

# The Fabric of Protest

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**Create a response to the  
Nationality and Borders Bill**

A monthly textile workshop by People's History Museum (PHM) and artist Helen Mather. Learn new techniques and discuss the issues that matter to you.

This resource introduces some of the ideas and techniques that were explored during the online workshop on Saturday 30 October. You can use it as inspiration for your own textile projects.

Recommended for 11+ (under 18s must have an accompanying adult present during the session).



#FabricOfProtest    phm.org.uk  
#TogetherWithRefugees    #WhoWeAre

Bringing together ideas from previous workshops where we explored migration and the themes of the More in Common project, in this workshop we looked at the Campaign Against the Immigration Laws (CAIL) banner from the museum's 2020 - 2021 Banner Exhibition.



Campaign Against the Immigration Laws (CAIL) banner, around 1980 @ People's History Museum

Campaign Against the Immigration Laws (CAIL) was formed in 1978 to oppose immigration laws of the time, particularly the Immigration Act of 1971, which they believed was the worst example of state racism. CALI supported and coordinated actions against deportations and detentions. This banner was made around 1980.

The UK government is currently proposing new immigration reforms in the Nationality and Borders Bill which will make significant changes to the UK asylum system. The Bill, which is going through parliament, amongst other contentious changes would profoundly undermine the UK's commitment to the 1951 Refugee Convention and will create a discriminatory two tier system that judges an asylum seeker on the route they take to the UK, not on why they came here.

The banner is made from purple polyester satin, the words CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE IMMIGRATION LAWS, made from white PVC and paper, are placed across the full front of the banner. It is 3,250mm wide and 900mm high.



# Fabric border

We made a fabric border that incorporated motifs and words as a response to the proposed Bill.



A fabric border can be part of the edges of a fabric, or a separate panel attached to a garment or decorative piece, edging or trimming a piece of fabric. Borders often contain motifs, either printed or embroidered.



We made a fabric border to challenge ideas of geographical borders, stitching our responses to the proposed Bill together with motifs. We frayed the edges of the borders to show the blurring of boundaries and the instability and precariousness of the situation for people who are seeking sanctuary.

# Prepare



You can use the links below to find out more about the collective concerns about the Nationality and Borders Bill and the devastating impact it will have on people's lives.

- [UNHCR The United Nations Refugee Agency - The Nationality and Borders Bill.](#)
- [The Refugee Council.](#)
- [University of Oxford Faculty of Law.](#)
- [The gal-dem guide.](#)
- [PHM's statement of support](#) for the #TogetherWithRefugees campaign against the Bill.

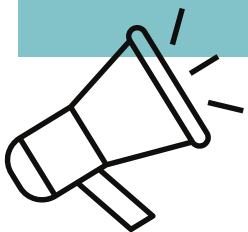
You can read the [UK government factsheet](#) on the Bill.



# Support the campaign

Join the [#TogetherWithRefugees](#) campaign in calling for the government to rethink its approach to the Nationality and Borders Bill.

- If you are in Manchester, complete a postcard at PHM voicing your concerns which we will send to the Home Secretary.
- Or write to your MP [using the template letter](#) created by Together With Refugees.
- Let us know the action you take. Take a photo, use the hashtag #TogetherWithRefugees and tag @PHMMcr so we can share.
- Not on social media? Email your pictures to [events@phm.org.uk](mailto:events@phm.org.uk).





# Materials



Gather some materials from around your home.  
You will need:

- Fabric – piece can be plain or patterned or have a border already detailed. Think about how stitched words will stand out when you make your choice. The fabric is to be cut to 7cm in width, the length is up to you.
- Embroidery threads – think of oranges and reds, colours which denote emergency and are used in refugee campaigning (orange heart)
- Embroidery needle
- Scissors
- Pen/fabric marking pen
- Ruler
- Paper

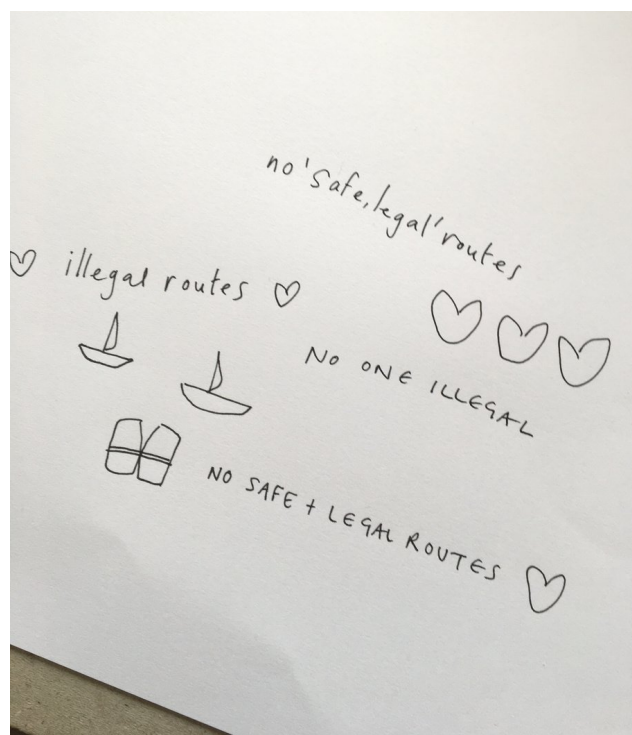


# Prepare your border

- 1 Trim your fabric to 7cm in width, keeping the length to see how many times you can repeat your design/words.



- 2 Your 'border' will have a motif and words, responding to the Nationality and Borders Bill with your thoughts and views. Think about a repeated slogan or word with motifs in between. Is there a part of the Bill you want to address directly or a more universal idea you want to voice? Use the paper to draw your ideas out.

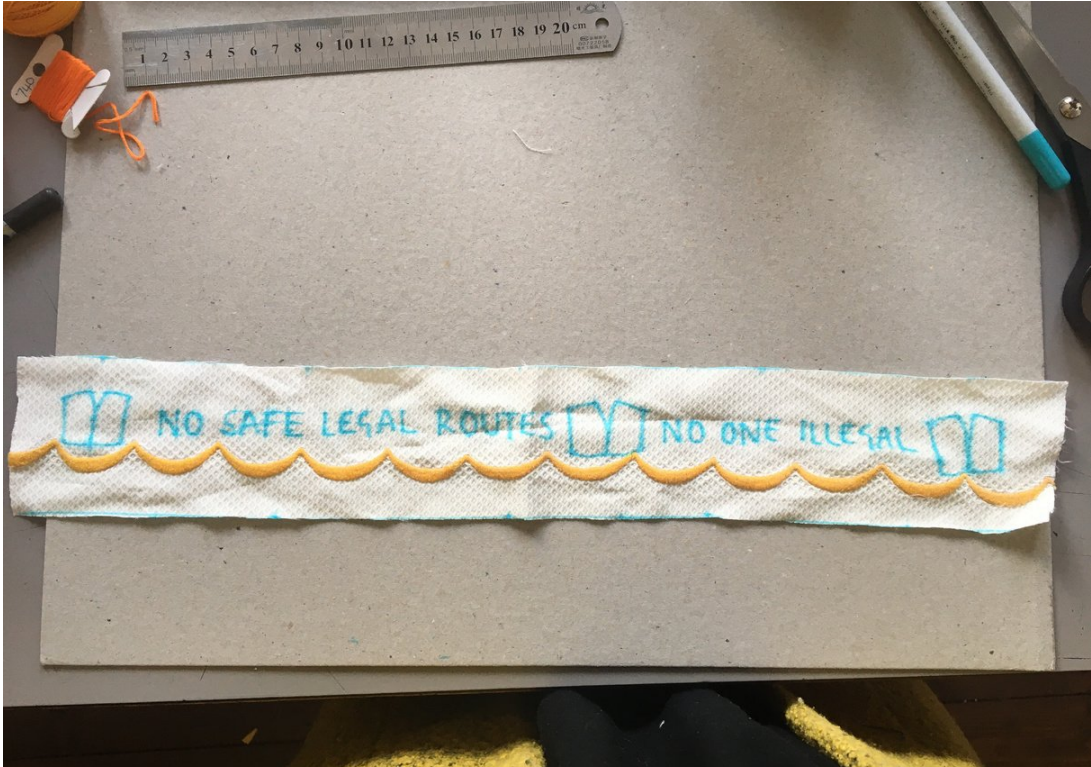




# Draw your motifs and words

3

Draw your motifs and words onto the fabric, either using a fabric temporary marking pen or a pen that will be covered over by your stitches.



You can use any stitch to embellish your words and motifs. In this piece we are using the back stitch as a continuous line, to follow the lines that we have made on the fabric.

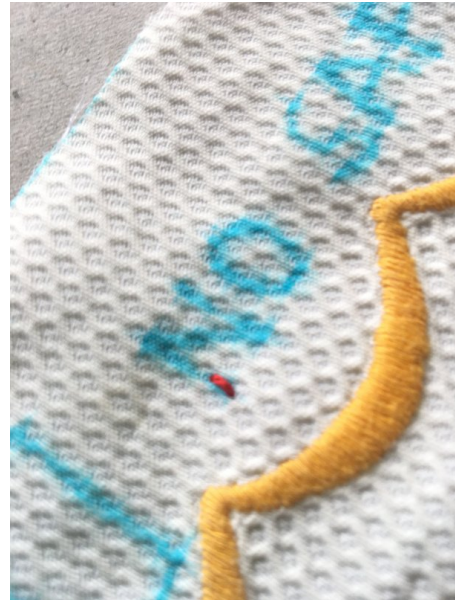




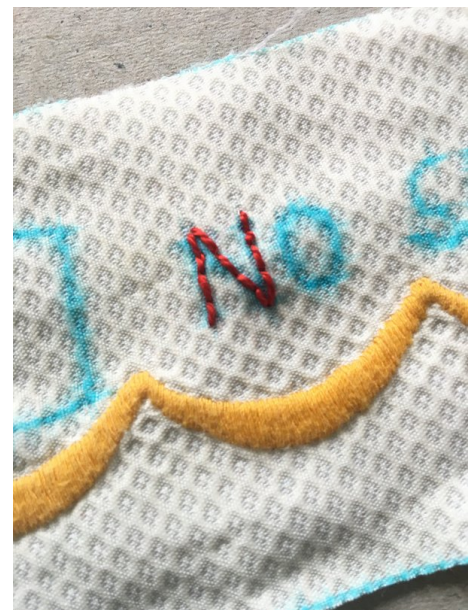
# Back stitch

4

Bring your needle up through the fabric to the front and down to make a stitch.



Bringing the needle back up a stitch length away (whatever size your stitches are), take the needle back into the hole of the last stitch, filling the gap completely and creating a continuous line.





## Stitch your motifs

4

Continue this technique for your motifs, creating a stitched outline over the line drawing.



## Fraying your edges

5

Finally, we will use fraying to blur boundaries and reflect changing borders, or maybe reject borders. Picking out the threads along the length will leave the shorter width threads exposed which will give the fabric a fuzzy frayed edge.





# Finished piece





## Join us on Zoom to get creative!

If you would like to join artist Helen Mather and others to stitch, chat and share ideas you can book onto one of the monthly online Zoom workshops.

Explore The Fabric of Protest resources created for other sessions.

Be inspired by the textile creations of participants who have taken part in our monthly public workshops.



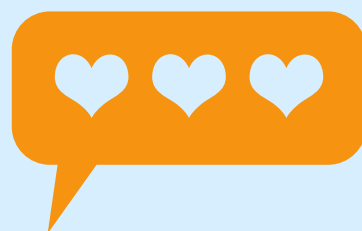
## Share what you have created

We would love to see what you have created!

If you use social media, please share photos of your creations using #FabricOfProtest #TogetherWithRefugees



Or if you prefer you can email a photo of your creation to [learning@phm.org.uk](mailto:learning@phm.org.uk).



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