

# POV Community Engagement & Education

## DISCUSSION GUIDE



### **FRUITS OF LABOR**

a film by Emily Cohen Ibañez

[www.pbs.org/pov](http://www.pbs.org/pov)



## FRUITS OF LABOR

Ashley, a Mexican-American teenager living in an agricultural town in the central coast of California, dreams of graduating high school and going to college. But when ICE raids threaten her family, Ashley is forced to become the breadwinner, working days in the strawberry fields and nights at a food processing company.

## USING THIS GUIDE

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This guide is an invitation to dialogue. It is based on a belief in the power of human connection and designed for people who want to use *Fruits of Labor* to engage family, friends, classmates, colleagues, and communities in dialogue after viewing. In contrast to initiatives that foster debates in which participants try to convince others that they are right, this document envisions conversations undertaken in a spirit of openness in which people try to understand one another and expand their thinking by sharing viewpoints and listening actively.

The discussion prompts are intentionally crafted to help a wide range of audiences think more deeply about the issues in the film. Rather than attempting to address them all, choose one or two that best meet your needs and interests. And be sure to leave time to consider taking action. Planning next steps can help people leave the room feeling energized and optimistic, even in instances when conversations have been difficult.

For more detailed event planning and facilitation tips, visit <https://communitynetwork.amdoc.org/>.



## THE FILM: KEY PARTICIPANTS



- **Ashley Pavón:** A Mexican-American teenager balancing the challenges of high school with the weight of helping to support her family. Ashley is also the co-writer of *Fruits of Labor*.
- **Beatriz Pavón:** An undocumented immigrant and the single mother to Ashley, Ashford and their siblings.
- **Ashford Pavón:** Ashley's younger brother, who is expecting a child with his girlfriend.
- **Ximena Rocha:** Ashford's girlfriend, who is pregnant with their first child.

## THE FILM: KEY ISSUES

*Fruits of Labor* is an excellent tool for outreach and will be of special interest to people who want to explore the following topics:

- Immigrant and Mixed Status Families
- Experiences of Undocumented Immigrants
- Mexican-Americans
- Coming of Age
- History of and Current Status of Agricultural Work in the U.S.
- Risk of Deportation
- Gender roles within the family
- The Global Food Economy & Food Systems
- Sleep Deprivation & Child/Teen Development
- Farmworkers



## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

**ICE, IMMIGRATION, AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT**

An undocumented immigrant refers to anyone who is residing in a country without legal documentation.

In the film, the threat of US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids and subsequently, the threat of deportation of Ashley's mother, Beatriz, constantly looms over the family. Having to be faced with, and navigate, anxieties and threat of deportation is a common experience for undocumented people in the US and their families. As of 2017, of the more than 40 million immigrants living in the United States, 10.5 million were undocumented, accounting for 3.2% of the nation's population. Like Beatriz, a rising share of these immigrants arrived in the U.S. legally, but overstayed their visas.

ICE is one of the federal government agencies responsible for deporting people. Whereas CBP, *Customs and Border Protections*, is responsible for enforcing immigration laws at and near the borders, ICE is responsible for enforcing immigration laws within the remaining areas of the US.

Today, ICE claims that it's official mission is to, "protect America from the cross-border crime and illegal immigration that threaten national security and public safety." Current law allows the federal government to deport anyone without documented immigration status, as well as anyone with status who have certain criminal convictions.

In January 2017, former President, Donald Trump, issued a new Executive Order which has since been revoked, titled "Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements," which, among other strategies aiming to prevent undocumented immigrants from crossing into the US, directed for a wall to be built along the US-Mexico border. This order also granted ICE broader authority to detain undocumented immigrants. Following this, during the 2017 fiscal year, there was a 30% increase in the number of interior, or "administrative," arrests made by ICE, though these numbers have since decreased.

To learn more about the history of ICE and the treatment of undocumented people in the United States, [visit this POV resource](#).



## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

**CHILDREN OF UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS/MIXED IMMIGRATION STATUS FAMILIES**

In the film, Ashley and her mother, now both increasingly fearful of the possibility of Beatriz's deportation, visit an attorney to discuss a contingency plan for the family. After they initially bring up the idea of Ashley adopting her three brothers and sisters, the attorney explains how serious and permanent those ramifications would be and instead suggests alternatives, such as Ashley being granted legal guardianship.

While Beatriz is considered an undocumented immigrant, Ashley and her siblings were born on U.S. soil and are therefore automatically considered citizens of the United States. This right - *jus soli*, more commonly known as birthright citizenship, dates back to the Fourteenth Amendment, which was ratified on July 9, 1868, and granted citizenship to "all persons born or naturalized in the United States." Families like Ashley's are often referred to as "mixed-status families."

Under U.S. immigration law, the parents of a U.S. citizen who are aged 21 or older are considered immediate relatives and are eligible for a green card. However, if those parents have already been living in the U.S. unlawfully for six months or more, they are not permitted to enter the country for three years. If they have been unlawfully living in the U.S. for more than one year, they would have become "inadmissible" to the U.S. for ten years. Even once Ashley turns 21, the path to legal citizenship for her mother is a complicated and risky one.

Millions of others are in a similar situation to Ashley and her siblings, living with the persistent threat of their parents' deportation. As of 2018, well over 4 million U.S. citizen children under the age of 18 lived with at least one undocumented parent. In 2019 alone, ICE deported 27,980 parents of U.S.-born children. Following the deportation of a parent, children left behind face economic hardship, housing instability, food insecurity and the emotional trauma of being separated from a parent, among other consequences.

When a child's parent is deported, there is the possibility that they are put into the child welfare system. However, they may also end up in the home of grandparents, other relatives, or close family friends. These families are often referred to as "grandfamilies." More than 2.6 million children in the U.S. are being raised, not by their biological parents, but in these grandfamilies. Of this number, approximately 1 out of 5 are living in immigrant grandfamilies, though it is not known how many of these formed as a result of detainment or deportation.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

**FEEDING AMERICA - THE ESSENTIAL WORK OF AGRICULTURAL WORKERS IN THE UNITED STATES**

*“Every single day we sit down to eat breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and at our table we have food that was planted, picked, or harvested by a farm worker. Why is it that the people who do the most sacred work in our nation are the most oppressed, the most exploited?”*

- **Dolores Huerta**, Political and labor Activist and co-founder of the United Farm Workers of America union

Ashley and so many other farm workers play an absolutely vital role in getting food to the tables of millions of Americans across the United States. So much so that at the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Department of Homeland Security deemed agricultural workers “essential,” along with nurses, first responders, law enforcement and others, with the expectation they had “a special responsibility to maintain their normal work schedule.”

Perhaps unsurprisingly, people were not lining up to take on the physical demands of agricultural work. The American Farm Bureau Federation estimates that U.S. agriculture requires a total of 1.5 to 2 million hired workers each year, but farmers are finding it increasingly difficult to fill these positions. In 2019, 56% of California farmers reported that at some point over the last five years, they had been unable to find all the workers they needed.

So who are the people filling these roles and taking on these responsibilities?

Today, immigrant farm workers make up an estimated 73% of agriculture workers in the United States, of which about between 50 and 70 percent are undocumented. Women account for roughly 32% of the workforce. These agricultural workers pay taxes, contribute to the economy, are considered essential workers, but are neither protected against deportation, if undocumented, nor by U.S. labor laws. Minimum wage provisions in the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) do not extend to most kinds of agricultural work and farm workers are also not entitled to overtime pay under the FLSA. According to the National Agricultural Workers Survey, 30% of farmworkers live in poverty, with the medium income falling between \$15,000 and \$17,499 annually.

While precise data on youth farm workers does not exist, the Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs estimates that there are approximately 500,000 to 800,000 farmworkers under the age of 18. Since 1938, federal labor laws have also excluded youth farmworkers, making children in agriculture the least protected by law compared to other sectors.



**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Under federal labor law:

- children of any age can work on farms operated by their parents
- Children as young as 10 can be hired to work on farms not operated by their relatives during short-term harvests
- children at the age of 12 can legally work unlimited hours on farms of any size with parental permission, as long as they don't miss school.
- By law, children working in agriculture can do jobs at age 16 that health and safety experts deem particularly hazardous. In all other sectors, workers must be 18 to do hazardous work.

Despite representing only an estimated 5.5% of working children, a Human Rights Watch report found that between 2003 and 2016, children working in agriculture accounted for more than half of the work-related deaths reported in the U.S. Young girls, who often work completely alone on farms, are exceptionally vulnerable to the lack of laws and protection.



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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

**AFTER VIEWING *FRUITS OF LABOR***

Immediately after the film, you may want to give people a few quiet moments to reflect on what they have seen. You could pose a general question (examples below) and give people some time to themselves to jot down or think about their answers before opening the discussion. Alternatively, you could ask participants to share their thoughts with a partner before starting a group discussion.

- What are two or three new things you learned from watching the film?
- Did the film encourage you to reconsider and subsequently change any ideas, views, or assumptions you had about immigrants and immigrant families prior to watching the film?
- Which person in the film could you most relate to and why?
- Did the film leave you with any questions or something you'd like to learn more about? If yes, what?



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

**PERCEPTION OF IMMIGRANTS**

Historically, do you think that the U.S. has been a country that welcomes immigrants? Can you think of any events that have impacted the ways the U.S. responds to immigrants? In what ways do these events impact how the U.S. supports undocumented people?

The reasons for immigrating are sometimes divided into two categories: 'push' and 'pull' factors. Push factors are reasons that compel or push people to leave the area of where they reside and pull factors are reasons that attract or pull people to move and settle in a particular area. Can you think of examples of 'push' factors that might result in someone needing to leave their home country, even if they preferred to stay?

If you were suddenly forced to move from your home country, what do you imagine would be some of the most difficult aspects of living in a foreign country?

John F. Kennedy once said, *"Everywhere immigrants have enriched and strengthened the fabric of American life."* Discuss some of the positive impacts you feel immigrants have on your community.

**ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE FAMILY**

Describe the roles that different members in your family took on when you were growing up. How influential of a part do you think gender played in designating these roles?

Though close in age, the weight of family responsibilities fall much more heavily on Ashley than they do on her brother, Ashland. Why do you think that is?

What role do you believe culture and society play in the way that gender roles manifest within families?

Ashley's mom used to tell her that, "Once you get the tortilla to puff up on the stove, you'll be ready to marry." In western society, cooking has traditionally been considered a responsibility of women. Can you think of other roles that we delegate within relationships, based on gender?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

## LIFE AS A TEENAGER

Can you recall some of the greatest challenges and responsibilities that you faced as a teenager? If you are a teenager now, what are some of the challenges that are currently weighing most heavily on you? What mistakes did you make when confronting them and what were some of the most significant lessons you took away?

*"I feel an enormous weight on my shoulders. I am the only one who can take care of my siblings if something were to happen to my mother."* Ashley expresses these feelings amidst the growing fear surrounding ICE raids in the area and grave concerns over the possibility of her mother being deported. When you were a teenager, or now, if you are currently a teenager, do you believe you would have been able to take on the responsibility of caring for younger siblings? What would have been some of the greatest sacrifices you would have had to make if being a parent suddenly became your main role in the family?

Towards the end of the film, Ashley says: *"This past year, I transformed from a scared turtle to a flower in bloom, just like my grandma told me I would, just like the curandera who told me not to fear my power. Flowers bloom out, they produce sweet fruit. Fruits remind me of my ancestors, who tell me not to give up."* Can you remember a pivotal moment or period during your teenage years when you went through some of your most important transitions? What encouraged or inspired this metamorphosis? In what ways did you end up blooming?



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

**EXPERIENCES OF IMMIGRANTS AND MIXED-STATUS FAMILIES**

What are some reasons undocumented people decide to come to the United States? In what ways did *Fruits of Labor* help you widen your perspective on the nature (and implications) of these difficult choices immigrants make?

What might families' who leave their home country's miss most about the country and communities they left behind? Do you have any first-hand knowledge or experience that speaks to this that you would feel comfortable sharing?

Undocumented workers are also burdened with paying annual taxes on their wages and are commonly made to pay much more than US citizens who work low-wage jobs. Recognizing that undocumented immigrants are forced to pay billions in taxes without receiving protections and supports from US policy, lawyers and policymakers in California are working on legal interventions which will provide all low-wage workers (including undocumented people) with tax breaks. How does the experiences of being undocumented impact representation in justice movements (like workers' rights) and likelihood of attaining equality?

What are some of the greatest concerns about being undocumented or having family members who are undocumented?

In what ways do experiences of peoples' family members being detained or deported drastically impact their lives? Aside from the emotional and psychic toll detainment/deportation has on all family members involved, what are some additional struggles you learned about by watching this film?

As a mixed-status family where some family members are undocumented and others are granted citizenship, what are some challenges and vulnerabilities these families experience that other families do not?

What, in your understanding of the naturalization process, are some of the greatest hurdles faced during the process of seeking to attain US citizenship?

What do you wish that more people knew about immigrants/immigrant families?



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

## TAKING ACTION

**Influence change and legislation** by speaking to elected officials about immigrant rights and reform. Call the congressional switchboard at (202) 224-3121 and ask to be connected to your representative or senators.

**Voice your support** for immigrants at local town hall and school board meetings and in letters to the editor in your local newspaper.

**Volunteer** with a border relief agency or organizations responding to deportation raids, such as: [Al Otro Lado](#), [Catholic Charities Respite Center](#), [Espacio Migrante](#), [RAICES](#). Help ensure that undocumented immigrants in your community **know their rights** by sharing the important information found [here](#).

**Take the time to listen and learn.** When the opportunity arises, listen to the stories of immigrants, whether that's through literature, films or conversations with immigrants in your local community. Listen to their stories. Learn about the challenges they face. Reevaluate your beliefs and assumptions.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

## RESOURCES TO CONTINUE LEARNING &amp; TAKE ACTION

[American Civil Liberties Union \(ACLU\) and the Immigrants' Rights Project:](#)

ACLU Immigrants' Rights Project is dedicated to expanding and enforcing the civil liberties and civil rights of immigrants and to combating public and private discrimination against them. Learn more about the current issues affecting undocumented immigrants and how you can help take action.

[Coalition of Immokalee Workers:](#)

The Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) is a worker-based human rights organization internationally recognized for its achievements in fighting human trafficking and gender-based violence at work. The CIW is also recognized for pioneering the design and development of the Worker-driven Social Responsibility paradigm, a worker-led, market-enforced approach to the protection of human rights in corporate supply chains.

[Community Agroecology Network:](#)

Non-profit organization with a mission to sustain rural livelihoods and environments in the global south through the integration of agroecology-based research, education, and development strategies.

[Farmworker Justice:](#)

A nonprofit organization that seeks to empower migrant and seasonal farmworkers to improve their living and working conditions, immigration status, health, occupational safety, and access to justice

[Fruits of Labor:](#)

Film's official website

[Grassroots Leadership:](#)

Grassroots Leadership works for a more just society where prison profiteering, mass incarceration, deportation, and criminalization are things of the past by working with communities across the nation to abolish for-profit private prisons, jails, and detention centers.

[Migrant Justice:](#)

Migrant Justice's mission is to build the voice, capacity, and power of the farmworker community and engage community partners to organize for economic justice and human rights. We gather the farmworker community to discuss and analyze shared problems and to envision collective solutions.

[National Immigration Law Center:](#)

One of the leading organizations in the U.S. exclusively dedicated to defending and advancing the rights of immigrants with low income.

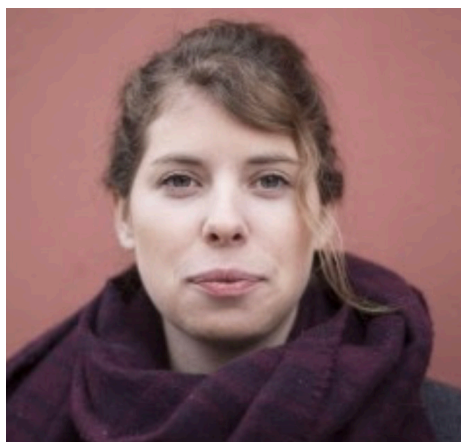
[Student Action with Farmworkers:](#)

Student Action with Farmworkers is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization whose mission is to bring students and farmworkers together to learn about each other's lives, share resources and skills, improve conditions for farmworkers, and build diverse coalitions working for social change

[United Farmworkers of America:](#)

Labor Union for Farmworkers in America.

## GLYNNIS RITTER



Glynnis Ritter (she/her), a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, is a film festival programmer and outreach producer with a particular interest in documentaries that bring attention to environmental and human rights issues. Her previous work includes programming and producing for Cinema Planeta Film Festival in Mexico, Patagonia Eco Film Festival in Argentina, Nordisk Panorama Film Festival in Sweden and production company WG Film in Sweden.

### CREDITS & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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