

A Film Guide to Discussing Faith and Immigration

FARMINGVILLE

Genre: Documentary (unrated); 78 minutes

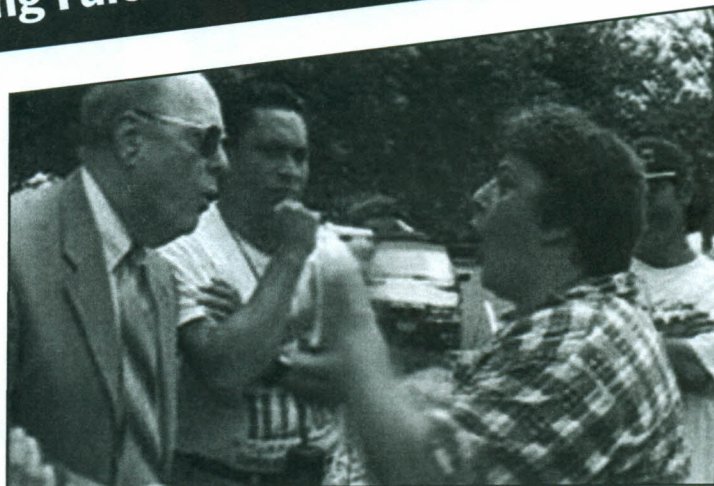
Issue: *Farmingville* looks into immigration issues lived out in suburban America. It addresses the challenges that come up when a community which is unaccustomed to having recent immigrants form a part of local life experiences an influx of immigrants.

Synopsis: In the film we see two groups in one suburban town working on the issue of immigrants in the community: Sachem Quality of Life and Citizens for Peaceful Solutions. It highlights the paradox of communities wanting immigrants deported while, at the same time, the community really needs their work.

Faith perspective: The film should cause Christians to struggle with the notion that we have a “slave class” living and working among us and for us. We should struggle with how to “welcome the stranger” while at the same time addressing the legitimate fears of those in our community who are hesitant to change. We should question why our comfort is wrapped up in being around people who look, act, and do exactly what we do.

Guides: Theological reflection from Sojourners, below, and discussion guide (www.pbs.org/pov/film-files/discussion_guide_action_discussion_file_0.pdf) from PBS.

Website: www.farmingvillethemovie.com
(DVD available for purchase)



FARMINGVILLE Theological Reflection

1. Throughout history, America has depended on those foreign to this land (Irish immigrants, Jewish immigrants, African-American slaves) to provide vital services that keep our economy running. The movie calls these day laborers a “slave class.” Do you think this is an accurate description of their work and our treatment of them? Or, do you think it is not slavery because undocumented workers come here voluntarily? Did you know how much the U.S. depends on day laborers prior to watching this film?
2. Social sin is the result of our collective selfish choices that indirectly have destructive consequences on society. Is the use and treatment of day laborers in the U.S. a social sin? What consequences does it have?
3. Do you live in a community with a noticeable immigrant population? Were you living there when you noticed a change in your community dynamic, or were you yourself a part of the changing dynamic? Do you see any of the same fears in your community that the groups seeking deportation express in the film? How do Christians prevent legitimate fears from turning into acts of human cruelty?

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4. In *Farmingville* the politician whose home was boycotted responds in a creative, nonviolent way. Instead of getting angry or ignoring the protesters, he provides donuts and refreshment. What impact do acts of peaceful response have? Are there times when you have felt attacked for who you are or what you believe? How can you respond to those who attack you in a similar way? Share experiences of times when you have participated in acts of kindness in the face of hostility.

5. Immigration reform needs to be addressed on the national level to provide consistent and equal immigration policies. However, the immediate effects and the day-to-day impact of changing demographics in this country are most often felt on a local level. How do we live with the need for federal reform when the issue is not being addressed by Congress? What is the role of local communities and churches in the meantime?

6. *Countries are built on people with a dream.*

—Film narrator

The film implies that our nation's economic infrastructure would crumble if undocumented immigrants left, and that the reason there is no immigration reform is because lawmakers know we need immigrant labor. Did you realize how dependent the U.S. is on immigrant labor? Does this change your perspective on undocumented immigrants?

7. *Guide the people of this land, and of all the nations in the ways of justice and peace; that we may honor one another and serve the common good.*

—Book of Common Prayer

Were either of the organizing groups working for the common good of the community? How? As Christians, how do we define the "common good"?

8. *Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy.*

—Prayer of St. Francis

The movie shows how everyday people get involved in the legislative process to effect change in their own communities. Have you ever been part of an organizing group? Did you find it effective? What is the church's role in this political activity?

9. *...Take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.* —Romans 12:17-18

Farmingville shows how the soccer games help to reform the image of immigrants in the community by building bridges of trust and communication. Could the immigrants have continued on as individuals in their conflict with some local residents? Why is community influential? Share examples from your life of how community shapes your choices and activities.

10. *Are we an immigrant nation or not?*

—Film narrator

Farmingville presents this question as a necessary debate for American identity. How would you answer this question? How does your answer shape your position in the current immigration debate?