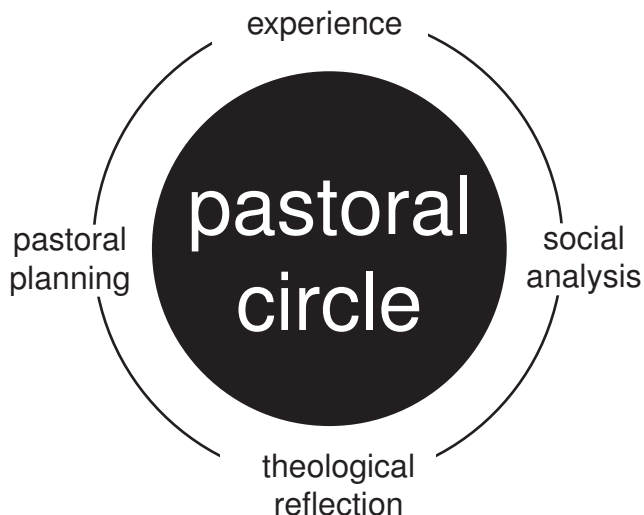


The Pastoral Circle: A Tool for Going Deeper



Experience

What is the current situation? What has happened that we would like to consider more deeply?

- Read the Stories of Immigrants
- Briefly add any direct experience or knowledge of immigration anyone in the group would like to share

Analysis

This stage considers the social, cultural, economic, political, environmental and ecclesial factors that influence the situation. These are complex questions that do not need to be fully answered, but provide a framework for a deeper consideration of the situation.

- What influence do policy and economics have?
- What role do cultural values play in the situation?
- What are the causes of the situation and why?
- What do the people need or want?
- What institutions have shaped the situation for better or worse? Government? Church? Family? Community Groups? Corporations?

Theological Reflection

What does our faith and our tradition have to say about the situation?

- What do we understand from Scripture about the situation?
- What do our Catholic Social Teachings have to say?
- What light do the holy men and women throughout our Church history bring to the situation?
- How might God be calling us to respond?

Action or Pastoral Response

Identifies a possible response to the situation and practical steps that can be taken

- How much energy do I/we have to give to addressing the situation?
- What is a realistic goal and specific steps I/we could take?
- How can I/we assist people to engage in responding to the situation of immigration?



Stories of Immigrants

The Hassan / Ahmed Family

Mohammed Hassan and his family fled the war in Somalia in 1992, when Mohammed was four. He and five older sisters came to the United States with their father, but were separated from their mother during the war. She and her oldest daughter, Sadia, went to a refugee camp in Kenya, where Sadia's baby, Ruqia, was born. In November of 1996, after four long years, Sadia and Ruqia joined the others in Chicago. Mohammed, his sister, Mulki, and his mother Amina Ahmed, told their stories several months later when Mohammed was in fourth grade and Mulki was a freshman in high school.

Mohammed Hassan

I was born in Mogadishu. What I remember is the water. If you want water, you take a rope with a bucket and put it down a hole and then pull it up.

I was too little to go to school so my mom was just holding me. It was very hot in Somalia. Sometimes it rained all the time. We lived far from the ocean. We lived in a big house made out of rocks.

I was too little to see any fighting. I was three. We would play hide and seek. I liked it there. Auntie still lives there with my cousins. I would like to go back. It was sunny and everything was fresh. My dad had a garden. Doctors were all free.

We would go and see my uncle's two camels. We kept a goat. It had a baby, but the dog ate it. We don't touch a dog. It is against our religion.

I was scared when I had to leave Somalia. I had to leave my mother. I remember crying.

We took three airplanes, and it took three days. Five hundred people were taking the airplane. My dad worked for the United Nations and the UN people helped us.

When we first moved to Chicago, we had 24 people related to us living there. I played with cars. I like toys like cars and motorcycles. When I get older, I will drive a car all around. I like Chicago, but not that much. I don't like the gangsters.

I help around the house. I make my bed and wash the bathroom every Saturday. I take out the garbage. My favorite food is McDonald's hamburger, french fries and vanilla milkshake. I go ice skating on Saturdays.

I like school. It is important. I like math the best. I like Ayaz. He is my best friend and gave me a calculator. I do not like T.V. I just like to study. I want to be a doctor. I'll need to see people's tongues with a stick. I want to be an ear, eyes and throat doctor with older people. I think I can make it.

When I get older I will marry at eighteen.

My mom came to Chicago on November 22, 1996. I didn't know about it. It was a big surprise. She hugged and kissed me, and she cried and I cried. I was so surprised and so happy. We had a party, the biggest party in the world. Everybody loves our mom. I was so little that I didn't remember her, but now I am very happy.

Mulki Hassan (Mohammed's Sister)

I went to school in Mogadishu. It was a crowded city. I liked it there, because it was always hot and we never had to wear jackets. I walked to school. It was in back of our house. I studied Arabic, math and art. They made us lunch, sometimes spaghetti or rice or sandwiches. I was happy.

Then trouble started. I was about 10 then. Soldiers could come and shoot you and take what they wanted. They pushed you, messed up stuff and took money. They were young. They trashed stuff. We couldn't sleep. It was so noisy and guns were all over. They had grenades. My big sister's husband died there.

We had to stop going to school. My dad would go out and get stuff. It was very dangerous. We went shopping once and never went back. Then we had to leave fast. We couldn't bring anything—just the clothes we were wearing. I was scared.

We went on foot. My dad took us to Medina—to our cousin's house. My mom stayed to watch the house with my sister.



Stories of Immigrants

continued from other side

Then we went in a truck to Kenya, but not my mom. We were so worried about her. My mom thought she would never see us again, and we thought we would never see her.

We stayed in Nairobi, in Kenya, for a month. My dad knew people, but we didn't want to stay. It wasn't safe.

Then we got on a plane. That was scary too, when it goes up and down. We were dreaming of coming to America, and our dreams came true.

We were shocked by snow and cold. The first time we saw downtown, it was awesome.

When we went to school, nobody was from Somalia. Everyone stared, but they were nice. I was in fifth grade. I was in a bi-lingual class, and it took me two years to learn English. There were a lot of kids who were talking to me, but I just shook my head because I couldn't understand. Then I made friends with some Puerto Rican girls.

We didn't hear from my mom for a long time. I didn't know if she was ok, if she was alive. When she came last November, Mohammed didn't remember her, he didn't know her name. I really missed my mom.

I want to be a nurse – whenever there's a problem, I can help.

We go to mosque together on Friday – the women sit on one side, the men on the other. On Sundays we go from nine in the morning until one. We don't date or go out with boys. If a man wants to come to your house, he asks your parents. I don't want to date. I go to school and come straight home. I should be getting married when I'm 20. I could wait until 25, but 30 is too old. My mom got married when she was 15 and had my sister at 16.

Amina Ahmed (Mohammed's Mother)

I used to live in Mogadishu with my former husband and my children. We had a farm between Afgoi and Merca. We grew maize and sesame, which we sold in our grocery store. I helped manage the store with the sons of my husband's other wife. My

husband worked for the American Embassy for 32 years, helping foreign workers get used to living in Somalia. I lived in our big six bedroom house from the time I got married at age 15. We had a good life.

The war started little by little in the north of Somalia. Nobody tried to get out. We didn't know the war would be so big. Then we had to flee our house – once in 1990, and again in 1992. The fighters were mostly people from the countryside who had guns. They came to the city to take anything they could, like money and jewels. When the war started in Mogadishu, my husband took the children to safety. They left by truck and went to the border with Kenya. Foreigners, especially those who worked for the U.N., were airlifted to safety by helicopter.

I stayed behind to protect the house, but I was scared because the gunmen tried to kill people who stayed in their houses. My oldest daughter Sadia, who was pregnant with Ruqia, stayed behind too. When we saw a lot of artillery fire we ran out. We escaped with nothing, not even pictures. I lost everything in the house. Sadia's husband and my brother were killed.

After leaving my house, I went to Medina, but when I got there, I heard that my husband and kids had left and gone to Mandera, Kenya, near the border. I walked 15 days to reach Mandera. When I got to Mandera I rejoined Sadia, but the rest of the family had already left. I was always just missing my family. I had so many problems on the trip. I didn't have any money, and I was scared of being killed and never seeing my kids again. I never dreamed I'd be with them in the U.S.

We went to a refugee camp in Mandera. Four months after leaving our house, I spoke to my family by phone and learned they were safe in the U.S. From Mandera we went to the refugee camp in Mombasa, Kenya, where Sadia's baby was born. We lived there for a long time. I had contact with my family in the U.S., but I was afraid I would never see them again.

After three years in Mombasa, my daughter, Hawa, called me from the United States and told me she was going to sponsor us to come here. We were so happy! I cried when the whole family met us at O'Hare Airport. I hadn't seen my children for four years.

Source: For You were once a Stranger: Immigration in the U.S. Through the Lens of Faith, Interfaith Worker Justice, 2007, www.iwj.org

