Meeting The Refugee Challenge: Perspectives From the 2000 Summer Course

Introduction
Sharryn Aiken

This is the third year we have dedicated a special issue of Refuge for participants and faculty of the Summer Course on Refugee Issues. The Summer Course issue provides a forum for sharing perspectives on the broad themes addressed in the seven day intensive programme. Launched in 1993 with financial assistance from the UNHCR, the Summer Course has hosted remarkably diverse groups of participants and faculty from every corner of the world. This year, in addition to a strong complement of faculty from York University and other Canadian institutions, guest faculty included Carol Bachelor (UNHCR, Geneva), Dr. Paul Spiegel (Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta), Prof. Ogenga Otunnu (DePaul University, Chicago), Prof. Barbara Harrell-Bond (American University, Cairo) and Prof. V. Vijayakumar (National Law School of India University, Bangalore). Participants came from South Africa, Ethiopia, Egypt, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Australia, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the United States as well as Canada and represented the full spectrum of institutional, academic, legal and non-governmental sectors. As in previous years, the papers included in this special issue reflect the diversity that is intrinsic to the Summer Course itself.

Maki Katoh provides a critical perspective on refugee assistance, highlighting the need to transcend the dualistic “we versus they” mentality that informs so much of refugee work.

Prof. V. Vijayakumar traces the historical antecedents and current dimensions of refugee protection in South Asia with particular reference to India, concluding with an interesting comparison of

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Northern and Southern approaches. Jackie King interrogates the concept of temporary protection at the international level as well as its recent application in Australia in response to the 1999 crisis in Kosovo. Citing critical flaws in Australia's new framework legislation, King underscores the tensions inherent in temporary protection schemes that fail to respect basic human rights for refugees. Lina Anani surveys the convergence of disability rights with human rights and the concomitant discrepancies in Canadian refugee resettlement policies with regard to both disability and health impairment. Anani's insightful analysis addresses an issue that has failed to receive much attention in the critical literature and is particularly timely in light of recent signals on the part of the Canadian government to exclude refugee claimants on the basis of positive HIV status. In "Meeting the Refugee Challenge: The Dutch Experience," Loeky Droesen provides an overview of asylum policy in the Netherlands with an emphasis on the evolution of status determination procedures in the last four decades. Elaborating on the experience of governments in both Canada and Italy in addressing the settlement needs of migrants, Grazia Scoppio argues that Canada's multiculturalism policy framework offers the best model for supporting the integration of migrants in their host countries. Finally, with Tomoko Okado's contribution, we return to the question of domestic responses to the Kosovar refugee crisis with an engaging review of the Kosovar Resettlement Assistance Project in Victoria, British Columbia.