

90 MIN • SECONDARY/POST-SECONDARY

Criminalization of Aid

Objective: In Criminalization of Aid, students are asked to consider how offering assistance at the border is interpreted. In addition, students are asked to reflect on why aid workers who sometimes assist in the movement across borders have been criminalized for their actions.

Preparation: Read and reflect on Scott Warren's Borders and the Freedom to Move before coming to the session.

Lesson Plan

Task 1: Introductory Activity

25 MIN

Border Advocacy



The New Yorker

When Humanitarian Aid is Considered a Crime

<https://www.newyorker.com/video/watch/the-new-yorker-documentary-when-humanitarian-aid-is-considered-a-crime>

Watch the New Yorker video about Scott Warren's arrest for aiding people as they attempted to cross the US-Mexico border (16:36).

As a class, have an opening/brainstorming discussion:

- What is your initial reaction to Scott Warren's story?
- What are the different approaches that advocates and state officials took in this story?
- What do people feel is at stake in such border crossings?

Task 2: Engaging in Oral Histories

TOTAL TIME / 50 MIN

Both the US and Canadian governments have made moves over the past decade to criminalize assistance to asylum seekers. This is part of the context of the more recent border crossings from the US into Canada, where advocacy groups in border communities organized to assist people on the move. One such group developed a flyer to provide information to the thousands of people coming through their community.

A. Introduction

5 MIN

In 2016 when residents began hearing about asylum seekers crossing into Canada at Roxham road, June stepped into action. As one of the founding members of Plattsburgh Cares, June continues to deliver food and supplies to those in need.



43:28-45:15

[Listen to the excerpt from June's interview](#)

To follow along with June's story, see the attached transcript.

In her interview, June talks about the flyer that Plattsburgh Cares produced for asylum seekers crossing into Canada. The following article shows how government officials responded to this flyer.



IPOLITICS – RACHEL GILMORE

Fix Guide for Asylum Seekers, Ottawa Urges

<https://ipolitics.ca/2018/05/24/fix-guide-for-asylum-seekers-ottawa-urges/>

B. Group Activity

30 MIN

Break into small groups and assign each group one of these three perspectives

- Government official (Canadian and/or US)
- Plattsburgh Cares advocate
- Person thinking of crossing the border

(hint for the instructor: prompt students to think about key concepts, e.g. smuggling, safety, humanitarian aid)

In groups:

1. Read Plattsburgh Cares' flyer. You can find the flyer under Resources on slide 5 and 6.
2. From your assigned perspective discuss the following questions
 - a. How do you interpret the purpose of this flyer?
 - b. What stands out to you as important or problematic?
 - c. What questions does this raise about safety and security?
3. Keeping in mind June's comments, the government response, and the flyer itself, come up with a three sentence statement that summarizes your position on this flyer.

C. Full-class debrief

15 MIN

Groups share and discuss their positions with the class.

Task 3: Wrap-up discussion

TOTAL TIME / 15 MIN

Reflect on Scott Warren's and June's stories. These two advocates present different kinds of aid to migrants crossing the border. For Scott, water, food and shelter were given to border crossers in the desert at the US/Mexico border, whereas Plattsburgh Cares developed an informational flyer and provided aid at the border. In both cases, humanitarian aid was portrayed as potentially dangerous, clearly with dramatically different responses.

- Why is it important to understand how advocates at these borders define their work? What can we learn by reflecting on their stories?
- What are some of the potential implications of criminalizing advocacy work related to borders and migration as in the case of these two examples?

Resources

UNITED STATES • 1 HR 24 MIN

June's story

"It's not work. It's bearing witness. It's being there, it's really a gift."



LISTEN TO JUNE'S STORY



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DIALOGUES IN HUMAN GEOGRAPHY

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<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2043820619876399>

Plattsburgh Cares Asylum Flyer

DISCLAIMER: This flyer is for informational purposes and is not legal advice.



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If you are traveling from the U.S. to Canada to ask the Canadian government for protection, consider getting legal advice in the U.S. first. For a referral to a legal service provider or to report fraud, call the New York State New Americans Hotline: 1-800-566-7636 (from a New York area code) or 212-419-3737. The hotline is open Monday-Friday 8 a.m.-9 p.m.

To Get Legal Advice in Canada:

If you apply for asylum in Canada, you should contact a reputable attorney or legal service provider. Solidarity Across Borders can help you at 438-933-7654, solidaritycrossborders.org or solidaritesansfrontiers@gmail.com. You can also contact P.R.A.I.D.A. at 514-284-0054 or Montreal Legal Aid 514-849-3671.

Travel Information to Canada:

The maximum fee a taxi can charge to take you from the Plattsburgh bus station to the Canadian border is \$77.50 per trip. If a taxi takes you anywhere other than where you asked to go, or if they charge you more than \$77.50, call Plattsburgh Cares at 518-243-8292 or 518-240-8866.

If You Are Stranded:

If you are stranded or need help in the Plattsburgh area or near the Champlain border, call Plattsburgh Cares at 518-243-8292 or 518-240-8866.

Plattsburgh Taxis:

- City Taxi: 518-561-7777
- C&L Taxi: 518-572-3830 (Call or Text)
- Northern Taxi: 518-534-5166

Plattsburgh Cares
P.O. Box 1932
Plattsburgh, NY 12901

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FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS CROSSING INTO CANADA



PLATTSBURGH
CARES

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Criminalization of Aid

Plattsburgh Cares Asylum Flyer

Crossing into Canada at Roxham Road (the IRREGULAR unofficial Crossing)

Things you need to know when crossing at Roxham Road:

- * You will need to take a taxi to Roxham Road. The maximum fare cabs can charge is \$77.50.
- * The short path at the end of Roxham Road leads to Canada. Canadian officials are there to warn everyone they will be arrested. No one on the American side will stop you on the short path to Canada.
- * You can only cross one time, so all baggage must be carried over together.
- * You may be told by Canadian officials to cross at the regular border instead, which is six miles away. By foot, this trip can be dangerous in cold weather.
- * Once you cross at the irregular border, the Canadian Constitution applies, and you may be able to claim asylum.
- * Everyone who crosses at the irregular border at Roxham Road is detained, interviewed and processed. If you want to make a claim for refugee status in Canada because you face harm in your home country, you must tell the government officials immediately.
- * Once detained you will be taken to an office for a security interview with a Canadian border official. They will ask why you crossed and may take your phone, computer, and other documents to check them over.
- * You will be taken to the main border crossing to be interviewed again by an immigration officer. The officer may try to discourage and challenge you, to test if you are committed to applying for asylum in Canada.
- * At the interview, you have the right to obtain an interpreter and lawyer before answering questions.
- * You may be asked if your home country should be notified of your presence in Canada. If you are afraid of returning home, ask for a lawyer before answering this question.
- * After this second interview, you will be given some forms. One is to obtain health services. You will then be taken to Montreal to complete the asylum process if the officer has determined you are eligible to apply for asylum.
- * In Montreal, you will be given a Basis of Claim (BOC) form. Follow all the instructions. You may need a reputable immigration attorney or legal service provider to help you. Contact Solidarity Across Borders for help at 438-933-7654. You can also contact P.R.A.I.D.A. at 514-284-0054 or Montreal Legal Aid 514-849-3671.

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Crossing into Canada at the Regular OFFICIAL Border Crossing

There is an agreement between the U.S. and Canada, so that, if you try to cross and apply for asylum at the regular, official border, you will be turned back and told to apply in the United States. There are only two exceptions:

- * You can prove at the border that you have one of the following family members in Canada: spouse (including common-law and same-sex), legal guardian, adult child, parent, sibling, grand- parent, grandchild, aunt, uncle, niece or nephew.
- * You can prove at the border that you are a child under the age of 18 with no family in the U.S. or Canada.

If you are turned away from Canada, you may be permanently banned from claiming asylum there. It is also very likely that you will be arrested by the U.S. government and may be detained in a jail. Even if you are not detained, you may face deportation from the United States.

If you already have a deportation order from the United States, you will not see a judge. You will be detained until the U.S. government can arrange for your deportation.

In the United States, you do not have a right to a free lawyer. You can hire a lawyer, but they will not be allowed to attend the interview at the border,

Additional Resources



CANADIAN COUNCIL FOR REFUGEES

“Proud to Aid and Abet Refugees campaign”

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CBC NEWS

CBC Canadian officials to counter 'incomplete' information in flyers with tips on illegal border crossing

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/flyers-plattsburgh-asylum-hussen-1.4676874>



CBC

CBC Road to Roxham

<https://gem.cbc.ca/media/short-docs/season-1/episode-118/38e815a-012c232993a>



ORGANIZATION

Plattsburgh Cares

<https://plattsburghcares.org/>

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Student Handout

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25 MIN

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A. Introduction

5 MIN

Listen to the excerpt from June’s story and follow along with the attached transcript.

Task 2: Engaging in Oral Histories

TOTAL TIME / 50 MIN

Both the US and Canadian governments have made moves over the past decade to criminalize assistance to asylum seekers. This is part of the context of the more recent border crossings from the US into Canada, where advocacy groups in border communities organized to assist people on the move. One such group developed a flyer to provide information to the thousands of people coming through their community.

In 2016 when residents began hearing about asylum seekers crossing into Canada at Roxham road, June stepped into action. As one of the founding members of Plattsburgh Cares, June continues to deliver food and supplies to those in need at the border six days a week. Plattsburgh cares is a coalition of faith, service, and activist groups working in Plattsburgh, New York.



[Read the excerpt from June's story](#)

June

11 August 2019

June: The flyer was put together probably within six months... Six to nine months of forming Plattsburgh Cares. It went on our website and we printed many copies, and we shared them locally in the hotels and other places, the bus station, other places that we thought people might be travelling through and might need the information. Have you looked at it?

RRTeam: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

June: Yeah. It's basically, in our mind, it was a 'things you need to know and how to stay safe.' And we were really motivated by the taxi drivers that were price gouging, or maybe weren't even legit drivers that might mislead them and take them to some place unsafe... or traffickers, or whatever. Might as well not be naïve about things. And that was the goal of that, to just give people good information that they needed to know. Of course, I'm sure you know that it kind of blew up in our faces because someone found it in a hotel in Plattsburgh and claimed that it was inviting people to cross illegally into Canada, which of course was not our intention whatsoever. I don't think we have those fires out right now, but it is still electronically is available, and it does give really good information.

Then as far as... You talked about other things in Plattsburgh. I can't really answer that. I'm not really sure if that flyer has been beneficial to people who maybe have ended up deciding to stay in Plattsburgh. I don't really know.

In her interview, June talks about the flyer that Plattsburgh Cares produced for asylum seekers crossing into Canada. The following article shows how government officials responded to this flyer.



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1. From your assigned perspective discuss the following questions
 - a. How do you interpret the purpose of this flyer?
 - b. What stands out to you as important or problematic?
 - c. What questions does this raise about safety?
2. Keeping in mind June's comments, the government response, and the flyer itself, come up with a three sentence statement that summarizes your position on this flyer.

B. Group Activity

30 MIN

In a small group, you will be assigned one of these three perspectives

- Government official (Canadian and/or US)
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- Person thinking of crossing the border

C. Full-class debrief

15 MIN

Share and discuss your position with the class.

Task 3: Wrap-up discussion

TOTAL TIME / 15 MIN

Reflect on Scott Warren's and June's stories. These two advocates present different kinds of aid to migrants crossing the border. For Scott, water, food and shelter were given to border crossers in the desert at the US/Mexico border, whereas Plattsburgh Cares developed an informational flyer and provided aid at the border. In both cases, humanitarian aid was portrayed as potentially dangerous, clearly with dramatically different responses.

- How do advocates define their work?
- Why is it important to understand how advocates define their work?
- What is the danger of criminalizing such work?
- What can be learned from looking at the stories of advocates at these borders?

Resources

UNITED STATES • 1 HR 24 MIN

June's story

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CBC NEWS

CBC Canadian officials to counter 'incomplete' information in flyers with tips on illegal border crossing

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/flyers-plattsburgh-asylum-hussen-1.4676874>



CBC

CBC Road to Roxham

<https://gem.cbc.ca/media/short-docs/season-1/episode-118/38e815a-012c232993a>



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