

**Proposal for “Bring your Own Idea” Program
“Refugee Lives: Local and Global.”**

Submitted by:

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While for the past two years the image of shipwrecks in the Mediterranean epitomized the lived experience of refugees, and while the current chaos at airports in the US may do the same this year, we are interested in a discussion that allows us to move beyond these images and narratives, that, while poignant, only represent some aspects of the complexity of refugee lives. We have decided to call this project “Refugee Lives: Local and Global,” because we are interested in, for lack of a better word, a holistic and data driven approach to this topic. We are committed to learning more about the legal and educational implications of refugee status, particularly in light of the recent restrictions in the US and in Europe, but we also would like to grasp how refugee experiences were common in history before the 1951 Refugee Convention. The questions that we would like to discuss include, but are not limited to, an examination of the following: social and educational experiences of refugees across the world and in St. Louis, the rhetoric on “security” that may inform policies and regulations about refugees, the effects of climate change on refugees who suffer multiple forms of displacement, the actual settlement patterns and conflict in different parts of the world, escape routes and border-crossings, and local concentrations of refugees in St. Louis through geo-spatial mapping.

The current situation for refugees and immigrants around the world has without a doubt intensified our interest in a university-wide conversation on this topic; however, an interdisciplinary research forum that addresses questions concerning refugees has been on our minds for quite some time. Our own research focuses on different dimensions of this topic. Tabea’s current research centers on refugee lives in the 1930s and 1940s, focusing specifically on escape routes between Germany, Spain, North Africa, and Latin America. She has published on migration in the Mediterranean, and taught interdisciplinary courses on migration in the global world. Cindy’s laboratory-based psycholinguistic experiments examine interacting factors involved in language acquisition, such as social psychology factors, innate mechanisms, and test method effects that advance research and offer practical implications for local and national educational policy and curricular design. In a current course that she teaches, she investigates how language tests in the USA may deliver messages about the prestige and hierarchies of certain languages, and not others, leading to policies of suppression of language diversity. We are both advocates for social and educational equity for bilingual/multilingual people across the world, and we believe that an interdisciplinary dialogue will not only be timely, but also be extremely productive, considering also that St. Louis is an important resettlement center for refugees. While the list of invitees includes mainly colleagues from Arts & Sciences, as well as faculty from the School of Law and the Brown School of Social Work, we would be very interested in opening up the conversation for colleagues in the Sam Fox School of Design and

Visual Arts, the School of Medicine, and the School of Engineering and Applied Science. We are also very open to add more members from Arts & Sciences if you have suggestions.

Our ultimate goal is to co-teach an interdisciplinary freshmen seminar on this topic that would also rely heavily on guest lecturers by local “practitioners” and Washington University scholars. We believe that first-year students would greatly benefit from exposure to issues involved in refugee lives in St. Louis and around the world, and we plan to equip them with the skills to think crucially and skeptically about this phenomenon.

Faculty we plan to invite:

Arts & Sciences

John Baugh, Anthropology

Nancy Berg, JINELC

Dillon Brown, English

Rebecca Copeland, EALC

Linling Gao-Miles, IAS

Odis Johnson, Education

Long Le-Khac, English

Sonia Song-ha Lee, History

Anne-Marie McManus, JINELC

Lori Markson, Psychology

Sunita Parikh, Political Science

Tim Parsons, History

Anca Parvulescu, English

Rebecca Treiman, Psychology

Ariela Schachter, Sociology

Ila Sheren, Art History

Michael Strube, Psychology

Anika Walke, History

School of Law

Stephen Legomsky

Leila Sadat

Brown School of Social Work

Sean Joe

Preferred Style of Gathering: Cocktail Hour

Cindy will be on sabbatical fall 2017, but we plan to schedule this discussion when she is in St. Louis, and then we will continue the conversations in spring, 2018.