



Refugees and Global Migration: Humanity's Crisis

February 17-19, 2017

Suggested Films for the 30th Annual Camden Conference

[America America](#) (1962)

Elia Kazan, who chronicled twentieth-century social issues in gritty films like [On the Waterfront](#) and [East of Eden](#), explored his own roots in this epic about immigration. Greek newcomer Stathis Giallelis won a Golden Globe for his twitchy, feverish starring performance in a role based on Kazan's uncle, who fled from Anatolia to New York in the 1890s to escape Ottoman oppression.

It's quite confronting for a Hollywood film of the day, especially in the harrowing early scenes, which depict the buildup to the Armenian and Greek genocides. On his long quest, Giallelis' character faces homelessness, starvation, brutal wage slavery and constant humiliation at the hands of Turkish authorities, before worming his way into middle-class society (and some desperate romance).

Aside from its social interest, *America America* is worth it for its typically Kazanian mixture of realism and ravishing melodrama, and its gorgeous cinematography by Haskell Wexler, future Francis Ford Coppola and Woody Allen collaborator.

[Border](#)

Change cannot come without debate. Filmmaker Chris Burgard's new documentary, *BORDER*, which takes an imperial look at the agonizing issue of our porous southern U.S. border, can go a long way towards fostering debate, discussion and, hopefully a more balanced outlook towards a national problem that has polarized America.

[Borders](#) (2001)

Jacqueline van Vugt traveled to Africa and observed the boundaries lie between Nigeria and the European Union: from Nigeria to Niger, Burkina Faso, Senegal and so further north. At every border they will find many people who dream of a better life and have put their sights on the promised land of Europe. But that choice they bring dire sacrifices. The border region is a harsh world where violence, exploitation and depletion lurk. Men risk their lives in plastic boats on the open sea, women have been

sentenced to a pimp. One of the women has her address tattooed on her arm, in case they are lost or dies. The closer get migrants in Europe, the more will lose the Dream.

[Border War: The Battle over Illegal Immigration](#) (2006)

Border War is a fresh, intimate look at many sides of the immigration debate -- told from people on the front lines of this growing crisis. Viewers are taken into the smuggling tunnels of Nogales, Arizona, to the migrant halfway houses for deportees in Tijuana, Mexico, to the Congressional corridors of power in the nation's capital.

[Casablanca](#) (1942)

If you haven't seen it, or haven't seen it recently, one of the greatest of all Hollywood films remains, among many other things, a surprisingly hard-nosed portrait of life in wartime, especially for those fleeing Nazi occupation. The "tortuous, roundabout trail of refugees" culminates in the film's stylized Morocco; some can afford exit visas from the black marketeers (who, of course, gather every night at Rick's Café). "But the others wait in Casablanca... and wait... and wait."

Despite the Golden Age sheen, the story of the Czech (read: Jewish) underground leader and his Norwegian lover trying to escape to the States and the burnt-out American mercenary who secretly helps them must have been a bit unnerving for audiences watching it at the war's peak. In and around the rousing action and classic romance lie edgy references to invading fascist armies, the legacy of colonialism, secret police, torture, genocide, desperate asylum seekers and – of course – people smugglers.

[Children of Men](#) (2006)

Naturally the definitive dystopian thriller of our time is a story about refugees. Before his career shot into orbit with *Gravity*, Alfonso Cuarón crafted this grimly beautiful masterpiece. It's 2027, and humans are no longer able to reproduce; the UK has become a fascist state in which asylum seekers fleeing worldwide anarchy are hunted down and forced to live in vast offshore penal colonies. So in other words, it's pretty realistic.

Clive Owen is a nihilistic shell of a man charged with protecting an African refugee (Clare-Hope Ashitey) and her seemingly miraculous unborn child. (The Christian iconography is not hard to spot, and entirely appropriate to the refugee theme.) Watch it for its brilliant screenplay and its phenomenal cinematography and action set pieces, but it's the disturbing vision of our society that'll stay with you.

[Clínica de Migrantes](#) (2016)

The volunteer-run clinic Puentes de Salud provides medical care to 10,000 undocumented immigrants each year in South Philadelphia. These patients often have nowhere else to go; they are not permitted to buy private health insurance and are unable to afford emergency medical care. Director Maxim

Pozdorovkin's moving film introduces us to the staff and medical providers at Puentes, who feel a moral obligation to offer preventative and prenatal care to those in need, and to the patients facing structural and economic barriers to wellness.

[Dreaming Of Denmark / Drømmen Om Danmark](#) (2015)

Young Wasi came to Denmark when he was fifteen, having arrived alone from Afghanistan. . Film-maker Michael Graversen, who followed Wasi for several years between Denmark and Italy, has managed to obtain remarkable access to Wasi's life underground in Europe and followed him throughout his year-long struggle, not only for survival, but also for an identity outside his country of in the absence of a family. Dreaming of Denmark is a compelling insight into what happened to one of the many unaccompanied refugee children who disappear each year from Danish asylum centers. Many darker stories remain untold.

[El Norte](#) (1983)

Gregory Nava helped kickstart the American indie film movement with this epic about two Guatemalan siblings, indigenous peasants from the country, who undertake the treacherous journey to "the North" (California) after their family are killed by the army. Once Enrique (David Villalpando) and Rosa (Zaide Silvia Guitérrez) arrive al norte – and trust me, watching how they get there is not for the faint of heart – the promised land turns out to be a land of cheap motels, backbreaking work in kitchens and sweatshops, and constant fear of being caught by *la migra*, the INS police.

Their suffering is buffered by great resilience and boundless hope – but look out, this one is a heartbreaker. Few other American films get inside the lives of immigrants so thoroughly; gringos are true outsiders here – strange, capricious creatures in the background who treat our heroes like children when they're not ignoring them completely. *El Norte* is also one of a kind for the way it avoids the standard social realism; instead it's filled with color, humor, melodrama and magical realism.

[Flee](#)

FLEE is an animated documentary film that goes behind the story of the many refugees who arrive in Europe everyday. It's the story of how people are forced from their homes and into the hands of human traffickers who take them on a journey through hostile environments and cynical bureaucracies. The narrative frame of the film is a conversation between two friends –Tobias and Amin. This sets off the different stories from Amin's life.

[Fuocoammare \(Fire At Sea\)](#) (2016)

The documentary captures life on the Italian island of Lampedusa, a frontline in the European migrant crisis. Situated some 200km off Italy's southern coast, Lampedusa has hit world headlines in recent years as the first port of call for hundreds of thousands of African and Middle Eastern migrants hoping to make a new life in Europe. Won Golden Bear Prize at the 2016 Berlin International Film Festival.

[Le Havre](#) (2011)

Kindly inhabitants of the port city conspire to harbor an illegal African stowaway (he's en route to England). Gentle, tastefully stylized and eccentrically comical.

[Hotel de Paso](#)

Hotel de Paso is a documentary that portrays the everyday life of the deported immigrants that live on this old hotel formerly called "El Centenario" and now known as "Hotel Migrante"; this place represents a microcosm or underworld where good and evil meet through protagonist and antagonistic characters. As life and time go by, as if it was a purgatory with lost souls, every character evolves building this film in a choral manner; each voice brings something different through his own holds: his past, his emotions, frustrations, his survival... all of them have to resolve their migratory situation either by trying to cross illegally again to "the other side", returning to their home city or country or by surviving on the border. Between the confinement and the wait, the inhabitants of this hotel have to accommodate their lives to the rules and dynamics imposed by those in charge, a civil organization called "Ángeles sin Fronteras".

[In This World](#) (2002)

This extraordinary film from the prolific Michael Winterbottom (*The Trip*, *24 Hour Party People*) follows the journey of two Afghan asylum seekers. Young Jamal (Jamal Udin Torabi, a real refugee more or less playing himself) and his older cousin Enayat (Enayatallah) attempt a treacherous overland odyssey from a Pakistani refugee camp to the promise of a better life in the UK in the hands of a network of people smugglers.

Shot in a point-blank doco style, with the crew and the actors travelling together on a dangerously authentic migrant route through the region, the film gets into the truth of the refugee experience like few other fiction films. The fear and misery, the hope, the endless waiting and the small moments of happiness are captured with amazing vividness.

[Intouchables](#) (2011)

In Paris, the aristocratic and intellectual Philippe is a quadriplegic millionaire who is interviewing candidates for the position of his caregiver, with his red-haired secretary Magalie. Out of the blue, the rude African Driss cuts the line of candidates and brings a document from the Social Security and asks Philippe to sign it to prove that he is seeking a job position so he can receive his unemployment benefit. Philippe challenges Driss, offering him a trial period of one month to gain experience helping him. Then Driss can decide whether he would like to stay with him or not. Driss accepts the challenge and moves to the mansion, changing the boring life of Philippe and his employees.

[Living At The Border](#)

Documenting the realities of African refugees and migrants, *Living at the Border* captures everyday life in Italy. Through their personal stories, this multimedia project shows the complexity of their lives as they navigate through the asylum system in Europe. Field research for this project was conducted in Rome, Italy from September to October 2013.

[Mediterranea](#) (2015)

Jonas Carpignano's feature film debut is a timely story of African migration to Europe. The poignant docudrama follows two Burkinabé men, single father Ayiva (Koudous Seihon) and his close friend, Abas (Alassane Sy), as they make the perilous journey from Burkina Faso to Italy, where they encounter hostility, violence and a life contrary to the "promised land" they envisioned.

[The Pirogue](#) (2012)

This film should be mandatory viewing for every Australian: Senegalese director Moussa Touré's drama humanizes boat people and people smugglers like no other. A reluctant fisherman (Souleymane Seye N'diaye) is hired to take a ragtag group of desperate souls to a new life in Spain across the North Atlantic in a nerve-rackingly small and ill-equipped boat (the pirogue of the title). Touré says he was influenced by *Master and Commander*, and it shows in the simple but taut narrative and excellent visual use of confined space. As the brave captain and his charges face danger and diminishing hope on the high seas, it's impossible not to feel for the thousands who attempt such odysseys in real life every year, with tragedy often the result.

[Refugee Kids: One Small School Takes On The World](#)

A short documentary that follows students at a New York City summer program for children seeking asylum from the world's most volatile conflicts. The film presents an intimate, emotionally gripping account of the students' stories of escaping war and conflict and resettling in America, chronicling their triumphs and setbacks as their lives unfold over the course of one formative summer. *Refugee Kids* humanizes complex geopolitics and depicts the challenges and urgency of immigration to America in an increasingly dangerous – and interconnected – world.

[Salam Neighbor](#)

Seven miles from war, 85,000 Syrians struggle to restart their lives inside Jordan's Za'atari refugee camp. For the first time, two filmmakers fully embed themselves in a camp, providing an intimate look at the world's direst humanitarian crisis. From meeting Ghousseon, a nurse who built a business to provide for three children, to the street smart, 10-year-old Raouf, whose trauma hides just beneath his ever present smile, Zach and Chris uncover inspiring stories of individuals rallying, against all odds, to rebuild their lives and those of their neighbors.

[Les Sauters \(Those Who Jump\)](#)

In northern Morocco, lies the Spanish enclave of Melilla: Europe on African Land. On the mountain above, live over a thousand hopeful African migrants, watching the fence separating Morocco and Spain. About from Mali is one of them – the protagonist in front of the camera, as well as the person behind it. For over a year, he has ceaselessly attempted to jump the fence.

[A Syrian Love Story](#)

Filmed over 5 years, *A Syrian Love Story* charts an incredible odyssey to political freedom in the West. For Raghda and Amer, it is a journey of hope, dreams and despair: for the revolution, their homeland and each other. *A Syrian Love Story* is available to download/stream from the [BFI website](#) and through [iTunes](#).

[Simshar](#) (2014)

Based on astonishing true events, *Simshar* tells two parallel stories of survival at sea which unravel on and around the Maltese islands. A fishing family from the Mediterranean island of Malta become stranded at sea after their boat, *Simshar* sinks. Their fate gets entwined with the saga of irregular African migrants crossing from Africa to Europe, with tragic consequences.

[Those Who Feel the Fire Burning](#) (2014)

A group of refugees trying to enter illegally by boat Europe. Suddenly a storm is rising. All hell breaks loose as an old man overboard. His consciousness slips into another, dark and hallucinatory dimension. Driven by a mysterious force and desperate for his loved ones, his soul will experience the everyday reality of many refugees stranded at the border of the supposed paradise of Europe.

[The Visitor](#) (2007)

After writer/director Tom McCarthy helped unleash Peter Dinklage on the world with 2003 indie classic [The Station Agent](#), he used his knack for witty dialogue and savvy ground-level views of suburban life for this heartfelt look at immigration in post 9/11 America.

Walter (Richard Jenkins), a lonely Connecticut College professor, befriends a Palestinian-Syrian drummer (Haaz Sleiman) and his girlfriend (Danai Gurira), a Senegalese jewelry designer, after he discovers them living in his New York apartment. Both are world travellers and free spirits who teach Walter to let down his hair and groove to Afrobeat, but soon the pair's precarious situation – including harassment by the authorities and a stint in a detention centre – crashes the party.

[Welcome](#) (2009)

For a film that sits next to middle-of-the-road French comedies on the DVD shelf, Philippe Lioret doesn't pull any punches with this touching but unsentimental tale of an Iraqi Kurdish teenager's foolhardy attempt to swim the English Channel in order to seek asylum in the UK.

Along with fantastic performances from French great Vincent Lindon and young Firat Ayrvedi, the film provokes with its depiction of the depressing real-life situation in Calais, where homeless refugees are brutalized by police and citizens can actually be arrested and imprisoned for hosting or comforting them. Even more depressingly, Lioret says he actually had to tone things down for the story in order to get the film made.

[Wetback: The Undocumented Documentary](#) (2005)

Director Arturo Perez Torres's award-winning documentary about undocumented workers chronicles the life-and-death journeys of Central American and Mexican migrants as they enter the United States without going through proper immigration channels. The subjects' first-person perspective sheds light on individual motivations for the trek and the hazards encountered on their way to the American dream.