

PhotoInsight.org.uk >Experiences Project

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The Experiences project

The Experiences project calls for experiences from migrant, asylum seekers and refugees. Photoinsight is trying to create a living archive on the Internet of histories from people who have experience relocation. We invite people to send in images that may be significant to them, stories, poems, music, maybe even an oral account. The aim of this project is to give a place, space and platform for the relocated to explore their own feelings about their identity and situation.

Aim:

The experiences project aim is to develop “experiences” from **economic migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and British migrants** who have left the UK to live abroad, in an attempt to bring together a varied range of experiences of people who have, for various reasons, relocated to and from the UK. In its completed form the Experiences project will act as a living archive, monument and heritage for many beyond the millennium.

Why is the project important?

- **Media access** – offers those relocated the opportunity to engage in a debate about themselves and their own identity
- **Offers amplification** of personal histories and experiences of relocation
- **Empowers and questions** stereotypical representations of the relocated in current media. Over the last 12 months a serious amount of TV news, fiction and newspapers have run stories on refugee groups and asylum seekers. The recent race riots in Bradford, and attacks on refugees and asylum seekers in Britain over the last 6 months has brought into question many issues surrounding relocation. The inquiry into the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence with the Metropolitan Police’s admission of institutionalised racism, the defamatory and near racist language used by both sides of the political divide over the issue of asylum seekers and refugees, and the appalling and terrifying spectre of extreme right-wing domestic terrorism are just some of the news stories of the last few years which have thrown into sharp relief the debates which surround issues such as racism, nationalism, national identity, immigration, the continuing legacies of western colonial, imperial histories and the nature of society in multi-cultural urban areas. Much of the most exciting, challenging and thought-provoking work

in the fields of visual arts and literature has been focused on precisely such issues, be it from established and successful artists such as Chris Opili, Yinke Shonebare, and Zadie Smith, to less well known artists such as Ming Wong and others featured in Photoinsight.

In Arts and Humanities Departments in Universities throughout the world such issues and concerns have been theorised, discussed, debated and disseminated under the category of Post-colonial Theory.

- **With a third of the people** on the globe on the move the project will provide a needed and powerful snap shot of this unique period in humanity
- **In light of 11 September Terrorist attack in USA**, and the possible anti-East feeling that may generate in the media and over the coming months – the Experiences project offers a positive representation of ethnic identity and Diaspora voices.

Once the project is realised who will benefit?

The Experiences project attracts all cultures and communities regardless of race, gender, disability or age to experience and gain more knowledge of the effects of relocation. Benefit to these communities occur by:

- **cross sector and culturally awareness** - similarities between different cultures can be experienced as can the benefits of accessing work from an unconventional and convenient medium.
- **easy access to the work** - for older communities and those with disabilities - the medium offers a chance to experience these works as these groups maybe unable to access it in museums, libraries due to the inability to travel.
- **an opportunity for young people** to explore more about the cultural and historical heritage in the UK

Increasing Skills and Creativity

It is anticipated that the Experiences Project will increase skills and creativity through the Millennium by:

- as a source of information to extend and feed into the ongoing exploration around theories of immigration Diaspora and relocation
- through creativity - the information contained in the website can be accessed by academics, students and researchers as an innovative resource to feed into their work and then to be disseminated to a wider audience for understanding

Making a Difference to a Community

- creating a physical archive, amplifying the historical and personal lives of refugees and asylum seekers in London
- raising awareness and enable younger generations to explore issues around relocation and therefore create a greater understanding between generations and cultures

Long Term Benefit

The Experiences Project will:

- be indefinitely accessible through on-line technology beyond the year 2000.
- permanently accessible to all communities when accessing the Internet
- be continually updated with the thoughts, aspirations of future generations - acting as a wider and useful index of the present and the past, and of cultures brought and found