

## Application for Funding from Warwick Creative Exchange & Coventry University

### **Joint Proposal: Darryl Georgiou (CU), Dr Harbinder Sandhu (Warwick), Rebekah Tolley (CU), Tarla Patel (CU/Warwick)**

The proposal is to work in close collaboration with people who have become displaced from their communities in their home countries, and have arrived in Coventry as asylum seekers and refugees. Our primary partner organisation for the project will be the Coventry Peace House on Stoney Stanton Road, which has a history of working with asylum seekers through their educational programme & partnership with Coventry Asylum and Refugee Action Group (CARAG)

<http://coventrypeacehouse.wixsite.com/coventry-peace-house>

The organisation sits on the border of Foleshill and Hillfields, two areas of the city that have been identified as having low socio-economic status, directly affecting life expectancy, employment, housing and education.

The proposed project will consist of initial group discussions, allowing for an open dialogue and (crucially) a gradual build up of trust between ourselves as facilitators/artists and our participants, in order to create a safe environment within which to explore and share stories/challenges of life before and after arriving in Coventry. This will be followed by practical, guided workshops, where participants will be helped to develop self-reflective photo-artworks - ultimately to be showcased at mutually agreed venues in Coventry/Warwick and published in print and online. The project would be measured by using early, ongoing and post project feedback from participants (and stakeholders) to assess and make improvements to the project at key stages. Ultimately we see this proposal as laying important groundwork for a larger project, with the wider aims of determining how photography as socially engaged arts practice can be used to support communities in determining who they are, help span cultural divisions and convey critical issues for refugees in the UK today.

The lead academics from Coventry University are Darryl Georgiou, interdisciplinary artist/ Postgraduate (Art & Design Leader) Principal Lecturer within the Faculty of Arts & Humanities and Rebekah Tolley, artist/filmmaker and Module Leader/Associate Lecturer for MA Design & Visual Arts: Contemporary Issues module. Central to their ongoing academic/practice-based research (with a focus on socially engaged practice and 'how places feel' (*genius loci*), Georgiou/Tolley have recently worked on a year long photographic/audio-visual residency, *The World Lived Here: L8*, working closely with the community/residents of Granby, Toxteth, hosts to the 2015 Turner prize winners, Assemble. The project was commissioned as part of 'Culture Shifts: Local' by Open Eye Gallery, Liverpool, <https://openeye.org.uk/whatson/culture-shifts-local-socially-engaged-photography/> and exhibited there from October 5 - December 22, 2017. A public conference re 'Culture Shifts' visual arts impact on health and wellbeing, will subsequently be delivered on January 29, 2018, at Atkinson Gallery, Southport.

The lead academic from the University of Warwick is Dr Harbinder Sandhu, Health Psychologist, who works in the areas of Health, Psychology & Wellbeing: 'psychology of health', 'empowerment; how people view their own health', and 'behaviour change'. Dr Sandhu lives in the Foleshill area with her family and her experience of migration is a personal one, through her own family's experience of moving from the Punjab to India in the 1960s. Dr Sandhu's work with Peace House participant groups will be to explore the issues of isolation and behavioural change in order to foster a positive form of reflective engagement and holistic outcome to the proposed project. Her skills would be utilised to create a safe environment in which people can feel confident to talk about their experiences of coming to Coventry and how they are subsequently coping.

Tarla Patel is a currently studying MA: Contemporary Arts Practice at Coventry University (with Georgiou and Tolley) and is also a University of Warwick employee. Tarla's experience of living in Foleshill and Hillfields gives her a personal insight into growing up in both areas. Her work on her father 'Masterji's extensive photography archive (an evocative portrait of immigrant life in Coventry) has allowed her to expand on her interview skills. Over a period of time she has transcribed many hours of conversations with her father; the story of his life before and after arriving in the UK from India in the early 1950s, and has subsequently helped organise photography exhibitions of his work in Coventry, New York and Mumbai, as well being involved in the recent publication of Masterji's first book. <https://photomining.org/projects/masterji>