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Playing with the Art of Dance to Explore the Concept of Refuge

Students discover universal themes of the refugee experience through the medium of dance



January 26, 2017 | Justin Wilder

BRISTOL, R.I. – At the heart of the refugee crisis are concepts anyone can relate to – feelings of loss, a connection to home and the yearning for a better life. Connecting to the larger world through shared experiences around these universal emotions fosters a greater sense of empathy and understanding for others and cultivates socially engaged citizens who impact the world around them.

Throughout the fall semester, students in Professor Cathy Nicoli's Advanced Choreography course explored these universal themes through their art form. As part of the University's year-long "[Quest for Refuge](#)" series, the students created the dance installation "Living in Limbo: Stateless Identities" as a way to bring a sense of the global refugee crisis happening around the world to the campus community in Bristol.

"I'm always looking for ways to metabolize liberal arts through the body, for performers to move as activists. We use our bodies to bring awareness to an issue," says Nicoli. "Movement is a medium for metaphor. By creating a theme-based production, we're asking students and audiences to question the movement and how it relates to larger ideas."

During last semester's academic programming for the "Quest for Refuge" series, the Atrium of Global Heritage Hall transformed into a performance space with RWU community members lining the walls to experience the dance students' exploration of what it means to have a life without a home.

Living In Limbo: Stateless Identities



ACADEMICS