

Using the arts to work with refugees and displaced persons in times of crisis and war

A panel presentation convened and moderated by:

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Panel abstract

Our global community is experiencing the highest numbers of internally displaced persons and refugees brought about by crises and war. Not since World War II have we seen such huge numbers of persons who have been separated from their families and communities and are without homes. The war in Ukraine alone, caused by Russia's illegal invasion, has contributed to over 14 million refugees and displaced persons, of which, according to UNICEF, 4.6 million are children. This panel explored how the arts can contribute towards restoring common humanity and dignity to those in crisis. Practical examples of how the arts and arts therapies are being used with refugees and displaced persons across the globe were presented. Topics such as safety, space and place, peer support, and collaboration were revisited as these relate to resilience, wellness, and empowerment. Three major questions guided the presenters as they shared their experience in working with people in crisis:

- Why use the arts when working with refugees and displaced persons?

- How are the arts understood/perceived as they are being integrated in this field of work?
- How do we restore common dignity and humanity to persons living in crisis?

SAJAT Special Issue: Conference Proceedings University of Johannesburg's Art Therapy in the Global South Conference with the theme *Training Art Therapists for Social Justice, Johannesburg, July 2023.*

The conference explored transformative applications of art therapy and its potential in promoting social change. Panel title: Using the arts to work with refugees and displaced persons in times of crisis and war

July 14, 2023, 3:30 pm – 5:00 pm SAST

Panel presentation and global webinar in collaboration with:

- UJ – University of Johannesburg, Art Therapy Programme
- FAS – First Aid of the Soul Ukraine
- IACAET – International Association for Creativity and the Arts in Education and Therapy

Presenter bios

Phillip Speiser

Phillip Speiser, PhD, REAT, RDT/BC, is an artist, expressive arts educator/therapist, drama therapist, and psychodramatist who has developed integrated arts therapy, wellness/health and educational programmes for over four decades. He is currently Director of Parkside Arts and Health Associates in Haymarket, Virginia where he does supervision and project development/management around the globe. He is also a research associate at the University of the Witwatersrand and a lecturer at the art therapy programme at the University of Johannesburg. After the tragic events of 9/11 he developed the Healing Arts Project, a trauma recovery/prevention programme in Boston and New York City.

Vivien Marcow Speiser

Vivien Marcow Speiser, PhD LMHC, REAT, BC-DMT, is professor emerita and co-director of the Institute for Arts and Health in the Graduate School of Arts and Social Sciences, Lesley University. Marcow Speiser has directed and taught in programs across the United States and internationally and has used the arts as a way of communicating across borders and across cultures. She believes in the power of the arts to create the conditions for personal and social change and transformation. Her interests and expertise are in the areas of working with trauma and cross-cultural conflict resolution through the arts and she has worked extensively with groups in the Middle East and in South Africa. She is a Fulbright Scholar and had a Salzburg Global Seminars Fellowship in 2020. She received an honorary JAAH Lifetime Achievement in Arts and Health Award in 2019, the 2014 Distinguished Fellows Award from the Global Alliance for Arts and Health, as well as a 2015 Honorary Lifetime Achievement Award from the Israeli Expressive and Creative Arts Therapy Association.

Prof Raymond Saner

Prof Raymond Saner is a titular professor at Basle University (Department of Economics and Management) and has taught at Sciences Po, Paris (Trade & Development of Low Income Development Countries) and at Lüneberg University (Environmental Negotiations). He is a reviewer and partner of research projects and co-founder of CSEND, a Geneva-based NGRDO with ECOSOC accreditation and consultative status. He has been involved with the 2030 Agenda since 2013, was moderator at the Second HLPF meeting under the auspices of ECOSOC, author of a chapter on the science-policy interface for the GSDR Report 2015, member of the drafting committee of Chapter 6 on LDCs, SIDS, and LLDCs and member of the UNECE PPP Bureau 2019-2021. He co-chairs the academic network of the OECD Guidelines on Business and Human Rights, is a member of the UN Task Force on Solidarity and Social Enterprises and is an expert in CSR quality standards. Saner holds a PhD in psychology from UGS University of Ohio, a Master in Education from Lesley University, and a License in Economics and Trade from Basle University. He studied sociology at the University of Freiburg. i.Br in Germany and is the author of 15 books, 35 book chapters, and 45 referred journal articles.

Prof Lichia Saner Yiu

Prof Lichia Saner Yiu is president and co-founder of the Centre for Socio-Eco-Nomic Development (CSEND), a 30-year-old NGO based in Geneva and accredited by ECOSOC in special consultative status. She is an expert in organisational development and institutional learning and is active in policy debates, strategic analysis, and designing public administrative reforms. She teaches at various universities in Japan, Italy, and Switzerland on management and leadership, human resource development (micro and macro) and the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs. She is an author of academic publications on the SDGs (city, education, poverty, data and monitoring, and institutional capacity building), co-convenor and presenter for the SD Learning Module on Monitoring and Review at the 2015 HLPF, reviewer of the 2015 Global Sustainable Development Report, contributor to regional SDG consultation meetings, and director of CSEND's Summer School on Global Leadership and SDG since 2015. Saner-Yiu was a post-doctoral fellow at Columbia University 1983-1984 and has an EdD in organisational psychology from Indiana University. She has published books and more than 80 articles in academic journals. Her newest book, *Public Goods, Sustainable Development and the Contributions of Business* (2021), is co-authored with Raymond Saner, Roland Bardy, and Arthur Ruben.

Nathalie Robelot-Timtchenko

Nathalie Robelot-Timtchenko, MA, is the founder and executive director of First Aid of the Soul. She holds a Master in Clinical Mental Health Counseling with a specialisation in Intermodal Expressive Arts Therapy from Lesley University. She is a professional member of the International Expressive Arts Therapy Association (IEATA) and the European Federation of Art Therapy (EFAT). While most of her life was spent cross-culturally, the last eight years were in Kyiv, Ukraine. Ukraine is her home. She has over a decade of clinical experience working with groups, individuals, and families within a variety of settings and cultures. Her expertise is in working with individuals facing challenges related to self-worth, acculturation, displacement, complex trauma, crisis, suicidal ideation, depression, anxiety, family conflict, and interpersonal difficulties. Robelot-Timtchenko founded and directs First Aid of the Soul, which offers free mental health and psychosocial support services through multifaceted

approaches and a holistic trauma-informed lens to Ukrainians affected by the war.

Joanna Wroblewska

Joanna Wroblewska, PhD, MA-ET, is a visual artist, expressive arts therapist, and Yoga Nidra teacher currently based in Belgium. She holds a doctoral degree in visual arts and a Master in Expressive Arts Therapy with a minor in Psychology. Joanna works mainly with people who have experienced migration in any form and those who search for a place of belonging, as this is also her own life path. She specialises in profound trauma-informed, cross-cultural, and interdisciplinary therapeutic work using art-based tools, somatic practices, guided imagery, and deep relaxation techniques.

Dr Debra Kalmanowitz

Dr Debra Kalmanowitz, PhD, HCPC, BAAT, is a registered art therapist and visual artist with extensive experiences in the context of humanitarian aid, disaster/crisis relief, trauma, resilience, displacement, political violence, refugees, community, social justice, and social change. She held positions at the Medical Foundation for Victims of Torture (London) and Christian Action (Hong Kong), where she worked with refugees. She is a practising artist and art therapist, head of the Master in Art Therapy programme at Sapir Academic College (Israel), senior lecturer at Ono Academic College, psychosocial facilitator for an international humanitarian non-government organisation (NGO), and works with refugees in South Tel Aviv (Assaf). She is the co-author of *The Portable Studio* and *Art Therapy and Political Violence* and *Art Therapy in Asia: To the bone or wrapped in silk*.

Bobby Lloyd

Bobby Lloyd is a visual artist, art therapist, educator, and refugee charity CEO based in London. She works with displacement, community, crisis support, co-production, and social justice. For more than three decades, she has worked as an art therapist in NHS child and adolescent mental health, inner-city schools and community settings, and on numerous socially engaged art projects and interventions, exhibiting in galleries, site-specific, and public settings in the United Kingdom and internationally. Through the privilege

of extensive collaborations with other artists and art therapists, she has co-lead two contemporary arts projects based in East London at the drawing shed and On Site Arts. She has co-lead projects, consultation, and training in contexts of conflict and upheaval. She co-wrote *The Portable Studio* and *Art Therapy and Political Violence* with Debra Kalmanowitz, under the Art Therapy Initiative. She has been CEO of Art Refuge since 2016, regularly works with people displaced and in crisis contexts in the United Kingdom and internationally, writes collaboratively about practice and ideas, and the development of The Community Table model.

Brief summaries of panellist presentations

The presenters presented on the topic 'Agency and connections through arts'.

Prof Raymond Saner

Prof Raymond Saner (University of Basel) described the magnitude of the problem of people living outside their countries. About 2.5% of the world's population—184 million people, including 37 million refugees—now live outside their country of nationality. The largest share (43%) of these live in developing countries (World Bank, 2023).

Saner went on to discuss some of the terms used to differentiate between what is a refugee, a stateless person, a displaced person, and an asylum seeker. A refugee is someone forced to flee a country due to persecution. An internally displaced person is forced to flee but does not cross a border to leave their country. A stateless person is not considered to be a national by any State under the operation of its law. A migrant is defined as a person who moves, usually voluntarily, to live or work, either temporarily or permanently, and this move may or may not involve crossing a border.

Some emergent trends are concerning. An alarming statistic is that more than 20,000 migrant deaths have been reported on the Central Mediterranean route since 2014. In addition, there is a trend in developed countries to put into effect deterrence strategies against refugees. Furthermore, the refugee impact on European Union governments, such as the Netherlands, showed disagreement on asylum policy and significantly impacted the ending of the four-party coalition.

Where there are conventions in place that could or should help, such as the UNHCR Convention, their obligations should be viewed in relation to realpolitik. In reality, the refugee issue is no longer specific to Europe and goes beyond WWII and the focus on European refugees. This refugee issue has also been influenced by the influx of refugees created by the Vietnamese boat people between 1975 and the 1980s when Western host countries' limits of acceptance were reached (Benoit, 2019; Vo, 2005). With Syrian refugees, some leading host countries made a call for new rules and a new interpretation of the UNHCR convention.

Saner concluded his presentation by summing up what can be done in the face of this crisis and offering a solution: the provision of essential services and human care through the use of the arts and community engagement.

Prof Lichia Saner Yiu

Prof Lichia Saner Yiu (President, Centre for Socio-Eco-Normic Development) began with a presentation of the Migration Drivers Chart. In this view, there are nine drivers: demographic, economic, environmental, human development, security, supranational, politico-institutional, socio-cultural, and individual.

The effects of disruption and loss due to migration or displacement and the effect on the lives of refugees and displaced people are defined as follows:

- Loss of belonging and belongings
- Loss of a sense of control and orientation
- Loss of one's societal roles in life
- Need to rebuild in a somewhat alien environment.

The Global Compact on Refugees is presented as a way of working together to help refugees and their host countries and communities around the world. Europe's refugee crisis is a crisis of humanity, not of migration.

The contributions that the arts can make are drawn from the work of Jacob L. Moreno, who was born in today's Romania, educated in Vienna, and died in Beacon, New York. In his lifetime, he experienced two World Wars and worked to help people make sense of their life experiences as survivors, as refugees, and as ordinary men and women.

Moreno (1934) authored the book *Who Shall Survive?* He is considered to be the founding father of psychodrama, sociodrama, and sociometry.

Moreno's three working assumptions are:

1. Spontaneity and creativity are the propelling forces in human progress, beyond and independent of libido and socioeconomic motives.
2. Love and mutual sharing are powerful, indispensable working principles in group life.
3. That a super dynamic community based on these principles can be brought to realisation through new techniques.

Moreno's work with spontaneity-creativity theory shows he believed that the best way for an individual to respond creatively to a situation is through spontaneity, that is, through a readiness to improvise and respond in the moment. Additionally, this theory encouraged the individual to address a problem in a creative way. Reacting spontaneously and based on impulse, they may begin to discover new solutions to problems in their lives and learn new roles they can inhabit within it. Saner Yiu believes that Moreno's work offers a significant theoretical perspective for working with the refugee crisis through the arts.

Further contributions of the arts in this regard have to do with the notion of empowerment as understood through the Karpman Drama Triangle developed by Stephen Karpman (KarpmanDramaTriangle.com, n.d.). This triangle considers the roles of the rescuer, the victim, and the persecutor (First Step Outpatient Services, n.d.).

To move on in a post-migration phase, refugees need to learn to redirect energy and attention away from being a victim, and to take up the role of creator to reengage with reality in a constructive manner. At the same time, caregivers supporting the refugees also need to learn to empower the refugees to develop new skills and expand their role repertoire in an unfamiliar environment and with little social capital.

A concluding remark on the use of the arts for refugees and migrants is that the arts create individual strength and social capital for refugees and migrants, and humanity for the helper and caregivers.

Nathalie Robelot-Timtchenko and Dr Joanna Wroblewska

Nathalie Robelot-Timtchenko and Dr Joanna Wroblewska from First Aid of the Soul (FAS) jointly delivered this presentation on 'First Aid of the Soul:

Compassion, care and belonging in time of war'. FAS is an organisation supporting Ukrainians' mental health. FAS' mission is to deliver accessible trauma-informed mental health and psychosocial support services to Ukrainians affected by the war. FAS uses multifaceted, holistic, and creative approaches. Their vision is to restore dignity, belonging, and wellbeing to the soul of Ukraine through services provided by a collective of dedicated, professionally trained mental health clinicians from North America and across Europe. FAS offers a wide array of support services, including support groups, supervision, mentorship, training, workshops, and self-help materials (FirstAidOfTheSoul.org, n.d.) (Figure 1).

The presenters shared poems and stories from work and via telehealth sessions by FAS volunteers in Ukraine. In addition, highlights were presented from arts-based workshops conducted with children on the ground in Kiev. Mental health challenges in Ukraine were presented that showed that 50% of Ukrainian adult respondents reported anxiety and depressive symptoms, 78% emotional disorders and anger, 84% depression, 84% nervousness, and 87% exhaustion. According to preliminary estimates, more than 15 million Ukrainians have war-related mental health problems and require support for mental exhaustion, bodily injury, and experiences of cruelty (Ukraine Ministry of Economy, 2022).

FAS has established its core team, a group of volunteer mental health professionals trained at leading universities from around the globe and specialised in a variety of trauma-focused therapeutic methods. The approaches used include embodied approaches (mindfulness, trauma-sensitive yoga, and grounding), expressive art therapies (art therapy, music therapy, and drama therapy, among others), dialectical behavioural therapy, cognitive behavioural therapy, eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing (EMDR), and crisis and disaster mental health. The services offered include self-help resources, support groups, supervision and mentorship, workshops, and training. Self-help resources are published in three languages (Ukrainian, English, and Russian), are accessible and downloadable on the website, and are disseminated through social media. Supervision and mentorship groups are offered weekly through ongoing virtual supervision groups, and mentorship is given to Ukrainian psychotherapists working on the frontlines in Ukraine with displaced people. Self-compassion support groups are offered weekly for various networks of mental health providers/frontline workers practising on the ground in Ukraine with displaced people and refugees. Regular trainings

are offered on a monthly basis, with consecutive and simultaneous translation from English to Ukrainian, to provide support and guidance in trauma-informed care, and to provide holistic tools.



Figure 1. These photos were taken in January 2023 in Kyiv, Ukraine. Nathalie Robelot-Timtchenko (FAS Founder/Director) was humbled to facilitate a fun workshop for internally displaced children now living in Kyiv. The Finding Your Inner Superhero Workshop helped the children recognise their strengths and build resilience through creativity. Robelot-Timtchenko led the group in mask-making with plenty of play and imagination. (Photos and videos were taken with written consent and permission from guardians/parents)

As of May 2023, FAS served approximately 500 Ukrainian mental health professionals monthly, ten weekly supervision and support groups for Ukrainian mental health professionals and individuals affected by the war, presented at ten conferences, served over 8,900 individuals, and FAS volunteers delivered 50 workshops and trainings that are ongoing monthly for mental health professionals serving displaced people in Ukraine.

This presentation closed with a poem from a Ukrainian participant receiving services from FAS. She gave permission to share this poem:

Janna's poem

The road is long and hard,
But we travel not alone.
We keep each other grounded
With heart, and voice, and soul.

We're here and you are there,
Our hands reach across the chasm. We open many windows
To give and take compassion.
The road is long and hard,
But we travel not alone.
We keep each other grounded
With heart, and voice, and soul.

Dr Debra Kalmanowitz and Bobby Lloyd

The panel concluded with a presentation from Dr Debra Kalmanowitz (Sapir Academic College) and Bobby Lloyd (Art Refuge). Both are founders of the Portable Studio.

We began by showing our film *Portable Studio* (Kalmanowitz & Lloyd, 2021), which presents the core ideas emerging from our work together in the former Yugoslavia in the mid-1990s, using photos and footage from both our collective and individual work over more recent years. *Portable Studio* is based on the premise that the internal structure we carry with us as art therapists can allow for work to take place physically in a wide range of settings (refugee camps, informal settlements, dining rooms, safe houses, fields, hillsides, and roadsides). This internal structure includes an attitude both to the art and the individual making it. Central is a belief in human beings as possessing internal resources rooted in experience, resilience, and culture rather than being powerless victims for whom the therapist alone holds the solutions.

Following the viewing of the short film, Kalmanowitz detailed one aspect of her work at the Idomeni Refugee Camp with the charity Refugee Trauma

Initiative (Figure 2). The refugee camp is on the Greece-Macedonia border, and work in this area took place for roughly two years, beginning in 2016. She focused on work that began with artmaking with children in a small tent and developed into a community-wide kite project over several weeks with children, parents, and young people from Afghanistan.

Lloyd continued with a short presentation on her ongoing work on the France-United Kingdom border for the United Kingdom charity Art Refuge. She focused on The Community Table – an open-access arts-based psychosocial group model developed in this crisis context (Figure 3), and further adapted for other settings on either side of the English Channel.



Figure 2: Flying Kite, Idomeni Refugee Camp, Northern Greece, 2016;
Copyright: Debra Kalmanowitz

Lloyd said, “In our film, we describe how we continue to draw from the knowledge we gained from the people we worked with in the former Yugoslavia almost 30 years ago, and from witnessing their strength and resilience. We ended by reflecting that, over time, we have individually and collectively come to understand that even in the most inhospitable situations, people seek to keep their spirits alive. Hope, imagination, and artmaking in the presence of others help people cope. Ultimately, this points to the capacity of human beings for endurance and survival.”



Figure 3. The Community Table, Calais, Northern France, April 2023;
Copyright: Art Refuge

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