

storytelling as decoloniality in/as praxis



navigating
belonging

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The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology
AAAS 2023

/presentation outline

- positionality statement
- situating hong kong within global asias
- community-based participatory research (photovoice + visual ethnography) and participatory storytelling + decoloniality as relational methodologies
- doing research alongside one's own community

1 / positionality statement

me + my biases

HONG KONG

Welcomes

Joseph and the Amazing
Technicolor Dreamcoat
(Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical)

30 April - 21 June 1998

Tickets/Enquiries: T: 280528

WELCOME TO OUR HOME HONG KONG

Fly Cathay Pacific.



praxis without
theory is blind;

(Walsh & Mignolo, 138)

theory without
praxis is sequestered

“the term 'research' is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism. The word itself, 'research', is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary (...) the collective memory of imperialism has been perpetuated through the ways in which knowledge about indigenous peoples was collected, classified and then represented in various ways back to the West, and then, through the eyes of the West, back to those who have been”

linda tuhiwai smith

decolonizing methodologies





Go to www.menti.com and use the code 5718 9206

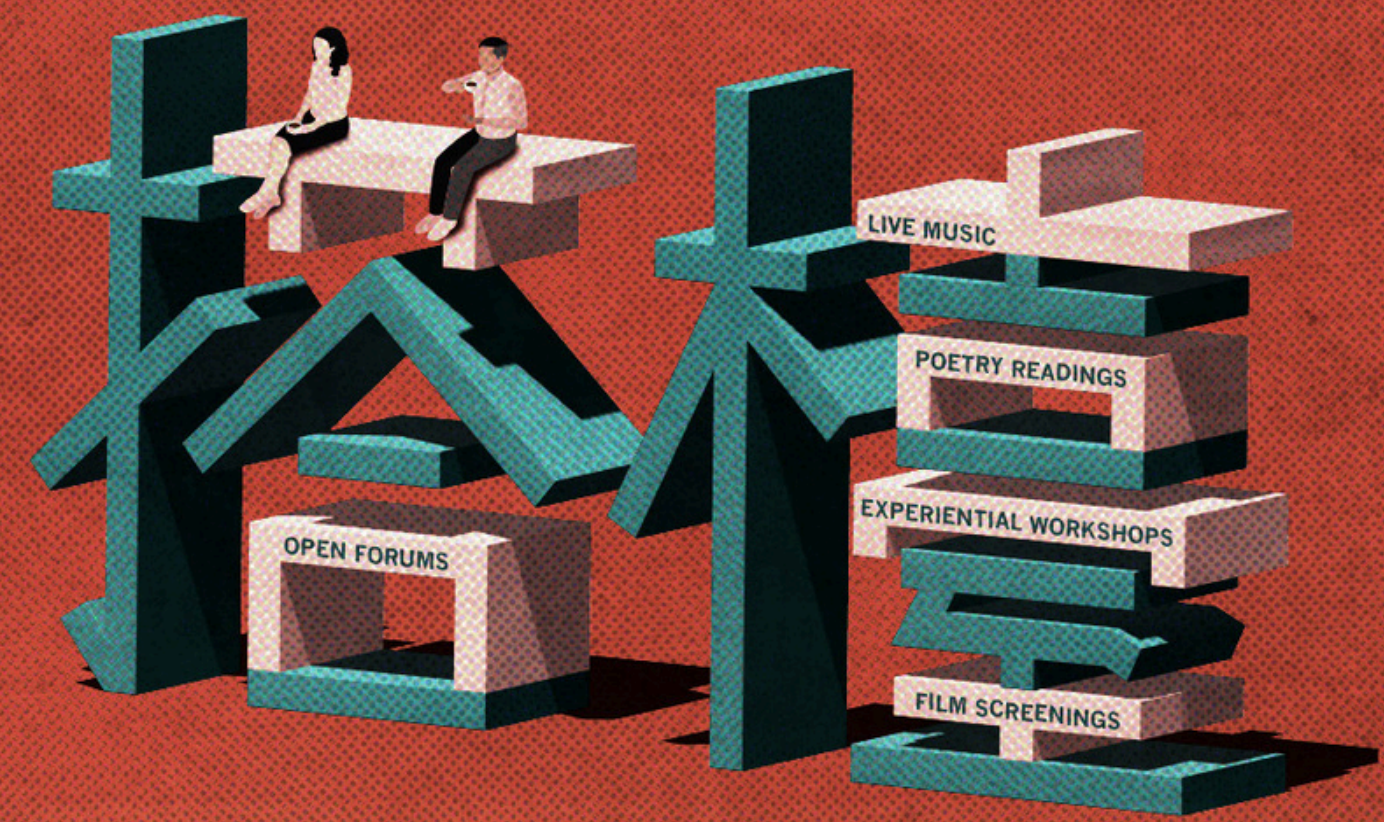
What are the challenges you face building community in hong kong? 29 Answers

Mentimeter

A FESTIVAL TO CELEBRATE THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

18-19 MAR 2023
EATON HK

SEATED WITH STRANGERS



DAAP³ TOI⁴ :
(LITERAL) TO PILE UP TABLES; TO EAT WHILE SEATED WITH COMPLETE STRANGERS AT THE SAME TABLE.

CO-PRESENTERS



PARTNERS





/ curry

meenakshi ganesan

I want you to know that

Indian food is not what you think it is

Indian food is not exotic trendy cool

Indian food is not your Starbucks chai tea latte

Indian food is not what you eat with your friends

from your weekly “hot yoga” class

I want you to know that

Indian food to me is probably not what it is to you

/ curry

meenakshi ganesan

To me

Indian food is my grandmother's love for tomatoes

Indian food is the smell of lentil soup comfort cooking
on a stovetop

Indian food is my father asking me to taste a spoonful

Indian food is my mother forgetting to put the salt in
but me loving it all the same (and even more)

Indian food is the home my taste buds dream of when
they sleep.

`I think the poem makes me reflect on how I myself and people I know think about cultures that aren't their own. Every culture has a history and their own stories; it's no wonder people who don't understand [them] would try to take the outermost part of a culture and claim that they know something. But this isn't the right attitude. We aren't supposed to assume other cultures are what we think they are. True cross-cultural communication is getting to know someone...and listening to their stories, listening to their memories, and not trying to brag about what we don't actually understand.

navigating belonging:?

Exploring Settlement for South Asians in Hong Kong through
Narratives and Participatory Photography

WHAT does it mean to belong for people from South Asian
backgrounds across generations in Hong Kong?

HOW | Sociolinguistic study of narratives and visual ethnography
(photovoice, participatory photography and storytelling)

WHY | Inform practice, policy, and to honour and document the
stories and histories of these communities in Hong Kong

2/

situating hong kong

within global asias

/ understanding the discourse of race in the context of hong kong

Perfunctory policies of inclusivity

- De facto segregation in the education system (See HK Unison 2014)
- Lack of Chinese as a second-language curriculum

Practices

- Structural access barriers in education, employment, access to public service (See Kapai 2015)

Representation






- Dearth of documentation about the historical roots of our communities in Hong Kong's history, popular media, literature
- What happens if representation is the only goal?



Unit 7 Multicultural Society
Racial Harmony

A Fill in the blanks.

Japanese Indian British Chinese Korean Filipino

-  I am British.
I am an English teacher.
-  I am Filipino. I am a
domestic helper in Hong Kong.
-  I am Japanese. I have a
sushi restaurant in Hong Kong.
-  I am Chinese. Shanghai is
my hometown.
-  I am Indian. I study in
an international school.

/ the myth of multiculturalism in the context of hong kong

Despite it being known as "Asias World City" and for its "multiculturalism," Hong Kong is a largely homogenous society

- ~91.6% of its people being Chinese (ethnically speaking, Han Chinese) Only 8.4% of Hong Kong's population consists of ethnic minorities (2022 population By-census)

Valorisation of a "Hong Kong" identity = modeled on Western neoliberal forms of citizen that place pressure on migrants to assimilate to the local culture.

- 52.97 of respondents ethnically identified as "Hongkongers" (PORI, 2019)
- Contributions by ethnic minority communities framed through the lens of "progress" or "development"; politics of recognition

3 / community-based participatory research

ethical, methodological, political
possibilities and limitations

phase one

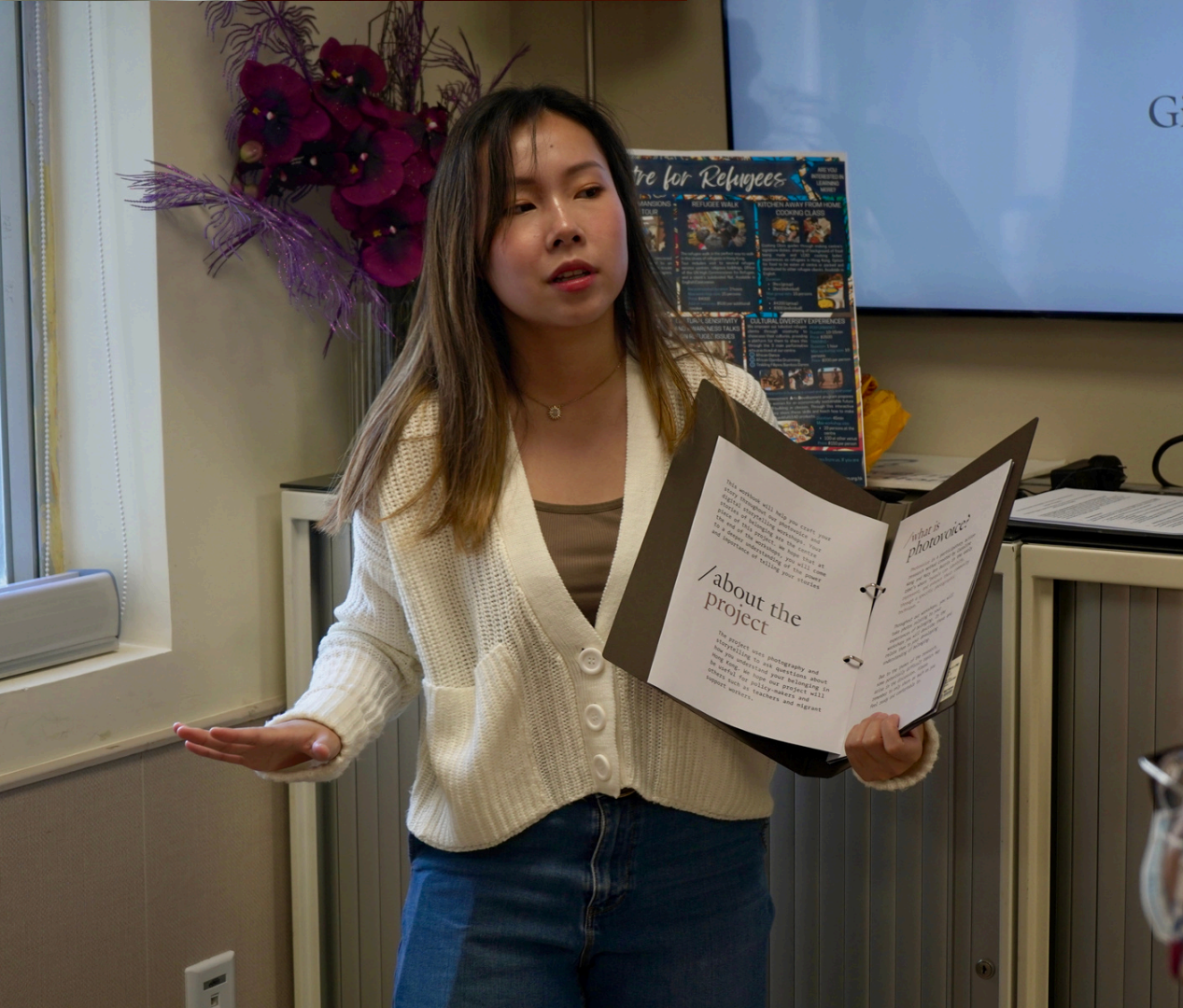
Christian Action's
Centre for Refugees,
Chungking Mansions



/ contextualising belonging for phase I participants

(From James Simpson's Workshop 3 fieldnotes)

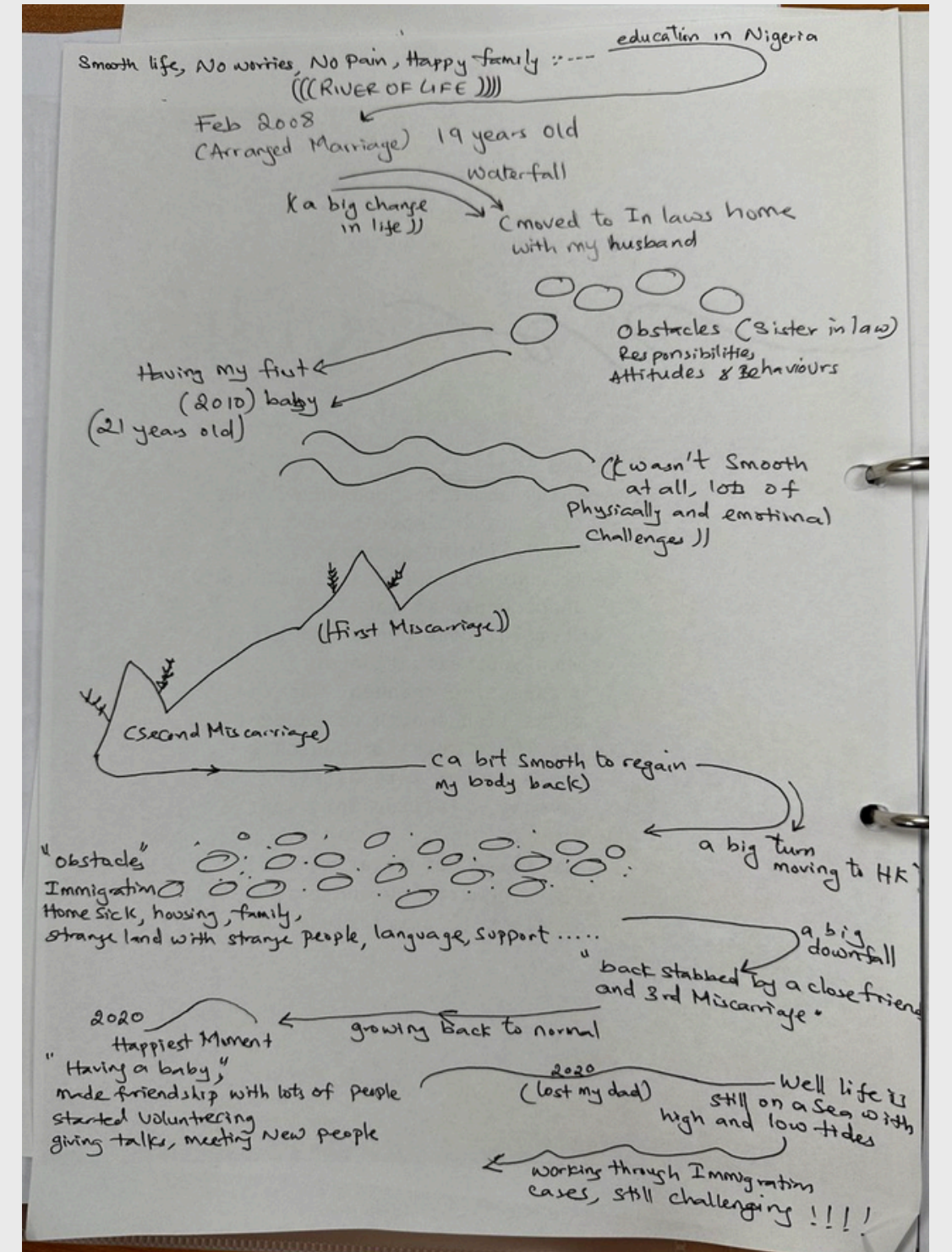
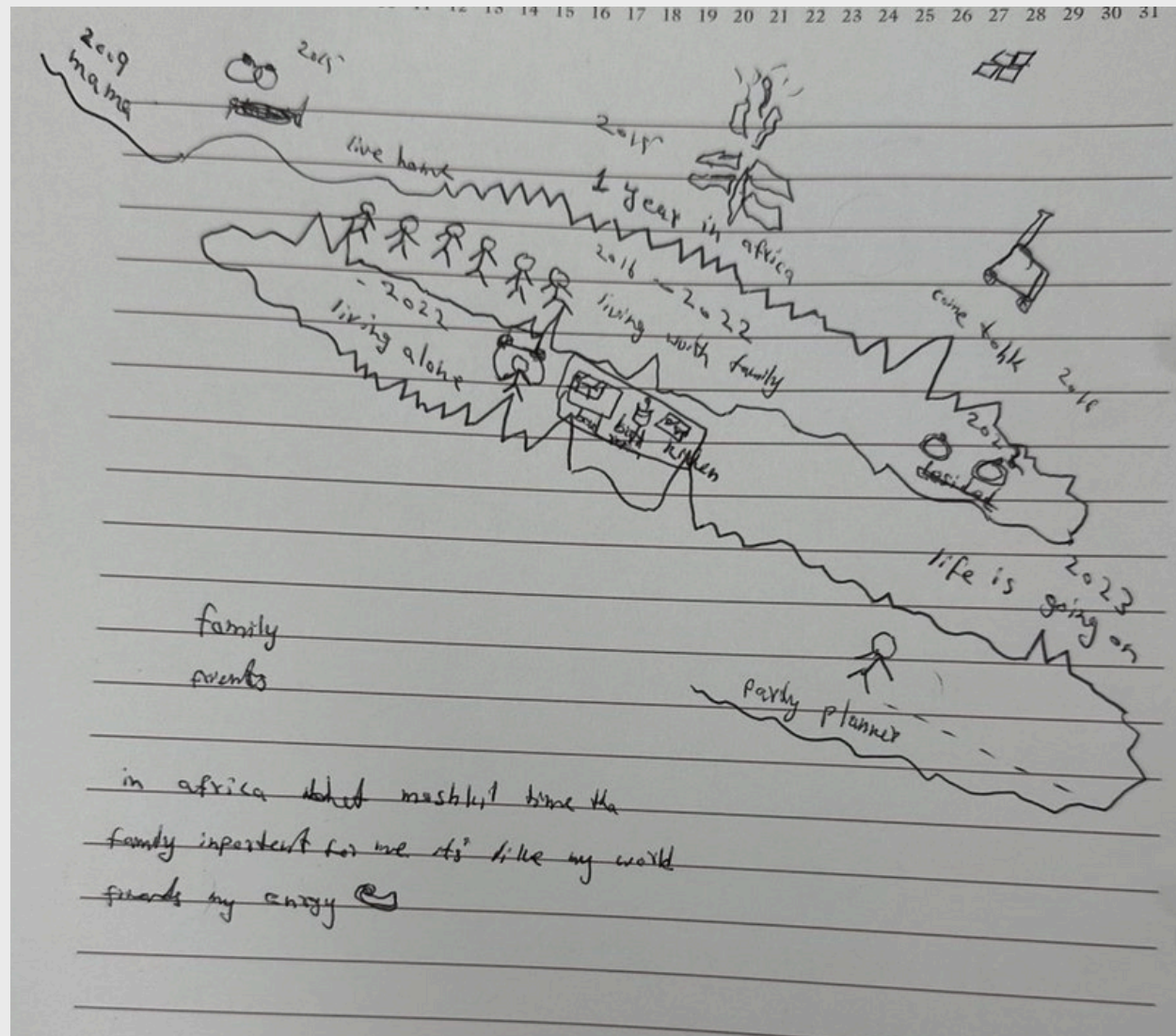
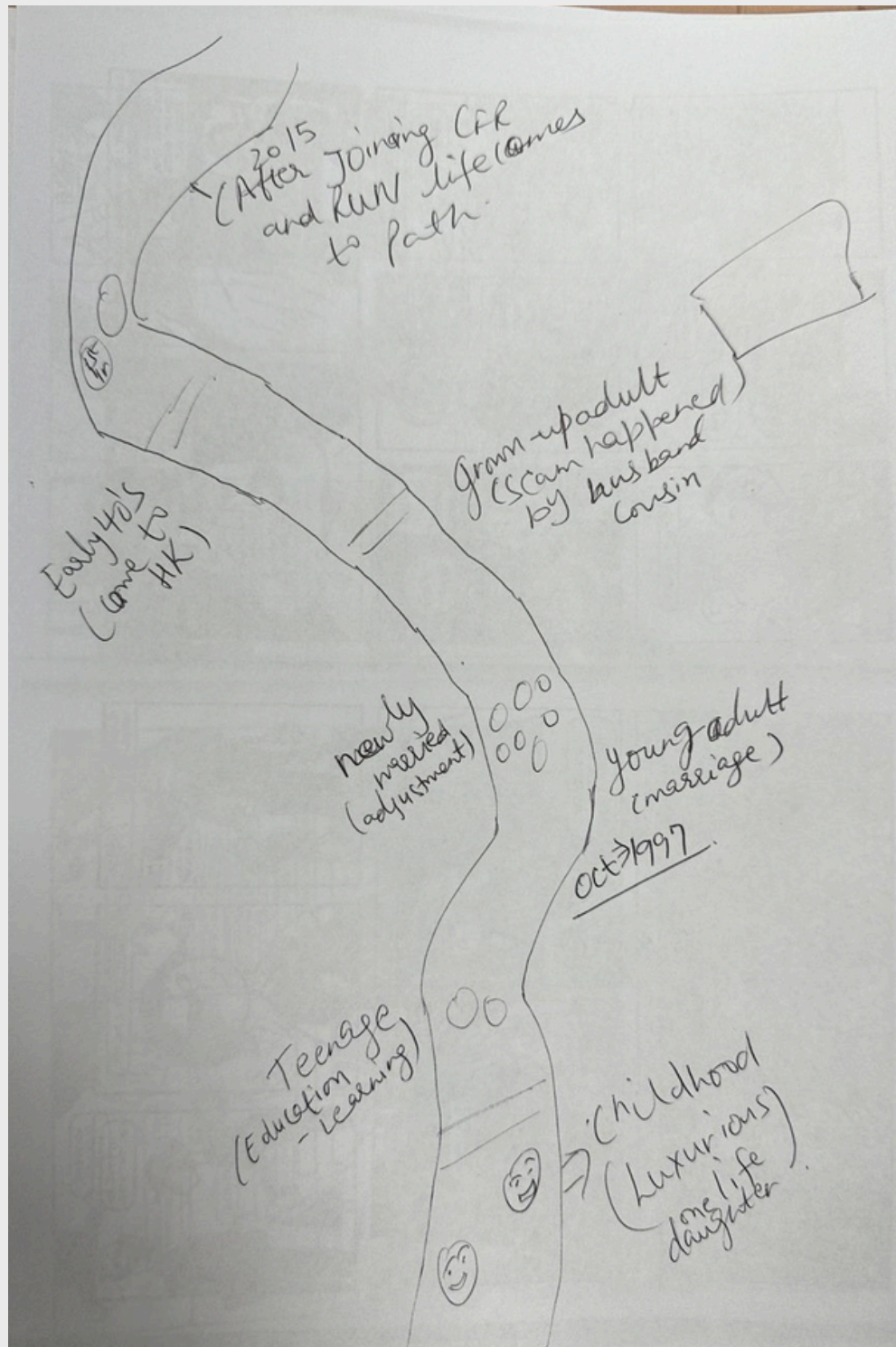
U, who in many ways is a 'lead' participant, has a meeting with her lawyer. She's awaiting her third appeal (which would not be allowed under the new laws). (...) The new law affecting asylum seekers, introduced (quietly and with little fanfare in the press, even HKFP) is that rather than the three rounds of appeal that have been allowed hitherto, if a claim is unsuccessful on first appeal deportation will swiftly follow. This is indeed happening. I'd like to find out more (or perhaps I wouldn't). The ostensible reason is that the legal system is clogged up with cases that will inevitably be unsuccessful.



/ the workshop as a space
where narratives emerge

5 Photovoice workshops (pilot-tested this with the research team)

- Mapping belonging + group norms
- Photography 101 (lighting, framing, composition), not a technical course, but one where we learn to tell stories through photographs
- Rivers of Life + Why does my story matter?
- Photowalk (putting what they learned in Photography 101 into practice)
- Crafting your story (letter-writing)



rivers of life activity

emergence of narratives

/ narratives of belonging culinary cultures

(From Workshop 3 transcription)

27:50, D:

"You know in our India and Punjabi people we have every day when you make any curry (...) that we make using ghee. This is called clarified butter. In every Indian home you receive this one, even Pakistan, without this when we make without, we don't like taste. (...) when I came over here to first two three months we didn't know about this (...) one day I talked to my friend he tells me about this that you can get from the shop near my home"



/ the workshop as a space where narratives emerge

(From James Simpson's Workshop 3 fieldnotes)
Our concern on the project is settlement and belonging in Hong Kong. We are not explicitly probing into people's migration history, their reasons for mobility and (in the case of our first phase participants) having to leave, or the progress of their legal battles. Nonetheless personal histories and trajectories, and ongoing efforts to legally belong, will inevitably relate and intertwine with their sense of belonging, their own subjective experiences of belonging, in Hong Kong. It's unavoidable perhaps that we will touch on these difficult stories.

/ the workshop as a space where narratives emerge

(From my Workshop 3 fieldnotes)

As we were walking to Kowloon Park, we noticed how Sam Bhai opened up a new store. A and D stopped by to see the pani puri stall. Rosy seems disengaged

- Suggestion that we do our next photowalk at CKM
- A agreed saying that there are more things at CKM remind us of home
 - Shayma says she'd rather not think about home, home is where she is now. Home was painful for her; the kidnapping, the torture.

In photo: The view as you are leaving Chungking Mansions (CKM)



/ the workshop as a space
where narratives emerge

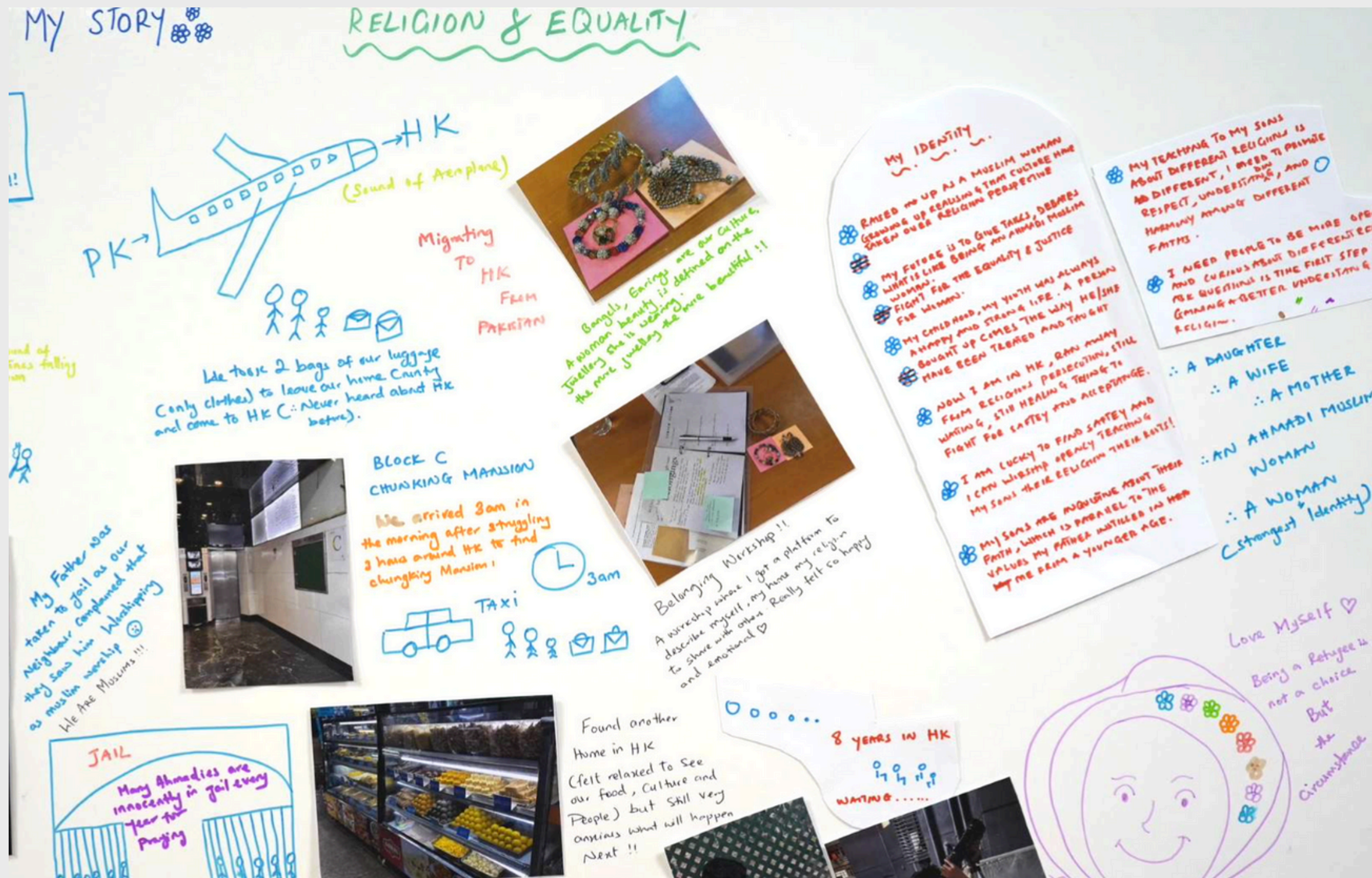
3 Digital Storytelling workshops

- Elements of storytelling (deconstructing this i.e., interrupting linearity,
- Visual communication (form, colour, font, symbols, etc.) and creating your multi-modal moodboard
- Gallery walk + consent (third round).

/ interrupting linearity

U: "You should tell that to our immigration officers. Sometimes they ask us the same questions and expect us to say the same answers."

"From an early age, children are instructed in the art of telling tidy and coherent narratives. We are admonished to "get our stories straight", and we learn early on that changing a story is the sure sign of a lie, an untrue story, a false self [...]. Yet, we know that a central dilemma of any narrative inquiry is that: "our voice is always contingent upon shifting relations among the words we speak, the practices we construct, and the community within which we interact (Britzman 2003, 34)"

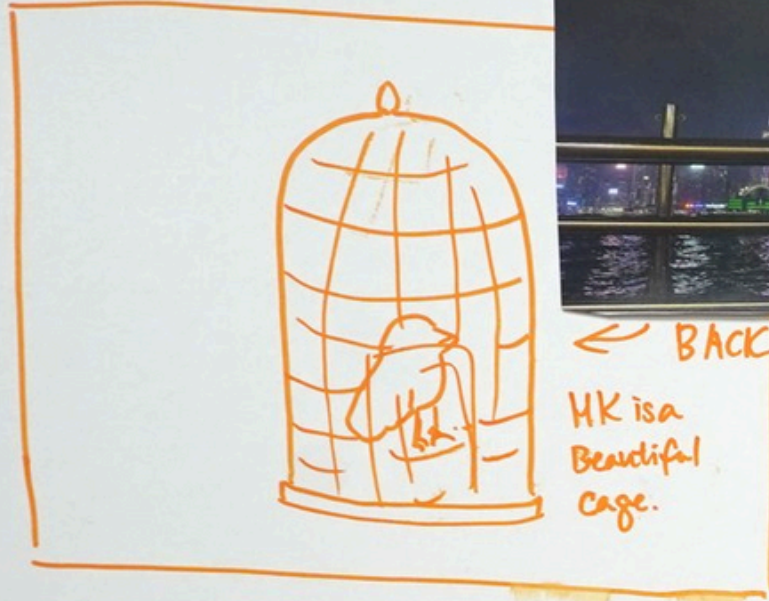


(CV Fieldnotes, DS3)
 Before the workshops, she understood belonging from an individual perspective. But after sharing her stories with everyone, she feels that there is a shift from "me" to "we." She mentions the sense of agency she has in relation to her expanded definition of belonging.

/ how useful is visual ethnography or cbpr, broadly speaking?

3 / doing research alongside community

① First frame

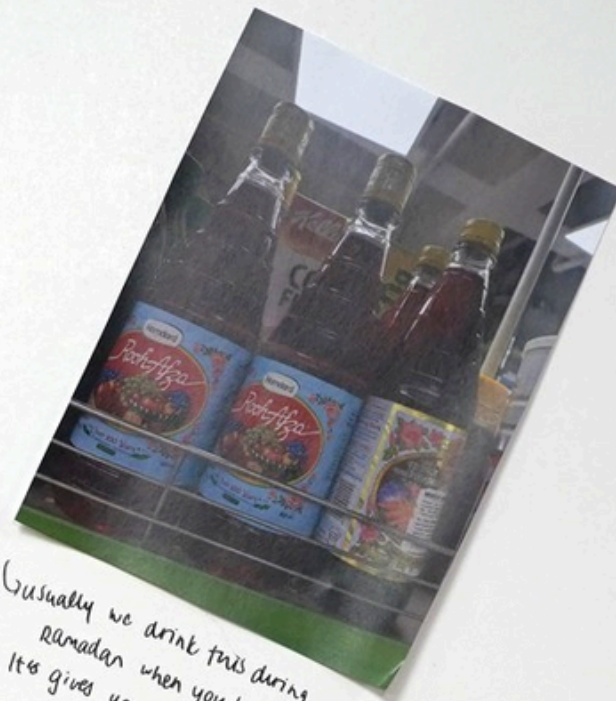


← BACK DROP

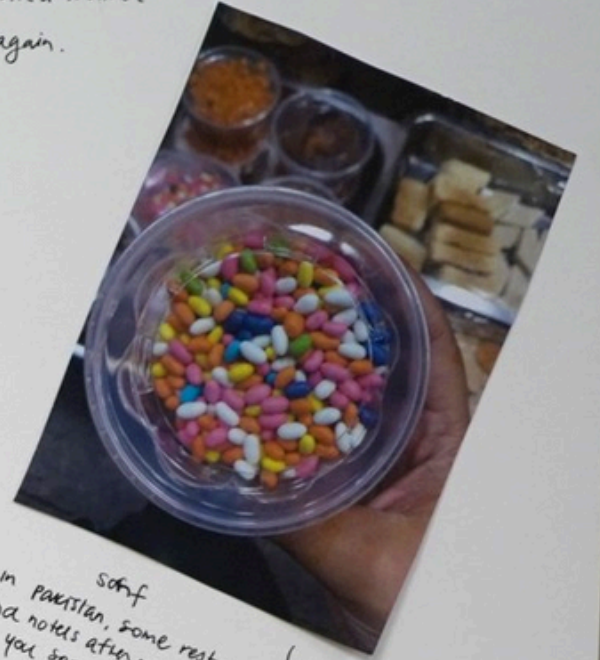
HK is a Beautiful Cage.



② animation:
birds flying across these photos ⇒



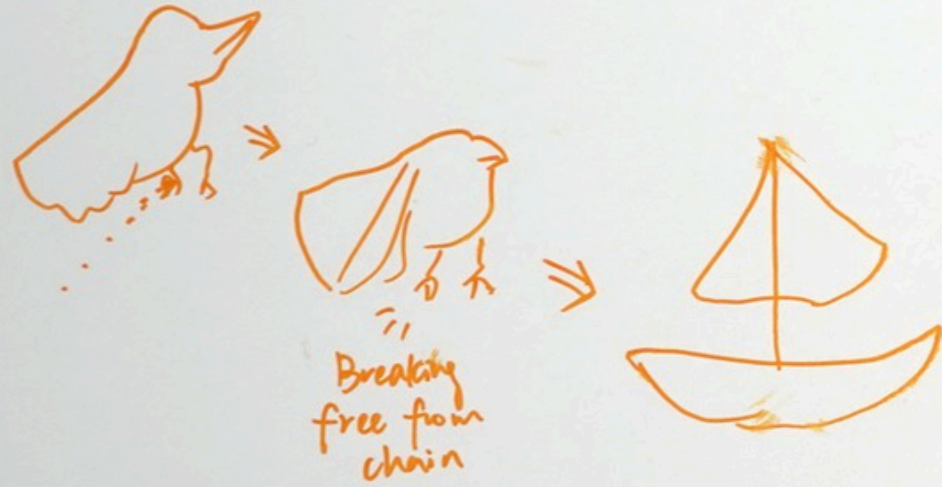
Usually we drink this during Ramadan when you break fast. It gives you energy. we also eat dates.



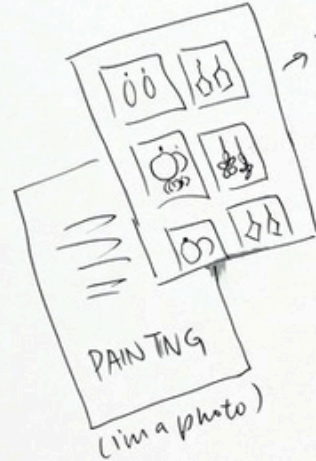
when I saw these in Chungking, I was reminded of these experiences. "that is my belonging!" I reflect I relived that moment and experience again.

soft in Pakistan, some restaurants and hotels after meals, they give you some. This reminds me of the time I spent with my mom growing up. I want to eat something. I want to buy something "mama" so she bought me these. It costs 5 rupees per box but home in Pakistan. this is good for your eyes, too. So she bought me these instead of candies.

③ animation of a bird morphing into a boat



Breaking free from chain



These are my hobbies. I like to paint and make earrings I love art. But sometimes, I don't have maybe the space, the time, or maybe money to do what I love. And I don't know where I can show my work.

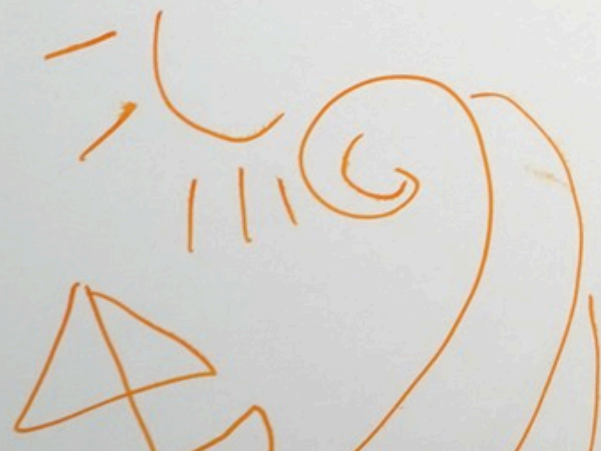
↳ Backdrop for the boat



} similar / a reflection of your heart. sadness cannot arrive w/o hope.

This photo shows loneliness because the trees have no flowers. Kind of nothing inside. empty heart, look like in the future it will be reborn. Hope that in the future that there will be flowers again.

④ Boat on the sea



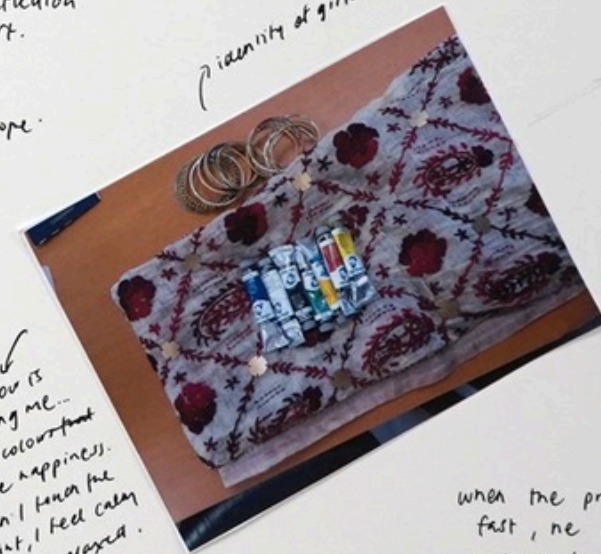
• meaning: breaking free from the chains citizenship → boat, a boat that can sail freely on the sea
• Ready for new challenges & journeys

On the sea, everyone is a boat. A boat has to survive the turbulence and challenges on the open sea, alone. But there's a new sun every day, and we are sailing.

In Pakistani culture, the elders are usually at home. here I can see, I saw many elderly in the park, going for walks. I felt this... our culture don't like this. they it's our mentality. they would say he should be at home.



color is giving me... + the color that give me happiness. when I touch the paint, I feel calm and relaxed.



↳ identity of girls.



when the prophet broke fast, he ate khajoor. sometimes he didn't have these at home, so he ate salt, or just water.

Sonaf = what the prophet says, or does, we follow. during Ramadan, this is very important for us.

When I shifted to living alone...



/ the role of the researcher

The limits of empathy

- "The problem is not simply that empathy sometimes substitutes for action, but that it promotes its own kind of moral callousness, a fascination with others' pain" (Serpell & Tumarkin 2020)
- So much work and deliberation need to happen before you actually do anything that is ethically grounded and not fundamentally self-serving

/ the role of the researcher

Emotional investment and reciprocity as a responsibility

- Challenging the methodological hegemony of neopositivist empiricism of the social sciences with critical feminist/decolonial methodology (England, 1994)
- Researcher reflexivity plays a crucial role in interpreting and producing knowledge by focusing on how knowledge is situated and constructed in the research process and to disentangle multi-layered power relations based on different social relations such as gender, race/ethnicity, class, language, etc.

4/

sustaining conversations

beyond the "project dates"

Reporting back to the people is never ever a one-off exercise or a task that can be signed off on completion of the written report. Some of my students have presented their work in formal ceremonies to family and tribal councils; one has had his work positioned amongst the wreaths which have surrounded the casket of a deceased relation. I have travelled with another student back to an area where she carried out her interviews so that she could present copies of her work to the people she interviewed. The family was waiting for her; they cooked food and made us welcome.”

Linda Tuhiwai Smith, 2012, p. 27



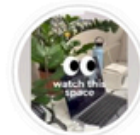
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Podcast B...



03.18 | Eato...



Events

POSTS

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We Are: NEXUS NEXUS Events Media & Blog Our Team Useful Resources 🔍

{ nexus events: }

Our core activities

NEXUS events are at the heart of what we do. We run a regular and active series of meetings both online and face-to-face where we explore belonging - and belonging in Hong Kong - from a range of perspectives.

What are NEXUS events like?

The events are led by interesting people from a range of backgrounds. Some are academic, where researchers and research participants report their findings and discuss with us what they might mean - for example [our event with Jan Gube from EdUHK](#). Some work we discuss straddles academia and creative practice, such as [our event with Christine Vicera, founder of the be/longing project](#). Some are less traditional in feel, more conversational and interactive, such as our [HKUST student-led open dialogue](#) and an [open forum with Narrativesbyus](#), both led by groups and organisations actively involved in challenging established conceptions of what it means to belong in Hong Kong.

Subscribe to our mailing list for updates on latest and upcoming events (and more)!



[Belonging and Allyship with Migrant Domestic Helper Creative Communities](#)

Hosting [Julie Ham](#) on belonging and allyship with migrant domestic helper creative communities

09 Dec 2022 (Fri) | 10:00am - 11:30am

in conclusion

- It is not enough to place an expectation on communities to tell their stories without long-term structural support. Forgoing this risk an extractivist model of activism that appropriates the language of social justice without truly recognizing the value of creative labour.
- Acknowledging the power dynamic doesn't make it go away
 - There is no one-size-fits-all solution, relational methodologies (CBPR, critical feminist/decolonial) provide a series of "maps" to guide research
 - Illustrate the partial nature of our understanding of "others" AND involve the communities you're working with throughout all phases of the research

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