

IMAGINE YOU ARE A SUDANESE REFUGEE AND HAVE JUST ARRIVED IN COLD UPSTATE NY.
YOU JUST GOT LUCKY.



UTICA

THE LAST REFUGE

OFF RAMP FILMS PRESENTS UTICA: THE LAST REFUGE
MUSIC BY HUB MOORE PRODUCED BY LOCH PHILLIPPS ADAM BEDIENT DAVID CHANATRY
DIRECTED BY LOCH PHILLIPPS EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS ADAM BEDIENT
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OFF RAMP FILMS, INC.

DISCUSSION GUIDE



UTICA THE LAST REFUGE

OVERVIEW

Utica: The Last Refuge tells the story of how a struggling rustbelt city has rebounded via the major contribution of its refugee population. Given that there are 25 million refugees globally, fewer than 1% of whom are likely to be resettled by current standards, there is a lot to be learned from Utica's example. We know that resettling refugees is one way we can fulfill our humanitarian obligations. If it can be shown that doing so benefits the communities in which they land, which is well supported by data, ramping the program up makes great sense.

MAKING A LOCAL CONNECTION

One key to helping *Utica: The Last Refuge* resonate with audiences is to tie its deep look at how refugee resettlement succeeded in Utica to the local area. We believe the best way to do this is to assemble a post screening panel for either live or virtual screenings that includes, most importantly, a refugee and someone working in resettlement in the area. If you are able to add other panelists, you could consider including someone from the filmmaking team, an expert in migration issues, and/or someone who appears in the film.



KEY TOPICS

The film tracks three threads over nearly 3 years. The first is the arrival of the Azein family and their story of acclimation to their new home. The second is how Utica's Refugee Center struggles to stay afloat under an administration that wants to shut the resettlement system down. And the third paints a portrait of a small city that has been welcoming refugees for 40 years, spotlighting the partnerships that help the program succeed.

Aspects of a typical refugee story

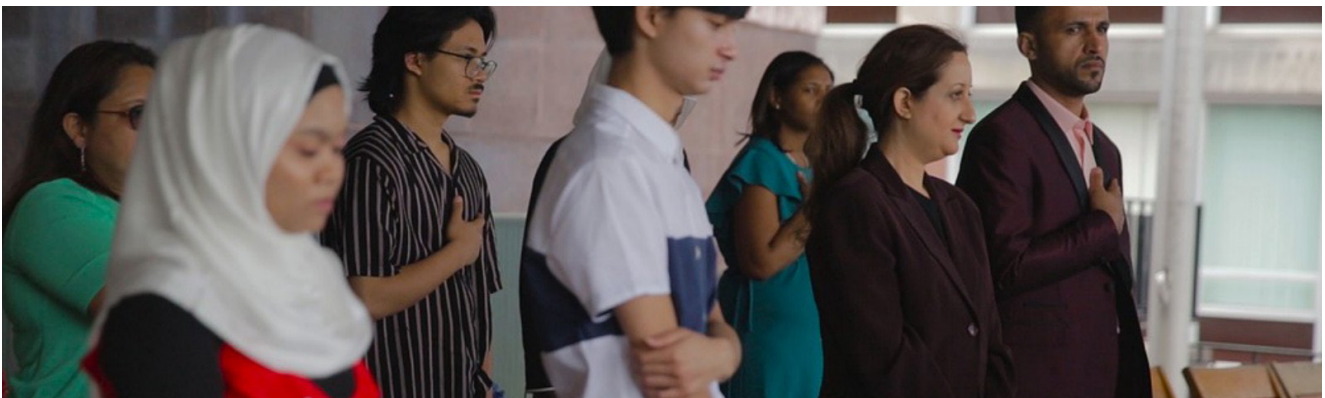
1. The reason they had to flee
2. Their escape story
3. Their first refuge, usually a refugee camp in a neighboring country
4. Obtaining the legal status of refugee
5. Being vetted for resettlement
6. Arrival in their new country
7. First impressions
8. Finding work
9. The challenges of acclimating to their new home

The job of the resettlement agency

1. Procure safe and affordable housing on their behalf, get power and all utilities on, and furnish with household goods
2. Pick up from airport with culturally and linguistically appropriate staff or family
3. Refugee Health Assessments, enrollment with primary care
4. Money—giving refugees the small amount of money provided by the federal government and helping them access local services
5. Cultural training and orientation
6. Language training, ESL classes
7. Job training and employment referrals
8. Enroll children in school
9. Transportation and safety training, introduction the DMV
10. Social security cards, identity documentation and citizenship training
11. General case management

Community Partners

1. Local resettlement agencies
2. National and local religious groups
3. Community Centers
4. Area politicians
5. Schools
6. Police
7. Volunteers
8. Private institutions and businesses
9. Resettled refugees (ethnic groups take care of one another)





SUGGESTED PANELISTS FOR Q&A

A Local Refugee

Ideally this person will have been living in the area long enough to feel comfortable there and be working steadily. If they have children, even better. You want them to be able to talk more widely about employment and schooling and how they feel about their new home. Sharing refugee stories is considered the best way to promote a welcoming attitude towards immigrants.

A Local Resettlement Worker

If there is a local resettlement agency, ask them to provide someone who has been active in refugee resettlement long enough to know how it works in the area. If they know the refugee on the panel well, that's a big plus. If there is no local resettlement agency, there is likely a refugee-focused organization not too far away. Reach out to them.

A member of the Film Production Team

Please feel free to reach out to us: lastrefugedoc@offrampfilms.com. We can often get the film's director, Loch Phillipps, or producer, David Chanatry, to appear. David is a journalism professor at Utica University and a native Utican.

An Expert in Forced Migration

Increasingly colleges and universities feature faculty with a solid understanding of refugee related issues. Climate change is exacerbating the problem and professors who have studied global migration issues may be found in any number of departments, including International Relations, Geography, Anthropology, Sociology, Economics, etc.

One of the People Featured in the Film

We have often included refugees who appear in *Utica: The Last Refuge* on panels. Here is a list of them:

Shelly Callahan Shelly is the Executive Director of Utica's refugee center and speaks brilliantly on a range of topics. She knows how resettlement has worked in Utica and is an expert at building the community partnerships that led to its success there.

Tatjana Kulalic Tatjana is a Bosnian refugee who has worked at the Center for nearly 20 years, helping refugees navigate the legal issues of immigration and citizenship.

Hassan Abbas Hassan is a refugee from Iraq. His story, and the great value he places on citizenship is a key emotional component of the film. Hassan worked in resettlement at the refugee center in Utica for a number of years and has 2 children.

Nasradin Azein Nasradin is a Sudanese refugee. He was greeted at the terminal in Utica not only by a resettlement worker from Utica's resettlement agency, but also our camera. He and his family's first 2.5 years in Utica and acclimation to life here form the spine of the film.



SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR PANELISTS

Panelists Working in Resettlement

- In what ways is refugee resettlement done similarly in this area? And how is it different?
- Are there things you think Utica could learn from this area?
- What ethnic groups are being resettled here?
- What impacts have refugees had here?
- In the film we see that studies were done on the refugee population in Utica. Has there been any effort to quantify the impact of refugees here?
- How is refugee resettlement perceived in this area and what kind of outreach is being done to broaden awareness?
- Have you noticed any recent changes in the political and economic climate? If so, have they impacted your organization's efforts?
- Have there been efforts to build bipartisan support in this area and, if so, how have they fared?

Refugee Panelists

- We saw in the film that refugee impressions of Utica varied a lot. What was your impression of this area when you first arrived?
- Did you feel like the community was welcoming?
- How do refugees in this area work to take care of one another?
- Was there anything in the film that particularly jumped out at you?
- Were there aspects of how resettlement done in Utica that you'd like to see happen here?
- Are there things you think Utica could learn from this area—or from your own experiences?

Filmmaking Team

- What are you hoping audiences take away from the film?
- Are you thinking that the film will change the minds of anti-immigration activists?
- Can a documentary with a point of view still be considered objective?
- *Utica: The Last Refuge* feels different than a lot of other social justice films. Can you talk about that?

Forced Migration Experts

- Can you paint a picture of the global refugee crisis we are now facing?
- What solutions do you propose?
- Two of the main arguments against bringing in refugees are that:
 1. They pose a danger to citizens here
 2. They are an economic drain

How do you respond to these criticisms of the program?

- Can you talk about the availability of data on the impact of refugee resettlement?
- What might this area expect to see happen as refugees are resettled here?

Economists/Community Leaders

- Can you talk about the availability of data on the impact of refugee resettlement?
- Two of the main arguments against bringing in refugees are that:
 1. They pose a danger to citizens here
 2. They are an economic drain

How do you respond to these criticisms of the program?

- If you have been a proponent of refugee resettlement in this area, why?
- Do you have any anecdotes to share about how resettlement has worked here?
- What might this area expect to see happen as refugees are resettled here?



LINKS

Utica: The Last Refuge Teaser



Link: <https://vimeo.com/504113045> (2:17) Off Ramp Films, Inc. All rights reserved.

The Issue

UNHCR Figures at a glance

<https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance.html>

IRC data on Refugees in the U.S.

<https://www.rescue.org/topic/refugees-america>

A Look at the Issue

<https://www.lastrefugedocumentary.com/outreach>

Utica Data

<https://www.lastrefugedocumentary.com/utica-2/data>

QUOTES

Pablo Bose

Associate Professor in the Department of Geography, University of Vermont

"So much of what we see in the story of refugees is about crisis—the crisis of war, of borders, of persecution, of desperation. In *Utica: The Last Refuge* there is another set of narratives that we get to see, a much larger and longer window into the lives of people as they flee old homes and arrive in new ones, the challenges they face, but ultimately the important ways that they rebuild not only their own lives but the places they settle into. I found this to be an honest and hopeful film. It takes the viewer into the heart of one of the most pressing and significant debates of our time: how, why, and for whom are our communities changing, and what do we owe one another through that process?"

John Zogby

Pollster, author, trend-spotter, thought leader & native Utican

"Everything in this film—the slices of everyday life, the intimacy—details a people and a community who found each other and together gained salvation. I am proud to say it is my community and I have never before seen it captured so perfectly."

Camilla Nielsson

Documentary Director, *Democrats and President*

"The way that the city of Utica, New York is embracing its migrant population and new citizens is both inspiring and humbling. If you feel like watching a film that leaves you with an increased faith in humanity, *Utica: The Last Refuge* is it!"

Trinh Truong

Research Assistant at the Center for American Progress

"As a former refugee resettled in Utica, this documentary humanely illustrates the magic of resettlement that happens in local communities across America on a daily basis. It's important for every person in this country to see how resettlement works, and how it changes everyone involved for the better."