



## AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

Adele M. Kubein for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology presented on April 6, 2015.

Title: Portlandia's Other Children: Refugee Communities in Urban Life

Abstract approved: \_\_\_\_\_

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This research analyzes the relations of ethnic refugee communities and particularly their businesses to gentrification and community vitality in a neighborhood in Portland, Oregon. The data indicates that gentrification is not a linear process of displacement of African Americans by Whites seeking affordable housing and new frontiers, but rather is a process of conflict and cooperation involving various communities, many of color, whose cultural and economic vitalities contribute to a demographically, culturally and economically mixed type of gentrification. The data is based on three years of participant observation and 172 interviews with in-migrants, oldtimers, Southeast Asians [Cambodians], former Yugoslavs [Bosniaks], and Somalis in the Montavilla neighborhood. The study shows that ethnic businesses in the refugee communities are vital nodes of articulation among communities--messy, marginal, and anxiety-inducing to urban residents, yet attractive to in-migrants and pivotal to overall community vitality, safety, and livability. The ethnic businesses also provide cultural maintenance and transmission within the refugee groups as they struggle with mainstream American

culture, its racism and their own need to adapt and survive. Refugees and immigrants are not just assimilated by “American” culture; they also bring culture with them, which then becomes part of the national experience. In short, these are the hubs of community vitality that support the process of neighborhood improvement in a form of gentrification that has received scant attention in the literature.

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Portlandia's Other Children: Refugee Communities in Urban Life

by

Adele M. Kubein

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

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Adele M. Kubein, Author

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## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to Richard G Mitchell, Jr., and Vera and Dick Mitchell, without whom none of this would be possible.

Over the years, Rich and I shared much of life's joys, travel, raising our wonderful daughters, and building a welcome home. But perhaps our happiest times are our most recent, the past three years together exploring the lived experiences of New Portlanders, peoples from far away now come to Oregon shores to teach us ways of the world.

This dissertation is the story of what we learned. In it, I have my say. Later, Rich will carry on.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### History and Questions

Portland, Oregon, the site of this study, is parodied on television and print as a la-la land of hipsters, a lily-white town in which the only perceived racial divisions are between African Americans and the tattooed Whites that have displaced them from their traditional neighborhoods. To be sure, Portland boasts abundant micro-breweries, chichi eateries, and trendy tattoo parlors. But there is another Portland, one where Somali elders spend their late nights playing dominos and centuries-old board games and Hmong families slaughter eight black bulls to assist their patriarch into the next world.

Cambodian refugees feast on fresh noodles and pig blood soup, dancing the night away to modern rock played on ancient instruments, and Bosnians, far from their former homes, weep both for their loss and newfound peace, singing traditional songs at the local café. Refugee and immigrant owned businesses across East Portland provide gathering places, nodes of sociability where ‘home’ cultures articulate with the ‘new’ social world. These businesses attract co-ethnic entrepreneurs, liven street life, provide food and cultural comfort for their populations, and make the cityscape vibrant and worthwhile for others. Yet simultaneously they give rise to clashes in the use of public space and the conduct of public life.

This is a story of Montavilla, one of Portland’s 95 officially designated neighborhoods. It is an ethnographic study of a neighborhood that deals with broad questions of urban vitality and community, two terms that are only partially connected and highly subjective. The study began with assumptions about Portland cultural

dynamics as built around a simple black-white dichotomy, but ends with assumptions shifted to account for a yeasty mix of culturally diverse peoples coming to cohabit a modern gateway city. Montavilla is a neighborhood that is a prime example of multiple ethnic groups—many recent refugees—living together, simultaneously trying to build their own communities and become part of the neighborhood and city. The narratives to follow focus on people far from their former homes in the process of integrating into American social life, a life they simultaneously adapt to and transform. Through the lens of these refugee communities in Montavilla, I ask questions that challenge commonly held views of urban development. What is the experience of these communities within the urban landscape, as they articulate with external and internal tensions in the midst of a gentrifying neighborhood? What impact does the dynamic presence and experience of these communities have on how we should define gentrification, urban vitality, and community in changing city neighborhoods such as Montavilla?

### Portland in Black and White

Apologists praise Portland for its artiness, tolerance and livability, liberal politics and high degree of citizen involvement in decision making, the place where ‘young people come to retire.’ Critics represent the city as white-dominated and self-absorbed, rife with white gentrifiers, who prize antique railings and trim, period furniture and neo-ethnic cuisine, over the welfare of the African American population. Inexorably, lower income residents, some of them African American, are being displaced to make way for weekend farmers’ markets and food carts, brew pubs and Reiki healing parlors. Either way, the

'big' problem is imbalance in resources between Black and White. That's the view of Portland, a mostly and sometimes guilty White population displacing and oppressing a declining Black underclass. Portland is indeed gentrifying. The formerly neglected neighborhood of Albina, for example, is an up-and-coming area of renovated homes, toney restaurants, soaring rental prices, and as predicted, far fairer complexions than in its storied heyday as the "Black' neighborhood" of Portland.

Montavilla also shows signs of revitalization and transformed use patterns but not always along the lines of a simplistic bi-racial conflict model. Since the beginning of fieldwork in 2006, Stark Street, the ostensible 'heart' of the Montavilla community, has gone from empty storefronts and needle and condom-strewn sidewalks used by the prostitutes of 82<sup>nd</sup> Street for sex and drug-taking, to the home of the Bi-Partisan Café, ('best pies in town'), the Pastry Girl bakery featuring four-dollar cookies, and the chic Country Cat restaurant renown for its hundred-dollar-for-two beef dinners. Portland newspapers tout Stark Street eateries in their foodie pages and weekend nights are a scrum of diners, moviegoers, and shoppers. While those who can afford Stark Street prices enjoy the neighborhood renaissance, the other neglected parts of the neighborhood produce their own forms of local cultural life in different chords, colors, tastes and sounds. Farther north, other changes have occurred. Several years after the Stark Street renaissance, Mekong Bistro, a restaurant and event venue, owned by a Cambodian refugee family, opened on 82<sup>nd</sup> Street in the far north end of the neighborhood. Mekong Bistro revitalizes its own area, bringing in hundreds of customers for ethnic events, and driving the prostitutes and drug dealers out of its parking lot shortly after opening. Meanwhile, Somali refugees open clusters of shops on neglected, industrial Glisan Street,

also in the north end of the area, and Bosnian restaurateurs and coffee shop owners in the southern part of the neighborhood, around Division Street, struggle to provide a location in which their war-weary community might drink their coffee and eat their favorite foods in a familiar setting, while evangelical Slavic refugees from former Communist countries, bring choral extravaganzas and messianic zeal to the refurbished Eastgate Theater complex.

The Black vs. White characterization of Portland's cultural diversity in general and in gentrification process in particular is understandable. The American psyche is profoundly affected by the history of institutionalized slavery, racism, and oppression. Not to minimize the affronts the African American community has suffered in Portland, but when I began this study, I was fooled into seeing Portland's most problematic cultural dynamic as gentrification, over-simplified in bi-racial terms.<sup>1</sup> Literature illustrating neighborhood revitalization with *influxes* of people of color was absent. The notion that neighborhood gentrification might be less unidirectional and bi-racial, and a more complex, segmented, and sporadic process, more than unidirectional, bi-racial 'gentrification' was rarely seen in the literature. The United States is not just a nation based on slavery and conquest, but also a land of immigrants and refugees, most of whom are invisible unless they "act up" or "move up." We know they are here but infrequently identify them as substantive cultural influences. They are the incidental other, the

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<sup>1</sup> For an excellent review of the plight of the African American community in Portland over the years please see: Gibson, Karen. 2007 *Bleeding Albina: A History of Community Disinvestment 1940-2000*. *Transforming Anthropology* 15(1):3-25, *and* Gibson, Karen. 2012 *Problems of Racial Justice in Portland, 1968-2008: Revisiting the City's "Kerner Report"*. In *Reinventing Race: Reinventing Racism*. Herring and Betancour, eds. Boston: Brill Publishing

curiosities, and condiments—never the main course. Ethnic entrepreneurs, Hispanic cleaners and landscapers, Vietnamese restaurants and bubble-tea shops, Mexican food wagons and tiendas, Russian bakeries and Chinese laundries, are a recognized but unremarkable aspect of urban life. They are at times the subject of racist jokes and ridicule because they do not fit conventional notions of neatness, space use, or consumption patterns that appealed to mainstream Americans.

Few would deny that without these businesses a city would not possess the character we associate with contemporary urbanism, but the dominant ‘problem’ remains black and white. In Montavilla I was to discover the limits of this traditional characterization. The role of the incidental other, the invisible other—immigrants and refugees—becomes a major factor that must be understood as part of urban social change, influencing the nature of gentrification and of community vitality.

### Roots

As I began this study and the pre-conceived notions I had of the neighborhood began to look less credible, I cast about for some alternative way of understanding East Portland. There are signs of traditional gentrification, racial tensions, and changes in the physical structure and the demographic composition of the neighborhoods, cultural clashes, and a dynamically changing business sector. Where to focus, where were the nodes? I spent the last thirteen years in academic pursuits, often trying to erase my origins, immersed in an academic culture of scholarly pursuits and volunteer work for the greater community. But my origins lie elsewhere, in the entrepreneurial immigrant population and on the

American streets of San Francisco. My father, a Christian Arab from Jordan, spent every day of his youth fighting Muslim youths on his way to school. Jordan had under 30,000 Christians at the time. My father tired of persecution and well aware of his limited future opportunities left our home town of Salt for a new life in United States in search of an education, a wife, and good money. He could not even tell the Ellis Island intake staff how to transliterate our Arabic name into proper English so our branch of the family became *Kubeins* while those that followed years later and settled elsewhere in the country became *Qubains*. As I began to write this dissertation my father began to die. I visited him and he reflected about his past, the litany of jobs he held in the new land, the new prejudices and barriers he encountered, the challenges of speaking, and acting ‘American,’ and his motives for becoming an entrepreneur. First in his English language class in Amman, his teacher urged him to apply for university study when he came to America. But that dream never materialized. Assailed by racism and his lack of English language skills, he abandoned his hopes for higher education and joined the work force. Made to clean toilets and floors, or to work in toxic conditions at many of the places he applied, he finally did what many immigrants do: he opened his own business, the Civic Center Market, a liquor store in one of the poorest parts of San Francisco. Maintaining his Arabic, Jordanian Cultural traditions were always a core concern. He used this small business to educate his sons in Arabic language and culture, and to sound business practices. Now under my brother’s management, the store continues a two generation tradition of hiring exclusively Arabic speaking immigrants and refugees from Africa and the Middle East. The market, our family’s market, has been a jumping off point toward

prosperity for scores of tattered refugees over the years, some of them sporting horrific wounds both physical and mental.

Things did not go so well for our family at first. There were conflicts, disappointments, predatory incursions from without. To escape all this I left home at the age of eleven, living on the streets of San Francisco, catch as catch can, sometimes cared for, sometimes brutalized, until I became old enough to get a regular job, cooking for an airline caterer and a well-liked restaurant in Silicon Valley, then managing a chain of frozen yogurt stores. Eventually, as my father had done, I started my own business to get away from the constraints of working for others. After the birth of my daughter I tired of taking orders. I wanted to keep my child with me as I worked. So I started a grounds keeping and landscape design business that continued for more than three decades, even after I returned to school at Oregon State University at the age of 45. For me, immigrant and refugee adaptations to and influences on urban social life are not merely abstract notions. They are part of my biography and heritage.

### Urban Vitality with Ethnic Businesses and Communities at the Center

As I made my way as an anthropologist into the Montavilla neighborhood, I found myself hanging out in ethnic businesses such as the one I had grown up in. They appeared to be significant as both gathering places and entry points into the community. Because of my background, I was equipped to understand their importance and observe their operation and their place in people's lives. It was there that I could share food while watching people's interactions and getting acquainted.

I realized that these food businesses were vital nodes in these communities; they articulated both with forces internal to the refugee community and those external in the neighborhood and city. They were locations of immigrant integration and conflict from which to examine the process of neighborhood change as well as urban culture and vitality. Ethnic business owners take a risk, putting themselves out front; they are visible and sometimes targets. Some mainstream Americans might be afraid to enter these businesses because they don't feel comfortable, or don't think they will like what is in there, but as a whole, we do not deny that without these businesses a city would not possess the form that we associate with urban life. These locations have a majority of English speakers who help with language and cultural explanations, and the businesses are good locations from which to view interactions within the study populations and between "mainstream" American culture and the study culture. Most importantly, food mediates cultures; the offering of one's food to the stranger is the ultimate act of peaceful encounter; it is the means of introduction and affirmation and it is the hand of friendship extended between cultures. It is the way in which cultures first present themselves to the "other."

These businesses became vital conduits to the life histories of the people who participated in this study. Connections that were formed in these places led outward to families, and allowed me to witness life change events within households, learn about family life and values, and experience the everyday challenges and victories of these diverse populations. People were eager to tell their stories and teach me about their cultures.

This study explores what urban culture and vitality look like if we put ethnic communities, businesses and entrepreneurs at the center, with special attention to: (1) the role of ethnic businesses and ethnic entrepreneurs as gathering places that facilitate maintenance and transmission of their own cultures and (2) the effect of these ethnic businesses on urban vitality, urban life, and urban culture in the midst of processes of gentrification. This focus is given added texture through interviews with local, long-term residents who also graciously shared their multi-generational stories of life in Montavilla as well as numerous community and city leaders.

The three ethnic businesses that form case studies for this dissertation are: the Mekong Bistro Restaurant to the north run by a Lao/Cambodian family, Marino's Adriatic Café to the southwest run by Former Yugoslavs, and Alle Amin Restaurant and Jaziira Café, both Somali-owned businesses along Glisan. They focus our attention on three communities chosen from the mosaic of the neighborhood: Cambodians, Somalis, and Bosnians.

The reason for the choice of Cambodian, Somali, and former Yugoslav study populations is complex. First, the participants from these groups asked for a voice. The Cambodian, Somali, and Bosnian/Yugoslav families and individuals participating in this project are afraid that if they do not speak out now, no one will remember what happened, how they arrived here, and what their culture was like.

For instance there are fewer Cambodians than other Southeast Asian groups in Portland, and their culture is lost in public translation. Cambodian community members specifically asked for their stories to be told, as did Hmong participants. Somalis think that they are mistaken for African Americans and they want to differentiate through their

stories as well as their culture. They are proud of their heritage and they carry the pain of loss. Former Yugoslavs carry their pain inside; they look like “mainstream” Americans until they speak, but when they do speak, they often speak of what war did to their nation, and they wonder how “they” themselves could have done such a thing. They want to be heard just as much as the other groups do. Ronault (Polo) Catalani, an elder, an author, an early IRCO founder, and a staffer in the Portland Mayor’s office, who is a leader in the refugee community, told me that the telling of these stories is important to the tellers, and to us. These groups feel that they have something to teach us, and in the process they create their own identities anew. So much has been stripped from them, but their stories are their own, and they give them to us graciously, so that we may learn from them.

Second, these chosen groups span a broad spectrum of refugee trajectories, cultures, and histories. European culture, Southeast Asian culture, and Horn of Africa culture are distinct and widely varying in praxis and worldview. In addition, each of these populations is further divided internally, for instance Bosnian refugees include Muslim Bosniaks, Croats, Muslim Roma, atheist partisan communists, and Serbian Christians who refused to go along with ethnic cleansing. Each of these study populations offers rich layers of culture. Upon entry to the United States these three main population groups experienced historically situated attitudes that affected their status and differing trajectories dependent on location of settlement, political climates and public attitudes.

“Hanging out” in these food-mediated locations provided access to many participants as well as opportunities for observation and interaction. Some people became participants because they presented themselves, with stories in hand. The Immigrant Refugee Community Organization (IRCO), and Lutheran Community Services, both in

Portland's East Side, also provided access to members of various refugee populations. The Mekong Bistro, the Cambodian business, opened doors to other cultures because many cultural events involving other Southeast Asian communities, as well as events put on by African associations, Chinese business associations, and other groups. The Somali shops also attract Arab customers as well as Whites out to "see the town," and Bosnian businesses attract many other Eastern European refugees as customers.

In sum, three refugee populations are central to this study, generally drawn from former Yugoslav/Bosniak, Cambodian, and Somali populations. Some members of other Southeast Asian refugee groups (Lao, Vietnamese, Hmong) and long term White residents and White in-migrants also participated. The study was centered on the Montavilla Neighborhood, but with carry-over into adjacent areas as participants' connections and interaction patterns made reasonable. The majority of participants were initially contacted at either one of the three main businesses mentioned above or the following organizations: the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization's (IRCO's) Asian Family Center and Africa House, Lutheran Family Services, the Montavilla Community Center, and Saints Peter and Paul Church on 82<sup>nd</sup> Street. Three years of participant observation and interviewing has been conducted in these locations. In addition to interviews and other modes of research I also attended public meetings, and church and temple events, walked and biked the neighborhood, spent afternoons speaking with residents in their yards, served on Boards and commissions, and volunteered at Saints Peter and Paul for almost two years feeding the homeless and prostitutes. Local, long-term residents also shared their multi-generational stories of life in Montavilla.

The most important nodes of interaction, the points of contact between the old world and the new, between outsider and insider culture, between traditional culture and the host nation are to be found in immigrant and refugee businesses. It is to these that I was first attracted and where I had the greatest success in developing trust and valued research participants. While entrepreneurial in outward form, immigrant and refugee businesses, especially food-mediated businesses such as markets and eateries, are much more. They are the social gathering places for newcomers and source of tools for cultural maintenance. They serve as critical points of articulation between the established culture and newcomers.

### The Setting

Montavilla (a contraction of Mt. Tabor Villa Addition) is a roughly 2 square mile rectangle of land east of Mt. Tabor, west of Highway 205, South of I-84, and north of Division Street. It was first platted in 1889, when local farmers sold off their Donation Land Claims to real estate developers, followed by a century of increasing subdivision, infill, and re-sectioning. While predominately residential, Montavilla is traversed in two directions by significant thoroughfares. Running north south is 82<sup>nd</sup> Street, actually Oregon State highway 213, owned and controlled by the state, and problematic in several ways. The street is one of Portland's main prostitution and illicit drug sale venues.<sup>2</sup> It is

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<sup>2</sup>Eighty Second Street was designated a 'Drug Free Zone' by city statute until that legislation was deemed unconstitutional.

seen by many as unsafe for walking or waiting for buses, especially at night, and as blighted, with car lots and marginal businesses running the length of the neighborhood. Distinctly lower-income houses close to 82<sup>nd</sup> butt up against renovated neighborhood pockets. There have been constant tensions between homeowners living in historic Craftsman homes surrounding 82<sup>nd</sup> concerning the activity that occurs on the street, leading to neighborhood crime abatement projects and efforts to create comfort and safety. However, 82<sup>nd</sup> Street is also the home of Mile Post 5, an artist residence, which is touted as a symbol of Montavilla's renaissance. Ethnic businesses are actually havens from the traffic and dirt, offering a range of consumer choices elsewhere unavailable. For example, the former Safeway store, a winged architectural wonder abandoned by its corporate parents, is now Hong Phat, the largest Asian grocery store in Portland. Glisan Street, the post-industrial throughway near Montavilla's northern boundary and to a lesser extent Division St. on the south display similarly ambiguous attributes of blight, transformation, and cultural reassignment.

Montavilla's statistics reveal it to have a lower socio-economic level than most of Portland with high crime statistics, but education levels and housing costs are changing. Median household income in 2009 was \$47,439 compared to Portland's median of \$50,203 for the same period. Employed Montavilla residents hold significantly fewer managerial positions and a higher proportion of service jobs than the city workforce as a whole.<sup>3</sup> According to the City of Portland's Neighborhood Crime Statistics, Montavilla

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<sup>3</sup> 4.3% of employed males hold management positions compared to Portland's 9.6% overall; percentage of males in service occupations compared to Portland overall was

ranks fourth in the east city for overall crime. Powellhurst-Gilbert, Hazelwood, and Lents are higher while fourteen other neighborhoods are below. Income trends are unclear (the neighborhood straddles two census tracts) but notably, the proportion of residents claiming post-graduate education in Montavilla is increasing, perhaps through new in-migrants, for there is no uptick in bachelor degrees or high school graduation rates. Similar to other Pacific Coast cities, housing costs have risen steeply in recent years. Median home value in 2000 was \$186,563 while in 2005 that value increased to \$264,770, and to \$277,084 by 2010. Median gross rent increased similarly from \$695 in 2000 to \$835 by 2011.

The Montavilla neighborhood and nearby areas appear to be becoming more diverse. During the past decade the White population has decreased while the Hispanic and notably Asian and to a lesser extent Black populations have increased.<sup>4</sup> In 2010 Montavilla's population of 17,300 was comprised of 75% whites, 12% 'Asians,' a catchall category comprised of many sub-ethnic and cultural groups, 9% Hispanic, and

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14.6 to 12.3; percentage of females in management positions compared to Portland overall was 4.7 to 8.0; percentage of females in service occupations was 23.8 to 18.1 overall ([www.city-data.com/neighborhood/Montavilla-Portland\\_OR.html](http://www.city-data.com/neighborhood/Montavilla-Portland_OR.html)). This data makes it clear that Montavilla's residents had and may still have lower incomes than the city as a whole.

<sup>4</sup> The White population decreased by 5.8% between 2000 and 2010. The Black population increase of 63.7% between 2000 and 2010 was likely due to the relocation of African Americans from the upwardly mobile Alberta neighborhood, which drove up living costs there, and an influx of African refugees, who are counted as "Black" in the census. The Latina population also increased by 2%. (Population Research Center).

City Data.com (2009)

less than 4% African American, with approximately 3% of the non-white population originating in Horn of Africa refugee populations (Population Research Center 2013).

Diversity can be seen in a large Vietnamese Catholic Vicarage, an Eritrean Coptic Church, and the Masjid al-Noor Islamic study center, other evangelical Vietnamese congregations, a Romanian church, two Buddhist temples, and a number of New Age spiritual gathering places. Somali clothing stores, markets, and restaurants dot Glisan Street in the north, along with Vietnamese, Lao, Hmong, and Cambodian religious, community and business associations. Nor is the white population monolithic. There is a sizable population of Slavs—Russians and Eastern Europeans—large enough to have its own churches and businesses notably the Slavic Church Emmanuel, a large Russian-speaking evangelical worship center in a refurbished multiplex cinema on 82<sup>nd</sup> Street. Bosniaks, Croats, and Romanians also have their own worship centers nearby.

In this one neighborhood, disparate communities, cultures, projects, and lives must find ways to co-exist and to share finite resources. Montavilla is not homogeneous. And unlike some big-city urban neighborhoods, it is not ethnically, racially, or economically segregated. Because of this it offers a rare opportunity to see how urban communities made up of people from different cultures and socio-economic groups interact and pursue projects within the broader metropolitan area and the transnational community in which we all live.



- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. The country cat (thecountrycat.net, 7937 SE Stark St.)     | 9. Ya Hala Lebanese (yahalarestaurant.com, 8005 SE Stark St.) |
| 2. Academy Theater (academytheaterpdx.com, 7818 SE Stark St.) | 10. Why Not Wine (whynotwineoregon.com, 7907 SE Stark St.)    |
| 3. Flying Pie Pizzeria (flying-pie.com, 7804 SE Stark St.)    | 11. Fred Meyer (fredmeyer.com, 6615 NE Glisan St.)            |
| 4. BiPartisan Café (bipartisancafe.com, 7901 Se Stark St.)    | 12. Safeway (safeway.com, 101 SE 82nd Ave.)                   |
| 5. Red Room (2530 NE 82nd Ave.)                               | 13. to Mt Tabor Park (approx. 1.25 miles)                     |
| 6. El Dorado, Mexican Cantina (8001 NE Glisan St.)            | 14. to Rocky Butte State Park (approx. 1.25 miles)            |
| 7. Roscoe's Bar (8105 SE Stark St.)                           | 15. to Kelley Butte Park (approx. 2.5 miles)                  |
| 8. Montavilla Community Center (8219 NE Glisan St.)           |   |

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Community Vitality

The terms ‘community’ and ‘vitality’ are often used in discussion of urban dynamics but seldom clarified. We tend to think of communities as a bounded, localized population of individuals who are related in some way. In the midst of current international flow of people, commodities, ideas, and capital, the notion persists that communities are geographically distinctive loci of people-in-place whose physical interactions create shared connections. This view is outdated. A Bosnian refugee in Portland, Oregon uses his smart phone to watch live broadcasts of his favorite foods being served in the restaurant he used to frequent in his hometown of Banja Luka, now in hostile Serbia an ocean and nearly two continents away. Somalis shiver through a wet, dreary Oregon winter, huddled round a tiny, inadequate space heater watching propaganda news videos of agricultural renaissance around sunny Mogadishu. Cambodians electronically donate money worldwide to pay for the overdue Cambodian trial of those who slaughtered them, and to support a memorial and museum in Chicago, Illinois. Refugee communities in the United States are in contact with each other and they support exchanges of national and transnational information, ideology and ideas, culture, capital, and people. Administratively, cities see neighborhoods as communities. Yet when people describe community they refer to many things. Community can mean neighborhood, people who live in the same locality, co-ethnics, people with the same jobs, interests, status, educational levels, or skin color, the same language, caste, class, religion, and so on. Community seems to be self-defined. People can belong to more than

one community. They may have benign or harmful effects. Communities may create, maintain and transmit culture.

Community vitality in this context is both self defined as well as institutionally formalized. Community vitality can stand for safety; beneficial social interaction; access to education, equity, and entertainment; and freedom to pursue personal and social projects or to prosper. It can also stand for the freedom to express cultural prerogatives and conduct cultural maintenance. With the recognition that definitions of community and vitality are subjective as well as somewhat visible, this review attempts to unpack these terms and examine them.

It is impossible to escape the effects of history on community vitality in urban settings. Culture, economic and political systems, racism, historical events, and means of social control are factors that affect urban development. This study is a cultural study of a neighborhood that is changing and developing once again; but it is important to understand that development is not independent of culture, power, and history. Understandably then, this review must examine the political and social history that affects the current status of refugee populations in this study location.

The Montavilla neighborhood is home to a wider range of refugees and immigrants than the three populations to which I'll draw primary attention in the discussions below. In addition to the Cambodian/Lao/Hmong, Somali, and Bosnian communities studied, some of the other refugee/immigrant aggregations populations in Montavilla and surrounding neighborhoods outnumber my focal groups. There are Russian evangelicals who fled Russia before and after 1989, there are Vietnamese, who were the entrepreneurial vanguards of Southeast Asian business in Portland, the Bantu,

Eritrean, Ethiopian, the various Middle Eastern refugees, Romanians, Uzbeks, and many other refugee groups within the study area. With the admission that many groups will be left out of this review and this study, a literature review of the refugee trajectory of these three study groups is necessary to be able to frame the events and help to understand the effects of their refugee experience on these populations. Portland, Oregon has its own urban personality, which affects refugee trajectories, accordingly part of this review will focus on existing ethnographies of these groups in the Northwest, as well as a bit of Portland political culture as it relates to this project.

Refugees are part of transnational flows of culture, ideas, people, and money. Never before in the history of humans have we been able to move about so freely, despite localized repression. We are able to communicate with each other electronically, to transfer funds, communicate, and virtually practice and reaffirm, religions, ideologies, and arguments across the globe.

### Community, Locality, and Urban Life

The terms “our community” and “their community” are the most common words used by the people who participate in this project as they talk about their lives as refugees, United States citizens, and neighborhood residents. It is used to refer to co-ethnics, co-religionists, neighbors, transnational relationships, church and temple congregations, academic organizations, and most other manifestations of social and cultural interaction. Therefore “community” is a slippery term that has different meanings, depending on context. Community can be seen as self-defined, global, trans-

local or locale based, closed, open, fulfilling or oppressive. It can imply a certain amount of agency, support and creativity, and/or it can imply structure, repression and social control. Members of communities self-define through common ties, and communal opposite to and distinction from an “other” (Cohen 1985, Fainstein 2010, Foucault 1975, Harvey 1973, Nagar and Leitner 1998, Chaskin and Joseph 2010). There is no “us” without a “them,” else all would be just “the people.” Cohen (1985), interprets the word “community” to imply a commonality with each other, which serves to distinguish them from others. Thus it implies simultaneously similarity and difference, or what might be called *centrifugal* and *centripetal* forces.

Othering also implies boundaries; there must be a place where “they” are and a place that belongs to “us.” Boundaries mark the beginning and end of a community, encapsulate community identity, and are called into being by the exigencies of social interaction. Community boundaries have a symbolic aspect that is crucial; this symbolic boundary may also be imperceptible to others. These boundaries are not necessarily geographic boundaries. At the local level, community hinges crucially on consciousness. “The consciousness of the community is, then, encapsulated in perceptions of its boundaries. . . which are largely constituted by people in interaction” (Cohen 1985:12-13).

Symbols do not so much express meaning as give us the capacity to make meaning. . . Community is just such a boundary-expressing symbol. As a symbol, it is held in common by its members; but its meaning varies with its member’s’ unique orientations to it. In the face of

this variability of meaning, the consciousness of community has to be kept alive through manipulation of its symbols. [Cohen 1985:15]

Culture, constituted by symbols, does not force all of its owners to make sense of the world the same way. Rather it gives them the capacity to make sense. Consonance is achieved because they are making sense with the same symbols. Thus the reality of community is a joint orientation toward a common body of symbols (Cohen 1985:16).

Communities have much discursive material to work with as they constitute themselves, and they protect themselves through appropriation of symbols. Cohen writes: “Communities might import structural forms across their boundaries but, having done so, they often infuse them with their own meanings and use them to serve their own symbolic purposes. . . . Since community boundaries. . . are unreadable, they are harder to breach” (Cohen 1985:37). By implication, subcultures are formed by self-identification with others of similar interests or qualities, with delineated boundaries encompassing the group. These subcultures create their own symbols which are then used to further differentiate ‘us’ from ‘them.’

Physical locations in Portland which are also symbolic are the concentrations of ethnic businesses, which persist despite the fact that many of their customers no longer live within walking distance of the shops and restaurants that mainstream residents recognize as an ethnic enclave. For instance, culture is emphasized and boundaries created by the numerous Vietnamese shops on Sandy Blvd. in Portland, though many of the owners now live elsewhere in the metro area. The outside world sees a Vietnamese enclave, and the business owners work in proximity to deal with issues that might come

up in their community; they find political strength in numbers, and the larger community is then visually aware of the Vietnamese population in its midst. Culturally, for all three main groups participating in this project, commerce is part of culture. Places of business are used as meeting places, places of cultural maintenance and transmission. Their proximity to each other may create market saturation, but that proximity also has an element of cultural comfort and it creates a reality in the eyes of the beholder; the businesses speak to us, they tell us that *a people* live here, that we share our urban space with the “other.”

People become aware of their culture when they stand at its boundaries. When they encounter other cultures or become aware of other ways of doing things, as well as the contradictions of their own culture, they recognize the boundary, which is a necessary precondition of the valuing of culture and community. As the structural bases of boundary become undermined or weakened through social change, people resort increasingly to symbolic behavior to reconstitute the boundary (Cohen 1985:69-70).

The boundary symbolizes the community in two ways: it is the sense they have of its perception by others, and it is their sense of the community as refracted through their lives and experience. It is in the private mode by which people think about and symbolize their community. Symbolism reinforces the cultural boundaries of the community by reconstituting its tradition (Cohen 1985:74-81). The very versatility of symbolic form and its capacity to obscure indigenous realities from the ‘other’ protects those realities from subversion by change and intrusion. They are enabled to make sense of disruption through the use of familiar idioms (Cohen 1985:91-92).

Cohen theorizes that people assert community when they recognize in it a medium for the expression of their selves. Community may provide them with “. . . a model for the political formulation of their interests and aspirations, [or] not so much a model, but more an expedient medium for the expression of very diverse interests and aspirations” (Cohen 1985:108). De Certeau (1984) thinks that community is constructed and bounded as a joint agreement and joint product of shared symbolic narrative.

Classical theorists such as Tu (1984) thinks that, focused on the transformation from village to urban life and its effects on the definition of community. Tönnies saw urban effects on community and culture. He thought that elements of pastoral, “primitive” culture (*Gemeinschaft*), lingered when cultures encountered urban life, but that these practices became rom village to urban life and its effects on the definition of community. Tönnies saw urban effects on community and cu*Gesellschaft*), fosters the upper strata, the rich and cultured, over the lower strata. Tönnies did not think that what he called the lower strata had the opportunity to set their own paths, but he did see the city as the place where free persons have contact and exchange with each other and cooperate with little leftover hostility from their former relationships prior to their relocation. Tönnies also saw the basis of urban life as commercial, with its wealth generated by capital wealth, through the appropriation of labor and exploitation of workers. For Topport relationships are essentially oppositional—labor versus capital. For Tor versus capitalially oppositionalt he did see the city as the place where free persons have contact and exchange with each other a *Gemeinschaft* community, and self-identity and agency are largely ignored. But though urban life is not solely constructed around commerce T and self-identity and agency are largely ignored. But though urban life is

Urban relationships, economically centered, arise from the ashes of *Gemeinschaft* community, and self-identity and agency are largely ignored.

Earlier urban theorists had a bleak view of the city. While Simmel (1903), thought that city life liberated humans from the prejudices of village life, Wirth (1930), writing during an era of rapid immigration, saw crime, deviance and mental illness as primary urban effects. In Wirth's view, the urban community, broadly put, is divided between bonds that emerged through generations of village interrelationship and the destabilizing influence of the urban diversity. Wirth thought that urbanites would not create the same type and strength of bonds as villagers. Diverse population elements on the one hand segregate from each other because their cultural requirements and modes of life are not compatible and on the other, people with homogenous status and symbolic needs self-select, drift into cohabiting the same social space. Ethnic enclaves are self-segregating because of antagonism toward others or drawn together because of homogeneity—centripetal and centrifugal influences together

Cohen (1985) theorized that people would use symbolic behavior to reconstitute their boundaries under certain circumstances (Cohen 1985:70). Wirth then theorized that this led to differentiation of different parts of the city, leading to a mosaic pattern of social worlds, bounded by territorial “markers”; what is interesting here is that Wirth thought that this mosaic pattern generated a tolerance for diversity over time, as urban residents had to transverse cultures to do their economic and social business.

Unfortunately Wirth thought the changes wrought by urbanization would lead to alienation and attenuation of human kindness, a view since discredited, but it cannot be denied that the resident of any large metropolitan area is more facile with exotic foods,

people, and cultures than many rural residents in the United States. Proximity does seem to breed tolerance or familiarity, and perhaps alters culture. These early Twentieth Century theorists focused on spatial segregation of enclaves; they saw ethnic communities with spatial boundaries, and they thought that village life was being reproduced in bounded enclaves in the United States. Immigrants were seen as holding fast to old traditions to conserve and maintain their cultures and communities.

Alternatively, Claude Fischer (1975) contends that urbanism does indeed affect social life, not by destruction but rather by helping to identify, create and strengthen the group. Deviance, when it occurs, arises not because traditional social patterns are destroyed but because urbanism creates new ones. Diverse subcultures foster “intimate social circles;” larger communities allow and promote those subcultures. Fischer’s subcultural theory holds that people in cities live in meaningful social worlds that are inhabited by people who share distinctive traits - ethnicity, core beliefs, behaviors, occupations - and who tend to interact with each other more often than with others. Communities are formed by these subcultures. There may be further differentiation in this process. The Vietnamese participating in this project, for example, describe their own arrivals in terms of ‘early’ and ‘later’ “boat people,” implicitly acknowledging that later arrivals had less resources and social capital. Thus, as Fischer argues urbanism may bring deviance, but not because it destroys social worlds, but rather because it creates new ones.

Fischer identifies two processes at work that intensify urban subcultures; critical mass and intersubcultural contacts. Population size is prerequisite. Groups must be large enough to permit a small collection of individuals to identify with each other and

differentiate from the larger population. Sufficient numbers allow clubs, places of worship, shops, and media, which allow members develop and affirm a common identity and act together on their own behalf. Portland's political system of formalized neighborhood involvement and numerous non-governmental organizations that assist immigrants and refugees, do indeed foster self-identification of distinct communities.<sup>5</sup>

The second factor Fischer identifies is the effect of contacts between subcultures. This contact may result in revulsion or conflict. Fischer theorized that one reaction on the part of subcultures is to draw in and embrace one's own community more firmly. For instance Muslims from Bosnia or Somalia may have been less observant or conscious of Islamic values in their home countries, but they begin to become more interested in and observant of them once they arrive here, as a result of internal community pressure to differentiate from mainstream American culture. Cohen (1985:70) also agrees with Fischer's analysis. In short, Fischer argues that urbanism does have an effect on communities. Although Fischer, and our own experience remind us that many contacts are positive, with mutual adoption of symbols, foods, ideologies and styles, particularly among the young, it is the recognition of difference that serves to define urban subcultures.

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<sup>5</sup> As illustrated in the 2014 "African Immigrant and Refugee Community in Multnomah County: An Unsettling Profile," a publication generated by African refugee community members in conjunction with Portland State University and the Coalition of Communities of Color. It was mainly younger Horn of Africa community members, working together with Portland State University to produce a pan-African report for the Portland metro area that produced the report.

## Urban Vitality and Gentrification

Cities have long been recognized for their potential to provide venues for self-actualization, personal freedom, entrepreneurial endeavor, and creative syncretism. But cities also may obscure inequity, and foster repressive means of social control and racism, and regressive economic schema. The term “justice” as applied to urban life and vitality, implies the ability of all residents to represent individual or group needs, the right to the use of public space, the right to seek employment, the right to self expression, the right to equitable distribution, the right to shelter, the right to economic participation, and the right to be with one’s preferred companions. These are the beginnings of a prescription for the “good city.” Equally important as the rights to “do,” are the freedoms “from”: the freedom from persecution, freedom from harm, hunger, the elements, the freedom from coercion, prejudice, or false imprisonment, to name some. In addition, there are physical traits of the good city. Jane Jacobs (1961) understood what made cities lively, and she wrote of cities and their components as if they were part of a living system. “Sidewalks, their bordering uses and their users, are active participants in the drama of civilization versus barbarism in cities. To keep the city safe is a fundamental task of a city’s streets and its sidewalks” (Jacobs 1961:30). She wrote that when people fear the streets it is a self-reinforcing problem, because the less people on the streets, the less safe they are. She recognized that the peace is kept not by brute force or fear of institutional retribution, rather it is kept “by an intricate, almost unconscious, network of voluntary controls and standards among the people themselves, and enforced by the people themselves” (Jacobs 1961:32).

In 1961 when Jacobs wrote this book, many of the attitudes toward street life had come into being, as suburbs, racial strife, white flight, and disinvestment ravaged the nation's cities. The days were ending of immigrants living on their stoops and small grocery markets with fresh produce. General discourse saw people who hung out on the streets as trashy, unemployed, and often racially tarred as, other, lazy, or criminal. Jacobs writes that judgment against people who loiter on the street is a profound misunderstanding of cities. The point of social life on city sidewalks is to bring together people who do not know each other, and who do not care to know each other in intimate, private fashion (Jacobs 1961:55). Writing of formal, public organizations, such as neighborhood associations and so on, Jacobs notes that it is not just meeting rooms and problems which activate organizations, they require an "informal public life underlying them, mediating between them and the privacy of the people of the city" (Jacobs 1961:57). Jacobs writes about an urban renewal project that widened sidewalks and created pocket parks, but the problem was that there were no businesses. Mothers who came to find contact with each other in winter had to all go to houses of acquaintances to make phone calls, find rides and warm up. It created a forced social life within the houses around the park, but a coffee shop or bodega would have served as a better, less exclusionary, meeting place (Jacobs 1961:62). Residential planning such as this caters to self-selected, upper-middle-class people. It does not work with any other kind of population (Jacobs 1961:65). Jacobs notes that the wealthy pay enormous sums to live in places with lively street life, whereas the poor depend on it for their social networks.

Some business owners who participate in this study state that their businesses are important for public safety. Jacobs makes the case for small shops, noting that children

would go to the shop owners for safety when they felt threatened. She urges us to think about the benefits of placing work and commerce near residences. It allows children to grow up in a world with both men and women in it, and allows for closer families (Jacobs 1961:84).

Immigrants and their small businesses also played a part in the gentrification of the Chicago neighborhood Brown-Saracino (2009) studied. This neighborhood was a formerly wealthy area that had experienced disinvestment, much like the Montavilla Neighborhood in Portland. In the 1950s and 1960s the neighborhood attracted poor, white in-migrants due to its low proportion of black people. It became a white, urban slum. The 1970's saw an influx of Latinos, African Americans, and Vietnamese refugees, many of them capitalists fleeing the Communist conversion of their nations. Chinese immigrants also came along with Cambodian, Laotian, Thai, and Korean people. Their businesses were one of the first attractions for new, white immigrants (Brown-Saracino 2009:42).

Though mainstream Americans seldom consider opening small shops to be a career destination, there are many immigrants and refugees who still use entrepreneurial endeavors after their arrival in the U.S. as their response to opportunity structures and socio-cultural needs. Views toward these businesses vary as neighborhoods change. Jacobs comes back to vitality when she writes that the common belief that low-status use will drive out high-status use in urban areas. People with money have no problem displacing those of low status if they decide an area belongs to them (Jacobs 1961:98-99). This does not hold in this study. It is likely that high status consumers may be attracted by diversity.

Having the economic and social capital necessary to transform neighborhoods also fosters self-introspection about gentrification. Brown-Saracino (2009) found that some newcomers to gentrifying areas, which she calls social preservationists, are highly self-conscious about their roles as gentrifiers, and they work for the benefit of long-term residents to mitigate the risks of gentrification for them (Brown-Saracino 2009).

During a period when cities were still seen as collections of distinct neighborhood populations, Jacobs (1961) argues with the common speculation that enclaves must be homogenous to be cohesive. She writes that few homogenous communities are actually highly cohesive. She points out that neighborhoods that look cohesive from the outside may actually be composed of many types of Asian or Slavic communities. However, her main point is that the key to cohesion is not ethnicity, but that people stay put (Jacobs 1961:138). It is not ethnic cohesion alone that builds cross-links essential to self-government.

A city is a complex system of functional order. Once we understand it as a system of order it looks different. “Being a structural system in its own right, a city can best be understood straightforwardly in its own terms, rather than in terms of some other kinds of organisms or objects . . . Only intricacy and vitality of use give, to the parts of a city, appropriate structure and shape” (Jacobs 1961:377). Jacobs presciently states that food carts are one of the best ways to liven up places since they can substitute for missing low-cost space lost in renovation efforts (Jacobs 1961:396). Portland uses this technique to great success. Guaranteed rent dwellings are another necessity which Jacobs thinks must exist in order to preserve vitality, mingled in with other residential and business uses (Jacobs 1961:396). Jacobs also rails against top-down planning and projects,

claiming that no one else except for the residents can have a full understanding of the needs and characteristics of a neighborhood (Jacobs 1961:410). Jacobs is attempting to get at one definition of vitality here, where environment, institutions, and culture interact to create and foster social connections important to overall community vitality.

William H. Whyte strove to understand what it is that makes cities lively. Much of his research supports Jacobs' research of twenty years earlier. Whyte concludes that it is too much empty space and too few people that caused the decline of inner city areas during the 1980's. Whyte wrote that what attracted people most were other people. With dismay he observed the opposite trend in design, to isolate areas and people from each other. Whyte noted that not many people, when asked, will claim that they prefer to spend time in a crowded area, but his observations proved that that is exactly what people tended to do (Whyte 1988:10). Pioneer Courthouse Square, known as the "living room of Portland" is a perfect example of Whyte's findings. The square is a constant mix of tourists, well-off and not so well-off residents, local international students finding cultural comfort in the public place, and the homeless, with the mild titillation of edgy youth and food carts thrown into the fabulous people-viewing area that the square has become. Vital, sometimes a bit scary, always attractive, safe, and almost always full of people regardless of weather, Pioneer Courthouse square is the perfect example that people bring vitality.

Whyte notes that window-shopping, particularly when there is interaction between merchant and prospective customer, attracts crowds. This is a self-perpetuating process as people stop to look at what others are looking at, and in the process, create more commercial interactions (Whyte 1988:84). It is the marketplace at its most basic,

the face-to-face bargaining, which brings vitality. It is the street merchandise rather than the big department stores that bring the most benefits to the area (Whyte 1988:99).

In a sense, deindustrialization has left the city open for new directions. As the city loses certain functions, Whyte thinks that it, more than ever, is the place of news, creation of ideas, and circulation of discourses, the place where deals are made and spectacle to be had. “This human congress is the genius of the place, its reason for being, its great marginal edge. This is the engine, the city’s true export. Whatever makes this congress easier, more spontaneous, more enjoyable is not at all a frill. It is at the heart of the center of the city” (Whyte 1988:341).

Postmodernity, with its global media flows, provides food for agency and creativity. Giddens (1991) agrees with Appadurai (1996) that global media exposes “a multifarious number of milieu” that provide fodder for potential lifestyle choices (Giddens 1991:86). Lefebvre (1996) sees the potential for liberation in the city. He thinks urban life provides opportunities where the

Multiplication and complexification of exchanges in the widest sense of the term. . . which cannot take place without the existence of privileged places and moments, without these places and moments of meeting freeing themselves from the constraints of the market. . . If one wants to go beyond the market, the law of exchange value, money and profit, is it not necessary to define the place of this possibility: urban society, the city as use value? [Lefebvre 1996:124]

Lefebvre is distinguishing between culture as an object of consumption and culture as something we create through appropriating our own space both physically and within the general discourse. The city, for us, has use value, not just exchange value, and we are not just dupes of capitalism; we have the ability to resist and to create our own spaces and cultures.

Control over space is one means of social control. Examples include the criminalization of homelessness, the application of special criminal codes such as drug free zones that govern who can be in certain places, prohibitions against demonstrations, and outright economic and institutional policies that foster segregation. Harvey (1973) thinks that changes in the spatial form of the city bring about redistribution. Job opportunities are affected by distance and public transportation provision. These factors affect whether some people can even afford to work, particularly when low income or low cost housing is segregated away from areas of employment. The supply of low-income housing is inelastic, and it is fixed by free market systems (Harvey 1973:61).

Differential disequilibrium in the spatial form of the city can thus redistribute income. In general, the rich and relatively resourceful can reap great benefits while the poor and necessarily immobile have only restricted opportunities. This can mean a quite substantial regressive redistribution of income in a rapidly changing urban system. [Harvey 1973:64]

## What is Gentrification?

Gentrification is generally thought of in terms of the well-studied conversions of U.S. urban areas such as Harlem in New York, and Chicago's Wicker Park neighborhood (Hackworth 2002, Freeman 2006). In these case narratives, urban African American areas that were ignored, redlined for loans, and largely owned by absentee landlords, find new life as destinations for "pioneers" or young whites who invest sweat equity into rundown houses. This equity then translates into new businesses, improved quality of life, and displacement of former residents who can no longer afford the new lifestyle. Sometimes the white in-migrant pioneers themselves become displaced as property they helped redevelop becomes more valuable. Certainly some case studies of gentrification are clear-cut cases of White vs. Black gentrification. But generally the levels of displacement and demographic change are not so clear, harm is not so clear, and views of change are mixed.

Gentrification is not mentioned in the literature as something that could potentially be led by non-whites, as it is in this study. This study shows gentrification as a process that is a segmented, spotty, and cyclic nature of neighborhood change. Turnover is not so linear as the literature suggests. No literature encountered in a broad search equated gentrification or even development with an influx of people of color. The case of the Montavilla neighborhood in Portland hews to classic gentrification literature in pockets, but overall the demographic changes are toward increasing numbers of people of color, even while census and other data shows that incomes, education levels, and costs of living are increasing. Montavilla is not a classic case of gentrification though it may

appear so at first glance, the mix of ethnicities and diverse businesses is not decreasing during an era of economic development, and development is economically spotty.

Gentrification is thought to be a process that is the result of neoliberal economic changes that displace the poor once their neighborhoods become desirable to newcomers. It is thought that there are defined stages that lead to gentrification and by proxy, displacement. Stages of gentrification are thought to include decay and disinvestment of poor areas, generally occupied by people of color, creating attraction for generally white pioneers seeking cheap properties to invest in. Pioneers rebuild homes, businesses tailored to their needs follow and prices begin to rise as the neighborhood gentrifies. Low-income residents are then driven out by an increase in prices and the newly prosperous neighborhood becomes homogenous.

There is a racialized tinge to the perceptions of gentrification because of two main reasons. First, it is thought that African Americans are displaced due to gentrification, and that racial prejudice leads indirectly to gentrification through disinvestment and redlining (the practice of denying loans to people of color). Second, ethnic enclaves seem to be attractive to gentrifiers who are generally white. It is believed that white gentrifiers directly displace people of color from their neighborhoods.

Classic gentrification as it is generally thought of is the end result of long-term processes of disinvestment. Disenfranchised populations experience disinvestment in their neighborhoods when political redistributive mechanisms ignore certain neighborhoods and invest in others. Poor neighborhoods do not provide as much tax revenue as wealthy residential or commercial areas do, so they are seen as a burden. In addition, black neighborhoods as well as other minority neighborhoods are left out of

redistributive schemes when resources become scarce, and/or discourse regarding minorities or the poor portrays them as unworthy of care. Poor neighborhoods may be left out of transportation loops, employment opportunities, and even basic infrastructural investment. As the neighborhood becomes poorer, middle class residents move out, and the problem is exacerbated. Absentee landlords do not maintain their properties, leading to even more physical decay. Since many poor neighborhoods are rich in people of color, the disinvestment process disproportionately affects neighborhoods of color (Gibson 2007, Freeman 2005, 2006, Hackworth 2002, Harvey 1973, Jacobs 1961, Bernt and Holm 2005, Brown-Saracino 2009).

The process of gentrification requires cheap but attractive, degraded housing stock, high status jobs to attract pioneers, and some form of cultural attraction to make the neighborhood attractive in spite of its blighted appearance. Sometimes the cultural attractant is actually the early gentrifiers who often are countercultural producers of various forms of art, including fine foods and beverages as well as craft goods, galleries and street art. In the United States, most pioneers are educated whites from middle class backgrounds who come to the area seeking opportunities for cheap, attractive housing, and the freedom to “create” their own communities. (Freeman 2005, 2006, Hackworth 2002, Bernt and Holm 2005, Brown-Saracino 2009, Currid 2009, Lloyd and Clark 2001, Lloyd 2004, Sullivan and Shaw 2011, Wyly and Hammel 2005, Zukin 2009).

There is an argument within the research field as to whether gentrification actually displaces. Hackworth (2002) claims that direct-displacement gentrification is no longer a valid theoretical foundation in an era of “profit-seeking corporate gentrifiers.” But he emphasizes that gentrification’s integration with wider processes of economic and

cultural change has heightened its relevance as a tool with which to examine broader socio-economic changes (Hackworth 2002:839).

Freeman (2005) takes this a bit further by looking at whether gentrification actually causes discernable displacement, and if so, what the effects are. Freeman finds that it is not displacement per se which causes demographic change in gentrifying neighborhoods; it is the people who are moving in—not the people who are moving out—that are changing the demographics (Freeman 2005:487). He found that people are attached to their neighborhoods and want to stay in spite of rising housing costs, so they tend to hang on in the neighborhood. Intra- neighborhood movement is out of the question though, due to increased rental or purchase costs, so if a family or individual wants to move “up” it is not likely that they would be able to afford to stay in the same neighborhood. Demographics are further shifted as new in-migrants are of higher SES and predominantly white. Therefore Freeman finds that the dynamics of neighborhood change in gentrifying neighborhoods is two-sided (Freeman 2005:486). The author found that high rates of displacement do not accompany gentrification, but when the research on participation and empowerment are taken into account, the in-migrants will change the character of the neighborhood and the ways in which political structures respond to the population. Freeman claims benefits as well; gentrification can improve the tax base, and socioeconomic integration, but inversely, housing prices inflate and lower income individuals are then locked out of in-migration. The long-term effects will be demographic change, and diminishing opportunities for some (Freeman 2005:488). Rather than direct displacement, gentrification changes demographics through attrition.

Much ethnographic work has been done in gentrifying neighborhoods. Resentment among long-term residents mingles with enjoyment of increased shopping opportunities and increased public safety. Differences in culture do not just attract gentrifiers; they can lead to misunderstandings and conflict as well. New residents expect and demand services such as those having to do with public safety, and they may perceive safety differently than long-term residents. This can lead to types of enforcement against previously unnoticed activities. Aguirre and Brooks (2001) cite studies that show an increasing trend by city governments to use redevelopment and revitalization policies to criminalize the homeless. The authors cite various strategies, including restrictive ordinances and other spatially oriented restrictions; prohibitions on begging, lying, sitting, or camping in public spaces; and police sweeps. Zoning and building code ordinances limit the creation of homeless shelters, increasing the chance that people will get caught up in sweeps. But structural forces, both political and economic, generate even more homelessness (Aguirre and Brooks 2001:76-77). The homeless are quite visible markers of decline. Incoming gentrifiers, unused to sharing their space with street people, as well as local business people, push for ordinances that clean up the streets. Homeless ordinances are one of the methods used to accomplish this cleansing.

Public space is politically charged space. Revitalization efforts often bring the city and the homeless into conflict. Homeless people think of public space as social space, in terms of its use value, since they have no living room to go home to or home to house it. They consume space, so to speak. Public space becomes an arena of struggle, pitting the homeless, with little voice, against the city administration. In an attempt to win the battle,

cities resort to criminalization of homeless behavior (Aguirre and Brooks 2001: 78-79).

Cities employ neutralizing techniques in order to delegitimize the presence of the homeless. One technique is to blame the victim. The homeless become not just people down on their luck, but stigmatized “others.” Blaming the victim takes attention away from structural causes of homelessness. Another neutralizing technique is to label them as hard-core criminals (Aguirre and Brooks 2001:81).

Though ethnic businesses and street life may foster development, attract gentrifiers and “ethnic tourists,” there are also clashes that occur over the appearance and use of space by ethnic groups and ethnic businesses. Public space, or what the public views as its living space, is contested. African males are used to hanging out in public together, but they are hassled for congregating on streets. The myriad posters and ads in Asian businesses leave an unfavorable impression on eyes accustomed to “order” in public spaces. Different cultural uses of space may cause clashes and reactions. Brown-Saracino (2009) studied various gentrifying communities on the East Coast of the United States. One of her communities was similar to Montavilla in that it had a large Asian population present at the start of the gentrification process. Brown-Saracino found that long-time residents did express appreciation for increased safety and opportunities for income generation presented by gentrification, but they expressed nostalgia for the past and a sense of loss (Brown-Saracino 2009:94). An argument erupted in the Chicago neighborhood under study over the role of Asian businesses. At public meetings, some white gentrifiers objected to the appearance of Asian businesses, particularly burglar bars, while the Asian population in attendance sat on the other side of the room. Some gentrifiers argued that the Asian businesses were bad for community appearance; others

argued that the Asian community created the neighborhood that people wanted to move into (Brown-Saracino 2009:117-18). The same neighborhood also had another dialectic discussion regarding housing. Some suggested that rentals and low-income housing would bring in crime and they wanted mandatory drug testing for affordable housing. Some of the preservationists paternally spoke up for the Asian community in part, because language barriers prevented some of the older Asian residents from speaking up for themselves. In addition the presence of alternative methods of participation such as Asian associations and business associations contributed to some of the old-timer reluctance to speak up at these neighborhood-wide meetings (Brown-Saracino 2009:124-25). In stark contrast to these interactions, however, Brown-Saracino concludes that a taste for authenticity was the prime driver of gentrification (Brown-Saracino 2009:264-65).

Not all researchers find good mixed in with the evils of gentrification. The fact that gentrification is led by middle-class whites who benefit by moving into areas that experienced disinvestment, make some researchers argue with the notion that there are overall benefits for lower-income residents. Wyly and Hammell (2005) write: “No matter its physical form, gentrification is fundamentally about the reconstruction of the inner city to serve middle- and upper-class interests.” They go on to claim that the process often involves a two pronged attack: subsidies to developers and cutbacks on housing assistance to the poor as well as in other social service programs (Wyly and Hammell 2005: 20). Though there are differences in degree and style of gentrification, gentrifiers still all want the same things: nice attractive cities free of homeless people begging, sleeping, urinating and defecating in public, and living in public. With the rise in wealth

levels of urban residents, they get what they want. There is increasing criminalization of the activities that homeless people must do to simply live (Wyly and Hamell 2005: 36).

A common question regarding gentrification is whether the process itself destroys the attractive qualities that began gentrification in the first place. Jacobs (1961) notes the tendency of gentrification to destroy itself through its own success. She thinks that the eventual destruction of diversity through gentrification will cause decay and stagnation in cities. In broad strokes she paints the process: a diversified mixture of uses becomes popular and successful; competition for space develops and becomes fad-like; the winners of the competition will likely be affluent in the long run, and the winners will belong to a narrow segment of the population (Jacobs 1961:243).

First we must understand that self-destruction of diversity is caused by success, not failure. Second, we must understand that that process is a continuation of the same economic processes that led to the success itself, and were indispensable to it. Diversity grows in a city area because of economic opportunity and economic attraction. During the process of diversity growth, rival users of space are crowded out, all city diversity grows, in part at least, at the expense of some other tissue. . . . This we think of as salutary if the unique uses are junk yards, used-car lots or abandoned buildings. . . . At some point the diversity growth has proceeded so far that the addition of new diversity is mainly in competition with already existing diversity. Here is a process, then that operates for a time as a healthy and salutary function, but by failing to modify itself at a critical point becomes a malfunction. [Jacobs 1961: 251]

### The Global Community

The historical notion of community as a geographically bounded group with shared identity, goals, and ideology is shaken in the postmodern era of global human, economic, media, communication, and technological flows. Communities are no longer spatially bounded, nor does community exclusively imply reoccurring personal contact. The notion of home as the place of origin persists in their lives. At times some expatriates may even vote in their home country's elections, contribute internationally to political causes back home, and otherwise seek to directly affect the course of social and political events in their countries of origin. Local refugees may be involved in pursuing justice in home nations, responsible for the economic stability of family members in far flung locations, economically supporting religious and political institutions in their home countries, building homes back home, supporting home charities, and even fomenting rebellion from abroad.

Furthermore, the classic notion of the assimilative model has not just been challenged but demolished. Directly related members of the same family may have to learn German, English, or French to survive in their respective countries of settlement. Refugees and immigrants in the United States spend time and money to assure the home language skills of their children, and they spend countless hours worrying about cultural transmission and maintenance. It is no longer a straight line from birth on American soil, through the American school system, to assimilation in the so-called melting pot. Young Cambodians, Somalis and former Yugoslavs, who are now Americans, are interested in

what happens in their home countries, and they learn language and customs. They still sometimes dress in traditional styles, listen to and make music in their own languages, and almost always eat traditional foods. Yet they attend American schools and they speak English fluently. Their American peers pressure them to conform, and they construct their own identities from an amalgam of the old and new. The United States of today is more tolerant of cultural diversity than the nation that castigated Catholic Irish upon their arrival in the late 1800s. Nevertheless, it is an uphill battle for the elders to maintain all aspects of culture once children are born in the United States. Food, the knowledge of its preparation, the taste for its flavors, the pride in its symbolism, seems to be the last thing to go as successive generations grow up on U.S. soil. Food and the traditions that accompany it carries with it the memory of the clothing, the language, the ecosystem, the very culture that gave it birth.

With the increasing ability of communities to maintain their boundaries and stay in touch electronically, transmit cash as well as culture from the home nation, as well as make a life here, the view that cultures will homogenize through contact is attenuating. Appadurai (1996) sees communities as transnational, mass-mediated “communities of sentiment” (Appadurai 1996:8). Hannerz defines globalization as a matter of increasing long-distance interconnectedness (Hannerz 1996:17). These scholars were presciently looking at a world that now, 20 years later, includes Facebook and Skype. Cultural organization in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century is different because people are mobile and so are meanings and meaningful forms, through global media and other communicative formats. Once these tools of movement have come into being, their uses multiply, and their consequences for the organization of social life and culture are

not foreseeable (Hannerz 1996:19-20). Community is self-defined and exists through boundary making and comparisons to the “other”; it needs locale of some sort from which to enact projects, resistances, and goals, but it can no longer be described as spatially bounded.

Hannerz and other theorists, particularly Appadurai (1996), think that instead of homogenization, or loss of culture, the overall cultural inventory is growing. Science is creating new knowledge; states promote their legitimacy through distinctive cultures; commodities are meanings and forms carrying meanings; and advertising is attaching more meanings to assorted things and activities. In addition there are more ways of preserving culture through electronic means. This is not to deny that some things are being lost, particularly languages. Modernization allows for some forms of global homogenization, as Western practices and ideas push out alternatives (Hannerz 1996). “In the mingling of old, formerly more separate currents of meaning and symbolic form, new culture also comes into existence. . . We no longer can easily live in ignorance of most of the cultural inventory of the world, but it now makes claims on us” (Hannerz 1996:25).

Hannerz urges us to give up the idea that the local is autonomous. The local is not independent of the global, rather it has an effect upon it in an iterative process. The significance of the local, is that it is the “arena in which a variety of influences come together, acted out perhaps in a unique combination, under those special conditions.” These connections are made by recurrent practicalities of life and by habits of thought (Hannerz 1996:27). In the course of daily urban life, people come into contact with the “other,” there is the Korean grocery store owner, the odd African stores that you stare at

as you go by each day, the warehouse full of colorful, Chinese paper products, or the local Mexican restaurant. These contacts and interactions go both ways. Hannerz claims that each contact between immigrants and “natives” will affect both of them. According to Hannerz, the periphery is speaking back. Encounters with workmates, neighbors and businesses creolize natives and provide immigrants with new ways of articulation (Hannerz 1996:77).

Transnationalism may be affected by the feeling toward the home nation, and intergenerational differences, as well as outside pressures. Some researchers find that successive generations may not maintain transnational ties identical to their parents’ but that transnational ties continue despite changes in form, leading to transnational identities in the successive generation. The old assumption that incorporation is dependent on acceptance of the receiving nation is under challenge. Transnational practices seem to correlate positively with their integration into the mainstream of their receiving nations. (Sackman et al. 2003, Purkayastha 2005, Vetrovec 2009, Portes et al. 2002, Morawska 2004).

Appadurai writes about communities, societies, or associations for which he uses the term sodalities, transnational communities that operate beyond the boundaries of the nation, mass-mediated “communities of sentiment” (Appadurai 1996:8). Globalization does not mandate cultural homogenization. Because so many crosscutting influences and individual agencies are at work in the process of globalization, we cannot assume homogenization but rather turn to concepts like fractionalization or the creation of new cultures. Humans have an unbounded capacity for syncretism and innovation. The local still has a role to play in cultural formation. Certainly multinational corporations have a

strong influence on what we recognize globally as branding, but the global attack of junk-food capitalism among other *isms* does not erase local effects on global culture. I have observed Kentucky Fried Chicken stores in Beijing offering culturally appropriate and sinfully delicious egg cream pies to their customers, and the Beijing MacDonald's offers flavors never seen at your local Midwestern Golden Arches. Even the mighty multinational bows down to local tastes, it does not erase them, it commodifies them. The local is enmeshed in and affected by the global; in return it affects the global in a dialectic process. "The new global cultural economy has to be seen as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order that cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing center-periphery models. Nor is it susceptible to simple models of push and pull. . . (Appadurai 1996:32).

Writing prior to the rise of Facebook and Skype, Appadurai thinks that media and migration have an effect upon the " . . . work of the imagination as a constitutive feature of modern subjectivity." Electronic media transform the field of mass mediation because [they] offer new resources for constructing imagined selves and imagined worlds, "Electronic media provide resources for self-imagining as an everyday social project" (Appadurai 1996:3-4).

In this study, for example, the refugees who gave me their stories construct electronic social networks with far-flung relatives and friends. My Facebook friends post Somali videos of Mogadishu markets full of produce, videos from Serbia of *chevapi*, a lamb sausage being slathered with *ajvar* and *kajmak* (condiments) in a favorite shop, and Saron Khut, the owner of Mekong Bistro actively participating in a documentary about the genocide and Cambodian musical culture, filmed in Cambodia by British filmmakers

and funded through parties at the restaurant in Portland, Oregon and through online crowd funding.

Appadurai retains the force of Bourdieu's (1977) notion of *habitus* but he places stress on Bourdieu's idea of improvisation, which no longer occurs within a bounded set of thinkable postures, but which is now powered by "imagined vistas of mass-mediated master narrative" (Appadurai 1996:55). "Habitus now has to be painstakingly reinforced in the face of life worlds that are frequently in flux" (Appadurai 1996:56). Once these life worlds set out on the river that refugees and immigrants have ridden for generations, these groups may get stuck in backwaters, figuratively drown, or they may create their own new communities. These new communities are bound to other communities and at times, part of them. Electronic means of connection and transmission are used to a great extent. Culture is transmitted and reified, and identity formed through electronically mediated networks. Electronic venues such as Facebook and Skype facilitate maintenance of non-spatially bounded communities and provide means of improvisation and identity formation. That these identities often hinge upon ethnic solidarity is to be expected, but we are seeing new ways for people to keep what they want and change what they wish. Of course family expectations, institutional structures, and location of settlement have a great deal to do with the amount of autonomy available to refugees, immigrants, and their offspring.

Along with Appadurai, Hannerz, and other theorists looking at transnational effects, Smith (2002) claims that social networks and practices that are transnational in scope are constituted by their interrelations and grounding inside the local. He calls for ethnographic work on the construction of transnational identity. He thinks that

transnational identities are being socially constructed through “adaptive, inventive, and multi-valent” work (Smith 2002:111). Specific conditions of cultural production become localized, interrelated, and mutually constitutive in particular places at particular times (Smith 2002:125). For Smith globalization is a complex interplay of cultural, economic, political and religious networks that operate at local, trans-local, and transnational social scales but which intersect in particular places at particular times. His view of culture is of a fluid and dynamic set of understandings produced by discursive and material practices (Smith 2002:120). In this view, the locality is the place where struggle and alternative discourses are played out. Globalization is thus not an inevitable force operating independently of people; it is subject to their actual material and discursive practices. People appropriate, accommodate, and resist; they interpret, and understand their everyday lives through the social networks in which they are embedded. Growing interconnectivity transforms the local into a transnational location.

### Refugees in the United States

The global affects the local, and communities are no longer dependent on their home villages for their identities, but where refugees find themselves in the new land still makes a difference. William Julius Wilson (1987) claims that neighborhoods have the power to affect social trajectories. He calls this factor “neighborhood effects.” Wilson emphasizes the effects of interpersonal influence on the residents of ‘blighted’ areas. He theorizes that middle class role models would have a beneficial effect on the actions of underprivileged residents, and that conversely, as more people in a neighborhood were

out of work, he thought that would negatively affect residents through “bad” modeling. Wilson’s argument has been contested as essentializing, but in the course of research, I and others examining researchers of the refugee condition (Chan 2003, Light and Gold 2000, Arthur 2000, Chait 2011, Waldinger et al. 2006, Franz 2005, Arthur 2014, Hardwick and Meacham 2008), have found that there are indeed differences in trajectory for refugees who are sent to different locations in the U.S.

In this study the groups’ responses to their circumstances are in part affected by the way in which the City of Portland has responded to their arrival. This distinction suggests that though some of the experiences of my research participants may be generalized across the United States, there are likely local differences in refugee trajectories nationwide.

For refugees, the connection between the global and the local is iterative. Though culture is electronically transmitted globally, it takes a locality of some sort for people to rally around, and enact their projects in. Laguerre (2007) argues that the “global cannot exist without local nodes that serve as its infrastructure . . . The relations among nodes constitute the identity of the globality” (Laguerre 2007:32).

Up until now, the concept of diaspora tended to highlight the cultural unity of groups and ignore class and gender orientations within the local. The diaspora is incorporated into the host land not only as a group, but as differentiated individuals as well. “Class divisions in the diaspora scheme are seen as the outcome of local, national, and global factors” (Laguerre 2007:35). The class diversity of diasporans is the outcome of three major processes: the social class they occupied in their homelands; the external constraints of their host land; and the stratification system into which they enter, must

adapt to, and cannot change easily. With obligations to their homelands and compatriots, the social distance that separates diasporic elites from their host land elites may be smaller than the distance between them and their compatriot diasporans. “Class position interferes with the identity of transnational and global networks, and in doing so may detach this segment from the rest of the group” (Laguerre 2007:34).

Diasporic communities are local because they are tied to a designated place, but they are also transnational border-crossers, linked sometimes to their own territories as well as other “extraterritorial diasporic sites. “In the diaspora, local and global blur. The local is the site where globalization process occurs. “The local is traversed by diverse global currents” (religion, homeland, non-homeland, business). There are diverse diasporic communities in the United States that are distinct from each other based on the form of their global connections. By lumping all transnational communities together one ignores the specific elements that make up their identities. “There is a global logic that makes their operation feasible” (Laguerre 2007:15- 22).

Portes and Zhou (1993) write about the children of immigrants who came to the US since 1965. They coin the term, segmented assimilation to describe three assimilation processes. The first mode is acculturation and integration into the European American middle class. The second mode refers to acculturation and integration into the mainly non-white underclass. The third identifies a strategy that some use as they pursue rapid economic advancement and involves ethnic solidarity and preservation of the culture of origin. All three strategies are at play in the diverse populations participating in this study.

“The current scholarly thinking is that instead of assimilating in an unproblematic manner (i.e., discarding an undying, unitary old culture and adopting an unchanging, homogenous new one), what people actually do is negotiate among different cultures that are in flux and span time and space” (Chan 2004:162). The process of culture as constantly being constructed and reconstructed by individuals, groups, and institutions is well represented in this study. How refugees understand and relate to the cultures of which they purportedly are members depends on what level of power they possess, their subgroup membership, and their position in relation to other groups in the larger culture.

Refugees and immigrants arriving in the United States are sometimes unaware of the long-standing, painfully unequal relationship between African Americans and White America. This relationship bleeds over into attitudes of racism toward Latin Americans, Africans, and Asians as well. Bosnian refugees look White; Asians, as we will see in this dissertation, occupy a strange, middle ground between whiteness and color; and Somalis battle prejudice against Black people, engaged in a battle they feel they have nothing to do with, and from which they try to differentiate themselves. Harrison (1995) writes about the effect of this binary opposition in the American culture. Though racial hierarchies and meanings are unstable, there is one racial pole in the United States that remains constant: White supremacy and Black subordination. Although the meanings of “white” and “black” have changed over the years, “The opposition between them has provided the stabilizing backbone for the United States’ racialized social body.” (Harrison 1995:59). Harrison cites research showing that a number of racially oppressed immigrants have achieved social mobility and high intermarriage rates. These are seen as “model minorities,” which are distinguished from whites only in terms of “what are

perceived to be bridgeable and transcendable differences.” She cites the case of Egyptian immigrants who became classified as “white” after they legally sought the change. But discourse celebrating their incorporation also damns minorities that do not “advance.” They are seen to rely on oppositional politics rather than individualism, hard work, and thrift. The model minority discourse also obliterates the diversity among for instance, Asian Americans. The patterns of assimilation that characterize model minorities and White immigrants does not easily apply to African Americans, Latinos, Puerto Ricans, Native Americans, and many Asian Americans. Their structural and physical location, their encounters with racism, and the diversity among them makes pan-ethnicity a viable political strategy (Harrison 1995:59).

The national identity of White Americans draws on gendered and sexualized images of racial Others. These images project “color-coded and social evolutionist assumptions.” Popular and politically constructed images of poverty, welfare, drugs, crime, educational disparities, and so on are shaped and disseminated by electronic and print media. Hegemonic images of racial stratification flood our popular discourse. These portrayals render the racially oppressed responsible for the systemic inequalities with which they must live. “Whiteness is a structural location that confers exclusive privilege, a standpoint from which to view and assess Self and Other, and a set of cultural practices that is usually unmarked, unnamed, and normatively given” (Harrison 1995:61-63).

Racism must be understood to be a nexus of material relations within which social and discursive practices perpetuate oppressive power relations between populations presumed to be essentially different. These practices need not be intended because unintended actions—and even those

intended to be antiracist—can have racist and racializing effects. Race still matters in the world today because the contradictory realities of racism are being reproduced in the disjunctures of the late twentieth century world.

[Harrison 1995:65]

As Harrison notes, racism is still alive and well. As much as Portland tries to accept its people of color with open arms, it is evident in the assumptions and administrative moves the city makes that it is still capitalizing on “otherness”. For instance the new “Jade Corridor” business district on the southern area of 82<sup>nd</sup> Street, capitalizes on difference and exotic attraction. This is not an overt nor intended racism, but a byproduct of the commodification of culture for commercial and urban development. Yet, the process of using ethnicity as spectacle, as a drawing card to a neighborhood, essentializes the individuals in the neighborhood, and delineates difference. It is a squeeze play between cultural commodification for economic development, and the dignity of the “other.” Most Asian business people on 82<sup>nd</sup> Street are pleased that they are finally getting some development help from the City, but they are also aware of the cultural commodification aspect of this development.

The three main groups that are part of this study face different challenges and trajectories upon their entry to Portland. Bosnian refugees look white, they have syncretic food tastes, are affected by the Ottoman and the Austro-Hungarian empires, and many of them come with cultural capital such as medical and teaching experience. Cambodians come with a family and community structure that promotes entrepreneurial pursuits as well as some family members here from the pre-genocide era. Cambodians also came

into a host culture that is ambivalent about the status of Asians as minorities. For Somalis the challenges are more pronounced as their culture is predicated on family and clan ties, with little tolerance of outside interference and few transferrable forms of cultural capital. They must also face institutional and social racism attached to them by people, in their view, who can't even tell the difference between them and African Americans. One question of this study is how do the long term residents of the neighborhood "see" the immigrants in their midst? Do they racialize them, or do they see them as immigrants foremost, and is there a difference in the attitudes toward different ethnic groups? In other words, do racial attitudes on the part of the receiving community make a difference?

Urban theorists from Jane Jacobs (1961) onward have noted that diverse neighborhoods and urban ethnic enclaves attract business and residents seeking diversity, anonymity, cheap housing and excitement; the opposite, or so it is thought, of the close-knit, least non-anonymous rural lifestyle. American fiction literature and media abound with tales of youth leaving the quiet countryside for the thrills of the city. The Comaroffs (2009) write about the marketing of ethnicity, generally by members of said ethnicity in order to advance economically. Though their research is mainly in developing nations, the marketing of ethnicity in the United States is part and parcel of the revitalization or gentrification processes in urban areas across the United States.

The people who participate in this study generally come to the United States with few forms of economic and social capital. Mrs. Khut's Mekong recipes, Dario's espresso making and music making skills, Khadro's Somali cooking and her determination to help support her family: All seem like meager resources but they take these skills and parlay

them into forms of American success. They do commodify their culture, but on their own terms, with as much power as they can muster to maintain those terms. On the commodification of culture, the Comaroffs write that for some people, “Cultural survival . . . has given way in many places, to survival through culture.” Nevertheless, there is also cultural regeneration emerging from demand (Comaroff 2009:19). The Comaroffs claim that the “raw material” of ethnic capital does not lose its original value, to the contrary, they say, the value may even increase because circulation brings recognition (Comaroff 2009:20).

A favorite form of urban entertainment with which Portland is familiar is the discovery and subsequent parading of the ‘new place’; the new Thai fusion, a Cambodian specialty, or French delicacy, the fluffiest Austrian pastry, best sausages made with local meat, or the exotic cocktails in town. This is the place to bring your friends to, the place even more exotic than the one they took you to last week.

Indeed, the Comaroffs write about the craving for the ethnic as a product of late stage capitalism, the desire to “bring things closer” to consume their likenesses. They address the issue of devaluation, or self-parody by reminding us that commodification of culture also leads to cultural preservation, and a means to “(re)fashion identity, to (re)animate cultural subjectivity, to (re)charge collective self-awareness, to forge new patterns of sociality, all within the marketplace. . . It does this by *ambiguating* the distinction between producer and consumer . . . .Because the producers of culture are also its consumers (Comaroff 2009:26). In the process they sense and listen to themselves enact their identity, objectifying their own subjectivity; they act on and with what they construct. But there are costs to the commodification of one’s culture. It makes the

primary referent of political behavior the pursuit of interest; it reduces cultural identity to a utility function, and it confuses the deployment of ethnicity as a tactical claim with the substantive content of ethnic consciousness. The Comaroffs argue that ethnicity as political identity and ethnicity as cultural identity are different phenomena, though they are conditions for each other's possibility (Comaroff 2009:44). Why do some of us crave difference and ethnic consumption? Comaroffs think that it is "driven by a burgeoning desire at once to endorse difference and to transcend it, the desire to touch for an instant the elusive otherness that we are too late, too settled, too detached fully to embrace" (Comaroff 2009:148).

#### Conclusion of Literature Review

Though they may seem homogenous to the outside eye, the populations and communities participating in this study self-define themselves into segments and layers of communities within larger communities. Local, national, and transnational connections link refugee populations with diasporic co-ethnics and their home countries, erasing the former view of culture and community as place bound, identified with locale, and dependent on personal contact. Though basic needs and desires remain constant among refugees, different definitions of success and vitality exist among different refugee populations. But cultural transmission, cultural maintenance, success for future generations, and cultural presentation to the host culture are paramount among all the populations studied.

Existing institutional and discursive structures affect the trajectories of refugees. Racism, history, and cultural capital have roles to play in how refugees adapt to life in the United States. Downward mobility is a given for almost all of the populations reviewed herein. Credentials and diplomas are often lost, and former professors, doctors, nurses and teachers are reduced to blue collar or menial labor, as well as pushed into entrepreneurial endeavors.

There is a “neighborhood effect” of sorts for refugees: their trajectories are not only dependent on their histories, their agency, and their forms of capital, they are also dependent on the structures and cultures of the locations in which they are settled or to which they migrate after settlement. Refugees are not always representative of their home culture. They are resilient and possess the economic, social and cultural capital to make it to a refugee camp or place from which they could emigrate. They also carry with them the stresses of their experiences.

Many nongovernmental organizations, ethnic mutual assistance organizations and religious-based organizations work to help refugees adapt to life in Portland. Some refugee populations originate in rural, agricultural based societies, and some, such as the Slavic and former Yugoslav people, arrive in the United States with urban-based skills and cultural preferences. If the population is big enough to support it, refugees soon set up gathering places and businesses. These locations are tangible signs of occupancy, places of cultural transmission and maintenance, and the means to make a living without all of the educational, language and cultural skills required to prosper in the business world of the United States. These locations are also the points of articulation with

“mainstream culture,” and their appearance and uses may be flash points between ethnic minorities and their neighbors.

The system of participatory democracy that Portland, Oregon, supports offers venues for involvement and empowerment, but by its nature it is exclusionary, since lower income people and residents of color often have more time and economic constraints to participation. Institutional racism also affects the interactions between some segments of the refugee population and mainstream culture, and current global events and religious ideology on all ends of the spectrum affect the internal views of refugees as well as “mainstream” relations with them as they integrate into American culture.

This dynamic of flight, stress, acculturation, and adaptation takes place in an urban area that is experiencing a form of gentrification. The processes of gentrification are generally thought to involve neighborhood disinvestment due to racism or classism, absentee landlords and White flight. Once the neighborhood gets so run-down that it is cheap to buy into it, younger “pioneers” come in, renovate homes and invest sweat equity. Their presence draws business tailored to their desires, and other investment follows. The neighborhood then gentrifies, driving the lower income residents out, and changing the demographic composition of the neighborhood. One result though, is that homeowners in the area may have the opportunity to cash in when their old homes become once-again valuable. Business prospers and safety improves, which is appreciated by all the residents of the area, but clashes, often racially or ethnically motivated occur between “gentry” and long-term residents. It is possible that gentrification, if carried to its end, in the classic sense, would extinguish itself. Once the

cultural attractions that bring gentrifiers to an area are homogenized, creative and innovative people then move to other areas in search of “authenticity.”

Gentrification seems straightforward, but not all neighborhoods experience it the same way. Gentrification may only occur in pockets, and do Whites always lead it? If it only happens in parts of the area, is it what we would recognize as gentrification really happening, even if income levels and property values are rising? Most neighborhoods that are gentrifying once were the purview of the gentry, and some neighborhood families have generational memories of their neighborhood before decline and subsequent re-development. It would seem that gentrification is spotty and cyclic.

Culture is commodified in order to market locales. Cultural amenities bring street life, vitality and “ethnic tourism,” therefore neighborhoods may be redeveloped through the commodification of ethnic businesses which often then must adapt a part of their business model to ethnic tourism as well as to the satisfaction of their own ethnic clientele. This process of commodification is at least partly led by the minorities in question, but it also essentializes and homogenizes populations. In return for the chance of prosperity participants in these endeavors also give up some of their cultural uniqueness by presenting a unified face to the outside public. Not all ethnic businesses comply with this strategy, and so there are locations that mainstream Americans largely ignore or shun.

Refugees and immigrants bring with them culture that many in the United States are hungry for both in the figurative and the literal sense. When refugees and immigrants engage in entrepreneurial endeavors they enrich urban life. When they share their stories they enrich our collective conscience. They remind us of the reasons to care for each

other, they remind us that we all have the same love for our families and need to self-actualize that they do. They remind us that war and oppression exist, and that we all should care enough to work towards a time where such pain and grief is not inflicted by neighbors upon their fellow humans.

### Chapter 3: Methodology

This study covered a population of 172 people, the majority of whom are residents of Montavilla with a few business customers from outside the neighborhood. The population consists of 18 community leaders of all types, 5 African-Americans, 69 white residents with under 10 years of residency, 10 old-timers with over 10 years of residency, 19 refugees from the Horn of Africa, 28 former Yugoslav refugees, and 23 Southeast Asian refugees. Twenty-five of the overall interviewees are business owners. Please see Appendix A for Table of Participants.

The research spanned three years and consisted of the following methods, all of which will be elaborated on below: participant observation; unstructured interviews; semi-structured interviews; photo elicitation and other photographic methods; and attendance at governmental and NGO meetings. I analyzed the material according to grounded theory (Charmaz and Mitchell 2007), coding and recoding with refinement on the second analysis.

Ethnographic interviews were conducted with members of various populations. Interviews are usually 30 minutes to one hour long, non-structured with minimal guidance. Questions are used to initiate interviews with various population segments, but interviewees had the option to ignore or answer initial questions, as well as the freedom to guide the interview to topics of interest to the participant. Probe questions were generated to push the conversation along should it lag. Please see Appendices B-E for initial semistructured questions and probes for the in-migrants, long-term residents, small business owners, and refugees. Interviews were conducted in places of business, homes,

and public areas, wherever the participant choose to meet. Some interviews became group endeavors, with more than one person contributing at the same time. The researcher did provide lunch and non-alcoholic beverages on occasion.

Photography was one of the major methods of this research. (Rich Mitchell, my partner, helped with the processes of photography and printing of the photos, and also got to know the people involved.) First it was used as a means of reciprocity with the community. Two examples show how this occurred.

The Somalis are loath to have photos taken, but the family of Khadro Abdi who runs Alle Amin was first one to pose because they wanted a family picture. After they posed, every single cousin of her and other men in the restaurant posed for pictures. When I brought the photos back, I was doing two types of methodology. I used photo elicitation to ask them about other people in the pictures. Then I took the copies of the pictures to the individuals, which gave me a connection with everyone I took pictures of. Once we had the trust of the Somalis, Khadro asked me to take pictures for her shop. I made large prints and she put them in the window of the shop for advertisement. That opened many doors for me because people knew that Rich and I were helpful and we weren't trying to take anything. That was the opening into the Somali community. After that everyone wanted family photos. So a community completely adverse to photography opened up to us and welcomed us.

A second example is the marriage picture of Saroen and her husband whose son runs the Mekong Bistro. Her wedding picture was bent, folded, broken, and stained, having been buried in the ground during the Khmer Rouge genocide in which her husband was killed. Again, we gained their trust over 6-7 months by taking family

pictures and making them copies. They understood that we would make pictures for them. After a time, Saroen brought the broken wedding photos to the restaurant one day and entrusted them to us. Those were all she had from Cambodia. It took us two weeks, scanning it with a high-quality scanner and painstakingly taking out every scar on the picture with Photoshop, but we gave her back a complete photo of their wedding day without marks on it. The whole family cried and said, “You are our family now.”

Thus, photography is a form of reciprocity because you have something in your hand to give when you are asking for things. It is not money; it is something much more important. It creates a snowball effect because even if you have a reticent group of participants, once they see nice photos, it is amazing how reticence changes to welcome, and it also draws other people in. It is trust-enhancing because we are giving back 8x10 prints to the families. We are showing that we are consistent and that we return. This takes patience and finesse, and is an effective way, although time-consuming, to reach private hard-to-reach people. This worked consistently across all three groups in exactly the same manner.

Photo elicitation in the classic sociological sense also was used. We have thousands of event pictures. With these I could go back and ask people, “You were dancing. Can you tell me about the dance?” This works very well in instances where things are ongoing and active and you can’t stop things in the middle and ask questions. A picture of a Cambodian celebration, for example, allows questions about how people celebrate, when they celebrate, and who is in the picture. They also then told me more about people who are in the picture. It is much easier to do it this way than to just ask people abstractly about things and events.

Reciprocity and trust are also part of my methodology and proved to be paramount with refugee populations. It would be impossible to do in-depth work without them. Being there was the primary way to gain trust and thus I had to go up to Portland for weeks and months, insinuating myself through the nodes of commerce, then through the nodes of people's households. Also the liaison with NGOs was important, and this trust also had to be earned with time. For example, I had to chase Polo Catalani who is known throughout all of Portland as a refugee community leader, for a year and half just to get a meeting with him. He works with the Mayor's office as the head of the New Portlanders Bureau. When I did finally meet him and he realized that I wanted to do something for his people, the refugees, he introduced me to everyone who worked at IRCO. I then interviewed every one of them. It was then that families started to want to talk to me. Before that no researcher had come and said they wanted to really write a book about Portland refugees. That started to build reciprocity and trust.

In addition, I went to all the meetings I could in the neighborhood: precinct police meetings, Neighborhood Association meetings, governmental meetings such as Portland Bureau Office of Neighborhood Involvement, and grant-writing workshops in Montavilla. I offered my help in the meetings. For example, I testified for Saron, owner of the Cambodian restaurant, at the OOLC meeting (see below) and I advocated for the homeless at a Neighborhood Association meeting. I also helped write grants at the workshops. I handed out cards and connected with the activists—community leaders of the various refugee communities—and government employees. That was one avenue into administrative and community leaders. In turn, that rippled out into households, as for example, Hmong households. Leaders would talk with me and respected me; community

members saw this and therefore trusted me. Later, we were invited to life events such as funerals, birthdays, marriages, and other life events.

It was very important to be the student in this process. I reminded myself every minute in the field that I was ignorant and needed to learn. I went shopping with all my research participants, learning how Somalis, Cambodians, and Bosnians shop. I learned the inside details of how they run their businesses. In doing so, I also learned about the communities in depth. I was able to observe the interpersonal relations between the business owners and their suppliers and customers as well as the networks that make these businesses run because all the businesses are related commercially to each other. The number of food suppliers for ethnic businesses is limited.

Volunteer work was part of building reciprocity and trust. Being willing to work with the homeless at a church and work with the community although I did not live right in it was instrumental in many ways. For example, at St. Peter and Paul Episcopal Church on 82<sup>nd</sup> Street, on Friday nights, the organization Rahab's Sisters feeds the homeless women and prostitutes of 82<sup>nd</sup> Street. This was not a population that I was writing about. Why should I help these people? It has instrumental and ethical effects.

Instrumentally, I got to meet all the volunteers in the church program who are neighborhood activists. I also got to see neighborhood activists who picketed the program. So I had a good show of the disagreements around these activities. It also gave me access to many long-term residents who volunteered there. They were very hard to reach. It also built trust with people on the street so that if I were going down the street and wanted to talk about the neighborhood, I could. I was also able to view the neighborhood from a religious point of view—one of religious compassion.

Ethically, I had to always think of what is applied anthropology and remember that this is about reciprocity. I am getting a degree; what are they getting? Should I use my talents in education for my own degree or to give to them? The reward is not just the degree but in being a true applied anthropologist. Reciprocity is essential in ethnographic work in applied anthropology. We come in as researchers and we already have education. We should use this not only to conduct our research but also as volunteers to offer our talents.

One of the ways that I volunteered my help was to research organizations and leaders so I could understand first of all whom I might be able to do something for. In the meantime, the research was ongoing and incremental so I had to remain open to whom to get involved with. Through incremental research, I learned about the organizations and the movers and learned whom I could help. I was open to synergistic involvement. As I attended meetings, boring or not, I was recognized, and also began to see where I could help. I offered a needs assessment to the Neighborhood Association in 2011 during my internship and numerous times offered to conduct surveys and did research for both the Neighborhood Association and the Business Association. In addition, I offered my services to IRCO, should they need them, as they collect oral histories. In short, we need to be open to those who are willing to help us with the understanding that it does not dilute our research to have help gathering data. In a large project, help in collecting data is important; ultimately your conclusions are your own.

Participant observation was the methodology that I used most because it was not devoid of verbal input. In the course of participant observation, many unofficial interviews were collected. My first inroad was to go into all of the places of commerce,

ask about the products, buy things, and ask innocent questions about how to use things. Such an approach worked surprisingly swiftly. It led on the first meeting to hearing the story of a Somali man whose father was killed. Being the stranger is conducive in closed societies to ethnography. In other words, walking in as a complete stranger elicited this response. It did so every single time because people want to share their culture. They want to tell people how great their culture is and they look for opportunities to talk about it. They want Americans to know how they got here and the suffering that entailed. Again and again, they said, “We don’t want this [suffering] to define us, but we want you to know how we got here.”

Participant observation turned into many hours hanging out in the three main locations and peripheral locations as well. The three main locations are: Mekong Bistro, Alle Amin Restaurant, Jaziira Café, and Marino’s Adriatic Café. Other locations were Montavilla Community Center, St. Peter and Paul Episcopal Church, businesses on Stark Street, IRCO, Lutheran Catholic Services, bars, stores, open-air markets, and garage sales. By walking and biking every street and hanging out on corners for often an hour at a time, I made sure to do street participant observation in all segments of the neighborhood. I wanted to make sure that I was observing from a broad spectrum of places to get a rounded picture of the neighborhood.

For analysis, transcripts were printed and a first reading using grounded theory coding was conducted. The whole body of transcripts was re-read and re-coded for consonance. Themes were generated and frequencies figured. Analysis was then written up on the basis of these themes.

What I hope to get across in the ethnography is the joy. The fact that people come through terrible circumstances. They smile, they give us their food, and they say let us tell you about our culture. I hope that this ethnography conveys this.

## Chapter 4: Portland, Oregon: Refugees and Urban Culture

### Refugees in Portland

Federal policies foster certain urban areas as refugee gateway cities; the Portland metro area is one of those gateways. Federal policies, city policies, local religious organizations and NGOs, and local diasporic communities are in place to help refugees in various capacities. Gateway cities face numerous challenges of cultural translation, ranging from the need for culturally appropriate medical services and translation, acceptable food, language and job skill training, housing, weather, differing cultural views of appropriate family behavior, the effects of local discourse regarding various refugee groups, and gender appropriate care (particularly for Horn of Africa women of childbearing age).

In 2005, Oregon ranked eleventh in the nation in terms of total numbers of new refugees (Hume and Hardwick 2005). At that time the authors noted the arrivals from Somalia, the former Soviet Union, Ethiopia, Bosnia, Vietnam, and Cambodia. Economic conditions were strong in 1990s Portland, leading to a leap in foreign-born populations in the metro area. By 2000 the foreign-born population of Portland metro was 12 percent of the total population. Nearly one-third of these arrived after 1995; half after 1990 (Hume and Hardwick 2005:189). After 1980, refugees were defined as persons living outside their homeland who are unable or unwilling to return because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution (UNHCR 2004). The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN refugee agency, made a definition that created a worldwide eligibility for admission of political refugees, *if* they can prove persecution or the

potential for it. This more inclusive definition of refugees paved the way for most of the sub-Saharan Africans that now live in Portland, as well as many of the Slavic community members, nearly all of whom arrived under refugee status, rather than immigrants (Hume and Hardwick 2005:191).

Refugees from Africa began to arrive in Portland in the 1980s, the earliest from Ethiopia or Eritrea, soon followed by arrivals from Sudan, Somalia, Liberia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad, Sierra Leone, and Togo. “These pan-African migrants came from diverse linguistic, religious, cultural, educational, and occupational backgrounds” (Hume and Hardwick 2005:193). Voluntary resettlement agencies (often called Volags) such as the Immigrant Refugee Community Organization or IRCO and Lutheran Community Services secure housing and provide a limited amount of financial assistance for rent, language training, and referrals to employment and social services. The groups that arrive are so diverse that it is difficult to meet the specialized needs of all of them; this leads to the creation of insider networks of support. The authors recognize though, that these networks vary in complexity, amounts of support, and composition. They note the example of the African communities in Portland, which each have its own association. For example, Africans attend mass events, such as Independence Day celebrations from many different nations, and crises arouse pan-ethnic solidarity, such as an accident or illness in the pan-African community. Somalis have created a service coalition, as have Eritreans. These smaller formalized associations are financially limited and often lack members facile with grant writing and fund raising expertise.

Portland’s Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO) is a major pan-refugee service provider. Its funding ascendancy, both governmental and to a lesser

extent private, precludes more individualized ethnic assistance organizations from competing with it in service provision. IRCO is able to serve a broad spectrum of immigrants and refugees because through its organizational structure, pan-ethnic culture, and other resources it can hire staff from within the communities served. Few small ethnic organizations have the wherewithal in various forms of capital to come close to the level of IRCO service provision; nevertheless, they provide services that IRCO and other larger organizations cannot. Lutheran Community Services (LCS) is another large and broadly funded Volag. Despite its Christian background, a casual visit to the LCS office evidences the large number of Horn of Africa and Middle East refugees that are served by this faith-based organization. LCS also draws its staff from within the refugee population. Many of their staff members are facile in Arabic, and traditional clothing worn by clients reflects the range of African and Middle Eastern cultures served.

IRCO has employees with first hand experience of the refugee experience for 33 individual populations of refugees in Portland, although often they do not speak the languages of their clients. So the individualized ethnic assistance groups have a strong role to play in the needs of their community members. The ethnic or nationality based groups also play a role in cultural maintenance. Language and customs are maintained and taught to the young. Only the internal community can provide this. In the process of adapting to the new land, language can be lost so rapidly in the young that it is difficult if not impossible to communicate with one's elders, as happened in my home, where I cannot speak to my own father.

IRCO serves refugees from Russia, Somalia, Cuba, Turkey, Iraq, Burma, Bhutan, Somalia, Egypt, Afghanistan, Liberia, Turkish Kurds, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan, and all of

Southeast Asia, along with a steady incoming trickle of new refugees from places that are not on the average American's radar, such as Democratic Republic of Congo. It is funded by federal, state, and city governments as well as private grants. Some of the refugees served languished in refugee camps for years to decades. Services include: youth and parenting programs, female empowerment, immigration assistance, English language assistance, translation and language bank services, employment training and job placement, police liaison services, health screening, services to families, and citizenship education. Most of the approximately 3,000 Cambodians in Portland have had some contact with IRCO at some point in their settlement period in Portland (Chan 2003:206-07, and personal observation in situ).

Factors that impact refugee adaptation include local networks and governmental policies. Hume and Hardwick write: "A host of support networks created and implemented by local coalitions of activists in the Portland area have created a positive policy environment that has been critical for the adjustment of large numbers of [migrants]" (Hume and Hardwick 2005:200-01). Economic, social service, and mutual assistance associations provide economic opportunities such as employment training, job search assistance, and entrepreneurial assistance. The federal government also budgets money to help refugees in Oregon resettle. New residents are required to enroll in English language classes and workshops to help prepare them for employment. Refugees with no English language skills are mainly limited to low paying work as housekeepers, janitors and so on. Those who arrive with some language skills, have more options, including eventually, even the possibility of working for one of the agencies that helped them upon entry.

Four primary impacts of networks on refugee trajectories are operating in Portland. Networks affect migration decisions; networks provide a way to mobilize financial support necessary to move to the United States and once here, within it; networks provide the organizational infrastructure to accomplish these moves; and networks provide newcomers with employment help, subsistence, medical care, and other support at their destination. Newcomers are struggling to maintain their own cultural values and traditions even as external conditions transform them. They strive to hold onto religious and cultural values along with the economic and social assets they bring with them. Ongoing participation in networks of support helps mediate the stresses of life that they face (Hume and Hardwick 2005:206-207).

Although language is the most significant barrier, catastrophic changes in lifestyle also affect refugees. It is difficult to shift from a rural agrarian culture and society to an urban one, especially if one is also suffering the effects of trauma as well. People from certain nationalities seek particular types of employment. Somalis drive cabs; one of my favorite topics with the wealth of Somali Portland cab drivers is the quality of the goat and rice to be found at Alle Amin restaurant and the education their wives and children are receiving. Russians also dominate in the cab driving profession. Bosnians enter the medical professions and Ethiopians work in caregiving. These are what are known as employment clusters. One challenge facing refugees, including my participants, is that someone was a doctor, a lawyer, or a professor in their own nation yet they experience downward mobility in the U.S. Most often credentials are lost in flight or just do not transfer to the American educational system. These refugees have families to support; they cannot afford to invest the time and money necessary to revive their

credentials. Many of them train for lower status professions in the same field with a downward mobility trend. Entrepreneurial endeavors begin to make sense in this field. IRCO and other organizations help people to start small businesses and this is a way people who are not able to absorb into the work force might make a living. The authors note the numerous Ethiopian restaurants and businesses in Portland, and at the time they wrote this article they note the increased number of Somali businesses that were emerging (Hume and Hardwick 2005).

Layers of social, cultural, economic, and political networks, chiefly IRCO and other social service agencies in Portland, work both in tandem and individually to provide support for new arrivals from outside the United States. These inter-and intragroup connections are defined by membership in religious, social, and cultural groups and are particularly important to new arrivals in their first months and years of settlement in the United States. [Hume and Hardwick 2005:206]

One of the primary reasons for the Portland metro area's diversity is the steady and relatively large flow of new refugees. Today's Pacific Northwest is neither as culturally homogeneous nor as economically vibrant as it was during earlier in-migrant influxes. Factors that affect refugee trajectories are: "Migration paths, time of arrival, cultural and economic niches, racialization, and the impact of whiteness in receiving societies, as well as the potential subordination by majority residents" (Hardwick and Meacham 2005:540). Through survey data and interviews, the authors conclude that

more than 90 percent of incoming refugees choose to stay in the area because of the network of support generated by IRCO. Equally important is the social support provided by religious, family, and clan networks (Hardwick and Meacham 2005:554).

At the local level, neighborhoods located in the most ethnically and racially diverse places in the urban area are now home to large numbers of foreign-born residents. In addition, particularly during their early years of settlement, a set of regional linkages helps hold newcomers in Oregon together no matter where they may live. . . .refugees and other migrants, united by cohesive ethnic, cultural and social networks, travel from one community to another on interstate highways to shop at ethnic groceries, eat in ethnic restaurants, and attend [regional events. At the transnational scale, ethnic networks are organized and maintained by e-mail and cell phones, connecting even the most remote refugee camps with Portland and other places in the outside world. [Hardwick and Meacham 2005:555]

### City of Portland Urban Culture

A walk down 82<sup>nd</sup> Avenue in Portland makes evident the effect that environment has on culture. One of the reasons 82<sup>nd</sup> Avenue is so dangerous is because it is little used by pedestrians, and the pedestrians who do use it are generally poor, working class, or of lower status. Car lots fill the street on both sides, even taking up the sidewalks bit by bit

over the years with encroaching fencing. There are few crossing lights and cars do not look for pedestrians. Jane Jacobs particularly excoriates car lots. She writes that in return for nothing, car lots make exorbitant demands on the land and upon aesthetic tolerance. But she claims it is not the lots that bring blight; it is blight that brings the lots. People on prime neighborhood land would not give up their land for a lot (Jacobs 1961:230-31). Eighty-second Avenue offered undeveloped land as well as old farmsteads that were taken up by car dealers to create a physical, automobile-mediated employment cluster. As Highway 213, 82<sup>nd</sup> Avenue is shunned for socially oriented development and enslaved to the automobile. This development pattern laid the foundation for subsequent crime and prostitution clashes with the properties abutting the thoroughfare. The physical structure of the street fosters crime and broadcasts poverty. The City of Portland and local ethnic organizations are struggling to change the uses, appearance and culture of the Avenue. Now it is partly up to the Asian minorities who lived with the filth of that street for decades to commodify their ethnic businesses in conjunction with the development of Portland Community College south campus, in order to change the culture and appearance of the neighborhood. The new Jade District Development office is working to “polish the Jade” as it puts it, cognizant of the history of Chinese exclusion and racism that now is being transformed into a cultural commodity to attract “ethnic tourism,” yet proud of the fact that the historic and current endeavors of Portland’s pan-Asian population are finally being recognized (Jade District 2015).

Participatory democracy is part of the fabric of Portland, Oregon, neighborhood life. Portland is in the midst of changing patterns of use and development. The Office of Neighborhood Involvement (ONI) and the system of neighborhood associations provide

direct “community” input to decision makers during these processes of change. When permits are requested for a new place where alcohol will be served, a new apartment building, or an emission permission for a new business, it is the local neighborhood association that arranges meetings, provides input from residents to decision makers. In the case of unwanted development, it is the neighborhood association that mobilizes residents, heads protests, testifies at public hearings, and engages in other forms of resistance. Neighborhood associations also head cleanup and redevelopment efforts in their neighborhoods (City of Portland 2015).

A central tenet of activism is the notion that systems of participatory democracy are a panacea for lack of representation and omission from redistributive schemes. One problem with neighborhood associations, particularly in the Portland case, is that they are by nature exclusionary. People who belong and actively participate tend to be White, homeowners, and have enough discretionary income that they can afford to spend some time in activism, regardless of parental or employment status. These are the groups who are doing most of the talking for the neighborhoods, yet they are not fully representative of local populations and needs.

Fainstein (2010) recognizes that minority communities are not monolithic, and community power may encourage separatism and opportunism. Nevertheless, there is no replacement for participatory democracy if groups are to have any voice in the decisions that affect them (Fainstein 2010:64). Portland, Oregon, has a strong participatory system of neighborhood associations. Participatory democratic systems are of import in two ways. First, they have the power to affect development and redistribution in their neighborhoods to a certain extent. Second, participatory democratic systems are thought

to be of great import in urban revitalization schemes; they are generally seen as a beneficial urban mechanisms that provide at least a chance at equal voice and equal distribution for all urban neighborhoods. In a way they are the gold standard of citizen involvement and self-determination.

Harvey (2008) claims that the right to the city is more than just redistributive, it is creative. It is the right to change ourselves by changing the city, and this transformation depends on collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization (Harvey 2008:1). This collective power is politically based to a great extent. Direct democracy provides the means for our collectivities to transform the city, but there are actually few takers for the task.

Generally, rates of participation seem to be slightly affected by opportunities to affect policy directly. Berry et al. (1993) claim that even though rates of political participation are low, there are benefits to participatory democracy, one of which is the potential to “teach” Americans how to participate. It is not just responsiveness by government which is the goal of participatory democracy, Berry and other authors (Ferman 1996, Rabrenovic 1996) imply that policies of inclusion as well as the process of participatory democracy have the potential to engage local residents in the political process, increase tolerance, and feelings of efficacy and even provide the chronically disenfranchised with a voice in local affairs. But is this true? Among other factors, this study examines the role that neighborhood associations and direct democracy have on the trajectories of ethnic entrepreneurs and their communities. Are there venues for refugee participation in Portland’s democratic institutions?

Weninger (2009) studied an urban revitalization project and found that the problem in her study was not that the residents wanted a clean neighborhood free of criminal activities, but that civic participation in neighborhood development schemas can foster or surface in rather uncaring attitudes and behavior. As the role of the state is reduced, intervention becomes the responsibility of individuals. “Resident’s toolkits consist mainly of ways to get rid of those who are thought to stand in the way of the neighborhood’s progress” (Weninger 2002:101). Outreach and organizational energy in these communities has been aimed as fostering investment in the neighborhood in order to attract more middle class homebuyers. Urban communities can become socially exclusive, with normative constraints on conduct seen as problem solving in one view, and spatial purification in another. Relying too heavily on civil society structures of participatory democracy can remove the actions of self-reliant urban residents from forms of public accountability (Weninger 2009:101-02). In Brown-Saracino’s case study, the gentry used their superior ability and experience to use the participatory structure to advocate for selected long-term members of the community (Brown-Saracino 2009). Participatory democracy does accomplish its goal of giving voice to neighborhoods, but it also has the potential to be exclusionary as well. Lower income residents have less time to devote to political actions and long-standing discourses with both external (institutional) and internal (cultural) requirements curtailing effective representation equally across the spectrum of refugees.

Portland has had its gentrification battles. Sullivan and Shaw (2011) examine the role of gentrification in Portland’s Alberta Street neighborhood. A complaint of people in gentrifying or redeveloping neighborhoods is that things are not as affordable. Montavilla

residents clash over which grocery stores they need and whether any of the new restaurants are affordable for long-term residents. Sullivan and Shaw caution that retail gentrification, or the revitalization of communities by making themselves attractive to the “creative class” might refashion neighborhoods—including their retail—in a way that is hostile to diversity (Sullivan and Shaw 2011:413). Sullivan and Shaw make a case for examination of the role of retail in revitalization, noting that retail gentrification affects goods and services available to residents and creates quasi-public spaces. Retail gentrification can keep people shopping in the neighborhood who formerly might have shopped elsewhere (Sullivan and Shaw 2011:414).

The authors write that cultural symbols such as restaurant tables on sidewalks, music, art, and other products not only reflect the tastes and personalities of new owners and new customers, but they also create symbolic boundaries (Sullivan and Shaw 2011:416). Black businesses such as barbershops and salons serve as social spaces for Black people to relax, so in neighborhoods where these small, low-revenue-producing businesses are threatened, Black residents may feel a loss of community space (Sullivan and Shaw 2011:418). From Alberta’s Black majority in 1980 to its current White majority there has been a decline in housing affordability; therefore Alberta’s Black residents, though no longer segregated and in an improving neighborhood, now find themselves unable to afford to live there. Some of its Black businesses have moved out, or no longer operate, and new businesses are primarily white owned, catering to white trade (Sullivan and Shaw 2011). Sullivan and Shaw interviewed a racially diverse group of longtime residents. Three types of reactions were expressed: Racial exclusion and resentment; complete acceptance; and bohemian acceptance, or yuppie scorn (Sullivan

and Shaw 2011:420). Some Black long term residents expressed feelings of racial resentment and exclusion. They feel that Black residents have been displaced and they feel that new businesses do not cater to their needs and incomes. They recount discrimination in restaurants and an “uncomfortable feel” when they patronize the new New Seasons food store. Residents feel as if whites are surrounding themselves with their own culturally appropriate businesses in a slow moving invasion (Sullivan and Shaw 2011:421).

The authors found that Black residents do not perceive this to be class-based prejudiced, rather they “Articulate sentiments of resentment and exclusion that are race based, referring to new White business owners as ‘them’ . . .and to White customers . . . as not being ‘longtime’ residents or not belonging to ‘this community’” (Sullivan and Shaw 2009:422). But this resentment must be taken with a grain of salt. Just as with Chaskin and Joseph’s (2010) study of mixed income housing for former housing project residents that found contented families happy to be out of danger, some Black residents of the Alberta Street area viewed the new changes positively, citing aesthetics, choice, and increased safety resulting from increased street use and increased police presence (Sullivan and Shaw 2011:423).

White residents were similar to some Blacks in holding positive opinions of the new retail offerings, but they had different reasons. They express enthusiasm about growing retail in general terms rather than instrumentally, as providers of much-needed items. They see retail as a source of positive cultural change in the neighborhood by creating spaces for interaction, the opposite of what some old time Black residents think when they see themselves as excluded. Whites involved in the neighborhood’s subculture

also had a negative view or are ambivalent about the new businesses. Bohemians who live in the area are scornful of the commercial interests that cater to the tastes and income of wealthier newcomers. Counter culture residents saw the neighborhood headed the same way as the wild tourist attractant of Northwest 23<sup>rd</sup> street in Portland, which on weekend afternoons is as busy as the current *Disneylandish* iteration of Haight and Ashbury in San Francisco (personal observation) (Sullivan and Shaw 2011:427). Paradoxically in this and other case studies (Lloyd 2004, Freeman 2006, Clark et al. 2004, Currid 2009) “pioneers” or early gentrifiers, which often belong to the creative class, or “Bohemia,” are also often pushed out of areas in which they were the primary gentrifiers by rising property values.

An interesting observation that Sullivan and Shaw make is that Alberta District has always been racially mixed, yet Black reactions to gentrification are similar to those in bigger cities such as New York, in which there was a higher level of segregation. “This suggests that the salience of race is not exclusive to neighborhoods in hypersegregated larger cities . . . it can be a powerful, divisive dynamic also in gentrifying neighborhoods in less segregated, midsized cities” (Sullivan and Shaw 2011:429). “The substantial increase in White retail, with its accompanying efforts to refashion the material and cultural aspects of the neighborhood, coupled with the modest decline in Black retail, exacerbates feelings of racial exclusion and resentment.” White residents’ overwhelming approval of new retail is explained culturally: it creates social spaces for interaction and attracts desirable new residents (Sullivan and Shaw 2011:429). The authors conclude:

Despite city officials, developers, new business owners, and members of the creative class embracing the principle of diversity and an

ethos of progressivism, their actions privilege White 'creative' place entrepreneurs and undermine racial diversity by excluding longtime Black residents. [Sullivan and Shaw 2011:430]

## Chapter 5: Refugee Histories

### Somali Refugees

Portland area African communities began to build in significant numbers in 1975. Today Africans are the fourth largest immigrant group in the area, comprised of newcomers from 28 countries, with the Somali, Sierra Leonean, and Egyptian communities making up 70 percent of the overall African population. Most of the African arrivals live in North and Northeast Portland with some pushed out into east Multnomah County in search of affordable housing. Most Africans arrive as refugees. Somalis are the largest group, with additional African representation from Congo, Central African Republic, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Burundi, Liberia, and Sudan (Reyes and Stevens 2014:7).

Africans have benefited from changes in U.S laws regarding refugees. The Refugee Act of 1980 changed the U.S. definition of refugee status to conform to U.N. protocol. Fifty thousand visas annually were provided for refugees under this act. The majority of African refugees in the United States come from Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, Eritrea, Ghana, and Liberia (Arthur 2000:8).

Hardwick and Meacham (2008) detail the increasing flow of refugees from African nations arriving since the early 1980s. First were Ethiopians and Eritreans, followed by those from Sudan, Somalia, Liberia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad, Sierra Leone, and Togo. The majority of African refugees still live in the inner north and northeast neighborhoods. One of the most recent groups is the Bantu from Somalia. The Bantu spent years in refugee camps in east Africa, and they have a hard time adjusting to life in the United States. Unknowingly refugee resettlement workers in

Portland, Oregon, placed the Bantu with their former overlords, the Somali who had enslaved them in Somalia. The Bantu were then subject to the same relations with the ethnic group that exploited them in their homeland. Once the mistake became evident, the Bantu were relocated to the Gateway District in Portland, close to service providers and away from northeast Portland where the Somali live. The Somali community itself is still divided between refugees from Somaliland and Mogadishu.

In her ethnography of Northwest Horn of Africa refugees in Portland, Chait (2011) also mentions the Bantu, noting that their arrival created a further division within the local Somali society. The long-standing Somali lineage system discriminates by dividing Somalis into two main lineages: *Samale*, or noble, and beneath them the artisan and production classes, or commoners (*sab*), who resemble *Samale* in looks but not lineage purity. The *sab* also includes the slave descendants who are mostly farmers like the Bantu, who speak Maay rather than the Maaha of the upper classes. The inequalities created by the *Samale* to further their own ends are perpetuated in the diaspora. The continuation of these systems makes it harder for the Somalis to trust one another and to work together (Chait 2011:22-23). Chait, as do Hume and Hardwick (2005), writes about the problems the Bantu faced when they arrive in the Portland area. First the Bantu were placed in Beaverton, where a number of Somalis live, until social service agencies realized that historical injustices were being played out right here in Portland, and then they were moved to the Gateway neighborhood in northeast Portland (Chait 2011:34).

Hardwick and Meacham (2008) find that a major concern of the African population is the trajectory of its youth. Part of the problem is generational tensions, caused by assimilation into American culture. Children speak and understand English

better than their parents which puts them into a superior position. They also adopt mannerisms of American pop culture to the dismay of the older community members. These African communities are striving to maintain ethnic networks crucial to maintaining their culture among the young (Hardwick and Meacham 2008:246-49).

Statistics on the African communities show barriers and challenges. Opportunities for academic and economic success are limited. Conservatism in public policy and low employment levels create risk factors for African youth involvement in gang activity. Fifty-five percent of Portland area Africans live in poverty, and the rate is 70 percent for single female head of household families. Unemployment levels are 17 percent; at levels double that for Whites. Forty-five percent do not have their credentials recognized here; one-in-three Africans are in unskilled work though they were credentialed in their sending country for high-skilled jobs. Forty-six percent of families spend more than 50 percent of income on housing. One confounding factor when trying to assess progress is that the African community is incorporated into the larger Black community in datasets. Embedding Africans into the larger African American community erases the specifics of their experiences. This is a “pattern of invisibility” and it obscures different outcomes.

One confounding factor when trying to assess progress is that the African community is incorporated into the larger Black community in datasets. Embedding Africans into the larger African American community erases the specifics of their experiences. This is a pattern of invisibility and it obscures different outcomes. For instance there is no way to know how many Africans are in the corrections system and why (Reyes and Stevens 2014:5-6).

The discourse toward refugees has changed. Rather than seeing the United States as a nation obligated to provide refuge, the discourse of rugged individualism is once again becoming ascendant, leading to racialized divisions and the use of exploited social constructions of people of color. The authors find high rates of unemployment among African groups studied. Sub-Saharan Africans in Multnomah County had an unemployment rate double that of Whites, at 17.2 percent; the rate was even higher than the overall Oregon rate of 15 percent (Reyes and Stevens 2014:9). Poverty rates for Sub-Saharan Africans were 40.2 percent for families, 70.1 percent for single mothers, and 41.0 percent across the board for all individuals. Compare this to White families with a poverty rate of 7.5 percent, a single mother rate of 33.4 percent, and 12.5 rate of across the board poverty for all individuals (Reyes and Stevens 2014:10).

Most of the refugees admitted to the United States from the 1970s to the 1990s were from the Soviet Union and Southeast Asia. The refugee act of 1980 allowed refugees from Africa to be admitted for the first time. Most of these first African refugee populations originated in Eritrea or Ethiopia. Subsequently the number of resettled refugees from Africa slowly began to increase with the later refugees arriving from Somalia and other Horn of Africa countries, including a continuing trickle of Ethiopians and Eritreans. Veney (2009) writes that African immigrants and asylum seekers are treated in a manner that reflects how the government and larger society view African Americans with substandard treatment during asylum-related confinement, including assaults, strip searches, solitary confinement, and lack of medical care (Veney 2009).

Hume and Hardwick (2005) note two sets of dynamics, connections and relationships among co-nationals, and pan-African relationships. The majorities of

African refugees turn to their own groups and do not participate much in pan- African gatherings. There are profound differences of culture, food, and religion among African communities. Portland's smaller African populations have more incentive to cooperate. Somalis in particular see themselves as scions of a historical Abrahamic line, and Somali clan divisions, though eased, still persist. The authors found that the Somali community was still divided between refugees of urban and rural Somalia; Ethiopian refugees are divided between speakers of Oromo and those who speak Amhara (Hume and Hardwick 2005:195-196).

Chait (2011) writes that her participants stated that they were discouraged by their inability to work together, even on things they agree on. Somalis who participated in her research were largely in clan-based communities, or what Chait calls lineage based institutions, with few older Somalis mixing with others outside of their related clan families. Only the Somalis from Mogadishu, who are accustomed to diversity, continue to interact relatively freely. Generally each Somali clan in Portland sticks to itself, with Darod, Hawiye, and Isaq as the predominant clans represented, though there are numerous members of other clans present (Chait 2011:21-22).

During the course of this research in Portland, I have attended a number of Pan-African sponsored events, and some single-nation sponsored events such as a Senegal Independence Day celebration, Somali culture night, various award ceremonies, administrative meetings, grant writing sessions, and get-togethers. Somali night only had three Somalis in attendance and though a couple of older Somali males show up at events, they are generally silent. A few Somali females are younger activists who attend many cross-cultural events as presenters and participants, often with a couple of male

community elders. Members of the other African countries do attend each other's meetings, but Somalis are the scarcest, particularly among the older generation and young males. Chait (2011) finds the same thing. Her research participants, particularly younger community members, have tried various ways to get people to work together on mutually agreed upon goals, yet "few are the Somalis who have succeeded in achieving all-inclusive organizations" (Chait 2011:29).

Conditions in Somalia before the refugee diaspora led to the inability of the Pacific Northwest Somali community to unite. The civil war was based on clan rivalry at first glance, but the rivalry was part of a struggle for the control of powerful political and economic assets. When Siyad Barre, the ruler, divided the spoils to his clan members, the view of Somali government was of a "winner-takes-all mentality. This mindset percolates into the actions of Pacific Northwest Somalis; Somali males are under the impression that they can start their own non-profits with access to monetary rewards (Chait 2011:169).

The Bantu are not the only ones discriminated against by the *Samale*; hunters, farmers, and tradespeople are also outcasts. These groups are considered to be untouchables. The stigma attached to them makes it difficult to own property and gain political power. In Mogadishu, members of these groups became scapegoats and were slaughtered as the civil war began. Members of untouchable clans try to hide their origins here in the United States by passing as members of other clans (Chait 2011:184-86).

To some *Samale*, manual labor of any sort is avoided, fit for only lesser humans. They discriminate against the farmers and skilled workers whom they perceive as inferior. Colonization accentuated clan differences and exacerbated class differences:

Northern Somalia became a British protectorate and fostered the middle class while pastoralists saw their influence diminish. Siyad Barre who came to power in 1969, promised to wipe out clan divisions, but disillusion with his regime grew. Ordinary Somalis resented the enforced strictures on clan activity and by 1980 Barre was running the country with a select group of cronies. Clans organized to revolt, and repression ensued (Chait 2011:148-49). The economic war against the nomads led to their rebellion and subsequent glorification of the pastoralist lifestyle, with a concurrent devaluation of craftspeople and merchants and backlash against them. Clans in Somalia struggled violently to gain power and protection for their own while the world stood by. Thousands of Somalis began to flee to refugee camps in Kenya. Today, when Somalis in the Pacific Northwest speak of themselves, they mean a narrowly defined clan group or members of the larger clan family (Chait 2011:151).

Immigration brings generational change and changes in overarching goals. A not uncommon refugee narrative is the triumphant return home. In the case of Somalis, there are refugees in the Pacific Northwest who talk of return, but few actually expect that to be possible in the foreseeable future. In the United States, their kids get a good education, more jobs become available, and the younger generation becomes American. For many going home now means vacations to visit families and provide financial support. For Somalis who own small businesses in Portland, the social life afforded by the shops and restaurants keeps owners in the world of Somalia, with the same clan divisions, avoidances and prejudices that they faced in their home country. Chait noted also the effect of Western diets on African bodies: “Not only do our gangs and racism kill off Horn immigrants, but our diets are leading them to the same end” (Chait 2011:234).

Another problem facing the Somali population is the generation gap. Kids fit in, they get the language and the culture, but many of the older members are suffering from posttraumatic stress in addition to culture shock, adrift in a society they do not understand. The kids end up being the mediators, but also the symbols of cultural loss. There from Horn of Africa gangs much to the shame of their communities, which usually take pride in and identify themselves on their morality (Chait 2011:233-35).

Racism is a serious problem for Somalis. They arrive in the midst of a racial dichotomy that they cannot at first comprehend, and which they strive to overcome, often through differentiation from African Americans. In the eyes of racists, Somalis are Black; racists ascribe a relationship between themselves and Somalis that does not exist in Somali refugee reality—until it does. To complicate matters Somali youth may differentiate both from their parents and from a society that seems to despise them, by adopting African American mannerisms and using the same forms of resistance that African American youth do. Chait points out the example of the murdered Ethiopian man, Mulugeta Seraw in 1988 Portland. A White Pride gang that never asked him where he was from, or if he was part of the American Black/White history murdered Seraw (Chait 2011:26). Some research participants have spoken of serious physical attacks that were racially motivated in the neighborhood that is the focus of this study.

Somali refugees face fear, stereotyping, and discrimination connected to their race and religion. Bigelow (2008) claims that their elders, as well as police and teachers, racialize Somali youth. Parents worry that youth are forgetting their culture, language and religion. It worries parents when they see their Somali children adopting behaviors and actions that they think typify African American culture. There are many peer pressures on

youth to adopt certain behaviors, particularly on kids that are “different” due to race, origin, language, and/or appearance. Somali male participants of Bigelow’s research reported being unfairly profiled by police and lumped together with African Americans. They explained that the Somalis, particularly the elders, try to differentiate themselves from African Americans by dress and comportment, yet many of them reported that the police saw them and treated them as “Black people” (Bigelow 2008:29).

The overall Somali community is pushed into individuation through the use of outside signs. Somali women reported feeling more pressure to cover fully in the United States—they reported not covering as often or to such an extent in the past as they do here. Veiling has taken on new meaning for Somalis, as a manifestation of cultural maintenance, and indeed as resistance. Of course, rejection of the veil is also a form of resistance to elders and tradition. It is also possible that in the United States, there is a renewed emphasis on religious purity to counteract the influences of western media and lifestyles. Bigelow found an intensification of religious beliefs among Somali communities (Bigelow 2008:31). It is possible that the very religious freedoms available to refugees in the United States foster enhanced adoption of various religious forms and manifestations.

With increased visibility, differentiation, and contrast with the mainstream population, Somalis pay a price. In 1992 and 1993, the United States tried to help the suffering civilian population of Somalia (and its own strategic interests). With the Somali population reeling from civil war, the United States intervened with food and military assistance, but that went poorly. The “Black Hawk Down” incident and the loss of American lives suddenly created awareness of Somalia, but not in a good way. When

angry mobs dragged the body of a U.S serviceman through the streets of Mogadishu in 1993, Americans started to form an opinion about people they had not thought much about before. Americans came to perceive Somalis as a bloodthirsty, vengeful people. Chait writes that in the days following September 11, 2001, Somali cab drivers were harassed, and Somali parents kept their children home (Chait 2011:61). I have first hand knowledge of this wrath of the American people. My family is Jordanian, not Somali, but on September 12, 2001, a mob of people brandishing clubs came into our downtown San Francisco liquor store and smashed things off the shelves. Fortunately for the Somalis of the Pacific northwest local Americans stood up in support of the Muslim community. Chait documents numerous incidents of Somalis being attacked after 9-11 in the Seattle area, including a 16 year-old girl who was attacked and stabbed at a gas station and six Somali women who were fired from their jobs for wearing *hijab*. Women on the street were harassed and rocks were thrown at a mother picking up her child from school. Most of these incidents happened in Seattle where was much local support for the community, in spite of the racism and anger shown by a few. These events also mobilized African youth into activism (Chait 2011:61-62). The war on terrorism is stressful for Somalis, “The images of themselves they see reflected in the eyes of their American neighbors do not fill them with confidence” (Chait 2011:160).

In their African home countries the major source of intergroup conflict are ethnic differences which exacerbate other conflicts over resources and ideology. But once in the United States, Arthur (2000) writes that African migrants attempt to individuate themselves from African Americans, choosing to be the foreigner rather than bear the brunt of White racial stereotypes. They find that the category of foreigner is higher status

than the category of African American. In spite of these attempts they come to recognize that no matter what they do, they can never insulate themselves from this foundational American dividing line (Arthur 2000:4).

Covert Islamophobia exists in the Pacific Northwest and women bear the brunt because their *hijab* and robes are readily viewable visual symbols of Islam. Veiled African women have a hard time getting work outside of co-ethnic employment and there is a reluctance to hire Somali men who have to fight the American<sup>6</sup> stigma of male Blackness in addition to the cultural barriers they face as refugees in a strange new home. Chait found that most Somalis opened small groceries, interpret at hospitals, or work in programs that serve their community, such as IRCO (Chait 2011:66).

Arthur found that young Somali and Ethiopian girls were redefining their social identities though they still faced family pressures to conform to traditional roles. Refugee youth are torn between maintaining African or adopting American cultural identities. Some of them are resisting the wholesale adoption of African culture by claiming their right to define and interpret the world from their own perspective and the new choices that America offers. Customary African methods of discipline such as beating are not only discouraged in the U.S. they are illegal and can cause trouble for elders attempting to enforce mores (Arthur 2000:61).

Women's roles are redefined and they often have access to more opportunities than they would in their home countries. They may work outside the home and limit the

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<sup>6</sup> With the recognition that the term America can mean the entire North American continent and its inhabitants, I use the term as it is used colloquially, in the United States, to signify what we in the United States think of as North American mainstream culture.

size of their families, thus diminishing the dominance of husbands and brothers. Some women experience a male backlash as family members attempt to maintain discipline through physical abuse or isolation, a problem that numerous organizations are aware of and work at combating (Arthur 2000:112).

In this new world, young Americans, children of the Horn of Africa, are willingly acculturated. Chait (2011) writes that the initial question of “Who are we?” turns into “Who do we want to be?” They try on different identities. Should they keep their dress, their religion, their language? Are they still Somali, Ethiopian, Eritrean? They also find themselves in a society that is predicated to an extent, on the historical Black/White dichotomy so they ask if they are ever African Americans, in the truest sense of the word? In their home countries they never defined themselves by race. They find themselves in a society that often even lumps Asians together as one, and accordingly, it is easy to classify Horn of Africa refugees as Black. Young Africans see themselves as future African Americans with all the baggage that entails, while the older community members take care to distance themselves from the debacle through external symbols of language, worship, and appearance that are obviously not North American in nature. Of course, degrees of lightness have been used as class standards internally in Somalia and other African nations for hundreds of years in order to exploit and oppress. Chait writes that the awareness of the history of Black slaves in the United States, coupled with the Somalis’ own racially oriented class system, leads older Somalis to vehemently disclaim any relationship with African Americans (Chait 2011:246-47).

Africans who come to the United States originate from countries where Blacks are in the majority. As a result many African immigrants and refugees come to the U.S. with

little understanding of the racial dynamics at play in America. Yet pervasive and poisonous discourse is contagious. Arthur found that his African research participants were developing attitudes toward African Americans that reflected the dominant White discourse. Arthur's respondents seemed to believe that American Blacks do not take full advantage of the economic and educational opportunities that America offers. They think that native born Blacks have "quit trying," and that the native born Black community penalizes rather than uplifts those who do succeed. African immigrants see their presence in the United States as predicated on international migratory forces, not enslavement. They do not feel that they should bear the burden of American racism and injustice, in spite of their enmeshment in the system (Arthur 2000).

The way that African immigrants and refugees are received in the new society is painful for them. Okpewho (2009) writes:

For a start, we are black people, and however qualified or competent we are in our fields of endeavor, some whites who judge everything in human relations by Manichean principles have not hesitated to put us in the same place they have reserved for African Americans throughout their history. It does not take long for us to be shocked by a rude curtailment of that old self-assurance that we could get anywhere we had a mind to. [Okpewho 2009:11]

Africans and African Americans have hundreds of years of damaging propaganda of all sorts that impedes understanding between them. Africans arrive in the United States with warnings not to associate with Black Americans, while Black Americans are affected by stereotypes of Africans as well as lack of understanding of cultural differences. African immigrants come, attend schools, and raise children and work. Their

children are raised in African immigrant communities, but they are also embedded in Black American cultural images. These children often grow up with dual identities and an intimate knowledge of both cultures and communities. First generation Africans pressure their children to retain their African identities, and large immigrant populations make cultural transmission to the second generation feasible, but peer pressures outside of home and community exert opposite pressures to acculturate and avoid the differentiation their parents crave. Clark (2009) found that language maintenance is crucial to identity, and that Africans who had lost their foreign accents acquired multiple identities in the process. Clark thinks that rigid definitions surrounding race in the United States are peculiar to this country, and thus issues of race and racial identity are more important in America than elsewhere (Clark 2009).

Portland's Somali communities are under pressure from racism, poverty, class, clan, cultural clashes, and the effects of lived traumas. One of the points of this study is to examine what role ethnic businesses play in the cultural transmission and maintenance of communities, and what "cultural comforts" may be found in them. Portland's Somali businesses are clustered in what might be considered a condition of market saturation. They are side by side, with very few customers in each market. In Washington and Oregon, Chait also notices the market saturation of African businesses. Regarding the Ethiopian restaurants she writes: "Sometimes when I drive by, I wonder how each one makes a living, as they rarely appear full and new Ethiopian restaurants continue to pop up, adding to the competition" (Chait 2011:12).

In the course of research with the Somali population, I met many other Africans, from the Horn, from West Africa, and North Africa, just as through a focus on a

Cambodian family, I met Lao, Hmong and Vietnamese who participated in this project. One difference between the pan-Asian populations and the Horn of Africa populations is that Southeast Asian groups do use the same facilities, and do share shopping areas. For instance Fubonn market, Pacific market and Hong Phat market in East Portland attract customers that run the full Asian gamut from Indonesian Muslim to Philippine Catholics and every persuasion in between. Somali markets almost solely attract their own internal groups, although other Africans do share some shopping areas just as the gamut of Asians do. Eritreans, Somalis, and Ethiopians have long standing historical disputes that carry over into their relationships or lack of them in the United States, and Somali class and clan divisions seem to persist in the New Country, at least among the older generation.

### Former Yugoslavs

I use the term “former Yugoslavs” because though a large percentage of my research participants from this population are Bosniak, or ethnic Bosnian Muslims, other refugees from the former Yugoslavia who participate in this study belong to other, distinct groups. The complex war engulfing the former Yugoslavia involved Serbs who generally belong to orthodox Christian faiths, Communist Yugoslav partisans, Bosniak Muslims, and Catholic Croats. Romani, or Gypsies along with Jews and other minorities also bore the brunt of ethnic cleansing and persecution. Centuries of intermarriage created families that might have members of all or some groups intermingled for generations. When lines were drawn and the wars intensified between sides, many people in mixed marriages and from mixed families fled. Serbs who had lived with their Bosnian

and Croat neighbors for generations sometimes refused to join the national army or deserted to keep from having to kill their neighbors in ethnic cleansing drives. Tito's followers did not want to tear their country apart. Croatia tried to protect its interests as a tiny seaboard country, and in the process Croats swayed between support for Serbia and the Bosnians. Many of those who fled the former Yugoslavia bemoaned the loss of their prosperous and modern nation, predicated on unity, and held together by Marshall Tito, who depending on whom you ask is either a saint or a demon. In this context, I think it is improper to refer to these research participants as Bosnians or Bosniak. When referring to distinct populations the accepted name will be used. Some of the authors reviewed here studied only particular segments of the former Yugoslav diaspora, and their nomenclature is used here. There *are* distinct populations from the former Yugoslavia though, and generally, Serbs are not present in businesses that are patronized by other diasporic groups from the former Yugoslavia. In Portland, pan-community events such as a funeral for a death in the diasporic community draw members of various groups, including a very few Serbian attendees, but generally Serbian members of the diaspora who are not members of mixed households, keep to themselves.

Between internal and external refugees, it is estimated that 1.4 million Bosnians live outside of their country. Almost two decades after the passage of the Dayton peace agreement, half a million Bosnian refugees are still scattered about the world, with an estimated 390,000 in the United States. The largest numbers of Bosnians living outside their home country are concentrated in the United States, Germany, Austria, Sweden, and the former Yugoslav republics (Valenta and Ramet 2010:1-6).

Bosnian refugees arriving in the United States entered a country with a long history of migration from Bosnia and other South-Slavic territories (Palmer 2014). Two mechanisms existed for Bosnian refugees to enter the United States after Yugoslavia's collapse: either by arriving at a U.S. border and seeking asylum, or through the refugee resettlement program. The first mechanism involves administrative adjudication on U.S. territory, governed by statute and regulation. This mechanism complies with international law. Most Bosnians who came after the breakup of their nation did not arrive in this manner. The second mechanism, the refugee resettlement program, was responsible for the bulk of Bosnian arrivals. Settlement locations are selected by destination communities, which select their settlers rather than the other way around. The first admission was in 1993 and the last in 2006 (Palmer 2014:4). Approximately 800,000 citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina emigrated in just two years—1993-1994 (Kupiszewski 2009).

The U.S. refugee program consists of three parts: the asylum system, overseas assistance, and refugee resettlement. More than 120,000 Bosnian refugees were resettled in the United States between 1993 and 2000. (Franz 2005:39) Money allocated to refugees was insufficient to survive the first month of residency in the United States; refugees were encouraged to enter the job market immediately. Many of the caseworkers that helped the Bosnians as they entered the U.S. were themselves refugees from the same geographic area. Jobs offered were often menial with no benefits. Women had an easier time than men getting employment, but all of them suffered from their inability to transfer credentials earned in their home nation, thus forcing many of the well-educated to engage in college courses and other means of regaining accreditation while another

family member worked. In addition to barriers of documentation and language, refugees also face the effects of traumatic stresses caused by brutal events witnessed and experienced. Many of the professionals that Franz interviewed never received public assistance as refugees in the U.S. though they were working in menial jobs and studying (Franz 2005).

In the 1991 census most Bosnians classified themselves as “Yugoslavs” rather than Muslims, Serbs, or Croats. Interethnic and interreligious marriages were widespread and many Bosnians felt that Bosnia was what Yugoslavia set out to be: a multiethnic society. “Without exception, Bosnians, (including Bosnian Croats and Serbs) who I interviewed expressed their surprise and shock about the outbreak of the Bosnian War in 1992” (Franz 2005:20). Some of Franz’s research participants spoke of their dreams of recreating community here in the United States, but they become disillusioned by the divisions that still exist within the diaspora of former Yugoslavs. Franz found that ethnic, national, and religious differentiation occurs and harbors “ethno-national identities” that seem to be stronger at times than they were in the former Yugoslavia, perhaps because with hope of going home extinguished, refugees need to cling to their identities more firmly to cope with their losses (Franz 2005:90-91).

The Bosnian War that occurred during the breakup of the former Yugoslavia went from 1992 to 1995. The refugees who fled began to develop new self-perceptions. They must create new identities from a background of their former lives, their war experiences, and the new locations they find themselves in. Some define themselves as Bosnians, former Yugoslav citizens, and Europeans. Between 1992 and 1995 approximately 2.2 million Bosnians were expelled from their homes, not all of them Muslims, though

Muslims bore the brunt of the war. Many Bosnians, particularly Muslims, thought that the Yugoslav republic was a successful example of multiculturalism and interethnic harmony (Franz 2005).

Mertus et al.'s (1997) collection of ethnographic interviews documents the atrocities that happened not only to Bosniaks but also to members of other ethnic groups in the former Yugoslavia. Rapes, imprisonment, torture, and killing were the realities of life for millions of Bosnians, Serbs, and Croats, as well as other groups such as Roma. Interviews with my own research participants tell the same stories. A theme that emerges from Mertus' collection of transcribed interviews with commentary is the surprise people felt when those they had lived together with for generations turned on each other. Historically people had celebrated holidays with each other, and intermarried. Bosniak Muslim women seldom cover, and the majority of all religious observance was balanced between church and state, secular and sacred. All that was torn apart as neighbors coalesced into distinct groups and began to [at times] turn on each other (Mertus et al. 1997:29-35). The editors note that these conversations and interviews were always food mediated. The interviewer realized that the only way to pay people back for their stories was to eat with them. "Our meal represented a statement of our intimacy and mutual trust" (Mertus et al. 1997:31).

During the second winter of the war in the former Yugoslavia, a journalist and a photographer arrived in Sarajevo. The city had already endured 93 straight weeks of shelling. In this environment journalist Barbara Demick (1996) and photographer John Costello found a house on Logavina Street, high in the town, in an area subject to sniper fire and shelling. They stayed for three and a half years, living among the residents, while

they documented the siege. Demick writes of the stench of burning shoes and furniture as people tried desperately to stay warm, in a dark city, with little electricity, no fuel, running water, and food. Sarajevo's residents were used to comfort, living in one of the most beautiful and cosmopolitan cities in their region. Now they were surrounded and being picked off by snipers and mortar fire while starving and suffering from lack of elementary hygiene and medical care. People showed Demick their splendid clothing and furniture, the photos of their vacations, their beautiful homes, now pockmarked and shell-pierced.

The residents of Sarajevo that Demick (1996) lived with expressed their surprise at the disaster that befell their nation. They just did not believe their country could succumb to war, and they were still in denial even when Dubrovnik, in what once again is Croatia, came under bombardment. Many of them had summer homes in Dubrovnik, and they thought they might have to cancel their vacations. By 1995, three years after war came to Bosnia, the people Demick spoke with rue their naiveté. They had come of age in a united, prosperous Yugoslavia, where they had everything they could possibly want, and they were at the head of Twentieth Century civilization; of course they do not kill each other, or so they thought (Demick 1996:13-15). Demick found that almost all of her interactions were food mediated, with the exchange of foods made to resemble traditional favorites, yet made from the meager rations available. People watched videos of family feasts, they exchanged wartime recipes, and they always invited her to share their meals.

Banja Luka is the home of Dario Jungic, whose café, Marino's Adriatic Café, in southeast Portland Oregon, is one of the community nodes from which this study was launched. Demick (1996) recounts interviews with former residents of Banja Luka, which

is now part of the Republika Srpska, or Serbian controlled area. Baja Luka was known for its 16<sup>th</sup> century Ferhad Pasha mosque, which was its chief tourist attraction. The Serbs destroyed that mosque, along with the other mosques in Banja Luka. An Orthodox minister recounted how his church had never been vandalized or threatened by Muslims, and he lamented how the Serbs had destroyed the mosques, which were also places of God, while the Muslims had vowed not to damage places of worship. In spite of the growing war, people tried to maintain national unity. The media hammered the message that it was not the Serbs per se who were doing the killing, but rather that it was groups of certain Serbs, led by certain leaders who were responsible for carnage. The Serb media was not so kind, using the Crusade-type language of holy war and eradication of Muslims, with racist slurs thrown in for good measure (Demick 1996:68-70).

Bosnian Muslims told Demick (1996) many times that they felt more in common with European Jews than with the Muslims of the Arab world. Women wear miniskirts and jeans, do not cover their hair, and they often may drink beer or wine. They are not interested in an Islamic state. The most observant Muslim Demick lived alongside, a man who read Arabic, and the Quran, and who attended mosque regularly, explained that Bosnian Muslims want to live together with all the people of the former Yugoslavia; they did not want the nation partitioned, nor did they want an Islamic state. He considered mixed marriages the “real Bosnia” (Demick 1996:76).

Anyone who spends time with diasporic former Yugoslavians knows that appearance is paramount. Men often wear suit slacks, or expensive jeans for the younger generation. They are groomed and clean, and women are most often coiffed, made up, well dressed, and well accessorized when in public. Dignity and appearance are important

to them as they are to all of the refugee populations. That dignity requires a cultural expression, which in this case is embodied in European standards of comportment and appearance, with its own colorful Eastern European accents. These manifestations of culture and dignity were noticeable to Demick (1996) as she spent time in besieged Sarajevo; Demick notes the extremes that people went to in order to continue to preserve their appearances and dignity. There was minimal to zero dental care due to the lack of supplies, little water, and no imports of cosmetics, crèmes, and other accouterment of personal care. Makeup was preserved and used even under fire, and “Women saw maintaining their appearance as an act of defiance against the Bosnian Serbs who were terrorizing them.” Demick recalls being startled at the attention lavished on hair, makeup and hygiene. Elegant women stood in line for food aid, and many of the women Demick met explained that though they were Muslim, they were what they described as “civilized Muslims” (Demick 1996:102-03).

Every first time visitor paying even a cursory visit to a Yugoslav café like Marino’s or a Bosnian sports club like 442 in southeast Portland discovers that the two constants of Yugoslav life are cigarettes and coffee, preferably shared with others. In her ethnographic account Demick remarked on the importance of these items, perhaps with their importance even intensified by the dangers people faced. “The staples of the Bosnian diet are coffee and cigarettes” (Demick 1996:112). One of the constants, written about by authors and talked about by all refugees of the former Yugoslavia is the love of, the cultural need for coffee. Mertus et al.’s interviewees talk about their memories of coffee at home, and the social and cultural meanings of the coffee ritual. Both Mertus et al. (1997) and Demick (1996) write about the lengths people would go to make coffee,

including frying food aid lentils gently as if they were coffee beans, and then carefully grinding and brewing them in tiny cups in the traditional fashion, resulting in a watery substitute (Demick 1996:50). Mertus et al. mention numerous times where coffee was the one happy memory, the one gesture that took people home, so to speak. One of their interviewees speaks of two cafés on the Hungarian border, close to a camp for Bosnian refugees, one visited by Serbs and the other by Bosnians. “When they get drunk, since the places are very close to each other, they sing in the dark together and laugh and cry” (Mertus et al. 1997:125).<sup>7</sup> Refugees from the Bosnian areas of the former Yugoslavia long for and romanticize their home country. Coffee in the town square, interactions with diverse neighbors, walks in the town, the taste of local food, these are the things that refugees speak of. The sight of familiar candies imported from what is now the Serb Republic, or familiar meat pastries can make them cry, as does the sound of familiar music. Refugees mourn the loss of the dream of a united Yugoslavia, and they feel like exiles (Ugresic 1997). The central role of café life recurs in all narratives of Bosnian refugee ethnographies. Franz writes that café life, particularly for men, was the epitome of European privilege (Franz 2005:107). Bosnians in Franz’s sample did not associate with Serb or Croat communities. They do however recreate their home café culture in the urban areas in which they live (Franz 2005:145).

Social divisions exist within the population of Bosnians in the United States. The three main groups, Serbs, Croats, and Bosnians, are the visible segments, but religious

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<sup>7</sup> The date of this interview was June 1995, in Budapest. The interview was conducted in the Red Cross headquarters.

practices, or the lack of them, extant mixing between groups, and many other ethnic and class identities exist in Bosnian society (Palmer 2014:5). Palmer notes the heterogeneous nature of the diasporic Bosnian population. He writes that social divisions within the population may exclude some groups of Bosnians from network benefits, or may drive differing strategies for advancement (Palmer 2014:21).

Through this study we can compare refugee trajectories upon entry to the United States. A review of literature on African refugees shows the effects of racism and long standing American attitudes that affect African immigrants' trajectories. Are there differences in the way former Yugoslavs are treated in their host nation as they face the challenges of precipitous flight from their countries? Many refugees from the former Yugoslavia are Muslim, and Muslims bore the brunt of the wars. Prior review of challenges facing Somali refugees shows that their outward manifestations of Islam as well as their Black faces attract untoward attention, but what about Bosniaks? Do they face the same prejudices?

Franz (2005) writes about the attacks and abuse that people of Arab descent endured after the World Trade Center attacks. Crowds of people beat Muslims on the streets, with 645 acts of ethnic hatred resulting in attacks and/or death in the week after September 11, 2001 alone. Immigrants and refugees of Arab origin became targets of U.S. rage (Franz 2005:21). Franz claims that because of their European features, Bosnian Muslims do not encounter the same prejudices after 9-11 as do other Muslim immigrant and refugee populations (Franz 2005:114).

Many Europeans and Americans may dismiss refugees from Africa and Asia as the "other," but they can see themselves in the refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina and

Croatia. Refugees from the conflicts caused by the breakup of the former Yugoslavia are people from small European towns and cities; they generally lived in typical European comfort, with cosmopolitan tastes and “relaxed” forms of religious observance (Mertus et al. 1997:2). Franz claims that because of their European features, Bosnian Muslims do not encounter the same prejudices after 9-11 as other Muslim immigrant and refugee populations do (Franz 2005:114). Researchers have found (Matsuo 2005, Coughlan 2006) that as European refugees, Bosnians are likely to face less discrimination than other more “visible” refugee groups. It is also implied in several studies that European enculturation and appearance have eased Bosnian refugee integration into Western nations. Bosnian migrants experienced less discrimination and stigmatization when compared to non-European migrant groups (Koser and Black 1999, Valenta and Bunar 2010, Colic-Peisker 2005).

#### Cambodians and Other Southeast Asian Groups

Most of the Southeast Asians participating in this study come from Cambodia and Laos, but interviewees included first-wave and subsequent Vietnamese refugees, as well as Hmong refugees. The elder generation of each population still tends toward insularity, and old wars are not forgotten. Older interviewees speak of their unwillingness to forgive or accept their former enemies. Older Cambodians see Vietnam as a continuing imperial force in their geographic area, and some refugees remain engaged in the affairs of their home country. Some of the participating families are intermarried among various Southeast Asian populations. In some cases the only lingua franca between family

members is English, with some members speaking Lao, some Cambodian, and some Vietnamese. Since a Cambodian-owned, extended family business is one of the foci of this project, this revue mainly focuses on Cambodian culture, but other Southeast Asian groups in Portland, Oregon, are mentioned as well since they are also participants in the study.

“Vietnamese” has four meanings: the major ethnic group in Vietnam; the language they speak; all residents of Vietnam, regardless of their ethnicity; and all things related to Vietnam. The ethnic minorities living in Vietnam, however, prefer to be known by their own names. “Sino-Vietnamese” are Vietnamese of Chinese ancestry who call themselves “Hoa.” “Montagnards” is a collective name the French gave to dozens of ethnic-minority hill-dwellers in Vietnam, but each group should be called by its own name. Between 1954 and 1975 the country was divided into two—The Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam) and the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam) (Chan 2003:xxxvi).

“Cambodians” refers to all people who live or lived in Cambodia, regardless of their ethnicity. “Khmer” refers to the major ethnic group in Cambodia, as well as to the name of their language. “Kampuchea” is a closer approximation of how the country’s name is pronounced in Khmer. “Sino-Cambodians” are Cambodians of Chinese ancestry. “Khmer Krom” are Khmer living in the Mekong Delta of South Vietnam, which used to be a part of Cambodian territory. The “Cham” are an ethnic group descended from the kingdom of Champa, which the Vietnamese conquered and absorbed centuries ago. They presently live in both Vietnam and Cambodia. The country’s name has changed several times since 1970. From 1970, after the overthrow of Prince Sihanouk, it was called the

Khmer Republic. From April 1975 to January 1979 it was known as the Democratic Kampuchea. Between January 1979 and 1989 its name was the People's Republic of Kampuchea. It became the State of Cambodia in 1989. After 1993 elections, supervised by the United Nations, the name was changed yet again to the Kingdom of Cambodia with the re-crowning of Prince Sihanouk (Chan 2003:xxv-xxvi).

The current official name of Laos is the Lao People's Democratic Republic. The "Lao" or "lowland Lao" are the major ethnic group in Laos, but they compose only about half of the total population of Laos. "Lao" is also the name of the language they speak. "Laotians" refers to all people who live or have lived in Laos, even though non-ethnic Lao groups prefer to be called by their own names. "Hmong," "Iu Mien," and "Tai Dam" are ethnic minority groups living in the hills of Laos; they are also found in the hills of Vietnam and Thailand (Chan 2003:xxvi).

Cambodian refugees participating in this study were fleeing the genocidal regime of the Khmer Rouge. Briefly, the Khmer Rouge were a group of communists who, under persecution by the monarchy, pursued a radical form of revolution, moving millions of people to the countryside, confiscating private property, and disassembling families. Cambodians were tortured, slaughtered, worked and starved to death, and "re-educated." Poor peasants were considered the only people with full rights, and all urban educated professionals were considered enemies of the revolution. The country's social structure was turned upside down overnight. Money, banks, private property, Western medicine, schools, and Buddhism were forbidden. In addition to the offenses against the Khmer people themselves, the Khmer Rouge persecuted ethnic minorities, for instance forcing the Muslim Cham to eat pork (Kiernan 1985, Vickery 1984, Chan 2003). A year after

coming to power the Khmer Rouge set up a torture and execution center at a former high school in Phnom Penh, which they called S-21. All but seven of the estimated 20,000 internees were killed by brutal means. In 1978 Pol Pot's henchmen killed an estimated 100,000 to quarter million Khmer, many of them Pol Pot's own cadres, whom he no longer trusted (Chandler 1999). In the three years and eight months that the Khmer Rouge regime lasted, from April 1975 to January 1979, at least 1.5 million people perished (Chan 2003:13). Many of those fleeing ended up in hellhole refugee camps—muddy, violent places on the Thai border.

In April 1975 the United States-backed government of South Vietnam collapsed. That year approximately 130,000 refugees from Vietnam, and to a lesser extent, Laos and Cambodia found their way to the United States. By March of 1980, 350,000 Vietnamese, many of them ethnic Chinese, 35,000 Lao, including minority groups of Hmong, Mein, and other groups, and 20,000 Cambodians were in the United States. In late 1981 the total Southeast Asian refugee population was estimated at 560,333. These refugees came in three waves. The first Vietnamese were part of military efforts to extract clientele or those whom worked with the United States. The first group arrived directly to camps in the United States and was predominantly Vietnamese. The second wave between 1975 and 1977 brought in approximately 1800 refugees a month, many of them considered “boat people” who escaped both overland and by boat. This second group, shorter in social capital, spent considerable time in refugee camps in other parts of Southeast Asia. Some of them languished in camps for twenty years. The third wave began in 1978. Some of the third wave was made of ethnic Chinese expelled from Vietnam and Laos, as well as victims of the Khmer Rouge genocide in Cambodia, a continuing trickle of

Vietnamese “boat people,” and groups that had aided the U.S. military such as Hmong and Lao minorities (Kelly 1986:139). At the time that Kelly wrote this article, close to one million refugees remained in camps, many of them for over another decade.

The first batch of Cambodian refuge seekers, who arrived in the 1975 wave, were elite Cambodians, many of whom were in the Cambodian military, or were already abroad due to educational, military, or economic reasons. The second wave were the 34,000 Cambodians who survived their escape to Thailand during the Khmer Rouge reign. Few people left immediately after the fall of the Khmer Rouge, in the hope that they might find relatives, or return to their homes. But by the fall of 1979 the third wave had begun to arrive at the Thai border, many of them on the verge of starvation due to the chaotic conditions which hampered the rice harvest. At the height of the exodus at least half a million starving Cambodians amassed at the border. The demolished infrastructure and surrounding political scene presented numerous barriers to the delivery of aid. The Soviet Union came to the rescue, providing trucks and technicians to transport aid and repair infrastructure. At the same time hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese and Sino-Vietnamese were also fleeing their nation along with tens of thousands of Hmong and lowland Lao, who all fled to the river crossings into Thailand. As the initial trickle of refugees became a flood, the generous resettlement policies changed. By 1978, 90,000 Vietnamese “boat people,” and 60,000 “land people” from Laos entered Thailand. The influx doubled in 1979 with an equal number of Vietnamese and Lao, but with the addition of 140,000 Cambodians who showed up. Malaysian shore patrols pushed boats away, and threatened to deport others already in holding centers (Chan 2003:23-25).

In October of 1979, at the Thai government's request, the UNHCR built a holding center specifically for Cambodians, separating them out of the Vietnamese, Sino-Vietnamese, Lao, and Hmong refugee populations. This was in response to the outcry that resulted when the Thai army forced 40,000 Cambodian refugees to run down a steep mountain to their deaths back into Cambodia. As persuasion, the Thai army used guns and the threat of certain death to force the Cambodians to flee into mountains strewn with minefields in which many of them perished. Thousands were blown to bits. The new, segregated camp was located in a low-lying rice paddy that flooded every time it rained, with houses of blue plastic tarps strung up on bamboo poles. People slept on the bare earth with no walls, often in the mud (Robinson 1998). The largest refugee camp for Cambodians was Khao I Dang, built in November of 1979 to accommodate Cambodians who arrived into Thailand during a three-month window of opportunity permitted by the Thai government (Chan 2003:27).

Until First Lady Rosalynn Carter's visit to the awful Sa Kaeo camp, built in the former rice paddy, the United States did not feel a collective need to aid Cambodians. There had been no overt U.S. soldiers in Cambodia, as there had been in Vietnam, and the Cambodians had not partnered with the U.S military as the Hmong and Vietnamese groups had. Few Americans had personal relationships with Cambodians. The sympathy aroused by the coverage of the camps faded quickly as other images came to take their place. The border camps were not controlled by the UNHCR, and therefore the residents were not automatically considered to be refugees as the residents of Khao I Dang were. The Refugee Act of 1980 provided procedures for admissions to the United States, adopted the UN definition of refugee status, and set an annual quota of 50,000 refugees.

It was still difficult to determine which Cambodians were “official refugees” and the camps, particularly the border camps, were beset with internal crime, perpetrated by former army members and other thugs who lorded it over the camps with the tacit approval and sometimes active participation of the Thai army. Thousands of Khmer Rouge were transferred into the camps with the same people they had brutalized. Most of the applicants who were accepted into the United States already had a family member or some connection with Americans prior to 1975, even though persecution, or the possibility of it, was to be used as the operating principle. Due to lobbying on the part of sponsoring groups, such as churches and NGOs, more than the intended original 30,000 managed to make it into the U.S., including some former Khmer Rouge members. A total of 148,665 Cambodians entered as refugees during those years (Chan 2003:29-31).

Refugees were dispersed when they came to the United States to reduce their physical and social impact on communities, along with the thought that they would integrate more quickly if immersed singly in American culture. Nevertheless, voluntary agencies, religious sponsors, and relatives all affected the settlement pattern of Cambodian refuge seekers. Once settled many Cambodians found and moved toward relatives or the familiarity of larger Cambodian communities. The availability of support programs also affected their settlement locations; some areas had activists advocating for the refugees, and other places exhibited antagonism toward them. The leaders of the first wave of Cambodians, many of whom had not had to live through the Khmer Rouge reign, were instrumental in helping to form organizations to help the refugees, and rebuild their religious institutions (Chan 2003:31-32).

The refugee populations that came to the United States did not represent a cross section of Vietnamese, Lao, or Cambodian society. First wave Vietnamese were well educated and a disproportionate number of them belonged to the Catholic Church. An example of the social and economic capital of this wave of refugees is Our Lady of LaVang, a large and prosperous Vietnamese Catholic church in east Portland established at that time. The second and third waves of Vietnamese still were made up of people of means, though the demographic composition shifted toward Vietnamese of Chinese ancestry who belonged to merchant classes as well as civil service. A large part of the second and third wave was also Cambodian, Lao, and ethnic minorities from those areas, including the 20,000 Hmong who arrived to the U.S. in the late 1970s. Religious and ethnic diversity entered into the Southeast Asian refugee community with the later waves of refugees (Kelly 1986:141).

Unfortunately for the first wave Vietnamese, and indeed for other refugee communities as well, the 7.2 percent of first wave arrivals who were doctors, and the 24 percent that were lawyers, managers, or professors, were not able to transfer their credentials to the American system. In the case of some Lao, Hmong, Mein, and Cambodians, the population had no written language, and contact with the United States began with service as covert agents in the CIA's war in what was then Indochina. They had been practicing swidden agriculture for the history of their peoples and entry into U.S. culture was brutal. All three waves tended to be young: 45.9 percent of first wave Vietnamese were under 18, and the third wave containing the Hmong had a Hmong rate of 51.6 percent under 18 years of age. Barring the Vietnamese first wave, few refugees

had skills marketable in the United States. Even managers and doctors faced barriers that included language, credentialing, and racism (Kelly 1986:142).

Kelly (1986) found definite movement among refugees. They moved from rural to urban areas, and began to coalesce after their scattering by the settlement agencies. Concentrated refugee communities began to form, in spite of the attempt to preclude them by geographically scattering refugees. Hmong, Lao, and Cambodians formed their own enclaves and have kept themselves generally separate from the Vietnamese. At the time Kelly wrote this article she cites 1500 Mein in Portland, Oregon. Kelly recognizes that she is looking at ethnic community formation. Economic factors had little to do with the internal migration of refugees, as the United States was in a deep recession at the time with low employment rates overall. Refugees were unemployed no matter where they were living, so there was little economic, cultural, or social benefit to living in isolation. People moved to places where they could form community, cultural networks, and social capital (Kelly 1986:145).

Southeast Asian refugees also face internal problems, many of them caused by the traumatic conditions under which they left Vietnam and the other countries. They have experienced downward mobility and family disruptions. One response has been to form ethnic associations, communities, and self-help organizations, some for the express purpose of maintaining and transmitting culture. Kelly writes that in 1977 alone 119 Vietnamese, 16 Cambodian, and eight Lao organizations were formed, with various goals ranging from job training and placement to cultural maintenance (Kelly 1986:149). IRCO and other groups in Portland continue to provide the same types of refugee services, some of them to Southeast Asian refugees freed from the prison-like camps not so long ago.

In the decades following the Vietnam War, Portland's demographics changed dramatically. Vietnamese, Cambodians, and Laotians arrived in the 1970s and early 80s, joined in the 1980s and 1990s by migrants from the Soviet Union, Romania, others from Southeast Asia, and Africans (Hardwick and Meacham 2008:228).

Refugees from Laos came to the United States shortly after the Vietnamese in the mid 1970s, and some more came a few years later. Many of the Lao refugees are Hmong, whose homeland was the mountains of Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand and Burma. Thousands of the Hmong had helped the CIA wage covert war; they then had to flee to "safety" in Thai refugee camps. There are approximately 95,000 Hmong in the United States, with about 2,200 in Oregon (Pfeifer and Lee 2003). Cambodian refugees who followed the same paths to the refugee camps joined the Hmong and Vietnamese. Two million Cambodians died at the hands of the Khmer Rouge. Many who survived walked to the Thai camps or fled into neighboring countries. Hardwick and Meacham (2008) find that Cambodians have a strong presence at cultural events. Cambodian youth play an activist role, organizing events, and trying to raise awareness of Cambodian culture and Cambodian presence in the area. In December of 2003 the U.S. ambassador in Thailand helped gain support to airlift to the U.S. 15,000 of the refugees who were still languishing in the soon-to-be- shuttered Thai camps. Some of these refugees spent almost their entire lives in refugee camps (Hardwick and Meacham 2008:243-46).

Most Cambodian refugees who entered after 1979 were in terrible shape; years of near starvation, trauma, sleep deprivation, hard labor, and terror took their toll. Yet they had many challenges still to go on American soil. But they were not passive victims as Chan (2004) reminds us. They formed communities, made choices, and self selected into

micro groups within the broader Cambodian community. There were differences of opportunities in various places, different economies, and patterns of social relations.

How well refugees and immigrants can respond to opportunity depends on the divergent human capital that different segments of the refugee population bring with them. Finally, regional variations exist, and opportunities change over time. Thus, where newcomers settle and the timing of their arrival often make a big difference in how they fare. [Chan 2004:81]

The 2000 Census found 2,569 Cambodians in Oregon, and 13,899 in Washington. This Oregon figure is fairly consonant with my participants who claim there are 3,000 initial Cambodians into Oregon, mainly through churches and family sponsors (Chan 2004:107). The greater Seattle area contains the largest number of Cambodians in the Pacific Northwest, with 12,391 counted in the 2000 census for the Seattle area. Many of the Cambodians living in Washington are secondary migrants from California, Oregon, and Texas (Chan 2004:120). The first Cambodians to arrive in Portland, half-dozen men from the Khmer navy who had escaped together in the same ship, were sponsored by Catholic Charities. During the peak years of the refugee influx, about 15 percent of the Indochinese refugees brought to Oregon were Cambodians, mostly placed in southeast Portland. Few secondary migrants come to Oregon, with its lack of public assistance programs for them, as well as the slow job market. Secondary migrants came to Oregon from California after the Northridge quake and to escape gangs. Portland's Cambodians work in electronics assembly and for sewing factories, hotels, and janitorial services. Intel and Tektronix hired large numbers of them, including Saron Khut, a member of one

of the families in this study. Chan finds few Cambodian owned businesses in Portland, supporting Saron's contention that his is the only Cambodian restaurant in the city (Chan 2004:121).

As soon as refugees arrived they registered at IRCO, where they met with job developers who spoke and still speak Vietnamese, Khmer, Lao, Hmong, Ethiopian, Russian, Romanian and other languages. Together they develop a job plan. Staff members explain the mechanics of the job search, but also the culture of the United States, such as people might encounter in their day-to-day institutional, educational, and governmental encounters. IRCO provides six weeks of ESL classes that can be extended if needed for employment. People have to take the jobs that IRCO finds for them. Chan credits this system with the low unemployment rate of Oregon-based Cambodians. The small number on public assistance tends toward the old, large families, or the ill. Oregon's Health Plan also is credited with good outcomes. Khmer-speaking case managers and interpreters, as well as the OHSU school clinic that serves southeast Asian refugees all lead to better outcomes for Oregon's Cambodians (Chan 2004:121-22). According to the 1980 census, 63.8 percent of Khmer lived below the federal poverty line. But they were not the worst off. Lowland Lao had a 69.1 percent poverty rate and 75.5 percent of the Hmong lived below the poverty rate. Vietnamese did better, with 36.9 below the poverty rate (Law 1988:171).

Some refugees had positive experiences with people that sponsored them, but some were treated like slaves, made to clean houses and work fields for little money. Because of these unhappy experiences and longing for home and the familiar, Cambodians tried their best to establish their own ethnic communities.

The dispersal policy of the federal government, the location of voluntary agencies and sponsors, the whereabouts of refugees' own families and friends, the refugees' tendency to compare the relative economic opportunities in different states, and the climate all played a role in determining where those communities sprang up. [Chan 2004:84-85]

Some later incoming Cambodians had trouble with earlier arriving relatives who had sponsored them. Relatives that did not have to live through the Pol Pot era said that their relatives had changed almost beyond recognition, as new arrivals were hard physically and emotionally. They had lost their humanity and their typical gentleness. And for the ones who had just come, they said that their families could not understand what they had been through, and they could not understand them. Families split up, with the newer arriving members going to live in Cambodian ghettos. They sought other Cambodians who had come in the later waves, the comradeship of those who could understand (Coleman 1990:369-370).

Many members of the Cambodian elite have suffered downward social mobility both in terms of prestige and incomes. Those who are now businesspeople or professionals remain at the top of the socioeconomic pyramid within their communities. A second segment consists of individuals who were professionals before 1975. Most of them came from elite or well-off families. They have had to struggle to retain their professional status, though they have suffered less downward mobility than the former elite. A third segment is made up of people, some of them former professionals who

could not meet the licensing or certification requirements in the U.S.; they often open small businesses. Being self-employed has helped them to retain a measure of social status and personal dignity. The fourth segment consists of younger professionals who received most of their education in the U.S. Some arrived as children or teens and some were born here. Some young professionals are children of the middle class, others are children of the working poor, some even come from families on public assistance.

Chan (2003) cites three particularly heart-breaking problems for the Cambodian community: First, their efforts to preserve the integrity of their Buddhist beliefs, which are being undermined by Christianity. Second, there are family conflicts, which are intense for some. Third, some refugees are unable to overcome the traumas they suffered during the war, the Khmer Rouge regime, and their escapes. Families face uneven rates of acculturation, with the youth becoming Americanized faster than the adults, with all of the tensions and challenges that can bring (Chan 2003:38-39).

The biggest dolor to the parents is the rejection and loss of Khmer language by their youth. “Second only to Buddhism, facility in spoken, if not written, Khmer is considered a true mark of being Cambodian.” One issue is the racism that Khmer kids face. My interviewees all said the same story: how tough it was to be the only one or two refugee kids in mainly White Oregon schools. Chan’s research supports the contention that generally even rebellious Southeast Asian youth do well at school (Chan 2004:213-14). Chan thinks that it is impossible for these youth to fully assimilate into mainstream White society. Full assimilation to the White middle class cannot occur for Asian Americans because most European Americans do not consider people of Asian ancestry as “real” Americans. Asian Americans can become part of the middle class or upper

class, but they can never become a part of the *White* middle class. “Being ‘American’ and being ‘White’ are not the same thing” (Chan 2004:215).

Eisenbruch (1991) writes that it is important to explore the meaning that refugees give to their suffering and the strategies they use to overcome it. He suggests that “cultural bereavement” is equally adequate terminology for what we think of as PTSD. He thinks that distress is not solely harmful; it may be a normal response with constructive components rather than a pathological response to trauma. The uprooted group loses its social structures, cultural values, and self-identity. The ensuing pain is a response to catastrophic loss. According to Eisenbruch, antidotes include active attempts to revive the cultural practices that once gave meaning to refugees’ lives (Eisenbruch 1991:673-74).

Families that participated in this study provided various reasons for their entrepreneurial endeavors. “A place to hang out” is a common rationale: a place where music, language, food, and cultural comfort and celebration are to be found. Another reason is to employ friends and relatives, as well as to support the family. Chan writes that even though Cambodians are from a country very different than the U.S. and have experienced horrors that fortunately few Americans will, in the end they desire the same things that all people want-- clothing, shelter, food, peace and safety, connection with others, and satisfaction in their work endeavors (Chan 2004:153). Chan also found concern for family, not just for employment, but also for family needs, such as educational expenses or medical costs. He writes about a Cambodian donut shop owner in southern California who stated that one of the main reasons he built his business is so that his relatives will be able to work for him rather than accepting public assistance. His

three reasons were: for his children, to sponsor his cousin's family, and to fulfill his dream of buying a little house (Chan 2004:148). The Southeast Asian ethic of collective endeavor persists in the new country. In a story echoing many that I have recorded, Chan writes of an Oregon family that required all of the members to pitch in order to survive. They spoke of life with eight family members and insufficient money to feed and clothe them all. The family used to go to the grocery store separately so that each member could buy the maximum number of items on loss-leader sale. They found clothes at Goodwill and they picked up cans and bottles wherever they went. Every weekend the whole family went out walking to look for cans. In summer they all picked strawberries, waking at 3:00 a.m. to drive to the fields. After the strawberry season, they picked blackberries. When the summer was over, the kids were grateful to be back in school. The woman interviewed made it through school and went to college, with the idea that she had so little to give back to her family, that at least she could give the diploma and help them in return (Chan 2004:154).

But it is the maintenance and transmission of culture that weighs the heaviest on the Cambodian and Southeast Asian populations participating in this study. This passage by Chan captures that urgency:

Still, what matters most to a vast majority of Cambodians, regardless of their socio-economic status, is the urgent need to preserve—indeed, to revive—“Cambodian culture” as they remember and idealize it. They dedicate themselves to that task perhaps more assiduously than other immigrants because the Khmer Rouge sought to destroy their heritage

with such methodical brutality... Virtually every Cambodian old enough to remember what happened feels a strong moral obligation to recover what was almost lost. Even though “Khmerness” or “Khmer culture” is itself in flux, that fact does not stop Cambodians in the United States and the rest of the world from trying to reconstruct an ideal as they remember it or as they wish it to be. For that reason, the “Khmer culture” that Cambodians who live outside Cambodia are trying to preserve may be more reified and essentialized than the cultural forms evolving within Cambodia itself.

[Chan 2004:168]

## Chapter 6: Sharing Life Stories: Old-timers and In-migrants

### Introduction to life stories

Ethnography is a messy business. Rather than gathering nice sanitized surveys, or structured interviews for semi-statistical analysis (couched as ethnography), true fieldwork can make you hurt. It takes time and effort, alters your consciousness, and tests your abilities to meet and understand the human lived experiences of others on their own timetables, terms, and turf. It is not a quick process. Impatience is counterproductive. For trust to be generated between researcher and participants, reciprocity is necessary. The researcher has to be willing to give of self, to let the participants know him or her, and in so doing feelings for participants arise. If there is no emotion aroused by the phenomena one is looking at, then why do it? We write *about* phenomena, but it is the people who teach us. In sharing of life stories and close association it is inevitable that ethnographic researchers and participants both will be changed by the experience.

The three main families who centered this study are now my friends. They care for me and I care for them. We share dinners and birthdays together, have mourned the dead at funerals together, danced at celebrations together. I do not fear adulteration of this study. I am honest about my role and conscientious in my analyses. As I was working on the end of this writing, I have been diagnosed with stage IV lung cancer. I have been given very little time to live, and even less time to write as a conscious human being. My research participants, my three families, and the many others I've met through the years all have ideas of how I should proceed in these final days. They shower me with recipe cures and the blessing of Allah and Buddha, with hugs and smuggled-in vitamin

concoctions. Everyone has a scheme to beat the odds. Everyone tries to help. I thought the study would continue for years after the dissertation was done, but that is not to be. I am grateful for this outpouring of affection and trust. My phone and inbox are full of love from people who I promised to respect. I promised to tell their stories because they asked me to. Now their stories are my story too. And I'll try to fulfill my promise.

### Old-timers, Developers and In-migrants

Interest in the Montavilla neighborhood began years ago, over coffee, on a chance meeting, with an improbable ally, Don Hanna, a descendant of Lebanese immigrants, and an East Portland local developer and realtor. Don gave me a tour around the neighborhood, showing me historical locations and his own recent acquisitions comprised of much of the retail core of Stark Street. Beginning in 2004 Don set about redeveloping this historic thoroughfare, fallen on hard times, in conjunction with some anchor tenants, and by 2009 he was still redeveloping his buildings with no help from grants or the city. Don detailed the histories of each property we passed, and explained who owned the other places and for how long. When Hanna started his project and for a few years afterward, the doorways of his properties were filled with sleeping bags, trash, and used needles. Drug dealing and prostitution were common sights on Stark and on the near area of 82<sup>nd</sup> Street, but Don, undeterred, had a vision. When I visited, Don Hanna's office walls were covered with framed historic photos of Montavilla in its first heyday. Fancy Stark Street businesses at the turn of the century glowed sepia in their wood frames along with scenes of the drugstore and livery on Stark, the streetcar systems, and the shops, all

frozen in time there on Don's walls. Don has carried this vision of Stark Street's glory in his soul. He has also been a shrewd businessman in his own right. In the cheap, historic rundown properties on Stark, among the closed storefronts, old taverns, and hot tub businesses and scattered among the condoms and used needles, Don saw the opportunity to return the neighborhood to what it was when his ancestors came from Lebanon to make their livelihood in the New World of Portland. So he bought a number of the buildings, while another investor bought the theater and pizza parlor across the street. Immigrants or their descendants, including other Lebanese Americans, actually own much of the street. Don rented the largest storefront out to an anchor, the Bipartisan Café. Soon there were bike racks out front, much to Don's puzzlement (He could not understand giving up a precious parking spot for a bike rack), and middle class Whites were hanging out with their laptops and babies, bikes securely locked to the formerly contested rack. Other businesses moved into Don's properties, all high class. Bakers and chefs arrived with their entourages and customers.

Don talked about his views of the area:

I kind of remembered what it [the neighborhood] used to be. I thought what we needed was a coffee shop to anchor it and the rest will come, and it has. That was actually my vision from the very beginning and the coffee shop came first and the rest of it just kind of fell into place . . . There used to be a lot of Asian gangs around here, and it is still owned by Asians [the building across the street from the Bipartisan] . . . The building is not the most attractive for what we wanted to do here, but . . .

to buy it and do something with it was not very realistic. We would have to put the store front back on and put some windows in it.

Most of the new business owners live in the neighborhood and they have an interest in the area that is larger than just their commercial interests. Don is implying that they are trying to build community as well. Neighbors banded together to fight the drug house next to the Mexican low rider chop shop, right around the corner from the Country Cat restaurant, and managing to have the place shut down and vacated. Other neighbors banded together to stop prostitutes from doing business on their doorsteps, and in the heat of that endeavor, they all brought lawn chairs out to the prostitution “stroll” and sat down with their snacks. They successfully stopped commercial sexual activity and public drug taking in their blocks. Don Hanna’s vision is successful. In-migrant interviews show that Stark Street is seen as the face of Montavilla. The businesses on Stark are identified as representative of Montavilla and the main attractant for over 90 percent of in-migrants and shoppers interviewed.

During our tour Don expresses frustration with other businesses, such as the Asian-owned building across the street. He does not want things in his redeveloped area that do not fit in with the aesthetic that he has created. Some of the older businesses actually disappeared as this study was ongoing. The corner west of the Bipartisan on the same side of the street had a mixed-use building at the start of this study. In the ground floor was an inset door, shadowed by the heavy stone of the multi-story building. Asian men sat in chairs outside, smoking and playing cards at all hours. A peek into the doorway and then a full-on foray revealed a Vietnamese pool hall, complete with

Buddhist shrine right inside the entrance. This was a place for Vietnamese males to hang out, play pool, eat, smoke and gossip together. It did not last long after the revival, and the building has since been vacated and renovated, an example of cultural clashes that involve differing notions of the use of public space, economic impetus, and aesthetic sensibilities.

Don and his tenant Adam Sappington, the owner of the Country Cat restaurant, managed to put a dent into the drug business on the street by forcing the City to remove the pay phone that had been out front. That phone and the drug house right around the corner from it had fostered a steady stream of drug deals in front of the restaurant. Hanna, Sappington, and the other business owners approached the problem with power. They harassed the police department for assistance, lobbied for legally enforced drug- and prostitution-free zones, managed to get the phone taken out despite City resistance, got the drug house condemned, and joined with the lawn chair-toting neighbors to drive prostitution elsewhere. In all likelihood, however, the rise of Back Page.com and Craig's list also are responsible for the disappearance of all but the lowliest, addicted prostitutes. Such activism is not all negative, the goal not being just to drive out the undesirable; the idea is to create things to foster development and community, though notions of appropriate community involvement vary widely.

The farmer's market is wildly successful, tucked into a tiny lot across from the Bipartisan Café, and local stores with handmade clothing and artisan products have opened on the street. The restaurateurs and new residents come in with expectations and powers. They expect order and support, and they know how to get what they want. The redevelopment in the area empowers old-time residents who are happy to see their

neighborhood coming up again, and who are willing to put some sweat into change.

These motivated individuals and the organizations that they form and belong to have different, at times clashing, views of their roles in the neighborhood and what they want to accomplish.

Different segments of Montavilla have different notions of community vitality. Don Hanna and Adam Sappington, along with other business owners on Stark Street, want a neighborhood that is aesthetically pleasing to middle class customers; home owners want peace in their front yards and a social life in the neighborhood; the homeless want shelter. The needs and desires of other population segments are somewhat dependent on culture. Asian communities want gathering spaces and entrepreneurial opportunities as well as employment, as do other immigrant populations, while young urban professionals want entertainment, outdoor recreation, good food, and music. Then there are those who see community service as an indicator of community vitality. They assess vitality by the level of services the community supports. Goals conflict at this articulation point. The businessperson's view of community vitality, and the Neighborhood Association's view of community vitality are in direct conflict with the volunteers who support the homeless, the sad prostitutes on 82<sup>nd</sup>, and the single moms, among other less fortunate segments.

On Friday nights, 82<sup>nd</sup> street is inhospitable. Cars roar by and there are few crossings should one need to get to the other side of the road. The sidewalks are narrow, constantly constricted by the car lots that take up space incrementally, one concrete barrier support at a time. Blood red light floods onto the parking lot of the former Safeway market, now Hong Phat grocery store, as the red glow mixes with the acid

orange of the highway streetlights that line 82<sup>nd</sup>, or Hwy. 213, as it is known on the map. A taco wagon with great food is tucked in behind a tire and detail shop, and weary people wait at the bus stop on 82<sup>nd</sup> and Pine, south of Burnside. The old couple shivers in the cold wind, waiting for the number 72 bus on 82<sup>nd</sup> street, in front of Sts. Peter & Paul Church. It is early evening and the lights glow from the church as women inside prepare the Friday night meal. Tiny and wizened, nut brown faces wrinkled like apple dolls they used to make in the old days, the couple share a bent clay pipe, smoke fleeing in the wind. The woman is wearing Hmong clothing, a skirt with colorful patterns woven on a black background, tied at the waist without fasteners, in the traditional style. Her headdress looks wrapped in the usual manner, but it is an old western scarf in faded blue and green patterns, still quite dignified when wrapped on her head. The man wears a cheap black stocking cap, but way up on his head, not folded, only pulled down as far as the tops of his ears, so that the hat stands up like a black chef's hat. He is shivering, his lined face impassive as he wraps his arms around himself for warmth. He wears a cheap navy colored parka, with a bag over his shoulder. Hands hidden, lined faces crack as she hands him the pipe they share. Her jacket is western, a brightly colored fleece that actually matches the greens and purples in her skirt. Many sad brown people walk by as I sit there. As the sky darkens and the bus arrives, a golden glow spills out of the church's windows, a scant benediction on the misery outside.

The Church behind the bus stop, Sts. Peter & Paul, is one of the points of friction between differing views of the neighborhood vitality and involvement. Sts. Peter & Paul Episcopal Church is the home of the Rahab's Sisters ministry. Rahab's Sisters is a unique organization, started in Oregon and not actually replicated in its current form elsewhere.

The mission of Rahab's Sisters is to feed, and supply needed sundries to the prostitutes and homeless women of Portland. Once a week, on Friday nights, volunteers, many of them members of the local Montavilla Neighborhood Association, other church communities, and secular service groups, gather to cook, and care for their sisters less fortunate. There is no proselytization; women do not have to pray for their meal or agree to seek salvation. For three hours an armed security guard shelters the women, since all males are forbidden on the premises during hours of service. Volunteers fill orders for toothpaste, feminine products, underwear, and other sundries, all stored in an over-packed, borrowed church closet. Other volunteers sit and speak with the guests while their fellows serve plated meals on silky purple tablecloths decorated with candles and flowers. For over ten years Rahab's Sisters has been operating here, in one of Portland's epicenters of misery and despair.

It is hard to like the guests; this is one of the few places in which these women have some power, so they often exercise the same behavior that they are subject to in their lives. They can be rude and demanding, but sometimes they make you love them, and their desires are very close to the goals that all of us have. I analyzed ten years worth of comments left behind by the guests, and I had to weep at the mix of despair and hope that these drug addicted, homeless women articulate in their prayers and comments. The daily struggles that they face as they try to live private lives in public, in front of the rest of us, those more fortunate than they, would be hard for anyone to survive, much less these women, who generally do not have the cultural capital that others do. As someone who has lived homeless, in hellish circumstances, I can state that the energy needed just

to survive day by day on the streets is more than most of you could muster without breaking.

Though members of the Montavilla Neighborhood Association do volunteer at Sts. Peter and Paul, the Association itself picketed outside the Church when the Rahab's ministry began. The gist of the complaint is that any services offered just bring more homeless people to the area, and the Association is against that, understandably so to an extent. Of course people have to go somewhere, and all humans should have right to shelter, food and safety, though we all know they do not. This neighborhood clash is precipitated by conflicting views within one population segment--that of engaged, professional homeowners. The homeless issue in Montavilla pushes some of the homeowners, particularly the younger segment outside their ethical comfort zone. They butt up against pragmatism while their progressive ethics dictate compassion. Three years ago a meeting was held at the Montavilla Methodist Church, not far from Sts. Peter and Paul. The Montavilla Neighborhood Association and the Methodist pastor arranged the meeting. This meeting was precipitated by widespread neighborhood revolt. The Methodist pastor came into the parish six months prior, cognizant of the needs of the homeless population and with a feeling of responsibility to them, founded in prior homeless ministry work. He came to a church in the middle of a clash between homeless people who used the extensive alcoves of the church to sleep in, and residents and business people who are tired of drunken fights, used needles, defecation, and noise in their front yards. The neighborhood blames the Methodist Church for attracting the homeless by allowing use of its premises. The pastor of the Methodist Church opened the meeting with this statement:

So when I came here I wanted to just—I wanted to really listen and not kind of impose my own philosophies, my own dreams on this congregation, but really give them a chance to kind of share what their understanding—what their responsibilities are regarding the homeless. It seems clear to me that over the last several years there have been various attempts to define what that role should be that have come and gone, which have left the church kind of paralyzed, unable to have a real clear sense of purpose and mission . . . The thing that we basically all agree on is that we want whatever we do to have the most effect for the most people with the least amount of negative impact. And that what we currently have is the least positive effect for the least amount of people with the most negative impact in that we don't do anything except stumble around the fact that there are people sleeping on our properties, so we help four or five people kind of maybe in a little way and that creates a huge amount of negative impact on the neighborhood. And so, the first thing I want to say is I want to apologize on behalf of the church. I have a house across the street from a park. I have two little kids. I am very cognizant of what it means to be in and around people who are often unstable and not always respectful of space and time, and so I just want to be clear on that. I also want you to know that we are taking this very seriously. We are having a lot of meetings now, a lot of conversations about how to be proactive, and it is our intention that we want to be good neighbors in this community

and we have absolutely no interest in fighting against your concerns. So it's our hope, as a community and congregation, to be part of this neighborhood, to be part of the solution on how all of us together try to figure out how to be responsive to the homeless in our neighborhood and how to mitigate the negative impact that that has. [January 2013 meeting transcript]

Three participants at this meeting were representatives of Sts. Peter and Paul: Reverend Kurt Neilson, the pastor, along with his daughter, and Jamie, an active volunteer member of the Sts. P&P congregation. This was my introduction to Rahab's Sisters and a glimpse, here in the midst of opposition, of other Montavilla community members who serve their fellows. The Saints Peter & Paul bunch were spies so to speak. They came to this meeting, arranged by an organization that does not particularly support them, to see if they could add to the conversation and find a way to reach out to the community that is disturbed by the side effects of their ministries. A year later silent, unseen mutiny occurs in the Montavilla Neighborhood Association when its female members start cooking and serving meals for Rahab's Sisters. It seems that at least one half of the population decided that the joys of service were at least worth as much as the security of a sanitized neighborhood.

Another local clash that illustrates the different neighborhood views toward development is the Safeway/Hong Phat conversion. The Safeway store on 82<sup>nd</sup> and Pine, just north of Sts. Peter & Paul Church was a rundown store. By the time it closed, the rate of beer theft forced the store to shut the other entrances, with the only open door staffed

by a security guard. When the Safeway store closed I interviewed long-term residents and newer in-migrants and analyzed a number of list serves to see what people thought about the closure. White respondents overwhelmingly are dismayed by the loss of the Safeway. They state that they now have no place to get groceries, in spite of the numerous Asian markets in the area that carry both American products and fresh produce. Many respondents hoped that a Whole Foods Market would come into the Safeway building, a futile desire, since that area of Portland is generally low income with a large ethnic minority component. There is a disconnect between the desires of White residents and the needs and incomes of the majority of the neighborhood. When a Vietnamese family bought the Safeway building, tore down the half-lit, broken Safeway sign and put up a shiny, new, huge red Hong Phat sign in its place, a psychic keening among the White population began to rise. Respondents of this population segment were miffed that an Asian market was taking the place of milk, bread, and peanut butter. In return, the owners of Hong Phat took care to stock an entire aisle of organic products and American and Hispanic foods, including bread and milk. The owners of Hong Phat soon purchased two old houses behind the market, razed them (releasing many rats), and then built another large addition onto the original building in order to house more Asian owned businesses. Three years of interviews and conversations with White respondents provided the following reasons for avoiding Hong Phat and other ethnic businesses: distaste for the types of food, appearance and/or smell of food, dislike of vegetables or lack of knowledge of cooking techniques for vegetables and unfamiliar foods, fear of appearing “dumb,” fear of language barriers, and lastly, a belief that they would be made fun of by staff (Interviews 2012-2015).

Hong Phat also uses other methods to invite Whites and other groups in. The store installed a coffee shop with espressos and cappuccinos; they put Udi's granola right by the front checkout stands, and continue to add Western style products, as well as halal and Hispanic items on demand. There is a conscious effort to serve as a neighborhood hub for food, produce, snacks, and interaction. Tables, umbrellas and chairs are outside in front of the store, with kerosene space heaters for the cold days. Old Vietnamese men, in their dandy clothing sit out front drinking coffee and smoking cigarettes. The parking lot is now full of cars, and hundreds of customers, many of them Muslim or Latin@, drive away any nefarious parking lot raiders. The change was a definite shift up. Is this gentrification?

The final example of that friction point between cultures that I will use is the example of Mekong Bistro and its inception. Saron Khut, the owner of Mekong Bistro had owned another restaurant-cum-sports bar in southeast Portland, out past 90<sup>th</sup> Street. That business closed after a shooting that left one man dead. Saron was caught unaware when a man with a grudge came in looking for revenge. Inside he found the man he was looking for, celebrating a birthday and shot him. Since the violence was between Cambodians, Saron was labeled as a possible gang member after the shooting, though he was an innocent business owner, just as traumatized by the shooting as any refugee would be. So when Saron decided to open a new restaurant in its current northeast Portland location on 82<sup>nd</sup> and Siskiyou, he reached out to the neighborhood associations and to residents attending a community meeting at the East Precinct building.

Saron introduced himself to the community members present and explained his ethnicity and his business. He handed out flyers and invited the neighborhood to come

and see the restaurant. Just as the Safeway parking lot had degraded into a drug and alcohol zone, so had the parking lot at the open air Asian-themed and Asian-owned mall on 82<sup>nd</sup>, where Saron was installing the new iteration of his restaurant. Before he opened, the lot was full of people taking drugs and prostitution transactions were carried out in the dark recesses of the large lot. The mall is set in a dainty pocket neighborhood of older bungalows and ranch style homes that was cut off and separated from Montavilla by Hwy 84 long after it was built as a neighborhood. The empty lot was a blight that led to residential burglaries and other forms of undesirable behavior. I assumed the neighbors would be happy to have a large business move in, with the added bonus of drinks and eats.

I met Saron at his restaurant shortly after it opened and we quickly became conversational. I explained that I was writing about refugee communities and their meeting places, and that was all it took to make a friend. He explained that there was no liquor license yet because the Madison South Neighborhood Association, which is the pocket neighborhood that surrounds the mall, researched Saron when he applied for the liquor license. When the Neighborhood Association, through typical due diligence, learned that the newest liquor license applicant to their neighborhood was a Cambodian man who had hosted a gang shooting in his prior bar, the Association sprang into oppositional action. Research reciprocity required my assistance with his liquor license problems. I agreed to show up at the Oregon Liquor Control Commission (OLCC) meeting to testify in Saron's favor. I underestimated the opposition and overestimated the defense.

The room at the OLCC building was packed with spectators. One side of the center aisle was packed with Cambodian faces, the opposite side of the aisle was packed with Neighborhood Association faces. There was a marked contrast between the brown faces and dull work clothes of the Asian supporters and the middle class demeanor of the White Neighborhood Association crowd. Two other Westerners beside myself were there to testify for Saron. One of them was a former business associate and the other was an older White couple from the neighborhood that loved Saron's mother's cooking. The opposition was surprisingly virulent. Neighborhood Association members implied in quite plain language that Saron was a Cambodian gang member and that his business would bring trouble to the neighborhood. They presented in force to prevent the liquor license that was finally granted conditionally.

Mekong Bistro hosts many ethnic events. From Africa Night to Cambodian New Year, the parking lot is often full. Now nights in the mall are not so edgy. There are no prostitutes hunkered in the shadows, no dealers scattering when the police cruise. Up to 300 people may be in the Eternity Hall section of Mekong Bistro, celebrating a graduation, a birthday, or a wedding, and local neighbors know that they can get a plate of noodles and a beer at midnight, in an area that was devoid of life before the restaurant moved in. Acceptance is still grudging three years later, but the Neighborhood Association had a scantily attended meeting in the restaurant recently and residents are slowly warming up to the place. The parking lot is safe to walk in, there are no more used needles rolling around the sidewalk, and families celebrate their life events in a place transformed. Light now streams from windows that used to be graffiti fodder.

Development in the Montavilla neighborhood is spotty. Stark Street is in the midst of what might be called classic gentrification. Mekong Bistro and Hong Phat have changed the environments around those businesses and demographic data shows both increased costs of living and increasing racial diversity. The City of Portland with administrative help from the newly constructed Portland Community College south campus is now using ethnicity specifically to target development to the southernmost portion of Montavilla, down by Division Street.

Various development schema are used by cities to attract development, or what we might call gentrification. One method is ethnic marketing, for instance ads for fun times in Chinatown, or Cinco de Mayo and St Patrick's Day celebrations that bring in business annually. Cities proudly advertise the wonders that can be found here at home--without a passport. You can visit Mexico in Los Angeles, experience Vietnam in Orange County, or enjoy Cuban culture in Miami. Ethnic marketing attracts people with discretionary income and at least mildly adventurous tastes. Land and housing in Portland is becoming more expensive and scarcer, therefore neighborhoods further from the downtown core are becoming desirable. In-migrants look for attractions, and ethnic tourism, or ethnic adventures *are* attractions. Due to the increased costs of moving, Portland in-migrants generally bring assets with them that improve tax bases of the neighborhoods they settle in.

The City of Portland recognizes the potential for development in the Montavilla area, as do the many merchants and entrepreneurs of varied ethnic groups who have owned businesses here since before Portland became so attractive. In September of 2014 an organization named *Know Your City*, in conjunction with the Jade District

Organization, hosted a tour of the south Montavilla area, around Division and 82<sup>nd</sup> Ave. The tour, led by Jade District manager Todd Struble was part of the kick-off to a new marketing campaign for Portland's newest attraction, the district itself. After years of neglect and decades of unappreciated hard work on the part of the Asian and other immigrants who built the area up, immigrant contributions to local culture are now used as marketing tools, ethnic tourist locales, and honey, with which to draw in-migrants to the planned apartment developments in the area. Rosaline Hui, the owner of *The Portland Chinese Times*, spoke with the tour participants in her newspaper's office. She clearly spoke about the perception of neglect her communities experienced in east Portland:

When the city started to say something about 82<sup>nd</sup>, I was so excited. You know, China Town doesn't really have Chinese. A lot of Chinese already moved out to here. Then, suddenly the city wanted to invest—make this area a better place. I always felt the city didn't do much in this area. Then, for all those years, I was saying that people like us—immigrants like us—especially Asian. Because this area there are lots of Asian, Vietnamese, Thai, etc. all those people have had business here for all those years. I always think that for the past years Asian immigrants really have contributed a lot to this area's economic development. And then, now the city has started looking at this area now. I think it is so good. When I watch the news, when they talk about 82<sup>nd</sup> street...it's second hand cars and prostitutes. But, this place actually is not bad. This is actually a really good place we call home. Because we spend: we shop

here, we eat here, and we have all of our activities happen in this area.

When they have the Jade District, of course, I was so eager to maybe help.

[Jade District Tour, September 2014]

An excerpt from the tour guide's patter clearly shows the effort to appeal to what might be called *hipster* sensibilities:

The issue the community has for the Jade District is to try and be that international district of Portland. So people can get that authentic cultural experience from other places. Also, feel like they are still a part of Portland. For example, the night market tonight, a lot of people thought it was kind of going to be like an Asian night market. But, we really want to emphasize that there will be a lot of other vendors there. And, we're still in Portland, so we're going to have some Polka performers out there, and we have a beer garden with a local brewpub that just started a couple months ago. They brew their beer with rice sourced from here in Portland.

[Jade District Tour September 2014]

Further conversation with the tour guide, who is also an administrator for the Jade District development organization, elicits a discussion of gentrification. Todd, the guide explains to the tour that gentrification is a worry for the development area. The City and the developers think that if Asian and other ethnic communities are involved in decision making, they will maintain their communities in the area, and the ethnic tourist attraction

component will continue to support the minorities who own these businesses. This is a self-reinforcing development tool predicated on racial delineation and ethnic essentialization. When asked what the Jade District notion and pan-ethnic cooperation had to do with development Todd replied:

I think the authentic cultural experience—it's the most diverse census tract in Oregon. So, you can go and get authentic Chinese food, authentic Vietnamese food. So it's kind of an authentic cultural experience that exists here today. International. There is also a Hispanic population out there. A Slavic community. So, there are a lot of immigrant populations that are out there. Not just Asian Pacific Islander communities. That's what we're trying to do. We are not leaving anyone out. [Jade District Tour, September 2014]

Ironically, the tour itself was quite informational: all but two of the thirty participants had never been in this part of Portland, and people expressed apprehension about being in southeast Portland, couched in joking terms. The tour meandered through varied Asian businesses, Vietnamese sandwich shops, Chinese herbal medicine dispensaries, Thai soup restaurants, Fubonn Asian Market, and Beijing barbeque joints. Visitors poked at produce, sampled mildly spiced spring rolls, and scattered around the mix of Asian shops housed under Fubonn's roof. At one point, walking down Division by 82<sup>nd</sup> the tour, White, measured, trim, and well dressed, passed a small pink house. Standing on the porch was a tall, golden black woman, with her blond hair tied up in a

bun. She was smoking a cigarette and wearing a bra, torn fishnet stockings held up by garters, and a bustier. Arched on stiletto heels, she was young, well built, and insouciant. She smiled a wicked smile as the line of well-dressed White intra-tourists walked past her with averted eyes and a wide berth. The sign on the pink house read: “Exotic Tan,” “Private Dancers,” and “Tanning Booths.” The neighborhood was perhaps still a little too exciting for these scions of Portland’s toney west side.

Do not let cultural clashes, car lots, homeless humans, prostitution and gentrification put you off. Montavilla is a pretty good place to live, interviews with respondents from both recent (<10 years) and long-term (>10 years) residents of all ages, colors, and persuasions. Montavilla is their preferred neighborhood. Almost 100 percent of shoppers, in-migrants, and long-term residents cited “diversity” as Montavilla’s primary attraction. Views of the neighborhood’s social life and cultural offerings are overwhelmingly positive, understandable since the neighborhood is thriving, at least in sections. But what about the old-timers, those who stuck with the neighborhood through ups and downs? Some of them still live in homes built by their grandparents or parents. Montavilla, though predominantly White, historically housed Black and Chinese middle class families. The neighborhood always had a small minority component that is now increasing. Sixteen long-term residents were interviewed. Since the focus is on history, perception of change and satisfaction with the neighborhood, no effort was made to recruit long-term residents from particular populations; the only criteria for inclusion to this part of the study is length of residency (>10 years).

Long-term residents of all ethnicities universally state that they perceive growing diversity in the neighborhood. White respondents have nuanced racial categorizations in

place. Over the last twenty years long-term White residents have seen an influx of refugee populations that have changed the face of the city. But this change is overlaid atop the changes other, prior refugee groups brought with them. For instance the first Vietnamese refugee wave to Portland arrived as IRCO was forming. Through mutual assistance associations and federal development monies, Vietnamese bought properties on Sandy Blvd, and on Glisan Street, as well as in other east Portland pockets. A belief in the power of entrepreneurship to lift refugees out of poverty into sustainability fostered this plan; decades later Vietnamese landlords rent small business space to Somali entrepreneurs. The Vietnamese educated their children, bought homes, and sometimes even built homes and temples back in their homelands with the money they scrimped and saved working long hours in their shops and eateries, now they rent their properties to the next wave of New Portlanders. But there is a caveat; there is a difference in the way that Asians and Africans are perceived by mainstream Americans.

African refugees and immigrants are enmeshed in American racial categorization, with all the racist effects that implies, but perceptions of Asians are more nuanced in the United States. Though Asians are seen as “other” there are also unrealistic and essentialized expectations regarding Asians floating through the American discourse. The widely discussed myth of Asian academic superiority, and the myth that Asians thrive economically in the United States, affect the way that Montavilla’s long-term residents see the newcomers in their neighborhood. Long-term resident interviews produced a surprising finding: Asians are not seen as a minority in the same sense that other populations are. Speaking of neighborhood change, respondents recounted their memories of Vietnamese influx. People remembered how Vietnamese businesses started

to pop up on Sandy Blvd, clustered in what was then named “Little Saigon.” They see the Vietnamese differently than the African American businesses that began to migrate eastward into Montavilla as Albina and the Alberta street area gentrified. Speaking of her perception of racial turnover one woman said:

*That [African Americans] is one of those (groups) you never saw in the area. You’d see some Asian. That would start more over towards Sandy and go our way. You’d see them here and there in the neighborhood, but you never saw anyone of color. Oh no, you didn’t see anyone. Then the [African American] church moved in there and then you’d see a couple little businesses like a barbershop and some other businesses. And then just in the last like 2-3 years all of a sudden there is all of this Somali that has moved in there, especially right by my street up above 69<sup>th</sup>. So that whole strip that used to be a car parts place has all become Somali. Then if you look carefully, a lot of people wouldn’t notice it who live in the neighborhood that wouldn’t shop there or who wouldn’t notice it—you could see like an East African meats shop and different shops along the way. [Italics added, April 17, 2014 interview]*

Other long-term residents expressed the same nuanced views of the people of color in their neighborhood. There was a sharp distinction when discussing African American in-migrants, Asians, and Africans. Asians were never put in the “Black” category, though they were “othered.”

Long-term residents noted increased cultural offerings, and they think that the change occurring has happened rather quickly. They complain of increased traffic, and they note the loss of older families as people die off and their children move elsewhere. Five of the thirteen long term residents interviewed lived in or owned homes in the area that had been in their families for more than one generation. Older respondents spoke of the chaos and division caused when Hwy. 84 was inserted into the neighborhood. Four of the of long-term residents interviewed state they were going to sell their properties and move into less populated areas, while two others had already moved and they were renting out their properties. All long-term residents note the demographic shift toward greater diversity. The oldest respondent, 75 years old and a third generation resident, remembered a time when the only minorities in Montavilla were merchants and the shoe store on Stark had a fluoroscope to look at the bones of your feet with. The insertion of the freeway and the rise of the car lots on 82<sup>nd</sup> in the 1970s are widely seen as blows to the Montavilla culture that long-term residents remember. Respondents agree that the decline of the neighborhood occurred between 1975 and 2000, with an upswing after that time, and people notice increasing numbers of house renovations and fewer rental properties.

## Chapter 7: The Story of Cambodians and Southeast Asians in Montavilla

### My Mekong Family

The music is deafening. A zaftig Cambodian crooner is performing that blend of traditional Cambodian, psychedelic rock, and piano bar tunes that is modern Cambodian music. In the corner of the restaurant an older woman is teaching three teenage Cambodian girls in brightly colored silk how to make hand gestures for the Cambodian conga line. In adjacent Eternity Hall the party is heating up: a sinuous line of dancers men, women, toddlers, young and old, all in their finest, most colorful garb, hands, wrists, and elbows entwined, graceful and alike, over one hundred Cambodian families, some learning, some teaching. Silks and lace in blues, purples, yellows, greens. A toddler is knocked over, laughing, rolling like a little cushion, perilously underfoot, only to be picked up and set upright to dance again. There is no English spoken, no need. Syna has made puffed rice cakes, drizzled with caramel, they are next to the register in plastic baggies, and beside them is a pile of battered fried bananas with black sesame sprinkled on them. The restaurant is rife with representation. A Buddhist shrine sits at the front door, and murals of tranquil Mekong River scenery adorn the walls. Mekong Bistro is Saron Khut's dream and his second restaurant. The crowd moves like an ocean, packed tightly and swaying in unison.

Ethnography is messy, done right it provides a snapshot of a time, and rich understanding of culture. It cannot be done at arm's length, and it takes commitment, not just to scholarship, but also to people. Trust and mutual communication lead to relationships that are not in every case perforce pleasant, but which can become

permanent. The Khut family, just as the Somali Abdis and the Yugoslav Jungic family, are more than just research participants; they are part of my life. We developed trust and affection.

Jai, Saron's wife and the co-owner of the restaurant, and I have taken lunches together, we have been fitted for traditional Cambodian clothes at the seamstresses house, we have shared our secrets over drinks, and we have gone out on the town together. She had just walked into their house, which is right across the street from the restaurant, when she got my message to call her. She called me right away and she was breathless from walking and trying to get ready to go work at the restaurant for the late crowd. I told her to sit down, but she giggled and said she was fine. I told her to really sit down; I had to talk to her. I wished I could have been there in person. She began to weep, and refuse to believe it will happen. She wept and wailed "No!" for a while, and then she gained some resolve and said: "I know how to fix this." She explained that she had a friend with stage four cancer who was cured with a certain concoction. She struggled to find the recipe in her e-mail while she wept. Later that night my phone beeped, it was a message from Jai telling me to look for the recipe in my in-box. Here is what the message said:

I want you to know that I have hope and I want to share with you about a friend of mine who just beat cancer. He was at stage 4 and with no hope from the doctors but he and his family did not gave up. He told me what he did and now he is 100 percent healthy. He said that he took the following below to help him beat cancer. Vitamin B17-Toxic drink,

Vitamin B15–Toxic drink, zinc Cintrate–energy, Pancreatic Enzymes.

[Personal communication, March 18, 2015]

The whole Khut clan came down to Corvallis on Monday March 23rd with one week's worth of food. They know that my appetite is bad, so they cooked enough tasty Cambodian food to keep me going for a while. It seems that everyone has his or her recipe for life and almost all of them involve food or herbs. Saron and Jai were mortified because they forgot the dessert. At three p.m. they left to spend the rest of their day and night in the restaurant. After the two-hour drive home they will work until 2:00 a.m. serving drinks and slinging noodles.

Saron Khut was born in 1970 in Cambodia. His mother Saroen, Saron himself, and his two sisters lived through the killing fields genocide of the mid 1970s. The Khmer Rouge took their father, and his mother hid the family photos wrapped in plastic, buried in the front yard. When her husband was killed she fled with three small children and the tattered photos hidden in their possessions. Decades later we recovered the photos by scanning and painstakingly repairing them in Photoshop. In one photo, Saroen is marrying her husband, Saron's father. They stand side by side, surrounded by family and friends in a traditional wooden building, their young faces happy, Saroen's tiny feet in white sandals, her body sheathed in pale lace and silk satin, both of them in their best clothing. The photo had been folded, dampened and holed. Along with other pictures it had been buried in the front yard for months at the least, then hidden and carried across the water and into the refugee camps. It was one of the few tattered remainders of their old lives. Saroen managed to carry these memories through the camps and across the

oceans to replenish her family's history. To see their smiles at their wedding is heartbreaking.

We escaped, we survived. We escaped to Thailand and stayed there as refugees for six months. And then we have sponsored - our uncle came here first, sponsored us. And he came directly to Portland and sponsored us to Portland. My father was killed in 1976 or late 1975. I don't remember exactly the time, but yes, we lost our father. [Interview, Saron Khut, April 6, 2013]

Portland was a good place for Saron's family. His uncle came with the first wave of Cambodians so he was here already to sponsor the rest of the family. Portland also appealed to the family because it had resonance with home. When I asked Saron what it was that made him stay here instead of starting a business elsewhere he replied:

The diversity of just people from different cultures. And so, for us it was more like home to come here because we get to see people with black hair, you know, and brown skin, and so we don't feel like we are in a foreign country, right? But we still have that sense, that feeling, the knowing that we are here in America. But being surround by the same national race, you know, it make us feel more comfortable. And that's why I—you know, we didn't want to go anywhere. We came here and we kind of get along with—everyone. [Saron Khut interview April 6, 2013]

Old divisions do persist for at least a generation, older members of the Somali population only shop in their own shops, and slander against each other is common. The young Somalis, particularly the girls, strive to create pan-Somali organizations, and clan divisions that have little purpose here in the U.S. are eventually attenuated as generations pass. The Southeast Asian refugee population had warfare to rival Mogadishu's brutality. Vietnamese were seen as invaders in Cambodia and Laos, and Chinese who had lived in Southeast Asian countries for generations were expelled. I asked Saron about current interrelations between Southeast Asian communities in Portland.

In the beginning, when we first got here, well—there's a history between Cambodia and Vietnam, and Laos and Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. And so the history was not always that great between us. There's like dispute all the time in Southeast Asia, in Asia where we were. And when we came here, we sensed, we still hold that grudge, that idea. However, time made us change the way we live our life. You know, we see things now- that the Vietnamese are not our foe anymore. It's—we're all here on the same boat. We're all here for the same reason, you know. I have Vietnamese friends. I have Laotian friends, you know. I have Black-American friends. I have White-American friends. So, you know, I fit well with everyone because I choose to assimilate, to accept everybody as friends. And so, I can say that there are so many—there are people out there that did not accept that well, within our community; whereas, some

Cambodian would see the Vietnamese community, Vietnamese people, as a threat. And the same with the Laotian to the Cambodian, the Laotian to the Vietnamese. We see each other as a threat, but again, we as kids growing up here and with our mind open to new ideas, to new things, we grow. We are able to adjust ourselves to accept people for who they are, and learn to live with one another. And that's why I have so many friends that are not just Cambodians, but I have Laotian friends, I have Vietnamese friends, and so on. So, that's my perspective. That's how my experience, you know, my life here in America, in Portland, Oregon.

[Saron Khut, interview April 6, 2013]

The entire Khut household is a product of Southeast Asian post war diaspora. Saron's wife Jai is a Lao refugee. Her family is Sino-Lao, who was persecuted and evicted along with Sino-Vietnamese and Sino-Cambodians as Southeast Asia destabilized. In order for Jai to speak to her mother-in-law, the lovely Saron, as well as her husband Saron, Jai must speak the only lingua franca they have: English. At a private Thanksgiving 2014 event with both families the strain of communication was obvious. Jai's Lao mother speaks very little English, so she is dependent on her husband and daughter to translate the general conversations, and the same goes for Saron's mother, who only speaks Khmer. Jai's sister married a Vietnamese man, further complicating communications. As a pan-ethnic family they must all use English, a language difficult for all of them, to communicate with each other.

Some refugees and immigrants are pushed into entrepreneurship by need and circumstance. They may not have transferrable credentials or the education necessary to gain employment in the U.S. In Saron Khut's case the impetus to entrepreneurship is familial and cultural, not economic. Saron and the family came to Portland in 1981. He graduated from Portland State University, went to work for five years as a FedEx Ground manager, and then he was employed by Intel. Up until 2009 Saron was an operations manager at Intel for FAB 20, which is a manufacturing fabrication section. Saron worked there for ten years when the economy hid a roadblock and his department was slated for closure. Intel was willing to provide Saron with a lateral transfer within the company. But familial troubles altered Saron's career trajectory. Over the course of three years, Saron many times repeats verbatim the story of the restaurant; it is his foundation, his *raison d'être*. His mother had lost her job, and his sisters had lost their jobs, even his sister's husband lost his job, all during the downturn. Cousins were also unemployed as well as some friends.

So I decided, you know what—I want to do something that would help out my family and friends. And the only way for me to do it is to open a business, a business where we can have employed people. It might not be hundreds of people; it might just be one, two, three people. But it's still employment. People still have a sense of work, a job, and so I made my decision. [Saron Khut, interview April 6, 2013]

The second impetus is also one that Saron brings up each time we meet. He wants to show the world about Cambodian culture. In October of 2014 there was a fundraiser at Mekong Bistro. It was for a film called *Elvis of Cambodia*. The film is about Sin Sisamouth, a Cambodian musician killed by the Khmer Rouge. Saron went to Cambodia to help the British filmmakers with their documentary. The fundraiser featured clips of the film with Saron in them, live Cambodian musicians, and a big buffet in Eternity Hall. After the event Saron explained why he must share his culture:

The man I was doing business with, he asked me where I was from, he misunderstood at first, and then he said: ‘Oh Cambodia, that is the killing field place, right?’ I don’t want people to only think of us as the killing fields, we have 1000 years of history, we have a beautiful culture, we were the pearl of Southeast Asia. I don’t know why we killed each other, but I want to bring a different picture of Cambodia. We cannot erase the killing fields, but I want to bring an understanding of Cambodian culture to others. [Saron Khut October 6, 2014]

Saron said that his reason for having a role in the film is now that Cambodians are here in the U.S., they might speak freely, face their past and move beyond it, make their own history, or bring out a history that is not coerced and forced by the government. He worries that the genocide is being erased, but also thinks that his history should not only be about the genocide. The genocide happened, it changed history both truly and ideologically, and now let us get past it, live together, and rediscover a history that is not

defined by genocide, rather one that encompasses the genocide as a part of the overall history of a complex and beautiful culture.

Mekong Bistro is Saron's second restaurant. A terrible event at his first restaurant almost ruined the family and generated White mainstream community sentiment against the Khut family as it settled into their new location. The reverberations of the event at Last Call, the former restaurant, continue to create divisions between The Khut family and the White neighborhood in which they live and do business. Last Call was in east Portland. Out beyond the unofficial 'safety' demarcation line, past 90<sup>th</sup> street, into the scrum. Historically Whites fled inner cities in the 1970s and 80s, even into the 90s with the bedroom community building bubble. The suburbs that sprang up in that era were mainly refuges for White, middle class urban escapees. Today we see a reversal. Inner Portland, both west and east sides are in demand and drawing immigrants from the entire United States. Wealthy Whites along with a few minorities are buying up condos and bungalows; prices now exclude working class individuals and families from living in areas that were warehouses and slums 25 years ago. African Americans and other minorities, along with low-income people, are now pushed out to the formerly White suburbs, which are assailed by gang shootings and poverty. The dream of White flight has now transformed to low class warehousing for people of color and the poor. The flow has reversed.

The Last Call was in such an area. Saron sunk all of his Intel money into the place. Southeast Asian respondents unanimously agree that there were gang troubles within the first waves of Southeast Asian refugees to Portland. Months and years in the camps, under the most brutal circumstances imaginable, created a hardened group of

males who ruled the camps and brought their understanding of life to the host nation.

Unknown to the Khut family, secure in their middle class environment, Last Call attracted gang members. On October 23<sup>rd</sup> of 2010, Steven Ouk, 28, a regular customer for at least four months, brought his mother-in-law and family to the restaurant to celebrate her birthday. At closing time a man with a grudge shot him in the chest in the middle of the crowded bar. He tried to run but collapsed at the front door in his wife's arms and died. Saron tried to rehabilitate Last Call's image by conducting community fundraisers for organizations, by having a fundraiser for the Ouk family and by hiring security.

The owner of the Last call property, whom Saron had leased from, stopped making payments on the building without notifying his tenants. Suddenly Saron found himself broke, with no business, and no job. There was no employment for the family and no income to feed the many mouths. All seemed lost. But Saron called upon his immediate community for loans, and upon the greater Southeast Asian community for connections. The current building was offered at a good price, and private loans came through. But relations with the White community remain testy. As noted above the Madison South Neighborhood Association continues to express reservations about Khut and his business even though it has transformed the area.

Gang membership has attenuated significantly. Respondents state that now there are other avenues of escape and power for Southeast Asian youth and different mores prevail. I asked Saron about current gang membership. He provided a cogent critique, one echoed by Polo Catalani, the Mayor's New Portlander liaison, who agreed with Saron and the others regarding generational changes. Respondents explain that there is a problem with traditional social control mechanisms because there are few surviving

leaders. When violent or traumatic acts are committed within the community it is a sign that traditional means of social control fail in the New World. Respondents claim that relief arises from opportunities for education and advancement that ease gang affiliations.

I say yes, as far as the community can control that [gang violence]; however, I don't see people in the community are actually taking that initiative to do that. So, the part where the community can control the menaces is – you got to have a strong leader, community leaders. You got to have a united community. Until you get that, it's really hard. It's really hard. However, nowadays, I'm talking about now versus 1990s, 1980s– people are not...we don't, what's the word–value that kind of menace behavior anymore. And it's also, it's not even like–how do you say it? People might look at it and say–why would you want to do that? Whereas the opportunity, the possibility of you being a good person is a lot better, often, to be a menace. There are choices. And the trend now, kids now, they don't want to be gangsters, right? They're more looking to be like going to get an education, have good jobs, make a living. You know? Those are the kinds of stuff that I see the path is moving toward. So, I think it's a lot to do with education. You know, educating our younger, our kids, and then let them decide what's cool, what's not. [Saron Khut, interview, April 6, 2013]

The future is bright, old enmities are fading, the young are gaining education and

status, and they are not as silent as their elders. But through these adaptations and transformations transnational events and connections affect local Southeast Asian communities. While the fundraiser for *Elvis of Cambodia* is going on at Mekong Bistro, an event in Cambodia tinges the local. As Saron Khut gives a talk to the crowd about the Cambodian genocide and loss of musical culture, at the same time, there is a trial going on in Cambodia. Saron, along with thousand of Cambodians in the global post war diaspora have contributed money to support the trial of the Khmer Rouge's surviving war criminals. The elderly, debilitated, defiant prisoners continue to deny their culpability, while Cambodians around the world watch and wait for a shred of justice. The world sees photos of blood stained torture rooms, while elderly killers sit before tribunals in senile complacency. I met a Cambodian seamstress who spends treasure and time to travel the world assembling opposition to the current repressive Cambodian government. She is also certain that Vietnam is still trying to conquer Cambodia. Her walls are lined with photos of herself and human rights activists in meetings around the world. The majority of Cambodian, Vietnamese, Lao, and Hmong interviewed contribute to charities and campaigns in their home countries. Most of these charities deal with the after-effects of war. Participants reported contributing to orphanages that continue to bear the brunt of a war long-thought ended. Mine fields, Agent Orange, poverty, exploitation, these are still war afflictions, disproportionately borne by the young.

As with the Somali population, it is Southeast Asian youth who begin to see the advantages to at least 'pan-Southeast Asian' cooperation. Those who were young when they arrived and those born in the United States are empowered in a manner that their elders are not. Saron explains that the elders are afraid to speak up because they feel that

this country belongs to Whites, not to them. An incident told to me by a Hmong elder at a funeral ceremony illustrates the respect some of the refugees have for their host nation.

When the Hmong, an animist people, arrived in the Pacific Northwest, they were amazed at the lush possibilities. Here there are woods and game, fish and water, the things they were familiar with. But what about the spirits? These were not Hmong spirits; the local spirits belong with the local people. The elders were paralyzed, they could not hunt or fish, and they had no way to ask the spirits for permission. So they went to the Warm Springs Reservation and asked to meet with the Warm Springs elders. They then explained their predicament and asked for permission to share spirits. The Native American elders assented and went beyond. The elders of similar cultures met and the Warm Springs elders, seeing that these people understood the spirit life of the land, welcomed the Hmong elders, who were proud of their warrior status. They invited the elder men to come and hunt small game on the reservation. Finally providing something so important to the men. They went out to the Res and had hunting parties for squirrel, rabbit and even bugs. They sat around the fire at night and dreamed of their land, as they made peace with the spirits of this land. Once again they, for a brief time, could feel as they should (Interview with Cha elder, February 22, 2014). For the elder Hmong Portland and America are disconcerting places.

The younger generation has an easier time adapting. Saron takes an active role in a form of community organizing, he fosters meetings at the restaurant, fundraises for causes, and he works to empower the young. When asked about the future of the pan-Southeast Asian population of Portland, he speaks of the power they are gaining:

Now I see the younger generation, such as myself—the kids that are minority, but they are citizen of the United States, they have that power. And we are educating them—they are going to make an impact on how things are going to be here in the city, the state, and the nation. And now we're networking. We are joining the communities, the Vietnamese, the Laotian, the Hmong, the Mein, the Cambodian. We're all coming together and trying to educate each other, trying to educate the younger people. It's going to change people's mentalities; it's going to change people's mindset— they're going to make a difference in how the city is going to be. We need to start with the city. I think that our community is going to make a big impact in the future—in the near future. And I hope that those who are in office, those who are planning to run for office, take notice on the minorities, you know? We are, depending on how you see it – as troublemaker or not—we're going to have a voice, right? And stop seeing us as nothing, you know? We are not invisible. The role of all these businesses, and the Asian businesses, does attract people; attract development. [Saron Khut, interview, April 6 2013]

Cambodians, Thai, Hmong and Lao have the same New Year holiday, which is in April, while Vietnamese and Chinese celebrate New Year earlier, around the end of January into February. There are profound language and cultural differences between Southeast Asian groups, and when asked what their community is, respondents always start with the same hierarchy: own group, Southeast Asians, Asians, America. For

instance a conversation about community with Saron Khut wanders through boundaries. He has an intense love for, pride in, and loyalty to Cambodia. Besides employing his family, Saron's other reigning impetus is to share and educate people about his culture.

His vision for Cambodia is of a nation that will be "The gem of Asia again. . . I've lived most of my life here, 34 years. But, I'm always thinking about how I can make Cambodia better. Before, I never had an avenue with which to help Cambodians. And now that we have this restaurant, this is our way of helping. Getting our name out there, not Mekong Bistro name, but Cambodian name" (Saron Khut interview, October 6, 2014). But in the same conversation Saron also speaks of pan-Asian cooperation and how important it is to him and the other businesses. Saron buys many of the restaurant's supplies from Hong Phat, a Vietnamese owned market; he also golfs with and spends his leisure time with other Southeast Asian business owners. Some communities are too small to be self-dependent. Hong Phat contributed to the *Elvis of Cambodia* fundraiser, and charitable contributions are not limited to one's own ethnic group. Saron's mother Saroen is loved by the entire Southeast Asian community, to the extent that a Vietnamese paper did a feature article about her that no one in the family can read. Southeast Asians are conscious that from the outside they look alike to others, they self identify first as family and ethnicity, then when queried, they speak of a Southeast Asian community as if they were reconciled to the fact of erasure. To the outside view the rich tapestry of cultures is muddled. There is a large difference between a first-wave Catholic Vietnamese family and the subsequent wave of animist Hmong or Buddhist Cambodians. The differences are almost as broad as the differences between Hmong and Germans or other Europeans. It saddens Southeast Asians when their cultures go unrecognized, and

the need to create pan-ethnic alliances also carries the danger of homogenization in the mainstream eye. Community, to the Southeast Asians who participated in this project, starts at home and ends up in the public eye of mainstream America. All respondents used the term “community” as a nuanced word that stands for many layers of differentiation. When Saron says he wants to improve his community he may be talking about Cambodia, Southeast Asians in general, or he may be referring to the American White community that he is embedded in physically and psychically. He believes that his business adds to all of these layers of community. Saron thinks that ethnic business is essential to development, but that racism and fear of gangs affects their ability to thrive, though from the Southeast Asian viewpoint gangs generally have become a thing of the past.

A lot of people don't see the role that these small businesses play in developing the city. We pay taxes, we pay business tax. So, you know, it helps those monies being made generated from taxes to help the city, all right? But again, the mindset of those who are in office—city center—do not see the value in that. So, going back to your question, does having all these Asian businesses help? Yes, it does. It helps. Any growth that helps spur up the economy, that help people shop, spend, it helps. Right? Yeah, not all businesses are perfect—are good. You're going to have some businesses that are going to run into troubles. You're going to have businesses that are going to have, like, incidences. But that does not mean that all are going to be like that. [Saron Khut, interview April 6, 2013]

The neighborhood opposition to Mekong Bistro generated official responses. Shortly after I attended the OLCC meeting to advocate for the restaurant, Khut was awarded a conditional liquor license. He had to have all the house lights on, stop serving alcohol at midnight, and he had to hire full security for every event. The Neighborhood Association continued to express fears, and residents pushed the OLCC into a sting operation. What happened next was a perfect illustration of conflicting cultural mandates. As hosts the Khut family is bound by culture to comfort, serve, and tend to their guests. It is culturally inappropriate to make demands, or to refuse service. At 11:55 p.m. two customers sat at the bar nursing drinks they had ordered previously. Syna was loathe to toss the drinks they ordered and had not finished, so she allowed the almost empty glasses to stand on the bar. The customers were OLCC agents; Saron lost the much contested liquor license, throwing the survival of Mekong Bistro into doubt.

Saron dealt with this in a collective Southeast Asian manner, he called in his troops. He sent an electronic message to every contact he had in the Willamette Valley. The message list was left open, so that all recipients could see who else was contacted. The message was a letter to the City of Portland and the OLCC accusing them of racism and persecution. I present it verbatim.

Dear OLCC Commissioners and the City of Portland Board  
Members,

As you are well aware, Mekong Bistro, a Cambodian  
family friendly and family owned/operated RESTAURANT

has been strip of its liquor license because the City of Portland and the OLCC is afraid of something different. Your fear of our culture and skin colors has prohibited my family from making a living through the sale of alcohol. You think that my restaurant business would bring the “wrong crowd”, so to prevent the “wrong crowd,” you put a noose around my neck which eventually I would be hung. The City of Portland & OLCC board members might live happily in your cozy homes while mine is struggling to pay the mortgage because our restaurant is not allowed to serve alcohol. How is that for a start to a new year?

Commissioners/Board members, I was told many times by my friends and family that I should just let this issue go because this is your land, your city, your state, and your country. They said I should just let things be and continue to let the unopened minded people whom hold high positions to dictate the minorities on how to make a living. I have tried to listen to them but this unfairness and bigotry mentality is eating up my mind and soul. As a tax paying American, US Citizen, I cannot let this issue get swept underneath the rug without openly expressing my unfair treatment and experience; because I still believe in our forefather that this is THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA land of the free and

the land of hope. We are now scarred and asking where is the faith of “Hope, land of the Free?” Isn’t this the “United States of America,” a country of equal opportunities regardless of race, color and religion?

Your restrictions on me to prevent the “wrong crowd” are discriminatory act. You should ask yourself these questions. What is the “wrong crowd?” How does one identify the “wrong crowd?” If you can answer these questions please tell me so I can be at peace. As a law abiding citizen I am extremely offended. I am appalled by your decision especially this time in age. We are supposed to live in a more open minded society not the John Crow era. This unfairness has got to stop. Though I am not placed in a jail cell but your decision and restriction placed upon me treats me and makes me feel like I am a criminal.

Commissioners/board members, I hope you know that the decisions you make have huge negative impact on peoples’ lives. Your decision has put my family in rough turbulence and has cost us so much pain financially, mentally, and emotionally. I hope you can sleep well at night knowing that my family is struggling. As a good citizen that we

are, we will continue to fight and strive to make a living  
legally and legitimately as always.

Sincerely

Karcna Khut

[Electronic communication January 15, 2014]

This message was sent to 59 recipients, including academics, the Mayor of Portland, OLCC and the Board of Commissioners, but most importantly to each and every known activist and administrator in Portland who deals with ethnic populations. As it passed along, the message began to reverberate. The outcome was a reinstatement of the liquor license awarded in Jai's name this time, partly to avoid the prior hassles. Despite his weak abilities to fight back, Saron used his social capital successfully to advocate for his family, and he did it in a manner that was culturally consonant for him. Various interviews with Polo Catalani emphasize the problems refugees face as they attempt to care for themselves in an individualistic host society. Demands and force are not culturally acceptable. In the face of opposition Saron took a strongly worded stance, but he also used the same forms of cultural and social capital that he would have used in Cambodia to achieve his ends. For people who have been trained by genocide and war to submit to authority, it takes a great effort to advocate and demand changes in the host nation. Life in America can put pressures on the traditional mechanisms that sustain community and new ways must be found to accomplish old tasks.

Saron's notion of community vitality is simple and shared by his fellow business owners as well as Southeast Asian residents who participated in this study. For refugees,

safety, safe parking lots and safe streets are visible and essential markers of community vitality. Street life, commerce and culturally appropriate activities go hand in hand with safe streets as markers of vitality. Music, language, celebrations, and of course, the all important foods, are internal markers of vitality. The ability to associate with those who speak your language, to eat your foods and dance the dances, to share with the young and respect the old are cultural needs that are provided by ethnic businesses. These owners and customers are vocal about the role that they play in general community vitality. Saron knows the Mekong Bistro properties once were drug dealing and prostitution centers before he moved the restaurant there. He is proud of his contributions to the “Portland community,” and he and others are clear that they are not only in it for their communities. They have a deep belief that they are contributing to all of us. America accepted them, and they must reciprocate.

## Chapter 8: The Story of Somalis in Montavilla

### Little Mogadishu

North of the expensive meals, cappuccinos, and hand-made clothing on Stark Street, lies Glisan Street. Unlike Stark Street, which was always the commercial and social center of Montavilla, Glisan Street was Montavilla's manufacturing center at one time. Many of the buildings are garages, appliance warehouses, and supply stores. In between the African stores, the glassware shop, and the social support club, is tucked a historic tack shop, still filled with saddle blankets and riding wear and close to it is a surprisingly huge professional costume shop that appears to be a tiny storefront from the street. The shop provides the television show *Grimm* with costumes. There are few crosswalks, and no flower planters or neighborhood banners. Traffic streams by, headed east to 82<sup>nd</sup> or west to the 60<sup>th</sup> Street Hwy 84 entrance, and there are few places to pull over even if something attracted. One day I watched a woman with a baby in a stroller try to cross Glisan at 76<sup>th</sup>. Cars missing her by inches, hardly slowing; I truly thought they would be hit. Finally a young woman was killed at that location shortly after, and the Montavilla Neighborhood Association finally turned their antennae toward Glisan Street. Once the local Neighborhood Association and other groups jumped into the fray, an on-demand stoplight and extra lanes appeared swiftly. This was ironic, as for years people risked their lives to get across the street, but until a formal group asked for it, there was no help from the city, in spite of accident reports. It took a group with empowerment and clout to finally help the northern, poorer area of Montavilla.

On Glisan there are glimmers of gentrification, an expensive pizza parlor, a coffee roasting place, a new restaurant, but the attrition of nearby 82<sup>nd</sup> Street; the traffic and dirt are hard to overcome. There is talk on the street that the City is about to approve apartments on 82<sup>nd</sup>, and fear that there will be no more cheap business space left once the area changes. All over the Glisan and 82<sup>nd</sup> area, among Somalis, old-timers, Whites, African Americans, Asians, rumors abound about development plans. Fear is in the air, fear of rising rents, of changing mores, of racism, of change, period. (Interviews fall-winter 2014-15 n=12).

My first introduction to Portland's Little Mogadishu left an impression. There are at least seven Somali-owned businesses on that section of Glisan Street, between 68<sup>th</sup> and 80<sup>th</sup>. I stepped into one of the corner shops during a particularly cold and wet winter day. The wind blew rain against the poorly fitting door. A tall man with liquid eyes, putty colored skin and very curly black hair greets me as I peruse the offerings. Four other men, older than the shop owner sit on dilapidated armchairs, arranged around a coffee table with a small old television centered between them. They face the television, with dominoes on the low table in front of them. Their gazes are rapt. A video is playing of Mogadishu. Carts and cars weave through an outdoor market, veiled women and working men fill the streets, and the scene is frankly bucolic. I ask the men about the video and they explain that they like to sit there and watch films of home. "Mogadishu is wonderful, look how nice it is. Here we are cold."

The shop owner begins to speak. He looks me in the eyes when I ask him what Mogadishu is like. His eyes become clouded, blank, as he stares ahead at nothing, and unbidden he begins to tell a story to a stranger. His family lived in Mogadishu, and as the

civil war intensified, they tried to stay in their home for safety. The storyteller was a teenager at the time. He looked out of the window of the home and saw a youth, a neighbor, a kid who lived down the street; they knew his parents, his relatives, they played together once. The youth was staring up at their window with an RPG rocket launcher on his shoulder. He took aim at the window, while my storyteller screamed at him.

“What are you doing? You are our neighbor, we know your mother!” The rocket came in the window and struck the head of my father, as he sat at his table. The shell blew his brains out all over the kitchen wall. I started to wipe my father’s brains off of the wall, the wall behind my mother. I could not stop wiping, I was crying. My mother began to scream “What are you doing?” I told her that I could not leave my own father’s brains on our kitchen wall. She screamed and screamed. We left Mogadishu after that. [Interview, January 2013]

While the man volunteered his story, the other men begin to play dominoes, with *sha* or Somali tea in Styrofoam cups as an accompaniment to the sunny scenes on the tiny TV.

Next to the market, the little coffee shop has a lit, rectangular white plastic sign above the front door that reads “Jaziira Café.” The store front is bare, no adornment, no plants living in the neglected, sere planter boxes, no efforts to draw customers in from the street. The aluminum doorframe clanks. Inside the small front room are tables, chairs, a thin drink cooler, and some tired looking croissants and baklava in the case. There is another room to the left of the front, with some grocery shelving and Somali women’s

clothes hanging on the walls. Sparse, sporadic cans of food litter the shelves; their colorful African and Middle Eastern labels shine red and yellow above a few sacks of teff and rice. Older Somali men are playing dominoes; the woman behind the counter has zaftig presence, a front gold tooth with an “S” carved into it, her body swathed with many colorful veils and her hands decorated with elaborate henna tattoos. The men stare, wondering what the outsider wants in this place that obviously was never created to attract outsiders. The woman smiles, tooth gleaming, “Hello, my name is Sophia Abdullah, what can I do for you?” The lit, red LED sign in the window says: “espresso” and there is an Italian espresso machine behind the counter. Hope springs eternal, but the coffee is awful. I don’t think the machine ever got much use. One day a sophisticated Saudi couple stopped in for coffee. Both of them in Western-style designer clothing, the young woman uncovered and stylish, they slumped in Little Mogadishu as I have seen a number of Arab Gulf States residents do. The pretty woman wrinkled her face at the first taste of espresso, while I tried to keep a straight face as she lifted it to her lips.

Sophia is garrulous. To the amusement of the domino players, she begins to talk about her life, how great Mogadishu is, and her strongly held opinions. The men roll their eyes as she raves about how wonderful Somalia is, particularly since they know she has not lived there as an adult, while they came here as refugees from the civil war. She bought this shop from the former owners who were also Mogadishu Somali, “But from a different tribe.” Sophia left Mogadishu with her mother when she was 8 years old. They moved to Rome, Italy, and she went through to the end of high school there. She was married at 15 years of age, and has three children. The oldest is 22 and the youngest still in high school. She is divorced but seeking a new Muslim husband through the

international Somali network, also known as Facebook. After her years in Italy, Sophia Moved to San Diego, California, as a contracted assembly worker for an electronics company. She then came to Washington State as a contract worker for GE and had the opportunity to visit Portland. When the contract was over her children begged her to move to Portland, so they did. Sophia's high status upbringing provided cultural and economic capital that shunted her trajectory toward middle class American life. Indeed, once she lost the lease to Jaziira Café, she bought a semi truck in order to help her new Somali husband start his own trucking company (Sophia Abdullah, interview October 22, 2014).

All of the refugees who participated in this study have a common complaint, one that Sophia Abdullah, a refugee from the Horn of Africa, holds in common with Dario Jungic, a refugee from the former Yugoslavia. The biggest challenge for refugee entrepreneurs is the high cost of survival in the United States. Unlike in their home countries, here all adult family members need to work, or bring in income. Education is deferred family investment in the collective future, but at times family members are needed in the family business, and thus discouraged to pursue higher education. Sophia tells me they have to work 20 hours a day to survive in the U.S., which is almost word-for-word what Dario Jungic and Saron Khut say as well. Sophia said everyone pushed her to come here with her kids, but as soon as she did, she said the taxes and the cost of living, especially in California, ate up the good money she made at the electronics place. She said she should never have left Italy because life there was great. In spite of Italian racism and cultural differences, the Italian social safety net system eased Somali adaptation to the European economic system, whereas in the United States it is

individualism and the “bootstrap ethic” that prevails. The racial trap of this ethic of individual endeavor is a system with an uneven playing field, yet which focuses on the responsibility of the individual to thrive.

One effect of acculturation is rejection. When refugee communities must adapt to unfamiliar cultures, often at least one segment of the refugee community will revert to cultural conservatism to maintain the culture in the “traditional” sense. Somali men and women who may have covered less severely or worshiped less fervently in their home country, now face two prongs of racism and community approbation. Somalis are pushed to differentiate from African Americans and they are internally driven to maintain culture in its “pure” form. In other words, the need to differentiate as Africans in order to avoid racism is reinforced by the drawing-in or forced cohesiveness of the Somali community. If traditions and culture are to be maintained, the community adapts by further isolating itself from mainstream culture. Religious piety and family relations are held under a magnifying glass, and each family looks to see how the other is maintaining. Under these conditions Sophia accomplished a remarkable cultural coup.

Long years in Italy and the United States erased Sophia’s ability to speak Somali. She divorced her first husband, and now that her sons are almost grown she decides it is time to find another husband. In Italy she was a self-described “party girl.” She drank, danced, and sported long tresses. When she worked as an electronics assembler in California she was still embedded in mainstream American culture and she still lived in a “secular” manner. But when she moved to Portland she found herself in a closed Somali society, under scrutiny in a manner that she had never been before. There is no way to seek companionship from other Somalis unless she conforms, and she is pushed away

from mainstream society by racism. Both centrifugal and centripetal forces push her into cultural conservatism. Lonely and conscious of the effect her comportment would have on her family's fortunes here in Portland, Sophia began to teach herself how to speak and write Somali. She used dictionaries and the Internet to study the language until she became fluent. She succeeded so well that her sons now speak Somali to her. She also embraces a full-throated version of Islam. Fully veiled, appearing increasingly conservative, Sophia oxymoronically returns to her Somali roots here in the bastion of liberal living that is Portland. She is successful, eventually marrying a Somali truck driver whom she had known back in California. This man, her current husband, knew her when she was a single mother, working in Silicon Valley, and he knew her sons as well. They reconnected through the Internet and she was now ready to be his wife, veiled and speaking Somali. Her current husband waited for decades for her to conform to his expectations, and she did so fully and joyfully. She says that she is happy now that she knows her place in the world and her faith guides her every move (Sophia Abdullah, interview January 25, 2015).

Sophia's Italian education and landowner capital certainly ease her way into American life. But her family is not immune from the racialized divisions that plague Black people in the United States. One day Sophia's boys are driving along on Glisan Street and the police see them, stop them, and make them get out of the car. While being handcuffed, put on the ground, and searched, the boys keep asking what they did wrong. Sophia's son hides his phone and dials his mother, he can't speak to her, but he leaves the phone on so she can hear what is going on. The boys are handcuffed and Sophia hears the police say to the males that they are going to search the car. Sophia cannot take this any

longer; she begins to scream into the phone, so that everyone can hear her on the other side: "Where are you?" and the son screams back their location, just a couple of blocks away. Sophia drives up there, and finds her boys handcuffed and on the ground. She starts screaming how she is going to sue the police, and asks the officers why they stopped her boys. The officer said they were driving around with loud music on and they were breaking the noise ordinance. Sophia knew this was a lie. Right before the boys left, Sophia, in her newfound piety, had put a disc of the Quran in the van's media player. Knowing that the police are lying, she stomps to the van, heedless of defending officers, and pushes the radio button, it is her car by the way, and the sound of Muslim prayers comes out of the speakers. Sophia turns to the officers and tells them to let her sons go and that her lawyers are on their way. They let the kids go, never explaining all of the actions. They thought the boys were African Americans.

All of us in the shop understood and nodded as Sophia told this story. One Somali man present said that he wanted to be American, but others all agreed that it was better to be African. After this incident, Sophia spoke of her desire to be removed from the conflict between African Americans and Whites. She said that this American conflict reflects on Somalis. "We are not slaves, we did not come to America on the slave boat, I came here on an airplane, like everyone else. I am tired of having to be the stranger, a Black woman, I don't want to be those things any more." One of Sophia's sons is still in college here in Portland, and the other son is working in the North Dakota oil fields and calling home every day. Sophia's accent is getting heavier by the day, because she is speaking to her whole family in Somali nowadays. She said the snow was starting to fall in North Dakota, and she thought her son would be home soon. He is only making 15

dollars an hour she says, and when he calls he tells her that his co-workers are so racist that they ask him what “is” he all the time. They come to him and ask if he is Mexican, or what is he, an Arabic terrorist? It must get old quickly (Sophia Abdullah, interview, September 26, 2014). By spring of 2015 both of her younger sons are home, and both back in college. They had enough of wandering about America and they along with their older brother in Seattle are planning to go to Hajj in Mecca with their mother. The centripetal forces won out it seems (Sophia Abdullah, personal phone communication April 8, 2015)

Neighborhood clashes intensified as Somalis settled Glisan Street. Other reactions were not as oppositional, but they were puzzled. Whites in the area were unsettled by the increased Black youth street presence, and though they understood that this was a different group than African Americans, that did not help relations. There was no reason for any White resident to go into the businesses, or meet any Somali, so there was no mutual contact. But it is the African American community that is most puzzled by their Somali neighbors. On Glisan there are African American businesses and churches, driven out toward the east from inner north and east Portland as historically African American areas of Portland gentrify. Interviews with African American business owners and their customers express puzzlement at the people living next to them who look like them, but who are so different. Two African American respondents speaking together about their Somali neighbors expressed their reservations:

We don't understand their language, and we can't even speak to their women. The second man says: 'We see them walking around but we don't

know anything about them. They dress differently, we don't speak their language, and they behave differently than we do. We don't understand them at all, and they do not talk to us. We have different religions, and different ways of living.' [African American Barber Shop interviews, January 2013]

The camel's back was finally broken when a White woman who lives behind Jaziira Café decided that she did not like the uses of space around her property. There were Somali cab drivers parking on the side streets, and Somali youth had a recording studio next to the Café. The woman, who by all official accounts<sup>8</sup> may have a form of mental illness, first went into the male-oriented Masjid al Noor, the Somali storefront mosque. On a Friday afternoon, during prayer hours, the woman invaded the mosque with her shoes on, no less, much to the shock and dismay of the men performing Friday prayers. When the panicked men shooed her out of the Masjid, she then went into Jaziira Café loudly complaining about the cabs parked behind Sophia's, the open garage door with the pool table and older Somali men, and the messy windows of the Halal shops. The woman screams to Sophia and the rest of the Somalis drawn out by the ruckus to go back to Africa, to go back home.

"I am speaking as a citizen," she says,

Sophia tells her: "Hey! I am from California! My passport says United States, just like yours, you and I," and she puts her two index fingers together, nails down, tightly,

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<sup>8</sup> Four different unrelated parties repeated this incident to me. All accounts match Sophia's version of events.

making the same gesture she made to the woman, dancing her two fingers tightly on the table top, dancing them up and down. “You and I, we are the same, both our passports say United States on them, I am from America, where are you from? We are both citizens. Where are your parents from? I came on my own, on an airplane. I lived in California most of my life. We are the same we are citizens.”

The woman says: “You need to go back to where you came from.”

Sophia: “Don’t tell me to go back, I am an American, you need to go back to Germany, because you are a racist Nazi. You Nazi, go back to your home country.”

“Don’t tell me to go back to my country, you go back to your country too. You all took this land, and you brought your black slaves with you, I have never been a slave, and I came here by airplane, not by boat.”

The woman might have been a bit cranky, but she is scant match for an enraged Sophia Abdullah (Sophia Abdullah, interview June 29, 2014). This particular conflict had been simmering for a few months, with occasional complaints to the City and forays by the woman into Somali spaces to complain. By the time it blew up in front of Jaziira Café, police, Somalis and bystanders had something to gather their attention. Sophia, as is her wont, offered to sue, and the woman finally stopped harassing people.

Age has its benefits; one of them is the erasure of gender. My white hair and wrinkles smooth my passage into the Portland Somali community. I never fool myself into thinking that I am a part of the community, but after three years of hanging out, I am a known person, someone to tell your stories to, who will do with them what you ask. I am trusted, and the men like to talk to me. I learned in my own Arabic household that white hair and education are avenues into the world of men among our respective

cultures. When I visit my own home I am invited to sit with the men after dinner. Hours spent in Jaziira Café, and in Alle Amin Restaurant have paid off. The older men talk to me and the women I am around embrace me. One spring day I am sitting in Jaziira Café, when the conversation turns toward a self-analysis of Somali problems. A young man is present who says he was born outside of Somalia in one of the refugee camps, Sophia's husband and an older man are also in the Café. The younger man came to help Sophia's husband do his taxes and says he worked both in a government job and in private consulting because he cannot survive with one job alone. The other man left Somalia as a young person when the civil war began. "The nightmares of the things I saw will be with me always. We killed each other because we were not yet ready for independence. Why? Why did we kill each other instead of being united, like here in the States?"

Sophia pipes up and says that in Somalia everyone helps each other, but here they hate each other. All the men look at her as if to say: "Honey, in Somalia we kill each other, here we just avoid each other." They all agree that Somalis here hate each other, yet they must build all their businesses together because that is the way they do it. One man explains that since Somalis do everything in private, the only businesses they start are food and clothing shops, because they do not buy anything else. They all have the same customers, he said, and they share them. In other words, we have only so many customers and more shops than customers. They explain to me that some people only shop with certain people and so on. He says it is not a good way to do business, because of market saturation and it is too bad they cannot work together to find a viable business model.

One of the guys says, “We all stick to our selves, look at the Russians, they have their own church, their own garages even! The Ethiopians, the Eritrean, all the other Africans, but we stick to ourselves, and even the other refugees and immigrants, like the Russians, they all stick to themselves too.” The oldest male says: “We have to have our stores so close for competition, we do all of our family business in private, we spend no money outside, so we only sell clothes and food.”

Sophia notes that among Bosnians, no matter if they are of different religions or anything, that all Bosnians will go into any Bosnian place and spend good money. Her point is that the Bosnians have some kind of cohesion that the Somalis do not (Jaziira Café, February 25, 2014). Over the course of three years worth of observation in Little Mogadishu, I never saw more than one or two particular customers in any of the shops at one time. Women hang out on chairs and talk, men speak among themselves quietly, work on books and little else, and youth sullenly serve sparse customers. The same people go into the same stores, all of them scantily supplied with the same foodstuffs and clothing as the other shops. The only universal stopping point is Alle Amin Restaurant, a few blocks from Jaziira Café.

Most of the Glisan Street Somali shop owners are from Mogadishu or the area around it. Jaziira Café has shop space in a separate room, which is full of clothing and food items from Africa. This area of Glisan was and is mainly commercial, with car garages and appliance repair businesses. Some of the shops still have garage doors set into the storefronts. Next to Jaziira Café is such a garage front, between Jaziira’s shop space and the Halal market on the corner. In good weather middle-aged Somali men play pool around a saggy bar-style pool table. In cold weather, when the snow and rain fall,

the door is closed and the men use the Halal market entrance to reach their amusements. In summer the door is always open, revealing the entertainments of men, far from home with little to do here in the New World. The men play pool all day, wearing *dish dash* with traditional caps on their shorn heads. The pool hall is actually a pool hole, a hole in the wall that used to be a garage bay that fit one car, or perhaps a storage room with a roll-down, garage style door. There is little light in it, and barely enough room around the pool table to stretch for a difficult shot. The men, putty colored, or brown, golden, gray, and almost always thin, are traditionally dressed. They briefly look up when I come by, and then back to the game and the conversation.

Late at night in Sophia's Café, the same men hunker around glass tables. They concentrate on dominoes and hand-drawn traditional board games such as *Ludo*, as they seek to recreate camaraderie. In their former homes they were the bosses, they ruled the households and they spent their days and nights in "manly" pursuits, suitable to their status. Now they languish in the damp cold, few of them able to even find sufficient employment. Their wives are empowered to open shops and restaurants, and the former proud pastoralists must bow to American laws and mores. Proud Somalis now fill the ranks of Portland's taxi drivers, cleaners, and housekeepers.

Just a few blocks away from Jaziira Café is Alle Amin Restaurant, run by the mild and lovely Khadro Abdi. Khadro, whom I was to later become closely connected to, was helped by an IRCO program to start her restaurant. She moved into it as another Somali woman moved out of the restaurant business. The original name of the restaurant was *Shingani*. Khadro's husband has employment out of the home, though it does not pay well, and the reluctant Khadro now finds herself the family's main breadwinner. IRCO

administers small business loans and grants, financial assistance that refugee communities find unattainable from mainstream financial institutions. The entrepreneurial program also provides some business training and assessment, along with access to food service interns.

Modest is an understatement. Alle Amin is a tiny place with seven tables in the restaurant section. There is another small room, just as there are for all of the Somali businesses, used for prayer and storage. The small room to the left of the main restaurant has a tattered green carpet, and is often full of Arab students from Saudi and other well-off countries. Khadro spreads a tablecloth on the carpet and the Arabs sit around in a circle and eat in the traditional style. On the back wall, prominent, is a commercial calendar from Hong Phat, with a picture of Asian New Year celebration, colorful next to the standard Mecca painting. Alle Amin is one of the few places in which you can behave as if you were at Auntie's house eating stew. I have seen coy Arab males bring White girls to Alle Amin to shock them. Very few of those girls pick up the goat and eat it, most of them demur. Alle Amin is indeed a refuge for more than Somalis; many people of Middle Eastern and Islamic faith use it for cultural comfort. I have to admit I use it that way myself. At Alle Amin you can sit on the floor with your shoes off, eat with your hands, smell the cinnamon in the goat, and you can feel as if you are cradled in your Auntie's living room having a family feast. This is one of the very few Halal restaurants in the area that is close to actual Middle Eastern and Horn of Africa dining customs.

Ethnic tourism is a Portland hobby. It is not just handsome young Arab males that eat at Alle Amin. Over the course of three years I observed an increasing stream of Whites exploring east Portland's ethnic offerings. Normally January is the worst month

to eat in Khadro's restaurant. The place has been drafty since before it was Shingani, about five years ago and the former refugee Vietnamese landlords have long since made their money and educated their children with the proceeds from that building. Now it is not very well maintained as it serves another generation of refugees to find their way around America's individualistic economic milieu.

The White couple came in as I was in my fifteenth minute of patiently waiting for Khadro to get set up in the kitchen and come out to take orders. They sat back against the wall by the kitchen and looked expectantly the plastic menu under the glass on the table, and at me, to see what I was doing in there. In conversation I found they were from the southwest side and had never explored out there before, but how they came to Khadro's is mysterious--perhaps they saw it, or smelled it. They thought they were going to order from the menu. While the man was in the bathroom, I explained to the middle-aged woman that you got what Khadro was cooking. She asked me which bread was the best and I told her, "The one that Khadro cooks today." She saw the goat and rice I was eating and she ordered the same, while he got the chopped chicken dish. She was the smart one. They were a Jewish couple from the southwest area of Portland; she had done work with the liberal Jewish congregation in Corvallis, and we tried to see if we had mutual friends. They said they had never been out this way before but they decided to explore the city, and so here they were, in the most unlikely place! He was not too impressed, but she was talkative, intelligent, and she liked the food. The couple quickly realized that the menu and the descriptions on the table are a form of fantasy. But that what you get is good.

Generally the only Whites that come into Alle Amin are people who work in the area at the garages and shops, but there is increasing ethnic tourism, to the tune of one or

two White explorers a week who at least peek into the restaurant, and there are the Arabs come to slum it in a place where they can feel at home. But there is a third group who come: Muslim business associates. On three occasions mixed groups of Arab, Asian, and Caucasian groups have come in to eat halal and have impromptu business discussions of a technical nature. The nicer Middle Eastern restaurants in Portland do not offer the authentic feel of relaxation and the authentic taste of whatever Auntie is cooking that day in the manner that Alle Amin does. For the ethnic tourists and for many Middle Eastern and Asian communities, Alle Amin is the real deal. It is a pity that this restaurant is not what Khadro wants to do for a living; otherwise we might see an individual example of “gentrification” right in that tired building.

The back wall of Alle Amin has a mural representing the agricultural area around Mogadishu. Palm trees, water and banana trees. Happy people work in a Somali village, it is a dream of an idealized past and a vision of a tenuous, a not yet realized future. These representational dreams are in each of the businesses chosen for this study. In each location the walls bear ideal dreams and visions of the best of the home country, icons both religious and secular, Buddhas and blond beauties, banana trees and Mekong River vistas, Adriatic lakes and Bosnian villages. In tempera and oil lie the unattainable hopes of refugees looking into the windows of their pasts.

Khadro Abdi, the owner of Alle Amin is a tiny woman who must deal with disrespect daily. The majority of Portland Somalis are from Mogadishu and its environs. They belong to dominant pastoralist clans and they only deal with each other. The Somali population of Portland is hardly large enough to patronize all of its shops. Somali respondents have clearly stated that they only patronize “their” shops; each shop survives

on the meager income from its own customers. Khadro bears the brunt of this clannishness. Proud pastoralism is the legacy of the Somali civil war. Disdain for manual labor and all forms of entrepreneurial commerce as well as a slave-owning history imbue Somali culture. Cooks, crafts persons, and farmers are the object of scorn. In each shop people advised me to go elsewhere for Somali food. They told me to go to their cousin's place on Powell Blvd. or the other African place on Division Street. Avoid Khadro's they said. In each shop, despite the rhetoric, I saw people with the telltale Alle Amin to-go boxes. There is no other Somali restaurant in Portland's Little Mogadishu and Khadro does more business than she cares to. Yet Khadro is the one who is treated with the least respect, the one that cooks for Somali women who have household money. I have seen her in the pouring rain, ministering to Somali housewives in nice SUVs. The women do not even open their windows, while Khadro tucks the food into their back seats and they pay her through slitted car windows while the rain soaks her veils. Her smiling husband, sharp little daughter, and nephew slave away in the hot, tiny kitchen to feed Portland's Somali community. Portland's cab drivers would sorely lack if they should lose Khadro's services and Portland's elite Somali women would have to work quite a bit harder. In return she receives scorn for her lowly position.

The least respected turns out to be the most loving. The service at Alle Amin is awful; I just go in and sit down until someone notices me, which may take up to twenty minutes. Khadro explained that she never wanted to have a restaurant, but the family needs income. Her husband works away from the restaurant and she finally now has her nephew cooking with her. The IRCO program kind of forced Khadro to open the restaurant, and desperation for income certainly added to the impetus. Khadro tells me

that she hates cooking; she clutches the veils at her chest and twists them as she tells me that when she is in the tiny kitchen she feels ill. “In the close kitchen my energy leaves and my chest gets hot inside, I feel sick when I cook too much. I am lazy, that is why I do not make bread.” The conversation turned toward a Ghanaian girl, Abi whom I adopted after a fashion. Khadro starts to speak about the status of women in Africa. She began to sweat and twist her veils, while she said: “There is no kindness for women in Africa, there is no kindness” She said that here in the United States the men are afraid of the law and so they do not beat women, but in Africa she said, no one cares about the women, and there is no law to protect them. She said that men are never kind to women there, and that she was so happy that beautiful Abi found a man who would not beat her.

Conversations about Africa and Somalia always end in stress for Khadro and I always allowed her to initiate them.

Portland’s Little Mogadishu is not isolated from Somalia’s Mogadishu. On a number of occasions I have spoken with Somalis who have just returned from a visit home. One man I spoke with had returned two days prior. He said that there was food and not much danger. He thought the improvements were noticeable, but when asked by his fellow cab drivers if he was building a home in Afgooye, he said: “No! There is not enough stability.” Most respondents report sending money home and Sophia’s brother bought a tract of land for Sophia on his last visit to Somalia. Sophia’s favorite fantasy is the triumphant return of she and her sons to Afgooye, her home area. She waxes eloquent when she speaks of the respect and comfort they will experience upon return. The men playing Ludo in her shop roll their eyes every time she brings up the topic.

Local racism, global discourse, and international pressures are pushing on Portland's Little Mogadishu. In the Winter of 2010 Mohamed Mohamud, a young Oregon Somali, engaged with federal agents in a plot to bomb the Holiday Tree lighting at Pioneer Courthouse Square in Portland, Oregon. Federal agents approached Mohamud as a minor and groomed a bid to either recruit him or to incriminate him in terrorism. Mohamud entered into the plot and thought he was blowing up the Square when he pushed the button. Mohamud's arrest is a deep pain for the Somali community; not one member will speak of it. There is pride in upright behavior, which reflects on the whole family. Slaughter of innocents is not one of Somali cultural mores, contrary to some people's opinion.

Smaller, pettier pressures also push from the large Seattle Somali population to the north. One day a mixed group of four or five young males came into Sophia's Jaziira Café. They tried to exchange food stamps for money, then they bugged Sophia about giving them a discount to buy things and generally gave her a hard time. Apparently they were casing the joint. Two of them were younger Somali males and the rest were African American. They came back in that night and burglarized the place for everything they could carry out. She thinks they were Seattle Somalis who had fallen in with gang type of kids. They then went around the Northwest preying on the Somali community, which is loathe to report any crimes that make the community look bad in the eyes of the "mainstream" (Sophia Abdullah, interview Feb 22 2014).

Somali youth do not know which way to go. Should they emphasize their African roots? If they do they are isolated from their American peers by religion and culture. As Africans they face scorn and misunderstanding within the African American community

as well as the White community. If they adopt African American customs they then enter the same oppositional, racist milieu that African Americans inhabit. Their parents expect obedience, language maintenance, and religious piety. External pressures of racism push African youth into oppositional behavior while media; global events and discourse generate a false view of cultures and religions that are in a struggle to the death for supremacy. These confusing and at times institutionally violent factors render young Somalis vulnerable to recruitment and abuse on the part of global actors. The eyes of Portland focused on the Somali community as the Mohamud incident unfolded into a lengthy trial. Federal agents infiltrate communities and actors, both institutional and diffuse, use the rage of youth to lead them to actions they may not have intended. As a result, mistrust rises. These are not good omens for the current relationship between Portland and its Somali community. Hopefully time and adaptation will smooth the transition to American citizenship for this population. Young Somalis, particularly girls, are seeking advanced university degrees, forming pan-African coalitions to help their communities, and stepping out as leaders for their youthening community. The City of Portland would do well to concentrate its efforts for the Somali community on youth programs and scholarship opportunities. The way to fight bad influences is to show Somali youth the very best that America has to offer, to provide them with a way up toward respect, decent incomes, and empowerment. They will choose what to keep and what to change, but they need the freedom to make those choices.

Cultural comfort is what we seek. The smell of cinnamon and goat, the yellow rice and cardamom flavor in the stew: these things arouse a cascade of feelings, thoughts, and contentment. I can see my auntie when Khadro brings me goat and rice; the smells

and tastes of our childhoods comfort us. Khadro begins to trust me, and to talk with me. One day she hears me coughing and she comes out with a special bowl of soup. From that moment she decides she is in charge of my health. Food makes me cough when it irritates my lung passages, so when she hears me from the tiny kitchen Khadro comes out of the kitchen with a bowl and a to-go cup with a lid on it. She says “I made you some soup, drink it and the cough will go away, I put this in it (showing me the black pepper shaker). Here is some to take home for later.” I drink two spoonfuls of the light brown, clear goat broth, with goat fat swirling on the top, and the cough stops for the rest of the day. She comes back out in a bit to bring more food to the men, and I force her to take money for my meal. She would not, because I took and printed photos of the food for her to post on the window, but we argued and I won. She was quite self-satisfied, knowing the broth would cure me. She sent greetings to my husband, and I to hers and her daughter. Each day now that she knows I am ill she calls me and prays over me, she begs me to come and see her and she tells me that I will not die.

One day while I was in Khadro’s looking up at the African shaped metal cut out in the window that has with a village scene painted on it, I realized that I was in one world, staring across the street at another refugee culture. Bui Tofu, the store across the street, was a whole different world seen from this bastion of Somali culture. Vietnamese, and other Asians, predominantly women, stride into Bui. Their tofu, in my estimation, is the best in Portland, and their store is full of Vietnamese desserts, and such delicacies as their lemon-grass tofu, golden fried, and rolled in crushed lemon grass and pungent spices. Every type of soy-based product may be found there, freshly made. The women parade into the shop in tank tops, summer dresses, shorts, and leggings all day, often on

high heels, to buy their supplies. Contrasted with Khadro's veils, beautiful in their colorful splendor, and the men's gazes toward the scenery. Here I was in Africa, an Africa that had come just 20 years ago, in a building used by Africans, and owned by Vietnamese refugees who had come here 40 years ago.

During Ramadan in July, my partner and I went to Alle Amin for iftar feast at sunset. The place was packed. All of the cabs were across the street in the Bui Tofu parking lot. Many of the cab drivers are unmarried. The local Somali girls are in school and assimilating into American culture as they can, so likely they will not be betrothed to cab drivers. The girl that worked for Sophia's cousin is going to university on a scholarship. Khadro's little daughter, always curious about me, puts her head against the curtain from inside the kitchen, peeking out at me with one round brown eye. I can just see the corner of her mouth smile a bit smirkiely as I catch her eye and smile. Her dad strides toward the kitchen with a food substance in his hands and she flies back just in time to keep from getting bonked.

The dinner was a fixed price and fixed menu. First we were handed a plate with *sambusas* and *mufo* bread, with minty green chili sauce, then soup made of chicken and in this case wheat, but sometimes oats, with onions, broth, milk, and sundry vegetables, called *barooddo*—a thick white colored soup, like a thick congee. Then the salad with white dressing and lime, made of lettuce, onion and tomato. Usually the guys pour the salad on the goat and rice, which is the main dish, and they eat it with their hands using the salad as a sort of shield against extreme finger stickiness. There is always a banana with dinner, and tea called *shaah*, which has ginger, cardamom, and cloves with it. There is the Vintu, a non-wine wine, which is always served for the special drink. It is in

powder or liquid form and tastes just like grape Kool-Aid, and it is always served with lime squeezed into it.

Khadro's husband comes to shake Rich's hand, but he has dirty hands, so he does a kind of touch and cross over thing with his wrists, holding his hands folded back. The little girl squeals when she sees us coming. She is hoping for more photos. I still have to photograph the goat and rice for Khadro when Ramadan ends.<sup>9</sup> We sit, and the first row of Somalis in the front, who do not know us, look up with surprise as we enter. At the end of the meal, when everyone else is gone, Khadro sits against the mural wall, and sighs with exhaustion. The quick meal over, the cab drivers disperse in the darkness, some of them lingering to chat as we walk out.

Fall of 2014 brought with it pain for Little Mogadishu. Sophia Abdullah, the youth recording studio, and the owners of the Halal Market were handed eviction notices. The landlord's son gave no reason for the eviction, and now in March of 2015, the shops are still empty. On April 8, Sophia tells me the building is now for sale by the owner's son. The eviction notices were handed in October. By winter a buzz was going around Montavilla. An old time, multigenerational resident interviewed at the Montavilla farmer's market in October was highly concerned about a plan for 82<sup>nd</sup> street that he had heard about somewhere. The man stated that 82<sup>nd</sup> Street was about to be gentrified and that low-income people would be driven out. His emphasis on gentrification seemed

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<sup>9</sup> The use of photography is one of the main methods used in this study. Khadro asked me to photograph her food so that she could use the prints for advertising. Her extended family also warmed up considerably when we brought back 8x10 family photos for them. This method of meeting respondents and gaining trust as well as valuable data was used with all of the groups studied.

extreme, but community members of other population segments had the same concerns. Once Sophia received the eviction notice, her paradigm suddenly shifted from a clan-led community view to an overarching view of the Somali population under siege by others. In October she said, “Where is our community going to go?...They don’t want us here, they are going to sell all of this to White people, and there will be no Black people here... They do not like the way we look, only the rich will be here.”

While she wails these things, Sophia is continually grabbing my forearm, with a gentle pinch, for emphasis. This is the first time that Sophia has spoken of the whole community rather than “her” community, which stands for her extended family.

“Where will the men go--to Starbucks?? The way we talk, the way we are, we cannot go there, the men cannot hang out there and play their games.” This is the first time that Sophia recognizes a joint Somali community, though even in the same breath she will refer to Khadro as “that woman”. She wailed about the pushing out of her community, and she repeated community three times, making a closed oval with her hands, a bounded oval that she used to represent the Somali community. The Somali community, in her estimation, at this point, and always according to her, has been under siege from people who do not like their way of life.

Ironically, Sophia here is saying pretty much the same thing as the bearded white man at the Montavilla farmer’s market. He said the developers were going to take over 82<sup>nd</sup> and that the services of Rahab’s Sisters, the car lots, and prostitutes would be things of the past. Sophia looked out at Glisan, nodded towards the nicely converted houses across the street, with the White businesses in them, and she said: “Soon it will be all Whites here.” She said that the businesses will change and that no one wanted them (the

Somalis) there in the first place. Before she rented it her place had been empty for seven months when the landlord offered to make her a deal for the whole section, and how much she liked the old man, how he had helped her with the power bills during the cold times. She felt that now that the property was more in demand, she thinks that the place has an offer on it. Basically she is saying the same thing that Saron Khut the owner of Mekong Bistro said earlier that month, that their business presence was in places that had been abandoned, and that their businesses help the communities they are in. They think now that gentrification is coming, the places they invested in will become valuable, but the pay off will be for others, not for them. These folks are also echoing the homeless and other marginalized residents, whom all feel under siege, along with the old-timers whom I have interviewed. Sophia, disgruntled says, “I am tired of people asking me where I am from. I do not feel American any more. Where will the community, our community go?”

On the last day in January 2015, I visit Khadro to ask her if I should use her name and restaurant in the dissertation, or if she wants me to render her anonymous.

She looks at me, beams the biggest smile I have ever seen her emit. She says proudly: “My name is Khadro Abdi, and this is Alle Amin! You use the name.” By January on Sophia’s block there is no place for the men to play pool and board games. No place for them to hang out at midnight with their peers. The row of stores sits empty in spring, with no “for sale” sign and no apparent tenants. The Somali offerings on Glisan Street are almost halved and the men are adrift.

In mid March of 2015, sitting in my truck, waiting for Khadro to arrive, I watch the cabs start to pull up around noon. Khadro’s nephew is feeding two hefty White guys. I guess the fairly cheap goat or chicken and rice is starting to attract other customers since

Charleys' Glisan Street Burger Barn closed. These two are not ethnic tourists, rather they look like mechanics and they are unusual customers. Khadro sees me waiting out in the truck and she comes to me with open arms to hug. I tell her that I came to talk to her. As I hold her close I tell her. She closes her eyes tightly and begins to wail in Somali. She wails "No, no." She sits me down inside, she wants to weep, but she could only wail. I am not sure Khadro can still weep. She asks me if I am sure, and I say yes. She wails and prays for me in Somali, while she explains to the rest of the family what is going on.

We sit at the table, and she begins to explain to me what to do. She takes me in the kitchen and starts taking things off the shelf while she continues to wail and pray in Somali. She touches me periodically, my arms, my hands. She takes black cumin, garlic, and special honey in a tiny jar. She explains in detail how to use them. She says that I must take every morning one tiny pinch of black cumin seeds, pop it into my mouth, and say "Bismallah" while praying to Allah, then take the garlic and put it in the blender with lots of water, and drink that water all day. In the morning I am to take a bit of the special honey after the black cumin seeds. Khadro repeats it over and over, to make sure I understand. Then she calls my cell phone to record exactly what I am to say every morning.

Khadro says: "Where is your home? I must come every night with food and care for you." I explained that I had moved back to Corvallis to write her story, and she wails: "How will I care for you?" She says she would call me every morning to make sure I take the herbs and ask Allah for life. Her husband comes in then and she tells him. He turns to me and says that we just don't know what Allah has for us. He hugs me, Khadro once again keening. The old, tall Somali leader who always wears a suit, who has spoken to

me for years, comes in and sees the commotion and asks me how I am. I explain what was happening. He comes to me and enfolds me in his tall and broad body with a big hug. Somalis, the people that no one else cares much about, or tries to know, the prickly warriors that people think harbor terrorism, care for me. Khadro walks me to my truck with all of the ingredients and she makes me promise to take the prescription every day faithfully. The message she leaves on my phone is scratchy and almost unintelligible, but I get it. She calls me each day since to make sure that I take my herbs and pray in the morning. She blesses me with prayer on the phone, between tears, and she begs me to come see her.

## Chapter 9: The Story of Former Yugoslavs in Montavilla

### Coffee, Song, and Cigarettes

My first introduction to Marino's Adriatic Café is daunting. Big White men wreathed in cigarette smoke with shaved heads and leather jackets stare at strangers and drink their coffee outside, speaking in an unknown language. It is as if I am in Moscow or Krakow, or perhaps Sarajevo or Prague, but instead of intellectuals it looks as if thugs surround me. There is not much overt curiosity and no one is making moves to be welcoming; they are just focused on the people sitting with them. The crowded metal tables outside have mesh tops and umbrellas, but the ones inside have a design on them. It is a guitar in the shape of an anchor. Tables take up half the sidewalk outside, arranged around Eastern oak trees, framed by tiki torches. Inside are many photos of belly dancing and musicians, and idealistic murals of Adriatic coves, Yugoslav villages, and beach cafes line the walls. People are talking, looking at each other, holding hands, and engaged in lively conversations with their tablemates. Then the musician steps up to the tiny stage. Fortuitously we have walked into an evening of Bosnian music. At the start the music sounds like gypsy music, the sound of old Eastern Europe, then the musician begins to sing in that language. The people rise as one, put their hands in the air, and begin to sing along. Some of the older couples are crying as they sing. They sway and sing and weep. A new song begins and they sing along. Something is happening here, and I am just starting to get it.

A big man with a round head, formidable and just as scary looking as the others approaches us. He puts a ham-sized fist out, smiles broadly, and says: "Hello! My name

is Dario, welcome to Marino's, what can we get you?" He explains that he is from the former Yugoslavia and he points to what I think is a picture of Johnny Cash on the wall over the door. Two beautiful young women are working the counter, one blonde and one dark, and tall, multilayered cakes in various colors sit resplendent in a refrigerated case with a rounded front. The espresso machine is a sleekly designed, gleamingly clean, handsome, 18,000-dollar Simonelli machine imported from Italy. Hardly stock equipment for the average hole-in-the-wall Portland espresso shop. "Best coffee in Portland" the big man says with the music in the background.

The man with the big hands and the big smile is Dario Jungic. Along with his wife Jasna and his three children, Dario chases a dream. Marino's Adriatic Café is not a big moneymaker. Overstaffed and undercapitalized Marino's is a place of cultural comfort, created, supported, and even voted upon by the Jungic clan. The dream of Marino's is the reproduction of Yugoslav culture at its best. That blend of Ottoman and Austrian that generates good coffee, baklava, meat pastries, and tall Austrian cakes. The baristas come from a broad swathe of Eastern European and Slavic stock. Dario has a hard time getting workers for Fridays, since some of them belong to Christian faiths that do not work that day, others are Muslim, and one is a staunch Zionist. The young women greet you with broad smiles, and hugs as soon as they get to know you. Dario thinks the two most important things in the place are the manner in which the baristas treat the patrons and the quality of the coffee. "Thin like spaghetti, slow as honey, and with a heartbeat. Don't bruise it, keep the cup close to the spout." This is Dario's recipe for joy.

Dario and Jasna met as teenagers in Banja Luka, their hometown in what is now the Republika Srpska, the Serbian controlled portions of the former Yugoslavia. Dario's

family is Croat, but unlike most Croats, his family is fiercely Partisan. Rather than following the Catholic faith that the majority of Croats belong to, Dario's family embraced Marshall Tito's vision of a united Yugoslavia. I soon discovered that Johnny Cash was actually Marshall Tito. His line-drawn face gazes out over the belly dancers and Bosnian musicians nightly. Jasna's family is upper class Muslim. Her father and mother speak Arabic, English, German, and Bosnian. When Jasna became interested in Dario as a teenager, her family disapproved, not because of religion, but because of class. Dario's electrician father and common upbringing were not good enough for their intelligent and ambitious daughter.

The hardest thing for Dario and other former Yugoslavs to accept is the manner in which their unified nation fell apart and the neighbor-against-neighbor carnage that ensued. Though many Yugoslavs kept or tried to keep their humanity toward their fellows, mob mentality prevailed. Dario often tells the story of his neighbor in Banja Luka. They had been friends for ages and their families were friends. As rumblings of civil unrest intensified and the Yugoslav army began to convert into the arm of ethnic cleansing, Dario's friend kept telling him that one day soon they would be enemies. Dario laughed at him until the day that televisions in Baja Luka showed images of ethnic cleansing from the adjacent town.

I will never forget. I watching the news and they showed how a city, which is just sixty miles from Munich, was being attacked. I was thinking this must be 600 miles, 6000 miles. This is not here, this cannot happen here. But then you start hearing explosions closer and closer and

you think no, that cannot happen here. The first ones came around your house, and they you say OH, it's happening. . . Would you accept it? No. They just found, 30 miles from my city, huge mud graves filled with women. [Dario Jungic, interview May 2014]

Dario and Jasna arrived in the Pacific Northwest late at night. They had been in the camps for four years, they spoke some English, and they worked for the Americans in the camps, "So we thought we might be able to come to America. When we arrived at PDX we thought we knew America. We had some language, we *knew* Americans, we saw the media, and so on" (Dario Jungic, Interview August 2014). The group that sponsored them greeted them upon arrival, and the exhausted couple was shown an apartment with only a mattress in it. They had very little money and they were exhausted as well as exhilarated.

We wanted to celebrate, so we set out to find a coffee shop that we can celebrate our arrival in. It was evening, and we looked and looked and could not find a coffee house. In Bosnia that is how we always celebrate. We were dismayed; we ended up at a fast food place like MacDonald's and drank bad coffee there. Then we took our last money and went to find coffee making stuff, since it was the one thing that we had to have to keep our sanity. We thought we understood this country, but nothing was as we expected. For us, the coffee house is where you go to go out, to celebrate, to live your life. We went to the grocery store and we could only find the

canned, ground Folgers type of stuff. We spent our last money on it, but did not know how to fix it, we ended up boiling it, it was ghastly. We were in culture shock, we could not understand how the United States had such a lack of places to socialize, at home everyone is out on the street, in the coffee shop, here no one was anywhere. We finally found a small European store that offered to order beans for us. We spent 80 percent of our available cash to buy a French press. The first coffee made in it with the canned coffee was awful, when we went back to see about good beans at the deli which is actually a European meat and cheese place, the owner agreed to order beans and a mortar and pestle for us so we could make the correct coffee. [Dario Jungic, interview August 2014]

All the family was there when Dario told this story; his father, brother, and wife all agreed how important this was to the family. They thought they were all ready to come to America, but they were sadly surprised when they got here.

Dario and Jasna, both educated, had some credentials in Yugoslavia. Dario was headed toward a teaching position and Jasna was being educated in the medical profession. Upon arrival in Portland they were introduced to IRCO. Dario eventually followed the path of other educated refugees and went to work for IRCO as an employment specialist. Jasna took advantage of a program that helped refugees rebuild their medical dossiers and she gained credentials. She now works as a specialized cardiac recovery nurse. Her income carries the dream.

When Dario and Jasna became fully employed here, when Jasna got the good job and Dario was an administrator at IRCO, they had money and peace. But they missed the culture. Dario recounts a family meeting they held before the coffee shop opened. Dario and Jasna have family meetings with their children on a regular basis. In this particular meeting, before Ina was born, the dream of Marino's was agreed upon and committed to. The family discusses the lack of a place for Bosnian music, for Bosnian coffee, for the older Bosnians to hang out, and most importantly for Dario, a place for the young to play music, to laugh, and to socialize. The family, which at that time was Jasna, Dario, and their young son, decided that in effect, they would surrender financial security in exchange for cultural comfort. Dario left his job and they took their savings to open Marino's. The going has been tough, but they meet periodically and now with the addition of a fireball of a daughter, the votes are now four in favor of continuing the endeavor. The shop does not make a profit (Dario Jungic, interview January 3, 2015).

Dario's reasons for the Café are clear. He wants a place where Yugoslav music, food, language, culture are to be found. He wants to show Portland what a truly civilized life is about in the company of friends, family, community, and good things to eat and drink. He is upset at the lack of cultural amenities for his community, and he worries about the youth and the elderly. All of the things that gave meaning to the lives of the old and the young, he is trying to reproduce. "You know the elderly here, the elderly Bosnians, they have no use." Dario was trying to find the right words. "Their experience and knowledge, there is no use for it here, the old Bosnians the men, they have no use here." He said that he has been trying to get the adult Bosnians to bring their parents in on Sundays, because they just stay shut in the home and they have no way to get out. He

even has offered to come and pick the elderly Bosnians up and bring them all to the café. Dario bemoans the fact that here in America the adults are working two jobs, that it is hard to survive and that they do not have time to take their parents to socialize. He said it is tough, because for the good life, “the good quality of life,” they need to socialize as they did back home. He wants to provide that. So he is sad that his plan to get the elderly Bosnians in there on Sundays does not seem to be working. He directly lays the problem on the need to live “American style” for the ones in the middle, the Bosnian born adults who now have kids and parents here also. The impetus to succeed here and the cost of living means that traditional parental relationships are shaken when adult children no longer are able to provide and participate in traditional social activities with their parents and older relatives (Dario Jungic, interview June 29, 2014).

Work with IRCO provides Dario with a broader lens with which to view the processes of refugee assimilation. He is able to compare his situation with that of the diverse ethnic groups for which he was responsible. Extended families are the norm in the former Yugoslavia, “If I stayed in Bosnia, I would live with grandmother until she died. We would live always in one house. Think about how this structure was amazing. It was good, but it didn’t prepare us for what happened. Like having to fight for yourself if you go to Denmark, England Australia—all different cultures. They [the Bosnian diaspora] had to fight for themselves” (Dario Jungic, interview July 2014). In this conversation what Dario is noting is the difference between the goals and structure of extended families where the whole family is joined in success or failure, and the individual manner in which the Yugoslav refugees were pushed to survive in their host

nations. There is guilt and confusion when traditional family culture is forcibly replaced with Western “bootstrap” individualism.

What made the breakup of the former Yugoslavia so traumatic, according to respondents, is that the extended family structure and the overlay of Tito’s unifying vision (such as it was) was the antithesis of the internal strife, warfare, and genocide that ensued upon the dissolution. How could their diverse, multiethnic society, a culture created at the confluence of East and West, how could a European-oriented, prosperous and diverse culture degrade into brother-to-brother, neighbor-to-neighbor slaughter in such a paroxysm of evil? Often Dario speaks of cultural differences. He thinks that it was expected to have warfare in Africa because people are still divided into small tribes and groups, but how could Yugoslavia have broken into such scattered groups after such unity?

The cross-ethnic make up of Dario’s family is a common thread among former Yugoslav refugees. Mixed families fled as they faced slaughter, rape, and ethnic cleansing, as well as lack of assistance or acceptance within their own families as the fighting intensified. The lack of a coherent culture to impart to his children is a source of agony for Dario. The family wanted to take the children to see their home country; Dario explains the trauma of being a multi-ethnic family in today’s former Yugoslavia:

I cannot tell my kids which language to speak. You see what a catastrophe my culture is. What can I tell my kids when they ask me, ‘Daddy which language do you speak?’ If I say Serbo-Croatian which I am, which I speak, which is right to say, others would be angry: Croat

nationalists, Muslim nationalists, and Serbs would be angry with me. They'd ask why I'm teaching kids wrong. They wouldn't understand. Then if I agree to call ourselves Bosnian, like I do, then I take my daughter to Croatia and she says she speaks Bosnian. I'm sorry but it's not a language. It's prejudice. They will look at her and be angry. They say, 'She should not speak Bosnian!' Because she's a Croatian citizen she should speak Croatian. And then if I just told her, you know, at 10 years old—I just teach her a little bit, a few words to say in Bosnian and then we went to my hometown and she spoke Bosnian to some Serb nationalist who turned on her. She said, 'Oh daddy I am so happy I understand Bosnian.' And they all look at you—it's prejudice.

My mother is Serb...in *their* categories. We were world people. We were not put in any groups. But in their eyes, my mother is Serb, my father is Croat. My wife is Muslim. I mean, f&%k. Sorry for my language, but nothing can explain. Now I have to teach my kids. I have to be quite smarter in order to communicate with them safely when we went to visit, in order to understand, in order to accept. My wife's mother doesn't know where she wants to be put in her grave. Or where is her life taking...nothing. All Bosnians come here and they all want to, you know what they do, they all build houses over there. And, I tried to tell them that it is very difficult. I tried to tell them, 'In America, with this country's machines, your kids in 10 years will not want to go live in some muddy

village. They will want be here. You will lose this house because the kids.’

[Dario Jungic, interview May 2014]

In late January of 2015 Tony Jungic Dario’s father, passed away of metastasized lung cancer. The chaotic funeral was a perfect example of the cultural confusion assailing the former Yugoslavia. Tony, or Anton Jungic was Croat; his family is so staunchly Communist that when Tony was dying and Dario thought to bring him a book of prayers for comfort, Lilijana, Dario’s stepmother came unglued. She forbade bibles and all religious items in the dying man’s household. On February 1, 2015, the funeral home parking lot was crowded with middle-aged, smoking Bosnians in dark clothing. Mercifully it was not raining and there were about forty people outside when we arrived. Even after the 5:00 p.m. start of the memorial service, the crowd was outside, many holding flowers in the one hand unencumbered by cigarettes. By 5:45 the line to sign the guest book inside the atrium was out the door and into the parking lot. Tony was embalmed and laid in a smaller private viewing room. He was pale and shriveled. Dario took pictures of his father lying there, covered with a Pendleton blanket from the chest down.

By 6:00 p.m. when the service was supposed to start, many people had been upstairs where the food was, but they did not eat anything. The Christian members of the local Bosnian diaspora had viewed the body, said their prayers, and performed the sign of the cross. The Muslim members, of whom there were many, were milling about; this entire event did not fit in with their modern, albeit attenuated notions of burial. To the discomfort of many, one Croat family sent flowers with a large black cross attached to

the upright spray, but there were no other intimations of any type of religious sentiment. No religious or spiritual solace was offered. Croat Catholics were shocked and Muslims commented on the difference between burial styles. Those who still clung to Tito's vision found themselves unable to craft a tradition that was appropriate for all of them.

A slide show running in the chapel has a stream of photos that show Tony standing with his mother-in-law and wife, all over the world on vacations. There is only one picture of Tony with his mother, Dario's grandmother. They are eating at the same table in what was then Yugoslavia. The grandmother was a Partisan. All of the members of Dario's family followed Tito, they believed in the multicultural state and fought for it. They saw religion as the poison that wreaked havoc in their area for generations, and they wanted to leave that behind and all live in peace and prosperity. They thought that Tito's ability to lead would take them to their dream. It worked for most, for a while. So they had no tradition of religion. Jasna's family, or what is now left of it, scattered in the diaspora, was a high-class Muslim family. So here they all are, trying to craft a new culture, a new way to deal with their losses. It was an uncomfortable event, one that accentuated the differences that still rive the greater community of former Yugoslavs in Portland and elsewhere in the United States.

Marino's Adriatic Café is a place of refuge. Dario's vision is to attract all former Yugoslavs to enjoy traditional coffee house culture under the patronizing glance of Tito, whose picture is there to remind Dario of paradise lost. Marino's is part of the healing. "Just in four years we destroyed the whole country. People don't lose culture, but they lose themselves, and this place [Marino's Café] brings them back to themselves, yes, it is the only place here in Portland like this, but it brings them [former Yugoslavs] a little

safety outside their own homes. Our people, how they look at safety, is to be next to other people” (Dario Jungic, interview July 2014).

Transnational connections bind former Yugoslavs just as they do Cambodians and Somalis. Often members of the diaspora build homes back in Bosnia, though as Dario is quick to point out, families that have since adapted to other lifestyles eventually shun most of those homes. Enmities between Bosnians and Serbs persist here in the United States. Portland’s former Yugoslav communities have few Serbs, and there is no intermingling between the groups. Current world events are having an effect upon the Bosnian Muslim community that generally prides itself on its secular lifestyle. Recent interviews with members of the Bosniak community paint a picture of increasing differentiation between conservative and secular Islam among local Bosnian populations. Though former Yugoslavs experience few racist barriers to assimilation, the current anti-Islamic discourse is noticed. Outside pressures tend to create opposition, and it is possible there may be increasing pushback on the part of some Bosniak congregations. People talk about events in the former Yugoslavia, and they are taking sides. There is a constellation of ideas here, a transnational sharing of culture, ideology, and discourse that happens with the Somali and Southeast Asian communities as well.

The night that Saron Khut was raising funds for the Sinn Sisamouth film, two war crime trials were occurring. One of them was the trial of the former Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. Cambodians all over the world contributed to the costs of the trial and watched closely for justice. Another trial was also going on, in a cooler part of the world. After the ardor and noise of Saron’s fundraiser, Marino’s seems sedate until people begin to arrive late in the evening. Six Bosniaks are drinking coffee way after the usual closing

time. They make a bit of noise, then they leave. Dario says they are going home to watch television. That is puzzling, as it is one-o-clock in the morning. It turns out that they are preparing to watch a live broadcast of a mass funeral. A mass grave was found at Tomasica and excavated by forensic anthropologists. The researchers excavated 360 people, in just one of the many graves dotting the countryside. Bosnian Serbs managed to keep the grave location secret until recently. Bosniak and Croat men, women and children, perhaps up to a thousand of them, were buried. The excavation is still ongoing and the funeral was just for the bodies found so far. The grave covers 53,820 square feet and is about 30 feet deep. On the screen hundreds of green painted wooden coffins lie in rows, while old Bosniak women in head shawls weep and hold their hands to the sky in front of their relatives' remains. This comes the same week that the Hague did assign blame to the Netherlands for an incident where almost 300 men and boys were massacred when the Dutch peacekeepers were forced/duped into giving them to the Bosnians. I wish I had not watched the films of the massacre. Like the Nazis, the Serbs documented their atrocities.

There is a musician named Faço who comes to Marino's. He left Sarajevo before the war began and was living in Paris. He and Dario sing old Yugoslav songs together, as well as gypsy songs and music. In France Faço was frantic to do something to help his people as the wars intensified, so he got a NGO group together with a plane. Flying to Croatia in that empty plane was so weird he said, "the big empty plane." They landed in Croatia and filled up with Bosnian refugees and took them to France for processing. Faço was the only Bosnian speaker, so all translation had to go through him for the hundreds of people they had saved. It was Faço's job to assess the stories for refugee status. "I

could not sleep for weeks afterwards, I only could see and hear the stories. People told me how the Serbs skinned people alive and then sprayed them with pressure washers. I could not get that out of my mind, ever” (Faço Nanić, January 26, 2015).

Tony Jungic’s illness caught everyone by surprise. Dario’s father seemed strong and healthy, but cancer wreaked havoc. Tony lived two or three months after his diagnosis, while the family struggled to find ways to deal with his imminent death. Fragmented culturally, there are no traditions or solace for the family. Dario decided to brush up on religion, and he began to ask religious questions, though he did not know the difference between religions, what rituals were, or which clergy went with which faith. He sat down with his children to prepare them for their grandfather’s death, and he decided that since his children are raised in America, a predominantly Christian nation, that he would find words to speak with them from that tradition. When Dario began to speak of grandfather going to heaven, little Ina became confused and indignant. She promptly explained that that is not the way they do things. At the funeral it finally sank in, grandfather was dead, and the children all began to mourn. The oldest is 14, then 10 and seven. The oldest child, a girl, shares my birthday, and we celebrated together last October. The youngest girl is my constant companion at the Café; she has written me love notes since she learned to write legibly. When I received my diagnosis I had to find some way to say goodbye without traumatizing the children. They just lost their grandfather the same way. This is not the average ethnographer’s dilemma. My concern is to cause no pain or damage to these families that have befriended me.

I asked Jasna to call me, and we discussed the situation and the children. Jasna’s professional medical demeanor holds, her voice is calm and even, until the end of the

conversation, when she cracked. She has a bottle of B-17 also known as laetrile. It has been believed to be a cancer cure for decades, though it has never been proven. Jasna bought it in Germany, while visiting her parents when Tony was sick, but he did not live long enough to try it. She urges me to take the substance. Black cumin, and honey, sour melon and herbs, vitamins and chemotherapy, each culture has its cure for me. My part in this study is almost over, and Marino's Adriatic Café is a good place to meet and greet the varied participants. The Jungic children can play with me while I am healthy, and let that be their memory of me. Friday night on March 27, 2015, there was a party at Marino's. Cambodians, Bosnians, Gypsies, the Rahab's Sister's crew that was not working, as well as family and friends all gathered in Marino's for a farewell. I owed it to them. Only Khadro was missing.

### The Yugoslav Gypsies

Diasporic members of the Yugoslav dissolution have an easier time adapting to life in the United States because of their European orientation, skin color, and cultural capital, but this population is diverse, and not all adaptations are beneficial in the long term. Different segments of the Yugoslav population emerge from vastly different social milieus in the former Yugoslavia. Gypsy culture is entwined with Yugoslav culture; some of the most beloved musicians and cultural icons are Romani, and the music and dance is embedded in Yugoslav culture. But Gypsies were persecuted, tortured and slaughtered during the wars, just as they are in other European countries during times of both war and peace. A component of the Yugoslav diaspora then is Gypsy. In the course of this study I

met over 100 Bosniak Gypsies at various events, one of which was the first birthday party of Neil Omerovic's youngest son. As with other study participants photographs, time, and reciprocity helped to build a strong relationship with the Omerovic family, allowing an intimate family view of the challenges Yugoslav Gypsies face in their new world.

Nijaz and Sanela Omerovic are at Marino's this unusually warm spring night. Sanela and I look at each other longingly, and then we cannot bear it any longer. She turns her face away from me and tries not to touch me, but we must embrace. She kisses my cheek without really doing so and we gaze into each other's eyes. When I arrive at Marino's tonight the first thing I do is fend off hugs and handshakes. It is a painful ritual. My last public appearance resulted in a terrible cold and I am determined to avoid that experience again. The combination of lung cancer, lung disease, and a cold was just too much to bear. But Sanela and I cannot stand there without holding each other. How can I turn away from her when this might be one of the last times we see each other? She tells me how much the children miss me and how they ask about me. We smile at each other from across the table. She asks me how I am and she translates for Nijaz across the sidewalk (April 16, 2015).

Sanela's husband Nijaz tells the customers who come to him for cars and detail work that he is Russian. He says that it is much easier to do business with people if they think you are Russian than if they realize you are a Gypsy. In an attempt at political correctness I used the term *Roma* one time, and Nijaz proudly told me that they are Gypsies and that is what they prefer to be called. The Yugoslav diaspora is diverse. Catholic Croats and Bosniak Muslims, Serbs and Partisans, and Gypsies. Muslim Gypsies. The first time we met Sanela and Nijaz we were struck by Sanela's Madonna-

like qualities. Her pale ivory skin glows, and black lustrous hair surrounds a smile that would put Da Vinci to shame. A photo of her elicited marriage proposals in Marino's one night, until people realized she was taken already. Sanela's Madonna guise is genuine; she is the mother of eight perfect children ranging in age from 17 to 1. She hardly looks older than the oldest child, an almost fully-grown 17 year-old son who helps his father in the auto business.

A visit to the Omerovic household is a lesson in parenting. The residence is a two story duplex in east Portland in a lower rent neighborhood. The house is spotless and the children quiet. These are not downtrodden children. Words are always mild, and hugs and kisses always available, toys and treats are judiciously distributed. The older children care for the younger. The Omerovic family is trapped between Bosniak Gypsy mores and modern American expectations for scholastic and economic success. They enthusiastically love their family, and continue to desire more children, or at least one more " . . .to bring the number up to nine." The children are raised in a clean, kind and healthy environment, with enough food and clean clothes and social interactions. The children are happy and relaxed. But expectations for the children's future are Old World expectations, not modern American expectations. The older girls will be perfect wives, with their cooking and child-rearing skills, and the oldest boy is already employed and dating, with tenuous prospects of high school graduation. The Omerovic family presents one with a conundrum: whose mores, whose expectations, whose culture will be the moral foundation of a healthy, happy family facing a future of low income jobs and poverty? (Field notes, June 29, 2014)

As refugees from the former Yugoslavia adapt to and make their way here in the United States we are reminded that all of the refugee populations examined in this study are made up of individuals. These are not monolithic populations; the differences between the culture, mores and goals of Dario and Jasna Jungic and the Omerovic family are vast, yet the things that bring them together in Marino's Café are identical. Their families are close, both internally and with each other, perhaps closer because they were refugees. They crave the same tastes, and they share language and at times religion, but the end goals are different. Family increase, family happiness, and the ability to subsist, these are primary for the Omerovic family. For them success is measured in family happiness and adherence to familiar mores, for the Jungic family, it is measured in the future education of their children and their success here in the new country. How to know what will bring happiness?

## Chapter 10: Conclusion and Recommendations

### Discussion and Conclusions

The Montavilla Neighborhood of Portland, Oregon is a study in contradictions. It *is* gentrifying if you look at rising costs and incomes, apartment buildings and new restaurants. But unlike the cases in most gentrification literature, Montavilla is *not* getting whiter. Montavilla does not yet have a Whole Foods Market, but it does have a nice, newly renovated Hong Phat superstore. This study is in great part a look at gentrification through the eyes of the refugee communities that are not only in its midst, they are part of gentrification's process. In Montavilla it is not just White "pioneers" who lead gentrification, we also see ethnic business-led gentrification. One of the contradictions found is the difference between what first attracts in-migrants to Montavilla and what they then expect once they settle here. Diversity attracts but homogeneity comforts. This contradiction is part of the process of gentrification itself.

Gentrification, in this process, is defined as improved quality of neighborhood life. It includes physical signs such as an increase in lively and varied street life, safe streets, culturally appropriate and varied shopping opportunities, increasing costs of living, changes in residential patterns, and slow demographic turnover. Some changes that accompany gentrification are considered beneficial, such as increased safety and commercial offerings, and some are considered harmful to certain populations, such as increased housing costs. Gentrification implies increased community vitality. But neighborhood residents also define gentrification, or their version of neighborhood vitality, by their own standards. Who is it that decides gentrification is happening and

vitality increasing? Each community in a neighborhood may have distinct benchmarks of neighborhood improvement. Some benchmarks are shared among communities, such as public safety, aesthetic improvement, adequate infrastructure and services, but community vitality also has benchmarks internal to distinct populations. One population may define vitality and neighborhood improvement in terms of boundary maintenance, for instance by building separate religious institutions and schools for distinct groups, while another group may see vitality as multicultural street fairs and intercultural exchanges. The physical qualities of neighborhood vitality and what is seen as gentrification are obviously matters of infrastructure and policy, but community definitions of gentrification and vitality are at least partly internal and less tangible.

Gentrification implies a form of ‘cleaning up,’ but what should be cleaned? Is it the homeless, the messy businesses, the kids on the street? Richness in terms of culture draws exploration by potential in-migrants. Ethnicity is ‘consumed’ and marketed by middle-class Whites, offered up by refugees and lower income people struggling to earn a livelihood and respect. Oxymoronically the same exotic messiness that attracts ethnic tourism and in-migration also repels middle-class people once they become residents. Neighborhood Associations are one of the vehicles by which this push-and-pull is exerted on the refugee communities, because the associations are the enforcers of neighborhood norms. Most neighborhood association members are homeowners and longer-term residents and their desires and expectations may clash with those of other residents. The point of this study is to examine neighborhood development through different lenses.

In Montavilla and other parts of Portland gentrification comes from above and below. The City of Portland has a hand in gentrification, in the Jade District, the Pearl,

Chinatown, development comes in various forms. Real estate development is fostered through various programs and schemes, in-migrants then attract business, and the City helps by providing marketing and structural assistance with parks, festivals, bike routes, etc. This is top-down gentrification. On the other end is the slow, spotty and inconsistent gentrification fostered by ethnic businesses and other small business. These are privately led endeavors, and the results are life or death for the small business owner. For instance Mekong Bistro's move into the current location has gentrified the entire corner of 82<sup>nd</sup> and Siskiyou by driving crime out. This was private, ethnic entrepreneurial-led gentrification, and not in the colors we usually expect to see it in. We need to see gentrification as a broader process that can be messy and is not necessarily White-led, nor led by the middle class. This process of gentrification is more like the immigration process of the 1920s and 30s, which led to extensive urban development at the time.

The internal struggles of refugee communities as well as their friction points with the broader community are part of a global, cultural struggle. Refugees are a part of the gentrification process; they do improve the often-marginal areas in which they create businesses, but they also bring social and cultural clashes. Individuals and families are unwittingly part of gentrification and at the same time consciously marketing themselves and drawing development. Cultural maintenance and transmission go on under the eyes of the host nation, and what is kept and what is left behind is affected by this dialectic. Cultures meet at this point and rub off on each other, but what is fun to visit may not be fun to live next to once one settles in the neighborhood. Though refugee businesses may draw and contribute to gentrification, their contributions are not always noticed or appreciated. Particularly in this case, gentrification is not linear nor is it White. It is

spotty, in pockets, and at times led by people of color and people who are not middle class per se. Thus, fears, especially the fear of displacement by the very people who are part of the gentrification process are part of gentrification. These clashes and internal struggles are part of the process of gentrification, as are the successes of the ethnic entrepreneurs who contribute to it. Cultural maintenance is part of the story. In the act of maintaining their own cultures, refugees are imparting knowledge not only to their own young, but to all of us. Gentrification in this instance is not a smooth story, not a White story, not a story of wealth; it is a story of many colors.

Refugees do not choose to leave their homes; they are ripped from their societies. Humans torn out of their lives try to maintain their memories, their cultures. This process of cultural maintenance is fraught with omissions. On the personal level credentials and documents become lost, and family members are killed, while on the cultural level oppression and genocide erases entire histories and changes stories. Ripped away from physical environments, some customs and culture no longer make sense. Contact with a host culture imparts new culture and attenuates the old. A culture is much deeper than its outward manifestations of food, dress, language and ritual. One peril for refugees is the potential of losing all but the most visible aspects of culture. This is intensified when ethnic entrepreneurs market their ethnicity to the host culture. As time passes and cultural bits rub off on the host culture, cultural maintenance can become a sham, left with outward visible markers that become integrated into the host culture, such as Chinese New Year or Cinco de Mayo. Cultural maintenance can also be oppositional, when people reject the host culture and the community draws in, as happens most often among the older refugee population. In this study the Somali population is the most insular

because it is isolated both by culture and by racism. Insularity oxymoronically generates a distinctly exotic population of “others,” which might make visiting some of these ethnic areas seem more “genuine” and thus more attractive for “ethnic tourism.” Cultural maintenance is not linear, various customs will be preserved while others will fade depending on maintenance methods and outside influences, for instance despite the diaspora, unwritten Hmong funeral rituals remain unchanged. Despite barriers to maintenance, ethnic businesses do serve to help maintain language, dress, music, and food traditions, which though they are not the whole of a culture, are indeed the customs that seem to persist the longest.

In-migrants, ethnic tourists, and ethnic entrepreneurs in the neighborhood both contribute to each other and make things hard for each other. Refugee culture trickles into popular culture—witness the number of *pho* shops in Portland—and refugees learn how to adapt to American life from their hosts. There is a dialectic between groups that livens the neighborhood, though clashes may erupt at times. It is ironic that the relatively closed refugee communities that struggle to maintain boundaries and culture are also responsible in part for the overall urban vitality of their neighborhood. In the process new communities are created, refugee communities adapt, host communities are enriched, and everyone changes in some manner. This dialectic, these interactions and relationships are not always friendly, but they always affect the individual groups and the neighborhood in which they all live.

There is a racial hierarchy apparent in the ways in which different refugee populations are treated in the United States. Different opportunities and obstacles are affected by race and presented to refugees on a racial continuum. ‘Native Whites’ or

American-born white residents hold superiority over refugees, but the trajectories of different refugee populations are affected by their coloration. The long-standing Black/White hierarchy extant in the United States affects these trajectories. Yugoslav refugees have an easier time finding work than Somali refugees do, and this is partly due to differences in cultural capital, but racism is a proven factor. Within refugee communities themselves there is much segmentation; there are divisions and hierarchies within each of the communities studied.

Gender certainly plays a role in refugee trajectories, but a focus on gender would have changed the direction of this study to a great extent. Traditional gender roles persist among refugee communities, but as with all diasporic populations, life in the host nation wreaks changes on these roles. Somali girls have fewer barriers to education and social changes than they do in Somalia. Young Somali men have peer pressures that drive them away from higher education whereas the girls take advantage of NGO programs that foster higher education. Young Somali women face a firmer future than the young males at this point. Former Yugoslavs emerged from a socialist society in which women were provided opportunities for employment and education. Nevertheless, many former Yugoslavs are comfortable in more traditional gender roles. All populations face the necessity of income. All groups studied speak of the need for women to work outside the home much more than they did in the past. The economic necessities of life in the United States play a role in changing gender roles, as does the American emphasis on education as a means of advancement. The most traditional expression of gender roles seems to be among the Cambodian and Southeast Asian population, but even here, the opportunity structure of the United States has a profound effect on gender roles within refugee

communities. Many Southeast Asian females are gaining college degrees and working outside the home, including their own businesses.

Refugees arrive in the United States with differing levels of social, cultural and economic capital. Ethnic business is one means of adaptation to refugee status in America. These businesses serve as cultural comfort, means of cultural transmission and maintenance, and means to an end. These businesses may pay for the education of the next generation or keep the family afloat. Seldom are they multigenerational because they outlive their usefulness as cultures assimilate. They instead are passed on to new immigrants. But overall, refugee-owned businesses are lasting signs in a new, transnationally mediated urban world. Cultures do not just assimilate linearly. There are generational differences in adaptation, and refugee businesses serve as ramps, a means to ease the lives of the elders and a jumping-off point for the young, who will pick and choose what they keep and what they leave behind, just as I did. Some cultural markers such as food, music, and specific traditions are kept for generations; these persistent traditions then are imparted to the host culture. In Portland, Oregon, Cambodian New Year in the Park has as much appeal as St. Paddy's Day revelries. There is always interchange and syncretism. Mainstream American culture is transformed by ethnic commerce, and refugees find their ways to both hold and adapt. Though some populations are more insular than others, as generations are born and time passes we all eventually assimilate. But we assimilate into a culture and society that we have altered however slightly by our own presence.

Ethnic businesses have two points of articulation. One is within the ethnic community and the other is with the mainstream society. Within the ethnic community,

these places are extremely important for cultural maintenance and transmission. They offer cultural comfort, refuge, and locations for cultural activities as a group. Cultural maintenance and transmission occurs in generally joyful environs. Refugees and their ethnic businesses provide a place for their own people to dance, celebrate, and learn.

The friction point, the location where the host nation meets the immigrant's culture, is the business, which is where the refugee culture is superior to the host culture in knowledge, but inferior to the host culture racially. From this position of weakness refugees nevertheless are certain that they have something to teach the rest of us. In their restaurants, the refugee is the host, feeding and hosting in the way that is most culturally appropriate to them. In the business the refugee or immigrant is the boss instead of being a refugee in America at the sufferance of the American people. This is the point of first impression, tinged but not yet delineated by all of the combined histories of the host nation and the new arrival. Here is the point at which mainstream Americans form a personal opinion of an unfamiliar culture, where they learn new tastes and tell their friends about them. The next stroll on Portland's east side will be more familiar and Southeast Asian culture slowly becomes part of the "hipster" culture of Portland, as Mekong Bistro becomes the go-to place for late night snacking on the upper east side. Mainstream culture is not fundamentally changed, but it has value added to it, as it is enriched and enlivened. The urban environment is also enriched by the lively presence of humans, attracted by unfamiliar sights, sounds, and tastes.

Of course, these articulations can go well or poorly. (As we have seen, there is a direct correlation between trajectories depending on race.) Saron's use of the letter he sent out when he lost the liquor license is an example of an articulation that succeeded,

but Saron used a very Asian way to do this. He used his collective culture and every person of power he could think of. It was a risk but it is a good example of using various strategies to adapt and articulate. He brought the suffering of his community directly into his letter and integrated it with his action, with the tools available to him here in the U.S. to save his business. He syncretically adapted his ways to the modern technology that he had access to in a culturally appropriate way and it worked.

The draw for White people to Montavilla is these businesses and they say so. They come because it is exotic and a bit edgy. They go back and tell their friends about what they discovered and interactions increase. It is important that this is to some extent a Portland phenomenon. There are NGOs as well as local, state and federal policies that create a welcoming climate for refugees in Portland. This affects the way that we look at this phenomenon because Portland markets its ethnicities. For example, the City created the Jade district in the south Montavilla area with its own manager, organization and cleanup parties last year. The City has approved apartments and other development in the area and Portland Community College has a new campus in Montavilla. Right at this moment we are looking at an area that is truly beginning to gentrify in the classic sense of people with more money coming in and new buildings and new stores coming in. Demography is changing. An overwhelming majority of respondents state that what draws them is the diversity of the area and the exotic and ethnic businesses of the area. With all this marketing, ethnic business owners and populations already living there are hoping that things will work altogether and they will not be driven out. Many respondents across all population segments worry about being displaced. One important difference between what is considered classic gentrification and the Montavilla instance is that the

influx is not all White. In-migrants are not all middle or upper class, and they are not all White. Diversity is increasing in Montavilla, not decreasing.

White people like it there because it is exotic and there are cheap properties. But the reactions of in-migrants—Whites, generally—to the businesses are interesting. There are local micro-frictions. In-migrants are both attracted and repelled by ethnic businesses. In these ethnic businesses White people fear that they will not understand the staff, that they will not understand the products, and that they would embarrass themselves by looking dumb. They also feel friction in regards to the messiness of the businesses, especially the outside appearances. There are different cultural uses of space. The Bosnian café takes up almost the whole sidewalk. The African markets are bare and the windows covered. Hong Phat is made up of small vendors within a large grocery store. These are frictions that emerge with in-migrants and long-term residents. There is also a lack of understanding between African and African American communities, with seemingly unbridgeable gaps in culture, religion, and lifeway.

There are also some macro-frictions. There is a persistent media-mediated perception of gangs that causes misunderstanding and fear. A steady media focus on gang activity in Portland creates a belief that simply the presence of Asians and Somalis will bring gangs. Global events and news, such as the focus on North African terrorism in current events further raises suspicion against Portland's Somali community. There is also disagreement about how to deal with the homeless and prostitutes. The Neighborhood Association has picketed organizations that offer services to the homeless. Yet there is revolt in the Neighborhood Association ranks with the women who also cook food for Rahab's Sisters once a month.

There is a lack of empathy among groups. There are two segments—low-income populations and home-owning populations (mainly white, long-term)—in Montavilla. When Safeway closed, the neighborhood was in a furor that an Asian market was coming in. They wanted a Whole Foods even though there is not the population to support such a market as this is one of the poorest parts of the city. People hold an internal community view, keeping their boundaries and needs to the forefront and sticking with them. They do not stop to think that the neighborhood is at least 20% Asian and those people may need an Asian market. Then they are unwilling to go into an Asian market despite the fact that the market is fully stocked for White people, Latin@s, and Muslims.

The most substantial macro friction is racism. From five different people I have heard instances of people screaming for Africans to go back to Africa. A media analysis shows a substantial degree of subtle racism in discussions of bars, gangs, and youth, particularly in the comments sections, which are not subtle at all. The incident regarding Saron's liquor license and the Neighborhood Association is a good illustration of how these discourse-driven beliefs affect refugee businesses and opportunities. Refugee trajectories are racial, cultural, and capital dependent. They are not linear. The color of refugee skin places the immigrant onto a quintessentially American continuum of color, with all of the discursive implications that come with it. Somalis face the worst obstacles to success; Cambodians and other Southeast Asians have to battle the oxymoronic tropes of the "Model Minority" concurrently with the myth of the Asian syndicate gangs. This study upholds the findings of other scholars regarding former Yugoslav trajectories in the United States. Though segments of Yugoslav populations experience generational

poverty, overall former Yugoslavs have more opportunities for success in their host nation than the other groups do.

Gentrification is not what people think it is or what it used to be. It is spotty and segmented; it is not linear. The view of it as a black-on-white issue is completely incorrect in this context. Although it is difficult, we need to use measures of community vitality that are interior to each community. There are many smaller communities under the broad community and each has its measure of vitality. Many of them overlap: safety, security, the ability to thrive, and the ability to do commerce. These go across all communities. But the communities have different interior measures of vitality. These always involve specific aspects of cultural maintenance such as ritual and mutual enactment of language, marriage customs, food and dress and well as mutual reproduction of these customs in the best manner available. So when we look at community vitality in the context of gentrification or any context, although we have to look at the overarching level of overall community benefit such as safe streets, we have to recognize that in this context there are individual communities that have different requirements for their vitality. Gentrification, defined in terms of community vitality, depends on the vitality of many small communities. Because different small communities have these differing vitality benchmarks, gentrification requires attention to specific social and cultural situations.

As an example, the Somali men have sharply curtailed lives here. They had a different social life and social status in Somalia. One way to keep themselves sane is to continue the patterns of the life they had back home. However, the pool hall, Ludo games, and dominos in Sophia's are all taken away by gentrification. In this case

gentrification comes in the classic form we think of: displacement of low income and low status ethnic businesses and residents in favor of White interests. Indeed that area of Glisan Street is slowly turning over toward more “mainstream” American businesses with the new pizza parlor and coffee roasters. The Somali men have a cultural need for social life that helps to keep the whole community vital. Now there are unhappy males: what will they do? They will complain to the younger males, and to their wives if they have them. They may take out their frustrations in inappropriate manners. The ripples of not having culturally appropriate means to maintain culture extend into the community and harm both the internal community and the broader neighborhood. New generations must have some moral framework to guide them into the new world. Gentrification exists and it happens, but there is no certain prescription for its success in the multicultural mold.

As Jane Jacobs and William Whyte write, gentrification, in the form of classic economic displacement of the poor or low-income populations in favor of a wealthier population, can kill a neighborhood. The Pearl District in Portland is such an example. The Pearl with its condos and expensive restaurants is now the butt of Portland gentrification jokes. But these scholars also focused on how to do it right, on what makes broader community vital; small entrepreneurial endeavors, diversity, and street life are agreed upon as necessities. Gentrification in the case of Portland Oregon’s Eastside has the potential to be beneficial to many if the neighborhood remains affordable and diverse.

Ethnic tourism attracts gentrification and money. Ethnic businesses are loved and hated--loved for their exotic attractions and hated for their disorder. Whites are attracted to aesthetically pleasing ethnic business, but the kaleidoscope of strange foods and broad

variety of cultures discomfits them as they explore their own city. Like other types of tourism, ethnic tourism is more fun when it is safe yet exotic. Despite discomfort Whites who use these ethnic businesses have increasing knowledge of refugee populations and enjoyment of ethnic offerings in the Montavilla Neighborhood.

What do “healthy” communities do? They adapt to change and to local conditions, they transmit culture, they reproduce culture, and they interact with other communities. These are benchmarks of community vitality. Some communities might do better at some of these benchmarks than others. There are internal differences in the strategies refugee communities use to adapt to life in the United States. Within refugee communities Somali populations are the least likely to engage in pan-ethnic endeavors, and Asians the most likely. Former Yugoslavs have different adaptations to the economic situation in the United States though at least ten participants from the former Yugoslavia did adapt to the loss of credentials by starting a variety of entrepreneurial businesses. Ethnic communities parse into smaller and smaller segments under examination. Somalis are divided by clan, and former Yugoslavs by religion or the lack of it, as well as ethnicity and class. Cambodians are few in Portland and tend to interact, but step back just a bit and the divisions of the Southeast Asian population become clear: Christian and animist Hmong argue over theology; Catholic and Buddhist Vietnamese seldom intermarry or interact; the segments are myriad. These differences affect aspects of vitality, therefore it is important to support these communities as they navigate entry and adaptation to life in the U.S. Their trajectories will affect urban life in general, and urban development patterns. Different populations face different challenges to adaptation and success.

Each of the families participating in this study has different cultural and personal reasons for their labor. Dario and his family must keep the best of their culture alive in the New World, Saron must support his family and tell everyone who will listen about his wonderful, ancient culture, and Khadro has no choice, no other way, unlike her nemesis down the street. Yet in each place the same thing happens: the young learn about their own culture, the “West” learns about “other” culture, and the old find comfort. Whether the endeavor is successful or, as is most often, hanging on by its teeth, whether the entrepreneur is pushed into it by organizations who would rather put out small loans than educate, or whether the entrepreneur engages in business wholeheartedly, these places are all places where culture is taught to the young, provided for the old, and put forth for the new country to see. These are food mediated interactions and means of identity formation in the new world. Families strive to transmit culture to their children against a tide of American influences in their lives. These efforts contribute to the vitality of these small communities by creating social bonds and memories that persist, but they also contribute to the vitality of the neighborhood by providing all residents with opportunities for cultural enrichment and outreach.

However, these versions of small, vital, bounded healthy communities with their ethnic businesses both repel and attract others in the neighborhood. There are long standing racial tropes and expectations that affect the way the rest of the neighborhood reacts to its ethnic businesses and populations. There is a definite continuum of comfort with the businesses. Through the course of this study I have observed more and more Whites going into Mekong Bistro and Alle Amin. Something is happening in this neighborhood that is affected by the refugee communities.

These communities of color, refugees, and immigrants with their ethnic businesses, help to shape and redefine gentrification in Portland, Oregon. The history of refugee influx into east Portland is part of what is happening now, so how will these communities fit in to a gentrifying neighborhood? Are Sophia and the others right? Will “classic” gentrification occur and will they all be driven out? Not if we recognize that healthy, vital communities must be a bit messy, that there has to be some strife, some frisson, and some diversity. Homogeneity is death, as Jane Jacobs reminds us. We have to take the messy windows, the funny looking vegetables, the chicken feet, and the black leather jackets, and recognize that they are part of what keeps the city alive. Refugee and immigrant businesses add to our communities in the broader sense. Life would be dull indeed without Mekong Bistro, Marino’s Adriatic Café, or Alle Amin Restaurant. Ethnic businesses such as these add to neighborhood and community vitality both within their bounded communities, and as attractions for ethnic tourists and in-migrants.

I hope this work has done is to generate a new view of what gentrification ought to be. Why should we be bound to the classic notion of disinvestment, White flight, pioneering, and subsequent gentrification and homogenization? There is a tension between in-migrants’ desires for safety and the familiar, and the factors that attract them to the neighborhood in the first place such as diversity. In some respects the City of Portland’s ethnic marketing is a potential solution. If ethnic businesses and small minority populations become part of the expected culture of gentrifying Portland, and are viewed as improving neighborhood vitality, with continued efforts at cultural exchange, perhaps the individual ethnic communities in their myriad segments will become a part of the urban fabric.

But as attractions, as means of development, how long will these communities persist? What will replace them? The functioning of smaller communities and their tendencies to make boundaries around themselves is an essential part of gentrification. It creates liveliness and it is what makes the neighborhood as a whole work better. It creates a marketable and actual vision of a neighborhood. Although there is a tendency towards isolation, together these individual communities make a whole organism, a kind of ecosystem that they live within and which is visible upon closer examination. The fact that Portland is an immigrant and refugee gateway city means that there is potential for continued influxes of culture as prior ethnic communities adapt and acculturate. On Glisan Street we see buildings owned by former refugees now occupied by current refugee businesses. Southeast Asian culture in Portland has not disappeared, but has adapted, even while it has changed Portland's urban culture. Our Lady of La Vang Vietnamese Church still stands, almost fifty years after the first Vietnamese came to the city, forty-plus year old restaurants still serve smoked duck and pho, and two of the largest grocery stores in east Portland are owned by Southeast Asian families. Refugee and immigrant culture is persistent and continues to exert beneficial effects on urban culture even after two generations. All Americans save those here at the first landings are immigrants and refugees, and we have homogenized into mainstream Americans. For those of us who appear White, homogenization is a given, After a number of generations food, attenuated holiday traditions, and at times abbreviated names are our remaining legacy. For refugees and immigrants of color the path is not so direct. Yet these are the populations that bring the spice to urban life, and that should be fostered and aided to do so as they enter the country.

In this new version of gentrification, in-migrants have to understand the need for cultural maintenance and the values inherent in the continuation of bounded communities. If they know more about the communities, they can accept the differing cultural uses of space and appearances. Incoming people should realize that they themselves will also make their bounded communities, that can interact with small minority communities and other groups. If individual, different communities come to understand that they all have the same basic goals and needs, they have grounds from which to form relationships and alliances.

Gentrification is not just an influx of White people with money. It is that which makes a neighborhood attractive and the process that ensues when a neighborhood becomes more attractive for a variety of reasons. So that attractive quality is essential to draw populations with lively communities. Attractions are not always aesthetic, they can be structural, such as geographical placement, cheap housing, etc. But structure alone does not create community. Montavilla is an interesting case because it is geographically long, poor with pockets of wealth and some people that have been there for three generations. It is the hottest place in town to move to. Gentrification in the classic sense is a neighborhood cleanup. That isn't what anybody wants—99% of people interviewed say that they like Montavilla because it is diverse. The question is: Can they keep that vitality, that mix, that acceptance of the poor with the rich, the messy with the clean, the homeless with the wealthy third generation-ers, the ethnic communities with the mainstream Whites?

### Recommendations

#### **Diversify the Neighborhood Association/s**

- The Neighborhood Association should continue to (1) recruit new blood from the refugee and immigrant communities, as well as from non home-owning populations and (2) try to see the whole neighborhood as an organism that functions together.

### **Support Ethnic Businesses**

- IRCO should train their outreach people in culturally appropriate approaches to clients. Outreach needs to be culturally appropriate for each community. For example, the young man who was responsible for internship evaluations tried to shake Khadro's hand when he entered her restaurant.
- IRCO and NGOs with small business programs should follow up after the initial phases of development. These organizations are limited in funds and in the length of time that assistance is offered, but this system should be re-assessed. Assessment and follow-up with targeted assistance is needed when people reach barriers to further advancement. Investment in further assistance pays off in the long run.
- Create a financial institution for immigrants and refugees. Now they get money from federal and local grants, but they cannot get money to improve or expand their businesses. They get stuck in small businesses that are not profitable. They do not have access to financial institutions.

### **Support African/Somali Youth**

- Somali youth must have educational support and peer support. This is a disaster that is about to happen. The community refugee leader, Polo Catalani, concurs.

The males need to be pushed into education and vocational training with opportunities and good incentives for them to go to school. Peer groups must be set up among the males. However, there are no pan-African organizations that function together. The African communities need help to organize an educational campaign for the youth of Africa, in order to show them alternatives. Youth are the best face forward for all the populations. They are easy to engage. Within the Somali community young women are an asset. It is the younger Somali women and a few college-oriented males who are engaged in social change within their communities. But one has to be careful not to isolate the youth from their parents. Families have to be approached as a whole in order to maintain moral order and supporting structures.

- The City also should develop a positive discourse towards African refugees. This is a discourse issue where the city can present a different face or view of African groups. The youth are being pushed away by racism and oppositional views from the city's White population and neighborhood organizations. The discourse needs to include a recognition that Africans are part of the city and that they add to it through their businesses and through their bright youth who want to contribute to their host country.

### **Increase Ethnic Tours**

- Some efforts already in place in Montavilla should be continued. The Jade district tours and open-air markets are very effective. There need to be more tours by "Know Your City" to east Portland.

### **Make Main Streets Pedestrian Friendly**

- The City of Portland needs to straighten out the traffic problems in the neighborhood. If they want Glisan Street and 82<sup>nd</sup> Avenue to gentrify in an inclusive or positive manner, they need to find a balance between the flow of traffic and the ability to cross the street without getting killed. Infrastructure must be invested in to ease positive gentrification.

### **Maintain the Services on 82<sup>nd</sup> Street**

- Services to the poor, homeless, and low income populations must continue to be available and supported by the community on 82<sup>nd</sup> Street, IRCO on the north end, is vitally important for the refugee population, and homeless services from Sts. Peter and Paul Church on Pine are particularly important for a segment of the population that people would like to ignore, but which lives among us. 82<sup>nd</sup> Street is changing, with the City planning to approve the building of apartment buildings; the challenge on 82<sup>nd</sup> is to keep the integration of various populations and businesses. With new glimmers of gentrification such as businesses and schools at the top and bottom of this section of 82<sup>nd</sup> Street, more police patrols will come in. The challenge of 82<sup>nd</sup> will be that the people who are on it right now have no other place to go. Will the city shunt them farther out into West Gresham or are they going to integrate them into the neighborhood? This is a huge clash. 82<sup>nd</sup> is a hotbed of services—IRCO, PPC, Africa House, St Peter and Paul with free meals. These need to remain in spite of the development that will occur. People will have to learn to live together. 82<sup>nd</sup> doesn't have any structure right now. When they raze car lots and build apartments, there is the potential to lose the street life of any kind and revert to a crime ridden, isolated area, similar to the

Lloyd Center, which attracts crime and criminals because there is no street life or business in that area. Small business and services are essential to maintain liveliness.

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**APPENDICES**

**Appendix A: Demographic Characteristics of Research Participants**

Population Characteristics	Business Owners	Leaders and workers at NGOs, churches, and other organizations (Demographic not important)	Research Participants' Age (including business owners)			Total
			Age 21-39	Age 40-59	Age 60+	
Southeast Asian	5		8	10	5	23
African American	3		4	1	0	5
White (Native, <10years residency)	5		35	30	4	69
White (Native, >10 years residency)	2			8	2	10
Horn of Africa	5		5	10	4	19
Former Yugoslav	5		9	15	4	28
<b>Total</b>	<b>25 Owners</b>	<b>18 Leaders</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>154</b>

Total all types: 172 (Community leaders: n=18)

**Appendix B: Starter Questions for Interviews with White In-migrant (<10 years residency) Residents of the Montavilla Neighborhood (non business-owning)**

- 1) How long have you lived here?
- 2) Has the neighborhood changed since you came here?
  - Probe: Could you give me some examples?
- 3) Do you own or rent your residence?
  - Probes: What do you think of housing costs in the area? Are you comfortable in your neighborhood? Do you like your neighbors?
- 4) Do you work in Portland?
- 5) Could you please tell me where you lived before you moved here?
- 6) Why did you choose to move to Montavilla?
  - Probes: What was the neighborhood like when you arrived? What did you expect? Was Montavilla what you expected? Where you happy with your choice?
- 7) Do you plan to stay?
  - Probes: Is Montavilla better/worse than where you lived before? How do you get along with people? Do you talk to your neighbors? Do activities with them? Do you worship here in the neighborhood? How safe do you feel here? Do you think the neighborhood is unified/divided/lively/friendly/unfriendly/diverse/etc?
- 8) Do you shop at local businesses?
  - Probes: Are businesses adequate? Which ones do you like/dislike? Are there enough? What is missing? What is it about a local business that attracts you to shop there?
- 9) What changes would you like to see in the neighborhood?

- Probes: What do you think it would take to accomplish (the change)? How do you think this change could come about? What should be the role of residents/organizations/churches/administration in this change?
- 10) After your experiences here, what would you say makes a neighborhood a good, place to live?
  - 11) What do you think the future of the neighborhood is?
  - 12) Is there anything else you would like to say?

**Appendix C: Starter Questions for Unstructured Interviews with Long-term Residents (>10 years residency)**

- 1) Could you please tell me how long you have lived in Montavilla?

- Probe: How many people do you know what have been here as long as you have?
- 2) Could you tell me what the neighborhood was like when you moved here, or were born here?
- Probe: How would you characterize your experience of living here?
- 3) What, if anything has changed?
- Probes: What types of changes? What do you think about it? Have there been changes in how you relate to your neighbors? Has the character of the neighborhood changed? Have the people changed?
- 4) How satisfied are you with life in the neighborhood?
- Probes: Do you like your neighbors? How well do you get along with them? Do you and your neighbors associate in activities and interests? Do you feel comfortable here? Do you feel safe here? Do you want to stay here? Are you happy here? Please give me some examples of pleasant interactions.
- 5) What do you think the future of the neighborhood is?

**Appendix D: Starter Questions for Unstructured Interviews with Small Business Owners in Montavilla**

- 1) Could you please tell me how long you have owned your business here in the neighborhood?
- 2) What is it like to have a business here?
  - Probes: How do you get along with your neighbors? Are you happy with your life here? Could you give me some examples? Do you have children? Do they work with you? Why did you come to Montavilla to open your business?
- 3) Where did you live before you came here?
  - Probes: What was life like there? Is it better or worse here?
- 3) What has changed in the neighborhood since you came here?
- 4) What have been your experiences as a business owner here in Montavilla been?
  - Probes: Could you tell me about what it was like to open a business here? What do you like/dislike about this process? How do you get along with your customers? Do you feel comfortable in the neighborhood? What kind of people eat/shop here? What do you think of the people in the neighborhood? Do you think people get along here? Could you give me some examples? Do you think you have enough business? Why/why not? What is your relationship with the City of Portland? Have you had any dealings with administration? Are you satisfied with your interactions? Could you give me some examples? Is there anything that could be improved? How do you think the City could help your business?
- 5) What do you think are the advantages to have a business in this neighborhood?
  - Probes: What do you like about the area? Could you share some of your successes with me? Do you like the people? Could you give me some examples? Do you

feel the neighborhood is close/supportive? Could you give me an example of a pleasant experience here?

6) What do you think are the disadvantages to have a business in this neighborhood?

- Probes: What kinds of problems do you face with this type of business? How do you get along with the local police? Could you give me an example of an unpleasant/difficult experience here?

7) After your experiences here, what would you say makes a neighborhood a good place to live?

8) What do you think the future of the neighborhood is?

9) Is there anything else you would like to say?

**Appendix E: Starter Questions for Unstructured Interviews with Refugee Populations**

- 1) Could you please tell me where you are from originally?
- 2) How did you manage to get to the United States?
  - Probes: Were you in a refugee camp? How did you get there? How long did it take you to get to the United States? Did you have any other places you wanted to settle?
- 3) What was the experience like?
  - Probes: Did you come here alone or with family members? How many of you came together? What did you bring with you? What did you leave behind?
- 4) What did you do in your home country?
- 5) Do you work here in the United States?
- 6) What made you choose the work that you do now?
  - Probes: did you have credentials at home? Did you have trouble finding work here? Do you still work in the same kind of work you used to do back home?
- 7) What good experiences have you had here in the area?
  - Probes: Do you like the people who live here? Have they ever helped you? What kinds of good experiences have you had? What do you like about being here?
- 8) What bad experiences have you had here in the area?
  - Probes: Have you had trouble with people here? What types of bad experiences did you have? What was the cause of the troubles?
- 9) What are your future plans?

- Probes: Do you want to stay in the United States? Do you have children here? If so, how are they doing? Do you plan to build in your home country? Do you want to go home? Do you plan to add to your education, learn a new trade, change your lifestyle, etc. If you have a business, why did you start it and do you intend to keep it?

