

Refugee Week Ambassador: **Flora Choi**

Early life

I don't remember much of my life in Khartoum (Sudan).

I was only five old years when I left, with my mum, brothers and sister. But I do remember living in Egypt. We went there first, for two years as refugees waiting for a humanitarian visa.

I remember the hardships our family faced and the amazing moments of triumph, such as when Australia granted our visas. We moved to Adelaide.

First impressions of Australia

I was eight when I came to Australia, so I pretty much grew up here. It was interesting at first. It was a very different society. The first thing I couldn't get over was how cold it was!

The food, too, was really weird. I could not get over Vegemite and how much Australians loved dogs.



Photo: Flora Choi

Poetry and writing

I am a writer, I write poetry and in May 2019 I launched my debut book, *Tomorrow's Dream: A Poetic Anthology*, at one of my favourite spots in Adelaide: African Village Centre Restaurant in Henley Beach.

Many refugees are tired of being told that they are being saved. I just want to survive, like everybody else.



Refugee Facts - South Sudan

- Since December 2013, brutal conflict in South Sudan has claimed thousands of lives and driven nearly four million people from their homes.
- While many remain displaced inside the country, more than 2.3 million have fled to neighbouring countries such as Sudan, Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in a desperate bid to reach safety.

Source: UNHCR and Refugee Council of Australia

Activism

As a Pan Africanist, a lot of the activism work I do is centred around the beliefs I have as young African woman who has grown up in diaspora. I believe in a free, self-reliant and self-defining Africa. My activism embodies arguments that deconstruct present day neo-colonial regimes. These beliefs are not just for myself but also for the greater network of African refugees and migrants pushing for self determination and a well defined agency of self. This year I was a guest speaker at the Refugee Alternatives Conference, run by the Refugee Council of Australia. It was an important event, because it provided a platform where we can talk about our experiences – without those experiences

being defined or compromised, to fit a story or label, and where other people can be progressive in our journey.

'I don't want to be saved'

Australia is a great place for refugees and refugees contribute to Australian society in so many great ways. But it's not just important for Australians to welcome refugees economically and socially – because we all know the benefits of that. We're also fighting for acceptance, fighting to be recognised and fighting to be seen as human beings. I don't want to be saved, I have already survived. Many refugees are tired of being told that they are being saved. I just want to survive, like everybody else – and you can be part of my survival.



Visit the Refugee Week website for recipe ideas for your 'Share a Meal, Share a Story' event.

www.refugeeweek.org.au



Refugee Council
of Australia