

# Dying to Leave

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STUDYGUIDE

ISSUE 39 AUSTRALIAN SCREEN EDUCATION

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## INTRODUCING DYING TO LEAVE

**Episode 1** – ‘Human Cargo’ (directed by Chris Hilton)

**Episode 2** – ‘Slaves of the Free Market’ (directed by Aaron Woolf)

This two-part series explores the current worldwide boom in people smuggling and human trafficking. Every year an estimated three to four million people are shipped in containers, shepherded through sewage pipes, secreted in car chassis and ferried across frigid waters. Others travel on legitimate carriers but with forged documents. An alarming number of these migrants end up in bondage, forced to work as prostitutes or thieves, or as labourers in sweatshops. *Dying to Leave* looks at the circumstances that drove five migrants from their homes, describes the difficulties involved in their epic journeys and reveals their lives in a new world.

The first programme, ‘Human Cargo’, tackles the unseen world of people smuggling, usually involving voluntary passage in search of better economic or social conditions. It tells the stories of Faris from Iraq, who lost his wife and daughter at sea when an over-

crowded boat sank while trying to reach Australia; Henry from China, who followed the well-worn route to New York by being smuggled through Mexico and across the border; and finally, Nina, who paid smugglers to escape her poverty in Moldova for a better life in Italy—only to have things go drastically wrong.

The second programme, ‘Slaves of the Free Market’, looks at human trafficking, which includes a new kind of slavery and the exploitation of women and children for the international sex trade. The story of Nina continues, as she is taken captive, sold from owner to owner and prostituted across Eastern Europe. We meet Antonio from Mexico, who was trafficked as a slave on the tomato fields of Florida by a shady network of smugglers and labour contractors, and also Marcela from Columbia, who went to Japan thinking she had a cleaning job only to be enslaved in the sex industry by the Japanese Yakuza.

Directed by Australian film-maker Chris Hilton and New York director Aaron Woolf, *Dying to Leave* places the boom in illegal migration within a broader historical context by identifying the factors that have contributed

to this explosive growth: the end of the Cold War and the subsequent opening of borders, the rapid expansion of the global economy and the new worldwide reach of commercial mass media.

## USING DYING TO LEAVE IN THE CLASSROOM

The documentary is of specific interest and relevance to teachers and students of:

- Studies of Society & Environment (SOSE/HSIE)
- English
- Politics
- History
- Media Studies

## Learning outcomes

- Critically compare representations of people, events and issues.
- Explain how causes, motives and consequences may be related.
- Analyse the core values of groups and societies.
- Describe and explain the responses of various cultural groups to issues of human rights.
- Consider the context in which the text was created and how this is



L-R: Migrant Camp, near Sasabe border crossing. Sasabe, Sonora Mexico • 'Casa de Huespas' – Migrant Guesthouse; Altar, Sonora Mexico • 'Casa de Huespas' – Migrant Guesthouse; Altar, Sonora Mexico Photos: Aaron Gwin Woolf



Below: Henry Zheng – central character, part one - smuggled from the Fujian, China to New York



Photo Credits: Aaron Gwin Woolf, Talyor Krauss and Chantal Abouchar



L-R: 'Casa de Huespas' – Migrant Guesthouse; Altar, Sonora Mexico • Migrant Camp, near Sasabe border crossing Sasabe, Sonora Mexico • Henry Zheng Photos: Aaron Gwin Woolf



reflected in the text.

- Draw on a repertoire of strategies to maintain understanding through a dense or extended text.

### Before watching the documentary

- Discuss the possible meanings of the main title—*Dying to Leave*—and the titles of the two episodes. Form hypotheses (tentative explanations) about the titles and record your ideas. Once you have watched the full documentary, read your earlier hypotheses and revise the explanations. Discuss your answers with other students in your class.
- Read and discuss the Glossary of key terms
- Read the information on the DIMIA Fact Sheets and the other web sites listed below.

### Glossary of key terms

An understanding of some of these terms before viewing will assist overall comprehension of the documentary:

ASYLUM – refuge; a place of safety.  
DEPORTATION – to expel a foreign national by force.

DETENTION CENTRE – a holding camp where illegal immigrants or asylum seekers are confined until a government decides whether or not they will be allowed to stay.

GLOBALIZATION – the process of breaking down economic barriers and creating a free world market for products and labour.

INDENTURE – an agreement that binds a worker to an employer, sometimes under unfair or cruel conditions.

REFUGEE – a person who flees their own country (especially to escape political or religious persecution) to seek safety in another.

SWEATSHOP – a small factory that pays workers very low wages and makes them work long hours.

TEMPORARY PROTECTION VISA (TPV) – a visa that provides short-term residence for refugees or migrants but requires them to return home once the visa expires.

### THE PEOPLE SMUGGLERS

People smuggling is big business. *Dying to Leave* estimates that the worldwide profits from this illicit trade are more than \$30 billion dollars a year. Such enormous profits attract both small operators and big criminal networks to become involved in

the illegal transportation of desperate people to the countries of their dreams. In Mexico the operators are called ‘coyotes’, while in parts of Asia, Chinese gangs led by ‘snakeheads’ control the dangerous commerce. The international connections of the Mafia and the Japanese Yakuza also make them powerful participants in people smuggling and associated rackets like prostitution.

There are notable differences between people smuggling and human trafficking but the two are often very closely linked. People smuggling involves voluntary financial agreements between would-be migrants and agents who transport them illegally across borders. However, the poverty, desperation and illegal status of the migrants make them vulnerable to exploitation and coercion from people traffickers who capture and sell illegal migrants into prostitution or indentured labour.

In *Dying to Leave*, Professor Kevin Bales, Director of Free the Slaves, explains:

*Violence is the absolute core at the heart of all forms of slavery so that once you take violent control of another human being; they stop being*



Above: Boys on deck

Bobaquiviri Mountain, near Kit Peak, Arizona—a sacred native American monument now used as a beacon for Northbound migrants. Pictured with US/Mexican border in foreground Photos: Aaron Gwin Woolf



Below: 'Casa de Huespas' – Migrant Guesthouse; Altar, Sonora Mexico; Migrants sometimes wait here several days before arranging a crossing



L-R: US border Patrol agent, US-Mexico border, Nogales AZ • United States Border Patrol vehicle, Nogales AZ Photos: Aaron Gwin Woolf



a smuggled person and start being a trafficked person.

Traffickers use threats, violence and financial traps to imprison and control their victims. Marcela had to risk her life to escape the Yakuza minders who were guarding her on the streets of Tokyo's port district, and only Nina's arrest by Italian police eventually enabled her to escape her 'owner'.

Antonio was pressed into virtual slavery on the tomato fields of the brutal Cuello brothers in Florida. He was promised \$150 a week for his labour but at the end of each week was told that his pay was not enough to service the debt he had accumulated for 'rent', 'food' and 'travel'. Antonio was finally able to make a dash for freedom while on a shopping trip. Even though this freed him from bondage, threats to his safety continued for some time afterwards.

The financial stranglehold that smugglers and traffickers have over their victims is tragically evident in *Dying to Leave*. 'Debt is the ball and chain around our feet', explains Lucas Benitez of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers. Seemingly generous loans of money become iron chains binding the victims to their captors. 'Later I real-

ized', says Marcela, 'I'd never be able to pay the debt back'.

Activity: Role play or interview

Work in pairs to prepare an imaginary interrogation of Abu Qussey or Big Sister Ping (two of the people smugglers mentioned in *Dying to Leave*). One person could play the role of a law enforcement officer who has arrested the smuggler. The other could play the role of a ruthless people smuggler.

- Work cooperatively to make up a list of eight to ten questions and answers.
- Act out the interrogation as a role-play or make a tape recording of the interview and play it to the rest of your class.

## THE MIGRANTS

Illegal migrants fall between the cracks in global immigration schemes. Most do not have the required skills or family connections to qualify as legal immigrants. Neither do they fit the accepted definition of refugee or asylum seeker because their reasons for migrating are largely economic.

There are an estimated eight million

illegal migrants in the USA alone and many more in other parts of the world. Driven from their homes by harsh economic conditions and by dreams of prosperity in far-off countries, they sail the high seas, use false papers to fly on commercial flights or travel on foot across inhospitable lands to reach their destinations. In doing so, they often risk death in their attempts to make better lives for themselves and their families.

Some illegal migrants are part of a 'restless generation' and mobile middle-class. These people are seduced by alluring advertising that creates unrealistic expectations of luxurious lifestyles in foreign countries. Others want simply to escape lives of grinding poverty and unemployment.

As we see very clearly in *Dying to Leave*, free trade agreements and globalization have had disastrous consequences for people who were once able to sustain themselves. The so-called freeing up of world trade can disrupt traditional economic structures, dispossess people of their land, and leave vulnerable groups without markets in which to sell their products.



Above: Chris Hilton, Series Producer, Cinematographer Dave Maguire and Steve Wong on location in Chinatown, New York Photo: Talyor Krauss

L-R: GP lying down • on deck at night



Below: Antonia, central character; part two protesting against the fast food industry in Louisville, KY Photo: Aaron Gwin Woolf



Above: US Coast Guard intercepts Chinese Smuggling vessel off the coast of the US



Activity: Push and pull factors

The narrative of *Dying to Leave* mentions the ‘push and pull’ factors of migration. A brief explanation of these terms is that ‘push factors’ are reasons people want to leave their home countries, while ‘pull factors’ are the conditions that attract people to new countries.

- Why did each of the five migrants in the documentary want to leave their countries of origin? (‘push factors’)
- Why did they each choose a particular new country in which to live? (‘pull factors’)
- As you watch *Dying to Leave*, listen to the explanations given by each of the interviewees. In your workbook, draw a table like the one below and use it to record the push and pull factors that affected each of the people listed. (see chart below)

**SUPPLY AND DEMAND**

A market demand for the services of illegal immigrants encourages illicit activity. As the documentary points out, the migrants supply a demand for cheap labour that helps rich countries to compete internationally. There is

always a market for their services. That is why former UN adviser on trafficking, Anne Gallagher, suggests that the countries of destination deserve as much scrutiny as the places of origin.

Professor Kevin Bales puts the concept of supply and demand into striking perspective by comparing old and new slavery. The number of captive labourers throughout the world today is double the number of slaves taken from Africa over the whole three hundred and fifty years of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

As you watch the documentary, take special note of the scenes in garment factories or in agricultural businesses. Think about Nina and Marcela’s experiences as forced prostitutes, and Henry Zheng’s description of restaurant work:

*I worked there for about three months, six days a week and all I did was sleep and work. I felt that life in the USA was meaningless but I had no choice.*

Consider what it would be like to work in such industries, enduring the same conditions as these workers.

Activity: Origins and destinations

- Draw or photocopy a small map of the world and locate the countries where each of the five migrants originated (you may need to use an atlas).
- Use a different coloured arrow to connect each migrant’s country of origin with his or her country of destination. You may also like to include, perhaps as a dotted line, the other countries the migrants visited before reaching their final destination. Write the migrant’s name above the appropriate arrow.

**WEIGHING THE RISKS**

As you watch the two episodes of *Dying to Leave*, think about the risks faced by the illegal immigrants.

- Why were they so desperate to leave?
- What risks did they take?
- What did each of the migrants miss most about the place they had left?
- In summing up each situation, do you think all the migrants achieved their dreams? Was their migration worth the risk? Refer to scenes and comments in the documentary

MIGRANT	PUSH FACTORS	PULL FACTORS
Faris Kadhem		
Henry Zheng		
Nina Matveyenko		
Antonio Martinez		
Marcela Palacios		



Below: Faris Khadem (central character part 1) and son Ali (11) outside Woomera Detention Center, Australia where Ali was detained for seven-months Photo: Chantal Abouchar



Below: Faris Khadem and son Ali outside Woomera Detention Center Photo: Chantal Abouchar



L-R: US Patrol Officer seen through the back of a US Border Patrol Van Photo: Aaron Gwin Woolf • Faris Khadem and son Ali outside Woomera Detention Center Photo: Chantal Abouchar

L-R: Street children, Chisinau, Moldova • Dave Maguire, Cinematographer, and Yoshiko Tanaka, Japanese Translator, shoot the making of a pornographic film in Tokyo, Japan • Dave Maguire Cinematographer shoots the making of a pornographic film in Tokyo, Japan Photos: Aaron Gwin Woolf



to explain your answers.

### FORTRESS AUSTRALIA, FORTRESS EUROPE

Destination countries have responded with alarm to the flood of illegal migrants wanting to cross their borders. They have increased border surveillance and toughened up border controls at points of entry. Australia has also established a controversial system of holding camps or detention centres where illegal migrants are held pending decisions about their futures.

*Dying to Leave* shows us the detention centre where Faris Kadhem's son, Ali, was held and we hear Ali describe the conditions he experienced there. Some of Australia's detention centres are not even on the Australian mainland. Under agreements with foreign governments, migrants are held at camps in countries like Nauru.

As we see in the documentary, France and Indonesia allow illegal migrants to stay temporarily until they can find an opportunity to enter Britain or Australia illegally. Each night, hundreds of illegal immigrants in France attempt to cross the English Channel into Britain. Some illegal immigrants in Indonesia have

been waiting as long as five years to enter Australia. They will often engage the services of people smugglers to help them make the journey.

#### Activity: Solutions?

Here is a list of ten actions that are shown or mentioned in *Dying to Leave*. They are put forward as ways to prevent people smuggling, stop trafficking and deter illegal migrants.

Organize the list (perhaps by writing a number against each one) to indicate which action you think is the most/least effective in meeting the above goals.

- Establish detention centres like the ones set up by Australia.
- Deport illegal immigrants as soon as possible.
- Set up publicity campaigns like the one in Moldova.
- Introduce anti-trafficking laws as the Colombian government has done.
- Establish witness protection schemes as has been done in the USA and Italy.
- Foster more international cooperation (as suggested by Paul Holmes).
- Concentrate on countries of

destination (as suggested by Anne Gallagher).

- Prosecute and imprison people traffickers.
- Execute people smugglers (as Faris Khadem suggests should happen to Abu Qussey).
- Use special agents like the FBI within immigrant communities.

Of course it is unlikely that any single idea will solve all the problems connected to people smuggling and human trafficking. A combination of approaches is more likely to be successful.

Do you have any additional ideas that are not on the list? Write them in your workbook and discuss them with the rest of your class.

### THE WORLD'S REFUGEES

Since the first British settlement in Sydney in 1788, Australia has welcomed immigrants from many different parts of the world. Although many of them wait for years to be accepted through regular immigration programmes, others are forced to leave their homelands by war or persecution. Two examples are the European migrants who came to Australia after the Second World War and the south-



L-R: Soviet-era monument celebrating agricultural prosperity; Near Cahul, Moldova • Guardia di Finanza interceptors; Near Otranto, Puglia, Italy • Dave Maguire films high speed boats of the Guardia di Finanza (Italian Customs Service); Near Otranto, Puglia, Italy Photos: Aaron Gwin Woolf



east Asian refugee settlers who fled wars in Vietnam and Cambodia.

Refugees form a special group of migrants. Australia is one of 141 signatory countries to the United Nations 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees and, as a result, has international obligations to assist people who have fled their home countries under duress.

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) defines a refugee as a person who *owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country ...*<sup>1</sup>

The UNHCR estimates that as at 1 January 2003, there were over twenty million 'persons of concern who fall under the mandate of the UNHCR.'<sup>2</sup> Some of these were 'internally displaced people' who were refugees in their own countries and unable to return to their usual place of residence.

Extension activity

Use the aforementioned UNHCR definition to examine each of the five migrant stories in *Dying to Leave*.

- Under this definition, how many of the migrants would qualify as refugees?
- Why did each migrant resort to illegal entry instead of making a legal application for immigration to another country?
- Use the Internet to discover more about the plight of the world's refugees. Two good places to start are the UNHCR web site ([www.unhcr.ch](http://www.unhcr.ch)) and the web site of the Department of Immigration & Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) (<http://www.immi.gov.au>). There are many others. Make a poster display on the theme of refugees for your classroom or school library. Include the web sites you have found on your bibliography.

### Web sites

Free the Slaves <http://www.freetheslaves.net/>

21<sup>st</sup> Century Slaves <http://magm.a.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/0309/feature1/index.html> DIMIA Fact Sheet 70: Border Control <http://www.immi.gov.au/facts/70border.htm>

[//www.immi.gov.au/facts/70border.htm](http://www.immi.gov.au/facts/70border.htm)

DIMIA Fact Sheet 73: People Smuggling <http://www.immi.gov.au/facts/73smuggling.htm>

DIMIA Fact Sheet 74. Unauthorised Arrivals by Air and Sea <http://www.immi.gov.au/facts/74unauthorised.htm>

PBS <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/wideangle/shows/dying/index.html>

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### ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> UNHCR Basic Facts: Who is a refugee? [www.unhcr.ch/](http://www.unhcr.ch/)
- <sup>2</sup> UNHCR Statistics [www.unhcr.ch/](http://www.unhcr.ch/)

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