

Paintings of Home



An evening to benefit



ERICA

Episcopal Refugee & Immigrant Center Alliance

June 12, 2015

7 :00 P.M.

The Village Learning Place

2521 St. Paul Street

Baltimore, Maryland 212

ERICA

As an outreach ministry of the Cathedral of the Incarnation in Baltimore, ERICA – the Episcopal Refugee & Immigrant Center Alliance – has welcomed people fleeing injustice, poverty and oppression in other countries since 2001. With the help of partner organizations and volunteers from the Cathedral of the Incarnation and the broader community, ERICA provides support to refugees, asylum seekers and other humanitarian immigrants. ERICA’s free services help smooth the journey to stability and a promising future, as newcomers adjust to their new circumstances. ERICA offers one-on-one problem solving, emergency and transitional aid, educational workshops, referrals for legal counsel and social services, English classes in partnership with Strong Baltimore (formerly GHCC), grants for family reunification and small zero interest loans for immigration-related government and legal fees. Within the last thirteen years, ERICA has served almost 700 humanitarian newcomers and issued 110 loans totaling \$117,400 to refugees and asylees for family reunification or legal assistance fees. Visit ERICA at www.eric-baltimore.org!

Staff

Betty Symington, Executive Director
Ellen Tabler, Event Coordinator
Elizabeth Warren, Johns Hopkins SOURCE Service Scholar
Eleanor Layfield, Johns Hopkins Center for Social Concern Intern

Advisory Board

The Rev. Rob Boulter, Acting Dean
The Rev. Charles Cloughen
Abner Lall
Blessing Ogamba
Brad Peabody
Amy Rakusin
Deepti Scharf
The Rev. Angela Shepherd

ERICA has an ongoing need for volunteers to assist with workshops, client transportation, interpretation, mentoring, data management, fundraising, and communications. If you would like to offer your time and skills, please contact any board member or the executive director at 410.467.3751 or bsymington@eric-baltimore.org. The Advisory Board holds monthly meetings, generally the first Tuesday of each month. All are welcome.

This Evening’s Program

Artists from around the world have come together tonight to share their visual works, music and personal stories. All have been moved to re-create the world as it is in their heart. To do so they have had to make themselves vulnerable to the world in an extraordinary way, even while taking extraordinary paths through the world. Their openness has enabled them to create the art they share with us. We are honored to see and hear their stories and come to share deeply in the vision of home they carry within themselves.

Morris Munyana



Malumba

I grew up in Uganda, raised by aunties. I earned my bachelors degree in Uganda, but employment is scarce there, so I moved to Rwanda to find a job. I worked for Partners in Health for three years as a research assistant, until 2013. I was working in the field of mental health with vulnerable communities of families and children infected with and affected by H.I.V. I have painted several paintings depicting children I worked with at Partners in Health.

Studying art was not an option for me; it would not lead to survival. I started painting in Rwanda where I made a connection who would show and sell my work for a commission. I was able to come home from work, take a shower, and paint anything that came from within.

I came to the U.S. in 2010 and 2011 for exhibitions on a 10-year visa. I had been discouraged from practicing art since childhood, but my first exhibition in the States in 2010 put me on a plane to Seattle. Back home very few people have ever flown on a plane.

I paint what I want to see. I paint what would make me happy. I don't like painting guns and killing. Some artists like to paint that, I don't, because it stays on my mind for a while. I cannot state a definite reason why I paint. It is like finding someone on the side of the road, singing. I paint the theme that is on my heart. I paint to make someone smile.

I'd like to tell the story of one of my paintings. The nongovernmental relief agencies focus on victims of genocide, but not on the children of rape. They are not genocide survivors, so they are forgotten. The child in this painting is the child of rape. The mother is a Tutsi and the father is a Hutu. This child has nobody to cry to, because neither parent will claim him. If the child calls out, the mother will say, "Go to your father," although he is in prison. The father will say, "Go to your mother."

This painting is of a child born and dropped at his dad's door. His dad would have nothing to do with him. The child went to live with his grandmother and was discriminated against, fed last, and left hungry. The eight-year-old child fled in search of his mother. When the mother and child finally met, the mother disowned him, twice. Homeless and on the street, he threw a rock at another child who mocked him for "thinking he had a mother." Realizing what he had done, the child in my painting believed he should go to prison like his father. The child is angry, but a butterfly will come into his life. He can catch it and begin to smile.

Lal Monger



Himalayan Scene 1

I discovered my interest in art when I was in the refugee camp in Nepal. At the time I can make only the pencil sketch art. Because of the economic status, we only had the pencils. It was difficult to buy the color. I made a sketch and gave it to my teacher who asked me to compete in art with my school section against other sections. There were 4000 or 5000 students in the school, so there were many sections. We also competed against other camps. I was selected to represent my camp in an art competition in the Damak camp. They provided the color but it was not working very well. I won up to inter-camp. I did not win the whole competition but my art was chosen for the camp calendar.

From that day onwards I have interest in art. I was thirteen years old. I was able to see art in a gallery outside the camp with three friends. We were wondering how can they paint and mix all that color? How to use that color? We decided to discuss and do art together, and share with our friends. We could use fabric dye for color on paper, but it was almost \$20 for one bottle. I sometimes painted on cloth.

And then almost twenty years passed. We did not receive citizenship in Nepal. It was possible to move to Canada or the United States or Australia. Some of my friends moved to other countries, and I started thinking that if I stay in Nepal I cannot do anything in my life, so I started the process to leave. When I came to Baltimore in 2012, my friend who lives in Rosedale showed me the watercolors at Walmart.

This painting is all from my mind and imagination, it is a Himalayan mountain, in either Bhutan or Nepal. It is not Mt. Everest, it is a little bit lower than Mt. Everest, a mountain in Kaski. I need to add a tree to make the mountain farther away but seem bigger. I can make a painting in two hours, it depends on the hand and the color and the mind. When I finish a painting I give it to someone in the office or I give it to a friend. My paintings are usually of home, of what is in my mind from the Himalayan country. I paint flowers too. I left my mom and dad in Nepal and brothers too. I have an uncle here in Baltimore and a sister in Georgia and a brother in Texas and one in Ohio. I am sad about leaving my family behind.

Priti is my wife and I have a son and daughter ages 10 and 6. Nishan my son also paints! He does school projects that he shows to me and I say "You are great!" Neeca my daughter is interested in singing English songs with her friends. I haven't seen a gallery in Baltimore, I haven't heard there is a gallery here. But I don't have much time. I am the umbrella for my family. On my day off I go to the rental office, social service office, sometimes I have to go to the bank, I help my uncle. I have one Bhutanese friend who paints. He works at Under Armour and I work at Lancaster Foods. Because we work at different companies I haven't seen him in a long time.

If I can save some money I will go back to Nepal to visit my family. My heart is in Nepal.

Najwa Al-Amin



Fragmented

When I was 15, a teacher of mine said, 'You are an artist.' It changed my life. You can train to be an artist, you may have talent, but the right guidance is crucial. I painted but, back then, my work was for myself, not for public show. It was expected that I would become a doctor, an engineer, anything but an artist. At the age of 19, I didn't know what was right for me and, a good daughter, I went to engineering school and then worked as a mechanical engineer in Baghdad for many years.

During the United Nations embargo of Iraq, started in 1990 soon after Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, it was as if we were in a prison: it was hard to connect with the world, it was as if we had dropped from the planet. We were isolated, technologically, scientifically, there were no books, no connection to the world of arts. I remember wanting to find people like me, I was eager to find other intellectuals to talk with. So, I went back to school, to *art* school, the same year my son went into first grade. But, after 2 years, we had to leave, to flee to Jordan, one of the few places that would take us without a visa. And what did I pack? I took my art work with me.

Unfortunately, living in Jordan wasn't working well for my husband and we had to move again, this time to Yemen. I continued to paint, had a couple of shows at the French cultural center but it was hard to make a living.

In 2000 I returned briefly to Iraq to be with my father. He had a stroke and was in the hospital. Good medical care was very hard to find. Human life was considered to be cheap. I stayed at his bedside, and he died 2 weeks later. At that point I knew it was time to make a new life for myself and I came to America to visit my sister. I came alone, without my son who stayed in Yemen with my husband. I sought asylum and did not see my son again for four years. My family, my spiritual life, my home, everything was up in the air.

Here, my painting was not enough to pay my rent, and I had no choice but to find work. I got a job at a day care center for children. The woman who ran it took advantage of the other immigrants who worked there, paid less than minimum wage, but I discovered that I am very good at working with children. When my son, by then a teenager, joined me in America, I began my own childcare business so that I could work from my home and be here for him too.

My exile has influenced my subject matter. Every time there is a situation, I have to make a painting for that. Often, I paint the city I live in now. During the events here in Baltimore this April, I made paintings. The human situation repeats itself and my work is inspired by suffering. Art has sustained me: during the United Nations embargo, war, time apart from my son, the break-up of my first marriage. It has put me back on my feet when I thought I had lost everything.

Please visit Najwa Al-Amin's website: www.absolutearts.com/portfolios/n/najwa/ and

Podcast: www.programs.wypr.org/podcast/signal-081911-082011-ginny-gongs-immigrant-experience-getting-close-personal-farmed-animals

Nar Neupane, Devi Dhimal and Friends



Harmonium, Madal, Jyali

Tonight we will play traditional Nepali instruments and perform songs that are a very old form of folk song that originated in Nepal a long time ago describing the beautiful landmarks of valleys and rivers. Almost 200 original instruments developed in Nepal. 108 types are still played across the country.

Nar Neupane will play the harmonium. The harmonium is similar to an organ. It blows air through the air vessels' reeds, producing musical notes. Our harmonium is hand-pumped: a hand bellows blows the air. Very skilled players pump enough air with one hand, remove it and play with both hands wherever necessary. The sound of the harmonium is mellow but also similar to that of an accordion. It is a very popular instrument in Himalayan countries.

Devi Dhimal will play the jyali. It has two pieces made of bronze and is played by hitting them together. We will also play the madal, a drum played by hand beating on both sides. Madal is made by making hollow a piece of thick log at its two ends and covering with goat skin. No one can stand still when people start beating madals and singing Nepali folk songs!



Thank you for Coming Tonight!

Thank You to our SPONSORS



Food & Flowers – Vendors and Donors

Donna's Charles Village, Greek Super Foods, Indigma Restaurant, Mary Klein, Lagunitas Beer, John McDonnell, Blessing Ogamba, Patty Parsley, Julia Pearson, Doris Ridenour, Joan Stanne, Anne Stick, Betty Symington, Ann Tabler, Washburn Wines, Michael Whorms

Silent Auction Donors



Event Volunteers

Peter Beyer, James Byun, Erin George, Cheryl Hazel, Daniel Jacoby, Cindy James, Eleanor Layfield, John McDonnell, Leslie Norton, Patience McPherson, Julia Pearson, Joan Stanne, Anne Stick, Ann Tabler, Ellen Tabler, Terry Tabler, Tom Thompson, Adele Wakefield, Susan Yeh

Paintings of Home Planning Team

Master of Ceremonies: John McDonnell
Art Coordinator: Anne Stick
Silent Auction: Cheryl Hazel, Leslie Norton,
Eleanor Layfield, Betty Symington, Ellen Tabler

ERICA is deeply grateful for the support of the congregation and staff of the Cathedral of the Incarnation, the staff of the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland, and of our volunteers who stepped forward to make this event a reality.



CATHEDRAL *of*
the
INCARNATION

And many thanks to the very wonderful Village Learning Place
for giving our event a HOME!

