

## Discussion Guide

### *Uprooted: Heartache and Hope in New Hampshire*

**Introduction:** This discussion guide is intended for moderators, teachers, or facilitators who are leading discussions following the screening of *Uprooted: Heartache and Hope in New Hampshire*. It accompanies the Fact Sheet found at [www.unh.edu/uprooted](http://www.unh.edu/uprooted). Discussion leaders are welcome to pick and choose topics, themes and questions that are appropriate to needs of audience members.

#### **First Reactions to the Documentary**

1. What surprised you about the documentary? What disturbed you? What intrigued you?
2. The refugees featured in the documentary are Umija Gusinac from Bosnia, Rasim Gusinac from Serbia, Zahara Mahitula from Somalia, Udai Baskota from Bhutan, and Munaf Mahmood from Iraq. Whose story was most powerful for you? Why?
3. Do you personally know any refugees? How are their stories and lives similar to or different from the people featured in this film?
4. Do you agree or disagree with Umija Gusinac's statement that she will always be a refugee? Why or why not?
5. Has the documentary changed your perceptions about refugees? If so, how?

#### **Acceptance: Whom do we accept; whom do we reject?**

1. Do ethnic, religious, cultural, or racial differences play a role in how refugees are accepted in New Hampshire communities? If so, why? What differences are the biggest barriers to acceptance?
2. In the past, what nationalities or religions or ethnicities weren't accepted by local communities in New Hampshire? Why was this the case? Do current refugees face some of the same issues in New Hampshire?
3. The following is an excerpt from "The History of Our Diocese" about the Catholic diocese in New Hampshire found at <http://www.catholicnh.org/about-us/125th/archive/history-of-our-diocese/#beginnings>

The first of several French Canadian parishes were founded in 1873 to accommodate the rapidly increasing population of immigrants from Quebec, a population estimated to have grown by 340,000 in

New Hampshire from 1850 - 1900. By the turn of the last century Manchester's Catholic population was roughly 40 percent French Canadian and 60 percent Irish, with the accompanying tensions that one might expect between two ethnic populations competing for employment in industries owned by neither of them. The Catholic population in general, however, faced far greater threats from the notoriously anti-Catholic Know-Nothing party and various spin-off groups. The Know-Nothings had some 250 lodges throughout the state by 1855 when they successfully elected their candidate for governor, as well as all three of their candidates for the U.S. Congress, and took control of the state Senate and House of Representatives. Catholics in New Hampshire were prohibited from holding state office until after 1877.

What are your reactions? What does it say about ethnic and religious tolerance in New Hampshire? What does it imply about the growth of tolerance toward newcomers in New Hampshire? Do you think that there are any anti-Muslim feelings in New Hampshire? If so what are the similarities and differences between anti-Catholic feelings in the 1800s and anti-Muslim feelings of today? Does the controversy over the building of a proposed mosque in Manchester demonstrate anti-Muslim sentiments? Do religious beliefs and practices determine how newcomers are accepted in New Hampshire?

4. A few years ago, New Hampshire Public Radio did a series about the diversity at Manchester High School Central. One thing they discovered was that most students self-segregated and sat with students of similar racial and ethnic backgrounds in the cafeteria. You can listen to the series and see photographs at: <http://www.nhpr.org/special/culturelessons>. Click on "Diversity: The Gap between Theory and Practice" to hear what students have to say about this subject.

Do you think it's acceptable to self-segregate and socialize with groups of people similar to you? Why do people do so? Is it important to you to get to know people from another ethnic or cultural background? Is socializing with your own cultural or ethnic group a barrier to getting to know people from other backgrounds? What are some ways communities, workplaces, schools, and churches can promote multicultural understanding? How do you think these efforts work? Do you attend multicultural events? Would you attend if personally invited? What would motivate you to learn about the culture and background of newcomers to New Hampshire?

5. Throughout the history of New Hampshire, many newcomers established their own neighborhoods and institutions that preserve the traditions and languages of their original homelands. Examples include Greek and Russian churches, French-speaking schools, and Italian social clubs. Does this phenomenon exist today with the most recent refugees? Why or why not? What are the benefits and disadvantages of forming ethnic, religious, or national heritage groups that preserve language and tradition?

**U.S. Refugee Policy: What guides policy? Who deserves assistance? Are there limits to humanitarian aid?**

1. What is the difference between refugees and immigrants? Who makes national policy regarding refugees in the United States? What currently guides this policy? What do you think should

guide this policy? For an overview of U.S. policy see the following websites:

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2001/5562.htm>

<http://www.state.gov/g/prm/rls/147254.htm>

2. What community resources may be strained when providing assistance to refugees? How do localities make decisions about competing needs for limited resources? What kinds of facts, analysis and ethical considerations should go into this type of decision-making?
3. What other categories of individuals or groups receive government assistance in addition to refugees? How does a community decide who deserves to receive assistance? Why does the United State give humanitarian assistance to refugees? What would happen if our communities or our country stopped providing help to the poor? To refugees? To children? To seniors? To small businesses? To the disabled?
4. For a case study on refugees and a community you can do research on Somali refugees who settled in Lewiston, Maine. Here are several articles about Lewiston with different points of view.

<http://abcnews.go.com/WNT/story?id=130098&page=1>

<http://www.newsweek.com/2009/01/16/the-refugees-who-saved-lewiston.html>

[http://www.pbs.org/pov/raininadryland/special\\_01.php](http://www.pbs.org/pov/raininadryland/special_01.php) This site contains a reprint of “Letter from Maine: New in Town” by William Finnegan originally appearing in *The New Yorker*, December 11, 2006

<http://www.sunjournal.com/city/story/896438> This is a recent (August 2010) article in the *Lewiston Sun Journal* about Somali businesses in Lewiston, Maine. You can also read comments and reactions.

### **Demographics and Economics: Who are these newcomers? What constitutes success?**

1. Do you know how many refugees come to New Hampshire each year? What countries do they come from? What are their religious and cultural practices? Where do they settle? The fact sheet that accompanies this discussion guide provides some facts and figures about refugees in New Hampshire. You can also do more research using local, state, and national census and housing figures. Were the facts you found different from your perceptions?
2. What would you define as the measure of economic success for refugees in New Hampshire? How long does it take to achieve this definition of success? How many generations does it take for newcomers to feel they belong in New Hampshire?
3. Why do you think that refugees receive resettlement assistance and immigrants do not receive that type of assistance?

4. Were you surprised that three of the refugees in the film were professionals? If so, why? Why do you think that they may be unable to continue the work they were trained to do? What would they need to do to get credentialed in New Hampshire?

**Language: Why is language so important?**

1. "How many languages do you speak?" Rasim Gusinac would ask his co-workers. As an American, do you think it's important to speak another language in addition to English? Why or why not?
2. Do you think it's important for newcomers to learn English well? Do you tend to be dismissive of people who do not speak English fluently? Language mastery is important for effective communication. Do you think there are other reasons to adopt the tongue of your adopted country?
3. When you travel to another country do you make an attempt to learn the language before you go? Why or why not?
4. Why do many people want "English-only" policies in the United States? Why would many people who come to the United States want to preserve their original language? Do you think there's value in preserving one's heritage language?

**Home: What makes a place home?**

1. Have you ever been "displaced" or experienced a sense of loss of home through disasters such as a fire or flood, through economic hardship, or through moving from one state to another? What do you carry with you to feel more "at home" in terms of material culture (pictures, art, fabrics), traditions, ideas, and memories? Do you think that the refugees were able to carry much with them?
2. What does it mean to belong? Does a refugee necessarily stay a refugee if she can't go "home" again? Do the refugees in this documentary seem to feel "at home" in New Hampshire?

**Imagining: What if this happened to me?**

1. If war broke out in the United State, if you had to endure some of the experiences of the refugees in the film, if you ended up in a refugee camp for many years where people were dying every day from poor sanitation and lack of medicine and food, if you were unable to work or have access to education in this camp, where would you go for help? What country (not including any English-speaking countries) would you ask to be resettled in? Why?
2. Suddenly you and your family must flee to Mexico to escape political or religious persecution. You rush to pack one small bag apiece. You cannot access any of your bank funds. You don't have Spanish language skills, but your oldest child has had a little Spanish in school. What would you most fear? What would you pack? What would you need to do to survive there?

3. A refugee family from Africa moves in next door. What would be your response to them, if anything? Would you be more reserved toward them, more open, more guarded, than if an American family moved in?

**Group Activities: Why are citizenship and heritage important?**

1. Look at the information on the path to US citizenship on the website [www.unh.edu/uprooted](http://www.unh.edu/uprooted). Take a citizenship quiz found there. What does it mean to be a United States citizen? Should we be stricter about allowing newcomers to become citizens?
2. Distribute a poster featuring flags of various nations. Flags are symbols of nationhood. How many flags can you recognize on sight? How would you tell someone the story of the American flag? What does it represent to you?
3. In a small group, share your own national or ethnic background. Do you know the story of any immigrants or refugees in your family? How are they alike or different from the refugees in the film?
4. Given a map of the world, how many countries could you identify? The website [www.freerice.com](http://www.freerice.com) has an interactive geography program that asks you to name countries on a map.

**Immigration in General: What do we gain and what do we lose?**

1. What do you think is a better metaphor for America's immigration story— a melting pot or a mosaic? Can you think of other images to describe immigration in the United States? In New Hampshire? Explain your thinking.
2. In addition to a variety of food, music, dance and holiday traditions, what other contributions do refugees and immigrants bring to a community? (Answers will vary. Here are some possible responses: different perspectives and ways of solving problems; the opportunity to learn different languages; the opportunity to gain understanding about different religious traditions, families and political systems; the opportunity to learn more about world geography and nature; the chance to be inspired by examples of resiliency and courage; the opportunity for Americans to share their talents and resources.)
3. Throughout the history of the United States, many groups of newcomers have struggled economically and have had problems being accepted by established residents. Examples include signs such as "Irish Need Not Apply" or underpaid Chinese laborers on the railroads. Why do you think this is the case?
4. Why do you think that some people resent refugees, immigrants, or other newcomers to the United States? Throughout the history of this country, have immigrants helped or harmed the nation?

5. Research an era or decade in US history, determine what some of the greatest contributions were to our society at that time, and then find out who were the movers and shakers behind those contributions. What countries did they come from or from what ethnic background?
6. The history of the United States contains examples of newcomers gaining economic power. One example of achieving economic power is found in the history of American credit unions, which were actually started in Manchester, New Hampshire as a response to the needs of immigrants. See the excerpt below from America's Credit Union Museum:

By the beginning of the twentieth century, thousands of immigrants pursuing work and a better life found their way to the mills of the largest textile-manufacturing center in the nation --Manchester, New Hampshire. Although gainfully employed, they were denied the privileges of savings and credit. On a hillside overlooking the mills stood St. Marie's Church. As pastor, Monsignor Pierre Hevey knew that many of his parishioners worked in these mills and needed a safe place to save their money and gain access to reasonable credit.

With counsel and guidance from Canada's credit union movement leader, Alphonse Desjardins, and the commitment of local attorney Joseph Boivin to serve as the first president and house the credit union in his home, Monsignor Hevey and his parishioners established the first credit union in the United States in 1908. Originally called St. Mary's Cooperative Credit Association its name was revised in 1925 to La Caisse Populaire Ste.-Marie, or "Bank of the People," St. Mary's.

From these humble beginnings the movement that promoted thrift and provided access to credit for the working class spread across America. Today there are more than 10,000 credit unions in the U.S., representing 80 million members. . .

How do immigrants and refugees achieve more economic power today? Can you give examples of local businesses owned by immigrants or refugees?

7. Read the following article from the *New York Times* about changing demographics in parts of the United States.

[http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/05/us/05census.html?\\_r=4&hp=&adxnnl=1&adxnnlx=1297173615-hll3af+Kchl46Q9uWKYRhw](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/05/us/05census.html?_r=4&hp=&adxnnl=1&adxnnlx=1297173615-hll3af+Kchl46Q9uWKYRhw)

How does this article relate to immigrants and refugees achieving political power, including holding elected office? Name some examples of descendants of immigrants who have held office. How do you think political and economic power may change in the future? Do you view those changes as positive or negative?

8. What have immigrants built in New Hampshire? What kinds of buildings and institutions have they created? What kinds of traditions and celebrations have become established in New Hampshire?