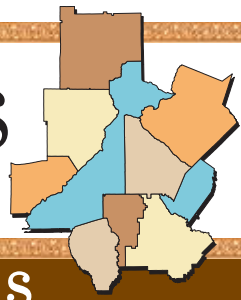


GLOBAL ATLANTA Snapshots

A LOOK AT ETHNIC COMMUNITIES IN THE ATLANTA REGION



ETHIOPIANS & ERITREANS

Global Atlanta Snapshots, a component of the Atlanta Regional Commission's Global Atlanta Works program, help foster understanding among the rich ethnic and cultural diversity across the Atlanta region. Members of Atlanta's ethnic communities are recent arrivals or long-time residents and may have cultures and customs different from others in the region. But what they share with others who call the region home is that they all contribute to its success. Global Atlanta Snapshots introduce ethnic communities by exploring their backgrounds, customs and cultures, documenting their roles in the regional economy and highlighting available resources.



Saada Yusuf, the owner of United News Stand on Courtland Street in Downtown Atlanta.

close ties to Egypt and Greece. Aksum's first emperor was Menelik, according to legend, the son of the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon. Eritrea maintained a high degree of autonomy during the Aksum dynasty.

Today's Ethiopia is the product of many distinct cultural influences over the centuries. Christianity came to the Aksum Empire in the 4th century C.E. (Common Era) and evolved into the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, similar in its theology to the Egyptian Coptic Church.

The next major influence came in the 16th century when Eritrea came under Turkish rule, becoming a part of the Ottoman Empire and its Islamic culture. This land along the Red Sea, with excellent access to other parts of Africa, Asia and the Middle East, was disputed territory, fought over by Turkey, Egypt, Ethiopia, Italy and Portugal. In the 1890s, Italy finally won out and established colonial rule over Eritrea.

Who are the Ethiopians & Eritreans?

Ethiopia, known to the world in earlier times as Abyssinia, traces its history to one of the world's earliest civilizations. Its neighbor, Eritrea, is one of the world's newest nations, having achieved its independence in 1993 after a long and difficult war with Ethiopia. Both countries are located in northeast Africa, in a geographic region known as the Horn of Africa. This area juts eastward between the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. Other countries of this region include Somalia, Djibouti, Sudan and Kenya.

The peoples of these culturally-diverse countries are challenged to find permanent solutions and relief from human suffering due in part to border conflicts and natural disasters. Efforts to advance political stability and develop economic and human capacity in this region continue.

The history of Ethiopia and Eritrea dates back more than 2,500 years, when the two countries were part of the Aksum Empire, with

Ethiopia is unique among African countries, the ancient Ethiopian monarchy having maintained its freedom from colonial rule except for the period of Italian occupation during 1936-1941. Emperor Haile Selassie, who had ruled since 1930, was ultimately deposed in 1974 by a military junta, the Derg, which established a socialist state. Torn by warfare, wide-scale drought and massive refugee problems, the regime was finally toppled in 1991 by a coalition of rebel forces. A constitution was adopted in 1994, and Ethiopia's first multiparty elections were held in 1995. The long border war with Eritrea, noted below, ended with a peace treaty in December 2000.

Ethiopia's population is approaching 75 million, although there is some flux in this number as Sudanese, Somali and Eritrean refugees who fled to Ethiopia to escape famine or fighting are now returning home. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital, is one of Africa's most populous, estimated at five million in 2005. The main Ethiopian ethnic groups are Oromo, at 40 percent of the population, and

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A Personal Story • Ethiopian and Eritrean Customs and Culture • Celebrated Holidays • Resources



A PERSONAL STORY

Yonas Abraha was born in Ethiopia at a time that Eritrea was not yet an independent country. He considers himself an Eritrean, though, and a victim of Ethiopia's conflicts. His father was killed when Yonas was a baby and one of his older brothers died while serving with the Eritrean forces in 1977.

Abraha came to Atlanta as a refugee in 1991 when he was 15 years old. He fled Ethiopia with another older brother, during the civil war being waged for Eritrea's independence. They came to Atlanta from a refugee camp in Kenya. When Yonas arrived he spoke no English and was nearly illiterate. His brother remained in

Georgia and lives in Clarkston. One of his sisters, who came to Atlanta in 1986, returned to Eritrea two years ago after getting married. He supports this sister as well as another sister who has never left Eritrea, and his mother who is currently battling serious illness. (The medical system in Eritrea is inadequate and his mother has come to the U.S. for treatment in the past.)

When Abraha entered Cross Keys High School in Atlanta, he was taken in by a woman he refers to as his adoptive mother. Rachel Campbell, he says, took an interest in him and allowed him to move in with her and her family. Campbell and her family had a major influence on his going to school and pursuing higher education. They also made it comfortable for him to maintain his culture, his language, and not forsake his identity. Throughout his college years, he continued to be influenced by Rachel as well as by his college professors.

Abraha has done well academically and professionally. After earning three degrees from the University of West Georgia in Carrollton, he owns a business and is a consultant in city planning. During his college years he interned in several organizations including the Carter Center and the Atlanta Regional Commission. He received several academic awards and honors and was the recipient of both HOPE and HUD scholarships. He also served as the Coordination Commissioner for the Eritrean American Athletic Association. In addition to his accomplishments in Atlanta, he volunteered for national service in the Ministry of Information in Eritrea in 1998.



IN ADDITION TO SUPPORTING SEVERAL FAMILY MEMBERS IN ERITREA, ABRAHA RAISES MONEY FOR OTHERS, INCLUDING AN ORPHANAGE IN ERITREA.

Abraha can best be described as a young entrepreneur.

He is the owner and manager of the Auburn Food Mart on Auburn Avenue. He also owns a Shell gas station and convenience store on Moreland Avenue and another newly opened store, Atlanta Food Mart, in the West End. He also owns three houses. Abraha partners with three cousins to operate the businesses and they live together in a small apartment above the Auburn Food Mart.

In addition to supporting several family members in Eritrea, Abraha raises money for others, including an orphanage in Eritrea. With additional money he has raised, along with the help of an American friend and the Eritrean government, he has spent the last two years completing the construction of a library in Asmara. The idea for the Asmara Public Library was a result of his desire to help the youth in Eritrea. He has traveled to Eritrea twice a year in the last two years with thousands of books. The collection contains about 15,000 books valued at about \$250,000.

Abraha feels that he's fortunate to have left his homeland at a young age since that prevented him from being harmed by events in Eritrea. He would have been a different man, he says, if he had left at an older age. Although he considers himself Eritrean, he says that "I got so much from the U.S. – there's a lot to pay back."





By the Numbers: Ethiopians and Eritreans in the Atlanta Region

Cherokee - 0	Fayette - 0
Clayton - 65	Fulton - 501
Cobb - 180	Gwinnett - 547
DeKalb - 3,024	Henry - 0
Douglas - 44	Rockdale - 6

Total 10-county region - 4,367

According to the 2000 Census:

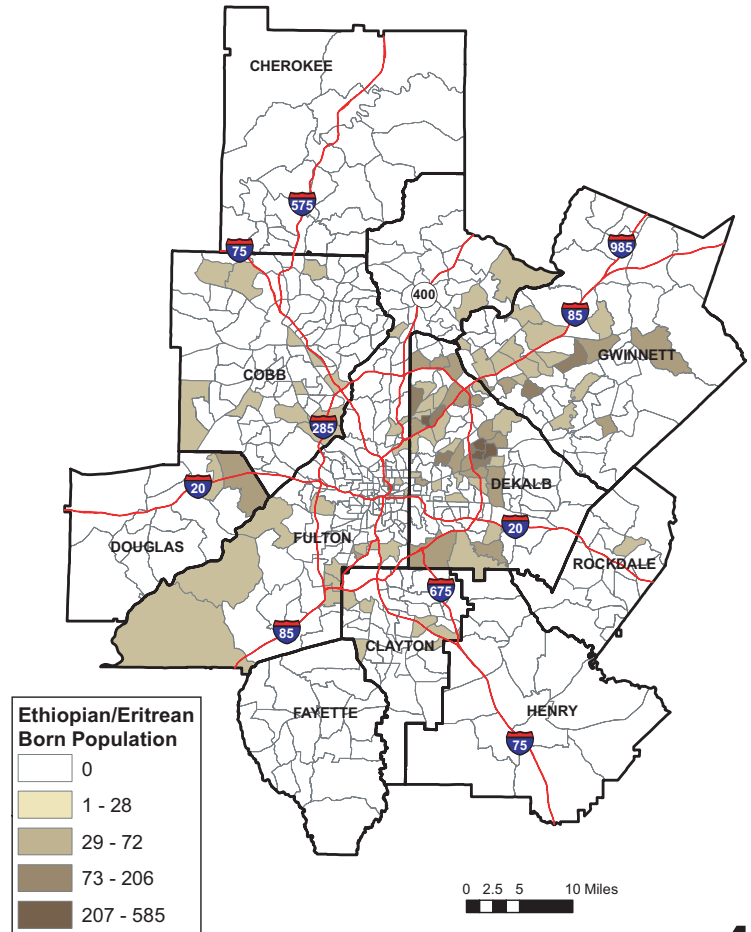
DeKalb County is home to the largest population of Ethiopians, by far, with 3,024. Gwinnett County is next with 547.

DeKalb County is home to 69 percent of the Ethiopians in the Atlanta region and 65 percent of the Ethiopians living in Georgia.

The 10-county Atlanta region is home to approximately 42 percent of Georgia's total population, but represents 94 percent of the state's Ethiopian population.

The largest concentrations of Ethiopians are found in DeKalb County just outside I-285 in Clarkston.

ETHIOPIAN & ERITREAN POPULATION IN ATLANTA Atlanta Region, 2000



(Source: 2000 Census Data on Foreign-Born Population by Region, Country or Area of Birth)



Ethiopians & Eritreans in the Atlanta Economy

The Ethiopian employed labor force in the Atlanta region was estimated at 2,850 in 2000, with 1,660 males and 1,190 females. To a great extent, this labor force was concentrated in office, management and sales occupations, which combine to account for two-thirds of the Ethiopian workforce. Among the men, significant occupational groups were found in services, with food preparation/serving being the largest. Transportation services, with taxi services accounting for 9 percent of the male labor force, are next in importance.

Ethiopian women were even more heavily represented in sales and office occupations than men. Both men and women held cashier jobs in high proportions. Women more often found work in food serving, child care, and in materials moving occupations, which might include packers in a factory.

Increasingly, Ethiopians are becoming small business owners, as evidenced by the formation of the Ethio-American Retailers Association and the Ethiopian Chamber of commerce.

Information specific to the Eritrean community is more anecdotal. People seem to follow occupational paths of earlier immigrants. For example, according to one observer, "if your sponsor is a taxi driver, you will also likely be a taxi driver." Many who came to Atlanta also have found work at the DeKalb Farmers Market and at hotels. "They live and work like that for 10-15 years and then face problems at middle age. Some of the taxi drivers are building nice homes but they have no benefits or retirement plan," according to a member of the Eritrean community.



LOCAL OBSERVERS SUGGEST THAT THE ETHIOPIAN COMMUNITY HAS BEEN GROWING SUBSTANTIALLY AND THAT THE POPULATION NUMBER AT LEAST 12,000.

Who are the Ethiopians and Eritreans? (continued)

Amhara and Tigre at 32 percent. The de facto official language is Amharic, which has its own alphabet. Ethiopia's principal religions today are Muslim, about 45 to 50 percent of the population, and Ethiopian Orthodox at about 35 to 40 percent.

Eritrea was confederated with Ethiopia after World War II by the United Nations. Subsequently, Eritrea was annexed by Ethiopia in 1962, an action which triggered a 30-year struggle for independence. Hostilities ended in 1991 with Eritrean rebels defeating the Ethiopian forces and independence from Ethiopia was overwhelmingly approved in a referendum two years later. With border skirmishes continuing in the late 1990s, Eritrea today hosts a U.N. peacekeeping team to help maintain an uneasy peace.

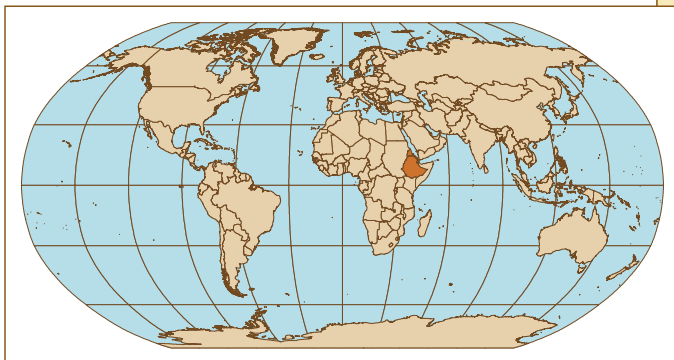
Although a formal census has not been conducted since 1984, Eritrea's current population is estimated at 4.8 million. Its principal population groups include ethnic Tigrinya (50 percent), Tigre and Kunama (40 percent), Afar, Saho and others (10 percent). Almost half of the population speaks Tigrinya, another third Tigre (see box below, citing origins in ancient Ge'ez language). Arabic and Tigrinya are the official languages, while English is taught in secondary school. The main religions are Muslim, Coptic Christian and Roman Catholic.

Some Ethiopians, primarily students in higher education, were in the U.S. in the 1960 and 1970s. Ethiopians began to migrate in greater numbers to America after the passage of the 1980 Refugee Act, designed to deal with the growing problem of African refugees. Ethiopians were the group that most benefited from the legislation during the 1980s and early 1990s. An estimate in 1991 placed the Ethiopian population in America between 50,000 and 75,000

people. By the 2000 Census, America's Ethiopian community numbered about 90,000. In recent years, only Somalis have exceeded Ethiopians in the numbers of African immigrants arriving in the U.S.

Eritrean migration to America is a relatively recent phenomenon. The combination of the Ethiopian-Eritrean war, along with drought and famine, led more than 750,000 Eritreans to leave their country as refugees. While many of these refugees settled in neighboring Sudan, significant numbers relocated to Washington, D.C., which is now home to the largest Eritrean community in America. In addition to Atlanta, other sizeable communities are found in Columbus, Ohio and Dallas.

Based on ancestry data, the population of the Ethiopian and Eritrean communities in Atlanta in 2000 was estimated at almost 5,400, according to the U.S. Census. Local observers suggest that the Ethiopian community has grown substantially and that the population numbers at least 12,000. This increase is driven in part by secondary migration from other major cities, including Washington, Los Angeles and New York.



The Ge'ez Rite Christian Tradition

The Ge'ez language is one of the ancient African languages of literary significance. In our time, Ge'ez alphabets are used by the states of Eritrea and Ethiopia. Ge'ez is also the mother of several Ethiopian and Eritrean languages. For example, Tigre (Eritrea), Tigrinya (Eritrea and Ethiopia) and Amharic (Ethiopia) are some of the languages that derived from Ge'ez. More significantly, Ge'ez is the liturgical language of the Orthodox and Catholic Churches in Eritrea and Ethiopia.

Ge'ez, also known as Ethiopic, is one of the first few ancient languages the Bible was translated into as early as the 4th and 5th centuries C.E. According to some Biblical scholars, Ge'ez words are also present in some Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament). For example, certain non-canonical writings are extant in their full version in Ge'ez language only, with the Book of Enoch being one.

By Kilfe-Ab Gebreab, *Representative of the Eritrean Ge'ez Rite Catholic Community of Atlanta In Parish Connection, quarterly newsletter of Office of Black Catholic Ministry, Archdiocese of Atlanta, August 2004*

Ethiopian and Eritrean Life in Metro Atlanta

The 10-county Atlanta region was home to just under 4,400 foreign-born natives of Ethiopia in 2000. Almost 70 percent of that population was concentrated in DeKalb County, with additional nodes of over 500 persons each in Fulton and Gwinnett counties. Some of the communities in which Ethiopians and Eritreans are clustered include Clarkston, Chamblee, Doraville and Auburn Avenue in Atlanta.

The Ethiopian and Eritrean communities are still relatively small, still adjusting to life in America, and, according to interviews, highly divided. For example, while others might refer to the "Eritrean Community," they often group themselves based on occupation and with others with whom they have something in common including village or political affiliations from their home country. Very few in the community have retirement plans, job security or healthcare.

For both of these East African groups, strong and sustainable community centers in Atlanta are essential. According to community leaders, the philanthropic community and policy makers do not yet fully recognize the value of these centers. These centers facilitate understanding and improve service delivery by helping to connect the communities to institutions and service providers across disciplines. The need for these centers is seen as necessary to aid the difficult transition that members of the community are still facing from the challenge of mastering the English language to inter-generational conflicts, as young people resent their parents for not assimilating at an acceptable rate. Despite the challenges these communities face, some Ethiopians and Eritreans achieve success as business owners and highly educated professionals.



What are Ethiopian & Eritrean Customs and Culture?

Ethiopia and Eritrea are lands of multiple religious traditions. Ethiopia has one of the world's oldest Christian communities and an estimated 35 to 40 percent of the population is Christian, mostly affiliated with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. This orthodox tradition, or Ge'ez Tewahdo, is a derivation of the Coptic Church of Egypt, which broke from the Roman Catholic Church over theological differences. Another significant portion of the Ethiopian population is Sunni Muslims. Both Christian and Muslim religious institutions serve as the most important centers of community life for Atlanta's Ethiopian and Eritrean communities.

The food of Ethiopia and Eritrea is similar and consists of stews, vegetarian and meat dishes. A typical meal could include injera – large, round, soft bread made of teff, an indigenous grain similar to millet. The injera is accompanied by a number of smaller bowls of meat and vegetable dishes, cooked together in little stews. One usually tears off a piece of injera and dips it into one of the stews, which are typically hot and spicy.

Celebrated Holidays

In addition to other Western holidays, Ethiopians and Eritreans may celebrate the following:

- 'Timkat' – Ethiopian Epiphany – Jan. 19
- Victory of Adwa Commemoration Day – March 2
- 'Mawlid' – Birth of the Prophet Mohammed – April 10
- Ethiopian Good Friday – April 21
- 'Fasika' – Ethiopian Easter – April 23
- Eritrean Independence Day – May 24
- 'Enkutatash' – Ethiopian New Year – Sept. 11
- 'Id Al Fater' – End of Ramadan – Oct. 22

Note that dates of Muslim holidays, which follow the lunar calendar, will change from year to year. The dates above apply to the year 2006.



Ethiopian & Eritrean Organizations, Associations and Resources

Below is a listing of selected organizations who work with the Ethiopian & Eritrean communities. Additional resources are available at www.atlantaregional.com.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Bethel Towers Apartments

210 Auburn Ave., NE
Atlanta, GA 30303-2610
Note: Provider of affordable housing to many Ethiopian, Eritrean and other residents

REFUGEE AND IMMIGRANT SERVING ORGANIZATIONS

Catholic Social Services

680 West Peachtree St.
Atlanta, GA 30308
404-881-6571
www.cssatlanta.com
Note: Contact main office for services and outreach center locations)

International Rescue Committee

4151 Memorial Drive, Suite 201-C
Decatur, GA 30032
www.theirc.org/atlanta
404-292-7731

Jewish Family & Career Services

4549 Chamblee-Dunwoody Road
Atlanta, GA 30338
770-677-9300
Email: info@jfccs-atlanta.org
www.jfccs-atlanta.org

Lutheran Services of Georgia

1330 West Peachtree St., Suite 300
Atlanta, GA 30309
404-875-0201
www.lsga.org

Refugee Family Services

5561-H Memorial Drive
Stone Mountain, GA 30083
Contact: Allen Shaklan, Exec. Director
404-299-6217 (phone) 404-299-6218 (fax)
Email: ashaklan@refugeefamilyservices.org
www.refugeefamilyservices.org

Refugee Resettlement and Immigration Services of Atlanta (RRISA)

4151 Memorial Drive, Suite 205D
Decatur, GA 30032
404-622-2235
www.rrisa.org
Email: info@rrisa.org

Bridging the Gap Project, Inc.

77 Forsyth Street SW, Suite 100
Atlanta, GA 30303
404-581-0044
www.btgonline.org

World Relief Atlanta

655 Village Square Drive
Stone Mountain, GA 30083
Contact: Kim Kimbrell, Community Relations/Volunteer Coordinator
404-294-4352 x231
Email: kkimbrell@wr.org
kkimbrell@wr.org

ERITREAN RESOURCES

BUSINESS

Auburn Food Mart

310 Auburn Ave.
Atlanta, GA 30303
404-221-9009

Shell Gas Station

3100 Moreland Ave.
Conley, GA 30288
404-366-1003

Shewit Eritrean Restaurant

926 Montreal Road
Clarkston, GA 30021
404-294-8899
Email: fsebha@aol.com

ASSOCIATIONS

Eritrean American Athletic Association

Contact: Desale Yacob, president
Email: ydesale@hotmail.com
www.eaaarunners.org

Eritrean Community Association

1935 Cameo Court
Tucker, GA 30084
Contact: Tekleyohannes 'Tekley'
Ghebreyohannes
770-938-7289

RELIGIOUS

Bethel Eritrean Alliance Church

(Shares sanctuary with the Lilburn Alliance Church)
5915 Lawrenceville Highway
Lilburn, GA 30047
Contact: Goitom Mezghedo (pronounced Mez.ga.bo)
678-760-3225; 770-381-9645 fax
Email: goitomym@yahoo.com
Note: Services held from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. every Sunday

ETHIOPIAN RESOURCES

ASSOCIATIONS

Ethiopian Community

Association in Atlanta, Inc.
964 N. Indian Creek Drive, Suite A.1
Clarkston, GA 30021
Contact: Fasil Cherenet
Email: cherejr@bellsouth.net

BUSINESS

Enat Ethiopia Café and Mart

1999 Cheshire Bridge Road
Atlanta, GA 30324
404-685-9291
www.enatethiopiacafe.com

Moya 'Ethiopian' Restaurant

1371 Clairmont Road
Decatur, GA 30033
404-633-6692
www.ethiopianmoya.com

Queen of Sheba Ethiopian Restaurant

1594 Woodcliff Drive, NE
Atlanta, GA 3032
404-321-1493
Email: nebyoust@yahoo.com
www.qsheba.com

United News Stand

(United Way Building)
100 Edgewood Ave., NE
Atlanta, GA 30303

RELIGIOUS

Clarkston International Bible Church

3895 Church St.
Clarkston GA 30021
Contact: Rev. Phil Kitchin, pastor
404-296-6483
www.cibc-sbc.org
Note: Rehobeth Ethiopian Evangelical Church meets in the same building; Same phone number

Ethiopian Bible Fellowship

3700 Market St, Suite D
Clarkston, GA 30021
Contact: Tegga Lendado
Email: tlendado@bellsouth.net

Contact:

E-mail: globalsnapshots@atlantaregional.com

Order printed copies from the ARC Information Center at 404-463-3102 or download free from the ARC website at www.atlantaregional.com

Atlanta Regional Commission • 40 Courtland St., NE, Atlanta, Georgia 30303 • 404.463.3100 • www.atlantaregional.com

Charles Krautler, Executive Director • Darlene Daly, Project Coordinator

The Atlanta Regional Commission is the official planning agency for the 10-county Atlanta region including Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry and Rockdale, as well as the City of Atlanta and 62 other cities. ARC provides a forum where leaders come together to discuss and act on issues of regionwide consequence.

The Community Foundation • 50 Hurt Plaza, Suite 449, Atlanta, Georgia 30303 • 404.688.5525 • www.atlcf.org

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