



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

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ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

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Washington, D.C. 20447

Dear colleagues and friends,

Happy Holidays and best wishes for a healthy and wonderful 2015!

After careful and extensive consideration, I have made the difficult decision to resign from my position as Director of the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), effective January 31, 2015.

I am deeply grateful to and honored by the Administration for allowing me to serve as Director of ORR for nearly six years, and for its unwavering support and guidance. As I came to the decision to step down, I have reflected upon my tenure at ORR and all that we were able to accomplish together. The list is extensive, and illustrates just how integral the network is to our programs' successes. From the U.S. Resettlement Program, to the Rescue & Restore anti-trafficking campaign, to the Unaccompanied Children's Program, this tiny office plays a critical role in providing essential services to a wide range of vulnerable people. I've said this many times before, but it truly does take a village to care for the uprooted and newcomers amongst us.

For those of you who have known me a long time, you know that I am not a political man. My "platform" is and has always been simple: "Put the refugees first." When I was appointed to be the Director of ORR, I arrived with that simple goal foremost in my mind. I am pleased to say that over the past six years, we managed to keep the refugees first in just about every conversation—even when they were being overshadowed by the ever-increasing budgetary and political challenges, the influx of unaccompanied children, or the repatriation of U.S. citizens and their families from Haiti accompanied by nearly 800 orphans, or other emerging political considerations that threatened the continued funding of everyone served by this office. But one thing did change: my own personal definition of "refugee" expanded to include all the vulnerable populations of concern to ORR, as we strove to keep everyone at the center of the conversation and decision-making, and remain true to the humanitarian imperative of this office.

Since I came to ORR in 2009, we have served more than 400,000 refugees, 150,000 asylees, 125,000 Cuban and Haitian Entrants, nearly 21,000 Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrant Visa holders, 3,200 Victims of Trafficking, over 32,000 U.S. repatriates, and almost 116,000 unaccompanied children. Altogether, that is more than 850,000 people, in just six years. I am proud to have been a part of these historic efforts.

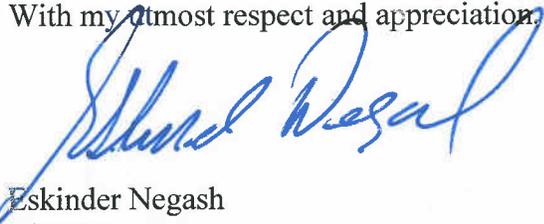
I like to think about what that number represents in families—including those reunified and also those that have grown from the new beginning each has been given—who now live in a place free from persecution based on one's race, nationality, religion, political opinion, or simply from belonging in a particular social group. While the road is yet unclear for the unaccompanied children we have served, I am honored to be part of an entity responsible for reunifying more than 95% of them with their family members after long separation and a truly horrendous journey in between.

As Director, I dedicated my service on behalf of refugees, many of whom have languished for decades in desolate refugee camps without hope or vision for the future, and for the many unaccompanied children lost on the long, treacherous trail in search of their loved ones. I took this job on their behalf, and I assure you that I worked tirelessly with humility and gratitude to restore hope and dignity to all ORR clients regardless of their origin.

Most of all, I'd like to thank you all for your immeasurable contributions to the mission of this office, and the work that we do. Each day, I have been especially blessed to work alongside an exceptional staff within ORR, and that appreciation extends to my colleagues in the Administration for Children and Families. Thank you for your dedication, your commitment, and your perseverance on behalf of those we continue to serve.

You may be wondering what I intend to do next. I have many ideas, and will always be connected to refugee resettlement in some form—it is almost impossible, as a refugee myself, to walk away entirely. But what form that will take has yet to be decided. I just know it is time for a change, and I look forward to the future. Helen Keller once said, "A bend in the road is not the end of the road...Unless you fail to make the turn." This is my turn.

With my utmost respect and appreciation,



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