

UNESCO RILA: The sounds of integration

Episode 1

Speaker: Gameli Tordzro - Artist in Residence of The Unesco Chair in Refugee Integration through Languages and the Arts

Welcome to the podcast series of the UNESCO chair in refugee integration through languages and arts. We bring you sounds to engage with you, and invite you to think with us.

Speaker: Alison Phipps - UNESCO Chair in Refugee Integration through Languages and the Arts

Hello, everyone, happy new year, and welcome to the first of our UNESCO programme podcasts. My name is Alison, and together with a team of researchers and artists and administrators, and some wonderful research students and refugee background ambassadors, I'm working to look at the role of the arts and languages and the practices and processes of integrating refugees and people living in existing communities into new communities themselves. What this means is that we are working to look at hospitality in quite a deep sense. So not just in the sense of the hospitality industry, or in the sense of offering a welcome to people saying hello or greeting them being friendly, as we might understand in lay terms, but actually, what it means to be hospitable in society, and what those practices of hospitality are, how we learn them, how we access them, why they are important symbols in society, and why they're vital today to the work of reforming compassionate societies, critical societies and societies in which all people can benefit from the presence of other people around them, people who may be very different to those they grew up with, or those they've habitually been able to understand in terms of their languages or other arts. We're also really interested in working on cultural heritage and understanding what it means to have lost your heritage, your language, the things that were part of your culture, and how it is that once you've been displaced from the land, where you grew up, and maybe where your forebears grew up, how you might keep alive some of those practices and traditions and how they might change as part of your experience of being in a diaspora and then settling, making your home, becoming indigenous to another land in another place. So these questions of integration are also for us intimately bound up with questions of indigeneity. Our work takes us all over the world, but in particular, we've been working with partners at the University of Ghana, Legon and with Noyam Institute for African dance, and looking at a context where many people left historically and were forced to leave under the conditions of slavery, not just obviously, from Ghana, but from many parts of Africa, and other parts where people were enslaved.

But also, it is important, I think, for us to reflect with these historical conditions and also the way in which in the present contexts like Ghana have not been so called hotspots of migration, panic or alarm as places of welcoming numbers, or receiving numbers of refugees and migrants have been in, for example, parts of the rich world. And it's been also important for us to reflect with our other partners at the Islamic University of Gaza and within the Gaza Strip, it's impossible to think of, and with, the category of the refugee, without thinking, first of all, about the category of the refugee as it was formed in international law, following the Second World War and the Holocaust, and following the creation of the State of Israel and its subsequent creation of refugees who are still under the protection of the

United Nations or under the organisation which is working to protect and support refugees who are of Palestinian origin and living within the context of Israel Palestine. Both of these global South contexts inform our work and our deeper thinking and theorising, but also our methodological approaches, the digital, the artistic and the linguistic, to our own work, much of which is also widely informed by theorising about decolonialism, decolonizing, and also practices of what we've begun to consider post decolonial ideas, the way in which for a reshaping to happen, this can't be left to one group or another, but actually needs to be worked out together with real care and thought, for us to make progress. So this is just a short podcast introducing the work of the UNESCO RILA team. We're looking forward to producing more podcasts over the months to come and as part of our reflection on events, perhaps on the news on our own activities, and also on the work that others do within context. So we wish you all a really happy new year and productive time in 2018. Thank you for listening.

Gameli Tordzro - Artist in Residence of The Unesco Chair in Refugee Integration through Languages and the Arts

Thank you for listening to the podcasts of the UNESCO chair in refugee integration through languages and arts, a podcast series to make you think. More information about our work can be found on the website of the University of Glasgow www.gla.ac.uk. Thank you very much.