To assist the co-facilitators, the Advising and Summer Reading Committee compiled a list of discussion questions. It is recommended that groups first take time to discuss the questions in Section 1 that students were asked to print out and respond to as they were reading the book over the summer. In addition, the students were asked to review the “Questions and Topics for Discussion” listed at the end of Outcasts United. Next, it is recommended that groups choose from the additional discussion questions in Section 2. However, please feel free to develop additional questions with your fellow co-facilitators.

SECTION 1: General questions to guide reading

1. For the refugees, what are the differences between the reality of living in America and the dream of living in America?

2. As illustrated in the book, cultural experiences help shape personal identity. Explain how cultural experiences have contributed to your own identity. It may help to ponder things like your specific family culture, vacations, traditions, cultural events, etc.

3. Beyond being simply a sport, soccer served as a lightning rod for the contention between veteran Clarkston residents and the refugees. For each side, what issues did soccer represent?

4. How do the refugees typically view America? What lessons about life in America do the refugee families learn? What sacrifices are necessary for their simple survival?

5. Luma required the team to follow a specific list of rules. How does one go about establishing and enforcing rules intended to serve the common good without becoming tyrannical?

6. What determines the legitimacy or illegitimacy of power? In terms of power, what differentiates Luma from the police force?

SECTION 2: Specific questions to guide group discussions

1. Define the term “super-diversity” (pg. 184), and review the three stages of Vetrove’s theory. What relationship, if any, do you think it may have on your transitioning to IWU?

2. Put yourself in the place of someone who is completely new in an unfamiliar town and has been a victim in a crime. How would you respond? Why?

3. The soccer team is comprised of refugee youths from a variety of geographic and cultural backgrounds. Have you observed someone judging another person according to external characteristics or appearance? What was your reaction? Did you intervene?

4. Conflicts existed among Fugee players and also between Luma and particular players. What has been your experience when presented with the challenge of participating in a particular team or group?

5. Do you think there was a reason that American players were not invited to play on the Fugees team? Would an American player change the cohesion of the team? If so, why and how?

6. What makes Luma work so hard to create, maintain, and manage a soccer team for the refugees? What is your own experience with volunteer service? What motivates people to volunteer?
7. In St. John’s narrative, why is the encounter between Chime and the Clarkston police officer given a lot of attention? Explain how this encounter illustrates the tensions (political, social and ethnic) in Clarkston.

8. Luna’s team manager, Tracy Ediger, earned a degree in medicine but then decided not to make it her career. What compelled her to make that decision? What did she do instead and why? What motivates your own educational and career decisions? Do you anticipate any changes?

9. The refugees’ adaptation included learning a new language in a new place in a completely new culture. Identify some of the cultural differences for the African mothers and their children. What effect did language have on the relationships between the mothers and their children?

10. The relationship between Luma and the YMCA was often characterized by conflict, and when she chose to prematurely end the Under15s seasons, the YMCA administrators questioned her decision. The administrators thought she should just eliminate the problem players from the team and finish the season. What was Luma’s response? In your opinion, did she make the best decision? Why or why not?

11. Gang affiliation threatened the Under13s and Under15s. Compare and contrast the benefits and drawbacks of gang membership with Fugee team membership.

12. St. John uses the term “liminality” to describe the refugee experience—and teenage refugees in particular. How do you define the term? In what way could this term describe your experience as a freshman?

13. St. John’s narrative includes a description of companies who regularly hire and recruit illegal immigrant and refugee employees. What is your perspective on these practices? Identify positive and negative aspects of the companies’ actions.

14. When Luma took some of the players into the suburbs for Halloween, the players saw a different version of an American way of life. How does that version differ from their own experience in Clarkston? How do you think their day-to-day lives differ from those of teenagers living in suburban neighborhoods?

15. An overarching narrative in American culture is the belief that this is a land of opportunity in which you can “pull yourself up by your own bootstraps” and gain success through hard work and perseverance. How does the experience of refugees who are single mothers with responsibility for young children (like Beatrice) challenge that narrative? Does the narrative assume a patriarchal worldview?

16. After reading this book, what insights have you gained regarding ethnic-based conflicts in other parts of the world?

17. Have your beliefs about refugees been changed in any way? If so, how? Have your beliefs about the way refugees are treated in America changed? If so, how?