

RFMS

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Quarterly News

DePaul

REFUGEE &
FORCED
MIGRATION
STUDIES



MEET THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR

My name is Katy Arnold and I am proud to be serving as the new Director of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies (RFMS), a two-year graduate program at DePaul. I have been teaching and researching in this area since I worked at Harvard University during the 9/11 era. Harvard was a great place to be at that time and the university supported my creation of a new class on immigration, as I transitioned into this field.



Dr. Katy Arnold, RFMS Program Director

Since that time, I have developed human rights classes, a class on development, and an immigration law class. Each one of my books discusses some facet of migration and I have edited two two-volume encyclopedia projects on migration (one on anti-immigration movements and the other, a state-by-state encyclopedia). I have been particularly happy to work with community groups in Chicago since coming to DePaul.

I was lucky enough to travel when I was younger and I have also lived in two separate countries for one year each. In the second country—France—I had a student work visa, which was an enlightening experience. Between the two countries, I was often accused of being an unaccompanied minor at the border; I was almost thrown off a train in the middle of the night (in an isolated, mountainous area) because my visa expired; and I was doing some cash work for an employer outside of Paris—he didn't like the paperwork required for my student visa and so he wanted to pay me under the table—and then he refused to pay me my wages at the end of the year. One of my other workplaces—also in the suburbs—was raided by immigration authorities and so I was asked not to come back. While none of these experiences can be equated with people who experience all of these things long-term, each event has deepened my understanding of displacement. It is the daily grind of these sorts of difficulties that amounts to political harm, although many scholarly works do not acknowledge this.

My most current work is on detainee protest and faith-based sanctuary—this includes a book on migrant protest and a forthcoming article on the difference between faith-based sanctuary and sanctuary localities in PRQ (Political Research Quarterly).

"MY STUDENTS' PASSION FOR THESE SUBJECTS AND THEIR WILLINGNESS TO FORM DEPAUL SANCTUARY... HAS BEEN SO REWARDING. I AM GRATEFUL TO HAVE SUCH AN INSPIRING GROUP OF STUDENTS, THEY HAVE TAUGHT ME SO MUCH!"

My students' passion for these subjects and their willingness to form DePaul Sanctuary (we have also included my graduate students and DePaul alum in these efforts) has been so rewarding. I am grateful to have such an inspiring group of students—they have taught me so much!

Connect with Dr. Arnold

My fifth book—*Arendt, Agamben and the Issue of Hyper-Legality* (2018)—examines the blurring of boundaries between the criminal justice and migration policy spheres (migration is largely civil law). I was influenced by Hannah Arendt's well-known statement that it is better to be a criminal than a stateless person.

I considered this in the context of contemporary US politics and argued that she was correct that criminals have more formal rights than do stateless people, but that to the degree that we view these systems as distinct, we miss the degree to which *crimmigration* characterizes the status of both migrant detainees and prisoners.

As I state in the preface of the book, I learned a lot and had access to community resources at two levels: at the grassroots level; Sara Wohlleb of CRLN included me in faith-based sanctuary efforts around Chicago and I provided some support for these organizations as they prepared to take in some families. At a more elite level, I was provided access to Chicago Bar meetings, including a really wonderful meeting with Georgetown Law professors who are gathering data and information about refugee adjudication, since the government largely refuses to comply with freedom of information requests. The person who provided this access is a MacArthur officer who is an important figure in migration policy and advocacy.

I also need to state that one of my biggest sources of inspiration is my students from my immigration law classes, contemporary political theory, and the sanctuary class I taught last Winter Quarter.

Dr. Arnold with some of her students.



ABOUT RFMS DEPAUL



RFMS Students "walking a mile" for the Young Center.

The Refugee and Forced Migration Studies program at DePaul University is a two-year Master of Science graduate degree. The goal of the program is to balance rigorous academic and practical training. An interdisciplinary curriculum pulls from expert faculty in a variety of fields relevant to seeking solutions for the complex global issues around human displacement. Core courses include Asylum and Refugee Law and Policy, International Human Rights and Policy, International Conflict Management, Public Health and Forced Migration, International Dimensions of Public Service, Refugee Trauma and Mental Health, and Humanitarian Logistics. The final term of the program is spent completing two practicum experiences in the field.

Visit our [program website](#) to learn more!

OUR CHICAGO LOCATION

Chicago is one of the largest immigrant hubs in the nation and has a network of agencies large and small that help refugees and asylum seekers settle in the city. Domestic U.S. RAP resettlement agencies such as **Catholic Charities**, **Refugee One**, the **Ethiopian Community Association of Chicago**, and **Church World Service** are located here.

The **Refugee Action Network** (RAN) is a statewide advocacy group consisting of members

from many of the agencies working in the greater Chicago area on initiatives related to displacement and resettlement such as **Asian Human Services**, the **Chicago Jewish Coalition for Refugees**, the **Middle Eastern Immigrant and Refugee Alliance** (MIRA), **Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights**, and the **United African Organization**.

REACH engages family-focused ecotherapy and outdoor adventure sports like climbing and kayaking. **FORA** is pioneering High-Dosage Tutoring for SLIFE (Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education) refugee students.

Countless other organizations represent the patchwork of humanity in Chicago like the **Rohingya Culture Center**, **Syrian Community Network**, **Indo-American Center**, **Muslim Women's Resource Center**, and **Deaf Defy**. You can find these organizations located in all corners of Chicago .



HELLO FROM THE DEPARTMENT ASSISTANT: MADDIE

Hi everyone. I'm Maddie Easton and I'm the department assistant for the Refugee and Forced Migration Studies program! Along with RFMS, I also work with the Critical Ethnic Studies MA and the Peace, Justice, and Conflict Studies BA, handling behind-the-scenes things like budgeting, course scheduling, bringing in guest speakers, welcoming new faculty, and more.

I graduated from DePaul in March of 2021 with my degree in both Political Science and Applied Diplomacy, and as the first graduate of the Grace School of Applied Diplomacy. I studied foreign policy and extremism, expanding on the latter through my Applied Diplomacy capstone project on the spread and effects of digital misinformation, and how diplomacy can act through the geography of social media.

In my undergrad I had the chance to study human rights, forced migration, and immigration law with Dr. Arnold, learning about the overarching global and national systems that both create and complicate refugee issues. I'm very excited to be working with Dr. Arnold again in this program and enjoy putting my undergrad knowledge to use. RFMS provides students with an intense, interesting, and enriching two years, and it's been a fun experience working with a program dedicated to supporting the needs of refugee groups and developing future leaders in this field.

Outside of DePaul, I am also an artist and like to spend time drawing, painting, and doing photography!



Connect with Maddie

HELLO FROM THE GRADUATE PROGRAM ASSISTANT: CLAIRE

Claire Holba is the Graduate Program Assistant and also a member of the incoming 2021 cohort.

In August of 2018 Claire found a home deep in the jungles of Thailand as a teacher in Mae Ra Moe refugee camp with survivors of conflict and persecution in Burma. She is forever indebted to the radical hospitality of the people of Burma who welcomed her in. Since living and teaching at Mae Ra Moe, Claire has committed her personal and professional life to finding solutions with and alongside members of the Burma communities as well as other survivor communities of conflict and displacement.

Claire finds herself continuously drawn to educational opportunities as a path forward for herself and others. She has been to Karen State as a guest of the Karen people, working with local leadership on educational reform and development amidst an ongoing civil war. She is currently the Board President of **Hope for Tomorrow**, a 501c3 charity building bridges of understanding between the Chin and other Burma diaspora communities and the American community through education, mentorship, and civic engagement.

Claire has also worked as a visiting scholar with various Burma state committees on processes of constitutional design and reform during the transition to a federal system. She is the co-founder of a 501c3 not-for-profit, **Patchwork Indy**, through which she is engaged in intercultural initiatives and advocacy around housing injustice affecting vulnerable communities.



STUDENT PROFILE: SARAH PAJEAU

Sarah Pajeau is in her second year in the RFMS program. She serves as Program Director at the **Rohingya Culture Center**, and shares about her experiences in the program...

RFMS: What were some of your experiences that led you to pursue this program?

SP: I first began an interest in working with displaced people after I volunteered at an internally displaced peoples (IDP) camp in Kenya.

I previously worked at Pan-African Association as a Job Developer where I worked with refugees and asylees from all over the world to find employment. I then worked at Apna Ghar as a Case Manager where I worked with immigrants and refugees from all over the world who faced gender-based violence. I had this experience and decided to pursue an MS in Refugee and Forced Migration Studies to both learn and do more.

RFMS: What are some of the current projects in the field that you are engaged in?

SP: I currently am the Program Director at the Rohingya Culture Center (RCC) where I manage and assist in various programs (Case Management, ESL classes, Citizenship classes, Youth Club, Academic Support, Religious Education, and Boys & Girls Soccer, Food Distribution, and COVID-19 Support). I seek, write, and organize grants to guarantee an uninterrupted delivery of services to the community.

I also organize all fundraising efforts, manage budget and financials, and organize events. It's a position where I am able to wear many hats and learn something new every day. I have actively been studying the Rohingya language and hope to speak it soon!

Next quarter I will be interning to support DePaul Sanctuary Group and FORA (Forging Opportunities for Refugees in America), while also still working full-time at RCC.

RFMS: What do you plan to use your degree for after you complete your M.S. in the RFMS program?

SP: I plan to continue working at RCC for the foreseeable future. However, I have an interest in public health and would like to incorporate that and my degree on a larger scale in the future.

RFMS: Are there any specific issues in the global refugee support infrastructure that you are focused on and what do you intend to do after graduation to contribute to a solution?

SP: I am very interested in public health. It's great because I can work with this interest in my current position through a specific grant we have, which allows us to focus on COVID-19 and overall health with underserved communities.

Rohingya Culture Center

"The UN lists the Rohingya Muslims of northwestern Burma (Myanmar) among the most persecuted people in the world. As many as 1,000 Rohingya have been resettled in Chicago since 2010" (**RCC Website**).

The RCC in West Ridge/West Rogers Park meets the needs of the Chicago Rohingya community through programming and advocacy.



STUDENT PROFILE: CHELSEA BUNDY

Chelsea Bundy is a second year RFMS graduate student and serves as a Sign Language Interpreter at **Deaf Defy**.

RFMS: What were some of your experiences that led you to pursue this program?

CB: I began working with refugees in 2016 as a tutor. In 2019, I was asked to join the Deaf Defy team as their sign language interpreter because of my experiences working with refugees. Going on medical missions with Deaf Defy and working with Deaf refugee children and their families gave me the realization of what I wanted to pursue: working with refugees with disabilities and Deafness. I planned to continue working with Deaf Defy as a sign language interpreter and board member and I wanted to ensure that I had an in-depth, ethical understanding of working with refugees, which led me to this program.

RFMS: What are some of the current projects in the field that you are engaged in?

CB: I work as the lead sign language interpreter and board member of the NGO Deaf Defy. The goal of Deaf Defy is to empower Deaf and hard-of-hearing children living in refugee camps through audiological care and sign language acquisition and access. Past missions have taken place in refugee camps throughout Lebanon and Jordan. With more education and funding, Deaf Defy plans to expand missions to include more countries!

After two years of being unable to work due to the pandemic, we are currently planning and fundraising for our 2022 mission where we will travel to Jordan and work in refugee camps throughout the country from June 17 until July 3.

RFMS: What do you plan to use your degree for after you complete your M.S. in the RFMS program?

CB: I plan to use my degree to continue working with and expanding Deaf Defy!

RFMS: Are there any specific issues in the global refugee support infrastructure that you are focused on and what do you intend to do after graduation to contribute to a solution?

CB: There is not enough research and work done to aid and empower Deaf and/or disabled refugees. I hope that Deaf Defy can continue paving the way in this field. I hope to also continue researching and spreading awareness about the field as well!

Thank you so much for the opportunity to speak about my work with Deaf Defy and please feel free to reach out to me with any questions!

My email is cbundy2@depaul.edu.

Deaf Defy

"Deaf refugee children are some of the most isolated and vulnerable people on Earth. Deaf Defy is a team of Deaf professionals, audiologists and ASL interpreters working to help these children achieve success in every way."

To learn more about Deaf Defy and to support their work you can check out their website: www.deafdefy.org and their social media!



ALUMNI IMPACT: ASHLEY WHETHAM

Ashley Whetham graduated from the RFMS program in 2021. She serves as Preferred Communities Case Manager with the **Ethiopian Community Association of Chicago** (ECAC).

Prior to joining the RFMS Program and completing her practicum experience at ECAC, Ashley had not worked in refugee resettlement. "I loved the RFMS program," she shares. "There are not many programs like it in the world with such an opportunity to gain knowledge and to work with professors who are experts in the field. One of my professors engaged guest speakers from the UN, UNICEF, and the Red Cross." Ashley recalls speaking with professionals holding such varied real-life experiences. The process allowed her to explore how she could better serve.

In her current role with ECAC, Ashley assists refugees after the initial 90-day service period. 90 days is the standard service period provided by authorized resettlement agencies. She works with single and expecting mothers, those experiencing medical challenges, and survivors of torture and gender-based violence. Her agency has been welcoming more and more individuals from Afghanistan every day. A large part of Ashley's role is balancing hard truths while being culturally appropriate. "I am working with women who have experienced injuries from the Taliban, and I am telling them that insurance will only cover some of the costs."

We asked Ashley what she perceives as some of the key issue areas in forced migration warranting solutions?

"The big challenge in post-resettlement is that it is not supported enough. The concept of a 90-day resettlement period is unrealistic. The current system expects people who are traumatized, from a different culture, and who don't speak the language to adjust in 90 days." The situations influencing refugee resettlement are always changing as well, Ashley points out. Ashley began working for ECAC during the global COVID pandemic. Real-time she is witnessing the aftermath of the situation in Afghanistan expose significant gaps in the system. "For example, with the Afghan program, much has changed, but at first, they were saying Afghan arrivals were not eligible for public aid."

We asked, *where do we even begin to make a dent in the system?* Ashley responded, "This is something I am always wrestling with. It would start with systemic change. I don't know this is realistic." She emphasized the importance of seeking change on an individual basis through advocacy work and education.

"What we are up against is incredibly difficult, but it can start on an individual level." Ashley cites RAN (Refugee Action Network) and how they successfully pushed Illinois representatives to provide more support for Afghan arrivals. "Get involved in a group like this. We want systemic change, but it is important to remember that even if this isn't happening, it is great that refugee resettlement exists."

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FEATURED FACULTY PIECE

RFMS PROFESSOR SHANA WILLS DISCUSSES HER WORK WITH THE ERITREAN DIASPORA COMMUNITY AND THEIR ABILITY TO BRING MEDICAL RELIEF AND SUPPORT TO THE FRONT LINES OF THE EVOLVING CONFLICT IN ERITREA AND ETHIOPIA AMIDST A GLOBAL PANDEMIC.

PEOPLE WERE SITTING, WATCHING AS THE WORLD CRUMBLED, SAYING NO ONE IS TALKING ABOUT THE SITUATION IN THE CAMPS.

We have the means. We just need to get it there.

This was the message recalled by DePaul professor, Shana Wills, as delivered to her by several members of the Chicago Eritrean diaspora community. COVID was affecting all corners of the globe. The Eri Yiakl Foundation had raised \$800,000 in funds from community members to address rising concerns about inadequate protections and COVID awareness in the camps hosting Eritrean refugees. The camps were primarily in eastern Sudan and Tigray, Ethiopia. The Eri Yiakl Movement had used some of the money to deliver basic food supplies, soap, and COVID awareness materials. They reached out to Professor Shana Wills for counsel on how to continue to deliver necessary supplies such as Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) to friends and family in the camps.

Professor Wills had cultivated longstanding relationships with several members of the community while examining the liberation struggle of Eritrea and its "remarkable policy of self-reliance" in the 1990s and early 2000s. Having conducted research on the impact of conflict on children in southern Africa, Professor Wills was drawn to the roles that children and women were playing in the liberation movement. During her research, Professor Wills engaged deeply with people in Eritrea and in the Chicago diaspora community. A few short years later, she helped sponsor the resettlement of hundreds of Eritreans as a Director at Heartland Alliance. This work solidified her connection to the local Eritrean Community.

Historically, Italy proclaimed Eritrea as a colony at the end of the 19th century. After occupation by British forces in the 1940s, the UN General Assembly voted to make Eritrea a federal component of Ethiopia in 1952. By 1993 Eritrea had successfully achieved independence from Ethiopia due to significant liberation efforts. Since achieving independence, both Eritrean-Ethiopian border clashes and major human rights violations by the Eritrean government forces against the Eritrean people have caused massive displacement in the region. The Tigray region of Ethiopia, as well as Sudan, have been long-term hosts to refugees from Eritrea.

THEN THE WAR ERUPTED IN TIGRAY.

Professor Wills explained how many of the leaders she had worked with on post-liberation reconstruction in the 1990s and 2000s had been forced to flee, due to differing political opinions with the dictatorial President. She recalled the excitement and energy in community townhalls with the diaspora stakeholders during this time period. Naturally, people moved on to various roles and pursued education to continue to develop their skills and build their lives.

But with the global COVID 19 pandemic sending shockwaves throughout the world, there was a resurgence of energy. A few months into the pandemic, Professor Wills was approached by members of the Eritrean community seeking to expand their efforts to deliver PPE supplies into camps. What began as local discussions turned into interstate collaborative efforts amongst the diaspora community. "I thought I was just working with the Chicago community, and before long, realized I was being contacted by other states," Professor Wills shared.

What was remarkable was that this small-scale effort, though quickly growing, was only the beginning.

"We talked about structure and framework. And then, I saw a friend, with boots on the ground in sub-Saharan Africa, had posted something on Facebook about an organization that was sending PPE to the region. I wondered, *would they send this to Eritrean refugees?* I just followed up and reached out to that friend, who put me in touch with the organization and we put in a proposal almost immediately." Before long, the organization, **Direct Relief**, had agreed to work with the Eri Yiakl Foundation to send PPE to Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia.

Professor Wills paused her story to reflect on the remarkable evolution of this accomplishment. She believes in "having faith in the nuance of serendipity."

"You can see something and say, *this is similar. This is interesting.* And then you can walk away. But you can also say, *Oh! What if I reach out? Make that connection?*"

Bulk shipments of PPE and medicine were sent to Ethiopia and Sudan for distribution in the camps where Eritreans were living. The Eritrean diaspora community moved to create a massive awareness campaign. The supplies arrived at the camps in Sudan, while the shipments heading to the camps in Tigray, Ethiopia were suddenly held up at the airport in Addis Ababa. "The logistics were *stuck*. Things were pending, pending." Professor Wills said it was as if they could feel something just over the horizon. "Then the war erupted in Tigray."

The Eritrean community watched as the dire situation of those still stuck in the camps unfolded in real-time. [In November 2020, the camps in Tigray were decimated.](#) Tens of thousands of refugees went missing. "The world was asking where are the Eritreans? I was calling so many organizations asking if they were on the ground doing anything. All of the big organizations were saying, 'we are not there' or 'we do not have access to the camps'." The team had to "put faith" in what they knew they could do.

Through their own network, the Eri Yiakl team was able to find a local organization willing to share office space in Khartoum. Through a series of conversations, proposals, and revisions, the team secured funds to establish a reception area on the border of Sudan and Ethiopia. From there, they could provide relief to fatigued and weary refugees crossing the border into Sudan.

The Eri Yiakl Foundation's emergency medical intervention in eastern Sudan was set up to provide medical consultations and public health campaigns around COVID 19. The clinic served about 100 patients daily with consultations, basic lab tests, and necessary medicines. Those who had been missing flowed into the reception center. Most had traveled in a long, roundabout way to cross into Sudan and were in poor physical conditions. During a six-month period, 15,000 refugees were served directly through consultations and 21,000 refugees were impacted by the COVID 19 awareness and public health campaign in the Tenedba camp.

"What was phenomenal about this group and recognizing their agency and what they could make happen was they didn't care if those needing help were Eritrean or Ethiopian. The consensus was that we already started something and we are going to address the needs of all those Ethiopians who have been hosting our people."

The story is still evolving and the community is continuing to innovate and adapt to the needs on the ground. Professor Wills states, "A key outcome of this preliminary intervention was that the Eri Yiakl staff on the ground in eastern Sudan spoke the same language as the refugees fleeing from Tigray. This was an incredible asset....it led the team to a greater understanding of the psycho-social impact of the situation on the refugees." As a result, the team sought to expand services and provide psycho-social counseling. They have successfully secured another 18 months' worth of funds and medical supplies to extend the clinic's services.

The project relaunched this month and will serve at least 50,000 refugees in three camps as well as Khartoum. .

Professor Wills' work with the Eri Yiakl Foundation is a powerful example of the role civil society can play in managing conflict, contributing toward humanitarian relief, and effectuating change.

WHAT WAS PHENOMENAL ABOUT THIS GROUP AND RECOGNIZING THEIR AGENCY AND WHAT THEY COULD MAKE HAPPEN WAS THEY DIDN'T CARE IF THOSE NEEDING HELP WERE ERITREAN OR ETHIOPIAN.

DePaul Professor Shana Wills

is the Executive Director/Founder of **Refugee Education & Adventure Challenge** (REACH), which provides refugee youth and families with experiential learning opportunities focused on STEAM-related education and adventure sports. She's also an independent consultant for refugee and immigrant service providers in Chicago and has served as the Director of Chicago Public School's International Newcomer Center for recently arrived refugee and immigrant high school students.

Professor Wills has conducted field research on issues impacting vulnerable populations, including child soldiers, street children, and marginalized communities in Angola, Colombia, Eritrea, Mozambique, & South Africa, and warehoused refugee populations in Kenya and Tanzania. She earned an MA in African Studies from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and a BA in African Studies through DePaul SCPS.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



RFMS students team up with Deaf Defy.

The RFMS Program seeks ways to engage with the community around us and this quarter has seen quite a few opportunities to put what we believe into practice. Leading up to the start of the 2021 school year, Dr. Arnold led a workout event in the Quad with **Deaf Defy**, an organization that provides language counseling, hearing tests, and hearing aids to people living in refugee camps. RFMS second-year student, Chelsea Bundy, is a Sign Language Interpreter with Deaf Defy and helped to organize the event.

During the quarter we also hosted volunteers from **Exodus World Service** for a simulation event that allowed students to discuss the experiences of a refugee fleeing their home. "Exodus enjoyed its time with the RFMS students and the thoughtful perspectives and experiences they brought to the simulation. We hope to work with the program and its students in the future as we serve the refugee population in Chicago!" said Exodus Mobilization Manager, Carissa Zaffiro.

TAKING ACTION

A group from both cohorts formed a team for a "walk-a-mile" virtual fundraising event for the **Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights**. We also helped the **DePaul Sanctuary** student group carry out a clothing drive to support displaced students from **Afghanistan as they joined DePaul**.

RFMS graduate student Katie Crosby formed a partnership with Sullivan High School, where our students are tutoring high school refugee students and helping them apply to jobs and colleges. Crosby was inspired by a book, **Refugee High**, which tells the story of Sullivan. Sullivan has one of the largest populations of refugee students of any school in the nation.

Our students are also working with Dr. Arnold to support the **Resurrection Project**, doing country conditions research to provide evidential support to asylum cases. Please contact Dr. Arnold if you are a student who would like to participate in either initiative.

**Follow us on
Social Media!**



RFMS students and friends (pups included) "walking a mile" for the Young Center.

