

US Immigration Policy and Attitudes towards Refugees during World War II and Today

Power point to accompany Carolina K-12's lesson "US Immigration Policy & Attitudes Towards Refugees during World War II & Today"

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IMMIGRANT

What comes to mind when you consider this word?

Immigration

An **immigrant** is someone who chooses to resettle to another country.

Immigrants are motivated by many things, sometimes called **pushes** (factors driving people out) and **pulls** (attractions of the new country), including:

- better economic opportunities,
- political forces/issues,
- re-uniting with family members,
- escaping conflict, wars or natural disasters.



REFUGEE

What comes to mind when you consider this word?

Refugee

A **refugee** is someone who has been forced to flee his or her home country. Refugees are generally unable or unwilling to return home because they fear serious harm.

Refugees can apply for asylum in the United States, but getting refugee status isn't easy and the process can take years.

Applicants have to prove that if they return to their home country, they'll be injured because of their race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or their political opinion.





Karlsruhe, Germany



Karlsruhe

Kaiserstraße

Kristallnacht (Night of Broken Glass)

- *Kristallnacht* marks the first instance in which the Nazi regime incarcerated Jews on a massive scale simply on the basis of their ethnicity. Hundreds died in the camps as a result of the brutal treatment they endured.
- Most did obtain release over the next three months (such as Hal's father) on the condition that they begin the **process of emigration from Germany**.
- In the weeks that followed *Kristallnacht*, the German government passed dozens of laws and decrees depriving Jews of their property and means of livelihood. For example:
 - Jewish-owned property & businesses had to be transferred to "Aryan" ownership, usually for a fraction of their true value.
 - Jews could no longer work.
 - German education officials expelled Jewish children still attending German schools.
 - Jews could not drive, own an automobile, or use public transportation.
 - Jews could not go to theaters, movie cinemas, or concert halls.

Kristallnacht – A Frightening Turning Point

- ❑ The events of *Kristallnacht* represented a major escalation in antisemitic policy. Moreover, the passivity with which most German civilians responded to the violence signaled to the Nazi regime that they could do this.
- ❑ The Nazi regime expanded and radicalized measures aimed at removing Jews entirely from German economic and social life over the following years.
- ❑ The regime moved eventually toward policies of forced emigration, and finally toward the realization of a Germany “free of Jews” (*judenrein*) by deportation of the Jewish population “to the East.”
- ❑ These policies are what led Hal and his family to be forced from their home in 1940.
- ❑ Thus, *Kristallnacht* is an essential turning point in Nazi Germany's persecution of Jews, leading to their attempt to annihilate the Jewish population entirely.

Why didn't Hal, his family, & other Jews leave Germany?

American Policy before World War II

- ❖ After Hitler rose to power in Germany in 1933, German Jews began to be stripped of their civil rights, excluded from public life, and targeted by government-encouraged violence.
- ❖ Many German Jews hoped to **immigrate** to the United States at this time, but US State Department policies made it very difficult to obtain entry **visas**.
- ❖ This was due to a 1924 law when Congress had reversed America's traditional "open doors" policy and imposed strict **quotas** to limit immigration.
- ❖ Additionally, after the **stock market crash of 1929**, rising unemployment caused anti-immigration sentiment to grow, and President Herbert Hoover ordered vigorous enforcement of visa regulations. In 1932 the United States had issued only 35,576 immigration visas in total.
- ❖ Due to such quotas, no more than **25, 957** **German citizens** could enter the United States each year—a tiny number compared to the hundreds of thousands who wanted to escape Hitler beginning in 1933.



The U.S. Government's Response

- ❖ Despite the ongoing (and worsening) persecution of Jews in Germany, the US State Department officials **continued their restrictive immigration measures**, even after Franklin D. Roosevelt's inauguration in March 1933.
- ❖ In fact, beginning in 1940, the United States further limited immigration by ordering American consuls abroad to delay visa approvals on national security grounds.

WHY?

- ❖ The State Department's attitude was influenced by the economic hardships of the Great Depression. Some Americans sincerely believed that the country lacked the resources to accommodate **immigrants**.
- ❖ The conditions during the Great Depression had also intensified **nativism, anti-Semitism, isolationism**, and **xenophobia**. Americans feared losing jobs and sharing resources with those deemed “outsiders.”



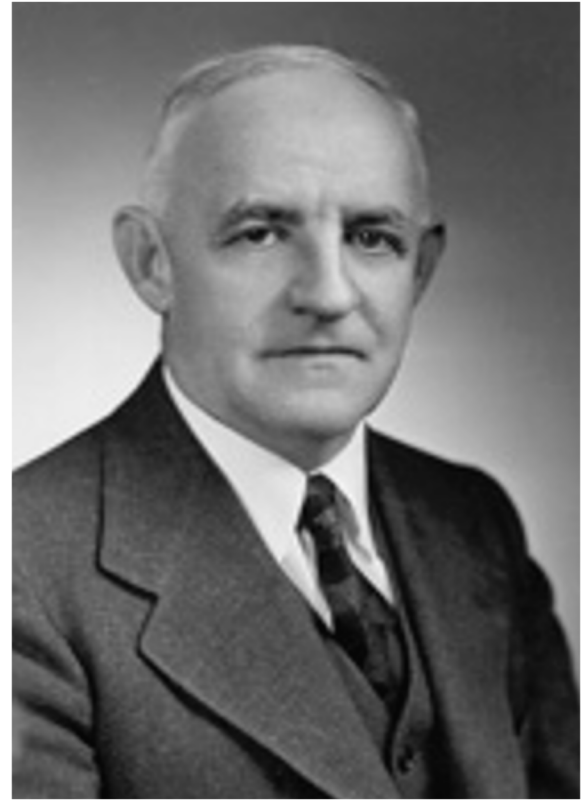
Vocabulary

- **Anti-Semitism** – discrimination, prejudice or hostility toward Jews
- **Xenophobia** - an unreasonable fear or hatred of foreigners or strangers or of that which is foreign or strange.
- **Nativism** - the policy of protecting the interests and demanding favored status of established inhabitants of a nation against those of newcomers/immigrants; nativism typically means opposition to immigration
- **Isolationism** - the policy of isolating one's country from the affairs of other nations in order to further your own country's advancement, as well as avoid foreign conflicts and responsibilities





Robert R. Reynolds

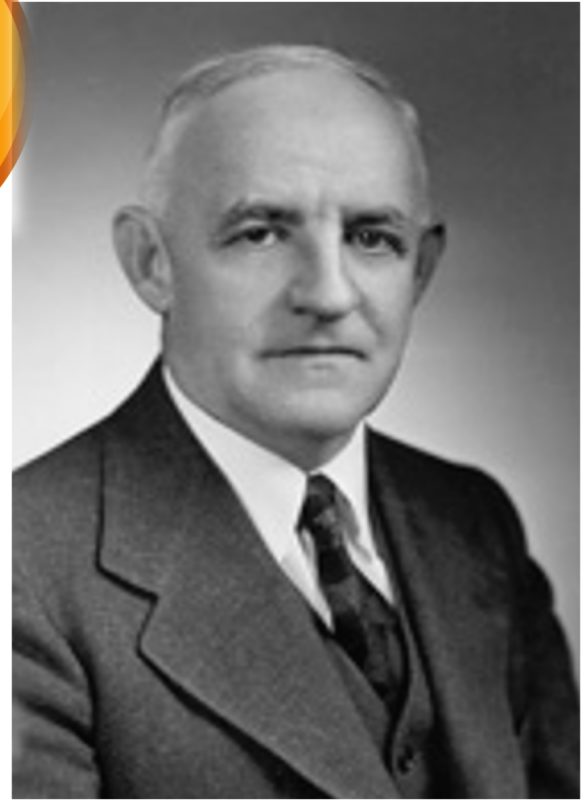


Dr. Frank Porter Graham

A Debate Over Rescue: North Carolina & the Holocaust



Robert R. Reynolds



Dr. Frank Porter Graham

Thousands of innocent Jews are suffering at the hands of Hitler and the Nazis. What, if anything, should the American government do to assist those trying to escape?



**FOR
HUMANITY'S
SAKE!**

**BOYCOTT
GERMAN INDUSTRY**

**DON'T BUY
German Goods**



German Austrian Quota

- ❖ American Jewish leaders organized a boycott of German goods, hoping that economic pressure might force Hitler to end his anti-Semitic policies.
- ❖ Prominent American Jews interceded with the Roosevelt administration on the refugees' behalf.
- ❖ In response, the Roosevelt administration agreed to ease visa regulations, and in **1939** (after the Nazi annexation of Austria), State Department officials issued all the visas available under the combined **German-Austrian quota** - 27,370 people.



Poster (issued by the Jewish War Veterans of the United States) calling for a boycott of German goods, 1937 & 1939

Refuge Denied: The *St. Louis*, 1939



Children on the SS St. Louis, 1939

- ❖ In a highly publicized event in May–June 1939, the US refused to admit over 900 Jewish refugees who had sailed from Hamburg, Germany, on the *St. Louis*.
- ❖ The *St. Louis* appeared off the coast of Florida shortly after Cuban authorities cancelled the refugees' transit visas and denied entry to most of the passengers, who were still waiting to receive visas to enter the United States.
- ❖ Denied permission to land in the United States, the ship was forced to return to Europe.
- ❖ Great Britain, France, the Netherlands, and Belgium each agreed to accept some of the passengers as refugees.
- ❖ However, of the passengers who returned to Europe, 254 are known to have died in the Holocaust.

Examine the primary source provided and discuss:

1. What do you first notice about this document? What stands out to you?
2. What information does this document contain?
3. What do you think the purpose of this document was? (What was it used for? Where might you have found it/seen it? And why?)
4. What questions do you have about this document?

THE AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE
29, Boulevard d'Athènes - MARSEILLE
20 South 12 th Street, Philadelphia, Pa U. S. A.

MY NAME IS } Kurt MOSES
JE M'APPELLE }

MY NUMBER IS }
JE PORTE LE N° }

I am sailing for the
United States on }
Je m'embarque pour } S/S MOUZINHO
les États-Unis sur }

SAILING FROM } Lisbonne
PARTANT DE }

*In case of emergency, cable to one of the above addresses,
either at Marseille or at Philadelphia, according to place.
Kindly give my name and number and describe my case. Do
not fail to give your full address. A reply will reach you
immediately and your expenses will be refunded in full.*

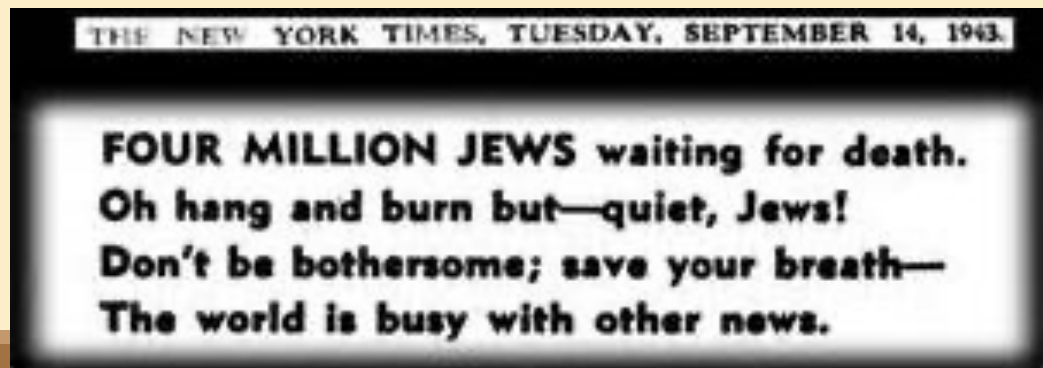
THANK YOU !

*En cas de besoin, télégraphiez ou cablez à une des adresses
ci-dessus soit à Marseille, soit à Philadelphie, suivant le cas.
Donnez mon nom et mon numéro et décrivez ce qui m'arrive,
N'omettez pas de donner votre adresse. Vous recevrez immé-
diatement une réponse et vous serez remboursé sans délai de
toutes vos dépenses.*

MERCI !

The Bergson Group & the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe

- ❖ In August 1942, the U.S. State Department received a report sent by the Geneva-based representative of the **World Jewish Congress (WJC)**. The report revealed that the Germans were implementing a policy to murder all Jews in Europe (**genocide**.) This was Hitler's "**Final Solution**."
- ❖ With the government still not acting, activist Peter Bergson and **The Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe**, intensified their efforts through rallies and newspaper advertisements to publicize the Holocaust and force the US government to rescue European Jewry.
- ❖ Bergson hosted a conference in New York City in July 1943, bringing together dozens of diplomatic and military experts to publicize specific, concrete ways to aid European Jewry.



Pressure on Roosevelt - The Bergson Group & the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe

❖ The Bergson group's advertisements, with headlines such as "**Action--Not Pity--Can Save Millions Now**" and "**How Well Are You Sleeping? Is There Something You Could Have Done to Save Millions of Innocent People from Torture and Death?**", appeared in newspapers from coast to coast.

❖ A dramatic march on Washington was held by 400 Orthodox rabbis & the Bergson group began a full-scale lobbying effort on Capitol Hill urging the creation of a U.S. government agency to rescue Jewish refugees.

We All Stand Before the Bar of Humanity, History and God

We will all be judged bloodguilty if we do not create the machinery to save the Jewish People of Europe

GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY PREREQUISITE FOR ACTION

During the Quebec Conference, this Committee dared to address a vehement plea to the President and the British Prime Minister, drawing their attention to the national disaster of the Jewish people of Europe.

This Committee did so because it was convinced that 2,000,000 dead and 5,000,000 doomed deserve their attention even, and especially, when plans of a global character are discussed and elaborated.

It did so because the situation, in which a whole people is being put to death and yet being ignored and forgotten, is intolerable.

It did so because the human mind cannot conceive any longer the United Nations being in constant cooperation—with their general staffs, their post-war planners, their economic councils, their relief organizations—and for the tortured Jews not a single idea, not one concrete program, not an official body appointed to act.

The Jewish people of Europe is still caught between the hammer of the enemy's brutality and the anvil of democracy's indifference.

In this respect, the very influential and liberal English newspaper, the Manchester Guardian has written: "If the victims were British, American or Russian, the United Nations would be up and doing something despite all difficulties."

This people cannot wait until victory is won because there is real danger that when the United Nations Armies will triumphantly march into the liberated countries of the European continent, there will be no more Jews—there will be only corpses—a continental cemetery. For the Germans have sworn

Churchill—are the last hope of the doomed Jewish people of Europe.

"In this exalting hour, when the victorious American and British armies are poised to strike at the continent of Europe and the onslaught of the United Nations is proving irresistible, we appeal to you, Mr. President and Mr. Prime Minister, to lead the moral offensive against this cold-blooded massacre as you have led the military offensive against brutal aggression.

"One word from you, Mr. President and Mr. Prime Minister,

Realistic Possibilities of Saving the Jewish People of Europe

Digest of program adopted at the Emergency Conference.

The Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe is an outgrowth of the Emergency Conference which convened in New York, July 20th to 25th. The members of this Committee have pledged themselves to remain on the scene until their task is achieved and to urge the Governments of the United States and the United Nations to carry out the following plans worked out by the Conference:

1. To create an official agency specifically charged with the task of saving the Jewish People of Europe. This agency to be initiated by the United States and the United Nations to be invited to participate in the agency when organized.
2. To seek guarantees from the Axis satellite countries, through the International Red Cross, Neutral Countries or the Vatican to insure Jews the same treatment given to other nationals.
3. To demand relief from starvation and disease in Axis-held territory by distributing food and medical supplies un-

Establishment of War Refugee Board (WRB)

- ❖ Finally, under public pressure as well as pressure from Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau, President Roosevelt issued an executive order on Jan. 22, 1944 that established the **War Refugee Board (WRB)**.
- ❖ This was the first concrete step the U.S. had taken to help the Jews who were being killed in Germany's "Final Solution," which had begun more than 17 months before.
- ❖ With the assistance of the **American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee** and the **World Jewish Congress**, as well as **resistance organizations** in German-occupied Europe, the WRB helped to rescue as many as 200,000 Jews.
- ❖ Even still, the Board suffered under inadequate funding and lack of cooperation from other government agencies, and many felt it's greatest failure was being set up too late.
- ❖ By the time the WRB was established, four-fifths of the Jews who would be killed in the Holocaust were already dead.

Fort Ontario Emergency Refugee Shelter ("Safe Haven")

- ❖ Throughout WW II the USA established only one refugee center in upstate New York (near Oswego) which housed less than 1,000 refugees.
- ❖ In August 1944, the shelter received 982 refugees of predominantly Jewish descent and of various national backgrounds.
- ❖ There were special criteria for selecting the few who were to be granted "safe haven." They were to be refugees for whom no other havens were available. Roosevelt also stated that the group should include mostly women and children.
- ❖ A big concern with the establishment of the camp was the issue of immigration. President Roosevelt made it very clear that the refugees would not be considered citizens; they would have no visa status.
- ❖ President Roosevelt also assured Congress that the Army would not permit any refugee escapes. Thus, the camp was surrounded by a 6-foot chain fence.

The Aftermath of the Holocaust

- ❖ In 1945, when Allied troops entered the **concentration camps**, they discovered piles of corpses, bones, and human ashes—testimony to Nazi mass murder.
- ❖ The thousands of survivors—Jews and non-Jews—suffered from **starvation, exhaustion, disease, and post traumatic stress**.
- ❖ For survivors, the prospect of rebuilding their lives was daunting.
- ❖ The homes & possessions of survivors had been looted, stolen, and destroyed. They were separated from family and friends, with a great number of them dead.
- ❖ Many Jewish survivors still faced **anti-Semitism**, which persisted in parts of Europe. (In postwar Poland, for example, there were a number of **pogroms** - violent anti-Jewish riots).



Soon after liberation, surviving children of the Auschwitz camp walk out of the children's barracks. Poland, after January 27, 1945. (USSHMM)

The Aftermath of the Holocaust

- ❖ After the war, hundreds of thousands of survivors found shelter as **displaced persons (DPs)** in camps administered by the **United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration** and the occupying armies of the United States, Great Britain, and France.
- ❖ A considerable number and variety of Jewish agencies worked to assist the Jewish displaced persons. The **American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee** provided Holocaust survivors with food and clothing, while the **Organization for Rehabilitation through Training** offered vocational training.
- ❖ The largest survivor organization, **Sh'erit ha-Pletah** (Hebrew for "surviving remnant"), pressed for greater emigration opportunities.
- ❖ Yet opportunities for legal immigration to the United States above the existing quota restrictions were still limited. Many borders in Europe were also closed to these homeless people.

Post-War Immigration

- ❖ President Harry S. Truman favored a liberal immigration policy toward DPs.
- ❖ Faced with congressional inaction, President Harry Truman issued a directive in Dec. 1945 that loosened quota restrictions on immigration to the US of persons displaced by the Nazi regime.
- ❖ Under this directive, more than 41,000 displaced persons immigrated to the United States. Approximately 28,000 were Jews.
- ❖ In 1948, the US Congress passed the Displaced Persons Act. The act provided approximately 400,000 US immigration visas for displaced persons between January 1, 1949, and December 31, 1952.
- ❖ Of the 400,000 displaced persons who entered the US under the DP Act, approximately 68,000 were Jews.



Post War Immigration

- ❖ The entry requirements favored agricultural laborers to such an extent that President Truman called the law "flagrantly discriminatory against Jews."
- ❖ Congress amended the law in 1950, but by that time most of the Jewish DPs in Europe had gone to the newly established **State of Israel** (founded on May 14, 1948).
- ❖ By 1952, 137,450 Jewish **refugees** (including close to 100,000 DPs) had settled in the United States.
- ❖ The amended 1948 law was a turning point in American immigration policy and established a precedent for later refugee crises.



Jewish refugee children wave at the Statue of Liberty, 1939

UN Subgroups for Refugees

UNCHR

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Founded 1950 to deal with refugees after WWII.

Helps refugees, IDPs, & stateless people's or people who lack citizenship.

Help run refugee camps, provide services for refugees, etc.

Trying to move away from using refugee camps to more "durable solutions:" repatriation, local integration, or resettlement overseas.

UNICEF

United Nation's Children's Fund

Founded in 1946 to help millions of children facing hunger & disease after WWII.

They assist refugees as well as IDP's due to natural disasters, epidemics, etc.

Today, they help children by providing health programs, education, water, sanitation, & hygiene.

Worldwide Displacement Hits All Time High as War & Persecution Increase

- ❖ Wars, conflict and persecution have forced more people than at any other time (since records began) to flee their homes and seek refuge and safety elsewhere, according to a June, 2015 report from the UN refugee agency.
- ❖ *UNHCR's annual Global Trends Report: World at War* said the number of people forcibly displaced at the end of 2014 had risen to a staggering 59.5 million
- ❖ Globally, one in every 122 humans is now either a refugee, internally displaced, or seeking asylum.
- ❖ Most alarmingly, it showed that **over half the world's refugees children.**



Worldwide Displacement Hits All Time High as War & Persecution Increase

- In the past five years, at least 15 conflicts have erupted or reignited, contributing to the rise of refugees:
 - 8 in Africa (Côte d'Ivoire, Central African Republic, Libya, Mali, northeastern Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan and this year in Burundi);
 - 3 in the Middle East (Syria, Iraq, and Yemen);
 - 1 in Europe (Ukraine) and three in Asia (Kyrgyzstan, and in several areas of Myanmar and Pakistan).
- Additionally, decades-old instability and conflict in Afghanistan, Somalia and elsewhere means that millions of people remain on the move or stranded for years as long-term internally displaced or refugees.



Worldwide Displacement Hits All Time High as War & Persecution Increase

- Since early 2011, the main reason for the acceleration has been the war in Syria, now the world's single-largest driver of displacement.
- One of the most visible consequences of the world's conflicts and the suffering they cause has been illustrated in the numbers of refugees seeking safety through dangerous sea journeys (on the Mediterranean, in the Gulf of Aden and Red Sea, and in Southeast Asia.)



The Vetting Process for Refugees

1. Refugees are screened by several different agencies.

- If the UNHCR refers refugees to the US, they are vetted by the National Counterterrorism Center, the FBI's Terrorist Screening Center, and the Departments of State, Defense and Homeland Security.
- Fingerprints are taken, biographical information is collected. They are then each individually interviewed by U.S. officials trained to verify that they're bona fide refugees.
- Refugees from Syria are then subject to additional screening that looks at where they came from and what caused them to flee their home, stories that are checked out. All of this occurs before a refugee is allowed to set foot in the country.

2. It's a lengthy process.

- On average, officials say it's 18 to 24 months before a refugee is approved for admission to the U.S.
- The U.S. has admitted some 1,800 Syrian refugees in the past two years, and President Obama wants to allow 10,000 more.
- The administration says half of those who have been admitted are children and about a quarter of them are adults over 60.
- Officials say 2 percent are single males of combat age.

Refugees in North Carolina

Number of refugees settling NC:

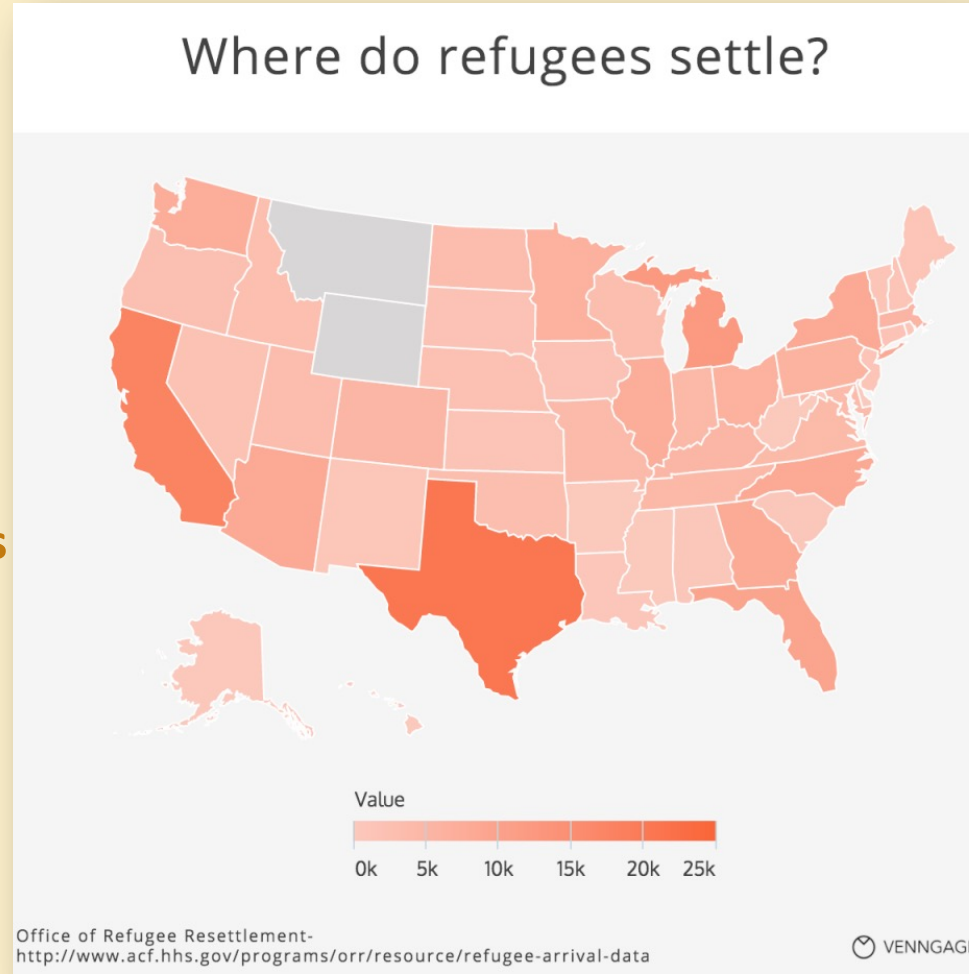
- **2012:** 162 - .55% of US total of 29,184
- **2013:** 2,337 – 3% of US total of 69,926
- **2014:** 2,443 - 3.5% of US total of 69,968

North Carolina is 12th in # of refugees settled here.

Top 5 Countries of Origin:

- Burma (806)
- Bhutan (354)
- Iraq (343)
- Somalia (275)
- Democratic Republic of Congo (201)

Source: Office of Refugee Resettlement



Write to be Heard!

BRAINSTORM:

- What can and should be done to help?
- Who you think could help make a difference in this situation in some way?
- Consider how you will be persuasive with your words.
 - Why should someone care/help?
 - What evidence can you note regarding the situation of refugees?
 - How might you cite lessons supposedly learned from the past (i.e., the Holocaust) to help spur action today?

FINAL LETTERS SHOULD:

- Be written in persuasive language with an introduction, details and inspiring conclusion
- Be no longer than a page
- Be written as a formal letter, using an appropriate layout
- Show knowledge of the refugee crisis and cite evidence that backs up any points raised in the letter
- Share a clear opinion on the current crisis and describe a realistic suggestion(s) for making a positive difference

Sources

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- <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007094#seealso>
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