

Oh Mercy

Searching for Hope in the Promised Land



DISCUSSION GUIDE

[Access Film Here](#)

Introduction

Thank you for wanting to learn more about the US/Mexico border situation and to share *Oh Mercy*'s humanitarian message with others. We suggest that you and your guests visit the [National Immigration Forum](#) website to help prepare for watching the film and any discussions you may have before or after the film.

The following are some recommended 'prompts' for discussions that are encouraged after a viewing of *Oh Mercy - Searching for Hope in the Promised Land*. They are suggestive only, and facilitators are encouraged to adjust them to the context in which the film is screened, as well as to the specificities of the audience. For this reason, modifications and/or different approaches to these discussion questions may be needed.

October 1st 2021 Update on US/Mexico Border Crisis

Shortly after Oh Mercy was released early in the first quarter of 2021, the refugee camp in Matamoros, Mexico was closed as a result of President Biden's decision to rescind the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) policy. This policy, also known as "Remain in Mexico," essentially required all those seeking asylum protection in the US to stay on the Mexican side of the border until their claims were processed — often over a period of many months. Biden's decision allowed those refugees in Matamoros and other camps in the Rio Grande Valley to enter the US and proceed with their asylum filings while residing in the US.

However, on August 24, 2021, the Supreme Court, in a 6-3 vote, upheld a ruling by a district court in Texas that decided Biden's rescinding of MPP was illegal. The reinstatement of MPP is now pending an agreement from Mexico. This agreement would force asylum seekers to stay in Mexico, as was originally the case. In the meanwhile, thousands upon thousands more migrants, from Central America, Haiti, Afghanistan, Venezuela, and Africa are aggregating, by the day, in the dangerous border towns up and down the Rio Grande Valley. They are incredibly vulnerable, and subject to violence of all sorts from members of cartels, gangs, and the human trafficking industry.

Pre-screening Discussion

Suggested Questions for Pre-Screening Discussion

- What is the difference between an [asylum seeker, refugee, and forced migrant](#)?
- What are the [Migrant Protection Protocols](#)? What is [Title 42](#)? Can you give examples of how they might or might not protect migrants or asylum seekers in the United States?
- How long do you estimate it would take someone to gain legal entry into the United States?
- What are some reasons why someone would feel compelled to leave their home and seek asylum elsewhere?
- What is happening to unaccompanied children when they arrive at the border?
- Do you think those at the border pose a public health risk during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- The answers to these questions and updates can be found on resource pages like the [National Immigration Forum](#), and others.

Reflection Questions

Suggested Questions for Post-Screening Discussion

- The crisis depicted in the film is a very sensitive and emotional topic. What emotions were you feeling during the film and at what points? Was there a particular scene that made you feel a particular emotion (sad, frustrated, hopeful, angry)?
- What were you shocked or surprised by in the film?
- What scene from the film sticks with you the most? Why?
- What did you learn in the film you weren't aware of before? Reflect on why you think you weren't aware of this topic or idea. Does this topic not come up in conversations with family or friends? Is it framed in a different way, or not mentioned, in the media sources you follow? Brainstorm some ways you can stay informed and continue to educate yourself on the topic.

- How did you view migrants at the border, or migrants in general, before viewing the film? Did your views change after watching the film, and if so, in what ways?
- Do you agree that there needs to be a more humanitarian approach to those seeking asylum?
- If you could ask an asylum-seeker in the film a question, what would you ask and why? Is there a specific person in the film that you would pose this question to?
- Put yourself in the shoes of one of the migrants in the Matamoros tent encampment. Close your eyes and think about the story of one of the migrants. Now, imagine yourself in the shoes of that migrant. Imagine that you have been separated from your child, your mother or father, or are trying to bring your child to safety. Picture the camp as you just saw in the film (tents, poor sanitation, little food and water) and imagine days, turned into weeks, turned into months, waiting in the camp with no knowledge of when it will end. Imagine you finally get called to an asylum hearing, but then with little advice and opportunity are turned away in a matter of minutes, back to the country you just fled. What are you feeling?
- Did any part of the film relate to something personal in your life? Maybe something reminded you of a personal experience you have had, or reminded you of your own children, siblings, or friends.
- What are your hopes for the asylum-seekers at the border depicted in the film? What are your hopes for the future of the U.S. immigration and asylum system? Is there enough public information available, in the right languages, to keep everyone aware of changes and developments in these issues?
- Immigration in the U.S. has become a very partisan topic. Discuss the different arguments surrounding U.S. immigration, what the roots of these arguments are, and ways both sides can find common ground. How can Republicans and Democrats come together in a common understanding to aid the asylum-seekers at the border who desperately need help?
- What more do you need to understand about the current crisis at the border?
- Do you know some of the root causes of Central America migration, including the United States' past involvement?

Ways to get involved:

We hope this film has educated you about US immigration policies and has improved your understanding of the terrible and inhumane conditions these policies have inflicted on innocent women, men and children. Here is **what you can do** to support the effort to aid the asylum-seekers, refugees, and forced migrants not only on the US/Mexico border, but also in your community:

- Write your congressperson and express your concern about the population who are currently on the border seeking access to the US. Follow the link directly below to find who your current representative is based on where you live:

[Find Your Representative](#)

- Tell your friends and family about this documentary and ask them to watch the film and then to share the free [link to the film](#). *Oh Mercy* website: ohmercyfilm.com
- Read about [ACLU's Border Humanity Project](#), and learn about ways to get involved in rebuilding a better, more humane asylum system.
- Learn how you can take action to advocate for justice for separated and detained families through [Families Belong Together](#), and check out the [#WelcomeWithDignity](#) campaign to learn how we can welcome those crossing the border in a more humane way.
- An excellent example of how a community can embrace this issue is the [Hearts & Homes for Refugees](#) model for how to resettle, assist and advocate for our new neighbors. Explore ways in which your community can replicate this model of welcoming and advocacy and learn more about how to be a voice for refugees and the policies that affect them. Read why community sponsorship is so important [here](#).
- Volunteer or support one of the non-profit organizations who conduct on-the-ground work on the border. Here is a website to get you started, but do explore the internet for more options. [Immigration and Refugees: Charity Navigator](#)

*See Resource Center document for additional information and background on this issue.

Worldwide Documentaries, Inc. is a not-for-profit corporation exempt under section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Service. Donations to our ongoing Oh Mercy distribution efforts or our follow-up film, Heart of the Matter can be made [here](#).