AN EDUCATIONAL HISTORY OF IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE CHILDREN IN KANSAS CITY

A DISSERTATION IN
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by
Paula D'Introno Watts

B.A., Rutgers University, 1997
M.L.I.S., Rutgers University, 2003

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Paula D'Introno Watts, Candidate for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree

University of Missouri-Kansas City, 2023

ABSTRACT

This is an educational historiography of immigrant and refugee children who resettled with their families in Kansas City, Missouri, after the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965. The dissertation concludes with a chapter about the opening of a new school in August 2021 called the Global Academy that was specifically designed to address the needs of this population.

Housed in the Woodland School in the Northeast neighborhood of Kansas City, the Global Academy is intentionally designed to ensure the success of immigrant and refugee children, some of whom may be sitting in a classroom for the first time. Bilingual and trilingual teachers and educators work to provide the best education they can while also providing space for students to retain their first language and identity.

This dissertation was written by identifying and analyzing primary and secondary sources that present a picture of immigrant and refugee children's educational experiences. Oral histories are included from administrators and teachers at the school. Oral history narrator accounts of specific experiences working with immigrant and refugee children lend rich details necessary for this educational historiography.

APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies, have examined a dissertation titled "An Educational History of Immigrant and Refugee Children in Kansas City," presented by Paula D'Introno Watts, candidate for the Doctor of Philosophy degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

Supervisory Committee

S. Marie McCarther, Ed.D., Committee Chair
Department of Educational Leadership, Policy, and Foundations

Marc Garcelon, Ph.D., Committee Co-Chair
Social Science Consortium

Donna Davis, Ph.D.
Department of Educational Leadership, Policy, and Foundations

Uzziel Pecina, Ed.D.
Department of Teacher Education and Curriculum Studies

Theresa Torres, Ph.D.
Social Science Consortium

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I Begin the Story during the COVID-19 Pandemic

If I chose a random person and asked them about their memories of the COVID-19 pandemic during 2021, my guess is they might list disruptions in routines at home and work and the effects on the rhythms of personal and family life. We were all forced to adjust how we went about our days. Keeping current with information about developments in local and federal pandemic responses occupied much of our attention while we stayed at home or returned to our places of work and school. I remember looking to see which stores had closed, which services were paused, and any glimmers of hope and progress that might be happening somewhere.

Kansas City Public Schools[1] had reopened and at my school, Foreign Language Academy, the teachers entered their classrooms, and I went to my school library. We all dutifully wore masks, kept six feet apart from one another, and walked in the hallways in one direction to lower risk of contamination through the air. I remember working and also patiently waiting for everything to turn back to "normal" so I and everyone around me could put this whole event behind us.

On a particularly difficult day after teaching while wearing a mask, I went home and logged onto Twitter. Disruptions can lead to new routines, and one I created was to scroll for Tweets posted around the country for stories about those who were making a difference in

[1] In this dissertation, the district is referred to as Kansas City Missouri School District or Kansas City Public Schools. In March 2013, Kansas City Missouri School District officially changed its name to Kansas City Public Schools, according to Policy AA of its Board Policies. Kansas City Public Schools, 2023, https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/Policy/ViewPolicy.aspx?S=228&revid=fecQqVlvVxFZHySuSoaIZw==&pti d=amIgTZiB9plushNjl6WXhfiOQ==&secid=&PG=6&IRP=0&isPndg=false.

social justice issues and who were helping people who needed essential services when so much was closed. As I was experiencing the lockdown after only a few months as a Kansas City resident, Twitter had become my window into what was happening across the city. It was how I became aware of Kansas City's independent news sources covering the less frequently reported local issues and developments in the area. It is one of the habits I developed during that time that I kept.

After scrolling a bit past the increasingly common grim predictions of pandemic trouble, I read a Tweet posted by *The Kansas City Beacon*: "We are here to get them ready so they can be successful in their classroom," referencing an article by Maria Benevento in that newspaper (see Figure 1).[2]

Figure 1.1. The Tweet that sparked the dissertation. Source: Tweet, *The Kansas City Beacon*, "We are here to get them ready so they can be successful in their classrooms," September 24, 2021, 4:30 a.m.

[2] Maria Benevento, "'A 60,000-Square-Foot Welcome Mat': New KCPS Center Helps Immigrant, Refugee Students," *The Kansas City Beacon,* September 23, 2021, http://kcbeacon.org/stories/2021/09/23/kcps-center-helps-refugee-students/.

The combination of the Twitter handle of the Kansas City Public Schools, @kcpublicschools, with the words "new" and "refugees, immigrants" prompted me to click and read the article titled "A 60,000-Square-Foot Welcome Mat': New KCPS Center Helps Immigrant, Refugee Students." The article about a new school in Kansas City for immigrants and refugees commanded my attention and has held it ever since.

I'm a Stranger Here Myself

I began teaching at Foreign Language Academy, a school in KCPS, in August 2019 when I moved here with my husband. He was offered a great job opportunity he could not pass up. Kansas City is the first place I have made a home in the Midwest. I was born in Brooklyn, New York and was raised in and went to college in New Jersey. Moving here was a big event, as I am the only one of my siblings to move away from New Jersey. But my family's history has many stories of people moving because of the promise of opportunity.

My mother, an immigrant from Italy who spent part of her childhood and teenage years in Venezuela when her family emigrated there for employment opportunities in the 1960s, moved to the U.S. when she married my father, who is a first generation immigrant. My father's family is from the same district of the same region in Southern Italy as my mother. I grew up visiting grandparents who did not receive a formal education and spent time with cousins, aunts, and uncles who spoke Italian almost exclusively during family gatherings. Despite being immersed in Italian during those gatherings, my father discouraged Italian from being spoken at home.

Figure 1.2. Naturalization papers of my Nonno, Paulo D'Introno. Paulo arrived at Ellis Island in 1932.

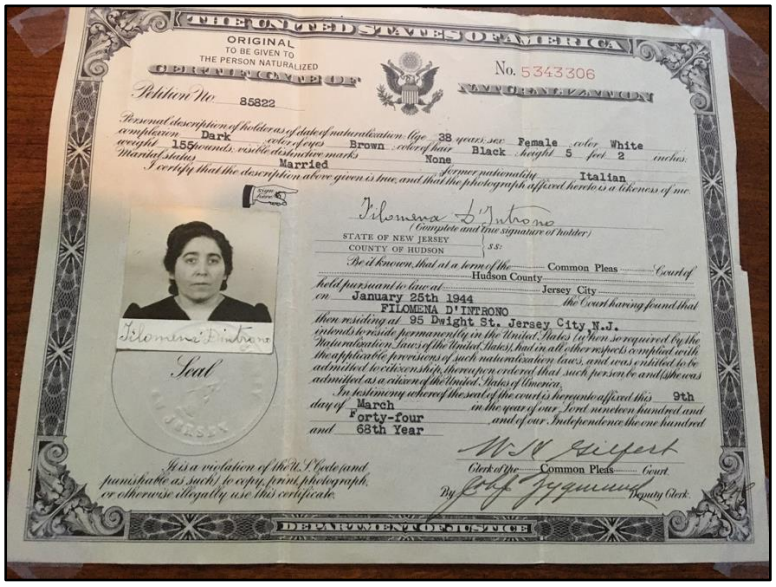

Figure 1.3. Naturalization papers of my Nonna, Filomena D'Introno. Filomena followed her beloved to America years later, in 1944.

My grandfather arrived just before major immigration policy changes, and my grandmother arrived after more changes were made after World War II (see Figures 1.2 and 1.3). My grandfather, Paulo, was sponsored by relatives who had arrived in Jersey City, New

Jersey, a few years before his arrival at Ellis Island in 1932. His work experience and expertise was listed in his immigration papers as cheese maker. He married my grandmother in Italy before he left for the United States. My grandmother, Filomena, joined her husband in the U.S. in 1944. Nonno Paulo wanted to have an established a business before his wife made the journey from her home to the United States. He opened a store on Jackson Avenue in Jersey City, New Jersey, a delicatessen specializing in Italian foods, especially handmade mozzarella, in 1946 (see Figure 1.4).

Figure 1.4. Paulo and Filomena D'Introno in their store on Jackson Avenue in Jersey City, New Jersey. The store opened in 1946. Photo credit: unknown.

My mother's immigration story is different. She was born in the same region as my father's family. She emigrated from Venezuela in 1972 and received a green card after she married my father in Brooklyn, New York. This protected her immigration status, but she was not a citizen. She held on to her green card until 1992, when she took the test and became a naturalized citizen. In the years before she attained U.S. citizenship, I do not

remember hearing her talk or complain about any issues with her green card status. The only time I was ever reminded she still has it was on the return trips home after visiting Venezuela in the 1980s. It felt like my brothers, my Dad, and I could race through U.S. customs compared to my Mom's wait in what seemed to me like the longest and slowest line at the airport. She needed to enter the United States with others who were without U.S. passports. In 1992 she studied for the citizenship test, passed, and was sworn in as an American citizen in Hackensack, New Jersey.

As I got older I learned more about the dynamics of my family and how they were affected by the immigrant experience. My father, the son of two Italian immigrants, wished for an American childhood experience for my siblings and me. He began to take action toward this goal when he turned eighteen and changed his name from "Cataldo," a name that is common in our family's region in Italy, to "Christopher," a more typical name in the U.S. At home, around the family, and when my mother wanted to grab his immediate attention, he was called "Aldo," a nickname for Cataldo. But out in the world, at work, and around suburban New Jersey friends, he went by "Chris."

Reflecting on my family's history and learning about their story of immigration, resettlement, and assimilation led me to understand more about my part in the story. I arrived at the realization that the lack of encouragement and space to try, fail, and attempt to acquire fluency in my family's first language had separated me from a part of my identity. This led me to begin to name feelings that I had had but never understood. What Italian I can speak I learned on my own, grasping for but still feeling locked out of the use of specific cultural currency with ease. I've always been sensitive to others who feel they do not fit in groups, so

I do my best to extend some space to the children in my classes whose parents are new to Kansas City and to the United States.

A New School? In This Pandemic?

Figure 1.5. A teacher works in a small group at Faxon Elementary School. Source: Maria Benevento, "Deadline Looms for Missouri Schools to Get $1.95 Billion in COVID Money," *The Beacon*, February 7, 2022, http://kcbeacon.org/stories/2022/02/07/kc-missouri-schools-covid-money.

Learning about the new school for immigrants and refugees gave me the idea of telling the story in my dissertation. As a child of immigrants I was, of course, happily surprised to read the article from the *Kansas City Beacon* that was linked to the Tweet. At the same time, the announcement also stung. I am a librarian at Foreign Language Academy in the Kansas City Public Schools. A large number of the students at FLA either are immigrants or refugees themselves or have parents and caregivers who are immigrants and refugees. There was no communication about this new school in any email or announcement to KCPS teachers. I thought this story could be just the right news to lift the spirits of my colleagues who were struggling to teach in the new environment. A positive news story, for once! I wondered why a big announcement never appeared in the local newspapers and why KCPS was not celebrating this development with us all to acknowledge the importance of progress

and change, even during times of uncertainty. What better way than to recognize the contributions that immigrants and refugees bring to our city than to open a new school specifically for the needs of their newly resettled children? I wanted to learn as much as I could about this population and about the school so I could tell the story.

The Story of the Children of Immigrants and Refugees and the Public School System

Kansas City, Missouri, has an established and growing immigrant and refugee population. Although there is a body of literature documenting the early waves of newcomers to the city beginning in the late 1800s, resources about subsequent arrivals from the mid-twentieth century onwards are more scarce, and even less exists about the children who arrived with their families and enrolled in the Kansas City Public School system.

I saw a need to develop a story that knit together a sequence of arrivals of immigrants and refugees that began with the establishment of Kansas City in the mid-nineteenth century and continues to the present day. I wrote this story, looking at these events and developments through the lens of the experiences of the children of immigrant and refugee children who enroll in the Kansas City Public School system.

Exploring the details of the history of children's experiences showed how the school system, along with independent resettlement groups, assisted many newcomers. My research interests included examining how the economic and social circumstances in Kansas City affected their experiences.

My dissertation culminates with the opening of a new school specifically for the children of immigrants and refugees. The opening is surprising because it occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic in August of 2021, a time when many in Kansas City and around the

world were immersed in uncertainty and fear. My research also focuses on some of the far-reaching aspects of the American education system that go beyond curriculum: in times of uncertainty and confusion, public schools work to ensure vulnerable portions of our population are seen and supported.

Remarkably, this school was opened with little fanfare. There was little mention in the local newspapers, a little more in independent news sources. It was a worthwhile endeavor to learn more about this school's opening and to understand more about the school district's policies about this population. If we can understand what happened in the past, we may be in a better position to create better policies for this population in the future.

Research Questions with Rationale for Each

Following are my research questions, with the rationale for each.

- What is the history of the flow of children with refugee and immigrant status into the United States, the Midwest region, and Kansas City, Missouri, from 1900 to 2000?

Rationale: A look back at the history of how the Kansas City Missouri School District managed immigrant enrollment is important, as it will help inform how best to serve this population in the future. Knowing where we have been will help us work to provide the best education for the children of immigrants and refugees in Kansas City.

- What is the history of the Kansas City Public School system with regard to the policies and practices of integrating children with refugee and immigrant status into the KCPS school system?

Rationale: I want to look at what the district was supposed to do and what actually happened to the children once they were enrolled as students. A close look at how the children who arrived in earlier times to the city in contrast to those who arrived more recently is important in order to create a timeline to show changes and gaps.

- How did the International Welcome Center and Global Academy, a half-day school tailored to the needs of recent immigrants and refugees, come to be in September 2021?

Rationale: The opening of a new school during some of the darkest days of the COVID-19 pandemic is remarkable. Learning more about how the decision to open the school was made and by whom in the school district and community is important, as it will help uncover how decisions about educational opportunities for immigrant and refugee children are made.

Historical Research Methodology

I studied and examined primary and secondary source documents, artifacts, records, newspaper articles and archived materials that helped me tell this story.

We remember the stories we've been told that explain the origins of things. From the stories of how our parents met and why we grew up where we did, all of these are stories we have either heard once or many times. I think we can easily remember them because there is a beginning, middle, and end. Stories also stick with us because they hook into what we already know and fill in gaps and help clear up an incomplete picture. An explanation through a story is remembered easily and carried away by the listener. Historical research is best for this project because of the people involved. It encompasses many areas of life: economic, social, emotional, and political.

Primary and Secondary Sources Consulted

I read and collected primary source documentation about the arrival of different waves of immigrants and refugee children to Kansas City, Missouri. Primary source documents, including but not limited to school district committee agendas reports, school board meeting agendas and reports, Kansas City municipal reports, photographs, data from independent resettlement agencies in Kansas City, and federal and local census data were also searched for, collected, and woven into the story.

The key archives for this project were housed at the Kansas City Public Library's Central branch, the Special Collections room at the Missouri Valley Special Collections, and online databases, including the Missouri State Heritage website. Public institutions in Kansas City have a wealth of resources that were perfect for my research interests. They included but were not limited to the Kansas City Public Library's online archives and the Kansas City Board of Education's website.

Newspapers

Articles from national and local newspapers were accessed through an online portal or microfiche or microfilm at the Kansas City Public Library and the Miller Nichols Library at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. Local newspapers that I searched through included *The Kansas City Star*, *The Kansas City Evening Star* (an early iteration of *The Kansas City Star*), *The Call*, and *Northeast News*. I collected articles from independent news sources *The Kansas City Beacon*, *Flatland*, KCUR, and *The Independent* to help provide historical context.

Print Books

Books were consulted about the history of Kansas City and incoming groups of immigration from the beginning of the nineteenth century. Scholarly titles about immigration to the United States and to the Midwest region were also included.

The books consulted and used in this dissertation about immigration to the United States include *American Immigration: A Very Short Introduction* by David A. Gerber,[3] which gives an overview of the waves of immigrants that arrived in the United States and also lists the Congressional Acts that restricted and increased the number of immigrants to enter the United States. *America Classifies the Immigrants: from Ellis Island to the 2020 Census* by Joel Pearlman[4] also provided a valuable overview of the complex history of classifying immigrants. It also includes sections that are important to this story such as how classification had an impact on certain groups more than others. Another title that provides valuable background on specific Congressional Acts is Gabriel J. Chin and Rose Cuison Villazor's book, *The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965: Legislating a New America.* [5] Chin and Villazor's book provided the background information I needed about the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. This federal act had a profound effect on the quantity and variety of countries from which immigrants and refugees were granted entry.

Books and articles written about the experience of adults as they navigated the experience of immigration and refugee status were easy to locate; less easy were ones about children. I found a few including *Huck's Raft : A History of American Childhood* by Stephen

[3] David A. Gerber, American Immigration: A Very Short Introduction (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
[4] Joel Perlmann, *America Classifies the Immigrants: From Ellis Island to the 2020 Census* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018).
[5] Gabriel J. Chin and Rose Cuison Villazor, *The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965: Legislating a New America* (Cambridge [UK]: Cambridge University Press, 2015). https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=nlebk&AN=1077331&scope=site.

Mintz.[6] His book provides an overview of the experience of childhood in the United States and includes a section on immigrant children's experiences.

Other Sources

Books consulted were about the history of Kansas City and incoming groups of immigration from the beginning of the nineteenth century. Scholarly titles about immigration to the United States and to the Midwest region were also included. I gathered all information within these titles about the educational experiences of the children of the immigrants once they resettled and enrolled in schools in Kansas City, Missouri.

History titles that provided context for the social movements in Kansas City were *Wide-Open Town: Kansas City in the Pendergast Era*[7] and Sherry Lamb Schirmer's *A City Divided: The Racial Landscape of Kansas City, 1900-1960.*[8] The Pendergast era stretched for about fifteen years from 1925 to about 1940. I read about Pendergast's influence and how he helped immigrants secure employment when they resettled in Kansas City. Schirmer's book looks at the history of the city from the perspective of racial issues that were present from the inception of the city.

Books that give an overview of how real estate companies that sold homes in Kansas City were also involved with the racial problems provided insight. *Creating the Suburban School Advantage: Race, Localism, and Inequality in an American Metropolis*[9] tackles the specific ways powerful real estate companies divided up the city and contributed to the racial

[6] Steven Mintz, *Huck's Raft : A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press/Harvard University Press, 2004).
[7] Diane Mutti Burke, Jason Roe, and John Herron, Eds. *Wide-Open Town: Kansas City in the Pendergast Era* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2018).
[8] Sherry Lamb Schirmer, *A City Divided: The Racial Landscape of Kansas City, 1900–1960* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2002).
[9] John L. Rury, *Creating the Suburban School Advantage: Race, Localism, and Inequality in an American Metropolis. Histories of American Education* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020).

divide. Kevin Fox Gotham's *Race, Real Estate, and Uneven Development: The Kansas City Experience, 1900-2000*[10] is also about this topic and focuses on white flight and how Kansas City's public schools suffered from real estate companies' predatory practices.

Oral Histories

Oral histories were collected in order to gain a better picture of the context of the different eras of this historiography as well as to arrive at an answer or conclusion at different parts of the story when primary source documentation was unavailable. Oral histories put the people first, front and center. They fill in gaps and help bring the reader into the story, though they may be unfamiliar with the topic. Oral histories were essential for this project to provide context for how the Global Academy came to be.

The oral history narrators are listed here with the rationale for each choice.

- Mr. Ryan Rumpf, Principal of the Global Academy at the International Welcome Center, Kansas City Public Schools. Mr. Rumpf was principal at the school's opening and holds the same position today.
- Mrs. Nasra, a paraprofessional or teacher at The International Welcome Center and Global Academy
- Mrs. Allyson Hile, Director of Language Services and Cultural Equity for Kansas City Public Schools. Ms. Hile was in her position at the opening of the school and currently holds the same position.
- Dr. Mark Bedell, Superintendent of Schools, Kansas City Public Schools, 2016–2022. Dr. Bedell has since moved on as Superintendent of a district in Baltimore,

[10] Kevin Fox Gotham, *Race, Real Estate, and Uneven Development: The Kansas City Experience, 1900-2000* (State University of New York Press, 2002).

it was worth reaching out to him as he was superintendent of KCPS at the time of the school's opening.

The Interdisciplinarity of this Dissertation was Essential

Bringing together the perspective of Education and Social Science led me to better examine the systems and structures within our public education system, and Kansas City in particular. The characteristics of each discipline were integrated, woven together, and drove my questions and sustained my curiosity about this population and their story (see Figure 1.6).

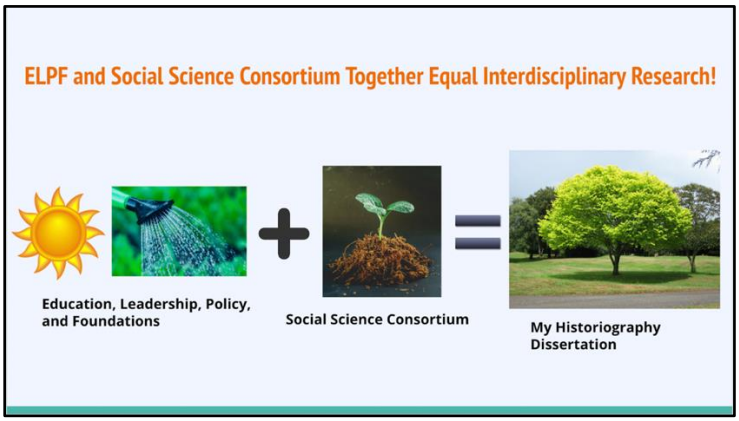

Figure 1.6. This slide from my dissertation proposal presentation illustrates the interdisciplinarity of my dissertation.

Overview of the Chapters

There are seven chapters in this dissertation. Chapter 1 contains the introduction to this historiography with background information about me as an educator, student, and the daughter of immigrants. Chapter 2 focuses on the background history of immigrants coming to the United States from the country's earliest days. Chapter 3 focuses on immigrants coming to Kansas City, Missouri. Chapter 4 helps set the scene for the immigrants arriving in the city by providing a background of the Kansas City Public School history where most

immigrant and refugee children receive an education. Chapter 5 returns to the immigrant story in the 1960s to the 1980s, and Chapter 6 takes us to the 1990s and then to the 2020s. Chapter 7 ends the story with the opening of a new school for immigrants and refugees in the Kansas City Public Schools system, The International Welcome Center and Global Academy. The opening of this school in August of 2021 is the high point of this dissertation, the event that I was made aware of by a Tweet, and one that planted a seed that germinated in this researcher's brain and demanded to be nourished and given space to grow.

Conclusion

This educational historiography tells the story of the educational experiences of immigrant and refugee children in the Kansas City School system, culminating with the opening of the International Welcome Center and Global Academy. The school is specifically designed for immigrant and refugee children in Kansas City. The following chapters tell the story from the earliest days of Kansas City and culminate with the opening of the school.

CHAPTER 2

IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES DURING THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

This chapter provides an overview of the history of immigrant arrivals in the United States during the mid-nineteenth century (see Figure 2.1). The rationale for including this chapter about national immigration trends is to provide background information for the rest of the story. Searching for resources about the increase in population size and changes in demographics of the United States is important for the following chapters of this dissertation.

The Tapestry of American Memories

Figure 2.1. Immigrants outside a building on Ellis Island, circa 1900. Source: "Photograph, Immigrants Outside a Building on Ellis Island, early 20th Century," Documented Rights, National Archives, Records of the Public Health Service, Record Group 90 (National Archives Identifier 595650), https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/documented-rights/exhibit/section3/detail/ellis-island-immigrants.html.

Davis A. Gerber's[1] book, *American Immigration: A Very Short Introduction* gives an overview of the waves of immigrants that arrived in the United States and also lists the Congressional Acts that first restricted the number of immigrants to enter the U.S., as well as

[1] David A. Gerber, *American Immigration: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

the later Acts that allowed for more to enter. To consider immigration through the lens of how open the United States' borders were at different eras in United States history is to also consider the timing of these policies and how the policies affected the experiences of newcomers to the United States.

Gerber lists significant acts that created opportunities for large numbers of immigrants and refugees to enter the U.S.: first in the 1840s and 1850s, second in the late 1890s to World War I, and last and most recently, the group that entered after modifications were made with the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965.[2] The first two waves coincide with a time period when the United States was transforming from an agricultural economy to one that was more urban and industrialized. Laborers were needed, and immigration policies were put in place to allow more people to move to and settle in the United States to fill available jobs. It was during this wave that my own grandparents left their jobs as olive and grape farmers in Southern Italy and migrated to the Lower East Side of New York City.

Gerber writes about how the arrival and resettlement of immigrants and refugees was also a part of the experiences of the residents who were already living in the United States. The negative reactions of residents to the newcomers arriving was more complex than simply feeling unsure about foreign languages, customs, and ways of life. Gerber writes,

> [N]ativism need not always be racist or mean-spirited; those who want the state to limit immigration and access to citizenship may have little against immigrants, and instead may be concerned about the welfare of the nation's established residents."[3]

[2] Gerber, *American Immigration.*
[3] Gerber, *American Immigration,* 16.

For example, Congress overrode a presidential veto and passed the 1917 Immigration Act[4] that was designed to exclude more immigrants by imposing limits by creating tests on literacy and wording to exclude those from the "Asiatic zone." Negative reactions of native-born residents were attributed to how laws allowing more immigration would shape the demographics of neighborhoods and cities. In short, it was not simply about how the make-up of the country was changing; it forced residents to consider the meaning of who should be counted as an American.

Much of what we may tell ourselves about what we know about the place we live likely includes stories and anecdotes that, as Gerber writes, are "enshrined in American memory."[5] Stories, for example, explain why our cities appear as they do, why the highways are positioned where they are, and why our neighborhoods are located where they are. When we think about immigrants who live in our cities, it may be too easy for some to assume we know the story, when in fact there is more to learn.

[4] Lorraine Boissoneault, "Literacy Tests and Asian Exclusion Were the Hallmarks of the 1917 Immigration Act," Smithsonian Magazine, February 6, 2017, accessed December 4, 2022, https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/how-america-grappled-immigration-100-years-ago-180962058/.
[5] Boissoneault, "Literacy Tests," 3.

Figure 2.2. Kansas Citians gather at the opening of Union Station, October 30, 1914. For many immigrants and refugees, it was the first building they saw upon arrival to their new city. Source: unionstation.org.

Immigration Laws that Restricted and Permitted People into the U.S.

Investigating the beginning of the story of the first laws and Acts reveals that limitations are as old as the country itself: during the same time the American colonies became the United States during the American Revolution, the young country put laws in place to limit migration flows. I knew a little about those laws, as part of my family's history was that my grandfather was allowed to emigrate during the period just before the limitations on people from Southern Italy were put in place.

Laws were written to mirror political opinion about the newcomers' arrival.[6] Early laws imposed restrictions that favored northern Europeans. Laws would continue to restrict some groups and allow greater numbers of other groups. By 1875 restrictions were put into

[6] D'Vera Cohn, "How U.S. Immigration Laws and Rules Have Changed through History," *Pew Research Center* (blog), accessed February 19, 2023, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/09/30/how-u-s-immigration-laws-and-rules-have-changed-through-history/.

place that limited the number of "criminals, people with contagious diseases, polygamists, anarchists, beggars, and importers of prostitutes" as well as "immigrants from Asian countries."[7] By the 1900s fewer people were migrating from northern European countries and more were arriving from southern and eastern European countries. The U.S. responded to this change in migration flow by enacting two Acts in 1921 and 1924 in hopes of returning to older immigration patterns. Congress established quota systems that were contingent on country of origin in order to restrict the number of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe.[8]

Immigration restrictions began to fall apart in the 1940s when laws were passed to allow more people from China to enter the U.S. and then in the 1950s, when a law allowed visas for those from other Asian countries and "race was formally removed as grounds for exclusion."[9] These changes would continue until 1965 when, due to the global political situation, Congress passed the 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act. This Act favored family reunification and allowed more skilled immigrants to migrate to the U.S. instead of adhering to quota systems.[10] Since that time, laws have focused on refugees or people fleeing their country of origin because of violence due to war or other political conflicts.

"**America Classifies the Immigrants"**

As I wondered about how these classification systems came to be for immigrants coming to the United States, I came across a recently published book that helped me fill in parts of this story that I did not know. The book helped me understand that historical research

[7] Cohn, "How U.S. Immigration Laws," para. 3.
[8] Cohn, "How U.S. Immigration Laws."
[9] Cohn, "How U.S. Immigration Laws," para. 4.
[10] Cohn, "How U.S. Immigration Laws."

contains stories of origins. Examining the origins of decisions made in the past may help us as we figure out how best to handle what is happening in the present and prepare for what may develop in the future.

Joel Perlmann's book[11] begins with the story behind the original list of classification used by agents at Ellis Island. The origin of the "List of Races," the list that was used to classify immigrants as they were processed at Ellis Island, was not the product of "deliberative discussion by high elected officials, a careful procedure of review by their administrators, consultation with experts on racial classification, testing forms and responses,"[12] but instead its "initial purposes were benign." The list would later be used by nativists who would look for reasons to argue the desirability of one group of people from Europe over another.

A pair of officials working at Ellis Island's high offices, Edward McSweeney and Victor Safford, created the list as an answer to a necessity (see Figure 2.3). Neither man was trained in any area of social science. When ships arrived at Ellis Island, a passenger list was provided by the steamship companies to the agents at the port. The passenger list contained information about each passenger such as gender, age, marriage status, last residence, and nationality (see Figure 2.4).

[11] Joel Perlmann, *America Classifies the Immigrants: From Ellis Island to the 2020 Census* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018).
[12] Perlmann, *America Classifies*, 13.

Figure 2.3. Edward F. McSweeney, Deputy Commissioner, Ellis Island, 1899. Source: "The Future of our Past: Social and Cultural History," GG Archives, 2023, https://www.ggarchives.com/Immigration/EllisIsland/TheGreatGatewayToAmerica-1899.html.

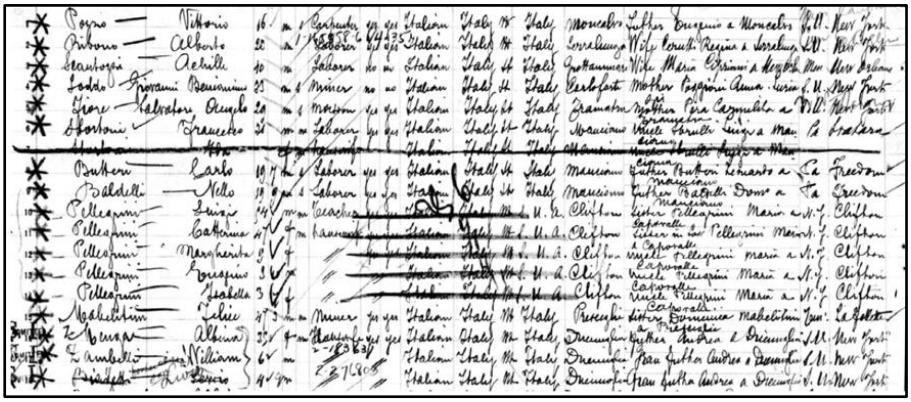

Figure 2.4. An example of a ship's manifest. Source: Rosemary Meszaros and Katherine Pennavaria, "GovDocs to the Rescue! Debunking an Immigration Myth," *Documents to the People* 46, no. 1 (April 9, 2018): 7–12. https://journals.ala.org/index.php/dttp/article/view/6655.

Stafford suggested adding a question about race to clarify an issue that stemmed from the fact that for the first time "large number of migrants were coming from multinational

empires, especially Russia and Austro-Hungary"[13] and all people under these classifications were being classified in terms of nationality, which referred to political status or being a member of a particular empire or country. Many were also arriving from nations under more than one European empire. This presented a problem for the agents at Ellis Island when they had to classify people coming from central and Eastern Europe (see Figure 2.5).

Figure 2.5. Registry clerks working at Ellis Island, circa 1900. Source: Meszaros and Pennavaria, "GovDocs to the Rescue!"

Perlmann writes that Safford made the argument that using race instead of nationality would be more precise and better for data collection. Safford and McSweeney were driven to adjust the classification system for economic reasons. According to Perlmann, Safford argued that race should be included in the question on the passenger list and intake materials at Ellis Island:

> This movement of immigration is not a senseless movement like the stampede of cattle but is in the main intelligence and fluctuates according to the supply and demand in the particular industrial field into which a certain class enters. The study of

[13] Perlmann, *America Classifies*, 18.

> our labor conditions has been brought within the scope of the federal government and economists even now look to us for certain data. If we fail to obtain economic value clearly within our power we can scarcely hope to escape being called to account for our neglect.[14]

The types of jobs the immigrants would do, where they would work, and how they would contribute to furthering industrial economic development in the United States was the biggest concern. McSweeney and Safford's work redesigning the questions and process of classification in order to simplify the bureaucratic realm of immigration intake would have lasting effects in areas of society that these two men never anticipated (see Figure 2.6).

Figure 2.6. Newcomers arriving at Ellis Island, 1907. Source: Becky Little, "How the Immigrants Who Came to Ellis Island in 1907 Compare to Arrivals Today," History.com, April 2, 2019, https://www.history.com/news/ellis-island-immigrants-compare-today-study.

Data of Immigration into the United States

I found The Migration Policy Institute (MPI) provided data and research about immigration trends in the United States. MPI's site provided historical and recent data about the numbers of immigrants and refugees who entered the U.S. beginning in 1850. Figure 2.7 uses the MPI data to show the numbers increased and compares the number of immigrants with the percentage of the U.S. population as a whole. The graph shows that although the

[14] Perlmann, *America Classifies*, 19.

number of immigrants has increased since an uptick that began in 1965, the immigrants as a percentage of the United States population has fallen.[15]

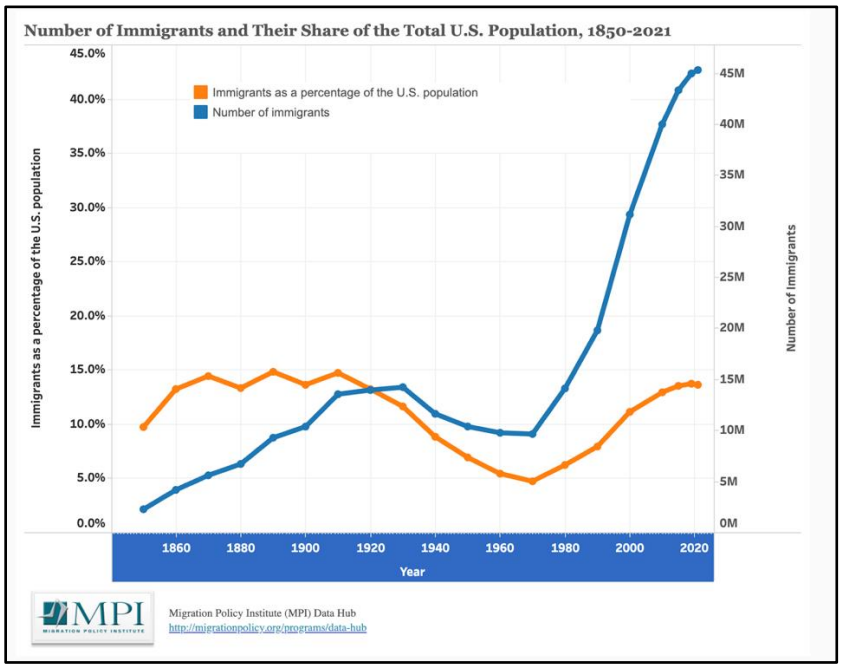

Figure 2.7. U.S. Immigrant Population and Share over Time, 1850–Present. Source: "Immigrant Population and Share over Time, 1850–Present," Migration Policy Institute, August 14, 2013, https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/charts/immigrant-population-over-time.

Another source of data is "Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-Born Population of the United States: 1850–2000"[16] from the Pew Research Center website. Their data show that the percentage of the foreign born was 9.7 percent in 1850, the earliest date for such statistics, and increased in 1860 to 13.2 percent and then stayed close to that percentage until 1930, when it fell to 11.6 percent (see Figure 2.8). The amounts fell

[15] "U.S. Immigrant Population and Share over Time, 1850-Present," Migration Policy Institute, August 14, 2013, https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/charts/immigrant-population-over-time.
[16] Cohn, "How U.S. Immigration Laws."

consistently until 1970, when the number of immigrants entering the U.S. began to rise again,[17] likely due to the passage of the 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act.

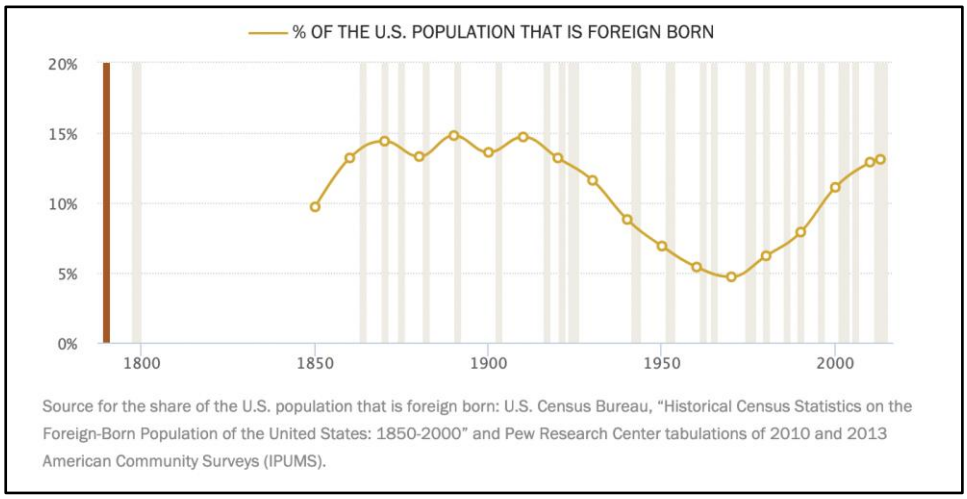

Figure 2.8. Percentage of the U.S. Population that is Foreign Born. Source: D'Vera Cohn, "How U.S. Immigration Laws and Rules Have Changed through History," *Pew Research Center* (blog), accessed February 20, 2023, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/09/30/how-u-s-immigration-laws-and-rules-have-changed-through-history/.

Conclusion

This chapter gave an overview of immigration to the United States during the nation's earliest days and set the stage for the demographic changes of the U.S. that developed in the following decades. Chapter 3 discusses the circumstances that brought immigrants to Kansas City from its inception in 1850.

My dissertation aims to fill in the details of the history that native-born or long established residents of Kansas City may assume they know and fill in parts of the story about the immigrant population from their viewpoint. My hope is to show how development of the United States and Kansas City is interdependent with the arrival and resettlement of immigrants.

[17] Cohn, "How U.S. Immigration Laws."

CHAPTER 3

IMMIGRANTS ARRIVE IN KANSAS CITY

The arrival of immigrants and refugees is an essential part of the history of the development of Kansas City from a few small businesses put in place for travelers going out west to a city with a major railroad station and meat processing facilities. While the city was growing, immigrants and refugees resettled, found employment, and made the city their new home. Their arrival also further diversified Kansas City's ethnic demographics (see Figure 3.1).

How Immigration Began to Change the Demographics of Kansas City

Figure 3.1. An early view of Kansas City along Main Street and 3rd Avenue, 1871. Source: Photograph Scrapbook Collection #1 (P8), https://kchistory.org/islandora/object/kchistory%3A64085.

Kansas City continued to develop and expand during the eighteenth century with a growing and diverse population. Many were drawn to Kansas City to find employment or to escape persecution or conflict in their country of origin. Neighborhoods in Kansas City

developed to include those who shared common languages and customs. Mexican, Italian, Irish, German, Scandinavian, and Polish immigrants and refugees are among the ethnic groups that found new homes in Kansas City during this time.

German immigrants were the among the first to move to Kansas City in the 1820s.[1] Missouri's statehood was secured in 1821, the Town of Kansas was named in 1838, and Kansas City was incorporated in 1850. A historical researcher may safely say that newcomers from Europe were integral to how the city began to take shape during its earliest days and may account for a large part of its success.

The white settlers who were already living and working in Kansas City who greeted the immigrants had been migrants themselves. They first homes were in other U.S. states, including Kentucky, Virginia, Tennessee, and North Carolina. Some of these settlers from other parts of the country brought enslaved people with them. Missouri's population of African Americans would reach 10 percent of its total population by 1860.[2]

Historical Events Brought Immigrants and Refugees to Kansas City

The discovery of gold in California in the 1840s prompted fortune seekers from the east coast states to include a stop in small towns in Missouri before setting out west into lesser known territories. Early towns in Missouri, notably St. Louis, Independence, and Westport Landing (which would later be renamed Kansas City) became the "Gateway to the

[1] "Immigrant Experience Research Guide," SHSMO, The State Historical Society of Missouri, accessed September 15, 2022, https://shsmo.org/research/guides/immigrant.
[2] "Immigrant Experience Research Guide."

West" for those who needed to stock up on provisions to sustain them during the long journey west.[3]

It is notable that from its earliest years, Kansas City had a history of offering people a place to stop on their quest for a chance at better fortune, or a location to create a new business enterprise. Overwhelmingly, those who arrived in Westport Landing stayed on to work in the many bars and taverns. This was not unique to Kansas City, as burgeoning towns along major rivers in the U.S. held the promise of opportunity, but it is important to include everyone in this early picture, including the non-native-born. The stories of immigrants and refugees are documented but do not seem to be available in easily accessible places for a researcher or historian. And the histories of the children of immigrants and refugees does not appear to be available in any meaningful way at all.

[3] Robyn Burnett and Ken Luebbering, "For the Sake of the Children: Missouri's Immigrant History," in *Blue Book, Official Manual, Secretary of State, Missouri Almanac*, n.d., 15–29.

The Pendergast Years

No picture of this time period would be complete without including the enormous influence Tom Pendergast, himself the son of immigrants from Ireland, and "the Democratic organization" that had a strong grip on urban development of Kansas City (see Figure 3.2). Pendergast was a Kansas City Alderman for eighteen years and would "reach out to his fellow Irishmen" and immigrant groups for votes and political support. For many immigrants, the "Pendergast Machine" represented a source of jobs that would be secured with their vote for the boss's preferred candidates.[4] He helped many working-class and immigrant people secure jobs that were usually available only to native-born, white, and usually Protestant citizens.[5]

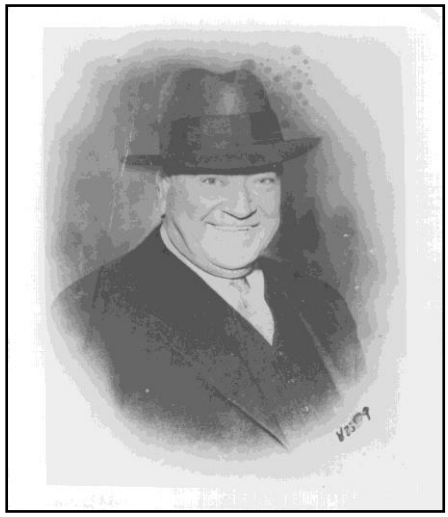

Figure 3.2. Boss Tom Pendergast, 1930. Source: "Boss Tom Pendergast," Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri, https://kchistory.org/image/tom-pendergast?solr_nav%5Bid%5D=a330e9e346eaf677d7c5&solr_nav%5Bpage%5D=0&solr_nav%5Boffset%5D=1.

[4] "Thomas J. Pendergast," Historic Missourians, State Historical Society of Missouri, accessed September 26, 2022, https://historicmissourians.shsmo.org/thomas-pendergast.
[5] "Thomas J. Pendergast."

Looking closely at how Pendergast's assistance to newcomers in finding jobs and housing in exchange for voting in alignment with "The Machine'' reveals a picture of immigrant enfranchisement in the early part of Kansas City's history. Lyle W. Dorsett's *The Pendergast Machine* states that Tom Pendergast developed social clubs for residents in the city who were unable to afford—or who were not allowed into—the country clubs in the area. Most of these events were held in the north part of the city where Italian immigrants had settled. These families who enjoyed this perk from the political boss were then encouraged to vote for chosen candidates as determined by Pendergast.

Social Service Agencies Worked to Resettle Immigrant and Refugee Families

Assistance provided by independent agencies was essential for resettlement of new families to Kansas City. For those who were without the support of a family member who was already residing in the city, the support agencies offered a lifeline to secure a place to live, for employment, and for many families, to access childcare. Kansas City has a number of independent agencies that have been providing assistance to newcomers since the first waves of immigration to the United States. A complete picture of the educational history of immigrant children thus needs to include information and data collected from these agencies, here represented by four such agencies: Guadalupe Centers, Della Lamb Community Services, Jewish Vocational Services, and Mattie Rhodes Center.

Guadalupe Centers

A quote appears as the most prominent feature of the front page of the official website of the Guadalupe Center of Kansas City, Missouri: "According to the National Register of Historic Places the Guadalupe Centers is the longest continuously operating

agency serving Latinos in the United States."[6] This organization is proud of their long history. Opened in 1919, the Guadalupe Center answered the essential needs of the growing Mexican population that immigrated to Kansas City looking for work and a better life after leaving Mexico after the Mexican Revolution in the early 1900s. The Guadalupe Center offered the social services needed by the newly resettled Mexican immigrants, who were faced with discrimination upon arrival and when they tried to secure work or sought healthcare and basic services (see Figures 3.3 and 3.4).

Figure 3.3. Guadalupe Center, 1936. Source: Kansas City Historical Society, https://kchistory.org/image/guadalupe-center-176?solr_nav%5Bid%5D=cf3b43423f09d93d4736&solr_nav%5Bpage%5D=0&solr_nav%5Boffset%5D=7.

[6] "Our History," Guadalupe Centers, 2022, accessed September 22, 2022, para. 1, https://guadalupecenters.org/home/who-we-are/.

Figure 3.4. Children playing in the yard of the Guadalupe Center, 1933. Source: "100 Years Ago, This Group Tried to 'Americanize' Mexicans. Now It Empowers Latinos in Kansas City," KCUR 89.3, NPR in Kansas City, February 29, 2020, https://www.kcur.org/community/2020-02-29/guadalupe-centers-kansas-city-latino-immigrants-mexican-american.

The Guadalupe Center expanded to include schools in the 1980s to address the needs of young Latino students who were dropping out of Kansas City's public schools by creating a charter school system. Enrollment stands today at about one thousand students in grades pre-kindergarten to high school.[7]

Della Lamb

Della Lamb is a non-profit social service agency located in northeast Kansas City dedicated to helping immigrants and refugees. The service has been in operation since 1897, when it began to offer its services to Italian immigrants (see Figure 3.5). The service began as a settlement church at the corner of 7th Street and Holmes built by Charles W. Moore in 1905 (see Figure 3.6). The settlement church helped boys and men who were out on parole.

[7] "About Our Charter Schools," Guadalupe Centers, 2022, accessed September 22, 2022, https://guadalupecenters.org/gescharterschools/.

The church later provided services to newly arrived Italian immigrants in Kansas City, where "Italians who had come to this country and settled here were made to feel at home."[8] In 1946 the house was renamed the Della C. Lamb Neighborhood House. The building was razed in the 1960s to make room for a cross-town highway.

Figure 3.5. Della Cochrane Lamb, the founder and head of the "Institutional Neighborhood House" that was changed to the "Della C. Lamb Neighborhood House." Credit: Dorri Partain, "Faces of Elmwood Cemetery: Della C. Lamb," *Northeast News*, October 21, 2020, https://northeastnews.net/pages/faces-of-elmwood-cemetery-della-c-lamb/.

[8] Institutional Church, Postcards of Mrs. Sam Ray, Kansas City Public Library, para. 1, https://kchistory.org/image/institutional-church-1?solr_nav%5Bid%5D=0f9d4a16c469d1dc0c8b&solr_nav%5Bpage%5D=0&solr_nav%5Boffset%5D=0

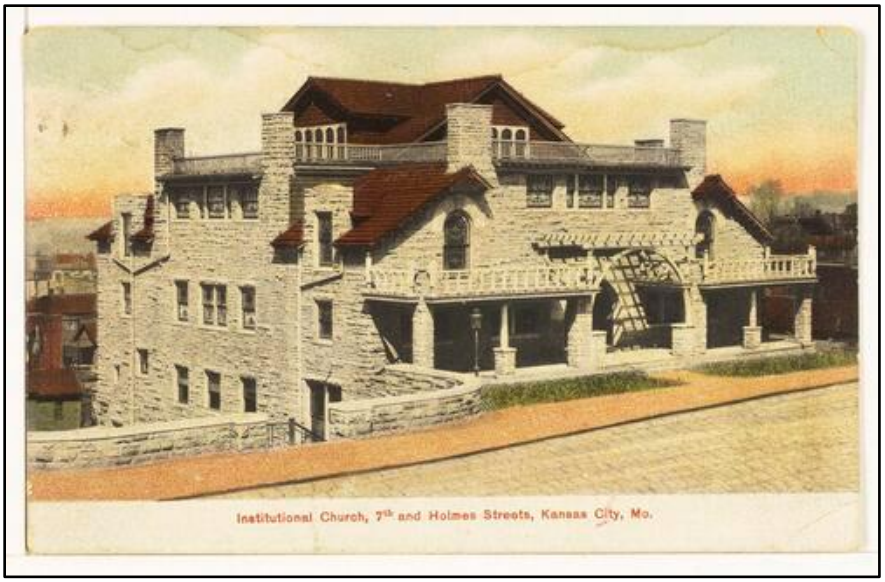

Figure 3.6. The Institutional Church at the corner of 7th Street and Holmes was the early site of what would later become the Della C. Lamb Neighborhood House, and then Della Lamb. Source: Institutional Church, Postcards of Mrs. Sam Ray, Kansas City Public Library, https://kchistory.org/image/institutional-church-1?solr_nav%5Bid%5D=0f9d4a16c469d1dc0c8b&solr_nav%5Bpage%5D=0&solr_nav%5Boffset%5D=0

The center is presently located at 500 Woodland Avenue, in the northeast area of the city where many immigrants and refugees live. Today Della Lamb is dedicated to helping meet the needs of refugees from Afghanistan and other countries with the hope of eventually helping these families move out of poverty.[9]

Jewish Vocational Service

Jewish Vocational Service has a similar mission to other agencies as they also work to help refugees achieve economic and cultural integration. JVS began in the 1940s to assist Holocaust survivors, refugees, and those returning after serving in World War II, providing services to assist them as they built new lives in the United States.[10]

[9] "About Us," Della Lamb, accessed August 11, 2016, https://www.dellalamb.org/about/.

[10] "Our Mission and Values," *Jewish Vocational Service* (blog), 2021, accessed September 25, 2022, https://jvskc.org/about/our-mission/.

Mattie Rhodes

Figure 3.7. Mattie Rhodes, circa 1890. Source: "Mattie Rhodes History," accessed November 20, 2022, https://www.mattierhodes.org/about-mattie-rhodes-2/mattie-rhodes-history/.

Located on West 17th Street, Mattie Rhodes is a community development organization that serves the community of the Northeast with youth and family services and a new cultural center that features an art gallery and exhibits created by participants in their arts education classes. The center's long history began when its namesake, who worked with underserved children, died of typhoid fever in 1890 and left $500.00 to her friends to continue the work with children (see Figure 3.7).[11]

Local and National Newspapers Give A Glimpse of What Life Was Like at the Time

Searching through the archives of *The Kansas City Star* revealed few articles about immigrants settling in the city, but more about immigrants arriving in other major U.S. cities.

[11] "Mattie Rhodes History," Mattie Rhodes, 2017, accessed November 20, 2022, https://www.mattierhodes.org/about-mattie-rhodes-2/mattie-rhodes-history/.

The *Star* reported on immigrants entering major American cities such as New York and about people displaced by natural disasters in the U.S. such as tornadoes who were labeled "refugees." The few articles I did find revealed efforts to help those who resettled in the city.

In one, the observations of a local reporter helped provide context. It was titled "Aid For Jewish Refugees, Roumanian Kansas City Extends a Hand to Roumanian Refugees,"[12] which reported how a "Hebrew charitable association," as described in the article, prepared to receive Roumanian Jewish families who had first arrived in New York City and were now on their way to Kansas City. The association intended to provide the families assistance finding employment and securing housing in the city. The article mentions that the exodus of Roumanian Jewish people was due to the refusal of the government in Roumania to adhere to provisions in "the Berlin Treaty which took effect at the end of the Russo-Turkish War"[13] that would have provided the group protection from religious persecution. The government was able to get away with not following the clause of the treaty "under the subterfuge that the Jewish people were aliens and not subjects of the government."[14]

The final paragraph features a Kansas City resident who was helping the families; he speaks about the effect of the families leaving Roumania for the United States. The writer quotes Rabbi Meyer, one of the leaders at the Hebrew Charitable Foundation, who was in charge of assisting the new families. After mentioning how the numbers of refugees had

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[12] "Aid for Jewish Refugees. Kansas City Extends a Hand to the Roumanian Immigrants," *Kansas City Star* (Kansas City, Missouri) 21, no. 19, October 6, 1900: [1], *NewsBank: America's News – Historical and Current*. https://infoweb-newsbank-com.kclibrary.idm.oclc.org/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=image/v2%3A1126152C152E4978%40EANX-115C4393D8B3B718%402415299-115C4393F2D244E8%400-115C4394D25E4158%40Aid%2Bfor%2BJewish%2BRefugees.%2BKansas%2BCity%2BExtends%2Ba%2BHand%2Bto%2Bthe%2BRoumanian%2BImmigrants. "'

[13] "Aid for Jewish Refugees," 1.

[14] "Aid for Jewish Refugees," 1.

actually been in decline, Rabbi Meyer says, "the friendly attitude of the American government in waiving the restrictions against immigration in this case has had a reflexive influence on the Roumanian government."[15] Rabbi Myers continues, asserting that the Rumanian government is "beginning to fear that the loss of good citizens will upset the economic conditions of the country."[16] The author does not say where Rabbi Meyer learned about this, but it shed light on how a Kansas City resident who was helping refugees was thinking about the effects his work would have on a nation half a world away. I was unable to locate another article that followed up on the resettlement of the Roumanian Jewish families or featured more insight from Rabbi Meyer.

An article about the Italians who resettled in Kansas City, "Our Italian Immigrants,"[17] in the *Kansas City Evening Star* was written in 1881. A writer named only "Garibaldi" wrote that Italian immigrants arriving in Kansas City at this time were "undesirable, both physically and morally" and that the "picked men" (which I assume means the more desirable or able bodied) were "in the army, civil servers and the religious orders."[18] No other details about the writer of the article were included.

In another article titled, "Kansas City Most American of Cities,"[19] the writer tells us that a number of residents of Kansas City at that time (January 1908), were either foreign

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[15] "Aid for Jewish Refugees," 1.

[16] "Aid for Jewish Refugees," 1.

[17] "Our Italian Immigrants," *Kansas City Star* 1, no. 98, January 10, 1881: [3], Readex: America's Historical Newspapers. https://infoweb-newsbank-com.proxy.library.umkc.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A1126152C152E4978%40EANX-1157AC33734AAD20%402408091-1157AC3440900330%402-1157AC35F868A898%40Our%2BItalian%2BImmigrants.

[18] "Our Italian Immigrants," 2.

[19] "Kansas City Most American of Cities," "*Kansas City Star* 28, no. 135, January 30, 1908#: 12, Readex: America's Historical Newspapers, https://infoweb-newsbank-

born or were from other states in the U.S. The words used in the title of the article, "Kansas City, the Most American of Cities" are used twice: at the end of the introduction and again at the end of the piece, almost as a statement of proof. The author uses the geographic location of Kansas City, in the middle of the country and at the nexus of railroad lines and large meat processing facilities, to emphasize how the city attracted and combined "different American strains" or the types of people who moved to Kansas City from other parts of the United States, making Kansas City the "most" American city, out of a diverse collection of people born in the United States.

In the final part of the article, the author writes that the city has a remarkable proportion of people from other parts of the country and includes the hopeful observation that "such a small proportion of foreign blood ought to prove an admirable laboratory for working out the principles of democracy combined with the idealism for which America stands before the world."[20] The article ends proclaiming, "herein lies the unique opportunity of Kansas City." Little did the writer know of the challenges the city and the rest of the nation would face with the arrival of world wars and a devastating flu pandemic that would change the city, the nation, and the rest of the world forever.

Another article pertained to a women's charitable organization that was not associated with any of the resettlement agencies in the city, but was independently working with immigrant families; it was titled "Too Distant with Foreigners. Social Workers of

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com.proxy.library.umkc.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A1126152C152E4978%40EANX-11650A97718C5380%402417971-11650A98B7081E98%4011-11650A9E0CBB8D50%40Kansas%2BCity%2BMost%2BAmerican%2Bof%2BCities"'

[20] "Kansas City Most American of Cities," 12.

Greater Kansas City Confer on Americanization Work."[21] The word "Americanization" caught my eye, and I braced for the worst, expecting a report about how the women in the organization held the lowest opinion of the foreign born, their cultures, and languages.

The article mentions there was a short period of time when there was a dip in the number of immigrants coming to Kansas City. The ladies of the charity group, the Catholic Women's Club, were quoted about their work of "Americanization" as they helped the families: "Americanization work, or rather assimilation of the foreign born is now ripe…we should not try to destroy the pride of these people in their homelands or make them ashamed of their language."[22] I was surprised and relieved to read that even at that time, there were members of charitable organizations who recognized the value of newcomers holding on to their first language. I will never know if this group actually helped newcomers do this, but I take comfort knowing the speaker said as much and that the writer chose to use the quote in the article. I tried to find more articles about this organization but was unsuccessful.

Independent, Nonprofit News Sources in Kansas City

Flatland is a non-profit news source that partners with National Public Radio and PBS Newshour.[23] This source led me to discover stories about parts of Kansas City's past that were not reported on often or at all in the major newspapers. Flatland's website features a section called "CuriousKC" and listed an article about the Mexican community in Kansas

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[21] "Too Distant with Foreigners, Social Workers of Greater Kansas City Confer on Americanization Work," *Kansas City Star* 83, no. 53, March 2, 1920#: 2. Readex: America's Historical Newspapers, https://infoweb-newsbank-com.proxy.library.umkc.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A1126152C152E4978%40EANX-119AF71926991698%402422386-119AF7196A14EB30%403-119AF71CA6DF9960%40Too%2BDistant%2Bwith%2BForeigners.%2BSocial%2BWorkers%2Bof%2BGreater%2BKansas%2BCity%2BConfer%2Bon%2BAmericanization%2BWork.

[22] "Too Distant with Foreigners," 2.

[23] "About," FlatlandKC, 2023, accessed August 21, 2014, https://flatlandkc.org/about/.

City, "(Kansas City's) Westside Story: A Question about How People Got Here Took Us to the Why."[24] This article helped me fill in the part of the story about the Mexican families that resettled in Kansas City.

The Flatland article references and quotes from an article written by Dr. Theresa Torres, an Associate Professor of Sociology, and Race, Ethnic, and Gender Studies at the University of Missouri-Kansas City titled, "The Kansas City Westside." Dr. Torres writes that Mexican families fled due to the conflicts of the Mexican revolution in 1910. Those looking for work found employment with the railway system and the stockyards in Kansas City. The article describes the impact that Mexican immigration had on the migration patterns in the United States and demographics in Kansas City: "By World War I, Kansas City was at the heart of the Mexican migratory movement to the interior of the country."[25]

The articles I found in the independent news sources helped me recharge when I came up empty searching the archived articles of major news sources in Kansas City, namely the *Kansas City Star*. The articles from Flatland and The Beacon are the work of journalists who want to answer questions and investigate seemingly forgotten parts of Kansas City's past. They are wonderful resources for curious people who are still looking for answers about this city's past.

The Great Undertaking: Migration in Search of Opportunity

The Missouri Digital Heritage Online Database has articles and data about the state and local communities of Missouri from its earliest days. Included is the article, "For the

[24] "(Kansas City's) Westside Story," FlatlandKC, November 1, 2021, https://flatlandkc.org/curiouskc/question-everything/questions-answered/curiouskc-kansas-citys-westside-story/.
[25] "(Kansas City's) Westside Story," para. 16.

Sake of the Children: Missouri's Immigrant History."[26] The title of the article comes from a Prussian teacher named Fredrich Steines who left Europe for a new life and freedom in Missouri. After resettling in St. Louis, Mr. Steines recalled of his hardships, "Was it not in great measure, for the sake of my children, that I attempted the great undertaking?"[27]

Although the article contains more information about immigrants in St. Louis, Missouri, there is also information about immigrants in Kansas City during the development of industrialized business that would emerge in the state after the end of the Civil War. The researchers write that the population of Missouri was in decline after the Civil War, and leaders in the state looked at immigration as a way to alleviate the developing labor shortage.[28] Missouri's governor at the time, Hamilton Gamble, helped create the Missouri Board of Immigration with the purpose of promoting and aiding immigration to Missouri by featuring the state's resources and advantages in advertising materials. The Board was particularly interested in recruiting immigrants from Germany and created advertising materials in German.[29]

Many immigrants worked in the train system in the city, but that was not the only large business that hired immigrants. The new slaughterhouses and meatpacking businesses in Kansas City also hired many newcomers to the U.S. As the stockyards grew, so did Kansas City. When the first slaughterhouses were built in 1871, the city's population was 32,000 people. By 1890 the population had reached 132,000, including many immigrants.[30]

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[26] Burnett and Luebbering, "For the Sake of the Children."
[27] Burnett and Luebbering, "For the Sake of the Children," 15.
[28] Burnett and Luebbering, "For the Sake of the Children."
[29] Burnett and Luebbering, "For the Sake of the Children."
[30] Burnett and Luebbering, "For the Sake of the Children."

A rail strike of the German and Swedish immigrant workers in Kansas City in 1893 provided the opportunity for recruitment to extend to newcomers from southern and central Europe. It was at this time that immigrants from Croatia, Lithuania, Russia, and Poland arrived and sought employment and housing in their new city.[31]

Resources from the Website of the State Historical Society of Missouri

The website of the State Historical Society of Missouri contains resources about the waves of immigrants to Kansas City. The section titled the "Immigrant Experience Research Guide" contains links to articles that appeared in the *Missouri Historical Review* (see Figure 3.8).

Figure 3.8. A woman and children attending an event at the Guadalupe Center in 1926. Source: Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.

[31] Burnett and Luebbering, "For the Sake of the Children."

An article titled, "A Study of Confusion: Missouri's Immigration Program, 1865–1916"[32] contained the following description from a book written much later than the initial surges of immigration. The book was among the projects commissioned by Governor Herbert Hadley to entice immigrants looking for land to farm to migrate to Missouri. The pastoral and enthusiastic picture of Jackson County and what awaited the immigrant looking for opportunity and pastoral beauty described Kansas City as:

> A land of opportunity where health and farm income await the lover of the great outdoors. A county of rural homes with all the advantages of a great city with none of the disadvantages…From the Four Quarters of America Aeolus breathes upon Jackson County's fields, woods and streams the healthful sustenance of growing things that has transformed this fertile spot of the Early West into an Eternal Garden.[33]

The Mexican Immigrant Community in Kansas City

I found a source that helped me understand more about the Mexican community that grew in Kansas City. The article, "Mexican Migrants in Urban Missouri: Social Welfare Institutions and Racial Boundaries in Kansas City and St. Louis, 1915–1940"[34] explores the experiences of Mexican immigrants who resettled in Kansas City and St. Louis, Missouri. Each city had a large Mexican community but the community in St. Louis was smaller and less concentrated than the one in Kansas City.[35] The availability of jobs in the stockyards and packing houses helped attract a larger population of Mexicans to Kansas City than to

[32] Normal L. Crockett, "A Study of Confusion: Missouri's Immigration Program, 1865–1916," *Missouri Historical Review* 57 (April 1963): 248–60.
[33] M. E. Ballou, cited in Crockett, "A Study of Confusion," 256.
[34] Bryan Winston, "Mexican Migrants in Urban Missouri: Social Welfare Institutions and Racial Boundaries in Kansas City and St. Louis, 1915–1940," *Missouri Historical Review* 113 (July 2019): 259–83.
[35] Winston, "Mexican Migrants in Urban Missouri."

St. Louis.[36] By the 1920s, a sizable Mexican community had formed and grown in Kansas City's Westside neighborhood (see Figures 3.9 and 3.10).

Figure 3.9. Employment opportunities in the stockyards helped attract immigrants, circa 1930. Photo credit: Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri. Source: Luke X. Martin, "How Multi-Ethnic Stockyard Workers Propelled Kansas City into the Modern Age," Up to Date, KCUR 89.3, NPR in Kansas City, April 28, 2018, https://www.kcur.org/show/up-to-date/2019-04-28/how-multi-ethnic-stockyard-workers-propelled-kansas-city-into-the-modern-age.

Figure 3.10. A posed photo of girls sitting around a sewing table at a class at the Guadalupe Center, 1935. Source: Guadalupe Center Collection (SC20), kchistory.org.

[36] Winston, "Mexican Migrants in Urban Missouri."

The researcher explores the history of the Mexican communities in the two cities with a focus on their experiences with the resettlement agencies that specifically assisted Mexican immigrants. Mexican migration increased in the early decades of the twentieth century. Kansas City and St. Louis were never a part of Mexico as were El Paso and Los Angeles and other cities in the South "and had no extensive Mexican and Mexican American history to shape their urban social relations."[37]

During the time of growth in the communities, the social welfare agencies assisted in providing social and cultural opportunities for community members while at the same time the community members were "pushing back against social-reformer racial boundaries embedded in the organizations themselves."[38] According to the article, the social welfare groups responded with a mixture of assistance and paternalism that made the transition of Mexican immigrants to their new city more difficult.[39]

This information about the experiences gave me a broader sense of the work of the resettlement agencies and the effects that their work had on the Mexican population. I was prepared to find in my research that not all of the efforts to "help" newcomers are welcome. I can see how the assistance from these agencies may be met with suspicion by some people, who may fear they will lose cultural connections and what they hold from their first country and first language and from the push toward becoming Americanization.

[37] Winston, "Mexican Migrants in Urban Missouri," 260.
[38] Winston, "Mexican Migrants in Urban Missouri," 259.
[39] Winston, "Mexican Migrants in Urban Missouri."

Conclusion

The development of the city owes a lot to the hard work of the growing immigrant population. I continually discovered more and more information about the independent social support agencies working in Kansas City that welcomed and helped resettle early immigrants and worked hard to provide stable beginnings for the newcomers to the city. Resettlement of immigrants is a part of the history of Kansas City that should be more readily included in the greater picture of the development of the city. Chapter 4 provides an overview of the development of the public school system in Kansas City where many immigrant and refugee children were enrolled.

CHAPTER 4

OVERVIEW OF HISTORY OF KANSAS CITY MISSOURI SCHOOL DISTRICT

The origins of the Kansas City Missouri School District are aligned with the story of Kansas City itself, a new American city teeming with opportunities for those who sought them.[1] During its earliest years the public school district did not offer equal educational opportunities for all children in the city's diverse population. But after a series of federal laws passed to protect the civil rights of African Americans, the district, after years of avoiding changes, would come under scrutiny.

Kansas City Missouri School District and How It Grew

The physical boundaries of Kansas City are defined by rivers and the boundary lines of surrounding townships. The Missouri River provides a natural border to the north. The city grew south and westward toward the border with Kansas. In the east Kansas City extends to the border of Raytown and to the south with the border of Hickman Mills. The Kansas City School District's boundaries are "not contiguous with the borders of Kansas City" and according to the school district's website, many areas that were within the borders of other suburban districts in Missouri have been annexed at one time by Kansas City,

Figure 4.1 is a map showing the growth of the Kansas City School District from 1867 to 1973. According to this map, which shows how the number of schools grew with the annexations of land by the city, the first schools were built close to the southern banks of the

[1] "History of KCPS," Kansas City Public Schools, para. 2, accessed February 6, 2023, https://www.kcpublicschools.org/about/history.

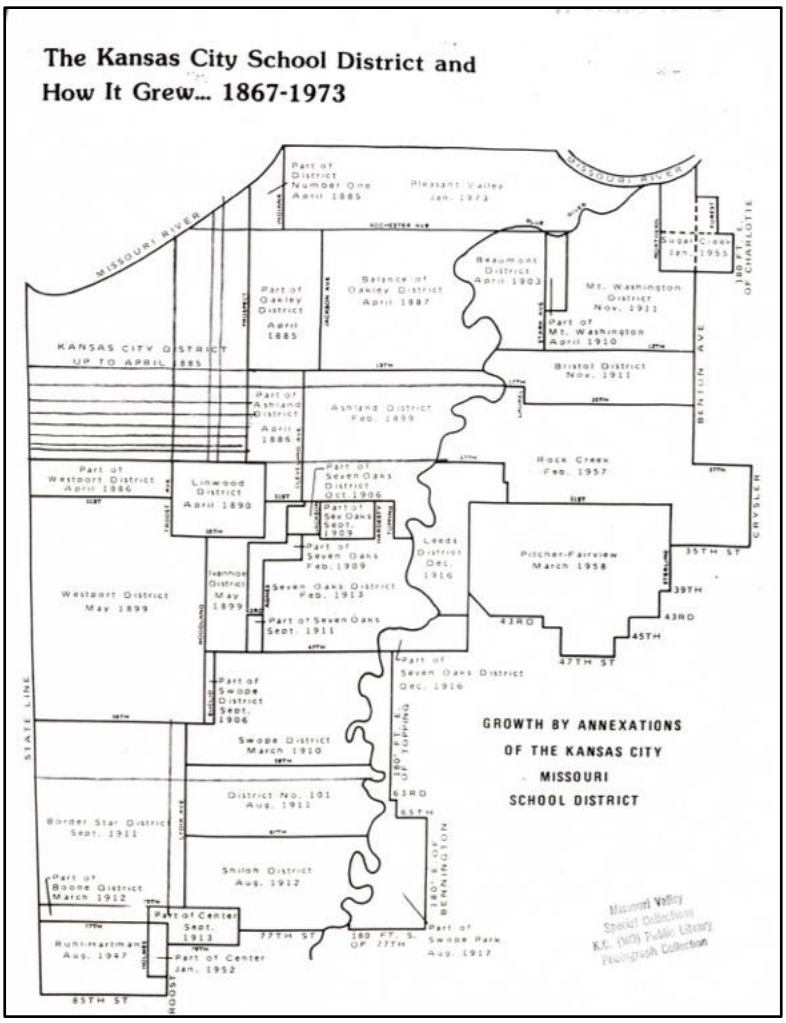

Figure 4.1. “Kansas City School District and How it Grew, 1867–1973.” Source: Vertical File, Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.

Missouri River, in the area of Indiana Avenue and Rochester Avenue, along with the Oakley District at Prospect and 15th Street. As more land was annexed, the school system added schools south and east in the city. Interestingly, the oldest areas of the public school system were located close by where immigrants and refugees would resettle, in the Northeast section of the city (see Figure 4.2).

The First Kansas City Public School Building Appears

Figure 4.2. Washington School at the southwest corner of Independence and Cherry in 1868 was the first of the Kansas City Missouri School District schools to be completed. Source: Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri, https://www.kcpsrs.org/timeline/.

The Kansas City Public Schools' website provides a list of the schools built in the district from its earliest days. The first schools appeared in District 1 in April of 1885. According to the website of Kansas City Public Schools Retirement Program, residents of Kansas City expressed resistance at first to the construction of buildings for the public school system. The controversial idea of educating all children, including Black children, was debated, as it would have replaced a private school system that was already established.[2]

But in 1866, interested residents persisted, and the Kansas City Missouri School District system began to take shape. The first school building that was built was the

[2] "History of KCPS."

Washington School on the southwest corner of Independence Avenue and Cherry Street.[3] After the Washington School, schools were built in the Ashland and Westport areas of Kansas City; then the other schools in the rest of the Westport area by 1899. The details from the website include neighborhoods and districts, such as the Ashland area, which do not appear on contemporary maps.

In 1867 the schools were officially opened, and most of the children attended classes in rented rooms in the city as more school buildings were under construction. The Kansas City Public Schools Retirement Program's website quotes from the book, *Kansas City: Its History and People* by Carrie Westlake Whitney to describe the early school facilities:

> the early schoolhouses erected in Kansas City were plain brick of four, six and eight rooms. The old buildings were provided with comfortable seats, but were heated with coal stoves, and in cold weather were ventilated by raising or lowering the windows.[4]

These were far from the modern buildings the district would build in the following years.

School Buildings in the District Continued to Increase in Number

The district grew quickly. By 1872 eight new school buildings had been added, including Lathrop School, Benton School, Morse School, Franklin School, and Lincoln School (see Figure 4.3).[5] Improvements to construction of the next group of school buildings included better heating, ventilation, seating for students, and lighting in the classrooms.[6] The district had also begun to require standards for teachers hired in the district. The fifty-eight teachers employed in 1874 were to follow a specific course of study.

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[3] "Timeline," KCPSRS, Kansas City Public Schools Retirement System, 2023, https://www.kcpsrs.org/timeline/.
[4] Carrie Westlake Whitney, *Kansas City: Its History and People,* 306, cited in "Timeline," KCPSRS, 2023.
[5] "Timeline."
[6] "Timeline."

Figure 4.3. Interior classroom view of Lathrop School with students working with wood turning shop equipment, 1917. Source: Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri, https://kchistory.org/image/lathrop-school-0?solr_nav%5Bid%5D=9b50f992bf409f72e609&solr_nav%5Bpage%5D=3&solr_nav%5Boffset%5D=16.

The 1900 to 1950 time period brought schools to the neighborhoods of Ivanhoe, which is east of Main Street, and then schools in Swope and the Mount Washington section further south and east. Following that was the area of Borderstar, then Seven Oaks District, followed by Briston, Shiloh, and Leeds, and Ruhl-Hartman in the east. During the period 1950 to 2000, schools in the Center, Sugar Creek, Rock Creek, Pitcher, Fairview, and Pleasant Valley sections were added, further south and further east.

Plessy v. Ferguson Allows "Separate but Equal" to Stand in U.S. Schools

In 1896 the Supreme Court of the United States decided that the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution did not prohibit

government mandated segregation for accommodations, including public accommodations such as buses and trains, as well as theaters and schools. This allowed public schools to remain segregated for Black and white students as long as the facilities and accommodations within the schools were equal. This decision had far-reaching implications that went beyond schools, as it laid the foundation for the Jim Crow Laws that would enforce racial segregation in the Southern states.

Missouri Schools Caught in the Crossfire

The article by researchers Hunt and Morice, "Caught in the Crossfire, Factors Influenced the Closing of Missouri's Black Schools," examines how Missouri schools for Black students were subject to closings more often than schools for white students. The Emancipation Proclamation in 1865 granted freedom to all persons who were enslaved in "rebellious states."[7] Shortly after this announcement, delegates of Missouri's legislature convened in St. Louis for the Missouri State Convention. One of the many issues the group tackled was the education of freed Black persons, which had been deemed illegal in 1847.[8]

Between 1865 and 1893, the members of the Missouri general assembly created segregated schools. They added the provision that if enrollment fell below a minimum number for Black schools only, those schools must close.[9] If a school's attendance remained below the minimum for a month, the school was to remain closed for six months.[10] Though African Americans made considerable advances in education, they and their educational

[7] "Emancipation Proclamation," National Archives, October 6, 2015, para. 1, https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured-documents/emancipation-proclamation.
[8] John W. Hunt and Linda C. Morice, "Caught in the Crossfire: Factors Influencing the Closing of Missouri's Black Schools, 1865–1905," *American Educational History Journal* 35, no. 2 (2008): 233–50, https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ818632&site=ehost-live&scope=site.
[9] Hunt and Morice, "Caught in the Crossfire."
[10] Hunt and Morice, "Caught in the Crossfire."

aspirations "remained in the crossfire of opposing forces stemming from wartime animosities, political differences, and controversy over the new industrial economy."[11]

Lincoln School for Black Students

The number of Kansas City public schools increased to accommodate a growing African American population during the middle of the twentieth century and remained segregated in the Kansas City Missouri School District. Examining the history of specific schools demonstrates that while under the pressures of social stratification and segregation, African American educational leaders working in the district persevered and did their best to provide the highest quality education for their students.

Originally constructed as an elementary school, Lincoln Elementary was the only school available to Black students during the school district's earliest days. Lincoln's first location in 1865 was at the corner of 10th Street and McGee Street where two hundred students were enrolled. By 1915 the school moved to its current location at 19th Street and Tracy Avenue and was renamed Lincoln High School (see Figure 4.4). Students who attended Lincoln High School came from the neighboring schools such as Attucks, Sumner, Wheatley, and Yates.[12] Under the leadership of H. O. Cook, along with principals and administrators who would succeed him in the years to come, Lincoln expanded, adding a middle school, junior college, and vocational school.

[11] Hunt and Morice, "Caught in the Crossfire," 234.

[12] "History – Lincoln College Preparatory Academy," Kansas City Public Schools, accessed February 11, 2023, https://lcpa.kcpublicschools.org/about/history.

Figure 4.4. In 1890, Lincoln High School opened at 19th Street and Tracy Avenue, becoming the first all-Black high school in Kansas City, Missouri. Source: "At Kansas City's Oldest Black High School, a New Space Finally Celebrates History," KCUR 89.3 NPR in Kansas City, May 30, 2022, https://www.kcur.org/news/2022-05-30/at-kansas-citys-oldest-black-high-school-a-new-space-finally-celebrates-history.

Lincoln remained a school for Black Kansas City school children even after Congress passed the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954. Lincoln did not become integrated until 1978, when it was changed into a magnet school and renamed Lincoln College Preparatory Academy.[13]

School Conversions for Black Students in Kansas City

Naming of schools for Black students is important in the educational history of the Kansas City Missouri School District. In "From Jefferson to Banneker: The Intersection of Race, Demographic Change, and School Naming Practices in Kansas City's Segregated School System, 1940–1953," the writer analyzes how renaming schools that were originally

[13] "History – Lincoln College Preparatory Academy."

constructed for white students for leaders who fought for equal rights for African Americans had in essence "coded those schools by race and further signaled that the surrounding area had become a Black neighborhood" (see Figures 4.5 and 4.6).[14]

Figure 4.5. Street level view of Jefferson School, 1310 Wabash Avenue, named for Thomas Jefferson. The school was renamed after Benjamin Banneker in 1946. Source: Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri, https://kchistory.org/image/jefferson-school-0?solr_nav%5Bid%5D=038eef46ba50e8523371&solr_nav%5Bpage%5D=0&solr_nav%5Boffset%5D=0.

This practice was not unique to Kansas City. As the Black population grew in Kansas City through the middle of the twentieth century, more white schools were renamed for African American leaders as a way to designate that the school was now segregated for Black

[14] Peter William Moran, "From Jefferson to Banneker: The Intersection of Race, Demographic Change, and School Naming Practices in Kansas City's Segregated School System, 1940–1953," *History of Education Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (2019): 65, https: doi.org/10.1017/heq.2018.51.

students.[15] This tactic was successful enough at the time, as it allowed the school district to delay grappling with the real issue of segregation.

Figure 4.6. Booker T. Washington School at 2404 Prospect Avenue in the 1980s. Designed by school district architect William F. Hanckey and built as the Irving School in 1988, the building was renamed Booker T. Washington School when it became a Black school in 1930. The school was closed by the district in 1976 and demolished circa 1990. Source: Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri, https://kchistory.org/image/booker-t-washington-school-4?solr_nav%5Bid%5D=014ca6e87dd0605a7f3b&solr_nav%5Bpage%5D=0&solr_nav%5Boffset%5D=5.

Postwar Population Boom for Kansas City and the School District

John Rury writes in *Creating the Suburban School Advantage,* that municipal leaders in Kansas City witnessed that St. Louis, another large city in Missouri on the extreme eastern boundary of the state that also straddled a river and two states, had turned down the opportunity to annex the suburban areas around it. They took notice that St. Louis eventually

[15] Moran, "From Jefferson to Banneker."

lost population density and taxable income and wealth in later years[16] as a consequence of this decision. With St. Louis' experience in mind, the municipal leaders of Kansas City decided to annex surrounding suburban districts. These acts of land acquisition would more than double Kansas City's footprint.[17]

Residents in the surrounding suburban districts voted whether or not to approve annexation. What persuaded them was the promise of access to better public services that were afforded to Kansas City urban residents. Access and use of the public schools in the urban core were not included in this endeavor. Kansas City's boundary area had increased to a large enough size that residents could say it held the largest metropolitan area in the country. Few could guess how social changes in future decades could divide and shrink the city with the very same school district omitted from the annexation deals.

Brown v. Board of Education and the School District's Response

The end of the Civil War marked the declaration of the end of legalized slavery in the United States. The *Brown v. Board of Education* decision led to desegregation of schools by ruling that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal."[18] Decided in 1954 in Topeka, Kansas, the ruling forced Americans to consider the segregation that was present in their towns and cities and in their schools. The importance placed on public education is an essential aspect of a democratic society, and it forced the country to consider how publicly funded education was a part of the ideals credited to the authors of the United States

[16] John L. Rury, *Creating the Suburban School Advantage: Race, Localism, and Inequality in an American Metropolis. Histories of American Education* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020). https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=nlebk&AN=2283179&scope=site
[17] Rury, *Creating the Suburban School Advantage.*
[18] "Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka," National Archives, August 15, 2016, para. 2, https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2004/spring/brown-v-board-1.html.

Constitution.[19] The *Brown* ruling affected the states that required legal segregation at the time, including Missouri.

Complex Justice: The Case of Missouri v. Jenkins by Joshua Dunn provides an overview of Missouri and Kansas City's reaction to this landmark case. Dunn writes that the state of Missouri removed requirements that their district schools be segregated and instead allowed local government entities to decide their response to *Brown.*[20] The Kansas City school board opted to end its dual school system and instead utilize a neighborhood school system. It was still a system of segregation, just one using residential boundaries instead of school district boundaries. This limited the amount of integration that happened in the city's neighborhood schools.[21]

Unlike other Southern and border states that resisted the *Brown* decision, Kansas City's reaction was relatively quiet. Dunn writes that *The Kansas City Star,* the largest newspaper in the city, did not print any articles that covered protests or unrest due to the decision[22] and "the relative tranquility in Kansas City meant that the courts had no reason to intervene" (see Figure 4.7).[23]

[19] "Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka," National Archives.
[20] Joshua M. Dunn, *Complex Justice: The Case of Missouri v. Jenkins* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008).
[21] Dunn, *Complex Justice.*
[22] Dunn, *Complex Justice.*
[23] Dunn, *Complex Justice,* 3.

THE KANSAS CITY STAR. MAIN EDITION

VOL. 74. NO. 242. KANSAS CITY, MAY 17, 1954—MONDAY—28 PAGES. PRICE 5 CENTS.

RECESS PROBE A WEEK

Senate Committee Votes the Delay After Eisenhower and Brownell Limit Testimony and Evidence in Army-McCarthy Quarrel.

ISSUES GO DEEP

Wisconsin Senator Says President Is Badly Advised in Lowering "Iron Curtain."

A REIN ON PRIVATE TALKS

White House Orders Officials Not to Divulge Details of Advisory Sessions.

Justice Department Says No Part of "Letter" Offered as Evidence May Be Told.

Washington, May 17. (AP) — Senators investigating the McCarthy-army row today recessed until next Monday to give time to try to clarify a presidential order forbidding further inquiry into high-level administration

Justice Department Studies Action Against an Informer.

Washington, May 17.(AP)— Attorney General Brownell said officially today the Justice department is considering "possible violations of the criminal law" in the preparation and dissemination of a document Senator McCarthy presented May 4 in the McCarthy-army hearings.

Brownell made the disclosure in ruling that no part of the document should be declassified from its confidential category.

McCarthy's document was in the form of a copy of a "letter" purportedly signed with the name of J. Edgar Hoover, FBI director. Hoover reported he had never written such a letter but that its subject matter and parts of its language were identical to a confidential FBI memorandum of the same date. It dealt with an investigation for possible subversives at Ft. Monmouth, N. J.

Through a Wall to Rob School Vault.

THIEVES early today knocked a hole in the wall of a vault at the Southeast high school, Meyer boulevard and Paseo avenue, and stole

school Friday, F. T. A. funds for a picnic, and Friday receipts from the school cafeteria. The physical education office in the building was ransacked but nothing was re-

BAR TO SCHOOL SEGREGATION

Unanimous Decision by the Supreme Court Holds That Policy of "Separate but Equal" Facilities Is a Violation of the Fourteenth Amendment.

DELAY ON EFFECTIVE DATE

Cases Will Be Restored to Docket to Decide Issues Involving When and How to Order the Decree Into Effect.

KANSAS AMONG STATES INVOLVED

But Ruling Will Affect a Total of Twenty Which Have Laws Either Requiring or Permitting Separation of Pupils According to Race.

Washington, May 17.(AP)—The Supreme court ruled unanimously today that segregation of Negro

Will Follow Law, Ray O. Joslyn Says.

Ray O. Joslyn, president of the Board of Education, on learning of the United States Supreme court decision on segregation, commented:

"Naturally, we will abide by the law. We will do whatever the law says we should do."

Dr. Mark W. Bills, superintendent of schools, said he was not now ready to comment on the decision.

A meeting of the school board is scheduled Thursday night.

FLOOD SUITS OUT

The Supreme Court Refuses to

CASE IS PARADOX

Actually Topeka Already Has Gone Far in Ending Racial Segregation of Pupils.

ALL HIGH SCHOOLS OPENED

Only 5 Per Cent of Children in Grades Were Affected by Old Traditions.

However, Because of Suit in One of Those Areas, Kansas Became a Test.

By Alvin S. McCoy.
(The Star's Kansas Correspondent.)

Topeka, May 17.—The Topeka Board of Educa-

Figure 4.7. The *Star* ran the headline big in 1954 when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education* that school segregation could not stand. The editors and reporters at *The Star,* however, did little for the next two decades to hold local school officials accountable. Source: Mara Williams, "Kansas City Schools Broke Federal Desegregation Law for Decades. The Star Stayed Quiet," *The Kansas City Star,* December 22, 2020, https://www.kansascity.com/news/local/article247821130.html#:~:text=Kansas%20City%20schools%20broke%20federal,The%20Star%20stayed%20quiet&text=Long%20after%20the%20U.S.%20Supreme,Star%20looked%20the%20other%20way.

"Difficult from the Start"

An article that reveals the reality of the reaction of the city and school district to *Brown v. The Board of Education* is "Difficult from the Start: Implementing the *Brown* Decision in the Kansas City Public Schools" by Peter William Moran. Written at the fifty-year anniversary of the landmark decision, Moran asserts the Kansas City School District's desegregation plan was flawed from the beginning. Using neighborhood schools as a way to determine which school a student should attend, the district's plan allowing students to transfer between schools, in combination with enormous changes in the city's demographics, undercut the efforts to achieve desegregation.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964

The call for equal rights to be extended to all American citizens regardless of race grew louder in the late 1950s and 1960s. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) developed methods for opposing discrimination and reaching its goal through peaceful protest.[24] With leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr., John Lewis, and Roy Wilkins, the fight for equal rights for Black citizens continued through the decades. President Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act in 1964, which prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.

White Flight and Building the "Troost Wall"

The desegregation order for public schools that was mandated by the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision was a major piece of legislation that not only affected the public schools, but induced changes in housing options in Kansas City. How neighborhoods and districts were represented to home buyers as they searched in Kansas City changed as real estate agents and companies took advantage of burgeoning anxiety about the desegregation order and used it to their advantage to influence the housing market.

The powerful forces guiding the real estate market worked together to maximize their advantages. In *Race, Real Estate, and Uneven Development: The Kansas City Experience, 1900-2000,* Kevin Fox Gotham outlines some of these tactics and their far-reaching results. Gotham defines "uneven development" as "unequal patterns of metropolitan growth that reproduce racial and class inequities and segregation, inner city disinvestment and suburban

[24] Dunn, *Complex Justice.*

sprawl."[25] Gotham highlights that this is a systematic and racialized process intent on keeping the poor in urban areas and encouraging white flight to the surrounding suburban areas (see Figure 4.8).

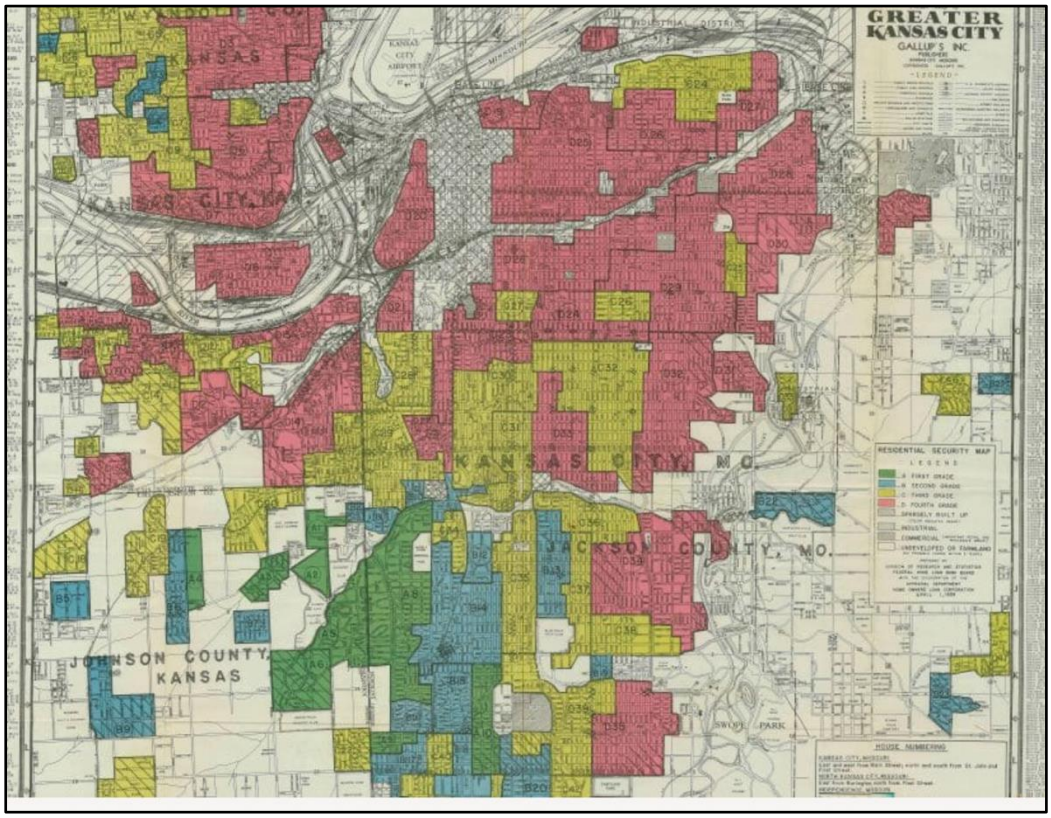


Figure 4.8. An example of a redlined map of Kansas City, 1939. Source: Andrew R. Gustafson, "Conference Context: White Flight and Civil Rights in Johnson County, Kansas," *American Association for State and Local History* (blog), The National Archives and Record Administration, 2021, accessed April 2, 2023, https://aaslh.org/conference-context-white-flight-and-civil-rights-in-johnson-county-kansas/.

The tactics used in Kansas City by real estate agents were intended to "reorganize" the city's neighborhood by including the creation of covenants that prohibited the sale of

[25] Kevin Fox Gotham, *Race, Real Estate, and Uneven Development: The Kansas City Experience, 1900-2000* (State University of New York Press, 2002), 1.

property in certain locations in the city to minorities.[26] The real estate covenants were the creation of J.C Nichols, a powerful real estate developer in the 1920s. “Blockbusting” was a related method where panic among white homeowners was created in order to compel them to sell their properties and leave the city for the suburbs in Johnson County and North Kansas City.

Construction of a highway system that would in effect bisect a portion of the city, where the majority of homeowners were Black, was the culmination of a series of policies designed to segregate the city. Whereas commerce decided Troost was the dividing line, the highways erected a permanent physical barrier (see Figures 4.9 and 4.10).

Figure 4.9. Downtown Kansas City, Missouri in 1957, showing the area cleared for the Downtown Loop freeway. Source: “KC Q - Kansas City’s Downtown Loop,” Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri, accessed April 13, 2023, https://kclibrary.org/blog/kc-q-kansas-citys-downtown-loop.

[26] Gotham, *Race, Real Estate, and Uneven Development,* 24.

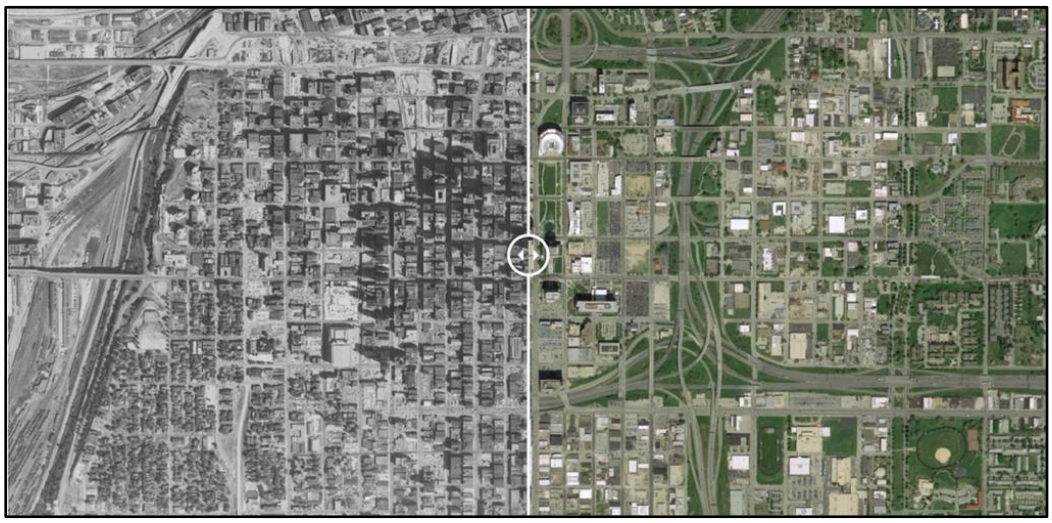


Figure 4.10. These two images (1955, left and 2014, right) were taken during construction of and then years afterward, showing the loops of highways and parkways that bisected the city. Source: Shane Hampton, "60 Years of Urban Change: Midwest," *The Institute for Quality Communities* (blog), December 12, 2014, https://iqc.ou.edu/2014/12/12/60yrsmidwest/.

Although the new highway system was an economic boon for the city and a catalyst for further economic development, neighborhoods were severed, adding fuel to the phenomenon of "white flight."[27] The communities and residents on the east side were cut off from the services and economic centers on the west side of the parkway. Community leaders on the east side demanded the erection of a series of bridges to lessen the effect of the highway system on their communities.[28]

Kansas City Missouri School District and "the Troost Wall"

The Kansas City Missouri School District participated in reinforcing the idea of Troost as a line of division between white and Black homeowners and residents in Kansas

[27] Diane Krauthamer, "How I-70 Changed the Kansas City Metro for the Better — and Worse," KCUR 89.3. NPR in Kansas City, March 2, 2017, https://www.kcur.org/talk-show/2017-03-02/how-i-70-changed-the-kansas-city-metro-for-the-better-and-worse.

[28] Suzanne Hogan, "Highway 71 and the Road to Compromise," KCUR 89.3. NPR in Kansas City, June 3, 2014, https://www.kcur.org/community/2014-06-03/highway-71-and-the-road-to-compromise.

City. Gotham writes about the school board's efforts to "preserve segregated schools by using Troost Avenue as a racially identifiable school attendance boundary from 1955 to 1975 separating white schools to the west and Black schools to the east."[29] Using neighborhood attendance zones, in which students were to attend the school that was closest to their home within their neighborhood or geographical area, was a way for the district to avoid following the Supreme Court's ruling in the *Brown v. Board of Education* case. With the help of those in power in the real estate business in Kansas City, the school district was able to continue to quietly maintain segregated schools. The real estate agencies' efforts to redefine neighborhoods was further supported in 1954 when they could refer to the Troost neighborhood attendance boundary and encourage more white families to sell their homes east of Troost and head out of the city and into the suburbs.

Kansas City School District after the Desegregation Ruling

The shifts and changes in the Kansas City public school system during the 1970s can be seen as mirrors of the shifts and changes that the city and its residents experienced in economic and housing situations. With the passing of the Desegregation Act, the public school district was closely examined and then forced to eliminate and rewrite policies that allowed segregation. District officials were forced to take a look at how "white" schools and "Black" schools were able to exist long after *Brown v. The Board of Education* ruling was decided.

[29] Gotham, *Race, Real Estate, and Uneven Development,* 24.

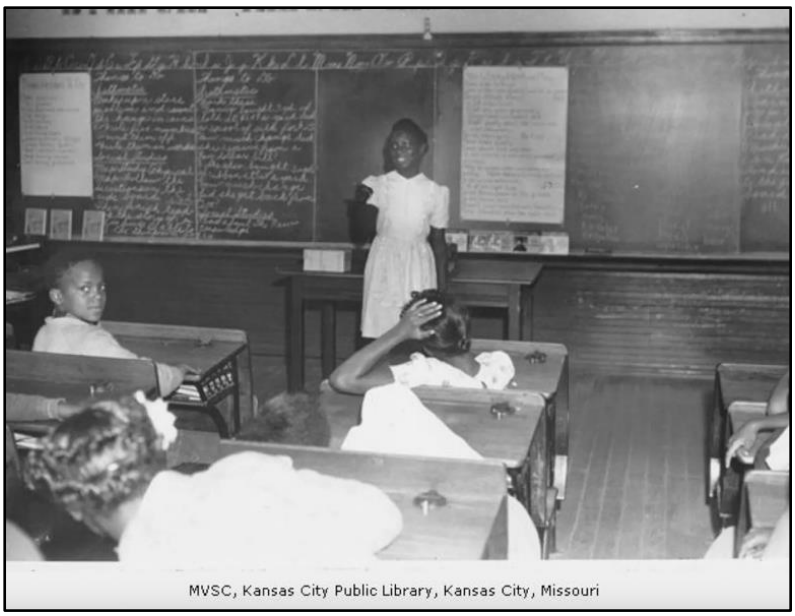


Figure 4.11. A student at Wheatley School for African American Children stands at the front of the classroom. Even after *Brown v. Board of Education,* Black and white children in Kansas City attended racially homogeneous schools because of residential segregation. Source: Elle Moxley, "How Kansas City's Complex Racial History Is Still Influencing Education Choices," KCUR 89.3, NPR in Kansas City, May 9, 2018, https://www.kcur.org/education/2018-05-09/how-kansas-citys-complex-racial-history-is-still-influencing-education-choices.

Missouri v. Jenkins and More Changes to the Kansas City Public School District

Dunn examines how an earlier case returned the Kansas City Public School District to the scrutiny of the courts. The district was one of a few that was able to continue their practices of segregation in the years after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. About two decades later, the Supreme Court demanded more aggressive action to more effectively combat segregation. In their ruling in the 1973 *Keyes v. Denver School District* case, the courts demanded all school districts, even those "which had never been legally segregated or had immediately desegregated after *Brown,*" were at risk of being sued for continuing to be

segregated in whatever way they had been able to get away with it.[30] This ruling affected the Kansas City Missouri School District and forced more changes.

The Brown v. Board of Education case and the *Keyes v. Denver School District* case would usher in the next legal milestone for the Kansas City School District, the 1977 case of the District lawsuit against the state of Missouri. The suit accused the defendants, the State of Missouri, three federal agencies, and a number of suburban school districts of forcing the Kansas City Public Schools to "operat[e] an unconstitutionally segregated school system."[31] By that time, the demographics had changed so drastically in Kansas City since the original *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling in 1954 that, according to Dunn, "middle-class White flight meant that the school system was over 60 percent minority (it was only 18 percent minority in 1954)."[32]

Years later, after a long process of gathering information and data about the situation at the Kansas City Missouri School District, Judge Clark ruled that it was still a segregated school district. He decided the school district, which he named the defendant in the case, and the State were operating against the decisions of the constitution. The suburbs surrounding Kansas City were no longer named in the case.

Due to another major case concerning the United States educational landscape in relation to busing, plans for bus routes that spanned whole metropolitan areas meant more changes would come to the district. With this development, Judge Clark created a plan for the Kansas City Missouri School District. His plan "would be a massive program to renovate

[30] Gotham, *Race, Real Estate, and Uneven Development,* 3.
[31] Gotham, *Race, Real Estate, and Uneven Development,* 3.
[32] Gotham, *Race, Real Estate, and Uneven Development,* 3.

the physical plant of the KCMSD and to institute a districtwide magnet-school program."[33] The implications of the magnet school system on Kansas City School District were far reaching (see Figure 4.12).

Judge Is Calm in Eye of Storm He Helped Create

By WILLIAM ROBBINS
Special to The New York Times

SPRINGFIELD, Mo., Oct. 17 — At the center of a long-running storm that has taken Kansas City's school problems to the Supreme Court sits a quiet and reserved Federal judge endowed by background and temperament, associates say, with the patience to weather the winds of controversy.

The judge is Russell G. Clark of the Federal District Court of Western Missouri, the judge in the city's school-desegregation case, which is to be argued before the nine Justices in Washington Oct. 30.

"Clark is a patient judge," said Russell Millin, a former United States Attorney. But he added, "He doesn't put up with any nonsense."

Judge Clark, a slender, soft-spoken man with a quick smile who grew up on a farm in southern Missouri attending a one-room school, doesn't quarrel with that assessment. "If tilling 30 acres of corn with a one-horse cultivator doesn't teach you patience, nothing will," said the 64-year-old judge, whose patience also helps him on the golf course where his rounds are often close to par.

Two Rights Clash

The voters of the Kansas City School District apparently tested the judge's patience to exhaustion, and his subsequent ruling is now to be decided by the High Court. It is a case that poses, as the judge himself has acknowledged, a conflict between two basic constitutional rights.

Voters of the district had repeatedly refused to approve levies to pay for school improvements ordered by Judge Clark, who raised their taxes anyway.

"Taxation without representation," was the outcry from many quarters, and protesters appealed.

The Kansas City case has spanned much of Judge Clark's career on the bench. He was appointed to the Federal court system in July 1977. The case, a desegregation suit filed in the names of several plaintiff children, their parents and the Kansas City school board, was assigned to him three months later.

About three-fourths of the district's 36,000 public school students are black. The surrounding suburbs are mostly white. The plaintiffs sought to increase integration by, among other things, incorporating the suburbs into a broader school district.

In his earlier rulings, Judge Clark made the school board a defendant, along with the state, rather than a plaintiff. In 1984, he dismissed the suburban districts from the case while placing on the state and the school district the responsibility for a system that continued to be segregated despite the Supreme Court's 1954 desegregation ruling.

In 1985, he ordered an elaborate system of "magnet" schools, planned around central themes and with enriched curriculums. He also ordered more spending on maintenance and construction. The aim was to win back whites who had fled to private and suburban schools. He ordered the state and the district to share the costs, with about three-fourths to be paid by the state.

In 1987, with the district voters still refusing to raise taxes enough to pay their share, the judge ordered district property taxes nearly doubled, from $2.05 to $4 per $100 of assessed value, and increased the state income tax of district residents by 25 percent.

On appeal, the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit invalidated the income-tax levy but upheld the property-tax increase. The state appealed to the Supreme Court.

Opponents continued to attack the judge himself. "An act of extraordinary judicial arrogance," said a recent newsletter of the National Legal Center for the Public Interest. Republicans used him for their own purposes in the 1988 election. "With a liberal Federal judge named Russell Clark, Missouri can't afford a liberal President named Michael Dukakis," they said in a brochure.

Both friends and witnesses who appeared before him find such descriptions ironic.

"I consider Russell to be a very conservative person," said Chief Judge Scott Wright of the same western Missouri Federal Court. "He is a very solid judge, and he is a defender of individual constitutional rights."

Gary Orfield, a University of Chicago professor who testified in the original case, said: "At the time, Clark had a reputation as an extremely conservative judge, and I would say from what I saw that he was. He seemed deeply suspicious of the claims of the desegregation people. I was really surprised when he came out with such sweeping remedies."

Others, such as Jack Balkin, a former professor of constitutional law at the University of Missouri-Kansas City who is now at the University of Texas, contend that the judge "boxed himself in," cutting off one avenue to integration with his early ruling dismissing the suburbs from that case.

Not Bothered by Label

Judge Clark has no problem with being described as a conservative. "I'm conservative except where it comes to civil rights," he said.

"Everybody forgets that the Eighth Circuit in 1986 approved the remedial plan and said the plan should be fully funded," he said. "I went to work and funded it."

As for the legal issues, the judge refers questioners to his published opinions, particularly to a passage in his 1987 order raising school taxes. In that, he acknowledges that the case posed a basic conflict between constitutional rights.

"The court must weigh the constitutional rights of the taxpayers against the constitutional rights of plaintiff students in this case," he wrote. "The court is of the opinion that the balance is clearly in favor of the students who are helpless without the aid of this court."

His decision, he says, was a verdict in favor of the children.

The New York Times/John S. Stewart

Judge Russell G. Clark, who ordered taxes raised in the Kansas City School District to pay for a desegregation plan that he had designed.

4.12. Judge Russell G. Clark, 1989. Source: Robin Williams, "Judge is Calm in the Eye of the Storm He Helped Create," *New York Times,* October 20, 1989.

Magnet Schools: Judge Clark's Solution to the District's Problems

The intention of Judge Clark's plan was to attract back the white families that had fled the urban areas of Kansas City and had moved to the suburbs. The idea was that the enrollment of the white students would improve the school experience for all, including the Black students who remained in the urban areas. This ruling would alter the school district. Judge Clark also ordered taxes raised by 25 percent to make up for funding that the state of

[33] Gotham, *Race, Real Estate, and Uneven Development,* 3.

Missouri was not ordered to cover.[34] The tax increase was so great that it required review by the Supreme Court in the years 1990 and 1995.

At first glance and without knowledge of the legislation that came before the decision, the development of a magnet school system in the late 1980s and 1990s could be seen as a solution to the segregation that the district had endured and as a way to attract the families who fled the urban areas of Kansas City for the surrounding suburban areas. But the plan was far from perfect.

According to the *Survey of Magnet Schools, Analyzing a Model for Quality Integrated Education: Executive Summary*, magnet schools, "were developed in large urban districts that sought a means of reducing racial isolation in public school through voluntary means as an alternative to mandatory assignment."[35] So instead of telling students where they should attend school, students could choose according to their interests, emphasizing "voluntary choice by interest rather than by selection or testing." (see Figure 4.13).[36]

[34] Gotham, *Race, Real Estate, and Uneven Development.*
[35] Rolf K. Blank et al., "Survey of Magnet Schools. Analyzing a Model for Quality Integrated Education: Executive Summary," Final Report of a National Study for the U.S. Department of Education Office of Planning, Budget and Evaluation, September 1983, 10, https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Survey-of-Magnet-Schools.-Analyzing-a-Model-for-of-Blank/500650e96bb6463649dec828cbe541bc4a341dc0.
[36] Blank et al., "Survey of Magnet Schools," 10.

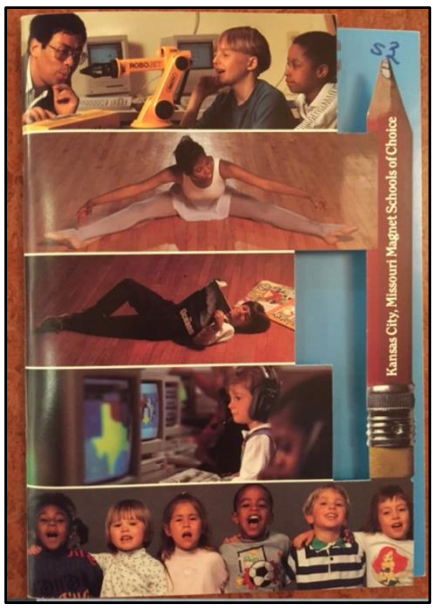


Figure 4.13. *Kansas City, Missouri Magnet Schools of Choice.* Source: "Kansas City's Magnet Schools Were a Dream Realized, Then Gone in a Generation," KCUR 89.3, NPR in Kansas City, August 8, 2016, https://www.kcur.org/community/2016-08-08/kansas-citys-magnet-schools-were-a-dream-realized-then-gone-in-a-generation.

Implementation was carefully considered with district-led reports and recommendations in order to "avoid a two tier system" and "distribute the magnets [schools] throughout the district."[37] An important measure to ensure success of the new magnet system was to demand active participation of the suburban districts of the Kansas City Metro area by insisting on including students from the surrounding suburbs to attend the magnet schools.[38] One report cited that considering the racial composition of the Kansas City Missouri School District with the introduction of magnets might "cause a distortion in racial balance and

[37] Phale D. Hale, *Summary Overview Kansas City Missouri School District Draft, Long-Range Magnet School Plan*, 1986, 3, Missouri Valley Special Collection, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri. MUSC0 379.778 K16SU.
[38] Phale D. Hale, *Summary Overview.*

educational programs."[39] The report said leaders in the district wanted to avoid the perception that the two-tiered system would be for white and Black students who were chosen to attend the magnet schools and another system for those who do not.[40] Reading through the reports from this era, I did not come across mention of immigrant or refugee children or students from any other minority[41] group, only Black and white students.

Changes to the District Continue Today

With student enrollment falling, the Kansas City Public Schools recently announced they are considering closing eight or ten elementary schools and Central High School[42] to consolidate resources (see Figure 4.14).[43] If the district is interested in creating stronger programming, turning their attention toward the growing immigrant population may help them with that goal, as stronger programming for these newcomers will help create a better informed citizenry for the Kansas City of the future.

[39] Phale D. Hale, *Summary Overview*, 1.
[40] Phale D. Hale, *Summary Overview.*
[41] Phale D. Hale, *Summary Overview.*
[42] Sarah Ritter, "We Don't Understand: Emotional Alums Plead to Keep KCs Central High from Closing," *Kansas City Star,* October 17, 2022, https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=pwh&AN=2W62521239119&site=eds-live&scope=site.
[43] Sarah Ritter, "Fewer Schools, Better Programs? KC District Makes Case for Closing up to 12 Buildings," *Kansas City Star,* June 20, 2022, https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=pwh&AN=2W6366311672&site=eds-live&scope=site.

Figure 4.14. Central High School, 3221 Indiana Avenue. Source: Robert Askren Photograph Collection, Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri, https://kchistory.org/image/central-high-school-11?solr_nav%5Bid%5D=25cb30a522275d33a69e&solr_nav%5Bpage%5D=0&solr_nav%5Boffset%5D=3.

Local Newspaper Editorial Provides Context for the Time

A 1980 editorial in the *Kansas City Star*, "At Last, a Good Word for Our Public Schools." was written by the father of a kindergartener at Hartman Elementary School.[44] It provided a viewpoint about the public perception of the decision of where to send children in the wake of all the lawsuits. The pleased father wrote about how after dealing with the decision of whether or not to send his (white) daughter to the "much maligned" public schools, that aside from the public perception of the district, he did not see problems that

[44] Bill Tammeus, "At Last, a Good Word for Our Public Schools," *Kansas City Star* (Kansas City, Missouri), March 30, 1980: 37, NewsBank: Access World News – Historical and Current. https://infoweb-newsbank-com.mcpl.idm.oclc.org/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2%3A1126152C152E4978%40EANX-15F4BFCDB1EC29D6%402444329-15F41513C705EF66%4036-15F41513C705EF66%40.

were any different than ones experienced by other schools. When asked by neighbors about any issues with the racial makeup of the school, he replied that he had "yet to find this matter a problem."[45] He did not agree that white families should leave the public school system but understood how "the pressures of middle class Blacks and Whites, both, have been heavy."[46]

Race, Localism and Kansas City Missouri School District

In *Creating the Suburban School Advantage: Race, Localism, and Inequality in an American Metropolis*[47] John Rury provides an overview of discrimination and educational equalization in Kansas City schools in Johnson and Jackson counties. The development of suburban towns in Johnson County followed white residents' wish to flee the urban metro area when school desegregation was decided in the late 1960s. The inclusion of "localism" is important as it provides a focus on the problems that are germane to Kansas City in particular. Inequity and racism and anti-immigration sentiments fueled policies that would affect those without the leverage of property ownership, as many in these demographics were renters and unable to enjoy the privileges and power that come with homeownership.

KCUR Publishes an Article about the Magnet Schools

Questions about the magnet school idea were still relevant enough to warrant an article by KCUR even as recently as 2016. The news organization published a lengthy article that went back in time to give the background and context for the decision to change Kansas City's public schools into magnet schools. "Kansas City's Magnet Schools Were a Dream

[45] Tammeus, "At Last, a Good Word for Our Public Schools," 37.
[46] Tammeus, "At Last, a Good Word for Our Public Schools," 37.
[47] Rury, *Creating the Suburban School Advantage.*

Realized, then Gone in a Generation"[48] gives a timeline and overview of how and why the magnet system was implemented in the district, a resource for a person who is new to Kansas City and has learned about the schools only in conversations with new neighbors. It summarized Judge Clark's wish to "transform the Kansas City School district" and who had ordered "the district and the state of Missouri to 'wipe out segregation.'"[49]

The article provides details about this idea and the program that led to the upgrade of many buildings with state-of-the-art facilities, but did not find lasting success. This article illustrated that the stories of Kansas City's and Kansas City Public School's past are still holding a prominent place in the minds of residents who are working to make a brighter and more equitable future for the city and the children who attend the public schools.

Conclusion

Chapter 4 gave an overview of the development of the Kansas City School District from its beginning. From when it began as a segregated school district to the district's response to the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision by the Supreme Court, Kansas City avoided making changes that would provide an equal educational experience for all students. How the district dealt with the *Brown* decision gives context for Chapter 5, which explores how immigrant and refugee children who enrolled in the Kansas City School district fared.

[48] "Kansas City's Magnet Schools Were a Dream Realized, Then Gone in a Generation," KCUR 89.3. NPR in Kansas City, August 8, 2016, https://www.kcur.org/community/2016-08-08/kansas-citys-magnet-schools-were-a-dream-realized-then-gone-in-a-generation.
[49] "Kansas City's Magnet Schools Were a Dream Realized," para. 1.

CHAPTER 5

IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE CHILDREN IN KANSAS CITY AFTER THE IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION ACT OF 1965

In this chapter I return to the story of immigrants and refugee children resettling in Kansas City after the Immigration Act of 1965, which allowed a greater number of people to migrate to the United States from a larger variety of countries. The countries include those in southeast Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. This change in the United States immigration laws would further diversify the population of Kansas City and the Kansas City Missouri School District.

This chapter features documents and reports from the school district and committees to provide details about the circumstances of the story during this period. I examined the documents to see how immigrant and refugee children were mentioned in public school policies and reports. News articles and photographs are included to provide context of the times.

Federal Legislation Allows Greater Numbers of Migrants to Enter the United States

The story of immigrants and refugees coming to the United States and Kansas City continues with the enactment of the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 (see Figure 5.1) and then further with the Refugee Act of 1980. These important pieces of legislation made it possible for more people to enter the United States after leaving their countries of origin.

Figure 5.1. President Lyndon B. Johnson signing the Immigration Act of 1965. Source: "The Hart-Celler Immigration and Nationality Act: 50 Years Later," Tenement Museum, October 5, 2015, https://www.tenement.org/blog/the-hart-celler-immigration-and-nationality-act-50-years-later/.

The Immigration Act of 1965

The Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 was signed at the foot of the Statue of Liberty by President Lyndon B. Johnson. The Act set into motion major immigration policy adjustments that would change the demographics of the United States even further by eliminating an established policy based on race and ethnicity and repealing the 1920s national origin quotas used to ensure that newcomers arrived from northern and western European countries.[1] The Act was able to allow large-scale immigration into the United States by replacing the quota system with a preference for the newcomer's family relation to a legal U.S. citizen or because of their desirable work skills.[2]

[1] Muzaffar Chishti, Faye Hipsman, and Isabel Ball, "Fifty Years On, the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act Continues to Reshape the United States," Migration Policy Institute, October 15, 2015, https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/fifty-years-1965-immigration-and-nationality-act-continues-reshape-united-states.
[2] Chisti et al., "Fifty Years On."

This Act of Congress is related to the struggle for civil rights that began during the 1950s. It would not be the last piece of federal legislation that would provide better representation to all of the citizens of the United States, but it is one that would bring to the fore the question of who or what is an American, and what does it mean to be an American, and, of course, the meaning behind educating children in American public schools. The same people who took issue with educating Black children in schools with white children would turn their attention to children entering the United States from around the world, who spoke a different language and embodied a different culture.

The Refugee Act of 1980

The movement to examine the laws that govern civil rights in the United States also had an effect on the laws about who may enter the country and elect to make it their new home. After the Immigration Act of 1965, other pieces of legislation were passed that would help more enter the United States.

The Refugee Act of 1980 further changed the demographics of the U.S. by establishing the Federal Resettlement Program which allowed, according to the Office of Refugee Resettlement (a part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services), for "provisions for the effective resettlement of refugees and to assist them to achieve economic self sufficiency."[3] This Act raised the ceiling on how many people were allowed to enter the United States so the spouses, children, and parents of U.S. citizens were exempt from the limitations set by the government for immigrants and refugees.

[3] "Refugee Act," Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, accessed February 4, 2023, para. 3, https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/policy-guidance/refugee-act.

Signed by President Jimmy Carter, the Act not only raised the number that could be admitted; it also created a process for reviewing and then adjusting policies for future events that would cause people to flee their home countries and seek refuge in the United States.[4] The review and adjustment would happen annually between the President of the United States and Congress. Also, the Refugee Act of 1980 adjusted the definition of the term "refugee" to be defined as a person who holds "a well founded fear of persecution."[5] The effects of the Refugee Act of 1980 would help increase the number of refugee families that were able to resettle in cities and towns in the Midwest, including Kansas City.

Vietnamese Community Grows in Kansas City

Thousands of Vietnamese people and people from their neighbor nation, Cambodia, would enter the United States seeking a new home after the Refugee Act of 1980. This vulnerable population would make their way here after fleeing the turmoil and chaos of their homeland near the end of the Vietnam War and the fall of Saigon, the capital city of Vietnam. Many would make their new homes in the northeast section of Kansas City. Just as the northeast had housed earlier waves of immigrants during the nineteenth century, the newest waves would find refuge and a new start there (see Figure 5.2).

[4] "Refugee Act of 1980," National Archives Foundation, 2023, accessed February 10, 2023, https://www.archivesfoundation.org/documents/refugee-act-1980/.
[5] "Refugee Act of 1980," National Archives Foundation, para. 3.

Figure 5.2. Woman holding infant and other Vietnamese refugees, Don Bosco Community Center, 1975. Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City Missouri, https://kchistory.org/image/vietnamese-refugees-don-bosco-community-center?solr_nav%5Bid%5D=c72f2c8c92ccf12fca13&solr_nav%5Bpage%5D=0&solr_nav%5Boffset%5D=0.

An article from the *Kansas City Times* describes the work of the volunteers at the Don Bosco Center to resettle Vietnamese refugees in 1975. The Center, a community agency located in the Columbus Park neighborhood of Kansas City, is committed to nurturing self-sufficiency among members of the neighborhood for a stronger community.[6] In the 1930s the Don Bosco Center was among the most active agencies committed to the resettlement of Italian immigrants in Columbus Park. Its mission shifted in recent years to providing assistance to senior residents of Kansas City, offering adult education classes, and building a community center in Columbus Park.

[6] "Don Bosco Centers," Don Bosco Centers, accessed April 4, 2023, https://www.donbosco.org.

The Vietnamese families mentioned in the *Times* article, "Viet Refugees Flood to City,"[7] were sent from a refugee processing facility in Fort Chaffee, Arkansas, to Kansas City. The Don Bosco Center volunteers described their feelings of frustration when trying to assist the large number of newcomers, but they persevered. The challenges of a language gap did not deter the volunteers in charge of the resettling effort. The journalist gives a window into the circumstances as he observes the activity at the Don Bosco Center and listens to the volunteers as they work under pressure and uncertainty:

> All this is taking place under the watchful eye of Sister Leo Christopher, residence hall manager. Her colleagues have dubbed her "Mother Hen." "First, they told us the refugees would be here about 30 days," she said. "But, oh my, no. They will be here more like 60 days. Probably some will go and others will arrive to take their places. We're already planning a Christmas party."[8]

With the last lines from "Mother Hen," we see how unknown details such as the duration of the families' stay at the Center could compound the frustration for the volunteers. Looking ahead toward a Christmas party shows the generous spirit and positive outlook of the volunteers working with the families.

The Kansas City Star reported about Vietnamese and Hmong refugee students in the school system in 1983, including the issue of finding teachers who speak in the student's first language (see Figure 5.3).[9] Students at the Scarritt Elementary School received some help from teachers' aides who were fluent in Vietnamese. In some cases the aides were doing more of the teaching than the teachers. The teachers who were interviewed agreed that this

[7] John T. Dauner, "Viet Refugees Flood to City," *Kansas City Times*, December 10, 1975, https://kchistory.org/image/vietnamese-refugees-don-bosco-community-center?solr_nav%5Bid%5D=c72f2c8c92ccf12fca13&solr_nav%5Bpage%5D=0&solr_nav%5Boffset%5D=0.
[8] Dauner, "Viet Refugees Flood to City."
[9] Mirriam Conrad, "Indochinese Pupils Hit Language Barrier," *Kansas City Star*, May 10, 1983.

situation was not ideal, but it was the best they could do, since certified bilingual teachers were not available.[10]


English-as-a-second-language teacher Pat Guerra-Alfaro drills a class of Indochinese children. She speaks only English to the students but has a Vietnamese aide who helps tutor them.

Figure 5.3. ESL Teacher Pat Guerra-Alfaro. Source: Mirriam Conrad, "Indochinese Pupils Hit Language Barrier," *The Kansas City Star*, May 10, 1983, 5.

The writer described how a "modern day Tower of Babel surrounds the requirements for bilingual education,"[11] or said another way, there were no substantial requirements for bilingual education at the time beyond a 1974 U.S. Supreme Court decision that said that schools must offer some English instruction to foreign students.[12] Districts were asked not to discriminate, but there did not seem to be much oversight of this ruling and the implementation of the programs in the schools.

[10] Conrad, "Indochinese Pupils."
[11] Conrad, "Indochinese Pupils," 5.
[12] Conrad, "Indochinese Pupils."

Chicano Students in Kansas City Protest with a Walk-Out

Flatland provided a story about a student walkout led by Chicano students at the now closed West High School in September of 1969 (see Figure 5.4).[13] The article, "Kansas City's Place in Chicano History: A Decades Long Fight for Brown Pride, Equality, and Education," reports that students walked out of their school in protest and demanded "equity, support for Mexican American culture, and better quality education."[14] Protests by Chicano students were happening in other parts of the country at this time. The group at West High School was likely inspired by those students demanding equal rights and "striving for self actualization."[15]

Figure 5.4. Student protest, West High School, September 1969. Source: "Kansas City's Place in Chicano History," September 29, 2020, https://flatlandkc.org/people-places/kansas-citys-place-in-chicano-history/.

[13] "Kansas City's Place in Chicano History," FlatlandKC, September 29, 2020, https://flatlandkc.org/people-places/kansas-citys-place-in-chicano-history/.
[14] "Kansas City's Place in Chicano History," para. 2.
[15] "Kansas City's Place in Chicano History," para. 2.

Lesser Known Parts of Kansas City's Immigrant and Refugee History

As I searched for information about this time period, the story about the Chicano students at West High School turned my attention from the federal level to the local level. Hunting through the Kansas City Public Library's archives was rewarding, as it provided details about how ordinary citizens and groups of people in neighborhoods can try to effect change and spread awareness of changes that are positive and changes that are not welcome. Two lesser known parts of Kansas City's immigrant and refugee history, the story behind the Thacher School and the Minority Museum, deserve mention at this point.

The Thacher School

The Thacher School at one time stood on Independence Avenue in the northeast section of the city (see Figure 5.5). For many years it provided an education for children living in the area. The building suffered damage during a fire and was torn down in 2010.[16] Demolition of the building was reported in the local newspapers, as it had an effect on the longtime residents in the neighborhood as well as the immigrants and refugee community.

An article titled, "New Americans Find Help at Thacher School"[17] reports that the Kansas City Missouri School District transformed the old Thacher school building into an intake center for immigrants and refugees. The focus of the center was to offer resources and support for children learning English as a second language. "Se Habla Espanol,"[18] another article, details how the Kansas City Missouri School District then turned the historic Thacher school building into the Thacher Multicultural Center in an effort to assist the district's

[16] "Remembering Thacher School, 1900–2010," Kansas City Public Schools, accessed December 30, 2022, https://www.kcpublicschools.org/kcps-news/kcps-news-board-page/~board/kcps-news/post/remembering-thacher-school-1900-2010.
[17] "New Americans Find Help at Thacher School," *Northeast News* 71, no. 26 (June 28, 2000).
[18] Megan Block, "Se Habla Espanol," *Northeast News,* August 6, 2003.

Hispanic students. But it seems that plan did not work out, as I found two more articles detailing the decision to demolish the school and its effect on the community, "KCPS to Demolish Thatcher Elementary School this Summer"[19] and "Say Goodbye to Thacher Elementary."[20] The articles report on plans to demolish the former Thacher Elementary School building after the school closed in 2010. In 2011 the building suffered damage from an arson fire, and although some Northeast residents expressed a wish to renovate and repurpose the school building once more, the district decided to demolish it due to safety and vandalism concerns.

Figure 5.5. Thacher School, 5008 Independence Avenue, 1990, partial frontal view. Source: Dory DeAngelo, Thacher School. https://kchistory.org/image/thacher-school?solr_nav%5Bid%5D=e2b88fb2c1734ebbf110&solr_nav%5Bpage%5D=0&solr_nav%5Boffset%5D=2.

The Thacher School's story gave me a sense of how a former school building held on to the imaginations of the members of the surrounding community. The people who live in

[19] "KCPS to Demolish Thacher Elementary School this Summer," *Northeast News,* March 6, 2013.
[20] "Say Goodbye to Thacher Elementary," *Kansas City Star,* July 10, 2015.

the Northeast, who attended Thacher and likely sent their children there, had hopes for the school building up until it was deemed too dangerous for occupancy. I was saddened to read the building was taken down, but then was happy to learn that the school was remembered with a memorial put in place by Superintendent Mark Bedell in 2021. The school district's website says, "We know losing Thacher was difficult for many neighbors," and the district is working toward "preserving history and giving our students the modern education spaces they deserve."[21] The memorial dedication provided another reason for the community to gather, this time to reflect on the legacy of what once was not only a brick and mortar building, but a touchstone for the community (see Figure 5.6).

Figure 5.6. Dedication of the Thacher School memorial, November 18, 2021. Superintendent Mark Bedell, school board member Manny Abarca, and the Northeast community attended. Source: "Remembering Thacher School, 1900–2010," accessed April 3, 2023, https://www.kcpublicschools.org/kcps-news/kcps-news-board-page/~board/kcps-news/post/remembering-thacher-school-1900-2010.

[21] "Remembering Thacher School, 1900–2010, para. 3.

The Minority Museum

In the late 1990s the Minority Museum opened. It was a tiny museum dedicated to telling the story of immigrants and refugees that resettled in the city and in other parts of the U.S. The museum was a labor of love for David Shapiro, a local business owner who created the museum in order to "tell of the real and often hidden accomplishments of minority groups to the establishment of America" (see Figure 5.7).[22] Shapiro, a retired optometrist and World War II veteran, had witnessed the horror of Nazi concentration camps in Europe. With what began as boxes of photographs in his basement, he was inspired to open the Museum in 1991 to promote racial tolerance and to promote diversity when "he saw a resurgence of hatred in Kansas City"[23] and growing racial intolerance. Mr. Shapiro was moved to speak at schools and public libraries in Kansas City. After a few years he was offered space in a room at Boone Elementary School at 89th and Wornall to display the contents of what would become the Minority Museum. The valuable teaching space served the public for a few short years before being dismantled.

[22] "Minority Museum Faces Uncertainty," *Kansas City Star*, June 17, 1999, 7, Vertical File, "Museums," Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.
[23] "Minority Museum Faces Uncertainty," 7.

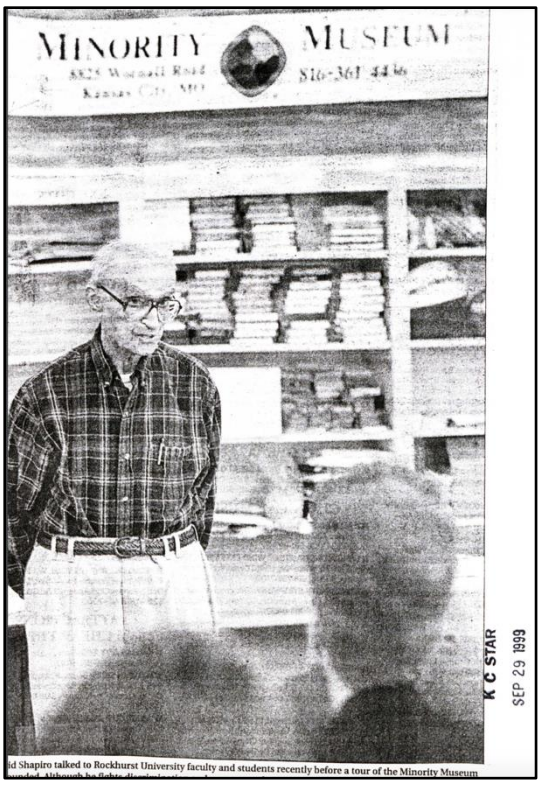


Figure 5.7. Minority Museum creator David Shapiro talking to Rockhurst University students, 1999. Source: "Minority Museum Faces Uncertainty," *The Kansas City Star,* June 17, 1999, Vertical File, "Museums," Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.

This story highlights one man with a vision to help stop the growing sentiments of intolerance in Kansas City who decided to take a stand and share what he knew of the destructive forces of hatred. I wonder what Mr. Shapiro would have to say about my efforts to tell the story of the immigrant and refugee children who resettled here.

Sources from the School District

I looked for documents from the school district in the archives of the Missouri Valley Special Collection located in the Central Branch of the Kansas City Public Library. I searched for a window into how policy writers considered the population of immigrant and

refugee children. I began with oldest primary source I could find, a *Teacher's Hand Book*[24] for Kansas City public school teachers printed in 1914. The book was not housed in the main part of the library's collection and required a form to be filled out before use. When I asked for access at the reference desk, Elijah Winkler, a reference librarian with whom I had many conversations about the library's collection during my research, saw from the request form that the book was in "the locked cabinet." This is where the collection's fragile and rare items are kept safe and snug in custom built, acid-free storage containers and folders. "Cool! I'll be right back!" he said with a big smile.

The small, delicate book was housed in a little box (see Figures 5.8 and 5.9). The pages were thicker than I expected and bound with the smallest staples I've ever seen. I turned the pages carefully and saw that it included sections about curriculum and teacher expectations. No part of the book's sections referenced the city's immigrant children population at all, which I had expected to see. There was just one example of a growing community: by 1910 about 7,000 people arrived in Kansas City from Mexico due to upheavals during the Mexican Revolution.[25] Migration to Kansas City had happened and was still happening, and the children of these immigrants were attending the public schools at this time.

[24] *Teacher's Hand Book for Kansas City Public Schools, 1914–15,* Kansas City (Mo.) Board of Education, 1914, Missouri Valley Special Collection, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.
[25] Valerie Mendoza, "Kansas City's Mexican Community and the Guadalupe Center," The Pendergast Years. Kansas City Public Library, June 15, 2017, https://pendergastkc.org/article/kansas-city%E2%80%99s-mexican-community-and-guadalupe-center.

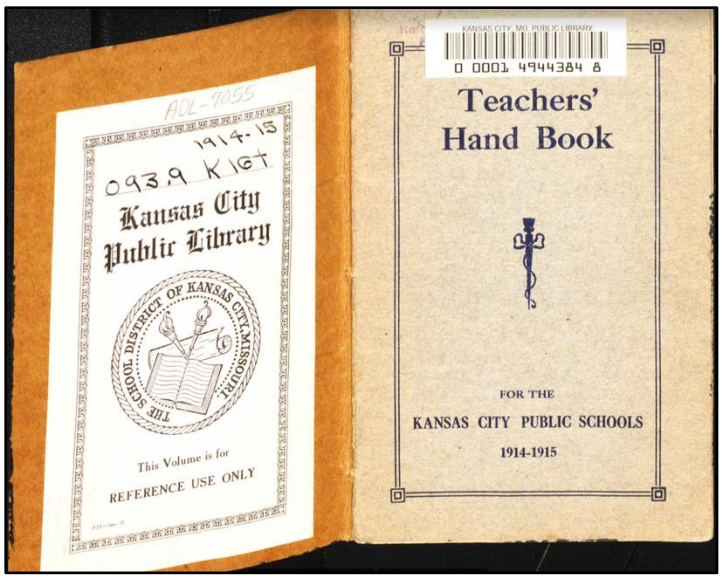
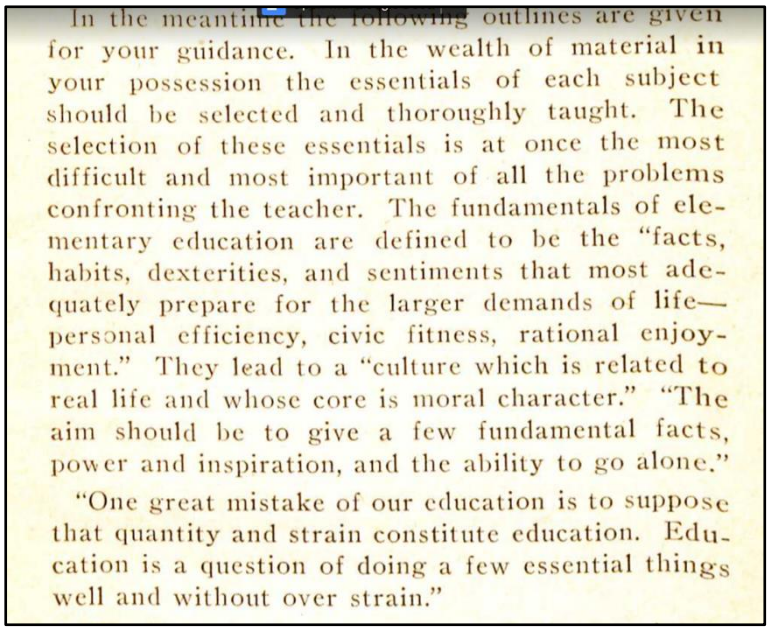


Figure 5.8. *Teacher's Hand Book for Kansas City Public Schools, 1914–15,* Kansas City (Mo.) Board of Education, 1914, Front Page, Missouri Valley Special Collection, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.



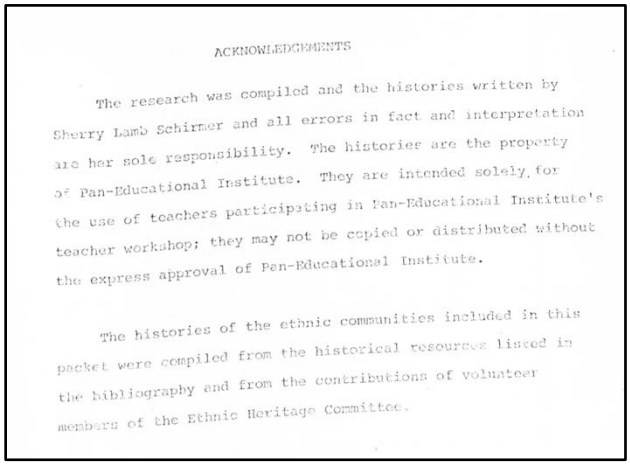
In the meantime the following outlines are given for your guidance. In the wealth of material in your possession the essentials of each subject should be selected and thoroughly taught. The selection of these essentials is at once the most difficult and most important of all the problems confronting the teacher. The fundamentals of elementary education are defined to be the "facts, habits, dexterities, and sentiments that most adequately prepare for the larger demands of life—personal efficiency, civic fitness, rational enjoyment." They lead to a "culture which is related to real life and whose core is moral character." "The aim should be to give a few fundamental facts, power and inspiration, and the ability to go alone."

"One great mistake of our education is to suppose that quantity and strain constitute education. Education is a question of doing a few essential things well and without over strain."

Figure 5.9. Page 3 excerpt from *Teacher's Hand Book for Kansas City Public Schools, 1914–15,* Source: *Teacher's Hand Book for Kansas City Public Schools, 1914–15,* Kansas City (Mo.) Board of Education, 1914, Missouri Valley Special Collection, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.

A Chat with the Librarian about Sources

I sought out print secondary sources to give me a better sense of context and a timeline of the major events that brought immigrants to Kansas City. I returned to the Missouri Valley Special Collection Room once more. After some cursory searches, I became frustrated when I was not able to locate many secondary sources about immigrants or refugees coming to this city. Elijah was working and was able to come up with one title, *Historical Overview of Ethnic Communities*,[26] by Sherry Lamb Schirmer (see Figure 5.10). The introduction to the book tells the reader that it was written in 1976 as a guide for educators in Kansas City, Missouri. The book includes "ethnic histories" of nationalities including German, Polish, Croatians, and Slovenians living in the West Bottoms and working in the packing houses, steel plants, and refineries in and around the city. There is no mention of children or students, an interesting detail I could not help but notice in a book that was written for educators!



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research was compiled and the histories written by Sherry Lamb Schirmer and all errors in fact and interpretation are her sole responsibility. The histories are the property of Pan-Educational Institute. They are intended solely for the use of teachers participating in Pan-Educational Institute's teacher workshop; they may not be copied or distributed without the express approval of Pan-Educational Institute.

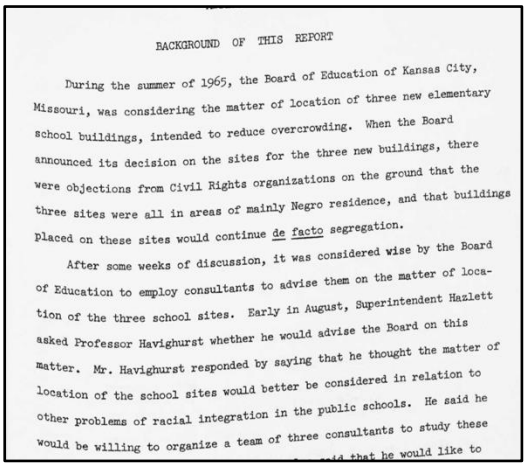
The histories of the ethnic communities included in this packet were compiled from the historical resources listed in the bibliography and from the contributions of volunteer members of the Ethnic Heritage Committee.

Figure 5.10. Acknowledgements, *Historical Overview of Ethnic Communities.* Source: Sherry Lamb Schirmer, *Historical Overview of Ethnic Communities* (Kansas City, MO: Pan-Educational Institute, 1976).

[26] Sherry Lamb Schirmer, *Historical Overview of Ethnic* Communities (Kansas City, MO: Pan-Educational Institute, 1976).

Report from Kansas City Missouri School District about Issues with Integration

The 1965 report, "Problems of Integration in Kansas City Public Schools: Report to the Board of Education of Kansas City, Missouri," provides an overview of the issues surrounding integration of the public schools (see Figure 5.11). The three consultants credited with creating the report were not local educators from Kansas City, but held positions at the University of Chicago, Illinois, public schools in San Francisco, California, and Detroit, Michigan. Their task was to study and make recommendations about where to place three new elementary schools that were to be added to the district in an effort to ease the overcrowded conditions of the schools. The panel of consultants was commissioned to make recommendations about the location and the use of the school sites in the area between Linwood Avenue, Brush Creek, Troost Avenue, and Topping Avenue. As we saw in Chapter 4, the neighborhoods in this area of Kansas City were redlined and separated from the rest. These streets encompass the east part of the city where a majority of Black families lived. Figure 5.11 shows the background of the report. The report does not mention any students besides Black and white students.



BACKGROUND OF THIS REPORT

During the summer of 1965, the Board of Education of Kansas City, Missouri, was considering the matter of location of three new elementary school buildings, intended to reduce overcrowding. When the Board announced its decision on the sites for the three new buildings, there were objections from Civil Rights organizations on the ground that the three sites were all in areas of mainly Negro residence, and that buildings placed on these sites would continue de facto segregation.

After some weeks of discussion, it was considered wise by the Board of Education to employ consultants to advise them on the matter of location of the three school sites. Early in August, Superintendent Hazlett asked Professor Havighurst whether he would advise the Board on this matter. Mr. Havighurst responded by saying that he thought the matter of location of the school sites would better be considered in relation to other problems of racial integration in the public schools. He said he would be willing to organize a team of three consultants to study these

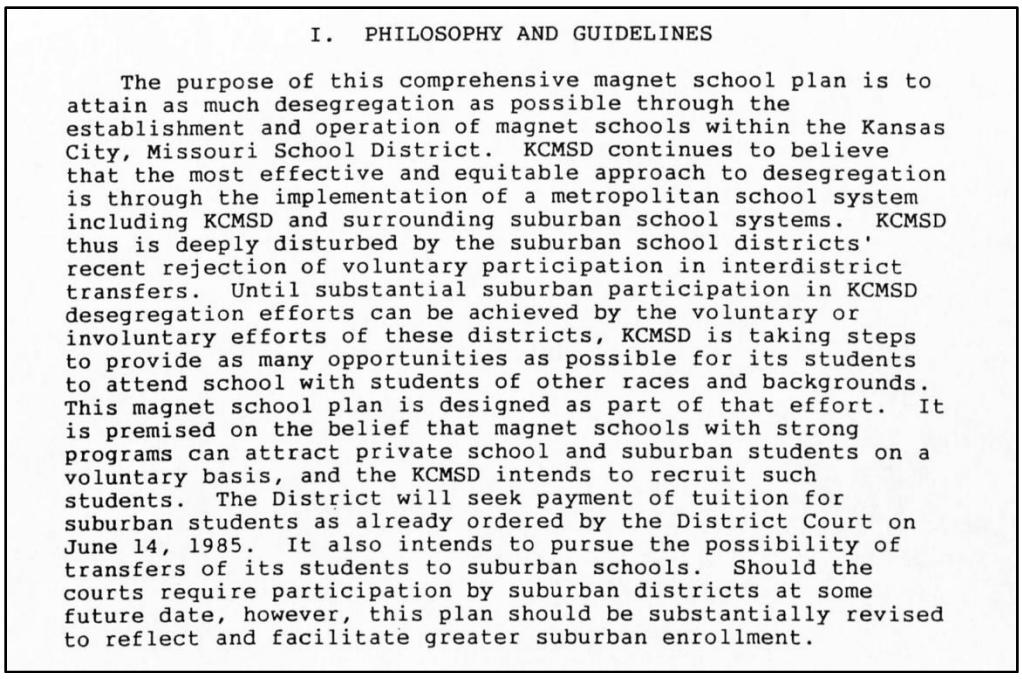
Figure 5.11. Background of the 1965 Integration Report. Source: Robert J. Havighurst, William L. Cobb, and Norman Drachler, "Problems of Integration in Kansas City Public

Schools: Report to the Board of Education of Kansas City, Missouri," November 18, 1965.

Another document, written decades later, "Kansas City Missouri Board of Education Strategic Plan for School District from 1981,"[27] did not mention immigrant or refugee children (see Figures 5.12 and 5.13). Sections of this report listed external and internal issues, including measures to remedy the effects of the tough economic situation at the time due to federal funding cuts. According to the document, the district sought alternative sources of revenue and other cost effective measures to remedy the effects of the economic situation. Much was written about the rise of costs due to inflation in the 1980s. I paused to consider how economic problems inevitably return, as inflation woes plague us today.

Another document titled "Kansas City Missouri School District Long-Range Magnet School Plan" by Hale and Levine, describes a plan to "attain as much desegregation as possible through the establishment and operation of magnet school plans in the Kansas City, Missouri School District."[28] In the Hale report, minority and non-minority students are included. There is no further breakdown of the makeup of the minority students attending the Kansas City Missouri School District at the time of this report beyond the word "backgrounds."

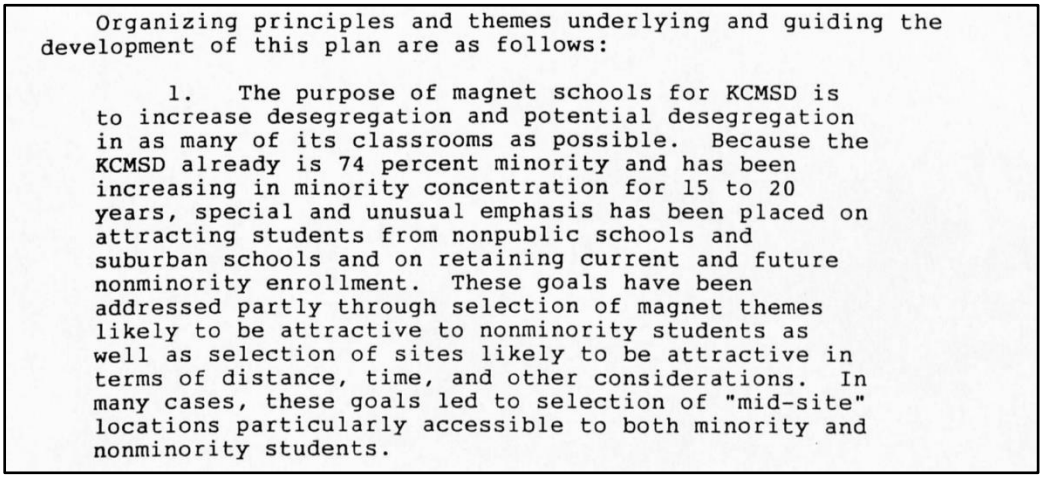
[27] *Kansas City Missouri Board of Education Strategic Plan for School District from 1981*, Missouri Valley Special Collection, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.
[28] Phale D. Hale, *Summary Overview Kansas City Missouri School District Draft, Long-Range Magnet School Plan*, 1986, MUSC0 379.778 K16SU, 3, Missouri Valley Special Collection, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.



I. PHILOSOPHY AND GUIDELINES

The purpose of this comprehensive magnet school plan is to attain as much desegregation as possible through the establishment and operation of magnet schools within the Kansas City, Missouri School District. KCMSD continues to believe that the most effective and equitable approach to desegregation is through the implementation of a metropolitan school system including KCMSD and surrounding suburban school systems. KCMSD thus is deeply disturbed by the suburban school districts' recent rejection of voluntary participation in interdistrict transfers. Until substantial suburban participation in KCMSD desegregation efforts can be achieved by the voluntary or involuntary efforts of these districts, KCMSD is taking steps to provide as many opportunities as possible for its students to attend school with students of other races and backgrounds. This magnet school plan is designed as part of that effort. It is premised on the belief that magnet schools with strong programs can attract private school and suburban students on a voluntary basis, and the KCMSD intends to recruit such students. The District will seek payment of tuition for suburban students as already ordered by the District Court on June 14, 1985. It also intends to pursue the possibility of transfers of its students to suburban schools. Should the courts require participation by suburban districts at some future date, however, this plan should be substantially revised to reflect and facilitate greater suburban enrollment.

Figure 5.12. Philosophy and Guidelines, *Long-Range Magnet School Plan.* Source: Phale D. Hale and Daniel U. Levine, *Summary Overview Kansas City Missouri School District Draft, Long-Range Magnet School Plan,* 1986, MUSC0 379.778 K16SU, 3, Missouri Valley Special Collection, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.



Organizing principles and themes underlying and guiding the development of this plan are as follows:

1. The purpose of magnet schools for KCMSD is to increase desegregation and potential desegregation in as many of its classrooms as possible. Because the KCMSD already is 74 percent minority and has been increasing in minority concentration for 15 to 20 years, special and unusual emphasis has been placed on attracting students from nonpublic schools and suburban schools and on retaining current and future nonminority enrollment. These goals have been addressed partly through selection of magnet themes likely to be attractive to nonminority students as well as selection of sites likely to be attractive in terms of distance, time, and other considerations. In many cases, these goals led to selection of "mid-site" locations particularly accessible to both minority and nonminority students.

Figure 5.13. Organizing Principles, *Long-Range Magnet School Plan.* Source: Phale D. Hale and Daniel U. Levine, *Summary Overview Kansas City Missouri School District Draft, Long-Range Magnet School Plan,* 1986, MUSC0 379.778 K16SU, 3, Missouri Valley Special Collection, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.

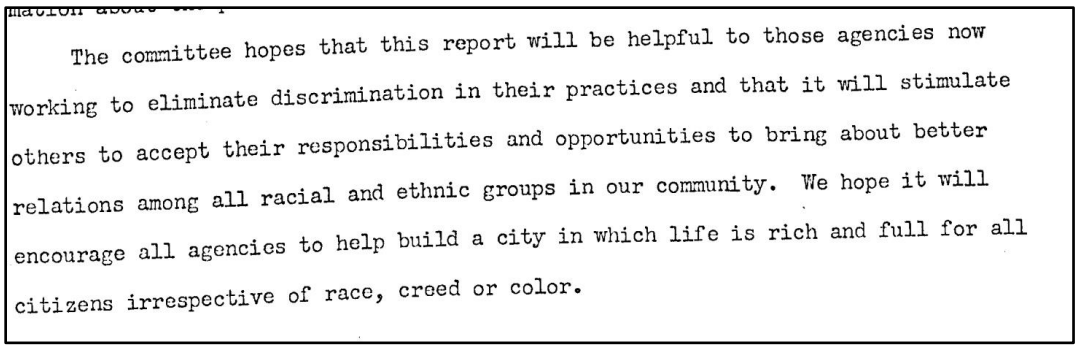
Lynn Horsley Desegregation Files

The Kansas City Public Library's special collections contains a *Kansas City Star* collection. Included are boxes of primary source documents that are not digitized. The finding aid for this collection includes a box labeled Series 5-2: Lynn Horsley Desegregation Files, 1977–1999. These files were collected from Lynn Horsley, a journalist who covered the Kansas City school desegregation case in the 1970s and retired from the *Kansas City Star* in 2019. I looked through her old files to see if they contained notations that might include details about immigrant and refugee children that are not included in articles that appeared in the *Kansas City Star*. I did not locate any information about immigrant or refugee children in relation to the desegregation mandate.

Intercultural Relations Group in Kansas City

A search in the Kansas City Public Library's catalog for primary source documentation about intercultural and ethnic relations policies revealed some material that provided details of efforts made to address the idea of promoting "ethnic harmony." One example is the 1952 title published by the Council of Social Agencies of Kansas City, "Intercultural Intergroup Relations Workbook" (see Figure 5.14).[29] The title may announce a focus on intercultural relations, but the only cultural group mentioned in the pamphlet other than whites living in Kansas City are African Americans, leaving out the members of the population who identified as Latino, Latina, Spanish-Speaking or Asian, for example. Immigrants and refugees had already resettled in Kansas City by this time.

[29] *Workbook, Intercultural Intergroup Relations.* Council of Social Agencies (Kansas City, Mo.). Recreation and Group Education Division, 1952.



The committee hopes that this report will be helpful to those agencies now working to eliminate discrimination in their practices and that it will stimulate others to accept their responsibilities and opportunities to bring about better relations among all racial and ethnic groups in our community. We hope it will encourage all agencies to help build a city in which life is rich and full for all citizens irrespective of race, creed or color.

Figure 5.14. Excerpt from *Workbook, Intercultural Intergroup Relations.* Source: *Workbook, Intercultural Intergroup Relations,* Council of Social Agencies (Kansas City, Mo.). Recreation and Group Education Division, 1952, 1.

Conclusion

Gaps remain in the story of immigrant and refugee children's educational experience in Kansas City for those who arrived and resettled after major pieces of immigration and refugee legislation in the 1960s and 1980s. It is within these gaps of the missing details where assumptions may settle, leaving room only for an incomplete picture.

I searched the Kansas City Public Library's archives and did not locate even a de facto written policy for handling this population during this time. Preliminary examination of archived documents revealed that data and numbers about immigrant and refugee students were not included or mentioned in the tools used to enact policy changes made to the Kansas City Missouri School District system in the 1970s through the 1990s due to the desegregation lawsuit. Instead, it appears immigrant and refugee children were counted along with Black students in the tools used to enact policy change, delineating only two distinct groups: whites and non-whites.

Was the population ignored, or lumped in with other minorities[30] profiled in the reports and studies despite their radically different backgrounds and life experiences? Closer examination of when immigrants and refugee children are unmentioned in policies may offer insight as to how policies written today are influenced by this past pattern.

I believe it is essential to fill in the gaps of data and personal histories. The work of identifying where the gaps are in the history of this group is important for immigrants who come to this city in the future. As newcomers continue to arrive, they may better understand that in Kansas City they are part of a continuing story. In Chapter 6 I explore how national and local events affected the educational experiences of immigrant and refugee children from the 1990s to the 2020s.

[30] Kevin Fox Gotham, *Race, Real Estate, and Uneven Development: The Kansas City Experience, 1900-2000* (State University of New York Press, 2002), 24.

CHAPTER 6

REFUGEES IN KANSAS CITY: THE 1990s TO THE PRESENT DAY

This chapter continues with the story of immigrants and refugees resettling in Kansas City in the 1990s to 2020s. I investigated the local, political, economic, and social climate of Kansas City during this time and gathered data to show the impact of the growing population on the city. The latter part of the chapter reveals how once resettled in Kansas City with the assistance of the resettlement agencies, refugees and immigrants created communities within their new city.

Examining both the global events and local happenings helped to tell the story about the decades that led up to the opening of a new school in the Kansas City School system, one that was specifically designed to address the educational, social, and emotional needs of this population.

Refugees and Immigrant Communities Grow in the 1990s

More war, political conflict, and natural disasters would force people to leave their homes around the world and seek refuge in the United States. This decade saw people leaving Afghanistan after the Taliban took over the government. Later people fleeing Bosnia, countries in Africa, and the Middle East made their way to the U.S. and then to Kansas City.

The immigrants and refugees who resettled in America from 1990 to the 2020s likely found themselves here due to deteriorating conditions in their home countries due to war, environmental disasters, or other political conflicts. Articles written about adults who migrated to Kansas City from the 1990s were available in my research, but fewer sources of data and information were found that told the stories about the children's experiences during

migration to the U.S and after resettlement. By relying on sources that tell the adults' experiences, my hope is to create context and a picture of what life was like at the time for this population as they resettled in Kansas City.

Data from the Migration Policy Institute

A report from the Migration Policy Institute, a non-partisan think tank located in Washington D.C., titled "Immigration to the Heartland,"[1] provided statistics and an overview about migrant families relocating to Kansas City. The data show that for the most part, immigrant and refugee populations are concentrated in Jackson and Johnson counties, that the majority are lawfully present in Kansas City, that educational attainment and poverty rates vary by country of birth, and that "a significant number of children have immigrant parents, estimated 63,000 children resided in the region with 83% (about 52,000) were born in the US (similar to the nationwide share of 79%)."[2]

The report describes Kansas City's geography as the nexus for railroad and also airline industries and an important stop before continuing west. It states when the population growth slowed down in the second half of the twentieth century, it rebounded with the influx of immigrants. In 2015, the Kansas City metropolitan area was home to 135,000 immigrants or 7 percent of the population of 2.1 million. The immigrant population is comparable to that of other mid-sized metropolitan areas in the U.S. of similar size (e.g., Indianapolis has a population of 124,000 immigrants and refugees; Jacksonville has a population of 125,000

[1] Randy Capps and Ariel G. Ruiz Soto, "Immigration to the Heartland: A Profile of Immigrants in the Kansas City Region," Migration Policy Institute, October 2016, https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/KansasCity-FINAL.pdf.
[2] Capps and Soto, "Immigration to the Heartland," 1.

immigrants and refugees; St. Louis has a population of 130,000 immigrants and refugees).[3] The immigrant population of Kansas City has grown in the last twenty-five years, from 33,000 in 1990, to 82,000 in 2000, to 120,000 in 2010, to 135,000 in 2015. During this time, immigrants and refugees comprised one-sixth of the total population growth (100,000 out of 600,000).[4] Figure 6.1 shows the growth in the population from 1990 to 2015.

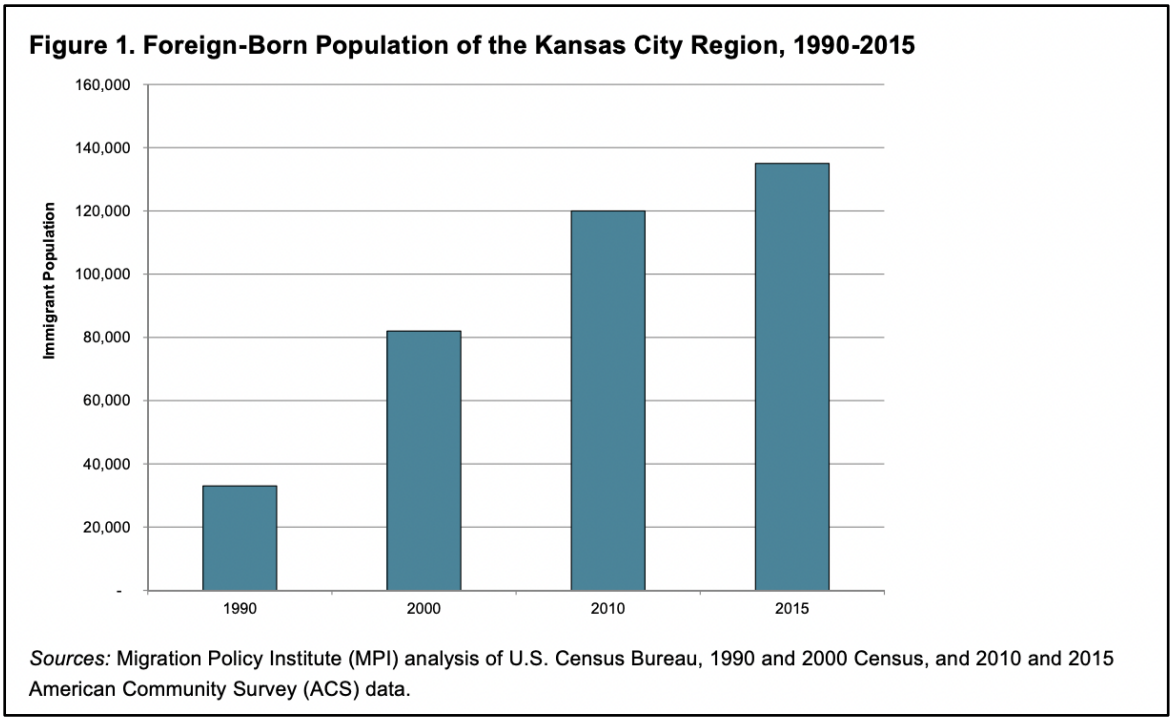


Figure 6.1. Foreign-Born Population of the Kansas City Region, 1990–2015. Source: Randy Capps and Ariel G. Ruiz Soto, "Immigration to the Heartland: A Profile of Immigrants in the Kansas City Region," Migration Policy Institute, October 2016, https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/KansasCity-FINAL.pdf.

A report from the Brookings Institute includes statistics of refugees entering the U.S. and resettling in Kansas City during the 1990s and as well as information about the experiences of refugee children. The report uses data from the Office of Refugee

[3] Capps and Soto, "Immigration to the Heartland."
[4] Capps and Soto, "Immigration to the Heartland."

Resettlement, which indicates children in this population are a distinctive portion of the foreign-born population in many metropolitan areas.[5] The report states that the experience of the refugee is a reflection of the connections between international, national, and local institutions.[6] The data provide the opportunity to "zoom out" and consider the context of what else is happening, not only in Kansas City during this particular time, but also around the world.

Life after Resettlement in Kansas City

Between 1983 and 2005, a civil war broke out in Sudan that caused the deaths of millions of people and caused many more to flee the country and become refugees. When the article entitled "Kansas City Sudanese Man Narrowly Makes It Out Of Sudan," was published in 2014, Kansas City had the largest community of Sudanese refugees in the country.[7] Manon Bol (see Figure 6.2) was one of the so-called "Lost Boys" who fled the violence in their home country, some on foot and as young as eight or nine years old. These children then spent years growing up in refugee camps in Kenya and other African countries before resettling in the U.S. Mr. Bol spent time in a refugee camp in Egypt before resettling in Kansas City. He was lucky to have a relative who was waiting to assist him, NBA star Manut Bol, who had come to the United States to play professional basketball.

[5] Audrey Singer and Jill H. Wilson, "From 'There' to 'Here': Refugee Resettlement in Metropolitan America," Living Cities Census Series, Brookings Institution, September 2006, https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/20060925_singer.pdf.

[6] Singer and Wilson, "From 'There' to 'Here.'"

[7] "Kansas City Sudanese Man Narrowly Makes It out of Sudan," KCUR 89.3, NPR in Kansas City, January 23, 2014, https://www.kcur.org/community/2014-01-23/kansas-city-sudanese-man-narrowly-makes-it-out-of-sudan.

Figure 6.2. Manon Bol, one of the so-called "Lost Boys." "Kansas City Sudanese Man Narrowly Makes It Out Of Sudan," KCUR 89.3, NPR in Kansas City, January 23, 2014, https://www.kcur.org/community/2014-01-23/kansas-city-sudanese-man-narrowly-makes-it-out-of-sudan.

The plight of "Lost Boys" and Kansas City received national attention in the realm of movie making when their story was featured in the 2014 motion picture film, "The Good Lie," starring Reese Witherspoon. In the film, four Sudanese children whose family is killed during the second Sudanese civil war flee their destroyed village and make a dangerous trip to a Kenyan refugee camp. After living in the camp, they are resettled in Kansas City, Missouri, and build a new life with the help of Witherspoon's employment agent character, Carrie.

Vietnamese Refugees, Years after Resettling in Kansas City

Flatland featured an article about the achievements of three refugees who fled tough situations in their native Vietnam, "Vietnam War Refugees Succeed—and Struggle—in Kansas City."[8] Ty Bui, Dong Do, and Nguyet Ha-Le all migrated from Vietnam and were

Figure 6.3. Ron Nguyen, son of Vietnamese refugees, is a Kansas City attorney who has helped the Vietnamese community here with various legal issues, first as a Legal Aid lawyer and now in private practice. Bill Tammeus, "Vietnam War Refugees Succeed—and Struggle—in Kansas City," FlatlandKC, September 11, 2017, https://flatlandkc.org/news-issues/diverging-paths/.

either placed in refugee camps or sent directly to the U.S (see Figure 6.3). Each was able to find success by starting a business, or finding work as a translator, or becoming a lawyer and were then able to assist others in the Vietnamese community in Kansas City. The article ends with an observation that the newest members of the refugee community who make their homes in the Northeast section of the city come from other countries and not Vietnam. At a World Refugee Day event in the Northeast that was held at the time the article was written, U.S. Representative Emmanuel Cleaver called the neighborhood, "the United Nations of

[8] Bill Tammeus, "Vietnam War Refugees Succeed—and Struggle—in Kansas City," FlatlandKC, September 11, 2017, https://flatlandkc.org/news-issues/diverging-paths/.

Kansas City."[9] It is where the Vietnamese community in Kansas City began, but now they are widely scattered across the metropolitan area.

Indisposable: KC Cultures

Photographs are essential primary sources used in historical research that place the viewer in a particular situation, at a specific time. KCUR reported in 2018 on an art exhibit called "Indisposable: KC Cultures"[10] consisting of photographs taken with disposable cameras by members of the refugee community living in Kansas City (see Figure 6.4). The photos show the members of the community being themselves and documenting the everyday joys of living and playing in their new home. Cameras in the hands of members of the community who captured their own moments showed me a view into this community that is uninterrupted by an outsider's interpretation or commentary. Photographs provide an unfiltered and instantaneous view into others' lives. This public exhibition of the images supported the visibility of refugees on their own terms.

Figure 6.4. Photo from the exhibit "Indisposable: KC Cultures." Photo credit: Ubah Kariye. "Refugees Use Old-School Cameras to Show Kansas City Life through New Eyes," KCUR 89.3, NPR in Kansas City, May 31, 2018, https://www.kcur.org/arts-life/2018-05-31/refugees-use-old-school-cameras-to-show-kansas-city-life-through-new-eyes.

[9] Tammeus, "Vietnam War Refugees Succeed," para. 24.

[10] Claire Verbeck, "Refugees Use Old-School Cameras to Show Kansas City Life through New Eyes," KCUR 89.3, NPR in Kansas City, May 31, 2018, https://www.kcur.org/arts-life/2018-05-31/refugees-use-old-school-cameras-to-show-kansas-city-life-through-new-eyes.

An Early Program for Immigrants and Refugees Students in Kansas City Public Schools

After finding many resources about the experiences of adults migrating to Kansas City during this time period, I saw an article that grabbed my attention. I was certain I had discovered a prototype or early iteration of the school featured in the final chapter in this dissertation. Located in the Northeast, Gladstone Elementary, part of the Kansas City school district, had a program that assisted immigrant students to learn English quickly. The majority of the students enrolled in the program were refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo (see Figures 6.5 and 6.6). This program seemed to have the elements to be the precursor for the school that I write about in the final chapter of this story, the International Welcome Center and Global Academy. All of the elements were there; for example, academic and cultural support for students.

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Figure 6.5. Most of the students in Emma Jones' class at Gladstone Elementary School are Congolese. Because they grew up in refugee camps, they have not consistently attended school. "Kansas City's Refugee Students Have Only One Year to Learn How to Go to School in America," KCUR 89.3, NPR in Kansas City, October 12, 2018, https://www.kcur.org/education/2018-10-12/kansas-citys-refugee-students-have-only-one-year-to-learn-how-to-go-to-school-in-america.

Figure 6.6. KCPS considers the students in Emma Jones' class to have limited or interrupted formal education. The program was formerly called New Americans. "Kansas City's Refugee Students Have Only One Year to Learn How to Go to School in America," KCUR 89.3, NPR in Kansas City, October 12, 2018, https://www.kcur.org/education/2018-10-12/kansas-citys-refugee-students-have-only-one-year-to-learn-how-to-go-to-school-in-america.

I was able to talk with Emma Seim, née Jones (see Figure 6.6) to learn more about the program at Gladstone Elementary and her work at the Global Academy. Emma began her work with resettled students first as an ELL teacher at Garcia Elementary. The program of small classroom instruction for recently resettled refugees was already up and running; most of the students were Somali. The program at Garcia was implemented because so many students were unprepared for school in the U.S. Emma told me, "Students with interrupted formal education need a lot more, especially the older ones." She went on to say how happy she was to work with the students, "A friend of mine had done the program and she moved, and so I wanted to do it. I thought, yes! This is exactly what I wanted to do." Then the program moved to Gladstone, because that is where the majority of the refugee families are resettled. "I had a self-contained classroom. The population of the kids changed over time. In the last ten or fifteen years we'd had mostly Congolese or Spanish-speaking populations."

At Gladstone Elementary she saw a lot of the same issues in students who were new to schooling in the United States. The majority of students had had some sort of interruption in their formal education careers. She began by asking them questions and figuring out their academic level:

> "Do you have number sense? Do you have math skills?" Some of them had never held a pair of scissors. For sure, scissors were a luxury. Some had never read a book or held a pencil. So you started wherever they were.

One aspect of school in the United States that I never really thought about was the parade of holidays that begin in October and keeps going month after month through early Spring. Emma said, "Every holiday hits them and they're like, what is going on? Right away in a new school year you have Halloween and then Thanksgiving and then Christmas and then Valentines Day. We're all celebrating in a big way, which is fun for them, and it all needs to be explained." She said that the birthday parties for children were also unfamiliar to these students.

As for how The Global Academy came to be, Emma recalls her superior, Allyson Hile, working on it.

> I think that our director had been thinking about it and wanting to do something like this [The Global Academy] because we do have too many more kids now. So I think it was a thought in her mind and I always mentioned to her, gosh, I would love to work in a place like that because unbeknownst to me this turned into exactly what I wanted to do with my life.

Recreation Brings a Refugee Community Together

Refugees from Myanmar are given a spotlight in an article in the *Kansas City Star* called "Karen Refugee Groups Find Community through Sport of Chinlone at Kansas City Park."[11]

Karen refugees from all over the world who resettled in Kansas City come together to play chinlone, a traditional sport of Myanmar (also known as kick volleyball or takraw) at a park in the Sheffield neighborhood of Kansas City, Missouri. The journalist writes,

> according to a 2017 report from the Karen Community of Minnesota, the largest population of Karen-Americans, around 17,000 live in Minnesota. According to RefugeKC, a local nonprofit Christian ministry, around 1,000 Karen refugees live in the Kansas City area.[12]

One refugee featured in the article named Htoo Lay says he learned the game as he grew up in a refugee camp in Thailand among the refugees who left Myanmar due to conflict in the country. A group of about ten to twenty gather to play most afternoons and upward of thirty people attend on weekends. The group has participated in tournaments with other resettled Karens in Arkansas hosted by the Karen Youth of Clarksville (see Figure 6.7).

[11] Nathan Han, "Karen Refugee Group Finds Community through Sport of Chinlone at Kansas City Park," *Kansas City Star*, June 17, 2022, https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=pwh&AN=2W64186142830&site=eds-live&scope=site.

[12] Han, "Karen Refugee Group," para. 11.

Figure 6.7. Nathan Han, "Karen Refugee Group Finds Community through Sport of Chinlone at Kansas City Park," *Kansas City Star*, June 17, 2022. https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=pwh&AN=2W64186142830&site=eds-live&scope=site.

This is the first article I've seen from the *Kansas City Star* about a recreational activity that brings refugees out of their homes and together for recreation. The article does not mention anything about Karen girls or children and the types of recreation they might enjoy in the sun and for cultural connection.

Afghan Arrival in Kansas City

The arrival of Afghan refugees is covered in two articles: KSHB News41 and KCUR. Afghan refugees began to arrive and resettle in Kansas City in November 2021 after the fall of Kabul, the capital and largest city in Afghanistan (see Figure 6.8). Interestingly, the KSHB News 41 article includes a quote from a resettled Vietnamese refugee who was featured in an article that appeared earlier in this chapter, Ty Bui. Mr. Bui speaks again about his time resettling in Kansas City and the help he received from the Don Bosco Center when he arrived in 1975. He was able to give back to the organization that helped him and

volunteered to help resettle new refugees. He said the work had its challenges: "the hardest part is the language barrier, especially with elderly."[13]

Figure 6.8. Families evacuated from Kabul, Afghanistan, walk through the terminal before boarding a bus after they arrived at Washington Dulles International Airport, in Chantilly, Virginia, on Sunday, August 29, 2021. According to agencies in Kansas City, as many as 625 refugees could be resettled in the Kansas City metro area. Photo credit: Jose Luis Magana, The Associated Press. Source: "First Family of Afghan Refugees Arrive in Kansas City," *The Missourian*, September 19, 2021, https://www.emissourian.com/news/first-family-of-afghan-refugees-arrive-in-kansas-city/article_89b7f056-1902-11ec-ad90-dfd982efe2ed.html.

Gillian Helm, the CEO of Literacy KC, speaks about the experience of helping Afghan refugees through a language barrier.

> "I think Kansas City is such a welcoming community already. We do a really great job of welcoming in other people from other countries, other cultures," she said. "A lot of times we learn a lot more from them than they can learn from us."[14]

The arrival of newcomers does not have a hard and fast beginning and end, but overlaps, as with any other events in the lives of real people. Migration and resettlement is occurring all

[13] Callie Counsellor, "Vietnamese Refugee Reflects on the Challenges Afghan Refugees are Facing," 41 KSHB Kansas City, https://www.kshb.com/news/local-news/vietnamese-refugee-reflects-on-challenge-afghan-refugees-are-facing.
[14] Counsellor, "Vietnamese Refugee Reflects," para. 9.

the time, and those who have resettled may be in the best position to help the newest members of our city.

The second article, "With Afghans on the Way, Kansas City's Refugee Agencies are Depleted by Budget Cuts,"[15] is about the short notice of the arrival of Afghan refugees and the increased pressure on agencies to secure funds for their resettlement after experiencing budget cuts during the Trump administration. The announcement that newcomers are arriving can be short notice for the city's resettlement agencies, but as Ryan Hudnall, an executive director at Della Lamb, said, "We are seeing that agencies are receiving notices and resettling people within forty-eight hours, so that puts a whole new level of pressure on the local affiliate."[16] After several years of low immigration during the Trump administration, the ramp-up of numbers put added pressure on the agencies, and the COVD-19 pandemic added another layer of complexity. These situations and events created funding shortfalls for agencies that handle refugees, leading them to cut their staff and limiting their ability to prepare for just such an event.[17]

Della Lamb and Bicycles for Refugees

The agencies that work with immigrants and refugees are dedicated to not only helping the resettled families feel at home, but also enforcing the idea that they are not limited to their neighborhood. Della Lamb created a program in the Northeast called "Bikes for Refugees" (see Figure 6.9). The program provided more than three hundred bicycles for Northeast Kansas City refugees, including adults and children. The bicycles offer a

[15] Carlos Moreno and Chris Young, "With Afghans on the Way, Kansas City's Refugee Agencies are Depleted by Budget Cuts," KCUR 89.3 NPR in Kansas City, August 28, 2021, https://www.kcur.org/news/2021-08-28/with-afghans-on-the-way-kansas-citys-refugee-agencies-are-depleted-by-years-of-budget-cuts.
[16] Moreno and Young, "With Afghans on the Way," para. 4.
[17] Moreno and Young, "With Afghans on the Way."

sustainable and inclusive transportation for the community's members.[18] Many resettled families rely on public transportation to get to jobs and schools, but the bus system does not go everywhere, and bicycles offer personal autonomy. The bicycles are an added method of transportation for getting around the city and where they need to go.

Figure 6.9. Children who will receive a new bicycle through "Bikes for Refugees." Source: Admin., "New Della Lamb Program Provides Bicycles to Refugees," Northeast News (blog), June 1, 2022. https://northeastnews.net/pages/new-della-lamb-program-provides-bicycles-to-refugees/.

A Choir Creates Community for Refugees from Tanzania

In a church in the Northeast, a community of refugees who fled the Democratic Republic of Congo and then migrated to Tanzania created a community by performing Congolese Rumba songs (see Figure 6.10). "We want other people to know us, who we are,

[18] Admin., "New Della Lamb Program Provides Bicycles to Refugees," *Northeast News* (blog), June 1, 2022, https://northeastnews.net/pages/new-della-lamb-program-provides-bicycles-to-refugees/.

and what we do," said songwriter Jeune Premier Silambien, 22, who is also a Penn Valley Community College student. "So that's our biggest dream."[19]

Figure 6.10. The Salvation Choir rehearses on Saturdays (and sometimes on Sundays) inside a garage in Kansas City's historic Northeast neighborhood. "A Tanzanian Refugee Choir Got Its Start in a Kansas City Church. Now It's Touring the Midwest," KCUR 89.3, NPR in Kansas City, May 27, 2022, https://www.kcur.org/arts-life/2022-05-27/a-tanzanian-refugee-choir-got-its-start-in-a-kansas-city-church-now-its-touring-the-midwest.

Somali Refugees Arrive in Kansas City Despite Travel Ban

Somali refugees began to arrive in Kansas City in the mid-1990s when the east African country collapsed due to a civil war. The article, "Somali Refugees Arrive in Kansas City to Warm Welcome,"[20] describes the scene of their arrival at the Kansas City airport. Handmade signs that read "Welcome Home," "You Matter" and "You Are Loved," along with cheers of good will greeted the group of several dozen adults and a few children. One

[19] "A Tanzanian Refugee Choir Got Its Start in a Kansas City Church. Now It's Touring the Midwest," KCUR 89.3, NPR in Kansas City, May 27, 2022, https://www.kcur.org/arts-life/2022-05-27/a-tanzanian-refugee-choir-got-its-start-in-a-kansas-city-church-now-its-touring-the-midwest.

[20] Laura Ziegler, "Somali Refugees Arrive in Kansas City to Warm Welcome," KCUR 89.3. NPR in Kansas City, February 9, 2017, https://www.kcur.org/community/2017-02-09/somali-refugees-arrive-in-kansas-city-to-warm-welcome.

greeter who held a sign written in Arabic said, "A friend who speaks Arabic wrote it for me. He told me it means Welcome, which is what I wanted to say."[21] Somalis resettled in the Northeast neighborhood with help from Della Lamb in 2017 after being held back by the travel ban on refugees during the Trump administration.

Northeast News and Articles about the Community Effect on Proposed School Closings

Change is difficult for residents of any neighborhood, but for the residents of the Northeast, the possibility of drastic changes in the form of school closings prompted neighbors to gather and demand answers. The *Northeast News* reported about an announcement made by Kansas City Public Schools in October of 2022 about potential school closings, listing some schools in the Northeast. The paper reported residents in the Northeast mobilized and voiced their concerns about the potential closures. Residents appeared at forums and meetings to tell district representatives how they felt about schools and about how important they are to the Northeast neighborhood's children. They gathered to say the school district should pay closer attention to the possible negative effects on the neighborhood children, including those in the immigrant and refugee population (see Figure 6.11).

[21] Ziegler, "Somali Refugees Arrive," para. 7.

Figure 6.11. Concerned citizens at a meeting to discuss pending school closures in the Northeast neighborhoods of Kansas City. Source: Abby Hoover, "Northeast Community Pushes Back on Potential School Closings," *Northeast News* (blog), November 9, 2022, https://northeastnews.net/pages/northeast-community-pushes-back-on-potential-school-closings/.

Two articles provided information about the possible closings. In one titled, "Northeast Community Pushes Back on Potential School Closings,"[22] the writer listened as members of the community remarked about the impact on the immigrant and refugees who have children at Northeast Middle School:

> One attendee noted that, although there were a few Spanish speakers in the audience, the demographics in the room did not represent Northeast, especially Indian Mound and Lykins where schools would close. They asked if any outreach has been done to immigrant and refugee families.[23]

[22] Abby Hoover, "Northeast Community Pushes Back on Potential School Closings," *Northeast News* (blog), November 9, 2022, https://northeastnews.net/pages/northeast-community-pushes-back-on-potential-school-closings/.
[23] Hoover, "Northeast Community Pushes Back," para. 29.

In another article, an attendee of a meeting at Whittier School featured in the article, "Northeast Residents Mount Formal Opposition Protest against School Closures,"[24]

Edgar Palacios, founder of Revolución Educativa said:

> I think part of the reason is that we are an incredibly diverse community, and so it's important that the district and the board know that the school closures would impact a strong immigrant community here.[25]

Community members coming together to speak out about changes to the schools in their neighborhood is important; for members of the community to comment about the impact on the members of the immigrant and refugee population who will be affected by the changes is noteworthy. I see it as evidence that the newcomers are a part of the community and neighborhood, that despite their language barriers and cultural differences, the people at the meeting were willing to speak on their behalf, knowing they would be affected by changes in the schools. These members of the neighborhood are proud of their diversity and recognize that refugee and immigrant communities are a part of that.

And This Story Continues Today: Refugees Migrate from Ukraine

The story of people arriving in the United States from areas of the world experiencing conflict continues. The current conflict in Ukraine, which started in February 2022 with a Russian invasion and seizure of territories, prompted millions of Ukrainians, mostly women and children, to flee as able-bodied men stayed behind to fight. The same groups that assisted

[24] Admin., "Northeast Residents Mount Formal Opposition Protest against School Closures," *Northeast News* (blog), November 17, 2022, https://northeastnews.net/pages/northeast-residents-mount-formal-opposition-protest-against-school-closures/.
[25] Admin., "Northeast Residents Mount," para. 3.

refugees in the past are working toward resettling Ukrainians, even as they continue to work to help the Afghan refugees who are still arriving.[26]

The Kansas edition of the *Kansas City Star* from April 2022 has an article with information for locals who wish to help Ukrainians migrating to the United States. There is an option through which they could sponsor a Ukrainian refugee or an immediate family member who fled the country after February 11, 2022 with an immigration status known as humanitarian parole, which lasts for two years.[27] Humanitarian parole is a system that was set up in addition to the humanitarian aid that was offered to Ukrainians after the conflict with Russia began. Ukrainians entering into the country and settling under this designation are classified differently than a refugee, as refugee status takes years to attain.[28]

I was unable to locate articles or data about Ukranians resettling with families or with the assistance of the agencies working in Kansas City, Missouri. From what I have read about Ukranians, it appears that many will relocate through agencies and families in Kansas.

Conclusion

My intention for this chapter was to show a picture of the national and local events from the 1990s to 2021 that affected immigrants and refugees who resettled in Kansas City. This stretch of years included global events that drove people to seek a better life in the United States. Kansas City, as we saw in the previous chapters, continued to provide a place

[26] Bryant Maddrick, "Kansas City Metro Refugee Aid Groups Ready to Help Possible Ukrainian Refugees," KSHB 41 Kansas City News, February 24, 2022, https://www.kshb.com/news/local-news/kansas-city-metro-refugee-aid-groups-ready-to-help-possible-ukrainian-refugees.
[27] Matti Gellman, "You Can Help Bring Ukrainians Fleeing War to Safety in Kansas City. Here's How," *Kansas City Star*, April 27, 2022, Updated May 17, 2022, https://www.kansascity.com/news/local/article260771292.html.
[28] Gellman, "You Can Help."

for families to secure employment and resettle. The city also provided a stable place for an education for immigrant and refugee children in the public schools.

This dissertation culminates with the opening of a new public school specifically for this population of children. Anyone asking if the new school is necessary or feels like it "came out of nowhere," can give even a cursory look at the history of immigrants and refugees resettling in Kansas City and answer that question with a resounding "yes." An awareness of the history of this population will help teachers and administrators better understand those students in their classrooms and schools.

CHAPTER 7

KANSAS CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS LAUNCHES A UNIQUE AND INNOVATIVE PROGRAM

The final chapter of this story shows how a new school specifically designed to address the educational needs of immigrant and refugee children opened in August of 2021 in Kansas City, during the uneasy era of immigration restrictions to the U.S. and the COVID-19 pandemic. The opening of this school provides an ending to the story of the educational history of this population with a testament to the hard work and perseverance of all involved.

Effects of the Trump Administration Policies and COVID-19 on Migration

Kansas City continued to welcome thousands of immigrants and refugees into the metro area in the 2000s from Mexico and other Central American countries as well as Asian and African nations.[1] The same resettlement agencies that served thousands of newcomers for generations continued assisting families and helping enroll children into the schools, but the patterns of migration on which the agencies and support networks had come to rely completely changed in the spring of 2020.

The Trump administration's rhetoric may have deterred some from entering the country, but researching this era, I found data from Migration Policy that shows that between 2016 and 2019, new applications for green cards decreased by 17 percent.[2].Immigrants may have still attempted to enter the U.S. despite the unwelcoming rhetoric from the

[1] Randy Capps and Ariel G. Ruiz Soto, "Immigration to the Heartland: A Profile of Immigrants in the Kansas City Region," Migration Policy Institute, October 2016, https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/KansasCity-FINAL.pdf.

[2] Muzaffar Chishti and Jessica Bolter, "The 'Trump Effect' on Legal Immigration Levels: More Perception than Reality?" migrationpolicy.org, November 19, 2020, https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/trump-effect-immigration-reality.

administration at the time but, "more than any earlier actions by the administration, closures of U.S. consulates and changes in global migration amid COVID-19 had the most dramatic effect on permanent immigration."[3] The combination of the restrictive policies put forth by the Trump administration as and the end of typical migration patterns due to the pandemic affected global migration; immigration to the U.S. reached a record low in 2020.[4]

A new and updated report dated March 14, 2023 was issued by the Migration Policy Institute, a non-partisan think tank located in Washington D.C., which keeps data and statistics about U.S. immigration trends. The section of their website, "Frequently Asked Statistics about Immigrants and Immigration,"[5] reports that the U.S. is currently experiencing an historic time of change in immigration history due to delays and backlogs of requests since the pandemic and increases in pressure about the issues surrounding the U.S. and Mexico's border.[6] Learning all this, I wondered, with so much uncertainty, how was the school able to open?

Nonetheless, A New School Opened

My memories of the Fall of 2021 are fuzzy beyond wearing masks while teaching my library classes, remembering to keep six feet of distance between me and my students, and learning to regard good ventilation as reassurance of safety from COVID-19. But, during this gloomy and unsettling era in history, the teachers and administration in the Kansas City Public School district opened a new school. The Global Academy opened on the second floor

[3] Chishti and Bolter, "The 'Trump Effect,'" para. 10.
[4] Chishti and Bolter, "The 'Trump Effect.'"
[5] "Frequently Requested Statistics on Immigrants and Immigration in the United States." Migration Policy Institute, accessed April 12, 2023. https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/frequently-requested-statistics-immigrants-and-immigration-united-states#children-immigrants.
[6] "Frequently Requested Statistics," para. 1.

of the Woodland Early Learning Center at 711 Woodland Avenue, in the Northeast section of Kansas City,[7] right in the heart of the immigrant and refugee community (see Figure 7.1).

Figure 7.1. KCPS opens International Welcome Center for English Language Learners. Source: "KCPS Opens International Welcome Center for English Language Learners," *Northeast News*, September 22, 2021, http://northeastnews.net/pages/kcps-opens-international-welcome-center-for-english-language-learners/.

Recollections of the Ribbon Cutting

I found a picture of the ribbon cutting for the school and took it with me when I spoke to Ryan Rumpf, the principal of the Global Academy (see Figure 7.2). I asked Ryan what he could tell me about his experience that day. He said, "That was actually about a month after the kids came, it was more ceremonial than anything."[8]

[7] "KCPS Opens International Welcome Center for English Language Learners," *Northeast News*, September 22, 2021, http://northeastnews.net/pages/kcps-opens-international-welcome-center-for-english-language-learners/.
[8] Ryan Rumpf, Principal the Global Academy, oral history, April 12, 2023.

Figure 7.2. Ryan Rumph, principal of the Global Academy, screenshot from a Youtube video (https://youtu.be/v5xLIa7-kNc) about his passion and ongoing work with the immigrant community in Kansas City. Source: Aubrey Hughes and John G. McGrath, "KC Educator Loves Serving Immigrant Families," FlatlandKC, December 5, 2022, https://flatlandkc.org/news-issues/kc-educator-loves-serving-immigrant-families/.

Allyson Hile, the Director of Language Services and Cultural Equity, remembers the day (see Figure 7.3). "We had a ribbon cutting that was actually really lovely, but afterward I thought how we should invite this person and should have been sharing it this way. But it grew. We had the Beacon article, the Northeast News, and KMBC news articles. It just kind of grew from there.[9]"


Figure 7.3. Allyson Hile. Source: "Allyson Hile, Director of Language Services and Cultural Equity, Kansas City Public Schools," Profile in Leadership, Schoolsmart Kansas City, 2022, https://schoolsmartkc.org/allyson-hile/.

[9] Allyson Hile, Director of Language Services and Cultural Equity, oral history, April 13, 2023.

The Beacon article that Mrs. Hile refers to is the one posted in the Tweet I read that sparked my research interests that led to this dissertation. My question about why there was little fanfare for the opening was answered simply: All involved were working their hardest to open the school. Any additional energy was needed to do the difficult work of adhering to safety procedures to keep staff, teachers, and students safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. There was no time or energy to spare for pageantry.

Superintendent's Recollections of the Idea for the School and Welcome Center

Dr. Mark Bedell was superintendent of Kansas City Public Schools at the time of the opening. Dr. Bedell moved on from KCPS in 2022 and is presently serving as superintendent of Anne Arundel County Public Schools, a district just south of Baltimore, Maryland (see Figure 7.4). I was pleased that he took time out of his busy day to talk to me on the phone one morning. I asked him what he remembers about planning for the new school and how it happened. He said,

> When I got to Kansas City in 2016, I did a one hundred day entry plan, and I wanted to take a look at every facet of the organization and see how we are serving the student population within the school district. I saw early on that we did not have a concentrated support model for ELL, for newcomers, for Spanish-speaking students, yet that was considered the fastest growing demographic in the Kansas City Public School district.[10]

As for the conversation about the idea of opening the Global Academy Mr. Bedell said,

> I remember having a conversation with Allyson Hile. I said Allyson, "I have a vision here, I want to create a welcome center, a newcomer welcome center." And Allyson said, "Oh my, I do too, and we've been talking about it. We haven't been able to get anything up and running."[11]

[10] Dr. Mark Bedell, former Superintendent of Schools, Kansas City Public Schools, oral history, April 14, 2023.
[11] Dr. Mark Bedell, former Superintendent of Schools, Kansas City Public Schools, oral history, April 14, 2023.

Figure 7.4. Mark T. Bedell, former Superintendent of Kansas City Public Schools. Source: Joe Jaros, "KCPS Names Dr. Mark Bedell as New Superintendent," *Northeast News,* January 20, 2016, https://northeastnews.net/pages/kcps-names-dr-mark-bedell-as-new-superintendent/.

As superintendent, Mr. Bedell knew that funds in the school's budget could make the opening of the International Welcome Center and Global Academy possible. Increases in tax revenue from property reassessment in Kansas City were just enough to open a new program. He used the additional money in revenue that was allocated for the school district, saying, "I'm going to use some of that money to build out the International Welcome Center. That's how that came about."[12] Next the search was on for a location. Woodland School was an option, and Mrs. Hile told me the story behind settling on what would become the perfect spot for the new school and program:

> It was perfect because it's right in the center. There is the housing where our families come from, it's on a major bus line and it's right by Garfield [one of the

[12] Dr. Mark Bedell, former Superintendent of Schools, Kansas City Public Schools, oral history, April 14, 2023.

> neighborhood schools where students would spend the other half of their day when they were not at Global Academy] and families, and for families that needed to come to us. So that's when we thought, it's going to be a welcome center and also house an elementary program called New Americans. Once we brought Ryan on, we knew we needed another name to differentiate from the International Welcome Center, so he and his team brainstormed names and came up with Global Academy.[13]

Once the Woodland School site was chosen, Mr. Bedell said the same delays that hindered other programs affected its progress: "It took a while to build out, but then the other issue we ran into was COVID."[14] Mr. Bedell shifted to something else he and his staff learned during the process of opening the school:

> We also saw that as we were making improvements in our data across the district which ultimately led to our full accreditation, the one student group that had not fared as well was our ELL Hispanic group. At that point we said we have to do something different,[15]

The idea of a school for this population with targeted and specific support and a center with wraparound services took form. He went on:

> We've got to get the resources concentrated, put these kids in an environment where they can have a true sense of belonging and that they're with other kids. This will allow them to assimilate a lot quicker, acquire English at a faster rate, but do it in a non-threatening environment. So it was also in response to the data that we really needed to get this program up and running.[16]

Mrs. Hile credits Interim Superintendent Allan Tunis for providing the support to make the Global Academy a reality. Mr. Tunis was named Interim Superintendent in 2015, the year before Dr. Bedell was hired as Superintendent. Mrs. Hile talked about Mr. Tunis toward the end of our conversation in a moment of reflection about all of the people who were a part of opening the Global academy.

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[13] Allyson Hile, Director of Language Services and Cultural Equity, oral history, April 13, 2023.
[14] Allyson Hile, Director of Language Services and Cultural Equity, oral history, April 13, 2023.
[15] Allyson Hile, Director of Language Services and Cultural Equity, oral history, April 13, 2023.
[16] Allyson Hile, Director of Language Services and Cultural Equity, oral history, April 13, 2023.

> He was the chief operating officer, and he was such a champion of our kids and students and KCPS and really helped mentor me and gave me the courage and the push to do this work. He just passed. I know we wouldn't be here without him.[17]

The Earliest Days of the Global Academy

I asked Mr. Rumpf to tell me about the first day of school. He took a deep breath and said:

> So that was September. We opened the day after Labor Day. Oh gosh, our first day, we started. We had thirty-four kids. We had hardly any kids. We were just getting out of the Trump era, where no refugees were being resettled.[18]

So much around the world was disrupted, including the established avenues for refugee resettlement in the U.S. But the faculty and staff of the school were ready to carry on, to enroll students and welcome new families to the International Welcome Center to the new school.

Mr. Rumpf continued about those first days:

> Kabul had just fallen. I was really nervous, thinking we have thirty-four kids. How are we going to justify having four teachers here? But Kabul just fell, and we knew that we were going to eventually start getting a lot more Afghan kids.[19]

Enrollment was slow until November. During those first few months, the school enrolled Congolese, Somali, and some Spanish-speaking children. Then in November, the Afghan students began to arrive—at first in small numbers, and then in larger groups. Mr. Rumpf said about that time: "Then we got our first Afghan family. They had three kids. Well, that's not very much. That was not the wave that we thought was going to come."[20]

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[17] Allyson Hile, Director of Language Services and Cultural Equity, oral history, April 13, 2023.
[18] Ryan Rumpf, Principal the Global Academy, oral history, April 12, 2023.
[19] Ryan Rumpf, Principal the Global Academy, oral history, April 12, 2023.
[20] Ryan Rumpf, Principal the Global Academy, oral history, April 12, 2023.

The preparation that resettlement agencies and all of the other support services need to have in place is extensive. I can only imagine what it is like to be prepared and to have to wait and worry that the plans and services put in place are unused until a time determined by another agency.

Mrs. Hile said of the new Afghan families and students,

> We were seen as another new partner in this crazy adventure into how we were going to figure this out and support these families. And for us, it was learning a whole new culture. We'd never had Dari and Pashto speakers. So, yes, let's figure it out.[21]

But then December 2021 arrived, and everything changed for Mr. Rumpf and for the faculty and staff at International Welcome Center and The Global Academy. Mr. Rumpf remembers one date in particular.

> December 15th, I'll never forget it. That whole hallway [he made a sweeping gesture with his arm toward the long hallway adjacent to where we were talking] was full of Afghan families. Between December 15 and about January 15th we had about 60 new students, which completely changed the dynamic of the building. It filled the classrooms. And they were mostly Afghan kids, and a quarter Hispanic kids and the rest were African refugee kids.[22]

The teachers at the Global Academy struggled with the sudden arrival of so many students and with students for whom just being in a classroom setting was a learning experience. The months went by, and Mr. Rumpf describes how slowly things settled down at the school and help became available:

> It was a bit of a struggle for a couple of months, I'm not going to lie. So that was January, then in April the paperwork was finalized and we could add a new instructional aide position. We could hire an Afghan gentleman, and when he started, he was really able to help with a lot of the behaviors,[23]

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[21] Allyson Hile, Director of Language Services and Cultural Equity, oral history, April 13, 2023.
[22] Ryan Rumpf, Principal the Global Academy, oral history, April 12, 2023.
[23] Ryan Rumpf, Principal the Global Academy, oral history, April 12, 2023.

Mrs. Hile talked about the challenge of resettlement of so many Afghan families all at once in the Northeast and making sure schooling was available to the children:

> Finding housing for these families that are larger was really hard. They were being served at hotels for a long time. Because they were at hotels, they weren't coming to us at the school. The teachers were going to them and having school at the hotel. We were these mobile units going out, identifying them, giving them a language screener that we're required to do by federal law. We'd do hotel school until they got into regular housing and could get on a bus and get to their regular school and come to us.[24]

As she shared her memories, I was better able to understand the extraordinary effort that was made to ensure these children received schooling. She was about to continue, but Mrs. Hile paused, took a breath, and said, "Gosh, just saying all that makes me think, how crazy that year was."[25] She paused again and continued:

> Of all of the times that this could have come together for a real need, that was the perfect time. It was frustrating along the way because things kept getting shut down or delayed, but it happened when it needed to happen.[26]

A Paraprofessional's Experience at the Global Academy

Mrs. Nasra is a paraprofessional teacher's aide at the Global Academy. She began her career in Kansas City working in Local Investment Commission (LINC). LINC provides the after-school program in the Kansas City elementary schools. After working with LINC after school, she applied to be a teacher's aide in the elementary schools in Kansas City. She worked with the newly resettled student population at Whittier Elementary and Gladstone Elementary and then applied for a paraprofessional position at the Global Academy.

[24] Allyson Hile, Director of Language Services and Cultural Equity, oral history, April 13, 2023.
[25] Allyson Hile, Director of Language Services and Cultural Equity, oral history, April 13, 2023.
[26] Allyson Hile, Director of Language Services and Cultural Equity, oral history, April 13, 2023.

Mrs. Nasra is originally from Kenya and speaks Swahili and Somali. A number of children at the Global Academy are Swahili speakers, so she uses her language ability to "reach them," as she said, in their first language as they do the difficult work of learning English. She sees her students get frustrated and she reassures them with support:

> It's okay, because they have a vision in their minds that they want to learn English. Okay, I say, yes, sweetie, you are going to learn English, but at the same time I want you to remember your language and keep your language because that's who you are, you know?[27]

That last sentence moved me. I wiped away a couple of tears. I wished I had heard something like that while I was growing up, about the importance of acquiring and holding onto the first language of my family so it would be a part of me, too.

I asked Mrs. Nasra to say a little more about how she assisted the children. "I don't want them to lose their language at all. That is the one thing that is dearly important to me."[28]

The school is dedicated to providing comprehensive support for the needs of immigrant, refugee, and non-native families in the city, and the center supports families and children who resettle here for whom Spanish, Arabic, Swahili, Kinyarwanda, Kinyamulenge, Somali, Karen, and Burmese are first languages. Mrs. Nasra is just one of the paraprofessionals who assist not only the children but the parents who are non-English or emergent English speakers.

The International Welcome Center provides the essential wrap-around services to the families. Along with help receiving vaccinations and health screenings and attending to the other needs of families new to the city and the country, the International Welcome Center

[27] Mrs. Abubakar Nasra, paraprofessional teacher's aide at Global Academy, oral history, April 12, 2023.
[28] Mrs. Abubakar Nasra, paraprofessional teacher's aide at Global Academy, oral history, April 12, 2023.

provides language assessment with help in placing students within the public school district. The school seems to have everything a new family could need to feel settled and ready to live in their new city.

Parents of Students

Parent engagement can help ensure a child's success while in school. Mrs. Nasra spoke about the relationships she develops with the parents of the students. Her experience with the parents of the students is different as she connects with them and supports them as their students take on the work of learning. "They are special, they are really understanding. You can see the excitement on their face. We had a parent teacher conference. I say not everything and anything is when students make mistakes, because mistakes are when they learn and grow."[29]

Mr. Rumpf spoke about the challenges he sees as an administrator: "Parental involvement like it is here is not a norm in the world." He's tried different ways to get them to the school for events so they can see the school, connect with teachers. "We've tried open houses, cultural nights and one there's no way to get them here unless we have a bus, and I've gone and picked them up. I think there's interest; it's just that transportation is a big deal."[30] Mr. Rumpf also spoke about the cultural issues with some of the families. "When we had all the Afghan families, men and women in the same room, you know it's nope, can't do it."[31]

[29] Mrs. Abubakar Nasra, paraprofessional teacher's aide at Global Academy, oral history, April 12, 2023.
[30] Ryan Rumpf, Principal the Global Academy, oral history, April 12, 2023.
[31] Ryan Rumpf, Principal the Global Academy, oral history, April 12, 2023.

Disruption in Schooling

Disruption in formal education is unfortunately a common experience for refugee children. The disruptions happen due to bureaucratic delays on their way to relocating to the United States. The Global Academy's program and curriculum aims to provide "an academic and socio-emotional soft landing when they arrive in Kansas City,"[32]

Mr. Rumpf spoke about this when he described the large influx in December 2021: "The girls, most of them had never been in school. So they didn't know how to walk in a line, they didn't know how to sit on the carpet. They thought this was playtime. They had no idea."

Mrs. Hile said of the influx, "So many of the girls had never been to school. High schoolers, had never been to school."[33]

Students Graduating from Global Academy

I was surprised to learn that students enrolled in the Global Academy are expected to graduate or move on so they can attend their neighborhood schools for the full day. When I asked Mrs. Nasra about this aspect of the school's program, she said, "When the students make progress, some want to stay longer, and you want to help them." It was at this point that Mrs. Nasra began to shed some tears as she thought about the students she has helped and was sad to see graduate from the Global Academy to enroll in their neighborhood schools for the full day. "They come through this door, and they want to share their story.

[32] "About," KCPS International Welcome Center, accessed September 11, 2022, https://welcomecenter.kcpublicschools.org/about.
[33] Allyson Hile, Director of Language Services and Cultural Equity, oral history, April 13, 2023.

When they see this map [she points to countries on a world map that hangs on the wall directly over the table where we sit] they will tell you, this is my country."[34]

Mrs. Hile described the students graduating from the Global Academy and moving on to their neighborhood school. "What we have found in many places is that they keep them too long." She and her colleagues have visited similar schools in Rochester and Buffalo, New York, and found that other programs for newly resettled immigrants and refugees keep students longer than is helpful to the student.

> It is really easy to keep the kids and then it's almost like segregation. I don't want to say it that way but they belong in their neighborhood school. They should have access to the kids and the curriculum and the language.[35]

She and her team decided early on that the Global Academy was not going to be an all-day program. If students arrive in Kansas City and they are older than sixth grade, they are enrolled in Northeast Middle School or East High School. "It's a half-day program for them, too, because of what we discovered in our pilot program."[36]

Images Gathered Online and at The School Site

Figure 7.5. Front page of the Global Academy's page on the Kansas City Public School's website. Source: KCPS International Welcome Center, KCPS, n.d., https://welcomecenter.kcpublicschools.org/.

[34] Mrs. Abubakar Nasra, paraprofessional teacher's aide at Global Academy, oral history, April 12, 2023.
[35] Allyson Hile, Director of Language Services and Cultural Equity, oral history, April 13, 2023.
[36] Allyson Hile, Director of Language Services and Cultural Equity, oral history, April 13, 2023.

Before visiting the school in April, I gathered the images included in articles about the school and that were posted on the Kansas City Public School's website. Figure 7.5 is a screenshot of the masthead of the web page for the school that is linked to the Kansas City Public Schools website. The image shows students walking through a hallway, with the "We Are KCPS" catchphrase included on the bottom. I remember seeing this on the website shortly after reading the Tweet that linked to the story in The Beacon.[37]

I found Figure 7.6 in article on the Kansas City Chamber of Commerce website. The teachers are holding handmade signs that read "Jambo" and "Bienvenidos," which translates to "hello" in Swahili and Spanish, respectively. Figure 7.7 shows a teacher with a class. The masks worn by everyone in the pictures helps the viewer understand the point in time.

Figure 7.6. Educators welcome students to the International Welcome Center. Source: "KCPS Opens International Welcome Center for Students, Families," Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, accessed March 1, 2023, https://www.kcchamber.com/current-topics/kansas-city-public-schools-opens-international-welcome-center-students-families.

[37] Maria Benevento, "'A 60,000-Square-Foot Welcome Mat': New KCPS Center Helps Immigrant, Refugee Students," *The Kansas City Beacon,* September 23, 2021, http://kcbeacon.org/stories/2021/09/23/kcps-center-helps-refugee-students/.

Figure 7.7. Students and teacher at the Global Academy. Source: Maria Benevento, "'A 60,000-Square-Foot Welcome Mat': New KCPS Center Helps Immigrant, Refugee Students," *The Kansas City Beacon,* September 23, 2021, http://kcbeacon.org/stories/2021/09/23/kcps-center-helps-refugee-students/.

With the dedicated staff of bilingual paraprofessional liaisons, experienced English Language Learner (ELL) teachers who are fluent in at least one other language besides English, and social workers who work closely with local outreach and resettlement programs, the International Welcome Center strives to provide resources and means of support in order to create the best foundation possible to ensure the students' success. Though the teachers, administrators and students may have different cultural and educational backgrounds, all of them are committed to students' success in the Global Academy at the International Welcome Center. Allyson said:

> Families know they can come to us, and we do everything from enrollment, but also accessing community resources, we have a food pantry now, we have a clothing closet. All of that has grown organically as we've gotten our feet under us and really figured out what the communities need.[38]

The mission of the school takes Article 26 from the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights to heart. The article states that every child is entitled to a free

[38] Allyson Hile, Director of Language Services and Cultural Equity, oral history, April 13, 2023.

and compulsory education.[39] The Declaration outlines how to honor the educational opportunities of children all over the world regardless of their country of origin or current status. I could see that people involved in making The International Welcome Center and Global Academy a reality were working to fulfill that promise for the immigrant and refugee children who make their new homes in Kansas City.

My Location Visit to International Welcome Center and Global Academy

Figure 7.8. Engoma Fataki stands next to one of several multilingual signs that adorn the halls of the KCPS International Welcome Center. Fataki came to Kansas City after 17 years in refugee camps, and he is now working at the new school to help it prepare for more refugees. Source: Laura Ziegler, "A New Kansas City Public School Offers Refugee Students Hope for a 'Soft Landing,'" https://www.kcur.org/news/2021-09-23/a-new-kansas-city-public-school-offers-refugee-students-hope-for-a-soft-landing.

I visited the International Welcome Center and Global Academy in April 2023. I called ahead and asked permission for a location visit and time for oral histories collection of a member of the staff and administration.

[39] "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, United Nations Department of Public Information, NY, accessed September 10, 2022, https://www.ohchr.org/en/human-rights/universal-declaration/translations/english.

The entrance for faculty and students is to the left of the main entrance of the Woodland School. The Woodland School at 711 Woodland Avenue Kansas City, Missouri, opened in 1921 and then reopened as the Woodland Early Learning Community School in 2013. The building is beautiful. The red tiles of the roof were the first feature I saw when I drove up to park. Then I noticed the other details in the stone work and the many windows! Perfect for a school for young children and newcomers to the city (see Figure 7.9).

Figure 7.9. The front of the Woodland School. Photo credit: Paula Watts.

Figure 7.10 is a photo of the entrance to the school and welcome center to the left of the main doors of the Woodland Center. Students are met by a faculty member when they exit their bus and are guided to the stairs. Depending on their schedule, students may arrive from their homes if they are scheduled to be at the Global Academy in the morning session or from their neighborhood school if they arrive at the Global Academy for the afternoon session.

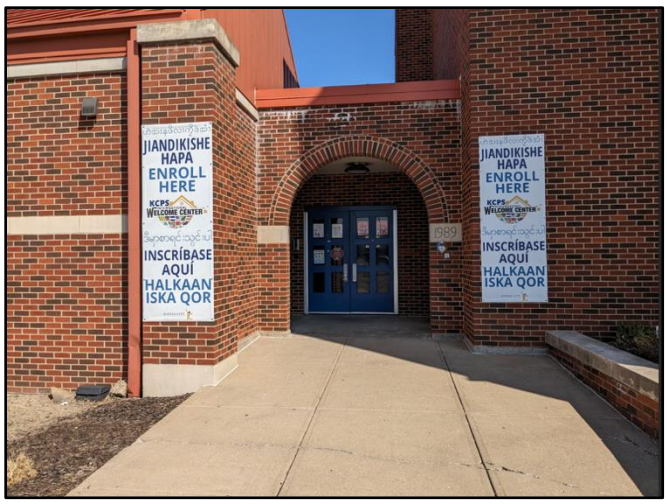


Figure 7.10. Student entrance to the International Welcome Center and Global Academy on the left side of the front of the building. Photo credit: Paula Watts.

Figure 7.11 is a brightly colored and attractively decorated directional pole planted just to the left of the entrance of the Global Academy. The countries and cities featured on the arrows are of the first home countries of the students attending the school. I couldn't discern all of the names of the countries because they were painted in the words of the language of that nation, but I could read a few: Democratic Republic of Congo, Mexico, Honduras, Columbia, and Nicaragua.

Figure 7.11. Directional pole outside of the entrance of the International Welcome Center and Global Academy. Photo credit: Paula Watts.

Figure 7.12 shows the entrance to the stairs that lead to the second floor, where the International Welcome Center and Global Academy is located. I took a picture of this panel next to the entrance because it featured directions in the most common languages spoken at the school. This is a small but welcoming touch for children and their parents to let them know they are welcome.

Figure 7.12. Entrance to the stairs to the second floor around the corner from the student and faculty entrance to the building. Photo credit: Paula Watts.

Figure 7.13 may appear to be an ordinary office with its check-in desk, computers, and a staff member waiting to assist and answer questions, but at the International Welcome Center and Global Academy, the main office is an essential first stop. Ryan told me:

> Something I don't think folks realize is how important the enrollment process is. In the mind of a parent, that's your first impression of a school, and for our parents, they just got here. Outside of the government agencies that the parents interact with, we're that first impression for the city, even, in that first office.[40]

This office is where the enrollment, screening, and outreach services are made available to new parents and families. It also has space inside for meetings and workers who are bi- and trilingual who help translate "up to twelve languages in person," according to Ryan. Parents also get help with the many forms necessary for enrollment and support services.

[40] Ryan Rumpf, Principal the Global Academy, oral history, April 12, 2023.

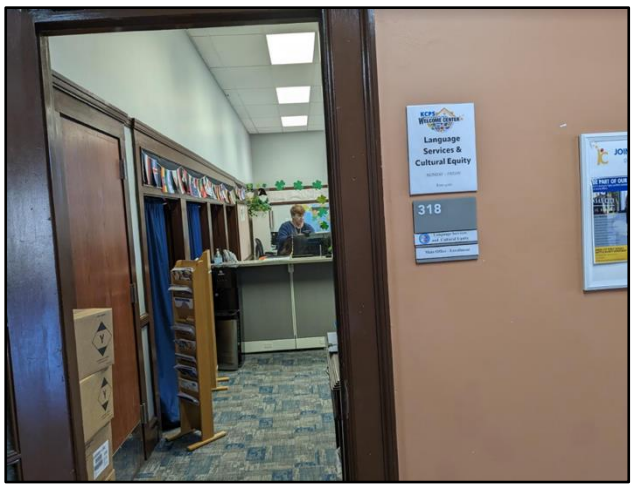


Figure 7.13. Enrollment Office, International Welcome Center and Global Academy. Photo credit: Paula Watts.

In the hallway I saw handwritten paper signs that read Gladstone, Garfield, and Whittier. These are the neighborhood schools the students attend for the other half of the day when they are not at the Global Academy. Figure 7.14 shows tables and chairs set up in the main hallway of the school. There are three other groupings such as this one that are used for small group lessons.

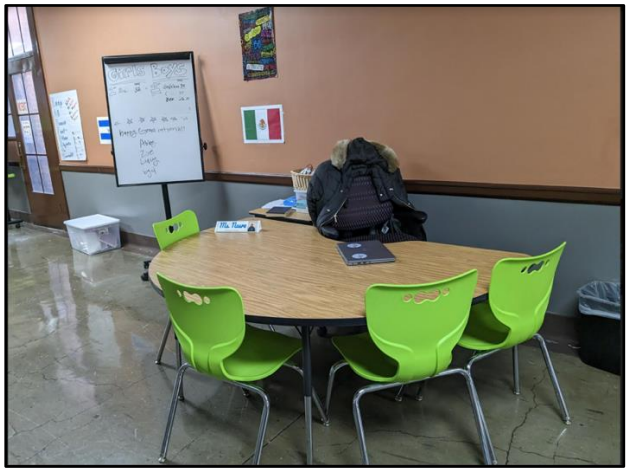


Figure 7.14. In the hallway there are areas with a table and chairs such as this one for small group work. Photo credit: Paula Watts.

Figure 7.15 is a mural of Kansas City. Ryan told me it was painted by a local non-profit arts organization that works with schools. The mural depicts Kansas City with several major landmarks such as the Woodland School, Downtown and the Kauffman Center, Union Station, Kessler Park, the Sporting KC arena in Kansas, and the Chiefs and Royals stadiums. It is a visual reminder of where the school is in relation to well known sections and landmarks in Kansas City. When the students heard about the Chiefs playing in the playoffs and then going on to win the Superbowl, they could look at the map and see that their neighborhood and their school is not a great distance away.

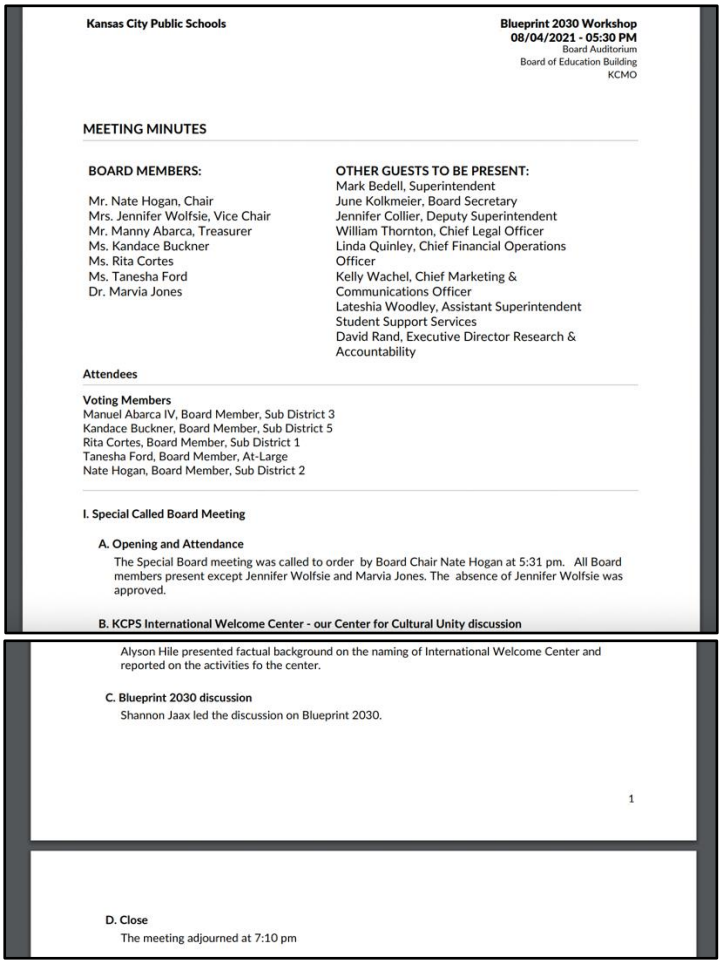
Figure 7.15. Hallway Mural (in progress). Photo credit: Paula Watts.

Board Minutes

This section shows the results of my efforts of searching for and examining documents from the Board of Education. School Board meeting notes are available on their website. I contacted the secretary of the Kansas City Board of Education, June Kolkmeier,

and she advised me as to how to search for and locate the minutes. I was hoping to find a paper trail regarding the opening of the school.

I tried to locate board minutes using the portal June told me to use, but I was unsuccessful. I reached out to Ms. Kolkmeier with another email asking for help. Her response told me there was a special meeting of the school board for the Global Academy, which was known at the time of the meeting as the Newcomer Center. She attached a link to minutes in her response. Figure 7.16 is a screenshot of the minutes of that meeting.



Kansas City Public Schools

Blueprint 2030 Workshop
08/04/2021 - 05:30 PM
Board Auditorium
Board of Education Building
KCMO

MEETING MINUTES

BOARD MEMBERS:

Mr. Nate Hogan, Chair
Mrs. Jennifer Wolfsie, Vice Chair
Mr. Manny Abarca, Treasurer
Ms. Kandace Buckner
Ms. Rita Cortes
Ms. Tanesha Ford
Dr. Marvia Jones

OTHER GUESTS TO BE PRESENT:

Mark Bedell, Superintendent
June Kolkmeier, Board Secretary
Jennifer Collier, Deputy Superintendent
William Thornton, Chief Legal Officer
Linda Quinley, Chief Financial Operations Officer
Kelly Wachel, Chief Marketing & Communications Officer
Lateshia Woodley, Assistant Superintendent Student Support Services
David Rand, Executive Director Research & Accountability

Attendees

Voting Members
Manuel Abarca IV, Board Member, Sub District 3
Kandace Buckner, Board Member, Sub District 5
Rita Cortes, Board Member, Sub District 1
Tanesha Ford, Board Member, At-Large
Nate Hogan, Board Member, Sub District 2

I. Special Called Board Meeting

A. Opening and Attendance

The Special Board meeting was called to order by Board Chair Nate Hogan at 5:31 pm. All Board members present except Jennifer Wolfsie and Marvia Jones. The absence of Jennifer Wolfsie was approved.

B. KCPS International Welcome Center - our Center for Cultural Unity discussion

Alyson Hile presented factual background on the naming of International Welcome Center and reported on the activities fo the center.

C. Blueprint 2030 discussion

Shannon Jaax led the discussion on Blueprint 2030.

1

D. Close

The meeting adjourned at 7:10 pm

Figure 7.16. KCPS school board meeting minutes, August 4, 2021. Source: “Blueprint 2030 Workshop.” KCPS Board of Directors Meeting, August 4, 2021.

There is only cursory mention of the opening of school: "Allyson Hile presented factual background on the naming of the International Welcome Center and reported on the activities fo [sic] the center."[41] No other details about the school are mentioned. I expected to see more. I can only guess that more was spoken at the meeting, but I have no way to know for sure.

Conclusion

The intention of this chapter was to focus on an important moment in the educational history of the children of immigrants and refugees in Kansas City with the opening of the International Welcome Center and Global Academy at the Woodland School in the Northeast section of Kansas City in August of 2021. This moment happened during a confusing start of the 2021–2022 school year, when the city and the rest of the country was still grasping for certainty amidst the fog of pandemic confusion and malaise.

The International Welcome Center and Global Academy is devoted to the educational needs of this population and seems determined to provide cultural learning opportunities for the children that will enable them to both retain their first language and cultural identity and also acquire new language and cultural competency for their new home. The "soft landing" that the school hopes to provide may be just the right approach for welcoming and educating these children in a way that is both effective and culturally responsive.

My hope is for administrators and teachers in public schools in urban areas to read the story about immigrant and refugee children in Kansas City and be inspired to open a school

[41] June Kolkmeier, Secretary of the Board of Directors, KCPS, International Welcome Center, Email, December 8, 2022.

such as this one in their own district. Innovative and progressive projects that aid vulnerable student populations can happen, even during times of uncertainty.

Final Thoughts

My intention was to tell the story of the educational experiences of immigrant and refugee children in Kansas City with a focus on the years following the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965. I began with an introduction about the history of Kansas City Public Schools, followed by overviews of the influx of immigration groups, then ending with the announcement of a new school specifically designed for this population that opened in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is a surprising, uplifting, and inspiring story that brings together different parts of the educational landscape in Kansas City and the agencies that support this marginalized population. Once I learned that the school opened, I wanted to know everything I could about it and the children who were enrolled there. After gathering details and information, I wanted to tell every teacher and school administrator what I learned. My perspective as a new resident of Kansas City and as a member of an immigrant family who did not encourage me to fully grasp this part of my identity allowed me to tell this story with compassion and sensitivity.

This New School Might Have the Best Shot at Success

With the availability of wraparound services for families to ensure stable households for the children, the connections to the long established resettlement agencies who have served the immigrants and refugees in Kansas City for decades, and the encouragement for students to retain their first culture and language by a well trained, empathetic, and informed staff and faculty, the Global Academy and International Welcome Center in the Kansas City

School District may have the best chance for becoming a model for other public school districts that educate resettled immigrant and refugee children in the United States.

Other school districts would do well to notice what KCPS is doing with this new school and program. The populations for any city can change with refugees arriving frequently from countries all over the world. The definition of success for this population can change, too. It does not have to mean only that the children lose their old language to become more "American."

After conducting research on this topic, I was struck by how little scholarship exists on the educational histories of immigrant and refugee children in public schools, and more specifically, in mid-sized cities in the Midwestern area of the United States. Therefore, it is my hope that educators and administrators will find value in my research. I see a need for those who write policies in education to study this specific story so they may write better policies for their schools and districts in the future. The story is of value for educators and administrators in Kansas City, but also those working in other cities with growing immigrant and refugee populations that are enrolling in public schools. Also, my hope is that other educators and administrators may take as a model International Welcome Center and Global Academy's approach of encouraging the retention of the first language and culture while at the same time acquiring a new one. An accurate and inclusive picture of the educational past that includes the stories of children from multiple countries and cultures speaking multiple languages can help educators create better informed policies in the future.

It is my sincere hope that this dissertation marks only the beginning of scholarship and investigation into the lives and schooling experiences of immigrant and refugee children in the United States. There is much more to uncover and more stories to tell.

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VITA

Paula D'Introno Watts was born in Canarsie, Brooklyn, New York. Her family moved to Glen Rock, New Jersey when she turned five. She graduated from Glen Rock Public Schools. She attended Rutgers University, New Brunswick campus and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in English Literature and a minor in Art History in 1997. After working in the branches of the New York Public Library for several years, Paula returned to Rutgers University and graduated with a Masters Degree in Library and Information Science in 2003.

In addition to her academic journey, Paula worked as the Head Librarian at Rutgers Preparatory School from 2005 to 2019, when she moved to Kansas City, Missouri, with her husband and daughter. She is currently the Librarian at Foreign Language Academy, a Kansas City Public School.

Paula continued her academic journey at University of Missouri-Kansas City's Interdisciplinary Ph.D. program with an interest in the educational experiences of immigrant and refugee children. Her students at Foreign Language Academy and her colleagues continue to be an inspiration to her. Upon completion of her doctorate degree, Paula wishes to continue researching, writing, and teaching.