Immersive Storytelling of Rohingya Refugee Experiences

Ray LC
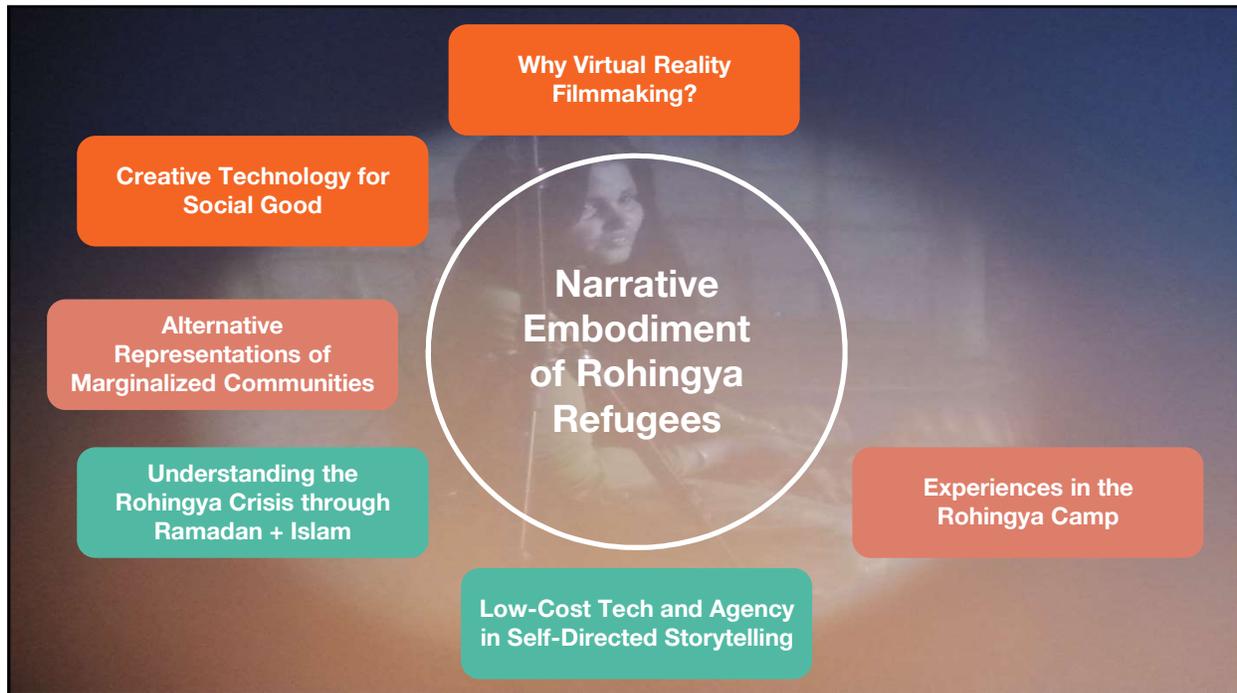Anika Ullah
Fabeha Monir

The Team:
Diverse Perspectives

Anika Ullah
Bangladeshi-American
Scientist, Multimedia Artist,
Community-Engaged Activist

Ray LC
Creative Technologist and
Neuro Artist
http://rayLC.org

Fabeha Monir
Bangladeshi visual journalist
and documentarian

Why Virtual Reality Filmmaking?

Creative Technology for Social Good

Alternative Representations of Marginalized Communities

Narrative Embodiment of Rohingya Refugees

Understanding the Rohingya Crisis through Ramadan + Islam

Experiences in the Rohingya Camp

Low-Cost Tech and Agency in Self-Directed Storytelling

The Rohingya Refugee Crisis: A Violent Conflict in Which Islamophobia and Forced Migration Collide

The UN says the Rohingya's situation is the "world's fastest growing refugee crisis".

Burned Rohingya village

- The UN's human rights chief Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein has said an act of genocide against Rohingya Muslims by state forces in Myanmar **cannot be ruled out**

Intact Rakhine village

Source: Human Rights Watch, Satellite image 21 September 2017   BBC

- **Bangladesh** plans to build more shelters in the Cox's Bazaar area but also wants to limit their travel to allocated areas

- **Myanmar** urged displaced people to find refuge in temporary camps set up in Rakhine state.

- **China** says the international community "should support the efforts of Myanmar in safeguarding the stability of its national development"

Fabeha: The Rohingya Crisis in Western Media

Anika: Refugees in a Country of Refugees, Transcending Interregional Trauma

Partition of India in August 1947

- much of the South Asia region is characterized by partitions and divisions (1947,1971)

- moving past politics and reaching into the stories of our families—the fact that majority of people caught in the middle of the conflict were innocent—focusing on the stories they tell (both empowering and upsetting)

- young nations built off refugees, migrations, and a continual need to create new worlds in the absence of previous ones

Anika: Moving Past Media's Fixation on Trauma through Tech + Community Engaged Artmaking

- **the issue of performative trauma**
- **capturing the multifaceted realities of human existence, not just what fits the Western palate**
- **critique the system that produced these injustices while highlighting hope and successes**
- **Art not journalism: moving past trauma by focusing on family memory**
- **Virtual reality (Ray), a narrative film, a participatory documentary film, and photographs pose multifaceted perspectives**

Anika: Using the Lens of Ramadan to Pose an Alternative Narrative

Ramadan is a time of choice, of self efficacy, and agency through one's body, you can exert your will regardless of your circumstances

Sense of community in Ramadan

How this philosophy is embedded in the practice of muslim Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh (an empowering story)

Combating Islamophobia through these narratives

How visual imagery of Ramadan is near absent in media

But now in Bangladesh, we are no longer afraid.

so we fast without eating anything.

Designing Collaborative Strategies for Agency through Tech and Storytelling

A Rohingya Ramadan

a collaborative film
by ameena khatun & her family
anika ullah, ray luo, & fabeha monir

stories of human resilience, of creating new worlds, of joy in the day to day, of making community where none previously existed

Anika: Mixing Interactive Art with Community Organizing to Share Voices of the Global Refugee Crisis

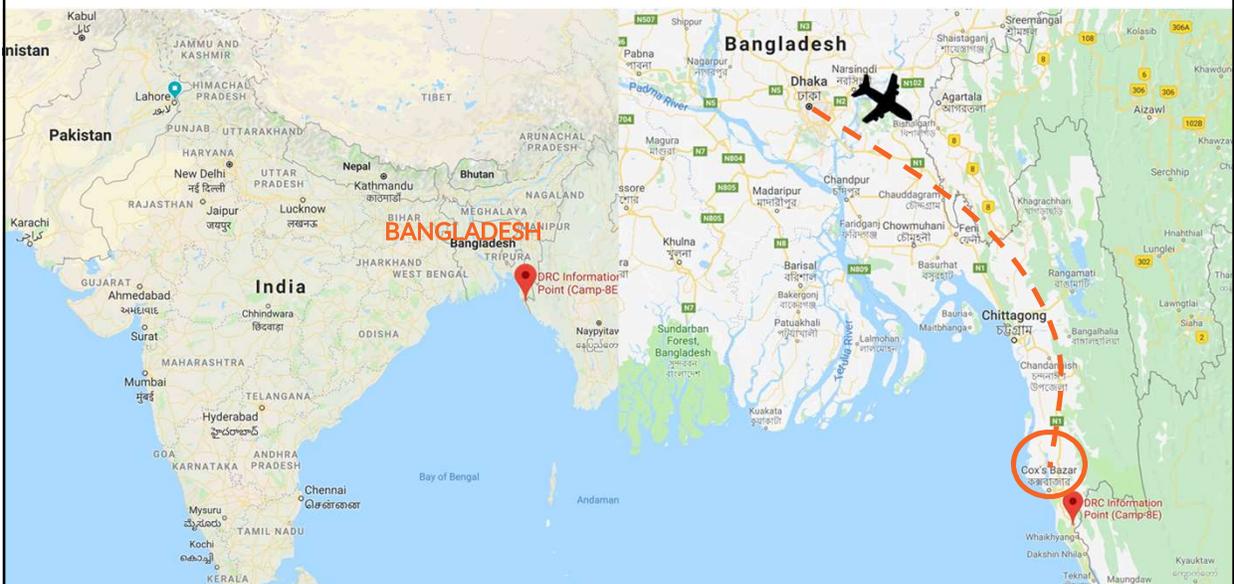Pushing Virtual Reality into the Physical Realm

Diver Alberto Nava in the SunCAVE (photo by D. Rissolo).

Ray: Journey to Rohingya

Journey to Rohingya

Journey to Rohingya

Journey to Rohingya

Faces of Rohingya

Faces of Rohingya

Children of Rohingya

Ray: Creative Technology for Social Good

Creative Technology for Social Good

Guardian VR presents: Sea Prayer

Google ((M)) UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency

theguardian vr

Ray: A New Language for a New Medium

+   Empathy machine
+   Makes ordinary experiences extraordinary
+   Fast screening in real time

- Static motion and sound (English)
- Pure narrative based on absent filmmaker
- Slow and not playful

A New Language for a New Medium

Movement - forcing perspective change
No need to hide the auteur
Use sound to surprise - VR power in invisible

Use their own voice - don't dub
Subtitle the viewer - not the scene
Prioritize expressive language over render
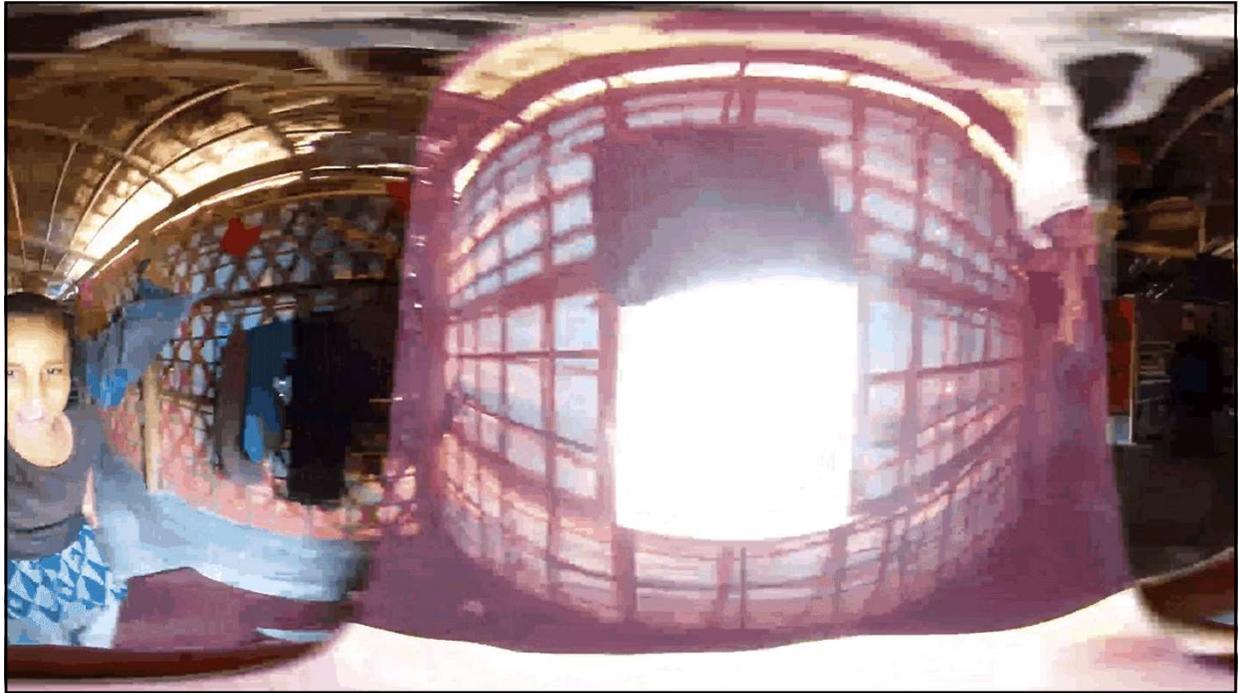
What We Learned

Frame narrative art instead of journalism
Multiangle project tells fuller story
Communication by action not just language

Immersive film language can be based on
movement, interaction, expression

What We REALLY Learned

Thank you for your support.

Project will be on rayLC.org and anikanullah.com

Bangladesh Team: Iqbal Chowdhury (PHALS), Daiki Hidaka (DataSoft).
Pakistan Team: Ayesha Saeed (Happieee Place), Hafsa Asad (MAD Studios).
Cox's Bazar: Mamad Yunos, Mamun Roshe, Ameena Khatun and Family.