

The Refugees in Towns Project Presents

REFUGEE INTEGRATION CONFERENCE & ARTS FESTIVAL

Arts Festival Program

Friday, October 2

7 - 8:30 PM - Suitcase Stories®

Suitcase Stories® is a traveling live performance series that features foreign and U.S.-born residents sharing refugee and immigrant stories. In this performance, four tellers from the RIT project and from the Boston area expose audiences to the complexity of immigration and refugee integration through their compelling stories. The performance will be followed by a lively discussion between the tellers, Cheryl Hamilton, director of the program, and the audience.

Saturday, October 3

10:30 - 11:50 AM - Policy Making Through Theater

Theater Director Vahdat Yeganeh and young artists from the Boston Experimental Theatre share their recent project *The Last Dream*, a play by children of Temporary Protected Status beneficiaries (TPS) from El Salvador whose parents are at risk of deportation. This online workshop will offer the audience an opportunity to learn about the creation of policy oriented theater and about the use of art in advocacy for policy change. José Palma, spokesperson and coordinator for the National TPS Alliance, will also join the discussion.

12 - 1:20 PM - Images of Home Through Paintings

For over a year, Thomas Cartwright, a Cape Town-based artist, has worked with a group of seven people from refugee backgrounds affiliated with the RIT project to paint on canvas visual representations of home. In this session, Thomas and the RIT persons who worked with him will introduce the artwork and discuss with the audience of the ways visual art can convey the emotions put into defining home.

1:30 - 2:50 PM - Community-Building Through Dance and Music

Community leaders and artists from the Angkor Dance Troupe, a Cambodian American community-based art organization from Lowell, MA, discuss the use of traditional dance and music for community building and outreach. They will share examples of collaborative initiatives that strengthened their integration in the city of Lowell and discuss with the audience of the use of performing arts as a cohesive factor for the community.

3 - 4:20 PM - Making and Using Narratives

Author and playwright David Valdes discusses the meaning and importance of narratives in refugee integration through his recent play, *"Downtown Crossing,"* which speaks directly about refugee and immigrant experiences. This online workshop offers the audience tools and tips to draft their own story and brings a fresh perspective on the social and political use of narratives.

4:30 - 6 PM - Photo Storytelling for Social Integration

Leora Kahn, executive director of PROOF: Media for Social Justice, and Maria Choles, community activist based in Colombia, discuss the power of visual media expression and the use of visual storytelling as a tool for integration, notably through a recent photography project conducted with internally displaced women in Colombia. Leora and Maria address with the audience the benefits and challenges of using arts to communicate with a host society.

All events are free and open to all! To receive the Zoom links to the events, register at:
<https://www.refugeesintowns.org/events>

