

OWATONNA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION



WINTER 2021 NEWSLETTER

January 12, 2021

Respect, Reflect, Include, Invite, Value

There is a woman who, against all odds, managed to bring her seven sons to the United States by herself, after witnessing the violent death of her husband in their native country. This woman lives in Owatonna. Unfortunately, this is not a unique story to many refugees who have been forced to flee to the United States. In 2016, James Bowey traveled the U.S. taking pictures of myriad refugees and briefly telling their accompanying story. For the presentation, type or click the link to the right of this Newsletter. These life stories should be shared in order to enlighten others as to the trauma and hardships overcome by many refugees, not only throughout the U.S., but right here in Owatonna. Life is not always as it seems and it is certainly not comfortable for MANY. For those who are comfortable, perhaps this will serve as an eye-opener and make room in one's heart for empathy and compassion.

It is easy to judge someone solely by their looks. This is called implicit bias: *Bias that results from the tendency to process information based on unconscious associations and feelings, even when these are contrary to one's conscious or declared beliefs.* (dictionary.com).

An April 2020 report from the Migration Policy Institute, appropriately titled "Immigrant Workers – Vital to the U.S. COVID-19 Response, Disproportionately Vulnerable", indicates that "While the foreign born represented 17 percent of the 156 million civilians working in 2018, they accounted for larger shares in some frontline occupations: 29 percent of physicians, 38 percent of home health aides, and 23 percent of retail-store pharmacists."

According to the MN Dept. of Human Rights, What questions can an employer ask during a job interview?

"Generally, an employer cannot ask you questions that will make you give answers about any protected class you belong to. Questions about your race, your age, if you are married or not, or any other protected class are generally not allowed. If the job you are applying for has specific needs for age, physical ability, or other things, then the employer may ask about those specific things." For more information on employment discrimination, follow the link to the right of this page.

Owatonna Human Rights Commission (OHRC) Mission Statement:

Promoting cultural diversity by educating the community on issues of discrimination and advising the city council on human rights issues.

The OHRC meets the second Tuesday each month at 5:30 PM in the Second Floor Meeting Room at City Hall, 540 West Hills Circle, Owatonna..

Helpful Contacts:

Minnesota Department of Human Rights: 651-296-5663

Owatonna Police Department: 507-451-8232

Owatonna Human Rights Commission: 507-774-7341 OR HRC@ci.owatonna.mn.us

Featured story:

When Home Won't Let You Stay - Stories of Refugees in America:
[https://jamesbowey.at avist.com/home-employment / Minnesota.gov \(mn.gov\)](https://jamesbowey.at.avist.com/home-employment/Minnesota.gov/mn.gov)

Recommended Reading by the BetterTogether Community Reading Circles:

- How to Be an Anti-Racist, by Ibram X. Kendi
- So You Want to Talk About Race, by Ijeoma Oluo
- White Fragility, by Robin DiAngelo

"Preservation Of one's own culture does not require contempt or disrespect for other cultures"

~Cesar Chavez, Civil Rights/ Labor Activist