

Oct 10, '24 – Clement Kigugu - Overcomers Refugee Services

Mr. Kigugu comes to us from Rwanda. He survived the Rwandan Civil War and the 100-day genocide during which 500,000-800,000 Tutsis were murdered and half that number of women raped. During his final years in Rwanda after the genocide, Clement ran a nonprofit organization helping victims of genocide, HIV and war. He came to the United States from Rwanda in 2006. He worked for several years as a caseworker for a New Hampshire resettlement agency, helping arriving refugees with the many needs that arise after they arrive, such as their human service applications, their utility bills, their children's school registrations, and especially help overcoming the pain of war and trauma. He eventually became an employment specialist providing refugees with pre-employment counseling and post-employment support and assistance.

Mr Kigugu realized that refugees are best served by people who speak their language and have shared their experiences, as well as an understanding American culture, so in 2013 he established Overcomers Refugee Services, a NH 501c3. Overcomers Refugee Services is a resource center for New Hampshire refugees and immigrants, particularly those in the greater Concord area. Refugees are placed in New Hampshire communities with the help of the local state resettlement agencies, but they provide new arrivals with comprehensive assistance for only six months. Six months support is not enough to learn how to get along in a new society. Overcomers provides ongoing practical support, education and cultural orientation through people who understand both the refugees' language and culture of origin. Refugees have come from hardship, persecution, war and famine, but they are resilient. Overcomers' goal is to empower them to become leaders in their community and cultural ambassadors to their receiving community.

Mr. Kigugu has a degree in Management from University Libre de Kigali (ULK), Africa, and is a trained and certified medical interpreter. Besides English, he speaks Kinyarwanda, French, Swahili, Kirundi, Lingala, and other Congolese languages.