



**SEEKING REFUGE:
FAITH-BASED APPROACHES
TO FORCED MIGRATION**

Poverty and Peacemaking II
March 3–4, 2017 at Princeton University

Roundtable Summaries



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Gender and Migration

Erin Wilson, University of Groningen (Moderator)

Hind Alowais, UN Women

Anindita Chatterjee Bhaumik, Connect Faith

Andrew Fuys, Church World Service

Maria Perales, Princeton University (Student Rapporteur)

Questions to be addressed

- How do gender, religious and racial identities intersect as part of the migration/displacement experience and what implication does this have for policy practice and people's lives?
- How do experiences of migrants themselves challenge or support approaches from governments and civil society regarding gender, religion and migration?
- What are the specific needs of people experiencing displacement across the different phases of displacement?
- What current approaches are effective and sensitive to migrant experiences and needs, and what could or should be improved?
- What role do secular actors and assumptions play in the analysis of religion, gender, and migration?

Introduction:

- Migrants are concerned about religious organizations (hostility, anti-LGBT, conversion). While these concerns should be taken seriously, this understanding should be critiqued in the context of the assumptions and work of secular organizations

Anindita Bhaumik, Connect Faith

- The organization raises awareness and has done work with organizations about domestic violence, gender-based and sexual assault. Forced migration in the context of Hindus in Bangladesh isn't well known. State involvement makes it impossible to stay in homes. Also because of infringed citizenship, children and women are more vulnerable. Women experience forced migration differently than men because of pre-existing gender inequalities. The capacity to seek help is diminished by the loss of self, subject to abuses/violence.

Anecdote

- A Hindu woman talked to her through session about missing India and was glad to see someone from her culture. Her husband threatened to kick her out, physically abused her in front of her family. She reminded her that she couldn't leave because women



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who had fled had been raped (these news were circulating). She started having night terrors and stomach pains. She couldn't return India and the U.S. didn't feel like home because of cultural and language differences. Furthermore, she felt stigmatized by the few families she met in temple in the U.S.

Reflection

- Faith doesn't always give protection. Hindus also try to set themselves as model minorities.
- Victim of two types of forced migration: the turmoil of the region + domestic abuse
- She doesn't feel like the society as a whole has given these women the resources, but also, the organizations aren't doing the work because she is the only Hindu speaker in the entire Massachusetts area. This aspect is missing from the work.

Andrew Fuys, Church World Service

- For some, faith is the only form of support. The ability and space to practice faith is critical for survivals of trauma as well as those that are threatened by social, legal and remains of migration. Church World Service also sees gender-nonconforming and other minorities that may not otherwise have any other support.
- Surveyed LGBTQ asylum seekers in South Africa and found that faith is still very fundamental for their being. However, some still felt unsafe in their faith/temples. For those that felt safe, they had been able to tap into accepting temples, but even then, they had experienced xenophobia or hadn't been able to receive services in their language.
- The organization had taken the stance that faith is understood as exclusive to sexual and gender minorities, but they had been finding interest from LGBTQ individuals about faith.
- Through the process they have been able to connect with religious leaders and organize locally. Being forced out of space is actually a common threat by nationals and folk seeking refugee/asylum protections. The organization is currently trying to bridge this together.

Hind Alowais, UN Women

- Migration should be interested in the context. It can be happening internally, externally and involve different degrees of agency, coercion, and incentives. Migration is always made by social, economically, political pressures, constructs and norms. This will help us better understand how to serve our migrants.
 - o Response for environmental migration very different than with conflict migration (i.e. Syrian refugees)



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- Gender is political. Home also becomes political. Thinking about policy and UN women and how one views their needs. Until men stop being the “default” legally, socially, economically, gender equality will mean women equality.
- UN Women is trying to include equality into global agenda. Women’s equality and empowerment became a goal on its own, but is also included in other seventeen goals.
- How do we make sure gender is integrated in migration? UN has advocated for acknowledging needs of oppressed sexual and gender individuals. They are trying to develop and push for creation of policies that are gender sensitive and understanding of the heterogeneity of migrants.

Discussion and questions

- Multiple sources of trauma (not just migration) for people on the move – language, culture, sexual identity and religion, faith
- Identities are transformed by the interaction with governmental and other humanitarian agencies?
- White men considered the norm—How do we involve men? (Only two in the room)

How can we conduct effective outreach in the ground/local level?

- Anindita: It’s very difficult because identities are different when they arrived. They are transforming at the time. However, places of worship are potential places/fundamental. Workshops at public libraries.
- Andrew: There’s a weekly meeting space at the detention centers for clients. He says his organization has found it to be a valuable starting point. When carrying out faith religious leader, you have to be reflective in doing it in a way that allows for them to respond/feel safe about doing it.
- Hind: Since gender and home are political, try to connect it to the UN. Even when we are working with individuals in the personal level, we reflect/become strategic about the institutional level. We want to use local level to make global/macro level changes.

We have to look at subliminal misogynistic messages. We are in a heteronormative male society, so we should begin early. From working with men, we should start programs early.

- Hind: When talking about gender equality, first we need to address women’s inequality but also, the accepted characteristics of masculinity. Power doesn’t exist in a vacuum.
- Sanctuary cities are needed or at least places of worships. Even within groups, they call things different names. Queer for example. At the UN, there’s no legal instrument and convention, we are taking this under the same agenda.
- Anindita: We need to hold our government, our representatives and officials accountable and encourage them to be proud of their culture.

Some of the notes taken by student rapporteurs were submitted as rough notes from the session rather than as a polished summary.



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On the Ground Lessons from an International Perspective

Tahir Zaman, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) (Moderator)
Hajar al-Kaddo, Human Appeal
Gabe Huck, Iraqi/Syrian Student Project
Theresa Kubasak, Iraqi/Syrian Student Project
Isis Sunwoo, World Vision International
Jenna Spitzer, Princeton University (Student Rapporteur)

In this roundtable, representatives from community-based organizations and international NGOs reflected upon their approaches to providing aid to forced migrants, recognizing the differences and similarities across their ideals and practices.

The session began with an introduction by the moderator of the roundtable, Tahir Zaman, from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). Tahir encouraged the participants to focus, during the session, on “our own position and perspectives on the issue – what are we missing?” Because “every perspective has blind spots,” Tahir hoped that the differences in perspectives of the participants could enable the discussion to tease out answers to the questions, “What are the lessons? For whom? What do they teach us about faith, humanitarianism, and mass displacement?”

Gabe Huck and Theresa Kubasak, founders of the Iraqi/Syrian Student Project, then offered their perspective from the ground: how they had developed a program for Iraqi and Syrian refugees in Egypt to enable students to receive scholarships to attend college in the United States. With one of their alumni present, Mohammed Eisa, and the moderator as a previous volunteer teacher, Gabe and Theresa explained how they had never tried to become an NGO but relied on “a whole community and net of people” to make their work possible.

Isis Sunwoo from World Vision International then explained how her organization, though operating at a much larger scale than Gabe and Theresa, is “not an eyeglasses organization. We are a child focused, Christian advocacy organization in over 100 countries with 46,000 staff around the world.” In its efforts to address 130 humanitarian crises in 63 different countries in 2016, Isis described how World Vision remained committed to “living out” the motto, “as international as necessary, as local as possible.” For instance, World Vision hires 90% of its staff from the communities they work with.

Hajar al-Kaddo, from Human Appeal, then spoke to the panel via Skype about her knowledge of Turkey’s response to the Syrian refugee crisis and Human Appeal’s attempt to provide long-term solutions to the crisis that “we all know is here to stay.” Hajar suggested that the Turkish government modeled their cultural ideal of accepting refugees as



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their guests, but that their approach failed to predict the continuity of refugees entering the country and the long-term solutions needed to address the crisis. Human Appeal, in its effort to provide long term solutions, is thus focusing on finding “housing, suitable work, language training, psychological and social support” for refugees. Tahir then asked Hajar about the potential limits of approaching refugees as guests: “Doesn’t that pigeonhole people into binary roles of host and guest? Shouldn’t we be looking to go beyond a host and guest framework?”

Although Hajar’s internet connection dropped before she could fully reply to Tahir’s question, Mitzi Schroeder from Jesuit Refugee Service responded that, in her experience, refugees do not always want to be subsumed into their new society, just as her great grandmother had lived in New York without learning English because she preferred to remain in her German community. Mohammed suggested that refugees may need extra encouragement to integrate, to which Mitzi said: “It’s fine to say we should encourage people to reconcile and communicate between host and refugee. It’s one thing to encourage; it’s another to force. To force would contradict the dignity of the refugees. People need to have that choice and be helped to understand the benefits of having relationships, but that has to be a dialogue – it can’t be a forced choice.”

Towards the end of the session Tahir presented another provocative question: “Are international NGOs really on the ground? Are they learning from migrants themselves? How do we learn from the people who are on the move?” Tahir explained that, while in Greece, he saw the capacity of migrants there to create sustainable lives for themselves in the space that had been created for them in the city. Without relying on international NGOs, these migrants had established communities and structures of support suggesting, Tahir proposed, that organizations should be learning from refugees and creating space for them to establish lives independently, as opposed to relying upon aid organizations.

In response, representatives of NGOs at the session reinforced the primacy of individuals on-the-ground in dictating the decisions of large-scale organizations. Isis recognized, “We need to do better to bring voices into policy conversation, but most of our staff are in those communities. They tell us how things are and we respond to what they say.” Similarly, Mitzi noted, “the majority of our staff and volunteers are refugees or are living in villages with refugees. Almost all of our staff members are drawn from local communities.” And Joel Charny, President of Norwegian Refugee Council – USA and former Vice President of InterAction, pointed out “the irony” of being an international aid NGO: that these organizations are criticized for interfering when they provide aid, but “when we’re not there, we are criticized for not being there.” Instead of relinquishing the role of NGOs, Charny suggested that these international organizations and community-based groups each have their role to play in the network of support, and that the goal of those in the aid community should be to “look at how we can work together better to build on our strengths.”



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Interfaith Approaches to Migration

Reverend Kyoichi Sugino, Religions of Peace (Moderator)
Imam Shamsi Ali, Nusantara Foundation
Rabbi Rachel Grant Meyer, HIAS
Daniel O'Neill, Christian Journal for Global Health
Adjoa Mante, Princeton University (Student Rapporteur)

After introducing the panelists, Rev. Sugino discussed the various arguments against accepting refugees, including the absence of responsibility or benefits to receptor nations and threats to the host country in terms of security or scarcity. Each of the panelists followed with a discussion of theological approaches to migrants from their faith tradition in addition to modern interfaith initiatives.

Rabbi Rachel Grant Meyer, HIAS

Rabbi Rachel Grant Meyer spoke about the importance of welcoming the stranger in the Jewish faith in light of the teachings of the Torah and the historical oppression lived by the Jewish people. Noting that the word “stranger” is repeated more than anything else in the Torah, Rabbi Grant Meyer stated “The Torah is unambiguous and unequivocal about how one is to treat the stranger....we are to welcome and protect the stranger – more than that...we are to love the stranger. [further reference: Leviticus 19:34]” Moreover she argued that the textual justification for this commandment stems from the historical experience of the Jews as strangers themselves in Egypt; they are to ensure that no other peoples experience the same oppression they suffered in Egypt. Further linking the Jewish faith to the theme of migration, Rabbi Grant Meyer reasoned that the Jewish experience as refugees was in fact “foundational to becoming a...people guided by law.” Given the importance of the stranger in the Torah and the historical experience of the Jewish people themselves as refugees, the Rabbi asserted, welcoming and loving the stranger and the refugee is a critical part of the Jewish faith.

Rabbi Grant Meyer continued with a discussion of the work done by HIAS, an organization that draws from this Judaic tradition to engage in service and advocacy in support of refugees. Through reference to a variety of internal and collaborative initiatives in which HIAS participates – including advocacy, education, volunteering, charitable giving, coalitions with local churches etc. – she highlighted the potential for faith-based action. Indeed, Rabbi Grant Meyer argued, “Religious communities uniquely positioned to address fear against welcoming refugees” since the Torah urges individuals to act in spite of fear.



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Imam Shamsi Ali, Nusantara Foundation

Imam Shamsi Ali discussed migration in the Islamic tradition, through reference to the experience of The Prophet and core tenets of the religion. Imam Ali stated that the Prophet himself was a migrant three times, his most famous migration being when he fled Mecca to enter Medina. In addition to this historical relationship with migration, Imam Ali asserted that the Islamic tradition supports migrants based upon the following moral grounds and beliefs: God is merciful to those who show mercy; the highest level of faith is demonstrated through an indiscriminate kindness; service and hospitality to others are seen as signs of faith; a harm to any individual is a harm to all of us; since the future is unknown, one ought to serve in the present; and lastly, easing the difficulties of others leads to God easing your difficulties in the time of judgments.

In further reflection, Imam Ali argued that the nation must discuss the root causes of forced migration, which include the lack of opportunities in countries due to oppressive regimes and wars influenced by the West. Ultimately, Imam Ali claims the policy of solely aiding refugees when they get to the US (and not addressing the root issues of migration) is akin to “providing Advil for cancer patients.”

Daniel O’Neill, MD, MA(Th), Christian Journal for Global Health

Dr. O’Neill engaged in a brief survey and application of key biblical texts for a theological approach to migration as a moral imperative in the Christian tradition. Dr. O’Neill underlined the equality between foreigners and the Jewish people in the Bible, citing the belief that all people are made in the image of God and deserve respect. Furthermore, Dr. O’Neill asserted that foreigners (*ger*) were included under the same laws in the *Torah* because of God’s love for them. Dr. O’Neill also noted that equality and unity in worship were enshrined values; inclusiveness was written into the structure of the temple. Referencing the New Testament, Dr. O’Neill argued that this equality was present in John’s eschatological vision of the inclusive society - “the leaves from the tree of life are for the healing of all peoples.” (Rev 22)

In further support of the biblical case for supporting migrants, Dr. O’Neill argued that the six Levitical cities of refuge show a pattern of transcultural permanency in God’s intention for humanity. As highlighted by Dr. O’Neill, these six cities of refuge were for Jews *and foreigners* and were forms of divine justice and provision. Dr. O’Neill argued that these “6 cities of refuge with significant Hebrew names (“set apart” “to carry a burden”, “fellowship, collaborative”, “protected”, “lifted up”, and “enfolding joy”), express[ed] the heart of God and call to his people.”



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Additionally, Dr. O’Neill noted, “Jesus identifies himself with the foreigner, the oppressed – “If you support them, you’re supporting me,” drawn from Matthew 25. Furthermore, Dr. O’Neill argued that Paul calls for the practice of hospitality (*philoxenia*) “love to the stranger” in contrast to *xenophobia*– to incorporate refugees as family. Referencing the current tensions within the Christian community, Dr. O’Neill reiterated, “Though there is an existing disconnect between belief and practice, fear and over-commitment to safety, and conflation of political loyalty with the gospel; there is emerging interdenominational commitment – a call to return to the character of God, the words of the prophets, unity and the supreme example of Messiah.”

Rev. Kyoichi Sugino, Religions for Peace

Rev. Sugino commented that Baha’i, Hindu, Christian, Muslim, Jewish and Buddhist leaders have issued statements welcoming refugees and reaffirming commitment to accepting refugees. He then opened the discussion to consider how to use these rich religious traditions to counter the political arguments against accepting refugees.

During the roundtable discussion, participants and panelists discussed tactics to address arguments against accepting refugees within faith communities, reframing “religious freedom” and examples of interfaith collaboration. Rabbi Grant Meyer argued that the strength of faith-based organizations is their ability to correct misunderstandings through both information and moral imperatives. In response, one participant asked, “How do we respond to these questions in a political context in which facts no longer have traction?” Rabbi Grant Meyer and Rev. Sugino then discussed the potential to emphasize the moral aspect in faith-based traditions and the fact that since 9/11, none of the hundreds of thousands of refugees accepted by the US have been arrested on domestic terrorism charges. Imam Shamsi Ali reiterated the importance of interfaith collaboration in addressing misconceptions spurred by the actions of the Trump administration; he cited recent collaborations including the “today I’m a Muslim too” rally. Dr. O’Neill also referenced the importance of relying on evidence and research “to sharpen the product of service” amongst faith-based organizations. He further argued that the modern day idolatries of materialism, isolationism, security and safety must be addressed to emphasize the importance of service.

Further topics of discussion included the difficulty of “reach[ing] those (Trump supporters) who don’t feel that there is plenty in America, those for whom this moral imperative is foreign.” In response, Rabbi Grant Meyer argued that refugee work must be done in coalition with organizations working on poverty relief and education to comprehensively address the problems of scarcity.

The panelists closed by reiterating the importance of the unity demonstrated by interfaith collaborations, the need for cross-faith identification and solidarity, the importance of advocacy, and the necessity of stepping outside of our natural spheres of influence to expand our sphere.



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List of Participants

Rachel Steinberg, UNICEF USA
Emma Coley, Princeton University
Claire Denton-Spalding, Princeton University
Rhonda Maguire, Mobile Minds of NJ + Baha'i Faith
Somayeh Malekian, Columbia University
Dennis McAuliffe, Georgetown University
Brittany Smith, Princeton University
Thad Winkle, Princeton Theological Seminary & Reformed Church of
Highland Park
Andreas Hipple, GHR Foundation
Sana Malik, Wichita State University
Chan (Rukmin) Jamoona, Hindu Charities
Chelsea Langston Bombino, Center for Public Justice
Sam Speers, Vassar College
Jonathan Golden, Drew University

Further Reference: Initiatives in the Christian Tradition

<https://wewelcomerefugees.com/>
<http://evangelicalimmigrationtable.com/>
<http://theimmigrationalliance.org/>
<http://actalliance.org/act-news/act-alliance-joins-unicef-refugees-welcome-programme/>



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Global Citizenship in an Era of Nationalism

Aaron Tyler, University of St. Mary's (Moderator)
Tom Dobbins Jr., Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of New York
Athena Mison Fulay, International Institute of Education
Daniel Perell, Baha'i Representative to the United Nations
Tamara Mann Tweel, Hillel International
Talya Nevins, Princeton University (Student Rapporteur)

Throughout the *Seeking Refuge* conference, panelists and participants engaged with the themes of borders, migration, cross-cultural empathy, international responsibility, and identity formation. In addition to being relevant to the topic of the conference, these themes feel especially timely in the current geopolitical climate. Dominant voices in today's public discourse promote closed borders and prioritize nationalist goals, eschewing language about shared responsibility for wellness and safety around the globe. For this reason, the morning roundtable discussion on "Global Citizenship in an Era of Nationalism" was an especially pertinent conversation. The discussion framed different religious approaches to citizenship and to refugees within the context of today's geopolitical environment.

Professor Aaron Tyler from the University of St. Mary's moderated the panel, which included panelists Tom Dobbins Jr. of Catholic Charities; Athena Mison Fulay of the International Institute of Education and Community of Sant'Egidio; Daniel Perell, who is the Baha'i representative to the United Nations; and Tamara Mann Tweel from Hillel International's Office of Innovation. Professor Tyler opened the discussion with remarks about the disconcerting rise of real, imagined, and rhetorical fears about the movement of people. He drew an opposition between constricted nationalism—which causes "an inability to accept people beyond its physical and ideological boundaries as equal in worth of dignity"—and global citizenship. According to Professor Tyler's definition, global citizenship implies a "positive sum relationship rooted in recognition of inherent dignity and value in each person simply because we are human." In order to further unpack this concept, Professor Tyler asked each of the panelists to draw on his or her faith's theologies of belonging and to reflect on the distinction between *de facto* and *du jure* citizenship in a religious, twenty-first century context.

Professor Tyler structured the discussion around two main questions and allowed each panelist five minutes to address each question. First, he asked the panelists: "Share with us some of your thoughts about this idea of global citizenship. What does it mean to you? What are some ways to think about this concept through the lens of your faith tradition?"

Tom Dobbins spoke first, stressing that global citizenship is already our reality, and explained that the commandment to "love thy neighbor as thyself" requires us to incorporate that reality



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into our reflections on who our neighbors are. Therefore, Catholic Charities works on interfaith and cross-cultural projects to “help the people who are active participants in global citizenship—refugees, immigrants, veterans, unemployed people—those who may not be on the better side of global citizenship.”

Athena Fulay spoke next about academia as an example of a transnational community that relies on global citizenship for free exchange of scholarship. According to Fulay, global citizenry means that everyone in the world shares a common home on this planet, although she problematized the term “citizenry” because of the intrinsic exclusivity of citizenship. She explained Sant’Egidio as a global community with members all over the world who encounter and befriend people on the periphery of society. The focus is on community, meeting face-to-face and discussing lives and concerns, in line with the Christian or Catholic idea of treating the stranger as a brother. Professor Tyler pointed out that this is easier said than done. After recognizing that global citizenship means sharing a common home, how do we live it? How do we teach it? The panelists agreed that it is essential to begin the process through being in relationship with one another— not through a dynamic of power.

Daniel Perell presented the Baha’i philosophy of global community as a belief that humanity goes through a series of collective maturations. First we focus on family, then immediate community, then nation, and then ultimately, the global society. Like Dobbins, Perell believes that we live in the age of global society and that we are adjusting to that reality. According to Perell, “the sense that the earth’s inhabitants are the leaves of one tree is slowly becoming the standard by which humanity’s collective efforts are now judged,” and if a policy (for example) is bad for one branch, it will harm the whole tree. As systems change, disintegration and integration happen simultaneously; it is time to challenge the existing paradigms that benefit one branch over the expense of the whole tree, even if they are politically powerful.

Next, Tamara Mann Tweel presented some Jewish texts and thought processes on the question of how the religious imagination can provide a constructive theology of belonging. She cited three main principles of Judaism that do this without relying on defining the stranger or the other. The first principle is *b’tzelem elohim*, or the belief that all people are created in the divine image. The second principle is *hachnasat orchim*, hospitality, and the humbling of oneself before one’s guests. The third principle is that of welcoming the stranger— a commandment that is given to the Jews thirty six times, indicating how difficult it is to uphold.

Professor Tyler’s second guiding question to the panelists was: “As you think about today’s global climate in the era of nationalism, what are some ways in which we might pursue and practice global citizenship in day-to-day practical ways?”



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Tom Dobbins answered with three basic steps: first, broaden our imaginations of what global citizenship can look like; second, practice what Pope Francis calls “the culture or civilization of Encounter;” and third, encourage one another to go across borders and boundaries to make friends with people different from ourselves in terms of background or ideology. Encountering another person comes in an atmosphere of mutual respect, inquiry, coming together, exchanging information, winding up as friends. Not only must we encounter people from the other side of the planet, but we must seek encounters with people on the opposite end of the ideological spectrum. This question of ideological encounter was a recurring challenge for the panelists and participants as we struggled with the prospect of lowering our ideological defenses in the pursuit of meaningful engagement with our political opponents.

Athena Fulay also focused on this concept of “bubbles” and echo chambers, insisting that we need to be better at listening and understanding our country’s historical wounds like slavery. She suggested several practical initiatives: educating ourselves about other peoples’ struggles through travel and meaningful encounters; looking closely at the problems within America’s version of citizenry; engaging rather than fleeing or fighting when faced with confrontation; doing service and pursuing conversations; and reinstating hospitality as an important value in our country and in our daily lives.

Dan Perell further suggested adjusting our frame of reference for thinking not only about what is a nation, but what is a citizen. He insisted that we must question the paradigms we use to define “the other,” such as the paradigm of “developed” and “developing” countries. How do we practice the ethic of global citizenry? Where do we choose to live? What do we teach our kids? How can we expect to achieve better social integration if we, for example, continue to move to culturally homogenous districts because of the best schools?

Tamara Mann Tweel also focused her final answer on the concept of changing our own every day behavior to make our country and communities more welcoming. Even if we can’t change the law, there is great space right now to shift the culture of welcoming in our country. Faith-oriented people in particular can offer examples of the culture of welcoming, as shown at the airport protests around the country last month. She argued that the religious idea of individual dignity and worth can work against the social-science-constructed dominant urge to define people based on categories or identity groups.

The panel then turned into a group discussion on these two main questions as well as some others that participants brought up or that Professor Tyler used at the beginning. The conversation was thoughtful and fruitful, but ultimately these are questions that we must continue to engage with, now more than ever. How might we imagine new radical ways of expanding the idea of belonging in a new global community? Is global citizenship the right conception for this new conception of belonging? How might faith traditions lead the way or set the stage? Through religious traditions, what opportunities can faith offer our human



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community? How can they help us traverse this era of isolationism and division? What are the spiritual and practical responses that can come from our faith?



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Root Causes of Forced Migration

David Hollenbach, Georgetown University (Moderator)
Wa'el Alzayat, Emerge USA
Diane Paulsell, Cristosal
Madeline Rose, Mercy Corps
Julia Casazza, Princeton University (Student Rapporteur)

Root Causes of Forced Migration began with an encouragement by Fr. David Hollenbach, to extend the definition of “refugee” beyond the five typical criteria proposed by the United Nations. Drawing upon the work of Alexander Betts, Fr. Hollenbach proposed including in the definition of refugee individuals who face threats to their basic rights, insufficient economic resources, or infringements upon their basic freedoms. In a nod to the diverse factors responsible for forced migration, Fr. Hollenbach noted that “you can’t separate the conflict in Darfur with the expansion of deserts there – they’re interwoven”. Fr. Hollenbach then introduced the roundtable’s three featured speakers – Diane Paulsell, Madeline Rose, and Wa’el Alzayat.

Diane Paulsell, Board President of Cristosal, provided an overview of the forces driving forced migration in the Northern Triangle region of Central America. Second only to Syria in terms of violence, this region includes El Salvador, whose capital city suffers from a murder rate of 200 out of 100,000 people. In response to the murder, intimidation, extortion, and gender-based violence encountered by its citizens, the Salvadorian government relies on an “iron first approach,” employing excessive force directed at populations assumed to be associated with gangs. Corruption within the police force and the possibility of re-victimization at the hands of criminal organizations block victims’ efforts to gain protection. Particularly vulnerable are LGBT individuals and women, who the government fails to protect from hate crimes.

Over 560,000 people were internally displaced within the Northern Triangle region in 2014 alone. These refugees remain “invisible” to many Americans due to the “drop-by-drop” nature of their migration, Paulsell noted. By forming relationships with state institutions that acknowledge forced displacement, including El Salvador’s Human Rights Ombudsman and the Salvador Women’s Institute, Cristosal strengthens these institutions’ capacity to serve their citizens. Offering psychosocial and legal services, Cristosal helps victims of gang-related violence reclaim their rights. Given the challenges associated with attaining refugee status in the United States, Cristosal advocates a community development-based approach to in country relocation, which looks to “make communities more resistant to violence.”

Mercy Corps policy advisor Madeline Rose focused her introduction on the connections between violence, forced migration, and international development. Currently, 80% of



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humanitarian aid benefits people fleeing violence and oppression, which, Rose noted, constitutes a marked contrast from the previous status quo. Adding to this challenge, the nature of violence has changed; 40% of those victimized by violence are civilians, cities are often the target of violence, and perpetrators prove difficult to trace. Amidst a changing background of humanitarian needs, Mercy Corps studies how refugees survive and adapt to their new communities. Rose pointed out that technology supports a “transnational sense of identity” by allowing refugees to stay in contact with distant family members and conduct money transfers. Mercy Corps investigates the factors linked to refugee “rootedness” in Jordan, Afghanistan, and Somalia, including access to jobs, nationality, and identity, with the hope of increasing the efficacy of humanitarian intervention. Closer to home, Rose underscored the need to strengthen and organize anti-war efforts in the United States. The success of Mercy Corps’ resilience-based approach rests upon a de-escalation of violent conflict throughout the world.

Wa’el Alzayat, who served as senior policy advisor on Iraq and Syria to former U.S. Ambassador to the UN Samantha Power, provided a brief overview of the refugee crisis in Syria, where the largest perpetrator of violence against Syrians is the Assad government. The government’s “medieval tactics of besieging an area, allowing people to starve, and forcing them to surrender” account for the 12 million people – half of Syria’s population – that are displaced. As an ally of the Syrian government, Russia’s bombing campaign increased the rate of Syrians trying to get into Europe tenfold. This influx of displaced persons challenges European and American commitment to their core ideals, damaging unity within these nations. Alzayat pointed out that, faced with a divided political environment, the United States’ “lack of resolve” allows the drivers of forced migration to persist. Even without an immediate solution to its conflict, Syria needs a cease-fire to protect civilians and allow maturation of the political process – but such a cease-fire would likely require American intervention.

Farzin Ilych, director of Visions of Peace, pointed to the United States’ role in destabilizing North Africa and the Middle East, including its intervention in Libya and the “catastrophic failure” of NGOs. If the purpose of this panel is to address the root causes of forced migration, he insisted, then we must acknowledge our own responsibility for displacement of persons. Alzayat defended American intervention in Libya, noting that a failure to stop Qaddafi’s then-impending march on Benghazi would have valued the life of a dictator over those of civilians. “Without American intervention, Libya would look like Syria today,” Alzayat commented, “and I would take one hundred Libyas over one Syria.” Addressing the role of the U.S. government in preventing conflict, Rose pointed out that Samantha Power worked on legal frameworks of human security and was interested in devising an early preventative strategy; however, lacking civilian support, these strategies will never come to fruition. Rose also noted that the U.S. government’s tendency to contract out projects to NGOs results from its concern that aid funds will be diverted to support terrorism. Wary of



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this “McDonaldization of humanitarian involvement,” Mercy Corps does not accept contracts from the U.S. government.

The conversation then turned to the topic of engagement with refugees and other displaced persons. Paola Stevens, the director of Interfaith-RISE in Highland Park, urged those engaged in refugee work to “listen to the local people and their daily practices,” citing an instance in which, as an aid volunteer, she was tasked with distributing 200 sleeping bags to 1500 displaced Salvadorians who had never seen such an object before. Paulsell described Cristosal’s public awareness campaigns and its Civil Society Roundtable on Forced Displacement, which collects data on patterns of forced displacement and the characteristics of victims. Paula Piscitelli, President of the Community of Sant’Egidio, underscored the duty that faith-based organizations possess in “building a culture of peace.”

The roundtable then examined the relationship between violent extremism, forced migration, and democratic principles. Rose drew upon Mercy Corps’ research into why individuals choose to join violent extremist groups, commenting that “religion is very rarely a driver to radicalization” – rather, economic grievances, in the case of Boko Haram, and outrage with war crimes, in the case of ISIL, allow these groups to amass supporters, who are radicalized following their decision to join the group. Mercy Corps responds to this challenge in the form of youth empowerment and prevention programs, which support Nigerian civil society. Peter Lems, Program Director for Education and Advocacy on Iraq and Afghanistan for the American Friends Service Committee, spoke to the U.S.’s need to lead by example in its responses to violent extremism. Working in Aceh, Indonesia, Lems saw that, in the wake of the PATRIOT Act, Indonesians increasingly saw American laws as “western diktats” rather than “international human rights norms.” Alzayat responded to this concern by stating that regardless of whether these principles are associated with the western world, they remain indispensable, and to question them “is a disaster” for all involved. “The choices for people of any region – but particularly the Muslim world – should not be dictatorship or ISIL.”

Fr. Hollenbach concluded the session by urging participants to continue with their efforts to address the peace issues that drive forced migration. Governments, the United Nations, and other intergovernmental organizations remain essential to this effort, but faith-based communities are also involved in on-the-ground efforts to promote peace. The only functioning institution in South Sudan is the church, and when the country voted for independence, it was churches that organized to teach people how to vote and what voting meant.



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Forced Passage: Smuggling, Trafficking, and Creating Humanitarian Corridors

Antti Pentikainen, The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers (Moderator)
Emilia Casella, World Food Programme
Ahed Festuk, Activist
Charlie Gardner, Community of Sant'Egidio
Julianna Wright Princeton University (Student Rapporteur)

Ahed Festuk began, sharing her own personal story of living in Aleppo during the civil war. She lived a pretty normal life before the civil war: her father owned a restaurant, she had just finished her accounting degree. The revolution began, asking for freedom of speech and expression, and it progressed into a civil war. After her family's house was bombed in 2011, her family decided to leave Syria, but she stayed, working with Catholic Relief Services as a nurse. Turkey closed its borders so there was no way for her to see her family without smuggling. She tried to get her name on the list so that she could pass, but they would not do it. She had to beg the guards and eventually, she had to resort to taking a clandestine route. She concluded saying, "many civilians are smuggled, old people, children, civilians. It's really hard. It's real life. It's not a documentary."

Next, Emilia Casella spoke, providing much background information on forced migration as it relates to food insecurity. One point that she wanted to highlight was that migration and forced migration are not issues of wealthy countries at all. Most migrate to low and middle income countries, mostly not traveling to Europe or North America despite panic. 9 out of 10 African migrants stay in Africa, and 8 out of 10 Asian migrants stay in Asia.

She then described the results of a preliminary study that showed that poverty and food insecurity are linked. Their presence increases the likelihood of and intensity of armed conflict. Finally, countries with highest levels of food insecurity and conflict have the highest outward flow of migration.

While food insecurity is a push factor for migration, people who migrate are also at risk for food insecurity because the journey has a physical impact on health, migrants are forced to spend money on smuggling or transportation that they might otherwise use to pay for food, and they lose a source of income since they are often unable to work in their country of reception. Once a migrant's journey has begun, decision on where to settle is motivated by economic situation, ability to find safety, and ability to find work. People tend to displace more than once before going on a cross border journey. If a person displaces internally and finds economic stability, the person stays. Policy makers need to think about this.



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Finally, she concluded by saying the mobilization around the current refugee crisis is an unprecedented movement and we need to capitalize on this global concern moving forward.

Finally, Charlie Gardner of the Community of Sant’Egidio spoke about the humanitarian corridors project of the Community of Sant’Egidio. The program takes the most vulnerable families living in refugee camps in Lebanon, and gets them legal humanitarian visas to come to Italy. The community has resettled 700 people within the first year of the pilot program, and they are looking to expand to 1500 this coming year. The project is in collaboration with the Italian government, which they describe as a win-win. From the Italian perspective, this is great, because it is a very secure way of doing work, as all of the vetting process takes place in Lebanon, and the families get a safe, legally sanctioned voyage to Europe. While the program is small, they hope that they can expand to offer more visas, and inspire other EU countries to begin similar programs. Gardner emphasized the role of symbolic actions. The first person who came through this program was a girl with eye cancer, who needed life saving surgery. The newspapers loved it, and it brought a lot of positive attention upon the project. Similarly, Pope Francis brought 12 refugees from Lesbos back from his visit through the humanitarian corridors project. Using images to capture the narrative can help governments change and grow.

Moving to a more open discussion, the group also touched upon a bevy of topics that plague the humanitarian aid world. How do you handle the mismanagement of funds? How do you deal with corruption in the government that affects aid delivery? How does the World Food Program remain independent when it receives such large donations from governments?

The panel particularly focused on the difficulty of getting food and aid into the city, and the “lack of passages” so to speak. Gardner further emphasized that this problem disproportionately affects the most needy. Those who are the most poor do not have the resources to get out of the city. With that, the panel ended focusing on the dearth of support within the city of Aleppo. When asked who was there, helping the people living in Syria, Festuk gave the brutally honest answer:

“No one.”



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Religious Experience: Testimonies from Refugees and Workers

Margarita Mooney, Princeton Theological Seminary (Moderator)
Reverend Chris Antal, Rock Tavern Unitarian Universalists
Ashar Hafeez Ghumman, Interfaith-RISE
David Sulewski, Community of Sant'Egidio
Andie Ayala, Princeton University (Student Rapporteur)

During this discussion, the panelists, as well as other participants, reflected on their experiences with, or as, refugees and workers. In these notes, I report the stories of the main panelists and include bits and pieces from participant members of the panel discussion who shared their stories as well. While these stories were far too detailed and rich to be fully recorded, the quotes below paint a broad picture of what was said in the space.

Reverend Chris Antal of the Rock Tavern Unitarian Universalists spoke about how his tradition had a rich heritage of working with refugees. He also explained that he was a US citizen who had been an army chaplain in Afghanistan from 2012 to 2013. Antal used the example of Tareek, who had been one of the interpreters serving with the U.S military in 2012, to demonstrate an integrity breach. According to Antal, Tareek had been promised a visa to the United States, verified by the 2009 Afghan Allies Protection Act, for putting his life at risk as an interpreter. However, as Antal noted, the U.S government did not follow through with this promise to Tareek and many others like him. “This is a breach of trust, and from the perspective of a military soldier, we were abandoning our comrades on the battlefield,” commented Antal. In light of all this, he suggested an honest self-examination.

In his words, Antal said, “Who are we, as U.S citizens? What kind of people are we becoming? Which consequences are we seeing that is a result of direct, or indirect action by the United States? What can we do to help these refugees? What have we done that has helped cause forced migration? What have we done in Iraq, Afghanistan and what are the consequences that we can attribute to those actions? Equally, important to these questions is: What have we failed to do as people of conscience who call ourselves religious, living in the US, to enable our US military to almost run amuck in the world?” In religious language he called for a moral reckoning, “let us confess our sins before God and neighbor.”

Ashar Hafeez Ghumman of Interfaith-RISE told the story of when he first arrived in the US, on July 14, 2016. He said that as an Ahmadi Muslim, he was in danger in Paksistan. He mentioned that he had worked with an American NGO for 18 years. According to Ghumman, when he arrived in the JFK airport and said that he was seeking asylum, he was immediately handcuffed. “I wanted to cry. I wanted to go to a place where I could cry out loud. When I arrived in the detention center, they gave me a blanket, and I put it over my head and cried. For two months I cried,” he shared.



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When Ghumman was at the detention center, people from different faith groups would visit him, especially Jews and Christians. He said that all of the people who would visit would tell him to pray to God, although none of them asked him to pray to their God. When he was able to call his parents, they told him “there is a wisdom of everything that God does, so there must be something that is good from this.”

During his time in the detention center he started reading the bible in Urdu, in Q’aran, and would ask himself why religion was so important. And then, as Ghumman explained, “I cried again. The first time I was crying out of my humiliation, the second time I was crying for all those prayers that David made, and Jesus made, and Mohmmammed made. And then I got out. After 8 months of detention I was released.”

According to Ghumman, there was a group from Highland Park who used to visit him, so he went to the church in Highland Park when he was released from the detention center. He said that the people from this church helped resettle him; “they provided me everything I needed.” At that moment, he felt as though “I could practice my faith the way I wanted to. I could tell everyone who I am.” While in Pakistan, Ghumman’s faith was a crime, in Highland Park, he was welcomed into the community by people of different faiths—who, because of their faiths, were inclined to help the marginalized.

- At the end of his speech, Ghumman stated, “we always talk about how to help and receive immigrants, but we never talk about why people are becoming immigrants? What are the root causes? Are we helping those countries to stop people from becoming refugees? Pakistan to reconcile their laws? Are we really helping Syria, Iran, Afghanistan, really? We are just trying to cut the branches on the trees, we are not looking at root causes.”

David Sulewski of the Community of Sant’Egidio talked about how he had recently been living in Quito, Ecuador for two years, coordinating a refugee welcome center in a church that was ministering predominately to people fleeing Colombia. Sulewski said that in this center they had offered basic humanitarian assistance, including mattresses, blankets, and food. However, he said at the same time, they also opened the church doors to be a healing space, where people could begin to re-knit a sense of community, reconnect with friends, and process their traumas and experiences in the context of their faith.

- He mentioned that the favorite part of his job was driving around the city, going to the least-visited parts of the city. According to Sulewski, he had once visited an elderly couple who had struggled to make ends meet and were both suffering from diseases. Back in Colombia, the wife had run her own restaurant, while the husband was a handyman and had had his own repair shop. In Ecuador, he was still trying to earn money here and there by repairing what he could in their single-room occupancy.



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- "Though they had little they poured us a generous cup of coffee," noted Sulewski. He added, "In that circumstance we were both foreigners, under completely different circumstances, and we were welcoming each other to a country that neither of us belonged to." Sulewski explained that the man had carried a silver cross with him from Colombia to Ecuador, which he had found from the trash, but that he was able to find meaning in what others had discarded.

After telling this story, Sulewski asked, "Do I perceive God in the flow of refugees all across the world? And also in the elderly who are often ignored in our societies, and are discarded? Am I walking alongside them? Just like this crucified God that watches over this elderly refugee couple?" He reflected, "It's been through my personal encounters with people who happen to be refugees that I hear most clearly this invitation to be another's keeper."

- Sulewski also told the story of buying a one-way ticket to Rome, where he was hoping to study, at the age of 21 years old. He said that a few months after arriving in the country, he happened into the beautiful evening prayer of the community of Sant'Egidio. After prayer, he mentioned that a young Muslim refugee man from Afghanistan, who had been learning Italian at the church, put his arm around him and said, "if you want to make friends you have to learn Italian."
- As Sulewski said, "Italian became the language of friendship and friendship became the language of peace." As he explained, "it was a Muslim who welcomed me back in the church, who set me back on the path back towards my faith." According to Sulewski, it is this sense of hospitality that has informed who he is, and what he does.
- Therefore, Sulewski asks, "what are the habits we form that blind us to the consequences of our actions?" Moreover, "what the world would look like if we left our doors opened, if we allowed ourselves to interrupted by a stranger passing by the street who simply wanted a cup of tea?"

Open Discussion

- *Margarita Mooney, the moderator, explained that her mother had fled from Cuba. "I don't do what my mother did, which was take a station wagon and go to garage sales around town and bring items to people's homes." When she went into academia she was so focused on her next project, what she had to do. She said that her teaching changed when she started inviting her students over to her home. "How do you model hospitality?" she asked. We place our security in food, in shelter, in clothing, in the material—but these people put their hope in faith.*



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- “I don’t believe in coincidences. This is a sacred space, because there is something about the testimonies people have that shape who we become.”

There was an Irish boy that she had befriended in high school who kept his bible in a ziploc bag in his locker. They had become friends when they started exchanging stories of religious tradition. He pushed her to learn about her own religion, while she did the same to him. When he died in his sleep, she was the only girl in his funeral with a headscarf. Now that he’s gone, she keeps in contact with his mother, because that is the only thing she can do to honor him.

- *When he was in a Syrian refugee camp in Jordan he noticed that one of the first things that had been built there was a mosque. The mothers there would say a short prayer for those who came. He remembered thinking that the prayer was immensely powerful, because there is no veil between the prayer of the oppressed and God.*

He had once been asked to teach who refugees were in his daughter’s elementary schools. He explained that refugees contributed to this country as professors, engineers, entrepreneurs. He noted that refugees pay taxes to the country, in fact, he said, they pay more than that, because they must pay back the \$20,000 of resettlement.

- Lines quoted from ‘The Guesthouse’ by Rumi: “The dark thought, the shame, the malice / meet them at the door laughing and invite them in. / Be grateful for whatever comes / because each has been sent / as a guide from beyond.”
- *Part of hospitality is paying attention the dark nights, the shame, and embracing all of it. We need self-examination.*

He had been leading a student trip to Greece in late January when the immigration ban was first imposed. As he was reading about what was happening in the US, he was working with Elpida, which is a Greek word for ‘hope.’ A woman—who was precisely the person that was being targeted by them and labeled as a ‘threat’ by the immigration ban—served him food.

He was thinking about the necessity of the marriage of the head and the heart. He wonders what kinds of conversations happen within the walls of Princeton. He notes that it’s easy for intellectual discussions to become somewhat bureaucratic and institutional, and deeply personal conversations like this one are marginal in the mainstream of academia. He asks, “How do we place a heart in places that are highly intellectual?”



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Let's Talk About Politics: Politicization of Migrants

Jeremy Adelman, Princeton University (Moderator)
Jane Bloom, International Catholic Migration Commission
Scott Cooper, Human Rights First
Salim Patel, SMILE for Charity
Sarah Sakha Princeton University (Student Rapporteur)

The story of refugees has been experienced by some, shared by many – refugees from South Sudan and Somalia, as recounted by Professor Jeremy Adelman, to refugees from Cuba, as talked about by Jane Bloom, to Muslim refugees from New Jersey to across the world, as explained by Salim Patel and Scott Cooper. These narratives have increasingly and inexorably become politicized, and in some ways, the inextricability of politics with the refugee issue has never been more apparent. “Politicization” can entail giving a voice and avenue for engagement to refugees, but it also does not necessarily mean that rights mentioned in public discourse flow from the narratives and rhetoric directly to refugees, which points to the nuanced and perhaps highly contradictory nature of politicization. It can create difficulties for us, but it can also allow us to accomplish certain things and be a highly positive force.

Politicization goes beyond the current president, beyond Muslims, beyond a list of seven banned countries, beyond refugee resettlement, beyond front-page news. As Jane Bloom pointed out, “Migration is at the very core, heart of sovereignty... fabric of our identity.” Of course, this influx of people has engendered the politicization of fear, in the form of a security threat, an economic one, and a cultural one with regards to our lifestyle. Salim Patel notes a “sentiment shift towards welcoming refugees, with violent strains around it,” and Cooper calls out this fear as irrational, as exemplified by President Trump’s Skittles analogy. Most notably, the Muslim refugee population has been a target of xenophobia and political attacks.

However, as Patel pointed out, “Not one of the faith-based refugee resettlement services comes from the Muslim background.” We need to examine the respective needs of communities and causes for their migration and displacement, in order to build interfaith coalitions to address this primarily humanitarian issue. At the heart of this discussion lies the imperative to embed the images, religious narratives, and values circulated in and around the media into our daily lives. Still, as Dean Alison Boden admonishes based on national self-interest, we should be careful not to use corruptible values language, and even redefine our “Americanness” by “forging a new path forward,” in the words of Patel. After all, most people in the United States ascribe some value to and take pride in being ‘American,’ Cooper points out how some things can be and are “un-American” and unpatriotic, such as hateful rhetoric



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towards another group. As Patrick Manning, a discussant, posed, “What are the common values, processes, that we can appeal to, in order to form some sort of coalitions to appeal some of these divides in these countries?” And our actions need to reflect those values. Cooper After all, “America is this wonderful fiction... [and] citizenship is not a spectator sport.”

Another commonly overlooked narrative is one involving the military, as brought to light by Scott Cooper. Specifically, he reflects on how veterans can use that power – of having served in the military – to push back against the narrative of never having met a Muslim. Through Human Rights First, 2500 veterans around the country have used their power to raise their voices and meet with members of Congress. In a similar vein, Patel contends that we should all engage in more honest conversations about the expansion of our military intervention, particularly salient with Trump’s recent airstrikes in Syria.

We have historically politicized this issue; Bloom cited Obama’s shift in Cuban policy, in response to a large influx of Cubans. Immigrants are now subject to “extreme vetting” as a part of political and security measures, and the U.S.-Mexico border is less a human rights issue today and more a political one. Can we, for once, as we see these gruesome pictures circulate, recognize the humanity behind our politics?



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Refugees in the Law

Silas Allard, Emory University (Moderator)

Sharif Aly, Islamic Relief USA

Serges Demefack, American Friends Service Committee

Elizabeth Foydel, International Refugee Assistance Project

Sahand Keshavarz Rahbar, Princeton University (Student Rapporteur)

The “Refugees in the Law” roundtable consisted of nearly twenty participants, including three speakers—Sharif Aly (Islamic Relief USA), Serges Demefack (American Friends Service Committee), and Elizabeth Foydel (International Refugee Assistance Project)—with Silas Allard (Emory University) serving as the moderator. The roundtable opened with brief remarks from Allard, who provided an outline for the schedule of the roundtable, which would consist of brief introductions from all present in the room, followed by remarks from the speakers, and ending with a Q & A and open discussion with all the participants. Allard also provided a few goals in his capacity as moderator: namely, to generate conversation and understanding. To this end, he reminded participants that the designated speakers would frame the issues and concepts pertinent to the discussion of refugees and the law, but they would not act as a panel of experts providing a one-sided lecture. Consequently, the overarching purpose of this roundtable conversation was not to set some sort of teleological end goal, but to come up with good questions and generate a good conversation.

Elizabeth Foydel followed Allard with some remarks based on her work at the International Refugee Assistance Project, which provides legal aid to refugees from the initial stages of the process all the way to resettlement. She began with a historical overview, noting that the term “refugee” is itself a legal definition set down in the 1951 convention. Since then, it has evolved in some ways, but not in others, meaning that the legal definition has not adapted to all situations that one might see on-the-ground today. This definition is an important starting point not only because it clarifies what “refugee” might denote, but because it represents one concrete way in which refugees encounter the law: the definitional space of formal recognition. Legal definitions lead to legal barriers that can cause unexpected headaches for refugees and those who work on their behalf. Foydel stressed the intricacies of the extensive vetting process all refugees must undergo, observing that the process of resettlement to the United States typically takes eighteen to twenty-four months in the best cases. The various steps in the process are difficult for English speakers to wrap their minds around, let alone refugees who simultaneously bear the trauma of uncertainty and the need to care for their families. Foydel also remarked on one of the insidious consequences of executive orders that bar refugees for 120 days. Though 120 days might not seem like a long time for those who live in safety, it is a considerable length of time for refugees. Refugee clearances have a window of time in which they are valid, so if they are forced to wait too long, they have to undergo several steps of the process again, adding more difficulties and burdens to an already lengthy process.



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Sharif Aly spoke next and defined the topic of his talk as an examination of how the law impacts the economic and social rights of refugees and the humanitarian services aiding them. He honed in on the situation in Jordan, which provides an interesting case for the operation of the law in the context of forced migration. Jordan has a population of 6.5 million people, of which twenty percent are refugees (predominantly Syrian, Iraqi, and Palestinian). Around one-quarter to one-fifth of the aid provided by his organization goes to the Jordanian government. Jordan has suffered economically and the structure of the country is incapable of handling such a surge of inward migration. In Jordan, refugees are called “guests,” a term that has no denigrating connotation. The use of this term deliberately underscores the legal ambiguity of their status, showing observers how the absence of laws governing refugees can lead to some unjust consequences. Aly spoke also about the arduous process nonresidents must undergo in order to secure work permits in Jordan. In addition to its inherent difficulties, the process also requires employers to pay a certain amount, making it an even more unappealing prospect. As a result, it comes as no surprise that less than one percent of the Syrian refugees in Jordan have the right to work. Such a system leads to multiple undesirable consequences: the vast majority of refugees must rely on public support, many have to work informally, some have to leave the country, and some have to have their children join the labor force. In addition to these problems, there are unintended consequences that hurt the host community as well. Jordanian employers wish to maximize their profit margins, and they recognize that refugees do not need as high of a wage. As a result, all wages in the country have gone down as the price of labor has lowered. Finally, Aly transitioned into some brief remarks about the catastrophic results of political rhetoric regarding refugees. The impact of such rhetoric has amplified xenophobia and Islamophobia, leading to a stricter regulation of migration despite the absence of evidence to justify stricter measures. Aly concluded by offering a series of questions for everyone to contemplate: what is the reality of the refugee population’s presence on terrorism? Is there logically a link? How is the ethnonationalist populist movement occurring all over the world—including in the Middle East—affecting refugee populations?

Serges Demefack offered some context on the American Friends Service Committee, the Quaker organization, noting that the Society of Friends included some of the first Europeans in America who fought for the freedom of black slaves. Since Demefack’s work largely concerns detention, he wished to consider the laws in the United States that frame the oppressive carceral system. He noted the “immigration detention quota” set forth by Congress and interpreted by ICE as a mandate to 34,000 detention beds at any one time. The language was slipped into an appropriation bill. Thus, we can observe that there is a legally-coded financial incentive to keep people in prison. Demefack asked whether it was possible to protect people seeking refuge given the existence of these laws, which seem to presuppose the need for a certain amount of detained immigrants at any moment. He also mentioned the need to address local policies, providing examples of local New Jersey jails and detention facilities that have a certain number of beds that must be kept full.



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At the conclusion of the speakers' portion of the roundtable, Allard provides some further thoughts. He echoed the thoughts of a Christian scholar who stated that an international legal regime for asylum is necessary because what refugees require, as individuals who have lost a state, is a new. The redress for harm is a new state that will protect them in new ways. Ideally, under such a system, refugee status would provide refugees provisional status as members of a new state. Other scholars have argued that such systems make refugees exceptions, because the standard is citizenship, and thus refugees are always peripheral and distinguishable from that normal standard. Allard linked this thought to the plenary remarks provided by Reverend Seth Kaper-Dale (Reformed Church of Highland Park): refugee status should not be a status of exception, but of privilege, one that affords refugees with extra protections.

During the open discussion portion of the roundtable, a question was brought up regarding the connection between the current crisis and past actions leading up to the crisis. Should there be, from a legal perspective, an effort to link past atrocities with their current consequences, as has been argued in the case of reparations? In other words, should a nation be compelled to provide aid for its past efforts in destabilizing the region? An interesting conversation followed in which participants noted the absence of an enforcement apparatus for international law, which remains the only codified tool through which such compulsion could be brought about. The question arose of whether the citizens of distinct nations, rather than the nations themselves, are the enforcers of international law, and whether it is more politically effective to focus on private efforts rather than to pressure the government to feel accountable, since such measures might be politically ineffective in the end. Elizabeth Foydel noted that arguments relating to reparations in the context of the refugee crisis do come up in professional contexts in her experience. She related how many of the people she needs to talk to for her work do not really care about international obligations. It might be useful to occasionally bring up history, but context is key in such situations. Another participant with experience in the U.S. Department of State noted the justifications the government could make for its contributions (or lack thereof) to provide aid. She noted that one of the rationales made for the low number of refugees in the United States is that the United States is supporting resettlement globally. Such arguments often invoke the idea that the goal of resettlement is not to make refugees move across the ocean, though this leaves open the question of refugees seeking asylum in the western hemisphere. Furthermore, the United States certainly does provide a lot of funding for international aid efforts, but this funding does not solve problems endemic to the crisis, like the twenty-one year average wait time for refugees living in camps all over the world.

Another conversation followed about the murky rights and legal protections afforded to individuals who are in the queue at immigration and who are detained. Foydel observed that the definitions associated with such protections are being contested now, with the current administration replacing the word "person" with "citizen" on many webpages. This serves as one example of a widespread effort by many prominent people to make arguments advocating that certain protections apply only to citizens. In this country, you have the right



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to bring a lawyer for asylum proceedings, but not the right to have one provided for you by the state. You are also not allowed a lawyer when you're in secondary detention at the airport. As a result, it can be difficult for a detained individual to access a lawyer or for a lawyer to access detained individuals, at least until these individuals are moved to an actual detention center. Ancillary questions, such as whether the immigration officials are entitled to search your cell phone or bags, are being contested, but the decisions are largely unfavorable to refugees. Demefack stressed the dubiousness of most laws in America, observing that this is what makes the legal profession so important. He also underscored the need to build coalitions across interest groups and to constantly engage in order to challenge unjust laws or practices effectively. Allard noted that there are a lot of opportunities to push the line of the law in favor of refugees in immigration contexts. For instance, he provided the example of certain social security cases in which successful arguments have been made in favor of due process as the ability to be heard, a standard that could be translated to cases involving refugees.

Towards the end, the conversation transitioned into a discussion of achievable recommendations that could be made in order to provide a legal framework for global refugee resettlement. One participant mentioned the problem of the average length of war increasing to span decades, creating contexts that perpetuate conflict rather than providing scenarios in which peace and prosperity can flourish. He provided the case of the World Bank partnering with other organizations to create an "employment park" that will provide work for both refugees and nonrefugees, the idea being economic prosperity for all. Aly emphasized the need to focus on diplomacy in order to reduce tensions. Allard noted the inherent difficulty of making any changes that make refuge and asylum more accessible, since countries do not want to promote the existence of refugees. He provided three ideas: rethinking the third safe country agreement, expanding the nexus requirement (expanding the definition of a refugee beyond only the considerations of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group), and resetting the burden of persuasion (refugees have the full burden of persuading that they are in danger, and any doubt on their reliability undermines their case; people fleeing in fear should not have the full brunt of the burden of persuasion). Demefack concluded this part of the conversation by recommending that we critically consider business agreements between countries, since these sometimes include immigration agreements. For instance, France might make a business arrangement with Senegal that would require Senegal to police reliably its borders to prevent emigration.

The conversation concluded with a brief discussion on how to reach out to others with whom we have differences and not lose hope about the possibility of effectively advocating for refugees. Aly noted that interfaith work has been found to be very successful, and emphasized the importance of panel discussions at universities and churches to educate citizens on refugee resettlement. The group noted the importance of fostering more



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opportunities for getting to know one another, ensuring that we are all willing to do the groundwork to go to our neighbors and to bring our communities together.



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Syria and Iraq: Religion and Migration in the Face of Violence

Ambassador Cameron Hume, Georgetown University (Moderator)
Sarab al-Jijakli, Network of Arab-American Professionals
Mustafa Hmood, Iraqi Student Project
Issam Khoury, Center for Environmental and Social Development
Becca Keener, Princeton University (Student Rapporteur)

Sarab al-Jijakli began the discussion with an overview of the reasons why Syrians become refugees. Probing beyond the sectarian narrative, he emphasized how the “refugee catastrophe was engineered to mask dissent.” Syria had been on the verge of implosion before 2011 because of the repressive rule of the Assad family. With this backdrop, the revolution should be read as a reaction to injustice, rather than a sectarian conflagration. al-Jijakli highlighted the fact that the vast majority of civilians killed (92%) were killed by the regime, referring to the Syrian refugee crisis as today’s *nakba*, the Arabic word (with strong resonances of the displacement of Palestinians) for catastrophe.

Issam Khoury outlined the demographics of Syria. The ethnicities represented include Arab, Kurdish, Syriac, and Chaldean. The religious make-up includes Sunni Muslims, Christians, Shiite Muslims, Jews, Sabians, Almrushdih, and Yazidis. He noted that among Sunnis, Christians, and Shiites there are many different subgroups. Moreover, there has been a significant decrease in the Christian population, decreasing from 20% in 1977 to 8-13% in 2017. He traced the lineage of this diversity in part to World War II, during which Syria hosted thousands of refugees from Eastern Europe.

Mustafa Hmood shared his experience as an Iraqi forced to migrate to Syria. Tracing the history of what he referred to as “religious sectarian violence” in Iraq, Hmood said that Saddam Hussein adopted sectarian discourse during the war with Iran, which privileged the Sunni minority over the Shiite majority. After the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq, Shiites were given political power, which Sunnis came to resent. According to Hmood, this led to the rise of Sunni extremist groups, who proceeded to carry out terrorist attacks. Hmood said, “the bombing of al-Askari mosque by Sunni extremists marked the beginning of the sectarian conflict in Iraq,” catalyzing an ongoing cycle of violence.

Hmood found himself at the center of this conflict in the summer of 2007, when his neighborhood-, composed of a mix of Shiites and Sunnis-, was attacked by a group of militants. The next morning, his family fled to Damascus. Hmood was fortunate to be able to attend school in Syria, but after graduating from high school in 2011, he was faced with a decision: “I was going to have to choose between continuing to illegally work as a fry cook



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in a falafel shop, making half as much as my Syrian co-workers, and hoping Syria remained relatively safe, or risking my safety to return to Baghdad where I could attend college for free.” At this time, he found the Iraqi Student Project, which enabled him to attend university in the U.S. Last year, he graduated from Christian Brothers University in Memphis with a degree in history. He is now committed to contribute to the cause of peace by promoting the education of Iraqi students.

al-Jijakli discussed the differences between American involvement in Iraq and Syria. Where as in Iraq there was an aggressive regime change policy, the US had a more complex relationship with Syria. “Just before the uprising,” he said, “the Assad family was courted by the US as a potential partner in the War on Terror.” Hillary Clinton repeatedly referred to Assad as a reformer. Even after the use of chemical weapons, he added, “regime change was not on the table for the Obama administration” and that it has “created devastation through inaction.”

The discussion then turned to the question of what narrative has replaced nationalism as a unifying force in Iraq and Syria. Hmood mentioned that sectarianism works against unification and that the problem lies with the state, who uses the sectarian discourse to accomplish state ends. al-Jijakli noted how Baathism came to be seen as “more of a controlling substance than an ideology,” and so Syrians became disillusioned with it. He added, “there is no country called Syria today,” breaking the country down into five distinct entities: the areas controlled by the Assad regime, ISIS, the rebels, Jabhat al-Nusra, and the Syrian Kurds. Khoury commented that Sunnis will reject Assad as president in the future and that establishing a safe zone is a potential way forward. al-Jijakli added that the US holds the most power over what happens in Syria, which evidences their interest in stability rather than freedom for the region. The discussion ended with the question: will the nation-state system still be the answer in the face of continued unrest and forced migration?



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In Every Generation: Descendants Carry on the Work

Melissa Borja, College of Staten Island (Moderator)

Patrick Barry, Catholic Charities, Diocese of Camden

Louise Sandburg, The Jewish Center's Interfaith Resettlement Committee (TJC/IRC)

Hemant Wadhvani, Hindu American Seva

Safa Syed, Princeton University (Student Rapporteur)

- Patrick Barry
 - Mother is Cambodian and father is of Irish descent
 - Born in Philadelphia
 - Father taught English in Saudi Arabia
 - Grandmother and great-grandmother were both refugees from Cambodia
 - As a child, didn't understand what "war" meant when his family talked about why they had to leave home
 - Performed his own research and spoke to members of the community who were not his family members to understand what the flight of refugees meant
 - For much of his life, wanted to explore his Cambodian life and finally went in 2001
 - An epiphany, understanding the work of non-profits and charity work
 - Went back to Cambodia to do an internship
 - Came back to America and started working for Catholic Charities
 - Became an interpreter

- Hemant Wadhvani
 - From the Sindhi community of South Asia
 - In 1947, British India split into Pakistan and India
 - Forced migration of Hindu Sindhis to move from Pakistan overnight
 - Sindhis had been traders throughout the world, in the Philippines or the Virgin Islands, globally
 - On his father's side, his father's family moved to Bombay two years before partition and his family became responsible for "resettling" families
 - Wherever the ties were—religious, financial, family—they would go
 - But refugee camps were set up throughout India, mostly in former military barracks
 - Creatively had to survive by entrepreneurial means—they would put "made in USA" on products.
 - Dynamics of partition still continue as a refugee flow still continues.
 - Strong community organizer locally



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- His parents were part of the first wave of Indian immigrants to the US and were Hindu-American immigrant community organizers.
- Worked on another resettlement project with Hindu Bhutanese people.
 - They were a primarily agricultural people who were resettled in an urban area, New York City
- Louise Sandburg
 - Her grandparents were Jewish refugees from persecution by the Cossacks
 - Her grandparents came into America in the 1880s
 - Reminds people about the human capital
 - Her grandparents never lost their accents and spoke Yiddish. They worked very hard and moved as teenagers to the US, where they met in a Philadelphia cigar factory.
 - When her grandparents arrived, HIAS took her grandparents in for a very brief time.
 - Jews from various backgrounds would band together, mostly to form burial sites.
 - Anti-Semitism was a constant, which was another reason Jews banded together.
 - Her father helped liberate concentration camps in Europe during WWII and was worried about coming back to America and being Jewish.
 - Anti-Semitism is very similar to the Islamophobia happening now.
 - Trenton community refugees
 - Central America was imploding, but the Jewish community was doing well, so they brought in some refugees from Central America.
 - Burmese
 - Bhutanese of Nepali descent
 - Turkish Muslim minorities
 - West African families
 - She went to her synagogue and asked for their help with the problem.
 - The Jewish concept of “Repair the World”—people asked, “Why donate here when we should be donating to Israel?” But this Jewish concept informed their beliefs
 - Helped resettle an Ahmadi family into Princeton. Urdu speakers in the university and at the mosque helped them.
 - Currently helping a woman from West Cameroon who sought asylum for domestic violence abuse and received it from the U.S.
 - Two Syrian refugee families just resettled into Highland Park
 - Expected to accept 50 refugees but that number has been cut because of the new presidential administration
 - Catholic Charities were expecting 125 refugee individuals but numbers have been cut



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- History of the Jews is linked to persecution
 - The Exodus
 - There were many Jewish refugees after this as well—Russia, Holocaust, so many times
- Helping refugees is part of the Jewish heritage
 - “A person’s manner is determined by his words and actions”
 - “Saving the life of one is saving all of humanity”
 - From the Bible—To welcome the stranger, remember the story of Abraham
- Everyone has the possibility to contribute
 - People are going to be working, paying taxes, and contribute
- Einstein was brought into the US by a Jewish family that had come at the same time Sandburg’s family came into the US
- Formed the Institute of Advanced Studies
- Some believed that all Jews coming into the country were communists

Discussion

- Something that really resonated—working with youth.
 - Really saw the struggle for kids during their teens, especially in this narrative of asking the questions
 - Especially in the asylum-seeker populations
 - Narrative behind why they were here was often not spoken about. Had simple answers but didn’t know why they were here.
 - These kids wanted to engage but didn’t know how. Felt the weight in their DNA, but their parents wanted to protect them
- How do you empower someone to engage them in this population instead of wearing a very heavy mantle?
 - Humanizing over idealizing
 - A juxtaposition—Having done a lot of work with adolescents and intergenerational students, both teens and parents—want to be American and don’t want to speak the home language.
 - One man, a former refugee, took his sons to West Africa, where his father was buried. Took his two sons there and to where his village was.
 - His sons came back changed from this experience.
 - Parents want them to take the good of both sides. Need to remember the past, but not as a shackle but as a launching pad.
 - A compromise between the experience of the past and the future.
 - Second individuality of adolescents in Western psychology—trying to form an identity. It’s often safe to take on the family identity. Is there such a sequence as generations move forward? When is it safe again to embrace and own the legacy while advancing?



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- Sandburg spoke to Wadhvani: How to get the Hindu-American community to engage?
 - A lot of people are second-generation Indians who came to work and find a life here, so they don't engage as personally with issues.
- The Hindu and Muslims Sindhis always got along until politics got involved.
 - Outside forces were fermenting the violence
 - Muslims Sindhis helped create safe passage for Hindus Sindhis
- Political utility in rejecting the refugee identity right now
 - Mung refugees don't want the refugee identity to define them, because especially in America, having a stateless identity is countercultural.
 - In the current situation though, the Mung refugees are reaffirming their refugee identity in order to make a political statement.
- Homeland security meeting
 - Funding to investigating white supremacy/KKK groups is being cut
 - Pamphlets have been created in Trenton area for the KKK but funding has been cut
 - Hindus, Muslims, Jews, and Christians were present
- Coalition building
 - The space that we occupy as people that support this work. What would happen if we changed the narrative of us helping, but creating culturally-sensitive coalitions to help rather than people coming for interpreters in the IRC
 - Everyone seems to be doing the same work, so how would things change if specific cultural groups are in charge of resettling
 - Catholic Charities is very fortunate to have several mosques and charities in the area
 - Had a refugee carnival, where you could trade tickets for toys. Bridged the gap between individuals of all cultures. Very successful day.
 - A refugee resettlement program does not last very long without the support of a local community.
 - Need to shift away from the narrative that resettlement agencies are being helped by the local communities but rather the opposite; refugees will be a part of these communities forever, but will leave the resettlement agencies.
 - Because numbers of refugees and resources have been cut, focus has been shifting to asylum-seekers
- West African refugee
 - Originally from Mauritania
 - His father was arrested for being against the government and he visited him several times.
 - Was given the choice to stay with his father or never see him again, so chose to stay with him



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- Deported to Senegal, but his father sued the Mauritanian government and passed away in the process in Senegal
- The refugees that have been resettled—do you get people that really need to help the people coming in? Are people willing to help out as a unit? Are recent refugees willing to help out incoming refugees?
 - Yes, there is support from people who have resettled in the community.
 - Can't say that like a Burmese family has assisted a Syrian family.

Some of the notes taken by student rapporteurs were submitted as rough notes from the session rather than as a polished summary.



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Health, Mental Health, and Migration

Sana Malik, Wichita State University (Moderator)

Debra Boudeaux, Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation

Sadia Kalam, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF)

Cathy Motamed, International Rescue Committee/NJ State Office for Refugees (NJOR)

Salwa Ahmad, Princeton University (Student Rapporteur)

Dr. Sana Malik, the moderator, began the conversation by outlining refugee health as a multifaceted issue that involves many layers and impacts a particularly vulnerable population. Mortality and morbidity rates can be expected to rise, and health is vital in camp settings, where refugees tend to suffer from malnutrition, disease, and reproductive health issues. Since war induces trauma, concerns are also compounded from a lack of security. Malik described the breadth of experience these panelists had regarding refugee health at all levels.

The panel presentation involved explaining the international, national, and local perspectives to gain an insight to the complexity of refugee health issues. The Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation is a faith-based organization that provides services in refugee camp settings in Jordan, Syria, Thailand, and Tanzania. The Foundation focuses on providing outpatient clinical care and services for basic needs, and it also organizes group activities and offers cash for relief assistance. Debra Boudreaux revealed that when children are asked what they wish for, they reply that “they wish to have a home.” She asserted that *people* created this situation, and *people* can find the solution, through education. By educating ourselves, we can spread the message, which is necessary because “If the USA cannot recognize this situation, the whole world will not have peace.” She provided an anecdote of visiting a camp and seeing two young boys fighting each other because they had been exposed to violence. Hence, her key takeaway was that we need to utilize education to improve the current situations of these groups.

Next, the RWJF presentation emphasized creating a culture of health and ensuring children have equal opportunities to lead the healthiest lives possible. Sadia Kalam explained that RWJF is invested in reversing childhood obesity and achieving health equity. A key takeaway from this presentation was that greater adversity or trauma experienced as a child makes it more difficult to achieve a healthy life. Therefore, Kalam stressed the importance of stretching our current understanding of health in order to achieve better overall health outcomes. The RWJF created “Caring Across Communities” to provide immigrant or refugee populations with a way to access mental health services.

Third, Cathy Motamed provided an overview of NJOR, and highlighted that New Jersey is one of the top eight states in terms of receiving and resettling refugees. The recent shift in



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the refugee demographic to more Syrians has resulted in changes in how NJOR approaches resettlement. The NJ Refugee Health Program has the following primary objectives: initial medical screening and surveillance, ongoing health care, and health education. The program also entails Medicaid and Medicare coverage since refugees are entitled to these services, and it also strives to ensure medically accurate interpretation for those who speak different languages. They advocate for the Public Health Model as the best scenario for the refugee program to follow, consisting of primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention efforts to identify, mitigate, and prevent illnesses. NJOR also contracts with federally-qualified health centers throughout the state, such as the Newark Community Health Clinic and Project H.O.P.E. in Camden County. Finally, Motamed touched upon refugee mental health, and conveyed that besides health screening provided through the refugee health assistance program, not enough is happening to accommodate these needs, especially since finding medical providers of specialty services is a major gap. She argued that moving forward, there was a great need to integrate mental health support in social service programs, train providers on mental health screening and related issues, and focus on trauma-informed care and practice.

After the panelists spoke about their respective organizations, other participants joined the conversation to discuss their perspectives on mental health issues. Participants suggested that health systems ought to be geared towards using psycho-social methods of identifying mental health problems, instead of just being solely treatment-based. Many argued that we do not have tools to address mental health issues, although there is room to innovate and create new approaches so that prevention is no longer overlooked. A few participants discussed utilizing the creative arts as mental health resources because they allow for expression and communication, as well as social connectedness, which could help cope with mental health challenges.

Moreover, the participants discussed at length potential improvements in messaging for refugees during orientation and integration periods. Motamed commented that it would be helpful for refugees to undergo a health-specific orientation piece, in which they could receive an explanation of “the anatomy of our medical system.” Participants considered the merits of employing resettled refugees to help with orientation because their language and vocabulary would serve as resources to help incoming refugees, which could also save organizations money on hiring external resources to accomplish these tasks.

Near the end, participants discussed the need to acquire a better understanding of refugees’ origin countries since a cultural gap often exists in the workforce that responds to resettlement. Whereas finding coverage is not always an issue, finding resources that are both linguistically and culturally appropriate is difficult. Currently, there are no existing policies to address this issue, therefore it remains a gap that must be considered in the very near future.



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Refugee Resettlement: From Global to Local

Larry Yungk, The UN Refugee Agency in DC (UNHCR-DC) (Moderator)
Tom Charles, Nassau Presbyterian Church
Heba Gowayed, Princeton University
Erol Kekic, Church World Service
Matthew Martinez, Princeton University (Student Rapporteur)

Larry Yungk began by outlining the broad implications of the Trump administration’s stance on refugees. Yungk emphasized that the United States takes in many refugees, but the country still has so much more capacity. In terms of safety concerns, he stressed that refugees are already the most-screened group of people “by far” entering the United States. Further security measures (as well as the suspension of the program for 4 months as desired by President Trump) would have a negative impact on resettlement agencies, who rely on federal funding to maintain the support network for refugee resettlement. Without this money, the programs must cut back and will be unprepared/understaffed when refugee resettlement begins again. From a local perspective, it is not as easy as simply starting again after months of suspension.

Tom Charles from the Nassau Presbyterian Church followed with a presentation on his work as the leader of the refugee sponsorship program at the church. Over the last 60 years, Nassau Presbyterian has sponsored 12 families without religious preference from diverse places around the world, from Bosnia to Burma and Iraq to Cambodia. Most recently, the church is involved with helping a Syrian family. Charles stressed that although the church helped anyone regardless of religious preference, the church’s motivation comes from a deep conviction that “it’s certainly welcoming the stranger, but in our case, it’s a sense of being doers and not just listeners of the Word.”

Charles explained some of the technical aspects of building capacity within the church to sponsor a family and discussed the connection to both Church World Service—the referral agency that takes the pool of potential refugees and matches them with sponsor agencies—and a local mosque as a resource for the Muslim Syrian family. However, Charles quickly moved to actionable items on a local level. He suggested getting involved with pro-refugee campaigns, but more importantly telling the refugee story in a positive manner by increasing the number of local, community sponsors. Although it is good to be active in liberal/diverse places, it is more important to be so in “the places that are currently fearful and uneducated.” Charles then shared his goal of having at least one Presbyterian church in every red state sponsor a family. Only 10% of refugees that come into the country have a sponsor, which is a major area of need that can be filled by local activists who encourage their churches to engage in sponsorship.



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Following Charles's presentation, Erol Kekic of Church World Service gave a presentation about the work of referral agencies and about the daunting and exhausting process that refugees trying to get resettled in the United States must endure before finally being able to resettle. First, refugees arrive in refugee camps, where the average stay is 21 years (as less than 1% of refugees end up actually being resettled in a new country). The United States government will select a small number of refugees to begin the process and will go out to every individual to determine if each person meets the definition of a refugee and are in need of resettlement as a "durable solution." A total of 18 agencies do security checks on the refugees, who must get approval at each step of the way. Unfortunately, each step in the process carries an expiration date, and the window of departure for when all those dates align is only a period of about four to five weeks. "If there's a new baby, if there's a new phone number, if Uncle Louis gets sick, no one travels" and everyone has to go back to the beginning of the process as one clearance expires, then another, and so on.

The last presenter was Heba Gowayed, a researcher studying Syrian refugees. Gowayed compared different approaches to Syrian refugee resettlement in different areas around the world. She began with a quick overview of the history of resettlement in the United States, explaining how we started from a basic principle that every human being has rights. We decided we were not going to discriminate based on country of origin, given that human rights are universal. This belief has eroded nationally with the rise of Islamophobia. Gowayed compared the swift response of President Bush after September 11, when he defended Muslims and clearly outlined that there is a difference between an extremist and a religious person, to the rhetoric of Donald Trump.

Gowayed then personalized the discussion by telling the story of a mother who had to go through the process that Kekic described. This mother was beaten and incarcerated in Syria, so she fled to Jordan with her two daughters. She finally made it through the rigorous screening process, but then Trump was elected and she was told she was banned. She had to wait for American activists to fight back, knowing that the four- to five-week window was quickly closing on her. Finally, she got a call to go to the airport, and she hurriedly packed her belongings and was sent to the United States, where thankfully she was welcomed. However, her daughter had gotten married in the interim and was unable to travel with the rest of the family.

Gowayed used this story to show that being a refugee causes people to lose a series of capital: human capital, social capital, financial capital, language capital, and so on. In addition to these obstacles, refugees are now concerned whether or not the rights that they have in the United States will be protected in the face of so much hatred. Women who wear hijabs are afraid to leave their houses, as there has been a spike in hate crimes against Muslims. Women have stopped driving and going out in public for fear of hate crimes.

The speakers then took questions, and Yungk began by explaining that the problem of how to approach refugee resettlement in such a negative political climate is one that does not have any readily apparent answers and all of us must try our best to come up with solutions,



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as “very small, very negative voices are having a disproportionate effect on policy in Washington.”

The first question from the audience was about the difference between the Canadian approach to refugee resettlement (full private sponsorship) and the United States’ approach, which seems like a hybrid. Kekic explained that although private sponsorship is a model that works well in Canada and appeals to a broad range of people, it would be almost impossible to use it in the United States. The Canadian government can measure how well the program is doing by looking at how many refugees apply for government aid, especially healthcare and welfare benefits. These applications signal a failed sponsorship effort, so more aid applications means that there is something wrong. Because healthcare is not universal in the United States, it is difficult to replicate the model with the same accountability. As the welfare laws in each state are different, there is no easy way to get good measurements on the strengths and weaknesses of a private sponsorship model here in the United States. However, the United States does employ, as the speaker noted, a hybrid model.

After further discussion, the group concluded that maybe the answer in the United States is not private sponsorship, but congregational sponsorship.

The next question dealt with different approaches to the prioritization of refugee placement next to coethnic communities. Kekic pointed out that the United States will not use “integration potential” as a determining factor in the decision to admit refugees, but once they are accepted, a certain level of coethnic community might be helpful. Gowayed gave contrasting examples of Italy, where there is no attempt to foster coethnic community, and Toronto, where great effort is made. She explained that refugees in Toronto seemed to be better off because of this prioritization of coethnic community.

Towards the end of the discussion, one of the participants, Joseph Sackor, stood up and explained that he had been a refugee from Liberia. He emphasized that outreach to other Americans goes “bottom to top.” He gave a story of talking to elementary students at his daughter’s school, where a child explained that her parents had told her that refugees “take taxes away from citizens and need to go home.” Sackor said that this attitude is common, but it is fundamentally untrue. Refugees only get assistance for three months, then they are on their own. After they have established themselves, refugees then pay taxes for the rest of their lives. Looking at the return on investment of resettling refugees leaves no doubt that the money is paid back plus so much more.

Yungk ended the conversation with a reminder that refugees themselves need to be part of any discussion and part of any solution. Part of the role of citizens is giving refugees a platform because now is a receptive time to speak up due to refugee resettlement’s place in the current political discourse.



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The Media and Migration: A Workshop

Deb Amos, National Public Radio (NPR) (Moderator)

Thibault Chareton, United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC)

Naomi Hunt, International Dialogue Center (KAIICID)

Eldar Shafir, Princeton University

Iris Samuels, Princeton University (Student Rapporteur)

Since the elections, the media field has shifted significantly. Deborah Amos, NPR correspondent who led the Media and Migration Panel, said that she now has to be aware of the structure of the alt-right. She explained that these groups, once seen as well outside of the status quo, now serve as advisers to the administration. If you work in the refugee world, she said, you must familiarize yourself with these group. In a panel that brought together nongovernmental aid workers and media specialists, the discussion addressed the ways in which the media can adapt to this new world of extremist messages.

Thibault Chareton, Program Officer of Media and Migration at the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), explained that by working with journalists around the world, he works to equip the media with tools to report on complex topics. Among his activities, he produced a media-friendly glossary on migration. In a field fraught with legal terminology and minute differences, this glossary is aimed at ensuring that reporters differentiate between terms such as “refugee,” “migrant,” and “asylum-seeker.” Chareton explained that his work stems from the understanding that “words really matter,” and that sometimes journalist do not have the time or the knowledge to use them correctly. The media, he said, has a significant effect on the perception of refugees. Chareton concluded by offering numerous recommendations, including increasing diversity in the newsroom, providing safe spaces for journalists to come to terms with their biases, eliminating unnecessary references to gender and race, and providing refugees the opportunity to be interviewed and present their own story in the media.

Naomi Hunt, the Refugees in Europe Program Manager for the International Dialogue Centre (KAIICID), spoke about the effect of the far right on the perception of refugees in Europe. Based in Austria, she has noticed that a proliferation of images of refugees “flooding Europe,” coupled with terrorist attacks in Paris and elsewhere, have led the public further to the right. While Muslims and Migrants are separate but overlapping groups in society, she pointed out that the media often conflates the two, employing gross stereotyping. The terms “refugee,” “asylum seeker” and “migrant” are used to differentiate between those deserving of resources and those who are not. Many newspapers create a dichotomy between deserving “needy” refugees and “bad” economic migrants. While the more serious media outlets attempt to address the question of whether or not Austria has the ability to integrate refugees, the tabloid media questions whether they should have the *desire* to integrate refugees.



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The final panel member, Eldar Shafir, a professor of behavioral psychology at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, spoke about the way the media manipulates the public, and raised the question of whether the media can report about refugee issues in a way that is memorable, without being manipulative. Behavioral science, he explained, dictates that different forms of reporting could have different effects on perception of refugees.

Shafir pointed to the story of Aylan Kurdi, a young boy who washed up on a Turkish beach in 2015, as a catalyst for change in public opinion. The photo of Kurdi's body received immense public attention, and following its publication, British Prime Minister David Cameron changed his views and said he would allow refugees into the country. However, Amos pointed out that despite the immediate reactions by many European politicians, the political mobilization did not last long. "We all get tricked by these pictures. We think something has changed. But nothing has changed."

Panel participants agreed that mainstream reporting is not doing well, while extreme reporting is on the rise, because it feeds into the public's desire for sensationalism. Amos added that it is harder to tell positive stories, and editors are less interested in them. In her reporting, she has often tried to tell the stories of civilians caught in the middle - individuals with whom readers and listeners can relate.

However, Paloma Haschke-Joseph, Intercultural Engagement Project Management Specialist for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), pointed out that as Europe undergoes financial instability, it becomes increasingly difficult for the media to create empathy. "The average person is worried about their own identity," she said. "Only audiences who are wealthy and comfortable are susceptible to that message."

Hunt emphasized the need for increased media literacy to combat the tendency towards echo chambers, in which audiences only consume media that fits their individual biases. Emilia Casella, Deputy Director of Partnership & Advocacy Coordination Division in the World Food Programme, expressed concern over the shrinking number of foreign correspondents. In states where local media doesn't have an international contingent, the public doesn't have the much-needed "personal perception of the refugees who want to come to these town," Casella explained.

Shafir concluded that for every bad story, there is a good story. "For every pickpocket, there's a refugee who saved a puppy," he said. "What we need is more balanced stories," Chareton said. "Hero Stories" and "Crime Stories" must come together to tell a more holistic story of refugee integration.



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What is the Just University? Responding to Forced Migration

Stanley Katz, Princeton University (Moderator)

Patrick Barry, Catholic Charities, Diocese of Camden

Mark Justad, Every Campus a Refuge/Guilford College

Dennis McAuliffe, Georgetown University

Marissa Rosenberg-Carlson, Princeton University (Student Rapporteur)

a. Professor Katz

I think it would be very useful for every university to ask itself: what is the concept of a just university?

Princeton is not a university in which political activism has ever been at the forefront. For the past 15 years, the Pace Center for Civil Engagement has sponsored this kind of activism, but this is recent – after Ralph Nader '55 challenged his classmates to raise money to encourage students in the direction of civic engagement. But Princeton is dominated by disciplinary departments, not multidisciplinary approaches. So how might we implement a broader approach to the refugee crisis?

b. Patrick Barry, Director of Refugee and Immigration Services, Catholic Charities – Diocese of Camden

- Son of Cambodian refugee
- Interpreter for his Cambodian grandparents in the U.S.

We connect with local universities like Temple, Rutgers, Princeton. We arrange events for refugees – we threw a refugee carnival, we have volunteers who meet with refugee families. We host a World Refugee Day celebration. Overall, we're only as successful as the community that supports us. The refugee resettlement program will fall apart without community support, but since November I've gotten more donations than I've gotten in the past year and a half.

c. Mark Justad, Director of Center for Principled Problem Solving, Guilford College

- Background in religious studies, PhD in theology from divinity school
- Guilford is a Quaker small liberal arts school, nonreligious but holds Quaker values of “tolerance”
- Co-created Every Campus a Refuge to respond to contemporary refugee crisis



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It never occurred to me that a university wouldn't be just. Because I'm a preacher's son, the notion of integrating the pragmatic and ideal has always been in my mind. The divinity schools I was part of were often seen as the conscience of the university in a funny way. So my academics have always been wrapped up in aspirational thought. I had this idea that education was a moral impulse, and could reflect an intrinsic capacity for social good.

Guilford College is a small Quaker liberal arts college in Greensboro, NC, whose administration has just begun to speak out on political issues – i.e. against North Carolina's HB2 "bathroom bill." Quakerism promotes tolerance.

Nine years ago, we founded the Center for Principled Problem Solving, through which we try to put values to work in the world. So we've been doing refugee work through that. My colleague Diya Abdo founded Every Campus a Refuge, which encourages campuses to become sanctuaries for refugees (everycampusarefuge.weebly.com). Professor Abdo is a Palestinian refugee, and instead of being demoralized she said, "What can we do? I'm used to having to work my way through things." Another colleague, Jennie Knight, teamed up with our local Church World Service agency to start orienting students and faculty to help with refugee resettlement services.

Many campuses have resources that would allow us to respond to this crisis in a way that draws campus communities into dialogue on an important issue. We've helped families resettle – the first family arrived nine months ago, and we provide each family a three-month window of free housing and support from the campus. The fifth family arrived last weekend. This is an example of "not thinking about it too much. We see a need, identify our resources, and find a way to address it.

Our outreach has a clear educational component, and it must reflect nature of the college. We don't need to duplicate other organizations doing this work. We now have a two-year minor in forced migration and refugee resettlement, with twenty-five students so far.

d. Dennis McAuliffe, Associate Professor of Italian, Founder of John Main Center for Meditation and Inter-Religious Dialogue, Georgetown University

- Meditation center teaches meditation also to people beyond campus, i.e. in refugee programs

We have a myriad of programs at Georgetown, including the Institute for the Study of International Migration (where students can obtain a certificate in refugees and humanitarian emergencies); the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs; the John Main Center for Meditation and Inter-Religious Dialogue; as well as local parishes and student-run refugee projects such as No Lost Generation, which promotes



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education, protection and support for adolescent and youth affected by the global forced migration crisis. We also partner with organizations outside the university to help refugees from the MENA region prepare for jobs.

Regarding meditation, though – meditation is a universal practice. It’s everywhere, in all religious traditions and also in non-religious traditions. We know that religiousness and spirituality are very important to most people in the world, maybe not as much in the U.S., but for 85% of people in the world, religion is very important. Particularly for refugees whose brokenness is so evident in their own lives – their faith can’t always deal with it. They lose meaning. They’re searching for something they thought they had before this brokenness got to them. This makes our job challenging, but necessary. Because meditation is present in all traditions, we can help them to be together in a practice. It’s very practical. It takes the attention off themselves and puts it on something else. The divine, the meaning they’re looking for, the unknown... that’s how we justify making the gift of meditation available to refugees. And for the people who run refugee programs, they need to take care of themselves, too. So we teach meditation to these caregivers as well. It has to be comprehensive and ongoing.

Roundtable Discussion

Professor Katz

These institutional speakers are in faith-based organizations. But higher education in this country is primarily secular – scientifically, the ideal is not morality. It’s easier to conceptualize this problem if you come from a faith-based institution that professes a set of values. At Princeton, we engage in the scientific pursuit of truth. This is a wildly pluralistic society, there’s no reason to think here that there’s any consensus on values.

This composes a constraint on moral action by an education institution itself. This is a characteristic problem for most universities like this. How do you agree on value specification or action in a community that has no previously existing consensus on what values are?

That’s why Matthew Weiner – and not the Vice President of Student Affairs – organized this conference.

When I was an undergrad at Harvard “a thousand years ago,” the university hired a new deeply religious president. He reinstalled the cross on the altar in the chapel, and declared that only Christian marriages could take place in the chapel. Faculty members were outraged. At the end of freshman year there was a march from the chapel to the president’s office. More than a thousand faculty members marched, and they got their way.



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Maria Hoehn, Vassar faculty

I disagree with the idea that there's no impetus on secular campuses. At Vassar, it was the secular students who reached out to faith-based communities to start these initiatives. We have to really think – who's with us, who's against us. They might not be who we expect. At Vassar, we work in a town that has Trump supporters, even people who support the refugee ban. But some are still involved with religious charities. So there's a much more complicated constellation of perspectives.

Tahir Zaman, SOAS lecturer

SOAS has a history very much tied into colonialism, and the empire struck back and now the children of the empire make up the large part of the student body. The institution is secular, and the students are driving a large part of the political question.

We have a lot of activism in general, like Justice4Cleaners. Student organizers put pressure on the university hierarchy to give custodians a living wage, give them proper contracts. These issues are like a seamless garment – these problems are all interconnected. In addition, we need to have a sanctuary scholarship – and the students are pushing the university to respond in that way. They understand that these struggles are interconnected.

Karen Emmerich, Princeton faculty

Let's think about civic engagement vs. education and research; all of the things happening at Princeton are “in addition to” whatever our educational impulse is. One of the convos happening a lot in civic engagement community is how to fold that into an educational program and research agenda so that these things are not competing for someone's time. That seems like a primary concern, and it also garners a lot of pushback.

Community member

I'm going to push back on these thoughts about secularity and religious communities. The secular mindset defeats itself when it closes itself to the religious orientation. When we look at the refugee crisis, we create good learning opportunities. But for me as an academic administrator I have a hope that the highest intellectual investment can be that we move out of this box that is way too pragmatic.

Chelsea Langston Bombino, Center for Public Justice

We are, though, in institutions that reinforce obligations to the stranger, and implicate students with sense of civic engagement. But are we in an echo chamber? I think it's important to make an argument to conservative communities, like in the rust belt.



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Professor Katz

The whole idea of service as the purpose of education is new and skin-deep at this point. So we need to reflect on how to grow that.

Essma Bengabsia, NYU student

From an activist perspective, a lot of this is theoretical. How you think our organizing as students can be implemented without administration pushback? At NYU, one of our main trustees is on Trump's Economic Advisory Board – this has made it difficult to push for a sanctuary campus.

Veda Jamoona, Maharishi University of Management student

I'm in the rust belt – Fairfield, IA – and we had a town hall meeting, and we're in a very different place than people in Princeton, NJ are. We're really just trying to let people know that we're all of the same nervous system, we're not that different, and it's a much more basic process of getting a largely white, Protestant community to feel empathy for Syrian and Iraqi refugees.

Michael Klein, New Jersey Association of State Colleges

The phrase sanctuary campus won't get you anywhere. Jan Napolitano over at the UCs won't use it. It has emotional power behind it, but it doesn't have legal meaning. Harvard Law students put a comprehensive document together about the legal agreements that can be made – but that's not one of them.

Jonathan Golden, Drew University faculty

Going off that, there's an idea around my community that the worst thing you can do is to call yourself a sanctuary because then ICE knows where to come. I also think, when I speak to people in law enforcement as to why they should help these refugees, that we don't need to make one single argument that's universally palatable to everyone. Everyone has their own self-interests and reasons for acting. Black people say, "We've been living this for 300 years." Latino folks say, "We're worried about getting our doors kicked down." We can connect with people from different angles.

Justad

Again, what is a just university? The notion that a university could claim to be just and say that it's neutral and doesn't have values – that doesn't hold water anymore. We all know that universities have and perpetrate values. Who gets to participate?



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Zaman

In Britain the cost of education has gone through the roof, so the problem is – how do people get involved in social justice action when it takes away from their education?

Katz

President Obama saw education as a jobs creator. What’s the justification for a liberal education, a training of the mind and citizenship? I don’t think it’s so clear that there’s broad-based public support for that now.

Zaman

Exactly. SOAS had a migrant day of action, walked out of class and marched to a square. And people were yelling, “Students, get a job!”

Community member

Can we really talk about integrating? I’m teaching a class on sustainability, climate change. The fundamental question is – how do values integrate? Can these be embedded in every course – how do we apply them in every context?

Katz

My own proposition to folks in secular universities is to think – what can you do to challenge your university to specify what its values are? If it’s not a school-to-job pipeline, what is it? How do we articulate these values, practically?

Some of the notes taken by student rapporteurs were submitted as rough notes from the session rather than as a polished summary.



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Creating Sanctuary Space: A Workshop

Linda Rabben, University of Maryland (Moderator)
David Sulewski, Community of Sant'Egidio
Peter Pedemonti, New Sanctuary Movement of Philadelphia
Fr. Daniel Groody, University of Notre Dame
Luisa Banchoff, Princeton University (Student Rapporteur)

This afternoon session offered conference participants an opportunity to collectively explore the concept of sanctuary spaces using the language of faith and spirituality. At the same time, the session's workshop-style framework oriented the discussion toward practical ways of creating and sustaining such spaces, and participants were able to exchange their own on-the-ground experiences and strategies of doing so. The questions and discussion that emerged centered around the nature of sanctuary, what sorts of demands are made of those who seek to build sanctuary, and how we can transform our visions of sanctuary space into action steps.

We gathered in a sunlit, wood-paneled room in East Pyne, each of us taking a seat in a circle of chairs. The session began with words of welcome from the moderator, Professor Linda Rabben, who then led the group in an opening moment of silence. Next, each of the three featured speakers shed light on the ways in which notions of sanctuary emerge from their engagement, and each posed several questions for the group's consideration.

David Sulewski, a member of the Community of Sant'Egidio in Boston, offered a reflection on how the theme of sanctuary manifests itself in Sant'Egidio's focus on life, friendship, peace, and prayer. In its efforts to take care of the elderly until the last moments of life, for example, the Community creates a sanctuary around the vulnerable, heeding Pope Francis's call to oppose a culture of "throwing away" people. Sulewski emphasized how the spiritual orientation of Sant'Egidio "welcomes newcomers in a spirit of friendship rather than seeing them as mere beneficiaries of aid."

This theme of welcoming was expanded upon by Peter Pedemonti. In his remarks, Pedemonti highlighted the ways in which his organization, the New Sanctuary Movement of Philadelphia, is taking to the streets of the city to create sanctuaries for some of Philadelphia's most vulnerable residents. The "Sanctuary in the Streets" initiative holds interfaith prayer services outside homes during Immigrants Customs and Enforcement (ICE) raids as a way of "answering a call for solidarity."

Fr. Daniel Groody, professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame, opened his reflection by sharing an anecdote about Pope Francis's first papal visit to pray with refugees in Lampedusa, the Mediterranean Island off whose coast thousands of refugees have



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drowned in the hopes of reaching Italy. Fr. Groody passed around a wooden chalice that, just like a cross that Pope Francis had commissioned while in Lampedusa, was carved out of the wreckage of boats found on the beaches of the island. He discussed how extremely marginalized people as refugees struggle with the fear of being “nobodies” in a society that appears largely indifferent to their suffering and death. Yet religious and spiritual traditions recognize each person as a “somebody” who is an integral part of the community of humankind. In Catholic terms, “the ‘nobodies’ are connected to the Body of Christ.”

After these three reflections, the second half of the session began. Drawing on the Quaker tradition of Worship Sharing, Rabben led the group in another silence, inviting participants to speak when they felt so moved. Participants shared insights and questions on the meaning of sanctuary and responded to the remarks and questions of the speakers. Tracy K. Smith offered her thoughts on the way in which the “large-scale love” of God can be challenging to live out in our lives, especially when love is so often “broken down into something comfortable.” Yet the constructive initiatives of many people, including some attending the session, demonstrates how love can be instrumental in enacting real change.

At other points in the session, participants wrestled with the tension that can arise between the demands of love and those of the law. If we consider sanctuary a “moral obligation,” Rabben noted, then those who seek to create sanctuary may at times be doing so in violation of secular laws. For those writing and shaping laws, it is important to recognize the larger context in which they laws are implemented, especially with regards to the urgent needs of displaced people in the world today. In another instance, a participant talked about the flaws of restrictive immigration laws that do not take into account the underlying reasons why people are forced to flee their home countries.

At the end of the session, participants were encouraged to share their closing thoughts. One remark brought to mind the image of the Statue of Liberty that Rabben had evoked earlier in the session when she read several lines from Emma Lazarus’s *The New Colossus*. “In dark times,” a participant said, “people of faith hold up the light.”



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Refugee Work as Vocation

Pulin Sanghvi, Princeton University Career Services (Moderator)
Joey Ager, Joint Learning Initiative on Faith & Local Communities (JLIFLC)
Marisol Conde-Hernandez, Rutgers Law School
Lina Sergie Attar, Karam Foundation
Julianna Wright, Princeton University (Student Rapporteur)

Pulin Sanghvi of Princeton University Career Services initially set the tone by citing the Dalai Lama, explaining the difference between a job, a career, and a vocation. A job, is about the acquisition of resources, a career, the acquisition of status, and both are driven by outward motivations. A vocation or a calling is different because it comes from an intrinsic motivation. It is work that we would continue to do for its own merit. Some, recognize their vocation from an early age that they want to engage in the issue of forced migration. For others, it is serendipity that throws them into the work. The panelists touched upon the following themes: How we as individuals can best make a difference against the problem; how we start to design our unique personal professional identities; and how we engage with others, joining organizations that are already in place or organizing people against something new.

Lina Sergie Attar, spoke about her path that led to founding and leading the Karam Foundation, an organization that currently runs a wide array of “Smart Aid” projects for Syrians affected by the civil war and consequential refugee crisis. Sergie Attar grew up in both the United States and Syria. She originally wanted to become a doctor, but since she did not meet the requirements for medical school in Syria, she found that she had to settle for an architecture degree. After moving back to the United States, and realizing that she had no interest in continuing with architecture, Attar decided to found Karam foundation. Karam, which means generosity in Arabic, originally had little to do with Syria. They ran programs on the south side of Chicago and built schools for girls in India and Afghanistan. It was a part time job of a few hours a week, and it made her happy. In 2011 with the start of the revolution in Syria, the organization started focusing on providing humanitarian aid in Syria. Learning on the fly, the organization grew to become a 24/7 job with 16 employees.

“I never expected to have this life or job, but I think of all of the Syrians who never expected for their lives to be that way either. We never expected university students would become citizen journalists, so many children to be orphans, so many people to die, so many to be displaced.” said Sergie Attar. The organization is currently mainly focused on running education projects for refugee children living in Turkey as well as an array of other Smart Aid initiatives.

Next, Marisol Conde-Hernandez, a Marsha Wenk Public Law Fellow at Rutgers University Law School and immigrant rights advocate spoke about her experience coming to terms with an element of inherent risk in the work that she does. Conde-Hernandez came to Princeton



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when she was one year old. She knew since she was four years old that she was undocumented, “illegal back then,” and she looked very different from her peers. There were not many Hispanic families in Princeton back then, and from the very beginning, she just knew that she had to go to college. Her parents “undertook extraordinary abandonment” to get her here, leaving behind their language, culture, and family, and she had to make it worth it. Even when she got to college, and was working 60-70 hours outside of classes to be able to pay the out-of-state tuition that undocumented students must pay, she just stayed focused. She lived in a state of dual risk and privilege: risk as an undocumented person but privileged in her ability to go to college. At 18 she first came out in public as undocumented, and while she was nervous, she knew she had everyone in Princeton to support her, and that there would be a strong force to pressure ICE into giving her discretionary relief were they to detain her. Conde-Hernandez wanted a voice so that she could directly challenge people. Channeling the words that her father once told her as a child: “You need to speak up because you can’t expect people to listen to you if they can’t hear you. If they can’t hear you in the first place it’s your fault to not speak up.”

Finally Joey Ager spoke about the concept of praxis, and the incorporation of action and reflection into one powerful tool. Ager works in Seattle as a faith-based community organizer. He describes finding his vocation as “a wild goose chase”. His core touchstone has been the theory of praxis central to liberation theology. He now works for the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Learning Communities (JLIFLC), a global collaboration of active practitioners and others around faith activities. He is currently working as a researcher on a project about the role of faith communities in the experience of forced migration in South Seattle, where more than 160 languages are spoken in just one school district. Ager further discussed the importance of deliberate reflection, and allowing yourself to be taught about the ways in which your worldview might be privileged. “This is the work that we who occupy the “powerful group in society” have to do,” he said, “It’s [building] deep relationships, not an academic exercise... People don’t care what you know until they know that you care.” He concluded calling for participants to “learn to listen deeply and honestly” to people coming from other cultures and experiences.

As the conversation turned to a more informal dialogue, Emma Coley, a freshman at Princeton, asked what she should be doing to make the most out of her experience at Princeton to prepare herself for the kind of work that the professional members of the group do, which soon led to a discussion of the dichotomy between academic work and on-the-ground activism. Conde-Hernandez encouraged students to take advantage of the resources and experiences on and off campus. Miriam Lowy, a professor at The College of New Jersey (TCNJ) proclaimed that she considers herself an activist in the classroom, teaching young people about what it is like to live in Syria and Egypt, providing information they do not yet know. She asserted that scholarship is a form of activism, they truly do combine.



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In closing Sanghvi asked the speakers if they think that the issues that they work on will be solved in their lifetime and how they found motivation. All responded with a resounding “no.” Sergie Attar responded “I wish I could wake up tomorrow and not have a job,” but no. She hopes to stay focused on Syria, someday working inside the country, and even as part of the reconstruction and postwar healing process. Conde-Hernandez responded that despite the complexity of the American immigration situation, which leads her to believe it will not be solved in the way she would like to see it solved in her lifetime, she finds meaning in her work from the individual interactions with people and the community. Ager claimed that although we are in a state of unparalleled global crisis, he is optimistic. The world is changing around us: the people who represent Trump saw it, got scared, and organized, and now it is time for us to organize too.



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How Do We Operationalize Our Faith?

Alexander Goldberg, Carob Tree Project (Moderator)
Bram Bailey, Salvation Army World Service
Mitzi Schroeder, Jesuit Refugee Service/USA
Imam Sohaib Sultan, Princeton University Office of Religious Life
Adjoa Mante, Princeton University (Student Rapporteur)

Moderator Alexander Goldberg, chief executive of the Carob Tree Project, opened the roundtable by introducing himself and his experiences with faith-based approaches to migration. Goldberg described his background, which includes advising former administrations in the United States and the United Kingdom, as well as founding CCJO Rene Cassin, human rights group in the UK with NGO status at the UN in Geneva. Goldberg highlighted the challenges faced by EU citizens, asylum seekers, and trafficked individuals in light of “Post-Brexit” and “Post-Trump” political climates. In contrast, Goldberg argued that the Jewish faith teaches the foundational importance of three pillars: “the Torah (the moral code and law we follow), prayer (service to G-d) and acts of loving kindness.” In light of this faith background, Goldberg contended faith groups must operationalize our faith to achieve justice. He noted the perennial nature of disdain towards migrants (e.g. surveys carried by CRE / British Government showing that some former migrants distanced themselves from other waves of migration, claiming their migration was different). Finally, he opened the discussion to key questions including: how do we get communities to engage in humanitarian services or delivering services to refugees? How do we operationalize our faith in the current political climate?

Mitzi Schroeder of Jesuit Refugee Service/USA (JRS) discussed the view of refugees in the Jesuit faith tradition and how this faith tradition informs the actions of JRS. Schroeder asserted that Jesuit teachings state that we should live as men and women for others; additionally one ought to see the face of God in every human being. In light of the importance of service in this faith tradition, Schroeder maintained that the JRS targets their efforts towards people and places not served by others. Furthermore, Schroeder emphasized the critical Jesuit principle of accompaniment, which is rooted in the Jesuit tradition as “companions of Jesus”. Therefore, Schroeder stated that the JRS as an organization strives to be companions of the people whom Jesus preferred – the lowly and neglected. Schroeder additionally discussed the Jesuit principle of discernment; people are encouraged to observe all circumstances and make decisions in terms of their aspirations moving forward. Given the Jesuit tradition of solidarity and accompaniment, Schroeder argued that the Jesuit faith has a strong basis in refugee work.

Schroeder continued with a description of the advocacy and strategies of JRS. She described how in her position as the US policy director for JRS, she engages in organizational work which is “the modern manifestation of a centuries old commitment to support for refugees



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and suffering populations”. Schroeder asserted that the process of advocacy at JRS grows out of fieldwork (e.g. difficulties lived and experienced by refugees); thus the process of advocacy includes bringing these challenges to policy makers and suggesting concrete changes moving forward to develop better results.

Bram Bailey of the Salvation Army World Service described the historical background of the Salvation Army to inform a discussion of how the modern Salvation Army World Service operationalizes faith to serve migrant communities. As Bailey articulated, the Salvation Army (SA) developed during the industrial revolution and came out of Methodist tradition. Bailey described how the founder was driven by faith to work with the destitute; he questioned how people could consider larger questions of faith in the face of hunger and poverty. In Bailey’s work with the modern Salvation Army, the organization continues to orient its philosophy around faith, firmly believing that “serving others is...[a] mandate of faith” and “service to others is....the outgrowth of one’s relationship with God.”

Bailey continued with a discussion of the practical ways in which the Salvation Army acts to operationalize faith through service. Bailey broadly described a range of Salvation Army projects related to education, health, income generation, anti-trafficking and disaster response at the community level. Additionally, Bailey discussed the international work of the Salvation Army World Service, which addresses the needs of migrant communities in various countries. Bailey celebrated the rich relationships within the community that have developed out of engagement to support refugees. However, Bailey described a current challenge of the Salvation Army: addressing the tension between the faith-based scriptural goals of the organization and community engagement.

Imam Sohaib Sultan of Princeton University’s Office of Religious Life contended that the Quran predicts and prescribes reactions to the global chaos and crises faced by mankind. Pointing to a passage in the Quran where the angels express fear of the violence and destruction that the human population might bring, Sultan claimed that the angels’ fear ties into the modern global crises faced by the human race. Sultan further contended that throughout the scriptures, God puts forward a response to the fears of the angels; God says that “those who follow His guidance will...have a distinct reality.” Sultan stated that in the Islamic tradition, faith and good actions are required to follow God’s guidance. Specifically, Sultan noted that the rules within the Quran are tied to 6 broader considerations including the protection of religion, life, education, and human dignity.

Turning to a discussion of how to operationalize the Islamic faith, Sultan mentioned the international work of Islamic organizations like Helping Hand and Islamic Relief. These organizations engage in service work through the lens of the six considerations, allowing people economic independence through faith-contextualized actions. Sultan noted that even smiling is seen as charity in the Islamic tradition; in light of this the organization SMILE has set up soup kitchens in New Jersey and is working with refugee populations to ensure that basic needs are met.



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Lastly, Sultan emphasized the importance of defending the dignity of refugees and migrants. Sultan argued that divisive political rhetoric has projected the fears and selfishness of human beings onto forced migrants (e.g. rhetoric of migrants “taking jobs” and “bringing violence”). Given this context,

Sultan claimed the importance of protecting the reputation of refugees is crucial in the operationalization of faith. However, he argued that lifting up the narratives of the exceptional is not enough; in his view, figures in need e.g. “the taxi drivers or the single mom forced to beg outside of a mosque” are worthy of the same dignity as the successfully integrated. Sultan concluded that “Faith based work must focus on lifting the humanity of all peoples. It must put a human face and reality to the experience of migrants and refugees.”

During the roundtable discussion, a participant raised questions about the potential to influence or change politics as faith-based organizations. In reference to politics, Schroeder asserted that “personal acts of accompanying refugees in local communities...could motivate individuals to engage with local politicians”. Bailey noted the resource and manpower limitations of certain organizations in getting involved politically. Sultan contended that some level of political engagement is necessary to support the vulnerable, but the “challenge of politics is it’s the realm of compromise while faith is the realm of principle”. Given this reality, Sultan stated that faith-based engagement must be founded in determined core principles. Another participant asked, “How do we defend the dignity of refugees, of all peoples” in the modern political context? Schroeder contended that one could defend people’s dignity by listening to them and learning their aspirations. Bailey underscored the importance of vulnerability about one’s own challenges to create an environment in which people are more open to share. Sultan argued that we must “provide platforms and opportunities for most vulnerable to tell their stories... to put human face to a narrative...put a face to humanity.” Additionally, Sultan asserted the importance of educating people of the statistical realities (e.g. no evidence that refugees have brought increased violence to America) and the illogic of the arguments of all refugees as sexual predators. Another participant asked about whether “we [are] talking about the root issues of migration or asylum seeking?” and about forums to speak about these issues. The panelists referenced the CIRF (Center for Islamic Religious Freedom), Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International as potential forums, while acknowledging, “there’s not enough of these conversations happening.” Further topics broached during discussion included the importance of involving youth in advocacy for the disadvantaged, the unique ability of religious organizations to elevate the voices of refugees (given the logistical drawbacks that make such advocacy in the political sphere unlikely) and the importance of interfaith initiatives.



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Refugees and Resistance

Stacy Mann, Princeton University (Moderator)
Saulo Padilla, Mennonite Central Committee
Dan-el Padilla Peralta, Princeton University
Karol Ruiz, Wind of the Spirit Immigration Resource Center
Fatima Shama, Fresh Air Fund
Becca Keener, Princeton University (Student Rapporteur)

Saulo Padilla began the discussion by telling the story of his family’s journey from Guatemala to Canada. He emphasized the hospitality of the Mennonite church to his family and many others who emigrated from Guatemala and El Salvador. “As the son of a refugee, an immigrant, with very few opportunities, but now I have a Master’s degree, and I blame it on the church,” he said. One of Mr. Padilla’s latest projects involves quilting. Emphasizing the interconnectedness of suffering, his quilt connects the history of persecuted Mennonites to the story of immigrants today. Padilla is dedicated to expanding the views of individuals and communities to recognize these points of similarity. He does this in several ways, which include reading and teaching from the Bible through the lens of an immigrant and taking people to the Mexico/U.S. border to interact with migrants first hand.

Next, Professor Dan-el Padilla-Peralta shared about his life as an undocumented immigrant. Now, he has situated himself at “the intersection of conversations about the responsibility we have to educate people about geopolitical interventions and the need to reckon with the effects.” One important aspect of his work in this area is to emphasize the intersectional nature of identities affected by structural violence. As a cautionary tale, Padilla-Peralta gave the example of Bartolome de Las Casas, who is well known for insisting on freedom for Indians, but who also excused the enslavement of African laborers. He emphasized that we cannot just “identify those groups who we feel best placed to advocate for.” Referencing Marcus Aurelius’ *Meditations*, Padilla-Peralta asked if it was necessary to “detach from affairs of the heart” in order to avoid disappointment in undertaking acts of resistance.

Karol Ruiz spoke next about her own story of fleeing the civil war in Colombia with her family, and how, despite the life-threatening circumstances at home, their situation did not make them eligible for refugee status in the US. She expressed gratitude for the many people who “broke laws to find refuge” for her as an undocumented immigrant, while she was hospitalized for depression. Now at Wind of the Spirit, Ruiz engages in advocacy for legislation regarding fourth amendment protections, municipal IDs, and local law enforcement resistance against federal ICE demands. Of Wind of the Spirit, she said: “our work is our prayer; our march is our faith; our existence is our resistance.”



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Fatima Shama shared about her family’s migration from Brazil and about her experiences growing up in a dual-faith home, as her mother is a Brazilian Catholic and father is a Palestinian Muslim. After serving as an interpreter for her parents and watching them struggle growing up, Shama dedicated her life to helping people like them. As Commissioner of Immigrant Affairs, her job was to make life better for immigrants in New York City. Shama said, “immigration is a federal issue, but immigrants are a local issue.” At the Fresh Air Fund, Shama is dedicated to bridging differences between people and a “commitment to pay it forward” because she is a “beneficiary of what America can do for immigrants.”

After a fruitful discussion, we reflected on the takeaways. We should start local with our action and reframe resistance to be about more than just illegality. We must make connections between different forms of oppression, so we can engage in intersectional advocacy. We must continue to speak truth to power and take risks in resistance. We need to share the stories of migrants to make the immigrant experience common. Finally, in resistance, practice makes permanent.



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Children, Religion, and Refugees

Liza Barrie, UNICEF (Moderator)
William Vendley, Religions for Peace
Paola Stevens, Interfaith-RISE
Ayman Mansour, Syrian American Medical Society
Daniel Perell, Baha'i International Community
Mariachiara Ficarelli, Princeton University (Student Rapporteur)

Barrie opened the afternoon panel by stating that children are at the heart of the refugee migrant crisis. The images of Syrian children Aylan Kurdi and Oram Kandish capitulated the refugee crisis to the forefront of international media, with these pictures representing the violence experienced by refugee children worldwide. Currently there are 50 million children around the world on the move. 28 million of these children are driven from their homes by conflict. More than half of refugees worldwide are children. Refugee and migrant children not only face xenophobia and discrimination but also are the most common victims of trafficking, malnourishment, rape, and severe trauma.

Barrie continued by describing the specific goals of UNICEF in ensuring that children do not fall through the cracks. The main aims of UNICEF are protecting child refugees and migrants, especially those unaccompanied, keeping families together, helping uprooted children to stay in school and stay healthy and combatting the experiences of xenophobia and discrimination.

The panelists then gave their opening remarks. Vendley works to establish and promote dialogue between religions for peace. His organization Religions for Peace coordinates international activities and projects in 90 countries. Vendley describes how through Religions for Peace, close to 900 religious leaders have convened around the deeply held and widely shared concern within their religions' duties is to protect and work with refugees. Referring to a PEW study, which has documented a rise in social hostility in which there is an erosion of social trust across different groups, Vendley calls for a movement in understanding the current environment and how religion can be a positive force and driver to ensure that refugees are no longer viewed with fear. Vendley states that religious communities need to mobilize their assets (social, moral, spiritual) and work together in order to reverse this reaction of fear.

Stevens works in helping refugees resettle in New Jersey as a social worker and director of Interfaith-RISE. Interfaith-RISE was started in response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis and is composed of all religions. Stevens states that at Interfaith-RISE one does not "say that you are here as a Jew or Christian but [you are] here as a human being." Her remarks were



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centered on the practical issues of refugee resettlement. The governor of New Jersey has closed government refugee resettlement and has reduced the help refugees have received. Stevens describes the approach of resettlement as a movement from the unfamiliar to the familiar. She gives various examples of American standards, which are different from the standards that most refugees are used. One such example is how most refugee families are accustomed to sleeping in the same room as their children instead of having their children in separate rooms. Steven's agency makes sure to ease these cultural differences, by ensuring families have access to culturally appropriate food, so that refugee children do not refuse to eat food which they are unaccustomed to. Steven's stresses the importance that a refugee family gets the support of the religious group they belong to, as religion is a key way, which helps make the unfamiliar familiar. Stevens highlights that children are the members in a refugee family that will assimilate to change faster and become the interpreters for the family.

Mansour is a pediatrician who traveled with the Syrian American Medical Society to work as a volunteer doctor for a week in Jordan. He worked in Za'atari Refugee Camp and in clinics in Irbid and other areas of Jordan. He states, "We were not just there to treat but to alleviate the atmosphere." He describes one of the most poignant moments being seeing the signs in roads in Jordan saying "Syria this way." Mansour stresses the importance for doctors to get out of their comfort zones and to work in refugee camps where assistance is needed.

Perell who is UN Representative for the Baha'i International Community, opens with a quote from the Baha'i World Centre, "Through shared discoveries and shared travails, peoples of diverse cultures are brought face to face with the common humanity lying just beneath the surface of imagined differences of identity." He goes on to say that people in positions of privilege need to consider the power and necessity of sacrifice, adding that sacrifice is not just about charity but also about learning. Perell says that children offer the greatest sense of hope and optimism and that we have a lot to learn from refugee children who are symbols of resilience. He gives an example of resilience among youth during a storm which hit Vanuatu. The youth said, "We do not need the authorities to tell us what to do... we know." The youth then continued on in rebuilding homes in their communities, ensuring that the elderly and children were cared for, etc. Perell closed by stating that of course while the numbers are important instead of just saying 20 million children are displaced, we could say "and here are the stories of those helping"... "you can help too". So, look for optimism, because otherwise we run the risk of being paralyzed by the overwhelming nature of what stands before us.

The floor was then opened for questions. Vendley closed the session by reminding that while we have to work endlessly for the system, we as people need to bring whatever the foundations of our care might be; through this, there will be hope.



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Women Refugees: Conversation and Action

Katherine Marshall, Georgetown University (Moderator)
Olivia Wicki, Princeton University (Student Rapporteur)

In this session, which was structured as an open discussion, conference participants gathered to distill practical policy recommendations on the topic of women refugees for institutional and grass-root structures alike. Erin K. Wilson, Director of the Centre for Religion, Conflict and the Public Domain, and a member of the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Groningen, opened the dialogue with the following framing question: How do gender/religious/racial identities intersect as part of the migration and displacement experience? “Until now global migration policy, on both the institutional and state level, has been gender and religion blind,” Wilson noted.

The institutional perspective in global migration policy was first introduced and represented by Hind Alowais, a Senior Advisor at the UN Women agency. Alowais explained that since the deadline for the 2015 Millennium Goals ended, the UN has focused on constructing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, of which 11 of the 17 goals have gender related targets or indicators and address the needs of women, as well as recognize and support the agency of women. Moreover, Post UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants, which occurred in September 2016, this institution is establishing a refugee response structure, with input from many different stakeholders. UN Women has consulted with a wide range of actors to employ “gender responsive” solutions, and focuses particularly on the economic empowerment of women as well as the provision of both legal and psychological support post trauma. Sana Mustafa, a consultant and public speaker, challenged the success of institutional structures when she noted that, “larger institutions such as the UN are often limited in their efficacy with pursuing on-the-ground action and smaller grass-roots organizations are more effective at achieving local impact.”

The second central theme to arise in this session was the tension between secular and religious approaches to migration policy. Namely how “a narrative prevails that religion is bad and secularism is good” (Wilson). Katherine Marshall explained that the US State Department National Action Plan for Women does not include any reference to religion and there is a tension in the interactions between secular women’s groups and religious women’s groups. Indeed, Marshall added that it is sometimes easier to have Buddhist and Hindus speak with Evangelicals than to cross the divide into the secular domain. “If you are not at the table you end up on the menu”, Marshall said. Although, Anindita Chatterjee Bhaumik, Senior Advisor on Immigration and Gender Based Violence at Connect Faith, asked the following rebutting question: “How often are Hindus or Buddhists consulted in informing the construction of policy?” There was a general consensus during the session that secular agencies are often privy to knowledge that religious organizations are not always able to access. One solution to this issue included potentially encouraging greater knowledge



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across parties about secular agencies unaware of their own assumptions and biases. Further, it was noted that secular agencies should be expected to assume no neutral stance on tolerance. “We need to be comfortable with not being neutral,” said Jessica Sarriot, a MPA student at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University.

The fourth theme to arise during the session concerned the use of language and communication in relation to the refugee crisis. Namely, the need more for more creative modes of communication when interacting with and when speaking about displaced populations. Hager Elhariry, a Program Specialist at the New Jersey Office for Refugees, noted that “the term ‘refugee’ can be alienating.” Moreover, issues concerning definitions of gender also entered the session discourse. The fact that gender is a broader term, encompasses a number of identities, and may have multiple meanings for different individuals was discussed. Daniel O’Neill the Managing Editor at the Christian Journal of Global Health explained that it is imperative to equip religious leaders with tools to explore issues, such as gender-based violence, and that sacred texts may be a way to engage said leaders. O’Neill noted sacred texts have staying power and, in faith-based communities, may exert the necessary influence to change cultural mores.

The concluding essential thread of conversation during the session revolved around domestic violence in the religious setting and in regard to refugees. Sandra Pinto, a Client Services Coordinator at El Centro of Catholic Charities, said that migrants often feel that they don’t trust the government and therefore turn to religious structures for support and help. Marshall replied that religious organizations have a long way to go in regards to recognizing domestic violence. Marshall explained that in religious communities it has been easier to discuss LGBTQ issues than domestic abuse issues. Moreover, Elhariry noted that speaking with various refugee women has unearthed many different experiences that need to be considered in this discussion. Many are accustomed to abuse and do not know that they may have access to help. A final point was made by Sarriot that the “affirmative consent narrative” is gaining a stronghold in the United States and noted that it is imperative to encourage the normalization of victimizers receiving help. It was noted that domestic violence is a global problem and that further investment in education revolving around rights equality and gender issues is fundamental in order to change social norms.

Final Action Items:

- Utilizing the emancipatory and enabling dimensions of diverse faith groups
- Equipping religious leaders with tools to explore issues, such as gender-based violence
- Harnessing the power that exists in mass movements (e.g. The Women’s March)
- Giving women and refugees a voice at the peace negotiation/diplomacy table
- Examining inclusivity of language and communication strategies
- Addressing domestic violence as a global problem