

**Rudy Owens**  
**Case No. 27, Day 1**  
**Date Due:** Jan 29, 2012

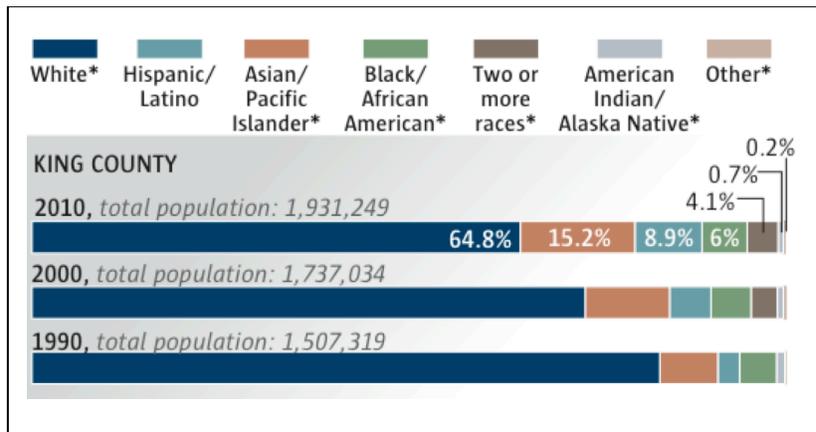
**Learning Objective:** Summarize the programs, support services, and fiscal issues such as temporary assistance for newly arrived residents to South King County.

**The Influx of Foreign-Born Persons to South King County Poses Challenges to Programs Serving Their Needs, From Language to Education to Job Assistance to Health Care**

***Abstract:** South King County, including the City of Kent, is experiencing a rapid demographic shift as more minorities and newly arrived, foreign-born residents to the United States locate to the area. Nearly 1 in 5 county residents is now foreign born, and their needs tend to cluster around language instruction, jobs, housing, health care, and navigating legal and cultural hurdles, according to some sources. School systems like Kent’s now have children who speak more than 100 foreign languages at home, putting burdens on local educators and districts. While social, health, and other service programs exist to help this diverse population of immigrants, asylees, and refugees, South King County appears to have fewer coordinated resources than more affluent areas of East King County.*

**Introduction—‘A Whole New Ballgame’:** Data from the 2010 U.S. census confirmed what many had known for a long time—that the face and fabric of South King County is changing. The Seattle Times in February 2011 characterized the shift as the suburbanization of minority populations, notably Latinos, whose numbers had doubled.<sup>2</sup> An influx of immigrants and refugees to the area and rising property values in urban areas helped fuel the change as non-white residents moved out of Seattle’s historically minority neighborhoods (Beacon Hill, Rainier, Valley, Central Area) and joined the new immigrants in the county’s southern suburbs. The opening of warehouse service centers in the sprawling valley south of Renton also required low-skill, low-wage workers, who located nearby. The Seattle Times piece said the “rapid change” had put pressure on school districts there to meet the language needs of their students and on local governments, who had little experience with a changing community. “Cities are seeing an increased need for interpreter services, and many leaders talk about the high costs of diversity, particularly newly arriving refugees, who need low-income housing and other social services,” the article noted.<sup>2</sup> The interim manager of SeaTac told the paper, “We are the first line of service. ... It’s a whole new ballgame.”<sup>2</sup> (See table 1 for the Seattle Times’ illustration and appendix 1 for county demographic information in greater detail.<sup>3</sup>)

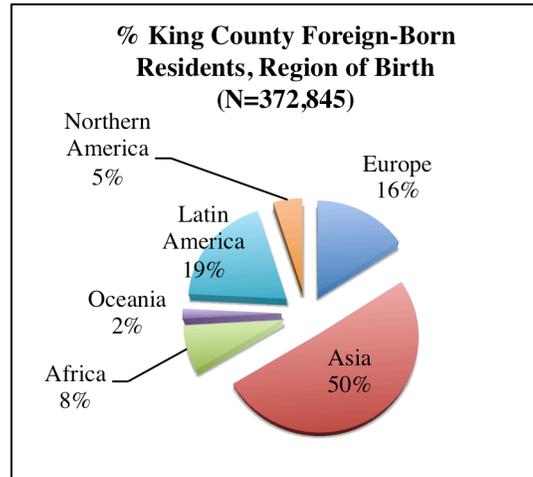
**Table 1: King County, Changing Demographics (Source Seattle Times)**



**Newcomers and Refugees:** According to a 2010 report by King County, a full fifth of county residents identify as “foreign born.”<sup>4</sup> From 2005 to 2009, 42,035 new foreign-born residents moved to King County, the largest group coming from Asia.<sup>4</sup> (See table 2 for breakdown

according to the U.S. Census Bureau.<sup>5</sup>) The diversity has led to 150 languages being spoken in the county’s schools, and many adults requiring adult education, all burdening the social service and education systems.<sup>4</sup> Most of the newly arrived residents are immigrants, and a smaller percentage are refugees.\*

In the last 28 years, King County has received the 5<sup>th</sup> largest number of refugees in the country, with 1,894 new refugees arriving in the county in 2010 alone.<sup>4</sup> Under U.S. law, a refugee is a person “of special humanitarian concern to the United States,” who can prove they “were persecuted or fear persecution” on the basis of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. They are legally entitled to work in the United States, receiving work authorization and Social Security cards.<sup>6</sup> Asylees also receive authorization and SS cards, but not resettlement support that brings refugees to the United States, as asylees must be present in the country when they apply for asylum status. Asylees must have a



**Table 2 (Source: U.S. Census Bureau)**

“demonstrated unwillingness or inability to return to their country of origin because of a history of persecution and/or well-founded fear of persecution due to their race, nationality, religion, political opinion, or membership in a social group.”<sup>7</sup>

Refugees and asylees are also eligible for income and medical assistance through the federal Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) and Refugee Medical Assistance and (RMA) programs. States are reimbursed at 100% by the federal government for disbursements. (See table 3.) Eligible refugees who are single or are a childless couple must be determined to not be eligible for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Medicaid, and can receive RCA and RMA support for up to 8 months; families with children under 18 years of age can receive TANF assistance for up to 5 years.<sup>8-10</sup> (See appendix 2 and table 3.) In King County, the biggest number of newly arrived refugee groups came from Iraq, Bhutan, Burma, and Somalia.<sup>1</sup>

<b>South King County Council of Human Services Estimate of How Federal Assistance Meets Needs of Refugees (Family of 2):</b>	
-	\$1800 per capita.
-	\$700 goes to resettlement agency.
	\$2,200 left.
-	Pay for first, last, and deposit = \$1000 to \$1,500.
-	\$700 - \$1,200 remaining
-	Deposit on utilities = \$400
-	\$300-\$800 remaining.

**Table 3: Federal Assistance to Refugees<sup>1</sup>**

A recent KUOW radio series (Jan 18-20, 2012) on refugees in South King County described a patchwork of support services that help this specific group of newly arrived persons—many suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).<sup>11</sup> The refugees, as the series noted, have

\* Note my research was unable to locate precise data on the percentages of legal immigrants, unauthorized immigrants, refugees, and asylees among foreign-born persons.

settled in public housing facilities called Birch Creek, in East Hill Kent, which is now home to more than 500 refugees and immigrants from around the world. The KUOW report, however, provided few details on the nonprofit agencies that provide job-placement assistance many needed. The series highlighted language skills and finding a job as refugees' top priorities.<sup>11</sup>

**Primary Challenges Facing Newly Arrived Persons:** A 2008 report by the League of Women Voters of Seattle (LWV) on immigrant issues in King County identified 5 key issues facing newly arrived, foreign-born residents to King County: *jobs, health care, affordable housing, understanding laws and customs, and English language skills*.<sup>12</sup> The report noted the higher priority for immigrants was finding a job, taking care of their families, and mastering enough language to navigate their needs. Chuck Perov, a program coordinator for the local office of the New York-based International Refugee Committee (IRC), concurred these were the primary challenges he has seen working for more than a decade with refugee clientele. Perov could not confirm if this was true for immigrants with or without legal status, as he does not engage those populations directly.<sup>9</sup>

**Language and Education Needs:** Language skills are a particular challenge for the country's non-Native English speakers. Legally, providing language instruction for all K-12 students is a state and local responsibility, and under the 1979 Transitional Bilingual Instruction Act, the state provides funds for services to students (\$56 million statewide in 2004-05) whose primary language is other than English.<sup>12</sup> Local districts must also provide funding for this service. The Kent School District, for instance, has 138 languages spoken in its schools, the top 5 non-English languages being Spanish, Russian, Somali, Punjabi, and Vietnamese.<sup>13</sup> The district also runs the Refugee Transition Center, serving the needs of refugee children in the district with state support as well.<sup>14</sup> It is not clear how that may work with needs of many of newest refugees arriving in South King County, including Iraqis, Burmese, and Bhutanese.<sup>1</sup>

As of 2005-06, King County's technical and community colleges served more than 13,000 English as second language (ESL) students.<sup>12</sup> Such instruction is considered "adult and family literacy," which is funded from the federal Workforce Investment Act and the state-funded Adult Basic Education (ABE), which is free or at very low cost to students. Prior to the Great Recession starting in 2008 and the successive waves of state budget cuts, the state provided \$11 million annually to serve more than 800,000 adult learners of all stripes statewide, including those enrolled in programs offering ESL instruction.<sup>12</sup>

**Employment Needs:** As noted, employment tops the needs of newly arrived residents, who seek out living-wage jobs. The IRC, for its parts, helps to place refugees with employers in Seattle and throughout King County.<sup>9</sup> In 2005, the state estimated that 1 in 7 of all state workers were foreign born, and of these, 44% were naturalized and 56% non-citizen—the largest proportion coming from Asia and Latin America.<sup>12</sup> Specific statistics for the legal status of such workers in south King County were not available, but the data from the League of Women Voters for 2006 shows foreign-born workers had a range of jobs, the largest working in office settings (8.3%), production and manufacturing (6.8%), management (6.7%), and food preparation (6.5%).<sup>12</sup> Their status can range from high-skilled workers (H-1B and H-1C visa holders) who work for Boeing or high-tech firms in Redmond, low-skilled workers (H-2A and H-2B visa holders), immigrants (legal or undocumented and without authorization), or refugees/asylees (who have work

authorization). Many workers without legal status fill low-skill employment positions, and even those who are legal immigrants will take such positions; 65% of all security guards and janitors are immigrants according to 1 survey by the SEIU Local 6.<sup>12</sup> The IRC's Perov said employment placement often results in refugees seeking jobs in South King County because it offers many job opportunities requiring low-skills and limited English.<sup>9</sup> For its part, King County's policy stance provides perhaps minimal protection for all foreign-born residents, though U.S. immigration law still trumps such efforts. In 2006 the county adopted a resolution acknowledging the county's diversity in documented and undocumented immigrants and calling for reform that "protects all workers regardless of immigration status" and that "offers a pathway to citizenship."<sup>12</sup> That will not prevent U.S. immigration authorities from targeting undocumented workers for enforcement. Overall county officials have identified the matching of jobs with immigrants' and newly arrived persons' employment needs as a policy challenge.<sup>12</sup>

**East vs. South:** In terms of resources, it appears some King County communities have mobilized more assets. The Alliance of Eastside Agencies (AEA), for instance, serves communities inclusive and north of Renton, on the East Side, such as Sammamish, Kirkland, Bellevue, Renton, and Redmond. The organizations consists of 60 non-profit organizations and government agencies serving East King County, providing a unified voice for Eastside health and human service providers in order to protect and build healthy communities.<sup>15</sup> The Eastside Refugee and Immigrant Coalition (ERIC), like the AEA, is a coalition group. Since 2002 it has provided social services for both immigrant and refugee communities, such as legal services, health care, social needs, counseling and referral programs, ESL programs, and education.<sup>16</sup> Since 2006, it has run its Eastside Cultural Navigator Program. This helps immigrant and refugee families who may have problems learning daily survival issues such as communicating with educators, applying for work, navigating the bus system, access to health care, housing services and others. The program is not fee-based and based on available resources.<sup>16</sup>

Based on a review of Internet resources, it appears that South King County—which includes the ethnically and linguistically diverse cities of Tukwila, SeaTac, Des Moines, Federal Way, Burien, Auburn, and Kent, and where a quarter of all residents in some areas speak languages other than English<sup>3</sup>—lags behind the more affluent Eastside communities in developing full-service connector organizations like ERIC and AEA. The Refugee Support Network is comparable, but apparently lower budget; its online presence shows it is being coordinated through a VISTA volunteer. It is comprised of four groups<sup>†</sup> serving the needs of immigrants and refugees in both south Seattle and South King County.<sup>17</sup> The IRC's Perov said he was not familiar with any type of similar umbrella support network for South King County, pointing instead to social service groups like Horn of Africa Services, which specializes in providing social services just to immigrants and refugees from East Africa in Seattle and King County.

**Health Care Assistance:** Under the federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), documented immigrants do not qualify for any federal health programs, except maternity care and emergency services during their first 5 years in the country. Undocumented individuals are permanently restricted, except for maternal and emergency services.<sup>12</sup> In Seattle and King County, health services that do not receive federal funds are open

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<sup>†</sup> East African Community Services, Jewish Family Service, the International Rescue Committee, and the Somali Community Services Coalition

to everyone; those served are “residents” not “citizens.”<sup>12</sup> Health care can be provided by Public Health-Seattle & King County (PHSKC), private clinics, and community health care clinics. The LWV’s study did not indicate the what percentage of immigrants’ medical bills are covered by church and community groups, though social service groups in the county prioritize linking immigrants to such health services. In our case, public health services are available in the community at the East Hill branch office of PHSKC, which mostly provides assistance for lower-income residents, including WIC, maternity screening and services, emergency contraception, and health services for special needs kids. The office’s web site does not indicate how staff accommodate language needs of clients. Despite these services, the LWV’s 2008 study found many immigrants do not attempt to receive medical care out of fear of being deported.<sup>12</sup>

**How Federal Assistance Works:** One of the larger organizations, serving just the refugee community, is the Christian-based World Relief, a major recipient of U.S. federal dollars for overseas aid work and domestic refugee resettlement. It is 1 of 4 agencies statewide receiving federal funds from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) for refugee assistance. The organization’s mission, in addition to spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ, is to “serve the most vulnerable.” This translates to mostly faith-based social work, which it runs out of its Kent and Seattle offices. The Federal Way-headquartered group works with local churches and the U.S. Department of State to, as it says, “empower and aid refugees in their journey of building a new life,” especially during their first months of difficult transition.<sup>18</sup> This orientation agenda includes greeting new refugees at the airports, providing them with housing, ESL instruction, job placement and training, and linking them to social services. World Relief claims it helped to resettle 700 refugees in 2011.<sup>18</sup> World Relief claims it has worked with refugees from 25 countries since 1979, and assisted 25,000 refugees and immigrants. The IRC’s Perov said his secular organization offers nearly identical services, supported by the federal government, serving about 400 individuals annually, and also immigration assistance for issues such as travel authorization and green cards to another 500-800 persons annually. Perov emphasized that federal support is contingent on outcomes-based reporting—documenting the successes of refugees in finding jobs, obtaining housing, and having their families educational needs’ addressed.<sup>9</sup>

**Back to the Case/Question:** As the trio in our case guessed, there are many issues facing communities elsewhere in King County, including Kent’s East Hill area. A closer look at that community, including the public housing facility of Birch Creek, with its many refugees and immigrants, may uncover multiple issues confronting the large influx of newly arrived, foreign-born persons to South King County. It is impossible to say at this stage of the case how the community is adjusting, but clearly a wealth of documentation indicates that the state programs that have supported newly arrived persons—funding for health care, education, and some social services—are now facing another round of budget cuts in Olympia. Our group may also learn if South King County has developed umbrella organizations that appear to be coordinating services comprehensively in more affluent East King County cities.

1. What have the largest groups of newly arrived, foreign-born persons identified as their top 5 concerns? Are there any surveys examining this question?
2. Why did Seattle/King County become a major gateway for refugee resettlement—and who determines this (the location of large aid agencies or the local communities and their networks)?

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**Appendix 1: U.S. Census Bureau estimates for racial/ethnic demographic makeup of King County, 2010:<sup>5</sup>**

<b>Race</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Total population</b>	1,931,249	100.0
One Race	1,834,450	95.0
White	1,325,845	68.7
Black or African American	119,801	6.2
American Indian and Alaska Native	16,147	0.8
Asian	282,075	14.6
Asian Indian	43,250	2.2
Chinese	69,212	3.6
Filipino	43,848	2.3
Japanese	20,652	1.1
Korean	28,298	1.5
Vietnamese	38,726	2.0
Other Asian	38,089	2.0
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	14,486	0.8
Native Hawaiian	1,558	0.1
Guamanian or Chamorro	1,581	0.1
Samoan	6,474	0.3
Other Pacific Islander	4,873	0.3
Some Other Race	76,096	3.9
Two or More Races	96,799	5.0
White; American Indian and Alaska Native	13,359	0.7
White; Asian	33,351	1.7
White; Black or African American	15,567	0.8
White; Some Other Race	8,207	0.4
<b>Race alone or in combination with one or more other races:</b>		
White	1,408,424	72.9
Black or African American	147,950	7.7
American Indian and Alaska Native	39,117	2.0
Asian	330,038	17.1
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	23,664	1.2
Some Other Race	90,214	4.7
<b>Hispanic or Latino</b>		
<b>Total population</b>	1,931,249	100.0
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	172,378	8.9
Mexican	121,794	6.3
Puerto Rican	6,486	0.3
Cuban	2,524	0.1
Other Hispanic or Latino	41,574	2.2
Not Hispanic or Latino	1,758,871	91.1

**Appendix 2: Federal Assistance to Asylees and Refugees.<sup>7,10</sup>**

<b>Type of Assistance</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Length</b>
RCA/RMA	Federal funding for those not eligible for TANF, SSI, or Medicaid.	Up to 8 months.
Matching grant	Employment alternative to cash assistance (job counseling, case management, living assistance, all limited).	180 days.
Medical screening	Preventive screening by a state's public health department (not available everywhere).	Varies, usually within first 90 days.
Federal "means-tested" public benefits	SSI, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), TANF, Medicaid	SSI for 7 years, SNAP no time limit, TANF/Medicaid varies.