

REFUGEES FIND HOPE IN NEW CITY, NEW LIFE (2 OF 2 ARTICLES)

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Body

IMMIGRATION

I've been here about a month and maybe it's not much time to be able to make my own opinion about life in St. Louis as well as the U.S.A., but you can notice some differences from the first moment.

Before I came here, I didn't have any idea what America looked like. I had seen many movies, but thought that they were only movies. Now many things from the movies are real for me. For example, to see lightning and thunder like happens here. It's really scary, but amazing at the same time. I thought the sky was touching the Earth, and it would crush me.

There are more things that many foreigners are scared of or complain about, but I think it's because these things are strange for us, and we need to get used to them.

I say every bad side has a good side. A car is not so necessary in my country as in the United States, but everybody here can afford a car. And the construction of houses is different. In Bosnia, all houses have an area in which people enter the house, take their shoes off and then go into living room through another door. In St. Louis houses, you enter directly into a living room, and you can almost see what every room looks like. Many Bosnian women complain about this. I like the big spaces that we can find everywhere. The streets, rooms, stores, parking zones, even refrigerators are big.

Almost everything here has order by law. Traffic is one simple example. There are light signals and signs that make driving easier.

In Bosnia, all parents take care of their children. There is no doubt about that, but children are not protected by the law like here. To not be allowed to leave your child alone at home, even if he or she is 11 years old, and go shopping, was for many Bosnian refugees something new. That is something like a rule for American people. This rule has good intentions, and I like it.

Americans do seem to want to avoid hurting someone's feelings. They are always very polite. But at the same time, it makes me confused because Bosnians say what they think directly.

Other Bosnians have a more difficult time because they must start from the beginning, like a child, learning a language. They must earn some money to buy a house that they already had in Bosnia, go into the store with the fear of being misunderstood, get used to this weather, and so on. But everybody needs time to assimilate into the country.

What's really funny is that America offers so much that people don't even notice. Everybody has the same rights, whatever their religion or nationality. Everybody can go to college, whenever they want to, no matter how old they

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are. Everybody can get a job and make progress. America and St. Louis are much more than I expected. It takes, but it also gives. I can make my dream come true if I'm ready to try and give my best. And that is to learn English, go to a college, have a good job, try different things and have a good life. All doors are open. I've only got to choose my door and go through it.

Notes

The above articles were contributed by the International Institute of St. Louis, which helps refugees learn English, find housing and jobs and counsels newcomers. Last year, more than 8,500 immigrants and refugees from 60 countries received services at the institute.

Graphic

PHOTO; Photo not Available tms; Photo Headshot - Asmira Redzic -- Bosnia

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