

Refugees from Burma: Values to bring with us, and changes or things to leave behind

During a cultural orientation session delivered by IRC/RSC East Asia in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, the participants, all refugees from Burma, identified the values that they would like to retain after resettlement, as well as changes they would like to make in themselves, their situation, or their values.

This exercise is conducted on the final day of orientation, and is designed to make refugees consider the values they consider most important and the changes they may like to make upon resettlement. Throughout the orientation course, refugees are encouraged to retain the elements of their culture and the characteristics that they hold most dear, as well as to modify behaviors that will make their adjustment to life in the United States more difficult.

These are the responses of a few participants, as interpreted. While only one of many activities during IRC/RSC East Asia's four-day cultural orientation sessions, the information shared in this exercise may be of interest to service providers working with refugees from Burma.

Values to bring	Changes to make
My religion, my customs and my culture, my values	Learn English, be successful businessman (owning a restaurant), adapt to American culture
My religion (which must be passed to the next generation), some cultural sayings for the next generation, traditional dance	Leave behind all bad behavior, master English, get a job (I'm afraid to get married without a secure job)
Values, the Bible, my religion, the Chin language and literature, our traditional clothing	Myself: I give up and get depressed when I face a problem, but I want to change that. I want to change being late. I want to be very good at English. I want to be a good mother to my children, and I want to be with my people.
Values, our religion and culture, what parents teach, our history and customs	To become successful, to try to be adaptable to my environment. I want to try to be a good leader, to lead my people.
Values, being kind, helping each other, being honest and friendly, being motivated, always remembering our opportunities	I want to respect time. Also, now, as a refugee, I don't belong to any country; I want to be a country's citizen.