Abstract

Refuge and Rejection: The Past and Present of Displaced Persons

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In this project we will build a humanistic, historical framework for consideration of persons displaced by war, natural disaster, and political upheaval. We examine the historical and contemporary circumstances of refugees, stateless persons and other migrants. We identify a set of specific research questions that we will address: 1) Who is a refugee? Who is a displaced person? 2) Where in history and contemporary circumstances do we see marked differences in their treatment? 3) What explains such differences?

Given our interest in contemporary as well as historical conditions, we will invite a wide variety of scholars in different disciplines to participate in a seminar, first at ASU and subsequently in the global academic community. We have identified a Visiting Scholar who provides a broad foundation for the work, and graduate students whose expertise and interest complement the project. To accomplish a broad inclusion, especially outside of the university, we have developed an explicit outreach strategy, one that showcases the project in the public sphere as part of the initiatives of the Institute for Humanities Research and Arizona State University. During the grant term, we will use internet devices to conduct our seminar and to broadcast our deliberations and dialogue to other scholars and to the public, submitting scholarly work and dialogue to public examination and revision in a web log. The web-based structure of the project also is designed to bring some order to the chaotic nature of information sources on the crises of demographic displacement, especially for those who seek a humanistic perspective.

Using the results of this exercise, we will sponsor a set of scholarly papers, drawn from several perspectives on refugees and displaced persons. A virtual conference will be held using these papers, comments, and dialogue between authors and audience. The revised papers will then be electronically published. Finally, we will prepare an application to the National Endowment for the Humanities for a Summer Institute. Here we will take what we have learned from our project work and prepare a research program for future humanities-oriented work, ensuring the long-term effect of the Refuge and Rejection project.