

# Where Do You Sit? Impact Case Study



**"Hugely moving, creative and informative. Human stories which reflected humanity in all its glories/horrors. Ordinary transformed into extraordinary."  
Audience Feedback**

*Where Do You Sit?* was presented as part of the National Holocaust Memorial Day Programme and also part of Newcastle City Council's Holocaust Memorial Day Events 2023. Our *Where Do You Sit?* programme included a free exhibition which was on display at Newcastle City Library from Friday 20 to Wednesday 25 January 2023, a special event which was hosted in Bewick Hall at Newcastle City Library on Wednesday 25 January and a radio broadcast, which shared highlights from the event, was broadcast on Skimstone Radio on Friday 27 January.

**The aim of *Where Do You Sit?* was to work with our communities:**

- To raise awareness and understanding of the Holocaust and other genocides
- To enable persecuted communities to commemorate those who suffered and died during the Holocaust and other genocides and who continue to suffer today
- To respect persecuted communities and individuals experiences through collaborating on story sharing resulting in an exhibition, live event and radio broadcast

- To encourage residents of the city to empathise with their loss and work with our young people to create original songs about the theme of Ordinary People
  - To enhance awareness and recognition of the attitudes and behaviours that lead to discrimination, persecution and genocide and to encourage appropriate resistance to them
  - To contribute to Newcastle's status as a City of Sanctuary and encourage tolerance and inclusion
  - To encourage audiences to pledge a response that is active and demonstrates empathy and understanding.
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### **The Exhibition:**

- This poignant new exhibition featured photographic portraits of ordinary people who shared extraordinary stories or co-created poems and lyrics that responded to the theme for Holocaust Memorial Day Events 2023 - Ordinary People.
- This collection of portraits revealed unique stories of how a mother, school friend, father, cousin, stranger and neighbour chose to support those being persecuted and how others have shown extraordinary kindness and courage in such dreadful times.
- Other portraits included those of people based in Newcastle upon Tyne and the North East of England accompanied by their poems, script or lyrics that were co-created with Skimstone Arts' artists. As with all Skimstone Arts' work, we asked visitors to respond with pledges and comments on how they, as ordinary people, could choose where to sit in the world.
- This photographic exhibition was a joint exhibition between Skimstone Arts' Associate Artists and photojournalists Shahor Omar and Ako Ismail and our Artistic Director Claire Webster Saaremetts.

### **The Event:**

- On Wednesday 25 January visitors were invited to our *Where Do You Sit?* event at Newcastle City Library to hear a selection of extraordinary stories about surviving interrogation and loss, coping with the unknown, making critical decisions and receiving sanctuary.
- This unique event, hosted by Claire Webster Saaremetts and Kema Sikazwe, featured performance, film and social action and explored extraordinary true stories, powerful and personal experiences and artistic responses from ordinary people, including artists and communities working with Skimstone Arts.
- It asked: Where do you sit as an ordinary person, in these extraordinary times, past and present?

### **The Radio Broadcast:**

- On Friday 27 January listeners were invited to tune in to Skimstone Arts' internet radio station Skimstone Radio to listen to highlights from our specially commissioned *Where Do You Sit?* event.

## Outputs/Outcomes:

- **16** individuals from our diverse communities made creative contributions to our *Where Do You Sit?* programme underpinning our core programming values of representation, inclusivity, quality and equality.
- **3** artists - our Artistic Director and two Associated Artists with lived refugee experience - captured the portraits featured in the exhibition.
- **29** people came to the exhibition opening at Newcastle City Library.
- **41** people attended the sold out event at Newcastle City Library.
- **168** listeners tuned in to listen to the Skimstone Radio broadcast featuring highlights from the *Where Do You Sit?* event.
- **10,121** people were reached with content about *Where Do You Sit?* In January 2023 via social media. This included 2,231 people via Facebook, 607 people via Instagram and 7,283 impressions on Twitter.
- **161** users visited Skimstone Arts website, of which 70.8% were new visitors, in January 2023.



Inna Mujacic Carlton

Nobody wanted the war to start, we had a simple life. Our country was beautiful.

My cousin, I call him my brother, Salih Bazdar was a young doctor graduated. He was cardiologist as just graduated as a consultant and during the war in Bosnia he worked in a male shift hospital in a little village held by the Bosnian Army. He did amputations without any anaesthetics, on wounded soldiers. He saved many many lives. He got himself injured and had to move to Croatia to be with his family. During this desperate desperate time and living in Croatia and been given a flat and had no financial support, he started to write all these letters. They are the most beautiful poetic letters.

Extract from one of the letters "My dear darling, you wanted me to reply to you as soon as possible. I'm sorry. I couldn't do it. Events have dictated my time. I just got overwhelmed. I don't know if my perception of life is emotional or sentimental then if it is, I've become both. My dear God, how is it possible that in a matter of only a few months everything changed in life. I know now that your Father's visits to our house every Saturday were really special. We would sit and drink coffee and talk about ordinary things. You know the strong bond we had.... My only wish is for us to meet again."

When the war started my Father was immediately taken to a concentration camp. Most people taken were Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Muslims. My Father was placed on death row and the Serbian killers decided whether to wait till tomorrow. He suffered Post Traumatic Stress Disorder the rest of his life from this. On one of these occasions he said to the Serbian guard "I just want to die quickly. I don't want to die in pain."

Suddenly what happened next, my Father says every time he told the story, his best friend from childhood, a Serbian friend, appeared and he had a word with the guard and my Father was released from prison. His best friend told my Father I'm going to get you across the border into Serbia, because that's the only way I can do it. What he said to the border guards we don't know but he must have been very very convincing. My Father got to Germany and met with my Mother and my sister. He learned later that his best friend had been killed by Serbian forces for helping him. He left a wife and a daughter and my Father supported them financially for the rest of his life.

## Feedback:

*"Great exhibition of life journey through difficulties, memories of love ones, touching stories, all need everyone's support with hold common value- kindness, love, freedom demands from situation of injustices. Keep it going!"* **Visitor to Exhibition**

*'Powerful and thought provoking texts that will hopefully persuade others to reach out and work towards 'others' to enrich our lives and our country.'* **Visitor to Exhibition**

*'To date the world is still demonstrating divide and hate: I hope something changes through the understanding of unity and shared dreams.'* **Visitor to Exhibition**

*"Still trying to process today. So many emotions, sadness at what happened to ordinary people, anger that it is still happening, and joy that even in adversity survivors lived to tell their stories."* **Visitor to Event**

*"A very thoughtful presentation which can inspire us and stir us out of our complacency. Really touched by the poems especially the one entitled "It will never happen"."* **Visitor to Event**

*"Your event was so, so powerful... the stories need to be told in schools. The stories need to be shared in as many different venues as possible to make sure the atrocities of the Holocaust are never forgotten and, to draw people's attention to the 'modern' atrocities happening now."* **Visitor to Event**

Find out what audiences had to say about our Where Do You Sit? event:



Listen to our Where Do You Sit? radio broadcast:



Skimstone Arts  
HMD 2023  
Holocaust Memorial Day 2023 (Live)

