

APPROVAL SHEET

Title of Thesis: Refugee Resettlement in the United States: Investigating History and Policy, and Exploring the Experiences of Congolese Refugees in Baltimore

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ABSTRACT

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The experience of Congolese refugees in Baltimore is deeply affected by the history of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the evolution of refugee policy. In this thesis I contextualize the modern refugee crisis in the Congo in its colonial and post-colonial roots in Congolese history, using Franz Fanon, Edward Said, and Thandika Mkandawire. Next, I analyze refugee resettlement policy in the United States through Immanuel Wallerstein's symbiotic pairing of universalism with racism and sexism, Bourdieu's forms of capital and symbolic violence, and Lily Cho's examination of the racist implications of place of birth requirements on passports. Finally, I collaborate with three refugee families from the Democratic Republic of the Congo to highlight their unique experiences through familial narratives told using portraiture methodology and evaluate the extent to which they feel refugee resettlement policy has served them in their transition to the United States. I conclude that changes in refugee policy should be more fully contextualized in colonial history and reflect the longer term cultural needs of refugees as they navigate the sometimes convoluted cultural landscapes of their adoptive countries.

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Refugee Resettlement in the United States: Investigating History and Policy, and
Exploring the Experiences of Congolese Refugees in Baltimore

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Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the University of
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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to refugees around the world who are living in limbo, unsure of when, where, or whether they will find stability.

Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been completed but for the help of many. I would like to acknowledge first and foremost the three couples who consented to share their stories. Thanks to my advisors and readers, who have dedicated many hours to giving me constructive feedback so that I could turn in my best work. I am grateful to my peers, friends, and family for their continuous support in the form of phone calls, study sessions, comments on numerous drafts, encouragement, and advice.

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Introduction

Take a moment to imagine, if you will, a time of abject fear in your life. Perhaps it is a time of childhood abandonment in a grocery store or at school. This fear could be an adult one, the fear that maybe the ends just will not meet this month and you may lose your home or your car, or the fear that you will never see your children again, or the fear that you will die alone. Regardless of which scenario you choose, embrace it. Sink into that fear, because no matter how fearful you can imagine it to be, it will likely pale in comparison to the real fear experienced by refugees in the moments before they make the decision to leave everything they know and cherish in order to flee for another country in the hope of a better life for themselves and for their families.

A refugee is officially defined by the United Nations as someone who has been persecuted on the base of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.¹ In order to be legally classified as a refugee, one must be outside of one's country of origin or residence.² The legal definition of a refugee in the United States follows the international definition: "any person who is outside any country of such person's nationality... and is unable or unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion."³ The two definitions are nearly identical because the language from the American law comes from the international one. The alignment of the two definitions is helpful given

¹ United Nations, "Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees," (Geneva, Switzerland: 2010).

² Ibid.

³ United States Congress. *Immigration and Nationality Act*. Act 101A, 42A-B.

the international nature of the issue of refugee resettlement. United States Refugee Policy was not consolidated or well-defined until the passage of The Refugee Act of 1980, and the language used in The Refugee Act of 1980 was taken directly from the United Nations definitions.⁴ Before 1980 American refugee policy was based on a series of laws passed by Congress from 1953 to 1977, each of which specified a certain ethnic or national group, including escapees from Communist countries (1953), Hungarians after their revolution against the Soviet Union in 1956-1957, Azores Islanders after a 1957 natural disaster, Chinese (from Hong Kong), Cubans, and Indochinese. Before the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was established in 1951, refugees were grouped in with other immigrants or called Displaced Persons (after World War II).⁵

Refugee resettlement is the act of moving refugees to a place of safety, often including transporting an individual or family from a country adjacent to their native country to another country that is further away, with the understanding that the resettled individual or family may never be able to return to their homes. The country of resettlement agrees to admit the refugees and “ultimately grant them permanent settlement.”⁶ Refugee resettlement is often perceived by countries who host refugees as a form of humanitarian relief, as a burden on the countries who are willing to take in refugees.⁷ Hosting refugees is indeed a burden, but it should be the responsibility of the international community to share that burden. In situations where refugees make it to countries with the resources to provide for their needs, they also contribute their diverse backgrounds to their new homes

⁴ Maryland Office for Refugees and Asylees, “About United States Refugee Admissions Program (United StatesRAP),” Accessed April 7, 2018.

⁵ United States Citizenship and Immigration Service, “Refugee Timeline,” (Department of Homeland Security: February 2018)

⁶ “Refugee Resettlement: The Facts,” Refugee Council (UK), accessed April 7, 2018.

⁷ Merle Kreibaum, “Their Suffering, Our Burden? How Congolese Refugees Affect the Ugandan Population,” *World Development* 78, (February 1, 2016), 262-287.

and bring new and valuable ideas, skills, and cultural knowledge. Often it is the neighboring countries, themselves in difficult or potentially unstable situations, to which most refugees flee, and where many refugees remain.⁸ There is another historical layer to refugee crises: many refugee crises today are caused, at least in part, by instability resulting from colonial rule and mismanaged transitions from colonial rule to post-colonial independence.

Refugees themselves are by definition caught up in the instability of their home countries, with little to no agency of their own. In emergency situations, the most critical material and survival needs of people are taken into account, such as, food, water, shelter, clothing, and basic medical care. Too often, refugee resettlement policies give refugees what the developed world assumes they need for this short-term crisis of survival, rather than supplying the tools they need for long-term stability in new cultural settings. There are many layers of power and agency at work, almost none of which belong to refugees themselves. Refugees are entitled to be accorded the basic human dignity, equality, and respect that all people should be given. This paper seeks to understand and bring light to the gaps between the definitions and assumptions made by policy makers and resettlement implementers, and the needs of refugees themselves, in this case a group of Congolese refugees in the Baltimore, Maryland region.

While refugees around the world may share certain broad experiences in common, their lived experiences are highly unique to their specific historical and cultural context. Understanding the history of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is therefore crucial to understanding the current refugee crisis and the experiences of Congolese refugees which

⁸ Margarita Puerto Gomez, Asger Christensen, et al., “The Impacts of Refugees on Neighboring Countries: A Development Challenge,” World Development Report, World Bank: 2011.

have brought them to their new homes, in the United States or abroad. The history component of Part One of this project gives some context for those individualized stories of the three refugee families in Part Three, from the beginning of the Belgian colonization of the Congo in 1885 to the current trouble in the country surrounding the government pushing back the 2016 elections.

Policy considerations in Part Two range from international and national policy to municipal policy, as appropriate. Local municipal refugee policy and the individual refugee experience cannot be wholly or effectively articulated without considering the national and international levels of legislation which govern the entire process. In most instances, national or international policies must be considered due to the top-down structure of refugee resettlement policy, in which refugees apply for status directly through the United Nations or through one of their local partner organizations and are eventually resettled in the United States by national nonprofits (or delegated to their local counterparts), on behalf of the United States government. Maryland state policy and programs focus on connecting refugees to state-funded (or state-managed federal) resources.⁹ Municipal-level active resettlement policy in Baltimore does not exist, since refugees are placed by private organizations on behalf of the federal government. In light of the fact that municipalities are not active in actually resettling refugees, they can focus on creating adjacent refugee-focused policies and programming. In Baltimore, this programming tends to focus on celebrating the cultural diversity of resettled families in creative ways, through local events such as Baltimore Welcoming Week, Immigrant Heritage Month, the New Americans Task

⁹ Maryland Office for Refugees and Asylees, “About United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP).”

Force, and Baltimore's World Refugee Day Festival.¹⁰ These programs and activities tend to combine the needs of all new arrivals, not just refugees. The city is not charged with handling the logistics of resettlement.

Part Three consists of three personal refugee narratives composed through a collaborative interview and translation process under the qualitative methodological framework of portraiture. These narrative portraits document the lived experiences of three Congolese families through their transition from their home countries to intermediary host countries and later to the United States as their country of resettlement. The interpretation and analysis of these narratives compares the three families in light of the various history and policy lenses discussed in Parts One and Two. Having brought these specific personal narratives into juxtaposition with the definitions and policies which frame their experiences, I conclude this project with recommendations for policymakers to consider as they update refugee resettlement policies.

I became interested in pursuing this research when several families from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) were resettled into the community where I manage an after school program and summer camp in a suburb just outside of Baltimore City. The houses and land in the community are owned by a single property management company, and all of the community members rent their row houses from this company. The community is relatively low income, and the services of my community center are offered free of charge. I wanted to learn the stories of the refugees who came to live in the community as individuals and as a group, which led to my curiosity about how the whole

¹⁰ City of Baltimore, "Mayor's Office of Immigrant and Multicultural Affairs (Overview)," Baltimore, MD, Accessed November 24, 2017.

Kaltenbach, Chris. "Baltimoreans, native and not, join together for World Refugee Day Festival" *The Baltimore Sun* (Baltimore, MD), June 23, 2018.

system of refugee resettlement works around the world, how the system was designed, and what effect the system has on the people it is intended to help. Since then, several of these families have moved to Kansas. When they moved away I still wanted to learn about different paths refugees from the DRC took to get to safety, obtain refugee status, and eventually be resettled in Baltimore. For this reason I sought out two other families who also came from the DRC to the United States in the past twenty years. In the course of my research, I learned that all three families escaped the DRC in the past twenty years.¹¹ Little research has been done on the day-to-day experiences of refugees who have been resettled in the United States, or of their needs as stakeholders in the resettlement process.¹² I decided to focus particularly on that experience in Baltimore for Congolese people because of my interactions with refugees from the DRC, but what I learned from even this small specific group strongly suggests that there is a great wealth of hidden and untapped knowledge in the lived experiences of the many thousands of refugees from scores of national backgrounds who have been resettled in any city in the United States and around the world.

The ongoing challenges experienced by those who become refugees is a result of international power dynamics. Culture is often used to create hierarchies for justifying political and economic policies. In some cases, the end goal of national leaders in their manipulation of politics, economics, or cultural dynamics is the accumulation of power, and not primarily the health and stability of the country or region they wish to rule.¹³ This

¹¹ The history of the DRC and of these wars is briefly articulated in the history and context section of this paper.

¹² United States Government Accountability Office “Refugee Resettlement: Greater Consultation with Community Stakeholders Could Strengthen Program,” Richard J. Irvin and Lois Gambrell, eds, in *Refugee Resettlement in the United States*. (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2013), 50-51.

¹³ Maryland Office for Refugees and Asylees, “About United States Refugee Admissions Program (United StatesRAP).”

mismanagement of power is exemplified when leaders encourage and promote national, ethnic, or tribal pride, and then use that pride to devalue other cultures. These devalued cultures within a country could be subcultures within the nation or they could represent cultures from outside the nation's boundaries. The leaders who promote nationalistic rhetoric are empowered through populist movements and often stay in power due to the fear of citizens to be classified as members of a devalued group. A devalued group is a group whose members are explicitly set aside as less important to the structure or the health of a society than the members of another more dominant group. Members of devalued groups in these politicized cultural settings are the people who most often become refugees. Refugees lose their livelihoods, homes, and security, and are forced to flee their communities and countries.

Some of those who successfully attain official refugee status through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) are then, after a long, drawn out evaluation and placement process, sent to other countries for more permanent resettlement. With few exceptions, they have no choice in where they will be sent.¹⁴ The question asked them is not where, but *if* they will go. There are systems in place which limit the autonomy of refugees and their ability - and right - to shape their own lives. Once they arrive in their new homes, their experiences are deeply affected by local cultural norms and expectations. The expectations of the governments and communities in the new homes of refugees in turn create new cultural and societal challenges for already traumatized individuals, who

¹⁴ Some refugees considered for resettlement in the United States apply directly, often through a previously existing affiliation with the United States. Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, "U.S. Refugee Admissions Program FAQs," United States Department of State, February 1, 2018, <https://www.state.gov/j/prm/releases/factsheets/2018/277838.htm>

must acclimate quickly to new social and cultural environments after what in many cases have been years of living in limbo.¹⁵

In this thesis I examine and critique refugee resettlement in three parts, focusing on Congolese history, refugee resettlement policy in the United States, and personal narratives shared by three Congolese refugee families in Baltimore. In Part One I summarize the history of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and analyze that history through the theoretical frameworks presented by Franz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth*, by Edward Said in *Orientalism*, and by Thandika Mkandawire in *Africa: Beyond Recovery*. In Part Two I outline the process of how a person becomes a refugee, the rights of refugees, and critique the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the refugee policy which stemmed from it in the context of Immanuel Wallerstein's analysis of the symbiotic pairing of universalism with racism and sexism. The resettlement experience is then examined through Pierre Bourdieu's conceptualization of the forms of capital and symbolic violence. Lily Cho's examination of birthplace designations on passports and the international experience of refugees is treated at the end of Part Two. Part Three presents personal narratives of the lived experiences of three refugee families using the collaborative methodology of portraiture. Portraiture blends the rigor of academic writing and qualitative analysis with the context and perspective gleaned from rich personal narratives exemplified in literary and aesthetic art forms.

¹⁵ See section on Pierre Bourdieu for an examination of symbolic violence.

Part 1: History in Context

The Democratic Republic of the Congo has suffered a turbulent colonial and post-colonial history, which is critical context for understanding the violence and instability that has resulted in recent refugee crises. In 1885 King Leopold of Belgium decided that the central African territory which he called the Congo Free State was his personal property and corporate state.¹⁶ A corporate state is a state owned by an individual or company for the purpose of making a profit, as opposed to a political state, which operates for the governance of a place by means of some governing body, like a parliament or congress. His treatment of the people in who lived there was horribly inhumane, and included orders to amputate hands and even feet as punishment for workers failing to meet their quotas in harvesting raw materials such as rubber.¹⁷ It is possible that as many as 10 million people were killed in this first period of the DRC's colonial history from 1885 to 1908.¹⁸ In 1908 the corporate state was officially annexed as a colony by the Belgian government due to international pressures, at which time it came to be known as the Belgian Congo.¹⁹ Leopold died a year later, having never set foot on the territories that he had terrorized.

The Belgian government did not know what to do with the Belgian Congo, so it settled for ensuring that it was a profitable enterprise by giving land grants to large corporations in exchange for shares of the profits. These corporations exploited the vast mineral wealth of the Katanga region in the southeastern part of the territory and built railroads to Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) and to the Atlantic Ocean. From 1914, every

¹⁶ David Van Reybrouck, *Congo: The Epic History of a People*. trans. Sam Garrett. (New York, NY: Ecco, 2014), 57-58.

¹⁷ Robert B. Edgerton, *The Troubled Heart of Africa*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002), 111-2.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 112.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 155-156.

able-bodied native African man was forced to pay an annual tax, called a head tax.²⁰ The only way they could earn the money required to pay the head tax was to work for colonial interests. By 1920, £12 million worth of raw materials were being exported from the Belgian Congo annually.²¹ Jules Renkin was the first Belgian administrator for the Congo, from 1908 - 1918. He put into place dual administrative structures. The first had 6,095 units, composed of African chiefs and sub-chiefs who were loyal to the Belgian government, but who had no idea how to collect taxes and had no respect from the communities which they were supposed to be governing.²² A second, higher ranked administrative structure, parallel to the first, was staffed by Europeans.²³ These civilian officials were permitted to arbitrarily order the flogging of Congolese people until 1955.²⁴ Nearly 30,000 public schools and two universities were established, but no black children were permitted to attend white schools until 1955. By 1960 only 421 African students were enrolled in university in the Congo.²⁵ During the colonial years (to 1960) mineral profits were invested in medical infrastructure as well as education and transportation, with at least one hospital per administrative district (100,000 people in the smallest districts). Quality of life for workers also improved, albeit unequally.²⁶

The country became the Republic of Congo when it won its independence in 1960.²⁷ The new republic was also called Congo-Kinshasa in order to distinguish it from

²⁰ Robert B. Edgerton, *The Troubled Heart of Africa*, 159.

²¹ Ibid., 158.

²² Ibid., 161.

²³ Ibid., 161-162.

²⁴ Ibid., 164.

²⁵ Ibid., 166.

There were 344 African students enrolled at Lovanium University and 77 African students in Elisabethville University.

²⁶ Ibid., 169-72.

²⁷ Ibid., 184.

its neighbor, also named the Republic of Congo, known as Congo-Brazzaville. Three important figures from the struggle for liberation were elected to lead the new nation. Joseph Kasa-Vubu was elected president; Patrice Lumumba, a pan-Africanist revolutionary, became prime minister (even though his party won the most votes); and Laurence-Désiré Mobutu (who later changed his name to Mobutu Sese Seko) was the Chief of Staff of the National Congolese Army.²⁸

Decolonization and the move toward independence in the Congo were no easy task. The new nation fell into crisis with the mutiny of disillusioned military officers in early July of 1960. Belgium, and later UN Peacekeepers, intervened to no avail. Kasa-Vubu and Lumumba reached out to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), asking them to monitor the situation and eventually provide aid upon the secession of Katanga Province and the failure of western powers to provide useful support.²⁹ Shortly thereafter, the new government cracked under pressure. On September 5, 1960, Kasa-Vubu announced over radio that he was firing Lumumba.³⁰ Lumumba in turn announced that Kasa-Vubu was a traitor and must be deposed.³¹ Mobutu quickly turned against both Lumumba and Kasa-Vubu, in a coup supported by the United States Central Intelligence Agency.³² Patrice Lumumba was placed under house arrest by state authorities loyal to Mobutu and sent to the Katangan prison in Elisabethville in January 1961. He was tortured and executed by firing squad on January 17, 1961, away from the prison.³³ The firing squad included

²⁸ Robert B. Edgerton, *The Troubled Heart of Africa*, 181-4.

David Van Reybrouck, *Congo: The Epic History of a People*, 265.

²⁹ David Van Reybrouck, *Congo: The Epic History of a People*, 297-298.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 303.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*, 302.

³³ Robert B. Edgerton, *The Troubled Heart of Africa*, 195-6.

Belgians and Katangan guards.³⁴ The Belgian and United States governments provided logistical support in Lumumba's assassination; they subsidized government salaries in the new Republic and were upset that Lumumba had sought support from the communist USSR. He was an example to be made in the Cold War struggle between European powers.³⁵ The deposition of Lumumba and tenuous relationships within the Congolese government and between the Congolese government and the United States, United Nations, and Belgium led to four years of conflict within the new country. Mobutu took the presidency in a coup with the help of the young nation's military leaders in 1965 by putting Kasa-Vubu under house arrest in a rebellion strikingly similar to the overthrow of Lumumba four years previously.³⁶

As an anti-communist rising to power in the larger global context of the Cold War, Mobutu's installation and stability as president was supported by Western powers.³⁷ He concentrated and abused this power, often brutally, through a dictatorial rule that lasted more than 30 years. He changed the name of the country (and the river) to Zaire in 1971 in order to highlight the return of power to the hands of the authentic African people.³⁸ European or Christian names of people and places were changed as well. Mobutu went further and expelled many foreign-born merchants from the country, giving their businesses to his friends and supporters, most of whom had no experience in business. The

³⁴ David Van Reybrouck, *Congo: The Epic History of a People*, 308.

There is some discrepancy here. According to David Van Reybrouck, Katangan authorities decided to murder Lumumba independently of the authorities in Leopoldville (Kinshasa) and Belgium. Reybrouck also cites 1962 as being the year of Lumumba's assassination, where Edgerton cites 1961. A basic Google search suggests that 1961 is the appropriate year.

³⁵ David Van Reybrouck, *Congo: The Epic History of a People*, 298.
Robert B. Edgerton, *The Troubled Heart of Africa*, 217.

³⁶ David Van Reybrouck, *Congo: The Epic History of a People*, 330.

³⁷ David Van Reybrouck, *Congo: The Epic History of a People*, 305.
Robert B. Edgerton, *The Troubled Heart of Africa*, 181-4.

³⁸ Robert B. Edgerton, *The Troubled Heart of Africa*, 212.
Kris Berwouts, *Congo's Violent Peace*, 11-12.

economy went into sharp decline, but Mobutu remained in power at the helm of a one-party government until 1997. Through changing the names of places and people, and in choosing to emphasize traditional elements of the culture (such as clothing), Mobutu led a post-colonial movement to restore African identity. His rule, however, was iron-fisted and often brutalized the Congolese people as he secured his dictatorial power.

Many of the poor choices made in the early governance of the first republic (Republic of Congo, 1960-1971) and Zaire (1971-1997) were caused by the sheer lack of educated or experienced leaders in the Congo at the time of independence. For all of its faults and violent rule as a colonial power, Belgium had built significant infrastructure in the Congo during the colonial period, including over 14,000 kilometers of rails, 140 kilometers of highways, over 40 airports/airfields, over 100 hydroelectric and power plants, a modern industrial sector,³⁹ 300 hospitals for natives, medical centers, and birth clinics.⁴⁰ The Congolese army had fought in both world wars. The state of higher education in the colony, however, was horrible. In 1959 there were 1.9 million pupils in primary school, but fewer than two percent of primary school students were able to go on to secondary school in 1958-1959.⁴¹ Nobody from the Congo had been allowed in significant leadership positions during colonization, and few were able to access university degrees, so they did not know how to govern. On June 30, 1960, when the Congo achieved independence from Belgium, only sixteen native Congolese people had a university education.⁴² None of them were doctors, engineers, lawyers, agriculturalists, or economists. Africans were not

³⁹ The Belgian Congo was the world leader in the production of industrial diamonds and 4th in the world in copper production.

⁴⁰ David Van Reybrouck, *Congo: The Epic History of a People*, 265-6.

⁴¹ Robert B. Edgerton, *The Troubled Heart of Africa*, 176.

⁴² David Van Reybrouck, *Congo: The Epic History of a People*, 266.

permitted to matriculate into the universities in the Congo until an auxiliary branch of the Catholic University of Louvain was opened in 1954.⁴³ In 1957, of the 600 African university students in the United States, only two were from the Congo.⁴⁴ The youngest member of the new cabinet upon independence was the first person in the country to have graduated from university, and he was only twenty-six years old. Had the Congolese people been able to access comprehensive education earlier, perhaps the outcomes would have been different, but instead the new leadership was blocked by colonial policies from having the knowledge necessary to succeed in governance.

The political instability left by the transition of power from Belgian colonizers to United States-supported oppressors from within the Congo and three-decade rule by a dictatorial one-party state created a perfect environment for the wars of the 1990s and 2000s. Mobutu was ill and weakening, and unable to respond to the energetic advances of the incoming militias from Rwanda and Uganda.⁴⁵ These wars, which were the First and Second Congo War and the Kivu Conflict, created the current flow of refugees out of the DRC.⁴⁶ The First Congo War began in 1996, and ended with the ousting of Mobutu in 1997. Laurent-Désiré Kabila, who had been a supporter of Lumumba at the time of independence, led the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo (ADFL).⁴⁷ Kabila's 1997 *coup d'état*, later known as the First Congo War, was supported militarily by the newly-empowered government in Rwanda and the government of Uganda. Most of his armed forces were veterans of conflict in bordering Rwanda, Uganda (to the

⁴³ David Van Reybrouck, *Congo: The Epic History of a People*, 218.

⁴⁴ Robert B. Edgerton, *The Troubled Heart of Africa*, 176.

⁴⁵ Kris Berwouts, *Congo's Violent Peace*, (London: Zed Books, 2017), 15.

⁴⁶ Robert B. Edgerton, *The Troubled Heart of Africa*, 265.

⁴⁷ David Van Reybrouck, *Congo: The Epic History of a People*, 426.

East), and Angola (to the West). Their strategy was to take control of the rich mining towns in order to starve the capital, Kinshasa, economically. Kabila's ADFL forces swept across the country from East to West before taking Kinshasa. Kabila changed the name of the country from Zaire to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Once again the name of the country was changed, this time as a sign of liberation from the Mobutu regime.

Kabila's victory was short-lived, however. The Second Congo War began a year later in 1998, shortly after Kabila dismissed the Rwandan and Ugandan military leaders who had aided him in his victory. This relationship proved problematic, as the military leaders did not immediately return to Rwanda and Uganda. Instead, the same military leaders turned to support other rebel groups in the Eastern part of the new Democratic Republic of the Congo, such as the Rally for Congolese Democracy. Much of the impetus for the Rwandan involvement in Congolese affairs is the high concentration of mineral wealth in the eastern part of the Congo.⁴⁸ Laurent-Désiré Kabila was assassinated three years later on January 16, 2001 by one of his own bodyguards, a child soldier from Kivu in the east.⁴⁹ His son, Joseph Kabila, was appointed to the presidency after his death and called for peace talks with Rwanda and Uganda.⁵⁰ The Second Congo War officially ended in 2003, but the devastating effects of the war continued afterwards, visible in high rates of malnutrition and disease, and in the following unrest known as the "Kivu Conflict," which is ongoing at the time of writing.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Kris Berwouts, *Congo's Violent Peace*, (London: Zed Books, 2017), 15.

⁴⁹ David Van Reybrouck, *Congo: The Epic History of a People*, 465.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 467.

⁵¹ Famine Early Warning System Network, "Democratic Republic of Congo: Key Message Update - March 2018," Reliefweb, March 31, 2018.

The second multi-party election in Congolese history since independence took place in October 2006. Joseph Kabila won the presidency. The next election was planned for 2016, but it was later postponed until April 2018 and postponed again until December 2018.⁵² It remains to be seen at time of writing whether the elections will actually be held at the newly appointed date. The opposition has held protests periodically since the December 20, 2016, which was supposed to be Joseph Kabila's last day in office.

Because this recent violence and instability in the DRC is so tied to the colonial roots of the country, it is relevant to look at that history through frameworks provided by post-colonial theorists. Franz Fanon wrote *Wretched of the Earth* in 1961, during the time of the Algerian liberation movement. Edward Said wrote about the history and impact of Orientalism in the mid-1970s. Thandika Mkandawire writes about post-colonial global economic policy and attitudes toward Africa as a continent. Together, these three theorists provide a structure to facilitate deeper understanding of the role of culture and power in the Congolese context.

Colonial Violence and the Historical Evolution of the Congo

Franz Fanon was an Algerian psychiatrist who wrote about revolutionary experience in the colonial context. In his book *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon wrote powerfully about the role of violence in the struggle for freedom from oppression. Indeed, he wrote that "decolonization is always a violent phenomenon."⁵³ The violence of colonialism and of decolonization, he argued, is not due to the violent nature of the

⁵² Steve Wembi, "Uncertainty as DRC sets election date to replace Kabila," Al Jazeera. November 9, 2017.

⁵³ Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington, (New York: Grove Press, 1961), 35.

“native,” but rather the inherent violence of the “settler.”⁵⁴ It is the settler who has seized for himself power and resources in a place formerly occupied by another.

The settler creates the native by naming him (or her) as such. The settler perpetuates the existence of the native-settler dichotomy through continued use of the term “native.” The settler defines himself (or herself) by his or her property, which was acquired through the violence of the colonial system.⁵⁵ A Belgian or a Frenchman or an Englishman is a native at home in Belgium or France or England. It is only when he takes it upon himself to move to another place that he becomes a settler. Just as a member of any tribe in Africa or in the Americas is merely a tribesman until that foreigner invades his home; only then is he a native.

In the context of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, this settler native relationship was certainly the case. Under the weight of colonization, Fanon explained, “there is no native who does not dream at least once a day of setting himself up in the settler’s place.”⁵⁶ His words were written in the context of comparing the clean, well-appointed, luxurious town which the settlers called home to the dirty, cramped town of the colonized. Fanon emphasized the extreme effects of colonialism on natives, which led white/European to be interchangeable with good and native/black/African to be interchangeable with bad. Natives came to feel not only envious of the quality of life experienced by settlers, but also somehow innately less-than their oppressors. This transition came to pass in the Congo only after years of continuous abuse by the colonizers through forced labor, the head tax, and arbitrary cruelty.

⁵⁴ Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 40.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 39.

The struggle for freedom, power, and autonomy is ongoing for oppressed people. This is evidenced in the brutal treatment of the colonized by the colonizers throughout the colonial world, and it was especially true in the Congo. Fanon argued for black liberation in the Marxist tradition, exchanging the Marxist terms proletariat and bourgeoisie for the peasantry and native intellectuals. He warned that the process of decolonization would only be successful if it occurred from the bottom up, in a revolution fomented by the colonized peasantry.⁵⁷ Fanon feared that if the native intellectual class lead the revolution, they would likely take the place of the former colonizers as the new oppressive class. The structure of oppression is upheld, merely with new faces at the helm.⁵⁸ Congolese independence looked nothing like Fanon's plan for revolution. It was not led by the Congolese people for the Congolese people. It was celebrated with pomp and circumstances, with participation by Belgian leaders and a Belgium-approved President in Kasa-Vubu.

The failed state of post-colonial Congo (Kinshasa) reflects precisely Franz Fanon's concerns about how revolution ought not to be done. The first democratically-elected government was unable to maintain its grip over the country as a whole. The early leaders of the Congolese government were not highly educated, although they (most notably President Kasa-Vubu and Prime Minister Lumumba) were by and large members of the *évolué* class, a class of Africans who worked to live in a manner as European as possible.⁵⁹ They carried the additional burden of needing to learn leadership skills as they led, since they had been unable to gain those skills during colonial rule. Fanon knew when he was writing in 1961 that popular revolution was the only way for a people to overthrow the

⁵⁷ Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 35

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 48-49.

⁵⁹ David Van Reybrouck, *Congo: The Epic History of a People*, 214-216, 225, 243.

corrupt colonizers. He knew that the intellectuals and idealists could easily forget the reason for the revolution by getting lost in the details. He argued that the common people would know that the reason for the struggle was not only for an idealized notion of freedom, but for the practical control of food and its production, or as he called it, “bread and land.”⁶⁰

Fanon would likely argue that the Congo failed because it was not founded on a united peasant’s revolution. Indeed, by Fanon’s definition, there was no revolution at all because the leaders were of the upper class and sanctioned by Belgium. The people who stayed in power after the revolution were indebted to Western powers for their success. The country did not - perhaps would not, perhaps could not - cut itself off from the influence of the colonizer to find solutions to its own problems. The new country immediately devolved into conflict over who should have the right to leadership, in a scramble for power nearly as violent as the results of the original Scramble for Africa in 1885.⁶¹

Franz Fanon’s focus was very much focused on the moment of struggle for liberation, given that his writing and publication of *The Wretched of the Earth* in 1961 coincided with many of the African revolutionary movements. Edward Said is another thinker who provides useful perspectives for understanding these complex settings. Said, writing over a decade later in the mid-1970s, focused his attention on detailing and analyzing the ways in which Western academics defined and constructed the Orient.

⁶⁰ Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 50.

⁶¹ Ibid., 54-55.

See Figure 1 for a map of Colonial Africa after the Berlin Conference.

Applying Orientalism to the African Refugee Context

Edward Said was a Palestinian American professor of literature who made great contributions to the field of postcolonial studies with his 1978 monograph *Orientalism*. Said defined Orientalism in three ways.⁶² First, Orientalism is an academic pursuit, an Orientalist being a person who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient. The second definition comes from the first, in that it relies on an academic distinction between the Occident and the Orient. Following this distinction, the difference between the east and west is pinpointed as a basis for elaborate socio-political as well as literary constructs about the Orient. The third definition of Orientalism has to do with the corporatization of Orientalism, using it to make statements about and define the Orient, thereby giving Orientalists the power to dominate and declare authority over the Orient. Because this colonial and post-colonial “othering” was a global phenomenon present wherever there was colonial rule, Said’s principles of Orientalism can be similarly applied to Western representations of sub-Saharan African countries.⁶³

Describing and defining other cultures, a phenomenon integral to Said’s concept of Orientalism, and more recently referred to as 'othering,' is a powerful act of cultural dominance.⁶⁴ In the 2003 preface, Said wrote that “there has been so massive and calculatedly aggressive an attack on the contemporary societies of the Arab and Muslim for their backwardness, lack of democracy, and abrogation of women’s rights that we simply forget that such notions as modernity, enlightenment, and democracy are by no

⁶² Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (Penguin Books: New York, 2003), 2-3.

⁶³ A. Czajka, "The African Orient: Edward Said's Orientalism and 'Western' Constructions of Africa." *Discourse Of Sociological Practice* 7, no. 1/2 (Spring/Fall: 2005), 117-134.

⁶⁴ Alison Mountz, “The Other” in *Key Concepts in Political Geography*, (Sage Press, 2009), 328-329.

means simple and agreed-upon concepts that one either does or does not find.”⁶⁵ Muslims and Arabs are perceived to be backwards, misogynistic terrorists post-9/11. It is common for African countries to be portrayed in Western media as poor, violent, inefficient, and all manner of negative adjectives. While it is important to give attention to the direct physical domination and violence of military and political colonial rule, it is critically important to understand the complex web of cultural and symbolic forces at work in colonial settings and the relationships they establish moving into post-colonial states. Said called the French and English domination of Orientalism from the end of the eighteenth century a strong example of this kind of control.⁶⁶ This Orientalism created significant obstacles to self-determination for the people who were so named, negated cultural complexity, and facilitated the use of cultural stereotypes that support cultural hierarchies and social inequality.

Said’s Orientalism is based in the power to name. People or groups with the power to name and define others interfere in the self-determination and self-representation of the groups they seek to define. Western academics take ownership over the “Oriental” by naming and defining what it means to be the Orient. Since none of these intellectuals are writing from the perspective of the people or cultures they define, they create a sense of “othering.” They are free to take their conceptions and misconceptions about places that they may have never visited and cultures of people they may have never met and publish those opinions as fact in western media. This creates a sort of cultural othering - the creation of boundaries between the writer and the subject. This sense of othering can lead to exoticification of these cultures based on geography and perceived cultural difference, which

⁶⁵ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (Penguin Books: New York, 2003), xiv.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 98.

contributes to a sense of “us” and “them” in the West. This sense of in-group, out-group identity contributes also to a power imbalance.

The Western scholars who name and define the Orient control the discourse around the way the Orient is perceived in the West by scholars and laypeople alike. The tradition of Orientalism in the field of history relied on a commonly held body of literature, which was used to describe and explain the people, culture, and behavior that was the Orient.⁶⁷ Orientalism created a sense of the Oriental “other” as native, barbaric, exotic, or otherworldly, which contributes to the hegemony of the West and the power of its cultural impact on an international scale.⁶⁸ Western countries such as the United States often apply the perspective of Orientalism to other non-Western cultures and civilizations as well, including countries in Africa. Orientalism towards Africa exists in the blanket statements made by Americans about “Africans” and the common misconception that Africa is a (homogenous) country rather than a diverse continent containing more than 50 countries , as many as 2000 distinct languages, and more genetic diversity than the rest of the world combined. The power of naming and “othering” or Orientalizing is exemplified by the reduction of this incredible diversity to a short list of stereotypes and images.

These concepts of Orientalism and of Revolution are crucial in constructing a more complete understanding of the socio-political and historical context in the Congo, which has led to the experiences of Congolese refugees.

⁶⁷ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 41-42.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

With half a century of experience since the era of independence struggles in most of the colonial world and technological advances in transportation, postcolonial theorists have recently begun to analyze the effects of the means by which power was transferred in various colonial-independence transitions throughout the world and the way that those transitions have affected mobility. Where Fanon and Said focused on the role of the colonized in the revolution and the discourse created by the West about the non-Western world, Thandika Mkandawire is primarily concerned with the role of colonizers in the economic context of post-colonial Africa. Mkandawire was born in Malawi, traveled abroad for his university studies, and has made his home in Sweden. His evaluations of the continent as a whole can be extended to understand the Congolese experience of economic uncertainty.

In his lecture entitled “From Recovery to Development,” the first of three lectures in his book *Africa: Beyond Recovery*, Mkandawire examines the post-colonial transitions of economic power in African countries, many of which had economies that flourished immediately upon their independence, crashed shortly thereafter, and entered into a long, slow recovery period. Due to this crash and recovery, he urges economists to refrain from conflating the recovery with economic development, which he argues can only occur once the economies have recovered fully to status when they were stable.⁶⁹ He adds that African economists should avoid extreme swings in opinion, which he refers to as Afropessimism and Afroecuphoria, that a more stable, moderate, long-term approach is more appropriate for the long-term stability of the continent.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Thandika Mkandawire, *Africa : Beyond Recovery*, 1.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

Mkandawire points to the rising middle class and the political reality that leaders throughout Africa are being evaluated by the success of their economies as two significant wins for economic stability.⁷¹ He cautions, however, that many of the significant increases in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) between 1995 and 2006 occurred because of price increases for the goods being sold on the international market rather than by market diversification or volume increases.⁷² Mkandawire points to the fact that early colonial economies were tied to slow-growing European economies, which was good for stability but bad for economic growth and economic development, and that in recent decades African economies have increased their trade with more dynamic Asian economies, leading to faster growth potential.⁷³

An important observation that Mkandawire makes is that western political and economic leaders made some serious mistakes in the 1970s and 1980s by forcing certain African governments to liberalize their economies in order to get international financial assistance without the appropriate private infrastructure to handle taking them over.⁷⁴

Mkandawire points to the importance of human investment, prioritizing investments in education and in infrastructure necessities, and criticizes the lack of investment in secondary and tertiary education across the continent.⁷⁵ As observed above in the section on Congolese history, it is education investment that determines the stability of a nation. If a nation's leaders do not have the skills necessary to regulate the economic sector, it cannot have control over the nation's financial stability, in the same way that if a

⁷¹ Thandika Mkandawire, *Africa : Beyond Recovery*, 10, 29.

⁷² Ibid., 11.

⁷³ Ibid., 13.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 15-17.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 18-20.

nation's political leaders do not have a strong grasp of governance, the country will be politically unstable.

Mkandawire's assessments of African economic stability as a whole can be applied to the DRC in particular. When Congo achieved its independence in 1960, there were no Congolese economists. No African in the country was trained in economics at the time of independence,⁷⁶ and yet there were billions of dollars of trade happening, managed and owned almost exclusively by Europeans.⁷⁷ That trade was interrupted after independence because of this knowledge gap. In this way, one of the wealthiest nations in the world in terms of natural resources is also one of the poorest in terms of life expectancy and other international measures of human development. This economic instability paralleled the political instability and contributed to the long-term conflict in the regions with the most natural resources in the country. The dominant narratives about best practices for developing countries continue to be defined by western institutions.

Former colonial nations such as DRC have never really been free to develop on their own terms. Indeed, the very terms of economic development were set by the same outside powers that have been in control since the colonial period. The current crisis in the DRC must be seen as simply the latest episode in a continuous history of violence and disruption from outside western colonial forces. Congolese refugees are to some extent the responsibility of those external powers, since the problems in the Congo are as much descended from Leopold's atrocities as they are created through the corrupt choices of local leaders.

⁷⁶ David Van Reybrouck, *Congo: The Epic History of a People*, 266.

⁷⁷ David Van Reybrouck, *Congo: The Epic History of a People*, 262-3.

Kris Berwouts, *Congo's Violent Peace*, (London: Zed Books, 2017), 12.

Part 2: Rights of Refugees and the Context of Resettlement

The refugees interviewed in this research, and whose experiences and stories are shared later, are all from the eastern borderlands of the DRC. Each was forced to flee his or her home in the face of either the First or Second Congo War. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, Article 14, everyone has the right “to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.” Not only is it the right of people to seek asylum, it is the responsibility of stable and resourced nations to help. Much, though not all, of the conflict which exists around the world today can be traced at least in part to the destabilization caused by colonialism. It is the responsibility of the nations whose interference created the instability to care for the people who have been most affected by it. In the case of the Congo that includes anyone who participated in the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, participated in the raping of mineral wealth from the land by means of forced labor, or who contributed to destabilizing the newly independent Republic of Congo after its independence in 1960.⁷⁸

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was created in 1950 (UNHCR, 2010).⁷⁹ The Commissioner was originally charged with resettling Europeans people who had been displaced within Europe before January 1, 1951, that is, to resettle people who had lost their homes due to the National Socialist rise to power in Germany, parallel dictatorships elsewhere in Europe, or the expansion of German territory

⁷⁸ Melvyn Bragg, et al. “In Our Time: The Berlin Conference.” produced by Thomas Morris. BBC Radio 4: October 31, 2013. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b03ffkfd>.

Conference Participants were: Austria-Hungary, Belgium, Denmark, France, German Empire, Italy, Netherlands, Ottoman Empire, Portugal, Russian Empire, Spain, Sweden-Norway, United Kingdom, and the United States.

⁷⁹ Office of the UNHCR, “Convention and Protocol,” 2010.

under Adolf Hitler.⁸⁰ The office was meant to disband after three years, but consecutive crises meant that its charter has been renewed repeatedly since its creation.⁸¹ 145 member states of the United Nations ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention, which serves as the guiding document for the Office of the UNHCR.⁸² The body passed an updated protocol in 1967, which expanded the original expectations of the 1951 convention in time and geography. The 1967 protocol redefined refugees beyond its original very specific temporal and geographical parameters. The most important piece of the United Nations definition of a refugee is the following:

[A person], owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.⁸³

This statement that a person must, in order to qualify for refugee status, be persecuted on the grounds of race, religion, nationality, political position, or affiliation with a particular social group, remains unchanged. While the modern definition of the refugee was established in the post-WWII context, the list of qualifiers is in need of broadening and updating. This lack of an updated definition has dramatic consequences. The narrow parameters of these original specific forms of persecution effectively deny refugee status to people in many desperate situations out of their control, including but not limited to

⁸⁰ UNHCR, “History of the UNHCR: The 1951 Refugee Convention,” (UNHCR, 2017).

⁸¹ UNHCR, “History of the UNHCR,” 2010.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Office of the UNHCR, “Convention and Protocol,” 2010.

people displaced due to drug wars, economic instability, climate change, or environmental disasters.⁸⁴

The one caveat to the right of people to seek political asylum is that “this right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.”⁸⁵ The basic international premise for refugee assistance is that people may be declared refugees if they have been oppressed but have not oppressed others. For example, a Nazi in hiding in Argentina would not be granted refugee status if he or she claimed persecution based on his or her political beliefs because those political beliefs led to genocide, an act contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations. Similarly, a Hutu who had participated in the genocide in Rwanda would not be permitted to apply for asylum if he or she felt persecuted after the realignment of Rwandan policies in the post-war years. After an evaluation process, anyone who has not actively persecuted others but has been actively persecuted, according to the specifications listed in international law, is granted refugee status.

The United Nations tracks refugees and other persons of interest around the world. These include 65.6 million displaced people worldwide, of whom approximately 22.5 million are refugees. The rest are not officially classified as refugees and are either internally displaced or fall under some other category of persons of interest. 17.2 million

⁸⁴ Jane McAdam, “Climate Change Displacement and International Law: Complementary Protection Standards,” (UNHCR, 2011). These natural disasters include widespread drought, rising sea levels, earthquakes, wildfires, tsunamis, etc.

Gracye Cheng, “Gang persecution as grounds for asylum in the United States.” *Forced Migration Review* 1, no. 37 (March 2011), 50-51.

Francis Gabor and John B. Rosenquest IV, “The Unsettled Status of Economic Refugees from the American and International Legal Perspectives--A Proposal for Recognition Under Existing International Law,” *Texas International Law Journal* 41, no. 2 (Spring 2006), 275-294.

⁸⁵ Office of the UNHCR, “Convention and Protocol,” 2010.

of 22.5 million refugees fall under the UNHCR mandate.⁸⁶ The other 5.3 million refugees are Palestinian, and fall under the mandate of the UNRWA, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.⁸⁷ The UNRWA operates separately from the UNHCR, so the UNHCR population statistics do not take into account the UNRWA population statistics.

The UNHCR data can be parsed by country of origin, by country of resettlement, and by year of resettlement. They list 3,319,006 persons of interest in the Congo. The largest category of those people are internally displaced (Internally Displaced Peoples, or IDPs). IDPs are unable to live in their homes but remain within their country of origin. The fact that some displaced persons remain within their national borders may be by choice, hoping that a return home is imminent, or it could also be because they do not have the means to escape to another country. In the DRC there are over 2,200,000 internally displaced people, and an additional 451,956 people from the DRC who have actually crossed the border into another country and been granted official refugee status, meaning they have gone through the application process with the UNHCR, either directly or through local partner organization offices.⁸⁸ A relatively small percentage of people who are given refugee status are considered in need of resettlement in a third country. Of the 451,956

⁸⁶ UNHCR, “Figures at a Glance,” (UNHCR, 2017).

⁸⁷ UNRWA does not interact with any refugees outside of Palestine and the Near East, so they do not have anything to do with the Congolese refugees addressed in this study, but I have included the number here so as to more accurately represent the number of refugees around the world. Palestinian refugees are classified differently due in part to the historical and political complexity of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict in the Middle East. For more information on the current conflict between Israel and Palestine, the displacement of Palestinians, and the history of the region, please see:

Reporters Without Borders, ed., *Israel/palestine: the black book*, (London, Sterling, VA: Pluto Press in association with Reporters Without Borders, 2003).

Girshon Shafir, *A half century of occupation: Israel, Palestine, and the world's most intractable conflict*. (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2017).

Louis H. Girard, *Israeli-Arab negotiations and issues*. (Hauppauge, NY: Nova Science Publishers, 2011).

⁸⁸ UNHCR, “Population Statistics,” Accessed November 17, 2017.

people from the Democratic Republic of the Congo who had refugee status in 2016, 22,133 were resettled throughout the world. Of those, 19,829, or 90%, were resettled in the United States.⁸⁹ The UNHCR worked with governments worldwide to resettle 189,000 refugees total in 2016. 96,823 of those refugees were resettled in the United States.⁹⁰ 96,823 sounds like a large number. Indeed, more than 50% of refugees who are approved for resettlement come to the United States. These sheer numbers, as well as the possibility of setting model program examples in the United States for other countries, makes it even more imperative for American localities to consider the full range of needs and challenges of cross cultural resettlement. Resettling fewer than 100,000 refugees pales in comparison, however, to the 22.5 million refugees in the world. In comparison, 384,478 refugees from the DRC are documented by the UN as living in neighboring Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Burundi in 2015.⁹¹ The vast majority (over 99%) of refugees are never resettled. They remain in camps or other environments in countries near their own or find some way to gain entry into countries further afield outside of the official resettlement process. While the narratives in this thesis focus on resettled individuals, the first crisis of the global refugee situation is that resettlement is a highly rare experience in the first place.

The United States national-level data are unavailable for comparison, but the Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC) reports that the average level of refugee admissions to the United States has been 95,000 since the passage of the Refugee Act of 1980.⁹² In 2015, the most recent year for which statistics are available from the

⁸⁹ UNHCR. "Population Statistics," Accessed April 8, 2018.

⁹⁰ UNHCR. "Population Statistics," Accessed November 17, 2017.

⁹¹ See Chart 2 in Appendix D.

⁹² Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC), "Press Release: ECDC Responds to Historically Low Presidential Report to Congress of 45,000 Refugees," (September 28, 2016).

United States Office of Refugee Resettlement, 69,933 refugees were resettled in the United States.⁹³ The UN data from 2016 may include some asylum seekers, as the United Nations and the United States maintain different boundaries in their reporting systems. The United States differentiates between refugees, who attain their refugee status before coming to the United States, and asylees, who come to the United States and request asylum. In order for asylum-seekers to be considered for official status, they must enter the United States legally on some other type of visa and apply from within the country. Refugees can apply directly to the United States and circumvent the UNHCR, but it is neither common nor easy to do so. Another possible reason for the difference between the figures from the United States and the UNHCR is that the UNHCR data is stored by calendar year, whereas the United States data is stored based on fiscal year (October 1 - September 30).

Funding for refugee resettlement in the United States is provided primarily by the United States government. However, in most instances the work of resettlement is not government led, but is implemented directly by one of nine resettlement agencies, as a contractor to the United States government: Church World Service (CWS), Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC), Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM), Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), International Rescue Committee (IRC), United States Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (United StatesCRI), Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services (LIRS), United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), and World Relief Corporation (WR). These nonprofit organizations are based in cities around the country, and their employees do the work to implement resettlement policy.

⁹³Office of Refugee Resettlement, “FY 2015 Served Populations by State and Country of Origin (refugees only),” (United States Department of Health and Human Services: 2016).
The UNHCR has a record of

They are charged with tasks such as meeting refugees at the airport when they first arrive, connecting them to private and public local, state, and federal resources, training refugees on skills needed for successful transition to life in America, coordinating logistics for housing, translators, and healthcare, and much more.

Five of these resettlement agencies are active in Baltimore City and Baltimore County. Of the refugees resettled in Baltimore City from FY 2012 to FY 2016, the vast majority of cases were handled by the International Rescue Committee (IRC), who resettled 3240 refugees. Additionally, 101 were resettled by World Relief, and 42 were resettled by the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS). In Baltimore County 355 refugees were settled by the IRC, again the large majority; however, 155 were resettled by World Relief, 1 was resettled by HIAS, 2 were resettled by the Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC), and 7 were resettled by Lutheran Social Services (LSS).⁹⁴ The IRC, HIAS, World Relief, and ECDC receive funding through grants from the Office of Refugee Resettlement. Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area is a local partner of the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, which also receives direct funding from the Office of Refugee Resettlement. All five organizations receive funds from the federal as well as state governments and private donations from businesses and individuals to do their work, although the IRC is by far the most active in the Baltimore area.⁹⁵

⁹⁴Maryland Office for Refugees and Asylees, "Statistics," 2017.

⁹⁵ "IRC Grant Awards from the Office of Refugee Resettlement, Department of Health and Human Services," International Rescue Committee (IRC), 2017.

"Financials," World Relief, 2017.

"Refugee Resettlement Partners," Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS), 2017.

"Partners and External Engagements," Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC), 2017.

"Consolidated Financial Statements and Report of Independent Certified Public Accountants," Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), 2016.

According to the United States Refugee Processing Center, 1,653 refugees were resettled in Maryland in Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 (October 1, 2015 to September 30, 2016).⁹⁶ From FY 2012 to FY 2016, refugees were resettled in eight counties in Maryland plus Baltimore City. According to the State of Maryland data for the FY 2016, 729 refugees were resettled in Baltimore City and 210 refugees were resettled in Baltimore County.⁹⁷ The refugees interviewed for this study were resettled in Baltimore County and Baltimore City. The only Maryland county to host a larger number of refugees than Baltimore City is Prince George's County, which is situated in the suburbs of Washington, D.C. From FY 2012 to FY 2016, 6,873 refugees from 46 countries were resettled in Maryland.⁹⁸ The top ten countries of origin for refugees in Maryland are Burma, Iraq, Bhutan, DRC, Eritrea, Syria, Sudan, Iran, Ethiopia, and Somalia.⁹⁹

Each of the refugees resettled in Maryland undergoes a similar path. He or she must leave his or her country of origin, apply for refugee status, and wait. The application process consists of several screening interviews, with representatives from the UNHCR, medical appointments, and United States officials. While these similar conditions frame the refugee process, the actual lived experience of each refugee can be very different, based on their access to resources, their educational background, the languages they know, where they are from, and more. Each of these intersecting pieces of a refugee's identity beyond his or her refugee status contributes to the experience that he or she is going to have once he or she arrives in his or her new home.

⁹⁶Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration Office of Admissions - Refugee Processing Center. "Refugee Arrivals, January 1 - December 31, 2016." Data extracted from the Worldwide Refugee Admissions Processing System (WRAPS) December 16, 2017.

⁹⁷Maryland Office for Refugees and Asylees, "Statistics," 2017.

⁹⁸ Maryland Office for Refugees and Asylees, "Statistics," 2017.

⁹⁹ For a complete list of all 46 countries, please see Appendix A.

In order to attain official status as “refugees” people have, by definition, needed to flee their home and country, often in the face of horrifying atrocities. In their flight, refugees are driven by their need for survival. They seek primarily the basic necessities of food, shelter, health, and safety. The complexity of their situation evolves as these necessities are secured (at least in part) in camps or the resettlement process. Once the basic needs of survival are met, the other natural human desires for social connections, meaningful engagement and work, opportunities to learn and develop, and choices about their future also return. This makes refugee resettlement a complex and ongoing process that requires policies and programming which respond to these evolving needs and looks beyond meeting simply these most basic initial material needs.

The international refugee crisis is enormous, and the vast majority of refugees around the world are never resettled. The U.S. takes a sizable share of those who are resettled, but there are many more refugees who are in need of resettlement who are never officially resettled. The United States model of refugee resettlement could, however, be a model for other nations given its leadership in the number of refugees resettled annually. More locally, the state of Maryland has a sizable resettlement population. Baltimore City is among Maryland’s largest refugee resettlement centers, with people from the DRC among the largest demographic group of resettled folks, particularly in recent years.

Universalism, Racism, and Sexism in the Refugee Resettlement Experience

Just as colonial and post-colonial contexts involve complex dynamics of power and inequality, so too do settings of cross-cultural refugee resettlement. Immanuel Wallerstein is concerned with how societies create and interact with culture. He proposes two definitions of culture: 1) the way a group distinguishes itself from another, and 2) certain

characteristics which distinguish some set of phenomena within a group as higher than other sets of phenomena within the same group.¹⁰⁰ Culture is more easily defined by differences than by similarities, but it is virtually impossible to define a culture based on parameters other than difference.¹⁰¹

In the United States, the dominant culture can generally be defined by some amalgamation of European customs influenced by the cultures of the people who colonized the United States as well as later waves of immigrants who settled densely into certain regions. When refugees come to the United States from the Congo, they are leaving the place where they are the cultural insider and moving to a place where they are very much the mysterious and strange cultural outsider. In a world that is still struggling to come to terms with its colonial past, sometimes by willfully ignoring that colonial past and its effects on twenty-first-century populations, this is a particularly important context.

A significant takeaway from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is its universalist language. Universalism is the attempt to define that which is human nature in blanket terms. It is easy to say that “all men are created equal,” as was written in the American Declaration of Independence, or even to add “all men and women are created equal” as the American suffragettes did with the Seneca Falls convention, but that does not change the reality that these two documents were written in a context of active slavery for a significant portion of the population and extreme wealth disparity among the “free” segment of society in the Colonies/ United States.

¹⁰⁰ Immanuel Wallerstein, “Culture as the Ideological Battleground of the Modern World-System,” in *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 7, (Sage: London, 1990), 33.

¹⁰¹ Immanuel Wallerstein, “Culture as the Ideological Battleground of the Modern World-System,” 34.

Similarly, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights contains sweeping generalizations about the innate rights of people, and recognition that those inherent rights have been disregarded. Underlying this universalist language is, however, an ignorance of or refusal to confront the underlying racism and societal inequities. One indicator of this is that it is guided by a very Western moral perspective, with no input from other cultural frameworks. Furthermore, the document does not provide any explicit guidance as to how certain nations could atone for their “disregard and contempt for human rights [which] have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind.”¹⁰² It is an ambitious document of post-war ideation and idealization driven by the determination of European leaders to establish lasting world peace in the aftermath of World War II, but does not provide the necessary tools to nations to begin thinking about how these ideals could, would, or should be applied. There is no consideration within the document for the reality of international economic or political tensions or power structures within the postcolonial context.

In response to this kind of sweeping postwar idealism, Wallerstein analyzes the way in which universalism is paired with racism and sexism within the capitalist world system. Wallerstein described universalism as originating in western monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) and culminating in secular Enlightenment philosophy, which credited human nature itself for the intrinsic nature of human rights.¹⁰³ It is important, then, to look at the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the refugee policies which came out of it, as a twentieth-century extension of enlightenment documents

¹⁰² United Nations, “Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” (UN: 1948), Preamble.

¹⁰³ Immanuel Wallerstein, “The Ideological Tensions of Capitalism: Universalism versus Racism and Sexism,” 4.

such as the American Declaration of Independence and Constitutions. Once outsiders are ejected - in the case of the United States outsiders meaning people who are not men or pale in complexion (i.e., descended from Europeans) - the greater society loses their contributions, which harms the society as a whole because capitalism requires maximum labor in order to create the most efficient system.¹⁰⁴

Racism (and xenophobia and sexism) and universalism seem incompatible on the surface, but work together as tools of the capitalist drive to maximize the accumulation of capital.¹⁰⁵ Since many refugees encounter a strong language barrier in the United States, they enter into a cycle of working long, exhausting hours at low-paying jobs. These long hours mean that they have limited amounts of energy to dedicate to improving their English in meaningful ways.

Refugees come from all kinds of professional backgrounds and bring with them years of valuable experience, often in skills as useful in the United States as they were in the DRC, Uganda, Tanzania, or Kenya. Barriers of language and dynamics of culture effectively prevent them from picking up where they left off and contributing their skills and knowledge at their own level. It is clear that refugees who have been resettled in the United States are under-utilized resources in two ways. First, they lack the tools necessary to resume the work that they were doing before they left their country of origin, which could be something of unique consequence in American society. Second, they lack the language skills necessary to find work in familiar settings. If their communication levels

¹⁰⁴ Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Ideological Tensions of Capitalism: Universalism versus Racism and Sexism," 6.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 7.

were improved, refugees might be able to work in the occupations they knew in their previous lives.

Wallerstein posits that racism and xenophobia originate in historical systems and were used for the explicit purpose of separating the in-group from the out-group, with members of the out-group being ejected, sometimes violently.¹⁰⁶ The in-group tends to be more powerful, a dynamic which reflects not only Wallerstein's cultural theories, but Said's Orientalism as well. Refugees are defined by their out-group status: they live outside of their countries of origin, and due to their foreign-ness, have difficulty fully integrating into their host or adoptive countries.

Regardless of their symbolic capital at any point in their existence, refugees are forced out of their homes for any number of reasons. Some refugees leave for political, religious, and economic reasons. Other refugees lose their homes because they happen to live on the wrong block in a city that has turned into a war zone. For some, their living or dying is not even based on their status as members of the in-group or out-group, merely on the unhappy circumstance of their living or working situations crossing paths with the power plays of government or anti-government forces. The refugees who have participated in this study escaped dangerous situations involving threats from people of their own race and nationality.

The problem with xenophobia and racism in the refugee experience comes from United States refugee quotas embedded in the policy, which limit the number of refugees allowed into the United States in a given year. Not only do they limit the total number of

¹⁰⁶ Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Ideological Tensions of Capitalism: Universalism versus Racism and Sexism," 6.

refugees, they limit the number of refugees who can come from any given region.¹⁰⁷ This quota structure is problematic especially because it is blind to the scale and location of real refugee crises around the world at any given time. Deciding numbers independent of the actual scale and particulars of the refugee situation highlights the disconnect between policy and reality. In the 2016 fiscal year, the Obama administration increased the quota from 70,000 to 85,000, and projected an increase to 110,000 in 2017.¹⁰⁸ In fiscal year 2017, however, the new Trump administration reached its self-imposed quota of only 50,000 new refugee arrivals by July.¹⁰⁹ This is a dramatic reversal of direction and significant decrease in the number of resettlement placements. The Departments of State, Homeland Security, and Health and Human Services proposal for Fiscal Year 2014 requested that the total ceiling for admitted refugees be 70,000, with a limit of 14,000 coming from Africa. 54,000 would be permitted to come from other regions around the world, and the remaining 2,000 would fall under the unallocated reserve, to be decided based on any new emergencies which arose that year, but not implemented before congress was notified.¹¹⁰ As it stands, the quota system is mismatched to the reality of refugees. It is also woefully inadequate, and, for political reasons in the U.S., is dramatically decreasing in scale, rather than increasing to meet the real needs.

The limits on refugee intake to the United States are also effectively racist. It is not clear that the policies are intentionally racist or if the racist implications are unintentional.

¹⁰⁷ Regions include the following: Africa, East Asia, Europe/Central Asia, Latin America/Caribbean, Near East/South Asia, and a small unallocated reserve, to be decided upon on an as-needed basis.

United States Department of State, United States Department of Homeland Security, and United States Office of Health and Human Services, "Proposed Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2014," 2013.

¹⁰⁸ Victor Beattie, "United States to Raise Quotas for Refugees in FY 2016, Allow 10,000 Syrians," Voice of America, September 21, 2015.

¹⁰⁹ Laura Koran, "United States Hits Refugee Admissions Quota for the Year," CNN Politics, July 12, 2017.

¹¹⁰ United States Department of State, United States Department of Homeland Security, and United States Office of Health and Human Services, "Proposed Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2014," 2013.

The proposed ceilings for FY 2014 reflect a governmental bias which could be interpreted as xenophobia or anti-Africanness. In 2014, the UNHCR recorded 4,623,635 refugees from African states, meaning the ceiling for African refugees resettled in the United States accounted for only 0.3% of African refugees worldwide.¹¹¹ 32% of total refugees in the world in 2014 were from Africa. 20% of the American total proposed ceiling for admitted refugees was set aside for African refugees. Whatever the parameters used to decide future refugee ceilings, they do not seem to be based on percentages of current refugees around the world. Even in 2013, the year one would assume was used to project the 2014 needs, Africans comprised nearly 33% of refugees worldwide, so if the data were purely statistical, it would make sense for the United States to build the refugee ceiling for African refugees according to the percentage of African refugees in the world compared to other refugees.¹¹² Instead, even though the percentage of African refugees in the world was 32%, the rate at which the United States proposed to accept African refugees was much lower at only 20% of total refugees accepted. It seems that in a system which tries to be objective, the ceiling for refugees accepted into the country should be related to the percentage of refugees around the world in need of resettlement.

Beyond the tensions between racism and universalism, women refugees face additional gendered challenges throughout their journey.¹¹³ They experience extraordinarily high rates of sexual assault.¹¹⁴ As many as 39% of women in eastern DRC

¹¹¹ UNHCR, "Population Statistics," Accessed April 17, 2018.

¹¹² UNHCR, "Population Statistics," Accessed April 17, 2018.

¹¹³ For more information on the unique experiences of refugee women, please see Susan Forbes Martin, *Refugee Women*, (London; Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Zed Books, 1992). A second edition of the same was published by Lexington Books in 2004.

¹¹⁴ Griff Tapper, "Increasing perils at Tanzania's Nyarugusu refugee camp: Sexual violence and environmental degradation threaten refugees seeking protection at Nyarugusu camp in Tanzania," (Al Jazeera: May 26, 2016).

have experienced sexual violence first hand.¹¹⁵ Furthermore, they are expected to balance their traditional responsibilities as women within their families with the needs of their families in the United States. They carry all the burdens of gendered roles and expectations from the DRC, and simultaneously must learn to navigate the gendered experiences of American life, often with less education (and English knowledge) than their husbands.¹¹⁶

Universalism, racism, and sexism each have a significant role to play in both formal American refugee resettlement policy and the lived experiences of refugees who have been resettled in the United States. Capital in its various forms and symbolic violence play equally important parts in the successful transition for refugees to American life. Wallerstein's interpretations of culture and society shows that western capitalist societies want a certain number of out-group people for the purpose of accomplishing certain low-ranked jobs or tasks, but they also apply cultural screenings for foreigners that support inequalities and "isms."

Refugees, Access to Capital, and Symbolic Violence

Pierre Bourdieu was a French sociologist who wrote mostly in the second half of the twentieth century. He worked and lived in Algeria for a few years during their struggle for independence from France, and was highly critical of the methods used by France to divide and control the Algerian people.¹¹⁷ He was also highly critical of, even hostile

¹¹⁵ Jason K. Stearns, *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters: The Collapse of the Congo and the Great War of Africa*, (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2012).

¹¹⁶ Susan Forbes Martin, *Refugee Women*, (New York: Lexington Books, 2004), 77.

Globally, female students comprise 10-40% of primary school students, less in secondary school, and 25% of all tertiary students. The numbers of refugee girls in schools mirrors those global patterns.

¹¹⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, "Colonial Rule and Cultural Sabir," *Ethnography* no. 4 (2004): 444.

toward, Fanon's work *Wretched of the Earth*, quoted above in this thesis.¹¹⁸ While Bourdieu disagreed with Fanon's revolutionary perspectives, two of Bourdieu's concepts, forms of capital and symbolic violence, are still particularly useful in examining the refugee experience.

Forms of Capital and the Refugee Experience

Bourdieu defined four forms of capital: economic, cultural, social, and symbolic. These forms of capital are acquired and accumulated throughout the course of one's life in the context of one's social connections, knowledge base, and access to institutions. Anything that is cash or prestige or convertible to cash or prestige is a kind of capital. Many refugees are fleeing from long-term persecution and oppression with few personal possessions. In their flight from their home countries, they lose most of the capital they had accumulated within their home contexts.

Economic capital is the form most traditionally associated with the concept of capital.¹¹⁹ It comprises cash or anything easily convertible to cash, such as property. Economic capital is the form of capital of which most refugees have very little. Occasionally a wealthy person seeks asylum in another country on the grounds of political beliefs, etc, but these people are rare, not the norm. The refugee resettlement process does involve transfer of some economic capital to refugees in the form of financial aid upon

¹¹⁸ Karl von Holdt and Michael Burawoy "Colonialism and Revolution: Fanon Meets Bourdieu" in *Conversations with Pierre Bourdieu: The Johannesburg Movement*. 2010. Accessed April 7, 2018. Bourdieu called Fanon's writing irresponsible and utopian, suggesting that it was bad for Algerians as a people and for Algeria as a nation. Von Holdt points to the different contexts of the two men - Bourdieu as a Frenchman who sympathized with the colonized, but was not oppressed by French colonialism, and Fanon as an Algerian who experienced colonialism. It seems prudent to mention it in this work, since I use both Fanon to criticize colonial history and Bourdieu to criticize policy.

¹¹⁹ Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," (1986), accessed 8/26/2013, marxists.org.

their arrival in the United States. This financial aid allows refugees to make certain purchases necessary for survival, such as rent for a place to live, food, clothing, and transportation.

The second form of capital defined by Bourdieu, cultural capital, can be broken down into three states: embodied, objectified, and institutionalized.¹²⁰ The embodied state of cultural capital is internalized. Embodied capital requires a significant investment of resources, particularly time, and it is generated by habitus. Bourdieu describes habitus most simply as “cultural attainment.”¹²¹ It is a Latin term which does not translate well into English, meaning “a condition, state, plight, habit, deportment, appearance, presence, mien.”¹²² Habitus is the way in which one has acquired culture, and the culture in which one feels most comfortable. Habitus is constructed from birth by the context in which a child is raised, and affects the experiences and cultural acquisitions for life. A child raised in a family which already has substantial cultural capital therefore has access to desirable or legitimate knowledge in its immediate environment. Conversely, a child who is raised in a family with little cultural capital needs to build cultural capital for himself or herself in order to gain access to that desirable knowledge. Refugees, having built their habitus and embodied capital at home in their own towns, lose virtually all of that cultural capital that comes from early cultural immersion. Regardless of how much embodied capital they had at home, the cultural capital which has value in the United States is different from the valued cultural capital in the DRC and their acquired capital is largely lost in transition.

¹²⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital.”

¹²¹ Pierre Bourdieu and Jeanne Claude Passeron “Foundations of a theory of Symbolic Violence (Prefaces and Book 1)” in *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, (London: Sage, 1998), 34.

¹²² “Habitus,” Latin Lexicon, Retrieved from <http://latinlexicon.org/definition.php?p1=1006976>.

The second state of cultural capital described by Bourdieu is the objectified state, which comes in the form of material objects and media, such as books, art, or other cultural goods.¹²³ The successful acquisition of cultural goods requires knowledge and access or economic capital (purchase power). Bourdieu emphasizes that this power comes with controlling the means of production. Those who depend on the sale of their services and products belong to the dominated groups, whereas those who make profits off of the exchange of cultural goods and services are of the dominant groups. As new arrivals to the United States, with few cultural goods which have value in the United States, refugees are almost always forced to sell their labor, rather than being able to trade on cultural goods such as knowledge or skills. There may be an exception when they find others from their own cultural context, for example a community group of Congolese refugees. In that context perhaps their cultural skills or goods may be respected as unitive for Congolese people in a foreign country.

The institutionalized state of cultural capital is based in the prestige associated with academic and similar qualifications.¹²⁴ In the United States a degree from a university such as Oxford, Cambridge, Düsseldorf, Prague, or Queensland is an acceptable, even valued, pedigree for employment, but a degree from any university in the Congo would likely raise questions of legitimacy or value. Due to these institutional inequalities, even the most educated refugees find barriers to find work in their fields in the United States.

Bourdieu's third form of capital, which he called social capital, requires membership to a group. The prestige of a group is rooted in (1) its collectively-owned capital and (2) the size of its network, and (3) the quantity of the capital controlled by each

¹²³ Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital."

¹²⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital."

member of the group.¹²⁵ In this sense, relationships are a product of long term investment strategies, intended or unintended, in order to gain social capital. Social capital includes in some sense a “network,” meaning a group of people who one can rely on to seek job opportunities, access to knowledge, or access to resources. These networks can come from family groups or institutional groups, all of which aim to reproduce themselves in future generations and contexts. Refugees may have fostered strong social networks at home, only to lose them when they moved away. Some people are able to continuously rebuild these social networks as they shift from one place to another, but it is a challenge. It may be easier to build social capital in a new place when one comes with a respected form of cultural capital to demonstrate that one belongs. This is uncommon, but, if a refugee was trained in a university setting, he or she knows how to interact in that setting. Universities tend to be comparable, though not the same, throughout the world. Similarly, someone who knows a particular trade can use that knowledge as leverage to gain access to an equivalent social group in their country of resettlement.

Importantly for Bourdieu, each form of capital can be transformed into other forms of capital.¹²⁶ Economic capital can give a person access to certain social networks and their capital or the ability to purchase cultural capital through institutional membership, degrees conferred, art objects, or knowledge (embodied).¹²⁷ Cultural capital can be transformed into economic capital and social capital. Social capital is acquired through prestige, which can be conferred by association with certain institutions, knowledge, or skills.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital.”

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

Cultural capital cannot be transferred to refugees in the resettlement process. It takes significant time and resources to build cultural capital. Resettlement agencies do, however, attempt to give newly resettled refugees some cultural context in their introduction to their new country, in a short introduction to American culture before they arrive in the United States, in the English languages which they can access upon arrival to the country, and in brief follow-up meetings to explain potentially foreign elements of American life, such as banking, the bureaucracy of governments, school, and health care, and how to navigate local public transportation.¹²⁹ In the twenty-first century, English-language knowledge is undoubtedly one of the most important cultural acquisitions one can have to succeed in the United States. The ability to communicate in English allows refugees to negotiate for better wages, apply for jobs, receive appropriate healthcare, navigate transportation, access education, understand the culture, negotiate relationships, and so much more. At the same time, fluency in English, as in any new language, can take years.

Social capital can be transformed into economic capital through jobs or business (or other) connections or to cultural capital through access to degrees or objects held within one's social networks. As career counselors tell college students - it's not what you know, it's who you know when it comes to getting a good job. Refugees must begin to build various forms of capital in in the United States. This is difficult since they lose so much capital in the transition from life in the DRC and in their intermediary host countries. Their habitus, as well as their capital in all its forms, is firmly rooted in these other contexts. It is only through the work of building relationships, learning language, acquiring other forms

¹²⁹ Maryland Office for Refugees and Asylees. Brochure. State of Maryland: 2016.

of local cultural knowledge that refugees can begin to improve their position in American society. The various forms of capital are complex and rooted in deep cultural and historical context. Without exception Refugees are placed (and resettled) at great cost to their own capital, and the process of rebuilding is slow, hard, and all uphill.

Symbolic capital can be capital in any form which is not recognized as capital but rather as competence in itself. Symbolic capital can be represented by a skill or possession of an artifact or knowledge which is rare. It is heavily influenced by hierarchies of value not only among the forms of capital but also among the arbitrary distinctions within a certain category. Habitus informs symbolic capital. Capital is gained most easily from birth. Later in life, once norms and contexts are set, capital becomes more complex to acquire. In this way, the earlier one is exposed to higher-value culture, the easier it is to acculturate and accumulate cultural capital within that culture. Once one set of cultural values is learned, it becomes more challenging to negotiate different cultural value expectations. For refugees, particularly adult refugees, the symbolic capital of their youth culture is negated with each cultural shift.

The most important takeaway from this examination of Bourdieu's forms of capital is that the maintenance and acquisition of capital is important for defining one's place in society. Refugees lose virtually all of their capital when they leave their homes. It is very challenging to build something from nothing, since it is the forms of capital which transform into other forms of capital in order to benefit the people with the most capital. For refugees who begin to build relationships while living for long periods of time in intermediary places, such as refugee camps or simply towns in neighboring countries, the loss can be reinforced when they leave their second homes to travel to their countries of

resettlement. Additionally, refugees who are forced to move several times between their original flight from their homes and their eventual resettlement can be living in a constant state of flux and personal and cultural instability for years. It is also worth noting that many refugees are never resettled. They are forced to continue living in these conditions until they return home or die.

The UNHCR reports that fewer than 1% of all refugees are resettled into third countries.¹³⁰ The rest remain in the countries to which they fled, making do with whatever help they receive and whatever work they can find for themselves, until hopefully it is safe for them to return home. This could work out in a positive way, in that the languages and cultures across arbitrary state lines can be shared in common, particularly in the African context where colonial markers divided land without regard to tribal alliances. This positive potential is why the United Nations' preferred option is for refugees to remain in neighboring countries indefinitely, in hopes that they will be able to integrate into local communities or return to their homes. Conversely, in some cases escaping over the border does not provide safety in commonality, as refugees can also be perceived by host communities as invaders who have come to take advantage.

Symbolic Violence and Cultural Integration

Bourdieu's work with Passeron to define a theory of symbolic violence provides another useful lens for analyzing the experiences of resettled refugees.¹³¹ They wrote their theory specifically to understand the context of the French school system and the way in which it was skewed to favor the children of wealthy families, even as it claimed to be a

¹³⁰ United States Department of State, "Refugee Admissions," accessed April 7, 2018.

¹³¹ Pierre Bourdieu and Jean Claude Passeron, "Foundations of a Theory of Symbolic Violence," vii-68.

meritocracy. I am here expanding the meaning of education beyond the formal school system to include the adult learning of social behaviors, expectations, and requirements.

Symbolic violence, for Bourdieu and Passeron, is the imposition of certain arbitrary meanings as legitimate while also concealing the power relations they carry through symbolic force.¹³² In our case, the arbitrary meanings which are accepted as legitimate come in two senses. The first instance which is relevant to this examination is the normalization of physical violence and war in the DRC due to the turbulent history there and the broader assumptions of violence and instability in the framing of the larger African context. The symbolic violence here is not based in the physical violence, but in the expectation and acceptance of physical violence as a new normal. The second instance in which symbolic violence is relevant considers the cultural expectations by Americans of refugees immediately upon their arrival in the United States.

Symbolic violence is asserted through pedagogic action, which is the imposition of a cultural arbitrary by an arbitrary power.¹³³ To stretch Bourdieu's theory slightly, the pedagogic action in the DRC which leads to the acceptance of violence as a new normal is not a formal one taught in schools, but rather a lived one, taught and transmitted in daily experience by the arbitrary power of constant fear that a stranger could come and murder one's family in the middle of the night, or that one might be raped while walking to get water, making the expectation of rape, murder, and constant fear a cultural arbitrary in itself.

¹³² ¹³² Pierre Bourdieu and Jean Claude Passeron, "Foundations of a Theory of Symbolic Violence," 4.

¹³³ Ibid., 5.

The case for symbolic violence inflicted upon refugees in the United States is more structured. In Baltimore, for example, the arbitrary expectation is that refugees will immediately learn a new language (English) and adhere to localized American customs. This is imposed by the culture at large, through the specific interactions between refugees and their caseworkers, their English teachers, their bosses at work, their interactions with their children's education process, and every time they set foot out of their own homes in order to interact with Americans. A cultural arbitrary for Bourdieu and Passeron is a thing, thought, or idea that a dominant culture wishes to see replicated in future generations or versions of society. This is seen here as the expectation of violence and instability in the Congo, and in the expectation of (near immediate) cultural acquisition in the United States. Arbitrary power comes from a dominant group or class. It is arbitrary in that it is not socially necessary for that particular group or class to be dominant. In the DRC, the dominant group is one or another of the functionally replaceable armed factions who terrorize civilians. In the United States the dominant group is the mainstream American culture that permeates institutions, policies, and programs. The resettlement process is one that is laden with symbolic violence, especially because it intersects with all the capital loss and othering features described above. Refugees land in new settings filled with cultural arbitraries that don't match their own attributes or forms of capital. They then must move quickly to adjust, acquire, or continue to be labeled and typed to their detriment.

Passports and Future Travel: Refugees as Immigrants

In the previous sections on Wallerstein and Bourdieu I have investigated the ways in which refugee policy perpetuates inequality through Wallerstein's pairing of universalism with racism and sexism and Bourdieu's analyses of forms of capital and

symbolic violence. While their theoretical frameworks are helpful for understanding the policies which name refugees and transition them into their countries of resettlement, Lily Cho's writing speaks to the refugee as immigrant, after he or she has attained citizenship in the United States and acquires enough capital to be able to travel internationally.

It is not uncommon for refugees to obtain passports and travel after becoming naturalized citizens in the United States. Lily Cho looks at the way that perception of place of birth designations in passports affects the experience of a traveler who is a naturalized citizen or passport holder in a country outside of his or her birth. Cho is the daughter of a Chinese immigrant to Canada and a literary scholar by training. Her assessment of the role place of birth designation takes (and has taken) in discrimination through scrutiny of passports is an intriguing one. Her focus is not on people born in the Congo, but rather on people who were born generally outside of Western Europe or North America but carry the prestigious passports of those countries.

In her article "Passports," Lily Cho argues that the "place of birth" designation on passports creates a hierarchy of citizenship, privileging people who are born in a country over naturalized citizens, and it strongly reflects the long term social othering experienced by refugees.¹³⁴ Cho examines the layers of holding a high-value passport but carrying with it a low-value place of birth designation. She ties the historical requirement of papers or passports to racism and racial profiling over the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, since "the passport, along with birth certificates, naturalization certificates, and so on, came to matter at precisely the point when racial difference

¹³⁴ Lily Cho, "The Passport," *Handbook of Mobilities*, Eds., Peter Adey, David Bissell, Kevin Hannam, Peter Merriman, and Mimi Sheller, (London: Routledge, 2014), 335-344.

complicated the presumed whiteness of the nation.”¹³⁵ She cites scholarship by John Torpey on the history of the passport in Early Modern Europe, Liisa Malkki on the evolution of the need for passports in the contemporary period as a reflection of “the metaphysics of sedentarism,” and Craig Robertson on the history of the passport in the United States in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹³⁶ Travel documents came to matter more as the physical appearance of citizens changed to include people with origins outside of Western Europe.

Cho analyzes United States and Canadian policies regarding this place of birth designation, which is listed on passports for all member states of the United Nations, but is not required by the International Civil Aviation Organization.¹³⁷ She includes an analysis of a United States Government Accountability Office document from 1987, “Passports: Implications of Deleting Place of Birth on United States Passports,” in which United States Immigration and Naturalization Services, the Drug Enforcement Administration, and the United States Customs Service opposed the idea based on their perceived inability to appropriately assess the criminality of a person if that place name were removed.¹³⁸ She further cited a Canadian study on the rate at which white Canadian citizens were held for further questioning in the UK compared to Canadian citizens of other races: non-white passengers were held at a rate 8.75 times higher than their white counterparts (35 per 10,000 passengers versus 4 per 10,000 passengers).¹³⁹ In the vein of Wallerstein’s pairing of universalism with racism, Cho remarks that “citizenship is neither culturally nor racially

¹³⁵ Ibid., 341.

¹³⁶ Lily Cho, “The Passport,” 336-337.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 338.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 339.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 340.

neutral. Instead, its insistence upon universality obscures it as an expression of dominant culture.”¹⁴⁰ In saying this, she starts a conversation about how, all else being equal, a person who is not white is immediately regarded as less automatically American by virtue of his or her physical appearance, and this is doubly true for people who speak with English accented by another tongue. Wallerstein’s focus was on the perpetuation of capitalism through the pairing of racism and universalism. In this case, the universalism exists in the sense that every citizen is entitled to apply for and receive a passport and other travel documents. Cho helps us understand that even the most seemingly neutral and administrative designation as citizenship on a passport, is itself laden with cultural assumptions that continue to “other” and structure inequalities.

Refugees are able to achieve citizenship in the United States after five years, but a place of birth designation on their passports leaves them potentially open to additional scrutiny. Refugees live in the United States under refugee status, but are eligible to apply for and receive a green card after a year. Once they receive a green card they are eligible to apply for citizenship after having lived in the United States as a refugee/permanent resident for five years. This process and later passport designation is probably most challenging for the children who come to the United States young enough that they develop American accents and adapt fully to American culture, but are forced by that passport label to associate with the traumatic experiences of their parents and their young childhoods. It is unreasonable to judge these children based on their place of birth. Since September 11, 2001, this challenge is likely more problematic for refugees from a country other than the DRC, for example Syria or Afghanistan, since those countries are associated with war and

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 341.

terrorism in the United States, but that could change in an instant if there were to be another violent event elsewhere in the world. Even so, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for those who are aware of global political discourse, is known for its instability, which could potentially become a marker for racist stereotyping during travel, either in the United States or abroad. For travel officials who are less aware of the political dynamics within the DRC, refugees from the DRC are still subject to the racism against black Americans in the United States based in broader forms of colorism and racism that collapse people into categories based on skin color alone. On the other hand there is also a complicated relationship between black Americans and African American immigrants that involves historical and cross-cultural dynamics. Although refugees in general, and particularly those of color and who are non-native English speakers, may certainly expect to be “othered” in all kinds of informal ways in their new society, they may also be formally “othered” through a document like a passport that explicitly lists their birth nation and implies a secondary level of citizenship. In short, even after full citizenship is achieved, the challenges of status, capital, othering, etc. can continue as evidenced by something as formal as a passport notation.

Due to their lack of access to capital, many refugees may or may not manage to access passports or the ability to travel internationally. The potentially ongoing conflict in their countries of origin can mean that they are unable to visit their families again for the same reasons that forced them to flee in the first place. For those who do manage to travel, however, it seems shortsighted to ignore the additional difficulties added on the basis of a foreign place of birth designation on the passports they carry as citizens of their adopted country. Of the few refugees who are actually resettled and are able to settle in as full card-

carrying citizens of a new nation, these challenges of their birthplace and cultural story can still follow them and continue to structure inequality for the rest of their lives.

Part 3: Lives in Portrait

Ethnographic Introduction: Locating Myself in this Research

I am not a refugee. Nor have I known many refugees in my lifetime. It has not been a common occurrence for people with whom I have interacted to inform me that they are refugees, and the ones who have, I could count on one hand before I began to run a community center in a small community just outside of Baltimore City. I had served with the Peace Corps in Zambia until a few months prior, and I noticed some women wearing traditional African clothes within a community that is predominately black American. Seeing them simultaneously made me feel homesick for the African country I had left only a few months previously, and uncomfortable in my awareness that they must be struggling to navigate American life. I reflected on the differences between what I imagined their transition to America must be like compared to my introduction to life in Zambia. I received a three-month training upon joining the Peace Corps, much of which was focused on understanding Zambian culture and customs, introductions to Zambians who spoke my language, and intensive classes in the Zambian language which I was to learn. I wondered if they received any cultural orientation upon their arrival to the United States.

I observed that the mothers would bring their children to the playground at the community center, but only when no other children were around. As time went on, sometimes the children would play on the playground later in the day when the American school children were also around. That is when I began to hear what the children had to say about “The Africans.” The American children would come tell me about things that the African children had done on the playground that they found distasteful or weird. Their mere existence seemed strange to the American kids, who were in no way prepared to meet

strangers from another continent in their community. Over the course of the next year I did what I could to facilitate some positive and constructive interactions among the children, allowing the refugee children to enter the community center, play games, work on homework, and eat snacks. I found them very friendly and respectful, though their English was minimal at first, so we communicated a lot using gestures and basic nouns, like “snack,” and “ice.” It was difficult to influence the attitudes of the American children, who learned certain prejudices at home or from the broader culture.

One of the refugee boys who came frequently to the community center was older, in high school, and spoke English well. He was very helpful, always willing to translate some things to the younger children. He also introduced me around to the six families who had moved in at similar times. All of these families were originally from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I learned. Some of them, like the older boy’s family, came to the United States by way of Uganda. Others, like the younger children who played on the playground, came to the United States by way of Tanzania. One family came to the United States through Rwanda. I would learn that these temporary living arrangements were a common and often extended part of the refugee experience.

Witnessing the families in the community as they first entered American life, I was curious about the stages of their journey and how they came to join this little community inside the Baltimore beltway, their experiences and the political situations which led them to flee their homes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to neighboring countries, and their experiences applying for refugee status, and how it was decided that they would be resettled in Baltimore. I wanted to learn their stories both as individuals and as a group. This also led to my curiosity about how the whole system of refugee resettlement works

around the world, how the system was designed, and what effect the system has on the people it is intended to help. Of the six families who moved into the community in the last half of 2016, only one remains. The others moved elsewhere in the United States after a year, several to Kansas.

Portraiture: A Collaborative Narrative Methodology

In this chapter I recount the stories of three families who fled the Democratic Republic of the Congo and were eventually resettled in the United States, in the Baltimore, Maryland area. In the course of my interviews I learned that each of the three participating families escaped the Congo in the aftermath of the First and Second Congo Wars (1996-2003).¹⁴¹

The interview process was collaborative, and the participants have been given the opportunity to see and respond to their stories as I have written them. I have sought to be as faithful as possible to the stories as they shared them with me, however I have framed them with some additional context from the political and historical moments which have precipitated their actions and experiences. Very little research has been done on the cultural implications of refugee resettlement on refugees themselves, and the ways in which refugee policy could better serve refugees, particularly in Baltimore.¹⁴² This paper seeks to begin

¹⁴¹ Gaim Kibreab, *African Refugees: Reflections on the African Refugee Problem*, Africa World Press, 1985.

Bruce Baker, (2000). "Going to War Democratically: The Case of the Second Congo War (1998–2000)," *Contemporary Politics*, 6(3), 263-282.

Christopher Williams, "Explaining the Great War in Africa: How Conflict in the Congo Became a Continental Crisis," *Fletcher Forum Of World Affairs*, 37(2), 2013, 81-100.

Mathys, G. "Bringing History Back in: Past, Present, and Conflict in Rwanda and the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo," *Journal Of African History*, 58(3), 2017, 465.

¹⁴² United States Government Accountability Office "Refugee Resettlement: Greater Consultation with Community Stakeholders Could Strengthen Program," Richard J. Irvin and Lois Gambrell, eds, in *Refugee Resettlement in the United States*. (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2013), 50-51.

the process of filling that gap by using portraits to share the stories of refugees as stakeholders in the global system. Names of participants have been changed to protect their privacy.

Several new methodologies have been developed to account for the fact that every researcher enters a project with a bias. This is particularly true with researchers who work with living human subjects. Writing is inherently biased in that it involves acts of translation and interpretation. Every researcher brings his or her own positionality and perspective to his or her work. This positionality frames what the researcher sees and what questions he or she asks. One chooses one's words in order to best frame one's argument. The result, historically, has been fascinating explorations of native cultures around the world as savage, primitive, or aboriginal. It has resulted in poor or marginalized people in society being treated no differently than bacteria under a microscope. Portraiture is a form of ethnographic research which, by presenting narratives informed by rich self-descriptions, strives to combat this historical misrepresentation of people.

Portraiture is a social science methodology which was developed by Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot, a sociologist and storyteller, in the 1980s and early 1990s. Its purpose as a methodology is to draw subjects of research into the research process. Unlike in traditional ethnographic methodologies, context and subjectivity are important to Portraiture. This applies both to the researcher (portraitist) and to the people whose stories are being told. The portraitist bears witness to her own biases and experiences which are likely to influence the story being told, and the context surrounding the experiences of the people being studied. The researcher and the person being researched collaborate to tell a story through a portrait.

The portraiture methodology shares many of the goals of ethnography and the values of the phenomenological paradigm, but seeks to combine empirical and aesthetic description, focus on the convergence of narrative and analysis, and speak to audiences outside of the academy. The portraitist chooses to elevate authenticity over reliability and validity, and recognizes the self as the primary research instrument for both documentation and interpretation of the experiences and perspectives of the groups studied.¹⁴³ In an ideal environment a portrait is crafted slowly, with enough time to allow the relationship between the portraitist and the participant to build into one of familiarity and comfortable interaction, just like the evolution of a painted portrait after both the painter and the subject invest hours of labor to create a likeness in a visual medium.

Due in part to the time constraints of this research project, but mostly to the highly sensitive nature of the traumas experienced by refugees, these portraits are much more like rough sketches or line drawings (to continue the artistic metaphor) than fully fleshed-out portraits. Throughout our sessions I was careful to ask if the participants had any questions for me or ask if they had anything to add at any point.¹⁴⁴ Sometimes I would ask for more specificity or clarity on a point, but if it seemed like the participant had said all that he or she was willing to say on a subject, I would let it go. There were several points throughout the interviews when I had the feeling that there was a deeper, and perhaps darker element to the story, but if at any point I got the sense that the person I was interviewing felt uncomfortable speaking about a particular topic, I was careful not to push too hard. I think it is important to respect the privacy of the narrator, and this is especially true in this case

¹⁴³ Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot and Jessica Hoffmann Davis, *The Art and Science of Portraiture*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bay Publishers, 1997), 13-14.

¹⁴⁴ For a comprehensive list of research questions, see Appendix B.

as the stories of refugees are never simple or painless. As such, these stories are a pared down, but from the details that are shared it is not difficult to imagine the extreme and challenging situations experienced in these very real events. The reading that I have done to better understand the context of their experiences and some of their own allusions during the interview process suggest that there is much more to tell below the surface level of what they have been willing to share. The narratives have evolved from hours of conversations which were led by my research questions (see Appendix B), but spread beyond the set of formal questions that I created and into more casual conversation.

My participants are few, but even these few individuals stories represent a striking diversity of experiences. The first couple was referred to me by a professor. I reached out to the second couple because I knew one of their sons. I met the third couple through the second couple. In an attempt to make the participants as comfortable as possible, they were given the choice to meet anywhere. Most elected to meet in their homes, although a few meetings were held in office spaces, public spaces, break rooms, or a church.

Due to constraints in language and literacy I submitted waiver of written consent to the Institutional Review Board when I applied for permission to conduct my research. When I actually met with the participants, four of the participants consented to the research verbally, and two elected to read and sign the consent form. I began the interviews with a brief introduction of myself and my research. Again, my goal was to make the participants feel safe and comfortable. I shared my experiences living in Zambia, which borders the Democratic Republic of Congo, and we discussed common cultural elements between the two countries. After these introductions, I asked my preconceived guiding questions,

interspersed with follow-up questions as a participant mentioned something which I found particularly intriguing or relevant.

I have done my best to shape these portraits through dialogue with the participants.¹⁴⁵ This has been a collaborative effort as much as possible. I have returned to each couple with clarifying questions and with the sections I have written about their stories. The linguistic barriers between us have made collaboration more challenging than if we shared fluency in a single language. I worked with two Swahili interpreters, each of whom faithfully translated my questions and the responses of the participants when the English was too complicated for them to understand or the concepts too theoretical for the participants to explain in English, which for some of them is their fifth or sixth language. For these reasons - the logistical challenges of faithful representation through translation, the psychological challenges of working with people who have undergone traumatic experiences, and the time constraints of the project as a whole - true portraiture remains aspirational. These portraits are mere vignettes, windows into highly complex lives and experiences. Portraiture and a collaborative interview structure have been the methodological goal of this work, even though the written product of the interviews reads similar to traditional qualitative studies and the narratives leave much for the reader to interpret.

My primary goal in this section is to share the stories of these couples as accurately and completely as possible, while treating their right to privacy and hesitancy to disclose fully with the utmost respect. Each couple has been through far more in their lifetime than I can imagine experiencing, and yet they have been nothing but kind and generous with

¹⁴⁵ Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot and Jessica Hoffmann Davis, *The Art and Science of Portraiture*, 3.

their time and stories. An element of portraiture which Laurence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis stress is that “ethnographers listen to a story while portraitists listen *for* a story.”¹⁴⁶ I have done my best to stay faithful to this idea. I have tried to listen between the lines of the answers given me to the refugee experience as an active and evolving thing, not merely the events and circumstances which led families to pick up and leave their homes. My goal in hearing their stories has been to find the joy and the hope that survive through tragedy, and to highlight the uniqueness of each of their experiences. I hope I succeed in highlighting the resistance and resilience of these brave souls, who have been faced with an extraordinarily challenging lot in life.¹⁴⁷

Portrait # 1: James / Chantelle

James and Chantelle come from the town of Bukavu in Sud Kivu, a province in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They are highly educated individuals who met through mutual social contacts in Bukavu. James holds a bachelor’s degree in political science and Chantelle holds a bachelor’s degree in economics from universities in the DRC. They met in Bukavu, where he was teaching French at a local university and she was still a student. They married three years later, in 1997. Chantelle was unable to find work after completing her degree, so with the exception of a brief internship, she stayed home.

In 1996, during the First Congo War, James was appointed mayor of Bukavu by Laurent-Désiré Kabila (i.e., the President who overthrew Mobutu). He held the position for two years, but after the Second Congo War began, the family felt unsafe due to the

¹⁴⁶ Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot and Jessica Hoffmann Davis, *The Art and Science of Portraiture*, 13.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

instability of the situation in relation to his role as a political appointee as the opposition leaders gained strength in the region. Chantelle shared one story about a friend of hers from university who was a gynecologist in Bukavu. One night some armed men came and killed him in his own home. She mentioned that there were similar tragic and violent stories hidden away in her memories. This story reveals more than a traumatic and tragic loss of a friend. The two families lived in parallel situations as educated people in the city, and as such the story reveals the kind of real and immediate danger that their own family faced.

In 1998 Chantelle left in the middle of the night with their six-month-old child. They flew to Nairobi in secret, telling only a few of their closest family members.¹⁴⁸ James followed a month later. They had to travel separately and carefully so as to avoid raising suspicions about their plans. Not long after James arrived in Nairobi to join them, they began the process to apply for political asylum. He went to the office of the UNHCR in Nairobi to apply for asylum, and they had to go through several interviews. Most applicants only had to go through one day of interviews, but James' situation was particularly complicated due to his status as a political appointee whose position was the result of a coup or liberations struggle. His political affiliations gave him his status as mayor, but they equally contributed to the complications of his withdrawal.

James and Chantelle originally planned to go to Canada, but at that time Canada would not accept refugees who applied based on political grounds. A few months later the American government took on their case. An American government employee came from Washington DC to interview James. The first day of interviews they went to the office in the morning and left with the last staff that evening. The second day, James returned alone

¹⁴⁸ For a map of the journey, see Appendix C, Figure 2.

for an extended and equally long interview because of his political status as a mayor appointed by Kabila in the First Congo War. While in Nairobi James taught French at Nazarene University and in private classes to a group of Kenyan lawyers in order to provide for the family. Once again, Chantelle was unable to find work. Their second child was born while they were in Kenya, but Chantelle describes her experience in Nairobi as a very lonely time. Her husband was working, but it was challenging to find friends in the large city, as people were closed off and untrusting. She eventually made one friend through her landlord, who trusted her because they paid their rent on time. The friend was another tenant of the same landlord, so they were neighbors.

After one year and eight months in Nairobi they achieved approval to travel to the United States. The family was given a travel loan from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) of about \$900 to cover the cost of airfare. After a layover in Belgium, the family of four arrived in the United States on January 16, 2001. A representative from the IRC picked them up from the airport in Baltimore, but a place had not yet been prepared for them to stay. They had to stay in a motel that night, and were given a gallon of milk and a loaf of bread to tide them over until morning. Chantelle was breastfeeding at the time, and felt totally miserable. The next day they were taken to the resettlement center to do some paperwork, and only after that were they brought to their new home. A woman who lived in their new neighborhood was Senegalese. She welcomed the family with a big bowl of food. The neighbor and Chantelle became fast friends, bonding in part over their shared French language.

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) helped their family settle into Baltimore by connecting them to jobs, housing, English classes, and some cultural classes about

American life, in which they learned how to go to the store, use the bus, use a bank account, apply for daycare vouchers, buy a house, and other similar skills. They also helped the family access health insurance and food stamps through social services. After two years James and Chantelle applied for and received green cards, giving them permanent resident status. Three years later, after five years in the United States, they were legally able to become American citizens, and did so in 2007.

In the United States, the couple found a sense of community mostly through a local Roman Catholic church. but they also found some supportive coworkers. James worked for the first year in the United States packing food at BWI airport. Then he went to work as a youth counselor for two years at a school operated by the state of Maryland for juvenile delinquents. After that he worked for a security company downtown and attended English classes at the local community college.

People from church and work found out about James's professional background and high level of education and encouraged him to go back to study at university. He sent a request to World Education Services for international equivalency scores based on his bachelors requirements so that he could prove that he was eligible for graduate school, and they gave him 158 university credits for his undergraduate work in Zaire (as the DRC was called at the time of his university education. See section on History of the Congo). With those university credits he was able to apply for a masters program in 2012. This was a significant step in his James's quest for economic and cultural stability in the United States. He was accepted, pending English language competency. He spent about one year as a student in an intensive English language program at the university, after which he was able to begin his graduate coursework in Intercultural Communication. He earned his Master of

Arts in 2015. As a student and since then, he has taught French at the same higher education institution as an adjunct faculty member. In this way, he has created and rebuilt valuable cultural capital for himself as a native speaker and university teacher of a valued foreign language, rather than being solely defined by his status as a refugee and as an English-language learner.

Chantelle found her first job about six months after they first arrived in Baltimore, working in a warehouse downtown. She stayed there for two years, picking up some Bosnian language skills because that was the language spoken by the other employees there. Then she worked odd jobs before going to work as a security guard, which she continued for ten years, from 2004 to 2014. During her time working as a security guard, she, too, was working to improve her English skills through ESOL courses at the local community college, so that she could qualify to attend college-level English classes at the same community college. After completing her associate's degree she was able to transfer to a four-year college, where she completed a bachelor's degree in business administration with a concentration in finance. In the meantime, she also had and began to raise two more children in 2003 and 2006. Having earned her new degree, she was able to get a job in student business services in the same university where James worked.

James says that the biggest challenge to life in the United States was language acquisition. For Chantelle, the most challenging thing about living in the United States is the social part. She finds it strange that she does not even know the names of her neighbors and finds it uncomfortable that it is considered odd to speak to strangers. In the Congo, the neighbor was practically family. She could go to the neighbors to ask them to keep an eye on her baby for a while when she went out, but in the United States it does not matter if the

neighbor was home, it is not acceptable to ask them to care for the child. Instead, she had to pay a daycare provider.

The easiest part of life in America for James was finding a basic job which would take care of the basic needs of his family. Chantelle added that finances are much easier in the United States, since credit and loans are available. In the Congo, one needed to have the cash up front to pay for anything, even large purchases such as a car or house, but in the United States these things are accessible with long-term loans such as mortgages. She also has a deep appreciation for the fact that in the United States everyone has some kind of food on the table, no matter how poor they are. Sometimes in the Congo for the poorest people, they did not have anything. In that, she sees less income disparity in the United States than in the DRC. James greatly appreciates the openness, transparency, and helpfulness that he has experienced from Americans when they find out he is an immigrant. The thing that he wants most is more education and more access to education, which he sees as the key to success in the United States.

Chantelle finds joy in her family, which, in the end, she says, are all she really has. She stays in touch with her family back home to the best of her ability, and was deeply saddened when her step-mother passed away very recently. She also finds happiness in the stability her family has achieved after so many years in Baltimore. She and James both have a steady income, a home, and safety. The things she wants more than anything is continued stability of income and a healthy family, and peace and security forever, in her new home as well as back home in the DRC.

Both James and Chantelle find the biggest challenge with refugee resettlement protocols to be that even though the government and resettlement agency had all of the

information about their professional qualifications and prior experiences, they were not given any tools or connections - that is, they did not have access to social or cultural capital - in order to make use of those qualifications and experiences. They agree that this failure to connect was the biggest gap in the resources offered when they first arrived in the United States. The IRC did not encourage newcomers to go to school. In fact, Chantelle was encouraged by faculty at the Baltimore City Community College (BCCC) to hide her academic qualifications from the Congo. She could not remember the exact reasoning given by that faculty member, but she thought it had something to do with possibly being denied financial aid to attend the community college.

James advised any newcomers to the United States to focus on a goal and pursue education or acquire the skills necessary to reach that goal. He added that patience is also very important. Goals cannot be achieved immediately, only with time and effort. His second piece of advice was to interact with people, share thoughts, and ask questions. Effectively, this means that refugees should develop intercultural communication and social and professional networking skills, in order to develop the social capital needed to cultivate more stable employment and housing.

James also had recommendations to policymakers at the IRC or government. He argued that it is important that these organizations should tell the truth to newcomers and be transparent about the challenging cross-cultural process of entering American society. They should be especially transparent about the importance of education to long term professional success in the United States and connect adults who are already well-educated to continuing education opportunities. He added that the relationship with refugees was not long enough, that the IRC should check in with resettled folks after one year, three years,

and five years. James says it took five years to understand most things about American culture and ten years in the United States to truly feel comfortable, but that the outreach from the IRC ended after a year or so.

James and Chantelle's experiences do not fit the stereotype for the "typical" refugee. They were well-educated and well-connected at home in Bukavu. Chantelle's inability to find work even with her university degree, both at home and after they fled to Kenya, must have been incredibly frustrating for her. Their story is in many ways ultimately one of successful integration into life in Baltimore. They had to fight through their emotionally traumatic experiences leading up to their resettlement, but they were able to build their English language knowledge and translate their skills in creative ways, and, while it took over a decade to do it, they were able to use the cultural capital they had acquired through their education and experiences in the DRC to navigate parallel tertiary education systems in the United States and find satisfying work in their chosen fields.

Portrait # 2: Adam / Mary

Adam and Mary also come from the Eastern part of the DRC. They are from the city of Goma, the capital of Nord Kivu and have been married since 1990. Adam graduated as an electrician from technical school in 1988, after which he worked for other companies for a few years before starting his own business in 1992. The family did not flee due to fallout from the Second Congo War like James did. Rather, they left their homes due to the extreme corruption of their local government and their fear for their lives if they were to have stayed in the city after a frightening series of events.

Adam was contracted to do some electrical work in a government security building in early 2003. The job was to fix a few refrigerators, which he did. He had been told that

he would be paid after the project was complete, but after several weeks and many trips back to the bureau, he still had not received the money. He went to the boss of the administrator at that government building, who informed him that the funds had already been disbursed. It turned out that his supplication may have been a foolhardy endeavor. Adam thinks the boss called the administrator after he spoke with him because on his way back to work from that meeting, a group of soldiers led by the administrator caught him, arrested him, and brought him to jail, where they proceeded to beat him for three days.

After three days of beating he was taken to the hospital, where he recovered, and then he went home briefly to check on his family. He knew he could not stay in his home for fear that the administrator might return with his soldiers and do worse damage to him or to someone in his family. He went and told some French journalists and a local office of human rights about his experiences with the government administrators. For some reason, the journalists shared his story on the evening news, putting his entire family in danger. Those same government officials who he had confronted earlier heard the news story and went looking for him at home, where they instead found his wife.

Adam and Mary did not specify what happened when the soldiers found her at home, but after this compounded scare, Adam knew the family had to leave town. He left first, alone, on May 16, 2003. He walked to find a vehicle to bring him to the nearby town of Bunagana, about fifty miles/ eighty kilometers away, where he snuck across the border into Uganda. He then found another vehicle to bring him the rest of the way (about 500 kilometers/ 300 miles) to Kampala, Uganda's capital.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ For an approximate map of the journey, see Appendix C, Figure 3.

After about a month Adam was able to send money to Mary so that she could travel with their five children, aged 9, 7, 4, 3, and 6 months. Mary and the children crossed the border through customs, traveling with regular transportation and the necessary papers. Immediately after they arrived, they began the many-layered process of applying for refugee status, first filing with the local police, who sent them to a local non-governmental organization (NGO) called InterAid.¹⁵⁰ At InterAid they went through two interviews and were connected to the Ugandan Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) for Refugee Management and the UNHCR.¹⁵¹ They were interviewed again by the OPM. After six months in Uganda they attained official refugee status, a relatively typical length of time for the process.

The family remained in Kampala for thirteen years. During that time, Adam continued to work as an electrician. He was particularly proud of a job that he did at the American Embassy. Over the course of their thirteen years in Uganda, Adam and Mary had three more children together. Early on Adam and Mary knew that they did not want to stay in Uganda forever. They experienced a lot of discrimination due to their refugee status. It was challenging to find jobs because people did not want to hire refugees. Beginning in 2008, about five years after they came to Kampala, Adam and Mary began to ask the UNHCR if they could go somewhere else where they might feel more secure. In September 2015 after seven years they had an interview with the UNHCR office. They found out during the interview that it was for an opportunity to go to America. At that point, they just wanted to get away from where they were in Uganda, so they were relieved to be selected. After four interviews, including a medical screening and meetings with UNHCR and

¹⁵⁰ InterAid Uganda. <http://interaiduganda.org>

¹⁵¹ Office of the Prime Minister of Uganda. <http://opm.go.ug/refugees-management/>

United States government officials, and a full year of waiting, they traveled to the United States in September 2016. In preparation for travel, the couple received a brief cultural orientation. It was supposed to be a three-day training, but it was condensed into two days because it fell on a holiday. The family received a loan for \$9068 from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to buy plane tickets, which they have six years to repay in full.¹⁵² The reason the loan was so large was due to the size of the family and the cost of plane tickets for so many children. The IOM brought them to the airport in Kampala, and they were met in Baltimore by representatives from the International Rescue Committee (IRC).¹⁵³

The IRC connected them with their apartment, which was furnished with the basics (chairs, beds, tables), and jobs. Adam travels by bus to his job at a hotel in Baltimore. Mary travels with a company van to her job at a food processing company. They both attend English classes as they can through the Baltimore City Community College (BCCC). They are generally only able to attend once or twice in a week due to their work schedules. BCCC offers English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, a morning session and an evening session. As refugees they are able to take ESOL classes at no cost to them until they reach a high intermediate level of English. There is no time limit. If they wish to progress further than high intermediate, they are then responsible for paying for their own advanced English language classes.

The family is on Maryland Medicare and receives some food stamp assistance, but this amount is not very much compared to the cost of the food they need each month.

¹⁵² International Organization for Migration. <https://www.iom.int/countries/united-states-america>

¹⁵³ International Rescue Committee. <https://www.rescue.org>

When asked about gaps they see in the system for helping to newly arrived refugees, Mary and Adam could not immediately think of any recommendations in particular. They stressed that their primary concern in coming to the United States to seek physical safety and security, but also recognized that they have not been in the country very long (less than two years), and may know more after more time in the United States.

They are slowly beginning to find a community in Baltimore, primarily with other Africans immigrants, but also with Americans. These connections come primarily through church networks.

Mary and Adam recount varied but consistent challenges in American life. Mary finds her long hours at work very taxing, as she must stand on her feet all day. She raises concerns about how American children grow up too quickly and make unhealthy choices, such as drinking and drug use. She fears what will happen if she or her husband were to fall ill and lose their income and home. Adam finds language his biggest challenge. He describes his feelings around his difficulty expressing himself as fully as he would like in English as heartbreaking. The second concern he raised was the challenge of interacting with neighbors in the community. He describes neighbors back home as being like extended family, willing to answer questions or help out where needed. In contrast he does not feel like he can reach out to his neighbors here, and says that the lack of welcome that they felt in the neighborhood, especially around the playground and community center, was why some of the other refugee families moved away.

Adam and Mary agreed that the easiest piece of living in America is knowing that when you go to work you will get paid what was promised. Mary added that she feels that building a community in the United States has been easy and she feels safe. Adam said that

the thing that would make him happiest would be peace, safety, and security. Mary would be happier if she could find a job that is less physically demanding and pays more. Both of them have a lot of anxiety around renting a home. They fear being unable to meet rent and being kicked out to the streets, so the thing they want most in the world is a house that is their own. Mary added that she wants to get to a place in life where she is financially secure enough to send money to a church she knows in order to feed hungry kids back in Africa.

Adam and Mary are still very early in their journey to integration into American society. They have entrepreneurial spirits, resilience in spades, and a strong drive to attain stability, but the challenge is that English fluency comes slowly, and they are getting older. They could use more support, especially with food and housing needs. Living in Baltimore, they witness the homelessness that is prevalent in the city, and sense how easily they could lose their home if for some reason one of them were to become ill and unable to work. In this, their story resonates not only as one of refugees, but as a family of working-class people struggling to get by day to day in the United States. Regardless of the struggles they experience in their new lives, they are grateful for the peace and stability they experience in their new country.

Portrait # 3: Sara / Gabe

Sara and Gabe were born in Fizi, Sud Kivu, Zaire. They grew up together in their village and attended local schools. Gabe completed secondary school, and Sara completed two years of secondary school. It was common for people in their area to go to secondary school and even continue to college. They were married when he was 20 and she was 18 years old.

They were forced to escape because of the war in 1996, at 20 and 22 years old. Most of their family died in the war. Sara's family were farmers. Gabe's father was a pastor who had accepted refugees from Rwanda into his church. The locals did not like it; they said that the refugees had killed others. A group of local townspeople and police officers attacked Gabe's family and killed nearly everyone. Gabe only survived because a friend of his from secondary school hid him, but he was injured in his leg. Gabe and Sara traveled together to Tanzania with their firstborn child and Sara's younger sister, first to Kigoma. From Kigoma they were transported to Nyaragusu Refugee Camp.¹⁵⁴ Nyaragusu Camp was built to house 50,000 refugees, but by some counts over 150,000 people actually live there.¹⁵⁵

Sara and Gabe spent 21 years in the Camp. They applied for refugee status immediately when they arrived at the camp in Tanzania. The Tanzanian government gave them food, water, medical care, clothing for the children, vitenge (a kind of traditional cloth women wear around their waists and use), soap, salt, oil, and lighting for the housing. There were a lot of problems in the camp with food scarcity, unclean water, diseases, and not enough access to medical treatment, but nonetheless they were able to live some version of a normal life. They had a small plot of land, where they raised crops such as sorghum, cassava, corn, and beans. They worked for other farmers when they could to make some extra money. In the 21 years they spent in the camp, Sara and Gabe had five more children. In 2015 they began the long process with the UNHCR to come to the United States. They

¹⁵⁴ For a map of the journey, see Appendix C, Figure 4.

Figure 5 is an aerial photo of Nyarugusu Refugee Camp.

¹⁵⁵Griff Tapper, "Increasing perils at Tanzania's Nyarugusu refugee camp: Sexual violence and environmental degradation threaten refugees seeking protection at Nyarugusu camp in Tanzania," (Al Jazeera: May 26, 2016).

had to interview with the RCC, the UNHCR, the IOM, and go through two medical checkups before they could travel, but they arrived in the United States on December 14, 2016.

Immediately when they found out they had been chosen to come to America, the family sold their farmland to shop for clothing. The money was not enough for the things they needed, so their neighbors helped as they could. The family received a loan from the IOM of about \$9,000 for the plane tickets to reach the United States.

When the family first reached the United States, they landed in New York City. They were given food, a place to sleep, and came to Baltimore the next morning. Two ladies from the church picked them up from the airport and brought them to their new home, which was already furnished. Members of the church have provided the family with clothes, toys for the children, shoes, and food. The government helped with money for rent for the first eight months. For the first six months, they received cash assistance from the government at \$400 every two months, totaling \$1200. They also received intermittent orientation sessions from the organization that helped them resettle. These sessions included information on things like how to handle money in the United States, American rules and laws that may be different from their experience at home, and cultural things like how to live among neighbors here. Sara and her husband were able to find jobs after three months. Sara cleans the church that has provided her so much support since coming to the United States. Gabe works evenings at a casino in Baltimore, cleaning dishes in the kitchen. They were getting food stamps when they first came, but they dropped down to \$100 per month once they were employed, and the food stamps were cancelled in May for good because their income was high enough for them to be disqualified from food assistance.

Sara is adamant in her gratitude for the church, where she has found community in America. She pointed out that they do not segregate them from the rest of the community, and people from the church check in on them and visit them at home. Gabe does not have the same experience; he does not feel like he has yet found any community in Baltimore. He finds it challenging that everyone in the United States stays in the house and nobody visits neighbors. He misses the casual camaraderie that he felt with his community at home.

Sara attends English classes two days a week at the local high school. She started in March of 2017, but says that the classes go for three months and then there is a break, so it has not been totally consistent. She is still in the lowest level of English language learning. Gabe goes for English classes at BCCC downtown three times a week in the mornings, and reports that he is not in the beginner level, but somewhere in the middle. Neither feels particularly comfortable speaking in English, having spent 20 years in transitional camps and only beginning to learn English in their forties, but both can at least communicate a little bit when they need to.

For the children Sara says the easiest part of living in America is access to education. In the camp it was difficult for them to go to school, and even if they went to school and were successful there, that success could not be rewarded because there was no work. She added that it is also easy to have a job that can provide some money to buy necessary things. Gabe agreed that the easiest thing about life in the United States is that when one works, one is paid what one is owed. Before, sometimes he would not get paid for the work he did. The other thing that he finds easy about living in America is that he does not have to worry about war here.

The thing that brings Sara joy and happiness is that she is grateful and happy that she was able to come here with her husband and children. Everyone is much healthier here, and they were sick frequently when they were living in the camp. For Gabe, the place where they live makes him very happy. It is a beautiful house on a quiet street. He is a bit concerned because they will have to find another place to stay after two years, as the house is a short-term provision through their church.

The hardest part of living in the United States for them is that Sara's younger sister could not come with them. They communicate sometimes over the phone, but she is still living in the camp. Her sister is nearly 30 years old, so after twenty years in the camp she was too old to be considered nuclear family when they were resettled. Sara worries about her because she is alone and her only surviving family member there. Both of them say it is their greatest hope that one day they can be reunited with her here, especially because she is looking very thin and they want to be able to support her. Beyond his wish to be reunited with his sister-in-law, Gabe added that he would like to see peace in his country because people are still being killed.

The story of Gabe and Sara, like the stories of the other two couples, is ultimately one of survival, perseverance and successful, if challenging, resettlement. Their family – save her sister - was able to find safety in the United States after over two decades in temporary housing in a refugee camp. In many ways, however, they are still in a highly unstable place. They will lose their temporary home at the end of the year and need to find another place to live. Sara's sister is still stuck in an overcrowded refugee camp due to western cultural and legal definitions of nuclear family and how those definitions effect refugee resettlement policy. Even though both Gabe and Sara work, there is much they do

not know about financial management in the United States and they are both very early in their journey to fluency in English. They are still in a very vulnerable place, although they have begun to develop some of the community through their church that they will be able to use as they move forward and require guidance and advice.

Comparison and Analysis of Portraits

On the surface, each of these three families have had similar experiences. They all come from the same region in the same country. Two of the families are from Kivu Sud while the third is from Kivu Nord, but their towns are all near the eastern border of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in what is called the Great Lakes Region of Africa.¹⁵⁶ They were all displaced in the unrest within the DRC when Laurent-Désiré Kabila or his son, Joseph, came to power. They all applied for, and ultimately received, refugee status and then were eventually resettled in the United States in Baltimore. While these are significant details of shared background and history that frame their story as refugees, there are also deep and complex differences in their background and experiences whose importance is highlighted in these richer portraits. Even refugees coming from the same place and fleeing the same conflict are complex human beings with their own unique stories.

James and Chantelle are university-educated, from the elite class of Bukavu. James was appointed mayor of Bukavu by Laurent-Désiré Kabila, and his eventual flight was precipitated by his political standing upon the return of the disgruntled Rwandan and Ugandan military leaders who had helped Kabila succeed in his coup d'état (or struggle for

¹⁵⁶ For maps of the region, see Appendix C, Figures 6 and 7.

liberation, as James calls it). Their flight from the Congo was a literal one - they were able to travel via airplane to Nairobi, Kenya.

Adam and Mary have some education, and lived a comfortable lifestyle in Goma, with Adam's trade skills as an electrician to support the family. They made it through years of civil unrest, until the corruption within local government became the downfall of their way of life. They made their way in stages to Kampala, Uganda, where once again they were able to rely on his skills as an electrician to survive, although they experienced prejudice based on their status as refugees.

Gabe and Sara were very young when they fled Fizi. They were still substantially reliant on his father for support, though they had both attended secondary school. And then they lost nearly all of their family to violence and had to make a way for themselves and Sara's sister in the challenging atmosphere of an overcrowded and chronically under-resourced refugee camp.

The refugees in this study come from provincial capitals in eastern regions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is a region that was shaken by the civil war and extreme violence of neighboring Rwanda in the early 1990s, and which has faced various incarnations of civil and political unrest since the First Congo War to overthrow Mobutu in 1997. They reached adulthood before these wars, but their childhoods were formed in the post-colonial period of independence and single-party dictatorial rule in Zaire. These refugees have been productive members of society in their own right everywhere they have lived. They are not rich in cultural objects, having fled their homes. They were forced to start over from scratch on several occasions, first when they left the Congo, and second, when they left the intermediary country where they lived and came to the United States.

These refugees are, without exception, multilingual and skilled in certain trades: lecturing, electrical work, farming, economics, childcare. Several of them have academic qualifications: one as an electrician, another a bachelor's degree in political science, and another with a bachelor's degree in economics. These degrees had meaning and prestige in the DRC, but they hold very little prestige in the United States because they are from institutions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Prestige is very much associated with perception.¹⁵⁷ This is because the institutions founded by whites in predominantly white countries tend to be acknowledged as more acceptable in other predominantly white countries.¹⁵⁸ This practice reflects Bourdieu's assessment of symbolic violence as it is asserted according to arbitrary cultural values and of Said's criticism of Orientalist thought as a key of western institutional authority over non-western institutions. This type of institutional racism exists in the network of university institutions around the world and imposes symbolic violence again upon people from outside of Europe and North America. James was a university lecturer and mayor in the Congo, and then he was able to lecture at a university in Kenya before he managed to get a visa to come to the United States. Once again, the networks he built in the United States allowed him to add a masters degree to his qualifications and land a job teaching at a university. With the appropriate connections the other participants should be able to work in their fields as well.

¹⁵⁷ Ali A. Mazrui, "Towards Re-Africanizing African Universities: Who Killed Intellectualism in the Post Colonial Era?" *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations* 2, no. 3/4 (Fall/Winter 2003), 142-3. 145

Taiwo A. Ande, "Academic Leadership Experiences of Foreign-Born African Immigrants in American Institutions of Higher Education," Indiana State University, 2009.

¹⁵⁸ James and Chantelle were both able to translate their skills to the American context eventually, but whereas James was able to get his credits translated to a bachelor's degree in the American context, he had actually earned a master's degree by American standards of education. Chantelle had earned a bachelor's degree, but was not able to have any of her work translated into the American educational system and had to begin building her credentials from an associate's degree.

Nearly all refugees are effectively forced into low-wage work upon resettlement in the United States. The participants in this study worked in hotels, churches, kitchens, and warehouses, cleaning or packing or doing other menial chores. Upon arrival, they did not have the contacts or English language skills to find jobs appropriate to their knowledge base. One of the participants managed to return to school for an advanced degree, but he was in America for more than ten years before he did it. The other participants have only been in the United States for less than two years, and are still too embroiled in the business of basic survival and assimilation to try very hard to find better or more appropriate work. It is a significant part of American history, however, that it has been the expectation that immigrants and newcomers take up these low-wage jobs. This reality is visible today in the demographics of who most likely completes the most menial tasks that American society has to offer: refugees, immigrants, black Americans, youth, the elderly, and people with disabilities.

These three families illustrate just some of the varied backgrounds of refugees. Imagine the diversity of backgrounds and stories across the hundreds of resettled families each year in Baltimore alone, and the tens of thousands across the U.S. Each individual in this research has a different level of education, different socioeconomic backgrounds, comes from a different part of the eastern border, escaped at different critical points in recent Congolese history to different intermediary locations for different lengths of time before being resettled in the same metropolitan area. Their journey has been long and is ongoing, and their story has involved specific challenges and opportunities along the way.

Conclusion

In this paper I have approached the refugee resettlement crisis from three angles. In Part One I summarized the history of the Democratic Republic of the Congo from the Berlin Conference to the present and analyzed that history through the lens of Franz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* and Edward Said's *Orientalism*. These analytical perspectives highlight the extent to which colonialism disrupted life in colonies as well as the imbalances of power which resulted from colonialism and continue to hold sway today. In Part Two I explored basic refugee resettlement policy at the international and national level, as well as the statistics related to how many refugees have been resettled in the United States and in Maryland in recent years. These policies and statistics were then contextualized with the thinking of Pierre Bourdieu, Immanuel Wallerstein, Lily Cho, and Thandika Mkandawire. These analytical lenses revealed the inadequacies and gaps in current international refugee policy and practice as well as the depth of social disruption and loss of capital that is involved in the processes of refugee status attainment and resettlement. In Part Three I documented my conversations with three couples, each of whom come from Eastern provinces of the DRC but experienced the journey to the United States from the DRC very differently. These stories of the lived experiences of families are critical resources for understanding what is needed in policy and practice. The refugee journey begins with escape, continues in the settlement and resettlement process, and does not end. The stories shared by the participants are stories of incredible perseverance and resilience which attest to the inadequacies of refugee camps and the need for far stronger social and cultural supports for the resettlement process.

Each of these pieces – the wide lens of history, the planned lens of policy, and the experienced lens of resettled refugees – is critical to understanding the refugee experience from the initial flight to camp experiences to the resettlement process. Each reveals a different kind of gap in services rendered to refugees. For example, the history of the DRC indicates that current instability comes from much deeper colonial and post-colonial injustices inflicted upon the Congolese people by Belgium and other powerful nations. The decisions made about policy are in many cases arbitrary, such as the decisions about which refugees are eligible to be resettled, where they will be resettled, and how many refugees from a given nation or region will be resettled. The individual experiences of each refugee family demonstrate that there is no monolithic, homogenous refugee experience, even for people from a single region within a single country.

My research into the historical context and modern-day refugee crisis in the DRC illustrates this ongoing relationship between colonialism and the refugee crisis. From brutal colonial violence to international entanglements in Congolese independence to postcolonial violence to ongoing social and political instability, the cycle of war and retribution causes the displacement of millions of people. The current crises flow directly from these historical acts of violence, cultural disruption, and political instability.

In reviewing the international policies and practices that define refugee status and guide resettlement processes, it is clear that there are gaps and inadequacies. The scale of the refugee crisis is certainly not matched by a proportionate international response to resettlement. It is the assertion of the UNHCR that approximately eight percent of the 17.2 million refugees who fall under the UNHCR mandate require resettlement in a third country, but fewer than one percent are currently being resettled. If the end goal of refugee

resettlement is to resettle everyone who needs to be resettled, then international and American policies need to reflect that. The United States is a world leader in refugee resettlement policy and its implementation. It is noteworthy that the United States resettles more refugees than any other western country.¹⁵⁹ It is not enough, however, to resettle the most refugees. The measure of success should not be compared to other western countries, but rather to the best that the United States can provide. According to Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it is the right of everyone “to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.” In addition to the Universal Declaration’s text, however, I argue that it is the responsibility of the nations who participated in the destabilization of the DRC (and other nations) to care for the people harmed due to their actions or inactions, past and present. This means that the inadequate international response to refugee crises around the world is more than a practical issue, but it is actually a moral imperative for any nation bound by a commitment to human rights.

It is the international imbalance of power between nations as well as the mismanagement by those who wield power on the international stage which is foundational to the refugee crises of recent decades, more specifically the refugee crisis in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo. The international community has not responded to the need for resettlement of refugees adequately, leaving under-resourced countries to scramble to host large quantities of refugees. Again, in my close look at the DRC, this is illustrated dramatically in the Congolese context, with hundreds of thousands of refugees living in camps and towns in the DRC’s neighboring countries.

¹⁵⁹ Emphasis on “resettles.” Many more refugees live in intermediary/temporary host countries than have been resettled, as explored in Part 2.

The resources at the disposal of the United States are vast, and much of the wealth has been collected as a result of colonization and the exploitation of natural resources and labor, particularly since the industrial revolution. It is not possible to go back in time and undo slavery or share the wealth with the people who produced it. Fanon, writing in the Marxist tradition, argued that the colonial oppressor would not cease to subjugate native peoples unless native people rose up in revolution against the oppressor. Thus far Fanon has been proven at least half right: the political and economic policies of western countries continue to cause harm in previously colonized nations, the DRC's instability being a prime example. The United States has the opportunity, however, to amend current economic and political practices in order to use its capital to mitigate some of the harmful effects of past abuses and prevent future ones.

When able to access necessary supports, refugees can contribute their rich cultural heritage and perspective to the places where they are resettled. Current policy implementation treats the refugee experience as monolithic, when in truth refugees are culturally and experientially and educationally diverse individuals and should be treated as such. Once their basic needs have been met refugees by and large want to be productive members of society, and they need to be given the tools to access work and relationships. For example, James and Chantelle have worked hard to increase their educational qualifications ever since they first arrived in the United States. Adam is actively pursuing technical and trade skills so that he can find work in a field similar to the electrical work he did in the DRC and Uganda. The resettlement process is largely focused on immediate and material survival models and fails to fund or to account for cultural and social needs. With more easily accessible information, and the time and resources necessary to pursue

education, refugees would be able to find these kinds of opportunities that much more smoothly.

The refugees in this study come from one of the most mineral-rich areas in one of the most mineral-rich countries in the world, but rather than a life of stability and security, their quality of life deteriorated until it became necessary that they flee their homes. These sequences of events that led to their flight may have devolved suddenly, but they were the result of a long history of colonial exploitation and violence, followed by another related history of postcolonial instability, corruption, and violence. In most global settings where a refugee crisis develops, the society is deeply rooted in violence and instability still emanating from the fallout from old colonial systems, both the actual colonial conquests and the exploitation of resources by colonial powers and post-colonial investors. Culturally, this instability is compounded through the continuations of forms of Orientalism, whereby entire cultures or geographic regions have been framed and reduced to disempowering stereotypes. After in some cases decades of displacement, the families came to the United States, where they find much relief, but are also faced with further challenges.

Nobody chooses to become a refugee. Refugees flee their homes due to real and immediate danger. The stories of the participants told here are come from a very small sample size of refugees as a whole, but the vein is the same. Refugees have valuable experience, whether it's years of farming, teaching university, economic analysis, or experience in a trade, as are the cases with the refugees highlighted in this study. Refugees have the tenacity and resilience required to survive the brutality of war, to continue when they have lost their entire family, or entire villages of loved ones. They know how to make

do with very little. Regardless of their education level, regardless of their home socioeconomic level in their homeland, that danger can be mitigated by their resettlement in other countries, but achieving basic security is only the first step. In the case of refugees from the DRC, as was described in Part One, some of the countries which host them contributed to the instability that drove them from their homes. Settling in and adapting and attaining a stable quality of life take time and community, and that is where the gap in refugee policy lies.

It is incredibly stressful to come from a culture rooted in community, like that described by these Congolese individuals, where neighbors are like family, to a culture of individualism, like that which predominates in the United States. Each of the individuals mentioned not knowing their neighbors or feeling comfortable to go to them for advice like they would have done at home in the DRC. The varying value sets among the different cultures can result in discomfort or tension. Even people who were born in the United States express concerns about the challenge of finding community if they move to another area. It is that much harder for refugees who come with little or no English language skills. They might be coming from large cities, such as Nairobi or Kampala, or large refugee camps, like Nyarugusu, but regardless of their experiences in these intermediary locations, they need emotional support. They need friends, and access to community. They need to build the social networks and the social capital required to find work and find help when needed. They need those social networks and access to the opportunity to build capital in order to feel like they are not a burden on society, that they can pull their own weight and help others along.

The United States must always strive for better policies and policy implementation. It is necessary to think critically about whether the United States refugee resettlement program is enough, and ways that we could make it better. If the goal of refugee resettlement is to provide safety and stability to refugees who are resettled, then the American policies need to respond to the long-term as well as the short-term needs of refugees. It is not the burden of the United States or any one country to solve all of the world's problems, but it is the responsibility of the United States, as members of the United Nations, to uphold the treaties and documents which it has signed, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in a self-critical way. Policy needs to take into account Wallerstein's cautions regarding the symbiotic pair of racism and sexism with universalism, particularly since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a universalist document, which in itself makes a lot of cultural assumptions in its universalist message.

A truly inclusive and robust resettlement policy should deeply incorporate language and cultural education into the job placement model in order to facilitate a smoother transition into American culture. The best culturally immersive model that I have encountered is the one used to train American Peace Corps volunteers overseas. It includes three months of full-time, intensive language, cultural, and skills training. Further research would need to be done in order to construct an economically realistic similar model for refugee introduction to the United States, but I envision that it would include some immediate job training or job placement, based on the work and language skills of the people being resettled. Over the course of three months, the balance of language and cultural and workplace training would transition from full-time training to a full-time job placement. During this three-month orientation period, refugees would be supported with

a living stipend, which would be replaced by their income as they transition to full-time work. I envision the transition to full-time work as beginning with ten hours per week after they have reached whatever the first standard is, perhaps some low level of English acquisition. Throughout the three months of orientation they would periodically add ten hours per workweek and subtract ten hours of training, until at the end of the three months the resettled adults will be working full time. After successfully concluding the orientation training, resettled refugees would still have access to a hotline or physical space where they could seek language, cultural, or legal advice for a proscribed period of time, perhaps until they are eligible for citizenship (five years after arrival). Looking closely at proven cross-cultural training models, like that of Peace Corps or other similarly immersive programs, would be a pathway for further investigation and implementation.

One is not a refugee in the past tense, at least not immediately after resettlement. Climbing out of the trauma of loss that most refugees face does not happen on a plane ride, or over the course of a year, but rather over the course of years and decades of struggle and healing. Many refugees find community in spaces of worship upon resettling in their new communities. This is certainly the case for James, Chantelle, Adam, Mary, Sara, and Gabe. James and Chantelle found support and comfort early on in their local Roman Catholic church. Adam, Mary, Sara, and Gabe all attend church together in a Protestant church. Churches give them a place to connect with others over a shared faith. Some churches, like the one Adam, Mary, Sara, and Gabe attend, have a Swahili-language service which serves primarily the Congolese community, so that they are able to build relationships with strangers from their home country. These church networks allow them to find comfort in the familiar and build capital by establishing a place for themselves in a new community.

This may be specific to some religious communities, but it holds clues that other forms of culturally familiar communities and practices could give similar results.

Refugees do not ask for much. They need time to adjust to the new culture, to learn the language, to acquire the cultural capital necessary to thrive in a new cultural context. They need social ties, mentors or community members who can help them in this journey to understanding how life works in America so that they can garner the social capital and connections necessary to elevate their families in American society. They need access to economic capital through safe, stable employment in order to be able to afford safe, stable housing, so that they do not need to worry about losing their hard-won peace. Every form of capital leading to safety and stability allows refugees to become contributing members of their new communities, thereby strengthening the community as a whole. The individual needs of refugees and their families vary, but these are points that they generally hold in common.

The resettlement organizations in the United States provide critical services with dedication and care. They meet refugees at the airport when they first arrive, make sure their new homes are prepared with basic furniture, connect them to government services such as food stamps and medical aid, help refugees find jobs, and connect them to English language classes. They do the best they can with what they have, but they are underfunded and understaffed. They only maintain high-level contact with refugees for eight months, and they do not have the time, energy, funding, or staffing for the type of long-term supports that refugees really need. Community volunteers step in at times, but they are limited in what they are able to do as well. Future research might examine policies for any

countries that have fuller resettlement supports, especially for social and cultural adaptation, in order to evaluate and adapt best practices.

The official resettlement policy and funding needs to take into account these real needs. As James noted, it was only after five years that he began to feel like he understood American culture, and ten years before he felt comfortable. The official aid provided to refugees lasts for less than one year. If nothing else, there should be community-based supports for refugees to access after their first period of entry into the United States in order to offset the symbolic violence necessarily inflicted upon refugees as they strive to rapidly adapt to a foreign cultural context. These supports would provide a safe space where they can ask simple cultural questions or seek treatment for trauma. In the long term, the ability to ask cultural questions and seek counsel are a simple provision after the stressful experiences refugees in order to get to their new homes.

Across cultural boundaries, American policy must continue to see the global refugee crises as rooted in a historical sequence of colonial and post-colonial violence and social instability. These crises are rarely, if ever, about just a specific recent event. They are almost always ripple effects of longstanding stories of violence and instability. Consequently, it is responsibility of the international community at large, particularly more privileged countries, to acknowledge these complex historical contexts. Refugee resettlement should not merely be perceived as international good will, but rather as a needed response to the sometimes violent evolution of post-colonial nations. DRC is a case and point example of this problematic and ongoing impact.

The current refugee reality is not met or matched by the current international policy and practice. An enormous gap exists between the needs of refugees and the help that is

given them by national and international bodies. The classifying definitions for refugees were created in the post-World War Two era and should be re-evaluated in the twenty-first century in order to reflect the changes in need over time. International policy should look to dramatically increase international responses and engagement, to dramatically decrease the time refugees spend in camps when appropriate, and to dramatically increase social and cultural supports for resettled people.

The lived experiences of refugees, and of these three families from the DRC in particular, highlight the diversity of people's stories within the refugee crisis as well as the complexity of their situations. These are people who are amazingly resilient in the face of all sorts of desperate situations, and their lives would be made measurably easier if only there were long term social and cultural assistance and supports in place for the transition into dramatically new worlds and lives. This set of portraits affirms the value of continuing to listen to people's stories and create space for their narrative voice. The voices and stories of refugees can and should be used to inform history, policy, and practice. These are hard stories to hear, and they must be told collaboratively and respectfully (with full self-determination), but they are filled with humanity and hope even as they express tragic losses and struggles and the need for much more support.

This is not specifically a paper on international policy, but the refugee crisis is by its nature an international one, which requires international solutions. More thought needs to be put into practical long-term international resettlement of refugees, perhaps by a team commissioned by the United Nations, either internally or externally. On the international scale one of the simplest ways that wealthy nations can begin to make amends for colonialism is to take in refugees and give them the resources they need in order to build a

new life for themselves in a new country. There is no way for western countries to atone for their past misdeeds, but they need not perpetuate the abuse of previously colonized states. One potential future model for resettlement policy is one framed around payment of reparations by erstwhile colonizers to countries which were once colonies, given the causal relationship between colonialism and certain unstable regions. This would almost definitely open up an international conversation about colonialism and its aftermath, but it could equally revive hostility and reopen wounds between previously colonized countries and previous colonizers. Additionally, the geopolitical sphere has changed quite dramatically over the course of the past few centuries. It might be more effective in the long term for post-colonial powers to recognize and acknowledge their role in destabilizing these regions and frame the need for funding through this lens, but to continue to do much of the work of caring for and resettling refugees through the agencies which already do that work. Linking refugee resettlement policy directly to post-colonial reparations is an idea which would require more research on the political, cultural, and economic relationships between various former colonizers and former colonies.

Another important extension of this initial thesis research would be to pursue additional input from discussions, interviews, or conversations with members of the refugee resettlement staff community, such as the people who work for the nine resettlement nonprofit agencies who resettle refugees in the United States and the United States government officials who work for the Departments of State, Homeland Security, Defense, and Health and Human Services, who interface with refugee resettlement policy and practices. Those perspectives would be very helpful for characterizing more broadly resettlement policy, particularly the ways in which those departments and agencies feel

funding facilitates or undermines policy implementation, and internal recommendations for improvements to policy, implementation of policy, funding streams, attitudes and skillsets of implementors, organizational needs, and long-term, cost-saving, more efficient methods to improve the whole process.

Finally, as the brief portraits of these three families demonstrate, it is critically important to continue to gather and document the stories and experiences of refugees themselves. As an ongoing long-term project these stories and data could be analyzed to find and examine commonalities among refugee experiences that could broadly instruct policy and practice. But, as the stories told here attest, there will always be differences and outliers, given the complexity of human culture and experience. The rich stories themselves humanize the individuals who tell them and are their own form of resistance to the dehumanizing effects of ongoing cultural stereotypes and reductionistic policy.

Appendix A: Nations of Origin for Refugees in Maryland, FY2012-FY2016 (adapted from Maryland Office for Refugees and Asylees Statistics, 2017)

Nationality	# Refugees	-	Nationality	# Refugees
Burma	1,946		Honduras	8
Iraq	908		Panama	8
Bhutan	875		Cambodia	7
Democratic Republic of the Congo	740		Rwanda	7
Eritrea	596		Moldova	6
Syria	404		Uganda	6
Sudan	337		Gambia	4
Iran	218		North Korea	4
Ethiopia	190		Mauritania	4
Somalia	152		Jordan	4
Afghanistan	77		Ukraine	3
Pakistan	67		Egypt	3
Cuba	66		CHINA	3
Burundi	59		Ecuador	3
El Salvador	33		Ukraine	2
Colombia	27		Liberia	2
Russia	25		India	2
Central African Republic	15		Vietnam	2
Sri Lanka	14		Cameroon	1
Nepal	13		Sierra Leone	1
Yemen	10		Zimbabwe	1
Byelarus	10		Sierra Leone	1
South Sudan	8		Guinea	1
Grand Total	6,873			

Appendix B: Research Questions

Narrative:

- Can you tell me a little about your journey from where you are from to here?
 - Where are you from?
 - What made you leave your home?
 - What did you do in the intervening time? Where have you lived?
 - How long have you been in the United States?
 - When did you apply for refugee status? How? Where? Through whom?

How long did the process take?

Integration (cultural):

- What kind of resources were provided to you when you first arrived in the United States? For how long?
- Are there any resources that would have made your introduction to American life smoother? Easier? Faster?
- Are you currently being provided financial or other aid through any organization?
- Are you working? Doing what? Are you taking classes?
- Have you found a sense of community here?
- What is the most challenging part of living in America? What is the easiest?
- What brings you joy/ makes you happy?
- What is the thing that you want most in the world?

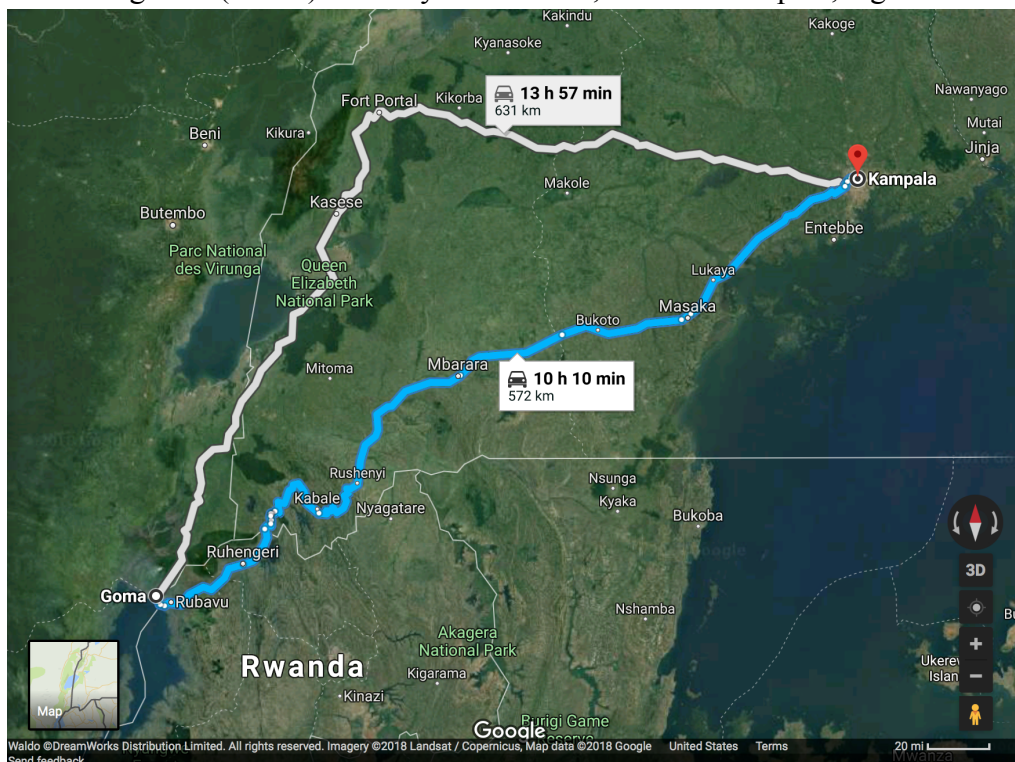
Appendix C: Figures



Figure 1 “The Scramble for Africa” *The Economist*, December 23, 1999.



Figure 3 (below): Journey from Goma, DRC to Kampala, Uganda.



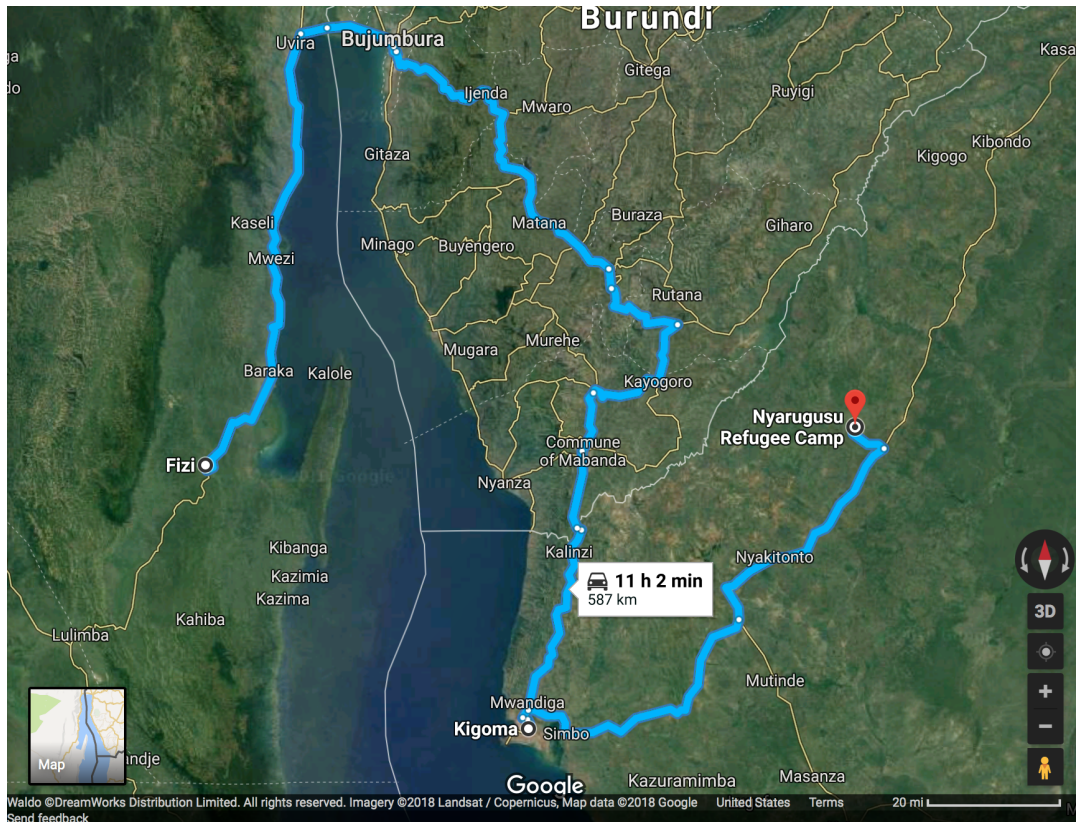


Figure 4 (above): Journey from Fizi, DRC to Kigoma, Tanzania to Nyarugusu Refugee Camp.

Figure 5 (below): Aerial view of Nyarugusu Refugee Camp.





Figure 6 (above): Regional map of Eastern Congo, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania, and Kenya. The red pin is on Fizi, and the other towns (Bukavu, Goma, Kampala, Nairobi, and Kigoma) are visibly marked.

Figure 7 (below): Map of Africa



Appendix D: UNHCR Population Data, 2015

Table 1: UNHCR Population Data Totals, 2015

2015 Totals	# of people
Refugees worldwide	16,111,285
Refugees from the DRC	201,782
Resettled refugees worldwide	107,051
Refugees resettled in USA	66,517
Refugees from the DRC resettled worldwide	10,469
Refugees from the DRC resettled in the USA 2015	8,206

Table 2: Top 4 Countries of Asylum/Residence for DRC Refugees, 2015
UNHCR Population Data

Country of Asylum/Residence	# of People
Uganda	201,782
Rwanda	73,864
United Rep. of Tanzania	55,803
Burundi	53,029
Total	384,478

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