

City of Refugees: The Story of Three Newcomers Who Breathed Life into a Dying American Town

By Susan Hartman

June 2022. 256p. Beacon, \$27.95 (9780807024676). 974.7

BOOKLIST REVIEW, first published April 15, 2022

The insightful and fascinating nonfiction debut by poet and journalist Hartman focuses on three immigrants to Utica, New York, as Hartman painstakingly and patiently documents their lives over the course of eight years. Ali Sarhan, who served as a translator for American forces in his home country of Iraq, creates a new life with an American woman, but is still torn between his former country and his new one. Mersiha Omeragic, a Bosnian refugee, teaches English as a second language and opens a bakery and café. Sadia Ambure, a Somali Bantu who is a stubborn high school student when Hartman first meets her, struggles for independence from her family. Hartman interweaves their stories with those of other immigrants who establish themselves in this Rust Belt city, shaping its life for the better, and reviews the complicated history of post-industrial cities in the Northeast. In doing so, she will hone and reshape the reader's understanding of the impact of refugees on American society.

— Margaret Quamme

This title has been recommended for young adult readers:

YA/General Interest: Young adults will be intrigued by Sadia's process of navigating a new culture and finding balance between family and freedom. — *Margaret Quamme*