

# RESETTLING REFUGEES IN NORTH CAROLINA

By Rebecca Hodge

The upcoming mainstage season at Burning Coal features Clare Bayley's *The Container*, a harrowing journey of a group of refugees in a shipping container trying to make it to the United Kingdom. Immigration and refugees are major topics of debate worldwide, but also affect our more immediate community in North Carolina.

I spoke with Nick Bauer, who is the Mentorship Developer for [Lutheran Services Carolinas \(LSC\)](#). LSC works with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service and local faith organizations to resettle immigrants in North Carolina communities. Nick's work has brought him directly in contact with the refugee population, and he agreed to share some of his experiences and expertise with me.

The first story he shared with me was about his time as an intern with LSC. He told me how he and his friends had picked up a family of eight from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, taking them from the airport to their new apartment. The family noticed one of Nick's friends was Muslim - they had heard overseas that there wouldn't be a Muslim community in the United States. But seeing this one woman helped to show them that they would be able to connect, find their people, and settle into the United States.

He then told me about one time a refugee had been resettled into a home with a roommate. It turned out that the now roommates already knew one another - they had been in the same refugee camp. After believing they had lost each other, they were now living together.

Nick explained that most people who are resettled in North Carolina are from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Afghanistan, and Iran. However, many of these people moved from New Guinea, Malaysia, and Indonesia to the United States, having stayed in those countries from several years after leaving their home countries.

The clients that the LSC serve in resettling have been vetted thoroughly by the United Nations and by the LSC themselves. [Research has shown that immigrants are no more likely to commit crime than native-born American citizens.](#) Nick emphasized that refugees are not the other, and they are not a threat to society. He discussed how much of the rhetoric about refugees is based around the Middle East due to perceptions of terrorism in the area, while the larger refugee crisis is occurring in Eastern Africa.

Finally, Nick shared how his work with LSC has affected him personally. A big part of what the group does is resettling and integrating refugees, and this has incentivized him to reach out to a

larger demographic. He wants people to be intentional with the knowledge you are pursuing and become involved with these issues, empowering refugees within one's community. "Your community is right next door," he said. "Refugees are not the other, they are right across the street." Refugee communities are everywhere, including in North Carolina - but you might not know about them unless you specifically reached out and researched them.

*The Container* takes place in Europe, but the issues it discusses are relevant not only to the United States but to our own North Carolina community.

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