

# Intertext

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# Intertwined Journeys

Chloe Hechter

**H**ow can writing be used to build community? The Narratio Fellowship provides an answer. This annual intensive storytelling and leadership program provides resettled refugee youth with the tools and resources to share their narratives and creative works on the world stage. Students work with a cohort to write their stories and form long-lasting bonds in the process.

Brice Nordquist, associate professor and Dean's Professor of Community Engagement and co-creator and co-director of the fellowship program, has been working at the North Side Learning Center (NSLC) since moving to Syracuse almost seven years ago. He has helped to develop curriculum and programming that includes running arts-based classes and workshops with different collaborators. The Narratio Fellowship program emerged out of a collaboration that SU writing professor Eileen Schell put into motion when she invited Iraqi-American author and poet Ahmed M. Badr, to campus for events in support of the department's creative nonfiction reading series.

Badr led a storytelling workshop at the NSLC and soon after, Nordquist and Badr began building the Narratio Fellowship program.

Intertwined Journeys, the theme for the program's inaugural cohort, is a collaboration between the Narratio Fellowship and the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Ancient Near East Department. The project features poetry performances by resettled refugee youth and a series of local and national photography and writing exhibits. The project is designed to showcase the stories around intertwined journeys of objects, people, and cultures from their homelands to reimagined futures. Participants have found the experience extremely rewarding, seeing it as an opportunity to cultivate a stronger sense of self and community.

The two poems featured on the following pages were written by SU students Nidaa Aljabbarin and Ibraheem Abdi, who presented their work at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Aljabbarin's poem "The Day I Left," written shortly after her grandfather passed away, is a representation of the day she

and her family left Jordan to be resettled in the United States. She remembers her grandfather saying that they would come back to Syria or Jordan to visit, but she knew that they wouldn't after he died. Her poem was inspired by "Vessel" (3rd century B.C–1st century A.D.), a bronze cast believed to be from Iran. It reminded Nidaa of all of the objects that her family packed away and how the key to the house—the item that held all of them together—was lost.

Ibraheem's object was "Arrowhead" (ca. early 1st millennium B.C.), a class of weapons excavated in northwestern Iran and Transcaucasia. His poem by the same name tells a story of prevailing through hardships and standing tall despite challenging circumstances.

The poems featured here and others appear in Ahmed M. Badr's *While the Earth Sleeps We Travel*: [www.earthsleepswetravel.com](http://www.earthsleepswetravel.com).

To learn more about the Narratio Fellowship: <https://narratio.org/fellowship>.

To learn more about the North Side Learning Center (NSLC): <https://northsidelearning.org>.

Layout by Chloe Hechter. Photographs by Edward Grattan.