

Migrants in the Midwest: An Annotated Bibliography

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Akou, Heather Marie. (2004). "Nationalism Without a Nation: Understanding the Dress of Somali Women in Minnesota." in *Fashioning Africa: Power and the Politics of Dress*. Jean Marie Allman, ed. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Akou examines the phenomenon of Somalis, particularly women, who continue to wear their national dress after migrating to Minnesota. What could be seen as a cultural choice also contains elements of nationalism, history, and resistance. Dress has been used as a method of resistance, particularly toward colonial powers, throughout the world. The decision made by Somalis to continue wearing their national dress fits into this larger discourse. Akou describes the history of Somalia, including the importance of dress within the historical narrative. Then, she discusses the nuances of style and meaning of Somali dress in Minnesota.

Amato, Joseph A. (1996) *To Call It Home: The New Immigrants of Southwestern Minnesota*. Marshall, MN: Crossing Press.

This book describes the changing face of immigration in southwestern Minnesota through a look at the demographics of newcomers to the region since 1980 and the reaction of the region. With the growth of the meat packing industry, migrants from all over the world have come to take the strenuous, low-paying jobs provided. The book discusses both the positive and negative sides of immigration and migrant assimilation in this context. Although a snapshot of immigration in America, the book provides a case study of how immigration can function in American society, an example of larger economic, social, and political issues at work.

Bato, Dinku Lamessa. (2015). *Engaging the African Diaspora in God's Mission: An Exploration into Diaspora Missiology in the Context of Selected African Congregations in the Midwest* (Ph.D. Dissertation). Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN.

Bato examines two Ethiopian congregations in the Midwest to look at issues of identity, missiology, and leadership within the Christian Ethiopian diaspora in the United States.

Broadway, Michael J. (2007) *Meatpacking and the Transformation of Rural Communities: A Comparison of Brooks, Alberta, and Garden City, Kansas*. *Rural Sociology* 72(4):560-582.

Meat packing plants have moved out of urban centers like Toronto, Chicago, and other Midwestern cities to rural communities, like Garden City, Liberal, and Dodge City in Kansas and Lexington, Grand Island, Schuyler, and Norfolk, Nebraska. These rural towns lack the steady supply of labor that the urban centers provided. Meat packing plants in small towns draw their labor from attracting and recruiting a growing immigrant population, largely changing the demographics of these previously largely white communities. While the population of Garden City has become predominately Hispanic,

particularly Mexican, the population of Brooks, Alberta is more multicultural with a growing African population. "This difference is attributable to Canada's immigration policy which emphasizes recruiting highly skilled immigrants and, by default, the packers resort to hiring refugees" (578). The large and quick growth of these towns' populations creates a boomtown experience similar to the effect created by mining or oil in rural American towns; however, meat-packing work is lower wage work, creating slightly different results than their boomtown predecessors.

Cohen, Patricia. (2017, May 29). Immigrants Keep and Iowa Meatpacking Town Alive and Growing. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/29/business/economy/storm-lake-iowa-immigrant-workers.html?mwrsm=Email>.

Like many rural, Midwest towns, the Iowa town of Storm Lake was struggling. In the 1980s, work at the local meatpacking plant provided a good salary, allowing employees to live comfortable, middle-class lives. However, at the end of the decade, the meatpacking plant was forced to close due to increased productivity and competition from other plants. The plant reopened, but the salaries had been cut by nearly two-thirds. The population willing to take these jobs has been immigrants and refugees from Asia, Mexico, Central America, and Africa. In a state that is 88% non-Hispanic white, Storm Lake, stands out as an outpost of cultural diversity. As many as eighteen languages are spoken in the schools. While the change has elicited mixed responses from longtime residents, the overarching perspective is that the benefit of having a growing and thriving town outweighs the perceived or real detriments.

Callebs, S. (2009) *Whites Become Minority in Kansas County*. Retrieved from <http://www.cnn.com/2009/LIVING/wayoflife/05/22/garden.city.kansas.minorities/index.html>

"Finney County, Kansas, is one of six counties across the nation that became majority-minority between 2007 and 2008, the U.S. Census Bureau recently announced," meaning that more than half of the population is composed of non-white individuals. Many of this majority-minority are migrants from outside the US, providing both challenges and rewards for the rural community of Garden City.

Darboe, Kebba. (2003). New Immigrants in Minnesota: The Somali Immigration and Assimilation. *Journal of Developing Societies*. 19: 4, 458-472.

Darboe's article examines the immigration and assimilation processes of Somali immigrants in Minnesota, considering issues of race and culture.

"Diversity: African Community in Kansas City." Visit KC, N.D.

<https://www.visitkc.com/visitors/discover/diversity/african-community-kansas-city>

This web site outlines the variety of festivals, restaurants, and churches that reflect the growing presence of the 34 African countries represented in the Kansas City metro area.

Dosi, Mohamed AM, Leonce Rushubirwa, and Garth A. Myers. (2007) "Tanzanians in the Land of Oz: Diaspora and Transnationality in Wichita, Kansas." *Social & Cultural Geography* 8(5), 657-671.

Discussion of African migrants in the Midwest is scant in the literature. The article begins with a discussion of the themes of diaspora and transnationality. The number of African migrants in the USA is growing each year, and more African countries are being represented by these migrants. Migrants from Tanzania only comprise a little more than 1% of all of Africans coming to the US; however, they have a significant presence in Wichita, KS. The article examines the following set of themes: migrants had high expectations for life in the US that included educational dream, but most did not pan out; and the Tanzanian Association of Wichita (Tawichita) thrive through transnational and translocal networks, particularly along the I-35 corridor. Although the study is ongoing, one conclusion is that claiming only one Tanzanian diaspora is a short-sighted reduction of the vast realities faced by Tanzanians in Wichita and in the broader United States.

Fennelly, Katherine. (2005). Latinos, Africans and Asians in the North Star State: Immigrant Communities in Minnesota. In Elżbieta M. Goździak and Susan Forbes Martin (eds.), *Beyond the Gateway: Immigrants in a Changing America*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Beginning with a demographic history of Minnesota, the topic of immigration has received a lot of attention due to the dramatic demographic change brought about by recent immigration to the state. Fennelly describes the entry patterns of two distinct groups of immigrants, those who voluntarily settle in Minnesota and refugees who are placed by the government. Because of its refugee population, Minnesota has a higher than average Asian and African population. Non-European immigrants began to be drawn to Minnesota in the late 1970s (after the Vietnam War) because of its thriving economy and social services. Asian immigrants were followed in the late 1980s with Russian-speaking immigrants and in 2000 with sub-Saharan Africans. Immigrants have been drawn to Minnesota's rural areas because of the abundance of low-skill jobs offered by meat (mostly turkey and pork) processing, vegetable processing, and ethanol plants. Fennelly ends her chapter by describing interviews with immigrants and white residents in the small community of Faribault outside of Minneapolis. She highlights issues of work satisfaction and dissatisfaction as well as xenophobia and segregation.

Filippi, Melissa K., Babalola Faseru, Martha Baird, Florence Ndikum-Moffor, K. Allen Greiner, and Christine M. Daley. (2014) "A Pilot Study of Health Priorities of Somalis Living in Kansas City: Laying the Groundwork for CBPR." *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health* 16(2), 314-320.

Since the civil war in Somalia broke out in 1991, nearly 800,000 Somalis have left their country. Kansas City hosts around 5,500 Somalis. This study used a community based participatory research (CBPR) approach to "identify the health priorities in the Kansas City Somali community." The first objective was to conduct interviews with a portion of the Somali community to ascertain health needs and weaknesses in currently meeting them. The second objective was to create a working relationship between the Somali community and the Kansas University Medical Center (KUMC). Limitations due to

illiteracy and mental health problems were two themes that continually arose during research.

Filippi-Franz M. (2009) *Reconstituting lives: Somali women's efforts to reformulate household and community values in Kansas City, Missouri* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Kansas.

Filippi-Franz's research focuses on Somali women in Kansas City, MO and their "strategies in providing care for their families after forced migration" (p. 5) against a backdrop of themes of negotiating identity and local and international networks.

Gambino, C.P., Trevelyan, E.N & Fitzwater, J.T. (2014) The Foreign-Born Population from Africa: 2008-2012. United States Census Bureau. Retrieved from:

<https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2014/acs/acsbr12-16.pdf>.

Even though the African-born population is small in the U.S., it has shown rapid growth in the past forty years. High population centers may host the largest numbers of African-born individuals, but as a percentage of all foreign-born people, North Dakota, Minnesota, South Dakota, Maryland, and Washington D.C. host the highest proportion of African-born people. African-born individuals typically have higher levels of education than other foreign-born.

Ghazali, Marwa Hamed. "'When the Heart Grows Sad': Loss, Absence, and the Embodiment of Traumatic Memory amongst Somali Bantu Refugees in Kansas City." M.A. diss., University of Kansas, 2010.

Ghazali's research focuses on the Somali Bantu refugee experience in Kansas City, looking at their "traumatic memory and the specific ways by which this community attempts to deal with the ongoing nature of suffering" (p. 1).

Goding, Cecile, Ed. (2001, March). Pheasant Ridge Community Writing Project (Iowa City). *Real Conditions: Writings from the Sudanese Community of Iowa City Iowa*, 2:1, 31 pps. Featured authors: Youssif Abdallah, Khalda Mohieldin, Yousif Bilal, Mona Ibrahim, Mohamed Ali Malik, Nagi Osman, Salma Salama, and Asma Taha.

A fascinating primary source, the writing project at the Pheasant Ridge Neighborhood Center features the works of eight Sudanese immigrants residing in Iowa City, IA. Each amateur writer relates a series of vignettes, poems, and stories to illustrate their memories from home and their transition to life in Iowa. All eight contributors are highly educated, most fleeing violence and political persecution faced in their homeland. Most (if not all) of the writers are Muslim and reflect on their religion in the place of Iowa or how Islamic religious differences led to persecution in Sudan. Each author gives a human face to the concept of migration.

Gowans, Alison (2012). African is New Face of Iowa Immigration, Cedar Falls Professor Says. *Cedar Falls Patch*. <https://patch.com/iowa/cedarfalls/iowa-s-african-population-growing> (accessed May 17, 2017).

Since the crackdown of employing undocumented migrants, Iowa towns with large industries, like meat packing plants, have become increasingly common centers of African migrant growth. There is a large population of Liberians in Waterloo, Burundians and Congolese in Cedar Rapids, and Sudanese in Des Moines. Black Hawk County is also a center of migrant growth.

Heldenbrand, K. (1996) Unwitting pioneers: Sudanese refugees in the Midwest. In: Rynearson AM, Phillips J, eds. *Selected papers on refugee issues: IV*. Arlington, Va: American Anthropological Association, 106-29.

A year-long case study of a refugee family from Southern Sudan describes how the family acclimates to life in a Midwestern city with no other Southern Sudanese people. After a brief literature review, Heldenbrand identifies four characteristics—self-esteem, self-confidence, independence, and the ability to communicate—that will be used to determine a migrant’s level of empowerment, or the belief that one has the power and resources to control one’s own life. Much of the essay covers the tumultuous experience of Simon and Komi, their two children, and Simon’s young cousins as they acclimated to life in the United States. The lack of a community with a similar background, religious and perspective differences with their case worker, and communication difficulties resulted in extreme interpersonal conflicts within the family. The article concludes by making connections from the case study to the literature about refugee resettlement experiences.

Hiskias, Frezgi, and Wally Wakefield. (2015). *Striking It Lucky: A Biography of Pain and Resiliency from Eritrea to St. Paul*. Denver, CO: Outskirts Press.

This short book covers the life of Frezgi Hiskias as a boy in a rural area in Eritrea to his adulthood in St. Paul. The book discusses hardships and loss as well as resilience and successes he experiences along the way, ending up in a career at a hospice care center.

Holtzman, J. (2000) *Nuer Journeys: Sudanese Refugees in Minnesota*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Holtzman describes how the nomadic pastoralist people, the Nuer from southern Sudan, have adjusted to their lives as refugees living in Minnesota, placing narratives of the Nuer in Sudan next to those in Minnesota. His captivating stories show his investment in the Nuer and help paint a multifaceted picture of what life is like for the group as they are forced to face their own cultural assumptions about livelihood, gender roles, and child rearing in the face of American culture.

Janzen, John M. (2006). Identity, Voice & Community among New African Immigrants to Kansas. *KU ScholarWorks*. Video: <https://kuscholarworks.ku.edu/handle/1808/13368> and Final Report: <https://kuscholarworks.ku.edu/handle/1808/13151>

The report discusses the Identity, Voice and Community project that explored the experiences of African immigrants to Kansas.

“Kansas City Gives Immigrants a Chance to Start Over.” VOA News, 27 Oct 2009.

<http://www.voanews.com/a/a-13-2005-05-04-voa87-66384147/547997.html>

This article discusses the influx of immigrants, particularly refugees, to Kansas City and how they have adjusted to their new home with help from organizations like the Jewish Vocational Services. Quoted individuals from Ethiopia, Somalia, and Azerbaijan reflect on their good fortune to be in Kansas City.

Kilen, Mike (2017) Somali refugees, banned last week, touch down to freedom in Des Moines. *The Des Moines Register*. Retrieved from

<http://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/2017/02/10/somalian-refugees-banned-last-week-touch-down-freedom-des-moines/97732892/>

This news piece outlines the journey of a family of nine who, delayed by Trump’s executive order, made it to Des Moines in February. They believe, as they claim all refugees do, that America means freedom.

Koumpilovo, Mila. (2016, December 31). Years with no nation, 90 days to become a Minnesotan: Amid broader debate, one refugee family races to master Twin Cities life. *Star Tribune*. Retrieved from <http://strib.mn/2bD0qqE>

This article begins by focusing on the work of case manager, Katia Iverson, as she begins her ninety-day relationship with Somali refugee Abdirahman Abdullahi (Abdi) and his family. The family’s daily experiences and struggles with their new home are described against a backdrop of immigrant life in Minnesota and a tenuous national political climate.

McCabe, Kristen. (2011, July 21). African Immigrants in the United States. *Migration Policy Institute*. Retrieved from <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/african-immigrants-united-states>.

McCabe describes the trends in African migration to the United States, showing how these numbers have increased and how African migrants tend to be well educated and proficient in English. She uses census and immigration data to describe geographic, entry, and demographic trends in this growing population.

Morris, Frank. (2017, February 18) A Tale of Two Kansas Towns: One Thrives as Another Struggles. *NPR Weekend Edition Saturday*. Retrieved from: <http://www.npr.org/2017/02/18/515849383/a-tale-of-two-kansas-towns-one-thrives-as-another-struggles>

In the 1970s, city, business, and church leaders decided to bring a meat packing plant to Garden City, KS to save the small town. After much work, the immigrants that have accompanied the opening of the plant have been welcomed. The rural town is now only 40% non-Hispanic white.

Pipher, M. (2002) *The middle of everywhere: the world’s refugees come to our town*. New York: Harcourt.

In a novel-like format, Pipher discusses the changing landscape of Lincoln, NE, describing how it became a hub for immigrant relocation services and what that means in layman's terms for refugees and for locals.

Power D.V. & Shandy D.J. (1998) Sudanese refugees in a Minnesota family practice clinic.

Cultural Competence 30:185–189. Available from:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/51324845_Sudanese_refugees_in_a_Minnesota_family_practice_clinic [accessed May 24, 2017].

Medical records from fifteen Sudanese refugees in an urban family practice were examined to discover their health histories and medical needs. Many of these refugees had prior infectious illnesses and experienced communication difficulties that compounded the issues experienced when receiving health care. "Cultural competency" has become an important aspect of education for health care providers, especially those who treat refugee populations.

Pulley, Mary. "Team of Young Refugees in Kansas City Finds Common Ground on Soccer Field." Fox4 News. 16 November 2016.

<http://fox4kc.com/2016/11/16/team-of-young-refugees-in-kansas-city-finds-common-ground-on-soccer-field/>

Four hundred migrant kids in Kansas City have joined a Northeast Soccer Club KC to help them acclimate to the US and find friends who have been through similar experiences.

Saulny, Susan. (2007, April 2). After Darfur, Starting Anew in the Midwest. *New York Times*.

Retrieved from: <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/02/us/02indiana.html>

Migrants from Darfur have come to small town and rural Midwest, particularly Indiana, bypassing resettlement programs that typically place migrants in large urban centers. Darfuris are comforted by the similarities with home. Fort Wayne, IN attracted migrants even before the 1990s, when mass migration from Darfur began, because of its network of aid agencies and available medical care. "Seventy-seven languages are spoken in the Fort Wayne public school system." Although cultural differences can cause conflict, many Darfuri believe they have found a good place to live.

Stull, Donald D., and Jennifer Ng. (2016). "Majority Educators in a United States Minority/Immigrant Public School District: The Case of Garden City, Kansas." *Human Organization* 75(2), 181-191.

Stull and Ng begin by discussing the changing geography of migration, centering new hubs of migrant settlement in the Midwest. Garden City is one of these hubs due to its meat packing plant, the largest in the world, that opened in 1980. The town's employment needs and thus its population grew, largely due to in migration of foreign-born individuals and their children. "Garden City is a prime example of what the United States Census Bureau now calls micropolitans," a rural area with an immigrant population like a large urban area. Stull and Ng describe the vastly changing ethnic demographics in Garden City from 1980 to the present and give these changes context through an examination of the school system. Teacher retention is a significant problem

that has a variety of successful and unsuccessful attempted solutions. Likewise, the ethnic and background diversity of the students provides challenges to learning, curriculum selection, and gaining high test scores; poverty seems to create the biggest challenge of them all, leaving the school district scraping to provide breakfast and lunch for many of its students against a backdrop of decreasing state funding to education.

Willis, M.S. & Fernald, C.J. (2004) A view of Sudanese refugee resettlement through Nebraska's print media. *Great Plains Research* 14(2): 271–292.

Willis and Fernald's research focuses on the accuracy of representations of Sudanese refugees presented by the Nebraska media. Nebraska was chosen because of its limited nonwhite population and difficult history with people of color. While looking for identification terminology and cultural explanations in the 103 published news items, the researchers found that "Nebraska's newspapers provided minimal description of traditional cultural patterns of the diverse tribes." The article continues by explaining the inaccuracies and deficiencies found in the surveyed articles and how these can affect the perspectives held and the services provided by Nebraskans of and to their Sudanese neighbors.

Willis M.S. & Nkwocha O.J. (2006) Health and related factors for Sudanese refugees in Nebraska. *Journal of Immigrant Minority Health* 8(1):19–33.

"Results of a health survey covering demographics, health risk/prevention factors, and barriers to health care among 263 refugees from Sudan, now living in Nebraska, are presented. Data are compared to Nebraska's general and minority populations. Sudanese refugees are generally young, highly mobile, uneducated, and live in poverty. Refugees are proportionally different from other Nebraskans, in terms of risk factors and rates of common U.S. conditions, but are unable to use preventive systems for maintaining high health status."