

Race & Racism in the U.S.: Educational Gaps for Resettled Refugees



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The **Hello Neighbor Network** is undertaking one of the first national research studies of its kind to understand the status of education about race and racism in the U.S. among adult refugees. Depending on country of origin, refugees may face race discrimination and violence and carry their own histories of racism from their country of origin. Many do not have an understanding of the history of race, racism, and how to engage in conversation and action around race in the U.S.

As a first phase in this study, this brief seeks to answer two questions:

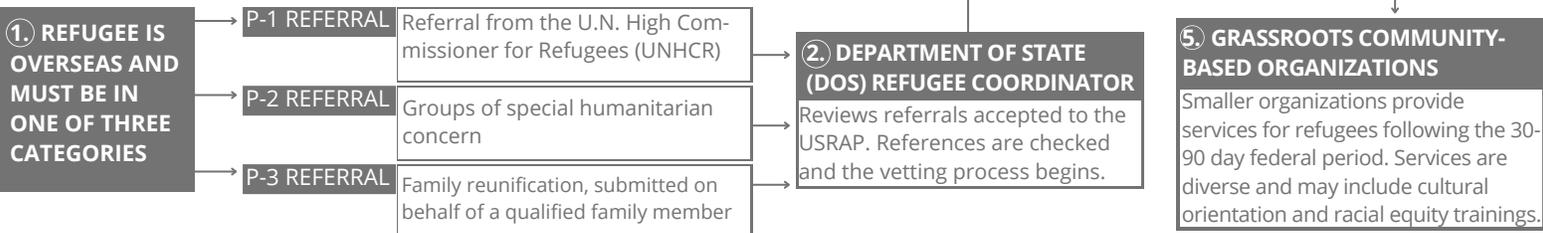
- What are specific acculturation trainings currently in place for adults 18+ moving through the refugee resettlement process?
- Of those, what currently exists for adults around the history of race and racism?

Key Takeaways

1. International, Federal, and Volunteer Agencies all use CORE orientation trainings, and these do not focus on racial equity.
2. Some grassroots organizations and smaller agencies lead racial equity trainings and could be leveraged as examples and partners in further development.

An Overview of USRAP and Orientation to the U.S.

The United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) is the most thorough vetting offered by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Throughout the resettlement process, refugees are trained on culture, values, and how to thrive in the U.S. The below chart depicts the many steps of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Process:



Existing Cultural Orientation Trainings within USRAP

UNHCR

U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees

Provides initial screening for and recommendation of refugees for resettlement.

RSCs

Resettlement Support Centers

Provides administrative and training support to refugees going through the resettlement process. 8 RSCs worldwide:

Africa: Nairobi	Austria: Vienna
E. Asia: Bangkok	MENA: Jordan
Latin America: Quito	S. Asia: Kathmandu
Middle East: Turkey	Eurasia: Moscow

VOLAGS

Volunteer Agencies

The nine main federally-funded agencies that provide the first 90-days of resettlement support including housing, employment, and cultural orientation:

CWS	EMM
ECDC	HIAS
USCRI	LIRS
IRC	U.S. CMRS
World Relief	

CBOs

Community Based Organizations

Dozens of CBOs exist across the United States, and perform a variety of services. The below organizations provide trainings geared towards racial equity for resettled refugees:

Switchboard	BRYCS
USA Hello	Hello Neighbor
Allegheny Human Services	
City of Alexandria	

The UNHCR, RSCs, and VOLAGs all use a special set of training known as CORE (Cultural Orientation Resource Exchange), which is funded by the U.S. Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration. CORE includes cultural orientation but very little training on racial equity, and has been updated very little since 1980. All CORE trainings can be found [HERE](#).

Organizational Outlook: Insights from Key Personnel in the Refugee Resettlement Process

NSC

Nationalities Service Center

Location: Philadelphia, PA
Provides: Professional & education services for refugees

Takeaways:

- Educational work is intersectional
- Many refugees are familiar with race and racial equity ideas
- Training program uses CORE training with additional facilitation. Emphasize that outward reactions to difference are not appropriate
- Often partners with LGBTQ Community

USCRI

U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants

Location: Arlington, VA (+ nationwide)
Provides: VOLAG style orientation trainings

Takeaways:

- Provides normal CORE trainings to refugees on arrival
- One unique training per year on relevant topic
- No difference in trainings by geography

NAMC & CC

Northern Area Multiservice Center and Catholic Charities

Location: Pittsburgh, PA (+ nationwide)
Provides: Case management, resettlement, and ongoing support

Takeaways:

- Specific curriculum required of resettlement agencies doesn't include racial equity
- They can supplement CORE trainings, but it's uncommon as many are under-resourced
- Volunteers and CBOs are creative with supplemental education, but none are known to have focused on racial equity

Racial Education for Adults: The Existing Literature

There is some research that uses critical race theory as a lens to understand the ways in which refugees and immigrants are targeted and treated in different ways on both personal and structural levels based on their race. There are other studies that interrogate the ways that discrimination based on race and citizenship status have been held separately for so long without being explored intersectionality. And there are many studies that explore the racism within immigration and refugee policies in the U.S, including one that reports that 4.2 million black immigrants in the U.S. have higher rates of arrest, detention, and removal. All of these studies focus on the impact of racist systems on the experiences of refugees.

When considering the education and background that refugees and immigrants receive about racism (both internalized and systemic), there is no research that can be found specific to the U.S. On the U.S. Department of Education website under Educational Resources for Immigrants, Refugees, Asylees, and other New Americans there is just one reference to race-based discrimination. This is within the context of the Office of Civil Rights, positioning it as a resource for those facing discrimination "on the basis of race, color, national origin (including lack of English proficiency), disability, sex and age" in federally-funded programs. All other education resources for adult learners are related to literacy, mathematics, English language, or career and technical education and this is where the majority of educational research has focused as well.

Missing Research: An Opportunity Gap

The opportunity, then, is to fill this gap in research to better understand refugee's internalized racism as well as their understanding and experience of racism in their countries of origin and then in the U.S. and the role they play as neighbors and community members. This research will provide a baseline to develop racial education resources that are sorely lacking specific to immigrants and refugees.

Key Takeaways



Throughout the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Process there are multiple opportunities for orientation to life in the U.S. Many International, Federal, and Volunteer Resettlement Agencies use a set of trainings known as CORE (Cultural Orientation Resource Exchange) and may supplement with additional trainings. The CORE series does not currently include racial equity as part of the curriculum, and only briefly mentions race as an element of society in the U.S.



Community Based Organizations are quickly adapting to current cultural needs in their ability to offer trainings on racial equity and race in the United States. As a result there is great potential for CBOs to be leveraged going forward.