

# ONWARD

## DISCUSSION GUIDE: *THE CARETAKER*



>> *The Caretaker* is a short documentary by Theo Rigby. 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 *The Caretaker* to Spark Discussions About Immigration

*The Caretaker* is a moving story about the relationship between an elderly woman and her immigrant caretaker. It can be used to highlight some of the under-sung contributions that immigrants bring to our personal lives, our communities and our country. Because it is a very short piece, it can easily be used in a variety of settings to prompt discussion and even action. For example:

- **Ask your church leader to incorporate it into their preaching and teaching** to prompt reflection about ways all our lives are interconnected and interdependent.
- **Co-host a screening with another group or congregation** that either serves immigrants and/or the aging community to brainstorm opportunities for collaboration and service.
- **Feature it during meetings with elected officials**, journalists, community leaders and/or other stakeholders to prompt discussion about aging, caregiving and the vital contributions of immigrants in your community.
- **Incorporate into your professional development** to train staff, orient volunteers and/or enhance cultural competency.
- **Bring it to your Bible study, share group, or women's fellowship** to connect your faith and scripture to the real-life experiences of immigrants and highlight our shared humanity.
- **Embed it into social media platforms and websites** to paint a vivid picture of the work your organization is doing, or to lift up the voices of immigrant neighbors who are adding to the vibrancy and prosperity of your local community.

## 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.

[Click here](#) to check out the iNation guide, a project that *The Caretaker* is a part of.

## Discussion Prompts

Here are some smart ways to start a conversation after you share *The Caretaker* 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

- **Have you had a caregiving situation that stretched you beyond the limits of what you thought you could bear?** What kind of support (community, legal, spiritual) was available to you?
- **What role do you think Josey's faith plays in her care for Haru?** How does Josey's faith community seem to support her in her work? Can you relate to her experience? Why or why not?

### 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.

- While acknowledging there are differences, **Joesy feels she can relate to Haru's experiences in a Japanese internment camp.** Why do you think that is? Please explain.
- **In your opinion, how do communities benefit** when immigrants like Joesey are able to realize their full potential? Please explain.
- Joesy says Haru loved going to Fijian Church and appreciated Fijian culture. **What do you think made it possible (experiences, values, etc.) for them to appreciate one another's worship communities?**
- Joesy describes many of the difficulties of caretaking. **What could we do to take some of the hardships out of these essential services?**

## Related Data

Over the next twenty years 77 million baby boomers are expected to retire, leading to a high demand for new eldercare workers. Therefore, Joesey's and Haru's stories are similar to those of millions of Americans'. Use the data and research below 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](http://www.OnwardProject.net).

- **Immigrant Caregivers.** Immigrants fill important gaps in the American workforce today and Joesy's experience is representative of trends. 95% of domestic workers are women<sup>1</sup> and about half of all immigrant workers are domestic workers.<sup>2</sup> In fact, immigrants make up 28% of all in-home healthcare workers and more than 20% of all immigrants employed in direct care are undocumented.<sup>3</sup>
- **Economic growth.** Research shows that if eligible legal permanent residents become U.S. citizens, the U.S. economy would increase from \$37 billion to \$52 billion over 10 years.<sup>4</sup>
- **A growing sector.** In 2011, the Eldercare Workforce Alliance estimated<sup>5</sup> that by 2030 we will need nearly 3.5 million more healthcare and direct care providers to meet demand.<sup>6</sup>
- **Protection for workers.** 85% of undocumented immigrants who encountered problems with their working conditions in the prior 12 months of one study did not complain because they feared their immigration status would be used against them.<sup>8</sup> But some states have started passing bills to address this problem and treat workers like Joesy with the compassion they deserve.<sup>9</sup>

"Creating a pathway to citizenship will stabilize the home care workforce that millions depend on to live independently, and significantly increase the tax base for Social Security and Medicare."

- Richard J. Fiesta, Executive Director of Alliance for Retired Americans  
Source: [Caring Across Generations](#)

<sup>1</sup> National Domestic Workers Alliance: [www.domesticworkers.org](http://www.domesticworkers.org)

<sup>2</sup> Brookings: [brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2012/3/15%20immigrant%20workers%20singer/0315\\_immigrant\\_workers\\_singer.pdf](http://brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2012/3/15%20immigrant%20workers%20singer/0315_immigrant_workers_singer.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> U.S. News: [www.usnews.com/news/articles/2013/02/14/study-immigrants-fill-healthcare-worker-shortage](http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2013/02/14/study-immigrants-fill-healthcare-worker-shortage)

<sup>4</sup> Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration: [www.dornsife.usc.edu/assets/sites/731/docs/citizen\\_gain\\_web.pdf](http://www.dornsife.usc.edu/assets/sites/731/docs/citizen_gain_web.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Eldercare Workforce: [www.eldercareworkforce.org/newsroom/press-releases/article:3-5-million-workers-needed-by-2030-to-care-for-older-adults-current-levels-of-workforce-already-stretched](http://www.eldercareworkforce.org/newsroom/press-releases/article:3-5-million-workers-needed-by-2030-to-care-for-older-adults-current-levels-of-workforce-already-stretched)

<sup>6</sup> American Society on Aging: [www.asaging.org/blog/will-immigration-reform-address-our-need-eldercare-workers](http://www.asaging.org/blog/will-immigration-reform-address-our-need-eldercare-workers)

<sup>10</sup> National Immigration Law Center's: [www.nilc.org/pubs.html#statesessions](http://www.nilc.org/pubs.html#statesessions)

<sup>11</sup> Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration: [dornsife.usc.edu/assets/sites/731/docs/citizen\\_gain\\_web.pdf](http://dornsife.usc.edu/assets/sites/731/docs/citizen_gain_web.pdf)

- **Wages and benefits.** No matter where we were born, we are all entitled to the same basic respect and dignity. And yet despite the central role that domestic workers like Joesy play in our society, the 23% surveyed are paid below the state minimum wage and 70% are paid less than \$13 an hour. In fact, less than 2% receive retirement or pension benefits from their primary employer.<sup>7</sup>
- **Demand for foreign workers.** The availability of visas to enter and work in the U.S. through legal channels is severely limited and does not come close to meeting labor market demands. This is true for highly skilled workers<sup>10</sup> and unskilled workers.<sup>11</sup>
- **Adjusting our sails.** Immigration is a source of economic vitality. It can be thought of like wind in the sail that propels us forward as a country. While immigration trends, along with other economic factors have always affected workforce demographics differently from one community to the next, the overall impact of immigrants on the economy is positive. Between 1990 and 2004, increased immigration was correlated with increasing earnings of Americans by 0.7 percent and is expected to contribute to an increase of 1.8 percent over the long-term, according to a study by the University of California at Davis.<sup>12</sup>



## Suggested Bible Study Additions

Read the suggested passage and the text accompanying it. Watch the film as a group. Then use the discussion prompts and reflection questions to make connections and ties between the scriptural stories and the film. Additional scriptural references are provided and can be used in the Opening and Closing Prayer.

### Passage for Bible Study

**Parable of the Good Samaritan: Luke 10:25-37:** The biblical story of the Good Samaritan features the kindness, compassion and care provided by a Samaritan to someone who was beaten and robbed. Samaritans were a different ethnic people. Reflect on this scripture and how it relates to the care and service being provided by immigrant caregivers today.

<sup>7,9</sup> National Domestic Workers Alliance: [www.domesticworkers.org/homeeconomics/key-findings](http://www.domesticworkers.org/homeeconomics/key-findings)

<sup>10</sup> American Immigration Council: [immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/us-economy-still-needs-highly-skilled-foreign-workers](http://immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/us-economy-still-needs-highly-skilled-foreign-workers)

<sup>11</sup> American Immigration Council: [immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/employment-based-immigration-united-states-fact-sheet](http://immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/employment-based-immigration-united-states-fact-sheet)

## Additional Scriptural References

**Leviticus 19:33-34:** The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the Land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.

**Deuteronomy 24:14-15:** You shall not withhold the wages of poor and needy laborers, whether other Israelites or aliens who reside in your land in one of your towns. You shall pay them their wages daily before sunset, because they are poor and their livelihood depends on them; otherwise they might cry to the Lord against you, and you would incur guilt.

**Jeremiah 22:13:** Woe to him who makes neighbors work for nothing and does not give them their wages.

**Psalms 146:9:** The Lord watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked.

**Zechariah 7:10:** Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor, and do not plot evil in your hearts against one another.

## For Further Reflection

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

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

Joesy enjoys going to her church on Sundays. What role do you think her faith plays in her love for Haru?

The film depicts a touching friendship between Joesy and Haru. Have you ever experienced a meaningful friendship with an immigrant or considered different than you?

## 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.