

Antiquity Now

MACALESTER COLLEGE

CLASSICAL MEDITERRANEAN & MIDDLE EAST DEPARTMENT

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Refugees and Human Rights: Five Macalester Perspectives

This special addition of *Antiquity Now* focuses on the plight of, and struggles surrounding, refugees and human rights. We do this through the lens of insights and experiences shared by five extraordinary Macalester women. All five have been working in these fields. They were doing so initially as students at Macalester, and have continued as professionals, working today in the same arenas and on the very front lines of this crucial humanitarian work across the globe. They are each inspiring reminders of the difference a small community like ours can make around the world on a daily basis. They are each bright lights in a time when the light can seem rather dim, and among five of our myriad better angels.

The refugee crisis, and level of loss and suffering in the Mediterranean and Middle East in particular, is at historic levels. Displaced persons in the Middle East exceed any other time since the 7th century. The current level of violence and destruction far eclipses that of any other period. Our world will be dealing with the impact and repercussions of these recent few years for a very long time. We will need the imagination, energies, and insights of many more young Macalester graduates to help right the destruction and suffering of this epoch. The short stories these graduates share here are instructive and informative, and show us there is much work to be done, and in that work, amid the struggles, there lies both hope and inspiration.

Emilie Minnick ('06) after studying Classics (now Classical Mediterranean & Middle East) at Macalester with an Archaeology and Arabic language concentration, worked with the International Refugee Committee (IRC) in Iraq, and also in Libya, Cairo, South Sudan, Yemen, Jordan, Geneva and Lebanon, where she was Child Protection Specialist at UNICEF. Emilie is now in Indonesia. **Isra' Muzaffar** ('02) studied Political Science at Macalester, writing an honor's thesis on conflict transformation in South Africa, Northern Ireland, and Palestine. Following a MA in Political Science from the University of Minnesota, Isra' returned to her native Palestine and has worked as the Head of Field Office – Central West Bank at the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Isra' worked in the same Ramallah office with fellow Macalester graduate Olivia Tecosky ('00). **Farah Al Haddad** ('17), from Damascus, Syria, is a graduate of the United World College, and studied Political Science, and many other things, while at Macalester. Farrah interned at Advocates for Human Rights in the Twin Cities where she helped counsel asylum seekers. Studying abroad in the Netherlands, Farah worked with the Dutch Refugee Council as an interpreter. She has been deeply engaged with the Syrian revolution and refugee crisis. She is completing her M.S. in Women, Peace and Security Studies at the London School of Economics, writing on displacement and gender among Syrian refugees, and working for Refuaid, in London. **Zoe Bowman** ('16) graduated from Macalester with a degree in Classics in the Arabic Language track. She spent a semester interning at Advocates for Human Rights, then studied abroad in Amman where she researched the impact of the refugee crisis on Syrians in Jordan. She received a grant to return to Jordan to intern with the Red Crescent. Zoe now works at the New Mexico Immigration Law Center, where she focuses on deportation defense for migrants. **Theresa Vogel** ('00) studied Classics at Macalester, and worked on archaeological excavations in the Crimea and Omrit in northern Israel. After graduation Theresa helped direct the Human Rights Centre at Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Poland. She received her J.D. from Catholic University, worked for a law firm in Denver, and is now Adjunct Professor at the Sturm College of Law at the University of Denver. She recently published the first comprehensive study of Asylum Proceedings for Women Fleeing Intimate Partner Violence in *The University of Michigan Journal of Law Reform*, vol. 52, (2019) 343-435.

At the start of this new academic year we wish to draw attention to this critical issue, and to members of our community who, like these five graduates who have shared parts of their stories here, are fighting for and finding solutions to the challenges we face amid these unprecedented refugee and humanitarian crises at home and abroad. -Prof. Andy Overman

ANTIQUITY NOW is an update and review of activities and opportunities in the Macalester College Classical Mediterranean and Middle East Department normally published twice a year. This special edition highlights vital work being done by alumni around the globe.



EMILIE MINNICK

Macalester was really where my career in the humanitarian world got started, although during my time there I did not realize where my studies and travels would ultimately lead me. I started out as a Classics major, focusing on archaeology, with a minor in art history. As a Classics major there was a language requirement: two years of Latin or ancient Greek – not exactly useful for communicating with the living. Instead I chose Arabic, which was not even offered at Macalester at the time however my Classics professor, J. Andrew Overman, was supportive and made an exception. I would later spend over ten years living in the Middle East, studying and working, and learning to love the multitude of dialects, quirks and idioms that the language and context had to offer. In Iraqi Arabic, for example, the way to ask someone “How are you?” is to literally ask them “What color are you?”. And I used it to communicate with people that I worked with, from Yemeni lawyers fighting for refugee rights, NGO drivers transporting staff from home, to the office, to meetings at the UN or to the airport, to refugees I have met in my various assignments fleeing from Sudan, Iraq and later Syria.

At some point I realized my interest in ancient faraway civilizations extended to contemporary cultures, near and distant. I added a second major, anthropology. My first exposure to the world of refugee studies was during my anthropology coursework. What better way to learn about other cultures than to study how refugees (re)make their lives in resettlement, in our own backyard in St. Paul. In my senior seminar, Diana Shandy told us that we needed to prepare ourselves for the real world. Anthropology, she noted, has many practical applications, even marketing. I was skeptical, but I drafted a cover letter as part of an assignment she gave us. I wrote to the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in New York, an NGO support displaced people overseas and in the U.S. Little did I know that my first “real job” would be with the IRC in Iraq.

After Macalester, I decided to pursue graduate studies at the American University in Cairo, where I received a Master’s degree in Refugee Studies and studied Arabic language. While I learned a lot from my professors there, the bulk of my education came from interactions with people living in states of limbo due to prolonged displacement and with advocates, working tirelessly to negotiate complex international systems and procedures that seem designed to keep people out. I also made a new friend in Cairo who was a refugee from Iraq named Hass. Urban refugees, I learned in my classes and from experience, were some of the worst off in the world. They don’t receive support from UN agencies because they are invisible and often intentionally live on the margins of cities where they won’t be noticed. Their status is often ambiguous.

When I first met Hass he was living with my professor, the director and founder of the Refugees Studies programme at the American University in Cairo, Barbara Harrell-Bond. It was a somewhat unusual arrangement. Hass lived in Barbara’s flat, because he needed a place to live and that’s just what she did. In exchange for living quarters, he provided interpretation services for lawyers in her legal clinic, helping other refugees, like himself. Sadly, Barbara past away in July of this year. The announcement of her death was met with a global outpouring of recognition, not only due to her important accomplishments in the field of refugee studies, but also due to her personal commitment to helping every single individual that crossed her path, including my friend Hass. Barbara was a fierce advocate for refugees, who left a lasting impression, if not intimidating. She was among the first to recognize that the aid industry, instead of creating dependency, should empower refugees to support themselves in their new environs. She created a community in her Cairo apartment, where lawyers, students and refugees would gather to watch films and discuss issues.

EMILIE MINNICK

Hass, like many others I knew, was living in limbo. He was separated from his family, who still lived in Iraq, but because of a threat he was unable to return. Instead he was waiting, like so many others. They were stuck there, waiting to go through the complex hoops of resettlement procedures, not knowing when the waiting would end. Many refugees in Egypt were unable to wait as their savings dwindled and no legal employment for refugees in Egypt. So, they went back. Going back to a place like Iraq was usually riskier than staying in Egypt, with explosions frequently targeting crowded public places like the local supermarket. Many could not return to their homes as they were in areas that were hostile to their religious or ethnic identity, so they started again. This is what Hass eventually did.

By some strange stroke of fate, Hass and I both moved to Iraq on the exact same day, me to Erbil in the North and Hass back to his hometown, Baghdad. In Iraq I worked to support a legal assistance programme for displaced Iraqis to get access to services and analyzed locations where vulnerable Iraqis might be having trouble accessing their rights because of discrimination or safety issues. The level of daily violence in places like Baghdad was shocking to me, but somehow daily life went on. If you ask an Iraqi in Arabic (in Iraqi dialect) "How are you?", they will respond "aisheen" – "we are living," a testimony to their resilience. Living in Iraq was sometimes difficult, being far from family and friends, getting used to extreme temperatures and dust storms and with the risk of with explosions. But I learned to appreciate what I had, as it was my choice to be there and I had the choice to leave. Most Iraqis could not say that, and my freedom of movement I recognized was a great privilege.

If returning to Iraq was a difficult decision for many refugees, such as my friend Hass, resettlement was also a double-edged sword. I went back to Iraq two times after I left. The last time I went back, it felt like most of the Iraqis I knew in Baghdad had been resettled. Who would be left to rebuild the country, I wondered.

After Iraq, I traveled for work to many places: to Libya, South Sudan, Yemen, Jordan, Geneva, Lebanon and now, for the past two and half years, I have been living in Indonesia. In many of the countries where I have lived and work, I was responsible for supporting unaccompanied and separated children, who had often lost touch with their parents during conflict or flight. In Jordan, I met many boys fleeing conscription in the army. These separations are sometimes intentional, for protection, and sometimes accidental, losing contact along the way during an unplanned and chaotic journey. It is shocking to see the same thing happening in my own country, across the US-Mexico border, and less visibly for those affected by the travel ban, especially as it is entirely preventable. Children need to be with their families, especially during times of stress and disruption. I am glad that my friend Hass managed to finally be resettled to the US with his family. He lives in the U.S. now with his family and is in the process of becoming a citizen. But he is among the lucky few.

While people around the world will continue to be forced to flee their homes due to violence and persecution, the threat of migration due to climate change is becoming an increasing reality. The most vulnerable are the most likely to be affected by both. While the US shuts the door to women fleeing domestic violence from places like Guatemala where the State cannot protect them, in the next twenty years millions of people will likely be forced to flee their homes due to drought, extreme heat or because their lands are swallowed up by rising seas. Countries must work together to share responsibility and devise arrangements to ensure that these people, the most vulnerable, will not be shut out.

ISRA' MUZAFFAR



Isra' Muzaffar from OCHA oPt explains to the USG how the Barrier has separated a Bedouin community from Bir Nabala, where they once had access to basic services. credit: Alaa Ghosheh, May 14 ,2011

History Can be Progressive

Twenty years ago, I got a full scholarship to study at Macalester College. I wanted to study chemical engineering; in fact, that was what my student visa indicated. Little did I know then that only four years later, I would graduate with a BA in political science and an honors' thesis on the role of intellectuals in conflict transformation in South Africa, the North of Ireland, and Palestine. Twenty years on, I have become a humanitarian and a UN official, working for the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

I hesitate to simply state that Macalester has changed my life and, by extension, the lives of those I work to serve, lest this be deemed merely an overstatement. But I can confidently say that the myriad experiences and amazing human beings I encountered at Macalester were pivotal in shaping what I want to do and be. And it all began with Professor Andrew Latham's course *Introduction to Global Politics* and working with Aaron Colhapp at the international students' center.

I may not remember all the books I have read or the conversations I had debating questions of political philosophy or human psychology; what has stayed with me, nonetheless, are the values and commitments that memory has a difficult time erasing: an insatiable curiosity to learn about the world, empathy, commitment to humanity, challenging traditional gender roles, and a personal ethos to fight against tribalism, racism, corruption and opportunism.

When I graduated, I wanted to become a political science professor in Palestine, my homeland. At graduate school, I studied political science with a focus on international relations and human rights and was a teacher's assistant for courses on US foreign policy and comparative politics. Upon completing my Master's degree, I decided to come back to my hometown Jerusalem, seeking to experience the dialectic between theory and practice on the ground. Surely this experience has been challenging and infinitely inspiring, as every passing day has brought with it illuminations of concepts I mainly entertained in political debates and introduced me to girls, boys, women and men whose lives are a daily reminder that despair can never be absolute.

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ISRA' MUZAFFAR

I have spent the past 12 years documenting humanitarian vulnerability in the occupied Palestinian territory, coordinating humanitarian response to displaced and other vulnerable families, monitoring and analyzing the impact of man-made policies, and working with fellow humanitarians not only to ensure that relief assistance is provided to people in need but also to give prominence to the voices of those affected by conflict.

The production of knowledge is undeniably not exclusive to the realms of academia. Every time one documents a story or produces evidence-based analyses, one produces knowledge, accrues the privilege of knowing, and engages with manifestations of the power-knowledge nexus. And with privilege comes responsibility, whereby inaction is a non-option. The responsibility to act, to advocate on behalf of those in need or to provide basic shelter to displaced families, becomes plainly just that, a responsibility, an ethical responsibility and a principal commitment. "Humanity", as a core principle of humanitarian action, is fundamentally a reaffirmation of our values, that "human suffering must be addressed wherever it is found to protect life and health and ensure respect for human beings."^[1]

A commonality among the refugees, children, women, and men we meet is that they all keep trying to rebuild their lives, be it with hope or despair, but whose lives have regrettably belied the theory that history is always progressive. An old Palestinian man born in the 1950s once told me: "What kills me is that my generation had more opportunities than those available to our children and we were better educated." This was in a small herding community in "Area C" of the West Bank. Sadly, I remember my late father, a Palestinian refugee from Jaffa, making the same remark back in the 1980s when he was well in his 50s.

My motivation to become educated is in essence deeply rooted in my culture and I simply had the immense privilege to take it from Palestine to Macalester College, via the United World College. I say this whilst I realize too painfully well that this fortune has not touched the lives of too many too often. I say it whilst I know that every day there are children born into conflict, racism, famine, disease and poverty whose parents raise believing that their children's lives must be and will be better.

History can indeed be very regressive – that, we have all learnt too well at the same time that we concomitantly celebrate this year the 71th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. But just like those afflicted by conflict keep trying, we all cannot afford but to keep trying, however differently, to ensure that human rights are indeed for all, and that history can be progressive.

^[1] OCHA on Message: Humanitarian Principles. 2010. URL: https://www.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/OOM_HumPrinciple_English.pdf.



FARAH AL HADDAD

I am currently taking a break from typing away in the library to meet my approaching dissertation deadline. My research project is the final requirement I must submit for my Master's degree in Women, Peace and Security at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). In my dissertation, I highlight the connections between displacement and gender, with a particular focus on masculinities among Syrian refugees in London. It nicely, but surely not neatly, pulls my various interests in one essay. I arrived here in London on a scholarship after spending the past 6 years in the United States, so allow me to start by describing bits of my journey.

In 2011, and at the age of 18, I was granted a scholarship to a 2-year high school program in New Mexico (UWC-USA). At the time, I never imagined where life was about to take me. 2011 marked multiple important, dream-like events in my life, and receiving the UWC scholarship was only one of them. The Syrian revolution was another. My contributions to the latter were virtually non-existent, apart from online posts supporting the revolution, so I decided to get involved in the limited capacity I had as a Syrian student abroad. At UWC, I began to accept each opportunity to speak about the Syrian situation and the resulting detrimental results for the Syrian people, as the Arab Spring in Syria began to dwindle into stagnant war. I was intentional about creating spaces to discuss the atrocities I saw unfolding from behind my screen. The most memorable moments are the ones that strike closest to *home*, where my parents continue to reside in Damascus. Those are the times when I learned to lean on my communities. Communities that contained every nationality imaginable. Communities that cultivated a culture of sympathy for one another. Communities that purchased the Syrian soap that I brought in my suitcase in order to donate all the profits to a Syrian charity, its scent filling up some of the rooms on our campus in New Mexico.

From New Mexico, I went to Minnesota to complete my BA in Political Science at Macalester College. The goodbyes at UWC-USA weren't easy, but once again I found myself surrounded by best friends, project partners, mentors, activists, and passionate professors. Once again, I was presenting on Syria. But, this time, I was also faced with bigger questions regarding race, oppression, poverty, gender, climate change, occupation, and neoliberalism. I was faced with bigger questions, and found it increasingly more difficult to confront the harsh realities that my generation is faced with today. I found myself taking part in (too) many organizations on campus, dancing to stay sane, and squeezing in time for essays and readings to meet the high standards of a Macalester education.

Throughout my senior year at Macalester College, I led a student-based committee that advocates for the recruitment and admission of displaced students to Macalester. As the founder and leader of this team, I was fortunate to be joined by my closest and most dedicated friends, whom were all-too-familiar with organizing campus events and spreading awareness. We had worked together to advocate for Palestinian rights, host panels, and build strong relationships on campus. My eagerness to see more displaced students at Macalester was naturally propelled by my own experience as a displaced student whose life was changed by the opportunities granted to me, and the beautiful individuals who carried and supported me along the way.

FARAH AL HADDAD

Additionally, I was inspired by my volunteer position with the UWC Syrian National Committee where I act as the Student and Alumni Manager (SAM) to monitor and innovate solutions in relation to pastoral care. I have reviewed applications (around 66 per selection cycle), conducted interviews with applicants, participated in our annual pre-departure orientation, and contacted students with sensitive cases. Reading the applications of these young students was a stark reminder of the pain that none of them should have gone through, yet all of them showed an abundance of resilience in response to.

During my time at Macalester I engaged with the topic of displacement academically as well as through internships/volunteer positions. As an intern at the Advocates for Human Rights, an organization offered pro bono legal services in hopes of guaranteeing a more secure life for asylees, I had a high degree of responsibility and I spoke with asylum seekers about their sensitive cases. I also improved my research, communication, and translation/interpretation skills. When I had the opportunity to study abroad in the Netherlands, I made sure to continue my work. Shortly after arriving in the Hague, I began volunteering with the Dutch Refugee Council as an interpreter. One of my tasks was to interpret info sessions at a refugee camp, where asylees anxiously waited for their families to be able to leave dangerous areas of Syria and Iraq. I could not give false hope of an upcoming family reunification. Instead, I tried to calmly address everyone's concerns and frustrations. As part of my academic life at Leiden University College, I conducted an independent research project about Syrian refugees in relation to the refugee crisis in The Netherlands.

As I reflect on my senior year of university, I believe that the past 6 years spent pursuing my educational goals—no matter how difficult—has given me the tools to work towards resolving issues like the ones my country is suffering through now. These transformative years came to an end, with an immigration ban, or the Muslim Ban, set in motion by the Supreme Court under the Trump administration. This executive order was part of his list of promises to his country. With that ban, citizens from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen were no longer able to enter the United States.

Fortunately, virtually everyone I was surrounded by in Minnesota had a different vision for the country than that of Trump. I was showered with support by many members of our community: from my host family and host mother, to the school's administration, staff, and my peers. This level of commitment is what I hope to offer in working with displaced populations worldwide. One of the most important lessons I have taken away from my time at Macalester College is the importance of standing in solidarity *with* those that are marginalized due to unjust and uneven power structures. Today, as an asylum seeker in the UK, I continue to seek channels that allow me to stay true to the responsibility I hold to my family and to the world. Whether through dance, research, or daily acts of care, I hope to continue to act against injustice.



Zoe Bowman

At right, Anna Nassif, (14) is pictured with Zoe Bowman (seated) at a DACA pro se workshop in Albuquerque.



Although I never did anything directly related to immigration law at Macalester, my classes, internships, and the groups that I was a part of as a student led me to the work I'm doing today. Like many Macalester students, I was interested in human rights and migration at an international level- International Politics was my FYC, I spent a semester interning at the Advocates for Human Rights, and studied abroad my junior year in Amman, Jordan, taking Arabic and researching the impacts of the protracted refugee crisis on Syrian refugees in Jordan.

At the end of my junior year I received a grant to return to Jordan and intern with the Jordanian Red Crescent, a humanitarian group working with urban refugees in Jordan. That summer I spent a lot of time discussing the challenges of humanitarian work with Jordanians and other international aid workers; everyone frustrated by the lack of resources, fading international media attention on the Syrian Civil War and refugee crisis, and the absence of a political solution in a war that was clearly not winding down. I deeply admired the work of the many humanitarian workers and displaced people that I met, but also felt acutely ineffective in the face of such intense suffering. As a result, in a round-a-bout way my Arabic concentration in the Classics major led me to take my first Spanish class as a senior and to apply to immigration law jobs on the U.S.-Mexico border. I did so with the goal of taking what I learned in Jordan and applying those lessons to a migration crisis constructed by and taking place within my country.

After doing a dozen interviews with different non-profits focusing on immigration law in different service corps programs, I found the New Mexico Immigrant Law Center (NMILC), a small non-profit started by a Macalester grad in 2012. Originally focusing on deportation defense during an Obama-era ICE crackdown, the organization expanded to provide humanitarian visas and protections to low-income immigrants in Albuquerque.

At NMILC, I learned how to work on humanitarian visas, host DACA workshops and citizenship fairs, and organize fundraising campaigns. With the election of President Trump two months after starting at NMILC, I also learned how organizations must adapt to rapidly changing needs of a community in crisis. We worked with community organizers to develop emergency responses to ICE pick-ups and started a program at a newly re-opened private immigrant detention center in rural New Mexico to support asylum seekers from around the world. The work that resonated with me in New Mexico, and led me to law school, was putting on legal workshops for young people receiving DACA and detained asylum seekers. These workshops taught people how to effectively represent themselves in their immigration cases, thereby making the legal system more accessible to the people most directly impacted.

After a year of law school, I had the opportunity this summer to work at Al Otro Lado in Tijuana, Mexico. Migrants from around the world remain trapped in border cities along the U.S.-Mexico border, forced to stay in dangerous areas rather than be allowed to seek asylum within the safety of the U.S. borders. At Al Otro Lado I monitored the border for human rights abuses, coordinated asylum workshops, and worked with unaccompanied minors living in shelters. The dystopian nature of the crisis facing asylum seekers in Tijuana as well as the detention center in New Mexico mirrors that of the situation facing refugees I met in Jordan in many ways. In all three places, people fleeing violence find themselves trapped by adversarial political systems that often cause further harm rather than help.

In many ways I have found that my education at Macalester has given me the political context and moral grounding to engage with immigration advocacy work in jobs and at law school. I use the communication and writing skills I gained at Macalester to inform people of their rights and how to take ownership of their immigration cases. Through the support and guidance of my friends and professors from Macalester, I have come to understand my role as support for the many immigrant activists and organizers fighting for change outside of our unjust immigration system.



THERESA VOGEL

My studies at Macalester formed a critical foundation for my work today in immigration and asylum law. Macalester provided my first exposure to a global perspective and taught me the interconnected nature of the world. As a classics and religious studies double major, I had remarkable opportunities to participate in archaeological digs in the Crimea and Israel. One of the unique aspects of Macalester's approaches to the study of archaeology is its focus on the archaeological site not only within the context of the ancient world, but also within the broader cultural context today. For example, I recall studying the ancient city of Dura-Europos situated along the Euphrates river in modern day Syria. During its most influential period as a part of the Roman Empire, it was an embodiment of a multicultural city in which Christianity, Judaism, Mithraism, and paganism coexisted. I remain fascinated with the positive impact of tolerance and inclusion on the ability of these religions to coexist peacefully in the ancient world. Undoubtedly, the success of a multicultural society such as Dura-Europos provides important lessons for our multicultural society today, particularly in the United States. These educational experiences at Macalester were the impetus behind my interest in international human rights law as well as my desire for more cultural immersion opportunities.

After graduating from Macalester in 2000, I accepted a research position with the Jagiellonian University Human Rights Centre in Krakow, Poland. The Human Rights Centre is similar to the American style legal clinic and provides free legal aid to victims of human rights violations, refugees, and asylees in Poland. In my role, I assisted in the management of Centre projects funded by the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Ford Foundation. Through this work, I gained an insider's view of the changes occurring in the country in preparation for its accession to the European Union in 2004. In particular, Poland was developing its approach to refugees seeking the country's protection as well as a growing multicultural society. At the time, the Centre was only one of four organizations in Poland that gave legal assistance to refugees. I observed the powerful force such an organization is in fostering legislative reform, particularly in the area of refugee law, and the impact it has on the society as a whole. My two years in Poland also instilled in me an understanding and appreciation for the unique knowledge one gains of a foreign country through cultural immersion.

My experiences at the Human Rights Centre were integral to my decision to attend law school where I focused on international and comparative law issues. In law school, I felt inspired by my internships with the American Bar Association's Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative and the Delegation of the European Commission in Washington, D.C. Through these internships, I worked on issues of international judicial reform and enforcement of judgments in former Soviet republics and comparisons of European Union and U.S. policy on development issues in African countries. The international nature of this work in law school only furthered my interest in refugee and asylum law in the United States, which developed from the United Nations Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees.

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THERESA VOGEL

Since graduating from law school, I have worked in both civil litigation and immigration fields as well as taught immigration at the University of Denver Sturm College of Law. In all of my roles, I have worked on asylum law issues through representation of clients in asylum proceedings and writing on topics in this field. I have had the opportunity to represent clients from all over the world who fear persecution in their countries based on their race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Through this work, I have become particularly interested in the specific challenges faced by women who seek asylum in the United States. Women asylum seekers more commonly suffer persecution from non-governmental actors, such as family members or members of their community, rather than direct persecution from the government itself. This presents an ongoing issue in the recognition of their claims despite the fact that their governments are unable or unwilling to provide protection to them.

In Spring 2019, The University of Michigan's Journal of Law Reform published my article "*Critiquing Matter of A-B: An Uncertain Future in Asylum Proceedings for Women Fleeing Intimate Partner Violence*." The article focuses on the United States' approach to asylum claims of women who are victims of domestic violence. Former Attorney General Jeff Sessions issued a decision in 2018 stating that generally these claims should not be recognized as meeting the requirements for asylum in the United States. This is only one of a number of issues that have arisen in U.S. immigration policy in recent years. Dramatic changes have also occurred in policies related to asylum seekers arriving at the southern border of the United States, asylum seekers who are fleeing gang violence in their countries, persons from specific predominately Muslim countries, the separation of immigrant families, and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. The situation is alarming for many reasons, but particularly in the disregard for the plight of those seeking the protection of our country.

The immigration laws and regulations in our country are desperately in need of reform. Because Congress has been unable to take action, changes in immigration have been left to the policy agendas and impulses of the executive branch. This ad-hoc approach is highly volatile and provides little guidance or consistency in immigration law in general, much less protection to those who fear persecution in their countries.

Exclusionary immigration policies are not new to the United States. However, history has demonstrated the prosperity that multicultural societies which promote tolerance and inclusion, like Dura Europos, may achieve. Ultimately, the question we reach is whether limited benefits from the employment of exclusionary policies, if any truly exist, are worth the harm to those who are in need of our protection.

In the future, my hope is that Congress will be able to bring comprehensive reform to our immigration system. As a part of this reform, the current impediments to asylum claims of women who fear persecution by non-governmental actors, including persecution involving domestic violence, must be eliminated. Reform is vital to providing consistency and reliability in our immigration system and protection to those foreign nationals who are the most vulnerable.