Transgression

A Study Guide for Social Work Educators and Students

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Introduction

This guide has been developed to assist social work educators and students in using films from the CSWE film festivals in their classrooms. It is one in a series of CSWE curriculum resources designed to enhance the teaching and learning of social work concepts.

We welcome your comments as the library of these resources is refined and expanded.

Michael A. Wright
Tennessee State University
Overview: Transgression

Film Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title: Transgression</th>
<th>A Film by: T. J. Barber, Morgan Hargrave, Toni Marzal, and Daniel Rotman</th>
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<tr>
<td>Running Time: 15 minutes</td>
<td>Distributor: Harvard Law Documentary Studio</td>
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Context: The film presents the story of Norma, a transgendered woman who fled discrimination in Mexico and sought asylum in the United States but was confronted with an immigration system hostile to both undocumented aliens and those alienated from society on account of their sexual orientation.

Overall Themes:
1. Transgender Immigrants
2. Immigration
3. Immigrant Justice

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<th>Topic</th>
<th>Central Quote</th>
<th>Salient Themes</th>
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<td>Isolation</td>
<td>“It’s a recipe for disaster.” (02:17)</td>
<td>National Immigrant Justice Center, transgender, immigration equality</td>
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<td>02:49–06:05</td>
<td>Existing</td>
<td>“…but I always lived in fear, always.” (4:35)</td>
<td>Family relations, gender identification, domestic violence</td>
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<td>06:06–10:41</td>
<td>Immigration Detention</td>
<td>“I was going crazy.” (07:17)</td>
<td>Detention facilities, transgender protection, psychological trauma</td>
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<td>10:42–14:50</td>
<td>True self: Immigrant</td>
<td>“…I identify with them. They are like me.” (12:31)</td>
<td>Family supports, detention alternatives</td>
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Topics

Isolation

Central Quote: “It’s a recipe for disaster.” (02:17)

Themes: National Immigrant Justice Center, Transgender, Immigration Equality

Abstract: Transgender is defined, and the challenge faced by immigration officials and transgender immigrants is presented.

Learning Objectives
1. Define transgender.
2. Identify institutions who are the legal enforcers of immigration law.
3. Identify organizations who are working to ensure the humane treatment and rights of LGBT immigrants.

Discussion Questions
1. What is the mission of the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)?
3. What human rights challenges can you identify in the treatment of transgender detainees?
4. How would you balance the mission and implementation of ICE with the dignity and worth value of transgender detainees?

Suggested Readings


Existing

Central Quote: “… but I always lived in fear, always.” (4:35)

Themes: Family Relations, Gender Identification, Domestic Violence

Abstract: Norma tells the story of childhood and her treatment at the hands of her family. Viewers are presented with the emotional trauma and physical violence often endured by transgender persons in conservative families. Norma speaks of the feeling that she as a transgender person was treated as if she did not exist.

Learning Objectives
1. Explore the family context and treatment of transgender persons.
2. Define domestic violence outside of spousal abuse.

Discussion Questions
1. Have you ever kept anything from your family because you felt they would have trouble accepting you? What was your feeling after finally revealing the information?
2. Do you think Norma’s treatment at the hands of her family warrant her seeking asylum in the United States?
3. What reasons do you feel are reasons a person should be granted asylum in the United States? List your reasons in order or priority.
4. How would you change the law to better support legal immigration for those seeking asylum in the United States?

Suggested Readings


**Immigration Detention**

**Time Code: 06:06–10:41**

**Central Quote:** “I was going crazy.” (07:17)

**Themes:** Detention Facilities, Transgender Protection, Solitary Confinement, Psychological Trauma

**Abstract:** The treatment and protection measures employed by the ICE detention centers are presented. Norma recounts her experience inside two different detention centers. The legal process is also highlighted.

**Learning Objectives**
1. Articulate the protection measures employed in detention centers to protect transgender persons from maltreatment by other detainees.
2. Explore the psychological impacts of incarceration and solitary confinement.
3. Contrast the rights of immigration detainees with the rights of alleged criminals.

**Discussion Questions**
1. Do you agree or disagree with the treatment of transgender detainees in the detention facilities? Why or why not?
2. What other alternatives can you list that would keep transgender detainees reasonably safe?
3. How would you describe the problem when attempting to house a transgender detainee?
4. Do your alternative detainment suggestions address the problem as you have outlined it?

**Suggested Readings**


**True Self: Immigrant**

**Central Quote:** “... I identify with them. They are like me.” (12:31)

**Themes:** Family Supports, Immigration Reasons, Detention Alternatives

**Abstract:** Norma makes her case for remaining in the United States. She describes the community she has garnered and her intention to learn English. Detention alternatives are discussed as the credits roll on screen.

**Learning Objectives**
1. Identify the reasons individuals may want to immigrate to the United States from another country.
2. List detention alternatives.

**Discussion Questions**
1. Do you agree that Norma’s reasons for immigration are valid? Why or why not?
2. What do you see as the primary problems with the detention and deportation system that is currently being implemented?
3. What, in your opinion, should be the priorities of US Immigration and Customs Enforcement?
4. What options, other than detention, can you identify that would both fulfill the priorities of ICE and ensure the rights of all immigrants?

**Suggested Readings**
