

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I should be shock-proof after teaching in various schools for more than 30 years, and then volunteering 10 years as an English Second Language teacher. Nevertheless, it happened. This past spring I enrolled in a 6-weeks workshop designed to teach Burmese students English. Early on, we saw a power point presentation to get us acquainted with the local Burmese population.

We, Americans, sometimes interchange the words "immigrants and "refugees". In our class, in the power point presentation, a refugee was defined as "a person fearing race, religion, nationality, member of particular social group, political opinion."

When the 6-weeks training was completed, I looked forward to Phase 2: getting a teaching site, a short-term English-speaking translator and Burmese students. To my surprise, the assigned translator refused to transport my Burmese students to my teaching site, and he would not say why. Naturally, I could not teach!

I contacted the white, paid staff and told them about the Burmese translator's behavior. I waited for an explanation. They gave me none. The silence was deafening. And after that shocking treatment, I had a flashback to the definition of a Burmese refugee - "a person fearing race... nationality... member of a particular social group."

I am proud to be a ninth generation African-American willing to teach anyone who wants to learn. In this case, I extended a "helping hand" and it came back empty. By the way, did you know the Reclamation Project is "serving refugees in the Fort Wayne Community"?

Dorothy Word

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