

WELCOMING  
AMERICA



▲ *Building a Nation of Neighbors*

# The Welcoming Institute

August 28, 2014



The Fostering Community Engagement and Welcoming Communities Project  
is supported by the  
Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR/ACF/DHHS)

# One-on-One Conversations

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- What is the story of your name?
- Where did you grow up?
- Share a story that illustrates why you do the work you do.



# Small Group Conversations

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- Your name and organization
- What do you hope to get out of participating in this conference?
- What experience (personal and professional) are you bringing to this conference?



# The Story of Welcoming



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# New Focus: Receiving Communities



A welcoming community not only supports immigrants directly, but helps long-time residents understand, contribute to and benefit from immigrant integration.

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# Institute Objectives:

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- Learn ways to foster deeper connections between longer-term, communities members and refugees in your community
- Consider how you can apply welcoming strategies to new and existing efforts in order to increase their effectiveness
- Hone your community engagement skills and develop new expertise to take back to share with others in your community
- Participate in a peer network to share your expertise and get feedback on your work

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# Why Foster Community Support?

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- More welcoming climate for all residents
- Refugees feel more welcomed to stay, integrate and participate civically
- Strengthened program credibility and success
- New champions and ability to attract additional resources



# Unsure

The ambivalent  
middle 60%

## Untapped

Sympathetic,  
would engage if  
asked

## Tapped

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# Receiving Communities Model

## Leadership

Engage credible, mainstream leaders to help foster a positive climate.

## Contact

Foster meaningful connections between U.S. born and foreign-born through dialogues and ongoing activities.

## Communications

Use strategies and messages that speak to unity, common values, and shared contributions.

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# 1. Contact



Photo credits:  
Intercambio Uniting Communities



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# 2. Leadership

Cultivating and engaging leaders from diverse sectors to set the tone.

- Government
- Faith
- Business
- Education
- Health Care
- Law Enforcement



# 3. Communications

Focusing on unity, contributions and prosperity



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# Action Planning

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*How will you take what you've learned today and apply it back in your own community?*

*What are the next steps you can commit to?*

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# Contact



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# Objectives:

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- Develop a shared understanding of why contact building is important
- Consider ways to strengthen the effectiveness of existing efforts and add new ones



# Building Meaningful Contact

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## *Fact Sharing vs. Shared Understanding*

“While there are many ways in which [intergroup anxiety] can be reduced, **it is through personal relationships with diverse individuals that the most profound and lasting changes take place. ...**

- Johnson, David and Johnson, Roger; —The Three C’s of Reducing Prejudice and Discrimination, *In Reducing Prejudice and Discrimination*;

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# Why Contact Building?

## Facts vs. Experience

Facts alone are typically insufficient for changing the hearts and minds of those who may be unsure about refugees



# Social Contact Theory

Regular, meaningful contact can reduce the anxieties that different groups may have about each other.



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# Contact Research

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- In a cross-national survey, researchers found that
  - a majority of those with **immigrant friends** see immigration as **an opportunity**.
  - a majority of those with **no social contact** with immigrants see them as **a problem**.
- Source: German Marshall Fund: Transatlantic Trends: Immigration (2010)



# Traditional Approaches

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- Tend to emphasize data and facts, rather than shared values
- May incorporate refugee stories, but broader and continued empathy may be limited
- Use cultural celebrations, but may not always reach those who aren't already involved



# Ways to Build Contact

Fostering meaningful connections between U.S. and foreign-born:

- ▣ Joint service projects
- ▣ Dialogues
- ▣ Cross-cultural potlucks
- ▣ Community forums & events (film, art, etc)



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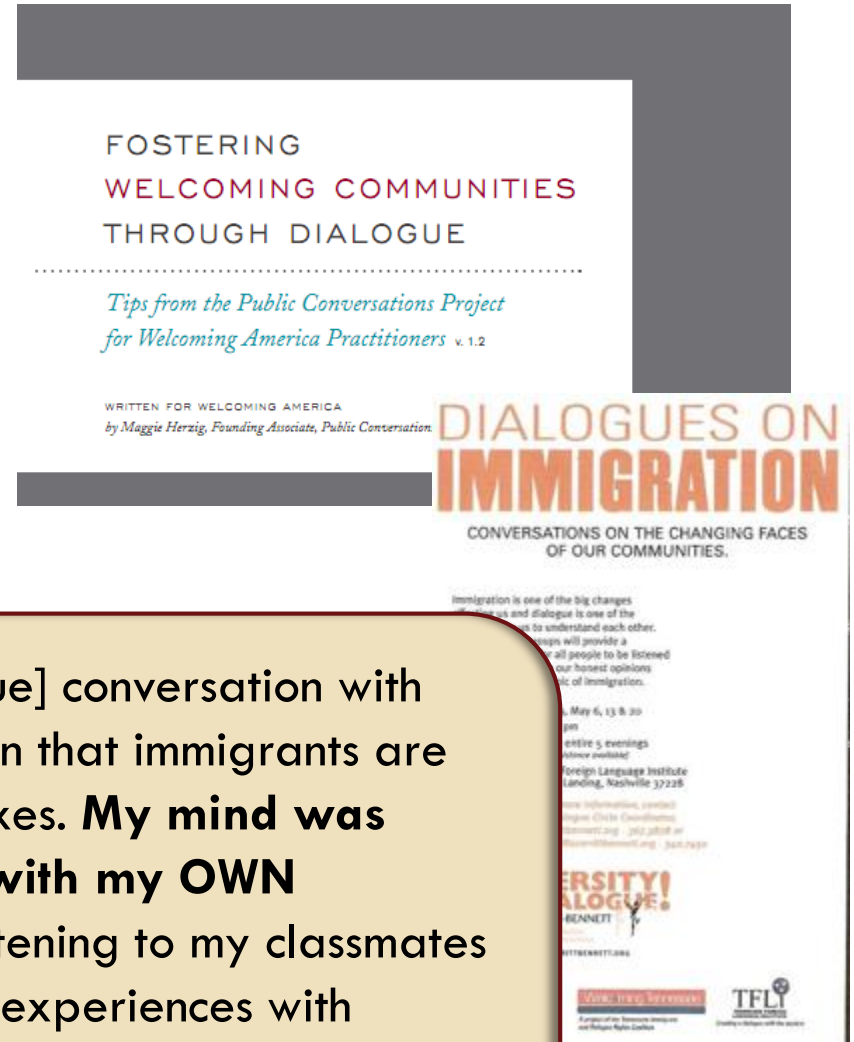
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# Dialogues

Facilitated conversations that address fears and misperceptions, by providing an opportunity to **move beyond stereotypes to understand the perspectives and experiences of others.**

I went into the [dialogue] conversation with the preconceived notion that immigrants are lazy and don't pay taxes. **My mind was completely changed with my OWN opinions.** I enjoyed listening to my classmates who had opinions and experiences with immigrants. It helped me find what I believe.

Alisha, Student  
Georgia dialogue  
participant



# Joint Service Projects

Bring people together to work side-by-side on activities of mutual interest

- ❑ Mentoring
- ❑ Citizenship, English
- ❑ The Arts
- ❑ Community Gardening
- ❑ Community Enhancement



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# Engaging RC Members as Volunteers

- Supporting program activities
- Volunteering side by side with refugees
- Serving as ambassadors



Photo credit: Welcoming Framingham

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# Engaging Refugees as Volunteers

- ❑ Building trust and support
- ❑ Using cultural intermediaries
- ❑ Identifying areas of common interest
- ❑ Sustaining engagement



# Small Group Discussions

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- What kind of contact-building activities are you already doing?
- Who are the non-refugee communities you are reaching? Who are you not reaching?
- What are the challenges you face in reaching particular communities? How might you overcome them?



# Leadership



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# Objectives:

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- Understand why engaging leaders is important to your work
- Strategically map out the leaders in your community with the potential to be champions for refugees
- Learn how to recruit leaders and consider new ways to approach leaders in your own communities



# Why Leadership Engagement?

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- Leaders are powerful voices for support or opposition
- Their opinions are communicated out widely
- Their actions and words send signals to the broader community
- They can help you strengthen your efforts!



Without the energy and intellect and innovation of our immigrant community, Montgomery County would, quite simply, be incomplete. “New Americans” are a critical piece in building a better future for all County residents.

- County Executive Ike Leggett  
Montgomery County, Maryland



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# MAYOR WELCOMES REFUGEES TO LINCOLN, NEBRASKA



“It is important to me to welcome you to this place as your new home [...] We encourage you to share your culture with the entire community, like the event you’ve planned today. It’s important we all continue working to build bridges with people who come from old and rich traditions.”

-Lincoln Mayor Chris Beutler at a recent Karen New Year Celebration

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# Which leaders?

- ❑ Elected officials
- ❑ Local government employees
- ❑ Business leaders
- ❑ Faith leaders
- ❑ Law enforcement
- ❑ Philanthropy
- ❑ Others?





# How to Connect

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How you connect will depend on the leader and what resonates with them:

*Your approach with a business leader will vary from how to talk about your work with a faith leader*

Tailor the message and ask them to take a realistic concrete step

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# Opportunities to Connect

- Be intentional
- Identify circles where such leaders interact
- Attend events & volunteer on region-wide committees & task forces
- Make friends with media

# What You Can Offer

- Knowledge of ethnic communities which include their constituents & customers
- Access to immigrant leaders
- Connections to mainstream services
- Pipeline for population growth

# Use a Positive Approach

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- ❑ Frame the issues and offer realistic solutions
- ❑ Assume goodwill and a commitment to the common good
- ❑ Always conclude with next steps
- ❑ Follow through on your commitments



# What will you Ask For?

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- ❑ An in-person meeting
- ❑ To attend or participate in an event
- ❑ To be a spokesperson
- ❑ To join a committee or a board
- ❑ To pass a welcoming resolutions
- ❑ To stay in touch
- ❑ Be creative!



# Recognize Common Hurdles

- ❑ Leadership engagement is a process – don't get discouraged!
- ❑ Continue to keep leaders informed – don't let the relationship lapse
- ❑ Make this a two-way relationship
- ❑ Anticipate leadership transitions



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## Snyder declares 'Welcoming Week' starting Saturday



Gov. Rick Snyder.  
Copyright 2012 Scripps



SHARETHIS

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Tweet 0

+1 0

Posted: 09/14/2012

LANSING, Mich. (AP) - Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder has declared "Welcoming Week" starting Saturday as part of an effort to reach out to immigrants across the state.

The declaration was posted Friday on the state's

# Bellone: Suffolk 'embraces immigrants'

Originally published: September 19, 2012 9:04 PM

2/7/12

## East Providence Passes Welcoming Resolution

The City of East Providence, Rhode Island has become the latest city to declare itself "welcoming". In a vote passed unanimously on January 3rd by the East Providence City Council, local elected officials adopted a welcoming resolution which states that the city is "committed to continue building a neighborly and welcoming atmosphere in our community where all are welcome, accepted and appreciated."

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*Cities & Counties*

Philadelphia, PA  
New York, NY  
Dodge City, KS  
Columbus, OH  
Boise, ID  
Montgomery County, MD  
Macomb County, MI  
San Francisco, CA  
Chicago, IL  
Dayton, OH  
Austin, TX  
Allegany County, PA  
High Point, NC  
Baltimore, MD  
Lincoln, NE  
Oakley, CA  
St. Louis, MO  
St. Louis County, MO

[www.welcomingcities.org](http://www.welcomingcities.org)



# Your Experience

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- Who are the most supportive leaders of refugee welcome in your community?
- Why do you think they are inclined to support you?



# Group Mapping Exercise

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- Who do you already have relationships with?
- For each, what do those relationships bring?
- How might these sectors connect with each other?  
Where are there ties?



# Individual Mapping Exercise

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- How are these people connected?
- What kinds of resources do they bring?



# Communications



Photo credit: Welcoming Michigan



Photo credit: Episcopal Migration Ministries

## Messaging and Tactics

# Why Communications?

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- An essential tool in fostering a more positive community climate for refugees
- A means to an end: helps to engage people that will help you reach your goals.
- Clarifies who we need to reach, how to speak to them, and through what channels.



# Frames

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- What do you read, hear or see in the media and the broader community related to immigrants and refugees? What's the narrative?
- What would you like to read, hear or see more of?
- What seems to be working, and what isn't?



# How are refugees framed now?



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# What would be better?





“I know the **strength that diversity has given my country** and I believe we must persuade the world that **refugees must not be simply viewed as a burden. They are the survivors.** The refugees I have met and spent time with have profoundly changed my life.”

- Angelina Jolie,  
speaking at  
World  
Refugee Day



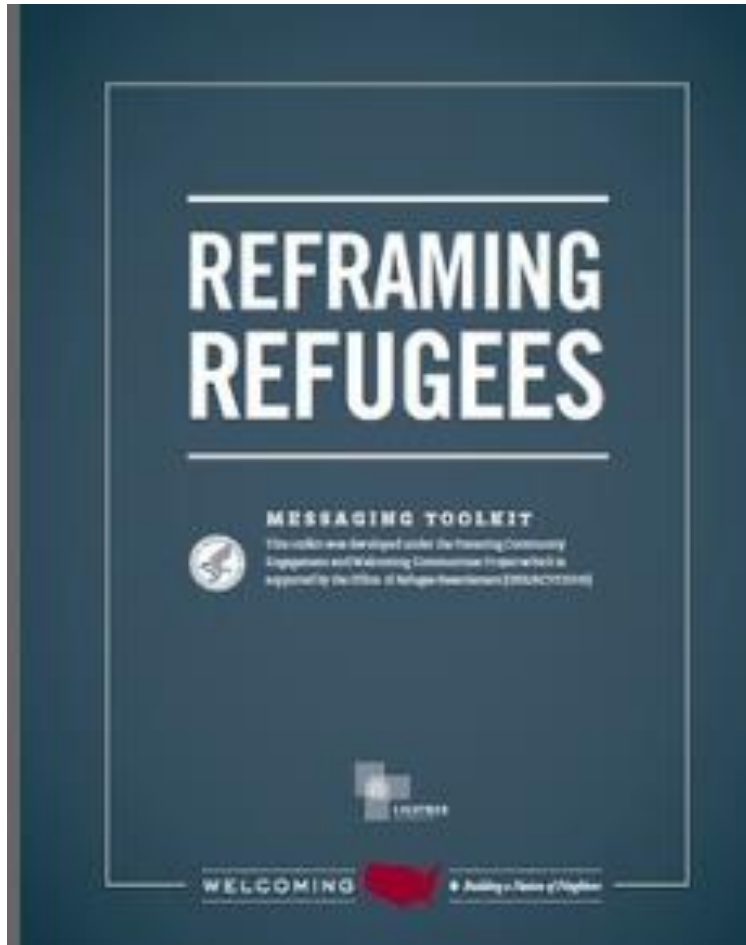
# The Power of Reframing



## Welcoming refugees is paying off for Cleveland

Photo credit: Cleveland Plain Dealer

# What frames work?



## IMMIGRATION **NEW MESSAGING** A COLLABORATION OF:



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# Define America



# Dignity of Work



# People Move



# Lead with positive, relatable messages



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# Values trump features



JUST ANOTHER GREAT  
NEBRASKA FAN.

**NEW NEBRASKA FAMILIES MAKE US STRONGER.**  
*Nebraska. A good life for everyone. NebraskaIsHome.org*

Nebraska is Home



**RUGGED  
INDIVIDUALS  
MADE HERE.**

**IN COLORADO, WE GIVE  
IMMIGRANTS A FAIR CHANCE.**  
[WelcomingColorado.org](http://WelcomingColorado.org)

Welcoming Colorado



# Communicate through credible spokespeople



Bahjat Shariff, Panera Bread / Howley Bread Group

“In this country, values, integrity, honesty and hard work pay off every time. Sharpen your pencil; be willing to learn new things and try new experiences and the skies are wide open for you.”



**WELCOMING RHODE ISLAND**  
ENRICHING NEIGHBORHOODS - STRENGTHENING RI

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# Involve Refugees

# The Cedar Valley Welcome Pledge

PLEDGE TO BE WELCOMING!

## Who Has Signed

THANK YOU TO ALL WHO HAVE PLEDGED TO BE WELCOMING



*Cedar Falls Mayor Jon Crews signs the pledge! Thank you!*



*Iowa State Representative, Anesa Kajtzovic signs the pledge!*



*Amanda Hallberg at Cottonwood Canyon Coffee!*



# Balance Facts

## and Stories



Alex Simonian was born in Syria, but built a small business in Rhode Island. Alex Auto Repair and Park Oil help keep his neighbors' cars running and their homes warm—with discounted rates for Cranston's seniors and low-income families. It's just one way he's giving back to his adopted hometown.

**IMMIGRANTS BUILD  
A BETTER LIFE FOR ALL OF US.**

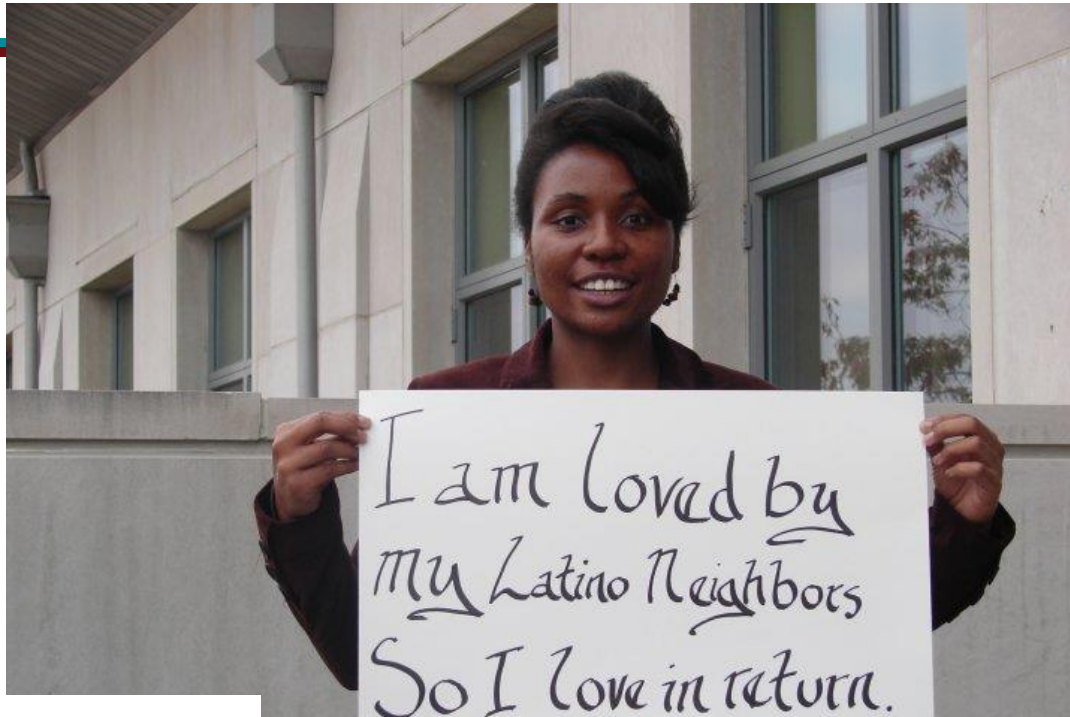
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# Why We Care



Why We Care



# Your GAME Plan

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## Goals

- What outcomes do you want to see as a result of your efforts?
- Goals should be specific, realistic, and measurable



# Audience

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Who needs to hear your message?

- ▣ Who must be moved to action?
- ▣ Who has the power to help?

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# Message

What values do you and your audience share?



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# Engagement

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- How will you get your messages to your audience?
- What tactics will be most effective while using the least resources?







“ I came speaking little English and only knowing US culture through MTV and CNN, but now I teach creative writing workshops for youth and am about to publish my first book.”

# I'm a proud **immigrant** and I contribute to DC.

**Immigrants face many challenges, but discrimination should never be one of them.**

If you think you've been discriminated against because of your national origin or your accent, call (202) 727-4559 or visit [ohr.dc.gov/complaint](http://ohr.dc.gov/complaint).

*Emigrated from  
Cameroon in 2000*



**Office of Human Rights**  
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

[ohr.dc.gov/wecontribute](http://ohr.dc.gov/wecontribute)  
 [facebook.com/dcohr](https://facebook.com/dcohr)

Share your story with  
**#immigrantscontribute**

# National Welcoming Week

September 13-21, 2014

Bringing together newcomers and receiving communities in a spirit of unity



welcomingweek.org

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