

## Reading 1

from New York Times: ["Americans Stretch Across Political Divides to Welcome Afghan Refugees"](#)

Throughout the United States, Americans across the political spectrum are stepping forward to welcome Afghans who aided the U.S. war effort in one of the largest mass mobilizations of volunteers since the end of the Vietnam War.

In rural Minnesota, an agricultural specialist has been working on visa applications and providing temporary housing for the newcomers, and she has set up an area for halal meat processing on her farm. In California, a group of veterans has sent a welcoming committee to the Sacramento airport to greet every arriving family. In Arkansas, volunteers are signing up to buy groceries, do airport pickups and host families in their homes.

"Thousands of people just fled their homeland with maybe one set of spare clothes," said Jessica Ginger, 39, of Bentonville, Ark. "They need housing and support, and I can offer both." Donations are pouring into nonprofits that assist refugees, even though in most places few Afghans have arrived yet. At Mission Community Church in the conservative bedroom community of Gilbert outside Phoenix, parishioners have been collecting socks, underwear, shoes and laundry supplies.

Mars Adema, 40, said she had tried over the past year to convince the church's ministries to care for immigrants, only to hear that "this is just not our focus."

"With Afghanistan, something completely shifted," Ms. Adema said.

In a nation that is polarized on issues from abortion to the coronavirus pandemic, Afghan refugees have cleaved a special place for many Americans, especially those who worked for U.S. forces and NGOs, or who otherwise aided the U.S. effort to free Afghanistan from the Taliban.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/06/us/afghan-refugees-volunteers.html>

### Discuss:

- Share your impressions, feelings, experiences and/or thoughts about what you just read.
- How do the Americans in the piece think about the Afghan refugees in need of resettlement?
- What, if anything, are the Americans in the piece doing in response?

## Reading 2

from New York Times: ["Americans Stretch Across Political Divides to Welcome Afghan Refugees"](https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/06/us/afghan-refugees-volunteers.html)

The moment stands in contrast to the last four years when the country, led by a president who restricted immigration and enacted a ban on travel from several majority-Muslim countries, was split over whether to welcome or shun people seeking safe haven. And with much of the electorate still deeply divided over immigration, the durability of the present welcome mat remains unknown.

Polls show Republicans are still more hesitant than Democrats to receive Afghans, and some conservative politicians have warned that the rush to resettle so many risks allowing extremists to slip through the screening process. Influential commentators, like Tucker Carlson, the Fox News host, have said the refugees would dilute American culture and harm the Republican Party. Last week, he warned that the Biden administration was "flooding swing districts with refugees that they know will become loyal Democratic voters."

But a broad array of veterans and lawmakers have long regarded Afghans who helped the United States as military partners, and have long pushed to remove the red tape that has kept them in the country under constant threat from the Taliban. Images of babies being lifted over barbed-wire fences to American soldiers, people clinging to departing planes and a deadly terrorist attack against thousands massed at the airport, desperate to leave, have moved thousands of Americans to join their effort.

"For a nation that has been so divided, it feels good for people to align on a good cause," said Mike Sullivan, director of the Welcome to America Project in Phoenix. "This country probably hasn't seen anything like this since Vietnam."

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### Reading 3

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The national infrastructure for resettling refugees has shrunk drastically over the last five years as the Trump administration slashed refugee admissions and cut federal funding to the nine contracted resettlement agencies whose caseworkers help arrivals enroll children in school, find jobs and become self-sufficient.

More than 100 offices where refugees seek help when transitioning to their adopted homes had shuttered by 2019. ....

Public opinion surveys have shown broad support for resettling Afghan refugees [sic]. In a [Washington Post-ABC News poll](#) released on Friday, 68 percent said they supported taking in refugees who had been subjected to security review, and 27 percent opposed it. The support included 56 percent of Republicans. Volunteer agencies said the community mobilization has crossed traditional political dividing lines.

“We have never seen anything like it,” said Krish O’Mara Vignarajah, the chief executive of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, a resettlement agency that has affiliates in 22 states.

Many Afghans are expected to join family and friends in established communities in California, Texas and the Washington, D.C., metro region. But, given the large volume of arrivals, they are likely to land in any corner of the country where jobs are plentiful, housing is affordable and there is a resettlement infrastructure.

On a recent rainy day in Prince George’s County, Md., Laura Thompson Osuri, executive director of Homes Not Borders, a small nonprofit, was racing between the group’s storage unit to two apartment complexes where two new families would be housed. In the car, she was zipping through frantic queries on her cellphone: Where was the stuff for the crib? Who needed the table? Yikes, was that my exit?

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“There is a momentum now that I have not seen since 2015,” said Mary Kaeck, who leads Phoenix Refugee Connections and advocates evangelical involvement with refugees. “I’m hoping that momentum will sustain,” she said.

But will it?

Tiffany Kapadia, 38, a realtor and mother of two young children in Phoenix, said she had seen the news from Afghanistan and had tried to put herself in the shoes of families fleeing for their lives. She has donated money to the fund-raising effort at her church.

“I am trying to peel away the negative rhetoric that comes from some news outlets and people,” she said, including from her brother, Josh Davies, who said he worried about terrorists and other criminals infiltrating the mass of arrivals, and about the impact of so many new immigrants on American culture and politics. “Who are these people? If 1 percent of them are ISIS, it’s all it takes,” Mr. Davies said.

Kari Lake, a former television anchor who is running for governor, tweeted a warning: “Unvetted refugees incoming.”

But Gov. Doug Ducey of Arizona, a Republican, said recently that [the state welcomed Afghan evacuees](#) and was working to offer them “safety in Arizona.”

Chris St. John, a vice president at the Center for Arizona Policy, an advocacy organization that promotes conservative values, [said in a blog post](#) that he applauded the governor. “I am not looking at this from a political perspective; I’m coming from a decidedly biblical perspective,” he said in an interview. “Could someone dangerous come? Perhaps. It is still worth the risk.”

Jason Creed, chairman of the board of Desert Springs Bible Church, said he had not heard complaints about the fund-raising drive for refugees. ....

The church is part of a newly formed coalition of churches in Phoenix that has committed to provide families with groceries, household supplies and furniture as well as assistance navigating the bus system and filling out job applications. “At the core of our mission is loving our neighbors,” Pastor Campbell said. “Which is not a one-time event.”

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