

Refugee Shabbat 2024 Book and Film Recommendations



Welcome the stranger.
Protect the refugee.

Articles and Books

1. [We Need to Take Away Children: The Secret History Of Family Separation At The Border](#) is a long form journalism piece by Caitlin Dickerson that follows a therapist for children being processed through the American immigration system. Winner of the 2023 Pulitzer Prize for explanatory reporting, this piece reveals the history of the U.S. government's family-separation policy, and the intentions behind it.
2. [The Best We Could Do: An Illustrated Memoir](#) by Thi Bui uses a graphic novel format to tell the story of her family's journey leaving Vietnam, arriving in the United States as refugees, and examining the lives they create. Introspective and bittersweet, the book delves into the generational effects of displacement and its ongoing impact on relationships.
3. [Asylum: A Memoir & Manifesto](#) by Edefe Okporo follows the author's life from growing up in Nigeria as a gay young man to escaping to the United States, only to face detention and the difficulties of navigating the immigration system. Beyond his own story, this book calls its readers to action to create a fair, just system for refugees and all immigrants. Okporo wants to create a place where all are welcome and safe and encourages each of us to strive for the same.
4. The memoir, [Solito](#), takes the reader along Javier Zamora's 3,000-mile trek from El Salvador to the United States at 9 years old to reunite with his parents. Along the way he is faced with numerous dangers which he is able to take on thanks to the help of strangers who become family as they travel together towards the hope of safety and shelter. Zamora highlights the kindness and compassion he receives on his journey, demonstrating the power of people sticking together and helping their fellow human beings.

Films and Videos

1. [We Were Here: The Musicians](#) is one of three videos created by the UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, and YouTube for World Refugee Day 2023 to challenge stereotypes about refugees by showcasing what unites us. *The Musicians* follows three Ukrainian-Ethiopian Jewish sisters who make up the hip-hop band Fo Sho as they use music to create unity and light.
2. [The Swimmers](#) is a poignant dramatization of the true story of the Mardini sisters and their perilous journey from Syria to Germany including swimming across the Aegean Sea. While they search for safety and refuge, they dream of swimming in the Olympics. The film highlights the resilience, strength, and vulnerability of forcibly displaced persons in the face of huge obstacles and the determination of the human spirit.
3. [Flee](#) is a documentary about a man named Amin recounting his story of escaping Afghanistan and coming to Denmark as a refugee. Amin has kept his story secret for the past twenty years, including from his soon-to-be husband. The documentary tells his story through interviews with the film's director, who has been friends with Amin since high school. The documentary is presented through animation and archival footage to share not only Amin's story but the intense emotions that accompany it.

4. [Limbo](#) shows the anxiety and listlessness people experience while waiting for months and years for asylum applications to be processed. It shows the absurdity and contradictions of being stuck in the asylum system; of being safe but unable to fully live. Funny and heartbreaking, stagnant yet hopeful, Limbo shows what happens once displaced persons reach their destination but are kept just out of reach of true refuge.
5. [Simple As Water](#) is a powerful documentary that shares portraits of several Syrian families displaced to different countries. It highlights the tension between the lack of control displaced individuals experience with their futures in the hands of bureaucratic systems while simultaneously having to make life-altering decisions. The film intimately shows the impacts of war, separation, and displacement while demonstrating the deep bonds of love and family.