

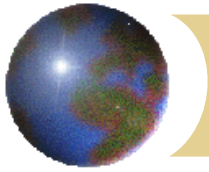
*The Church without Frontiers:  
Accompanying Churches  
Welcoming Refugees*

Sr. Stephanie Spandl, SSND, LICSW, SEP  
NACSW Annual Conference  
November 4, 2017



## *Context of Immigration*

- ❖ 13% of U.S. population foreign born - 20% immigrants and their children.
- ❖ International realities: war, poverty, Global politics/policies, economic globalization
- ❖ U.S. realities: Anti-immigrant climate – fear of the “other”, ongoing effects of recession; aging population and need for both skilled and unskilled workers



# *Why People Migrate*

## ***Push Factors***

- ⊕ War
- ⊕ Environmental disasters – drought, floods, etc.
- ⊕ Political/religious/gender/race/ethnicity/sexual orientation persecution
- ⊕ Violence –gangs, crime
- ⊕ Poverty, hunger, unemployment, famine

## **Pull Factors**

- ⊕ Hope for better life
- ⊕ Desire for education
- ⊕ Employment opportunities
- ⊕ Marriage
- ⊕ Family reunification
- ⊕ Personality factors (risk-taking, future oriented)



# Why People Migrate

An excerpt from **HOME** by Warsan Shire

- *no one leaves home unless home is the mouth of a shark  
you only run for the border  
when you see the whole city  
running as well*
- *no one leaves home unless home chases you  
fire under feet  
hot blood in  
your belly*

*it's not something you  
ever thought of doing  
until the blade burnt  
threats into your neck*

- *no one puts their  
children in a boat  
unless the water is safer  
than the land*



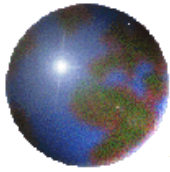
# *Theological Reflection*

- ✚ Members of the Body of Christ have the responsibility of “reading the signs of the times and interpreting them in light of the Gospel.”

*(The Church in the Modern World, Vatican Council II, #4).*

- ✚ The Bible does not offer a blueprint for modern legislation, but it can serve as a moral compass and shape the attitudes of those who believe in God.

*(Immigration 2009, National Evangelical Association)*



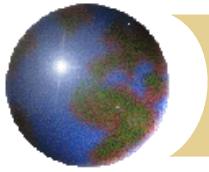
# *Biblical Foundation in Scripture*

## ✦ **Old Testament**

- ✦ Genesis 1:26-28
- ✦ Story of Exodus
- ✦ Leviticus 19:32-34
- ✦ Isaiah 10: 1-2 and Isaiah 58
- ✦ Jeremiah 22: 3-4

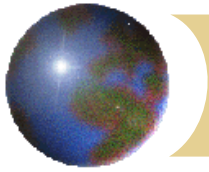
## ✦ **New Testament**

- ✦ Flight of Holy Family into Egypt, Mt. 13-15
- ✦ Judgment of the Nations, Mt. 25:31-46
- ✦ The Great Commandment, Mk 12:30-31; Mt. 22:37-40
- ✦ The Good Samaritan, Lk. 10:29-37
- ✦ 1 John 4:19-21



## *Leviticus 19:33-34*

- ✚ When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.
- ✚ There shall be for both you and the resident alien a single law, a perpetual law throughout your generations; you and the alien shall be alike before the Lord.



## *Isaiah 58: 6-9, 12*

Is not this the fast I choose:

to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked to cover them, and not hide yourself from your own kin? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up...





## *Mark 12: 30-31*

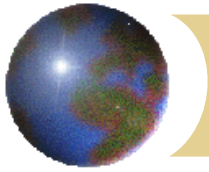
The first [commandment] is this...

You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: You must love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.



## *Matthew 25: 31-46*

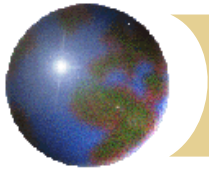
- ✚ ...For I was a stranger and you welcomed me...
- ✚ Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these, you did it to me.
- ✚ “Discipleship is not a passive privilege, but an active mission.” We are not invited to relax and bask in the pleasure of God’s love, but rather to bring that love to fruition on earth. (Virgil Elizondo).



# *Theological Reflection*

- ✦ A change of mentality is needed, no longer seeing the poor [or the immigrant] as a burden, or as intruders trying to profit from others, but as people seeking to share the goods of the world so that we can create a just and prosperous world for all

*(The Hundredth Year, Pope John Paul II, 1991, #28).*

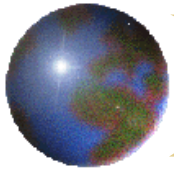


## *Theological Reflection*

### **Christian Churches Together February 1, 2013**

*The diverse group, representing leadership from Catholic, Evangelical/Pentecostal, Historic Protestant, Orthodox, and Historic Black churches, agreed on these unified principles:*

- ✦ An earned path to citizenship for the 11 million people in the United States without authorization.
- ✦ The priority of family reunification in any immigration reform.
- ✦ Protecting the integrity of our borders and protecting due process for immigrants and their families.
- ✦ Improving refugee protection laws and asylum laws.
- ✦ Reviewing international economic policies to address the root causes migration.



## *Possible Scenarios for Church Helpers*

- ✚ Formal volunteer relationship with resettlement agency to companion refugees
  - ✚ The resettlement agency provides some training, support & direction – time specific
- ✚ Informally Supporting a church member or neighbor– who may be a refugee, documented or undocumented immigrant, temporary protected status, DACA or VAWA applicant, etc.
- ✚ Churches choosing to provide sanctuary



# *Preparing Church Members*

*Good will can easily be overwhelmed by the depth and complexity of need*

- ❖ Church members are not trained social workers
  - ❖ Refugees/immigrants are not their “clients” so boundaries are different, but necessary
- ❖ Training/support
  - ❖ Cross-cultural skills, cultural humility and interfaith sensitivity.
  - ❖ Basic skills in working with interpreters
  - ❖ Emotional and spiritual issues common for refugees/immigrants
  - ❖ Understanding trauma responses
  - ❖ Support in dealing with compassion fatigue
  - ❖ Finding resources/navigating systems



# *Immigration Status*

- ⊕ Refugee – fleeing persecution, processed abroad
- ⊕ Asylee – fleeing persecution, applies in U.S.
  - ⊕ During application process eventually receives work permit, but has limited legal status.
- ⊕ Legal Permanent Resident
  - ⊕ Family-based
  - ⊕ Lottery
- ⊕ Temporary Immigrant status
  - ⊕ Student, employment, agricultural workers
- ⊕ Temporary Protected Status (TPS)
  - ⊕ allowed to stay beyond visa due to natural disaster, outbreak of war
- ⊕ Undocumented immigrants
- ⊕ Unaccompanied minors (refugee and undocumented)
- ⊕ Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) – U and T visas
- ⊕ Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA)



# *Stages of Migration*

## ✦ **Pre-migration and departure**

- ✦ Refugees flee under dangerous conditions
- ✦ Immigrants have time for planning

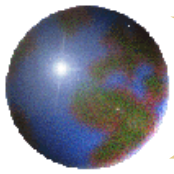
## ✦ **Transit**

- ✦ Refugee camps
- ✦ Crossing borders as undocumented immigrant or asylum seeker
- ✦ Safe journey for other immigrants

## ✦ **Resettlement**

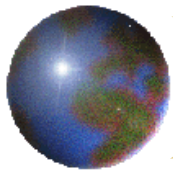
- ✦ Variations in experience based on status – cultural adjustment
- ✦ Discrepancy between expectations and reality
- ✦ Reception from host country





# *Primary and Secondary Arrivals*

- ❖ Primary arrival- Refugees who arrive directly to a particular state and receive 90 days of case management services from one off the local resettlement agencies
- ❖ Secondary migrants- Refugees initially resettled to another state who move to a different state within days, weeks, or years of arrival. If they move within the first year, they are forfeiting resettlement services that would have been available in the city of initial resettlement.



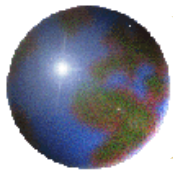
# *Domestic Resettlement Program*

## **Refugee is in safe, stable environment**

This means...

- ❑ Picked up at the airport by someone who can speak their language.
- ❑ Placed in a safe home that they know how to pay for.
- ❑ They have basic necessities (as outlined by the Cooperative agreement)

*Slide credit: Laura Svoboda, LISW*



# *Domestic Resettlement Program*

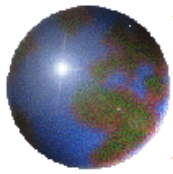
## Practical Steps

- ✦ Find housing
- ✦ Negotiate with landlords
- ✦ Furnish home
- ✦ Provide food for 1<sup>st</sup> days
- ✦ Train in rental rights and responsibilities
- ✦ Set up the apartment with all needed supplies

## Challenges

- ✦ Rental rates higher than public assistance
- ✦ Refugee/UST preferences
- ✦ Will it be affordable after 6 months?
- ✦ Local housing vacancy rates (2.5% currently)

*Slide credit: Laura Svoboda, LISW*



# Domestic Resettlement Program

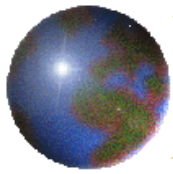
## County Assistance - MN

Family Size	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Cash Assistance	250	437	532	621	697	773	850	916	980	1035
Food Stamps	178	327	473	601	702	835	904	1024	1145	1269

Family of 3      \$1125 x3 = \$3375 Resettlement Grant  
\$1300 1<sup>st</sup> months rent and deposit  
\$225 Bridging furniture  
\$150 Bed and frame  
\$150 Groceries  
\$650 2<sup>nd</sup> months rent

\$900 remains for rent \$900/4 months= Grant pays \$225  
and county assistance pays \$425. Family has \$107 dollars per  
month for phone, paper products, utilities, etc.

*Slide credit: Laura Svoboda, LISW*



# *Domestic Resettlement Program*

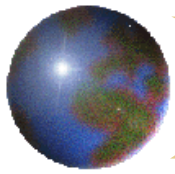
## **Refugee can navigate appropriate and relevant systems**

This means family can access...

- ❑ Transportation
- ❑ Groceries and other necessities
- ❑ Medical appointments, the doctor, and navigate the health care system.
- ❑ Translation when needed
- ❑ Emergency services
- ❑ School system ESL/children's school
- ❑ Immigration services
- ❑ Public Assistance

**And Social Security card has been obtained.**

*Slide credit: Laura Svoboda, LISW*



# *Domestic Resettlement Program*

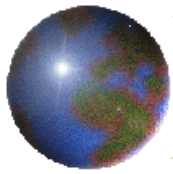
## Practical Steps

- ✦ Bus training
- ✦ Educate on 911, fire, storm safety
- ✦ Educate regarding green cards, citizenship, and family reunification
- ✦ Setting appts. for health screening, primary care
- ✦ Assist to select specific health plan
- ✦ Transport to all needed appts.

## Challenges

- ✦ Systems are complicated even for native born English speakers
- ✦ All staff are not aware of the entitlements associated with refugee status
- ✦ Lack of medical expertise on the part of VOLAG staff
- ✦ Challenges in cross system coordination

*Slide credit: Laura Svoboda, LISW*



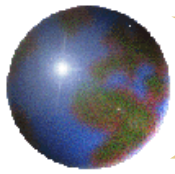
# *Domestic Resettlement Program*

## **Refugee family is connected to means of ongoing support for self/family**

This means....

- The family is connected to services they are eligible for
- Families are financially supported (or self-sufficient) and can explain where the household money will come from after the initial resettlement period.

*Slide credit: Laura Svoboda, LISW*



# *Domestic Resettlement Program*

## Practical Steps

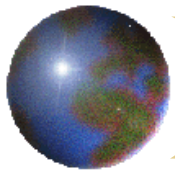
- ✦ Connect with county assistance
- ✦ Connect to Refugee Social Services (RSS) & Refugee Employment Services (RES)
- ✦ Enrolling in ELL/school
- ✦ Budgeting and financial planning
- ✦ Navigate endless paperwork and letters

## Challenges

- ✦ Complex systems
- ✦ Families have different priorities for money
- ✦ Public assistance does not cover all needs
- ✦ Needs emerge after 90 days
- ✦ Most written communication is not interpreted into primary languages & many not literate in own language

*Slide credit: Laura Svoboda, LISW*





# *Domestic Resettlement Program*

## **Refugee understands surroundings and situation**

### **This means....**

- A family knows where they live, how to make a phone call and how to be reached.
- A household understands the effects of moving.
- Families know the role of the agency and expectations of the agency and self.
- Families have a basic understanding of U.S. laws and cultural practices.
- Families are aware of basic community safety

*Slide credit: Laura Svoboda, LISW*



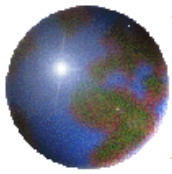
## Practical Steps

- ✦ Assisting families to buy and set up phones
- ✦ Teach basic US customs and laws
- ✦ Addressing unexpected emerging needs
- ✦ Explaining things like Halloween or daylight savings time

## Challenges

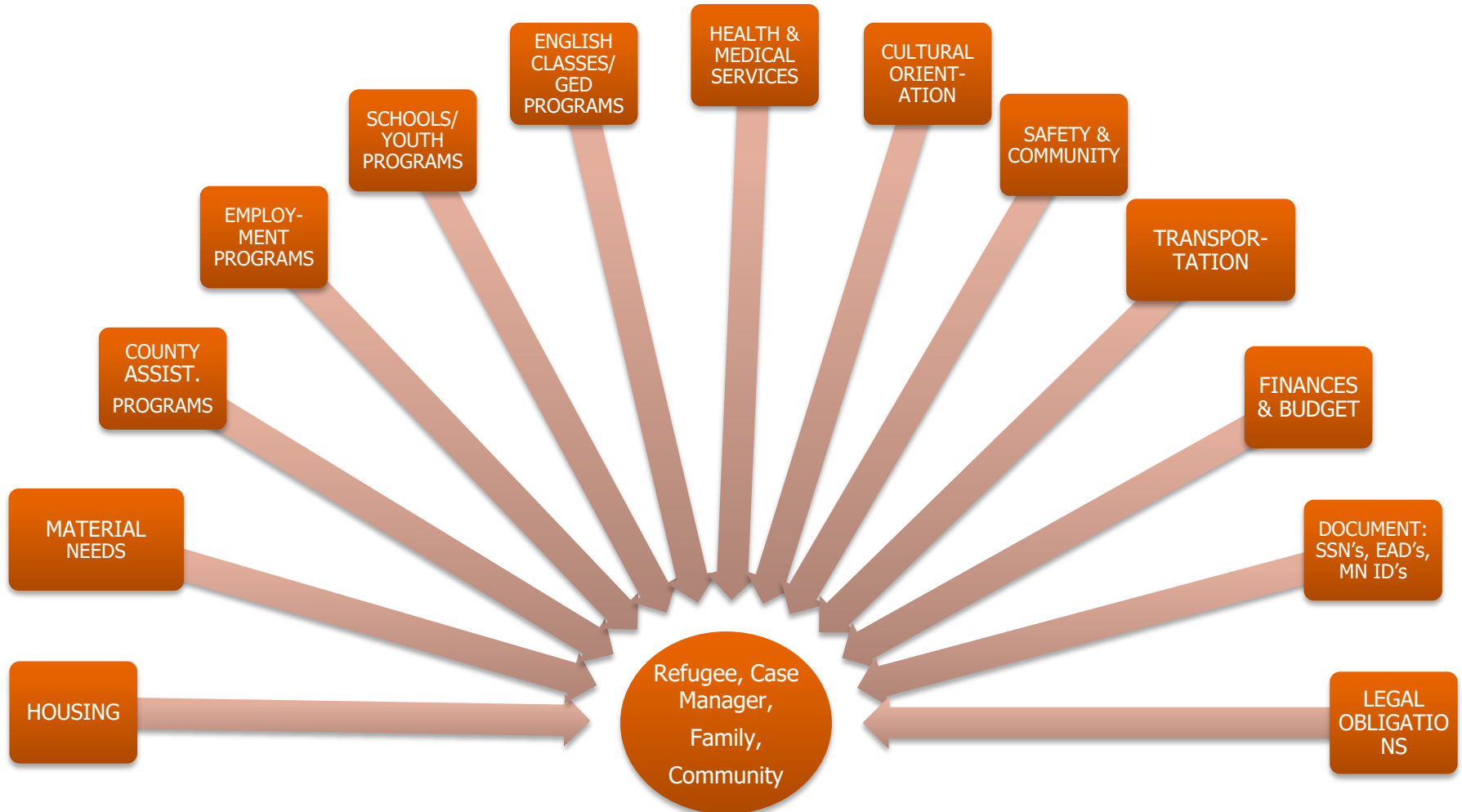
- ✦ Unfamiliar cultural context
- ✦ Varying expectations
- ✦ Balancing our assistance with need for progress toward self-sufficiency

*Slide credit: Laura Svoboda, LISW*

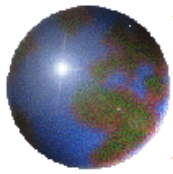


# Domestic Resettlement Program

## Ideal Situation



*Slide credit: Laura Svoboda, LISW*



# *Domestic Resettlement Program*

How resettlement often feels

Refugee

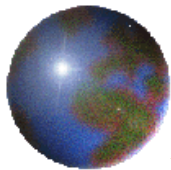
Case Manager

Community Partners

Family

Friends

*Credit for slide: Laura Svoboda, LISW*



# *Effect of Immigration Status on Service*

**For services such as: TANF, Medical Assistance/Affordable Care Act, Disability payments, Legal Aid Services & Public Housing programs**

**☉ Generally:**

- ☒ Refugees/approved Asylees eligible for all services
- ☒ LPRs after 5 years (federal)
- ☒ LPRs pre-5 yrs. and TPS eligible for Affordable Care Act tax credits, but not Medical Assistance
- ☒ Some states use state money to cover various legal immigrants not covered with federal money.
- ☒ Citizen children eligible even if parents not
- ☒ Undocumented: only pregnant women and emergency MA, not eligible even for full-pay Affordable Care Act. Not eligible for any other programs.



# Resettlement Issues

*Church members can be instrumental in helping families deal with housing issues and learning needed daily living skills*

## ✦ Housing –

- ✦ affordable housing limited
- ✦ large families hard to house
- ✦ Unscrupulous landlords
- ✦ Cultural misunderstandings of norms of apartment living
  - ✦ Bedbugs, roaches, mice
- ✦ Families separated – across town – isolated
- ✦ Moving into neighborhoods where they are not welcome
- ✦ Frequent moving – changing schools, friends – kids, changing cultures in location
- ✦ Transportation issues

## **So much to learn!**

- ✦ Unrealistic expectations when refugees arrive.
- ✦ Learning how to use appliances, flush a toilet, smoke detectors, bathtubs, locking doors, garbage
- ✦ Paying bills
- ✦ Urban legends among communities – fear – inaccurate info



# *Child & Adolescent Issues*

*This is an area where church members can have a big impact and at the same time must be careful not to usurp parents' role*

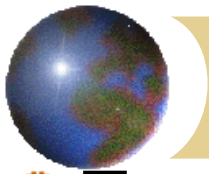
- ✦ **Role-reversal** – kids interpret for parents – banking, doctors, welfare office, landlords, even their own school conferences. Parents can lose authority.
- ✦ Language barrier – adjustment to school routine, expectations, issues of teasing and acceptance.
- ✦ Double identity – home culture and school culture
- ✦ Communication with school – Parents can't read letters; parental culture may teach that it is disrespectful to communicate with school.
- ✦ Missing field trips/finances for extra activities
- ✦ Parents can't help with homework/lack of study space



# *Potential Cultural Differences*

- ✦ Sense of time – understanding appointments
- ✦ Communal decisions rather than individual ones
- ✦ Gender roles
  - ✦ Often need to speak to the male first
  - ✦ Gender of volunteers may matter, depending on culture
  - ✦ Woman's freedom to work, go to school, etc.
- ✦ Health issues
  - ✦ Spouse and extended family may be part of health care decisions – surgery, birth control
  - ✦ Procedures other cultures may find demeaning: colonoscopy, pap smear, mammogram
  - ✦ Gender of doctor or interpreter may be important





# *Emotional/Spiritual Needs*

- ✦ Trauma affects the ability of refugees to trust church volunteers as well as potentially others in their own ethnic community.
  - ✦ Especially true in communities in which varied ethnicities, tribes or religious groups who have been in conflict have all immigrated (Somali, Iraqi, Rwanda)
- ✦ *Soul Wound* – Trauma opens up deep spiritual questions
  - ✦ Loss of everything, loved ones, homeland, possessions, status, community
  - ✦ Faith as a resource
  - ✦ Faith put into question – where was God in all this?
  - ✦ Religious leaders/communities scattered – how to re-establish in new country

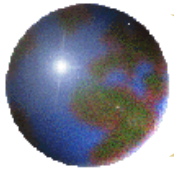


# *The Effects of Trauma*

## **Torture & War Trauma affect FIVE basic human needs**

- ✚ The need to feel **safe**
- ✚ The need to **trust**
- ✚ The need to feel of **value** (self worth)
- ✚ The need to feel **close to others**
- ✚ The need to feel **some control** over our lives

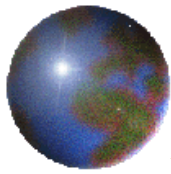
Slide Credit: Abby Weiss, Psy.D., LP



## *Common Myths About Survivors of Trauma*

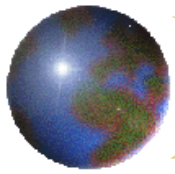
- Time heals all wounds
- Survivors will eventually forget about the past
- Bringing up the past only makes it worse
- Survivors can bounce back to “normal” once they are removed from war or after a set amount of time
- If they look fine on the outside they are fine on the inside

*Slide credit: Abby Weiss, Psy.D., LP*



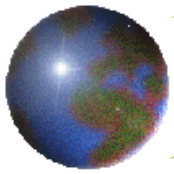
# *Triple Trauma Paradigm: Pre-flight*

- ✦ Harassment, intimidation, threat
- ✦ Fear of unexpected arrest
- ✦ Loss of job/livelihood
- ✦ Living in hiding
- ✦ Societal chaos/breakdown
- ✦ Prohibition of traditional practices
- ✦ Separation, isolation of family
- ✦ Lack of medical care
- ✦ Malnutrition
- ✦ Need for secrecy, silence, distrust
- ✦ Being followed or monitored
- ✦ Imprisonment
- ✦ Torture
- ✦ Other forms of violence
- ✦ Witnessing violence
- ✦ Disappearances/deaths



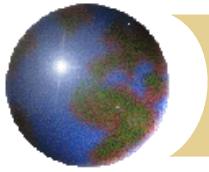
# *Triple Trauma Paradigm: Flight*

- ✦ Fear of being caught or returned
- ✦ Living in hiding
- ✦ Detention at checkpoints, borders
- ✦ Loss of home, possessions
- ✦ Loss of job/schooling
- ✦ Disruption of studies, life dreams
- ✦ Illness
- ✦ Exploitation: bribes, falsification of papers
- ✦ Physical assault, robbery, rape, or injury,
- ✦ Witnessing violence
- ✦ Lack of medical care
- ✦ Separation, isolation of family
- ✦ Malnutrition
- ✦ Crowded, unsanitary conditions
- ✦ Repeated relocation
- ✦ Long waits in refugee camps (10-20 years)
- ✦ Great uncertainty about future



# *Triple Trauma Paradigm: Resettlement*

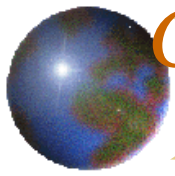
- ⊕ Low social and economic status
- ⊕ Loss of identity, roles – professional, family, gender
- ⊕ Conflict: internal, marital, generational, community
- ⊕ Language barriers
- ⊕ Transportation, service barriers
- ⊕ Unmet expectations
- ⊕ Unemployment/underemployment
- ⊕ Racial/ethnic discrimination
- ⊕ Inadequate, dangerous housing
- ⊕ Repeated relocation/migration
- ⊕ Social and cultural isolation
- ⊕ Family separation/reunification
- ⊕ Unresolved losses/disappearances
- ⊕ Bad news from home
- ⊕ Unrealistic expectations from home
- ⊕ Shock of new climate, geography
- ⊕ Symptoms often worsen



# *Messages for Survivors*

- ✿ Welcome; I'm glad you are safe and here in our community.
- ✿ You will have much to contribute.
- ✿ I know you have gone through many bad experiences.
- ✿ Most war survivors are still feeling the effects of these experiences. This is normal.
- ✿ I know you were not always a refugee. You have lost much.

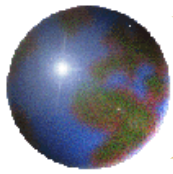
*Slide credit: Center for Victims of Torture, St. Paul, MN*



## *Church members can help address mental health needs through informal support*

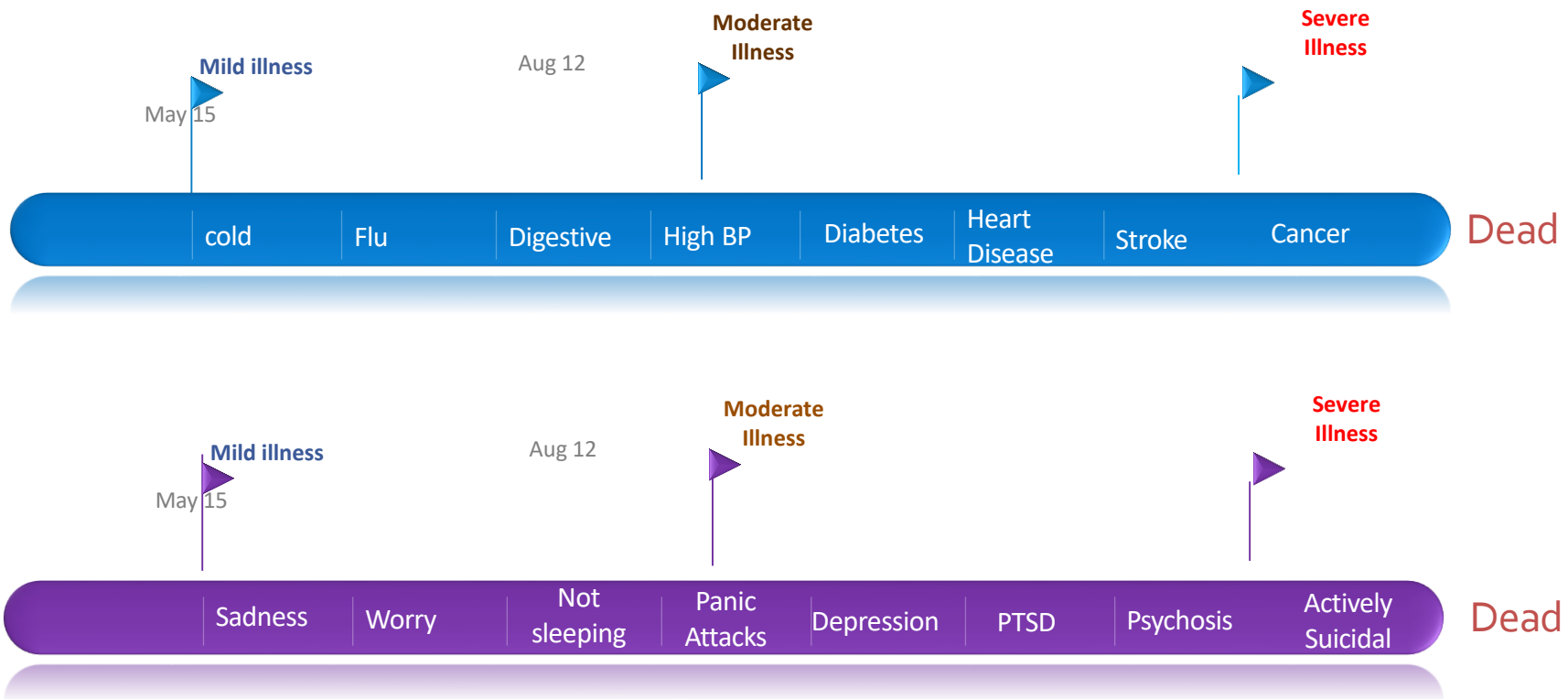
- ✦ Normalize emotional/physical reactions to trauma
- ✦ Help to regulate distress
  - ✦ Help them remember what has helped in past as well as learn new ways
  - ✦ Prayer, deep breathing, yoga, exercise, music
  - ✦ Provide opportunities for pleasure/fun
  - ✦ Find examples of strength in their stories – look for resiliency (The Danger of a Single Story TED talk)
- ✦ Assess need for referral: appearance, behavior, cognitions, emotions, functioning
  - ✦ be aware that distress is normal at beginning and may not be best time for referral

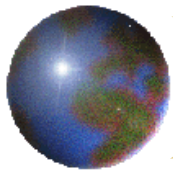




# Addressing Mental Health Needs

Mental Health stigma – there is only sane or crazy, no continuum— help educate



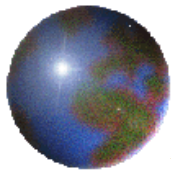


# *Special Issue: Use of Interpreters*

*Good communication is essential to the ability to build trust and effectively assist immigrant families*

## ✚ Where to find interpreters

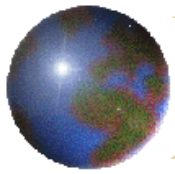
- ✚ Professional interpreting services (cost money)
  - Preferred due to training and ethics
  - Especially essential for health/mental health appts.
- ✚ Family/friends
- ✚ Ethnic organizations and churches
- ✚ Universities



# *Special Issue: Use of Interpreters*

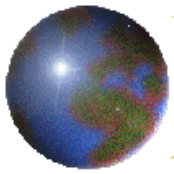
*So much more than the translation of words*

- ⊕ Specialized terminology and cultural concepts
- ⊕ Subtle meanings
- ⊕ Idiomatic expressions
- ⊕ Implied meanings
- ⊕ Affect
- ⊕ Tone of voice
- ⊕ Other non-verbal cues.



## *Use of Interpreters: Special Challenges*

- ✚ **Confidentiality!!!!**
- ✚ Interpreter's understanding of concepts & comfort asking questions
- ✚ Cultural embarrassment for interpreter
- ✚ Gender/tribal appropriateness of interpreter
- ✚ Interpreter says too much or too little
- ✚ Speaking clearly, in short segments, with plain vocabulary
- ✚ **Speak to the *client* not the interpreter**



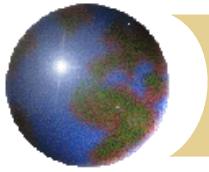
## *Potential Resources in the Community*

- ⊕ Ethnic specific organizations & ethnic church communities/leaders
- ⊕ Resettlement agencies
- ⊕ Research which health and mental health clinics are culturally responsive and having success with immigrant clients
- ⊕ Centers for Victims of Torture
- ⊕ Legal Aid can help with housing, welfare & disability benefit, family and immigration law.
- ⊕ Research which domestic violence services are culturally responsive.



# *Resources: Immigrant Stories*

- ✦ DVD: A Well-Founded Fear – PBS
- ✦ TED Talk: The Danger of a Single Story by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
- ✦ DVD: Tony & Janina's American Wedding: A Deportation Love Story
- ✦ Book: Undaunted: My Struggle for Freedom & Survival in Burma by Zoya Phan
- ✦ Book: The Late Homecomer by Kao Kalia Yang
- ✦ Book: The Middle of Everywhere by Mary Pipher



# **Network, network, network!!!!**

Feel free to contact me.

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