

ARRIVALS *and*
DEPARTURES

THE STORIES WE TELL

The stories and poetry from newcomers presented by
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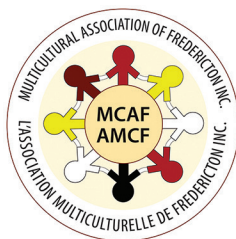


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Anthazia Kadir

Arrivals and Departures



ello Everyone,

On September 21 and 22, 2018, 13 participants and I ventured into a journey back to our selves. This booklet chronicles that journey towards our inner selves, each participant giving voice to their own travels. Through reflection and reminiscence participants learned how to discern these memories not as experiences that keep them living in the past but as launching pads for their continued life journeys. The pages in this tiny booklet capture little of what the participants and I experienced at the Arrivals & Departures workshop, a partnership between *The Fiddlehead* and The Multicultural Association of Fredericton to celebrate Word Feast 2018.

When we read the words “Arrivals and Departures,” it is easy to think about airports and goodbyes; however, the concept of this workshop goes beyond a physical place, it demonstrates the fears, frustrations and often confusion we experience as we grapple with the emotional baggage of past experiences. These usually not-so-pleasant experiences remind us that as humans beings we are always in the process of becoming, that our pasts connote and hold vital treasures for life in the present and beyond.

The stories and poems in this booklet demonstrate the lives of individuals — often broken lives, often lives made whole by the beauty of disappointments, illusions, and shattered dreams. As I have learned in my faith walk with life, as I continue to learn in workshop gatherings and in my relationships, it is often in the rawness of these times, times of unimaginable suffering, that connections are made back to the truth of who we are while we explore the oneness of the human condition.

May you be well, may you be happy, may you find peace, may you never stop travelling.



*I*n 1969 my husband, Professor Verma, took sabbatical leave from UNB. He decided to go to Bombay to work with Bhabha Research Institute. I welcomed his decision. My interest was to meet with my mother's cousins and their families there whom I had never met but had heard stories about — how they had escaped from their burning houses in the middle of the night in 1947, at the time of Indian Partition. All the Hindus had to leave Pakistan to take shelter in a safe place without their belongings.

I was anxious to meet with them face-to-face and to learn how they reached Bombay and got settled there. On our arrival, to Bombay, I went to see them with my grandmother in an apartment building, not knowing how old they were at that time. They were very pleased to see me. They had heard my story of going to Canada to get married from my grandmother and my mother. It was a very emotional transition moment in my life when I heard their settlement stories.

Most of the men took taxi cleaning jobs to feed their families. Shelters were provided by the Indian government. In the rainy seasons strong winds would blow the tin roofs off their cottages. In the morning men would go out to find the roofs of their shelters and some fought with each other to claim the right roof. That was a very difficult time for all the displaced people in India and Pakistan. But they never gave up hope that one day they would have a comfortable life for themselves and for generations to come. At the time of my visit they all owned taxi businesses or car dealerships, and were leading comfortable lives. We had a great stay in Bombay and I enjoyed meeting with family and friends, and I visited most of the tourist places.

Their stories made me very strong and appreciate the comfort we are enjoying in Canada. Lessons learned: to move forward and give back to society.



Pradeesh

Stranger

“Hey stranger,” a familiar voice
calling out
Ol’ memory trying to find that puddle
in a drought

Bruised, rugged and tired
is the owner
That voice and reflection beaming
right back at this loner

A stranger he’s become
to remember — a feat
Journeys he’d been through, won’t take
anything less in a heartbeat

Lonelier is it 6 feet underground hoping
remembrance comes a day a year
Or lonelier is he who forgets
Reflections give nary a care

Happy and content is he,
knowing life is tic-tac-toe
Worry not into the sunset of life,
hold my hand as we go



John Son

My life, my dreams

I was born into this world, May 20th, 1968. I am Korean. At the time of my birth Korea was a very poor country because of the Korean War. As a child my father had a big farm. We had big apple trees, orchards and lots of cows. I have three brothers and three sisters. My brothers and I helped our parents because life was hard.

I graduated from elementary school, middle school and high school and went straight to university. My major at university was Physical Education. After graduating from university, I went to the army and there I became a sniper. I was a featherweight in Taekwondo in the military. After three years of military service, I married my wife and had one daughter and one son.

I chose to immigrate to Canada for the future of my family. I wanted to live with my children in a safer country and for me that was Canada. I have lots of skills and experience in Japanese cuisine. I look forward to my future. My children are all grown up and went away to university and college in Ontario this September.

My family is happy here in Canada. The air is clean and the people are kind.



Abdulahadi Alawad

Life was good, then the war came

Eight years ago, everything was good. I had started my new life after many sad events. The good times brought a new baby into my life and I had just started my new business: a mini market. I bought a new car. Everything was good until the war came.

The war changed everything and harvested many souls. I became afraid for my family; I knew I had to take them to a safe place but wherever we went the bombing began. After three years of moving from place to place, from town to town with death following us, I decided to go to Jordan.

The journey from Syria to Jordan took about four months because of the many mercenary barriers that spread throughout Syria. After about four months we arrived at Al-Zaatari Camp in Jordan. Upon arriving at the camp, I sat inside the tent which was about to become my home. I remember feeling safe and the bad times in my life began to pass through my eyes. I began to see again how my house was destroyed, how many relatives died, and how many friends I had lost. It was a difficult time filled with tragedy.

My family and I stayed in the camp for about three months. I worked hard outside the camp. After a little while I rented an apartment and took my family to live in the apartment. We lived there for about four years.

After four years they talked to me about travelling to Canada. I agreed and made the journey on April 25th, 2017. Here my family and I began life, beautiful and full of optimism.

Every day I remember my friends and relatives. I wish the war did not happen. Here in Canada I am still with friends and spend beautiful moments going on trips; however, unfortunately the impact of the war changed the course of my life. Life does not go back, and I am trying to do what I can in the present.



My Journey

Ten years ago, I was confident; I knew what I wanted, I knew what I wanted to achieve. Most of my life I have been searching for a future. Back in Syria times were good. I was married and had three children. We lived at my parents' house because I was building a house for my family and it was not completed.

After a few months my family and I moved into our own house. We were very happy. My wife and I were very happy with our children. We had a regular life. I had a good job, my children were in school, and my wife stayed at home; however, our settled, happy life was short-lived when the war came. Suddenly there were problems in the capital of my province. The problems extended through the country like wild fire.

When most of the houses were burnt we thought the war would end, but the government kept attacking my city. People were dying, some were injured, and some were taken to prison as ransom. I was taken to prison. It was a very hard time in my life. After I got out of prison, I was sick for at least three months.

The time I spent in prison reaffirmed that the problems in my country would not stop, so I started to think about leaving my country to save my life and my family.

After discussing my decision with my wife and parents, I realized that nothing matters — my job, my house and all the things I had worked so hard to achieve — in comparison to the safety of my family and my parents. After a few months we left with only some clothes and food, and headed to a small border town on foot.

When we reached Jordan's border the military men were kind and they took us to the camp. We were tired and hungry. Life in the camp was very difficult. After a few months we met a friend living in the camp and he helped us find a place to rent. My family and I had no money to pay the rent and to pay for heat. My sons and I found odd jobs picking olives. It was winter and we were cold; however, we had to continue working. We were hungry and we needed a shelter over our heads. My sons and I had to work, it was the only way we could buy food and at least pay our rent. After a little while in Jordan we found our way to Canada. Life here is hard, but we have been through much hardship and we hope for a different future.



Vanessa Shege

Behind her Smile

Sitting on a rock by the river.
Watching the reflection in the water
Slowly I close my eyes and listen
I let out a sigh of relief and let go of the weight on my shoulder

In that moment, I feel the cool wind blowing on my skin,
I hear the sound of the waves and peace within
I listen to my heart beat
Heavy and burdened it beats on and on.

I open my eyes and now the reflection I see the water
A little girl fragile and innocent
Is this a sign to face the evils of the past?
Is this strength awakening within?

As I walk back crossing the bridge
The silver-grey skies above
The Wind blowing stronger I smile

I smile
Behind that smile are wounds healing
Strength awakening
A start of a new me



Vanessa Shege

The Journey to Self

Growing up in hiding, on the run and working ten times harder to fit in to society. Learning to speak and acting like the new people in the land we had stumbled upon was hard.

My father, who was once a fine young lad, had built a life for himself and his family, and was now scrambling to feed his family. Still he worked so hard to provide the best he could so as to make sure we never faced the same hardship as him.

My father raised us strictly; however, there were no boundaries to what we could do as girls. Early morning runs and straight As were a must, and English had to be spoken at all times. “Be strong, polite, confident, there’s nothing you can’t do,” he would say.

Back then he was being too strict, but now as a parent, I see a man wounded by the past, staying strong against all odds for his family to have a free tomorrow.

Years went by, seasons changed, the world moved on, but the struggle continued. Engulfed by trying to fit in, place to place, culture to culture, I lost myself. In another’s eyes I was a kind, smart, loving, strong and confident young girl but behind all that no one saw the little, wounded, broken girl crying for help.

I had mastered the art of concealing my feelings, my expressions and opinions. I did not know who I was anymore, what I liked, who I wanted to be — it was all oblivious to me. But somehow, I managed to wake up and carry on daily.

Fifteen years later, I am haunted by myself. The girl within is itching to come out. The feelings I once bottled up are now overflowing. Despite the overwhelming conditions within the confusion, I catch myself smiling. I feel a little, just a little, bit of weight being lifted off my shoulders.

Am I ready to embark on this journey back to myself? Maybe not. But I am excited to see what comes along. I am thrilled to go on board a ship out in the big open ocean amidst the strong fall winds, the cold winter — whatever it takes, I want to find me.



Masoud Mahmoudzadeh

Inspired by Love after Love by Derek Walcott

Looking in the mirror ten years from now I see a man who dared to
change his life for the better.

Life has many faces to offer but you were meant to enjoy only some of
them,

at least that's how it seems.

The parts that are unfolding before you, are the parts that you plan for,
the parts that you share with people around you.

The faces, the new faces of life, the one that reflects your own feelings
— the human condition.

Finding the parts that suit you is important, because you must build it
brick by brick. It is hard but at the end it is what you designed.

Sometimes you lose the pleasant parts. You must cope abandoning all
things that you were

Accustomed to — friends you adored.



Parisa Basiri

This day live your life.

This day live your life.
Later you will put aside your grey hair.
You will put aside your colourful pills.
When you sit beside your young self next to an old chimney.
Instead of love you will complain of foot pain, a hundred times.
In days of old it will make no difference if your hairs are grey or any
other colour,
When your son brings you a cane on Mother's Day.
Here at the dawning of years you will understand
That you had to fight for your dreams and your life.
Cheat for your survival and your better days.
This day is all you have this time is all you have.
Say words. Aging seems like a mystery.



Notes on Contributors

ABDULHADI ALAWAD is from Syria. He has three children and lives in Fredericton.

QASSIM ALBRDAN is 45 years old, married, and has five children — two sons and three girls. He and his family came to Canada on February 15, 2016. His previous profession was a power line technician and he was a farmer.

PARISA BASIRI is from Iran. She came to Fredericton seven months ago. She adores reading books. This is her first poem in English.

PRADEESH is a management professional who's just moved to New Brunswick with his small family. He loves the outdoors and enjoys cooking, reading, and fishing with his eight-year-old son.

MASOUD MAHMOUDZADEH was born in September 1973 in Khoy, Iran, and immigrated to Fredericton in September 2018.

VANESSA SHEGE is the eldest of three girls and a mother to a three-year-old Ninja (as he likes to be called). She was born in the Democratic Republic of Congo but was raised in Uganda and moved to Fredericton in May 2017.

JOHN SON is from South Korea and has lived in Canada for five years. He is a Japanese chef and his dream is to open a new Japanese restaurant. He would like to live with his family in Fredericton forever.

MADHU VERMA is a founding member of MCAF, NBMC and Immigrant Women organizations. For her distinguished service to Immigrants, Refugees, and international students, she has been decorated with federal and provincial medals and awards.



Participants at the **Arrivals and Departures** workshop.



Anthazia Kadir, leading participants at the **Arrivals and Departures** workshop.



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