

Refugee Republic

Release Date: 2012

Genre: Interactive Documentary

Creators: Dirk Jan Visser, Jan Rothuizen, Martijn van Tol, with Bruno Felix

Length: varies with site visitors

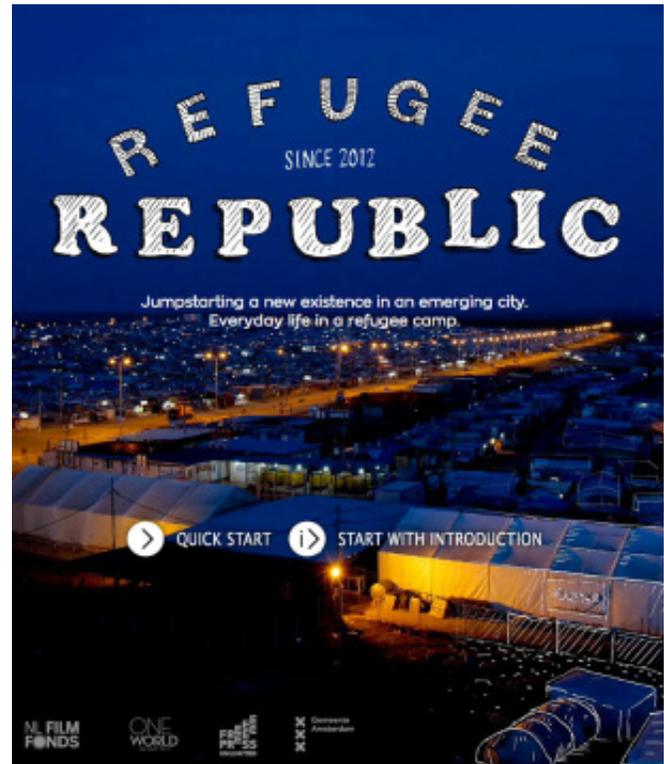
Rating: Not Rated

SYNOPSIS

Refugee Republic is an award-winning, Dutch-made, interactive documentary that allows viewers to explore everyday life in Camp Domiz, which is a Syrian refugee camp in northern Iraq near the Syrian border. Approximately 60,000 predominately Kurdish refugees are now living in this sprawling and chaotic camp, which was built to hold half that many; the camp has become a “makeshift town” where people struggle not only to survive, but also to find ways to thrive, even in small ways. *Refugee Republic* is now online, in English, with open access: <http://bit.ly/2iAu0IE>.

The interactive website encourages scrolling through hand-drawn maps, drawings, photographs, sounds of the camp, and several short videos which present both the difficulties of living in tents in a temporary space and the ways the refugees cope with these difficulties through their resources, skills, and creativity.

Viewers can get a sense of what life is like in this camp and meet various inhabitants as they go through their days, all waiting for some resolution to their status as they attempt to go on with their lives. Viewers can visit different parts of the camp, learn how refugees live their daily lives as well as set up their “homes,” and meet several of the individuals at Camp Domiz. The interactive documentary/website provides a type of “encounter” that Pope Francis promotes: getting to know others in their full humanity, not simply as one-dimensional characters one hears about in the news.



CATHOLIC SOCIAL THOUGHT THEMES IN THE FILM

- Respect for Life and Human Dignity
- Option for the Poor and Vulnerable
- Common Good
- Solidarity
- Participation in Community

OFFICIAL WEBSITE

<http://bit.ly/2iAu0IE>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What was your experience of moving through a refugee camp via *Refugee Republic*? How was it different from watching a regular documentary? How did it help you get a fuller picture of life in a refugee camp?
- Reflect on what a day in your life would be like if you lived in this camp. How would you react:
 - To the physical surroundings?
 - To the difficulties of getting your family's needs met?
 - To the opportunities you might find in the camp?
 - To the challenge of keeping hope for a better future alive?
- What was the most surprising thing you learned about life in a refugee camp from visiting *Refugee Republic*? What was the most interesting thing you learned about refugees lives that you could share with others?
- Pope Francis, in his *2018 World Day of Peace Message*, urges us to look at refugees with what he calls the "contemplative gaze," discerning the migrant situation from an inner perspective, taking a view of the current situation through the lenses of compassion and hope, seeing from a compassionate and loving orientation. How does this interactive documentary help us to view the world with a "contemplative gaze"?
- In the Pope's *2018 World Day of Peace Message*, he also asks us to be open to the gifts that migrants, immigrants, and refugees have that can create to communities if they are welcomed. Think about the people you have met in *Refugee Republic*. Are they presented only as victims or as individuals who have different gifts that they can contribute to their communities? What are some of the skills and talents you have seen in refugees in this documentary? What could they contribute to your community?
- How does this interactive documentary relate to Catholic social teaching values like Option for the Poor and Vulnerable, the Common Good, Participation in Community, and Respect for Life and the Dignity of the Human Person? How does the concept of Solidarity relate to the camp itself and also to your experience of exploring the camp and meeting some of the people in it?

FAITH IN ACTION

- Get involved with the Share the Journey campaign and walk with migrants and refugees in prayer and support: www.sharejourney.org.
- Find out who is sponsoring refugee resettlement efforts in your area and explore ways you can support them.

PRAYER

Christ, your own family fled to Egypt to escape Herod's violence, so we ask you to look down with compassion and mercy on the plight of today's refugee families. We pray that their dignity and value be recognized, and that they may be welcomed as holy families, your children, and our sisters and brothers. In your name, we pray. Amen.