

POV

Community
Engagement & Education

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Dalya's Other Country

A Film by Julia Meltzer





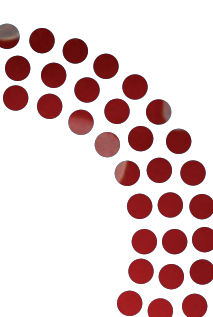
Dalya's Other Country follows my last film, *The Light in Her Eyes*, which was about a Quranic school for women and girls in Damascus, Syria. On and off from 2005 to 2010 I lived in Damascus and often traveled to Aleppo. Witnessing the oldest continuously inhabited city in the world where ancient trade routes, commerce and culture were active—despite constraints imposed by the Syrian regime—made a deep impression on me. In 2012, while we were in distribution of *The Light in Her Eyes*, the city of Aleppo was in the process of entering the war. I wanted to document a family or an individual connected to this city. My daughter was born in 2012, and I no longer had the flexibility to travel and leave home as I had for my previous film, so I searched for a way to tell a story about Aleppo from close to home. I met Dalya and her mother, Rudayna, shortly after they arrived in California from Aleppo and knew that I had found a compelling story.

Dalya and Rudayna's move to Los Angeles is not the typical Syrian refugee story that has dominated the news. They are a middle-class family with American citizenship; they had not suffered life in a refugee camp or tried to cross the Mediterranean in a raft. Nonetheless, they were struggling to adjust to a new culture and the loss of their home. Their story offers a lens into how a traditional Sunni woman and young girl try to hold on to their customs and traditions within the United States, which they sometimes perceive as an unwelcoming place.

The city that Dalya and Rudayna now inhabit is both familiar and unfamiliar to American viewers. The Southern California teenage lifestyle is ubiquitous, but Dalya inhabits a very particular subset of this community—an Arab and Muslim immigrant world. The home life of most Muslims, especially women, is very private. I have been able to shoot with this family over an extended period of time and this has allowed me to get to know them, gain their trust and gradually understand their issues and challenges in a deeper way. **Dalya's Other Country** is made in the tradition of observational cinema, favoring intimate cinematography and an emphasis on placing the audience in close connection with the subject matter. The scenes are edited to immerse the viewers in Dalya and Rudayna's world and create a human connection with the subjects so audiences understand the world from their perspective.

Julia Meltzer

Director, **Dalya's Other Country**





2	Letter from the Filmmaker
3	Introduction
4	Potential Partners
4	Key Issues
4	Using This Guide
5	Background Information
5	Syria's Arab Spring
6	Syrian Refugees
7	Wearing the Hijab
7	Polygamy in Islam
9	Selected People Featured in <i>Dalya's Other Country</i>
9	General Discussion Questions
10	Discussion Prompts
12	Taking Action
13	Resources
15	How to Buy the Film

Writer

Faith Rogow, PhD
Insighters Educational Consulting

Guide Producers, POV

Eliza Licht
Vice President, Content Strategy and Engagement, POV

Alice Quinlan
Manager, Community Engagement and Education, POV

Ione Barrows
Associate, Community Engagement and Education, POV

Background Research and Reporting

Kelly Thorngate

Design:

Rafael Jiménez

Copy Editor:

Natalie Danford

Thanks to those who reviewed this guide:

Julia Meltzer
*Director, *Dalya's Other Country**

Mustafa Rony Zeno
*Co-producer, *Dalya's Other Country**

Sareta Ashraph
Chief Legal Analyst, United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, 2012–2016

Phil Sands
Journalist and Eric and Wendy Schmidt Fellow at New America

Jennifer Patterson
Deputy Executive Director, USA for UNHCR
Reviewed relevant facts and statistics regarding the global refugee crisis and issues of resettlement.

INTRODUCTION

In 2012, 13-year-old Dalya and her mother, Rudayna, fled the escalating war in Aleppo, Syria for the comparative safety of Los Angeles. In their new home, mother and daughter wonder how they can remake themselves in a country that doesn't embrace the religious traditions and culture that are central to their lives. Just months before their escape, Rudayna learned a secret that destroyed her marriage, leaving her single at midlife. As a newly divorced woman in a strange place, she worries about how to live independently and also preserve her daughter's commitment to the family's Muslim heritage. Dalya lands at an all-girls Catholic high school—she is the only Muslim enrolled at Holy Family.

In many ways, Dalya is a typical adolescent exploring her identity. Her journey as a Muslim girl navigating high school social networks in a new country and culture is complicated by the fact that she is dealing with her parents' divorce. She misses her father, who chooses to live in Turkey rather than come to the United States. Like so many immigrants, members of this family face daily pressures to assimilate and also to hold on to their traditions. For viewers, their story personalizes debates over U.S. policy and the nation's historical commitment to welcoming refugees.



Dalya's Other Country is well suited for use in a variety of settings and is especially recommended for use with:

- **Your local PBS station**
- **Groups that have discussed previous PBS and POV films relating to Syria, Islam and women, immigrants, or teenage girls, including *Girls Like Us*, *My American Girls Neuland*, *Off and Running*, *Rain in a Dry Land*, *Return to Homs*, *The Betrayal (Nerakhoon)*, *The Light in Her Eyes* (also by Julia Meltzer), and *The New Americans*.**
- **Groups focused on any of the issues listed in the "Key Issues" section**
- **High school students, youth groups and clubs**
- **Faith-based organizations and institutions**
- **Cultural, art and historical organizations, institutions and museums**
- **Civic, fraternal and community groups, including organizations involved in resettling refugees**
- **Academic departments and student groups at colleges, universities and high schools**
- **Community organizations with a mission to promote education and learning, such as local libraries**

Dalya's Other Country is an excellent tool for outreach and will be of special interest to people looking to explore the following topics:

- **adolescents**
- **assimilation**
- **collateral damage of war/impact of war**
- **coming of age**
- **culture**
- **divorce**
- **family structures**
- **gender roles**
- **girls**
- **high school**
- **hijab**
- **identity formation**
- **Islam**
- **Middle East**
- **Muslim immigrants**
- **polygamy**
- **refugees**
- **resettlement**
- **Southern California**
- **Syria**

USING THIS GUIDE

This guide is an invitation to dialogue. It is based on a belief in the power of human connection, designed for people who want to use **Dalya's Other Country** to engage family, friends, classmates, colleagues and communities. In contrast to initiatives that foster debates in which participants try to convince others that they are right, this document envisions conversations undertaken in a spirit of openness in which people try to understand one another and expand their thinking by sharing viewpoints and listening actively.

The discussion prompts are intentionally crafted to help a wide range of audiences think more deeply about the issues in the film. Rather than attempting to address them all, choose one or two that best meet your needs and interests. And be sure to leave time to consider taking action. Planning next steps can help people leave the room feeling energized and optimistic, even in instances when conversations have been difficult.

For more detailed event planning and facilitation tips, visit www.pov.org/engage



Syria's Arab Spring

When Dalya and her family left Syria in 2012, much of their home region had seen a year of protests and violence stemming from what was termed “the Arab Spring”: pro-democracy rebellions across Middle Eastern and North African countries in late 2010 and early 2011 that resulted in three authoritarian governments being removed from power. In March 2011, pro-democracy protests in the southern Syrian city of Dara'a erupted after a group of teenage boys were arrested and tortured for painting anti-government statements on a school wall. Protesters cited unemployment rates, a lack of political freedom under President Bashar Al-Assad and widespread corruption as motivation. The unrest was also driven by the fact that many Syrians who had earned their living by farming, largely young men, were forced into the cities to seek employment after a years-long drought devastated rural areas. Among the many drivers of instability and unrest in Syria is climate change.

By July 2011, hundreds of thousands of people across Syria had taken to the streets, where they were met with violence as the government attempted to crush the demonstrations. These demonstrations were among the bloodiest in the region, and several thousand protesters were killed as government forces used tanks and snipers to crack down.

Opposition supporters began to take up arms to defend themselves and in an attempt to push government security forces from their neighborhoods. As violence escalated, so did defections from the Syrian armed forces. Anti-government armed groups formed to battle government forces for control of cities, towns and the countryside and began operating in an increasingly organized fashion under the banner of the Free Syrian Army. In February 2012, amid intense countryside clashes between government forces and organized armed opposition, the civil unrest became a civil war.

During the pro-democracy protests, demonstrators emphasized the unity of the Syrian people and their pride in the Syrian mosaic, made up of diverse ethnicities, faiths and sects. Nevertheless, sectarian elements entered the conflict, arguably stoked by a Syrian regime keen to use the vocabulary of “terrorism” to describe first the protesters and then the armed opposition. The longstanding power structures in Syria—with the majority Sunni population ruled by Assad's minority Alawite sect—had also raised the risk of the unrest taking on a sectarian bent. But it was arguably the entry of foreign actors—both on the ground and as finan-

cial backers of the warring parties—that turned a battle for democratic reform into a regional struggle for power between Sunni and Shia regimes. As the conflict continued, the Syrian government began to rely on Iraqi Shia militias, Lebanon-based Hezbollah and Iran, while the Free Syrian Army and other anti-government armed groups received support from Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

From another coexisting perspective, the conflict came to represent—for some, though arguably not for Syrians—a struggle for dominance on a global scale. Russia, with its historic ties to the Syrian government and a base on the Syrian coast, supported the Syrian government, first as a backer and then, beginning in September 2015, as a warring party. Anti-government armed groups received fluctuating levels of support from the United States and various European states.

The war in Syria has only become more brutal since 2012, and it has also metastasized into multiple and sometimes overlapping conflicts. The original war between the Syrian government and anti-government armed groups continues. With significant Russian military support, the government had by December 2016 regained control of Aleppo, the last city that was partially in rebel hands. In 2013, what would become known as the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, or ISIS, crossed from Iraq and established itself in northeastern Syria. ISIS has battled against all other armed groups that have not sworn allegiance to its caliph, or spiritual leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The Syrian Democratic Forces, a coalition of armed groups predominantly composed of and led by Syrian Kurdish forces, the YPG, are battling ISIS with the backing of a U.S.-led coalition. This has only served to increase tensions with Turkey, which, fearing greater unrest within its own Kurdish population, will not tolerate a Syrian-Kurdish autonomous area along its southern border.

By late 2016, the war had devastated Syria, with one in every two Syrians having fled their homes, becoming either internally displaced in their own country or refugees in other countries. Nearly 70 percent of Syrians live in extreme poverty, with an unemployment rate close to 58 percent. Almost half of all children no longer attend school—they are referred to as ‘the lost generation.’ Diseases such as typhoid and tuberculosis have become endemic. Polio, previously eradicated, has resurfaced. More than 500,000 Syrians have died as a result of the war, and more than 2 million have been injured. A March 2016 study estimated that the total economic loss as a result of the conflict was 275 billion U.S. dollars.



Sources

Alkousaa, Riham et al. "How Syria Became the New Global War." *Der Spiegel*, Oct. 11, 2016. <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/syria-war-became-conflict-between-usa-and-russia-and-iran-a-1115681.html>

Barnard, Anne and Patrick Kingsley. "Turkey Assails U.S. Decision to Arm Syrian Kurds." *The New York Times*, May 10, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/10/world/europe/turkey-us-syrian-kurds.html>

BBC News. "Islamic State and the Crisis in Iraq and Syria in Maps." Apr. 28, 2017. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-27838034>

BBC News. "Why Is There a War in Syria?" March 13, 2017. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35806229>

Merriam-Webster. "Caliph." June 21, 2017.

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/caliph>

Cornell University Library. "Arab Spring: A Research and Study Guide." Oct. 12, 2016. <http://guides.library.cornell.edu/c.php?g=31688&p=200753>

Femia, Francesco and Caitlin Werrell. "Syria: Climate Change, Drought and Social Unrest." The Center for Climate and Security, Feb. 29, 2012. <https://climateandsecurity.org/2012/02/29/syria-climate-change-drought-and-social-unrest/>

Fisher, Max. "Straightforward Answers to Basic Questions About Syria's War." *The New York Times*, Sept. 18, 2016. https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/19/world/middleeast/syria-civil-war-bashar-al-assad-refugees-islamic-state.html?_r=1

Frontier Economics. "The Cost of Conflict for Children: Five years of the Syria Crisis." March 2016. <http://www.wvi.org/syriacostofconflict>

International Crisis Group. "Syria's Metastasizing Conflicts." June 27, 2013. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/syria/syria-s-metastasizing-conflicts>

Khoury, Nabeel. "The Fall of Aleppo." *The Cairo Review of Global Affairs*, Dec. 19, 2016. <https://www.thecaireview.com/tahrir-forum/the-fall-of-aleppo/>

Lesch, David W. and James Gelvin. "Assad Has Won in Syria. But Syria Hardly Exists." *The New York Times*, Jan. 11, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/11/opinion/assad-has-won-in-syria-but-syria-hardly-exists.html>

Macleod, Hugh. "How Schoolboys Began the Syrian revolution." CBS News, Apr. 26, 2011. <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/how-schoolboys-began-the-syrian-revolution/>

Syrian Center for Policy Research "Confronting Fragmentation! Impact of Syrian Crisis Report." Feb. 11, 2016. <http://scpr-syria.org/publications/policy-reports/confronting-fragmentation/>

United Nations General Assembly. "Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic." Nov. 23, 2011. [https://documents-dds-](https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G11/170/97/PDF/G1117097.pdf?OpenElement)

[ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G11/170/97/PDF/G1117097.pdf?OpenElement](https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G11/170/97/PDF/G1117097.pdf?OpenElement)

United Nations General Assembly. "Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic." Aug. 16, 2012. http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/Session21/A-HRC-21-50_en.pdf

The Washington Post. "Middle East and North Africa in Turmoil." July 13, 2011. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/special/world/middle-east-protests/>

The Washington Post. "Looking back at the Middle East in 2011." Dec. 21, 2011. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/special/world/middle-east-year/index.html>

Westcott, Lucy. "Syrian Refugee Children Risk Becoming 'Lost Generation': Report." *Newsweek*, Aug. 2, 2016. <http://www.newsweek.com/syrian-refugee-children-education-funding-gap-486640>

Wimmin, Heiko. "Syria's Path from Civic Uprising to Civil War." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Nov. 22, 2016. <http://carnegieendowment.org/2016/11/22/syria-s-path-from-civic-uprising-to-civil-war-pub-66171>

Syrian Refugees

The number of refugees from Syria has increased dramatically since the fighting began, surpassing 5 million by early 2017. Unlike Dalya and her family, the vast majority of refugees remain in the neighboring countries of Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq. Turkey alone hosts almost 3 million Syrian refugees, while the small nation of Lebanon hosts 1 million. Additionally, more than 6 million Syrians are displaced inside Syria. Half of the displaced from Syria's conflict are children, and many countries have restricted the entry of Syrian refugees, leaving millions displaced inside Syria's borders. As of May 30, 2017, the United Nations estimated that there were more than 6.3 million people displaced inside Syria.

Under international law, a refugee is defined as a person fleeing armed conflict or persecution who has a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a social group and who has crossed a border into a new country to find safety. The 1951 Refugee Convention and other relevant international laws dictate that refugees should not be expelled by host nations or returned to situations where their lives and freedom would be under threat.

Once a person crosses a border, they are able to register



with the UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, and consequently to receive protection and support. The UNHCR then determines refugee status and looks for a long-term solution through local integration in the neighboring country or resettlement in another country, though the majority of refugees voluntarily return to their home countries once they can do so safely. Only after all efforts to help refugees either return home or settle permanently in the country of asylum have failed does third country resettlement become an option.

The UNHCR refers only about one percent of all refugees for resettlement in a third country. And the U.S. Department of State reports that the United States accepts almost two thirds of the refugees resettled in third countries through this process. In 2016, the United States admitted 84,995 refugees for resettlement, 12,587 of them from Syria.

Sources

Al Jazeera. "UN: Number of Syrian Refugees Passes Five Million." March 30, 2017. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/03/number-syrian-refugees-passes-million-170330132040023.html>

Krogstad, Jens Manuel and Jynnah Radford. "Key Facts About Refugees to the U.S." Pew Research Center, Jan. 30, 2017. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/01/30/key-facts-about-refugees-to-the-u-s/>

UNHCR. "Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015." June 20, 2016. <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/statistics/unhcrstats/576408cd7/unhcr-global-trends-2015.html>

UNHCR. "Syria Emergency." May 30, 2017. <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/syria-emergency.html>

UNHCR. "Syria Regional Refugee Response." March 30, 2017. <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

UNHCR. "UNHCR Viewpoint: 'Refugee' or 'Migrant'—Which Is Right?" July 11, 2016. <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/latest/2016/7/55df0e556/unhcr-viewpoint-refugee-migrant-right.html>

UNHCR. "What Is a Refugee." <http://www.unrefugees.org/what-is-a-refugee/>

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. "Syrian Arab Republic." <http://www.unocha.org/syria>

U.S. Department of State. "Refugee Admissions." <https://www.state.gov/j/prm/ra/>

Wearing the Hijab

Many Muslim women across the world wear the traditional hijab. The most common type of hijab—an Arabic word meaning "cover"—is a square scarf that covers the head and neck while leaving the face clear. As of 2011, nearly half of the approximately 1 million Muslim women living in the United States did not cover their hair, while just over 40 percent wore headscarves all the time.

A woman may choose to wear a headscarf for a variety of reasons. For some, it is a religious edict; many modern scholars note that although the Quran does not explicitly state that women must cover themselves, it does encourage women to dress modestly. For many, the headscarf is simply part of cultural identity as a Muslim. Some Muslim women wear the hijab to identify with a community, while for others wearing the hijab provides a sense of either physical or metaphorical safety.

Sources

Blake, John. "Muslim Women Uncover Myths About the Hijab." *CNN*, Aug. 12, 2009. http://www.cnn.com/2009/US/08/12/generation.islam.hijab/index.html?_s=PM:US

Facing History and Ourselves, "A Brief History of the Veil in Islam." <https://www.facinghistory.org/civic-dilemmas/brief-history-veil-islam>

Khalid, Asma. "Lifting the Veil: Muslim Women Explain Their Choice." *NPR*, Apr. 21, 2011. <http://www.npr.org/2011/04/21/135523680/lifting-the-veil-muslim-women-explain-their-choice>

Mir, Shabana. "17 Reasons Why Women Wear Headscarves." *Religion Dispatches*, July 3, 2009. <http://religiondispatches.org/17-reasons-why-women-wear-headscarves/>

ReOrienting the Veil. "The Quran." <http://veil.unc.edu/religions/islam/quran/>

Polygamy in Islam

Polygamy is the practice of marrying multiple spouses. Although the term is gender-neutral, it is most commonly used to refer to one man with multiple wives. When the Quran first references polygamy in chapter 4, verse 3, it defines the conditions under which men are permitted to marry multiple women and sets a limit of four wives: "If you fear that you cannot do justice to orphans, marry such women as seem good to you, two, or three or four, but if you fear that you will not do justice, then marry only one."

Scholars emphasize the historical context of the Quran's polygamy authorization. When Islam was founded in the



seventh century CE, polygamy was a common practice among residents of the Middle East, including the Babylonians, the Assyrians and the Hebrews. Wars across the Arab world led to a high death toll among men and a gender imbalance in the population. The Quran refers to polygamy as a means for men to take responsibility for widows and orphans.

The Quran reformed an existing custom by setting limitations on polygamy. Islamic law requires husbands to provide for all of their wives and children and forbids a man from taking more than one wife if he cannot provide support. Further, as noted above, men must treat all of their wives and children equally: “Marry such women as seem good to you, two, or three or four, but if you fear that you will not do justice, then marry only one.” (4:3) The Quran later advises, “You will never be able to do perfect justice between wives even if it is your ardent desire.” (4:129) Some Muslims interpret these verses as an implicit ban on polygamy.

Scholars disagree about whether or not Islam condones polygamy. Some believe that men may marry up to four wives at their discretion and point to the example of the prophet Muhammad, who had nine wives. Others argue that Islamic law does not allow polygamy for men’s satisfaction, because the Quran mentions the practice as an obligation toward widows. They believe that the Quran regards monogamy to be the ideal marriage; polygamy is permitted only in rare circumstances, to provide for fatherless children. Today, these scholars argue, male mortality is lower and women are more independent, so the Quran’s limited support for polygamy no longer pertains. Accordingly, Muslim countries such as Turkey and Tunisia have banned the practice.

Today, polygamy is permitted in several Muslim countries, but it remains rare. According to some estimates, fewer than two percent of all Muslim men have multiple wives. In Syria, polygamy is legal but regulated: a man must seek approval from a family court and prove legal grounds and economic means to marry a second wife. One interpretation of the Quran—the one espoused by Rudayna—is that a woman must be informed of her husband’s intentions to take a second wife.

Sources

- Abbas, Noorhan and Eric Atwell. “The Qurany Concepts Tool.” The University of Leeds. <http://www.comp.leeds.ac.uk/nora/html/>
- An-Na’im, Abdullahi A. “Syria (Syrian Arab Republic).” *Islamic Family Law*. <https://scholarblogs.emory.edu/islamic-family-law/home/research/legal-profiles/syria-syrian-arab-republic/>
- FRONTLINE. “Beliefs and Daily Lives of Muslims.” <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/teach/muslims/beliefs.html>
- Hogben, Alia. “Polygamy in Context.” *Common Ground News Service*, March 2, 2010. <http://www.commongroundnews.org/article.php?id=27379>
- Nouchkioui, Fatima. “The History of Head Covering and Polygamy Practice in Islam.” *What History Teaches*, vol. II, 2011. <http://teachersinstitute.yale.edu/curriculum/units/2011/2/11.02.03.x.html>
- The Religion of Islam*. “An Introduction to Polygamy in Islam.” <https://www.islamreligion.com/articles/325/an-introduction-to-polygamy-in-islam/>
- Rizvi, Sayyid Muhammad. “The Concept of Polygamy and the Prophets Marriages.” *Ahlul Bayt Digital Islamic Library Project*. <https://www.al-islam.org/articles/concept-polygamy-and-prophets-marriages-sayyid-muhammad-rizvi>
- Walther, Wiebke. *Women in Islam*. New York: Marcus Weiner, 2011.

Selected People Featured in **Dalya's Other Country**



Dalya
arrives in the United States
as a Syrian refugee just as
she is entering her teens



Rudayna
Dalya's mother



Mustafa
Dalya's older brother



Mohamad Hassan
Dalya's father

GENERAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Immediately after the film, you may want to give people a few quiet moments to reflect on what they have seen or pose a general question (examples below) and give people some time to themselves to jot down or think about their answers before opening the discussion:

- What did you learn from this film?
- If a friend asked you what this film was about, what would you say?
- If you could ask anyone in the film a single question, whom would you ask and what would you ask them?
- Describe a moment or scene in the film that you found particularly disturbing or moving. What was it about that scene that was especially compelling for you?

At the end of your discussion, to help people synthesize what they've experienced and move the focus from dialogue to action steps, you may want to choose one of these questions:

- What did you learn from this film that you wish everyone knew? What would change if everyone knew it?
- How would you complete this sentence?: Dalya's (or Rudayna's) story is important because _____.
- If you could require one person (or one group) to view this film, who would it be? What would you hope their main takeaway would be?
- Complete this sentence: I am inspired by this film (or discussion) to _____.



Adjusting to Life in the United States

What did you learn from the film about the experiences of Muslim refugees in the United States? How does what you learned inform your thinking about policy issues related to immigration and the acceptance of refugees from places like Syria?

Dalya reports that her father didn't want her to come to the United States because, she says, "He thought if I grew up here, I would be such a bad girl." In what ways did choosing a Catholic school address his concerns? What were the benefits and drawbacks for Dalya?

Mohamad Hassan says he "would rather live under the bombing and suffer like my people are suffering in Syria than to be in here, enjoying the beach, enjoying the freedom, enjoying the good life." What is it about the United States—or about him—that makes him so uncomfortable?

Rudayna recalls:

When I came here, I stayed like someone is tying my hand. I was crying a lot. In a very bad situation. My son suggest for me to go to a college. And it was big step for me. My life in Syria, it was just cooking, cleaning, having people over. That's it. I feel like I'm in a different planet. The technology, nobody help me to know what I should do, where I should register, what I should—so many things to learn. Now I'm here. I have to be part of this life. Otherwise I'm going to be by myself.

What might have been different for Rudayna if she had been married, a man, younger, an immigrant by choice rather than a refugee or a Christian?

Rudayna has advantages that many refugees don't. She previously lived in the United States, has a college-educated son living in the country, speaks English and receives some financial support from Dalya's father. How do these factors increase the chances that she will succeed in the United States?

Now that you've "met" this family, what do you suppose they think about their new country when they hear news about Muslims being blamed for acts committed by extremists or Muslims (including refugees from Syria) being denied entry to the U.S.? How does imagining that the news is about Dalya or Rudayna influence your reaction to such reports?

Insights About America

Sometimes we can learn about ourselves by looking at our lives through the eyes of strangers. What do you learn about American culture from the perceptions of Dalya and her family?

Rudayna and Mohamad Hassan observe, respectively, that life in America is "always business, no time for yourself" and "it's too busy, too much rush. People are not free to visit with other people. They're not even free to talk to you." Do you share this perception?

Dalya observes, "[In] Syria, everyone's the same. But here, one is Mexican, one is Filipino, one is Korean, one is Middle Eastern. Like, each one is different. Each one is raised in different cultures." How does this mix of identities influence American culture?

What did you learn from this story about the types of support needed by refugees like Dalya and Rudayna? Are the refugees in your community getting the support they need to succeed? If not, what might you do to help?

Culture and Identity

What's the significance of the film's title? Which country do you think is "other"?

Dalya says, "If I still lived in Syria, I would've been a completely different person." What do you think she means?

Dalya's brother Mustafa comments on her college essay, "Where you come from is not only not a hindrance, but a strength in what you want to do in the future." Based on what you see in the film, what strengths does Dalya draw from her Syrian, Muslim and family heritage?

Rudayna says, "I teach my daughter the right way of this land... That she's not supposed to hate, kill, talk about anybody, do bad stuff. And do what God ask her to." How does this compare with the core values you teach your children, if you have any, or that you learned from your parents? How does it compare with the descriptions you've heard about the essential values of Islam?



Dalya reacts to Edina Lekovic's talk at her school as follows:

Being a Muslim and then hearing this, I really related to you. And, like, the way you looked at Islam. Because the way my family looks at Islam is different than other people... For example, I support gays, but that's not what [my family's interpretation of] Islam is like... When I saw you explaining where you came from [and] your everyday life and when you went to college, I really felt—it was really good.

What's the power of hearing someone speak who makes us feel like we're not alone in our experiences, or hearing someone speak who has accomplished a goal that we also hope to accomplish one day?

What messages do Dalya's parents convey about boys, sex, appearance and sexuality? How do those messages compare/contrast with messages you got from your own family, from peers or from media sources when you were her age?

Hijab

What did you learn from Dalya and Rudayna about the reasons that some Muslim women choose to wear a hijab (headscarf)?

Dalya explains, "I currently do not wear the hijab because I want to cover myself or protect myself from men, men's eyes... What made me love my hijab is my life experiences. It was a constant reminder for me of who I am, where I'm from." How does this compare to other explanations you have heard or learned?

Rudayna puts a knit cap over her hijab "to avoid weird people... There are disturbed people causing problems. When they see the hijab they think all Muslims are like the terrorists. So... just to be on the safe side." Dalya objects to her mother "hiding" her identity. With whom would you side in this exchange and why? What do you think it feels like to be forced to choose between feeling safe or observing an important part of your faith tradition?

The Impact of War

Dalya says, "Before I left Syria, things got worse and worse. There were bombs and shootings in front of my house and stuff. And it was really scary... [It's not that] the pain has gone. I just learned how to live with it." How does a person learn to live with that kind of pain? What do they need to heal and how can the communities where they reset-

tle help?

Rudayna describes bombings and kidnappings, then says, "The war didn't leave any choice for me. I had to come here with my daughter." How does her motive compare/contrast with that of other immigrants over the course of U.S. history or that of other immigrants you know?

Rudayna describes the personal cost of the violence she witnessed:

There's not one single house that hasn't been affected by all the problems. From divorces to their houses getting destroyed, and then they go live with their in-laws, then problems start happening... Men can't stand their wives, and the wives can't handle the in-laws...and that's in addition to losing a son, a brother, or being uprooted from their homes. You know, if a building collapses, where will they go? This is the problem.

What lesson does this impart about the impact of armed conflict on families and how might that lesson inform the services provided by groups or governments involved in aid efforts?

Family

Compare and contrast Dalya's experiences with those of teens you know:

- stressing out over college applications
- dealing with rejection from her college of choice
- arguing with parents about attending a dance, choice of clothing or wearing make-up

In what ways is Dalya like an average American teen and in what ways is she different?

Mustafa says, "Since the day my mom arrived, I've had to jump into the role of a dad, and head of household... As the eldest child in Arab culture, you kind of grow up knowing that you are next in line for taking charge." What are your family's customs around children's roles and responsibilities?

Dalya avoids talking with her father about topics on which they disagree, such as his belief "that men should have higher power, or a woman should do this, a woman should do that." Mohamad Hassan says, "Even talking to my two boys, there's always a difference between dad and son... I have to consider what I have to say few times before I say it because I don't want to upset them. Many times I just ab-



stain, just to avoid any arguments.” How common is this family dynamic of silence? How do divorce, geographical distance and cultural differences between generations influence the dynamic?

Marriage and Divorce

In the scene where Dalya and her mother look at wedding pictures, what do you think Dalya learns about marriage?

Dalya worries about her father judging her behavior. She wants to honor him but questions his traditional view of marriage and women’s roles: “If I was like what? Barbie, Cinderella, a princess, then I’ll have a successful marriage?” What do you think is required for a successful marriage? Do your parents share your ideas? If not, how do you reconcile the differences?

Dalya states, “I don’t want to get married in the future. And a big part of it is because I don’t want the experience Mom went through, with my dad, to happen with me.” In your experience, how does divorce change kids’ views about marriage?

Dalya says, “I was really shocked when I found out my dad got married. I was really mad about it because, like, I always see my mom cry and she’s just sad. Everyone wants to, like, have the perfect family with the parents together, and siblings together, and everyone happy... I’m very sure a lot of

my friends, their dads got married or they cheated on their moms. It’s not something you talk about. It’s just something embarrassing, kind of.” Why do you think Dalya is embarrassed even though she had no control over her father’s actions? In your experience, how common is Dalya’s reaction?

Mohamad Hassan explains, “My desire to have more than one woman led me to go to practice my religion where we’re allowed to have multiple wives.” Rudayna responds, “Religion didn’t say this. Religion said if you want to get the second wife, you have to ask the first one and she has to say yes... God says you have to be fair.” Have different interpretations of religious practice ever led to conflict in your family?

When Mustafa asks his mother if she has reconsidered her relationship with his father she answers, “I’m still thinking about it... I have to see how he acts, how he treats me, then I’ll decide.” Were you rooting for her to get back together with Mohamad Hassan? Why or why not?

Polygamy is legal in Syria but overseen by family courts and there is historical context for the practice. Do you think polygamy has a purpose and functionality in modern society?

**Additional media literacy questions are available at:
www.pbs.org/pov/educators/media-literacy.php**

Taking Action

- **Find ways to support local initiatives to host or resettle Syrian refugees. Where possible, identify mentors or buddies to help refugees who are students to navigate school culture.**
- **Document, track and publicize instances of negative stereotyping of Muslim women. Work with local allies to combat those stereotypes and provide your community (and media professionals) with a more accurate picture. If needed, brainstorm ways to protect Muslim women who fear being attacked.**
- **As a way of educating yourself on the issue and humanizing political debate over immigration policy, collect stories from Syrian (or other Muslim or Middle Eastern) refugees or immigrants. Share those stories with elected officials and with the public.**



FILM-RELATED WEB SITES

DALYA'S OTHER COUNTRY

www.dalyasothercountry.com

The film's official website provides information on the film and film team.

Original Online Content on POV

To further enhance the broadcast, POV has produced an interactive website to enable viewers to explore the film in greater depth. The **Dalya's Other Country** website—www.pbs.org/pov/DalyasOtherCountry—offers a streaming video trailer for the film; an interview with filmmaker; a list of related websites, articles and books; a downloadable discussion guide; and special features.

SYRIAN REFUGEES

INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE

<https://rescue.org/country/syria>

This refugee resettlement organization offers a summary of the impact of the conflict in Syria and ways to help Syrian refugees resettling in the United States.

REFUGEE COUNCIL USA

www.rcusa.org

A coalition of U.S.-based non-governmental organizations working on issues of refugee resettlement.

SYRIA DEEPLY

www.syriadeeply.org

This independent digital media project is dedicated to the conflict in Syria.

THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE:

"HOW A SYRIAN FAMILY IS ADJUSTING TO LIFE AS REFUGEES IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA"

www.pe.com/articles/cups-826256-alemolina-scng.html

This is a news feature by Alejandra Molina on Syrian refugees in Southern California.

UNHCR, THE UN REFUGEE AGENCY

<http://www.unhcr.org/>

The office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has statistics, educational resources and publications on its website, in addition to a list of organizations working on issues affecting refugees.

USA FOR UNHCR

<http://www.unrefugees.org/where-we-work/syria/>

This U.S. nonprofit is dedicated to raising funds for refugees, as well as raising awareness and educating Americans about the global refugee crisis and emergencies such as the Syrian crisis.

ISLAM, WOMEN AND STEREOTYPES

COUNCIL ON AMERICAN-ISLAMIC RELATIONS

www.cair.com/

This advocacy group fights stereotypes by increasing public understanding of Islam, encouraging dialogue, and protecting civil liberties.

ISLAMIC NETWORKS GROUP

www.ing.org

This organization works to educate and inform the public about American Muslims, in addition to building relationships across communities.

MIDDLE EAST INSTITUTE: "INTRODUCTION TO ISLAM: AN ONLINE TEXT"

www.mideasti.org/content/introduction-islam-preface

Law professor M. Cherif Bassiouni wrote this introductory text about Islam specifically for non-Muslims.

MUSLIM PUBLIC AFFAIRS COUNCIL**www.mpac.org**

This non-profit's website includes policy briefs, research and other information on public policy affecting Muslims in the United States.

MUSLIM WOMEN'S LEAGUE**www.mwlusa.org**

This U.S. organization offers explanatory position statements on a wide variety of issues related to women living as Muslims in the modern world, as well as links to other relevant resources and organizations.

RETHINKING SCHOOLS: "SAVE THE MUSLIM GIRL!"**www.rethinkingschools.org/archive/24_02/24_02_muslim.shtml**

This piece by Özlem Sensoy and Elizabeth Marshall critically examines the depiction of Muslim girls as victims in Western young adult literature and offers alternative strategies to help students think through related issues.

HOW TO BUY THE FILM

To order **Dalya's Other Country** for educational use, go to <http://www.gooddocs.net/dalyas-other-country>.



Produced by American Documentary, Inc., POV is public television's premier showcase for nonfiction films. The series airs Mondays at 10 p.m. on PBS from June to September, with primetime specials during the year. Since 1988, POV has been the home for the world's boldest contemporary filmmakers, celebrating intriguing personal stories that spark conversation and inspire action. Always an innovator, POV discovers fresh new voices and creates interactive experiences that shine a light on social issues and elevate the art of storytelling. With our documentary broadcasts, original online programming and dynamic community engagement campaigns, we are committed to supporting films that capture the imagination and present diverse perspectives.

POV films have won 36 Emmy® Awards, 19 George Foster Peabody Awards, 12 Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Awards, three Academy Awards®, the first-ever George Polk Documentary Film Award and the Prix Italia. The POV series has been honored with a Special News & Documentary Emmy Award for Excellence in Television Documentary Filmmaking, three IDA Awards for Best Curated Series and the National Association of Latino Independent Producers Award for Corporate Commitment to Diversity. More information is available at www.pbs.org/pov.

POV Digital www.pbs.org/pov

Since 1994, POV Digital has driven new storytelling initiatives and interactive production for POV. The department created PBS's first program website and its first web-based documentary (*POV's Borders*) and has won major awards, including a Webby Award (and six nominations) and an Online News Association Award. POV Digital continues to explore the future of independent nonfiction media through its digital productions and the POV Hackathon lab, where media makers and technologists collaborate to reinvent storytelling forms. @povdocs on Twitter.

Front cover: Dalya attends weekly mass service at her all girls Catholic high school.
Photo courtesy of Anne Etheridge

POV Community Engagement and Education

POV's Community Engagement and Education team works with educators, community organizations and PBS stations to present more than 650 free screenings every year. In addition, we distribute free discussion guides and standards-aligned lesson plans for each of our films. With our community partners, we inspire dialogue around the most important social issues of our time.

American Documentary, Inc. www.amdoc.org

American Documentary, Inc. (AmDoc) is a multimedia company dedicated to creating, identifying and presenting contemporary stories that express opinions and perspectives rarely featured in mainstream media outlets. AmDoc is a catalyst for public culture, developing collaborative strategic engagement activities around socially relevant content on television, online and in community settings. These activities are designed to trigger action, from dialogue and feedback to educational opportunities and community participation.

Major funding for POV is provided by PBS, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and National Endowment for the Arts. Additional funding comes from Nancy Blachman and David desJardins, Bertha Foundation, The Fledgling Fund, Marguerite Casey Foundation, Ettinger Foundation, New York State Council on the Arts, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, Ann Tenenbaum and Thomas H. Lee, and public television viewers. POV is presented by a consortium of public television stations, including KQED San Francisco, WGBH Boston and THIRTEEN in association with WNET.ORG.

You can follow us on Twitter @POVengage

for the latest news from
POV Community Engagement & Education.



Media Sponsor:

