



New Americans Refugees and Resettlement

Historical Context and Overview

The reasons why people move from one place to another are described as push and pull factors. Push factors are poor conditions (political, economic, and environmental) in home countries that cause people to leave. Pull factors are attractive qualities about other countries that lure people in—economic opportunities, open land, favorable climate, and political freedom. Both refugees and immigrants move from their home country to another country. While immigrants decide to leave for various reasons, refugees are those who are forced to leave as a result of war, political, ethnic or religious persecution.

Columbus has been home to refugees from the beginning, when the “Refugee Tract” was set aside for residents of Nova Scotia who were left homeless as a result of their support for the American Revolution. In the more than 200 years since the Refugee Tract was created, waves of new immigrants and resettled refugees have established communities in Columbus.

World War II led to a massive refugee crisis with more than a quarter of a million displaced European Jews at the end of the war. Persecuted for their ethnic and religious heritage in Europe, many Jews came to the United States. By 1952, 137,450 Jewish refugees had settled in the U.S. Those who came to Columbus in the postwar period joined earlier Jewish communities in the Southside, Bexley, Eastmoor, and Berwick neighborhoods.

Only a small percentage of refugees resettle in new countries. Those who are fortunate enough to resettle face many challenges. Contrary to popular myths, they receive only a small monetary stipend to help them get established in the U.S. They must quickly acclimate to a new culture and language and obtain employment to become self-sufficient. Organizations such as Community Refugee and Immigration Services help refugees learn English, obtain jobs, housing, medical screenings, and education.

Columbus became a resettled home for thousands of Somali refugees in the 1990s. More recently, a large community of Bhutanese Nepalis has resettled in Columbus.

Standards Alignment

Ohio's Learning Standards: Social Studies

Grade 5

Content Statement 9. Political, environmental, social and economic factors cause people, products and ideas to move from place to place in the Western Hemisphere today.

High School World Geography

Content Statement 9. Human migrations impact physical and human systems

High School Contemporary World Issues

Content Statement 7. Individuals can participate through non-governmental organizations to help address humanitarian needs.

Learning Objectives

- Explain the differences between refugees and immigrants.
- Discuss push factors that force refugees to leave their homes.
- Analyze the historical circumstances that led to a refugee crisis during and after World War II.
- Describe the hardships faced by refugees and how they overcome these obstacles.
- Explain how immigrant and resettled refugee communities have impacted Columbus.

Discussion Questions

1. What are the differences between refugees and immigrants? What types of push factors force refugees to leave their home countries?
2. How does a person obtain refugee status? What forms of persecution qualify someone for refugee status?
3. How difficult is it for a refugee to resettle in another country? How long does resettlement typically take? About what percentage of refugees are resettled?
4. Why did World War II create a refugee crisis? What groups were persecuted and why? How did this crisis impact Columbus?
5. What hardships do refugees face upon coming to America? How do refugee and resettlement organizations assist refugees?
6. What misconceptions exist regarding financial assistance for refugees? How soon do most refugees in Columbus become self-sufficient?
7. How have recently-arrived immigrants and refugees helped shape Columbus today?

Extension Activities

- Give students a job application form in another language. Using Google Translate, ask them a few questions that might be used during a job interview. Ask them to reflect on how an immigrant/refugee might feel about this experience. Brainstorm what can be done to make the experience more comfortable.
- Have students interview resettled refugees from the community and/or staff members from Community Refugee and Immigration Services or Us Together. Based on the interviews, have students brainstorm ways they can help newly-resettled refugees through a service learning project.

Additional Resources

- This Is What Europe's Last Major Refugee Crisis Looked Like: <http://time.com/4029800/world-war-ii-refugee-photos-migrant-crisis/>
- Columbus: A Global City - Video presentation on the growing diversity of Columbus: <https://youtu.be/ocl1fmMzjfl>
- Community Refugee and Immigration Services: <http://www.crisohio.org/>
- Us Together: <http://ustogether.us/>
- United Nations Global Issues - Refugees: <http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/refugees/>