



Westchester Jewish Coalition for Immigration (WJCI)
Programming Content Resource
for HIAS National Refugee Shabbat
March 5 - 6, 2021

This coming March, Westchester Jewish Coalition for Immigration will proudly cheer on HIAS' National Refugee Shabbat, a time during which Jews across the country will take action for refugees and asylum seekers. Over Shabbat during March 5-6, 2021, the American Jewish community will dedicate sacred time and space to refugees and asylum seekers. This 3rd annual National Refugee Shabbat, in which nearly 300 congregations across the United States and abroad will participate, will be an opportunity to join together and once again raise awareness in our community, recognize the powerful work that has been done, and reaffirm our commitment to welcoming refugees and asylum seekers.

Westchester Jewish Coalition for Immigration is pleased to provide concrete actions that pertain to the issues of immigrants and refugees locally, as well as at state and national levels.

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, consider using a local refugee-owned and/or refugee-operated catering business to recommend to members as Shabbat Dinner on Friday night. WJCI can provide catering recommendations.

Action #1

In the course of Jewish history, Jews have often been refugees who faced and overcame great hardships to create new lives in other lands. On this Shabbat, Jews across the entire country will commemorate our past and discuss critical issues pertaining to modern-day refugees. Drawing on Jewish history, ethics and values, Rabbis, or guest

speakers, will frame our actions around addressing the challenges refugees face today and highlight the imperative to strive to make a difference in the lives of refugees in our own community. Here is a [conversational guide](#) to use during Shabbat services and a [Refugee Torah Study](#). Participants can also engage in [Jewish texts](#) about the value of welcoming the stranger.

WJCI can help you locate a speaker from an organization in Westchester that serves the immigrant community including Community Resource Center, Neighbors Link, Pace Women's Justice Center, Students for Refugees, and Hope Community Services, We can also line up a refugee or asylum seeker through our contacts or a local politician or lawyer specializing in immigration issues.

Action 2:

Participate in our Right to Counsel (R2C) zoom on Sunday, March 7th at 10am for a community wide “action” in conjunction with all the individual, internal synagogue responses to the HIAS Shabbat. The R2C zoom will be an introduction to the issue of the lack of right to counsel for families (low income, immigrant, people of color, etc) who have been hit hard by the pandemic and may be facing eviction when the moratorium on evictions is lifted. It will conclude with concrete steps that each community can take to impact our local legislators. Please share this registration link with your community:

<https://zoom.us/j/97739196770?pwd=RmtqbVg0TFp2bWg5U0QvUXYzWXVOUT09>

Synagogues can also plan other zoom series, including interfaith panels with leaders of local/national organizations; discussions about advocating for immigrants, featuring immigrants; and/or text-based workshops given by local rabbinical staff. WJCI can help provide these resources and contacts.

Action 3

> HIAS can provide reading lists for all ages and lists of movies and podcasts revolving around the topic of immigration. Here is a sample book list:

https://www.hias.org/sites/default/files/hias_recommended_book_list.pdf

> Communities can feature a “one community” watch or read, and/or discussion with a facilitator or expert on the topic of refugees and asylum seekers.

Action 4

Other hands-on activities that can be done within our communities:

- > Light Shabbat Candles with Intention – As you welcome Shabbat on March 5th, use [this reading](#) before lighting Shabbat candles to set an intention to stand with refugees and asylum seekers around the globe.
- > Invite participants to write letters or place a phone call to their congressional representatives in the hopes of gaining their support for refugees.
- > [“My People Were Refugees Too”](#): Invite participants to complete the sentence “I Care About Refugees Because . . .” and take a picture 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.

Contact: wjciorg@gmail.com for more information on any of the above suggestions or ideas.