NO SEPARATE SURVIVAL
documentary film, (27 minutes)
directed by Shabnam Piryaei
2024
https://vimeo.com/895439351

Film Summary

No Separate Survival is a short documentary film and a community experience about asylum seekers across the U.S./Mexico border. Through a lens of creative expression, *No Separate Survival* allows asylum-seekers to give voice to what it means to create home and seek safety. The film documents five years of workshops aiming to give migrants the tools to define their own stories through healing & creative arts.

No Separate Survival conveys themes such as safety, gender identity, loss and violence, chosen family, and the ways we make place. These stories reveal that we are closer in humanity than often divisive headlines would make us, in our loss and pain, as well as in our joy and our hope. This film honors Audre Lorde's reminder, "There is no separate survival."

Audience

- Empathetic or open-minded explorers
- Informed residents seeking to understand more about immigration or the region/globe, including those who may travel regularly
- Women & LGBQT+ Audiences
- Artists, filmmakers, educator, psychologists, careworkers, non-profit workers, lawyers and others in related healing, public-facing professions
- Students: Middle Grades, High School & College classrooms
- Diverse 1st, 2nd+ generation immigrants
- Spanish-speaking viewers

Themes

Immigration
Creativity & Art as Healing
Storytelling
Displacement
Domestic Violence
Trauma
Loss
Safety
LGBTQ+
Gender identity
Family
Home (leaving it, seeking it out, making it)

Activities

Activity #1

Watch & Respond

Have students watch the film and take notes as they watch. Once the film is complete, give students five minutes to write a one-paragraph response to the film. Put students in groups of 3-4 and have them share their responses to discuss with their groups.

Activity #2

What's Your Story?

1. Freewrite
2. Narrative
3. Project

Have the students write the words *Who Am I?* at the top of their page. Set a timer and have the students do a "freewrite" for 7 minutes. Before writing, guide the students to not be concerned with spelling or grammar, and to not read back or edit their writing as they write. During the freewrite, students are transcribing the thoughts in their head in response to the prompt. After the 7 minutes, encourage students to share what they wrote.

Next, students can revise and craft their freewrite into a more polished narrative that they can incorporate into another, more developed project. For example, students can use their *Who am I?* narrative to do a live performance, or to make a short film about their own lives using their smartphone.

When making the project students can consider the following questions: What aspects of their lives would they share, and which would they omit? What audio and visual elements, images and words would they include? How might others learn from their experiences?

Activity #3

Make a PSA

A PSA is a public service announcement: a short, community-oriented message that radio or TV stations air to serve the public interest. PSAs can create awareness, show the importance of a problem or issue, convey information, or promote behavioral change.

- Pick a topic or issue related to the film *No Separate Survival* (possible ideas are immigration, stereotypes, discrimination). Pick a subject that's important to your group, and one you can visualize. Keep it straight to the point, with one main idea.
- Research. Get the most current and up to date info on your topic. Statistics and references can add to a PSA. You want to be convincing and accurate.
- Know your audience. Are you targeting parents, teens, teachers or some other social group? Consider your target audience's needs, preferences, as well as what might turn them off. They are the ones you want to rally to action. The action suggested by the PSA can be anything. It can be spelled out or implied in your PSA—just make sure that message is clear.
- Grab your audience's attention. You might use visual effects, an emotional response, humor, or surprise to catch your target audience.
- Create a script and a storyboard for your PSA. The storyboard can have 6 panels with corresponding text for each panel.
- Share with the class.

Discussion Questions

Have students discuss the following questions in groups of 3-4. After smaller group discussions, have each group report back for a larger class-wide discussion.

1. How can art bolster our sense of purpose and meaning?
2. How are immigrants and refugees portrayed in the news? In what ways does *No Separate Survival* offer us a new perspective on the theme of immigration? What role does media play in creating and disseminating stereotypes? How can it be a tool for breaking them?
3. What is the importance of hearing people tell their own stories from their own point of view? How is this different from hearing people tell stories they have not personally experienced? Who is telling the story in *No Separate Survival*?
4. What is a documentary film? What is it supposed to do? How can a documentary film be ethical or unethical?
5. The poet Audre Lorde writes, "there is no separate survival." What does this quote mean to you? How does it relate to the film No Separate Survival? In what ways is our wellbeing interconnected?