

RACE & MIGRATION

REFUGEES IN TOWNS SYMPOSIUM 2023

PROGRAM



ABOUT REFUGEES IN TOWNS

The Refugees in Towns project (RiT) promotes understanding of the migrant/refugee integration experience by drawing on the knowledge and perspectives of refugees themselves as well as local hosts. The project was conceived and is led by Karen Jacobsen. It is funded by the Henry J. Leir Institute for Migration and Human Security.



DR. KAREN JACOBSEN

Principal Investigator,
Feinstein International Center

Karen Jacobsen founded the RiT Project in 2017 in response to rising anti-immigrant rhetoric in the U.S. and abroad. Her goal was to understand urban integration through the perspectives of refugees, returnees, IDPs,

other migrants, and their hosts by asking them to write about their own experiences in the towns where they lived. Her idea was that these local perspectives could give a “ground-up” view of what enables and inhibits integration in towns around the world. Prof. Jacobsen has written, taught and conducted research about migration and displacement for 25 years. She is the Henry J. Leir Professor of Global Migration at the Fletcher School at Tufts University. She was head of the Joint IDP Profiling Service (JIPS) in Geneva from 2013-2014, and as Director of The Alchemy Project from 2000-2005. Prof. Jacobsen received her B.A. from the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, her M.A. from Northeastern University, and her PhD in Political Science from MIT.

SYMPOSIUM ORGANIZING TEAM

Gilberto Calderin, Fletcher MALD student

Yumeka Kawahara, RiT Research Assistant; Fletcher MALD student

Lucy Mastellar, RiT Research Assistant; Fletcher MALD student

Charlie Williams, RiT Research Assistant; Fletcher MALD student

PROGRAM & GRAPHIC DESIGN

Nicci Matthey, RiT Research Assistant; Fletcher MALD student

Media and Zoom Manager: Dominique Ramsawak

SCHEDULE

APRIL 14TH, 2023

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- 10:00 AM** Coffee & Networking
 - 10:30 AM** Opening Remarks from Dr. Karen Jacobsen
 - 10:45 AM** *Research Partners Spotlight:*
The Hello Neighbor Network & Dwell Mobile
 - 11:05 AM** *Research, Race, & Resettlement:*
A Presentation of Research Findings & Open Immigrant Dialogue
 - 12:45 PM** Lunch from Dave's Fresh Pasta
 - 1:30 PM** *Research Spotlight:*
Dr. Helen Marrow, Studying Race in Migration & Migrant Integration Research
 - 2:05 PM** *Policy, Practice, & Prejudice:*
A Discussion of Racialized Immigration Policies & Paving a Path Forward
 - 3:15 PM** Closing Remarks

Opening Remarks



Dr. Karen Jacobsen
Principal Investigator,
Feinstein International Center

Research Partners Spotlight: The Hello Neighbor Network & Dwell Mobile

Hello Neighbor and Dwell Mobile were instrumental community partners and sponsors throughout the RiT summer research process. Rachel Vinciguerra of Hello Neighbor and Jerri Stroade of Dwell Mobile share their motivations for bringing this important topic forward and reflect on the RiT research findings.



Rachel Vinciguerra
Director of National Programs,
Hello Neighbor

Rachel Vinciguerra (she/her) leads the Hello Neighbor Network, a coalition of grassroots nonprofits working with refugees and immigrants across the U.S. convened by Hello Neighbor. She has worked with nonprofit and international organizations for nearly a decade focused on gender equity, social inclusion, board development, and program design and evaluation. She has lived and worked in countries including Haiti, Thailand, and India and worked with organizations including the United Nations Development Programme, Strong Women, Strong Girls, and The FISA Foundation. She currently serves on the boards of the Jane Addams Peace Association, The Birmingham Foundation, and Write to Be (a girls' empowerment nonprofit she co-founded in Haiti). Born in Boston, Rachel has made Pittsburgh her home and was named one of Pittsburgh's 30 Under 30.



Jeri Stroade

Executive Director,
Dwell Mobile

Jeri Stroade is the founder and director of Dwell Mobile. She has a Masters of Science in Agricultural Economics with an emphasis in international development. While pursuing her degree, she discovered a passion for working with other cultures which ultimately led her to work with the refugee community in Mobile, Alabama. She is continually inspired by the resiliency and determination of the resettled refugee families she has worked with as they pursue their goals in the face of adversity.

Research, Race, & Resettlement: A Presentation of Research Findings & Open Immigrant Dialogue

In the summer of 2022, the RiT teams conducted research on how refugees in the US learn about American race relations. In this session, first, the RiT team will present their findings from the research. Then, migrant panelists will have an open discussion with the RiT team to challenge or reinforce the findings and/or speak from their experiences in the U.S.



Sohrab Saliooki

Pittsburgh Case Study Co-Author,
RiT

Sohrab Saljooki (he/him) is a graduating senior student of History and Philosophy at Carnegie Mellon University. His research focuses are the history of urban policy, American resistance movements, ethics, and refugee/immigrant policy. Sohrab was born in New York and currently resides in Pittsburgh, recently working alongside the Hello Neighbor Network team last summer. He plans to study law after completing his undergraduate education.



Mugisho (Moses) Muhabao

Dwell Mobile Mentor and Case
Informant

"Freedom is the only worthy goal in life." Mugisho Muhabao (Moses) fled the Democratic Republic of Congo seeking freedom from war. In 2009, he and his family arrived in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The juxtaposition of life in a country that's being fought over and life in the American South has influenced his perspective on the true meaning of freedom and the consequences of not being free.



Kay Klo
Executive Director,
Midtown Utica Community Center

Kay Klo is the Executive Director of the Midtown Utica Community Center. Kay and her family moved to Utica, NY as refugees in 2004 due to the civil war in Myanmar. After receiving a B.A. in anthropology from Mount Holyoke College, Kay spent one year in Thailand as a Fulbright Scholar, where she taught English and learned Thai. As Executive Director, Klo works closely with the board of directors and oversees MUCC's finances, maintenance of the MUCC headquarters in Midtown Utica, the many volunteers dedicated to the community center, and MUCC programming. In addition, she heads fundraising endeavors. She is currently pursuing a Master's Degree in Information Design and Technology at the SUNY Polytechnic Institute. In 2022, she was named a "Woman of Distinction" by the New York State Assembly. She is dedicated to community engagement and social equity in all forms of her work. She loves Thai food and enjoys napping.



Hawa Juma
Community Outreach Coordinator,
Midtown Utica Community Center

Hawa Juma is Somali-Bantu and arrived in the U.S. in 2004 as a refugee from Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya. Hawa lives in Utica, New York, and has a Bachelors in Sociology from SUNY POLY. Hawa works as the Community Outreach Coordinator at the Midtown Utica Community Center and as the Youth Case Manager for Safe School Mohawk Valley in the Utica City School District where she assists children in school by removing barriers to learning and boosting their social and emotional well-being. After noticing gun and racialized violence impacting her community, Hawa founded a group called Future Leaders in Utica, which provides a safe place for members of the Somali-Bantu community to come together and address the current problems facing the community.

Researcher Spotlight: Prof. Helen Marrow, Studying Race in Migration & Migrant Integration Research

Professor Marrow highlights her research regarding race as part of the "context of reception," greeting newcomers in different places, processes of migrants' racial socialization, and the role of colorism.



Dr. Helen Marrow

Associate Professor of Sociology,
Tufts University

Professor Marrow's research focuses on immigration, race and ethnicity, social class, health, and inequality and social policy. The topics she explores include but are not limited to: Latin Americans' identities in the United States and Europe and how they are incorporated into the society, the spatial patterning of Latino, Asian, and Muslim immigrants' perceptions of discrimination in the U.S, and the relationship between immigrants and hosts, threat, trust, and civic engagement, and Americans' emigration aspirations.

Policy, Practice, & Prejudice: A Discussion of Racialized Immigration Policies & Paving a Path Forward

Practitioners play an important role in helping immigrants navigate the complex structures and cultural differences within the United States. This panel will focus on how race, racism, and xenophobia manifest in each panelist's work and how the legal, policy, and advocacy community can push for more racially equitable immigration laws and policies.



Mahsa Khanbabai

Attorney,
Khanbabai Immigration Law

Mahsa Khanbabai is founder of Khanbabai Immigration Law, which focuses on employment-based immigration and consular processing issues, and is an adjunct professor at Stonehill College. She serves in numerous leadership roles at American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA); Elected Director Board of Governors, State Department Liaison committee, DEI Liaison Committee, co-chair Afghan Response Task Force and Editor AILA Law Journal. Mahsa is an advisor to international student entrepreneurs at the MIT Sandbox and engages in physician immigration policy work with the IMG Taskforce. Her legal advocacy and strategic use of the media spotlight has led to numerous high impact immigration changes and she is interviewed regularly by news sources such as Wall Street Journal, MSNBC News, NYT, and NPR. As an active advocate and representative for Save the Children Boston Leadership Committee she travels to their refugee programs. Ms. Khanbabai received her J.D. from Albany Law School (1998).



Ronald Claude

Director of Policy & Advocacy,
Black Alliance for Just Immigration

Ronald Claude is a first-generation Haitian American from Boston. After receiving his B.A. in International Relations from Boston College, Ronald entered Representative Ayanna Pressley's (MA-07) team in 2016 as an intern during the Congresswoman's time on the Boston City Council. Ronald worked as part of her team as a neighborhood liaison, district policy advisor, and on the hill as a legislative aide+assistant covering immigration, transportation, and foreign policy issues. Since leaving Pressley's office in the fall of 2021, Ronald has continued to work on immigration policy, particularly regarding Black migrants, as the Director of Policy & Advocacy at the Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI). An abolitionist non-profit organization that fights for the rights of African-Americans and Black migrants through organizing, legal advocacy, research, policy, and narrative building. Ronald currently lives in Washington, D.C., and looks forward to continuing working with diverse communities in pursuit of Black liberation.



Dr. Alexandra Piñeros-Shields

Visiting Associate Professor of the Practice of Racial Equity,
Brandeis University

Dr. Alexandra Piñeros Shields is a Visiting Associate Professor of the Practice of Racial Equity at Brandeis University. Prior to her current role, she was the Executive Director of the Essex County Community Organization (ECCO), an interfaith, interracial, and interclass network of 40 congregations. During her tenure as executive director, she transformed the organization into one guided by womanist, antiracist, anti-imperialist democratic operating principles that center Blacks and Latinos in all levels of organizational decision-making. Through her leadership, ECCO became a "laboratory for democracy." By centering people who are most affected by our systems of mass incarceration, ECCO leaders of color created and led campaigns for justice. Most recently those include the establishment of immigrant sanctuary policies in four cities; preventing two sheriffs from signing agreements with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE); implicit bias trainings for the entire police department in Lynn, MA; and the development of an unarmed crises response team to respond to mental health emergencies instead of police. Prof. Piñeros Shields served on Gov. Deval Patrick's design team for the New Americans Agenda, an immigrant integration policy agenda. Because her model is rooted in civil rights leader Ella Baker's teaching, "people can think and act for themselves," Prof. Piñeros Shields sees herself as a Midwife for Power. Currently, she serves as Chair of the Board of the Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center and on the Boards of the ACLU of Massachusetts and Philanthropy Massachusetts.



Pastor Dieufort Jean Fleurissaint
Senior Pastor, Total Health Christian Ministries
President, True Alliance Center

Pastor Dieufort Jean Fleurissaint (“Pastor Keke”), Founder and Senior Pastor of Total Health Christian Ministries and a native of Haiti, currently serves as the President of True Alliance Center and Chair of Haitian Americans United Inc. (HAUINC). Pastor Fleurissaint has extensive experience working with the Haitian Community, as an advocate for social justice both in Haiti and in the United States. Pastor Fleurissaint immigrated to the USA, undocumented, at the age of 20. He understands what it means to be an undocumented and lonely stranger in a foreign country, and has fought for the well-being of Haitian immigrants displaced after the 2010 earthquake, providing interpretation and translation assistance for immigration officers and legal experts at various information sessions on TPS and medical deferred action. He connects with most immigrant led organizations and unions to advocate for favorable policies affecting all immigrants. He continuously engages in assisting, supporting and helping Haitian immigrants navigate the complex immigration, social, and economic systems in the US by hosting several sessions on Financial Literacy, Legal Clinics, etc. He connects with immigrant-led organizations and unions to advocate for favorable policies affecting all immigrants, such as the Work and Family Mobility Act and the Safe Communities Act. Fleurissaint has a passion for ministry and, as a Pastor, encourages his community with messages that are inspirational and practical. Pastor Fleurissaint is heavily engaged within his community, and serves as the current Chair of Haitian Americans United, Inc.; current liaison for New England Haitian Fellowship Pastor’s Association; and current interim President of the Haitian Parent Association of Massachusetts, among many other community boards.



Panel Moderator: David Muehlke
Current State Department Fellow,
The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University

David is a career U.S. Foreign Service Officer with 17 years of experience developing and implementing U.S. foreign policy. His professional and academic interests include human rights diplomacy, refugee and migration policy, humanitarian assistance, East and Southeast Asian foreign relations, and intelligence diplomacy. He is a two-time winner of the Department of State's Warren Christopher Award for Outstanding Achievement in Global Affairs for his work to advance religious freedom in Vietnam (2017) and to resettle political asylum seekers from Myanmar after the 2020 military coup (2021).

Concluding Remarks

RIT Research Team



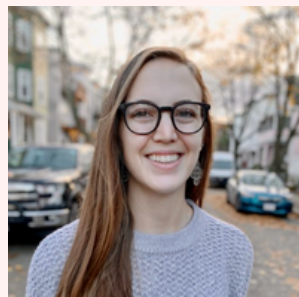
Yumeka Kawahara

Yumeka Kawahara is a second-year MALD studying Human Security and International Organizations. Her main academic focus is refugee integration processes in Europe and the role of civil society. She is from Japan and earned LLB at Kyoto University with 1-year study abroad experience at Sciences Po Paris. Prior to Fletcher, she worked with several think tanks and non-profit organizations in Japan, France, Singapore, and Cameroon and worked on migration issues and international affairs.



Lucy Mastellar

Lucy is a second-year MA candidate at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, where her studies focus on migration and international law. Prior to Fletcher, Lucy worked in a variety of roles throughout the private and public sectors. Lucy has hands-on experience navigating refugee and asylum crises in Greece and at the United States - Mexico border. Lucy earned her BA at American University, where her final thesis assessed the intersection of religious extremism and migration.



Charlie Williams

Charlie is a second-year MALD student at Fletcher, focusing on gender analysis and international organizations. Prior to Fletcher, Charlie received her BA in history from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo and worked with a food security non-profit in Senegal. She is passionate about community engagement and advocacy, and through her studies hopes to work in resettlement post Fletcher.

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