

POV Community
Engagement &
Education

DISCUSSION GUIDE



La Casa de Mama Icha
a film by Oscar Molina

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LA CASA DE MAMA ICHA

La Casa de Mama Icha offers a profound meditation on notions of home and the inescapable pull of one's motherland. The documentary follows María Dionisia Navarro, otherwise known as Mama Icha, on a physical and spiritual journey that draws on the complexities inherent to many migrant experiences: distance, the loved ones left behind, and the problem of aging in a country that doesn't feel like your own.

At ninety-three, Mama Icha feels that the end of her life is near. Despite protests from her family, she spends her days focusing on just one thing: returning to her native village of Mompox in northern Colombia. Mama Icha dreams of passing her final years taking comfort in the landscapes of her youth, walking along the Magdalena River at dusk, surrounded by her relatives and neighbors in the courtyard of the house that she painstakingly had built during her years of absence, with the money she sent from abroad.

Thirty years prior, Mama Icha had emigrated to the United States to help her daughter with the care of her children, Mama Icha's grandchildren, and remained ever since. Now, against the best wishes of her family in the U.S. who feel that she's built an admirable life in Philadelphia complete with Social Security, a community that supports her, and access to important senior resources, Mama Icha boards a plane and flies back to Colombia where she meets her sons, Gustavo and Alberto, who have been in charge of her house while she's been gone.

But upon returning, the idyllic world of her memories is put up against a harsh reality of deteriorating family relationships and broken expectations. The confrontation is disappointing and forces Mama Icha to consider exactly how much she's willing to sacrifice for the notion of home that she's longed for so long.

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This guide is an invitation to dialogue. It is based on a belief in the power of human connection and designed for people who want to use La Casa de Mama Icha 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 support planning and facilitating your screening, visit [POV's Community Network](#).

HELPFUL CONCEPTS & DEFINITIONS

HELPFUL CONCEPTS & DEFINITIONS

Diaspora: a large group of people with a similar heritage or homeland who have since moved out to places all over the world.

Elder Agency: language referring to older people and their right and capability to fulfill their desires and to have choice in their lives

Emigration: to leave one's own country of origin and settle in another country permanently

Immigration: to enter and settle in another country that is different from one's country of origin

Migrant: a person who moves from one place to another, particularly in order to find work or different living conditions

Remittances: money or goods sent from migrants to their families in their home country



THE FILM: KEY PARTICIPANTS

Mama Icha: Maria Dionisia Navarro, “Mama Icha,” is a 93-year-old Colombian émigré who for the past 30 years has lived in Philadelphia, PA with her doting daughter and granddaughter, Epifania and Michelle Angela respectively. Though Mama Icha relies upon the social and health services available to her in the United States, and though her migration to the United States helped her escape poverty, at this stage in her life, she decides to return to Colombia to live and die in the house she has built for herself in Mompox. This house was paid for by money Mama Icha earned in the U.S. and sent back to Colombia, a type of money transfer common to migratory people and known as “remittance.”

Epifania, is a sixty-three-year-old woman and Mama Icha’s fourth child. She moved to Philadelphia when she was 17 and has three children in their thirties. She knows the dynamics of work and survival in the United States and does not desire to return to Colombia. She secured a pension from the United States government for Mama Icha. Epifania helped build the Mompox house with those resources. She works hard in Philadelphia: in the mornings as caregiver for a white American woman who lives on her own. In the evenings, she prepares Colombian-Caribbean food for social events in Philadelphia. She feels betrayed by her mother’s wish to return to Colombia.

Michelle Angela is a mediator between her mother, Epifania, and her grandmother, Mama Icha. She shares her mother’s fears regarding the life her grandmother may face upon returning to Mompox, and thus, Michelle Angela disagrees with Mama Icha’s position. Michelle Angela is a Latinx artist with a successful career in the United States. Her artwork deals with gender, identity and issues facing migrating families. She often expresses in her art the experiences of her mother, her grandmother, and other members of the Latin-American immigrant community in which she was raised.

Alberto is Mama Icha’s youngest son. He was 14 when Mama Icha left Mompox for the United States, and he was very affected by her absence. He is dependent on alcohol and on financial support from his mother. During the last years of Mama Icha’s stay in Philadelphia, Alberto was responsible for taking care of the house in Mompox. Although he works fixing bicycles, he does not make enough money to sustain the house. Each month, he expects remittance money from Mama Icha to pay for the utilities, taxes and maintenance costs of the house. Mama Icha wishes to restore a maternal relationship with Alberto, but there are many barriers in their way, including the interventions of Gustavo.

Gustavo is Alberto’s older brother and Mama Icha’s son. He lives in Barranquilla and has been divorced twice. He is unemployed, has eight children and lives in the house of one of them. He assumes the responsibility of taking care of his mother during her return to Colombia with one condition: she must sell the Mompox house and buy a new one in Barranquilla. This, Gustavo says, will allow him to have the resources needed to pay for Mama Icha’s expenses and healthcare. He portrays his brother Alberto as an evil person in order to have him evicted from the house. He inadvertently serves as an antagonist.

La Casa de Mama Icha is an excellent tool for outreach and will be of special interest to people who want to explore the following topics:

- The emotional and familial toll of migration
- The hopes and challenges of return migration
- Remittances
- Honoring agency in elder care
- Colombian diasporic communities
- Lived experiences of globalization
- Poverty
- Housing as a human right
- Finding home and belonging within conditions of displacement



MIGRATION

According to the United Nations, more people than ever live in a country other than the one in which they were born. [The UN Migration Agency \(IOM\) defines a migrant as:](#)

any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from their habitual place of residence, regardless of: (1) the person's legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) what the length of the stay is.

Globally, an estimated 270 million people, or roughly four percent of the world's population, live and work outside their country of origin, and half of this population are women ([UNCDF](#)).

Movement across national borders, or migration, can be voluntary or involuntary. People may leave their home country voluntarily in search of a better life and higher standards of living, or they may be forced to move by forces and conditions beyond their control, such as climate change, war, famine, economic crisis, or other instabilities. Many migrations are caused by multiple factors and fall somewhere in between these aforementioned reasons. Mama Icha, for example, chose to move to the United States in order to provide childcare to her daughter's children, but this choice was in response to the lack of affordable childcare options for the family in the US and lack of economic opportunities in Colombia.

According to a 2015 report by [Migration Policy Institute](#), despite being a nation rich in natural resources, exemplary in biodiversity, and populated with diverse talents, "Colombia is the largest source of South American immigration to the United States and the 14th largest source of US immigrants overall, accounting for 1.7 percent of the country's foreign-born population." *La Casa de Mama Icha* asks us to consider what structural factors create a situation by which a country like Colombia with such wealth has to experience rampant displacement of its most valuable resource: its people.

Mass emigration from Colombia to countries like Venezuela, Ecuador, Canada, and the United States began in the mid-20th century as Colombians escaped lack of job opportunities and a decade of civil war called La Violencia, a period of deadly, armed conflict between the warring Liberal and Conservative parties. This in-fighting created power vacuums which gave rise to leftist, guerrilla movements, against which rose paramilitary groups years later. Over the course of the 20th century and the first two decades of the 21st century, Colombian civilians have been subject to rampant violence and economic instability as the country's governance is engaged in this tug-of-war. Leftist groups have used political violence and drug trafficking to fund attempts to resolve excessive economic inequality and the concentration of land in the hands of a small elite; while paramilitary groups, also partially financed with drug trafficking, have fought to maintain the economic and political order which serves their interests.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Meanwhile, the United States with its Cold War priorities, [provided funding and training](#) to any groups or leaders that would quell rural, working class organizing in favor of leadership and economic policies favorable to United States' imperial and capital interests (Lee, 2017).

Given these volatile conditions, many Colombians fled their home country during the second half of the 20th century. By 2014, an estimated 1.2 million people residing in the US claimed Colombian heritage, making Colombians the seventh-largest Latin American group in the United States ([Carvajal, 2017](#)). Today, all of the Colombian people living in diaspora—around five million people—would form the second most-populous city in Colombia.

Parallel to the migration to other countries, the violence in Colombia also has forced many people, the majority from rural areas, to leave behind their homes and lands and look for refuge in other areas of the country, mainly in cities. According to world statistics reported by The [UN Refugee Agency](#), “Colombia has the highest number of internally displaced people with 7.8 million at the end of 2018.”

Immigrant communities often infuse their host societies with cultural resources such as food, music, arts, and language, as well as economic resources through entrepreneurship and small business ownership. A [2021 study by SCORE](#), a nonprofit organization supporting small businesses, found that 20% of small businesses in the US are owned by first-generation immigrants, “contributing more to the economy” than almost any other group (other major contributors include veteran and encore entrepreneurs).

For those within the immigrant community, such contributions are not only designed for social mobility, but are also a form of finding community, constructing belonging, and contributing to social justice or cross-cultural understanding. Epifania, for example, runs a thriving catering business in which she introduces fellow Philadelphians to Colombian food. And Michelle Angela Ortiz, Mama Icha's granddaughter, is a nationally recognized artist who uses her cultural heritage and talents to draw attention to pressing issues within immigrant communities and to call for immigration policy reform.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

RETURN MIGRATION

Often, public conversations about migration focus on people’s movement away from a home country to a host country. This prevailing framework tends to overlook those instances in which migrants eventually return to their home country, what’s commonly referred to as return migration. Return migration is difficult to measure or study because much of it is spontaneous and goes unrecorded ([OECD, 2020](#)). Just like migration, return migration can be forced—as in the case of deportations—voluntary, or a combination (such as for families who find themselves discriminated against and unable to make a living in the host country). Mama Icha’s return can be said to be a combination of forced and voluntary. While on the one hand, her decision to leave the United States is an act of will, it is a choice that she must make to mend the ruptures in her family created from three decades of living apart due to unsustainable economic conditions.

Given the high numbers of people living outside of Colombia, the Colombian government has developed programs to encourage and facilitate the return of highly skilled emigres or of people displaced by armed conflict. But these programs’ success are limited by “the lack of a comprehensive plan guaranteeing employment and competitive salaries” ([Carvajal, 2017](#)). Such programs targeting highly skilled Colombians also do not actively support the fruitful return of elder Colombian nationals like Mama Icha.



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

HOME

The documentary *La Casa de Mama Icha* asks us to consider home as not simply a shelter nor simply a personal space rich in personal memories and sentimental value, but also a *political* space. As Mama Icha and her family illustrate, caregiving decisions are socio-economic decisions. Through years of savings, Mama Icha steadily builds a house in Colombia which is made possible by way of a transnational experience—a transnational experience that was itself compelled by unsustainable expenses of childcare and the family’s search for greater economic opportunities. Mama Icha called this a “double fraud:” in order to have the possibility to live (and later die and be buried) where she wanted, in her own homeland, she had to live in the United States in pursuit of resources to build, maintain, and pay expenses on her dream house in Colombia. In this way, the house, like Mama Icha herself, is made transnational.

Home in *La Casa de Mama Icha* is also a dynamic feeling and sense of rootedness that exists between and across borders, “understood both as a physical location of dwelling as well as a space of belonging and identity [...] shaped by consumption, remittances, and social networks” (Brickell and Datta, 13-14).

The decisions Mama Icha makes for herself and to support her family are protected rights. Though the right to housing is not explicitly stated in the Bill of Rights to the U.S. Constitution, nor is it framed as a fundamental right in mainstream political and social discourse, housing is an internationally recognized right inscribed in the 1948 [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) and subsequent United Nations committees. The right to adequate housing for all persons includes:

- Protection against forced evictions and the arbitrary destruction and demolition of one’s home;
- The right to be free from arbitrary interference with one’s home, privacy and family; and
- The right to choose one’s residence, to determine where to live and to freedom of movement.

Housing is in fact [a right upon which almost all other rights depend](#) (Florida, 2017). As per Abraham Maslow’s “[Hierarchy of Needs](#),” people must first meet urgent needs for food, shelter, and safety before they can engage in higher-order and collective struggles for growth, for self-actualization, and for the betterment of society. How, for example, can families exercise freedom of expression or their right to vote, [asks Former President Jimmy Carter \(Florida, 2017\)](#), if their housing situation is not reliable or safe? Migrants work doubly hard to secure housing for themselves and their families despite the common experience of being excluded from voting rights in the US, which would provide more power in shaping conditions that directly impact their need for shelter, experiences of belonging, and opportunities to shape home.

CARE AND CAREGIVING

If the amount a job earns is an indicator of its value to a society, the unpaid or under-paid nature of caregiving work is a glaring mismatch between the market value of this service and the essential value it provides to the functioning and well-being of a society. Though “child care is essential to the health of the nation’s economy and to children’s well-being” ([Boesch & Hamm, 2020](#)), this work is often unpaid, as was the case for Mama Icha. The National Alliance for Caregiving (NAC) and AARP report that in 2020, nearly 1 in 5 or “53 million adults in the U.S. have provided unpaid care to either a child or another adult,” amounting to about \$470 billion in unpaid contributions to society. Thirty million of those adults are doing their caregiving work while also working a paid job. Unpaid caregiving labor is disproportionately the responsibility of Black and Latinx women. This suggests that “the devaluing of care is connected to attitudes” about race and gender ([Boesch & Hamm, 2020](#)).

Though there are many gains to caring for an elder, including an increased sense of connection and love, unsupported caregiving can cause financial hardships for a family, as well as increased levels of stress, depression, exhaustion, and subsequently, compromised immune function ([CDC](#)). Caregivers are also prone to physical disorders such as diabetes or high blood pressure. It is urgent that the United States begin to develop more sustainable, more nurturing, and more affordable systems of elder care (as well as care for caregivers) because the number of people 65 years old and older is expected to double between 2000 and 2030, while the number of potential caregivers within each family will decrease from 7 to 4 in that same time period (CDC).

The [AARP Policy Institute](#) advocates for expanding Medicaid to support paying family caregivers. Doing so can have significant advantages:

- The person who needs care can age in their own home, which is the preference for the vast majority of people who need long-term support services.
- The family caregiver earns modest income, mitigating the impact of the job hours they lose by having to take on caregiving responsibilities.
- Costs are kept lower. One analysis found the average monthly cost for self-directed care was \$1,774 in 2019, compared to \$6,175 for a room in a semi-private nursing home.

REMITTANCES

Remittances are earnings typically sent by immigrants in host countries to relatives and family in their home countries to support living expenses like food, clothing, shelter, health care and even weddings or funerals migrants can't attend in person. Each year, more than 200 million migratory people send remittances from higher-income countries to over 800 million family members in low- and middle- income countries ([IFAD, 2021](#)). Remittances are often critical to the economic sustainability and development of lower-income countries, amounting to over three times the amount of international aid that goes into these same countries ([United Nations Department of Economic & Social Affairs, 2019](#)).

In 2020, five-hundred and forty (540) billion (USD) was sent in remittances from higher-income to low- or middle-income countries across the world ([World Bank, 2021](#)). Sixty-eight (68) billion (USD) of that global sum of remittances were sent out from families within the United States to countries around the world ([Migration Data Portal, 2021](#)), with \$6.87 billion (USD) of those remittances going to Colombia ([World Bank Data, 2020](#)). This amount accounted for 2.5% of Colombia's GDP and the second source of overseas income after the exports of oil and coal.

It is tempting to think of remittances as a shocking siphoning of funds from one place of higher resources to a place of lower resources, but more accurately, remittances ask us to consider the interdependency of all countries, on each other and to the laws of nature. Remittances are one way to redress centuries-long imbalances in power and [extraction of resources](#) from lower-income countries (McNeish, 2018).¹ We also see the ways in which remittances demonstrate global interdependencies through the lens of climate change. Remittances are a by-product of migration which is itself often compelled by climate-related disasters which disproportionately impact lower-income countries and make livelihoods unsustainable. 50% of the carbon emissions contributing to such disasters are produced by three nations: China, India, and the United States. This means that the industrial practices of these three countries are playing a significant role in creating unsustainable living conditions and thus compelling migration in countries around the world.

1 We discussed earlier the paradoxical situation of Colombia's natural wealth and its mass displacements. But this is not a situation exclusive to Colombia. The Democratic Republic of the Congo, an African country, is considered [one of the richest in the world in natural resources](#), but "these vast resources have scarcely benefited the Congolese people. Instead, they have contributed to decades of conflict, numerous serious human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law" ([UN Mapping Report, 2003](#)). Such exploitation of Congolese resources by military power and foreign actors have led to Congo having one the highest number of [displaced people](#) and a high dependency on [the economic resources \(remittances\) sent by Congolese people living abroad](#).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

[According to the United Nations](#), remittances also can offer essential support to the development of a home country in all of the following ways and many more:

- Poverty reduction: a 10% increase in per capita remittances leads to a 3.5% decline in the share of poor people in the population
- Improving the health and well-being of recipient families.
- Reducing infant mortality: Infants born into remittance families have a higher birthweight and are less likely to die during their first year.
- Remittance-receiving households have demonstrably better educational participation than non-recipients, and invest about one tenth of their income educating their children.
- Transforming the economic role of women both on the sending side and receiving end through financial independence and better employment opportunities.
- Mitigating some of the negative impacts of climate change-related disasters by helping cope with income shortages due to weather-related shocks.

On the other hand, a reliance on remittances can lead lower-income nations to become dependent on the migration of their citizens. Remittances can create both an inflation of real estate costs in such local economies and a new, higher standard of living from the cash flow. If the home economy and job opportunities therein have not substantially improved, these new costs of living can only be sustained through an infusion of earnings from abroad ([Wucker, 2004, p. 39](#)). Local governments can also learn to rely on emigration and remittances to replace “the traditional function of a social safety valve,” thus discouraging governments from making the changes needed to support their local economies and create sustainable living conditions (Wucker, 2004, p.38).

Remittances are typically sent as over-the-counter, cash transactions sent via wire transfer through companies like Western Union and MoneyGram. These companies make profit from exorbitant fees charged on each transfer. Such transfer fees might range from 7% of the total funds sent to as high as 20% ([Butler, 2019](#)). The World Bank, who tracks remittance flows each year, reports the fourth quarter average (global) fee of a \$200 wire transfer in the year 2002 at 6.5%, more than double the Sustainable Development Goal target of 3 percent. ([World Bank Data, 2021](#)). By reducing average costs to three percent globally, remitting families would save an additional \$25 billion (USD) annually ([Elks, 2018](#)).

[The UN Capital Development Fund](#) advocates for a move away from cash transfers toward digital. Digital transfers circumvent some of the inefficiencies, exploitative costs, and failure points of cash transfers. Various digital technology companies are starting to compete for a share of the remittance market by charging lower fees.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Remitly, for example, is an app-based service where customers can use their smartphones to transfer money digitally abroad at a fraction of traditional Remittance Transfer Providers. Remitly operates in Colombia and might charge \$3.99 or approximately 2% for a \$200 transaction. Bitcoin may also be a cheaper and simpler way for migratory families to send money back to their host country. As a new medium of exchange, it will require educating consumers on its uses and benefits.



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STARTING THE CONVERSATION

Immediately after the film, you may want to give people a few quiet moments to reflect on what they have seen. You could pose a general question (examples below) and give people some time to themselves to jot down their thoughts, share their reflections with a partner, or to think about their ideas before opening the floor for discussion.

Alternatively, you could ask each participant to use one word to describe one feeling the film brought up for them. After everyone has spoken, take a moment to recognize the range of feelings--some which are perhaps even contradictory--that the film has brought into the room. Then, you can ask 2- 3 volunteers to reference a specific scene that created their expressed feeling for them, or to elaborate on the feeling they expressed.

- If you were to share this film with one person you know, who would that be? And why would you want them to see it?
- Did this film generate any new thoughts, ideas, curiosities, or ask you to consider something you hadn't yet before considered?
- If you could ask anyone in the film a single question, whom would you ask? What would you ask; and why?

CARE AND CAREGIVING

1. What are the social and economic benefits of caregiving work? Are there outcomes to caregiving work that are tangible and measurable? Think what you might say to a policy maker to advocate for more support services for caregivers.
2. We see in the film that there is a strong sense of shared responsibility in Mama Icha's family. Have you ever been in a caregiving role? If so, what made you feel supported? What online or in-person resources, groups, and services did you use to build community to support your caregiving work? What did you wish you had more of by way of support?
3. What are the advantages of intergenerational care? What do children gain from being raised in an intergenerational family, with access to elders? How for example might Michelle Angela's art and activism be informed by the fact that she grew up under the care of two generations of women in her family?
4. Do you have experiences feeling cultural bias against elderly people in the United States? If you feel comfortable, share some of those experiences. After anyone who wishes to has shared, as a group, discuss:
 - What are some of the emotional, physical, psychological, or material consequences of such bias?
 - What do you think are some factors responsible for such bias?
 - What can be done to address these hurtful biases and create a culture and society which honors elders? In your responses, address what can be done by individuals, communities, businesses, and government.
5. What are ways that families and medical personnel can listen to and honor the needs and agency of elderly people? Have you had experience making elder care choices in which you had to make a decision between your wishes and those of your family member? What did you prioritize in making those choices?
6. Consider that leaving one's home country is of great sacrifice, so much so that emigres may harbor a dream of return for decades. Consider also the many economic and social benefits that remittances can confer upon home countries. Given this, do you think remittance-receiving nation states, like Colombia, have a responsibility to provide material care to their diasporic communities by way of health insurance or social security? Discuss.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

7. In the next few years, there will be more people who need care in the US which means more and more people will be thrust into caregiving roles. Are our systems in the US designed to care for caregivers? What bureaucratic or material challenges have you or someone you know faced in serving as a caretaker? What barriers have they faced in accessing government or other types of support?
8. Have you had to have difficult conversations about dying with loved ones? What resources or people did you turn to to help you have those conversations?

RELATIONSHIP TO HOME

1. Think of any times in your life you've felt, like Mama Icha, that you felt torn between different homes or displaced from somewhere that felt like home.. What emotional, psychological, or material consequences did that have for you and your loved ones? How did you eventually resolve any of the tensions or difficulties this situation created for you or your loved ones?
2. How do you define "home"? What are the various factors -- emotional, psychological, sensory, material -- that connect us to a home place?
3. The film touches on a sense of belonging to one's homeland. Did the film complicate your understanding of belonging? Are there times when you yourself, like Mama Icha, felt your sense of belonging was disrupted, and if so, what strategies did you use to restore a sense of belonging? What social, interpersonal, and/or material supports do you think are important to have in place for people to restore that sense of belonging?
4. How might it feel to *not* be connected to a home land? Can people forge relationships to land when such land is contested or a site of trauma?
5. Have you ever returned to somewhere you once felt at home and everything felt different from how you'd imagined it? If so, what had changed and why?
6. Have you ever moved away from somewhere that felt like home carrying with yourself the conviction or confidence that you'd return, but didn't ever end up returning? What got in the way of you returning?
7. Mama Icha sustains two homes across national borders. What does the film suggest about ways transnationalism can complicate or exacerbate family issues? How does distance (especially across borders) impact communication and caregiving within families?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

8. Do you believe people have a *right* to migrate? Why or why not?
9. Do you believe people, communities, or entire nations have a right to remain in a place they feel they belong or in which they have generations of history?
 - Consider this latter question in the context of gentrification: do communities have a right to remain and be protected from being priced out of their own neighborhoods and homes? If so, what kinds of policies do you think would help protect communities' right to home? (One example of a protection might be in requiring developers to sign [Community Benefits Agreements](#)).

CONSEQUENCES OF MIGRATION

1. What does the film teach you about immigration experiences that you didn't know before?
2. Distance can fracture families and create more problems than resolutions. How might our public conversations about immigration change if we didn't just think about migration as an exchange of labor but as a complex set of material choices and psychological consequences?
3. It's often understood that migration is a benefit to the immigrant but how do host communities also benefit from the cross-cultural exchanges made possible through immigration?
4. How have you personally benefited from people's decisions to immigrate to the United States? Think of the goods, services, cultural resources, entertainment and/or ideas you encounter regularly and how much of that is owed to immigrant families.
5. In what ways is migration into the US related to policies of the United States? What does the film reveal about this interplay?
6. Throughout the 20th century in the United States, there's been a tension between the US's rhetoric about immigration as a site of refuge -- the Statue of Liberty's "give me your huddled masses" -- and restrictive immigration policies (Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 for example). We're seeing this still today: humanitarian language employed while policies are in place to deport thousands before they can access their legal right to seek asylum. As a person living in the United States, how do you reconcile these contradictory ideas for yourself? How can the US or European nations be simultaneously a hub for welcoming refugees while also setting boundaries given finite resources?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

7. What does the film suggest about challenges people might face in returning to their country of origin after years living abroad? How might those challenges be exacerbated if returning to unstable political or economic situations?
8. Many immigrants into the US arrive with accrued financial stability or high skills. This is drastically different from the portrait of migration that is most prominent in the news--of people moving to the United States to seek resources. Why do you think public discourse tends to focus on one type of immigration rather than the other?
9. Increasingly, people of means from higher-income nations are moving to the global South, something like gentrification on a global scale. What might be some of the consequences of this type of migration on local economies, local cultures, and environment? Will people be displaced from their own home countries? Should there be limits on this type of migration precisely because of some of its ramifications?

REMITTANCES AND INTERDEPENDENCE

1. What are your thoughts on Mama Icha's decision to return to Colombia to live in the house she built? Why do you think this house was so meaningful to her? Have you ever felt so connected to a house? If so, why?
2. How might poverty in any one country affect all of us? Why should we be concerned with poverty in countries not our own?
3. Often, migratory people are working long hours within difficult working conditions: meat packing plants; farmworking; construction. Given the ends to which people go to earn a paycheck, what do you think accounts for the fact that portions of these earnings are sent back to home to support people's families?
4. Have you ever shared your earnings with members of your family (besides your children)? If so, what led you to do so and how did you feel?
5. Scholars and researchers observe a distinction between Western and Eastern worldviews: Western worldviews value independence while Eastern worldviews value interdependence. Have you experienced either or both? And what do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of either worldview?
6. What do you believe are the most significant factors in developing generational wealth?
7. The United Nations has invested a great deal of time and energy in supporting and facilitating remittances. Why do you think that might be?

TAKING ACTION

*For any of these activities, please prioritize your safety and that of others so that no one is made physically more vulnerable (such as by exposure to COVID-19) through participation.

- Support local businesses which are owned and operated by immigrant families.
- Host dinners in your local community in which you invite people from different backgrounds to spend time together and get to know one another informally.
- Follow and support the work of [Michelle Angela Ortiz](#) as she makes visible the struggles of immigrant families.
- Follow and support the work of the [National Domestic Workers Alliance](#) as they advocate for workplace protections for the nearly 2.5 million nannies, housecleaners, and home care workers who do the essential work of caring for our loved ones and our homes.
- If you hire in-home care, provide vacation time, personal days, sick days, and healthcare whenever possible.
- Modeled on the StoryCorps project, virtually or in-person, take an hour to audio record an interview with a loved one and learn more about their journey, their hopes, dreams, and fears. This way, when it's time to make decisions together about a loved one's quality of life, you have a sense of what it is they want for themselves.
- If you're in a caregiving role, join support groups to make sure you are taking care of your own well-being and mental health so that you can avoid the negative consequences of "caregiver stress."
- Follow and support the work of [AARP Policy Institute](#) as they advocate for pay for family caregivers.
- Lead financial literacy workshops for women in your neighborhood, especially women who might send remittances to family members abroad. Support women in learning more about bitcoin and alternative, digital money transfer options that do not charge the exorbitant fees of companies like Western Union.
- Gather with people in your neighborhood and start mutual aid efforts to meet the care needs of everyone in the community. Consider: meal shares to provide meals for caregivers; taking turns to share caregiving responsibilities; raising funds to support caregivers; hosting self-care nights for wellness and balance.
- Inform yourself about US interventions in South America, interventions which have contributed to unsustainable economic conditions and violence within South American countries, thus compelling waves of migration away from South America.
- So much misunderstanding is fostered through lack of exposure to different perspectives and lifestyles, and all change work is best developed by hearing from the people most affected by the issues. Volunteer to support an immigrant rights organization or to spend time with an elder in your community as a way of spending time with, giving back to, and learning from people most affected by the issues.

RESOURCES

A list of relevant social movements, non-profits, and organizations. Be sure to include brief descriptions for each org and a link. [Here](#) is an example.

- [AARP Policy Institute](#) - site of the The AARP Public Policy Institute (PPI), which conducts research and lobbies to support family caregivers, recognizing family caregivers as are an essential part of the social, health, and economic fabric of the United States.
- [National Domestic Workers Alliance](#) - The National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA) works for the respect, recognition, rights and workplace protections for the nearly 2.5 million nannies, housecleaners, and home care workers who do the essential work of caring for our loved ones and our homes.
- [National Alliance for Caregiving](#) - Located in the heart of Washington, D.C., the National Alliance for Caregiving conducts research, does policy analysis, develops national best-practice programs, and works to increase public awareness of family caregiving issues. [See their list of resources for caregivers.](#)
- [ElderCare Locator](#) - a public service of the U.S. Administration on Aging connecting you to services for older adults and their families.
- [UNCDF Migration & Remittances program](#) - the UNCDF is working with international and regional organizations, with national governments, with financial service providers, and with migrants themselves to make remittances work better for families and local economies around the world. This program has a specific focus on empowering women.
- [List of resources for supporting immigrant communities](#)
- [Protecting Immigrant Families](#): A network anchored by the National Immigration Law Center (NILC), the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), and member organizations, the “Protecting Immigrant Families, Advancing Our Future” (PIF) Campaign aims to advance and defend access to health care, nutrition programs, public services and economic support for immigrants and their families at the local, state and federal level.
- [Women’s Institute for a Secure Retirement](#): supports, educates and provides resources for women and women caregivers to plan for a secure retirement.
- [Shut Down Berks Coalition](#): The Shut Down Berks Coalition is a group of organizations and individuals fighting to close the Berks family prison in Pennsylvania and end the practice of imprisoning immigrant families in the U.S. Members of the coalition include organizers, lawyers, immigrant leaders, and allies.
- [International Day of Family Remittances](#) is celebrated every year on 16 June to recognize and support the contributions of migrant workers and their families. Their website is a rich resource for understanding the transformative value of remittances. <https://familyremittances.org>

- [Migration Policy Institute Diaspora Profile](#) (2015): The Colombian Diaspora in the United States
- [People Move blog](#): a blog by World Bank economist, Dilip Ratha, dedicated to research on the relationship between remittances and economic development.
- [Mi Casa My Home](#): a multimedia web portal from the team behind La Casa de Mama Icha, which will chronicle and contextualize people's experiences with "remittance homes" around the world



Aggie Ebrahimi Bazaz



Aggie Ebrahimi Bazaz is an award-winning, Iranian-American documentary media maker, writer, and educator whose work focuses on immigration, co-creation, and the operations of power. Aggie earned her M.F.A. in film from Temple University in Philadelphia and an MA in multicultural literature from the University of Georgia, where she was researcher for the Civil Rights Digital Library. She is Assistant Professor of Film Production at Georgia State University and Co-Producer of La Casa de Mama Icha.

With research and writing support from:

Ashley Younger

Ashley Younger is an aspiring videographer and filmmaker pursuing her MA degree in the Film, Video and Digital Image program at Georgia State University. A 2018 honor graduate in Mass Media and student athlete from Clark Atlanta University, Ashley's career credits include work as a Digital Media/Communications intern for the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (SIAC) and Turner Broadcasting Network, freelance production/videography work for budding filmmakers, as well as videography for major network series including OWN and Bravo.

Joey Molina

Joey Molina is a multi-disciplinary artist and scholar working between video, installation, and collage. Molina's research interests include horror films, queer theory, and new media. They received their BA from Georgia State University in 2013 and is on track for their MA in Film and Video at Georgia State University.

THANKS TO THOSE WHO CONTRIBUTED TO AND REVIEWED THIS GUIDE:

Oscar Molina, Writer, Director, Producer | La Casa de Mama Icha
Brenda Steinecke Soto, Producer & Co-Writer | La Casa de Mama Icha

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Courtney Cook, PhD | Education Manager

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