

Attn: News, Arts and Feature Desks

For immediate release

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#SharedPasts

Justice Centre Hong Kong collaborates with Filipina photographer

Xyza Cruz Bacani

to document stories of Hong Kong's refugees

view the video at www.justicecentre.org.hk

Justice Centre Hong Kong is collaborating with Filipina Photographer Xyza Cruz Bacani to launch #SharedPasts, a commemoration of the common history and stories shared by refugees from all walks of life in Hong Kong - including families who fled here as refugees from China.

Hong Kong has a rich refugee history. From the 1 million people who fled from mainland China, seeking refuge in Hong Kong from the 1950s onwards during the civil war and Cultural Revolution; to the Vietnamese boat people who fled here during the seventies; to today's 10,000 refugees currently seeking sanctuary in Hong Kong from over fifty countries in Africa, Europe and Asia.

But despite this refugee past and present, the Hong Kong Government does not recognise refugees and has never sought the extension of the UN Refugee Convention to its territory. Nor does it allow current refugees to remain in Hong Kong long term or to work, even if they have been granted a positive determination on their case.

For one week in May, Bacani photographed 17 of Hong Kong's refugees or descendents of refugees living in the city, who were also interviewed by Justice Centre staff. Their stories, although all completely individual in their own way, shared a similar theme, a common narrative, a shared past. It is one of inspiration, resilience and survival; ordinary people always in the midst of the most extraordinary of circumstances, 'making it' against the very worst of odds.

Justice Centre Hong Kong, a non-profit organisation that works to protect the rights of refugees and survivors of human trafficking, first met Bacani, a former domestic worker in Hong Kong, when the photographer won an award in the Hong Kong Human Rights Arts Prize, organised by the NGO.

Director of External Relations at Justice Centre Hong Kong, Aideen McLaughlin, said:

“I was so inspired by the power of Xyza’s work, her talent and curiosity and her commitment to shining her lens on lesser known issues. The stories we collected for #SharedPasts, are stories of cruelty, hardship and terror; but ultimately of hope, survival and love. We met Hong Kongers whose grandparents had fled here from China during the civil war and Cultural Revolution; Europeans whose parents had sought protection after the atrocities of the Second World War; Vietnamese who took their lives and their belongings in their hands, making perilous journeys on equally perilous boats; and families who are more recently seeking sanctuary in Hong Kong from war, torture and persecution in places as diverse as East Africa, the Middle East and parts of Asia.

We hope the project will help connect some Hong Kongers with their own refugee history, as well as highlight the reasons why people are seeking sanctuary in Hong Kong today.”

Xyza Cruz Bacani, said:

“I was so delighted to collaborate with Justice Centre on this project. As a former migrant domestic worker from the Philippines in Hong Kong, I really connected with the refugees’ stories: with their feelings of isolation and alienation; with the fact that they have few rights and are treated as second-class citizens in Hong Kong.

I would really like to thank them for welcoming me into their homes, for allowing us a glimpse of their lives, for sharing with us their stories.”

#SharedPasts is an ongoing project and there will be an exhibition of the full works at a later date.

Watch the video at www.justicecentre.org.hk

Notes to Editors:

Xyza Cruz Bacani is a Filipina photographer, based in Hong Kong. She is known for her black-and-white street photography of Hong Kong life. Xyza is currently at New York University taking up the Magnum Foundation Human Rights Fellowship.

Justice Centre Hong Kong is an NGO that works to protect the rights of refugees and survivors of human trafficking. www.justicecentre.org.hk.

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