

The Fabric of Protest

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**Create a rosette celebrating
migrant workers**

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 workshops on Saturday 26 February and Saturday 26 March 2022. Use it to prepare for the workshop or 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

Inspiration: 1

We took inspiration from two pieces across both these workshops, the first is *The Journey We Made Across Land And Sea, To Build A Country Not Made For Me* banner (2021) by artist Seleena Laverne Daye.

Now part of the museum's [2022 Banner Exhibition](#), this banner was commissioned for the [Migration: a human story](#) installation on display at PHM. This project is the culmination of a two year collaboration with a Community Programme Team made up of individuals whose lives have been shaped by migration.

The team wanted to create a 'fake trade union banner' to subvert the classical ideals traditionally seen in PHM's collection. It is designed to give a voice to migrants; visually representing those working in care, hospitality, agriculture and textiles.



The Journey We Made Across Land And Sea, To Build A Country Not Made For Me banner (2021), by Seleena Laverne Daye. Image courtesy of People's History Museum.

The banner has a red background, the central image is a black female cleaner standing proudly, bucket and mop in hand against a backdrop of grass and sky, flanked by two pillars. Above the figure are the words 'THE JOURNEY WE MADE ACROSS LAND AND SEA' and below the words 'TO BUILD A CENTRY NOT MADE FOR ME'. Circular images symbolising agriculture, textiles, healthcare and hospitality are positioned in each corner of the banner. The banner is 2,040mm wide and 1,475mm high.

Inspiration: 2

The second piece we drew inspiration from is the poem and video, 'You clap for me now' by Darren James Smith (poem) and Sachini Imbuldeniya (video), that is featured in the #WELCOME exhibition on display at PHM. (Read the poem on Page 4 of this resource.)

The video features UK residents, immigrants and people of foreign heritage who are key workers during the Covid-19 pandemic. They read the poem, which in its opening lines subverts racist language often directed at immigrants, showing that those who have experienced discrimination are now key workers, trying to keep people safe during the pandemic.



#WELCOME? exhibition, on display until 5 June 2022 at People's History Museum

The image above shows the display walls in the exhibition. It includes photographs, newspaper covers, campaign material and video.

We followed on from previous workshops exploring migration, by looking at how people who have migrated to the UK are valued.

The term essential worker (or key worker) has been frequently used since the outbreak of Covid to describe the workers who keep the fabric of society going. People such as health and care workers, agricultural workers, shopworkers, delivery drivers, factory workers are all essential in keeping people safe, warm and fed.

A large proportion of these jobs are done by people who have migrated to the UK. Both the video and the banner seek to celebrate, raise voices, and challenge negative representations of migrant labour, worker's rights and how important migrant people are in the building of communities in the UK.

Rosette badge



Inspired by the circles of industry on Selena's banner, we made a rosette that responds to these pieces (the banner and video), speaking to the value of migrant workers, especially through these years affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Rosettes have often been used in campaigning but also have a celebratory impact, using textiles to embellish the campaign message.

We made the rosette across the two sessions: Session One in February and Session Two in March. Participants could attend either or both of the sessions. In Session One we made the central badge for the rosette. In Session Two we added the rosette trim around the badge. This resource supports the making of both elements.

Find out more

To prepare before making your rosette you might want to:

- Consider what message you want to stitch onto your rosette.
- Use the links below to find out more about the displays and projects at the museum that inspired this activity.

- Watch the ['You clap for me now' poem and video by Darren James Smith \(poem\) and Sachini Imbuldeniya \(video\)](#).

Read the story behind the making of the video in these articles:

- [Huffington Post](#)
- [Galdem](#)

Read PHM's blog posts:

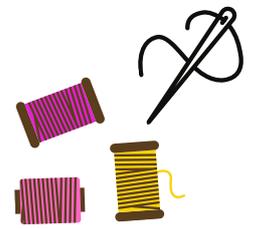
- Artist Seleena Laverne Daye shares [the significance of banners in the fight for change and what visitors can expect from PHM's 2022 Banner Exhibition](#).
- [From 'unskilled' to 'essential': histories of migrant workers in PHM's collection](#). PHM's researcher Dr Shirin Hirsch takes a closer look at the history of migrant workers documented in the museum's collection.

'You clap for me now' poem by Darren James Smith

'So, it's finally happened. That thing you were afraid of.
Something has come from overseas. And taken your jobs.
Made it unsafe to walk the streets. Kept you trapped in your
home. A dirty disease.

Your proud nation gone. But not me. Or me. Or me. No, you
clap for me now. You cheer as I toil. Bringing food to your
family. Bringing food from your soil. Propping up your hospitals.
Not some foreign invader. Delivery driver. Teacher. Lifesaver.'

Materials: Session One (February)



These are the materials will need for Session One in February to make the central badge of your rosette.

- Fabric for circles
- Felt / wadding or batting or something that can be inserted for quilting – this is optional if you don't have anything suitable
- Embroidery threads and needle
- Sewing thread and needle pins
- Circle to draw around - could be a saucer, cup, tin or can
- Scissors
- Pen / paper

Materials: Session Two (March)



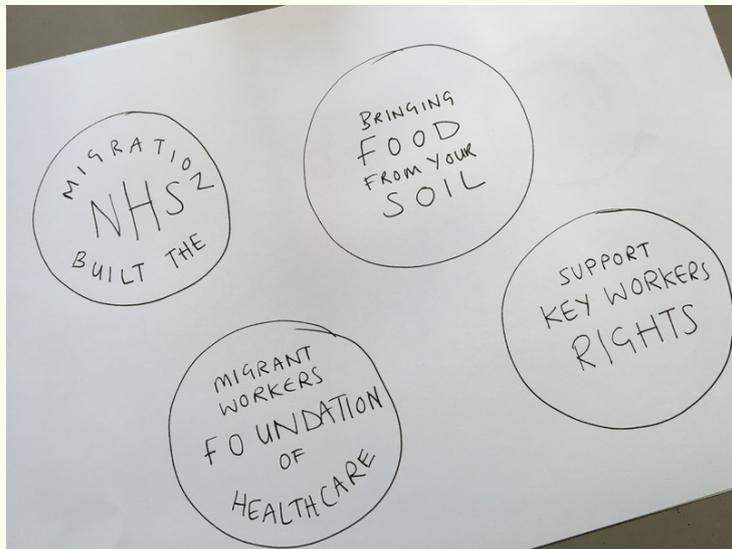
These are additional materials required for Session Two in March. *If you have not attended Session One in February you will need also to bring along the materials listed on Page 5.

- Fabric for gathering frill (either one long strip approx three times the circumference of the circle or smaller random pieces to make the whole)
- Ribbon (optional)
- Sewing thread and needle
- Embroidery thread and needle
- Pins
- Scissors
- Tape measure

Session One (February): Create your rosette badge

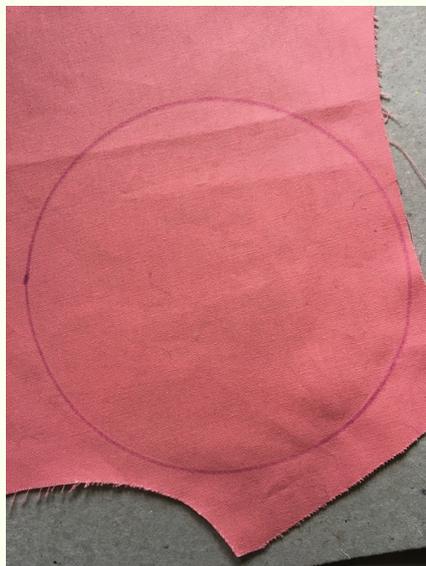
1

Think about the message that you want to put on your rosette. This could be lines or inspiration taken from the 'You clap for me now' poem or something from your own experience as a key worker or your experience during the Covid-19 pandemic. It could be a message of support for migrant workers' rights, or of appreciation for the strong role people from overseas have played in the making of this country. Your message could be a written message or it could be an image.



2

Draw around your circle shape and cut out two circles in fabric for your front and back pieces, and another circle in felt, batting, or wadding (if you have some) for your middle piece.

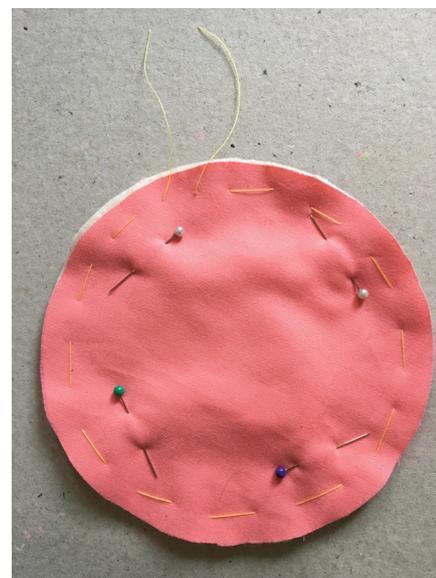


3

Pin the circles together (the batting in the middle if using) and stitch a line of basting stitches around the edge of the circles to keep them together.

The basting stitch is a long running stitch using regular sewing thread, which is a temporary stitch and can be removed later. There is no need to knot this thread at the beginning or the end, just leave an inch tail of thread on either side.

You can take the pins out after completing your basting stitch.



4

Write your message onto the front piece of fabric with a pen suitable for use with fabric. This might be a fabric marking pen that can be removed, some carbon paper to transfer onto fabric, a chalk pencil, or a light pen that can be stitched over.

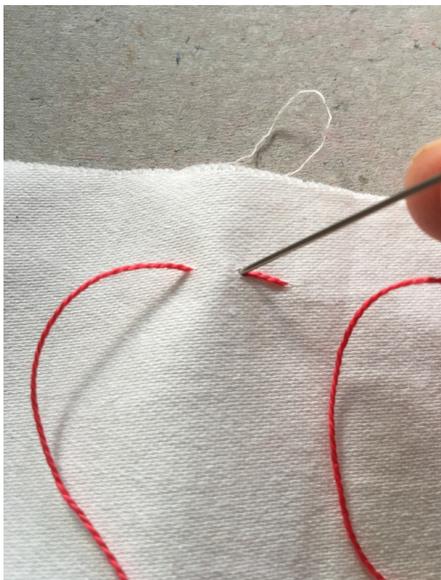
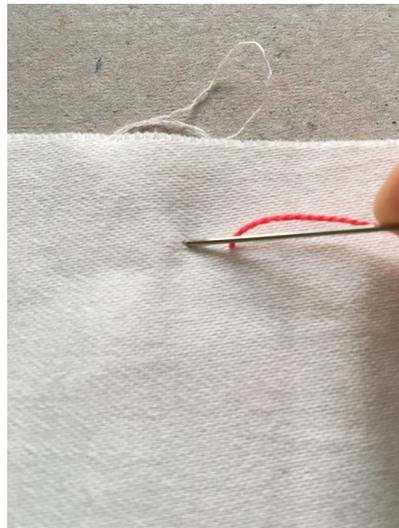


Back stitch

5

You can decide which stitch you would prefer to use. We've used a back stitch for the letters 'built on migration' and a wrapped chain stitch for the thicker lines of the letters 'NHS'.

Back stitch: Bring the needle up from the back and down to make a stitch. Bring the needle back up a stitch length away and take the needle back into the last hole, making a continuous line. Repeat going a stitch forward and back into the last hole made.



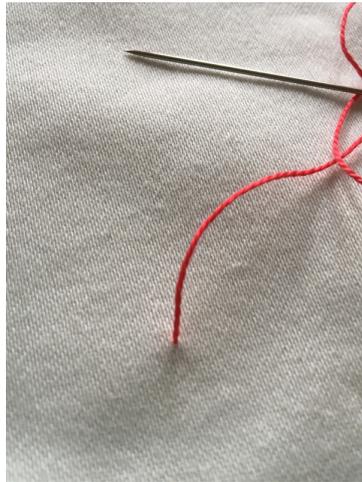
Chain stitch

6

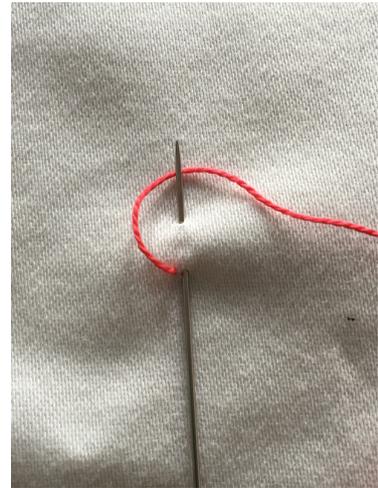
Chain stitch: Bring the needle up from the back. Make a loose loop shape with the thread and put your needle back in where your thread came out, pushing forward a stitch length away.

Make sure the thread in the loop is below the needle. Draw your needle through the fabric, pulling the thread as you go, to form the first link in your chain. Repeat this, bringing your needle back to where your thread is and pushing forwards a stitch length, again making sure that the loop is under your needle.

a



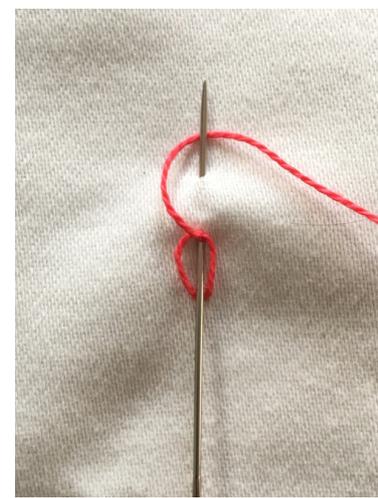
b



c

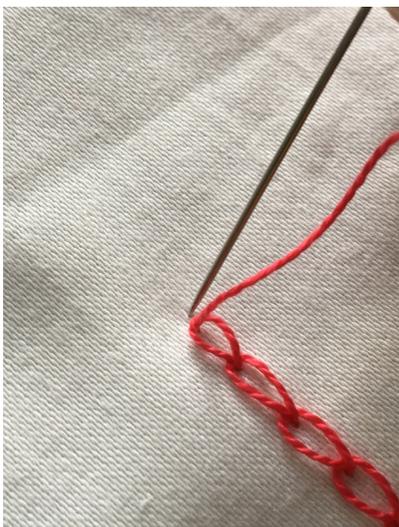


d



When you are ready to finish your chain, bring your needle down on the other side of the link to secure, knotting at the back.

e



f



Wrapped chain stitch

7 Wrapped Chain Stich:
Bring the needle up from the back of the fabric. Use a contrasting colour from the chain stitch. Using the eye of the needle, push under the first loop and draw the thread through. You are not piercing the fabric in this stitch, it is just wrapping the thread.

Repeat through each chain stitch, moving in the same direction each time (in this case right to left) just on one side of the chain. When you have finished, bring the needle back into the fabric and secure it with a knot at the back. You can repeat this on the other side of the chain, maybe using another colour again.

a



b



c



d



e



f



Finished piece
Session One



Session Two (March): Create your rosette trim

1 Before stitching the frill to the circle, if you want to attach some ribbon, cut a length (around 20-30cm) and fold in half.



2 Pin to the back of the circle and secure with a few stitches just through the back layer of fabric.



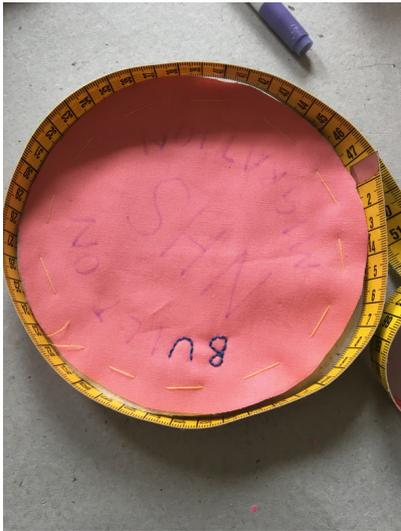
3 Cut diagonals in the ribbon ends to stop fraying.



Make your surrounding frill

4

Cut a piece of fabric approx three times the length of the measurement around the circle and around 5 - 10cm in width, depending on how big you want the frill to be. You can do smaller sections if you don't have a long piece of fabric, gathering them individually or stitching them together into a long piece.



5

Thread up a long piece of sewing thread. Secure one end of the fabric with a few stitches and stitch a running stitch all the way to the other end, leaving a tail at the end, no knot.



6

Repeat this running stitch just below the first line of stitches all the way to the end of the fabric again.

**7**

Gather the fabric by pulling gently on the two thread ends, pushing the fabric down the length of the threads.

**8**

Place the circle on top of the frill and pin to secure them together, adjusting the gathers to fit the full circle. Knot and trim the end threads on the frill to keep gathers in place.



9

Once fully pinned, then use embroidery thread to stitch all layers together to attach.



When attached you can pull out the basting stitch you did on the circle originally, as it is now secure.

Finished piece
Session Two



Join us on Zoom to get creative!

If you would like to join artist Helen Mather and others to stitch, chat and share ideas inspired by this resource, [book onto one of The Fabric of Protest 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



Or if you prefer you can email a photo of your creation to learning@phm.org.uk.



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