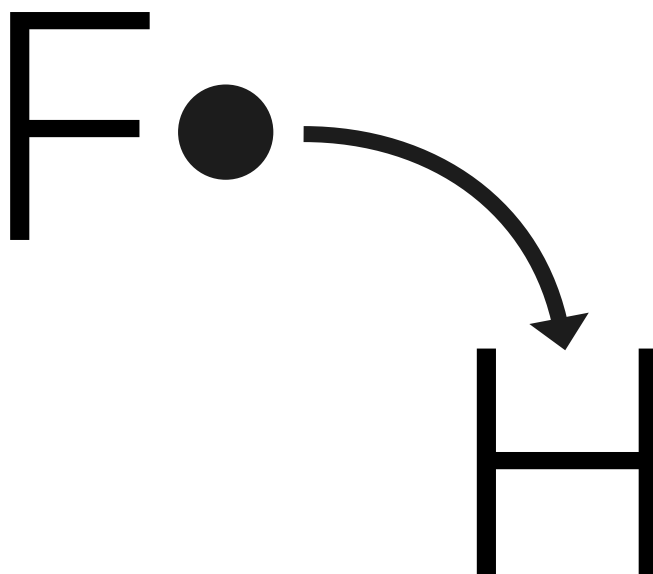


# FINDING

CATALOGUE



# HOME



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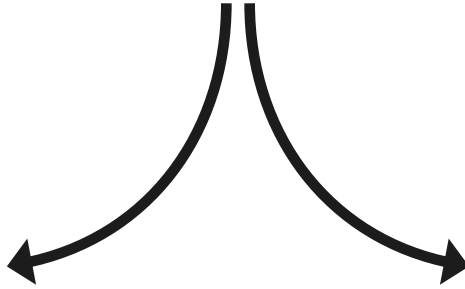
June 2021



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# *Introduction*

by Marusya Bociurkiw



Our stories are lifelines, traveling with us, tossed between continents, hidden, preserved, pulled out when needed. They are narratives told at refugee hearings, poems written long past midnight, films emerging from long pandemic days, phrases wrought from the scars of exile, the joys of freedom. *A story my father used to tell.* As a child soldier during World War II, he was captured and placed in a prisoner-of-war camp. Leaving out the grisly details, he told us only this: in the camp, he made drawings, and then traded the drawings with the cook to get extra food. This simple story sat with me, and became more complicated over time. The drawings at first seemed of little consequence to the story. They were merely currency; the narrative seemed to be about food, and survival. Over time, I understood what enormous risk this eighteen year-old daredevil was taking: if you were caught drawing, you could be shot. I began to understand that the drawing was itself life, as important for survival as the food. The drawings said, *I am here. I exist. I am human.*

Elahe Zivardar, who was detained in a migrant jail on Nauru Island by the Australian government for six years, has said: “I have been through a serious identity crisis and I am not sure who I am anymore. I am an Iranian woman; an engineering and architecture university graduate; an artist and journalist. Then I was reduced to nothing but a number.” Like Behrouz Boochani, who created a book, a film and many articles while in migrant prison, Zivardar used words and images to survive, to say, *I am human*—but also to expose border violence sanctioned by the Australian government.

The 3-year international research project “Finding Home: Migration, Placemaking & Research Creation” (and, in Toronto, the four participatory media workshops we created specifically for LGBTQ+ refugees), reaffirmed this idea, and many more. While providing a small measure of skills training, creative mentorship and community, the project foregrounds the idea that migration is story, and story is survival.

But is it research? I had that niggling question in my head the whole damn time.

Natalie Loveless, in her article “Towards a Manifesto on Research-Creation” (2015), has called this kind of processual, collaborative academic mode “alternative research worlds.” This radical approach to research forced us to reckon critically with academic tropes like “research subjects”; “data”; “outputs” and “knowledge mobilization”: magic code words that we deployed in our initial SSHRC application. And we did create an alternate research world, a wondrous and often privileged place that allowed us to meet with one another, in Toronto, London UK and Sydney, to engage in humane and scholarly conversation with Dr. Elena Marchevska in UK and Dr. Caroline Lenette in Australia and others, to break bread together, to create what Jorge Lozano has called “networks of emancipation” (personal communication 2021).

In Sydney, Caroline Lenette and research assistant Josie Gardner collaborated with three refugee-background women co-researchers originally from Iraq, to explore meanings of home and placemaking during resettlement. They walked with each co-researcher around her neighbourhood, talking about places and spaces that symbolise ‘home’, from formal structures and services, to social dynamics and

relationships. In London UK, Elena Marchevska worked with Carolyn Defrin and filmmaker Winstan Whitter, creating short films that focus on the power of responsive art-making as well as the hostile political climate that provokes it. Made in collaboration with activists and artists across the UK and Europe, the films explore policy, acts of art-making and the ways in which COVID has further impacted notions of home.

Other, equally rich conversations occurred with the graduate students and artists who worked with us: with Ryerson graduate student Nooreen Hussein, our project facilitator; with artists like Lozano, Seb Aguirre and Elizabeth Littlejohn who facilitated workshops; with the people we called our co-researchers – exceptional people from Iraq, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda and beyond. This alternate research world allowed me to think through the gentrification of university research, and the “moral loss” (Brady 2012) of the neoliberal university, which has contributed to what Fricker has called “epistemic injustice” (2007) and a kind of affective violence, entrenching university caste systems.

During the course of this project we were blindsided by a global pandemic. In such a time, art is what helps us to understand the unfathomable. In UK, Winstan invited us all to make films about our experience of the pandemic, providing an easy-to-use template, included in these pages. I turned to working with my co-researchers online, from which a plethora of images and dreamscapes emerged. (Descriptions of all of those works are included herein, and are freely available on the Project Finding Home Youtube channel). Those of us who are academics had the time to re-evaluate our investment in the neoliberal university. Happily, as this catalogue will demonstrate, this project gave us the opportunity to develop alternative forms of pedagogy and research based on collaboration, creativity, and solidarity. We are honoured to share our work and our reflections with you.

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REFLECT

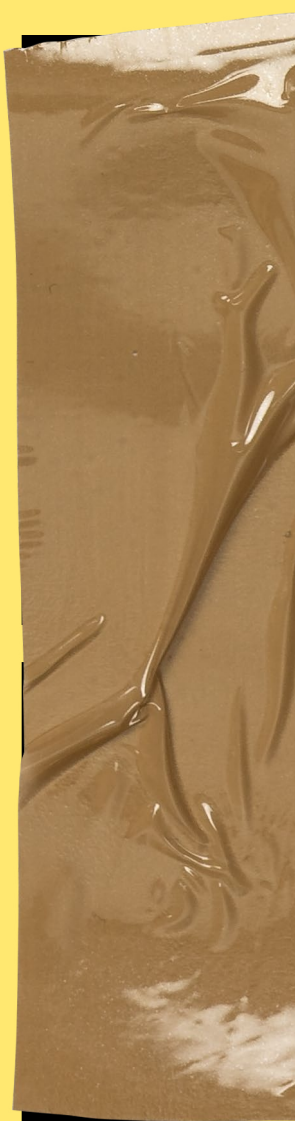
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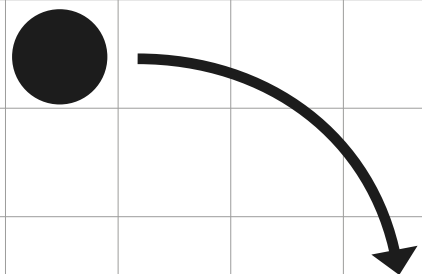


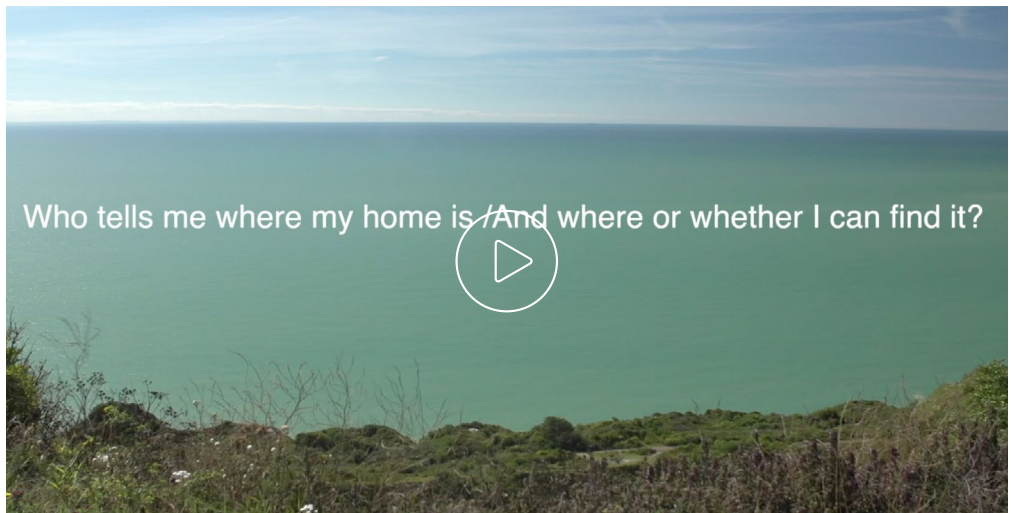




Taking  
care,  
taking  
time,  
making  
art

*Elena Marchevska and  
Carolyn Defrin*





In 2012, Theresa May (the UK's Home Secretary at the time), declared her aims to create a "really hostile environment" for illegal migrants. The UK Home Office Hostile Environment policy has since become a set of administrative and legislative measures designed to make staying in the United Kingdom as difficult as possible for people without leave to remain, in the hope that they might "voluntarily leave." According to [The Free Movement website](#): "the hostile environment includes measures to limit access to work, housing, health care, bank accounts and more. It is characterised by a system of citizen-on-citizen immigration checks. The majority of these proposals became law via the Immigration Act of 2014, and have since been tightened or expanded under the Immigration Act of 2016" (Yeo 2018).

<sup>1</sup> “Leave to remain is the permission granted to non-UK nationals to enter and stay in the UK for a limited period of time. After a qualifying period of residency in the UK, you may then become eligible to settle and apply for indefinite leave to remain” (Morris 2020).

These last ten years of hostile policy making and instability have inspired a desire to make change, and an enormous creative response from artists who come from migrant backgrounds. It is this creative foil to destructive government policy that inspired our team’s research. As fellow artist-researcher-humans with our own intergenerational migrant histories, we wanted to focus on the power of this responsive art-making as a way to not only understand, but to resist and defy the hostile political climate that provokes it.

Author and academic Shahram Khosravi argues that an auto-ethnographic approach to studying borders and migrant lives enables research that can “explore abstract concepts of policy and law and translate them into cultural terms grounded in everyday life” (2010, 5). This mingling of the personal and the political was critical to our research. Engaging with other migrant artists over two years, we worked deliberately as co-researchers and co-creators in a non-hierarchical dynamic. We ate together, we took our time, we shared stories of our own personal journeys and together created a series of four films that explored how we find home when it is so impacted by government policy, social and cultural integration, and intergenerational relationships.

Below you will find fragments of our reflections on this work. Focused through the lens of food, time and creativity, we trace the key ingredients in our nuanced collaborations.

## Tracing food

We meet Mojisola at Aso Rock in Dalston, her favourite Nigerian spot in East London. d’bi.young takes us for Ethiopian food in Brixton, South London. Mohand, Peter and Sophie of PsycheDelight theatre company introduce us to their favourite doner kebab restaurant near their rehearsal space at the Young Vic. And even via Zoom, we learn the ingredients for Khaled’s take on a simple Italian pasta, which he enjoys while catching up on Grey’s Anatomy. These simple interactions offer key beginnings in each of our collaborations. Breaking bread together allows us to break the boundaries of researcher/subject and open up to co-research and co-creation. We discuss how our mutual migrant-situated knowledge reflects the current landscape and in what ways, as artists first, we might contribute our perspectives.

In addition to offering an entry point, food also becomes



Having a meal with d’bi. Photo credit: Elena Marchevska.



'At home: with Mojisola Elufwoju'

a landing point for some of our films. In the omnibus series we created, “At Home with...,” we invited artists and ourselves to re-examine ideas of finding home in our pandemic lives, with the option to film walks, domestic objects or the making of a meal. Mojisola chose to film herself making a traditional Nigerian dish. We hear her sing; we see her mashing yams and sprinkling herbs; she talks of the in-between nature of homes in the UK and in Nigeria. Pre-pandemic, we had planned to film Moji at work in a theatre. This opportunity to take the camera into her kitchen, on her own terms, opened up an entirely new view of her.



'At home: with Carolyn Defrin'

And for me (Carolyn), as I experimented with filming my own pandemic cooking habits, the intergenerational nature of food revealed itself. Cutting purple cabbage, the map-like design takes me to resonant purples from my grandparents' borscht soup. I reflect on their complex journeys from Poland to America. How I crinkled my nose at that earthy soup as a child, and how now it's found its way humorously into my older body. The heirloom of lost homes lives on in majestic purple root vegetables that aptly hold ancestral roots/routes.

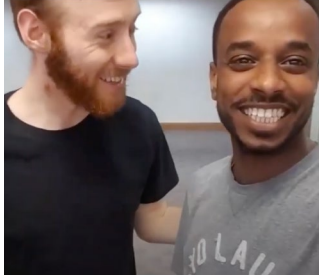
## Tracing time

Time was something we encountered differently through this project. Quick turnaround and quick cycles don't suit work that requires digging deep and building trust. We agreed we would resist usual production timelines and find a way of working with slowness and care. This was particularly unearthed in our collaboration with Khaled Barakeh. Originally from Syria and currently based in Berlin, Khaled spoke with us early on about wanting to ensure we didn't just represent him as 'the' voice for all migrants. We took our time through several conversations and creative brainstorming over two years to find the right piece. In the end he felt that revisiting a project he had made in 2015 called “On the Ropes,” where he suspended his entire studio to reflect the groundlessness he felt, would best reflect his relationship to finding home. He took the lead on editing footage from that project, working with his fellow migrant artist team in Berlin.

We recognise that time in the context of migrant life is double-edged. While we actively sought ways to construct our own relationships to time, this desire stems from how time is often used by government bureaucracies to control freedom. Waiting time for processing refugee and asylum seekers' claims in the UK is growing exponentially. For some, it can take up



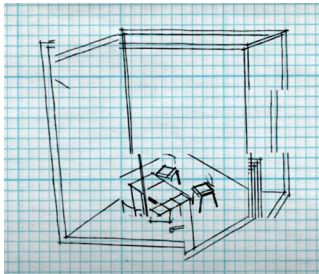
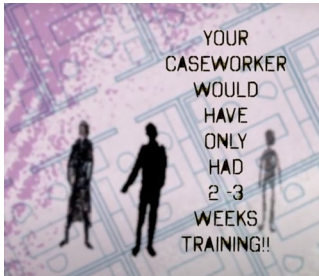
Screenshot from 'Suspending Home' by Khaled Barakeh



“Staging Home” with Peter and Mohand and PSYCHEDelight theatre company.



‘At home: with d’bi.young anitafrika’



‘Home-less’ created with Sebastian Aguirre and Paul Burgess.

to 10 years for a case to be fully considered. This is what the theorist Franco Bifo Berardi (2011) calls the “slow cancellation of the future.” He says: “Of course, we know that a time after the present is going to come, but we don’t expect that this time will fulfil the promises of the present” (Berardi 2011, 17). Migrants are existing in this suspended notion of time that citizens of the privileged West don’t have capacity to imagine. As argued by Lisa Baraitser, this is time conceived of as a viscous fluid, no longer a line with direction or purpose but a pool, the welling up of present time that will not pass and has no rim (2017, 1). If time can be lived without its flow, then what can this suspended form of time tell us about how we are currently living? What does it mean to have time stolen from you by a state apparatus?

## Tracing Creative Practice

Creativity becomes an active mode of resistance to such constraints. In all of the films we made, we aimed to prioritise artistic practice and aesthetics. Even in the most documentary-style film we created, “Staging Home” with PSYCHEDelight theatre company, we worked with Sophie, Peter and Mohand to ensure their theatrical style was front and centre, observing their rehearsal process and capturing the premiere of the show with its first audience. We agreed together about the value of this multi-dimensional view of refugee status and how necessary this is in the current landscape that often further marginalises refugees through narratives that only portray the horrors.

d’bi.young anitafrika, who created a film for the “At Home with...” series, exemplified her artistry as a poet as she reflected on the early months of the pandemic while performing a yoga routine in her flat. Through her words and movement, she transmitted an intergenerational message from her ancestors to her children: to stop and stay still, while a pandemic ravages the world beyond her window.

In our most policy-driven film, “Home-less,” created with Seb Aguirre, the filmmaker Winstan advocated that we find visuals to accompany our discussion of the complex asylum-seeking process. Part of policy’s problem is its labyrinthine nature, which serves the hostile environment designed to make us leave, to throw up our hands and think we can’t wrap our head around how many different stages there are to finding home. Working with animator Paul Burgess, we aimed not only to elucidate

the practical reality of the asylum seeking process, but also to express how emotional and debilitating it is.

Finally, for us as a research team, we made a point to include our own artistic voices. Creating ‘home movies’ for the “At home with...” series took us out of our heads and put us more in our bodies at home. Perhaps united by this new status, we were able to discover its meaning. How do we survive at a distance? How do we forge a new home, when everything around us is collapsing? As a species we struggle to think about deep future time and to acknowledge that human beings and the world itself are always already ending. Extinction, sharply brought to human attention by the pandemic, has the potential to draw out new responsibilities and potentialities of care that might lead to eventually protecting other species on the edge of extinction. And in the present, many species including our own are living in intolerable and increasingly uninhabitable conditions brought about by the degradation of social values of life and justice, and by more and more brutal forms of economic and social violence. So, shall we rebuild this world anew? Is this our chance to de-link ‘the future’ from the capitalist notion of constant expansion and growth?

Professor **Elena Marchevska** is a practitioner, academic and researcher interested in new historical discontinuities that have emerged in post-capitalist and post-socialist transition. She is researching and writing extensively on the issues of belonging, displacement, the border and intergenerational trauma. Her artistic work explores borders and stories that emerge from living in transition. She is an Associate Professor in Performance Studies at London South Bank University.

**Carolyn Defrin** is an artist and researcher currently focused on subject matter related to migration, intergenerational connection, feminism, nature and care. Originally from the US, and currently based in London, UK, she works across video installation and theatre practices. She holds an MA in performance and design from Central Saint Martins and has just completed a collaborative PhD with London South Bank University and Hammersmith United Charities.

As Winstan filmed his own reflection in his parents’ mirror that now hangs in his children’s bathroom, as Carolyn assembles old photos of her grandparents with toy pianos from past arts projects, and as I (Elena) walk with my children and exchange our many inherited and adapted languages through trees near my home that have been here long before me and will be here long after me, we consider how we live at this new edge. How the migratory patterns that live in our cells can teach us to create other worlds beyond hostility.

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New  
perspective  
on equitable  
and non-  
hierarchical  
research

*By Nooreen Hussain*

practices and  
methods



Nooreen Hussain holds an MA in Immigration and Settlement Studies at Ryerson University. She is interested in exploring research on migration, racialization, identity formation and religious minorities in Canada. Over the past ten years, Nooreen has worked in the higher education and nonprofit industries managing projects related to multiplatform storytelling, experiential learning, applied research, website redesign and community building.



I joined *Finding Home* as Project Facilitator in its final year in October 2020, 7 months after the pandemic began. I had just finished my Masters degree in Immigration and Settlement Studies, after almost 11 years away from academia. Fresh out of this program, I was intent on realigning my professional work, which for a decade had been in the higher education sector in project management, towards the area of migration. This project was the perfect fit.

Although we were exposed to many qualitative research methodologies during my program, the majority of research we studied used interview-based methods. Arts-based and participatory research did not seem common and were methods I admittedly had limited knowledge of. PFH changed that for me and exposed me to new and more equitable ways of knowledge creation and research.

Unlike the rest of the research collaborators in this project, I did not create a film. However, as I was managing this project, I was selected to partake in a storytelling workshop series program—very similar to the workshop series we had organized for this project. The workshop program I was selected for was the *i...am project*, led by the Canada Excellence Research Chair (CERC) in Migration and Integration at Ryerson University. The *i...am* workshop series brought together a diverse group of graduate students from across Canada to explore issues of belonging and identity, exploring through film what being Canadian meant to us.

The video that I produced through this workshop series was similar to the videos our co-researchers produced through PFH, which focus on migration/stories of migrants and show what can happen when you take away constraints, break down hierarchy and allow for rich, human-centric stories to be told by those who have a lived experience of racialization and marginalization. As a very visible Pakistani Canadian Muslim woman, I have regularly felt excluded, misunderstood and misrepresented; seen but unseen at the same time. I was compelled, like our co-researchers, to take control of my narrative and share a deeply personal story.

My film, entitled, '*Luxury to be Complex*', explores the years-long process I experienced making the decision to unveil after almost twenty years of wearing the hijab. The film speaks to many themes, including the external pressures around identity and veiling that majoritarian society places on young Muslim women in terms of the lack of freedom in their decision-making. In speaking to these external pressures through personal storytelling, my story subtly touches on the danger of post-9/11 Islamophobic rhetoric and discourses of the veil, which deny Muslim women's agency and blame barbaric Muslim men for their oppression of us.

The intersections and parallels between my film and the films our co-researchers produced are many. What these videos all speak to are the grave dangers of misrepresentation, of being intentionally and widely misunderstood, of having someone else tell our stories and the dehumanization which accompanies this.

As I reflect on the close of this project, I see a lot of benefits and power in arts-based and participatory research creation methods, conclusions I have come to both through my work managing this project, through my MA and through my involvement in the *i...am project*.

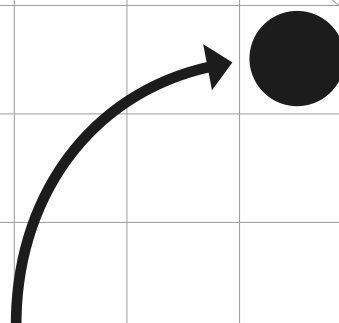
Some of these conclusions relate to the beautiful storytelling and experiences that can come out of empowering a research subject with the skills to tell their own stories, creating the conditions for that to happen rather than placing constraints on this process. This also allows it to develop more organically. What you get out of that is a richer story that has great depth and vulnerability. This type of collaborative research, where the subject moves into the role of co-researcher, also disrupts the hierarchies between researcher/subject and around knowledge creation itself. I believe this type of research methodology is one way to counteract and disrupt settler colonial and capitalist tendencies, norms and practices we have all internalized, often without question. Arts-based methods and participatory research also provide a supportive and equitable exchange with the 'community' of participants/co-researchers. There is the possibility for reciprocity.

It is my hope that with my upcoming PhD studies in Sociology at York University, I will have the opportunity to continue exploring arts-based participatory research creation methods in my work. My hope is to make space and explore the stories, lives and experiences of young second-generation Muslim identifying women in Canada, navigating faith, negotiating identity and sharing what that looks like. Very much in the way Project Finding Home has done with LGBTQ+ migrant stories.

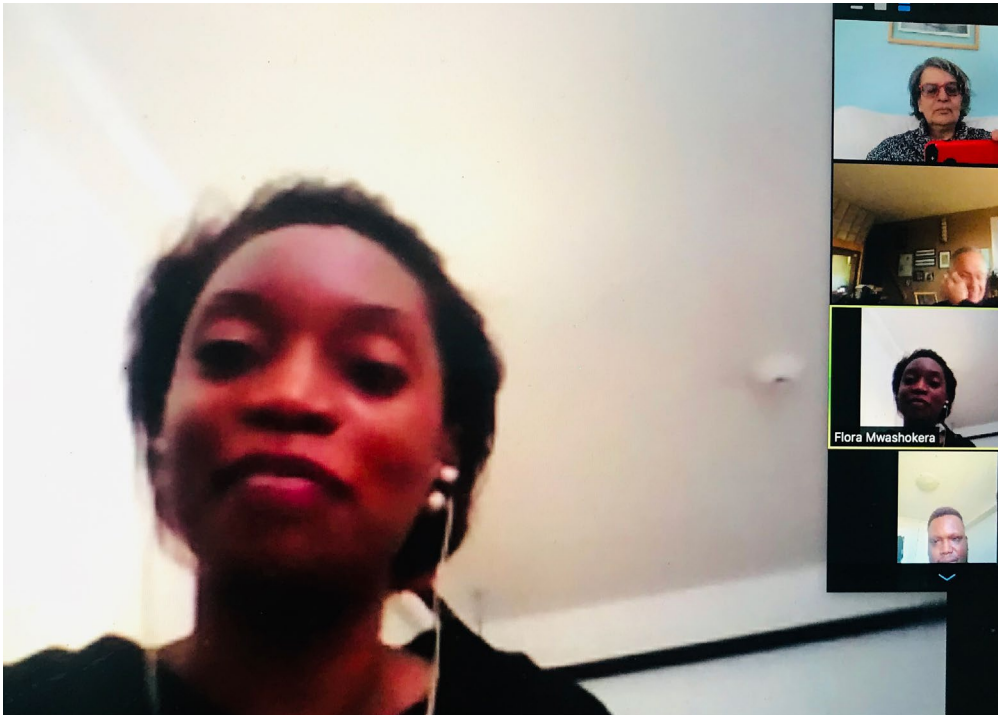
I have  
found  
my  
home

*By Flora Mwashokera*

I was born on a warm, sunny day on the beautiful Island of Zanzibar, Tanzania in East Africa. I went to school in the Northern part of Tanzania ( Kilimanjaro) and graduated in Arts and Tourism Studies. I migrated to Canada alone in October 2018 after LGBTQ people were arrested in Tanzania and I left my family behind. Now, I am a full-time caregiver, motivated by my love for helping people, support them and put a smile on their faces.



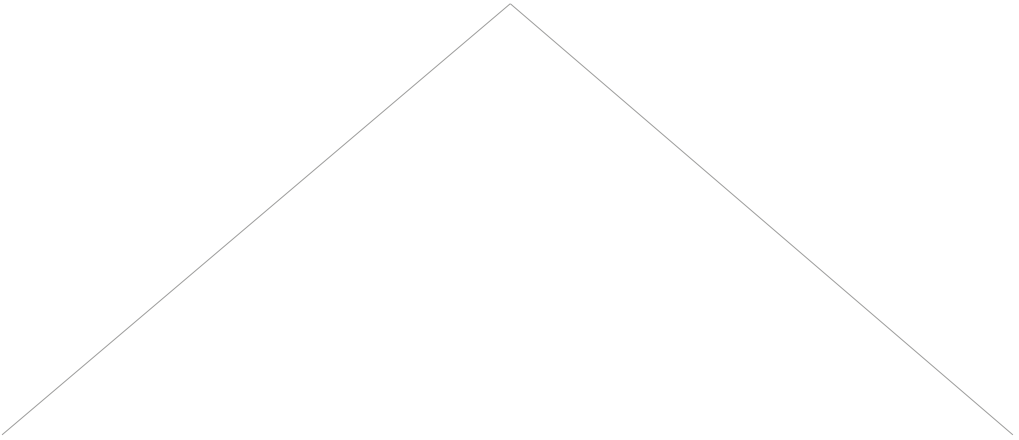
My name is Flora Mwashokera, I'm from Tanzania. I came to Canada in October 2018. I have attended three Finding Home Project workshops, and one thing I learned from the workshops is "SELF IDENTIFICATION." By creating a video and using a photo to make a story, I realized that I know myself even better now than I did before.



Flora participating in the online media storytelling workshop. Photo credit: Marusya Bociurkiw.

The Finding Home Project helped me to connect with other LGBTQ+ Newcomers in Canada who are struggling to find a home where they will be accepted and welcomed, a home where they will settle and live without fear of being persecuted or killed for their sexuality. And that is the challenge—when you are new to the country, all you want is to meet other people who have the same belief: that sexuality does not define you; “SEXUALITY IS NOT YOU, IT’S JUST A PART OF WHO YOU ARE.” It does not make you less or make you above anyone else. You can still be you and who you want to be, and achieve anything you want in life.

The Finding Home Project was great. However, since everything went online, we didn’t get to use the equipment we needed. We didn’t get a camera to shoot or edit the videos, and that was the challenge in our last workshop. But other than that, the workshop was great. Participants were able to create and edit videos using their own phones and tablets. Our facilitator, Jorge Lozano, an artist and filmmaker in Toronto, was able to introduce us to some useful videomaker apps (like QUIK). It is good and easy to use apps to create videos on your



phone or tablet. We were all able to use Quik to create videos for the entire workshop.

I learned about how Canada treats those identified as LGBTQ+ Newcomers in this country. Even though Canada is internationally recognized as one of the safest nations in the world for LGBTQ+ people, it still has work to do in making sure that LGBTQ+ refugees are welcomed here and are safe, without experiencing other forms of marginalization such as racism, sexism, poverty or other factors, alongside homophobia or transphobia that negatively impact mental health. LGBTQ+ Refugees experience stigma and discrimination across their lifespan, and are targets of sexual assault, physical assault, harassment and hate crimes here in this beautiful land. New to the country and afraid, most refugees don't report these crimes to authorities.

Project Finding Home has been a blessing to me. My involvement and participation in this project helped me in my court hearing earlier this year. I am now a proud Convention Refugee. I am proud that I have found my Home through the Finding Home Project.

Apple  
cake and  
queer  
courage

*by Marusya Bociurkiw*





**Marusya Bociurkiw** is the daughter of Ukrainian immigrants, a professor at Ryerson University in Toronto, director of 10 films, author of 6 books and over 75 scholarly, popular and arts-based articles. Her research is concerned with affect, memory and archives as they relate to media, history, and nation. She is Founding Director of *The Studio for Media Activism & Critical Thought* at Ryerson University.



In 2015/2016, I traveled to Ukraine just after the historic “Maidan” revolution, and shot a film about internally displaced LGBTQ+ folks who had escaped Russia’s Gay Propaganda Law (in force in the Russian-occupied Donbas region). My film crew and I spent some time in a shelter for those refugees, a modest, crowded apartment in Kyiv full of suitcases, stylish queers and the smell of apple cake.

Vlad, 19 at the time, who had fled Donetsk with his passport and not much else, pressed plates of cake upon us - the way my grandmother would have. There was so much in the small gesture that was to inspire me to continue this work for several more years: resilience, creativity, humanity. Unfathomable courage.

Once completed, the film screened in a dozen countries—most of them, like Lithuania and Poland, with new or proposed anti-gay laws. I learned that the Gay Propaganda Law was the brainchild of U.S. evangelists ([Levintova](#)), and that Uganda had an identical law. I found out that there is a system of global sexual apartheid: that over 70 countries now have vicious anti-gay laws, creating a human rights crisis that is underreported and, in migrant studies, insufficiently analyzed. This became the focus of the Toronto branch of Finding Home. I partnered with the LGBTQ+ Refugee Program of the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) in East End Toronto, a beacon for LGBTQ+ asylum seekers worldwide.

In December 2019 I began working with Lokchi Lam, a videomaker originally from Hong Kong, to organize a series of six workshops with LGBTQ+ asylum seekers affiliated with the MCC. For three cold winter months, 28 refugees who had fled African countries with anti-gay laws came through Ryerson's doors for a 6-week workshop, whose goals were skills sharing, community building and generating data for advocacy and social change. Lokchi and I provided basic video recording and storytelling skills. The output would be a video that would educate the public and policymakers alike about the conditions for LGBTQ+ refugees in Canada. Because of what the participants had been through—death threats, arduous border crossings, abysmal shelter or substandard housing, barriers everywhere—it took a while to create a safe space for other affects to emerge. The conversations began with gratitude, but eventually moved into frustration, grief, even anger. We had long discussions with our co-researchers about the main issues, as they saw them: long wait times for a hearing, difficulties finding employment, racist landlords. The video is filled with visceral commentary on Canadian society, like: “The moment they saw that I’m a refugee, and also that I’m a Black person, they don’t want to give me accommodation. I remember meeting a landlord; the moment I stepped my foot in the door, he didn’t allow me to go to see the place....”

Caitlin Nunn calls these kinds of creative spaces “exceptional spheres of belonging, giving rise to new, transformative possibilities for belonging within and beyond the project” (2020, 2). We might also describe them as spheres of cultural citizenship, what Toby Miller has described as a concept that moves beyond documents and status, asserting instead “a right to communication and to the representation of cultural difference” (2011, 57).

That workshop and the ones that followed resulted in a participant-directed, 10-minute video, “Finding Home: LGBTQ+ Refugee Claimants Talk About Their Lives,” as well as a series of 1- to 9-minute films that I hope will build understanding in Canada of the LGBTQ+ refugee experience - , an experience often only described in terms of liberation. As a settler colonial state engaged in an kind of imperialist project

of moral superiority, Canada grooms its citizens into a state of disbelief about migrant injustice. So our co-researchers, by documenting what they go through with anti-Black landlords, or the racist and legally sanctioned demand by employers for “Canadian experience,” as well as the pleasures of finding freedom of sexual expression, made an original contribution to the body of work on the refugee experience. The co-researchers also insisted on narrative space to express contradictory affects: pleasure, pride, hope.

At Lokchi’s suggestion, the pre-pandemic workshops were held at Ryerson University. Lokchi noted that when she arrived in Canada, she felt that many doors were closed to her: “This will be a way to open a door,” she said. The certificates we handed out on the last day proved as important as anything else we supplied. There are always unintended impacts in participatory research; in this case, those certificates—and sometimes the videos themselves—were used in asylum hearings, and helped some of our co-researchers make successful claims.

By the time the pandemic began in March 2019, there had been a backlash against refugees in Ontario. The border with the U.S., and walkable checkpoints like Lacolle, Quebec, had closed. Ontario’s right-wing government had severely cut back legal aid funding—free legal assistance plays a large role in achieving permanent status in Canada. Refugees were also ineligible for most government supports related to the pandemic, and all refugee hearings had been temporarily suspended, lengthening the already arduous waiting times. If nothing else, I thought, the online workshops would help relieve the boredom of waiting.

Thus, 2 more workshop series ensued. In one session, not long after the pandemic began, filmmaker Elizabeth Littlejohn showed the participants an old Bob Dylan music video (“Subterranean Homesick Blues”) in which Dylan uses pieces of paper with text. She asked the participants to write their feelings about self-isolating on pieces of paper, filming themselves on their cell phones. We edited those short videos together and created a crude but moving short in which the participants expressed fear, a sense of isolation, panic, boredom and other feelings. affects. When we showed the video to the refugee program coordinators, they found it gave them an insight they might not have otherwise had into what their refugee colleagues were going through. We also posted it online as a way to build awareness of inequities in the pandemic experience.

UK artist Khaled Barakeh said, during the Border Trouble Symposium that concluded this project: “Multiple attachments means multiple stories.” In our final workshop series, led by Jorge Lozano, the stories poured forth. Working with minimal technical means proved to be highly generative. Participants downloaded basic editing software onto their tablets that we had purchased for them, and used tablets or cellphones to film in quarantine. But it was also Jorge’s explicit positionality as an immigrant, and the common cause he forged with the participants, that opened up the process. He encouraged participants to think through their bodies, reminding me of *Cixous*’ call to subaltern creativity: “Write yourself. Your body must be heard. Only then will the immense resources of the unconscious spring forth.” (1976, 880). “Relate your body to territory,” said Jorge: “home here, and home there.” Extraordinary

images and sentences emerged, including this one, by a Mexican woman: “my body is the machinery that makes my dreams.”

As a result, there is a strong sense of embodiment in the final work, like the video “[The Value of a Moment](#),” in which the videomaker films herself turning in a circle and uttering affirmations about herself and her sexuality: “No more chains on my hands: I am free.” In another video, the artist, Rycardo, says in a voice over: “In my moment of self-prescribed confinement, I looked at my skin. The sun rays made it sparkle [...] my skin is the very essence of who I am, and my ancestors that had this skin endured far more than my struggles.”

## Findings

As the workshops continued, I found myself rejecting the very notion of generating data. In a neoliberal academic context, “people of colour become “commodities to promote the self-interest of the White institution” (Iverson 2007, 599).”

In the end, I can only speak to what I learned. My sense of myself both as teacher and researcher shifted—as it has for many of us during the pandemic. I am much more committed to an ethics of care within pedagogy and research. I am less committed than ever to data collection, outputs and knowledge mobilization. If these workshops repositioned the participants as citizens rather than research subjects, they also repositioned me within the site of academic citizenship where, as Brady writes, “the centrality of teaching and learning has been restored” (Brady 2012, 344).

In that sense, witnessing, which is a common trope in academic refugee solidarity, is not enough. I believe that it must be accompanied by the provision of services and the sharing of resources, which can range from time and expertise, to actual goods and payment for participation or consultation.

The rewards for the researcher are enormous, and in some ways disproportionate to what the participant receives. In the process of organizing these workshops I was able to restore some measure of dignity to my profession, trading data extraction for service. Perhaps, like my father who later became an academic after coming to this country as a refugee, I was finally, even if for a moment, able to get a glimpse of the high stakes of maintaining dignity and authenticity, of saying we are human, in an institution that, according to Omid Tofghian (2021), is on a continuum with border violence around the world.

I hope that we’ve shown that research creation can be a tool for solidarity, that food and conversation can be central, and that art and creativity are essential to transformative justice.



Participatory Media Workshop at Ryerson University. Photo credit: Marusya Bociurkiw.



Participatory Media  
Workshop at Ryerson  
University. Photo credit:  
Marusya Bociurkiw.

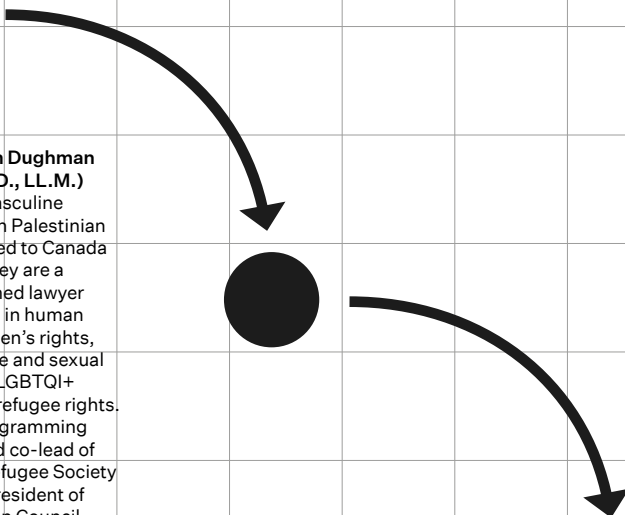
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Exploring  
the  
intersections  
between  
work, art  
and policy

*By Aleks Selim  
Dughman Manzur*

**Aleks Selim Dughman Manzur (J.D., LL.M.)** is a transmasculine Chilean born Palestinian who migrated to Canada in 2008. They are a foreign trained lawyer specialising in human rights, women's rights, reproductive and sexual health law, LGBTQI+ rights, and refugee rights. Aleks is Programming Director and co-lead of Rainbow Refugee Society and Vice-President of the Canadian Council for Refugees. Their role focusses on facilitating SOGIESC sponsorships, designing programs and services for LGBTQI+ newcomers, and advocating for the rights of refugees at all levels of government.



Aleks in conversation with Dr. Elena Marchevska and Seb Aguirre who led the 'This is who I am' workshop

I want to start by sharing a few words I wrote, inspired by what I heard in the “This is who I am” workshop during the Border Trouble symposium:

Conversion therapy  
suicide attempts ○ se  
staying in ○ *no cele*  
*control* ○ nightmares  
who? who is my role  
sexual violence ○ *ab*  
○ life ○ *hide, hide, hid*  
in control ○ *shake it*  
*it off.* ○ This is who  
*me? Am I here?* ○ Lib  
○ *I seek what you see*  
This is w



◦ *forced marriage* ◦  
*secrecy* ◦ coming out,  
*bration, always in*  
◦ *hide, hide, hide,* ◦  
model? ◦ *Violence* ◦  
*use* ◦ resilience ◦ *joy*  
*de,* ◦ dreams, always  
*t, shake it off, shake*  
◦ I am. ◦ *Do you see*  
operation, liberation,  
*ek,* ◦ Do you see me?  
who I am

Around the world, LGBTQI+ people face violence, discrimination and persecution, sometimes on a daily basis, to the point of having no other choice than to flee persecution and seek refuge elsewhere.

Today, 71 countries criminalise private, consensual, same sex sexual activity. At least 6 countries implement the death penalty – Iran, Northern Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Somalia and Yemen – and the death penalty is a legal possibility in Afghanistan, Brunei, Mauritania, Pakistan, Qatar and UAE. 15 jurisdictions criminalise gender identity and/or expression of transgender people<sup>2</sup>.

LGBTQI newcomers and refugees escaping persecution based on SOGIESC (sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sexual characteristics) believe that Canada is a safe haven, that they will be free of hardship. In some ways this is true; however, one microaggression at a time, one refusal to access at a time, one year of unemployment at a time, they come to the realization that they have traded one kind of oppression for another.

Systemic racism is everywhere and infuses our public institutions, along with ableism, transphobia, sexism. Through art and narrative, we shed a light on our systemic failures and address the structures that allow it to thrive and operate.

In thinking about the design and implementation of public policies, the question of narrative is vital. Who gets to tell our stories? Do we see our stories reflected in policies, or are policies creating narratives about who we are? How can policies reflect our narratives and our stories when they are being drafted by individuals far removed from our realities? When I observe policymakers in higher positions of power, I see mostly whiteness. I hardly see myself and my communities.

Art is a way of empowering communities through understanding that the conditions of inequity are created by the dominant culture, rather than the premise that marginalised communities have a deficit. Through art, we get a chance to take back the narrative, to tell our stories and inform those in power of the realities that they need to account for when designing and implementing policies. Hopefully, we can then also attain positions of power and make meaningful systemic change.

In the case of Viktor<sup>3</sup> (Kazakhstan), homosexuality is not a crime since 1997 but it continues to be socially forbidden. Here, art can become a tool for transformational social change. But it

also speaks of the need to have the letter of the law go hand in hand with policies aiming at educating civil society and protecting the rights of LGBTQI+ folks.

Denise points to the truth of representation and visibility in seeing yourself as a teenager in others. Being able to exchange ideas without fear. When we grow up in oppressive systems, art might be the only way to hold a dialogue with who we are and with our communities, and to see ourselves reflected in others when speaking out loud is not safe.

In Laura's experience of disownment, displacement, leaving family and land, the loss and grief and the search for home and family have created subversive queer families – chosen families beyond the binary and the biological. Through art we reimagine reality, we push the boundaries of what is socially accepted, we recreate and redefine concepts and we find home.

Much of our queer survival is rooted in the reimagination of other worlds and possibilities. When this reality is oppressive and impossible, we say if not this reality, then a new reality. We heal through the telling of our stories and give others an opportunity to empathize and experience with us a little bit of who we are. Art as a tool for social change allows us to say so much more and deeply impact the viewer and the listener.

Art is a tool to transform institutions and share/redistribute power. To share power in the highest places means, for some, stepping back and letting others lead. Sharing power is not just recruiting for formal leadership positions but also allowing deep transformation of what we have considered our traditional institutions and the ways we generally do things. This means decentering Eurocentric models and allowing racialized bodies to become the model.

I am transformed when you are transformed. This is relational. Through art, the community is in the best place to explore and determine its own needs, and ultimately tell their stories and demand transformation.

<sup>2</sup>Based on data found at <https://www.humandignitytrust.org/lgbt-the-law/map-of-criminalisation>

<sup>3</sup>Viktor, Denise, and Laura are characters in a play by ice&fire theatre company that was read at the symposium.

Behind  
each work  
there is  
a story  
of pain:

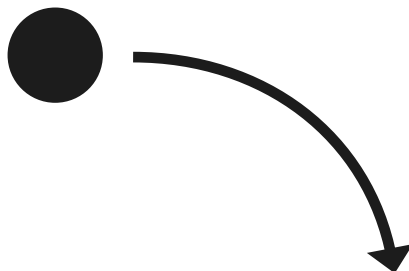
Nedhal's art makes her happy

*by Caroline Lenette  
and Nedhal Amir*

**Caroline Lenette** is Associate Professor in the School of Social Sciences at UNSW Sydney.

**Nedhal Amir** is a community leader and an artist and assists newly arrived refugee-background families who are new to Sydney

First published on the Refugee Hosts blog. Reprinted with permission.



Everyone knows Nedhal in Fairfield, which is one of the most multicultural suburbs in Sydney, Australia. She has lived there for 15 years. She is a community leader and an artist. Originally from Iraq, Nedhal calls Australia home. She runs a weekly women's group and assists newly arrived refugee-background families who are new to Sydney. Nedhal has become the 'host' in a new environment.

In 2015, Nedhal was hit by a car while crossing a busy road. She flew over the bonnet and broke her hip. She was in hospital for four months. She couldn't walk for the first year, and she didn't get out of the house for two years. The fracture in her hip is still not healed.

While discussing her art for the project Finding Home, Nedhal shared how artistic practice makes her feel happy and positive. Art is her therapy and takes her mind off pain. She does art and craft for healing: rock and glass painting, collages, floral design, food art, soap carving, paper mâché, candle design, you name it. “Without art, I would not be able to cope” Nedhal says.

Trauma is a normal part of Nedhal’s life. She doesn’t sleep well, so she makes art to keep her mind focused on something else. She displays her creations all around her house.

*“I put all my suffering from pain and sleeplessness in beautiful pieces of art,” she says.*

*“Art makes you focus on things in your hands, whether you’re working with clay or ceramics. This is what I have to do, for myself, for my family, my children, my grandchildren.”*

She shared a 3D picture of a peacock.



Nedhal made this three years ago to welcome a group of Yazidi Iraqis resettled to Wagga Wagga. The peacock is symbolic of the region where they were born. This was Nedhal's first time painting with oil and acrylic. She tried to capture how these newcomers might feel. She said, "The suffering and the pain is the same, differences from before don't matter anymore."

Nedhal welcomes many people in her home, who support her art and seek her advice. Her house and her art bring people together. It's a way to bridge the gap across generations and remind younger people in their community about their culture and country.

“Art makes me patient. When you have to do very small, beautiful things and be precise, art calms you down when you're angry.”

“When I make art, ideas come to me for options and solutions to help others, especially the women's group. I make my talent work. It makes my mind work very well!”

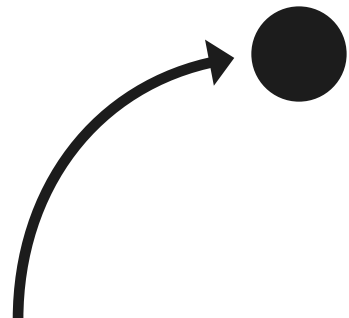
Nedhal hopes that other people who live with ‘permanent pain’ can feel inspired by her pain experience and turn their concerns into creative art.

As an arts-based researcher working in an academic institution in a Global North setting, it is a privilege to relinquish the role of ‘question-asker’ and enter a space alongside co-researchers to listen intently to art-inspired stories of hope, trauma, and culture.

Arts-based methods can create a sense of sanctuary for refugee-background co-researchers wherever they are situated. In a context where immigration policies are increasingly devoid of any sense of hospitality, arts-based approaches can alleviate the pressures of unrealistic expectations in terms of mental health, educational or employment outcomes as markers of ‘successful’ settlement.

By privileging culturally safe, trauma-informed approaches, arts-health collaborations can shift the ideological boundaries of knowledge and ways of knowing, just like the stories Nedhal shares about her art guide our understanding on what it’s like to live with pain and sleeplessness, and support loved ones and newcomers.

Arts-health research carves out spaces where creative forms of expression reflect precarious situations and narratives of strength and hope.







Photograph taken during Nedhal's walking interview, May 2019

BORDER



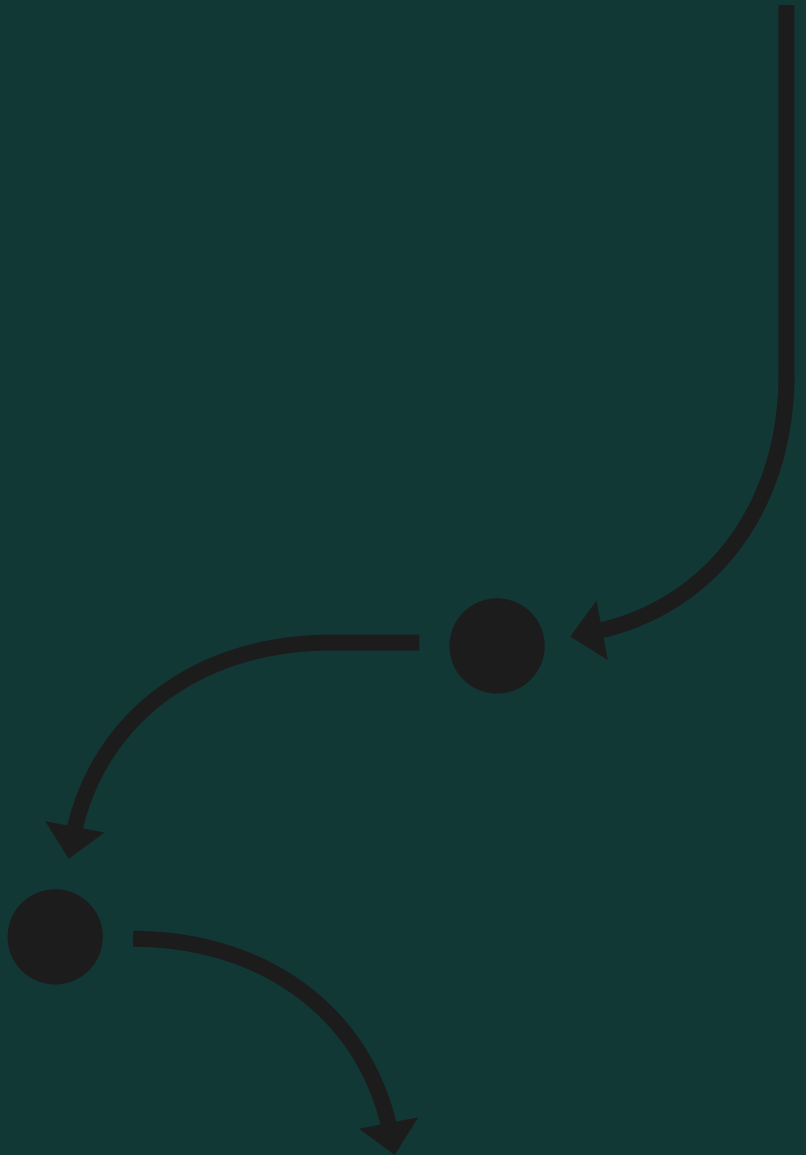
TROUBLE

Between April 26- 29, 2021, Project Finding Home brought together academics, scholars, artists and migrants to explore the complex intersection between forced migration and new place-making strategies through art and storytelling. The 4-day free online symposium, entitled Border Trouble: Migration, Research Creation, Art & Policy, featured panel discussions and workshops with leading migrant artists and human rights activists around the world, and included a keynote event with Behrouz Boochani, a Kurdish-Iranian human rights activist/journalist/writer, and his longtime collaborator Dr. Omid Tofighian.

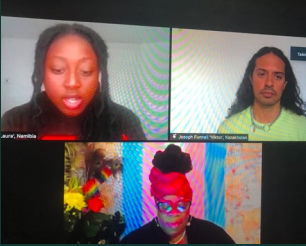
The Symposium featured panel discussions, a keynote presentation and a workshop, all addressing the following questions:

- How can art practice become a space where citizenship is performed by homeless or underhoused refugees and asylum seekers?
- How can these practices be mobilized as knowledge that can impact the host culture?
- How can research creation enhance, contradict, complement or reinvent the official process of crossing a border, finding housing and striving for citizenship?
- How can arts-based research impact policy?

# FINDING

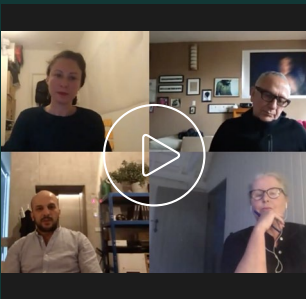


'THIS IS WHO I AM':  
Research Creation,  
Migration and Policy



Moderated by Co-PI Dr. Elena Marchevska, this workshop featured activist and artist Sebastian Aguirre, who introduced us to the work of ice&fire, an arts organization that "explores human rights stories through performance." Actors shared verbatim testimonies from LGBTQ+ refugees on their experience in their own country and on arrival in the UK. The workshop was followed by a discussion with VP of the Canadian Council of Refugees, Aleks Dughman-Manzur, exploring the intersections between their work, art and policy.

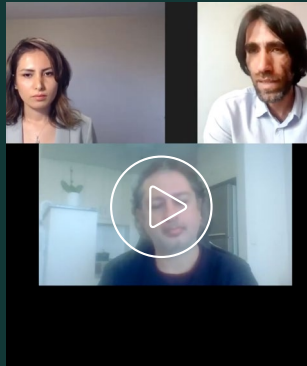
'HOME IS A SITE OF  
MEMORY': Migrant-  
Led Art Initiatives



During this panel discussion, moderator and researcher Dr. Carolyn Defrin engaged artists d'bi.young anitafrika,

Khaled Barakeh, Jorge Lozano and Curator and Co-Founder of Counterpoints Arts, Dr. Aine O'Brien. The panelists discussed their work and what it means to create migrant-situated knowledge through creative practice.

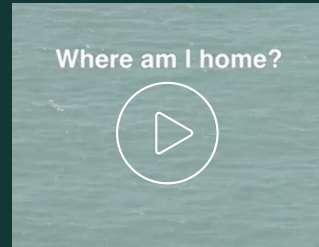
JOURNALISM,  
MIGRATION AND  
HUMAN RIGHTS:  
In Conversation with  
Journalist/Activist  
Behrouz Boochani  
& Collaborator/  
Translator Dr. Omid  
Tofighian



During this keynote presentation, we heard from speaker Behrouz Boochani and his longtime collaborator Dr. Omid Tofighian. They as they talked about how migrants and people who are displaced or exiled can tell their own stories to influence governments and communities. Behrouz Boochani, a Kurdish-Iranian human rights activist/journalist was held in the Australian-run refugee detention camp in Manus Island, Papua New Guinea, for seven years.. He used his smartphone to secretly write over 100 articles, a book—the award-

winning No Friend but the Mountains: Writing from Manus Prison—and the film "Chauka, Please Tell Us the Time." In this way, Boochani was able to expose the Australian government's disastrous human rights policy.

MY BODY IS  
THE MACHINE  
THAT MAKES MY  
DREAMS: Project  
Finding Home Across  
Geographies



In a departure from traditional academic models, co-researchers from the SSHRC-funded Project Finding Home included academics, migrants, artists and refugees. In this panel, they come together to discuss best practices in participatory research creation and to share stories of collaboration, activism and artistic dreaming.

**Below are some highlights from the event, in the words of participants.**

'THIS IS WHO I AM':  
Research Creation,  
Migration and Policy

Sebastian Aguirre (ice&fire)  
Is this art or is this activism?...We've managed to get to policy makers

with these readings...It's a constant conversation, like I say, I'm having with myself and our funders.

There are always people who don't know how the asylum process operates and functions. This is such a hidden area of British law. It's the only area of British law where you can be detained without having been found guilty of a crime, and it's the only area in British law where you can be detained indefinitely, which contravenes international human rights laws.

'HOME IS A SITE OF MEMORY': Migrant-Led Art Initiatives

**Jorge Lozano (Artist)**

A lot of my work is emotional responses to events and situations. I lived in a world that defined me with 4-5 words, enclosures that reduced my presence to stereotypes and rejections. I was judged before I opened my mouth and when I uttered a few words with a strong accent I ended up talking to walls or suspicious gestures. Becoming an immigrant is a border thinking experience. A visceral transformation, ruptures, double consciousness, dislocation, desenseless, the links from the self and the need for self-creation and emancipation. Instability defines our life and creative boundaries.

**d'bi.young anitafrika (Artist)**

We all make change. And sometimes that change is obvious where

we can see it and mark it and sometimes it's not so obvious but inside we know that the change happens, that policy change happens, whether it's happening on an organizational level or at a city-wide level.

From my perspective, the change is happening on a personal level, on an interpersonal level and it's also happening on an institutional level and that gives me an incredible amount of hope.

The very fact that we have populated the entire planet is a testament to the fact that we move. WE MOVE. We moved out of the continent, out of the African continent and we moved all over and we grow. And so this idea of borders—I think of Turtle Island, I think of Canada—these borders that have become erected by settler colonialism... and who are these borders serving when we know ourselves to be movers on the planet? The very fact that I, in order for me to move around the world, I need to get the permission of the people who have constructed these borders makes me ask myself who are these borders actually serving?

JOURNALISM,  
MIGRATION AND  
HUMAN RIGHTS:  
In Conversation with  
Journalist/Activist  
Behrouz Boochani  
& Collaborator/  
Translator Dr. Omid  
Tofighian

**Dr. Omid Tofighian**

**(Academic)**

So much about what has happened to Behrouz, so much about the oppression and domination and subjugation of people seeking asylum in Australia is determined by not just the change or program of the border regime at the time but so much related to interconnections with other parts of the world with neoliberal economic policies, with exploitation, it's really essentially about racial capitalism here. So what's happened with Manus Island and Naru is it's not only a way for Australia to assert its sovereignty by being harsh on borders by criminalizing people seeking asylum, it's also very important for winning elections, it's become politicized.

CREAT

RESET

CREAT

VIDEO FROM

RESET

CREAT

RESET



TIVE

SEARCH

TIVE

CANADA, UK, AUSTRALIA

SEARCH

TIVE

SEARCH

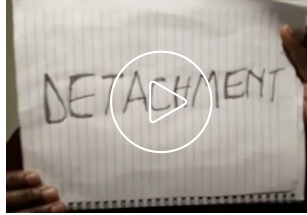
## Finding Home Toronto: LGBTQ+ Refugee Claimants Talk About Their Lives



Created by LGBTQ+ refugee claimants and allies in Toronto  
Running time: 10 mins, 51 secs

This film, conceptualized and filmed by a group of LGBTQ+ refugee claimants in Toronto, documents the challenges they faced on arriving in Canada. They describe how, after arduous journeys, they are told repeatedly that their education and professional experience is worth next to nothing. The film highlights experiences of rejection, racism, and the many months of waiting for hearings and appeals. But what also comes through is their resilience, patience and resolve, and their deep relief about being in a place where they can express their sexuality more freely. Subtextually, the film raises questions about whether sexual liberation can exist without racial and economic equity.

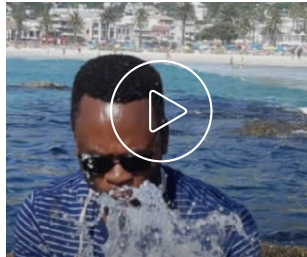
## Toronto LGBTQ+ Refugees on Feelings during COVID 19 #NoOneLeftBehind



Created by LGBTQ+ refugees and allies in Toronto  
Running time: 3 mins, 23 secs

LGBTQ+ refugees hold up handwritten signs expressing their experiences and emotions during the COVID19 pandemic. Fear, isolation, and worry fill the screen, as well as statements of resolve, sympathy, and a need for support. The film concludes with a call for equitable access to the Canada Emergency Benefit, with the hashtag #NoOneLeftBehind.

## LGBTQ+ Refugee Reflections on Freedom and Nature



Created by Emmanuel O  
Running time: 1 min, 29 secs

Accompanied by a slideshow of images, the videomaker takes us on a journey through the natural landscapes and built structures that give him a sense of freedom. As we travel from grasslands to the Taj Mahal to Cape Town's Table Mountain to criss-crossing roads and bridges, we hear how each symbolizes different aspects of the videomaker's destination: freedom.

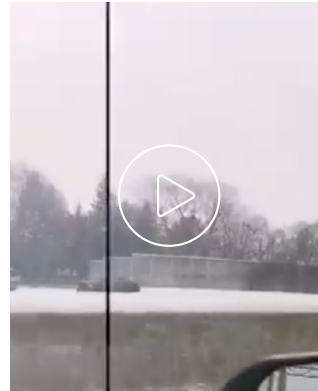
## Flying



Created by Imam Al-Balochi  
Running time: 1 min, 44 secs

In this montage of images and video of flight, a stirring soundtrack accompanies footage of pilots in a cockpit and a plane taking off. Dynamic geometric lines appear and disappear across the screen, creating a sense of movement even across static images. The statement "The Sky Is the Limit" appears as we travel up into the clouds.

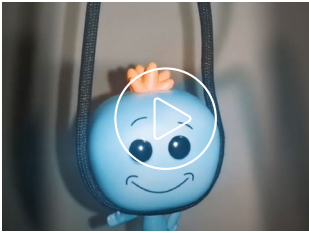
## A Wanderer



Created by Imam Al-Balochi  
Running time: 1 min, 17 secs

Split-screen footage of a man driving a car in a face mask and gloves is poignantly juxtaposed with a soundtrack of a man singing in Arabic about his lover, with English subtitles of the lyrics. As the song reaches a climax, the subtitles refer to the lover as "him." As we drive down a snowy highway in Canada, the singer repeatedly begs for reassurance about his love, asking "What has the separation done to him?"

## Demon



Created by Imam Al-Balochi  
Running time: 1 min, 58 secs

As images of a seemingly innocuous toy become distorted and menacing, the videomaker describes his “worst experience in life”: being locked alone in a room as punishment for being gay. Through a terrifying encounter with the devil and the devil’s mother, the video raises questions about isolation, trauma, and the horrors of homophobia.

## Up to Me



Created by Imam Al-Balochi  
Running time: 1 min, 23 secs

The video opens with a young child running away from the camera, as the videomaker tells a story that begins with the line “I came out head first,” alluding to the double meaning of “coming out.” As he describes his childhood and being rejected by his family, the scene becomes one of people scaling a wall of ice, prompting us to reflect on how one can move forward from tragedy.

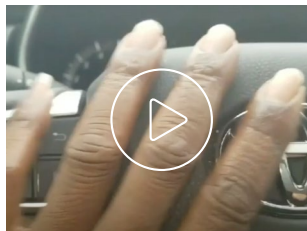
## A Migrant’s Reflection on the Pandemic



Created by Alma Garcia  
Running time: 48 secs

To an upbeat ukelele tune, the video pans across family photographs and sticky notes expressing the complex emotions and experiences the pandemic has wrought. We balance between happy times shared with family, regrets, loss, and optimism for the future.

## LGBTQ+ Refugee Shares His Reflections on Life in Canada



Created by Babatunde Shoyombo  
Running time: 2 min, 2 secs

The videomaker shares scenes from his life—the interior of the car he drives as a Lyft driver, snowy Toronto streets, and residential neighborhoods—expressing his appreciation for his job and for the diversity in Canada that brings together people from all over the world. He concludes with reflections on COVID-19 and the devastating loss of businesses.

## Beautiful Faces of the World



Created by Olurotimi Ojagbuwa  
Running time: 2 mins, 46 secs

This video shares a vision of beauty as unifying us across our differences. We see a slideshow of faces from all over the world, striking in their diversity of age, features, dress, gender expression, and skin color. The videomaker comes us to this “family of beautiful faces,” where all differences are respected and treasured.

## Lost in the White Snow



Created by Olurotimi Ojagbuwa  
Running time: 42 secs

The videomaker takes us on a walk in the snow, which he travels in his “precious shoes,” although the destination wasn’t of his choosing. As the camera tilts upwards from the snowy ground to the blue sky, he decides to look away from his “dark and gloomy days.” We are reminded that even in the snow, flowers can bloom.

## A Letter to My Younger Self



Created by Mary Shorun  
Running time: 4 mins, 2 secs

This video in three chapters begins with photos of the videomaker's family, celebrations, and travel as she speaks affirmations to her younger self. The second chapter is an evocative and lyrical meditation on suspense and anticipation. In the third chapter, the videomaker wraps a gele, a Nigerian head wrap, around her head as she explains its storytelling capacities. Her story concludes with the powerful affirmation: "I choose Black African queer love."

## The Summer Market



Created by Olurotimi Ojagbuwa  
Running time: 1 min, 42 secs

The videomaker brings to life the sights and sounds of an outdoor market, juxtaposing footage of a bustling market with his descriptions of the experience. We see pyramids of vibrant fruit and buckets of fresh seafood, as his voiceover brings to life the cries of "Come and buy!" and the experiences of both inclusion and disregard that take place in the market.

## We Are in This Together and We Will Get Through This Together (COVID-19)



Created by Phionah Karungi  
Running time: 41 secs

A mellow guitar tune carries us through a suite of images that recall the COVID-19 pandemic. From personal images of someone in a hospital bed, we move to more public images of the virus itself, and of health care workers. These global images hearken back to the title's reminder that we are in this together.

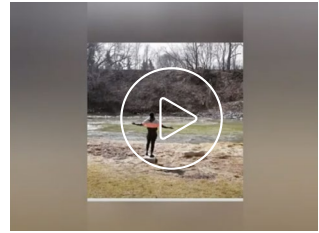
## The Value of a Moment



Created by Phionah Karungi  
Running time: 1 min, 57 secs

Accompanied by a surging musical soundtrack, the videomaker films herself turning in a circle, uttering affirmations and celebrating her existence in Canada: "No more chains on my hands: I am free." Repeated references to rainbows create a subtextual connection between her body, her sexuality, and her own forced migration.

## Freedom



Created by Ricardo Simpson  
Running time: 4 mins, 36 secs

This four-part video begins with the experience of lockdown, "when your home has become your prison, fortified by snow." The second chapter reflects this theme, as black and white photos take us through an apartment interior while a person calls 911 to report an intruder who may or may not be real. The third chapter, written by an unknown contributor, tells the story of a friend who is "on the surface Black Africa's eyes and lips," but who "wants to be one with the snow." This causes an irreconcilable rift in the friendship, as the narrator relishes the sun and the peace he finds "only on the islands." The video closes with the videomaker's reflections on his own skin and history, as he summons his ancestors' strength and perseverance.

**Project Finding Home  
Youtube channel**

<http://bit.ly/ProjectFindingHome>

## Home-less



Created with Sebastian Aguirre  
Shot and Edited by Winstan Whitter  
Curated and facilitated by Carolyn Defrin and Elena Marchevska  
Animations by Paul Burgess  
Running time: 11 mins, 9 secs

In this video, Sebastian Aguirre, a human rights activist and theatre practitioner from the Chilean refugee diaspora, explains the asylum-seeking process, using a creative exercise. We hear about a system in UK that is harrowing, shocking and disturbing. But we also hear about human beings who demonstrate remarkable resilience and dignity despite being thrown into an arduous and complex system.

## Staging Home



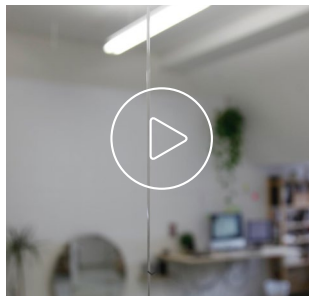
Created with Sophie Besse, Mohand Hasb Alrsol Badr and Peter Pearson of PSYCHEdelight Theatre company  
Running time: 9 mins, 23 secs

This film documents the rehearsals and premiere of a new theatre piece called 'Mohand and Peter' created by PSYCHEdelight, a participatory Theatre

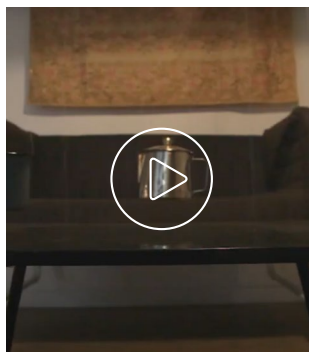
Company of Sanctuary founded in 2011 by Sophie Besse. Based on a real friendship between the two main performers, the show sheds light on the ways in which theatre allows us to imaginatively travel back home when the realities of politics prohibit it. Inviting us to observe their rehearsal process, the film shares some of our discussions about home, art, traveling, prejudice and language, and features excerpts from their rehearsal process and the first showing of the piece at Theatre Deli in November, 2019.

## Suspending Home

Created with Khaled Barakeh  
Running times: 8 mins, 41 secs (each video)



Suspending Home i: Berlin



Suspending Home ii: Paris

In these two films, artist Khaled Barakeh reflects on an artwork he made in 2015 called 'On the Ropes', where he suspended his entire studio in a metaphoric study

of his own groundlessness.

Barakeh is a visual and conceptual artist and activist, originally from Syria, and based in Berlin. We met him in London in 2019 and have since embarked on conversations about how art can often speak more powerfully to the complexities of the refugee crisis. In a specific desire to move past 'talking head' documentaries that can often further marginalise refugees, we have considered how to present a work of art for 'Finding Home' that would illuminate how migration stories are part of who we are, but not all of who we are.

## At Home With:

Created with d'bi.young anitafrika, Carolyn Defrin, Mojisola Elufowoju, Josie Gardner, Caroline Lenette, Elena Marchevska and Winstan Whitter

This omnibus of short films made by seven artists with intergenerational experiences of migration was created during lockdown and explores notions of home through daily walks, cooking and special objects.

Inviting our collaborators to create short films based on our themes of 'home' in relation to migration, we asked them (and ourselves) to consider how these ideas took on new meaning as we all spent much more time 'at home' during the pandemic. How, as artists, do we navigate home in our practice and navigate practice in our home?

We invite you to make your own 'at home' film using the instructions: (<https://www.projectfindinghome.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Finding-Home-Filming-Template-2.pdf>)

At home with:  
d'bi.young anitafrika



At home with:  
Josie Gardner (part i)



At home with:  
Winstan Whitter



At home with:  
Carolyn Defrin  
(part i)



At home with:  
Josie Gardner (part ii)



At home with:  
Carolyn Defrin  
(part ii)



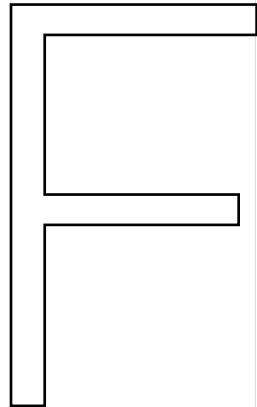
At home with:  
Caroline Lenette



At home with:  
Mojisola Elufowoju



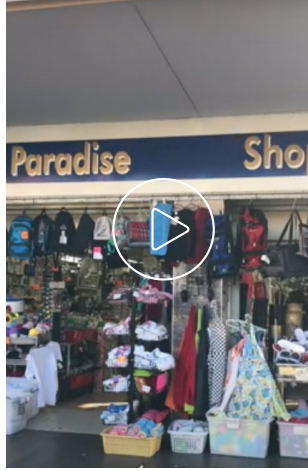
At home with:  
Elena Marchevska



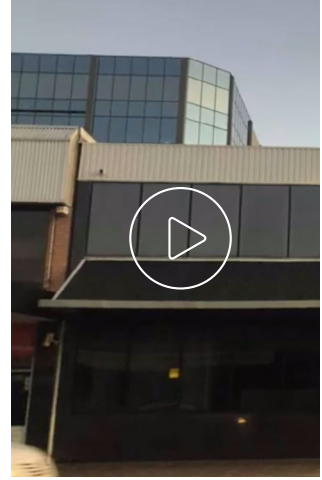
## AUSTRALIA

Walking interviews

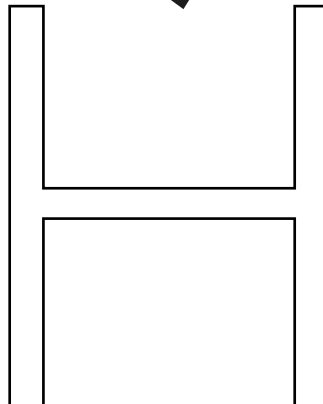
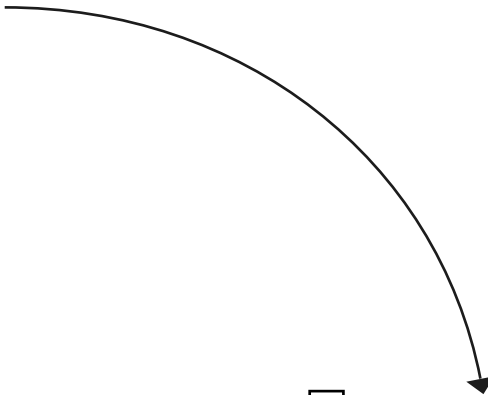
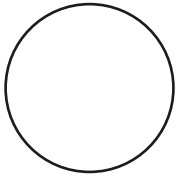
In Sydney, we collaborated with three refugee-background women co-researchers originally from Iraq who migrated between five and 15 years ago. We walked with each co-researcher around her neighbourhood, exploring and talking about places and spaces that symbolise 'home' and have shaped the experiences of creating a home in Australia. These videos present images and soundscapes recorded from the walking interviews, reflecting meanings of home and experiences of place-making.

Nedhal: Life Here... and There

Created by Caroline Lenette and Nedhal  
Running time: 2 mins, 43 secs

Roan: Finding My Self in Liverpool

Created by Caroline Lenette and Roan  
Running time: 54 secs



**Project Finding Home  
Youtube channel**

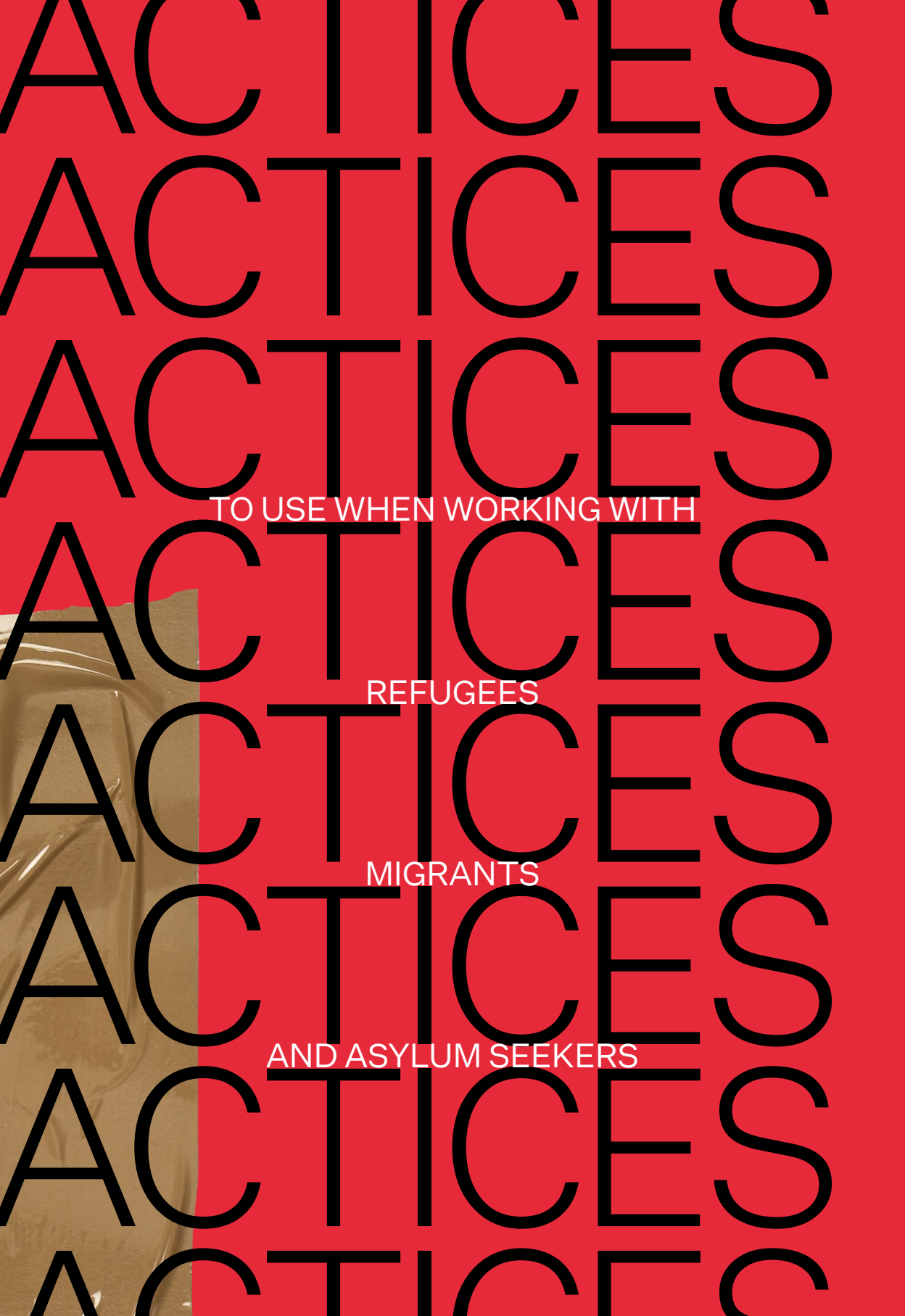
<http://bit.ly/ProjectFindingHome>

BEST PRACTICES

PRACTICAL TIPS AND EXERCISES







TO USE WHEN WORKING WITH

REFUGEES

MIGRANTS

AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

## Part 1: Best practices for participatory video with refugees *by Marusya Bociurkiw*

- Before you start, or early in the process, read up on participants' countries and culture. Jorge, who taught our final workshop, researched poets from every participant's country and sent participants links to those poets as a way for them to enter into the creative process.
- Treat the participants as you would any other student. Ask for a reasonable but serious commitment. If necessary, draw up a contract or agreement. The seriousness with which you treat their participation is a sign of respect.
- Rather than soliciting traumatic stories of migration, begin lightly, with ice breaker games or discussion prompts (What are you most proud of? What makes you feel like you belong? What is your favourite food?)
- Speaking of food, always make room in the budget for snacks, hot food, and drinks, as well as transit fare. The food table becomes an important site of camaraderie and conversation, and may also supplement a meagre diet. The transit fare may be the only way that some participants can attend.
- Divert as many resources as you can to the participants: student volunteers; university equipment and facilities; professional instruction; pens, paper, markers etc. We also used gift cards to purchase tablets for all fifteen participants.
- As much as you can, remunerate your participants. Hire migrants and refugees as consultants and facilitators of your project.
- Start the production process with discussion to identify the top 3-4 themes. Divide into small groups if necessary. You may begin with a list of many more themes; the goal is to consolidate them. This also becomes a way for participants to express dissatisfaction, critique, etc. of their new country, which might otherwise be taboo. Out of this, create a shot list (for B-roll and dramatic re-enactment) and a list of interview questions.
- After (or while) giving a series of basic workshops (3-point lighting, sound recording, camera, interviewing) make sure everyone gets to handle the equipment. The shyest person might end up being passionate about sound recording, or camera. You can also divide people up into small groups so that, after having

received an overview, they pass a camera or a Zoom recorder around and remind one another of the basic operating procedures.

- For a collectively produced video: When shooting starts for a large group, have rotating ‘crews’. Ours were: Indoor interview, outdoor/indoor re-enactment, and B roll. Each crew had an “instructor” (some of them my students), who would make sure they were using equipment and creating content to a reasonable technical standard.
- Once themes have been agreed to, let participants conduct their interviews, dramatic re-enactments, etc. Stay in the background as much as possible so that they can create a safe space for themselves, as traumatic stories may emerge.

- Have sessions where the whole group critically examines the previous day’s footage and identifies where the gaps are/what still needs to be covered or reshot.

- Buy a software license or two that can be shared with participants so that they may continue to make art on their own.

- Editing is usually the most time-consuming part of production. Because of the precarity of asylum seekers, it may not be possible to sustain such a long-term commitment. I hired a professional editor and directed the editing according to what I’d heard from the participants. We had a test screening of the rough cut with some of the participants and other community members, and made adjustments based on their feedback.

- Make sure that participants have full access to the final product so that they can share it on social media, or more privately with friends/family/refugee adjudicators.

- Provide a certificate at the end of the workshop, which will be used in a variety of ways, from something to proudly hang on a wall, to a lifesaving document in a refugee hearing.

- Be prepared to write support letters long after the workshop is over: a great way to use your position and your university letterhead to help sway an adjudicator’s decision.

*Part 2: 'At Home' Filming Template*  
*Created by the UK 'Project Finding Home' team:*  
*Elena Marchevska, Carolyn Defrin & Winstan Whitter.*

©June, 2020

**Action 1:**  
**Cooking**

Film yourself preparing a dish that connects you to home in some way. This might mean you cook or prepare something from your home country, or it might be an adaptation of a dish from the country you live in now. Consider how we can experience the ingredients and actions of making this dish. Or perhaps you just want to give us close-ups and/or a birds-eye view of the dish once it is complete and tell us a story about home while we look at the food?

**Action 2:**  
**Walking**

Film yourself walking somewhere (a place you are able to walk in the current situation) which connects you to an idea of home. Consider how we experience this walk as you do. What and how do we see/hear etc?

**Action 3:**  
**Objects that mean something to you (including your own artworks)**

Film an object(s) that is meaningful to you. This could include an artwork you have created, or performed. This could happen in several ways—perhaps you want to film an object you created, or film yourself in the process of making something. If you are a performer, perhaps you want to film yourself delivering poetry or stand up comedy, etc.

## Parameters

Film in Landscape,  
not Portrait Mode

Make sure your  
camera lens is  
clean and free from  
fingerprints

When filming  
anything try to hold  
your frame for at least  
10 seconds

Use the highest video  
quality setting your  
camera allows

Please limit any  
single recording to 10  
minutes maximum

Try not to speak  
whilst filming, unless  
you're doing a piece  
to camera

Please direct the  
camera's focus to  
the area you are  
highlighting

When filming  
handheld please use  
the STEADYSHOT  
mode if you have the  
option

For fixed shots, please  
use a tripod/easel/  
books etc to secure  
your camera

Try to film in well lit  
areas; this will enhance  
the images you film and  
give a sharper focus (you  
may need to add a light  
source)

## Part 3: Resources for disrupting and decolonizing participatory research in refugee studies by Caroline Lenette.

**Participatory video** can be used with refugee-background co-researchers to create their own films and present issues according to their sense of what is important, and challenge traditional filming approaches where someone else records, directs and edits their stories.

Lenette, C. (2019). *Arts-based methods in refugee research: Creating sanctuary* (Chapter 8, pp. 199-226). Springer.

Lenette, C., Blomfield, I., Yuol, A., Bordbar, A., & Akbari, H. (2020). *Self-representation in participatory video research: Ethics and lessons learnt*. *Art/Research International*, 5(2), 399–424.

**Walking interviews** can trigger discussions about health and wellbeing and reveal broader narratives of forced migration. This participatory, mobile technique privileges co-researchers' perspectives as they explore new contexts and share memories.

Lenette, C., & Gardner, J. (2021). *Walking interviews with refugee women*. *Field Methods*.

Lenette, C. (2022). *Health on the move: Walking interviews in health and wellbeing research*. In D. Lupton and D. Leahy (Eds.), *Creative Approaches to Health Education*. Routledge.

**Ethical filmmaking** is concerned with issues of anonymity and representation, and aims to avoid depersonalising tropes so that people from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds can still exercise agency in filmmaking.

Blomfield, I., & Lenette, C. (2019). *Anonymity and representation: Everyday practices of ethical documentary filmmaking*. *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media*, 18, 175–182.

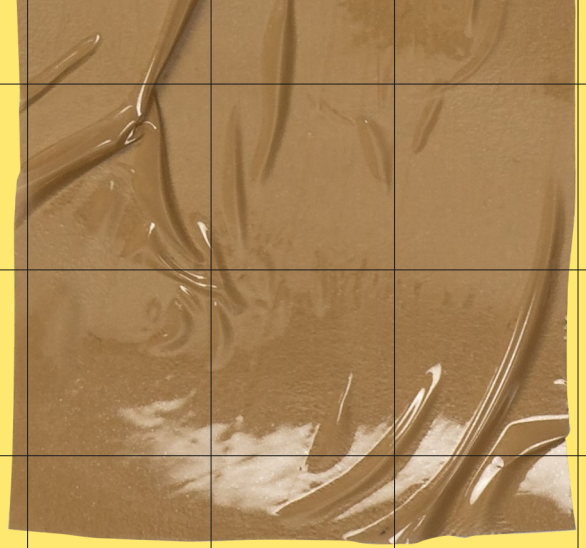
Blomfield, I., & Lenette, C. (2018). *Artistic representations of refugees: What is the role of the artist?* *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 39(3), 322–338

**Participatory research**

has the potential to be emancipatory, but also yields intricacies and complications that are not always discussed in the literature. A reflexive approach is crucial to disrupt power imbalances and co-produce meaningful research outcomes.

*Lenette, C. (2022). Participatory Action Research: Ethics and decolonization. Oxford University Press.*

*Lenette, C., Stavropoulou, N., Nunn, C., Kong, S.T., Cook, T., et al. (2019). Brushed under the carpet: Examining the complexities of participatory research. Research for All, 3(2), 161–179.*



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