Getting to Know You: The Journey from African Refugee to African-Australian

Insights into the life and times of African refugee women settling in Perth

Nicolette Macdougall

BA Hon. (Sociology)

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

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Nicolette Macdougall
Abstract

In this thesis I adopt a multi-disciplinary approach to explore the experiences of African humanitarian migrants in Australia. I argue that effective integration and positive settlement outcomes for this group would be enhanced by a clearer understanding of their originating circumstances and culture(s).

I employ a combination of ethnography, autoethnography and narrative styles to articulate different aspects of the lived experience of flight and settlement of twelve individual African refugee women. These stories were collected through semi- and unstructured personal interviews over a period of two years. They emerge out of my evolving relationships with the participants, and highlight the importance of friendship and active listening in promoting positive cross-cultural interaction.

The narrative accounts are supplemented and augmented by documentary chapters that examine the broader socio-political aspects of culture, war and refugees in Africa. The fine detail of the individual experiences of flight, settlement and relationships converge with these contextual accounts to open a window on the social world of humanitarian migrants. Together, they provide a layered and multi-faceted account of the life and times of African refugees and the challenges that they face in Australia in the 21st Century.
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Dedication

To Honey, faithful friend and constant companion.

You kept me grounded and reminded me that there is more to life than study.

And to Tessa, who woke me up.
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