



Seeking Refuge

Director: Karen Cho, Canada, 2008, 70 minutes

Every year, some 30,000 people come to Canada to apply for refugee status. About 40-45% of those are eventually accepted. *Seeking Refuge* takes us into the lives of five claimants and their support networks.

Though Esly and her common-law husband managed to evade violent gangs in Honduras, they were stopped at the US-Canadian border. Since they could not prove they had been living together for more than a year, he was deported and eventually killed by the men who were threatening them in Honduras. Najia is a human rights activist from Kabul whose parents begged her to flee after two of her colleagues were assassinated. When the death threats spilled over to her father, she came to Canada. Leyla escaped serial rape and other violence at the hands of soldiers in the Democratic Republic of Congo but cannot produce the exact documents demanded by refugee board members. Fouad is a Palestinian from Lebanon who is running through his limited legal options after his claim is rejected, due in part to bad luck as his brother's nearly identical claim had been accepted by a different board member. On the other end of the process is Kader, a blind man from Algeria who has been living under asylum at his Montreal church for over three years.

Together their stories provide a provocative look into this lengthy, frustratingly bureaucratic process, fraught with political landmines. For the government it has become, to an extent, a numbers game.

For the people who come to Canada seeking refugee status, it is usually a matter of life and death.

DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Native to Montreal, Karen Cho is an emerging filmmaker who has carved out a name for herself directing both documentary and fiction films. Karen's films often recount un-told histories and explore themes of immigration, activism, self-identity and social justice. Her approach to filmmaking is shaped by personal experience, pop-culture and her background in a richly multi-ethnic family. Karen is interested in using film as a tool for social debate. A graduate from Concordia University in 2001, she has already received several awards for her work.

FILMMAKER IN ATTENDANCE

COMMUNITY PARTNER

