



“No Border_No Lagers” Festival: Program Synopsis

From the 23rd to 25th August, we come back again as a self-organized refugee women’s group to transform Oranienplatz, Berlin, into a center of diversity, inclusivity, creativity and inspiration.

We are committed to the abolition of asylum accommodation camps and stand up against the discrimination of women and LGBTQ+ people, especially in these times of right-wing populist policies, where racist asylum laws and deportation plans are being passed by the government.

In collaboration with House of Kal, during the three days of our “NO BORDERS_NO LAGERS” Intersectional Empowerment Arts and Culture Festival, there will be a variety of performances, archives of Women in Exile’s work, workshops, panel discussions and actions led by local and international guests.

The festival’s kickoff will start in the afternoon with registration, followed later by welcome opening speech, performance from Women in Exile and entertainment from different artists. Throughout the festival and during the following two days, there will be tents and a stage for various workshops, exhibitions, murals, stage activities, and a space for children’s activities. Workshops will cover: awareness about LGBTQ+ issues, empowerment, legal, campaign against police violence, climate justice, traditional Dominican black percussion, network against femicide etc. Stage activities will include: dance, music, percussions, playback

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theatre and panel discussions on Gender and on EU politics. We also offer childcare and a creativity tent for screenprinting, painting fancy banners, embroideries and more creative activities.

To make this festival happen, we still need support on: translations, childcare, collecting donations, providing some of the infrastructure needed, help to build the camp, on-the-spot help, etc.

If you want to collaborate in any way, please contact us through our social media, or write to us at: info@women-in-exile.net, or add your name and contact details on this pad:

<https://tinyurl.com/OPlatz-Festival-Pad>

Registration link for the festival: <https://tinyurl.com/OPlatz-Festival-Registration> (we can help you find accommodation in Berlin during the festival).

Together, let us celebrate diversity, promote understanding and empower each other through the power of arts and culture.

Workshop on Medicinal Plants: Exploring the Virtues of Nature

with Madeleine Mawamba

On 06 July 2024, an exciting workshop on medicinal plants was held at the House of Projects in Potsdam. Organised by the association Women in Exile and Friends, the workshop took place in a garden that has been in existence for 2 years under the name of Mejuwanawake. The event brought together more than forty refugee women who were passionate about learning more about the therapeutic virtues of plants. Here's a look back at a day full of discoveries and knowledge-sharing.

The workshop began with an introductory presentation by Madeleine Mawamba from Women in Exile, who shared her knowledge of medicinal herbs. She explained the basics of phytotherapy, the art of treating oneself with plants, stressing the importance of respecting dosages and contraindications.

Morning: Theory and Basic Knowledge

The morning was devoted to discovering the most common medicinal plants. Participants were able to explore the properties of plants such as:

- Mango leaves and bark: known for its soothing effects, which lower blood pressure and blood



Workshop participants at the WiE garden plot

sugar levels for diabetics. Anti-inflammatory.

- Citronella: used mainly to cleanse the kidneys. It's a diuretic.
- Parsley: renowned for its diuretic properties and refreshing effect.

Madeleine also touched on the history of the use of medicinal plants, highlighting the legacy of the ancient civilisations of our grandparents, who bequeathed a wealth of knowledge about plants.

Afternoon: Practical Workshops

The afternoon was devoted to hands-on experience, with several interactive workshops. Participants had the opportunity to take a tour of the Women in Exile garden to look for the medicinal plants they knew and explain them to the participants under the supervision of Madeleine and her assis-

tants. Among the activities on offer: a presentation of the different medicinal plants, rosemary, which makes hair grow, and cloves, which soothe toothache and are very good for coughs, bronchitis and body odours.

The participants expressed their satisfaction and enthusiasm at the end of the day. One of the women said that this workshop has opened her eyes to the potential of the “plants that I’ve always had in my garden without really knowing how to use them. It’s a real rediscovery of nature.”

The workshop on medicinal plants was a great success, offering an informative and practical insight into the world of phytotherapy. By reconnecting participants with nature’s treasures, the event helped to promote a more natural and holistic

approach to health. “Herbs & Health” is already planning new workshops to expand on this knowledge and enable even more people to enjoy the benefits of medicinal plants.

Upcoming Events

For those who missed this workshop, other events are planned over the coming months, including botanical outings and courses on growing medicinal plants. For more information, visit the Women in Exile and friends website.

The day demonstrated that medicinal plants still have a special place in modern society, that can offer natural and effective alternatives to conventional medicines. Thanks to workshops like this one, ancestral knowledge continues to be passed on, enriching our relationship with nature and health.

My Emergency Hospital Visit Experience

I live in an asylum camp, in a town in Brandenburg. For a while now I have been having severe pain, two weeks before my monthly period, heavy bleeding with clots lasting about 5 days. For this reason, I have only been able to use Pampers because the normal/maternity pads could not hold the flow.

In February 2024, things got so bad that I visited the camp nurse, who was very cooperative. She immediately called an ambulance after observing and seeing what I was going through. I was taken to the hospital in Herzberg. I was well received because I was an emergency case.

The doctor examined me, and after examining me he said I should go and find a gynaecologist because they didn’t have one. I was in a big hospital, or so I thought, and was wheeled there because of my condition, but the doctor is here telling me to find a doctor in my state. As they say, “this is Germany”.

I was given no painkillers or anything to stop the bleeding and had to go back to the camp, with my problems unresolved. I was so devastated as I walked to the bus station and waited for the bus to take me to the camp.

There is a German pastor at a local church I attend. Fortunately, I had already shared my problems with

him. I called him as soon as I arrived at the camp. He told me he would come the next morning at 8 am. He was at the camp gate at 8 am, and took me to the hospital in Finsterwalde. I was given an appointment for that afternoon. The pastor took me back to the camp and at 2:30 pm he came back and took me to Finsterwalde Hospital, where a kind gynaecologist took care of me.

I don’t know why the doctor in Herzberg didn’t treat me as an emergency case. Or at least give me first aid. I don’t know if it’s because I’m a black refugee or why he didn’t bother. I don’t know how many refugees go through what I went through, and keep quiet. Deep down inside I feel it wasn’t right.



Hospital in Brandenburg visited by the author



Interview: A Positive Court Decision After a Life of Trauma and Depression

K. moved from the UK to Germany 4 years ago. This year, the court ruled in their favour to stay. As K has written about in our previous newsletters and book article, it has been a physically and emotionally challenging journey.

Women in Exile (WiE): Why did you leave the UK?

Leaving the UK and moving to Germany was a difficult decision to make. However, in order to avoid deportation, we had to make this decision. There were many challenges ahead - a new place, new people and a new language. That, combined with not knowing what the future was going to be like, was mental torture.

WiE: How was the struggle?

In Eisenhüttenstadt I started sessions with a psychologist, which was very important at that time because of my mental disturbances. I asked her to write a letter describing my mental state. I wanted to present this letter at my interview with the BAMF (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge). At the end of this letter, she wrote that we had come to Germany with a lot of high expectations. We didn't come here with high expectations. But meanwhile, Germany has proved that moving here was the best decision we ever made. Germany has welcomed us with an open heart and with open arms.

I remember when I wrote my story for our book *Breaking Borders to Build Bridges*, it took me many days to write because I was so emotional and broken. Back then I couldn't see my life getting better. My husband has been very supportive for the last 20 years. With all the negativity, I was broken, disappointed, depressed and in a state of panic.

WiE: How did you react to the positive court decision?

Being able to stay in this country is a dream come true. We were shocked with many emotions when we received a letter from the court with a positive decision. We didn't know how to react. We were happy and crying at the same time.

WiE: What advice would you give to other women fighting to stay?

When we were in Eisenhüttenstadt, I got to know some women from Women in exile. I shared my story with them. I am very grateful to each and every one of the members of W.I.E. They have been very supportive of me in so many different ways. This journey has not been easy and it might have been more difficult without their support.

The same goes for my lawyer, the organisation *KommMit*, which works with migrant and refugees, and my doctors. I would not have made it this far without them.

The advice that I would give to other women who are still struggling is to just keep on fighting for your rights. W.I.E. is the best platform that can help you in different ways. They did for me. Never give up. Never lose hope. Focus on what you want to achieve and one day, your dreams will come true.

Also get yourself a good lawyer and the support that you need.



KEEP IN TOUCH

Website: women-in-exile.net
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