

2023 Forum for Excellence Conference

# Silent trauma among ESL students

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As the ESL teachers we won't be able to learn the native language of all our diverse students, but we can learn **how to** communicate with them, nevertheless. They enter our classrooms with the same hope and expectation we all share: to build a better, safer life for themselves and their families. We should never assume we understand what they went through, but it isn't part of our story.

We can offer respect, **inclusion and sensitivity.**

*"The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story."*

— **Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie**









*Ableism is discrimination and social prejudice against people with physical or mental disabilities. Ableism characterizes people as they are defined by their disabilities.*

Many kinds of trauma



# What is trauma?

## What Is Trauma? | Psychology Today

In his book "The Body Keeps the Score," trauma researcher Bessel van der Kolk suggests the metaphor of trauma as a splinter – the body's response to the foreign object, as encoded in our [nervous system](#), that becomes the problem, more than the object itself. As Peter Levine, developer of the somatic experiencing approach for trauma treatment, wrote years earlier:

*[Traumatic](#) symptoms are not caused by the triggering event itself. They stem from the frozen residue of energy that has not been resolved and discharged; this residue remains trapped in the nervous system where it can wreak havoc on our bodies and spirits.*



## WHY we leave?

- Reasons WHY people become immigrants and refugees:
- Seeking safety
- Life in your homeland doesn't allow us to support and provide for the children or elderly parents
- Personal changes, divorces, unemployment
- War, revolution
- Intolerance
- Displacement
- 
- When we take a look at **different types of trauma** and why people escape the familiarity of their homelands, we find similarities.
- Those, often times, are our students





# Refugees and Immigrants today

- Syria. Over 25% of the total global refugee population are part of the global ...
- Ukraine. In February 2022, escalated conflict in Ukraine led to a full humanitarian ...
- Afghanistan. The ongoing humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan consistently makes ...
- South Sudan. The world's youngest nation is also the site of one of its largest ...

- [See full list on concernusa.org](https://concernusa.org)

How much we, as the trauma impacted students' teachers, will know about our learners' struggles, depends on the level of trust we build between each other. Honesty, in my perspective, is the key to create a trust.

How to build **rappor**t among the students, when they have a “close and harmonious relationship in which the people or groups concerned understand each other's feelings or ideas and communicate well”

Providing well chosen Civics components to help our students feel “at home”, Where EVERYONE matters.



Mayor Jonson in Chicago on migrants: [EO2023-16Immigration.pdf \(chicago.gov\)](#)

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR CITY OF CHICAGO BRANDON JOHNSON MAYOR EXECUTIVE ORDER NO.2023-16 EXECUTIVE ORDER ON IMMIGRANT, MIGRANT, AND REFUGEE RIGHTS WHEREAS, throughout Chicago's history, immigrants from across the world have built and strengthened the social, economic, and cultural fabric of the City of Chicago (the "City"); and WHEREAS, a Black Haitian immigrant, Jean Baptiste DuSable, is recognized as the founder of our City; and

WHEREAS, the foundation of our City today was built by the vibrant and important history and struggles of the indigenous people and Native Americans who lived and thrived on this land for many years before settlers first came to the region; and WHEREAS, the City of Chicago is located on the traditional homelands of the Anishinaabe, or the Council of the Three Fires: the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi Nations; and WHEREAS, Chicago also has a history as a refuge to many different peoples, including those who came here to escape enslavement, oppression and climate change

and WHEREAS, Chicago became one of the first sanctuary cities in the country on July 18, 1982, when Wellington Avenue Church congregation voted to become just the second church in the U.S. to provide a **safe haven** for Central Americans fleeing political oppression and violence;





Activity



## Ice-breaker activity:

1. What is your favorite vacation spot **abroad**? Tell us about it.
2. How much do you know about this place? Do you speak the language?
3. Imagine you go there for vacation. You pack your language. You enjoy your time in this place.
4. Now, on the evening before you go back home you find out your country is at war. You can't leave. You have to stay here and nobody can tell you for how long.
5. What are your fears? What is your plan? Do you have skills necessary to survive and build the future here?
6. Every day hundreds and hundreds of people are coming to this place and the resources are ending.





Gabor Maté is one of the best trauma informed researchers

Dr. G. Mate: Trauma is NOT what happens to you, buy what happens inside of you because of what happened.

Trauma is not only what have happened to you, but also what (good) didn't have a chance to happen.

### 7 IMPACTS OF TRAUMA

1. *Isolation/Separation from the world*
2. *Disconnection from the people*
3. *Altered worldview*
4. *Lifelong pain*
5. *Cognitive (brain) development-how we LEARN*
6. *Personal shame*
7. *Difficulty being PRESENT-loving in the past.*

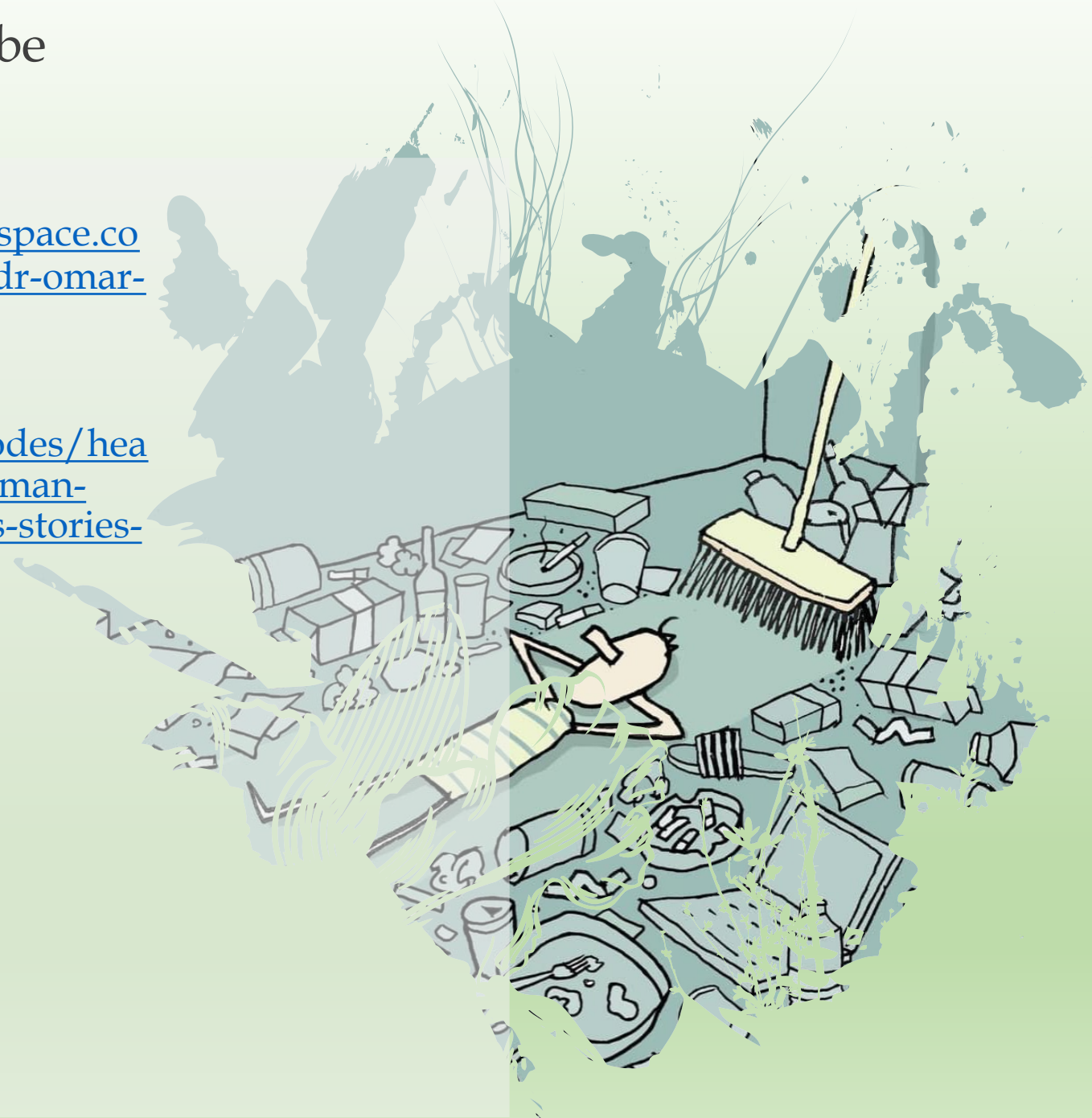
YouTube clips of his:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZT3mMExAN0M>

Here are 2 podcasts that might be helpful:

<https://thetraumatherapistproject.squarespace.com/podcast/a-promise-to-my-sister-with-dr-omar-reda?rq=refug>

<https://healthpodcastnetwork.com/episodes/healthcare-for-humans/refugee-series-the-human-faces-of-refugee-trauma-dr-barakat-shares-stories-of-survival-ep-26/>



There are complex articles about the immigrant experience, and this website has other articles too. This one is a bit outdated but still relevant:

<https://www.apa.org/topics/immigration-refugees/report.pdf>

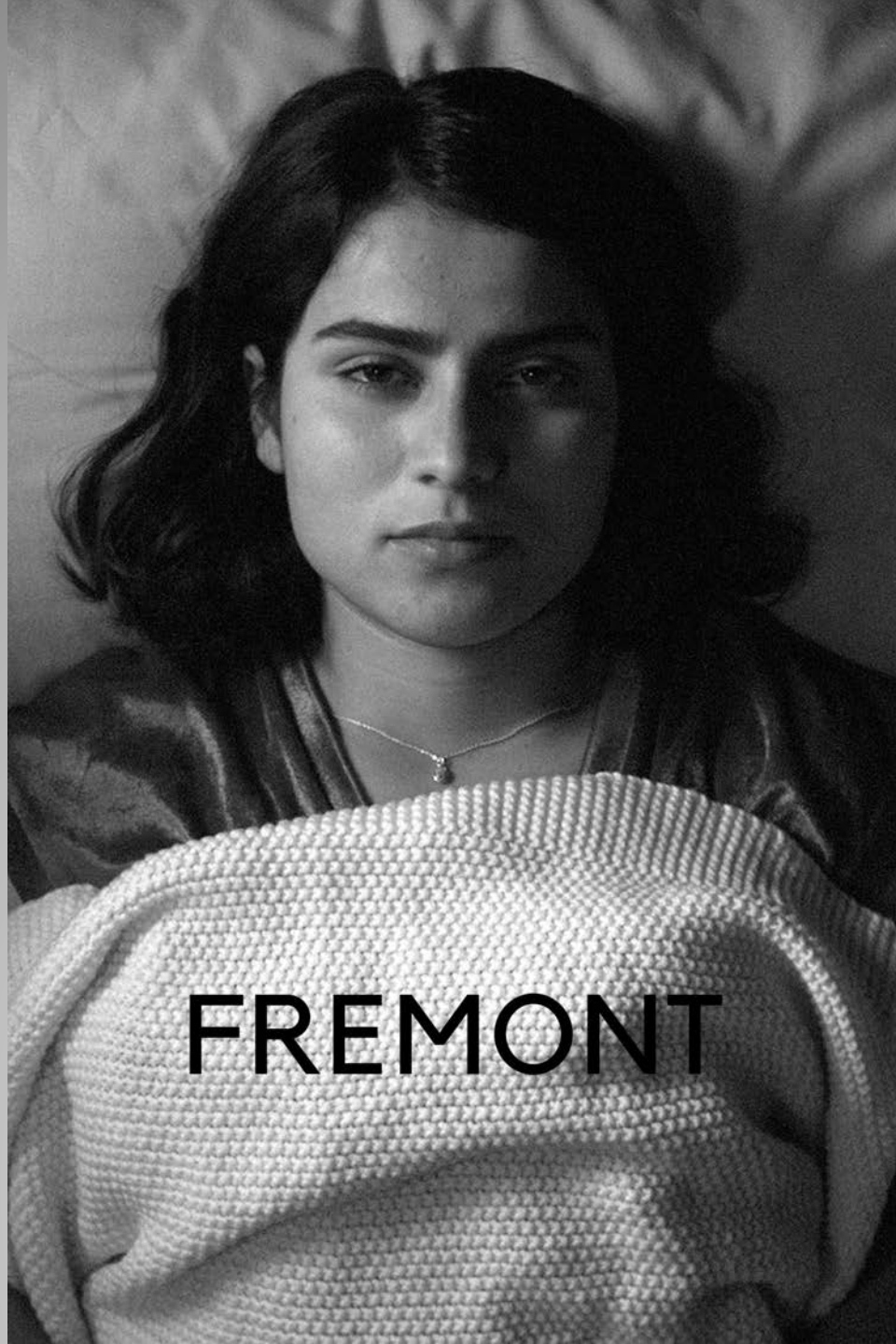
More from their site:

<https://www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/trauma-types/refugee-trauma>

<https://www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/trauma-types/refugee-trauma/external-resources>

There is a tremendous HEALING to happen!!





**FREMONT**

In the movies we can find contemporary take  
on immigrants' trauma:

We are One  
Fremont

Spoken Word

Poe-Tree

<https://www.youtube.com/@Poetree/videos>

Refugee children and adolescents exhibit resilience despite a history of trauma. However, trauma can affect a refugee child's emotional and behavioral development. Mental health providers should consider how the refugee experience (e.g., exposure to hunger, thirst, and lack of shelter; injury and illness; being a witness, victim, or perpetrator of violence; fleeing your home and country; separating from family; living in a refugee camp; resettling in a new country; and navigating between the new culture and the culture of origin) may contribute to a child or adolescent's emotional or behavioral presentation in a clinic, school, or community setting.

When engaging refugee children and families in the treatment process:

- Work to build trust with all family members, not only to increase the benefits of treatment, but also to ensure the family will accept your recommendations and referrals.
- Listen to the family's concerns, acknowledge the importance of their expressed primary problems, and address first the basic or most urgent needs.
- Focus on aspects of the mental health services that relate to the family's expressed values, such as supporting a child's academic success.
- When you are referring to other services, discuss what the resource can provide for the child or family and, if possible, facilitate the family's contacting the referral.

This place in Chicago offers culturally sensitive trauma-informed mental health care:

[https://maha-us.org/community-mental-health-clinic/jonas-ginsburg/?doing\\_wp\\_cron=1693820931.9287250041961669921875](https://maha-us.org/community-mental-health-clinic/jonas-ginsburg/?doing_wp_cron=1693820931.9287250041961669921875)

In theater

[A Safe Space: How Martyna Majok Channeled Her Immigrant Struggle Into Playwriting Success | Newcity Stage](#)

**“It helped me translate my heart and my past and my story.”**

Majok’s plays concern what she knows – the lives of immigrants and other underrepresented communities, particularly women. Gritty, unsentimental and often politically engaged, they are filled with dark humor, and experiment with time and structure.

Majok’s 2015 breakthrough play, “Ironbound,” is the story of a Polish immigrant living in New Jersey, working as a house cleaner and factory worker. It first appeared as a workshop production at Steppenwolf, before going onto the Women’s Voices Theatre Festival in Maryland and then an Off-Broadway run. Nelson Pressley of the Washington Post praised it as “harsh and wonderful.”



[Crossed Paths: In “Port of Entry” the Albany Park Theater Project Uses Immersive Theater to Explore the Immigrant Experience | Newcity Stage](#)

“Over the past five years, more than 150 artists, storytellers and craftspeople have invested their creativity and spirit into bringing ‘Port of Entry’ to life,” Feiner says. In immigrant neighborhoods around Chicago, people from all different parts of the world create “ecosystems together, across the hall from one another, next door to one another, people who, if not for globalization and global conflicts, would never have crossed paths, and now they’re neighbors.

“So the idea of ‘Port of Entry’ was to recreate one of those buildings,” Feiner says. “We wanted to create for the audience the experience of those different families living in proximity to one another and interacting with one another.”



# Nice News

## LIFEFORCE

- What CAN we do to enhance positivity in our ESL classroom without offering false hope about the world around?
- We just highlight and bring the attention to WHAT good is happening:
- My wonderful teacher, **Laurie Martin** (Thank You!!)  
recommended a lot of helpful resources to me. Every day I start my lesson with:
- [Nice News](#)
- Here at Nice News, we know that advancing in age doesn't mean slowing down, and Lifeforce shares that philosophy. With the company's scientifically-backed program, you can **embrace a life filled with energy, focus, and vigor, no matter your age.**



## Books

### Project 562

By Matika Wilbur

Page 192: Fannie from Navajo Nation

“I wish I could gather all our grandchildren at one place and talk to them. (...) But the thing is that the language barrier stops it from happening, because some of them don't understand Navajo. And I must speak everything in Navajo so that they can understand what I am talking about. I want to tell them my stories.”





<https://journaltherapy.com/journal-cafe-3/pennebaker-book/>

### Journaling with the students.

- Here: Stories from my students.
- Topic: “Please write about your last evening in your country before you arrived in U.S. and your first day here.”
- Research has found that journaling is helpful and writing to help contemplate solutions is even more helpful. It even involves watching the pronouns we use. Journaling without including healing elements can make us feel more depressed, apparently.

My home.



# *Nostalgia*

(my poem written in 2021 during the pandemic)

- They don't want me there.
- I shared the simple request
- In honesty of perpetual
- Childish hopes.
- Tribunal gathered
- Dissecting each letter.
- I wasn't in a rush.
- Patience is what I mastered best.
- Long, yet not particularly
- Pleasant waiting room.
- Undescriptive stories
- Bought on sale in Walmart.
- Tropical memory
- On dusty leaves.
- Bleak and unnecessary effort.
- I assume fleeing would surprise no one.
- Safety of rectangle in the wall.
- Slap to billion years of organic shapes.
- I could wait some more.
- Night is on the horizon.
- Its humming whispers,
- Moon in Virgo, levitation of stars.



*Thank you!*

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