



*Transgression*

## **A Study Guide for Social Work Educators and Students**

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**Table of Contents**

Introduction..... 4

Overview: *Transgression*..... 5

Topics

    Isolation..... 6

    Existing ..... 7

    Immigration Detention..... 8

    True Self: Immigrant..... 9

## **Introduction**

This guide has been developed to assist social work educators and students in using films from the CSWE film festivals in their classrooms. It is one in a series of CSWE curriculum resources designed to enhance the teaching and learning of social work concepts.

We welcome your comments as the library of these resources is refined and expanded.

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## Overview: *Transgression*

### Film Information

Title: <i>Transgression</i>	A Film by: T. J. Barber, Morgan Hargrave, Toni Marzal, and Daniel Rotman
Running Time: 15 minutes	Distributor: Harvard Law Documentary Studio

**Context:** The film presents the story of Norma, a transgendered woman who fled discrimination in Mexico and sought asylum in the United States but was confronted with an immigration system hostile to both undocumented aliens and those alienated from society on account of their sexual orientation.

### Overall Themes:

1. Transgender Immigrants
2. Immigration
3. Immigrant Justice

Time Code	Topic	Central Quote	Salient Themes
00:14–02:48	Isolation	“It’s a recipe for disaster.” (02:17)	National Immigrant Justice Center, transgender, immigration equality
02:49–06:05	Existing	“...but I always lived in fear, always.” (4:35)	Family relations, gender identification, domestic violence
06:06–10:41	Immigration Detention	“I was going crazy.” (07:17)	Detention facilities, transgender protection, psychological trauma
10:42–14:50	True self: Immigrant	“...I identify with them. They are like me.” (12:31)	Family supports, detention alternatives

## Topics

### Isolation

Time Code: 00:14–02:48

**Central Quote:** “It’s a recipe for disaster.” (02:17)

**Themes:** National Immigrant Justice Center, Transgender, Immigration Equality

**Abstract:** *Transgender* is defined, and the challenge faced by immigration officials and transgender immigrants is presented.

### Learning Objectives

1. Define *transgender*.
2. Identify institutions who are the legal enforcers of immigration law.
3. Identify organizations who are working to ensure the humane treatment and rights of LGBT immigrants.

### Discussion Questions

1. What is the mission of the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)?
2. Compare and contrast the role of ICE with US Citizenship and Immigration Services.
3. What human rights challenges can you identify in the treatment of transgender detainees?
4. How would you balance the mission and implementation of ICE with the dignity and worth value of transgender detainees?

### Suggested Readings

Norton, A. T., & Herek, G. M. (2013). Heterosexuals’ attitudes toward transgender people: Findings from a national probability sample of US adults. *Sex Roles*, 68 (11–12), 738–753.

Cerezo, A., Morales, A., Quintero, D., & Rothman, S. (2014). Trans migrations: Exploring life at the intersection of transgender identity and immigration. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, 1(2), 170–180.

Tomchin, O. (2013). Bodies and bureaucracy: Legal sex classification and marriage-based immigration for trans\* people. *California Law Review*, 101, 813–862.

## Existing

Time Code: 02:49–06:05

**Central Quote:** "... but I always lived in fear, always." (4:35)

**Themes:** Family Relations, Gender Identification, Domestic Violence

**Abstract:** Norma tells the story of childhood and her treatment at the hands of her family. Viewers are presented with the emotional trauma and physical violence often endured by transgender persons in conservative families. Norma speaks of the feeling that she as a transgender person was treated as if she did not exist.

## Learning Objectives

1. Explore the family context and treatment of transgender persons.
2. Define *domestic violence* outside of spousal abuse.

## Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever kept anything from your family because you felt they would have trouble accepting you? What was your feeling after finally revealing the information?
2. Do you think Norma's treatment at the hands of her family warrant her seeking asylum in the United States?
3. What reasons do you feel are reasons a person should be granted asylum in the United States? List your reasons in order of priority.
4. How would you change the law to better support legal immigration for those seeking asylum in the United States?

## Suggested Readings

- Levi, J. L., & Monnin-Browder, E. E. (2012). *Transgender family law: A guide to effective advocacy*. Bloomington, IN: Author House.
- Norwood, K. (2012). Transitioning meanings? Family members' communicative struggles surrounding transgender identity. *Journal of Family Communication*, 12(1), 75–92.
- Whitley, C. T. (2013). Trans-kin undoing and redoing gender: Negotiating relational identity among friends and family of transgender persons. *Sociological Perspectives*, 56, 597–621.

## **Immigration Detention**

Time Code: 06:06–10:41

**Central Quote:** “I was going crazy.” (07:17)

**Themes:** Detention Facilities, Transgender Protection, Solitary Confinement, Psychological Trauma

**Abstract:** The treatment and protection measures employed by the ICE detention centers are presented. Norma recounts her experience inside two different detention centers. The legal process is also highlighted.

### **Learning Objectives**

1. Articulate the protection measures employed in detention centers to protect transgender persons from maltreatment by other detainees.
2. Explore the psychological impacts of incarceration and solitary confinement.
3. Contrast the rights of immigration detainees with the rights of alleged criminals.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Do you agree or disagree with the treatment of transgender detainees in the detention facilities? Why or why not?
2. What other alternatives can you list that would keep transgender detainees reasonably safe?
3. How would you describe the problem when attempting to house a transgender detainee?
4. Do your alternative detainment suggestions address the problem as you have outlined it?

### **Suggested Readings**

Markshamer, J., & Tobin, H. J. (2014). *Standing with LGBT prisoners: An advocate's guide to ending abuse and combating imprisonment*. Washington, DC: National Center for Transgender Equality.

Reisner, S. L., Bailey, Z., & Sevelius, J. (2014). Racial/ethnic disparities in history of incarceration, experiences of victimization, and associated health indicators among transgender women in the US. *Women & Health, 54*, 750–767.

Stotzer, R. L. (2014). Law enforcement and criminal justice personnel interactions with transgender people in the United States: A literature review. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 19*(3), 263–277.



## True Self: Immigrant

Time Code: 10:42–14:50

**Central Quote:** "... I identify with them. They are like me." (12:31)

**Themes:** Family Supports, Immigration Reasons, Detention Alternatives

**Abstract:** Norma makes her case for remaining in the United States. She describes the community she has garnered and her intention to learn English. Detention alternatives are discussed as the credits roll on screen.

### Learning Objectives

1. Identify the reasons individuals may want to immigrate to the United States from another country.
2. List detention alternatives.

### Discussion Questions

1. Do you agree that Norma’s reasons for immigration are valid? Why or why not?
2. What do you see as the primary problems with the detention and deportation system that is currently being implemented?
3. What, in your opinion, should be the priorities of US Immigration and Customs Enforcement?
4. What options, other than detention, can you identify that would both fulfill the priorities of ICE and ensure the rights of all immigrants?

### Suggested Readings

Anderson, L. (2010). Punishing the innocent: How the classification of male-to-female transgender individuals in immigration detention constitutes illegal punishment under the Fifth Amendment. *Berkeley Journal of Gender, Law & Justice*, 25, 1–31.

Gruberg, S. (2013). *Dignity denied: LGBT immigrants in US immigration detention*. Washington, DC: Center for American Progress.

Tabak, S., & Levitan, R. (2014). LGBTI migrants in immigration detention: A global perspective. *Harvard Journal of Law & Gender*, 37, 1–44.