### Appendix L

**Humans of New York (HONY)**

**Refugee Profiles**

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<tr>
<th>Student Name: _________________________</th>
<th>Date: _____________</th>
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For each image and caption, answer the following three questions in complete sentences and as specifically as possible:

1. What are my first impressions about this person/family?
2. What do I know about this person/family?
3. What do I wonder about this situation?
4. How does this situation make me feel?

| A. | “I had to leave the home that I’d spent thirty years building. One day I just had to close the doors, turn the key, and leave everything behind. I’m seventy-two. No one wants to leave home at my age. But I left because I have six sons, and I knew one day the soldiers would come for them. My sons weren’t political. They wanted nothing to do with killing, but that didn’t matter. Good people and bad people were all being treated the same way. I watched soldiers take away the neighbors’ boys with my own eyes. They were good boys. I’d known them their whole lives. But they were led away like sheep. They didn’t even speak up because if they opened their mouths they’d be shot. I knew it was only a matter of time before they came to our house. We left everything behind, but now my family is safe. So I am happy.
I was an only child, but I had eleven children. I built a whole family. Every Friday I’d cook for them at my house. I’d spend the whole day in my kitchen, and all...” |

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the grandchildren would come over, and the house would be filled with noise. The word ‘family’ is a painful word for me now. The war scattered my children all over the world. They are in Syria, Lebanon, Germany, and Jordan. I love all my children, but this one here is my soul. He’s always taken care of me. He’s even raised his children to take care of me. His daughters are always asking if I need anything—just like their father. Tomorrow he’s leaving for a place called Memphis, Tennessee. I don’t know what I will do without him. I hope they will let me come to Memphis too. Can you tell us anything about Memphis? Are there nice people there? I heard that it is a city of music. I love music.”

(Amman, Jordan)

B.

“Sometimes I sit by myself and I blame myself for leaving Syria. I used to own my own business. Now I’m working as an employee in a dairy shop. I have nothing here. When I feel nostalgic about Syria, I remember the smell of jasmine in my back garden. I remember my four best friends. We were always laughing and joking together. On Friday mornings during the summer, we’d wake up early to drive to the lake and swim. In the winter we’d play cards and smoke the water pipe. But I have to remind myself that Syria isn’t there anymore. Our old town doesn’t even have any food. A bag of salt costs $50 now. And all my friends are gone. One of them is in Egypt, one is in Turkey, one is in Lebanon, and the other was killed by a sniper.

Life had been going so well for me before the war came. I’m a driver, and I’d just saved enough money to buy a
new car. I was starting a family. My father had given us a house and we’d bought all new furniture. But one day a mortar destroyed a wall of our house. It was too dangerous to stay. I left because of the children. The years we’ve spent as refugees have been very tough, but we’ve just learned that we’re going to Detroit, Michigan. I have a brother-in-law who says it’s very nice there. He says he is allowed to work legally and officially. So hopefully I can start driving again. He says there is heating in the houses and the water is warm when you shower. And he says that America cares about children. He tells me that there is a bus that picks them up and takes them to school. They are too young now, but one day I will tell them about Syria. They are already asking questions. The oldest one overhears us talking on the phone to our family back in Syria. She asks us: ‘If our aunt is hungry, why can’t she just buy bread?’”

(Amman, Jordan)
“I was the only doctor in the area, so when ISIS captured our town, I knew that they would ask me to work for them. We should have left right away. One night five men came to our house. They were wearing masks and they refused to take off their shoes. Their Arabic was not with a Syrian accent. They claimed to be searching for weapons and went from room to room. They knew about me already, because they kept calling me ‘Doctor.’ When they finished searching the house, they arrested my husband. It was a night in January, so it was too cold for them to start their car. The engine kept turning over and over. I thought that maybe a miracle would keep them from taking him. But then I heard the engine start and they drove away. I paced in the street all night. At one point I heard a gunshot in the distance, and I thought for sure they had killed him. I thought it was all my fault. We should have left right away.”

“ISIS needs educated people to support them. None of them finished school. They cannot manage the cities they capture because they have no skills. When they took me to prison, at first they were very aggressive. They kept putting a gun to my head and taking it away. But after a few minutes of this, one of the men began speaking to me in a very nice way. He said: ‘You are an Islamic man. Please, be a good Muslim and help us. We want your wife to open a hospital for us. And we want you to manage it.’ I agreed to everything they asked. I told them I would help. Then the moment they let me go home, we packed our bags and left.”
“We’ve been waiting for two years now. We’ve been through all our interviews. Last week this letter came and said that we’ve been ‘deferred.’ I’m not even sure what that means. We were very truthful about everything. We have nothing left in Syria. I want to continue working as a doctor in America. Here my hands are tied. Refugees are not allowed to work. I don’t have papers. I can’t communicate with anyone. I worked my entire life to become a doctor. I did nothing but study for six years. I didn’t even have a hobby. Now I’m doing nothing. I’m losing hope. I’ve started to wonder if it would have been better for us to go the illegal way across the sea.”

The whole purpose of my trip to Turkey and Jordan was to interview refugees who had been approved for American resettlement. So when this couple showed me the letter saying they’d been ‘deferred,’ I was a bit confused. But I continued the interview anyway. As I learned the rest of the couple’s story, I noticed my UNHCR facilitator typing on her phone. After a few minutes, she came over to me and showed me the screen. It was a text message from the main office. It said: ‘They’ve been approved. Would you care to tell them?’ So it was my great honor to inform this couple that they were going to America. This portrait was taken thirty seconds after they learned the news.

(Gaziantep, Turkey)
“I had a very brilliant teacher in elementary school. She was my role model. I don’t remember deciding to be a teacher so much as I remember deciding that I wanted to be just like her. My whole life became about studying. I’d learn every lesson early so that I could participate in class. When my siblings were playing games around the house, I’d plug my ears and work on my homework. Education was my passion. It was all I thought about. I didn’t even want to get married. I finished at the top of my class in both high school and university. I got a scholarship to pursue my Masters at a German university. Then I met a man who was very supportive of me going to school, so I decided to marry. But four months later he was killed in a car accident. And I was pregnant.

I knew immediately after my husband’s death that I would have to let go of my dreams. I fell into a deep depression. I was going to be a single mother so I’d have to focus everything on raising my child. I thought that I would never be able to do anything in my life again. I skipped the orientation for the German university. I missed my German language lessons. Everything seemed to be slipping away. I gave birth to my daughter and moved in with my parents. When I saw my daughter, I realized that I needed to get my life back on track. She’d already lost her father. I didn’t want her to lose her mother too. So I enrolled at the University of Damascus and continued with my studies. I graduated once again at the top of my class. I began to work as a
professor while I applied for my PhD. My daughter was getting bigger. Everything seemed to be getting back on track. Then the war came. Because I’m a refugee, my life is on pause. My studies have stopped. I’m not working. I don’t have a career. Because I’m Syrian, I’m not allowed to participate in society. It’s been years of doing nothing. I used to be a cheerful person. I was always invited to parties. Now I like to be alone. I’ve become more nervous and aggressive. I yell over silly things. I just want to start my life again. I learned last Thursday that I’m going to a state called North Carolina. I’m very nervous. I know nothing about it. More than anything, I want to finish my education. But mostly I hope that whatever is waiting for me there is better than what I’ve gone through. Doesn’t she look like an American? The lady who did our interview said that she looks like an American. She’s very excited. She’s young, so I know she’ll be able to learn English very easily. She’s a very smart girl. She’s already decided exactly what her room will look like in North Carolina. She won’t stop talking about it. She says that she’s going to do a lot of swimming and learn how to use the computer. Someone at her school told her that kids in America can do whatever they want and never get yelled at. So whenever I try to punish her, she tells me: ‘That won’t be allowed in America.’”

(Amman, Jordan)
“Every month we had to go to Baghdad to get my son’s eyes treated. When we went for his last appointment, the hospital was very crowded so we decided to go back to the hotel and wait. We walked out into the street and waited for a taxi. A car pulled up and stopped. We thought it was the police. Two men with guns jumped out and asked for our ID cards, then they pushed us into the car. After a few hundred meters, my wife and I were tossed into the street. But they kept my son. After they took our son, my wife was so weak that she couldn’t get out of bed. For days I walked around Baghdad like a crazy man. I could not sleep. I walked from early in the morning to late at night. I thought maybe I’d recognize the car if I saw it again. Every day I picked a new neighborhood. I kept my phone in my hand hoping that someone would call. Every few seconds I’d check the screen. Soon I lost hope. I was sure that I’d lost my son. Then after one week an envelope came to the house with a phone number inside. I called the number and a man told me that he had my son. He said he wanted a large amount of money. He said if I called the police, my son would die. It took me twenty days to get the money together. I sold the house. I borrowed money from relatives. Days would pass between phone calls. I kept begging for more time. They kept changing SIM cards so I couldn’t call back. When I finally got the money, I told them I was ready to meet, but I demanded to speak to my son. I told them: ‘Please, I need to hear his voice. I need to hear his voice.’ Then suddenly I heard my son’s voice on the phone. He sounded very scared. He said: ‘Dad?’ Then the phone was disconnected. ‘They told me to meet them at a certain address with the
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<th>money. It was an old abandoned house. They told me to wait for a silver car to come, and to throw the money inside. After a few minutes a car came. I threw the money inside and it drove off. Soon another car pulled up, the door opened, and my son was thrown out. I didn’t believe it was my son. It was like I was born again. I picked him up and I started running and I didn’t stop until I reached a place full of people. Both of us cried as I ran.” (Hegyeshalom, Hungary)</th>
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<td>F.</td>
<td>“The army searched our house six times. The first two times they knocked on the door. The next four times they kicked in the door in the middle of the night. They hit my wife. They shocked me with an electric baton. And my children had to witness all of this. The psychology of my children changed before my eyes. I stopped getting hugs and kisses. They used to watch cartoons and play normal games. Now they only played games related to war. They’d chase each other around the house, shouting: ‘I’m going to kill you!’ I tried buying them an educational kit with cardboard squares and triangles and circles. When I left the room, they broke the shapes and turned them into guns.” (Hegyeshalom, Hungary)</td>
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“I saw the army burn my neighbor’s house. They set it on fire and took photographs while it burned. The next day I saw the same house on TV, except the headline claimed that it had been destroyed by ‘terrorists.’ The army began to arrest 300 people every day. They were arresting everyone. They came for me during Ramadan. I was eating with my entire family when suddenly we heard the sound of a car outside. Soldiers kicked down the door and they tied my hands behind my back. My children were screaming. The soldiers said: ‘We know you are working with the opposition! You are a terrorist!’ I told them: ‘Please. We are poor people. We have done nothing. We are trying to live.’ I never thought I’d see my family again. They brought me to the prison and blindfolded me. They made me kneel on the floor. They asked me questions about the opposition, but I knew nothing. When they asked me a question, I only had two seconds to answer before I was kicked. They beat me for hours while they questioned me. I begged them to stop. I kept promising that I would tell them if I heard anything. Then they attached cables to my body. They would run electricity through me for 25 seconds, then they would stop, and they would ask another question. When I said: ‘I don’t know,’ the electricity would start again. They kept me for three days. When they finally let me go, I couldn’t stand. I went home and hugged my family but I had to go straight to work. Because there was no food in the house and no one had eaten for days.” (Lesvos, Greece)
H. I worked as a waiter in Saudi Arabia for seven years to save money so that I could build a house in Syria. It only had two rooms and a bathroom, but for me it was paradise. We lived there for about twenty years. We did not want to leave. We have young children and no money to travel. But it became impossible to live. Our house was situated between the army and the opposition. Every day the army knocked on our door, and said: ‘Help us or we will kill you.’ They came to the restaurant where I worked and accused us of feeding the enemy. We hid in the cellar while they beat the manager. If the opposition managed to capture our village, we would also be killed. They would accuse us of collaborating with the army. We had no options. Minding our own business was not a choice. We left with nothing but our clothes.” (Lesvos, Greece)