Jumping In

A Story of Refugee Resettlement

susan augustine

cover image: A depiction of her new home in Chicago by Hala, a Syrian refugee, age 9

book design: Vidura Jang Bahadur

migration stories

The Migration Stories Chapbook Series, 2019
Drawn from the community at and around the University of Chicago

Edited by Rachel Cohen and Rachel DeWoskin

Jumping In

A Story of Refugee Resettlement

susan augustine

My family met the family that I will call the Mousawis for the first time a few weeks after they arrived. We walked up the three flights of stairs to their apartment, repeating our limited Arabic phrases to ourselves: alsalam ealaykum (a formal greeting) and Shukraan (thank you). I carried homemade dal and rice, and with hands full, we awkwardly took off our shoes and winter gear before turning to greet the family. We were introduced by a woman who had been in the airport welcoming party and was soon moving to Brazil. The translator on that occasion was a warm and friendly Syrian woman who had grown up in California and was now living in Chicago. We had a rule from the beginning that if someone new was going to be introduced to the Mousawis, it needed to be done by someone they had already met. This train of verified people provided some reassurance to the family, who, in this piece, are called Tahani and Ahmed, and their three daughters, Hala, Razan, and Mona. That first day, I noticed that when I repeated basic phrases in English – "Hello. My name is Susan," the oldest girl, Hala, would watch my lips closely and move hers at the same time, as if trying to capture the shapes and sounds. She already spoke Turkish, Kurdish, and Arabic, and was nearly bursting with eagerness to learn English as well.

The goal of the day was to figure out where they would pick up their mail, which was in a separate building from the one that housed their apartment. We explored the mail building before heading back to their apartment. I most remember how easily our nearly eight-year-old son connected with

the three little girls. They found their own way to communicate and were soon playing tag despite having no shared words. Their elastic brains and openness offered a lot of hope for a family that had lost so much.

After two hours, we appeared to have accomplished the single goal of knowing where to pick up mail. It was an eye-opening experience. Before the family had arrived, we had secured generous donations of a free year's membership at the Museum of Science and Industry for them along with free passes to the Aquarium. We thought the family would welcome these leisurely visits in the midst of all the learning and settling, but there were always far more pressing matters that filled our time with them. It took nearly two years before we were able to visit the Science Museum with the family.

§

Two and a half years ago, my family joined a group of other community members to form the Hyde Park Refugee Project (HPRP), an organization that wanted to help resettle Syrian refugees. None of us had much experience doing this kind of thing, but we worked closely with a local refugee resettlement agency, and we learned as we went. When I sat down to write about our experience, I thought maybe I could create a guide for others interested in embarking on such a project. I didn't feel comfortable telling the personal stories of the refugee families. Plus, the resettlement agency made clear that we should not ask them to explain their past; it can be too painful to relive. I also didn't want to be the voice of the HPRP. As I worked to write this, I found that I wasn't making a guide, but a collection of observations that I and others made that I thought might be of interest to people who are wondering about jumping into the unknown to help a refugee organization get off the ground, about volunteering, working with and getting to know a refugee family.

In preparing this piece, I spoke with the mother of one of the families, who was glad to contribute her observations. I'm including some of her translated words, and I spoke with Dorothy Pytel, who gave the group its first forward momentum. Writing this, I have changed the names of everyone except four of us among the group who have already taken a public role: early leaders Penny Visser and Dorothy Pytel, and my husband Daniel and myself.

Launch

It was early in the fall of 2016. Daniel and I had been talking for years about doing more volunteering.

We had many one-off experiences like working at the Chicago Food Bank for a day or canvassing for a political candidate, but we had not deeply committed to a cause. We started talking about how we might be able to help Syrian refugees. This was an effort we felt passionately about. When I was a child, our family helped a couple of Laotian refugee families settle in my small Michigan town. The work felt necessary, immediate, and connecting. It had opened cultural doors to me as a child, giving me simple new experiences like trying cilantro for the first time, and complex ones like hearing a very different language and seeing more clearly what it meant to really struggle to survive. When I read about what was happening in Syria and how so many people were displaced, I wanted to get involved but wasn't sure how. My husband Daniel was feeling the same way. He and his family are immigrants, and the growing anti-immigrant wave in this country felt personal. We thought it would be particularly meaningful if we volunteered as a family.

I work in a high school in Hyde Park, a neighborhood of Chicago, and am blessed with some of the most generous and curious of students. Just a few weeks before the 2016 election, one of them let me know about a group of people coming together with plans to sponsor at least one refugee family in Hyde Park – and hopefully more.

Daniel went to an early meeting of this group while I stayed home with a sick son, and he came back energized at the possibility of hosting a family. The resettlement agency RefugeeOne that would be bringing over the family had presented on some of the cultural and pragmatic challenges involved with a community effort of support. They had been uncertain about having a family settle in Hyde Park – a south side neighborhood in Chicago that is dominated by the University of Chicago with little track record of working with refugees – but they eventually came around when they learned more about the dedicated group of volunteers that had come together. RefugeeOne has settled thousands of families in the Chicagoland area since the early 1980s and typically does so on the far north side of the city, where they and many supportive services are already in place: schools that offer ESL, community health centers that accept Medicaid and are accustomed to dealing with immigrants, mental health services and ESL classes through RefugeeOne's office, a WIC office, and perhaps most important, dozens of other settled refugee families. Although they shepherd the families through the citizenship process and provide many services such as ESL classes, they require a community group

to do the bulk of the day-to-day assistance – and to raise the money needed to support the family during the first few months after arrival.

My husband and I had so many questions and no answers. What would it look like to help settle a family? What would it require from us in terms of money, time, effort? Who else was involved? How does one even begin? I think we went into the project thinking that someone would just tell us what to do, and then we'd give our time and energy. We were very naïve.

The first sign that this was going to be a deeper commitment came a few evenings after the RefugeeOne meeting. Two women who had attended contacted us and asked if they could come over and talk to my husband and me about how we could be involved. "Sure!" One of them was soon moving to Brazil, and the other was interested in helping but knew she wouldn't have the time to commit. They had walked away from the meeting with an impression that Daniel would be a good volunteer, so they came to talk. It soon became clear that they were not asking us to assist someone who knew what they were doing; they were asking us to lead something and figure out how to do it. About 10 minutes into the conversation, the women said to us: "We would like you to be in charge of mentoring the family and helping them learn English by finding ESL programs and tutors. Will you do it?" It was a shock! We had never done this before. We didn't know where to begin, but we had energy and we're organized and we thought it was important, so we said yes.

I don't know how that commitment would have turned out if Hillary had become president, but she didn't. I remember that the night of the election, after I returned home, I was cleaning up in my office, and I bent to pick something up under the desk. In that crouched position, I suddenly had a visceral feeling of fear. I had a flash of an impossible plan of hiding there for the next four years. This emotional and physical reaction jolted me. I needed to revolt against the new administration. I think others in our community felt similarly, and that gave important energy to our work.

Once we made the commitment to taking responsibility for ESL programs and mentoring, we had to figure out how to get there. It helped to carry both the big, international picture and the local details in mind. Assad's violence and oppressive regime displaced millions of people, and some say, helped lead to the global events that encouraged Brexit to pass and Trump to be elected. Closer to home, as a result of this distant

war, I was about to meet real people with immediate needs, and helping them would be intense and personal.

When we met the Mousawi family, one of the first things I noticed about the two older daughters, Hala and Razan, were their grey teeth. When they'd smile, I couldn't help but having a second of surprise and sadness, seeing this reminder of their past. The girls were thin and malnourished, and had probably never seen a dentist, much less had a routine in place with teeth brushing. I was immediately grateful that something could be done to fix them; they were only baby teeth. I wanted to make everything better for the family and help these sweet girls. Fixing direct needs is one thing, but I certainly couldn't repair the emotional damage from loss, displacement, fear, and so many other things the family had faced. I struggled with being naïve and idealistic about my impact, but at the same time, I took comfort in the fact that there were tangible ways in which we - the refugee family and all of us together – could make progress.

The Visionary

Dorothy Pytel is a mom at the school where I work, an active member of her Lutheran church, and an immigrant herself. In the summer of 2015, she and her family were vacationing in Germany. She opened the paper and read a story of a woman in Bavaria who woke up to find 20 people camping out in her front yard. They were refugees. Her response was to go make rolls and serve them breakfast. When Dorothy read this, it was her first moment of realizing that something transformative and monumental was happening in the world.

Back in Hyde Park that Fall, she became aware that a Unitarian church in the area was helping sponsor a family, so she donated a few things. She wanted to become more involved with the family, but they were being settled on the north side of Chicago, a distance of 15 often traffic-jammed miles, so logistically, it would have been challenging.

Dorothy's Lutheran church in Hyde Park had a history of sponsoring refugees in the 1980s, and so she thought perhaps they could renew that work. In December 2015, she planned three Sunday afternoon forums to discuss the topic, and she invited a woman who had been involved in the earlier effort to speak first. In the second forum, a member from the Unitarian church described their current efforts, and during the third, Dorothy was confident the congregation would enthusiastically come together and decide to sponsor a family. She felt deflated when she saw

their hesitancy. This led to months of her spinning her wheels, trying to get the congregation on board. Looking back, she reported it as the lowest emotional point in the project. But, in the end, she said it was the best thing that ever happened. In order to get the Hyde Park Refugee Project off the ground and sustainable, *multiple* organizations and individuals needed to come together.

A major part of the Project's success was this coming together – the serendipity of interest growing simultaneously throughout the neighborhood. During this same year, Dorothy's son's fifth-grade teacher Sharon became interested in refugee work and reached out to families in the class to see if they wanted to do something. Because Dorothy had some limited experience with the Unitarian project, she contacted them and found out about the resettlement agency RefugeeOne, and put Sharon in touch with them. Due to the Syrian crisis dominating the news, everyone was contacting RefugeeOne. It was hard to get a response. Even in the best of times, RefugeeOne is understaffed and underfunded and overwhelmed, so getting a call back was probably only made possible by Dorothy's thin connection to one of their existing sponsors - the Unitarian church. That personal connection (something that would prove invaluable throughout the project) helped move their cause along.

At the same time, there was a brainstorming meeting of the Hyde Park and Kenwood Interfaith Council, which represents about 20 different congregations in the Hyde Park area. About 10-12 representatives were present, and when they went around the table, at least half said, "we could really get involved with refugee relief." Still, Hyde Park was new territory for RefugeeOne, and they were dubious about whether the neighborhood could successfully sponsor a family.

Sharon's students raised $1,600 and took a yellow school bus to Target to buy supplies for refugee families, which were then funneled through RefugeeOne. The class effort concluded, summer hit, and the students left her classroom for good.

Although Hyde Park is a neighborhood in Chicago, it's also like a small college town, with many families affiliated with the university clearing out at the end of the school year. At the end of summer 2016, when many were gone and momentum seemed lost, RefugeeOne said yes! The HPRP could resettle a family in Hyde Park. This surprising and exciting news kick-started all of the organizing efforts: securing housing, raising money, gathering donations, and most importantly,

finding committed volunteers.

At that moment, there were 21 million refugees worldwide, and of the 193 countries in the world, 10 of them were hosting more than 50% of the refugees. The Amnesty International Secretary General called for more countries across the world to host families. Refugees were being pushed out of Sudan, Libya, Syria, and Myanmar, and governments were not responding. This was an urgent time.

When the school year resumed, there was a scramble to prepare and bring volunteers together. A meeting was held on October 15, 2016, with nearly a dozen people: Dorothy, her son's teacher Sharon, and other interested community members, including my husband. A representative from RefugeeOne was there, presenting about many legal, social, and logistical matters regarding a sponsorship. She said many things that Daniel relayed to me later: first, be prepared to welcome and help someone who might have completely different political and world views than you do. You might be a strong feminist and be welcoming a woman in a burka. Second, don't make assumptions about a family's religious and cultural beliefs. The last thing you want to do is give a Koran as a gift and have a quasi- or non-religious Syrian family feel like they have to be pious. Religion is so charged in the country from which they come. And third, don't ask questions about their past. Most likely, the refugees have gone through some very painful experiences, and as much as we might think that listening and being supportive would help, they may not want to relive their past. Be ready for anyone and anything, put your own expectations aside, and let the family share their beliefs and stories at their own pace - if at all.

The RefugeeOne representative's main point, however, was that if you're serious about this, you need to settle on a date when you will be ready to receive a family. Dorothy wrote "DATE" on a piece of paper (she wishes she still had it). It became the main goal for the meeting. They walked away, declaring that by December 15, they would be ready. This was like a catapult. It was, as Dorothy told me, necessary to set this date. It holds one accountable.

RefugeeOne requires that $8,000 be raised in order to settle a family. Within a week, they put up a fundraising page for HPRP with a big thermometer whose "temperature" went up every time money was donated. It was a compelling visual, and seemed to drive enthusiasm and money. Dorothy would often refresh the page, feeling closer to the goal with each bump up.

Dorothy started organizing by emailing from her personal email account, reaching out to other members of the Interfaith Council. Although many atheists (including my husband and me) have been core volunteers, local religious organizations took a lead in supporting the families, both through what the organizations could contribute as a whole and through individual members who donated money, time, and household items. One volunteer was able to secure subsidized housing from their organization, which in the long run proved to be one of the most important pieces of the resettlement. In addition to being affordable, it was just barely within the boundaries of a school district that would allow the kids to go to an excellent public school, which itself became a generous partner in the resettlement.

It was difficult for Dorothy to envision a long-term plan during the challenging beginning of the project. The community response was somewhat uncertain, and so was the sustainability. She mentioned an underlying factor that drove the moment: "I don't know if the situation would be different if we weren't living in a Trump world. That continues to be a major motivator, kind of like [how] gun sales skyrocketed under Obama and they're in a slump under Trump."

The feelings of sympathy, frustration, and hopelessness that so many felt at the beginning of the Syrian refugee crisis coupled with anger over the current administration motivated people to do something. One can't solve the refugee crisis of 21 million people but one can help a single family. There's something amazing about it; helping one family becomes its own meaningful, tangible, and fulfilling accomplishment.

The Arrival

The Mousawis flew to Chicago O'Hare airport on December 23, 2016 – a young mother and father and three small children, all Syrian Kurds, none of whom spoke a word of English. We were in Scottsdale, Arizona, spending Christmas with my in-laws and so we sadly missed the welcoming. According to one person who was present, Tahani was crying, saying through a translator that she felt like she was finally "home." Two and a half years later, I asked her what she felt when she first arrived, and she spoke of feeling disoriented, uncertain about what was real and what wasn't. She cried, she said, because she was so surprised and happy by how everyone welcomed them. She said it was both a sad and happy moment.

They had been travelling for days from central Turkey with three young girls under the age of seven.

I try to imagine how strange this last leg of the journey felt as they rode in Dorothy's van down to the prepared apartment in Hyde Park. They approached the city skyline, drawn from thousands of lights shining in glass towers, steam rising in the December cold. The van progressed to Lake Shore Drive. Lake Michigan might have seemed like endless grey lapping water. Communication would have been only smiles, pointing, nodding – the generous spirit one tries to present to someone who doesn't speak one's language.

The cabinets in the kitchen had been stocked; the home was furnished; toys and books were waiting; and the new space was warm and safe, perched on a third floor with radiator heat. There was a cooked Syrian meal awaiting them, prepared by local high school students. Interestingly, this gesture of a familiar meal is a requirement set by the State Department for welcoming refugee families. What could the Mousawis be thinking or feeling when they entered their new home? Exhaustion, fear, relief? On the other side of this equation, members of the HPRP were elated. Their work was no longer theoretical.

Toward Understanding

We still have volunteers who haven't met one another, but the Mousawis have met all the volunteers. I wonder how we seem to them. I can see them as I did that first day that we went over to their apartment, carrying dal and rice, and our few Arabic phrases, but the picture is also rounded out by what I came to know of them.

The mother Tahani wore a hijab but otherwise was dressed like a typical American, in jeans and a blouse. She smiled often but seemed tired, frequently needing to run after one of her daughters or comfort them. Each of the three girls had a distinct personality. Her youngest daughter Mona was nearly two and had dark circles under her eyes. She tried to hide in her mother's legs and did not stray far. I could immediately see that the middle daughter Razan was intense. She would fix her eye on something that she wanted and not give up until she got it. She tore at books, would try to escape her parents' hands and spring toward the road when outside, and would easily take what she wanted from her sisters. She didn't cry or scream, but silently and willfully pursued what she coveted. The oldest daughter Hala was curious and friendly and never misbehaved. I imagine there was a lot expected of her.

The father Ahmed was also friendly, strong, and eager to learn. He leaned on the edge of his seat, as if ready to jump into action. As we learned over time, his natural

disposition is relaxed, and he is quick to smile and laugh. The openness and trust with which the parents greeted us amazed me, but they probably didn't feel like they had much choice.

There are so many things established in our lives that we forget that each needed to be built. Underpinning everything in a new culture is the need for language. Without that communication, it's nearly impossible to start this building. Thankfully, the HPRP found a few translators, but finding them wasn't easy, and their help was absolutely necessary for getting anything accomplished. Having a multicultural and multilingual population nearby at the University of Chicago was key. Consider the fact that every meeting with the family required coordinating and communicating with all of the other volunteers so there was no overlap, confirming with the family itself (through a translator) so they were prepared and available, and ensuring that a translator was available to join. Logistics were challenging, and Google Drive ended up being the best way to help volunteers coordinate. We also set up a weekly mentoring meeting on Saturdays with the family. Consistency made scheduling with translators and the family much simpler.

It was slow establishing anything. RefugeeOne had stressed the importance of learning some English before trying to get a job, so Ahmed started intensive ESL classes. Not only did he speak languages with different alphabets and few cognates, he had never learned to read and write in any language. After third grade, he had to quit school in order to work. Even the whole process of learning is something one needs to learn, so his illiteracy made the struggle that much harder. Over time, Ahmed was quick to understand what others were saying in English, but he spoke fast and loosely as if language was an obstacle in the way of the important stuff: work. We eventually came to understand some of his mispronunciations. Every time he said "Jersey," we'd confirm he meant "Dorothy" and then laugh together. Ahmed wanted to get past the schooling and start earning money, but at least some basic phrases are necessary in every workplace.

My husband Daniel was responsible for finding ESL classes. Typically, RefugeeOne provides these within their office, but they were located an hour and a half north via train, making it a challenging option. Daniel started not knowing a thing about ESL classes in Chicago, but over time and many internet searches and phone calls, he started to learn. This was done by diligently taking notes after a conversation with someone or a discovery online and

piecing together the possibilities, which included considerations of distance, cost, level of instruction, and public transportation. Interestingly, as he learned about the options in the city, he also learned about the greater web of refugee services that support them. Organically and slowly, he was educating himself.

Daniel found out that all community colleges in Chicago offer free ESL classes, as do many cultural neighborhoods. Since Chinatown was close to Hyde Park, he thought that might be a feasible choice, but then he heard about other refugees who had attended Chinatown classes and found it incredibly confusing. It was common for everyone, including the teacher, to revert to Chinese throughout and after the class. The public library turned out to be a good option. Their classes were free and located downtown, a 20-minute bus ride away. They started with teaching students how to sign their name and write their address. Ahmed complained of students falling asleep in class and the slowness of the pace. He and Daniel discussed it, and Ahmed decided it would be best if he also attended the classes at RefugeeOne. In addition, tutors visited the Mousawis at least twice a week to work on English with both parents.

The plan was to have the family (and Ahmed in particular) work on English intensively for six months and then for Ahmed to find a job. With three young girls, Tahani would have to stay home, but she dreamed of one day working herself, when all three were in school. The State Department requires refugees to find employment six months after arrival. RefugeeOne would continue to offer support services: mental health counseling and ESL classes, but the money raised for the family would dry up by that point. The father was champing at the bit to work. Still, the language instruction was crucial. When he did finally start applying for jobs - with a volunteer by his side - he was able to contribute a few words and understand instructions. Without that, it's hard to imagine anyone hiring him. There was a lot of stress during those six months, with Daniel and I and other volunteers pursuing possible leads for employment – ideally something that paid more than minimum wage and could support a family of five. At the same time, Ahmed was learning the language very slowly and we worried about his ability to communicate. We all felt the pressure of finding a job, and the six-month mark was speeding toward us.

To this day, the instruction continues. The children have soaked up the language easily from their exposure at school and

preschool, and they now speak English with little effort. It's harder for the parents. Ahmed has settled well into two jobs - approximately 70 hours a week - and has little time to continue studying English. Tahani is more isolated, but very eager to learn. She told me recently that her highest priority moving forward is learning English. In the summer of 2018, she took an intensive English course at the University of Illinois at Chicago, and on the last day, the class went out for pizza. She shared a photo from the meal with me. She was sitting in a booth - no kids, no husband - with other men and women from around the world. All were smiling and leaning in to each other. It brought tears to my eyes. Tahani's a smart and generous woman who rarely has time for her own care and growth; this class was more than a gift of language learning.

We no longer need translators for our visits, but communication is still a challenge. We resort to Google Translate, which is correct about 20% of the time at best. It's helpful and funny to see the confused looks on Ahmed and Tahani's faces (and on our own) as Google Translate slowly moves us toward understanding. What'sApp translates our texts in a similarly amusing manner. Below is a texting conversation I had with Ahmed on an evening in the summer of 2017.

John will come on Sunday at 4pm to tutor you in English

Hello, how are you

Ok thank you very much

You're welcome. Have a good night!

The purposes of the Devan are cheap.
In the end they take us on Saturday or Sunday.

There is cheap cheap cliché bread

Say cheap in a supermarket

If in a fuzzy solution we took

Saturday and Sunday

We wedge to be cheap

I am not sure I understand...

Days and Weeks

In the same way that Daniel learned and then helped the Mousawis with English classes, we all grew into our roles, which then shaped the structure of the HPRP. Other volunteers became the point people for housing, health care, and employment, while I was the lead mentor.

I set up the original tutoring and mentoring schedule, connected translators to other mentors, and

managed the calendar. I saw where there were communication and organizational needs and looked for solutions. We started using Google Docs and Calendar to share mentoring notes and schedules. When I look back at these early records, I see a stuffed calendar. In the first month, there were three full-day orientations at RefugeeOne, multiple ESL classes for Ahmed, visits to the Social Security office, the WIC office, the school for the older children's registration, in-home tutoring, multiple mentor visits, and the start of a long string of medical appointments.

I found an entry I made in the shared spreadsheet a few months after the family's arrival. It nicely demonstrates the myriad issues that needed to be handled by volunteers.

"*I gathered the single medical bill that was sent to them and will contact Mt. Sinai hospital with Mona's medicaid number to try and get it resolved... I also gathered two WIC program health referral forms from them that need to be filled out and returned to a WIC office. I'm going to contact Dr. Bernard about getting the forms filled out for two of the girls (The translator is checking with the dad to remind me which ones) and then get the forms back to them so they can drop them off at the WIC office themselves. They're going to ask Gary about Internet access tomorrow since they finally have the letter from the school* [which allows them free access through a Chicago DHS program]. *Ahmed spoke with Carol at Refugee One and was able to figure out the issue of getting his public transportation card replenished. It should be resolved on Tuesday when he goes to class. Regarding the language classes on Friday made available through Sirat* [a local Muslim organization that partnered with us], *they are currently planning on having just Tahani and oldest daughter Hala attend while the father watches the other girls. They would all like to attend but are concerned about child care and transportation. There is no easy CTA* [Chicago Transit Authority] *way for them to get there. If anyone is able to drive them, that would be great. I'll talk to Daniel about the ESL program and possible rides. Mona is almost through her iron medicine, but we explained that if they bring the bottle back to CVS, they can just show it to the pharmacist and get a refill. They're interested in getting their Social Security cards laminated (along with a few other documents), so we talked them through what they needed to do at Kinkos. Hopefully, they'll be able to run that errand on their own. They're getting money on their LINK card.*"

Writing up these mini reports was just one piece in the time-consuming process of helping. All the stuff described in the report needed to be done – by me or another volunteer – and I often found myself following up with doctors and calling social service agencies. Rides and phone calls and reaching out to other volunteers consumed my time. Typically, I would spend 10-15 hours a week outside of a weekly visit to the family. Those visits were our favorite times, politely sipping very small amounts of strong Turkish coffee and helping them with whatever issues arose, while our son played tag with the girls in the apartment or read them a picture book.

Health and Insurance

At some point, I was asked by someone what surprised me the most about the whole process of resettling a family. It was the huge amount of medical care needed. It makes sense that if you take five people that received no medical services for years, there will be a lot of deferred maintenance. The impossibility of taking care of health issues while living as a refugee, coupled with the physical and mental stress, make for a huge physical mess. Parasites, infections, rotten teeth, and many other health problems resulted in what were often multiple weekly visits to doctors. On top of that, you throw in the American healthcare system, and we soon saw that we needed a single person dedicated to helping the family with their health.

One amazing volunteer with a flexible schedule started driving the family to appointments, communicating with doctors and scheduling new appointments. He emailed me about what was happening with the family's health and added the appointments to the online calendar. He was often taking various members of the Mousawi family to the doctor 3-4 times per week and researching alternatives for dental care or trying to find an Arabic-speaking doctor. Sometimes he would pick up Ahmed at seven am on his way to drop his own kids off at school and then head to the doctor. Looking back, I think this volunteer may have given more hours than anyone during the intense first months. He didn't have any background in healthcare; he simply took care of the Mousawis' health in the same way that he would have his own, and in time, he learned about the Medicaid system and how to obtain a translator at an appointment (a service often offered by phone from the medical center). He and I were in touch every few days to make sure upcoming appointments were communicated to the family

and issues like bills, extra drivers, and child care could be handled.

There was a doctor's visit that Tahani needed to attend without children, so I offered to take her and watch the kids at a park across the street with the help of my then eight-year-old son. We walked to the clinic together. Tahani kept a strong hand hold on Razan. Once we got there and I helped her sign in, the kids and I left for the park. I hadn't realized that there was no fence at this park, no boundary to keep the girls safe. I turned to my son and said, "You keep Razan safe, and I'll keep Mona safe." We didn't have to worry about the eldest, Hala. We spent almost two hours herding those girls like sheep as they tried to escape, laughing and fast as lightning. It was exhausting, and my respect for Tahani lifted even higher as I imagined her handling three children by herself at all times – especially when she doesn't speak English or understand the culture and so many of the norms surrounding her. As a parent of an only child, I also gained some insight into how the oldest can be burdened with responsibilities beyond their age. My son was working that entire time.

I was surprised at the amount of medical care the family needed, but the family was shocked at the number of appointments required. The American healthcare system astounded them. In Syria, if they had a health problem, they would make an appointment with the doctor for the next few days. While the doctor was examining one's thyroid, he might also check the heart and that foot problem that had been bothersome for months. Everything was done at once. Only the most extreme issues were referred to a specialist, and those appointments followed quickly. Ahmed and Tahani couldn't believe how long they had to wait for appointments and how many different types of doctors they had to visit. Coordinating medical care seemed like a communication nightmare. They missed the simplicity and speed of their old system.

They started their healthcare in the States with an immediate check-up for each member of the family. RefugeeOne arranges these initial visits with a partnering health clinic. That's where emergency issues can be addressed and a general physical completed, something that's required to get the green card process started. Much more care was needed, so it was critical to get the family on Medicaid as soon as possible. Medicaid, however, wasn't possible until the family had their social security cards and numbers secured. Within the second and third weeks after their arrival, we had two visits to the Social Security office to get that squared away.

I have been lucky to never have to worry about the intricacies of Medicaid. It's a complicated system, the website is confusing, and you really have little say in your doctors or coverage. I ran into its limitations while trying to help the eldest Mousawi girl, Hala, obtain glasses. We had a prescription in hand, and I called around to Pearl Vision branches to see who would accept Medicaid. I found one on the northside and drove Ahmed and Hala there to pick out a pair. When we walked in, Hala was excited to see the hundreds of pairs of contemporary and shiny frames. When I explained to the woman working there that we'd be paying with Medicaid, she went to the back office and brought back a box half the size of a shoe box. In it were six pairs of dated frames mingled together. Those were the choices. Thank goodness one of them was pink! Hala left excited about the new glasses on order. It was especially poignant because she loves to learn and her eagerness at school was hampered by her vision problems. She had more than enough challenges learning English and adjusting to a new culture; the glasses were critical. It was supposed to take six weeks for the pair to be ready, but after eight weeks, we were giving up hope. In the end, one of the volunteers simply went to a local Pearl Vision and paid for a pair herself.

Sometimes it was easier for our group to make these leaps by spending money rather than dealing with slow government agencies, but we were always walking a tightrope between giving too much and allowing the family to learn how to manage themselves. RefugeeOne had been adamant about not giving money or large gifts to the family. They wanted the refugee families to have a realistic perspective on what it takes to survive in America and to always be thinking strategically about money. Giving money can also set up an unhealthy relationship between volunteers and refugees. The families may come to see the volunteers as financial benefactors rather than partners in their resettlement. These glasses, however, struck us as a case for immediate action. I also want to say that despite the restrictions of Medicaid, it did provide a lot of care for the family, and, as was so often the case with HPRP, one of our volunteers fortuitously had the perfect qualifications to help. She worked for the Medicaid office, and we turned to her whenever problems arose.

As we worked through these problems, I often thought how expensive it is not to have money. When we tried to get car insurance for Ahmed, we learned that it would be six times as much as it was to get it for ourselves! This

had to do with no driving history in the States coupled with a lower level of education. But, through his contacts and communication within the refugee world, Ahmed learned about cheaper options. We just needed to help by making the phone calls. We then had the name of an insurance company that could be shared with future refugees. Nearly everything was a learning moment, and the natural growth that came from these discoveries laid the foundation for the organization. It had a snowball effect.

Volunteers

HPRP has been blessed with a lot of volunteers who happened to have applicable skills: a doctor specializing in neurological medicine who spoke Arabic, an optometrist who offered pro bono check-ups for the children, and the Medicaid employee. There were also many other volunteers who had no specifically relevant skills, but they were able to build up a level of competency by simply spending time with the family and working with them to solve problems.

One woman was a member of the religious organization that provided subsidized housing, so questions about broken doorbells and mice were funneled through her. She naturally became the housing expert and proactively communicated with the family and the landlords to resolve many problems. She was even able to get Ahmed some work with the building owners in between his English courses, physical work that required little language skill. He had learned phrases such as "how are you," "good," and "thank you" and repeated them often in an enthusiastic manner.

During these crucial first months, one of the volunteers took a leading role in managing other volunteers. Uber-organizer Penny Visser brought a lot of tools and communication to Dorothy's vision that allowed the HPRP to take shape. She and Dorothy saw a need for an administrative infrastructure, and so Penny set up a Gmail account for the organization and then set up a database. Whenever anyone expressed interest in helping or giving money to the organization, she added their name and contact information. This proved a long-term tool for finding help and support. The organization still uses it; it grew from five to 20 to the current 533 names.

It was very important for volunteers to be able to communicate with each other. A weekly meeting was started, but in addition, we documented our visits with the family in a Google Drive spreadsheet. This documenting lasted about a year and four months at which point, we switched over

to communicating on the Slack platform. Just to give you a sense of the involvement by volunteers, there were 157 meetings with the family documented during that 16-month period - approximately 10 per month, and that's just for one family! There were many additional undocumented visits as well. Recently, I asked the mother if she thought there were too many visits at the beginning. She said that she thought they were necessary. The family became accustomed to and really benefited from them. Although the mother said everything was helpful, she thought it was particularly useful to have volunteers review and fill out documents. This was something I did frequently. Every time we would go to their apartment, they would hand us a pile of paper - usually mail or notes from doctors or school. I know as a native English speaker how hard it can be to sort through all the communication from our various services; I can only imagine how impossible this would seem in a totally different language and society. Fortunately, the family trusted us. The mother said they felt comfortable following our lead, "knowing that you knew the right things to do."

What our dedicated volunteers gave of most was their time. It was important to have such a large pool of people to pull from so that responsibilities could be distributed. Most helped a little, and that was wonderful, but a few gave a lot - and I can say as one of them, that we became intertwined with a wonderful community of dedicated Hyde Parkers that we may never otherwise have met. A year in, we looked around and realized we had made all these new friends - the family themselves, but also the other volunteers with whom we were texting regularly and working on a common and hopeful path.

Recognition for the work volunteers do is an important benefit beyond the intrinsic satisfaction one feels, especially for those giving the most. That's why an honor bestowed on the HPRP by RefugeeOne at their annual gala this spring was so meaningful. Dorothy accepted the resettlement agency's highest accolade: the Lighting the Path Forward Award for the HPRP's and her "outstanding work of welcome."

The Second Family

Soon after the first family was settling in, HPRP expressed interest in sponsoring another family. Trump then declared his initial Muslim ban. Members of the HPRP joined hundreds of other demonstrators at O'Hare airport. Fortunately, lawsuits were quickly filed and the ban was found illegal. There was a brief

moment between the striking down of that ban in February 2017 and a new one issued by Trump in March, and during that time, members of the HPRP were at the weekly meeting, taking a step back to analyze where we were. One member advocated for creating an organizational chart that could be replicated if a new family arrived. In the middle of this bureaucratic conversation, Dorothy received a phone call and stepped away. It was RefugeeOne asking if we'd like to sponsor another Syrian family. They would be at our doorstep in a week! We said yes!

Fortunately, there was another apartment just under the one occupied by the Mousawis that had been set aside for a second family. There was a mad dash of reaching out to the volunteers and previous donors, trying to gather household goods and furniture. We soon learned that the second family had initially been brought over by a different resettlement agency and placed in Rochester, NY, with basically zero support. They were set up in a damp apartment with cockroaches in an unsavory part of town, far from shopping and services, without a car, and effectively left to their own devices. The father had tried to contact the refugee agency there to ask about registering for school but without any luck.

Amazingly, RefugeeOne found this family through a referral from the Mousawis. It was an example of how our families acted with agency, outside of any guidance or aid from volunteers. Refugees communicate with each other through multiple channels, sharing advice and stories, and Ahmed let this other Syrian family, whom they had briefly met in Turkey, know about their own situation and an opening for a second family. The next thing we knew, we had the phone call asking if we could sponsor them.

The family had six children and were about to occupy a two-bedroom apartment in Hyde Park, but it was safe and clean and there was a crowd of volunteers ready to help. A number of bunk beds were secured, and we worked hard to set up the apartment. It was meaningful to witness how the Mousawis stepped in and helped with the preparation. They appeared eager and excited to be on the other side, helping - and to welcome their new neighbors.

We could see the empowerment of the Mousawis in a lot of moments that day. Dorothy relayed a story to me that took place while we were preparing. Ahmed came in and got a piece of paper and wrote his name. She said, of watching him, "It was an amazing moment of 'Oh my goodness, I can write my name!'"

Building the Next Version of HPRP

Shortly after the second family arrived, in March 2017, the Hyde Park Refugee Project decided to host a mentor and tutor training, with the hope of recruiting another pool of volunteers to help the second family. Attendance was large and various people spoke, including my husband and myself. Though we'd have never guessed it six months before, we had become the seasoned veterans to whom others looked for guidance and inspiration, and assurances that they, too, could step into the unknown and help. Another speaker - a Chicago lawyer who worked to protect immigrants and refugees - spoke about refugee rights, how to interact with the police (e.g. don't run away from them if stopped), and some scams to be aware of that specifically targeted immigrants. These societal issues were things I hadn't considered while working so intensely with the daily obstacles faced by the Mousawis.

We passed index cards around the room, asking people to write their names, their contact info, their desired role, what specialized skills or things they had to offer, and their availability. Someone with a flexible schedule and a van could be incredibly helpful at shuttling a family to doctor appointments. Someone with ESL training would be invaluable as a tutor. Those interested in mentoring had to have time to meet with the family regularly and tackle a variety of issues as they arose - everything from taking them to a doctor's visit to following up a question from school to figuring out the washing machine in the basement. Forty people filled out cards, and from that pile, another volunteer and I worked on organizing names by interest, ability, and schedule. That started an intensive tutoring program for the second family. Actually, it was a little too intense. We had 12 tutors coming a week to work with the family of eight, plus the ESL classes that were taking place outside the home. There was certainly a lot of language immersion, but the family felt overwhelmed and asked for fewer visits. Hearing them honestly express their needs early in their resettlement was heartening.

Those index cards resulted in a few core volunteers that still work closely with the second family. It was exciting to see how many people wanted to help, but, realistically, only a few stick around for the long run, so it's necessary to cast a wide net at the beginning. This community of long-term volunteers, although modest in size, has been at the heart of the project. A year after the first and second families were settled, Dorothy brought up the idea of

hiring staff and moving away from volunteers, but the other members of the HPRP convinced her otherwise. It didn't seem necessary since new volunteers had come on board, and there was a core team of committed people. Still, finding those few deeply committed individuals in the wide group of interested people is a job in itself. Between a job placement person, someone to manage health issues, and at least one mentor, three completely dedicated people are required for each new family - plus a plethora of tutors and occasional volunteers for everything from donations to childcare to helping with school issues.

I can see why Dorothy might consider having paid staff. She shared a story with me about the personal sacrifices one sometimes makes when they're giving so much of themselves. Early on, when one of the first family's kids was sick, she took them to the hospital. A friend took her kids. Before leaving, they put away their Christmas decorations in little containers but forgot to store them. They had a new puppy, and while away, the dog ripped everything apart. "I come home exhausted and our floor is covered with all of these broken decorations. I couldn't figure out what to do. I think the worst part was my children bursting into tears about the decorations. A number of times I think my kids have felt neglected, so that personal sacrifice is hard."

I felt the personal sacrifices as well. When the Mousawis first arrived, helping was like a part-time job. We would see the family at least once a week, and I spent many hours per week behind the scenes, contacting translators, trying to solve and figure out problems the family was facing, and entering reports and scheduling details. Because my husband and son and I were doing this together, it filled our days and conversations and focus. Mostly, we felt giddy from the excitement of finally contributing in a meaningful way, our collaboration, and the relationships we were building with the Mousawis, but sometimes it felt overwhelming. I needed more sleep, and Daniel needed to finish his book, and our son needed some chill time. Nevertheless, whenever we visited, we had a great time; spending time with the family was fun and rewarding. We were becoming friends. Recently my son said to me, "The best thing I've ever done in my life is help the Mousawis."

The intensity of our involvement at the beginning has subsided. That was when the needs were the greatest. Now that the Mousawis are more settled, we've felt like we can take a step back, although we still continue to see the family and help out when needed. The

organization has a life of its own now, and it sometimes feels odd not being in the thick of things. HPRP feels like a child that has grown.

Politics

A November 2014 report from Amnesty International talks about the treacherous crossing from Syria to Turkey. This would have been around the time that Tahani and her children made this trek. Ahmed had already crossed the border. He avoided the refugee camps, went to a city in central Turkey, and managed to find a job. He then waited for the rest of the family to arrive. Between December 2013 and August 2014, 17 people were shot at the border by security guards at undesignated crossing spots. Many were turned back or abused in other ways. Turkey had an open border policy with Syria during this period — if refugees crossed through the official checkpoints — but there were only two of these in a 900 kilometer stretch of the border. The family's reuniting finally came after repeated and harrowing attempts at dodging ISIS and crossing this border outside of the checkpoints. This was a story we never asked about, but it came out in bits and pieces over the years. We knew not to ask too many questions about their journey; we were there to listen when and if they brought it up.

Politics are an important backdrop to this story and affect our families and other displaced people significantly. Before departing office, Obama responded to the world crisis by setting the US cap for 2017 at 110,000 refugees – higher than the typical 70,000-80,000 that had been accepted in previous years. The reality was that, with Trump in power, fewer than 60,000 refugees were let in during that fiscal year. In 2018, only 22,000 were accepted - despite the cap being set at 45,000. The numbers continued to drop, and Trump set an historically low bar for 2019 at 30,000 - the lowest number ever in the history of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, and even that number probably won't be reached. Compare these numbers to the more than 1.4 million refugees that Germany – a smaller country by far – has welcomed.

Although it had taken 2-3 years of vetting before a refugee could come to the US, Trump added additional procedures that stopped people, even those far along the pipeline. Despite fears that refugees are taking up resources, studies paint a different picture. Faculty from the University of Notre Dame conducted a study that showed that on average, refugees repay all the money that the "system" provides them within eight years. Past that point, they contribute more to the economy.

There is little given to refugees for free. I was surprised to learn that refugees are required to repay the cost of the plane tickets that brought them to the United States. That's a significant burden – especially for families with just a few changes of clothes that are expected to be financially independent in six months.

Some have made the argument that refugees should resettle in countries more similar to their own, but those countries often don't have the infrastructure to support them. The U.S. was not stepping up despite being well equipped to welcome and support refugees. We saw the desire in our own small community, and many people across the country felt similarly.

After the third Muslim Ban was upheld by the Supreme Court in summer 2018, there would be no more Syrian refugees in the foreseeable future. The HPRP saw needs elsewhere. Were there refugees from other countries not on the banned list that they could sponsor? And were there other refugees in Chicago who weren't getting the support they needed? There was a Congolese family in Chicago that fit that description. Unlike the Syrian families we had helped, this family had lived in a refugee camp for 15 years before coming to the States a few years ago. That's a long time to live in a temporary place with no stable jobs or schooling. Perhaps because of such a long stretch in a camp, the family was having difficulty finding and keeping jobs in the US. Luckily, their English was fairly good, but they needed some support, so the HPRP decided to assist them, especially with finding employment.

As this commitment was being made, Dorothy described the challenge of finding the right people. "We actually have volunteers waiting to do stuff and we've invested a lot in a structure to make sure there are background checks and proper info on people. But what we really need are 1-3 people who can do [job] placements, and the placements really require hand-holding." Indeed, the person who puts themselves in between the families and potential and eventual employers has a huge task. A lot of communication is required. One volunteer had taken on this role for two of the Syrian families and it was a many-hours-a-week commitment. She couldn't add another family to her load, and someone else had to step up.

Because of the abundance of different kinds of volunteers in the pool, HPRP has started a conversation about sponsoring more refugees. They're considering another family from the Congo.

Or perhaps a family of Rohingya Muslims who come from Myanmar, a country not on the banned list. One of the main collaborators with HPRP has been a Hyde Park Muslim-support group called Sirat, and they would most likely help the Rohingya as well. It's a sad fact that there will never be a scarcity of people who need help.

HPRP is in a much different place than it was two and a half years ago. They are no longer uncertain whether they can raise the money to support another family. The community has been incredibly generous. They now have English language classes in Hyde Park and an abundance of volunteers for tutoring. They have a social worker as one of their volunteers who is well trained in many of the issues the refugees face. Hyde Park has become a thriving refugee resettlement community.

Networking

The backbone of HPRP's success has been networking through technology and people. Just as in any productive venture in the modern world, the internet has been key. Without it, organizing would have been much more difficult. As I mentioned, we used Google Drive for shared spreadsheets, documents, calendar, and email. The ubiquitous Facebook was useful for promotion, and Sign-up Genius became the perfect tool for donations. More recently, Slack has become the communicating platform of choice. It's a whole new world for community organizing, and we were able to see first-hand how much more quickly things could be accomplished with these tools.

Technology has changed the refugee experience as well. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, there are currently 25.9 million refugees in the world, and only 92,400 of them are resettled. With those odds, you know the people who make it here are smart, persistent, and incredibly lucky. They know how to survive in the world – better than most – and they're able to apply their survival intelligence to living in this new strange place, partly by taking advantage of tools. Our first family arrived with almost nothing, but they did have phones. Phones provided news, communication to family back home, maps, and translation. Daniel recalls trying to help Ahmed find his way to an ESL class downtown. He went with him the first time and as they walked, Ahmed followed the map on his phone, capturing the path for the next time when he would be on his own. Although illiterate, he took photos of street signs whose cryptic symbols he could later use to help him navigate.

Just as networks move through

our computers and phones, they also permeate our communities. Dorothy and Penny worked with local groups and individuals to build what became the HPRP. Clearly, the Hyde Park and Kenwood Interfaith Council was instrumental in getting the ball rolling, and the organizations affiliated with each member of that council ended up bringing a variety of skills or spaces that proved useful. One Council member's organization has a gym, which is being used as a space for a summer camp. During summer 2018, the camp ran for 20 kids for two weeks. In summer 2019 the camp served 30 kids for a month. There was enough money raised (through donations and a grant) to hire a coordinator and even take the kids on field trips with a hired bus. Remarkably, it was primarily organized and run by high school student volunteers within HPRP.

Another organization within the Council has long hours, so they are the collection site for donations. And Dorothy's church has been the place for our weekly meetings. As each member organization contributes something, they have more buy-in. Sirat, a support group in Hyde Park for Muslims, was a partner early on, providing English classes and financial support for the family; Jewish organizations have also given money and free childcare for the children. The generosity of organizations across the neighborhood has been astounding and demonstrates the best of what it means to live in a multicultural society.

Likewise, HPRP has helped other groups meet their goals. One of the volunteers involved with HPRP is also an active member of a yoga studio. They conducted an annual fundraiser this year, and decided to make HPRP the recipient organization. That helps build community at the studio and also helps HPRP. And if anyone from Hyde Park happens to attend the yoga fundraiser, they would learn more about HPRP. It's positive all around.

Auxiliary groups have also played a role. The Hyde Park Good Neighbors has an email list that's been set up for neighbors to exchange information. It includes over a thousand people, so on occasion, HPRP has forwarded emails to them, asking for donations of goods and more volunteers. And then there's the parent support network in Hyde Park. A new baby was recently born to one of the refugee families, and if the HPRP doesn't gather everything the family needs through their first circle of supporters, they will widen their request to these groups with a simple email and a link to a Sign-up Genius form. It's amazing how many opportunities appear by simply looking around the community with a mindset

of collaboration. The HPRP has not just helped refugees; it's helped strengthen the Hyde Park community.

Resettled yet again

Recently, the Mousawis needed to move apartments. I spoke with Tahani about what they wanted in a new place. At the back of my mind, I held my own wishes – a sunny place with spacious and quiet rooms. Those sorts of aesthetic concerns didn't come up; her number one concern was safety, and a distant second was staying in the same school district. Her response surprised me, and I realized I had for a moment forgotten their past and their fears. They felt safe in their third-floor apartment with many doors between them and the outside world. It made perfect sense that this was foremost in her mind.

I was also briefly surprised at how sad the two eldest girls were to leave their place. Their new apartment was bigger and closer to school, but that didn't matter. They were leaving their home, and that is how they think of Hyde Park and that first apartment. It made me wonder if the eldest girl had been sad to leave Turkey, and how the girls struggled, young as they were, to leave Syria. I also wondered if the sadness was as much about that apartment as it was about a deep need for stability.

When the moving day came, there was yet another moment of surprise. This family had arrived two and a half years ago with just a few suitcases. We and a number of other volunteers moved two, filled, 15-foot trucks worth of stuff from one place to the other. I know we humans naturally expand to the space we have, but it was a striking and measurable contrast, a sign of how they'd settled.

At one point, I had asked Tahani if they wished they'd been settled in the northern part of the city where there were more Syrians, or at least more people speaking Arabic. She said no. They were Kurds and had already felt like outsiders in Syria, so they were accustomed to being different from those around them. She seemed to shrug off the need for a homogeneous community, an attitude that fit well with Hyde Park. What was important was that her family was safe and they had found a group of friends to work with towards a peaceful life.

Sources

Amnesty International. *Struggling to Survive: Refugees from Syria in Turkey*, 2014
.https://www.amnestyusa.org/reports/struggling-to-survive-refugees-from-syria-in-turkey/

Amnesty International Reports
https://www.amnestyusa.org/reports/

Brown, Don. *The Unwanted: Stories of the Syrian Refugees*. Houghton, Mifflin, Harcourt, 2018.

Evans, William N. and Daniel Fitzgerald. "The Economic and Social Outcomes of Refugees in the United States: Evidence from the ACS." NBER Working Paper No. 23498, Issued in June 2017.
https://www.nber.org/papers/w23498

Liptak, Adam and Michael D. Shear. "Trump's Travel Ban is Upheld by Supreme Court" in *New York Times*, June 26, 2018.

Refugee Council USA
http://www.rcusa.org/

UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance.html

About the Author

Susan Augustine has volunteered with the Hyde Park Refugee Project since December 2016. In addition, she has been a librarian for the past 20 years and is currently the High School Librarian for the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools.

About Hyde Park Refugee Project

The **Hyde Park Refugee Project** was founded in 2016 and has always been volunteer run. More than 25 organizations have partnered with the Project. In addition to resettling two families from Syria, they have supported two additional Syrian families and a Congolese family, all in Hyde Park. They provide mentoring, tutoring, food assistance, home supplies, and continue to build strong friendships with these refugee families. They've also run a summer camp for refugee and immigrant children living in Hyde Park and provided English as a Second Language classes for moms and non-school aged children. More information about the organization can be found here: **https://hydeparkrefugeeproject.org/**

Afterword

We are proud, pleased, and grateful to present this series of five chapbooks as part of the ongoing Migration Stories Project at the University of Chicago. We decided to introduce a chapbook series because it feels important for writers in our community to have a place for longer reflections about histories and experiences of migration. In these pages, Tanya Desai writes on animals shipped across oceans and among royalty in the early modern period; Tina Post traces movements of paper and people through the *Chicago Defender* and the Great Migration; Felipe Bomeny pieces together one man's experience of leaving Xelajú during the Guatemalan Civil War; Liana Fu uses poetry, prose, found texts, photography and two languages to think about coming of age in the Hong Kong diaspora; and Susan Augustine chronicles the work of the Hyde Park Refugee Project to support two Syrian refugee families arriving on the south side of Chicago. Each piece illuminates another moving line in the vast map of the history of migration, and helps us to see more clearly how these lines shine through the life of our shared neighborhoods.

The Migration Stories Project began in November of 2016 as a project of the Creative Writing Department in the hopes of making more spaces to tell and listen to migration stories, and to help elucidate the collective history of migration in the community at and around the University of Chicago. Over the last three years, the Migration Stories Project has created or co-hosted nine public readings, and has collaborated with the Smart Museum, Student Support Services, and the Regenstein Library. In 2017, we published an anthology of migration stories, written by people from all around our community, now accessible at **https://knowledge.uchicago.edu/record/1236**. We are glad to be a part of the new Migration Studies Cluster hosted jointly by the English Department and Creative Writing, which creates research opportunities for our students and fosters new collaborative relationships among our faculty. More information on Migration Stories Projects can be found at **https://creativewriting.uchicago.edu/**.

We hope these chapbooks inspire new readers as they have inspired us, to keep reading, writing, and imagining stories of migration.

Rachel Cohen & Rachel DeWoskin

Creative Writing
University of Chicago

Acknowledgements

The Migration Stories Chapbook Series is extremely grateful for the generosity and commitment of our authors: Susan Augustine, Felipe Bomeny, Tanya Desai, Liana Fu, and Tina Post. And we are deeply appreciative of the beautiful design work of Vidura Jang Bahadur.

The Migration Stories Project has been sustained by the financial support and active involvement of the following institutions:

The Creative Writing Program at the University of Chicago

The College Curricular Innovation Fund through the Humanities Collegiate Division

The Migration Studies Undergraduate Research Cluster in English and Creative Writing

U Chicago Arts UCHICAGOArts

For kind permission to include images, we thank:

Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York; The British Museum, London; The Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts; the Library of Congress, Washington D.C.; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.; the David and Alfred Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago; and the University of Houston Libraries, Texas.

We are glad to have the chance to acknowledge our inspiring collaborators:

The Hyde Park Refugee Project

Office of Service Learning at the Laboratory Schools

The Pozen Center for Human Rights, University of Chicago

The Pritzker Traubert Family Library of the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools

The David and Alfred Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago

Student Support Services at the Center for Identity + Inclusion at the University of Chicago

The University of Chicago Library

Visual Resources Center (VRC), University of Chicago Department of Art History

The Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights

We are grateful for generosity of time, labor, and vision from the following individuals:

In Creative Writing, Jessi Haley, and Starsha Gill; at the Humanities Collegiate Division, Hannah Stark and Chris Wild; at Student Support Services, Ireri Rivas; at The David and Alfred Smart Museum, Berit Ness; at the University of Chicago Library, Sarah G. Wenzel; at the Visual Resources Center, Bridget Madden.

Chapbook Authors' Acknowledgements:

Susan Augustine would like to thank early readers Thea Goodman and Rachel Cohen and the many volunteers within the Hyde Park Refugee Project, especially Dorothy Pytel and Daniel and Isaac Sutherland.

Felipe Bomeny would like to thank Rachel DeWoskin and Rachel Cohen for their guidance and input. Most of all, he would like to thank José for his charm, storytelling, kindness, and perseverance.

Tanya Desai would like to thank Max Bean and Rachel Cohen, as well as all fellow students from the Spring 2017 non-fiction writing workshop at the University of Chicago.

Liana Fu would like to acknowledge the Chinese Evangelical Free Church of Greater Chicago (CEFC), her family and friends, and poet Emily Jungmin Yoon.

Tina Post would like to thank Rachel Cohen and Rachel DeWoskin for their friendship and the feedback that made this piece immeasurably better; the ladies of SWAG/SLAY for keeping her at it; and Mark, Arlo, and Phineas for being her heart's true home.

Migration Stories Chapbook Series

Susan Augstine, *Jumping In*

Felipe Bomeny, *Leaving Xelajú*

Tanya Desai, *Dürer and the Rhinoceros*

Liana Fu, *Origins*

Tina Post, *Paper Trails*