

## Gretchen Mohr

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Dear Ambassador Quinn,

Thank you again for meeting with us and granting an interview. We won the State contest and traveled to the national competition in College Park, Maryland in June. I have enclosed a copy of our nationally ranking documentary. I would also be happy to make a copy of the entire interview with you and Governor Ray and send it to you, if you would like, let me know. Thank you again. I'm looking forward to this year's World Food Prize! If there is ever anything I can do for you please let me know.

Sincerely,  
Gretchen Mohr

**Igniting Reaction, Prompting Reform:  
Iowa's Revolutionary Refugee  
Resettlement Program**

**Dexter Golvinghorst  
Gretchen Mohr**

**Senior Division  
Group Documentary**

After learning of this year's theme, *Revolution, Reaction, Reform in History*, we began searching for topics, which revolutionized Iowa and spurred reaction across the U.S. and world. After viewing "A Promise Called Iowa", we discovered Southeast Asian refugees relocated to Iowa as a result of revolutionary action by Governor Robert D. Ray and Iowans to resettle the Tai Dam and other ethnic refugees, sparking reactionary reform across the nation in refugee resettlement.

After combing the Internet for background knowledge, we dug deeper into Iowa's revolutionary actions through sources obtained through our school, Rivershare Online, and St. Ambrose University Libraries. We received sources from the Vietnam War, National and Library of Congress Archives. We then contacted and interviewed Ambassador Kenneth Quinn, Houn Baccam, Kim Poem-Logan, Governor Robert D. Ray, and countless other Iowan sponsors and refugees who graciously shared their experiences with us and demonstrated the impact of Iowa's revolutionary actions. After interviewing, we were granted special access to the Ray Papers Collection at the State Historical Society where we gained valuable insight into the revolution taking place—Iowa acting as the only state government certified as a refugee resettlement agency in the nation.

After researching we decided a documentary would be the best way to demonstrate the revolution in Iowa, the reaction around the globe, and the reform of refugee resettlement that resulted.

Iowa's revolutionary action as an agency for refugee resettlement fits this year's theme perfectly. Governor Ray's administration and the citizens of Iowa revolutionized refugee resettlement in multiple ways. First, and most importantly, Iowa and its people were the first and to this day remain the only government certified as a refugee

resettlement agency. Also revolutionary was the action of taking in the Tai Dam as an entire group, rather than splitting them up, as immigration law required. Iowa's citizens and the lobbying efforts of both Governor Ray and Ambassador Quinn, then an assistant to the State Department, spurred positive reactions around the world, prompting the United Nations Geneva Conference on Refugees. Moreover, this revolution sparked a nation-wide reaction to Iowa's refugee resettlement and prompted other states to assist in resettling refugees. Iowa's revolutionary actions ignited Congress with legislation including the Refugee Act of 1980, and reform of previous policies concerning refugee resettlement and rights. Resettlement of Southeast Asian refugees also revolutionized how the U.S. treated foreign policy relations, and realized how crucial refugee relations were in dealing with countries worldwide. Iowa would again react to the displacement of the "Boat People" and once again become a leader of the world in resettling those people across the state. Iowa continues to resettle refugees today.

The resettlement of the Tai Dam and other Southeast Asian peoples was revolutionary because Iowa still remains the only government certified in the successful resettlement of displaced refugees. This created domestic reaction and reform by encouraging other states to take in refugees of war stricken areas and changing policy in order for refugees to live out their own versions of a "Promise Called Iowa."

## Annotated Bibliography

### Primary Sources:

**Baccam, Ha. "Let's Improve Ourselves, Adjustment to the New Society." Our Soul: Monthly Tai Dam Newsletter Dec. 1980 Vol.3 # 49: 2. Ray Collection: State Historical Society of Iowa. Des Moines, Iowa.**

Ha Baccam discussed the need of the Tai Dam to work hard and do one's best in educating one's self and informing one's children to become better citizens and improve status in life in Iowa. The article stated, "Though we left a past of misery, hardship and fear in our old world, we must now be brave and resourceful and become better Americans." Later, it goes on to say that by being the best that they could be, [the Tai Dam] would make America a better place, and indeed they did by utilizing the revolutionary refugee resettlement program provided by the State of Iowa.

**Baccam, Houg. Personal Interview. Des Moines, Iowa. 27 Dec. 2011.**

Mr. Baccam was the leader of the second group of Tai Dam refugees to come to Iowa as a result of Iowa's revolutionary government reform into having Iowa become the first and only U.S. government entity to resettle refugees. Speaking with Mr. Baccam, we were able to appreciate the first hand, positive effects of Iowa's revolutionary and humanitarian actions. We also learned the people of Iowa reacted in a generally positive manner, allowing for nationwide reform. This interview experience was one vital to the knowledge of our project as it allowed us to talk to someone who personally experienced the results of Iowa's newly formed government agency.

**Bethlenfalvy, Peter, et al. "A Report by a German Expert Delegation on Integration Programs of the Indo-Chinese Refugees in Iowa and Michigan." Jan. 1980. Ray Collection: State Historical Society of Iowa. Des Moines, Iowa.**

After visiting and seeing the resettlement efforts in the states of Iowa and Michigan, these German diplomats returned to their own country to implement similar programs. This shows precisely how revolutionary Iowa's actions were in refugee resettlement because the state was willing to stretch accepted guidelines in order to accommodate people in need. The state of Iowa was the resettlement agency. This report further demonstrates the reaction of the world to Iowa's humanitarian efforts and the international reform thereafter in regards to immigration and refugee resettlement in other countries.

**Berg, Al. Letter to Gretchen Mohr. 26 Apr. 2012.**

We wanted to gain the unique perspective of a Vietnam War Veteran about Iowa's Indochinese Refugee Resettlement. For this information we turned to Mr. Al Berg who explained to us that he made many friends who were Vietnamese while fighting in Vietnam. He said he sometimes wonders what happened to them and if they ever made it out. We had heard stories from others that some Vietnam veterans were against the resettlement of the Indochinese people because they had been trained to fight against people of Vietnamese decent and they thought it was disrespectful to the families of soldiers who had lost their lives to ask the families to help with the resettlement of Vietnamese people. Mr. Berg disagreed with this view, pointing out that they have become productive members of society and like natural born citizens, are committed to making America a better place to live and not change it to meet their needs. He left us with his reaction to this revolution: "After all I went to Vietnam to try to make a better life for them. I had friends get wounded and even die to make a better life for them. The refugee resettlement program enabled them to make a better life for themselves and isn't that why we fought the war in the first place."

**Byrne, Brenden, Robert Ray, William Milliken, "Report and Policy Position  
Recommendations of the Task Force on Indochina Refugees National Governor's  
Association Committee on International Trade and Foreign Relations." 9 Jul. 1979.**

Governors Ray, Milliken, and Byrne's subcommittee testimony to the Immigration, Refugee and International Law of the House Judiciary Committee on the Refugee Bill being considered by Congress, was to encourage the spread of Iowa's revolutionary resettlement program. This bill included a call for a combined international effort to continue to allow refugees to land and not force them back to sea as well as increasing the number of refugees to be admitted to the U.S. over the following twelve to fourteen months. On June 28, 1979, President Carter announced the U.S. would double its monthly quota from 7,000 to 14,000 refugees. This decision was in response to reports that Thai and Malaysian Governments forcibly repatriated refugees back out to sea and dissuaded new refugees from landing by shooting at them.

**Colton, Deborah. Letter to Colleen Shearer. 19 Jun. 1981. Ray Collection: State Historical Society of Iowa. Des Moines, Iowa.**

This letter discussed the American Public Welfare Association's stance on what to do with refugees and funding in regard to the refugees. It show how crucial lobbying was in support of the refugees and the reaction by the State Department to make continued resettlement of the refugees of Southeastern Asia a priority and a success. This letter contained information regarding the importance of continuing the program and also the positive effects the refugees had on America.

**Council of Directors, International Understandings. Newsletter. Dec. 1975. Ray Collection: State Historical Society of Iowa. Des Moines, Iowa.**

This newsletter spoke of the importance of the new Tai Dam immigrants to the people of Des Moines, Iowa and how their culture had enriched the lives of all people who had the pleasure of meeting the Tai Dam. Moreover, it explained how the cancellation of activities that allowed this to occur would create area-wide disappointment because of the loss of interaction. This showed us how the immigrants actually changed the way native Iowans lived, thus creating positive reaction in the community that adopted them.

**Dorothy, Lori. Personal Interview. Keosauqua, Iowa. 28 Dec. 2012.**

Mrs. Dorothy's Center Chapel Methodist Church decided they would sponsor a family of refugees when they saw a need and thought they could help. "Governor Ray said we want to welcome these people to Iowa. We sponsored this family and they've just been a wonderful family." The Kavahns were Laotian and stayed in a small house behind the Dorothys. "They really were running for their lives." The community of Keosauqua was told there were children, but when they picked up the family they were surprised to find out there were actually ten people in the group. When the family arrived, a house was already made up and there was food waiting for them. Mrs. Dorothy stated that as the family grew up and moved they still stay in touch and are there for the big moments in life: weddings, first communions, etc. She also said when her husband Jack died, the Kavahns were there the next day and stayed until the funeral was over. This helped us to see the important lifelong bond formed between sponsors and those they helped.

**Eberline, William. "43 Refugees Begin their New Lives in Iowa." Des Moines Register 27 Oct. 1975. Ray Collection: State Historical Society of Iowa. Des Moines, Iowa.**

This newspaper article speaks of new refugees arriving in Iowa in order to start their new life free of persecution. The article also talked about how 300 Vietnamese would be relocated in Arkansas as well, proving that Iowa's effort was seen and adopted nation-wide.

**Eglin National Refugee Processing Center. "Tab E Personal Status Chart." May 23, 1975.**

In order to log all of the refugees that arrived in the United States as a result of reform in policy. This reform was an effect of the revolutionary refugee resettlement program established in Iowa under the leadership of Governor Robert Ray. Iowa was the first and only state government entity certified to resettle refugees. While the U.S. had taken refugees in prior to 1975, Iowa also revolutionized refugee policy by taking in the Tai Dam as an entire group. This chart from a Florida processing center allowed us to view what the refugees were screened for and how the resettlement progress began.

**Eisenhower, John. "The President's Advisory Committee on Refugees." Letter to Governor Robert Ray. 27 Jun. 1975.**

This letter was sent to all of the governors in the country asking them to assist in resettling Indochinese refugees. "Most (refugees) have arrived with little more than the clothes on their backs. The task of this resettlement must not and need not be an occasion for prolonging the fear, uncertainty and despair which have clouded the lives of these people for so long." This helped us analyze the need for a revolutionary response to the need of the Indochinese refugees.

**Evans, Daniel. "Vietnamese Refugee Resettlement Program." 20 May 1975. Ray Collection: State Historical Society of Iowa. Des Moines, Iowa.**

Governor Ray worked closely with Washington State's Governor Daniel Evans. Washington was the first state to accept refugees and Ray worked to build Iowa's refugee program based on the successes and failures of different resettlement agencies in Washington. Ray and Evans sent many letters to each other throughout the planning of the Iowa Refugee Resettlement Agency's founding. Although Washington state did not have resettlement agencies sponsored by their state government, Evans saw the process of the refugees' transition and because of their close relationship, Ray was able to reform Iowa's Revolutionary Resettlement Agency.

**Gammie, Sandra, State of Florida Washington Office Emily Yaunt, NGA Task Force. "Draft Policy Statement on Refugees and Immigration. Materials on Legalization and Guest Worker Program." NGA Task Force on Immigration and Refugee Issues. 14 Dec. 1981.**

This 1981 letter discussed how the current system could not adequately address the number of aliens seeking asylum. The Task Force decided to provide for a fair and expeditious review of asylum claims. This document discussed how the task forces in each state, which resettled the Vietnamese refugees, could be used to deal with the sudden influx of Cubans/Haitians. The NGA (National Governors Association) Task Force suggested these immigrants be put under the Administration's immigration bill, which would result in the eligibility of entrants for federal benefits. This would help ensure the financial burden of such benefits did not fall on state and local governments. This helped us see how the revolutionary action of Vietnamese refugee immigration helped impacted and reformed immigration to the United States.

**Governor's Task Force for Indo-Chinese Resettlement. Iowa Tai Dam Newsletter. 19 Dec. 1975. Ray Collection: State Historical Society of Iowa. Des Moines, Iowa.**

The Task Force created by Governor Ray on behalf of both Iowans and Tai Dam was used to inform the Task Force of any issues and allow them to voice their concerns issued in this newsletter. It also provided a positive reaction for the Tai Dam people who felt Iowa really cared about them as a group, not just individual refugees. This newsletter allowed the Tai Dam people to be connected with the office that was handling their case and to feel more welcomed into the state of Iowa.

**Hawkes, Phillip. Governor Robert Ray. 12 Nov. 1981.**

Phillip Hawkes, Director of the Office of Refugee Resettlement commemorates Governor Ray and the state of Iowa on the work they were doing in, "Leading the United States and the world in refugee resettlement." The Director includes in his letter his agreement of helping the state by giving 1.75 billion dollars to assist in Iowa's resettlement work stating, "The excellent work carried out in behalf of refugee resettlement in your state is testimony to your support of this program." This helped us understand how people around the United States, even Washington D.C., noticed the work Iowa was doing and wanted to assist in this revolutionary work.

**Hegarty, Colleen. Phone Interview. 27 Apr. 2012.**

Ms. Hegarty's Catholic church in Algona, Iowa, sponsored Cama Borapon in 1980 and then three more refugee families in 1987. She explained that the church helped them with housing by allowing them to live in homes on properties that had been donated to the church. She noted there was originally some opposition to the refugees because the first thing they bought when they arrived was guns, and not just any guns but rifles. Ms. Hagerty explained that they were not buying these guns to kill people, but rather to hunt because they knew no other way to obtain food and had not heard of a grocery store or dealt with money before. She also noted that interestingly, Algona Vietnam veterans were originally opposed to the refugees because "...anyone who looked like that [they] were trained to shoot." However, Hagerty informed us how the community pulled together in support of the refugees because they demonstrated hard work and dedication to the ideals of American culture.

**Iowa Refugee Service Center. "Refugee Program Dollar Flow." 13 Jun. 1981. Ray Collection: State Historical Society of Iowa. Des Moines, Iowa.**

This analysis of a proposed block grant from the government demonstrates the incredible effort needed in order to successfully administer a program to benefit refugees. This also demonstrates how Iowa was able to push aside politics for the advancement of refugees. It clearly states how domestic America could prosper as a direct result of refugee resettlement. It goes as far as saying, "Jobs are the most important necessity for refugee—even more than English language facility." In addition, this document explains how detrimental the loss of funding for refugees would be to foreign relations, stating the U.S. will "have lost a crucial pawn in the international chess game—refugees."

**Meyer, Greta. Phone Interview. Algona, Iowa. 27 Apr. 2012.**

Ms. Meyer's church, Trinity Lutheran, sponsored refugees and was responsible for their successful transition to Iowa. She personally helped the refugees by donating furniture she and her family no longer needed so that they may make a home of their own. Ms. Meyer remembers that the language barrier was the biggest problem the refugees faced once they arrived in Iowa, but that programs were available to help them learn English. Furthermore, because she was a nurse, she oversaw some of their health concerns and made sure they had proper immunizations. Her work with the refugees inspired her to take a mission trip to Taiwan in 2003 with her Church to aid in humanitarian efforts there.

**Mui, Falvang. "Ronald Reagan Was Elected as the 40<sup>th</sup> President of the United States." Our Soul: Monthly Tai Dam Newsletter Nov. 1980 vol. 3 #48 1. Ray Collection, State Historical Society of Iowa. Des Moines, Iowa.**

The reaction the refugees shared about the Presidential election of Ronald Reagan and how the free and democratic country, new to the refugees, worked was shared in this article. The author made a special note of saying many Democrats voted for Reagan, the Republican, thus demonstrating the intertwining of parties within the polity of America. It demonstrated for the Tai Dam that they could vote any way they chose and not just to please their political party, which was such a revolutionary idea to them.

**Mui, Falvang. "Share Idea-Auto Pool" Our Soul: Monthly Tai Dam Newsletter Nov. 1980 Vol. 3 #48: 3. Ray Collection, State Historical Society of Iowa. Des Moines, Iowa.**

This publication explained how the Tai Dam, when gathering in large groups for a celebration, had problems parking all of their cars on the side streets and in front of neighbors' homes. It asked the Tai Dam to think about carpooling to relieve some of this problem. The final thoughts explain these people's reverence for their new country, "The important thing to remember about social customs is not to do anything that might make other people feel uncomfortable." The Tai Dam were very conscious about not stepping on the toes of their American neighbors, so to speak, in order to advance the transition from their old home to their new one in Iowa in order to prevent any possible conflict that may have arisen.

**Mui, Falvang. "Visit Tai Federation in 1978." Our Soul: Monthly Tai Dam Newsletter Nov. 1980 Vol. 3 #48: 2. Ray Collection, State Historical Society of Iowa. Des Moines, Iowa.**

Information from Southeast Asia where the Tai Dam fled was shared in the newsletter. Although people there grow two rice crops each year, they do not have enough rice to feed their families in the Tai Federation. All planted fields are communalized after harvest; one portion is given to the people who worked the fields; the Government takes the other. This illustrated for us that there were also other factors, which contributed to the displacement of the Tai Dam and other ethnic groups from Southeast Asia in the 1970s. In comparison with past decades, living in the Tai Federation continued to be difficult in the 1980s.

**Mui, Falvang. "Young Tai Dam Join Iowa National Guard." Our Soul: Monthly Tai Dam Newsletter Sept. 1980: Vol. 3 #46. Ray Collection, State Historical Society of Iowa. Des Moines, Iowa.**

Mr. Lo Van Oune of Hull, Iowa and Luong Van Ich of George, Iowa, were the first two Tai Dam to join the Iowa National Guard. Training was held at Camp Benning, Georgia. In joining the Iowa National Guard, Tai Dam refugees demonstrated to Iowa and its natural born citizens that they were willing to fight for and protect the State which had worked so hard to revolutionize refugee resettlement in order to save the Tai Dam people's lives. This demonstrates the Tai Dam were patriotic to America and wanted to defend their newly found freedom in Iowa.

**Nguyen, Father Peter Duc Hung. Phone Interview. 28 Apr. 2012**

Father Nguyen of Wesley, Iowa, came to Iowa when he was seventeen years old as a result of Governor Robert D. Ray's revolutionary efforts to save the boat people who escaped Vietnam on fishing boats with nothing more than the clothes on their backs. Father Nguyen was a boat person himself and was forced to flee his homeland with his family because of the oppressive Communist regime, which had virtually stripped them of their rights. Iowa was able to accommodate his family and him because of the revolutionary refugee resettlement program he developed in cooperation with the Iowan citizenry. Father Peter knew no English except the alphabet, and was placed in an English-as-a-Second-Language course in high school near Des Moines. The most surprising cultural difference in Iowa compared to Vietnam was the amount of food that was always available and the variety. He said that in Vietnam they would eat mainly fish, rice, and vegetables whereas in Iowa he was able to eat anything he desired. Father Peter's faith, Catholicism, inspired him to become a priest and serve fellow Indochinese citizens in the Wesley area. His story was most touching when he stated, "I want to thank all Americans because of their generosity, and welcoming us to their country with acceptance and treating us like human beings, not animals." He explained, "[...] there is no place like America. It is the place of opportunity for all refugees because if you study hard you can work in almost any job you want and get a good education." This interview demonstrated the real world results of Iowa's revolutionary refugee resettlement program.

**Poem-Logan, Kim. Personal Interview. Phone Interview. 8 Feb. 2012.**

Mrs. Poem-Logan came to the United States when she was ten years old. As a refugee fleeing persecution in Cambodia her family was resettled in Oskaloosa, Iowa. She commented, "We couldn't have gotten here through a better program (Iowa Refugee Resettlement Agency). She explained to us the struggles of being some of the first refugees in Iowa and in her area. When she arrived there were few programs to help with the language barrier and she said she struggled a lot but she felt really accepted. She spoke about the sponsorships Iowa set up and warmly spoke of how the program was, "People connecting to and helping people. Iowa was a state of plenty and reached out to help." As one of the founding members of the Iowa Asian Alliance which focuses on establishing a community in the Asian-American community and embracing culture differences, she commented "Iowa's refugee program set the bar on how Iowa embraces diversity and was a panicle in US refugee policy." By hearing Ms. Poem-Logan's experiences as a refugee in Iowa we were able to gain a deeper understanding of the hardships faced, as well as times of pride.

**Quigley, Kevin. "The Select Commission's Mandate, Methodology, and Findings." 10 July 1981. Ray Collection: State Historical Society of Iowa. Des Moines, Iowa.**

This article discusses the investigation of the Select Commission into the resettlement of refugees into the U.S. as a result of Iowa's revolutionary actions in setting the standard for accepting refugees into the states. It analyzed demography, employment, foreign policy, and the results of previous immigration/ refugee programs. "The Commission concluded that immigrants and refugees contribute to the well-being of our society. It is also suggested that the U.S. has a limited ability to continue absorbing large numbers of immigrants and refugees." This assisted our research by noting the government wanted to react in the proper way, and would reform in such a way that success could be possible.

**Quinn, Kenneth. Letter to the Editor. 5 Feb. 1979. Ray Collection: State Historical Society of Iowa. Des Moines, Iowa.**

Kenneth Quinn, Assistant to Governor Robert Ray at this time, wrote to the editors of newspapers across the country to spread the word about Governor Ray's efforts in resettling the Tai Dam. He hoped to encourage governors of all of the other states to do exactly as he and Ray had done; revolutionize refugee resettlement in order to improve the lives of people experiencing the awful effects of communism and persecution.

**Quinn, Kenneth. Letter to Governor Robert Ray. 21 Aug. 1975. Ray Collection: State Historical Society of Iowa. Des Moines, Iowa.**

Kenneth Quinn wrote to Governor Ray expressing his pride and appreciation for the city of Dubuque, Iowa, where thirty-seven Vietnamese refugees were resettled as a result of the efforts of the State of Iowa. It explained how Iowa was "[serving] as an inspiration to other communities around throughout the nation and will be a source of great pride for the State."

**Quinn, Ambassador Kenneth. Personal Interview. Des Moines, Iowa. 17 Feb. 2012.**

As one of the main leaders behind the movement in Iowa to revolutionize refugee resettlement, in cooperation with Governor Robert Ray, Ambassador Quinn (then a State Department Assistant) provided invaluable insight into the workings of how Iowa was the only state government with a humanitarian heart which was truly revolutionary in its ambitious task of resettling refugees, how this revolution ignited nationwide reaction, and later a global one when he, Vice President Walter Mondale, and Governor Ray attended the Geneva Conference on Refugees. This interview allowed us to truly appreciate the way that Iowa acted and through leaders like Ambassador Quinn, revolutionized refugee resettlement in a way that is truly inspiring.

**Ray, Governor Robert. Letter to Charles Thone, Governor of Nebraska. 22 Jan. 1979. Ray Collection: State Historical Society of Iowa. Des Moines, Iowa.**

Governor Ray, after already revolutionizing refugee aid in his relocation of the Tai Dam to Iowa, sent a letter to the governors of every state and asked them assist with the "Boat People" because they too needed rescuing from the harsh environment in Southeast Asia. Furthermore, Ray pleaded the other states' find it in their heart to open their borders because it would provide a reformed future for the refugees, a future of promise, a future living the American dream.

**Ray, Robert D. "Letter to President Carter" 17 Jan. 1979. Ray Collection: State Historical Society of Iowa. Des Moines, Iowa.**

In this letter, Governor Robert D. Ray tells President Jimmy Carter that Iowa will take 1500 Indo-Chinese refugees in the coming year. Ed Bradley's CBS documentary on "The Boat People" stirred Iowans to also help with the plight of these refugees. Iowa contacted local church communities to help sponsor these people and continue to utilize the revolutionary actions the State implemented in order to accommodate previous groups including the Tai Dam and Laotians.

**Ray, Robert D. "Letter Supporting Local Schools." Letter to Dr. Robert D. Benton, State Superintendent of Schools. 6 Oct. 1980.**

This letter informed the State Superintendent of Schools that the Governor and the State of Iowa applauded and supported local school districts trying to help local Indo-Chinese refugees learn to read and write. The letter also stated the amount of money eligible to each school district which applied for help, again proving Iowa was willing to go above and beyond the expectations of the nation and world.

**Ray, Governor Robert D. Personal Interview. Des Moines, Iowa. 17 Feb. 2012.**

In this amazing interview with the retired Governor of Iowa, we were able to hear the creator of Iowa's revolutionary refugee resettlement program tell us first hand of its origins, purpose, and impact on the world. Governor Ray provided us with an unequalled experience to gain first-hand knowledge of our topic to use in our documentary. This was an experience that speaks to the continued dedication of Governor Ray to impact the State of Iowa and world with his program.

**Ray, Robert D. "Speech to the Iowa Boat People." Des Moines, Iowa. 25 Apr. 1979.**

"Where would we be today if America had closed its doors to our forefathers? The Statue of Liberty is inscribed with these words "Give me your tired, your poor, and your huddled masses yearning to breath free. The wretched refuse of your teaming shore send these, the homeless, tempest tossed to me. I lift my lamp besides the golden door. To the refugees, I wish you great good luck in the new adventure you are beginning today." Governor Ray wished to welcome these people to Iowa so that the revolution he and the State created could be completely fulfilled. This called the "boat people" to action and encouraged them to evolve into complete, well-rounded Americans.

**Ray, Robert D. "Volunteer Tutor Program." Iowa Refugee Service Center. 18 Mar. 1980.**

Governor Robert D. Ray issued a statement asking for volunteers to help Indo/Chinese refugees learn English in refugees' homes. The letter stated that the AEA regional coordinators and contacts would help put volunteers and refugees together. The AEA had a curriculum set up to help volunteers. This showed us how Iowa educational agencies reformed and reacted to accommodate to the needs of the newly resettled Tai Dam.

**Scherer, Colleen. "Half of Iowa's Vietnamese Refugees on Welfare." Waterloo Currier 21 Oct. 1976: B4.**

Colleen Scherer, Director of the Refugee Task Force, stated a negative reaction to the Vietnamese refugees, "900 of the 1900 Vietnamese refugees are on ADC (Aid to Dependent Children) and other forms of welfare." Scherer blasted them for accepting welfare when they could work or were independently wealthy. She had seen none of these problems with the Laotian refugees brought in earlier or the Tai Dam because under her direction and with the leadership of Iowa citizens, these refugees remained self-sufficient. This error on the part of the Vietnamese refugees was quickly addressed to maintain the integrity of Iowa's revolutionary refugee resettlement agency, the State Government itself.

**Shearer, Colleen, "Iowa Refugee Service Center." Press Release. 25 Apr. 1979. Ray Collection, State Historical Society of Iowa. Des Moines, Iowa.**

"196 Boat People will be resettled though out the state of Iowa. They will arrive by chartered jet in Des Moines airport @ 11AM Colleen Shearer, Director of the Iowa Refugee Services Center announced today. They will be taken to Camp Dodge, Iowa, National Guard Post." Discovering this Press Release gave us insight into the process of how refugees were brought to Iowa and were transitioned into their new homes.

**Shearer, Colleen. "Refugee Resettlement: Not Why, But How." Testimony Submitted to the Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy. 25 Feb. 1980. Ray Collection: State Historical Society of Iowa. Des Moines, Iowa.**

Ms. Shearer testified on behalf of the Iowa Refugee Service Center to promote the continuation of the refugee program and the funding for it. It discusses how Iowa led the nation in humanitarian efforts in order to reform the lives of thousands of refugees especially of Southeast Asia. She urged that the efforts made were vital to the sanity and livelihood of the Tai Dam and other groups and insisted that the efforts had to be continued in order to reach its full potential.

**Shearer, Colleen. "U.S. Refugee Resettlement Policies." Letter to Gov. Robert D. Ray. 8 Jul. 1981. Ray Collection: State Historical Society of Iowa. Des Moines, Iowa.**

This memorandum sent to Governor Robert Ray of Iowa by the Director of the Iowa Refugee Service Center is crucial to our understanding of the vast impact of Iowa's actions in reforming refugee resettlement. It furthermore shows the hard work that these two members, Governor Ray and Colleen Shearer, did in order to improve the lives of refugees by giving the refugees a chance at the American dream, a life that too many Americans take for granted. The revolutionary actions of Iowa and its people installed a reactionary attitude in the hearts of other countries around the world. This reaction led to the reform of how refugees were handled and the regulations that applied to them.

**Simon, Julian. "Economic Objections Fall Apart When Used Against Immigrants." *LA Times*. 1 July 1980. Ray Collection: State Historical Society of Iowa. Des Moines, Iowa.**

Although immigrants were blamed for economic struggles, the numbers actually supported immigrants and refugees boosted the economy with additional people in the working class. It is important to consider that initially immigrants may have a negative effect because of their needs for resettlement, but as soon as they are established, it is evident they in fact support the economy. This shows the revolutionary and albeit risky action in taking the immigrants and refugees of Southeast Asia, in fact paid off. This article showed the people of America the revolutionary actions of Iowa led to positive reform across the country in the positive aspects of refugee resettlement.

**Stein, Dr. Barry. "The Refugee Experience: An Overview of Refugee Research." Feb. 1980. Ray Collection: State Historical Society of Iowa. Des Moines, Iowa.**

Dr. Stein's research regarding refugees was presented at the Geneva Conference for Refugees as an overview of exactly what a refugee experienced day in and day out in Southeast Asia. The accounts displayed in this essay are both moving and quite disturbing; thereby creating a reaction which pushed the UN to develop policies for the resettlement of the Indo-Chinese refugees.

**Truong, Lien. Personal Interview. 21 Apr. 2012.**

Ms. Truong came to the United States when she was seven years old. She explained the process her family went through to come to the U.S. "We lived under the North Vietnamese for two years and we knew if we wanted to survive, we needed to leave." The family contacted a fisherman and arranged their smuggling out of the country. They were worried the Communists would learn of their plans and they would be killed, but they made it to a refugee camp and later came to Iowa. She said it gave her great pride to be able to support her family by the time she graduated from High School and they were able to financially support themselves. Ms. Truong compared her experiences to the situation in North Korea and China today.

**United Nations Commissioner of Refugee Services. HCR. Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations, Sept-Oct. 1980. Ray Collection: State Historical Society of Iowa. Des Moines, Iowa.**

This pamphlet, handed out at the Conference regarding refugees, is full of pictures that display the horrible effects of being displaced from one's home and having to live in a refugee camp. It further showed the reformed lives of those lucky enough to be resettled. This pamphlet created a reaction amongst those in attendance at the Conference leading to reform in the lives of the victims displaced from their homes.

**United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "Workshop on Integration of Refugees from Indo-China in Countries of Resettlement." United Nations. Geneva, Switzerland, 1980. 1-iii. Ray Collection: State Historical Society of Iowa. Des Moines, Iowa.**

This workshop manual specifically developed for the Conference for integration of refugees from Indo-China explained the intense amount of suffering and agony the people of this region were suffering as a direct result of the communist regime in Vietnam. This aided our research because the Conference was encouraged by the efforts of Iowa Governor Robert Ray who initiated the revolutionary program in Iowa, appreciated worldwide for the efforts made to positively reform the refugees' living conditions and future.

**United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "Workshop on Resettlement of Refugees from Indo-China: Summary of Results." Telegram to Kenneth Quinn, State Department. 14 Oct. 1980. Ray Collection: State Historical Society of Iowa. Des Moines, Iowa.**

"With generally low-key persuasiveness, the U.S. delegation was instrumental in the formulation of the workshop's conclusions: emphasizing the overall success of the resettlement regardless of problems noted and differences in approach [...]" This message, received by State Department Representative Kenneth Quinn, proves efforts of the United States were successful in revolutionizing humanitarian efforts for the Tai Dam refugees.

**United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Social and Rehabilitation Service. "Policy Instruction" State Administrations and Other Interested Organizations and Agencies. 9 Jun. 1975.**

Legislation including The Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1975 (Public Law 94-23) and Special Appropriations for Assistance to Refugees from Cambodia and Vietnam (Public Law 94-24) provided reimbursement to States on a 100 percent basis for financial assistance, medical assistance, and social services to Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees for the states from the federal government through formula grants. Each state had to apply for the money and it was based on the number of refugees. This document also gives the definition of a refugee in accordance to these laws as: "A Cambodian or Vietnamese national who 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 to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country and has been paroled into the United States by Immigration and Naturalization Service as a refugee." Although these laws only promised funding from July 1975 to June 30, 1976, it gave assistance to states as they started their own refugee programs.

**United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Social and Rehabilitation Service. "Questions and Answers on the Medical Assistance Program for Vietnamese and Cambodian Refugees." 9 Jun. 1975.**

This publication answered frequently asked questions many people had about the Refugees' healthcare as they were making the important decision of whether or not to become sponsors. Included in this was how sponsors had the responsibility of helping provide basic health care. This knowledge of sponsor responsibilities helped keep the refugees off of welfare in most cases because the sponsors looked out for the best interests of the refugees.

**United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Social and Rehabilitation Service. Sponsorship. Washington D.C.: 1975.**

This packet included information about what was involved in sponsoring a refugee family. The responsibilities listed include: "Receiving the refugee and their family, providing shelter and food, until the refugee becomes self-sufficient, provide clothing and pocket money, provide assistance in finding employment and in school enrollment for children, cover ordinary medical costs or medical insurance (some may obtain medical assistance through state Medicaid programs, however this in no way abrogates a sponsor's moral obligation to provide normal health assistance for refugee families)." The packet goes into detail about the standards and paperwork included in each of these steps. This reaction in the need for refugee sponsors ultimately resulted in the high number of refugee lives saved.

**United States House of Representatives. "Committee on Foreign Affairs Report." June 19, 1968.**

Minutes from the voting of the House in 1968 gave us insight into issues that our nations politicians had with bringing in refugees. However, we were glad to find out that an overwhelming majority supported both increasing the amount of aid that the U.S. would provide to the refugees and also voted to allow those displaced by the Vietnam War to come to the United States if they were unable to return to their homeland. These measures passed by the House and later the Senate set the groundwork for the Governor Ray and Iowa to revolutionize refugee resettlement in the state government in 1975.

**"Vietnam: America's Conflict." Historical Documentaries. DVD. Mill Creek Entertainment, 2009.**

This collection from the Vietnam War is packed with over twenty-three hours of historical footage. This firsthand cinema was insightful to the conflict from the front lines and we were able to utilize some of this incredible footage in our documentary to demonstrate the horrible conditions refugees were exposed to and survived. It enlightened us on the urgency the refugees were facing to flee to refugee camps and the hope they found from Iowa's continued activism to protect and resettle them.

**Warren, Andrea. Escape from Saigon: How a Vietnam War Orphan Became an American Boy. New York: Melanie Kroupa Books, 2004.**

These first-hand accounts of one boy's resettlement in America after his parents were both killed in Vietnam was another inspiring story we learned of in our research. He explained some of the struggles he had, the language barrier, and joining a new family in America. He said though, that children at school went out of their way to make him feel welcome and he quickly acclimated to the culture. Matt, the boy in the story, grew up and through his hard work went to medical school and became a doctor.

**Weisman, Joel. "Refugees Thrive in Iowa." The Washington Post 25 Dec. 1975. Ray Collection: State Historical Society of Iowa. Des Moines, Iowa.**

This Christmas Day article featured Iowa's Tai Dam refugees and tells of their success and ability to prosper in Iowa as a result of their resettlement through Governor Ray's revolutionary actions. Moreover, this discusses how the Tai Dam supported the economy by taking jobs most other Americans did not want or appreciate, alleviating allegations of taking jobs away from Americans.

**Yaung, Emily. "HHS/ORR Policy Decision on Cash and Medical Assistance for FY '82." State Refugee Resettlement Program Coordinators. 29 Sep. 1980.**

Under the Refugee Act of 1980, HHS/ORR was required to establish formal and comprehensive program regulations to administer state refugee resettlement programs. The preliminary decision was made on the cash assistance policy for refugees. The policy decisions included that the states would be reimbursed for the cash and medical assistance to refugees for thirty-six months. I was able to gain an idea of the reaction the United States Government had to assist in the states refugee assistance.

**Yocum, Jerry. "Re: Revolutionary Iowa Government" E-mail to Gretchen Mohr. 9 Jan. 2012.**

Jerry Yocum was a key player in the successful transition of refugees in Algona, Iowa, and the surrounding areas. He was a facilitator through his church and worked hard to make the resettlement of the Indochinese as painless and as seamless as possible. At the High School, where he taught he did extra help sessions and worked with co-workers to do the same. He was also incredibly helpful to us because he pointed us to people who were in charge of resettlement of their respective churches in Algona. We were then able to contact and interview them and they shared their incredible stories of humanitarianism with us. All were touched by the efforts of Iowa's revolutionary refugee resettlement program because it reformed their opinions about foreign people and they reacted in a positive manner to aid these victims of communism.

### **Secondary Sources:**

**Amacher, Anna Marie. "Cathedral Pastor Learning Vietnamese." Diocesan News: Catholic Messenger 8 Mar. 2012.**

Lien Troung was a refugee who settled in Moline, Illinois, after coming to America through the Refugee Resettlement Program. She benefitted by the revolution in Iowa because it made other states react by drawing awareness to the refugee crisis of the Indochinese region in Southeast Asia. These articles discuss how Ms. Troung is avidly working with Father Rich Adams of Davenport to teach him Vietnamese so he can eventually offer a Vietnamese mass and accommodate the needs of all of the congregation. The Father speaks to a sort of "reverse language barrier", which Americans experience when learning a new language is comparable to the refugees learning English when they first arrived here. He proclaims, "...an example of the complexity of the Vietnamese language is that one word can have many meanings based on the accent mark and the type of mark on a letter." This showed us how both Vietnamese and American cultures continue to interact today so that the relationship between both can be mutually beneficial.

**Bilck, Acker. "Stranger on the Shore." Oct. 1961.**

This music allowed us to set the mood of our documentary as well as stay true to the time period of our topic.

**Davey, Monica. "Immigration, and Its Politics, Shake Rural Iowa." NY Times 13 Dec. 2007. New York Times. 18 Nov. 2011. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/13/us/politics/13voices.html?pagewanted=all>>.**

During the 2008 Presidential Elections, illegal immigration was a hot topic of both the GOP and Democratic parties. This article focused on Storm Lake, Iowa, an area divided by locals and also Southeast Asian refugees and Latinos who came to the town for meatpacking jobs. This demonstrated to us the impact that Iowa's Government has on people still today. In addition it was interesting to us that this community and its people have blended culture into a multicultural community that is highly functioning, yet has its own unique issues between immigrants working in the factory and citizens who focus on agriculture.

**Garner, Joe. We Interrupt this Broadcast. "Saigon Falls." Naperville: Sourcebooks Inc., 2000.**

As an event that grabbed Americans and left them wanting to know each detail as it became available regarding the war efforts, this book includes the falling of Saigon, the initiating event of refugee displacement. Saigon falling marked the end of heavy U.S. forces in Southeast Asia and left Tai Dam people and others without a home. Iowa's Government under the leadership of Governor Robert D. Ray, revolutionizing refugee resettlement, was able to open its arms to extend a helping hand to address the desperate needs of these people.

**Hakim, Joy. All the People. New York: Oxford UP, 2003.**

Hakim provides substantial information explaining the conflict in Indochina which led to the rise of communism, the fall of Saigon and displacement of refugees in desperate need of assistance. It explains the mass movement in the United States against the Vietnam War, especially on college campuses. The most touching portion, however, discusses the refugees who fled with what little they could gather before they were killed. Hakim developed new insight into the perspective that Americans took initiative in resettling the refugees in perhaps as a way to demonstrate that they were in Vietnam to defeat communism but also preserve the culture of the displaced refugees.

**Huyser-Honig, Joan. Laotian Refugees Start and Join Churches. Calvin Institute of Christian Worship. 9 Jan. 2012. <<http://worship.calvin.edu/resources/resource-library/laotian-refugees.html>>.**

Refugees have adopted Christian values in their transition to the United States. This particular group of Laotians settled in Michigan after that state reacted to the positive effect of Iowa's resettlement and decided to also accommodate refugees. This article describes how Laotians have been able to acclimate into American society and form their own cultural churches and community events. It was beneficial for us to know that the refugees were able to blend so well into society once they made the journey to America.

**International Rescue Committee. Frequently Asked Questions About Refugees. 2011. IRC. 13 Jan. 2012. <<http://www.rescue.org/refugees>>.**

This Committee is dedicated to successful resettlement and adoption of refugees around the United States. This website allows anyone to access information and answer any questions of apprehension or dejection about refugee issues. This information was created so the general public could ease the tension they might feel towards the refugees or to just increase their knowledge about the process of refugees. This allowed us to realize the outreach the Committee offered both to refugees and to the general population in America to ensure a positive reaction with the arrival of the refugees.

**Iowa Arts Council. *Iowa Roots: Tai Dam Traditional Music and Dance*. CultureALL. Web. 05 June 2012. <<http://www.iowaartscouncil.org/programs/folk-and-traditional-arts/iowa-roots/season-one/houng-baccam.shtml>>.**

The Iowa Arts Council has created an Iowa roots program in which cultural citizens can share their stories to better inform the people in Iowa of its rich heritage and diverse culture within the state. Because of this project we were able to contact and personally interview Houng Baccam, one of the leaders of the Tai Dam. We were able to utilize this interview in our documentary.

**Molseed, John. "Meat Packing Jobs Bring Burmese Refugees to Waterloo." *WCF Courier*. 29 May 2011. *WCF Courier*. 25 Feb. 2012 <[http://wcfcourier.com/news/local/article\\_052f8dff-c45e-59e9-a9fc-72ff4b87f6e7.html](http://wcfcourier.com/news/local/article_052f8dff-c45e-59e9-a9fc-72ff4b87f6e7.html)>.**

The reform and reaction of Iowa's revolutionary government is still seen today through the resettlement of Burmese people, refugees of the Middle East, and other oppressed Arabic countries. This article discusses the specific story of a refugee who spent five years in a refugee camp and then came to Iowa and gained work to bring the rest of his family over from Thailand refugee camps. This allowed us to gain perspective about the current resettlement of displaced people to Iowa.

**"A Promise Called Iowa." Iowa Public Television. PBS. Johnston, Iowa. 4 Apr. 2007.**

Paying tribute to Iowa's revolutionary refugee resettlement policy, this IPTV documentary opened our eyes onto Governor Ray's and Iowa work in successfully relocating the Tai Dam and other ethnic groups to Iowa. This documentary helped us to see the revolution in Iowa and sparked our interest in this year's topic.

**Schwieder, Dorothy. Iowa The Middle Land. Iowa City: UI Press, 1996.**

This history of Iowa and her roots is an accurate depiction of Iowa's lasting legacy in the United States' past. Schwieder discusses the in-depth impact of Iowa on the nation and world. Specifically, the novel digs deep into Governor Robert Ray's Administration and the lasting revolutionary and humanitarian legacy his office left on the State. It helped us understand that even though the country was in turmoil, Iowa's people were willing to open their arms and reacted in a positive manner to refugees in Southeast Asia. Iowa revolutionized refugee resettlement by becoming the first and only state entity certified in refugee resettlement.

**Smith, Kay Fenton, and Carol Roh-Spaulling. Zakery's Bridge. Des Moines, IA: Shrieking Tree, 2011. Print**

Governor Ray authored the forward of this book which discusses nine individual stories of refugees that came to Iowa as a result of the revolutionary refugee resettlement program that he helped establish. This book was published recently so it allowed us to see the continued work that Iowa has done in resettling refugees still needing resettlement.

**Smithsonian Institute. "Exit Saigon, Exit Little Saigon." Viewed 15 Nov. 2011.**

After learning of the revolutionary work in Iowa, the Smithsonian began researching for and developing an exhibit dedicated to the resettlement of Indochinese refugees. This exhibit traveled around the country before being placed in the collections at the institute. The goal of the exhibit was to make the public more aware of the leadership of Iowa in resettling Indochinese people and to promote the positive impact of refugee resettlement.

**Sweeney, Michael. From the Front: The Story of War. Washington D.C.: National Geographic Society, 2004.**

The Vietnam War left the United States a country divided. Many saw the purpose of preventing Communist control, while others thought the United States had no business in helping these foreign countries with their problems when we had domestic issues of our own. This book also provided information on WWII and went up through Desert Storm in 1991. Sweeney's work helped gain necessary knowledge on the events leading up to U.S. involvement in Vietnam and also provided statistical numbers to allow us to bring more accuracy into our research.

**UNHCR. United States of America 2011 Regional Operations Profile. 2011. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 7 Jan. 2012. <<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx>>.**

As a national leader in refugee services, the United States along with the High Commissioner of Refugees from the UN created a report of current outreach goals and places that need assistance. This report has included in it a compilation of reports from all past Commissioners including the conference, which Governor Ray and Vice President Walter Mondale attended, which wished to utilize Iowa's system of resettlement on a global level. This demonstrated the world impact of the revolutionary government as the only state government with a certified entity to resettle refugees and how the entire world reacted by wanting to reform their own policies to better accommodate the refugees of the world.

**United States Department of Education, et al. About the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. Oct. 2010.**

On October 14, 2009, President Obama signed an Executive Order reestablishing his commitment to Southeast Asians and people of the Pacific Islands. This was based off of a summary of the program in Iowa as created by Governor Ray. It outlined all of the major groups Iowa had resettled up through 2008, of which the most recent group was Bhutanese. This allowed us to appreciate the reaction Iowa's revolutionary government created across the nation, and the impact that continues today.

**United States Department of State. Diplomacy in Action Southeast Asia. 15 Nov. 2011. USDS. 26 Feb. 2012. <<http://www.state.gov/g/prm/108723.htm>>.**

The Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) still works in Southeast Asia today with the people to provide humanitarian assistance and vulnerable populations. In addition the Bureau watches refugees and people who live in what they term "statelessness." This means that they watch people and groups without a permanent country to provide haven. This also outlined specific duties of the Bureau in the region concerning outreach, which demonstrated to us the importance of the region to the U.S., even after Iowa initially took in the Tai Dam.

**United States Senate, Subcommittee on Immigration, Committee on the Judiciary. Empty Seats in a Lifeboat: Are There Problems with the U.S. Refugee Program? Washington: GPO, 2002.**

After realizing rescue lifeboats had available seats on them, then U.S. Senator from Massachusetts, Edward Kennedy, called a meeting to address possible issues with refugee policy. He invited Senator Charles Grassley from Iowa to address the committee which desired his input because "the committee takes note that in 1975 Iowa was the only State that became an agency in order to receive refugees, of all of the 50 States, because of the concern of the people of Iowa." This not only acknowledged that Iowa's steps to becoming a refugee resettlement agency were humanitarian, but also that Iowa was the only state to revolutionize policy to help the people displaced as a result of the Vietnam War. Kennedy later notes "They [Iowa] have a very special and unique position in terms of refugee policy."

**University of Northern Iowa. New Iowans Program. Cedar Falls, Iowa: UNI, 2000.**

As a result of Iowa's revolutionary refugee resettlement, UNI wanted to further advance the impact of Iowa in terms of success by innovating a way to allow refugees and immigrants to obtain a college education. The New Iowans Program (NIP) provided consultation for community leadership, develop training programs, and to educate Iowans concerning the needs, challenges, and opportunities. This advanced the impact of both Iowa's native citizens and the newly resettled refugees and immigrants in a way palatable to the State. This helped us understand the revolutionary work in Iowa was really a large cooperative effort to successfully resettle refugees without stepping on the toes of citizens at the same time.

**Vietnamese Heritage Project. Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Program. 5 June 2012. Web. <<http://vietnam.si.edu/>>.**

This project began in 2004 as a means for the journeys of the over 30,000 Vietnamese immigrants who have migrated to America to be shared and embraced throughout the nation. This project promotes Vietnamese culture and traditions which have influenced and changed culture in the United States. It also clarifies and sheds light on the sacrifices that many refugees were forced to give in order to make a better life for themselves in America.

**Yepsen, David. Email to Gretchen Mohr. 15 Nov. 2011.**

Mr. Yepsen worked at The Des Moines Register during the time Governor Robert D. Ray was revolutionizing Iowa's Government along with a cooperative outpouring from Iowa's people to accommodate the Tai Dam and other Southeast Asian groups. He was also featured on "A Promise Called Iowa." He enlightened us that during the time the Governor was helping to revolutionize refugee resettlement. "This was a big story. Nothing like this had been done before in Iowa. There wasn't a fear of bringing immigrants here but a lot of compassion for these people. Iowans were overwhelming in responding to a human need." This allowed us to understand that although there was some opposition, this was an acute minority and Iowans were willing to embrace the new refugees.