

Programming Content Resource for HIAS National Refugee Shabbat March 20-21, 2020



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Introduction

Participation in National Refugee Shabbat can be as multifaceted as you would like.

Whether you signed up to participate on behalf of your congregation or as an individual hosting an event in your home, there are a number of options for how your National Refugee Shabbat can take shape:

For congregations, you might consider including a liturgical reading on the theme of the refugee crisis in Shabbat services and/or dedicating a sermon or text study to the topic. If you have a relationship with a refugee, asylum seeker, or refugee agency professional in your local community, consider inviting that person to speak during services. In addition, you might plan a Shabbat dinner program after Friday evening services or a Shabbat lunch program after Saturday morning services. If you are bringing in food for your programming and it is within your community's practice of *kashrut*, consider using a local refugee-owned and/or refugee-operated catering business.

In this document you will find several useful resources for building out your participation in HIAS National Refugee Shabbat:

- a liturgical reading to include in Shabbat services or to share with congregants to read in their homes
- sermon talking points
- a text study to use during Torah study, Shabbat services, or as a stand-alone post-services program
- a list of musical compositions from Jewish and contemporary refugees to either include in Shabbat services or to use as part of a chamber music concert, as well as a newly written song for National Refugee Shabbat 2020
- several outlines for suggested programs:
 - an introduction to the global refugee crisis through a Jewish lens (HIAS' Do-It-Yourself (DIY) General Educational Program)
 - an asylum seeker-oriented movie suggestion with discussion questions
 - a guided discussion and exploration of refugee art
 - a workshop on having difficult conversations about refugees with family and friends
 - an advocacy program that will guide you through creating a public narrative (personal and communal story-telling that can be used in in-district meetings)
 - resources for students in grades 1-4 and 5-9

We encourage you to think through which of these options would be the most appealing to you and/or your community.

For those in major metropolitan areas with many congregations working on refugee issues together, we recommend considering coming together for Havdalah and a post-Havdalah program, which will allow you to partner on a larger program and explore programming options with which you might not feel comfortable on Shabbat (e.g., writing, video).

For individuals, in this document, on pages 3 and 4, you will find a list of ideas for how anyone can take action on National Refugee Shabbat.

Safety and Security

As you make arrangements to support National Refugee Shabbat, HIAS would like to take this opportunity to remind you to consider safety and security as part of your standard event planning process. In this era of heightened anti-Semitic, anti-immigrant, and Islamophobic violence, it is prudent to reflect on your community's approach to safety and security. We encourage you to consider which best practices are applicable to your congregation and facilities. [Secure Community Network](#) (SCN) is one of the U.S. Jewish community's security networks working to strengthen safety and security at Jewish institutions around the country. Working in collaboration with the Department of Homeland Security, SCN has created a number of great resources for strengthening safety and security at Jewish institutions around the country. Here are some of those resources for your consideration:

- [Facility Security Guidance](#)
- [Low Cost Security Measures For Jewish Facilities](#)
- [Social Media Awareness](#)
- [Active Shooter Attacks: Security Awareness for Soft Targets and Crowded Places](#) – Department of Homeland Security (DHS)
- [Mass Gatherings: Take Charge of Your Personal Safety](#) – Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

Publicity and Social Media

HIAS National Refugee Shabbat is an opportunity for the Jewish community to communicate our strong, shared support for refugees and asylum seekers in our country and abroad. HIAS headquarters will be working to tell the story of the Jewish community's participation in National Refugee Shabbat, and we hope that you will do so too by contacting local media about your programming, inviting local elected officials to attend and/or speak at your programs, and/or writing op-eds about your participation for local news outlets. Please also consider writing about your participation on social media and in your community's newsletter or bulletin. Suggested language and logos for this can be found [here](#).

Action Items for Everyone

This is a list of ways that anyone can take action for refugees and asylum seekers in the week leading up to National Refugee Shabbat, as well as on the actual Shabbat itself.¹ Feel free to share widely with family and friends.

1. **Advocate** – Call your Member of Congress to ask them to stand for the rights, safety and dignity of refugees and asylum seekers.
2. **Get Involved in the Election** – Research the candidates running in local elections in your area, and make a plan to let them know that the rights of refugees and asylum seekers are amongst your top priority issues this year.
3. **Update Your Facebook Photo Frame** – Show your support for refugees by updating your Facebook profile picture with the HIAS #JewsforRefugees frame. [Click here for directions](#).
4. **Join the “Jews for Refugees” Facebook Group** - Joining this group is a great way to connect with thousands of other committed individuals across the country, access up-to-the-minute information about the Jewish response to the refugee crisis, and share the actions that you are taking. [Click here to join](#).
5. **Donate Your Miles to Asylum Seekers** – HIAS has partnered with Miles4Migrants (M4M), a nonprofit charity dedicated to using donated frequent flyer miles and money for the relocation of refugees and those seeking asylum – including families recently separated at the U.S.-Mexico border. HIAS and Miles4Migrants (M4M) will work to identify refugees and asylum seekers who need assistance purchasing airfare to reunite with their families. Donate your frequent flyer miles [here](#) the week of National Refugee Shabbat.

¹ We recognize that there are a multiplicity of ways that HIAS' supporters celebrate Shabbat. We encourage you to choose the activities that work best for you and to use the time leading up to National Refugee Shabbat and directly after for any of the activities that resonate but are not in line with your personal Shabbat practice.

6. **Buy Refugee-Produced Goods** – Support refugees and asylum seekers around the world and in your local community by buying refugee-produced goods and/or researching refugee-owned restaurants in your community and having a meal there. [Check out this website to purchase goods made by a collective of African asylum-seeking women living in Tel Aviv, Israel.](#)
7. **Give Life to Refugees and Asylum Seekers** – In the week leading up to National Refugee Shabbat, set up a Facebook fundraiser to benefit HIAS’ work in multiples of \$180².
8. **Scholarships for Displaced Students** – Research whether your local universities and colleges offer scholarships to refugees and asylum seekers. If not, reach out and ask them to consider starting such a program. [Check out Columbia University’s program for an example.](#)
9. **Have A Difficult Conversation** – Using the [HIAS Conversational Guide for How to Talk About Refugees with Family and Friends](#), commit to having at least one conversation with someone in your life who has expressed concern about welcoming refugees to the United States or even someone who has made disparaging remarks about refugees or asylum seekers.
10. **Light Shabbat Candles with Intention** – As you welcome Shabbat on March 20th, use [this reading](#) before lighting Shabbat candles to set an intention to stand with refugees and asylum seekers around the globe.
11. **Host A Gathering In Your Home** – Invite a small group of friends over to your home for Shabbat dinner or lunch or a *havdallah* (the ceremony for closing Shabbat) wine and cheese gathering. At the gathering, consider using the text study on page 6 of this guide as a jumping off point for conversation, take a look at and discuss the refugee art on page 13 of this guide, or screen the movie suggested on page 14 and 15 of this guide.
12. **Start A Book Club** – Start a book club – for adults or young people – to read books by and about refugees and asylum seekers. Use [this list](#) as a jumping off point for suggestions or search google for even more ideas.

² In Jewish tradition, the number 18 is associated with the word *chai*, which means “life.” It is customary to donate charitably in multiples of 18 or 180.

Liturgical Reading – Shamor v'Zachor: Observe and Remember for Refugees

[Click here to download this reading as a formatted handout.](#)

Read the following aloud before you light the Shabbat candles, followed by the blessing:

Shamor v'zachor – we observe and we remember.

We welcome Shabbat with two candles – one to remember Shabbat, and one to make it holy through our observance.

Zachor – we remember. After the Jewish people's original journey as refugees, when we fled our biblical oppressors in Egypt, we were given the gift of Shabbat rest. Today, we remember Shabbat by linking ourselves to those who came before us, a people who, time and time again, were forced to leave home in order to practice Judaism openly and freely.

As we remember our own ancestors' journeys, we think of the millions of refugees and asylum seekers around the world today still fleeing violence and persecution because of who they are.

Shamor – we observe. We observe Shabbat by creating sacred space in our homes, in our synagogues – in all the places that give us refuge. We hope that the lights we kindle over these holy hours will illumine a path to a world made whole once more, a world in which our rest on this day will inspire us to action on all the days that follow.

We observe. We remember. And, now, inspired by our history and our faith, we will act.

Together, we will speak out against those who seek to close the doors of our country to refugees and asylum seekers. We will welcome newcomers to our communities, helping them to settle into new lives with ease. We will ground ourselves in our shared values, living them each and every day as we fight for justice for all.

The flickering of these lights reminds us of the Divine spark that is within each of us – all of us equally deserving of dignity and respect, no matter who we are, what we look like, what we believe, or where we call home.

Shamor v'zachor – we observe and we remember. May the transformative power of these Sabbath lights embolden us in our pursuit of justice so that we may transform our world.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו במצוותיו, וצונו להדליק נר של שבת.

Baruch Atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech Ha'olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav, v'tzivanu l'hadlik ner shel Shabbat.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who hallows us with commandments, commanding us to kindle the light of Shabbat.

Original text by Rabbi Rachel Grant Meyer, HIAS Rabbi-in-Residence

Sermon Talking Points

Please email Rabbi Rachel Grant Meyer on Monday, March 2nd for the most current sermon talking points (facts/figures and advocacy asks). For inspiration for the Jewish content piece, check out the text study below, [HIAS' Refugee Torah](#), or [this text study](#) on the general value of welcoming the stranger.

Text Study

Items Needed

- Copies of the [source sheet with discussion questions](#) (1 copy per participant)

Framing

This text study looks at the weekly Torah portion for the Shabbat of March 20th – 21st, Parshat Vayakhel-Pekudei. Specifically, the Torah portion allows learners to explore the evolution of the Israelite community and how they integrate outsiders as a model for thinking about refugee and asylum seeker integration today.

Instructions

Read through the texts on the first page of the text study as a group. Next, use the discussion questions on the second page to inspire conversation. The beauty of Torah study is that every person and every group has different insight into the text, so there is no wrong way to have the conversation. To help you towards a productive conversation, here are some of the points you might want to guide learners towards seeing in the text:

- By the time this week's Torah portion takes place, the Israelites have cohered into a more cohesive community than in previous chapters of the book of Exodus. They went from the disaster of building the Golden Calf to the shared project of building the Tabernacle.
- The Israelites were not always quite so well-cohered! In fact, the Torah even points out that there are outsiders in their midst – the *erev rav* – who are called out as not being part of the community (otherwise, why point them out at all?).
- Part of what accounts for this shift from a people described as having outsiders amongst them to one assembled community may be the fact that they have a shared sacred goal to work towards (the building of the Tabernacle), rather than becoming distracted by divisiveness (e.g., the Golden Calf).
- Having a shared project to build towards helps a community come together – this was true for the Israelites and can be true for local communities welcoming refugees and asylum seekers today. We want to create communities where we can see that refugees and asylum seekers do not take away from our communities but, rather, make important contributions based on who they are.
- The Israelites brought their particular skills and talents to the building of the Tabernacle, and refugees and asylum seekers do the same in the communities they join. We can have a common goal even if we come from different backgrounds.

Refugee Music

Background

Throughout history, refugee artists have made enormous contributions to art around the world, including as musicians and composers.

Over National Refugee Shabbat, consider including liturgical compositions by Jewish refugees in your Shabbat services.

Alternatively, you might host a chamber music concert featuring pieces composed by refugees on Shabbat afternoon (if it is in keeping with your community's Shabbat practice) or as a post-Havdalah evening program. In between the musical pieces, invite community members to share biographical information about the composers to enrich participants' understanding of the contributions refugees have made over the centuries. After the concert, you might provide attendees with materials to write a post-card to their representatives advocating for refugees (see "HIAS Do-It Yourself (DIY) General Educational Program" section of this guide on page 11 for directions). Consider preceding the concert with a meal catered by a local refugee-run catering company, if there is one in your community.

Below you will find suggestions of composers with links to their compositions to help you put together the musical program for such a concert, as well as the composers' biographical information. If your community is served by a Cantor or employs a musical director, you can certainly work with him/her to put together a musical program for the concert based on his/her expertise and/or with selections from the suggestions below. Otherwise, you might hire a quartet or put together a quartet with musicians from your community, provide them with the names of the musicians below, and ask them to put together a musical program.

"You Were Strangers" – For Piano and Solo Voice or Duet

New for National Refugee Shabbat 2020, we are excited to share a special song composed by Jewish activist musicians in solidarity with HIAS.

Inspired by the most repeated commandment in the Torah – "love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" – this song speaks to the importance of welcoming immigrants and refugees and asks us to remember our own vulnerability so that we might recognize it in others. The song is part of [REVIVAL](#), a spiritual folk-rock music show with themes of love and justice.

[Click here to download the sheet music for this composition.](#)

[Click here to access an audio recording and music video of this composition.](#)

Jewish Liturgical Composers

Include the music of these composers in Shabbat services. It is quite possible that you already use many of their settings, with which congregants may even be quite familiar. Consider highlighting any settings you do use over National Refugee Shabbat and offering some words of introduction, including the

composers' biographic information and a brief explanation of why it is important to highlight their contributions as refugees on this particular Shabbat.

Samuel Adler: “[Samuel] Adler was born in Mannheim, Germany, in the last years . . . of the Weimar Republic. His father, Hugo Chaim Adler, was a highly respected cantor at Mannheim’s chief Liberale synagogue, where the orientation was the mainstream German-Jewish synthesis of tradition and modernity – most closely approximating the American Conservative movement’s path in many respects. Chaim Adler was also an active liturgical composer. Within a year after the nationally orchestrated pogrom known as *Reichskristallnacht*, in 1938, and the realization of doom for German Jewry’s future, the family immigrated to America, where the elder Adler obtained a position as a cantor in Worcester, Massachusetts. There the young Samuel Adler (originally Hans) displayed his musical talents at an early age. He became his father’s choir director when he was only thirteen and remained at that post until he began his university studies. . . .

Adler’s catalogue comprises more than 400 works in nearly all media, including six symphonies, twelve concerti, eight string quartets, five operas, many shorter orchestral works, pieces for wind ensembles and concert bands, other chamber music, and dozens of choral settings and songs – all in addition to his liturgical music. . . .

He is the recipient of many awards and prizes, including the Charles Ives Award, the Lillian Fairchild Award, a Guggenheim Fellowship, a MacDowell Fellowship for five seasons, the Distinguished Alumni Award from Boston University, and Eastman’s Eisenhart Award for distinguished teaching. In 2001, he was elected to membership in the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He has also conducted major orchestras across North America, Europe, the Far East, and Israel.”³

- [Jewish liturgical music composed by Samuel Adler](#)

Israel Alter: “Israel Alter was one of the great virtuoso cantors of his generation and one of the most erudite exponents of artistic *hazzanut* on a classical level. Born in Lemberg (L’vov, then in Galicia, part of the Hapsburg or Austro-Hungarian Empire; now L’viv, in Ukraine), he served as *hazzan* of the Kluge Tempel in Vienna for a number of years and then accepted an appointment as Oberkantor of the principal orthodox synagogue in Hannover. After the assumption of power by the National Socialists, he emigrated to South Africa, where he held a major cantorial post until his immigration to the United States in the 1960s. . . . In New York, Cantor Alter taught at the newly established School of Sacred Music of the Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion. . . .

Alter was particularly interested in the matter of word repetition in cantorial delivery – a subject that still generates debate – to which he devoted much thought in fashioning his compositions and in his own improvisatory singing from the pulpit. Opposed to superficial showmanship or any aspect of cantorial rendition that did not serve both the act of prayer and the meaning of the liturgy, he also rejected . . . prohibitions against word repetition on . . . religious grounds. . . .

³ From <https://www.milkenarchive.org/artists/view/samuel-adler/>.

In his later years he became revered for his knowledge of cantorial history and its stylistic and interpretive traditions.”⁴

- [Jewish liturgical music composed by Israel Alter](#)

Chamber Music Composers

Béla Bartók: “Through his far-reaching endeavors as composer, performer, educator, and ethnomusicologist, Béla Bartók emerged as one of the most forceful and influential musical personalities of the twentieth century. Born in Nagyszentmiklós, Hungary (now Romania), on March 25, 1881, Bartók began his musical training with piano studies at the age of five, foreshadowing his lifelong affinity for the instrument. Following his graduation from the Royal Academy of Music in 1901 and the composition of his first mature works – most notably, the symphonic poem *Kossuth* (1903) – Bartók embarked on one of the classic field studies in the history of ethnomusicology. With fellow countryman and composer Zoltán Kodály, he traveled throughout Hungary and neighboring countries, collecting thousands of authentic folk songs. Bartók's immersion in this music lasted for decades, and the intricacies he discovered therein, from plangent modality to fiercely aggressive rhythms, exerted a potent influence on his own musical language.

In addition to his compositional activities and folk music research, Bartók's career unfolded amid a bustling schedule of teaching and performing. The great success he enjoyed as a concert artist in the 1920s was offset somewhat by difficulties that arose from the tenuous political atmosphere in Hungary, a situation exacerbated by the composer's frank manner. As the specter of fascism in Europe in the 1930s grew ever more sinister, he refused to play in Germany and banned radio broadcasts of his music there and in Italy. A concert in Budapest on October 8, 1940, was the composer's farewell to the country which had provided him so much inspiration and yet caused him so much grief. Days later, Bartók and his wife set sail for America. . . .

From its roots in the music he performed as a pianist – Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin, Brahms – Bartók's own style evolved through several stages into one of the most distinctive and influential musical idioms of the first half of the twentieth century. The complete assimilation of elements from varied sources – the Classical masters, contemporaries like Debussy, folk songs – is one of the signal traits of Bartók's music. . . .

If a single example from Bartók's catalogue can be regarded as representative, it is certainly the piano collection *Mikrokosmos* (1926-1939), originally intended as a progressive keyboard primer for the composer's son, Peter. These six volumes, comprising 153 pieces, remain valuable not only as a pedagogical tool but as an exhaustive glossary of the techniques – melodic, harmonic, rhythmic, formal – that provided a vessel for Bartók's extraordinary musical personality.”⁵

- [List of works composed by Bela Bartok](#)

Tania Leon: “Though she grew up poor in Havana, Tania León's entire family supported her remarkable musical talent. Her grandmother insisted she be admitted to the music conservatory at age four, before she could even read. Her grandfather purchased a piano for the household when León was five. An avid

⁴ From <https://www.milkenarchive.org/artists/view/israel-alter/>.

⁵ From <https://www.allmusic.com/artist/b%C3%A9la-bart%C3%B3k-mn0000534880/biography>.

reader, her grandmother often spoke to her about artists – Marian Anderson, Josephine Baker, Paul Robeson, Leonard Bernstein – many of whom Tania later got to work with. When she was nine years old, León’s teacher casually planted the seed of her becoming an international pianist. While performing in France, he sent her a postcard of the Eiffel Tower. ‘It had such an impact; I kept saying to my family that one day I would live in Paris,’ says León. Before leaving Cuba, she earned a BA and MA from Carlos Alfredo Peyrellade Conservatory, and simultaneously, earned her CPA from the school of commerce – in case her dream of being a musician never materialized. . . .

If she had not bravely come to the US on a 1967 “Freedom Flight” from Cuba, she would not have gifted New York City and the country with her talents and influence, inspiring generations of artists. . . .

Arriving first in Miami, she knew the city could not offer the opportunities needed to launch a music career. She explained her predicament to a church sponsor. Three days later she had a one-way ticket to New York City, which she has called home ever since. . . .

A chance meeting with Arthur Mitchell, the New York City Ballet’s first African American principal dancer, changed the course of her life. She had agreed to sub as a ballet accompanist, and during a break, she met Mitchell when he heard her playing. . . . Eventually, he asked if she’d like to help with his new project, Dance Theatre of Harlem. Motivated by the assassination of King, Mitchell had the idea of using art, specifically dance, to affect social change. León became the organization’s first music director. Eventually, Mitchell inspired León to create her first composition, *Tones*, which she dedicated to her grandmother. . . .

Today, León is an inspiration to young composers, a cultural activist, and a champion for contemporary music. She has been a professor at Brooklyn College since 1985 and is a City University of New York (CUNY) distinguished professor since 2010. As a professor, she sees her role as supportive: teaching students to believe in themselves and helping them to bring out their best compositions.”

- [List of works composed by Tania Leon](#)
- [Short list of chamber works composed by Tania Leon](#)

Darius Milhaud: “One of the more prolific composers of the twentieth century, Darius Milhaud was born to a Jewish family in southern France during the last decade of the nineteenth century. He learned the violin as a youth. Studies at the Paris Conservatoire from age 17 on gave the young composer opportunity to work with some of the most prominent French composers and theorists of the day, including Charles Marie Widor, Vincent d'Indy and André Gedalge, and allowed him to focus on developing his skills as a pianist.

While serving as an attaché at the French delegation in Rio de Janeiro during the First World War, Milhaud began a long and fruitful association with poet Paul Claudel (who was at that time a Minister at the delegation), several of whose plays Milhaud would go on to provide with incidental music (*Proteé*, 1919; *L'annonce fait à Marie*, 1934) and who, in turn, would supply libretti for many of Milhaud's compositions (e.g. the opera *Christophe Colomb* of 1928). . . .

Milhaud composed, performed, and taught ceaselessly during the 1920s and 1930s, only abandoning his homeland in late 1939 after all hope of resisting the German advance vanished. Settling in the United States, Milhaud accepted a teaching position with Mills College in Oakland, California, and continued to compose prolifically. From 1947 he combined his American teaching duties with a similar position at the

Paris Conservatoire, remaining at both institutions until 1971, when his poor health forced him into retirement. . . . He died in Switzerland three years later.

Milhaud's musical output is impressive, both in terms of quantity and quality. The numbers alone are staggering for a twentieth century composer: nine operas, 12 ballets, 12 symphonies (in addition to six chamber symphonies), six piano concertos (one of them a double concerto), 18 string quartets, and about 400 other compositions in almost every conceivable form and instrumentation. The most frequently discussed feature of his musical language is polytonality (the simultaneous use of multiple tonal centers), though Milhaud was familiar with and fluent in any number of twentieth century techniques.”⁶

- [List of chamber works composed by Darius Milhaud](#)

Ruth Schonthal: “Ruth Schonthal was born in Hamburg. . . . She began her musical studies at the age of five at the Stern Conservatory in Berlin. . . . Shortly after the elections of 1932–33 led to the National Socialist regime, however, Jews were no longer permitted to attend such institutions, and she was expelled as a [Jew] in 1935. As the persecution increased, her family emigrated and sought refuge in Stockholm, where she continued her studies at the Royal Academy of Music. . . . In 1940 her first piano sonatina was published. But when safety for Jews in Sweden began to appear less secure, she and her family left and became refugees once again – this time in Mexico City (to which they had to travel via the Soviet Union) in 1941. . . . At the age of nineteen she was the soloist in the premiere of her own piano concerto (*Concerto romantico*) at the Palacio de Bellas Artes. When the great émigré composer Paul Hindemith (also a refugee from the Third Reich) came to Mexico City on a concert tour, he had occasion to meet Schonthal and hear some of her piano works. He offered her admission and a scholarship at Yale, where he had been on the faculty since 1940 – an offer she quickly accepted, graduating in 1948. . . .

More romanticist than modernist, yet fully conversant with 20th-century developments, Schonthal pretty much resisted the sway of both the European and American avant-garde forces. But some of those influences are still to be found within her synthesized aesthetic, which includes many elements of the aggregate European musical tradition, Mexican folk music, aleatoric aspects, and even occasional nods to more recent so-called minimalism. . . .

In 1996 Schonthal was invited to compose a piece about the Berlin Wall and its dismantling. In one section she incorporated the infamous Horst Wessel song, the official anthem of the Nazi party from 1931 on (banned by law in postwar Germany to this day), whose lyrics she still remembers hearing as a child from her family’s balcony as the storm troopers marched through the streets. . . . Schonthal built what she calls a ‘gruesome parody’ around the song.

‘For me,’ Schonthal has said, ‘the contrasting elements – the beautiful-ugly, tension-release, good-evil – are opposite ends of one and the same thing. They have a magnetic attraction towards each other; they are never static. I deliberately combine the good old with the good new, because of my background and because I believe that every revolution throws out the baby with the bathwater. I am not religious—on the contrary—but I believe in a spirit of devotion.’”⁷

- [Selected works composed by Ruth Schonthal](#)

⁶ From <https://www.allmusic.com/artist/darius-milhaud-mn0001175393/biography>.

⁷ From <https://www.milkenarchive.org/artists/view/ruth-schonthal/>.

HIAS' Do-It-Yourself (DIY) General Educational Program

Throughout the year, HIAS offers a 3-module DIY Educational Program, which includes an introduction to the global refugee crisis, the opportunity for participants to share their own stories and connections to this critical social justice issue, a Jewish text and values component, and advocacy activities to move participants to action. The program comes complete with a detailed facilitator's guide and all relevant handouts so that it can be meaningfully implemented by professional staff or lay leaders in any congregation and community.

[Click here to download the facilitator's guide, as well the handouts, which are linked within the guide.](#)

If you move fairly quickly from one activity to the next, the program can be accomplished in one hour and 45-minute block. Leaving more time for questions and discussion, it could a bit longer. For a shorter program, you might also consider using one module as a stand-alone program – such as the text study or the letter writing/phone banking advocacy module.

For the most up-to-date advocacy talking points for this module, please email Rabbi Rachel Grant Meyer at rachel.grant.meyer@hias.org 1-2 weeks prior to March 20th.

The program can be modified to be Shabbat-friendly by simply removing the two short videos suggested and eliminating the advocacy component, which invites participants to write letters or make phone calls to their elected representatives and to create social media posts. Further direction are included in the facilitator's guide.

An Exploration of Refugee Art

Items Needed

- Copies of [“An Exploration of Refugee Art” handout](#) (1 per participant)

Framing

This program gives participants the opportunity to explore different mediums of refugee art – visual, poetry, and spoken word – to get to know who refugees are and how their experiences affect the lives they rebuild. It is meant to be an informal discussion of the art pieces printed in the handout.

Instructions

Give all participants 5-10 minutes to look through and read about the various pieces of art below. You may suggest that they jot down some immediate impressions. Next, have an informal group discussion using the discussion questions. You can either do this as a large group (if 10-15 people or fewer) or ask participants to break into pairs and then come back together to share their reflections after 20-30 minutes.

Movie Recommendation and Conversation Guide

Items Needed

- A/V equipment to project the film
- Internet access to show [Credible Fear](#) (password: CredibleFearFilm2019)
- [Google Slides presentation](#) with family history conversation prompts OR butcher paper with these prompts written out

Framing

Asylum is very much in the news today. But despite how much we're hearing about it, there is significant misunderstanding about what asylum means and confusion around recent changes to U.S. asylum policy, especially at the southern border.

This program allows participants to share their own family histories of migration and to draw connections to the stories of today's asylum seekers. Below, you will find an outline for a program based around the short documentary, *Critical Fear*, which shows the struggle that West African asylum seekers go through on their way to the United States through Latin America. The film focuses on Sam Kwesi, a Ghanaian asylum seeker who fled his country when his father was murdered in a religious conflict. Sam is now being held in a detention center Louisiana, where he is awaiting a hearing to determine whether he will receive asylum status in the United States. After participants have shared their family stories and viewed *Critical Fear*, the program suggests a handful of questions for fostering further discussion.

Instructions

Welcome participants to the program.

Say to the group:

"Asylum is very much in the news today. But despite how much we're hearing about it, there is significant misunderstanding about what asylum means and confusion around recent changes to U.S. asylum policy, especially at the southern border.

Asylum is a legal protection granted to people fleeing persecution based on their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. An asylum seeker is someone who has applied for protection but has not yet received any legal recognition or status.

The right to seek asylum is guaranteed under U.S. and international law; however, the issue has become highly politicized in recent years and today asylum seekers who present themselves at a port of entry may be detained or turned away. This morning/afternoon/evening, we have the opportunity to view *Critical Fear*, a short documentary that will give us insight into the experience of a Ghanaian man seeking asylum in the United States and the arduous journey he undertakes.

Before we watch the film, though, let's take a moment to share our own connections to this issue. Please find a partner and take five minutes to share each other's family migration stories with one another using the questions on the paper at the front of the room/on the screen."

Project these conversation prompts using the Google Slides presentation or write them on a large piece of butcher paper to hang in the front of the room:

- How did your family come to the United States?
- Did your family's migration story shape your family's identity in any way? Were stories of other family members' migration – like grandparents or great-grandparents – passed down to you? If so, how?

After five minutes, bring the group back together and say: "I hope you can see from the richness of your conversations that migration stories are deeply a part of the Jewish experience. This morning/afternoon/evening, as we observe National Refugee Shabbat together, we have the opportunity to think about our role in the current global refugee crisis, given that our families have now found safety on these shores. In order to better understand the experience of today's asylum seekers, we are going to watch a short documentary to help foster our discussion."

Now, show *Critical Fear*, which can be viewed [here](#) (password: CredibleFearFilm2019).

After the film, use these questions to prompt an informal discussion:

1. In what ways was Sam's journey similar to the journeys your family members took to come to this country? How was it different?
2. What did you see in the documentary that surprised you or that you did not expect to see or did not know?
3. Is there one scene that particularly stuck with you? How might you describe that scene to someone else to communicate how dire the situation is for asylum seekers both on their journey to and in the United States?
4. What is the role that fear plays for asylum seekers? We hear often about those who are fearful of asylum seekers, but we hear less about the fear asylum seekers experience themselves. What were the points in Sam's story when he dealt with fear? How might you talk about Sam's experience of fear with those who are fearful of asylum seekers?
5. When he is on the bus from Mexico to the United States, Sam remarks that police officers often ask to see passengers' papers but that they don't check everyone, and Sam remarks that this is because of racism. Given that the majority of asylum seekers are people of color, what role do you think racism plays in our current immigration debate? Do you see a connection between racism and other forms of hatred in our current national rhetoric – if so, how?
6. How is Sam's story a story of resilience? Where did you see or hear resilience in his story?
7. How does Sam's story inspire you to take action for refugees and asylum seekers today? What action will you commit to in the months to come?

How to Have Difficult Conversations

Items Needed

- Handout – [How to Talk About Refugees with Family and Friends](#) (best printed double-sided; 1 per participant)
- Handout – [Refugee Torah text study](#) (1 per participant)
- Handout – [HIAS Sukkot Posters with stories of refugees](#) – pages 4, 5, and 9 (1 per participant)
- *Optional:* Handout – [“Some Helpful Definitions”](#) and [“The Global Refugee Crisis: The Top 5 Facts”](#) (best printed as one double-sided handout; 1 per participant)

Framing

This program will help participants develop skills for talking about refugee issues with people with whom they may not agree. It will ground participants in the basic facts of the global refugee crisis, as well as equip them with language from Jewish textual tradition that undergirds the Jewish responsibility to support refugees.

Instructions

Begin the program by welcoming participants and asking them to find a partner and take 2 minutes each to briefly share why they came to today’s program and why this issue matters to them.

After 5 minutes, bring everyone back together and say:

“In our increasingly politicized world, it can be difficult and even painful to talk to loved ones with whom we disagree about some of the issues that we hold most dear, including the global refugee crisis. The question we are here to unpack this morning/afternoon/evening is how we can speak authentically and Jewishly about this issue while also enabling those with whom we speak to safely and fully express their concerns. Over the course of the next hour, we are going to spend some time looking at best practices for having difficult conversations, finding Jewish language to talk about our responsibility to refugees, and equipping ourselves with some of the basic knowledge we need to address common misunderstandings about refugees. We will be using HIAS’ Conversational Guide for How to Talk About Refugees with Family and Friends as our guide.”

Hand out copies of the [Conversational Guide](#).

Ask for four volunteers to read aloud from the four sections on the front side of the Conversational Guide – Listen Fully, Build Empathy, Draw On Your History and Values, and Bring the Facts.

After you finish reading these, you may want to acknowledge that, while we all know that we should listen fully to those with whom we speak, this can be particularly hard to remember when a conversation gets heated. Ask participants to share any best practices they have for remembering to let someone finish speaking before they respond, even if the other person says something upsetting or offensive.

Take a few minutes to review the answers to the frequently asked tough questions on the back of the Conversational Guide.

If your community is just tackling this issue for the first time, you may also want to consider distributing [HIAS' Helpful Definitions and Top 5 Facts handout](#) and taking turns reading aloud to ground yourselves in a shared understanding of the basic definitions of refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced people, and migrants, as well as some of the top-line facts about the refugee crisis and refugee resettlement in the United States.

Finish this section of the program by saying to the group:

"In addition to knowing this information, it is also important for us to help others use accurate language to talk about immigrants and refugees. For instance, we can remind people to use the word refugee or asylum seeker when speaking about someone who has specifically fled violence or persecution because of who they are, rather than the umbrella term of migrant, as refugees and asylum seekers have particular legal rights. We can also remind folks that we should say refugee, asylum seeker, or migrant, rather than illegal alien or illegal immigrant. While people cross borders in a multiplicity of ways, no human being is illegal."

Hand out copies of the [Refugee Torah text study](#). Say:

"With this basic information under our belts, we are now going to spend 15 minutes looking at various Jewish texts that address our obligation to welcome, love, and protect the stranger. Please find a partner and follow the directions at the top of this text study."

After 15 minutes, bring the group together and say:

"I hope the last 15 minutes gave each of us a firmer grasp on how we can use Jewish texts to respond to claims that the refugee crisis should not be a Jewish concern. Of course, while it is certainly important for us to bring factual information to our conversations and to apply the values we learn about in our holy texts, for many people, what is most moving is to have a real face put on this vast and often overwhelming crisis. Let's spend some time reading real stories of real people who have been forced to flee their homes due to persecution and violence and think about how we might tell their stories to respond to common concerns people express about refugees."

Hand out the posters with the stories of Rawan, Carlos, and Ahed. Have participants count off as 1's, 2's, and 3's. Ask everyone to find a partner with their same number. Say to the group:

"1's: you will be looking at Rawan's story. 2's: you will be looking at Carlos's story. 3's: you will be looking at Ahed's story. Take a look at the questions in the front of the room to guide your conversation. You might even try taking turns assuming the role of the person with the concern and the person responding to the concern and practicing how you would respond."

Have the following prompts written on three large butcher paper (large enough that everyone can see from where they are sitting):

1. How would you use Rawan's story to respond to the sentiment that refugees will change the American way of life and/or American values because they will not acclimate?

2. How would you use Carlos's story to respond to the sentiment that refugees do not support themselves but, rather, just "milk the system"?
3. How would you use Ahed's story to respond to those who say that Muslim refugees are actually terrorists trying to hide amongst non-Muslim refugees?

After 10 minutes, bring the group back together and say: "As we close today's program, I hope we are all feeling more confident in addressing these issues with those in our lives who may not agree with our support for refugees. Before we end the program, I invite everyone to share one thing they learned tonight or something they are thinking about differently, as well as one commitment you would like to make to build on what you have learned or practiced today."

Public Narrative

Items Needed

- [Google Slides Presentation](#)
- Projection system for showing internet-based video
- Paper and writing implements for all participants

Framing

As advocates and activists, our personal stories are some of our most critical tools. The powerful delivery of a story can open someone's mind to new ideas, make them feel like they are part of something, or motivate them to take action. Powerfully-delivered stories can build community and even drive movements forward. In this workshop, participants will learn to craft their own public narratives in service of being able to personalize their own advocacy work in support of refugees.

Instructions

Introduction

Say to the group:

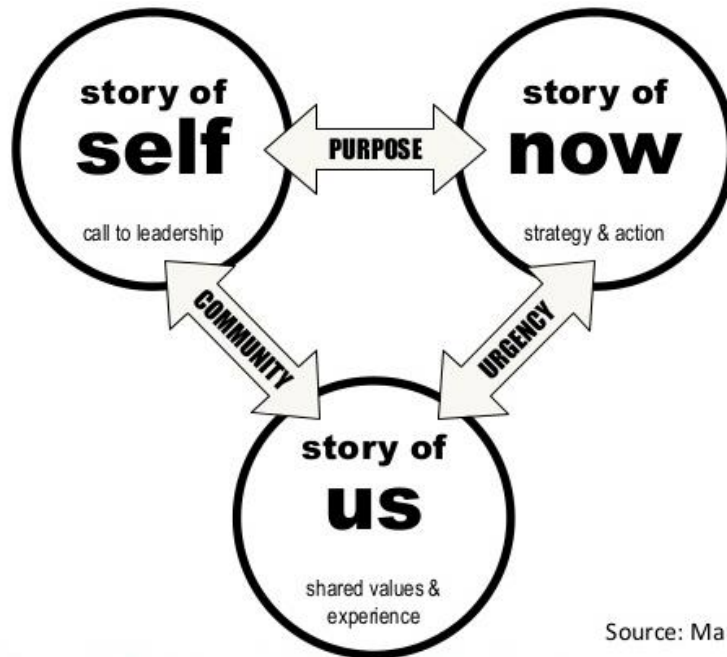
"As advocates and activists, our personal stories are some of our most critical tools. The powerful delivery of a story can open someone's mind to new ideas, make them feel like they are part of something, or motivate them to take action. Powerfully-delivered stories can build community and even drive movements forward.

The public narrative model was developed by Marshall Ganz, a long-time organizer in the migrant farmworkers movement in the U.S. and currently a Senior Lecturer at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard. Since it was developed in the 1990's, the model has been used by thousands of community organizers, activists, and organizations as a key component of building leadership and movements.

As Jews, we are the inheritors of a tradition of storytelling that has sustained our community's values, history, and cultural norms across centuries and even millennia. Today, as part of National Refugee Shabbat, we learn to tell our own stories using a model that moves others to take action for refugees."

Part One

Start the [Google Slides presentation](#) with slide 1 and have this graphic clearly displayed:



Source: Marshall Ganz

Say to the group:

“The public narrative model is based in the idea that people are moved to action based on both strategy and narrative.”

To compose a public narrative, you actually need to weave together three different stories into a short pitch that can be delivered in the span of approximately five minutes.”

Display slide 2 of the Google Slides presentation.

Say to the group:

“The three different stories are:

- **Story of Self:** This is your own personal story of why the issue matters to you.

Your story should include answers to questions like:

What motivates you to take action for refugees?

What is your personal connection?

When did you make the choice to become involved and take action?

- **Story of Us:** Make a connection to a broader community.

In this part, you are not focusing on your own story, but, rather, broadening to a set of shared stories or values.

Consider your audience. They should be part of the “us” and included and implicated through your appeal to Jewish values and history, American values, or the values of your synagogue or local community.

- **Story of Now:** End by talking about urgency.

Why is it critical that we take action right now?

What is at stake?

What can we all achieve, if we all join together?

Be hopeful. End with a specific and actionable ask – something that your audience (be that one person or hundreds) can do.”

Pause to discuss everyone’s reactions to the model before moving to the next section.

Part Two

Say to the group:

“Former President Barack Obama is a master of public narrative and a polished orator. We are going to watch a short clip from the 2004 Democratic National Convention. As it happens, public narrative was the tool that he used in the very speech that was responsible for rocketing him into the national spotlight! As we watch, let’s specifically look for the Story of Self, Us, and Now, and make note of the lines that clearly reveal which section he is in. Jot down a note for yourself about when each section starts and ends.”

Show the clip to the group. Either use the link embedded in slide 3 in the Google Slides presentation or use this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ueMNqdB1QIE>. Start at 0:13, and end at 4:46 with the line “I say to you tonight we have more work to do.”

After watching the video, discuss everyone’s findings using the following guiding questions.

1. Did you notice where the Story of Self ended and the Story of Us began? What lines indicated that he had moved to that next section?
2. Did you notice where the Story of Us ended and the Story of Now began? What lines indicated that move?
3. How did watching this speech make you feel? What made this speech compelling and effective?
4. What works well about the Story of Self - Story of Us - Story of Now progression? How does it guide the listener through a path from sympathy to action?

Part Three

Give the group 10 (or more) minutes to compose their own public narrative. Remind the group that everyone has a story to tell and that being able to tell that story in a compelling concise way can move others to action.

Part Four

Ask everyone to share their story with a partner or neighbor. If time permits, ask for a few volunteers to share their story with the group.

If you have a particularly adventurous group, you can even try to identify the three sections of each presenter's story. Or you can workshop some of the stories as a group, giving advice and feedback to the presenter.

Wrap-Up

Say to the group:

"We can all use our own platforms, our own networks, community bulletins, local newspapers, or even, social media accounts to get a message out to a broad audience. We can share our stories with family and friends, with our community, and even with elected officials.

In what contexts can you imagine yourself using your public narrative?"

Conclude by saying to the group:

"In today's world, communication is only becoming more and more democratized. We no longer need to be 'above the fold' in the New York Times to be relevant. Some of the loudest voices today make themselves heard on Twitter and Facebook! Powerful stories draw attention to your message and all of us in the room should feel empowered to use our voices to make change."

Additional Resources

For additional reading on this topic, check out these resources:

1. Why Stories Matter, Marshall Ganz
<https://friendsofjustice.blog/2009/02/18/marshall-ganz-why-stories-matter/>
2. Public Narrative Participant Guide, Marshall Ganz, Harvard Kennedy School
<https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Public%20Narrative%20Participant%20Guide.pdf>

Tallit for Welcome

For communities interested in an intergenerational project that works well, in particular, for religious school-aged students, consider creating a “Tallit (Prayer Shawl) for Welcome.”

In preparation, encourage participants to explore some of these [Jewish texts about the value of welcoming the stranger](#). Then, host an event or religious school program where participants create fabric squares depicting what the Jewish concept of welcome means to them personally, perhaps also drawing on their family’s immigration story (if they have one).

Finally, sew all of the squares together into a large rectangle and attach *tzitzit* (fringes). You can purchase *tzitzit* online; there are many sellers on Etsy. For more information about tying *tzitzit* yourself, [watch this short explanatory video](#).

You can use this tallit for group *aliyot* to the Torah, consecration, weddings or other events in the synagogue or community.

Resources for Students in Grades 1-4

For students in grades 1-4, we recommend HIAS’ free, downloadable children’s book, [Rosie and Warda and the Big Tent](#). It is perfect for a children’s Shabbat service or for a religious school class discussion. At the beginning of the book, you will find suggested discussion questions to use to further unpack the issues covered in the book.

Resources for Students in Grades 5-9

Items Needed

- [Google Slides Presentation](#)
- [Slips of paper with pictures of bicycles, cars, boats, or vans \(Transportation Vectors\)](#)
- [Transportation Vector Signs](#)
- Handout – Text Study: “[What Is Our Obligation To The Stranger?](#)” (best printed double sided in landscape setting on 11x17 paper and folded in half so that the text is on the inside of the booklet and the text navigator and notes section are on the outside; 1 per participant)
- Handout – **Guide to Calling and Writing Members of Congress**⁸ (1 per participant)
- Handout – “[My People Were Refugees Too](#)” [signs](#) for people to fill in and take pictures of themselves holding (1 per participant)
- Paper and writing implement for every participant

⁸ Please contact HIAS Rabbi-in-Residence, [Rabbi Rachel Grant Meyer](#), 1-2 weeks before the planned program to receive the most up-to-date guide and talking points.

Framing

This program provides a brief introduction to the global refugee crisis through a Jewish lens for students in grades 5 through 9. It begins with an opportunity for participants to try to put themselves in the shoes of today's refugees to build empathy, followed by a section in which they will inductively define who refugees actually are. Next, participants explore Jewish texts on the value of welcoming the stranger and think about how to apply them in their lives today. Finally, participants take action for refugees through advocacy.

Instructions

Set Induction (10 minutes)

As participants come into the room, there will be a [Google Slides presentation](#) projected. The first slide will read: "What would you miss the most if you had to leave your home quickly without having time to pack more than what you could carry in your hands?" As participants settle into the room, they should think about this question.

Participants will also receive a [slip of paper with a picture of a bicycle, car, boat, or van](#). Around the room, there will be [large signs with a picture of a bicycle, car, boat, or van](#). Participants will be directed to gather under whichever picture corresponds to their slip of paper.

Move to slide 2 in the Google Slides presentation. Tell participants that they are leaving home by the mode of transportation depicted on their slip of paper and that they have 5 minutes to pack whatever they think they can bring with them, given how they will be leaving home. They should make a quick list and then divide the list into 3 categories: "Essential Survival Items," "Things It Might Be Nice To Have," and "Things That Make Me Feel Like Myself."

After they have made their lists, bring participants back together and ask them to offer quick, popcorn-style responses to these questions (switch to slide 3 in the Google Slides presentation to project these questions for the whole group to see):

- 1.) Were you able to take everything with you that you wanted?
- 2.) What did it feel like to pack to leave so quickly?
(Possible answers: scary, confusing, rushed)
- 3.) Would any of the items you packed help you?
(Possible answers: maybe they'd make me feel comforted which would make me feel more safe and confident)

Refugee 101 (10 minutes)

Switch to slide 4 in the Google Slides presentation.

Say to the group:

"As we have just seen, there are a lot of reasons that people leave home. Most of us in the room have probably only experienced leaving our home by choice. Sadly, for lots of people in the world, that is not

the case – maybe even some of your parents or grandparents. They are actually forced to leave home for a variety of reasons. As Jews, we know that this has been the case throughout our history.

Thinking about some of the pictures you saw earlier while you were making your packing list, what you know about Jewish history, and what you know about the world today, what are some of the reasons that people might be forced to leave home?”

Possible examples include:

- Because they are hungry and in need of food (famine)
- Because they cannot make enough money to support themselves/their family and need better job prospects
- Because of war
- Because they are being discriminated against because of their religion
- Because a government does not accept their political opinion
- Because they are being threatened because of their ethnicity or nationality
- Because they are not safe because they are a member of a social group (e.g., LGBTQ)

Put up the picture of Albert Einstein in the Google Slides presentation (slide 5). Ask participants to brainstorm everything they know about him (key answers: Jewish, born in Germany, had to flee Germany to U.S. in 1930s to escape Nazi persecution).

Once the group brainstorms a solid list, explain that, while the term “refugee” had not yet been officially legally defined when he came to this country, Albert Einstein was a refugee.

Switch to slide 6 in the Google Slides presentation.

Say to the group:

“While there are many reasons that people might be forced to leave home, refugees and asylum seekers are people who are forced to leave home because of fear of harm or persecution due to one of five categories: their nationality, ethnicity, religion, political opinion, or membership in a social group. Refugees and asylum seekers are people who leave their home country and cross over into another country. Refugees, unlike asylum seekers, have been granted some sort of status either by their host country or the UN High Commissioner on Refugees. The participants will then be able to see the definitions of refugees and asylum seekers projected on the Google Slides presentation.

Text Study (20-25 minutes – extendable, if extra time)

Transition by explaining to participants that, while the global refugee crisis may seem daunting, Jewish tradition gives us some language to help us gain a foothold on what our responsibility is.

Ask participants to find a *chevruta* (study partner). Hand out the source page (“[What Is Our Obligation to the Stranger?](#)”). Instruct participants to use the text navigator on the front page to move through the text study, beginning with the pink source in the middle from Genesis 18:1-8 and then focusing on 1-2 of the blue commentaries using the prompt questions as a guide for conversation. The text navigator suggests that participants spend 5 minutes on the main text, 3-5 minutes skimming the commentaries, and 10 minutes discussing the commentaries. Roam around the room as the *chevrutot* discuss the texts

to keep time, make sure that everyone is making their way through the sources in a timely way, and answer any questions.

This text study is meant to be a jumping off point. Depending on how much time you have, you can encourage *chevrotot* to discuss fewer or more of the commentaries, as the questions for each commentary text are printed for everyone to see.

After 15-20 minutes, wrap up the discussion by bringing the group back together and asking everyone to reflect together on the following question for 5-10 minutes, referencing the texts they have just studied. Given what you have read about the Jewish responsibility to welcome the stranger, how might you act on the values or concepts communicated by these texts? Really encourage participants to reference specific texts and the values and concepts in those sources.

Letter-Writing/Selfie-Taking (Remaining Time)

PLEASE NOTE: Due to the quickly changing nature of the advocacy issues pertinent to refugees in the current political climate, please contact HIAS Rabbi-in Residence, Rachel Grant Meyer, (Rachel.Grant.Meyer@hias.org) 1-2 weeks before you plan to implement this program to make sure that you have the most current advocacy module and talking points.

Transition by letting participants know that, today, they have the chance to take act on the values they just studied and take action as part of the American Jewish movement for refugees.

Explain that, right now in the United States, with so many different attempts to prevent those seeking safety from rebuilding their lives here, there is heightened awareness around refugee issues and a need for a strong Jewish voice in support of welcoming refugees. The United States has a history of offering safe haven to refugees, and the attempts to stop refugees and asylum seekers from coming to the United States are both cruel and a departure from this long-standing tradition of welcome.

Invite participants to write letters or place a phone call to their congressional representatives using the provided talking points in the hopes of gaining their support for refugees.

Explain that, for those who feel comfortable, there are also [signs that say “My People Were Refugees Too.”](#) Invite participants to take one and complete the sentence “I Care About Refugees Because . . .” and take a picture of yourself holding the sign. They can take pictures in small groups as well. They can then Tweet/Instagram/post the pictures to their Facebook profile with the hashtags #JewsforRefugees and #RefugeesWelcome. Feel free to tag HIAS: @HIASRefugees.