



## REFUGEE RESEARCH NETWORK

[www.refugeereseach.net](http://www.refugeereseach.net)

### E-Newsletter, Spring 2010, Vol. 1.1

This is the first issue of the **Refugee Research Network** e-newsletter. Here you'll find information about ongoing and recently completed activities of the network, and updates on new developments. The Refugee Research Network e-newsletter is a biannual publication accessible in electronic format.

The **Refugee Research Network** (RRN) has been created to mobilize and sustain a Canadian and international network of researchers and research centres committed to the study of refugee and forced migration issues and to engaging policy makers and practitioners in finding solutions to the plight of refugees and displaced persons.

As an established hub of scholarly activity internationally, the Centre for Refugee Studies at York University, Toronto, Canada is well-placed to stimulate this knowledge mobilization process and it is doing so with a generous grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

The **Refugee Research Network** (RRN) aims to contribute to the improvement of the well-being of refugees and forced migrants around the world by:

- expanding our awareness of the global knowledge regime concerning refugee issues and forced migration,
- improving communication concerning this knowledge within and between academic, policy-making and practice sectors in the Global South and North, and
- alliance-building and active policy involvement in the development of national and international policy frameworks and humanitarian practices affecting refugees and forced migrants.

## Message from Dr. Susan McGrath

Dear **RRN** Members,

We are pleased to circulate our first e-newsletter! April 2010 marks the second anniversary of the awarding of the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Strategic Knowledge Cluster Grant for the development of a **Refugee Research Network**. The seven year grant runs until 2015. The goal of the **RRN** is to generate and mobilize knowledge among scholars, practitioners and policy makers to benefit the well-being of people who have been displaced. Our individual members include academics, students, NGO and government workers, and we are reaching out to refugees and displaced people. Refugee research centres, national and international NGOs, government departments, and associations of academics and students are among our institutional partners.



**Susan McGrath**  
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We are at a crucial stage. The infrastructure and governance mechanisms are in place and several research clusters have been launched. Our website ([www.refugeereseach.net](http://www.refugeereseach.net)) is running and becoming populated with members and materials. We have also learned a lot about global networking and the challenges of technological connections. Our first evaluation report has been completed. Our co-applicants and institutional partners are gathering at the end of April 2010 to review our progress thus far and assess our strategic directions.

This newsletter features our existing and emerging research clusters, the work of some of our southern regional partners, our New Scholars Network and profiles **RRN** member Pilar Riaño-Alcalá. Thanks go to Paula Popovici, a doctoral student at York University who sits on the management committee and has helped organize the New Scholars Network, for putting the newsletter together.

The full details for all of our initiatives are at the website. Do check it regularly; new materials are being added daily. And do contribute to the website: post your own work, conference notices, curricula for forced migration courses or blog about an issue that concerns you. Any suggestions about the format or content of the website are much appreciated by Michele Millard ([mmillard@yorku.ca](mailto:mmillard@yorku.ca)) the Project Coordinator and Evan Leibovitch ([evanl@yorku.ca](mailto:evanl@yorku.ca)) our Open Source Architect. Our re-search engine which will troll the web looking for forced migration materials will soon be in place.

If you know someone who is not a **RRN** member and would be interested, please forward this newsletter to them.

With best wishes,  
Susan McGrath  
**RRN** Principle Investigator  
Director, Centre for Refugee Studies  
York University

## What's New?

Each year, the [Refugee Research Network](#) supports various initiatives from network members. The following is a brief description of some of the developments planned for the coming year. If you would like more information, please feel free to contact the leads individually.

### Tertiary Education Cluster

#### **Borderless Education: The Provision of Tertiary Degree Programs to Long-term Refugees**

Lead: Wenona Giles, Centre for Refugee Studies, York University, Toronto, ON, Canada

<http://borderlesseducation.wordpress.com/>



**Wenona Giles**  
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The initial stage of this project included a Workshop held at York University on April 9<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup>, 2010. The Workshop brought together academics and practitioners seeking to develop a knowledge 'audit' to ascertain what is known about refugee tertiary education in long-term refugee situations, the gaps that exist, and the measures that have been taken to date to address these gaps. The Workshop participants also began to develop a strategy for mobilizing academic knowledge into pragmatic solutions, thus ensuring educational opportunities for long-term refugees in the global south. The knowledge and relationships gained from this Workshop are expected to contribute to the development of large-scale collaborative multi-year funding applications to support the provision of tertiary education in long term refugee camps in selected sites.

### Refugee Law Cluster

#### **A comparison and assessment of Refugee Determination Processes and Procedures in selected jurisdictions**

Lead: Donald Galloway, University of Victoria, Victoria, BC, Canada

[www.refugeeresearch.net/ref-determine](http://www.refugeeresearch.net/ref-determine)



**Donald Galloway**  
[galloway@uvic.ca](mailto:galloway@uvic.ca)

The aim of this initiative is to contact and bring together legal (and other) academics from various jurisdictions to collaborate on a project focusing on the different procedures and best practices used in refugee determination. The plan is to provide a database of legal and socio-legal literature that would appear on the [RRN](#) website. Reviews of current literature and an assessment of best practices could also appear on the [RRN](#) site. A comparative

monograph is also planned. In light of announcements from the Canadian government to transplant some procedures from other jurisdictions, we aim to offer op-ed assessments of such plans, based on expert analysis from these jurisdictions.

### **Forced Displacement, Protection Standards, and the Supervision of the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol and Other International Instruments**

Lead: James C. Simeon, Centre for Refugee Studies, York University, Toronto, ON, Canada

[www.refugeereseach.net/1951-Convention](http://www.refugeereseach.net/1951-Convention)



**James C. Simeon**  
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The international conference 'Forced Displacement, Protection Standards, and the Supervision of the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol and Other International Instruments' will bring together 80 distinguished jurists, national and international policy-makers, academics, legal practitioners, and INGO and NGO representatives, and students to consider how the supervision of the 1951 Convention may be enhanced. It will be reviewing and integrating the research and practice literature on supervision of the 1951 Convention. The main objective is to reach a broader global consensus (track two diplomacy) on the development of a number of strategies for moving forward on various proposals for improving the mechanisms for the effective supervision of the 1951 Convention.

## **Gender and Sexuality Cluster**

### **Strengthening Sexual Minority Refugee Research**

Lead: Jennifer Hyndman, Centre for Refugee Studies, York University, Toronto, ON, Canada

[www.refugeereseach.net/sexual-minority](http://www.refugeereseach.net/sexual-minority)



**Jennifer Hyndman**  
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The proposed work will extend the scope of the new 'gender' research cluster to include refugee issues also related to sexuality/sexual orientation. Specifically, this initiative would aim to: deepen networks of scholarship at York on asylum and sexual minority status; create a resource repository at the Refugee Law Project in Uganda, a highly discriminatory state that produces many sexual minority claimants, with documents that address LGBT refugee scholarship and activism; disseminate research by York scholars on sexual minority status refugees in Uganda to highlight the often silenced stories of those persecuted and the scholarship/legal work being done; we would aim to support the Uganda scholars in ways that we may not yet know about.

## Global Network of Research Centres on Forced Migration

### Formation of a Resource Centre on Forced Migration in South Asia

Lead: Ranabir Samaddar, Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group, Calcutta, West Bengal, India

[www.refugeereseach.net/node/570](http://www.refugeereseach.net/node/570)

Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group has undertaken steps to develop a South Asia Resource Centre on Forced Migration Studies in congruence with its research and orientation activities in this area. The activities of the Resource Centre will serve South Asian programmes on forced migration studies in which participants from all over South Asia will join. The Resource Centre will have various components and hold exchange activities under it. It will be an open access centre and will be linked to the [RRN](#).



**Ranabir Samaddar**  
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### Mobilizing a Regional Research Network to address forced migration issues in Latin America

Lead: Roberto Vidal-Lopez, Javeriana University, Bogotá, Colombia

Drs. Susan McGrath and Dr. Alan Simmons at the Centre for Refugee Studies, York University and their partner, Universidad Javeriana represented by Dr. Roberto Vidal in Colombia will mobilize academic and NGO representatives from various Latin American countries including Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru and Venezuela to explore issues related to forced migration in the region, including the impact of the movement of large-scale refugee populations on the socio-political, economic and legal infrastructures of receiving states; the contribution of forced migrants to the process of peace building and post-conflict reconstruction; and the way in which (failed and flawed) development processes contribute to the root causes of forced migration.



**Roberto Vidal-Lopez**  
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### Creating a Digital Archive of Grey Materials on Migration

Lead: Loren Landau, University of Witwatersrand, Forced Migration Studies Programme, Johannesburg, South Africa

[www.refugeereseach.net/node/571](http://www.refugeereseach.net/node/571)

The Forced Migration Studies Programme (FMSP) has initiated the creation of an online database of 'grey' research material relating to migration in Africa. Their aim is to enhance the visibility and accessibility of African migration related resource material that is currently fragmented, in different countries, and difficult to access. 'Grey materials'



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include unpublished reports or papers, study findings, policy relevant meeting minutes, draft policy papers, and other materials relevant to African migration, displacement, public policy, and humanitarian assistance. This endeavour is intended to increase the communication and knowledge-sharing between scholars and institutions within and outside Africa concerned with migration by digitally publishing important, but otherwise unavailable materials.

## Working Groups

### **Age and Generation in Refugee Contexts**

Lead: Christina Clark-Kazak, Centre for Refugee Studies and Glendon College, York University, Toronto, ON, Canada



**Christina Clark-Kazak**  
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This project will contribute to knowledge on age and generational issues in refugee contexts by providing a forum in which researchers working on these issues can collaborate. A growing body of research explores changing inter-generational relations due to forced migration. In addition, age is increasingly recognized as an important marker of 'difference' – alongside gender, class, ethnicity, race, etc. – in refugee contexts. However, scholars working on age and generation in migration contexts have benefited from few designated networks to collaborate and exchange ideas. In particular, the RNN does not currently identify age and generation as a research cluster. The proposed project will thus not only add an additional perspective to these existing initiatives, but also provide an opportunity for dialogue across cluster areas, particularly in relation to protracted refugee situations, refugee law, gender and education.

## On-going Projects

### Refugee Policy Cluster

#### **Developing a Refugee Policy Research Network**

Lead: James Milner, Carleton University, Ottawa, ON, Canada

[www.refugeeresearch.net/ref-policy](http://www.refugeeresearch.net/ref-policy)



**James Milner**  
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The goals of this initiative are to further the priority of fostering more open and collaborative relations between the refugee research community in Canada and the policy community in Canada and elsewhere, to continue mapping the refugee-relevant policy community in Ottawa, contribute to the database of refugee researchers seeking engagement with the policy community, facilitating interactive events, initially in the

Ottawa area and subsequently to policy communities at other levels of government, and to research funding opportunities for members of the **RRN**. Events are planned for Spring 2010 on urban displacement and climate change and forced migration, hosted at Carleton University and the University of Ottawa to foster closer relations between the research and policy communities. In addition, the Refugee Policy Research Network would cooperate with counterparts in Ottawa to host events for refugee researchers who travel through Ottawa and seek opportunities to present research findings to the policy community.

## New Scholars Network

### Developing a network for New Scholars

Lead: Paula Popovici, Centre for Refugee Studies, York University, Toronto, ON, Canada

<http://www.refugeersearch.net/node/85>



**Paula Popovici**

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The New Scholars Network is dedicated to graduate students undertaking research in the field of forced migration studies and, also, to practitioners and policy makers in junior positions whose work is related to refugee and forced migration issues. In the period following the 12<sup>th</sup> IASFM Conference, the first Executive Committee of the New Scholars Network assembled and, in December 2009, the Interim Executive Committee held its first meeting. The NSN IEC started developing the operational procedures for NSN and also the functioning guidelines for future Executive Committees.

Currently, the IEC is developing the election processes (planned for each September) and is looking at strategies for increasing the membership of the NSN. The IEC is also exploring the possibility of linking new scholars with refugee centres worldwide. The forum of the NSN will be an E-Journal, *The Refugee Review*, the development of which is now underway.

## Refugee Law Cluster

### Research Workshop in Critical Issues in International Refugee Law

Lead: James C. Simeon, Centre for Refugee Studies, York University, Toronto, ON, Canada  
[www.refugeersearch.net/critical-issues](http://www.refugeersearch.net/critical-issues)

A research workshop was held at York University in May, 2008 to consider a number of critical issues in international refugee law on a periodic basis, about once every two years. The Workshop on Critical Issues in International Refugee Law brought together leading Superior and High Court Justices, academics, national and international public officials, and promising students to examine a limited number of legal issues confronting international refugee law. One of the objectives of the research workshop was to develop

new insights and to identify areas that require further research and analysis in the field. It is also intended to provide jurists and policy-makers with the latest legal research and analysis available in the field.

### **War Crimes and Refugee Status**

Lead: James C. Simeon, Centre for Refugee Studies, York University, Toronto, ON, Canada

This SSHRC-funded project is developing a five country (Australia, New Zealand, Canada, USA, UK) comparative database on the application of international criminal law and international humanitarian law on the jurisprudence involving those who have been excluded from Convention refugee status under Article 1F(a), war crimes, crimes against peace, and crimes against humanity, genocide. The "War Crimes and Refugee Status" international comparative research project will create a database of key variables on jurisprudence that deals with the application of international criminal and humanitarian law to the adjudication of Article 1F(a) of the 1951 Convention. The database will not only provide large amounts of information more efficiently and effectively to researchers in the field, but, it will also allow for the identification of unique patterns of judicial interpretation among these five leading refugee law and asylum receiving countries.

## **Persons in Limbo Cluster**

Lead: Howard Adelman, Centre for Refugee Studies,  
York University, Toronto, ON, Canada  
[www.refugeeresearch.net/pil-cluster](http://www.refugeeresearch.net/pil-cluster)



**Howard Adelman**

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The Centre for Refugee Studies Persons in Limbo Cluster have gathered and linked up with a large number of scholars and investigative agencies undertaking parallel work and have organized the international dimensions of a research project on persons in limbo (PiLs) to: gather data from Australia, Europe, America and Canada regarding numbers, categories, length of time in limbo, new initiatives; prepare a bibliography on research on PiLs, undertake analysis, and propose solutions.



## Meet an RRN Member

### Who is Pilar Riaño-Alcalá?

I am a Colombian Canadian anthropologist and communicator. Currently, I am an associate professor at the School of Social Work, a research associate at the Liu Institute for Global Issues (UBC) and one of the members of the Colombian Historical Memory Commission. I have worked in the field of socio-cultural anthropology and community development for over twenty five years exploring three broad themes relating to ongoing violent conflicts: the lived experience of violence and forced displacement, the politics and practices of memory, and the ethnography of suffering.



**Pilar Riaño-Alcalá**  
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My professional research began in the early 1980s when I worked for the Colombian Center for Research and Popular Education (CINEP), an NGO that combines popular education work in diverse communities across the region and academic research. My work with CINEP has been an indelible influence in my search for and adoption of innovative and collaborative methodological, pedagogical, and theoretical approaches.

Since I arrived in Canada, I have been involved in various capacities in research and community work in the fields of anthropology of the cities and immigrant and refugee issues. My work has covered topics such as: the interconnections between racism, the “war on drugs” and the media in Vancouver; cross cultural dynamics among refugee families from Africa, Asia and Latin America; and the relationships between health, housing and immigration status among Latin American women in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver. My work in cities like Bogotá, Medellín or Vancouver has addressed the relationship between the changing cultural and social dynamics of the city and the macro social processes of violence, drug economies and displacement.

### Tell us few words about some of your past projects

Between 2004 and 2008, I was involved with a team of 9 researchers from Latin America and Canada in the research project “Forced Migration of Colombians: A Comparative Study on Fear, Memory and Social Representations in Colombia, Ecuador and Canada.” This collaborative research was coordinated by me and by Colombian scholar Martha Villa from Corporación Región (a social research and popular education organization in Colombia). The Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO) also participated in Ecuador<sup>1</sup>. In this qualitative study, we examined how internally displaced Colombians and Colombian refugees reconstructed their social worlds and mediated fear and historical memory in nine places of settlement, three in each country.

My previous project “Youth Violence and Memory in Medellín” was an ethnographic study of how urban youth in Colombia came to be at the intersection of multiple forms of political, drug-related, and territorial violence in a country undergoing 40 years of internal armed conflict. This work was published in the book *Dwellers of*

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<sup>1</sup> The project was funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), UBC HSS, and the Colombian Institute of Science and Technology, Colciencias.

*Memory. Youth and violence in Medellin* (Transaction Publishers, 2006 and 2010) and examines the ways in which youth in the city of Medellín re-configure their lives and cultural worlds in the face of widespread violence.

### **... and something about your current projects.**

As part of my work in the Historical Memory Commission of Colombia, I have been working with Colombian political scientist Maria Emma Wills on a research of four critical cases that condense and illustrate the complexity of the relationship between armed conflict, gender constructions and the resistance displayed by women in the Caribbean region of Colombia during the most recent war period (1995-2008). After a year and a half of working with other investigators of the Commission of Historical Memory in documenting through a participatory and capacity building process the memories of war and resistance of victims of the armed conflict who in large numbers are also internally displaced, I coordinated the development of a pedagogical and research toolkit for the reconstruction of historical memory. This material is used in training sessions with historical memory practitioners and given to local victims and civil society organizations advancing historical memory work.

Another project I am currently working in the Commission is on the topic of internal displacement and memory in the region of Antioquia with the aim of analyzing two emblematic cases of conflict induced displacement, its causes, dynamics and forms of victimization.

I am also currently working on a UBC funded research project that explores the social functions of memory for those who provide testimony in the public events organized by the Colombian Commission on Historical Memory. Through this work I developed a further line of questioning about the politics of memory when the work of historical memory is conducted in contexts of ongoing conflict and about the complementarity and differences between transitional justice oriented processes and those that are mostly focused on historical memory recovery.

Last, with Erin Baines at UBC, we are working in an interdisciplinary, collaborative research project that examines the conditions in which community-based organizations collect evidence and victims' memories of human rights abuses in settings of on-going conflict. Comparing communities within and across Colombia and northern Uganda, two sites of prolonged conflict and forced migration, this project develops a conceptual framework for interpreting when and why communities adopt specific strategies to document and remember. Further, it examines how such strategies contribute to local, national or international justice and reconciliation initiatives.

### **One thought about the Refugee Research Network...**

The potential of the Refugee Research Network to facilitate innovative and horizontal forms of exchange among researchers and practitioners from different parts of the world is enormous. I also think that there is a great opportunity with the network to store and circulate knowledge and insights produced in different parts of the global south and in different languages; this is the type of information, insights and knowledge that does not have a large dissemination and one that can make a critical contribution to the understanding of the complexities of refugee issues. I also see the Network as an important mechanism to foster communication among scholars, practitioners, activists and policy makers in a country like Canada.