

Acupuncturists Without Borders

Spring 2019

Refugees, Migrants and Asylum Seekers...

...are people looking for shelter from war, abuse, bigotry, poverty, social inequality and environmental devastation. Trauma is often their shared experience, resulting in despair, insomnia, anxiety, depression, drug use, and suicide. For many, trauma is passed from one generation to the next.

AWB believes that unresolved trauma is often at the root of human suffering and conflict, affecting individuals, families, communities, and nations. Luckily, trauma is not a “static” state. With intervention and support, healing can happen. Hope, resilience, problem-solving, and empowerment have a chance to emerge. People can think better, handle challenges, connect with one another, and move forward with their lives.

Acupuncture can help people recover from trauma by regulating the body and emotions, creating greater peace and stability for themselves, their families and communities.

Here's what AWB is doing to bring what we call the *Medicine of Peace* to refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in the United States and internationally...



- **68,000,000 people in the world are forcibly displaced.**
- **One in 110 people globally is a refugee.**
- **Over fifty percent are children.**

Refugee Support Project Update

Trauma healing for refugees in Greece.

AWB is the first organization that we know of that has brought trauma reduction acupuncture to refugees in Greece, where over 60,000 refugees reside in dozens of squalid camps. Conditions in the camps have degraded in the past two years, as migrating people continue to arrive in Greece every day to escape war, poverty, and environmental devastation in the Middle East and Africa.

In 2016 and 2017, nine teams of AWB volunteers have done thousands of treatments in the EKO Station, Piraeus Port, Ritsona and Oinyfyta refugee camps since May 2016. AWB trained a core group of Greek acupuncturists to work locally in camps and refugee projects on a regular basis.

In 2018 and 2019, AWB's work expanded from the camps to community centers serving refugees in transient housing. AWB currently offers weekly treatments at the Melissa Network, a community organization in Athens, Greece that provides essential social services to women and children migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees from over eighteen countries. Volunteers from the US, as well as Greek acupuncturists trained by AWB, recently gathered at Melissa Network to plan an expanded Wellness Program for women refugees in 2019-20. This program will include, massage, yoga, meditation, reflexology and aromatherapy, and self-care techniques.



Ear acupuncture clinic at Ritsona refugee camp in Greece



AWB acupuncturist Aria Walker providing treatments at the Melissa Network-Athens



AWB volunteers treating asylum seekers at the Texas-Mexico border, January 2019

Trauma Healing for Immigrants, Asylum Seekers, and Refugees in the US.

For the past five years, AWB has brought trauma healing acupuncture to refugees and immigrants in the United States. We have trained acupuncturists to work with people in free community service clinics in places like Tucson, AZ with the International Rescue Committee, in Cleveland, OH with the US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, and with AWB-National Capitol Area clinics in Washington, DC and Silver Spring, MD.

In 2019, AWB started the Border Project to address the humanitarian crisis on our southern border. We have started in Texas, where the highest numbers of migrants are detained and waiting for asylum processing. Since January, AWB has sent teams of volunteers to bring trauma healing to asylum seekers and community volunteers on both sides of the border (in Brownsville, Texas and Matamoros, Mexico at the international bridge). AWB hopes to extend the Border Project to Arizona and California this year.

The international bridge at Brownsville-Matamoros is one of the “points of entry” at which people can supposedly apply for asylum to the US. Essentially, it is closed, allowing only several people to be “processed” each day. Asylum seekers are living on the Mexico side of the bridge with few resources. Meanwhile, those who have managed to get through are placed in detention centers for several weeks and then released without food or money. Detention centers in the Rio Grande Valley (RGV) have been releasing 300-400 people a day since June 2018. Often families are left with nowhere to go while they wait for their asylum paperwork to be processed. Some end up sleeping under the international bridge on the Texas side.

Community “first responders” and volunteer groups, including Las Angry Tias y Abuelas of the RGV, Team Brownsville, and Catholic Charities, have been assisting asylum seekers with food, water, warm clothes, transportation, shelter, medicine, and toiletries. They have been working around the clock since the summer. Many volunteers have been experiencing secondary trauma in response to their work. ***Here’s a video about how AWB is helping:***

To view our new video ***Bridging Borders***



Treating community volunteers at the Texas-Mexico border, March 2019



Thank you to Pat Simpson and the Rosenthal Family Fund, as well as all the incredible AWB volunteers that make this work possible!