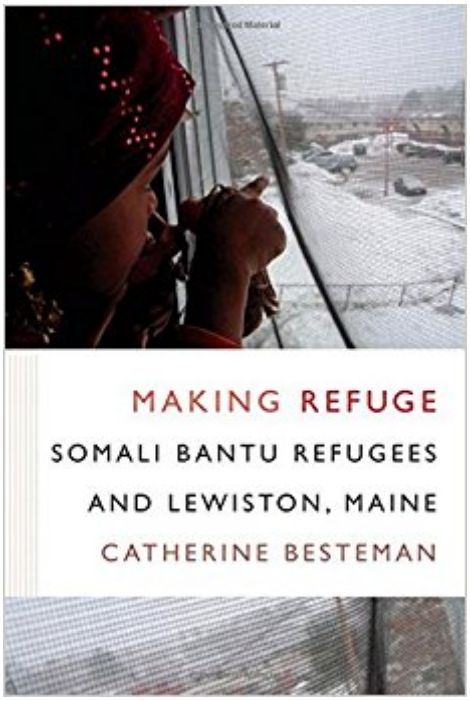
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Making Refuge: Somali Bantu Refugees And Lewiston, Maine (Global Insecurities)



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Synopsis

How do people whose entire way of life has been destroyed and who witnessed horrible abuses against loved ones construct a new future? How do people who have survived the ravages of war and displacement rebuild their lives in a new country when their world has totally changed? In Making Refuge Catherine Besteman follows the trajectory of Somali Bantus from their homes in Somalia before the onset in 1991 of SomaliaÃ¢â ¬â„¢s civil war, to their displacement to Kenyan refugee camps, to their relocation in cities across the United States, to their settlement in the struggling former mill town of Lewiston, Maine. Tracking their experiences as "secondary migrants" who grapple with the struggles of xenophobia, neoliberalism, and grief, Besteman asks what humanitarianism feels like to those who are its objects and what happens when refugees move in next door. As Lewiston's refugees and locals negotiate coresidence and find that assimilation goes both ways, their story demonstrates the efforts of diverse people to find ways to live together and create community. BestemanÃ¢â ¬â„¢s account illuminates the contemporary debates about economic and moral responsibility, security, and community that immigration provokes.Ã Â

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Making Refuge is the extraordinary story of an anthropological reencounter as the ethnographer discovers that villagers she had lived with in Somalia two decades earlier have become her neighbors in Maine after they left their war-torn country to seek asylum in the United States. Few

studies have provided such a powerful albeit intimate understanding of the unexpectedness of globalization, variations in the experience of diaspora, and complications of resettlement in a sometimes hostile new environment."Ã Â (Didier Fassin, author of Humanitarian Reason: A Moral History of the Present)"The timeliest of books in these most troubling of times. The out-of-nowhere arrival of refugees and migrants at the doorstep of Europe and the United StatesÃ¢â ¬â •their sheer mass, the horrors of the journey, their inhospitable reception, the centrality of this to all that is political todayÃ¢â ¬â •is the issue of our time. Catherine Besteman follows the journey of Somali refugees who resettled in the United States with brilliant insight and eloquence, and with the intimacy and soulful empathy that comes from years of acquaintance, both in Somalia and in the United States."Ã Â (Charles Piot, author of Nostalgia for the Future: West Africa after the Cold War)"Besteman eschews social science jargon to tell her story with great insight and empathy. Her book should be required reading for policymakers currently debating what to do with refugees from Syria." (Nichola van de Walle Foreign Affairs 2016-02-15)"Given BestemanÃ¢â ¬â„¢s unique perspective on the Somali Bantu community in Lewiston and her impressive scholarship on refugees, Africa and racism, it would be difficult to imagine any scholar having as rich and multi-faceted a frame of reference on the issue of refugees in Maine. ... BestemanÃ¢â ¬â„¢s writing offers an in-depth and timely analysis of the Somali Bantu experience in Lewiston, now in its second decade."Ã Â Ã Â (Dave Canarie Portland Press Herald 2016-02-14)"Tensions between newcomers and established communities are as old as the US itself, and Making Refuge is a rich account of what is gained and what is lost in becoming American. Think of this book as your ringside seat to the birth of a new shared meaning of 'life the way it should be.'" (Faith Nibbs Times Higher Education 2016-02-05)"[S]cholarly yet accessible. . . . The book neither loses itself in despair nor politicizes what she treats as the wholly human drama that it is." (Jim Breithaupt Bookslut 2016-03-01)"It is a devastating read, full of complex geopolitical realities, crushing social revelations regarding race and poverty in America, the seemingly insurmountable problems the Somali Bantu in particular face, and a general public prone to nasty blog comments and xenophobia." (D. L. Mayfield Books & Culture 2016-06-01)"The book is highly accessible, engaging, ethnographically rich, and written with real sensitivity, qualities that will resonate well with students. The book will also be useful to policy makers, NGOs, and refugee service providers." (Stephanie R. Bjork American Anthropologist 2016-12-05)"In a time marked by continuous talk about refugee crisis and a rise in anti-immigrant sentiments, Making Refuge forms an important contribution to a more nuanced understanding of displacement. Given the little ethnographically driven research there has been into the plight of Somali minority groups, the book also forms a significant historical document

about a community in the making." (Annika Lems Society and Space 2016-10-22)"Making Refuge is a superbly written, well-organized book with beautiful stories and photographs and sound but subtle theories that will make it a great book for undergraduates and graduate students and a must-read for anyone interested in refugees, human rights, the aftermaths of war and migration, race and ethnicity, and engaged anthropology." (Jennifer Erickson American Ethnologist 2017-06-01)

Catherine Besteman is Francis F. and Ruth K. Bartlett Professor of Anthropology at Colby College and the author of Transforming Cape Town and Unraveling Somalia: Race, Class, and the Legacy of Slavery.Ã Â

For anyone who is interested in the story of people who immigrate to the United States, this is a must read. The author knows this subject intimately because of her connection with the Somali Bantu over 25 years. She did a field placement in southern Somalia in 1988, and then lost touch with the Somali Bantu after the collapse of the Somali government in 1990. By incredible coincidence, she and the Somali Bantus ended up in Maine 25 years later and joyfully reconnected.While this is the story of one group of people from southern Somalia, it is in large part a story about the struggles that other groups of immigrants who, despite numerous, often tragic, obstacles, persevere to provide their families and children with a better life. Professor Besteman challenges a number of the myths about immigrants - that they are passive, that they are helpless victims, that their tragic circumstances leave them unable to cope with their circumstances. The Somali Bantu survived the loss of their land, the destruction of their villages, the murder of their family members, the rape and degradation of their women, treks across open desert, the horrors and humiliation of the refugee camps in Kenya, the indifference of the international community, the double and triple vetting of the immigration process which often left families with a "Sophie’s Choice" situation in which they were forced to make a decision about which family members to leave behind, the requirement that they pay for their plane tickets to the United States, the hostility of the Lewiston community, the challenges of adapting to a new culture in which their parent-child, husband-wife relationships were challenged, they were forced to choose between caring for their family, getting a job or going to school, and holding on to those parts of their culture and traditions that were so precious to them. Professor Besteman clearly identifies the Somali Bantu people as incredibly resourceful and resilient. The last chapter that describes how both the Somali Bantu and the Lewiston community have adapted to the benefit of both communities.This is a smart, heart-warming book. You may not want to dig too deeply into the anthropological analysis in one of

the chapters (although I found that it helped to set the context) but you will be charmed and seduced by the story of these people, and you will have a much more informed perspective on the more universal story of mass immigration.

This book is not one I would normally have chosen to read, but I'm so glad I did. It was so enlightening and I really appreciated the variety of perspectives the author presented and how accessible she made issues that are complex and nuanced.

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