

Staying off the Bottom of the Melting Pot: Somali Refugees Respond to a Changing U.S. Immigration Climate

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As a nation of immigrants, the United States has also been a nation of nativists...We have welcomed immigrants in periods of expansion and optimism, reviled them in periods of stagnation and cynicism...In short, American nativism has had less to do with 'them' than us...Fear and loathing of foreigners reach such levels when the nation's problems become so intractable that some people seek scapegoats. Typically, these periods feature a political or economic crisis, combined with a loss of faith in American institutions and a sense that the national community is gravely fractured. Nativists' targets have reflected America's basic divisions: class, race, religion, and, to a lesser extent, language and culture.

"Cycles of Nativism in U.S. History,"
The National Immigration Forum

Immigrants thrive best in socially and politically supportive environments that allow them to change most of their social and cultural practices at their own pace...Doing so, in turn, allows immigrants to build up their confidence and sense of belonging gradually but deeply...A model grounded on equity and mutuality, and a more organic rather than forced pace of adaptation, holds the most promise.

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I. Globalized Neighborhoods: Theories on Migration

A. The Phenomenon

In October 2002, a once-thriving economy and Franco-American town was in decline. Lewiston, Maine was already hurting after its textile mills closed and thousands of residents lost their jobs; however, a sud-

den influx of Somali refugees arguably had an even greater impact. Somali refugees had come to Lewiston, either directly from refugee camps or from “war zones” in inner-city Atlanta, to escape violence and settle in a town where housing was affordable and it “seemed like a good place to bring up kids.”¹ Their children attracted federal dollars into Lewiston schools and, with local university degrees, many Somalis worked in Lewiston hospitals and opened small businesses to employ one another. However, when crime and welfare caseloads began to rise, the Lewiston Mayor wrote a public letter urging Somalis not to invite any more relatives to Lewiston. He claimed the city needed “breathing room” and was “maxed out, financially, physically, and emotionally.”² Hollywood’s release of *Black Hawk Down* incited the issue, intensifying the memory of soldiers killed in Somalia, and native Lewistonians angrily protested in the streets.³ City officials were able to avert a major conflict, however many other cities across the United States have felt similar tensions when newcomers suddenly enter a community.

In Lewiston and beyond, resettled Somalis face accusations of having terrorist connections, unfairly receiving public assistance, or not deserving the full rights accorded to other Americans. It was not always this way. Over the past decade, the United States has increasingly restricted the social and civil rights of non-citizens by limiting their access to public assistance, cutting funding for social services, questioning their loyalty to the nation, and deporting them. In this country of immigrants, where immigration is perpetually controversial, it seems the pendulum of public approval has swung away from today’s newcomers. Perhaps Somali refugees entered the U.S. at an inopportune moment. Since the 1990s they have arrived in the thousands, many as penniless refugees in the midst of an anti-welfare movement, as *xijaab*-wearing⁴ Muslims in the aftermath of September 11, 2001, and as taxi drivers and hotel staff in a period of competition over low-wage and “illegal” labor. Somalis defy America’s social categories as black, Muslim, and Arab-African immigrants. Many of their ways of cooking, family structures, religious duties, and communication styles challenge U.S. cultural norms, workweek schedules, and apartment occupancy rules. This academic project will analyze the cyclical changes in U.S. support for immigrants and refugees. It will focus on Somalis in Minnesota as a case through which to view the health of the nation: Have we maintained our values of tolerance and respect for diversity? Are

we still willing and able to integrate newcomers into a multicultural United States?

B. The Concept of Migration

Flows of immigration due to economic disparities and civil conflict now land many of the world's people and their unique cultures, religions, and languages, on the same neighborhood block. Such heterogeneity, however, is difficult to maintain and may escalate into conflict if not carefully managed. The "internationalization" of Minnesota neighborhoods, such as the West Bank or Lake Street, brings issues of foreign policy and stereotypes of faraway nations into a local context of urban struggle over jobs, housing, transportation, schools, and health care. Increasingly polarized governmental units parallel an increasingly polarized American constituency. As external foreign affairs and internal immigration politics both grow tenuous, voices from the local to the national levels call out for a view of immigration in a new light.

Stripped of politics and debate, the essence of migration is change. It reorganizes social demography, capital flows, and value systems. Migration creates a sense of upheaval for individual migrants as well as their sending and receiving countries, and communities are transplanted and transformed in the process, for better or worse. Immigration historically generates controversy for the state because it defies borders and incites social tensions, yet it also provides a labor boost for slow economies. Efforts are constantly made to harness migrant flows for the best interests of the state, yet it is an unpredictable force.⁵ Studies on migration are increasingly interdisciplinary, incorporating analysis from economic, sociological, historical, and most recently, political and legal perspectives.⁶ Scholars today differ from earlier theorists by acknowledging that migration is not uniformly "positive" or "negative," but has varied consequences on society and impacts individuals in different ways. One emerging and popular view, *international political economy theory*, analyzes migration with a broad brush and considers its effect upon (and the influences of) all sub-national, national, and transnational interest groups. This postmodern view sees migration as the result of multi-level actors: transnational institutions, such as the United Nations or International Organization on Migration; national policies; globalizing economies and ideas; pro- or anti-immigrant political coalitions; geographical boundaries between nations; and the will of the migrants and their host communities.⁷ Thus, we can under-

stand that Somalis entered the United States as the result of many different factors—primarily pushed away from war and pulled toward economic opportunity—and that their arrival, in turn, will affect many different aspects of life in their new home.

C. Changes in Citizenship

Somalis will not enter their new country as if in a vacuum. They will become part of the fabric that defines the nation, and eventually may be considered formal “citizens,” although this concept has changed over time. In most Western industrialized nations, citizenship holds two functions: (1) to define and unify a civic community, and (2) to endow its members with certain rights and ensure a basic level of welfare. T.H. Marshall advocated for a liberal “welfare state” to uphold these citizenship rights, however, his principles have recently been challenged by neo-liberal theorists and Thatcher-Reaganesque social conservatives. Many American political conservatives now emphasize the necessity of “citizen duties” to complement Marshall’s citizen rights. This philosophy of rights earned by duties, suggestive of Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s social contract, now outweighs Marshall’s social rights in contemporary policies, particularly with regard to non-citizens.⁸ Full and legal citizenship has become increasingly difficult for foreigners to acquire, as the concept has dissolved into a series of debates over the “integration” of immigrants and whether they need or deserve governmental assistance to achieve this goal.

United States history books describe success and social mobility as “pulling yourself up by your bootstraps” or following the principles of “rugged individualism” to achieve the “American Dream.” Some scholars argue that this was not always the case, that earlier immigrants actually received considerable government support. Nonetheless, today’s national policies assume the self-sufficiency of most immigrants and their families. Prior to 1996, all legal permanent residents (including refugees) were eligible for the same welfare benefits as citizens. All U.S. residents received “social” rights including welfare eligibility, whereas citizenship was only required for voting. Now citizenship is required in order to receive most forms of social assistance. Movements like California Proposition 187 attempted to restrict this line of rights even further, by withholding all public services and education from non-citizens, particularly undocumented immigrants. The lines between citizenship and welfare and self-sufficiency are cloudy

at best, and Somali migrants, among others, are caught in the midst of debates that may seriously affect their ability to survive in their new country.

D. Integrating New Americans

Every generation finds a way to categorize new immigrants as “foreign;” the Irish were considered too brash, the Protestants too sacrilegious, and the Italians too dark-skinned. Culture, religion, and race still represent the alien elements in today’s immigrants, many of whom come from undeveloped and/or conflict-ridden countries in the Global South. Past immigration debates promoted ethnic identity politics in the 1970s,⁹ or images of America as an assimilationist “melting pot” or multicultural “mixed salad” to its increasingly diverse population.¹⁰ Today, contemporary views dominate, such as Alejandro Portes’ theory of “segmented” or “downward assimilation” of immigrants into a blue-collar urban society¹¹ or Alba and Nee’s “new assimilation” theory of a more culturally mixed America.¹² However, many immigration experts now look beyond the images of pots and salads to refer to immigrant integration as a “two-way street.” This interdisciplinary adaptation to one’s environment follows the rights-and-duties or “social contract” model to ensure balance. By acknowledging the agency of immigrants, we can develop a mutual “give and take” relationship between immigrants and the host society. This “critical adaptation” results from each community’s impact on the others.¹³

The one certainty about integration is that it requires time. Immigrants first must “resettle” in the new country, and satisfy their immediate needs, such as food, housing, and basic income. As they become familiar with their new environment, a process of “integration” follows as they psychologically adapt to a new “home” and integrate into social networks and economic, political, and cultural activities. Unlike resettlement, which happens over days or weeks, integration may take years or up to a lifetime.¹⁴ According to this model, newcomers and U.S.-born individuals gradually move toward building a new synthesis of community that recognizes and respects both. This is a more holistic definition of resettlement because it considers the short-term and long-term welfare of newcomers as well as the welfare of the entire community.

This article discusses the intersection of these three concepts: migration, citizenship in a welfare state and the idea of a “social contract,”

and the integration of new immigrants. Somali immigrants are entering the United States via proliferating routes and means of migration, as they escape civil war and seek opportunities for education and employment. As legal residents, they are entitled to rights and given responsibilities, yet are also caught up in policy debates over how much (if any) government assistance they should receive. The American public is also indecisive about how to receive the foreigners, as welcome members of society or as unwanted intruders. This essay will outline how Somalis fare and respond to such an immigration climate.

II. Give Me Your Tired and Poor: U.S. Refugee Policy and Process

A. Research Questions and Method

This study is guided by the following key question: *What is the nature of today's climate of immigration and integration?* This is the overriding question guiding this project; however, several preliminary questions are addressed in the following Somali refugee case study:

1. Why have so many Somali refugees come to Minneapolis–St. Paul, Minnesota?
2. In what ways has the United States and Minnesota impacted Somali refugees' resettlement and integration processes?
3. In what ways have Somalis impacted Minneapolis–St. Paul since their arrival?
4. How can an integrated and diverse "New Twin Cities" be re-envisioned according to the needs of both Somalis and prior residents of the Twin Cities?

This research provides a snapshot into the ongoing resettlement and integration of Somalis in the Twin Cities. It features an analysis of major U.S. policy shifts between 1996 and 2006 by assessing the academic literature, national policy briefs, graduate dissertations, and U.S. census and immigration records. Field research on Somali refugee communities consisted of twelve interviews with administrators of six resettlement organizations, two focus groups (male and female), and review of community discussions, publications, and documentaries.¹⁵

B. Entering the United States

New York City's Statue of Liberty stands as a global symbol of freedom, safety, and refuge. It has welcomed newcomers "home" to American shores for more than 120 years. The Hart-Cellar Act lifted the quotas system in 1965 to allow increasing immigration from Africa and Asia, changing the formerly European character of prior immigration flows. Fifteen years later, the Refugee Act established a formal system to accept refugees and asylees.¹⁶ Whereas refugees had previously been admitted in an ad hoc and politically biased process, the Refugee Act modeled the United Nations' admission guidelines from the 1949 Geneva Convention. The Refugee Act was a monumental show of support for global refugees and resettlement programs in third-party countries; the United States alone has admitted over 2.6 million refugees and asylees since 1975.¹⁷ Through the Hart-Cellar and Refugee Acts, the U.S. government institutionalized the values of ethnic diversity and support for victims of persecution. This humanitarian view of accepting foreigners into the United States prevailed throughout the late 20th century. However, swift changes in U.S. political ideology and the social welfare state, beginning in the mid-1980s, soon eroded key elements of this immigration policy paradigm. This section outlines the basic process of refugee resettlement in the United States and Minnesota in particular, and the ways in which internal political and economic changes (specifically welfare reform and the reaction to the attacks of September 11) now threaten U.S. commitments to supporting refugee welfare and welcome.

The first steps of the resettlement process begin overseas, where the State Department evaluates refugees for their potential for "successful resettlement" in the United States. "Voluntary resettlement agencies" (VOLAGs) teach about American culture and government as well as practical skills, such as how to use foreign appliances.¹⁸ Once the refugees finally arrive, the broader social processes of "resettling" and "adapting" are decidedly more complicated. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services takes over from the State Department to coordinate hundreds of public and non-profit refugee service providers across the country. Ten national VOLAGs are contracted to case manage new refugees and, with \$425 per capita over 90 days, provide each refugee with "core" resettlement services like access to housing and food, home visits, and referrals to employment and education programs. After this period, refugees are served by a network of public

services, non-profit organizations, and community and family members.

In Minnesota, the Department of Human Services (DHS) oversees local networks, including partnerships between “mainstream”¹⁹ and ethnic community-based efforts to serve refugee needs. It works primarily with high-capacity mainstream organizations, such as Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota and Catholic Charities. DHS also provides technical support and capacity building for smaller, community-based organizations that often arise to serve specific (and often new) refugee and immigrant communities. Known as Mutual Assistance Associations (MAAs), these organizations are created and led by more established former refugee members of the ethnic community to aid newcomers.

An overall “resettlement infrastructure” is organically constructed, particularly in urban areas, to serve new refugees in a decentralized, public-nonprofit network of social services. This network of outside assistance, coupled with mutual efforts by prior and new arrivals, has supported refugees in cities across the United States for decades. However, this collaborative support network is among the first elements of U.S. refugee resettlement efforts to suffer from shifts in legislation and funding.

C. Minnesota’s Resettlement Climate: Contradictions

Although an unlikely destination for any traveler, something about wintry Minnesota has attracted a steady stream of immigrants and refugees from East Africa, Laos, and Thailand for over 20 years.²⁰ Aside from the inclement weather, most of these immigrants enjoy the state and cite similar reasons for their choice: plentiful (skilled and unskilled) jobs, good public schools, an existing community of their ethnic or national origin, and a warm social welcome. Minnesota has a long history of progressive politics and a dynamic business community. It is nationally recognized for its abundant educational opportunities, relatively low urban poverty and crime rates, commitment to public health and safety, and overall high standard of living.²¹ Despite some urban-rural differences, the Twin Cities are politically left-leaning and have produced national figures, such as Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey and Senator Paul Wellstone, who both supported immigration and safety-net programs for the poor. The state has long provided generous public assistance programs to all eligible individuals

and families, and its statewide public education system is considered a national model. Twenty-eight percent of state expenditures go to social welfare programs, and the Twin Cities offer a plethora of social services, ranging from non-profit organizations and neighborhood associations to homeless shelters and food shelters.²²

The Economist published an article in 1999 titled, "Minnesota's Job Market: Land of 10,000 Opportunities," bringing national attention to the thriving economy and high citizen-participation rates common to Midwestern states.²³ In addition to an active private sector, Minnesota has dynamic public and non-profit sectors and a social culture of "Minnesota nice," built up from generations of civic engagement and volunteerism facilitated by faith communities and other organizations. Minnesota is home to the nation's first immigrant settlement houses and battered women's shelters, and was among the first states to accept Holocaust survivors into the United States in 1948.²⁴ If a large job market first enticed Somalis to Minnesota, it is likely that the government and community support they receive persuaded them to stay and invite their families to join them.

Yet Minnesota is not impervious to change. Despite a history of Democrats holding the majority in congressional politics, Republicans have grown in numbers and power in recent years. Soon after fiscal conservatism emerged on the national stage, it was felt in Minnesota as well, and budget cuts in historic social programs were rationalized by the "economic crisis" faced by state and local governments across the country. One Hennepin County employee admits that, "the tone of Minnesota has changed over the last few years," particularly since Governor Tim Pawlenty came into office with an anti-illegal-immigration campaign, which spawned negative media attention around undocumented immigrants. He also pushed (unsuccessfully) for driver's licenses to state one's legal status.²⁵ The employee continued, saying, "given the political flavor in Minnesota right now, you've got still some remaining liberals who are fine with extending benefits, but they're saying let's pick our battles and maybe this is one we don't really want to fight." According to this county employee, the future of Minnesota's traditionally warm welcome and social programs for immigrants and refugees, despite their history, is increasingly subject to fluctuations in the budget.

D. Cracks in the Welfare State

After decades of liberal social programs throughout the Great Society period and Civil Rights revolution, conservative Republicans, such as President Ronald Reagan, promoted a swift change in the role of government and assistance for society's young, elderly, disabled, and working classes. Between 1996 and 2006, unprecedented change occurred in American values and views, particularly regarding foreigners: Democrats who had historically supported welfare programs turned against them on the basis of "economic inefficiencies," and *laissez-faire* economics was believed to lift all U.S. residents out of poverty, through employment. To relieve overburdened budgets, non-citizens were removed from key assistance programs and immigrants who threatened to place too large a demand on the state were denied residency papers. Then, to add to the mix, a handful of Muslim men crashed planes into the World Trade Center in 2001, and dark-skinned and Muslim foreigners across the United States were suspected as threats to national security. Immigrants and refugees who arrived during this period entered a different America than had existed in the years following the Hart-Cellar and Refugee Acts.

According to an interviewee at the Department of Homeland Security (DHS),²⁶ the policy changes from 1996 have, above all other recent events, had the largest "downstream" effects on refugee and refugee families' access to public assistance. Welfare²⁷ first came under attack by social and fiscal conservatives who criticized the system as inefficient and costly. They viewed "welfare checks" as disincentives to work that fostered a culture of unemployment and poverty. Public debates played off of perceptions of "welfare queen" single mothers who chose to live idly on the largesse of the government, rather than looking for work. This popular—however exaggerated—image, as well as the increased financial strain of funding the welfare program, generated bipartisan support for the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act (PRWORA), and Democratic President Bill Clinton signed the Act into law.

Welfare reform transformed the nature of public assistance by imposing new restrictions on programs and eligibility, including a five-year time limit, and reducing caseloads up to 75 percent.²⁸ Yet PRWORA also included lesser-known provisions with landmark impacts on non-citizen communities in the United States. The Act was the first piece of national legislation to differentiate between citizens and non-citizens

in their eligibility for public benefits. Prior to 1996, any U.S. resident could qualify for welfare, regardless of legal status. After PRWORA, eligibility for most federally funded benefits was tied to an additional factor: legal status. Citizens could receive assistance for up to five cumulative years throughout their lifetime, while refugees could only receive assistance for their first five years in the United States;²⁹ legal permanent residents were barred from assistance for their first five years (and then could only receive benefits from the state); and undocumented immigrants were barred indefinitely from all national and most state-funded assistance.³⁰

These non-citizen provisions were added in response to claims that immigrants were weighing down welfare caseloads and perhaps coming to the United States expressly for the prospect of “free” benefits. Immigrants were using significant amounts of public assistance, evidenced by Congressional Research Service reports showing non-citizen welfare participation rates nearly doubled between 1989 (7%) and 1996 (12%).³¹ The Act had the anticipated effect of pushing non-citizens’ welfare rates back down to 8% by 2001, and again was hailed an economic success.³²

To explain such a dramatic fall in welfare use among citizens and non-citizens alike, many assume that low-income Americans have since found employment and raised their standard of living or that non-citizens have been naturalized. But Michael Fix, Vice President of the Migration Policy Institute, challenges this conclusion with the concern that families may have left welfare, but without necessarily achieving full self-sufficiency. He commented at a Brookings Institution Welfare and Beyond Forum in 2002:

We see steep declines in benefit use for refugees, declines that we can’t fully explain. We see especially steep declines among poor families living in states with fast-growing immigrant populations and poorest safety nets. And we see that naturalization and income gains do not explain most of these declines.³³

At least in part, state-funded assistance programs fill some of this welfare gap. Thirty-five states created additional allocations to fund assistance programs for non-citizens beyond what PRWORA prescribed.³⁴ Neither federal nor state programs, however, are open to undocumented immigrants and, as one Hennepin County employee remarked, “many of them are on the streets.” Non-citizen populations

are swiftly growing in states like Texas and Ohio because of their large job markets, yet such states offer virtually no safety-net assistance to women, children, the elderly or disabled, or other non-citizens who may need health insurance or temporary unemployment assistance.³⁵ As one's access to assistance is contingent on state-provided programs, location, like legal status, has become another primary factor in immigrant and refugee welfare.

State and local institutions traditionally bore the brunt of immigration costs by providing English classes, expanding public transportation systems, building affordable housing, and increasing funding to schools and health clinics for special resources such as translators and cultural training. The passage of PRWORA in 1996 only shifted costs more heavily onto the states and counties already burdened with large and growing immigrant populations.

The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1997 caused a further downward shift in costs, placing additional financial responsibility on immigrants who wished to bring family members to join them in the United States. The 1997 law legally activated the broad principles of the public charge doctrine and required all non-refugee immigrants to enter or remain in the U.S. based on *sponsorship*. Citizen or permanent-resident family members and employers could sponsor new immigrants by agreeing to take full financial responsibility and concede their own eligibility for public benefits for the first five years. Because reuniting family in the new country is of such importance for immigrants, one Hennepin County manager critically questions the logic and effectiveness of the sponsorship principle:

I certainly understand where the federal government was coming from when they implemented [this law], but I also understand that if I had family member who was in a refugee camp and hungry and in less than hygienic conditions...I would sign anything they asked me to sign or that I thought I could sign in order to get that family member over to where I was and to have a better life. So, whether that means I thought I could actually take care of them or not, I sure as hell would say I could.³⁶

The sponsorship policy is certainly effective in keeping immigrants off of welfare caseloads, but despite its purpose of guiding immigrants to help support one another, the requirements may instead increase downward pressure on their overall welfare.

Additional cause for concern about immigrant welfare is the result of the negative casting of welfare recipients in the public debates as “lazy” or manipulating the system for free money.³⁷ Many immigrants avoid public services, either because they would be prohibited from sponsoring family visas, or they could be deported as “public charges” or be exposed as undocumented. For instance, WIC, a free nutrition education program for pregnant mothers and children, is one of the few state-funded programs in Minnesota that is offered to anyone, regardless of legal status. A Hennepin county WIC staff member speculates that WIC’s Latino clientele dropped over the past decade because of these “chilling” effects reaching across all Latina mothers in all public programs, both documented and undocumented.³⁸

Fix also comments on the “spillover effect” of welfare fear in mixed citizen/non-citizen families:

Now of course one of the lessons, at least for me, of welfare reform is that it’s very difficult to target cuts at one population without having spillover effects on other populations...According to the census, 85% of children in families with a legal immigrant parent are themselves citizens, and in the wake of welfare reform what we see is that citizen children in these mixed status families are less likely to receive TANF and food stamps and are more likely to be uninsured than poor kids in citizen families. We see the same kind of spillover effect among refugee populations.³⁹

Thus, the overall health and wealth of non-citizen populations has been at increased risk since welfare reform, despite nominal increases in their employment rates and decreased dependence on public programs. Economist George Borjas claims that food insecurity has risen among immigrant families, who may lack the income to buy nutritious food and yet are ineligible for healthy food programs such as Food Stamps.⁴⁰ Welfare reform has mixed results in citizen and non-citizen communities alike. The reforms reduced welfare caseloads and raised employment statistics. However, the reform and stigmatization of welfare recipients affects non-citizens so strongly that many eligible and needy families risk their well being and health in order to avoid legal repercussions and to sponsor family members as new immigrants. Moreover, costs that were eliminated at the national level were simply shifted elsewhere—to state budgets and to the sponsoring families of new immigrants.

Welfare reform was enacted in the spirit of Douglas Massey's "social contract": only those that attempt to work are allowed temporary assistance. However, the reformed public assistance system affected non-citizens in unexpectedly harsh ways. Instead of supporting a target needy population to achieve self-sufficiency, welfare reform exacerbated the potential to compound poverty and overwhelm local governments.⁴¹

E. Terrorism Breeds Social and Economics Fears

When terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center Towers and the Pentagon occurred on September 11, 2001, all U.S. residents felt the shock—citizens, immigrants, and refugees alike. During the period of grief, Americans were both touched and traumatized, making the lasting effects of 9/11 not only economic and political, but personal. The personal characteristics of the hijackers became immediately relevant information. The nation's interest in post-9/11 immigration thus shifted from how many immigrants enter the United States to a stronger interest in *who* enters and their national origin, religion, ethnicity, and past history relative to potential terrorist organizations.⁴² New background check requirements were added to an already backlogged visa application process, and rumors circulated that applications from certain national groups (including Middle Easterners, East Africans, and those from the Caribbean) were indefinitely wait listed. A particularly controversial federal program called NSEERS⁴³ required all adult males from Arab and Muslim countries to register and be interviewed annually in order to track their activities. Deportation proceedings also spiked following September 11, as hundreds of Arab males were removed for minor crimes and due-process rights were temporarily eliminated.⁴⁴

In Minneapolis and St. Paul, Somali individuals and communities were on the alert for their personal safety. One man who was quoted on Minnesota Public Radio remarked that he was fearful about his wife walking to the store alone at night and that his children might hear anti-Muslim slurs as they walked to school. Yet above all, he was shocked and pained to hear his six-year-old son ask, after hearing of the search for Osama bin Laden, "is the government going to kill us, and all Muslims?"⁴⁵ Other Minnesota Muslims remember being labeled "terrorists," spat on, and told to "go back home" in the weeks and months following 9/11.⁴⁶

Police harassment and high-profile tragedies incited community-wide anger and anxiety. Shortly after the attacks, a 66-year-old Somali elder was assaulted without cause while waiting at a bus stop and later died in the hospital. Police initially disregarded witnesses' testimony of a tall, white male attacker and the medical examiner identified natural causes for death. Later, the attack was verified as a homicide. In another incident, a 28-year-old Somali man with a history of mental illness was shot repeatedly by six Minneapolis police when he charged at them with a machete and crowbar. The police claimed that they had followed appropriate procedure before shooting in self-defense, but the Somali and neighboring communities nonetheless were outraged and accused the officers of excessive force.

In November of 2001, several money-wiring services in Minneapolis were suspended and investigated for allegedly financing Islamic terrorists. Many Somalis were shocked—first, at the prospect of their charitable contributions being used for terrorist groups, and second, at the devastating impact that would follow from being unable to send money to support remaining family members in Somalia or in refugee camps. One man recalled of his local money wiring company:

When Al Barakaat was closed, everybody felt that other will be closed. Families back home were calling, [saying] 'Will I be getting this month's money, what's going to happen?' People here didn't know. Some people here even went so far as, 'Should I even go to these places to send money? What if I'm accused of sending money?' Some people came to me, and said 'Can I go to this one that's open? Can they trace me back?' We tell them sending money is not a crime.⁴⁶

Later the same year, the FBI conducted numerous "information gathering" interviews with young Somali men, again raising security concerns in this community. The executive director of a prominent community organization recalls how Somalis' fears of the FBI were heightened by their history of political persecution in Somalia:

In Somalia there was a dictatorship for 20 years, and if the police knocked on your door, you were in real trouble. It's not like, 'come here and talk to us voluntarily...So I'm really sure that people will be worried if they were called by the police or the FBI for an interview...What we do not agree with is simply to have a net-casting of people, simply because of their religion, simply because of their ethnic background, or simply because of their country of origin. That is not the American way.⁴⁷

Although most events were minor personal injuries and isolated incidents, rumors spread swiftly throughout the close communities and exaggerated existing fears of political persecution across all Somalis.

Perhaps the most ubiquitous and enduring effect of 9/11 on non-citizens, more than isolated targeting, was felt in the turn toward fiscal conservatism. Businesses and employees suffered the lingering effects of increasing national security and defense expenditures as the funding for domestic social services dwindled.⁴⁸ Tourist, hotel, dining, and travel industries took serious hits in the months following the attacks, forcing companies to lay off hundreds of thousands of workers in 2002 alone.⁴⁹ Minnesota had been gradually reducing benefits for non-citizens since 2000, but severe budget cuts between 2002 and 2003 led to the reduction or elimination of several key assistance programs for all low-income populations, but particularly for non-citizen, low-income communities. Food stamp programs for legal permanent residents were reduced, so that only permanent residents above the age of 50 could qualify for food assistance, a "basic need."⁵⁰ Emergency medical services were also cut for non-immigrant visitors, and refugee cash assistance steadily dwindled, from 36 months to only 8 months of coverage.

In the non-profit sector, funding from all sources has become more rare and difficult to secure. Mutual assistance associations increasingly struggle to find funding, specifically for basic operating costs and broad populations. An employee at the Brian Coyle Community Center, which serves the densest population of Somalis in the Twin Cities, remarks that he has lost some flexibility and autonomy in his services:

Foundations, for the past 10 years, used to give grants to support services for anyone without a job, but now they only focus on narrow issues, like seniors or for crime prevention. So you have to adjust your mission, and sometimes it's hard. Foundations come out and check up on the org. You have to be very transparent. I only can serve about 6 out of 10 [clients], because of narrow funding, limited money in certain areas, and can only use volunteers.⁵¹

Another Brian Coyle Center administrator agrees, speaking of the growing gaps in youth and health program funding:

The grants are also focused too narrowly. Foundations focus on funding *outcomes*, not operating costs. You know, there's no loose money anymore, for technology—and technology gets really expensive for nonprofits—for phones, heat, electricity. All the foundations want to fund a staff member and a particular program, but we have other costs too...There's less youth money, less for basic health needs, there's more targeted toward mental health...And recently there's been a downward cycle of funding from state and federal sources.⁵²

Even the state of Minnesota, despite its traditions of social liberalism and tolerance of newcomers, is impacted by changes in federal policy and economic resources. The “power of the purse” is illuminated in this case. States are allowed to create policies and elect leaders that resonate with the opinions and values of the state residents; however, shrinking federal resources translate into shrinking state and local resources. This compounds the pressure for “self-sufficiency” at the local level since virtually no support exists at the national level and support is falling even at the state level. Thus, the requirements of survival—housing, jobs, learning English, health care, cultural adjustment, maintaining families, etc.—must happen by the grace of local resources and the will of immigrant families themselves.

III. Triple Trauma: Individual Obstacles and Community Support

A. The Un-Televised America

One Somali elder describes his first experience with winter as complete bewilderment. A friend had prepared him for icy sidewalks, but he hadn't known to wear a hat, and during his first venture outside he feared his ears were “breaking off.”⁵³ Many Somalis cited surprise, awe, confusion, and culture shock in regards to Minnesota weather, landscape, and society as their initial impressions of the United States.⁵⁴ Yet, as one community cleric explained, “many Somalis assume that once you go to America, it's just blissfulness and enjoyment and fun and easy life. And that's not the case.”⁵⁵ A Hennepin County employee echoes this sense of disconnect between the American ideal and the refugee experience:

From abroad, a lot of people think the United States is rich—we say we're the most powerful nation—and so when [resettlement agencies] say ‘You're going to the United States,’ [Somalis] believe that the United

States is going to take care of them. I don't know that that's necessarily true, but I don't think we do a good enough job up front of explaining that that's not the case. When they got here, I think they expected things to be very different.⁵⁶

Although the standard of living in the United States is an improvement on that of still embattled Somalia, or on refugee camps, many Somalis do struggle with financial and psychosocial challenges in their new home. They enter American life not only as foreigners, but many enter as low-income families, non-English speakers, and victims of psychological trauma in the throes of yet another life transition. From their homeland to refugee camps to the resettlement country, it may be their third transition. For many, moving to the United States was, in fact, a third and unexpected source of emotional trauma.

Abundant jobs, education, and housing were found to be three primary factors that first attracted Somalis to Minnesota's Twin Cities.⁵⁷ A Somali lawyer at Legal Aid claims:

These are doctors, lawyers, judges, poets, and all this but they're driving taxis instead because they can't make it here. For example, you remember the man who was just here... he is a poet. That disk was full of poems, thousands, and it would be a great asset to American society, if they were translated to English. But it would take a long time for him to translate them, and he can't afford to do that. He has to take care of his family here and also his family back home in Somalia.⁵⁸

However, Somalis' access to each of these life essentials has been impaired by the changing legislative, social, and economic climate since 1996. These changes threaten the social mobility opportunities for Somali refugees (particularly future generations) as well as negatively affect their self-esteem and identity formation as Somali-Americans. This section documents their challenges and the unique internal support networks that Somalis employ to overcome obstacles and the threat of "triple trauma" in their own ethnic communities.

1. Obstacles in Income

A resettlement agency director claims that, "everyone assumes that we must be on welfare," but he asserts "Somalis come here for work, not for welfare."⁵⁹ In fact, Somalis are considered among the least welfare-dependent groups in Minnesota. A "self-support" index mea-

tures that Somalis' ratings rose from 30% in 1999 to over 80% in certain Minnesota counties.⁶⁰ The community is still relatively new, and most families are fully covered by health insurance and public assistance if they are eligible. However, welfare's time limits now persuade many to opt out of or shorten their English or professional re-certification classes in order to work to support large families and send remittances overseas. Since 9/11, noticeable religious discrimination has impacted Somalis' chances at employment. A focus group participant from a 2001 study explained that, "a woman with *xijaab* will get a job last, when it's impossible to get help, because companies don't like to hire us." One Somali lawyer agreed that cases like these had increased dramatically following the attacks on the World Trade Center and publicity about Osama bin Laden and Muslim covering traditions in the Middle East. In their first few years as refugees, most Somalis will be eligible for assistance in finding employment and will receive government-sponsored health care. However, concerns may arise after their first five years in the country, when Somalis lose access to assistance and may struggle to find secure employment, and the elderly and disabled may lose supplemental income (SSI). Naturalizing as U.S. citizens and learning English is increasingly critical for this population in order to maintain their income, particularly for non-working individuals such as the elderly and disabled.

2. Obstacles in Education

Quality public schools and institutions of higher education, including the University of Minnesota, make the Twin Cities a premier center for both private and public education. One interviewee from the Minnesota Historical Society described education as having "always been important to Somalis." She had been told that, "when the war happened and there was no more infrastructure to provide that education, America became one, of a few places, became an accessible place to go and get a quality education for their kids."⁶¹ However, students are undereducated when they enter the States, don't speak English, have little parent support in education, and then are thrown in with peers with little hope of "catching up." University of Minnesota professor and immigration scholar Katherine Fennelly writes:

Many immigrant children are from families working multiple jobs, so parents aren't around, and some families are quite impoverished. Young

children are not really ready for school, because the parents/grandparents do not speak English and do not have access to bilingual preschool programs.⁶²

While the need for bilingual and English language teachers soars, federal and state cuts in education funding only contribute to the overall decline in public school education in Minneapolis and St. Paul. One state legislator gave K–12 schools “a failing grade for the state, and a C in the Metro area,” explaining that “the results don’t lie—immigrant youth have high drop-out rates.”⁶³ President Bush’s No Child Left Behind initiative stripped funding from “under-performing” schools. Consequently, schools in more immigrant-heavy areas have less funding. According to one foundation officer:

We have seen major disinvestments in after school programs, which are very important in young people’s identity and social support, considering that their parents are pretty much employed. You have to have consistency, you have to challenge young people, and we are not doing that with after school programs. You have success stories, but if you look at the graduation rate, we are losing ground with immigrants and refugees, just as we have with African Americans and Native Americans.⁶⁴

Education as a “great equalizer” is threatened by both funding shortages and sudden influxes of non-English-speaking children that require resources to be pulled from other areas for specialized attention and curricula. Definite strides have been made in improving the schools on tight budgets, especially in the St. Paul districts. As spending cuts continue, however, the future is uncertain.

Developing self-esteem and a firm sense of identity is another crucial element of elementary and secondary education. Unfortunately, it marks another major battle for young Somalis transitioning to the Twin Cities today. Somali traditions in conservative dress, behavior, and values already differ widely from the ideals of individualism and liberal attitudes toward sex and drugs that define contemporary American youth culture. However, their foreign dress, unfamiliar accents, and behavior make Somali youth vulnerable to teasing by other students. Perhaps the worst impact of September 11 is seen now in schools, where U.S.-born students mock the *xijaab* or call out Muslim classmates as terrorists, mimicking media caricatures of Islam. This has damaging and long-term effects on second-generation Somalis and their self-confidence.

3. Obstacles in Housing

In order to establish a true sense of belonging in a new place, one must first have a tangible, physical "home." Because of refugees' likelihood to receive low wages while supporting large families, they tend to congregate in high density, low-cost housing projects. Somali and other East African populations are most concentrated in complexes such as Riverside Plaza Apartments in South Minneapolis or in St. Paul's Skyline Towers on University Avenue. Both of these areas are locally dubbed "Little Somalia" or "Vertical Africa." Unfortunately, many of these same complexes are nicknamed "ghetto in the sky" or "crack towers" because of the poverty, depression, poor upkeep, idle youth, and crime that linger there. There are few affordable alternatives. Somalis may be rejected from apartments because they lack rental history or because of language or cultural misunderstandings. Just as in public education, federal budget cuts have had detrimental effects on the availability of affordable and "section eight" subsidized housing in Minneapolis and St. Paul. Gentrification projects across the Twin Cities are also raising property values out of the reach of many low-income, largely minority communities, including Somali and other refugee populations.

All refugees receive immediate temporary housing in their first 90 days in the country; however, this generous accommodation comes with a price. In an increasingly tight housing market, refugee groups were once given their immediate housing in a complex with such a high demand that two years' worth of low-income and minority residents were on its waiting list.⁶⁵ When Somali refugees were given first preference in the new units, it is said that serious "trust issues" developed between African Americans and the Somalis, according to an employee of the Brian Coyle Community Center. In a post-9/11 period of economic instability, especially for historically disadvantaged groups such as African Americans, Somalis were seen as privileged competitors for limited jobs, resources, and services throughout the cities. Despite the preferential treatment they receive through resettlement programs, all Somalis' rental assistance ends after 90 days, at which point they find themselves facing the same barriers to affordable housing as other immigrant and minority populations.

IV. A Community Responds

A. Somali Support Networks

A degree of self-sufficiency has always been required for immigrants to adapt to their new country and overcome the inevitable obstacles of language and culture, in order to re-create a meaningful life in a new place. Somalis are not alone in facing such obstacles, although they face a steeper climb to well being and integration than did some past generations of immigrants. Thus, according to a social contract of “rights” and “duties,” U.S. policymakers require that Somalis be innovative in ensuring their own survival. Somalis have done so by creating community organizations and becoming outspoken advocates for their needs.

The Confederation of Somali Community in Minnesota (CSCM) was the first Somali-led organization in Minnesota. Established in 1994, CSCM was founded by several Somali men in order to provide counsel and English training to incoming Somalis and unite the local diasporic community across clan differences. CSCM today is located in the Brian Coyle Center Building in the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood of South Minneapolis, within the densest neighborhood concentration of Somalis in the country. The organization is grant funded, employs 15 staff members (14 of which are East African) and is overseen by a 14-member Board of Directors (10 of which are East African). Its mission is “to strengthen the capacity of Somalis in Minnesota to become contributing members of society, while keeping their culture,” and offers youth mentoring, job seeking, advocacy, women’s support, and community education. The Brian Coyle Center plays a “parenting” role to CSCM by helping to establish policies and build capacity, and renting its space for East African organizations like CSCM to easily reach East Africans, lessening the burdens of transportation and interpretation.⁶⁶ Brian Coyle Center is one of nine community centers funded and coordinated by Pillsbury United Communities, a non-profit agency descended from the late 19th century tradition of settlement houses to improve the quality of life in urban slums.⁶⁷

Interviewees at Brian Coyle and CSCM both admitted that Somalis’ long-term integration into Minnesota society is not likely to happen directly through their programs; they have limited contact with outsiders due to the isolated nature of the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood, bordered by highways. However, they stressed the importance of pro-

viding for new arrivals' immediate needs in an informal, communal environment, and allowing an internal community to build among this "gateway" neighborhood of new Minneapolis residents. As one interviewee noted:

I see a resettlement agency being something like Lutheran Social Services, with offices and departments, like a government office. We offer the same services, but it's just a different approach. We're more holistic, casual...I wouldn't say it's a better way, but just a different model.⁶⁸

An interviewee at CSCM also mentioned the sense of ownership that local Somalis feel about the Center and CSCM as an organization made of their community members and serving community interests. "Somalis come and they feel like the organization is theirs," he said, continuing, "they feel welcomed."⁶⁹ Staff members give an extraordinary amount of attention to their clients, driving them to doctors' appointments and meetings, donating money when someone cannot pay his or her monthly rent, writing letters to employers on their behalf, and coaching them for citizenship interviews.

CSCM is better than mainstream agencies (for example, the International Institute of Minnesota) because they have fewer people to serve and can focus on one community, they know the culture. New refugees can communicate with the CSCM leaders, even after hours and they have greater ownership over 'this is our community' and then when they become self-sufficient they get involved in the community to give back. They consider Brian Coyle 'their own home.'⁷⁰

Voluntary contributions also come from the community. CSCM manages up to 80 volunteers each year to operate its programs, and over 30 Somali elders also work in the community to resolve disputes, deal with domestic abuse issues, help with cultural celebrations, and mentor young people. Community centers like Brian Coyle and CSCM help preserve a sense of home and guide families through cultural transitions by rebuilding family and community unity and strength. The common concern of CSCM and Pillsbury United is funding. CSCM, for example, faces an overwhelming need for programs such as English language classes, daycare, and the skill-building program for East African women, yet funding shortages keep the waiting list nearly as long as the list of participants.⁷¹

Compared to other community-based social service organizations, the African Development Center (ADC) has a much more specialized focus. It serves as a bridge to help established African immigrants improve their income and community development opportunities. The executive director worked as a Wells Fargo banker for 12 years and then transferred his financial and leadership skills to the African immigrant community. In 2004, he established the ADC as a catalyst for training, integrating, and generating wealth for entrepreneurial Africans. ADC services consist of extended training and workshops to orient Africans with American concepts, such as credit scores, loans (with standard interest or interest-free Islamic financing), mortgages, and other elements of business and home ownership. As a community development corporation, ADC occupies an important role in building the leadership and self-sufficiency capacity of African immigrants in the Twin Cities. Their work is “beyond resettlement” in many ways, by investing in Somalis’ economic and social capital for long-term growth. Both CSCM and ADC benefit the Somali population by creating jobs, providing resettlement services directly in the community in a familiar cultural setting, and strengthening the community’s ability to operate organizations and build wealth. Despite their individual challenges, Somalis as a community have learned to adapt and thrive by their own will and creativity.

Unfortunately, some Somalis’ will to survive also creates a backlash. Some employees in public assistance offices and public schools have picked up on an “aggressive, dig every hole” assertive behavior in some Somalis, and these individuals have tainted the reputation of all Somalis.⁷² One Hennepin County employee explains:

I think the [Somali] community is one that wants to work, wants to have their own money, wants to contribute. But they learn very quickly that there are rules and rights that protect them and entitle them to certain things that they, to some degree, not all, have become very demanding and vocal, for example the prayer or mediation rooms. It isn’t a ‘this would be wonderful if you could accommodate this’ it’s a ‘I need this, I want this’...And I think part of that comes from their coming from a society pretty much of bartering, and the government officials were corrupt, and so they think the more pressure they put on you, the more likely they are to get what they want.⁷³

She justified her comments, saying that, “many of them are, besides being my staff, my friends, and they’re just wonderful people in the

community.” Setting the majority aside, however, she notices that a small section of overly assertive Somalis “are getting a stigma, and that hurts [all of] them.”

Local media also freely broadcasts Somalis’ requests for religious accommodation: Somali taxi drivers refusing to transport alcohol or refusing to handle pork products as grocery cashiers, or their requests for Somali signs and prayer rooms at the Minneapolis–St. Paul International Airport. Public schools have been overwhelmed by numerous requests from Somali parents, while some families leave the schools altogether for Qur’anic schools that uphold traditional Somali culture. This strong advocacy from Somalis is understandable, however it may negatively impact the future. In their efforts to preserve cultural traditions and community, Somalis may overly isolate themselves and limit their children’s opportunities to grow up bi-culturally and eventually merge into U.S. society.

Moreover, as the economy wanes and jobs are scarce, economic mobility and the classic integration pattern of immigrants eventually dispersing beyond ethnic enclaves is changing. One employee at the Brian Coyle Center claims that “[Somalis] are beginning to feel the wall and feel that they can’t advance and move up...there are more Somali single parents, we’re starting to see Somali gangs...it’s like they’re learning what institutional racism is.”⁷⁴ Another employee elaborates:

I think we’re at a crossroads...usually [the Cedar-Riverside] neighborhood turns over with new immigrant groups—before in the 1980s there were Vietnamese and Koreans here, and then it turned over to East Africans in the ’90s. But it hasn’t turned over yet [as I expected it would by this time]. It seems like the Somalis are afraid to leave because they’re comfortable here, they have their mosques and their grocery stores. I have some friends who live out in Burnsville and their kids get taunted in school. It seems like no one wants to move out from this isolated area.⁷⁵

Some Somalis have left the city for rural factory jobs, yet those that remain in the Twin Cities are beginning to find themselves “stuck in the underclass,” and cling to tight-knit, culturally comfortable enclaves. It is those same enclaves that have helped them survive in a difficult immigration climate, but for how long is it healthy to avoid mainstream society? Eventually such self-segregation will have consequences for their relations with native-born Minnesotans.

B. Concerns for Integration

Somali refugees had already exhibited a coping strategy of relocation by moving from other areas of the United States to Minnesota for its abundant economic resources, public spending, and tolerance for diversity. When these conditions began to change between 1996 and 2006, research indicates that Somali refugees reacted in two ways: (1) Creating and relying more heavily on African- or Somali-led organizations in order to foster community cohesion and provide employment, education, and housing opportunities within Somali communities (rather than in mainstream companies and institutions), and (2) Requesting special accommodations or exemptions in order to maintain Islamic and Somali cultural traditions. This suggests that, in response to a decreasing job market and public resources and increasing social hostility, Somali refugees seem to retreat into their own communities and religious and cultural traditions for support. Despite their challenges, Somalis do not seem to be falling to the “bottom of the melting pot” to be burned. Instead their communities are thriving: people are gaining advanced degrees, starting small businesses, and beginning to finance their own homes. They embody U.S. immigration policies’ emphasis on self-sufficiency as well as the sociological concept of “collective efficacy,” that cohesive communities provide support and agency for group problem solving.⁷⁶ The executive director of New Americans Community Services highlights Somalis’ motivations:

Somalis, when given the opportunity, to some degree, like self-sufficiency. That’s first. Then secondly, we have bigger families and like sending money back home. We want to work hard, pay our bills here, and have enough to send back to family in Somalia or wherever. We have inter-family dependency...We just brought [the culture of] Africa here, brought Somalia here, with the way we depend on each other.⁷⁷

This community strength results from a combination of African family tradition, strong diasporic bonds, and the unique need for Somalis to unite and overcome the divisions that still plague Somalia. The research also supports the conclusion that, because the political and social changes that occurred between 1996 and 2006 limited tolerance for both social and economic flexibility, Somalis are forced to adapt culturally in addition to losing funding for their internal organizational supports. Not only does America send the message that Somali

culture and religion is potentially threatening (in its association with Islamic fundamentalists), but that the institutions, charter schools, and cultural centers that celebrate Somali traditions also cannot be funded by the state or mainstream America. Besides facilitating Somalis' initial relocation, the United States does much less in the way of a welcome—materially or symbolically—for the Somalis than was done for immigrants and refugees in years past.

Because of this growing imbalance, Somali communities may be at risk of becoming isolated and not fully reaching the last stage of resettlement, *integration*. Somalis, other minority and immigrant communities, and mainstream Minnesotans now face the collective challenge of initiating collaborative projects, engaging with one another, respecting one another's boundaries and limitations, and re-envisioning a new Minneapolis and St. Paul for all. The final section of this essay will address possible models for this collaborative process.

V. Re-Envisioning an Integrated Twin Cities

The terms "cultural brokering," "bridging," and "cultural liaison" resurfaced multiple times in my interviews, visits, and interactions with Somali refugees. The process of "brokering" refugee adjustment is done first by large, contractual resettlement agencies, such as Catholic Charities, yet after 90 days, refugees must navigate this process virtually on their own. Public and non-profit organizations step in to aid this "brokering" between Somalis' needs and U.S. systems of services in order to ease any miscommunications and complications that may arise. Nevertheless, the relationships between Somalis and native-born Americans are facilitated by individuals. Thus, in addition to balancing financial responsibilities, cross-cultural learning for all individuals is a crucial element in resettlement and integration to moderate the extreme views and clumsy stereotypes that develop between misinformed communities.

A certain amount of self-sufficiency is expected from newcomers to prevent the state from becoming overburdened, yet the state should at least show rhetorical support for the most rooted elements of newcomers' identity, such as religion or culture, and should sponsor public events and discussions. Somalis should also make efforts to interact with non-Somalis whenever possible. If these objectives are achieved, neither group should be economically overextended nor pressured to change the fundamental elements of its identity as a source of commu-

nity cohesion and strength. Cross-cultural learning, or public education, then, is the final component to inform groups about one another, eradicate distorted stereotypes and fears, and create a common history upon which new conceptions of community can be constructed. Several remarkable examples of contributions, leadership, and public education in the Twin Cities have helped to ease the burdens of change as Somalis enter this new space.

This is not to suggest that re-envisioning and rebuilding a community are without challenges. The future long-term resettlement of Somali refugees is at risk as the result of compounding social and economic factors. Such factors include negative perceptions of welfare dependents, enduring subtle racism and assumptions about the “privileges” given to immigrants and refugees, and fears over Muslims in the United States. Nevertheless, Somalis’ best coping strategies—creating organizations and strong self-advocacy—are sources of both support and tension, as they risk harming future relations with Minnesotans. A truly re-envisioned and integrated Twin Cities will require cultural brokering; its members will need to dialogue, take stock of their contributions and burdens, and collectively choose the journey forward.⁷⁸

Notes

1. H.D.S. Greenway, “Standing Up to Prejudice,” *Boston Globe* (1 August 2006).
2. Kelley Bouchard, “Lewiston Somalis Bewildered,” *Kennebec Journal* (5 October 2002).
3. *The Letter*. Director Ziad H. Hamzeh. Hamzeh Mistique Films (2003).
4. *Xijaab* is the Somali equivalent of the *hijab*, a veil or covering worn by many Muslim women.
5. Barbara Schmitter Heisler, “The Sociology of Immigration: From Assimilation to Segmented Integration, from the American Experience to the Global Arena,” *Migration Theory*, edited by Caroline B. Brettell and James F. Hollifield, 77–97 (New York: Routledge, 2000).
6. Caroline B. Brettell and James F. Hollifield, “Migration Theory: Talking across Disciplines,” *Migration Theory*, edited by Caroline B. Brettell and James F. Hollifield, 1–26 (New York: Routledge, 2000).
7. *Ibid.* Note that not all migration flows are fully “unregulated.” Refugee flows are regulated by governments in primary migration, yet then become unregulated in the case of secondary migration. Thus, although refugee migration patterns are influenced by push/pull factors and non-state actors, I also consider them as “semi-regulated” flows that become less regulated after refugees arrive in the United States.
8. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract* (1762, translated from French).
9. Richard Alba and Victor Nee, *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).

10. Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1970).
11. Douglas S. Massey, "The American Side of the Bargain," *Reinventing the Melting Pot*, edited by Tamar Jacoby (New York: Basic Books, 2004).
12. Alba and Nee 2005.
13. Massey 2004; and Ahmed I. Samatar, "Beginning Again: From Refugee to Citizen," *Bildhaan: An International Journal of Somali Studies* 4 (2004): 1–15.
14. *New Neighbors, New Opportunities: Immigrants and Refugees in Grand Rapids*. Dyer-Ives Foundation, Grand Rapids, Michigan (2003), online at www.dyer-ives.org.
15. Two focus groups were conducted with the assistance (in recruiting participants and translation) of New Americans Community Services in St. Paul. The groups were separated by gender and composed of six women and six men of middle age or older, and most had lived in the United States between three and eight years.
16. Refugees differ in legal terms from asylees because they are given refugee "status" prior to being resettled. Asylees are foreign nationals who first enter the host country, then apply for refugee status.
17. "The United States Working to Advance Freedom and Human Dignity: The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration." Fact Sheet. (4 August 2006).
18. Minnesota Historical Society Interview (15 December 2006).
19. The term "mainstream" was used by many of my interviewees to refer to the more established, native Minnesotan (and often white Christian) populations or employees in social service organizations. Mainstream organizations were named in opposition to ethnic- or community-based organizations that were comprised mostly of leaders from the migrant communities, although both types of organizations served similar populations. Because of their history, mainstream organizations were also considered to have more established practices and capacity to serve larger populations effectively, as opposed to younger community-led organizations.
20. Minnesota and the Twin Cities attract refugees initially through secondary migration, from other states in the country. Over time, however, popular locations with large ethnic communities will also persuade resettlement agencies to directly resettle refugees in areas with established communities of the same ethnicity, thus adding to the attraction of the location.
21. Minnesota was awarded first place in the United Way "State of Caring" Index for the past several years. State Policy Reports (considering factors such as economic performance, health, crime rates, and education) placed Minnesota at the top of the "Camelot Index." A Carnegie Mellon University survey placed the Twin Cities in the top 10 of the "Bohemian Index" for concentration of creative people. See also, "Minnesota: High Quality of Life." University of Minnesota College of Education and Human Development (27 March 2007). Accessed online at education.umn.edu/MN/quality.html.
22. Martha R. Burt, Rob Geen, and Amy-Ellen Duke, *New Federalism Project*. Urban Institute (1997). Accessed online at urban.org/publications/307314.html#minn.
23. Katherine Fennelly, "Latinos, Africans and Asians in the North Star State: Immigrant Communities in Minnesota," *Beyond the Gateway: Immigrants in a Changing America*, edited by Martin Gozdziaik (2005).

24. These traditions continue today by the community centers of Pillsbury United Communities and Women's Advocates.
25. Hennepin County Office of Multicultural Services "OMS" Interview (21 December 2006).
26. Department of Human Services Interview (10 January 2007).
27. Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act (1996). Online at <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c104:H.R.3734>.
28. Brookings Welfare Reform and Beyond Forum: Should Legal Immigrants Receive Public Benefits? The Brookings Institution (February 2002), accessed online at brookings.edu/comm/transcripts/20020228.htm.
29. Refugees can possibly still receive the same amount of welfare benefits as citizens, but instead of a lifetime of eligibility for up to five cumulative years of support, they are only eligible for their first five years. Refugees may only receive welfare benefits beyond their first five years of residence if: (1) they haven't received benefits already for five full years, and (2) they naturalize and regain eligibility as citizens.
30. Susan Martin, "The Politics of U.S. Immigration Reform," *The Politics of Migration: Managing Opportunity, Conflict and Change*, edited by Sarah Spencer (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2003).
31. Percentages represent immigrants receiving welfare out of all individuals receiving welfare benefits. Michael E. Fix, Jeffrey S. Passel, and Kenneth Sucher, *Trends in Naturalization*. Urban Institute (2003), accessed online at urban.org/publications/310847.html.
32. Part of the drop in non-citizen welfare use may also be explained by rises in naturalization rates, as former non-citizen recipients could continue the program (up to five cumulative years) as citizens. Naturalization rates rose steadily since 1996, ending a 20-year-long downward trend. (See Brookings Forum, 2002.)
33. Brookings Forum, 2002.
34. Several exceptions to the 1996 Act have also been made for specialized populations, granting benefits eligibility to immigrants who have served in the military, those with disabilities, minors under 18 years of age, and some retirees.
35. Robert Kaestner, "Should Immigrants be Singled Out? Immigrants, Self-Sufficiency, and Welfare Reform," *Policy Forum* 15, no. 3 (University of Illinois Institute of Government and Public Affairs, 2002.)
36. Hennepin County OMS Interview (21 December 2006).
37. Hennepin County OMS Interview (1 December 2006).
38. Hennepin County WIC Interview (1 December 2006).
39. Brookings Forum, 2002.
40. Ibid.
41. Note that these conclusions pertain only to the non-citizen-related effects of welfare reform.
42. Martin 2003.
43. National Security Entry-Exit Registration System (NSEER).
44. Martin, "Important Immigration Issues" publication. Armstrong Teasdale, LLP. St. Louis, Missouri (January 2003).

45. "Under a Shadow: Somalis after 9/11." Minnesota Public Radio (9 September 2002).
46. "Integrating Minnesota," Panel Discussion at Hamline University, St. Paul, Minnesota (18 January 2007).
47. "Minnesota's September 11." Minnesota Public Radio (9 September 2002).
48. Gail Makinen, "The Economic Effect of 9/11: A Retrospective Assessment," *Congressional Research Service* (27 September 2002).
49. Taken from a Milken Institute report cited in "Terror Attacks: Economic Recession to Claim more U.S. Jobs in New Year: Study." *People's Daily Online* (12 January 2002).
50. Hennepin County OMS Interview (21 December 2006).
51. Brian Coyle Community Center Interview (3 January 2007).
52. Ibid.
53. Male Focus Group (11 January 2007).
54. Male and Female Focus Groups (11–12 January 2007).
55. Ibid.
56. Hennepin County OMS Interview (21 December 2006).
57. Ahmed I. Samatar, "Beginning Again: From Refugee to Citizen," *Bildhaan: An International Journal of Somali Studies*. 4 (2004): 1–15. See also, "Immigration in Minnesota: Discovering Common Ground," The Minneapolis Foundation (2004).
58. Legal Aid Society Interview (7 December 2006).
59. New Americans Community Services Interview (12 December 2006).
60. Associated Press, "Somali Refugees Hailed for Moving off Welfare Quickly" (February 2007). Online at minnesotamonitor.com/showDiary.do?diaryId=1228.
61. Minnesota Historical Society Interview (15 December 2006).
62. Katherine Fennelly, "State and Local Policy Response to Immigration in Minnesota," *Immigration's New Frontiers: Experiences from the Emerging Gateway States*, edited by Greg Anrig, Jr. and Tova Andrea Wang (New York: The Century Foundation Press, 2006).
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid.
65. Hennepin County Interview (7 December 2006).
66. Brian Coyle Community Center Interview (3 January 2007).
67. Pillsbury United Communities, online at puc-mn.org/.
68. Brian Coyle Community Center Interview (3 January 2007).
69. Confederation of Somali Community in Minnesota Interview (10 January 2007).
70. Brian Coyle Community Center Interview (3 January 2007).
71. Confederation of Somali Community in Minnesota Interview (10 January 2007).
72. Lidwien Kapteijns and Abukar Arman, "Educating Immigrant Youth in the United States: An Exploration of the Somali Case," *Bildhaan: An International Journal of Somali Studies* 4 (2004): 18–43.
73. Hennepin County OMS Interview (21 December 2006).
74. Brian Coyle Community Center Interview (3 January 2007).
75. Ibid.

76. Robert J. Sampson, "Neighborhood and Community: Collective Efficacy and Community Safety," *New Economy* 11 (2004): 106–113.

77. New Americans Community Services Interview (12 December 2007).

78. Lidwien Kapteijns and Abukar Arman suggest similar recommendations in a 2004 article in *Bildhaan: An International Journal of Somali Studies*, including the following: dialogue and education across Minnesota communities and public institutions, outlining expectations and realistic compromises between Somalis and mainstream Minnesotans, engaging Somali youth and the elderly to develop positive self-images, and a focus on the challenges faced and positive contributions given by Somalis to their new neighborhoods and communities.

APPENDIX

Policy Recommendations

For National Policy

- Establish state committees to monitor the welfare and needs of all new refugee communities as they transition from benefits-eligible refugee status to benefits-ineligible permanent resident status after five years, particularly SSI-recipients and communities with limited social support.
- Encourage national and state leadership that is supportive and speaks in practical and specific terms about immigrants.

For State Programs

- Share successful curricula and teaching methods between Minneapolis and St. Paul public schools curricula. Begin piloting St. Paul School's nationally known English learning programs in Minneapolis Public Schools.
- Create a parallel Office of Multi-Cultural Services in Ramsey County government.
- Hold public forums and encourage community research into relations between Somalis and police, ICE officers, and the FBI.

For Mainstream and Mutual Assistance Associations

- Conduct community needs assessments and evaluations of service delivery once every two years (may be done formally with a contracted consultant or informally, using elders).
- Foundations should set aside a minimum level of funding for basic operational costs for community-based organizations.

- Collaborate with Minneapolis Public Libraries to develop a Somali-American center for cross-cultural learning. Publicize this center in all libraries across the Twin Cities and outer suburbs.
- Increase work on leadership development in immigrant communities and capacity building for smaller organizations. Develop partnerships like Confederation of Somali Community and the Brian Coyle Community Center.

For Somalis

- Encourage young people to embrace biculturalism and seek community support for troubled teens.
- Accept that there is a limit on the amount of financial support the U.S. government can provide and pursue additional training and degrees to become self-sufficient.
- Approach neighbors of different backgrounds with respect and attempt to learn more about their historical background and values for life in the United States.