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CATHOLIC ALLIANCE FOR PEOPLE SEEKING ASYLUM

Educational Activities

This document provides an overview of some educational activities that can be run with students or adults, to get them thinking more deeply about a refugee experience.

Where Do You Stand? gives instructions for an exercise in which students decide how well they agree or disagree with a range of statements. It is geared to both self-awareness and engagement on the issues with their peers.

Listening to the Story is a sheet giving ideas for ways to enable students to engage with a story. It lists individual resources, as well as websites that give access to more resources.

The following four documents are ideas for helping students respond to stories:

This Story and Me is an exercise geared to helping the student to relate to the story and the person telling the story. The exercise needs to be personalised as a worksheet by filling in the name(s) of the storyteller and the subject of the story, if that is different from the teller.

Where Does This Story Take You? enables students, having heard a story, to move to a commitment to take action.

Walking With... can be used either as a preparatory exercise prior to hearing a story, or as a follow up. The exercise is again geared to compassion and feeling 'with'. It could be adapted for older or younger students. The exercise is based on an assumption that it is sometimes easier, and perhaps less traumatic for children in a materialist society, to imagine being without things rather than being without family.

What Would You Do? is a role play exercise to help students understand the dilemma of one family in danger. The process could be adapted to any number of stories.

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Where Do You Stand?

This exercise is designed to have students declare, at least to themselves, where they stand – how much they agree or disagree with a variety of statements. Depending on the logistics, it may also provide a way to share their position more widely.

POSSIBLE STATEMENTS

- People should always use the legal way to enter another country, even if they have to wait a long time
- If you and / or your family members are in danger in your own country, then it is fine for you to seek asylum in another country and to get there whatever way you can
- There are always legal ways to apply to enter Australia
- Australia is very generous to refugees
- I know a lot about people seeking asylum
- I have met or I know a refugee
- It is appropriate to keep people in detention
- People have to be in detention for the safety of the rest of us
- Too many migrants, especially refugees, make Australia unsafe
- We should welcome refugees with open arms
- Refugees contribute a lot to Australian society.

THE LOGISTICS

A) When the group is small enough and there is floor space available:

Create an imaginary line across the available space with one end being *strongly agree* and the other *strongly disagree*, with the centre being *unsure*.

Ask students to stand wherever is appropriate in response to some of the statements above. This is best done quietly, with time for students to notice where they are in relation to the group and where the group is.

Once they have responded to a few of the statements, ask them to talk with one or two others about how the experience felt OR what it made them think about. That could be followed by some comments to the whole group.

B) When the group is large and/or there is little floor space:

Provide the students with a sheet (paper or digital) with several lines marked *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. Ask students to mark wherever is appropriate in response to some of the statements above.

Once they have responded to a few of the statements, ask them to talk with one or two others about what their responses were and how the experience felt, or what it made them think about. The discussion could be followed by some comments to the whole group.

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Listening to the Story

One way to engage students with the realities around seeking asylum is to share a story. (There are many, many resources available, including online, so below are some starting points.)

STORYTELLING IN PERSON

The story may be told in person from either an asylum seeker, a refugee or someone who has close contact with one or more. The latter could be someone who visits a detention centre or who works with them in the community through a parish.

Below is a list of organisations which may be able to provide a speaker:

- **Asylum Seeker Resource Centre**
www.asrc.org.au
- **Brigidine Asylum Seeker Project**
basp.org.au
- **Jesuit Social Services – Speakers Program**
www.jss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Speakers-Program-web-brochure.pdf
- **Asylum Seekers Centre** 02 9078 1900
asylumseekerscentre.org.au

Clearly, booking a speaker is more feasible in major centres or rural areas where asylum seekers are settling. However, the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre have compiled a list of support organisations which may be able to assist, depending on their goals.

The list is available at www.asrc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/asrc-resource-directory.pdf.

VIDEO AND POWERPOINT

Alternatively, the story could be told via a video or a powerpoint presentation.

The Refugee Council have many films and documentaries listed with a blurb about each one. The list is available at www.refugeecouncil.org.au/resources/films-and-documentaries. Below is just one example from their list:

In This World (2002)

Directed by Michael Winterbottom
Based on true events and using refugees themselves as the actors, this story follows two young Afghan refugees on their journey to London.

Similarly, Edmund Rice Centre lists in their *Asylum Seekers and Refugees Education Resource: Activities for Students* a number of films, with a blurb about each. Below is just one. The package is free to download at www.erc.org.au.

New Land, New Life (2013)

The inspiring firsthand stories of five refugees from the Horn of Africa who've settled in Australia. All have undergone great hardship yet made successful new lives here. Duration: 25 minutes www.harda.org.au

OTHER OPTIONS

Another alternative is to read a story, or provide a written story for students to read. There are a multitude of resources in the Edmund Rice Centre resource, page 47.

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This Story and Me

This story and me, this story and ... , me and

BEFORE HEARING THE STORY

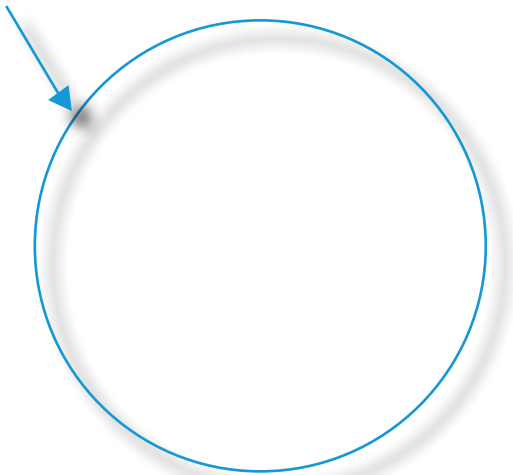
About asylum seekers:

I think:

I believe:

I feel:

Whose story is it? Write five words about the story.



AFTER HEARING THE STORY

After hearing the story, has anything you think feel or believe about refugees changed? Write three or four sentences about this.

Unless they tell us, we cannot know for sure how someone else feels. How do *you* think it would be for someone with this kind of story to talk about it?

Write four words to describe your relationship with the person(s) in the story now.

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Where Does This Story Take You?

Think of yourself today as being on a journey during which you have heard a story. The following questions are a chance for you to clarify for yourself what your response to the story is going to be in the future.

1. Some facts I learnt today or heard about again:

2. Something I have had explained today, that I knew perhaps, but understand better now:

3. Something that made me feel differently, or strengthened a feeling I already had:

4. Something I would now like to do, even if it does not seem feasible at the moment:

5. Something I commit myself to doing:

Action:

By when?

6. Something that will help me to be true to my commitment – it may be talking to someone about it, putting it in the diary, or asking someone else to do it with me:

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Walking With...

Make a list of ten things that you are glad that your family has in your home.

Make a list of five things that belong just to you.

If, for some reason, you had to go away and take **only two things** that you could carry, what would you take?

What else would you really, really want to take?

What do you think it would be like to leave all the rest behind?

Lots of people have to do that – because of the dangers of war and violence in their own country, or because of violence in their own home in Australia, or any country.

If you had to leave your home with hardly anything and maybe only part of your family, how would you like to be treated by other people?

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What Would You Do?

Essan's story is on video: www.asrc.org.au/about-us/how-we-help/asylum-seekers-stories/

This exercise uses the first part of his story as a starting point: the rest relies on the imagination of the students. Given the power of role play, the whole group needs to be small enough for the leader to be able to support students as needed.

ESSAN'S STORY

Essan lives in Kabul in Afghanistan with his wife and children and his parents. He has a full-time job which pays well so he and his family are secure financially.

Essan is a program director, second-in-charge of a group of over 600 people, so it is an important job. He is working for a human rights organisation, and the Taliban, who of course are very aggressive towards anyone who chooses a way different from them, are very much against Essan's program.

One day, five of Essan's co-workers are killed by the Taliban just near Kabul.

INSTRUCTIONS

In groups of four, students take the roles of Essan himself; Afia, his wife; Geeta, a woman who works with him on his program; and Kamal, who is the person in charge.

- **Essan** knows that he and his family have to decide their future – to stay or to go – he is undecided.
- **Afia** knows the dangers, is frightened of the future, possibly without her husband, and her children being in danger. She wants to leave.

- **Geeta** is very aware of the dangers and feels sympathy for Essan's worrying about his family, but she also sees the importance of the work they are doing.
- **Kamal** is focused on the importance of the work they are doing for their people and their nation. He definitely does not want Essan to leave.

Have a conversation, initiated by Essan, looking to the others for their counsel.

At the end of the role play, ask each person (as themselves) to say what it was like to play that part. Make sure they have time to say their piece and have it respected without comment from others in the group, except thanks at the end.

In the whole group, pose questions such as:

- What are some of the implications for Australia in the face of thousands of stories like that of Essan?
- What moral obligations does it place on us as a nation?
- What moral obligations does it place on us as communities, businesses or individuals?