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July 2012

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The Living Word - Tales from Tribal India

**Randhir Khare**

Tribal Affairs Activist



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July 2012



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Dear Readers,

The main feature is **The Living Word – Tales from Tribal India by Randhir Khare**. It is best described in his words - *“I discovered that the stories that I collected during my travels were rich with cultural symbols that had been carried along by a language which was emotive, vibrant and throbbing with reality. They were soaked in centuries of reverence for life and reflected the awareness that the environment within which the community survived wasn’t merely earth, rivers, trees, animals, birds, plants, insects...waiting to be pillaged. It was the cradle of its culture and the regenerative force that kept its identity alive.”*

This is followed by:

- **An interview with Bobby Chinn**, the celebrated restaurateur and TV Presenter. He has hosted the World Cafe Asia show for the Travel and Living Channel, BBC’s Saturday Kitchen, UKTV Food’s Great Food Live and Bobby Chinn Cooks Asia for the Discovery Channel. A must read is his bestselling book Wild, Wild East, Recipes & Stories from Vietnam.
- **Joo Peter’s photo exhibit** of the Jade Emperor Pagoda in Ho Chi Minh (Saigon) is a collector’s item.
- The beautiful and gifted **Country star, Kori Jean Olsen**, from Austin, Texas, speaks about her life and work in an exclusive interview. She is on the verge of great stardom.

- **Terry McDonagh’s poem, A Journey Home!**, was written about 20 years ago and yet the emotions are alive and relevant in the verse.
- **Special Report - Asylum Seekers in Tel Aviv by Steven Beck**, Director of Israel-Diaspora relations, Iraq, on the African refugees in Israel raises a number of uncomfortable questions on Jewish values besides highlighting the wonderful charity work that is being done.
- It takes a village - **A photo feature on ARDC by Sari Ganulin** reflects the pathos of the African refugees.
- **Candess M Campbell’s, Creating Healthy Boundaries**, is essential reading for those seeking a balanced life.
- **John Chester Lewis exhibits two of his paintings** that he feels will be of interest to his new born daughter in the years to come.

We request you to kindly pass this free magazine on to everyone you know.

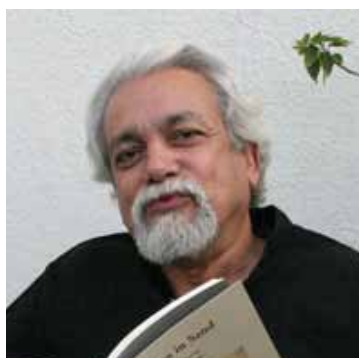
Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

**Mark Ulyseas**  
**Publisher/Editor**



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## The Living Word - Tales from Tribal India by **Randhir Khare**

Khare is an award winning author of twenty one volumes of non-fiction, fiction, translation and poetry. Executive Editor of Heritage India, the International Culture Journal, a Director of The Rewachand Bhojwani Academy and Visiting Professor to the Dept Of English, Pune University. Recently he was given The Residency Award by The Sahitya Akademi (India's National Academy of Letters) for his contribution to Indian Literature and the Human Rights Award for his efforts to preserve and celebrate marginal and minority cultures.

[Available books](#)



## Bobby Chinn speaks to Mark Ulyseas in an exclusive interview

Bobby Chinn is half Chinese, half Egyptian, raised in England, lived in San Francisco and New York and now based in Hanoi. He is one of the most respected chefs in Asia. He is a maverick star who has hosted the World Cafe Asia show for the Travel and Living Channel, BBC's Saturday Kitchen, UKTV Food's Great Food Live and Bobby Chinn Cooks Asia for the Discovery Channel. A must read is his best selling book Wild, Wild East, Recipes & Stories from Vietnam.

[www.bobbychinn.com](http://www.bobbychinn.com)



## Photo Gallery - Vietnam **Joo Peter**

Aka Joachim Peter is a Visual artist and writer based in Southwest Germany, presently working on documentary & travel photography in Asia right. He loves to explore and combine all arts in his work. Joo has studied Arts; painting and graphics, worked for theatre ( designing stage, costume and light), did some work for television and film, went into teaching. He writes essays and a blog in his native tongue, German, for he feels his language combines philosophy and humour. <http://joo-peter.photoshelter.com>



## Kori Jean Olsen Country Singer in an exclusive interview with **Mark Ulyseas**

She is a country star with soul and thousands of followers. From the age of 8 she has been playing the piano and singing. Alumni of Star Charter High School she has performed at over 30 events around Texas in the last 15 months, including CMA - the biggest festival in country music. Her first album, Reason Why, was released a few years ago. Presently she is working with Grammy Award winning producer, Eric Paul, on her next album due in the Fall of 2012. <http://www.korijeansen.com>



## A Journey Home! **Terry McDonagh**

Poet and dramatist, Terry McDonagh has published four collections of poetry; a play; a book of letters, novel and poetry for children. His work has been translated into Indonesian and German, funded by Ireland Literature Exchange. [In the Light of Bridges - Hamburg Fragments](#) is his latest book that was launched in Hamburg on 26th April, 2012. [www.terry-mcdonagh.com](http://www.terry-mcdonagh.com) [www.podcasts.ie](http://www.podcasts.ie) [www.killedan-and-nowhere-else.com](http://www.killedan-and-nowhere-else.com)



## Special Report - Asylum Seekers in Tel Aviv by **Steven Beck**, Director of Israel-Diaspora relations, Irac

Steven was born in Ohio and grew up in Florida. He moved to New York to pursue a Master's Degree in International Affairs at Columbia University and stayed to work in local politics. After several years as a political operative in New York, Washington, DC and Ohio, He joined the Peace Corps and spent two years teaching computers in Togo, West Africa. Steven currently works in Jerusalem at the Israel Religious Action Center, the public and legal advocacy arm of the Reform Movement in Israel, as their Director of Israel-Diaspora relations. He lives in Tel Aviv with his fiancée Sari Ganulin.

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## It takes a village A photo feature on ARDC by **Sari Ganulin**

Sari Ganulin is currently the Resource Development Coordinator at the African Refugee Development Center in Tel Aviv. She was born and raised in Ohio, moved to New York to work in theatre, and stayed for college at The New School (BA with honors, Music). After studying Jewish music in Jerusalem for a year, Sari moved to Tel Aviv where she lives with her fiancé, Steven Beck, and their dog, Nikud.

[ARDC: http://www.ardc-israel.org](http://www.ardc-israel.org). Please join our newsletter to keep up to date with the refugee situation in Israel. [Photography inquires: sarimalia@gmail.com](mailto:sarimalia@gmail.com)



## Creating Healthy Boundaries **Candess M Campbell**

Candess M. Campbell, PhD is an internationally known Intuitive Life Coach, Licensed Mental Health Counselor, Seminar leader, Hypnotherapist and Author. She specializes in assisting others to gain their own personal power and to live a life of abundance, happiness and joy. Early 2012 she will be releasing her book 12 Weeks to Self-Healing: Transforming Pain through Energy Medicine.

<http://www.12weekstoselfhealing.com>



## Exhibition of his paintings **John Chester Lewis**

Lewis was born in Southern California and began writing poetry during university in Colorado. He lives in Ubud, Bali, Indonesia where he works on his poetry, music, and painting, when not running JL Galleries fine art.

[www.poempress.com](http://www.poempress.com)

[www.jlgalleries.com](http://www.jlgalleries.com)

[www.johnniechester.com](http://www.johnniechester.com)

How can so many Israelis who talk about the Holocaust as if there are trains waiting to take us away tomorrow not see the parallel, or at least the irony, in wanting to round up thousands of Africans in the middle of the night?

- Steven Beck



# The Living Word

by Randhir Khare

In tribal India, stories have always occupied a special space in the life of the individual, the family and the community because they hold within them the collective wisdom and lore of past generations, kept alive by the word and passed on through the oral tradition.

Because of this, they carry the richness of individual and collective awareness, understanding and perception of the world around and the reverence for all living beings. Probably as important as this, is that they seek to explain the environment around, natural and supernatural phenomena and the whole gamut of human existence including the origins of communities, customs and attitudes. In this way, a single story is multi-layered and swollen with cultural symbols.

I discovered that the stories that I collected during my travels were rich with cultural symbols that had been carried along by a language which was emotive, vibrant and throbbing with reality. They were soaked in centuries of reverence for life and reflected the awareness that the environment within which the community survived wasn't merely earth, rivers, trees, animals, birds, plants, insects...waiting to be pillaged. It was the cradle of its culture and the regenerative force that kept its identity alive.

According to the Konds of Kalahandi, there was a deluge which destroyed every living being except two children who were fortunate to have been washed up on a hill. They remained there for ages, struggling to keep alive. And then the salap tree gave them its juice and saved them from starvation. When the waters settled down and dry land appeared everywhere, the children grew up and multiplied, creating the Kond community of Kalahandi. Because it had nurtured the first Konds, the salap tree is still considered sacred.





**The Gonds of Koraput believe that in the beginning there was a divine cow. Man and woman were created from her feet, and that is why they are called Gond. The Ankiya Konds of Ganjam say that they are descendants of a Kond man and woman. These two beings were made from various trees, vegetables and fruits such as the bael, saral wood, karela, mushrooms, oranges, lemons, brinjals, onions and wild mangoes which were sour and green. The Saoras describe their first couple as having popped out of a gourd. Some of them are of the view that it wasn't a gourd but a tobacco plant.**

The Saoras god Kittung created all other living beings from parts of his own body. A lover of nature, Kittung blessed every form of life that he had created, especially the sago palm, the date palm and the palmyra palm.

From the Hill Saoras of Koraput, there is a story which celebrates Kittung's compassion. One day, the story goes, Kittung was out in the forest, taking stock of his creations when he came across a dove who complained, "Lord Rama has killed most of my family."

Kittung was furious. He confronted Rama who refused to mend his ways. "I have created this forest out of love," cried Kittung, "how can you lay your trap here?"

"I am Lord Rama," the other replied.

"So what?" asked Kittung and destroyed the trap. He turned the birds into fruits, the cords into a vine, the bladder into leaves and the trap into a siari vine. "Instead of birds," said Kittung, "roast the seeds of the vine and eat them, use the leaves for your sacrifice and the vines for your ropes."

"And if I don't?" asked Rama.

"I shall turn you into the scum of the earth," replied Kittung.

Interestingly, this story also reflects, in a subliminal way, the struggle of hunter-gatherer communities against settled ones – as well as the confrontations between traditional faiths and beliefs and emerging new ones ( a confrontation that exists even today in the tribal lands of the Indian sub-continent. There are of course, numerous stories that describe the mythic creation of tribal lands. The Bhils and their relatives the Bhilalas of the Jhabua and Alirajpur region of Madhya Pradesh in Central India have a lucid explanation of why their lands are drought prone. According to them, in the beginning, there was only water. Jugnu Mata stood on the surface of the water and wondered to herself, "Will anything good ever come of this water? Will there ever be something like firm land?"

But she received no answer. So she set out on a great search everywhere. All that she ever saw was water and more water. She flew up into the air, high up, high up – beyond the clouds and searched there too, hoping to find land floating in the air. But there was no land. Nothing as far as the eye could see. Only water and more water. She divided herself into four parts and sent each part out in search of land. One went east, the other west, and north and south. For hundreds of years they searched but could not find land. They then decided to look for God. After a very long search they finally found Him. He was on holiday in his mahal in the sky. The four Jugnu Matas went into the mahal and found him sleeping on his bed in a secret chamber.

He had been drinking mahua, the traditional liquor, and didn't want anyone to catch him. So the four Jugnu Matas stood around his bed and started shaking his body, "Get up you drunkard," they shouted. But he didn't wake up. So one Jugnu Mata caught one hand and the other caught the other hand and the third caught one leg and the fourth caught the other leg. They pushed him and pulled him and bounced him on his bed and then they jiggled him around. They put him down and tickled him too. But God didn't get up. He was drunk. Asleep. And on holiday.

One Jugnu Mata changed herself into an egg and they placed the egg near God, on the bed. The egg grew until it cracked open and a baby was born. Now this baby lay next to God who was drunk and asleep, and started crying.

This forced God to awaken. He was surprised when he saw the baby crying near him so he stuck his finger into the baby's mouth. Milk came out of his finger and the baby started drinking greedily. As she drank milk from God's finger, her body became bigger and bigger. God became weaker and weaker. This confused him. He didn't know what was happening. So off he went to a palmist and astrologer who sat floating on a lily leaf. "Please tell me what is happening. There's a baby in my bed and she's growing bigger and bigger and because she drank milk from my finger, I have grown very weak. Tell me, who is this baby?"

The palmist and astrologer told God that the Jugnu Matas had created the baby because they wanted to wake him up from his slumber and find out from him if he could find land for them. "And will I find land?" asked God.

"No" said the palmist and astrologer.

So God made himself invisible and hid from the Jugnu Matas. They searched for him everywhere. Finally, one Mata created four bumblebees from the dirt between her breasts. And the four bumblebees helped the Matas to find God, even though he was invisible. The moment they found God they gave him a good thrashing. He pleaded to be spared and asked them instead to go to the palmist and astrologer. So they went to the palmist and astrologer who sent them instead to Kanikarchoob the crab. But the crab couldn't help. She was far too busy sharpening her pincers. She sent them instead to Kalikarchab the tortoise.

When Kalikarchab heard their request he went down into the depths of the waters and after five hundreds years came up with an egg. "Take care of this egg," he said "let it be touched by the sun and the wind and the rain and one day it will hatch."

And so they followed his instructions and looked after the newly hatched land so well that it grew and grew and never stopped growing ... that's why today the region has so much land and so little water.

Other clans of Bhil even have stories about how they were created. According to one clan, a fish brought news one day of an approaching deluge. No one believed his story. Up and down the river course he went, warning other creatures, but no one would take any notice of him. Finally, he met a proud cock staring at his own reflection in the river. "The world is going to end, the world is going to end," said the fish. So carried away was the cock with his own image that he was sure it was his reflection talking to him.





He rushed off and informed his master who was a washerman. The young man quickly made a large box and put his sister and the cock inside it, along with a supply of food. Then he climbed into the box himself and sealed it when the rain started.

For many days it rained and the seas and the rivers overflowed their banks and all living things on the face of the earth were drowned. Only the box remained, floating in the flood. Once the rains stopped and the water returned to the rivers and the seas, the cock began to crow. Just at that moment, the messengers of God were flying overhead. They heard the cock crowing and located the box. When they opened it in God's presence, the three creatures came out. "I thought I had destroyed every living creature on the face of the earth. How did you survive?" asked God.

The frightened washerman narrated his story.

God turned to his messengers. "I had planned to let the earth rest a while before I created new creatures to live in it. Now what am I going to do with these three? Should I sacrifice them?"

"You have sacrificed all creatures that once lived on the face of the earth. You can't perform another sacrifice so soon," they replied.

"But if they are brother and sister, how can they multiply? Besides the cock cannot be mated with the girl," said God.

"But Lord," said the first messenger, "this is a New World. The Old World has passed away. In this New World past relations do not matter any more. They are now only man and woman. Surely they can be mated."

God listened carefully and then agreed. He made the washerman stand facing east, then west, then north and then asked him to swear that the woman with him was in fact his sister. The washerman did as he was told and swore that the woman with him was his sister. God then asked him to face southwards and close his eyes. The washerman did that. Then he made his sister stand naked in front of him. "Stretch out your hands before you," God said, "and tell me what is it that is before you, a man or a woman?"

The washerman did as he was told and then answered, "My sister."

God repeated his question, "Is it a man or a woman?" The washerman replied, "A woman."

God asked, "Is it a beautiful or an ugly woman?" The washerman replied, "How will I know Lord, I cannot see."

"See with your hands," said God.

So the washerman saw with his hands and indeed what he saw was beautiful.

God asked, "Is it a beautiful or an ugly woman?"

"Lord, she is beautiful," he said.





“Then take this woman as your wife,” the Creator said. When the washerman opened his eyes, he had forgotten that it was his sister who was standing before him. All he saw was a beautiful woman. As time moved on, they had seven sons and seven daughters. These children grew up and intermarried.

God blessed the first son and gave him a horse. But the young man didn't know what to do with it. So he set it free and went away to live in the forest. He was the first Bhil.

Stories of creation of either land, human beings or customs and beliefs abound in all communities. Consider the pastoral Todas of the Nilgiris for example. They believe that in the beginning, there was only the sky and the earth. Haen, the first Toda flew across the open blue in search of an ideal place for The Land of Belonging. After centuries of travelling, he finally found himself hovering over the beautiful blue mountains of the Nilgiris.

Circling the verdant region, he saw endless cool grasslands, fruit trees, flowering shrubs, streams, rivers, waterfalls, wild animals, birds, insects and all manner of living beings, except of course humans. It was then that he realized that in fact this was the Land of Toda Belonging that had been created specially for the community and had been waiting through the centuries to be finally inhabited.

And so, Haen descended and stood with his feet firmly on the soil of the Nilgiris. When he did this, an amazing power coursed through him like a brilliant white light. When surge of energy subsided, he saw before him – his wife. Now the two of them created the first Todas on earth and they multiplied like the stars in the heavens – hundreds of them, thousands.

When the land was sufficiently populated, he divided it into the land of the Living and the land of the Dead (which he called Amunore). Once this was done, Haen decided that his task in the world of the living was over and he retreated to Amunore, becoming the Lord of the Other World. He left the world of the Living in the charge of his beloved daughter Porshaey.

Porshaey was an enlightened young woman who was endowed with the power to create the religious, social, cultural and economic identity of the Todas. She divided her people into fifteen clans and gave each a specific geographical location to settle and live in.

Then she created a separate divine female force to be worshipped by each clan in their mund (or settlement), along with prayers and family, religious and social rites and customs, attire and eating habits. When this was done she chose a sacred space where she sat and prayed.

One day, after she had concluded her prayers, she drew a magic circle on the earth. The moment she did this, the earth opened up and she leaned in and began to draw out one sacred buffalo after another.

The people were amazed and watched in awe as fifteen animals emerged from the earth. The sixteenth to appear had deformed horns so they began laughing. The process of creation stopped.

One sacred buffalo was assigned to each temple of the fifteen clans and the sixteenth animal did

not have sacred powers but it gave birth to innumerable others who formed the vast herds of the Todas, supplying them milk – the very basis of their economy.

Porshaey marked out the sacred and ordinary migration routes for buffalo herding and ensured that that the seasons provided the right support for special varieties of grass to grow that would provide feed stock for the animals.

Since she ruled the Land of the Living and had placed female sacred powers in each clan temple, the Toda woman became the embodiment of the community. This is why even till today Toda women do not worship at the temples. In fact they maintain a distance from the temple's precincts. The men are assigned the task of worship at the temple.

Muthanad mund is the place where Haen first arrived on earth and created the first Todas. It is also the place where Porshaey created religious, social, community and economic customs. Located near Ooty, a popular hill resort, the mund is tucked away among the woods. The sacred spot is marked by a Toda 'cathedral'. Not far from this spot is a circle of stones in an open field which marks the place where Porshaey created buffalos.

And so the Todas continue to regard the Nilgiris as hallowed ground and their people, animals and customs as sacred.

The tribal world, if one can use such a term, also endows birds and animals with powers. These powers are manifested in the stories that describe their origins. According to traditional communities of South Gujarat birds are more than just birds. They are carries of folk tales and ancient lore. The Golden Backed Woodpecker for example. As a traditional tale goes, long ago, this was a very ordinary looking bird.

One day it came across a tree-trunk that promised to be full of juicy insects and grubs. So without much ado, it set to work tapping rat-a-tat-tat on the trunk. It was so full of delicious little creatures to eat that the bird went higher and higher. Suddenly it realised that it had climbed the roots of a divine tree that was growing in paradise above.

At that very moment, God was tending to his garden. The bird popped out of the earth before his eyes and gave him such a start that his gardening tool slipped and fell, cutting off his toe. The woodpecker used a blade of grass and with his beak stitched the toe back on. Then he bowed down and wiped away the blood with his head. “I forgive your act of carelessness,” said God, “because you used your presence of mind and that beak I gave you, thank you.”

Then the Creator stroked the bird's back and it became gold. This is why, till today, the woodpecker has a golden back and a crimson crown.

Another story tells about how the Black Winged Kite got the markings on its wings.

There was a time, a long long time ago when the world was white with ice and snow. It was bitterly cold and creatures everywhere had to live in holes in the ground. Because of this, they lived in darkness. The sun did little to help because he too was frozen stiff.





One day all the creatures got together and had a meeting to try and work out what was to be done. There were many wise ideas and suggestions but they were of no help at all. Then a flock of swallows said that there was a shell of ice that covered the entire world like the shell of an egg. This stopped the world from warming up. This shell had to be broken. A scouting party consisting of other birds accompanied the swallows one day to see if it was true. Sure enough, there it was – the thick shell of ice.

So now, the creatures met again to decide how to crack this shell of ice. Many birds offered to help but were unable to fulfil their promise. Finally, the birds requested the tallest teak tree in the forest to help.

“If you give me enough food and water I’ll be able to grow fast,” said the teak tree. And so that’s what they did and the tree grew so fast and tall that it went right up into the heavens and cracked open the shell of ice.

The shell cracked of course but not enough to let enough light and heat in. So a flock of white kites offered to make their way through and represent the case to the Creator. When they flew out into the beyond, they discovered the world outside was a blazing furnace. Flying through the furnace they reached the home of the Creator.

“But I created the ice shell to protect you from the heat,” said the Creator.

‘We’d prefer the heat,’ they said.

So the Creator melted the ice shell and the world was filled with light and heat. Of course, it is not hot all the time because the earth floats away from the furnace when it gets too difficult to stand the heat. And that’s the way we have both heat and cold and even rain.

Even today teak trees grow straight and tall as if they are trying to touch the sky. And the snowy white kites? Well, they burnt their wings black when flying through the furnace. Even today, all kites of this family have black markings on their wings to remind them of the great feat of courage that their ancestors performed.

Let me close the living book of tribal tales for the moment, and allow you to reflect on the amazing inner life that each story carries. And while you reflect, listen to the song-poems of tribal composers and singers...and to the words of the elders...



© Randhir Khare

### **The Aged Jaanu Kaka, The Kunbi Shaman, Reflects On The Passing Of Trees**

Where will the devis go when these trees are gone?  
Sacred companions in the groves of the holy ones  
Who stretch their arms to shade,  
Their trunks to rest,  
Cool earth beneath them soft with belonging;  
Every day some disappear, not even their roots remain –  
The imli, hardoun, katore,

When time was a newborn, eyes sticky with light,  
The great forefathers of these trees were here,  
Calling with voices of flowers and fruits  
The holy ones;  
They came, each to a home, a prayer,  
A space, a stone,  
Each to a river, stream and hill,  
Each to a mantra chanting her new name.

With every clearing a field appears  
A new god to guard it,  
A new prayer, a new mantra,  
A new need, a new sacrifice;  
Where will the devis go when these trees are gone?

Back to the heart of their beginning  
In the great cave of the faithful  
Where time is still to be born  
And the hum of their breathing pulses in the dark  
Where the seed of tomorrow  
Floats in the warm ooze of faith?

Standing here in the light of morning  
Where field and wood meet indifferently,  
I raise my hand and say –  
Peace be to you,  
Don’t go to war on what the axe has done  
It’s not your fault, nor his,  
Nor the one that made him a weapon,  
Nor the one who enslaved the one who made him a weapon  
Nor the god he prays to faithfully;  
Such is the way of blood and mud,  
They meet sometimes as friends  
And sometimes foes.





**The Aged Jaanu Kaka, The Kunbi Shaman,  
Waiting To Cross Over Into The other World**

I saw Birsingh last night,  
Standing beneath the old tree  
By the river  
The moon watched us  
Waiting for one to speak  
He said nothing  
Neither did I  
The wind fell on its stomach like a drunk  
Rolled over and started snoring.

There were women in the fields  
Long dead women  
Waiting  
Sickle in hand  
Song hanging on their lips  
Eyes empty  
And a curlew by the waterside  
Told me that my time had come  
That I had crossed over.

But this morning  
I am here  
Walking in the marketplace  
Sitting down with the living  
Offering prayers at the shrines of deities  
Eating  
Resting  
Being with a world crowded with want  
And hate and thanklessness.

I must prepare myself  
For the long journey ahead  
The parting, the leaving  
Divide my belongings  
Carry nothing  
But this skin stretched on bone  
And the certainty  
That the river will bear my ashes  
Westwards where the sun forever sets  
And hours darken like honey.

I have seen children in the trees at night  
Frozen like fruit that refuse to fall  
They watch me

Walk between worlds  
Waiting to greet me  
When I have given my ashes  
To the river  
And my memory to the wind.

The deities glide through my thoughts  
White egrets in single file  
Along the green river  
My mind is stilled  
Like the day that's pinned to the sky  
Like a stone that hangs suspended  
Over the water  
Like a dream that is waiting to end  
Like Birsingh under the old tree  
By the river.

**Nathu Baba, The Shaman From Jhinjhini  
Under The Stars**

Lie still if you want to see the stars moving,  
On your back, look into the dark blue  
Stream of the sky, watch them swim,  
The smaller in swarms, vast and mysterious,  
The larger ones, tails swishing  
Move through, downstream where the water  
Is white as milk and the reeds throw shadows;

Lie still if you want to see the stars moving,  
Birds gliding through leafshade,  
Feathers flashing, calling with voices of yesterday  
Drifting into tomorrow  
And you and I here, now, watching the passing –  
Through time, through seasons, through  
Pathways of light and night  
And the eternal quiver of the living;

Lie still if you want to see the stars moving,  
Harden your muscles, let your spine settle into  
Your flesh and fat like a fallen tree does with the earth,  
Sinks in, everything moves but the tree;  
And the wind walking through the woods steps over it  
On its way to the far hills and the river;  
Move – and the fish and birds and all the beings above  
Will freeze as on a pithora on your wall  
Waiting for your stillness to set them free again.

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**Tukaram The Drunk Dangi Talks To Jaari Mata  
At Her Shrine In The Forest Of Barade**

It's the mowra that's brought me to you  
Telling me, look here Tukaram,  
It's time you stopped thinking about your stomach  
But your heart instead,  
Fired as a lump of summer mud,  
It's not even fit to be trampled on, or kicked  
Or even thrown in anger;  
Go to Barade jungle, go, go.  
So I dragged myself up and down through the trees,  
Reached here where lean cattle graze  
And thorns tear the leather of my soles.

Now beside you, I sit cross-legged,  
Look at you straight in the face  
Like one stares when one has told a lie,  
What have you to say to me ?  
You wind-eaten mother of the half asleep,  
You wide-eyed, stubborn hag  
Who sits on my back  
Who trails me like a shadow  
Who always forgives  
Who accepts my curses  
What have you to say this time?

Look here, there's mowra to be had  
And more, much more than you'd ever imagine,  
My life's half lived like a partly eaten murgi  
There's still a leg left, half a breast and wing  
And bones to be chewed  
Until the juice is out of them  
And they're for no more than the earth,  
So I can't sit here waiting for you to speak  
As the murgi turns to worms  
And the air stinks  
And they say, that was half a man.

So, what have you got to say?  
Speak stone, speak to me;  
I've offered you a coconut  
Like I was meant to do,  
Lit agarbattis, smeared you with red,  
It's over now and time to go,  
Don't hold me back; the dark has come,  
I have no light to lead me through the night;  
You heard me? Didn't you?

It's over now, I've eaten the coconut's flesh  
And drank its blood and thrown the shell away,  
What is there left to do but leave?

I've left, I've gone, away,  
I'm free of you, for now,  
Barade's arms wrap around me like a mother,  
Like a wife, a bhabi, a sister, a daughter,  
A dying nani who does not want to leave  
And grabs my hand to save her from the endless pool  
In the womb of the forest;  
It's a long way home  
To the half-eaten murgi,  
The mowra glass  
The bubbling laughter of forgetfulness,  
I'm wandering home.

**Badhu, The Bard From Ojhar  
Sings Of The Times Now Gone**

I carry the memory of flowers  
Blooming without the rain  
No sun to warm them  
No earth, no butterflies, no care.

I carry the memory of rivers  
They move and never dry  
Over rocks that are ringing  
They flow with shoals of fish.

I carry the memory of fields  
Asleep beneath waves of grain  
Sickles dance in the morning  
The evenings are fires and song.

I carry the memory of cattle  
Crossing the fences of dawn  
Streaming with light to mowra shades  
Hours grow around them like weeds.

I carry the memory of the land once alive  
Now dry dung cakes in the fire  
Dust on the soles of a traveller's shoes  
Sweet sweat of death on the brow of a corpse.

I carry the memory of all that I was -  
The child, the singer, the song  
Words vanishing into the dry air  
Voices following like bees.

© Randhir Khare





### A Bhilala Mother To Her Married Daughter

I know you are leaving for the house of another,  
Off to a faraway land,  
I hug you my child and I let you go –  
With a wave and a wave of my hand.

You smile through your tears as you walk away  
Off to a far away land,  
And the bullock cart rumbles and creaks on its way  
Puffing up clouds of sand .

I know you'll be gone and they'll put you to work,  
Out in that far away land,  
And your hands will be sore and your back will be stiff  
And your tears will burn like a brand.

So send me your spirit whenever you're sad  
Off in that far away land,  
In the form of a bird that sings in the neem  
Then feeds from the palm of my hand.

I'll sing with you child and sway to the song  
Though you're off in a faraway land,  
For the bird of your heart and your soul and your love  
Nests in a tree on our land.

You're going, you're going, you're going  
Away to a faraway land.  
You're going, you're going, you're going  
With a wave and a wave of your hand.

© Randhir Khare

### A Katkari Sings A Birthing Song

Sacred is the forest  
Where the tiger birthed today,  
The crystal stream is chanting  
And a flock of egrets pray;

Sambrani mist is curling  
Round the bodies of the trees,  
And the fragrance of the newborn  
Floats on the swallow breeze.

The Jungle Crows are silent  
And watch how life becomes,  
Breath of magic fills the air,  
As the young heart drums.

Sacred is the new life  
As it throbs from green and stone,  
Sacred is the mother  
As she quietly rests alone.

Holy is this moment when  
A single dove call flies  
And circles round the forest,  
As tears drown my eyes.

Sacred is the forest  
Where the tiger birthed today,  
The crystal stream is chanting  
And a flock of egrets pray.

### Peace Chant Of A Kurumba Shaman

Peace peace peace peace

Stone upon stone beside stone beneath stone  
Soldered by memory-spit frozen with dust  
Bone upon bone beside bone beneath bone  
Deep in the earth with death and with rust.

Peace peace peace peace

Lives upon lives beside lives beneath lives  
Thickening air-layers with hopes and dreams  
Hives upon hives beside hives beneath hives  
Breathing words clustering, dissolving in streams.

Peace peace peace peace





From the time I first interviewed Bobby Chinn in Bali (2008) we have kept in touch. Bobby has been a great supporter of Live Encounters and in the first few issues he contributed articles on life in Vietnam and his magical culinary conceptions. He is a maverick star who has hosted the World Cafe Asia show for the Travel and Living Channel, BBC's Saturday Kitchen, UKTV Food's Great Food Live and Bobby Chinn Cooks Asia for the Discovery Channel. - Editor

## Bobby Chinn

Restaurateur & TV Presenter  
in an exclusive interview with Mark Ulyseas



SAIGON  
He's Back!  
It only took 15 years....

“My life is what I made it. It is somewhat chaotic which works perfectly well if you have ADD, but I do not recommend it to the faint of heart. I have two restaurants in two different cities, where I am filming on and off my new series about opening my flagship restaurant in Ho Chi Minh City.

In between those filming dates and restaurant operations I also continue to film sporadically the World Café Series. If that was not enough, I also do events and appearances where I promote a cause or simply cook for an event. I am also working on a new book and continue to play a little music with my friends.”

**As Mae West said ' You only live once, and once is enough if you do it right!'**



“Do it because you love it.  
Cook with passion and treat every dish as if it’s for a loved one.  
No one knows it all and it is the one job that you get to use all your senses.”

- Bobby’s message for aspiring chefs.

### Why are you a Chef? And what are the joys that it brings?

With the schedule that I have, I really cannot call myself a chef. I have too much respect for the profession. A chef is a person that commands a kitchen and runs it day in and day out. It is a passionate person that deserves pleasure to cook and feed people. They are very nurturing people, and although many might be screamers and shouters, underneath it all, is a kind generous person that derives pleasure from making people happy. I am more of a restaurateur and a TV presenter these days.

However, when I decided to get into cooking as a profession, it just seemed to make sense to me. I was always surrounded by great food (with the exception of my time in English boarding school of course) I had to leave Wall Street and do something that I had passion for, as I was becoming more and more disillusioned with the whole world of finance and the Wall Street way of life.

I simply stumbled into cooking via stand up, and it addressed all my desires of what I was looking for, plus I also had an inherit belief that I could cook and do the job. I looked at every task as a challenge, nothing was too low for me to do. I had a passion that was burning up inside of me like I never felt before. I found that cooking gave me some of the thrills of Wall Street, but a platform of creative opportunities that were lacking from daily Wall Street life. In cooking I got the gratification to make people happy and that was enough for me and it was all that I was looking for.

### What are your favorite culinary concoctions and the cocktails that go with them?

I generally find my favorite culinary conceptions deviate from the original by a minor amount but provide the similarity of the original whilst coming across as fresh, new, or even peculiarly familiar! When it comes to cocktails, I do not let the food interfere with my drinks. I always let the wine dictate and the same is true for cocktails. If I’m tired it would need to be a margarita with premium brand tequila with Cointreau on the rocks. I find that tequila actually lifts me up when I am dragging. If its about to be a long one, the fruit vodka martini’s work well with me, but once again I only drink premium brands because I plan my drinking with the notion that I maybe drinking too much and vodka is the cleanest on the system.



Bar at Restaurant Bobby Chinn Saigon. Pic © Bobby Chinn







Bar at Restaurant Bobby Chinn Saigon Pics © Bobby Chinn

### Could you share some delightful incidents that occurred while shooting for your TV Show and/or during a live demonstration of your culinary expertise?

My new show is called 'Restaurant Bobby Chinn' and it is a reality based show of the trials and tribulations of opening a restaurant in Vietnam. We went out to find the best of the best that Vietnam has to offer, and it turns out that the Vietnamese are farming birds that make birds nest soup. Funnily enough, the bird that regurgitates its stomach contents is called of all names a 'swallow'. Any rate we went down to the Mekong to film these farms which are now peoples houses. Turns out the Vietnamese are getting the birds to sort out the insect problem then selling off tons of these birds nest off to Hong Kong where it fetches a very dear price. We all filmed in these dark houses, which were converted to bird's nest rooms, and when we left, we were all a little bit itchy. No one wanted to explain to the other why they were scratching their private parts etc., until the camera man asked me "Are you itchy" "Of course I am itchy, you think I am scratching like this for fun? Well, we all got bird lice and it was a bit of pain filming the following 3 days. I was lucky as I was the only one that wore jeans, and everyone else worse baggy shorts.

### Tell us a little about your restaurants?

Well there is a whole show about it and I do not want to ruin the surprises for those that will watch it, it premieres on September 3rd on TLC. The restaurant is 450 square meters, designed as a restaurant that can reconfigure itself into many different special events. From the equipment in the kitchen to the entire design was designed as a special event venue as well as a restaurant. It has a state of the art kitchen and churns out some global comfort food as well as expanding on a lot of local Vietnamese dishes. The restaurant houses some of Vietnam's most prominent artists on acoustic walls and we generally are in constant development and transition.

### Why is Vietnam your base? Is it the culture, the people or the variety of ingredients that is available?

I fell in love with the people, the culture, the food and a lot of the interesting expatriates that I have befriended over the years here. There is a great energy here that I tapped into years ago and I still feel the vibrant excitement of this dynamic city. I have a great sense of being alive here, and although I am far away from friends and family members, I feel like I have an extended family over here and still feel that I am making a positive difference and that's what drives me day in day out and keeps me here.



Restaurant Bobby Chinn Saigon. Pic © Bobby Chinn

### It is said that the way to a man's heart is through his stomach. But what about a woman?

A way to a woman's heart? That is tough, you can probably find your way to a women's heart by many ways, but to stay there it is a completely different story. I think women want to be understood. Do not try and use rational reasoning, solutions to their problems, or anything that may appear logical, as logic often is not what is sought. As I say women want to be understood which requires a serious emotional connection. If they are pissed off about something, don't think of a solution, they want touchy feely understanding. I have no idea to a women's heart as to make a sweeping generalization with them is just opening yourself to an argument you cannot win. I think you just need to be yourself and hope that she is patient enough or feels sorry for you to keep you!

### With a monetary crisis looming over Europe there appears to be a slow-down in economic growth. Has this affected high end restaurants like yours and do you envisage a rethink on pricing?

They don't have chapter 11 where I am! Make it all cheaper, and sell alcohol, people drink when they are happy and celebrating, and they drink when they are down. I am thinking of smaller plates and get them full on the bread and rice! There is no magic potion but I follow Steve Jobs philosophy, if it is not working, change! I am rethinking the whole thing, not just pricing.

### Have you written any books after your best seller - Wild, Wild East, Recipes & Stories from Vietnam?

Working on a new book, which is a collection of thoughts, vignettes, stories that I want to share. Recipes as well, of course.

### What is your message to young aspiring chefs around the world?

Do it because you love it. Cook with passion and treat every dish as if it's for a loved one. No one knows it all and it is the one job that you get to use all your senses.





Above & opposite - Taoist temple Phouc Hai Tu (Turtle sanctuary) is also called Chua Ngoc Hoang (Jade Emperor Pagoda) in Ho Chi Minh (Saigon).



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Music is a language that everyone can relate to no matter what “language” one speaks or what kind of life one leads. It’s what brings us together as a human race. It can provoke happiness, tears or laughter and that, to me, is so incredible. It’s what drives me to be an entertainer. - Kori Jean

## Kori Jean Olsen

Country Star from Austin, Texas  
in an exclusive interview with Mark Ulyseas

“I grew up in Provo, Utah, 6000ft high among the ski slopes. It was the place where I took voice and piano lessons. Later my family moved to Austin, Texas. At a young age I began developing my talents by performing at local events in the Round Rock Texas area. When I was 14 I travelled to New Mexico, Colorado and a number of towns across Texas as the lead vocal in a choral group. It was this experience which convinced me that I would pursue music as a career.

At 16 years old I entered a contest called “Austin idol” sponsored by the Fox News affiliate in Austin. The contest was set in the American Idol format and was designed to select a few winners from this singing contest and follow them to Dallas Texas for the American Idol tryouts. I finished second in this contest and was able to go to the American Idol tryouts in Dallas followed by Fox News. The experience was invaluable because I quickly learned that to be successful in the music business required hard work and a well planned path.

Incidentally, I did not go through the usual high school experience. Instead I opted for Star Charter High School, a school designed specially for kids with extracurricular obligations.

My family comes first and so when I am not performing, practicing or writing new material, I unwind with my parents and three younger siblings, 16-year old twins Matt and Kelsi and a 7-year old sister Ryli. As I am always with my family, people mistake me and the twins for triplets!”

I’ve been blessed to do what I love  
and I don’t want to ever look back and say, “what if”.





Pics © Kori Jean Olsen

### Why do you sing?

I sing because I have seen firsthand how music has such amazing healing power. Over the past year I have watched my 16 year old niece go through cancer treatment and seen my grandmother suffer with Alzheimer's. Through these trials I have seen how music deeply affected both these special people in my life.

Music is a language that everyone can relate to no matter what "language" one speaks or what kind of life one leads. It's what brings us together as a human race. It can provoke happiness, tears or laughter and that, to me, is so incredible. It's what drives me to be an entertainer.

This is why music is my passion, my life, the very essence of my spirit.

And I rejoice in it.

### Do you compose your own songs? And where does your inspiration come from?

I always compose music and get my inspiration from experiences that I have had. People aren't going to relate to me if they think that I, personally, have not gone through what I'm singing about.

### Do you play any instrument?

Yes, I play the piano and guitar. In fact, to help my song writing skills I took a year of guitar lessons

### Have you met and/or played with any of the great country stars? And in your opinion which great country singer has influenced your work?

I had the opportunity to open for [Kenny Loggins](#) at the famous [Blue Bird Café](#) and open for [Little Texas](#). If I had to pick a few country greats that have inspired my work I would definitely pick [Patsy Cline](#) and as current artist I love [Eric Church](#). His style is so eminent and his sound is undeniable.

### What are the albums that you have produced? And who is your Producer?

I have co-produced every album I have cut. I have also been working with Grammy Award winning producer [Eric Paul](#) for my current album project that will be released in the fall. Eric has worked with many of the greats in country music over the last two decades such as Waylon Jennings, Johnny Cash, Willie Nelson, Emmylou Harris, Alabama and many others.



My brand of country is inspired by pop, blues and a bit of rock. This is best reflected in my album (2009), [Reason Why](#), which consists of 11 songs. I like to think of it as traditional with a modern twist. My art form is influenced by Miranda Lambert, Carrie Underwood and the legendary Loretta Lynn. It mirrors their strong sense of female empowerment.

### Your song Texas Rain is a classic country song with shades of Dolly Parton. Did you write it and when was it released? And the band that backed you, who are they?

As much as I would like to say I wrote this song I did not! It was written by a group called [sleeperstar](#)! They are absolutely incredible and I feel so grateful that they let me use their song. The band that backed the song was my studio musicians.

### Have you performed at any music festivals? And have you won any awards?

I have performed at many, many music festivals. Probably the most known festival I have performed at has been [CMA](#) (Country Music Association) music festival. It has been such an honor to be a part of it the past 2 years. CMA Festival is the biggest festival in country music.

### Do you think country music will ever die out?

Country music will never die out. It is where you can go to hear stories about real life and that's relatable to a fan.

### What is your favorite food?

Chicken nuggets, chocolate chip waffles and macaroni and cheese. Basically my diet is like that of a 12 year old.

### What message do you want to give your listeners and lovers of Country music across the world?

The most important thing is that "you" should always be "you". People know when one is a "fake". One should never let anyone change them. Work hard and dreams will come true. Nothing is handed out on a silver platter.

And lastly, be grateful and humble throughout all your journeys.

[Click on any icon to check out Kori Jean Olsen's music.](#)







Written about 20 years ago on the Prinz of Scandinavia car ferry from Harwich to Hamburg

## A Journey Home!

From the deck of the Prinz of Scandanavia  
the banks of the Elbe are flat: a narrow strip  
includes the river, its banks and the treetops.

Houses shaped out of storybooks peer over  
the dikes and there is one white and  
shining lighthouse sheep-grazed up to its door.

There are no cleavages in snarling rocks for breezes  
to weave and sway through, nor does the land rise  
even to a hiding place in blue cold or white heat.

Further up in Husum or St. Peter Ording, the sea  
rolls out and out and in, halted only by its own gasping.  
Sea birds and land birds always eat busily there as if

not sure of the tides on the great flat prairies of mud.  
White horses have been seen and men lost  
cursing the goddess for a handful of shells or a short cut

to an island. The winds do come, heaving walls of  
black and brown cloud and, sometimes, next morning  
whole bits of land have been tossed from one place to

another – helpless as a bad prayer. We docked in  
our city or theirs, and I drove the streets seeing  
men and women drink beer and coffee standing,

not the Irish way but valid in a sacred way known  
to Hamburg and more and more to me. Again I think  
of the mud flats and the sea straining away from

the North Sea wind and my own knees  
bent by childhood prayer. I am as far away  
as the stories I listened to as a child.



Be kind to the stranger for we were once strangers...

## Asylum seekers in Tel Aviv

### Special Report by Steven Beck

*Director of Israel-Diaspora relations,  
Israel Religious Action Center, the public and legal  
advocacy arm of the Reform Movement in Israel*

**There are currently between forty to fifty thousand Africans seeking refugee status in Israel.** The majority of the asylum seekers come from either Eritrea or Sudan, but there are also refugees who come from the Ivory Coast, Nigeria, the DRC, Guinea, Somalia, and several other countries.

**The reasons they fled their home countries vary, but most of them ended up in Israel the same way. They traveled through the Sinai desert.**

Africans fleeing violence in the Horn of Africa began trickling into Israel back in the mid-1990s, but the majority of the current refugee community came to Israel over the last five years. While early arrivals were received almost with warmth and sympathy, the reception is more hostile now that the community is larger.

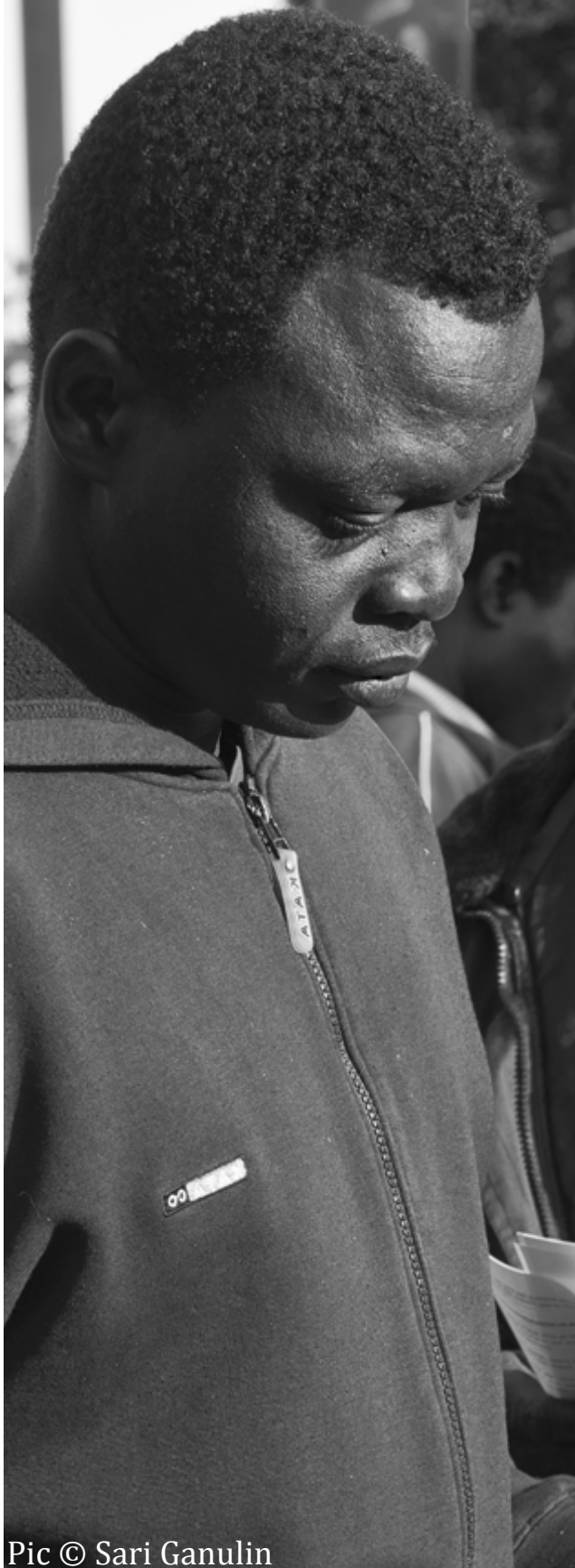
The main concentration of refugees in Israel is in Tel Aviv, but there are also communities in other cities like Arad, Be'er Sheva, and Eilat. The majority are men ranging in age from early twenties to fifties, but there are refugees that are older and younger, as well as women and children (born both abroad and in Israel). Occasionally members make the journey with their families, and other times they send for their families once they are more settled.

Their status is one of deliberate ambiguity. Israel does not grant them refugee status and the rights that would go along with that, which include the right to not be sent back to their country of origin.

In the history of the state of Israel, less than 200 non-Jewish individuals have been granted refugee status in Israel despite Israel being a signatory to the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.



If saving our Jewish values means turning our backs on our fellow man, what exactly is compelling about those Jewish values to start with?



We were sitting together in a hospital room staring up at a small television watching Guinea play Ghana in the Africa Cup. All of a sudden a doctor appeared. He looked at me and asked if the young African man sitting in the bed next to me spoke Hebrew. I told him no, but that I would be happy to translate. He asked a few questions that I translated into French and, within seconds, the doctor had disappeared. We had no idea if today was going to be the day when they would finally remove the pieces of shrapnel stuck in this young man's back.

I first met Alseny a few days before in the office of the African Refugee Development Center (ARDC) in South Tel Aviv. I occasionally helped ARDC when asylum seekers from Francophone countries came to their office looking for assistance. I was at work in Jerusalem when I received a call from one of the staff: Would I mind telling a new asylum applicant, who had just arrived in Israel and spoke only French and his native language, Sousou, to come back in the evening for an interview?

**When I arrived in Tel Aviv to meet him in person, I was shocked by how young he looked and by his physical state. He looked like he had been walking for days. In reality, he had been walking for years.**

We began the interview with the standard questions. Where are you from? How old are you? When did you arrive in Israel? How long were you detained by the Israeli Military? When did you leave your country? Did you spend time in any other country before arriving in Israel? Did you claim refugee status in any other country? And finally, why did you leave your home country? This is normally when the stories become difficult to hear.

As a teenager in Conakry, the capital of the West African country of Guinea, Alseny witnessed a violent change of government. During the chaos, government forces killed his father because he was part of the opposition. Even though he was young, Alseny believed that he was also in danger. He decided that the best way to save his own life was to run, so he fled the country of his birth.

Why are so we protective of the Jewish character of the State if it allows us to become the same monsters who once oppressed us?

**He went to Mali, but only until he could find passage to Libya. He had been told that there was work in Libya and that Africans would be safe there. But when he arrived in Tripoli, the war that would soon overthrow Quaddafi had just begun. Instead of finding safety, he had walked into yet another conflict.**

**Alseny said that as the war raged on it became very dangerous for any Africans in Libya. Since Quaddafi used African mercenaries, the Libyan people assumed that all Africans, or at least all young African men, were combatants. He knew that he needed to get out of there as fast as possible, so he ran once again. This time he made it to the border with Egypt. At that time, most Africans could enter Egypt without a visa and he hoped to once again find work to sustain him, and possibly even send something back to relatives remaining in Conakry.**

At first it seemed that Egypt might be the sanctuary Alseny had been seeking for over a year. He met other Africans from Guinea and managed to get work loading and unloading trucks. He began to breath a sigh of relief that there was some stability on the horizon until he could return home. The Arab Spring put an end to all of that.

**When masses of demonstrators began to occupy Tahrir Square, Alseny feared that he would soon see a repeat of what he had experienced in Libya. He wondered how long it would be before his new hosts turned on him. He did not wait to find out. He gathered his few possessions and what little money he had managed to save, and he approached a group of Bedouin smugglers based in Cairo.**

Alseny was placed in a group of about twenty Africans awaiting transport through the Sinai desert to the border with Israel. He paid the smugglers several hundred dollars (all that he had) and they loaded him in the back of a pickup truck with the rest of the group.

**They set out late at night and drove for hours. Without any notice, the vehicle stopped and they were all ordered to get out of the truck. It was pitch black and none of them knew where they were. The Bedouins yelled at them to go straight ahead and they would get to Israel. In the dead of night, Alseny once again began to run.**

He said it seemed like he ran for an eternity. The other Africans who made the trip with him tried to stay together. Suddenly, there were flashes of light and loud noises. People in the group began screaming and falling all around him. He did not know if he should stop or keep running towards the border. The fence between the two countries was in view.

**The Egyptian border guards had spotted them and were shooting live fire. Just as he reached the barbed wire, he felt something burn his back. He crawled forward on his belly as the sharp spikes tore his clothes and ripped into his skin. Once he made it through he tried to run, but he could not stand up or even move. He was shot and shredded. He sat there and waited to die.**

**In a few minutes, he saw lights and more soldiers. He was waiting for them to start shooting. Instead, they pointed their guns and yelled in a language he had never heard before. Instinctively he put his hands in the air as best he could. He was now in Israel.**





**How can so many Israelis who talk about the Holocaust as if there are trains waiting to take us away tomorrow not see the parallel, or at least the irony, in wanting to round up thousands of Africans in the middle of the night?**

**When the Israeli soldiers saw how badly he was injured, they dressed his wounds and took him to a hospital in Be'er Sheva, a major Israeli city in the Negev desert. He was unable to communicate with people and he had no idea what was going to happen to him. Finally, after more than a week in the hospital, he met an older Israeli who spoke French. He was very disturbed by what he learned.**

The man told him that, when he was better, the Army would put him in detention because he had come to Israel illegally. He asked the man where he could go to be with other Africans and was told Tel Aviv. There was a park by the Central Bus Station that had many Africans. He should try to go there. Though he had no idea where he was, and no idea where Tel Aviv was in relation to him, Alseny began hatching a plan.

**Alseny had met a few Israelis who came to the hospital regularly to help the asylum seekers with clothes and other basics. One of them even gave him 100 shekels (around 25 dollars). Wearing clothes given to him, a hospital bracelet on his wrist, and with a hundred shekels in his pocket, he walked out the front door (he was not officially discharged) and straight into a taxi. Alseny looked at the taxi driver and pointed at himself and said the words Tel Aviv.**

The driver headed away from the hospital and, understanding that this young man did not understand him, he wrote the price of the trip on a piece of paper: eight hundred shekels. Alseny held up his one hundred shekel note and the driver quickly changed his course. He took the bill, handed Alseny back eighty shekels and dropped him at the bus station. The taxi driver even pointed to the bus that was going to Tel Aviv.

**Upon arriving at the Central Bus Station in Tel Aviv, Alseny saw many Africans sitting in a large park. He walked around, still in pain, searching for someone who spoke French. When he found another refugee from the Ivory Coast, he told him some of his story and the Ivorian took him to an NGO that could sometimes help new arrivals find a temporary place to sleep. Alseny was also told about ARDC, the organization that might be able to help him with his claim for asylum.**

That was how he ended up sitting in a small room with three other people trying to figure out his story. At first we did not understand that he still had shrapnel in his back, but when he came back a second time, the extent of his injuries was discovered and he was immediately sent to a hospital in Tel Aviv. For days, a few volunteers, myself included, took turns sitting with him while he waited to get a place in surgery. He and I sat for hours talking about everything from sports to African food, but I was tormented inside the whole time thinking about what was waiting for him once he left the relative comfort of his hospital bed.

#### **Who are the refugees?**

**In a recent rally in Tel Aviv Knesset Member (MK) Miri Regev, from the Likud Party said, "The Sudanese are a cancer in our body." [REFER LINK](#)**

**"...immigrants' children are liable to damage the state's Jewish identity, constitute a demographic threat and increase the danger of assimilation". Interior Minister Eli Yishai, from the ultra-Orthodox Shas party. [REFER LINK](#)**



The voices of Israelis who would stand up for our true values and the real essence of our Jewish character are becoming fewer every day.

The African refugees' ability to sustain themselves in Israel is hindered by not being granted actual work visas. Instead, Sudanese and Eritrean asylum seekers are given a "conditional release visa" (CRV), which essentially means Israel does not have room to keep them in prison, nor can Israel deport them, so they are releasing them until there is more room to incarcerate them. Asylum seekers have to renew this visa every three months. Written on the CRV is the phrase, "This is not a work visa," but there has been a ruling in the courts that holders of this visa can work. The result? Employers do not know if they are breaking the law if they hire a refugee.

There have been efforts to deter Israeli employers who hire Africans, so even asylum seekers who have the right to work find employment difficult. Without a means to support themselves, and no help from the state, their situation becomes increasingly desperate. The level of homelessness in the community is high, which can be plainly seen to anyone passing by Levinsky Park near Tel Aviv's Central Bus Station.

Complicating their situation even further, many of the asylum seekers come from countries with no diplomatic relations with Israel. Those who have no representation in Israel cannot be issued travel documents to return home or go to another country. Many of them do not want to go back to their home countries because of continued danger and, because of Israel's unique geographical location, there is no place else for them to go on foot. They are trapped, even if they are not put in jail right away.

Legally, Israel cannot deport people to a country with whom they have no diplomatic relations, so the government simply labels these asylum seekers as "infiltrators," and often treats them like criminals. If asylum seekers are found with an expired CRV, they are put in prison for being in the country illegally even though there is no way for them to fix their status.

**Politicians in Israel are constantly calling for more prisons to be built and for mass round-ups of asylum seekers. They hurl racist statements that would end a political career in most countries, but in Israel the comments are met with cheers and applause.**

**Asylum seekers face serious discrimination, legal limbo, and increased levels of violence. Recently in Tel Aviv, there was an anti-refugee rally that turned violent. Many innocent bystanders were injured. Stores and apartments in Tel Aviv neighborhoods with refugees have been vandalized. The government's inaction is as much to blame for this as the terrible acts of incitement committed by certain government officials such as MK Miri Regev and Shas Minister Eli Yishai.**

### What can be done?

The Israeli Government has no policy for how to handle refugees other than to procrastinate on constructively dealing with the population. I believe there are several steps they could take that would help bring this situation under control.

**First, they need to set a moral example and not tolerate racism and incitement from Members of the Knesset or Government officials. No matter one's opinion of the asylum seekers' presence in Israel, no person of conscience can tolerate arbitrary acts of violence against innocent people.**





I have included a letter that any reader of this article can send to MK Miri Regev. Please email her and tell her that refugees are not a cancer. When we start seeing others as less than human we lose our own humanity. [LINK FOR LETTER](#)

**Second, the Government needs to give the asylum seekers who are waiting to have their claims heard clear permission to work. If they are not allowed to take care of themselves while they go through the system, they will become a burden on Israeli society. Detention is not the answer. Putting people in jail for fleeing genocide, war and oppression is immoral from a state founded by refugees who were fleeing genocide, war and oppression.**

**Finally, the Government needs a unified and fair refugee status determination process so they can accurately tell who has a legitimate claim for asylum. If there have been less than two hundred accepted claims out of tens of thousands of applicants over the years of Israel's existence, clearly the process needs to be fixed. The asylum seekers who do qualify for protection should be granted resident permits or safe passage to a third country that will also recognize their status.**

The situation seems to deteriorate further everyday for this African community in Israel. The sympathies of the public at large have turned against them, and the political class uses them as a scapegoat for crime and other social ills. The government claims that the Africans are a threat to the Jewish character of the State.

I see it differently.

I am a Jew who knows his history, but I also know it is not the job of Israel to take in every person who shows up at its border. Yet, when people are legitimately fleeing war or genocide or the kinds of inhumane oppression that still exists in the world, we cannot say no. We especially cannot say no under the guise of protecting our Jewish values or the Jewish character of the State of Israel.

If saving our Jewish values means turning our backs on our fellow man, what exactly is compelling about those Jewish values to start with? Why are so we protective of the Jewish character of the State if it allows us to become the same monsters who once oppressed us?

How can so many Israelis who talk about the Holocaust as if there are trains waiting to take us away tomorrow not see the parallel, or at least the irony, in wanting to round up thousands of Africans in the middle of the night?

The voices of Israelis who would stand up for our true values and the real essence of our Jewish character are becoming fewer every day.

I recently received a phone call from a number I did not recognize. When I picked up the phone, it was Alseny. At first I could not tell that anything was wrong. He greeted me in the same respectful way that is common when an African speaks to someone older than himself. I asked him where he was. He paused. Then he told me he was in prison.

He was found without a valid CRV, and he now faces years in jail. He committed no crime other than being in Israel after fleeing four countries that turned against him. He was not fully registered with the State because of his vague status (he had no identification papers from Guinea), and Israel could not deport him anyway because Guinea and Israel do not have diplomatic relations. I told him I would immediately call the organizations I knew that dealt with refugees but, in reality, there was nothing I could do.

I thought back to the hours we spent in the hospital together. I was worried then about his surgery, but I was even more worried about his life after surgery. I thought about him sleeping in the park and eating out of garbage cans. I thought about the dangers one faces living on the streets, and I thought about everything Alseny had been through just to get the opportunity to be homeless in Israel. He is just one person, but thousands of asylum seekers live in those same conditions, steps away from all of Tel Aviv's prosperity and freedom.

**Many in Israel talk about forty or fifty thousand "infiltrators" as a threat, but the real threat is what we are doing to ourselves by treating refugees as criminals. The few who fight for the rights of refugees might be losing the battle of public opinion, but I believe we can still appeal to Israelis' sense of justice and history.**

**Jews were once stateless, wandering from place to place, and our physical survival often depended on the kindness of those who had no real reason to show any kindness towards the Jews living among them. From the tragedies of Europe and elsewhere, the Jewish people built an independent state and are masters of their own destinies for the first time in two thousand years.**

**I believe that, despite statements from some of the political leaders, Israelis want to live up to their higher ideals. One of the most important lessons from our own history is that injustice to anyone is injustice to everyone. The Jewish state must show comfort and compassion to these refugees in the name of our true Jewish values.**

I have included a letter that any reader of this article can send to MK Miri Regev. Please email her and tell her that refugees are not a cancer. When we start seeing others as less than human we lose our own humanity.

[LINK FOR LETTER](#)



Pics © Sari Ganulin



IT TAKES A VILLAGE...

SARI GANULIN

The African Refugee Development Center runs the only refugee shelter in Tel Aviv for the most vulnerable segment of the population: pregnant women, new mothers, and their children. The children depicted here are current shelter residents, often left to fend for themselves while their mothers are at work.

They say that it takes a village to raise a child.

ARDC's shelter is that village within Tel Aviv.



Sari Ganulin, Photographer



Boy modeling basket from Kuchinate Women's Collective, south Tel Aviv Pic © Sari Ganulin





Boys passing time, ARDC Shelter, south Tel Aviv Pic © Sari Ganulin



IT TAKES A VILLAGE...



SARI GANULIN



Outside the ARDC Shelter, south Tel Aviv Pic © Sari Ganulin

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Outside the ARDC Shelter, south Tel Aviv Pic © Sari Ganulin

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## Creating Healthy Boundaries

The first half of this year I focused on teaching you to connect with yourself, your intuitive self and your Higher Self. My focus for the rest of the year will be about maintaining your health by having healthy relationships with others. Emotional situations that are not resolved can create health issues.

*Here is an example of how avoiding dealing with a situation can create illness. Janice is a woman in her mid-forties. She was married and her husband was controlling and emotionally abusive. They had children and she was afraid to leave the relationship because she had been financially dependent on her husband and had not developed skills that would make her employable. She decided to stay with her husband, but had to be quiet about what she thought and felt. Soon she began feeling angry, but kept the feelings to herself. Instead of expressing herself, she ended up with digestive problems (she could not stomach the situation) and a chronic cough (words were stuck in her throat and her body was signaling to her that she needed to push the words out.)*

She came to see me and she processed her feelings and shared what she really wanted in her life. Eventually she left her husband and her symptoms disappeared. She was empowered and went on to be independent and happy again.

One way to stay in balance, be happy and maintain your health when you have others in your life that are difficult to communicate with, live with, or work with is to learn about and set healthy boundaries. The way you set your boundaries can change over time and also in different situations. This is a general guideline you can use. This writing has not accounted for the differences between cultures, so take what is helpful for you and leave the rest.

In this article and next month I will be focusing on Creating Healthy Boundaries.

### Crossing Boundaries

Are you more likely to allow others to cross your boundaries or do you cross the boundaries of others? Do you get too close to people physically? Do they back away from you? Do you feel protective of yourself when others are too close?

*Someone I know was one of twelve siblings. Her family was cramped into a small house and were used to being close together. As an adult she had no sense of other people's personal space. When she was around me she would get really close to me and I felt uncomfortable. It was natural for her to touch my arm or back or give a quick, spontaneous hug and I found myself resisting being around her. I am comfortable being touched, but not by someone I am not close with. Her unwanted intimacy was off-putting.*

When someone's boundaries are crossed often, over time they can become fearful and have anxiety, panic attacks or depression. If you have your boundaries crossed, let the person know what is comfortable for you and what is not. Become aware of how you are around others and if you cross their boundary, practice giving them personal space.

**Do you find yourself focusing on other people's lives and telling them what to do. Although you are well intentioned, do you find yourself trying to "fix" your friends or family? This is another way of crossing boundaries.**

*I had a session just the other day with a woman who was distraught. Because of financial difficulty she moved in with two friends who were a romantic couple that continually argued. My client shared how disturbed she was by the arguing and how difficult it was for her to live there. She said they yelled at her and she became stressed and it affected her health. As the conversation went on she shared that she repeatedly tried to help them and offered them solutions, but they didn't appreciate her at all.*

You may be aware of a situation like this. Most of us know what we are supposed to do, but doing it is another matter. If someone in your life behaves in ways you don't approve of, it is better not to cross boundaries and tell them what to do, but rather ask them if you can offer a suggestion.

If they say yes, give them your solution once. Telling them over and over again can cause resentment on their part and be exhausting for you.

Look at your own life and allow them to make changes in theirs.





Saying yes when you want to say no is another sign of having collapsed boundaries. This can happen because of fear rejection or fear of the response of the other person. In either case, it is important you are clear with yourself and say what you mean.

### Collapsed Boundaries

#### **Sharing too much personal information too soon can be a sign of collapsed boundaries.**

As a therapist, having clients share with me in depth at our first session is natural and healthy. In one's personal life though, this is not the case. Maybe you have met someone for the first time and they start the conversation with something like, "my father just died," or "I just broke up with my boyfriend." It is better in social situations to begin by sharing some things that the two of you have in common. You may ask whether they have children or not, where they were raised and went to school or something safe like this. Later when you have created a friendship or intimate relationship you can share more personal information.

**Saying yes when you want to say no is another sign of having collapsed boundaries.** This can happen because of fear rejection or fear of the response of the other person. In either case, it is important you are clear with yourself and say what you mean. Over time if you don't say what you mean you can become indecisive and suffer from low self-esteem. When this happens it becomes even harder to say what you mean and to have the respect of your peers and loved ones.

*Over the years I have had several clients who have become so disconnected from their desires because they align with and follow others that they have no clue what they want. In session sometimes it has taken months for them to identify what they enjoy and what they believe and then to make choices toward empowering themselves.*

Have you ever been around someone that says "I don't know" when you ask them a simple question like "what do you want to eat, or what would you like to do?" Occasionally this is okay, but when you are with a friend who continually refuses to make his or her own choices, it can be draining and frankly boring. Often if you do make choices for someone else, they are not happy and they blame you. If this is your case, begin to practice saying what you want, even if you are not sure; practice being assertive. If you make decisions for someone else, practice being patient until they decide, or even leave the situation and go do something on your own. They will learn to speak up and this will eventually empower them.

**Doing anything to avoid conflict is another sign of collapsed boundaries.** Although conflict is difficult for most of us, it is a natural occurrence in life. When you avoid conflict for a long time you find you become separate from your friends of your loved ones. The relationship begins to suffer and the trust and connection is lost.

*I have a client who had an abusive father. Throughout his life he had difficulty feeling and expressing anger in a healthy way. Now, in his marriage when his wife gets upset, he tends to pull back and avoid*

*her. He doesn't bring up anything that bothers him for fear of her getting angry. He retreats feeling fearful and weak-kneed.*

When situations like this happen, where the origin of the fear is from a childhood issue, current conflict can make you feel like you are that same little kid. It is helpful to practice writing out your feelings about the situation in a journal before you address the person. It can also help to imagine talking to them first, seeing yourself being strong and present.

The last symptom of collapsed boundaries we will look at is **having a high tolerance for abuse.** This can happen if you grew up with abuse or violence or if you find yourself in a relationship or neighborhood where abuse is common.

*I was counseling a couple earlier this year and although I have been counseling for 30 years, I had never seen such anger between a couple. I did my usual asking them to tell me what was going well in their marriage and then what was not going well. Once we got to the not going well, the gloves came off. For 45 minutes I watched and listened to them scream and yell and call names, blaming each other for everything, and not taking ownership for anything. I made several attempts to redirect them, but to no avail. This went on for a few sessions before I could get them directed toward some positive behaviors.*

This couple clearly had a high tolerance for abuse and this was a normal fight for them. My guess is that they both grew up in a home with a lot of anger and maybe even violence. After several sessions they were able to communicate in a friendly way, but eventually outside of my office they had a fight that ended up in violence and the last I heard they were separating.

If you find yourself in a similar situation, no matter what the other person says, doesn't understand, or believes about you, it is best to move away from the situation and to communicate at a later time; with a third person if necessary.

It would be remiss of me not to say here that it is important to have clear boundaries when you are a parent and need to protect a child. If you have collapsed boundaries and cannot model healthy boundaries or protect your child, be sure to find a friend who can do this for you.

This is the first of two articles on boundaries. Have fun practicing.

I would love to hear your feedback. Contact me through my website. Like me on [Facebook \(1st profile\)](#) and/or friend me at [Facebook \(2nd profile\)](#).





### Eruption

I have always been fond of this painting due to its simplicity. Most of the color is from underneath the layers. I covered the color with dark paint and then scratched down to the canvas with a pallet knife. It reminds me of a preschool project where we used crayons to cover an entire piece of paper in bright color. Then the color was covered with black crayon and the picture was created by scraping off parts of the black with a coin to reveal the underlying color. Good fun.



### Purple Faces

When I painted this I was engaged to my now wife. After finishing I knew this would one day be my daughter's painting. She arrived a month ago and I hope she likes her first piece of art. There is an abundance of faces that can be found in this painting and I at times consider bringing them out more with a hint of black lines to highlight. But then again I am growing more and more fond of just leaving these images to be played out in my daughter's imagination with no hints or suggestions limiting her explorations.





## Elephant Aid International. Working to improve elephant welfare.

Elephant Aid International (EAI) provides education and hands-on assistance to improve the lives of captive held elephants worldwide.

EAI projects include elephant foot care, mahout and elephant training and the creation of elephant care centers and retirement homes.

Our work is based on respect for elephants and the culture and traditions of the countries in which we work, appreciation for the men and women who live and work with elephants and the knowledge that small changes can make a huge difference.

EAI projects engage mahouts, local NGOs, tourist facilities, elephant welfare groups, researchers and government officials in joint efforts to:

- Improve living conditions for elephants in captivity.
- Offer alternatives to the use of chains to control and contain elephants.
- Eliminate abusive training by teaching mahouts humane methods of care.
- Facilitate the establishment of lifetime care centers (sanctuaries) across Asia.

In spite of a long history of coexistence, elephants and humans in Asia are now competing for limited land and food resources. How governments deal with the problem will determine whether elephants have a place in this rapidly developing world and what that place will be.

We cannot wait to see who will fix the pressing problems facing captive and wild elephants. EAI believes we must all be part of the solution - *one world, one elephant at a time. Please join us.*



A Carol Buckley Project  
**ELEPHANT AID INTERNATIONAL**  
One World. One Elephant at a Time



**Amazon Watch is a nonprofit organization founded in 1996 to protect the rainforest and advance the rights of indigenous peoples in the Amazon Basin. We partner with indigenous and environmental organizations in campaigns for human rights, corporate accountability and the preservation of the Amazon's ecological systems.**

**For more information visit [www.amazonwatch.org](http://www.amazonwatch.org)**



# Live encounters



Pic © Mark Ulyseas