

Liminal Encounters: Presenter Bios

Eman Abdelhadi

Eman Abdelhadi is an assistant professor of sociology in the Department of Comparative Human Development at the University of Chicago. Her research focuses on Arab and Muslim communities in the United States. She co-wrote the sci-fi novel *Everything for Everyone: An Oral History of the New York Commune, 2052–2072* (Common Notions Press, 2022), which has been translated into French and Catalan. Abdelhadi co-edited a “Queer Palestine” issue of *Pinko* magazine published in 2024 and is co-editor of a special issue of *Public Humanities* called “Palestine as Paradigm: How Gaza Transformed the World.” She writes a regular column on Palestine and politics for *In These Times* magazine, and her essays have appeared in *Jacobin*, *Truthout*, *Zeteo*, and other publications.

Ibtesum Afrin

Ibtesum Afrin is an anthropologist and researcher whose work focuses on displacement, statelessness, and the lived experiences of marginalized communities with particular attention to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh and Bangladeshi Immigrants. She holds a Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of Western Ontario, Canada, where her doctoral research examined everyday practices of hope, memory, and belonging amid protracted displacement and the politicization of “homeland.” She also earned an MSc in Medical Anthropology from Durham University, UK, as a Commonwealth Scholar, and holds BSS and MSS degrees in Anthropology from the University of Dhaka. Ibtesum is currently a Research Officer at the Coady Institute, St. Francis Xavier University, Canada, where she works on participatory research, knowledge mobilization, and community-engaged learning initiatives related to social justice, gender, and systems change. She previously worked with organizations such as UNDP (a2i), ActionAid, and Helen Keller Bangladesh, bridging academic research with policy and practice. Her scholarship employs ethnography, oral history, and qualitative methods, and her work has appeared in international journals, edited volumes, policy-oriented publications, and national newspapers.

Philip Bohlman

Philip V. Bohlman is Ludwig Rosenberger Distinguished Service Professor at the University of Chicago and Honorary Professor at the Hochschule für Musik, Theater und Medien Hannover. He took his MM and Ph.D. from the University of Illinois, and he received a doctor honoris causa from the Romanian National University of Music Bucharest (2019). His research addresses the intersections of music with race, nationalism, and colonial encounter. Among recent books are *Song Loves the Masses* (with J. G. Herder; California 2017), *Wie sängen wir Seinen Gesang auf dem Boden der Fremde!* (LIT 2019), *World Music: A Very Short Introduction* (rev. ed.; Oxford 2020), *Wolokolamsker Chaussee* (Bloomsbury 2021), and with the New Budapest Orpheum Society the 2015 Grammy

Award-nominated CD, *As Dreams Fall Apart: The Golden Age of Jewish Stage and Film Music, 1925–1955* (Cedille 2014). For his books he has received the Derek Allen Prize, the Bruno Nettl Prize, and the Ruth Solie Prize. He is co-producer with Ronit Ghosh and Pramantha Tagore of the forthcoming documentary film, *The Kolkata Piano Shop*, one of several recent ethnographic projects he has undertaken in India. He is the recipient of the 2022 International Balzan Prize in Ethnomusicology.

Greg Constantine

Greg Constantine is an award-winning documentary photographer and author. He has dedicated his career to long-term, independent projects that explore the intersection of human rights, inequality, genocide, citizenship, identity and the power of the state. His long term projects include: [Nowhere People](#), [Exiled To Nowhere](#) and [Seven Doors](#). He is the author of several award winning photography books and his work has been exhibited in over 40 cities around the world. Constantine has been documenting the persecution of the Rohingya community for the past 20 years. In early 2017, he received his PhD from Middlesex University in the UK and has since received Independent Scholar as well as Early Career Fellowships from the [Independent Social Research Foundation](#) and Queen Mary University in London. Most recently, he was a Hearst Visiting Fellow at the University of Oregon's School of Journalism and Communication. In late 2020, he began working with Rohingya on the project [Ek Khaale](#). *Ek Khaale* has been exhibited in Chiang Mai, Thailand and Dhaka, Bangladesh. In 2025, Constantine and *Ek Khaale* were recognized with the 2025 Bertha Artivism Awards from the Bertha Foundation and the IVSA Anticolonialism & Antiracism Award for Progressive Advocacy and Visual Research by the International Visual Sociology Association.

Imran Fazal

Imran Fazal earned a Bachelor of Science in Social Work from Buffalo State University and is a dedicated advocate for refugee rights and social justice. Born stateless in Myanmar and denied citizenship and education, he fled alone as a teenager, traveling through 6 different countries by boat. He spent eight years in refugee camps—including an Australian offshore detention center—where he taught himself to read and write, sparking his passion for storytelling and advocacy. Resettled in the U.S. in 2018, Imran began school at age 21 and quickly excelled. He served as President of Phi Theta Kappa at Truman College and as a Student Trustee for the City Colleges of Chicago. As a writer, Imran uses journalism to uplift displaced communities. He won Amnesty International's blog competition, became a Pulitzer Center Reporting Fellow, and received the Society of Professional Journalists' 2021 Mark of Excellence Award. His research on the resettlement and educational experiences of Rohingya refugees in Buffalo was accepted for presentation at the 2025 National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR) and the Student Research and Creativity Conference. He founded the Rohingya Empowerment Community (REC), providing ongoing case management and culturally responsive support in the Rohingya language. His advocacy work has taken him to Washington, DC, the Berkley Center at Georgetown University, and the United Nations Civil Society Dialogue in Italy. A recipient of the Deborah K. Renzi Social

Advocacy Award, he later earned the SUNY Chancellor's Award for Student Excellence, the highest honor for undergraduates.

Osman Goni

Osman is a Rohingya refugee and one of the most well-regarded and accomplished musicians in the Rohingya diaspora. His parents fled from their homeland in Northern Arakan, Myanmar to escape the Burmese military's genocidal campaign against the Rohingya in 1992 and settled in Kutupalong Registered Camp in neighboring Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, where Osman was born and raised. As a young child, Osman began to teach himself to sing and play several musical instruments. From his teenage years onwards, he has received formal music instruction from several exemplary Rohingya musicians, including Amanullah Gayen, Rashid, and Liyakot Ali. During this time, he has written hundreds of songs. The majority of these are Rohingya *taranas*, which are songs that center the Rohingya nation in various respects—their homeland, plight, aspirations, etc. Osman has performed extensively throughout the Rohingya refugee camps of Cox's Bazar on a wide variety of occasions, from official events hosted by the Bangladeshi government, various UN agencies, and local NGO organizations to private gatherings hosted by members of the Rohingya refugee community. Osman also teaches music to dozens of Rohingya students, training them to sing, compose, and play harmonium and Rohingya mandolin. Osman's Facebook page (@OsmanARTV) has nearly 70k followers and his YouTube channel boasts nearly 30k subscribers (Osman ARTV). Over the past two years, Osman has been working towards establishing the Rohingya Performing Arts Center (RPAC) in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. Bringing together the most widely acclaimed Rohingya artists alive today, RPAC promises to provide a community-run, safe space for Rohingya performing artists to gather, teach, and perform music, dance, and theater.

Tomal Hossain

Tomal Hossain is a musician and PhD candidate in ethnomusicology at the University of Chicago. His dissertation examines *tarana* song performance regarding questions of nation, Indigeneity, and Islam among Rohingya Muslim refugees in Bangladesh. Tomal has previously worked on the songs of Kazi Nazrul Islam, the Bangladeshi American diaspora, and the sonic rituals of various transnational Sufi orders. As a performer, he specializes in solo vocal performance of *kbayal* and Nazrul songs, while also performing as a founding member of the Hamnavai *qawwali* ensemble. Beyond performance and scholarship, Tomal serves as artistic director of the Rohingya Performing Arts Center in Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh and as a board member of the Chicago-based non-profit organization Refugee Women for Peace and Justice. Tomal's research and music have been variously supported by the Fulbright Program, the Watson Foundation, the Society for Asian Music, and the American Institute of Bangladeshi Studies, among other institutions. Prior to starting his PhD, Tomal earned a BA in Computer Science and Music from Amherst College (2017) and a certificate in ethnomusicology from the Five College Consortium (2017).

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Nursyazwani Jamaludin

Nursyazwani's dissertation research is situated at the anthropological interfaces of sovereignty, migration and religion, to examine the world-making practices among displaced Rohingya individuals and communities on the peripheries of ummah, the global Muslim community. Through ethnographic research with Rohingya refugees in Malaysia, resettled Rohingya in Chicago, and Rohingya online communities, her comparative study traces inter-scalar modes of Rohingya world-making across different political, embodied, transnational, and spiritual domains. She has been working with Rohingya refugees in Malaysia since 2017, resettled Rohingya refugees in Chicago since 2021, and has undertaken online ethnography of Rohingya discourses on digital platforms since 2020. She received her M.Soc.Sci. from the Department of Sociology at the National University of Singapore, where her research focused on the co-construction of refugee legibility among Rohingya in Malaysia. Previously, she was a Research Associate at the Yusof Ishak-Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) in Singapore and the Research Coordinator at Advocates for Refugees-Singapore.

Lucky Karim

Lucky Karim is an internationally recognized human rights activist. from Burma (Myanmar) In August 2017, she was compelled to flee her homeland amid genocidal attacks perpetrated by the Burmese military. She lived for six years in the world's largest refugee camps in Bangladesh. Starting in 2018, when she was just 15 years old, Lucky began working with numerous international humanitarian organizations to provide vital assistance to her Rohingya community in Cox's Bazar camps. At age 17, Lucky defied odds to pursue higher education at the esteemed Asian University for Women in Chittagong, Bangladesh. In December 2022, she was resettled in the United States.

Since then, she has closely worked with government officials, lawmakers, UN agencies, civil society, and relevant stakeholders from around the world, focusing on the Rohingya crisis and broader issues in Myanmar. Lucky has testified before the US Congress, testified before the US House foreign affairs committee, briefed the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, and served as a representative for the most recent UN General Assembly High-level Conference in New York. She is the first Rohingya woman to write a memoir (*Born Lucky*), which has been acquired by Sourcebooks publishers and will be out in fall 2027. Recognizing the power of women's leadership, Lucky founded Refugee Women for Peace and Justice in August 2024—the first official, Rohingya refugee-led nonprofit operating directly in the refugee camps of Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. She is also a refugee advisor to the Complementary and Resettlement Pathways to UNHCR in Geneva, a Senior Fellow at the International Campaign for Rohingya in Washington, DC, and a Refugee Alumni at Refugees International.

Haley LeRand

Haley LeRand is the Executive Director of Global Gardens Chicago (GGC), a non-profit farm in Chicago's Albany Park neighborhood that supports 60+ refugees who grow organic vegetables for sale and home consumption. She holds a BA in Psychology from University of Illinois at Chicago, where she spent several years working as a research assistant on a project called Cultivating Wellbeing: The Cultural and Ecological Significance of Urban Gardening in Chicago. This project was a collaboration between UIC's Department of Anthropology and the Field Museum, and involved analyzing different gardens around Chicago to understand their impact and how they functioned as sites of healing, cultural vitality, and stewardship. GGC was a research site for the project, and after conducting field work there from 2017-2019, Haley became formally employed by the farm in 2020. In 2024, she took over as Executive Director, and led a period of programmatic expansion and development. Haley has extensive experience working with Chicago's refugee populations, managing the GGC programs and operations, and expanding the farm's activities and resources to further its mission. Haley lives in Evanston and works as a musician in her spare time, playing guitar and singing in a jazz trio.

Anjali Mohan

Anjali Mohan is a political and legal theorist. Her research critically examines existing doctrines in both private and public law, especially as they relate to questions of responsibility, citizenship, and sovereignty. Her publications include "Reframing Genocide" in the *Utah Law Review* and "Statelessness and World Citizenship" in the *Oxford Handbook on Cosmopolitanism*. Anjali started her career at WilmerHale in Washington, DC as a litigation associate. She then went on to spend several years working on human rights in Burma/Myanmar as Country Director of the NGO Justice Base and international legal advisor to Women's Peace Network, a Rohingya-led advocacy organization. Anjali received her JD from Harvard Law School, PhD in Political Science from the University of

Chicago, and BA in Government, Economics, and Plan II Honors from The University of Texas at Austin.

Vicky Mogollón Montagne

Vicky Mogollón Montagne (she/ella) is the Balzan Postdoctoral Instructor in the Department of Music at the University of Chicago. Her current research interests include the sonic and affective dimensions of everyday violence, hemispheric histories of religion (Spiritism), and popular electronic music scenes in Caracas (raptor house, música urbana, and electro-tambor). As an educator, writer, and performer, she builds collaborative partnerships with the diasporic Venezuelan community to support the growing tambor music network in the U.S. In the past, she also participated in music-related projects at the Smithsonian Institution, the Venezuelan National Museum of Science, and the UT-Austin Briscoe Center for American Studies. Her first book, *Fuerza: Intensities in Venezuelan Espiritismo Marialioncero*, explores religious practitioners' curation of spiritual intensity through sound, sights, and temperature as a form of worldmaking that propitiates human/non-human solidarities during Venezuela's contemporary crisis. Musically speaking, this research focuses primarily on the religious reworkings of salsa and Afro-Venezuelan tambor in Espiritismo Marialioncero contexts. She obtained a PhD in ethnomusicology and a graduate portfolio in museum studies from The University of Texas at Austin in 2024. Prior to her appointment at Chicago, she was the Charles H. Turner postdoctoral fellow at the University of Cincinnati's College-Conservatory of Music.

Tin Mar Oo

Tin Mar Oo is a second-year PhD student at the University of Montana. Her doctoral research examines land dispossession and the erasure of Rohingya identity in Myanmar. Tin is a Rohingya feminist, and she was a medical doctor who served for three years in a government hospital in civil war-affected areas in Myanmar. She was later punished and forced to resign for providing medical care to ethnic Karen minorities during the war between the Karen Army and the Myanmar Military in 2011. This experience compelled her to become a human rights activist opposing the military dictatorship. Tin was an Australian Awarded student and earned her first master's degree in public health from the Australian National University. She earned a second master's degree in Global Challenges through an online program at the University of Edinburgh. Tin has worked with several NGOs and INGOs in Rakhine State over the past 12 years. Her efforts in these organizations have primarily concerned women's education, human rights protection, and gender equality. Currently, Tin works as Program Coordinator at Asia Justice and Rights Organization and Project Assistant at the Rural Institute at the University of Montana. Her work has been published in the International Journal of Burma Studies and through the Knowledge for Democracy program.

Sarah Pajeau

Sarah Pajean is a PhD candidate in International Development at the University of Edinburgh. Her doctoral research focuses on Rohingya experiences of belonging and identity reconstruction post-resettlement. Sarah's professional background is in nonprofit management, refugee rights, and community health. Prior to joining the University of Edinburgh for her doctoral studies, Sarah worked with non-governmental organizations in Chicago, USA, supporting resettled refugees. She remains Assistant Director at the Rohingya Culture Center of Chicago and an Advisory Council Member for the City of Chicago's Office of New Americans. Her previous research areas include barriers in the U.S. refugee resettlement process, mental health access for Chicago residents with limited English proficiency, the mental health impacts of prolonged detention, and trauma-informed care practices in refugee support work.

Mohammed Mirza Nu

Mohammed Mirza Nu is a Rohingya researcher, human rights defender, and language professional based in Kutupalong Refugee Camp, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. He has over seven years of experience working in research, interpretation, and community-based humanitarian projects. Mohammed has served as a Analytical and Humanitarian Researcher and Research Assistant with academic institutions and humanitarian organizations, contributing to qualitative and quantitative studies, ethnographic research, participatory workshops, and cross-border trade research involving Rohingya and host communities. In addition to research, Mohammed is a professional translator, interpreter, and voice-over artist, fluent in Rohingya, English, and Hindi. He has provided interpretation and translation services for medical, humanitarian, and educational contexts and currently works as a part-time medical interpreter. Mohammed is deeply committed to human rights, youth empowerment, and climate action. He has facilitated leadership and peacebuilding trainings for Rohingya youth and actively documents the lived experiences of his community through research and visual storytelling. His work focuses on amplifying marginalized voices and promoting sustainable, community-led solutions.

Mohammed Ridwan (Rezuwan)

Mohammed Rezuwan is a Rohingya folklorist, storyteller, and human rights advocate. He is the author of Rohingya Folktales Book: *Stories from Arakan, as Told by Rohingya Refugees* and co-author of *All Walls Collapse*, a fiction magazine published by Comma Press (UK). Rezuwan examines how folktales and storytelling preserve language and culture across generations, even in the face of exile, and decades of state-sponsored genocide faced by the Rohingya people, through his work on Rohingya folktales passed down orally for centuries which might otherwise have been lost. His work on Rohingya folktales bridges the Rohingya community and international audiences, while providing young Rohingya children growing up in refugee camps and the diaspora with space to learn about their culture, folktales and language. He is the Founder and CEO of Global Rohingya Future (GRF), a refugee-led organization promoting education, human rights advocacy, and cultural documentation

in the world's largest refugee camp. Beyond his literary work, Rezuwan has served as a fixer, interpreter, educator, and researcher with international organizations, including Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF). His storytelling and photography have been featured in The Guardian, CNN, VOA, and the South China Morning Post. Now living in Ottawa, Rezuwan continues to amplify Rohingya voices and affirm that culture is not left behind in displacement but carried forward—generation by generation—even in the most fragile spaces of exile.

Oliver Shao

Oliver Shao is Associate Professor of Ethnomusicology in the Liberal Arts Department at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC). He is also the coordinator for the Music, Theater, and Dance Program at SAIC, and is a member of the Society for Ethnomusicology Council. His first book, *Composing Aid* (Indiana University Press 2023) considers the fraught dynamics of the United Nations-administered Kakuma Refugee Camp in northwestern Kenya. This work offers critical insights into the cultural-economy of a long-term humanitarian encampment, the design and social impact of music and arts initiatives, and the reimagining of state and humanitarian approaches towards forced migration. Shao's recent research continues to probe music's intersection with beings, spaces, and histories shaped by international and imperial systems of violence and inequality. His latest article project examines how popular music reveals and responds to the emotions and affects entwined with long histories of anti-Asian racism in the United States. His most recent research attends to the musicians, artists, and activists who are confronting the environmental devastation of capitalism.

Shayna Silverstein

Shayna Silverstein's research examines the politics and aesthetics of sound, movement, and performance in the contemporary Middle East. Her first book, *Fraught Balance: The Embodied Politics of Dabke Dance Music in Syria*, analyzes how Syrian dabke, a popular dance music suffused with the collectivism and cultural memory, has paradoxically contributed to isolation and fragmentation within Syrian society from the formation of the authoritarian nation-state to the recent conflict. She also writes about the politics of body, performance, and culture in the Syrian diaspora. Her research generally attests to the centrality of performance in constituting and destabilizing social spaces in Southwest Asia and North Africa (SWANA). Silverstein's publications include an award-winning [article](#) in the *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, an [audiography](#) in *[in]Transition: Journal of Videographic Film & Moving Image*, and articles in *Music & Politics*, *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication*, and *Lateral*, among other scholarly publications. Her research has been supported by the Institute for Citizens & Scholars, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Fulbright Program, as well as the Alice Kaplan Institute for the Humanities and Buffett Institute for Global Affairs at Northwestern University. She currently serves

on the Editorial Board of **Northwestern University Press**, the Editorial Advisory Board for the **Sound Studies** series of Bloomsbury Press, and on the Society for Ethnomusicology Advisory Council.

Khin Maung Thein

Khin Maung Thein (“Abdullah”) is a Rohingya artist and storyteller undertaking photography, videography and poetry. He is a former schoolteacher from Maungdaw, Rakhine State in Myanmar. Forced to flee his home, he arrived in Bangladesh in early September 2017 and started working with the Rollywood Rohingya film team making videos re-enacting Rohingya life. He has produced several photo essays, poetry books on different topics, short films and documentaries based on Rohingya life. In 2019, his photographs were published by the Asia Time and many others. In August 2020, he received the third prize in the photo series category from the Rohingya Photo Competition. In 2021, his work was published by Westword in “Today, Tomorrow, Forever: Being Rohingya in Australia.” His photographs have been exhibited at the Human Rights Research and Education Centre in Ottawa and the Oxford Human Rights Festival. He is the winner of the International Minority Artist Award and Refugees Nansan Award for Asia and Pacific.

Nasir Zakaria

Nasir Zakaria was born in Burma and fled to Bangladesh when he was 14 years old. He then traveled to Thailand and Malaysia, and, in 2013, he was resettled in Chicago. He saw the need for a place for the Rohingya population to gather and receive services, as there was no Rohingya population in Chicago before refugees began arriving in 2010. Through hard work and determination, Nasir founded the Rohingya Culture Center, where he remains Executive Director. Nasir serves as a community leader for the Rohingya population and is known nationally and internationally throughout the Rohingya diaspora for opening the first, one-of-a-kind Rohingya cultural center.