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# Researching Refugee & Migration Narratives @ UEL: Living Archives & the CMRB

# CENTRE FOR RESEARCH ON MIGRATION, REFUGEES AND BELONGING



CMRB @ UEL

- The Centre for Migration, Refugees and Belonging (CMRB) grew out of the Refugee Research Centre, which was founded in 2004.

# Research & Teaching

## Research

CMRB provides interdisciplinary, innovative and critical scholarship on the relationship between migration, refugee and belonging, including on the intersectional relationship between race, gender, and citizenship.

The Centre supports scholarship and debates on contemporary issues of migration, refugees and belonging through the work of its members and by fostering partnerships between academics, policymakers, practitioners, activists and migrants from a wide range of backgrounds.

## Teaching

CMRB aims to integrate research and teaching programmes that are designed to support the capacity of students in academia, as practitioners and activists locally and globally.

Teaching includes:

MA In Refugee Studies

MA IN Conflict, Displacement and Human Security

Part of the UCL, Bloomsbury and East London (UBEL) Doctoral Training Partnership.

# CMRB Activities

CMRB research seeks to engage with political and policy debates as well as theoretical concerns that have local and global relevance.

For example, the Tallash exhibition by **Majid Adin and Arash Niroomand** invites audiences to reflect on movement, borders and belonging. The artists share their experiences with the public, and what it means to keep trying. Using simple materials and makeshift structures that connect with the reality of refugee lives, Tallash/ تلاش consists of short videos and photos taken by Majid and Arash at the France-UK border and in London

The work of CMRB is closely integrated with that of the [Refugee Council Archive](#) at UEL.

Unfinished Refugee Journeys...  
June 17th– 22nd 2024  
Refugee Week

Arash Niroomand Majid Adin

Free Exhibition

Mon Tue Wed 1-5  
Thu Fri Sat 4-9

**Tallash**  
(Try) Photography and video art

The Royal Foundation of St Katherine  
2 Butcher Row  
Next to Limehouse, DLR Station  
London, E14 8DS

Refugee Week | CMRB | University of East London | The Royal Foundation of St Katherine  
An extraordinary urban oasis

# Archives Held at UEL





The Refugee  
Council Archive

Association of  
Ukrainian Women  
Archive

Council for  
Assisting At-Risk  
Academics (CARA)  
Archive

Northern Refugee  
Centre Archive

UNHCR (London  
Office) Audio-  
Visual Library

Information Centre  
for Asylum and  
Refugees (ICAR)  
Archive

Charter 87

Cambridge  
Refugee Support  
Group Archive

Dr Louise Pirouet  
Papers

Documenting  
Chile Archive

Physical Refugee & Migration Archives @ UEL

# History of the Refugee Council Archive

The Refugee Council originated from two independent organisations, British Council for Aid to Refugees (BCAR) and the Standing Conference on Refugees (SCOR), which were both founded in 1951 following the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

Archive of the Refugee Council as an organisation, including correspondence, minutes, of meetings, case files and related materials.

Thematic special collection of published books and journals, reports and grey literature incorporating working papers, conference papers, leaflets, newsletters, case studies, field reports, statistical data, press cuttings and audio-visual materials.

Over 35,000 items have now been catalogued and we are still trying to add new materials to the collection.

**UEL**  
University of  
East London

**the REFUGEE  
ARCHIVES**

at UEL

[www.uel.ac.uk/rca](http://www.uel.ac.uk/rca)





# Refugee Archives – Oral History

- **Oral history-based collections:**
- Gujarati Yatra Oral History Collection. Exhibition held at the Museum of Croydon.
- VOKIM: Voices of Kosovo in Manchester Oral History Archive. Manchester Aid to Kosovo.
- Healing the Wounds. Irish Community Services Oral History Project documenting the Irish community in South East London.
- Crossing the Borders Oral History Archive. Documenting the Chinese community in Manchester. The Wai Yin Society
- Eastside Community Heritage: Projects on Somali Seafarers ; Ugandan Asians; refugees from the Hungarian Revolution.

Dhows



GUJARATI YATRA  
JOURNEY OF A PEOPLE



# Living Refugee Archive – A Case Study





## Researching Migration in the Archive

- Could archives be a creative space for undertaking anti-oppressive, accessible and representative research projects for and with the people in displacement?
- Led to a civic engagement project on “Democratic Access or Privileged Exclusion? Civic Engagement through the Preservation of and Access to Refugee Archives,” in partnership with co-researcher Dr Rumana Hashem at the Centre for Migration, Refugees and Belonging at UEL.

# How Do Testimonies “Exist” within the Archive?

- “Refugees are the experts of their own experience”\* and should be enabled to control how their narratives are archived and represented.
- Social history and powerful political narratives are situated, memories are situated, and ideas about memories and identities can be challenged through oral history recording of contested lived experience of refugees. Complete new social history can be constructed with every single oral history.\*\*
- \*Hynes, T. (2003). The issue of “trust” or “mistrust” in research with refugees: choices, caveats and considerations for researchers. Working Paper No. 98. Geneva: UNHCR, Evaluation and Policy Unit.
- \*\* Hashem, Rumana and Dudman, Paul V. (2016) ‘Paradoxical narratives of transcultural encounters of the “other”: Civic engagement with refugees and migrants in London’, *Transnational Social Review*, 6(1-2), pp. 192-199. doi: [10.1080/21931674.2016.1186376](https://doi.org/10.1080/21931674.2016.1186376)



## Living Refugee Archive

- The Living Refugee Archive represents an innovative new approach as the portal would act as a digital library documenting the lived experience of displacement, whilst simultaneously representing a collaborative tool for active engagement with living histories of displacement through community outreach.
- Alongside the Living Refugee Archive, the project focused on recording life stories associated with loss, cultural and political memories, archiving these narratives, which we believe is important for helping to document and establishing a counter-narrative led by the displaced and their history of displacement.
- Ethics were at the forefront of this work, where we developed critical anti-oppressive methodology (Hashem, 2014) to help balance the power relations between researcher and participant





# Archive as Counter Narrative

- The Living Refugee Archive continues to develop, and our engagement with displaced authors, artists, activists, scholars, and practitioners continue to help us shape and adapt what is meant by a participatory, living archive documenting the lived experiences of displacement.
- This has led us to consider the role of the Refugee Archives as a counter-archive, challenging the traditional notions of archival management to provide a living archive which is respondent to displaced communities, documenting their stories in the way they wish them to be told.





# Documenting Chile Archive Case Study

*And the Crafting Resistance Exhibition.*

# Crafting Resistance The Art of Chilean Political Prisoners



- **Crafting Resistance: The art of Chilean political prisoners** was originally an in-person exhibition that took place at the University of East London's Refugee Council Archive between 26 January and the 16 February 2018 after previously being displayed at the University of Warwick. The exhibition was co-curated by Jasmine Gideon, Birkbeck, University of London, and Gloria Miqueles, a Chilean ex-political prisoner.
- The exhibitions showcased over 150 hand-crafted objects created by Chilean political prisoners whilst incarcerated in the prison camps in Chile.
- The exhibition brings together a collection of these artefacts and reflects on their importance in relation to sustaining the mental health and wellbeing of those incarcerated. These artefacts are now testimony to the mental endurance of all those who were political prisoners under the Pinochet regime.



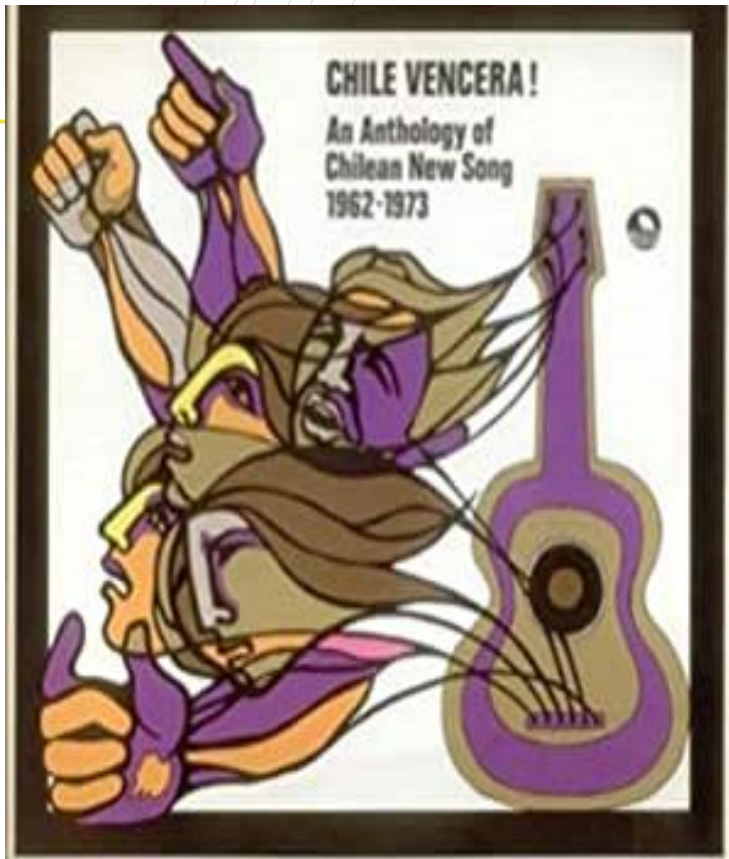
# Crafting Resistance Virtual Exhibition

- Crafting Resistance Artefacts: A virtual reproduction of the artefacts included in the original Crafting Resistance exhibition.
- Crafting Resistance Workshops: A selection of images from the original exhibition documenting both the exhibition installation and also the two Crafting Resistance workshops held in conjunction with the exhibition.
- Badges: A collection of Chile solidarity badges from both the UK and abroad which have been collected as part of the Documenting Chile project at the Refugee Council Archive at UEL.
- Music and Speech: A collection of Chile Music and Spoken Word materials from both the UK and abroad which have been collected as part of the Documenting Chile project at the Refugee Council Archive at UEL.
- Pamphlets and Books at the Refugee Council Archive (RCA): Examples of books, pamphlets and reports currently held within the Refugee Council Archive at the University of East London.
- Posters: A collection of Chile solidarity posters from both the UK and abroad which have been collected as part of the Documenting Chile project at the Refugee Council Archive at UEL.





# Documenting Chile Project



- Working collaboratively with the Chilean diaspora community in London and beyond to explore opportunities to work with communities and organisations to help collect materials on human rights issues in Chile and preserving the collective memory of exile.
- Hope to connect with individuals and organisations who may have either documents or objects from on the situation in Chile from the 1970's through to the present that might help to preserve the collective memory and lived experience of the Chilean diaspora, ensuring your voices and stories are both heard and are also told in a way that you want your stories to be told.
- Looking to collect across the archival spectrum in terms of the range of scope of materials to be collected.
- Link:  
<https://www.livingrefugeearchive.org/archives/documenting-chile-archive/>

## Contact Details

### Enquiries:

We welcome enquiries for research in relation to our Archives. Please Contact me, Paul Dudman, on:

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