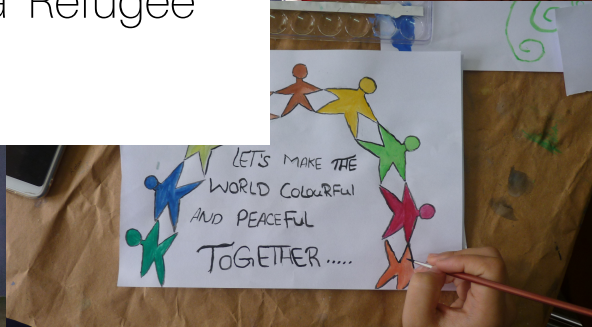
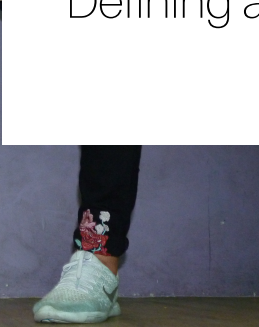




Defining a "Refugee"



I would like to thank everyone involved in this project for their willingness to open up to me and to contribute to this project. Your voices deserve to be heard.


Thank you to CAPI and QES for providing me with the opportunity to be involved with the Malaysian Social Research Institute (MSRI). It has been a pleasure to build friendships with and learn alongside the students, staff and clients.

My inspiration for this project comes from various interactions that occurred during my internship placement. I encountered various instances in which people demonstrated frustration with the "refugee" label. Often labels take away agency and voice from individuals. Individuals should not be reduced to a label. All of the individuals who contributed to this project disclosed how they are so much more than "refugees." Everyone involved revealed to me their hopes, dreams, feelings and aspirations. It is important to recognize that, just as all people in the world are unique, everyone involved in this project is unique. Individual experiences and perspectives are too often overshadowed by the "refugee" label. This project is meant to show how "refugees" themselves understand what it means to be a "refugee."

To be a refugee means I am seeking help. My family is seeking help from a different country. But it doesn't necessarily mean I am different from the other people. We are still here, even though we have problems. Everyone has problems, but ours is a bit different, but we are still the same. Some people act hateful towards us, or just don't take us seriously. We have the right to live a peaceful life. I like to draw and write. Drawing has been my passion for a long time and writing has been fun ever since I started learning English. Being with my family makes me happy. I don't think I would be complete without them. I have a lot of things I want to do. I want to publish my own book one day.

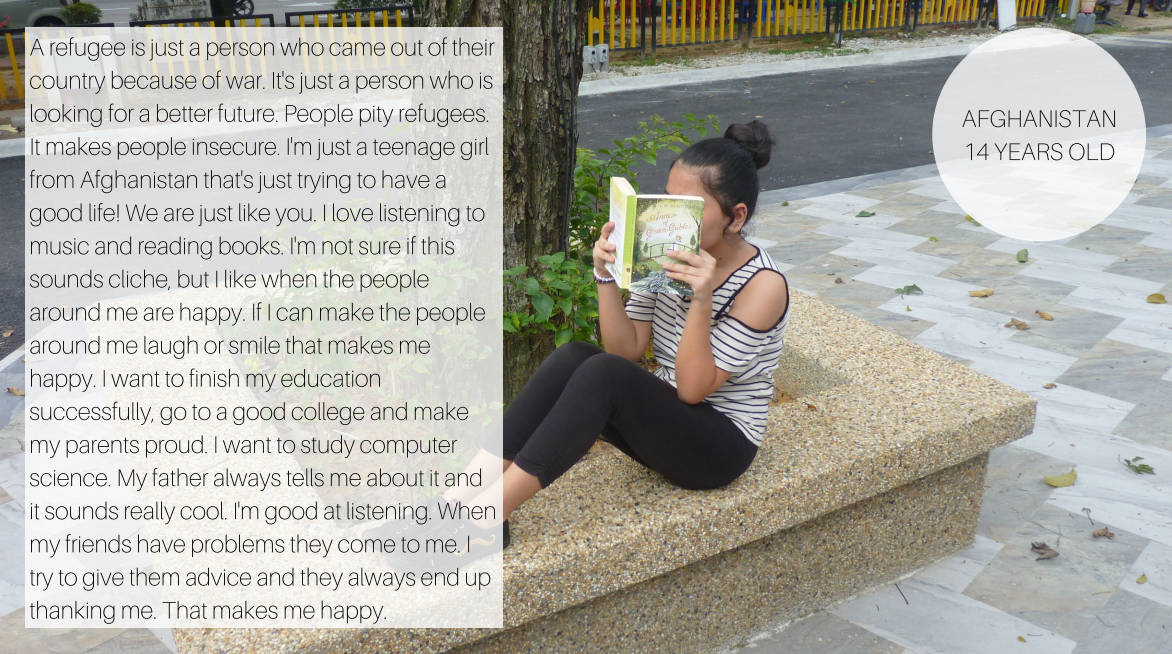
IRAN
16 YEARS OLD



A young woman wearing a brown hijab and a black watch is holding hands with another person whose arm is in a grey sleeve. They are sitting in front of a red and yellow striped wall. The woman is looking down at their hands.

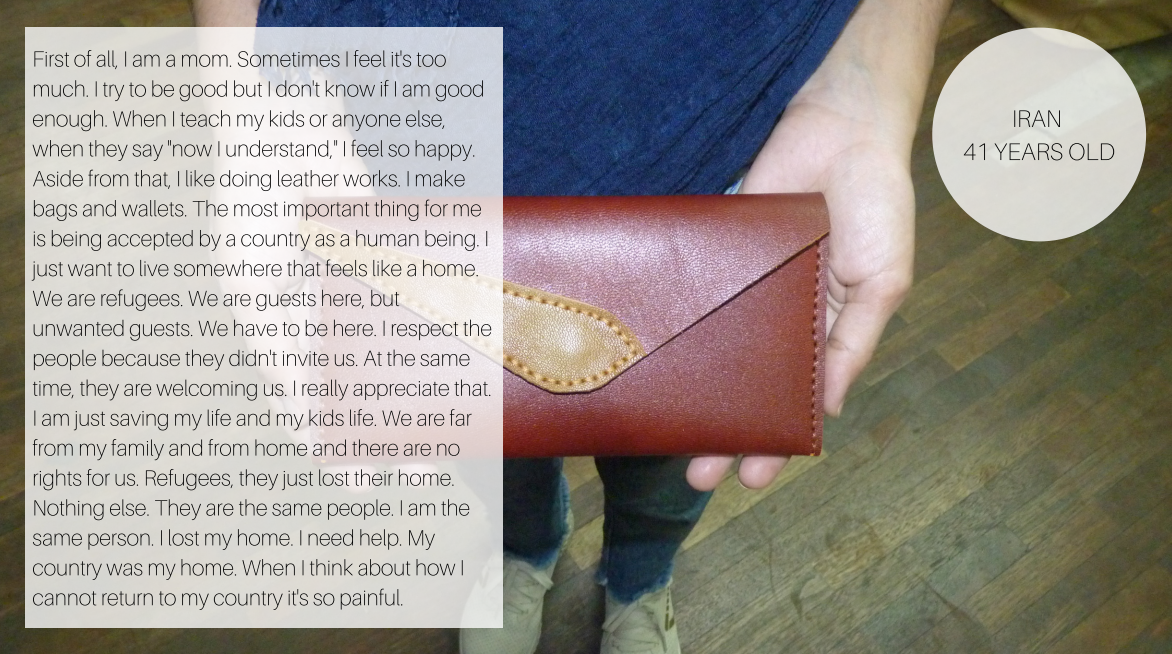
Refugees are people like us. They also have feelings. I am a refugee. If I am a refugee that doesn't mean I can't have social media, I can't be like the others, I can't play, I can't have fun. No! A refugee has feelings just like the others. My mom taught me how to cook, and I have been singing since I was 8 years old with my daddy. Small things make me happy. Like when I see my family around me, when I go to school and have fun with my classmates and playing. I always like to play in the rain. I dream to become a teacher. I want to help as much as I can. I am good at taking care of things. I care a lot, actually. I care about people. A lot of my friends, when they have bad moods, they just come to me and talk to me.

SOMALIA
15 YEARS OLD

A teenage girl with dark hair tied in a bun is sitting on a concrete bench outdoors. She is wearing a black and white striped shirt and black leggings. She is holding an open book with a green cover that has a picture of a house on it. The background shows a paved area with a checkered pattern, some trees, and a yellow fence. A semi-transparent white box on the left contains text, and a white circle on the right contains more text.

A refugee is just a person who came out of their country because of war. It's just a person who is looking for a better future. People pity refugees. It makes people insecure. I'm just a teenage girl from Afghanistan that's just trying to have a good life! We are just like you. I love listening to music and reading books. I'm not sure if this sounds cliché, but I like when the people around me are happy. If I can make the people around me laugh or smile that makes me happy. I want to finish my education successfully, go to a good college and make my parents proud. I want to study computer science. My father always tells me about it and it sounds really cool. I'm good at listening. When my friends have problems they come to me. I try to give them advice and they always end up thanking me. That makes me happy.

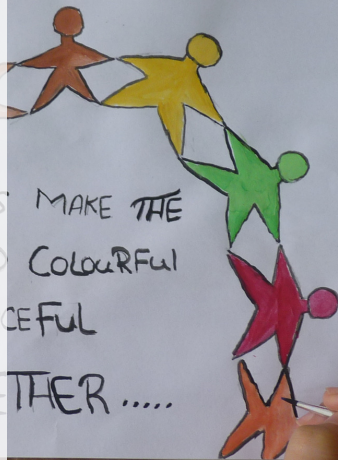
AFGHANISTAN
14 YEARS OLD

A person wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt and jeans is holding a red leather wallet with a tan leather patch and stitching. The background is a wooden floor.

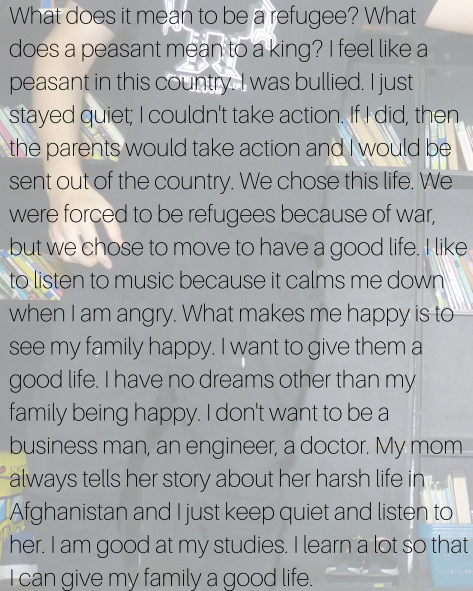
First of all, I am a mom. Sometimes I feel it's too much. I try to be good but I don't know if I am good enough. When I teach my kids or anyone else, when they say "now I understand," I feel so happy. Aside from that, I like doing leather works. I make bags and wallets. The most important thing for me is being accepted by a country as a human being. I just want to live somewhere that feels like a home. We are refugees. We are guests here, but unwanted guests. We have to be here. I respect the people because they didn't invite us. At the same time, they are welcoming us. I really appreciate that. I am just saving my life and my kids life. We are far from my family and from home and there are no rights for us. Refugees, they just lost their home. Nothing else. They are the same people. I am the same person. I lost my home. I need help. My country was my home. When I think about how I cannot return to my country it's so painful.

IRAN
41 YEARS OLD

The word refugee is not so bad, but when I hear it it makes me sad. When I hear "refugee" I think about the things we cannot do. For example I cannot study in a higher school. If I tried they would ask for my passport and then they would tell me that I cannot study. What makes me happy is everything. I like to do new things. For example, when I get to experience new things with people like you, but when they leave, I become sad. My favourite thing to do is paint. Me and my older sisters sit around and talk. My older sisters have a lot of hopes and dreams. We all hope to be together in the future, all six of us, and we want to open an art gallery together.



AFGHANISTAN
13 YEARS OLD



What does it mean to be a refugee? What does a peasant mean to a king? I feel like a peasant in this country. I was bullied. I just stayed quiet; I couldn't take action. If I did, then the parents would take action and I would be sent out of the country. We chose this life. We were forced to be refugees because of war, but we chose to move to have a good life. I like to listen to music because it calms me down when I am angry. What makes me happy is to see my family happy. I want to give them a good life. I have no dreams other than my family being happy. I don't want to be a business man, an engineer, a doctor. My mom always tells her story about her harsh life in Afghanistan and I just keep quiet and listen to her. I am good at my studies. I learn a lot so that I can give my family a good life.

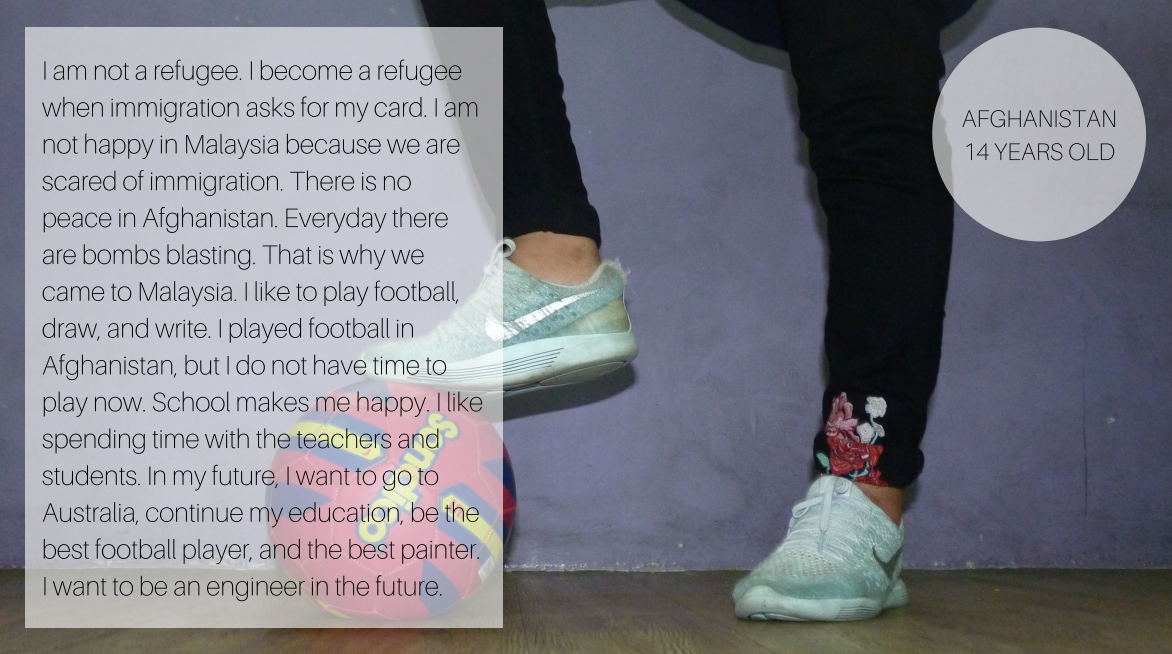


MISTAKEN
PROBLEM WITH
IRAN
16 YEARS OLD
UNDISPUTED

A refugee is a person who came to another country to study and better their life. Sitting with my friends, singing and dancing makes me happy. I do arabic dancing. I want to be a doctor in the future, a dentist. I love singing and reading. I have been singing for two years. I am also good at cooking. I like to cook cookies, cakes and pasta. I would like to tell other refugees to keep trying and don't give up.

SOMALIA
14 YEARS OLD



A photograph showing the lower half of a person standing against a grey wall. They are wearing black pants and bright green sneakers with white soles. A colorful soccer ball is partially visible at their feet. A semi-transparent grey box on the left contains text, and a white circle on the right contains identifying information.

I am not a refugee. I become a refugee when immigration asks for my card. I am not happy in Malaysia because we are scared of immigration. There is no peace in Afghanistan. Everyday there are bombs blasting. That is why we came to Malaysia. I like to play football, draw, and write. I played football in Afghanistan, but I do not have time to play now. School makes me happy. I like spending time with the teachers and students. In my future, I want to go to Australia, continue my education, be the best football player, and the best painter. I want to be an engineer in the future.

AFGHANISTAN
14 YEARS OLD

A refugee is when there are some problems in your country and you cannot live there. Those people who are refugees are not different from the others. They are just like you. They have feelings. There are some people who judge refugees. The others have to respect them. If you are in your country you have to be thankful. Refugees also want to be in their country. I am a human like everyone else. Being with my friends and my family makes me happy. I like to read and sometimes I like to play playstation. I like playing football and Call of Duty with my brother. I am good at math. I love everything about my life. My friends tell me to have courage and they tell me to trust myself. My family and friends make me strong.

$$\frac{2x + x}{7} = 7 \times 7$$

$$2x + x = 49$$

$$\frac{3x}{3} = \frac{49}{3}$$

$$x =$$

SOMALIA
14 YEARS OLD