



# **MOVEMENT IS A HUMAN RIGHT:**

**Migrants, Refugees, and Asylum-Seekers in the U.S.**

# WHO WE ARE

Woven Teaching is the human rights education practice of the Bylo Chacon Foundation. Through a combination of original programming and grantmaking, Woven Teaching advances the foundation's focus on long-term change towards a widespread acceptance of basic human rights for all.

Our programmatic work is dedicated to supporting classroom teachers with practical help for ethical and effective instruction. We believe that by weaving **human rights education** into the curriculum, we can help educators create socially responsible global citizens.

Woven Teaching envisions a world in which every student's education includes:

- A sense of historical perspective;
- The development of critical thinking skills;
- A feeling of global citizenship;
- The ability to identify bigotry – understanding its negative effects on both individuals and society – and the analytical tools to combat it.

## CONTACT



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Do you have feedback on this lesson or want to share how you implemented it in your classroom? We'd love to hear from you!

Please take our short evaluation at [bit.ly/WT-eval](https://bit.ly/WT-eval) or scan the QR code to the left.

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# INTRODUCTION

One of the most prominent topics in the news has been the crisis at the U.S.-Mexico border. While the reality of the situation is complicated and defies simple answers, this lesson offers students an opportunity to learn more about the experience of refugees, migrants, and asylum-seekers as well as U.S. immigration law. Additionally, misinformation about asylum-seekers and immigrant communities is clarified with facts and personal narratives.

Woven Teaching has created this lesson to:

- Address and correct myths about immigration and refugees
- Provide space for students to discuss complex ideas about immigration and asylum
- Reinforce the concept that asylum is a fundamental human right

## FOCUS ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Woven Teaching believes that human rights education is essential for students to assert their own rights and to protect the rights of others. As a result, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) lies at the core of Woven Teaching's materials. The document's 30 articles outline fundamental human rights: basic rights and freedoms which every human being is entitled to, regardless of the person's race, religion, birthplace, gender, sexual orientation, or other characteristic. Although its articles are not legally binding, the UDHR serves as the moral compass for the international community.

The activities in *Movement is a Human Right* connect directly to several UDHR articles, including:

- Article 3: All people have the right to life, liberty, and safety.
- Article 5: No one should be subject to torture or to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment.
- Article 9: No one should be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention, or exile.
- Article 13: Everyone has freedom of movement, including the right to leave their country.
- Article 14: Everyone has the right to seek asylum from persecution.

Please see Appendix (pg. 22) for a student version of the UDHR.

## CONTENT LEVEL:

9 - 12

## TIME:

90 Minutes

## GUIDING QUESTIONS

- Does the United States have a responsibility to protect refugees?
- What can we learn from the stories of migrants and refugees?

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After this lesson, students will be able to:

- Explain the difference between the terms ‘migrant,’ ‘refugee,’ and ‘asylum-seeker.’
- Debunk common myths about immigration to the United States.
- Understand some of the reasons why an individual might flee their country and seek asylum elsewhere.
- Articulate their opinion on migration and asylum as it relates to the United States.

## MATERIALS & TECHNOLOGY

- Computer with projector and speakers
- Google Slides presentation (optional)
- Student Handouts (3)
  - Definitions [Handout A]
  - Eyewitness Reports [Handout B]
  - UDHR - Student Version (optional)

## COMMON CORE STANDARDS

### Reading Informational Text

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.1

### Speaking & Listening

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.C
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.D

### Writing

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.4

### Language

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.1

### History/Social Studies

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7

# CONSIDERATIONS FOR TEACHING ETHICALLY AND EFFECTIVELY

1. Briefly review your classroom's ground rules for discussion and remind students to communicate respectfully.
2. Be sensitive to students' personal histories related to migration and the feelings that this topic may bring up for them.
3. Avoid situations where students who have personal experience with immigration are put on the spot and expected to speak for all immigrants or all refugees.
4. Remind students to use "I statements" and to avoid speaking for another person or community.
5. Encourage students to critically examine both the topic and their feelings about it.
6. Be mindful that the notion of the United States as a "nation of immigrants" does not take into account the experience of Native Americans or many African Americans.
7. Complicate thinking. Immigration is a complex and multi-faceted issue.
8. Ask students to speak or write about the subject carefully and to be aware of ways that bias shows up in language, e.g. "undocumented immigrant" vs. "illegal alien."

# ACTIVITY 1: DEFINITIONS

When discussing controversial topics, it is particularly important to be precise with our language. In this activity, students will learn the difference between the terms ‘migrant,’ ‘refugee,’ and ‘asylum-seeker.’

## Procedure (15 Minutes):

1. As students trickle into class, give them a copy of Handout A and have them read over the key terms on the back. Explain that you will be exploring what it means to be a migrant or a refugee today and will be talking about the current situation at the U.S.-Mexico border.
2. As part of this explanation, tell students that the right to asylum is one of the human rights enshrined in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. All individuals, regardless of where they live, have the right to flee their country and request protection from another state if they are being persecuted.
3. Once all students have arrived, begin the following video from TedEd. Explain that they should use the information from the video to complete the fill-in-the blank activity on the front side of Handout A.



### Teaching Tip

*Students may wish to explore all 30 articles of the UDHR. A student version of the document is available in the Appendix, pg. 22.*

To better ensure all students can process the information, be sure to turn on the closed captioning.



## What Does It Mean To Be A Refugee? (5:30)\*

At the end of the film, give students a few minutes to complete the handout. Then, briefly discuss the following questions as a class.

1. What is the difference between a migrant and refugee or asylum-seeker?
2. What are some reasons why refugees flee from their country of origin? What does ‘membership in a social group’ mean, and what kinds of people might this apply to?
3. Why is the right to asylum an important right for all people to have?

*\*Source: Benedetta Berti and Evelien Borgman, “What does it mean to be a refugee?,” TedEd, <https://ed.ted.com/lessons/what-does-it-mean-to-be-a-refugee-benedetta-berti-and-evelien-borgman#review>.*

## ACTIVITY 2: DEBUNKING MYTHS

There are many common misconceptions about immigrants and the immigration process in the United States. In this activity, students will examine some of these and debunk some of these myths.

### Procedure (25 Minutes):

1. Ask students to look at the activity on the back of **Handout A**. Students should read the statements to themselves and mark whether they believe the statements are true or false.
2. After all students have completed the page, debrief as a class. In your discussion, refer to the answer key on pages 19-21.

### Questions for Further Discussion:

- Were any of the answers surprising to you? Why?
- Why do you think that misunderstandings about immigrants and refugees are so widespread? What can we do to counter these misconceptions?
- Why is this information important to have?

## ACTIVITY 3: EYEWITNESS REPORTS

There are many reasons why a person might leave their country and seek asylum in another. In this activity, students will read eyewitness reports from Central Americans who have come to the United States seeking asylum.

### Procedure (25 Minutes):

1. Divide students into groups of three and distribute one set of Eyewitness Reports [Handout B] to each group. Each report includes the eyewitness testimony of a migrant or asylum-seeker from a different location in Central America (Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador), and each student in the group should have a different report.
2. Ask students to read their handouts silently, making annotations about things that surprise them, questions they have, or other notes.
3. Once all students in the group have finished reading, each student will summarize their passage to their group and use one word to describe how the passage made them feel.

Then, the group should discuss the following questions:

- a. Would you consider this person a migrant or a refugee/asylum-seeker? Why did they leave their country?
- b. What do the stories have in common? How are they different?
- c. Why do you think it is important to learn about the experience of migrants and refugees?

# ACTIVITY 4: BELIEFS ABOUT ASYLUM

Under international law, the United States is required to provide protection to refugees (although the President can set the limit for the number of people accepted into the country). In this activity, students will have the opportunity to articulate their beliefs on immigration and to learn from or challenge their peers' perspectives.

## Procedure (25 Minutes):

1. Read the statements below one at a time. After reading each statement, ask students to move to either side of the room to demonstrate their opinion.

They should move to the LEFT side of the room if they agree with the statement, and they should move to the RIGHT side of the room if they disagree. Even if students feel ambivalent about their answers, they should pick a side. Ask students to move silently until every person has taken their place either on the left or right side of the room.

### Statements about asylum:

- The United States should offer protection to anyone fleeing persecution.
- The U.S. government needs to make sure that all Americans are provided for before it offers help to refugees or asylum-seekers
- Refugees should enjoy the same rights as U.S. citizens.
- The United States is not currently living up to the poem on the Statue of Liberty, "The New Colossus," written by Emma Lazarus in 1883. The poem's final lines read:

*"Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"*

You may wish to ask students to look at this language carefully. *What does "free" mean in this context? What does "wretched refuse of your teeming shore" mean?*

2. After students have moved to one side or the other, debrief by asking a couple students on each side to explain their position. Debate between sides should be encouraged, as long as it remains respectful. Students are encouraged to switch sides during the discussion if they have a change of opinion. Allow students the opportunity to speak up if they do not feel comfortable with something their classmates have said, or to speak with you privately at the close of the activity.



# REFLECTION

Discussions about immigration have the potential for conflict and strong emotions, so it is important to give your students space for reflection.

## Suggested Writing Prompts:

1. How did you feel while participating in this lesson?
2. What are three things you learned from this lesson?
3. How did your views on migrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers change over the course of this lesson?
4. Did you leave class wanting to express anything that you felt was left unsaid? If yes, what did you wish to express?
5. How has this lesson impacted your view of the humanitarian crisis at the U.S.-Mexico border?



# STUDENT HANDOUTS

# DEFINITIONS: MIGRANTS, REFUGEES, & ASYLUM-SEEKERS

One of the most prominent topics in the news has been the humanitarian crisis at the U.S.-Mexico border. The reality of the situation is complicated and defies simple answers.

In order to be an informed global citizen, it is important for all students to learn more about the experience of refugees, migrants, and asylum-seekers as well as U.S. immigration law. Additionally, because misinformation about asylum-seekers and immigrant communities is widespread, it is important to separate myths from reality.

During the following lesson, consider your own thoughts and opinions on the crisis at the border and how they change (or don't) over the course of the activities.

Watch “What does it mean to be a refugee?” and complete the following sentences using the words below.

asylum-seekers	displacement	internally displaced persons	migrants
nationality	non-refoulement	persecution	refugees

1. Around the world, there are currently 60 million people who have been forced to flee their homes due to war, violence, or \_\_\_\_\_.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ are individuals who flee their homes but stay inside their country.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ are people who flee their homes and cross international borders seeking safety.
4. The modern definition of ‘refugee’ was drafted in 1951, in response to the mass persecution and \_\_\_\_\_ from the Second World War.
5. Under international law, a person may qualify as a refugee if they fear persecution because of their race, religion, \_\_\_\_\_, membership in a social group, or political opinion.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ are people who leave their country for reasons not related to persecution, such as employment or educational opportunities.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ are not legally considered refugees until a host country accepts their asylum applications.
8. Because of laws concerning \_\_\_\_\_, host countries cannot force refugees or asylum-seekers back to their home countries if they may be harmed or persecuted there.

# TRUE/FALSE

Determine whether each statement below is true or false.

1. Under international law, the United States must provide protection to refugees and asylum-seekers. **T / F**
2. It is legal to request asylum anywhere on U.S. territory. **T / F**
3. Accepting refugees into the country burdens U.S. taxpayers. **T / F**
4. Asylum-seekers must provide proof that they are at-risk of violence and persecution in order for the U.S. to approve their asylum application. **T / F**
5. Refugees and immigrants are more likely than U.S. citizens to commit crimes. **T / F**
6. U.S. law states that asylum-seekers must live in detention centers while they await their immigration court date. **T / F**
7. The United States resettles more refugees than any other country in the world. **T / F**
8. The right to asylum is a human right. **T / F**

## KEY TERMS

**asylum:** protection granted to a foreign person, inside the United States or at a point of entry, who meets the legal definition of a “refugee.”

**asylum-seeker:** a person who flees their country and is seeking international protection. Under U.S. law, applications for asylum come from people who are physically present in the U.S. or at a port of entry (like a border checkpoint or an airport).

**‘credible fear’:** the concept in U.S. asylum law whereby an asylum-seeker must prove that there is a real threat of persecution if they return home. If they have established a ‘credible fear,’ international law states that the asylum-seeker cannot be deported back to their home country.

**displacement:** the forced movement of people from one place to another.

**internally displaced person:** a person who flees their home due to conflict, violence, or disaster, but who remains within their country’s borders.

**migrant:** someone who chooses to leave their home country and live in another, but not for reasons of fear or persecution. Migrants often leave their countries to pursue economic or educational opportunities elsewhere.

**non-refoulement (non ray-fool-mon):** a principle in international law that bans countries from sending refugees and asylum-seekers back to countries where they may be harmed or persecuted.

**refugee:** a person who flees their country of origin and is unwilling or unable to return based on a well-founded fear of persecution due to: race, religion, political opinion, nationality, or membership in a social group. Under U.S. law, applications for refugee status come from people physically outside of the United States.

**undocumented immigrant:** a person who resides in a country without proper documentation (e.g. a visa).

# EYEWITNESS REPORTS

## HONDURAS

According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), there are currently 25.9 million refugees around the world, half of whom are children under the age of 18. Refugees are unwilling or unable to return to their countries of origin due to a fear of persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group.

By the end of 2019, it is expected that nearly 540,000 people will be displaced in Central America. Much of this displacement occurs in the so-called ‘Northern Triangle’ of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. Due to increasing gang recruitment, violence, and political and economic instability, many Salvadorans have fled their country, seeking safety in Mexico or the United States. Others make the dangerous journey to the United States seeking work and other opportunities, or to reunite with family members already living in the U.S.

## MAINOR'S STORY

“One day they threatened me in front of my mom. They told my mother that if she does not make me disappear, they would kill me there in front of my house, in front of all my brothers,” [Mainor] Meléndez said in the temporary migrant shelter in Mexico City.

“Meléndez is an up-and-coming soccer talent; he played in one of the top divisions in his region. He was about to advance to an adult league and play with people older than him, but he could not escape the gangs. They would hang out in front of his school, pressuring the kids to join. When Meléndez and his friends resisted, the gangsters took offense. His friends jokingly call him “*Diablo*” [“Devil”] after he bought a number of red jumpsuits for his trip across Mexico.

“They killed two of my friends. They killed two. They cut off their heads...Everyone knew who they were and the police did nothing,” he said.

“The gangs sent threats through Facebook, photos of guns and notes saying he would soon meet their knife. This is when Meléndez knew he had to leave.”

*Source: Mother Jones; written by Brett Gundlock - [bit.ly/2GrEKza](https://bit.ly/2GrEKza)*

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. In one word, how does Mainor’s story make you feel?
2. Would you classify Mainor as a migrant or a refugee/asylum-seeker? Why did he leave Honduras?
3. How does Mainor’s experience similar or different from the experiences of the migrants/asylum-seekers your group read about?
4. Why do you think it is important to learn about the experience of migrants and refugees?



# EYEWITNESS REPORTS

## EL SALVADOR

According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), there are currently 25.9 million refugees around the world, half of whom are children under the age of 18. Refugees are unwilling or unable to return to their countries of origin due to a fear of persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group.

By the end of 2019, it is expected that nearly 540,000 people will be displaced in Central America. Much of this displacement occurs in the so-called 'Northern Triangle' of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. Due to increasing gang recruitment, violence, and political and economic instability, many Salvadorans have fled their country, seeking safety in Mexico or the United States. Others make the dangerous journey to the United States seeking work and other opportunities, or to reunite with family members already living in the U.S.

## MARIA'S STORY

“Maria, a transgender woman from El Salvador, fled her home country twice. The first time, she and a transgender friend were detained for several months by the Mexican authorities. ‘We were detained with men and were sexually and physically abused there,’ she said. ‘My friend could not stand being detained, and she decided to be returned to El Salvador. Then she was killed when she went back.’

“Maria pursued her asylum case while detained in Mexico. ‘But I lost after four months. They had me interviewed by a man when I asked to be interviewed by a woman. They denied my case for ‘lack of proof.’

“Persecuted and abused again by Salvadoran police after being returned to El Salvador, Maria fled again, with a different transgender friend. The second time she reached Mexico, immigration police arrested her again. “I was punched in the face and bleeding,” she said. “They stole all our belongings.” Maria was able to run away and stayed in a shelter in Mexico for a few months, but, living in constant fear there, she traveled to the United States to apply for asylum.”

*Source: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees - [bit.ly/2LEvFYa](https://bit.ly/2LEvFYa)*

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. In one word, how does Maria's story make you feel?
2. Would you classify Maria as a migrant or a refugee/asylum-seeker? Why did she leave El Salvador?
3. How is Maria's experience similar or different from the experiences of the migrants/asylum-seekers your group read about?
4. Why do you think it is important to learn about the experience of migrants and refugees?



# EYEWITNESS REPORTS

## GUATEMALA

According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), there are currently 25.9 million refugees around the world, half of whom are children under the age of 18. Refugees are unwilling or unable to return to their countries of origin due to a fear of persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group.

By the end of 2019, it is expected that nearly 540,000 people will be displaced in Central America. Much of this displacement occurs in the so-called ‘Northern Triangle’ of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. Due to increasing gang recruitment, violence, and political and economic instability, many Salvadorans have fled their country, seeking safety in Mexico or the United States. Others make the dangerous journey to the United States seeking work and other opportunities, or to reunite with family members already living in the U.S.

## OSCAR'S STORY

“Thirty-two-year-old Oscar Leonel Lopez has lived [in Guatemala] his whole life, except for a couple of months when he attempted to migrate to the United States in February last year. ‘My intention was to head to Florida,’ he says, but he was caught at the border and quickly deported. Lopez has a wife and six small children.

“‘I made the decision to migrate to the United States because there are no jobs here,’ he says, ‘that’s why women, children, everybody is leaving my country,’ to make a decent living, he says. ‘My family didn’t have money to send me to school and have a profession. Maybe my kids can get an education and can create a better life for themselves.’ Lopez says poverty forced him to quit school after seventh grade. [...]

“Lopez knows that immigration laws have changed in the U.S. and that the journey has become more dangerous, ‘but what we suffer here is worse than what we risk’ he says. ‘People are pushed to gamble the journey, to lose money [borrowed to pay human smugglers], because if I’m lucky to cross, I know I’ll have a job.’”

Source: NPR; written by Marisa Peñaloza - <http://n.pr/2JYgp4Z>

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. In one word, how does Oscar’s story make you feel?
2. Would you classify Oscar as a migrant or a refugee/asylum-seeker? Why did he leave Guatemala?
3. How is Oscar’s experience similar or different from the experiences of the migrants/asylum-seekers your group read about?
4. Why do you think it is important to learn about the experience of migrants and refugees?





# APPENDIX

# ANSWER KEY: DEFINITIONS WORKSHEET

1. Around the world, there are currently 60 million people who have been forced to flee their homes due to war, violence, or persecution.
2. Internally displaced persons are individuals who flee their homes but stay inside their country.
3. Refugees are people who flee their homes and cross international borders seeking safety.
4. The modern definition of 'refugee' was drafted in 1951, in response to the mass persecution and displacement from the Second World War.
5. Under international law, a person may qualify as a refugee if they fear persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, membership in a social group, or political opinion.
6. Migrants are people who leave their country for reasons not related to persecution, such as employment or educational opportunities.
7. Asylum-seekers are not legally considered refugees until a host country accepts their asylum applications.
8. Because of laws concerning non-refoulement, host countries cannot force refugees or asylum-seekers back to their home countries if they may be harmed or persecuted there.

## Discussion Questions:

### 1. What is the difference between a migrant and refugee or asylum-seeker?

A migrant is someone who chooses to leave their country for a reason unrelated to persecution, e.g. employment, educational opportunities, reunification with loved ones, etc.

### 2. What are some reasons why refugees flee from their country of origin? Why is 'membership in a social group' a category, and what does it mean?

Refugees flee violent situations (such as war or gang/militia violence) or persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a social group, or political opinion. Membership in a social group is based on a person's background, habits, or social status. It is the most vague category of the five listed and can include a number of different types of persecution. Some who may qualify for this category are:

- Domestic violence survivors
- LGBTQIA+ individuals
- Individuals with disabilities

### 3. Why is the right to asylum an important right for all people to have?

All humans are born with the rights to dignity and safety. The right to asylum allows individuals to escape situations that could be potentially harmful or fatal for them.

# ANSWER KEY: DEBUNKING MYTHS

## 1. Under international law, the United States must provide protection to refugees and asylum-seekers.

**TRUE.** The United States is a signatory to the United Nations 1951 Convention Concerning the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol. As a result, it has a responsibility in the international community to provide protection to refugees. It must also abide by the principle of non-refoulement, the concept stating that those who have requested asylum may not be sent back to their home country if the threat of violence or persecution remains.<sup>1</sup>

The U.S. also has a responsibility under federal law. The Refugee Act of 1980 aligned the U.S. definition of ‘refugee’ with the UN definition; increased the annual ceiling for the number of refugees the country would accept; created the Office of Refugee Resettlement; and created procedures for processing refugees in the U.S.

## 2. It is legal to request asylum anywhere on U.S. territory.

**TRUE.** Under U.S. law, it is legal to request asylum at a port of entry (such as a border checkpoint, airport, etc.) or from inside the country itself. If a person came into the U.S. and did not request asylum upon entry, they have one year from the date of their arrival to request asylum.<sup>2</sup>

Asylum may also be requested as a means of challenging deportation orders, though like other asylum-seekers, the requester must establish ‘credible fear’ of persecution in their country of origin.

## 3. Accepting refugees into the country burdens U.S. taxpayers.

**FALSE.** Although asylees and refugees may need public assistance upon arrival, a recent study shows that they pay more in taxes than they receive from welfare after just eight years in the United States.<sup>3</sup>

Additionally, once a person is legally confirmed as a refugee or asylee in the U.S., they have the right to work in the country and can start to provide for themselves and their loved ones. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, foreign-born residents of the U.S. have a lower unemployment rate than native-born residents. This does not mean, however, that immigrants or refugees take jobs from Americans. Immigrants often work at low-paying, dangerous, or odd-hour jobs in order to make ends meet. In many industries, it can be difficult to find native-born residents who wish to fill these roles. For this reason (and others), immigrants and refugees are a critical part of the American economy.

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1 “Fact Sheet: Asylum in the United States,” American Immigration Council, May 14, 2018, <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/asylum-united-states> (accessed July 18, 2019).

2 “Obtaining Asylum in the United States,” U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/refugees-asylum/asylum/obtaining-asylum-united-states> (accessed July 17, 2018).

3 William N. Evans and Daniel Fitzgerald, “The Economic and Social Outcomes of Refugees in the United States: Evidence From the ACS,” National Bureau of Economic Research, June 2017, <https://www.nber.org/papers/w23498.pdf> (accessed July 18, 2019).

# DEBUNKING MYTHS (CONTINUED)

## 4. Asylum-seekers must provide proof that they are at risk of violence and persecution in order for the U.S. to approve their asylum application.

**TRUE.** In order to be granted asylum in the United States, all asylum-seekers must undergo an interview to establish that they have a ‘credible fear’ of returning to their country, as well as a hearing with an immigration judge. Interviewees must bring any identity documents they have, as well as proof that they were persecuted in their country of origin. Proof can include documents, photos, recordings, or witnesses. Whether or not the asylum-seeker has established a ‘credible fear’ is up to the sole discretion of the asylum officer who interviews them.<sup>4</sup>

This process can be very difficult, as many asylum-seekers leave their countries quickly, often without documents or ‘proof’ of persecution. Additionally, they may not be fluent in English, the language in which all asylum interviews are conducted. If they cannot complete the interview in English, the asylum seeker must provide their own translator.

The process for refugees is different, as U.S. law stipulates that the legal definition of refugee is someone seeking protection from a location outside of the United States (i.e. not inside the country or at a point of entry). After being screened by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, refugees must also be vetted by the United States. This process includes 8 government agencies, 5 security databases, 6 background checks, and 3 in-person interviews.<sup>5</sup>

## 5. Refugees and immigrants are more likely than U.S. citizens to commit crimes.

**FALSE.** Numerous studies have shown that immigrants as a whole – whether documented or undocumented, migrants or refugees – commit fewer crimes than U.S. citizens.

According to a 2015 study, although the immigrant population of the United States has grown over the past several decades, violent crime rates have actually fallen.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, a 2017 study found that a higher immigrant population may have the effect of lowering a city’s crime rate.<sup>7</sup>

## 6. U.S. law states that asylum-seekers must live in detention centers while they await their immigration court date.

**FALSE.** Under U.S. law, asylum-seekers who have established a ‘credible fear’ do not have to be detained while they await their hearing. In July 2019, a US District Judge ruled that it is unconstitutional to hold asylum-seekers in detention facilities indefinitely; all asylum-seekers should have the opportunity for a bond hearing.<sup>8</sup>

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4 “Preparing for Your Asylum Interview,” U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/refugees-asylum/asylum/preparing-your-asylum-interview> (accessed July 19, 2019).

5 “Refugee Resettlement Facts,” United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, February 2019, <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/us-refugee-resettlement-facts.html> (accessed July 23, 2019).

6 Anna Flagg, “The Myth of the Criminal Immigrant,” *The New York Times*, March 30, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/03/30/upshot/crime-immigration-myth.html> (accessed July 19, 2019).

7 Graham C. Ousey and Charis E. Kubrin, “Immigration and Crime: Assessing a Contentious Issue,” *Annual Review of Criminology*, <https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/pdf/10.1146/annurev-criminol-032317-092026> (accessed July 18, 2019).

8 Vanessa Romo, “Federal Judge Blocks Trump Policy Ordering Indefinite Detention For Asylum-Seekers,” *NPR*, July 3, 2019, <https://www.npr.org/2019/07/03/738385096/federal-judge-blocks-trump-policy-ordering-indefinite-detention-for-asylum-seeke> (accessed July 18, 2019).

In addition to the possible physical and psychological harm that detention can cause, detention can also make it more difficult for asylum-seekers to be granted asylum. While detained, they often have little or no access to legal counsel or other assistance.

It is often stated that once released from detention, asylum-seekers do not show up for their immigration court dates. Statistics from the Department of Justice say otherwise. Over a five year period, only 10 percent of asylees living outside of detention centers did not show up for their court dates.<sup>9</sup>

**7. The United States resettles more refugees than any other country in the world.**

**FALSE.** In 2018, for the first time in over 30 years, the United States was not the number one resettler of refugees in the world. Canada resettled 28,000 refugees, while the United States resettled 23,000. Globally, 92,000 refugees were resettled in 2018.<sup>10</sup>

The refugees resettled by the U.S. in 2018 came from all over the world – 47% from Africa, 17% from the Near East and South Asia, 16% each from Europe and Asia, and 4% from Latin America and the Caribbean. These numbers do not include individuals seeking asylum at the southern border or elsewhere in the United States.<sup>11</sup>

**8. The right to asylum is a human right.**

**TRUE.** The right to asylum is enshrined in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Written in 1948, this document establishes a set of inalienable rights that ensure the life, liberty, and dignity of all human beings.

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9 Warren Fiske, “Rep. Rob Wittman says 85 percent of immigrants skip their court hearings,” Politifact, November 13, 2018, <https://www.politifact.com/virginia/statements/2018/nov/13/rob-wittman/rep-rob-wittman-says-85-percent-immigrants-skip-th/> (accessed July 22, 2019).

10 Jynnah Radford and Phillip Connor, “Canada now leads the world in refugee resettlement, surpassing the U.S.,” Pew Research Center, June 19, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/06/19/canada-now-leads-the-world-in-refugee-resettlement-surpassing-the-u-s/> (accessed July 19, 2019).

11 “Refugee Resettlement Facts.”

# UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

## STUDENT VERSION

<b>1</b> All human beings are born <b>equal in dignity</b> and in rights.	<b>2</b> These <b>rights belong to everyone</b> . You should never be discriminated against.	<b>3</b> You have the right to <b>life, liberty, and safety</b> .
<b>4</b> No one can hold you in <b>slavery</b> .	<b>5</b> No one can <b>torture</b> you or treat you in a cruel or degrading way.	<b>6</b> <b>Everyone has rights</b> , no matter where they are.
<b>7</b> Laws should be <b>applied the same way</b> for everyone.	<b>8</b> You have the right to <b>seek legal help</b> if your rights are not respected.	<b>9</b> You cannot be <b>imprisoned or thrown out of a country</b> without a good reason.
<b>10</b> You have the right to a <b>public trial</b> .	<b>11</b> You should be presumed <b>innocent until proven guilty</b> .	<b>12</b> You have a right to <b>privacy</b> . No one can enter your home, read your mail, or bother you without good reason.
<b>13</b> You have the right to <b>move and travel</b> within your country and internationally.	<b>14</b> You have the right to <b>seek protection from another country</b> (asylum) if your country treats you poorly.	<b>15</b> You have the right to <b>be a citizen</b> of a country (have a nationality).
<b>16</b> Every adult has the right to <b>get married</b> and <b>have a family</b> .	<b>17</b> You have the right to <b>own property</b> .	<b>18</b> You have the right to <b>practice any religion</b> .
<b>19</b> You have the right to <b>express your opinion</b> .	<b>20</b> You have the right to gather with others and <b>protest publicly</b> .	<b>21</b> You have the right to <b>participate in the government</b> of your country (e.g. vote).
<b>22</b> You have the right to have your <b>basic needs met</b> (e.g. through social security programs).	<b>23</b> You have the right to work, to receive equal pay for equal work, and to <b>join a union</b> .	<b>24</b> You have the right to <b>rest</b> from work.
<b>25</b> You have the right to an <b>adequate standard of living</b> , including housing, food, and medical care.	<b>26</b> You have the right to an <b>education</b> .	<b>27</b> No one can stop you from <b>participating in your community's cultural life</b> .
<b>28</b> Everyone must <b>respect the social order</b> that allows these rights to exist.	<b>29</b> Everyone must <b>respect the rights of others</b> .	<b>30</b> No one can <b>take any of the rights</b> in this declaration away from you.

# RESOURCES

## **Asylum 101 – HIAS**

[hias.org/sites/default/files/asylum\\_101.pdf](https://hias.org/sites/default/files/asylum_101.pdf)

HIAS helps to protect and resettle refugees from around the world. This short handout provides information about the asylum process in the U.S. and includes a vocabulary list of key players.

## **A Guide to International Refugee Protection and Building State Asylum Systems – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees**

[unhcr.org/en-us/publications/legal/3d4aba564/refugee-protection-guide-international-refugee-law-handbook-parliamentarians.html](https://unhcr.org/en-us/publications/legal/3d4aba564/refugee-protection-guide-international-refugee-law-handbook-parliamentarians.html)

This lengthy handbook includes helpful information about the international legal framework protecting refugees. It also includes a section on the rights of all refugees and asylum-seekers.

## **Immigration – Teaching Tolerance**

[tolerance.org/topics/immigration](https://tolerance.org/topics/immigration)

Teaching Tolerance has lesson plans on many topics related to social justice, including immigration. Their section on this important topic includes materials about immigration myths, Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE), and sanctuary cities.

## **Refugees in America – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees**

[unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/usa/](https://unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/usa/)

The UNHCR site includes recent statistics about refugee resettlement in the United States. It also has several helpful resources about refugees and the refugee experience around the world.

## **Resources for Educators – Stand with Immigrants**

[standwithimmigrants.org/resources\\_for\\_educators](https://standwithimmigrants.org/resources_for_educators)

Stand with Immigrants is a national legal group that helps to protect immigrants from deportation. It also works to advocate for fair treatment and due process for immigrant communities. The site includes a few helpful resources for educators, as well as a list of ways that students can get involved in campaigns to protect vulnerable communities.

# END OF PREVIEW

To download the full lesson, please [create a free account](#).

