

Migrant Justice

Light in the Absurdity

by Lia Smith

“For God did not give us a spirit of fear, but of power, of love, and of a sound mind.” 2 Tim 1:7

Easy answers and quick decisions are so often employed when it comes to immigration. The rhetoric that we often hear and accept (whether passively or actively) includes statements such as “immigrants would rather be in the US than their country”, “immigrants are a drain on our social services”, “terrorists are coming in through our southern border”, and “NAFTA was a positive economic move.” Our list continues to grow as the debate continues. Why do we so easily accept statements such as these for truths? Why do we allow these to dictate our opinions, lifestyle, hospitality, action, and inaction? We have betrayed a gift of our culture. Friends, our values of investigation, truth, and hard work have given way to blind acceptance, false truths, and negligence.



Photo by Lia Smith taken in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. Hermanas con la Luz/Sisters with the Light.

We also slip into simplified conclusions when we encounter “the poor” or “disenfranchised.” I think of Cristina, a woman who we met in Juárez. Cristina has dedicated her life to improving the education and livelihoods of the children in her neighborhood. She sees potential in her children and commits herself to bringing them out of addiction, poverty, and despair. She runs a library and afterschool program with nothing but a little support from her family and a local priest. Cristina often sacrifices time with her own family. Yet, Cristina remains faithful to the neighborhood children that she cares for. Cristina often makes her way into schools, advocating for education amidst corruption. She brings her advocacy for

education into the homes of her children as well. In their homes, she consistently and passionately defends not only learning but any other need of the child at hand. After hearing stories such as hers, how often has our response made light of systems of oppression and focused solely on the hope that individuals carry? How often have we noted that, “Yes, they live in poverty, but what hope they have!” While this may be a valid observation, we tend to use this as a justification for the structures and politics that deny opportunity, smother truth, and steal dignity. This justification not only provides false comfort to the privileged, but, more importantly, robs hope of its significance.

Since leaving El Paso, I have sought what it means to be hopeful. I left the border wondering how one could possibly maintain the light of hope against the oppressive powers that keep the migrant, the refugee, the immigrant, the neighbor as an outsider. In my searching, a close friend suggested that there are two opposites to hope. One, despair. The other, idealism. He suggested that in both cases, these states of being are blind to reality and lack forward motion. Hope, however, allows one to accept one’s surroundings and then create a vision for an unseen reality. Thus, hope is creative, constructive, and most importantly, grounded in reality. Vaclav Havel, the Czech writer and philosopher, underscores this thought by stating that, “perhaps one could never find sense in life without first experiencing its absurdity.”

Hope, a light that burns in the absurdity, does not cast its light without the oil to maintain the flame. It is a cheap and simplified conclusion to assume that it is the vision, the hope, alone that is our sole sustainer. No, in order to engage our broken world and continue to put one foot in front of the other, we must be sustained in faith.

Although we may have hope, we have no guarantee that we will see this unseen reality will ever be remotely realized. No matter how thoroughly we analyze the situation at hand or how much logic we use, there is no guarantee. No matter how ‘out-of-the-box’ or how revolutionary our vision, there is no guarantee. No matter how hard we fight or how fast we run, there is no guarantee. How often have we fought for our vision only to become burned out, cynical, and doubtful?

It is faith in a God that is bigger than the absurdity around us that keeps our feet moving forward. It is faith that we are not alone, faith that God loves, faith that God works in ways unseen. Without the daily struggle to step out in faith, we omit this essential companion to hope. Without faithful steps towards the unseen reality, our hope dissipates into puffs of idealism, self-righteousness, well-wishes, sadness, or despair. It is faith that maintains our unseen vision, that corrects us when we stray, that breathes redemption into the everyday. For hope, as a state of being, is not what propels us forward. Friends, steadfast faith maintains the gift of hope-filled vision.

On the last night in El Paso, wrought with desperation for human dignity and anger at the reality of immigration, I told our group that I was leaving behind my hope. I now see that what

I left behind in El Paso is false hope. I left behind easy answers and simplified conclusions.

My hope is for a world of human dignity and respect for our neighbors, our friends, and our family. Faithfulness to God means fighting daily for the realization of the Imago Dei in each and every human being, regardless of immigration status, which border has been drawn, or what the rhetoric of fear has perpetuated. Friends, let us carry the light of hope together. Let us remember the importance of the oil which allows our light to burn. We step out in faith as a community. ■

Why everyone should care about the Temporary Foreign Worker Program

by Harsha Walia

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With recent media scandals about the abuse of temporary foreign workers and the subsequent outrage about migrant workers stealing Canadians' jobs, Minister Jason Kenney has announced a number of changes to the Temporary Foreign Workers Program on June 20, 2014.

But these reforms are band-aid measures that maintain the legal exploitation of migrant workers. Coupled with increased Canadian Border Services Agency funding, migrant workers can now be removed more quickly – within two years. Such reforms cater to reactionary sentiments to privilege Canadians and 'get rid of migrant workers' without addressing the structural abuse inherent to the program. The fanfare about stricter penalties for employers is a PR stunt since employer sanctions will be based on workers' complaints to the government (totally unlikely!) Migrant workers will continue to be indentured to a single employer, won't have guaranteed access to social services or labour protections, and will not be granted permanent residency upon arrival.

Canada currently accepts more migrants under temporary permits than those who can immigrate permanently. Barriers to permanent residency for refugees, skilled workers and family members are increasing, while citizenship for migrants is becoming harder to get and easier to lose.

To sponsor one's parents or grandparents, stringent income requirements have to be met. This makes family reunification a privilege for the wealthy and bars low-income migrants, mostly racialized women, from being with their families. Moreover, spouses must now arrive on a 2-year conditional probationary visa before gaining full permanent status. This increases the vulnerability of immigrant women in abusive relationships. Under the Harper regime, over 80,000 migrants have been arbitrarily detained without charge. The Refugee Exclusion Act creates a two-tier system that discriminates based on nationality and further entrenches incarceration. The number of refugee claims has decreased by 50% and the number of accepted refugees has

dropped by 25%. Similarly, the number of skilled worker visas has decreased by 20%. And now the Canadian government can deport thousands of permanent residents for minor offences including traffic offenses, while the new Stealing Citizenship Act makes it possible to even revoke citizenship.

The decrease in permanent immigration and simultaneous explosion of the number of migrant workers is not, as some might contend, a reflection of a 'broken' immigration system. The temporary foreign worker program is a system of managed migration perfected to ensure the steady supply of cheap labour within neoliberalism while further entrenching racialized citizenship. What happens to migrant workers should matter to all of us because dispossession, labour flexibility, and hierarchical social relations are central to how capitalism and colonialism marginalize various communities.

A Labour and Immigration Model of Permanent Temporariness

***"It's modern day slavery. They dispose of the workers, just like they did to me."* – Noé Arteaga, migrant worker**

Capitalism's drive to maximize profit requires a constant search for cheap labor and effective mechanisms to control workers. "It's not that global business does not want immigrant labor to the West," David McNally observes in *Another World Is Possible: Globalization and anti-capitalism*. "It simply wants this labour on its own terms: frightened, oppressed, vulnerable."

The denial of permanent residency is precisely what makes migrant labour precarious: it ensures legal control by bosses, which embeds labour exploitability. Migrant workers are extremely vulnerable to employer abuse – including being held captive – since any assertion of their rights can lead to deportation. In addition, as non-citizens, they fall outside the state's regime of rights: they can be paid less than minimum wage, denied labour rights, prevented from accessing social services despite paying into them, and deported when considered dispensable. These workers therefore represent the ideal workforce: commodified and exploitable; flexible and expendable.

The devaluation of migrant labour is reinforced by the devaluation of the racialized bodies performing that labour. Though their labour has secured billions of dollars in profit for industry and is a major subsidy to the economy, the naming of migrant workers as 'foreign' or 'temporary' signals their non-belonging. Such terminology has little to do with how long these workers have lived and worked and built community in Canada; rather, it signals their position as permanent outsiders – even to the so-called national working class who is often complicit in calling for their expulsion.

Migrant workers don't suppress wages; employers and the state do. Yet rhetoric such as 'Canadians for Canadians jobs' alienates migrant workers and inhibits discussions about organizing to lift up the wage floor for all workers. Racism operates as a convenient buy-in for many citizen workers who pledge loyalty to nationalist protectionism rather than transnational solidarity. It also, not coincidentally, circumvents reflection on the causes

of displacement and unemployment in the global South that compels the migration of workers. Finally, Canadian complicity in local and global resource extraction from Indigenous lands and exploitation of racialized labour is what even makes possible the material conditions of the Canadian welfare state that dominant elements of the working class are clamouring to defend.

With growing anti-immigrant sentiment, fear-mongering about race-based demographic changes, and panics about job losses, migrant workers become the perfect pretext for maintaining a pool of cheap disposable labour without disturbing the centrality of whiteness in colonial Canada.

Disposability Within Colonialism & Capitalism

Though the labour and racial apartheid that marks the Temporary Foreign Worker Program is unique, the disposability that underscores the program is central to capitalism. Those who do not participate by selling their labour as a commodity – by will or coercion – or are no longer needed are expendable. Indigenous communities, homeless people, precarious workers, single mothers, seniors, and people with disabilities are all systematically targeted as disposable within capitalism.

Capitalist accumulation explicitly requires dispossession of communities from the lands on which they subsist. In settler-colonial Canada, colonialism and capitalism have been mutually reinforcing. The myth of terra nullius, for example, operates in two ways. First, Indigenous territories are alleged to be barren — what capitalists prefer referring to today as ‘dead capital’— because collective subsistence economies are deemed ‘unproductive’. Second, Indigenous people are themselves constructed as unproductive, and hence disposable, for refusing to be disciplined into the waged labour-force. The colonial state’s genocidal attempts to expropriate Indigenous lands and assimilate Indigenous nations are linked to capitalism’s attempt to drive out Indigenous modes of cooperative production and stewardship that are a direct threat to its expansion.

Women’s reproductive and domestic labour is also grossly devalued and invisibilized within capitalism. Single mothers become marginalized as ‘unemployed’ and ‘uncontributing’ when they are in fact, as scholar Silvia Frederici observes, strengthening a key source of capitalist accumulation by reproducing the very labour power on which it depends. Ableism similarly dictates the norms of productivity and functionality under capitalism. Since capitalism has linked human worth to an individual’s ability to produce and have their labor extracted for profit, people with disabilities and seniors are cast as ‘burdensome’ and ‘worthless’.

Because capitalism defines what can and is valued as labour, it ties human worth to wage-labour productivity. While fighting to improve the conditions of low-wage workers, we have to firmly reject coercive wage-labour within capitalism as our sole and primary humanizing logic. An ethics of transformation cannot be founded on the very basis of our exploitation.

Migrant workers are more than pawns in discussions about the economy and labour shortages. Similarly, low-income women, Indigenous communities, those in informal street economies, differently abled and aging folks, and those providing

domestic or care labour are also all forcibly disciplined, devalued and stigmatized. Human dignity and self-determination are inherent, not dependent on how much or how well we are labouring to serve the colonial Canadian state or the capitalist economy. When we recognize that we are all similarly impacted – though not uniformly – by the structural violences of the system, we can strengthen our solidarities to dismantle them and, instead, nurture alternate socio-economic relations that are land and place-based, kinship-oriented, premised on need not profit, and that value self-management rather than alienation from one’s production. ■

Biblical References Regarding Refugees, Immigrants, Exiles

from Rev. Aundreia Alexander, National Coordinator, Office of Refugee Resettlement and Immigration Services, American Baptist Home Mission Societies

Biblical Immigrants/Refugees

Abraham – immigrant traveling from Ur to Haran to Egypt then to Canaan

Joseph – forced migration, sold into slavery (slavery, human trafficking)

Moses/Israelites – left Egypt as refugees fleeing persecution

Ruth – reunification, immigration to reconcile family

Daniel – exile

Jesus and family – refugees fleeing Herod’s death threat

Acts – after Stephen is martyred, many Christians fled, seeking refuge in other countries

The Biblical Mandate on Relating to the Sojourner

Love as yourself – Lev. 19:33-34

Same just laws should apply, treat fairly in courts, prejudice not tolerated – Exodus 12:49

Provide for basic needs as you would the widow and orphan – Deut. 10:18, Psalm 146:9

Do not oppress the sojourner, the widow, or the orphan – Ezek. 22:7, Zech. 7:8-10

When you harvest crops leave some for the widow, orphan, and foreigner – Deut. 24:19-21

The migrant/immigrant/refugee is included as a beneficiary of the triennial tithe of the harvest for a feast – Deut 14:28-29

God’s wrath against those who abuse the sojourner – Mal. 3:5, Deut. 24:14-15

The stranger among us may be an angel – Heb. 13:2

Refugees/immigrants are neighbors – Luke 10: 25-37, Matthew 22:35-40



Faith-Based Principles for Immigration Reform

from No More Deaths

No More Deaths is a humanitarian organization based in southern Arizona that works to end death and suffering in the Mexico-US borderlands through civil initiative: people of conscience working openly and in community to uphold fundamental human rights. Find out more here: <http://forms.nomoredeaths.org/en/>

In March 2004, a Multi-Faith Border Conference was held in Tucson. There No More Deaths presented its principles for immigration reform and the opportunity for involvement in its first desert-aid campaign that coming summer. On April 19, Arizona Interfaith Network pastors and leaders joined Bishop Gerald Kicanas of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Tucson and many other faith representatives on the lawn of the Arizona Capitol Building to urge the government to enact these principles.

Preamble: We come together as communities of faith and people of conscience to express our indignation and sadness over the continued death of hundreds of migrants attempting to cross the US-Mexico border each year. We believe that such death and suffering diminish us all. We share a faith and a moral imperative that transcends borders, celebrates the contributions immigrant peoples bring, and compels us to build relationships that are grounded in justice and love. As religious leaders from numerous and diverse faith traditions, we set forth the following principles by which immigration policy is to be comprehensively reformed. We believe that using these principles—listed from the most imminent threat to life to the deepest systemic policy problems—will significantly reduce, if not eliminate, deaths in the desert borderlands.

1. Recognize that the current Militarized Border Enforcement Strategy is an ill-conceived policy. Since 1998 more than 7,000 migrants [as of 2014]—men, women, and children—have lost their lives in the deserts of the US-Mexico borderlands trying to make their way into the United States. These tragic and unnecessary deaths must stop. The border blockade strategy has militarized the US-Mexico border, which drives migrants into remote desert regions yet has failed to stem the flow of immigrants into the United States. Further, the fragile desert environment has sustained severe damage as a result of migrants moving through remote desert regions and responding enforcement patrols. Indeed, a militarized border control strategy has never in United States history successfully stemmed the flow of immigrants. We recognize the right of a nation to control its borders, but enforcement measures must be applied proportionately, humanely, and with a conscious effort to protect the people and the land.

2. Address the status of undocumented persons currently living in the US. Workers and their families currently living in the US must have access to a program of legalization that offers equity-building paths to permanent residency and eventual citizenship for workers and their families. Legalizing the undocumented workforce helps stabilize that workforce as well as their families. A stable workforce strengthens the country.

3. Make family unity and reunification the cornerstone of the US immigration system. Migrants enter the United States either to find work or to reunite with family members, yet the arduous and lengthy process forces families to make potentially deadly choices. Families must be allowed to legally and timely reunify as well as to immigrate together as a unit.

4. Allow workers and their families to enter the US to live and work in a safe, legal, orderly, and humane manner through an Employment-Focused immigration program. International workers' rights must be recognized and honored in ways that protect: the basic right to organize and collectively bargain, individual workers' religious freedoms, job portability, easy and safe travel between the US and homelands, achievable and verifiable paths to residency, and a basic human right of mobility.

5. Recognize that root causes of migration lie in environmental, economic, and trade inequities. Experiences of Mexico and countries further south demonstrate that current trade and aid strategies that are based on greed and lack of basic respect deeply and negatively impact workers, their families, and the environments in migrants' homelands. This is forcing a quest-for-survival-based migration of unparalleled proportions. International agreements must be negotiated in ways that build mutual and just relationships. Such agreements must be designed to meet the needs of the present without compromising future generations' abilities to meet their needs. New strategies must include incentives for the public and private sectors to invest in economic and environmental repair and sustainable development in the sending communities. ■

Deportation, Detention and Abuse on the Mexico-Guatemala Border

by Laura Carlsen

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Mexico's southern border has become the line of contention of the most powerful country in the world. The victims of this extraterritorial policy are Central American migrants who cross every day, seeking to save their lives and their families from the violence and hunger plaguing their countries.

For years, and especially in the past year, the U.S. government has claimed the southern border of Mexico as a strategic area for its national security. The formation of a regional trading bloc with the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) began a policy of intervention - incorrectly called integration - in Mexico that was explicitly extended to the area of security with the Security and Prosperity Partnership in 2005, and culminated in Merida Initiative in 2008.

Presented by George W. Bush as a plan of "Counterterrorism, Counternarcotics and Border Security," the

Merida Initiative, or Plan Mexico, introduced a new framework for U.S.-Mexico relations, militarized and securitized and led by the Pentagon.

The government of Barack Obama, far from reconsidering the ultra-violent impacts of the drug war strategy in Mexico, inherited the Bush plan and immediately decided to go further with it. The Obama administration extended the original three-year, multibillion-dollar Bush version “indefinitely.” It also extended the drug war in the countries of Central America, first with the Regional Security Initiative for Central America (CARSI), and now with the Partnership for Prosperity.

Mexico’s southern border was included in the plan from the outset. The original Bush Plan Mexico targeted “flows of illicit goods and persons” and lists migrant monitoring, bio-data collection, and border control expenditures, all of which have been appropriated and expanded under the Obama versions. Since the child migrant crisis of summer of 2014 and the announcement by the Peña Nieto government of Plan Frontera Sur (Southern Border), these programs began to receive more attention, and human and financial resources from both governments.

According to researchers and human rights defenders working at the southern border, the results are a tragedy for migrants. Salvador Lacruz, of the Fray Matías de Córdova Center for Human Rights in Tapachula, says that through this process of “externalization of borders” by the United States, the northern neighbor “moved its border and turned Mexico into a vertical border where border control is exercised throughout.”

Now, what has migrated— but from north to south not south to north - is the repressive model of border control. After years of witnessing the results of the infamous wall and the militarization of the northern border that has killed thousands of Mexican and Central American migrants, the U.S. model has been transferred further south - to Mexico’s border with Guatemala, with the active support of the Mexican government despite the obvious implications for national sovereignty.

The crackdown affects the states of Tabasco, Campeche and Chiapas, but above all Chiapas that has a border of 700 km with Guatemala.

Deportations Move South

After the crisis of unaccompanied children in the United States in the summer of 2014, the U.S. government pressured President Peña Nieto to stop Central American migrants in Mexico, well before they reached the U.S. border. The U.S. government sent resources, training for security forces and equipment to promote the conversion of the southern border into a trap for humans.

In Mexico, Peña Nieto announced the plan as if it were his idea in July 2014 as the Southern Border Plan. Previous administrations had begun the process of militarizing the southern border under other names, but today’s draconian measures are unprecedented. The Mexican government has sent, in addition to the army, federal, state, municipal and migration police, and some 300 (or more) members of the Gendarmerie, a new force of military police with the mission of protecting strategic economic interests.

Official figures reveal that Mexico now surpasses the United States in the deportation of Central American migrants.

Deportations by the Mexican government rose more than 35% in 2014, to 107,199. So far in 2015, the Fray Matías Center reports that every month this year there have been levels of deportations at least 50% higher than the corresponding month of 2014.

An excellent study by the Human Rights Institute of Georgetown Law that focuses precisely on the conditions for migrant children, which was the pretext for this phase of militarization of the border, concludes that children and their families face long periods in detention centers that look like prisons and lack decent living conditions. In addition, there are no adequate processes for assessing asylum and refugee cases, and no procedures required by law are made to determine the best interests of children who come fleeing their countries. Nor do they take into account the goal of family reunification with parents living in the United States or Mexico.

The centers report that young people and adults are returned to situations that threaten their lives - the same situations that forced them to leave their countries.

Lacruz says that unlike the northern border where efforts are concentrated at the boundary line, U.S.-Mexico operations in southern Mexico reach far inland. The two governments are implementing a plan, partly funded by the Merida Initiative, to establish a series of checkpoints that extends up to 100 miles from the border.

This strategy promotes military/police occupation of the entire border area—an area rich in mining, agriculture, oil and water resources.

“We believe that they decided to implement this model to curb social protest, because here in Chiapas and Tabasco and Veracruz, they are planning many mega mining, oil exploration, wind turbine construction, and other projects,” says Lacruz.

“The planned megaprojects mainly affect indigenous peoples,” he says. “And they know there will be conflicts, that these people fight for their rights.”

He added that the Alliance for Prosperity proposed by the U.S. government and the Inter-American Development Bank for the “northern triangle” countries of Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador would extend militarization even more, but not to control smuggling. “They need the army to control the population,” he explains.

Human rights organizations as the Fray Matias de Cordova face enormous obstacles in addressing the accumulation of serious violations on the southern border. Out of 94,000 detainees in 2014, the center had contact with only about 400.

The rest, the vast majority, are women, men and children left to their fate, a destiny marked by a system that has defined them as human castoffs. It doesn’t matter what they have gone through or what they will have to go through just trying to survive. And this is the response of the governments of Obama and Peña Nieto to the “humanitarian crisis” of defenseless children last year. ■

—Laura Carlsen is the Director of the CIP Americas Program, a “leading source of information for activists, academics and citizens concerned about US foreign policy in Latin America, human rights and movements for social justice within the hemisphere.”

Los sueños que se convierte en pesadillas

por Eleazar Pérez Encino

Son privilegiados por vivir en un país de privilegios.

Yo soy Privilegiado injustamente, en un país donde carece de oportunidades para todos(as).

¿Por qué? mi hermano(a) no tienen las mismas oportunidades que yo, ¿Por qué? los jóvenes de mi pueblo migran en busca de sueños y de nuevas oportunidades, ¿Por qué? no todos (as) corren con la misma suerte de ser exitosos(as) y que sus sueños no se conviertan en pesadillas, ¿cómo tú crees? que me halle cuando me encuentre en un país injusto, ¿cómo tú crees? que me sienta cuando mi país es corrupto, donde los ricos se enriquecen más y más y los pobres cada vez más pobres. La falta de oportunidades son escasas, porque la mayoría es excluida y miles de razones para moverse al otro lado.

Sueñan y sueñan que en el otro lado los Sueños ofrecen bondades, pero no todos(as) corren con la misma suerte de cruzar su frontera. Usan muros y alambres marcando su territorio, su justicia es ciega porque no se aplica por igual, sólo se aplica a quien se supone inocente.

Su discurso y su política mentirosa dice: “Hay drogas, narcos, terroristas”, por eso aseguran la frontera, ¡pero un momento! ¿Acaso, eso no es inventada? Es verdad que quizá hay drogas, pero ¿no hay conciencia de quiénes las distribuyen y las consumen? Sí hay, pero no se dice nada por conveniencia y por dinero.

Cuando yo vi a esos jóvenes Mexicanos esposados de pies y manos en el juzgado, juzgados por la justicia ciega ¿cómo tú crees? que me sentí, ¿cómo tú crees, que piense?

Si, son considerados terrorista, delincuentes, violentos, al final se les condena a 6 meses de cárcel por cruzar de ilegales, se les acusan por cruzar sin permiso, por ser Mexicanos, por ser Centroamericanos por ser latinos, por ser Indígenas por ser mujeres. Se les acusan por ser migrantes pero solo son excusas que usan de manera horrible, a fondo solo para controlar la mano de obra barata porque le pagan al migrante la mitad de lo que sudan.

Es ilógico que en el norte se les respete hasta los derechos de un perro, pero en las fronteras los derechos humanos son carentes.

Cómo puede un indocumentado asimilar el estilo de vida de un ciudadano, si no vive tranquilo, por estar lejos de su familia. Como pueden pensar en pisar el suelo americano sin sentirse ilegales, indocumentados, terroristas o algún otra categoría llena de prejuicios.

La única verdad es que todo es mentira, se les ignoran, se les aplasta, se les explota, se les saluda de lejitos, si es que les regala una mirada. Algunos (as) se sienten superiores y afirman que están en lugar de oportunidades, en donde la mayoría de los seres humanos son exitosos, pero sin embargo se violenta a otros(as).

En México casi siempre se hablaba y se refería a la sociedad americana, como la que ofrecía la posibilidad de una igualdad de oportunidades para aquellas personas que con decisión y el esfuerzo propio alcanzaban la prosperidad material, posibilidad que era para los inmigrantes y sus hijos(as) en su momento fue el

anhelado sueño americano, muchos(as) lograron salir adelante con suerte. Hoy en día las posibilidades son nulas, el sueño americano cambio y se convirtió en una pesadilla.

Pesadilla que no solo es del migrante, la pesadilla también son de las familias, vecinos, comunidades, que han perdido a su madre, padre, hijos (as), primos (as), tíos (as), sobrinos (as), abuelos (as) por cruzar la frontera. Esta pesadilla también se llamo muerte. ■

Interfaith Platform on Humane Immigration Reform

A statement from BPFNA (written in 2009)

As our diverse faith traditions teach us to welcome our brothers and sisters with love and compassion regardless of their place of birth, we call on the Federal Government of the United States to enact humane and equitable immigration reform.

We call for immigration reform because each day in our congregations, service programs, health-care facilities, and schools we witness the human consequences of a broken and outdated system. We see the exploitation of undocumented workers and the plight of separated families, as well as the escalation of community fear due to indiscriminate raids and local police acting as federal immigration agents. Humane immigration reform would help put an end to this suffering, which offends the dignity of all human beings.

The Hebrew Bible tells us: “The strangers who sojourn with you shall be to you as the natives among you, and you shall love them as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Leviticus 19:33-34). In the New Testament, Jesus tells us to welcome the stranger, for “what you do to the least of my brethren, you do unto me” (Matthew 25:40). The Qur’an tells us that we should “do good to... those in need, neighbors who are near, neighbors who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer that you meet” (4:36). The Hindu Taittiriya Upanishad tells us: “The guest is a representative of God” (1.11.2).

Therefore, we call on the Federal Government of the United States to commit to:

Uphold family unity as a priority of all immigration policies

Recognizing the importance of families to the creation of healthy individuals and strong communities, we call on the Administration and Congress to 1) expeditiously reunite immigrant families separated due to lengthy visa backlogs; 2) revise family preference categories and per-country caps to prioritize family unity; and 3) remove bars to reentry and adjustment of status for individuals seeking to reunite with their family members. Attempts to devalue the family, such as denying birthright citizenship to the children of immigrants or placing family-based and employment-based visa applicants in competition with each other on a point-based or other system, must be rejected in order to maintain and promote family unity.

Create a process for undocumented immigrants to earn their legal status and eventual citizenship

We urge the Administration and Congress to enact immigration reform that allows undocumented immigrants and their families to earn lawful permanent residency upon the satisfaction of reasonable criteria, with a pathway to citizenship. The workability of such a program should not be hindered by overly punitive criteria, such



as mandating that immigrants leave the country or pay exorbitant fees, or by making the process conditional upon the implementation of enforcement measures. Communities and congregations around the country are prepared to provide legal services to those eligible, as people of faith are committed to an effective and humane system that keeps families together and values the dignity of our friends and neighbors.

Protect workers and provide efficient channels of entry for new migrant workers

We call for an expansion of legal avenues for workers who seek to migrate to the United States to work in a safe, legal, and orderly manner: Their rights must be fully protected, including the ability to bring their families with them, travel as needed, change their place of employment, and apply for lawful permanent residency and eventually citizenship. As currently structured, electronic employment verification programs have proven detrimental to both employers and employees due to increased discrimination and unfair hiring and firing practices. All workers benefit, however, from the enforcement of health, safety, wage, and hour laws, as well as the right to peacefully organize.

Facilitate immigrant integration

Many immigrants desire to naturalize but lack the necessary tools. The U.S. immigration system should empower them to this end by providing financial support to state and local governments and community organizations that offer language and civics education, outreach, and naturalization application assistance. Citizenship should be made more affordable by reducing naturalization fees and making fee waivers more easily accessible. Moreover, the processing of application backlogs and security checks should be streamlined to reduce waiting times. Counterproductive laws prohibiting immigrants from accessing social services and mandating that local police act as immigration officials should be revoked. These barriers to integration decrease community safety and discourage immigrants from pursuing education and community involvement. Faith based organizations and congregations around the country will continue to assist in integration efforts by providing social services and helping immigrants learn English, find jobs, and thrive in the United States.

Restore due process protections and reform detention policies

Immigration policies should respect human rights and ensure due process for all persons. We have witnessed how indiscriminate immigration raids have caused trauma and hardship for thousands of individuals. Such raids separate families, destroy communities, and threaten the basic rights of immigrants and U.S. citizens alike. The suffering caused by the increase and severity of Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids in homes and workplaces underscores the problems with current U.S. immigration policies and the urgent need for reform. Many faith organizations administer services to those impacted by raids, as well as to immigrants in detention facilities. Witnessing the toll of incarceration on detainees, their families and our communities, we urge the Administration and Congress to reduce the use of detention for immigrants and improve detention conditions by enacting clear, enforceable reforms that include rigorous medical treatment standards and increased access to pastoral care, legal counsel and legal orientation programs. Furthermore, the government should expedite the release of individuals who pose no risk to the community and expand the

use of community-based alternatives to detention, which are more humane and cost effective.

Align the enforcement of immigration laws with humanitarian values

For the past 20 years, the federal government has dramatically increased fence construction, border patrol presence, and the deportation of immigrants, which have proven ineffective at decreasing undocumented immigration. During this time, we have witnessed the desecration of sacred sites and the violation of environmental and religious freedom laws, as well as the unnecessary suffering of community members whose loved ones have suffered or died seeking entry into the United States. Currently, vast resources are being used for fence construction and the mass arrests, detention, and deportation of immigrants who contribute to the U.S. economy and culture. To truly decrease undocumented immigration, the United States should improve access to the legal immigration system by increasing the number of ports of entry, expanding visa availability, and eliminating application backlogs to increase processing efficiency. Border policies must be consistent with humanitarian values and with the need to treat all individuals with respect, while allowing the United States to implement its immigration laws and identify and prevent the entry of persons who commit dangerous crimes. All immigration laws must respect the dignity of all persons, prioritize the cohesiveness of families and communities, recognize the economic contributions of immigrants, and uphold our moral obligations to provide refuge and welcome the stranger.

Immigration: A matter of human rights

As people of faith, we call attention to the moral dimensions of public policy and recommend reforms that uphold the God-given dignity and rights of every person, each of whom are made in the image of God. We are dedicated to immigration reform because we value family unity, justice, equity, compassion, love, and the humane treatment of all persons. It is our collective prayer that Congress enact just immigration reform based on these tenets. ■

Living the Undocumented American Dream

by Nick Haynes

When I think about it, I never had strong aspirations of living the American Dream. The ideals of Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness were simply words that I, like many other people born in the United States, always took for granted. It was not until those “rights” were stripped away that I even noticed that I ever had them, and that I was privileged—privileged not because of anything I have done, but because of where I was born and the color of my skin.

There are those among us who do not take the American Dream for granted. Those who were not born into privilege, or those who were born, let’s say, in Mexico. There are people who are born and live their lives in countries and situations in which they constantly face great difficulty and lack of any opportunity.

Some of these people sacrifice everything to travel to the United States, which, in theory, is a land of opportunity. I say sacrifice because no matter how difficult one’s circumstances, it



is always a sacrifice to leave your home, your family, your culture and your language to go to a place where no one knows you, no one likes you, and no one speaks your language—simply so you can put food on the table. It is true desperation that drives people to emigrate from their homeland to seek out new possibilities.

This is my wife's story, and now my story as well. My wife was born in Mexico. Like any other little girl, she grew up going to school, playing (and fighting) with her sisters and putting dresses on dolls. She wanted to be a teacher when she grew up. She had a blackboard and often pretended that she was a teacher.

Then, one day, shortly after the implementation of NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement), her dad lost his job. For several months, the family coped with his unemployment with the little money he earned from selling lotions on the street. But this was no way to support a family of five.

Eventually, my wife's father made the courageous, but difficult, decision to move to the United States for work. They had applied for a visa several months earlier, but the wait was more than 20 years. So he came anyway, without a visa.

After a year of separation, my wife's parents made the most difficult decision of their lives. Her mom packed up the family (I say packed because it is a common expression; they actually came with nothing), said goodbye to friends and loved ones and made the long, dangerous journey to the United States. They hired a man to take my wife, her mother and two sisters across the river and deliver them to Waco, Texas.

This man could have abused them, robbed them or abandoned them. This happens to many families. My wife was fortunate. And so began their glorious life of living in the shadows in the land of opportunity.

Living in the United States was not easy. My wife was ridiculed because she couldn't speak English. She was told that she always had to lie, always had to hide her true situation. The life of an undocumented teenager trying to stay under the radar is a lonely and isolated life. Yet they were grateful because the family was together, and they had food to eat.

My wife grew up in the Waco school system. She eventually learned to speak English, perfectly. In order to survive, she had to work. In order to work, she had to claim that she had work authorization. She eventually went to college, earned an associate's degree and began attending church.

This is where I come in. My wife and I met in the spring of 2006 through a small group in our church. We fell in love, and were married in May 2007. Like many other naïve Americans, I was under the impression that if an immigrant, like my wife, married a US citizen, like myself, then she could automatically become a US citizen too.

How wrong I was. The problem is that our immigration system is antiquated, broken and incredibly complex. To make a long story short, my wife was eventually able to become a Legal Permanent Resident—although it was an arduous journey that forced us to endure three months of separation, while she was sent back to Mexico as part of the process.

Because of this status, she can now work legally, have a driver's license and a mortgage. Our lives are fairly normal.

The problem came when we applied for my wife to become a US citizen. We have now been told that, because of a box my wife checked on a form when she was working without authorization, she cannot become a US citizen and will eventually be deported. There is no other option; she will never qualify for any type of immigration benefit in the United States without a change in the law.

Let me be clear about the brokenness of our immigration system: if my wife had robbed a bank, there might be a path for her. If she had murdered someone, there might still be a way for her to become a US citizen. But because she did what she had to do, and went to work to put food on the table for her family, in the only land she calls home, where she was raised from childhood, she will never be able to become a US citizen.

Our family now faces eventual exile. When we have children, they will be US citizens, but their mother still will face deportation. Despite being a US citizen, I am not free. I cannot live the American Dream.

It is difficult to describe, but try to imagine if you can. Though we try our best to live normal lives, the fear and threat of separation and deportation constantly hangs over our heads.

Just for the record, I am unconditionally committed to my wife, and I have absolutely no regrets about loving and spending my life with this woman. When she is deported, I will be deported as well. That means no more holidays with family. We may lose our house, our jobs and everything we hold dear, except each other.

Unfortunately, our story is not unique. Today in the United States, thousands, if not millions, of citizens and their immigrant families are dealing with our broken immigration laws. Wives are being taken from their husbands, and parents from their children, and they are deported. Our immigration system is broken and it needs to change.

My challenge to you is this: When you think about immigrants, think about my wife and our story. Think about how this problem is affecting our community. We are your neighbors, your coworkers. We worship beside you in church.

Also, think about why it is that you deserve the privilege of US citizenship and others do not. What did you do to earn your citizenship? My wife has done everything to earn hers. I have done nothing.

If you would like to do something about this, contact your representatives in Congress. Tell them to fix our broken immigration system, to stop separating families and to allow people like my wife to become US citizens, so they can stay in the only land they call home. ■

—Nick and Eloisa Haynes both work at Baylor University in Waco, TX. Nick has lived in Waco since 2000. Eloisa immigrated to the United States from Mexico and has lived in Waco for 20 years. They have been married for eight years. This article originally appeared as an Act Locally Waco (ALW) blog. ALW is a clearinghouse for activities and organizations in the Waco area that are designed to end poverty and injustice. This article was republished by *Seeds of Hope* in the Summer 2015 issue of *Hunger News & Hope*. See *Additional Resources* to download this issue of *Hunger News & Hope* in full.

Church Coffee: Supporting Small Farmers with Every Cup

by Rev. Stan Duncan, Intentional Interim Minister with the UCC

This article was originally published here (<http://equalexchange.coop/blog/church-coffee-supporting-small-farmers-with-every-cup>) on Equal Exchange's blog. Reprinted with permission from the author and Equal Exchange.

See [Additional Resources](#) for a link to another article by Rev. Duncan called "Victor and Hugo: Life and Faith and the Price of Coffee" published in *The Christian Century* in 2006.

I am an Intentional Interim Minister, which means I serve churches during the period between settled pastors, while the church is going through a search process. My unusual vocation has also given me a unique opportunity to introduce Equal Exchange's Fair Trade coffee program to a wide variety of churches. In doing that, one thing I've been impressed with is that no matter who I talk to--rich/poor, young/old, urban/rural--people love the idea that just by standing around the church coffee pot, drinking Fair Trade coffee, they are making a difference in farmers' lives and are supporting communities all over the world.

Equal Exchange's strong ethical standards, like paying a fair price to farmers, or giving credits to help them in the down times, or making long-term commitments with co-ops, and so on, appeal to everyone. This is a mission cause that church people from all over the political spectrum can get behind. Members who are more politically liberal tend to appreciate that this is an alternative business model to that of major coffee corporations that crush the little guy in their poverty, while those of a more conservative bent often feel good that drinking our church coffee pays a hard-working farmer more money, helps his family, and helps them keep their home.

It's not rocket science to realize that the crash of coffee prices in the 1990s was a major factor in the increase in immigration into the U.S. during those years. Drinking fairly traded coffee is one small step in slowing the migration flow. The more we raise the incomes of small farmers in regions like Mexico and Central America, the more we can lower the terrible social disruption that breaks up families and communities and drives their young people thousands of miles, off into a different (and often hostile) country.

Equal Exchange's church coffee program is a treasure for church mission programs. Today over 10,000 churches in the U.S. serve and/or sell Equal Exchange products. That's an enormous amount of coffee and it represents an enormous amount of good around the world. ■

What Your Church Can Do!

Remember these issues regularly in worship and Christian education. Here are just a few ideas based on the Additional Resources listed:

- Do a book study on *The Middle of Everywhere: Helping Refugees Enter the American Community* by Mary Pipher – Study guides are available on line or contact us.

- Do a Bible Study series based on ABCUSA's *Pastoral, Practical, Prophetic, and Personal: A Resource on Immigration / Inmigración: Un Recurso -Pastoral, Práctico, Profético y Personal*.
 - English: http://www.abc-usa.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/ImmigrationResource_Eng.pdf
 - Spanish: http://www.abc-usa.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/ImmigrationResource_Spa.pdf
- Lift up some of the many, many scriptural references: *On Immigration*, a new book by Chris Harbin has an extensive compilation of biblical texts related to immigration.
- Weave these themes into worship services. Many of the resources listed offer prayers, litanies, hymn suggestions and more.
- Host a movie night using *The Second Cooler*, a classic like *El Norte* by Gregory Nava and Anna Thomas or another similar film.
- If your church has a book group, encourage them to read and discuss *Into the Beautiful North* by Luis Alberto Urrea or a similar novel.
- Use Equal Exchange's *Win-Win Solutions: An Introduction to Fair Trade and Cooperative Economics* in your Sunday School classes.
- Support Fair Trade in as many ways as possible, using it as an opportunity to educate yourself and your church about the consequences of unfair economic practices.
- Get involved in local efforts. Find out what groups are already working in your area and ask them what their needs are. Some groups active in migrant, immigrant, and refugee work that may have a local presence near you include:
 - **Catholic Social Services:** Various sites based on location.
 - **Church World Service:** <http://www.cwsglobal.org>
 - **Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service:** <http://lirs.org>
 - **New Sanctuary Movement:** Various sites based on location.
 - **World Relief:** <http://worldrelief.org>

There are almost certainly other grass-roots organizations near you that would welcome your involvement. After learning more through education and local involvement, you'll be ready to advocate for just immigration reform, economic policies, improvements to local services and more.

Additional Resources...

American Baptist Churches USA Pastoral, Practical, Prophetic, and Personal: A Resource on Immigration / Inmigración: Un Recurso - Pastoral, Práctico, Profético y Personal

English: http://www.abc-usa.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/ImmigrationResource_Eng.pdf

Spanish: http://www.abc-usa.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/ImmigrationResource_Spa.pdf

American Baptist Home Mission Societies Suggested Resources for Cross-Cultural and Refugee Ministry

- *Angrosino, Michael V. Talking About Cultural Diversity in Your Congregation: Gifts and Challenges. Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira Press, 2001.*
- *Bakke, Raymond, J. A Biblical Word for an Urban World: Messages from the 1999 World Mission Conference. Valley Forge, Pa.: Board of International Ministries, American Baptist Churches USA, 2000.*
- *Bakke, Raymond, J. A Theology as Big as the City. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1997.*
- *Bakke, Raymond, J. The Urban Christian: Effective Ministry in Today's Urban World. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1987.*



- Bennett, Milton J., ed. *Basic Concepts in Intercultural Communication*. Yarmouth, Maine: Intercultural Press Inc., 1998.
- Conde-Frazier, Elizabeth. *Listen to the Children: Conversations with Immigrant Families/Escuchemos a los niños: Conversaciones con familias inmigrantes*. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2011.
- Foster, Charles R. *Embracing Diversity: Leadership in Multicultural Congregations*. Washington, D.C.: The Alban Institute, 1997.
- Foster, Charles R. and Brelsford, Theodore. *We Are The Church Together: Cultural Diversity in Congregational Life*. Valley Forge, Pa.; Trinity Press International, 1996.
- Law, Eric H.F. *The Word at the Crossings: Preaching and Teaching in a Multicontextual Community*. St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 2003.
- Law, Eric H.F. *Sacred Acts, Holy Change: Faithful Diversity and Practical Transformation*. St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 2002.
- Law, Eric H.F. *Inclusion: Making Room for Grace*. St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 2000.
- Law, Eric H.F. *The Bush Was Blazing But Not Consumed: Developing a Multicultural Community Through Dialogue and Liturgy*. St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 1996.
- Law, Eric H.F. *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb: A Spirituality for Leadership in a Multicultural Community*. St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 1993.
- Oden, Amy, G. *And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity*. Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 2001.
- Pipher, Mary. *The Middle of Everywhere: The World's Refugees Come To Our Town*. New York: Harcourt Inc., 2002.
- Pohl, Christine D. *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999.
- Ruffle, Douglas, W. "Building Blocks for a Multicultural Congregation." *Quarterly Review*, Fall 1993: 73-82.
- Watkins, Keith. "Multi-Language Congregations: A Field Study in Los Angeles 1993," *Encounter*, Winter 1994, 129-153.

ABC Women's Ministries In Their Shoes: Immigrants and Refugees (A toolkit on ways to reach out to immigrants and refugees in your communities): <http://www.abwministries.org/store/product.aspx/productId/17/In-Their-Shoes-Immigrants-and-Refugees>

A Dreamer's Dream: Estar con mi mamá (To be with my mother) from Luis Enrique Jacquez (Lutheran Social Services) | edited by Peach Jack: This presentation (available as a pdf or powerpoint presentation) looks at the statistics surrounding the issue of unaccompanied minors coming to the US from Mexico and Central America: <http://www.bpfna.org/gather/frontera-border#presentation>

Annunciation House Justice for Immigrants Worship Resources: <http://annunciationhouse.org/advocacy/prayer-guide/justice-for-immigrants>

Baptist Fair Trade Project Order through Equal Exchange and a portion of your total will go toward the BPFNA Scholarship Fund: <http://shop.equalexchange.coop>

BorderLinks <http://borderlinks.nationbuilder.com>

BPFNA Justicia en la Frontera/Justice at the Border page: <http://www.bpfna.org/gather/frontera-border>

Christian Century, The Victor & Hugo: Life and Faith and the Price of Coffee by Rev. Stan Duncan: http://www.bpfna.org/sm_files/Victor_and_Hugo.pdf

Jewish Voices for Peace "From the Borderlands to Palestine" http://www.bpfna.org/sm_files/BorderlandstoPalestine.pdf

Kairos Canada Borderless: A codu-poem about the lives of undocumented workers: <http://www.kairoscanada.org/product/borderless-25-minute-dvd-movie>

Kairos Canada Seeking Shelter: An Advent Resource: <http://www.kairoscanada.org/product/seeking-shelter-advent-resource-print>

Latin American Working Group Actions and Campaigns you can get involved in:

Actions: <http://www.lawg.org/action-center>

Campaigns: <http://www.lawg.org/our-campaigns>

Latin American Working Group Faith-Based Organizing: <http://www.lawg.org/action-center/faith-based-organizing>

NC Council of Churches Becoming the Church Together: Immigration, the Bible, and Our New Neighbors: A Biblically based curriculum: http://www.ncchurches.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/Becoming_the_Church_Together.pdf

NC Council of Churches Immigration Board Game: <http://www.ncchurches.org/immigration-curriculum>

New Sanctuary Movement Toolkit http://www.bpfna.org/sm_files/NSM_toolkit.pdf

On Immigration A new book by Chris Harbin: <http://www.amazon.com/On-Immigration-Christopher-B-Harbin/dp/1938514629>

Seeds of Hope Hunger News & Hope Vol. 15 No. 3: The Immigration Issue: http://www.bpfna.org/sm_files/HNH_Vol15_No3.pdf

The Second Cooler A documentary about who benefits from illegal immigration: <https://thesecondcooler.com>

United Church of Christ A Worship Service to Lift up Immigrants: http://www.ucc.org/justice_immigration_worship_worship-service2

United Church of Christ Worship resources: http://www.ucc.org/justice_immigration_worship_index

Oración de un Inmigrante / An Immigrant's Prayer from the United Church of Christ

O bendito Dios, Corazón del cielo y de la tierra, alabado sea tu santo nombre. Te alaban tus hijas e hijos de todos los pueblos del mundo sin importar fronteras.

Te alabamos y te damos gracias porque has puesto entre nosotros, a los peregrinos inmigrantes, que hacen florecer y producir a la tierra para llevar alimentos a la mesa de los pobres y los ricos por igual.

Te alabamos y te damos gracias porque siempre caminas con quienes cruzan las fronteras en busca de una vida mejor y para poner de su parte en la construcción del mundo, como nos encargastes.

En nuestro camino recordamos tu Presencia y la promesa que hicistes a Sara y Abrahán de la liberación del pueblo de Israel. Te alabamos y te damos gracias porque bendices a todos los inmigrantes, que cruzan las fronteras de Estados Unidos.

Hoy te pedimos una senda para la ciudadanía que sea clara para todo nuestro pueblo. Te pedimos que guies los corazones de los políticos, para que hagan buenas decisiones, que lleven al bienestar de todos y todas. Dios de amor y de bondad, escucha nuestra oración.

Amen

O holy God, Heart of heaven and earth, praised be your holy name. Your daughters and sons, from all peoples of the world, regardless of borders, praise you.

We praise you and give you thanks because you have placed in our midst immigrant pilgrims who make the earth flourish and produce, to bring food to the table of the rich and poor alike.

We praise you and give you thanks because you always walk with those who cross borders in search of well-being, of doing their part in building the world you entrusted to us.

On our way, we are mindful of your Presence of the promise to Abraham and Sarah of the liberation of your people, Israel. We praise you and give you thanks for your blessings on all immigrants, on those who cross all the borders in the United States.

Today we pray for a clear and direct pathway to citizenship for all our people! We pray that You guide the hearts of policy makers, to make the right decisions, and be on the right side of history. This is our prayer.

Amen