

CAMPAIGN AIMS TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT IMMIGRANTS;

MINNEAPOLIS FOUNDATION TARGETS COLD WELCOME

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Body

When Minnesotans think about the state's recent immigrants, are they warm and friendly "Minnesota Nice" - or ice?

That's a question the Minneapolis Foundation wants Minnesotans to ask themselves when it unveils a new public information campaign on Sunday called "Minnesota, Nice or Not?"

"We're trying to make people self-aware," said Emmett Carson, foundation president and chief executive officer. "We want to turn back the mirror on the reader. We want them to ask, 'Is this my behavior?'"

Part of the campaign involves newspaper ads and posters, one which shows a trio of smiling Somali women and says: "Maybe you're just not sure what to make of all these new Minnesotans bringing in all these strange new cultures and customs.

"But hey, have you ever really thought about lutefisk?"

Immigration has become a major issue in Minnesota due to recent increases, especially of immigrants from Africa, Asia and the former Soviet Union, Carson said. The foundation decided to launch the campaign to improve the state's response to its changing demographics.

Two weeks ago, the United Way of the Minneapolis Area reported that immigration had increased by nearly 50 percent in the state over the past decade. Immigrant numbers reached 165,602 by 1996, according to estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau and the Minnesota Planning Department.

Despite the jump, there are far fewer foreign-born residents in Twin Cities compared with other metro areas around country. Immigrants made up only 3.5 percent of the population in Twin Cities in 1990, compared with 9.5 percent for U.S. metropolitan areas generally and double-digit percentages in richly multiethnic cities like Los Angeles, New York and Miami.

"New York and California long ago accepted that they are multicultural," Carson said. "Minnesota is changing, and that's frightening for some people. But we think it's an opportunity."

The campaign begins Sunday with a Minnesota, Nice or Not? full-page ad appearing in the Minneapolis-based Star Tribune. The ads will appear in Mpls/St. Paul magazine and Twin Cities Business Monthly and as posters in Twin Cities bus shelters throughout October.

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The **foundation** also is offering 30,000 copies of a free booklet titled "Immigration in Minnesota," which features an essay by author and public radio host Garrison Keillor and information **about** the four largest groups of recent **immigrants** to Minnesota - Hmong, Mexicans, Russians and Somali. Minnesota is believed to have the nation's largest urban Hmong population and its largest concentration of Somali **immigrants**.

Ilene Her, executive director of the State Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans and a trustee of the **foundation**, said that even though the Hmong have been in Minnesota for a quarter century, she still finds widespread ignorance **about** Hmong culture and traditions.

"We are seen as a country that **welcomes immigrants**, but do we do that? Do we have a personal relationship with new arrivals - or do we let them struggle?" she said.

Amal Yusuf, executive director and founder of the Somalian Women's Association, said sometimes Americans assume newcomers know more than they do.

"I hope the **campaign** will help people to understand some of the barriers and background we face," Yusuf said. "I hope it will give Minnesotans a clearer picture of where we're coming from, what we're going through and what are issues are."

The **Minneapolis Foundation** produced the **campaign** with financial support from the Star Tribune, MSP Communications, the Ford **Foundation**, the Stewart Mott **Foundation** and the General Mills **Foundation**.

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Graphic

The booklet in conjunction with the "Minnesota, Nice

or Not?" **campaign** can be ordered by calling the **Minneapolis**

Foundation at (612) 672-3869. The **foundation** will include the booklet

contents and the ad **campaign** on its Internet site (mplsfoundation.org) later this month.

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