

## **Creating a Voice for Change: Issues and Recommendations**

### **Issue 1**

Many untapped capacities exist within the refugee community and ought to be utilized. Their voices are valuable sources of change.

Recommendations:

- Success of the Ethiopian Community Association in Atlanta, Inc. (ECAA) reorganization is a good model for creating a broad-based task force on refugee issues in and around Atlanta
- USCIS should be included in an attempt to create this task force (according to Joe Kernan - Community Relations Officer, USCIS, Dept. Homeland Security)
  - USCIS is responsible for all aspects of immigration and citizenship
  - USCIS can report problems with systems more easily
  - Mr. Kernan offered the use of the USCIS building near Tucker as a possible location for this type of initiative
    - Has a large auditorium and PA system available for use
- Creating a task force will take time and requires thoughtful planning
- Involvement in local politics can help the refugee community be engaged

### **Issue 2**

Community groups, professional organizations, and associations need to be involved in community action.

Recommendations:

- Both the ECAA and Kurdish Community Center are examples of organization that have gotten these groups involved
- These organizations, and others, can be used as models

### **Issue 3**

Refugees need to be aware of the Census and the importance of participating in it.

Recommendations:

- Explain to refugees the benefits of participating in the Census
- Stay aware of the Census Public Awareness Campaigns
  - Campaign will include teaching children in schools about the Census so they can inform their parents
  - Local communities can apply for grants for up to \$3,000 to run their own census campaigns
  - Census Bureau has material available to place in agencies, public places
- Encourage members of ethnic groups to Self-ID so the group are counted in the Census

**Issue 4**

Applying for citizenship is an important step for refugee to take.

Recommendations:

- Jewish Family and Career Services (and potential other organizations) offer Civics and Citizenship courses
- English proficiency is a requirement of the test, so attending ESL courses is vital
  - Jewish Family and Career Services are now offering a community ESL class in Clarkston
- Explain to refugee communities the benefits of citizenship