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Sponsor: McNair Scholar's Program

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Topic: Refugee Resettlement: Evaluating strengths and weaknesses in policy.

Focus: History and Policies of Refugee Resettlement in The U.S

Introduction: Overview

The term “refugee” is used to describe a person seeking refuge in another country to escape from inhumane conditions such as persecution, genocide or war. The United Nations specifically defines this term as:

a person who is outside his/her country of origin and is unable or unwilling to return to the country of origin due to a well-founded fear of persecution because of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion.

There is a distinction between “refugees” and “immigrants”. Immigrants are people who leave their country voluntarily to seek a “better life”. Refugees, however, are generally forced to depart because of the human rights violations against them. Refugees from all over the world have been resettling in the United States for over 60 years. Many have fled from communist regimes, human trafficking, sexual exploitation, civil warfare, genocide and a number of other circumstances.

Throughout history, the U.S has been modifying and revamping its legislation on refugee policy. How do these changes in policy impact refugees? What are some challenges and weaknesses in Refugee Resettlement Policies?

To address these research questions, I shadowed two organizations that work with refugees: Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program and the Association of Africans Living In Vermont, Inc. I reviewed government court cases regarding immigration and refugee law from 2006 and 1992 as well as journal articles, publications and books.

