



Remembering Refuge

Between Sanctuary and Solidarity

What are Provocations?

Provocations are the questions that lie at the heart of conversations about migration and borders, but that often are not made explicit. The provocations emerged from the overarching themes that developed out of the team's engagement with the oral histories. They are points of entry that both inform and are informed by the oral histories and are meant to provoke critical thinking and engagement.

Provocation: Main Provocation

Rarely do we reflect on what gives states the authority to enforce borders in particular ways or even why borders exist in the first place. This provocation encourages you to ask:

- What work do borders do?
- Are they needed?
- Why do states use labels or categories to differentiate between people who cross their borders? How do borders include or exclude?
- Who can take mobility for granted and why?
- What is *your* relationship to borders?

From the Remembering Refuge Archive

At rememberingrefuge.com/oral-histories, you can explore a collection of oral histories where individuals share their experiences of crossing the Canada-US border to seek refuge, along with accounts from advocates in border communities. The following excerpts have been chosen for their relevance to the provocation “Why do borders exist?” and can be used to reflect on the questions it raises.

Key moments from the oral histories:

Maria 00:26:43 - 00:33:29

Bridges Not Borders 01:10:17 - 01:13:20

Roberto 00:22:45 - 00:25:17

To access the key moments, follow the steps listed below:

1. Go to rememberingrefuge.com
2. Go to “Oral histories”.
3. Scroll to find the oral history you’re looking for, and click on it.
 - a. Note: Some oral histories may include a trigger warning. Click the play button to continue.
4. Inside the story, click “Explore X’s story” located at the top of the page to view a list of Key Moments from the oral history.
5. Scroll through the Key Moments to find the timestamp you’re looking for and click on it. This will take you to that moment in the audio.
6. To play the story, click on the play button in the bottom-left corner of the page.

Education Resources

At rememberingrefuge.com/education, you can find education resources designed to activate the counter-archive by encouraging learners to engage with the stories meaningfully and consider how the knowledge can be applied beyond the classroom. The following materials were selected for their relevance to the provocation “Why do borders exist?” and can be used to reflect on the questions it raises.

Education Resources:

Categorization and Migration

Rethinking Borders

To access the education resources, follow the steps listed below:

1. Go to rememberingrefuge.com
2. Go to “Education”.
3. Scroll to find the education resource you’re looking for, and click on it.
4. Once inside you can view the online version or download the PDF.

What have other people said about this question?

Sadiya Ansari, *What Do Borders Really Do?*, 2019

<https://magazine.utoronto.ca/research-ideas/culture-society/what-do-borders-really-do-immigration-ethics/>

Borders and Belonging, *Season 1, Episode 1: Why We Build Border Walls*, 2022

<https://www.torontomu.ca/cerc-migration/borders-and-belonging/>

The Criminialization of Freedom of Movement, *Episode 1: Feminist perspectives on prison abolition and border abolition*, 2024

<https://feministresearch.org/podcasts/>

Stephen Lurie, *Why Do We Have Borders Anyway?*, 2017

https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/kzeyvx/why-do-we-have-borders-anyway

Todd Miller, *More Than a Wall*, 2019

<https://www.tni.org/files/publication-downloads/more-than-a-wall-report.pdf>

Want to learn more about the project? Visit rememberingrefuge.com