

CONTEXTUALLY  
RESPONSIVE  
OCCUPATIONAL  
THERAPY working  
with refugees &  
asylum seekers

WFOT

May 22, 2018

Capetown, South Africa

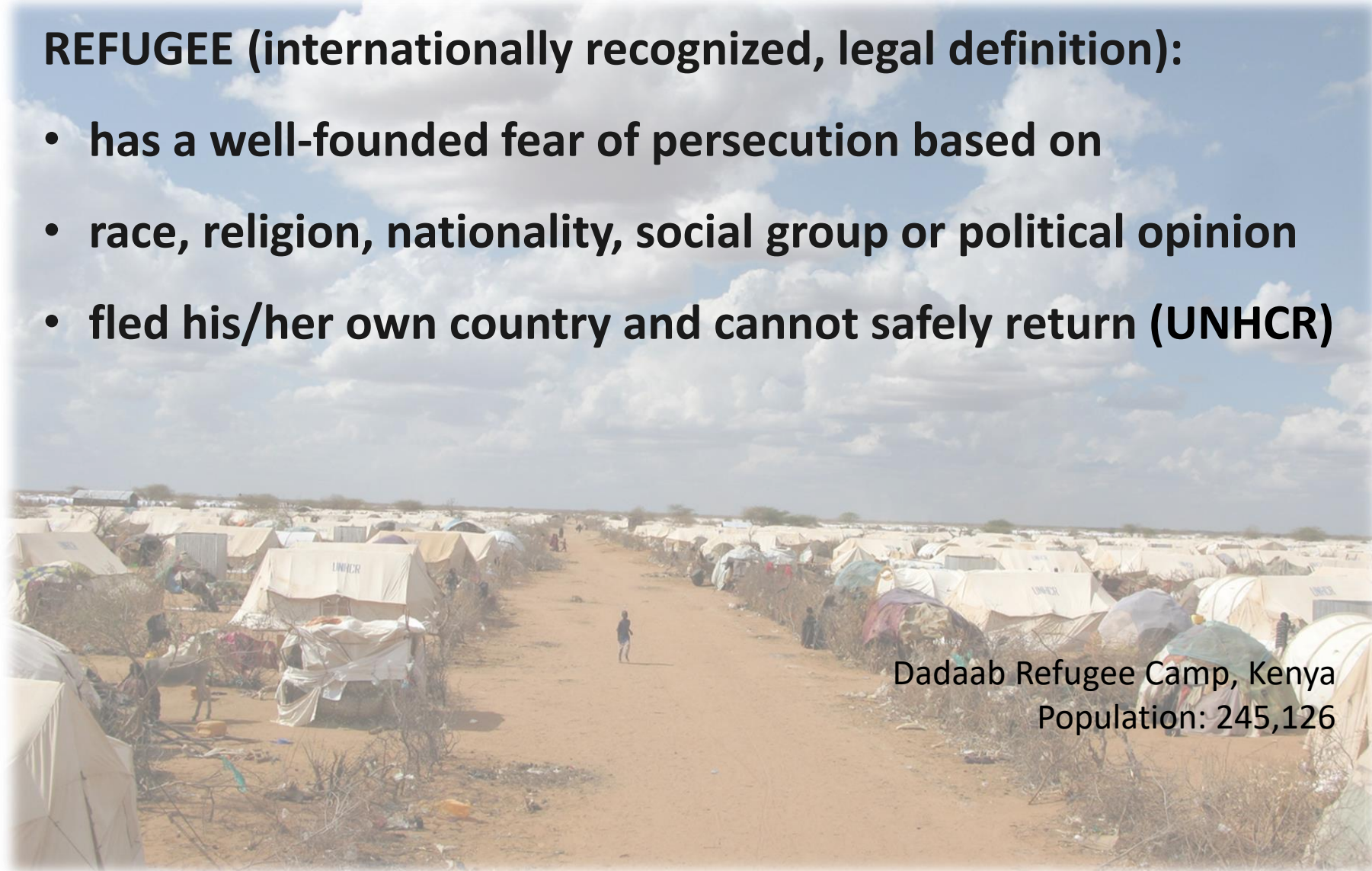




# WHO IS A REFUGEE?

**REFUGEE (internationally recognized, legal definition):**

- has a well-founded fear of persecution based on
- race, religion, nationality, social group or political opinion
- fled his/her own country and cannot safely return (UNHCR)



Dadaab Refugee Camp, Kenya  
Population: 245,126

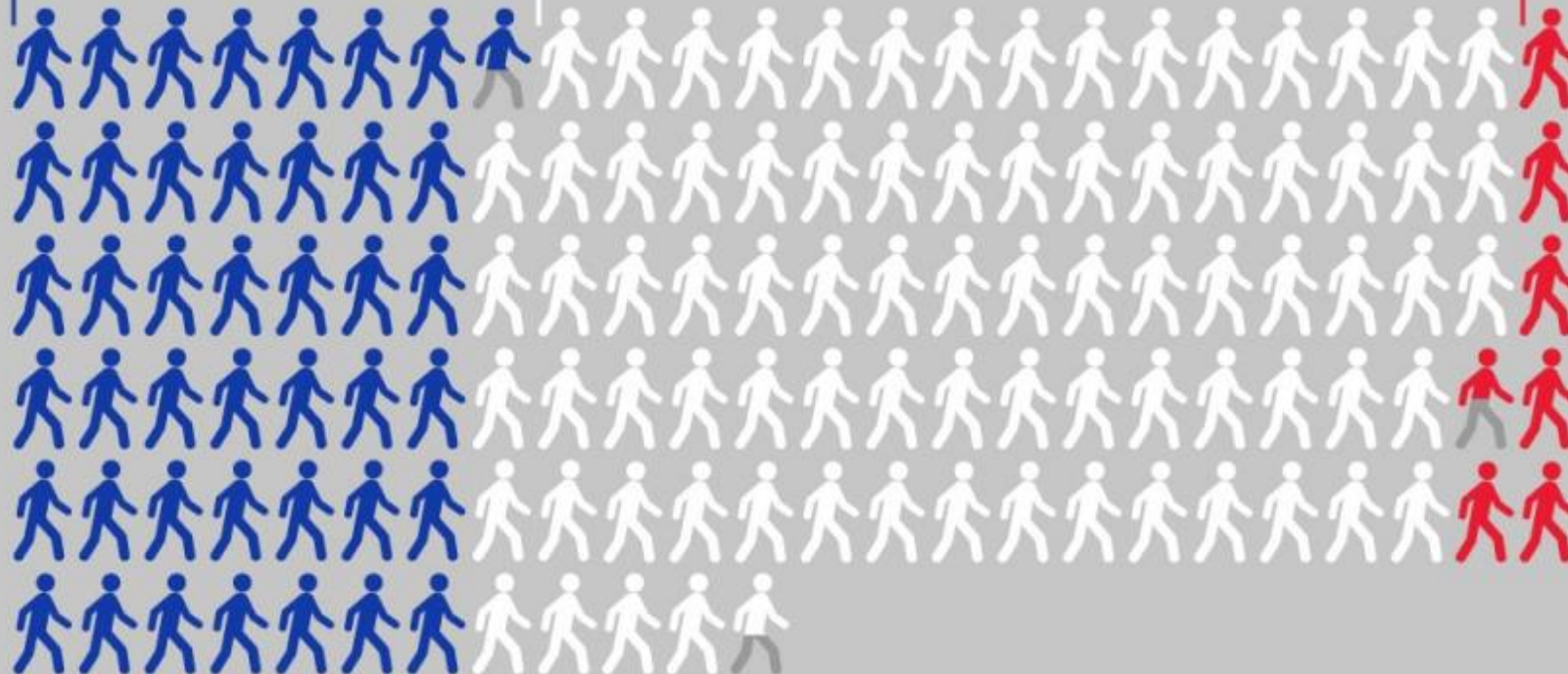
# GLOBAL MIGRATION-HIGHEST IN DECADES

**65.3 million** people worldwide are forcibly displaced — roughly the population of France

**21.3 million**  
Refugees

**40.8 million**  
Internally displaced people

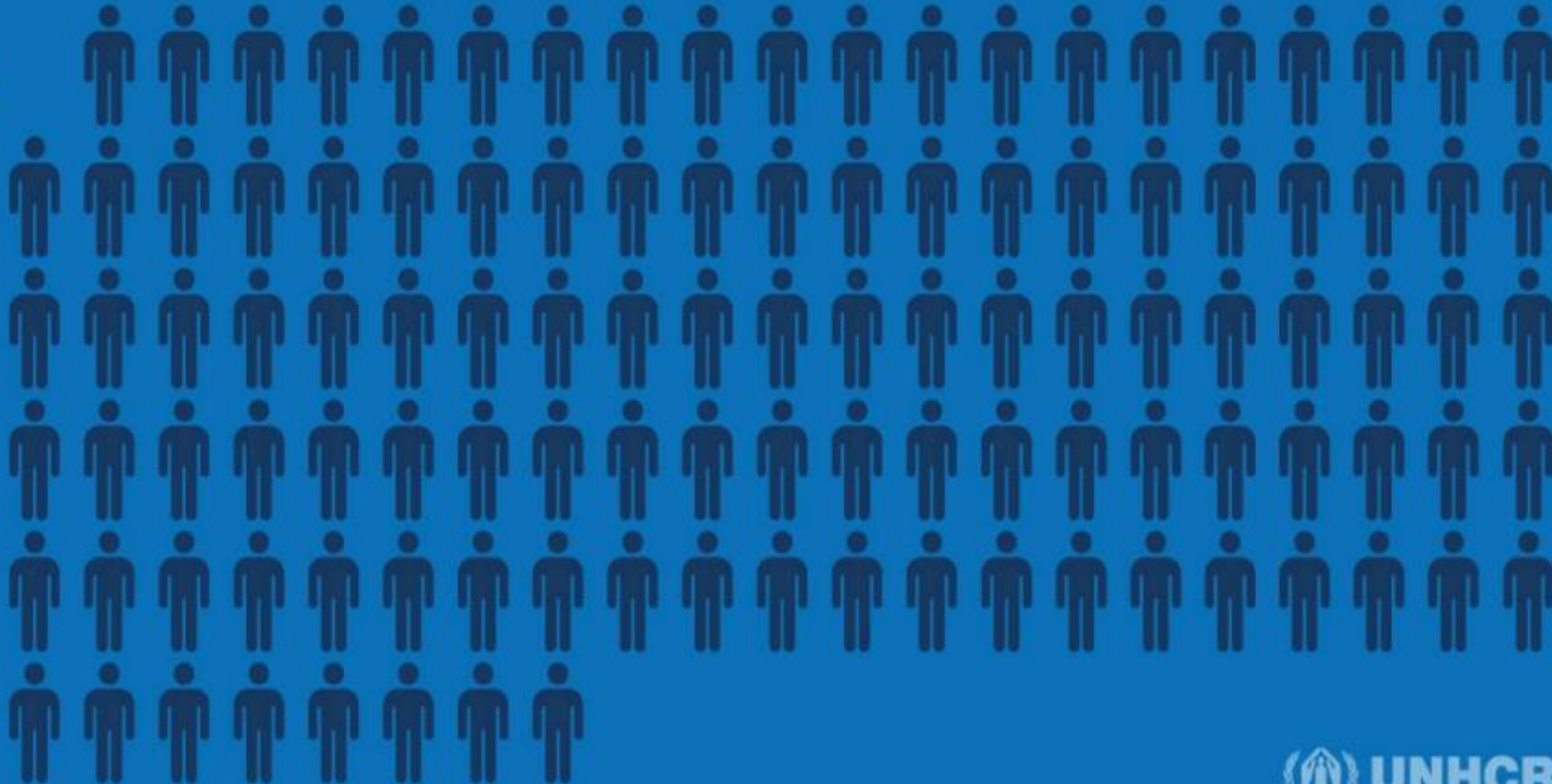
**3.2 million**  
Asylum-seekers



 500,000

Source: UNHCR / 20 JUNE 2016

**1 in every 113 people** on earth is an asylum-seeker, internally displaced or a refugee



Source: UNHCR / 20 JUNE 2016

# Flight

- Fear of being caught and returned
- Crossing checkpoints and borders
- Robbery
- Crowded, unsanitary conditions
- Exploitation: bribes, lies, entrapment
- Lack of medical care/untreated conditions
- Malnutrition
- Long waits in centers
- Unpredictable shelter
- Uncertainty about future
- Danger from war/raids
- Gender-based violence



Many refugees and survivors of

asylum seekers are state sponsored torture



**Amnesty International  
documents over 141  
countries as  
practicing torture.**

*Source: Amnesty International Annual Report 2014: The State of the World's Human Rights*

# TORTURE

Used systemically and systematically around the globe

The ultimate corruption of human relationships breaks the spirit, silences, shames and is meant to *break bodies and minds* (Stover and Nightengale, 1985)

“Torture as an instrument of political and social control is intended to rob its victims of their "voice" and their agency, to have them serve as abject warnings to the general populace” (Gorman 2001)

Torture creates discord in families, perpetuates fear and distrust among communities, and stifles opposition to the ‘status quo’ fueling a cycle of intimidation, and alienation, ultimately corrupting human connections and creating isolation.

Normal human response to abnormal human experiences

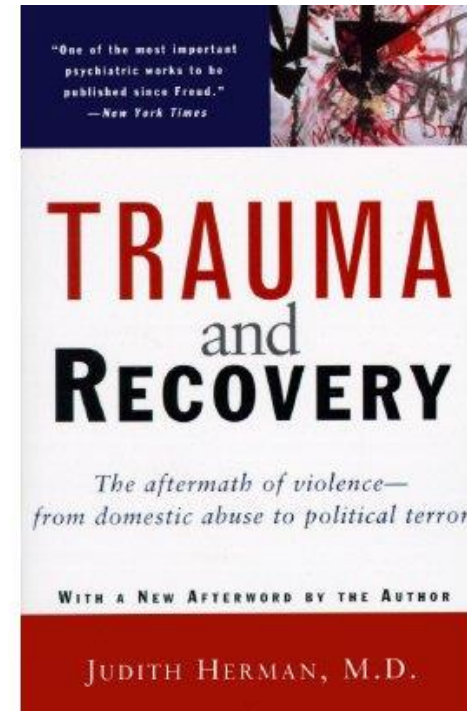
Torture is the pathology not the symptoms



# Trauma-Informed Model is Imperative

Judith Lewis Herman, MD

- Safety
- Reconstruction
- Reconnection

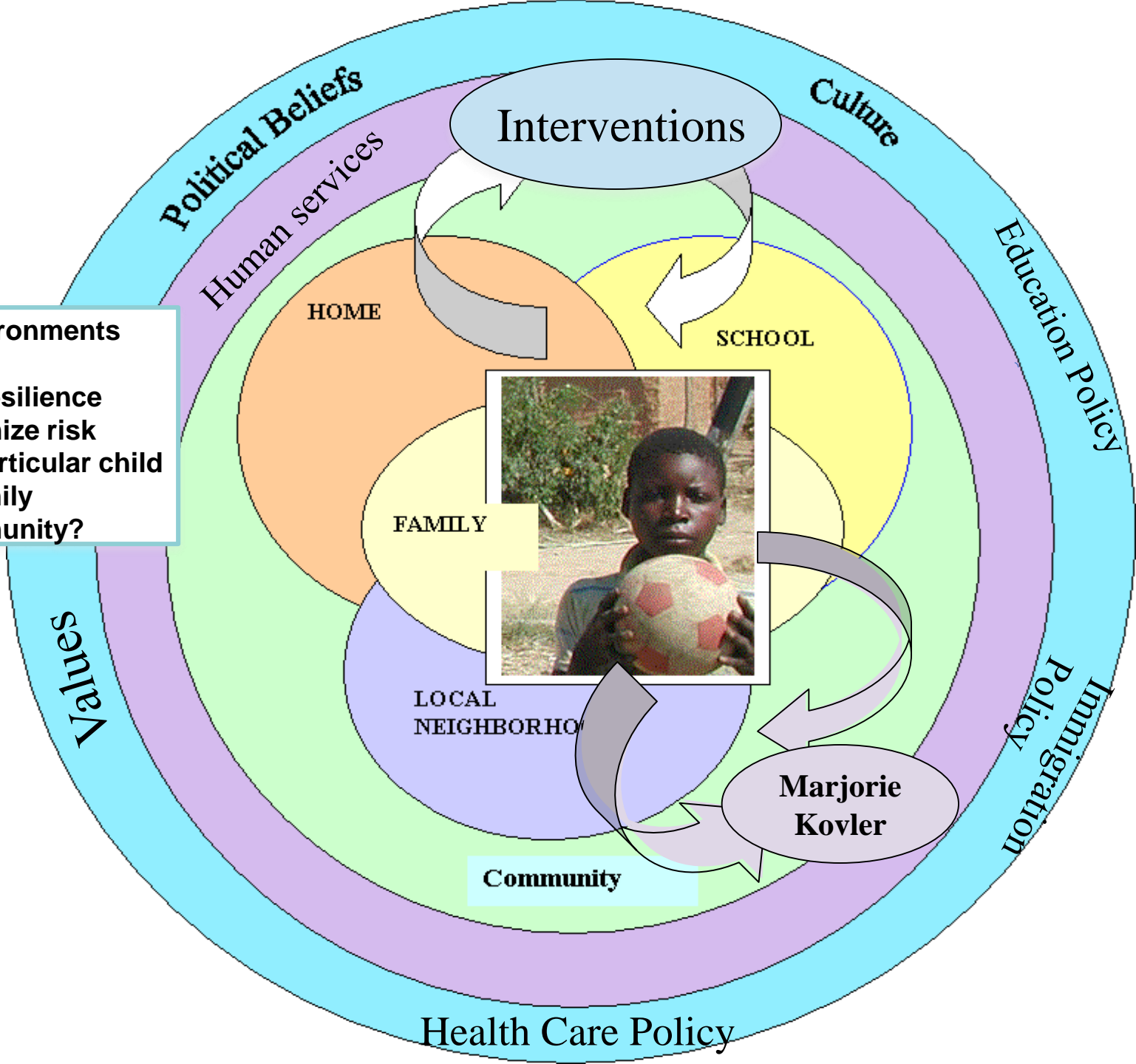




# Culturally responsive approach

- Awareness of implicit biases
- How we see ourselves may be different than how others see us
- Culture = (not ) Race + Ethnicity
- Do not assume you understand
- Be aware of power and privilege
- Approach work with humility
- Consider modifying terminology in medical/mental health settings
- Explanatory models helpful
- Create environments reflective of populations served-collaborate
- Work collaboratively with interpreters ~ "cultural broker"

What environments can best support resilience and minimize risk for this particular child in this family and community?







“We’ve lost something we’re always trying to capture. Where do you find it? In the kitchen! When you get in the kitchen we find it in little pieces, in the food, in the conversation. When you smell that particular herb, you can picture the woman in the market who sells it, what she is wearing- you know where she is from. It takes you back to good places, takes you back home. I still own a culture of food that I can share and that people will accept...



...In English I can't capture the experience but I can touch the feeling when we're creating, when we're doing. You feel it. It's alive...The greatest joys are simple. When we're eating nothing else counts. We're no longer a survivor. We are celebrating family. We are happy.' all about acceptance. That is our tradition.

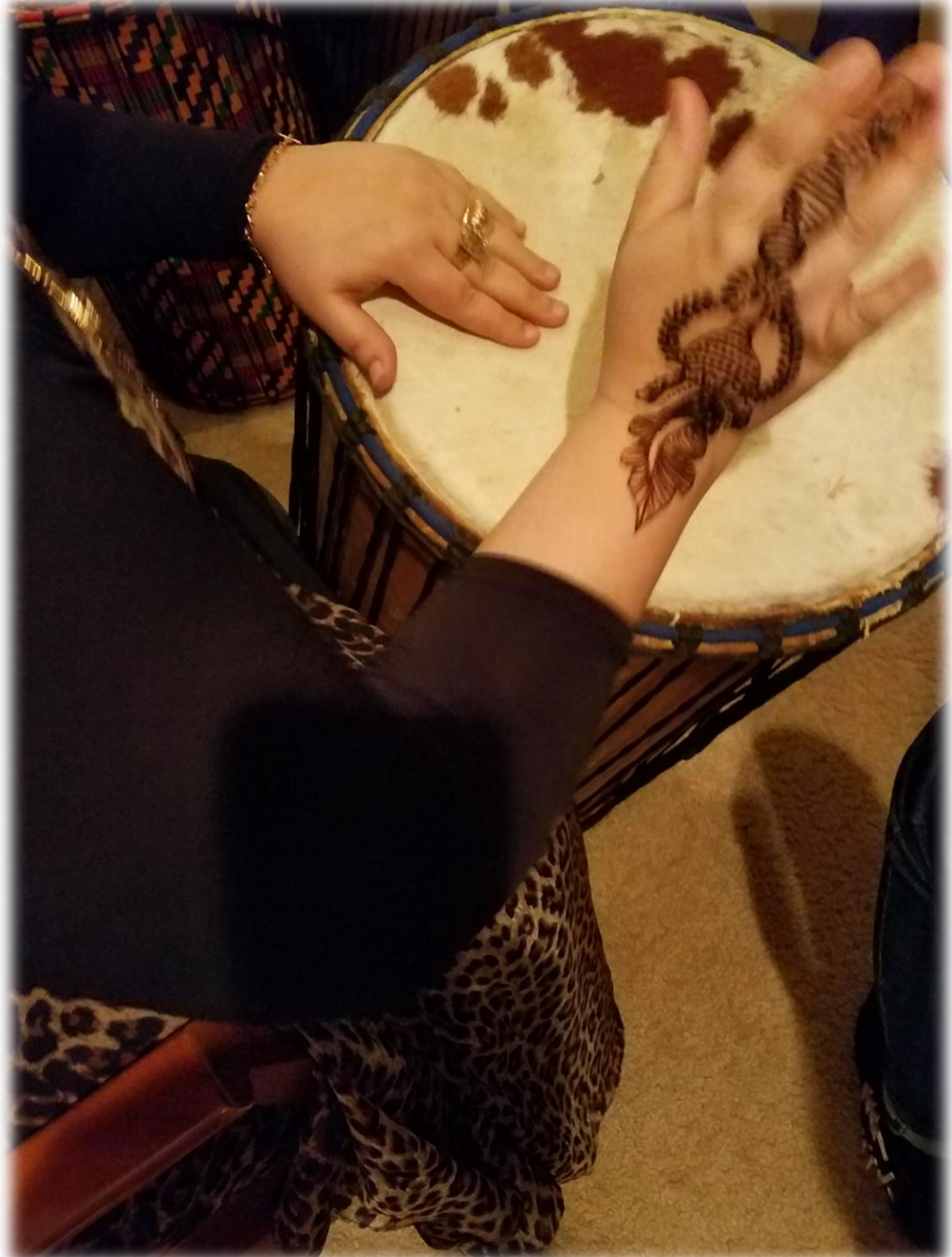
Anthony C. Ibeagha, TASSC member from Nigeria, personal communication, 2008













In the garden you often hear,  
"Oh, this smells just like what my mother planted...this brings me home."



**Every time I'm there, It's so interesting to see how one plant can have a connection to different countries...they all know it. I say, "I have this in my country." "You have this in your country?"**

**And we feel like, oh, we're related now, you know. We're family!"**



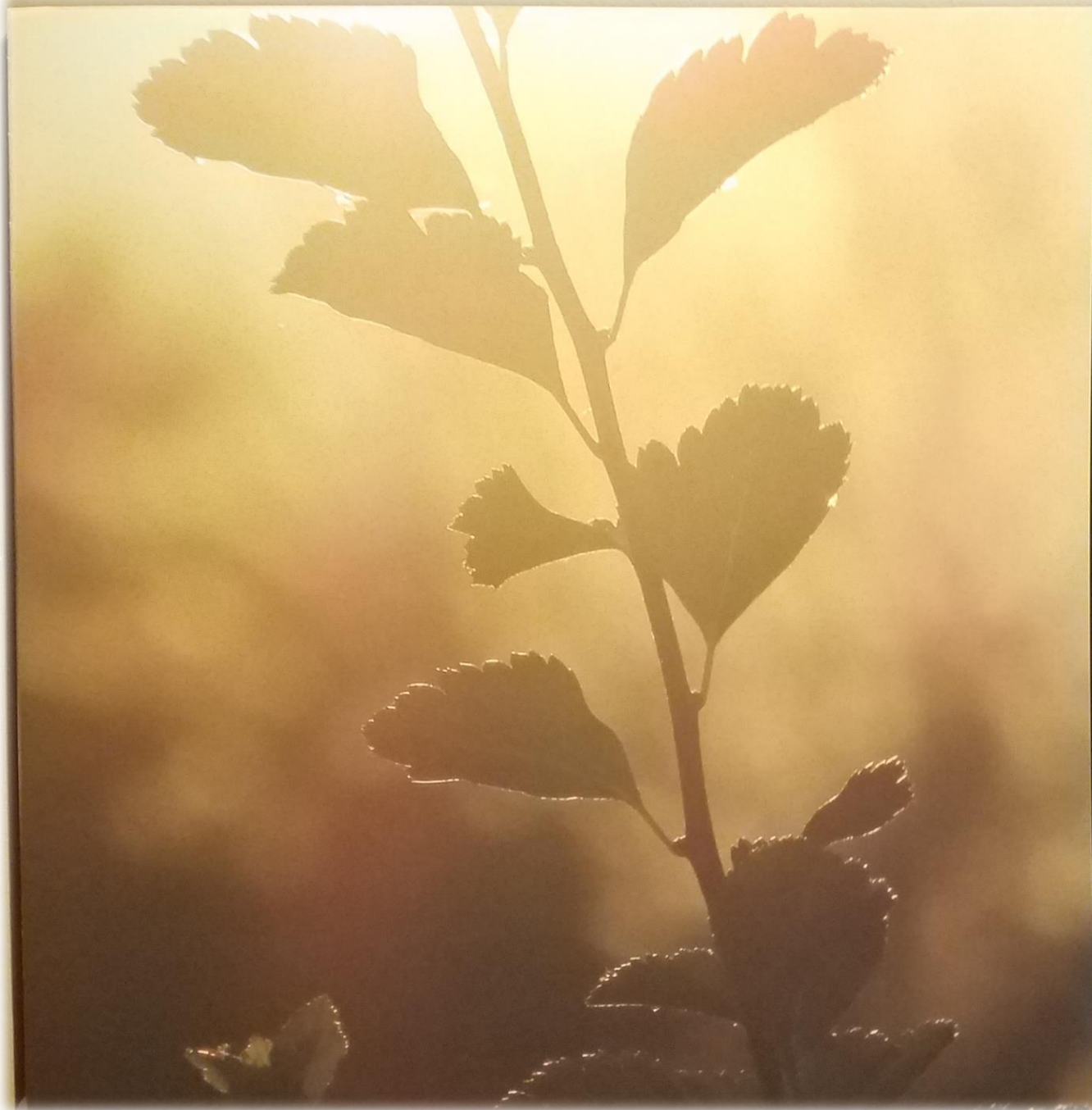












## ALBION

### *Teardrops of Freedom, 2014*

Falling from the leaves, these raindrops are bringing life into the land.

Every raindrop that falls from me, without taking in a breath of air, offers me the ability to continue a life without pain.

A life without torture!

**FORCED MIGRATION  
PHOTOVOICE PROJECT**



## NANCY

### *Une Communauté inattendue / An Unexpected Community, 2014*

Coming from far away lands, we never thought we would find ourselves in this place: despite our differences in color, language, culture, and religion, we can live hopeful lives here now and rediscover the peace that was lost in the hardships of our homeland.

I chose this photo because I feel that waves exude a certain tranquility after they break on the sand. We find ourselves together today like different grains of sand on the beach. Living together gives us the sustenance to carry on despite our problems—much like the waves that continue their perpetual movement—so that we can have hope for our future.

So many organizations bring peace and hope to those who live here in Chicago.

FORCED MIGRATION  
PHOTOVOICE PROJECT

CHICAGO  
PUBLIC  
LIBRARY



City of Chicago  
Mayor Rahm Emanuel

CHICAGO  
PUBLIC  
LIBRARY  
FOUNDATION

DEDICATED TO THE CURIOUS

HEARTLAND ALLIANCE  
INTERNATIONAL

HEARTLAND  
ALLIANCE  
HUMAN CARE



**You are dealing with people who are not  
giving up, so why should you?'**

Ayman Gharaibeh, UNHCR working in Yemen

