

WELCOME STRANGERS

Discussion Guide

General Reactions

- What scenes in the film affected you most? Why?
- What emotions did you feel after watching the film?
- Which characters illustrated hope to you? Why?
- What examples have you personally witnessed of someone not being welcoming to an immigrant in this country?
- If you're native-born in the US, how might a relationship with an immigrant impact your idea of freedom?
- If you're an immigrant, how does the current US immigration policy affect your life?

Immigration Process

- What was your view about the asylum and legal immigration process before seeing the film?
- What did you learn about immigration after seeing the film?
- Did anything you learned about how the U.S. handles this process shock you? If so, what shocked you and why?
- Javier said he wasn't able to contact his family while he was detained. How do you feel that immigrants with no money must pay for phone calls to their loved ones or to their lawyers?
- Seeking asylum is an internationally recognized human right. Knowing this, how do you feel about our government's treatment of immigrants who seek safety?
- Think of the famous words: "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free." How does our current treatment of immigrants compare to this phrase?
- Sarah believes we can create a more welcoming country for immigrants that doesn't include family separation or indefinite detention or even detention itself. What in this film gives you hope we can accomplish this?
- What alternative solutions do you think could be possible? (For some ideas, refer to the Freedom for Immigrants and Justice for Immigrants websites).

Welcoming Strangers

- Early in the film, Sarah says she doesn't want to scare immigrants who are released from detention onto the streets. We see some of that fear in Javier, who is skeptical when Cassie picks him up. What would be some reasons for Javier's fears and distrust?
- Why would a place called "House of Peace" be necessary for people who endured a journey like Javier has?
- Casa de Paz offers very practical assistance to its guests, and it also offers something deeply personal.
- What actions do Sarah and other volunteers take to make interactions more personal?
- What is the benefit to guests from having such personal touches?
- How do you think volunteers are rewarded by their work?
- What are some examples from the film where volunteers express how they are rewarded from this work?
- Some of Casa de Paz's young student interns engage with Javier at the dinner table. What is the value of these types of interactions for young people?
- Sarah says you can learn how best to serve by asking immigrants about their community's greatest needs. She says when she asks this question, she's almost always surprised by their answer.
- Have you asked any immigrant friends what are the greatest needs of their community?
- If you have, what did you learn? Were you surprised by any of the answers?
- Sarah says the work of Casa de Paz is bittersweet. On one hand, it's wonderful to see an immigrant win their freedom and arrive at Casa de Paz. On the other hand, they're still not reunited with their family. What continued support do immigrants need after they stay at Casa de Paz?

Get Involved

- Some viewers might feel overwhelmed and like they can't offer anything meaningful to an immigrant who's been through so much.
- How does this film speak to that?
- What is a step that you, personally, may take in welcoming immigrants?
- What hesitations do you have about showing hospitality to an immigrant in your community?
- Are there any hospitality groups like Casa de Paz in your area? (Refer to WelcomeStrangersFilm.com for a list of immigrant support organizations, including those that offer hospitality services).
- How can you hold yourself or someone else accountable if you notice that either of you aren't welcoming to immigrants?
- What immigrant advocates can you identify in your community that practice Sarah's conviction of the golden rule, by treating the vulnerable as they would want to be treated themselves?

This guide developed in partnership with Sarah Jackson and Scott Sawyer.