

The refugee's gift

These photographs by Bill Knight are from an exhibition called the Refugee's Gift. They seek to show a very small fraction of what refugees bring to this country. The people in these pictures all came to the UK because they could not stay where they were. They came with nothing except an unstoppable determination to make a new life and they are an inspiration to their fellow refugees and to all of us.

The exhibition is sponsored by the Refugee Council and was first shown at St Martin-in-the-Fields gallery in London. It has subsequently been shown around the country.

Bill Knight is a photographer specialising in people - portraits, theatre and opera. His website is www.knightsight.co.uk

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what refugees bring with them

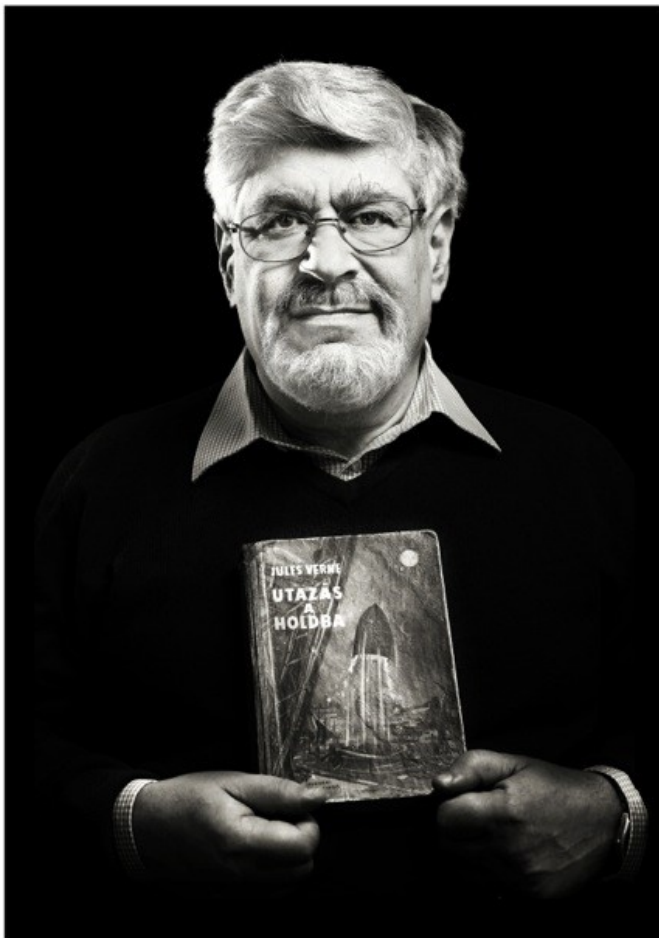


Amna Idris worked as a client adviser at the Leeds office of the Refugee Council. She came to this country from Eritrea in 2005. Amna speaks Tigre, Arabic, Tigrinya and Amharic. She says that as she has been through the system herself she knows how it feels.

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Robert (Bob) Vertes and his parents fled from anti-semitism in Hungary in 1957 when he was eight. They obtained Hungarian passports by giving up their home and settled in England with the help of Bob's uncle, who lived here. Bob has worked for the Open University as a mathematics tutor for 43 years and for St Mary's University College, Twickenham for 24 years training teachers. He is holding a book, Jules Verne's *Journey to the Moon*, one of the few possessions the family brought from Hungary, given him by a school friend.

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Bob Hepple was a South African-born lawyer who acted as legal adviser to Nelson Mandela at his trial in 1962. Bob was arrested but after 90 days detention without trial he escaped to the United Kingdom in 1963. He was a banned person in South Africa for 27 years. He had a distinguished legal and academic career in this country and was knighted in 2004. He is in the hall at Clare College Cambridge, where he was an Emeritus Fellow and Master from 1993 to 2003. Sir Bob died in 2015.

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Daria Pluto came to the United Kingdom from Russia with her family when she was 11 years old. When this photograph was taken she was managing a café in Leeds and about to start work for Leeds Council as a Customer Liaison Officer. Dasha went to school in Halifax and graduated from Leeds Metropolitan University with a 2:1 degree in Art, Event and Performance Studies.

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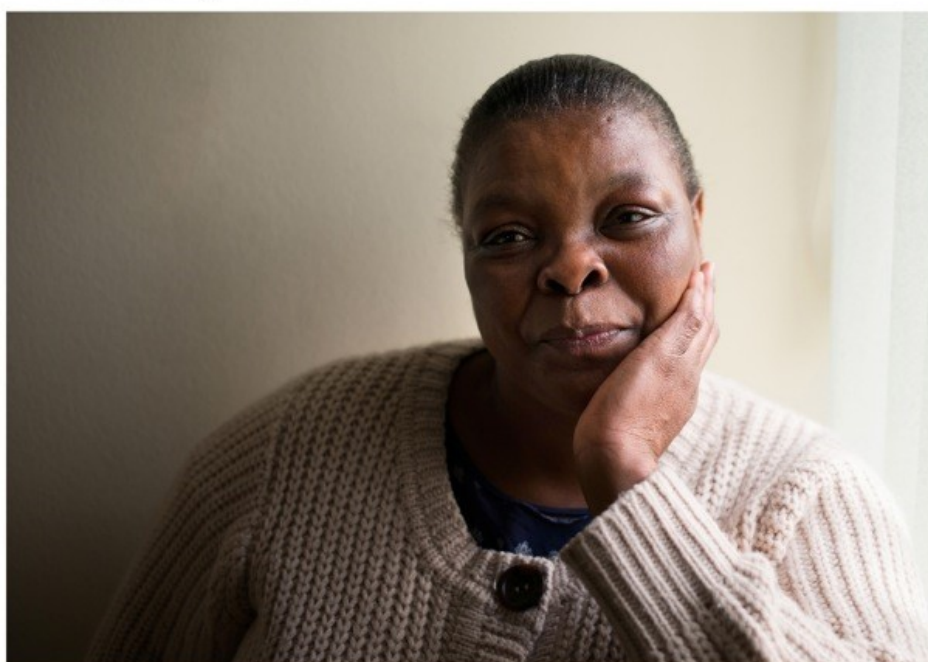


© Bill Knight 2013

Didier Ibwilakwigi-Ekom taught in the International Relations Department at Khinshasa University in the Congo until 2003 when he came to the United Kingdom. When photographed he was reading for a PhD in Politics and International Relations at Swansea University and working towards resuming his academic career. He is pictured outside the NHS clinic where he worked as a diabetes mentor.

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Elizabeth Maali came to the United Kingdom from Zimbabwe in 2001. She is a carer, working with elderly and disabled people in Leeds. She sings in a choir, Asmarina Voices, formed by the Refugee Council and the West Yorkshire Playhouse.

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© Bill Knight 2013

Elsbeth Juda was 102 when this photograph was taken. She came to London from Darmstadt in Germany in 1933, with her husband Hans and his violin. Hans became founding publisher and editor of *The Ambassador*, *The British Export Magazine*, and Elsbeth was associate editor and fashion photographer, also working for *Vogue* and other fashion magazines as a freelance photographer. Elsbeth died in 2014, aged 103. This picture is in the collection at the National Portrait Gallery.

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Emina Hadziosmanovic came to the United Kingdom in 1992 with her family when she was four years old to escape the siege of Sarajevo in Bosnia. She has degrees from the universities of Birmingham and Oxford and is shown here at the Institute of Mental Health at Nottingham University, where she was reading for her PhD in clinical psychology. Dr Hadziosmanovic is studying the use of narrative exposure therapy to reduce symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety.

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Erich Reich was deported from Vienna to Poland with his family in 1939. Erich came to England in August 1939 on the Kindertransport and never saw his parents again. The family photograph, which was taken in Poland shortly after his fourth birthday, is inscribed 'to little Erich'. He is the small boy on the left. He was brought up in Surrey and lived for twenty years in Israel. After returning to the United Kingdom in 1967 he founded Classic Tours which has organised activities to raise over £85 million for good causes. Sir Erich was knighted in 2010.

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Eva Jiricna was working for the Greater London Council as a newly-qualified architect in August 1968 when the Russians invaded her home country, Czechoslovakia. Shortly afterwards she received a letter from the Czech embassy which informed her that she was no longer in possession of a valid passport. She settled in England and has built a successful architecture practice. She now has an office in Prague.

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Fahim Khan came to the United Kingdom from Afghanistan in 2009 when he was 15 years old. Fahim loves cricket which is becoming a hugely popular sport in Afghanistan, although Fahim had never played with a hard ball before he arrived in the UK. In this picture Fahim is keeping wicket for the Refugee Cricket Project team in their fixture against the Free Foresters during Refugee Week. Fahim now works as a greengrocer.

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Farhiya Abdi came to the United Kingdom from Somalia as a refugee in 2005 when she was 16 after her parents had been murdered and her home burnt down. She spoke no English when she arrived. When photographed she was working as a carer for the elderly while completing her nursing degree at Oxford Brookes University.

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Favourite and Fortunate Frizell are twins whose family sought asylum from the Mugabe regime in Zimbabwe. They came to England in 2002 when they were ten years old. When photographed they were both undergraduates at Cambridge University, thinking of becoming lawyers. The twins are holding a photo which they brought with them from Zimbabwe – it shows them as children, with their mother.

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Gary Chimuzinga came to the United Kingdom from Zimbabwe with his family in 1999 when he was five years old. He was photographed at the University of Kent reading economics after achieving 21 GCSEs. The photograph on his desk shows him teaching in 2012 on a trip to Sierra Leone. Gary intends to study for a master's degree and then to work in finance, in a bank or in industry. He aspires to be a politician.

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Gustav Born escaped with his family from Nazi Germany in 1933 when he was 11 years old. His father, Max Born, was one of the most distinguished scientists of his generation, winning the Nobel Prize for physics in 1954. Gustav was professor of pharmacology successively at the Royal College of Surgeons at Cambridge and at King's College London, retiring in 1986. He was elected a fellow of the Royal Society in 1972. At 92, with five children and ten grandchildren, Professor Born is working on his question of why muscles appear to be immune from the spread of cancer. He remains committed to the work of the Council for Assisting Refugee Academics.

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Jade Amoli-Jackson is a writer who came to the United Kingdom in 2001. In her home country she was a sports reporter on radio and television. She holds her book *Moving a Country* which describes her journey to her new life after her husband, father and sister were murdered.

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Aster Yehades came to the United Kingdom in 2009 from Eritrea and works in public health. Monisola Adeyanju came from Nigeria in 2004 and is a fashion designer, Somaya Ismail is an accountant who came from Sudan in 2007, Zebiba Reta is a nurse who came from Ethiopia in 2013. They have all volunteered for the Refugee Council in Leeds, helping asylum seeking and refugee women, particularly those who were pregnant.

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Mehrad Ramazany came to the United Kingdom from Iran and was granted refugee status in 2012. Dr Ramazany re-qualified as a doctor in the United Kingdom and was photographed working at the Accident and Emergency Department of Newham University Hospital in east London.

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Doris Moritz came to the United Kingdom from Germany on the Kindertransport in 1939 when she was 15. She lived for many years in Cardiff where she worked as a teacher. She is shown here with her son Michael, a venture capitalist who in 2012 made a donation to Oxford University which the university described as 'the biggest philanthropic gift for undergraduate financial support in European history'. Michael was appointed KBE in 2013.

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Muna Mohamed ran for Sudan in the 400 metre hurdles at the Beijing Olympics in 2008. She also competes in the 400 and 800 metres flat and the heptathlon. She came to the United Kingdom in 2009. She trains in Sheffield and hopes to represent Great Britain. Her performance in the 400 metre hurdles gained her the title of the fastest woman in Africa.

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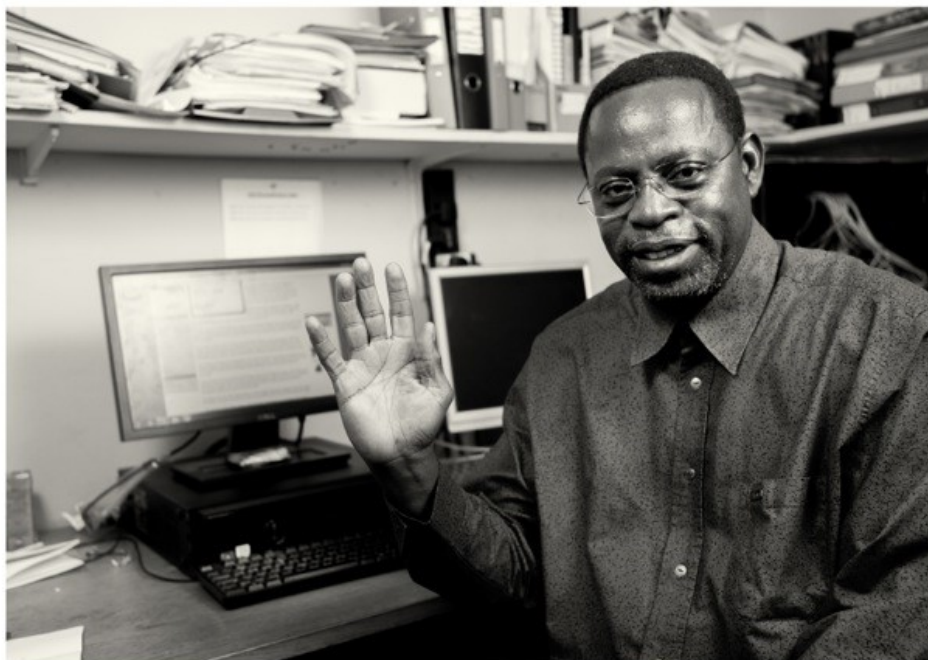


© Bill Knight 2013

Muru Visana came to the United Kingdom as a refugee from Uganda in 1972 when the Ugandan Asians were expelled by President Idi Amin. Manu met his wife Jaya in Leicester. He has lived in Clavering, Essex for 34 years and working with Jaya and his son Sunil he has built a prosperous family store business.

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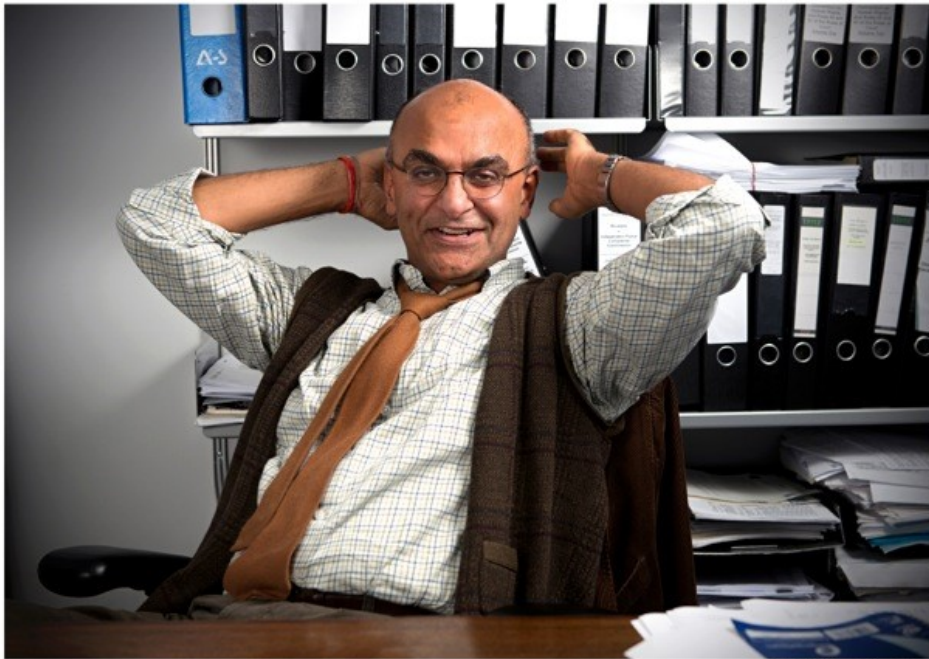


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Nyeya Yen came as a refugee from Ghana in 1984. He has spent many years providing basic skills training in Southwark for people of all nationalities and has served as a trustee of the Refugee Council.

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Raju Bhatt came to the United Kingdom from Uganda in 1972 when he was 15 years old. He is one of the founding partners of Bhatt Murphy; lawyers who work together to protect civil liberties. Raju helps those who seek accountability from the police, the prison service and prosecutors. Raju served on the Hillsborough Independent Panel which reported in September 2012 upon the events surrounding the Hillsborough disaster of 1989.

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Ram Gidoomal's family was expelled from Kenya in 1967 when Ram was 16. Although his family were British citizens, Ram was born in Mombasa and as the holder of a passport for a British Protected Person he would not have been allowed into the United Kingdom with his family but for the kindness of an immigration official. Ram was naturalised and had a successful career in business. He was awarded the CBE in 1998 for services to the business community and race relations and ran for Mayor of London in 2000.

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Ruth Barnett was born in Berlin in 1935 and came to England aged 4, with her 7 year old brother, on the Kindertransport in 1939. After leaving university, Ruth married her Jewish boyfriend and converted to Judaism. They celebrated their golden wedding anniversary in 2008. Ruth was a secondary school teacher for 19 years and a psychotherapist for 28 years. She is a writer working to raise awareness of the plight of the Roma and Travellers, whose families were victims of the holocaust and who are still persecuted in Europe today.

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Selam Woldehaimanot was 15 when this photograph was taken. She came to the United Kingdom from Eritrea when she was two years old. She is an artist, a musician and a prize-winning dancer, wondering whether to make her career in show business or in the visual arts. In Eritrea Selam means peace.

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Stephanie "Steve" Shirley arrived in Britain aged five on the Kindertransport in 1939. In 1962, she founded the FI Group software company. She found it advantageous to go by the name "Steve" in the male-dominated business world and she employed only women until it became illegal to do so. Since her retirement in 1993 she has given away over £65 million, especially for autism research. Dame Stephanie stands in front of the Kindertransport memorial outside London's Liverpool Street station.

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Simon Dawit-Abraham came to this country from Eritrea when he was 16. He arrived on a lorry. The police put him in touch with social services who arranged for him to be fostered and after exceptional A levels he went to University College London to read maths. Simon brought nothing with him to the United Kingdom. His hands are held by his foster parents Tesfai and Yergalem Tewelde and their daughter Lulia.

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Sonia Khoury is a doctor from Syria, where she was a general practitioner. She came to Wales in 2011 to read for a PhD at Bangor University but was unable to go home. The United Kingdom is her home now; she does not expect Syria's troubles to end any time soon. She is planning to practise here and her daughter is studying at Lancaster university. Sonia is holding her university student card. In 2015 she was UNHCR Woman of the Year.

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Tina Gharavi is a filmmaker who came to the United Kingdom from Iran when she was 6 years old. She has lived in New Zealand and the United States and currently resides in Newcastle. Her movie, 'I Am Nasrine', about a teenage girl who leaves Iran for the United Kingdom was nominated at the 66th British Academy Film Awards for outstanding debut by a British writer, director or producer. For the photo she had with her a small gold locket which she had brought from Iran. There were no pictures in it.

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Turhan Çömez works as a surgeon in the NHS. He came to the United Kingdom from Turkey where he was a member of the Turkish parliament. He was granted asylum following political differences with the Erdogan regime.

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Victor de Waal was born in Amsterdam. His mother was a member of the Jewish Ephrussi family from Vienna who fled to the United Kingdom in 1939, when Victor was ten. After education at Cambridge University Victor was ordained into the Church of England and served as chaplain of King's College Cambridge from 1959 to 1963 and Dean of Canterbury from 1976 to 1986. He is shown here at the Islington Refugee Centre, where he works. He is holding a glass decorated with the family coat of arms which he brought with him in 1939. The history of Victor's family can be read in the book by his son Edmund, *The Hare with Amber Eyes*.

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William Kaczynski came to the United Kingdom from Germany in 1939 on the Kindertransport when he was three years old. He had a successful career as a hat manufacturer and in the business of office refurbishment. He is a writer and his book 'Fleeing from the Fuhrer' is open at a page which shows a letter written to his mother when they were interned in the Isle of Man.

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Yasmin Alibhai-Brown came to this country in 1972 from Uganda. She completed her M.Phil. in literature at Oxford in 1975. She has written for *The Guardian*, *Observer*, *The New York Times*, *Time Magazine*, *Newsweek* and *The Mail* and is now a regular columnist on *The Independent*. In 2002 she won the George Orwell Prize for political journalism. She is also a radio and television broadcaster and author of several books including *Who Do We Think We Are?* about the British nation and a food memoir *The Settler's Cookbook*. She is Professor of Journalism at Middlesex University.