

10 THINGS YOU NEED TO CONSIDER IF YOU ARE AN ARTIST – NOT OF THE REFUGEE AND ASYLUM SEEKER COMMUNITY- LOOKING TO WORK WITH OUR COMMUNITY.

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There has been a huge influx of artists approaching us in order to find participants for their next project. The artist often claims to want to show 'the human side of the story' through a false sense of neutrality and limited understanding of their own bias, privilege and frameworks.

1. Process not product

We are not a resource to feed into your next artistic project. You may be talented at your particular craft but do not assume that this automatically translates to an ethical, responsible and self-determining process. Understand community cultural development methodology but also understand that it is not a full-proof methodology. Who and what institutions are benefiting from the exchange?

2. Critically interrogate your intention

Our struggle is not an opportunity, or our bodies' a currency, by which to build your career. Rather than merely focusing on the 'other' ('where do I find refugees'.. etc) Subject your own intention to critical, reflexive analysis. What is your motivation to work with this particular subject matter? Why at this particular time?

3. Realise your own privilege

What biases and intentions, even if you consider these 'good' intentions, do you carry with you? What social positionality (and power) do you bring to the space? Know how much space you take up. Know when to step back.

4. Participation is not always progressive or empowering

Your project may have elements of participation but know how this can just as easily be limiting, tokenistic and condescending. Your demands on our community sharing our stories

may be just as easily disempowering. What frameworks have you already imposed on participation? What power dynamics are you reinforcing with such a framework? What relationships are you creating (eg. informant vs expert, enunciated vs enunciator)

5. Presentation vs representation

Know the difference!

6. It is not a safe-space just because you say it is

This requires long term grass-roots work, solidarity and commitment.

7. Do not expect us to be grateful

We are not your next interesting arts project. Our community are not sitting waiting for our struggle to be acknowledged by your individual consciousness nor highlighted through your art practice.

8. Do not reduce us to an issue

We are whole humans with various experiences, knowledge and skills. We can speak on many things; do not reduce us to one narrative.

9. Do your research

Know the solidarity work already being done. Know the nuanced differences between organizations and projects. Just because we may work with the same community doesn't mean we work in the same way.

10. Art is not neutral

Our community has been politicized and any art work done with/by us is inherently political. If you wish to build with our community know that your artistic practice cannot be neutral.

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Source: <http://riserefugee.org/10-things-you-need-to-consider-if-you-are-an-artist-not-of-the-refugee-and-asylum-seeker-community-looking-to-work-with-our-community/> (26.5.16)