

Middle Tennessee State University

Practicum Report

Catholic Charities of Tennessee Refugee and Immigration Services

Fall 2018

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PS-6290: Practicum in International Affairs

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Introduction

I completed my practicum in the fall of 2018 as a component of my ongoing graduate studies in International Affairs and concentration in Security and Peace Studies. My practicum took place at Catholic Charities Refugee and Immigration Services, a Nashville-based resettlement agency specializing in helping those who need assistance most in the wake of disaster, displacement, and many other situations that leave people in need. The following practicum report provides details of my experience. In this report, I endeavor to make four primary points. First, the report covers an overview of Catholic Charities Refugee and Immigration Services overall and how it came to be a resettlement agency for newly arriving refugees nationally and within Tennessee more specifically. Second, the report highlights programs and services that the organization provides to refugees once they arrive in the state. Third, the report discusses my practicum activities and responsibilities. Finally, the report concludes by drawing comparisons and connections between my studies in International Affairs and my work with the Refugee and Immigration Services department I worked with.

Agency Overview

A charitable organization, Catholic Charities of Tennessee was established in the 1960s to provide services such as adoptive placement, daycare, and counseling. The department's mission states that "by welcoming and serving diverse populations, we strive to meet human needs and respect their dignity by empowering individuals to achieve self-sufficiency through encouragement, education and support" (Catholic Charities of Tennessee, 2012). As an active

individual's needs. The agencies consider many factors including culture, family member ties, and resources that are appropriate for refugees to make the resettlement smooth and comfortable. The Department of State and ORR, a department that oversees refugee resettlement, set the standards and cooperative agreements for refugee resettlement agencies such as Catholic Charities to follow. For instance, the cooperative agreement requires that refugees are met at the airport upon arrival. This provides a first-contact opportunity so that newly arriving refugees can immediately begin acclimating to the networks that are there to support them. This first contact is both a security requirement and an opportunity to help with the potential culture shock of being in the United States for the first time.

Programs Offered by Catholic Charities

Catholic Charities has many programs to provide services for refugees once they arrive in the state. The services are not limited to refugees that are brought to the US by Catholic Charities but are also extended to other groups that meet the definition of humanitarian refugees. The program assists granted asylees, Cuban and Haitian entrants, Special Immigrant Visa holders (SIV), victims of human trafficking, and others. The services include initial reception, programs for youth and the elderly, employment assistance, social services, and immigration assistance.

Initial Reception

Under this program, the agency prepares to house including furnishing the apartment and preparing a meal before the refugee arrives. Once the refugee arrives, caseworkers complete the airport pick-up, home orientation, and twenty-four-hour visitation. A social security application must be completed within ten days of arrival. A medical checkup is completed within thirty days

naturalized U.S. citizens within the first seven years of their residence, they will lose Social Security and medical benefits.

Employment Program

Once a refugee has completed the medical screening and has secured all the appropriate documents, the employment specialist starts searching for a job based on the refugees' skills. The employment program provides employment-related case management, employment readiness class, and job training. The aim of this program is to help refugees and their families find employment and become economically self-sufficient. The program also assists and guides refugees who come to the U.S. with advanced degrees to work on their certification and credentialing as a long term plan. The employment program staff also visits many employers in the community to introduce and educate employers about refugees so the employer can hire more refugee clients. Some employers do not know that refugees have the right to work in the U.S. and are cautious from hiring refugees even though the E-verification immigration system is available to them. Employment staff builds strong relationships with employers in the community to create smooth transitions for a refugee to access the job market. For example, Tyson Foods Inc. has a major presence in Tennessee and has hired many refugees placed in the state.

Social Services

This program focuses on case management. The program assists refugees who need more services to become self-sufficient. For example, if a refugee has an ongoing health issue, this program assists with doctor appointments and transportation. The program also assists with filing disability claims for refugees if they are unable to work, applying for low-income housing and many other issues that refugees might face. The services under this program are extended to

Practicum Activities

I have worked with Catholic charities for over thirteen years both in the refugee resettlement area and in social services. For this particular practicum activity, I worked with the immigration department. Donna Gann oversaw my activities. Jennifer Escue was my supervisor for my practicum and the officiating paperwork. Donna Gann has been working with the immigration department for over thirty years and is extremely knowledgeable about immigration law. Ms. Gann introduced me to basic immigration rules and regulations as part of the formal training. She signed me up for immigration training including webinars through the Catholic Legal Immigration Network. The training included an introduction to immigration law and family-based immigration, inadmissibility, deportability concepts, consular processing, an overview of humanitarian relief and U.S. citizenship acquisition, derivation, and naturalization.

Once I completed the basic training, I was able to provide consultation to clients who have immigration questions about eligibility and all required documentation. I followed the instruction sheet Ms. Gann had created to guide the clients on what documentation they would need to prepare before filing the application or petition for family members still in their home country. Little by little, I was able to independently help clients with their questions and concerns. The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services resources website has been an invaluable tool during my work, especially tools such as immigration policy memoranda to find answers to some complex inquiries.

Assignments

Ms. Gann assigned me two projects. One was to file citizenship applications for students who attend citizenship class with Nashville Adult Literacy Council (NALC). NALC provides a

period. At the end of October 2018, the NALC found out that the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services will not renew the funding for citizenship class.

As part of my second assignment, I attended two meetings that were related to the topic of refugees and immigrants. The first meeting took place at Catholic Charities when the field director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services came to discuss what a newly-opened office will do to help the community. The director said that all citizenship applications, marriage packets, Green card interviews and other cases would be adjudicated at the new office. The application support center which had been part of the immigration department used to handle case inquiries. According to the director, case inquiries would be taken over by the new office. Ms. Gann and I asked many questions regarding case adjudication, asylum hearings and immigration court. The director indicated cases that required hearing and asylum interviews were still under the jurisdiction of the Memphis immigration court. I took notes at the meeting and briefed Ms. Gann on what the director discussed.

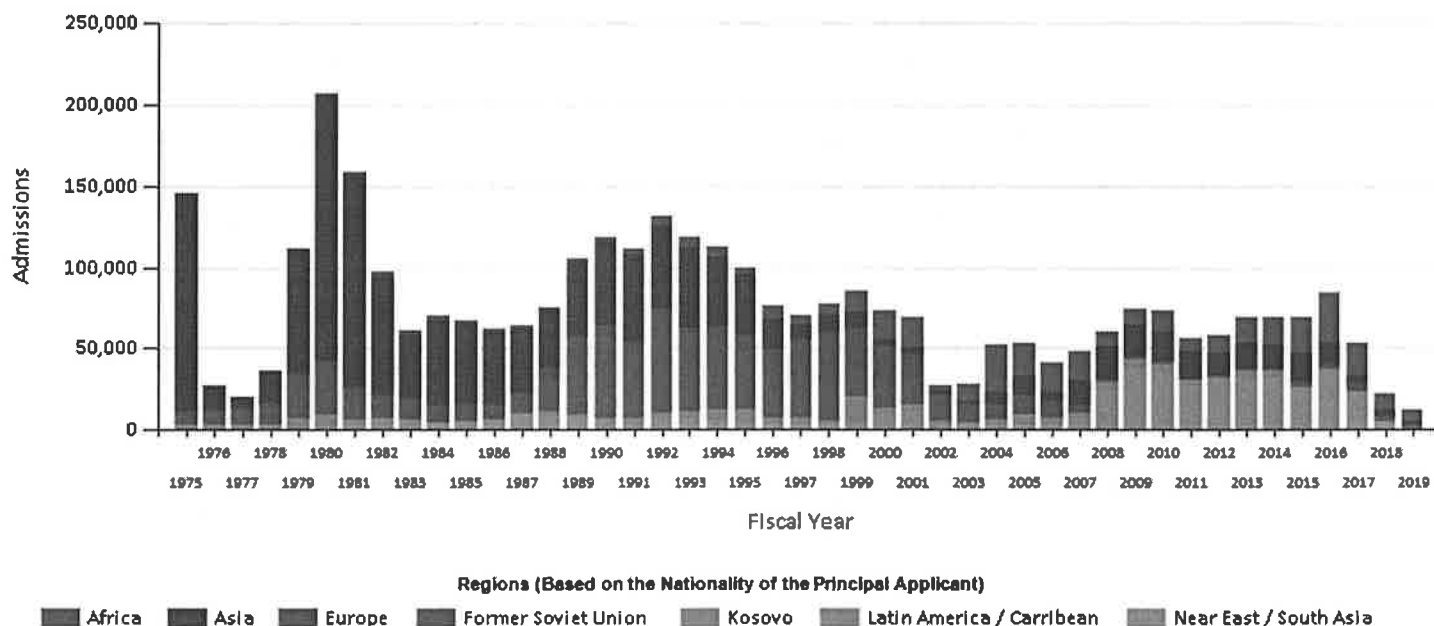
I attended another important quarterly meeting with agencies that provide services to refugees and immigrant communities. The meeting was hosted by Tennessee Justice for our Neighbors. Among the agencies that attended the meeting were Tennessee Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence, Tennessee, Tennessee Immigrant & Refugee Rights Coalition, and Nashville International Center for Empowerment. Tennessee Justice for our Neighbors and Tennessee Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence both have staff attorneys who can represent asylum seekers and victims of human trafficking before immigration. They provide pro-bono services for those who qualify. The agenda of the meeting was how to create networking opportunities in order to help clients who are in need of immigration legal services, what methods

relationship with religion and history. In many cases territory connects people more than national identity and citizenship. Territorial and border disputes are hard to resolve through compromise (Vasquez, 1995). Fortuna, on the other hand, argues peace might be harder to keep in conflicts that pit different ethnic or religious groups against each other as compared to wars fought over ideology (Fortna, 2004). The majority of refugees that Catholic Charities have been resettling fled their country after experiencing a civil war that may have influenced the decision of man as Waltz explains or other types of conflicts that caused due territorial disputes or ethnic violence.

In conflict and resolution studies, one area focus has been rebuilding war-torn states. The idea of post-conflict reconstruction is to consolidating peace, security and attaining sustainable socio-economic development in war-torn states (Del Castillo, 2008). One of the most challenging issues in the process of in reconstruction of post-conflict countries has been the return of exiled refugees. Once refugees fled their home countries, the lack of good governance, security, poverty, employment, political reconciliation, and intuitions prevent refugees from returning to their home. The record shows many attempts for peace and economic reconstruction in post-conflict countries has been unsuccessful because most countries have a larger probability of returning to war and conflict (Del Castillo, 2008). Iraq and Afghanistan are the best examples and both countries are still experiencing exiled refugees and internally displaced population. Only a few countries such as El Salvador and Rwanda have managed to sustain peace avoiding further displacement of their population (Del Castillo, 2008).

The majority of refugees are often unable to return to their home. The refugee population is currently at a record high. According to the UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, there are 68.5 million forcibly displaced people worldwide. 25.4 million are refugees. About 85% of refugees

10,000 Syrian refugees. In 2017, 54,000 refugees have been resettled. In 2018, the US resettled 45,000 refugees which is a record low refugee admission since the 1980 refugee act was passed (Rush, 2018). The report below shows FY 1975 through 31-Mar-2019



Sources: Department of State, Office of Admissions - Refugee Processing Center

On January 27, 2017, President Trump signed an executive order banning people from seven mainly Muslim countries including refugees from entering the U.S. Refugees were banned from entering the U.S. for 120 days. Even though the refugee resettlement resumed after 120 days of the executive order, the number of refugee arrival declined because the majority of refugees are coming from countries that have been indefinitely banned under the executive order from entering the U.S. These countries are including Iran, Libya, Somalia, Syria, Venezuela, and Yemen.



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Required documents and fees for RENEWAL of Deferred Action (DACA)

You should apply to renew your DACA before it and your employment authorization document (EAD) expire. **But do not wait until the last minute!!!** If you do, your EAD might expire and you might start accruing "unlawful presence," which can make it hard for you to adjust to permanent legal immigration status in the future. You can renew your status as early as one year before the expiration and you:

Did not depart the United States on or after Aug. 15, 2012, without advance parole;

Have continuously resided in the United States since you submitted your most recent DACA request that was approved; and

Have not been convicted of a felony, a significant misdemeanor, or three or more misdemeanors, and do not otherwise pose a threat to national security or public safety.

PER PERSON: Catholic Charities Fee: **\$200** cash or money order (**Bring two Passport size photos**)
USCIS Fee: **\$495** money order or cashier's check
(made payable to: U.S. Department of Homeland Security)

You will need the following documents when you come for your appointment:

- A valid photo ID
- Your current Employment Authorization Card (EAD)
- Your Social Security Card
- If you have graduated from High School or a GED class since your last filing, bring the certificate with you to your appointment
- Two Passport size photos
- If you have had any kind of trouble with the police since you first applied for DACA, bring the following items in:
 - Tickets
 - Citations
 - Court Documents like judgments or indictments or Court DISPOSITION



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Required documents and list for Citizenship

(You must currently be a Permanent Resident and have been in that status for 5 years or more)

PER PERSON:

NO PERSONAL CHECKS OR CREDIT CARDS

Catholic Charities Fee: **\$200** (cash or money order)
U.S. Department of Homeland Security: **\$725 personal check or credit/debit card**
FREE if currently on Food Stamps or SSI
(submit approval letter and last tax return with W2 form)

- **PHOTOS:** two(2) passport size
- **ADDRESSES:** list for the past 5 years with dates that you lived there
- **EMPLOYMENT:** list of employment for the past 5 years with dates you worked there and addresses of employer (full-time and part-time)
- **CHILDREN:** list of all children (living or deceased) birthdates, Alien # (if any), and current addresses (residing in or out of the US)
- **SPOUSES:** Current spouses birth date, Alien # (if any), date of marriage, immigration status, name of employer (if working)
- **MARRIAGES:** former spouse name, birth date, date of marriage and date of termination of marriage (yours and your current spouse)
- **TRIPS:** list of all trips taken outside of the US for the past five years. Must list actual date you left the U.S. and the date you returned
- **ARREST:** if you have had any traffic tickets or arrest, bring a certified copy of the **DISPOSITION** from the court and proof that the citations have been paid or dismissed.
- **GREENCARD:** bring to your appointment (if you have applied for a replacement or renewal bring the receipt letter from USICS with you)

YOU MUST BE ABLE TO READ, WRITE AND SPEAK ENGLISH TO PASS THE CITIZENSHIP TEST UNLESS YOU HAVE A MEDICAL EXCEMPTION OR HAVE HAD YOUR PERMANENT RESIDENCE MORE THAN 15 YEARS AND ARE OVER THE AGE OF 55.

** If you are 75 years of age or older, you do not pay the biometrics fee of \$85. Therefore your fee will be \$640.

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT FACTS

REFUGEE: A person forced to flee their home country to escape war, violence or persecution.

RESETTLEMENT: The careful selection by governments for purposes of lawful admission of the most vulnerable refugees who can neither return to their home country nor live in safety in neighboring host countries.



2018 GLOBAL RESETTLEMENT FIGURES AT A GLANCE

1 in every **500** of the world's refugees were resettled in 2018. UNHCR estimates that **5%** of the world's refugees may need resettlement. In 2018, **27** countries around the world accepted refugees for resettlement from almost **65** different countries of origin.



5 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT:

- 1 Refugees do not apply for resettlement themselves.** UNHCR identifies vulnerable cases to be considered for resettlement.
- 2 Only the most vulnerable refugees are considered.** All refugees who are referred must fit at least one vulnerability category, some of which include:
 - Medical needs
 - Women & girls at risk
 - Children at risk
 - Survivors of violence/torture
- 3 Countries decide which refugees to admit for resettlement**
- 4 Persons who have committed serious crimes or who might pose a security threat are not eligible for refugee status or resettlement.**
- 5 Refugee resettlement saves lives.**

RESETTLEMENT TO THE UNITED STATES

The United States has a long history of welcoming refugees and remains one of the largest refugee resettlement countries in the world.

TOP U.S. STATES FOR REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN FY 2018

OCT. 2017 - SEPT. 2018

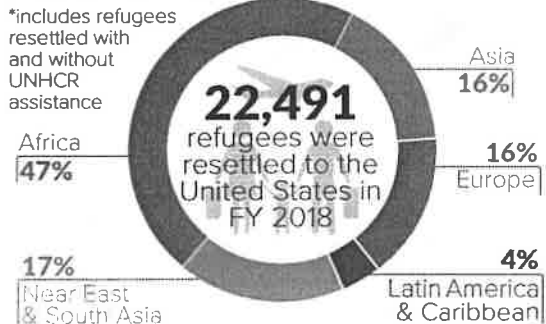
1	TEXAS
2	NEW YORK
3	WASHINGTON
4	CALIFORNIA
5	MICHIGAN
6	PENNSYLVANIA
7	KENTUCKY
8	GEORGIA
9	OHIO
10	NORTH CAROLINA

48 states (and the District of Columbia) received refugees for resettlement in FY 2018

REFUGEES RESETTLED TO THE U.S. IN FY 2018 BY REGION OF ORIGIN*

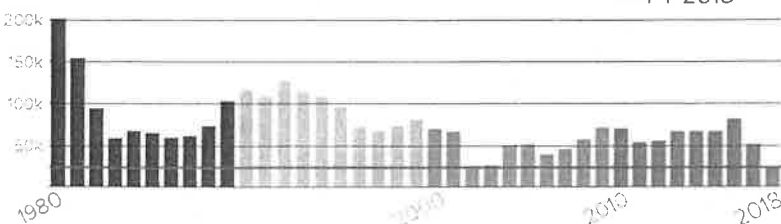
OCT. 2017 - SEPT. 2018

*includes refugees resettled with and without UNHCR assistance



REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT TO THE U.S. SINCE 1980

FY 1980-2018



TOP COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN FOR REFUGEES RESETTLED TO THE U.S. IN FY 2018

- 1 Dem. Rep. Congo
- 2 Myanmar
- 3 Ukraine

THE U.S. RESETTLEMENT PROCESS

In addition to UNHCR's screening, the U.S. conducts its own vetting process to decide whether to accept a refugee for resettlement. The entire process can take up to two years.

- 1** UNHCR refers a refugee to be considered for resettlement and provides background information:
 - Iris scans
 - Fingerprints
 - Facial scans
 - Bio data
- 2** The U.S. Government screens the refugee and decides whether to admit them for resettlement. This process includes:
 - 8 U.S. Government agencies
 - 5 Separate security databases
 - 6 Background checks
 - 3 In-person interviews
- 3** If the refugee is approved, the State Department assigns the case to one of nine U.S. NGOs:
 - Church World Service
 - World Relief
 - HIAS
 - International Rescue Committee
 - United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
 - U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants
 - Episcopal Migration Ministries
 - Ethiopian Community Development Council
 - Lutheran Immigration & Refugee Service
- 4** The NGO helps the refugee integrate and become economically self-sufficient in their new U.S. community

REFUGEE FLEES

Due to a well-founded fear of persecution, a refugee flees his
or her country of origin.

REPATRIATION

Refugee is able to return
to his or her home country.

NATIONALIZATION

Refugee stays in the
country to which he or
she fled.

THIRD COUNTRY FOR ASYLUM OR RESETTLEMENT

Refugee is sent to a third country to be resettled. Less than 1%
of refugees are eventually resettled.

US ADMISSIONS PROGRAM PROCESSING

Refugee is screened by multiple US security agencies,
interviewed by Dept of Homeland Security/US Citizenship and
Immigration Services, and evaluated for any medical concerns.

ALLOCATED TO VOLAG

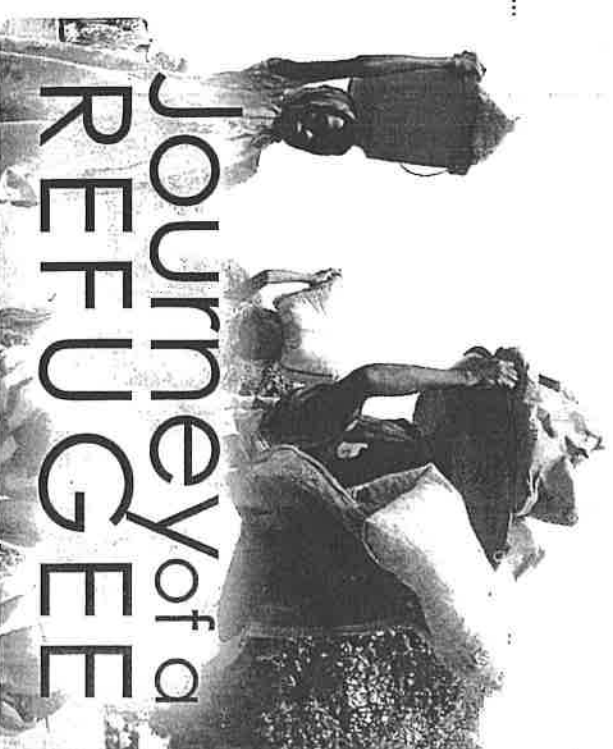
Refugee is assigned to one of
the 9 voluntary agencies
(VOLAGs) for resettlement.

ALLOCATED TO RESETTLEMENT SITE

Refugee is assigned to
a specific agency in a
chosen US city.

REFUGEE NOTIFIED OF US RESETTLEMENT SITE

Refugee is informed of US resettlement site if recurrent vetting has
not revealed any complications. Cultural orientation is conducted to
help refugees prepare for life in the US.



Journey of a REFUGEE

PROCESSING COMPLETE

Flight booked. Resettlement agency
notified of the date of arrival, usually
a few weeks in advance.

RESETTLEMENT AGENCY PREPARES FOR ARRIVAL

Caseworker assigned to the case;
arrangements made for housing,
furniture, and food.

REFUGEE ARRIVES IN US RESETTLEMENT CITY

Caseworkers meet the refugee or family
at the airport and take them to their
new home.