

POV

Community
Engagement & Education

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Special Flight

A Film by Fernand Melgar



www.pbs.org/pov

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In the discussions that followed the screenings of *The Fortress*, my 2008 film about asylum seekers in Switzerland, it struck me that the Swiss public was largely unaware of how the continual hardening of the laws on asylum and foreigners affects the lives of innocent human beings. I believe Swiss citizens no longer know why they vote. The populism that the UDC (a conservative political party in Switzerland) uses in its campaigns blinds voters and stirs up xenophobia. At screenings of the film in schools, I learned that the term “asylum applicant” was, for a majority of teenagers, synonymous with “offender.” So confining asylum applicants in order to deport them seemed normal. When I realized that, I considered it urgent to make a film about the reality of administrative detention and deportation.



Filmmaker Fernand Melgar

Photo courtesy of Denis Jutzeler

One hundred fifty thousand paperless migrants live in Switzerland. The vast majority of them work, pay taxes and contribute to our country’s social insurance programs. They look after our elderly, care for our children and clean our homes and hospitals. Without them, many hotels and construction sites would have to shut down for lack of cheap labor. Both unsuccessful asylum seekers and paperless migrants live with a sword of Damocles dangling over their heads: They may be arrested at any moment, imprisoned for months or years and deported from Switzerland without any form of trial. Or, the height of absurdity, they may be released, only to be arrested again a few months later.

I realized that I needed to continue reflecting on the work I had initiated at the Vallorbe reception center, where I filmed *The Fortress*; I needed to go deeper below the surface to close the loop and attempt to understand better this swinging pendulum between hope and despair that characterizes the lives of so many migrants.

While shooting *The Fortress*, I befriended Fahad, a young Iraqi translator who took refuge in Switzerland after receiving death threats in his home country. Immediately after his asylum request was denied, he was arrested in order to be deported. Visiting him in Frambois, I discovered the most profound human anguish that I have witnessed in this country. Fahad told me of his companions in misfortune: fathers torn from their children, illegal workers worn out by years of hard labor and young men on the verge of suicide, broken by their search for a better life. All were treated like criminals, though their only offense was not having Swiss residence permits. Some were locked up for months, although there was no re-admittance agreement with their countries of origin. They were at the mercy of arbitrary local immigration services.

Fahad's brutal deportation by "special flight" a few months later shocked me. Six Zurich policemen turned up in his cell in the middle of the night, chained him up and took him away. He bore the physical and psychological marks of manhandling and humiliation for a long time afterward.

I contacted the politicians representing the area that includes Frambois. After lengthy discussions, I gained their trust. All agreed that *The Fortress* had opened a positive public debate, and they considered it necessary to continue this work on the issue of asylum and migration. I got permission from them and from the Frambois management to film without restriction not only life at Frambois, but also the work of judicial bodies and police officers involved with the center.

The director of Frambois, Jean-Michel Claude, encouraged his team to participate in this project. He even defended it before his superiors. Prison wardens are often perceived in a bad light, whereas he believes they perform important social work in a situation that is very difficult to handle. This film was an opportunity to showcase their work. As for Frambois staff members, the objective approach I took toward the institution in *The Fortress* convinced them to appear in this film.

Before the shoot, I spent a lot of time with Frambois inmates. Gradually, I gained their trust and they started confiding in me. Almost all of them agreed to participate in the film. They knew that it was not going to change their personal situations, but it was a way for them to make themselves heard and to let viewers witness a situation that seemed unfair to them.

We spent several months with the inmates and knew their histories, their families and their fears. We were present to shoot when the police came to get them at Frambois to put them aboard special flights, but we didn't have a chance to say goodbye. The expressions on the prisoners' faces as they were led away haunt me to this day.

In Switzerland, detention is handled by the cantons (similar to the states in the United States), but the organization of special flights is the responsibility of the Federal Office for Migration (FOM). I requested that body's permission to shoot in the airport lobby, where the deportees were chained up before being boarded. At first, I received no response. After repeated requests, the FOM press service told me about a federal order that prohibited filming a person in a humiliating or degrading situation. In view of the fact that the deportees had given me permission to film them, I asked for a copy of this order. I am still waiting for it.

After each man's departure by special flight, we called to see how his journey had gone. Their testimony was overwhelming. Not only did they feel that Switzerland had thrown them out as if they were trash, but they also suffered the physical and psychological consequences of having been chained up. On arrival, some were arrested and even had their money stolen by the police in their countries, sometimes under the noses of Swiss representatives. So we decided to continue seeing them in their home countries and filming their lives after deportation. These portraits are presented in my new documentary, *The World Is Like That*, in spring 2013 on European television and currently online at <http://www.volspecial.ch/fr/webdoc/>.



Filming *Special Flight*

Photo courtesy of Denis Jutzeler

Fernand Melgar

Director/Producer, **Special Flight**

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The exterior of Frambois detention center in Switzerland.

Photo courtesy of Denis Jutzeler

Special Flight (60 minutes) is a dramatic account of the plight of undocumented foreigners at the Frambois detention center in Geneva, Switzerland, and of the wardens who struggle to reconcile humane values with the harsh realities of a strict deportation system. The 25 Frambois inmates featured are among the thousands of asylum seekers and undocumented immigrants imprisoned without charge or trial and facing deportation to their native countries, where they fear repression or even death. The film, made in Switzerland, is a heart-wrenching exposé of the contradictions between the country's compassionate social policies and the intractability of its immigration laws.

Special Flight is well suited for use in a variety of settings and is especially recommended for use with:

- **Local PBS stations**
- **Groups that have discussed previous PBS and POV films relating to immigration, asylum and detention, including *Well-Founded Fear*, *Sin País*, *The Sixth Section* and *Rain in a Dry Land*.**
- **Groups focused on any of the issues listed in the Key Issues section**
- **High school students, youth groups and clubs**
- **Faith-based organizations and institutions**
- **Cultural, art and historical organizations, institutions and museums**
- **Civic, fraternal and community groups**
- **Academic departments and student groups at colleges, universities and high schools**
- **Community organizations with a mission to promote education and learning, such as local libraries**

Special Flight is an excellent tool for outreach and will be of special interest to people looking to explore the following topics:

- **Detention centers**
- **Human rights**
- **Immigration**
- **Nationalism**
- **Political asylum**
- **Psychology**
- **Racism**
- **Refugees**
- **Switzerland**
- **Undocumented immigrants/workers**

USING THIS GUIDE

This guide is an invitation to dialogue. It is based on a belief in the power of human connection, designed for people who want to use **Special Flight** to engage family, friends, classmates, colleagues and communities. 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 www.pbs.org/pov/outreach



Immigration Detention in Switzerland

Switzerland has one of the highest rates of immigration in the world, with over 20 percent of the country's population (approximately 7 million people) claiming a foreign nationality. The country also has notoriously tight naturalization laws; being born in Switzerland does not automatically grant a person Swiss citizenship.

In 2012, Switzerland received 25,900 applications for political asylum, placing it in the number six spot for countries receiving asylum seekers. Every foreigner has the right to apply for asylum, but fewer than 12 percent of applicants are accepted.

Special Flight tells the story of the other 88 percent (as well as undocumented migrants who never asked for asylum), all of whom are swept into one of the country's detention centers. Frambois, established in 2004, is

Pitchou, Blacky, Wandifa, Abdoul and Dieudonné pose for a photograph in Frambois detention center.

Photo courtesy of Fernand Melgar

recognized for its high cost and relative comfort, yet its deportation rate, 86 percent, is the highest in the country. Many of the "paperless" immigrants and asylum seekers detained there have lived in Switzerland for years—20 years in the case of Ragip, a Kosovar man featured in the film—and have jobs and families. They may be locked up for as long as 18 months before being deported.

Detention Infrastructure

Switzerland is composed of 26 states—also known as cantons—each with its own constitution and freedom to interpret and enforce federal law.



Dieudonné looks through the fence at Frambois detention center.

Photo courtesy of Fernand Melgar

Although some cantons have dedicated migrant detention facilities, others arrange to send migrants to neighboring cantons and have joint agreements with shared facilities. For example, the cantons of Vaud and Neuchâtel pay to use the canton of Geneva's Frambois facility, which is featured in the film. Short-term periods of detention are often carried out in police facilities, while longer periods are carried out in cantons with facilities like Frambois.

While there are no federal statistics on the number of detention centers and cells in Switzerland, the Global Detention Project reports that there are 32 facilities in use as immigration-related detention sites. These sites included transit zone (airport) facilities, semi-secure centers for asylum seekers, dedicated immigration facilities, police stations and prisons with separate sections for migrants awaiting deportation.

Separate facilities are reportedly used to detain women, though Geneva's Frambois facility is exclusively male, as are the majority of facilities in Geneva, Vaud and Neuchâtel.

The Global Detention Project reports that this is due to gender segregation requirements limiting facilities'

capacity. Minors under the age of 15 are not subject to detention.

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Inmates playing football inside the center's recreation area.

Photo courtesy of Denis Jutzeler

Detention Policy

The Swiss Federal Office for Migration (FOM) coordinates all matters related to asylum seekers in Switzerland, which includes organizing the controversial “special flights” that are arranged when applicants who are denied asylum or visas refuse to leave the country voluntarily. The men who are filmed in **Special Flight** are all asylum seekers or undocumented immigrants who were detained after their applications were denied. There is no pattern to which immigrants are targeted, though Switzerland has signed agreements with certain countries regarding immigration policy. For example, in February 2011, Switzerland signed an agreement with Nigeria under which it forcibly repatriates all Nigerians living in the country illegally. In 2010, nearly 2,000 Nigerian citizens applied for asylum in Switzerland, accounting for 13 percent of all asylum requests.

In order to receive asylum, an applicant must register in person at one of the FOM's four reception and

procedure centers, provide proof of identity to Swiss authorities and prove a legitimate fear of persecution in his or her home country. As stated in the Swiss Asylum Act, the FOM examines each application and determines whether or not the applicant fulfills the requirements for refugee status, which includes whether or not it is safe for the applicant to repatriate. If a decision cannot be made about an asylum application within 90 days, the applicant is transferred from the reception center to an assigned canton, and it is the job of the cantonal authorities to keep the applicant housed and fed while the applicant awaits a decision. According to the Global Detention Project, the maximum period foreign nationals can be detained while awaiting notice is 18 months (though at the time **Special Flight** was being filmed, the maximum period was 24 months) and for minors between the ages of 15 and 18, the maximum period is six months. An



Alain at Frambois detention center.

Photo courtesy of Fernand Melgar

applicant who is rejected is required to leave Switzerland. If a rejected applicant then refuses to leave, he or she is removed under supervision on a “special flight.” According to the FOM, over half of asylum seekers who do not fulfill requirements to remain in Switzerland leave unsupervised.

The FOM deals only with asylum seekers, which means the cantons are left to handle the status and deportation of all other foreign nationals who do not have proper paperwork. The deadlines for leaving the country vary depending on the canton. To encourage voluntary departures by asylum seekers, cantons sometimes offer repatriation allowances to encourage foreigners to return to their home countries.

In June 2013, the Swiss people are scheduled to vote on several revisions to Swiss asylum policy and law that were made effective by the country’s parliament in September 2012. The revisions are an attempt to reduce the

number of asylum requests (up to 22,551 applications in 2011—40,677 underwent the official asylum procedure by the end of 2011).

If the Swiss vote against these changes, they will only remain in effect until September 2013. If not, they will remain in effect until September 2015.

If the revisions are approved, Switzerland will no longer grant refugee status to conscientious objectors and army deserters and will no longer permit asylum seekers to fill out applications at Swiss embassies abroad. The law will also allow for the construction of new centers dedicated solely to uncooperative asylum seekers already inside Switzerland. Federal authorities will be permitted to house asylum seekers for up to three years without cantonal permission.



Plane flies over Frambois detention center in Geneva.

Photo courtesy of Denis Jutzeler

The controversial revisions are opposed by the Social Democratic Party and the Green Party, as well as by several human-rights groups, while the right-wing Swiss People's Party is in full support of the changes.

Sources:

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Swissinfo.ch, February 14, 2011

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Special Flights

The coercive measures seen in **Special Flight** are intended not as a punishment, but as a guarantee of departure, and the implementation of deportation is entrusted to specially trained police officers. In cases of voluntary departure, the police meet an inmate in his cell and escort him to the plane. If the inmate does not want to leave on his own volition, a so-called "accompanied" flight is organized. The inmate is notified the day before departure. On the day of departure, he is handcuffed and accompanied by two plain-clothes of-



Plane at Frambois detention center in Geneva.

Photo courtesy of Denis Jutzeler

ficers on a scheduled flight to his final destination. He may, however, refuse to board.

The final possibility is a special flight chartered by the FOM. The only passengers aboard are deportees, police officers and FOM representatives. To avoid resistance, inmates are notified at the last moment. They are then taken to the airport in chains and escorted to the aircraft, where they are tied to their seats and equipped with helmets and diapers. A special flight may take up to 40 hours, during which the passengers remain tied to their seats. When there are prisoners from different nationalities on board, as is often the case, the planes stop in several countries.

The conditions of these deportations are a source of controversy. The Federation of Swiss Physicians opposes special flights for medical and ethical reasons and urges doctors to refuse to participate in deportations under duress, because providing proper medical supervision is considered impossible. Special flights have already cost three people their lives.

A special flight to a nearby destination can cost 20,000 Swiss francs (\$20,657), and longer flights to places such as Africa can cost up to 200,000 Swiss francs

(\$206,568). The cost per deportee person can be from 15,000 to 23,000 Swiss francs. The annual cost is estimated at approximately 1.9 million Swiss francs (\$1,962,676).

Source:

Special Flight Press Kit.
http://www.volspecial.ch/uploads/1330426232_vs_dossier%20de%20presse_en.pdf

Frambois

Frambois was inaugurated in June 2004 on the outskirts of Geneva. State councilor Micheline Spoerri makes no secret of how challenging the design of Frambois was, saying, "Its objective is to respond intelligently and humanely to a law that has the unique feature of detaining persons who have



The director stands inside Frambois detention center.

Photo courtesy of Fernand Melgar

committed neither crime nor offense, in order to ensure the successful implementation of deportation. As its operation has not yet been defined in federal law, a special system of administrative detention had to be invented. The challenge was daunting.”

Inside the prison there are 22 individual cells equipped with refrigerators and TVs, and inmates are free to leave their cells between 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. The common room on the ground floor is the core of Frambois. It is equipped with tables, chairs and table tennis facilities. Inmates spend most of their days there, participating in discussions, games, meals and even visits by chaplains.

The so-called “Frambois concept” has a price: Construction of Frambois cost 4 million Swiss francs (\$4.1 million), 90 percent of it supplied by the government. Frambois costs 280 Swiss francs (\$288) per day per inmate

and nearly 100,000 Swiss francs (\$103,100) per year per inmate. With a capacity of 25 inmates, Frambois accommodated 272 people at various times in 2009.

Frambois is staffed by a team of 13 people who meet every morning for discussions. Management communicates the dates of deportation or arrival; officers describe what happened during the night.

Source:

Special Flight Press Kit.
http://www.volspecial.ch/uploads/1330426232_vs_dossier%20de%20presse_en.pdf



Elvis and the director speak.

Photo courtesy of Denis Jutzeler

Immigration Detention in the United States

With 961 sites directly owned by or under contract with the federal government, the United States has the largest immigration detention infrastructure in the world. In 2009, these sites were reported to have a capacity of 33,400 detainees. According to the Global Detention Project, 18,690 of these detainees had no criminal convictions, and more than 400 of those with no criminal record had been incarcerated for more than one year.

Detention facilities in the United States typically operate under Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), which is a part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Since the detainees are in federal custody, they can be placed in any facility in the country where the ICE has a contract, regardless of the detainee's home. For example, in March 2007, 361 workers were arrested at a factory in the state of Massachusetts and many were moved to facilities in Texas within 48 hours.

Nearly two-thirds of immigrant detainees are held in local jails, and the Global Detention Project reports that local law enforcement agencies profit substantially

off of confining immigrants. In 2008, the federal government paid nearly \$55.2 million to 13 local California jails housing detainees.

The ways in which immigrants end up in detention centers and prisons have come under scrutiny in recent years. The immigration system is not a criminal system—it is a civil one—so the Department of Homeland Security has discretion to apprehend immigrants it suspects of being in the country illegally. Amnesty International outlines the various ways immigrants are detained: Individuals may be apprehended at the border, during employment or household raids, as a result of traffic stops by local police or after having been convicted of a federal offense.

Immigrants in the United States, like the detainees in Switzerland portrayed in **Special Flight**, are often detained after living in the country for decades as taxpayers who hold jobs, have families and have no criminal records. There have also been many accusations against detention centers for

acts of physical and mental abuse. In 2008, *The New York Times* published under the Freedom of Information Act a list of 107 people who had died in U.S. immigration detention centers since 2003. Immigrant detainees in the United States spend an average of 31 days in detention while awaiting deportation, while asylum seekers spend an average of 64 days.

In recent years, however, the ICE has made improvements to its system. Unaccompanied, illegal minors are now housed in church-run shelters or halfway houses overseen by the Global Detention Project. Conditions in these facilities are superior to those in prisons and they are funded by different programs. The ICE has also established Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) to make immigration laws more transparent and effective. ERO prioritizes only immigrants who pose a threat to national security. For those who are detained, the ICE vows to provide access to legal resources and advocacy groups.

The financial aspects of detention are also of interest. In 2008, through intergovernmental service agreements the federal government paid almost \$55.2 billion to house detainees. According to the National Immigration Forum, the cost to detain an immigrant is \$164 per day. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security is currently requesting more funding for ICE operations. If the ICE were to jail only immigrants who have taken part in illegal acts, taxpayers would save \$1.6 billion per year. The National Immigration Forum proposes that immigrants accused of crimes be detained and the rest be monitored.

According to the ICE, the annual number of deportations has been stable in the past few years: 370,000 in 2008; 390,000 in 2009; 393,000 in 2010; and 397,000 in 2011. An ICE spokesperson recently stated that that body is “Congressionally funded to remove 400,000 a year.”

Illegal immigrants detained by federal officials are usually deported back to their home countries without being informed of their legal right to counsel or being put in touch with their home country consular officials. As punishment for unlawful presence in the United States, undocumented immigrants must return to their native countries to wait out bans lasting three to 10 years before applying for legal residency (assuming they have legal ways to immigrate, which many do not).

While there has been an absence of comprehensive federal immigration reform in recent years, it has been a frequent subject of state-level legislation. Many

states have advanced laws similar to Arizona’s anti-immigrant SB 1070, which in 2011 made it a state crime to be an undocumented immigrant. In late June 2012, the Supreme Court ruled against much of SB 1070, but it did uphold a provision allowing police officers to check the immigration status of people they detain.

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U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary. “Written Testimony of U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano for a House Committee on the Judiciary Hearing Titled ‘Oversight of the Department of Homeland Security.’”

<http://www.dhs.gov/news/2012/07/17/written-testimony-dhs-secretary-janet-napolitano-house-committee-judiciary-hearing>

United States Repatriation Programs

From the summer of 2004 through 2011, U.S. border control sponsored optional flights to Mexico for 125,154 people arrested along the Arizona border. The program was said to be intended to protect people from the extreme Arizona summer heat, as well as from smugglers and human traffickers along the border. The flights were deemed voluntary.

In 2011, the United States and Mexico piloted a new program that flew detainees back to Mexico called the Mexican Interior Repatriation Program (MIRP). Unlike the former initiative, the MIRP involved mandatory flights managed by



Samuel at Frambois detention center.

Photo courtesy of Denis Jutzeler

ICE—not the border patrol. According to ICE, the program operated 70 flights over 80 days in 2011 and resulted in 8,893 Mexican nationals being repatriated. Passengers included Mexicans with and without criminal convictions. The United States paid for flights back to Mexico City, and Mexico paid to return people to their hometowns. There were no reports of passengers being chained up or maltreated.

Publicity brought attention to the flights' steep cost of \$724 per passenger and, consequently, there were few flights through much of 2012. However, in October 2012 a new pilot program called the Interior Repatriation Initiative (IRI) was launched, and it was officially signed in April 2013 by secretary of the interior Janet Napolitano and the government of Mexico. This new program will use chartered aircrafts to repatriate Mexican nationals from all areas of the United States.

Sources:

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Selected People Featured in **Special Flight**

MANAGEMENT



Monsieur Claude, director of Frambois

OFFICERS



Denis, Guardian/Warden



Adulai, Guardian/Warden

Selected People Featured in **Special Flight**

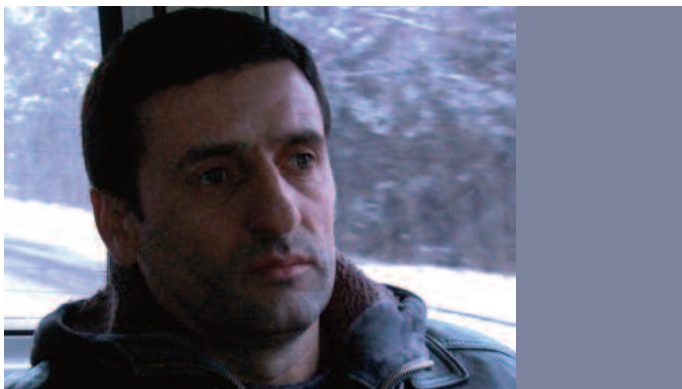
DETAINEES



Geordry, Cameroon



Wandifa, Gambia



Ragip, Kosovo



Dia, Senegal

Selected People Featured in **Special Flight**

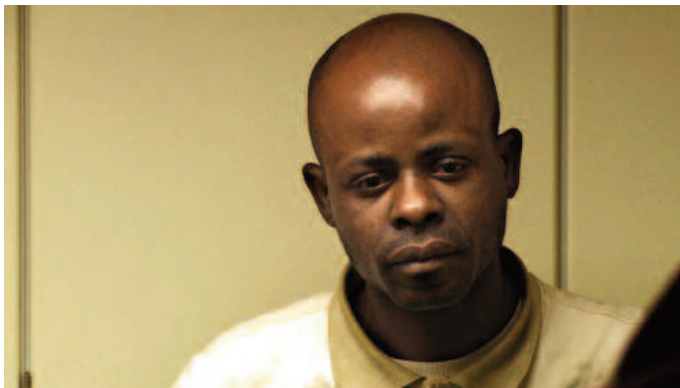
DETAINEES



Pitchou, Democratic Republic of Congo



Jeton, Kosovo



Serge, Kinshasa



Julius, Nigeria



Alain, Democratic Republic of Congo



Wandifa and Denis have a conversation.

Photo courtesy of Denis Jutzeler

Immediately after the film, you may want to give people a few quiet moments to reflect on what they have seen or 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:

- If you could ask anyone in the film a single question, whom would you choose and what would you ask him or her?
- What did you learn from this film? What insights did it provide?
- If a friend asked you what this film was about, what would you say?
- Describe a moment or scene in the film that you found particularly disturbing or moving. What was it about that scene that was especially compelling for you?



Inmates exercise in Frambois detention center.

Photo courtesy of Denis Jutzeler

Policy

The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) states, “Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.” From what you see in the film, how would you rate Switzerland’s adherence to the declaration? How would you rate the performance of your own country?

What did you learn from the film about the benefits of citizenship and the perils of being “stateless”?

What did you learn from the film that informs your thinking about immigration and detention policy in your own country?

Geordy asks, “Why are people who are not criminals deprived of their freedom?” He notes that this is particularly puzzling in a democratic country that prides itself on valuing freedom and human rights. How would you answer him?

The film opens by noting that Switzerland can detain an undocumented immigrant for two years without a trial, even if he or she is not accused of committing any crime other than not having legal immigration pa-

pers. Why do human rights activists oppose such detentions? What are the possible outcomes of incarcerating people who have broken no criminal law?

After the death of a man being placed on a special flight, the director of Frambois says, “I’m not proud to be Swiss after these events.” Are you proud of the way your country handles asylum and deportation? Why or why not?

Several of the detainees have lived productively in Switzerland for years. Should immigration law account for time spent “in country”? If so, how many years of residency should be required to earn permission to stay? If not, why not?

One inmate complains about a policy that allows him to be held for up to 24 months. The staff says that it’s the policy people chose by voting. The inmate responds, “Right, they did, but they don’t know what happens behind the scenes.” What do you think “happens behind the scenes” that could sway Swiss citizens to change the policy?



Jeton and his wife embrace inside Frambois detention center.

Photo courtesy of Denis Jutzeler

Pitchou comes across a news article about mistreated house pets being given legal representation and says, “So, animals are more than human beings... Our lawyers file appeals, but nobody wants to listen to us. But now they’re going to listen to cats!” Should people arrested for lack of documentation be guaranteed legal representation? What should happen if they can’t afford to pay lawyers?

Staff members seem to be amused that Serge works in the kitchen to earn his keep, even though he doesn’t have to. Like other inmates, he wants to work. What was your reaction to this story about Serge? What role should a desire to work and/or an ability to be economically productive play in influencing decisions about the granting of citizenship?

Procedures

Staff policy at Frambois is to treat detainees with respect. What do you see that supports that policy? Do you think that the inmates feel respected? Why or why not? How does the jailer/prisoner relationship affect the way the men at Frambois treat one another?

Ragip is offered a chance to leave on his own—the director describes him as a “free man.” Even though

it’s clear he doesn’t intend to agree to this option, officers go through the charade of taking him to the airport. Why do you think they won’t let Ragip simply refuse and stay at the detention center?

Addressing the inmates after five of their peers have been taken away on a special flight, the director says, “We can guarantee that it all went with dignity, respect and calm.” How does this description square with the deportees’ experience of being strip-searched and handcuffed?

A detainee who is being deported along with Julius and Emmanuel dies while he is tied up. Though the Frambois staff members genuinely seem to abhor this mistreatment, they are still a part of the system responsible for it. If you were their boss, what would you say to them?

What did you think of the director’s and Denis’ attempts to keep things calm when Julius and Emmanuel return and tell their story? What would you have said or done if you were in their shoes?



Michel at Frambois detention center.

Photo courtesy of Denis Jutzeler

Language and Symbols

The staff intentionally uses phrases similar to those used by people in the helping and hospitality professions, as if they were counselors or hotel managers. For example, Michel says he prefers the word “resident,” rather than “inmate.” And Frambois’ director, Jean-Michel Claude, welcomes newcomers, saying, “I wish you a pleasant stay. We’re here if there’s a problem.” Later he offers assurances that he understands the men’s anger and pain, saying, “If you want to talk about it, we’re here to listen.” What’s the purpose of such language? What are the potential dangers of using it? What is the impact of language choices on the way that people understand the situation and the issues?

At the end of a meeting designed to prepare Pitchou for deportation, Pitchou refuses to shake the hand of the man meeting with him. What does a handshake represent in this situation? What do handshakes represent in the rest of the film?

In conversations with inmates, Frambois staff members repeatedly refer to “your country” or “going home.” What makes a country “home”?

In a visit with his family, Ragip says, “They treat us like criminals.” Others express similar views. How does this compare with the way the staff members would describe their treatment of the inmates? In your view, is it ever possible to establish a genuinely respectful relationship between jailer and jailed?

The director says that “the staff are just as sad as you are. It’s not easy for us to see you go, because we have a cordial and sincere relationship with you. So when you have to leave, it’s difficult for us, too.” What do you imagine this sounds like to the inmates?



Abdoul and Denis converse in detention.

Photo courtesy of Denis Jutzeler

Impact

We see Ragip and Pitchou with their families. What do you think the impact of detention and deportation is on their children? What should a government do for children of parents without legal documentation, especially if the children have never lived in their parents' country or countries of origin?

Ragip says, "Mentally speaking, it's very hard to be here." Another accuses the government of playing "a psychological game" designed to make detainees "freak out" so they can declare them dangerous and use that as a reason for deportation. What is the psychological impact of the type of detention shown in the film?

As the staff assists police in preparing detainees for departure, Denis observes, "Having passed so many months with them leaves a mark. It affects us, too!" In what ways do the policies around immigration, asylum and detention impact jailers and others responsible for carrying out the policies?

After a man dies while being put on a special flight, Denis says, "Things will change because of this. It can't go on like this." One of the detainees responds, "I'll bet

you nothing will change." The film ends as Alain is about to be placed on a special flight. Do you think his experience will be different? Will anything have changed?

The Role of Prejudice and Racism

Arguing with the man who is assigned to facilitate his deportation, Pitchou says, "We're from the Third World. That's why you consider yourselves superior. But the day will come when things will change." In your view, what is the impact of race, class and religion on immigration policy?

What are all the possible explanations for the fact that nearly all of the detainees at Frambois are Muslim or men of color?

Wandifa (the rapper) says, "We're human beings, just like everyone else. Not black sheep nor black crows." Another recounts his experience hearing racial slurs. Why do you



Teka at Frambois detention center.

Photo courtesy of Denis Jutzeler

think they object to being labeled “black sheep”? What are the connotations of the phrase?

One of the detainees, Abdoul, suggests a relationship between European colonialism and immigration from Africa, observing, “We just tried to find a better future here. Why? Because you came to Africa and destroyed everything, leaving wars behind. So we come here to seek a better life because we’re human beings like you.” In your view, do former European colonial powers bear any special responsibility to African immigrants? Why or why not?

Additional media literacy questions are available at:
www.pbs.org/pov/educators/media-literacy.php



Alain at Frambois detention center.

Photo courtesy of Fernand Melgar

Taking Action

- Review legislation related to asylum and detention of undocumented immigrants to determine whether or not existing laws and policies reflect your beliefs. If not, check with local, national or international human rights organizations to see how you can support efforts to improve policies.
- Provide a public but safe opportunity for asylum seekers or undocumented workers and their families to tell their stories. During the event, distribute handouts with accurate information about immigrants and immigration policy.
- Start a dialogue with officials responsible for operating detention centers and suggest they show *Special Flight* as part of their staff training.

FILMMAKER WEBSITE**www.volspecial.ch/en/home**

In addition to information about the film, the website for the film includes background information on detention practices in Europe, suggestions for taking action and a link to the film's Facebook page. Note: Some of the site's resources are in French.

Original Online Content on POV

To further enhance the broadcast, POV has produced an interactive website to enable viewers to explore the film in greater depth. The **Special Flight** website—www.pbs.org/pov/SpecialFlight—offers a streaming video trailer for the film; an interview with Fernand Melgar; a list of related websites, articles and books; a downloadable discussion guide; and special features.

What's Your POV?

Share your thoughts about **Special Flight**

by posting a comment at <http://www.pbs.org/pov/SpecialFlight>

Immigration and Detention Policies**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL****<http://amnesty.org/en/refugees-and-migrants>**

In addition to bringing public scrutiny to bear on specific cases of human rights abuses, this organization has reported on Europe's increasingly stringent border control policies.

GLOBAL DETENTION PROJECT**www.globaldetentionproject.org**

This Geneva-based inter-disciplinary initiative provides research and policy recommendations on the role of detention in states' responses to global migration. Of particular interest is the body's 2011 report on practices in Switzerland:

www.globaldetentionproject.org/fileadmin/publications/GDP_Swiss_detention_report.pdf

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH**www.hrw.org**

In addition to providing regular world reports on the status of human rights, this organization also offers substantial resources and advocacy related to asylum seekers. Of special interest is this article providing background on Roma immigrants in Switzerland like Ragib: www.hrw.org/news/2010/12/16/referendum-aside-obligations-remain

OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES**www.UNHCR.org**

The office of the United Nations high commissioner for refugees provides a range of research and policy recommendations related to asylum and migration. This site is searchable by country and includes comments on current policies and procedures.

U.S. IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT**www.ice.gov**

This is the official site for U.S. policies related to asylum and detention of undocumented immigrants.

HOW TO BUY THE FILM

To purchase the film: www.artfilm.ch or info@artfilm.ch

POV



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POV Digital www.pbs.org/pov

POV's award-winning website extends the life of our films online with interactive features, interviews, updates, video and educational content, as well as listings for television broadcasts, community screenings and films available online. The *POV Blog* is a gathering place for documentary fans and filmmakers to discuss their favorite films and get the latest news.

POV Community Engagement and Education

POV films can be seen at more than 450 events nationwide every year. Together with schools, organizations and local PBS stations, POV facilitates free community screenings and produces free resources to accompany our films, including discussion guides and curriculum-based lesson plans. With our community partners, we inspire dialogue around the most important social issues of our time.

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Front cover: Wandifa.

Photo courtesy of Denis Jutzeler



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