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TACOMA

## The Immigrant Stories Project Curriculum Guide and Teaching Resources





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## IMMIGRANTS IN TACOMA

In 2015, the Tacoma City Council passed [Resolution 39116](#) which authorized Tacoma's membership in the Welcoming Cities and Counties Initiative. This means that Tacoma is committed to creating a welcoming, immigrant friendly environment that maximizes opportunities for economic growth and cultural vitality.

### **Immigrant Population in Tacoma:**

According to the 2022 American Community survey, 12.5% of Tacoma's Population is Foreign Born. Of that population, here are the main regions that the immigrant population comes from:

Region of Origin	% of Tacoma's Immigrant Population
Southeast Asia	30.1%
Central America	20.8%
East Asia	12.6%
Eastern Europe	10.1%
East Africa	4%
Caribbean	3.3%
North America	3.1%
South Asia	3.1%
Western Europe	2.9%
Oceania	2.4%

Country of Origin	% of Tacoma's Immigrant Population
Mexico	17.2%
Vietnam	11.6%
Korea	8.0%
Philippines	8.0%
Cambodia	6.3%
Ukraine	4.9%
Canada	3.1%
Russia	2.8%
Kenya	2.4%
China	2.3%
Germany	2.2%
<b>Laos</b>	<b>2.1%</b>

The above data is from [Town Charts](#), originally from the 2022 American Community Survey

### **Economic Contributions of Immigrants, Washington State:**

The links below are sources that will provide an overview of Washington State's immigrant population and their contributions to our economy:

[Fact Sheet: Immigrants in Washington](#) (American Immigration Council)

[What Immigration Means to Washington, Infographic](#) (American Immigration Council)

### **RESOURCES FOR IMMIGRANTS:**

The links below are resources for organizations dedicated to helping immigrants in Tacoma.

[Tacoma Community House](#): Offer a variety of immigrant services such as immigration assistance, citizenship classes, English classes and help finding employment.

[Northwest Immigrant Rights Project](#): Provides legal assistance for immigrants.



## RECORD YOUR OWN IMMIGRANT STORY INTERVIEW

The following short video from the Smithsonian Institution offers clear guidelines for conducting your own oral history interview.



### The video mentions five steps:

1. Finding someone to interview  
If someone in your family is an immigrant, you might want to interview them. If you don't have a family member who is an immigrant, you might be able to find a neighbor or a family friend who is an immigrant. Remember, you want this to be a positive experience for them so try to find someone who would like to share their story.
2. Preparing for the interview  
Consider making up a list of sample questions that you would like to ask your interviewee. Share these questions with them in advance so they feel prepared and comfortable for your interview. There may be some topics your interviewees would prefer not to discuss, but it is more likely they have some interesting life experiences that they would like to focus on. Craft the questions so that they can tell their story in the most interesting possibly way.



Below is a list of the questions that the World Affairs Council of Tacoma (WACT) used as the basis for the Immigrant Stories Project. You will notice from the interviews that we have adjusted the questions to reflect the different life stories of the interviewees.

It is also a best practice to have your interviewee sign a “deed of gift.” This is a statement where your subject consents to being interviewed by you. It can be very simple. Here is a template that is recommended by the US House of Representatives:

I, [interviewee name], agree to do an interview with [interviewer name] on [date], consisting of an audio recording. I [interview name] accept the interview on [date] for inclusion to my [immigrant story] oral history project.

Obtaining permission is something that historians and researchers regularly do to ensure they are on the same page as the people they are interviewing.

### **3. Conducting the interview.**

Interviewers are often encouraged to be active listeners. It is important to be aware of this, so you do not interrupt the flow of what your subject is sharing with you. Remember, this is their story, and you want to let them tell it in their own way as much as possible.

At the same time, you want to pay attention to what your interviewee is saying so you can ask follow-up questions. Rather than automatically going down your list of questions one by one, try to encourage your interviewee to provide more explanation for topics that are particularly interesting. Taking notes during the interview is useful for planning follow-up questions.

### **4. Recording the interview.**

It can be a challenge to remember everything from the interview just by listening and taking notes. Fortunately, most cellphones can very easily record an interview. This is described in the video above.

### **5. Thank your Interviewee!**

They have shared memories that are probably very important to them. Let them know you appreciate what that shared and what you have learned from them!



## RESOURCES:

Here are a few resource sites that provide useful tips for conducting oral interviews (and were helpful in making the above list):

[Activity: Conduct Your Own Oral History](#) (From the United States House of Representatives)

[How to Do Oral History](#) (From the Smithsonian Institution Archives)

[Oral History Interviews](#) (From the American Folklife Center)

## SAMPLE QUESTIONS FROM THE WACT IMMIGRANT STORIES PROJECT:

Here is a list of questions you can use as a basis for your interview. As part of your preparation for the interview, talk to your subject and create additional questions that relate to their own specific experiences:

Questions:

1. What is your name?
2. Where did you come from? Why did you leave?
3. What was the process like to get to the USA?
4. Why did you come to Tacoma?
5. If you had not come to Tacoma, what do you think you would be doing in your native country now?
6. What obstacles did you face coming to the US? Did anything shock you?
7. What would you like people to understand about immigrants in Tacoma?
8. What are some of the ways you try to contribute to Tacoma?
9. What advice do you have for immigrants coming to Tacoma today?



## CURRICULUM SHEET FOR MARIAM D. KURDGHELIDZE ANDERSON

### IMMIGRANT FROM THE REPUBLIC OF GEORGIA

Mariam describes her struggles both with Georgia's transition from communism after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and adjusting to her new life in the U.S. For more on Georgia's thirty years of independence, read this article, [Narratives of Georgia's Modern History](#).

#### RESOURCES:

1. Encyclopedia Britannica, [Georgia](#).
2. BBC Country Profiles, [Georgia](#).
3. CIA World Factbook, [Georgia](#).

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What observations does Mariam have about life under Soviet communism?
2. Describe how the breakup of the Soviet Union impacted Mariam and her family.
3. What lessons does Mariam draw from Georgia's military conflicts with Russia?
4. What does freedom mean to Mariam? Why is it important to her?
5. What were some of the difficulties that Mariam faced in coming to the U.S.?
6. What was shocking to Mariam about life in the U.S.?
7. How is diversity regarded in Georgia compared to the U.S.?
8. Why did Mariam decide to stay in the U.S.?
9. What is Mariam doing in Tacoma now?
10. How does Mariam try to contribute to her community?
11. What advice does Mariam have for immigrants coming to Tacoma?
12. At the end of the video Mariam describes visiting Georgia. What does she miss about her life in Georgia? What does she appreciate about life in the U.S.?





## CURRICULUM SHEET: ZAHID CHAUDHRY

### IMMIGRANT FROM PAKISTAN

Zahid is an immigrant from Pakistan and a veteran who served in the U.S. military immediately before and after the 9-11 attacks. He retired from the military after suffering an injury that required him to use a wheelchair. In this conversation he discusses his time in the military and some of the ways in which Muslims face discrimination in the U.S. The report on discriminatory immigration policies against Muslims that he discussed can be accessed here: [Muslims Need Not Apply](#). Zahid was prominently featured in the PBS documentary [American Exile](#).

#### RESOURCES:

1. Encyclopedia Britannica, [Pakistan](#).
2. BBC Country Profiles, [Pakistan](#).
3. CIA World Factbook, [Pakistan](#).

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Zahid's family leave Pakistan?
2. Why did Zahid relocate to Washington State?
3. Why did Zahid join the military?
4. Describe what happened to Zahid as he was crossing the border at Blaine Washington. What does this show about the environment for Muslims in the U.S. post 9-11?
5. What are the difficulties that Muslims face in immigrating to the U.S.?
6. What is Zahid's notion of service, and how have his actions reflected that?
7. What was different about how Tacoma reacted to attacks on Mosques compared to eastern Washington?
8. What are some of the contributions of immigrants to South Puget Sound that Zahid describes?
9. What does Zahid intend to convey with his example of the flowers?



## CURRICULUM SHEET: RESHMA DAVID

### IMMIGRANT FROM INDIA

Reshma David is an immigrant from India who moved to Tacoma with her husband. Unfortunately, when her visa expired, she was forced to leave the country and move to Canada where she hoped to eventually get approval to return to the United States. For more on the rules governing the expiration of visas, you can read this [fact sheet](#) from the American Immigration Council.

#### RESOURCES:

1. Encyclopedia Britannica, [India](#).
2. Encyclopedia Britannica, [Kerala](#) (this is the state in India that Reshma is originally from).
3. BBC Country Profile, [India](#).
4. CIA World Factbook, [India](#).

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Describe Reshma's life in India before coming to the U.S.
2. How did Reshma feel about coming to the U.S.?
3. What did Reshma think about coming to Tacoma?
4. What did Reshma notice about life in Tacoma that made her sad? What did she do about that?
5. How did people in Tacoma treat Reshma?
6. What did Reshma do to contribute to the community in Tacoma?
7. Why did Reshma have to leave? How does she feel about that?
8. What are some of Reshma's memories of her life in Tacoma?



## CURRICULUM SHEET: LEON KHALSA-MAULEN

### IMMIGRANT FROM GERMANY

Leon Khalsa-Maulen is a Professor of Psychology at Pierce College. To find out more about his school, you can visit the [Pierce College website](#).

#### RESOURCES:

1. Encyclopedia Britannica, [Germany](#).
2. BBC Country Profile, [Germany](#).
3. CIA World Factbook, [Germany](#).

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Leon describes his decision to move to the U.S. as being like an Irish knot. Why?
2. Why did Leon Decide to stay in the U.S.? What impact did this have on his relations with his family?
3. What does Leon mean when he says that getting to America is more than getting on an airplane?
4. Describe Leon's decision to become a citizen. Why did it take so long?
5. What did life in America offer Leon that he could not find in Germany?
6. Why did Leon decide to move to Tacoma?
7. What does Leon see as the positive and negative aspects of freedom in the U.S.?
8. What advice does Leon have for new immigrants to the U.S.?
9. What contributions to the country is Leon most proud of?
10. What does Leon mean when he says that becoming an American is in part fact and in part fiction?



## CURRICULUM SHEET: MAURICE LEKEA,

### IMMIGRANT FROM THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Maurice is active in the Tacoma Refugee Choir and has his own podcast. If you want to learn more, you can visit these websites:

1. [Tacoma Refugee Choir](#).
2. Maurice's podcast, "[Create Home Together](#)."

#### RESOURCES

1. Encyclopedia Britannica entry, [Democratic Republic of Congo](#).
2. BBC Country Profile, [Democratic Republic of Congo](#).
3. CIA World Factbook, [Democratic Republic of Congo](#).

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Where did Maurice immigrate from?
2. Why did Maurice decide to move to Tacoma?
3. Describe Maurice's passion for helping handicapped children.
4. Who are the people or groups that have helped Maurice? How have they helped?
5. What was the most important obstacle that Maurice faced, and why was it so important?
6. What is the negativity that Maurice has faced, and how has he dealt with it?
7. What are the contributions that Maurice makes to Tacoma?
8. What does Maurice have to say about where his home is?
9. What is Maurice's advice for other immigrants?



## CURRICULUM SHEET FOR SOK-KHIENG LIM HARDY

### IMMIGRANT FROM CAMBODIA

Please Note: This interview discusses the genocide in Cambodia and includes a reference to female genital mutilation that may be upsetting to some viewers.

In this interview Sok-Khieng describes how her family escaped the Cambodian genocide, made a life for herself in the United States and later returned to Cambodia as an adult. For those of you who would like to learn more about Sok-Khieng's incredible life journey, she has written an amazing memoir: [Present for a Purpose](#).

#### RESOURCES:

1. Here is a link to the [Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum](#) that Sok-Khieng discusses.
2. This page from the [United States Holocaust Memorial Museum](#) provides a good introduction to the Cambodian genocide including the events that led up to it.
3. This page from the USC Shoah Foundation gives [a brief background to the genocide](#) as well as testimonies from survivors.
4. Encyclopedia Britannica, [Cambodia](#).
5. BBC Country Profiles, [Cambodia](#).
6. CIA World Factbook, [Cambodia](#).

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What were the events that led to Sok-Khieng's family leaving Cambodia?
2. What were the factors that led to Sok-Khieng's family being separated when they left Cambodia?
3. What happened on the boat trip? What were Sok-Khieng's parents told about Sok-Khieng as a result of the accident? What lesson does Sok-Khieng take from this?
4. What was Sok-Khieng's experience like growing up in Oregon?
5. Why did Sok-Khieng decide to start working in the field of immigration law? What were some of the important cases she had to work on?
6. What are some of the ways in which Sok-Khieng contributes to Tacoma?
7. What were the killing fields?
8. Describe Sok-Khieng's visit to the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum in Cambodia.
9. How does Sok-Khieng relate her own experience to what Ukrainian refugees are going through today?
10. What advice does Sok-Khieng have for immigrants today?



## CURRICULUM SHEET FOR GADINE MARIE NIYOTWIZEYE IMMIGRANT FROM RWANDA

Gadine is an immigrant from Rwanda and she has some interesting observations on culture shock and adjusting to American eating habits. Here is an [article that compares the American diet with other countries of the world](#). Here is an article on the [basic elements of culture shock](#).

### RESOURCES:

1. Encyclopedia Britannica, [Rwanda](#).
2. CIA World Factbook, [Rwanda](#).

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How did Gadine end up coming to the U. S.?
2. Why did Gadine decide to stay in the U.S.?
3. Why did Gadine move to Tacoma?
4. Describe Gadine's struggles adjusting to American eating habits.
5. Who were some of the people and groups that assisted Gadine in getting settled in Tacoma? How did they help?
6. What jobs has Gadine held in Tacoma?
7. What are some of the ways in which Gadine supports her community, and people in her community?
8. What advice does Gadine have for people coming to Tacoma?



## CURRICULUM SHEET: KERRY RAMROOP

### IMMIGRANT FROM TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

In this interview, Kerry Ramroop discusses some of the ways in which he encountered culture shock after moving to the U.S. Here is a [short description of the phases of culture shock](#). He also discusses some of the struggles he faced as a nurse during COVID. This [article on fourteen nurses](#) give some fascinating personal background on what it was like to do this difficult work during COVID. [This article describes the critical role played by immigrants in the U.S. health care sector](#).

#### RESOURCES:

1. Encyclopedia Britannica, [Trinidad and Tobago](#).
2. BBC Country Profiles, [Trinidad and Tobago](#).
3. CIA World Factbook, [Trinidad and Tobago](#).

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What did Kerry do in Trinidad before moving to the U.S.?
2. How did Kerry meet his wife?
3. Why did Kerry relocate to Tacoma?
4. What were some of the ways in which Kerry encountered culture shock? What was different about how people interacted here compared to in Trinidad?
5. Who helped him to adjust to life in Tacoma, and how?
6. What sort of work has Kerry done in Tacoma?
7. What were some of the difficulties that Kerry encountered and saw as a nurse during COVID?
8. What advice does Kerry have for immigrants coming to Tacoma?



## CURRICULUM SHEET FOR MAURICIO ROBALINO

### IMMIGRANT FROM ECUADOR

Mauricio Robalino has lived in Tacoma for over twenty years and his artworks can be seen throughout the city. In this interview he talks about his life and some of the pieces of art he has created for the city. One of his most memorable works is for the Alberta Canada Building downtown. This article discusses the [life of Alberta Canada](#). This article discusses [Billy Ray Shirley](#), whose tragic shooting death inspired Mauricio's sculpture for the Eastside Community Center. To find out more about his art, you can visit [Mauricio's website](#).

#### RESOURCES:

1. Encyclopedia Britannica, [Ecuador](#).
2. BBC Country Profiles, [Ecuador](#).
3. CIA World Factbook, [Ecuador](#).

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Describe Mauricio's childhood in Ecuador.
2. Describe Mauricio's decision to become an artist.
3. Describe Mauricio's family life in Tacoma.
4. What led to Mauricio's decision to move to Tacoma?
5. What is Mauricio's advice for immigrants?
6. Describe Mauricio's mural for the Pho King Restaurant.
7. Describe Mauricio's mural for the Alberta Canada Building. Who was Alberta Canada, and how does the mural depict her?
8. Describe Mauricio's sculpture for the Eastside Community Center to commemorate Billy Ray Shirley.
9. How does Mauricio describe his artistic process?
10. What do you think Mauricio means when he says that everyone has art in them, but not everyone should become an artist?
11. What does Mauricio have to say about how his art relates to the community?





## CURRICULUM SHEET FOR ETGA UGUR

### IMMIGRANT FROM TURKEY

Etga Ugur came to the U.S. over twenty years ago, right before the 9-11 terrorist attacks. In his interview he describes dealing with discrimination against Muslims in the aftermath of the attacks and his efforts to foster understanding between different communities. Etga is the author of the 2019 book, [Faith and Politics in the Public Sphere](#).

#### RESOURCES ON ISLAMOPHOBIA

1. Here is a [report from a Gallup poll on anti-Muslim sentiment in the U.S. and other countries](#).
2. Here is a [recent report on Pew Survey about anti-Muslim sentiment in the U.S.](#)
3. This [article from the Council on Foreign Relations describes efforts to combat Islamophobia](#).
4. Here is a [Seattle Times story on the arson attack on the Islamic Center of Tacoma](#).

#### RESOURCES ON TURKEY

1. Encyclopedia Britannica, [Turkey](#).
2. BBC Country Profile, [Turkey](#).
3. CIA World Factbook, [Turkey](#).

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why did Etga decide to come to the U.S?
2. Describe why the 9-11 (September 11) attacks made Etga feel anxious. What are some of the things he describes?
3. What was encouraging to Etga about the way some people reacted to these attacks?
4. What concerns Etga about the way the public's view of the extremists influenced the way they perceived Muslims in general?
5. What were some of the ways in which Etga got involved in social justice groups as part of his effort to move forward.
6. Why did Etga come to Tacoma?
7. How does Etga describe the immigrant community in Tacoma?
8. Describe the arson attack on the Islamic Center of Tacoma. How did the community respond to this?
9. What are the contributions that Etga makes to Tacoma?
10. What advice does Etga have for immigrants coming to Tacoma?