

ONWARD

DISCUSSION GUIDE: *Get to Know Me*



>> *Get to Know Me* is a KQED radio story by Jose Arreola about the day he revealed his undocumented status to his best friend. Below you'll find suggestions for how to use the story to support your work, as well as related data, scriptural references, discussion prompts, and tips for productive dialogue. Feel free to pick and choose sections of this guide that are most relevant to the kind of conversation you'd like to have.

How to Use *Get to Know Me* to Spark Discussions About Immigration

Get to Know Me offers a glimpse into one young man's grappling with his undocumented status in his own words. It highlights his fears of deportation and of his friend's rejection. The audio format makes it easy to use as a prompt for personal reflection at community events, meetings, book clubs, bible studies and more. Here are ideas to start:

- **Ask your church leader to incorporate it into their preaching and teaching** to remind members of the connections between newcomers today and a shared history of immigration among Americans.
- **Bring it to your women's fellowship, Bible study, or share group** to connect your faith and scripture to real-life experiences.
- **Co-host an event with another congregation or group that serves immigrants** as a way to deepen relationships and brainstorm opportunities for collaboration and service.
- **Embed it** into social media platforms and websites to paint a vivid picture of why the work you're doing to support immigrant youth and create more welcoming communities.

Facilitation Tips

A facilitator's job is to create a safe space for discussion, while encouraging participants to share their experiences and insights in a respectful and productive way. Here are some tips:

- **Take some time to identify your own 'hot-button' issues** in advance of the screening. This will give you ample time to reflect and process your emotions so you can focus fully on facilitating the discussion.
- **Start the discussion by acknowledging that people may have different views on immigration**, and that we can learn valuable things when we share our views with and listen to each other.

- **If you're working in a religious setting, start with an opening prayer** that grounds your discussion in the scriptural basis for treating the "stranger" or the immigrant with respect, dignity, and love.
- **Plan ahead for how you will respond to possibly offensive comments.** You might acknowledge, for example, the good intentions behind a comment, then remind everyone of the purpose for the discussion.
- **Set ground rules to help foster a safe space for dialogue.** For example, remind people: there are no wrong answers and people are encouraged to share opinions, not convince others they are right; to make "I" statements and speak from their own experiences, and; allow an opportunity for everyone to be heard.

Discussion Prompts

Here are some smart ways to start a conversation after you share *Get to Know Me* with your group. You can customize the discussion with some of the relevant data and scripture we've collected below.

Conversation Starters (highly recommended)

- What, if anything, struck you about this story? Please explain.
- What moment or experience depicted can you most relate to? Please explain.

Going Deeper

- When his best friend suggested they travel through Arizona to avoid a snowstorm, Jose felt paralyzed by fear because he worried his undocumented status could get him deported. If it were you, **what would sudden deportation mean for the life you have built?** What would it mean for your loved ones? Please explain.
- Jose explains that he was only three when he came to the U.S. with his family. **Do you know of anyone in your community or church in a similar position as Jose?** What has prompted them to tell you their story as Jose did to his friend?
- Despite their political differences, Jose's best friend could relate to Jose's story and recounted his own Irish grandfather's emigration to New York, where he worked as janitor without citizenship. **How is your own family's immigration story similar or different** to Jose's or his friend's family story?
- Now realizing the risks, Jose's best friend takes steps (driving slowly) to protect his friend. **What role (practical, material, spiritual, emotional, advocacy, etc.) could churches and other faith communities play** in protecting people like Jose?
- **Why does Jose say the immigration debate became real for his friend** that day in the car—"a different conversation than the one politicians are having"? What does he mean?

Related Data

Jose is just one of thousands of youth without documented status who live in fear of deportation from the U.S., for many the only home they've ever known. Use the data and research below in your post-screening discussion (or feature it on your website or materials) to help make broader connections like this to the story. You can also find additional data in the Did You Know? documents, which live on the various issue pages connected to the story.

Historical context. Immigrants and immigration have been a part of our national make-up and experience since our country's earliest days. Jose's arrival corresponds with a fourth wave of large-scale immigration that began in the 1970s and continues today. The other three waves included: the peopling of the first colonies, westward expansion during the mid-19th century, and the rise of cities at the turn of the 20th century.¹

Benefits of diversity. Research reported in the *Scientific American* has shown that diversity enhances creativity, leads to better decision making, and problem solving. Even simply being exposed to diversity can change the way you think.²

Immigration is wind in our country's sails: The labor, skills, and ideas that move our country onward. Right now those sails—our policies—are poorly positioned. They are both inconsistent with our country's highest moral values to treat all people with respect and dignity, and they are impractical. By adjusting our sails, we can harness the power of the 11.4 million unauthorized immigrants living in this country, 24% of them under 24³, and nurture their potential so they can more fully contribute to a shared and prosperous future.

Deportation. Jose has reason to worry about sudden deportation. Two-thirds of people deported are subject to "summary removal procedures" that are aimed at streamlining deportation procedures but result in depriving people of both the right to appear before a judge and the right to apply for status in the U.S. Two of these procedures allow immigration officers to make a decision within a single day, which means they often fail to take into account critical factors, like whether a person is eligible to apply for lawful status, has long-standing ties here, or U.S.-citizen family members.⁴

The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), a program first enacted in 2012 and reapproved in 2014 (the expansion of which is indefinitely stalled due to a 2015 court injunction), offers undocumented immigrant youth who are qualified temporary work authorization and a two-year reprieve from deportation. It is the result of advocacy by young people like Jose—Dreamers—and wide recognition among policymakers that young people who have grown up in this country and that we as a nation have invested in, should not be deported. A survey of young people who benefitted from DACA demonstrated that 60% of them obtained a new job and increased their earnings. As many as 2.1 million youth are eligible for the program.⁵

¹ Migration Policy Institute: migrationpolicy.org/article/immigration-united-states-new-economic-social-political-landscapes-legislative-reform

² *Scientific American*: www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-diversity-makes-us-smarter/

³ Migration Policy Institute: <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/unauthorized-immigrant-population/state/US>

⁴ Immigration Policy Center: www.immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/removal-without-recourse-growth-summary-deportations-united-states

⁵ Brookings: www.brookings.edu/blogs/the-avenue/posts/2014/11/19-daca-executive-action-immigration-singer

Suggested Bible Study Additions

After listening to the audio clip take a few minutes to journal about any feelings, thoughts, or reflections you have in response to Jose's story. Who do you identify with in the story? Have you ever experienced fear to share something with a friend, like Jose experiences? Have you ever had the experience of a friend telling you something that surprised you, changing the way you see things?

Read the suggested passage. Then use the discussion prompts and reflection questions to make connections and ties between the scriptural stories and Jose's story. Additional scriptural references are provided and can be used in the Opening and Closing Prayer.

Passage for Bible Study: Book of Esther, Chapters 2-8

Esther is a young teenage girl growing up among the Jewish diaspora in the Persian Empire. Her true racial and cultural identity is not known as she has been able to conceal her identity and "pass." Even those closest to her do not know her secret and like Jose there comes a moment where she has to "come out" as her true self or she and her people will face persecution and possible death. Compare the stories of Jose and Esther. What did they both overcome in finally speaking out? What were/are the risks? How do their personal stories help to change other people's hearts and history?

Additional Scriptural References

Exodus 23: 9: You must not oppress the stranger; you know how a stranger feels, for you lived as strangers in the land of Egypt.

Leviticus 19:34: The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him yourself, for you were strangers in the Land of Egypt; for I am the Lord your God.

Zechariah 7:8-10: Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other.

Deuteronomy 1:16: Give the members of your community a fair hearing, and judge rightly between one person and another, whether citizen or resident alien.

Luke 4:16-30: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me to bring good news to the poor...release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, and to let the oppressed go free.

Ephesians 2:11-22: So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God.

I Corinthians 12:26: If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

John 4:19-21: We love because God first loved us. If anyone says, I love God, and hates a brother or sister, he is a liar, because the person who doesn't love a brother or sister who can be seen can't love God, who can't be seen. This commandment we have from him: Those who claim to love God ought to love their brother and sister also.

Galatians 3: 28: There are no more distinctions between Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female, but all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

For Further Reflection

What biblical character, scripture, or faith teaching does this film connect to for you? Please explain.

How do you think God sees Jose? How might God be at work in his life and through his friend?

Our country and faith traditions value hard work, service, and compassion. How could our churches, religious communities and public systems reflect those values, so that people like Jose can live in dignity?

About ONWARD

ONWARD, a one-stop, web-based collection of curated films, video clips, audio stories, hot-off-the-press books, and journalism that tells a deeper story about immigration today. Each story is carefully paired with data, scriptural references, tips, and more to make it easy for anyone –anywhere—to use vivid media to increase support for an immigration system that works for all of us.