“Now I know not to ask them for their last names,” commented a teacher, referring to her Burmese students. This comment, made after the ALBETAC workshop, Building A New Life – Burmese Refugees & Their Resettlement, reflected some important information that the teacher had learned; that is, there really are no first and last names for the Burmese and Karen people.

The workshop, part of the Second Annual Professional Development Conference of the Albany City School District, took place on Saturday, March 27th. ALBETAC Director, Pat Lo and Consultant, Khin Sann Myint, committed to providing services to New York State school districts with Asian populations, traveled to Albany to meet with twenty educators interested in helping the increasing Burmese refugee population in their school district. Khin Sann Myint (no first or last name) shared her first hand experiences as a Burmese and as a former employee for refugee resettlement programs. They were later joined by Refugee and Immigrant Support Services of Emmaus, Inc., which offers ESL and other support services to the refugee children and adults in the Albany area. Participants expressed gratitude to the presenters for sharing their knowledge and resources, and showed great interest in learning more about the Burmese culture and strategies to enable them to better assist the Burmese refugee students in their schools.

Here are some interesting facts that participants learned from this workshop.

- Burma changed its name to Myanmar in 1989.
- Most of Burmese refugees are Karens and Red Karens.
- There may be ethnic conflicts within the same language group.
- The literacy rate is low among Burmese refugees.
- It is rude to walk between two people who are having a conversation.
- Making long range plans and setting goals are new concepts for the Burmese.

Learn more by following the link to the power point presentation.

Building A New Life – Burmese Refugees & Their Resettlement