

Name:

Andre and Lisette

Read Andre and Lisette's story, and prepare to introduce them to your class.



André was a law student in the Democratic Republic of Congo. He belonged to a political party called the Union for Social Democracy and Progress. They opposed the government. André was arrested at a rally asking for justice. He was thrown in jail. In jail, he made friends with one of the guards. One day, all the prisoners were lined up and marched outside. The first seven people in line were shot and killed. Then his friend the guard pretended to shoot him. André fell over and played dead. He escaped to Malawi, in East Africa. For 11 years, he lived in a refugee camp. He applied to come to the U.S. as a refugee.

Lisette was living in the Democratic Republic of Congo with her uncle and baby daughter. Her uncle opposed the government. One night, soldiers came and arrested the family. Lisette's daughter was taken away from her. She never saw her again. Lisette escaped and walked for hours. She lived on the streets. Finally, a truck driver smuggled her to a refugee camp in Malawi.

Lisette and André met at the refugee camp and got married. André had already been waiting for three years to be allowed to come to the U.S. Lisette also applied.

After four years, André got permission to come to the U.S. as a refugee. Now he lives in New Jersey. He works for a company that sells seafood. Lisette is still in Malawi, however. André hopes that Lisette can join him soon. Both André and Lisette will need refugee green cards to stay in the U.S. permanently.



Fact sheet: Refugee green cards

Read the facts on this fact sheet. Check off the facts that apply to Andre and Lisette's situation.

- One type of humanitarian green card is for refugees. A refugee is a person who fears for their life in their own country, because of their race, religion, nationality or political opinion.
- To come to the U.S. as a refugee, people go through an extensive process:
 1. **Referral.** The United Nations determines that a person is a refugee, and refer them to the U.S. for resettlement.
 2. **Interview** to prove that their life was at risk.
 3. **Medical screening.**
 4. **Financial sponsor.**
 5. **Cultural orientation.**
 6. **More U.S. security checks.**
- This process can take 3 years or more.
- Only 20% of applicants are accepted to come to the U.S.
- There are about 20 million refugees in the world. Before 2017, the U.S. admitted up to 100,000 refugees a year. In 2020, the U.S. cut the number of refugees admitted to 18,000 a year. Refugees must wait much longer now to come to the U.S.
- Refugees get financial help for their first 3 months in the U.S. After that, they must pay their own way.
- Currently, refugees are paying billions more in taxes than they got as help from the U.S.
- After one year in the U.S., refugees can apply for green cards to become permanent residents. They must show they can support themselves.

Sources: "Leaving Africa, and Living in Limbo," *The New York Times*, January 19, 2018.

"Who is a Refugee and What Do They Go Through to Get to the U.S.?" worldrelief.org, December 4, 2015.