

TALKING STORY IN ASIAN AMERICA

■ Polo



# At year's end

What we do, and who we are

**A**va is photocopying piles of papers. Papers in Arabic and French and English. Yellowed and folded and refolded papers. Papers of paragraphs neatly masoned in blocks of tidy MS Word font. Papers in the universally awful scrawl of rushed physicians. Important papers, all of them.

Ava is 10. Her big brother Jude is 11. She's in fifth grade, he's in sixth, and they both like school a lot. Their mom, Diana Nuñez, explained this demanding documentation task — their entire Saturday — just a couple of evenings before. During dinner.

"They need to see another perspective," Ms. Nuñez says, "an example of the generations that came before them, what it took so that they can have their comfortable lives now. I am a first-generation Mexican American," she says. "And they are second generation."

Exhausted Iraqi and Afghani parents, wounded Congo and Burma women, brought those important papers real early this Saturday morning. Bright Somali teenagers brought them by the Safeway grocery-bag full. Four generations of brand new Portlanders of 14 Old World communities packed them to Catholic Charities of Oregon's four-story block on still hushed S.E. Powell Boulevard, between Wendy's and Cleveland High, near East Portland Locksmith. Those hardy little English sparrows, here even in gloomy November, were singing their hearts out.

**What refugee means**

These families arrived by TriMet's first morning busses, when Catholic Charities was dark and locked. I shared a Turkish smoke with Iraqi Kurd brothers Jassim and Dar. Around us, our growing crowd chatted anxiously in about a quarter of Portland's 90 or so languages, worrying whether they brought the right papers. Whether they even had them. Ever. They are refugees. Like our family and I were — meaning, none of us had the time or presence of mind to sort and pack anything before shoving out to sea, or striking out across the frontier.

Meaning, the U.N.'s High Commissioner for Refugees *plus* the president of the United States of America, separately determined that each toddler and teen, each parent, grandparent, and great-grandparent, gathering here at Catholic Charities, is a scared-to-death asylum seeker. It is a fine-toothed legal process.

This Saturday morning's crowd are the lucky ones. "Tentu, kasihan'illaah," surely God loves you, we say back home, because many do not get out alive. Most still sit in neighboring nations' squalid holding camps, or have surreptitiously slipped into their general populations. Stateless illegal aliens, forever.

I see our mother in many-many women's faces here. I see our father too. She's looking hard at him, and he's turned away. She's extremely anxious about whether he's collected the requisite quantum and quality of evidence of each of our family member's *reasonable fear of persecution*, as the legal standard reads. She's worried sick, whether each of our respective paper piles will verify that each of us is moral enough to remain in the United States. Or be shipped back, to hell.

Our mamma, and consequently her

entire household, indeed our entire community of likewise open-wounded families, lived at this exhausting emotional high for only four years. Folks gathered here today, have hummed with this communal dread, depending on which nation they fled, for anywhere from two to 22 years.

Our pop did not return her gaze. Not because he's not the mightiest man out of the Ouwe Batavia neighborhood their families shared back home. Because he is. The blessed fact of us breathing Oregon air and living American dreams, proves it. Less muscular and less quick-witted dads' families never got out, or they're still sitting around miserable refugee communities in humid Malaysia, in arid Kenya, in suburban France.

No. These men aren't returning their women's looks because of shame. Out of humiliation. Because they've failed to properly protect and properly provide for their families. Like each promised. Seas of this shame are rising everywhere, oceans as dark as those dividing families burdened by last century's colonialised economies and the beneficiaries of our accelerated west.

Humiliated men are not good. There's risk that some will harm themselves, and maybe others, usually those they love — our Anglo-American legal standard for locking them away.

**"It's the Portland way"**

About 1,200 refugees resettle like this in Oregon each year. Every month about 100 survivors of our wobbly world's worst regimes take a deep breath here. Here, on the generous banks of our two river matriarchs. Our city (America's 52nd largest) ranks eleventh for numbers of refugees. Our percentage of kind people is much higher than most U.S. cities. Terima kasih banyak (I offer our love) for your

## Band favored by North Korean leader cancels Beijing concerts

*Continued from page 3*

have been related to stories circulated by South Korean media about a rumored past relationship between the married Kim and a female member of the band, which also made rounds on Chinese social media, said Yang Moo-jin, a North Korea expert at the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul.

North Korea has built a cult of personality around the Kim family, which has ruled for three generations, and sees any outside criticism or mockery of its leader as an attack on its sovereignty.

"There are few things the North takes more seriously than an attack on the dignity of its supreme leadership, and it might have decided to bring the female

members of the band back quickly to cut off such reports," Yang said.

While China continues to provide crucial economic support and diplomatic cover for Kim's impoverished communist regime, the North Korean leader appears to have used defiance of Beijing to shore up perceptions of his own power and independence of action.

Relations appeared to be on the mend following a well-publicized visit to Pyongyang by high-ranking Chinese official Liu Yunshan in October. However, Kim's unwillingness to visit China and his government's refusal to restart denuclearization talks have frustrated the Chinese leadership.

*Associated Press writers Louise Watt in Beijing and Kim Tong-hyung in Seoul, South Korea contributed to this report.*



Diana Nuñez and her daughter Ava are seen at Catholic Charities of Oregon, first- and second-generation New Americans doing what Portlanders are nationally envied for doing. Civil society. (Photo/Ping Khaw)

goodness. Portlanders are like that.

How this continuously cycling flow of our achy earth's most resourceful and most optimistic families successfully integrates into River City, is really the core of this column. Coincidentally, it's also central to this season, the one of miracles celebrated by all children of Prophet Abraham. Jews and Muslims and Christians alike.

Mainstreaming Portland's 70 or so newcomer streams is mostly the work of local civil society. Of course, our federal government directly assists refugees (though not immigrants) for eight months; county government looks after health and wellness; city hall engages elders and activists in getting valuable city services into our ambitious neighborhoods. But the thousand-thousand things newcomers need to know and say and do daily — like shopping and driving, like speaking to your son's teacher or your grandma's doctor, like filing forms necessary to be a driver, a patient, or a legally present alien — require caring people. Our civil society.

By civil society, we mean that second wave of Portlanders arriving at Catholic Charities this early Saturday morning: those still-sleepy neighbors, lawyers, cops, social workers, community activists, lugging spouted boxes of hot Starbucks, Costco-sized flats of croissants, bagels, tubs of cream cheese, and enough bottled water for, well, a humanitarian crisis. We mean: Asian Pacific American Chamber of Commerce's president Ping Khaw carrying tray after tray of fragrant entrées donated by Chinese Portlanders' restaura-

**"We as Portlanders, Oregonians, Americans, and human beings need to remember that refugees are fleeing the senseless violence that has taken so many lives recently. I will be greeting Portland's first Syrian refugee family at the airport, and I expect the community will help make our city their new home. It's the Portland way."**

*-- Portland mayor Charlie Hales*

rants. I mean, grade-schoolers Ava and Jude, and their proud New American mom, Diana. Back in Indonesia, we called these folks tetangga penuh kasih (kind neighbors).

Civil society made Portland a nationally envied model of neighborhood activism, from the time our family resettled right up to now. Affirming this extraordinary ethos, while dismissing those shrill narratives linking terrorism to families fleeing ferocious armies, mayor Charlie Hales recently said: "I will be greeting Portland's first Syrian refugee family at the airport, and I expect the community will help make our city their new home."

"It's the Portland way," he said. A certain attitude, backed by solid acts.

Ava says that when she walked into Catholic Charities' crowded community room, she felt curious about so many different families from so many different places, and then she felt sad about their really hard lives. Her mom explained what it means to be a refugee, and what hope means to lost parents and kids. Ms. Nuñez says she's teaching her children that helping at Catholic Charities gives these families hope. That their help makes these parents and kids feel cared for. That it's about both feeling others' sorrow and doing something about it.

So what are Ava and Jude doing next? Helping mom organize a pillow and toothbrush drive at their school. Simply and solidly acting on a kid's understanding of what it takes to feel comforted, and to start a new life. Doing what Portlanders do.

*Nota: To view facts on U.S. refugee resettlement, simply and solidly stated, visit <www.immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/refugees-fact-sheet>.*

## su | do | ku

© Puzzles by Pappocom

			4	1		2		
6		8					3	
	1			6	9			
			9					2
1	3					6	9	
5			7					
	2	4				5		
3				9			1	
4		2	1					

Difficulty level: Hard #41268

**Instructions:** Fill in the grid so that the digits 1 through 9 appear one time each in every row, column, and 3x3 box.

### Solution to last week's puzzle

Puzzle #12548 (Medium)

All solutions available at <www.sudoku.com>.

8	7	6	1	2	5	3	9	4
1	5	4	8	9	3	7	2	6
2	9	3	4	7	6	5	8	1
3	4	7	9	6	1	8	5	2
9	2	8	5	4	7	6	1	3
6	1	5	2	3	8	9	4	7
7	8	9	6	1	2	4	3	5
4	6	1	3	5	9	2	7	8
5	3	2	7	8	4	1	6	9

**The Asian Reporter is published on the first & third Monday each month.**  
*News page advertising deadlines for our next issue are:*

**January 4 to 17, 2016 edition:**  
*Space reservations due:*  
 Wednesday, December 30 at 1:00pm  
*Artwork due:* Thursday, December 31 at 1:00pm