

DePaul Refugee
and Forced
Migration
Program
Newsletter

FALL QUARTER 2023





Note from the Director

- Hello—In this newsletter we have a faculty spotlight and two features on recent RFMS graduates' activities. We are so grateful to have students, faculty, and alum who have done so many interesting and worthwhile projects in the field of forced migration. I have also included recent activities for DePaul Sanctuary and Sanctuary Now! as well as a “save the date” notice for a panel on sanctuary on November 1st. Please consider attending if you can.
- I am so grateful to work in this area as Chicago is a host to so many new arrivals and we can aim at social justice projects in our local area even as issues of forced displacement continue unabated. Let us continue to work together in solidarity with all forced migrants and with each other (for those of us with the privilege of a stable citizenship and home). Prof. Katy Arnold

Thank you to Payton James, political science undergraduate, for her work with RFMS (including work on this newsletter) as well as serving as president of DePaul Sanctuary.

Faculty
Spotlight:
Prof.
Maria
Ferrera



Faculty Spotlight: Prof. Maria Ferrera

Interview conducted by Payton James, political science

- Prof. Ferrera's areas of practice and research involve: decolonization methods; the influence of colonization on ethnic identity development; community-based, socially just practices and mixed methods research with ethnic minority youth; health disparities and the impact of healthcare law on new and undocumented immigrants in Chicago
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- *O Where are you from, and does it impact how you view issues of social service?*

- I am the daughter of immigrants. My parents are from the Philippines, so I am a second-generation Filipina American. I was born in Chicago, Illinois, but my parents grew up on a tiny island, Banton, which is usually not on the map as it is so small (in the province of Romblon, Philippines). They had humble beginnings, and they came to the United States looking for a new life and more opportunities, like many other immigrant stories. Nevertheless, the trips we took to visit the Philippines impacted me greatly. I was very conscious that the Philippines was a developing country as a young child, which stayed with me. That sense of what it is like around the world. I was also aware of my privilege of living in the United States. My identity is very grounded in my cultural origin, and it is easy for me to identify with the different struggles that immigrants share, the sacrifices they make, and the reasons why they migrate.

Faculty Spotlight: Prof. Maria Ferrera

Interview conducted by Payton James, political science
cont'd

- *O Are there any projects you are looking forward to?*

- One project that I am a part of looks at the experiences of young adults; we call them emerging adults or youth around navigating immigration status. My team interviewed folks who had to navigate the process. In a paper that's come out in the last year, we talk about the idea of illegality and what it looks like to traverse this feeling alone. We also looked at Latin X communities in comparison to other ethnic or undocumented individuals: not always talked about in the field. I am also the director of the Center for Mental Health Equity and was able to partner with DePaul and Rush. At the center, we are thinking about the concept of belonging on a structural and individual level. What structures make it hard for an individual to feel like they belong? The bodies which integrate them into society are not where they feel a sense of belonging. We think about belonging in terms of outlining solutions and making immigrants believe they have a place to belong when they can feel so isolated and alone.

- *O How do you view the RFMS program, and how does it allow you to continue to follow your passions?*

- It is so great that DePaul has the program. So many issues are happening in the field, and it is inspiring to see the community at DePaul thinking about human and immigrant rights, which gives students the opportunity to come here and learn. I teach in the social work program, and we need to understand these stories. There is a history that relates to ethnic and immigrant communities and the traumas that they so often experience. So, finding ways to help and give them mental health resources is significant. This community at DePaul allows for collaboration, and our work is enhanced by others' work in the collective. We inform each other and the students. We learn from the students who are often immigrants themselves. Those in the program and immigrants have the opportunity to give back to others or those in their community, which is immeasurable.

Faculty Spotlight: Prof. Maria Ferrera

Interview conducted by Payton James, political science
cont'd

- *O What guided you to teach? And subsequently, what motivated you to teach at DePaul?*

- I did not think I would be teaching in higher education. I love school. And when I went back to get my doctorate, it allowed me to delve into issues in my community. This interest stayed with me, and the socialization in the doctoral program pushed us to think about how we utilize our education in institutions to help people belong. There are many complexities in the experiences of people of color and indigenous communities due to colonialism and oppression. I want to help people establish a sense of agency. Teaching can be a mechanism for raising critical consciousness and engaging students, guides them in their advocacy for others.

- *O Can you tell us about some of the courses you teach and why they are important?*

- I am not teaching any course this quarter. Next year, I will teach immigrant and mental health, cross-listed with the RFMS program during the winter quarter. I bring a lot of my research to the course. The outside work that I am doing with the Midwest Human Rights Consortium and the coalition informs my classes. We discuss what policies are on the table now, how we understand them, their histories, and what tangible ways we can respond as social work practitioners or those interested in social justice to find advocacy models. Through the mental health lens, this work is about providing mental health services and comprehending immigration policy. What is happening in real-time, and how do we make the connection between policy and mental health? In my classes, I bring current examples and models. I love dialogue; much of what we learn sticks more when we understand the story. I see life via narratives and storytelling, so individual stories are useful. I like finding ways to disperse this into the class.

Faculty Spotlight: Prof. Maria Ferrera

Interview conducted by Payton James, political science
cont'd

- *O What projects are you currently working on, and does the work link to your previous projects?*

- In recent years, issues around human rights, immigrants forced to migrate, asylum seekers, refugees, and those who are undocumented characterize groups of individuals who face many challenges and need support through social work. In the last few years, I have focused on helping adults navigate their paths in one way or another. Because I am a licensed social worker, the things I can use my license for comes down to conducting a lot of forensic asylum evaluations, such as psychological evaluations that can increase the chance of a seeker successfully obtaining or receiving asylum. I am a part of a network of medical and mental health practitioners conducting these types of assessments as a way to advocate for those seeking asylum. This work aids attorneys by adding to and helping their clients' cases. Last year I received a fellowship that allowed me to work with the Midwest Human Rights Consortium and taught a class with Minal Giri and Dr, Chi-Jang Yin, a filmmaker. The course discussed immigration and families seeking asylum, where the students had the opportunity to make films to promote human rights. We were incredibly excited by this work; the videos will be on the website of our community partner, the Midwest Human Rights Consortium.

- This fellowship put a bug in me, and I became very intrigued by the process of producing films. I applied for another fellowship that correlates to how one looks through a camera and creates films. So, I hope to integrate that knowledge into my research as so much of it is rooted in storytelling; how one tells a story; how one experiences trauma; how we tell the stories of experiences before someone migrated. There is often trauma during the migration and in living in a new place. I am interested in telling stories through a means that helps the public understand why people come to America. There is a lot of rhetoric around the border, its crossings, and "illegality." I seek to highlight the story of migration issues from a humanitarian perspective.

Faculty Spotlight: Prof. Maria Ferrera

Interview conducted by Payton James, political science
cont'd

- *O How do you view the trajectory of your work moving forward?*
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- Over the last five years, I have been part of a group that started a coalition for immigrant mental health. We just received 501(c)(3) status as a nonprofit organization. I have enjoyed working with the organization since 2016, and we gained a lot of momentum, especially after Trump was elected. A host of information sharing was necessary in those years and continues to be so. We value providing access to the mental health resources that these communities need. We also focus on policy in areas where we can participate in advocacy to see more immigrant-friendly policies and healthcare systems. This work has kept me busy over the last few years, but I am very excited about taking film classes and connecting that to my other work as a solution. I will become a student again, which will be very humbling.
- *O What issues do you see in your chosen field, and how do you strive to solve these issues?*
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- We talk a lot in our center about changing the narrative. There is a lot of rhetoric. Overall, we are so polarized between our different communities; in many ways, I would argue that we have lost a sense of global humanity and community. We are so quick to demonize different groups and "other" them. When I think about changing the narrative, the stories come in as a way of understanding that we have more in common through our shared humanity than we think. How can we promote this? By thinking with empathy, a sense of inclusion, and belonging as a part of the human community. We are all good humans at our core, and we do not have to hurt each other. Everyone to belong and have their basic needs met. In order to change policy, you have to change the way that people think about these problems. It can feel overwhelming, but to me, it is possible through the idea of a narrative shift.

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Interview conducted by Payton James, political science
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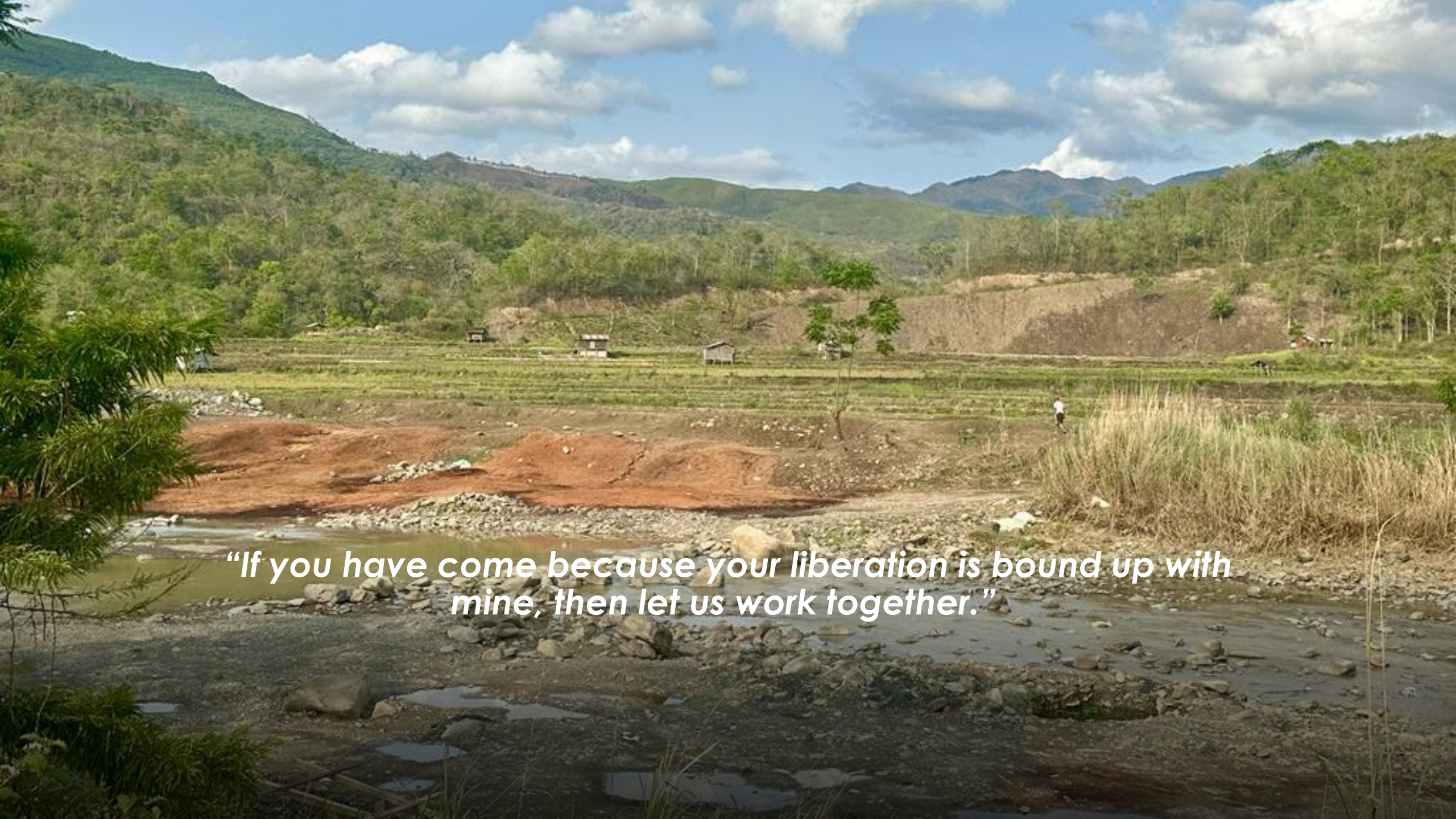
- Our Coalition for Immigrant Mental Health continues to train front line providers (non-mental health practitioners) about promoting mental and emotional wellness among new arrival migrants. After training close to 300 providers from various community-based organizations, including police stations, shelters, navigator programs, CIMH plans to do another round of training sometime in January.
- See more information here: <https://ourcimh.org/cimhspotlight>
- Resources around mental health can be found on the CIIMH website here: <https://ourcimh.org/mh-resources>

Claire Holba—recent RFMS graduate

- My name is Claire Holba and I graduated from the Refugee and Forced Migration Studies (RFMS) program this past June. During the second year of my program, I was overseas three times (twice to Thailand and once to India) and I recently arrived back from two months overseas in Taiwan through the U.S. Department of State's [Critical Language Scholarship](#) program. I am grateful to DePaul and the RFMS program for supporting meaningful work on critical refugee issues during my time in the program.
- As a Steans Fellow with the DePaul [Irwin W. Steans Center](#), I was honored to work with the [Institute of Chin Affairs](#) (ICA) on a critical project documenting the human rights violations experienced by Chin refugees from Myanmar, who have been forced to flee to Mizoram State in India. An estimated [70,000 displaced Chin](#) people reside in Mizoram State, as well as others in various states and cities throughout India. The Chin people are one of the ethnic nationalities of Myanmar (Burma) and have faced decades of persecution and forced displacement at the hands of the Burmese military junta. Most recently, in February 2021, the military junta staged a coup d'etat against the democratically elected government, which has resulted in a resurgence of human rights violations and war crimes against Myanmar's diverse peoples, including the Chin.

Claire Holba—cont'd

- In May, I worked alongside an incredible team at ICA during a field mission to document the stories of survivors of human rights violations in Myanmar. In three weeks the team and I visited nine camps and one urban center in Mizoram State, interviewing and recording the stories of 38 Chin refugees. Another critical component of our mission was to understand the personal experiences of displacement in Mizoram and identify any needs, concerns, and interests of both the displaced Chin and Mizo host communities.
- We conducted meetings and interviews with representatives from 18 other stakeholder groups including Mizo and Chin NGOs and advocacy groups, political leaders, educators, village committees, and other groups representing a broader constituency such as the UNHCR. Our findings are forthcoming in late October, and if you are interested in connecting and/or collaborating with ICA on this vital work, please reach out! (email below)



“If you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.”

Claire Holba—cont'd

- While in Mizoram, I also traveled with another amazing organization, [Hope for Tomorrow](#), which has been operating an eLearning program for internally displaced and refugee students from Myanmar for the last several years so that children can continue their education. This May, the Hope for Tomorrow school was opened in Zote camp—this was the first time the students have been able to go to school in over two years! The opening ceremony was an incredible moment of the Mizo and Chin communities coming together to support the children and their families and I was humbled to be invited as a guest to share in this moment. My words can't describe the joy, celebration, and pride on all sides during this gathering, so here is a [video](#) capturing it!

EDUCATION: YOUR DOOR TO THE FUTURE
ZOTE, CHAMPHAI, MIZORAM




Opening of the Hope for Tomorrow School in Zote Camp



Claire Holba—cont'd

- Following graduation, I spent two months in Taiwan through the U.S. State Department's [Critical Language Scholarship Program](#). I was selected as a [finalist](#) to study at [Tamkang University in Taiwan](#) in an immersive Mandarin Chinese program where I committed to speaking no English with my teachers and classmates. I applied to CLS as part of my goal to reach an advanced level of Mandarin Chinese language proficiency, which is important for my work with communities from East, South, and Southeast Asia on issues of forced displacement and human rights.
- The language gains made during the program were astounding, and the opportunity to build lifelong connections with my Taiwanese homestay family, classmates, and teachers was the most meaningful part of my experience. *Taiwan is an astoundingly beautiful country. The Taiwanese people are warm and welcoming and go out of their way to help you.* I highly recommend current students to apply for the CLS program!

A woman with brown hair tied back, wearing a black top and a blue denim jacket, is smiling and presenting in a classroom. Behind her is a whiteboard with a small logo of four colored dots (red, blue, red, blue) in the top left corner. To her right is a large projector screen displaying a presentation slide. The slide features a scenic background of a river flowing through a lush green forest. The main text on the slide is in large white Chinese characters. The overall scene is brightly lit, typical of a classroom environment.

5事你能做帮世界的难民 不平等的问题越来越好

可林

Me presenting to my Mandarin Chinese class on 5 things you can do to help contribute to solutions for refugee issues

Taiwan Homestay

Several members of my incredible homestay family in Taiwan! They welcomed me so warmly.



Claire Holba—cont'd (last)

- Currently, I am working with the [Niskanen Center's](#) Immigration Policy team as a fellow in Washington D.C. focusing on the Welcome Corps, the new private refugee sponsorship program launched by the U.S. Department of State, and on other forced migration policies. Most recently, I co-authored [New Data Confirms the U.S. Has Rebuilt the Refugee Admissions Program](#).
- I am also continuing to pursue work related to my thesis research on higher education pathways for refugee students: [Strengthening higher education for displaced students from Burma in Thailand: identifying collective interest and expanding value across diverse stakeholders](#).
- I would love to connect! Email: ccholba2292@gmail.com
- **P.s. since writing this, Claire's thesis has been cited in the "UNHCR Global Refugee Higher Education" newsletter, which came out on 10/17/2—congratulations Claire!**
- You can find it at:
- <https://www.unhcr.org/media/refugee-higher-education-global-newsletter-2023-volume-2>
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Deaf Defy

Deafdefy.org



DEAF DEFY



لصممه له صممه

(Deaf Deaf) رغم الصم

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Deaf Defy—by Chelsea Bundy, ASL/English Interpreter
M.S. Refugee and Forced Migration Studies
(They/She)

- *A bit about Deaf Defy:* Deaf Defy is an international NGO that uses a sustainable medical model approach to bring sign language, hearing aids, and audiological care to Deaf and hard of hearing children living in refugee camps and areas of conflict.
- The team is Deaf-led and committed to improving the lives of Deaf children around the world. Chicago native, Zaineb Abdulla, founded Deaf Defy and leads their medical missions. The team is composed of audiologists, language acquisition specialists (all of whom are Deaf themselves), and interpreters.

What does a typical day look like for the work of Deaf Defy?

- Because Deaf Defy works in conflict zones and refugee camps, the team knows to expect the unexpected. Unexpected obstacles--like the loss of electricity in the middle of a medical visit or military checkpoint stops when traveling between clinics--pop up frequently.
- The Deaf Defy team sets up makeshift clinics in schools and medicals buildings within a refugee camp or area of conflict. All patients begin with otoscopy, the checking of the ear canal to ensure no blockages or active infections. Next, they receive audiological care and testing, to determine their current hearing levels.
- Afterwards, they are fit with custom hearing aids, programmed specifically to their levels of loss. Lastly, the patient moves to the sign language acquisition stage. In this final room, a Deaf language specialist works with the child and their family to determine current levels of linguistic ability.

A typical day

- Children who are completely language-deprived are given direct instruction on sign language use. Those who already possess some rudimentary language skills are trained in further developing these abilities.
- All children are given level-appropriate sign language resources to ensure long-term skills practice. It's important to note that all instruction is delivered in the local sign language of the region.

Why is this work important:

- Deaf Defy is the first, and thus far the only, Deaf-led NGO providing both hearing aids and sign language to Deaf children living in refugee camps and areas of conflict.
- As a Deaf-led group, we understand the value of this dual approach and we are committed to ensuring that every one of our patients benefits from both hearing aids and sign language.

Deaf Defy at work



Plans for the future:

- As Deaf Defy continues to grow, we are planning to expand our reach to North Africa and Southeastern Europe. Current plans include medical missions to Lebanon, Gaza and Morocco.
- We are currently looking for contacts within Morocco, Bosnia or Kosovo. If you or someone you know currently works in humanitarian relief in any of these countries, and would be interested in partnering with Deaf Defy, please contact Zaineb Abdulla at zaineb@deafdefy.org





Sanctuary
Panel Nov.
1—please
join us!

Please save the date for a panel discussion:

- ***The Value of Sanctuary: Dispelling Myths, Building Community***

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- ~***date***: Nov 1 (Wed), 6-7:30

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- ~***where***: Cortelyou Commons, DePaul University (Lincoln Park Campus) 2324 N. Fremont Street. Chicago, IL 60614

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- Please save the date for an important discussion of the importance of sanctuary localities and faith-based sanctuary. Today, some southern governors and even one Chicago alderman are blaming sanctuary for refugee flows and more. In this panel, we will help to explain the history and need for each sanctuary approach. Sanctuary does not cause migration but it certainly supports migrants, treating them as human beings with dignity.

- Refugee and Forced Migration Program,
- Dir. Prof. K. Arnold karnol14@depaul.edu

- ***Speakers***: Chris Inserra and Craig Mousin (Sanctuary Working Group), Cristhian Villanueva (with Rev. Sara Wohlleb interpreting), Antonio Gutierrez of Organized Communities Against Deportation (OCAD), Fred Tsao of Illinois Coalition for Immigrants and Refugees (ICIRR), and Johannes Favi of Illinois Coalition for Displaced Immigrants (ICDI)

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DePaul Sanctuary~current campaigns

- ~Iran petition to help Iranian men who performed mandatory military service-this is a sign-on letter to support Sen Durbin in advocating for a change in guidance
- --here is a link to the support letter if you would like to read more about this issue (and sign if you would like):
 - For the support letter, please go to:
 - <https://forms.gle/CC6uL6m59EBxr6FZ8>
 - For the testimonials, please go to:
 - <https://forms.gle/bE1HZc8eD6aW9CoLA>
- ~we have been collecting clothing and yoga mats for Venezuelan refugees over the past year (donations to Centro Romero)
- ~raising money for all needy students (esp foreign students) in the dorms over Winter Break (they will not have regular meals)—Sanctuary Now! (*we are not asking students for donations)

Faculty Activities

- ~Prof. N Altay has recently published a co-authored article:
- Prasad, S., Borra, H., Woldt, J.J., Altay, N., & Tata, J. (2023) “Migrant flows: Humanitarian operational aspects of people in transit” forthcoming in *Production and Operations Management* <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/poms.14037> (paper is open access).
- ~Prof. K Arnold, Short Interview on Sanctuary on NPR/WBEZ available here:
- <https://www.wbez.org/stories/what-does-chicagos-sanctuary-city-status-mean/2f54e895-8781-48e2-8568-640e65398fbb>
- ~Prof. K Arnold, Grace Keynote address:
- https://www.academia.edu/107448769/Grace_School_Keynote_Address_for_Chicago

- Please
- Consider
- Applying:

Depaul University

Refugee and Forced Migration Studies Department

990 West Fullerton Avenue | Suite 2105 | Chicago, Illinois 60614-2446 | (773) 325 - 4736

The Refugee and Forced Migration Program Master's Program at DePaul University accepts applications from January 1st through July 1st.

This unique graduate program entails the two-year study of and work with issues of forced migration. Since the early 1900s, mass displacement has occurred across the globe, due to a myriad of causes. As Hannah Arendt has argued, what is new about mass displacement is the lack of ability to find a new home—the refugee is a product of nation-states' refusal to accept thousands of displaced peoples. Forced migration today includes the stateless, those displaced by natural disasters (particularly climate-induced migration), trafficking victims, internal displacement, and the circumstances of those who appear to be simply undocumented.

This program allows students to explore key institutions, immigration law, and human rights law and institutions as well as contemporary cases to better understand displaced groups' situations. Located in vibrant Chicago, famous for migrant- and refugee-serving NGOs, this DePaul program helps students connect the local to the global. Students gain an understanding of key issues regarding forced migration as well as practical experience and a graduate credential that will enhance their employability in this field.

This program will give you a credential in a field of your interest; if you are working in this field, the MS can lead to salary increases, promotions, and new opportunities.

Depaul University and Chicago

Chicago has some of the leading pro-migrant policies in this nation, leading refugee resettlement and progressive policy towards the undocumented. From Heartland Alliance to the National Immigration Justice Center to Refugee One, institutions in Chicago are leading the nation in child-sensitive policies, work on unaccompanied minors, and trauma relief for torture victims. Chicago is also home to the New Sanctuary Movement and exciting migrant rights' advocacy groups. DePaul's faculty in the RFMS program have an important balance of research and community experience, preparing students to be not only migrant advocates but also leaders.

Additional Information

This program is two years, with required courses that include Immigration Law, International Conflict Negotiation, and Forced Migration Public Health as well as electives to fit the student's particular interest. The degree ends with internships that will give the student valuable experience in this field (as well as a way to demonstrate your experience in this field to prospective employers). Course material ranges from matters of practical advocacy to case studies and education on key institutions. Research, writing, and public speaking are all parts of this program.

Some background in political organizations, human rights, and the Bretton Woods Institutions preferred as well as second language study and some experience in volunteering or working with migrants and/or refugees.

How to apply:

Please go to this link for more information and application instructions

<https://las.depaul.edu/academics/refugee-and-forced-migration-studies/graduate/refugee-and-forced-migration-studies-ms/Pages/default.aspx>

Any questions? Please feel free to email Director Prof. Kathleen Arnold at karnol14@depaul.edu