OTHERING & BELONGING

EXPANDING THE CIRCLE OF HUMAN CONCERN

OTHERINGANDBELONGING.ORG

haas institute
FOR A FAIR AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

Berkeley
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

OTHERING & BELONGING

EXPANDING THE CIRCLE OF HUMAN CONCERN

CONTRIBUTORS

Authors

WHAT IF WE OTHERED YOUR CHILD AND YOU?

Nina Miriam and her husband are raising their three loving, smart children in the DC area. Doing so in a country and community that undermines and devalues them as a Black family is sometimes depleting. Nina Miriam is a pseudonym chosen by the author's children.

OBJECT TO SUBJECT: THREE SCHOLARS ON RACE, OTHERING, AND BEARING WITNESS

Abigail A. Sewell is assistant professor of sociology at Emory University and founding director of the Race and Policing Project. Specializing in advancing quantitative approaches to racism studies, they have identified empirical links between the political economy of race and racial health and health-care disparities using policing and housing policy data. Their work has been published in a variety of outlets, including *Social Science & Medicine*, *Social Science Research*, *Sociological Forum*, *Journal of Urban Health*, *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, *Du Bois Review*, and the *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law*. Their research has garnered support and recognition from the National Institutes of Health, the Ford Foundation, the National Science Foundation, the Society for the Study of Social Problems, the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, and the Planned Parenthood Federation of America. They received their PhD and MA in Sociology from Indiana University, with a minor in Social Science Research Methods, and their BA summa cum laude in Sociology from the University of Florida, with a minor in Women's Studies.

Wizdom Powell is director of the Health Disparities Institute and associate professor of Psychiatry at the University of Connecticut. Formerly, Wizdom spent over a decade at University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill's Gillings School of Global Public Health, where she held a tenured appointment in the Department of Health Behavior and was research associate professor and associate director of the Center for Health Equity Research in the Department of Social Medicine. In 2010, Wizdom gave invited testimony before the President's Cancer Panel (PCP) on physician communication with minority patients and its impact on their mistrust and use of health care. The PCP used her testimony to recommend national strategies for eliminating cancer disparities to President Barack Obama. In 2011–2012, she was appointed by President Obama to serve as a White House Fellow to Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, where she provided subject-matter expertise on military mental health, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, suicide, and military sexual trauma. Her community-based research focuses on the role of modern racism and gender norms on African American male health outcomes and healthcare inequities. She has published numerous peer-reviewed articles and book chapters, including ones in the *American Journal of Public Health*, *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, *Behavioral Medicine*, and *Child Development*. She is also a fellow of the American Psychological Association (APA) Minority, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Kaiser Permanente Burch Minority Leadership Development Program, Institute of African American Research, Aspen Institute, and the Ford Foundation. She received a PhD and MS in Clinical Psychology and an MPH from the University of Michigan–Ann Arbor.

Erin M. Kerrison is assistant professor at the School of Social Welfare at the University of California, Berkeley. Her work extends from a legal epidemiological framework, wherein law and legal institutions operate as social determinants of health. Specifically, through varied agency partnerships, her mixed-method research agenda investigates the impact that compounded structural disadvantage, concentrated poverty, and state

supervision have on service delivery, substance abuse, violence, and other health outcomes for individuals and communities marked by criminal justice intervention. Erin's research has been supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the National Institute of Justice, the National Institute on Drug Abuse, and the Ford Foundation. Her recent empirical research has been published in *Punishment & Society*, *Social Science & Medicine*, *Race and Justice*, and the *Harvard Journal on Racial and Ethnic Justice*. Her current book project is tentatively titled *Hustles and Hurdles: Law's Impact on Desistance for Job-Seeking Former Prisoners* and foregrounds life history narratives for a sample of three hundred drug-involved former prisoners. Erin holds a BA in Sociology and Philosophy from Haverford College; an MA in Criminology, Law, and Society from Villanova University; and a PhD in Criminology from the University of Delaware.

CONTEMPORARY CASES OF SHARED SACRED SITES: FORMS OF OTHERING OR BELONGING?

Karen Barkey is professor of sociology and Haas distinguished chair of religious diversity at the University of California, Berkeley. She received her PhD from the University of Chicago. Karen has been engaged in the comparative and historical study of the state, with special focus on its transformation over time. She has focused on state society relations, peasant movements, banditry, opposition and dissent organized around the state. Her work *Empire of Difference* (Cambridge University Press, 2008) is a comparative study of the flexibility and longevity of imperial systems. Karen is now engaged in different projects on religion and toleration. She has written on the early centuries of Ottoman state toleration and is now exploring different ways of understanding how religious coexistence, toleration, and sharing occurred in different historical sites under Ottoman rule. She edited the book *Choreographies of Shared Sacred Sites: Religion, Politics, and Conflict Resolution* (with Elazar Barkan) (Columbia University Press, 2014) that explores the history of shared religious spaces in the Balkans, Anatolia, and Palestine/Israel—all three regions once under Ottoman rule.

AN EVOLUTIONARY ROADMAP FOR BELONGING AND CO-LIBERATION

Sonali Sangeeta Balajee was a Senior Fellow in Belonging at the Haas Institute, where she worked closely with the *Othering & Belonging* conferences, frameworks, and strategies. She is the founder of the Bodhi Project, which promotes emergent practices and actions at the intersection of belonging, organizing,

decolonizing, health, and interconnectedness. Her research and activism focus on core frames that elevate the connection between social and spiritual well-being, focusing on artistically embodying the intersection of the ecology of health, belonging and caring, decolonization, and spirituality. She spent thirteen years working in government in Portland, Oregon, innovating and organizing in the areas of health equity, policy and systems shift, and community visioning, contributing to national movement building with the Government Alliance on Race and Equity. She is the lead author on *Equity and Empowerment Lens*, a racial equity tool and process with a racial justice focus, for Multnomah County, Oregon, which was born during her time in local government. Sonali has spent over ten years of direct community organizing in the areas of youth, arts, HIV/AIDS, environmental justice, and political mobilization around racial equity. She serves as a healing practitioner with the W. K. Kellogg Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation initiative and began her study of mindfulness, yoga, and spirituality at an early age. Sonali has twenty years of experience in performance art (dance and music) and has taught yoga in schools and correctional facilities, and has studied the effects of mindfulness and yoga on classroom instruction.

PART AND PARCEL: CULTIVATING SURVIVAL IN THE VILLAGE OF BATTIR

Sama Alshaibi is an artist of Palestinian-Iraqi origins and a naturalized U.S. citizen. Her artwork explores struggles that arise in the aftermath of war and exile. She is professor and chair of photography, video and imaging at the University of Arizona, Tucson. Sama received the 1885 Distinguished Scholar title in 2013, a visual arts grant by the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture in 2017, and was awarded a Fulbright Scholar Fellowship in 2014 as part of a residency at the new Palestine Museum in the West Bank. Her monograph *Sama Alshaibi: Sand Rushes In* (Aperture, 2015) presents her *Silsila* series, which probes the human dimensions of migration, borders, and environmental demise. *Silsila* was exhibited at the 55th Venice Biennale (Venice, Italy, 2013), the Honolulu Biennial (Hawaii, 2017), the Johnson Museum of Art at Cornell University (New York, 2017), Marta Herford Museum (Herford, Germany, 2017), the Qalandiya International Biennial (Haifa, Israel, 2016), Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art (Arizona, 2016), and Ayyam Gallery (Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 2015; London, United Kingdom, 2015). Other exhibitions include at the Museum of Modern Art (New York), Arab American National

Museum (Michigan), Busan Museum of Art (Busan, South Korea), Arab World Institute (Paris, France), and Darat al Funun (Amman, Jordan). Her essays have appeared in several journals and anthologies, including *We Are Iraqis: Aesthetics and Politics in a Time of War*, *Social Dynamics: A Journal of African Studies*, and *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*.

REMOVING BARRIERS AND BUILDING BRIDGES: HOW PLAY CULTIVATES INTEGRATION AND BELONGING IN REFUGEE CHILDREN

Freya White set up and ran a children's center in La Liniere refugee camp in France, maintaining a welcoming, safe environment for traumatized children and coordinating a team of volunteers. The experience led to the creation of Refugee Children's Centres, of which Freya is the founding director. She has a background in education and environmental science. Her main areas of interest are informal education, the impacts of stress and adverse childhood experiences on psychosocial well-being and early childhood development, and the benefits of using play-based intervention to support well-being and development and promote social cohesion. Freya and her team are currently focusing on developing capacity building partnerships with volunteer-led organizations working with refugee children living in Greece, to strengthen the provision of informal education, early childhood care and development opportunities, and psychosocial support in refugee camps and community centers.

HOW TECHNOLOGY COULD BRIDGE THE GAP OF COMPASSION

Romain Sepehr Vakilitabar is the founder of *Pathos*, a non-profit virtual reality lab focused on bridging the growing divides in empathy, compassion, and understanding among disparate groups. His interest in mending interpersonal and cultural divides came at an earlier age. After being assigned by his fourth grade teacher to write about "what patriotism means to you" and being reprimanded for taking creativity into his own hands and writing about being "planetotic" instead, Romain first began to wonder what the difference was after all. Through his adventurous experiments, whether backpacking between Israel and Palestine to better understand the long-lasting conflict, spending weeks voluntarily homeless in the streets of Scandinavia to empathize with the idea of "absolute need," hitchhiking through South America to test the generosity of strangers, or living with conservative rural farmers in Oklahoma to better understand those on the opposite side of the political spectrum, Romain has found that people, no matter how big the differences, are more alike than they imagine. Pathos was created in part to make that case.

Artists

Shikeith (*Cover* and *Object and Subject*) received his BA from The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA for Integrative Art (2010) and his MFA in Sculpture from The Yale School of Art, New Haven, CT (2018). His work attempts an assemblage of personal truths and wonder that focuses on the metamorphoses of Black men, especially within a society that denies these men their erotic and reconciliatory potential and capital. It is the interior he considers—his own, as well as, other Black men or masculine people through emphasizing portraiture, sculpture, and filmmaking to examine the fantastic as it relates and complicates personal autobiography and self-making.

Zarina (*What if We Othered Your Child and You?*) was born in Aligarh, India and currently lives and works in New York. After receiving a degree in mathematics, she went on to study woodblock printing in Bangkok and Tokyo, and intaglio with S. W. Hayter at Atelier-17 in Paris. She has exhibited at numerous venues internationally including representing India at the 2011 Venice Biennale, and her retrospective exhibition entitled Zarina: Paper Like Skin was presented at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles in 2012, and at the Guggenheim, New York, and the Art Institute of Chicago in 2013. Her work is in the permanent collections of the Tate Modern, London; the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; and the Menil Collection, Houston.

Samuel L. Paden (*An Evolutionary Roadmap for Belonging and Co-Liberation*) was born and raised in Central Africa to an American father and Swedish mother. After many years spent in New York and Reykjavik, Iceland, he now lives in Garden City, Idaho. "I use this diverse background to pursue a simple statement of the self, land, and elements," said Paden. "My work shifts from the interior energies of abstract figures to the outward forms of landscape. This movement reflects my artistic process and the catalyst for painting."

Abdul Rahman Katanani (*Removing Barriers and Building Bridges: How Play Cultivates Integration and Belonging in Refugee Children*) is a young Palestinian artist who was born in 1983, and lived all his life as a refugee in the "Shatila & Sabra camp" in Lebanon. His artistictalents forcefully emerged in his early childhood years when he started torigorously paint using the painful realities of the refugees' everyday living in thecamp as his subject matter. Hence, his artistic works intensely depict the tragedyof his people, the Palestinian refugees. His works are considered by many as areal-istic and vivid portrayal of the hardships, endurance, and persistent spirit ofresistance that are the main characteristics of life in the Palestinian refugeecamps. Accordingly, his artistic works reflect the often contra-dictory feelings ofsuffering and endurance, hopelessness and hopefulness, pain and happiness,along with the nostalgic feelings for a beloved homeland. What makes Abdul-Rahman's works prominent among others is that in his genuine portrayal of his;and his peoples' feelings as refugees, he utilized the camp's structural materialsof tin and card boards, rags of old clothes, and old utensils, etc. as his artmaterials. Abdul-Rahman is a truly creative young artist whose works representdramatic and deeply felt compassions that are motivated by heartfelt experi-encesand aspirations.

Design & Art Research

Bo-Won Keum is an independent designer in New York, NY. She maintains a studio practice that observes the effects of unyielding systems upheld by various sectors of our social, political, and physical world. Her publica-tion, *Dear Books to Prisoners: Letters from the Incarcer-ated* (with Books to Prisoners) has been presented at Brown University, the Maharam Foundation, and Design Indaba. She holds an MFA from the Rhode Island School of Design and a BA in comparative literature from Princeton University.

Rachel Ossip is a designer and writer based in Brooklyn, NY, and production manager at the *n+1* Foundation.

Editors

Andrew Grant-Thomas is codirector at EmbraceRace, an online community of parents, teachers, and other caregivers to children. He is also a race and social justice consultant with a wide range of educational, nonprofit, philanthropic, and research institutions. Previously, Andrew has directed work at Proteus Fund, the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University, and the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at Ohio State University, where he was editor-in-chief of its journal, *Race/Ethnicity*. Andrew earned his BA in Literature from Yale University, his MA in International Relations from the University of Chicago, and his Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Chicago.

Rachelle Galloway-Popotas is the communications director at the Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society where she oversees the Institute's publications, digital media, arts and cultural strategy, press relations, and public engagement. Rachelle has led the develop-ment and curation of some of the Institute's flagship projects including the *Othering & Belonging* conferences and multimedia journal. Rachelle has worked in the nonprofit communications field for almost 20 years where her speciality has been developing a nimble and responsive communications infrastructure to amplify the vision of an organization and helping to shape and define the voice and identity of organizations. Rachelle has bachelor degrees in political science and graphic design. She is a tribal member of the Caddo Nation.

Stephen Menendian is the Assistant Director and Director of Research at the Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society where he oversees the Institute's research initiatives and projects, including the Inclu-siveness Index, fair housing policy and opportunity mapping project, and community engagement. The author of many law review and journal articles, Stephen co-authored the Institute's *amicus* brief in the US Supreme Court case of *Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs v. the Inclusive Communities Project*, as well as the Institute's *amicus* brief in *Fisher v. Texas* asking the Court to uphold the University of Texas' race-conscious admissions policy.

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

A child cannot, thank Heaven, know how vast and how merciless is the nature of power, with what unbelievable cruelty people treat each other. —JAMES BALDWIN

Children are not born knowing the nature of power or the cruelty with which we often treat one another, but in the world we have made a great many children come much too early to that knowledge. At the time of this writing a furor has erupted in the United States about the morality, ethics, and political and social consequences of the Trump administration's "family separation" policy, a policy that in just seven weeks saw more than 2,300 immigrant children taken from their caregivers at the US-Mexico border. These traumatized children, many of them infants and toddlers, may be the most public faces of *othering* in the US today.

Tragically, these immigrant children have plenty of company in their innocence and suffering. Around the world, children feature prominently among our most vulnerable populations, whether Rohingya and Syrian refugees, people with disabilities in Afghanistan or Sudan, people living in extreme poverty, or any of the other groups we could name. Children also have a range of roles in this issue of *Othering & Belonging*—as wards in need of protection, yes, but also as witnesses, as accountability partners, as vehicles of empathetic imagination, and as inheritors and re-shapers of the institutions and communities we construct now.

In "Removing Barriers and Building Bridges: How Play Cultivates Integration and Belonging in Refugee Children," (p. 86) Freya White blends her knowledge of the empirical research literature on child development with her experience in a refugee camp in northern France to argue for the importance of play as a hedge against trauma for refugee children. While the circumstances of immigrant children forcibly separated from their parents and placed in US "tender age shelters" differ in various ways from those of the largely Kurdish

refugee children White worked with in France, readers may find the comparison telling. And uncomfortable.

Children are central, again, in "Object to Subject: Three Scholars on Race, Othering, and Bearing Witness" (p. 16). Here, scholar-activists Erin Kerrison, Wizdom Powell, and Abigail Sewell cast light on the mechanisms and consequences of othering for people of color, and especially for the health of Black boys and men. Their conversation with *Othering & Belonging* editor Andrew Grant-Thomas concludes with reflections on what the seeds of greater belonging for racially marginalized peoples might be, and with powerful revelations about how these women manage to keep working to meet the very daunting challenges they describe.

Whereas Kerrison, Powell, and Sewell bear witness to racial othering through their activism and research, poet Nina Miriam bears witness by recasting her white interlocutor as the racial "other." Above all, "What If We Othered Your Child and You?" (p. 10) is a plea for empathy. Her themes include the perils of racial isolation, microaggressions, racial over and under-representation, and their consequences for whites as well as for people of color. Throughout, Miriam's main concern is for children.

Miriam calls for empathy and understanding across difference. Karen Barkey examines one tangible form accommodation with difference has taken. In a world fragmented by racial, ethnic, social, and geopolitical conflict, Barkey's "Contemporary Cases of Shared Sacred Sites: Forms of Othering or Belonging?" (p. 30) shines a spotlight on shared religious sites as a partial antidote to the hopelessness many of us feel. Barkey does not romanticize the work these sites do; the belongingness they nurture, she observes, is temporary and less than "full." Nevertheless, in countries like

Macedonia, Tunisia, and Turkey that are marked by interethnic tensions and struggles, their very presence "reflects the possibilities of human coexistence across boundaries."

From sites of forbearance we move to a site of resistance: the Palestinian village of Battir, designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2014. That same year, photographer Sama Alshaibi arrived in Battir, accompanied by her husband and two sons. Her observations, insights, research, and photography come together in "Part and Parcel: Cultivating Survival in the Village of Battir" (p. 70). In Alshaibi's account, Battir serves as a powerful symbol of Palestinian resistance to the destruction of a people and a culture. Her short essay and accompanying photographs chronicle the tenacity of a place whose very existence has long been under threat, most recently by the wish of the Israeli Ministry of Defense to extend a literal "separation wall" through the territory.

With Romain Vakilitabar's 360-degree (immersive) film, *Strangers*, the vulnerability of children, and the obligation we feel to protect and provide for them, again loom large. The film and Vakilitabar's accompanying essay about it, "How Technology Could Bridge the Gap of Compassion," (p. 106) feature three women—a Black Lives Matter activist in St. Louis, a farmer in rural Oklahoma, and an Iraqi refugee—who seemingly share little but their feelings and experiences of alienation and their concerns as mothers. All three women understand their struggle as a service to their children, their grandchildren, and future generations.

And finally, Sonali Sangeeta Balajee brings us "An Evolutionary Road Map for Belonging and Co-Liberation," (p. 52) wherein she also discusses the sacred:

the sacred connection of spirit and belonging. Her pioneering attempt is "to map out an emerging DNA of what belonging would look like when tied to health, spirituality, resilience, and well-being."

The candid but necessary conversations and perspectives featured in this issue speak directly to the lived experiences of those of us struggling to foster a more just and inclusive society. The urgency of this responsibility has rarely seemed more acute. As this journal enters its third year, it feels like a vital forum for mutual support, encouragement, and action or, in the words of Sangeeta Balajee, "becoming … the changes we want to see" as well as for illuminating and revealing.

This issue, in particular, places *Othering & Belonging* on solid footing in terms of tone, identity, and the extraordinary range of content that such a forum can showcase in pursuit of our vision. The exigency of othering crises enveloping the globe right now must be met by resistance, yes, but also by education, understanding, compassion, love, and belonging. Our world depends upon it.

Yours in Belonging,
Andrew Grant-Thomas
Rachelle Galloway-Popotas
Stephen Menendian
Editors
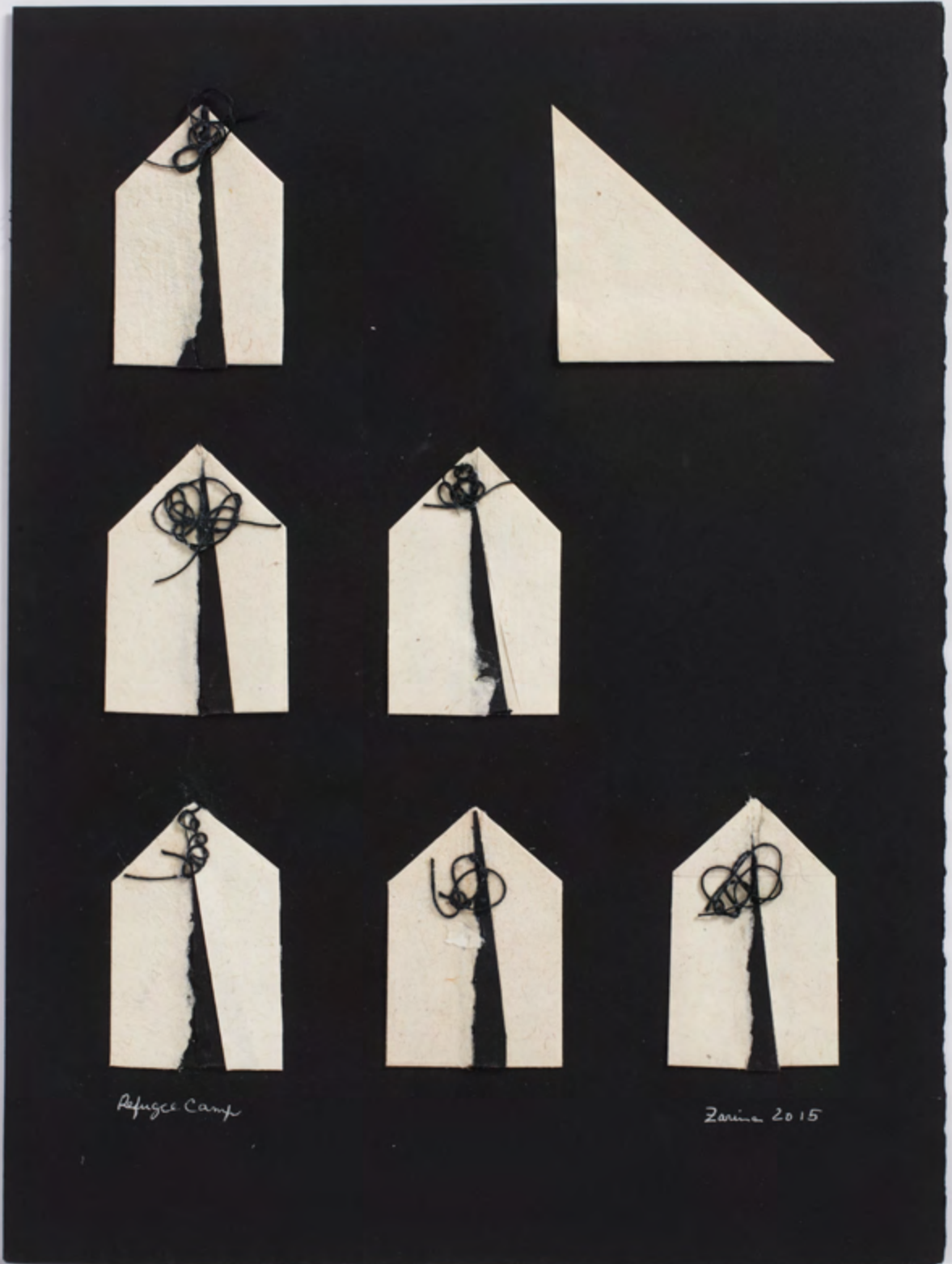
What If We Othered Your Child And You?

Nina Miriam

ARTWORK BY ZARINA

What if We Othered Your Child and You?

What if we surrounded you in a sea of blackness
And in an attempt to get to know you,
Peppered you with a barrage of questions and statements
That only served to undercut your value
In our eyes, if you fail our surprise
battery of quizzes and challenges to test your knowledge, your worth,
your view on issues deemed insignificant by you.

What if we told you you're the first white-skinned Caucasian we knew
and asked to run our hands through your straight hair of red hue?
Without regard for how our actions feel like an assault to you?
On your mind, your body, and Lord, help me, your spirit, too?
Our words leave your young ones off-balance, feeling out of place
Even in what used to feel like the safest space.

We let you know, with our lingering gaze, you are an oddity
we do not encounter most days
For we choose to isolate ourselves in the most myriad of ways
What we read, watch, see, and play
Is a reflection of us, our experiences, our tastes
That only serve to exclude or erase
Your being, your existence.

Would you persist in these dark spaces? Encourage your ill-equipped child
to shoulder the burden of educating us, all the while
fighting the temptation to say nothing and just smile?
To hide their confusion, the shock and dismay,
that in a multicultural world, we still isolate ourselves in such a way
we have so little knowledge of your whiteness that we can say,
you're the first white-skinned Caucasian I've met to this day.

If day out and day in, we othered your child and you,
would we wear you down?
Would you begin to frown
at your pale complexion, and fine thin hair?
To question your right to breathe the same air,
without the awkward pauses, and malignant stares? Maybe you'd invest in
cornrows and tanning creams, as part of a carefully designed plan to make
    you seem
A little less white.

Or would you seek the comfort of another venue,
One where you were free to just be you,
where your brothers and sisters understand they are created *imago dei* and
assert that you are, too?

Or maybe you'd simply come to take a stand, and from an early age
guide your sons and daughters through the real world,
not an artificial land
through stories, films, plays, and shows,
through worship, interpersonal relationships, bridge-building, and who
    knows?
I'm confident they would come to see, the world is full of people like them,
    and me.
That we're all a part of God's intricately woven tapestry
stitched together with an abundance of love, grace, compassion, and
    empathy.
You'd continue to shield them from the not-so-well intentioned few, and
    surround them with curious
but loving people who do
learn to celebrate differences, rather than eschew.

What if We Othered Your Child and You?
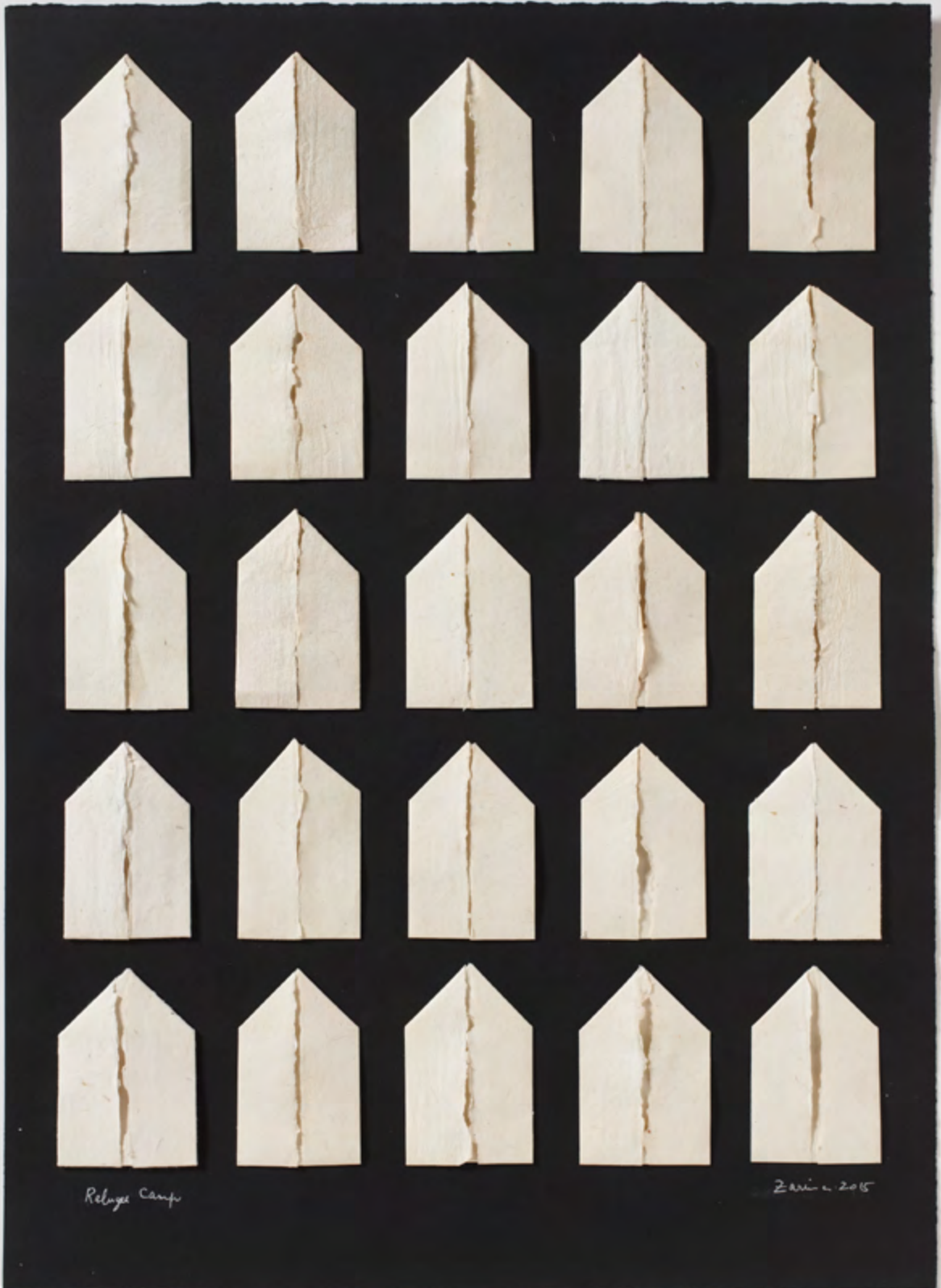
Zarina,
Refugee Camp, 2015

Object to Subject: Three scholars on race, othering, and bearing witness

Erin Kerrison, Wizdom Powell, & Abigail Sewell

with editor Andrew Grant-Thomas

ACCOMPANYING ARTWORK BY SHIKEITH

On March 19, 2018 *The New York Times* published an article entitled "Extensive Data Shows Punishing Reach of Racism for Black Boys." Drawing on longitudinal data on millions of American children, the research cited revealed that even when Black boys and white boys grew up in similar socioeconomic circumstances, the Black boys almost always went on to become men who earned less, often much less, than their white counterparts. Indeed, whereas rich white boys typically became rich men, wealthy Black boys were more likely to become poor than to remain wealthy.

These findings provided one point of departure for a conversation convened by *Othering & Belonging* Editor-in-chief Andrew Grant-Thomas on the following day. The participants were three African American scholar-activists deeply invested in naming, scrutinizing, and countering the *othering* of Black people and members of other marginalized communities—Erin Kerrison, School of Social Welfare, University of California, Berkeley; Wizdom Powell, Health Disparities Institute, University of Connecticut; and Abigail Sewell, Sociology, Emory University. An edited transcript of their conversation follows.

What does the term "othering" mean to each of you?

WIZDOM: I think to be othered is to be denied the fullness of one's humanity. It's about reminding people, either by the barriers we put up in social spaces or the barriers to opportunities to advance our well-being, about saying through words or actions, that "you're not one of us." And I try to think about what it must be like for Black men and boys, for boys and men of color, to move through political and social spaces highly visible in some ways while *invisibilized* in others.

ABIGAIL: I think there is also a suggestion, in addition to the alienation Wizdom is talking about, that one is intrinsically different from the "self" who does the othering, the self who is raised up as the ideal, the thing the "other" should be. So there's a process of subordination happening when someone, or a group of people, is othered.

ERIN: I love both of those definitions. I want to add that othering renders the subject as object. When you are rendered as object instead of subject, then anything can be done to you and it's okay. We, the mainstream, the people who are not othered, the self to which other people need to aspire, can do whatever we want to you and you have no recourse. And I think that's a really important part of being relegated to the object as opposed to the subject.

WIZDOM: I love that because it makes me think about the challenge that we have, from a social science research perspective, when we consider white males as the group against which everybody else is compared. And every decision we make is about the relative distance between the others and this group. That has consequences just from the perspective of measuring population health. So othering has social and psychological consequences for the individual, but it also has

impacts even on the data and the science and the stories we tell about communities that are vulnerable.

ABIGAIL: You hit the nail on the head. When we talk about health disparities, people always want to know, "What is the ideal health outcome for a group?" But if white folks don't always have the best health outcomes, why do we use them as the ideal self? As Wizdom says, that has clear implications for how we set up our studies—and what kind of research the National Institutes of Health supports, for example.

Understanding how inequality is created doesn't necessarily mean focusing on group differences in health outcomes. Going back twenty years, we would study discrimination. And to understand discrimination we say, "Okay, we'll put everything that can reasonably account for outcome disparities in the model and everything that's left over we can attribute to discrimination." But that actually doesn't tell us anything except that we don't have a good way of measuring what's going on.

So I think the othering framework is actually really useful because it leads us to ask who the object is, who the subject is, and why some people are being objectified. To what purpose? Instead of that being in the background story, object and subject become the center of our analysis.

You've started to talk about the consequences of othering for the individual, for groups, and even for the science of inequality and the kind of research the National Institutes of Health supports. Let's dig deeper into the matter of consequences. What specific consequences of othering most concerns you in your work?

ERIN: I think a lot about the lack of attention paid to the health-related fallout of criminal justice policy and criminal justice interventions. So, yes, dying at the hands of a criminal justice agent is a bad health outcome, for sure. But what about the less dramatic health outcomes we typically don't recognize as such—issues like anxiety, insomnia, fear of moving around in your neighborhood, e.g., Freddie Gray running after making eye contact with a police officer? We're not counting those phenomena as important when we think about the fallout of policy and what it's meant to achieve with respect to public safety.

That's something I'm really hung up on with colleagues and the policymakers whose ears I have, but I'm not sure they're willing to hear it because it requires understanding othered folks as subjects instead of objects. Poor health outcomes persist because we don't even name them as health outcomes or we don't name

them as problems or challenges that need addressing. And that silence is in and of itself very, very violent.

WIZDOM: Yes! I also think about the impact of being othered on the willingness or capacity of men and boys of color to be emotionally vulnerable, to disclose what's really happening to them. To call a thing a thing, which is really important if you're going to be made visible, to move from object to subject. Because objects don't speak, right? They're spoken to.

ERIN: That's very right.

WIZDOM: I think that there are real consequences for the interior lives of boys and men of color that are related to their interactions with systems that other them, mute them, render them invisible. I'm concerned about how we sanction men and boys, particularly boys and men of color, around the disclosure of emotions in ways that leaves it almost impossible for them to seek social support. You can't reap the benefits of the village if you believe being vulnerable is going to expose you to more threat.

I'm talking about both the immediate and lagged effects of that kind of process. We saw that with Kalief Browder. Here's someone who emerged from incarceration as a symbol of social justice reform and crumbled under the weight of undiagnosed trauma. [Browder killed himself at age twenty-two.] He was met with, "Oh, you're so resilient!" as opposed to, "What's really happened to you and how can we help you get to the place in your life you want to be?" And that concerns me profoundly, not just as a psychologist, but as a woman, connected to men and boys in our community, who realizes that when they don't live to experience life at its fullest potential we all suffer. Our fates are linked—as a Black woman, a sister, an aunt, as someone who's profoundly connected to a community of men I love and care about.

What you've already all said underlines how hard, probably impossible, it is to disentangle causes and effects, the mechanisms of othering from the consequences of othering. But I do want to focus on mechanisms for a moment. What fuels othering as a social process in the spaces and among the groups you're working with?

ABIGAIL: If we want to have that conversation about mechanisms, then we have to start thinking about time. We have to start thinking about cohorts. We have to start thinking about how people disadvantaged within

a space by economics or by racial or immigration status are unable to protect the next generation from the types of inequality they themselves were exposed to.

I think that's one of the most remarkable things about the recent study talked about in *The New York Times*. It showed that even the most well-to-do Black people can't protect their Black sons from poverty. People pass down wealth through intergenerational transfers and through the ability of beneficiaries to use wealth to create more wealth. But when we have poor schools, when we have a mass incarceration system that actually rewards stock owners when people are criminalized, then even Black people with money are spending that money to keep the next generation out of the criminal justice system instead of having them start their own businesses. So we can't only think about what happened in the 1960s versus 1970s. We have to think of this from a life course perspective. For me that's very fundamental.

When I think about mechanisms, I also can't help but talk about policy. In fact, I think that's the only reason I do the work I do—because I want it to be used to create policies that hold police accountable for their actions and their inactions, that support communities to intervene on their own behalf, and to establish an understanding at the federal level that having such huge disparities is evidence of a problem in the system itself.

WIZDOM: What you said hits home on so many levels. What I think we're bearing witness to, and have over generations, is a critical empathy gap for boys and men of color, in particular, and people of color, in general. I can't tell you how many times I've been in a room talking with passion about issues that are facing boys and men of color and I can see people checking their email or looking away or maybe planning their grocery list. And that's concerning to me.

And yet I try all the time to make the case that this is about you! Because we're in a significant demographic transition. We're a browning nation and if we're going to compete in the global marketplace, this is the labor force we have to be ready to deploy, the one we have to prepare for economic and social innovation. And so, the fact that people look away at this moment in time is striking. This is really about all of us. If we don't get that now, we never will.

Erin, I'd like you to take up Wizdom's point about the failure of empathy, about so many people checking out of the concerns she raises about the objectification of men and boys of color. And I also want to ask: are the dynamics of the othering of

Black people different in kind or simply different in degree from the othering of other people of color?

I'm thinking about several conceptualizations of racial hierarchy in the United States. A common one sees white people at the top, Black and/or Native peoples at the bottom, and other groups arranged in between. Another sees the crucial division as between whites and "people of color," and a third talks about Black people and non-Black people. And there are still others. With respect to othering, are Black people the canary in the coal mine, simply the group most vulnerable to the structural inequities that affect everybody, or are they subject to a different kind of othering altogether?

ERIN: Okay. The question of empathy and of kind versus degree is helpful. Wizdom just talked about how often she's been the only one in various spaces lifting up the uncomfortable truth about boys and men of color. But the first problem is that she's too often the only one in those spaces who looks like us othered folks. So, that's a huge part of it. We're dealing with a crisis of segregation and exclusion where the movers and shakers who would shine a light on these very real problems that merit attention and remedies aren't part of the conversation.

And that's a huge, huge part of cultivating a culture of empathy. It's not enough to say, "You should really care." I think people are just straight-up not exposed. That's a huge issue that we see in all groups, the movers and the shakers, and the policymakers and the legislators, but all the way down to lay citizens who go to voting booths and simply do not see the people for whom we're advocating. They don't see them, so of course they don't see their pains. And those who ignore, deny them, I still say we can do better about winning them over.

WIZDOM: I so appreciate your positivity about the potential for people to be transformed. As a positive psychologist, I can really appreciate that.

There're probably more than two sides to othering. One is to say, "I don't see you. You're invisible. You're not really relevant to me. There's enough distance between you and me, social or otherwise, that you don't even exist." That's one way to other. The other, more vicious, dangerous form of othering says, "I don't see you" and "I don't want you. I'm going to extinguish you." That is what I'm seeing in my work with boys and men of color. It's not only that they're invisible. It's that, "Even having you at the bottom of the social ladder is not enough distance. I want you below the ground."

ABIGAIL: My comments are pretty aligned with yours, Wizdom. Maybe, four or five years ago, I did believe that Black folks in particular were canaries in the coal mine. The economic recession really hit Black folks, Black families at a much earlier date, maybe three or four years before it hit the rest of United States. And it wasn't just that nobody cared, it's that people actually profited from it.

I want you all to wrap your minds around this for a minute. *People on Wall Street made a lot of money off the recession*. Not everybody lost. People just think that everybody lost, but some people knew it was coming. They knew that systematic failures within the mortgage market would topple the economy. They were able to get the government to bail them out after they made the damaging loans in the first place.

Yup. Failure in one respect. And we know that systems do exactly what they're designed to do. The system worked!

ABIGAIL: It's not failure! It's the system working as it should. Our American system is white nationalist at its core. It was designed to be a white nationalist system, so when it starts to look like they're trying to kill us, when it looks like they don't care, like they're trying to make us sick—it was designed to be that way. "Our" system was built on settler colonialism. The right question is not how do we try to make the system work, but how do we tear it down?

It's not to say that some individual minorities and poor people can't win in this system. But if you're working for the success of entire generations of those people, you have to create a system actually designed for their success.

Good. Let's talk about that. Imagine that here we are, sitting together in the year 2043—twenty-five years from now—and we've made significant progress along the dimensions of race, class, gender, and othering that we've been talking about. Give us a glimpse of what that might look like and then describe one or two crucial points in the intervening twenty-five years that have paved the way to this very new conversation we can now have.

ERIN: I'm happy to jump in and I hope we can capture Abigail's frowning because it was so perfect.

So what seed do we want to plant and have someone else come along and till, so that we might have better outcomes in twenty-five years? I'm thinking about the development of technology and the ways in which

that's incorporated in policy. I'm not optimistic. I'm not optimistic, especially thinking about surveillance and the emergence of big data. The idea of body-worn cameras on police as an accountability measure, for instance. We've never not had effigies and mementos of state violence against Black folks. There are families that still have heirlooms and artifacts of skin from lynched victims; I'm very serious about that. That these shrines exist and people are proud of them. We've never not known that these things were happening.

Twenty-five years from now, I don't know that it'll be better without a massive system overhaul—and I don't mean anarchy. That's about having imagination about what is possible for us, and who we include as citizens and what we want for our youth. I'm happy to go on record saying I'm cynical and I'd love to be convinced otherwise as an activist who's committed to this work, so that I don't feel completely defeated. I'm still in it with you and always will be, but it is something I think about given that we're operating in a context that is working exactly the way it's supposed to.

Erin, we can come back to you in a bit, if you like, because I do want you to take up the challenge, which is what the seed of transformation would look like. What might just one seed look like? And relatedly, is anything happening now that gives you some hope, that holds some promise? So let's come back to that, but, Wizdom or Abigail, want to offer any thoughts you have?

WIZDOM: This question forces me to think about how little progress we've made thus far, and to have to face the really stark reality that in twenty-five years things may not be much different. But I do believe one excellent sign of having arrived at a better place would be when the so-called other can live life without fearing that other people will think of them as *less than* or expect deference whenever they enter a room.

I think the only catalyst for that is to build a nation of disruptors. We can't catalyze change if we teach a generation of youth, Brown and Black youths in particular, to be quiet and silent about social injustice. At a time when facts and evidence are doubted or treated as false, more truth, alone, isn't going to bring us to a freer place.

I also believe there has to be a more fervent movement towards love within the communities that are objectified. I talk about altruistic love as the great equalizer for people who are marginalized because when you love someone who looks like you, you behave in ways that are prosocial. You do things that uplift

Shikeith,
*Dreams in Black
and White*

community and you are able to really catalyze social justice. No social justice movement or change can happen without love. I am all about upstream change, structural change; we need that. But if we create that change and are still broken in it, it's not going to work out well for us in the next twenty-five years.

ABIGAIL: I love the idea of a nation of disruptors. We definitely need that. The question is how will they disrupt things. Now, some people would assume that they're going to break buildings, set fire to everything, overturn cop cars. But I think there are much more effective ways to disrupt.

Looking ahead to the 2018 midterm elections, we had 100 million eligible voters who did not vote in the last election. 100 million! That's about the number who did vote. How disruptive would those missing 100 million votes have been to the current state of affairs? I respect anybody's right to bow out and recognize that our political system is set up to discourage people from voting. That also tells me where the next possible solution is. When you remove the barriers to voting and participating in our political system, to helping hold different institutional actors accountable for the things that they do, you're going to see a different system.

I am part of that generation of people who use the internet to create things that never existed, to take down things that should not have existed, to build communities that rely on more than physical connection. I think digital platforms have a lot of disruptive power. Unfortunately, a lot of people are trying to corporatize and privatize the internet right now and we need those 100 million people to show up and show out.

ERIN: You restore my hope; thank you! On my lowest days, when I'm really feeling empty about where we're headed and whether we can dig ourselves out of them, I remember and place a lot of value on bearing witness. On sitting with the discomfort and ugliness. On telling the truth unapologetically, without mincing words, being brave about telling a story that folks don't want to hear.

Zora Neale Hurston said, "If you are silent about your pain, they'll kill you and say you enjoyed it." With respect to planting seeds of progress, I think that's a huge thing that needs to continue. Then no one can say we didn't tell them.

Abigail, I loved what you said about the digital platforms through which people can show up and show out, because it's true. In addition to the harmful effects of gerrymandering and long waits to vote and short polling hours, lack of political participation is also about people not being able to see the benefits of participation. Leveraging digital platforms to include the voices and perspectives of marginalized people is actually a huge move forward. I think that is one very healthy and productive way of building a critical mass of folks who could overhaul these systems, of building up spaces so that folks, once again, are subject instead of object.

If the folks who read this could have seen your expressions when I first asked you to envision the substantial progress we might make over the next twenty-five years, some would have said, "Oh wow, that's really cynical." And yet you all lead the most uncynical lives, right? You are activists and advocates, living the life of the mind and also doing the practical, on-the-ground social change work.

In closing, could each of you say a word about how it is that in spite of your deep concern, even skepticism, that we can make real progress even in twenty-five years, you choose to spend your time pushing for that change.

WIZDOM: I've always questioned why other people are treated unjustly or unfairly, and that fire in my belly is rekindled daily as I watch us move through the world. Having survived the Transatlantic Slave Trade and Jim Crow and lynching and a campaign of white terror, still we get up every day and love on each other, and celebrate, and create music and art and film, and inspire each other through a simple, "What's up, sis?" That energy, our capacity not just to survive but to thrive, keeps me going.

In my opinion, there is nothing more patriotic than a Black person going to work every day, paying taxes. Seeing all the Black people who persist in a society that constantly tells them through word and deed that they don't matter—that keeps me going. Remembering that it was the everyday acts of resistance that brought us to this place. It was because Harriet said, "I'm going to go back and get some more people," even in though people probably looked at her like she was crazy.

Some days I think this is hard work. I can't watch another Black man, Black woman being shot down in the street like a dog. But then I think, "what would Harriet do?" She didn't give up and I can't. I have the luxury of a warm house and a good salary and a husband I love. We don't have to live on separate plantations and he doesn't have to sneak out in the middle of the night so we can be together. I do believe in many ways that I'm called to this purpose. Every day it's the thing that gets me out of bed.

ERIN: This is an easy answer from me, Andrew, and thank you for inviting us to share why and how we keep getting up. As you said, Wizdom, people must have looked at Harriet Tubman like she was crazy. Coincidentally, she did have a traumatic brain injury. She had a traumatic brain injury and still saved all those souls. She literally had half a mind and still killed it. I just love that. But I think about her and I think, "How dare I not do this work?" Before I even existed, there was the vision of me, there was the promise of me for whom she was fighting. And so, I owe her at least that. It's just that simple. And I hope that what she dreamt for me will be reproduced in what I dream for those who come after me.

The rest is just one foot in front of the other. It really is. I'm reminded of that by you guys. You guys are so beautiful and brilliant, and I think about all the privilege that we have and we know it would make no sense not to do these things. It's really energizing too when you know you're on the right side of history. I think about a righteous covenant that I have with my ancestors who risked everything, everything so that I could read, so that I could be on a panel like this. That's crazy. I think about having a vicious imagination for what's possible; how dare we not push forward for that?

WIZDOM: I don't want to break in because I know Abigail has to speak, but I just have to weigh in on this point you made about what to give back to people who fought for a reality that they would never live to see. What's more loving than that? How do you even say to yourself you're not going to do it? How do you get up and fight for a right to vote or to be free or to read when you yourself may never read a book?

ERIN: You're giving me chills. I have a hard enough time getting up going to the gym for a body that I know that I want in this lifetime, right? Those folks fought for me. It just becomes a no-brainer. But go ahead, Abigail.

ABIGAIL: I love what you all are saying. It's giving me a lot of energy right now. I'll give several people credit in my answer. One is my sister who asked me what I wanted to do with my life—this is after I was accepted into graduate school but before I had started. And I said, "Oh, I want to do this, I want to do that," a lot of stuff around policy and activism. She said, "Don't wait until you're finished. Do it now."

I also had a close friend in college ask me, "Where will you be when the revolution happens?" The question has really haunted me over the years. I remember asking someone else that question and she said, "We won't be the revolution; we'll be the ones who usher in the revolutionaries." And I've taken that charge to heart. Everybody I come into contact with, every student, every faculty colleague, I'm just out there trying to usher them into their revolutionary state.

And then the last thing is: I've never lived in a world that can give me everything I've ever wanted, but that's what I want for the next generation. I hold on to the idea that the world that has yet to be shaped is a world that I would actually want to live in. I do the work I do because I'm not satisfied with the world as it is.

WIZDOM: Over time I've become less concerned with what my role in the revolution will be and pretty clear that my role is probably going to be very, very small. I don't see that as problematic. I think about the Keymaker in *The Matrix*, whose only role is to open the door. If I have to hold the door or open the door, I'm going to play that part and I think that's how we have to see ourselves in this fight. Today I'm holding the door, tomorrow I'm opening the door. And whatever role I'm supposed to play on this battlefield I'll play it because I understand that I'm so minuscule to the overall design and divine plan.

ERIN: One second! Minuscule but necessary. Minuscule but critical. It wouldn't function without you. But that is how the universe works.

ABIGAIL: Exactly.

Some years ago I tried to put together an edited volume premised on a version of the question I posed earlier. I asked thirty to forty social justice workers what their corner of the universe would look like in twenty-five years if they were wildly successful in their work. Few people could answer that question in a vivid and compelling, affirmative way—because it's hard. What would systems transformation look like? How do we make strategic moves toward a world we literally can't imagine?

And then I remember the words of E.L. Doctorow, who said that "Writing a novel is like driving a car at night. You can see only as far as your headlights, but you can make the whole trip that way." He was talking about writing, but I think it applies equally well to the struggle we're all engaged in.

Thank you.

Shikeith,
Germinate

Contemporary Cases of Shared Sacred Sites: Forms of Othering or Belonging?

Karen Barkey

This article investigates one particular narrative of "othering and belonging," one that brings together the historical and contemporary experience of particular communities of Jews, Christians, and Muslims who have found it possible to work out various forms of coexistence.

As we grapple with contemporary American politics, it is clear that significant damage has been done to the core values that bind us, to our civil religion that appeals to unity, and to our common sense of purpose in our diversity. Such diversity and unity have been eviscerated by the body politic, by the innumerable ways in which our discourse of civility and inclusion has been shattered by this presidency and its divisive rhetoric. The language of the recent political discourse—that of othering, segregation, and exclusion—has brought even more real and symbolic violence to the range of possibilities Americans imagine. Even though none of these tropes of othering are entirely new in the United States where forms of group-based conflict, especially racism, are deeply rooted, they have recently acquired amplified prominence. It is clear that there is no time to waste and that we need to counter this damage with unremitting repair work at all levels—local, national, and global.

How do we provide alternative narratives and engage in debates that present the public with examples of belonging, inclusion, and sharing peacefully? As the media and internet become tools of manipulation, fake news, and easily captured sites of racial and religious hatreds, it behooves us to harness these tools for the goal of belonging.

1 john a. powell and
   Stephen Menendian,
   "The Problem of
   Othering: Towards Inclu-
   siveness and Belonging,"
   *Othering & Belonging
   Expanding the Circle of
   Human Concern,* Issue 1.

2 Ibid.

Othering and belonging are both relational concepts that reflect on the nature of individual and group-based interactions. In one example of these concepts, john powell and Stephen Menendian define othering as "a set of dynamics, processes, and structures that engender marginality and persistent inequality across any of the full range of human differences based on group identities."[1] By contrast, belonging can be defined as the same set of dynamics, processes, and structures that make it possible for comprehensive membership in the community of citizens. This is an important way of conceptualizing these notions since they allow for a more post nation-state contemporary perspective on identity, belonging, and citizenship. Consequently, many distinguish belonging from the concept of toleration which entails a partial belonging, based on the willingness of the powerful in society to grant acceptance. Belonging is by far more capacious since it demands full inclusion and membership in economic, social, and political structures of society. Furthermore, a society where there is group-based belonging has a political culture of inclusion, accommodation, and forbearance that values difference and understands that diversity enriches rather than threatens society. As powell and Menendian argue, "we must not only create inclusive structures, but we must foster new identities and inclusive narratives that can support us all."[2] It is in this spirit that this article considers such concepts.

Most of the othering that happens in contemporary society is based on notions of identity, loosely defined as a mode of self-identification as well as an indicator of how individuals and groups are perceived by others. Such notions of identity based on class, race, religion, gender, and ethnicity are not only quite fluid and diverse, but they are also temporally constructed. As such, different historical periods have given rise to different identitarian struggles and some identities have remained important to group construction through times. Also, different people choose to emphasize distinct aspects of their identity, changing their focus in response to their relation with outside structures and peoples. So, a gender identity might predominate at certain moments, but a class identity at other times. We therefore need to pay attention to which identities are evoked for what purpose and in what context in order to understand the specifics of othering and belonging at particular sites. And we should reflect on how identities can work at local, national, and global registers at once.

In this article, I aim to discuss the particular phenomenon of sharing sacred sites in the Mediterranean—in history and as it continues in the contemporary world. The purpose of this discussion is not only to show how identities function in a particular case, but also to reflect on the narratives of belonging that such sites engender. These narratives, I argue, are certainly different and more local than full forms of belonging and inclusion into the polity. Yet, they serve various purposes. They have explanatory power since locals use them to explain their participation in sharing, but also, they spread within neighborhood networks that span beyond the mere restricted spaces around the sacred. Moreover, in a policy attempt, they can be circulated and used as examples of coexistence and accommodation that show that members of different groups with defined religious identities can adopt respectful coexistence.

Shared sacred sites are "holy" for members of multiple religious groups (which may as well be ethnically or nationally distinct) and serve not only as places where persons are brought together to respect the site in various ways, but also as sites where they are forced, by their coexistence, to mediate and negotiate their otherness. Such spaces of coexistence have been customary between Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the Mediterranean and the Middle East. Chronicles of the three Abrahamic religions are full of examples of cohabitation, hospitality, and tolerance despite a world torn apart by cultural, ethnic, and spiritual struggles. Sharing has biblical significance. "In a crucial episode related both in the Bible and the Qur'an, Abraham is said to have hosted with open arms three mysterious visitors, inviting them for a meal under the

oak of Mamre where he lived. Often considered angels, one of these strangers sent by God promised him that his wife, Sarah, would have a child, Isaac, despite her great age."[3] The act of accepting the visitors indicates the acceptance of the "foreigner" as a central theme of Abrahamic faiths.

Maps of the Mediterranean and Near East are strewn with shrines that have long been the sites of convergence for prayers, wishes, and contemplation, yet their origins of sharing differ.[4] Often local populations perceive a benefit in another group's sacred space, or places become recognized because of their open-minded leaders who preach unity or by members of different religious groups who share said space for pragmatic reasons. Such sacred spaces are often outside the realm of the more traditional houses of worship which are mono-religious and adhere more strictly to the institutional culture, the rules and regulations of separation, maintenance, and purity. There are also exceptions, however, as I will describe later.

These sites that are shared are broadly construed as places of religious veneration, where communication with supernatural entities is frequent and where holy figures inhabit the space to render it sacred. In these spaces, individual religious leaders and practitioners are both significant, charismatic, and open to the flexibility of the space, welcoming joint prayer and ritual. Such sites are also freer in their practices since they are less controlled by religious institutions that impose their strict systems on the believers. It is such sites that are more frequently shared by multiple religions. Often these places are shrines that function as *tekkes* (Sufi lodges) or *türbes* (Sufi burial places, mausoleums) or Orthodox Christian churches. An important segment of the historical material on shared sites in the Middle East can be explored throughout the history of the Seljuk and Ottoman empires, both established at the frontiers of Christianity and having conquered territories that belonged to Byzantines.

Coexistence in the Ottoman Empire

Historically, the coexistence between groups and the sharing of religious sacred sites has occurred under the aegis of imperial states that were interested both in maintaining and in manipulating diversity. They have also emerged as a result of the vast population movements in the Mediterranean, bringing peoples of different beliefs closer together. Historical conditions where states were formed within syncretic environments and as hybrid entities helped shape tolerant attitudes toward diversity. Thus, one general hypothesis would be that the more open a state is to ethnic or religious difference, the more likely it is for coexistence to be cultivated and the sharing of sacred sites to be allowed and accepted. In fact, many pre-modern empires that were stretched thin across vast territories understood quite well that they would not be able to homogenize their populations and since maintaining their control over these populations was far more important, they reframed diversity as a positive value, just enough so that relations between religious and ethnic groups remained peaceful.[5]

During the early days of the Ottoman Empire, coexistence was driven by the example of local cases of cooperation across the frontiers between Byzantines and Seljuks. The first sultans of the Ottoman Empire, following their conquests in the Balkans, were also interested in showing deference and tolerance towards the settled Christian populations as they knew the Ottomans were demographically vulnerable. Colonization strategies were sometimes based on this cooperation in that they attempted incorporation of local communities rather than unyielding domination. Their usable past, their history also points towards the multiethnic steppes of Central Asia where they comingled with multiple groups. As a result, sultans and their colonizer companions, often Sufi sheiks were quite open to Christianity and eager

3 Dionigi Albera, Karen Barkey and Manoël Pénicaud, "Introduction: Sharing Holy Places across the Mediterranean World," *Shared Sacred Sites*.

4 We have mapped some of these places in their historical representation in our Visual Hasluck project. Please see the maps in the Visual Hasluck segment of sharedsacredsites.net.

5 Karen Barkey, *Empire of Difference: Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

6 Elazar Barkan and Karen Barkey, *Choreographies of Shared Sacred Sites: Religion, Politics, and Conflict Resolution*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

7 Karen Barkey, "Religious Pluralism, Shared Sacred Sites, and the Ottoman Empire" in *Choreographies of Shared Sacred Sites*.

8 Ibid.

9 "Visual Hasluck: Mapping Christianity and Islam in the Mediterranean," http://vh.dimaterialist.net/.

10 There certainly are numerous examples of sacred sites which are not shared, separated and where partitions are the only ways to maintain peace. In this article I chose to reflect on those cases that remain examples of sharing.

to maintain good relations. Therefore, the Ottoman Empire's colonization practices allowed for inclusion early on, and these values permeated throughout their early rule. Even as they settled into their empire, developing a much stronger Islamic identity, sultans created a tolerant environment under which Christian and Jewish communities could exist. The empire found success in incorporation partially because religious leaders who were responsible for spreading the Islamic message did so in a manner that tempered Islam and created an approachable Islamo-Christian framework under which the local communities could function.[6]

The Ottoman Empire favored coexistence between different ethno-religious communities, even as it organized them into separate and autonomous units, called *millets*. Strategies of territorial and socio-religious contiguity, the movement of Ottoman settlers right next to Christian hamlets, the establishment of Sufi convents with soup kitchens and lodges open to all irrespective of religion, the maintenance of churches and the allowing of Christian worship to continue in spaces converted to mosques, the mixed faith marriages sultans preferred (especially with Christian women) presented opportunities for Christian-Muslim coexistence.[7]

Though the Ottoman authorities converted many churches into mosques, Christians were often offered space to pray within these converted spaces. There was no legal sanction for this practice, but in some communities, it became the norm for Muslims to look the other way as Christians continued using the mosques to pray. When churches were not converted, often Muslims attracted by perceived benefits of the space or the holy figure represented by the church, moved in to pray jointly with the Christians. These relations across sites were nurtured by the presence of religious stories and holy figures which eased the cultural back and forth between communities, furthering increased knowledge and familiarity, each breeding their own form of co-presence and sometimes a form of benevolent coexistence.[8] In converting Christian churches into Muslim spaces or in the reciprocal attendance of each other's shrines, religious traditions and figures often were made to converge. When the distinctiveness of the Christian religion still infused converted sites, Christian symbols remained but were often reimagined to suit Islam. For example, in many sites saintly figures such as Saint George or Saint Theodore were associated with the Muslim saintly figure Khidr. A prophet or a "saint" of Islam, Khidr who traveled across space and time provided the perfect narratives to facilitate joint worship. In the Middle East, the association between the Muslim prophet Khidr, the Orthodox Christian Saint George, and the Jewish Prophet Elijah, has always connected Islam to Christianity and Judaism and enabled the invention of shared stories and shared spaces.[9] This shows us that despite theological differences, the Abrahamic religions possess many common elements, such as beliefs, rites, stories, and personages. Messages of reception together with the commonalities of beliefs, prophets, and rituals lubricate the exchanges across otherness. These mutual influences and superimpositions form a fertile ground for the sharing of sacred sites, but sometimes they may also generate partition between different denominations.[10]

The imperial model then, at least in the case of the Ottoman Empire, respected difference, accommodated and included diversity within a framework of belonging that was not modern or democratic, but allowed for forms of imperial participation. In the contemporary world, these sites operate within different political and cultural contexts.

Shared Sites in the Mediterranean:
Contemporary Examples

Historical cases flourished under empires, and in many places they continued even though the nation-states which were formed out of the ruins of empire were adamant about creating homogeneity and uniformity. Such uniformity would usually preclude inter-faith commitments and coexistence. Furthermore, since the rise of Islamic politics in the Middle East, Islam has become a prominent force actively resisting attempts at mixing or syncretism of any sort. Despite such forces, still today the maps of the Mediterranean and the Near East are sprinkled with examples of shared sacred sites. Yesterday as today, many believers—Jews, Christians, and Muslims—pray in the holy place of another religion. This is even more significant since our contemporary world is torn apart by ethnic, political, and religious struggles and many nations-states are under the sway of religious nationalism. Therefore, there could be no better illustration of coexistence than the extensive history of sacred sites shared by members of different beliefs and backgrounds. The following examples are important in that they reflect the possibilities of coexistence—the power and success of engaging the "other" in spaces of worship. Even though they often operate in national contexts that are fraught, these spaces represent the better dispositions of peoples who negotiate across their differences and as such, they remain important to disseminate, to use as positive examples of accommodation and acceptance.

The observation of such cases of mixed worship in many shrines demands that we think through the original notions of othering and belonging that we started with. The notion of hospitality which is observed in many shared sacred sites is not the same as belonging in the way defined by powell and Menendian. Belonging in these cases is a temporally defined phenomenon, even though it is based on long held traditions and structures of "living together" and respect for the other. In many of these places, ownership is in the hands of one religious denomination that controls the space, and the members of different religions who choose to worship there come at specific times during the week for specific moments of ritual or pilgrimage. As temporary visitors, they do not claim ownership of the site. Instead they solicit a form of temporary participation in the space and its rituals that reflects respect and inclusion in the larger tradition of the place. For one thing, these churches, synagogues, or shrines are well known to be open to other religions and to bring some benefit regardless of religious affiliation. Often people of different faiths converge in the same sanctuary because they are animated by a common quest for supernatural help and seek the protection of a particular saint with a reputation for efficacy. Therefore, they perceive their participation as temporary, and even though they share in the bounty of their hosts' hospitality, they do so with reserve.

Such belonging is also understood today as the legacy of a long-standing "cosmo-politanism" of empire. The compilation of such modes of coexistence represents the traditions of the Ottoman lands, the semiconscious solutions, and instincts that made people navigate their daily lives by participating in multiple religious and cultural institutions at once, facilitated by the fluidity of boundaries and the multi-vocality of messages. Believers explicitly bring back memories of these past practices as carried out by their ancestors in order to partake in a sense of nostalgia. In each case, a particular past with a multi-ethnic and multi-religious context is brought to bear on the explanations for continued sharing and coexistence. By bringing up the past, belonging is justified as continuity, tradition; and the effect of such claim-making is often a *rapprochement* between people of different religions.

The benefits of such participation in the sacred spaces and rituals of the *other* are not about a strong sense of belonging and comprehensive membership in the

nation-state. It is more about spreading message of community, similarity of experience, and the expansion of ties at local levels. Members of different faiths who encounter each other in shared shrines not only seem to relate to each other in further occasions, but also create weak ties that extend further then strong ties and bind different communities together. Ultimately, the belonging and othering in these cases has to also be considered in the larger national context where these local examples remain significant, yet not widespread. Furthermore, especially in the case of rising Islamic politics, the visitation of Muslims to Christian or Jewish sites has not appeased the larger politics of Sunni dominance as is strongly the case in Turkey. Therefore, while a form of belonging is experienced at the level of the shrine, many ways of othering continue as Islam becomes more dominant in society. As such, we have to distinguish between the local levels of sociability and the national level of politics. In the following section, I give three examples of belonging, each temporary, yet each reflecting strong inter-faith relations, some diasporic, others more local and continuous. Each of the cases below is set in an increasingly homogeneous nation-state where sameness is preferred to difference. Yet, these spaces continue to exist.

THE GHRIBA SYNAGOGUE IN DJERBA, TUNISIA

See the accompanying documentary on the Ghriba Synagogue by Manoël Pénicaud at *otheringandbelonging.org/sharedsacredsites*

The Ghriba Synagogue in Djerba, Tunisia is located in Harah Sghria village on the island of Djerba and is shared by Jews and Muslims both during a particular pilgrimage as well as more commonly at other times during the year. The village was formerly home to a predominantly Jewish population. There have been varying accounts of the founding of this synagogue. One such story reveals that after the First Temple of Jerusalem was destroyed, priests settled on Djerba, bringing with them a stone and door from Solomon's temple. Djerba acted as a refuge for these Jews, and the Ghriba Synagogue served as a link between the destruction of the Second Temple and the formation of a Jewish diaspora.

Another account informs that the synagogue was built on the site of a cabin where tradition says that a young woman died in a fire. Though her house was burnt, her body remained intact. According to legend, the young woman had never been accepted by the community, and it was only after her miraculous death that the people understood her sanctity. The name of the synagogue is a reference to this mysterious woman as the Jewish saint El Ghriba means "the Stranger" or "the Miraculous."[11] Present day visitors insist that since the religious identity of this young woman was never really determined, both Jews and Muslims worship at Ghriba. This is interesting since it shows how a particular narrative is fashioned and repeated through generations to justify the joint veneration of the space. Worshippers will also say that though this space is a synagogue, all worshippers enter the space in the same way one enters a mosque, by removing their shoes and covering their head. Yet, it is also true that Jews entered the Temple barefoot.[12] The rituals in the synagogue have been described by Manoël Pénicaud as bringing Jews and Muslims together in their wish making, barely distinguishing between them.[13]

In the late twentieth century, Jews began emigrating from Djerba. However, a month after the end of Passover Jews make the pilgrimage to Djerba in celebration of Lag BaOmer, the Jewish festival. The pilgrimage and the Ghriba Synagogue are symbols of the centuries of Muslim-Jewish coexistence in North Africa. Tunisian Jews as well as Jews from Europe and Israel come to the Ghriba Synagogue annually. Outside of the synagogue venders sell Jewish-Tunisian wares and kosher Tunisian food, symbolic of accommodation that occurs in this space. Jews and Muslims are present during the festival and are proud to declare their joint worship.

11 Haim F. Ghiuzeli, "El Ghriba Synagogue, Djerba, Tunisia," *Beit Hatfutsot*, accessed March 11, 2018, https://www.bh.org.il/el-ghriba-synagogue-djerba-tunisia/.

12 Manoël Pénicaud, "The Ghriba synagogue in Djerba: A shared holy place for Jews and Muslims," *Shared Sacred Sites: A Pilgrimage in New York*, Catalogue, 2018.

13 Ibid.

Manoël Pénicaud, *Jewish and Muslim Women Praying toward Jerusalem*

Manoël Pénicaud, *The Ghriba*

Jewish and Muslim faiths have long coexisted and crossed over in North Africa. Shared spaces like the one in Djerba were common as both religions prayed at one another's shrines. Visiting the tombs of saints was also a shared practice, facilitated even more by saints and their stories common to both religions. Even though the migration of Jews from this region led to the decline of religious crossover, continued visits by Jews for the annual pilgrimage make Djerba and the Ghriba Synagogue an exception. In 2002, a truck bomb went off near the Ghriba Synagogue, temporarily debilitating the Jewish presence in the region during the annual pilgrimage. The synagogue has recovered from this downturn in attendance, and today a number of Jewish pilgrims make the trip to Djerba and contribute to the model of Muslim-Jewish coexistence. Such continuity forces us to consider the power of coexistence and joint worship which resists attempts of destruction.

THE CHURCH OF THE MOTHER OF GOD
AT VEFA, ISTANBUL, TURKEY

The Church of the Mother of God, also known as Vefa, in Istanbul, Turkey has a long history of sharing as Christian, Muslim, and Jewish communities have long populated the church, known for the healing powers of its *aghiasma* (holy water). The church is most active on the first of every month for the monthly pilgrimage, but Tuesday and Thursday mornings until noon are also popular visiting times, when people come to pray, light a candle, make a wish, collect some holy water, and get blessed by the priest before going about the rest of their daily routine. The Church of Vefa reflects the coexistence between Christians, Jews, and Muslims in Istanbul, the shared history they remember from their Ottoman past, and their willingness to claim continued cosmopolitan belonging despite the extreme narrowing of pluralistic space in the new Turkey.

On pilgrimage days, the crowds at the Church of the Mother of God can reach into the thousands, as regular congregants are joined by people from all walks of life who want to participate in the observance, go through the rituals, make their wish, and then linger to speak to others about their experience. On these days, the church is open from early morning until six in the evening, and one's presence at the church is bookmarked by festive, friendly mixing at the large courtyard. It is in the courtyard where most of the conversations, cheerful and plaintive, take place, and where friendships are renewed with opportunities for sharing the pleasures and the burdens of life. Especially after the prayers, people—young or old, male or female, religious or secular, wearing a headscarf or donning a short skirt, rich or poor, alone or among friends, as a family or as an individual, architects, lawyers, artists, businessmen, and artisans of all kinds—find themselves lingering in the courtyard. Crowds mingle and chat, offering candy and chocolate when their wishes have come true. It is here in the courtyard that religions also mix. Women offering candy explain that the practice of handing out sweets after an auspicious event is Muslim, but, they hasten to add that this custom fits well with the local tradition of wish-making and sprinkling of holy water. Traditions, rituals, and practices are discussed as not the same, but compatible. Each time, narratives are told of shared rituals, prophetic figures and shared desires.

Everyone knows the rituals of this little Greek Orthodox church. As people first enter, they stop and buy a few metal keys, each symbolizing a wish to be made. They then continue on to buy a few candles—a symbol of the light of Christ—which are then lit and placed into a stand. As men and women stream in front of the lit candles, they take a moment to pause, hold their hands in imploration, and pray. Christian men and women hold their hands folded, and Muslims have their hands raised and palms open, praying next to each other, different just in their particular ritual gesture

Noah Arjomand, *The Church of the Mother of God*

Noah Arjomand, *The Church of the Mother of God*

of imploration. Worshippers then often pass their keys in ritualized behavior over the small window boxes on the walls that contain old icons, following the edges of the boxes, circling a few times—some say three times exactly, others seven, depending on their religious and mystical beliefs. When the circuit on the ground level of the church is finished, visitors move downstairs, where a fountain, more icons, and a small statue of Jesus are located. Believers wash their hands and face with the holy water of the aghiasma, take small bottles of the water for home, and pray and often cross themselves in front of the statue of Jesus, before moving back upstairs to join the long line of people waiting to be blessed by the priest. A lot of this ritual is performed by individuals, going through the numerous behaviors on their own, praying to God, but also furtively watching others to get the sacraments right.

While waiting in line, people mingle, share stories, gossip, and tell each other the history of their involvement in the church. Even though some of the gestures and acts of worship are not strictly a part of the rituals, the mixing of traditions clearly surfaces in the details of the acts of devotion; the hand gestures, the washing of hands seven times, the distribution of candy—these things all attest to the ways in which Christian and Muslim traditions have mixed in this sacred shared site.[14] Beyond the rituals of sharing, especially secular Muslims and Jews who patronize this church make numerous references to the politics of the times, to the dominance of a religious party and the consequences of a strong Islamic discourse. For them, the local practices are a form of refutation of the national narratives of "Sunnification."

CRKVA SVETI NIKOLA/H'DIR BABA TEKKE IN MAKEDONSKI BROD, MACEDONIA

Sveti Nikola/Hadir Baba Tekke is used by Orthodox Christians and Muslims as a singular worship space in the Macedonian town of Makedonski Brod.[15] Part of the reason these communities share the space is the Christian belief that in the pre-Ottoman period, the location was the Church of Saint Nicholas. The conquering Ottomans converted the space to a *tekke*, a Sufi monastery. Muslims believe the *tekke* was founded by the Bektashi saint Hadir Baba. Christians in the town tell a story of Saint Nicholas saving townspeople from the plague. Saint Nicholas is said to be buried under the church. The same story is told by Muslims about Hadir Baba. Hence the joint name, Sveti Nikola for Christians and Hadir Baba Tekke for Muslims. The space served as a Muslim shrine until World War I, after which it fell into disrepair. It was converted to a church in the 1980s or 1990s.

Since then, the shrine has become multi-religious as both Muslims, mostly dervishes from the Bektashi order as well as Sunnis, and Orthodox Christians worship within the church. The shared significance of the site has led to each group accommodating one another in their use of the site. The church's architecture is one way that the space creates room for both faiths. The roof is made of ceramic tiles trimmed with wood, reminiscent of nineteenth century mosques. The interior of the church has a simple iconostasis and icons which, according to visitors, were painted recently. The floor covered with carpets and rugs reflects the Muslim *türbe* features. Carpets with Muslim designs and prayers are placed around the tomb and pictures of Ali and Hüsein. Pictures of Bektashi saints are also hung on the west and south walls. This space features an incredible mixture of Christian and Muslim iconography and imagery, meant to facilitate visits and engender hospitality for both religious groups.[16]

Accommodation is also displayed during major holidays and religious festivals. For Christians, the most significant day is May 6, Saint George's day. In preparation for the celebration, the prayer rugs and depictions of Muslim saints are placed in storage. Christians celebrate on May 5 when they take branches and leaves from the church

14 Karen Barkey, "The Church of the Mother of God at Vefa, Istanbul," Summer 2013, http://sharedsacredsites.net/fieldwork/our-fieldwork/fieldwork-in-greece-and-turkey-2013-16/vefa/

15 Makedonski Brod is a small town in the central part of the Republic of Macedonia which became independent in 1991.

Sveti Nikola/Hadir Baba *tekke*, by Wikimedia user Makedonec

Manoël Pénicaud, *Sveti Nikola Tomb and Iconography*

Glenn Bowman, *Sveti Nikola tomb and iconography with Sufi dervish praying*

Glenn Bowman, *Sveti Nikola, Tomb and Iconography*

Glenn Bowman, *Sveti Nikola, Tomb and Iconography*

16 john a. powell and
    Stephen Menendian,
    "The Problem of
    Othering: Towards Inclu-
    siveness and Belonging,"
    *Othering & Belonging
    Expanding the Circle of
    Human Concern,* Issue 1.

17 Elizabeta Koneska,
    "Shared Shrines in Mace-
    donia," Winter 2013,
    accessed March 16,
    2018, https://eefc.org/
    post-folklorista/shared-
    shrines-in-macedonia/

18 Glenn Bowman, "Ortho-
    dox-Muslim Interactions
    at 'Mixed Shrines' in
    Macedonia," pp. 195-219
    in Chris Hann and
    Hermann Goltz, *Eastern
    Christians in Anthro-
    pological Perspective*
    (Berkeley: University of
    California Press, 2010).

to decorate their doorways and on May 6 when there is a liturgy followed by wish-making and swinging in the courtyard. On May 7, the caretakers carefully but quickly replace the prayer rugs and depictions of Mecca, Ali, and Hussein around the tomb. Such hybrid representation as well as respect for the particularity of one tradition on certain days, reflects on the understanding that each group has of the common past of this shrine. As long as the locals maintain the shrine and open it to both religions such hospitality maintains a shared belonging that is valued by both sides. But, as Bowman also shows there are also indications of conflict, when outsiders come in to shift the precarious balance maintained by centuries of elaborate choreographies.

The communities that worship at Sveti Nikola/Hadir Baba Tekke represent peaceful cohabitation. Instead of allowing the two different historical narratives of the space's founding to divide them, the groups appreciate the significance the space holds for each other. In so doing, they have found ways to create a way for both groups to worship together, where they value similarities and accept differences.[17, 18]

Conclusion

This essay explored the concept of belonging in the context of shared sacred sites, religious sanctuaries in the former lands of the Ottoman Empire, which continue to be shared by members of different religions peacefully. I argued that the belonging in these spaces was of a particular type, not indicative of a fully inclusive national space of citizenship and equality. No doubt these spaces are easier to describe as a form of belonging since they are exceptional spaces in the larger national framework of ethnic and religious relations. None of the countries in which they are now located, Tunisia, Turkey, and Macedonia are free of ethnic and religious inequities of various sorts, yet, the continued existence of such spaces of respectful forbearance reflects the possibilities of human coexistence across boundaries.

Detail from Samuel
Paden, *Believe*

An Evolutionary Roadmap for Belonging and Co-Liberation

Sonali Sangeeta Balajee

with original watercolors by Samuel Paden

In my thirteen years working in the field of racial equity, primarily in government, colleagues from the District Attorney's Office, the library system, and the health department brought to our attention the need to more fully integrate and prioritize healing, trauma-informed work, the arts, and power analyses into teaching methods. In the training we were providing public servants, numerous people expressed the need for more frames and structures that embodied belonging.

Because we do not spend time creating, articulating, and embedding the models and frames we do want that embody health and well-being, our strategies are often partial and at times can be harmful. All of this is strengthened by how sound bites are prioritized over complex and nuanced analyses in communication, how historical amnesia is more valued than critical historical reflection, and how conditioned we are to promote ruptured relationships within ourselves and to each other, our institutions, and our planet.

This essay is part of the work I've done to put my experience and analysis in a frame that speaks to the whole health, life, and death of the living systems we are looking to improve and heal. This framework focuses on embodying belonging and co-liberation, and is an attempt to map out an emerging DNA of what belonging would look like when tied to health, spirituality, resilience, and well-being.

This work can be deeply challenging because many of us feel the need for certain kinds of proof of these connections in order to engage with an analysis around them. There is a tension between wanting to use the social sciences to research and define findings from this framework, as it would lead to more healthy societies together, and a solid desire to not root this inquiry from either a place of defense or the need to buy into unhealthy systems and ways of knowing and being.

We spend so much time articulating, framing, and researching things that are symptomatic of and rooted in oppression. We are experts at this. We've all been schooled in the modern project that thrives on valuing capital and profits over people and ecosystems, setting up hierarchies within and around all of that based on race, sex, gender, religion, ability, and ideology. White, male, and hetero-centered thinking being the dominant system of our theories and culture—these are the waters we swim in.

john a. powell, director of the Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society at UC Berkeley, speaks about a systemic "antilife project." Hardened nation-states bent and dependent on isolating groups as "other" are gaining momentum. Our biological and conditioned needs for certainty cause anxiety and stress. Globally, we're seeing the dire effects of climate change and illness. Our collective rhythms, which are intrinsically linked to the health of the earth and should be in sync with our ecosystem, are off.

Dr. David Williams, Professor of Public Health at the Harvard T. Chan School of Public Health, speaks of the negative health impact of high levels of incivility and how hostility in the larger environment can create adverse impacts as well. The experience of such angst and "weathering" is not equal across populations. People of color and other marginalized populations live shorter lives, tend to get more sick while young, and experience greater severe illness.

This essay is part of a more expansive piece by the author that includes a framing letter to the author's fifteen-year-old daughter. The full piece will be published at otheringandbelonging.org.

Although many cultures possess a wealth of knowledge around the interconnected worlds of spiritual and social change, the reality is that in today's "antilife project," many religious and economic systems have poisoned the waters around this embodied connection that many believe is inherent to what it means to be fully human.

The terms (see p. 56) we use to define these concepts,and realities, can be tricky and sometimes, themselves, may produce an *othering* effect when used. The definitions and language used mean many different things to different people. It's important to note that terminology and language have been used to erase or deny key aspects of well-being and justice.

Also important is the recognition that people who forefront their engagement with the work of spirituality have been perceived as too often conducting that work at a mostly individual level, without acknowledging, and often outright denying, that we are connected to larger systems that produce racial injustices and outcomes. A damaging belief that many religious and spiritual practices hold is that things like racism and inequities just happen because a [insert any higher power] deemed it so. This denies the socially constructed reality of injustices and helps maintain an innocence to how complicit we actually are in their creation and maintenance. On the other hand, many involved in equity work often leave out a discussion of anything perceived as spiritual because it is seen as synonymous with the negative aspects of religion affecting populations across the globe for centuries.

More movements are choosing to lead with traditionally marginalized people who carry cognitive and spiritual maps together with the wealth and wisdom of their own lived experiences. The entertainment industry is giving rise to marginalized experiences, reflecting liberatory movements and visionary ideas. New forms of knowledge production are on the rise. Decolonization efforts are gaining momentum. Indigenous communities are leading movements in visionary ways that are rooted in ancient cultural and spiritual beliefs.

The impetus for the following framework is the recognition of our need to make better alignments toward what is healthy for all of us. This work centers on and builds from the experiences and paradigms of people of color while also speaking to the fluidity and multidimensionality of our identities, bringing into the fold all populations.

The reality of belonging is that all of these strategies—of leading with ways that shift consciousness, that utilize different modes of critical examination—are already within us. They are not outside of us collectively or individually. They are present and waiting for us to break down the barriers that hold them back from organizing into social arrangements that bring us health.

The Framework

This framework is intended to be a dynamic model that can adapt and evolve. While the work is emergent, I do offer specific key strategies as examples of what the muscles and fiber of the framework look like in the following key areas: beloved; be still; behold; believe; becoming; and belonging, co-liberation, and well-being.

These six guideposts work together. Doing work in one is often tied to others. Ultimately, all guideposts and actions are grounded in the root of belonging and in recognition of the beloved, or the larger interconnectedness we all belong to.

The social outcomes we are striving for can be seen as similar to the experience of the leaves and branches of a tree when it is healthy. These areas are also the DNA and living threads that run throughout the entire frame as a whole.

A short note about the terms used in this essay

Epistemic injustice occurs when singular ways of knowing and being exist as a result of excluding and holding down other ways of knowing and being. Indigenous cultures have experienced surplus suffering as a result of this kind of injustice. Many of the words below and their definitions represent practices, outcomes, and strategies related to this type of injustice; I share them as the undergirding pillars for the analytical framework of embodying belonging and co-liberation that this essay attempts to define.

SPIRIT-BASED & SPIRITUALITY

Spirituality may be most usefully understood as a noun of the original root of the word *spir-*, meaning "breath" or "purpose." Research shows that when we are able to define purpose and meaning in life, we are the most connected to physical well-being. It is the reality of interconnectedness and wholeness (not perfection), as much as it is the journey to experiencing these. To that end, the yearning for and experience of this wholeness is deeply based on both the realities of living and of death and impermanence. Spirit-based practice is inseparable from social justice and, when realized, is "the highest form of political consciousness" (Kenny Ausubel, Bioneers, 2017). (Supporting sources: Shelly Tochluk, bell hooks, Joanna Macy, john a. powell, Pema Chödrön, Thich Nhat Hanh)

CO-LIBERATION

Liberatory-based language and practices have been centered from groups such as Black Lives Matter, the queer Chicana movement, Bioneers, and the Women's March. I purposefully use co-liberation to account for the understanding of decolonial action and the belief, expressed by many activists, in a collective liberation that connects your freedom to mine, and mine to yours. Co-liberation calls for integrating self, community, and institutions toward a greater good. This definition requires an underlying belongingness; coliberation is required for the social and spiritual connection to thrive. As Zadie Smith shares in the foreword of her recent book *Feel Free*: "You can't fight for a freedom you've forgotten to identify." (Supporting sources: Audre Lorde, Laura Perez, Ramon Grosfoguel, Lyra Butler-Detman, Robyn Avalon)

BELONGING

Belonging is a state of enacting and being wholeness. It requires an expansive quality—the ability to zoom out and expand our circles of concern and care. Within the process of creating belonging is the need to eliminate or reduce the negative effects of harmful and oppressive structures. Equity-based strategies and decolonizing efforts are intrinsic to the work of belonging. Prioritizing the right to belong is vital in order to have a thriving and politically engaged populace, which informs distributive and restorative decision-making. (Supporting sources: Stephen Menendian and john a. powell, yoga sutras, Robyn Avalon, Vanessa Andreotti, Sharon Stein)

HEALTH

The word "health" has roots in old Germanic and English, speaking to being "whole." The word "heal" hails from these similar roots, speaking to "restoring to wholeness or sound health." A movement toward wholeness is inherently present for us as living systems, both at the individual and collective levels. Our systems are built to stretch, tear down and repair, and heal in the movement toward greater wholeness and balance, which does not mean toward some idealized vision of perfection. Indigenous peoples for millennia have led with holistic representations of life, often referred to as the relational worldview model, which emphasize balance, sustainability, relationship, spirit-based practice, environmental well-being, and cultural cohesion. This evolutionary road map is intentionally grounded in this indigenous representation of health (which is also supported by the World Health Organization's [WHO's] definition of health), elevating and prioritizing actions and ways of being that speak to spiritual, mental, and social well-being, in addition to the physical. Mental and spiritual well-being and capacities are required for liberatory practices and movements to thrive. (Supporting sources: Terry Cross, W. K. Kellogg Foundation, Indigenous peoples' movements worldwide, California Endowment, WHO, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

COLONIZATION & DECOLONIZATION

The global modern project, or the "antilife project," depends on a shadow side of violence and colonizing practices. Such practices seek to take and own land, and own how knowledge gets produced and what types of knowledge are rewarded. Often colonization is tied to economic gain, but not always over longer periods of time. From my Indian and Sri Lankan descent, I've learned about the devastating effects of British rule in India and Sri Lanka, which permeated not just the political and economic structures, but also the spiritual and cultural ways of being.

A critique of using the word "decolonizing" is that such practices do not point us to where we want to be. Decolonizing in India has not been about simply removing the colonizers. A more holistic definition of the word calls for deconstructing and eliminating the toxins while promoting ways of being that lead to greater well-being and belonging. In government, it's not just about identifying structural barriers and removing such practices and policies. It's not just about thinking our way out of problems. It's about undoing, letting go and letting die what needs to go and change, interrupting, and calling forth liberatory organizing-based solutions at all levels. (Supporting sources: Sandew Hira, Vanessa Andreotti, Sharon Stein, Decolonial Futures Collective, Sarah Ahmed, Kandi Mossett)

POWER

How we define power and why we choose to do so is connected to our agenda and our purpose at hand. In a frame that is clearly linked to promoting well-being and health for all people while targeting the health inequities experienced by those who have been marginalized, power is seen as both a resource and as a pathway to greater well-being. Hannah Arendt has described power as the ability to not just act but to act in concert. Power as a resource is then a positive social good that needs to be distributed more equally in order to lead to more equitable decision-making and the deepened experience of agency at both the individual and collective levels.

We are brought to analyze the ways in which broader political, social, cultural, and historical forces enable some individuals and groups to exercise power over others. Michel Foucault shares how power and knowledge are inextricably related: how creating and maintaining knowledge is an exercise of power and how power is always a function of knowledge. Here we see how knowledge can support further colonization and power over entire populations, with or without spoken intent to subjugate and control.

Definitions of "power" that lead to well-being call for building power within (strengthening power within communities and individuals) as well as power with (strengthening power across various communities, levels of the constructed hierarchy, and other junior partners in the ecosystem). The National Economic and Social Rights Initiative calls for building power systemically by building a culture of solidarity, developing collective action, and creating participatory and accountable systems.

Beloved and Be Still: The roots and quality of the soil of belonging

BELOVED

> "Societies never know it, but the war of an artist with his society is a lover's war, and he does at this best, what lovers do, which is to reveal the beloved to himself and what that revelation, to make freedom real." JAMES BALDWIN

At the root of belonging and co-liberation is the living connection among the spiritual, ecological, social, and political realms. It is based on how our individual and group realities are just as multifaceted, multidimensional, and connected as the greater living systems of which we are a part. The components in this frame of beloved and be still are intrinsic to our nature as the type of living systems that we are.

We speak deeply to what it is we love, what and whom we care for, and what we find sacred. This area speaks to the practice of openness, openheartedness, expanding our circles of human concern, and committing to put it all into service. It is essential to understand that we are hardwired to experience this, both unconsciously and consciously, to maintain mutually beneficial relationships with each other and with the planet. Our collective health is guided by both spiritual and social well-being, and negatively affected by surplus suffering in both connected realms (john a. powell, *Racing to Justice*, 2011).

Beloved is not a romantic ideal. To love and to be loved can also be tough, grainy, and sharp. It can require putting up necessary boundaries, unearthing what is poisoning us, or deconstructing something creating excessive suffering.

This might mean taking the time to connect to a deeper purpose toward equity and belonging, articulating that purpose, and revisiting it regularly in meaningful and provocative ways.

Our health and well-being benefit from connecting to what we find sacred and actively embodying a greater interconnectedness. Such engagements can decrease

BELOVED

"This figure was a Gaia figure for Beloved. A spirit figure and a genuine person. I attempted with this piece to speak to the connection between self, open heart, and greater life, of expansion and growth." –Samuel Paden

ARTIST STATEMENT

"When I was growing up in Eastern Congo, meetings in the small community I lived in often happened in the shadow of a tree. It was a place of rest and work, but it also held religious and cosmologic significance that I was aware of, although limited given that I was an outsider. This experience—sitting on the ground and around natural forms—is a very different model than a table or in a cube. It elicits some questions—Where do we meet? How do we meet? And then it's not just about the form.It's about the why.

Across all the watercolor pieces I drew to accompany this essay, there is a movement. We start from more of an individual perspective as an accessible entry point for the viewer, all the way through to the group perspective. The figures and images move from more of a sitting position to standing. Sitting is more appropriate in the beginning because it makes one think of pausing. Colors move between them, the use of shimmer is consistent, the green appears universally, as do the reds and the purples. I don't know where many of these images came from. I've never seen them before. That's something I think is interesting to reflect on in the process, which is that things emerged that I didn't plan for, that came from a different part of my brain. They came more from the gut."
–Samuel Paden

the feeling and experience of social isolation. Research has shown us that the experience of social isolation and mortality is similar to the effects of cigarette smoking and mortality.

Social and collective spaces and practices that embody the beloved can improve our well-being by providing necessary social and emotional support, strengthening our collective sense of purpose in this work, and improve our nonverbal and socially intuitive abilities that call forth love in all of its forms. Shelly Tochluk describes in her book *Living in the Tension: The Quest for a Spiritualized Racial Justice* the context of how these practices occur and why it matters. Religious or spiritual practices can also be employed in power over ways, furthering the exclusion of those deemed others, worsening mental health.
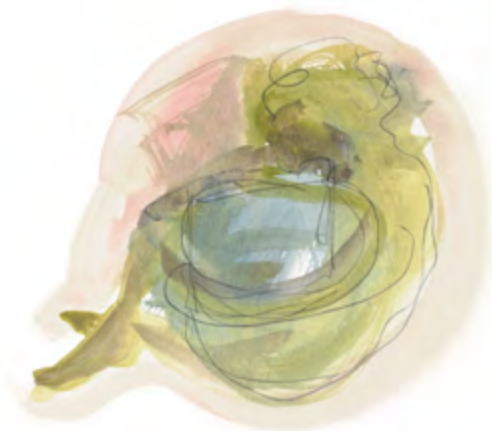
BE STILL

> "Going nowhere, as Leonard Cohen would later emphasize for me, isn't about turning your back on the world; it's about stepping away now and then so that you can see the world more clearly and love it more deeply." PICO IYER

A crucial guiding principle of health and healing is that you must be more still than the thing in front of you that you seek to effect. This type of action, prioritizing this be stilling, is not typically rewarded in a world that emphasizes profit over people and which asks us to be complicit in our addiction to speed. We are taught to act on the fly and quickly.

Yet the amount of complexity in navigating the world today requires wisdom, not strategy alone. Developing skills around patience and creating informed actions from this space help make the best of our energy, resources, and time. Being still can help create more energy, energy of the most creative kind; the type of energy required during immense periods of change and turmoil. Being still is a constant struggle and involves attention to prioritize greater reflection and silence.

It is through the consistent practice of being still that we are able to touch what we have available to us and what is already present. A key and well-researched strategy for be still is for people to reconnect to the natural world, spending time with the other species that coinhabit the earth with us. Our nervous systems seem to recognize our interconnection with other species and can relax nonverbally into the living web.

BE STILL

"The intention with this piece was to engender a sense of calm and reflection, and coming around what is important. The figure is folded inward, surrounding a circular object in the middle. This painting also speaks to the connection between Bestill and Beloved. Bestilling is all about holding, connecting with, and caring for what we love and hold sacred." – Samuel Paden

We find the core rhythm we have with other living systems to be mirror images of our own species as partners in something more expansive than any one thing.

There are direct ties to the well-being of our individual and collective bodies, and by employing this to our work, we can better behold what we are striving to organize and support.

Being still slows down the part of the nervous system that stimulates our fight-or-flight responses (our sympathetic nervous system) and improves our abilities to rest and digest (our parasympathetic nervous system). We are better able to repair ourselves and eliminate our toxins. These processes are inherent to who we are as human beings. When we are out of balance, bringing about greater equilibrium in these ways not only better sustains our health but also helps us be the vehicles for social change we aim to be. Research from neuroscientists suggest that all models of social change could benefit greatly from a be-stilling space and practice as a part of the work.

Socially, there are great possibilities to integrating meaningful reflection and pause. Being still does not mean we remain in a state of inaction. We need our responses to be timely and accurate when it comes to responding to political infection and toxin. Anger and frustration are necessary emotions and movement builders, activating our organizing muscles and actions. Yet bodies are healthier if they are able to maintain balance. Prioritizing a grounding in mindfulness and stillness best helps the initiation and recovery from our mobilizing and change efforts. We improve our abilities to more accurately and holistically behold and take in situations and people in front of us when our collective and individual bodies are calmer.

Behold and Believe: The mapping and beginning structures of the tree

BEHOLD

"You can't be what you can't see." MELISSA HARRIS-PERRY

"The fundamental feature of every 'now' reveals itself, not in only what is past or what is present, but also in what is absent." ERNEST BLOCH

Our ability to mobilize and organize around the areas we care about and want to bring greater health to depends on our mapping of the areas and the issues themselves. Capitalism and supremacy run deep socially, and I am constantly shocked by how something so huge, so systemic can affect what we can see and understand in the first place before any related strategic action even happens. There are deep wells of anger and grief around witnessing these partial social lenses that are strengthened by historically perpetuated systems of oppression, misused power, and othering.

If we come from a grounded place of love and stillness, we can better hold what is in front of us, as a compassionate doctor effectively holds what a body is presenting to her in order to better understand its current condition, what led up to it being ill, and where to go from there in terms of healing strategies. Spiritual and social teacher Reverend angel Kyodo williams pressingly asks in her writings, "What is being left out? How do we better notice and identify where we enact superiority around who should experience greater life chances and health?"

Beholding applies not just to the structural conditions of the situation or topic but also to the emotional and relational balance present or not present. We are not adept at recognizing pain and suffering connected to social illnesses. To behold

while grounding in spirit-based and liberatory practices calls for first touching base with beloved and be still. This will open up to a greater interconnectedness and resulting willingness to stop seeing things from conditioned perspectives and will calm our nervous systems socially and individually. We can better see, listen, and feel clearly from these spaces. Bearing witness to hope, as well as grief and anger, propels this work into the transformative by increasing our understanding of the suffering we hope to shift.

How do we embody the ability to literally behold what is in front of us and work toward greater well-being? How do we expand our frame by integrating decolonizing practices and multiple methods of knowing and learning, helping us move to a space of liberation and not toward simply a kinder, gentler suffering? Beholding for colonizing influences, as well as places of expansion and health, helps provide a more accurate map of change, including where our implicit biases play a role in the perpetuation of surplus suffering.

Key behold strategies also move us to push the edges around how strongly we place value on simple communication. While there is an elegance to conveying things in simple ways, as well as experiencing improved accessibility, we often misapply the "simple" rule and reward overly simplistic analysis, solutions, and approaches in order to increase our number of "likes," for instance. What we behold is affected by our negative connotations to things we project and deem as overly complex, perhaps because they lay just beyond our realm of conditioned and perpetuated understanding. While I think all things can be better laid out in simple and engaging ways that speak to our overly stimulated minds, the processes and outcomes of belonging require us to be with multiple perspectives, to integrate some space for chaos and messiness, and to allow strategies to emerge from this.

Key racial equity-driven movements possess incredibly sharp lenses and analyses to better behold racial inequities and the contributing structures and practices to the undergirding systemic racism that roots it all. Examples of such analysis include the tool kits and processes put forward by the Government Alliance for Race and Equity, Race Forward, and PolicyLink. All of these groups have also been expanding their frames to integrate healing- and trauma-related content, practices, and questions, helping to more accurately behold what they are seeking to transform. And with this expansion, I look forward to these efforts and countless others to be more intentionally grounded in indigenous-based decolonizing analyses, leading to more accurately identifying and addressing systemic racism and oppression as well

as their antidotes. Examples can be found in the work of Vanessa Andreotti of the University of Vancouver, British Columbia, and that of Sandew Hira of the Decolonial International Network.

BELIEVE

> "For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change." AUDRE LORDE

Glenn Harris of the organization Race Forward shared the following astute observation: "You need 'believe' to be a part of this frame if you're really going to address systemic racism."

We collectively hold and perpetuate beliefs of superiority, which state that some people deserve to experience illness, poverty, and unequal chances at lives of ease. Such beliefs help inform the design of our social arrangements, keeping rigid racial and social hierarchies in place. Just as with the natural laws of our own personal bodies, our beliefs about the mappings of our social body and its anatomy influence how we move and how we think we can move.

Merely learning about belief systems that breed supremacy and superiority are not enough. Knowledge alone doesn't interrupt or disrupt. This is something I experienced myself in own professional work, complicit in promoting, for example, that educational sessions could help solve the issue as sole strategies. All the trainings and capacity-building sessions in the world won't change the culture of racism alone. Such beliefs will still be present without, first, their thoughtful and consistent

BELIEVE
"The predominance of red and largeness of the form that are related to one's beliefs speak to how much we are guided by what we believe and what incredible passion moves through us as a result. The presence of eyes as part of that Believe form above the head of the figure also speaks to the strong influence what we Behold has on our beliefs. The paint appears to be in motion, in the cloud formations above the figure, as well as into, out of, and through the figure, speaking to how dynamic and powerful our beliefs can be." –Samuel Paden

deconstruction and, second, the centering of beliefs that expand our collective imagination and promote well-being.

So how does what we behold relate to what we believe? What and how we behold affects what we believe and how fiercely our grip is on those beliefs. If we're taking in partial information that goes unexamined, our beliefs will reflect that, and then our actions or inactions are partial as well and possibly even more harmful than we intended.

Somewhere between what we behold and what we believe are processes of noticing, attaching huge feelings to what we notice, and then crystallizing all of that into mental formations and, eventually, beliefs.

What are some practices in believe that can help us lead to greater belonging and co-liberation? For starters, we can intentionally build in practices that help us critically question and interrupt our conditioning and assumptions, both used with situations and people external to us, and those that guide how we view ourselves internally. This could look like creating spaces, just like in artistic processes, where we focus on looking at the things we're working with from multiple perspectives. We turn it upside down, put it on its side, and engage people most affected by inequities to tell us what they see. We might find examples of superiority and inferiority. From here, our presence and willingness to change, which we've developed in be still, and our ability to more clearly behold help us shift such beliefs.

And just as important is connecting what we believe to what is beloved. How can what we believe about what guides us toward belonging and well-being be grounded in the natural laws of interconnectedness and in the connection between the social and spiritual? Grounding in such wholeness and sacredness is helped along by surrendering and de-emphasizing intellect-only approaches, which most often guide how we create and maintain our beliefs. Such surrender also helps our innate, as well as our constructed and learned, needs and obsessions to experience certainty at all times. Connecting believe to beloved involves engaging with multiple ways of knowing and being, allowing us to better engage with the unknown.

After all the years I've dedicated to working with racial equity, and doing so from within heavily bureaucratic and usually white-led hierarchies, the energy to sustain my contribution cannot be disconnected from my being a queer woman of color from an immigrant background, and one who has also struggled with chronic illness. Tarell Alvin McCraney shared in his keynote at the last Othering & Belonging conference that if we turn our attention to those who don't want us or if we believe we—as communities of color, as queer people, as all the above—should not live, we leave unprotected our own people.

There can be real negative health impacts to working with people who believe we should not live, and within our movements, we need to get more strategic and real about how, with whom, and in what ways we work within oppressive structures.

This framework is unapologetically based on promoting an expansive ethics of caring. We are hardwired for connection. This is also true in relationship to human caring, having memories of caring and being cared for. The experience of such caring is connected to having an ethical response to bring about justice, for instance, or address inequities.

Becoming and Belonging, Co-Liberation, and Well-being: Branching, bridging, and embodying health

BECOMING

> "Having a deeper understanding of power and acknowledging the power that comes from spiritual practice and personal challenges can also increase our relevance to the communities we work with. We rarely use power-mapping techniques that include the power we get from within. This intellectual approach to landscaping power can unintentionally disempower our organizations and communities. While it's hard to quantify spiritual or emotional power, leaving it out of the overall picture leaves little room for us to imagine ourselves as powerful." KRISTEN ZIMMERMAN, NEELAM PATHIKONDA, BRENDA SALGADO, TAJ JAMES

Feedback from activists and advocates across sectors on this framework helped refine the concept. "What does spirituality and practice have to do with building power?" "Why should I care at all about a bunch of theory with no application?" "Show me why all of this is important." I found it challenging to try and describe a connection that I had been culturally and spiritually taught was ever-present and self-evident, which could also only be described verbally up to a point. But research guiding the frame makes it clear that these areas of building power, activism, and spirit-based practice were inextricably linked.

Becoming, belonging, and co-liberation are inherently messy at times, nonlinear, and can elicit multiple perspectives that love and hate, and include and exclude, the emerging innovations and alternatives. This frame has both resonated with many people by providing more expanded views of change and ways of being to improve their work and turned people off who shared they felt the need to actively disengage with it. And then there were many people who said they just didn't have the language to comprehend what they were seeing and reading, and wanted to learn more.

There are a few key learnings here. First, epistemic injustice has been perpetuated for centuries around splitting spirit from matter and spiritual suffering from social suffering. While the laws that protect us from the harrowing and negative effects of church integrating with state affairs are necessary, we seem to have also thrown out Beholding and embodying the positive health social and structural practices of meaning-making, connecting to purpose and what we love and hold sacred, and acting from a place of essential interconnectedness (Beloved).

Also, spiritual practices denying and not integrating social practice is also a contributing factor. For many justice-focused people, not integrating spiritual practice that denied the realities of social and racial injustices was a protective factor and necessary in order to maintain the required focus on structural and systemic change to bring about greater belonging.

Lastly, language. Language can be used to exclude or include, often tied to desired outcomes and agendas that are not usually transparent. I have been complicit in these acts as well, as I imagine all of us have been. The tension is the desire for accessibility for the masses alongside the desire to what we commonly refer to as "speaking truth to power." Of course that speaking is also influenced by our formal and informal schooling, experience of intersecting cultures, and our need to participate in the systems of capitalism in order to live.

Ultimately, I believe that if our feelings, thoughts, connections to what is sacred and to a greater interconnectedness, and beliefs are moving along the journey towards belonging and co-liberation, then our communications and actions will

follow. We desperately need not just multi-verse, but pluri-versal decolonizing ways of talking, discussing, and enacting, and within that, leading with the voices of the most marginalized.

Becoming practices seek to deconstruct barriers and colonizing processes and support emerging alternatives to such colonizing realities. For those within bureaucratic systems, Becoming can look like "hospicing" the things that are dying, which are also harming our collective well-being and health, and "hacking" or breaking up and through oppressive structures and practices.

Building power and organizing economically, politically, socially, and spiritually are key to strengthening the branches and bridging structures in the tree of belonging. Such organizing is done, however, in a more supported fashion by grounding in what is Beloved and in the liberatory strategies of Behold and Believe. A key priority throughout would be the resiliency and well-being of all of us engaging in this work, if we elevate and focus on conditioning as an integral part of Becoming. One of my interviewees, a fifth-degree black belt, shared that people doing social and racial justice work need to condition ourselves. Most of the work of karate is about conditioning one's mind, body, and soul for if and when a strike occurs. The art isn't geared toward taking people out, but rather developing an immense preparedness and solid health in order to work through the fights.

Becoming is non-linear and dynamic, although still embedding strategic thinking, narrative, and action. Organizing movements that embed spirit-driven practices as defined in this article are growing; in the national and local scenes, we need to hold up these examples and strive to embody their learnings in order to more accurately achieve our social visions for belonging, and sustain our individual health and resiliency. Examples of these movements include: generative somatics trainings, healing justice strategies put forward by groups such as WorldTrust, transformative leadership sessions held by the Movement Strategy Center, yoga and equity initiatives, the collective strategies embodied by indigenous movements worldwide, and so many more.

BECOMING

"Becoming doesn't have results yet. It is sparse. But the figures are all in this space together. There is an engagement in a similar soil, although they are distinct, very much so. Some are connected, and some aren't. There is a form of a tree that's singular, but they're part of that tree." -Samuel Paden

BELONGING, CO-LIBERATION, AND WELL-BEING

> "You cannot change any society unless you take responsibility for it, unless you see yourself as belonging to it, and responsible for changing it." GRACE LEE BOGGS

> "I define 'politics' as the ongoing collective struggle for liberation and for the power to create—not only works of art, but also just and nonviolent social institutions." ADRIENNE RICH

Indigenous leader Kandi Moffett speaks candidly about her experiences as a leader in the Standing Rock water protection movement with many Indigenous women across generations. Her calls to action prioritized both protecting the earth and decolonizing our minds. She shared how her fellow activists and family members integrated medicines, such as sage and sweet grass, as they were resisting and protecting. She spoke of how women have been organizing for years around collective prayer integrally connected to activism to stop extractive environmental practices and policies.

Aspects of this frame came to life as she was talking, grounded in what is beloved, decolonizing what they were beholding, and becoming in such a holistic, intergenerational way. Alone, each one of these aspects is not enough. But if approached and interacted with as an interwoven whole, they light up as a map toward the experience of greater social health and belonging, take shape, and self-animate. As we play with working models, such as this embodying belonging and co-liberation frame, it is crucial we take the time to reflect on our experiences and take in through all our senses what feels differently when enacted. By doing this sort of intentional and holistic reflection we solidify healthier ways of being, and going back to our old more destructive ways will be unthinkable (Dr. Darya Funches, Founder of REAP Unlimited, on the meaning of transformation).

BELONGING

"Action is happening both up and down, in both the Belonging individual and Belonging collective [next page] paintings. In the collective one, there is looking at the tree and the results, but it's not singular. There are all of these different voices and the state of living and being organic. What I was wanting to have concentrated in the visual is what's happening in our communities. It's not a singular person or thing, it's multiverse."- Samuel Paden

Conclusion

"For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others." NELSON MANDELA

"We do not see things as they are, we see things as we are." ANAIS NIN

Our shared work in justice-related efforts calls for us to renew, cocreate, and follow boldly emergent narratives and frames that urge us to embody belonging every step of the way. How we get there matters if we want to improve our overall outcomes while also sustaining and promoting positive health and well-being during the journey.

This is one of many emergent frames designed to embody the changes we want to see, including being structured as both a series of parts and as an interwoven working system and being informed by indigenous thought and multiple disciplines in content and implementation. In order to consciously not perpetuate existing structures of oppression, our work of becoming needs to branch from more structural analyses of what we believe and how we behold. This growth and movement will more greatly speak to our overall liberation and well-being if grounded in beloved and be still, or in the social and the spirit-based, and in what it takes to experience such interconnectedness. This frame strongly urges us to organize differently by integrating love and belonging at every turn.

The beauty and power of this frame is that it is already available to us—we are hardwired to love, to care, to mitigate harm, and to engage in multiple ways and systems. Indigenous peoples have been living this way for millennia, and many social and physical sciences also elevate the same premises. I invite you to explore and apply this frame to what is important to you and your communities and to constructively critique it, too. I hope it is supportive in fortifying your efforts and overall health as we move forward together, interwoven, toward greater belonging, and co-liberation.

Detail from Samuel
Paden, *Beloved*

Part and Parcel: Cultivating Survival in the Village of Battir

Sama Alshaibi

Photographs by author

Sama Alshaibi, *Battir 1*

It was October 2014, and the new Palestine Museum I was working with sent me on an assignment. I was to photograph the Palestinian village of Battir, declared a UNESCO World Heritage site under the title, "Land of Olives and Vines—Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir." The village was also included on a list UNESCO maintains of sites declared World Heritage in danger "after finding that the landscape had become vulnerable under impact of sociocultural and geopolitical transformations that could bring irreversible damage to its authenticity and integrity."[1] Palestine's campaign to have Battir declared a World Heritage site was rooted in their struggle to thwart Israel's plans to destroy the village by building a separation barrier through it. It was a watershed moment for Palestine. That any Palestinian landscape would be named a World Heritage site while also recognizing that heritage to be in imminent danger because of Israel was, in itself, a victory.

1   "Palestine: Land of
    Olives and Vines—
    Cultural Landscape of
    Southern Jerusalem,
    Battir, inscribed on
    World Heritage List
    and on List of World
    Heritage in Danger,"
    UNESCO, available online
    at https://en.unesco.org/
    news/palestine-land-ol-
    ives-and-vines-cultur-
    al-landscape-south-
    ern-jerusalem-battir-in-
    scribed-world.

2   "Palestine: Land of Olives
    and Vines—Cultural
    Landscapes of Southern
    Jerusalem, Battir,"
    UNESCO, available online
    at https://whc.unesco.
    org/en/list/1492/. www.
    developingchild.harvard.
    edu, (10.03.18)

The language used by the UNESCO committee clearly lent legitimacy to Palestinians' historical narrative of their continued presence on the land for over a millennium and listed Battir in the "State of Palestine."[2] It also put the international world on notice that the destruction of Battir would be a loss not only for Palestinians, but for civilization as well. In the context of Israel's destruction of hundreds of Palestinian villages before and after Israel's creation in 1948, Palestinians have long resisted Israel's ongoing policy and practice of expropriating their remaining land in Israeli settler territory under the pretext of security. Countless resolutions have been passed by the United Nations condemning the separation barrier, occupation, and settlements, but to no visible effect or change.

This declaration, however, felt different. There was hope that it would provide some measure of protection for Battir by stopping a wall from dividing the farmers from their land. Indeed, the declaration only helped one village, but it served as a symbolic, moral win in the struggle for continuous sovereignty over Palestinian territory and the freedom of movement for the Palestinian people—one that played out on an international stage.

Battir is an anomaly, an outlier in the constantly changing and shrinking Palestinian landscape under a brutal occupation. Located six miles southwest of Jerusalem, on the path of the historic Jaffa–Jerusalem railway, Battir still reflects its Palestinian identity rooted in centuries of farming traditions. The quest to save Battir's fields and the historic terraces still watered by a Roman-era irrigation system was not only to maintain a way a life, but also to preserve a living archive of Palestinian history, culture, and resistance. Under enormous odds, Battir has once again stemmed the tide of its impending annihilation. This nonviolent struggle to defeat the encroaching expansion of the separation wall can be further understood through its heroic and creative efforts to survive in the aftermath of the 1948 war that brought over four hundred Palestinian villages to their end. Somehow Battir remains intact, free of the separation wall, and its inhabitants, all Palestinian.

As I pulled up to the village of Battir in a taxi with my husband and two sons, I was transported into a time warp and reality confusion. The view of the precipitous slope, of its lush valley unencumbered by the separation wall, recalled haunting stories and old photographs of historical Palestine's open, serene beauty prior to the Nakba (Arabic for "catastrophe") of 1948. The visual scars of the occupation disappeared into vivid green hues smartly arranged into 2,000-year-old stacked terraces leading my sight up to the heavens. Walls made of stones, not concrete walls of the separation barrier. The cascading fields in full bloom sparked imaginings of sacred gardens. Springs. Olives. Fruits. Battir is Eden. It is also located in a zone that Israel is desperate to rid of its Palestinian identity.

Battir is located in what is known as "Area C"—a land designation from the 1995 Oslo II Accord that divided the West Bank into three types of areas. Most of the Palestine population were located in urban areas designated as Area A (full Palestinian Authority control) or Area B (under Palestinian Authority civil control and Israeli military control). The remaining 62 percent of West Bank territory, which was mostly the natural and agricultural land mass surrounding Areas A and B, was designated as Area C and placed under full Israeli administrative, construction, military, and civil control.

Israel's control of Area C was meant to last only five years before being transferred to the Palestinian Authority and, in some areas, slotted for further negotiations when drawing the final boundary status. Today, Area C clearly displays the intention of Israel to create permanent facts on the ground through its occupation and its apparatus: the navigation of a dizzying array of military checkpoints and twenty-five-foot concrete walls controlled by the Israeli army; the road blocks and barriers cutting

Sama Alshaibi, *Mount of Olives Wall Demolished Home*

Sama Alshaibi, *Abu Dise Wall*

Sama Alshaibi, *No Man's Land*

roads and routes of Palestinian movement; the settlements deep into West Bank territory with their enormous system of highways and watchtowers to incorporate and connect the illegal Israeli settlements into Israel proper; the massive expropriation of Palestinian land through the demolishing or confiscation of Palestinian homes, farms, and groves; and the complete control of water aquifers and natural resources. All future potential for Palestine's urban, agricultural, and economic development is either blocked or disposed by Israel's policies and activities in Area C, which often spreads into Areas A and B with arbitrary laws feigning security concerns.[3]

Battir's greatest achievement—to exist—cannot be underestimated, as its location adjacent to the armistice line (the Green Line) is of extreme strategic importance for Israel. According to a 2005 study on the impact of the Israeli separation wall, the plans to isolate Battir's farmers from their fields was an impending reality:

> On 16 June 2002, [Israel] began implementing unilaterally a segregation plan in the West Bank and issued military orders to seize Palestinian lands under the pretext of security...In areas with sizeable population and/or in-close perimeter with the Armistice Line...the Segregation Wall consists of 6–8 meters high concrete wall supplied with rigid concrete cylinder military watchtowers lined-up about 200 meters apart...Loss of high valuable agricultural lands, uprooting of plants and high damage to the agro-biodiversity. The land between the Segregation Zone and the Armistice line constitutes some of the most fertile land in the West Bank...In the southern part of the West Bank, west of Bethlehem, the Segregation Zone will encircle six Palestinian villages within a closed area called Etzion Block...The six villages are Al Walaja, Battir, Husan Nahhalin, Wadi Fukin, and Khallet Sakariya...
>
> Battir village is lying within the closed Etzion Block. The Segregation Zone will pass through Battir land south of the armistice line dividing its land into three strips. The first strip will be behind the Segregation Zone, while the second will be used and destroyed by the Segregation Zone construction. The third strip will be a buffer zone with restricted uses...According to this new route, the Segregation Zone will not pass along and on the Armistice Line of 1949...the Segregation Zone will cross the north-west boundary of Battir village inside Battir Village land. It will cross the Valley and Battir hills and the rich cultivated and irrigated land without any consideration to the values of this land to its owners and without any consideration to the damage that it will create to the natural life and natural systems.[4]

The report makes several mentions of Battir's proximity to the armistice line and the village lands lying behind it, which fell into Israeli territory after the 1948 war. While Battir defended itself militarily during the 1948 war, King Abdullah of Jordan essentially forfeited the village after the war when he surrendered the railway to Israel. According to research by Jawad Botmeh (2006), Battir reached an agreement with Israel that saved their village. Driven by Battir's own initiative under the leadership of its resident Hasan Mustafa, who lobbied Jordanian officials, they developed strategic actions to secure Battir's land that fell into no-man's-land along the armistice line. It

3   "Planning Policy in the West Bank," The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories (November 11, 2017), available online at https://www.btselem.org/planning_and_building.

4   Jad Isaac, Walid Halayqa, Jane Hilal, Anwar Qubaja, Manal El-Butmah, and Nael Jubran, "The Environmental Impacts Assessment of the Israeli Segregation Plan on Battir Village," *The Applied Research Institute—Jerusalem* (2005), available online at http://www.arij.org/component/content/article/99-publications/papers/2005-papers/338-the-environmental-impacts-assessment-of-the-israeli-segregation-plan-on-battir-village.html.

5   Jawad Botmeh, *Civil Resistance in Palestine: The village of Battir in 1948* (Coventry, UK: Coventry University, 2006), available online at http://www.preparing-forpeace.org/pdfpapers/s2-JawadBotmeh.pdf.

6   Historians commonly describe the various Jewish paramilitaries operating within Palestine prior to 1948 as "Zionists," as their intent was to establish a Jewish state. Correspondence with Dr. Maha Nassar, Associate Professor, Modern Middle East History, Islamic Studies, at the University of Arizona.

7   Benny Morris quoted in, *The Origin of the Palestine-Israel Conflict* (Berkeley: Jews for Justice in the Middle East, 2000), 12.

8   Jawad Botmeh, *Civil Resistance in Palestine: The village of Battir in 1948* (Coventry, UK: Coventry University, 2006), available online at http://www.preparing-forpeace.org/pdfpapers/s2-JawadBotmeh.pdf.

9   Ibid.

showcases Palestinian continued ingenuity in unarmed, civilian-led mass actions as forms of resistance.[5]

During the 1948 war, most of the villagers fled Battir. Zionist paramilitaries had committed massacres on nearby villages that resulted in a type of psychological warfare to encourage villagers across Palestine to flee when the militias approached.[6] The militia then destroyed those mostly empty villages to create the Israeli state. In his book *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1949*, Israeli historian Benny Morris chronicles the deliberate destruction, intended to ensure refugees would not return:

> Ideas about how to consolidate and give permanence to the Palestinian exile began to crystallize, and the destruction of villages was immediately perceived as a primary means of achieving this aim…[Even earlier,] On 10 April, Haganah [the underground militia of the Jewish community in Palestine] units took Abu Shusha…The village was destroyed that night…Khulda was leveled by Jewish bull-dozers…Abu Zureiq was completely demolished…Al Mansi and An Naghnaghiya, to the southeast, were also leveled…By mid-1949, the majority of [the 350 depopulated Palestinian villages] were either completely or partly in ruins and uninhabitable.[7]

Mustafa remained behind in Battir with a few others. He made sure that before, during, and after the war, the village appeared defended and completely inhabited. This included lighting lamps in the homes of the villagers, keeping animals in the yards, and other measures to make the village appear busy and filled with daily life. During the war, he developed a good relationship with the local Palestinian resistance and Arab army officers in Jerusalem. In turn, they kept their presence in the village. As such, Jewish forces were discouraged from entering a village that appeared well inhabited and defended.[8]

In the immediate aftermath of the war, Battir was still occasionally attacked from Israeli forces across the valley. Mustafa convinced some villagers to return to Battir. Cut off from food, work, and humanitarian aid located in refugee centers away from the frontline, they switched to low-maintenance crops in the areas exposed to Israeli fire, a tactic to lessen their exposure to daily danger. However, the largest threat to the village was the valuable railway connecting Jerusalem to the coast. It was located in the no-man's-land of the armistice line; in order for Israel to gain its control, they needed to depopulate the remaining Palestinian villages within the corridor. King Abdullah agreed to forfeit the railway and remove his troops from the no-man's-land, essentially sealing Battir's fate. Had Mustafa not lobbied sympathetic Jordanian military officials by making a case that the village was not conquered and still inhabited by the villagers, as well as being present on the day of Battir's demarcation to defend every hill, valley, and road from Israeli deception, Battir would not be what it is today.

The final 1949 Armistice Agreement between the Jordan and Israel governments spelled out terms for villages along the line; this included language that Israel would allow Battir residents to continue cultivating their own land inside the armistice line in exchange for their guarantee to safeguard the railway from attacks. Mustafa ensured the safety of the railway and agreed that the villagers themselves would cease to use the railway in exchange for ownership and access to their own land. Finally, he embarked on a program of community development to revitalize the village, including a road to connect Battir to Bethlehem and building a school for girls.[9]

In January 2015, Israel's Supreme Court froze construction on the separation wall in the Battir valley. Israel's Ministry of Defense asserted its right to revisit the route should it feel it necessary in the future.[10] While the same would not be true for other villages uprooted and for Palestinian land lost and destroyed to the segregation wall, it did highlight the multiple civil and cultural acts of nonviolent resistance that Palestinians have always participated in.

In spring of 2018, the international community witnessed the Palestinians in Gaza participating in a grassroots campaign of civil disobedience and cultural action. The Great Return March coincides with the forty-second anniversary of Land Day on March 30, with activities taking place over six weeks that culminate with the seventieth anniversary of the Nakba on May 15. Wedding celebrations, barbeques, traditional bead baking, folk dancing, circus acts, singing, and reading chains were among the many activities taking place to express Palestinian cultural life as a living process toward freedom. The protesters celebrating culture over those six weeks were met with violence by Israeli soldiers, who killed 112 Palestinians and injured over 13,000.[11]

The right to live one's culture without danger and to preserve its integrity for the present and future is an essential right of every human. Battir residents, for now, have maintained a process for preserving and living their cultural traditions. It contributes to the dynamic ingenuity for creative, evolving resistance that is the foundation of the Palestinian popular struggle. For Palestinians, their right to live and prosper remains elusive, but their determination endures.

10   Nir Hasson, "Palestinians, Settlers, Greens Declare Victory in Court Ruling on Separation Barrier," *Haaretz* (January 2, 2015), available online at https://www.haaretz.com/.premium-palestinians-israelis-laud-s-court-decision-1.5356139.

11   "Health Ministry: Israel Army Killed 112 Palestinians, Injured 13,190 Since March 30th," *IMEMCnews* (May 21, 2018), available online at http://imemc.org/article/health-ministry-israeli-army-killed-112-palestinians-injured13190-since-march-30th/.
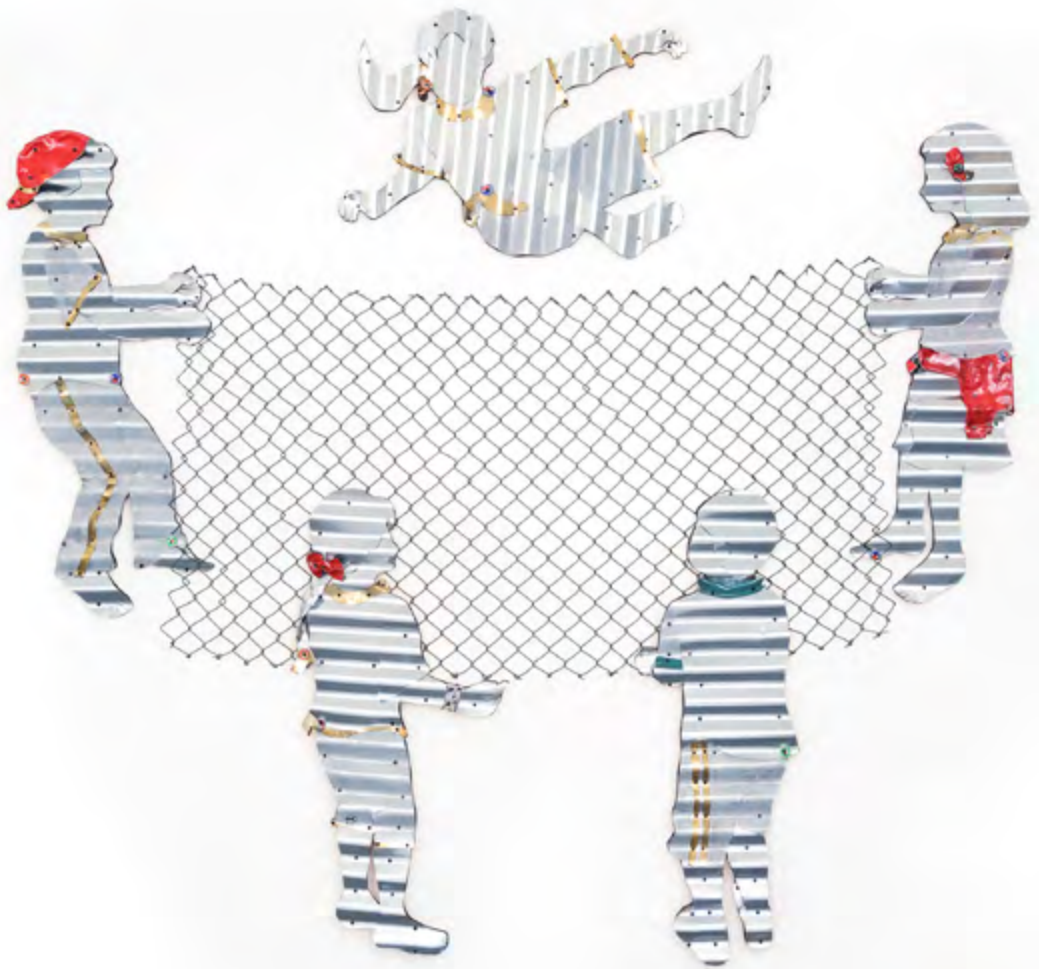
Sama Alshaibi, *Battir 2*

Abdul Rahman
Katanani, *Untitled*

Removing Barriers and Building Bridges: How Play Cultivates Integration and Belonging in Refugee Children

Freya White

Photographs by author

ACCOMPANYING ARTWORK BY ABDUL RAHMAN KATANANI

Wars, conflict, persecution, and climate change are causing more people to flee their homes now than at any other time since records began. The UN's refugee agency (UNHCR) estimates there are more than 65.6 million forcibly displaced people, 22.5 million refugees and 10 million stateless people worldwide, many of whom are living with limited access to basic rights such as health care and education. Over half of the world's refugees are children.[1]

Many displaced children end up living in refugee camps or temporary settlements for months or even years, making up a substantial part of their childhood. For some, life on the move is all that they know and will make up their earliest memories.

    The hardships children face do not always end once they have arrived in their host country. Beginning a new life in a new community presents serious challenges. How children are supported to overcome trauma and deal with these new challenges will influence their ability to reach their potential in becoming full, active participants in society. With the right support and opportunities most refugee children will thrive but those with deep scars who are left behind may find themselves marginalized on the edge of society, stuck in a perpetual state of being neither here nor there.

    What are the mechanisms at play in creating barriers to belonging for refugee children and how do we prevent the narrative of *othering* becoming manifest? How do we support refugee children in becoming fully connected, active members of society and give them an equal chance at leading rich, happy, and fulfilling lives? In this article I will highlight the impact of life in a refugee camp on the well-being and development of refugee children, and consider how play can remove barriers to belonging and build bridges between individuals and communities. These issues will be discussed in the context of my personal experience of setting up a play center in a refugee camp and founding a charity to promote the development of refugee children through play-based intervention.

Conflict, Crisis, and an Opportunity to Help

I'd just started teaching around the time of the Arab Spring—protests and uprisings in the Middle East were met with violent government responses in many countries, prompting regime change in some. Over the following years the things I saw and read affected me deeply. It felt as though calls for help from the international community were falling on deaf ears; the world watched helplessly as men, women, and children suffered.

    The conflict in the Middle East contributed to a staggering rise in the number of refugees seeking the protection of Europe. In 2015 alone almost a million people risked their lives crossing the Mediterranean, and thousands died trying.

    The news was dominated by harrowing scenes of desperate journeys and the rejection with which many people were met as they attempted to cross borders. The look of absolute fear on the faces of women and children as they were scattered by armed border guards and security personnel, and images of a journalist kicking a Syrian refugee to the ground as he held his son in his arms were excruciating to witness; they'd survived war and reached the "safety" of Europe only to be greeted

like this. Instead of being welcomed they were vilified. Instead of being met with outstretched arms they were rejected. Instead of being supported they were abandoned.

Transit and destination countries were overwhelmed by the flow of refugees and struggled to manage the new arrivals. Independent volunteers from all over the world started filling the gaps and grassroots organizations sprouted up across Europe. In Germany people cheered the arrival of weary travelers, greeting them with bottles of water, food, toys, and sweets.

At the same time inflammatory rhetoric in the media, such as that which warned of a "swarm of people coming across the Mediterranean, seeking a better life," helped ignite a culture of fear and loathing. "Get the water cannons out, Miss White!" exclaimed a twelve-year-old boy in my Current Affairs class, after watching a report of a boat full of people capsizing. For a moment I was speechless.

I thought of the videos I'd seen of mothers and fathers running from the ruins of collapsed buildings with the broken bodies of blood-stained children lying limp in their arms; guttural screams expressing an agony no parent should endure. People had fled atrocities and lost entire families, escaping with nothing but their shattered lives, yet somehow the terms "refugee," "migrant," and "asylum seeker" had become dirty words, words that degraded and dehumanized.

I felt impelled to do something. For years I had felt helpless, an idle observer of the millions of lives being destroyed. I wanted to add to the voices saying, "You're welcome. You're safe." Now I felt I had an opportunity to do something. I wanted to use my skills to support them in some small way, and, with a background in teaching, I began looking for opportunities to help. After a little research I found a group of volunteers who'd set up and run a kids' tent in an informal refugee settlement in Dunkirk who were looking for someone to take over after the residents were trans-ferred to a new camp. Within a few weeks, I set off to France with a friend to help create a safe space for children living in the camp.

Childhood in a Refugee Camp

"Prepare for hell on earth," was the advice given to me before I set off for the refugee camp on the northern coast of France. With the arrival of migrants and refugees into Europe in 2015, the population of the informal settlement on the edge of a small town boomed within the space of a few months. By autumn several thousand people were living in a dense mass of tents and tarpaulins cramped between trees, surrounded by a sea of thick mud and debris. The conditions were unimaginably horrendous. Without proper waste disposal or sanitation a hazardous layer of litter and waste had built up, making it feel more like a landfill site than a refugee camp.

The majority of the residents were from the autonomous Kurdish region of northern Iraq. Here were men, women, and children escaping the horrors of conflict and desperately seeking a better life. Most were using it as a stepping stone to reach the UK, by any means possible, anxious to be reunited with family and loved ones who had been granted asylum during the Iraqi-Kurdish Civil War in the mid-1990s and the Iraq war in the mid-2000s.

"I lived in Bradford for 15 years," explained Hammad. He had gone back to Iraq to rebuild his life after the last war ended, met his wife, and started a family. But the peace was short-lived and they were forced to flee again in 2015 when ISIS invaded a town just kilometers from where they lived. He had a British passport but his wife and children did not. "I've spent almost half of my life in England. In England I can get work at my uncle's taxi company. I can earn good money and look after my family. In

La Liniere Refugee Camp, Grande Synthe, France

France I can do nothing because I don't speak French." It was a common story. I met teachers, builders, engineers, and artists who wanted nothing more than to rebuild their shattered lives. Men with tired eyes spoke of the social isolation they believed their wives would face should they have to stay in a country where they knew no one and were unable to communicate. They wanted to be able to provide for their families but most of all they wanted them to be happy.

In March 2016 the residents were moved from the squalid conditions of the informal settlement to a new purpose-built camp a few miles away. Established by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) and the local authorities, it was the first internationally recognized refugee camp in France. The physical conditions were greatly improved. Rows of little wooden huts and shower blocks lined a rocky path running the length of the camp. A little later, a tea tent and community kitchens were added.

There was no mud and the huts provided some respite from the cold and the rain but it didn't take long to realize that these improvements in physical comforts played only a small part in alleviating the suffering of the inhabitants. Wherever you looked, the psychological impacts of conflict, migration, and life in a refugee camp were clear to see, and it was bitterly cold. I remember one evening feeling a momentary buzz of excitement at the prospect of going home to my cozy, warm bed but then immediately afterwards a feeling of gut-wrenching guilt at the thought of everyone we were leaving behind. As I walked out of the gate I saw a man with his head in his hands, crying.

Those fleeing war-torn areas will often have undertaken long journeys with insufficient access to food and health care. Children may arrive at refugee settlements malnourished and in poor health, sometimes having gone days without food. With no running water in tents and shelters it is difficult to keep clean, especially when living in damp and overcrowded accommodations, and dental health among children is often poor. The cramped living conditions, along with poor sanitation and limited access to medical care, make perfect breeding grounds for illness and diseases such as diarrhea, vomiting, respiratory disease, scabies, and measles.[2]

The shelters, undoubtedly an improvement on previous conditions, were the size of a small garden shed. Yara, a mother of four, showed us inside. A bed shared with her husband, their two teenage sons, and seven-year-old daughter, who had cerebral palsy, took up most of the floor space. Tidy piles of clothes and a few belongings lay along either side of the bed, and some food and cooking equipment was kept on a shelf in the freshly swept porch. There was no room for baby Rawan so he slept over everyone's legs at the end of the bed. If you stood in the middle of the shelter with your arms outstretched you could almost touch both sides. I thought of my nieces bouncing off the walls after one day of being kept cooped up inside.

The ground outside was covered in a layer of rubble to prevent it from becoming waterlogged and, initially, there was no designated area for children to play and limited access to safe space where they could burn off their energy. Sharp rocks and children don't mix well. They couldn't run, skip, or jump without falling and cutting their knees, and, as we soon found out, the rocks made perfect ammunition to hurl in a fight.

As I arrived in the camp one morning I came upon a commotion outside the shelter of a family. Sara had taken some books and pens from the school tent to take to her shelter. Enterprising, enthusiastic, eager to learn, but still a thief in the eyes of her peers. "Ali Baba!"[3] The children cried, "She Ali Baba!" The regular attendees of the camp's tented school were outraged at the iniquity. Sara was pelted by rocks, more rocks were thrown back, and one hit Akham with a crack. His little head was soaked with blood. Rock fights like this were an almost daily occurrence.

The cramped living conditions, rocky ground, and lack of communal space also meant there were limited opportunities for learning to crawl and walk; babies and

2   C. Louis. *Medicins Sans Frontieres and the refugee crisis in Greece: an interview with Dr Apostolos Veizis*. Pathog Global Health. 2016 Sep; 110(6): 219-222. Doi: 10.1080/20477724.2016. 1197441 Retrieved from www.ncbi.nlm. nih.gov/pmc/articles/ PMC5070638/

3   Ali Baba is a character from the folk tale, Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves, featured in the "Ariabian Nights" tales, One Thousand and One Nights. In the story, Ali Baba discovers a cave full of stolen treasure. The children in the camp used the term 'Ali Baba' to describe someone who had stolen something.

4   Center on the Developing Child (2007).

toddlers were confined to their tiny shelters or pushed around in prams. It was not uncommon to see children with delayed crawling and walking. Delays in developing core muscle strength can have cumulative effects on gross and fine motor skills later down the line—children who haven't developed strong core muscles may find sitting at a desk and using a pencil difficult.

I was struck by how many young children there were in the camp and by how long some of them had been living there. From watching the news at the time you'd be forgiven for thinking the camps in northern France were almost entirely devoid of women and children. The media frequently portrayed the residents as mobs of angry young men and criminal traffickers. Individuals' complex and often harrowing stories were lost. Instead, husbands, fathers, and sons were conveniently reduced to pantomime villains to make a more palatable "truth" for those seeking to confirm their bias rather than arouse deeper thought that might challenge their preconceptions.

I quickly came to know three-year-old Saya who would run to greet me in the mornings. Taking my hand she'd walk along the track with me singing the songs she had learned with previous volunteers. She knew all the words to "The wheels on the bus," "If you're happy and you know it," and "Twinkle, twinkle little star," to name a few. She had been in the camp for so long and from such a young age, I thought, she probably wouldn't have any memories of her life before her "home" in the camp.

And then there was Mateen. He'd been born, and spent the first year of his life, in a refugee camp in Turkey. Escalating tension between Turkey and the Kurds prompted his parents to risk the journey to Europe, where Mateen spent the second year of his life. His entire time on this planet had been spent living in refugee camps.

Toxic Stress and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

The early years of a child's life are crucial for their physical, cognitive, and social and emotional development. Early experiences interact with genes to determine the development of the brain and body, setting life-long patterns for behavior, character, health, and the ability to learn, and forming the foundations for future well-being and life-course.[4] However, refugee children are exposed to a myriad of stresses on a daily basis and in many camps there is little in the way of stimulation for young children.

Before arriving in Dunkirk I thought I knew about the challenges of living in a refugee camp but I had drastically underestimated the impact of the seemingly lower level, everyday stresses: the friends you make one day being gone the next, being hungry because yesterday's dinner was early and today's breakfast was late, volunteers coming and going, being kept awake all night listening to rival criminal gangs fighting outside your shelter, the ever-changing social structure and group dynamics, the constant worry of having your home raided by terrifying men dressed in riot gear with batons and snarling dogs, not knowing from one day to the next whether your asylum application will be processed or if you'll be deported back to where you came from. It was a waiting game. Children in refugee camps are existing in a no-man's-land; their rights curtailed, their lives on hold, their futures uncertain.

The multiple stresses and anxieties associated with living in a refugee camp can manifest as depression, withdrawal, or aggression, and angry outbursts in response to threats or perceived threats were common. Children were living in survival mode. Disputes escalated swiftly and incidents of unprovoked violence were common.

The fighting was deeply upsetting. There were times I felt I'd witnessed the very moment innocence was lost. One of the first fights I saw took me by surprise:

The Science of Early Childhood Development (InBrief). Retrieved from www.developingchild.harvard.edu, (10.03.18)

5   National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2005/2014). *Excessive Stress Disrupts the Architecture of the Developing Brain: Working Paper No. 3.* Updated Edition. Retrieved from www.developingchild.harvard.edu. (10.03.18)

6   Ibid.

7   *Excessive Stress Disrupts the Architecture of the Developing Brain*.

8   Center on the Developing Child (2007). *The Impact of Early Adversity on Child Development* (InBrief). Retrieved from www.developingchild.harvard.edu, (10.03.18)

9   Petchel P and Pizzagalli DA (2011). *Effects of early life stress on cognitive and affective function: an integrated review of human literature*. Psychopharmacology 214:55-70

10 National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2010). *Persistent Fear and Anxiety Can Affect Young Children's Learning and Development: Working Paper No. 9*. Retrieved from www.developingchild.harvard.edu.

11 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Violence Prevention, Adverse Childhood Experiences Journal Articles. Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/journal.html (10.03.18)

12 Bellis MA, Hughes K, Jones A et al. 2013. *Childhood happiness and violence: a retrospective study of their impacts on adult well-being*. BMJ Open 3(9):e003427.

13 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Violence Prevention, Adverse Childhood Experiences Journal Articles.

14 Delan Devakumar, Marion Birch, David Osrin, Egbert Sondorp and Jonathan CK Wells (2014). *The intergenerational effects of war on the health of children*, BMC Medicine, 12:57

seven-year-old Aria was playing quietly with his sister one minute, the next he was being violently kicked and punched to the ground by a gang of slightly larger boys. The look of absolute shock and fear on his face was heartbreaking. It was like watching the carpet being pulled from under his feet, the moment of realization that he was not safe, not even here.

There were many more moments like that to come. I saw children punched, slapped, kicked in the face, throttled, stamped on. The fighting created a cycle—the bullied often became the bullies—playing out in front of my eyes. Each little face was etched in my mind forever.

Research shows that prolonged and excessive exposure to stress in early childhood can be toxic to the developing brain.[5] Developing skills for coping with adversity is a key part of healthy childhood development but prolonged or excessive activation of the brain and body's stress response systems has a profoundly detrimental effect on development.[6] In the absence of sufficient intervention from a nurturing caregiver, this toxic stress response impedes the developing brain's architecture and disrupts the healthy functioning of other organs, causing damaging effects on behavior, health, and learning.[7]

There is an increasingly large body of evidence that shows adverse experiences during childhood, such as those that cause acute trauma or toxic stress, are strongly associated with negative physical and mental health outcomes in later life.[8] Exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) such as prolonged fear or neglect, family hardship, exposure to violence, severe maternal depression, emotional or physical abuse, famine, and general insecurity can affect neurological, immunological, and hormonal system development, which may result in problems with attachment, emotional regulation, cognitive response, memory, and learning throughout life. [9, 10]

These impacts on physical and mental development are likely to have a profound effect on an individual's life. Studies have shown adults who were exposed to ACEs are more likely to engage in unhealthy behaviors such as smoking, high-calorie diets, alcohol and drug abuse, and are at greater risk of violence or re-victimization and chronic health conditions.[11] Furthermore, they may be more likely to have difficulties building relationships, struggle with social situations, and become detached from society, in part due to poor mental well-being, low life satisfaction and life worth, and an inability to trust others.[12]

Studies into ACEs by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have found a strong dose-response relation between the number of ACEs a child is exposed to and negative outcomes. The more ACEs a child is exposed to, the higher the risk of suffering from depression, mental distress, suicide attempts, severe obesity, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, cancer, lowered educational attainment, poor work performance, and unemployment.[13]

But the impact of trauma doesn't stop there. The symptoms and associated behaviors of trauma can be passed down from one generation to the next via a complex post-traumatic stress disorder mechanism.[14] This transgenerational trauma can be transmitted via child-parent relations and possibly even through heritable changes in gene function.[15, 16, 17]

Adversity in childhood creates developmental and psychological barriers to belonging not only to the original sufferers but potentially also to subsequent generations, perpetuating a cycle of ill health and social disadvantage that feeds into the narrative of othering.

The Scarcity of Responsive Relationships

The relationship between children and their parents or caregivers is a key factor influencing children's development. Responsive relationships promote healthy brain development, buffer against toxic stress, and help build and strengthen resilience to adversity.[18] However, in disaster-affected communities children may become separated from families and caregivers, some are orphaned or become separated during dangerous journeys, others are sent alone with smugglers or traffickers by parents desperate to get them to safety.

A report by UNICEF revealed the number of refugee and migrant children traveling alone has increased nearly five-fold globally since 2010. Over 300,000 children were recorded in 2015–2016 but the real number is probably much higher as many countries don't record lone children. From 2015–2016, 100,000 unaccompanied children were apprehended at the US-Mexico border and 170,000 unaccompanied children applied for asylum in Europe.[19]

Furthermore, caregivers who are suffering from the effects of war, conflict, or trauma themselves are not always able to provide the support that's needed. I remember on one occasion hearing a baby crying near the center. When the crying didn't stop after a few minutes, we went to see what was happening. A toddler had fallen and was lying face down on the sharp rocks. His mother sat motionless a few steps away.

Separation from families, break down in community structures, lack of resources, and reduced access to essential services in the aftermath of emergencies greatly affect both the physical and psychological welfare of refugee and displaced children of all ages; they are at an increased risk of abuse, neglect, violence, and exploitation. Unaccompanied children in particular are vulnerable to physical abuse, sexual violence, and trafficking, and are often forced into prostitution to pay off debts to smugglers.[20] Many women and girls in refugee camps live in constant fear of being attacked, frequently reporting that they are too frightened to go to the toilet at night.

The responsibility I felt was enormous. What would happen to these children who have been born into this life, who have survived war, traveled across borders, seen friends beaten at the hand of those who were supposed to protect them, witnessed family members drown as they made perilous journeys across oceans, and have been exposed to violence and left to fend for themselves in refugee camps across the world? Would they grow into happy, healthy adults, scientists, hair dressers, teachers, carpenters...? I hoped so.

What's certain is that what we do or don't do for these children today not only affects their present well-being but will have implications lasting a lifetime.

An Enabling Environment

By the end of our first week in the camp my friend and I had been given a tent and some toys. Although the local authorities had contracted an organization to manage the camp, the operation of most of the services still relied entirely on a workforce of unpaid volunteers, many of whom had arrived independently over the previous months. There was no budget for the running of the children's center. The tents and buildings we used had been donated by a charity, and all of the resources had been donated or funded by donations from individuals and organizations.

We established a safe space to play and soon the first little faces began peeping through the canvas doors. Before long the tent was full of small people, busy with Lego bricks, painting, playdough, coloring, and singing; their smiles and laughter belying the

15 Rachel Yehuda, Nikolaos P. Daskalakis, Linda M. Bierer, Heather N. Bader, Torsten Klengel, Florian Holsboer, Elisabeth B. Binder, Holocaust Exposure Induced Intergenerational Effects on FKBP5 Methylation, Biological Psychiatry, September 1, 2016 Volume 80, Issue 5, Pages 372–380

16 Rodriguez, Tori (March 1, 2015). "Descendants of Holocaust Survivors Have Altered Stress Hormones". Scientific American. Retrieved January 30, 2018.

17 Roth, T. L. (2013). Epigenetic mechanisms in the development of behavior: advances, challenges, and future promises of a new field. *Development and Psychopathology*, 25(4 0 2), 1279–1291. http://doi.org/10.1017/S0954579413000618

18 Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2017). *Three Principles to Improve Outcomes for Children and Families*. http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu

Quick thinking, problem solving, and teamwork
skills are needed to escape the lava

Children and their artwork at the refugee camp

19 Unicef, 17.05.2107, A Child is a Child www.unicef.org.uk/press-releases/five-fold-increase-number-refugee-migrant-children-traveling-alone-since-2010-unicef/ (accessed 14.04.2018)

20 Ibid.

21 Economic and Social Research Council, 2014, The wellbeing effect of education. https://esrc.ukri.org/files/news-events-and-publications/evidence-briefings/the-wellbeing-effect-of-education/. (accessed 14.04.2018)

22 Save the children, 2015, THE COST OF war Calculating the impact of the collapse of Syria's education system on the country's future http://static.guim.co.uk/ni/1427711553264/Save-the-Children-Cost-of-W.pdf

23 UNHCR, 2016, Missing Out: Refugee Education in Crisis. http://www.unhcr.org/57d9d01d0 (accessed 14.04.2018)

24 National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2010). Persistent Fear and Anxiety Can Affect Young Children's Learning and Development: Working Paper No. 9

25 Center on the Developing Child, 2012, Executive Function (InBrief). Retrieved from http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu

26 Center on the Developing Child, Key Concepts: Executive Functioning, https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/executive-function/

reality of their situation. Within six weeks we had upgraded to a wooden building. We bought strips of artificial lawn, sand trays, potted plants, and garden furniture. Our little corner of the camp was a tiny oasis of color and fun, a stark contrast to the rest of the grey and barren environment.

It both amused and saddened me to see the children flocking to the center. After months or even years on the move, most children had little or nothing to call their own and the colorful, busy building was so necessary an escape from reality that we often found it extremely difficult, and sometimes distressing, to persuade them to leave at the end of the day. But the center evoked happy memories too—of camping holidays as a child, the number one priority on arrival being to check out the play-ground—and reminded me just how important it was for children to have a place of their own, a place where they belonged, a place where they could be a child again in a very adult world.

We created an environment that was welcoming, nurturing, and stimulating, with a balanced routine of free play and structured activities, focusing on art, music, sports, and games, non-formal education and language acquisition. Particular highlights of the week were snack and story time (who isn't happy with a chocolate biscuit and a good book?), and Wednesday afternoons—chocolate spread sandwich-making and cinema.

After months of living in chaotic and unsettled environments, many children found adapting their behavior to a classroom context difficult. One group of eight- to eleven-year-old boys were proving particularly hard to reach, preferring to spend their days climbing on top of moving cars, riding on the backs of delivery trucks or surfing down mud banks on scraps of wood—all a great deal more thrilling than going to school! They visited the center infrequently; when they did, they were hypervigilant, fractious and at times aggressive. Sharing and taking turns were challenging and it was usually only a matter of time before a fight broke out.

Most of the children had been out of the education system for months or even years, and some had never had the chance to attend school or children's provision of any kind. One young girl proudly told us she could speak in seven languages: Sorani, Farsi, Turkish, Greek, German, French, and English. But she could read or write in none.

Education is one of the strongest predictors to life outcomes.[21] Providing schooling during war and displacement supports mental resilience and helps children avoid child labor, early marriage, and recruitment by armed groups.[22] Yet only 50 percent of primary age refugee children have access to education and only 22 percent attend secondary school.[23] Many children are unable to attend school due to physical barriers, bureaucratic issues or family hardship, but what happens when children are physically but not mentally able to access education?

Minds that are full of worry and fear are incapable of performing the skills necessary for everyday functioning and learning.[24] [25] Only when a child feels safe, and their basic needs have been met, both physically and emotionally, are they able to perform high order skills such as creative thinking, executive functioning, and self-regulation.

Executive functioning and self-regulation are the mental processes needed for focusing attention, planning, remembering instructions, and controlling impulses. They rely on the functioning of our working memory, mental flexibility, and inhibitory-control, and are key to how we retain and manage information, avoid distractions, work effectively with others, and adapt to changing situations. We are not born with these skills but develop them throughout childhood. The more children practice the skills, the stronger their capacity for using them.[26]

Conversely, children overloaded with stress or lacking opportunity for practice will struggle, and their skills development may be seriously delayed or impaired.

Sharing a toy, taking turns, following rules, or controlling impulses may be almost impossible. Without healthy functioning of core capabilities, children will, in later life, be ill-equipped to make positive choices, get along with others, hold down a job, or function in society.[27]

Reducing stress, establishing routines, modeling appropriate social behavior, and creating and maintaining supportive, reliable relationships are central to facilitating the development of a child's core capabilities. It's also important that children have the opportunity to exercise their developing skills through creative play and social connection.[28]

"Providing the support that children need to build these skills at home, in early care and education programs, and in other settings they experience regularly is one of society's most important responsibilities." (Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University).[29]

As the weeks went by, I gained a deeper appreciation of the true value and potential of our little play center. A structured routine within a safe, nurturing, and reliable environment restores a sense of normality and continuity to disaster-affected communities and helps mitigate against the chaos and trauma of displacement.

The Power of Play: Breaking Barriers and Building Bridges

Play is an essential part of childhood. It enables the development of vital physiological, cognitive, social, and emotional skills, and allows children to build self-confidence and develop secure and trusting relationships with others. Play is a means of freedom of self-expression, healing, and happiness. To feel a true sense of belonging children need the physical and mental space in which they can fully express themselves, free from fear or prejudice, a place where they can just *be*.

Children of all ages learn through play—it is their natural way of understanding the world around them. Through team games, construction, and imaginary play, children develop skills in creativity, problem solving, critical thinking, and collaboration. Play inspires curiosity, a sense of wonder and challenge; a desire to explore and discover is the foundation for the desire to learn. For the children who are not yet ready to access education, play helps remove the barriers to learning and bridges the gap between life on a refugee camp and the classroom.

Diar, an information technology teacher from Iraq and community volunteer, brought his bright and bubbly 21-month-old daughter to our ECD program in the camp. He found the play sessions helped Soma's confidence grow and supported her later transition to nursery school in the UK. "It was very useful and good. She learned many skills and children's songs, and when she joined nursery she already knew many things and learned very quickly. Her friends were worried and cried but she was very happy."

As well as bringing an immediate sense of joy and happiness, play has therapeutic qualities that reduce stress and anxiety and promote a sense of well-being. Young children lack the language and understanding to process complex emotions such as grief and loss, and consequently, negative feelings often manifest as frustration, irritability, anger, or withdrawal. Arts, sensory activities, and creative play in particular are calming and soothing, and provide an invaluable tool for enabling children to express their feelings, regulate their emotions, and build and strengthen their resilience to adversity.

Through role-play, children can re-enact difficult experiences in a safe environment, helping them make sense of the world around them. They are free to manipulate

27 Ibid.

28 Center on the Developing Child, Key Concepts: Executive Functioning.

29 Ibid.

30 Theirworld, 2018, Donor Scorecard - Just Beginning: Addressing inequality in donor funding for Early Childhood Development https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Donor%20 Scorecard.pdf

scenarios by changing the outcome or changing their role within it. On one occasion we helped a group of boys build a den with blankets and chairs. Once it was ready, they immediately began ripping it down and dragging each other out, shouting, "Police! Police! Get out!" Being afraid of a monster under your bed is terrifying enough, it's difficult to imagine living in constant fear of the people who are supposed to be there to protect you.

Physical play is essential for supporting development and promoting both physical and mental health yet many camps have little or no provision for keeping active. Sports and games help to reduce stress by giving children a positive outlet for releasing nervous energy which improves mood and helps reduce aggressive behavior. When a local sports coach came to the center, the children played for hours at a time. The discipline, teamwork, and perseverance required began to improve their ability to focus and helped to build their self-esteem and confidence. This was particularly beneficial to the group of hard to reach boys who required a more physical, practical approach.

In autumn an outdoor playground was built in the camp, with a climbing frame, slide, swings, and level area for games—the tarmac had not even set before children came running with bikes, scooters, footballs, and prams, and within minutes beautiful chalk drawings covered the ground like a field of wildflowers reclaiming a wasteland. It is no coincidence that at around that time the behavior of the children dramatically improved. The children's center was no longer broken into on an almost weekly basis—in fact, not at all for almost five months—the fights became less frequent and the children stopped smashing at the windows with rocks every time we had to close the building.

Bushra, mother of four, said the children's center was one of the few things she took comfort from in the camp. "My sons [who were in their early teens] are at an age where they could be drawn into doing the wrong things. There was very little for them to do and they got bored easily. I felt confident that when I sent them to the children's center they'd be safe, looked after and fed. I didn't send them anywhere else on camp because I didn't feel it was safe. They were so happy there, they still talk about it now and miss the friends they made."

It seems absurd to have to justify and provide evidence for the benefits of the most natural, instinctive behavior of children but in our modern, competitive society, play often takes a back burner, and is seen as an addition or "extra-curricular activity" rather than a fundamental need in itself.

The benefits of play are indisputable yet there are refugee camps in Europe where children have been living for over a year with no access to a safe space to play and no provision at all for children under seven. A recent report published by children's charity, Theirworld, found that only 1 percent of all international ECD aid is spent on pre-primary education.[30] Where children do have access to play, the quantity or quality is often woefully inadequate. In one place I visited a large international NGO was running a successful Child Friendly Space but it was only catering for 60 of the 700+ resident children per day.

The "Right To Play" is a universal right recognized by the United Nations in Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, "Every child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts."[31]

Providing access to play in a safe, stimulating, nurturing, and reliable environment helps shield against the adverse experiences of displaced children's unsettled lives, gives them a chance to reclaim their childhood and develop the skills needed to access education, integrate into new schools and communities and, ultimately, to function in society.

31 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 31 https://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights_overview.pdfhttps://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights_overview.pdf

An uneven surface doesn't deter these
tennis enthusiasts from having fun.

32 UNHCR, 2013, The Future of Syria, Refugee Children in Crisis: The Challenge of Education http://unhcr.org/FutureOfSyria/the-challenge-of-education.html (accessed 14.04.2018)

33 Human Rights Watch, 2016, "We're Afraid for Their Future" Barriers to Education for Syrian Refugee Children in Jordan https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/08/16/were-afraid-their-future/barriers-education-syrian-refugee-children-jordan (accessed 14/.04.2018)

34 UNHCR, 2013, The Future of Syria, Refugee Children in Crisis: The Challenge of Education

35 Ibid.

36 Susan T. Fiske, Amy J. C. Cuddy, and Peter Glick, "Universal Dimensions of Social Cognition: Warmth and Competence," Trends in Cognitive Sciences 11, no. 2 (December 22, 2006), accessed April 1, 2016, doi:10.1016/j.tics.2006.11.005, http://fidelum.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Warmth-Competence-2007.pdf. - Cited in john a. powell and Stephen Menendian, "The Problem of Othering: Towards Inclusiveness and Belonging", Othering and Belonging, Issue 1, (June 29, 2016) http://www.otheringandbelonging.org/the-problem-of-othering/

37 OECD, 2015, "Helping immigrant students to succeed at school—and beyond" http://www.oecd.org/education/Helping-immigrant-students-to-succeed-at-school-and-beyond.pdf

38 Ibid.

39 OECD, 2015, "Helping immigrant students to succeed at school—and beyond"

Creating a New Shared Identity

For refugee children re-entering the education system, many of the barriers to learning and belonging remain and the transition can be problematic. In Dunkirk, children were offered the opportunity to attend local schools and, in most cases, were immediately mixed into classes with local children. There was an initial rush of interest and the children queued up for the bus each afternoon eager to get to school. One headteacher even came to the camp each week to build relationships with the children and parents. However, despite the positive start and initial excitement, many quickly lost interest and began refusing to go.

In transient refugee camps—those where residents are passing through en route to other destinations or are awaiting family reunification—there is often a lack of motivation, and in some cases a lack of parental engagement too: they do not see the point of learning a new, seemingly unnecessary, language when they hope to be elsewhere the following day or month.

Other issues include being unable to access the classwork due to the language barrier, gaps in knowledge and basic skills, and finding it difficult to concentrate due to the impacts of trauma, stress, and sleep deprivation. Feelings of frustration and boredom can contribute to disruptive behavior and staff are not always equipped to deal with the complex needs of refugee children. Traditional discipline methods or use of corporal punishment can retraumatize children and create a negative feedback cycle, increasing anxiety, and exacerbating behavioral problems.[32, 33]

Countries hosting large numbers of refugees often operate a two-shift system, where refugee children attend school after local children have finished. However, this means there is no opportunity for the refugee children to integrate and make friends with local children, which will impact their ability to develop language skills, and, more importantly, their enjoyment of school and sense of belonging.

There is often resistance from local communities, with parents raising concerns over the impact on their own children's education, and refugee children often face bullying and discrimination.[34] In France two young refugee girls told me they would not return to school after peers began calling them gypsies, and in Lebanon there have been reports of children being physically attacked, and of local parents refusing to let their children play with refugees "because they have headlice and scabies."[35] Refugee children who are lacking in language skills, with socio-emotional behavioral difficulties and gaps in educational knowledge, are at risk of being perceived as people to be "pitied" or even "despised," reinforcing the narrative of the "other."[36]

Results from OECD studies suggest there are wide differences across EU countries in both academic achievement and psychological well-being of immigrant students.[37] In the Netherlands, migrant children have a graduated approach to integration where children spend time developing their language and building core skills before joining mainstream classes. More than 80 percent of first generation immigrant students there reported that they felt a sense of belonging at school, compared to less than 50 percent in France.[38] The size of the differences indicates that there is much that countries can learn from each other.

It's clear that a priority for preventing the narrative of othering becoming manifest between refugee and host communities is to gain a better understanding of the best methods of integrating migrant children into schools and communities. While individual characteristics are important in determining life chances, the school environment, policies, and practices play a key role in how well immigrant children overcome their barriers to belonging and build strong foundations for their new lives.[39]

Play-based interventions that focus on supporting social cohesion, language acquisition, and building positive social-emotional skills can help remove barriers to learning and integration and build bridges between individuals and communities. Play is the universal language of all children. Through play, children can build positive relationships from an equal starting point, where their social standing and capability are not judged on academic ability, language competency, or background—play transcends borders, nationality, and language.

Community groups, sports clubs, youth centers, and other play-based interventions are powerful tools for educating communities and creating pathways for social change. Building more opportunities for free and structured play into integration and education programs, both within schools and the wider community, will enable children to create a strong new shared identity. The migrant children in the OECD study reported the strongest sense of belonging in schools that offered a higher number of extra-curricular activities.[40]

Play has the power to counter the narrative of othering and cultivate belonging on two levels. Firstly, in its capacity to support development, play helps children grow into happy, healthy adults. Secondly, by bringing people together, play builds bridges between individuals and within communities.

The Future and Beyond

When people ask me about my experience volunteering in refugee camps, I've learned to respond by trotting out the same old phrase, "Yes, it was quite different to my last job! Oh yes, but very rewarding." Otherwise where do I even begin? With the beautiful four-year-old boy with Down Syndrome, threatened with death by ISIS, who blossomed in our care, or five-year-old Sia, once a beaming ray of joy who now spent hours sobbing, inconsolable, in my arms? The gorgeously cheeky six-year-old Mohammad who'd lost his smile after being shut in a police cell and separated from his parents for 24 hours? Or the charismatic Roman who refused to leave the center at the end of the day because she knew once she'd left, the bubble would burst and it would be back to the reality of life in the camp? Eighteen-month-old Aya who went to bed each night and woke each morning saying, "Children's center, children's center!", or seven-year-old Kasim who was so very angry at the world?

There are many strong, intelligent, and resilient children who will move on with their lives beyond war, beyond the refugee camps, beyond the suffering, who will grow strong and achieve wonderful things, but there are some who will not. There are some for whom the scars will be too deep, and these are the children who keep me awake at night.

Nothing I'd read or heard about refugee camps prepared me for being there. Feeling something is a thousand times more powerful than reading something, for there are no words to describe bearing witness to the suffering of a child, day in day out, nor seeing their parents' anguish and despair at being helpless to prevent it.

Although it's the conflict in Syria that has been dominating the headlines in Europe over the past seven years, the numbers or refugees and displaced peoples are growing worldwide. According to a recent report from the World Bank, tens of millions more people will be forced to flee their homes over the next decade. The effects of climate change alone may result in 140 million people becoming internally displaced in just three regions of the developing world by 2050.[41]

This massive movement of people, both internally and across borders, will put enormous pressure on infrastructure, resources, services, and jobs, causing huge issues for local and national governments, and increased risk of conflict, threat to

40   Ibid.

41   Rigaud, Kanta Kumari; de Sherbinin, Alex; Jones, Bryan; Bergmann, Jonas; Clement, Viviane; Ober, Kayly; Schewe, Jacob; Adamo, Susana; McCusker, Brent; Heuser, Silke; Midgley, Amelia. 2018. Groundswell : Preparing for Internal Climate Migration. World Bank, Washington, DC. © World Bank. https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/29461 License: CC BY 3.0 IGO.

42   Ibid.

43   Matthew Taylor, "Climate change 'will create world's biggest refugee crisis'", The Guardian, (November 2 2017) Retrieved at https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/nov/02/climate-change-will-create-worlds-biggest-refugee-crisis

Swingset at refugee camp

governance and economic, social, and political stability.[42] Sir David King, former chief scientific adviser to the UK government, warned that we are facing a crisis that "requires a human response on a scale that has never been achieved before."[43]

If part of belonging means becoming a full, active participant in society, then by allowing children to spend months or even years of their childhood living in refugee settlements without access to high quality early childhood care and education, proactive psychosocial support, and targeted language and mental health intervention, we are robbing them of their chance to reach their full potential, and potentially their ability to ever feel a true sense of belonging, before they even step into a classroom.

Improving capacity for supporting the healthy development of children in refugee settlements and gaining a better understanding of how to support refugee and migrant children with integration in host communities post conflict is an urgent priority for world leaders, not only to meet the needs and protect the rights of the millions of individuals affected, but also to ensure a safe and secure future for the world.

While we cannot erase the grief, loss, or trauma caused by conflicts or disasters, we have a moral obligation to ensure that every child has their universal rights upheld and that they have equal opportunity to become citizens of the world. Providing holistic children's services that support development and well-being through play-based intervention can improve the life chances of refugee children and should be seen as of equal importance to education and other needs if they are to be given the best chance at becoming full and active participants in society.

What does belonging mean to a child? First and foremost children identify as children. Wherever they are born, wherever they live, they all have the same hopes and fears, wishes, and dreams, and they all have the same innate desire to play.

Childhood is precious—children only get one shot at living it and adults only have one shot at getting it right for children. The children of today are the custodians of the future: their future rests in our hands but we mustn't forget, ultimately the future of the world rests in their hands.

Stills from Romain Vakilitabar's short virtual reality documentary *Strangers* (2017).
Access the film at otheringandbelonging.org/strangers.

How Technology Could Bridge the Gap of Compassion

Romain Vakilitabar

with stills from his documentary Strangers (2017).
Access the film at otheringandbelonging.org/strangers

After the 2016 election, I drove twelve hours to learn more about America's invisible political majority. In order to get there, I had to pass through hundreds of miles of forgotten stories, buried memories, unrecognized sacrifices, and rusted machinery, digging deep into the troughs of lost prosperity. This was rural Middle America, and I was desperate to understand why so many in this heartland had harvested their hopes and cast their ballots for a presidential candidate who spoke against everything that I believed, who stood unwaveringly against who I was. I needed to confront my fears and see for myself why some of these folks appeared to want me dead.

I was deeply afraid of what I would find. I was afraid of what my dark beard, hazel eyes, and Middle Eastern brow would evoke. I had no road map, no contacts, no place to stay. I had two weeks and one goal—to seek understanding in the belly of the beast.

Historian and social psychologist Reza Aslan states that the best way to counter Islamophobia is to know just one person who is Muslim. And yet, despite living in a country that claims to be a melting pot, one in four people in the United States don't know a single person who is Muslim.[1] Aslan's hypothesis is consistent with intergroup contact theory, which proposes that the best way to counter prejudice, discrimination, and fear of the "other" is through intimate exposure and contact to *difference*.

The truth of the matter is that, as a son of immigrant parents, born and raised in a cosmopolitan city, I had never really met these "monsters" who were using their voting power to undermine my existence. And as I mustered my courage and drove out to Middle America, I never expected to find what I found: incredible hospitality, kindness, and warmth.

No shotguns were brandished. Instead, perceptions changed on both sides. I befriended a different manifestation of conservatism than what I had been exposed to. And they met a different manifestation of liberal/cosmopolitan/Middle East than they might have expected.

I recognized then the true monster: isolation. This monster has the power to make people afraid of others who may carry different identities or hold different ideologies or occupy different lands. This was the monster I needed to fight.

By November 2016, it had become evident that America was deeply polarized and becoming more radicalized and divided than ever before. The election catalyzed empirical research and evidence showing how bifurcated and isolated we had become across political, racial, religious, and socioeconomic lines. It also became evident that media and technology—tools of incredible power and scale—were reinforcing our isolating echo chambers and facilitating antagonism among those who had divergent political views.

As a technologist and a millennial, I have spent the last couple of years taking a deeper look at how technology has widened gaps in compassion and understanding, and how, if done right, technology can do the opposite: foster empathy across lines of difference. I created *Pathos* as a nonprofit laboratory to explore this hypothesis. I have used virtual reality as the mechanism to immerse audiences in the lives and realities

1   Mona Chalabi, "Americans Are More Likely to Like Muslims If They Know One," FiveThirtyEight (February 13, 2015), available online at https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/americans-are-more-likely-to-like-muslims-if-they-know-one/.

of others, those who they may not understand, to show that despite the differences people are more alike than they may imagine.

"Strangers" is a virtual reality, 360-degree experience featuring three mothers who exist at opposite ends of the political, religious, cultural, geographic, social spectrums from one another. But their stories converge as they all feel invisible to, and forgotten by, the country they call home. These three mothers—a farmer in rural Oklahoma; an Iraqi refugee in Denver, Colorado; and a Black Lives Matter activist in St. Louis, Missouri—shared their homes and their stories with me. While they seemingly have little in common, their lives converge on the shared feeling of living in the country's shadows.

In August, *Pathos* will embark on a trip across the country to interview two thousand individuals from forty communities, who represent the country's incredibly diverse political, racial, religious, gender, and socioeconomic identities. We will take virtual and augmented reality technologies to underserved and isolated communities, thus beginning to address the pervasive technology gap and, ultimately, bring the resulting content to university campuses. There, *Pathos* will work with students to discuss diversity in America, reach understanding across lines of difference, and think about the biases that may exist within each of us.

[00:46]   "I am proud to be an American."

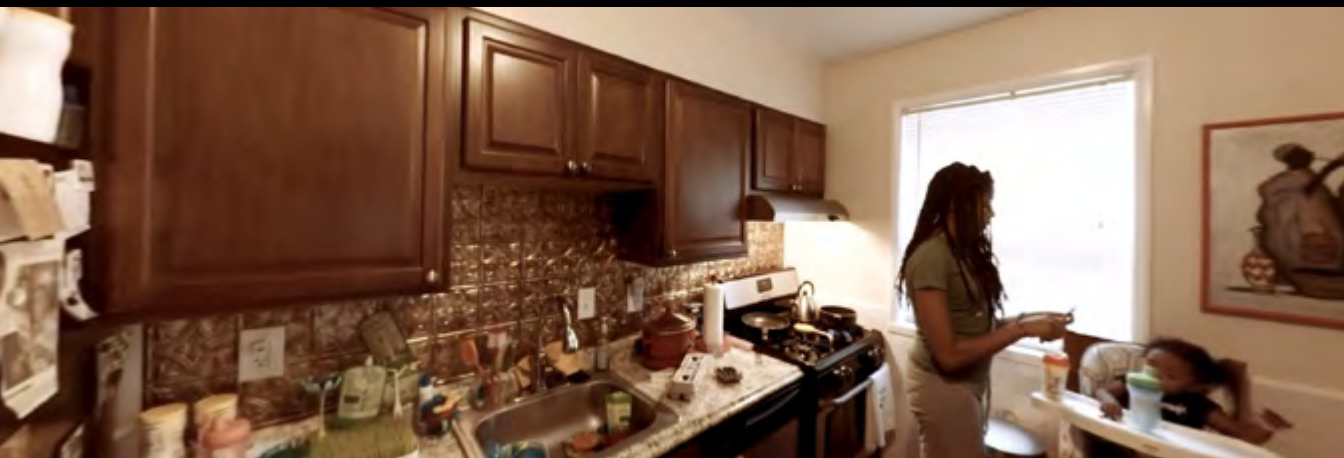[00:56]   "Where at least I know I am free."

[01:06]   "But I won't forget the men I know who died."

[02:54]   "We strive for a country that recognizes our lives matter."

[03:02]   "Our lives did not matter to Iraq. So we left. Our lives did not matter to Syria. So we fled."

[03:02]   "Our lives did not matter to Iraq. So we left. Our lives did not matter to Syria. So we fled."

@haasinstitute

[03:33]   "Will our lives be recognized for our hard work and sacrifices?"

[04:14]   "Sacrifices were made to this country by our ancestors, whose bodies fed the prosperity of men who would not even recognize their humanity. It's long overdue. Recognize us."

[03:59] "Has our country forgotten how much we have given to it? Why is our share taken and given to those who haven't made the sacrifice?"

[04:36] "Recognize us. We may look like strangers, but we love as you love. We have hopes for our children, as you have. We wish for peace, as you do. We pray for safety and for health. And we dream of the freedom that we have never had before."

[07:08]   "I am a stranger to the future generations who may never know that we cultivated this land with them in mind."

[07:42]   "I am a stranger to those who will continue where I left off."

[07:22]   "I am a stranger to the future generations who may never know that we marched for them.
We marched for their liberation."

[08:42]   "This is what hope looks like."

OTHERING & BELONGING

EXPANDING THE CIRCLE OF HUMAN CONCERN

To download a PDF or access all the
content in this issue and more, visit
OTHERINGANDBELONGING.ORG

OTHERING & BELONGING
EXPANDING THE CIRCLE OF HUMAN CONCERN

Othering & Belonging is produced and published by the Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society at UC Berkeley. The vision of the Haas Institute is to bring together researchers, community members, policymakers, and communicators to identify and challenge the barriers to a just, inclusive, and sustainable society in order to catalyze transformative change. The framework of *Othering and Belonging* reflects the broader mission of the Haas Institute to interrogate and challenge social cleavages and hierarchies based on power, privilege, and access to resources. *Othering & Belonging* integrates different fields of practice and scholarship in order to challenge othering, advance belonging, and expand the circle of human concern.

haas institute
FOR A FAIR AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETY