

ONWARD

DISCUSSION GUIDE: *INDIVISIBLE*



>> *Indivisible* is a feature length documentary by Hilary Linder that will be released in late 2015. The video's featured on ONWARD are short clips adapted from the film. Below you'll find suggestions for how to use them 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 *Indivisible* to Spark Discussions About Immigration

Indivisible offers a look into the lives of three young people who were brought to the U.S. as children and who have been separated from their families as a result of U.S. immigration policies. The scenes are 2-5 minutes each and easy to incorporate into a variety of settings to deepen understanding and awareness of the impact of deportation on children and families. Use them to prompt discussion and action in support of immigrants. Here are a few ideas:

- **Ask your church leader to incorporate it into their preaching and teaching** to:
 - Raise awareness about deportation practices in the U.S. and the impacts on immigrant families,
 - Recruit new members and volunteers to work to keep immigrant families together and support those separated from loved ones,
 - Gather donations for campaigns and programs that stop family separations and promote family-friendly policies.
- **Use it to kick off meetings, town halls, press-briefings** or other forums to paint a vivid picture of the work you're doing to address detention and deportation practices that harm families.
- **Embed it** into social media platforms and websites to put a human face on your work or to shine a light on voices in your community.
- **Co-host a screening with another group or congregation** that serves immigrants to spark interaction and dialogue or to brainstorm opportunities for collaboration and service.
- **Incorporate into your professional development** to train staff, orient volunteers to the issues.
- **Bring it to your Bible study, women's fellowship, or share group** to connect your faith and scripture to real-life experiences.

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 screen *Indivisible* 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?

Going Deeper

Renata and Her Mother at the Border Fence

Renata is undocumented because her family brought her and her siblings to the U.S. without documentation when she was only six. Then in 2007, when Renata was still a teenager, immigration officials raided their home in Massachusetts. They detained her older brother Rafael for being in the U.S. without authorization but neither Gorete (Renata's mother) nor Renata was home at the time. Frightened, both Rafael and Gorete spoke to a lawyer and Gorete decided to turn herself in to immigration officials and was later deported back to Brazil where she still lives. Six months after meeting with her mother at the fence, Renata became one of the first Dreamers to get approved for travel under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program (DACA¹, see page below).

Do you need help?

ONWARD makes it easy to discuss sensitive issues in grounded and responsible ways. But don't hesitate to get more help if you need it. Consider your group and decide if it makes sense to bring in an experienced co-facilitator.

¹ Migration Policy Institute: migrationpolicy.org/research/daca-two-year-mark-national-and-state-profile-youth-eligible-and-applying-deferred-action

LEARN MORE: Deferred Action for Children

The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program is a policy –indefinitely stalled--that has offered many undocumented immigrant youth temporary work authorization and a two-year reprieve from deportation. As many as 2.1 million youth have been eligible.

- In one scene we see Renata's mother, Gorete, break down and cry when she sees how well her daughter has been doing in school. If you were in Gorete's shoes, **what do you think your emotional and spiritual struggle might be in that moment?**
- What would your **message to policymakers** be about how families like Renata's should be treated?

- Renata has been on her own financially since her mother was deported when she was just a teenager. Consider a teenager in your own life. If their caregiver was immediately deported and they were left on their own, **what kind of support do you think they would need?**
- In your opinion, what implications might there be for a community when someone like Renata is able to **safely work and contribute** to it?
- How do you think people of faith can model more **compassionate treatment to families kept separate by these legal barriers?**



Antonio Says "Goodbye" to His Grandparents

Antonio and his younger brother were raised by their grandparents in Veracruz, Mexico while their parents traveled to the U.S. in search of work. Then, when he was 11, Antonio joined his parents in the U.S. to pursue an education while his younger brother remained in Mexico under the care of their grandparents. But when Antonio's grandparents died, Antonio's parents returned to Mexico to take over care for their other son, Antonio's brother. However, because Antonio was undocumented, he was not able to return to Mexico for his grandparents' funerals. He would have had to risk a dangerous border crossing and leave behind the life he had built in the U.S.



- If you were in Antonio's shoes, what do you think the **emotional and spiritual effect of this barrier**, which kept him from his family, would be for you?
- In your opinion, **should young people like Antonio be given a chance** to more fully contribute to the communities where they reside in the U.S.?
- In 2014, due to the enactment of DACA, Antonio was finally able to return to Mexico and say "goodbye" to his deceased grandparents. **In what ways do you feel policies like these align with your faith?** In what ways do they align with American values, as you see them? Please explain.

Thanksgiving With Evelyn and Her Family

Evelyn was three when her family fled Colombia to escape drug-related violence. At the time, the family traveled to the U.S. on tourist visas, then decided to stay in Florida when their visas expired. While Evelyn's father has since become a U.S. citizen, Evelyn remained undocumented until DACA was enacted. Evelyn was 18 when her mother, Yolanda, was arrested for driving without a license. Yolanda was sent to a detention center for several months before being deported. But Evelyn's father and two U.S.-citizen sisters remained in the U.S. with Evelyn. Despite having U.S.-citizen children, Yolanda does not qualify for Deferred Action for Parental Accountability (DAPA,² below) because she was deported and no longer lives in the U.S.



LEARN MORE: Deferred Action for Parents

The Deferred Action for Parents of Americans (DAPA) program is indefinitely stalled due to a February 2015 court injunction. It was designed to provide deportation relief and temporary work authorization for undocumented U.S. residents who are parents of either U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents (who entered the U.S. before January 2010 and have lived here continuously for at least five years, among other conditions).

- Despite her DACA status, **Evelyn has not been able to get approval to travel** to Colombia to see her mother. At the time this scene was shot, Evelyn and her sisters had been living without her for seven years. Evelyn says that Christmas is the hardest for her. If you were in her shoes, **how would this separation effect you emotionally and spiritually**
- In one scene, we witness Yolanda trying to parent her daughters over the internet. **If you were in Yolanda's shoes**, what do you believe the greatest struggle would be for you? **Do you know of anyone in your community** or church in a similar position to Evelyn and her family?
- **In what ways do you feel policies like DACA align with your faith?** In what ways do they align with American values, as you see them? Please explain.
- In your opinion, **what role (practical, material, spiritual, emotional, advocacy, etc.) can churches and other faith communities play** in supporting people like Evelyn and her family?

Related Data

In many ways, Renata's, Antonio's, Evelyn's and their families' stories are similar to those of millions of people in our country. Use the data and research on the next page in your post-screening discussion (or feature it on your website or materials) to help make broader connections between the story and these trends. You can find additional data in the Did You Know? documents, on the various issue pages connected to the story on www.OnwardProject.net.

² Brookings: www.brookings.edu/blogs/the-avenue/posts/2014/12/29-dapa-population-singer

Separated Families. A Freedom of Information Act request revealed that more than 200,000 removals of parents of U.S.-born children had occurred from July 1, 2010 to Sept. 31, 2012.³

Dislocated Kids. Luckily, Renata was old enough and able to find work when her mother was deported. Antonio was able to move in with his aunt and uncle. However, in a yearlong investigation in 2012, the Applied Research Center found that at least 5,100 children whose parents were detained or deported were placed in foster care.⁴ Many of the kids may never see their parents again, because foster care systems try to find new permanent homes for children as quickly as possible.

Protecting Our Youth. Renata, Antonio and Evelyn all applied for and have received DACA status, which has made it possible for them to stay temporarily in their country where they've lived most their lives and to work to increase their earnings and to pay taxes. A survey of young people who benefitted from DACA demonstrated that 60% of them obtained a new job.⁵

Access to College. At least twenty states offer in-state tuition to unauthorized immigrant students.⁶ However, Massachusetts—where Renata lives—does not. But it does provide in-state tuition to students who have received DACA status, as Renata has.⁷ While she (and Antonio) cannot qualify for federal financial aid, all three—Renata, Antonio, Evelyn— have been lucky to find and receive scholarships to help with some of the costs.

Costs of Detention. Evelyn's mother and Renata's brother were sent into immigrant detention, where he remained for several months, for each of their cases. The average cost of detaining an immigrant in a prison-like facility is approximately \$164 per person/per day. Taking a practical, commonsense approach to moving forward means examining the moral and material costs of our current system.

Alternatives to Detention. Community-based alternatives to detention are effective and significantly cheaper, with some programs costing as little as \$12 per day. An estimated 93% of people who participate in alternatives programs still appear in immigration court for their deportation hearings.⁸

Right to Legal Representation: No matter where we were born, we are all entitled to the same basic respect and protections. However, unlike in criminal cases where low-income people may be appointed a free lawyer to defend them if they cannot afford one, the vast majority of people in deportation cases who cannot afford a lawyer are forced to represent themselves, well over three-quarters of detained immigrants (84%).⁹

Non-criminal Detention: Being in violation of immigration laws is not a crime; like a traffic violation, it is a "civil" violation. People who are held in detention are there for a deportation process aimed at determining whether they have a right to stay.¹⁰

Suggested Bible Study Additions

Read the suggested passages on the next page and watch the clips together as a group. Then use the discussion prompts and reflection questions to make connections between the scriptural stories and the scenes. Additional references are provided and can be used in the Opening and Closing Prayer.

³ Colorlines: www.colorlines.com/archives/2012/12/us_deports_more_than_200k_parents.html

⁴ Colorlines: www.colorlines.com/archives/2011/11/thousands_of_kids_lost_in_foster_homes_after_parents_deportation.html

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

⁶ NCSL: www.ncsl.org/research/immigration/tuition-benefits-for-immigrants.aspx

⁷ WBUR News: www.wbur.org/2012/11/19/in-state-tuition-immigrants

⁸ Detention Watch Network: www.detentionwatchnetwork.org/resources

⁹ Detention Watch Network: detentionwatchnetwork.org/sites/detentionwatchnetwork.org/files/Real%20Deal%20on%20Detention%20March%202023_1.pdf

¹⁰ Detention Watch Network: www.detentionwatchnetwork.org/resources

Passages For Bible Study

Joseph and his family: Genesis 45: This passage is the climax of the story of Joseph, who as a teenager was sold into slavery and forcibly separated from his beloved father. Through many years of separation, he and his family go through the terrible emotional toll of being a severed and separated family. Read the chapter and discuss the similarities to the stories of immigrant families today separated because of immigration policies. How does God comfort those separated? How do we seek justice to end needless suffering and separation? What does your faith say about family unification?

Baby Moses: Exodus 1:15-2:10: The Pharaoh orders all the Hebrew boy babies to be killed, so in a desperate act of love and survival, Baby Moses' mother hides him in a basket and sends him upstream to a place where she believes he will have a chance to live. Reflect on the story in light of the story of Evelyn's family who fled violence so that their children could survive. Each year there are unaccompanied children whose parents send them to the United States in order to escape violence and to survive. How is what's happening today like the story of Baby Moses?

Additional Scriptural References

Psalms 137:1-4: By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down and there we wept when we remembered Zion. On the willows[a] there we hung up our harps. For there our captors asked us for songs, and our tormentors asked for mirth, saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion! How could we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?"

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.

Hebrews 13: 1-3: Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured.

Ephesians 2:19: So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God.

For Further Reflection

Our country and faith traditions value hard work, service, and compassion. How could our public systems reflect those values, so that people like Renata, Antonio, Evelyn and their families can live in dignity?

What do you see God calling you to do with respect to supporting families similar to theirs?

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.