

FATUMA HUSSEIN, Doctor of Humane Letters (LHD)

Fatuma Hussein is the founder and executive director of the Immigrant Resource Center of Maine (formerly the United Somali Women of Maine). Born in Somalia, the oldest of thirteen children, Hussein lived in a Kenyan refugee camp after civil war broke out in Somalia in 1991. She moved to Atlanta, Georgia, in 1993, where she attended high school. Seeking relief from congestion and crime in urban Atlanta, she moved with her family to Maine, eventually settling in the Lewiston-Auburn area. While there were many French-speaking West Africans living in the area, Somalis and other immigrants from Africa faced additional challenges—of culture, religion, and language. In response to an open letter from the mayor of Lewiston asking members of the Somali community to discourage relatives from resettling in the area, Hussein began her efforts to build bridges within the community. Beginning as a refugee center in 2001, the Immigrant Resource Center of Maine now provides housing resettlement services and helps families navigate a complex landscape of local, state, and federal regulations so that the talents and abilities of Maine's immigrant community can best serve the common good.