



U.S. COMMITTEE FOR REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS

EVERYONE.
EVERYWHERE.
EQUAL VALUE.

June 8, 2018

Dear Members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives:

The U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) has been building a strong America since 1911. This has meant helping newcomers to learn language, job skills and prepare for citizenship through a Network of agencies across the nation. Since 1980, the USCRI network has resettled over 300,000 refugees from South East Asia, Africa, Middle East, and the former Soviet Union countries.

Today we see new policies and rhetoric that challenge our understanding of the basic values of our country. It's not entirely new, we have seen this before in 1939 with the voyage of the St. Louis and other historical disregards to the plea of refugees and immigrants with well-founded fears of persecution.

I'm a recipient of an *American by Choice Award* from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services in 2009 and a former refugee from Africa resettled in the great state of Georgia.

From the moment I arrived over three decades ago, I have dedicated my life to the welcome and protection of others who found themselves in similar situations, as a refugee or an immigrant. Like many immigrants and refugees, I have worked hard, raised a family, volunteer in my community and have had many blessings. But still, the idea of being a refugee, stateless, displaced and separated from family and loved ones is a consistent scar to remind all of us that our journey and suffering is real.

Despite the daily headlines that promote fear of immigrants, I know the history of the United States is also a history of refugees and immigrants. I urge you, as a member of Congress to see the faces and names of your constituents, your staffers and volunteers and think hard about how each of them came to be here. The family that loves them and the challenges they have overcome through the years. Today's immigrants and refugees want nothing more. A chance for peace and freedom.

Today's immigrants will be as grateful as I am to call this my country.

Sincerely,

Eskinder Negash
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