

# Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice

## Faith and Immigration Study Guide

This study guide was created to serve as an educational tool for faith communities who want to explore the many facets of immigration and its connection to various faith traditions. The study guide is divided into the following four sessions:

- Roots of Migration
- The Dangerous Journey
- Life in the United States
- The Knock at the Door

The study guide was designed so that your congregation could take any of the sessions as a stand alone activity or use all four sessions as an educational series. Each session contains the following components:

- Opening Reflections
- “Juan and Carlotta’s Story”
- Pop Quiz
- Going in Depth: Film Screenings
- Group Activities
- Suggestions for How to Take Action
- Background Information

As each group will be able to allot varying amounts of time to this study guide, we offer the various activities within each session as menu of options that your group can pick and choose from.

Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice members are available to help facilitate the curriculum as needed. Please contact our office with any questions or to obtain copies of the DVDs used in the curriculum at 503.550.3510 or [portlandsanctuary@gmail.com](mailto:portlandsanctuary@gmail.com).

Thank you!

## Section One: Roots of Migration

### I. Opening Reflections

We dare not feel "at home" in a world like this  
Where one-third live in scarcity –  
Two ghettos: one rich, one poor.  
In such a world we are refugees  
Dwelling on either side of a dividing wall  
Afraid to cross the boundary.  
"Home" happens when the walls come down  
And the ghettos are no more,  
And we are all brothers and sisters.

- Excerpt from *The Way Home* by Richard Wilcox

For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." (Deuteronomy 10:17-19)

## II. Juan and Carlotta's Story

**Juan:** I am from Mexico City, one of six siblings. Wanting to get ahead always pushed us to come to this country (USA) through whatever means necessary. My father has always been a laborer. He worked in hardware stores in Mexico.

I began working at 13 or 14 years old. I worked in a store that sold cosmetics for women, like lipsticks, hair dyes. I also worked in a cardboard box factory and in a plastics factory where we made everything to do with plastics including buckets, trays, etc.

I did not earn good money because you have to go through a process of beginning at minimum wage. I remember that when I left school it was \$420 pesos a week (USD equivalent today of \$30). We're talking about 23 years ago, so it was something difficult.

Life in general was very hard because what you earned was barely enough to survive and to eat day by day. Sometimes the salary that you earned in a week was already split up and you didn't have any left in your pocket. You already have to pay your bills, the rent, and sometimes a pair of shoes would have to last all year and you had to repair them several times. A pair of jeans you had to wear for two years because you had to sew them. Well, it's hard but you have to get ahead.

My father was in Los Angeles. He was kidnapped in a town where they paid the workers \$2 a day. We didn't see my father for six months and we didn't know anything about him. He had to escape from this ranch to be able to let the authorities know that they had 800 people from the state of Oaxaca working there. When my father left to work, I was left in charge of the family. At 16 years old, I supported my family including my mother and my brothers. I supported them for two years, but when my father returned, unsuccessful [without money], I tried to take the position of saying, "I'm your relief, let me go to the United States." A cousin had just arrived from New York, he told me, "Look, you earn so much money there." Seeing the possibility to help them, I waited for my cousin to come to my house to talk to him.

I was 16 years old and still in Mexico. I kept waiting for someone to give me the opportunity to be able to come to this country because to come to this country costs a lot of money. I didn't have money, not even enough to get to the border. Why? Because all of the money I earned I was investing in my mother and my siblings, because for two years I took my family on my shoulders. Maybe in Mexico this is not seen as bad because people normally do this because everyone has to work. If your dad is going to work [migrating], you have to step up.

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[Years later, after Juan had been living in the U.S., he returned to Mexico.] With all the money that I had saved, one day I decided to return, and when I arrived to my house my father had a surprise for me. I arrived and he told me, "Come here, son," and he took me to a room that he had built. He said that, "With the money you have been sending, I've been buying tools so you can start your hardware store." This is known as warehouse, something like Home Depot, but smaller. I was so excited that the next week I opened my hardware store. I began to work just as hard, and it started to go very well for me, excellently. After three months, I had so much success that I decided to open another store, and from there everything went well. I was the man who made appointments to eat in restaurants where the suppliers paid for my meals so that I would do business with them. Then came the debate about the devaluation [of the peso] in Mexico with President Salinas, who is [George] Bush's cousin, because they did exactly the same thing. So in one day, I lost everything that I had earned. To be able to open the hardware store, I asked for 40,000 pesos in a loan that I needed in three days. Then I didn't owe 40,000, but I owed 4,000,000 pesos because of the devaluation of the peso. Sometimes you want to get ahead and you don't even know what you're signing. I remember that our accountant told us, "You know what? Take the merchandise out of the stores and take it home. Close so that you don't have to pay." This is what we did; we took the merchandise out of the stores and took it to my mother's house. It would always rain at Christmas, I don't know why. This is something funny in Mexico City, it rains the 24<sup>th</sup> of December or the 31<sup>st</sup> of December, something happens. All of the merchandise got ruined that Christmas. So I had to return to New York again.

### **III. Roots of Migration Pop Quiz**

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1. How many Mexican corn farmers have been displaced since NAFTA was implemented?
  - A. 500,000
  - B. One million
  - C. 250,000
  - D. Two million

2. How many Mexican migrants have crossed the border into the U.S. since the passage of NAFTA in 1994?

- A. 10 million
- B. 15 million
- C. 5 million
- D. 2 million

3. Since NAFTA passed, the minimum wage in Mexico has:

- A. Remained constant
- B. Increased by 20%
- C. Fallen by 20%

4. What has happened to the maquilas, or factories, created after NAFTA in Mexico?

- A. They have doubled in number
- B. One-third have moved to another country
- C. They provide high paying jobs

**Answers:**

1. **D** The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was implemented in 1994 as a trade pact between the U.S., Canada and Mexico. NAFTA has displaced many farmers who cannot compete with the heavily-subsidized large agribusinesses that export cheap goods to Mexico from the U.S. Since NAFTA went into effect, Mexican corn farmers' income fell by 70%.
2. **A** The rate of immigration from Mexico into the U.S. has almost doubled since 1994. Two-thirds of undocumented Mexican immigrants currently in the U.S. arrived following the implementation of NAFTA.
3. **C** The rate of new jobs being created in Mexico equals about 50% of new workers entering the workforce. About 80% of the Mexican population works in the informal sector, where they receive no steady wage or benefits.
4. **B** Many of the jobs created by NAFTA are located in maquilas, factories where low wages and labor rights violations abound. Many companies set up factories wherever they find the cheapest labor. Many of the jobs created by factories moving to Mexico as a result of NAFTA have already been lost: one-third of the 800,000 manufacturing jobs created have now disappeared.

*Information provided by "Forced from Home: U.S. Trade Policy and Immigration", published by Witness for Peace, [www.witnessforpeace.org](http://www.witnessforpeace.org).*

#### **IV. Going In Depth**

View Witness for Peace Video on the “Roots of Migration”, 30 min. Available online at [www.witnessforpeace.org](http://www.witnessforpeace.org) or in DVD form from the Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice.

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#### **V. Activity: Immigration Timeline**

*Instructions:* See the attached “Immigration Timeline” handout for this activity. You will need to print out the timeline and paste it together and tape it to a wall or place on a table that your group can gather around. Have each person in the group write the names of their family members who emigrated to the U.S. at the appropriate dates on the timeline. For instance, someone may have had a great-grandparent emigrate in 1890 and a parent emigrate in 1940. As the group is writing the names of their family members on the timeline, ask them to notice what sort of historical events were taking place or what the immigration policy was at that time. After everyone has had a chance to write on the timeline, gather the group back together for discussion (you can also ask people to answer the following questions in pairs and then report back to the larger group).

##### Group discussion questions:

1. When did your family members emigrate to the U.S.?
  2. Why did they leave their country of origin?
  3. What was the immigration policy of the U.S. when they emigrated? Were they able to enter? Did they need documentation?
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#### **VI. What You Can Do**

1. Learn more about the effects of free trade – travel on an educational delegation to Latin America ([www.witnessforpeace.org](http://www.witnessforpeace.org))
  2. Support legislation that promotes fair trade policies, i.e. the TRADE Act ([www.citiizenstrade.org](http://www.citiizenstrade.org))
  3. Organize your congregation to use fair trade coffee and tea ([www.equalexchange.coop](http://www.equalexchange.coop))
  4. Sign an Oregon New Sanctuary Movement’s “Love Has No Borders” Campaign ([www.oregonsanctuary.org](http://www.oregonsanctuary.org))
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#### **VII. Background Information**

“Forced from Home: U.S. Trade Policy and Immigration” pages 1-6

## Section Two: The Dangerous Journey

### I. Opening Reflections

Lord God, the time nears when we will leave our home to work in the fields far away. The time flies! We have hardly arrived home, and now we leave again. But we give thanks to you for the time and the gifts you have given us to share with the relatives and dear friends of our barrio.

How wonderful it is to feel the security of home, protected from the dangers of the road. But now it is necessary to leave this tranquility, leaving for the fields of work, far from here...

- Courtesy of the National Farm Workers Ministry

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### My New Life

This is the journey I'm on. Forced out of my home, I'll tell you what I'm taking with me and the hardships I might face. I will bring my big black and white puppy. She is jumpy and ready to go. Her innocent eyes are as adorable as a newborn baby. She helps me believe this will be a new life. On this voyage I will take my intelligence, ready for use. Some say I'm as smart as a border collie. I will take my brand new Bible. It's as thick as a wise person, ready to tell of his travels. My Bible anxiously sits waiting. This in my new life, in America.

- by Alexandra J., student from Clarendon Elementary School, Portland, OR

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You shall not oppress a resident alien; you know the heart of an alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt." (Exodus 23:9)

## II. Juan and Carlotta's Story

**Juan:** My cousin came back to Mexico when I was about to turn 17. He told me that he would offer to lend me money to come to New York. This was in 1986 when the amnesty happened. They sold me a paper that said I had worked in the field [similar to an agricultural visa] but I didn't want it because, like most people, I only wanted to come for 1 year, and now I've been here 23 years.

To get to the border it cost \$720 pesos (USD equivalent \$50 today). We had to buy a round-trip ticket so that it came out to be more affordable. We bought the ticket from Mexico City to Hermosillo which is a three hour flight and then another hour from Hermosillo to the border at Nogales in a taxi. There are taxis dedicated to this and they knew the people at that time. I didn't know that they were exclusively for transporting people who came only to this country. I paid \$100 pesos (USD equivalent \$7) from Hermosillo to Nogales.

They took us to a hotel on the border in Nogales and we were there for two days waiting for the coyote. From there, they told us how we were going to cross. There was a McDonald's in Nogales, Mexico that was connected to a department store in Nogales, Arizona. We entered through the door by the drive through of the McDonald's which led into the department store. On the other side of the door to McDonald's is where they would throw out the trash. We had to exit through the lady's department that was only for women's underwear. You had to leave with a bag of what you had bought in the store. This was how you evaded immigration or "la migra." In those days there weren't many of them. Then we had passed to the other side. It didn't take a lot of work because at that time my cousins had good contacts so they took us to Phoenix and then to Mesa. We rode in the trunk, five of us, and we were very squeezed together. We were tossing and turning; we tried to get comfortable, but we were packed like sardines. So from Customs to Mesa, it took three hours. To endure the heat and to come so cramped was very hard. From Mesa we waited for a flight to take us to New York. This was in 1986, at the time when I was about to turn 18 in the summer.

I had to pay \$1500 to the coyote and an additional fee for the flight to New York.

The journey took nine days, counting from when we left Mexico City for Hermosillo and then from Hermosillo to Nogales, where we waited for two to three days at the border. Afterwards they took us to a house and told us that there wasn't a flight to New York yet in the city of Mesa. We then had to wait for the money that our families sent us. How they do it is to send you the money where you were going. In this case I was going to New York. Another cousin also sent money for three people, but he sent it through Western Union. The money was a little bit late in arriving so we were waiting two or three more days, so sometimes there weren't flights. So it was nine days from Mexico City to New York.

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[At a later date] So I had to return another year to New York again, but this time the crossing was more difficult because then it cost \$2,500 pesos to cross the desert by walking two days. You would run into animals. We were waiting, this time I remember, it was the third time we tried to cross. I remember because we walked in the desert between Mesa and Tucson to be able to arrive in Phoenix. A lynx came up and stopped beside me. I saw it, a mountain cat. All that I saw was how it moved its little ears. And then the coyote said, "Don't move, because this animal is going to attack us." We were stopped there for four hours, without moving, because the animal smelled us. One person threw his lunch, some *tortas* that we had for our lunch, to the lynx. The animal went for them and we ran to the car that was waiting for us.

**Carlotta:** Well, like you said, it is truly a journey in the unknown. You are afraid because you don't know what they are telling you. You don't know the language or where they are going to send you. You don't know if they are good or bad, right? My payment was more expensive so that I didn't have to go through everything he had gone through, like having to cross walking in the desert or through the river. I crossed in a car with false documents. Well, supposedly I was going to cross in a car, but something happened and they detained us. They saw that something was wrong, something did not match up. I don't know what. It was because of this that they caught all of us who were in the car.

Immigration told me what they were going to do to me. If you saw the mistreatment that they give you verbally, because physically they cannot mistreat you, it is very hard to see because you say "why are you treating me this way?" I mean, I am not a criminal. I am going to work. I want to have a better life. I heard that in the U.S. you can have the opportunity to work and to be able to receive a reasonable salary. This verbal mistreatment is hard. But now that you are already here, now you are coming to work, to look for a means of work, and it is hard when you come for the first time because, well, you don't know the language, you are scared, you are afraid of everything because after the bad experience you had at the border, when you arrive here, you aren't free. That is to say, you carry this weight on you that here you cannot be free. You say, "I am afraid; when are they going to come looking for me?" You come with this fear for a long time.

Weeks later, when I tried again, it went well, the same thing with someone else's documents. You cross with fear, and asking God that you can get across. After so many days of being at the border, all that you want is to see your family who are waiting for you on the other side, all the while having the fear that they will detain you again. It's not as risky sometimes to cross in a car. Thanks be to God that I didn't have one of those experiences when you have to run or you have to hide yourself, risking your life to be able to come.

### III. The Dangerous Journey Pop Quiz

1. Between 2000 to 2006, how many bodies of migrants were recovered in the Arizona desert?

- A. 500
- B. 1700
- C. 2600
- D. 4000

2. On average, how much do migrants pay a coyote, or smuggler, to take them across the US-Mexico border?

- A. \$1500
- B. \$2500
- C. \$5000
- D. \$3000

3. How many undocumented migrants cross through the Southwestern US each day?

- A. 4200
- B. 3400
- C. 2800
- D. 2500

4. How much funding did the U.S. government provide for border security in 2007?

- A. \$2 billion
- B. \$10.4 billion
- C. \$5.7 billion
- D. \$15 billion

**Answers:**

1. **C** The vast majority of undocumented migrants found dead in the U.S. southwest died from dehydration or hypothermia. Current U.S. border enforcement strategy, designed in conjunction with the signing of NAFTA, emphasizes fortification of urban areas, which had been the main thoroughfare for migration in previous decades. The result: many migrants and the coyotes that guide them now cross the border in remote areas.
2. **D** In 1994, a Mexican emigrant could expect to pay \$300 for help in crossing the border: today the going rate is tenfold at about \$3000. Central Americans pay an upwards of \$5000 to coyotes. Because coyotes operate outside the law, immigrants run the risk of being abandoned, robbed, or abused with no legal recourse. Coyote costs create further hardships for migrants who often finances the exorbitant amounts by putting up their land as collateral and/or relying on a friend or relative to go into debt to pay the rest.
3. **B** Migrants increasingly stay in the U.S. because of the augmented risk that they might be able to successfully cross the border in the future. A worrisome consequence of this policy is that many families have begun seeking reunification by moving all of their family members northward.
4. **B** Border security funding increased from \$4.6 billion in 2001 to \$10.4 billion in 2007. The stated objective of the U.S. border enforcement is deterrence of migrants, yet neither the new fences constructed over the past decade nor the thousands of border fatalities have proven successful in the stemming of migration.

*Information provided by "Forced from Home: U.S. Trade Policy and Immigration", published by Witness for Peace, [www.witnessforpeace.org](http://www.witnessforpeace.org).*

#### **IV. Going in Depth**

View “Dying to Live” by University of Norte Dame, 33 minutes

View “Crossing Arizona” by Rainlake Productions, 75 minutes

View “Border Crossings” by Pan Left Productions, 17 minutes

Contact the Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice for the DVD’s.

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#### **V. Activity: Immigration Game**

##### **Option One: Immigration Roulette – So you want to come to the USA**

Created by Alice Vetter. Contact interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice for game pieces.

##### **Option Two: Immigration Board Game**

Created by the Northwest Federation of Community Organizations

Download at <http://www.nwfc.org/immig/immigration.brd.game.htm>

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#### **VI. What You Can Do**

1. Ask Congress to demilitarize the border
  2. Support humanitarian aid organizations along the border ([www.nomoredeaths.org](http://www.nomoredeaths.org))
  3. Participate in the Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice “Love Has No Borders” Campaign ([www.imirj.org](http://www.imirj.org))
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#### **VII. Background Information**

“Forced from Home: U.S. Trade Policy and Immigration” pages 6, 8.

## Session Three: Life in the United States

### I. Opening Reflections

Recognize your family in the stranger  
Open your door, invite them in  
To sit at your table  
And share your bread.  
Call no one stranger  
Whose roots are kin to your own  
Whose lives all spring from the  
One Great Foundation of Life

- Sr. Patricia Mulhall from *Call No One Stranger*

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I Am From

I am from the big soccer field.  
When I see one, my skin gets tingly  
And the first words from my friends  
Are, "Let's go play!"

I am also from Mexico.  
My blood is from there.  
My whole family is from there.  
Unfortunately, I came to the United States  
When I was one-year-old.  
But I will never forget Mexico  
Because Mexico is my blood.

- by Alberto, student from Clarendon Elementary School, Portland, OR

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When a stranger dwells among you in your land, do not taunt him. The stranger who dwells with you shall be like a native among you, and you shall love him like yourself. (Lev. 19:33-34)

When a stranger becomes impoverished and his means falter in your proximity, you shall strengthen him – stranger or resident – so that he can live with you. (Lev. 25:35)

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But those who entered the city and the faith before them love those who flee unto them for refuge, and find in their breasts no need for that which has been given to them, but prefer (the refugees) above themselves though poverty become their lot. And who is saved from his own avarice – such are they who are successful. (Qur'an, Verse 55:9)

## II. Juan and Carlotta's Story

**Juan:** It was hard when I arrived in New York because I didn't speak the language, and I felt alien in a community that had problems with Hispanics. In the apartment where we lived there were nine people in what now I understand is only for one person. It was a studio apartment and at that time we paid \$1200. I slept on a plastic floor in the kitchen with only one blanket. Then I would go out to look for work. Every day it was difficult, but you have the commitment to your mother or your father to come back. You want to pay the money that they lent you, so there isn't time for sadness, so you simply face what is and eat what you don't know.

I worked for people who exploited us because they knew that we didn't have papers. They paid us \$120 a week, 7 days a week, and the only thing that they gave us to eat was rice and a piece of chicken in 12 hours. Those were the three hardest years of my life, because they made us watch fruit and flowers outside of the store and fight off people who would take the fruit and outrun us. If we didn't catch them, then the owners wouldn't pay us for a week. We worked outside in the summer and winter. After that, I went to work washing dishes. They closed the restaurant and I was left without a job.

A cousin recommended me to a pizzeria and from there I began to learn the language by asking. I never had been to school [in the U.S.]. I don't think my English is good but I can ask questions today. It took me a year and a half to pay my cousins what they had lent me to get to New York. So yes, those first three years were difficult.

I began to work very hard and to send some money to my parents so that they could get ahead. Afterwards I continued succeeding in the same way. The same men recommended me to restaurants because they saw my attitude, how I could cook and take charge of kitchens in New York.

I worked in North Carolina for awhile, selling carpets from Israel. These carpets were so, so heavy. They weighed around 120 pounds each and between two people we had to carry them for 10 minutes for the clients to see. We would finish with our fingers all bent, torn up, and bloody. Why? Because our arms would hurt and then we had to lift the carpets again into the trailers. The next day we would go to another event and take the carpets out again and hold them up, and I was living this way for three months.

I also worked in the cotton fields. I didn't know that when cotton is fresh, it is something so ugly, so heavy that in half an hour my fingers hurt and I didn't know why. When I left the fields, blood would begin to run from my fingers, because the cotton bursts your fingertips.

I returned to Mexico because my brother was going to be married. My mother told me to finish high school, since I never finished. At this time I already was 27 years old. In

that school I met my wife. She was studying in night school. I wasn't worried about the economic situation, but after we got married we began to have difficulties. A marriage is always going to have economic difficulties at the beginning. We didn't have anywhere to live, so we had to look for the resources to be able to get ahead; it was very difficult.

We worked in a nursing home for one year. Working with elderly people is a great blessing because you learn about these people, but it is also a tragedy because you see people who are not well mentally, physically, or emotionally. My wife had to get up at 3 in the morning to calm them, to bathe the little grandmothers who had tumors, who had cancer, who had diabetes, and there were people who would throw their food with their hands and would fight. We had been married for one year and had lost our baby, a baby boy. We decided to keep fighting for our marriage and so I made the decision to come here because we knew her sister was living in Oregon. So this is how I came to live in Oregon.

And after three months, I brought her here with me, even though it was a lot to be indebted for three years, which was very difficult. They charged me \$2500 but I had to go and pay for ticket so that they would bring her to me specifically here in Portland, and then we went to look for a room to live in. I remember that we used our clothing for pillows so that it was easier to sleep because we both slept on the carpet. But all the same, we saw it as tremendous.

Unfortunately here in Oregon there is a lot of racism. You find that people don't like you because you are dark skinned. They treat you like you are stupid because you don't speak English or do things the same way that they are done here. [Speaking to the interviewer] In this case, you are American; you remember the first time that I didn't want to trust you. So in the same way, you run into problems. Thanks be to those with good hearts. For example, the woman who rented to us the first time 13 years ago here in Oregon, she just died last year. She was a woman with a good heart, and even now we try to be like her, to do good things for people who maybe are not from our same community. She gave us a place to live in these apartments; they were stables for horses and she converted them into apartments for her children. She rented us a few small rooms. The rent for 3 years was \$370 a month. Imagine paying \$1200 or \$1000 in rent in New York and here you can rent an apartment for \$370.

It is very hard to live here in Oregon without a car and you have to have a license. My wife passed [the driving test] the first time. We tried to study for the test together. She passed easily and the second time I got a 70%. I remember the first little car that we bought, it cost us \$100, a little red car, and we drove from Woodburn to here to bring it home. In the same way, we made our home from second hand items from stores in Woodburn, from yard sales, and from people that give you things. We had a bed that we had to throw out because it broke. So then we went to get a bed from the trash to be able to sleep.

I had the good fortune of being able to work in a restaurant again, even though I had to start out washing dishes when I already knew how to cook. I had the opportunity to work at a very good club, and I became the person in charge of the kitchen, and I began to realize that here in this state that I could do many things. I began to pay taxes. My two children were born here. We went to school. [My wife] got her GED. I didn't get mine because I am very stupid! I don't have the abilities/aptitude that she has. But you begin again, like in New York, only here in this place, I was already with her, I already had a support, someone who I could depend on. From there comes, with all the sacrifices, the ability to have something normal like an apartment where you pay your rent, you have the things that in Mexico maybe you don't have. What are basic for an American person are a television and a blender.

In Oregon I was making around \$7 an hour but I already had two jobs. I was washing dishes and working as a prep cook. You have to have two jobs, not only to save but even just to live here because you can't count on the same resources that a citizen has. You don't have medical insurance, you can't have dental insurance. If you get sick or something, you can't go to the doctor and there isn't anyone to tell you where a clinic is. There is the loneliness of not knowing anyone. You have to get ahead, and what you have is not even enough. If you compare this with Mexico, you suffer more, but not in the same way as in Mexico. In Mexico, it is three or four times more costly to have an apartment. You work two jobs but there you work day and night to be able to have the basics. So when we were already here, my wife became pregnant because we wanted to have a child. We found out that the birth was going to cost \$10,000, so someone told us to get on the Oregon Health Plan. This was a great door for us to get out of a big problem. Afterwards we went to a hospital that as all the things that I had never seen. This is how our first son was born.

Our apartment had concrete floors, so it was very cold, not like the rest of the apartments that had wood floors, so I put myself to work covering the floor and the walls with cardboard so that neither the baby nor my wife would be cold. I had to put curtains on the door so that the cold wouldn't come in, because at that time it was a lot of money to turn the heat on. I couldn't get rid of the mold that came out of the walls, which caused my son to have asthma. Since then I have been studying about asthma. The doctors who see him say that it was in the first year that he got sick. We have found what he is allergic to, including dust, carpet, and humidity. When he was seven months old he suffered a very strong convulsion. His temperature rose to almost 105 degrees, his body was boiling. We arrived at the fire station. There was an ambulance there and they sent him to the hospital. I remember that they took off all of his little clothes and put him in water, but my baby had another problem. My baby was born with some marks on his back, a few moles. They arrested me because they said that it was child abuse. How could they think that I would hit my son when they were only birthmarks? I cooked, I cleaned, and I went to the supermarket because she [my wife] couldn't go out. I see that here, people can do it alone. But in Mexico we always have the family there to help us; we are very close to our families. So we came here, and we were alone, and

we had to do it all alone, without knowing anyone who would say oh, we'll lend you the car, or oh, I'll stay here a little bit with your wife. I mean, there was no one who we could count on. We were in a desert.

Later, our life was very normal - we paid our rent, went to the beach. But a desire to succeed began and we started to go to school. We began to learn that in this country there are many opportunities. We began to be successful and we started to have the American dream and grow in our marriage. We have been succeeding as parents. From there we began to climb more rungs and to say that this is our moment. We started a business and I named it after her because she had worked in a second hand store. But the opportunity arrived where they told us "you could be your own boss," so we were for four years. We had the opportunity to have full time employees, so (my wife) was Señora Carlotta.

### III. Life in the United States Pop Quiz

1. Immigrants do not pay taxes.
  - A. True
  - B. False
  
2. Undocumented immigrants make up approximately what percentage of the total U.S. population?
  - A. 3.5%
  - B. 10%
  - C. 25.5%
  
3. Undocumented immigrants are eligible for which of the following benefits?
  - A. TANF (cash support)
  - B. Food Stamps
  - C. Medicaid
  - D. None of the above
  
4. Of over 9 million refugees worldwide, up to what percent may settle in the U.S. each year?
  - A. Less than 1%
  - B. 25%
  - C. 75%
  
5. Immigrants currently constitute a bigger proportion of the total U.S. population than ever before in history.
  - A. True
  - B. False

**Answers:**

1. **B** False. Immigrants are required to pay taxes, just like everybody else. They pay real estate tax, sales tax, and income taxes. A study in 2005 found that undocumented immigrants pay \$6-7 billion in Social Security taxes alone, which they will never be able to claim.
2. **A** Recent estimates show the total population of undocumented persons in the U.S. is between 10-12 million people. This amounts to 3.4% to 3.7% of the total U.S. population.
3. **D** In 1996, a federal law was passed that heavily restricted legal and illegal immigrants from utilizing public assistance programs. Undocumented immigrants are excluded from all federal public welfare programs. The only assistance they may receive is medical attention in the case of a health- or life-threatening condition.
4. **A** The UNHCR estimated that by the end of 2004, there were 9.2 million refugees worldwide. The U.S. accepts up to 70,000 refugees each year. In 2004, the U.S accepted approximately 53,000 refugees.
5. **B** False. In fact, the current percentage of the U.S. population that is foreign born (now at 12%) is still lower than it was throughout the peak immigration years of 1870-1920 (when it was 15%).

*Information provided by the Advocates for Human Rights,  
[www.discoverhumanrights.org](http://www.discoverhumanrights.org).*

#### IV. Going in Depth

View VOZ Worker's Rights Education Project documentary on day laborers. Contact the Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice for a copy.

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#### V. Activity: Vignettes and Discussion

Excerpts from The Tortilla Curtain by T. Coraghessan Boyle

*Instructions:* Break into five small groups and hand out one excerpt to each group. Ask them to read the excerpt aloud and discuss the following questions. After the discussion, bring the groups back together and have each group report back on their discussion.

##### Group 1

Candido and America had crossed the border from Mexico and were living in the arroyo canyon outside of Los Angeles. America is pregnant. Candido leaves the canyon each day to find work at the day labor camp. As he was returning from work one day he was hit by a car crossing the freeway. Although the man wanted to help him he waved him off afraid he would draw attention which would surely get him deported. The following are excerpts of this young couple as they try to survive.

"America walked nearly eight miles already, down out of the canyon to the highway along the ocean where she could catch the bus to Venice for a sewing job that never materialized, and then back again and she was like death on two feet. Two dollars and twenty cents down the drain and nothing to show for it."

"She had to walk back up the canyon in the bleak light of the declining day while the cars swished by her in a lethal hissing chain, and in every pair of eyes that screamed, *Get out, get out of here and go back where you belong!*"

Discussion Questions:

- What specific challenges do you think undocumented immigrants face when trying to find work?
- How would you feel if you were in America's place?
- How does your faith tradition inform how you think about immigration and immigrants?

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##### Group 2

Candido and America had crossed the border from Mexico and were living in the arroyo canyon outside of Los Angeles. America is pregnant. Candido leaves the canyon each day to find work at the day labor camp. As he was returning from work one day he was

hit by a car crossing the freeway. Although the man wanted to help him he waved him off afraid he would draw attention which would surely get him deported. The following are excerpts of this young couple as they try to survive.

America discovers Candido: “At first, the thing in the path wasn’t anything to concern her—a shape, a concert of shades, light and dark—and then it was a rock, a pile of laundry, and finally, a man, her man, sleeping there in the dirt.....then she bent and touched him and she knew that she was in the worst trouble of her life.”

Discussion Questions:

- If you were America, what would you do? How would you feel?
- Many immigrants live in the shadows in the U.S. How do you think this affects their lives?
- How does your faith tradition inform how you think about immigration and immigrants?

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### Group 3

Candido and America had crossed the border from Mexico and were living in the arroyo canyon outside of Los Angeles. America is pregnant. Candido leaves the canyon each day to find work at the day labor camp. As he was returning from work one day he was hit by a car crossing the freeway. Although the man wanted to help him he waved him off afraid he would draw attention which would surely get him deported. The following are excerpts of this young couple as they try to survive.

America trying to get work: “After sitting in the corner all day yesterday, afraid to talk to anyone she’d screwed up her courage this morning and gone straight to the man in charge and told him her name and asked for work...of all the mob she was the only woman. She waited, she was frightened. What if she didn’t get work—not today, not ever? What would they eat? What would their baby do for clothes, shelter, nourishment? And the place—wasn’t it the perfect spot for La Migra to come in their puke-green trucks and tan shirts and demand documents.”

Discussion Questions:

- What specific challenges do you think undocumented immigrants face when trying to find work?
- How would you feel if you were in America’s place?
- How does your faith tradition inform how you think about immigration and immigrants?

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### Group 4

Candido and America had crossed the border from Mexico and were living in the arroyo canyon outside of Los Angeles. America is pregnant. Candido leaves the canyon each day to find work at the day labor camp. As he was returning from work one day he was hit by a car crossing the freeway. Although the man wanted to help him he waved him off afraid he would draw attention which would surely get him deported. The following are excerpts of this young couple as they try to survive.

After their camp had been robbed and Candido beaten: "Candido waited a long while before emerging. They'd been gone half an hour at least, their shrieks and obscenities riding on up the walls of the canyon till finally they blended with the distant hum of the traffic and faded away. His stomach heaved on him again, and he had to crouch down with the pain of it, but the spasm passed. After a moment he got up and waded in to the stream to try to recover his things, and it was then that he noticed their parting gift, a message emblazoned on the rocks in paint that dripped like blood. The letters were crude and the words in English, but there was no mistaking the meaning: BEANERS DIE."

Discussion Questions:

- Where do you think anti-immigrant sentiment comes from?
- How would you feel if you were Candido?
- How does your faith tradition inform how you think about immigration and immigrants?

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#### Group 5

Candido and America had crossed the border from Mexico and were living in the arroyo canyon outside of Los Angeles. America is pregnant. Candido leaves the canyon each day to find work at the day labor camp. As he was returning from work one day he was hit by a car crossing the freeway. Although the man wanted to help him he waved him off afraid he would draw attention which would surely get him deported. The following are excerpts of this young couple as they try to survive.

America after being violated by two men: "And so she waited there in her little nook in the woods like some princess in a fairy story, protected by a moat and the sharp twisted talons of a wrecked car, only this princess had been violated and her pee burned and she jumped at every sound....A week passed, then another. It got hot. Her pee burned and then gradually the pain faded and she began to forget what had happened to her here in the paradise of the North, began to forget for whole minutes at a time."

Discussion Questions:

- What specific challenges do you think undocumented women face in the U.S. or on the journey to the U.S.?
- What other ways do you think immigrants are exploited or abused?

- How does your faith tradition inform how you think about immigration and immigrants?

## **VI. What You Can Do**

1. Hire a day laborer from the Martin Luther King Worker Center ([www.portlandvoz.org](http://www.portlandvoz.org))
2. Host a tamale making class by the Committee of Solidarity and Mutual Support (503.230.9427)
3. Participate in the Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice's "Love Has No Borders" Campaign ([www.oregonsanctuary.org](http://www.oregonsanctuary.org))

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## **VII. Background Information**

"What are human rights violations?"

## Session Four: The Knock at the Door

### I. Opening Reflections

The Day the Bad Thing Happened

*You're back! Where have you been?*

I missed you Sponge Bob

Mom said I couldn't take you with me

To our new house

And I was sad.

*I missed you, too.*

When I left you at the apartment

Were you scared?

*A little bit, were you scared with out me?*

Yeah, uh huh.

*Were you afraid*

*About how you were going*

*To solve problems?*

Yeah, I was scared as a starfish at low tide.

*I remember how I helped you*

*Solve problems with your friends.*

I sure missed you in our new place.

*I missed you, too.*

*I thought I was going to lose*

*You forever.*

- by Alejandro, student from Clarendon Elementary School after the ICE raid in June 2007

### **Deportee** (Words by Woody Guthrie, Music by Marty Hoffman)

The crops are all in and the peaches are rotting

The oranges are packed in their creoste dumps

They're flying them back to the Mexican border to

Spend all their money to wade back again

CHORUS:

Goodbye to my Juan, goodbye Rosalita

Adios mis amigos, Jesus y Maria

You won't have a name when you ride the big

Airplane and all they will call you will

Be...Deportee

Some of us are illegal and others not wanted  
Our work contracts out and we've got to move on  
Six hundred miles to the Mexican border they chase us  
Like outlaws, like rustlers, like thieves

Goodbye to my Juan, goodbye Rosalita  
Adios mis amigos, Jesus y Maria  
You won't have a name when you ride the big  
Airplane and all they will call you will  
Be...Deportee

(Instrumental Bridge)

The sky plane caught fire over Los Gatos canyon  
A fireball of lightning that shook all the hills  
Who are all these friends who are scattered like  
Dry leaves the radio said they were  
Just...Deportees

Goodbye to my Juan, goodbye Rosalita  
Adios mis amigos, Jesus y Maria  
You won't have a name when you ride the big  
Airplane and all they will call you will  
Be...Deportee

Goodbye to my Juan, goodbye Rosalita  
Adios mis amigos, Jesus y Maria  
You won't have a name when you ride the big  
Airplane and all they will call you will  
Be...Deportee

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For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.'

Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?'

The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.' (Matthew 25:35-40)

## **II. Juan and Carlotta's Story**

This portion of their story is in progress. Contact the Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice for updates.

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### III. Knock at the Door Pop Quiz

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1. True or False: The United States Constitution guarantees certain rights for citizens of the United States, but not migrants or undocumented workers.

- A. True
- B. False

2. True or False: Legal migrants have a right to reunification with spouses and children in an expeditious manner.

- A. True
- B. False

3. Deportation rates of undocumented immigrants increased by what percentage from 2000 to 2006?

- A. 20%
- B. 200%
- C. 50%
- D. 750%

4. In 1994, there were 7,500 beds in immigration detention facilities in the U.S. How many were there in 2006?

- A. 26,500
- B. 22,500
- C. 15,000
- D. 12,500

**Answers:**

1. **B** False. The United States Constitution guarantees certain rights for all people in the U.S. whether citizens or migrants, documented or undocumented. These rights include equal protection under the law, the right to due process, and the right to fair criminal proceedings.
  
2. **A** True. The right to maintain unity of family is one of the most fundamental human rights. Although the U.S. recognizes this by granting special preference in attaining visas to family members of immigrants, the methods for reuniting families are still inefficient. A strict quota system combined with understaffing and a slow adjudication process has led to a backlog of millions of visa applications. The wait for reunification can be decades.
  
3. **D** Deportation raids, carried out by the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), have ushered in increased racial profiling and separation of families. In the first six months of 2007, the Department of Homeland Security and ICE detained and deported over 20,000 immigrants.
  
4. **A** The majority of the ICE detention facilities are privately operated centers and are barely distinguishable from prisons. From 2004-2007, at least 62 people died in immigration detention centers.

*Information provided by the Advocates for Human Rights,  
[www.discoverhumanrights.org](http://www.discoverhumanrights.org).*

#### **IV. Going in Depth**

View “Frozen Dreams” about the 2007 ICE Raid at the Del Monte Fresh Foods plant in Portland, OR. The film is 30 minutes in length. Contact the Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice for a copy.

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#### **V. Activity: Confronting Six Misconceptions**

Use the attached handout “Myths About Immigration.” Read in small groups and use the following questions to guide your discussion.

Discussion Questions:

1. Were there any myths that surprised you?
  2. What are other common myths about immigration and immigrants that weren’t listed?
  3. How would you go about debunking / confronting these myths?
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#### **VI. What You Can Do**

1. Call for an end to raids and detentions. Learn more about the U.S. detention system ([www.detentionwatchnetwork.org](http://www.detentionwatchnetwork.org))
  2. Provide hospitality and solidarity to immigrants through the Sanctuary Movement
  3. Participate in the Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice’s “Love Has No Borders” Campaign ([www.imirj.org](http://www.imirj.org))
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#### **VII. Background Information**

“Forced from Home: U.S. Trade Policy and Immigration” pages 9-11.