

AFRICAN, RUSSIAN, AND UKRAINIAN REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN PORTLAND, OREGON

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ABSTRACT. The residential patterns, adaptation experiences, and impacts of immigrants on North American cities have been well documented in the geographical literature. In this article, we build on prior work by testing the theories of Gaim Kibreab, who identified three factors that shape the experiences of recent refugees: attitudes of the receiving society; current policy environments; and employment opportunities in local communities. We analyze some of the ways in which these factors operate as interrelated systems for two comparative groups of foreign-born migrants in Portland, Oregon: sub-Saharan Africans; and Russians and Ukrainians. Using a mixed-methods approach, we triangulate data from a blend of in-depth interviews, participant observation in the community and at refugee and immigrant social service agencies, census and other statistical records, and cartographic analyses to report on the findings of our work. Data suggest that the residential, economic, and social spaces of new refugees are constructed as a complex multiplicity of networks and relationships that link time and place. *Keywords:* Africans, Pacific Northwest, refugees, Russians, Ukrainians.

Issues related to international migration and its impacts on society and space have increasingly attracted the attention of geographers and other scholars during the past two decades (see, for example, the work of the geographers Boswell and Curtis 1984; McHugh, Miyares, and Skop 1997; Zelinsky 2001; Mountz and others 2002; Chacko 2003; Wright, Ellis, and Parks 2004). Individuals who embark upon the journey from home and travel to a new place of residence are transformed, as are the places where new migrants settle. Perhaps nowhere in the rapidly diversifying landscapes of the U.S. Pacific Northwest is this process as visible as in Portland, Oregon, a metropolitan area in the midst of rapid demographic, cultural, and economic transformation. Today the state of Oregon ranks eleventh in the nation in terms of total numbers of new refugees. Many arrive from places like the former Soviet Union, Somalia, Ethiopia, Bosnia, Vietnam, and Cambodia.

New foreign-born migrants began to settle in this moderate-sized Pacific Northwest city in response to the strong economic conditions that existed there during the 1990s. By 2000, the foreign-born population accounted for 12 percent of the total population in the metropolitan area (U.S. Census Bureau 2000). Nearly one-third arrived after 1995; half, after 1990. As a reflection of the city's robust economy and active support networks for refugees and immigrants, the foreign-born population grew by 136 percent between 1990 and 2000, more than double the national growth rate for foreign-born residents (Ray 2004, 13).

This article documents and analyzes the migration, adjustment experiences, residential patterns, and economic, cultural, and social networks of two large groups

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