

# Researchers for Asylum Seekers

---

**INTERDISCIPLINARY  
CONFERENCE 2018**





## CONFERENCE CONVENOR

Karen Block

## SPONSORS

Melbourne Social Equity Institute

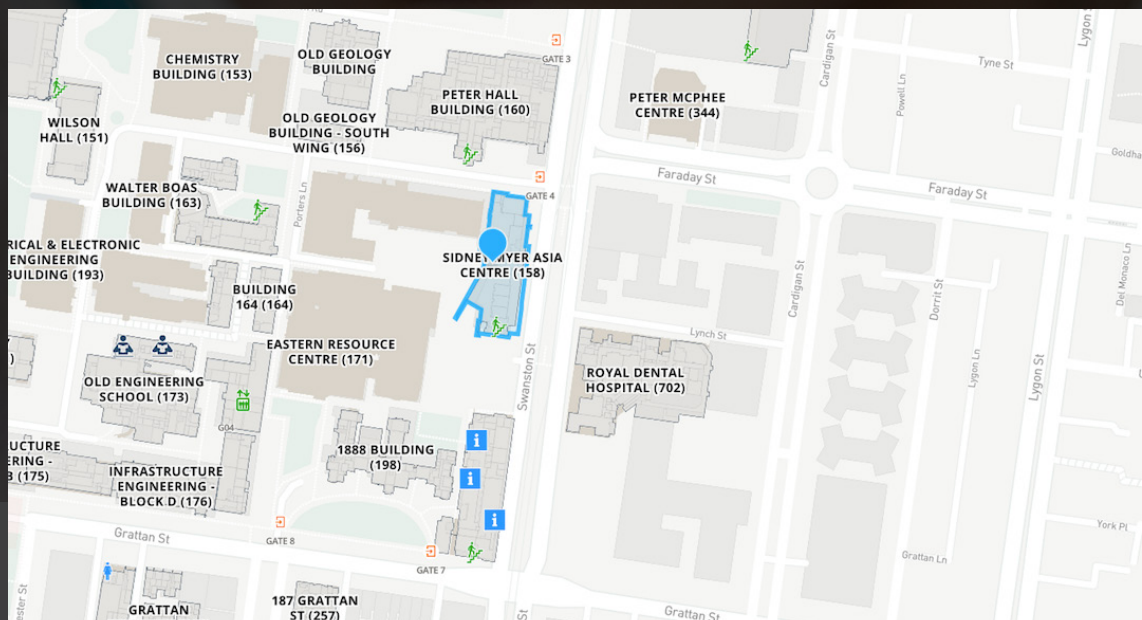
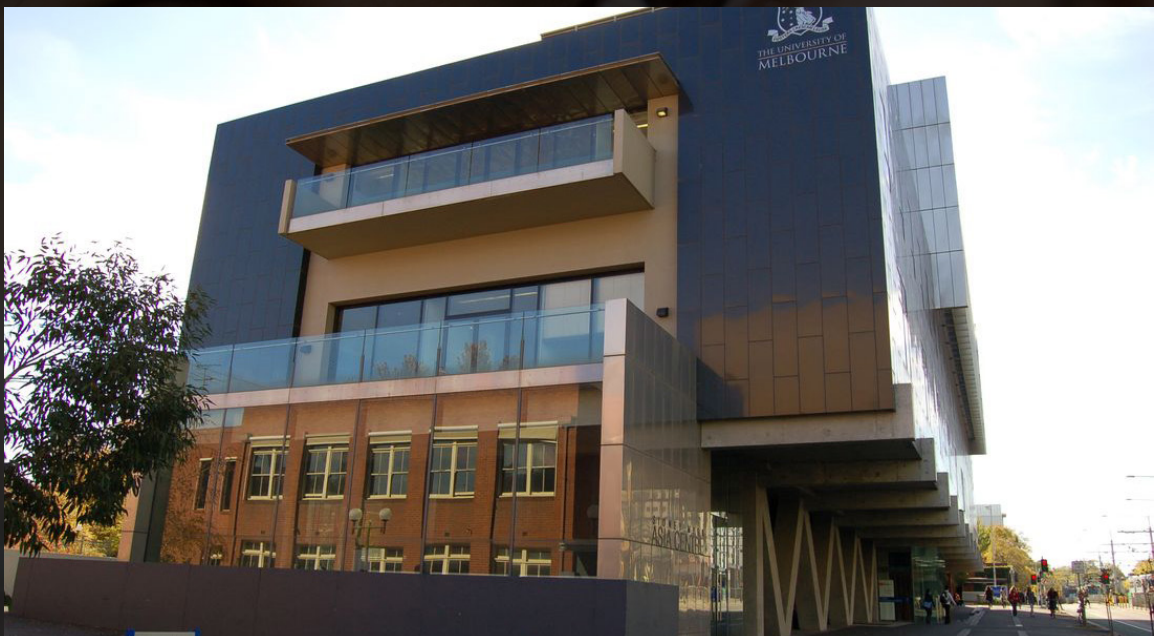
Lunch will be provided, comprising vegetarian and vegan finger foods from Asylum Seeker Resource Centre Catering, as well as light refreshments for morning and afternoon tea.



# VENUE

Yasuko Hiraoka Myer Room  
Sidney Myer Asia Centre  
761 Swanston Street  
University of Melbourne

The Sidney Myer Asia Centre is located directly opposite Tram Stop 1 on Swanston Street. The Yasuko Hiraoka Myer Room is located on Level 1.



# Program

---

9.15 Welcome – Nick Haslam

**SESSION 1 REPRESENTATION AND IDENTITY**  
**CHAIR: KAREN BLOCK**

9.20 KEYNOTE ADDRESS: DIANA JOHNS AND NAKIER CHOL  
Growing up South Sudanese in Victoria after the  
Moomba 2016 ‘riot’

10.00 ASHLEIGH HAW  
“We’re talking about real people”: Audience perceptions  
of dehumanisation and exclusion in Australian news  
representations of asylum seekers

10.20 EDEN BAKER, JOE SCIGLITANO & MEGAN GOODWIN  
Australian Red Cross x Portable: “I am a living question mark”

**10.40 MORNING TEA**

**SESSION 2 GENDER, IDENTITY AND PERSECUTION**  
**CHAIR: ANDREW SIMON-BUTLER**

11.10 HADEEL ABDELHAMEED & MONICA KEILLY  
Female refugees: Bodies as counter-political testifiers

11.30 YARA JARALLAH  
Structural violence in the context of settler colonialism:  
The case of Palestine

11.50 REYVI MARINAS  
Becoming Conscious Citizens: Transnational Activism and  
Collective Identity of the Filipino Diaspora in Australia

12.10 SARAH STRAUVEN  
Citizen initiatives as places of preferred identity formation

12.20 JACQUELINE MILLNER  
Feminism, art and ethics in neo-liberal times

**12.30 LUNCH**

**SESSION 3****PLACE AND INCLUSION****CHAIR: CHARLENE EDWARDS**

- 1.30 JOHN VAN KOOY  
Situated welcome: Refugees' inclusion and settlement experiences in Australian neighbourhoods
- 1.50 MARK RAINEY  
In search of respect: Refused asylum seekers and the emotional landscapes of ethnographic research
- 2.10 ROSE ISER  
Second-generation African Australian students from refugee backgrounds in the classroom and at home
- 2.30 ANH NGUYEN  
Game change: Engaging refugees in #digital\_diaspora
- 2.50 PHILLIPA BELLEMORE  
Refugee Mentoring
- 3.00 CAITLIN DOUGLASS  
Exploring alcohol and other drug use among culturally and linguistically diverse communities in Victoria, Australia

**3.10****AFTERNOON TEA****SESSION 4****RESPONDING TO TRAUMA AND PERSECUTION****CHAIR: DANA YOUNG**

- 3.30 HANNE WORSOE  
Women's lives as asylum-seekers, in limbo, in Australia
- 3.50 ROBERT GRUHN & SHAWFIKUL ISLAM  
'Falling through the cracks' – Community perspectives on asylum seeker and refugee mental health
- 4.10 DZENANA KARTAL, MAURICE EISENBRUCH & DAVID KISSANE  
Trauma, cultural identity and integration: A psycho-social approach to investigating the mental health of refugees in Australia
- 4.30 STEPHANIE BECKWITH  
Free from Violence Against Women and Girls: Voices of women seeking asylum who have experienced SGBV
- 4.50 ANDREW SIMON-BUTLER  
Defining sexual and gender-based violence in the refugee context
- 5.00 HALA NASR  
'Whose voice is louder?' Safe spaces as responses to gender-based violence in refugee settings

**5.10****CONFERENCE CLOSE**

SESSION ONE

---

# REPRESENTA- TION AND IDENTITY.

CHAIR     KAREN BLOCK

# Growing up South Sudanese in Victoria after the Moomba 2016 ‘riot’

DIANA JOHNS & NAKIER CHOL

Diana and Nakier will present themes that have emerged from a recent research collaboration between Monash University, the University of Melbourne and the Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY). The project explores South Sudanese young people's experience of the demonising media and political narratives about Moomba 2016 and 'African gangs'. The just-published report, *Don't Drag Me Into This: Growing up South Sudanese in Victoria after the Moomba 2016 'riot'*, brings to light the perspectives of young people for whom such narratives have had a deep and far-reaching impact on their everyday lives. Diana and Nakier will talk about some of these effects, in conversation, as one of the researchers and someone with lived experience of the issues raised. The themes to come out of the research reflect young people's perceptions in three main areas: the role of the media in creating and perpetuating myths about racialised crime and South Sudanese people; the experience of racism, both at the level of systemic discrimination and in everyday encounters; and issues of belonging and opportunity.

**Diana Johns** is Senior Lecturer in Criminology at the University of Melbourne. Her research and teaching focuses on imprisonment, post-prison social integration, young people in contact with the justice system, and African communities in Victoria. She recently published her first book, *'Being and Becoming an Ex-Prisoner'* (Routledge, UK).

**Nakier Abraham Chol** is 19 years old, from South Sudan. She is a Yarra youth ambassador, young entrepreneur, freelance model, public speaker and voice for her community. Her involvement with community and young people began after she experienced injustice and what it felt like to be treated different because you were different.



# “We’re talking about real people”: Audience perceptions of dehumanisation and exclusion in Australian news representations of asylum seekers

ASHLEIGH HAW

The media is a critical source of information on people seeking asylum and in turn, plays an important role in shaping the public’s understanding of the issue. In Australia, few studies have investigated how media audiences respond to news discourses about asylum seekers, and no research has combined discursive and audience reception approaches to shed light on the topic. This paper discusses the findings of research employing Fairclough’s (1992) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) alongside an Audience Reception framework (Hall, 1980) to explore how Australian media audiences conceptualise and evaluate news representations of asylum seekers. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 24 residents of Western Australia (WA), who discussed their general views about asylum seekers, their media engagement preferences, and their perspectives regarding Australian news discourses about seeking asylum. Most participants cited news coverage as their main exposure to information about asylum seekers. The sample demonstrated a combination of dominant-hegemonic, oppositional, and negotiated readings of media messages, supporting the applicability of Hall’s (1980) ‘encoding/decoding’ model of communication in research concerned with discursive responses to media coverage, particularly when used alongside a CDA approach. All participants critiqued the reliability of news content as an information source about asylum seekers. A common issue raised during these discussions was the dehumanising nature of news depictions, with many participants arguing that asylum seekers’ voices are frequently absent from news coverage about their plight. These findings reveal considerable disenchantment among WA media audiences, highlighting the importance of transparent, compassionate, and inclusive approaches to news coverage about asylum seekers.

**Ashleigh Haw** has recently submitted her PhD in Sociology at the University of Western Australia. Her thesis focused on discursive responses to news representations of asylum seekers among Australian media audiences. Ashleigh has a Master of Education from the University of Sydney and has worked in various research assistant, administration and tutoring roles at UWA, Edith Cowan University, the University of Sydney, and the University of New South Wales. She is currently employed as a sessional tutor in the School of Culture and Communication at the University of Melbourne and volunteers as a campaign writer for the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre.



# Australian Red Cross x Portable: “I am a living question mark”

EDEN BAKER, JOE SCIGLITANO & MEGAN GOODWIN

People seeking asylum are often treated as a homogenous group, defined by their situation. Nothing could be further from the truth. Australian Red Cross and Portable are currently conducting a research and co-design project that aims to give a voice to people seeking asylum in Australia and engage them in the process of designing new services to improve their lives. Underpinned by a human-centred design approach, this unique project involves workshops and interviews with Australian Red Cross clients (people seeking asylum), caseworkers and volunteers across Australia. Our research sheds light on the varied and interconnected issues people seeking asylum are experiencing. These include complex issues around identity—such as attitudes and behaviours of help-seeking, social and cultural connections and purpose. It shows that while people seeking asylum have common needs, they are not defined by their situation. Each have their own interests, values and aspirations. Co-presented by Australian Red Cross and Portable, this presentation will provide an overview of the project, our research findings and our next steps.

**Eden Baker** is a researcher and strategist at Portable. Prior to this role she spent several years working as a policy adviser in the state and federal government. She has a Bachelor of Laws and a Bachelor of Arts in Communications and is currently studying an MBA (Social Impact) through the University of New South Wales.

**Joe Sciglitano** is a multidisciplinary designer with over 10 years' experience in product, communication and user experience design. Joe works collaboratively with end users and clients to research and design strategic solutions that strike a balance between user and organisational needs.

**Megan Goodwin** works in Migration Support Programs at Australian Red Cross. Megan has worked with Australian Red Cross in a range of areas supporting people seeking asylum and refugees, including the Immigration Detention Program and the Restoring Family Links Program. She has also worked internationally with Red Cross in Indonesia and East Timor.

SESSION TWO

---

# GENDER, IDENTITY AND PERSECUTION.

CHAIR     ANDREW SIMON-BUTLER

# Female refugees: Bodies as counter-political testifiers

HADEEL ABDELHAMEED & MONICA KEILLY

This paper investigates the role of female refugees' physicality in documenting body persecution. It shows that the lives and bodies of asylum seekers are conceived as ungrievable according to an ontological apprehension of life. Accordingly, the wasted (mutilated or incarcerated) bodies of female refugees and asylum seekers act as counter-political factors to resist invisible policies of negligence performed by host governments. The paper is a blend of reality and theatricality. It is a critique of an Iraqi war drama that tackled stories of three female refugees. These narratives are interwoven with personal observations and interviews done by an Australian young woman who was an eyewitness to the stories of persecution inflicted upon Palestinian people. While it provides a realistic background of the violence that causes them to become displaced and seek of refuge, it emphasizes that persecution does not stop as they reach the host countries.

**Hadeel Abdelhameed** is a PhD candidate at La Trobe university; Drama and Performing Arts Program. Her research is a comparative study between Iraqi and Australian war drama that tackled women's involvement in inner conflicts or global combats. She is an activist who sees in drama a type of creative activism.

**Monica Keilly** has worked as a human rights observer and contributed to international protective presence in occupied Palestine and Israel. She has conducted research into gender-based violence as a Research Assistant to Prof. Jacqui True (Monash GPS) and also to Dr. Jasmine-Kim Westendorf (La Trobe University) and Humanitarian Advisory Group. She is a current student of International Relations.



# Structural violence in the context of settler colonialism: The case of Palestine

 YARA JARALLAH

This presentation will utilise Michel Foucault's concept of bio-power to demonstrate how life choices can be structured and constrained by political violence in the context of settler colonialism. It draws mainly from Tawil Sourì's historical tracing of the Identity Card regime in Israel/Palestine and Shalhoub-Kevorkian's work on the politics of birth in occupied East Jerusalem, to show how Israeli biopolitical measures of discipline and control enacted through surveillance and immobility have affected choices and behaviours of birthing Palestinian women, politicising childbirth and inflicting widespread social and psychological suffering.

**Yara Jarallah's** research considers the interplay between family processes (marriage and fertility), war and conflict, and health and well-being outcomes to understand social stratification and inequality. She uses mixed methods, demographic techniques of event history modelling, quantitative methods and qualitative methods in her research. Her work is interdisciplinary and cuts across research in family sociology, demography and public health with a focus on populations in conflict and post-conflict settings including forced migrants predominantly from the Arab World.

# Becoming Conscious Citizens: Transnational Activism and Collective Identity of the Filipino Diaspora in Australia

 REYVI MARINAS

This presentation explores an alternative way of looking at the idea and practice of citizenship from the point of view of a migrant group's collective consciousness and activism within its diaspora. I call this type of citizenship a 'conscious citizenship', which is about becoming politically conscious and engaged in the political community. Being conscious citizens entails contestation and resistance against the neoliberal policies of the sending and receiving states at a transnational level. It also involves group solidarity and collective action that transform the individual to become part of a collective political community. In this research project, I investigate the political activism of Migrante Australia, a Filipino migrant grassroots organisation in Australia. I examine the group's political participation and practices, their political views and awareness and the significance of Filipino collective identity in the diaspora. The study discovers several significant themes and results that arise from the interviews and field observation. First is Migrante's transnational activism and counter-hegemonic political engagement that effects changes both in its homeland and in its diaspora. Second is the importance of political consciousness of its members as a way of sustaining a deeper level of political awareness and involvement in the wider community. And third is the emergence of a new Filipino collective identity in Australia that illustrates a transformation from 'being Filipino' (having a sense of 'who we are') to 'becoming political' (having a sense of 'what we have become') on a transnational level.

**Reyvi Marinas** has recently completed his doctoral thesis at Monash University Law School entitled 'Conscious Citizenship: The Political Activism of the Filipino Diaspora in Australia Through the Lens of Hannah Arendt'. He is the current Secretary-General of Migrante Australia, a Filipino community organisation in Australia. Reyvi is also an Immigration Lawyer practicing in the areas of migration and refugee law, administrative law and human rights.

# Citizen initiatives as places of preferred identity formation

 SARAH STRAUVEN

My doctoral research project focuses on Australian grassroots community initiatives whereby citizens and people with refugee experience are co-creating a shared world through narrative practices. An especial focus being the transformational potential of these relational encounters. Narrative practice seeks to dismantle the stories that limit people's lives while exploring alternative stories that open new possibilities of being and acting. Collective narrative work involves gathering others as witnesses to acknowledge and support these counter stories and claims of preferred identities. I'm interested in researching how citizen initiatives are creating spaces for narrative practices and how people participating in these grassroots community initiatives are affected. Through a social justice approach I hope to make a contribution to local communities and public debate.

**Sarah Strauven** worked in a Belgian reception centre for asylum seekers for 10 years. As a clinical psychologist concerned with issues of systemic violence, institutional trauma and social justice she trained in narrative therapy and community work. One of Sarah's involvements with grassroots community initiatives included a mobile interactive art exhibition with Afghan friends.



# Feminism, art and ethics in neo-liberal times

JACQUELINE MILLNER

Care critically explores how care in its many forms represents an alternative ethics to neo-liberalism. It will connect and explore researchers and artists working with care in a number of ways; Care as Relational, Care as Political Labour, Care as Moral Theory, Caring for earth/Country, Art practice as care – Care as Art Practice. The project aims to produce a conference, exhibition and scholarly publication which integrates knowledge produced through non-traditional research outputs. Care will take an interdisciplinary approach, including perspectives not only of artists, art theorists and curators, but also from the many fields in which care is of central concern, including political science, philosophy, the law and health sciences, providing opportunities to build cross-disciplinary links. The project will also highlight Regional artists and communities in both Victoria and New South Wales. The next stage in the research is to set up a Care Research Network, which will enable small group discussions, leading to the conference in late 2019. The Care Project will extend the research activities of the research cluster co-founded by Dr Millner at University of Sydney, Contemporary Art and Feminism (CAF). CAF was set up in response to the groundswell in engagement with feminism's role in the development of contemporary art and its current relevance to art-making and analysis. CAF facilitates collaboration and communication while producing high quality research on the connections between feminism and art practice, and their contribution to current political challenges.

**Jacqueline Millner** is a writer and educator widely published in the history and theory of contemporary art. Her interests include Australian art; installation, video and performance; social practice and new forms of institutional critique; contemporary art and feminism. She is Deputy Head of School of Humanities and Social Sciences (partnerships and connectivity) at La Trobe University.

## SESSION THREE

---

# PLACE AND INCLUSION.

CHAIR     CHARLENE EDWARDS

# Situated welcome: Refugees' inclusion and settlement experiences in Australian neighbourhoods

 JOHN VAN KOOY

Australia's immigration regime is carefully managed to meet the country's demographic and labour market needs. Refugees occupy a somewhat unique position in this system, having been admitted entry and long-term residence for ostensibly humanitarian reasons. However, refugee policy remains predicated on an expectation that humanitarian entrants—like other migrants—contribute to society through active engagement with the world of work and autonomy from social support. These federal policy settings have influenced public discourse and widely-held expectations for refugees' contribution to the nation. However, the lived experiences of refugees are mediated by conditions in local settlement contexts. It is in the neighbourhoods and towns where refugees settle that inclusion or exclusion occurs. The attitudes and actions of stakeholders in receiving communities (such as neighbours, employers, local government, community organisations, and service providers) shape real opportunities for refugees, and can either reproduce or contest broader policy directions and discourse. Indeed, some Australian communities have developed settlement initiatives for refugee arrivals that reflect a more welcoming, socially inclusive disposition to federally-funded, mainstream service offerings. This project will explore how these macro and micro-level dynamics interact to produce settlement outcomes for refugees in Australian neighbourhoods. Using a mixed methods research design, I will examine how neighbourhood characteristics and social exchanges influence refugees' lived experiences. Overall, I aim to advance plausible explanations for the ways in which place impacts upon settlement outcomes, while reflecting on the significance of refugee status for local inclusion.

**John van Kooy** is a PhD Candidate in the Monash Migration and Inclusion Centre (MMIC) at Monash University. He has spent the last 10 years working as a research and evaluation professional in the international community development and migrant settlement sectors in Australia, Asia and Africa.



# In search of respect: Refused asylum seekers and the emotional landscapes of ethnographic research

MARK RAINEY

This paper reflects on the emotional landscape of ethnographic research undertaken with refused, male asylum seekers living destitute in the UK. At its core, this paper argues that feelings such as respect and shame should not only be viewed as themes and topics for research, but should also be recognized as forming key desires (or aversions) on the part of the researcher. In other words, the emotional landscape of research is often situated between any formal distinctions between the 'field' and the 'social' and between the 'researcher' and 'research topic'. Alongside the humiliation of not being believed in their claims for refugee status, refused asylum seekers in the UK are denied the right to work, have no recourse to public funds and live under threat of arrest, detention and/or deportation. Many are pushed into destitution and become dependent on others, including charities, to meet basic needs. In this context feelings of dignity and indignity come to the fore and the logic of the deserving and underserving is often reproduced and activated on the fringes of what Bridget Anderson terms 'the community of value'. This paper also argues that moments of uncertainty and the provocation of shame can have an important role to play in ethnographic research, particularly if they serve to push the researcher out of the 'enchanted ordinary' and recognize the uneven tragedy of border regimes. And in this respect, anger – understood in the manner of Audre Lorde and Michael Keith – can become a productive force within ethnographic writing.

**Mark Justin Rainey** writes on politics and migration from an interdisciplinary perspective. In 2017 he completed a PhD at the University of London a joint project between the School of Geography, Queen Mary and Centre for Cultural Studies, Goldsmiths. Last year he founded and co-chaired the Migration and Destitution Action Group within the Manchester Homelessness Partnership in Manchester, UK. He is currently a Visiting Researcher at SHAPS, University of Melbourne.

# Second-generation African Australian students from refugee backgrounds in the classroom and at home

 ROSE ISER

In the context of the changing dynamics of Australian multiculturalism, this paper explores the existing cultural and language resources of African-Australian communities in inner-Melbourne and how schools draw upon these resources in supporting SGAA students in their academic and social development. In light of the political and media focus on #AfricanGangs in Victoria, the study is a timely investigation of the way SGAA students, their families and schools understand their cultural backgrounds. A qualitative inquiry comprising case studies of students and their families across two schools, the researcher is currently undertaking observations, interviews, and student-created soundscapes to generate in-depth knowledge about participants' perceptions of the SGAA students' resources. The research draws on Critical Race Theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1999) and adopts an asset perspective to counter deficit views of students from refugee backgrounds. It draws on theoretical models of resources including Bourdieuan forms of capital, Funds of Knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (Paris & Alim, 2017) to navigate how students' resources can be conceptualised. The primary intention of this research is to generate new insights into the interface between schools and cultural and language resources of the African background communities they serve.

**Rose Iser** is a second year PhD candidate with the MGSE, and a participant in the PhD Program in Refugee and Forced Migration Studies at the Melbourne Social Equity Institute. She has worked in law, politics and teaching, with a particular focus on diversity and equity in community engagement and education

# Game change: Engaging refugees in #digital\_diaspora

ANH NGUYEN

Digital access and citizenship has been the game changer for refugees and asylum seekers in diaspora. Refugees in Digital Diaspora are connecting in real time and through social media. They are building on-line community archives and networks that have significant creative potential for Museum, Advocacy and Education programming and collection. Recently, Museums Victoria has been able to collect art and images from a detainee on Manus Island based on a Facebook friendship between an advocate and detainee since 2001. Vietnamese refugees from particular rescue boats or refugee camps are curating their own historical records and memories on Facebook and reuniting with one other worldwide. What are the implications of these activities for community-based and museum collections? How can we better program for public engagement with contemporary migration issues? Anh Nguyen shares her research and game design education program for teachers and students to build video and board games based on oral histories that showcase their understanding of the complexity of choices that ordinary people make in becoming refugees. Explore in real time the museums engagement with digital life and migration, and discuss how to promote active engagement with contemporary and controversial immigration history.

**Anh Nguyen** is a Research Associate with Dr Moya McFadzean, Senior Curator Migration & Cultural Diversity at Museums Victoria. Anh's work focuses on collaboration, research, community engagement with oral history of contemporary migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. She currently is completing her PhD about Vietnamese child refugees with Joy Damousi, Child Refugees and Australian Internationalism Laureate Fellowship at the University of Melbourne.

# Refugee Mentoring



PHILLIPA BELLEMORE

Refugee mentoring provides a pathway for relationships between refugees, people seeking asylum and their local community. Relational bonds develop with the assistance of a third party, such as a non-government or faith organisation. This type of program acknowledges that settlement is more than the traditional three E's of English, employment and education and recognises that settlement is also an emotional journey. Refugee mentoring offers connection, symbolic belonging along with practical assistance. The nature of the bonds varies and can range from fragile to immersive. In this presentation, three models of refugee mentoring are examined, and I explore how each model shapes different relationships between mentors and mentees. Participants in mentoring programs do not always conform to rules and expectations, and I discuss ways in which mentors and mentees resist organisational imperatives and challenge refugee imaginaries. I provide a snapshot of an academic mentoring program called Making Connections for refugee background students currently being piloted at Macquarie University. So far, the program is revealing promising results for both mentees and mentors. Embedded in the program is an evaluation and the findings will provide directions to improve and strengthen the program. This low-cost program has the potential to be adopted elsewhere by other universities and higher education facilities.

**Phillipa Bellemore** is a doctoral candidate in Sociology at Macquarie University. She is investigating the relationship between refugees and the receiving community in Australia. Phillipa is a member of Academics for Refugees–Macquarie University node and is a Project Officer on Making Connections, a pilot academic mentoring program for refugee background university students at Macquarie University.



SESSION FOUR

---

# RESPONDING TO TRAUMA AND PERSECUTION.

CHAIR     DANA YOUNG

# Exploring alcohol and other drug use among culturally and linguistically diverse communities in Victoria

CAITLIN DOUGLASS

Australia's national drug and alcohol policies identify culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities as priority populations for reducing drug and alcohol-related harms. Although prevalence of alcohol and other drug (AOD) use is thought to be lower among people from CALD backgrounds, some individuals from these communities face significant barriers in accessing AOD treatment services and are vulnerable to factors associated with AOD-related harms (including mental health conditions and experiences of trauma). This PhD project aims to explore the context of AOD use in CALD communities from the perspective of key stakeholders, young people and parents of CALD backgrounds in Victoria, Australia. Participants will be purposively sampled through community-based organisations. The study will adopt qualitative and participatory research methods to enable young people of CALD backgrounds to frame the research agenda. Data will be collected through workshops, in-depth interviews and focus groups. Analysis will be guided by the social-ecological model to understand the role of individual, interpersonal and community-level factors on AOD use. Results may inform culturally appropriate prevention, harm reduction and treatment strategies for AOD.

**Caitlin Douglass** is a PhD student at Burnet Institute and University of Melbourne. She has a Bachelor of Health Science from Monash University. Her research interests include alcohol and other drug use, sexual health, social media and young people of migrant and refugee backgrounds

# Women's lives as asylum-seekers, in limbo, in Australia

 HANNE WORSOE

Since 2011, about 36,000 people have sought safety in Australia by means of a people-smuggling boat. Policies of deterrence enacted by the Australian government ostensibly countered the high amount of drownings at sea, but also worked to counter political criticism about managing the “integrity” of Australia’s borders. Under “Bridging Visa Es” granted to them, these people were forced to live off 89% of an unemployment benefit, and denied resettlement services and work. Today, 91% of these people are not detained, but live in the community. Frozen in asylum-seeker-limbo for over six years, they are now known as the “asylum legacy caseload”. Under new “fast-track” processing of refugee claims, they are offered one of two further temporary visas in a lengthy and difficult process with a reduced refugee recognition rate. There is huge pressure on voluntary legal clinics to process often-complex claims, with limited preparation for a two-hour interview with DIBP, and then the lengthy appeals process that often ensues. As yet, there has been no intersectional unpacking of how such laws and policy impact people differently. It is my contention that asylum-seeking women, as 20% of the cohort, have a gendered asylum-seeker experience, distinctly and diversely socially embodied. Using participant observation at an asylum seeker clinic, and interviews with practitioners, I provide initial fieldwork findings on the effects of temporary visas on women of the “asylum legacy caseload”.

**Hanne Worsoe** has worked in education for two decades. She graduated from the University of Queensland in 2013 with a Masters of Development Practice. After volunteering with refugees, she began a PhD about women asylum-seekers in Australia in 2016. This paper is a result of recent fieldwork.

# ‘Falling through the cracks’ – Community perspectives on asylum seeker and refugee mental health

ROBERT GRUHN & SHAWFIKUL ISLAM

This presentation from the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (ECCV) will outline findings from a recent ECCV Health Policy Issues Paper: ‘Falling through the cracks’ - Community perspectives on asylum seeker and refugee mental health. Through consultations with Afghan Hazara, Burmese and Rohingya communities, ECCV found that these communities are experiencing difficulties and gaps accessing a complex health and mental health system. A central theme for discussion will be the current knowledge gap about if and how refugees and people seeking asylum in Victoria effectively use health and mental health services. ECCV will outline why and how refugees and people seeking asylum with mental health conditions face barriers to access, including language, experiences of trauma and torture, limited knowledge of options and other complex settlement challenges. In addressing these issues, ECCV will propose pathways and support options to improve their mental health effectively and appropriately. We will argue that more specialised, community-based and integrated refugee and asylum seeker mental health services are needed to fill the gap between mainstream mental health and those services that treat mental health conditions, such as torture and trauma. Community recommendations (gathered through in-depth interviews with community leaders) will emphasise the changes required to achieve culturally safe, accessible and responsive mental health services. Addressing quality and safety concerns will be vital to increase accessibility and cultural competency of mental health services, specialist refugee mental health services. Mainstream services need to be culturally appropriate and more responsive to diversity. Policy makers, service providers and health practitioners must ‘get it right’ in a time of intensified transnational population movements.

**Robert Gruhn** has advocated on social justice issues in community organisations in Germany and Australia. He is experienced in research, policy and advocacy addressing inequities in health, disability and aged care. Recent work includes advocacy on interpreting and refugee mental health. Robert holds degrees in history, political science and international relations.

**Shawfikul Islam** is a Burmese-Rohingya community activist who lives in Melbourne’s south east in Springvale. Shawfikul arrived in Australia in 2013. He is the chairperson for the Australian Burmese Rohingya Organization (ABRO) and currently also works as a union organiser. The main issues Shawfikul will discuss are statelessness, barriers to education and successful settlement and refugee health and wellbeing issues linked to migration.



# Trauma, cultural identity and integration: A psycho-social approach to investigating the mental health of refugees in Australia

DZENANA KARTAL, MAURICE EISENBRUCH  
& DAVID KISSANE

War-related traumatic events can affect the mental health of refugees long after their resettlement. Migratory stressors such as unemployment, host-language difficulties and discrimination are associated with integration difficulties, and also have a cumulative negative affect on the mental health of refugees. Research studies conducted with refugees have however studied these factors in isolation from one another, concentrating on investigating either the traumatic impact of traumas or the impact of acculturative stress on mental health. Using structural equation modeling, this study examined the relationships between traumatic exposure, acculturative stressors, cultural identity and mental health outcomes (i.e., posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression and anxiety symptoms) in two samples of Bosnian refugees that have resettled in two different host nations – Austria and Australia. The findings indicated that traumatic exposure is still the strongest direct and indirect predictor of PTSD, depression and anxiety symptoms. Furthermore, acculturative stressors affected the host cultural orientation and identity, hence mediating the effects of traumatic exposure on all mental health outcomes. These findings point toward the importance of assessing both psychological and social stressors when assessing mental health of refugees. While provision of psychotherapy to refugees with mental health problems should remain a priority, addressing acculturative stressors could not only assist better integration, but also improve mental health outcomes.

**Dzenana Kartal** is a Research Specialist at the Phoenix Australia - Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health. Dzenana specialises in mental health service delivery and research including implementation and evaluation of evidence-based treatments, knowledge translation and evidence synthesis. She has published on a variety of topics including refugee mental health, acculturation, implementation and assessment of effectiveness of psychological treatments for PTSD.

# Free from Violence Against Women and Girls: Voices of women seeking asylum who have experienced SGBV

STEPHANIE BECKWITH

This presentation presents the findings of 'Free from Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)', a pilot research project funded by the City of Parramatta Council. Through interviews with 10 women seeking asylum as well as consultations with practitioners who are providing support to this group, we sought to gain an understanding of the experiences that women have had both in Australia as well as prior to arrival in Australia, the strengths and gaps in service systems in this area, and areas in which urgent reform is needed. Our research found that:

- Women seeking asylum can be particularly vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and face significant barriers to accessing appropriate support services.
- Women seeking asylum have often already had experiences of SGBV in their home countries and during their migration journey, which continue to impact on their lives in key ways after they arrive in Australia and seek protection
- That reporting SGBV in Australia can place women and children at further risk of harm, both whilst in the country living in precarious circumstances, and if returned to countries of origin where they often have limited institutional protections from perpetrators and/or extended family/community. This can be a significant barrier to women reporting abuse.

Our findings point to a need for further advocacy and policy change to increase protections for women who are seeking asylum in Australia and who report SGBV, both in terms of access to support as well as visa pathways once SGBV has been reported.

**Stephanie Beckwith** is the Project Coordinator of Finding Safety, a new program run by Jesuit Refugee Service and funded by Women NSW – DFV Innovation Fund. Finding Safety aims to reduce incidences of DFV among women seeking asylum across Western Sydney, through a model which facilitates self-empowerment and leadership with women seeking asylum.

# Defining sexual and gender-based violence in the refugee context

ANDREW SIMON-BUTLER

The term ‘sexual and gender-based violence’ (SGBV) has gained prominence in international human rights documents and within academic discourse relating to refugees. The SEREDA project (SExual and Gender Based Violence in the REfugee Context: From Displacement to Arrival) – a major research collaboration between the University of Birmingham, University of Melbourne, Uppsala University and Bilkent University – aims to understand the incidence and nature of SGBV experienced by refugees who have fled conflict in the Levant Region. As a contribution to the initial phase of this project, a literature search was undertaken to examine how key terms relating to SGBV have been defined and how these terms may apply in the refugee context. This presentation will explore from a legal perspective how a broad definition of SGBV has been used to understand the refugee experience in conflict settings, with particular focus given to the current conflict in Syria. The international community’s approach to SGBV will be examined, with close attention paid to definitions in multi-lateral Conventions and other hard and soft instruments of international law. Finally, what gender means in the context of SGBV and the resulting debates about who should be the primary focus of humanitarian intervention will be discussed.

**Andrew Simon-Butler** (BIntSt(Hons), JD, LLM, LLM(LegPrac), MRes) is a Research Assistant at the Melbourne Social Equity Institute, where he undertakes legal research in international human rights law, mental health law and criminal law. Andrew is also a qualified Australian Lawyer, Canadian Barrister and Solicitor and Australian Registered Migration Agent.

# ‘Whose voice is louder?’ Safe spaces as responses to gender-based violence in refugee settings



HALA NASR

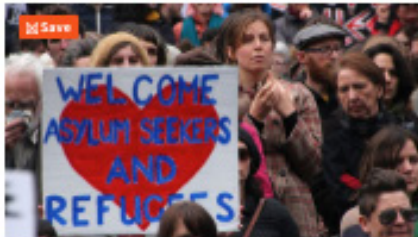
Women-only safe spaces are increasingly recommended and implemented as part of gender-based violence responses in humanitarian and development settings, despite little evidence supporting best practices. The framing of safe spaces is an important point of interrogation, as it impacts the (im)possibilities for refugee women who are accessing them, particularly those who have experienced gender-based violence. In this presentation, I discuss the academic and grey literature on safe spaces in development and humanitarian settings. I then present five main interconnected themes underlying how safe spaces are framed and approached within this literature: physical separation, empowerment, connection, treatment, and transformation of gendered social norms. I conclude by arguing that the voices of refugee women accessing safe spaces are, however, absent from the conversation and future research must address this gap to ensure safe spaces develop to meet the needs and aspirations of refugee women.

**Hala Nasr** is a gender-based violence responder and advocate, whose past work in Aotearoa/New Zealand has included working within a feminist women's refuge supporting African, Middle Eastern and African migrant and refugee women survivors of domestic and family violence, as well as implementing the NZ Defence Force's Operation Respect – a project geared to ending sexual violence in the military – in the Navy, Airforce and Army bases in the Northern region. She was recently awarded the University of Auckland's Top 40 Under 40 award to recognise her contributions in this space. She is currently conducting her PhD at the University of Melbourne with a focus on safe space responses to gender-based violence in refugee settings as part of a multi-country project SEREDA.

# REFUGEE RESEARCH ONLINE

## refugeeresearchonline.org

Providing a platform for academic and non-academic research and comment on issues surrounding people seeking asylum and refugees



06 Nov 2018 / 0 Comments

### CAN OPPOSING GROUPS AGREE TO DISAGREE?

How many migrants should we take? Is our border protection adequate? Are detention centres warranted? Australian society continues to be fragmented in attitudes towards these...

[Read More](#)



23 Oct 2018 / 0 Comments

### MAKING CONNECTIONS: A MENTORING PROGRAM FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS WITH A REFUGEE BACKGROUND

Many refugees and people seeking asylum are keen to study at university to enable pathways to meaningful work, but face barriers in navigating the university...

[Read More](#)



22 Oct 2018 / 0 Comments

### KALDOR CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE LAW ANNUAL CONFERENCE

'Refugee Diplomacy: Negotiating protection in a changing world' – Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law Annual Conference, 23 Nov 2018  
Foreign policy bears directly...

[Read More](#)



15 Oct 2018 / 0 Comments

### PSYCHOSOCIAL-ONCOLOGY AND ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS

As a psychologist, researcher and lived experience with cancer, I am keen to develop a program of research in psychosocial-oncology and particular in the area...

[Read More](#)



02 Oct 2018 / 1 Comments

### EXTENDING A COLLECTIVE HUMAN RIGHT TO ADDRESS A GLOBAL CHALLENGE: SELF-DETERMINATION FOR REFUGEES, ASYLUM SEEKERS AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

Forced human displacement is one of the signal challenges of the twenty-first century. UNHCR has reported that, in 2017, 68.5 million people were forcibly displaced...

[Read More](#)



11 Oct 2018 / 0 Comments

### RESEARCHERS FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS INTERDISCIPLINARY CONFERENCE

Thursday 15th November, 2018 9am – 5pm Yasuko Hiracka Myer Room, Sidney Myer Asia Centre, University of Melbourne MAP BOOK NOW  
Conference Spotlight: Gender, Identity and Persecution...

[Read More](#)



19 Sep 2018 / 1 Comments

### ACHIEVING CHANGE IN AUSTRALIAN REFUGEE POLICY: A CASE STUDY IN THE LIMITS OF LAW AND POLITICAL ACTIVISM?

In 2015, the Human Rights Law Centre, acting pro



23 Aug 2018 / 0 Comments



05 Sep 2018 / 0 Comments

### BOOK REVIEW: "REFUGEE – TRANSFORMING A BROKEN REFUGEE SYSTEM", ALEXANDER BETTS AND PAUL COLLIER