Refugee Week

We cannot walk alone

A special edition for Refugee Week
This week, 14-20 June, is Refugee Week. As we recently became a University College of Sanctuary, we hope this week will be an opportunity for the community at Mansfield to explore and celebrate the gifts and contributions of refugees and those seeking sanctuary, along with providing space to ask questions and reflect on how we, as a College, provide an environment of welcome and hospitality. Many events will take place jointly with Somerville College - fellow University College of Sanctuary - so keep an eye out for all the different opportunities to get involved.

And there will be events taking place across Oxford and across the country for you to join! All leading up to World Refugee Day on 20 June.

The theme for Refugee Week this year is 'We Cannot Walk Alone' based on a passage from Rev'd Dr Martin Luther King, Jr's speech 'I have a dream.' You can learn more here.

'... we hope you’ll join us in making Refugee Week 2021 a bold, collective act of reaching out; a space for us all to listen, to exchange and connect. To find out what we can learn from each other, and what we can build together.' (from refugeeweek.org.uk)
Xenos, stranger, is intertwined with power. Combined with love we get hospitality (philoxenia). Combined with fear we get xenophobia. Hospitality is the opposite of xenophobia. Hospitality is not simply about inviting a friend over for a cuppa; it is not about the familiar. Hospitality is the love of the other, the stranger, and the transformation that love creates. Hospitality is risky. Hospitality makes vulnerable both host and guest. The one who offers love and welcome to the stranger takes a risk. The one who accepts such love and welcome takes a risk. The world tells us that accepting the hospitality of a stranger is dangerous. And that offering hospitality to a stranger even more so. Strangers are, by definition, people we do not know. Strangers are strange. How do we treat those who are different? Those we deem ‘stranger’? The simple answer: not well. But hospitality is power. Hospitality is transformation. Those who offer hospitality to the displaced, the exile, the refugee, the stranger have significant power in this act of love. For love of stranger transforms two strangers into those who are no longer strange. With love, neither guest nor host is stranger any more. Philoxenia overcomes, overwhelms, overpowers xenophobia. Love overcomes, overwhelms, overpowers fear.
Cause for Pause

Today at 8.30pm

Space to reflect on the theme of Hospitality and Sanctuary for All

A reflective online space to come together using words, music (from Sweet Honey in the Rock) and silence.

Nothing is expected of attendees - everyone is invited to come together and just 'be' in this shared space. You can join on Zoom using this [link].

Take time to stop.
Take time to pause.
In this joint Somerville and Mansfield student organised event three exciting refugee poets from Syria, Ethiopia and Iran explore the complex framing of home and exile through their poetry. Chaired by Dr Jennifer Langer (poet, editor and founding director of Exiled Writers Ink).

Can the place that perpetrated the violence be considered home? In their contemplation, the poets may accord with Ovid in perceiving exile as death or in contrast, as life, which was Victor Hugo’s contention. Alternatively, poetry itself, may be a location, a vessel, resting between Self and Other, Conscious and Unconscious. Learn more about the poets involved, below.
Exiled Writers (cont.)

Hussam Eddin Baramo is a poet and journalist who was born in Syria and whose poetry collection in English is Grave Seas (Palewell, 2021). He co-founded a publishing company Al-Wa'l in Damascus and having endured the repression that crushed Syria and the clandestine leftist party to which he belonged, he fled to Cyprus and in 1994 moved to London. When the Syrian uprising against the Syrian regime began in 2011, he was part of the creation of the Syrian Writers Association. Hussam's previous publications include a poetry book Poisoned Kohl (2012) and short stories. He translated Introduction to Slavoj Zizek and Post Orientalism, by Hamid Dabashi (2013).

Shirin Razavian is a Tehran-born poet whose work has appeared in a range of literary magazines. She has published five Farsi and English poetry collections in the UK, the last being Which Shade of Blue. Some of her poems have been translated into Czech and published in the anthology Before Infinity Ends. Shirin's work has also been featured in anthologies including Happiness-The Delight Tree, The Poetry of Iranian Women and Silver Throat of the Moon: Writing in Exile.

Alemu Tebeje is an Ethiopian journalist, poet, lyric writer and campaigner who now lives in London. His poetry collection is Greetings to the People of Europe (Tamrat, 2018). His poems have been published in Amharic, Chinese and English. He co-translated and co-edited with Chris Beckett Songs We Learn From Trees: An Anthology of Ethiopian Amharic Poetry (Carcanet, 2020).
An Audience with Bishop Munib Younan & Bishop Tor B Jørgensen (online)

Wednesday 16 June 5.30pm

Bishop Munib Younan shares his own experience as a Palestinian refugee alongside his work as former president of the Lutheran World Federation and Bishop in Jordan and the Holy Land encouraging communities and leaders around the world to embrace those seeking sanctuary. He will also speak to the work he Initiated with the UNCHR, the interfaith document “Welcoming the Stranger: Affirmations for Faith Leaders”.

Bishop Tor B Jørgensen is the Bishop of the Lutheran Church in Great Britain and the Chair of the Council of Lutheran Churches who have generously sponsored the Sanctuary Scholarship at Mansfield College. Based in Norway, he will share his experiences of standing in solidarity with those seeking sanctuary in what promises be a thought-provoking and inspiring conversation.

You can register for the talk here.
Mansfield Evening Chapel
Wednesday at 8.15pm
Together on Zoom
ID: 824 5333 9851 / PW: chapel
(recordings will be available on the College YouTube Channel tomorrow)

Refugee Week
Preaching: Bishop Munib Younan

With the Mansfield College Choir

This term we are holding services on Zoom so that we can come together to worship - if not in person, at least in spirit. We are looking for volunteers to lead prayers, take readings or contribute music to the services. If you are interested, please contact the chaplain.
VQ+: Refugee Week

Oxford’s Colleges of Sanctuary Annual Event 2021:
Voices for Sanctuary: We Cannot Walk Alone

A discussion featuring
Reverend Inderjit Bhogal
Founder of Cities of Sanctuary UK

Afraa Hashem
Action for Sama

Thursday 17 June, 5.30pm

Register at: www.mansfield.ox.ac.uk

You can find more details and sign up here.
The library has put together a book display of refugee books in support of Refugee Week. Go and check it out!
Refugees and Asylum Seekers are facing tremendous challenges, being in especially vulnerable and oppressed positions. Since Somerville and Mansfield College have successfully become Sanctuary Colleges committed to supporting refugees and asylum seekers, we aim to raise money during refugee week, raising awareness about these pressing issues whilst also raising money to contribute towards the important work of refugee charities (Asylum Welcome, Europe Must Act, Refugee Council UK).
And keep checking with the JCR and MCR for other events happening this week! - volunteer panels, walking challenges, fundraisers and more!
A big THANK YOU to everyone who has helped to put together such a wonderful week of events - opportunities to learn from others in our communities and from afar, space to engage in discussion and challenge ourselves as well as chances to come together to have fun and celebrate our shared humanity! Thank you to all those in the JCR, MCR, SCR and across the staff team who made this all possible!
It is the obligation of every person born in a safer room to open the door when someone in danger knocks.

Dina Nayeri