

REFUGEE WEEK

# Our Stories

REFUGEE LEADERSHIP  
EXHIBITION 2026



AUSTRALIA

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

JRS Australia acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the Lands on which we meet and work, and their connections to Land, waters and community. We pay our respect to Elders past and present.

JRS Australia's offices are located in Parramatta, on Dharug Country, and our 2026 Refugee Leadership Exhibition took place on the Lands of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation.

First Nations storytelling, leadership, and sovereignty has existed for over 65,000 years, on Land that was never ceded, and which always was and always will be Aboriginal Land.

We acknowledge with gratitude that we share this Land today, our sorrow for the costs of that sharing, and our hope that we can move to a place of justice and partnership with the Traditional Owners. May we walk gently on this land.

# INTRODUCTION

Since 1947, Australia has granted one million permanent humanitarian visas. Behind each journey is a person with a story: someone who showed incredible strength, and who has helped build the Australia we know.

Across collections of videos, archival works and artworks, leaders and artists share not only their personal stories, but a strong commitment to justice and upholding dignity and human rights for all.



Their pieces ask us to reflect on the reasons people seek asylum, who is deserving of safety and protection, and what kind of society we want to be. This booklet contains more information about the artworks and stories on display.

**Thanks to your support tonight, leaders and artists will be paid for their courage and time in creating pieces that speak to their truth, share their resilience and hopes for the future.**

# REFUGEE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

JRS Australia's Refugee Leadership Program supports leaders with lived experience of forced displacement to be advocates, agents of change and leaders in the community.

At JRS, we recognise and celebrate refugee leaders' existing leadership and expertise – deriving directly from their own stories, journeys and insights.

We are committed to centering the leadership of people seeking asylum and forced displacement in all areas of the work we do.



**Learn more about the Refugee Leadership Program here:**  
<https://aus.jrs.net/en/advocacy/refugee-leadership/>

# Inside

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>01</b>
<b>Refugee Leadership Program</b>	<b>02</b>
<b>Leaders and Artists Descriptions</b>	
<b>Sara</b>	<b>04</b>
<b>Abdul</b>	<b>05</b>
<b>Abdulfattah</b>	<b>06</b>
<b>Jacob</b>	<b>07</b>
<b>Dindo</b>	<b>08</b>
<b>Hediyeh</b>	<b>09</b>
<b>Sana</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>M</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Anonymous</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Wai Yan</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Thanush</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Zainab</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Magdalene</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Batoul</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Student Creative Competition Winners</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Silent Auction Prizes</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Take Action</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Thank You</b>	<b>38</b>



# SARA & RANIA

“My artwork reflects the theme of "A Million Stories" and celebrates the journeys, contributions, and connections that make Australia home for so many people.

The word REFUGEE is reimagined through qualities that describe who we are: Rebuilding, Embracing, Finding, United, Growing, Empowered, and Enriching. These words remind us that refugees are not defined by what they have lost, but by their resilience, hopes, and contributions.

The world map invites visitors to draw a line from their country of origin to Australia, showing that although our journeys are different, we are all connected through a shared home. The map of Australia becomes a collective artwork as visitors leave their fingerprints, symbolising that every person leaves a unique mark and contributes to the richness of our communities.

The photographs share moments from my own journey and represent hope, belonging, and the rebuilding of dreams. Together, these pieces celebrate the power of diversity and the million stories that shape Australia.”

**Sara, originally from Sudan, followed in her father's footsteps by studying civil engineering. Despite the war breaking out in Sudan, she courageously moved to China to pursue her PhD. Now, she is embarking on a new chapter in Australia, ready for a fresh beginning.**

**Her artworks were made in collaboration with her sister, Rania.**

# 2

# ABDUL ABDUL'S STORY

**Our Story JRS** **ABDUL'S STORY**

My name is Abdul. I am from Bangladesh. I arrived in Australia in March 2016 and I am currently on a bridging visa.

I was born in Chuadanga in Bangladesh and moved to Dhaka to study in university. Growing up, I had many friends and neighbours and I only focused on my studies.

I graduated in Commerce and Accounting. I like good food and traveling. I am a father of a lovely son.

My dream is getting a job and seeing my family.

I left my country due to political persecution and came to Australia. When I first arrived, the main problem was language. I went to get support and joined the refugee language program.



But my eyesight has declined since 2018 due to a blow to the back of the head.

I had surgery in Australia, but I am still sensitive to bright, strong lights. I am living with seven diseases and have bad health linked to diabetes.

I was working in a bread factory doing bread packing for 1 year. But two years ago I lost my job because of my vision and I struggled to find a new job due to my disability.

I am not eligible for many support services such as the NDIS due to my visa status.



I cannot access disability employment service networks. So I have difficulties paying rent and I experience challenges because of my disability.

I have been here for 10 years but I can't find a stable job or support due to my visa. I share my story so I can change my situation and for other people like me.

Speaking up in public was an achievement for me. It helped me with my communication skills and creating social connection which I am proud of.

I would like to stay here and I would like to see my family one last time before I lose my vision.



Abdul has been part of the Refugee Leadership Program since 2025.

Since joining the program, he has shared his story with thousands of students, community members and everyday people.

Abdul hopes to raise awareness about the challenges he faces as someone seeking asylum whilst experiencing a disability.

He hopes raising awareness will change the situation for himself and people like him.

**“Right now I want to find a suitable job so I can support myself. I don’t want to rely on Government aid. I just need a suitable job. I do not want to be a government burden.”**

**Abdul came to Australia in 2016 from Bangladesh. He is a disability advocate and often shares about the hardships of having a disability whilst seeking asylum. Abdul currently lives on an insecure bridging visa, which limits his access to work, study and healthcare. Abdul is not eligible for NDIS support.**

# 3

## ABDULFATTAH A DIFFERENT HORIZON

**A quiet meeting of distance and arrival, where open water holds stories that are not fully spoken, and the shore offers something that is felt more than defined. Between what is left behind and what has not yet begun, there is a moment suspended—neither here nor there, but gently moving toward possibility.**



“I am Abdulfattah Hashem from Gaza, Palestine. My passion for drawing began in childhood during elementary school, when my art teacher recognised and encouraged my artistic talent.

As I pursued my studies in law, I set aside drawing to focus on my education. After arriving in Australia as a displaced person from Gaza, my children encouraged me to reconnect with my passion for art.

Their support inspired me to begin painting again, and I expanded my artistic approach by creating numerous works with acrylic paints, moving beyond my previous experience with oil painting.

Today, art is both a source of creativity and a way to express my experiences, memories, and appreciation for life. I hope that viewers will enjoy my paintings and connect with the emotions and stories that convey.”



# JACOB

## JACOB'S STORY

“I chose to share my story and participate in the exhibition and Refugee Leadership Program because I believe that personal stories have the power to inspire understanding, empathy, and positive change.

As someone currently seeking asylum, my journey has included many challenges, sacrifices, and moments of resilience. By sharing my experiences, I hope to raise awareness about the realities faced by refugees and highlight the strength and determination that many bring to their new communities.”

Participating in the Refugee Leadership Program has given me the opportunity to develop my leadership skills, build confidence, and connect with others who have similar experiences.

It has also allowed me to use my voice to advocate for inclusion, diversity, and equal opportunities. Through the exhibition, I hope to encourage meaningful conversations, challenge misconceptions about refugees, and inspire others to pursue their goals despite the obstacles they may face.

My story is not only about hardship but also about hope, resilience, and the importance of community support.”

**My name is Jacob. I was raised in South Sudan amidst a period marked by conflict and turmoil.**

Unlike many other children, I had a childhood devoid of joy and security. Instead, I experienced fear, displacement, hunger, and uncertainty. My family had to escape our home because staying there was too perilous. There were nights when we slept outdoors, under trees, lacking shelter, food, and any knowledge of what the next day would bring.

Experiencing war profoundly affected me. I often felt frightened, desperate, and emotionally shattered. I lost the chance at a normal childhood, an education, and a sense of a secure home. Seeing my family suffer was one of the most agonizing experiences of my life. There were times when I felt like the war had robbed me of my childhood and my sense of tranquility.

Despite everything, my family never lost hope for a brighter future. We envisioned finding a safe space where we could live free of fear and where I could study, grow, and build a life. That hope ultimately guided me on my journey to Australia to seek asylum.

Arriving in Australia was a challenging experience. The journey was filled with emotion and uncertainty. However, reaching Australia also provided me with something I hadn't truly felt in a long time: safety.

For the first time, I discovered what it meant to live in a peaceful country where children can attend school safely, families can sleep without worry, and people can plan for their future.

Today, I am dedicated to creating a better life for myself through education, work, and personal development.

I aspire to support my family and assist others who have faced challenges and displacement as I have.

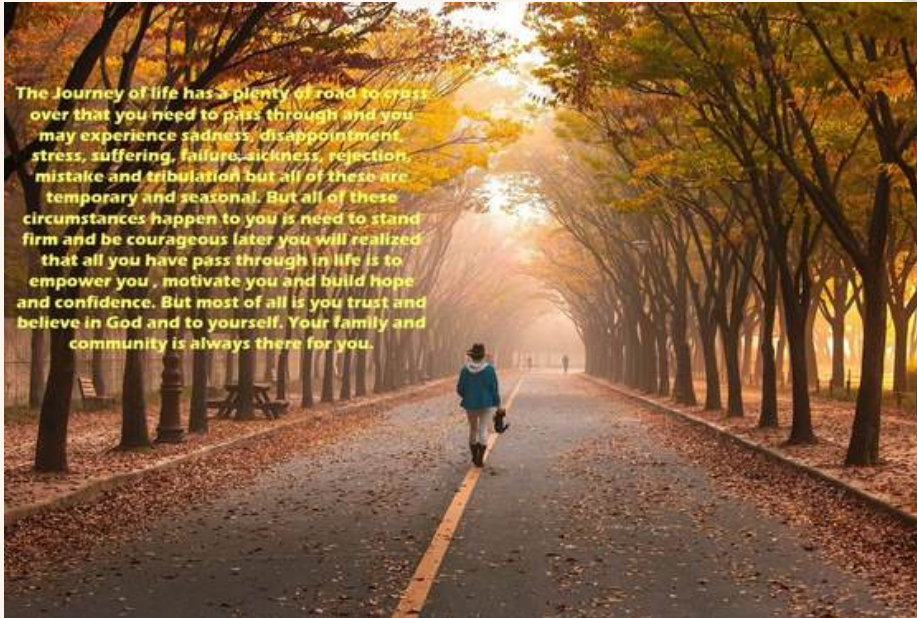
My story is one of pain, but it's also a narrative of survival, resilience, and hope. I continue to pray for peace in South Sudan so that future generations will never have to undergo the suffering, loss, and displacement that my generation faced.

**Jacob is an active community member and passionate about leadership that supports others. He is currently finishing his certificate in Youth Work and has a diploma in Bible and Mission. He loves helping others and making a positive community impact.**



# DINDO

## THE JOURNEY OF LIFE



The Journey of life has a plenty of road to cross over that you need to pass through and you may experience sadness, disappointment, stress, suffering, failure, sickness, rejection, mistake and tribulation but all of these are temporary and seasonal. But all of these circumstances happen to you is need to stand firm and be courageous later you will realized that all you have pass through in life is to empower you , motivate you and build hope and confidence. But most of all is you trust and believe in God and to yourself. Your family and community is always there for you.

“This picture represents the direction or path of our journey in life. Some reach their destiny, like in in this picture: you see the path and it is easy to view the goal or destiny you choose.

But other times require you to crossover to reach the goal or destiny of life. This represents our thoughts, memory, trials that you need to grow in confidence of faith and sacrifice.

In all paths or direction of life, you need to pass every circumstance or trial that requires your patience, endurance and perseverance.

And above all you need to pray, focus, motivate yourself, and believe in Jesus.”

**Dindo is a former IT Consultant from the Philippines who came to Australia in 2018 with his wife and two sons. Dindo's strong spirit of hope and ambition has led him to study IT and Theology, and work extremely hard to provide for his family, all whilst facing many challenges as he navigates the Australian visa system and copes with a serious illness.**

**Read Dindo's story here: <https://aus.jrs.net/en/news/dindos-story-faith-community-leadership/>**

## 6

HEDIYEH  
DESTINY

“The feeling I wanted to express in it is that of entering a world completely different from the one in which I grew up — learning a new language, starting from zero, feeling like a stranger, experiencing fear and uncertainty, and remembering those days when I couldn't even pronounce the name of the street I was living on.

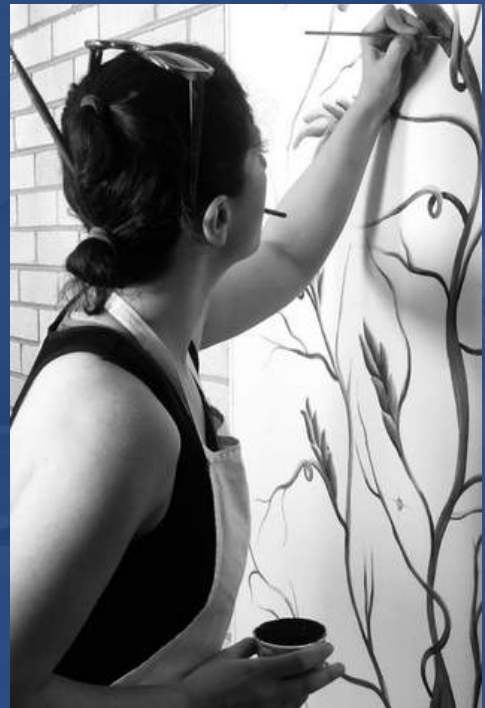
Then, by God's grace, I met all of you — a group of kind people whose hearts shine with warmth and compassion. With you, I felt understood. Despite all our differences, you helped me step by step, always with a smile.

With kindness and patience, you taught me the alphabet of your world. I love you all dearly and thank you for welcoming me as one of your own from the very beginning.

Today, as a permanent resident of Australia, I am proud of both my past and the person I have become.

And I know, from the bottom of my heart, that I could not have done it without you. You made this journey easier, brighter, and far less lonely.

With all my love and gratitude,  
Hediyeh.”



**Hediyeh Monfared (born 1980 in Tehran, Iran) began painting in childhood, mainly in a surrealist style. She has also been involved in music since her teenage years and later expanded her practice to sewing after migration. Her life has always been dedicated to art, which she believes is the key to understanding life.**



# SANA PILWAR

## ZIBA (“BEAUTIFUL” IN FARSI)



“My work emerges from displacement, trauma, grief, and the search for freedom. Through painting, texture, layering, and reconstruction, I explore what it means to reclaim identity after surviving oppression, exile, and violence.

As an Iranian woman, I grew up oppressed by the fundamentalist Islamic regime and strict Sharia law, within a society built upon shame, control, and fear.

Joy was met with suspicion. Dancing was forbidden. Singing was dangerous. Happiness itself often seemed like an act of resistance. I lived with the feeling of being constantly watched, criticised, disrespected, and judged.

Yet the more forcefully these systems attempted to erase my identity, the closer they pushed me towards my true roots.

My work reconnects me to a civilisation that existed long before Islamic conquest and oppression—a 3,500-year-old Zoroastrian heritage grounded in light, truth, dignity, and the celebration of life.

The inspiration for my artwork comes from Persian symbolism and images of strong, dignified Persian women adorned in intricately beaded textiles and clothing rich with colour, beauty, and cultural meaning.

My work seeks to recover fragments of a cultural identity that has survived despite centuries of invasion, violence, and erasure.”

Sana's artwork has been created with support from Petra Fonteyn, a Registered Art Therapist and Counsellor who is passionate about assisting clients to connect with their values, meaning and purpose. Working from a trauma-informed and strengths-based framework, Petra supports her clients in building self-esteem, self-worth, and engagement with the broader community.

Petra can be contacted on [petra@petrawithyou.com](mailto:petra@petrawithyou.com)



# SANA PILWAR

## HELYA (“DAUGHTER” OR “THE SUN”)

“A recurring figure within many of my artworks is Helya, a symbol of the sun, light, and spiritual resilience. She is the daughter of the sun, a pure spirit of light who breaks through darkness and inspires the world to dance, celebrate, and live freely. Through her presence, I seek to reconnect with the joy, vitality, and freedom that oppression attempts to suppress.

The Woman, Life, Freedom movement resonates deeply throughout my artistic practice. It represents not only resistance against the oppression of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, but also the courage of Iranian women who continue to fight for autonomy, visibility, and human dignity. My paintings honour those women—the voices silenced, imprisoned, or lost—and celebrate the resilience that remains.

Each work becomes an act of emotional reconstruction. Every brushstroke allows me to reconnect with the powerful Persian women who came before me: women who were respected, influential, creative, and free. Through the process of making, I feel myself resurrecting parts of myself that trauma attempted to destroy. I am uncovering the culture buried beneath fear. I am returning to the person I was before violence, displacement, and silence interrupted my life.

Art transforms pain into testimony. It allows me to bear witness while also creating space for healing. My work is both personal and collective—a story of survival, but also of remembrance. It is a search for light within darkness.

Now rebuilding my life in Australia, I create work that speaks of freedom, resilience, and hope.

Through my practice, I seek not only to honour those who have suffered under oppression, but also to imagine a future where dignity, truth, and liberation prevail.

Ultimately, my work is an offering of light. It is an attempt to illuminate what has been hidden, to reclaim what has been taken, and to remind myself—and others—that even after profound darkness, it is possible to return to oneself. There is hope. There is dignity. There is strength, beauty, purpose, and meaning. I refuse to be erased.”





# M M'S STORY



“I am sharing my story because I believe that personal experiences can help build understanding, empathy, and stronger communities.

Moreover, I feel extremely alone and stressed a lot due to thinking the uncertainty of my life. As someone who has experienced the challenges of starting a new life in a different country, I understand the importance of resilience, hope, and support from others.

Through this exhibition, I would like to highlight not only the difficulties that refugees and people seeking asylum face but also their strengths, skills, and contributions to society.

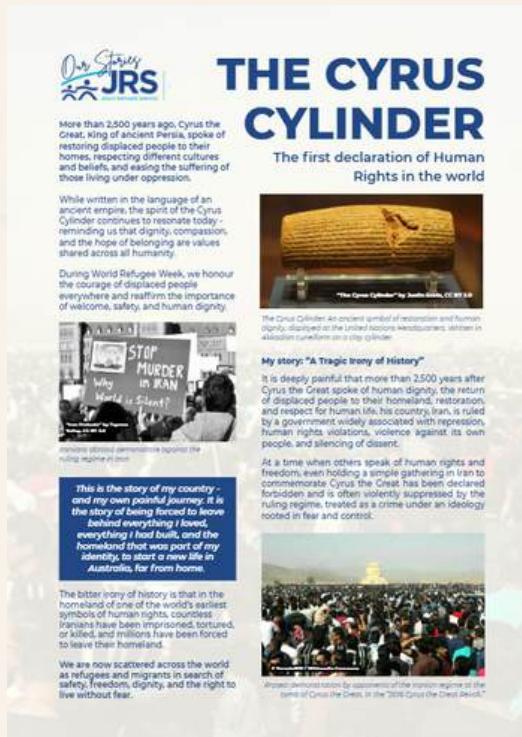
Sharing my journey provides an opportunity to raise awareness, challenge misconceptions, and encourage meaningful conversations about inclusion and belonging.

By participating, I hope to inspire others who may be facing similar challenges and demonstrate that, with determination and support, it is possible to overcome obstacles and contribute positively to the community. I am grateful for the opportunity to share my story and be part of a movement that promotes dignity, respect, and social cohesion.”

**My name is M and I am from Bangladesh living here with my wife and 2 children. My family and I sought protection claim in Sydney in 2024 and I completed a Master of Science in Life Science from Shimane University, Japan, in 2020. We were lucky, because we can come to Australia but so many people in my country are suffering.**



# ANONYMOUS THE CYRUS CYLINDER



My reason for choosing the Cyrus Cylinder as part of my story is to highlight a powerful and interesting paradox.

More than 2,500 years ago, Cyrus the Great, King of ancient Persia, was associated with ideas of restoring displaced people, respecting different cultures, and reducing suffering. At that time, much of the world was marked by war, conquest, and violence.

Today, after more than two millennia of human progress and the development of concepts such as human rights, democracy, tolerance, and international law, one might expect these values to be more firmly established everywhere.

Yet many Iranians have experienced the opposite. The contrast between the ideals often associated with the Cyrus Cylinder and the reality that has forced millions of Iranians to leave their homeland as refugees and migrants is both ironic and deeply tragic.

The purpose of this piece is not to make a political statement, but to invite reflection and curiosity. It asks how a land connected to such an ancient symbol of restoration and human dignity could produce circumstances that have led so many of its people to seek safety, freedom, and belonging elsewhere in the world.

It also aims to remind people that Iran is one of the world's oldest civilisations, with a long and rich history that is very different from the image created by its current government over the last 47 years.

**Anonymous\* is an Iranian-born community advocate and storyteller whose work explores themes of displacement, identity, resilience, and belonging. Through personal and historical narratives, they seek to create dialogue about human dignity, cultural memory, and the refugee experience.**

10

# WAI YAN

## THE CHOSEN ONE (2021)



This photograph was taken during the mass protests that followed the military coup in Myanmar in February 2021. Captured on my mobile phone while I stood among the demonstrators, the image is both a personal record and a witness to a historic moment of resistance.

The raised three-finger salute seen throughout the crowd became a defining symbol of Myanmar's Spring Revolution, representing solidarity, defiance, and the collective demand for democracy. In the background hangs a large portrait of Aung San Suu Kyi, the elected leader who was detained by the military following the coup and remains imprisoned. Her image became a powerful emblem of the people's call for justice and the restoration of democratic rule.

By selectively preserving color in the portrait while rendering much of the scene in monochrome, the photograph emphasizes the enduring presence of hope amid uncertainty. This image reflects the courage of ordinary citizens who risked their safety to stand together and make their voices heard.

10

# WAI YAN

## THE LAST COLOR (2021)



Taken during the early days of Myanmar's Spring Revolution, this photograph captures a moment of collective resistance in the aftermath of the military coup. Standing among thousands of protesters, I witnessed ordinary citizens unite in defense of democracy, raising their voices against military rule despite growing uncertainty and danger.

At the center of the image, a single red flag remains vividly colored while the surrounding cityscape and crowd are rendered in monochrome. The flag, bearing the fighting peacock and star associated with Myanmar's democratic movement, becomes a symbol of resilience, courage, and hope. Its striking presence contrasts with the muted surroundings, reflecting the tension between a nation plunged into darkness and the enduring spirit of its people.

Captured on my mobile phone, this photograph is both a personal testimony and a historical document. The title, *The Last Color*, refers to the fragile yet persistent hope that remained visible amid fear, violence, and repression. It is a tribute to those who stood together in pursuit of freedom, believing that even in the darkest moments, the dream of democracy could not be erased.

10

## WAI YAN

**Wai Yan Minn (b. 1996, Burma/Myanmar) is a self-taught photographer whose practice explores everyday life, human connection, and the changing landscapes of society.**

**Beginning with a mobile phone as his first camera, he developed a passion for documenting fleeting moments and finding poetry in the ordinary.**

**Now based in Australia, Wai Yan's work is shaped by observation, memory, and lived experience. His photographs often focus on daily rituals, natural movement, and the stories that emerge from communities.**

**Since participating in refugee art exhibitions in Australia, he has increasingly used photography as a platform to raise awareness of the ongoing challenges faced by people in Myanmar. Through his practice, he seeks to create visual narratives that encourage reflection, empathy, and dialogue.**

To learn more about the crisis in Myanmar, and what we can do together to support people displaced in the region, visit: <https://aus.jrs.net/en/myanmar-crisis/>



# THANUSH

## THANUSH'S STORY

Thanush has been part of JRS Australia's Refugee Leadership Program since 2021, sharing his story with thousands of students, community members and decision-makers, and advocating for the rights of people seeking asylum.

His last advocacy effort with JRS was to film [this video](#) for this exhibition before he resettled in Aotearoa (New Zealand). His video shows his unwavering courage on his commitment to justice and to fight for his friends and community who are suffering under unjust laws that keep people seeking asylum in limbo and uncertainty for decades.

Thanush is part of the cohort who were transferred to Nauru and Papua New Guinea under Australia's cruel offshore processing regime and were later brought to Australia for urgent medical treatment. 700 people still remain in Australia without pathways to permanency and rights.

You can support Thanush and his community by taking action here: <https://action.asrc.org.au/let-them-stay-for-good>



**Thanush is a human rights activist who came to Australia in 2013 after having to flee Sri Lanka. When arriving to Australia by boat he was put on offshore and indefinite detention. He recently accepted permanent residency in New Zealand/ Aotearoa after waiting for permanency in Australia for more than 13 years.**

12

# ZAINAB

## ZAINAB'S STORY

“ I joined the Refugee Leadership Program because I believe that refugee voices and experiences deserve to be heard and valued. As someone who has experienced displacement and resettlement, I understand both the challenges and opportunities that come with rebuilding a life in a new country.

I am particularly passionate about advocating for the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan, whose access to education, employment, and public participation has been severely restricted in recent years. Having witnessed both the opportunities and challenges faced by Afghan women, I believe that education and equal participation in society are fundamental human rights.

I hope to use my voice and professional experience to raise awareness of the ongoing struggles faced by Afghan women and girls and to support efforts that promote their empowerment, dignity, and inclusion.

I am also committed to increasing awareness of the challenges faced by refugees and asylum seekers in transit countries, including Indonesia.

Many individuals and families spend years living in uncertainty, often without access to stable education, employment, healthcare, or long-term legal protection. Their stories are rarely heard, despite their resilience and determination.”

**Zainab graduated with a Bachelor of Policing from Kabul Police Academy and served in the Afghan military for three years. After arriving in Australia, she pursued further studies at Western Sydney University, completing a Bachelor of Accounting and a Bachelor of Laws, graduating in June 2024. In December 2025, she was admitted as a lawyer by the Supreme Court of New South Wales. Zainab is currently undertaking a Master of Laws at the University of Sydney while working as a Law Graduate.**



# MAGDALENE

## MAGDALENE'S MESSAGE

“I was fortunate enough to come across JRS Australia when I sought asylum in 2018, and I am proud to have joined as a leader in their leadership and advocacy team in 2021. I continue to share my lived experiences as an asylum seeker through public speaking at schools, churches, and community organisations, hoping to raise awareness and support for those seeking asylum. I use my voice to talk about issues such as homelessness and the struggles they face navigating the system.

In Sierra Leone, I worked as a sportswriter, broadcaster, and photojournalist in print and electronic media. As a sports journalist, I covered major world sports competitions.

During this time, I was also actively involved in advocating for the rights of women and girls and positioned myself as a strong and vocal opponent against Female Genital Cutting/Circumcision. I am still involved in the campaign to eradicate the practice in Sierra Leone and elsewhere.

In 2023, I started working as a Project Support Worker in the Finding Safety Project at the Women Space.

I am passionate about working with the Finding Safety project, which aims to support asylum-seeking and refugee women in increasing their understanding of domestic and family violence, its drivers, and their rights.”





# BATOUL

ONE IN A MILLION

“Not all things grow the same way.

Sometimes, it’s not about the tree—

but the ground it was given.”

**Batoul came to Australia from Gaza in late 2023, two months after the genocide began. She had to leave before finishing her dentistry degree. Now living in Sydney with her family, Batoul is a “creative adventure-seeker” who loves trying new things. She is a strong advocate for justice for her people.**



# STUDENT CREATIVE COMPETITION SHORTLIST

In honour of the Refugee Week theme “A Million Stories”, JRS Australia’s School Engagement Program hosted a Creative Competition, which received over 150 entries from students across Australia.

We received so many incredible submissions, including artwork, poetry, prose and video, with beautiful reflections and messages of welcome for refugees and people seeking asylum. It is inspiring to see the empathy, creativity and wisdom of Australia’s next generation of young leaders.

While all artworks will be on display at this year’s Refugee Leadership Exhibition, the pieces on the following pages have been shortlisted for awards.

**If you would like to book a schools workshop, and sponsor a Refugee Leader to share their story at your school, visit: <https://aus.jrs.net/en/advocacy/schools-engagement/>**



# STUDENT CREATIVE COMPETITION SHORTLIST

## SECONDARY SCHOOL ARTWORK

BIANCA CERDON COLLEGE

DARCEY AQUINAS CATHOLIC COLLEGE  
MENAI

HADIJA HOMESCHOOL

KASHISH CATHERINE MCAULEY  
WESTMEAD



# STUDENT CREATIVE COMPETITION SHORTLIST

## PRIMARY SCHOOL ARTWORK

ARIANN A ST MARY'S RYDALMERE

ELINA ST MARY'S RYDALMERE

ETHAN ST MARY'S RYDALMERE

MARIA ST PATRICK'S PRIMARY SCHOOL  
GUILDFORD

ROSE ST MARY'S RYDALMERE

TALA ST PATRICK'S PRIMARY SCHOOL  
GUILDFORD



# STUDENT CREATIVE COMPETITION SHORTLIST

## SECONDARY SCHOOL VIDEO

BENJAMIN PARRAMATTA MARIST HIGH  
& JOSEPH SCHOOL

LYDIA & ST IGNATIUS COLLEGE SOUTH  
ROSINA AUSTRALIA

# STUDENT CREATIVE COMPETITION SHORTLIST

## SECONDARY SCHOOL WRITTEN

ALEXANDER PARRAMATTA MARIST HIGH SCHOOL

ALPHEN PARRAMATTA MARIST HIGH SCHOOL

CHLOE AQUINAS CATHOLIC COLLEGE MENAI

EVANSHKA CATHERINE MCAULEY

MARYAM CAROLINE CHISHOLM COLLEGE



# STUDENT CREATIVE COMPETITION SHORTLIST

## PRIMARY SCHOOL WRITTEN

JARED ST PATRICK'S PRIMARY  
PARRAMATTA

SIENNA MARIST CATHOLIC COLLEGE  
NORTH SHORE

# SILENT AUCTION PRIZES

Thank you to the wonderful individuals and organisations who have generously donated their art, products or services in support of this silent auction, all proceeds from which will be directed toward JRS Australia's Refugee Leadership Program.

- 1) Dinosaur Designs
- 2) The Bread and Butter Project Hamper
- 3) Helen Kaminski Bag
- 4) Greater Western Sydney Giants Signed Jersey
- 5) Verve portraits \$650 photography gift package
- 6) Australian Chamber Orchestra Performance at the Sydney Opera House
- 7) Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG) Guided Walking Tour \$100 voucher
- 8) MISC \$250 Gift Voucher
- 9) 1 Night Stay at The Albert
- 10) Dolce & Gabanna Bialetti Gift Set
- 11) Peter Drew Bella Singh Aussie Poster
- 12) Steph Martei Artwork
- 13) Bourke Street Bakery 'Free Coffee for a Month'

# \$250 DINOSAUR DESIGNS VOUCHER

Value: \$ 250

Dinosaur Designs is an Australian design studio, globally renowned for their handmade resin and metal, homewares and jewellery.



# THE BREAD & BUTTER PROJECT HAMPER

Value: \$ 100



The Bread & Butter Project is Australia's first social enterprise bakery. They invest 100% of their profits into providing training and employment pathways for people seeking refuge in Australia, who aspire to become bakers.

Since 2013, this program has been creating a lasting intergenerational impact, by boosting trainees' prospects of successful resettlement and employment, while building a strong sense of belonging in the Australian community. Trainees undertake an intensive training program which includes on-the-job bakery training, English-language tutoring and job readiness support. The Bread & Butter Project then supports trainees after graduation to secure employment with like-minded organisations who are passionate about creating a diverse and empowered workplace. Almost all baker graduates since launch are sustainably employed and have been able to discontinue welfare support.



# HELEN KAMINSKI BAG

Value: \$ 500

Helen Kaminski is an Australian brand synonymous with unwavering quality, craftsmanship and sustainable practices. Their handcrafted raffia and crochet peices are made in remote village workshops in Sri Lanka.

The workshops give women the opportunity to learn new skills and gain financial independence. It also means they can work while looking after their families, and be part of a positive, social community. Today, they employ over 6,000 active artisans in Sri Lanka.

3

## GREATER WESTERN SYDNEY GIANTS SIGNED JERSEY

Value: Priceless!

Greater Western Sydney Giants 2025  
Authentic Home Guernsey

Size: L  
Year: 2025

Official AFL Merchandise

4

## VERVE PORTRAITS \$650 PHOTOGRAPHY GIFT PACKAGE

Value: \$ 650

Your photography package includes a personalised photography session at Verve Studios. After the photoshoot, you can pick a chosen image which will be framed in a 25cm x 19cm Art Frame, delivered to your home.



5

## TWO TICKETS TO AUSTRALIAN CHAMBER ORCHESTRA PERFORMANCE AT THE SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE

Value: \$180

The Australian Chamber Orchestra is 17 musicians who live and breathe music. Led by Artistic Director Richard Tognetti, the ACO makes waves around the world for explosive performances, adventurous cross-artform collaborations and dynamic programs that embrace celebrated classics alongside new music and commissions. Enjoy an ACO performance in the beautiful Sydney Opera House!



6

# SYDNEY CRICKET GROUND (SCG) GUIDED WALKING TOUR \$100 VOUCHER

Value: \$ 100

Step into history and experience the ultimate behind the scenes pass to one of the world's most iconic sporting grounds. An SCG Tour offer you an unforgettable journey through our 160 years of sporting heritage and the place where legends are made. Discover the stories, stand in the rooms, and walk the grounds that have shaped Australian sporting history.

**A \$100 voucher equates to 3 tickets.**



7

# MISC \$250 GIFT VOUCHER

Value: \$ 250

\$250 voucher to dine at MISC parramatta. Whether you're breaking bread at a casual meet-up, sipping finely curated cocktails, or partaking in a special event, MISC. offers an experience you won't find anywhere else in Sydney.



8

# 1 NIGHT STAY AT THE ALBERT

Value: \$600

1 night stay in a modern suite. Includes welcome drink, a bottle of prosecco, and complimentary chef-cooked breakfast at The Albert Hotel, Mosman.

Expiry date: 10/10/2026



9

# DOLCE & GABBANA BIALETTI GIFT SET

Value: \$215

Dolce & Gabbana Bialetti Gift Set, including 3 cups, a Moka pot, and one can of ground coffee.



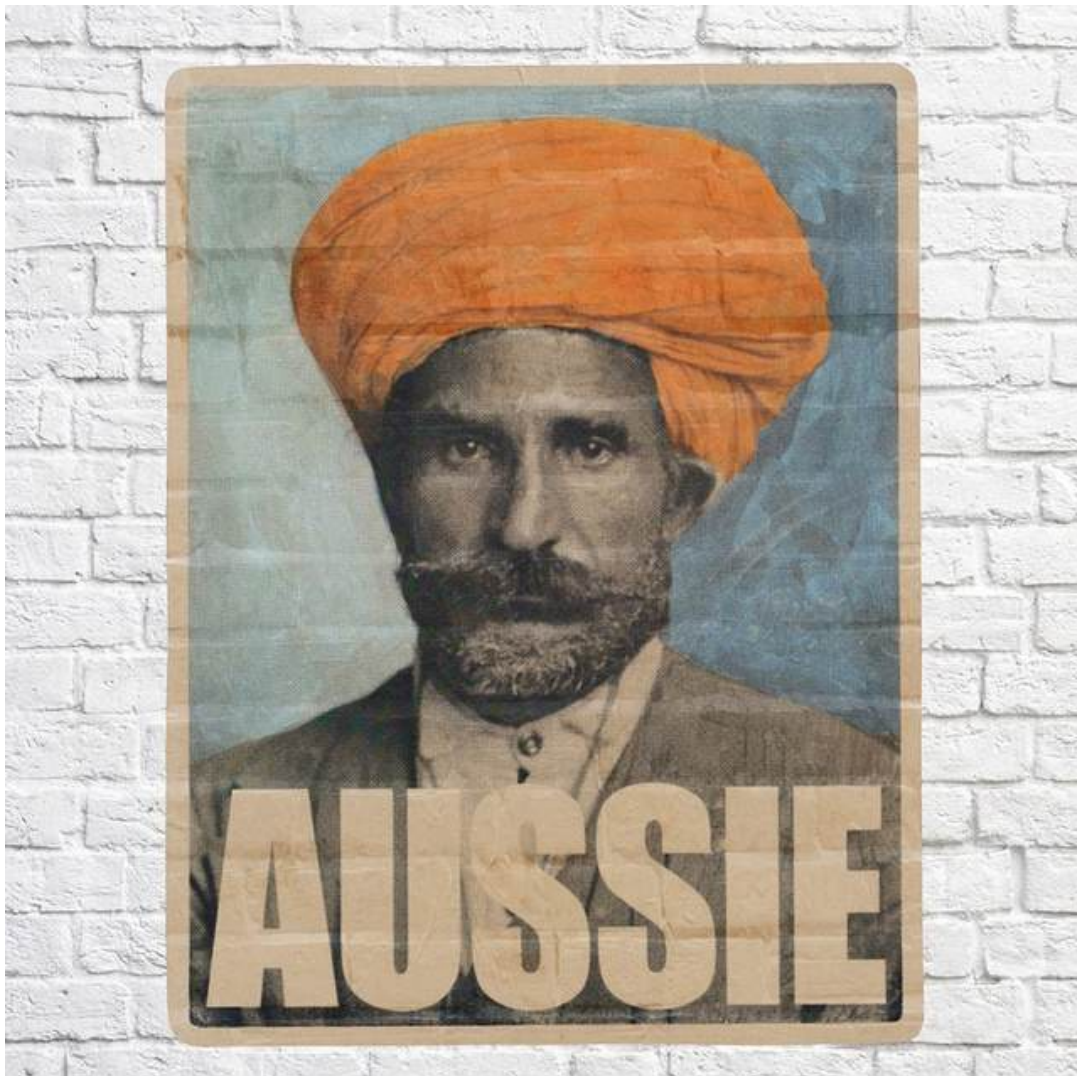
10

# PETER DREW AUSSIE POSTER

Value: \$104

Peter Drew is an Australian artist whose work is concerned with memory, nationalism, masculinity, criminality, brown paper and mythology. He has been exhibited at major arts institutions around Australia, though his most prominent works are installed on city streets. You may have seen some of his 'AUSSIE' posters around the streets of Sydney. His posters feature photographs from the National Archive of Australia. Most of the photos come from applications for exemptions to the dictation test which was a function of the White Australia Policy.

This poster features Bella Singh, a Punjabi migrant who settled in Australia in the late 1800s, becoming an early settler who navigated the restrictive White Australia Policy. He is the great-grandfather of NSW Nationals party leader Gurmeh Singh.



## STEPH MARTEI ARTWORK

Value: \$???

In *Our Mother's Garden* is a deeply personal reflection on migration, family, and the legacy of care passed between generations. Inspired by Steph Martei's own experience as the child of an immigrant, the work honours her mother's journey of arriving in a new country with very little and creating a life filled with possibility.

The four women resting amongst the plants, flowers, and banana tree represent a space of comfort and belonging that was cultivated through her resilience and determination. Set against the Australian landscape, the garden becomes a meeting place between heritage and home, where new roots are planted without forgetting where they came from.

The white picket fence serves as a quiet reminder of the security and stability that can grow from sacrifice and hard work. For Martei, the garden symbolises more than a physical place; it is a source of nourishment, peace, love, and inspiration that continues to sustain future generations. Through this work, Martei reflects on the foundations her mother built and the opportunities that have flourished because of her courage.

**Steph Martei is a Ghana-born, Sydney-based multidisciplinary artist whose practice explores the collective consciousness. Through portraiture and mixed media works, she examines intersectionality, belonging, and cultural memory, creating spaces for underrepresented narratives to be seen and celebrated. Influenced by her Ghanaian heritage and a lifelong fascination with graphic novels and visual storytelling, Martei's creative journey began through the guidance of her uncle, a comic book artist who introduced her to creative practices in Ghana. This foundation continues to inform her approach to art making. As a self-taught artist, Martei has cultivated a unique style that allows her to remain unconstrained by the traditional boundaries of art making.**

# **BOURKE STREET BAKERY 'FREE COFFEE FOR A MONTH' CARD**

Value: \$175

This gift card can be used to redeem one regular-sized coffee, tea, hot chocolate, or chai per day at any Bourke Street Bakery locations for one month.

There are 12 locations across Sydney: Parramatta, Surry Hills, Alexandria, Balmain, Banksmeadow, Barangaroo, Caringbah, Kirrawee, Marrickville, Neutral Bay, Newtown & North Sydney



# TAKE ACTION

Would you like to support refugee leadership and make a difference in your local community? You can take action in the following ways:

1

## **Donate to JRS Australia**

Your tax deductible gift has the power to help thousands of people seeking asylum living in our local community, right here in Sydney. Your donation supports immediate relief for families in need, and funds refugee leadership, so people with lived experience can showcase their skills and talents, and become advocates for change. [Click here](#) to donate today.

2

## **Help Restock the JRS Foodbank!**

Collect non perishable food, toiletries, and essential items for people seeking asylum. Supermarket gift cards can also be donated via email. Contact [foodbank@jrs.org.au](mailto:foodbank@jrs.org.au) for more information, including the current list of items required for our Foodbank.

3

## **Advocate**

Join the [Campaign for a Human Rights Act in NSW](#) to make sure everyone has access to their rights in New South Wales, regardless of visa status, and visit our website to learn about other ways you can advocate for change.

4

## **Subscribe!**

[Sign up](#) to our monthly e-newsletter to stay up to date with the latest stories, events, and opportunities to take action! Follow us on Instagram @JRSAustralia, or Facebook: Jesuit Refugee Service Australia - JRS.



THANK YOU

We extend our deepest gratitude to:

**Canva Space**

**Inner West for Refugees**

**Dinosaur Designs**

**Bread and Butter Project**

**Verve Portraits Photography**

**Australian Chamber Orchestra Performance**

**Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG)**

**MISC Parramatta**

**The Albert Hotel Mosman**

**Peter Drew (Bella Singh Aussie Poster)**

**Steph Martei (Artwork)**

**Bourke Street Bakery**

and all the leaders, artists, volunteers and attendees who supported this Leadership Exhibition. We hope we can continue telling “Our Stories” together.