Dead Reckoning / Crossing the Med: Thinking and Feeling Migration Differently

Transcript of Symposium Debate, as part of the *Who are we?* Programme

Tate Exchange, London

Wednesday, 15 March 2017, 12:00–14:00

Professor Nira Yuval-Davis: Good afternoon, everybody, and welcome to the event 'Dead Reckoning / Crossing the Mediterranean: Thinking and Feeling Migration Differently'. My name is Nira Yuval-Davis. I am the director of the Centre for Research on Migration, Refugees and Belonging at the University of East London, and I am going to facilitate the discussion, which should be seen as part of the experience of thinking and feeling of what is going on behind the door – the installation that is going to be talked about as well as the other parts of the event and

the experiences which are next door. It is going to be quite a job to facilitate it because we have eight speakers, but I'm going to try to be quite strict on time because the idea is that after each of us share our most important message about how to think and feel migration differently, we want to hear from you, as well as to have conversation among ourselves and with you.

The issue of migration, as you know, has been so decisive in the rise of what some have called an autochthonic politics and right-wing populism, which differentiate sharply between those who belong and those who do not belong. We can see this in Brexit, in the United States with the election of Donald Trump, and with what is happening now in the Netherlands and in France and in many other places all over the world in the West and the rest. It is important to examine the causes of what some call the greatest migration crisis since the Second World War – not just from the situated gaze of the nationalists or even from those who would like to fight about not having just 150 or even 3,000 unaccompanied refugee children coming to the UK – but the whole issue of migration and borders and what caused the need and/or the wish to migrate and what people should feel or do about that. Hannah Arendt and following her Agamben in the nineties discussed some of the principled issues raised for states and societies when confronted with refugees – although these days, unlike in the time of Hannah Arendt, refugees have legal status in international law, so we should really talk about those who are seeking refuge. Agamben, following Greek mythology, called the refugee 'bare life' that, unlike humans, can be sacrificed. But I don't think that even Agamben, when he talked about the refugees during the nineties as an Italian philosopher, thought that so many thousands of lives of those seeking refuge would be sacrificed in the water of the Mediterranean near where he was speaking. There is no time today to develop the issue, but I think we need to look at it as an outcome of a systemic crisis of neo-liberal globalisation, which has caused – and we can talk about it more in the discussion – a crisis of governability, of governmentality as well as of the environment, which is experienced differently in different parts of the world and by different people, but is experienced everywhere. And to understand it as well as to be able to change what is happening, again, we have to act differently. Hannah Arendt said that what should be the domain of human rights should cover the rights of people once they are not covered by civil rights. But what we see is that people who have a certain amount of human rights (though these are shrinking all the time anyway) are the same people who have some citizenship rights. And those who do not are deprived also of their human rights, and more and more of them are deprived of their lives altogether. And that's what we are going to talk about today.

The first speaker is Dr Vicki Squire, who is the organiser of this symposium, and who has been doing some very, very important work. You have all the biographical notes, so I'm not going to

go into the details about every speaker, but she is Reader of International Security at the Department of Politics and International Studies at the University of Warwick, and the event today is part of her work.

Dr Vicki Squire: Thank you very much, Nira. Thanks everyone for coming today – and thanks to the speakers, because we've got an incredibly interesting group of people discussing how to think and feel migration differently today. My concern is as a scholar working in the field of migration and border studies is with increasing hostility and fear surrounding migration, and I've been doing a lot of work on the so-called 'refugee crisis' in the Mediterranean. My concern is also about humanitarianism, which I see as an ineffective alternative way that European societies and governments currently respond to migration. In September 2015 we saw a huge outpouring of sympathy in the face of the death of Alan Kurdi, a young boy who washed up on the shores of Turkey after getting on a boat to travel to Greece. And while this hugely emotional, sympathetic response was sweeping across Europe, as a scholar of these issues for many years I was feeling great dread at the moment it turns and that much harsher response comes about. Miriam Ticktin talks about humanitarianism as dependent on the innocence of the victim and this form of compassion that's fleeting – as not lasting because it's not embedded in rights, it's based on fleeting emotion. The question then for me is how to facilitate, support, and use our research to encourage alternative approaches that recognise people on the move in precarious situations as people with lives of great potential whose rights and dignity are worthy of respect. For me it's about how to move from a politics of sympathy, or a politics of pity which is not sustainable, to something more like a politics of empathy or mutual respect.

I just want to make two points along these lines. The first one is about sharing stories, and I'll talk a bit about the story map that our project offers as a part of the 'Who Are We?' installation. I think it's really important to note the question of empathy is not a straightforward one; Carolyn Pedwell's work is very important in pointing to the difficulties of directly empathising with another in light of diverging power relations. That was particularly evident for us doing our research. As a team, we carried out over 250 in-depth qualitative interviews in 2015 and 2016 with people who had made the journey across the Mediterranean, or who had tried to or want to make the journey. The difficulties of empathy are very evident for us in doing that sort of research. In an interview situation, when we're having this engagement, the confrontation with relations of privilege are stark – that is something we can't avoid and is very present in the process. I think it's also an issue that is also carried over in our story map in some ways, and even the installation as a whole: the people whose stories we're sharing, whose

journeys we're documenting, aren't here, present to speak for themselves. So those relations of privilege again are evident in who's here, who isn't here. And I think they are also evident for audiences engaging with Bern's *Dead Reckoning* installation. So, I see two problems here: first how to break down the alienation of people from those people in precarious situations who might not be present, but without just falling back into the politics of sympathy or pity. Second, how to deal with or even mobilise the discomfort of confronting that privilege, yet without provoking further alienation. I think for us the map's been very helpful there. I've learned a lot from working with Bern – creating the story map has been very much impacted by my dialogues with Bern. We've tried to people the stories in a similar way that Bern does in her moving installation: the paper boats have 'mother', 'brother', 'son', 'daughter' on them, so we do the same with our stories. We have direct quotes from the interviews which can be shocking, but we try to present these in a way so people can relate to people on the move – be it a person talking about gardening, or a person who's struggling with parents-in-law – while also having reflective questions for people to think about and imagine what it would be like to have their privileges removed. I think sharing the stories here is about interconnection in the face of privilege, and that's very important for me in redressing a politics of hostility or sympathy.

The other thing I want to say is about research and art coming together as an act of political witness, and I think this is where the collaboration between Bern and I has been very important. Bern has talked to me about the importance of balancing comfort and discomfort in the installation. She has also talked about witnessing these border deaths and wanting to do something. I learnt a lot yesterday from being in the installation and having dialogues with people – such as the importance of hope and having ideas of concrete action to take in the face of what we are confronting. Art and research can come together I think to bear political witness to events, actions, violence – such as the violence of border practices. I'm mindful here of Lilie Chouliaraki's discussion of post-humanitarianism, where she talks about the passive spectatorship of victimhood, which is just punctuated by the occasional giving of aid or by occasional expressions of sympathy. I see our collaboration as an act of refusal and as a joint challenge to the violence of contemporary policies. I think that's evident in Bern's work. That's something that our stories and her boats share. It also comes through in the interviews directly that we embed in the map, and I think comes also through the interaction with the installation that I hope you will all experience after this symposium. Thank you.

Professor Nira Yuval-Davis: The next speaker is Bern O'Donoghue, who is an artist whose work is bearing witness to human rights crises, and who is responsible for this amazing installation outside. The floor is yours.

Bern O'Donoghue: Thank you for coming. My name is Bern O'Donoghue. I'm a visual artist, and I make socially engaged work. I've done a lot of collaborative work, a lot of art involving participation, and I'm very interested in art as being a vehicle for thinking. I'm also interested in making art that supports social change: art that is a seedling for future change, but not necessarily change that I am going to control. I work with the idea that I'm on a journey, my work is on a

journey, we are all on journeys. We collaborate with each other creatively, for good or evil, for positive or negative. But there is a possibility, with great courage, that we can make something which is greater than the sum of our parts. And I'm really interested in gathering people's energy, gathering people's ideas, and finding ways to facilitate progressive change.

I started making this project in 2015 when, six days apart, there were two boat disasters off Lampedusa on the Libyan route between Libya and Sardinia, Italy, where, first of all, 800 people died and, then six days later, 400 people died. At the time, I was doing a completely different piece of work. Again, it was focusing on connectedness, and it was focusing on the power of words to shape perception, but it was domestic: I was looking at the impact of coalition policies and the power of words to shape perceptions, partly so that politicians might be able to encourage people to think things were happening when they weren't, or to push through things that people had no idea that they would be witnessing, which we are currently witnessing now. I was making that work and I was literally stopped in my tracks when I saw these two reports on the news, because I couldn't understand how 1,200 people could die and we were using terms like 'invasion', 'marauding', 'migrants', 'swarms'. I could not understand, as a parent, as somebody with a family, watching and hearing stories about families – I could not understand how we weren't connecting with what it would be like to be in that situation, having to put forward the children and parents and the relations that we love, and put them in a precarious situation. So, I started making paper in my home. I was under quite a lot of pressure to actually not look at it, because it was so distressing. I was very distressed by it. But I kept thinking to myself, if I do not engage with this, I do not want to look – in the future – I do not want look back in twenty years' time and think, I have done nothing.

I feel like we are all connected. Every choice I make, every choice you make, everything you consume, things you watch, the things you say – they all have an impact on somebody else. And the things that I buy here are taken and made in other countries, using resources that other people have. Whether or not they're traded fairly or not, whether or not they're travelled fairly or not – all those things impact not just me, but the people who are making or who are living in those countries. And I'm really interested in that idea of connectedness and the fact that we have lost that connectedness.

So, I started making origami boats from the paper I had made, and I started, as I was making them, trying to make sense of the information I was hearing, forming an emotional response to innocent, left-wing, right-wing, educated, uneducated, old, young, poor, rich people, all put together in a terrible situation, and simply by fortune of birth they're in that position. And so I started thinking about what it would be like to be in that position, what it would be like to have

those choices. I forced myself to make that connection on a regular basis and I carried on making the work. And as I made the work there was paper everywhere in my house, and it was getting in the way of my husband cooking, it was getting in the way of my children working. There was paint drying everywhere. I was making paper in the kitchen. I would make paper and then I would cook. I would talk to people and then I would make boats, partly to keep busy, so that I wouldn't get angry or distressed. And I realised that I had to use where I was to make the work, so that it could go out and be part of my forging of connectedness. All the time this work was about how can I connect myself to other people's experience? And how can I connect members of the public, who have actually been encouraged in the political dialogue and in the dialogue in the media to remain disconnected – how can we make that connectedness happen, so that they can start to see these people as possibly brother or sister or neighbour or friend?

That's what the work's about. And it's probably better, rather than me spending a lot of time talking about it, for you to engage with me with it, and then we'll get a true understanding.

Professor Nira Yuval-Davis: The next speaker is going to be Dr Jennifer Bagelman from the University of Exeter.

Dr Jennifer Bagelman: I want to start by thanking the organisers for extending this invitation and making this public event possible, and to really thank you all for coming here today to talk about these really urgent issues. And I also want to start by situating myself within this conversation of migration:

I see myself as a migrant, here in the UK, with a temporary work visa which was rejected twice by the Home Office. But despite that small hurdle, my visa was relatively easily attained and I think speaks to my privilege in this conversation, my privileged mobility as a Canadian citizen. I see myself as a settler, a granddaughter of Jewish refugees who grew up on unceded Indigenous territories (also known as Vancouver Island). I see myself as an ally who seeks to work in solidarity with Indigenous peoples and irregularized migrants, displaced and dispossessed by colonial borders.

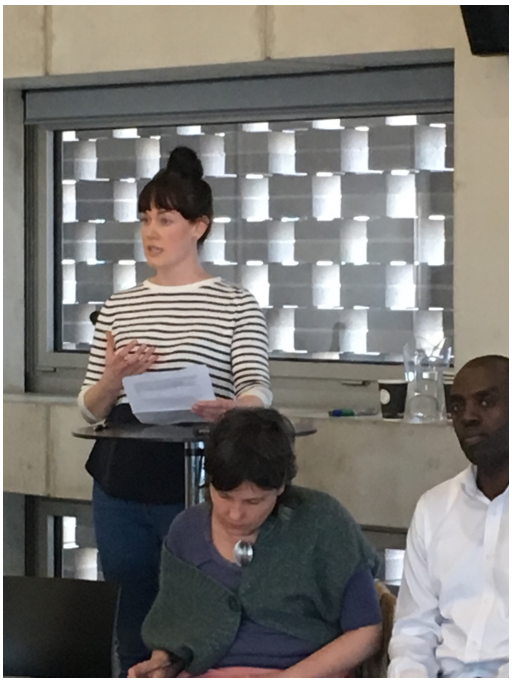
The reflections I want to offer today are on love. Feminist, social activist bell hooks famously tells us: 'The practice of love is the most powerful antidote to the politics of domination.'

What strikes me about Bern and Vicki's work is how they invite us to really reflect and think about a loving politics, an expansive politics. And I want to argue that they enact this loving politics – artfully – by engaging in the scale of the intimate. And I want to suggest, as feminists have long argued, that intimacy is hopeful for challenging the politics of domination to which hooks refers.

So I was particularly moved by the way that Bern and Vicki refuse to engage at the level of generalised narratives of victim, of villain, that we've become far too accustomed to. They refuse to simply spew the numbers of death from which we've become insulated. Instead, they start

from particular stories, objects. Vicki assembles an archive of migrant testimony that speak to situated, grounded and material conditions. Bern gestures not to faceless figures, but of people placed in relational webs: loved 'mothers/daughters/fathers/brothers/friends' …reclaiming the sense of humanity lost in discourses of crisis.

We're also provoked to rethink this word 'crisis.' Bern, you mentioned that the circularity of the images are supposed to evoke a sense of chaos and disorder, but for me, actually, it provoked a sense of the orderliness – not the chaos and the crisis of this condition, but actually that this is a very calculated, managed effort that we're seeing right now to deny the dignity and mobility of peoples. And that these arrangements, in their ordered fashion, in some way expose the myth of western benevolence towards migrants while, at the same time, these little boats that you see in this exhibit are folded with such care, and each crease of these colourful boats – to me there is a spectre of a more loving solidarity.



To say that these pieces enact a loving politics I think is not to say that they are outside of critique, or that they are immune to our questions. Quite the opposite. I think a fierce, loving politics embraces critique. It must to grow. As Lauren Berlant says: "love is always about violating your own attachment to your own intentionality, without being anti-intentional." To me these words call upon us to question, seriously and playfully, the limits of what we think and feel is loving political work.

I offer these final reflections in that spirit of, what I hope, is a generative critique. My first is about the role of trust. We know that the foundation of intimacy is trust. It takes time. And (especially in the context of the neoliberal university which I'm embedded in) how do we take the time required to build safe spaces for sharing intimacies of trauma?

The art that we reflect on today, a lot of it focuses on the deadliness of crossing the Med. I wonder about those who are being held still. I'm thinking of the asylum seekers in this country who experience the slow death born out of everyday bordering and destitution in our cities…those whom Judith Butler might refer to as ungrievable lives, not mourned because…they were never counted as a life at all.

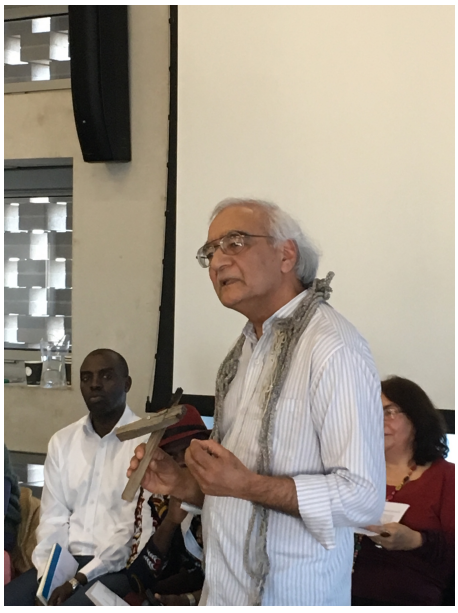
And I wonder about the object of the boat, one that we have become very seduced by in this contemporary crisis: a haunted object that has come to metonymically stand in for displacement. Where are the internally displaced women, the queer, the differently abled bodies in this object; the issues of race, class, gender, sexuality that deny so many access to this mode of transport? Where are these others? And how can our work mark these absences? Can it? Can it speak

spectrally to those who are, as Vicki said, not here today with us? How can we ensure that they have a place in this beautiful building, which itself enacts certain everyday bordering practices? How can we think of these walls as borders too, that require questioning?

Thank you.

Professor Nira Yuval-Davis: Thank you very much. The next speaker is Inderjit Bhogal, who is the founder of the City of Sanctuary movement.

Inderjit Bhogal: Thank you very much, Nira. My name is Inderjit. I'm a Methodist minister. Thank you very much for inviting me to share here. I feel greatly honoured and privileged. So, what am I doing here? How did I get here? I could go back 400 years to tell you my story, but I won't do that today. So maybe just 70 years, because 70 years ago, 1947, India and Pakistan divided, the Partition. My parents, young teenagers – as Syrian families might say to the young members of their family now – my parents…my parents' parents said to them, 'Get out of there. Go and make yourself safe, and make a bit of a life for yourself.' And they actually went to Africa, and I was born in Nairobi. And in 1964 Kenya became independent, and we had to get out of there. We weren't called refugees. We were part of the forced dispersal of the Asian community in Eastern Africa, and we ended up over here because we actually had British passports, but via a nine-month sojourn in Tanzania. So, for nine months, every two weeks we were going to a different house, and I had no education in that time but learnt at home from my mum. And I became a Methodist minister. I've been a minister for 40 years, and really I'm more of a practice-based activist than an academic. And I'm into doing things. I've helped to create what's called the City of Sanctuary movement in Britain and Ireland. And if you want to know more about that, more detail, just Google it and you'll get all the details. It's a real art – the website itself.



City of Sanctuary is about creating cultures of welcome and hospitality and safety for people and the world in which we live. And the real crisis for me is that human beings, in 2017, don't know how to resolve conflict in nonviolent ways and in peaceful ways, without resorting to war and weapons and violence. And so people are bombed out of their homes and on the way taking risky journeys. People don't do that because they think it's a good idea. They do it because their lives are in danger. When they come here, what they're looking for is safety. Everybody wants to be safe. We all want to be safe. And no one is safe until we are all safe. And so sanctuary is about – that's what people want – welcome, hospitality, safety. I've been trying, working with others, to build cultures of welcome and safety and hospitality and sanctuary. And that's something we can all do. We can all be a person who can actually give

welcome and safety and sanctuary and hospitality. And we can all be a person who's a safe person to be with, and to create a whole culture, to just change the whole narrative from hatred to hospitality.

So, what can we do to take us away from hatred and hostility and war toward building hospitable, welcoming, inclusive communities? That's my challenge, and that's what City of Sanctuary is about. I brought with me a couple of symbols of the world in which we find ourselves. This rope – at the same time as Vicki I went to Lampedusa, and I picked this up from one of the boats left in a kind of a cemetery and brought it with me. And I thought, if this rope could tell a story, what would it say about those people who were on the boat that toppled over, that Bern refers to with all her boat objects? What story would this tell? And so, for me, as a minister, this has become my stole. I wear this as a symbol of that. And I also picked up a piece of wood from one of the boats and made a cross from it. And this is my cross, the one I use when I am conducting worship, and use these symbols to tell the story of what's happening in the world and to challenge church people to do what they can do to build sanctuary. For me, a worship centre of whatever faith – Jew, Gentile, Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Buddhist – a worship centre should be the safest place on Earth. Sadly, that's not how it's been, and so my call and my commitment now is to work with church people and centres of worship to build sanctuary churches. It's a modest contribution, but we can all do something, and that's what I am doing. Thank you very much.

Professor Nira Yuval-Davis: Thank you. The next speaker is Dr Angharad Closs Stephens from Swansea University, who has been working on nationalism and resistance.

Dr Angharad Closs Stephens: Thank you. I am quite moved by the contributions so far; thank you Vicki for organising this gathering. I want to ask: how are refugees, asylum seekers, and those rendered precarious through movement portrayed within this current context of a heightened nationalism? I'm a senior lecturer in Geography at Swansea University - a city that voted 'leave' and which might be described as a 'left-behind city'. But it was also the second city in the UK to declare itself a 'City of Sanctuary', back in 2010. So, as Vicki has said, empathy is complicated. What I'm interested in is trying to understand nationality as a felt experience – that feeling of being part of a community in and against others. This is familiar from football matches, to the campaign around Brexit, to climates of fear that follow terrorist attacks. And in contemporary times, the 'refugee' seems to emerge as a figure that binds communities in emotional solidarity, both with each other but also against others. Why might that be and how does that work?

The anthropologist Arjun Appadurai tells us that in a political world organised into nation-states – which rely on boundaries, censuses, taxes, and documentation – the refugee emerges as a figure with no identity, no name.[1] She or he appears in a categorical '*grey zone'* that combines pictures of the 'stranger', the 'victim', the 'criminal', and the 'undocumented visitor'. So, in this striking installation by Bern O'Donoghue, I want to begin by drawing attention to the way in which she rewrites those identities, perhaps, as 'son', 'daughter', 'neighbour', 'friend'.

I want to make two points more generally on this relationship between arts and politics, and what the arts might contribute to our understanding of those rendered precarious through movement. First, I want to argue that these people are not simply invisible to us. From this '*grey zone*' they are rendered both visible and invisible at the same time. Vicki Squire has already mentioned that picture of the young toddler, Alan Kurdi, who died crossing the Mediterranean Sea, and whose picture was carried on the front pages of all the national newspapers in the UK on the 3rd of September 2015. This led to an outpouring of grief among British publics. However, two months later, following the terrorist attacks on 13th November 2015 at the Stade de France in Saint-Denis, and the Bataclan theatre, several cafés and restaurants in Paris, that figure of the refugee once again became a figure of suspicion. In just two months there was this distinct shift in national mood.

Now around this time the highly-regarded artist Ai Weiwei went to set up a studio in Lesvos, Greece, to create artistic responses to those arriving on European shores. Several lines of work have come out of that period – leading to a current exhibition at the National Gallery in Prague called 'Law of the Journey'.[2] One photograph features himself, lying on the beach, assuming the same pose as Alan Kurdi, the young toddler.

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[1] Arjun Appadurai, 'Aspirational maps: On migrant narratives and imagined future citizenship, *Eurozine,* 19 February 2016. http://www.eurozine.com/aspirational-maps/

[2] http://www.artfixdaily.com/artwire/release/8478-ai-weiwei-spotlights-refugee-crisis-with-massive-art-installation

[3] You can follow a link to the photograph here in The Guardian, to avoid asking for permission to reproduce.

The photograph was designed to be seen and to be shared. It is very provocative and the act has been criticised by other artists including Jake Chapman.[4] In this photo we see a large, heavy man dressed in loose clothes and a pair of trainers – an ordinary man, not a young man; an adult, not a child – someone who has lived a life, rather than having a life to live. And my students and I have been intrigued by this photograph, by what it invites us to feel, for it asks us: how do you feel about me, then? How do you feel about this adult man? Who do we see, and who remains unseen, when these intensified moods of compassion take off? And what, perhaps, do we need to see?

My second point is about the role that artists can play, and are playing, as interlocutors in the political sphere. Artistic responses are interesting for many reasons, but in this context, they are so because they work with feelings and affects. These are art's raw materials. Bern O"Donoghue has spoken today about her visceral response to seeing those two boats capsize in 2015, and that that's where this work started for her. It was an emotional response before it was anything else.

I'll end by using some of feminist philosopher Elizabeth Grosz's work, who has written in more depth about this relationship between art and politics.[5] She says that artists don't simply represent emotional feelings back to us, such as anger, rage, shame, or sadness. Rather, art grabs them and works with these energies to offer new framings of the world around us and to present new affective feelings and sensations. This is what I feel both Bern O'Donoghue and Ai Weiwei do – in very different ways: they are not simply representing emotions to us but grabbing them and creating something new with them.

Professor Nira Yuval-Davis: The next speaker is a performance artist, Usifu Jalloh, who has been working with art and education via art.

Usifu Jalloh: Thank you very much. Well, good afternoon, everybody. [pause] I'll repeat, good afternoon, everybody.

Audience: Good afternoon.

Usifu Jalloh: Please can you sit at the edge of your chairs. Sit at the edge of your chairs, everybody. Just lean forward. Just sit forward. Just lean forward like so, lean forward like so. And can you just repeat for me, 'Ooh.'

Audience: Ooh.

[4] https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/jonathanjonesblog/2017/jan/13/jake-chapman-ai-weiwei-refugee-crisis

[5] Grosz, E. (2008) *Chaos, Territory, Art,* New York: Columbia University Press.

Usifu Jalloh: ‘Ah.’

Audience: Ah.

Usifu Jalloh: Thank you so very much. I promised Vicki and Bern that by the time I’m done you’ll be at the edge of your seats saying ‘ooh and ah’.

[Laughter]

Usifu Jalloh: I am Usifu Jalloh. Some people call me the Cowfoot Prince. I am a storyteller and educator. I’m an architect for social change and cultural awakening. This is what drives my work as a storyteller. So, what I’m going to do for you is actually tell you a story. Is that okay? Yeah? I’ll tell you a story. And this will be record breaking. My stories are usually half an hour, 45 minutes. I’m gonna do it in four minutes.

[Laughter]

Usifu Jalloh: So when I say ‘in’, you say ‘out’. In.

Audience: Out.

Usifu Jalloh: In.

Audience: Out.

Usifu Jalloh: In.

Audience: Out.

Usifu Jalloh: When I say to you, ‘I want to tell you a story’, you tell me, ‘Oh, get on with it’. I want to tell you a story.

Audience: Get on with it.

Usifu Jalloh: I said I want to tell you a story.

Audience: Get on with it.

Usifu Jalloh: I say in.

Audience: Out.

Usifu Jalloh: Well, there’s a woman who wanted to cook for her husband. And this woman, she’s got her husband, she says she must cook for him…she has one garden, one plant, and this one

plant grows so tall it goes all the way into the sky. On top of this one plant was one okra vegetable, and the woman said she must cook this one okra vegetable atop this one plant in the one garden for her one husband.

So she called her husband out: 'Husband.' And the husband came out. 'Yes?' And as he came out the woman took an axe and gave it to the husband, and she says, 'Chop down this plant. I want to cook that one okra vegetable for you.'

The husband, he chopped and chopped and chopped, and as he chopped, as soon as he chopped a branch fell off and something magical happened. The branch turned into a human being. And as it turned into a human being the woman, the woman go, 'Ah! Who are you? What kind of a branch of a man are you? And who are you? Why have you come here?'

And this branch of a man, he stood up and he said, 'Me, my only reason for being here is to chew. Please give me something to chew.' And the woman thought, 'Ah! What is this?' So, she went back here and came out with some cassava. She piled it to fill up a wheelbarrow. And the man, he came and said, 'Thank you very much. I am ready to – '

Audience: Chew.

Usifu Jalloh: And the man, he started chewing. And he says, 'Please, woman, I want to chew. Please give me something to – '

Audience: Chew.

Usifu Jalloh: And the woman thought, 'Well, you know something? This is too much. Let me go across Africa.' And so she travelled across Africa, all the way to South Africa. And then from there she moved on to Kenya. And she moved from there, right across the world, through Congo, through Nigeria, through Zambia, through Rwanda, through Sudan. She went all the way, and as soon as she came all the way back down to Sierra Leone – after Ghana, Nigeria, and the Gambia, and all these places – she came back. By this time, things had now changed so much, they were now singing songs again. [singing]

Audience: [singing]

Usifu Jalloh: And so… things have changed so much. She had given everything again for this man. And he came. He started chewing. And the woman thought, 'I cannot do this thing'. They came up with an idea. They managed to find this man a visa, and they sent him to Europe.

And when he came to Europe he did not fit in. They watched him, and they watched him. And this man, he chewed his way, he chewed his way, he chewed his way, through the Jungle of Calais. And he chewed his way, he chewed his way, through the barbed wires of Calais. He chewed his way through the Channel Tunnel. He chewed his way through the buses. He chewed his way through the trains. He chewed his way, he chewed his way through the toilet floors. He chewed

his way through fast food restaurants. He chewed his way through the hospitals. He chewed his way, he chewed his way, into evening colleges. He chewed his way, he chewed his way, into the universities. He chewed his way into the schools. He chewed his way into your television. Until he chewed his way into your living rooms. Until he chewed his way into your kitchens. Until he chewed his way into the blenders in your kitchen. Every time you put the blender on in your kitchens, it is that man, and…

…and, exactly, that's who we all are. Just like that man. We've all chewed our way right across the blenders of Africa, across the blender of Europe, across the blender of now into the United Kingdom, chewing our way to the blender of London. And here we all are, chewing our way into the blender of the Tate Modern. The only question I usually ask is: Do we understand the value we have added to this blender? Even more, the value that others add into this blender? Because when we do value that, the smoothie we're gonna make...

[Laughter and applause]

Professor Nira Yuval-Davis: What happened to the Okra?

Usifu Jalloh: That is another story.

[Laughter]

Professor Nira Yuval-Davis: Thank you very much. Our next speaker is Alex Ntung, who is an advisor and trainer in inclusion and diversity.

Alex Ntung: Thank you. It's really hard to follow Usifu.

[Laughter]

Alex Ntung: Before I make any comment regarding today's event, let me start by sharing a little bit of my background. I'm Alex Ntung. I was born and grew up in the highland mountains of South Kivu in Eastern Congo. That's probably about 200 miles from the border with Burundi and Rwanda. I come from a place which I still think is probably the most beautiful place in the world. I've travelled so many places since I've had the privilege to have the right to stay in this country. I've had the opportunity to go different places, and I started kind of questioning my subjectivity, about thinking that my place is the most beautiful place. But I keep comparing it every time; I still think it was a paradise as I grew up. Happiness, really, I was given from the tradition I was born into – a tradition of Ubuntu, human kindness. A tradition where we were told as children that you are not happy if one of you is sad. A tradition where sharing is based on everyone's needs rather than the idea of 'half' and 'half'. We don't say 'I' and 'mine', we only say 'we'. And that's how I taught. I also grew up in a place where I appreciated freedom given to children. As a child, I used to move in different parts of a large area near Congo Jungle, an area which really is so

remote, extremely remote. A journalist from Holland who managed to get to the place where I come from told me, 'Look, Alex, your journey between where you come from to life in the UK, is as if you had travelled a thousand years into the future.' This reminds me that, I am a migrant through space, but also a migrant through time. I come from a place which was kind of a stone age type of life. We live by what nature gives us. Nothing has modern facilities there.

But one day that happiness ended, and that's when I started questioning where we are. I started seeing villages burnt down. I started seeing people being killed. The most horrific things you can imagine – you hear from stories of war, the places, the violence. And I've seen, witnessed, a woman being raped, when I was nine. That's one of many other horrific stories such as losing relatives. I've lost eleven members of my family. And later we were deported to Rwanda, which you have heard about. It was during the genocide, when it was happening. In hundred days, one million people died. When I was there, dead bodies were everywhere

To cut a long story short, I came to this country as an asylum seeker and didn't speak English. And the story I kept hearing is that we're bad. We cannot speak English. We are coming to claim benefits. We are coming to take houses. We can't educate ourselves. And I thought, I'm going to do something completely opposite to what they thought. And that's what I did. I have been working the last two years, working in migration, producing resources for schools. And the argument we were making with those resources was, migration has been isolated as a subject. Or the idea of refugees and migration is outside the rest of equality training. So instead we are trying to make the resources that apply to every subject, to really reduce the 'us and them' scenario.

To move on to today's topic, one thing which I want to say is that observing my journey through asylum, I sometimes wish I was not successful. And you may be wondering, why do you wish that? It's because I'm have opportunities to interact with the policymakers, I'm in interactions with amazing people producing incredible knowledge and artwork. And this make me wonder, how can we not transform the narrative, the debate? And I can sometimes wish, maybe I should have just been a migrant who is happy to have survived. What I'm seeing is that we are going through a poverty of culture and morals; a poverty of culture and morals. What do I mean by that? I know we've seen so many Band Aids about helping Africa on a material basis, on poverty, there other types of poverty. I think we should see something the other way around, to see where we can actually be learning about morals and compassion which is declining.

Let me move on to a last point: How can we do this? And this is what's the question that we've been given by Bern and Vicki – who have done incredible work to organise this – is really, for this kind of event we wonder, what can we do? I think we need to go back to addressing the issues through education, instead of keeping really 'fighting' with opinions. How can we influence negative attitudes and values through education? And what we are seeing is a situation where it's difficult for young people to know what's the truth and what's not truth. And the only way isn't really about myth-busting – but addressing the issue through education. It's really to go back to basis and learn about common humanity values, to start really from school level. Research has shown that between seven and fourteen years old children start forming attitudes and values that may stay with them for life. And that is a time where we are able to actually address some of the misinformation. And the opportunity is, children are much influential on their parents. Well, the information they are learning from their parents, parents can learn from their children too. And the arts, being a way in, is an incredible way to introduce this. Thank you so much.

Professor Nira Yuval-Davis: The last speaker is Giovanna Del Sarto, who is a documentary photographer and the creator of *Polaroid for a Refugee*.

Giovanna Del Sarto: Good afternoon to everybody; I'm very happy to be here. First of all, I would like to share some words about Bern's work. I think, as I would describe it, it is just a very powerfully simple piece of work. Why? Because she chose the boats, and we can speculate on it because migrants come by boat. In my opinion, it's very important. So, today we will call it origami, and everybody might know what origami is. However, we too can call it paper boats, and I think all of us – that's the beauty of her work, because we can all relate to it – I think as kids we might have done, sooner or later, paper boats. Didn't we? Right? Or somebody else had created it and said, 'Oh, look, it's a hat', or whatsoever.

So, the powerful simplicity of her work is the fact that everybody can relate to it, at a simple level, to a memory level, or to the symbol. However, that's when it becomes more marked with a message, that boat is not just a simple boat, but is a boat which makes you transport yourself in another reality, which unfortunately does exist. Because everybody wants to go somewhere, wants to be free, stay well, and have a life. It's our simple rights.

So, these people come here. And I came here myself – I'm from Italy – so I'm a migrant. I'm an economic migrant – that migrant that a lot of people in this country and every country might say, 'Wow, you're coming here and take our place or our work'. But we come because we want not only a better life for ourselves, we also know that we can contribute to the society we are going to be in. So, what I'm trying to say is, thanks to this little boat, we can make a journey which goes from our own childhoods to a dream that we can move forward; this shows us that we are people and we are dreaming, and we want the best for ourselves. So why not we want the best for other people? It doesn't make sense, right?

So that's what her work is to me, and that's why her work is very similar to mine. It's very simple. Mine is very simple work, and it has been… it was born from the same position as Bern's work

started for her. I'm a documentary photographer and a photojournalist, so I worked with refugees before. In October 2015, I got fed up with hearing something like, 'Oh, they are all coming here to take our place. Europe is becoming Islamic. Blah, blah, blah.' It might do, it might do, but not in our own time. I don't think so. You know, it could be a possibility, anyway. I got fed up and said, 'I want to go and see, I want to go and see these people', right? So, I decided to go, but I decided not just to go as an artist or as a photographer, but as a human being, as a volunteer. I started volunteering with a small association, so I could get to know better what is all this fuss about. And, of course, what I realised is as simple as some people said here before: it could be us. Well, we are really lucky. It could have been us on the way to come here, or on the way to go to Syria. It's as simple as that.

And so I decided to do something very different from just getting a picture and moving on. I used a polaroid, and I had this dramatic idea to give a picture to the people I would encounter and say, 'You can have it. You can keep it. And in your journey maybe one day you can write back to me and say you're safe. Let me know.' And then I take two photos, , one for them to take in their own journey and one for me to bring back. And I have with me some polaroids, so I can show you later. I bring them back because I want to show the people here and wherever I go, in the community whatsoever, that, you know, it's simple: they're just like us. We label them as refugees and migrants, but we should really look at the images in another way.

This is my question for you. It's, okay, this is a picture I took, right? And it's, what is it? A refugee wearing a skirt in Serbia. But if I look at this image, I say, 'of course, Giovanna, it's a refugee. Fine, it's a refugee's skirt, and whatever'. But I never stopped to think of it and say, 'wow, she's quite cool, actually. She has got a blanket on the top, and if a fashion designer would have thought of it this style would be quite frankly, cool.' So I started seeing this girl as somebody - she's quite like me, right? And she's somebody who likes pink. Or she has got pink at the time, but she likes pink. She does like pink.

So, what I'm trying to say…let's look at these images – and whenever you see an image of a refugee – in another way, in a simple way. So, yes, they do have mobile phones. They take selfies. They eat and smoke cigarettes, and they drink coffee. They do exactly what we do, even in a very desperate situation.

Professor Nira Yuval-Davis: Thank you very much for all the speakers, whether as scholars or artists or educators – and so many of us are also migrants ourselves. I think that one of the conclusions we can draw – and we already saw this in what has been happening until now – is

that although we have a lot of things in common, each of us have our own situated gaze, our own life story, our own social positioning. And because of that, if we want to understand, to know something, we need to establish what Bakhtin called the dialogical epistemology. We cannot understand the world just from our own position. We can't even understand the world just by trying to be compassionate or with empathy to other people. The understanding should come from including as many situated gazes as possible – and Patricia Hill Collins said that at most we can approach the truth, we can never completely reach it. This is very important for what is happening now. Somebody mentioned the notion of everyday bordering. This is crucial because not only the migrants and the refugees on the one hand and the professional border officers are involved. Everybody now is asked, in Britain, to become an unpaid untrained border guard – if you are an employer, or a teacher, or a health worker, or a landlord. So, all these bordering practices, which supposedly are there in order to keep us safe, to feel at home, only make us more anxious and on guard. This existential anxiety, this everyday bordering, all this hysteria, is just making more and more people fearful and helps to develop the autochthonic populist poitics which have brought about Brexit to a large degree.

So we need to examine what people are thinking, what they are feeling and experiencing. But it's also about values, about morality, which was also mentioned during the talks, and about the relationships between these and our actions – including symbolic actions using art, as well as other kinds of actions for social and political change.

So thank you very much for all your different contributions to the discussion. I would like now to open the floor to everybody else. Who would like to be first?

Audience Member 1: I'm an artist, and I'd like to talk about Giovanna's work very briefly, seeing as she's come to talk about Bern's work. I think there's a lot to learn from it because what she does is she gives a gift of ordinary importance. She gifts those ordinary things that are so important to all of us. And the core of that for me is when we work with children, so often, and when we represent ourselves, we try to represent ourselves as a simplicity. 'I'm just an ordinary person', meaning, 'I'm simple. I'm easy to figure.' It's not true. None of you are ordinary. None of us is simple. We're all complex. If we start with that basis, then when we look at the rest of the world we can go, 'No, they're not simply migrants' or whatever tag we want to give them. They're complex human beings. Start with and accept our own complexity, and then we can see the complexity and the treasure that makes each and every one of us what we are.

Audience Member 2: I'm a Masters student. I just wanted to thank you first. That was really very interesting. A lot of you come from various different backgrounds – there's a lot of academia, there's a lot of art – and I wonder, with the exception of the religious parts and storytelling, quite a lot of it is in more 'high-end' places. So, I just wonder how you get in touch with people who are maybe slightly more marginalised. There's a class issue, I think, is what I'm trying to say. And I completely agree with what you were saying about needing to speak to children. You need to get into various schools and change attitudes from there. And I just wonder if you've got any advice to do this sort of work, to talk to people within the UK about this sort of work, who may be slightly more marginalised than people in academia or people in the art worlds.

Bern O'Donoghue: Actually, that's where a lot of my work is. I actually work with people who don't want migration. And I work with people who mistrust refugees. And I go into quite confrontational situations, sometimes on one-to-one, sometimes in performances, but often with schools and the extended community of schools. I've done quite a lot of work with Alex to work with children, and I identify children as being experts in kindness. So I start from discussions with children and I talk about what happens in their communities in relation to, what are core things within their environment, within their school, that make their school fair places. And what are the core things within their group that make individual members of their group important and good community members? And I send that out by encouraging children to see themselves as powerful people – almost activists, really – who have to rely on each other and who want to be supportive of each other. And then I actually get them to think about adults as people who've forgotten how to do that. I then work with their adults to remind them of the core values that we actually want to establish for our children, and at why, as adults, we presume that those core values are things that we cannot model for children, we choose not to model for children, and what the implications are for our children if we create an adult world where those values are not put into practice. So there's a lot of discussion, and I do it in front of children, I do it in front of adults in front of their children. I call people out, but I find a kind of gentle way by bringing in children to begin with.

Alex Ntung: I've also seen professional activism. I was working in a camp in Uganda, one of the oldest refugee camps in the world – it's been there for 55 years – it had schools and everything. I was just amazed to see that 70 percent of volunteers were British, many from arts backgrounds. It closed down last year. I think somehow academia, artists, educators must stay in contact with these issues. It is privilege we have, to speak, to translate, the experience – but also a puzzle. It took me ten years to be able to speak my experience. I see this as a kind of like a voice of the voiceless, and it's a privilege. And it's important, our ethics, for us in academia or art to keep, to keep in touch with what's going on.

Inderjit Bhogal: I think what you said is really important. From a City of Sanctuary perspective the way it works is that it works across all sections of the community, at different levels. Just to give you an example, in Sheffield where I live there is a gardening plot area, and so the people who run the plot opened it to people who are from other countries, who are used to working in fields and gardens back home, and they can have a plot here and work here. And while we're all gardening together we can all talk to each other and hear the stories. And so over the number of

years what they've found is that that's actually broken down some boundaries, barriers. But also, the people who actually run the allotment area have said that it's really, really helped to dispel racist attitudes and behaviours, especially amongst people who are at the kind of level you're talking about and who feel, 'We're all being left behind and all these immigrants are taking over our country.' It's really engaging with those people, helping them to see people as human beings with all their stories and helping to move on from sympathy and pity to really creating cultures of respect and relationships with each other.

Audience member: The most important thing you do when you work with children is to really listen to them, always.

Bern O'Donoghue: On the way here, actually, I was sitting on the Tube and I looked up and I saw an advert which said – it's a Winston Churchill quote – it said, 'We must not lose our faculty to dare, particularly in dark days.' And I actually think putting yourself outside your comfort zone, dealing with an issue creatively, you almost have to engage in the scary stuff yourself in order to be able to bring people in who are often frightened to change. So you have to work with how you feel and you have to connect with your prejudices. And, you know, sometimes that means the prejudices that you may actually experience about the people you think are prejudiced. So, you have to engage. There's a very polarised position that we all seem to be in. You know, Brexit, 'remoaners', 'remainers', whatever it is you want to call yourself. The point is people are calling each other names, and while they're shouting at each other the middle ground is not used at all. So you have to meet people halfway, and you have to be prepared to actually engage with what they're saying before you can actually talk about what you want to say.

Dr Angharad Closs Stephens: I feel I should say something about the academy here and what can be the rarefied space of academia. I want to respond to your question about those 'high-end places', but I also want to defend academia a little bit because in my University, for example, around 90% of students come from state schools, and they don't always find it easy to, for example, find the £30 necessary to print off their dissertations in the final year of studies. So when we speak about marginalised people, or people living in precarious positions, this is again a complex term. It cannot be easily mapped onto one category of people. Students are thirsty for knowledge and for readings that will help make sense of the world around them. And students have also made a significant journey – often, away from their parents for the first time. That move, away from the stories they have grown up with to something new – that also opens up a space for politics.

Professor Nira Yuval-Davis: And it's important to remember that stories people tell are not necessarily only their stories. In our work with refugees we used participatory theatre and we used stories that refugees told us in both Playback Theatre in which people have their stories played back to them and the audience and Forum theatre, in which they create a theatre scene with other members of the audience and examine if it could have been played differently. This is a way in which people's stories can be transformed and become a Launchpad for social, personal, political change, not only of themselves but also of other people who are listening. And this is the transformative power of storytelling.

Audience Member 3: I'm a student and I recently did a project on resettlement and relocation in the climate change context, so I've been becoming more involved in migration. That's not really my area, but I just wanted to thank you for this amazing panel because it was such a diversity of perspectives and voices but all told in an incredibly heartfelt way, which I think really adds a lot to what you can learn and take away from the conversation. A couple of points struck me. Bern was talking about the lack of connectedness, which is so in conflict with the fact that we live in a very globalised world. We are so interconnected in terms of migration flows, and yet there's this lack of connection between individuals and our personal, emotional responses. And then I was noticing that a few people in the panel were problematizing this idea of crisis, the refugee crisis, and saying, why do we call it this and what impact does that have for how people react to it? And Jen, I think you were saying that that discourse of crisis interferes with our ability to interact with the humanity of it. There's just so much to respond to …I think maybe the symbol of the blender is what really, for me, works so beautifully and I really enjoyed that story a lot. Thank you. But I think this idea that putting into a blender all these different components of these different individuals in the national context, and maybe the initial process of grinding it all up – they're all sort of bashing against each other – can be quite violent, and it's resulting in conflict, and this blade is kind of breaking everything down. But then once you get past that…hopefully you can get past that conflict stage and create something that is really delicious.

[Laughter]

Audience Member 3: Thank you.

Professor Nira Yuval-Davis: Well, there's two images about hybridity versus assimilation. Are you talking about porridge or about salad?

[Laughter]

Usifu Jalloh: Well, I think …for me there is just the power of the narrative. I usually say that the success or failure of any nation or project is entirely dependent on the narrative. Now, in Sierra Leone, we have a challenge where the trajectory of a lot of the young people is to literally move from the village to the city. Now I'm beginning to believe that using storytelling you can work

through conflict, so that you still get to a point where you can all live together. I'm using this story to go right down to the roots, if you like, and begin to say let's think of the narrative that we had yesterday that has brought us to where we are today. If you don't like where we are today, what narrative are we going to use now so that we like where we're going to get to tomorrow, to create a future for our children, and so on and so forth. I think that the whole issue of migration…we do have to create another narrative to the ones in power, with policies of even the media – they're using powerful, powerful narratives. Sometimes we say 'news', …what it is, is a story being told here, and we all…you know, we've got to make some kind of decision – what's really uniting and effects changes for children. But this is how I work all of the time when I have been going into schools for the past thirty or so years. I'm constantly challenging their narratives. I go into the schools, and I now talk about melanin and I tell them I need to go and visit my home country. And they all want to come. So, when we get to Africa now, I say, 'You know it is difficult to come unless you have a visa.' And they tell me, 'Yeah, I've got a card'. But then, you know, we go into…that's experience, and then I tell them, 'Your visa is going to be all over your body. What are you going to take to come along?'

'Sun cream!'

'What's that?'

And we get into a whole debate. 'Well, you've got to rub it so you don't burn [inaudible].'

'[inaudible] I don't burn.'

'What do you mean?'

We go through all that and then we just address the issue directly and we talk about melanin. That's all it is. That's all it is. Nothing else. And there's so many narratives. You've got to really think very, very deeply about what narratives you are taking on from so many texts or books that you're reading. When I tell the children, I ask them, I say, 'My Grandma is going through the River Nile, and she's just seen a country where it is we find the largest number of pyramids in the world. Where are we?'

'Egypt!'

And I tell them, 'Grandma says you're wrong.'

And the teachers all, '[gasp] Wrong?'

It's in Sudan – 220. Egypt has 83. Narratives – so powerful. And this is what we need to address, and I like what you're talking about that, you know, looking at 'them' in another way and seeing what they can contribute.

Audience Member 4: Thanks. I've got a question probably for Jen and Alex, but maybe others want to say something to that too. So, at least in the UK or in Europe, we're living in a place where we understand function, we understand individualism, and stuff like that. So what you're doing, if your starting point is Ubuntu, and if your starting point is intimacy and feminist literature …you're challenging that massively. And it appears quite alien to how we usually conceptualise life. So I'm just curious about how people react to you when you tell those stories or narratives – you know, it's unlocking a different narrative. I'm just interested in what reactions you get.

Alex Ntung: Let me start by saying that I just work out of a college, working on human rights in this country now. And it was really luck. I don't know why they recruited me. My English was so poor. But still I was advising people, and literally my memory was still full of terrible stuff. Of course, I don't know where my family is. I'm professional, I'm wearing a tie and advising kids. I was frustrated by their queries and I had to really tell myself, stop. Don't start comparing your life with others. You've gone through this. You've been homeless. They have to be patient. And I stopped comparing all those things. I started finding Ubuntu here. The teacher helping me with the class, finding a school – that is Ubuntu. And I still remember vividly a lady who I asked for directions from. I'd never been on a train. Literally, she bought me tickets – I was trying to get to Croydon – and she said how I'm going to get there. And I still remember that fifteen years on. That's Ubuntu. So, there are amazing Ubuntu examples in different ways, and that's how I keep looking at it. And I think that we have it here, and that's why I was talking about cultural and moral poverty. Yesterday on the radio there was a really nice little radio station that was asking people to call in, whether they would accept a refugee family on their street. Well, for me it is frustrating – the idea that they are normalising that kind of question. The question should be: *how* would you accept a refugee family on your street? But 'would you?' – I think that discussion is what we need to be changing; that normalisation of non-Ubuntu.

Bern O'Donoghue: You've all got a card on your seats which has got a photograph of planks of wood and a question to see what reactions you get. Sometimes you have to provoke reaction. This card game is actually to go with the work we're doing, and we'd like you to look at the question anyway, and then respond when you're actually going out and looking at our work. Sometimes what we have to do is we have to provide some opening for somebody to actually see that they are possibly having a similar experience to others. So it is literally about stepping outside your comfort zone and finding the good in people, and helping them to find the good in themselves. And some people don't want to work with it. They do not want to work with it because they have a world view that they want to keep tight. But I really believe, like Alex, that people are intrinsically good and most people can understand that collective action is better than individual protectionism. I think it's really good to remember that kind of approach.

Audience Member 5: Thank you for the interesting discussion. I'm a researcher and I wondered what you think of Slavov Zizek's line which is that the really difficult thing to address is cultural difference, and that as artists and academics we're constantly focusing in on what makes our commonalities are when there are some really difficult questions to tackle about difference, and that we've handed that discourse to the right by not engaging with it.

Inderjit Bhogal: I might just say that it's really important to engage with that debate in a positive way. Because for some people difference is danger: we don't want you because you are different. Margaret Thatcher said we are all being swamped by people of a different culture. And that's become the narrative. And you were talking about how people feel as if they are being invaded by all these people coming here. But difference, you know, needs to be looked at in a positive way. I'm glad we are all different. Wouldn't it be boring if we were all the same? Well, according to the V&A, apparently we are all more alike than different. But our differences are immense. We cannot erode them or ignore them or pretend we are all the same. So, celebrate difference, think positively about difference. And we need that rhetoric. Just always think positively. In my daily life…a lot of people in conversation will say quite negative things about those who are different. I never say yes or suggest that we can talk about it negatively. I never, never portray difference in a negative…I always say, 'Well, I want to speak to you about difference in a positive way.' At a rally of the British National Party I actually began talking with people there, and I said to them…They were all singing 'I am dreaming of a white Christmas', and I said to them, 'So what's your problem with me, then?' And, forgive me for the language, this is the language they used: 'You are ****ing taking over our country. You bastard. You go back to where you came from.' And, to cut a long story short, I said to them, 'Where do I fit into your vision of Britain as you would like it to be?' And they said, 'You don't fit into our vision. You go back to your own country.' And I said, 'Well, I have a vision in which we all belong together, with all our diversity, and make Britain a richer place. And I'd like you to invite me to your rallies so that I can actually share my vision of Britain as I would like [inaudible].' I'm still waiting.

[Laughter]

Usifu Jalloh: I just want to say something. Two things to say: Number one, I was listening to the radio – the guy who at that time was leading the British…BNP…Party was on the radio and was talking about the idea of separating all the cultures. I was really intrigued by that. I said great, let's do it. I phoned in and I said I'm really supportive, let's do it. Let's separate everything…let's have total separation. And he was excited because of my accent, it is clear that I am not necessarily an English person. And he said, 'Where are you from?' I said, 'I'm from Sierra Leone.' I said, 'So I really support you.' I said, 'Great.' I said, 'First of all, let's go to the British Museum, and let's take everything out of it that is not English at all.'

[Laughter]

‘Then let’s go around the restaurants. Then let’s look at the language that you are speaking itself. Let’s remove the word pyjamas. Let’s remove all these different words in there. I said, ‘Let me continue please. You know, that’s just one thing. You know, how do I define myself as a man if you’re not a woman? How do you define yourself as a woman if I am not a man? It is that kind of wall of relativity that is making the excitement.’

The second thing I wanted to say… The second point is that growing up in Sierra Leone, Freetown is this amalgamation of all these many different cultures. From Bollywood, to Lebanese, to Syrian people, you know… Chinese are there, Spanish. And if I start speaking like this you will see what I mean [starts speaking Creole]… Right? That’s Creole. And so, like I said, when I speak fast you won’t understand. When I speak slowly you will understand. But it’s a mixture of different languages. Now, as an artist, I have been so privileged to have got into a school in Sierra Leone that was called Prince of Wales. Couldn’t get any posher than that.

[Laughter]

But at Prince of Wales I learned Latin and French and all this stuff. I had teachers who were Indians. I had, you know… Now my art form, which I never thought I would take up at this point, performing as an artist, when I was going to school…but now, when I go into schools, I sing a Bollywood song. I sing a Chinese song. I use different words, and so on. And they ask, ‘Where did you learn it from?’ I learned it in Sierra Leone. I don’t sing ‘She’ll Be Coming Round the Mountain’ because I learned it here. It’s very much a part of my culture in Sierra Leone, and that is the question of…when we stop for a moment and just ask. You know, I ask the children in schools, ‘Do you know the word pyjamas?’ And they say, ‘Yeah, yeah!’ ‘It’s an English word, yeah?’ And they go, ‘Yeah!’ ‘No. It’s come from afar…’ Just opening up their mind to see that every moment of our lives is something that we’ve taken from somebody else, and that has become part of us.

Alex Ntung: Just something very quickly, something which I want to say about…I found the agenda about diversity, multiculturalism as a focused on the physical differences. And somehow if you are talking about culture at the university, you’re talking about no whites. At school, you know the kind of thing, the cultural day basically is for all the countries, so that the English whites can watch. But actually, you have culture too.

[Laughter]

We forgot that one person has so many identities. We need to be studying diversity within ourselves, diversity within us. As soon as we start exploring diversity within ourselves, then we’ll be studying, looking at diversity, a different way. And diversity will be…we are part of it. If you’re

talking about Britain that is what people have failed to do, often, and the policy has not talked about that. Actually I focus on that kind of difference, difference that means we become kind of ghettos. So in London we have countries within London, instead of actually seeing what we have in common. The difference is, as Inderjit says, is if you see it as a positivity, and if we look at diversity within ourselves, and then celebrate commonalities – that would be wonderful for me.

Bern O'Donoghue: I sometimes wonder if it's not a binary thing that we always get stuck in. And you know we can actually celebrate culture and commonality, and at the same time be different. I think that, yes, there's overlap. I do a lot of work sometimes where I have to get somebody to look at something difficult, but I have to get them to look at themselves, I have to get them to listen to themselves first. But in order to do that I have to enter emotionally into what their anxieties or areas of concern are. The thing that everybody says, 'How do you do that?' – you just get up, and you start, and you make a mess, and you do it by process, and you work it out in a very emotional, stop-start, rolling backwards and forwards, this is a language I don't understand, this is…you know, these shoes don't fit me. You find physically and emotionally, by running up against the things that are uncomfortable, you find out the actual point that somebody is bringing across to you. So, I think the thing is I don't ever expect to change somebody. I have to work with who I am, and change who I am, in order to show people that I am open to where they are. And it's only if I do that that somebody else can develop a trust to think that I'm not going to invade them, I'm not going to steal from them, I'm going to allow them to be. And I have to work really hard at that. We all have to work really hard at that. You know, all that sharing thing…that's part of it, a big part of it.

Professor Nira Yuval-Davis: I think there is something very wrong with an approach which blames everything on cultural difference. Cultural differences are embedded in power differences. The problem is privilege difference, the problem is in differential access to resources. And within cultures, as we've heard, there are differences within ourselves, there are differences between people. Every culture is synthetic, every culture has internal contradictions, and different people for their different political projects of belonging, choose particular elements that fit their projects.

Audience Member 6: I'm really taken by something that you started off with, which was in terms of fear and the rhetoric of fear that's gripped us and holds beyond belief, in my view. And I'm interested that you touched on and skated around this notion that we can… Jen talked about love coming through. You know, the whole thing around love and how we hold that love, I don't believe we have given that as a gift to society, and I wonder how we might do that with good effect. Because I think in a combative society we're always trying to be top dog, and it's much easier to buy fear than it is to buy love or to buy into love. And I'm interested in what that might do and how we might respond more effectively.

Professor Nira Yuval-Davis: Thank you. Why don't we go in turn to all the speakers; you can all incorporate a response to this last point but also sum up.

Dr Angharad Closs Stephens: Yes, thank you very much for that. I've been thinking about fear a lot as well, in an attempt to break out of this idea that there are 'leavers' and 'remainers', and that these are solidified identity positions. People feel fearful in the context of multiple crises: a crisis of political institutions and political representation, and an extended, deep economic crisis. What can we do to alleviate some of that fear, to encourage someone to take a small chance or do a minor gesture that would take them out of their everyday routines and habits. I think your point, Alex, about the Croydon train ticket was lovely.

Bern O'Donoghue: Wasn't it?

Dr Angharad Closs Stephens: That's something fairly small – a small act of kindness - that someone did but has stayed with you because it made a big difference.

Dr Jennifer Bagelman: I'm just very moved by all the presentations and questions. I guess, starting from this last question about love, I think, yeah, the role of story has a big part in challenging somebody's fear and the discourses that we see so prevalently. And I see this in the classroom, you know, the power of having a story, of someone's personal, intimate account, to go back to the question about the role of intimacy. It's deeply uncomfortable, and I think discomfort is important in our politics, to keep that present. You know, why can you consume art so easily and walk away from it? We may have an emotional encounter, but how does that move us to action? How can we keep that present in our lives day to day? And that, I think, is the real challenge. It goes to your point, Nira, about this cultural diversity. If it's easy to consume and we feel good about ourselves after consuming it, I don't think that's political work. I don't want to end on a negative note, but our loving politics should also be one that's open to critique. And so we talked about story, and I believe deeply that story is powerful, but whose stories are expected to be told and why do we expect certain people to tell them over and over? There's a huge burden in that, right? And there's this wonderful group, if you want to check it out. They're called Rise, and they have ten rules for anyone who wants to work with migrant communities, if you're not a migrant or asylum seeker yourself. And one of the rules is, don't expect to feel good after doing work with us. Don't expect our stories and our bodies to be your, you know, your commodity that you can then move on to feel, you know, you've done your bit. I think that's an important part, and we need to have a right to refusal. If someone doesn't want to share their story, we need to make space for that in our activism and our academic and our artistic works. And I think that's a part of love too.

Giovanna Del Sarto: Thank you very much for this beautiful event. I'll try to do a sum up of what I listened to today and…yes, how do we make sure that we love or we understand why we are afraid of somebody, or a situation, or what they represent? Just thinking about it and trying to, maybe, when we go out from this event try to talk, even for a minute, to somebody who might not know about this. Because it's true, noy everybody comes to the Tate. So we are people who are already open to these discussions; it's good, I'd say it's really good. However, it would be nice if each of us, we can say this to someone we know, we can have the strength to start a conversation with somebody who is not familiar with this. That's one thing that we talked about with Bern in the past – how we take it out. Because it's good, my *Polaroid for a Refugee* is really good, and now it's in Rome, it's going to go to Georgia, it's going to go to elsewhere. However, it needs the community to be seen, because the reason why I went is to be able to come back to say to somebody, 'It's not true what all the newspapers say'. Or, 'yes, it's true in this part. But, however, it's like this'. 'I want to show you my picture if you have a possibility to see it. You will see just a normal person there. Right?' So, a family portrait, that's what we need to do out of here. I think so. I think this is the message. Because otherwise it will just be in a kind of high-hand, academic, artistic, you know, groovy, fantastic activity.

[Laughter]

Alex Ntung: What a beautiful question to end up the event with. I think there is one thing that we all share, one or two things, it doesn't matter what background we're from: love and having a home, somewhere we call home. And I think something which struck working with Bern on a project at school, we made some follow-up to this work after two days, and we involved kids to research or to write actually on the boats… Bern was asking them to write on the boats what message they would give to the kids of the people crossing. And of course they had been involved in the subject for two days, and they were saying, you know, love them and welcome them. I will never forget is seeing a Syrian boy who, he had been at school I think for more than six months. The deputy head teacher came to us, almost in tears, saying that this boy has not spoken at all. But the boy was really confident. He's speaking about where he comes from. He had never spoken about coming from Syria before. The confidence he had to say that in front of a school, and we were basically trained not to bring up anything emotional, but for him to do that…it was because we made the issue relevant to the classroom. He saw that his experience was relevant to other children, and therefore basically that sharing his experience is no longer shameful. It's no longer bad. They love me.

Usifu Jalloh: Well, very quickly, I want to end with a story, so is that okay? It's going to be quick, really short. So I say, in.

Audience: Out.

Usifu Jalloh: In.

Audience: Out.

Usifu Jalloh: All right. Okay. First of all, let me say, fear is just an alarm clock to wake you up to love. That's always how I use fear. When I feel fear, I think of loving, you know, to move into that space of loving. For me, I use that as a tool to love.

But you know there's a woman who wanted to be known as the kindest woman in the whole world, and in the whole village, and in the whole town. And so every single day she took a loaf of bread, sliced it open, and put some lovely, nice stuff inside the bread and placed it by the window. A hunchback man came and took the loaf of bread out of the way without saying thank you, and all he would say is, 'The evil that you do will come back to you. The good that you do will come back to you.' And the woman was incensed. 'What kind of ungrateful man is this, just to take my bread?' And the next day she took another loaf of bread, placed it there, and the hunchback man came again, took the bread, and walked away. 'The evil that you do will come back to you.' The woman said, 'What is this? I'll teach him a lesson.' She took a loaf of bread, sliced it open, and put poison in it. She went to place it by the window and her hand was shaking, so she took the bread and threw it away in the fire. She took a fresh loaf of bread, sliced it open, and put some lovely stuff in there, placed it by the window, the hunchback man came, took the loaf of bread. 'The evil that you do will come back to you. The good that you do…'

I mean, she was furious. She sat down thinking what to do. She heard a knock on her door. She got up, thinking, 'Who's knocking on my door when I'm so angry?' Opened the door, staggering in was her long-lost son. She hadn't seen him for years. 'My son! Where have you been?' The son staggered in, and he says, 'Mama, I've been coming home and it's been so tough, Mama. So hard, Mama. I was coming almost to your house here, Mama. I fell down, I almost fainted out of hunger. It was a hunchback man who came. He gave me a loaf of bread, saying that I needed that loaf of bread much more than he did. And as she hugged her son, she remembered the words of the hunchback man: 'The evil that you do will come back to you. The good that you do will come back to you.' That's my story.

[Applause]

Dr Vicki Squire: I just want to reflect on that question about fear in terms of the installation, actually, and just to say that I really like the point you make about fear as an alarm clock to love. This point, just this idea that, you know, fear…it's okay to feel fear. That's fine. And I think, to me, that is more the problem that needs to be addressed, to give space for fears to be expressed but without these driving political interventions. I'm also not convinced by the cultural difference argument. I think it's not about class straightforwardly either. Everyone's got work to do. I think that's become really apparent through the discussion. And what I would say from fieldwork I've done in lots of different places is, you know, generosity… acts of generosity in society are not specific to any particular group or type of person. For me it's very important to take that back into academic space – especially a privileged one, because I think a privileged space is also often an impoverished space … so what I try to do, really, is bring these acts of generosity back into my teaching, my writing, and my daily activities, as best I can. But I guess the final thing I would say is that there's been a lot of connected ideas about a kind of philosophy of sharing and mutuality coming out in different ways across the panel, which I think is really interesting and important. I

think one of the things is about how actually doing things together, shared tasks – and this comes to the question of building trust, which Jen talked about – you know, the question of how do you build trust, because it takes time and we don't always have that. I think giving people time is important, and also that there can be shortcuts to trust-building. Bern's boat making is one way, I think, that barriers can meltdown as we start making the installation together. This resonates with our interviews - when we invite people to share their stories with our project, we also ask them if they want to speak back to European audiences, policymakers, and what they want to say. I think this is one way that we build trust by sharing the task of creating different narratives together. So, I think that doing things together – having shared tasks and shared goals – is really important. To me, is what happens in that installation. Fears, worries and anxieties can come out the same time as we are doing something together, and they can get processed and transformed along the way.

Inderjit Bhogal: It's a great inspiration to be part of this. Thank you. People often say to me, 'You're very different than me. You are all right, but you are different from the others, you know.

[Laughter]

And what's happened when they say to me, 'You are all right'? What's happening? They've got to know me. They've come to relate to me as a human being. And I think that's what needs to happen. So, they have their fears, but they've actually worked through their fears in relation to me because they've got to know me. And I think it is important to help them to deal with their fears in that way, by getting close and by engaging and by relating to them. So for me it works by helping people to meet, to create spaces for meeting people of different backgrounds and diversities. We need to do what we can to bring people together. And if we can bring people together that's a way of helping to build relationships, and that's a way of helping to deal with their fears. And if you can bring people to be together to build relationships of mutual love and respect and trust, then you can get to a point where you actually cooperate, work together to make a difference. And if you can bring people together to make a difference, you can engage on a journey which is about travelling together as human beings. I feel that's what I have in mind when I think through City of Sanctuary, to help people to really engage and to work in that way. So it's an ongoing, endless process, but it begins by meeting and just being human and calling out to others to be human, and being hospitable and calling others to be hospitable, and challenging inhumanity, and challenging inhospitality. And you do that by building cultures of welcome and hospitality and respect and sanctuary and safety.

Bern O'Donoghue: There are millions of things you can do, but they're all tiny. Tiny, and I think it's a great question how we can give love to society and respond more effectively. I think we need to remain open to other people, to love people regardless. Love is a verb. It's very easy to talk about love, but actually doing it is the tricky, vulnerable, messy, a possibly rejected, and possibly completely misunderstood thing. But it's just physically about being the change that we want to see. It's kind of really small and it's massive, all at the same time. And it's about recognising other people who want to see that change, who may be very different to you, and finding a way of building a bridge together to meet, so that you can cross it and also support other people to cross it. And it's about getting people who are not like you, who can do things that you can't do, or who can connect to people that you can't connect, to kind of say – let's do it together. So, it's the kind of stuff that you do if you have a garden. Being creative is a bit like having a garden. And it's a bit of a slog, but also some of it's really fantastic. Some of it's bloody horrible, but some of it's really fantastic.

Professor Nira Yuval-Davis: Thank you all very much for these words about the politics of hope, of solidarity, of positive change. I think it's just the right way to finish. So let's just thank again all the speakers.

[Applause]

Speaker Biographies

Dr Jennifer Bagelman (University of Exeter)

Jen Bagelman's activist and academic work is concerned with advancing anti-colonial migrant justice, particularly through arts-based research. Her work seeks to contribute to Indigenous, migrant-led political movements, such as 'No One is Illegal.' Most recently she has co-designed picturebooks with women employed as Live-in Caregivers on Coast Salish Territories (Vancouver Island) as a method for documenting experiential geographies of Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker Program. She is currently a Lecturer in Human Geography at the University of Exeter.

Inderjit Bhogal (City of Sanctuary, Sheffield)

Inderjit Bhogal lives in Sheffield and is a Methodist Minister currently working as a Learning and Development Officer. He is a former President of the British Methodist Conference. Inderjit has been instrumental in the founding and establishing of the City of Sanctuary movement across Britain and Ireland.

Dr Angharad Closs Stephens (Swansea University)

Dr Angharad Closs Stephens is a senior lecturer in Human Geography at Swansea University and author of *The Persistence of Nationalism: from imagined communities to urban encounters* (Routledge, 2013). She is currently working on a project about the 'Atmospheres of Nationalism', asking what it feels like to be part of a community with and against others. She is assistant editor of the journal, *Citizenship Studies.*

Bern O'Donoghue (Independent Artist, Creator of *Dead Reckoning*)

Connection and permission are recurring themes in the work of Bern O'Donoghue. Addressing social and political issues, her process led practice explores the means in which simple artistic activities can be catalysts for progressive change. Since 2010, the artist has employed immersive projects to examine the power of words to shape perception, translating tacit making about social change, migrant displacement and disappearance into human centred and affective content. Her most recent work *Dead Reckoning,* employs the use of everyday materials and social media as it challenges myths about refugees and migrants. Begun in 2015, the project has expanded into installations bearing witness to the thousands of migrants and refugees who die crossing the Mediterranean Sea as they attempt to reach Europe. Through this work the artist visually explores the notion of 'other', resting in the overlap between 'us' and 'them' to forge emotional connection. Comprised of thousands of tiny, hand-marbled paper boats, *Dead*

Reckoning presents a fragile reminder of the individuals caught up in Europe's biggest humanitarian crisis since WW2, provoking inquiry and engagement that reaches beyond statistics or headlines.

Usifu Jalloh (Performance Artist and Storyteller)

Usifu Jalloh is a highly experienced, talented award winning performer and educator who has been working in arts education for over 20 years. His roots in multicultural Sierra Leone, and his long standing and close association with artists and audiences from a wide range of cultures, have lead him to develop a storytelling style which encompasses international languages, music, dance and story themes. He was born in Kamakwie in the Bombali District of northern Sierra Leone. Usifu has a passion for motivating young people to educate themselves within the context of their culture. Along with Storytelling and music, he has established Maambena Fest through the Aruna Jalloh Foundation as one of the vehicles he uses to accomplish this laudable goal. His production Africa's Cowfoot, serves as a platform for promoting Sierra Leonean and African cultures as a whole by embodying them within the rich Oral heritages of his ancestry.

Alex Ntung (Expert Witness, Advisor and Trainer in Inclusion & Diversity)

Alex was born into a family of cattle-herders in South Kivu, a province of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Growing up he survived extreme poverty, hardship and violence at a terrifying scale and lost many members of his family. His hunger for education took him to a school in Uvira. Here, countless incidents of xenophobia and violence were directed at him as a member of the minority Banyamulenge ethnic group (also sometimes known as 'Tutsi Congolese') in the DRC. He later had to flee to Rwanda where he witnessed the 1994 genocide and subsequent violence fuelled by Tutsi and Hutu ethnicity. Alex later came to the UK and underwent a stringent asylum process and, learned English and later gained a postgraduate diploma in management studies and an MA in Anthropology of Conflict, Violence and Conciliation at the University of Sussex. He is author of the *Not My Worst Day*, a book about his life in Rwanda and DRC. He has occupied several responsibilities in the public and community sector and, internationally, he has been involved in peace and political mediation work in conflict affected areas. Alex is speaker and universities guest lecturer offering honest insights into issues of migration, human security and cultural insensitivity in conflict resolution. Alex is currently a country expert witness (DRC, Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda) in security, cultural, linguistic, religious and ethnic issues in litigation. He is also a specialist trainer in diversity and migration and has co-published resources for teachers.

« Just go to somewhere, anywhere, that you will have peace and be able to survive. Then call that place home! »

Alex's father's message as he left everyone and everything behind and started the journey of thousands miles away from his home to seek safety.

Giovanna Del Sarto (Documentary Photographer and Creator of *Polaroid for a Refugee*)

Giovanna del Sarto, London-based photographer, specializes in Documentary photography based on pure observation and focuses on the personal stories and lives of her subjects, paying close attention to detail and emotion. The interaction among people, places and objects and their mutual influence is what she looks for when she embarks on a photographic journey. All of her work moves its first steps from herself, in the sense that her curiosity, her need to answer to a set of questions, her interest in getting a deeper knowledge of the situation she is experiencing that sets it going. The pictures are a consequence of this movement towards a new perception. Her work has been featured both nationally and internationally in publications such as L'Espresso, La republica, Il Sole24Ore, National Geographic Italy, Usbek&Rica, and Wonderland Magazine- to name a few. She has also been commissioned by the likes of NHS, Amnesty International UK, Traces London and FCM (Swiss Federal Commission on Immigration) for Terra Cognita Magazine. Her latest project *A Polaroid for a Refugee* was recently a semi-finalist for the recent World Press Award as well as exhibited in France, Italy, Georgia, Switzerland and UK. www.apfar.org

Dr Vicki Squire (University of Warwick, Principle Investigator for *Crossing the Mediterranean Sea by Boat*)

Dr Vicki Squire is Reader in International Security at the Department of Politics and International Studies, University of Warwick. She is author of *The Exclusionary Politics of Asylum* and *Post/Humanitarian Border Politics Between Mexico and the US: People, Places, Things*, Editor of *The Contested Politics of Mobility* and Co-Editor of the journal *International Political Sociology*. Dr Squire is currently Leverhulme Research Fellow on *Human Dignity and Biophysical Violence: Migrant Deaths across the Mediterranean Sea*, which examines the toleration and contestation of border deaths in relation to European traditions of framing human dignity. She is also Principal Investigator on the ESRC project *Crossing the Mediterranean Sea by Boat: Mapping and Documenting Migratory Journeys and Experiences,* which documents the journeys, experiences, expectations and claims of people on the move in precarious situations across the Mediterranean. Dr Squire is a frequent contributor to The Conversation and openDemocracy, and tweets @vidkowiaksquire

Professor Nira Yuval-Davis (University of East London)

Professor Nira Yuval-Davis is a diasporic Israeli Jew living in London. She is the Director of the Research Centre on Migration, Refugees and Belonging (CMRB: http://www.uel.ac.uk/cmrb/index.htm) at the University of East London. She has been a member of the 2006 Sociology RAE panel and the 2014 Sociology REF panel, the President of the Research Committee 05 (on Racism, Nationalism and Ethnic Relations) of the International Sociological Association and is a founder member of *Women Against Fundamentalism* and the *International research network on Women in Militarized*

Conflict Zones. Her recent research projects include the ESRC project on *Identity, performance and social action: participatory theatre among refugees* and the EU 7th frame project on *EUBorderscapes.* She is an editor of the Palgrave MacMilan book series on *The Politics of Intersectionality.* Among her books are *Woman-Nation-State (1989), Racialized Boundaries* (1992), *Unsettling Settler Societies* (1995), *Gender and Nation* (Sage, 1997), *The Warning Signs of Fundamentalisms* (2004), *The Politics of Belonging: Intersectional Contestations* (2011), *Women Against Fundamentalism: Stories of Dissent and Solidarity* (2014) and *Bordering* (forthcoming, 2018). Her works have been translated into more than ten languages.

Photos and transcription by Shannon Mathieu.