Beyond Resettlement: The Role of Ethiopian Refugee Diaspora in Homeland Peacebuilding

Etsegent Endale
Kennesaw State University

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A dissertation entitled

Beyond Resettlement: The Role of Ethiopian Refugee Diaspora in Homeland Peacebuilding

by

Etsegenet G. Endale

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree in International Conflict Management

______________________________________
Sherrill W. Hayes, PhD, Committee Chair

______________________________________
Akanmu Adebayo, PhD, Committee Member

______________________________________
Brandon D. Lundy, PhD, Committee Member

______________________________________
Terrence Lyons, PhD, Committee Member

______________________________________
Debarati Sen, PhD, Committee Member

Kennesaw State University

2019
Thesis/Dissertation Defense Outcome

Name: Etsegenet G. Endale
KSU ID: 000476182

Email: eendale@students.kennesaw.edu
Phone Number: 404-200-8319

Program: PhD International Conflict Management

Title: Beyond Resettlement: The Role of Ethiopian Refugee Diaspora in Homeland Peacebuilding


Passed With Revisions (attach revisions)

Signatures

Sherrill Hayes
Thesis/Dissertation Chair
Digitally signed by Sherrill Hayes
Date: 2019.06.28 15:15:52 -04'00'

Brandon D. Lundy
Committee Member
Digitally signed by Brandon D. Lundy
Date: 2019.06.28 16:07:51 -04'00'

Debarati Sen
Committee Member
Digitally signed by Debarati Sen
Date: 2019.06.28 16:24:23 -04'00'

Akanmu G. Adebayo
Committee Member
Digitally signed by Terrence Lyons
Date: 2019.06.28 12:13:49 -04'00'

Brandon D. Lundy
Committee Member
Digitally signed by Brandon D. Lundy
Date: 2019.06.28 16:08:04 -04'00'

Akanmu G. Adebayo

Program Director

Joseph Bock
Department Chair

Graduate Dean

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JUL 0 8 2019

BY: .........................

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Abstract

The number of people forced to flee their homeland across the world is increasing at an alarming rate. As a consequence, refugees have become a growing concern among researchers, practitioners, and policy makers. Although much attention has been afforded to refugee studies, the contributions of conflict-induced migrants towards homeland peacebuilding remain underrepresented within the peacebuilding discourse. This study explores the perceptions and understandings of peace and specific peacebuilding activities from the perspective of conflict-induced forced migrants, namely, former refugees from Ethiopia who have resettled in the United States. The objective of the study is to expand the scholarly discussion on conflict-induced migrants who are forced to leave their homeland by providing in-depth analysis of a specific group, focusing on their engagement in homeland peacebuilding as it relates to their lived experiences. The study uses interpretive phenomenological analysis through the lens of positive peace and conflict transformation to explore and analyze the peacebuilding practices of study participants. Research findings reveal that participants’ homeland engagement in creating an enabling environment for peace to flourish is a response to their own often-painful experiences of forced flight from Ethiopia as it relates to several key factors including: quality of their lives pre-flight, perceptions of homeland, opportunities and challenges in the resettlement country, and opportunities to inspire and enhance peacebuilding capabilities. Insights from the study expand existing dialogue on forced migrants and peacebuilding and enrich our understanding of how refugees are active agents in homeland peacebuilding as a result of the forced nature of their own migration and their own experiences with violent conflict and instability. Thus, this study adds to existing dialogue on local agency in peacebuilding processes.
Dedication

I dedicate this project to God Almighty, my constant source of inspiration and strength. I also would like to dedicate this dissertation to my family who have meant and continue to mean so much to me. A special gratitude to my loving parents, Gebremeskel E. (Baba) and Woineshet K. (Woinye) whose words of wisdom and encouragement stay with me each second. Thank you for making me aware of the world around me, and teaching me to empathize and reach out to those who are not as fortunate as I am. Thank you for your strong belief in education, excellence, resilience, and push for tenacity. My brothers, Biny and Mickey, have never left my side and are very special to me. Thank you for being my role model, cushion at times of need, and cheerleader throughout my journey. Thank you for standing by me when things look bleak. My husband, Girme GM, put his career goals on hold so I could achieve my dream. He has been a constant source of support and encouragement during the challenges of graduate school and life. Thank you for your love through the ups and downs. I am truly thankful for having you in my life. My beloved kids, Lilly (Mamaye) and Nathy (Babaye), who are my endless source of joy and adoration, mommy loves you to the moon and back.
Acknowledgement

There are many people that have earned my gratitude for their contribution to my time in graduate school. The study could not have been completed without their support. First, I am indebted to my thesis advisor, Dr. Sherrill Hayes. Since my first day in graduate school, Dr. Hayes believed in me and supported me throughout my journey in the PhD program. Thank you to Dr. Hayes for your patience, positivity, advice and guidance in the development of the doctoral research. Besides my advisor, I would like to thank the rest of my dissertation committee members, Dr. Akanamu Adebayo, Dr. Brandon Lundy, Dr. Debarati Sen, and Dr. Terrence Lyons, for your invaluable advice and insightful comments. Special thanks to Dr. Terrence Lyons for agreeing to serve on my dissertation committee as an external evaluator on a short notice. I also would like to express my deepest gratitude to my family. I owe so much to you for your unwavering belief that I can achieve so much. This dissertation would not have been possible and I would have never got to where I am today without your kind love, continued patience, and endless support. Not least of all, I want to thank my study participants who shared their stories and perspectives with me. I am grateful for your trust, and I hope that I have done well to share and reflect on your stories in these pages.
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Preface

December 5, 2017 is a Tuesday afternoon, and it is raining heavily outside. As I am sitting at the West Cobb Regional Library and re-reading the chapters that I have completed so far, the idea of starting with a prologue to reflect on the journey that led me to pursue this topic came to mind. Born and raised in Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia, I grew up with a loving and supportive family who has sacrificed a lot to shape me into the person I am today. My father served our community in Addis Ababa as an elder and mediator. Although not formally recognized as a peacemaker or peacebuilder, I witnessed him manage and resolve conflicts between different social and religious entities that arose within families and neighborhoods. He utilized a variety of diplomatic methods, including forgiveness, mutual understanding, respect, and a fine-tuned attention to traditional customs.

During my undergraduate studies, I traveled to different villages in Ethiopia, specifically Degehabur, Afar, and Dessie, to complete my fieldwork requirements. During these visits, I witnessed many of the social, economic, and political challenges that people face within their communities. I also witnessed the efforts and desires of individuals and elders in the community who work to build a culture of peace. After graduating from Addis Ababa University with a Bachelor’s Degree in Political Science and International Relations, I had the opportunity to work with the government for a few years where I spent my time in an actual conflict situation and participated in various peacebuilding processes. During this time, I witnessed the growing role of government agencies as a core pillar for effective conflict management and peacebuilding.

A few years ago, I immigrated to the United States and settled in Atlanta, which became my new home. Although my entire family stayed in Ethiopia, they gave me the strength I needed
to overcome any barrier. I also met many Ethiopians who emigrated from different parts of Ethiopia to start a new life in the United States; their experience and passions of bringing peace and stability to their homeland was inspiring.

In the summer of 2016 I returned to Ethiopia, my birthplace and my family, after several years of living apart. It was a profound experience that I could never adequately express in words. Although the country is still experiencing subtle turmoil and instability, I met with individuals who returned to Ethiopia after living in the United States and who were engaged in extraordinary activities to bring peace and stability to the country. Although they mostly consider their work ordinary and done out of “responsibility” and sheer humanity, I observed that they were working to build their families, communities, and ultimately greater peace.

Being in graduate school and working on this dissertation is a wonderful privilege, as I have the opportunity to build a platform for these individuals to highlight their lived experiences as “invisible peacebuilders.” Their stories provided insights into their roles as instruments of peace, and inspired me to find my own way of engaging in greater peacebuilding efforts by pursuing a journey towards becoming a “peacebuilder through profession”.

Use of Language

Interviews were conducted primarily in English; however, some preferred to speak in Amharic, one of the main languages of Ethiopia, once they realized I speak Amharic fluently, despite speaking English proficiently. A few participants used English while answering direct questions, but they chose to use Amharic to elaborate on their stories. Thus, some of the dialogue required interpretation and translation for the purposes of analysis and reporting. However, quoted written text in this dissertation is presented in the language in which it was vocalized. The names of participants have been changed, using pseudonyms to maintain respondents’
confidentiality. Actual names that are commonly favored by Ethiopians are used as pseudonyms so that readers can track the dialogue from participants across quotes and chapters.

**Outline of Dissertation**

Chapter 1 lays out the basis for the study, including problem statement, research context, purpose, and significance of the study. Key terms that are used in the study are also introduced and defined in this chapter. Chapter 2 lays out the research context, providing the historical, socio-economic, and political atmosphere in Ethiopia. It also discusses the history of migration from Ethiopia and resettlement in the United States. An overview of integration and resettlement experiences of Ethiopians in the United States is also reviewed. Chapter 3 provides an extensive review of literature on peacebuilding, and specifically on peacebuilding literature that deals with diaspora and forced migrants. Chapter 4 provides a comprehensive discussion of the research methodology. Chapter 5 examines the data obtained from interviewees through narrative and thematic analyses. Chapter 6 summarizes previous discussions and provides final thoughts by outlining key findings, followed by proposed areas for future research.
Chapter One: Introduction

The United States is a nation with a history of welcoming people from all over the world, so much so that most Americans claim some kind of immigrant experience in their family (Larsen, 2004). In 2013, approximately 41.3 million foreign-born individuals lived in the United States, accounting for 13 percent of the overall population. These foreign-born individuals who enter the United States include naturalized citizens, lawful permanent residents (including qualified refugees, asylees, students, and others), persons on certain temporary visas, and the undocumented immigrants (Zong & Batalova, 2015). The basic distinction between these groups is their reasons for moving. Immigrants move by choice and are often in search of better economic opportunity or further education. They may also move for family reasons or because they are looking for the “American Dream” (Fong, 2007, Lopes & Lundy, 2014), refugees and asylum seekers, however, are forced to move out of their country in order to save their lives (Smith, 2001).

In 2016, the total number of refugees arriving in the United States through the refugee resettlement program was 84,994, of which 27,500 came from Africa (32%). The movement of forced migrants continued, and in the year 2017, the United States accepted 53,716 refugees from around the world, 35,000 of which came from Africa (65%). In 2018, a total number of 22,491 refugees were admitted into the United States, of which 19,000 came from Africa (84%) (Bruno, 2018). According to the most recent data available, for the years 2011-2013, Ethiopia was one of the top three countries of origin for asylum seekers, next to China and Egypt. Ethiopia was also among the leading countries of nationality for refugees who were admitted to the United States along with Iraq, Burma, Bhutan, Somalia, DRC, Sudan, and Eritrea (Department of Homeland Security, 2013).
Estimates put the number of Ethiopians in the United States from early 1980s to early 2000 between 600,000-800,000 (Getahun, 2007). The majority of these are concentrated in major cities in the U.S., such as Washington DC, Los Angeles, Seattle, and Atlanta (Getahun, 2007; Woldeyesus, 2009). Although the exact number of Ethiopians living in one of the major cities is unknown, Ethiopian community leaders and other members of the community in Atlanta for instance estimate that there are more than 50,000 Ethiopians living in the South, and the majority of these live in Atlanta and its suburbs. Ethiopian-born immigrants are the second largest migrant groups from Africa next to Nigeria. Approximately 1000 Ethiopian born individuals were admitted as a refugee each year from 1981-2007. This number does not include those who were granted asylum during those, making the overall number of forced migrants admitted in the U.S. significantly higher (RAD, 2014).

The migration of people from one country to another has different causes such as economic, political, religious, or environmental. There exists an ongoing discussion in the scholarly communities of different disciplines to distinguish between these different groups, but a clear and distinct definition has not been reached due to the interconnectedness of these concepts (Daniels, 2002; Hatton & Williamson, 1998; Hayes, Lundy & Hallward, 2016; Lee, 1966; Lewis, 1982; Mincer, 1978). Thus, it is challenging to differentiate between the types of immigrants who come to the United States for various reasons. As noted above, foreign nationals can be classified as those who are granted lawful permanent residence (i.e., admitted as immigrants or became legal permanent residents), those who are admitted into the United States on a temporary basis (e.g., tourists, students, or workers), those who applied for asylum and were granted refugee or asylee status, and those who are naturalized (Department of Homeland Security, 2013).
According to Forced Migration Online (2012), there are three types of forced migrants: conflict-induced, development-induced, and disaster-induced. There are also three durable solutions for forced migrants: (1) voluntary repatriation to the country of origin; (2) local integration in the first settlement country; and (3) resettlement in a third country with the intention of permanent integration with the host society if the situation in the homeland does not change. Refugee resettlement is considered as the most desirable of all with the belief that forced migrants’ admittance to a host country as refugees or asylees with permanent residence and eventual citizenship status will solve their problems and allow them to lead normal lives (UNHCR, 2011). Since World War II, the United States has provided legal and physical protection for refugees and has been the world-leading resettlement country (UNHCR, 2011). My research focuses on conflict-induced migrants who are lawfully resettled in the United States.

The growing number of migrants continues to challenge host countries and the countries from where they emigrated. Loss of human capital in the home country and possible economic inconvenience for the host state are major challenges. Furthermore, forced migrants are faced with the difficulty of effective integration while their homelands suffer from a lack of effective peacebuilding initiatives to bring lasting peace, which ultimately addresses the root causes of forced displacement.

Transnational economic, social, and political engagement is a complex subject that is context and group specific. Diaspora group refers to transnational communities who are engaged in their countries of origin through transnational economic, political and/or socio-cultural contributions (Brinkerhoff 2011: 116; Cohen, 2008). Although the debate on whether diaspora contributions have a positive or negative impact or if it has both effect is continuing, it is
important to note that there are distinctions between diasporas created by or as a result of violent conflict and those that have not experienced violent conflict. Throughout this dissertation, the distinctive experiences of individuals, who have faced conflict and violence, have a strong impact on the responsibility that they feel to support others who may be facing such conditions, protect others from potential violence, and bring structural change and transformation to their home societies.

Most scholars and policy makers who focus on the transnational activities of the diaspora community tend to emphasize their potential impact on development through financial and other remittances such as skills and knowledge (Hammond et al, 2010; Mohamoud, 2006; Orozco, 2003; Van Hear, 2003; Terry, 2005). Researchers have also focused on the degree to which diaspora communities’ involvement exacerbates conflicts in their homeland by funding rebel parties and contributing to conflict perpetuating activities (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004; Demmers, 2007; Lyons, 2004; Shain, 2002). Being a member of the diaspora that is formed as a result of forced migration is often stated as a strong motivation to engage in conflict-fueling activities from afar (Beyene, G. H., 2014; Cheran, 2001; Demmers, 2007; Djuric, 2003; Fuglerud, 1999; Joshua, 2002; Lyons, 2004). It has often been argued that diasporas tend to worsen conflict because of their removal from direct, physical conflict, and their invulnerability to the immediate costs of violence. However, existing literature does not fully explore how the diaspora, and specifically conflict-induced forced migrants, participate in and take an active role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding (Roth, 2015; Smith, 2007). The literature on the complexities and nuances regarding the potential of individuals directly affected by violence, referred to as resettled refugees, conflict-induced migrants, or forced migrants in this dissertation, is rather limited to few studies (Van Hear & Cohen, 2017; Um, 2015).
A number of resettled refugees who fled from Ethiopia have been observed engaging with their homeland and actively working to create conducive environments for peace and stability there. This observation seemed in contrast to existing dialogue and debate around conflict-induced migrants and homeland engagement, which led to further inquiries. How and why does an individual who has been tortured and made to leave his/her homeland decide to engage in homeland peacebuilding? What are the motivations? Is the motivation of conflict-induced migrants to engage in homeland affairs different from that of other types of migrants, such as those who have left the homeland voluntarily in search of a better life? Context specific research is required in order to examine individual peacebuilding efforts of the Ethiopian refugee diaspora. It is imperative to explore why or how some individuals are able to engage in practices of peace while others instigate conflict. The study participants do not typically identify themselves as peacebuilders, but their actions, values, beliefs, and perceptions are fundamental in building a culture of peace and conveying lasting peace in their homelands. As such, the study is informed by a holistic definition of peacebuilding that embodies all aspects of conflict and individual efforts that are rooted in the lived experiences of people and their everyday lives. Peacebuilding from this perspective deals largely with the prevention of conflict and societal transformation in search of lasting and positive peace.

**Problem Statement**

Conflict-induced forced migrants are involved in homeland peacebuilding directly or indirectly. Although the Ethiopian refugee diaspora has made numerous positive contributions to the homeland, the efforts and potentials in the area of peacebuilding go unnoticed. This is because scholarly attention focuses mainly on diaspora’s economic contributions toward development and conflict resolution and on the contribution of formal state institutions, civil
society organizations, and international communities’ peacebuilding efforts. Smith & Stares (2007) and Antwi-Boateng (2012) are among the few studies that recognize the role of the African diaspora in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Although these are important studies to uncover the role of the African diaspora in homeland peacebuilding, the discussions and findings are not sufficient for understanding the unique experiences, perspectives, and roles of conflict-induced migrants whose nature of flight is different from other types of migrants. This research offers another African case from the perspective of the refugee diaspora to enhance the body of peacebuilding literature.

It is also the case that forced migrants do not always see themselves as “peacebuilders” because of the complexities surrounding defining the term and the informal nature of their involvement. This makes their lived experiences unnoticeable and their contribution towards peacebuilding indiscernible. This study is, therefore, designed to give visibility to their work.

The study builds upon existing peacebuilding literature and expands our understanding of peace and peacebuilding from the perspectives of individuals who are forced to leave their homeland. It is designed to explore their lived experiences and make their contributions visible, expanding current approaches to peacebuilding

**Research Context**

The research for this dissertation is situated in the context of Ethiopia, a country in East Africa, and forced migrants from Ethiopia who settled in the United States, particularly in the city of Atlanta and its surrounding suburbs, as well as those who have returned to their homeland. Ethiopia has experienced a long history of conflicts over the years due to foreign invasion, dictatorial regimes, violent coups, a war of independence, border tensions with neighboring countries, disputed election polls, and violent anti-government protests. Despite
recent economic developments claimed by the government, the country is torn by the prevalence of diseases, poverty, high unemployment, wide-scale drought, mass refugee out-flows, and inequitable social and economic development which could trigger additional violent conflict.

While serving as a volunteer at the Ethiopian Community Center and at a Refugee Resettlement Center in Atlanta, I had the opportunity to familiarize myself with the community and interact with several refugees from Ethiopia. When I met some of the former refugees and asylees, I was startled by the extent of their desires to give back to their home country, their motivation to see a peaceful and flourishing society, as well as their desire and hope to return home. Most Ethiopians I met in Atlanta were more interested in the political, social, and economic structures of their homeland than many Ethiopians that I knew in Ethiopia. This observation inspired me to want to better understand this group with the intention of finding out why (and how) they want to remain connected to their country of origin after experiencing persecution and hardship in that very same homeland. Throughout this study, I hoped to understand the reasons behind their actions and motivations and I explored their everyday peacebuilding experiences as opposed to top-down perspectives of liberal peacebuilding actors.

I recognize that my multiple and intersecting identities (such as my own roots, my status as an Ethiopian born-and-raised naturalized American citizen, shifting social and geographic location, gender, and education) have contributed to shaping the choice of this topic as dissertation research. I consider myself to be uniquely positioned to explore this topic. Although there are many elements that I share with the study participants, I also hold a unique position as an immigrant researcher within the dominant society. These features were beneficial to establishing trust with the study participants while intellectually engaging with the dominant culture. I have attempted to minimize biases, which might result from my positioning, by
engaging in a constant process of self-reflexivity at each stage of the research process and by carefully coding the data, allowing the voices of study participants to take precedence (through the use of quotations) as often as possible.

**Purpose of the Study and Research Questions**

The question “What actually happens after refugees have resettled and asylees have been granted asylum status?” has not been fully addressed. In particular, a gap exists in the peacebuilding scholarship concerning micro-level, locally initiated, or self-organized peace building practices. In addition, the experience and meaning of peacebuilding by refugees and asylees, who have experienced conflict in a particular way, has not been fully studied or acknowledged. Peacebuilding discussions have largely focused on liberal peace and peacebuilding and on the roles of state institutions, the civil society organizations, and international actors after the outbreak of war and physical violence (Boutros-Ghali, 1995; Boyce & O’Donnell, 2007; Chandler, 2004; Fukuyama, 1993; Richmond, 2006, 2008, 2009; MacGinty, 2010). Hence, peacebuilding is mainly understood as an effort that is related to peacekeeping and peacemaking, involving formal structures, the state, and international organizations. On the other hand, an alternate form of peace and peacebuilding is understood as creating the optimum environment for human potential to flourish (Galtung, 1996) by building relationships and social structures as a way of life and work (Lederach, 2014). Furthermore, an emerging literature on peacebuilding that focuses on everyday peace or the strategies used by ordinary people to cope with their own experiences challenges exiting norms that focus on peace experts and standardized practices (Goetschel & Hagmann, 2009; Mac Ginty, 2012; Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013). This emerging dialogue challenges us to look into the attitudes, expertise, and everyday practices of individuals that are employed to create an environment that allow peace to flourish.
This study is informed by this holistic perspective of peacebuilding and is conducted to recognize the efforts of such individuals who continue to positively engage in their homeland with or without describing themselves as peacebuilders.

The purpose of this study is to explore and better understand the resettlement experiences and homeland engagement initiatives of forced migrants from Ethiopia and what they learned form these experiences as it relates to homeland peacebuilding. The research objectives are:

- **To understand the motivation behind forced migrants’ engagement in peacebuilding activities.**
- **To explore the specific peacebuilding activities in the economic, social, political, and cultural spheres that forced migrants are engaged in.**

In order to achieve these objectives, the following research questions guide the study. How and why do forced migrants from Ethiopia who are resettled in the United States contribute to peacebuilding efforts in their homeland? What do forced migrants’ lived experiences look like pre- and post-flight? What motivates forced migrants to engage in peacebuilding activities from abroad? How do forced migrants envision sustainable peace and peacebuilding in their home country? What kind of roles do resettled forced migrants play in building sustainable peace in their homeland?

A phenomenological qualitative study is employed to enable participants to share detailed accounts of their lived experiences and perspectives towards peace and homeland engagement. A deeper understanding of the experiences and motivations of forced migrants to engage in homeland peacebuilding will enhance the understanding of long-distance and mundane peacebuilding, which primarily focuses on diaspora engagement in conflict and development. There is an extensive amount of literature that looks at refugee agency, and this study build on
that by adding to the understanding of peacebuilding initiatives undertaken by the refugee diaspora. It will expand existing knowledge on holistic peacebuilding by acknowledging the involvement of individual forced migrants in homeland peacebuilding. It also sheds light on how to better support such initiatives. It is my contention that the findings and stories from this study continue to empower forced migrants as active “peacebuilding agents” instead of the label that is often applied to them as “victims” or “supporters of violence.”

**Significance of the Study**

While fully acknowledging the role of the diaspora in promoting conflicts in some parts of the world, this dissertation explores the roles refugee diasporas can take in peacebuilding activities. The study contributes to the growing field of peacebuilding, specifically to the scholarship on forced migration and peacebuilding, by exploring the nature and scope of the peacebuilding activities of the Ethiopian refuge diaspora through extended one-on-one discussions and participant observations. Ascertaining how peacebuilding is understood and experienced by the study participants is particularly important to advance the scholarly discussion on the topic, which is highly dominated by literature on the role of the state, international organizations, and civil society organizations in peacebuilding. This literature pays limited attention to micro-level and bottom-up everyday peacebuilding practices by displaced people affected by instability in their home countries, particularly within the African continent.

When Ethiopian immigrants in the United States are discussed in relation to peace and homeland affairs, it is often based on diaspora activist groups or individuals who actively identify themselves as peacebuilders. This study, however, provides an opportunity for the voice of forced migrants, who are engaged in their homeland affairs but do not necessarily identify themselves as peacebuilders or are recognized by others as visible participants in homeland
affairs. The voices and viewpoints of study participants are not described from my viewpoint, my analysis is a complementary extension that features their engagement in homeland peacebuilding through their lived experiences.

Through this research a lot can be learned about the ways that peacebuilding is experienced and peace is understood by people who are forced to leave their country due to conflict-related circumstances. For this reason, the study makes an important contribution to increasing the visibility and positive contribution of forced migrants in peacebuilding dialogues. It adds existing knowledge regarding the role of the diaspora in many academic disciplines, including the field of peace and conflict studies, development studies, and migration studies. It also contributes to countering the common stereotypes attached to forced migrants, such as ‘victims’, ‘refugees’, ‘deprived’, ‘needy’, ‘dependent’, ‘detached from homeland’, and ‘security threats’, by highlighting the experiences of selected forced migrants from Ethiopia who are not only resilient but also are striving to bring positive change to their homeland.

The analysis and findings could potentially help local, national, international, and non-governmental agencies that are working in peacebuilding and conflict prevention spheres to better understand the roles that the refugee diaspora play in everyday peacebuilding as well as to actively engage this group in their initiatives.

**Definition of Key Terms**

Many of the words and terms used in this research have multiple definitions and are used interchangeably by scholars. Hence, it is important to provide the definitions for the terms that will be used. The following key concepts inform the arguments and discussions that run through this research:
Asylum seekers: people who have moved across international borders in search of protection under the 1951 Refugee Convention, but whose claim for refugee status has not yet been determined (Castles, 2004).

Asylee: a foreign born individual who is in the United States or at a port of entry and unable or unwilling to return to his or her country of nationality, or is seeking the protection of their country of nationality because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution based on the person’s race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion (USCIS, n.d.).

Diaspora: The term diaspora was initially associated with forced migrants who were spread from their homeland, such as the Jewish, Palestinian, Armenian, Kurdish, and the Greek diasporas (Sheffer, 2003). Today, the term diaspora is used to describe displacement and essentially any population that is considered transnational, including refugees, asylees, guest workers, expatriates, and overseas communities (Butler 2001; Tololyan, 1996; Vertovec, 1999). Diasporas are also defined as people dispersed from their homeland a result of conflict and are in search of work, trading opportunities, or better educational opportunities in another country (Cohen, 2008). Diaspora communities are usually connected with their homeland through traveling, sending money (i.e., remittances), or taking part in political and social affairs (Butler, 2001). However, diasporas have been mostly studied for their contributions towards the development of their homeland through remittances (Orozco, 2003; Sander & Samuel, 2005) or as an extension of conflicting parties in their homeland who support war activities that have led to prolonged conflicts in different parts of the world (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004; Shain, 2002; Tölolyan, 2007).
**Forced Migrants**: people who have been forced to flee their homes and seek refuge elsewhere (Castles, 2004). Forced migrants include a host of categories, such as refugees, asylees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), those displaced because of development activities, those displaced because of disaster and environmental issues, and those who are smuggled and trafficked across borders (Castles, 2004). For the purpose of this dissertation, the researcher focuses on people who are categorized as refugees and asylees. Since the causes of flight are similar among the study participants, the word refugee and asylee will be used to refer to forced migrants and will be used interchangeably throughout the study.

**Peacebuilding**: For the purpose of this dissertation, peacebuilding is defined as an on-going process that tackles the underlying causes of the conflict. Peacebuilding is described as relationships and confidence-building activities that require communication, collaboration, cooperation, resources, and the involvement and participation of all affected people at all levels (Paffenhолz, 2001). Peacebuilding is also defined as a long-term multi-track transformative contribution to social change, helping to create a just and sustainable peace beyond the narrow definition of a post-conflict period (Lederach & Appleby, 2010).

**Refugees**: The United Nations Refugee Agency report from the Geneva Convention of 1951 (p.14) defines a refugee as follows:

A person owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself to the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.
In addition to this definition, the 1969 Refugee Convention organized by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) (now called the African Union) defines refugees as:

- every person who, owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country of origin or nationality, is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality.

Concepts from both definitions will be employed in this study. The later definition by the OAU or the African Union (AU) is because the earlier UN definition considers only political repression as the cause of forced displacement. Since it was developed during the time when most African states were under colonial rule, it does not account for issues that affected post-colonial African states including environmental problems (famine, drought, etc.), bad governance, or the failure on the part of the state to provide basic services and safety and security to its citizens. The definition by the AU seems to better capture the causes behind the displacement of Ethiopian refugees, which included discrimination against certain groups, bad governance, famine mainly due to poorly executed policies, and political and economic marginalization of some minority groups.

The discussion in this study assumes the following as the fundamental characteristics of a refugee:

1) The person is outside the country of his/her/their nationality;

2) The person left the homeland involuntarily;

3) The person is unable to return to his/her/their homeland for some time due to security risk; and
4) The persecution that the person fears is directed against the person personally or against a family or group to which the person belong.

**Refugee versus Immigrant:** The terms “refugee” and “immigrant” are often used interchangeably. While there is an overlap in the experiences of these two groups in terms of the transnational nature of both, a difference does exist. Kunz (1973, p. 130-135) distinguishes between refugees and immigrants by pointing out that refugees are people “pushed out of” while immigrants are “pulled away from” their countries of origin. Hence, immigrants are people who left their home countries voluntarily for the purpose of economic advancement and other motives, whereas refugees are people who are forced into exile. Migration theory assumes that immigrants are pulled to their new land, but Kunz distinguished how they are different from refugees by introducing the idea of “push” that states that the refugee is pushed out and not pulled out. In the Ethiopian context, violence, injustice, discrimination, and bad governance could be considered push factors alongside war and physical violence.

**Refugee Diaspora:** People who are displaced from their homelands involuntarily and continue to maintain transnational connections.

**Resettlement:** According to the US Department of State (2013), resettlement refers to settling permanently in a third country. Resettlement normally takes place when other durable solutions – voluntary repatriation or local integration – are unavailable (UNHCR, 2011). Resettlement is one of the three “durable solutions” to refugees along with settlement in the country of first asylum and voluntary repatriation to the country of origin.

**Resettled Refugees:** According to the UNHCR Resettlement Handbook (2011), resettled refugees are those who are permanently placed in a third country after first leaving their country of origin and finding temporary protection in a second country, often confined to a refugee camp
for years before the final move to be resettled. This group differs from those who live in a second
country waiting to be resettled or who voluntarily return to their homeland once the threat is
removed (UNHCR, 2011). This dissertation specifically focuses on the resettled refugees who
are now beyond the scope of the UNHCR and are under the responsibility of the resettlement
country, the United States in this case.

Transnationalism: is defined as “the process by which trans migrants, through their daily
activities, forge and sustain multi-stranded social, economic, and political relations that link
together their societies of origin and settlement, and through which they create transnational
social fields that cross national borders” (Basch et al., 1994, p. 6). For the purpose of this study,
transnationalism refers to the grassroots activities of international migrants across borders, and
not the relationship between macro-agents, such as state actors, and multinational or
transnational organizations (Faist, 2010).

For the purpose of this study, I will continue to use the term refugee diaspora, resettled
refugees, conflict-induced migrants or forced migrants as the research focuses on individuals
who are forced to leave their country of origin due to violent conflict or conflict-related
circumstances in their homeland. The Ethiopian diaspora population lives outside of Ethiopia as
a result of many push and pull factors. The push factors can include violent conflict, natural
disaster, poor governance, and persecution. And the pull factors include educational
opportunities, job opportunities, and family ties, among other things. For the purposes of this
research, forced migrants who fled Ethiopia due to violent conflict and persecution are
considered. All of the study participants were initially forced to leave their country of origin as
their lives were abruptly disturbed.
Chapter Two: Research Context

The Bigger Picture

This research is set within the context of Africa and more specifically within Ethiopia, where sense of family values, cooperation, relatedness, community, solidarity, sharing, hospitality, friendship, and respect for spirituality and humans are embodied within the society in general (Magesa, 1997; 2014). Although exploration of these values is beyond the scope of the dissertation, it is crucial to mention these idealized and romanticized values as they ultimately influence the actions and motivations of study participants as it relates to peacebuilding.

Ethiopia and Forced Migrants: An Overview of the Historical Background

Ethiopia is located in East Africa and is bordered on the north and northeast by Eritrea, on the east by Djibouti and Somalia, on the south by Kenya, and on the west and southwest by Sudan. The total area spans across 1,104,300 square kilometers, forming a major portion of the easternmost African landmass known as the Horn of Africa (The World Fact Book, CIA, 2014). Currently, Ethiopia is a land-locked country due to the separation of Eritrea in the early 1990s where the entire seaside along the Red Sea was lost. In the past, however, ancient Ethiopia’s cultural, economic, and political activities were tied mostly to her access to the Red Sea. The population is estimated to be 96,633,458 and is home to many ethnic groups, with the major ethnic groups being the Oromo (34.4%), Amhara (27%), and the Tigray (10-15%) (The World Fact Book, CIA, 2014). Contemporary Ethiopia emerged from the Abyssinian Empire that came to rule in the 12th Century, and the Amhara and Tigray ethnic groups are both believed to be descendants of the peoples of the Abyssinian Empire (Fransen & Katie, 2009).

Ethiopia is one of the oldest nation states in the world and the oldest in Africa (Wagaw, 1990). It is the only country in Africa, besides Liberia, which has never been colonized by
European powers with the exception of the five years occupation by Italy. This has helped Ethiopians to preserve their culture without major foreign influence and maintain a strong sense of cultural identity. It is also a country with its own alphabet and script used in its official language, Amharic. It is documented that Ethiopians feel a strong sense of pride in their culture, history, and historic national freedom even though they remain divided along ethnic lines internally (Cheboud, 2001; Tebeje, 1989). This historic pattern of attachment to their homeland has a significant influence on the difficulties refugees face during resettlement and acculturation.

It is common to see Ethiopians identify one another by their place of origin such as “Addis Ababa,” “Gondar,” et cetera if they are asked where they are born. Although sense of identity for many come from their ethnic background or place of birth and ethnic identity precedes individual and national identity, it is often the case that most Ethiopians in exile identify themselves as “Ethiopian” first, thus adhering to their national identity and showing a strong sense of attachment to their national homeland over more specific ethnic or geographic affinities (Haile, 2008; personal interview, 2015). Ethiopia is a land for various ethnic groups and there exists extensive literature discussing the influence of ethnic identity in upward mobility and political engagement. However, Ethiopian’s self identification along ethnic line does not necessarily apply to the majority of Ethiopians living abroad as they find themselves to be a minority in a dominant society (Tefera, 2016). Thus, most Ethiopians in exile appreciate their collective identity as an “Ethiopian” instead of identifying along their respective ethnic line.

Emperors ruled Ethiopia until the military regime overthrew the monarchial rule of Emperor Haile Selassie in 1974. After a period of protracted civil unrest and domestic turmoil, the Tigrayan Peoples' Liberation Front (TPLF) and the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) were merged to overthrow the military regime in 1991 and
established the Transitional Government of Ethiopia. The Ethiopian constitution that was established in 1994 has led to the formation of the current federal system in Ethiopia with the vision of ethnic federalism based on the self-determination of the country’s ethnic and religious populations. The most recent government has been in power since 1991, claiming landslide victories in every election inciting anti-government riots, civilian shootings by government forces, and opposition figures and civil society leaders being imprisoned and charged with treason and genocide (Zimeta, 2010). It is also reported that political freedoms are being suppressed in the country with the state control of the media, limited academic freedom, and intolerance for opposition toward the government where politically motivated killings and detention are widespread (Human Rights Watch, 2009).

The EPRDF government has been challenged by organized groups, both in the diaspora and locally, who consider ethnic federalism as destructing the country’s long-standing national unity and who challenge the alleged human rights abuse and restricted freedom. This conflict culminated in the declaration of a 10-month long state of emergency on October 9, 2016 following massive protests against the government. Although this is thought to be a major setback towards building a stable country, the declaration was considered by many as a necessary step in order to protect property and citizen’s lives. In spite of protests and instability surrounding this time, the country has been getting positive press and support for its economic growth and for encouraging outside investment. In fact, the government started to send delegations to mobilize support from the Ethiopian diaspora in the United States and else where. Ethiopians abroad, who became citizens of the host country, were offered the opportunity of gaining a special card that shows their original identity, i.e. “the person of Ethiopian origin” yellow card, allowing them most of the rights enjoyed by locals. The government continued to
encourage investment by Ethiopians in the diaspora through various incentives, including reduced tax for imported goods and diaspora bonds (Chacko & Gebre, 2013; Gofie, 2016; Lyons, 2007).

**Forced Displacement and Resettlement in the United States**

Ethiopians lived in relative peace and harmony until 1974 by most accounts. Before the 1974 military coup, the country was ruled by the monarchical system under Emperor Haile Selassie. By the early 1970s, student groups and military officers started to question the imperial elites for the country’s economic and social downfall. The groups dissatisfied with the existing system started to organize themselves under a coordinating committee (the Derg), where Major Mengistu Haile Mariam was elected as chairperson (Getahun, 2007). The Derg succeeded in overthrowing the monarchical institutions, and established the Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC) that assumed the functions of government (Marcus, 2014). Before discussing the refugee movement from the 1970s onwards, I will start by presenting brief contextual information regarding early migration of Ethiopians to the United States before the beginning of the arrival of Ethiopian refugees.

The Ethiopian diaspora has been considered the oldest member of African immigrants residing in most urban cities in the United States (Getahun, 2007). Ethiopians started to arrive in the United States throughout the 1920s as university students in an attempt to garner further modern education. During the period of Emperor Menelik II (1889-1913), the first generation of intellectuals as part of the Ethiopian delegation, university students were sent to the United States for official visits and further education (Skinner & Shinn, 2003; Zewde, 2002). According to Skinner and Shinn (2003), this trend of sending students and government officials continued during the reign of Empress Zewditu (1916-1930) and under Emperor Haile Selassie’s reign.
(1930-1974) where the second-generation intellectuals were sent to study and attend UN conferences during the 1930s and up through the early 1970s. These groups were mostly related to Emperor Haile Selassie or were the sons of first-generation intellectuals, and they were highly patriotic and loyal to their country (Zewde, 2002). Before the coming to power of the military regime in 1974, Ethiopian officials and students returned to their homeland after completing their official visits or studies in the United States in order to put their newly developed skills to work in service to their country.

After the overthrow of the emperor in 1974 and during the turmoil surrounding that time, Ethiopian students who were pursuing their education in the West and others who were serving as diplomats, representing Ethiopia abroad, decided to seek asylum in their respective host countries. This marked the start of the “refugeeism” period in Ethiopia. From the above illustration, we can see that early migrants from Ethiopia were mostly intellectuals who had close relationships with the ruling class and who came to the United States voluntarily to advance their education unlike the refugees of the later period who were pushed out of their country for various other reasons.

**The Derg Regime (1974-91) and Forced Displacement**

The first major influx of Ethiopian refugees to the United States occurred during military rule (1974-1991). When the revolution took place in 1974, a significant number of Ethiopians who were sent as government officials and students by Emperor Haile Selassie remained in the United States despite their initial intention of returning to Ethiopia (Farkas, 2003). The adoption of a socialist-oriented ideology by the military government contributed to the creation of havoc and turmoil manifested in the form of massive human rights abuses including imprisonment, torture, disappearances, and killings of those who were believed to be a threat to the existing
government (Fenta, Hyman, & Noh, 2004; Kobel, 2010). The radical political and military change within the government and the ill-reputed “Red Terror” led to the forced displacement of many Ethiopians to neighboring countries, such as Kenya and Sudan, and the eventual resettlement of many to Europe, the United States, and Canada. Some of these refugees were able to proceed to the United States and resettle in different states. Others were able to enter the United States through various means, such as family reunion or by requesting asylum, and get asylum status granted (Haile, 2008). The settlement of Ethiopians as a refugee diaspora is described as a recent phenomenon dating back to the late 1970s (Chacko, 2003; Getahun, 2007).

Peaceful demonstration against the government held in various cities ended in bloodshed; bodies were displayed on the streets and relatives were prohibited to mourn the loss of their loved ones, and consequently, many people left the city either for the rural areas or to the neighboring country of Sudan (Human Rights Watch, 1991; Takougang, 1995). A study participant who lived through this period, described his experience as:

My brother was killed in front of my mother, and his lifeless body dumped on the street during the revolution … my mother was not even allowed to conduct a decent funeral ceremony. The military wanted to exhibit the body to silence the youth. It was a terrible time, I still carry those memories … then they begun looking for me, so I run away to save my life leaving my elderly mother behind … the journey to Sudan was rough … life as a refugee in Sudan was beyond your imagination … life was difficult … but we stayed there hoping for a miracle, nothing was worse that the terrible military junta by then, and so we survived. I cried so many times. I cried for my mother, my family, and I cried for Ethiopia; my motherland being destroyed by her children. (Interview, 2016, Atlanta)
During this period, many people from all parts of Ethiopia were threatened, imprisoned, and killed throughout the “Red Terror,” a campaign that destroyed armed opponents of the military regime as well as members of the civilian population. The worst periods of the “Red Terror” campaign started in 1976 and officially ended in 1978, after claiming the lives of thousands of citizens. Internal divisions within the regime and opposition from the urban youth marked this period. It was also characterized by centralized state terror where the regime started to arm civilians through local government offices and associations spreading violence in a short period. Besides, the military government was able to get intelligence support and arms shipments from the socialist countries with which it had entered an alliance leading to massive human rights abuses (ERTDRC, n.d.; Getahun, 2007).

The “Red Terror” operation contributed to the forced displacement of a significant number of young, educated, and visionary Ethiopians from their homeland. Furthermore, the government started to forcefully recruit young men to be enlisted into the army, and many were forced to flee the draft. Merchants, traders, and landlords were also targets of the military regime as they were largely classified as class enemies of the revolution who succeeded to accumulate wealth at the expense of the majority. Most of them were detained and their land and property confiscated adding to the number of people heading to neighboring states (ERTDRC, n.d.).

Political violence and turmoil are not the only causes of forced displacement. Kebede (1994) argued that land scarcity due to increasing population pressure, an unfavorable land tenure system coupled with discriminatory policies, agricultural stagnation caused by poor government policies, and an environmental crisis and the subsequent famine have acted as forces pushing people from the rural areas to the urban centers and eventually to neighboring countries in search of survival and a better life. Urbanization and better economic opportunity were not
listed as the official reasons for why people were forced to leave, but emphasis was given to the push effect of famine and land problems due to unfavorable government policies (Gugler & Flanargan, 1978). Due to a shortage of rainfall and restrictive government land policies which failed to motivate the peasants to produce and cultivate the land, severe famine and prolonged hunger took place in the early 1980s, reaching its climax in 1984. The 1984-1985 famine resulted in the death or displacement of hundreds of thousands of people within Ethiopia and forced about 100,000 refugees into Somalia, 10,000 into Djibouti, and more than 300,000 into Sudan (Ethiopian History, 2008).

In general, the refugee migration pattern to the United States due to the Derg regime and “Red Terror” could be classified into two categories. First, we have students who came to America for higher education, and government officials who came to America to participate in meetings prior to the 1974 Revolution, but who failed to return home because of the violence that was taking place in their homeland. The second group consists of individuals, mostly college students at the time of flight, who took refuge in neighboring countries and who were later allowed to resettle in the United States. In addition to the “Red Terror” and the violent political campaign by the Derg regime, the systematic oppression of certain ethnic groups within the society and the plea for political centralization played a significant role in pushing refugees out of their homeland. According to Bariagaber (1999), the internal war with Eritrea that started around 1961 and the war with Somalia over the Ogaden region in Ethiopia in 1977 and 1978 generated massive refugee flows in the late 1970s and early 1980s. From the 1980s onwards, the Horn of Africa became the largest refugee-producing area in the world, with Ethiopia being the largest contributor to the refugee flows (Bariagaber, 1999). The military regime tried to wipe out farmers and peasant associations in the rural parts of Ethiopia and many were killed in the
process. It failed to totally abolish the peasant based opposition movement in Tigray (Northern Ethiopia), known as TPLF (Tigrayan People Liberation Movement) that gained popular support and later gained control of the government by overthrowing the military regime in 1991.

Sudan was the major refugee accepting country in the horn of Africa where Ethiopian refugees settled before 1991. But, this trend shifted from 1991 onwards when Sudan started to develop a friendly relationship with the Ethiopian government and became hesitant to harbor refugees in an effort not to strain diplomatic relations between the two countries. In addition, the internal tension within Ethiopia changed when the Oromo Liberation Front was fighting to gain independence. The “Oromo” ethnic groups have traditional ties and cultural connections with similar ethnic groups in Kenya (Getahun, 2007). Thus, during their internal struggle with the government, many people from the Oromo and South region began to enter Kenya as refugees. Somalia stayed unstable with its own internal turmoil leaving Kenya the most viable alternative for refugees to migrate from various parts of Ethiopia.

**The EPRDF Regime (1991-present) and Forced Displacement**

At the onset of its establishment, the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) claimed to bring democracy and economic development throughout Ethiopia. While the government was working to devolve power and minimize central power by giving autonomy to the regions and promising every ethnic group self-determination, it faced criticism and opposition from many accusing the government of fragmenting the country and dividing the people, which eroded the long held tradition of “one, united, Ethiopia” that has been traditionally maintained throughout different regimes. Moreover, the ethnic composition of the ruling group, which is predominantly Tigrayans, faced strong opposition from other ethnic groups who blamed the government as ethnocentric (Getahun, 2007; Mehretu, 2014). People started to challenge the
formation of ethnic based regional governments. Besides, young educated Ethiopians begun to openly criticize the failed policies, the corrupt practices, and election misconducts that started to occur frequently.

After the Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front came to power in 1991, Ethiopians continued to migrate to neighboring states and relocated abroad, including the United States, as refugees and asylum seekers due to unmet expectations and unfulfilled promises that started to create dissatisfaction among people (Getahun, 2007). There have been continuous allegations that the government does not allow for the development of democratic culture and continues to imprison, persecute, and silence the voices of opposition. This has caused many Ethiopians to leave the country (Fenta, Hyman, & Noh, 2004). The Ethiopian-Eritrean war, which erupted in May 1998, has also accounted for the largest number of displaced people in Ethiopia since the 1991 government changeover. Over 350,000 people were displaced at the start of the war from areas along the common border of the Tigray and Afar regions, who fled mainly to neighboring Kenya (Dessalegne, 2004; Getahun, 2007). The forced movement of people from Ethiopia is still continuing, and hence the need to study what these forced migrants end up doing after their resettlement in order to address the circumstances that forced them to flee.

**Resettlement in the United States**

The United States is known as the country of immigrants due to the consistent flow of people from the rest of the world. The Refugee Act of 1980 created the Federal Refugee Resettlement Program to provide for the effective resettlement of refugees and to assist them with achieving economic self-sufficiency as quickly as possible after arrival in the United States (Kitagawa, 1984; Patrick, 2007). The program has created federal funding opportunities to states to develop refugee resettlement programs by providing a legal avenue for incoming refugees to
resettle easily. The Refugee Act incorporated the United Nations definition of “refugee” and standardized the resettlement services for all refugees admitted to the United States. Hence, the number of Africans resettled in the United States has progressively increased since 1982 (Takougang, 1995). According to the United States Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI, 2015), a significant numbers of refugees from Africa settled in different states during the years 1989-1999, and refugees from Ethiopia ranked among the largest population of African refugees who were admitted to the United States from those years.

A refugee does not choose the settlement pattern and destination state of resettlement in the United States. The pattern and destination are instead determined by the government and resettlement agencies that are assigned to facilitate the process. The president of the United States determines annual ceilings on the total number of refugees who may enter the country from each region of the world and the designated nationalities of those refugees, and the refugee resettlement agencies help to resettle the refugees into local communities (RCUSA, 2014). In order to qualify for resettlement in the United States, they have to demonstrate an urgent need to resettle in a third country because integration in the second country (a country neighboring their home country) and voluntary repatriation are not options. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) interviews refugees who stay in refugee camps to determine their eligibility. Asylum is also a protection granted to foreign nationals who are already in the United States or at the border and meet the international definition of a refugee. To be granted asylum, an asylum seeker has the burden to show substantial evidence in order to prove either persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution in the country of origin (RCUSA, 2014).
Upon arrival to the United States, refugees from Ethiopia are required to comply with the rules and regulations of their respective resettlement agencies, including learning English (for those who are not conversant in English), completing vocational studies (if need be), becoming self-sufficient economically, and adjusting to the new society quickly. As stated by Rogg (1971), political migrants tend to be well educated with solid social and economic backgrounds before displacement. This is true in the case of many forced migrants from Ethiopia, especially those who left the country during the military regime. Although the resettlement state is normally considered a final destination for refugees who are expected to stay at his/her/their initial place of resettlement, it is not uncommon to see a refugee or asylee moving from state to state throughout the United States in search of better opportunities (Lopez & Lundy, 2014).

It is important to note that, during the military regime (1974-1991), Ethiopians were restricted from going to the United States due to ideological differences between the two countries. Thus, those who were faced with the abuse, torture, famine, and internal turmoil either fled to refugee camps and small cities in Sudan or Kenya in the hope of gaining refugee status to come to the United States. In the periods following 1991, people who were not able to flee to neighboring countries or who had the opportunity to travel to the United States either through a student or tourist visa came to the U.S. directly and applied for asylum once they arrived. These groups can be technically considered refugees since their reason to flee were similar to that of refugees, but they do not fall under the category of a refugee. Hence, a discussion regarding asylees is beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, it is important to note that during the post-military period, Ethiopians were relatively free to travel to a second country and apply for asylum if they fulfilled the criteria.
It is also important to mention that despite the displacement from their homeland, Ethiopian refugees and asylees continue to engage with their homeland’s social, economic, and political spheres (Haile, 2008; personal interview, March 16�th, 2016). Because of their special status and their displacement history as forced versus voluntary, they are considered to have a stronger attachment to their origin and could be used as agents for peace building in their homeland by both the home government and host country. Conflict induced migrants experienced violence and varying degrees of torture, and they took the painful decision to leave their homeland to arrive in their resettlement country with hopes of gaining peace and stability. This personal and direct experience with violence and suffering puts them at a front place to be able to address the same issues that led them and others to flee.

Unlike other types of immigrants, first generation forced migrants from Ethiopia enter the United States with limited intention of staying long term or gaining citizenship, hoping to go back once peace restores and the conditions that led them to flight improves (Getahun, 2007). Some have already returned permanently, and the majority end up gaining citizenship while continuing to engage with the homeland in various ways. As a result of their special status and displacement history as forced versus voluntary, refugees are considered to have a stronger attachment to their origin and could be used as agents for peacebuilding in their homeland by both the home government and host country. It is important to note that forced migrants’ pre-displacement life experience (including education and socio-economic status), reasons for flight (involuntary), and their unique legal status after resettlement (with no guarantees of asylum, temporary residency, a long wait for citizenship, and limited access to governmental support programs) can affect the level and intensity of transnational linkages.
Chapter Three: Literature Review

This review aims to situate the study within the context of literature on forced migration and peacebuilding, and examine the theoretical frameworks that will be employed in this study. It establishes a context for the current study by reviewing existing knowledge on forced migration and peacebuilding. Existing literature gaps and scholarly discussions that need expansion on the role of resettled refugees in peacebuilding will be identified in relevant sections.

Forced Migrants, Peacebuilding, the Diaspora, and Transnationalism in Existing Scholarly Discussion

This section discusses the main concepts that inform the dissertation, which are the structures of forced migration and peacebuilding. It also examines existing literature on the relationship between resettled refugees and the homeland, and the relationship between the diaspora and transnationalism in order to situate the Ethiopian case within the broader study of forced migrants and the diaspora.

Structures of Forced Migration

Although not unique to Africa, Africans have been experiencing displacement and forced migration for centuries, which makes the refugee problem rather common on the continent. In the early 1960s and late 1970s, most refugees from Africa were the creation of colonial wars for independence and national liberation. This trend of forced displacement due to wars of national liberation changed gradually when individuals started to leave their homeland unwillingly due to repressive governments, including the regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam in Ethiopia (Adepouju, 1982; Kibreab, 1985; Veney, 2007). Consistent instability and human rights abuses coupled with dictatorial and suppressive governments, which have resulted in various social, political, and
economic tensions, have been the major causes of involuntary migration in many African countries, including Ethiopia.

As the number of people who are forced to flee their homes and seek refuge in another country continues to grow, it became necessary to develop an international refugee law that could be applied as an instrument to the notion of refugees. The law provides a universal meaning that defines a refugee and protects the human rights of a refugee. Although there were some international instruments that were embraced before WWII, the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to Refugees adopted by the United Nations is a significant legal document that forms the basis of most of the work related to refugees. It was primarily developed to protect individuals who were forcefully displaced because of WWII. The convention defines the term “refugee” and outlines the rights of the involuntarily displaced, as well as the legal obligations of signatory states, including United States and Ethiopia, to protect refugees (UNHCR, n.d.). It also defines a refugee’s responsibilities to host countries. This convention was later amended by the 1967 Protocol, which was expanded to include the various problems that push individuals to make the difficult decision of leaving their homes, families, and communities seeking refuge in another country (UNHCR, 2011).

In addition to these international legal instruments, the Organization of African Union (OAU) argues that the 1951 UN convention is inadequate because of its main focus on issues related to WWII and European refugees, leaving out issues of external oppression, foreign domination, oppression, and persecution that most African states were facing at the time. Thus, the OAU adopted the “Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa” in 1969 focusing on problems that African states were experiencing (Murray, 2005; Shacknove, 1985). The OAU convention builds upon the UN convention and expanded the
definition of a refugee. The international and regional convention regarding refugees was established to protect their human, social, cultural, and economic rights and clarify the obligations that they have during their period of asylum. However, signatory states decide whether to accept or reject refugee claims by setting policies for the admission and treatment of refugees. Although some resettlement countries have a more restrictive policy towards refugees, others have an open policy where admission is relatively accessible and refugees are provided with various rights and the option of permanent settlement via naturalized citizenship (Milner, 2009; Rogg, 1971; Rutinwa, 1999).

According to the international community, including UNHCR, a refugee is believed to have secured a solution if one of the following is fulfilled: resettlement in a third country of asylum, integration of a refugee in the country of first asylum; or repatriation to the country of origin (UNHCR, 2011). These are known as “durable solutions” in refugee resettlement. Resettlement is an option if a refugee cannot return to the homeland or is unable to live permanently in the country of first asylum. The UNHCR facilitates the resettlement process. However, the country that is hosting the refugee has an ultimate say whether to accept a refugee or not. Local integration emphasizes the need for the social, cultural, and economic integration of refugees to the host society. Repatriation is the voluntary return of a refugee that is based on negotiation and collaboration between the asylum country, country of origin, and the UNHCR to facilitate the successful return of a refugee (Bariagaber, 1999; Crisp, 2004; Kibreab, 1993; Rutinwa, 1999). Although these solutions have been working to some extent, it is important to focus on the root causes that force people to leave and emphasize preventative measures due to the continued increase and plight of refugees. Refugees have mostly been discussed as victims and a potential problem to the host society (Schemer, 2012; Threadgold, 2009; Van Gorp, 2005),
and this study proposes to shift the conversation away from that and towards the process of refugees participation as active agents in their and their home countries outcomes, looking for a solution to limit forced migration and the displacement of people from the outset.

**Relevant Discussion on Forced Migrants and Transnationalism**

The vast majority of existing literature on refugees focuses either on integration after resettlement (Ackerman, 1997; Bakewell, 2000; Harrell-Bond, 1986; Jacobsen, 2001, Kaufman, 2009; Kibreab, 1993) or on repatriating refugees from temporary settlement sites before resettlement to a third country (Chimni, 1993; Harrell-Bond, 1989; Morsink & et al, 1994; Rogge & Joshua, 1989). Research studies on forced migration focus either on the policies that seek to integrate refugees into host countries (Berry, 1997; Fielden, 2008; Hein, 1993: 55) or on the barriers of resettlement (Ackerman, 1997; Kaufman, 2009; Mills, 2007). There is also an emphasis on settlement actors and agencies that are believed to orient refugees toward the receiving country context and connect them to broader social networks (Eby et al., 2010; Nezer, 2013).

Forced migrants have also been studied as persons who uproot themselves, leave behind destroyed lives, interrupt familiar life, and cease to belong in their original culture in order to permanently resettle and assimilate into the social and political norms of the host society with limited transnational agency, abandoning any hope of returning to the homeland (Glazer and Moynihan, 1970; Gordenker, 1987; Handlin 1973; Strand and Jones, 1985; Valverde, 2002). Expanding on this, Nolin (2002) argues that forced migrants continue to maintain very limited ties with the homeland due to continuing instability in the homeland, lack of communication, limited resources, and limited and dispersed social networks at home. Existing studies on refugee transnationalism presumes that resettlement is an ultimate solution and final destination for
forced migrants who have settled permanently in the new country (Glick Schiller et al., 1995; Nolin, 2002, 2006) and therefore little attention has been given to resettled refugees’ return migration or the maintenance of strong ties with their homeland.

The following questions remain when one tries to understand the experiences of forced migrants: What happens to forced migrants after resettlement? Do they automatically lose their identity and become a member of the host society? Why and how are they involved in home politics? What kinds of actions do they take in order to restore peace in the homeland? What happens to them if the situation that has forced them to leave no longer exists? Do they return? Do they engage in peacebuilding initiatives while maintaining their ties with the resettlement country? These are just some of the questions that need further investigation. Not much has been done to examine the transnational engagement of resettled refugees, especially by approaching it through the lens of peacebuilding.

Conventional wisdom with regard to refugees’ long-term motivation and desire assumes that refugees are victims and passive actors in politics, lacking in agency and traumatized by a political structure, and they therefore have no active interest in engaging in homeland politics and economic development (Schemer, 2012; Van Gour, 2005). They are often portrayed by local and international media sources as helpless victims who need outside agencies to guide and direct their activities, especially in the first years of arrival to a resettlement country. When forced migrants are studied as agents, they are often studied as accessories associated with rebel fighters in cases like the Kurdish refugees, Eritrean refugees (Al Ali, Black, and Koser, 2001; Loescher 2001; Wahlbeck, 1998), or Ethiopian diaspora (Lyons, 2009). Most studies also consider forced migrants as people with complex and challenging experiences, stripped of their agency, stripped of their power, stripped of their history and identity, and in need of

The identity of forced migrants is typically constructed by outside actors (government, host country institutions, non-governmental institutions, religious institutions, etc.) and the media. They are typically classified as vulnerable, powerless, “others”, deprived and in need of assistance, which fits the Western understanding of displacement while serving as an important fundraising tool for humanitarian agencies (Anand, 2007; Brubaker & Cooper, 2000, p. 32; Cohen, 2001). Their individual journey, perception of “self” as an agent, past experiences before displacement, and contribution towards peacebuilding practices after their forced displacement are not well understood. In this study, I examine the lived experiences of forced migrants surrounding flight, the specific contributions they make towards the homeland in order to create enabling environments for peace, their understanding of peace and peacebuilding, their construction of the past and the future, their construction of an “Ethiopian” identity within the country of resettlement, and their understandings of their own identity, which in turn shapes their active engagement in the homeland. The findings are expected to enrich our understanding of the refugee-diaspora community and their practices that go beyond resilience and towards giving back.

Existing literature on transnationalism mostly focuses on diaspora economic and political transnationalism through remittances and does not necessarily focus upon forced migrants (Hammond et al., 2011; Maimbo & Ratha, 2005; Ozden & Schiff, 2006; Page & Plaza, 2006; Stark et al., 1986). For instance, research on Eritrean and Haitian diasporas suggest that diaspora groups often participate in various nation-building ventures, such as the use of social media to
advocate and fundraise in order to strengthen their homelands through remittances (Bernal, 2004; Pegram 2005). A majority of the literature discusses homeland engagement under the context of transnationalism and globalization in relation to the diaspora group and refer to the social, cultural, political, and economic relations that migrants maintain both with their home and host country leading to multiple identities (Al-Ali et al., 2001, pp. 620-632; Clifford, 1992, 1998; Gupta & Ferguson, 1992; Sherrell & Hyndman, 2006). On the other hand, some literature on forced migrants’ transnational engagement focuses on the link between protracted refugees in camps and regional insecurity, while others examine the relationship between diaspora remittances and contributions towards their homeland (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004; Demmers, 2007; Hammond et al., 2010; Lyons, 2004; Orozco, 2003; Shain, 2002; Smith, 2007; Terry, 2005; Van Hear, 2003).

Scholars on transnational migration describe migrants in the era of globalization as those who are detached from their ethnic and national bonds by embracing post-ethnic and post-national identities, and characterized by new forms of belonging and identities that translate into transnational political practices (Martiniello, 2005; Schiller et al., 1995). Some scholars are also concerned about the consequences of globalization. They claim that it reduces migrants’ sense of belonging and nationalism by eroding cultural identity (Giddens, 1990; Karim, 2006). By examining migrants’ experience through the lens of assimilation theory, studies suggest that migrants would inherently lose the social, political, emotional, and cultural ties that they once had with their country of origin, making them more politically active in their receiving countries (Martiniello, 2005; Schiller et al., 1995).

Literature also indicates that forced migrants can be more at “home” in the country of asylum by severing ties with their country of origin, especially if they have lived there for a long
time with better economic or social opportunities (Black & Khaled, 1999; Haycock, 2013, p. 21; Koser, 1997; Lamina, 2013; Rogge & Joshua, 1989). Economic factors as a reason not to return to a country of origin are also mentioned by these authors under the assumption that returnees can be subject to economic problems in their countries of origin upon return. In addition, the democratic culture in a host country is mentioned as a major factor that could facilitate assimilation by loosening or cutting links that the diaspora maintains with the homeland (Safran, 2005). Nevertheless, Cuny & Stein (1992) argue that the inability to effectively integrate with the host society may push the refugees to return home. This is an interesting scholarly debate that needs to be further researched by studying a particular group that have gone through a specific circumstance, such as violent conflict and maltreatment at a certain time.

Generally, the discussion on assimilation and acculturation sees migrants as a homogenous entity and does not take specific cultural and individual values and experiences into account. Most of the literature leaves a gap in understanding the desires and motivations of already resettled refugees and asylees in areas of peacebuilding and the prevention of further violence. The transnational ties that the refugee diaspora group maintain with the homeland, and its contribution towards homeland peacebuilding and development has been studied by some scholars (Mohamoud, 2005; Reilly, 2014; Yahia, 2011; Zunzer, 2004). However, the dialogue does not provide a detailed and contextual account of the meanings and experiences of forced migrants with regard to peace and peace initiatives. Concepts related to the meanings that they give to peace and how their experiences both in the homeland and host country shape their attitude towards peace and peacebuilding are not discussed in depth.

Existing literature on transnationalism that suggest the severance of social, political, or cultural practices from one’s native place is not enough information to understand the
experiences of forced migrants who are different from people who leave their homeland voluntarily. There are studies on the experience of diasporas’ homeland engagement (including return migration) from the viewpoint of international organizations, NGOs, and national governments, leaving a gap in the understanding of the topic from the perspective of the individual migrant. Forced and voluntary migrants are often examined together under the umbrella term of diaspora in many migration studies, glossing over the unique stories and experiences of forced migrants. On the other hand, refugee studies have largely focused on integration, resettlement, repatriation, and humanitarian aid, giving limited attention to the active participation of forced migrants’ in their homeland as “agents” of peace and conflict transformation. They fail to address the question of how (and if) former forced migrants contribute towards peacebuilding and what kinds of resources and skills have been used in achieving the goal of peacebuilding and ultimately conflict resolution.

There exists insufficient research specifically on forced migrants whose motives and intentions for actively engaging in their homeland could be different from other members of the diaspora due to the very nature of their flight. This study recognizes the need to look at forced migration as a continuum and examine all aspects of the refugee experience, including pre-flight, flight, and resettlement in order to explore the effect that each stage of forced migration has on participants’ experiences in the peacebuilding process.

**Relevant Discussion on Diasporas and Transnationalism**

Although migrants can broadly be defined as those who move from their original country to another, they are further classified based on their reasons for migrating and the duration of their stay in a host country. Some are voluntary migrants such as labor and trade diasporas, while others can be forced migrants due to persecution, violence, or slavery (Cohen, 1997, 2008).
Similarly, some migrate for a short time while others move permanently. Cohen (1997) further classifies the diaspora as those who have a national homeland and those who are stateless such as the Kurdish diaspora.

The term diaspora has been historically associated with forced migrants such as the Jewish diaspora. However, due to the need for a broader category, the term is coming to be identified not only with refugees but also with expatriates, guest workers, overseas communities, exiles, and displaced people in general (Butler, 2001; Tololyan, 1996). This leads to a much broader definition of the diaspora as groups living outside the country of origin (Connor, 1986, p. 16) and “communities of transnational moment” (Tololyan, 1991, p. 5). Another defining feature of a diaspora group is shared identity and mutual understanding and memory (Braziel, 2003; Cohen, 1997; Orjuela, 2008). Members of the diaspora do not necessarily share the same identity despite coming from the same country. Their identity is further shaped by their specific ethnicity or language. This is relevant in the case of the Ethiopian diaspora that comprises of several ethnic groups.

The diaspora community is also described as one that maintains a relationship to an actual or imagined homeland as this provides a foundation from which its identity develops (Butler, 2001; Lukose, 2007; Zeleza, 2009). Literature on the diaspora emphasizes the strong relationship between the diaspora and their homeland and concentrates on issues of transnationalism, identity formation, symbolism of the homeland, collective memory of the homeland, bonding with the homeland, remittances, and the desire to return (Armstrong, 1976; Braziel & Mannur, 2003; Brubaker, 1996, 2005; Butler, 2001; Cohen, 2008; Lukose, 2007; Safran, 2005; Sheffer, 2006; Smith, 1986; Tololyan, 1996). Clifford (1994), on the other hand,
describes the diaspora as a group of people who are separated from their homeland with a strong interest of recreating a distinctive community abroad.

The diaspora groups are studied as a positive as well as a negative influence. They are often seen as an asset by the homeland states and societies due to expected economic benefits that they are capable of producing (Orozco, 2003; Schiller, Basch, & Blanc, 1995) through remittances and investment. They can also serve as transnational activists and informal lobbyists on behalf of the homeland government or representatives of their homeland in foreign lands as ambassadors and consultants (Laguerre, 2006; Zunzer, 2004). For instance, Mohamoud (2005) illustrates the positive influence of the African diaspora through the construction of civil society groups and the transmission of knowledge and skills that can aid in the promotion of peace in their homelands.

The diaspora communities are also described as fundamentalists that perpetuate conflicts through financial and political support without being physically present (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004; Ostergaard-Nielsen, 2006; Radtke, 2005; Sriskandarajah, 2003; Vertovec, 2005), often by “framing conflict issues for those at home and in the diaspora” (Lyons, 2006, p. 111). Political refugees are described as conflict-generated diasporas who play an important role in exacerbating conflicts as they desire to rectify the past injustices that led to their displacement (Lyons, 2006; Shain, 2002). Although some diaspora groups, such as the Cambodian diaspora and Liberians in exile, contribute to the resolution of conflict in their countries of origin (Um, 2007, p. 253), most literature discusses the role of the diaspora, such as the Tamil and Somali diasporas, in renewing or sustaining conflict.

The diaspora community engages with the homeland by either encouraging development activities or contributing to conflict. The diaspora can promote conflict or participate in
peacebuilding activities depending on the experiences of the group or individual and the conditions in the homeland and host country. Thus, it is imperative to focus on a particular diaspora group from a specific origin that resides in a particular country, such as forced migrants from Ethiopia who resettled in the United States, and examine their particular experiences. Diasporas who are expelled from their homeland involuntarily behave differently than other kinds of migrants. Similarly, all forced migrants do not behave in the same way regardless of their nature and context. Some contribute to conflict, while others participate in peacebuilding initiatives to reduce, if not eliminate, the causes of flight. Although the researcher remains cognizant of the broader diaspora scholarship, this study is situated within the under-theorized category in the diaspora, forced migration and peacebuilding, in the context of a specific African country – Ethiopia.

**Peacebuilding**

As explained in previous sections, scholarly work on forced migrants’ individual experiences in the aftermath of a conflict and their role as agents in the post-conflict period is limited in existing peace and conflict literature. Forced migrants are often studied as victims of war or as instigators of violence in their homelands. Furthermore, most literature has focused on the role of state institutions, international actors, humanitarian agencies, and civil society organizations in peacebuilding; affording limited attention to the important contributions of individuals (as agents) towards peacebuilding and conflict prevention. The central theme of this study is that rather than simply being “victims” of conflict or perpetrators of violence, forced migrants can become active agents of peace by becoming involved in transnational political, economic, social, and cultural activities to support everyday peacebuilding and conflict prevention efforts in their homelands.
The concept of peacebuilding gained importance after the end of the cold war with the mushrooming of intra-state. Although short-term humanitarian aid and crisis intervention are vital in helping conflict affected societies, emphasis has shifted towards conflict resolution and peacebuilding in recent years. The notion of peacebuilding goes beyond the idea of addressing the security concerns of a nation by protecting and defending its territory. It is a comprehensive process that addresses conflict through a wide-ranging set of approaches and stages, including a bottom-up strategy, needed for social transformation of a conflict-affected society toward sustainable and peaceful relationships (Lederach, 1997).

Peacebuilding deals with the transformation of societies from cultures of violence to cultures of peace and non-violence. The concept is related to Johan Galtung’s (1964, 1969, 1976) theory of positive peace where peace means more than the absence of war or death of soldiers on the battlefield, but refers to the endeavor to create sustainable peace by addressing the root causes of conflict and supporting local capacities for peaceful management and resolution of conflict through structural and relational means. Discussions on peacebuilding and what it infers has been expanding since its articulation by Johan Galtung (1976) and subsequent use of the term by the United Nations when Boutros Boutros-Ghali (1992) announced the Agenda for Peace with an emphasis on structural transformation and institutional reform, implying a top-down approach to peacebuilding through external intervention or through internal state institutions that control the peacebuilding process. In addition, the 1992 Agenda for Peace was mainly concerned with post-conflict peacebuilding activities by giving limited attention to actions that may take place in the absence of physical violence. It also excludes actions that may take place before or after a conflict through formal and informal networks and channels that are outside of the official peace process. Although the UN General Secretary expanded the concept
of peacebuilding in the *Supplement to an Agenda for Peace* (1995) to be instrumental in preventative diplomacy, it continued to suggest a top-down approach to peacebuilding.

The top-down approach to peacebuilding is closely related to the paradigms of liberal peace. The liberal model of peacebuilding has dominated peacebuilding discussions since the conception of the notion by Immanuel Kant's essay *Perpetual Peace- 1795* (2010), which links peace to liberalism and democracy. This idea has remained popular by the end of the cold war where the expansion of liberal democracy is assumed to bring world peace and stability (Fukuyama, 2006). Similarly, intrastate conflicts became the concern of the international community, opening up the way for a new form international intervention (which has a top-down character) to promote democracy, rule of law, free trade, and human rights as a recipe to instill peace in fragile states (Chandler, 2004; Richmond, 2006; Robinson & Hehir, 2009). This practice undermines the role of individuals and communities operating informally and from below, such as forced migrants who are resettled abroad.

A scholarly discussion on whether a peacebuilding process necessarily results in sustainable peace is also emerging. This view in mostly rooted in Johan Galtung’s (1969) classic work that makes a distinction between positive peace, which refers to the absence of structural violence, and negative peace, which indicates the absence of physical violence. As such, peacebuilding is understood as a process that aims to transform society and addresses underlying issues of conflict in order to build lasting peace, distinguishing it from peace agreements that do not guarantee peace by themselves. It is classified as an activity that can take place before, during, and after a conflict, aiming at preventing violent conflict or relapse of violent conflict (Jeong, 2002; Mac Ginty & Williams, 2009; Petrie & South, 2014). These scholars describe peacebuilding as a commitment to implementing transformative action that transcends conflict
management, targeting fundamental structural issues and inequalities. The limitations in the liberal peace model create a gap in understanding peacebuilding interventions and initiatives when a country is faced with a “no-war, no-peace” situation, where structural challenges remain while open war seems to have ended. By embracing positive peace as an organizing concept, I argue that the methods of intervention need to shift from primarily humanitarian, military, or state-focused approaches to those of understanding and including local actors and individuals who are directly or indirectly affected by the conflict.

Scholars have also started to shift the understandings about the root causes of conflict and its resolution from an external and state-centric approach to issues of identity and complex phenomena involving actors at the individual and community levels (MacGinty, 2010; Paris, 2010; Richmond, 2009, 2010; Roberts, 2011; Robinson & Hehir, 2009; Sen, 1999). It is argued that interventionist policies by the UN and the donor communities represent neocolonial and imperialist tendencies, suggesting the need for internal leadership in any peacebuilding process, and especially in Africa (Chandler 2004; Clapham 2002; Kumar, 1997, Murithi, 2009). Others suggest the need for both internal and external actors to work together focusing on the outcome of the process, which is peace, rather than focusing on the actors involved in the process (Duffield, 2011; Newman & Schnabel, 2002). There is a tendency to focus on a combination of actors to achieve sustainable peace. Similarly, instead of the top-down approach of peacebuilding, Lederach (1997, 2001) suggests that peacebuilding efforts will be most successful when a multitude of actors from different levels of society are linked together in multiple collaborative processes over an extended period of time. Lederach (1997) advises that the more individuals (actors at the grassroots level, middle range actors, and elite actors) get involved throughout the whole of society, the higher the chances are for a lasting, positive peace.
The United Nations General Assembly Secretary-General report (2012) has also highlighted the importance of following an inclusive approach towards peacebuilding. It is emphasized that a successful peacebuilding process must be transformative and create space for a wider set of actors – including, but not limited to, representatives of women, young people, victims and marginalized communities; community and religious leaders; civil society actors; and refugees and internally displaced persons – to participate in public decision-making on all aspects of post-conflict governance and recovery. Parallel to this observation, we see a shift from “track-one” diplomacy, which is an official government action, and “track-two” diplomacy, which is unofficial nongovernmental action, to “multi-track” diplomacy (Diamond, 2002). “Multi-track” diplomacy includes nine ways of diplomacy; including government, professional conflict resolution, business, private citizens, research comprising training and education, activism, religion, funding, and public opinion/communication (Diamond, 2002; McDonald, 1997). Diamond (2002, p. 26) stresses that people from all walks of life need to be involved for a peacebuilding process to be effective, long term, and transformative.

The strong emphasis on state and international institutions in solving the root causes of protracted conflicts is slowly declining as peacebuilding from below is gaining recognition (Azar, 1986; Burton, 1969; Diamond, 2002; Fisher, 1997; Lederach, 1997; Lyons, 2009; Oda, 2007). For instance, the constructive contributions of individuals to the society by engaging in areas of business and investment is being recognized by the work of many scholars (McMillan & Woodruff, 2002; Naude, 2007; Nyar, 2011) who analyze the potentials of entrepreneurs to contribute positively to the society beyond economic prosperity and rising GDP. Amartya Sen in his work *Development as Freedom* (1999) focuses on individual agency when discussing development arguing that an increasing human capability, responsibility, and opportunity lead to
economic production and ultimately social change. His argument relies on the concept that development is the expansion of essential freedoms, where freedoms are described as capabilities (choices) that an individual or the community possesses. According to Sen (1999), an investment, for example in youth education, needs to aim beyond increasing work force or production, and focus on its role in advancing human capabilities (for example in accessing information, accessing knowledge, having the means to fully function, and having the freedom to achieve), freedom, and choice as a measure of development. Amartya Sen’s understanding of development goes well with the idea of positive peace by bringing human agency into peacebuilding discussions. This concept of capability approach towards social change will be used in later chapters in order to explore the contribution of resettled forced migrants in the advancement of education, opportunities, and information in their country of origin for the purpose of expansion of human capabilities in various fields.

Aligning with Sen’s argument, Zelizer (2013) illustrates the concept of peacebuilding as an activity that requires an ongoing process that must be integrated across numerous sectors, from creating economic opportunity and improving healthcare systems to making the media and governance institutions more transparent and accountable. These interventions designed to promote human development in a community context establishes the notion of “peacebuilding” as a holistic process (Boulding, 1979; Montagu, 1978). Similarly, emerging concepts of everyday peace and everyday peacebuilding recognizes the everyday practices of ordinary citizens as political, which is often not recognized in the traditional peacebuilding approaches, that takes place through everyday informal ways visibly or in an indiscernible way (Mac Ginty, 2014; Richmond, 2010; Watson, 2012). These sources have provided valuable insight and criticism concerning existing peacebuilding practices where international organizations and states
continue to dominate the peacebuilding discourse, leaving out important dialogue on the engagement of resettled refugees, which is a particular concern for this study. As such, this study is informed by theses alternate understandings of peacebuilding that conceptualizes the process from a holistic perspective.

In the context of deep-rooted and “new” forms of conflict, peacebuilding should aim to address the root causes of conflict on a long-term basis before they lead to renewed violence within a society. It can also be considered a proactive measure in order to resolve or manage a violent dispute in the absence of active conflict. Throughout the development of this study, “positive peace” is implied when discussing peacebuilding initiatives, and peacebuilding is understood to include efforts to make peace sustainable and “positive”, including efforts aimed at addressing structural issues and social and economic inequalities through the provision of access to basic healthcare, education, or job opportunities (Farmer, 2009). The researcher uses the term peacebuilding not only as a post-conflict activity, but also as a concept that runs throughout the complete cycle of conflict, including preventive action and a durable solution beyond post-conflict recovery and reconstruction. For the purpose of this dissertation, I adopt Lederach’s interpretation of the concept and define peacebuilding as an initiative that aims to prevent the outbreak, recurrence, or continuation of violence and armed conflict, and comprises a wide range of political, developmental, humanitarian, and cultural programs and involvements. Peace building strategies that are focused on relationship building, capacity development, societal transformation, sustainable development, reduction of poverty and inequalities, and the promotion of a culture of peace and nonviolence will be the focus of this study.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Ethiopian resettled refugees and asylees have been victims of both direct and structural violence in their homeland, and it is possible to assume that
a significant number of them have a special interest in seeing societal transformation and prevalence of peace. I believe peacebuilding efforts that do not involve or recognize their contribution and potential is incomplete and likely to lead to strong grievances and renewed violence. Despite the rising focus on a bottom-up approach toward peacebuilding, most of the literature on the politics and policies of peacebuilding overlook the contributions of former refugees and their roles in peacebuilding (Adelman, 2002; Koser, 2002; Zaum, 2012). It is my contention that micro level peacebuilding initiatives, and especially those that involve involuntarily displaced migrants, have not been explored extensively. This dissertation adds to existing discourse on the topic to enrich our understanding of significant yet everyday practices that are employed by individuals to contribute towards conflict prevention and resolution.

**Theoretical Framework**

**Social Identity Theory**

Social identity is explained as a psychological concept where an individual’s self-concept is derived from the knowledge of their membership to a particular group, including the value and emotional significance attached to that membership (Tajfel, 1981). The theory states that social identity is a person’s sense of who they are based on their group membership and identity that is collectively and socially constructed in terms of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ or ‘in-group’ and ‘out-group’, creating a sense of belonging and emotional attachment to a particular group or community (Hogg & Terry 2000; Oakes 2002, p. 812; Oldmeadow et al. 2003, p. 140; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The theory suggests that people think and act as members of collective group, supporting the idea that an individual’s identity is socially constructed depending on the context in which they find themselves. According to this theory, forced migrants who might find themselves as having difficulty in integration and acculturation in the dominant culture in a host society are
likely to develop a strong sense of social identity with their own community abroad, which in turn cultivates and strengthens their ties with their home culture, traditions, and values. An important element of social identities is that they do not necessarily require continued interaction of group members in closed settings, but individuals are expected to act on behalf of the group according to the norms he/she internalizes as a result of belonging to that group (Stets & Burke, 2000). This concept is helpful in exploring the engagement experiences of migrants who are not physically present in the country of origin.

I utilize the concept of social identity and identity politics to explain individuals’ motives to find the will or solidarity for causes of peace and development in their homeland by highlighting their status as an ‘outsider’ in the resettlement society. The need for a sense of belonging is believed to be a major factor for resettled refugees’ and asylees’ desires to maintain ties with their homeland and engage in self-initiated peacebuilding activities. According to Volkan (1997), group identities are outcome of geographical reality, historical continuity, a myth of a common beginning, and other shared values that evolve naturally (p.22). Similarly, Adamson in Lyons & Mandaville (2012) argues that some forms of transnational political activism are shaped by political entrepreneurs’ employment of national or ethnic identities to function as boundary markers or mobilizing factors. In addition to identifying with the country of origin (Ethiopian or of Ethiopian descent), understanding how forced migrants from Ethiopia came to identify themselves (or be defined by others) as a refugee/asylee can help to explain their relationship with the homeland (i.e., How does being a forced migrant or the interaction with the broader diaspora community defines ‘self’?). Furthermore, the fact that they retain a strong sense of historic pride and nationalism for being the only African country that remained free of colonial power adds to the development of a strong sense of identity formation. The
sharing of collective memories and keeping a unique history of their own can become key markers of Ethiopian forced migrants’ collective identity. Although social identity theory fails to account for inter-group disparities, embedded power relations within group members (both in the country of origin and in the mainstream), gender differences within groups, and additional social structures such as education that could play a role in identity formation, I use the theory to help explain the fact that forced migrants remain engaged with each other and with the homeland through the formation of group identity which in turn influences their personal identity.

Theory of Conflict Transformation

For the purpose of this research, the role of resettled Ethiopian refugees and asylees in peacebuilding initiatives in their homeland will be studied within the framework of conflict transformation theory. It is argued that a top-down peacebuilding approach is problematic in an environment that needs a context-specific and systemic design for peacebuilding (Chopra, 2000; McDonald, 1997; Murithi, 2009; Paris 2004). The concept of conflict transformation offers an alternative for recognizing the role of forced migrants by factoring in individual “agency” and letting individuals at the grass roots level be providers of security, complementing the role of the state and other interested parties. It also proposes that the notion of peacebuilding move from a state-centric approach to a holistic approach that involves people directly affected by the conflict (Newman, 2010; Roberts, 2001; Sanders, 2009; Tadjbakhsh, 2010). This approach takes into consideration the potentials and needs of individuals who are affected by the conflict in peacebuilding. Resettled refugees and asylees are individuals who are directly affected by existing challenges in their homelands, and thus their potential and engagement needs to be seriously examined if one applies the logic behind the notion of conflict transformation.
The conflict transformation framework is a relatively new concept in conflict studies that was developed by John Paul Lederach in order to complement conflict resolution and conflict management techniques. Conflict transformation, as described by Lederach (1995), does not suggest a simple elimination or control of a conflict, but rather transformation requires an effort towards bringing positive peace within a society. The conflict transformation framework also seeks to bring lasting peace by focusing on the relationship between parties involved with or affected by the conflict. In an environment where people are suspicious and fearful of each other, displaced from their homes, and hold feelings of marginalization and persecution, it is important to address these relationship and trust issues as well as problems related to social injustices and structural violence in order to bring lasting peace (Bar-Tal, 2004; Fisher, 1997; Lambourne, 2004; Lederach, 1997). According to the proponents of this approach, conflict transformation requires the building and rebuilding of trust between conflict parties. As direct victims of conflict and bad governance, forced migrants are an important group in which relationship building is required for positive peace to prevail. Using John Paul Lederach’s lens of conflict transformation, this research argues that the role of resettled forced migrants in peacebuilding activities needs to be identified, recognized, and encouraged in order to bring long-term peace and development.
Chapter Four: Research Design

This study seeks to expand the notion of peacebuilding by specifically focusing on explicit peacebuilding initiatives of resettled forced migrants in Atlanta, Georgia and those who have returned to Ethiopia from the United States. It aims to gain an understanding of the lived experiences of conflict-induced migrants’ homeland engagement and peacebuilding efforts. It aims to explore the work of individual “peacebuilders” and understand their motivations for engaging in their homeland in a constructive manner. A qualitative research design using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is employed to meet the research aims. A phenomenological approach is believed to be appropriate for this study since the experiences and motivations of these specific groups are not well understood, and this approach is successful with surfacing deep issues and making individual voices heard (Creswell, 2007; Lester, 1999). This approach is particularly useful in capturing the lived experiences of study participants, and how they interpret the phenomenon that they experience.

This phenomenological approach utilizes in-depth data collection to study lived experiences, which is vital for exploring and understanding individuals’ understandings, actions, and the motivations. As discussed in the literature review, there is little information about the flight and resettlement experiences of forced Ethiopian migrants and how their experiences affect their homeland engagement. This research provides insights into their specific experiences and perspectives, through their personal stories, and the interactions that take place to construct their lives and involvements in homeland peacebuilding. Their individual stories and analyses have the potential to tell us something significant about general patterns and larger phenomena (Atkinson et al 2001), which in this case is to expand the notion of peacebuilding to everyday acts.
Methodological Framework: Rationale to the Qualitative Research Approach

The choice of a qualitative research design was appropriate since it allowed the participants to speak and share their lived experiences in the United States, express their thoughts about homeland and peacebuilding, and explain their levels of homeland engagement in order to bring positive change. It gives them the chance to express their feelings, thoughts, and motivations in their own way (Berg & Howard, 2012). As described by Glesne (2006), a qualitative research method is very useful to understand a certain social phenomenon from the perspectives of those involved. It involves the interpretation of data obtained from the voices and experiences of the participants in terms of the meanings participants bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

The open and less restricted method of interaction enables the researcher to capture new ideas and adjust the research design to accommodate the emerging themes from the data collected during the study. The research explores and gains a deeper understanding of the reasons and motivations for why forced migrants contribute to peacebuilding efforts in their homeland and how they conceptualize peace and peacebuilding. It explores the experiences of participants as they face different phenomena, and how that experience affects the understandings of peace and peacebuilding. Due to its exploratory nature and due to the fact that this topic is an area in which little is known, the in-depth dialogue with study participants and the involvement in participant observation allow for the possible emergence of new ideas and patterns in the field of forced migrants, and specifically in areas of peacebuilding. In addition to its value in terms of enriching the data, a qualitative inquiry is appropriate due to the sensitive and traumatic nature of the topic to a potentially significant number of study participants. The qualitative method can also increase the chance to develop an interactive and personal
relationship with respondents. This is helpful in building trust and rapport, and yields better understanding of the topic under study.

**Phenomenological Approach: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)**

Phenomenology is concerned with the lived experiences of the people involved, or who were involved, with the issue that is being researched (Holloway, 1997; Robinson & Reed, 1998). It seeks to describe and analyze the meaning of individuals’ lived experiences (Creswell, 2007). Similarly, Todres & Holloway (2004) described phenomenology as a research strategy where individuals who have experienced a common phenomenon can convey their experiences and understandings of an experience to others. Phenomenology is also explained as an interpretive work that draws on descriptive account of a certain phenomenon, allowing the participants to give an honest and natural description of a phenomenon from their perspective (Patton, 2002).

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), as an integral part of phenomenology and qualitative methodology, fits with an exploratory study and represents an approach most suited to this particular research. IPA is a phenomenological method that involves examination of personal experience of individuals, including perception or account of an experience or event, as opposed to an attempt to produce an objective statement of the object or event by the researcher (Smith & Osborn, 2003). This methodology holds that there is no one, universal objective reality to be discovered, but rather knowledge is constructed from multiple realities that are lived and experienced by individuals making sense of those realities. IPA also emphasizes that the research exercise is a dynamic process with an active role for the researcher in that process. It involves a two-step process, the first being understanding and giving voice to the concerns of participants.
and second, to interpret, contextualize, and make sense of the experiences in relation to a wider social context (Larkin et al., 2006).

Smith (2004) described IPA as an inductive theoretical approach that allows for an in-depth exploration of how participants make sense of their lived experience. It is concerned with understanding and giving voice to research participants, but asking critical questions such as: Is there something going on that the participants themselves are not aware of? Is there something going on that the participants are not verbally expressing but can be interpreted from their physical and emotional state? What can be observed from participant behavior and interaction? What kind of thought can be uncovered by connecting the various concepts from the data?

This study is interested in exploring how forced migrants understand and experience flight, resettlement, homeland engagement, and how they make sense of their personal and social world as it relates to peacebuilding. It is concerned with the process and nature of flight, the complexity involved in the resettlement process, and the inspirations and motivations for engaging in the homeland where participants experienced violence and torture that forced them to flee to begin with. The study is not attempting to test a predetermined hypothesis; rather the goal is to explore participants’ subjective experiences, make their voices heard, and make connections with broader social reality. For this reason, IPA is selected as the optimal method of analysis for the study.

**Study Development**

During the planning of the study, due to the difficulty of finding individuals who meet the inclusion criteria (discussed below), it was decided to focus on recruiting key informants who possess an in-depth knowledge of the refugee community. The key informants are involved in leadership position of the Ethiopian community in Atlanta. They helped identify individuals who
have been engaging with the homeland to bring positive change, and who are interested to participate in the study in order to share their experiences.

**Interview Design**

Semi-structured interviews are considered a suitable method for data collection that employs an Interpretive Phenomenological Approach (IPA) by providing a focused and yet flexible method of data collection that allows participants the freedom to express their views in their own terms (Smith & Osborn, 2003). The interview questions (see Appendix 2) aim to obtain an understanding of participants’ experiences surrounding flight (including pre, during, and post), perception of homeland, homeland engagement, peace, and peacebuilding. These areas are believed to capture participants’ experience that is relevant to answer the study question in a holistic manner.

**Participants’ selection criteria**

Purposive or purposeful sampling was used for finding participants through a snowball technique in order to identify individuals who have similar experiences. According to Polkinghorne (2005), purposeful sampling is appropriate when the goal is to select participants who could serve as providers of significant information through their lived experiences and accounts of the phenomenon. The lived experience of participants will expand current understanding of the central phenomena in the study, which is primarily flight and peacebuilding and the connection thereof. In order to meet the goal of the study, the following criteria was employed in the selection of participants:

- Individuals who meet the definition of a refugee or asylee;
- Individuals who were born in Ethiopia;
• Individuals who came to Atlanta as a refugee or asylee (1\textsuperscript{st} generation refugees/asylees as they are the ones who experience forced displacement);
• Individuals (for refugees) who completed U.S. resettlement programs and who have been living on their own unassisted (to avoid bias due to fear of resettlement agencies);
• Individuals who have been living in the U.S. for at least four years (to fully assess their lived experience in the U.S.); and
• Individuals who have been known to engage in the social, economic, and political spheres of their homeland.

Additionally, the following selection criteria were used for returnees in Ethiopia,
• Individuals who came and resettled in the United States as a refugee or asylee prior to their return;
• Individuals who returned to Ethiopia after living as a resettled refugee/asylee and who settled back in their homeland (either temporarily or permanently); and
• Individuals who engage in the economic, social, and political spheres of the homeland.

**Pilot Project**

A pilot project was conducted in Spring 2015. The project helped in establishing contacts within the community and provided preliminary information about the various kinds of homeland engagement. The study was conducted through in-depth interviews with 8 forced Ethiopian migrants who reside in Atlanta. The study was primarily focused on examining the relationships between integration in the host country and homeland engagement. Initial findings suggested that effective integration in the host country has a positive effect on homeland engagement. However, the study also found that limited integration does not necessarily lead to limited homeland engagement, but rather encourages study participants to strengthen their ties.
with their country of origin. The pilot study indicated forced migrants from Ethiopia remain engaged with their homeland regardless of their integration experiences with the host society. In addition, the pilot interviews helped to test the interview guide’s contents and obtain feedback from participants regarding the process of the interview and any suggested amendments or revisions to specific questions.

**Procedure and Data Collection for Dissertation**

The city of Atlanta, Georgia, United States and the city of Addis Ababa in Ethiopia were chosen as appropriate field site venues. Study participants included forced migrants from Ethiopia who live in Atlanta, and those who have permanently or temporarily returned to Addis Ababa from the United States after resettlement. It is believed the two sites provide the highest possibility of obtaining appropriate participants to the topic that is explored in the study.

The State of Georgia hosts a large number of migrants including refugees (McCabe, 2011). Although the total number of Ethiopian refugees who live in Atlanta remains unknown, Atlanta is considered one of the cities with the largest concentration of Ethiopian immigrants, including what some have referred to as a secondary diaspora with its own unique set of conditions (Lopez & Lundy, 2014). DeKalb County is home to 69% of the Ethiopians in the Atlanta region and 65% of Ethiopians living in Georgia (Global Atlanta Snapshot, n.d.). DeKalb County is also a place where many refugees arrive and settle through resettlement agencies, and it has become a place where most of the Ethiopian religious institutions, community organizations, shops, and business centers are established. Ethiopians residing in this area have established numerous business centers, religious institutions, professional organizations, and community associations. I have developed networks and contacts by visiting these places and
through volunteer work with Ethiopian refugees to assist with adjustment and resettlement concerns. In addition, I conducted a pilot research study with participants from the area in 2015.

The second site, Addis Ababa, is the capital city of Ethiopia. It is the country’s commercial and cultural hub, and is one of the places that attract returnees who are interested in bringing change to their country. The participants of this study are returnees from the United States, irrespective of where they lived when they were in the United States, since it is their return that is of interest rather than where they lived in the United States. Because the project is focused on forced migrants, the research participants included those who fled from Ethiopia beginning with the 1974 revolution and subsequent persecution and violence that resulted after the coming to power of the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front in 1991.

**Participants**

Fourteen participants were selected for the study as having a small number of study participants, from five to twenty-five, is suggested to be the most appropriate strategy if a phenomenological approach is employed for a study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010; Smith & Osborn, 2003). The study participants were selected through a purposive or purposeful sampling strategy after the use of a snowball technique. The selection criteria, discussed above, were employed to recruit eligible participants. For the purpose of confidentiality and to respect the wishes of participants, I use pseudonyms for the write-up and only basic demographic information about participants is provided as an overview (Table 4.1).

The journey of forced migrants after resettlement and especially their contribution towards peacebuilding efforts in their country of origin is an experience about which little is known. This study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences, perspectives, and actual interpretations of the topic and actions of this group as they relate to peacebuilding
through the qualitative research methodology. A small number of study participants were interviewed, as the purpose of this study is not to make general claims, but to explore the lived experiences of this particular group and analyze each case. The relatively small number allows for an in-depth engagement and detailed analysis with each story.

Table 4.1 – Participant Basic Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant ID or Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Approx. Year left Ethiopia</th>
<th>Highest degree</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Homeland visit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abebe (A)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Retired college dean/Professor</td>
<td>Returned permanently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bekele (B)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Software engineer</td>
<td>Visits twice a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caleb (C)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Shop owner</td>
<td>Multiple visits in a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debebe (D)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>MD</td>
<td>Physician</td>
<td>Visits once a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eshetu (E)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>MBA</td>
<td>Broadcaster, Journalist, Mediator, Business owner</td>
<td>Multiple visits in recent years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feleke (F)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>MD</td>
<td>Retired college professor, practicing Physician &amp; Instructor</td>
<td>Returned permanently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gelila (G)</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Real estate, Investor</td>
<td>Multiple visits in a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawa (H)</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>DNP</td>
<td>Certified Nurse, Midwife, Blogger</td>
<td>Visits once a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iman (I)</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Teacher, Business owner</td>
<td>Visited twice since flight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jara (J)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Author, Novelist, Poet, Writer</td>
<td>Multiple visits in a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kebede (K)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>Business owner, Community organizer</td>
<td>Visits once in two year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lemi (L)</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Housewife, Blogger, Community organizer</td>
<td>Multiple visits in recent years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mesi (M)</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>MD</td>
<td>Physician</td>
<td>Returned permanently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nahum (N)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Market Research Analyst, Investor</td>
<td>Multiple visits in recent years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introducing participants

All participants have been living in the U.S. for more than 5 years. They were selected based on their known contribution towards homeland peacebuilding. In addition, homeland visit (at least once) after flight is among the inclusion criteria. Participants were either in college or have completed college education at the time of flight, and they all achieved higher level of education in the U.S. Although education was not part of the selection criteria, participants who are known to contribute to homeland peacebuilding efforts are found to be well educated. A question about ethnic identity was part of the initial interview list. However, participants chose not to share their ethnic identity by simply referring to themselves as Ethiopian or stating “I am Ethiopian”. Ethiopia is home for more than 80 ethnic groups. Although there exists an implicit and sometimes visible, long-standing ethnic tension among the different ethnic groups, participants’ comment suggested a conscious decision on their part not to amplify existing tension among selected ethnic groups.

Ethnic tension and intolerance has been an often embedded and unspoken permanent fixture of Ethiopian internal political structure for many years. However, it is important to note that ethnic intolerance is not often witnessed among Ethiopians in the diaspora as most individuals identify with the larger Ethiopian identity over ethnic belonging. This is a typical attitude among many Ethiopians within the Ethiopian community in Atlanta in an effort to avoid politicization of ethnic identity. Ethiopians in diaspora in general, although there are many that involve in accelerating homeland ethnic violence, stay away from ethnicization of identity, in particular in light of recent renewed ethnic tension in the country. Thus, for the purpose of this dissertation all participants are understood as an Ethiopian instead of their particular ethnic background.
Homeland Environment at the time of Participants’ Homeland Visit/Return

Ten Participants who left Ethiopia during the military regime in the 1970s returned to visit the homeland for the first time following the demise of the military regime and after the coming of the Ethiopian People Republic Democratic Front (EPRDF) in 1991, which adopted multiple policies to implement internal change based on multi-party system, democratization, and mixed economy. Since the time of their first visit, they continue to visit the country several times a year and some have returned permanently in recent years. Four participants who were dissatisfied with existing internal changes with EPRDF left the country in the 1990s and returned to visit the homeland once they observe improved internal political environment and economic growth after 2004 (Geda, 2005). They visit Ethiopia once a year or multiple times in a year, however, none of them have returned permanently. Participants’ return period coincides with the end of the Eritrean-Ethiopian border conflict of 1998-2000 that claimed many lives and displaced thousands. The establishment of the Ethiopian Diaspora Association in 2012 has also acted as a contributing factor for participants’ return by serving as a bridge between the diaspora and the Ethiopian government for the protection of their rights and interests. The Association provides timely information regarding domestic policies and strategies, which Ethiopia pursues for the Ethiopians abroad. The government has also implemented several policies aimed at the diaspora and has become one of the most active among African countries in promoting diaspora engagement since 2002 (Getahun, 2007, Weldeyesus, 2009).

Data Collection

Interviewing is an important means of collecting data in a qualitative study, especially when “investigators are interested in understanding the perceptions of participants or learning how participants come to attain certain meanings to phenomena or event” (Berg & Howard,
Interviews were conducted in a place that is conducive to the participants, and initially up to 90 minute was allocated for each interview. However, 9 out of the 14 interviews took 3 hours with several breaks in between, and 5 out of 14 interviews were conducted in 90 minutes. In some instances, additional meeting with the participant was required in order to complete the discussion. Having extended and long session with participants provided opportunity to observe and listen to what is said during breaks. Participants were encouraged to speak either in English or Amharic (official language of Ethiopia). The nature of the interview was explained and issues related to confidentiality were discussed before participants were asked to sign a consent form (Appendix 1). The interview guide (Appendix II) was semi-structured in nature, allowing for flexibility and an informal conversation when needed. Participant observation and a pilot study were used in order to enhance the internal validity of this study.

**Data collection # 1: Key Informant Interviews (with selected key respondents)**

Interviews with key informants, whom I refer to as community “experts”, were conducted in the initial stage of the research. The insights offered by these experts were used in subsequent question development and interviews with the general study participants. Expert interviewing was important to gather ideas and important issues from people who have closer knowledge of the topic under discussion. Gaining insights from these key respondents during the initial phase of the research helped avoid unnecessary imposition of my own assumptions or other ideas gained from previous readings. The experts included a community leader and an active participant in development and investment endeavors in the homeland. The initial expert interview helped me engage with major undertakings in the community and identify people who could satisfactorily answer questions that this research intends to explore. The interviews with
key informants were semi-structured to allow for in-depth information, but within the context of the research guide so as not to get distracted with topics that had no relevance to the research.

The expert interviews provided preliminary knowledge about individuals’ understandings of the topic of Ethiopian refugees’ lives after resettlement in the U.S. and their engagement in peacebuilding activities in the homeland. It also helped to gather information on what types of peacebuilding activities were likely taking place. The information obtained from these interviews helped inform subsequent methods, such the questions for the semi-structured interviews with study participants and participant observations. It also allowed for the formation of networks that led to other individuals who participated in subsequent interviews.

Data collection # 2: Semi-Structured Interviews (with forced migrants known to engage with the homeland positively)

A semi-structured, face-to-face interview was conducted with participants both in Atlanta and in Addis Ababa in order to extract information about the lived experiences as resettled refugees and asylees and their contribution towards peacebuilding efforts in their homelands. In addition to the interviews, side conversations, non-verbal clues, and attitudes were recorded during the interviews and were used as part of the analysis. The in-person interviews were vital in gathering information about participants’ experiences with forced displacement, resettlement in Atlanta, notions of homeland, and homeland engagement.

A semi-structured interviewing method was selected for the following reasons:

• It provided a greater range of responses, including unanticipated replies which add to the richness of the data;

• It provided avenues for a detailed response within the guidelines or within what the researcher wanted to study without being too broad or off topic;
• It provided flexibility to the emerging viewpoints in the interview process without losing the focus of the inquiry. I was able to ask follow-up and probing questions for clarity;
• It encouraged participants to express their experiences naturally without imposing a fully structured questionnaire, which gives limited opportunity for leeway; and
• It allowed for a natural flow of information. The ordinary nature of the interviews allowed me to gain participants’ trust and willingness to share information freely.

The interviews began with a set of general questions in order to build connections with study participants and create a degree of ease during the interview. Participants were given the opportunity to speak in either English or Amharic (the official language in Ethiopia) during the interview, as I am conversant in both languages. Although all interviews started in English, most participants chose to speak in Amharic or by mixing both languages as our conversation progressed. Thus, data translation was required for analysis. The goal of the interviews was to create a safe and open dialogue whereby the participant was encouraged to authentically discuss his or her lived experience at the time of flight, after resettlement, and subsequent homeland engagement efforts (Bergold & Stefan, 2012).

The study is not particularly focused on family remittances that are transferred home regularly so that family members can afford to pay for necessary expenses. However, study participants were selected purposively based on their experiences as forced migrants and their engagement in broader social, economic, and political affairs of homeland. This was to ensure that study participants provided information that was particularly relevant to the research questions (Maxwell, 2013). The following guidelines were used in order to construct key questions and guide the semi-structured interviews (Berg & Lune, 2012):
• Pre-displacement experiences: description (nature) of their life before displacement, what led to displacement, why they are here, how they arrived here, if they lived in refugee camps what their experiences were like in refugee camps, challenges encountered, feelings about homeland prior to resettlement, peacebuilding activities prior to resettlement, hopes and dreams before resettlement;

• Post-resettlement experiences: experiences and nature of their life after resettlement, challenges encountered, opportunities gained, feelings about their homeland and host country, ways of maintaining contact, types of peacebuilding activities, levels of contributions, reasons for their contributions, plans about the future, hopes and dreams after resettlement, reasons for return.

Under these guidelines, participants were encouraged to share their experiences. Probing questions were used to get a detailed response from participants. I also asked follow up questions when I got new information that was not a part of the initial interview.

I met study participants in person and explained the purpose of the study and their level of participation. Before travelling to Addis Ababa, particular returnees were identified to start the initial interviews. Other participants were identified through snowball sampling. Telephone communication was employed as much as possible to determine study participants’ willingness and availability to participate in the interviews. Study participants signed an informed consent form before proceeding with the interview. Participants were given the opportunity to ask for clarification, and they were encouraged to speak freely. I refrained from placing my own perspectives on their views.

I was very mindful of my own identity (i.e., a displaced Ethiopian living in the United States), and in order to limit bias, I stayed focused on my role as a researcher. My personal
experience provided both an opportunity and a challenge to do this research. My identity as an Ethiopian was useful as it gave me knowledge of the local language and culture and helped me to communicate smoothly. My familiarity with the region and similar identity helped to develop a stronger rapport and trust with the study participants. Despite these advantages, I am aware of the potential negative effects in terms of a preconceived assumption and issues of neutrality, and therefore stayed mindful of the situation and tried to be objective in the interviews.

Each interview was audio-recorded. In addition, I took notes during the interview process. I also kept personal reflective notes related to the interview process, the study participant’s behaviors, the interview setting, and any other unique experience that I encountered. This helped me to recall specific events during transcription and data analysis. The interview style followed the study participants’ culture of communication, which involves careful listening, understanding, empathy, and acceptance while people tell stories, especially those related to traumatic experiences such as forced displacement. I was very mindful of the cultural values of most Ethiopians, including an opportunity to share a small meal or coffee with participants before starting a conversation. Most of the study participants chose coffee shops familiar to them as the places to conduct the interviews while others offered their home as a venue. This is a culturally accepted characteristic among the Ethiopian community.

**Data collection # 3: Participant Observation**

This method was used to observe events that study participants partook in activities that were related to peacebuilding efforts and initiatives. Participant observation was conducted by attending four Ethiopian Community Association meeting in Atlanta and an event organized by Ethiopian diaspora in Bahir Dar, Ethiopia. Venues for observation were chosen based on the information obtained from expert interviews. I took notes on my observations and notes on the
overheard conversations. Gaining access to the venues was easy, as I identify with the community. In this study, participant observation was employed to cover a potential gap in interviews. The use of participant observation strengthens the internal validity of the study, and helped to observe what individuals from the Ethiopian community were actually doing verses what they say they are doing.

Data collection #4: Pilot Project

As discussed in a previous section, a pilot project was conducted in Spring 2015 in order to establish contacts within the community and gain preliminary information about the various kinds of homeland engagement.

Data Analysis

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used to analyze data. IPA aims to give evidence of the participants’ sense making of phenomena under investigation, and at the same time document the researcher’s sense making. The following steps were employed in the data analysis process (Smith & Osborne, 2008):

1. Multiple readings of the transcripts, listening to audio recordings and making notes of significant observations.
2. Transforming notes into emergent themes. Themes were formulated based on the detailed accounts of participants. Transcribed interviews were read and the right hand margin was used to record emerging themes.
3. Finding connections and grouping themes based on conceptual similarities. The clusters of themes were given an umbrella term, which became the main theme that captured the core meaning or essence from the remaining themes.
4. Discussing each theme illustrated with extracts from interview(s) (i.e., exemplars) followed by a brief discussion section, which relates the identified themes to existing literature.

5. Comments and implications of the study.

Based on the steps of IPA, the researcher was working from both the emic (from within and from the perspective of the participant) and etic (from outside and from the perspective of the researcher) perspectives. IPA is an approach that is phenomenological in nature as it allows the inclusion of the lived experiences of participants while the researcher is able to interpret the interpretations of participants’ lived experiences (Smith et al., 2009, p. 3). Since the initial stage in the data analysis was to become familiar with the data, I immersed myself in the data through the work of translation and transcription as needed, and by repeatedly reading through the data in order to try to step into the participants’ shoes as much as possible in order to avoid reductionism. At the same time, interpreting the data with the application of relevant concepts and theories was necessary in order to develop broader concepts. Reflective memos were kept at all times in order to add to the credibility of the data.

The purpose of this study was to explore and better understand how forced migrants from Ethiopia make sense of their lives as it relates to flight, as well as their experiences in homeland engagement and peacebuilding initiatives. The transcripts of the interviews were analyzed using IPA, which is both phenomenological and interpretive where the researcher assumes an active role. IPA was chosen for this study as it allows understanding of others while developing interpretations of their experiences and realities. It allows for interpretation during data analysis and the freedom to explore participants’ lived experiences, not only according to them, but also with them. The flexible approach offered by IPA allowed for a structured analysis
where the personal accounts of participants were organized and expounded by focusing on participants' personal perspectives on flight, homeland, peace, and homeland engagement. Their lived experiences prior to flight, during flight, and after resettlement are explored as it is an integral part in understanding their current undertakings in the homeland.

This chapter provided the rationale for using a qualitative phenomenological approach as an approach for inquiry. It described the steps involved in data interpretation and analysis and discussed the study development, including selection of participants, processes of data collection, and characteristics of study participants. This research explored the lived experiences of forced migrants, how their experiences contribute to the way they chose to engage in homeland, and the manner in which they have been engaging with the homeland. The research objectives included understanding the motivation behind homeland engagement in peacebuilding activities, examining the specific peacebuilding activities that conflict-induced migrants are engaged in, understanding the meaning they make of peace and peacebuilding, and exploring the opportunities and challenges that have shaped their peacebuilding initiatives.

**Main Question**- How do forced migrants from Ethiopia who are resettled in the United States contribute toward peacebuilding efforts in their homeland?

- What did forced migrants lived experiences look like pre and post-flight?
- What motivates forced migrants to engage in peacebuilding activities?
- How do forced migrants envision sustainable peace and peacebuilding?
- What kinds of roles do resettled forced migrants play in building sustainable peace, given their position?
Four key themes and several sub-themes emerged to form the basis for analysis: stability amidst chaos, walking away, but looking back, What is peace? and, the power of the individual: voice after flight. More information on the themes will be provided in the following chapter.
Chapter Five: Findings

This chapter presents the results of an interpretative phenomenological analysis of 14 resettled refugees’ experiences of peacebuilding in their homeland. The findings are based on the data collected through in-depth interviews with participants who are actively engaged in homeland peacebuilding. The purpose is to present the lived experiences of study participants prior to resettlement, the reasons behind their continued homeland engagement, the specific activities and roles that they play, their understanding of peace, and their experiences as an everyday peacebuilder. The main goal is to deepen the understanding of their unique experiences of surviving persecution in the home country and their courageous decision to engage or re-engage with the homeland. The participants’ stories paint both the lives that each of them lived prior to their forced displacement and how their lives were changed suddenly to become a story of persecution, struggle, persistence, and resilience. The stories further highlight the relationship between the respondents’ lived experiences with their involvement in their homeland, not as fighters but as peacebuilders.

Section I of this chapter offers reviews some of the demographic information of participants and a synopsis of the study presented in Chapter 4. Section II provides the themes and subthemes of: stability amidst chaos, walking away but looking back, what is peace? and the power of the individual. Using the participants’ authentic voices, the pre-flight experiences of participants, how the persecutions they faced in their homeland affected them, and the lived experiences that led them into a life of exile are discussed in depth. In each sub-topic, examples of the unique characteristics of those who decide to leave their home country and relocate to a foreign land involuntary and those who later return are provided. In addition, this section explores the reasons behind homeland engagement, and examines participants’ perceptions of
peace and the specific roles they play in peacebuilding. Each section ends with a discussion contextualizing the stories through the lens of peacebuilding from below.

As noted in the previous chapter, I used Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as the primary analytic strategy. As IPA involves a two-step process - first understanding and giving voice to the concerns of participants and second interpreting, contextualizing, and sense making (Larkin et al, 2006), the presentation of the results includes both traditional “findings” (i.e., voices of participants through direct quotes) and “interpretations” (i.e., contextualization and explanation) when appropriate. I recognize that the presentation of results and analyses are more typically done separately; however, it was important to present some of these together in this chapter to maintain fidelity to the IPA analytical strategy. Chapter 6 will also include more detailed analysis across themes, subthemes, and applications of these results to other areas of the literature and theories more broadly.

**Synopsis of the study**

The demographic information, which was presented in the previous chapter, is provided below as a reminder of the information regarding the participants.
Table 5.1 Participant Basic Information (same as Table 4.1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant ID or Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Year left Ethiopia</th>
<th>Highest degree</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Homeland visit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abebe (A)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Retired college dean/Professor</td>
<td>Returned permanently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bekele (B)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Software Engineer</td>
<td>Visits twice a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caleb (C)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Shop owner</td>
<td>Multiple visits in a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debebe (D)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>MD</td>
<td>Physician</td>
<td>Visits once a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eshetu (E)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>MBA</td>
<td>Broadcaster, Journalist, Mediator, Business owner</td>
<td>Multiple visits in recent years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feleke (F)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>MD</td>
<td>Retired college professor, practicing Physician &amp; Instructor</td>
<td>Returned permanently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gelila (G)</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Real estate, Investor</td>
<td>Multiple visits in a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawa (H)</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>DNP</td>
<td>Certified Nurse, Midwife, Blogger</td>
<td>Visits once a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iman (I)</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Teacher, Business owner</td>
<td>Visited twice since flight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jara (J)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Author, Novelist, Poet, Writer</td>
<td>Multiple visits in a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kebede (K)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>Business owner, Community organizer</td>
<td>Visits once in two year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lemi (L)</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Housewife, Blogger, Community organizer</td>
<td>Multiple visits in recent years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mesi (M)</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>MD</td>
<td>Physician</td>
<td>Returned permanently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nahum (N)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Market Research Analyst, Investor</td>
<td>Multiple visits in recent years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The purpose of this study is to explore and better understand homeland engagement and peacebuilding initiatives of forced migrants from Ethiopia. The research objectives include understanding the motivation behind homeland engagement in peacebuilding activities, examining the specific peacebuilding activities that they are engaged in, understanding the meaning they make of peace and peacebuilding, and exploring the opportunities and challenges that has shaped their peacebuilding initiatives.

Main Question- How do forced migrants from Ethiopia who are resettled in the United States contribute toward peacebuilding efforts in their homeland?

- What did forced migrants lived experience look like pre and post-flight?
- What motivates forced migrants to engage in peacebuilding activities?
- How do forced migrants envision sustainable peace and peacebuilding?
- What kind of roles do resettled forced migrants play in building sustainable peace, given their position as those resettled in the United States?

Four key themes and several sub-themes emerged to form the basis for analysis: stability amidst chaos, walking away but looking back, what is peace? and the power of the individual (Table 5.1 and Figure 5.1).
## Table 5.2 Inductive/emergent Themes and Subthemes from interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stability amidst chaos</td>
<td>Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National pride</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Instability, persecution, and leaving unprepared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hopes and agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking away, but looking back</td>
<td>Feeling of “other” in resettlement country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Belonging to homeland</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Capacity and means</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guilt and responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Homeland visit: keeping dreams of return alive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opportunity in the homeland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is peace?</td>
<td>“I am not a peacemaker, just an ordinary individual”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Empathy, fairness, and participation”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Forgiveness and reconnection”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Fulfillment of essential services”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The power of the individual: voice after flight</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Healthcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Investment and job creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Media: Spreading peace</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The major themes and subthemes are presented in a written narrative in the remainder of the chapter. Repeated phrases and ideas have been omitted for a smooth flow of reading; several exemplary quotations are employed to reflect participants’ views as closely as possible and to help illustrate these inductive/emergent themes and subthemes.
Figure 5.1 Themes in the Research

Themes and Discussion

**Lived Experience Surrounding Flight: “Stability Amidst Chaos”**

Study participants’ lives were reportedly calm and stable before their sudden experience with violence and persecution that forced them into flight. All participants described their homeland, Ethiopia, as a peaceful and desirable place to live before the violence. A clear picture of turmoil and trauma emerged when they described the abrupt and disturbing way they left their homes and family. Understanding study participants’ perceptions of homeland and the circumstances surrounding their flight provides information on how they have responded. It also exposes their attitudes toward recent engagement and behaviors associated with the concept of peace and homeland peacebuilding. The following are major subthemes shared by all
participants: Security; National Pride; Instability, Persecution, Leaving Unprepared; and Hopes & Agency.

**Security**

All participants described life as happy and stable prior to the violence that forced them to flee. Gelila reflected, “My life was full and joyful. It brings me so much happiness to even think and talk about those good times. I remember my life being secure, full of hope. I greatly miss the normality and predictability of my life before the violence.” Mesi remembered her life as “dignified and full of promises” while describing life as “a life lived in devotion and purpose with strong connectedness with family, neighbors, and everyone around.” Kebede got very emotional when remembering the good times in his past as:

> My country and my community made me the person who I am today … everything has not been rosy, but it was calm and stable. I grew up poor, but I remember being happy and fulfilled all the time. The people around me gave me the stability I needed. That is how I remember my country, not the violence that pushed me away from my safe haven. That’s just a small part of the whole piece that has been filled with great memories.

Similarly, Nahum stated, “We were very happy as a family. We didn’t have a lot of money, but the love was unbelievable. I remember feeling secured and protected. There was no ‘I’, but ‘us.’” Iman shared that her life was comfortable and attributed the sense of security to prosperity and professional success as she was thriving professionally and personally. She reflected,

> My life was great. My parents were both professionals who worked for the Ministry of Education … I grew up comfortably and had never dreamed of living in another country until the violence started … whenever I visit home, I have always been able to find peace and strength within the chaos.
The participants’ accounts illustrate their background and how they perceived Ethiopia growing up. Their source of security varies as for some it came from a sense of community, and for others feelings of security stemmed from wealth and stability within the family. However, it is worth mentioning that all participants painted a favorable picture of Ethiopia, remembering their past in a positive light.

National Pride

This subtheme captures participants’ stories of heroism and attachment while reflecting on what being an Ethiopian means to them. A strong sense of national and cultural identity is expressed and observed among participants due to the strong sense of pride of being Ethiopian. Their stories uncovered the role that cultural narratives, which are embedded in history, play in shaping the cultural identity of individuals. The following excerpt illustrates participants’ pride and belonging as expressed by Jara,

Being an Ethiopian is like being born among the greatest heroes of our times. Our fathers and grandfathers fought colonial Europeans to keep our independence intact. They won the battle of Adwa with a colorful victory. I am very happy to say that I am from Ethiopia, a land of heroes.

Gelila reflected on similar experiences as “humbling to be from my motherland that has never been colonized by Europeans. I am always eager to say that I come from a land that has always been independent.”

This reflection was associated with the fact that Ethiopia is Africa’s oldest independent country that has never been colonized apart from the five-year occupation during the battle of independence. This served as a symbol of African independence throughout the colonial period. As expressed by Lemi, “Saying that I was born in Ethiopia is very rewarding. I feel very regal
whenever I think about my heritage. Having our own language, script, customs, and stories to pass to the next generation.” In a similar way, Hawa thinks of herself as someone with unique culture and history. She reflected, “I know I have a strong history and strong identity. The food, the music, the holidays, the coffee ceremony, the cultural clothing, and the strong social bond are all unique.” The well-preserved culture and history, especially the victory at Adwa, inspires a unique sense of pride and attachment among participants. Their responses were consistent and mostly influenced by historical account.

**Instability, Persecution, and Leaving Unprepared**

This theme illustrates participants’ experiences during the times of instability and what took place around the time of their flight. Most participants fled the country during the early years of the military regime (1974-1991), and a few after the coming to power of the current regime in 1991. All of them were either college students or young adults at the time of flight.

Participants recalled the horror and graphic details surrounding those moments. They spoke of the struggles they experienced because of instability brought by political leaders in their homeland. They shared the hurdles they endured as they fled persecution and the price they paid longing for peace and safety. They reflected on the role of elders, villagers, and bus drivers who helped them in many ways as they walked through towns. The elders provided them with food and water. They hid them at their houses and gave them a safe place to rest. The bus drivers gave them rides and did not ask for money. The villagers gave them warm blankets as most of them left with just the clothes on their back. They also mentioned the help they received as they passed by churches and mosques. They remembered the times when priests and Imams from the mosque provided them a place to stay for days and prayed for them. Abebe remembered the time of violence and disruption between 1976 and 1977 as,
It was a very dark time. They call it the ‘Red Terror’ and I remember the days when people whom I know were all killed and their bodies were left on the streets for others to see. They were hunting the youth. I remember feeling hopeless and very distraught. I had to leave everything. I walked at night to cross the border and hide during the day. After crossing the border, we waited for a long time before being resettled to a safe place.

In a similar manner, Bekele recalled the time as,

I was very young, full of dreams. The idea of leaving my village never crossed my mind. I lived happily and in calm until the militia came to power … I saw children aged 10 and 11 became targets of hate and violence. I witnessed my parents cry every night, worrying about us and their future. Although we had no idea where we were going, we suddenly started preparing to leave. And, that was when they took my father and older brother. They said that they are taking them for questioning, but they never came back. Our lives changed in an instance … I went back to visit my village after so many years. It brought back so many memories, the good and the bad. Bad leaders come and go, but the land and the people are unchanged.

The study participants grew up listening to the stories and folktales about Ethiopia as the land chosen by God, where various ethnic groups live in harmony with their unique cultural practices, and where major faiths display peaceful co-existence.

The violence that took place during the military regime is expressed as a complete tragedy and one that does not represent the culture and history of the country. This view was reflected by Debebe as, “We, as a nation, do not have a history of violence and massacres. We are known for our generosity and hospitality. It is a land of love, a land of peace and coexistence.” Gelila revealed how she became a victim because of her role as an activist working
towards the advancement of girls in school. She shared a similar story about the sudden violence that abruptly changed the course of her life. “I was still in school, very hopeful about the future of our country and all the good things that the youth can do to get us out of poverty.” At the time, she was working with a youth organization that advocated for girls education and empowerment. She detailed her experience as:

One day I came from school and found my mom crying and packing our cloths. I asked what was happening and she told me to get ready to leave … I asked why, and she said some people came to the house looking for me and my brother. We headed for the bus station and took a bus to a remote village. From there, we started walking, and took another bus, walked again, and took another bus… we finally crossed the border and reached a camp.

Gelila shared how she became distant from her parents because they made her leave. “I never wanted to leave my home, my friends, my school, and everything that I loved. I didn’t even comprehend why we were leaving. I blamed my mother, thinking that she was just scared. I was in denial and I didn’t want to face the reality.” This story echoed the reflection from Feleke who recalled life as:

Happy and stable until the day where the police came and arrested me. They took me to a secluded room and started to beat me … they kept beating me and denying me food until I told them the names of people whom they think are working against the government. The torture went on for about four months until I found a way to escape.

He was also made to leave the country and shared that how the decision to flee was the only option at the time.
The torture was too much and I decided to leave my beloved country. I met a group of boys who were traveling to a neighboring country … I joined them and started my journey. We were many, traveling at night and sleeping in the forests at daytime.

Mesi who fled to a neighboring country recounted:

I was targeted because of my then fiancé’s role as a political activist. They took me to the police headquarter for questioning, but it was more than questioning. They abused me sexually and physically. I hated those people for a long time. I hated the leadership and the government that pays and directs those people, but I never hated my people. I never hated my country.

Most of the participants lived in a second country, Kenya and Sudan, temporarily before they were admitted to the United States as refugees. Some participants, however, were able to enter the United States and were granted asylum status afterwards. Participants who lived in a second country considered their experiences as a life in limbo where they hoped for better while living in significant hardship and distress. They recounted their experiences as negative that robbed them of their human rights, dignity, and self-worth. Kebede recalled,

I lived in Kenya for some time as I awaited the decision regarding my eligibility for refugee resettlement. It was a very ambiguous time. I knew that I couldn’t go back to my homeland because of the threats on my life. I knew that I wanted to go somewhere safe. But, I did not know where, how, or for how long. I did not live as a free person in Kenya. The local people did not want us to be there and the police were looking for us all the time.

Similarly, Caleb commented on the everyday challenges of living in a neighboring country as,

“Life in Kenya is similar to living in a big prison. I lived in a small one room, shared by six other
refugees. I lived in fear. The local police were very unkind towards refugees.” Some participants remembered the temptations of wanting to go back home amidst of the hardships. Eshetu recounted this moment as,

There were many times where I thought about returning home, no matter the consequences, but I was always reminded of the light at the end of the tunnel. As a young man, I had a dream of helping others, I had a dream of owning a successful business and employing so many people, I had a dream of feeding the hungry and bringing food security for many families. I am now able to do all these things. This is a story that I always tell to my children.

Participants’ stories of flight emphasized personal struggle. It also illustrated the help they received from many individuals along the way. Their stories demonstrate their appreciation towards the people. They consider the violence as a small part of the whole picture that is painted by kindness and goodness of many Ethiopians they encountered along the way. The questions that revolve around instability and violence were very difficult and emotional to share for all participants. The period of flight was generally described as ‘sudden’, ‘unplanned’, ‘unwanted’, and yet ‘necessary’. It is important to note that all participants recalled their life as stable and happy until the period of disruption, when they were forced to leave due to the circumstances.

**Hopes & Agency**

This theme captures the aspirations that participants had at the time of flight. Most participants expressed their hopes of seeing a peaceful and prosperous homeland and their dreams of returning to their country. Their aspiration is shaped by their unique experience of facing violence and instability. Their future dreams are created by their genuine desire to build a better future for the people whom they left behind so that others do not have to pass through
what they have gone through. This aspiration directs how they make sense of their purpose in life and orients their current social actions, creating a sense of agency and responsibility in their everyday lives.

All participants shared the hope for a stable homeland, their aspiration to create a better life for others, the dreams of reuniting with family, and their fantasies for life to return to normal. In fact, a few of the study participants have already returned to Ethiopia permanently and the interviews took place during my visit in Addis Ababa. The majority of participants recalled the promises they made to support families back home. They also longed for a stable life in the resettlement country, where they are accepted with open arms. They hoped to be able to continue with their education, find their dream jobs, and be able to lead a stable life while helping others. They all fantasized about returning to their homeland eventually. The hopes and dreams discussed in this section will later become a contributing factor that affected the way they viewed their resettlement experiences in the host country. It also influenced their decisions for homeland engagement.

Illustrating the hopes of new and better lives for themselves, their families, and community, Abebe gave the following account: “I hoped for the torture to end. I hoped for my life to return to normal and to return back to my family. I prayed for a time machine that could take me to my childhood, the happy memories.” Some participants hoped to be able to express themselves freely, while others expressed their dreams of acquiring education. Eshetu summed up this desire as,

All I wanted was to be free. I wanted to express my beliefs freely. I wanted to advocate for peoples’ rights and be a voice for others. I hoped to be in a situation where I am able to bring change and influence the life of others in a positive light.
Similarly, Feleke shared his experience as,

I fantasied about a stable country where I can go back and be with my family. I wanted to see a country where the right of individuals is respected, where opportunities for personal growth are provided, and where each person is respected and valued. I wanted to see people respecting each other’s opinions and resolve differences in a peaceful manner.

As mentioned earlier, most participants either were young college students or were in a career of their choice at the time of their flight. They all hoped to further their education and help the people that they left behind. Debebe explained “Before my experience with the flight, I was a medical student. My dream was disrupted because of the instability. But, I carried my dream of becoming a surgeon and was able to continue with my education to fulfill my dreams.” In spite of the fact that study participants were forced to flee because of violence and torture enforced by the existing political system, their imagination of home and the words that they used to describe their country of origin are thought-provoking. The shared experiences of pre-displacement life in their homeland and the strong sense of national pride tended to erase ethnic and other differences among forced migrants, reinforced solidarity, and inspired homeland engagement. The construction of collective memories in their country seems to contribute to the desire to continue to maintain strong ties with the homeland.

The attitudes revealed in the participants’ stories included a strong feeling of attachment to homeland and the responsibility for taking care of those whom they left behind. The process of achieving this aspiration required tremendous effort and resilience, including starting over in the resettlement country, negotiating changing statuses and relationships, and looking for opportunities while bouncing back from challenges rather quickly. The study participants were able to become an agent of change by empowering and developing themselves first through
education, experience, persistence, vision, purpose, and positivity, living life from a proactive
and creative perspective as opposed to a reactive viewpoint.

**Motivation for Engagement: “Walking Away but Looking Back”**

This section explores the reasons behind participants’ interests in engaging with the homeland even though they left the country due to persecution and maltreatment. The following are major subthemes shared by all participants: feeling of “other” in the resettlement country, belonging to homeland, capacity and means, guilt and responsibility, homeland visit: keeping dreams of return alive, and opportunity in the homeland.

**Feeling of “Other” in the Resettlement Country**

This notion captures participants’ treatment as “others” in the host society, where the distinction between “us” and “them” is often present. The various excerpts from participants illustrate this reality and aid our understanding of how transnational ties are produced and strengthened due to racial hierarchy and ethnic distancing. All participants conveyed limited or low cultural integration in the host society. Limited sense of inclusion and belonging in the host society and experiences that demonstrate ‘otherness’ were mentioned frequently. Lemi alluded to this as:

I am a foreigner and will always be. When people see me the first time, they are eager to ask where I come from and why I am here. After learning my background, they act as if I am a helpless person … that usually comes out of compassion but it is a constant reminder that I am someone else, and I don’t belong.

Most participants were doubtful that they will achieve cultural integration regardless of time or access to political and economic structures as expressed by Jara “I do not see the American society opening up to me fully, and I become to accept that as a natural reaction”. Referring to
the feeling of “other”, Bekele described the level of anger and frustration he had to endure when people impose an identity on him:

I do not even feel like I am a refugee anymore. I am past that, I am no more a person who needs assistance … I am a person who is able to do things. It is disturbing when people call you by your immigration status rather than by whom you really are.

Despite becoming an American citizen, several participants described their former nationality as their main identifier. Feleke’s account shows the difficulty to fully identify with the host society:

Despite being an American who has been residing here for more than 30 years, I am identified as a foreigner. I actually like it when people identify me by my country of origin. The problem is when they start to discriminate based on that. Regardless of the consequences, I like telling people my origin. Some even undermine my capacity to teach at a university level or perform as a medical doctor. I am constantly reminded of my skin color or hair texture. It is a discreet signal that you belong to your home and home is far away.

In spite of the difficulty of feeling fully welcomed and accepted, participants expressed their desire to belong and function as a productive citizen since this is a land that gave them refuge when they needed it. They all expressed a sense of gratitude and admiration to the United States government and people who served as a sanctuary in their time of need. However, the sense of otherness and migrant distancing in the host society seems to strengthen their transnational ties and homeland engagement.

**Belonging to Homeland**

These participants’ experiences illustrate the strong connection that many migrants have towards their homeland. The favorable memory of their past, the recollection of events more
positively especially from the pre-flight period, and national pride are factors that contribute to their strong desire to stay connected with their homeland. In addition, study participants who have experienced low levels of cultural integration with the host society are attracted to identify with their own people. Despite maintaining a strong connection to their country of origin, participants display an appreciation to the host society and a yearning to making it their second home. Their desire to remain engaged with people and events in the homeland does not contradict the desire to stay in the resettlement country.

This is illustrated when participants described their experiences as, “it is very important that I maintain a strong relationship with my homeland. What do you do when you want to belong but people do not accept you? You find your roots” (Caleb). Study participants continue interacting with people at home through regular emails, phone calls, social media, and also print media. Participants described their ability to easily access technology as:

Most people keep to themselves and do not socialize as much… I had to quickly learn how to use the Internet and social media effectively in order to connect with people. I can access it anytime and communicate with people from home or others who live in different parts of the United States. I always update myself with information about what is going on at home. I listen to news and events taking place in Ethiopia or watch an Ethiopian movie during my spare time. Some of my friends joke around by saying that I know more about Ethiopia than the prime minister of the country himself. That definitely makes me feel closer to my homeland. (Kebede)

All participants describe the importance of having a shared experience with other migrants from Ethiopia. Having a shared culture and collective community is mentioned as an important factor helping them remain connected to their country of origin. Iman elaborated further as:
I wear my traditional clothing every weekend. I attend an Ethiopian church every Sunday with my family. It is something we look forward to every week. I go to Ethiopian restaurants as much as possible. I try to cook Ethiopian food at home. I try to attend local cultural festivals if time allows. I attend community meetings regularly. I even wear some accessories from home everyday…That is who I am and I want to feel at home although I do not physically live in Ethiopia. I want people to know that I too have a place, a country and people that I belong to. I love explaining my origin every opportunity I get.

Although participants remain engaged in the host society, their connection with their country of origin is not severed. It is rather reinforced due to various factors, including their own choice to remain connected and the willingness of the natives to accept them as part of the host society as manifested by daily life occurrences.

**Capacity and Means**

The subtheme of capacity and means refer to the ability to access economic and political structures in the host country and its effect on homeland engagement. All participants acknowledged that the ability to get higher education, the ability to get a decent job and the ability to speak freely helps them to participate in home affairs. Some described their ability to bring resources and set up service delivery institutions in their homeland. Others mentioned their ability to set up small business enterprises and invest in real estate ventures opening up employment and growth opportunities for people in Ethiopia. Most of the study participants have a steady, high paying job in the United States and some were able to get higher education in fields that are valuable for their businesses and investment. As illustrated by Nahum:

After coming to the U.S., I worked very hard and had the opportunity to enroll at the University of Georgia to study Business and Management. I also studied law. The
education that I got here opened up my eyes … I have been able to save and invest in my homeland. I learned how to run businesses and deal with rules and regulations … my goal is to make the lives of Ethiopians back home better and help with the growth of the economy.

The exposure to democratic values in the resettlement country was mentioned as a positive experience that fosters homeland engagement in hopes of helping Ethiopians experience the values of democracy.

Moreover, the inability of forced migrants to fully access political opportunities in the United States strengthened informal homeland political involvement. In addition to structural barriers, part of the reason for not taking active part in U.S. politics was participants’ own perceptions and intentional withdrawal. Gelila mentioned:

Aside from voting, I am not particularly interested in taking an active part in American politics. I listen to Ethiopian news everyday. I know what is going on over there on a daily basis. If you ask me what I know about the United States policy, I cannot tell you much … I think I wanted to remain distant from American politics on purpose … I feel like my participation does not make a real difference anyway and might even weaken my interest towards home politics.

In spite of the difficulty to access conventional political structures, the ability to adapt to democratic values and norms in the host country is a major incentive to cultivate the desire of migrants’ homeland political participation.

The other point that was frequently mentioned was the opportunity to participate in volunteer programs. Participation in various volunteer programs organized by the city or charitable organizations provided them with opportunities to improve communities through
service. During their work as volunteers, most participants mentioned their immersion in various parts of the community, their interaction with different people and their engagement free of obligation. This afforded them with countless opportunities to learn, interact with others, reflect on self, develop new perspectives, and work for common goals. The culture of volunteerism is something that participants feel is helping their transnational engagement. Debebe recapped his view:

Americans participate in volunteer services. I developed that side of me here … I always wanted to do something good with my time and skills, but I did not know how to do that formally. After living here for some time, I started providing free community service through Cobb County Literacy Council to provide adult education. I also take part in a foundation established to help cure childhood cancer … I return to Ethiopia at least twice a year to work with other volunteers providing free education and medical support for helpless girls. I used to think that I need to have lots of money to give back, but that is not true and I thank Americans for teaching me that lesson … Americans travel to remote places to give free service to people they do not know … how can I sit here and let my own people suffer.

Involvement in various volunteer opportunities opens the door for some participants to break out of their comfort zone and interact with various people, developing their inter cultural skills. Getting involved, participating, and contributing to the wellbeing of a community are important attributes that contribute to a democratic and inclusive community. Additionally, this quality is an important skill that study participants learn, develop, transfer, and apply in their homeland engagement.
The study participants were able to take advantage of the education system and boost their career, while others chose to engage in businesses. They are not only contributing to the local economy through social security payments and income taxes, but also giving back to the less fortunate and contribute to the betterment of people whom they left behind. Having the actual capacity and means to engage productively is enabling and empowering individuals to remain connected and engage in practical ways to prevent conflict and reduce unproductive tension.

**Guilt and Responsibility**

All participants mentioned a feeling of shame for leaving people behind in a violent environment and for saving their own lives. They revealed the feeling of shame and remorse for leaving their homeland. It is the feeling of responsibility that comes with guilt that encourages participants to actively engage in homeland affairs to bring meaningful change for those left behind. Participants shared their tendency toward self-criticism and how they try to offset that feeling by sending money (i.e., remittances), investing in the homeland, writing and speaking their language, teaching their children about traditions and cultures of Ethiopia, telling their stories, and keeping tradition and history alive. Some mentioned their intentional efforts to offset their guilt by extensive engagement in homeland affairs. Gelila expressed the common feeling of guilt as:

I still think about the times when I left the people behind. Leaving my family and my neighbors was a very painful process that left a big scar in my heart. For a very long time, I thought my decision to leave was a very selfish one, which only kept myself alive and safe. I was not able to find a peace of mind until I decided to help out the ones that I left
behind in any way I could. After all, what is the meaning of living if I am the only one winning? It makes so much sense when you actually do something about it.

All participants expressed a feeling of survivor’s guilt for fleeing from the violence while others did not have the chance to escape. They shared the times when they felt helpless, depressed, hopeless, unmotivated, and even suicidal in some cases until they decided to think about the situation in a rational manner and remind themselves of the flight as an opportunity to help others. Abebe vividly illustrated this:

“The first years of resettlement were exceptionally difficult. There were times when I used to have flashbacks and so many questions as to why I survived and my friend did not. I spend several years grieving the loss and my decision. Although this feeling is a burden that I still carry with me, my choice to be of service to others in my homeland serves as a huge relief.

A sense of responsibility was another concept that came up several times during the interviews. In addition to the guilt and powerlessness that they experienced, participants expressed the motivation to improve the circumstances, connect, and feel empowered to make the conditions in the homeland better. Although a majority of study participants felt guilty and experienced powerlessness at the beginning, the feeling of responsibility and obligation that followed guilt encouraged them to take action and do something positive and constructive to help others. The guilt encouraged participants to take responsibility as they started developing a healthy relationship with themselves. As time progresses, they learned not to accept unjust responsibility for others and started building social interactions in an effort to bring lasting impact on a greater scale.
All participants expressed the fact that they do not want to see others pass through the same painful experience as they did. Having first hand exposure to violence, flight, and resettlement, and having lived through all these phases is a unique aspect among forced migrants that keeps them motivated to engage in a positive manner. In addition, as individuals coming from a collectivist culture, participants view themselves as connected to others. Major characteristics of a collectivist culture, such as strong family ties, obligation to others, supporting others, and doing what is good for the society, served as important factors of motivation.

**Homeland Visits: Keeping Dreams of Return Alive**

All participants visited their homeland once the threat to their security was over and the country was stabilized. The times of their visit varied depending on their individual circumstances, but all of them returned for a short initial visit. They shared the emotions and feelings surrounding their decision to go back for the first time after their flight. Eshetu recalled that time as, “I was very excited but fearful to go back. I travelled with reservation. I didn’t want to face all the memories and all the people that I left behind.” The actual experience they had once they landed in their homeland was a positive one. As expressed by Caleb:

As soon as the plane hit the ground, I started to cry. Tears just started to flow and I could not stop myself. My body ached as I walked through the terminal. I kneeled down and kissed the ground. I wanted to smell the sand and the mud. It was special… and then, meeting my friends, family, and seeing the places where I called home for so many years brought back all the good memories. The memories of torture and sad times were suddenly gone. It was an affirmation that I was not holding some kind of resentment towards the people responsible for my sufferings.
Feleke remembered, “I have always felt shame for leaving. I have always doubted my decision to flee. But, my visit helped me evaluate what I gained because I survived. It helped me see what I can do to help others.” Similarly, Mesi shared her experience during her first visit:

I felt blessed when I returned for the first time. Sadness, happiness, and feelings that I can’t express in words were all over me. It was a sweet and joyful moment. The people were so innocent, very kind, very pleasant. I observed that some people live a good life, but many struggle to feed their children or send them to school. Although the country seems to be growing in general, so many were still living in unacceptable situation. I was also reminded of my responsibility to do my part in order to change that. I was reminded of my promise to bring a change when I left a long time ago. I wanted nothing but for these people to live in peace, to prosper, and achieve what they should deserve as a human being.

Debebe, a successful healthcare professional in the United States, shared his experience as well:

I returned back after securing my citizenship and studying the internal condition of the country. There were so many emotions washing over me as I landed there. My visit was very successful. I saw buildings and roads being built in the country. I have observed several people enjoying a very luxurious life, while others live in extreme poverty. As one of the poorest countries in the world, I realized that the government alone couldn’t tackle all the problems. It is also my responsibility to do my part. My visit was an eye opening experience where I was reminded of my ability to do something of value to the locals.

Homeland visits were generally expressed as a positive experience that enhanced or renewed participants’ personal connections with the society and boosted their commitment to
remain connected. It served as a perfect reminder of why they needed to remain engaged. Participants’ first visit was mostly described as having a healing effect on the suffering they experienced at the time of persecution and during their flight.

**Opportunity in the Homeland**

Participants’ narratives suggested that political and economic developments in Ethiopia provide ongoing incentives to participate in the homeland regardless of access to opportunity structures in the host country. The lack of democracy, continued human rights abuses, and the country’s economic decline appeared to be factors that motivate forced migrants’ homeland engagement. Eshetu summarized:

I fled my country during the military rule, and although the dictator is gone, human rights abuses still continues to some extent… I cannot let what happened to me happen to my brothers and sisters. I help with whatever I have to bring democracy into my homeland. I use my platform as a journalist to uncover the truth and promote news based on popular opinion. It is good to exercise my rights of free speech and know that the government is at least open to my opinion. The fact that I was not imprisoned the very first time I visited home and multiple times afterwards is a positive affirmation that things at home are getting good.

Most participants mentioned improved government policies that are being implemented in the country as attractive and inviting. They elaborated on the efforts that are being taken to attract skilled persons and mentioned that they are encouraged to engage in business ventures and volunteer activities. Caleb stressed:

I know that there still is human rights abuse and limited democracy, but it is getting better. I fled while the military was in power. The current government is much better. It is
time to start investing, giving back, thinking about going back … and it is time to help change the economy. It is impossible to expect the government to do everything. We, as people of the nation, need to do our part. I think it is time to stop the blaming and start acting … people are suffering and we need to do something, no excuses. I am determined to change one life at a time.

Although participants shared their active contribution in their homeland for a long time without waiting to be mobilized, recent policies that are designed to attract Ethiopians living abroad and a relatively favorable political condition facilitates their engagement. An enabling environment on the part of the country of origin is understood as a very important factor in order to encourage participation in peace and development endeavors.

**Perception towards Peace and Peacebuilding: “What is Peace?”**

The following themes were extracted in order to answer the research sub-question, “How do forced migrants envision sustainable peace and peace building?” Although participants provided various descriptions for peace, a very interesting conceptualization of peace and peacebuilding emerged from the stories that participants shared. The “culture of peace” and the notion of “positive peace” were two dominant concepts that appeared amidst the stories. In addition to the absence of direct violence, all participants correlated peace with the absence of poverty, provision of education, personal development, provision of healthcare, and a conducive social climate that promotes understanding, civility, acceptance and respect. The following are major subthemes shared by all participants: I am not a peace builder, just an ordinary individual; empathy, fairness, and participation; forgiveness and reconnection; and fulfillment of essential services.
“I am not a Peacebuilder, just an Ordinary Individual”

A common understanding among the participants is the idea that they each view themselves as normal and responsible individuals who possess common sense and a sense of morality. Most participants understood that their actions are contributing factors to peace and development, but they refrained from acknowledging themselves as peacebuilders due to various concerns, including concerns related to the word becoming a buzzword that has been losing its true meaning, or just considering self as a simple individual doing what is expected from a person with good moral character. Peacebuilding or a peacebuilder is described by Debebe as, “these are terms that are becoming to be a buzzword, and are lacking their true value nowadays. We see everyone, from international organizations to several individuals using the word.” Feleke expanded on this point by identifying his own struggle in using terms such as peacebuilder:

I believe the question of whether I use the term peacebuilder to identify myself is not relevant. What is important is doing the work, knowing why I do it, and being honest with myself. The term peacebuilder is losing its ability of telling us what peace is, what needs to be done to achieve it, and what sacrifices ought to be made. If I call myself a peacebuilder, I might be expected to follow some rules or do only the things that a peacebuilder is expected to do. Some criteria are usually set by someone in order to qualify as a peacebuilder. And, that is usually a turnoff to someone who is trying to do the best under the circumstances.

Few participants stated the fact that some individuals within the diaspora are engaged in disruptive behaviors, and yet call themselves peacebuilders. The vagueness of the word is discussed as a limiting factor. The lack of a precise and understandable meaning or measurement of what a peacebuilder entails, especially in their native country, is an important concept gained
from the interviews. The inappropriate use of the word by some people was mentioned as a motivational factor to not use the word to describe themselves or their work. Eshetu elaborated:

A peacebuilder may not be the ideal person that we think of when we imagine peace.

There are so many people who are involved in acts of violence to advance their political causes, and call themselves a peacebuilder. If I call myself a peacebuilder, it would be very confusing to the people we serve. We are living in a time when someone calling himself a peacebuilder is doing the same thing as an individual who uses violence to advance his own interest. Some individuals who are living in a foreign country are destroying our people by taking actions that have very little to do with actual peace are instead trying to create a political environment for themselves.

Eshetu’s comment summarizes the general sentiment among participants regarding the inappropriate use of the term by many in the diaspora. “People who have experienced some kind of suffering are the ones who are working for peace,” he remarked,

Peace is a word used by everyone, even by those who are trying to divide the country and insight violence. We see many people in the diaspora supporting groups that are stirring violence in the homeland in the name of peace and peacebuilding. They either send money or encourage such activities by various means. It is easy to arouse and excite people that are living in poverty or who do not have a job to keep them occupied. If you want to see peace and stability in the country, the solution is to help those people get out of poverty. That is where the action needs to be.

Common sense and morality is also mentioned as a major element of peace. Some participants see the term peacebuilding as a politicized concept, and view their efforts as less implicated amoral obligation. As illustrated by Iman, “What I do to help the people in the homeland is
simply a good deed. It is what my common sense and personal beliefs tell me to do, and I do not consider myself as this big peacebuilder.” Similarly, Nahum expressed his view as, “For me, it is simply a matter of doing the right thing. It is often problematic when we give big names to everyday simple terms, such as logic and responsibility.” This view was also supported by Kebede who shared his experience as:

Our culture is based on morality and humility. I believe in doing good things but not necessarily call myself as a peacebuilder or expect others to call me a peacemaker. That is a term usually used by leaders and politicians. But, it surely will be nice to be recognized and encouraged.

Although the ambiguous use of the word peacebuilder and other factors affect participants’ decisions to call themselves peacebuilders, they still strive to keep their focus on the prevention of poverty and violence by creating and supporting conducive environments for peace to flourish. Most of their interventions are explained as coming from a place of moral judgment, good character, and a deep desire to see peace and stability prevail. There is a general understanding that their actions, no matter how small, contribute to making their homeland a more peaceful place. It is also important to note the different interpretation people in the diaspora may have regarding peace and peacebuilding in the homeland. It all depends on the person’s lived experiences, motivations, and trajectory of flight.

**Peace is “Empathy, Fairness, and Participation”**

As expressed by most participants, the ability to be compassionate and empathetic toward each other is a fundamental principle that their parents tried to embed in them as they grew and developed as children. The extent of our empathy plays a significant role in our understanding of peace, as empathy is a foundational concept in finding lasting peace. It also plays a significant
role in important concepts, such as development for all, social justice, and peace for all. The concept of fairness and the ability to participate and do something to change the suffering of others was frequently mentioned when participants were asked to share their understanding of peace.

Many participants describe peace as having a compassionate spirit and being empathetic. They stressed the importance of having empathy as a significant element of peace where a sense of humanity and concern about others is displayed. Mesi described peace as, “To me peace happens when you understand the pain caused by the suffering of people around you”. Similarly, Eshetu described peace as, “a sense of being empathetic to others regardless of who they are or what they have done in the past.” In the same way, Jara described peace as:

It is the ability to feel others, to feel their pain, to feel their suffering, and identify with them. As you connect with their experiences, it is easier to support them. It gets easier to help them, and it gets difficult to hurt them. It gets easier to see people as equals and many superficial differences such as ethnicity start to fade away. That is the only time when peace prevails. Peace prevails when we start to act as humans.

Fairness is also a term derived from participants’ interview data. The principle of fairness is cited as a major element of peace, and engagement in a mutually advantageous venture is considered a significant step toward peace. All participants’ shared the importance of contributing their own share in order to gain something positive in return, which is peace. Thus, they generally correlated the term peace with fairness. As illuminated by Gelila,

It is important to do my own part if I want to gain something. For example, I want to return to see stability prevail in my homeland. I also return to my homeland permanently.
So, it is only fair to do my part, support the government in its quest for peace, and support the people in whatever I can in order to fulfill my dreams.

Nahum states this sense of fairness and reciprocity as:

You get good only when you do good things. I want to see a stable country, and I feel it is my responsibility to do something about it instead of just waiting for someone to do the job. I want to see my fellow Ethiopians secure a job, and I believe I have some obligation to offer that opportunity instead of waiting for the government of other individuals to do the job. Besides, I am in a position where I am capable of doing some things to impact a positive change in the country. So, why not be fair, spread your blessings, and share the burden of others.

Participation is another idea that emerged from the interviews. When participants described peace, the importance of participation of each concerned individual in the quest for peace came up several times. In order to create lasting peace, it is important to work together, and the role and contributions of forced migrants is an important element of that. The concept of participation is in line with the belief that the culture of peace should and needs to represent all affected people in the process. All participants expressed the need to participate, to be aware, to be proactive, and to do their part in order to fulfill their desire for peace. They shared their strong opinion that without participation in the peace process, it is impossible to achieve what one desires or at least remain engaged for a positive change persistently regardless of the outcome. Persistent participation and positive engagement is of a great value to all participants if a desirable change is to come.

Peace is described as a concept that encompasses many elements, including empathy, fairness, and participation. Developing a culture of empathy and fairness helps in cultivating
peaceful interpersonal relationships. The formation of respectful relationships that are based on compassion is an important element of peace. A strong human relationship helps to transform conflict as former adversaries learn to understand each other and have sympathy for each other. These personal interactions develop into larger group processes, inhibiting suspicion and strong social formation along the lines of ethnicity, creating the opportunity to accommodate each other. Participants used the term peacebuilding or peacebuilder less often, but used words such as compassion, trust, healing, alliance, and understanding more frequently while describing their perceptions of peace and peacebuilding.

**Peace is “Forgiveness and Reconnection”**

All participants spoke about forgiveness as an important element in order to mend relationships and lay the foundation for peace. They spoke about the role that forgiveness played in their healing process personally, and then into reconciliation and working for the same goal. Although most participants shared the significance of their religious beliefs in the forgiveness and healing process, others mentioned their strong belief in forgiveness without referring to their religion. Lemi, for example, has struggled with the idea of forgiving the people who inflicted pain upon her and her family and who forced her to leave her homeland. She described the times when she felt very angry toward them and very bitter toward the regime. However, she credited her religion that guided her to the path of forgiveness where she started to focus on the relationship with the higher power. It was only then that she started to forgive, to heal, and to begin a new relationship with herself and others. It was common for participants to relate forgiveness with peace of mind and harmony. Jara’s comment summarized the common understanding regarding forgiveness and healing among participants as follows:
Peace is something that we can’t talk about without forgiveness. I needed to forgive myself first and heal from inside to move to the next step of healing. I blamed myself for leaving my people, for abandoning my land, and for being unable to do anything to change the condition for a long time. I had to forgive myself by accepting that was my only choice at the time. Then, I moved to forgiving others who had done me wrong. It was only then that I started to feel liberated. I started to think with a clear mind. I started to identify the causes for suffering and actively work toward reconnecting and rebuilding relationships. As soon as I did that, I felt the peace flowing through me. And, I have been working to spread that awesome feeling of peace that comes through forgiveness and reconciliation.

A few participants spoke about the importance of creating a healthy relationship with self, others, and the world around them in order to achieve the ultimate peace. These relationships were often between families, former adversaries, and people from different ethnic groups and social backgrounds. Nahum spoke of his friendship with people from different ethnic group such as Oromo and Tigray. Iman, whose family was originally from the Southern part of Ethiopia, developed a very close relationship with individuals from different ethnic groups. Although some participants grew up learning to stay close to their own ethnic group, they came to realize the importance of connection with others. Jara talked about how random encounters with people of different ethnic backgrounds and political opinions provided him with a sense of peace:

I live in a place where I see many Ethiopians most of the time. When I first came to Atlanta, I was suspicious of every Ethiopian around me. I was not sure who is who. I was anxious, and I coped by connecting people with the same background as myself. This changed when I found my internal peace. I started to build new relationships and connect
with people who may have different political opinion, different religion, or different ethnic background. I quickly realized how irrelevant these things are when we are trying to work past a conflict. As I start interacting with others and listening to their stories, I began to find a space for new relationships and new experiences.

Forgiveness was collectively portrayed as a switch from the past with the intention of looking for an authentic restoration of human relationships. Forced migrants are victims of the individuals who persecuted them or their family at the time. As participants embody and practice forgiveness, they had begun to lose the feeling of animosity. Each participant’s story tells a story of the struggle that they face in the process to forgive and reconcile with any individual or group who has wronged them; however, their ability to regulate their internal feelings of grievance in order to move to a positive future is noteworthy. Achieving peace is difficult if the persecuted individual continues to be consumed by hate and retaliation, and the ability to forgive and move forward is a significant step for any peacebuilding process to succeed.

**Peace is “Fulfillment of Essential Services”**

This subtheme captures participants’ understandings of peace as a concept, not necessarily that we ask from others, but rather as a gift to be given. All participants expressed the importance of not expecting peace when we do not provide the environment for peace to flourish, not to expect people to be advocates of peace when their basic survival is threatened. The conversation on this topic revealed their perception of peacebuilding or peace as something that needs to be brought closer to people. Interview data revealed participants beliefs in the provision of basic necessities, such as food, shelter, education, employment, health, and information in order to create and maintain a peaceful society. Abebe, for instance, maintained
that peace is impossible when we have people struggling to eat or when we have people who lack basic understandings of conflict resolution or peaceful coexistence. He continued,

It is natural for any one of us to fight for basic survival. It is not entirely possible to expect someone not to be a thief or fight for something scarce or even kill someone in order to feed himself or his family. In the same way, we will have big problems if someone lacks the awareness of how to solve disagreements peacefully and do not have the education to prevent conflict and master peace. These simple, and yet very important foundations of peace need to be in place for peace to flourish.

Creating an enabling environment for people to access economic and other social services is an important step in building a peaceful and stable society, particularly in a place where government institutions are unable to provide equitable and affordable access to all. Although Ethiopia has experienced a more recent positive outlook in terms of economic growth, the share of the population without shelter, food, water, healthcare, education, and employment is still significant. Despite its recent fast economic growth, it remains one of the poorest countries in the world. Poverty, poor education, poor healthcare, and unequal access to resources are some of the factors that lead a society to violence. Mesi expressed her concern as:

Poverty was not prevalent when I grew up. Most people were able to afford a relatively good life. It is totally different now. With the prevalence of conflict and increased population, we see many families unable to afford the basic necessities of life. For instance, a father is no more able to provide for his family and a mother is no more able to prevent her young child from joining an armed group. People are more likely to do harmful things in order to earn a few dollars.
Similarly, Debebe expressed his apprehension regarding the lack of basic infrastructure, such as safe drinking water, food, and healthcare. He expressed his concern:

As children are dying due to malnutrition and proper health care, parents start to lose confidence in the government. The neighbors or a whole village stops trusting the people in power as they see their loved ones suffer from hunger and diseases. It is easy to become vindictive and bitter when these things happen. People start to look for alternatives. They look for another means in order to survive. They want to fight the existing system. They will hate individuals who are in power. And, the government may not be in a position to provide needed services. That is where we come in. That is where one individual is able to bring a positive change in the life of one family, or two, or three, and then the whole village. That is how we create a chain of positive effect, which ultimately leads to peace.

Although effective delivery of essential public services is the primary function of government, the welfare of everyday people is treated by the country’s inability to serve everyone. The active participation of capable individuals is key to complement parallel undertakings to increase the stability of families through the creation of new employment opportunities or provision of services, such as healthcare and education.

Participants’ views and responses emphasized the unique opportunity that each individual has in fostering peace, development, and stability. Implementing the concept of bringing peace closer to the people is a fundamental step in ensuring stability in a fragile society where the people have poor access to basic services. The provision of social services was viewed as essential in addressing the causes of conflict or as preventative measure. These ideas represent a major undertaking that overlaps with conflict resolution or peacebuilding.
All study participants’ perceived peace and peace building as satisfying basic human needs of ordinary people. Participants’ understanding of peace as empathy and the ability to understand the needs of others’ is a fundamental component of conflict resolution. Their beliefs, attitudes, and values towards peace reflect a culture of peace that focuses on the prevention of conflict by tackling the root causes of conflict through various means, such as creating jobs, reducing hunger, decreasing diseases, creating opportunities for education, and creating a fulfilling future for as many people possible. Their stories show commonalities with what we describe as peacebuilder, peacebuilding, and conflict prevention. It serves as a powerful voice to advance peacebuilding literature in hopes of realizing their significant contribution to the broader peace and peacebuilding discourse. The stories illustrate the significance of understanding peace and peacebuilding through the everyday, bottom-up, and mundane practices.


The following subthemes were extracted in order to answer the research sub-questions “What kind of roles do resettled forced migrants play in building sustainable peace, given their position as those resettled in the United States? How do they engage in peacebuilding activities?” Education, healthcare, investment and job creation, and media: spreading peace are the major subthemes that emerged under the theme “the power of the individual: voice after flight”.

**Education**

Education plays an important role in reducing conflict-prone behaviors, building sustainable peace and transforming conflict. Few participants are involved in providing formal education although one participant provides peace education. Peace education includes awareness raising about the adverse effects of conflict, educating children about the value of
respect and cooperation, and helping local communities overcome their differences and build
tolerance. Eshetu explained his involvement in the provision of peace education:

I took conflict resolution courses in college, and I am a very good mediator. I regularly
travel to my hometown, and I teach school-aged children healthy ways to manage
conflict. The peace education classes are held in collaboration with local schools that are
willing to work with my project. I take my peace education proposal to various local
schools several times each year. I provide the skills to manage any conflict that may arise
at home, church, school, or any other setting. These classes are important in creating and
developing responsible citizens who are ready to build a peaceful community and
country. I also work with churches to provide the locals with basic mediation skills.

In addition to promoting a culture of peace through peace education, some participants were
involved in the provision of access to formal education by opening schools and training centers.
Others contribute to the creation of knowledge by sending money to support local schools and by
shipping books and instructional materials. Abebe, a retired college professor, decided to open
four schools and hire qualified staff after his initial post-flight visit back to his country. He
elaborated on his experience:

My first visit was eye opening. I witnessed young boys and girls on the streets sitting on
rocks and playing cards on weekdays. I was told that their parents do not afford to send
them to school, and they have nothing to do except play. I approached some of them to
receive firsthand information. They were eager to share their desire to go to school, to
learn, and to become teachers, doctors, engineers … they shared their dreams that their
parents were not able to afford. That is when I decided to do something about it.
Similarly, Nahum shared his experience in advancing the provision of education in the homeland by distributing teaching and learning materials as, “I collect books, games, computers, and tablets, through donation or purchase, and send it back home for students and schools who are in need.”

Education, in the form of the provisioning of peace education or allowing access to formal education, is an important piece of peacebuilding through the promotion of harmony among communities, advancement of human rights, and instilling responsibility in order to avert aggression and hostility (Deutsch, 1993; Reynaldo, 2011). Training the youth in conflict mediation, peacebuilding, and communication will help to assist in the provisioning of positive change within the community (Raider, 1995). In addition, engaging the youth with schoolwork, awareness creation, capacity building, and skills development is a valid intervention in promoting tolerance, positive attitudes, national cohesion, and peaceful coexistence. Preparing children, young adults, and older people to read, write, think critically, and also to live in peace with others through education empowers them to be active participants in seeking and promoting peace. Furthermore, bridging the educational gap by providing access assists in reducing tension and competition for scarce resources among groups.

Healthcare

Some participants were involved in initiatives that aimed to improve the health of specific groups, such as women, children, and the elderly. This initiative was designed to not only improve healthcare standards among the community, but also increase the level of peace and stability in the area. Debebe is a physician who travels to his homeland every summer to provide medical services free of charge to elderly patients who suffer from hypertension, diabetes, glaucoma, or any internal diseases. He also organizes other volunteer healthcare
professionals to travel with him in order to reach a broader population. He collects surgical and imaging instruments to donate to local health clinics. Similarly, Hawa is a midwife who travels home once a year to provide services and help improve maternal and newborn survival in the villages and remote areas. This is a considerable intervention that potentially fills the gap where there is inadequate healthcare provision.

In addition to periodic visits to deliver health services, participants shared their experiences with healthcare provisioning in terms of opening clinics and hospitals. Mesi is a physician who returned to her homeland permanently. She participated in yearly mission trips to provide health services before her permanent return. She now practices in her hospital as a chief administrator and surgeon. She also overseas two clinics that she helped build in rural areas. She also teaches in one of the renowned medical schools in the country. She shared her experience as:

I am very blessed to be in a position where I can give back to my people. Upon my arrival in the U.S., I continued my education and became successful in what I do. I am in a profession where I can help lessen the pain and suffering of people to some extent. My decision to return gave me a tremendous opportunity to serve many people and share my knowledge with students who are in medical school.

Feleke was also another physician who returned permanently. He built three clinics in an area that was previously severely affected by war and violence. He described the toll of war on the health of the community as, “I saw the suffering in front of my eyes. Men and women without limbs, tragic explosion injuries, permanent disabilities, and countless mental health issues.” He shared his decision to return on a permanent basis after he realized the extent of the shortage of qualified professionals and the extremely limited access to healthcare facilities. He shared his
inability to secure authorization to open clinics for a long time until the government decided to welcome support from the diaspora. He further elaborated:

There are few doctors, nurses, or midwives in many regions of the country. The few are concentrated in the capital city, and there are no working clinics in the villages. Children die due to lack of access to basic vaccines and services. Women die in labor and infant mortality rate is very high. People are losing hope and they are becoming desperate. My service has been very helpful in reducing some of the desperation by cultivating hope. And, this is an important contribution that I am very passionate about. However, there is a lot that needs to be done. People who do not have access to basic services remain to be alarmed and anxious about the future. We need to do more to stop the suffering and prevent chaos.

Health care is a field that is fundamentally rooted with principles of care, compassion, and service. It is a field that advocates for all and works for the provision of maximum benefit to the individual. In addition to the nature of the field, healthcare professionals are often regarded as legitimate, ethical, and supreme, where they earn the trust of others relatively easily (Gutlove, 1998). All these qualities situate the healthcare worker in a position of authority and influence if they chose to promote peace through the provision of health. A healthcare system that is accessible to as many members of society as possible promotes feelings of security and belonging to a caring and inclusive society that meets the essential needs.

**Investment and Job Creation**

Strengthening economic opportunities through investment and the creation of jobs improves economic opportunities, leading to reduced tension within a community. Gelila, who invests in a large agricultural venture, explained the importance of creating jobs in preparing
people to be able to meet their basic needs and provide for their families. It is her belief that as individuals become occupied in productive activities, their tendency to engage in violent and illegitimate activities reduces significantly. She shared:

I employed many young men and women who were idle before. Some were engaged in disruptive activities and some were preparing to leave the country, trying to escape poverty. These young people were vulnerable, and I believe providing them with employment opportunities changed their life for the better. They are now productive citizens, with families of their own, and no dreams of leaving their homeland.

Nahum, who is a market research analyst and an investor, also shared the importance of a project that he has been working on for several years. He partnered with a local investor to create self-employment for the youth where they are afforded a chance to change their lives and their community positively. He elaborated:

The project provides loans and access to finance for individuals who are interested in building their own business. We also provide skills training, job internships, offices, resources, networking opportunities, mentoring and supervision. These individuals develop important business skills that make them successful business owners.

Four participants shared their specific roles in improving the living standards of women and youth by establishing creative income-generating entrepreneurial undertakings, contributing their share in the formation of a strong and stable society. Caleb, a successful business owner in Atlanta, explained his involvement in sustainable livelihood programs:

The youth not only lack the economic resources, but also the education of how to lead a sustainable life. I work with a local NGO, which I helped build, to provide career training, financial managements, skills development, and entrepreneurship. We provide
access to capital after participants demonstrate these skills. These young people are equipped with foundational business training programs to help them transform their business ideas into action and cultivate their creativity. We have trained many young people who became successful youth leaders in their own [communities]. They go on to open up small businesses, creating employment opportunities for others and contributing to building a stronger community. This is how we help in reducing the income gap among people.

Addressing the livelihood needs of women is another area of engagement. For example, Gelila has been leading a project that trains rural women to grow and sell flowers and coffee beans to ensure their financial independence and economic agency.

Similarly, Iman, a teacher and successful business owner, runs a project that provides capital and small loans for mothers who have no access to capital or banking services. She shared several success stories of women who excelled in generating income, leading successful lives by providing for their household and sending their children to school. Nahum also believes in empowering local women because, “enabling poor women [to] transform their lives is a wonderful blessing. You are not only impacting one woman, but the lives of many through the process.” As a market researcher and business analyst, Nahum has the required skills and training in addition to his passion in ensuring a decent life for poor families.

The establishment of locally owned small businesses and sustainable livelihood programs empowers people living in poverty and the marginalized group. Provision of economic opportunities benefits vulnerable groups and assists in reducing tension among individuals who otherwise are prone to be mobilized by some groups to incite violence. The business and capacity training programs aim not only to increase income, but also targets underlying
knowledge deficits that may hinder successful entrepreneurship. Participants’ intervention in these areas aim to promote inclusive economic opportunities, reducing tension by acknowledging excluded and marginalized segments of society.

**Media: Spreading Peace**

The perspectives of people who engage on social media shape stories they cover. Their viewpoints on important issues related to peace help influence the opinions of others who follow their platforms as opinion leaders. They may wish to cover stories of peace and raise awareness, or may lead people to engage in violence. The experience of study participants tells us the former. Eshetu, a respected journalist and local media owner, stressed the importance of engaging in spreading news of cultural dialogue and understanding:

As a media personality my opinion matters. I choose to cover stories of peace, healing, cooperation, and understanding. I try to make peace a normal part of humanity by spreading the word of harmony as much as possible. I am interested in spreading love, and not necessarily in selling stories. Some people like my platform, and others not. But, I control the types of messages that I want to transfer, and that is absolute harmony among humans.

His strong belief in the promotion of peace is shaped by his own experiences with stability and then violence. He added, “I lived in a very stable environment before the military regime disrupted everything. The stability I experienced as a child and young man is what I want for others.” Similarly, Hawa has a YouTube channel with many followers. Besides her career as a mid-wife, she is also a social media influencer and part of a blogging community who publishes at least one post every week promoting notions of peace. Although a medical
professional, she shared her passion in spreading the word of peace through social media for positive social change. She elaborated on her contribution:

I have a YouTube channel with many followers where I talk about various issues from health concerns to concerns in areas of building a stable community. I also blog about my experiences with conflict and the importance of spreading peace. I write about various topics, including mindfulness, self-regulation, meditation, communication, and interconnection. My aim is to post one article or story related to peace and peaceful coexistence every week.

Jara is an author and novelist. He wrote and published five books, and regularly contributes articles, stories, and poems to a local magazine. His writings revolve around telling stories of love, healing, wisdom, identity, acceptance, family, culture, and tolerance. His purpose is “to inspire readers to love, live, and forgive to find the ultimate peace.” He also writes children books to convey words of kindness among the new generation. The media, in the form of print or audio, plays an important role in peacebuilding by serving as a peace promoter and bridge builder by promoting positive relationships between people.

The ideas of “informality” and “peacebuilding practice of everyday life” were major concepts that came out of participants’ stories. The participants’ stories uncover the importance of the “everyday” practice of individuals, highlighting the value of informality, and implicitly diverging from formal and official peacebuilding practices. Their stories disclose a noteworthy notion of informality, where they view subtle and informal processes as necessary to the creation of trust and harmony. As opposed to the popular view that portrays refugees as individuals who tend to harbor animosity after war and persecution due to their traumatic experiences, the stories told by the study participants highlight their thirst for peace. It uncovers their hopes for
normalcy, their strong attachments to their homeland, their aspirations to invest in the
development of the youth, their engagement in social and economic development, and their
dreams about the future. The participants’ engagement in various sectors and at varying levels
can shape the type of society that emerges. Peacebuilders that are engaged at the macro-level
may overlook the importance of the types of homeland engagements made by ordinary people on
a daily basis as portrayed by stories by the study participants. It is easy to miss the important
roles they play at the local and community level through everyday practices.

The stories examined in this chapter address the research questions by examining how
forced migrants from Ethiopia who were resettled in the United States contribute toward
peacebuilding efforts in their homeland. It explores their lived experiences surrounding flight
and how that has affected their perceptions of homeland and understandings of peace and
homeland engagement. Key to the participants’ stories is the intersections between their lived
experiences before and after flight and peacebuilding undertakings. The chapter explored their
motivations toward maintaining an active role in the creation of a conducive environment for
peace to flourish, and the specific roles that they play in building sustainable peace. A strong
sense of belonging, resilience, and passion for a positive change is what emerged from the
stories. The stories highlighted focus on the process of building peace by creating enabling
environments for peace to flourish. The findings reveal participants’ understanding of peace that
is beyond the absence of violence but includes their dreams and hopes of contributing toward
creating better economic and societal outcomes to reduce the level of grievances and tensions.

Chapter five presented a full picture of participants’ stories displayed in four themes,
detailing their lived experiences in relation to flight, why they remained engaged after
experiencing persecution and fleeing their homeland, their perceptions toward peace, and the
daily activities that they are engaged in to prevent conflict, depicting the power of the individual in peacebuilding. The findings provided insights on what actually happens after refugees have resettled and asylees have been granted asylum status in the resettlement country. It provided answers to this study’s research objectives, which included understanding the motivations behind forced migrants’ engagement in peacebuilding activities and exploring the specific peacebuilding activities that they are engaged in.
Chapter Six: Conclusions and Implications

This study looked at the interconnection and intersection between the lived experiences surrounding flight and homeland engagement that paves the way to peace and stability. The central themes and subthemes in the previous chapter display the links to the concept of positive peace and the theory of conflict transformation that are employed to guide the analysis and understand the studied phenomena. The relevant dialogues surrounding the concept of peace, peacebuilding, and forced migration are discussed in the literature review. Peace and peacebuilding has been mostly defined within the framework of negative peace as either the cessation of armed conflict between groups and attainment of a compromising solution between competing parties or as the expansion of the theory of liberal peace and attainment of free market and democracy that are guided by a top-down structure (Chandler, 2004; Fukuyama, 2006; Kant, 2010; Richmond, 2006; Robinson and Aidan 2009; Mac Ginty, 2006; Paris, 2010; Weiss & Kessler, 1990; Zakaria, 1997; Zaum, 2012). Scholars also analyzed and conceptualize peace and peacebuilding as more than the termination of armed conflict, but as a broad process that aims to transform society by addressing underlying issues of conflict and tackling root causes of instability and structural violence (Call, 2008; Galtung, 1969, Jeong, 2002; Lederach, 1997; Mac Ginty & Newman, 2009; Williams, 2009; Petrie & South, 2013). This study adds to exiting literature on concepts of peace and peacebuilding by taking into account everyday thoughts and actions related to building peace in post-conflict societies, especially by those most directly affected by those conflicts.

As discussed in chapter three, there are multiple descriptions and values associated with the term peace and peacebuilding. However, the majority reproduces the notion of negative peace and involvement in a post-conflict setting. This study, however, takes a holistic approach
and highlights the role of conflict-induced individuals related to conflict prevention by taking their lived experiences, perceptions, and beliefs into consideration. In recent times, although there is no significant and continuous physical violence and war in Ethiopia, societal tension, poverty, and structural violence remain a key concern. Given the positive peace principle, the findings from this study illustrate what specifically and authentically conflict-induced migrants can do to implement the principle of peacebuilding in order to contribute to the advancement of positive peace in the homeland. In addition to works that have looked at refugee diaspora groups as instigators of conflict, the findings establish foundations to expand the discourse by demonstrating that similar groups of people could have a positive impact on peacebuilding.

The study brought forward the voices of 14 individuals who were forced to flee their homeland of Ethiopia due to conflict over the past 40 years. The question of how do conflict-induced migrants who left their homeland in a moment of crisis and who have experienced torture and persecution by the existing system turn around to promote peace demands explanation. This contradictory notion was the inspiration for this study, which began by asking the main research question: How do forced migrants from Ethiopia who are/were resettled in the United States contribute toward peacebuilding efforts in their homeland? In order to understand the context surrounding their life, the study also asked: What did forced migrants lived experiences look like pre and post flight? In order to gain insight into the various peacebuilding initiatives and the reasons behind homeland engagement, the study asked: What motivates forced migrants to engage in peacebuilding activities? How do forced migrants envision sustainable peace and peacebuilding? what kinds of roles do resettled forced migrants play in building sustainable peace in their home country?
As presented in chapter five, the stories and experiences of study participants situate them as active agents of peace who promote social change by creating conducive environments for a lasting peace directly and indirectly. Their strong interest in building an enabling environment for peace to flourish is demonstrated by the various engagements in areas of education, healthcare, investment, job creation, and spreading the culture of peace through traditional and social media. Their involvement in homeland peacebuilding is discussed in chapter five under the overarching theme of “the power of the individual: voice after flight,” highlighting the specific activities they are engaged in to create enabling environments for the building of peace and stability. This demonstrates their involvement as agents of peace as peacebuilding is more of a process than a onetime intervention.

The motivations and reasons behind their engagement is presented under the central theme “walking away but looking back”, and includes the sub-themes: the feeling of ‘other’ in the resettlement country, belonging to homeland, capacity and means, guilt and responsibility, homeland visits, and opportunity in the homeland. Participants were also asked to share their lived experiences surrounding flight, including their stories before instability, the persecution they were subjected to at the time of instability, and their perceptions of homeland. This is discussed in chapter five under the central theme of “stability among chaos”, and it includes the subthemes: strong sense of security before flight, national pride, persecution and leaving unprepared, and hopes and agency for future as subthemes. As for their understanding of peace and peacebuilding, all participants consider themselves as ‘ordinary individuals’ and not as ‘peacebuilders’ due to the negative connotation that the term holds according to their understanding. Instead of focusing on formal definitions, participants describe peace as a moral obligation and simply the “right thing to do.” As presented in chapter five, words employed to
describe peace are empathy, fairness, participation, forgiveness, reconnection, and fulfillment of essential services.

Although principles, guidelines, and labels related to the concept of peacebuilding are useful in providing general guidelines, it is important to note the meaning the study participants attribute to peace and peacebuilding. Their understanding is not based on a predetermined or prescribed notion of peace, it is instead formed by taking their own lived experience as conflict induced migrants as a frame of reference. The shared context of flight, resettlement, culture, identity, belief, the importance they afford to the fulfillment of basic human needs, and development inform their perception toward peace and peace building. Despite their contribution to preventing societal tension and enhancing the culture of peace, they chose not to call themselves peacebuilders. They consider themselves regular people who are doing everyday practical activities and addressing problematic areas of life to benefit people in the homeland. This may be true, and what they are doing may not be astounding, novel, or any more relevant than what others have been doing. Regardless, what make their contributions relevant to the field of peacebuilding is their personal background and their specific context of being a conflict-induced migrant, and the challenges and ‘opportunities’ that comes with it. As voiced by participants, their decision to engage in homeland peacebuilding activities is a response to their own experiences, the challenges that they faced, and also the opportunities they acquired. This finding suggests one potential area for future research in order to explore if the term ‘peacebuilding’ and ‘peacebuilder’ should be conceptualized to capture the individual contexts of people that have been involved in an actual conflict as peacebuilding potential lies inside each individual, including forced migrants. The following four concrete outcomes emerged from the
study and correspond with the findings provided above. They are presented with remarks on the
study’s implications for peacebuilding activities and future research.

**Four Emergent Concepts Based on the Findings**

**Relationship between Peacebuilding Work, Success, and Personal Growth in the Resettlement Country**

One of the key aspects that became evident from the study participants’ stories was the unexpected personal and professional achievement they gained in the resettlement country and the role that it played in advancing their contribution into meaningful work. Although there are several studies that acknowledge refugees as agents, the general narrative and discourse depicting the majority of refugees and asylees is in the form of either victims, helpless, frauds, deviant, or threats in the context of the society in the resettlement country (Bleiker et al., 2013; Gale, 2004; Hyndman, 2000; Owens, 2011; Robin, 2003; Steimel, 2010). In spite of the challenges that study participants’ faced during the process of resettlement and adjustment, they began to take advantage of educational opportunities, develop their profession, and slowly started to climb the career ladder to become successful (Table 4.1). They built themselves up seemingly from scratch as they started a new life, worked hard, persevered amidst many difficulties, and have contributed not only to the resettlement country but also to their homeland. Another area of growth that study participants experienced and developed in the resettlement country was exposure to democratic institutions and human rights. This exposure proved to be an important asset that they were able to transfer to their homeland through different ways to promote peacebuilding and advance the culture of peace.

All participants achieved remarkable professional success that put them in influential professional positions such as business management, engineering, education, healthcare,
journalism, blogging for social change and impact, writer, and influencer. They were able to transfer their knowledge and skills in a positive manner, making them active participants and agents of change towards achieving peace and stability. Although structural opportunities in the resettlement country played a part in their successes, the occupational successes and personal growth that participants achieved is mainly attributed to the goals and dreams that they carried with them as they fled their homeland. Additionally, their personal character, perseverance, resilience, and ambition have played a significant role in placing them in successful careers. Their strong desire to make a positive impact on the lives of people in the homeland, and their romantic view of “homeland” coupled with their visions of return is a strong motivational factor to remain engaged in homeland peacebuilding and development activities. Although a limited number of participants are involved in this study, the stories featured in this study highlight their significant role in conflict prevention and peacebuilding and creates an opportunity to discuss their positive contributions in scholarly discourse.

**Relationship between Strong Sense of “Ethiopian” Identity and Homeland Engagement**

Ethiopia is a nation that is known for its early civilization, rich traditions, and ancient history while serving as a symbol of freedom for many African countries at the time of colonization (Alelu, 2012; Putnam, 2007). Overall, Ethiopians are very proud of their traditions, legacy, and their language, cuisine, culture, and religion serve as important markers of Ethiopian identity, functioning as an essential element of stability and coping mechanism, while adjusting to a new life in the resettlement country (Alelu, 2012; Hayes & Endale, 2018; Haregewoyn, 2007; Putnam, 2007).

Results from the study participants’ interviews supported existing research regarding a very strong sense of connection to their homeland and their “Ethiopian” identity. Most
participants identified themselves as an “Ethiopian” despite their many years of residence in the United States and citizenship status. Existing research demonstrates that Ethiopians often identify themselves by nationality instead of skin color and that the source of identity for most Ethiopian migrants is their nation, as they identify themselves as “Ethiopian” instead of “African Americans” or “blacks” (Chako, 2005; Moran, 1989). The strong sense of identity and pride in their nation and culture was evident from participants’ stories. Most participants prefer to be identified by their nationality, which is “Ethiopian,” and some identify themselves as “Ethiopian-American” rather than their particular ethnic origin. They highlighted their nationality, culture, religion, and history as a means for self-identification. This strong sense of identification with their nationality, culture, religion, or history is in line with social identity theory, which implies individuals place themselves as member of a certain group, locating themselves in social groups and imagining the positive aspects of that group (Tajfel 1978; Tajfel and Turner 1986). The positive identification toward their nationality-facilitated association with a clearly defined identity group helps in maintaining constructive self-esteem and stability. This association in turn likely facilitates meaningful homeland engagement as individuals aspire to contribute to a positive image by identifying as Ethiopian or by exhibiting characteristics that foster group belonging and feelings of “Ethiopianess”.

Although the general tendency was to strongly identify with the “Ethiopian” group, participants also demonstrated an ability to balance and negotiate between the two cultures while exhibiting each identity according to the particular circumstance (Hayes & Endale, 2018). The ability to control their identity and display one identity over another depending on the specific circumstance without abandoning their national identity is an interesting finding from the data. Despite violence and torture enforced by the existing system causing forced migrants, their
positive imagination of home, strong desire to belong to their nationality, and the words that they use to describe their country of origin is thought-provoking.

**Building Peace as a “Process”, not as a Final Goal, and Creating an Enabling Environment for a Lasting Impact**

A third and significant finding of this study situates forced migrants as active agents in the quest for peace and significant players in peacebuilding and conflict prevention. As individuals who survived persecution, violence, and succeeded in overcoming multiple challenges associated with flight and resettlement, they have the unique opportunity to understand the value of peace. This combination led the participants to be both determined and engage in practical efforts to cultivate peace and prevent tension in the homeland. Key to this study was the unique way participants’ perceived peace and the specific roles they played in preventing conflict. Importantly, the types of everyday activities all of these participants engaged in are not typically seen as “peacebuilding,” even by many of the participants; however, the small actions contributed to an ongoing personal identification and desire to do something positive. This combination of motivation, knowledge, skills, and helping participants identify their activities as “peacebuilding” was a significant finding in the study.

Most participants mentioned a feeling of guilt for leaving people behind in the violent environment and for saving their own lives. The impact of survivors’ guilt and the feelings of responsibility that came with that motivated and inspired many of these participants to actively engage in homeland affairs to bring meaningful change for those that were left behind. Participants shared that they offset their sense of guilt by taking active steps to improve the lives of those “left behind”. These actions included: sending money; investing in the homeland; continuing to write and speak their language; teaching their children about Ethiopia: telling their
stories; and keeping tradition and history. In addition, the lived experiences of the study participants were an integral part of their contribution and desire to achieve lasting peace. Their experiences of conflict and displacement coupled with the important skills and knowledge that they acquired in the U.S. afforded them both passion and advantages, which allowed them to contribute to peacebuilding efforts in meaningful ways.

Existing literature mostly addresses the role of international organizations, state, and civil society in peacebuilding in post-war societies. While the role of these major actors is significant, I argue that acknowledging the under-researched and under-appreciated role of individuals, particularly the contributions of forced migrants, as crucial in building a conducive environment that results in lasting peace. Although scholarly discussion is heavily dominated by large-scale violence, war, and negative peace in the form of reduction of war, peace is not just the absence of conflict (Galtung, 1969; Webel & Galtung, 2007), and peacebuilding is a process that seeks to prevent conflict through small-scale interventions.

This study focused on positive peace developed through the everyday actions of individuals. The findings highlighted participants’ constructive and optimistic attitudes toward their homeland and their engagement through societal development, promotion of fairness, reduction of poverty, enhancement of healthcare, promotion of education and awareness, and development of a peace culture. In addition to the various factors discussed in chapter five that motivate forced migrants to engage in homeland peacebuilding, participants’ interest in giving back and helping others has a cultural lens. Collectivism is deeply rooted in the tradition of Ethiopians where hospitality and looking out for each other and humanity precede individual interest and personal comfort (Wagner, 1995). This serves as an important factor to attract forced migrants to look back to what they have left behind and engage in a positive manner.
Forced migrants homeland engagement through various practical ways provides a sense of normalcy and stability, discouraging the formation of further conflict. In contrast to existing literature that studies forced migrants as accessories associated with rebel fighters and violent political groups (Loescher 2001; Lyons, 2009; Wahlbeck 1998), the data analysis shows that participants are constantly looking for ways that could bring peace and development in the country. All participants mentioned the need for a non-violent struggle and discussed their role in creating and developing a suitable environment for the advancement of peace.

The findings revealed that homeland engagement for these participants was not perceived as a choice but a necessity that had to happen based on a personal need to act. The nature of their painful experiences of conflict, violence, and flight gave them the bitter taste of instability and left them all determined to assist fellow Ethiopians to not experience what they had. They expressed their determination to engage in the process of paving the way for a peaceful coexistence regardless of what had happened to them. Participants’ statements focused on the ways that they “want to bring peace” and they “can’t let what happened to them happen to others” illustrated their determination to participate in peaceful activities in order to bring lasting stability and development in their country of origin. Their stories highlighted the role that forced migrants can play as significant partners in creating an enabling environment for a lasting peace as the focus of their engagement is on prevention and reduction of the sources of tension and violence.

**Relationship between Determinants in the Host State, Home Country, and Homeland Engagement**

This finding looked at the role of significant factors in the resettlement state and home country in facilitating homeland engagement. In addition to individual agency and participants’
motivation towards participation in homeland peacebuilding activities, it is important to highlight the role of state structures. The data revealed four important points that encourage homeland engagement from the host and home country perspective.

The significance of welcoming policies formulated by the Ethiopian government to attract and enhance diaspora engagement is worth noting. The government considers the diaspora as a key development partner, and developed several incentive mechanisms aimed at mobilizing and attracting knowledge and capital from the diaspora. This include the issuance of an Ethiopian ‘Yellow Card’ that offers more privileges to returnees, remittance sending protocols, investment incentives, a diaspora bond, and foreign currency bank accounts directed at the diaspora (Kuschminder & Siegel, 2011). Additionally, the existence of weak, but evolving, state institutions that are unable to provide basic services in the home country encourages and inspires participants’ to remain engaged in order to fill the gap and provide services. This is particularly witnessed by participants’ initial visits after flight where they observed immediate needs for healthcare, nutrition, education, and infrastructure. There are also existing opportunities in the resettlement state that serves as an enabling factor where participants are able to take advantage of the opportunity structures in order to grow both professionally, personally, and financially (Endale, 2016). The ability to adapt to democratic values and norms in the host country is a major incentive to cultivate the desire of forced migrants’ homeland political participation in the form of peace education and awareness creation. The culture of volunteerism is something that most participants feel that they have developed in the resettlement state by participating in various volunteer programs through the local governments and churches. This enhanced participation in various community projects aids in the development of the culture of volunteerism, which in turn boosts and inspires individuals to give back to their homeland. As
illustrated in the previous chapter, the culture of volunteerism and giving back is an important building block for peacebuilding, which facilitates their transnational engagement.

Finding from the pilot project that I conducted in 2015, investigating the relationship between homeland engagement and level of integration in the host society, suggest low level of integration as a significant factor in inspiring migrants to remain engaged with their homeland. Resettlement and adjustment challenges, due to settlement and immigration policies that shape public opinion and outlook, serve as a motivating factor to remain engaged with homeland affairs. The stereotypical portrayal of refugees as helpless and problematic negatively impacts the opinion of the host society, leading to limited or hindered participation and involvement in local affairs. Although the study participants demonstrated a high level of perseverance to overcome the challenges related to integration, those who have experienced delayed or low levels of cultural integration with the host society are attracted to identify with their own people. Their identity and what it means to be an Ethiopian is influenced by their inability to belong in the host society to some extent; however, it is important to explore if a strong sense of “Ethiopian” identity causes reservations and hesitation among study participants to integrate with the host society, or if existing challenges to integrate with the locals causes them to identify with their Ethiopian roots even more. This is an important question for future research.

**Implication for Peacebuilding Activities and Future Research**

This section discusses the implication of the study as it relates to the practice of peace building and future research on the nexus between issues of forced migration, positive homeland engagement, and peacebuilding. The results from this study have demonstrated the important role that individual forced migrants can play, not only in addressing immediate problems (e.g., sending money to family members or through remittances), but also addressing underlying issues
through changing social structures and relationships (e.g., providing services and skills to improve education, healthcare, and provide employment opportunities) and the spread of positivity and a culture of peace (e.g., awareness raising through media).

The study findings provide valuable lessons for policymakers and peacebuilding practitioners, who are accustomed to following state-centric or NGO-based approaches to peacebuilding, to consider developing policies that increasingly focus on the role of individual refugees/asylees who were a product of violent conflicts. Forced migrants are traditionally labeled “victims,” rather than active agents of change, therefore, understanding the active role they can play paves the way for the recognition and participation of other marginalized groups in peacebuilding initiatives. It is important to recognize the role of forced migrants in response to daily realities and needs of people in the homeland in order to reduce violence by tackling underlying causes. It is only when we are able to recognize and acknowledge their role in peacebuilding that we can work toward their inclusion in formal peacebuilding activities.

This study serves as a foundation for further research, particularly by focusing on other refugee groups and comparing findings in order to expand the field of conflict resolution, management, and transformation. In addition, it adds to existing literature on Ethiopian immigrants and the African diaspora in the United States. Importantly, this study gives voice to forced migrants and their active contributions toward stability and conflict prevention through everyday practices. National pride, a strong sense of “Ethiopian” identity, feeling of “other” in the resettlement county, and hope of return are among the subthemes that inspires participants’ homeland engagement. Further study is required to uncover and understand the linkage between national pride and the strong sense of identity and feelings of “otherness” in the resettlement country. Research should be undertaken to inquire if the strong sense of national identity and
pride affects the level of integration or if the feeling of “otherness” and low-levels of cultural integration enhance associations with the homeland and self-identification as “Ethiopian”. In the same way, it is worth investigating the relationship between return and homeland engagement through peacebuilding. Further research needs to be conducted to inquire whether the desire to return leads to active positive engagement or the act of engaging and contributing enthuses forced migrants to permanently return.

Another possible avenue for future research is to expand the scope of the study by comparing homeland engagement of forced migrants who reside in the United States and other host countries. For instance, a comparison of Ethiopian forced migrants who reside in the United States and those who resettle in Canada or some parts of Europe will provide more information on the impact immigration or reception policy and level of integration has on homeland engagement. It would also be useful to expand the research and collect data from second generation Ethiopians in order to find out the level of engagement and compare the experiences of first-generation and second-generation groups. This would provide insights on the impact of birthplace and identity on attachment, transnationalism, and homeland engagement. There are many avenues for future research to highlight the role of conflict-induced diaspora in peacebuilding and conflict prevention and expand the scholarly discussion on diaspora peacebuilding. In general, this study adds to existing scholarly discourse surrounding peacebuilding as we continue to compare traditional approaches of peacebuilding to new forms of everyday peacebuilding practices.
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Appendix 1- Consent Form for IRB Review

**Title of Research Study:** Beyond Resettlement: The Role of Ethiopian Refugee Diaspora in Homeland Peacebuilding

**Researcher’s Contact Information:**

Etsegenet G. Endale  
Ph.D. Student at Kennesaw State University  
Email: eendale@kennesaw.edu  
Phone: 470-200-8319  
Advisor: Dr. Sherrill Hayes

**Introduction**

You are being invited to take part in a research study conducted by Etsegenet G Endale, a PhD. student from Kennesaw State University. This consent form explains the research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, you should read this form and ask questions about anything that you do not understand.

**Description of Project**

The purpose of this study is to explore and better understand the peacebuilding initiatives undertaken by resettled Ethiopian refugees and asylees (who reside in the United States) in their country of origin. It also seeks to inquire their perceptions about their country of origin, and their understandings of peace and homeland peacebuilding engagement. The extent of engagement, the
ways of engagement, and the motivations for engagement in the country of origin will also be explored.

**Explanation of Project**

I am interested in hearing your story related to your flight, resettlement in the United States, and your level of engagement with Ethiopia, for example in the economic, cultural, social and political spheres. I will ask you questions related to your journey ranging from where you began to your current situation. I am particularly interested in hearing about your pre-flight, flight, and resettlement experiences, your understanding of peace, as well as your current involvement with your country of origin. Questions I might ask include your experiences related to forced displacement, your perceptions of your country of origin, your experiences in the host country, your understanding of peace in general and peace in your country of origin, your efforts to maintain the relationship with homeland, and the types/extent of engagement.

**Time Required**

The interview should last 60-90 minutes, but it could take shorter or longer depending on the nature of your responses and your availability.

**Risks and Discomforts**

There are no known risks associated with this interview. You may choose not to answer a question, take a break, or stop the interview at any point. Feel free to ask for clarification if you don’t understand any question. Our discussion will be audio recorded to help the researcher to accurately capture your insights in your own words. The tapes will only be heard by the
researcher for the purpose of this study. If you feel uncomfortable with the recorder, you may ask that it be turned off at any time.

Benefits
There are no direct benefits from participation in this research, however, a better understanding of conflict-induced migrants’ experiences, their perceptions of the host country and their country of origin, their understandings of peace, and their engagement with their homeland will help improve the understanding of the roles of forced migrants in the economic, social, political and economic development of their homeland. It will also help to understand their actions and attitudes towards the host country. This research may help policy makers and those working with peacebuilding and conflict prevention initiatives to consider the contributions of forced migrants and include them as important stakeholders in the process of the homeland’s economic, social and political development. It also gives insight towards the journey of conflict-induced migrants after resettlement, and the need to understand their desires and motivations for engagement in their homeland. This will be helpful for those working to bring peace and development in a country from which migrants were once forced to flee.

Compensation
There will be no monetary compensation for participating in the study.

Confidentiality
The results of this participation will be kept confidential. The recording and transcription of the recording shall be coded to maintain confidentiality. Although direct quotes from you may
possibly be used in the dissertation or published work, your name and other identifying information will be kept private through the use of pseudonyms or by combining your responses with other similar responses. Also, the recording and transcription shall be secured in a password-protected database. In the event you chose to withdraw from the study, information you provide (including audio recordings) will be destroyed and omitted from the final publication.

**Inclusion Criteria for Participation**

The participants of this study are required to be at least 18 years of age. Also, participants should have come to the United States as a refugee or asylum seeker (with official refugee and asylee status) from Ethiopia as a result of the 1974 revolution (1974-1991) or related events or during the EPRDF (Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front) regime (1991-current).

**Signed Consent**

I have read the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

**Signature of participant, Date**
I certify that I obtained the consent of the subject whose signature is above. I understand that I must give a signed copy of the informed consent form to the participant, and keep the original copy.

**Signature of Researcher, Date**

____________________________________________________________________________________

PLEASE SIGN BOTH COPIES OF THIS FORM, KEEP ONE AND RETURN THE OTHER TO THE RESEARCHER

Research at Kennesaw State University that involves human participants is carried out under the oversight of an Institutional Review Board. Questions or problems regarding these activities should be addressed to the Institutional Review Board, Kennesaw State University, 1000 Chastain Road, #0112, Kennesaw, GA 30144-5591, (678) 797-2268.
Appendix 2- Interview Guide

This interview guide will be used with each person interviewed. The guide is developed using the conceptual/theoretical frameworks, the researchers’ observation, and previous research on related subject. The interview guide is organized in themes to avoid mix-ups. While every question in the guide may not be asked, the researcher will ensure that major areas are covered within each of the themes using the bulleted “further prompt” questions below the main theme question, allowing for participants to discuss these issues more naturally.

Icebreaker questions
Can you tell me a little about yourself? Further prompts- Are you married? Do you have children? What is your level of education? How long have you been in the United States?

Theme 1: Personal reflections on life prior to displacement
- When did you first move to the United States?
  - Tell me about your decision to come to the United States.
  - Why did you move to the United States?
- How would you describe your country of origin at the time of your flight?
  - How would you describe your life in Ethiopia (before displacement)?

Theme 2: Personal reflections on life after displacement
- How would you describe your experiences after arriving in the United States?
  - What did you find most difficult about the United States?
• What did you find most enjoyable in the United States?
• How would you describe Americans’ attitude towards new people (towards you)?

- Tell me about your educational and work experiences in the United States.
- Do you have any additional thoughts on your resettlement experience in the United States?

**Theme 3: Thought on American Culture**

- How do you identify yourself?
- What does the word refugee/asylee/forced migrant mean to you?
  - Does it carry a special meaning?
- Are there times when being a refugee/asylee feels like who you are?
  - If so, what kinds of things prompted that feeling?
  - Does the word refugee define who you are? If so, how. If not, why?
- What was your impression of America and Americans after you arrived in the United States?
  - Did you think about life in America before your resettlement?
  - Is it different from your perceptions before arrival?
  - Americans hospitality? The language? The American culture (food, music, media, literature)
  - In your opinion, what defines/characterizes being an American?
  - How do you feel about the American culture?
  - How do feel about the American society?
- What do you appreciate about American culture and society (if any)?
- What bothers you about American culture and society (if any)?
- Did you face any challenges and barriers as far as culture or language is concerned? If so, please describe.

- In your opinion, does the cultural difference hold back the process of integration with the American society?

**Theme 4: thoughts on the homeland**

- What do you think about your country of origin?
  
  - The Ethiopian language? The Ethiopian culture (music, literature, media, food, etc.)? Do you listen to Ethiopian media? Do you watch Ethiopian television programs? Do you read the Ethiopian news online? How often do you engage in these activities?

- Do you associate with the Ethiopian community in Atlanta or any other state?
  
  - If so, why and how? What is the extent of your involvement?

- In your opinion, what defines/characterizes being an Ethiopian?
  
  - How do you feel if you had to abandon your identity and culture?

- What do you appreciate about Ethiopian culture (if any)?

- What bothers you about Ethiopian culture and society (if any)?

- Are there times when you have wanted to distance yourself from being Ethiopian?
  
  - If so, why and how did you resolve that?

- In your opinion, does the cultural difference with Americans help you maintain strong ties with your own community? If so, describe how.

**Theme 5: Personal views and experiences of peace/peacebuilding (positioning interviewee’s understanding of peace and peacebuilding)**
- What is peace for you?

- How does your displacement affect your understanding of peace?

- How does your resettlement in the United States affect your understanding of peace?

- How do you characterize Ethiopia (in terms of peacefulness)? Is it a peaceful country? Why do you think that?

- (If answer for previous question is ‘not peaceful’) Do you think that there is a possibility for creating peace in the country of origin? If so, how and where do you see yourself in that?

- How do you envision lasting peace in Ethiopia?

- How do you see your role in encouraging peace in your country of origin?

- How do you think you can contribute to peacebuilding?

- How does your stay in the United States affect your role in peacebuilding at your country of origin?

Theme 6: Thoughts on homeland engagement

- Have you been back in your country of origin since your displacement?
  
  - If so, how often and for how long
  
  - What was the reason for travel
  
  - Was it safe to travel back to the country of origin? Describe.

- Are you involved in development (investment) or charitable activities back home?
  
  - If so, what kind of activities and why?

- Do you feel that it is important to make economic contributions towards your country of origin?
  
  - If so, why?
- Do you feel your current economic status in the United States has affected your level of engagement in Ethiopia? (If yes, in what ways?)

- In what ways, if any, do you consider yourself politically engaged in the United States?

- Are you politically engaged in Ethiopia?
  - If so, in what ways?
  - If actively engaged, why is important to remain politically engaged in Ethiopia?

- How have the civic and political experiences you have encountered in the United States influenced the ways or the reasons that you engage in Ethiopian politics?

- Why did you decide to return back to the country of origin? (this is specifically for returnees)

- Did you maintain contact with the country of origin before your return? (this is specifically for returnees)
  - If yes, what kinds of contact have you maintained?

- Describe your contribution in the well being of Ethiopians who reside in Ethiopia? (this is specifically for returnees)

- Do you maintain contact with the United States? (this is specifically with returnees)
  - If yes, what kinds of contact do you still maintain?

- Do you have additional thoughts on your engagement experience towards Ethiopia?

- Is there anyone else that you think I should talk to about this issue?