

Study Guide

This study guide for “Brother Towns/Pueblos Hermanos” is meant to help you start discussions within your communities, schools, church groups, or other gatherings regarding issues of immigration to the U.S. These questions are broken down into four sections: Immigration, The Border, Day Labor, and Maya History, corresponding with sections of the website. Use the site as your springboard for researching and learning more about these topics and the issues that they spark. The site offers a number of links to other pages on the Internet that offer more in-dept information about specific topics.

Immigration

1. Discuss your own family’s immigration history. Compare this in a larger group.
2. Has the U.S. been a welcoming place in history or has it traditionally closed its borders? How has this differed depending upon ethnicities and nationalities concerned?
3. Read the section on U.S. immigration history. Discuss “nativism” and what some call the “anti-immigrant sentiment in the U.S.”? Do you think common attitudes towards Latin American immigrants today differ from attitudes or public sentiment towards historical immigrant groups?
4. Read the section “Why Do They Come?” and watch the video about Pancho, the coffee farmer. In what ways do you think our lifestyles or decisions in the U.S. affect the lives of our Latin American neighbors? How does economics play a role in these decisions?
5. The section on “Becoming a U.S. Citizen” describes the difficulty foreigners have entering the United States legally. Why do you think laws have become restrictive towards immigrants?
6. Was there a crucial moment or turning point when everything regarding immigration changed? What does NAFTA have to do with immigration from Mexico? CAFTA from Guatemala? If you could revamp federal immigration law, how would you do it?
7. In the film, Filomeno says that he is “of two hearts”; he wants to be a good father, present to his family, but also wants to provide materially for them. Try to put yourself in his shoes. How would you respond to this conflict of needs?
8. Many American citizens have serious concerns about the presence of immigrants in the United States. Can you name some of these fears that you have witnessed in your own community? Do you think these fears are well founded? Are there also benefits to the presence of immigrants in our communities?

The Border

9. Some advocacy groups say that assisting immigrants is a humanitarian act. What do you think our responsibility is towards people who endanger their lives to go to the U.S. to work? How should we respond to the building of the border wall and border policies in general, when those policies threaten the lives of desperate people without stopping the flow of migrants?
10. Why do you think the U.S. Border Patrol budget has increased so much over the last 15 years? If you had control over the \$10 billion the U.S. government expends each year on Border Patrol services, how would you use it to address immigration concerns? Can you think of alternative ways to control immigration to the U.S.?
11. Read about the 'Funnel Effect' in the "Crossing the Border" section. Though the Funnel Effect is not the intended goal of the U.S. Border Patrol's policies, it is a result of those policies. What responsibility do the U.S. government and U.S. citizens have for consequences of our border policies? How do you think this should be addressed?

Day Labor

12. Are there day laborers in your community? If so, why? If not, why not? If you have day laborers in your community, what is your community's relationship with them?
13. Read through the "Myths about Day Labor" section. Think about your own perceptions about day laborers. Where do they come from? How do permanent residents' perceptions influence the way your community interacts with day laborers?
14. In what ways has your community sought local solutions to immigration issues? Should local communities respond to the immigrants in their midst, or is this a federal issue?
15. Does a community near you have a day labor center? What local support has this Center received? What kinds of support do you think your community should offer to this Center?

Maya History

16. Read about the role that the U.S. government played in the Guatemalan Civil War under subsection A. Does our history of involvement in Guatemala affect our responsibility towards Guatemalan immigrants today?
17. There is evidence that the Maya may have traded in and explored some of the territory that we call the United States today. Perhaps they were in this territory more than a thousand years ago. Does this longer view affect the ways we should view land rights or land control?

Making the Film

18. A large part of “Brother Towns” was filmed in Jacaltenango, Guatemala. How can documentary work be done so that it is respectful to the communities it works with? Is it always appropriate to pursue documentary subjects that can be invasive to other communities?

19. Many of the stories collected through interviews for “Brother Towns” are personal and very emotional. They were shared with “Brother Towns” filmmakers because of long-term relationships of trust. What ethical considerations are there when using the personal stories like these in a public format?