HOPES AND DREAMS
Stories from Young Refugees

A User's Guide






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Alberta
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BY THE ALBERTA CIVIL LIBERTIES RESEARCH CENTER

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> *"There is no greater sorrow on earth than the loss of one's native land."*
>
> — EURIPIDES 431, B.C.E.

Overview/Introduction

Only the Native peoples have lived in Canada for thousands of years. However, Canada is now home to millions of citizens descended from refugees and immigrants who fled hardships, oppression and persecution in every part of the globe. Since the Second World War, Canada has become a refuge for more than half a million men women and children representing many different languages, traditions, religions and ethnic groups. Refugees are people who are forced to leave their home country and cannot return because they have a well-founded fear of persecution.

Canada is a signatory to the United Nations *Refugee Convention*. As such, Canada has a legal and humanitarian obligation to offer protection to refugees from around the world and to assist them with resettlement in Canada. Canada's commitment to the protection and assistance of refugees is incorporated into Canadian law in the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*.

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees estimates that there are 15.1 million refugees (*Refugee Figures*, online: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Homepage <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c1d.html> (date accessed:8 March 2015)). The number increases to a possible 42.8 million (as of 2010) when you count an estimated 27.5million internally displaced persons worldwide (*Internally Displaced People Figures*, online: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Homepage <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c23.html>. About half of this displaced population is children, and overall, the great majority of refugees are women and children.

Refugees flee their countries for a variety of reasons, such as civil war, genocide, torture, or religious persecution. Many countries in the world accept refugees into their borders, giving them all the rights and protection that refugee status provides, but the majority of these displaced people are not formally recognized as refugees and therefore live in 'legal limbo' in a neighbouring country. Many of these are developing countries in the South, which means that the world's poorest countries harbour most of the world's refugees.

This Video User Guide will define and explain the term "refugee," provide background information on why refugees leave their home countries, as well as elaborate on refugees' experiences of flight and of their life in refugee camps. Human rights and the laws which govern and protect refugees will also be addressed. The guide also contains a video script, a glossary and a list of references and resources. We hope that through the information contained in the Video and this User's Guide, viewers, particularly students, will realize that more than fifty percent of the world's refugees are children and teenagers like themselves. Hopefully viewers will develop an empathic appreciation of the unique experiences of refugees and will try to help classmates and neighbours who are refugees to overcome some of the biggest obstacles to acceptance that they encounter, such as prejudice and discrimination. And, that they will help them to feel welcome and to fit into their new environment.

The video is intended primarily for the education of young people; however, it will also be useful for adult educators. It can be used as an accompaniment to the educator's resource manual (Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre has produced an educator's resource manual) as a part of a presentation on the experiences of refugees and the discrimination they face, or as a stand-alone educational tool. It could be relevant to many subject areas, for example:

- Secondary school courses of study in English/ Language Arts, Health, Law, Social Studies and in the CALM program,
- Post-secondary courses of study in Communications, Cultural Studies, Education, Criminology, Humanities, Law, Journalism, Political Science, Psychology and Social Work,
- And to the work of Community and Human Rights educators and non-profit organizations.

In the video, young people who were forced to flee their home countries, and who came to Canada as refugees, talk about their experiences. They were between the ages of one year and sixteen years old when they fled, some with their parents and some without their parents. The young people also share some of the barriers they faced when they came to Canada. They talk about the prejudice and discrimination that they experienced when they first came to Canada and began to participate in school, work and other daily activities. One participant in the video who was born in Canada shares her observation of treatment of refugees. The young people have shared their personal stories with the hope that their experiences will foster greater understanding and acceptance of refugees.

Before showing the video, we recommend that you:

- read this User's Guide including the video script, and watch the video,
- copy, distribute the glossary to participants, and discuss the terms in the glossary with them,
- share the information in the Introduction section of this User's Guide with participants.

Below, we have included some suggested questions for discussion and activities for participants after showing the video:

1. Have you ever been discriminated against or been treated unfairly? How did you feel?
2. Have you ever discriminated against someone or treated someone unfairly? How do you think they felt?
3. What most surprised you as you watched the video?
4. What are some things you can do to help a refugee classmate or neighbour feel welcome?
5. Research the names of some famous former refugees, such as Canada's former Governor General Adrienne Clarkson, former United States Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Scientist Albert Einstein, Latvia's President Varia Vike- Freiberga.
6. Access the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) website, <http:// www.unhcr.ch/>. Read about the current specific issue facing the UNHCR and be prepared to discuss it.

Additionally, Section 6: Some Common Myths and Questions, provides more topics for discussion.

1. Who is a Refugee?

First and foremost we should always remember that refugees are individual people with individual likes and dislikes, just like each one of us.

Too often we make assumptions or promote stereotypes about refugees. The first thing that each of us can do to promote equality is to become aware of and to acknowledge our stereotypes, and the prejudice that results from them.

People who become refugees were at one time living very normal lives in their home countries. They had families, went to work or school every day, felt committed to particular values and had a home. When we refer to 'refugees' in this Guide or in the Video, we are referring to those persons who share a common experience of being forced to flee their homes because of human rights violations or persecution, although each refugee will view that experience from his or her own unique, individual perspective.

A) DEFINITION OF REFUGEE

The United Nations High Commission on Refugees ("UNHCR") states in Article 1 of the 1951 *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees ("Refugee Convention") Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, (1954) 189 U.N.T.S. 137; *Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, (1967) 606 U.N.T.S. 267) that a refugee is:

1. person who is outside of his or her country of nationality or habitual residence;
2. a person who has a well-founded fear of persecution because of his or her race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion; and
3. a person who is unable or unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country, or to return there for fear of persecution.

This definition has also become part of Canadian law since it has been used in section 96 of Canada's *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (*Immigration Act"*) (*Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*, R.S.C. 2001, c. 27.)

B) DIFFERENT TYPES OF REFUGEES

The following categories determine the degree of access to national and international protection that a refugee has.

i) Asylum Seekers

People who are seeking asylum are asking the country they are in for "the right to be recognized as bona fide refugees and the legal protection and material assistance that this status implies" (*Refugees by Numbers 2001 Edition*, note 1 at 10). Usually this category refers to the people who have formally submitted an application for asylum. However, in reality there are many refugees living in limbo who have not put in an application for asylum. They may be unaware of their options, or have limited means to reach another country to make an application.

ii) Refugees who have been granted asylum

These are people whose refugee claim has been accepted by the government to which they have applied for asylum.

iii) Undocumented Refugees and those with Forged Documents

Many refugees are forced to flee their countries without a passport or any identifying documentation. Sometimes this is because they have had to leave home so quickly there has been no time to gather or apply for documents, but more frequently it is because their government has not allowed them to apply for or obtain these documents.

In some cases these people are forced to obtain forged documents so that they can find a safe passage to another country. In other cases people leave their country without any documents because, for example, their government has collapsed due to a civil war. These refugees arrive in Canada with no way of proving who they are or where they came from. It is important to remember that just because refugees arrive without the required identifying documents, that their lack of documentation does not necessarily make them criminals or false claimants.

iv) Returned Refugees

Most refugees prefer to return home as soon as circumstances permit. Usually this is after a conflict has ended, some stability has been restored and infrastructure (such as schools, hospitals and roads) is being rebuilt. Before it can encourage refugees to return home, UNHCR must be sure that it is safe for them to do so. Repatriation is voluntary; refugees are not forced to go home if they feel it is unsafe. UNHCR keeps a watchful eye on the treatment of returned former refugees, raising the alarm if persecution breaks out again.

v) Internally Displaced Refugees

In order for the government of Canada to recognize a person as a refugee, that person must be outside his or her own country and unable or unwilling to ask his or her own government for protection for fear of persecution. This presents a major difficulty for refugees who have been forced to leave their homes or hide from the government because of persecution, but yet remain within their own countries. These people are called internally displaced persons ("IDPs"). Unlike other refugees, they are not well protected by international law or eligible to receive many types of aid. It is estimated that there are approximately 27.5 million people in this category worldwide who continue to fall between the cracks of current humanitarian law and assistance.

C) THE REFUGEE CONVENTION AND ITS IMPORTANCE

After World War II there were so many refugees that the United Nations devised the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees in 1951. It is often called the *Refugee Convention* and it was the first truly international agreement that spelled out a set of basic human rights for refugees. The *Refugee Convention* recognized the need for international cooperation and sharing the responsibility of dealing with the problem of refugees in the world. As of April 2015, the *Refugee Convention*, and its 1967 *Protocol*, has been signed by 148 countries (*States Parties to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol*, online: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees <http://www.unhcr.org/3b73b0d63.pdf>). Canada did not sign until the 1969 Protocol was introduced.

In 1969 the Organization of African Unity, now called the African Union developed the *Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa*, which applies only to Africa, and which was based on the Refugee Convention. The OAU Convention expanded the category "refugee" to apply not only to the "persecuted", as defined in the Refugee Convention, but also to "*every person who, owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country of origin or nationality is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality* (See Organization of African Unity: Basic Documents and Resolutions (Addis Abbaba: n.d., The Provisional Secretariat of the Organization of African Unity) at 7-13).

D) CANADA'S INTERNATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY TO REFUGEES

As a result of signing the *Refugee Convention* and *Protocol*, Canada and other signatory nations have an international duty to offer asylum to refugees. To uphold this duty Canada opens its doors to thousands of refugees every year.

Canada has not always been receptive to refugees. Through government inaction and bureaucratic (the Director of Immigration's) anti- Semitism, Canada emerged from World War II with one of the worst records of Jewish refugee resettlement in the world. Between 1933 and 1939, Canada accepted only 4,000 of the 800,000 Jews who had escaped from Nazi controlled Europe.

E) IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

"Refugees" and "immigrants" are both references to people from other countries who come to live in Canada. The key difference between refugees and immigrants is that, for the most part, immigrants *choose* to leave their countries to come to another country. Immigrants may be admitted to Canada because they have the required job qualifications, because they have family members with whom they wish to reunite, or because they have money to invest or start a business. Immigrants are not forced to leave their homes suddenly and they have time to decide what they will bring with them from their country of origin.

Refugees on the other hand leave their homeland out of necessity and therefore have little or no choice in when they leave, what they

take with them and where they go. They are fleeing their country in order to protect their own and their family's lives. In March 1999, during a short period of two weeks, more than 120,000 refugees crossed into Macedonia from Kosovo. Many were given only a few minutes' warning before they were forced to march away from their homes (British Columbia Ministry of Education Special Programs, "Students Who Are Refugees: A Resource Package for Teachers. Focus on the Kosovar Refugees" (2000) at 1 [hereinafter "Student Refugees"]). Although it can be difficult for people who are immigrants to adjust to living in Canada, refugees have an even more difficult time adapting to Canadian life because they are not here voluntarily.

F) REFUGEE CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS

Every day, somewhere in this world, children and teenagers become refugees to escape persecution or war. As with adult refugees, persecution may take the form of physical violence, harassment and wrongful arrest, or threats to their lives. They take with them only what they can carry; only what they have time to pack. Sometimes all they have left is their dreams, their hopes, and a will to survive. During the 1980's, thousands of Sudanese boys, aged between seven and fourteen years and unaccompanied by parents, trekked to Kenya to escape the civil war that ravaged their country. It was a dangerous and bewildering experience for young people who walked for hundreds of kilometers for many months before reaching Kakuma in Kenya, which became the largest refugee camp for unaccompanied minors in the world (*Refugees Magazine*, 1:122 (2001) at 12). Refugee teenagers are more vulnerable to the effects of violence in any refugee population because of their immaturity.

2. Why Refugees Leave Their Countries of Origin

Refugees leave their countries for a variety of reasons depending upon the political and social context in which they live. They flee their homes because of war, ethnic cleansing, torture, political upheaval and a host of other reasons.

1. GENOCIDE

Governments in various countries around the world have practiced genocide - the systematic destruction of a national, racial, or religious group - as a means to killing off certain sectors of their population that they consider "undesirable." For example, in 1994 in Rwanda the Hutu ethnic people who formed the government targeted the Tutsi ethnic group, intending to wipe out all Tutsis. Even newborn babies were attacked.

When genocide occurs, the people who are targeted usually try to flee the country. Sometimes the country encourages them to leave, but often the government will not give them the proper documents they need to depart. If they want to escape, they have to do so secretly, without proper passports or travel documents and are then often forced to obtain false documentation.

2. GENDER PERSECUTION

It is estimated that approximately 53% of refugees are children and the same percentage are female. (UN Global Issues, Refugees the Numbers, online: <http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/briefingpapers/refugees>). Despite the proportionately large number of refugee women and children, men make up the majority of claimants at the Canadian border. One of the reasons for this is that it is more difficult for women than men to leave their country of origin. In some countries women need permission to leave the country, which may be difficult to obtain without an accompanying male. Women who are able to leave often only have sufficient resources to make it to a neighbouring country. As one commentator has put it "[Women who have been persecuted] can't jump in the car and go to the airport to buy a ticket; they [often] aren't permitted to drive. And they don't exactly have an American Express gold card that they could use to buy tickets to fly [to a safe county]" (E. Broadbent,

Canadian Press, "Women-Refugees" (10 January 1993), online: QL(CP93)).

Even though women are targeted for abuse in ways and for reasons that men are not, gender is not specifically listed as a ground for establishing Convention refugee status. Gender-based persecution started to surface as an important issue in the 1980's during the first U.N. Decade for Women. In 1984, the European Parliament passed what was then a revolutionary resolution, asking states to consider women who transgress religious or societal mores as a "particular social group" for the purpose of refugee status determination (J. Kumin, "Gender: Persecution in the Spotlight" *Refugees Magazine* (2001) 2:123 at 12-13). And in the 1990's, there was growing consensus that certain gender-related claims can and do fall within the 1951 *Refugee Convention*. In 1991, the UNHCR issued its "Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women". In 1993, Canada became the first country to issue guidelines on refugee women fleeing gender-related persecution when the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB) issued guidelines entitled "Women Refugee Claimants Fearing Gender-Related Persecution" (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Chairperson's Guidelines, "Women Refugee Claimants Fearing Gender-Related Persecution, Part B: Assessing the feared harm" (1993, updated November 13 1996), online: <http:// www.irb.gc.ca/pub/index_e.stm> date accessed: 16 May 2002)). This set of directives, called *Guideline 4*, provide general principles and information to help the IRB interpret the definition of refugee in a gender sensitive manner. *Guideline 4* suggests that persecution based on gender would include rape, infanticide, genital mutilation, bride-burning, forced marriage, domestic violence, forced abortion and compulsory sterilization.

Gender persecution can also result from restricting a person's right to earn a livelihood, the right to practice a chosen religion and the right to access education that is normally available to others. The United Nations *Handbook on Procedures and Criteria for Determining Refugee Status* (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Handbook on Procedures and Criteria for Determining Refugee Status* (Geneva, September 1979, re-edited January 1992) (*UNHCR Handbook*), discusses the difference between discrimination and persecution. Gender based discrimination is a universal issue and the line between discrimination and persecution is often blurred.

3) SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Governments everywhere have enacted repressive laws that deny homosexuals their basic economic, political, social, and human rights, and that legalize discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. This issue must be addressed because gays and lesbians have suffered abuses of a horrific nature and scale - unlawful killings, torture, and the arbitrary deprivation of liberty. Gay and lesbian rights cannot be ignored because if we tolerate the denial of rights to any minority group, then we destroy the protection provided by human rights laws and Conventions to all people. When the rights of any one part of society are ignored, then no one's human rights are safe.

Like gender, sexual orientation is not specifically listed as a ground for establishing Convention refugee status. However, Canada has extended refugee status to gays and lesbians because they comprise a 'particular social group' whose members fear persecution, which is a ground recognized by the Refugee Convention (The decision in *Canada (A.G.) v. Ward*, [1993] 2 S.C.R. 689 established the proposition that sexual orientation could be a ground for establishing refugee status in Canada).

4) CIVIL WAR

People fleeing the turmoil of civil war in their home country regularly attempt to claim refugee status. But unlike the above situations, the persecution resulting from civil war may not necessarily be accepted as grounds, in and of itself, for being granted refugee status. As with all refugee claims, a person must satisfy all of the elements in the definition of a Convention refugee. The problem with attempting to use civil war as a basis for a refugee claim is that the harm feared may not necessarily relate to one of the grounds listed in the *Refugee Convention*. Rather, what is feared may be "merely" the generalized and arbitrary dangers that all residents of a country in a state of civil war experience. That does not by itself amount to persecution within the meaning of the *Refugee Convention*.

The IRB (1996) has created its own guidelines to assist in the determination of claimants who have fled civil war as refugees. They are called "Guidelines on Civilian Non-Combatants Fearing Persecution in Civil War Situations."

3. The flight from home

Life in a refugee camp.

Today, when one thinks of refugees, one invariably thinks of refugee camps. When refugees flee to a new country, the government of that county often requires the refugees to stay in a camp. Most refugees have little idea when they will be able to leave the camp. They may have to live there for a few days or for several years. One of the main characteristics of camps is an authoritarian administration where everything is highly regimented and the inhabitants are depersonalized and become numbers without names. A second feature of camps, especially where refugees' access to land is restricted, is a chronic shortage of food ("Are Refugee Camps Good for Children?" Barbara Harrell-Bond, August 2000, UNHCR Working Paper No. 29, at 1). Although camps are intended to facilitate the delivery of international relief programs, the aid that refugees receive is sporadic and inadequate. This means that even when they reach the supposed safety of a refugee camp, their problems are far from over.

It is impossible to maintain a normal life in a refugee camp. Adult refugees can rarely find jobs and children often do not have access to schools. Even if schools are available, it is common for children (especially girls) to stay home and help with household chores or to look for jobs themselves in order to help support their families. Camps are overcrowded, freedom of movement is highly restricted, and access to health care is sporadic at best. As a consequence, malnutrition, poor sanitation, and disease are rampant. Another problem is the effect camps produce on family life. Being displaced from their home, unable to work, and suffering from a lack of basic provisions all contribute to a very stressful situation for families. Eventually they consider their situation to be hopeless and out of their control which increases their anxiety and depression. Domestic violence, substance abuse, and family breakdown are the result. Being uprooted and resettled can thus produce harmful social, psychological and economic consequences. No-one would freely choose to move into a refugee camp and everyone who is able leaves as soon as possible.

Refugees leave their countries looking for safety and stability. But camps are often dangerously located, frequently near the border of their home country which is experiencing unrest or civil war. This makes refugees vulnerable to cross-border armed raids which can result in murder and abduction. In addition, just as one can find criminals in any group of people, there are criminals within refugee camps. Refugees' safety and well-being are constantly threatened. Ironically, governments often justify the policy of forcing refugees to stay in camps on the basis of 'security' concerns.

4. The human rights of refugees and the laws that govern and protect refugees

What rights do refugees have?

Each category of refugee has a different level of access to national and international protection.

Laws and policies that govern and protect refugees

Many different areas of law and policies govern the rights of refugees within Canada and internationally.

- *The Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* (The Refugee Convention) outlines international policy on how refugees should generally be treated and what rights those seeking asylum are entitled to.
- *The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, the Canadian *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the *Alberta Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act* outline standards and legislation on human rights internationally, within Canada and within Alberta, respectively.
- *The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* applies to youth under the age of 18 years and outlines a standard of human rights specifically applicable to children and youth including specific reference to refugee children.

Within Canada, the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* is the major legal document which addresses all of the elements necessary to accept a person into Canada as a Refugee. The *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* has undergone several amendments which will have an effect on the treatment of those seeking asylum in Canada. For example, in 2012 several changes passed into law that affect refugee appeals, refugee claimants form designated countries of origin, and claimants who are designated as "irregular arrivals" (*Bill C-31*) among other changes. However, the *Act* has maintained its connection with the Refugee Convention by incorporating the definition of refugee used in the Convention. In addition, the *Anti Terrorism Act*, which amends several different statutes with the aim of cracking down on terrorism, will also affect refugees in as yet undiscovered ways. A general description follows of the aforementioned key legal instruments which are critical to those who are seeking asylum in Canada. For more information on current refugee law in Canada, see Canada Council for Refugees ccrweb.ca.

Seeking Asylum and the International Community

The movement toward protecting the rights of those seeking asylum began in the international community. The UNHCR was established in 1951 to deal with the issues that European refugees were facing after World War II. Today, many refugees leave their home country in mass exoduses because of massive human rights violations. One of the primary purposes of the UNHCR is to make sure that countries understand that they have an obligation to protect refugee people and those seeking asylum.

The *Refugee Convention* was created in recognition of the growing number of refugees in need of protection and was intended to set international standards that would effectively deal with issues faced by people seeking asylum. The *Refugee Convention* came into force in 1954 and Canada became a party to it in 1969. The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* ("UDHR") which was approved in 1948 had already made the connection between international responsibility and refugees. Article 14 of the UDHR states that "everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution." However, the right to seek asylum is only a part of the equation. The right to seek asylum does not mean that states are obligated to grant it to anyone who seeks it. States merely have an obligation not to return refugees to a country where they would suffer persecution.

The *Refugee Convention* ensures that refugees entering or living in a new country will be treated in a non-discriminatory way. It also notes that refugees have general obligations within a country of asylum, including conforming to the laws of that country, as well as defines the term 'refugee.' To be considered a refugee, three elements must be present: 1) the claimant must be outside his or her country of nationality; 2) he or she must have a well-founded fear for persecution; and 3) the persecution must be based on one of the listed grounds (race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.

Although the above criteria provide a guide for applying the R*efugee Convention*, it must be acknowledged that the Convention does not cover *every situation* where a person flees for fear of persecution or from a violation of his/her human rights. Some governments interpret the Convention restrictively, which limits the protection it can offer to asylum seekers. Additionally, the Convention does not apply to *every person* who claims refugee status. Even if a claimant meets the above criteria to be considered a refugee, the protection offered by the Convention is not available if there is evidence showing that the person has committed

a war crime or a crime against humanity, or violated other's human or international rights. Also, if that person has committed a serious crime before being admitted to the country in which they claim refugee status, or if they have been guilty of acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations, then the Convention will not help them.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child ("CRC") entitles youth and children under the age of 18 to a series of rights. It is the most important legal framework for the protection of children. The CRC has been signed by the greatest number of countries of any human rights treaty, and has been ratified by all countries except the United States of America and Somalia. As an international convention, the CRC guides countries as to what rights children and youth should have and is based on the principle that children have the same human rights as adults. It also acknowledges that children need special protection due to their physical and mental immaturity.

Although the rights listed in the CRC apply to all children, some specifically apply to the unique experiences of refugee children. For instance Article 38 says that countries should take all reasonable measures to ensure that children under the age of 15 do not participate in armed conflicts. Article 10 encourages countries to facilitate family reunification. Article 22 is specifically formulated for refugee children and states that countries should take appropriate measures to ensure a child has access to refugee status, whether they are accompanied by an adult or not. Article 22 also stresses that countries should seek to reunify refugee children and their families, or if reunification is not possible, to protect refugee children in the same manner as any other child in need of protection.

The CRC is applicable to all refugee children whether they have established their status in a country as a refugee, are in the process of seeking asylum or have been refused refugee status by a country but are still living in that country. The latter category is protected by virtue of Article 2, which says that *each child* within a country's jurisdiction shall be entitled to the rights set out in the CRC.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has issued other guidelines that specifically relate to children. In 1994 they issued "Refugee Children - Guidelines on Protection and Care". In 1997 they issued "Guidelines on Policies and Procedures in dealing with Unaccompanied

Children Seeking Asylum". The CRC examined all of these guidelines and used them to formulate the Articles mentioned above.

Seeking asylum within Canada

The *Canadian Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* incorporates the definition of refugee that is used in the *Refugee Convention.* Thus, in order to acquire refugee status in Canada, people must first prove that they fall within the definition of refugee contained in the *Refugee Convention* and then they must meet any additional admissibility criteria imposed by the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*. The *Act* establishes the requirements with which immigration officials must comply in determining whether a person can be admitted into Canada as a Convention refugee.

In cases where people are forced to obtain and rely on false documentation, or where they have no documentation, their identity is suspect on arrival in Canada and they have difficulty proving their identity. The IRB has listed a schedule of countries (Schedule XII) where residents will have a difficult time obtaining travel documents (This schedule of countries is subject to change along with changing political situations). People from these countries can claim asylum even if they don't have the proper documentation.

Increasingly demanding requirements for identification, medical and security checks have made it impossible for some Convention refugees to attain landed status. Recent amendments to the *Immigrant and Refugee Protection Act* present further concerns, including the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration's power to incarcerate refugees for 12 months without judicial review; his or her power to designate certain countries as "safe" and thus deny refugee status without appeal to refugees from these countries; and his or her power to withdraw a genuine refugee's permanent residence status, if the Minister believes that the conditions in the country of origin of a particular refugee have improved. This amendment also makes family reunification for refugees even harder (*Open Letter to Jason Kennedy: Bill C-31 must be rejected* (April 27, 2012), online: rabble.ca News for the Rest of Us http://rabble.ca/news/2012/04/open-letter-jason-kenney-bill-c-31-must-be-rejected). The concerns with the current act (*Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*), have raised serious concerns that Canada is moving toward a system that would not grant permanent protection to refugees in contradiction of Canada's historical, international obligations to humanitarianism and compassionate treatment of refugees.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (the "*Charter*") is a part of the Constitution of Canada, which makes it this country's most powerful instrument for protecting human rights and liberties. It applies to both the federal and provincial governments as well as all agencies created by either level of government, such as municipalities, administrative boards, and police officers. If an individual feels that a governmental action has been discriminatory or has infringed his or her human rights, then that person can make a claim under the *Charter.* In Alberta, the *Alberta Human Rights Act* applies to discrimination by private individuals, organizations, associations, trade unions and corporations.

Many sections of the Charter are applicable to every person physically present in Canada, including refugees and those seeking refugee status as well as persons who have entered Canada illegally. For instance section 2 of the Charter gives *everyone* certain fundamental freedoms including freedom of religion and freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression. Section 7 extends the right to life, liberty and security of the person to *everyone* and section 15 says that every individual is equal before and under the law and has a right to equal protection and benefit of the law. Other sections in *Charter* only apply to *citizens* of Canada. For instance section 3 gives every citizen a democratic right to vote and section 6 gives every citizen mobility rights.

The Alberta Human Rights Act

The *Alberta Human Rights Act* prohibits discrimination in several situations against all persons on the basis of race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, physical ability, mental disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, source of income or family status, gender expression and sexual orientation.

'Person' has not been explicitly defined by the legislation and therefore any person, including refugees and those seeking asylum, would be entitled to the protection offered by these provisions as long as the person lives within the jurisdiction of Alberta.

5. Settling in Canada

A) ADAPTATION ISSUES

Refugees face many issues upon arrival in Canada. From using the telephone book to finding a place to live, to learning English or French, adjusting to the Canadian way of life can be a long and difficult process. The adjustment process can be even more difficult if refugees are still recovering from the effects of the persecution that they faced, or if their family members have been left behind in the country from which they fled. The stress of resettling in a new country compounded by the loss of loved ones only adds to the existing trauma caused by war, persecution, rape or famine. This means that many refugees eventually turn to alcohol or drugs to help them cope with the effects of their traumatic experiences.

Dealing with government agencies that provide financial and other services for refugees can be difficult. Translators may not be available and staffs are often overworked with heavy caseloads. Some refugees report great difficulty navigating the process and dealing with incidents of rudeness or rejection that may be based on discrimination against newcomers. Thus, refugees struggle
with many issues.

i) Culture Shock

Once a refugee is admitted to Canada, they must go through the long and difficult process of adapting to a completely new environment. To comprehend the problems a refugee would face in adjusting to a new culture, consider these typical stages of adjustment that a refugee would experience (Student Refugees, note 7):

- Optimism, excitement. Initially, refugees are hopeful of starting a new life with lots of opportunities. Excitement and optimism replace the anxiety they experienced before their arrival in their new home.
- Culture shock. Differences in behavior, language barriers and values in the new culture become overwhelming.
- Superficial adjustment. Refugees attempt to adjust and fit in. However, changes are superficial and they continue to interpret everything in terms of their own perspectives and attitudes.
- Frustration, depression. The problems of daily living in a new country are encountered at his stage. Language, discrimination,

parental unemployment and setbacks in attempts to fit in all become a source of stress.

- Acceptance of host culture. At this stage, refugees accept and identify with the host culture, which leads to their eventual integration and a change in attitude. They realize they do not have to abandon their own cultural values but can integrate new values with some of their traditional ones.

ii) Employment

Work is necessary not only for economic self-sufficiency, but also for healthy self-esteem. Consequently, people who do not or cannot work often feel unworthy.

Some of the many barriers newcomers to Canada face in attempting to join trades and professions include ("After the Door Has Been Opened: Mental Health Issues Affecting Immigrants and Refugees in Canada" Report of the Canadian Task Force on Mental Health Issues Affecting Immigrants and Refugees (1998), online: <http:// ceris.metropolis.net/ Virtual%20Library/other/ canadian4.html> (date accessed: 10 April 2002)):

- *Language proficiency*

  Lack of access to language training in general and lack of programs for technical or professional language training are both obstructions to refugees adapting to life in Canada. Programs are often only available to those with permanent resident status. Additionally, those people with children have the added burden of finding and paying for childcare while they attend classes.

- *Evaluation of academic credentials*

  There is a general lack of understanding about educational equivalencies on the part of professional review panels. Further, there is also the danger that professional societies may downgrade the credentials of newcomers in order to protect the interests of their current membership.

- *Allocation of credit for foreign experience*

  Proof of "Canadian experience" is required to join many trades and professions.

  Devaluing foreign experience means that newcomers are considered not to have sufficient experience but yet are not able to find employment where they could obtain such experience.

- *Examinations*

  Examinations are a common part of being certified to practice in many trades and professions. Some professions (such as nursing, accounting, medicine and law) require re-training in Canada before those who have been trained abroad are allowed to write certification exams. This creates economic hardships for newcomers as the cost of re-training is often very high.

- *Systemic discrimination*

  Some people have alleged that the above barriers that prevent immigrants and refugees from practicing their chosen field were created specifically to exclude foreign - trained workers, a discriminatory practice that is racist in origin.

- *Practical considerations*

  Refugees may not be able to meet the requirement to present original documents in order to become certified in Canada. As already discussed, they may have had to flee without their documents and may not be able to get replacements due to political upheaval in their country of origin.

All of the above barriers mean that foreign-born workers have higher rates of unemployment and underemployment than the general population. The effects of not being able to work are numerous.

People who were professionals in their home countries can feel degraded by doing manual labour. On the other hand, refugees who are illiterate often have difficulty coping in a highly skilled work force such as Canada's, and cannot support their families. Stress and humiliation are the result.

iii) Problems Specific to Children and Adolescents

Children and adolescents who have been displaced are faced with two stressful processes at the same time. First they go through the typical developmental challenges children deal with as they grow up, and secondly they experience the additional trauma caused by losing their home and fleeing their country of origin. Refugee children may experience the following:

- Loss of home and home country. The home can become a symbol of the self. Its loss implies not only a loss of shelter and security, but also a loss of identity.
- Loss of important others, often family members. Often, this means the loss of parental protection and support, a great loss considering that families are often the only shield between children and adversity.
- Loss of physical capacity. Refugees frequently go through severe physical stress, injury or disease in escaping their country of origin.
- Loss of parental emotional support and security. Parents of refugee children often suffer anxiety, anger, and aggression since it is common for them to have lost their jobs and feel helpless. Children, in turn, can be deeply affected by the suffering of their caregivers.
- Loss of family structure. Family separation and changed family units frequently occur in displacement.
- Loss of educational opportunities. In times of crisis or resettlement, children's fundamental rights, such as the right to education, are often violated, which means that they can lose several years of schooling.
- Cultural changes. Learning a new language and a different set of cultural norms can be very confusing to children, often producing a tug-of-war between the desire to fit into the new culture and be accepted by their peers, and the need to please parents who may want to preserve the language and traditions of their home country.

As the above losses increase, the stress level that children experience also increases, which can lead to a greater risk of mental health problems, for example Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

iv) Intergenerational Conflict

Generally speaking, older people have less adaptive capacity than the younger generation. As a result, children often learn the culture and language of a new country faster than their parents and grandparents, which sets the stage for intergenerational conflict (Z. Koslidou, "The Case of Refugee Children" online: <http://issc-ssic.ca/ odKoslidou-e.html> (date accessed: 22 August 2001) [hereinafter "The Case of Refugee Children"]). Because children and adolescents are the first to become bilingual, they often take on a lot of responsibility, becoming translators and cultural interpreters for their parents. This creates two significant problems. The first is that refugee adolescents end up having to manage daily family matters such as paying bills, doing the shopping, and generally worrying about their family while also coping with their own trauma. Consequently, this role reversal often results in destabilization of the normal lines of communication and authority, which upsets routine interactions between family members (The Case of Refugee Children).

The gap between the generations becomes even more pronounced as time passes. Young immigrants and refugees want to fit into their new culture and often disapprove of their elders who wish to preserve the language and culture of their home country. The lack of change in their elders' diet, dress, and social or religious behavior can become a source of criticism and embarrassment. Such disagreement over culture and values can lead to elders feeling alienated from the younger members in their families.

B) RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION

Refugees and immigrants may experience racism and discrimination in their home countries, and indeed they may have been forced to leave because of their ethnic or racial origin. They may also experience racism and discrimination in their new host country.

Prejudice towards refugees and immigrants, fear of foreigners, (xenophobia) and racism are all connected. Although in Canada we consider ourselves to be an open multicultural society and generally do not accept racist ideas or practices, hostility toward newcomers acts as an outlet for the expression of many people's underlying racist attitudes. In fact, racism towards refugees is usually most evident in rich industrialized countries through their use of restrictive immigration policies. After the events in the United States of September 11 2001, this trend toward

restrictive admission procedures and general discrimination against refugees has become even stronger. Many states now equate the global campaign against terrorism with the fight against illegal immigration ("Racial Discrimination and Related Intolerance" *Human Rights Watch World Report 2001: Special Programs and Campaigns* (2002), online: Human Rights Watch Homepage <http://www.hrw.org/wr2K1/ special/ racism.html> (date accessed: 22 May 2001)).

Racism and discrimination are global problems that can be seen at both the personal and systemic level in the mistreatment some individuals experience.

i) Racism and the Administration of Justice

The term 'administration of justice' includes policing, criminal prosecutions, trials, sentencing, and imprisonment. Racism in this setting can cause a great deal of harm to individuals, by depriving them of their freedom or even their life (via the death penalty), and to society in general by preventing certain groups from participating in the economic and political affairs of the nation.

When it comes to enforcing criminal law, many studies have shown that police excessively target visible minorities for arrest (See generally "Racism and the Administration of Justice", online: Human Rights Watch Homepage, <http:// www.hrw.org/campaigns/race/criminal_justice.htm > (date accessed: 17 April 2002) [hereinafter "Human Rights: Racism and Administration of Justice"]). Minority groups also face a disproportionate number of criminal prosecutions, unfair trials, and overly severe sentences (See "Race of Defendants Executed Since 1976" (2000), online: Death Penalty Information Center Homepage, <www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/ dpicrace.html > (date accessed: 22 May 2002)). If police and the courts are the government actors that minorities are forced to constantly deal with, then their continued mistreatment strengthens and rein- forces their inferior status to the majority (Human Rights: Racism and the Administration of Justice, note 23). In this way, discrimination in the justice system can uphold or promote social, economic, and political inequalities resulting from wide-ranging government and private practices.

6. Some Common Myths and Questions

This chapter sets out some of the common questions and myths about refugees and immigrants. Each myth is followed by a discussion of the facts. The "myths about refugees" are separated into the following themes: Security, Canada's Treatment of Refugees, False Documents, and Human Smuggling and the Sri Lankans arriving by Boat in August, 2010. This information comes from the document "Facing Facts: Myths and Misconceptions about Refugees and Immigrants in Canada," Canadian Council for Refugees (1999), online: <www.web.net/~ccr> (date accessed: 29 September 2005), the document "Facing Facts: Myths and Misconceptions about Refugees and Immigrants in Canada," Canadian Council for Refugees (2007), online: <http://ccrweb.ca/documents/FFacts.htm> (date accessed: 15 May 2012), and the document "Myths and Facts 2011," Canadian Council for Refugees (2011), online: <http://ccrweb.ca/en/myths-and-facts-2011> (date accessed: 15 May 2012).

A) QUESTIONS

1) **Question: If the Refugee Convention was signed in 1951, is it still relevant today?**

   More than ever, as the number of refugees in the world is increasing. Although the nature of conflict and migration patterns have changed in the decades since the creation of the Convention, it has proved to be remarkably resilient in helping to protect about 50 million people in all types of situations.

2) **Question: The Refugee Convention refers to a "well founded fear of persecution." How do you determine that a person's fear for their safety is well founded?**

   For a fear to be well-founded and fit within the meaning of the Convention, the question is whether a claimant has a genuine reason to fear a return to his country and whether that fear is reasonable. This means that there must be both a subjective and objective component to the claimant's fear. The subjective element relates to the existence of the fear in the mind of the refugee claimant. The objective element requires that evidence be produced so that their

fear can be evaluated objectively to determine if there is a valid basis for that fear.

The second part of the test is that the claimant must fear "persecution". Persecution involves repeated and persistent harassment, or systemic infliction of punishment against an individual. This means that persecution involves conduct that is cumulative and not merely random and it must also be more serious than harassment or discrimination. The third element is that the persecution must be based on certain grounds - a person's race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. Taken together, these three elements form a difficult test for refugee claimants to meet. In fact, the Canadian government approved only 38% of all refugee applications made in 2011 (*By the Numbers: Refugee Statistics*, online: Human Rights Research and Education Centre < http://www.cdp-hrc.uottawa.ca/projects/refugee-forum/projects/Statistics.php>).

3) Question: How do women qualify for refugee status because of persecution?

Obviously, women may be persecuted for political, ethnic or religious regions, on the basis of their race or membership in many kinds of social groups. Someone who is fleeing severe discrimination for her failure to conform to strict social codes does have grounds to be considered for refugee status. A woman who fears attack for her refusal to wear restrictive clothing, or because of her desire to choose her own spouse and live an independent life, may indeed be a refugee. Sexual violence, such as rape, may constitute persecution. In 1984, the European Parliament determined that women facing cruel or inhuman treatment because they seemed to transgress social mores should be considered a particular social group for the purposes of determining refugee status. The United States and Canada have exhaustive guidelines relating to gender-based persecution.

4) Question: Can criminals and terrorists be refugees?

Article 1F of the Refugee Convention states:

"The provisions of this Convention shall not apply to any person with respect to whom there are serious reasons for considering that:

a) he has committed a crime against peace, a war crime or a crime against humanity, as defined in the international instruments

drawn up to make provision in respect for such crimes;

b) he has committed a serious non-political crime outside the country of refuge prior to his admission to that country as a refugee;

c) he has been guilty of acts contrary to the purpose and principles of the United Nations."

5) Question: Are some developed countries being swamped by refugees?

Many countries around the world believe that they are being overwhelmed by refugees seeking asylum. While it is true that numbers of refugees have increased dramatically in the last few decades in many areas, the concerns of individual countries are all relative. The bottom line is that some nations in Africa and Asia - states with far fewer economic resources than industrialized countries sometimes host larger numbers of refugees for far longer periods of time.

B) MYTHS

i) Security

MYTH #1:

Those who make a refugee claim in Canada "jump the line" and are not as deserving as refugees who wait in refugee camps overseas. Real refugees are those who wait in refugee camps overseas.

FACT:

There is in fact no line or queue for refugees to "jump". According to international law, refugees have the right to flee to another country to seek asylum. This is why there is a refugee determination system in Canada – to allow people fleeing persecution to seek asylum here. Refugees are people whose lives are at stake and have been forced from their homes by human rights abuses. We should not expect refugees to wait passively for someone to help them. Refugees do what they can to save their lives and the lives of their families. Refugees are survivors – and of those who make it to Canada, most

have already survived a lot. Different rules must therefore apply to refugees – people whose lives are in danger.

It is not right to say that refugees who make a claim in Canada are not as deserving as refugees who wait in refugee camps overseas. All refugees have a right to protection, wherever they are. Saying that some refugees are more deserving than others is the same as saying that some human beings are of less value than others.

Canada has legal obligations towards refugees in Canada under the *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* and the *Convention against Torture*. The Supreme Court of Canada has also confirmed that the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* guarantees the rights of asylum seekers to fundamental justice. Not everyone who makes a claim in Canada will be found to be a refugee, but all need to be heard to ensure that no one is sent back to face persecution or torture. Canada does not have the same legal obligations towards refugees outside Canada who apply for resettlement.

MYTH #2:

Refugee claimants pose threats to Canada's security.

FACT:

Refugee claimants are not threats to security – they are seeking security and protection from threats to their own lives.

Refugee claimants all go through a front-end security screening, in place since November 2001. Through this process, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) checks all refugee claimants on arrival in Canada. Since the screening was put in place, the number of claimants found to represent any kind of security concern has been statistically insignificant.

It is far more difficult to enter Canada as a refugee than as a visitor, because the refugee determination process involves security checks by CSIS and the RCMP, fingerprinting and interviews. It is not likely that a person intending to commit a violent act would expose themselves to such detailed examinations.

The *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* excludes refugee claimants if they are found to be inadmissible on the basis of security, serious criminality, organized criminality or human rights violations.

MYTH #3:

Canada's refugee determination system needs reform to become faster.

FACT:

Refugee status determination is an inherently difficult process. Placing speed above other criteria in the process leads to poor decisions.

Unlike other countries with a refugee determination system, including the United States, the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands and South Africa, Canada does not give refused claimants an appeal on the merits of their case, even though a refugee appeal was legislated in the 2001 *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*. As a result, wrong decisions in Canada often go uncorrected and refugees face forced return to persecution.

Refugee status determination processing times are determined by how effectively the government manages the process. One cause of increased processing times is government failure to make timely appointments of members to the Immigration and Refugee Board. In 2006-07, the Immigration and Refugee Board finalized 23% fewer claims than projected, due to a shortage of board members.

ii) Canada's treatment of Refugees

MYTH #1:

Canada respects the rights of all refugees and immigrants living in Canada.

FACT:

Canadians are rightly proud of our *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and our human rights commitments, but our record is not spotless. For example, Canada has been criticized by the United Nations Committee against Torture and the UN Human Rights Committee for not recognizing our responsibility as a signatory to the Convention against Torture not to return a person to a country where there is a risk of torture, without exception.

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has repeatedly criticized Canada for its slowness in reuniting refugee families, in violation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child which requires States to deal expeditiously with requests for family reunification.

In 2000, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights identified a series of flaws in Canada's refugee determination system, including the lack of appeal. Many of these flaws have not been addressed, as is shown in the finding of the UN Committee against Torture in the case of Mr. Falcon Rios. The Committee found that the Canadian refugee claim process had not been effective in assessing his risk of torture.

MYTH #2:

Almost everyone who makes a refugee claim in Canada is accepted and those who are refused have innumerable appeals.

FACT:

Less than half of refugee claimants are granted refugee status. In 1998, 44% of refugee claims were accepted. During most years since 1989, refugee acceptance rates have generally been between 40 and 45% (*By the Numbers: Refugee Statistics*, online: Human Rights Research and Education Centre < http://www.cdp-hrc.uottawa.ca/projects/refugee-forum/projects/Statistics.php>). Despite the fact that refugee determination deals with matters of life and liberty, there is in fact no appeal on the merits of the case for refused claimants. Review by the Federal Court is limited in scope and few claimants are even given permission to be heard by the court.

MYTH #3:

Canada receives more than its share of refugees

FACT:

Many other Western countries receive more refugee claimants than Canada, both in absolute numbers and per capita. Year after year, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States have each received more refugee claims than Canada. The United Kingdom received only 100 more claims than Canada in 2011, though. In 2011, France, Italy, Sweden, and Belgium also received more claims than Canada. With regards to the number of asylum-seeks per 1 USD GDP per capita, between the years of 2007 and 2011, Turkey received

more claims than Canada as well, while Belgium and Italy received less (*Asylum Levels and Trends in Industrialized Countries* (2011), online: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees <http://www.unhcr.org/4e9beaa19.html>). The majority of the world's refugees come from, and remain in countries of the South. The following countries have each been hosting over a quarter of a million uprooted people: the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Guinea, Sudan, Tanzania, Azerbaijan, Germany, Russian Federation, Yugoslavia, United States, China, Gaza Strip, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West bank, India, and Pakistan. Each year, between 1998 and 2011, Canada hosted an average of 12,000 refugees. The lowest was 5,936 and the highest 17,631 (*IRB Refugee Status Determinations (1989 – 2011 Calendar Years*, online: Human Rights Research and Education Centre <http://www.cdp-hrc.uottawa.ca/projects/refugee-forum/projects/documents/REFUGEESTATSCOMPREHENSIVE1999-2011.pdf>). The number of refugees Canada accepted these years was less than a tenth of 1% of our population. In 2015 — 2016, Canada promised to admit 25,000 Syrian refugees.

MYTH #4:

Refugees who come to Canada using false documents are bogus refugees.

FACT:

For many refugees fleeing persecution or death, a false travel document is the only means of escape. Often governments refuse to issue passports to known political dissidents, or imprison them if they apply. The fact is that a claimant uses a false travel document tells us nothing about whether the person is a refugee or not. Because refugees often cannot obtain all the necessary papers, international law prohibits governments from penalizing refugees who use false documents. Most governments, including the government of Canada, require travelers to have visas, creating an enormous obstacle for refugees trying to escape persecution. The more governments put up measures to stop people traveling to their countries, the more refugees are forced to use false documents and turn to smugglers to help them escape.

MYTH #5:

Refugee claimants can prolong their stay in Canada indefinitely because of government red tape.

FACT:

There is very little a refused refugee claimant can do to delay removal. Even an application for humanitarian consideration does not postpone removal. Over 5,000 refused claimants were removed from Canada in 1998. Many other claimants left voluntarily.

MYTH #6:

Refugee claimants in Canada are less deserving than refugees abroad and Canada should therefore close its borders and only select refugees overseas.

FACT:

All refugees are people who have been forced to flee their homes by human rights abuses and all deserve the chance to start a new life. To say that some are less deserving than others is to say that some human beings are of less value than others. Canada has specific obligations towards any refugees on Canadian territory. Sending refugees back to persecution would violate international human rights standards.

iii) False Documents

MYTH #1:

Real refugees do not travel on false documents.

FACT:

On the contrary, international law recognizes that refugees often have no choice but to enter a country of asylum illegally. The Refuge Convention therefore prohibits governments from penalizing refugees who enter or remain illegally in their territory.

Interdiction measures include visa requirements and identity checks by airlines and other carriers. Used by many governments – including

the Canadian government – to prevent people from arriving on their territory, these measures force refugees to use smugglers and false documents to reach safety.

Many Jews fleeing Nazi persecution in the first half of the twentieth century used false documents to reach safety and were later recognized as refugees.

For many refugees fleeing persecution, a false travel document is the only means of escape.

Repressive governments often refuse to issue passports to known political dissidents – or imprison them if they apply. Sometimes refugees are stripped of their identification as they flee from conflict or have no time to collect their documents before fleeing for safety.

MYTH #2:

Refugees who come to Canada using false documents are bogus refugees.

FACT:

For many refugees fleeing persecution or death, a false travel document is the only means of escape. Often governments refuse to issue passports to known political dissidents, or imprison them if they apply. The fact that a claimant uses a false travel document tells us nothing about whether the person is a refugee or not.

Because refugees often cannot obtain all the necessary papers, international law prohibits governments from penalizing refugees who use false documents. Most governments, including the government of Canada, require travelers to have visas, creating an enormous obstacle for refugees trying to escape persecution. The more governments put up measures to stop people traveling to their country, the more refugees are forced to use false documents and turn to smugglers to help them escape.

iv) Human Smuggling and the Sri Lankans Arriving by Boat in August, 2010

MYTH #1:

People who use smugglers are less likely to be refugees in need of protection.

FACT:

People fleeing persecution often have no choice but to turn to smugglers to help them escape. What would you do if your life was threatened and you needed to get out? How people arrive in Canada tells us nothing about **why** they left. To decide if they need our protection we need to know why they left and what dangers they would face if they returned. We have a refugee determination system to find this out.

Many – maybe most – refugees have used smugglers to get to Canada. This is true whether they came by plane, land or boat. There has been a lot of focus on the fact that passengers on the MV Sun Sea may have paid smugglers. But this is just as much the case for refugee claimants who did not arrive by boat – so why the fixation on the boat?

MYTH #2:

Smugglers are increasingly targeting Canada.

FACT:

Where is the evidence for this? Refugees using smugglers to get to Canada is nothing new. The number of refugee claimants arriving in Canada has been going dramatically DOWN (10,000 fewer in 2010 than in 2009).

MYTH #3:

Harsh policies will stop smugglers and asylum seekers arriving by boat.

FACT:

It is unfair and immoral to punish refugees in an attempt to deter smugglers. It is also not going to work. Refugees are fleeing desperate situations and will do whatever they need to do to save their lives. They rarely know anything about the policies in place in the country they arrive in – sometimes they don't even know where they are going.

Australia tried the strategy of punitive measures to discourage refugee arrivals: it didn't work. When the Australian government abolished their "Temporary Protection Visas" in 2008 they explained that they had not achieved their intended purpose: "The evidence clearly shows, however, that TPVs did not have any deterrent effect. Indeed, there was an increase in the number of women and children making dangerous journeys to Australia."

MYTH #4:

We have to be particularly cautious with people like the Sri Lankans arriving by boat to Vancouver Island, because these types of people might be terrorists or criminals.

FACT:

There is no reason to think that wrong-doers are more likely to arrive by boat than by other means. No sophisticated terrorists are going to put themselves on a long and uncomfortable boat trip, knowing that they will be subjected to intense scrutiny by the government.

The government is putting a lot of time and resources into investigating the passengers who arrived on the MV Sun Sea. It is not clear that this is rationally justified. The long-term detention and disproportionate investigations are costing the tax-payer a lot of money.

MYTH #5:

The UN has said that Tamils are no longer at risk in Sri Lanka.

FACT:

In July 2010 the UNHCR issued new guidelines that recognized the evolving situation in Sri Lanka. They advised that it is no longer

necessary to presume that Tamils from the north are at risk, but they also said that all claims by Sri Lankans must be examined on their individual merits. They note that groups *potentially at risk of persecution* in Sri Lanka include journalists, human rights activists, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals and persons suspected of having links with the LTTE (Tamil Tigers).

MYTH #6:

Canadians are asking for harsh measures against people who arrive by boat.

FACT:

The harsh measures in Bill C-31 (*Protecting Canada's Immigration Act*) have been rejected by all opposition parties and condemned as illegal and punitive by a wide range of faith, rights, labour, community and legal groups.

Most Canadians of course want to be tough on smugglers, but Bill C-31 punishes *refugees*. The Canadian Council for Refugees firmly believes that most Canadians do not want refugees, including children, to be jailed as punishment for seeking protection.

v) Myths About Immigrants

MYTH #1:

Immigrants are a burden on the economy, and a net tax loss for the government.

FACT:

Report after report shows that immigrants continue to positively contribute to economic growth. A parliamentary committee studying the issue concluded: "the evidence presented to the committee confirms that Canada's immigration program continues to exert a positive influence on our economy." Immigration actually increases government revenue, and creates a net tax benefit. Immigrants and the Canadian-born have about the same rates of employment. Immigrants are more likely to be self-employed than the Canadian-born.

MYTH #2:

Immigrants take jobs away from Canadians.

FACT:

There is no established link between immigration and unemployment. Interestingly, the economy often grows during periods of high immigration. Immigration does not cause significant job displacement among Canadian-born workers. Many immigrants create job opportunities by starting companies and investing capital. Studies show that the wage levels of Canadian-born workers are not significantly affected by increased immigration levels.

MYTH #3:

Recent immigrants are not integrating and threaten Canadian values. Their level of education is low, and many cannot speak English or French.

FACT:

The vast majority of immigrants speak either English or French before arriving or learn one or both languages soon after arrival. Immigrants are on average better educated than the Canadian-born and many of the children leading the class in Canadian schools are immigrant and refugee children.

Over 80% of immigrants become Canadian citizens. Research has shown that immigrants participate in Canadian politics as much as the Canadian-born. Fears about immigrant integration are not new. Generation after generation, people have worried about whether the most recent immigrants will integrate as well as previous immigrants. Immigrants contribute to Canadian values of diversity and openness.

MYTH #4:

Increased immigration leads to an increase in crime.

FACT:

There is no established connection between immigration and crime. Immigrants are actually less likely to commit major crimes than the Canadian-born, and are under-represented in the prison population. According to the most recent available figures, 20.5% of the Canadian population older than 15 had been born outside the country, while only 11.9% of the total prison population were foreign born. Immigrants are just people like anyone else. While a few end up in jail, most are law-abiding.

MYTH #5:

Family class immigrants contribute less to Canada than economic immigrants.

FACT:

Families make significant positive contributions to Canadian society. The Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (2003) found that immigrants tend to establish themselves more easily if they are supported by their families.

According to a 2007 Statistics Canada study, family class immigrants are less likely to be low-income than skilled workers immediately after they arrive in Canada.

People contribute to society in many ways. We make a fundamental error if we rank the value of one's contribution, whether immigrant or native born, purely in economic terms. In our complex economy, all contributions are necessary and valued irrespective of income level. People contribute in many other ways, as caregivers, leaders, artists, community workers and elders.

MYTH #6:

Canada has more difficulty integrating newcomers today than a century ago. Immigrants are now more diverse.

FACT:

Fears about immigrant integration are not new. Generation after generation, people have worried about whether the most recent immigrants will integrate as well as previous immigrants.

A hundred years ago, Canada was actually quite diverse, with First Nations peoples, a significant Chinese population especially in the West and African Canadians who had been living in Canada for generations, in addition to people of different European heritages. Due to racism this diversity was denied and has tended to be forgotten. Among the early immigrants arriving in large numbers, some European groups were seen as big challenges to integration. Ukrainians, for example, were seen by many as alien because of perceived differences in race (Slav), language, religion (Orthodox) and customs. In 1901 a Member of Parliament told the House of Commons that the assimilation of Ukrainians "means the intermarriage of your sons and daughters with those who are of an alien race and of alien ideas."

Diversity is not something to be feared: diversity is Canada's strength.

7. VIDEO SCRIPT

Hopes and Dreams: Stories from Young Refugees

Definition on screen:

Racism is treating certain people unfairly because of their colour, nationality or ethnic origin.

HUZAN: When I first walked in people stared.

Definition on screen:

Stereotype is a standardized mental picture or assumption we may have about certain individuals, places or things.

MLADEN: We were different. We were, you know, and I think they were scared of us being different.

Definition on screen:

Prejudice is a negative attitude or belief that causes us to pre-judge an individual or group. Prejudiced attitudes are often hostile.

KAMAL, (interpreting for Sabryia): Saddam killed approximately 50,000 people and she says that many families, they lost their mom, their dad, and they had nobody with them.

Definition on screen:

Discrimination occurs when people **act** on preconceived ideas of racism and prejudice and treat individuals or groups unfairly.

SUZAN: We were scared of if there was going to be another attack, if people were going to come and take all the men in the family 'cause that's usually what they did. They would take the fathers and the brothers and leave the children with no parents.

Definition on screen:

Refugee... a person who flees their home country to a safe haven; especially one who escapes from oppression or persecution.

ALI: I was coming from a refugee camp. In a refugee camp you don't have any hopes, you don't have any dreams.

TITLE: "Hopes and Dreams: Stories From Young Refugees"

TYLER: Every day, somewhere in the world, young people become refugees. They sometimes flee their countries because their lives are in danger. In the chaos and confusion of escape, they can accidentally be separated from their parents. Many of them end up living in refugee camps without what we would consider the basic essentials to a normal life... things like electricity, running water, and even food.

NIKKI: In this program, you will meet young people who fled their home countries and became refugees. By sharing their personal experiences and perceptions, it is hoped that **you** will begin to appreciate what it's like for a young refugee to come to a new country, learn to speak a new language and meet new people in what is often a culture quite different from their own.

You'll get a sense of some of the barriers they face including starting school not knowing any English, making friends, and finding a job.

TYLER: And you'll begin to see that one of the biggest barriers they face is discrimination and prejudice. Many of them encounter discrimination daily and they'll talk about some of these experiences. We hope that once you know about some of the things they have gone through, you will be kind and welcoming to newcomers in your class or your community.

NIKKI: We want to remind you that in Canada, it is against the law to discriminate against anyone, on the basis of race, colour, religion, physical or mental disability, ancestry, religious beliefs, place of origin, marital or family status, source of income, age, gender, or sexual orientation. In order to avoid developing prejudices against refugees and to avoid discriminating against them, it's important for us to know why people were forced to give up everything and to leave their home countries.

'DID YOU KNOW' TEXT & EXPLANATION ON SCREEN:

Did you know...The United Nations Refugee Convention says that "a refugee is a person who has left their home country and cannot return because of a well-founded fear of persecution."

WHY THEY LEFT

ALI: I left Iraq in 1991 shortly after the Gulf War, the second gulf war when Kuwait, when Iraq attacked Kuwait. I left the country when I was sixteen years old and I went to Saudi Arabia. I stayed in a refugee camp for seven years before I finally came here to Canada.

SUZAN: It wasn't really told to us that we had to leave, it was basically just the fact you saw everybody running saying, "Here they come!" All you could see was the families pack up their stuff; parents put their kids on their lap and start running for their lives.

AUGUSTINE: It was really a struggle for me to leave the country alone without my parents because of the war, the war just occurs... And I had to leave because I was just terrified by what is happening, seeing people being bombed and people who are dying and so I was threatened by the war and I had to leave the parents.

TYLER: Refugees flee their home because they are forced to, by circumstances over which they have no control, such as war, political persecution, torture, religious persecution and even genocide. They leave to protect their own and their family's lives and their journeys to safer havens are rarely easy.

'DID YOU KNOW' TEXT AND EXPLANATION ON SCREEN:

Did you know... Canada is one of 148 countries which have signed the United Nations Refugee Convention. It obligates us to offer protection to refugees from around the world and to assist in their resettlement in Canada.

TRAVELLING TO CAMPS

Kamal, (interpreting for Sabriya): No, not everybody made it there. First of all there was no food, no water. Many people would just leave their kids, literally newborn kids because the mothers couldn't feed them. The older people couldn't compete you know with the younger ones to walk. She [Sabryia] said that through her journey she would see many people lying down in the mountains, older people or young people either dead or barely alive.

Ali: We stayed for two days without water. We didn't have anything. We had some food that we had with us, but we didn't have water for two days.

Augustine: We had to walk from Sudan to Nairobi and it is not just a short distance. We walked for four to five days to reach Nairobi. We had nothing at all. What we had was only the containers with us. We carried the water and it was just finished on the way. We did not even have food, and Africa is very dry, some parts are so dry and that's where we crossed. And it was a very difficult journey to go through, but we had to dig some foods like roots underground that we dug and we had to eat them so that we can survive. We didn't even know what it was. Like we just ate anything we got on the way.

NIKKI: Many of the refugees who come to Canada have been through traumatic experiences. They may have lived in limbo in a refugee camp for many years before coming to Canada, and may have been physically or mentally abused. Some have fled overnight from their homes, and lost friends and family along the way. Sometimes the families can be separated for several years.

'DID YOU KNOW' TEXT AND EXPLANATION ON SCREEN:

Did you know...At the end of 2014 there were approximately 19.5 million refugees in the world.

CONDITIONS IN CAMP

AUGUSTINE: Because life was very tough in the camp, like we were just in a jail, it was a jail for me to be in that kind of a situation. It was just very hard and we could not be able to go out.

SUZAN: We thought if we went outside they're going to kill us so we decided why don't we just stay inside, it's going to be safer instead of going out there.

KAMAL, (interpreting for Sabryia): There was no school, no doctors, not enough food and that's how they spent years actually.

ALI: Some people are now mentally disabled because they couldn't bear the pressure and the hard circumstances there that some of them even commit suicide.

SUZAN: You'd see like thirty people in one bedroom, one bathroom, one kitchen, people had their kids sleeping underneath the kitchen, I remember sleeping underneath the counters of the kitchen. You couldn't open the door because there were people beside the doors. You were scared that something was going to happen during the night. When you

woke up in the morning there wasn't any school, there wasn't food, you just sat around and waited till the day passed by until the next night.

AUGUSTINE: And at the camp there was not even food, we had to eat like bananas as food. This was the first time for me to start eating bananas as food.

ALI: For three years my family didn't know where I was. The first people who left the camp after three years informed a friend of our family in London, England and the friend sent a letter to my family informing them that I was in a camp and was okay.

NIKKI: When refugees flee to a new country, the government of that county often requires them to stay in a camp. Some refugees lived in houses and went to school while they waited for a country of refuge to accept them, while others have been without the benefit of school and lived in tents or cramped rooms. Most refugees have no idea when they will be able to leave the camp. They could live there for a few days or for several years.

TYLER: It is impossible to have a normal life in a camp. Adult refugees usually cannot find jobs or are not allowed to work. Even if schools are available, it is common for young people, especially young girls, to stay home and help with household chores or to look for jobs, in order to help support their families. Camps are overcrowded... freedom of movement is highly restricted.

Being uprooted can cause harmful social, psychological and economic consequences. No one would freely choose to move into a refugee camp and everyone who is able to, leaves as soon as possible. When refugees are finally able to leave, they often have little or no choice as to where they go.

'DID YOU KNOW' TEXT AND EXPLANATION ON SCREEN:

Did you know...There are about 300,000 child soldiers in the world, many of whom are refugee children.

COMING TO CANADA

AUGUSTINE: It was a peaceful place to be, it was a place where the opportunities are just available. It was just the place, just like a paradise when people are talking about it.

ALI: People, when they first come here they have expectations. They think about this place as heaven. Then after a few weeks then their expectations go down.

AUGUSTINE: The culture is totally different. Even the food. The food was also very different, like I ate pizza, I was given pizza and I said "What is this?" They said it is food. It was very, I just had to eat, and then I say, but it is better than bananas that I had eaten at the camp.

ALI: Everybody faces difficulties out of their home land, whether it is what you call culture shock, that's a barrier in front of you that you have to go through. I was coming from a refugee camp. In a refugee camp you don't have any hopes, you don't have any dreams, but once you come here you start thinking about your options. Now I went to school for four months, but I had enough English and I had enough experience to start to work. I applied in many places and every time I applied they asked me for Canadian experience. How can I get Canadian experience when I have only been here for four months. But still, when I think about it, Canada is a great place and anywhere out of that camp is a great place.

NIKKI: Being admitted to Canada is not the end of a refugee's story; in fact, it is the beginning of a new phase of their experience. Once they are here, they must go through the long and difficult process of adapting to a completely new environment. Culture shock is a major issue for refugees. Using a telephone book, finding a place to live, learning English or French, attending school, or simply adjusting to the Canadian way of life can be a long and difficult process. Newcomers can become overwhelmed at how everything around them is so different from what they were used to.

TYLER: The adjustment process can be even more difficult if a refugee is still recovering from the effects of the persecution they faced, or if their family members have been left behind. The stress of resettling in a new country, compounded by the loss of loved ones only adds to the existing trauma caused by their experiences. On top of this, young refugees have to deal with the typical developmental challenges most young people face as they grow up.

NIKKI: As the losses increase, the stress level that young people experience also increases, which can lead to a greater risk of mental health problems. Young refugees are subject to a host of conflicting demands and pressures. Some may perform poorly in school because of racial stereotyping, low teacher expectations, textbooks that are too advanced or too simple, or a lack of positive role models among school staff.

'DID YOU KNOW' CAPTION AND EXPLANATION ON SCREEN:

Did you know.... In 2014, approximately 13,600 people made claims for refugee status in Canada.

SCHOOL

HUZAN: When I first walked in, people stared, they looked, they talked, but I didn't understand. I don't know if they were saying good things or bad things.

MLADEN: It was scary, I didn't know what to expect. I mean even though I knew the language I didn't know what the people were going to react like. I got in there, I didn't really talk to anybody. We just waited to be .... And the school system is completely different than that in Europe so that was a new experience for me, so we just waited and then we sat down and the teacher introduced me as a refugee from Yugoslavia. There was a group of us, there was seven or eight kids from the former Yugoslavia, and none of us were really accepted in junior high. We had our sort of own little group, but we weren't, I guess it was junior high and the mentality of the kids is really immature. But, you know, we just got kind of used to that and we just hung out with each other.

EMAN: When I was in high school there were a couple of people who were refugees from countries that were torn by war, and I just remember the response of people because these people did not speak English, these students weren't aware of the culture, they weren't wearing the latest fashions, they were unaware of how to act in front of people - Canadian students. And, so you know, people would tell them to go back home. There was one instance where they were throwing rocks at a young individual because he was just arrived from Bosnia. Just because they look different people discriminate against them.

KAMAL, (interpreting for Sabryia): She says that it was a horrible experience. "I never went to school before and I end up to be in grade ten. I didn't even know ABC's or I didn't even how to write 1, 2, 3, nothing. And for six months I was constantly crying and having a very rough time in school."

SUZAN: You saw about twenty, ten to twenty people in one classroom, they all understand each other, you're the only person that doesn't understand. You're sitting there saying to yourself in your mind, what are they saying, what are they talking about, who are they, because you don't know what they are saying. You try to talk to them but they don't know

what you are saying. I kept to myself, I stayed in a little corner.

HUZAN: I had a girl that had to help me out, show me things, so she'd basically teach me, she'd be the second teacher.

MLADEN: At the beginning it really upset me that people would ask questions such as do you have a McDonald's over there? Or do you guys live in houses or huts? Questions that showed that they were not really educated about where I was from, questions that showed that they thought we were an underdeveloped country and that we had nothing like there was in Canada. But then, you know, you just kind of learn to think, they're the ones that aren't educated, you know, they can think whatever they want. They can pick up a book and learn about it if they really wanted to, why should I feel offended that they are asking. I think they just felt we were, not uncivilized, but in a way less civilized than them and I think that played a big part in it.

TYLER: Besides school, another issue facing young refugees is that they are usually the first in the family to become bilingual. They often take on a lot of responsibility, including becoming translators and cultural interpreters for their parents. This means that young people end up having to manage daily family matters such as paying bills, doing the shopping, and generally worrying about their family's well-being while also coping with their own stresses and adaptation issues.

DID YOU KNOW TEXT AND EXPLANATION SCREEN;

Did you know... Approximately 57 % of the world's refugees are children, and nearly as large of a percentage are women.

DISCRIMINATION

ALI: Sorry to say this but some people look at you as an animal. They look at you and they say... I even had a person at my job here. Now I work with a security company and after hours we have to stop people from getting into the building. I told him, "Excuse me sir, if you don't have permission, you're not an employee, I can't let you in." He looked at me and said, "Is this my country or your country?" I said, "Sir, I am Canadian too."

On screen, "Hijab: a headdress worn by Muslim women"

EMAN: Because I wear the hijab many people believe that I am a refugee because I look different than the majority of people. And they have told me things, go back to your country, learn to speak English, do you speak English, go back to the war. And it makes me upset that people would discriminate against me because I look different, even though I am born and raised in this country, and I speak English just as clear as anybody else in this country. So it makes me really upset and it kind of scares me that if I going through this and I am actually born in this country, that I can't even imagine what refugees go through.

MLADEN: There were a few refugee students in my junior high that didn't speak any English so the other students would take advantage of that and get them to say stuff that, well you know, would get them in trouble, or do things that shouldn't be done, just to get their laugh out of it.

AUGUSTINE: The policeman was following me from where we played soccer to the closest place where our house was. And then he stopped me on the way for no reasons at all and I was treated like a criminal, and I was terrified because two of my friends they were new, they were totally terrified by the attack. I was attacked and I was told to come out from the car and raise my hands up and I was handcuffed and I was taken to the police station. And, I kept asking them, "What is the problem?"

ALI: When I applied for a job and was looking for a job, there was a place, they were hiring, I know they were hiring, a friend of mine told me about it. I went there to apply for a job. I walked to the reception desk and I said, "Hi, excuse me can I have an application please." He looked at me, and maybe from my accent or the way I looked, he looked at me and said "We don't have applications, we are not hiring."

TYLER: Prejudice towards refugees and immigrants, fear of foreigners, and racism are all connected. And even though every person in Canada is protected from discrimination by Human Rights legislation, many people's underlying racist attitudes may be expressed in hostility toward newcomers.

Racism towards refugees is usually most evident in rich industrialized countries through their use of restrictive immigration policies. After the events in the United States of September 11, 2001, this trend toward restrictive admission procedures and general discrimination against refugees has become even stronger. Many countries now equate the global campaign against terrorism with the fight against illegal immigration. Simply because refugees have been forced to enter a

country illegally does not automatically mean that they are criminals, yet that is often how they are portrayed by politicians, the media and the general public.

NIKKI: Newcomers to Canada are often reluctant to talk about the discrimination they experience - often even excusing the behaviours of people who are rude, who call them names and who discriminate against them. So, during the interviews we asked this question, "If you could ask young people to do one thing that might help new refugees, what would that be?" Here are some of their responses.

DO ONE THING CANADA

SUZAN: Basically, the one thing I would say is just be helpful. If somebody asks you for help, just help them, you know, even if it's on the street saying where does this bus go, or do you have change, can you give me change for a loonie. Doesn't matter what it is, just be there, you know, you don't have to keep to yourself.

MLADEN: Just keep an open mind, accept people for who they are and help them out, I mean, you never know if you'll be in that type of position one day. And, you know, whoever the refugee is, they're here for a reason and they haven't been through the best of times lately. So just help them to adapt, to adapt to the culture. And you know, teachers need to step in there too in school and realize the language trouble they might have and just help them out, make them feel like they belong because it is a brand new beginning for them and they don't know what it's going to be like.

EMAN: The best advice I can give to students who may have refugee students within their class is to be very helpful, to help them out with whatever they need. Even if they feel excluded and or if they're just sitting outside, maybe they don't speak the language, ask them if they want to join your group, just to know they're included in something.

ALI: Look at people for who they are as human beings, it doesn't matter where they come from, it doesn't matter what race they are, we are all equal, we are all human beings here.

NIKKI: Canada has an obligation to accept refugees, and equally important, Canada has a reputation as a country where people from all over the world have started new lives in peace, harmony and safety.

TYLER: These young people came to Canada hoping to be treated with fairness and respect, and to make friends with other young Canadians.

They and other refugees come committed to working hard to adjust to all aspects of life in Canada and to being responsible citizens. Think about how you can help newcomers in your school or community to feel welcome and help to put an end to prejudice and racism.

TEXT ON SCREEN

This video cannot cover everything you need to know about refugees. See the User's Guide for background information on the topics discussed, international laws which protect refugees and Canadian laws which protect everyone against discrimination. Also available is a Teacher's Resource Manual that expands on the back- ground information in the Video User's Guide and contains activities and recommended resources.

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8. Glossary

Discrimination - Unfair treatment of a person or group, usually because of prejudice about that person's race, ethnic group, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or other characteristic.

Culture shock - Sudden exposure to an unfamiliar culture; the feelings of confusion and anxiety experienced when an individual (or group) suddenly finds him/herself in an unfamiliar cultural environment.

Genocide - The systematic extermination or destruction of an entire people or national group.

Human rights - Universal, moral rights which belong to everyone. They include the right to life, liberty and a decent human experience. Human rights also include all of the political, social and economic rights necessary for people to live dignified lives.

Immigrant - A person who chooses to come into a country or region of which he or she is not a native in order to settle there.

Persecution - The mistreatment or oppression of people because of their race, religion or beliefs.

Prejudice - A judgment or opinion formed before- hand or without thoughtful examination of the facts and issues. Prejudice often manifests itself as irrational hatred or dislike of a particular group, race or religion.

Race - A group of people having or assumed to have a common origin and a constant set of genetically determined physical traits.

Racism - A belief in or advocacy of the superiority or inferiority of a particular group on the basis of supposed racial differences.

Refugee - A person who flees his or her home country to escape persecution.

Stereotype - A standardized mental picture or assumption about certain individuals or groups. A stereotype assumes that all members of a group share some general quality.

Torture - The infliction of or subjection to extreme physical pain, often implemented systematically by repressive governments or regimes.

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University of Ottawa Human Rights Research and Education Centre: http://www.cdp-hrc.uottawa.ca/

U.S. Committee on Refugees: http://www.refugees.org/

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