

RESOURCES FOR REFUGEES, IMMIGRANTS, AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

Adapted with Permission from the Refugee Forum, November 17, 2016

Current Concerns & Incidents in the Community

While there is an acknowledgement of a broad range of communities that are currently facing fear and concern over safety, three particular subgroups of the refugee & immigrant populations are detailed here:

Muslim Women:

Women from a Somali women's group at a local mosque have expressed an increasing sense of fear in being out in the community and have had discussions around safety strategies. They also worry about the implications of wearing the hijab and how this may impact getting and/or keeping employment. Other members of the Iraqi community expressed that the Iraqi community is also focusing on the vulnerability of hijab wearing Muslim women, who are often targeted for harassment. One shared that some Muslim women will not even share their negative experiences with their own families.

Refugee & Immigrant Children (or children with refugee or immigrant parents):

A member of the Iraqi Community Center reported on increases in bullying as well as inappropriate comments made by school staff. Many children are afraid either they or their parents will be sent back to "where they came from."

Undocumented Immigrants:

Unlike refugees who have established immigration status, undocumented immigrants are particularly fearful of reporting hate crimes or harassment due to potential immigration implications.

Safety and Security

The Tukwila Police Department has done extensive outreach into the refugee and immigrant community. Their partnership with the IRC, schools and community based organizations has created a strong community approach to establishing trust between refugee and immigrant communities and law enforcement.

Safety Tips:

- Be aware of your surroundings.
- Travel in pairs or groups.
- Keep your eyes up.
- No phones, earbuds or texting.
- Use cross walks.
- Don't go to isolated areas.
- Call 911- Explain why you're afraid and in incidents of hate crimes the police will be there as quickly as possible. Incidents of hate crimes are reported to the feds, so information from all local municipalities should feed into this one system.

- Give details on why you are afraid. Ex. “I am a Muslim woman, I’m wearing a hijab, and there is someone following me.”
- If English is limited immediately just say “No English, I speak _____”. You will be connected to a translator. This will ensure that the urgency of the call and details surrounding the circumstance are most efficiently communicated to and understood by the Police Department so they can respond in an urgent manner.
- If you see someone else being harassed, call 911.
- Many people are afraid to call 911 because of immigration status or fear of repercussions. The Tukwila Police explained that they **do not** check immigration status and that public safety is the sole goal, not immigration enforcement.

Reporting

Many refugees and immigrants are afraid to call the police due to experience with police in their home country and/or their current immigration status. In many cases, the victims of harassment and attacks don’t even tell their own families. Advocates and community leaders continue to try and encourage people to talk about incidents. Options for reporting:

- **Call 911-** Tukwila Police don’t check immigration status and that the best approach is to call 911. In addition to the local police response, it also gets the incident reported as a hate crime to the feds. Tukwila Police believe that all police departments have the same policy of not asking for documentation/proof of citizenship
- **Report incidents of inappropriate comments, harassment and bullying in the school setting to school administration**
- Parents are encouraged to report incidents the school administration

Community Action Strategies – What can you do?

- **Write Letters to the Editors.** Below are some suggestions from the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR).

The way to make the most societal impact, with the least amount of effort, is to use the information below to write letters to editors to remind the wider public about American values and to use your voice to educate them about their American Muslim neighbors’ lives.

In today’s climate with unprecedented levels of anti-Muslim rhetoric and resultant record high hate crimes nationwide esp. in the past 2 years, the need is greater than ever before, to have fair-minded friends and allies like you to publicly and vocally speak about how the wider public’s faith and American values should guide the way they treat American Muslims they encounter. We hope that many, many messages ideally through letters to editors (e-mailed to: letters@seattletimes.com) but also through media interviews and online posts from you and other allies and faith leaders will guide millions of members of the public to be their best selves.

To help you with ideas for what to write in your letters to editors, statements, posts to your social media, comments in online articles and other forums, here are two documents to simply copy and paste from:

1. 3 key messages to talk about American Muslims (and which words not to use):
<https://www.scribd.com/doc/293538401/3-Key-Messages-American-Muslims-12-16-2015>
2. A “menu” of possible messages specially crafted for allies to speak about the lives of their American Muslim neighbors. It has facts about American Muslims, and sections on religious language, how to talk about the lives, values and contributions of American Muslims whom you know, and information about Muslims in specific parts of WA state that might be most useful to you in your letters to editors, interviews and online posts. <https://www.scribd.com/doc/293537576/Menu-of-Language-to-Choose-to-Use-to-Talk-About-American-Muslims-You-Know-Dec-16-2-015>
3. Facts about Islam/Muslims: www.islamfactcheck.org

Anti-Muslim remarks by many leaders have been covered by top local and national news sources, so your letters to editors can be published by national newspapers and be read by the largest possible audience of millions. You’ll find the top national newspapers’ letters and opinion editors’ contact info and guidelines

here:

http://www.theopedproject.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=47&Itemid=54

- **Attend Events**

Communities around Washington State are organizing events. The King County Refugee Forum facebook page exists and will be a place to post about attending these events.

- **Sign Statements of Support and Solidarity**

The Northwest Immigrant and Refugee Health Coalition has written the following statement, which is available in a number of languages:

We support the United States’ long history of welcoming refugees, immigrants, and asylum-seekers. We are dedicated to upholding the human rights of these individuals, their families and communities. We call upon you to stand alongside your neighbors who fear discrimination and for their safety. We are committed to never be silent in the face of religious persecution, racism and personal acts of aggression.

Please use this message (or message of choice) to reassure clients and the community. Possible avenues of reassurance and support are to post the statement in public places at your agency, send a letter to clients, and/or post the statement on your website and social media accounts.

- **Outreach and Inform**

Educate, inform and interact with different entities. Some ideas on where groups can speak:

- City Council Meetings
- Sound Cities Association
- School Districts
- Police Departments

Attend Trainings

- OneAmerica's "Know Your Rights"
- Tukwila Police Departments workshops/approaches for Refugee & Immigrant Communities
- Bridging Cultures: <https://jsis.washington.edu/mideast/news/bridging-cultures/> Series of presentations and workshops designed by the Middle East Center, School of International Studies, University of Washington. The sessions are free of charge to public school teachers and administrators and can be tailored to meet your school or district-wide needs. For more information or to schedule sessions contact David Fenner at dmfenner@u.washington.edu or Felicia Hecker at fhecker@uw.edu
- Humanities Washington "Human Migration" presentation. <https://www.humanities.org/speaker/david-fenner-2/>

- **Naturalize**

Encourage people who are eligible to naturalize to attend one of the upcoming free workshops to fill out the N-400. Here is information on an upcoming workshop.

FREE Citizenship Workshop

WHEN: Sunday, December 4th

WHO: For Legal Permanent Residents over 18 years' old who have had their green card for 5 or 3 years

WHAT: A legal team will help Eligible Legal Permanent Residents fill out their Citizenship Application and answer all questions regarding their next steps

WHERE: North Seattle College. 9600 College Way N Seattle WA 98103 (Northgate Area)

HOW: PLEASE REGISTER APPLICANTS HERE <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/nccworkshop12>

WALKINS WELCOME TOO!

More information call: 206-386-9090

<http://www.seattle.gov/iandraffairs/NCC#flyers>
