

Nationality Matters
Statelessness under International Law

To Mark

SCHOOL OF HUMAN RIGHTS RESEARCH SERIES, Volume 29

The titles published in this series are listed at the end of this volume.

Nationality Matters
Statelessness under International Law

Laura van Waas



Antwerp – Oxford – Portland

Cover: Picture by Sarah Hayward

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ISBN 978-90-5095-854-7
D/2008/7849/95
NUR 828

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am writing this on the day that I acquire Dutch nationality. It wasn't planned that way, but it is a thought-provoking coincidence. After I attend the "naturalisation ceremony" this afternoon (i.e. share cheese and wine with a local civil servant and the other aspirant-Dutchies), I will be a dual national. British and Dutch. And I cannot deny that this moment has gained added significance thanks to the understanding that I now have of the value of citizenship. As you can see, the PhD manuscript to which I have just put the finishing touches is on statelessness. An entire study devoted to those who have not two nationalities, not even one, but none.

Statelessness is a fascinating anomaly - the idea that a person can be denied membership of every one of the world's states, cast into an officially-sanctioned, legal limbo is somehow incredible. It is a phenomenon that readily captures both the imagination and the heart. My own first encounter with statelessness certainly raised many questions, like how does statelessness come about, how does it impact people's lives and what are we doing to tackle it? It is a good thing that I found (and still find) the topic so compelling because it meant that these and other questions kept me very happily occupied for the last four years.

I feel very privileged to have had the opportunity to devote so much time to what really began as a personal interest. This would not have been possible without my supervisor, Willem van Genugten, putting his faith in my ability to turn my personal interest into a worthy academic study. His unrelinquishing encouragement helped me to keep up the momentum in my research and gave me the confidence to take on all sorts of other activities alongside working on my manuscript. I would also like to thank my second supervisor, Helen Oosterom, for her enthusiasm for my research and her continuing willingness to discuss trouble spots and comment on draft texts. I am indebted to the further members of the reading committee, Cees Flinterman, Pieter Boeles and Anton van Kalmthout, for taking the time to read and assess this sturdy document. And I would like to thank my sister, Sarah Hayward, for crafting the perfect cover illustration to accompany my manuscript.

The last four years were made all the more enjoyable by two things: the fact that I was able to participate in several practical projects to satisfy my idealistic drive and all of the fun that I have had with both colleagues and friends. I owe a real

| Acknowledgements

debt of gratitude to Philippe Leclerc and Mark Manly of UNHCR, as well as Simon Heap of Plan International, for allowing me to get involved in the “real world” of statelessness. This offered me insights that I would not have gained purely within the academic setting and gave me great satisfaction. Then to all the kind and committed people who I have had the privilege to work with through Books 4 Life over the years – thank you, you have been a true inspiration. Please keep up the fabulous work.

So I come to those colleagues with whom I have shared so many cups of tea, slices of cake, beers and laughs with. There is nothing that boosts your morale quite like “melige woensdag” or a spontaneous trip to the Efteling. Jeroen, Christophe, Vera, Tamara, Nicola, Conny and Femke – you have kept me sane in this otherwise oh-so-lonely profession, thanks. Thank yous also to those friends outside of work who have added so much colour to my life; to my parents, for many things, among which their winning decision to ensure that English is my mother tongue - it has been a real help; and of course Mark, who makes me smile and laugh most of all and with whom I cannot wait to embark on the next adventure.

Laura van Waas
20 August 2008

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