

ONWARD

DISCUSSION GUIDE: *UNDERWATER DREAMS*



>> *Underwater Dreams* is a feature length documentary film by Mary Mazzio. The version included in ONWARD is a 44 minute video adapted from the film. Below you'll find suggestions for how to use it 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 *Underwater Dreams* to Spark Discussions About Immigration

Underwater Dreams is a beautiful "underdog" story that highlights the tremendous creativity and vision of a handful of young people who were brought to the U.S. as children. The film can be used to highlight the importance of diversity and the potential of immigrant children as a source of ingenuity and vitality that can help move our country forward. The short length makes it easy to pair with a group discussion, youth group activity, or other event. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- **Ask your church leader to incorporate it into their preaching and teaching** to prompt reflection and action around supporting undocumented children in your community, or to create a safe space for interaction and (inter-generational) dialogue.
- **Partner up with another congregation** that serves a primarily immigrant population to forge/strengthen new partnerships or collaborations between the two communities.
- **Organize an invite-only "VIP" screening** with elected officials, journalists, community and opinion leaders to engage them on the issues, highlight immigrant contributions, and identify feasible solutions to move our country forward.
- **Incorporate story into your professional development** to train staff or orient volunteer to the issues and our moral obligation to treat all human beings with compassion and respect.
- **Host a public screening event** to recruit new volunteers or raise funds for programs to support undocumented youth so they can more fully realize their potential to contribute.

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.

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.

Discussion Prompts

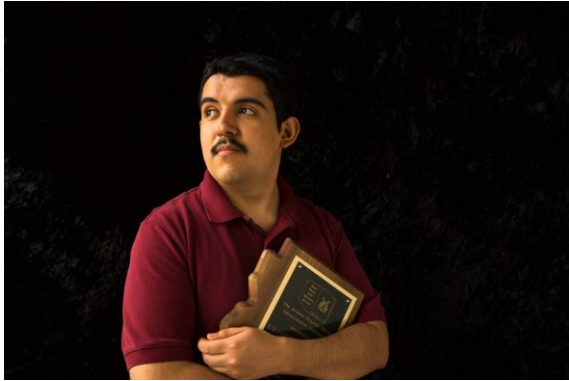
Here are some smart ways to start a conversation after you screen *Underwater Dreams* with your group. You can customize the discussion with some of the relevant data and scripture we've collected below.

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

- In your opinion, what key attributes, qualities or experiences did this "rag-tag" team of high school kids bring to the college level underwater robotics competition? Which of these attributes could also **help to move our country forward**?
- How do you think the Carl Hayden High School students are **contributing to their community** (taxes, cultural diversity, purchases of goods, workforce, friendship, etc.)? Please describe.



- Christian, who graduated second in his high school class, had his university **student financial aid revoked** as a result of Proposition 300 in Arizona, so he couldn't go to college. Do you believe it could be useful to offer a student like him financial aid so he can contribute meaningfully to our communities and our nation as a whole? Please explain your answer.
- Oscar enlisted in the U.S. Army as soon as he was eligible and did two tours of duty in Afghanistan. A Carl Hayden High School teacher praised him: "What a citizen, what an American." What, in your opinion, are the qualities of a good American? **Can a person be a good "American" without being a citizen?** Please explain.



- We learn that a few of the boys in the Carl Hayden team were undocumented and brought to the U.S. as children. And while these **young men have become role models** for a new generation of students at Carl Hayden High School, unlike the MIT students, **none of them has been able to forge a path in robotics.**
 - **What obstacles do you think the boys faced** in continuing their education and working in the field of engineering? What barriers are created by not having "papers"?
 - **What emotional and spiritual effect** do you think being undocumented could have on these young men? Please explain.
 - **What programs, organizations, policies, or other supports exist in your community** to help undocumented youth to more fully realize their potential to contribute? Do you know people in your church or community who have helped others in this way? Who are they and what motivated them?
 - **What are the benefits to your community** of supporting children like those featured in the film? How about our school or church community - both immediately and also in the long term? Please explain.
 - **What would your message be to policymakers** about the contributions of students like these? What could we do differently so that everyone benefits from our combined ingenuity?

Related Data

In many ways, the stories of these children are similar to those of millions of people in the United States. 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 local/national trends. You can find additional data in the Did You Know? documents on the various issue pages connected to the story.

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA): DACA makes it possible for undocumented youth like many of the boys at Carl Hayden High to study, work, and live in the U.S. temporarily with lawful status.

DACA Beneficiaries: About 2.1 million immigrants are eligible for DACA.¹ A survey of DACA beneficiaries² demonstrated that 60% of them obtained a new job and 45% increased their earnings.

U.S. Workforce Changes: As is the case in most other highly industrialized countries in the North and West, the U.S. labor force is aging and declining in number and the younger, working-age population is growing very slowly by comparison. This means the former is increasingly dependent on the tax-base contributions and productivity of the latter.³

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 workers⁴ and unskilled workers.⁵

STEM: The Carl Hayden underwater robotics team is representative of immigrant trends in the U.S. According to the Census Bureau, immigrants represent a disproportionately high percentage of engineers, mathematicians and scientists. Two-thirds of foreign students pursuing a bachelor's degree or higher in the U.S. are studying in STEM or business fields.⁶

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.⁷

To be considered for deferred action, the person must:

- Have entered the country before the age of 16;
- Have continuously resided in the United States since January 1, 2010;
- Graduated from High School, have a GED, or be in High School.ⁱ

To be considered for deferred action, the person must not:

- Have been convicted of a felony offense, a significant misdemeanor nor multiple misdemeanor offenses.ⁱⁱ

ⁱ National Immigration Law Center: <http://www.nilc.org/dapa&daca.html>

ⁱⁱ National Conference of State Legislatures: www.ncsl.org/research/immigration/deferred-action.aspx

American Innovation: The Partnership for a New American Economy has documented that in 2011, foreign-born inventors were credited with contributing to more than 75% of patents issued to the top ten patent-producing universities.

Border Enforcement: In the film, a few of the young students explain that they crossed the border with their families to enter the U.S. However, half of unauthorized residents in the U.S. are estimated to have entered the country legally, indicating these are visa overstays and not border crossers.⁸ And yet, enforcement measures at the border of the U.S. and Mexico represents the most heavily funded and publicized element of the enforcement system.⁹

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

² Brookings: www.brookings.edu/blogs/the-avenue/posts/2014/11/19-daca-executive-action-immigration-singer

³ Frey, William, H. (2014). Diversity Explosion: How New Racial Demographics are Remaking America, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institute

⁴ American Immigration Council: immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/us-economy-still-needs-highly-skilled-foreign-workers

⁵ American Immigration Council: immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/employment-based-immigration-united-states-fact-sheet

⁶ Ruiz, Neil G.: www.brookings.edu/research/interactives/2014/geography-of-foreign-students

⁷ Scientific American: www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-diversity-makes-us-smarter/

⁸ Brookings: www.brookings.edu/blogs/up-front/posts/2013/03/01-us-immigration-reform-wilson

⁹ Migration Policy Institute: www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/pillars-reportinbrief.pdf

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

The Story of Esther – Book of Esther Chapter 2-8: Esther is a young teenage girl growing up among the Jewish diaspora in the Persian Empire. In many ways she can “pass” and excel in the society where she is a minority, but there comes a point where a barrier arises and she and her people will be faced with persecution and even death. What must Esther overcome in herself to “come out” and advocate for her people? How do you see the young men in this film also overcome barriers and speak openly about their situation?

Additional Scriptural References

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.

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 do you believe is God's dream for each of the young men from Carl Hayden in this film? What prayer would you offer for each of them?

What prayer would you offer for our country and the hearts of decision-makers so that the gifts and human ingenuity of all persons be fully appreciated.

Our country and faith traditions value hard work, service, and compassion. How could our public systems reflect those values, so that people like the children featured in this story 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.