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Editorial: Refugees: Past and Present

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The articles in this themed issue of the *Australian Journal of Politics and History* showcase original and innovative research across a number of disciplines within refugee studies. Although research on asylum seekers and refugees in Australia is a well-established field, the seven articles in this special issue present exciting new directions in refugee studies. Collectively, the contributors highlight novel methodologies, explore unexamined sources and identify new areas of investigation. The original articles address understudied areas, for example, the history and uses of photographs of refugees, or topics hitherto unexamined, such as the role of Australians in supporting Bangladeshi refugees and their struggle for independence from Pakistan. This collection also includes analysis of previously unexamined source material, such as Max Harris' correspondence with Foster Parents Plan, which are archived in the United States. Papers also contribute to the histories of emotions and humanitarianism, and to genres of history that are flourishing.

The articles in this special issue are clustered into three main themes. The first two articles examine emotional discourses of child refugees from the post-Second World War reconstruction era to the present-day.

In the opening article, Mary Tomsic analyses the photographs collected by Australian migration worker, Esmā Banner. While working for the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) and the International Refugee Organisation (IRO) in Germany, Banner took photographs, kept a diary and wrote letters to family back home. In her study, Tomsic uncovers evidence of the difficulties Banner faced in understanding post-Second World War Europe and how to make sense of the competing personal, national and international interests at play. In Banner's photographs, displaced children are portrayed as individuals, with agency, emotions and their own politics. Through the medium of photography, we gain a glimpse into the lived experiences of forcibly displaced children and adults, encouraging us to reflect on the uses of personal and visual sources in writing histories of displacement and war.

Jordana Silverstein's article explores Australian political discourse from 2013 to 2016, asking what emotional work these narratives about child refugees do in the national imagination, and how it helps create an idea of Australia and Australianess. Silverstein argues that ideas surrounding the nation and identity "are thoroughly racialised relationships" in which politicians view themselves as arbiters of the nation and its emotions. Particularly in relation to the assumed well-being of child refugees, politicians cast the Australian nation as part of the "white saviour" project, a concept with deep roots in settler-colonial relations.

The next grouping of articles considers refugee aid within the context of histories of humanitarianism.

In her study of the establishment of the Foster Parents Plan of Australia (PLAN) in 1971, Joy Damousi charts the shift from notions of charity to justice in the orientation of PLAN, highlighting the dynamic and ever-changing nature of humanitarianism during the 1970s. This evolution was not linear, nor straightforward, and within the organisation the tension between charity and justice in the form of humanitarianism it promoted remained an issue within the organisation. This shift was manifest in the move from a

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focus on sole child sponsorship to one which concentrated on community support programmes and development. The end result, Damousi argues, was a complex hybrid form of humanitarianism that combined elements of charity and its colonial paternalistic connotations, with the more modern concepts of social justice underpinned by moralism.

In the fourth article, Rachel Stevens draws our attention to the suburban nature of Australian refugee relief efforts during the brutal Bangladesh Liberation War from Pakistan in 1971. In her analysis of constituent correspondence to then-Prime Minister William McMahon, and tracking the suburban origins of donations to emergency relief organisations, Stevens finds that, paradoxically, it was individuals with little political capital who spearheaded Australian efforts to aid the ten million Bangladeshi refugees concentrated in camps in India's West Bengal province. During the 1971 Bangladeshi refugee crisis, Stevens demonstrates that Australian aid efforts were a citizen-driven movement with momentum independent of media coverage, NGO campaigning or political posturing.

Histories of humanitarianism often focus on the aid efforts of western nations rather than the experiences of recipients in the global south. Anthropologists Gerhard Hoffstaedter and Nicole Lamb address this imbalance in their article, examining the experiences of Chin and Karenni refugees from displacement in Myanmar, to in-transit in Malaysia, and finally their resettlement in Australia as UNHCR-designated refugees. By following the stories of a number of refugees during their long journey to Australia, the authors challenge self-congratulatory notions of Australian generosity and encourage readers to question current practices of resettlement in Australia. Hoffstaedter and Lamb observe that refugees in Australia often experience barriers to education, employment and legal aid, making full integration into society difficult. The authors encourage us to engage refugees in a negotiated process of defining what different versions of successful integration may look like and how best to achieve them.

The final group of articles considers the myriad ways in which Australian law, as it is currently practised, excludes refugees from arrival to citizenship. Jaz Dawson examines the past and present treatment of people applying for asylum on the basis of their sexual or gender identity. Despite recent improvements in the ways that immigration officials adjudicate LGBTIQ claims for asylum, she finds that decision-makers continue to confuse sexuality and gender identity. She urges Australian immigration officials to adopt more nuanced understandings of gender non-conformity as well as develop an appreciation of the cultural variations in the presentations of sexuality and gender. To reach this end, Dawson argues, the Australian immigration bureaucracy and appeals tribunals should be more transparent about the development and implementation of asylum-seeker guidelines.

Legal scholar Sangeetha Pillai concludes this special issue with an exploration of the ways in which Commonwealth legislation and government policy have increased the barriers to inclusion for migrants, and particularly refugees, who may wish to become permanent residents or citizens of Australia. Pillai documents six tiers of membership in the Australian community. Pillai demonstrates that three new tiers of membership now exist: temporary residents with no clear pathway to permanent residence, permanent residents without a practical capacity to acquire Australian citizenship and dual Australian citizens whose citizenship is contingent on their behaviour. These new tiers create marked inequalities among the Australian community, an injustice falling disproportionately on refugees. With permanent residency or citizenship beyond the reach of some refugees, one wonders, how will they successfully integrate into society?

The strength of this special issue lies in its breadth. Contributors come from disciplinary backgrounds, with the fields of history, political science, anthropology, sociology and law represented, but all authors share an expertise in the general field of refugee studies. The topics covered here are diverse, incorporating innovative

methodologies, under-utilised sources and pursuing new areas of inquiry. These articles contextualise refugee studies within wider national and international developments reflecting how individuals, organisations and governments view Australia's place in the world, both in its past and its present.

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