



Transitions of South Sudanese Refugees: Reaching for a Better Life in America



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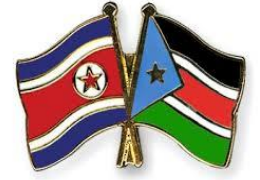
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The authors wish to acknowledge the assistance of Ms. Annie Stenvig in creating the diagram shown in Figure 1.

The learner will be able to:

1. Describe South Sudanese former refugee migration and resettlement in the context of situational transitions theory.
2. Discuss a grounded theory describing the process of “reaching for a better life” among former refugees from South Sudan.
3. List two implications of study findings for nursing practice and nursing research.

Sudan



<http://classroom.synonym.com/make-powerpoint-presentation-meet-apa-format-3489.html>

<http://www.alltravels.com/sudan/maps>

Transitions

- Situational migration with geographic relocation precipitates radical social and environmental change (Meleis, 2010)
- Former refugees in United States from South Sudan
- Transitions during resettlement
- Limited research

Current Understanding

- **Vulnerable to health problems** (Willis & Nkwocha, 2006)
- **Child-rearing differences and adjustments** (Ebbeck & Dela Cerna 2006)
- **Resettlement affects health and well-being** (Baird, 2009)
- **Importance to maintain family ties** (Lim, 2009)

Current Understanding, cont.

- **Poverty, under-education, limited preventative services access** (Willis & Nkwocha, 2006)
- **Traumatic experiences with distress during the pre-migration, transit and post-migration resettlement phases** (Khawaja, White, Schweitzer, & Greenslade, 2008)
- **Mental health problems increased with pre-migration trauma** (Schweitzer, Melville, Steel, & Lacherez, 2006)

Cross Cultural Adjustment

- Honeymoon
- Culture shock
- Adjustment
- Mastery

(Gautam & Vishwakarma, 2012; Lee, 2006).

A background image showing a globe with several hands reaching out to touch it, symbolizing global impact or support. The globe is positioned on the left side of the frame, and the hands are of various skin tones, suggesting diversity. The overall lighting is warm and soft.

Research Question

What is the situational transition experience of former refugees from South Sudan who have resettled in a community in the American Midwest?

Methods

- Grounded Theory (Corbin & Strauss 2008)
- Speak English, 18 years of age
- Exempt status approved by South Dakota State University Human Subject Committee IRB
- Gift card
- Three focus groups
 - “What is it like to transition from being a refugee from South Sudan to being resettled here in America?”

Participants

- 10 men, 8 women
- 28-67 years of age
- Varying Sudanese ethnicities
- 10 different languages and tribal dialects
- 13 married, 14 had children
 - Additional people live in the home
- Education: High school-trade school-advanced college degree
- Employment (14) - interpreter, physical habilitation assistant, examiner, welder, food industry worker, store owner, packer, support professional, producer, and housekeeper




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Arrival

A globe is shown on the left side of the slide, with several hands of different skin tones touching its surface. The background is a warm, yellowish-orange gradient with a subtle pattern of white circles.

- 1980's $n=6$
- 1990's $n=6$
- 2000's $n=1$
- Journey took 1-15 years
- Lived in up to six other countries

A globe is shown in the background, with several hands of different skin tones touching its surface. The scene is set against a warm, golden-yellow background with soft, out-of-focus light spots, creating a sense of hope and global unity.

Results

- Core process of

Reaching for a Better Life in America

Reaching for a Better Life in America

Arrival:
Encountering
New Realities

Brought
Hopeful
Expectations

Brought
Abilities

Brought
Beliefs

Being
Understood

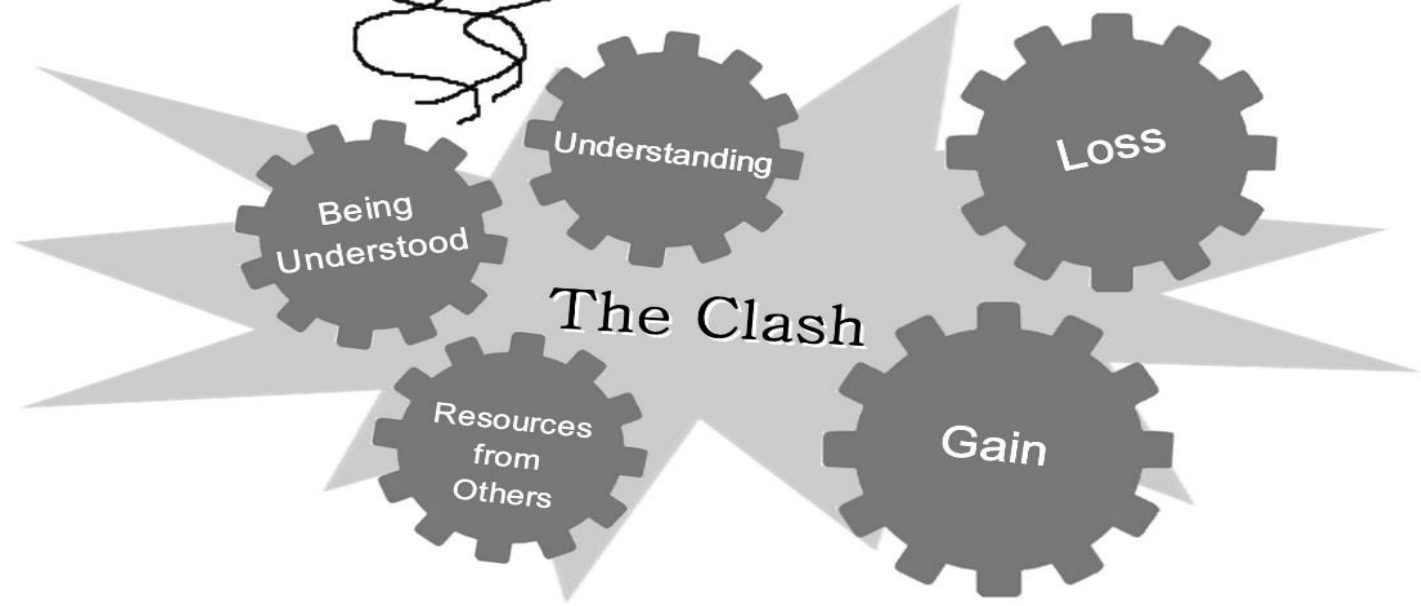
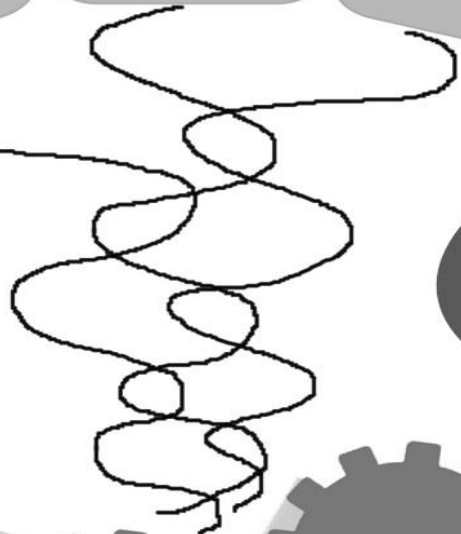
Understanding

Loss

Resources
from
Others

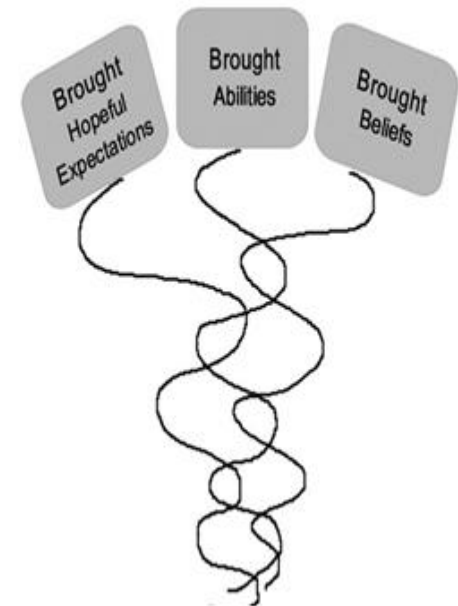
Gain


The Clash



Antecedents

- Brought hopeful expectations
- Brought abilities
- Brought beliefs



A globe is shown in the background, with several hands of different skin tones reaching out to touch it. The scene is set against a warm, golden-yellow background, suggesting a sunrise or sunset. The hands are positioned around the globe, symbolizing global unity, support, and the arrival of new people.

Upon Arrival: Encountering New Realities

- Brought Hopeful Expectations
 - Positive outcomes
 - Land of freedom, land of hope
- Brought Abilities
 - Previous knowledge and skills
 - Education
- Brought Beliefs
 - Mores, values, ethics

Brought Hopeful Expectations

- Assumptions that resettling in a new community will have positive outcomes
- *Living in a utopia*
- *Like when I come here, I think I can get all of my dream*
- *So we come here for next generation to build our back home better for what we didn't have before*
- *When we are coming here, we believe the land of freedom, the land of democracy, the land of hope, the land of opportunity*

Brought Beliefs

Salient, deep, bedrock belief structure of interrelated internal convictions, perceived truths, and personal subjective realities

Brought Beliefs About Others

- *Extending Sudanese-like welcome*

We need to know our neighbor. We love our neighbor to know us. This is our culture, we want it

- Rules for accepted touching and physical contact between persons

Somebody spanking a man? Don't bring that kind of nonsense to a Sudanese person and start touching them inappropriately. You gonna get killed

Brought Beliefs About Family

- *You don't just live with a man because you love them and then you're not married. What do you call them? Are they husband and wife? No! Boyfriend? We don't even have that word in our culture*
- *They <parents> don't kiss in front of their children*
- *Like an insurance policy, having children. It's kind of like that. If you grow them, they'll grow you. We do not have nursing homes at home*

Brought Beliefs About Education

In our culture, we put the education is the most important thing. Nobody will go to school and just drop out, you don't have electricity, just you catching up with the sunlight to do your homework

Brought Abilities

- Describe previous knowledge and skills spanning varied life and work experiences, linguistic ability, and formal education

Not all of us from South Sudan are illiterate, or don't have any education, language, and employable skills

Many of our people have experience—they're supposed to be doctors in Sudan, and lawyers, and high professors

Encountering New Realities



Resources from Others: Formal

- Resettlement agencies
- English classes
- Employment assistance

Resources from Others: Informal

- Friends
- Other Sudanese

Resources from Others

- Formal assistance from people and institutions responsible for helping new arrivals
- Examples: basic needs for housing, food, household goods, English language classes, and employment assistance services
- Informal assistance developed by the refugee after arrival
- Examples: serendipitous friendships, relationships, and networks



Encountering New Realities

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Encountering New Realities



Encountering New Realities

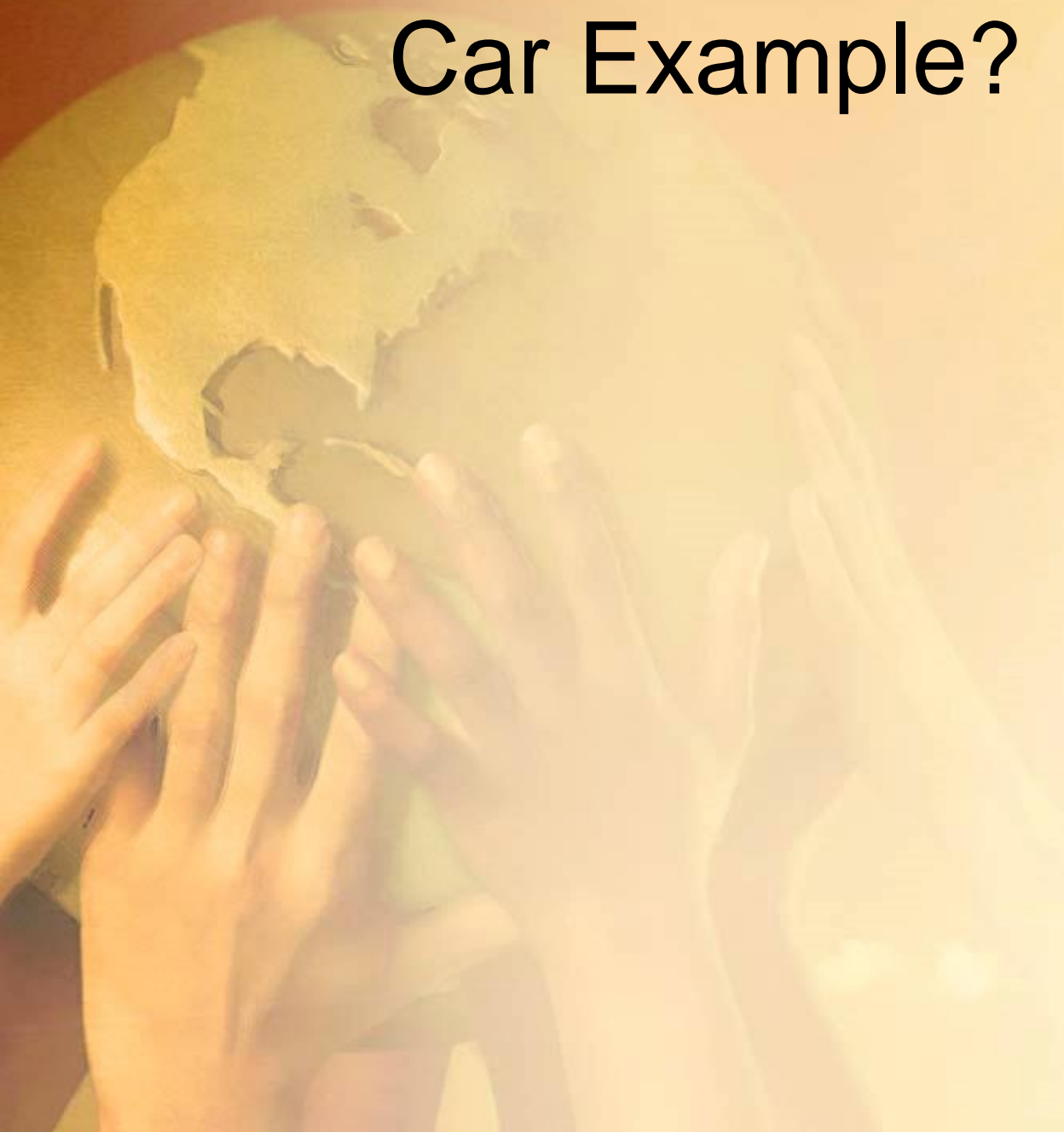
- Being Understood

Describes outcomes if context-intended communication content and meaning is successfully conveyed to others

- Understanding

Describes conditions and outcomes if context-intended communication content and meaning is successfully conveyed to the recipient

Car Example?



Encountering New Realities: Gains

perceived advantageous changes and positive consequences in interactions between *resources from others, being understood, and understanding.*

Examples: living in a safe environment without war, owning cars, earning an income, and living in modern houses with conveniences like indoor plumbing and electricity

Encountering New Realities: Gains

- Perceived advantageous changes and positive consequences in interactions between *resources from others, being understood, and understanding*
- Safe environment - without war
- Owning cars
- Earning an income
- Live in modern houses with conveniences (indoor plumbing and electricity)

Encountering New Realities: Losses

Negative consequences when *resources from others, being understood, and understanding* interact destructively and desired outcomes are not achieved.

Examples: inability to discipline children, failing in school, fractured intergenerational ties, altered family roles and relationships, physical stress-induced ailments, personal property loss, and blocked advancement and employment prospects

Encountering New Realities: Losses

- Negative consequences when *resources from others, being understood, and understanding* interact destructively and desired outcomes are not achieved.

- Inability to discipline
- Failing in school
- Fractured family ties
- Altered family roles
- Stress-induced ailment
- Personal property loss
- Blocked advancement
- Blocked employment prospects

The Clash

- conglomeration of dissonance between antecedent “*broughts*” after *encountering new realities* in the new home
- persist in a interactive zone as more new realities are encountered
- Results in second looks at the “broughts”

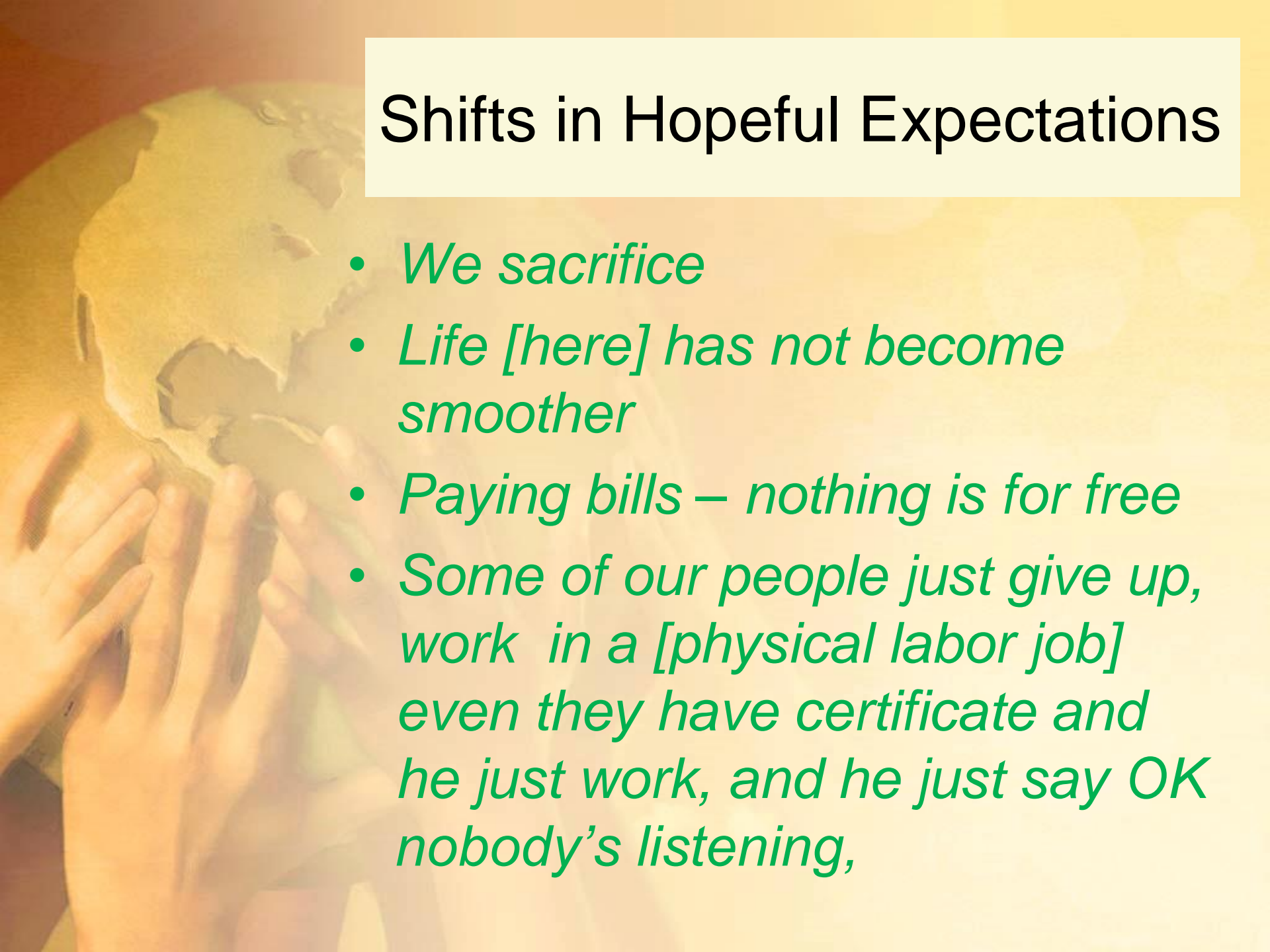
Life [here] has not become smoother

being brought into town and just left without directions

Soon after you put your degree away, you hide it or you send it back home for display. But I am not qualified here.

The Clash

- Conglomeration of dissonance between antecedent “*broughts*” after *encountering new realities* in the new home
- Persistent interactive zone as more new realities are encountered
- Results in second looks at the “broughts”



Shifts in Hopeful Expectations

- *We sacrifice*
- *Life [here] has not become smoother*
- *Paying bills – nothing is for free*
- *Some of our people just give up, work in a [physical labor job] even they have certificate and he just work, and he just say OK nobody's listening,*

Battling the Brought Abilities, Gains, Losses Fit

- *not a prideful <people>
... assume that
whoever saw you or
whoever you work with
they will know*
- *Underqualified then
overqualified for the
same job*

*Soon after you put
your degree away,
you hide it or you
send it back home
for display. But I
am not qualified
here*

Battling the Brought Beliefs, Losses, Gains Fit

- *Non-Sudanese welcome*
- *Being brought into town and just left without directions*
- Discouragement, unhappiness, not being accepted or liked, being prejudged and avoided by neighbors, wanting to quit trying

Formal Resources from Others

- Declines over time
- Primarily short-term startup help
- Less responsive to refugee's “Ask us our need” for mentors and adjusted assistance over time

Informal Resources from Others

- More like the Sudanese-like welcome than the formal resources
- Others
 - include neighbors, other Sudanese refugees, friends
 - Share a language, culture
- Help examples
 - Employment
 - Enrolling in classes

Losses Regarding the Children

- In jail
- Become pregnant
- Use drugs
- Fail in not completing high school, attending college, or earning credentials for 'good' jobs
- Unacceptable manners
 - Selfishness
 - disrespectful towards adults and visitors
 - Immodest dressing *pants all the way down*

Gains

A background image showing a globe with several hands of different skin tones touching it, symbolizing global unity and strategy development.

- Require strategy development
 - to assure understanding and being understood
 - Reading and responding to new situations
- Persistence

Discussion

- Earlier models claiming migrant transition and adjustment occurs in predictable, distinct stages was not supported
- Transition begins at arrival and persists
- Safety nets are needed for successful transitions
- Utopia is not the end product of Researching for a better life in America

Recommendations

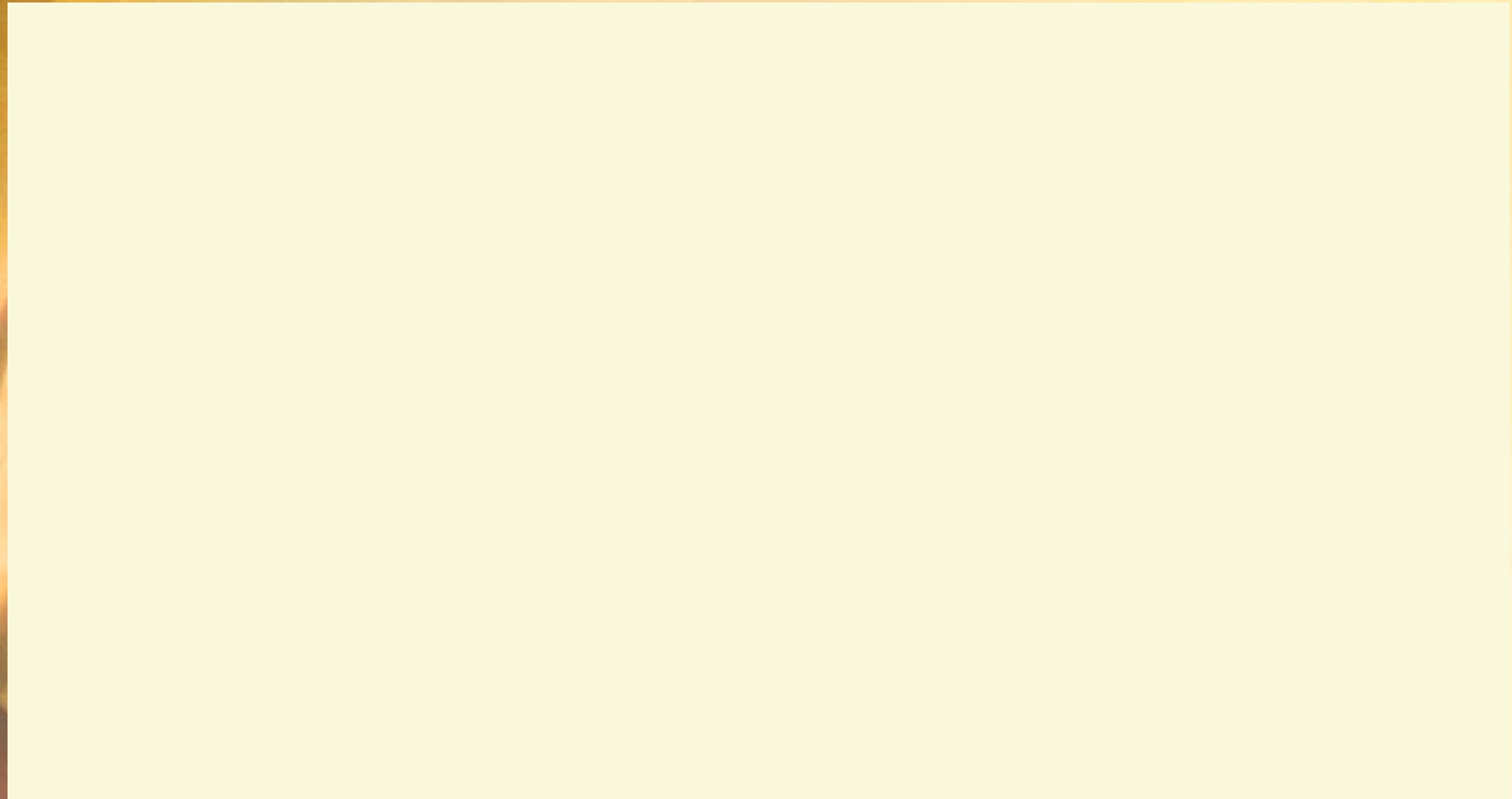
- Inform providers regarding:
 - perceived obstructions and blocks in understanding and being understood
 - Non-linear nature of their needs
 - The refugee voice that wants to be part of the solution

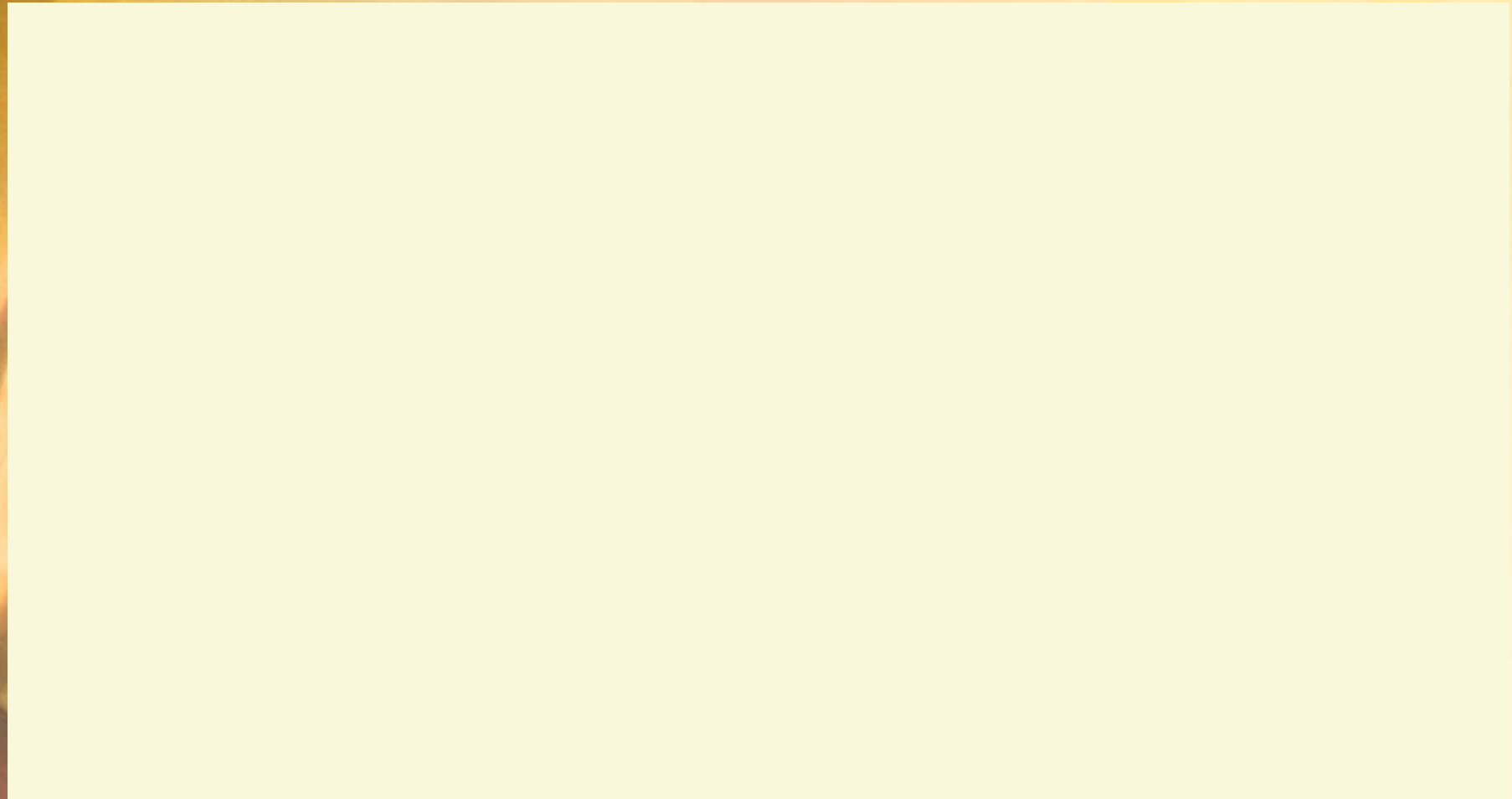
Future Opportunities

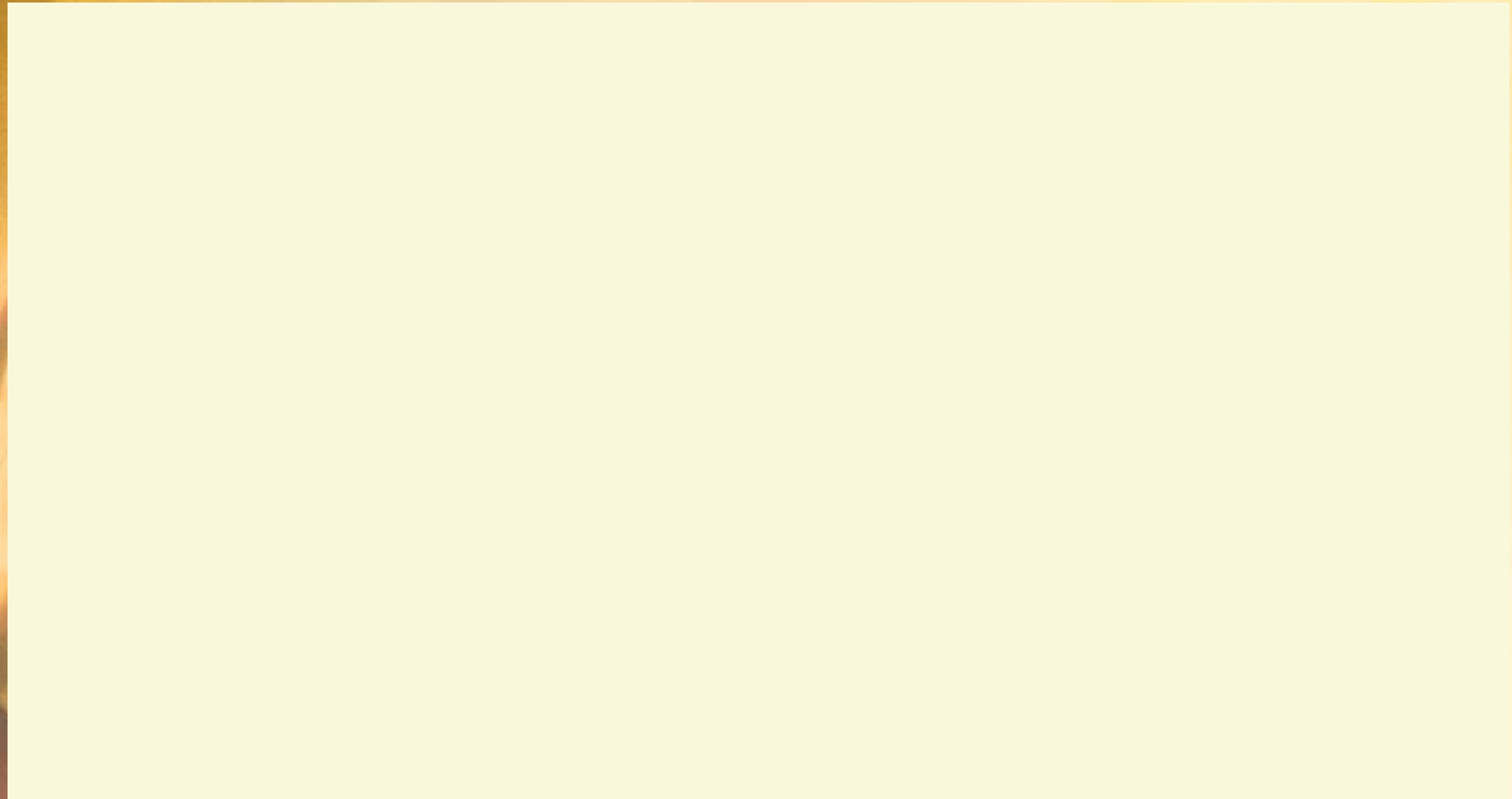
- Learning the language
- Parenting in a new culture
- Navigating the legal system
- Existing safety nets

A globe is shown in the background, with several hands of different skin tones touching it. The hands are positioned around the globe, symbolizing global unity and listening to the community. The text is overlaid on the globe and hands.

*We want America to take
time to listen to our
community.*







The Clash

- *Life [here] has not become smoother*
- *Being brought into town and just left without directions*
- Soon after you put your degree away, you hide it or you send it back home for display. But I am not qualified here.

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1

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