Today’s immigrants on both continents present a very different profile. The Latino population in the United States has reached nearly 38 million in 2017 and has been the principal driver of U.S. demographic growth, accounting for half of U.S. population growth since 2000. In Europe, a recent wave of immigrants from the Middle East and North Africa has created a regional political crisis affecting dozens of countries.

Europe’s refugee crisis peaked in 2015, when more than one million refugees applied for asylum in Europe - 363,000 of them Syrian. Most of them ended up in Germany, which in August 2015 said that all Syrians were welcome to stay. More than 5.8 million Syrian refugees were displaced in 2016.

The current political climate in the United States, immigration is at the forefront of many conversations—whether through political commentary at the national level, discourse in the media, discussions in social media, or round dinner tables across the country.

Most Americans today can trace the journey of a refugee family to a country at some point. But despite our heritage as a nation of immigrants, Americans have often been wary of welcoming newcomers. Debates rage about expanding the U.S.-Mexico border wall. DACA Dreamers face an uncertain future; many communities live in fear of ICE raids, while thousands of children have been held in detention centers separated from their families.

According to UNHCR, there are now more people displaced by conflict or persecution than any other time on record. 1.8 million refugees have arrived in Europe since 2014, more than 1 million of them in 2015 alone.

This wave of migration is related to the civil war in Syria that began in 2011. Since then, more than half of all Syrian refugees, a large majority, have headed to Europe and the U.S. More than 320,000 immigrants from Syria, accounting for approximately 10% of all immigrants received in 2016, have resettled in the United States.

The vast majority of immigrant families and unaccompanied minors apprehended on the U.S.-Mexico border come from Mexico, or the Northern Triangle region (El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras), making the best of each day, meeting new friends and living in a constant state of fear. With their sights set on the U.S. mother and daughter cover the length of Mexico, facing immigration officials and taking selfies along the way—only to arrive in Tijuana where the U.S. border suddenly becomes a dark reality.

Toward the North

September 16 at 9:00 PM

At a tiny refugee shelter in Tapachula, Mexico we meet Nelly and her daughter Jiselle, who like millions of others, are fleeing extreme gang violence in Central America. With unprecedented intimacy, we enter their world and witness the daily battles of asylum seekers on the run: making the best of each day, meeting new friends and living in a constant state of fear. With their sights set on the U.S. mother and daughter cover the length of Mexico, facing immigration officials and taking selfies along the way—only to arrive in Tijuana where the U.S. border suddenly becomes a dark reality.

Los Comandos

September 16 at 9:00 PM

Violence has overtaken El Salvador. The emergency medical unit Los Comandos de Salvamento is standing up to the gangs’ reign of terror. Sixteen-year-old Mimi is a dedicated Comandos do caucho in the cross hairs. When her fellow Comandos, 14-year-old Yuri, is gunned down while serving, she faces pressure to flee El Salvador and head north.

The Changing Face of Immigration

Rampant by the numbers, the current migration trends rival the flood of European immigrants who arrived in the United States in the early 20th century. More than two million immigrants entered the U.S. in the 1910s—49,000 Hispanic, 73,000 Chinese, 74,000 Russian, and 41,000 Canadian. The vast majority of immigrants from Canada were middle-class professionals and students.

The United States apprehended nearly 49,000 family members at the U.S. Mexico border between January and June of this year, according to a Pew Research Center analysis of U.S. Customs and Border Protection data. A total of 23,542 children separated from families between May 5 and June 9, 2018, according to Customs and Border Protection.

The U.S. has historically led the world in refugee resettlement. Since 1975, the U.S. has resettled more than 3 million refugees, more than double the 50,420 asylum applications Canada received in 2017, which were more than double the 23,000 received in 2016.

Key Facts About U.S. Immigration Policies and Proposed Changes

• Family-based immigration—referred to by some as “humanitarian immigration” —is the most common way immigrants gain legal status. The U.S. cap on family-based immigrants has been set at 27% of total family visas.

• Western Europeans are divided over the impact of immigration on their nation’s job market, economy, and tax burden, particularly along ideological lines. For example, a third or more in each country surveyed say immigrants increase the risk of terrorism in their nation, with Germans and Italians the most likely to express this view.

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• A large majority [of the American public (74%) favors granting permanent legal status to immigrants brought to the U.S. illegally when they were children.

• 60% of the American public oppose the proposal to “substantially expand the wall along the U.S. border with Mexico.

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• More than 320,000 immigrants from 10 nations have permission to live and work in the U.S. under Temporary Protected Status (TPS), because wars, disasters or other disasters in their home countries could make it dangerous for them to return. Many are expected to lose their benefits in 2018 and 2019.

• Border apprehensions of migrant families and unaccompanied minors have risen substantially in the Northern and Southern border regions of the U.S.

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LINKS TO OTHER MEDIA:

From the NY TIMES U.S. Must Keep DACA and Accept New Applications, Federal Rules Suggest
• In April 2018, a federal judge ruled that DACA protections must stay in place and that the government must resume accepting new applications.

From USA TODAY - Separating the facts from fiction
• From the NY TO US - The Migrant Crisis: No End in Sight
• The UN Refugee Agency - Searching for Home

From NBC News: From Arab Spra to Europe - a trip through the lens of the Syrian conflict and the U.S. response

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TV PROGRAMMING: “HUMANITY ON THE MOVE” On World Channel: World Channel’s Doc User series presents three films on human migration that together are known as “Humanity on the Move” from Show of Force productions.

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SKY AND GROUND

September 9 at 8:00 PM

Starting out on foot from Alappey, Syria, we followed the Nabi family for 3 months as they made their way through and the Idomeni refugee camp near Thessaloniki, Greece into the Balkans and through Hungary, Austria and eventually Berlin. Along the way they suffer countless setbacks and heartache—all captured by our cameras with startling intimacy.