



**Jewish Family Services**  
of silicon valley

## **How Could We Do Any Less?**

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When people fled affliction and disaster during ancient times, we welcomed them into our tents. When persecution by government and ignorance of the populace gave rise to pogroms and shtetls, we shared what little we had.

When economic calamity of the 1920s created disruption and authoritarian regimes in the 1930s, we comforted those in harm's way and prayed for a miracle.

When outside forces threatened the state of Israel with intimidation and, at times, much worse, we spoke together in support.

How could we do any less?

As Assyrian Christians living in Iran, brothers Daniel and Nahira could not practice their religion, determine their careers or decide where to live. Daniel's interest was in customer service while Nahira's background was hardware assembly and IT. Since resettling as refugees in the US in 2016, the brothers had perfect attendance records in Vocational ESL classes at JFS and, after much preparation with JFS staff, found good jobs within two months of arrival. Daniel is a sales representative at Home Depot and Nahira is with Tesla Motors in Fremont.

Today's refugees may appear different from "traditional" Jewish refugees. They may not share the same bloodline, heritage, language or perspective, but their status as our extended family cannot be denied. My grandparents were from Poland. Our place in today's waiting line might say "Iraq" or "Turkey" or even "Syria". Does it matter? None of them had it easy.

We are part of the HIAS resettlement program. HIAS was founded in 1881 as the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society to assist Jews fleeing wretched conditions in Russia and Eastern Europe. They provided meals, transportation and jobs for the new arrivals to Manhattan and now, 136 years later, welcome all who flee persecution.

How could we do any less?

Approximately 22 offices in the US help HIAS resettle refugees in 2017. JFS of Silicon Valley is just one of two in Northern California. In Santa Clara County, we are the second largest provider of assistance to refugees among all social service organizations and average 125-150 resettlements per year.

Life behind our ordinary office door on the second floor in the JCC is a revelation. Visit an ESL ("English as a Second Language") class and watch in wonder as students resembling the United Nations take their first steps toward acculturation. Peek in on job counseling sessions. Your jaw

will drop in awe as newly arrived refugees...cleanly scrubbed after the meat grinder of immigration investigations...are welcomed with tears by the staff who've communicated with them for years behind the veil of extreme vetting.

Brothers Bandeko and Nangalire and their sister Mulindwa, are from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Born in a refugee camp with no stable source of food or water, the siblings endured and made it to the US in 2016. Alone and speaking limited English, they diligently attended ESL courses at JFS and worked closely with the Job Developer on resume-building, job-readiness training and intensive interview preparation. As a result, Bandeko, Nanagalire and Mulindwa obtained positions at Whole Foods in Los Gatos just two months after arrival. The manager was so impressed with their positivity, respectfulness and graciousness he hired them on the spot.

What is a Jewish soul without an expression of Jewish values? Thoughts without actions? Words without deeds? JFS of Silicon Valley only helps those with a sponsor and a place waiting for them in the US. We inspire miracles to happen at least 10 times every month. We do what the Jewish people have done for thousands of years.

Do not avert your eyes from difficult choices. Volunteer. Donate goods or money. Raise your voice. Open your arms. Lead with your heart.

How could we do any less?

Rich

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