

SIMPLE AS WATER

—

A COMMUNITY RESOURCE GUIDE



“The words we have for the horror of fleeing home in the face of violence and war are insufficient: refugee, migrant, asylum seeker. The vast experience of a million impossible decisions are folded into clinical terminology that describe the process, but fail to capture the humanity of those living through it. Enter *Simple as Water*.”

—*Vanity Fair*

“*Simple as Water* took my breath away with its humanity. One of the most insightful documentaries about refugees ever made.”

—*Melissa Fleming, UN Under Secretary General for Global Communications*

“I’ve seen *Simple as Water* work its magic on audiences. From the emotional visceral responses it invokes to inquiries about ways to support Syrian refugees. All a testament to its power and ability to move communities to take action.”

—*Lina Sergie Attar, Karam Foundation*

ABOUT THE FILM

New York Times Critic's Pick SIMPLE AS WATER is a love story celebrating the bonds of family by Oscar®-winning director Megan Mylan. Portraits of Syrian families filmed across five countries reveal the impact of war, separation and displacement.

98 minutes// In Arabic and English with English subtitles



Simple as Water raises profound questions for viewers about migration and our responsibility to migrants who have fled their homes and settled into our communities. Each of the film's sections features the daily experiences of individuals seeking safety after fleeing and the family ties that sustain them as they work to make a new life. In response, viewers have the opportunity to reflect on how individuals and communities can take action to create inclusive and sustainable societies and the well-being and thriving of those on the move and displaced from home.

simpleaswater.org

#SimpleasWater @MeganMylan @HBO #RefugeesWelcome

Trailer

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QqGYNvUqty8>

Publicity Materials

<https://simpleaswater.org/publicity>

Educators' Guide

https://reimaginingmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/SimpleasWater_EducationGuide_Re-ImaginingMigration_Sept2023.pdf



HOW TO WATCH THE FILM

Simple as Water is available to stream through [Max](#), [Hulu](#), and the non-theatrical service [SWANK](#). If none of those services are available to you or your organization, please contact the film team through simpleaswater.org

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This discussion guide is designed to give you the tools you need to host a meaningful screening of *Simple as Water*. With the resources included here, we aim to help you engage in productive dialogue around the ideas presented in the film and provide options for further education and action in support of refugees and immigrants. *Simple as Water* has been embraced for its artistry, its humanity, and its insight into the multi-layered ways war and displacement impact families. The film's focus on love between parent and child affects audiences intensely, at a deeply personal level. Many people come away from the film, thinking ***“What can I do?”*** We hope the film activates a sense of common purpose, and contributes to strengthening a culture of welcome where refugees and immigrants can thrive.

TIPS FOR HOSTING AN EVENT

Whether you are hosting a gathering of neighbors in your living room or an event for your organization, we have found structure to be the key to success. We have hosted events around the world in a wide variety of settings and here is what we have found works best:



1. Well before the event starts, make sure all the tech is ready to go and do a test run of the film. Make sure everyone will be able to hear and see the film properly. Where do you turn off the lights and close curtains. Even if you've shown a film before in this exact setting, test things anyway.
2. Allow people to gather informally for 20-30 minutes before starting the movie. Food and drinks always help make people feel welcome.
3. Before starting the film, introduce yourself and say a few words about why you are hosting the event, and why this film spoke to you in such a profound way. Remind audience to silence their cell phones and that you'll be having a conversation afterwards.
4. Dim the lights and start the film. When the film finishes, if time allows let the credits roll. It gives audiences a moment to process before conversation.
5. Gather your group together for a conversation. We have provided a few discussion prompts in this guide and some tips for facilitating a conversation. We also have a few tips for organizations planning a panel to lead the conversation. For a deeper facilitated conversation, Re-Imagining Migration has created this Educator's Guide.
6. Keep the conversation to 20-30 minutes and then let people mingle and chat with each other to allow for smaller conversations. Movies are great tools for fostering connection so informal gatherings are often the best moments of the evening.

TIPS FOR FACILITATION

Simple as Water raises issues that may provoke difficult conversations. As a facilitator, you can create an atmosphere in which people feel safe, encouraged, and respected, making it more likely that they will be willing to share their ideas openly and honestly. Below we provide a few tips for guiding the conversation.

- Understand basic facts. You don't need to be an expert on the issues, but knowing the basics can help you keep a discussion on track. We have a list of facts included in this guide (under resources).
- Think about what biases you might possibly have and then examine them, knowing that you may not recognize them all. Be honest and open to discovery.
- Think about what questions and prompts might be most meaningful and effective for your community. If you are inviting others to facilitate a discussion, set up a preview screening for them beforehand.

Panel Discussions

If you would like to host a group of speakers/panelists to discuss the film consider the following:

- Representation matters: The best people to reflect on the experience of migration and displacement are refugees and immigrants themselves. Immigrant and refugee service/rights organizations exist everywhere in the country. We strongly encourage you to contact these organizations to find a representative willing to speak with you. You may find what you're looking for under Resources.
- Keep it simple: Audiences respond best to a conversation that lasts 20-30 minutes and gives them an opportunity to ask questions and learn more about how they can help.
- More about the subjects: We have kept close contact with the subjects of the film and have provided updates on what they're up to that you can share with your group.

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION PROMPTS

Below are a set of questions to draw from when sharing the film in a community setting.

- What thoughts, feelings, or questions came up for you when you watched the film?
- What did you find most interesting about the film? What scene, or character, stood out to you the most and why do you think you responded to it?
- Why do individuals and their families leave their homes to settle somewhere else?
- When people are forced to flee their homes, what needs to happen to ensure safety, security, and future? Who needs to be involved?
- What do displaced people need to enable them to thrive?
- How did this movie make you feel about migration or your own story of migration (if you or your family have one)?
- What kind of issues have come up in our community because of migration?
- How has watching this film impacted how you think or feel about those issues?
- In many places, the poor, racial minorities, women, and other marginalized groups most acutely feel the impacts of migration. What disparities do you see in your community around migration?
- What is our responsibility to others? How might we use our voice and our networks to create and sustain inclusive and welcoming communities for displaced people?

Facts

- More people than ever before are experiencing displacement. 110 million individuals have been forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, or human rights violations, according to UNHCR.
- 52% of all refugees come from just three countries: Syria, Ukraine, and Afghanistan
- The world's wealthiest countries like the United States and United Kingdom host just 24% of the world's refugees. The remaining 76% are hosted by poor low and middle-income countries. Countries with the largest population of refugees are Turkey, Iran and Colombia.
- The right for refugees to seek asylum in another country is included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights alongside the right to a fair trial and freedom of expression.
- The United States resettlement program is the largest in the world. The process of refugee resettlement in America is thorough and takes about two years.

TAKE ACTION

Now would be an excellent time to talk about how you can help to create a welcoming space and culture for refugees and immigrants. We have been working with the leading refugee and immigrant rights organizations to help us understand how we can all be involved in creating a **welcoming culture** for newcomers.

Volunteer: Our partners are always looking for volunteers to help them create a more welcoming culture.

Learn: Cities and towns across America are taking action to help the unprecedented number of refugees across America to make a home here. Find out what's happening in your own backyard and how you can help [here](#).

Donate: A number of organizations are taking meaningful action to create a culture of welcome in the United States to respond to the unprecedented number of migrants crossing our borders. We suggest a few below in Resources.

Employ Refugees and Immigrants: If you are a business owner or have influence in your business, take specific steps to recruit newcomers. [TENT](#), an organization dedicated to increasing employment in this population, has some great suggestions for how to include immigrants and refugees in your search.

Sponsor a Refugee: Did you know that you and your community can be guides to help refugees settle into their new communities? Learn more about how to become a sponsor [here](#).

Welcome a Refugee: One of the simplest and kindest ways we can help create a more welcoming culture is simply by reaching out to refugees. Several organizations help you to do this, including [Refugees Welcome to Dinner](#). [Miry's List](#).

PARTNERS

[Walk with Amal:](#)

Little Amal is a 12-foot puppet of a 10-year-old Syrian refugee girl who has traveled across 15 countries meeting more than a million people. This fall, between 7 September and 5 November 2023, she will journey 6,000 miles across the United States in one of the largest free public festivals ever created. More than 35 towns and cities from Boston to San Diego and 1,000+ artists and arts organizations will create **100+ free public events** to welcome her.

[Welcoming America:](#)

Welcoming America is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that leads a movement of inclusive communities becoming more prosperous by ensuring everyone belongs.

[Welcome Corps:](#)

The boldest innovation in the United States' approach to refugee resettlement in four decades, the Welcome Corps, a new program that empowers everyday Americans to welcome refugees. [Welcome Corps on Campus](#), a new targeted education sponsorship initiative that enables U.S. colleges and universities to play a leading role in resettling refugee students.

[Reimagining Migration](#)

Re-Imagining Migration provides high-quality learning opportunities and resources to help educators create inclusive learning communities where all students develop the knowledge, skills, and understanding they need to navigate a world on the move.

[Arab Film & Media Institute](#)

The Arab Film and Media Institute (AFMI) is the first organization of its kind outside the Arab world, a unique ecosystem to find, nurture and develop Arab film and media projects.

[Karam Foundation](#)

Karam's work focuses on Syrian youth with a determination to have no generation lost. Karam seeks to restore the dignity and quality of life for people affected by conflict by eliminating barriers to success through innovative education, sustainable development, and community-driven aid. Guided by the aspirations of the people we serve, we pursue this mission with compassion, transparency, and generosity.

FAQs - DIRECTOR MEGAN MYLAN

Why did you want to make this film?

Parenthood changes how you experience the world and it's changed my filmmaking. When the war started, I became consumed with news of Syria. I started each morning reading about the exodus and looking at photos, particularly ones of parents cradling their wounded children. And then there was one image I couldn't shake. I imagine you remember it, a three-year-old boy, Syrian refugee Alan Kurdi, his face down in the sand on a Turkish beach. I found myself fixated on his shoes, the Velcro ties—just like the ones I was teaching my own son to fasten. I couldn't stop looking, not only because Alan was the same age as my Jack. But also because, when I saw that little boy, I thought of his surviving father, and imagined the intensity of his pain. And thought of all the other Syrian parents who had to make the choice to risk their children's lives to save them and those who managed to get their children out and were now trying to protect and reassure them in strange new places. How as a parent do you say to children, "Everything will be okay," when things are obviously— so very far from okay? That was the aspect of war I felt I could make more visible, how the elemental and universal bonds between parent and child fracture and endure.

How did you find your subjects?

A whole constellation of people came together to make this film possible. My most important collaboration is with the people in the film; I focus on people who want me to share their stories, who find some value for themselves or their community in the telling. Our Syrian crew was key to casting and building trust. Our Syrian co-producers, field producers and translators represent a cross-section of Syrians—many are refugees themselves, some with film experience, some without. They enabled us to plug into a Syrian diaspora to identify potential film subjects and establish a relationship. We worked together to identify people that were going through the experiences we wanted to illuminate and figuring out the right locations and timing that would be accurately representative, dynamic and emotionally rich. Once we'd identified families, we took a lot of time developing relationships. We were asking to be invited in to what I think of as a sacred space of family. I find that sense of trust and collaboration is the key to this kind of intimate filmmaking, to being able to engage organically and have what I'm hoping to depict naturally unfold without needing to force anything. While you're filming, no matter how close someone lets you put the camera, at every moment they are deciding how much of themselves to reveal to you.

What is the biggest takeaway you hope audiences get from the film?

I hope audiences come away with a sense of shared humanity, an emotional intelligence about what war does to families and a feeling of moral urgency to change the things we can – safe passage, prioritizing keeping families intact and enrolling children quickly in school. And to welcome newcomers in ways that enable them to thrive.

I wanted the film to convey what a universal desire it is to protect your family. It's elemental. Every time we see conflict this is what's going on. In very specific and very predictable core ways lives are being ruptured, families are, too. When everything falls apart and you grab for what matters most to you, for a lot of us, the answer to that is family.