

Hyung-in Kim's *Remem-bearing as Refugees*, 2017, community art project with textile installation

by [Maria Fee](#) in the [July 2024](#) issue



For Hyung-in Kim, art is an avenue for self-repair. The artist, educator, and pastoral leader's body bears one culture yet dwells in another. It is marked by continual custom-switching, leading to disorientation and alienation. To live as a refugee—from one place to another and yet another—means losing things that tether you to locality. More than just remembering home, the artist must bear it as a faith act. For Kim, the term *refugee* is a Christian descriptor of the sojourner whose dwelling is God. Here, the process of making art becomes the front door to

spaciousness.

Through the project *Remem-bearing as Refugees*, Kim shares the capaciousness of art by inviting others into collaborative sessions that embody the practice of bearing with one another as social repair. She offers the braid as an art form to direct conversations among groups of three. Like a dance, participants maneuver around each other to weave three long strips of brightly colored textile remnants to make a hefty braid. The act of creation becomes a space to discuss race, diversity, experiences of being misunderstood, and remedies for fear or loneliness.

The author of Ecclesiastes notes that a three-stranded cord is tough to break. By dexterously negotiating fabric of differing weights, colors, and designs to fashion one unit, participants are alerted to the wonders of unified diversity. Interweaving—unlike homogenizing practices—becomes a celebration of distinctiveness.

A visual cacophony ensues when Kim aggregates and exhibits the braids from the collaborations. Sitting side-by-side, the ropes display varying girths; many are unevenly braided. Throughout the arrangement clunky knots, made by lengthening shorter chords, add volume to the whole. Draped from above, the braids hit the floor to fan out like welcoming arms. As a curtain, *Remem-bearing as Refugees* references the new perspectives gained by its makers and stands as an artifact of collective remembering.