

# JUNE IS REFUGEE AWARENESS MONTH



Blong Xiong fled persecution in Laos and spent two years in a refugee camp in Thailand. He was admitted to the United States at age 14

not knowing English. He later became the first Hmong tenured Professor at the University of Minnesota as well as serving as Fresno City Council President.

During the month of June, the California Department of Social Services recognizes the achievements and contributions that refugees have made to this state. Refugees, who have fled their countries of origin due to persecution, bring with them rich cultural traditions and strengths to start new businesses and make California a more vibrant place to live.



Photograph compliments of the International Rescue Committee San Diego



Owilya Dima and Meyuna Hussein-Cattan are a mother-daughter team who arrived to California as refugees from East Africa in the 1980s. The two later established the Tiyya Foundation, a community based non-profit organization in Orange County, that assists refugee families transition into their new home country.



Richmond Appleton fled the Liberian civil wars at the age of 14 and spent five years in a refugee camp in Ghana and was admitted to the United States in 2004. Richmond went to earn a Master's degree from the University of San Francisco and is currently writing a memoir, *The story and Journey of a Refugee*.



Pierre Imbert, a refugee from Haiti, served as Executive Director at the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and former Deputy Director at the California Department of Social Services.



Yvette Khani fled persecution from Iran in the mid-1990s. She and her family were eventually resettled by the

International Rescue Committee in Glendale, California. By 1997, she was hired by the IRC in Los Angeles. Since then, she has assisted in the resettlement of over 10,000 refugees into California and she is in the pre-arrival work of over 1,000 more to come.