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**African asylum seekers and refugees on the island of Ireland**  
**ABSTRACT**

There is a growing interest as well as urgency to understand diversity, cultural differences and transformation on the island of Ireland. With the UK's BREXIT decision in summer 2016 the notion of the border, border crossing and what European Union membership entails for different groups in society have become even more opaque. This chapter examines the everyday life experiences of African asylum seekers and refugees in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. It considers how asylum seekers and refugees experiences of integration are shaped by issues such as racism and sectarianism in Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland. It explores how local environments, spatial segregation and being a black asylum seeker or refugee in a largely white society, conditions feelings of belonging as well as future aspirations.

## **Introduction**

On January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2018, a story of a violent attack in Dundalk began to circulate in the Irish media. A young Japanese man lost his life, violently, as he walked home from a night-shift. Stabbed and left for dead, Yosuke Sasaki had only been living in Ireland for over a year. That morning, two other young men were also attacked, but both survived their injuries. For Yosuke Sasaki, it was catastrophic. The media ran with stories that intimated the possibility that this was Ireland's 'first' terrorist attack. The attacker, Mohamed Morei, a young 18-year old man was quickly captured and taken into custody. Racist and angry comments were thrown at Mohammed as he was detained at Dundalk court. Public responses to the event were stark, Mohammed was thought to be an asylum seeker. It was reported that he had had his asylum application rejected somewhere in Great Britain; that he took the ferry to Belfast and crossed into the Republic of Ireland –sleeping rough in an abandoned site in Dundalk. Claims were also made that Mohammed travelled to Dublin but then returned to Dundalk where on January 3<sup>rd</sup> he carried out this brutal attack. Debates ensued about the motives for this egregious attack-was he a member of ISIS? Could this in fact be the first of this type of terrorism in Ireland?

More saliently, however, to our particular scholarly focus, were the debates about how Mohammed had so easily crossed to the Republic of Ireland, having had his asylum application rejected in the UK. Critiques of both the UK and Irish asylum process abounded, as did criticisms of policing and security across the island particularly with respect to the border. In the midst of debates about

BREXIT and the possibilities of the reinstatement of a hard border on the island these debates have a very particular resonance. In the days after the attack, racist posters began to appear in various spots around the town of Dundalk.

Different layers of racist discourse and racialising were collapsed through media coverage of this murder: Islamophobia – Anti-Muslim racism (the asylum seeker, Mohammed) and the murder of another non-white Other (Yosuke) were the key dichotomies. This particular story evinces the notion that ideas of whiteness and different racisms have to be more carefully scrutinised in the context of non-white newcomers to Ireland (and indeed, elsewhere).

This chapter focuses on the everyday life experiences of African asylum seekers and refugees on the island of Ireland in order to consider the different notions of belonging, ‘racisms’ (Garner 2010) and integration at play on the island. Key to our thinking herein is the fact that asylum seekers and refugees’ experiences in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland are differently fashioned through two distinct immigration systems, as well as two distinct national, historical and socio-economic contexts (Murphy and Vieten 2017). While both parts of the island share much in terms of historical experience, there is little doubt that Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland have come to be differently shaped.

At the time of writing this chapter in 2018, the lack of certainty of how BREXIT will further reconfigure the relationship between the two contexts still features large. This is significant for any further consideration of the experience of asylum seekers and refugees as well as any reflection on the variant articulations and intersections of ‘racisms’ in Europe (Fekete 2009; Vieten 2011; Garner 2012; Erel et al. 2016). Engagements with notions of integration and anti-racism (Lentin 2004; Gilligan 2017) have also been differently articulated on both parts of the island, and this is also key to how asylum seekers and refugees experience life in both places. When considering different legacies of European racisms (Vieten 2011), the complexity of different subordinations have to be noted and situated while at the same time it needs to be asked how ‘white Europe’ affects the contemporary living conditions of black Others, for example, black refugees and asylum seekers.

Herein, we will explore the ways in which a salient sectarian community division in Northern Ireland frames the everyday experiences of asylum seekers and refugees in Belfast, and also reflect comparatively on the ways in which refugees in the Republic of Ireland have engaged with the growth of racism in the context of an austerity Ireland through their own sense-making mechanisms (in particular, religion). The question of how racism experienced in Northern Ireland is similar or dissimilar to the experiences of asylum seekers and refugees in the Republic of Ireland features large in our reflection. We argue that hegemonic whiteness and institutional racism (Bourne 2001) shape

the experiences of African asylum seekers and refugees in ways that go beyond the legal divide as far as the two jurisdictions are concerned.

We highlight our argument with two distinct and original sets of empirical data. Research in Northern Ireland was commissioned for the Racial Equality Unit in Stormont, Northern Ireland. It took place in 2016 and 2017, and research was conducted predominantly in Belfast and Derry/Londonderry. The project was largely a qualitative research project whose scope was to feed into the development of a refugee integration strategy for Northern Ireland. Currently, Northern Ireland is one of the few jurisdictions in the UK which does not have a refugee integration strategy (Murphy and Vieten 2017). For this research, we conducted semi-structured interviews with 48 asylum seekers and refugees from ten different countries and 50 members of the NGO/Charitable sector and service providers (health, education, labour and housing) in Northern Ireland.

Research in the Republic of Ireland is an ongoing longitudinal ethnographic project which started with a research project entitled ‘After Asylum: refugee integration in Ireland’ and was generously supported by a grant from the *Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences* (IRCHSS) Research Development Initiative Strand, 2008-2010.<sup>1</sup> For this project, we focused predominantly on Nigerian and Congolese refugees who had mostly been through the direct provision system. We conducted ethnographic research in Dundalk, Drogheda and Dublin for a period of two years. One of the researchers on this project, and co-author Fiona Murphy continues to work in the spirit of long term ethnographic engagement within this space in the Republic of Ireland. With this chapter, we thus contribute to a critical debate on how ethnic identity, religion and ‘race’ as visible differences play in distinct ways out across the island of Ireland.

## **Asylum and refuge in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland**

The asylum experience on the island of Ireland differs dramatically depending on whether one might seek asylum in Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland. Two distinct systems of migration management operate, both highly problematic (see Maguire and Murphy 2012; Murphy and Vieten 2017).

**Northern Ireland** is a complex space through which to consider immigration law. Immigration law comes from *Westminster* and Northern Ireland must implement this in an accordant fashion. However, Northern Ireland is outside of the UK policy of dispersal, so asylum seekers come to

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<sup>1</sup> The PI for this project was Dr. Mark Maguire of Maynooth University and this project culminated in the publication of a book published by Manchester University Press entitled *Integration in Ireland: The everyday lives of African Migrants* (2012).

Northern Ireland in three distinct ways either independently or as programme refugees, or through family reunification programmes (Murphy and Vieten 2017). Mohammed, the perpetrator of the attack in Dundalk, arrived from Britain, and it is interesting that he entered the Republic (though close to the border) trying to claim asylum again.

Northern Ireland has responsibility for integration as some of the core aspects shaping local living conditions (e.g. housing; health, education) are devolved matters. To date, there is no refugee integration strategy in place, however, the research we conducted for the Racial Equality Unit will form the basis for the development of same (Murphy and Vieten 2017). Asylum seekers are housed in dedicated asylum housing managed by the Housing Executive but this is also governed by Westminster. The growing commercialisation of asylum seeker housing has seen a gross deterioration in housing conditions for asylum seekers (see Murphy and Vieten 2017). Added to this is the growing issue of homelessness and destitution of asylum seekers and refugees in the UK. With the British EU referendum vote to leave the European Union (Art. 50 triggered on 29 March 2017) Northern Ireland's particular situation, unlike any other region in the UK, has captured international attention -underlining its complex relationship, history and future (Basheska et al. 2017<sup>2</sup> ; Schiek 2017<sup>3</sup>). Sharing a spatial border with another EU country - the Republic of Ireland – underlines the frictions, contradictions and tensions that hinge on an unresolved colonial past and the way sectarian conflict impacts the everyday lives of people in Northern Ireland (in particular for those living close to the border).

Before the EU referendum in 2016, the city of Belfast hit the international news and debates, counting an extreme rise in race hate crimes in the new millennium. In the years following 2005, Belfast was 'dubbed by the media as the "race hate capital in Europe" (Knox 2011) referring to the international attention that followed the large-scale attack on Roma (see Gilligan 2016). Many Roma returned to mainland Europe following these attacks.

The recent interest in more thoroughly recording hate crime, sectarian and racist violence is an expression of the transformation of the social fabric, seeing a rise in immigration since the end of the 1990s, e.g. with the *Good Friday Agreement in 1998*. As one aspect of normalisation, people from outside Northern Ireland, and with respect to EU free movement rights, European citizens, for example, became more interested and attracted to this location despite its recent history of armed

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.qub.ac.uk/home/EUReferendum/Brexitfilestore/Filetoupload,43694,en.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://blogs.qub.ac.uk/tensionatthefringes/files/2017/02/Schiek-Brexit-and-the-UK-Ireland-relationship-CETLS-TREUP-occasional-paper-2-20171.pdf>

conflict. This also means that since the 2000s asylum seekers consider staying in Northern Ireland, and with the ‘Vulnerable Person Relocation’<sup>4</sup> scheme about 800<sup>5</sup> Syrian refugees have arrived to make a new life in Belfast and Derry. In 2018, there were approximately 700 asylum seekers living in Northern Ireland (mostly residing in Belfast), with an average of 200-300 new applications per year. While this represents less than 1 per cent of the overall UK figures, the accommodation of asylum seekers and refugees and the ‘integration’ of the latter, nonetheless poses challenges for state policy, social institutions and employers in Northern Ireland, particularly given NI’s status as a post-conflict/divided society.

In the **Republic of Ireland**, immigration law is closely governed by national and EU directives (with current debate about Ireland adopting the EU Reception directive). Currently, asylum seekers are kept in a system of direct provision –which is a system of open detention, where people are housed together communally without the ability to cook or live independently. People have spent very long periods of time waiting in direct provision for their asylum application to be processed. The McMahon report (2015) detailed the dehumanising living conditions of direct provision and since its publication, there has been widespread protest aimed at ending this system. At the time of writing, debates about giving asylum seekers the right to work have figured large and plans to adhere to the EU reception directive are afoot. Sites such as Dundalk and Drogheda were chosen for the IRCHSS *After Asylum research project* because at the time of research, they had a high number of refugees due to their proximity to one of the larger direct provision centres Mosney. Dundalk was also chosen due to its particular proximity to the border with Northern Ireland and its long complex relationship to Northern Ireland. Dublin, as the capital city, also became a key site due to the numbers of refugees living in different parts of the city –we spent much of our research time in Clondalkin and Tallaght. In general, the numbers of asylum seekers in Ireland on a yearly basis have tended to be between two thousand and three thousand (figures for 2016 show a decline in applications)<sup>6</sup>. Ireland has had a poor history in terms of accepting and processing asylum seekers, due in no small part to the system of direct provision (see McMahon 2015). Integration strategies and engagements have also been piecemeal at best (see Murphy and Maguire 2012), with until recently, little examination on how such processes are shaping and have been shaped by those seeking asylum in the Republic of Ireland (Murphy and Maguire 2012).

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<sup>4</sup> The United Kingdom has established a resettlement program for Syrian refugees – the Vulnerable Persons Relocation (VPR) scheme. Northern Ireland has been a recipient of both program refugees (through the VPR scheme) as well as having an estimated number of 200-300 new asylum seekers per year from different locations. Northern Ireland has also received individuals with refugee status from Somalia.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.embraceni.org/information/asylum/syrian-refugees-in-northern-ireland/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/republic-ireland/statistics>

## **Northern Ireland: a white ethno-religious place, worlds apart?**

The focus of our research on asylum seekers and refugees was on their everyday experience of Northern Ireland, and so the topic of Northern Ireland's complex history of conflict and division was often brought up by our research participants. Over the course of our work, we encountered many stories of how this history impacts on their relationship with Northern Ireland. One of our participants, a young man from Kenya, told us that articulations of sectarianism were an issue for many asylum seekers and refugees as they go about their daily lives. He puts it thus:

It does affect me because, especially because now for me, I have a child with an Irish woman... because she wouldn't go to Protestant areas, which limits my movement with my daughter, to wherever I want to go and definitely, it affects me too much, because I used to and I stay in a lot. Like if I go looking for a house now, she's not happy because of where I'm going to take, do you know what I mean? Because, not because she wants to tell me which place I should go and get housing, she's worried when my daughter comes in there, it's going to affect her. It does affect me because I just find it very very wrong, do you know? (Kenyan Refugee, Interview 2016).

Fear of sectarianism – and here, with respect to moving within or to a more Protestant neighbourhood – is almost overriding other fears of racism. The right to move freely in the city (e.g. Belfast) and near the Irish border is particularly problematic for African asylum seekers and refugees. Many are not aware of the legal consequences of moving across the national border, but also their visibility makes them vulnerable to police checks and sectarian violence in particular parts of the city. Racism and sectarianism in Northern Ireland have been little discussed with the exception of a few studies (Brewer 1992; McVeigh & Rolston 2007; Knox 2011; McKee 2016), also with a focus on contact hypothesis and cultural marginality (Hayes & Dowds 2006) or by including a discussion of multiculturalism (Geoghegan 2008). Though the views held by Polish EU and migrant workers community division in Northern Ireland have been analysed (Kempny 2013) the question of how perceptions of sectarian space and sectarian violence shapes the everyday life experiences of asylum seekers and refugees has not been fully documented. McKee (2015: 792), however, found in her study focusing on an analysis of the *2013 Northern Ireland Life and Time survey* 'partial support for the sectarianism hypothesis, with those most accepting of mixed marriages more willing to accept all three groups, although the effect was largest with Muslims and, in general, the coefficients were somewhat smaller than with social contact or economic self-interest.' She concluded that it needs more research and discussions of 'racism alongside sectarianism' (ibid). It has been argued that

equating sectarianism with a propensity towards racism is far too facile. However, Neil Jarman and Rachael Monaghan (2003) make the following argument:

As sectarian residential segregation has continued to increase it is likely that some people have identified the minority communities as the new ‘other’ and turned their attentions away from the Protestant or Catholic minority towards the Chinese and Indian communities who are beginning to create new interfaces in some working class communities. This is not to argue that racism and sectarianism are exactly the same thing but that they have common roots in a society which does not tolerate difference, which is focused in upon itself, is insecure and which accepts violence and abuse as a broadly legitimate form of expression (Jarman and Monaghan 2003:21).

While segregation patterns in Northern Ireland are lower in the 2011 census compared to 2001 there are many studies which claim that spatial segregation continues to be a barrier to successful integration processes (Malischewski 2013). Much of what we found in our own study would concur with this analysis (Murphy and Vieten 2017).

Further, the statement by the UN Advisory Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (2011) and Council of Europe (2011) on racism and sectarianism is worth considering in this regard. They state that ‘(treating) sectarianism as a distinct issue rather than as a form of racism (is) problematic, as it allows sectarianism to fall outside the scope of accepted anti-discrimination and human rights protection standards.’ (Bell and McVeigh 2016: 24).

Critical to this chapter, is also the fact that the conflict in Northern Ireland has not been properly considered in UK policy thinking on racism (see Galligan 2017). In line with this argument and as argued elsewhere (Vieten 2011) the different notions of ethnicity and race that are used across the UK need more attention when looking at the situation across the island of Ireland: ethnicity in a UK (GB) context ‘defines ethnicity primarily in terms of “colour” – thus 98% of Northern Ireland residents are defined solely as “white”’ (Bell and McVeigh 2016: 24). As Bell and McVeigh argue, ‘this does nothing to capture the ethnic complexity of Northern Ireland and nothing to help construct policy and practice on ethnicity.’ (ibid) Thus, in the British context ethnicity is primarily identified with non-whiteness.

It is important though to mention that Northern Ireland also has a more recent history of combating the negative imprint of sectarianism and racism. A number of anti-racism groups (in particular at the grassroots level) are in operation- for example, the *West Against Racism* Network in Belfast. The *Equality Authority*, *Human Rights Commission* and the *Racial Equality Unit* also work to find ways to eliminate racism and discrimination in Northern Ireland. Likewise, many members of the Northern Ireland voluntary sector provide anti-racism training (such as NICEM and CRAICNI),

NGOs that often have been set up by refugees or other black immigrants. However, the view that sectarianism is the business of the two dominant political ethno-religious communities and less of newcomers is difficult to change, as our research data indicates (Murphy and Vieten 2017).

According to Malischewski (2013), who conducted a small-scale study on asylum seekers and refugees in Northern Ireland the perceived homogeneity of groups poses one of the main challenges in understanding the situation of asylum seekers and refugees here. She argues (2013: 6) that ‘The Northern Irish case presents a dramatic example of social division, one in which the question of ‘what’ refugees and asylum seekers are integrating into is particularly poignant. Indeed, though sectarianism plays an overarching role in dividing society, other factors such as age, gender, class, race, and ethnicity also contribute to social positioning and division.’

Our research participants, similarly, frequently equated racism and sectarianism when speaking about housing, schooling and employment; the three areas of their daily concern. In that sense, the impact of sectarianism was felt in most areas of their everyday lives. One female refugee from Zimbabwe when talking about opportunities in finding a job referred to the specific religious sectarian context of NI:

I practice Catholicism. It’s not a problem for me to have loads of friends from other communities, so it doesn’t bother me at all. But I would be a bit careful when I’m saying to another person my religion. Or if I’m applying for work, I must be like should I say it, should I not. (Interview 2016).

As a newcomer to Northern Ireland society she felt anxious about how to read societal codes, and felt a lack of certainty in manoeuvring group boundaries which impacted on her confidence in finding a job and feeling accepted.

There is much research on the spatial dimensions of settlement for asylum seekers and refugees (Franklin 2014). The areas in which asylum seekers and refugees are housed impact on access to employment and health, as well as broader social networks with the host community and other members of the asylum and refuge seeking community. The spatial complexities of Northern Ireland are compounded by its history. As most of this research was undertaken in Belfast, it makes sense to comment here somewhat on how Belfast as a city with high levels of spatial segregation can be a complex place for asylum seekers and refugees to live and settle in. Often asylum seekers and refugees are housed in lower quality housing in underprivileged areas with high levels of segregation. In the context of Belfast, where there are higher levels of NASS accommodation, South Belfast has become somewhat of a hub for asylum seekers and refugees and also a number of civil

society sector organisations supporting them (see also Kerr 2013). In particular, the spaces around the Queen's University district are vibrant and mixed with an international community. In our interviews, our research participants expressed a preference to live in this area. Given the pressures on the housing system, this is not always possible and so asylum seekers and refugees find themselves living right across the city. When asked whether the history or legacy of the troubles posed any specific problems in their lives, our research participants answered with very mixed responses. A number suggested that they just treat everyone the same and don't like to think about the divide specifically, but others engaged with the issue and its impact on their daily lives.

There is very little research extant to substantiate the links between religiously segregated places and racism (see however McVeigh 2007). The media, however, have drawn a number of links between divided areas and an increase in racism. This means that some asylum seekers and refugees are fearful about being housed in certain areas even without ever having visited them. One research participant told us 'I am too scared to get to know my neighbours, I just stay in my house you know, getting depressed.'

The 'perception' that these areas are much more challenging to live in means asylum seekers and refugees sometime feel anxious about receiving housing in these areas, this is an idea perpetuated by host community members as much as anyone else. As one research participant articulates it:

We had a friend actually who was saying, who lived in north Belfast, his dad was really old. And he was saying to me if my area was okay for you, I would have given you my daddy's house for the time being until you get a permanent home, which was very kind of him. But then he said people might not receive you around there so I don't want to cause you problems. So he couldn't give us that house. And also he had a landlord who had a nice apartment in north Belfast which was manageable. Their rent was reasonable. But I did not want to change the school. And then he said the colour might cause a problem when the children come back from school. The colour of the uniform. Maybe nowadays it has improved a bit. But still people will ask you, I want to go and rent a house at this area, do you think I'll be safe. People will be concerned where they go because they will know some areas might not be as friendly as others. (Sudanese refugee, Interview 2016)

It is worthwhile, however, to stress that intersectional dimensions of gender, age and generation affect the perspective of black newcomers to Belfast; e.g. Northern Ireland, too. A group of second generation African Northern Irish youngsters clearly expressed their sense of belonging to Belfast; though they equally experienced racism and sectarianism. One of our interview partners moved school, eventually going to school in South Belfast as racism and harassment impacted on his wellbeing. That means, black newcomers to Belfast find their individual strategies to cope with

racism and sectarianism- though collectively and publically, it is difficult to tackle this as entangled racisms.

## **The Republic of Ireland: black believers and white (Catholic) secular Ireland**

*Gabriel sits uneasily in his taxi as he details the sequelae of racisms he has experienced as a taxi driver in the small town he lives and works in. With purposeful intent, he tells us of how he is often passed over for a white or local driver. Late night driving is now something he tries to avoid because of experiencing violence and abuse. Name-calling and accusation form part of his everyday he gets angry as he recalls some of the racist abuse he has experienced first-hand. He has been working as a taxi driver for almost ten years now and in spite of widespread media attention, he tells us, racism towards African taxi drivers has not been dealt with in any meaningful way. (Fieldnotes 2010)*

In the Republic of Ireland, the experience of direct provision (a system of detention and containment), and a different notion of Christianity complicates the experiences of asylum seekers and refugees (Maguire and Murphy 2015). Abel Ugba (2009) argues that ‘Pentecostalism has offered African immigrants in 21<sup>st</sup> century Ireland new/additional basis for constructing understandings of self, “others”, commonalities and boundaries.’ (Ugba 2009: 131-132).

In the IRCHSS funded project *After Asylum* (PI Mark Maguire), we examined questions of integration as they existed in relation to issues of education, politics, the labour market, second generation African youth, and religion (see Maguire and Murphy 2012). Throughout our research, questions of integration and indeed, barriers to integration, such as racism figured large. Our engagement with what Susan Harding calls ‘the repugnant cultural other’ (1991) evinced the complexities of these experiences in the lives of our research participants. We conducted ethnographic research across a wide variety of spaces in order to understand the complexities of integration across the realms of labour, education, religion, politics, and amongst second-generation African refugees. We found bureaucratic mistrust and concerns about notions of integration and prejudice in places like Mosney, a direct provision centre, whilst out campaigning with African refugees running in the local elections, in African Pentecostal churches or simply when sitting in a classroom with young African children. In singular lives, we were confronted with the strength, sense of community and value people imputed into the presence of the church in their lives. For others, a stark rejection of religion and spirituality, and a deep distrust of the State was evident.

At the time of conducting the IRCHSS project and for a number of years after, debates about racism on the taxi ranks in Ireland’s towns and cities loomed large in the media (Maguire and Murphy 2012). From 2000 onwards the Irish taxi industry was deregulated in order to facilitate open competition for fares, this greatly contributed to acrimony on the taxi ranks between full-time and

part-time drivers, and ultimately, engendered hostility towards migrant taxi drivers (in particular visible migrant or refugee drivers) (Maguire and Murphy 2014). We conducted very close ethnographic research on taxi ranks in Dublin, Drogheda, and Dundalk (see Maguire and Murphy 2012) at a time, where, particularly in Dundalk and Drogheda, African taxi drivers had become the target of violent racist abuse (Maguire and. Murphy 2014). During this time, Ireland had also entered a period of deep economic recession and austerity (O' Riain 2014), and African taxi drivers as a very visible other became victims and targets of racism and prejudice anchored in a putative discourse of employment shortage (Maguire and Murphy 2012). In the same period, we were also conducting research in African Pentecostal churches in the same towns, and this crisis of racism and prejudice was a recurrent topic at all of the services we attended (Maguire and Murphy 2015). A strong theme in many of the services at these churches was an attempt to make sense out of these increasingly hostile racisms by linking them to economic recession and austerity (Maguire and Murphy 2015). Interviewing African taxi drivers, sitting with them in their cars while people passed them by in favour of a white taxi driver, and attending Pentecostal services (where the challenges of living with racism were often discussed) unequivocally demonstrated the challenges of everyday life for African refugees in austerity Ireland. Pastors and even some of the taxi drivers we interviewed attempted to fashion a moral ledger in which an Ireland pre-austerity was recalled as a more welcoming, less racist place. Austerity might have triggered increased racism and resentment against black others, but it has to be interpreted and understood in the context of Irish history and policy without making invisible a longer history of State and institutional racisms (see Lentin 2004).

Gabriel, our research participant, cited in the opening paragraph, was both a taxi driver and a Pentecostal worshipper. During the years we got to know him and his family, it was clear that he was becoming increasingly alarmed at having to drive taxis in the small town in which he lived, he worried incessantly that one day the verbal abuses he regularly suffered would culminate in violence. He felt deeply angered by his experiences but worried that this anger would impact on his young children. Accompanying him and his young family one Sunday to a Pentecostal service, we heard him openly pray for an austerity Ireland to find recovery, by doing so, he believed that the racism he was experiencing might lessen. Another driver, a friend of Gabriel explained it to us in these terms:

On Saturday, I went to the rank. I was there for two hours. When I got to the rank there was only two cars, one in the front and me. So the one in the front took a run while I was there, and another car pulled behind me, which is a white guy. When the customer came he took the white one. That one went and come back again, and he took about four runs when I was in number one. So he made me mad, he made me feel bad as hell. I can't blame God for making me a black

man, you know? It frustrates me, you feel bad, am I not a human being? (Interview, 2010; see also Maguire and Murphy 2012).

For many of the taxi drivers we met Pentecostalism offered them a different space through which to interpret their encounters with racism within their everyday lives. As another driver Michael explained:

It is racism, FACT!! People can call it whatever they like, but it is pure racism when someone looks at you and say, 'Oh it is a black driver', and then goes behind you and finds a white driver. [...] It is humiliating, degrading. ... Is it I am a subhuman being? But I refuse to accept this kind of theory that I am a subhuman being. No! ... I always tell myself that God can give me the courage to accept the things I cannot change and the wisdom to change the things I can. I can't change this. (Interview 2010; see also Maguire and Murphy 2012).

Not long after a violent confrontation between African taxi-drivers and white taxi drivers in the carpark of a Louth radio station (Maguire and Murphy 2012), one of the local Pentecostal churches decided to organize what they called a Jesus Walk through the town of Drogheda (Maguire and Murphy 2012; 2014). Pentecostal sites of worship exist in Ireland in the margins, or the zones of invisibility and 'gaps of the postindustrial city' (Garbin 2013), hidden in plain sight in industrial warehouses. Inspired by a broader movement of Pentecostal spiritual mapping and the Great March for Jesus which started in London in 1987 (Garbin 2013), a number of Pastor's from various Pentecostal denominations decided to organise a Jesus walk through a large town on the Irish North-Eastern sea board.<sup>7</sup> Central to the organisers' aim was the intention of praying Ireland out of economic crisis in order to remedy many of the experiences of their worshippers. Initially, the organising committee had hoped that members of the mainstream dominant churches in Ireland would also participate but attracted only the interest of Charismatic Catholics practicing in the area. Akin to the March for Jesus in the UK, this Irish Jesus walk plotted a religious geography which intersected with some key Irish institutions and historical sites. For the Pastors and the other participants on the walk that gloomy Saturday morning, the walk was an attempt to show the people of Drogheda that they could perhaps find and share in a better life. Critical emphasis was placed on praying Ireland out of the recession and of addressing their own often unequal presence in Ireland. Ritualistically sprinkling oil at significant sites such as the police station, the hospital and court was both an attempt to imprint their religious identities on and reshape local place. As the town slowly

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<sup>7</sup> Inspired by a broader movement of Pentecostal spiritual mapping and the Great March for Jesus which started in London in 1987, a number of Pastor's from various Pentecostal denominations decided to organise a Jesus walk through a large town on the Irish North eastern sea board. In common with the Great March for Jesus and the subsequent emergence of thousands of similar marches, the Jesus Walk intended to spread the message of Jesus and to let the people of Ireland know about the existence of African Pentecostalism. It was a mobile performance of faith, a kind of spiritual warfare on an Ireland deep in the recesses of recession and caught, as the Pastors saw it, in the binds of racism.

moved out of its Saturday slumber, street cleaners, market stall holders, passengers in cars, and busy doctors and nurses glared at the group of praying walkers. No one asked to join in, no one stopped and prayed in solidarity, the group it seemed remained marginal, isolated somehow from the mainstream. With cameras in tow, we too stepped in and out of the walking-praying stream, sometimes enthralled by the praying fervour, snapping it feverishly, wanting to document the corporeal co-presence of refugee and host subjectivities, different expressions of religion, of belonging and ultimately, and of being in the world.

On our return to the church, Pastor Femi announced his hope that both the town of Drogheda and Ireland would eventually be awash with hope and success, with a sense that it had been prayed for. The walk then, as we argue in our larger work, was an attempt to ‘enchant’ the Irish landscape, to engender a symbolic geography of Pentecostalism near sites of Irish historical and societal significance (Maguire and Murphy 2012). In a town, however, with a recent history of racial conflict (particularly in the taxi industry), the desire to ignite a response to Pentecostal idioms of being was met only with silence. Nonetheless, for the participants of the walk there was a sense that day and in discussions afterwards that the Jesus walk, as the first of its kind in the town birthed some form of recognition. It said very simply, we are here, we want to protest exclusion and racism, we want to belong. The pastor described it as thus:

We have an adage from Nigeria that says, well you want to put a bucket on your head, and you are calling for help, you don't leave it for the person helping you, you also support with the hand and both of you put it on the head. You know a lot of immigrants have come here, probably they need help, prob they have been subjected to all kinds of attacks problems and so on, they also have a part to play in developing where they are. For me, I find everywhere you are is a home, and wherever is a home, you have to make it very good for yourself. So we try to tell them and let them know what have you to contribute to the society. (Interview 2010).

In redrawing the town in a spiritual frame, the Pastors and congregation were beginning the process of reconstituting their sense of belonging and home. By shining the lens of a diasporic religion on urban Irish space, the organisers of the Jesus walk signified the religious super diversity that has come to characterize postsecular urban space, (thereby attempting to rewrite the hegemony of Catholicism that has hitherto defined Irish society). We see the Jesus walk as beckoning to both transnational forms of belonging, cosmopolitan engagements and new solidarities. The Jesus walk was a corporeal form of engaging Irish urban space with African Pentecostal ways of being, a social re-construction of Irish public space through the lens of African refugee identities. While the Jesus walk is open to multiple interpretations, we see it primarily as a means by which Pentecostal refugees living in Drogheda and its surrounds attempted to weave an alternative tapestry of meaning,

which embraced new ways of becoming, belonging, and integration. The walk was a pilgrimage of sorts, an attempt to inscribe a Pentecostal presence on a landscape dominated by Catholic spires. It publicly expressed a multiplicity of belonging that served as both a reminder of and protest against exclusion and racism.

Ultimately, the Jesus Walk was an attempt to create new solidarities not only in response to the experiences of many of the African taxi drivers in the area, but also to address issues of exclusion and racism more broadly. What happens in African churches in terms of responses to these issues, is just one example of what is a very robust anti-racism movement in Ireland. In recent years, there has been a steady growth of organisations which attempt to combat racism and exclusion—such as the anti-racism network and MASI (Movement of Asylum seekers in Ireland). However, as the work of one of the editors of this book Lucy Michaels (see [iracism.ie](http://iracism.ie)) shows, there has been an ongoing failure on the part of the Irish State to deal with hate crime and racism in a meaningful and responsive fashion. Hence, the need for volunteer and civil sector organisations to backfill what should in fact be State provision in this area.<sup>8</sup>

## Conclusion

Though *Mohammed*, the asylum seeker and murderer, and *Yosuke*, the Japanese victim of Mohammed's vicious attack, introduced in the beginning of this chapter, cannot be regarded as clear cut examples of non-white victimhood and white racist hate crimes the tragedy of this entanglement of violence and institutional failures, ties into a more endemic situation, where violence on the street has become instrumental in enacting rage and even, trauma.

The links between the sense of alienation and marginalisation that the experience of racism and prejudice engenders and the challenges of fully integrating into society were frequently mentioned by our research participants in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The everyday life experiences of asylum seekers and refugees are affected by the ongoing tensions in Northern Ireland; in particular, being confronted with *spatial segregation*. This results in no-go areas, or as far as housing and neighbourhoods are concerned produces anxieties for asylum seekers and refugees. Though spatial division clings to ethno-national tensions it intersects prominently with religious, intra-Christianity sectarianism impacting on the wellbeing and life of newcomers to the society.

In the Republic of Ireland, direct provision continues to impact on the mental health and wellbeing of asylum seekers and refugees. The story of racism and exclusion in the Republic of Ireland is, like anywhere, a complex one. Broadly, there has been a failure on the part of the Irish State to

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<sup>8</sup> We found this to be similar in our work in Northern Ireland. A very strong and vibrant voluntary sector exists and often backfills State gaps in service provision

deal with the complexities of racism and integration (Fanning 2002). Direct provision continues in spite of ongoing criticisms and campaigns, and recent attempts to achieve the right to work have been met with a very limited interpretation of this right. The intersections of austerity and recovery with some of this has also challenged progress in these areas. Faith – Pentecostalism – shapes the feeling of belonging particularly for African refugees in the Republic whereas religion (e. g. identified with the adversary white and local communities) did not have a prominent and collective place in African asylum seekers and refugee’s mindset in Northern Ireland.

In 2002, one of the editors of this volume, Bryan Fanning argued that in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, much of the anti-racism and awareness building work came from minority group activists and NGOs (Fanning 2002). Sixteen years later, as this chapter shows, little has changed in either Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland.

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