlds, the children of exiles either born in exile or leaving Chile as children, became the reluctant witnesses of their parents' painful adjustment processes.

The UK welcomed no more than 3,000 Chilean exiles (in comparison to over 100,000 in Sweden) making it a tight knit community. While they were located across the UK, big cities such as Birmingham, Edinburgh and Sheffield spawned strong Chilean communities often supported by sympathisers such as trade unions and humanitarian organisations like the Quakers. I grew up in one of these communities, first in Cambridge and then, when my parents received a World University Scholarship, in Birmingham. Most of my friends were also the children of Chilean exiles and much of my childhood was spent at solidarity events where my parents tirelessly campaigned against the dictatorship. However, I came to resent their insistence on trying to form me as a Chilean. My very survival depended on assimilating British culture, and like many children, I simply wanted to blend in. I identified as British and that feeling grew ever stronger as I became a teenager. I did not understand why my parents were so determined to maintain their cultural identity or fight for a country thousands of miles away, lost in time.

Confronting the Homeland

In 1990 I was 15 and living in London with my father. He was the coordinator for Chilean Exile NGO Chile Democratico based in Old Street, North London, and as a result, privy to much information. He assured me that the dictator would fall, and we would finally 'go home'. Junot Diaz the Dominican American writer once spoke about this shadow that loomed over his childhood in an interview:

> "From the moment I could remember, it was made very clear to me that I was going to the United States," he says. "There was already the shadow of the United States over all of our lives. There was a sense that the world that we were inhabiting, the people that we

[1] Carole Concha Bell, @chiledissident, conchabellis@gmail.com.

> were connected to, the neighbourhood that was more or less my entire universe, that all of these things would soon vanish."

From 1988 things changed quickly in Chile, the fax machine at Chile Democratico tirelessly churned out lists of people allowed to return. Finally, after 13 years of being blacklisted, 450,000 Chileans living in political exile across the globe were permitted to return to Chile (Artigas, 2006).

I did my best to swerve those uncomfortable conversations about 'returning'. London was my home, not that hot, dusty hell that represented death, persecution, and rejection. All I wanted to do was prepare for my upcoming exams and not think about Chile. Alas, I was never to take them. Shortly after my 16th birthday my father came home bursting with excitement, his handsome face beaming. It had finally happened. We were off the blacklist and now free to return. My tiny acts of rebellion such as running away to Wolverhampton for three days and hiding in a shed, did little to affect the inevitable. On 26 October 1990 we boarded an Avianca Plane toward Caracas and then Santiago bound.

We landed in Santiago and lived there for a few months until my father rented a flat in the Southern city of Chillan, where he was from. Chillan is a small conservative rural city that, unbeknown to me, was socially segregated and still reeling from the effects of the regime. The shock of being transplanted from the multicultural metropolis that is London to this small outback where bulls and horses roamed the streets, was immense.

My father adjusted quickly, reverting to whoever he was before his enforced exile in the UK. He took a new wife and started a new family. I on the other hand began to wilt like an uprooted plant. I made friends but could not adjust to Chile's antiquated cultural norms. There were structural issues too, like schooling and the language. I furiously clung to my British identity, refusing to learn Spanish and or to engage in norms, breaking rules at every opportunity.

I eventually found my tribe, composed mainly of other exile kids from France, Belgium, Sweden, Canada, and Switzerland. We were united in our alienation from Chilean society and proud of our misfit status. Chile had forgotten us, and we returnees were a thorn in its side: a reminder that a very brutal exile had taken place. Chile wanted to move forward from the past but without addressing those dark issues of the past or acknowledging our existence at all. The order was to blend in and shut up. Shut up about Europe, stop wearing those clothes, stop listening to that music.

What we did not grasp was that the dictatorship propaganda machine had manufactured the concept of a 'golden exile' during the regime. The claim was that Chilean exile was a privilege, pitting incoming returnees against our compatriots that had lived through one of the most heinous regimes in Latin America. (Wright and Zuniga, 2007:63). And while this notion of 'golden exile' originated from right wing elements, it proliferated across Chilean society, including those on the left who felt abandoned by us.

At parties we debated our legal status at length. Were we really exiles if born abroad? Was this forced 'return' not a sort of exile? Was this new Chilean identity not being imposed upon us? Eventually most of us left Chile. I was one of the last to leave, hanging on for six years.

Eventually I made enough money through teaching English to the pampered upper classes of Santiago who requested my services because of my exquisite British accent. I arrived back in the UK in 1997, alone and even more confused than when I had left as a teenager.

Making sense of identity: first v second generation exile

In 2019, I decided to examine the theme of exile and identity by embarking on a Creative Writing MA. Once I had learned about the varying literary devices that exist, fiction in all its forms stood out as the vehicle that would enable me to begin the process of interpreting my experiences. In contrast to writing from an academic perspective, fiction, whether it be via a novel, short stories or a full blown longform novel, gives writers the artistic freedom to incorporate not personal experiences, but that of others observed. In preparation I devoured books by Chilean exile authors such as Roberto Bolaño and Ariel Dorfman, yet while I was mesmerised by the writing and identified with much of the visceral descriptions of uprootedness, I did not feel they encapsulated my experience as the daughter of exiles. These were first generation writers who, like my parents, had lived through a painful exile and possessed something I did not: a strong sense of identity, for they had lost their homeland whereas I had never known mine. And I would never know mine because I did not have one, being the bastard child of dictatorship and rejection, too British to be Chilean. Too Chilean to be fully British. It dawned on me that a distinction needed to be made between the generation of those expelled from Chile as exiles and identified as such, versus those of us born or bred in 'host' countries and who identified with their cultures.

I decided to write my Masters dissertation on the theme of second-generation exile in fiction and while searching for academic texts on the literary output of second-generation Chileans. I stumbled upon the term 'hinge generation' and 'double exile' or 'counter diaspora.' (King and Christow 2009;3). Still, I struggled to find authors specifically discussing the topic of second generation Chilean retorno and struggled even harder to find any novels written by hybrid retornados. It was time to finally rise to the challenge of writing the text I longed to read despite the pain of having to relive unpleasant memories.

Discovering Junot Diaz' Pulitzer Prize winning novel *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* turned me upside down. I saw myself reflected in this tale of political exile and identity struggles as Diaz skilfully conveyed how dictatorship and exile impacts upon families. After reading and analysing its contents I felt validated enough to begin planning and writing my novel. The artistry involved in the construction of these experiences using fiction as a device acted as a buffer, enabling me to detach myself and recall 1990s Chile as an observer. Chapters began to flow, though sometimes stunted by the minutiae of everyday tasks and the typical doubts most writers suffer.

In her blog Isabel Allende speaks of how writing fiction helped her overcome the trauma of exile:

> "It took me many years to get over the trauma of exile. I was lucky, though. I found something that saved me from despair. I found literature. Frankly, I think I would have not

> become a writer if I had not been forced to leave everything behind and start anew. Without the military coup I would have remained in Chile. I would still be a journalist and probably a happy one. In exile, literature gave me a voice. It rescued my memories from the curse of oblivion. It enabled me to create a universe of my own."

El Retorno was a strange period: a homecoming for some, an exile within an exile for others. In this case, the use of stories over academic interpretation fulfils many functions. It enables writers to document their experience of this particular point in history, and in turn carve out a unique identity separate from that of our parents and grandparents, that has its own characteristics and layers of pain. Documenting our perspective on this event gives us a voice to tell our stories and claim back our complex identities as players in this chapter of Chilean history.

References

Allende, Isabel, https://www.isabelallende.com/en/musings#life_in_exile
Diaz, J 2008, The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao, CPI Bookmarque, Croydon.
https://www.americamagazine.org/arts-culture/2017/05/04/junot-diaz-talks-dominican-identity-immigration-and-complicated-american
King, R., & Christow, A. (2009). Cultural Geographies of Diaspora, Migration and Transnationalism. Perspectives from the Study of Second-Generation 'Returnees', University of Sussex: Sussex Centre for Migration Research.
Wright, T. C., & Zúñiga, R. O. (2007). Chilean Political Exile, Latin American Perspectives, Issue 155, Vol. 34, No. 2, pp. 31 – 49.
Wright T.C., Oñate R. (2005) Chilean Diaspora. In: Ember M., Ember C.R., Skoggard I. (eds) Encyclopaedia of Diasporas.

From women's rights lawyer in Pakistan to a precarious life in Australia: Learning from lived experience

Mrs Babar, Lisa Hartley, Rachel Burke & Rebecca Field[1]

Introduction

Internationally the number of people displaced is at an historical high. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that there were more than 79.5 million people displaced by conflict or persecution at the end of 2019 (UNHCR 2019). Australia is one of a relatively small number of countries that annually resettles refugees from overseas. In accordance with its international obligations under the UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, Australia also provides protection to people who arrive in Australia seeking asylum. Historically, however, Australia's policy response to people seeking asylum has been particularly punitive, including the re-introduction of temporary forms of protection for those found to be refugees.

The choice to participate in higher education is an important factor for many people seeking asylum in Australia (Hartley, Fleay, Baker, Burke, & Field, 2018). Further education can provide asylum seekers with important opportunities to develop and enhance capacities and knowledge to sustain their livelihoods; aiding resettlement, social inclusion, and personal life fulfilment (Fleay, Lumbus & Hartley, 2016). Despite this, access to Australian higher education remains a persistently difficult problem for people seeking asylum who are effectively locked out because of the temporary nature of their visas (Burke, Fleay, Baker, Hartley, & Field, 2020). Because of their visa status, people seeking asylum and refugees living on temporary visas are classified as international students and are therefore pushed to pay full fees. Further, these people lose the only welfare payment they are eligible to collect if they enrol in a program of study of over 12 months duration. This has created a subclass of asylum seekers and refugees who are effectively denied access further education in Australia, unless they are able to access one of the few fee-waiver scholarships offered by some Australian universities (Hartley et al., 2018).

While the gendered issues that women refugees face in accessing education have been documented (Hatoss & Huijser, 2010; Harris, Chi & Spark; 2013; Watkins, Razee & Richters, 2012), there is little known about how women from asylum seeking backgrounds access, or participate in, higher education in Australia.

Overview of article

The discussion in this article focuses on the lived experience of a mature-aged woman living in Australia from an asylum-seeking background who is living on a temporary visa while her claims for refugee status are processed. Her discussion focuses on reflections of her educational experience and passions in her homeland of Pakistan and her aspirations and barriers to

[1] Lisa Hartley (Curtin University, lisa.hartley@curtin.edu.au); Rachel Burke (University of Newcastle); Rebecca Field (Curtin University) & Sally Baker (University of New South Wales)

engaging in higher education and employment in Australian society. This discussion comes from a broader collaborative research project with women from asylum-seeking backgrounds in Perth, Western Australia and four academics, all who identify as women. Through the broader collaborative project, the women seeking asylum discussed at length a range of issues relating to accessing higher education in their country of origin and in Australia. These conversations cut a range of issues including how gender identity intersected to shape experiences of accessing higher education in a pre- and post-migration context, and the conditions leading to their precarious experience in Australia. Mrs Babar[2], the first author of this article, is a woman of lived experience of seeking asylum and Lisa, the second author, is a human rights academic and practitioner. The third author, Rachel is an applied linguist and Rebecca, the fourth author, is a social work and human rights teacher and researcher.

My life in Pakistan: "How can I help these women?".

In north-west Pakistan where I grew up, women don't often pursue education, and many come from very disadvantaged backgrounds. In one country, we have a two-type society: one in which people are living a very hard life, and on the other side, they are living a life with the full luxuries. I was lucky to come from a privileged family and I think often about the first time I knew I wanted to be a lawyer. We had a maid who worked in our house during my childhood. When I was about six or seven years old, I remember her coming to our house with bruises on her face because her husband had beaten her so much. I couldn't understand this because in our home my dad was very polite, very cooperative with my mum, and sharing the housework with my mum. I couldn't understand how men could behave like this to hurt their wife. When I saw these bruises, I asked my dad, "How can I help these women?". My dad told me that if you want to do something you have to become a lawyer and fight for them.

From that moment, I was driven to become a lawyer to help women who are underprivileged and facing domestic violence and abuse. My parents and brothers helped me a lot during my studies which was a difficult profession to study because it was male dominated. But I was successful. I even appeared at a judiciary exam to work as a judge. Although I passed the exam, I didn't end up becoming a judge because when you become a judge, you can't help the women I wanted to help. So, I started working as a lawyer and worked with an NGO helping women facing abuse. Not long after this, however, I got married and needed to escape Pakistan to find safety. My husband and I ended up in Australia, and our lives have changed forever.

Coming to Australia: "I'm wasting my life and skills"

I arrived in Australia a few years ago and am still waiting for my refugee claims to be processed. While I wait, I am forced to live on a temporary bridging visa. This visa allows me to live in the Australian community but to gain access to higher education, I need to pay full-international student fees. There are some Australian universities that offer fee-waiving scholarships for people in my situation, but where I am in Perth only Curtin University offers these, and it is very competitive with only a few offered a year. To study a law degree as an international student is

[2] Mrs Babar is the pseudonym of the first author. A pseudonym has been used for the purpose of her safety in a hostile environment.

very expensive and impossible for me as being mother of two children on my husband's income. As an asylum seeker, I don't receive any government assistance for childcare to place my two children in day-care while I work or study. My husband says, "Whatever you are getting from your job, you will pay for the kids to be in day-care, so where will you leave the kids?". So, I am caught.

If I try to apply for recognition of my Pakistani law qualification, I need to pass the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) with a very high score of 8.0[3] and then submit my degree to the local bar for assessment. If I get a positive assessment, then I am eligible to attend a one-year legal training program. So, it's a long process and to achieve the high IELTS score requires professional coaching which costs a lot of money.

Sometimes I feel very depressed and I feel like I'm wasting my life and skills. If I were back in Pakistan at least I could do work in my field, but I can't go back to my country, it is not safe. This situation not only affects my physical health but my mental health. Although my husband is very helpful in our family life, as a woman I have to look after my children. But as an educated woman it is very important for me to start work in my field and to continue to help other women not as fortunate as me.

If the Australian government gave asylum seekers and refugees on temporary visas the chance to work on themselves when they first arrive in Australia, it would mean they would be more likely to be able to support themselves and they won't be a big burden on the government. And it would help with the mental and physical health issues caused by the stress of sitting home and worrying about our future. As a woman, I worry 24 hours a day about the details of our situation and about our children. My husband, he speaks a little bit about our problems, but he goes to work and gets it out of his head. My husband has the same problems, but he sleeps. I want to sleep, but I cannot.

I wish the Australian government could help make it easier for me to contribute to our life here. We are living here, my kids are here, they go to school here, my husband works and pays tax. This is our society now and I want to contribute. But I am not doing anything, I just sit at home and I am just wasting my life in terms of my field and to be helping others.

Conclusion

Mrs Babar's lived experiences echoes previous research which finds people seeking asylum as one of the most educationally disadvantaged populations in the Australian community (Hartley et al., 2018). This disadvantage includes barriers created from ones' temporary visa status, including needing to pay prohibitive international fees to gain entry, but also the very often unobtainable English language requirements for admission into a degree or for overseas qualification recognition (Burke et. al 2020). In Mrs Babar's case, despite strong English levels,

[3] The Australian federal government requires student visa applicants to achieve at least a 5.5 on the test. Alternatively, they can get a 5.0 and do at least 10 weeks of intensive English language learning, or a 4.5 and do at least 20 weeks of intensive English language learning. The highest a person can achieve is a 9.0.

achieving a score of 8.0 on the IELTS test is unobtainable due to the costs involved in undertaking the extensive training required, and inability to access childcare to do this in the first place. It also is important to note the IELTS being criticised by university academic and administrative staff for being a poor predictor of performance (Hyatt, 2013).

Mrs Babar's experiences offer important insights into the gendered forms of exclusion facing women asylum seekers in the Australian context, including the lack of government funded childcare subsidy given to people on temporary visas in Australia and the pressures of assuming family responsibilities while her husband works full-time. Her experience also speaks to the gendered mental load in terms of the worry she holds for her family's future and the uncertainty surrounding their temporary visa status.

In sharing the various complexities of her current circumstances, Mrs Babar offers important insights into the need for research that focuses specifically on issues of gender and access to higher education for people seeking asylum. Exploring how sociocultural attitudes to gender interact with the unique circumstances and restraints imposed on people seeking asylum will provide greater insight into the complexities of accessing and successfully completing higher education for this vulnerable group. Research may also identify current attempts by institutions and community agencies to support pathways into education for women seeking asylum, and possibilities for expanding these supports. Mrs Babar, like so many other people around the world, just wants to contribute to her host society but has been rendered excluded from meaningful societal participation due to her temporary visa status.

References

Burke, R., Fleay, C., Baker, S., Hartley, L., & Field, R. (2020). Facilitating Access to Higher Education for People Seeking Asylum in Australia: Institutional and Community Responses. Refuge, 36(2), pp.59-69.

Hartley, L., Fleay, C., Baker, S., Burke, R., & Field, R. (2018) People Seeking Asylum in Australia: Access and Support in Higher Education. National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education, Curtin University, Perth: Western Australia.
https://www.ncsehe.edu.au/wpcontent/uploads/2018/11/Hartley_PeopleSeekingAsylum.pdf

Harris, V.; Chi, M. & Spark, C. (2013). The Barriers that Only You Can See': African Australian Women Thriving in Tertiary Education Despite the Odds, Generos: Multidisciplinary Journal of Gender Studies, 2(2), 182–202.

Hatoss, A. & Huijser, H. (2010). Gendered Barriers to Educational Opportunities: Resettlement of Sudanese Refugees in Australia, Gender and Education 22(2), 147–160.

Hyatt, D. (2013). Stakeholders' Perceptions of IELTS as an Entry Requirement for Higher Education in the UK, Journal of Further and Higher Education, 37(6), 844-863

Watkins, P.G., Razee, H., & Richters, J. (2012). 'I'm telling you … the language barrier is the most, the biggest challenge': Barriers to education among Karen refugee women in Australia, Australian Journal of Education, 56(2), 126–141.

'But You Don't Look Like a Syrian': Migrant Narrative Beyond the Dichotomous Divide in Migration Studies

Lina Fadel[1]

'I have learned and dismantled all the words in order to draw from them a single word: Home.'

Mahmoud Darwish - 'I Belong There' (in Darwish et al, 2013, p. 7)

Prelude

I am looking out of the window midway through a taxi journey to the BBC's offices and studios on Holyrood Road. I had worked as an Arabic interpreter at the time and was invited by a BBC producer to interpret for a Syrian man who had come to the UK seeking refuge and is now sharing his story for an episode of The Untold *on BBC Radio 4. I feel anxious about this encounter: I was warned that this would be a heart-wrenching story, especially for a Syrian like me. The ride, too, is making me anxious and I start making mental notes on how best to circumnavigate the driver's lines of questioning. Having paid our tribute to the Scottish weather, the conversation now took an unexpected turn. Seeing I did not look Scottish, my taxi driver wanted to know where I was from. Before I could answer, however, he interpolated with an emphatic proclamation saying I definitely was Spanish or Italian. 'How can you be so sure?', I asked, to which he responded with pride: 'You speak very good English, but you have Spanish looks about you'. I found his condescending confidence humorous, but I could not wait to prove him wrong, so I said: 'close, the Mediterranean, but not Spanish. I am Syrian'. What he said after that was completely unexpected: 'But you don't look like a Syrian'.*

I learned later that apart from those Syrians he read about in the media or came across in the news, I was the first Syrian he had ever met.

This paper is a personal piece, which also aims to draw upon academic research using insights from current discourses of and on migration, to ask questions about migrant and refugee experience of everyday microaggressions and internalisation of colonial forms of narrative. Employing a reflective approach redolent of experience and memory, the paper draws on my own first-hand experience with migration and, in particular, comments I heard over my time in the UK, the ensuing discussions and reflections, and my own ongoing research. I do not claim to provide answers: the main focus will be on keeping the conversation going by engaging with current debates (or the lack thereof) on migration by placing this paper in that space that opens up when research departs from dichotomous thinking and the dualities of right and wrong. Writing this is also about catharsis; it is a form of therapy that allows for processing, sharing, and externalising emotions and turning them into elements that can be scrutinised more rationally against the body of literature. In writing this piece, I echo Toni Morrison's sentiment: 'we speak, we write, we do language. That is how civilizations heal' (Morrison, 2015). Following this logic,

[1] Lina Fadel, Assistant Professor, Intercultural Research Centre, Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh. lina.fadel@hw.ac.uk

for people in the diaspora, writing becomes a form of therapy and healing, a way to stay connected and break the silence. More broadly, and because, as Bhabha (1994, p. 306) unapologetically declares, 'transnational, ''migrant'' knowledge of the world is [still] most urgently needed', this piece is also a form of activism and an ode to all those displaced voices.

In teasing out themes from my chance encounter with my Scottish taxi driver, I reflect on the migrant's place in everyday conversation and, consequently, migration discourse(s). In doing so, the taxi becomes a microcosm of the city and the country where I have now lived for 14 years under different but interrelated identities: student, academic, mother, migrant, refugee, immigrant, citizen. By framing this piece through a personal narrative, my aim is to inject real migration into migration, beyond the 'cookie cutter approaches' (Gupte and Mehta, 2007) and borders of 'categorical fetishism' (Apostolova, 2015; Crawley and Skleparis, 2018). I argue against the homogenisation of migrant narrative and experience and in favour of 'historical contextualisation' that appears to be missing in migration and refugee studies (Bhambra, 2017). Such contextualisation demands an accounting for an intersectional understanding of racial hierarchies and colonial histories. Grosfoguel et al (2015, p. 636) state that 'part of the problem is how, with few exceptions, migration theory has focused on human mobility across borders, underestimating the significance of race and racism in processes of migrant incorporation.' This necessitates a closer examination of marginalised experience that focuses 'on the fabric and routines of their everyday lives, because marginalisation is so often experienced and felt at the banal level – eating, washing, travelling and socialising.' (Mayblin et al, 2020, p. 108). In other words, this is a call for an understanding of 'how hierarchical conceptions of human worth impact on the everyday' (ibid., p. 108) and the need for adopting fresh outlooks and frameworks when we talk about migration.

Thinking back to that brief taxi conversation, the driver's preconceived idea of what a Syrian person should look like is a stark reminder of Edward Said's study of the phenomenon of orientalism which he defines as 'the internal consistency of Orientalism and its ideas about the Orient […] despite or beyond any correspondence, or lack thereof, with a ''real'' Orient' (Said, 2003, p. 5). Here I was, a Syrian woman in the flesh, a 'real Orient' that the man resisted for not complying with his expectations of and assumptions about what a 'typical Syrian' should look and sound like. He explained that away by saying that he thought all Syrian women wore the hijab and asserting, quite triumphantly, that I must have stopped wearing it after 'having been liberated' in/by the UK. It was very presumptuous. Here I was again, being 'instructed […] in the ways of the modern West' (Said, 2003: 86). Like the Orient, I was being ontologically captured, treated, described, improved, and radically altered, exactly as Said (2003: 95) intended. The fact that 'I spoke very good English', as the driver approvingly remarked, was what pardoned my otherness, if only momentarily. I do not know why but I am immediately reminded of David Cameron's stigmatising £20m language fund to help migrant, refugee and Muslim women learn English in an all-too-familiar rhetoric of adhering to British values, a view that expects the other to strive towards a 'native' standard of living and becoming and being. The blatant insinuation that I had earned my place in this country filled me with a sudden and strong urge to prove my worthiness, that I was a 'good' and 'safe' migrant' (See Bhabha, 1994; Shukla, 2016), by listing my achievements. I wanted to talk about my privilege, that privilege is not only

white, that I, in so many other non-western ways, was privileged too. I wanted to talk about my education, my career, my life, but I did not. I resisted it, knowing that to succumb to that pressure was to say that other Syrian immigrants and refugees like me for whom Britain is now home, can only earn their place by parading their achievements for the world to see. I had nothing to prove to anyone; my accomplishments belonged only to me.

In an article she wrote for *The Guardian*, Iranian-American novelist Dina Nayeri says that while the colonial centre demands eternal gratitude from the marginalised other, the refugee, what the other should do is 'tune their voices and polish their stories, because the world is duller without them. Because a person's life is never a bad investment, and so there are no creditors at the door, no debt to repay. Now there's just the rest of life, the stories left to create, all the messy, greedy, ordinary days that are theirs to squander.' (Nayeri, 2017). And so, in an act of rebellion, I started telling him about the Syria that he did not, or chose not to, know.

It was clear to me that the driver's questions projected thinking steeped in colonial values and how western forms of knowledge and rhetoric supersede and, by default, marginalise what is non-western. Did he realise that? Was he ever taught about race at school, at home? I realised that my responses were careful and calculated, brushing off his condescending entitlement to satisfy a 'categorical fetishism' that has permeated European and British politics and discourses around the migration crisis. His attempts to categorise me were relentless, evident in yet another question asking when I came to the UK: 'was it before or after the war?', followed by 'I see – so you're not a refugee'. 'The use of the categories "refugee" and "migrant" to differentiate between those on the move and the legitimacy, or otherwise, of their claims to international protection has featured strongly during Europe's 'migration crisis' and has been used to justify policies of exclusion and containment' (Crawley and Skleparis, 2018, p. 48). People's words stay with us and can manifest themselves in our narratives and the internalised discourses; they can become frames of reference that we use to define ourselves. I remember for a while after that, I subconsciously added 'I came before the war' to any statement I made about my 'status' and life in the UK – yet another dichotomous categorisation of my experience that seeks to pigeonhole me, viewing 'what happens "in between" […] as being largely inconsequential' (ibid., p. 55).

How could the taxi driver make that distinction so effortlessly, as if the two categories of refugee and non-refugee subsumed all those 'plagued' by otherness? How could he do it with such ease, such conviction when I am still in the process of negotiating my identity and finding my place in the world? Who is responsible for instilling these brutally restraining frames of reference? These are perhaps questions for migration and postcolonial scholars to ponder. As the taxi navigated the streets of Edinburgh that evening echoing their cobbled noise, I thought of how my movement across borders was different from his: mine was migration, his was mobility.

Before arriving at my destination, he asked me if I had wanted to return home and I wanted to say: but where and what is home? It sounded like a well-meaning question; however, a profound sadness came over me. The question was patronizingly suggestive of the speaker's conviction that this, my here and now – Scotland – is not really my home but a temporary place

from which I can only return. This is problematic, not only because of the underlying microaggression and the reductive power these words have. What makes the act of returning more worthy of conversation than the act of being in the here and now? Why discuss what reminds us of our 'misfortune' and 'loss' when we can discuss what makes us 'strong' and capable of producing home anew? Why focus on the pain of being in the diaspora when we can celebrate the everyday quotidian effort by those displaced or, like me, now wilfully placed?

Taylor (2015) sheds useful light on the concept of home and explains how home comes with a certain sense of complexity for those who have been forced to migrate (or are, as in my case, better off staying). According to her, 'the lost home and the new home in exile are not discrete, dichotomous entities [..] but are rather part of a continuum' (Taylor, 2015, p. 2). How can I explain to the taxi driver that home was a concept in flux; that it certainly was not bricks and mortar but a process, a lifetime work of reconciling the connections between past and present and all those spaces in between? How can I explain that home is often no more than an act of putting one's shattered pieces together? How can I explain to him that in order to return, one has to arrive and that I am still in that liminal space in the process of arriving (Boersma & Schinkel, 2018)? I wanted to explain that I was away from home but I was not without it; that I, indeed, 'have many of them' (Massey, 1994, p. 172); and that the thereness and the hereness of my existence (Bhabha, H. in Kläger, 2017) are with me. I said that understanding 'home' might start with being-at-home and being-without-it but certainly involves an ongoing searching-for-home-again (Boccagni, 2017, p. 18). I told him 'we are all immigrants from the past, and home lives inside the memory, where we lock it up and pretend it is unchanged' (Nayeri, 2019). He was silent for some time after that. Perhaps, I thought, he was in search of home too.

This piece is a snippet of a longer auto-ethnographic paper I am currently writing that explores the complex nature of migrant experience and addresses some of the concerns outlined here concerning the heavy reliance on categorisation in migration research in understanding human experience, which is limiting and often erroneous. An understanding of race is vital in any conversation about migration, and necessitates a critical, in-depth, and wide-ranging encounter with race and postcolonial studies. Such encounter not only enables a historical contextualisation of current forms of hegemony and marginalisation, sovereignty and citizenship, movement and homemaking, but also provides alternative theoretical and analytical frameworks that move away from formal methodologies and embrace perspectives that pay equal attention to the everyday and circumstantial forms of narrative (Anderson, 2019). In the study of migration, in particular, researchers need to 'think more carefully about the use of categories, and the process by which the boundaries between them are constructed' (Crawley and Skleparis, 2018, p. 50). Perhaps, and just like postcolonial thought, what migration studies needs is a new 'emotive language' that can capture the intimate experiences of migration; a language that does not neutralise emotive issues by turning them into policy.

Arriving at my destination that evening, my driver stamped me with otherness one last time, saying he was happy he had finally met a real Syrian and that I seemed like a decent person. I smiled at all that that implied, before I slammed the taxi door shut behind me. Had he asked me about my name and my dreams, the greenness of our olive trees back home, the blueness of

the Mediterranean, the hustle and bustle of everyday life and the sunsets, we would have had a more colourful and meaningful conversation about migration.

References

Anderson, B. (2019). 'New directions in migration studies: towards methodological de-nationalism', CMS 7, 36. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-019-0140-8.
Apostolova, R. (2015). 'Of Refugees and Migrants: Stigma, Politics, and Boundary Work at the Borders of Europe', American Sociological Association Newsletter, September 14. https://asaculturesection.org/2015/09/14/of-refugees-and-migrants-stigma-politics-and-boundary-work-at-the-borders-of-europe/
Bhabha, H. (1994). The Location of Culture. London and New York: Routledge.
Bhambra, G. K. (2017). 'The current crisis of Europe: Refugees, colonialism, and the limits of cosmopolitanism', European Law Journal, 23(5), 395–405. https://doi.org/10.1111/eulj.12234
Boccagni, P. (2017). Migration and the Search for Home: Mapping Domestic Space in Migrants' Everyday Lives. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
Boersma, S., & Schinkel, W. (2018). 'Imaginaries of postponed arrival: On seeing 'society' and its 'immigrants'', Cultural Studies, 32(2), 308–325. https://doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2017.1354047
Crawley, H. and Skleparis, D. (2018). 'Refugees, migrants, neither, both: categorical fetishism and the politics of bounding in Europe's 'migration crisis'', Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 44:1, 48-64, DOI: 10.1080/1369183X.2017.1348224
Darwish, M., Akash, M., Forché, C., Antoon, S., El-Zein, A., & Joudah, F. (2013). 'I Belong There'. In Unfortunately, It Was Paradise: Selected Poems (p. 7). University of California Press. Retrieved May 26, 2021, from http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt2855v1.10
Grosfoguel, R., Oso, L. and Christou, A. (2015). 'Racism', intersectionality and migration studies: framing some theoretical reflections', Identities, 22:6, 635-652, DOI: 10.1080/1070289X.2014.950974
Kläger, F. and Stierstorfer, K. (2017). Diasporic Constructions of Home and Belonging, Berlin, München, Boston: De Gruyter.
Mason, R. and Sherwood, H. (2016). ''Cameron 'stigmatising Muslim women' with English language policy'', The Guardian, 18 January.
Massey, D. (1994). 'A Place Called Home?', Place, Space and Gender. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp.157-173.
Massey, D. (1994). Place, Space and Gender. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
Mayblin, L., Wake, M. and Kazemi, M. (2020). 'Necropolitics and the Slow Violence of the Everyday: Asylum Seeker Welfare in the Postcolonial Present', Sociology, 54(1): 107-123. doi:10.1177/0038038519862124
Morrison, T. (2015) 'No Place for Self-pity, No Room for Fear', The Nation. 23 March.
Nayeri, D. (2017). 'The Ungrateful Refugee: 'We have no debt to repay'', The Guardian. 4 April.
Nayeri, D. (2019). The Ungrateful Refugee: what immigrants never tell you.
Said, E. (2003). Orientalism. Penguin Books.
Shukla, N. (2017). The Good Immigrant. Canongate Books Ltd.
Taylor, H. (2015). Refugees and the Meaning of Home. Cypriot Narratives of Loss, Longing and Daily Life in London. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Review: Becky Taylor, *Refugees in Twentieth Century Britain. A History*

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. ISBN: 9781316638385 (paperback), £22.99, 327 pages.

Anna Maguire[1]

Becky Taylor's *Refugees in Twentieth Century Britain* is a brilliant history of refugee arrivals, reception and resettlement across the twentieth century. Following four cohorts of refugees, the book offers a comprehensive analysis of the shifting terrain of 'welcoming' refugees to Britain, from the Second World War to the 1980s and 1990s. More than that, the book uses the treatment and experience of refugees by and with the British state, non-governmental and voluntary organisations, and broader publics as a compelling tool for investigating what modern Britain was and how it was developing, from imperial power to post-colonial, and European, nation. 'Underwriting this shift was a perpetual tension between assumptions of British dominance on the world stage and fears of decline and of shrinking prestige and influence.' (p. 5.) Rather than a book about refugees, Taylor tells us, 'this is a book about the country refugees found refuge in or were barred from.' (p. 5.) What follows therefore is a richly woven and deeply researched account of who got to be a refugee in Britain and how their experience was shaped and structured by the changing provisions of the welfare state from housing to healthcare, the development of hostile bordering regimes and practices, conceptions of Britishness and belonging, and policies of assimilation, integration and multiculturalism. Rather than seeing refugees at the margins of this context, they are at the centre of understanding how Britain's political, social and moral economy developed.

From the outset, Taylor describes refugees as 'awkward' (p. 1). This conception offers an effective underpinning to the book. It helps to challenge moral signifiers as to who refugees and migrants are expected to be in Britain: 'good' and 'grateful' or 'bad' and 'bogus'. It is a useful category through which to interrogate the responses of both statutory and non-governmental provision: how do governments and charities provide for newly arrived populations with such varying demographics and needs? It offers a position from which to understand when and how refugees have coalesced or diverged from the broader history of immigration and its control. And it explains how the history of refugees in, and as a history of, modern Britain has been underwritten or marginalised.

The book is structured in chronological order, following the arrivals of refugees through mass settlement schemes and in particular moments of historical crisis which tell us about Britain's understanding of its responsibilities to refugees and its role in the world. At the heart of Taylor's argument is the demonstration of motivations to accept refugees to Britain that had less to do with humanitarianism and more to do with the country's international preoccupations and sense of identity. This is deftly argued through the four case studies. Chapter One, 'Protectionism vs Internationalism: Refugees from Nazism' considers two movements of refugees, before the outbreak of war in September 1939 and in May 1940. Taylor uses both state papers and the records of groups like Worthing Refugee Committee to demonstrate that 'Britain's reaction to

[1] Anna Maguire, Queen Mary, University of London, a.maguire@qmul.ac.uk

the European refugee crisis was partial and driven by voluntary not state initiatives, most often in the face of policy intransigence.' (p. 31) Chapter Two, 'Post-War Settlement: The Hungarians', tracks the arrival, reception, dispersal and employment of Hungarian refugees after the uprising, against a background of 1950s Britain grappling with the superiority of having been a world power and the discomfort of its changing status as a decolonising imperial power. The concern with 'economically active potential citizens' amidst the growing immigrant population was somewhat offset by Britain's full employment and welfare state. (p. 99) Yet 'for many Hungarians in 1956 the path to life in Britain was a jagged one.' (p. 147)

Anxiety over immigration and race in relation to refugees is illuminated in Chapter Three, 'Rivers of Blood: The Ugandan Asians'. 'This was the first time in Britain that the metropole saw its "empire striking back" through a mass "refugee" movement.' (p. 150). Taylor paints a vivid and complex picture of how the experience of Ugandan Asians tells us about the operation of race relations and racism across British society but also about the depths of the housing crisis and the bureaucratic nightmare for all trying to claim support from the reduced welfare state, coalescing sharply in the policy of dispersal and the distinction of 'red' and 'green' areas. The welfare and campaigning work of voluntary organisations and pressure groups, especially under the umbrella of the Co-ordinating Committee Welfare of Evacuees from Uganda, in turn offers insight into the 'fertility of early 1970s political activism'. (p. 162). Chapter Four, 'Marketisation and Multiculturalism: Refugees from Vietnam' resumes the investigation of the impact of international relations, both post-colonial and Cold War, voluntary action, housing, poverty, racism and the continued emergence of a 'multicultural' society on refugee resettlement. (p. 209) Taylor explores the Conservative government's decision to sign up to the UNHCR Vietnamese resettlement programme to avoid losing international status, but that this was accompanied by tougher domestic rules on immigration. The 'rolling back' of the state under Thatcher saw the return to the voluntary management of refugee arrivals: 'the resettlement of Vietnamese refugees across Britain after 1979 was made possible due to the work of hundreds of individuals motivated by little more than goodwill', with local groups especially important in the context of dispersal. (p. 212) We begin to see the impact of multiculturalist policy and practices on work with refugees, including the British Council for Aid to Refugees and Save the Children/Refugee Action's efforts to establish a Vietnamese trainee social worker programme. (p. 261). The book concludes with Chapter Five, 'A New World Order', where the transition from mass resettlement programmes to rising individual arrivals saw lines blur between refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants, leading many to question what Britain's responsibility to refugees was and provoking the reworking of domestic policy hostile to refugee entry.

Coming out in 2021, coinciding with the 70th anniversary of the Refugee Council, one of the many strengths of Taylor's book is the necessary attention it pays to the role of charities and refugee agencies and their relationships to the state. Even if humanitarianism was not always at the heart of the state's response, then the providers of aid, voluntary actors and upholders of 'civil society' were called upon time and again, within and beyond and in opposition to the state's plans for refugees: the British Council for Aid to Refugees, Shelter, the Child Poverty

Action Group, to name just a few of those who made up this patchwork landscape. The question of the kind of 'home' available to refugees resonates throughout the book: 'it is clear that if any case for a British tradition of tolerance and welcome exists then this needs to be acutely historicised.' (p. 27). In our contemporary hostile environment, where asylum-seekers risk their lives to come to a country where they are kept in barracks, subject to evictions and Home Office immigration raids, against a backdrop of Brexit, the Windrush Scandal and Grenfell, many of the issues which Taylor investigates remain vital and urgent: inadequate housing, bureaucratic violence, the construction of borders, both internal and external.[2] This book is an essential read for anyone wanting to understand how we got to our present Britain.

You can read more from Becky about her book here:
http://www.cambridgeblog.org/2021/05/refugees-in-twentieth-century-britain/

[2] I am grateful to Amy Grant for the term 'bureaucratic violence'.

Review: Annabelle Wilkins, *Migration, Work and Home-Making in the City. Dwelling and Belonging among Vietnamese Communities in London*

London and New York: Routledge. Routledge Studies in Migration and Diaspora. ISBN: 978-1-138-57717-6 (hbk) 978-0-367-67087-0 (pbk). 180 pages.

Paul V. Dudman[1]

Migration, Work and Home-Making in the City is an ethnographic study of the experiences of the Vietnamese diaspora within the city of London, focusing on their experiences and practices of home-making and belonging and how these impact on notions of identity and home. This work reflects the historical sweep of Vietnamese forced to flee Vietnam as refugees in the 1970s through to more recent Vietnamese migrants for both work and educational purposes in more recent years. At the time of writing, the author, Annabelle Wilkins, was a Research Associate on the project `Translation, interpreting, and the British Humanitarian Response to asylum seeker arrivals since the 1940s' at the University of Manchester.

The book itself is divided into seven chapters plus an introduction focusing on issues including: Conceptualisation of home, work and migration within urban contexts (Chapter One) focusing on the conceptual framework and methodologies underpinning the study; Locating Vietnamese communities in East London (Chapter Two) focusing on East London as a site of migration and its history of migration, settlement and diversity and the arrival of the first Vietnamese communities; Experiences of departures, journeys and arrivals (Chapter Three) frames the narrative of Vietnamese refugees and migrants and the "experiences of departure from Vietnam and arrival in East London, highlighting the diversity of their migration trajectories and providing a backdrop to the personal and geopolitical factors that influenced their decisions" (p. 6); Experiences of work, home and the city between Vietnam and London (Chapter Four) considers the importance of visual cultures and the role of objects as a basis for how individuals construct their notions of home between Vietnam and East London, and considers notions of transnationalism that help formulate relationships between multiple "homes", work and the city; Material and spiritual concepts of home (Chapter Five) considers the importance of spiritual and religious influences on the Vietnamese diaspora; and The concept of home itself within a super-diverse city; Future of home-making and the (im)possibilities of belonging (Chapter Six) focuses on the narrative experiences of the Vietnamese diaspora around the concepts of future homes and the possibility of return migration to Vietnam.

> "For the migrant, home is a carpet bag of memories, emotions and experiences." (Anne Kershan, senior editor's preface, in Wilkins, 2019, p. vii).

Migration, Work and Home-Making in the City draws extensively on the experiences of the Vietnamese community located within the London Borough of Hackney. Over 20 million Vietnamese have resettled in Britain between 1975 and the late 1980s, although Wilkins points

[1] Paul V. Dudman, Archivist, University of East London, p.v.dudman@uel.ac.uk.

out that the Vietnamese population in Britain `has been regarded as "invisible" in comparison to other migrant groups' (Wilkins, 2019, p. xx).Her research has focused on how the turmoil of migration can help to forge new identities and senses of belonging within new community contexts. The aim of this work is to explore the intertwined relationships of home, work and migration on the daily existence of Vietnamese residents in East London. Through this work, Wilkins aims to bring to the fore the individual narratives of the Vietnamese diaspora and to focus on the diversity of their migration experiences.

In the Introduction, Wilkins highlights how there have been few studies undertaken on the situation of the Vietnamese community in East London, compared to an established and growing base of literature focusing on other ethnic and migrant communities in this part of the city. Have the experiences of the Vietnamese community just been overlooked or been silenced within the wider discourses looking at migration experiences within East London? This is a concept we have been working with in relation to our Refugee Archives at the University of East London. How do we ensure that we are collecting archival materials that are representative of minority communities and, where their voices are absent, how can we ensure we can ethically engage to ensure these narratives are documented?

Wilkins highlights the significance of her theoretical framework in under-pinning the narrative engagement within this book by connecting work, home and migration within the wider aspects of the city and considering geopolitical aspects of home and the relationship to migration. The theoretical framework brings together notions of geopolitical perspectives on migration, work and human mobility whilst also considering the challenges of (re)making home within conditions of super-diversity and restrictive immigration practices framed within the Hostile Environment. It also considers the influence of power relations and political structures and their impact of the experiences of Vietnamese migrants on their experiences of navigating migration, work, study and their daily lives in inhabiting a multicultural city.

The research framework encompasses both ethnography, qualitative interviews and visual methods with the purpose of enabling a holistic approach to consider both practices and meanings of home, work and migration within the wider framework of the city. The book also attempts to highlight the importance of visual cultures in relation to notions of remembering and recovering home. The referencing and use of visual and material cultures was one of the key aspects that drew me to this work as, in recent years, this has been an area of interest in relation to the Refugee Archive collections we house here at the University of East London. The Crafting Resistance exhibition in 2018 focusing on the Chilean diaspora community in London, focused heavily on a collection of over one-hundred objects loaned especially for the exhibition, and created by Chileans whilst detained as political prisoners during the military Junta of General Augusto Pinochet. This generated interest in how we, as an archival repository, determine what we mean by "the archive" and how we can look to move beyond established definitions in looking to document the experiences of diasporic communities. Throughout the work, Wilkins reflects upon the importance of "visual cultures in remembering and recreating home in diaspora", whilst noting that refugees and migrants "do not only take objects that are necessary for physical survival, but also items of emotional value, letters and ornaments." (Wilkins, 2019, p. 18). Objects in this context are markers for national or cultural identity as well

as invaluable reminders of home and those left behind, thereby reinforcing notions of belonging. Through her interviews and fieldwork, Wilkins considers how domestic possessions are by their very nature, intertwined with her participants notions of memory, identity and belonging, both in East London, and transnationally as reminders of home in Vietnam. It was interesting to note the author's collaboration with the Geffrye Museum during her research for this book, which helped facilitate outreach projects with local Vietnamese communities and the challenges of data protection and informed consent in relation to such projects (Wilkins, 2019, p. 28).

Two key aspects of this work were the focus on narrative research as a methodological tool and the importance of documenting the notion of community within the Vietnamese diasporic context. The narrative approach can be important to enable participants to be able to share their memories within an open and safe environment, whilst also demonstrating "how the memories of refugees are shaped by their experiences of diaspora (Nguyen, 2009, p. 5)" , whilst also being an opportunity for empowerment and to give a sense of voice and agency to community members (Wilkins, 2019, p. 31). The narrative approach as undertaken by Wilkins also presents an opportunity for participants to take ownership of their stories and their experiences, by enabling their narratives to be told in the way they want to be told. This work provides a useful approach through the engagement with participants with differing experiences of their journey to London. This enables both a multi-generational perspective but also the differing experiences of those forced to flee alongside those who have elected to migrate for work or study. This facilitates a wider and more inclusive baseline of the experiences of the Vietnamese in the city: their journeys and their sense of identity and belonging in relation to making home in a new city and home and communities in Vietnam.

Migration, Work and Home-Making in the City also engages with the important discussion around notions of "community". Wilkins argues that "discussions of `Vietnamese communities' should be situated within an understanding of the complexity of this term and the diverse population that it describes." (Wilkins, 2019, pp. 34-5). Wilkins rightly situates her analysis within an understanding of the difficulties associated with the term 'community' within both academic and public discourse, describing it as "a complex and problematic concept." (Wilkins, 2019, p. 35). The concept can be linked to multiple overlapping notions including place, locality and also territory and related structures of class, ethnicity and gender in relation to diasporic communities. Wilkins argues in favour of understanding "communities as potential sites of exclusion as well as belonging" and to consider this when working within the Vietnamese diasporic communities, who "are heterogeneous, differing in terms of ethnic background, circumstances of migration, age, religion, and socio-economic status." (Wilkins, 2019, p. 35).

The importance of home in relation to East London is also highlighted with a number of the interviewed participants expressing a sense of home as being in relation to East London, and also within Hackney itself. Early in the book, Wilkins quotes from one of her research participants. Vű, who was forced to flee Vietnam in the 1970's and spent three months in a refugee camp in Singapore before moving to the UK: "It was fear of getting lost and not being able to find our way. We had no beginnings to help ground us. We weren't at home." (Wilkins, 2019, p. 1). Wilkins emphasised the importance of the concepts of home (nhà) and homeland

(quê hương) for Vietnamese communities, both within Vietnam and abroad, and considers the translocality of belonging as being a process that situates diverse spaces and practices within different locales', arguing that Vietnamese migrants' senses of belonging are experienced through both national boundaries, but also negotiates through attachments that can be considered `local-local.' Wilkins draws "upon concepts of translocality in integrating the multi-scaler connections that are formed between East London and Vietnam through everyday mobilities and practices of dwelling." (Wilkins, 2019, p. 8).

Migration, Work and Home-Making in the City successfully explores the intertwined relationships of home, work and migration within the context of the everyday lives of Vietnamese residents in East London. The book articulately considers participants narratives of belonging and their multiple perceptions of home, especially for those who have experienced an enforced departure from Vietnam, Son reflects: "But because us boat people, we've been away so long, we don't say that is home anymore. We say we go home to visit family, but we call the UK home now. We settle, we feel safer coming back to the UK then we say we go back home, back to Vietnam." (Wilkins, 2019, p. 83).

Specific elements of the book focus on the notions of Vietnamese "identity" and what is meant by community within the context of a super-diverse city. Wilkins does not assume that "`the Vietnamese' constitute an homogenous community" (Wilkins, 2019, p. 8) within the wider context of East London, and considers that communities must also be considered as sites of exclusion as well as belonging, especially as Vietnamese communities in East London are heterogeneous, differing in terms of ethnic background, circumstances of migration, age, religion, and socioeconomic status. This is beneficial to the overall narrative of the work as it facilities a diversity of migration experiences, from Son's experience as a refugee and Minh's experience moving to London to further her education:

> "I lived in Vietnam until 1979 when the whole family left the country by boat, and I came to the UK via Hong Kong, and I've been in the UK ever since." Son. (Wilkins, 2019, p. 39)
>
> "We felt excited, we felt so happy that we are here, finally we're here! Because to be able to be here, we had to pass IELTS exam, you have to pass the visa process, and so many things we have to deal with." Minh. (Wilkins, 2019, p. 39)

Vű, one of the author's participants, who had arrived as a refugees in London, subsequently went on to found the An Viet Foundation community organisation which helped to support the Vietnamese diaspora in Hackney for over thirty-five years, providing drop in services on issues relating to social welfare, immigration and housing in addition to interpretation and translation services, employment advice and cultural activities (Refugee Council, 2021). Hackney Archives in conjunction with Hackney Chinese Community Services were recently awarded a grant from The National Archives Covid-19 Emergency Fund (The National Archives, 2021) to help stabilise and conserve the An Viet Foundation Archives after their former offices were taken over by squatters and the archive left out on the roof (Sheridan, 2019). The awarding of this grant reinforced the invaluable community work undertaken by the Foundation and the importance of the Archive for generating a sense of community identity and belonging for an under-documented group. Additionally, the UEL Archives has also received Testbed Funding from The National Archives for a collaborative project with artist Moi Tran, to establish a Civic Voice

Archive documenting the Vietnamese experience in Hackney "by exploring creative methods to disturb and challenge traditional archives usage and structure, including taking agency in narrative as activism, promoting conventionally subjugated knowledge systems through archival processes and to explore contemporary arts practice in a community archive." (The National Archives, 2021)

Migration, Work and Home-Making in the City by Annabelle Wilkins provides an important addition to the literature both in relation to documenting the experiences of Vietnamese communities in East London, and Hackney in particular, whilst also providing an important theoretical approach for how we as researchers, and archivists, can work with, support, and engage with diasporic communities more broadly. Through her multifaceted conceptual framework, bringing together discussions of geopolitics and the super-diverse city, with an understanding of home-making, identity and belonging within a diasporic community, Wilkins has utilised both narrative and visual methods to facilitate an in-depth representation which help to emphasis the diverse relationships and everyday practices that are involved in creating a sense of belonging within a multicultural city.

References

Refugee Council, (2021) Archived version of An Viet Foundation. Available at: https://www.webarchive.org.uk/wayback/en/archive/20150827172404/http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/services/2861_an_viet_foundation (Accessed: 9 May 2021).

Sheridan, E. (2019) 'Race to save "irreplaceable" Vietnamese archive left on roof for months', Hackney Citizen, 21 November. Available at: https://www.hackneycitizen.co.uk/2019/11/21/race-save-irreplaceable-vietnamese-archive-roof-months/ (Accessed: 9 May 2021).

The National Archives, (2021) The National Archives - Awarded grants - The National Archives, Archives sector. The National Archives. Available at: http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/finding-funding/covid-19-archives-fund/awarded-grants/ (Accessed: 9 May 2021).

The National Archives (2021) The National Archives - Current projects - The National Archives, Archives sector. The National Archives. Available at: http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/finding-funding/collaborate-and-innovate/archive-testbed-fund/current-projects/ (Accessed: 9 May 2021).

Wilkins, Annabelle (2019). Migration, Work and Home-Making in the City: Dwelling and Belonging among Vietnamese Communities in London. London and New York: Routledge.

Creating Space in the Archive for an Anti-oppressive Community Project: Recording Border Control and Subversion

Rumana Hashem[1]

Introduction

Archives exist to record and preserve documents on historical and contemporary events, official and unpublished reports, collective memories, political narratives, and personal and unofficial documents including letters and other materials that embrace memories that could be otherwise lost. Archives also have the power to present a narrative "determined by the evidence that has survived, and "to empower a certain representation through the use of language" (Dudman and Hashem, 2015). Most archives preserve documents, but not many archives could make available the recorded documents to their users. Refugee Council Archives are one of those that made available documents when needed.[2] However, the dilemma is, as notes the archivist Paul Dudman, that only some of us could access the archives. Most archives in the UK had failed the displaced in terms of representation when recording documents on immigration legislation, border control, resilience and subversion within the nation-state (Dudman, 2014).[3] How can the displaced be "re-installed on the historical record"? Casba Szilagyi correctly notes when writing about the experiences of refugees globally and the role of archivists in the sector that the Refugee Archives have particularly important roles in recording, creating, disseminating, "managing, preserving, authenticating and making available records documenting historical and contemporary" experiences of the displaced people and those on the move (2020:150). According to the Archives Hub database, there are several other archives in addition to the Refugee Council Archives for documenting lives of the displaced which co-exists in London and beyond. But who accesses these archives? Are refugee archives well-represented as regards to the preservation of lived experience of refugees and migrants? If not, why is this? Who get excluded from refugee-archives, and in what ways? How could we improve access to refugee research archives? Could archives be a creative space for undertaking anti-oppressive, accessible and representative research projects for and with the people in displacement?

The above are some questions that we explored at the Refugee Council Archives through the collaboration of and working on a community project with refugees and irregular migrants prior to Brexit, in 2015. The project entitled, "Democratic Access or Privileged Exclusion? Civic Engagement through the Preservation of and Access to Refugee Archives," was supported by

---

[1] Rumana Hashem, . Email: Rumana.Hashem@nottingham.ac.uk.

[2] The University of East London's Library and Learning Services at Docklands has been the home of the Refugee Council Archives for more than two decades, and the archives hold over 34, 000 documents offline, and more digitalised materials which can be accessed online. The archives has expanded over the years and currently facilitating new collections such as 1) Council for At-Risk Academics Archives; 2) Northern Refugee Centre Archive; 3) UNHCR London Office Audio-Visual Collection; 4) Cambridge Refugee Support Group Archive.

[3] I use the term "the displaced" as a synonym to "people on the move", "the displaced", "people in displacement" and "refugees and irregular migrants". All these terms have been used synonymously in this article. This is done by purpose.

the Library, Archives and Learning Services of the University of East London (UEL).[4] In this article, I discuss how the project helped us to establish a successful collaboration with migrant communities in London, enabled the creation of an anti-oppressive space for documenting narratives of resilience and subversion, and made possible the development of a Living Refugee Archive which help preserve the narratives and make accessible the archives to all, including the displaced people globally. I also show how the project ensured representation of people in displacement within the archive.

Background

Hosted by the Refugee Council Archives, the project was a collaboration with the Centre for Migration, Refugees and Belonging (CMRB), the Oral History Society, and the Library, Archives and Learning Services at UEL. We used existing Archives held within the UEL Library as a basis to forge collaboration between the archivist, the displaced people, researcher and scholars and community groups who work with people on the move. Focusing on the preservation of lived experiences of asylum-seekers and irregular migrants in London, we co-worked for three months with those who experienced border controls during their journey from home to the UK. I conducted open-ended life history interviews with five subverted migrants, who during the research period were remaking home in the mega city of London and became the users of the newly created digital archives afterwards.

The archivist of the Refugee Council Archives, Paul Dudman, the former Head of Digital Services in UEL Library and Learning Services, Thomas Shaw, and I conducted a series of consultations with community organisations, practitioners, oral historians, academics and experts in the field. We consulted other archivists including Black Cultural Archives, Eastside Community Heritage, Islington Centre, Cambridge Borough, and several other organisations for assessing the needs for representative archives and communicating the research questions for building an accessible archive. In the end of the project, a workshop with all research participants, stakeholders, community activists, scholars in migration studies, and users of archives were held, and the Living Refugee Archive was launched, and key findings were shared with everyone in a room shared by both the participants (in this case, the people in displacement who gave oral accounts to preserve in the archive), archivists, and the experts in studies on border controls and migration.[5]

Creating an Anti-oppressive Space – the Methodology and Techniques Applied

Creating an anti-oppressive space within archives to preserve and document lived experiences and collective memories of border controls and immigration hostilities could be difficult as there are many challenges in collecting evidence that archivists have already highlighted (see for

[4] The project was supported by the University of East London's internal fund under the Grant of Civic Engagement Fund 2015 [grant number 1214]. The research team include Paul Dudman - the archivist of UEL, Rumana Hashem - the researcher of the CMRB, and Thomas Shaw - the former Digital Head of UEL Library and Learning Services.

[5] See a summary of the workshop and a brief report from the launch event which was held on 13 July 2015, available on the Living Refugee Archive here: https://www.livingrefugeearchive.org/about/democratic-access-privileged-exclusion/

example, Dudman, 2014; Gilliland, 2018, Szilagyi, 2020). Our first step in this project was to engage in a dialogue with the institution that we were located in. We explained the urgency to build an archive that is open, accessible, representative and well-timed, and how this might also benefit the University as a Higher Education Institution in the UK, which is accessed by thousands of international students and many migrant researchers. Writing the bid, making it interesting for the institution, and presenting a strong ethical ground helped us to break through the initial institutional barriers. In the bid we outlined three-fold scopes of the project that interested the funder and the institution, in this case, UEL.

The three-fold scope were to: 1. engage with local communities in an attempt to establish a Living Refugee Archive and to promote and enable accessibility and engagement with existing collections; 2. incorporate digital content collected as part of UEL's Oral History Project which would ultimately help facilitate continued discussions and civic engagement activities on border control, resilience and subversion; and 3. help encourage interaction between archivists, historians, NGOs, and the communities themselves as to how the refugee experience can be adequately collated, preserved, and documented.

By taking a community approach to the collaboration we were able to establish our authentic positioning to the funder, while the activist-migrant approach of the researcher helped us to build the trust base and encouraged the displaced to join us and make active contributions. Our public engagement on social media (via Twitter and Facebook) also enabled direct messaging on the role of archives on issues of border controls and resilience, and helped connecting with people on the move. However, the key means for outreach and collecting life stories was activism and long-term collaboration in the field. Except one, all of the participants who told their moving narratives with "trust" in the archive are people that the key researchers knew from their previous work.

The past of the displaced and their long history in relation to homeland and the journey as a refugee are not recognised other than the painful part of the journey which often redefines the displaced as simply "vulnerable" and in constant need of economic and material support (see for example, UN Refugee Agency, 2018; USA for UNHCR, 2018). But we deliberated our efforts to deconstruct this narrative of vulnerability in the archive by taking a bottom-up approach to oral history. Life story interviews help to keep the authenticity of stories in any context (Hashem and Dudman, 2017) and the bottom-up technique to oral history empowers participants. This enables to preserve the original life histories, simultaneously keeping the original narrators' voice active, and make it representative through the engagement with the participants as an individual as well as community speaker. The use of bottom-up approach meant participants shared their transcultural encounters in London openly and they talked about how their hopes are gradually buried under immigration regulations, but none felt vulnerable in the research process.

An anti-oppressive methodology also advocates for engaging in decolonial methodologies as important tools for research. For the production of accountable knowledge on border control

and recording subversion of the displaced in the archive, we followed MbeMbe (2016)'s notion of decolonising the archive which suggests that we should reject any pre-existing paradigms in this field. This approach also implies that archives should only preserve documents that have been created in a space where refugees/the subverted are welcome and could co-work without fear the institutional boundaries and regulations. For this reason, participants were invited to share their stories in the archives as they wished to and suggest ideas for the deconstruction and decolonisation of the archives and help us producing creative narrative and true collective memories that did not exist in an archive in the past.

Participants were pleased to accept the invites and actively participated in the creation of the Living Refugee Archive. Overall, we followed a methodology of what we called a bottom-up oral history approach to research with the subverted.

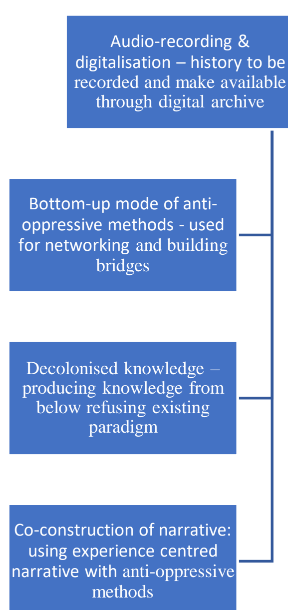


Chart 1. Bottom-up oral history methodology in chart.

The bottom-up oral history approach is essential for documenting authentic narratives because it enables the voices of the participant to be heard and ensure that the original narrator is active when preserving and documenting the stories, rather than making them passive storyteller.

Whose voices and which stories to archive

Participants belonged to three ethnicities and six nationalities. Two women and four men, aged between 20 to 50 years, narrated their life-histories. One of them was a 37-year old American-born Irish-Jewish woman who left home to avoid domestic violence; one 28-year old Bangladeshi-born (Sunni) Muslim man who became atheist after he came to study in the UK; one 24 year old Black Moroccan-born ex-Muslim man who fled home under religious persecution; one 42-year old Nigerian-born Muslim woman who escaped Nigeria in the face of gendered violence; one 25-year old South Sudanese-born (Sunni) Muslim man who moved over to the UK via Libya, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Greece, and Germany, and one 26-year old Syrian-born (Shia') Muslim man who came to the UK via Turkey, Greece, Germany and Belgium to survive from the ISIL war. All of them have experienced border controls during the journey from

home to the arrival in the UK, then re-victimised to the hostilities in the host country as they underwent complex immigration rules whilst seeking asylum to be "legal" residents.

Some of these stories about health, housing and work inequalities (Hashem, 2018), asylum process and right to education, and some transcultural encounters when they were trying to engage in human rights activism in the new place, London, have been as heart rendering as moving.[6] Despite setbacks, their resilience is remarkable and they shaped "powerful forms of resistance to hostility, simultaneously negotiating uncertainties that can adequately be explored by the use of a bottom up oral history to traditional life history method and combining with experience-centred narrative methodology for analysing displaced narratives" (Hashem and Dudman, 2019:1).

During the interviews, four participants were going through asylum process, and one was an undocumented migrant who suffered from severe epilepsy but was denied basic well-being support. We collected these oral histories, analysed selected extracts of the oral accounts and checked back the meanings of various terms by going back to participants before documenting anything, then preserved and made accessible some of these accounts with consent of the participants through the Living Refugee Archive, and other online outlets and academic journals. Through the co-working with the displaced we have learned a number of lessons that could be useful for archivists in the sector.

The stories that our participants told are moving which, Shahosh, the 24-year-old black Moroccan man who was the first storyteller in this project and who was going through the asylum process described as "moving memories". The term "moving memory" refers to both how the memories are powerful and how the oral history has made it even more moving. Some of these stories told by both the displaced and other participating community representative and researchers who actively participated in the project through their consultations and the engagement in a half-day workshop, have powerfully challenged the notion of nation and the state. Nation is for an undocumented migrant from Latin America: "a population that can exist and go beyond any place, any nation-state, and become undocumented "as herself. "It has little to do with the state", said the undocumented migrant woman who had been fleeing home and travelling around the world for 17 years. During her journey she also experienced brutal border control but her tremendous resilience enabled her to keep going to back to countries.

These stories of lived experiences of participants of this project showed how the displaced, those who were going through asylum process, and those who could not (as undocumented migrants) and those featured as "vulnerable refugees" in the mainstream media and conventional scholarship of forced-migration and refugee studies have been subverted but

[6] See a detailed discussion on these life narratives in Hashem, R. and Dudman, P. (2016) Paradoxical narratives of transcultural encounters of the "Other": Civic engagement with refugees and migrants in London, Transnational Social Review: A Social Work Journal of Routledge, 6 (1):192-199. Also see Immigrant, A. and Hashem, R. (2020) "Too black to be Moroccan", and "too Afrikan to be Black-British": A Conversation. Displaced Voices, A Journal of Migration, Archives and Cultural Heritage, 1 (1):17-26. Available from: http://www.livingrefugeearchive.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Too-black-to-be-Moroccan-Hashem.pdf

formed strong solidarity and powerful resistance too. Through their first-hand accounts and paradoxical narratives in the city of London that is known as a diverse place, participants challenged the meta-narrative of refugee crisis and vulnerability.

A Digital Human Rights Project

This is a project which an indigenous participant from Morocco called a "Digital Human Rights project". The Refugee Council Archive was apparently an ideal space to talk about, learn from, and co-produce narratives about hostility towards and resilience of the displaced, as pointed out all participants who gave their powerful oral history for archiving and digitalising, and make available via the Living Refugee Archive.

"People do not simply believe that refugees have rich histories in relation to their culture, landscape and livelihood in their homeland which they bring along as they land in the host country for remaking home", said a Syrian participant who loved the landscape of their homeland. It was our intention to co-construct authentic social history through our research and make available the genuine narratives of refugee lived experiences in London. The way that Refugee Council Archive has created a space for the undertaking of this collaborative project with the displaced people from the global south in London is unusual. It has enabled the recording, supporting, documenting, preservation and open access to invaluable life narratives and "moving memories" of subversion of those undergoing the brutality of border controls, immigration related hostilities, asylum seeking process, and health care and work regulations in the UK. The step to showcase the oral history of local communities and the displaced have helped to make accessible through the Living Refugee Archive.

Conclusion

It has been a challenging and experimental yet the most rewarding collaborative project that I have undertaken so far. Archivists need to come forward "to develop more inclusive descriptive practices that empower refugees, who are largely marginalised and under-represented, and acknowledge them as records creators" (Sazilagyi, 2020:3). The discussion above shows that it is possible to develop inclusive, representative and accessible archives as the Refugee Council Archive project has shown us. We had a good response, positive remarks, strong collaboration of a good team, and good outcome of the project.

The ideas were ours but these would be impossible to undertake unless the Refugee Council Archives hosted the project and had helped to bring our ideas to life. Throughout the duration of the project, we have also recognised that our understanding and teamwork have been a great resource for us. We have had a great team spirit with a sensible institutional supervision and with much needed expertise of the project leaders. This work is not a complete undertaken though we consider this as a good beginning of a new outreach. This work will continue and expand upon the project to build on future partnerships and community engagement with the displaced and subverted.

Image from the project launch event.

References

Dudman, P. and Hashem, R. (2015) Democratic access or privileged exclusion? Civic engagement through the preservation of and access to refugee archives. Interim briefing report. London: University of East London.

Dudman, P. (2014) Preserving and Listening to the Voice(s) of the Refugee within the Archival Record of the Nation-State. A conference paper presented at the *Refugee Voices*. Hosted by the Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford, 24 March, 2014.

Gilliland, A. J. (2018) Refugees rights in records symposium: Summary Report. Research and development questions arising. Symposium hosted in Budapest on 10 January 2018. Report published by UCLA Center for Information as Evidence on 23 January 2018. [Accessed on 20 June 2021] Available from http://www.osaarchivum.org/files/Final-Report_Symposium-on-Refugee-Rights-in-Records.pdf

Hashem, R. 7 August 2018. Wage discrepancies and health care imbalances of non-EU and irregular migrant workers in the UK. Living Refugee Archive Guest Blog [Online]. 7 August, 2018. [Accessed on 9 August 2018] Available from http://www.livingrefugeearchive.org/wage-discrepancies-and-health-care-imbalances-of-non-eu-and-irregular-migrant-workers/

Hashem, R. and Dudman, P. 30 September 2019. Documenting untold resilience and moving memories with displacement: Narratives of asylum-seekers and refugees in Britain. Living Refugee Archive [Online]. 30 September, 2019. [Accessed on 1 October 2019] Available from http://www.livingrefugeearchive.org/documenting-untold-resilience-and-moving-memories-with-displacement-narratives-of-asylum-seekers-and-refugees-in-britain/

Hashem, R. and Dudman, P. (2017). The significance of oral narratives in making the voices of refugees heard: A foreward. In: Hoffman, M. Asylum under Dreaming Spires: Refugees' lives in Cambridge, pp.vi-v. US: Routledge.
Hashem, R. and Dudman, P. (2016) Paradoxical narratives of transcultural encounters of the "Other": Civic engagement with refugees and migrants in London, Transnational Social Review: A Social Work Journal of Routledge, 6 (1):192-199.
Hashem, R. and Dudman, P. (2016) Listening to lived experience and narratives of refugees in London: (Re-)constructing social history through the preservation of "moving memories". Working paper. London: University of East London.
Mbembe, A. (2016). Decolonizing knowledge and the question of archive (Unpublished paper). Accessed on 22 January 2016, from wiser.wits.ac.za
Szilagyi, C. (2020) Records of forced displacement and refugee narratives: A case study from the Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives in Budapest. 149-162

The Seventieth Anniversary of the Refugee Council: Voluntary Action, Living Archives and Refugee Voices

Paul V. Dudman[1]

This issue of *Displaced Voices*, published during Refugee Week, reflects on the 70th anniversary of both the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the establishment of the third sector organisations that were to become the Refugee Council. Our theme for this issue was: *Twentieth Century Histories of Civic Society Responses to Crises of Displacement*. Throughout these seven decades, the issues of refuge and displacement, and the challenges faced by those undertaking the migration journey, have continued to require an engaged response from third sector organisations, often filling the void left by the relative inaction of national governments. This article considers the key narratives located within this issue, whilst also exploring our role as the host archival repository of the Refugee Council. The anniversary is an opportunity to reflect on our work undertaking anti-oppressive, participatory and collaborative methods working directly with refugees, community groups and third-sector organisations.

There has been a long history of voluntary sector responses to situations of refugee and forced displacement within the UK setting, often co-existing with the expression of anti-refugee discourse and a mixed response from the ruling parties in Government during those particular moments. The Refugee Council is one of the primary not-for-profit organisations working with refugees and asylum seekers in the United Kingdom. The Refugee Council originated from two independent organisations, British Council for Aid to Refugees (BCAR) and the Standing Conference on Refugees (SCOR), which were both founded in 1951 following the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. By the end of the Second World War, it was estimated that there were approximately 9.2million displaced peoples in Europe alone (Kushner and Knox, 1999, p. 43), leading to creation of the United Nations 1951 Convention. The most recent figures published by the UNHCR in 2020 suggest that there are 79.5 million displaced people worldwide (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2020, p. 1).

In light of debates around the current Hostile Environment policy and the New Plan for Immigration from the current Conservative Government in the UK it is interesting to consider the longer history of these policies. These negative approaches towards displaced persons are not new and are in evidence at the turn of the twentieth century with the introduction of the 1905 Aliens Act. In parliament at the time, as Kushner and Knox describe: "Other MPs referred to the pre-war period and how Britain had been flooded by the `ne'er-do-wells and parasites of the world'; `the muck, the rubbish, and the refuse of the Continent.'" (quoted in Kushner and Knox, 1999, p. 74). A policy of almost total exclusions of aliens, as refugees were then described, was introduced by the British Government following the end of the First World War

[1] Paul V. Dudman, Archivist, University of East London, p.v.dudman@uel.ac.uk

under the Aliens Restrictions Act at the end of 1919, reflecting a continued anti-alienism and underlying xenophobia.

Historic hostility has been met with resistance by those who have sought to welcome refugees to Britain, including voluntary sector organisations. Successful support of displaced persons in Britain is in evidence from as early as the 1930s, with the inception of the Britain's Aid Spain Movement (BPSM) established primarily to support Basque refugees from the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939. BPSM came to be considered "the most widespread and representative mass movement in Britain since the mid-nineteenth century days of Chartism … and the most outstanding example of international solidarity in British history." (quoted in Kushner and Knox, 1999, p. 106). The National Joint Committee for Spanish Refugees (NJCSR) was subsequently established on 6 January 1937 at the House of Commons and became an umbrella organisation for at least 150 different organisations. The inter-war period also saw a number of organisations established in response to the increase in refugees from the Nazi regime in Germany. Organisations included the Refugee Children's Movement, formerly the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany, and the Academic Assistance Council, later to become the Society for Protections of Science and Learning and now renamed as CARA, the Council for At-Risk Academics. AAC was founded in 1933 with the aim to support "university-teachers … of whatever country, who, on grounds of religion, political opinions or "race" [who] are unable to carry on their work in their own country." (Kushner and Knox, 1999, p. 161).

The establishment of the British Council for Aid to Refugees (BCAR) and the Standing Conference on Refugees in 1951 as a response to the creation of the United Nations Convention on the Status of Refugees saw this voluntary work to support and resettle refugees arriving in Britain continue beyond the Second World War. The Refugee Council therefore has had a long history of involvement in the resettlement of refugees. This included providing a growing level of support services, often outsourced by the British government. An early example is the funding given to both Save the Children (£50,000) and the BCAR (£10,000) in response to agreeing to accept 2,500 Hungarian refugees following the Uprising in 1956. (Kushner and Knox, 1999). During the late 1960s, BCAR was involved with supporting "almost" refugees from Czechoslovakia following the Warsaw Pact invasion. (Refugee Council, no date). Their work continued during the 1970s responding to the Ugandan Asians, Vietnamese and Chilean refugee situations, with the "BCAR settlement section assisted over 2,000 such refugees from 48 countries, mostly African, but also from the Middle East, Asia, Latin and Central America." (Refugee Council, no date). The British Council for Aid to Refugees and the Standing Committee on Refugees merged in 1981 to form the British Refugee Council and continued to play a leading role in responding to situations including the crises in the Balkans during the 1990s and the creation of The Gateway Protection Programme in the mid-2000s.

Effective and humane resettlement policies have played an important role in the voluntary sector responses to larger scale refugee movements over the Twentieth Century. The current controversy over the housing of asylum seekers within sub-standard conditions during a global pandemic within Napier Barracks in Folkestone and the Penally Camp in Wales is not a stand-

alone incident. BCAR worked with the Government to receive 346 Vietnamese refugees in Kensington Barracks after they had been rescued at sea by the British ship *Wellpark* (Kushner and Knox, 1999, pp. 309–310). Kushner and Knox argue that the Refugee Council took "conventional centralised approach to reception" (1999, p. 315) traditionally in refugee camps ranging in size from under 100 to over 700 hundred. This compared to other charities like Ockenden Venture whose reception work, especially with the Vietnamese, focused on "small reception centres with a family approach and volunteer staff, settling small refugee groups together and encouraging interaction with the local community" (Kushner and Knox, 1999, p. 316). These differences in approach to refugee resettlement reflects the differences in philosophy and approach within the voluntary sector, reflected in an argument outlined by the Refugee Council at the time, that "despite avowed commitment to avoiding refugee dependency, Ockenden gained a reputation as paternalist, inflexible and even authoritarian in its attitude toward refugees," (quoted in Kushner and Knox, 1999, p. 316), which could even result in competition within the refugee resettlement response.

Archiving Voluntary Action, Retaining Refugee Voices

This issue of *Displaced Voices* focuses on a number of underlying issues that have helped shaped the history of the refugee experience over this period. This has reflected our wider work with both the UEL Archives and the Living Refugee Archive, where we have looked to work with both third sector organisations and diaspora communities to help ensure that we are able to include refugee voices within the journal, both as individual and co-produced articles reflecting the need to ensure the supportive space for these narratives to be included. Our work to date has involved collaboration on archiving and oral history projects documenting the lived experiences of migration and displaced persons. Our Living Refugee Archive virtual portal began as an oral history project to document the experiences of refugees in East London, which one of our participants referred to as a "project of human rights." Oral history provides an important approach for facilitating the collection of everyday experiences of displacement and we have been able to collaborate on diverse collections including the Voices of Kosovo in Manchester archive; documenting the experiences of Chinese and Vietnamese communities in the same city in support of Crossing the Borders project by the Wai Yin Society; and documenting the histories of the Gujarati communities in Croydon and Brent in conjunction with Rolf Killius and Subrung Arts on their Gujarati Yatra exhibition at the Museum of Corydon and the new Roots and Changes Gujarati Influences exhibition in Brent.

In his article, Sandip Kana reflects on the importance of narrative approaches to documenting the history of Partition, especially the reliance on male narratives of the period, overlooking the female lived experiences of Partition. The author demonstrates the importance of documenting issues of gender and refugee women's wellbeing and lived experience in the aftermath of Partition, including through oral history methods. This is an area of work that we have looked at through the use of anti-oppressive oral history methodologies (Hashem and Dudman, 2016) and the importance of participatory and co-productive methodologies to ensure that due agency and empowerment is given to these narratives. (Kaur, 2021).

Yusuf Ciftci and Larysa Agbaso, in their article on the VOICES Network, reflect this approach in their work through meaningful participation as an approach to healing trauma when working with refugees. The VOICES Network aims to provide a safe platform to help facilitate empowerment and integration to help in the promoting of confidence and wellbeing. Co-production and agency in supporting the support under-pinning a lived experience approach involved a value-driven participatory approach, involving both equal and reciprocal partnerships and the opportunity for healing through narrative engagement, whilst providing a safe space to open up.

The work of Juan delGado considered in the article by David Andrews explores how conventional approaches to capturing refugee stories risk “stereotyping the refugee as a passive victim prey to malign external forces". The author considers how delGado avoids this in his work by “framing the refugee narrative as one of mutual involvement with the struggles of communities they have joined”. We can see this approach of co-production and mutual collaboration in the co-authored article by Mrs. Babar, a mature-aged woman living in Australia as an asylum seeker. This article adopts the participatory action approach modelled in a previous issue of *Displaced Voices* (edited by Kiran Kaur): both involve co-authorship of articles but with the first author being the writer who wishes to share their lived of experience of migration, creating a safe and participatory space to tell their story in the way they choose to tell it. In this case, Mrs. Babar was keen to focus on the importance of gender and access to higher education for seeking asylum, an issue which will resonate with participants who have attended our OLIve course for refugees and asylum seekers at the University of East London.

Lina Fadel also takes a very personal reflection on a refugee’s experience of everyday microaggressions and the internationalisation of colonial forms of narratives. Fadel considers first-hand experiences of migration and the importance of writing as a sort of catharsis – “For people in the diaspora, writing becomes a form of therapy and healing, a way to stay connected and break the silence.” (Fadel, 2021, p. 60). Fadel argues “against the homogenisation of migrant narratives and experience and in favour of “historical context visualisation” that appears to be missing in migration and refugee studies.” (Bhambra quoted in Fadel, 2021, p. 61).

Kushner and Knox have reflected on the Government reliance on voluntary organisations to assist with refugee resettlement throughout much of the Twentieth Century. This is made clear in Zibiah Loakthar’s article for this issue of *Displaced Voices*, where the author reflects on the ebb and flow of migrant organisations in London, powered by volunteers. With the move towards ideas of integration rather than multiculturalism in policy, ethnic-based organisations found it harder to source funding leading to the changing face of community organisations. Loakthar eloquently initiates the call for the preservation of the collective memories of those organisations. Loakthar’s call to consider donating materials to archives in order to ensure their survival, long-term preservation and to ensure their accessibility for future generations interested in this important aspect of our cultural heritage.

But, "charity archives are under threat" (McMurray, 2014, p. v): according to a report on the state of the charity archive sector which considers that "most charity archives are operated on shoestring budgets, with in-house archival provision almost impossible for most with incomes under £10 million … [with] … poor understanding by senior management about their organisation's histories, their archives and the value they hold for their organisations is exacerbating this problem." (McMurray, 2014, p. v). Yet these archives are crucial for exploring refugee experience: as Peter Gatrell argues, "Refugee history cannot be understood without considering their relationships and intersections with governments, national and international NGOs, it is impossible to write about one without considering the other." (History Workshop Online, 2021). This was a view echoed by one of McMurray's interviews for his report on charity archives: "British history can't be written without looking at the voluntary sector." (McMurray, 2014, p. 1). This can be highlighted by the damage inflicted to the *An Viet Foundation* archive and library, which had documented over thirty years of a community organisation working directly with the Vietnamese communities in Hackney, showing how easily the legacy of a diasporic community can be lost. Fortunately, after being left out on the roof by squatters and being heavily water damaged (Sheridan, 2019), the *An Viet Foundation* archive is now undergoing initial conservation as a consequence of receiving a grant from The National Archives Covid-19 Emergency Fund (The National Archives, 2021).

If archives are under threat, then collecting refugee stories becomes ever more important. In her discussion of the virtual exhibition on *Arriving and Belonging: Stories from the St. Albans Jewish community*, Helen Singer considers the importance of stories in documenting migration and displacement, and the universal themes that could apply to other migrant groups as they settle in the UK. Over 100 stories were collected from community members of the St. Albans Mascrati Synagogue (SAMS) and the virtual exhibition includes photographs of community members outside of their front doors, holding objects that illustrate their stories and showcased on the virtual photography wall, a similar methodology to that undertaken in *Life Under Lockdown: On Mehetabel Road and Isabella Road in Hackney, 2020*, which focused on the experiences of Lockdown by residents of two local streets in Hackney, and the objects that sustained them (Nightingale, 2020).

Chilean Exiles and Archival Futures

It has been estimated that half a million Chileans were forced to flee as exiles in response to the September 1973 military coup of the Socialist Salvador Allende government. Voluntary sector organisations including the World University Service (WUS) and the Refugee Council played a significant role in supporting Chilean refugees arriving in Britain following the 1973 Coup, which was important given the low-key response from the British Government, Ann Browne, Coordinator of the Joint Working Group for Refugees from Latin America, argued that "In Britain, the immediate response of to the coup was more muted than in many other countries." (quoted in Kushner and Knox, 1999, p. 294). On their arrival in the UK, Chileans were initially reliant on the established third sector organisations including BCAR and the Ockenden Venture, founded initially as a response to refugee children in European DP camps. The Joint Working Group for Refugees from Chile was subsequently established as a partnership

between organisations including BCAR, WUS, Ockenden Venture, and Christian Aid to help facilitate the reception and resettlement programme for Chilean refugees. The Joint Committee also included newly established solidarity groups including the Chilean Solidarity Committee and the Chile Committee for Human Rights. These solidarity groups reflected a growing grassroots response to supporting Chilean refugees and helped facilitate an approach which helped to reflect the needs of those arriving from Chile.

The writing of Carole Concha Bell highlights the challenging experiences of the exiles from Chile and the role of literature in second generation identity struggles. For Bell, the complexities of identity, exile and belonging between first and second generation Chilean exiles played out in the form of identity fiction as a vehicle to begin interpreting the author's experiences of exile, and just as importantly, the impacts of returning to Chile. The role of fiction in discussing the experiences of second-generation returnees was the narrative form that the author felt could best resolve her notions of identity, cultural belonging and what it meant to be a returnee. This is an interesting comparison to the review of *Exiliado in Buckingham Palace* by Gloria Miqueles which acts as an autobiography of a first generation Chilean exile, which also considers narratives of historical exile in the light of current immigration plans and the lived experiences of displacement.

The role and significance of objects as cultural heritage and symbolising notions of home and belonging has become a recurring theme in the civic and community engagement work we have undertaken at the University of East London. Material culture plays an important role in the migration experience but is often overlooked in favour of the more traditional approaches of locating the refugee experience within more established narratives of trauma and loss, and the challenges of the journey. In 2018 the UEL Archives hosted an exhibition entitled *Crafting Resistance* which focused on the history of the Chilean diaspora in London and their experiences as political prisoners during the dictatorship in Chile following the military coup of the 11 September 1973. Their experiences were told through over 100 individual objects loaned specifically for the Exhibition, primarily of objects created during periods as political prisoners in Chile. The exhibition was immensely powerful as it was able to bring together both physical objects, with documentary materials within the Refugee Council Archive and a documentary where Chileans were able to discuss and reflect upon their experiences and discuss the importance of the objects within the exhibition and their importance as objects of resistance. Kushner and Knox (1999) reflected on how the dissipated nature of the Chilean diaspora post arrival made their stories dependent on the collection of oral histories given their relative absence from established archival collections, and the *Crafting Resistance* exhibition (Gideon and Miqueles, 2018) offered a tantalising opportunity for how we could more effectively work with diasporic communities to help better document their collective memory, whilst facilitating a sense of agency and empowerment to their collective histories.

We are currently working with Gloria Miqueles and members of the Chilean diaspora community in London on a new project to help collect and document materials relating to the Chilean experience of exile and adaptation in the UK along with experiences of life under the

military Junta in Chile. Entitled *Proyecto Documentando Chile del Archivo Viviendo como Refugiado de la UEL / Documenting Chile Project on the Living Refugee Archive*:

> "We hope to connect with individuals and organisations who may have either documents or objects from on the situation in Chile from the 1970's through to the present that might help to preserve the collective memory and lived experience of the Chilean diaspora, ensuring your voices and stories are both heard and are also told in a way that you want you stories to be told." (Dudman, 2021)

We will also be launching a curated virtual exhibition of the materials included in the *Crafting Resistance* exhibition along with new materials collected since the exhibition at the International Association for the Study of Forced Migration Conference in July 2021. Through this project we will be reflecting on the role of material culture in supporting the understanding of the lived experience of displacement through objects and artefacts and the role of participatory creative practice. Our original exhibition was held in conjunction with two craft-based workshops held in the Archive at UEL by Jimena Pardo, a second-generation Chilean, focused on how we can document experiences through creative praxis. Jimena's work has focused on the arpilleras (Spanish for burlap), which are "brightly-coloured patchwork pictures stitched onto sacking are chronicles of the life of the poor and oppressed in Chile in the 1970s and 1980s during the totalitarian military regime of General Augusto Pinochet Ugarte." (O'Toole, 2014). Originally conceived as a creative form of protest under the Pinochet regime in Chile, arpilleras have come to represent important visual records of the experiences of ordinary Chileans, especially women, who experienced life under military rule. Through her creative practice working on the *Bordando por la Memoria* (*Embroidering for Memory*) project, Pardo reflects on the arpilleras and "how they act as a platform to reconstruct and visualise memory by representing historical accounts and experiences through textiles." (Fashion Space Gallery, no date).

This resonates with the work of the Qisetna project outlined in the article by Sarah Barker, which considers the significance of storytelling and community focused collecting in her article on the Qisetna virtual platform, representing both a digital archive documenting the cultural heritage of Syria and Syrians and a communal platform for the sharing of stories. Barker reflects on the fragments of memories documented within the archive, and the role played by storytelling as a fundamental aspect of Syrian identity and culture. In a similar fashion, Miqueles has considered the importance of documenting memory as being a key aspect of preserving Chilean diasporic collective history. Mezna Qato raised the challenge to consider the distinction between refugee archives and the more informal refugee collections, which are curated by refugees themselves. Archivists have traditionally helped shape what we mean by refugee histories. How can we distinguish the encountering of collections produced by refugees themselves, which can include ad hoc collections of photographs and scraps and shards of documents on plastic bags which survive and are handed down from generation to generation. As Qato reflects, "these collections have a different kind of provenance and historicity and wouldn't class them as refugee archives, this is not doing enough work to do so." (History Workshop Online, 2021).

Conclusion

This issue of *Displaced* Voices touches on a number of key issues, including the role of voluntary sector organisations in supporting displaced voices; the importance of allowing space for empowerment and agency in refugee narratives and the role of refugees in modern history and the importance of archives in terms of what we collect, how we collect it and the importance of the stories we enable for empowering refugee narratives back into the historical record. However, we should ensure that we do not place pressure onto refugees to tell their story and contribute to refugee historical narratives and thereby reclaiming them back into history. Rumana Hashem in her article to close this volume of the Journal considers how anti-oppressive methods can help create space in the Archive for community engagement and challenge existing paradigms for ensuring ethical documenting of refugee narratives.

It is not possible to consider the history of the nation or the state without including the history of refugee. We as archivists and historians should look to ensure that refugees are not just caught in the moment of their displacement and not to consider the refugee as an exclusive category of history. Examples from this issue of *Displaced* Voices highlights how displaced persons can also be part of political movements and have wider political, community and individual identities beyond the fact of their displacement. Heather Faulkner articulately describes how "Being a refugee is part of a whole constellation of belongings beyond being a displaced person" (History Workshop Online, 2021) and we should ensure we incorporate these identities and notions of belonging within the archival collections we look to establish, and not to focus on their identity solely as a refugee.

The importance of home and the sense of identity this engenders is reflected in several of the articles in this issue, whilst Qisetna's vison to move away from the rhetoric of labels and focus on storytelling, advocacy and co-production presents us with a positive example of how a proactive community-focused project can help develop and support a sense of agency and belonging amongst dispersed communities. Something we continue to strive to achieve through archival collecting work with the Refugee Council Archive and related collections at UEL and through our community-focused outreach and engagement work with the Living Refugee Archive.

References

Dudman, P. V. (2021) Proyecto Documentando Chile del Archivo Viviendo como Refugiado de la UEL / Documenting Chile Project on the Living Refugee Archive, Living Refugee Archive. Available at: https://www.livingrefugeearchive.org/documenting-chile-project/ (Accessed: 1 June 2021).

Fashion Space Gallery, (no date) Threads of Memory - Workshop with artist and activist Jimena Pardo - Fashion Space Gallery. Available at: http://www.fashionspacegallery.com/event/threads-memory-workshop-artist-activist-jimena-pardo/ (Accessed: 3 June 2021).

Gideon, J. and Miqueles, G. (2018) Crafting Resistance Exhibition, Living Refugee Archive. Available at: https://www.livingrefugeearchive.org/exhibitions/crafting-resistance-exhibition/ (Accessed: 1 June 2021).

Hashem, R. and Dudman, P. V. (2016) 'Paradoxical narratives of transcultural encounters of the "other": Civic engagement with refugees and migrants in London', Transnational Social Review, 6(1–2), pp. 192–199. doi: 10.1080/21931674.2016.1186376.
History Workshop Online, (2021) Creating Refugee Archives. (History Workshop Online Podcast). Available at: https://soundcloud.com/historyworkshop/creating-refugee-archives (Accessed: 3 June 2021).
Kaur, K. (2021) Displaced Voices: A Journal of Archives, Migration and Cultural Heritage Volume 1, Issue 2 (Winter 2021). Living Refugee Archive, University of East London. doi: 10.15123/uel.89673.
Kushner, T. and Knox, K. (1999) Refugees in an age of genocide: global, national, and local perspectives during the twentieth century. England; Portland, OR: F. Cass.
McMurray, M. (2014) Charity archives in the 21st century. Cardiff: Royal Voluntary Service, pp. x, 56p. Available at: https://www.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk/Uploads/Documents/Our%20impact/Charity_Archives_in_the_21st_Century.pdf (Accessed: 28 March 2019).
Nightingale, E. (2020) Life Under Lockdown: On Mehetabel Road and Isabella Road in Hackney, 2020. London: Eithne Nightingale. Available at: https://pagesofhackney.co.uk/webshop/product/life-under-lockdown-on-mehetabel-road-and-isabella-road-in-hackney-2020/.
O'Toole, R. (2014) 'What is an Arpillera? | The William Benton Museum of Art', 23 June. Available at: https://benton.uconn.edu/exhibitions/arpilleria/what-is-an-arpillera/ (Accessed: 3 June 2021).
Refugee Council, (no date) 'Our history', Refugee Council. Available at: https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/about-us/our-history/ (Accessed: 3 June 2021).
Sheridan, E. (2019) 'Race to save "irreplaceable" Vietnamese archive left on roof for months', Hackney Citizen, 21 November. Available at: https://www.hackneycitizen.co.uk/2019/11/21/race-save-irreplaceable-vietnamese-archive-roof-months/ (Accessed: 9 May 2021).
The National Archives, (2021) The National Archives - Awarded grants - The National Archives, Archives sector. The National Archives. Available at: http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/finding-funding/covid-19-archives-fund/awarded-grants/ (Accessed: 9 May 2021).
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, (2020) UNHCR Global Trends 2019. Geneva: UNHCR. Available at: https://www.unhcr.org/statistics/unhcrstats/5ee200e37/unhcr-global-trends-2019.html (Accessed: 31 May 2021).