

Joyce Murray Campaign – Syrian Refugee Ad “This October, Let’s Keep Our Commitment to the World”

Challenge

During the 2019 federal election campaign, Vancouver Quadra Liberal MP Joyce Murray was seeking ways to remind Canadians about her party’s ambitious 2015 election commitment to settle thousands of Syrian refugees, by sharing a story about someone who successfully fled violence and/or persecution to find refuge in Canada.

A pro-refugee partisan campaign advertisement might seem counterintuitive to many Europeans or Americans, but Canadians are amongst the most pro-refugee people on earth. Sharing a powerful story of refugee resilience and strength would help to underscore what was at stake in the election, and to motivate Liberals to support Ms. Murray’s campaign, thereby keeping Canada’s commitment to the world.

Process

Burrard created a [digital ad](#) to tell Hassan Al-Kantar’s gripping story. A very articulate Syrian who did not want to return to his war-torn home to kill his own brothers, he was trapped in the Kuala Lumpur airport for nine months, until Canada offered him refuge. While captive in the airport, Al-Kontar used his smart-phone to plead to the world for asylum.

The ad’s narrative was carefully developed so as not to sensationalize the issue. The first two minutes were designed to draw people in and avoid overt political messaging. We also used a black screen with subtitles and muffled sounds of the Syrian conflict to convey the sense of devastation and violence that Al-Kontar was fleeing from, while also being compliant with new Facebook policies regarding violent imagery in advertisements. By using original footage provided from Al Konatr’s social media accounts instead of TV news sources, we also avoided copyright issues.

Finally, to illustrate the Liberal commitment, we inserted a tweet from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau welcoming Syrian refugees. We also showed Mr. Al-Kontar having coffee with Joyce Murray near the end of the video.

Outcome

- Award: 2020 REED Finalist at US-based Campaigns & Elections [REED Awards](#) (Atlanta, GA)
- Video: [Hassan’s Canadian Story](#)
- Vancouver’s Georgia Straight dubbed it the [“The Most Inspiring Video of 2019 Election Campaign.”](#)

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