

Homes of Our Own:

A Qualitative Journey of Nepali-Bhutanese Refugees to Northeast Ohio

Julia Newton

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Advisor: Diane Chambers, Ph.D.

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I also would like to thank Maria Mancinelli and the others at the International Institute of Akron. It was a pleasure to intern with you, and your help in completing this project has been essential. Thank you.

And of course, an acknowledgement page is nothing without a shout-out to my parents. Thank you for raising me to be both curious and compassionate for the world. I wouldn't be here without you.

Soli Deo Gloria

Introduction: The Birth of “Homes of Our Own”

The Importance of Story:

I wrote my first book when I was five. It was about a monarch caterpillar named, surprisingly, Monarch, who became so hungry that he got fat and formed a chrysalis (a scientific cause-and-effect, to be sure). While enclosed, he experienced philosophical questions about the meaning of life until one day he emerged to become a beautiful butterfly. I filled the tiny book with lines of great worth, such as “his stomach felt like the opposite of an echo” – a phenomenon which I have never been able to understand to this day. I dictated these golden lines to my mother, but I imagined and illustrated and taped the pages together with my own little hands.

I was enchanted by this new way of life. I had already stored away hundreds of fantastic scenarios in my brain, but to have them sitting on a page staring back at me was a treat that would only grow in its value. The creation of the book seemed like a small, albeit precious, event. Little did I know that I would continue asking philosophical questions and writing narratives for the rest of my life.

Writing is not easy for me. It came early, but it did not come well; I have never had the confidence in my writing style that I hope one day to attain. If some authors can create a renaissance masterpiece with their words, then I often feel like I am left quietly on the floor, finger painting. Be that as it may, one strength I’ve always known and loved within myself is creativity. I may not snare you with my poetic metaphors or my witty dialogue, but I have worlds like swarms of butterflies constantly whooshing to and fro in the recesses and crevices of my mind. They are beautiful, ever-moving organisms half-unknown, who I love to meet when they are coaxed into existence through ink and paper.

So why, you might ask, did I sign up for a writing-based project that involves all of the stylistic skills and much less of the personal creativity? I have often asked myself this question in the previous months, and the final answer I have come up with is this: because it is important.

Finding Bhutan:

The process of choosing to write the stories of Bhutanese refugees was long and winding. I knew that I wanted to start my thesis in the spring of 2015, which loomed in my face in the fall of 2014 when I took my Global and International Studies Capstone class with Dr. Patterson Roe. Though a social work professor, she constantly challenged me to think about how my passion for justice could combine with the writing skills I was learning through my experience as an English major. During the same semester, I also had the privilege of interning at the International Institute of Akron, a refugee resettlement agency that has welcomed new arrivals to northeast Ohio from all four corners of the earth. I met and worked with quality individuals from various continents, and there I was introduced to the heartbreaking story of the Bhutanese refugees.

It frustrated me that something so sad and so important could be left unnoticed by America at large, and I was shocked as I realized that most people have a low-level bias against refugees in the United States. This made me question deeply what it meant to be American, to be hospitable, and to be Christ-like. It was when I shared these frustrations with Dr. Patterson Roe that she suggested the idea of using oral histories in my thesis. I nodded like I knew what she was talking about and then hastily went to my dorm room to look up the term. What I found was this: “*oral history* - recorded information about the past that you get from talking to people about their experiences, families, etc.” (Merriam-

Webster). This boring definition almost fooled me into thinking that it was not an important topic worthy of my excitement and my time.

Oral history is a way of refuting the myths and biases about refugees in America by sharing the stories of the refugees themselves. By sharing their words, I could use my voice as a writer to help the American audience better understand the refugee predicament and reduce the unintentional oppression of stereotypes and assumptions. Dr. Patterson Roe saw my passion and paired it with values steeped in anti-oppressive practice – a social work ideology that acknowledges oppression in the world and seeks to negate or influence that oppression. By using oral histories with this anti-oppressive framework in mind, I could use my writing to fight for social justice.

One reason why this idea began to excite me is because I am interested in using my abilities and opportunities to be an amplifier for the voices of people who are misunderstood in the world. Refugees are a growing population in the United States with a slew of stereotypes that misrepresent them and dehumanize their often terrible situations. Therefore, as someone with the privilege of having the ability both to gain an understanding of their situation and to share that understanding with others, it is my hope that I can use this thesis to represent the people who have voices of their own but are not being heard. My main goal in this paper, besides gaining personal experience and knowledge through the process, is to fight the misconceptions of refugees in America by letting them tell their stories from their eyes, not ours.

Notes on Technicalities

As in any project of this size, there are a few items that should be clarified before it begins.

Ethics were an important part of my research. Firstly, this project was approved by Malone University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) in spring of 2015 in order for the interviews to be completed in July. Concerning transcriptions, I did my best to write the conversations exactly how they occurred. Unfortunately, sometimes certain phrases or words were unintelligible due to background noise or the accent of the participants. In these cases, I used context to insert the word or phrase that best fit their message. If the context did not give enough indication of what this might be, then I inserted my best conjecture in brackets. When shaping the text for the final draft, I edited the dialogue for readability and continuity.

As an act of accountability, I also sent my finished draft of the collage to both of my research co-participants for their feedback. I received a response from one of them, who corrected a mistyped fact and asked for a certain story to be removed from the final entry. I made these changes before submitting the final draft.

One note on the name of the project: the title of my thesis includes the phrase "Nepali-Bhutanese." Although I have not encountered this phrase during my research, I was prompted to use it when I realized that the refugees I spoke with intermittently referred to themselves as both Bhutanese and Nepali. Because the focus of this work is to communicate their story through their perspective, I wanted to respect their view of their own identity by including both titles in the name; and thus the present title was born.

Finally, due to the style of the narrative work, I took advantage of different fonts and formats in order to give a visual display of the the different voices. In an effort to better clarify the purposes of these fonts, I created the following key.

Key:

Times New Roman – Historical information and factual trivia

Myanmar – Personal comments, original works of fiction

American Typewriter – Statements made by – or directly paraphrased from – the interviewees, their narratives, descriptions of interviews

Right justified: the story of Hem Rai

Center justified: History, trivia, fiction, personal comments

Left justified: the story of Sudan Rai

“Homes of Our Own”

Prologue

In my mind, Bhutan was a small country of less than a million people, with an unfamiliar language, an array of foreign religions, and a host of problems that were as uncomfortable as they were remote.

But why should I care about the Bhutanese, anyway?

Protected from feeling the suffering of the world by my own share of pain and problems, I comfortably allowed small, hurting countries to fall into the depth of invisibility. Until one day that changed.

On September 2nd, 2014, I strode into an internship with the International Institute of Akron. There, for the first time, I learned about the Bhutanese refugee crisis. The year after my internship, Ohio would receive 1,038 refugees from Bhutan, almost a fifth of the total number of Bhutanese refugees resettled in the United States that year (Office of Refugee Resettlement). At my internship, I met and worked with a number of these beautiful and diverse individuals. Some were young, some were old. Some were already American citizens, and some had only breathed in the American air for a few weeks before shaking my hand. Some spoke English well, and some would not let their interpreters out of their sight. They all had stories, and I realized that I wanted to listen.

The more I spoke with others about my internship, the more I realized that the average American was as uninformed as I had been. These Americans also did not know where Bhutan was located on a map, and they had not tasted the deliciousness that is

Nepalese food. They did not know that the large population of Bhutanese refugees that had recently moved into the Akron area had stories of forced exile, brutal persecution, and egg-shell thin identities that could break our hearts if we listened.

These are the scattered and collaged accounts of Hem Rai and Sudan Rai, two Bhutanese gentlemen who have no relation except sharing a shocking and important cultural history. Last summer they both agreed to help me coax away our country's apathy and ignorance with the power of their stories.

Maps



Bhutan (in red) and the surrounding countries (refugee-net.org)



Bhutan and major cities (zukitours.com)

Maps (continued)



Locations of the Bhutanese refugee camps in Nepal (Human Rights Watch)

I.

Bhutan (Leaving: Part I)

You can finally see it as you walk around a thrust of trees beside the small creek.

The rolling hills hold the squares of farmlands in their hands,
guarded by the vast forests and a small, angular home to your right.

Cows graze in pastures.

Kids play in orange trees.

Men and women look after the garden, the livestock, and their families
with a calm and determined delight.

A woman stands in the doorway of the box-like house, holding a child no older than
two years on her hip
as the Bhutanese wind slides through her hair. The crystalline air is full of the
richness of history and peace.

This is home. (JN)

The recent history of Bhutan has been as dramatic and brutal as it has been
concealed. Bhutan, like America, has an identity wrapped in immigration. Within
Bhutanese society there are dozens of ethnic groups with different languages and cultures
from surrounding countries, distilled into one nation at the birth of Bhutan.

Although there is this diversity in the periphery, Bhutan has one particular people
group that stands out as its “national culture” – the Drukpa, the culture belonging to the

descendants of migrants from Tibet who practice Mahayana Buddhism and speak the Dzongkha language (Bird 23). The Drukpas have been the dominant ethnic group for the past few centuries, but this domination did not impede the peace of the other groups until within the last fifty years.

Hem

“Do you remember anything about Bhutan? Or were you too young?”

I am sitting in a restaurant called Nepali Kitchen. In my hand is a yogurt drink called a lassi, and on my fork is a delicious, crumbling bite of somosa, a pastry filled with steaming mashed potatoes, green peas, and spices.

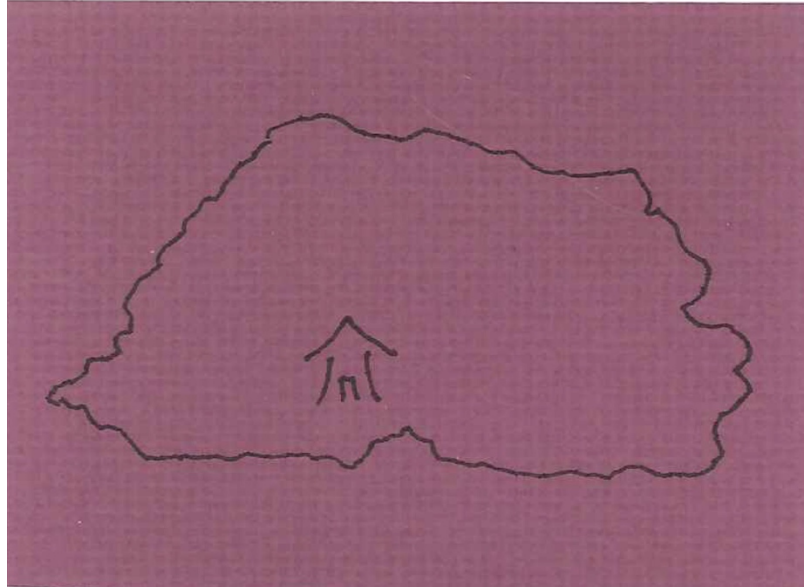
Hem Rai, the owner and operator of the restaurant and a 27-year-old recent arrival to northeast Ohio, has been answering my questions for the last thirty minutes. The room is small and crowded with Akronites seeking wholesome and delectable food from a foreign world. Drifts of Asian music waft across the ceiling.

Hem plays with a notebook and welcomes an incoming guest before answering my question.

“No,” Hem replies, “I didn’t remember anything about Bhutan. But my mom, she used to say that we had the land, the house, something like a cotton ball field. We’d have oranges in the house, we’d have everything: cows and farms... But that was a long time ago. We don’t remember our home. We were just kids.”

“How old were you when you left?” I ask.

“Two years old.”



"Home" – J.N.

One of the largest of the peripheral people groups in Bhutan is the *Lhotshampa*, a word that translates literally as "the southerners" and is composed of thousands of descendants of immigrants from Nepal. In 1988, a countrywide census revealed that the Lhotshampas were increasing in population, and even threatening to become a majority (Bird 23).

Sudan

Julia: So you left when you were four years old?

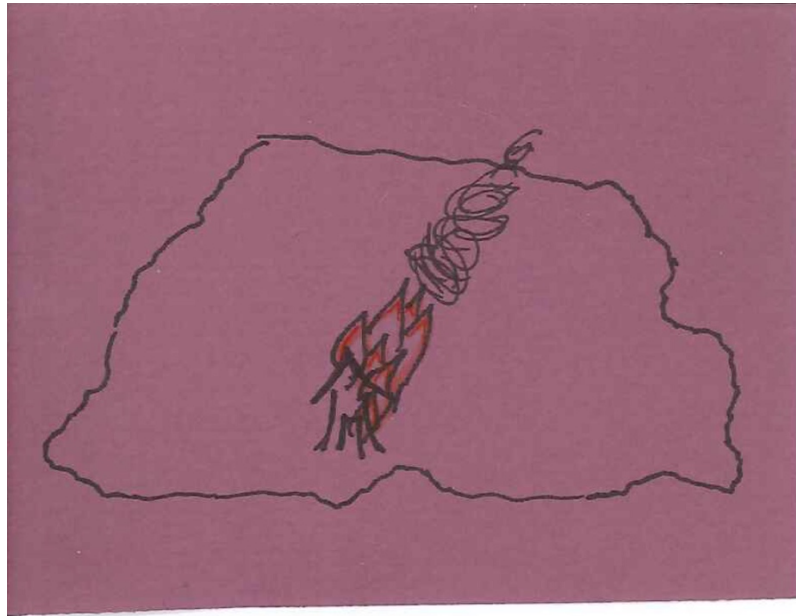
Sudan: Yep.

Julia: To Nepal?

Sudan: Mmhmm.

Julia: So do you remember Bhutan at all?

Sudan: Umm... Just a few things. I remember, like, my house. Streets. My few friends. Yeah, that's all. Nothing much. I was about, like, four years old, so I don't remember



"Persecution" – J.N.

One of the most distinctive aspects of the Bhutanese is their traditional dress.

The men wear a long robe called the Gho, tied by a traditional belt called the Kera.

Women wear a long dress, with a jacket called a Tego and an inner layer known as the

Wonju. (Tourism Council of Bhutan)

This is not what the Lhotshampa wore.

The monarch in the late 20th century, King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, decided that something must be done to prevent this increase the Lhotshampa population. On January 6, 1989, he declared a policy entitled "One nation, One People." This policy,

which required all Bhutanese citizens to adhere to the Drukpa dress code and to learn Dzongkha, was only the beginning of the hardship experienced by the Lhotshampa people. A later law also required the Lhotshampas to prove their long-term citizenship by producing tax receipts from before 1958, effectively shutting out recent immigrants from enjoying the benefits of citizenship (Bird 23).

“The Bhutanese themselves call their country Druk-Yulor the ‘Land of the Thunder Dragon.’ The ruling monarch of the country carries the title Druk Gyalpo, or ‘Dragon King.’” (Countries and Their Cultures Forum).

These actions of forced cultural assimilation against the Lhotshampa population created a slowly escalating uprising, which started as peaceful protests and eventually grew into acts of violence and vandalism. The Bhutanese government responded to this violence with violence of their own. Reports spread of human rights violations, including arbitrary arrest, ill treatment, and torture against the ethnic Nepalis in southern Bhutan. Sometimes this violence was done in response to the protests. Other violence was not; some of it seemed to have been deliberately aimed at forcing ethnic Nepalis to leave the country.

Hem

My family moved from Nepal to Bhutan six generations ago. After the fifth generation, the Bhutanese government... send back
kick out

from our home in Bhutan.

In 1990 people started moving out from Bhutan to Nepal.

And Nepal... Nepalese are strong, and Nepalese is our identity, you know.

But the government of Bhutan, they took us from Nepal four centuries ago.

The government of Bhutan, they took, like, hundreds of families to Bhutan from Nepal.

You know, by big... to grow the population.

After all, when Bhutan gets more population, we start getting involved in the politics, and the government did not want that.

So the Nepalese people were sent back to Nepal.

But Nepal, they are like, "Oh, I didn't want these people all again."

And... no more.

So we spend our life... as a refugee.

In the years following the 1988 "One Nation, One People" declaration, the persecution continued to swell unnoticed. Reports in the West of house-raids, unjust arrests, and even tortures were routinely overshadowed by news of larger ethnic cleansing in Rwanda and Bosnia (Bird 23). For many of the Lhotshampa people, this persecution was too much: "By 1992, an estimated 80,000 Bhutanese of Nepali ancestry had been pushed across the border into Indian Territory... These refugees constituted at least 15 percent of Bhutan's estimated population of 550,000" (Bird 22).

When I started working on this project, I doubted my ability to empathize with the Bhutanese struggle. There are some things, however, that everyone can understand. One of them is the feeling of losing a home.

...

My parents have been living on foreign soil in their own house for the last nine months. They sold my childhood home to an expanding business and were given a year to move. The floors they live on are not their own. We have to ask for permission to walk in our own forest.

We used to call it Waldheim, the wood home.

When I went home for Easter, all the trees were gone.

...

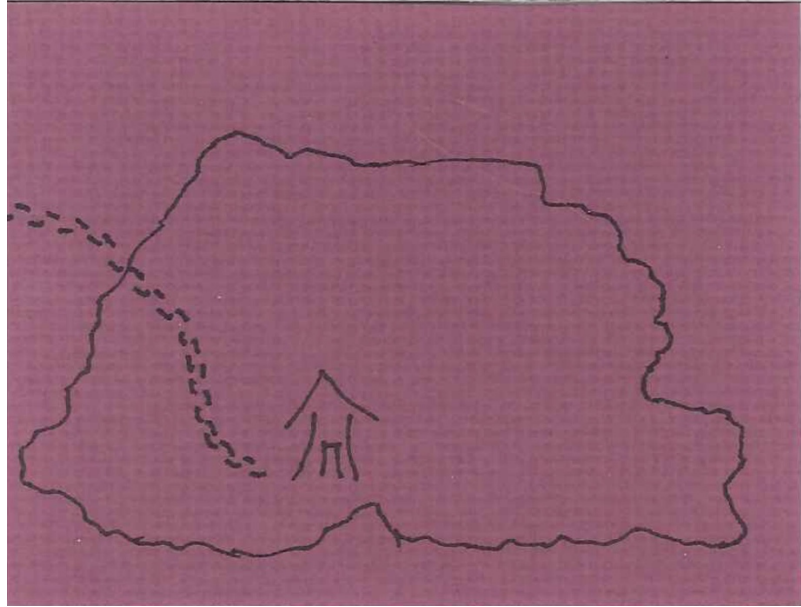
And yet, I still have a home. I have my food to eat,

an education to gain,

the world to travel.

I lost one home, but I have many.

They did not. (JN)



"Fleeing" - J.N.

"So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt."

(Matthew 2:14, NIV)

"There is something profoundly important about the fact that God's own son walked this earth as an undocumented child refugee. This was no accident. It was part of the plan all along. He could have been born and lived as a prince, a wealthy landowner, or the Chief Priest. Instead, He chose to become a refugee. . . .

God's heart is very much for the refugee." (Greenfield)

Sudan

"But did you think, like... 'We're going to go home?'"

"Oh yeah," Sudan answered with tragic nonchalance. "Always."

Sudan graciously allowed my friend Maria and me into his home to answer my long list of questions. He ushered us into a small and quaint living room and sat us down on a floral-print couch. We shook hands with several members of his extended family, who, after politely smiling at us for a span of a few minutes, soon returned to their movie. It was filmed in an Asian language and set to a foreign soundtrack that continued on in the background, which seemed to transport our interview across the earth. Sudan spoke English very well, almost without an accent. A family member set a tray of cut vegetables and two cans of Mountain Dew on the coffee table. I was struck by their hospitality. I had thought that I was the one being selfless by listening to their stories. But he proved me wrong with kindness.

Maria: So you didn't bring anything with you? No money, no anything?

Sudan: We didn't bring anything. We came empty-handed to the camp from Bhutan. We start like this. [He clapped, and gave a tired laugh of someone who is done with remembering nightmares.]

Maria: It was more sudden; it wasn't generations of war and lots of occupation. So can you imagine what would have happened if you had stayed in Bhutan? If this all had never happened?

Sudan: Yeah, sometimes I think about what would be happening if I still lived in Bhutan right now. I think I... I don't know. My dad had a very nice

job in Bhutan, before we left. He worked in the cement factory as an operator. And he did very well. It's a government job. We had our own facilities, a house; they provided us with food and everything. It was nice for us.

Julia: So then you went to the refugee camps in Nepal. Did you know what was going on when you left?

Sudan: Actually, not. I was four years old, and you know, and I didn't know anything about what's going on in Bhutan, like the war or anything like that. I just knew we had to leave the country. That's [what] I knew.

Julia: So how old were you when you figured that out that you were a refugee? And what does that mean?

Sudan: Yeah, when we came to Nepal, in the refugee camp, we had nothing and nobody to help us. Then I came to know that we had become refugees, and... we have no lands, and no country. Since then, I just kept asking my parents or anybody I could talk to. And it's like, you know, asking like, what the cause and why - why did we need to leave the country. Things like that. Still I'm learning from people. Still I'm asking

Still I'm learning from people. Still I'm asking.

II.

The Camps

You don't know how long you've been walking. Your arms are full of
your children and nothing else.

Fear and desperation still claw through your veins; they push you forward into the
night when your mind collapses into nothingness.

Finally, after leaving Bhutan and passing through India to Nepal, you and your family
arrive at the camps.

But there's nothing there.

Just the familiar face of fear pasted to every head

And despair growing in every eye.

There is no home now. (JN)

A refugee:

Someone who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country (UNHCR).

Sudan

We were the first family; we, and with us another seventeen families. So including us, eighteen families. We were the first in the camp.

There was nothing there when we got there. Just like a... a bank of river. Just a barren land, with nothing there. And there was nobody there. There was only us, and we had no idea what to do. So we just went ahead and cleaned the... what do you call the word for the cows and things? A pasture? Yeah! It was empty, and there weren't any cattle or anything; just land and the empty shell of a barn. When we told the local people our story, they told us to claim it as our own. And so we did, but the barn was almost no protection: no walls, nothing, just a roof. But we lived there. We didn't even have a blanket, but we lived there.

Hem

*I grew up in the camps. I remember
that we had dramas.*

I used to pretend I was an actor.

I remember we had an Easter program once.

But we couldn't walk around at night.

"The UN makes that rule?"

Because we are refugees, yes. We are not allowed,

not supposed to walk outside

after seven o'clock

just

get inside the house,

sleep.

“Did you have electricity at all? No? What about running water?”

Yeah, we have to stay in line to get water.

Like, one tap, and a hundred people

But...

I remember we used to do plays.

Sudan

Julia: So how long did you live in the refugee camps?

Sudan: Umm... Okay, uhh... (mumbles a few numbers) Around eighteen years.

Julia: Eighteen years? So from when to when?

Sudan: From 1990 to 2008 (corrects himself) '09! The beginning of '09.

Julia: That's crazy.

Sudan: Yeah, it's almost eighteen years. Half of my life I spend in the refugee camp. (laughs)

(laughs)

After leaving Bhutan, the Bhutanese refugees had to travel to refugee camps in Nepal, which were built by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) after the Nepalese government requested assistance to handle the influx of refugees (Bird 22). According to International Organization for Migration, over 105,000 refugees moved to the camps in Nepal, while an estimated 20,000 refugees went elsewhere in Nepal and India (2). Many of these refugees stayed in these camps for decades before getting the chance to be resettled in other countries.

Hem

What was the camp like?

...It was like, I don't know. You know, we're just spending our life there. You know, getting married, getting kids, and... you know, the government gives food, rice for us, but not all the people, you know. So we had to work a little bit, you know?

Sudan

We spent months there without any change. We had nothing to eat, and our parents had to go to the local areas, in the villages and cities, to bake food and get whatever they could find.

My mother was a social worker in Nepal. When we came to Nepal, she went to Kathmandu many times; the local leaders took her over there to share her stories with agencies and such. They saw her and everything,

and she told them everything that happened. And then the agencies came to the camp, you know, and inquired about the situation, and they started to help us. Like, first, I think, the Red Cross Nepal was the first agency that helped us, by providing food and clothing and things like that. And then, after that more refugees started coming, you know? Because there someone is helping, so maybe they can get help.

*In 2000, the U.N. High Commission on Refugees
estimated that one out of every 135 people alive in the world was a ‘refugee.’
(Pumariaga et al.)*

Sudan

So, um, there is a lot of people there. There are over 2,000 - 3,000 people there now, I think, and it is very very hard to manage the camp. It is really crowded. I mean, like, everyday thirty people died, just because of the disease. And there's nothing there, no toilets or things like that. There's nothing there. It's just an open field, and it is very very... it's terrible to live there.

So the - I think the UNHCR - they decided to separate the camp into three smaller groups so that they can manage it well. So they started to divide the camp into seven groups in Eastern Nepal. And then I moved to Beldangi 1 - that is the name of the camp, Beldangi 1 - so I came there, and

we stayed there. And then I just went through school - there was no school building, nothing, but I started my schooling there anyways.

In a 2008 review of studies done on Bhutanese refugees in Nepali camps, the results showed a dramatically high incidence of mental illness present, including depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Both tortured and non-tortured participants reported elevated rates of mental illness because of their experiences.

(Mills et al.)

Sudan

It was very very, you know, hard. Was very hard, at the initial stay - the beginning of our time. And you know later, when we go to the school, start our class, and then they built a school building later. Like, with the bamboos and things like that. And after that, everything is okay, but the thing is, like, we didn't have money, we didn't have income. We totally relied on whatever we got from UNHCR. The UN supported us, with everything, even basic food. We needed to totally rely on them.

So there was a lot of frustrations, a lot of depressions in the youth.

Like - like me.

दुःख (dukkha) : the Nepali word for sadness
(Google Translate)

Death a Fear

*Sometime I deeply breathe in with great
Sigh of hopelessness,
When I gaze upon thy abode above the sky,
What enchantment thy abode does bore,
For I can see no more
Than the endless sheets of blue sky,
But I heard somewhere that
Death is the only way to thee
And I fear to come to thee
By the dark doors of death.*

-Choning Dorji, Bhutanese poet

Sudan

In the camp, in Beldangi 1, when I... we were teenagers, you know. Fourteen, fifteen years. It was a frustrating time. I saw a lot of people in Nepal that had a luxurious life, and I thought - you know, like, obviously I - you know, I wanted that life. And then I kept thinking about that, because we had nothing to do. We can't do anything. We can't go outside. And, umm... I'm very, very lucky, I think. A lot of my friends, they uh... they discontinued the schools, and they didn't want to continue their studies because of - because of, you know, the situations there in the camp. So there's no hope for the life of anyone there.

But really, what are you gonna do with education once you have it? You don't have citizenship from any country, so you have no options. But I kept going to school. Umm, my parents always supported me for that, you know. They encouraged me to go to school, to finish the school, so one day I can do something, you know? And then I kept going and I finished my camp school. Umm... I graduated when? In 2002. And I finished, and then

after that it was really, really hard time, you know, after that. Like, what can we do? For the studies, for the higher educations. We needed money, we needed to afford to live, to learn. We can't do that, because we have no income, you know?

I guess it's a very long story, you know?

We are a very long story.

Like, we've been through many things.

A lot of things.

A lot of friends lost their life in the camp.

Without getting a treatment for things
that should be simple to cure,

or because people were addicted to the drugs.

There are...

You know, there are so many things in the camp.

But I just, you know...

I just like, thinking about my better life.

One day, it will come.

That's all that I was waiting for. (laughs)

One thing that I learned in the camps was that if you have nothing to do, or if you have no hope of doing anything in the futures, or if you think too much about what's going to happen in the future... it doesn't work. In

the refugee camp, there's nothing to think about it. So that forces you, you know, to do the bad things. People are frustrated. People are doing, like, you know... the things they are not supposed to do. And that leads people into a horrible life, so in the refugee camp that's the main thing. If you have nothing to do in future, or if you think "I have no country, I have no citizenship, I have no rights; if I get a degree, I will have no job," that will definitely make you behind. So that's the thing, and it is very, very, very sad.

Refugee life is not a happy life.

Everything is a compromise. You can't eat the food you want, you can't go anywhere that you want... We can't travel outside the camp; like, that is the permit. And we can't work outside. If we do, then we don't get paid. We get completely exploited. If we go to the local area, we can become teachers. And then if we teach, like, six months, or three months, when we come back home and we ask the manager for the money... [laughs dryly] You can't do anything! There is no one to make them be fair, so they will take advantage of people.

Hem

Maria:

I have a question. You were two when you went to the refugee camp, so how old were you when you realized, like... "I'm not a citizen of Nepal?"

Hem:

Yeah, I started talking or thinking about it in school.

People taught us that "Oh, we are refugees, guys! No more outside! Inside!

We have to study!" [Laughs]

Everyone taught us this to focus, to study.

Maria:

Why is it important for you to be a citizen?

Hem:

Because people...

I don't like... nobody likes to be refugee, you know?

If you spend your life

like one year

or one month as a refugee, it's too hard.

You have nothing, you know?

No identity.

You have nothing.

If people ask which country you're from,

the answer is:

I don't know.

Some people, they are crying in camps.

Like eighty years, they used to cry,

because they don't have

identity.

सपना (*supanā*) : *the Nepali word for dreams*
 (Google Translate)

Hem

Car, car is only dream. You know? To have AC in house, only dream.

Because poor people didn't have big mind. Always poor.

And we don't... have like, big dreams, you know. Just small dream. Just eat two: night and morning. And sleep. And spend your life like that. No dreams, you know. "Oh I'll get this, oh I'll do that." Because we don't have citizenship, so we are not allowed to do anything. If I go to do something outside [the camps], people are like, "You are refugee; you have to go back." So we are not... so no dream. Just eating plain, maybe. [small chuckle] Here and there, moving. So where you spend your life. I didn't have anything in my life, so...

Sudan

I don't have big goals for the future. I always think about... I will have a better job, so I can afford my family, so my daughter can go to the better school, get her degree without any problem, so I can support her in her every step. Yeah, and I want to live happily.

It was not until the year 2007 that the US ambassador to Nepal was able to finalize an agreement that allowed many of the refugees to be resettled. As of November of 2015, 84,800 of the 100,000 that have resettled in host countries have found their homes in the United States. Unfortunately, however, there are still 18,000 left in the camps (UNHCR).

Sudan

Originally, we just thought that this - that this would be for a short time only. Like maybe a couple years. Then Bhutan would come and take us back, or something will happen. But it never happened. Our leaders from the camp, the seniors - they tried to go back to the country, and they conducted a lot of the peace movement. But it all failed. None of it worked. Like, they tried to go to Bhutan, but Bhutan wouldn't accept. At all. Bhutan and Nepal had so many bilateral talks in the minister level. They had talks, meetings. No success. Nothing, nothing.

Right now there are still people in the camps, hoping that they can go back - at least so they can go there and die.

आशा (*āśā*) : *the Nepali word for hope*
(Google Translate)

Sudan

Julia: So how was that process like to apply to come to America?

Sudan: Umm, just declare that we are interested to resettle in that country, and that's all. We needed to fill out the forms and things like that. They will just do the process. We have many choices. There are seven other countries that are willing to take refugees: Canada, UK, Australia, Denmark, Norway, Netherland, and New Zealand.

Maria: Yeah, I know the US has taken 75,000 plus. We've taken the majority for sure.

Sudan: I'm pretty sure, yeah. And most of refugees are still here in the US. You know, they ask you where you want to go. And everybody chooses where they want to go: where their friends or families are, you know. They just want to follow them. As for me, I wanted to come to the United States. I like the United States, I had heard a lot of things about the United States. Full of opportunities, great education. You know if I had go to another country, I may have a regret, you know? (laughs) No, I had to go to the United States.

Additionally, to some the news of resettlement was not as wonderful a miracle as it might appear to others; according to a report written by the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, there were several instances of violent opposition in the camps after the United States offered to help resettle the refugees, especially towards those who were registering with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in order to resettle.

We spent our twenty years as refugees in Nepal, so after... IOM, the International Organization for Migration, they came to camps and they asked us whether we wanted to stay as a refugee or we wanna go to some other countries, like America, or Canada. And I came here.

When they came the first time, people said,

“No! IOM, go back!”

They didn’t want to leave; they didn’t want to go to any other countries.

They just wanted to go back to Bhutan, or... they wanted to stay at Nepal. But slowly, slowly the people started to think; “No more here. Let’s go to America or something! Let’s go to Canada.” They they started going, some. So they started saying they are ready.

They are sleeping, you know, like this. [Pretends to wake up suddenly]

Like a daymare of some type.

Like, ahh, like... you can’t imagine what kind of daymare, you know.

Like something happens. [Pretends to wake up again.] America!

Sudan

“Do they tell you about resettlement options?”

No, they won’t tell you about resettlement. Because if they tell you that, there might be chances to, you know... what can I say, arguments? Or war? Or something will happen. People are still hoping that the United

Nations is helping us to go back to our country. Not to resettle to different countries. No, they don't want to talk at all, the United Nations, because everybody is hoping... they are hoping that they will help us to go back to our country. And if instead of that they are telling them, "Hey, you need to resettle. You need to forget your country," you know that won't be good for them.

So they started little by little. Like... "What about if other countries offer for you to resettle? Like, America?" Like this, you know, they started slowly. And there was a lot of revolt, because a lot of people fought because they didn't want to go.

Some people are very happy. I always wanted to come to the United States, like before when I was in the camp. Before they talked about this resettlement, I always wanted to come here. Always, but there's no way to come. (laughs) How can I come, you know? So there was no way. But if I got a chance, then I would be here before that.

(laughs)

III.

From Nepal to America (Leaving: Part II)

It has been twenty years.

The jungles of Nepal are now your home. Your children, once
clinging to your coat strings, are now grown.

You think about Bhutan every day, but you try not to speak of it.

Your son, now twenty-two years old, approaches you
And informs you that he is going to try to resettle in America.

You are heart broken, of course,
but there's nothing you can do.

If you do not let him leave,
he will die with you
in these camps. (JN)

moving (adj) –

1. *in motion.*
2. *producing strong emotion, especially sadness or sympathy.*
(Google)

Hem

I was twenty-four when I finally left the camp.

That was three years ago. I didn't expect houses like this. I always expected New York City, you know? Big buildings, crazy people. When I came here, it was totally different. When I landed in the Chicago airport, I was like, "This is America!" But then they took me by car to my first apartment, and I was surprised. There were four families that lived in the same building. One family here, one family there - it was completely different than I expected.

Everything is surprising when you first get here. Even the small things. The bus system is different - you guys have a cyber card? That is different. And you have to watch out for traffic lights.

We don't have traffic lights in Nepal.

Here, there is the opportunity to work. Our country is so poor that they can't afford for people, you know. But no one expected to leave.

Over 100,000 Bhutanese individuals have been resettled to a different culture from 2007 to 2013. 1,737 of those Bhutanese have come to Ohio ("Refugee resettlement referral from Nepal reaches six-figure mark," Ferenchick and Pyle).

Sudan

The first thing I expected about the United States is that I would definitely have a better life than what I had in the refugee camp. That's the first thing, you know? I was thinking, at least I can work over there. I can live my life - you know, happily. So way, way, way better than the camp.

And I knew that it would be culturally different. This country definitely is not like our culture. Language, for instance. I started learning English before I came, but it is still frustrating.

Even to those who were enthusiastic about the opportunity to resettle, the process was – and is – not easy. According to a handout about refugee resettlement provided by the International Institute of Akron, “UNHCR refers only about 1% of all refugees for resettlement in a third country. Only when all efforts to either help refugees return home or settle permanently in the country of asylum have failed does third country resettlement become the option of last resort” (14). This 1% is solely comprised of people who can prove that they escaped from their homeland “due to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, social group affiliation, or political opinion” (IIA handout 14).

Sudan

What was the hardest thing about moving to the US? Well... everything is a challenge for us. Because of the language - language is the first thing. If you can't communicate, you can't do anything at all. You can't live the way you want. Language, cultural differences, umm... yeah, a lot of things, you know. The hard part, I think, is to integrate, to get a good job, to get a stable [job] to support the family. Yeah, those are the things that are very hard.

My parents didn't get jobs, so for one year I had to support them, and I had to pay their loans, like the travel loan. The US government pays for the plane ticket over here, but we have to start paying them back six months after we arrive in the United States. It took me three years to pay off. It's like 4,500 dollars. For three people.

What was the best thing about coming to the US? It's a new life, here. And we start our new life here. We are nothing back there; we had no hope. Over here, everything is, you know... I feel like I wasn't born here, but it's good. It gives us hope. So life is so much better over here, compared to back there. Obviously yeah, I miss my country. You know, like where I was born. I miss my country, and... otherwise I'm good over here. (laughs) I can stay here.

Hem

When people started going to other countries, and I told my mom, "I want to go to America." And she told me no.

"America is not good for you, because uh, the people are very cruel," or something. "They don't care about other refugees over there."

And there are a lot of rumors over there in the camps. "Oh, no, you don't have to go to America," or something like this. "And Australia, Australia is good. And in Canada you'll have to speak another language too, beside English! So no more Canada!" You know. [Laughs] People started choosing other countries. And my brother, my uncle's son, he went

to Canada – wait, Australia. And he told me, “Oh come on! Come to Australia!” you know? “It’s good!” From my friend, from the US, “Oh, come to the US!” you know? Because they want more friends here. They want to call everyone.

And I was like, “Uhhh... America is America.” You know? Everybody knows about America. You know? And I was like, I have to go to America. And people started... the people they started talking like America is like, opportunity or something, you know?

It is full of opportunity.

If you go to America you will get whatever you want.

Even for those who meet the criterion for resettlement, refugees are only able to come to the U.S. if they are referred to the U.S. Resettlement Program (USRP) by UNHCR or the U.S. embassy in the country of asylum. If the refugees are approved by USRP, then they are matched with an American resettlement organization, such as, as is the case for hundreds of Bhutanese refugees, the International Institute of Akron.

LSG Sky Chefs, an airline meal producer, makes 15,000 bread rolls every hour (Hoeller).

Sudan

At first, when I came to Akron, it was very exciting – more than exciting. We kept wondering what it would be like. We landed in Newark,

New Jersey. We landed there late, and we had to spend the night. We were starving, because we could not eat the airplane food.

It was terrible. I missed my rice! So we got to the hotel, very hungry, and they asked us, "What do you want? Non-vegetable, or vegetarian? Are you vegetarian? Or do you want to eat meat?" Well, obviously yes! Meat! Why not, right?! It's meat. Okay, then, so everybody's happy. We think it's gonna be food like we're used to, you know? And they bring us like in a pack, and they bring us to our room, and they bring the food in. And when we open it, we see the turkey's leg, you know? Big, very big, and three or four of them. The smell was very hard for me, very hard. I couldn't even touch it, you know? "Oh my gosh, how can I eat this?" No rice, nothing. It's only that leg! Oh my god, how could I eat it? I've never eaten like that before. It was strange to me. I was so hungry, but then I couldn't eat it at all. I couldn't eat it. There were fries that came with it, and I ate a little bit, but that's all I ate that night.

And then there was a story in Charlotte, North Carolina. I was expecting someone from the IOM, or from the Institute, I don't know – but I thought that someone would help us. There should be someone there to transit us, because we're very new, right? We didn't know anything. From Nepal to New York we had a guide, to tell us how to board and how to get to the gate. From New York also they helped us get on the plane, so when we got to the Charlotte, we got off, but we didn't see anybody that could help

us. We were two families, and we were trying to find who could help us, right, to catch the next flight. And we didn't even know where our boarding passes were. We had only the bag we held, the bag we were given from the IOM. I don't know where our boarding passes were, and things like ticket - nothing, and I had no clue what to do; no idea, nothing. And I was nervous, you know? I told the other family, say [something] to the people so they can help us. (laughs) Nobody came, you know? And then I just went and asked one of the personnel from the airport, "Hey! Can you help us?" And they said, "Yeah." All I knew was that we were going to an airport called Akron-Canton. "I'm going to Akron-Canton, but I have no idea how. I don't have anything, boarding passes, anything. How can I go?" He was so surprised. "You don't have boarding pass? How can you go there?" "I don't know! I don't know anything; I have only this bag." "Can you check that, your bag?" And I checked it, and the boarding passes were inside there. Nobody told us that it would be there! It was terrible.

After the complicated efforts of finding proper education and employment, the refugee has to apply for a green card. A green card can be applied for after one year of residing in the United States, and it is one step closer for former-refugees to finally become American citizens. The green card application includes legal and medical forms that must be filled out and co-signed by the refugee as well as by an attorney and a medical professional. After a refugee has possessed a green card for five consecutive years, he can then apply for U.S. citizenship. Some of the requirements thereof include at

least 30 months of residence in the United States in the previous five years; the ability to read, write, and communicate in English; knowledge about U.S. history and government; and “good moral character” (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services). Therefore, the road from arrival in the United States to citizenship takes a large amount of effort and at least six years of residence. Those intervening years are filled with the everyday difficulties of employment, education, and socialization, all made more difficult through culture shock and emotional stress of this shift in cultural identity.

IV.

Life in America

You are sure that the plane will fall apart on the way down the runway,

But once you are in the air, you can't help but

Let your heart smile.

You have never seen the world from such great heights.

When you land, your son meets you at the airport.

He looks older, but you think he is

more handsome than ever.

He takes your hand.

"The world is a different place over here," he says.

"Let me guide you through it." (JN)

Hem

Maria:

Are you going to study journalism, or what...?

Hem:

No, I don't want to do journalism. I want to go to movie. I want to be actor.

I don't know what I have to study, but I want to do something...

Maria: Acting school?

Hem: Maybe. I don't know. I think maybe I'll study about cameras, or
maybe about making movies.

I want to do that, but not LA. Uhh, maybe in Florida. You know Full Sail
University?

Full Sail University is all about the movies, so I studied online, and I liked
their page on facebook. They make a lot of movies. And maybe if I study
there, I will get a chance.

Sudan

The move was so sudden, from Bhutan to Nepal. And sometimes I
wonder about what life would be like if we were still in Bhutan. It was nice
for us there. Yeah, but... I like it over here. Compared to in the camps.
[laughs] I love it over here, now. It's much better.

Liminal (adj)

1. *of, relating to, or being an intermediate state, phase, or condition : in-between, transitional*

<example: in the liminal state between life and death>

(Webster-Merriam Dictionary)

Sudan

*Sudan: So yeah, we arrived and just like that I was looking for job. I went to
the interview, and I passed the interview. I got my first job at Step2 - have
you heard of the Step2?*

Julia: What is it?

Sudan: It's very hard work. Very hard. Night shift, I had to work like twelve hours.

Julia: Doing what?

Sudan: Assembling things. It's a very hard job. Very hard, very noisy and very - you know, you need to work very fast. You should be very quick to do that. And then, I worked for like two months, two months. And I got a job in the school. So I got in the school, and then I'm happy.

Hem

The story of Hem Rai is also the story of dreams fought for and fulfilled.

Most of his family is still in Nepal. His brother married a woman from India, which complicated his paperwork just enough to make him ineligible for resettlement. Hem's father passed away many years ago, and Hem's mother, though heartbroken to see her son move so far away, chose to stay in the camps to be close to her grandchildren. So Hem packed up his few belongings, hugged much of his family goodbye, and boarded an airplane with his wife and his brother, Mongol.

After landing in Chicago, he was transported to Dayton, Ohio, where he studied English at Sinclair Community College to hasten his language learning process. But what he really cared about was food.

Julia:

So you were a waiter in the camps?

Hem:

No, no. We weren't allowed to – like, we didn't have big restaurants in the camps. We are not supposed to work outside or do jobs, because we are spending our lives as refugees. Just eat, sleep, go to school. Just schoolwork. We don't have, identity, you know? We are not allowed to work outside. So we just went outside, hiding, and worked. I worked as a waiter in a Mandarin restaurant that was two hours away by bike. Yeah... here that seems crazy, but there it is fun. Nobody had a car. If somebody had a bike, that is good. It's like you're rich! [laughs]

According to a study done by Chmura Economics & Analytics, refugees have greatly bolstered the northeast Ohio economy through their spending, refugee service expenditures, and the refugee-owned businesses. In 2012, the estimated economic impact of refugees on the Cleveland area was \$48.0 million, supporting 650 jobs (26).

When he arrived in Dayton, he asked for help in finding a job in the restaurant business. The refugee resettlement agency helped him find a job at the Cheesecake Factory as a dishwasher. Grateful to be able to work in a restaurant, Hem started his new job with gusto.

The experience was not a simple one. After a few months of dishwashing, he started cooking as well. Everything was foreign. While

learning the culture, he also had to handle strange foods made for different sets of cultural taste buds. He also soon realized that the Americans around him were not all speaking the same language; in the restaurant kitchen he was introduced to what he called America's second language, Spanish. He picked it up quickly, trusting helpful friends to help him decipher between the curse words and the more benign vocabulary he heard every day. Soon he was having conversations in Spanish as well as English.

When I was sixteen, I lived in northern Brazil for three months. One of the more embarrassing of the preconceived notions I carried into the trip was that less education equaled less intelligence. I soon learned that I was very wrong, and I was humbled by the knowledge, wisdom, and experience that my new friends taught me.

Going into an internship with refugees from desperate situations all over the world, I had a different version of the same lie tucked inside my sternum. I assumed that refugees could not be educated and thus could not be on the same intellectual level that I was.

I soon learned from Sudan that the Bhutanese have an excellent, English-based education system, and that the Nepali refugee camps (as terrible as they were) are also some of the best maintained refugee camps in the world. Both Hem and Sudan studied throughout their lives in the camps, going through elementary

school, middle school, high school, and even college-prep classes. And, to add salt to my newly humbled soul, both of them know multiple languages that I've never even heard. Sudan is fluent in Nepali, English, and Hindi and now works as a professional interpreter in Akron. Hem can speak eight languages, including multiple tribal languages as well as Nepali, Hindi, Dzonghka, English, and now... Spanish. (JN)

Hem

While he was living in Dayton, Hem noticed that many people were becoming successful by starting their own businesses. Fueled by his love of cooking and his unwavering work ethic, Hem started dreaming of opening up a restaurant of his own.

He moved to Akron in January of 2015, and he immediately started a restaurant with his business partner, Mon Phuyel. This restaurant is called Nepali Kitchen, and it currently stands on East Cuyahoga Falls Avenue, north of Tallmadge. His gift of sharing food and culture is simultaneously encouraging the Bhutanese in the area while also impacting the rest of the population of Akron. His food has become a delicious and nutritious bridge between what can seem like two different worlds.

Sudan

Maria: Did you talk about what you're doing now for your job?

Julia: But yeah, you work at the school as an interpreter. Are there a lot of Bhutanese kids in the school?

Sudan: Oh yeah. I work at the school as an interpreter. I can say almost forty or fifty percent of the students now speak Nepali. In North High School, fifty percent are Nepali.

The transition still is not easy. The language can be difficult for decades, especially for the older generation of newcomers. Small aspects of culture that are as important as they are unspoken, such as eye contact or door-holding customs, can be frustrating seemingly without cure. Hem described to me how the Bhutanese treasured roaming the jungle in Nepal for vegetables and fruits. Now, in the crowded neighborhoods of Akron, they feel the lack of green like the memories of the family they left behind. They flock to metro parks and community gardens in search of a connection to nature that seems so far behind them. Upon learning this I suddenly knew why, when Sudan gave us a tour of his home, the crowning jewel was the backyard garden filled to the brim with gourds and peas, herbs and corn.

V.

What It All Means

Your son helps you up the stairs to the front door.

There is a small, white porch and a

Throng of vegetables peaking around the side of the house

from the vegetable garden.

His wife opens the screen, smiling as

she holds your grandson in her arms.

Your son pretends not to see the tears.

He leads you upstairs to your room.

“Welcome home.” (JN)

Starting a new life in the United States should be a joyful and triumphant time for refugees, who by definition are fleeing from dangers and persecutions that the average American citizen can only experience through a television screen. Unfortunately, this is often not the case. Refugees who are resettled in the United States have to deal with a large number of emotional and practical problems from the past, present, and future. They can bring with them memories of difficult lives in the refugee camps or memories of persecution in their homelands. Their futures can be difficult to predict, especially in a world that is so different and so new. Their present is constantly in a state of liminality as they adjust to this new world. Between the stresses of their past, the uncertainty of their future, and the discomfort of their present experiences, the refugees are left

emotionally vulnerable. High stress and rates of suicide show the difficulties that follow the Bhutanese refugees that look for a better life far away from their original homeland, beyond the temporary home of refugee camps, and through the struggles of reaching the shores of the New World.

According to a study done by the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, suicide rates are significant among Bhutanese refugees in America: “The rate of suicides among US-settled Bhutanese refugees from our study was 20.3 per 100,000, higher than both the global rate and the US rate of 12.4 per 100,000” (15).

And yet, they are here. And they have hope.

Hem

“Ok,” I asked, neatening my papers as my question marked the end of the interview. “So what lessons have you learned through your experience as a refugee?”

Hem thought for a second before responding.

“I’ve learned that... we need to do something. I learned that... that we are people, you know? I think people have to have something in their life, in their mind. They have to grow their mind, you know? What I learned is that when I was a refugee, I used to think about how the Nepalese people,

they are biking, eating, drinking, you know. They work hard, and they are
able to do a lot of things for their lives.

“And... we have something. Everybody: you, me, and everyone has
something special, you know.

“We need to grow that special.

“I want to say that, too. If we only think something without doing anything,
nothing will happen. But if you do think, and then you do something, then
you can change things. Not only do, but not only thinking; both working
together. You have to do practically. So you do everything.

“And this is for everyone. If you are studying Anthropology, and you focus
in your field, then you will do something good.”

He looked at my eyes, speaking directly to me.

“Yeah, you are here. You are interviewing me. Maybe in the future, you
will interview Barack Obama or some other people, great people. You will
have your station on the TV. You will do that, definitely. If you’re dreaming
really from your heart, you’ll do everything. So... as a refugee, I still did
that, and we need to work hard. You know, we need to do work hard, to
keep working hard. If we work hard, we will do something. And be positive.
Because nobody’s going to take anything after they die. Everything will
stay here. So work hard, and be happy.”

Sudan

“If you could have any message to say to Americans who are reading this story, what would you say?” I asked. “What would you tell them?”

“Well,” Sudan answered, “I’m very thankful to them. Because, they gave us a warm welcome. They welcomed us here, and we hope for more help and support from them. The new refugees are coming, and we hope that Americans can help them like you have helped us.”

“How can we Americans help refugees coming into the cities?”

“Well,” Sudan answered. “Just give them the opportunity. The refugees, when they first arrive in the United States, they don’t know anything about the laws, about work here, about anything. If they are doing something wrong, you know, explain to them what is wrong, and what will happen. Don’t call the cops on them - they will be scared! They will be scared, and they won’t know what to do. They are not that mean. This is all because of misunderstanding, you know, in between people. So, just help them and try to understand them and let them know that you’re going to accept them the way they are. I can say that, I know that. And we are very grateful.”

Final Reflection

As this project comes to a close, I am torn between locking this document away in a chest or framing the title page for my wall. These pages contain the memories of the highs and lows of my undergraduate academic career, and therein lies their worth; through the challenges that came with this formidable project, I was able to put aside my thirst for perfection and embrace the learning and exploration inherent in the process. That being said, the finished result was not what I had first envisioned, and forward progress was not always simple.

One of the simplest and most frustrating of the complications was deciding how to present the stories I had gathered in the interviews. Did I want to create short stories based off of the narratives? A novella? Poetry? It was not until February of 2016, just two months before the due date, that the vision for the project began to fall into place. Still, when I had finally finished the preparatory research, I stared at a blank screen for almost an entire month (which I came to highly regret in the weeks preceding the deadline). Part of this frustration stemmed from the lack of examples of the collage style of narrative; although I studied several samples of oral histories, none of them held the stylistic qualities I was searching for. This opportunity to explore a new style was both exciting and frustrating.

Another obstacle I had to overcome was my fear of representing another person's story. While I was in the Middle East last semester for a study abroad program, I met a wonderful professor named Dr. Rula Quawas who taught at the University of Jordan in Amman. She was a minority in many ways: she was a female academic, she was a feminist, and she was a Christian. I asked her about how the West can help women in the

Middle East fight against gender-based oppression, and her answer shook me: “Hear my voice; don’t hijack my voice.” I was immediately struck with the connection to my thesis project. How was I to represent someone else’s story, especially a story that is usually so misrepresented or ignored? How could I handle such a sacred responsibility? Thankfully, my thesis advisors came beside me and encouraged me to have boldness in the process. They trusted my cautious nature more than I trusted myself and reminded me that this is not only a representation of the co-participants’ voices, but a work of my own voice and experience as well. Still, learning the art of balancing art and fact was a valuable lesson that I have still to perfect.

The hardest struggle by far was the incompleteness of it all. As much as I worked on my thesis, it is not what I hoped it would be. There are stories that I wanted to uncover; there are poems I wanted to write; and there are art pieces I wanted to chip into. Eventually, I had to realize that these were dreams that were inhibited by the shorter-than-ever-imagined time span of a little over a year, and that I had to accept the learning process as a prize within itself and completely separate from the finished product. This draft of intertwined stories is evidence of an academic exploration in which I grew as a person, a writer, and a scholar – but it is still a draft. Finishing this thesis is a constant battle against a talking monster who is forever editing my work and suggesting grand additions: “How about a poem there? Another short story? A hand painted portrait of the participant’s grandmother?” But I’m learning that wrestling with a piece of writing is part of the process for improvement.

So what did I learn? In some ways that answer is more difficult to verbalize than my difficulties, but I do know this: I learned how to be humbled by another’s past. I

learned how to let go of my expectations of perfection in exchange for the richness of diving into a process. Part of the beauty of anti-oppressive practice is how personal the work becomes. As Brown and Strega state, “As anti-oppressive researchers, we recognize that usually the first target of change is ourselves” (Brown and Strega 260). I wholeheartedly believe that, and I am grateful for the opportunity for introspection and change within myself. And on top of it all, I learned infinitely more about Bhutanese history and the process of collecting oral histories than I thought I ever would.

I also learned that experience is far more valuable than research, although both are useful. I spent a considerable amount of time last spring researching the area of oral histories, and although the information was beneficial, I learned that conducting oral history research is infinitely more complex than what it appears to be on paper. Some of the advice that the oral history professionals gave was logical, but impractical in the actualization of the project. For instance, while I tried to follow their advice to use advanced recording equipment, the technology failed me and both of the interviews were eventually recorded on my iPhone. Also, the idea of formatting the finished research, which was almost an afterthought in most of the articles, proved to be the most difficult part of the process. This is one of the reasons that I am thankful for the opportunity to actually perform an oral history project, rather than simply researching the work of others.

My biggest regret in this research, other than allowing myself to procrastinate for too long, was probably in shaping the questions. My time in the Middle East gave me new insight into topics that provide special insight into cultural differences. These range from large questions like religion and moral values to details such as hobbies and favorite

American foods. There could have been such richness and depth of identity with which the reader could have become acquainted if I had let myself explore more aspects of the narrators. If I ever do an oral history project again, I will be certain to include the full array of questions for a vision beyond the timeline of their past into the dimensions of their personality.

All in all, the thesis is done. I have learned valuable lessons about both how to and how not to do an oral history project, and I am thankful for the freedom I had to discover both. I now have a deeper appreciation for the hardships that the Bhutanese refugees went through and are currently experiencing. My hope is that this novice attempt at telling their stories did justice to the richness and power of these beautiful people and that we as Americans continue to listen.

Research on Oral Histories

When I answer questions about my thesis with the term “oral history,” the most common response I get is a blank stare. I don’t blame them; it is not exactly on the 2015 list of most common words, and even I heard it for the first time only when Dr. Patterson Roe suggested it as a topic. Thus my thesis journey began by becoming acquainted with the concept of oral history: what it is, why it is important, and how to conduct the project in a way that gives life to the speaker and not just the interviewer.

Depending on how you look at it, oral history can be considered as old as time or relatively recent. For many centuries, history was passed down orally and knowledge was generally taught through spoken words, not through pages. Then, even as writing became a life changing invention, people gathered other peoples’ stories to continue their legacy and to instruct posterity about their heritage. In her article “Making Sense of Oral History,” Linda Shopes says, “Moreover, for generations history-conscious individuals have preserved others’ firsthand accounts of the past for the record, often precisely at the moment when the historical actors themselves, and with them their memories, were about to pass from the scene.”

Despite its long-standing legacy, it is generally decided that oral history as we know it began with Allan Nevins in the 1940s. He was arguably the first to use a systematic method of interviews to collect a single story when he created a biography for President Grover Cleveland – and with that biography, “the contemporary oral history movement [was] born” (Shopes). Today, oral history can be defined as “a self-conscious, disciplined conversation between two people about some aspect of the past considered by them to be of historical significance and intentionally recorded for the record” (Shopes).

These oral histories, whether exciting and important or seemingly mundane, can change the way we see and interact with the world.

Oral histories have been used in a number of ways. Not only have they served in a biographical sense, as was the case with President Cleveland, but they also collect the stories of others for empathic and educational causes. They have been particularly used to gather awareness for overlooked or misunderstood people groups, such as homosexuals, the homeless, ethnic minorities, or prostitutes (della Porta 263). They share the emotional and personal stories of those who are marginalized and give them an opportunity to speak. Steven VanderStaay, the author of the anthology *Street Lives: An Oral History of Homeless Americans*, wrote this about the process of interviewing:

At moments I was treated as a midwife of sorts, one who would bring these stories out to the community. On other occasions the testimonies became nearly confessional, as the narrators searched their stories for the key to explain their situations... There were people who cried as they spoke, and people who shook with rage. Some told me they needed to talk. Others said that I needed to listen. But all of them wanted their stories to be heard. (viii)

Compiling oral histories is not simply a task to collect trivia; it is a journey to see people as they are, creating a safe place where they are able to speak and we are able to change our perspectives by teaching ourselves to listen. Stories are powerful, and hearing the true narratives of others can destroy stereotypes and eliminate assumptions.

This belief in the importance of story shapes how we research them. Shopes describes this purpose in her article: “What is needed then is an understanding of oral

history not so much as an exercise in fact finding but as an interpretive event, as the narrator compresses years of living into a few hours of talk, selecting, consciously and unconsciously, what to say and how to say it.” By interacting with the interview as a story that is worth telling, the oral historian takes a living story and translates that life to the page.

Although the act of gathering these stories may seem like a simple process, the actual collection of oral histories requires a large amount of preparation and logistics. According to Judith Moyer’s article, “Step-by-Step Guide to Oral History,” there are eight steps in the process of collecting oral histories: Defining a central question or idea, planning the project, researching background information, conducting the interview, processing the interview, evaluating the research, organizing and presenting the results, and storing the materials. If each of these steps is done thoroughly, then the chances of success for the project improve.

Moyer states that the first step in organizing an oral history project is to come up with a central idea, theme, or question to explore. In my case, this is the simple question of: “What are the stories of Bhutanese refugees who come to Akron, Ohio?” By defining this question in the beginning of my research process, I was able to shape the entire project in order to best answer this question. Every question I asked and paragraph I wrote was guided by that premise, by the goal that I would find the truth of their experiences rather than continue in misunderstanding and assumption.

The second step is to plan the project, keeping in mind things such as budget, publicity, timeline, equipment, and other such details. For my project, this included finding and learning how to properly operate the recording equipment, locating and

asking the interviewees to participate, getting permission from the Institutional Review Board, and planning the locations and times of the interviews.

The third step, Moyer writes, is to do background research in the topic at hand. This provides both a foundation on which to create questions and an ability to further empathize with the interviewee. In my case, this involved taking a much closer look at the political situation in Bhutan and Southeast Asia, the evidence of which can be found in the research below.

After I had researched the situation of the refugees and was comfortable with the oral history process, I started planning what questions I would use in the interviews. Creating questions is in itself a very important part of the oral history process. The questions should lead the interviewee to paint a picture of her life in order to give context to her current story. Dr. Julia Villaseñor emphasizes the importance of broad, open-ended questions, which give the interviewee the same liberty of taking the story any way he wants. Both della Porta and Moyer also suggest that the interviewer should concentrate on coming up with themes of discussion, rather than direct questions (excepting basic, preliminary questions to begin conversation). This way the interviewee can tell his story without too much direction from the interviewer. However, according to Barbara Truesdell, having a pre-made list of questions can be helpful by adding structure to the interview: "Prepare a list of questions for the interview. You need not follow this list exactly; other questions will arise during the interview, but they will give a solid organization and cohesiveness to your interview" (2). Whether writing out questions beforehand or not, however, both camps agree that the key is to be flexible and allow the narrator to tell his story at his own pace. When I interviewed my co-participants for this

project, I had a list of twenty-one questions prepared in order to shape conversation.

However, I only ended up using about half of these questions in favor of encouraging the interviewee to share their story naturally through the use of follow-up questions.

The next step in Moyer's list is to conduct the interview. Moyer writes several tips, such as picking a quiet area that feels secure and safe for the interviewee, making sure the interviewee knows why and what the interview will consist of, and using good listening skills. Moyer emphasizes that knowing how to correctly operate the equipment is especially important. The interviewer must decide on what kind of equipment is essential – whether they need audio recordings alone or both audio and visual, whether there needs to be a microphone to aid with the clarity of the recording, or whether a more expensive piece of equipment might be preferable to a cheaper, less reliable recording device. It might be wise to have someone else in charge of the recording equipment, so that the interviewer can focus on the discussion without worrying about the technology involved (Chambers). Since a malfunction could put the entire project in jeopardy and would require a repetition of the interview, the equipment should be tested before each interview. In my situation, the equipment I had received from the University was complicated enough for the stress to outweigh the reward, so I successfully recorded the interviews with the simple and familiar machinery of my iPhone.

Once the equipment and the setting are arranged, the actual interview can begin. Moyer gives many pieces of advice that dive into the details of the interviewing process. For instance, sometimes it is better not to speak; there are times when silence can allow the narrator to speak more honestly and feel less rushed. Moyer also advises interviewers to be mindful of “the psychological forces at work” when dealing with difficult topics.

She also says that the conversation should start with general and easy questions and then move on to more difficult, probing topics before ending on a lighter note. Dr. Andrew Rudd, professor of communications at Malone University, advises that the first few questions should be questions that are almost impossible to answer wrong, such as “What is your name?” “Where do you currently live?” and “Where were you born?” These questions not only provide useful biographical information, but they also affirm the interviewee as the authority in the situation when they might not be used to being heard at all (Rudd). Both Rudd and Villaseñor also emphasize the importance of follow-up questions during the interview, since “follow-up and tag questions are usually the most fruitful” (Rudd). All of these strategies are to make the interviewee comfortable and thus in control of her own story. If successful, the interview can allow the narrator to feel heard, as well as allow the interviewer to learn valuable lessons: “From the experience of reading and interviewing, students can discover that everyone, even the most humble among us, has a story to tell, a story whose significance depends largely on the skill and empathic response of the interviewer” (Farrell 7). Thus, even though the stories belong to the narrators, it is the interviewer’s duty to conduct the interview in such an empathetic way that is conducive to success.

It is important to keep ethics in mind throughout the entire process of collecting the oral histories. In the article “Principles and Best Practices,” the Oral History Association (OHA) gives advice on how to conduct interviews in an ethical and respectful way that keeps the narrator’s best interest at heart. In the process of sharing an individual’s story, the oral historian’s first priority should be to protect and defend the rights of the narrator. In order to do this, “Interviewees hold the copyright to their

interviews until and unless they transfer those rights to an individual or institution,” which is often done by signed consent forms presented at the beginning of the interview (see appendix B). Interviewers are also ethically obligated to research the topic of the discussion and ask sensitive and enlightened questions that will give opportunity for the narrator to “give their story the fullness they desire” (OHA). The interview itself should be conducted as previously discussed to the interviewee, especially in regards to the length of time, number of questions, and subject of discussion. The interviewer must also allow the participant to remain silent on any subject that she does not wish to speak about. After the interview is concluded, the interviewer should explain his methodology for the record in order to provide proof of ethical practice.

After the interview is done, there is still much work to be completed. First, the interviewer must write detailed notes of what happened in the interview, both for ethical purposes (as stated above) and for use in editing the material (Moyer). Then, the researcher must listen to and sometimes transcribe the interview into a typed format. From there, the oral historian must decide how to edit the work. Sometimes editors might change details for readability’s sake, and sometimes the researcher might create stories based on the story told in the interview. Dr. Villaseñor suggests looking for themes while going over the interview material; if a common theme appears between the different interviews, then that can be a convenient way to format and edit the end product. This became an essential part of my own project. Because I attempted to combine two narratives into one written work, I needed to find a way to organize the stories in a way that both represented the interviewee and made sense to the audience. In the end - after much experimentation - I decided to use the themes of place and

movement, choosing a different situation for each chapter of the narrative. It was only in using the idea of themes that I was able to organize the stories in a way that effectively communicated the heart of the research.

Whatever the editing method, it is hoped that the final product becomes a source of truth that tells the stories of voiceless people in a beautiful way. “When the histories are done well, they transcend whatever methodologies gave them birth, transmuting what are often unfocused vocal ramblings into the rhetorically dramatic structures of good, perhaps even great, literature” (Farrell 3). These literatures can then be distributed and archived for posterity and for awareness.

Historical Background of Bhutan

The recent history of Bhutan has been as dramatic and brutal as it has been concealed. Bhutan, like America, has an identity wrapped in immigration. Within Bhutanese society there are dozens of ethnic groups with different languages and differing cultures, coming from different countries in the surrounding area during the birth of the country (Piper). Although there is this diversity in the periphery, Bhutan has one particular people group that stands out as its “national culture” – Drukpa, the “culture of the descendants of migrants from Tibet who practice Mahayana Buddhism and speak the Dzongkha language” (Bird 23). The Drukpas have been the dominant ethnic group for the past few centuries, but this domination did not impede on the peace of the other groups until within the last fifty years.

One of the largest of these peripheral people groups is the *Lhotshampas*, which translates literally as “the southerners,” and is composed of thousands of descendants of immigrants from Nepal. In 1988, a countrywide census revealed that the Lhotshampas were increasing in population and even threatening to become a majority (Bird 23). The monarch at the time, King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, decided that something must be done to prevent this from happening; on January 6, 1989, he declared a policy entitled “One nation, One People.” This policy, which required all Bhutanese citizens to adhere to the Drukpa dress code and to learn Dzongkha, was only the beginning of the hardship experienced by the Lhotshampa people. A recent law also required the Lhotshampas to prove their long-term citizenship by producing tax receipts from before 1958, effectively shutting out recent immigrants (Bird 23).

These actions against the Lhotshampa population created a slowly escalating uprising, which started as peaceful protests and eventually grew into acts of violence and vandalism. The Bhutanese government responded to violence with violence of their own. Piper writes that, “In the aftermath of the demonstrations there were consistent reports of widespread human rights violations, including arbitrary arrest, ill-treatment and torture, being committed against ethnic Nepali southern Bhutanese.” These actions had multiple possible motivations: “In some cases the violations were simply carried out in retaliation to the protests. In others, the violations, or the threat of such, appear to have been deliberately aimed at forcing ethnic Nepalis to leave the country” (Piper). In the years following the 1988 “One Nation, One People” declaration, reports to the West of house-raids, unjust arrests, and even tortures were routinely overshadowed by news of larger ethnic cleansing in Rwanda and Bosnia (Bird 23). For many of the Lhotshampa people, this persecution was too much: “By 1992, an estimated 80,000 Bhutanese of Nepali ancestry had been pushed across the border into Indian Territory... These refugees constituted at least 15 percent of Bhutan’s estimated population of 550,000” (Bird 22). When they left their homes, these people unknowingly stepped into the life of refugees.

After leaving Bhutan, the escaping Lhotshampas had to travel to refugee camps in Nepal, which were built by the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) after the Nepalese government requested assistance to handle the influx of refugees (Bird 22). According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), over 105,000 refugees moved to the camps in Nepal, while an estimated 20,000 refugees went elsewhere in Nepal and India (2). Many of these refugees stayed in the camps for decades before being given the chance to resettle in other countries. It was not

until the year 2007 that the US ambassador to Nepal was able to finalize an agreement that allowed many of the refugees to be resettled. As of November of 2015, 84,800 of the 100,000 that have resettled in host countries have found their homes in the United States. Unfortunately, however, there are still 18,000 left in the camps (UNHCR). Additionally, to some the news of resettlement was not as wonderful a miracle as it might appear to others; according to a report written by the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, there were several instances of violent opposition in the camps after the United States offered to help resettle the refugees, especially towards those who were registering with IOM in order to resettle.

Even to those who were enthusiastic about the opportunity to resettle, the process was – and is – not easy. According to a handout about refugee resettlement provided by the International Institute of Akron, “UNHCR refers only about 1% of all refugees for resettlement in a third country. Only when all efforts to either help refugees return home or settle permanently in the country of asylum have failed does third country resettlement become the option of last resort” (14). This 1% is solely comprised of people who can prove that they escaped from their homeland “due to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, social group affiliation, or political opinion” (IIA handout 14). Even for those who meet this criterion, refugees are only able to come to the U.S. if they are referred to the U.S. Resettlement Program (USRP) by UNHCR or the U.S. embassy in the country of asylum. If the refugees are approved by USRP, then they are matched with an American resettlement organization, such as, as is the case for hundreds of Bhutanese refugees, the International Institute of Akron.

Even after the stress and paperwork of being approved to migrate to the U.S., there is still a surplus of steps the refugee has to accomplish before becoming an American citizen. Before she can make the trip to her new home, she must complete a collection of several tasks that could take anywhere from two months to two years to accomplish (IIA handout 15). First, the resettlement agency has to assure the Department of State that the refugee has a house to move into, preferably near other family or friends, if possible. In the case of Akron, a relative living in the area is necessary for a refugee to be placed there. Refugees must also go through medical and security clearance, as well as culture orientation training before coming to the United States. Once these steps are completed, she can make her flight arrangements. The money used to pay for the tickets comes from the U.S. government, but, contrary to popular belief, the refugees are required to agree to pay back the price of the ticket six months following their arrival in the country. Within the first thirty days after landing, they must accomplish a checklist of necessary arrangements, such as beginning to apply for Social Security numbers, registering for schools for any children, getting a medical evaluation, and enrolling in English language training (IIA handout 16).

After the complicated efforts of finding proper education and employment, the refugee has to apply for a green card. A green card can be applied for after one year of residing in the United States, and it is one step closer for former-refugees to finally become American citizens. The green card application includes legal and medical forms that must be filled out and co-signed by the refugee, an attorney, and a medical professional. After a refugee has possessed a green card for five consecutive years, he can then apply for U.S. citizenship. Some of the requirements thereof include at least 30

months of residence in the United States in the previous five years; the ability to read, write, and communicate in English; knowledge about U.S. history and government; and “good moral character” (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services). Therefore, the road from arrival in the United States to citizenship takes a large amount of effort and at least six years of residence. Those intervening years are filled with the everyday difficulties of employment, education, and socialization, all made more difficult through culture shock and emotional stress of this shift in cultural identity.

Starting a new life in the United States should be a joyful and triumphant time for refugees, who by definition are fleeing from dangers and persecutions that the average American citizen can only experience through a television screen. Unfortunately, this is often not the case. Refugees who are resettled in the United States have to deal with a large number of emotional and practical problems from the past, present, and future. They can bring with them memories of difficult lives in the refugee camps or memories of persecution in their homelands. Their futures can be difficult to predict, especially in a world that is so different and so new. And their present is constantly in a state of liminality as they adjust to this new world. Between the stresses of their past, the uncertainty of their future, and the discomfort of their present experiences, the refugees are left emotionally vulnerable. According to a study done by the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, suicide rates are significant among Bhutanese refugees in America: “The rate of suicides among US-settled Bhutanese refugees from our study was 20.3 per 100,000, higher than both the global rate and the US rate of 12.4 per 100,000” (15). This shows the difficulties that follow the Bhutanese refugees that look for a better

life far away from their original homeland, beyond the temporary home of refugee camps, and through the struggles of reaching the shores of the New World.

But that is not that end of the story. Many refugees, such as the individuals interviewed for this project, choose to embrace the move as an opportunity to change their futures. Thousands of Bhutanese have embraced this new life in America with great success, and the citizens of America are benefiting from the newcomers' triumph. According to a study done by Chmura Economics & Analytics, refugees have bolstered the northeast Ohio economy through their spending, refugee service expenditures, and the refugee-owned businesses. In 2012, the estimated economic impact of refugees on the Cleveland area alone was \$48.0 million, supporting 650 jobs (26). Refugees are becoming an integral, lively, and growing part of our economy and our society. They have gone through unimaginable horrors, and yet many are making the world a better place even as they transition to a new life. And I am honored to live among them.

Appendix A

Julia Newton
Oral Histories of Bhutanese Refugees in America
Interview Questions/Proposal
29 March 2015

1. What is your name?
2. Where were you born?
3. When did you come to the United States?
4. Do you have a family? (Are you married? Do you have children?)
5. Where do you live now?
6. What is life like in your home here in the United States?
7. Before you came here, where did you live?
8. Tell me about your favorite childhood memory.
9. What kind of foods do you miss?
10. Why did you have to leave your home in Bhutan?
11. What was life like in the refugee camps? Was it safe? What did you like about living there? What did you dislike?
12. Where were you when you heard the news that you were chosen to come to the United States? What do you remember about that moment?
13. Did you leave any friends or family behind in the refugee camps?
14. What did you expect the United States would be like before you came to live here?
15. How did you feel when you stepped off of the plane in America? How did it feel one month after you were here? How do you feel now?
16. What was the hardest thing about moving to the United States?

17. What was the best thing about moving to the United States?
18. What is the hardest thing about living in the United States?
19. What is the best thing about living in the United States?
20. What do you miss the most from your life before you came to this country?
21. What are your hopes for your children?

In this project, I shall interview a small number of refugees (two or three) to explore their experiences in coming to the United States. In the event that I need further information, I will return and conduct a second interview to more deeply explore the same questions asked in the first interview. I shall then transcribe and edit the stories into oral histories. Depending on the form of the finished oral histories, I might do a creative work in response to the stories collected. These stories, and any creative work that might be written, will be published as an honors thesis through Malone University and might be given to the archives of other local, internationally minded institutions.

agree to be audio- and video-recorded during this study.

Statement of Informed Consent to Participate

Ms. Julia Newton of Malone University is conducting a study to learn more about the stories of refugees in America. By participating, you will be able to share your story with future readers of Ms. Newton's thesis and, by doing so, will help combat misconceptions about refugees living in the United States.

Participating in this study consists of taking part in a thirty to forty-five minute interview, which will be recorded both visually and aurally. The interview consists of sixteen questions that were carefully developed to give you an opportunity to share your experiences while emigrating to the United States. The interview also consists of several demographic questions. The demographic information is useful in helping us as we review the data.

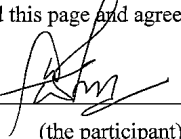
Participating in this study is completely voluntary. There are no penalties for not participating. All of your information will be kept confidential and your identity will be protected (by using pseudonyms or false names), if you so choose. We will enter your information into a computer in a way that will keep your answers private. This study has been approved by the Human Research Committee of Malone University. If you have questions about ethics in human research, please, call the committee's chair, Dr. Lauren Seifert, at 330-471-8558. We will transcribe the data using pseudo names to protect your identity. At the completion of the study the audiotapes and videos will be destroyed. We plan to use the results of this study for: the publication of Ms. Newton's thesis and for the archives of local institutions.

If you have additional questions or concerns about this study, please contact the faculty advisor/supervisor: Dr. Diane Chambers of the Language and Literature Department, at 2600 Cleveland Avenue NW, Canton, OH, 44709. You can also reach her by her office phone at (330) 471-8183, or her email at dchambers@malone.edu.

Thank you!

Participant's statement:

I have read this page and agree to take part in the study described on this page.

SIGNED:  07/05/15 DATE:

(the participant)

Initial only one option:

I, ☒ Do
☐ Do Not

agree to be audio- and video-recorded during this study.

Statement of Informed Consent to Participate

Ms. Julia Newton of Malone University is conducting a study to learn more about the stories of refugees in America. By participating, you will be able to share your story with future readers of Ms. Newton's thesis and, by doing so, will help combat misconceptions about refugees living in the United States.

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Participating in this study is completely voluntary. There are no penalties for not participating. All of your information will be kept confidential and your identity will be protected (by using pseudonyms or false names), if you so choose. We will enter your information into a computer in a way that will keep your answers private. This study has been approved by the Human Research Committee of Malone University. If you have questions about ethics in human research, please, call the committee's chair, Dr. Lauren Seifert, at 330-471-8558. We will transcribe the data using pseudo names to protect your identity. At the completion of the study the audiotapes and videos will be destroyed. We plan to use the results of this study for: the publication of Ms. Newton's thesis and for the archives of local institutions.

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I have read this page and agree to take part in the study described on this page.

SIGNED: Hem Aljal DATE: 07.05.15.
(the participant)

Initial only one option:

I, ☒ Do
☐ Do Not

agree to be audio- and video-recorded during this study.

Appendix C

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF AKRON
helping the foreign born to integrate into society

207 EAST TALLMADGE AVENUE AKRON, OH 44310-3298

T: 330.376.5106

F: 330.376.0133

WWW.IIAKRON.ORG

March 30, 2015

International Institute of Akron
207 E. Tallmadge Ave.
Akron, Ohio 44310
330-376-5106

To Malone University Institutional Review Board (IRB):

The International Institute of Akron assists new Americans who desire to integrate into American society and become productive citizens of our community. The International Institute of Akron has welcomed and provided direct services to 3,184 refugees since 2006, 610 of whom arrived last year (2014).

I am familiar with Ms. Julia Newton's research project entitled "Oral Histories of Refugees." I understand the International Institute of Akron's involvement to be: working with Ms. Newton to recruit interviewees, arranging interview times, and coordinating with the refugees involved to aid in the process of the project.

I understand that this research will be carried out following sound ethical principles and that participant involvement in this research study is strictly voluntary and provides confidentiality of research data, as described in the protocol.

Therefore, as a representative of International Institute of Akron, I agree that Ms. Newton's research project may be conducted at our agency/institution. Please contact me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Maria Mancinelli
Community Outreach Coordinator

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