

THE Round Table

Summer
2009

"...a path from where we are to where we should be." --Peter Maurin

Immigration: Loving our Neighbors as Ourselves



CAUTION



**NAFTA
AT WORK**



Why This Issue?

Like the rest of us, I have listened to many of the comments made about the “illegals” that are supposedly flooding our country. They are often referred to as just that – “illegals” - not persons, but threats, invalidated by their very label. Politicians and others have bordered on hysteria in their call for tightening our borders, cracking down on lax employers, etc. I have wondered about all this animosity and hysteria. Where is this coming from?

Last fall I began participating in the “Intercambio” set up by IFCLA and facilitated by Elizabeth Driscoll. The idea was that Spanish speakers who wanted to learn English would pair up with English speakers who wanted to learn Spanish and we would take turns speaking with the other in the language each wanted to learn. I came to Kabat House to participate in this exchange. I have thoroughly enjoyed these sessions, and my Spanish has improved. The day we played “Dictionary” in Spanish was hilarious. However, even more valuable, these sessions with Spanish-speaking immigrants have opened my eyes to their realities. Each time I heard another story of immigration, I was deeply moved.

I heard about the trains people catch to come up north, and how sometimes they have to hold onto a ladder on the side of a train-car for more than 24 hours, not sleeping or eating, and that sometimes they can't hold on and they fall off, slipping to their death under the moving train. I heard about stories of slavery here in St. Louis, of people who are sold to businesses and have no recourse. Some of the people telling me these stories had faces worn with the sun, bodies with the scent of hard work, and clothes of a working person – jeans, rumpled shirts. Are these the people who are inspiring so much fear and animosity?

Three summers ago, I traveled to El Salvador and visited the village of Guarjila. Immigration to the U.S. looks a lot different from down there than it does from up here. From the view up here, immigrants are looked upon as selfish opportunists, gleefully breaking the law to benefit themselves, taking advantage of our open society. From Guarjila, it felt more like an on-going tragedy that people had to leave their families and work in the U.S. to make enough to support their families. The families suffer greatly from the absence of spouses, parents, children, even if the money helps them to raise their standard of living. “If a spouse is gone for more than three years,” one Salvadoran told me, “the marriage usually doesn't last.” Her own marriage hadn't lasted; when her spouse sent for her to join him in the U.S., she opted to remain in Guarjila to work for change.

We are bringing you stories about immigration to the United States. Elizabeth Driscoll relates some of the personal struggles of immigrants that she has known. Jenny Truax fills us in on the history of immigration to the U.S. and causes for the current wave of newcomers. Carolyn Griffeth offers a theological reflection on how we ought to treat the stranger in our midst. Marilyn Lorenz-Weinkauff and Susan Ryan, of the Interfaith Committee on Latin America, tell us about the Latin American reality and the effects of immigration on Guarjila, the town that Marilyn has visited annually for the past 20 years or so. Sarah Cool, from Cherith Brook Catholic Worker House in Kansas City, Missouri, writes of the myths and realities of immigrants today.

As always, we include our regular columns: James Meinert, in “From Karen House” tells us the latest, John Nolan updates us on Kabat House, and Teka Childress takes up the issue of decentralization in “Catholic Worker Thought and Action.”

We hope our efforts convey to you a bit more of the experiences of the men and women who struggle and sacrifice much to make a living in this country. And we hope you are inspired to welcome these ‘strangers in a strange land,’ in other words, our neighbors. ✦

- Ellen Rehg

"Angolan Refugee" – Annjie Schiefelbein
"Bloodied Farmworker," "Bearing the Cross,"
"Haitian Woman" - National Farm Worker Ministry

"NAFTA at Work" - Cindy Clark
"Sweatshop" – Marissa Orton
Cover Arrangement – Jenny Truax and Joe Angert
Centerfold: Timmy Cosentino and James Meinert

The St. Louis Catholic Worker Community

Karen House
1840 Hogan
St. Louis, MO. 63106
314-621-4052

Ella Dixon "Little" House
1540 N. 17th St.
St. Louis, MO. 63106
314-974-7432



Carl Kabat House
1450 Monroe
St. Louis, MO. 63106
314-621-7099

Teka Childress House
1875 Madison
St. Louis, MO. 63106
314-588-9901

www.KarenHouseCW.org

Esperanza: May It Not Be In Vain

by Elizabeth Driscoll

Last year, I began to work with an organization called IFCLA, the St. Louis Inter-Faith Committee on Latin America, facilitating a program called Intercambio. Essentially Intercambio is a conversation hour, half in English and half in Spanish. The idea is that both Spanish speaking Latinos and English speaking people could come together to work on practicing both languages as well as share about their realities and create community. It is a space for both Spanish and English speakers to give and receive.

As other articles in this *Round Table* have described in detail, Latinos are our neighbors geographically, as well as in contributing to our economy through their countries' rich lands and labor resources. Through the Intercambio, I have come to know countless stories from our Latino neighbors in the St. Louis area and everyone I have met has come here to support their families and ultimately seek safety and happiness. This article will highlight three stories from individuals that I have come to know through Intercambio. Their names have been changed for their protection. Although I meet Latinos from various Latin American countries, these three all happen to be from Mexico. They were all very excited to meet with me and deeply want others to know their stories and to connect to the community around them, instead of as how they are commonly regarded by their American neighbors, as outcasts in society.

Fernando

Fernando is a 22 year-old from Veracruz, Mexico. He comes to the U.S. seasonally with a work Visa. Although Fernando comes to the U.S. "legally," he is

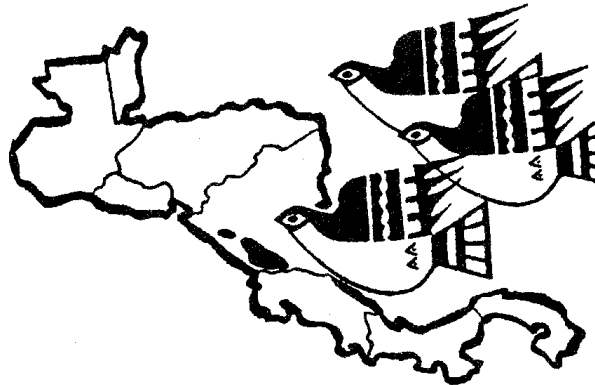
still treated as a criminal in his daily life in the U.S. and in the process of immigrating. One of the first times Fernando attended Intercambio he shared his frustrations about the immigration process. Fernando said that in general he can hide from much of the hatred he experiences from American neighbors, but he has to face it every time he crosses the border between the U.S. and Mexico. He said it's something different every time he crosses, but essentially, every time he comes back to the U.S. he faces a dehumanizing set of officials in a dehumanizing system.

The last time he crossed the border an inspection officer singled him out of the line of immigrants and demanded that Fernando show her his "real" identity card. The officer accused him of using a fake Visa and threatened him saying, "If you don't tell me your real identity then you could spend time in jail." She then brought him to a back room where she continued to interrogate him, "Do you want to spend 1 year or 6 years in jail? It's up to you to decide."

Finally, after a period of Fernando denying her accusations, she left him alone to sit in a corner of the office. He sat and waited for 3 hours and then without any further discussion he was released. Fernando said that ideally he would like to talk to his neighbors and be part of his community, but until he feels he can do so, he will continue to live in fear and hiding.

Manuel

Manuel happens to be another man from Mexico. I asked him one day why he immigrated and he said frankly, "In Mexico there is no option." Manuel had been living in the U.S. for some time,



Elizabeth Driscoll is getting to know her neighbors at Kabat House better and looking forward to sleeping on the roof this summer.



but says that his life in the U.S. really began when in December of 1997 he met the woman he would eventually marry. Manuel and his wife dated for 2 years before they married. Manuel explained that he is married to an American woman, but swears he didn't marry for papers. His wife thought that when they got married her husband would automatically have citizenship, so Manuel never thought to apply. They didn't marry for papers in the first place, so they didn't look into it.

After about a year, Manuel found his life extremely stressful. He was working more than 50 hours a week and his wife had just been diagnosed with cancer. Then he was pulled over by cops while driving and taken into holding with a threat of deportation. Very soon, Manuel and his wife learned that he did not have citizenship through marriage, so they found a lawyer to try to fight his deportation. The lawyer's advice was to return to Mexico and apply for citizenship to come back legally. She assured Manuel and his wife that he could go back and forth from Mexico and the U.S. on Visas and then in 3 years time he would be a resident.

Manuel returned to Mexico and immediately went to the U.S. Consulate to apply for a Visa. Seven months later he received notice he had been denied a Visa. Before he was married, Manuel had gone to the U.S. twice without documentation, which he did not deny. The new legislation at this time dictated that every time a person enters the country without documentation, he/she must stay out of the country for at least 5 years before they can return. Manuel stayed 2-3 years working as much as he could in Mexico, trying to find a legal way to return to the U.S. Finally, when his wife was getting a surgery for a second resurgence of cancer, with-

out warning his wife, he returned to the U.S. Now Manuel and his wife have a new lawyer, who says their former lawyer wanted to make fast money and did a very poor job of paying attention to changes in immigration law. During the time of his deportation of the same year, the law changed, which now put Manuel in a situation where he could not return to the U.S. for 10 years. The new lawyer said that the previous lawyer never should have advised him to leave the U.S.; she should have had him stay and fight his case.

The present lawyer is now fighting to open the case again. If the judge approves the approach of a new case then Manuel could apply for a Visa and slowly work on the documentation process. Manuel is optimistic about his lawyer, "He stays on top of new laws. My former lawyer didn't watch these changes." Manuel is our neighbor, a married man fighting to be in the U.S. with his native-born North American wife who is unable to leave and wants her husband at her side as she is dying of cancer. Manuel is a man broken by the system in which he still has faith. He is the epitome of a "good" American citizen who is driven to learn English and who respects the institute of marriage, hard work, and the law.

Esperanza

If you met Esperanza today, you would never guess that she has encountered the types of hardship in her life that she has experienced. She always presents herself as happy and light. Until I got to know her better I thought this came without any effort, but like many Latino immigrants, Esperanza confronted horrible danger and terrifying conditions to come to the U.S. When Esperanza came, her oldest daughter was 13, the second daughter was 9, and her only son was 6. Now they are young adults. She has missed out on living with her children as they have grown, but they are and always have been her main motivation for coming to the U.S. She came to try to make money, before her family died of hunger or threat of danger from drug activity in Mexico.

Esperanza told me, "For me it is sad that North Americans name us animals. No. To risk your life to have work, to help your family, is no animal. I would like to ask some American mother what would you do for your family? You would risk your life and you do. You risk your life from the moment you cross that border." Esperanza paid a guide to help her cross into the U.S. and one of the first things she asked was how long would it take to cross. The guide told her it would take about 4 hours. It was a lie. It took Esperanza and about 15 other people four days and three nights to cross the border into the U.S.

Esperanza told me the desert is brutal; it has very hot days and very cold nights. During the journey, experiencing such intense heat and after walk

ing so long, both her feet and thighs bled profusely. Her jeans rubbed against her bleeding legs and her shoes pressed upon her nail-less toes. Eventually she had to take off both her shoes and jeans in order to keep walking. Actually, Esperanza really wasn't walking; she explained that as a group they were constantly running from danger. They would run from animals, immigration patrol, and thieves in the desert. They would take breaks for about 15 minutes and then would run for as long as they needed to, until they got out of harm's way. At night, Esperanza carried a stick to knock away the snakes and other animals which were rampant in the desert.

As Esperanza's group reached the border, the guide yelled for the last time, "immigration!" They ran through a tunnel as fast as they could until they arrived at a ranch. After a few hours of waiting at this ranch, all 15 people in their group were piled in a medium-sized truck. The men were all literally stuffed in the back. The guides piled the men on top of one another, lying down in a horizontal position, for them to remain unseen and to carry such a large number. The women were in the front section of the truck, sitting on top of one another, right behind the driver's seat. They traveled to Arizona without any breaks.

The guides of the group finally stopped in Phoenix where they were herded into a house with 40 other Latinos, most of them men. Very soon the new group of Latinos, who had just survived the desert, realized they were being kidnapped. Six people carried guns and they monitored the door and the windows. They told the captives they had to pay \$2,000 if they wanted to be released. Esperanza says, *lamentablemente* (unfortunately), the kidnappers were Mexicans, taking advantage of the flawed immigration system and the desperation of people trying to survive. After about 4 months of being held, a friend in the U.S. paid Esperanza's ransom and she was released. Some years later, Esperanza was able to slowly pay back her friend.

At the end of telling me this story Esperanza turned to me solemnly saying through her experience what we are trying to reveal in this *Roundtable*. Immigrants are people deserving of respect and love, they are our neighbors. Esperanza said, "Elizabeth, I don't have an education but I have values that my parents taught me. *Aunque soy inmigrante* (although I am an immigrant) I want to talk peacefully not aggressively. I didn't come here to sell drugs, or steal, or to do prostitution, only to give food to my family. If the U.S. gave me an opportunity, I would do it, but because of the place I am from and the family I was born into, I can't. Many say *pinchos gabachos* (a foul term for North Americans or those of European origin), but in return I only say thanks to the U.S. *¡Fijate Elizabeth!* (Imagine that), I love this country. It gave me possibilities

I might not have had. I am so thankful to the U.S. I say thanks to you to have a house. In the U.S., until I am old, until I can't, I can work. In my country, not so. Give me the opportunity to contribute, the permission. I want no trouble with the police."

"There are Mexicans that are citizens that do drugs, that create problems, but I wish I could have their opportunity for citizenship; I would not abuse it. Give me the opportunity to be well, not to live in fear. Do you know the terror I live not to see my children for 7 years, only by telephone? They are alone. This is the hardest sacrifice. The other things the racism and the desert, these are not the hardest. I didn't come here to buy a fancy car or to buy good clothes, only with the idea to *sacar mis niños adelante* (to give the best to my children). I was living here 5 years on the streets. I bought a hamburger from McDonalds for \$1.00. I didn't have anything. My children, the thought of them, kept me going. Now I live in a small apartment, I have work, and who would pay for my children? Only me, so for this I am thankful to the U.S."



Resources for more information

www.cirnow.org-- The central purpose of the CCIR is to pass progressive comprehensive immigration reform.

www.nomoredeaths.org-- Their mission is to end death and suffering on the U.S./Mexico border through civil initiative: the conviction that people of conscience must work openly and in community to uphold fundamental human rights.

www.annunciationhouse.org-- In a Gospel spirit of service and solidarity, we accompany the migrant, homeless, and economically vulnerable peoples of the border region through hospitality, advocacy, and education.

www.ifcla.net-- Inter-Faith Committee on Latin America is a local solidarity group on Latin American issues. They work on issues surrounding immigration, accompaniment, intervention and trade justice. Receive updates on what is going on in Latin America or volunteer.

Biting the Hand That Feeds Us: Immigration and Capitalism

by Jenny Truax

"Now there's this Spic at work, but he's not so bad. Pedro works hard. He sends back most of his paycheck to help his family back in Mexico. He's not like most of them; he's OK."

This is a quote from my cousin Paul. Paul is generally a good guy, a hard working, Midwestern, all-American kind of guy. Paul doesn't generally like immigrants from Latin America because they are stealing our jobs, sponging resources from the system, and overrunning our cities.

"Now HE was a hero. Do you know he had nothing when he got here? He worked this land himself and built a name for himself. I'm proud to be his grandson." This is also Paul, talking about our Grandfather Peter.

Pedro and Peter; their stories are identical. They both came from suffering countries with few options, and both worked hard to make a way for their families. They both were at the bottom of the social heap of their time. Despite these conditions, they both succeeded.

Immigrants are a historical fact of life across the globe and, as a society, we must decide how to relate to them. Can we finally recognize the gifts these people bring? Can we understand that the curse or luck of being born in a particular place shouldn't determine how we are treated and what we deserve? Or, will we continue to draw a protective box around ourselves? In doing so, we marginalize immigrants, people of color, and the poor, which is certainly contrary to the teachings of Jesus. Can we evolve so that the next generation of Pedros and Peters will both be welcomed, and not crushed? Can we love our neighbor as ourselves?

My cousin is able to recognize the good in Pedro because he knows him personally, and everything begins with that knowing. When giving talks about Karen House, we often say that your surroundings

determine your reality and beliefs; building relationships with Pedro, with the disabled, with the poor both widens perspective and fosters compassion. Life as a Catholic Worker exposes you to the systems affecting these folks: the education system, the health care system, the welfare system, the economic system, the immigration system. Often, you start to lose your faith in, or obedience to, these systems when you meet their victims over and over again. During this process of listening, those of us with privilege often respond first with disbelief, then defensiveness. We often blame the victims of these systems (sometimes even subconsciously) for their inability to make the system work for them, or for not being the exception to the rule. Taking the steps to educate ourselves and then to act with the oppressed for justice is the basis of our liberation.

An immigrant is a foreign-born person residing in the US.¹ Most immigrants enter through family-sponsorship or employment-sponsorship. Immigrants fall into three categories: one-third have some form of legal status, one-third are undocumented, or "illegal", and one-third are naturalized citizens. The undocumented immigrants either overstayed visas (about half of this group) or crossed the border illegally, and most have lived in the U.S. for five years or more.

Receiving the Immigrant: A Rocky History

The story of the United States is filled with successive waves of immigrants from a variety of countries.² With each new wave, the "older" population has protested. In the early 1900s, a Nebraska legislator stated in a local newspaper, "If these people are Americans, let them speak our language," echoing the public sentiment against the recent wave of German immigration.

It's important to recognize that citizenship,

Jenny Truax is continuing her amazing contributions to Catholic Worker thought by collecting CW works on Economics and posting it on KH's website (www.karenhousecw.org) and enjoying her new puppy Obi. Both are Jedis.

immigration and naturalization have consistently had a "preferential option" for whites. A few examples of this trend include the Naturalization Act of 1790 restricting citizenship to "free white persons," the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act banning all Chinese immigration, and the current visa quotas that severely restrict immigration from under-developed countries. Two hundred years of legal slavery, followed by 100 years of lynchings, Jim Crow laws, and economic oppression prevented over 10 million African "immigrants" and their descendants from enjoying the benefits of citizenship and freedom. Obstacles placed before people of color have provided a cumulative advantage of power and wealth for whites throughout U.S. history.

The U.S. government's response to immigration has become increasingly militarized in the past 30 years.³ In the 1980s the U.S. responded to an increase of refugees (many from Central American conflicts involving the U.S.) by imprisoning new immigrants before their status hearings, and this practice expanded in 1996. Now many people await their immigration status hearings in prisons, without legal representation, separated from family and resources. Privately-run prisons are a booming industry, even in the current economy. Notably, the inefficient, punitive and expensive strategy for both immigrants and drug users is the same: simply lock them up. According to U.S. law, it is a civil, not a criminal offense to cross the border illegally - the same level as a speeding ticket. Imprisoning border crossers is clearly disproportionate to the "crime" committed.

Confronting the Big Lies

Many attitudes in the U. S. towards immigrants are based upon the Big Lie, or rather Big Lies. It starts off with the talk radio mentality "immigrants fly into Hobby Airport on one day and the next day get on welfare and live happily ever after. First, they do not fly here, mostly they walk. Furthermore, they cannot get any kind of welfare. No food stamps, no welfare checks for families, no Medicaid, no disability. About the only thing available for immigrants is schooling for their children and limited health care in the emergency room [for which they are billed]."⁴ Immigrants contribute more to the U.S. economy than we realize - over \$80,000 more in taxes per person than they receive in state, federal, and local benefits over their lifetimes. People often blame crime on immigrants; however, studies have consistently shown that immigrants are far less likely than natives (U.S.-born people) to commit crime.

By and large, immigrants do not "take our jobs." They typically enter the U.S. job market at the top and bottom ends (most at the bottom), so the majority of U.S. jobs are not affected by immigration.



Companies from Kentucky and the Carolinas come to the Houston Catholic Worker's hiring hall to find immigrants willing to work on tobacco farms, in chicken factories, or in construction - extremely demanding, low-paying jobs. About 40% of all immigrants work on farms for huge "agri-business" produce corporations. Common working conditions on these farmlands include: being sprayed with pesticides while working, 12-15 hour work days, danger of sexual abuse and rape, and supervision by armed guards. Farm workers earn an average of \$10,000 per year, and are often paid by their harvest; 40-50 cents per 32-pound bucket is the going rate for tomato pickers in Florida.⁵

Unbridled Capitalism Requires Immigration

If Americans want to discuss the "problem of illegal aliens," they should start by addressing the neo-liberalism that has destroyed people's livelihoods in their home countries. Immigration has skyrocketed in the U.S. because we have enacted trade policies that destroy local economies while enriching multi-national corporations.

U.S. capitalism has adopted the philosophies of neo-liberalism, which encourage the privatization of public systems, the de-regulation of the market, an emphasis on corporate rights over national laws, and the free movement of wealth and trade. By

adopting these policies over several decades (under both Republican and Democratic leadership,) we have granted multi-national corporations unprecedented power. These decisions have created abject poverty for the majority of the world's citizens, devastated the planet's ecosystem, enshrined the values of materialism and convenience in the U.S., and caused a race to the bottom in worker's wages.

One major neo-liberal policy was NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement,) which took effect in 1994. NAFTA was the 9/11 for Mexican farmers - it allowed the U.S. to flood Mexican markets with heavily-subsidized corn, which bankrupted about 2 million small family farmers there. The result was a huge northward migration of desperate people searching for employment - out of work as a direct result of this unjust trade deal.⁶

The Houston Catholic Worker provides a further insight. "People from Mexico have been pouring in ever since [NAFTA's] passage." Many have told of how their small businesses failed because they could not compete with multinational corporations such as Wal-Mart, which opened hundreds of stores in Mexico after NAFTA. By design, NAFTA opened borders for wealth, investment, and trade, but not for labor -an illogical and cruel contradiction.

It's an expensive, complicated process for unskilled workers from the Global South to enter the U.S., but we desperately need these people to fill our labor pool due to both low fertility rates and employee shortages in the agriculture, construction, and service industries. People want to work, the U.S. needs the workers, and adjusting our outdated visa quotas is now essential. One example: Although the U.S. shares a 2,000-mile border with Mexico (population 110 million) it has the same visa quota as that of Botswana, Africa (population 1.8 million).⁷

It is also important to identify the connection between immigration and the sin of colonialism. Countries that have been scavenged for resources, whose populations have been enslaved, or that have lost wars of expansion, are often the "sending" countries, while countries benefiting from this exploitation are typically the "receiving" countries. Modern neo-liberal trade policies (which now also dominate the U.S.-influenced World Bank and International Monetary Fund) are the new face of colonialism, wrecking local economies, requiring privatization of public services, and

enforcing outrageous interest rates on underdeveloped countries.

Immigrants are at the bottom of the capitalist food chain, and it is more effective, compassionate, and logical to address the disease of capitalism rather than demonize the symptom. Immigrants in the U.S.- the Chinese railroad worker in the 1800s, the African slave on a tobacco plantation, and the Honduran factory worker of today - have rarely reaped the benefits of their labor. The inequality of wealth in the world (the top 1% of the world's population controlling over 56% of its wealth) is impossible without: 1) the oppression of millions in sweatshops, factories, and farmlands, 2) a public mythology that casts this oppressed majority as inferior (often racially), lazy, greedy, and/or dangerous, 3) governments that are controlled by wealth, and 4) the complicity of citizens born with privilege (you and me).

"Under capitalism there will never be a happy time when workers [native and immigrant] can start to work less, relax and enjoy the fruits of the extraordinary technological progress that capitalism has produced. We will always face pressures to tighten our belts, raise productivity and look over our shoulders at the other workers with whom we are competing."⁸ It is time to evolve, to transform our society's relationship to money, and to create new ways of sharing wealth. It will take a shift, in the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., from a "thing-oriented society to a person-oriented society."⁹ The truth is that we have both the natural resources and ingenuity (but perhaps not the will) for people -native AND immigrant- to meet their needs.

Action

"If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality." - Desmond Tutu

It's up to us to challenge and change the U.S. immigration laws. Most reform proposals include these elements¹⁰:

- Updating and expanding the number of visas granted - the current number does not meet the great demand for immigrant workers, hence our



Cesar Chavez / JAC

huge undocumented population.

- Addressing the lopsided trade deals that devastate sending countries' economies

- Proportionately enforcing immigration laws (In 2000, the Vera Institute demonstrated the efficacy of providing legal information, referrals, and reminders to asylum seekers in an alternative pilot program, resulting in a 93% appearance rate at about one-fourth of the cost of detention.)

- Guaranteeing a fair hearing and legal representation for immigrants seeking to live in the US.

- Offering undocumented immigrants the opportunity to gain legal status through an earned legalization program.

We also need to finally admit - and what better time than in a major financial crisis - that capitalism has gotten out of control. (Many would say that this is capitalism's inevitable function). The Catholic Worker envisions a new world where it is easier for us to be good: as a society, we need to build new systems of organizing ourselves and our money. As Americans, we've come to expect and depend on products - food, electronics, and clothes - that directly harm others. Immigrants do the back-breaking work that satisfies this demand for year-round strawberries, fancy home landscaping, and inexpensive outfits at Target. We can take small steps to support alternatives (organic, seasonal, and/or local food, Fair Trade items, and sweatshop-free clothes) that provide dignified employment and earth-friendly practices. We might experiment with non-participation in unjust systems (from banning the purchase of new electronics to war tax resistance). We should curtail the materialism ravaging our country and our families by getting rid of the cable TV, resisting our tendency to "upgrade," and building relationships with the poor and vulnerable.¹¹

It is time to learn about, debate, and experiment with economic systems that value human needs over profit-making. The Catholic Worker promotes distributism, where productive property (our work, land, houses, tools, etc.) is spread as widely as possible, rather than centralized under the state's control (socialism) or controlled by a few multi-national corporations and wealthy individuals (capitalism).¹² The Catholic Worker ideal "building networks of small, personalist communities valuing manual labor, connected with the land and focused on the Works of Mercy" has a myriad of expressions across the world. Decentralized community networks that value self-subsistence would provide plenty of dignified work, reducing the major cause of immigration, the desperate search for work. Immigration might become a more voluntary phenomenon in this new society. Towards this goal, we can both learn about different models and build these inclusive communities. In small groups, it's far easier to buy Fair Trade coffee in bulk, to share clothing,

to build small credit unions, to grow our food, to create inclusive decision-making structures, and to perform the Works of Mercy (like hospitality to the poor and the immigrant).

No one person, U.S. President or not, can or will reign in corporate wealth or ensure basic human rights for all people in this country. Our laws greatly favor big business, not workers, and certainly not those who can't work. It is up to each of us to take personal responsibility, recognize our privilege and create alternatives now.



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Immigration In Light of Faith

by Carolyn Griffeth

Sylvia visits the climatron at the Missouri Botanical Gardens to breathe in the aroma of Nicaragua and remember faces and places left behind. Perhaps the scent of coffee and banana blossoms take her back to her childhood in Nicaragua, or to the birth of her first son, who she has not seen for fourteen years. Now she inhales deeply, introducing the unborn daughter in her womb to the smells of her ancestors.

Sylvia is savoring the calm before the storm. Her baby's father, a recent arrival from Nicaragua, is due to be deported just after their baby is born. His story is an unlucky one. While visiting some Latino friends, who were US citizens, the household was raided by the INS, and everyone was asked to show documents. Having none, Carlos was taken to jail. After posting bail he was released but a recent court hearing concluded he would be deported in July. With a baby daughter to provide for, as well as relatives back home, it is no surprise that Carlos plans to stay in the US. He will be here illegally, as before, but now with an INS case. "He will have to get all new documents, a new job, and move," Sylvia says. "It will be like the birth of my son, Ramos, (with her ex-husband, also Nicaraguan) we were always on the move - only the INS is more aggressive these days."

Sylvia's reality of forced separation from family members and of living in hiding in fear of deportation is shared by countless undocumented immigrants. As "illegals" they live as strangers in a strange land, a land whose wealth and leisure is built on their exploited labor, but which hides them and denies them access to the same. It seems that we have forgotten that ours is a nation born of immigrants, who likewise arrived full of dreams on an already inhabited land, often carrying Bibles with much to say about how we treat strangers amongst us: "When a stranger sojourns with you in your land,

you shall not do (the stranger) wrong. The stranger who sojourns with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love (the stranger) as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Leviticus 19:33-34). In these words and many similar passages, scripture seeks to remind us of our own history of displacement and living at the mercy of others and to compel us to act with consideration and compassion.

Yet these admonitions often fall on disinterested ears. It has been too long in the Anglo-American memory since we have been foreigners, since we had to ask the natives to share their crops for our survival, since we were the ones who couldn't speak the language, since we, like the Jews in Egypt, were not allowed the benefits of citizenship. Insulated from the realities of the world, we imagine ourselves as living in an independently wealthy nation while inebriating ourselves with the cup of the global economy. Yet our national stupor is not enough to dull the anxious feeling that someone is coming who might snatch our cup away. Within our national discourse, that person is the illegal immigrant. And so we give them walls, militias, and every obstacle to integration.

Leviticus' admonition to "Love the stranger [foreigner, alien] as yourself" makes clear not only that hostility towards those who are "different" is wrong, but also that such hostility is nothing new. It is a chronic pattern which often arises in human society. Human societies are said to have evolved for the adaptive value of forging an increased network of human cooperation, enforced through cultural adhesion. A central question then for any society, and every participant in society, is: How far, or to whom, do we extend our cooperative boundary? Depending on how it is answered, this question can lead to another: Wouldn't we have more for our

Carolyn Griffeth, though usually at home raising kids, veggies and flowers, managed to recently engage in civil disobedience at Blackwater, or Xe. She invites all to come by this summer for flowers, peaches, and greens.



Rita Corbin

selves if we designated a group of individuals (not at all like us) from which to steal?

A society's answer to these questions can be seen at its borders. Are there great barriers erected between nations, races, classes, sexes, neighborhoods, and neighbors? The militarization of the Mexican border, suburbanization, rise of gated neighborhoods, and almost mandated use of privacy fences in some neighborhoods, are just a few visuals that speak of the state of our nation. From a certain perspective this is all good. It is important to know with whom we share, and from whom we steal; after all, it makes no sense to steal from a man or woman and later share your plunder with their children. Although, this is exactly what we do often times with our "charitable" contributions to those poor, starving children in the "undeveloped" world. Yet, even this act can be useful for bolstering our superior identity: We are generous. We are Americans!

The reinforced boundaries of our nation and our neighborhoods also serve to remove from our vision, and thus from the potential for relationship, the people who are "different," the ones who are exploited, and often enough the ones who receive our charity. In this highly removed context, real charity, with all its provocative potential, has become endangered. How can one ask, as St. Vincent De Paul suggested, the poor "to forgive the bread we give," as beneficiaries of systems of economic exploitation, when we don't even encounter them? Instead of pricking our individual and national conscience, such

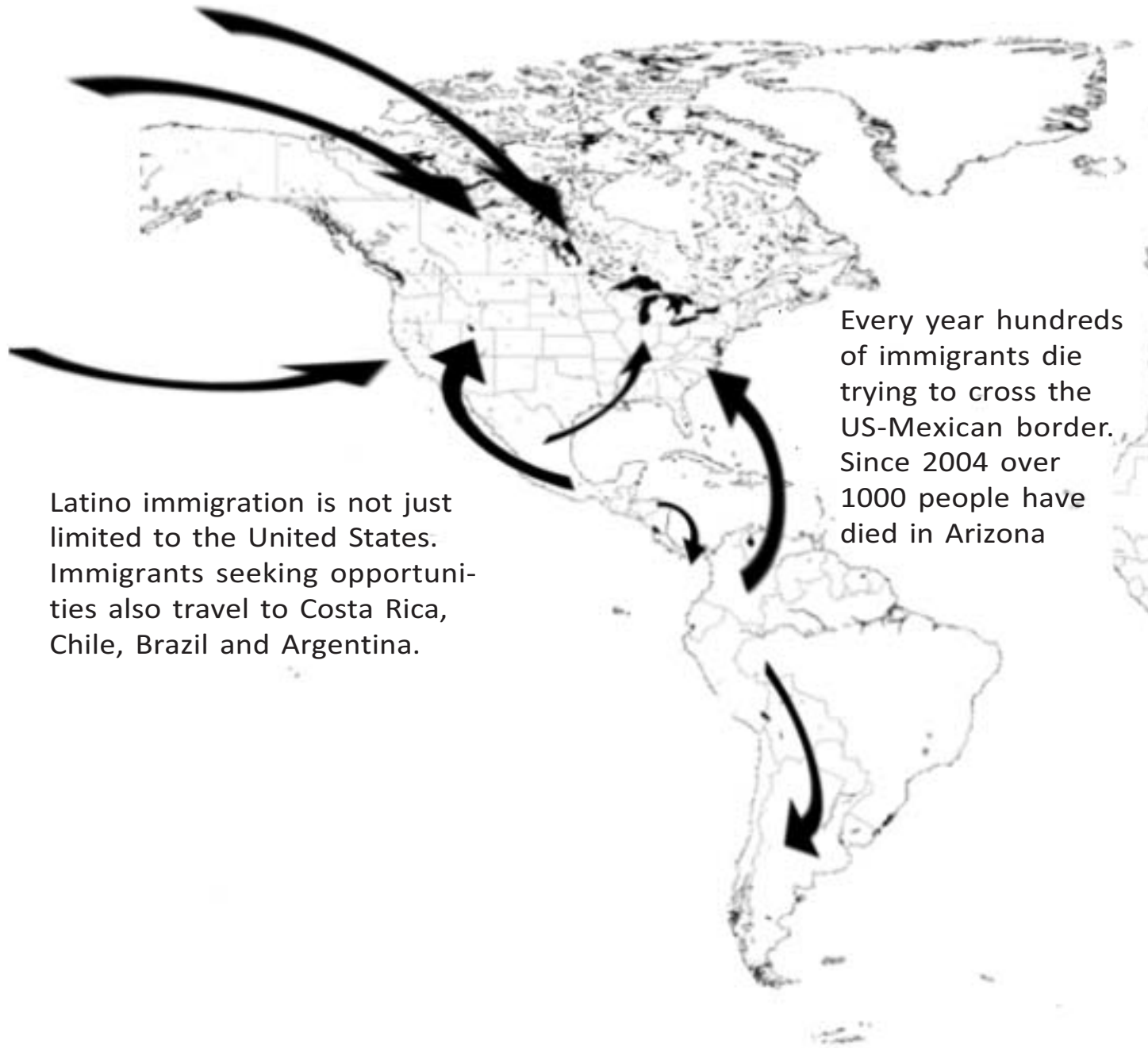
blinded "giving" appeases us, putting our uneasy questions to rest.

Leviticus wrote, "When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do the stranger wrong..." yet this assumes a degree of contact. This is not because the Israelites had no separatist tendencies, but because the ancient world placed considerable emphasis on the practice of hospitality, as safe trade and immigration were seen to be in everyone's best interest. Xenia, a Greek word for obligatory hospitality, and friendship between foreigner and host, mandated that if one found out that a person did not have a place to sleep or was hungry, one must ask that person into one's home. The Hebrews, Arabs, Greeks, and the Romans all practiced some form of xenia. The exhortation of Leviticus builds on this tradition while calling God's people to take it to another level: that of loving each stranger, foreigner, or alien as ourselves. But can one really love, which means actively love, or actually care about the needs and wellbeing of everyone?

A scholar of religious law asked of Jesus, "And who is my neighbor, teacher?" Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead with no clothes. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, he too passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and looked after him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise." (Luke 10:30-37)

Considering that the Jews ostracized the Samaritans, whose practices violated Jewish law, and that the Samaritans equally hated the Jews, Jesus' story speaks not only to the all-encompassing demands of neighborly love, but also models hospitality as a means of dissolving such divisions. His answer is something like this: Stop thinking about all your exclusionary laws and ideologies, getting ahead, or saving up for yourselves, and see and care for the needs of the one before you, the stranger, and the less fortunate. And for those of us living in a land of the privileged and in "ghettos" of privilege therewith, I'd argue that the parable extols us

Global Pathways



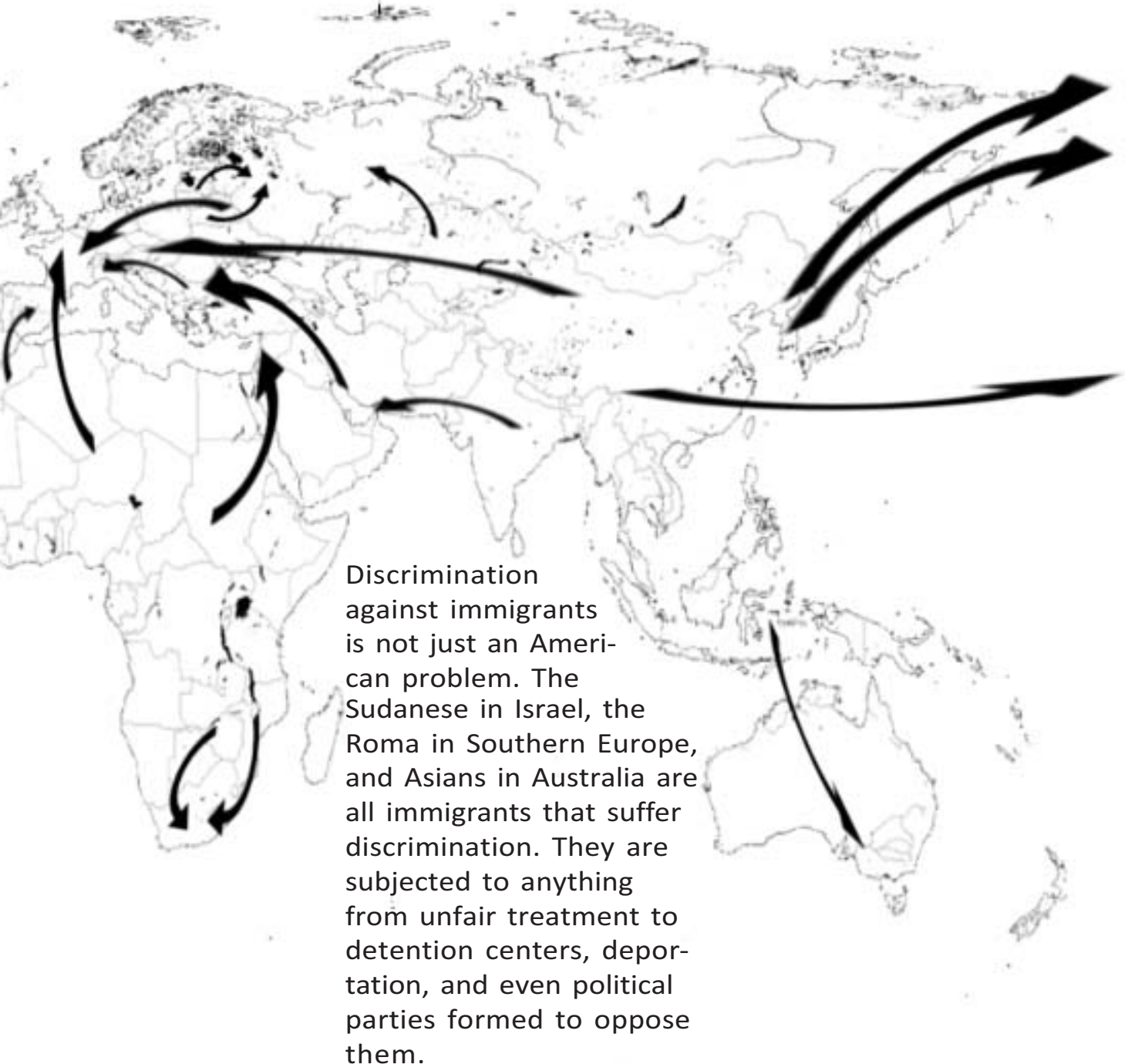
Latino immigration is not just limited to the United States. Immigrants seeking opportunities also travel to Costa Rica, Chile, Brazil and Argentina.

Every year hundreds of immigrants die trying to cross the US-Mexican border. Since 2004 over 1000 people have died in Arizona

Notice that the pathways of immigration follow the concentration of wealth. Since the appearance of capitalism, people have had to leave their homelands in hope of survival, and globalization has exaggerated this reality to the benefit of corporations and the detriment of the working poor.

of Immigration

Refugees as immigrants: The UNHCR reports that in 2008 the number of refugees rose from 9.9 million to 11.4 million people.



even further: Go beyond the walls that protect you and travel, even unnecessarily, the troublesome road. Be Present. Love awaits you. Not to mention, the fullness of life, which is what the scholar of Jewish Law was asking Jesus about to begin with: "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 10:25)

Although there are many ways of traveling the troublesome road or going to the margins, they ultimately merge in calling us to the practice of hospitality in its biblical sense. In his book *Reaching Out*, Henri Nouwen writes, "If there is any concept worth restoring to its original depth and evocative potential, it is the concept of hospitality." (1) No Catholic Worker could argue with that. Yet it can be hard to actually say what hospitality means to us.

In Paul's list of the "Marks of the True Christian" in Romans chapter 12, we are told in verse 13 to practice hospitality. The Greek word, *philoxenia*, translated as "practice hospitality" is also used in Hebrews 13:2: "Do not forget to entertain strangers [*philoxenia*], for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels." The word *philoxenia* literally means the love of foreigners or strangers; more broadly, it refers to the divinely sanctioned responsibility to share the burdens of "outsiders," which fosters *xenia*, a particular kind of friendship between people who began as strangers but, by virtue of a sort of providence or caring, end up having strong lifelong bonds. Such friendships, I believe, are the life-blood of the Catholic Worker Movement.

In the chapter titled, "Creating Space for Strangers," Nouwen details further the nature of this relationship: "When hostility is converted into hospitality, then fearful strangers can become guests revealing to their hosts the promise they are carrying with them. Then, in fact, the distinction between host and guest proves to be artificial and evaporates in the recognition of the new found unity." Nouwen argues further that this is the core of our Christian vocation, to convert hostility (i.e. *xenophobia*) into hospitality (i.e. *xenophilia*), and "the enemy into a guest and to create the free and fearless space where brotherhood and sisterhood can be formed and fully experienced."

I have learned a lot from these words of Nouwen. For one thing, they reveal that the goal of hospitality is real relationship, in which we can't help but encounter the common humanity of one another, despite the categorical differences which competitive, fear-driven societies have employed to separate us. Furthermore, Nouwen's writing makes clear that although hospitality is often recognized as an act of service toward one in need, this is just the beginning. It is the planting of a small seed, whose full flowering is mutuality in which both parties give and receive according to need and ability. It is this experience of mutuality, the flowering of brotherly, sisterly love that is the fullness of life itself, the Kin-

dom of God. This is the gift received when we dare to break through our preset boundaries and live cooperatively with all strangers. And the greater the divisions we courageously cross, the greater the measure of our shared liberation. What starker divisions could be found than one's life and livelihood being legal versus illegal?

In my life, practicing hospitality to those our nation calls illegal has been enlightening. Since my husband and I live below the poverty line, embrace manual labor, and try to live a simple sustainable lifestyle, it is easy to forget that we are nonetheless embedded in privilege. Both of us grew up with adequate housing, food, and education, and knowing that we could choose a fulfilling life for ourselves without facing danger or permanently separating ourselves from our family or loved ones. This is not the reality of any of the undocumented immigrants I have known. For most, finding meaningful work isn't even a part of the dialogue. They must work to pay the bills, not only for their own often cramped apartments, but also for their relatives back home, who either can't find work or are paid meager wages. Furthermore, while living already in crowded quarters, immigrants often make room for one more when someone new arrives in the country or is otherwise in need. Realizing this helps me to see that as a Catholic Worker community we are not that exceptional because we share our housing and resources with others. On the contrary, we are following the ancient tradition of *xenia*, which still thrives amongst groups of individuals who are in touch with their need for one another.

For me, the greatest gift of being engaged in *philoxenia*, or hospitality to immigrants, is the life-changing relationships forged. For example, my friend Sylvia has made me see the privilege it is to know that a militarized border will never separate me from my children, and that I never have to worry that my husband will be randomly arrested or deported. But more than anything, our relationship has made the pain of every mother who is separated from her son or daughter by a border my own pain. Also mine are the struggles of every immigrant being exploited in the workforce, detained in prison, or crossing the border hoping to survive and find shelter.

When I consider the costs of our nation's immigration policies, it is not the monetary costs that I count, rather is the cost of division itself: Separating mothers and fathers from one another and from their parents and children, and separating ourselves from those "strangers" with whom we might forge transformative relationships—relationships with the potential of showing us what life is really about.



Looking into the Face of Our Neighbor: Latin American Immigration to the US

by Marilyn Lorenz and Susan Ryan

Immigration is not a new issue in the U.S. Of course, we are a country of immigrants -who asked the indigenous peoples if the first immigrants had the "right" papers? And, we are a country with exceptions for the newest arrivals: Benjamin Franklin's concern over the Germans in the 1700s, the Chinese Exclusion Act in the 1800s, quotas for Italians, Jews and Greeks in the early 1900s. Legal or not, the U.S. has not been a welcoming place in spite of Lady Liberty in the Harbor.

The Center for Immigration Studies reports that in 1970, immigrants accounted for one in twenty-one U.S. residents. In 2007 that number reached one in eight, or 37.9 million, due to an immigration wave at the turn of the twenty-first century, the largest immigration wave since the 1920s. U.S. immigration scholars have referred to this wave as "the new immigration." The *New York Times* reports that for the first time, "illegal" immigrants outnumber legal immigrants entering the U.S.: in 2008, 11.9 million "illegal" immigrants were estimated to be living in the U.S.

Today, the U.S. Census Bureau reports that there are an estimated 20 million Latin American immigrants in the United States, making Latin Americans the largest immigrant group in the U.S: Latin America is the region of birth for 58.7% of all immigrants entering the U.S. from 2000-2007 (Center for Immigration Studies). Latin American immigrants, both legal and "illegal", comprise 8% of the U.S. work force (*New York Times* article "A slippery place in the U.S. workforce" (<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/22/us/22immig.html>). It is important to note, however, that while legal immigration is well documented by several sources including the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), the Bureau of the Census, the Department of Justice, the Department of Labor, and the Department of Commerce, the data on "illegal" or undocumented immigration is less reliable.

What is driving this immigration? Poverty and

Globalization drive immigration

Throughout the 1960s, and for a short period in 1980, Latin American refugees largely consisted of Cubans; however, by the early 1980s, Cold War tensions in Central America resulting in large-scale population displacement provoked a new trend of large-scale immigration from war-torn countries such as El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua.

In large part, the most recent immigration increases have been brought on by unemployment and poverty, according to the Labor Research Association. The Labor Research Association reports that in Mexico, per capita GDP in 2005 was \$10,100, compared with \$42,000 in the U.S. Further, 40% of the Mexican population lives in poverty, compared with 12% of the U.S. population. The IMF reports \$10,235 for 2008, but does that mean an increase for all, or more accumulated wealth for the top 10%?

A large number of the immigrants crossing the border from Mexico into the U.S. are originally from Guatemala, where 2005 per capita GDP was \$5,200 (2008, \$2,848) and 75% of the population lives in poverty. The Hondurans who cross the border from Mexico to the U.S. are leaving a nation where 53% of the population lives in poverty and the annual per capita GDP was only \$2,800 in 2005 (Labor Research Association) and \$1842 in 2008 (IMF). Similarly in Nicaragua, \$2,688 in 2005 lowered to \$1,025 in 2008. For El Salvador, where at least 700 people leave each day, from \$2,618.26 per capita in 2006, the figure was \$3,824 in 2008. This increase still does not meet the needs of the rural population.

The Dominican Republic-Central American Free Trade Agreement ((DR-CAFTA) has also fueled much immigration from Central America. In the report on DR-CAFTA for 2008, the three countries which have implemented the treaty, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua show none of the benefits promised. Too many jobs have been lost in the agricultural sector to balance the new low paying jobs in the maquilas (factories) of the transnational

Susan Ryan will head off to Law School after her May SLU graduation. She interned at IFCLA this semester.

Marilyn Lorenz is Program Coordinator of IFCLA (Inter-Faith Committee on Latin America) and a long time friend of the Catholic Worker communities. She visits Ann Managanaro's on-going work at the Clinic in Guarjila each March.

corporations. The increase in exports did not benefit the local economies which cannot compete in a global market. Instead of improving the balance of trade, the opposite has occurred. In the pharmaceutical industry, patents restrictions are extended for twenty years, limiting the entrance of generic drugs. DR-CAFTA also facilitates megaprojects of mineral extraction (paying little or no tax) which destroy and pollute ancestral lands leaving the indigenous with no recourse. In short, DR-CAFTA is increasing migration and compounding economic inequalities rather than cooperation and sustainability.

The Effects on Guarjila, El Salvador

What I am about to discuss is anecdotal based on reading and discussions with Salvadorans over the years. I began to go to El Salvador in March of 1987 and have returned fifteen times since 1992. IFCLA (St. Louis Inter-Faith Committee on Latin America) made a covenant with Guarjila, Chalatenango in January of 1988 and has supported the repopulation of the community and the work of the clinic started by Sr. Ann Manganaro, SL, who was part of the Karen House Community in the early days.

Why is it that 20% of the population of El Salvador lives in the United States? War, Government Policy, CAFTA, Family, Jobs, etc. All of these factors play a part in the migration of Salvadorans.

War: During the late 1970s a brutal repression against the organized people's movement (campesinos, labor, catechists, teachers, etc.) gave rise to a civil war which began in earnest after the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero on March 24, 1980. The Salvadoran security forces moved across the countryside massacring villages and pushing the people off the land. Some went to Honduras, some went to the cities and many went to other countries. Perhaps two million came to the United States. Parents sent their sons to avoid forced recruitment into military service; families who had resources left to start new lives; activist leaders escaped to protect their lives. The civil war finally ended in 1992 with Peace Accords which raised hopes and expectations. Some returned to El Salvador to be part of the new El Salvador, but many had put down roots and taken advantage of the 1986 immigration "amnesty." These "anchor" people have pulled people to join uncles or friends to make a new life, if only for a while.

Government Policy: During the war, the unofficial policy was, if we could just get the population down to levels of 1960, the country could be on better economic footing." However, after the Peace Accords, the young and the not-so-young returned

home to start families. There was a baby boom. Instead of focusing on finding meaningful employment for the demobilized soldiers and guerrilla, the Salvadoran ARENA (National Republican Alliance) government turned to free market and neoliberal economic policies. Agriculture was abandoned as the life blood of the country. President Armando Calderon Sol (1994-1999) undermined the gains promised in the Peace Accords and encouraged the privatization of state-owned industries and funds to finance the government but not social programs. Francisco Flores (1999-2004) strengthened bonds with the United States, giving up the national currency and adopting the dollar, attempted to privatize the public health facilities, and actually encouraged citizens to migrate to the U.S. Tony Saca (2004-2009) furthered the commitment to the free market. The needs of the poor were largely ignored except for an occasional "photo-op" donation of housing or a school. He continued to try to privatize public health and water services and to welcome mining, hydroelectric projects and other mega-projects like highways and maquiladores.

DR-CAFTA went into effect in 2004 with the passing of a required (by the U.S.) anti-terrorism law. Parts of San Salvador look like Miami, with huge shopping malls, fast food chains and luxury car dealerships. The banks are owned by Citibank and other transnationals. Globalization has flooded the market with junk food and trinkets. Free market allows the cost of pharmaceuticals to be 550-580% higher than in Nicaragua. In El Salvador there is no law nor regulation of the pharmaceutical industry and the government opposes the creation of any laws or regulation. The promise of jobs from CAFTA was illusory. New lower-paying jobs increased, but many maquilas moved to China for a net loss of jobs.

In the 2008 report from the Ana Manganaro Clinic, Dr. Dagoberto Menjivar writes, "In El Salvador, the crisis is aggravated even more because of the high unemployment of the active economic population of Salvadorans. The PNUD (UN Development Program), in its 2007-2008 report for El Salvador, said that the government does not have a considerable secondary employment policy. The report says that more than 50% of the population is underemployed and that only 20% of the employees make a living salary. The other 80% of employees earn between 180-300 dollars a month."

"The Government has attempted to alleviate the situation with programs, such as Net Solidarity, (in which they give between 20 and 30 dollars a month to the families that live in extreme poverty), and improvement through building some highways and introducing a few services, like the availability of drinking water, electricity, some health services and more. All of this is good, but it is very focused and does not do anything to improve the fiscal situation. In order to make fiscal reforms for those that most need the resources, those of whom will end up pay

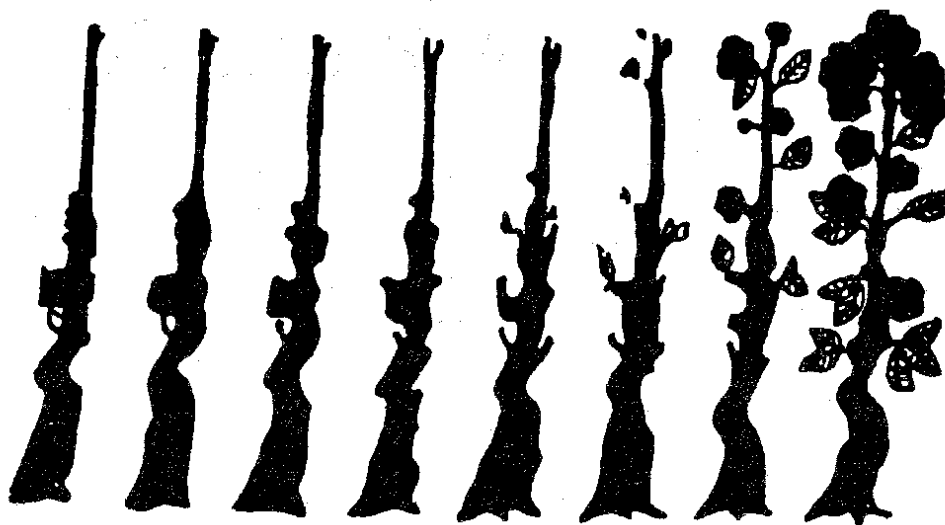
ing the taxes, it is necessary to pursue the greatest tax evaders and to sanction the largest companies that follow the law, etc."

It is in this context that a reported 700 Salvadorans leave for the North each day. Many pay a coyote up to \$7,000 to guide them across Guatemala and Mexico into the U.S. They sell animals, borrow from family in the U.S., or use their family's land as collateral to gather this huge sum. They get three tries to cross and have a year to pay back the debt. This puts them under a great pressure to work at whatever job they can find and to live in crowded conditions to save money. The goal is to pay back the debt and earn enough to send money home on a regular basis. The people from Guarjila are very lucky. They have a trusted and successful coyote that they use and most "make it." Many, but not all, families in Guarjila have at least one member living and working somewhere in the U.S. A few can travel with a visa, but for most such a luxury is out of reach. Almost all applications are denied after the \$135 interview at the U.S. Embassy in San Salvador.

Another factor which has influenced Salvadoran migration is TPS (Temporary Protection Status). This has been granted due to the civil war and the earthquakes of 1986 and 2001. Salvadorans have been given this special renewable status, creating an artificial sense of normalcy to many living in the U.S. for many years. Some say that this benefit has also been extended as a "pay back" for the Salvadoran troops who were sent to Iraq. (Their tour ended in the spring of 2009.)

In the past, before 9/11, there was a fair amount of north/south movement. I would see men in their pick-ups trucks driving through Guarjila, visiting their families, only to return to their work in the U.S. Now that flow is less frequent. The borders are more dangerous to cross and the penalties are too great.

What is the effect of this migration? I would call it the two-edged sword of prosperity. Families now have disposable income. There is a section of the banks solely for remittances. Dollars flow and products are purchased. Older people have "social security," single mothers receive monthly checks from their partners to clothe and feed their children, children left behind with relatives or neighbors can buy cell phones and other electronics, make up, and cool status items. However, the social disintegration costs are great. U.S. products are preferred to those pro-



duced locally. TV programming presents images and situations foreign to their lifestyles and reality. Obesity is becoming an issue as pre-packaged sugar treats replace fruits and the need to work is transformed into taking the bus to Western Union or the bank. Youth do not have to do chores and traditional respect for parents and elders diminish when having is more important than being together in the struggle to create life out of little.

The economic downturn is both a blessing and a curse. Finding life too expensive and the loss of jobs in the U.S. have sent some folks back to Guarjila. Others have been deported. The risk of not arriving safely is also a deterrent, but there were new departures from 2008-2009. The life in El Salvador is many times harder than the hardest life in the U.S.

There is still an echo of hope. Organized efforts to create micro-businesses in fish and other produce support a few families. Struggles against mineral mining, hydroelectric dams, and the routing of a major highway away from the community have united the people in a common project. And finally, grassroots work over the last twenty years has led to the election of the first FMLN Presidency. There is a tremendous sense of triumph and hope that the cause of the poor will be foremost in the new government. People are ready to work and participate. However, President Mauricio Funes faces a National Assembly with a majority block of the right and the worldwide economic crisis. If he can follow through on his commitment to follow Mons. Oscar Romero's "preferential option for the poor," then life will improve for the majority of Salvadorans and they will be able to stay home to create the life they fought to hard to achieve.

(http://www.cispes.org/documents/DR-CAFTA_Effects_and_Alternatives.pdf)



Immigration Reform

by Sarah Cool

The issue of Immigration to the U.S. has become increasingly more complicated and more precarious in this post-9/11 era. With the creation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the beefing up of the Department of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), immigrants find many more roadblocks than ever before to citizenship, decent employment, fair housing, access to healthcare and education, and even something as simple as a legitimate drivers license along with vehicle ownership and insurance. Our legal immigration process can take, at best, 6 years, and in some extreme cases, up to 28 years to complete. And even then, after all those years of waiting, many still cannot gain citizenship. Spouses, minor children and parents of U.S. citizens have the easiest route to citizenship, while those who are siblings of U.S. citizens have the longest wait.

According to US law, an immigrant is a foreign-born individual who has been admitted to reside permanently in the US as a Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR). There are three ways to get admitted to permanently live in the US: family-sponsored visas, employment-sponsored visas, or by winning a visa in the annual diversity visa lottery. This lottery system is only open to immigrants of certain countries, and is becoming increasingly limited in availability. Others are allowed to immigrate with Refugee or asylum status in order to escape persecution in their homeland. They must prove that they have a well-founded fear on the basis of race, religion, membership in a social group, political opinion, or national origin. Once approved, a Refugee or Asylee can apply for LPR status after one year.

Many people recognize that our current immigration policy is broken and has failed to regulate the flow of migrants to the US. There are now approximately 9.3 million undocumented immigrants living and working in the U.S., many of whom have remained separated from their families for years, waiting for visas. Deaths along the border have reached alarming rates, increasing 21% from 2006 to 2007. More than three million children who are citizens of the U.S have at least one undocumented

parent. Detention Watch Network states that by the end of 2009, the U.S. government will hold over 440,000 people in immigration custody – more than triple the number of people in detention just ten years ago – in a hodgepodge of approximately 400 facilities at an annual cost of more than \$1.7 billion.

Human Rights Violations of the Undocumented

Although the government's post 9/11 counterterrorism efforts have had the most negative impact on Muslims and people of Arab descent, many of the newly-enacted policies have had a detrimental effect on undocumented immigrants as a whole. These strategies have even had adverse effects on US citizens who have been mistaken for immigrants or because their immigrant family members have been targeted. As a result, the civil liberties of these people have been seriously undermined. In 2007, 63% of all hate crimes were committed against Latinos. Many would agree that there have been infringements on the civil rights of all people who call the US their home since 9/11.

Undocumented workers often fill particularly "undesirable" jobs that others avoid. They are paid at the lowest end of the wage scale. Some employers take advantage of the workers' legal vulnerability by threats, imposing excessive demands and withholding portions of their already minimal wages.

Undocumented immigrants have access to emergency health care but not long-term treatment, even though they may suffer injuries related to their jobs. They cannot organize with others to protest unjust treatment or to petition for changes in their work situation. They do not receive benefits that other workers receive. Their undocumented status puts them at considerable jeopardy and in abject subordination, even as they are doing productive labor that contributes to the US economy.

In addition to these difficulties, undocumented people live under the constant threat of being caught by ICE. The department frequently conducts raids and sweeps at factories, day laborer sites, and apartment complexes where undocumented people live and work. Routine traffic and police stops can also

Sarah Cool lives at Cherith Brook Catholic Worker House in Kansas City, Missouri and has two daughters, ages 6 and 19.

trigger ICE action. When caught up in a raid or sweep, folks are separated from their families, placed in detention, must provide for their own legal counsel, and face eventual deportation.

To help families prepare for something like this to happen, the Office of Immigration Issues with the Presbyterian Church in Louisville, KY provides a comprehensive Family Care Plan online (pcusa.org) to inform undocumented families who are concerned about their rights being compromised of what might happen to their children as well as their personal property should they be forced to enter into the deportation process. Completing this packet with undocumented friends is a great way to help support them should they ever be detained because of their immigration status.

The National Council of La Raza (NCLR) indicates that in recent years there has been much legislation and other activity at the state level imposing harsh restrictions specifically on Immigrants' access to state-issued driver's licenses and identification documents. These proposals go well beyond denying undocumented Immigrants access to driver's licenses, and have the potential to exclude legal immigrants and even U.S. citizens from state-issued identification documents. Moreover, they are of great concern because they prohibit drivers from being properly licensed and insured, discriminate against Immigrants and other groups, and make entire communities less safe. The NCLR believes that a state-issued driver's license should be reliable proof of an individual's identity and proof of authorization to drive a motor vehicle; it should not be tied to an individual's immigration status. There are legitimate and sound avenues for individuals to prove identity which would allow state Departments of Motor Vehicles to fulfill their mission of ensuring safe roads without creating new licensing requirements that would make the driver's license a de facto proof of legal residency in the U.S.

In April of 2005, the New York Times published an article that illustrated some of the issues of undocumented workers, the significant amount of money they contribute in the employment taxes that they and their employers pay to the U.S. government, and how this system actually bolsters the U.S. economy with billions of dollars annually.

Since illegally crossing the Mexican border into the United States six years ago, Ángel Martínez has done backbreaking work, harvesting asparagus, pruning grapevines and picking the



ripe fruit. More recently, he has also washed trucks, often working as much as 70 hours a week, earning \$8.50 to \$12.75 an hour.

Not surprisingly, Mr. Martínez, 28, has not given much thought to Social Security's long-term financial problems. But Mr. Martínez - who comes from the state of Oaxaca in southern Mexico and hiked for two days through the desert to enter the United States near Tecate, some 20 miles east of Tijuana - contributes more than most Ameri-

cans to the solvency of the nation's public retirement system.

Last year, Mr. Martínez paid about \$2,000 toward Social Security and \$450 for Medicare through payroll taxes withheld from his wages. Yet unlike most Americans, who will receive some form of a public pension in retirement and will be eligible for Medicare as soon as they turn 65, Mr. Martínez is not entitled to benefits.

He belongs to a big club. As the debate over Social Security heats up, the estimated seven million or so illegal immigrant workers in the United States are now providing the system with a subsidy of as much as \$7 billion a year.

While it has been evident for years that illegal immigrants pay a variety of taxes, the extent of their contributions to Social Security is striking: the money added up to about 10 percent of last year's surplus - the difference between what the system currently receives in payroll taxes and what it doles out in pension benefits. Moreover, the money paid by illegal workers and their employers is factored into all the Social Security Administration's projections.

The Call for Immigration Reform

One of the most promising programs created to address these issues in a broad sense is called Comprehensive Immigration Reform (CIR). Proponents of CIR emphasize that any immigration reform must include a sensible, compassionate, and just path to citizenship for most of the undocumented living in the US; it must provide workplace protections and living wages for all workers in the US; it must honor and respect the dignity of family unity; finally, it must create humane border policies. Proponents also demand the suspension of workplace raids until federal CIR is enacted. These mandates are being promoted in the midwest by an organization based in Kansas City, Missouri called the Immigrant Justice Advocacy Movement (IJAM), associated with the New Sanctuary Movement.

The NCLR also stands firmly behind CIR. They state

that the current US immigration system is in need of fundamental reform. They believe that real reform must establish policies that address the needs of the country now and in the future. Congressional failure to enact reform has led to piecemeal state and local measures that are detrimental to the well-being and safety of Hispanic and sister communities. The harsh tone of the immigration debate in recent years has created an environment of intolerance against immigrants, regardless of immigration status, and against Latinos in general. They claim that our broken system has led to a burgeoning undocumented population whose status makes it easier for them to be preyed upon and harder for them to integrate into American society. Federal leadership is required to address these failed policies and ensure that our treatment of immigrants is aligned with America's best values and traditions.

One crucial practice of justice is to correct the abuses occurring in our midst. The awful conditions that are experienced by undocumented workers are not intolerable to them because they are desperate for the income. But these abuses should be regarded as intolerable by the rest of us. Undocumented workers are put in the position of a servant class. Michael Walzer, a political philosopher, asserts that to use a person's labor without making available the full rights of citizens is akin to tyranny.

The Presbyterian Church goes on to say that undocumented immigrants contribute positively to our

communities in many ways. This needs to be acknowledged and affirmed as we consider immigration reform. It is well known that immigrants are hard working risk-takers who have endured a great deal to immigrate to the US. It is often extraordinary what these immigrants have to deal with in this new land. Yet they persist with tenacity and courage in the face of great difficulties that would discourage many of the rest of us. They bring the gifts of their identities and cultures, which often include prevailing through experiences of war, persecution and tyranny.

Persons who have been living in our communities and participating in a responsible way are, morally speaking, already members of our society. Membership is at its heart relational in character. When persons live and work as citizens do, they are in fact members, even if their relationship to the community has not been formally established. The de facto membership of undocumented immigrants should be acknowledged and legalized.

There are two bills that need our support right now: 1) the Child Protection Act which gives immigration judges the discretion to do what is right for citizen children in deportation cases, and 2) The DREAM Act, which opens doors to education and citizenship for undocumented youths who are completing high school and seeking to be integrated into US society. Please call and write your representatives to support these initiatives.



Mailbox: Letter to the editor

Hello, Friends!

I loved the "Holy Families" issue of the *Round Table* and, as always, I thank you for your insight and honesty. One particularly interesting essay was Teka's about how families arrange to care for older members.

I would like to see further discussion about how Catholic Worker families care for their community members and guests as they age. I remember when I lived in Saginaw's Jeannine Coallier House with Renaye Fewless, and she said to me one day, when my old bones were creaking a bit, "Isn't it wonderful to know that in the Catholic Worker you'll always have a home?" That was one of the most loving things anyone ever said to me, and although my birth daughters will also make sure I am surrounded by love and care, I think that openness to "until death do us part" is an important aspect of Catholic Worker life.

At the 2008 national gathering in Worcester, Joan and Chris Montesano led a session on Aging and the Worker, and pointed out that as founding mothers and fathers age, communities need to plan for the changes that will be involved in eventually caring for them, especially as social security income and health insurance are rare for folks who have lived their lives in precarity. Years ago, Ade Bethune had plans for a Catholic Worker type of cooperative for the aging, but unfortunately it morphed into a glamorous assisted-living facility way out of the reach of any Worker. Perhaps as young people think about starting houses of their own or moving into and reshaping existing communities, they could think about a new type of hospitality--providing a physically accessible and emotionally gentle retirement community for Workers.

Peace, Rosalie Riegler



From Kabat House

by John Nolan

Tonight we got out the TV and watched a play about Carl Kabat. It was written and performed by a Clayton high school drama group, from interviews with Carl and others from our community. The play depicts Carl's radicalization experience, from his first years in the priesthood to federal prison. Carl is played as a priest and clown, who take the stage together. The priest tries to be faithful to his mission in the Philippines and Recife, Brazil. But his own idealism, and the audacity of his clown alter-ego, compel them to stand up for the poor. Eventually, they upset too many people, and the Carls are sent home. However, Carl's new social awareness has already been cemented by his experiences. He identifies militarism as the ultimate cause of world poverty and decides to begin a series of direct "plowshares" actions against the nuclear weapons which pepper the Midwest. The play does a good job of portraying Carl's unique approach to peace activism. Carl did, in fact, dress as a clown for several of his plowshares actions. We can appreciate the irony: Our nation spends billions on political control, and deadly weapons, capable of instantly annihilating hundreds of thousands of people, and the guy who tries to stop them is a clown.

Tomorrow morning, most of us will attend the memorial service for another CW hero, Larry 'Lorenzo' Rosebaugh. Among many other things, Lorenzo was noted for his participation in the "Milwaukee 14" draft card burnings during the Viet Nam war, and for being jailed and beaten in Brazil for operating an ad hoc soup kitchen. He was killed May 19th, in a robbery in northern Guatemala. Although the motives of the attack aren't known, many have been assassinated for standing with the poor as he did. Lorenzo was a free spirit whose gentleness and compassion touched everyone who knew him. Although he was a poor student and struggled with languages, he lived alongside the homeless in Brazil and Guatemala, and has become an icon for our generation of Catholic Workers. Larry was a close friend of Carl, Carolyn, and Tery, and was expected to move into our community later this summer. Those of us who never knew him can only imagine what we have lost.

And so we begin growing season. This is our time to get serious, and get silly, with our collective projects. Our community members who are teachers are home now, and very few of us are doing any paid labor. Now we can throw all of our collective energy into our projects and spending time together, which are the real aims of our lives.

Gardening is a staple project for summertime. It is a source of self empowerment, as well as providing the community with fresh, local, organic produce. Gardening is a wonderful opportunity to learn practical knowledge and skills, to do manual labor, and to spend time together. Eating our own produce reminds us of the power that we have to determine our own lives and to empower others.

Our other major project for the summer is the rehab of Dan and Sarah's house. Castle House, as it is known, is just across the street, and has undergone extreme transformation over the last few months. Most of the major work has been done, but it will still take a big push to finish by the time school starts in August. The rehab is another project where people can connect with each other and learn valuable skills. It is also exciting to have another CW household on Monroe St.

Kabat House provides hospitality to Latin American immigrants on a long term basis. We have recently begun a new project in hospitality. On Friday afternoons we pack a large picnic and serve food to the homeless people who congregate downtown, at Lucas Park, just outside of the Larry Rice shelter. The picnic model has proved very useful in avoiding police aggression, and for facilitating meaningful interaction with the people who come to eat. We have really tried to make the food really good. About half of the people take food and move on, while the rest stand around and chat with us. Along with the idle chat and some great stories, several people have complained about the ineffectiveness of services available to homeless people. For us, listening attentively to the people who come to eat is just as important for us as the food itself, and it is much more demanding. It is a spiritual practice in building compassion and a perspective of radical love.

The end of our Friday picnic always brings me to reflect on this life. We sit around for about an hour, talking to people as they enjoy the food. Then we pack up the blankets and baskets, get in the car, and head back to our warm little community, while they continue to wait for the Larry Rice Shelter to open at seven. At this moment, I know that what we have done was worthwhile, that I couldn't have done anything better with my Friday afternoon. Everything must be done to resist exploitation and indifference to human suffering. Everything must be done to cultivate love in our own hearts. This is the work which was begun by fools and martyrs, which we are trying to advance. So we continue our little projects, our experiments in community and sustainability. We are convinced that they are significant, and only hope that we have the strength and ingenuity to do them well.





From Karen House

by James Meinert

We have striven to say no. One great 'no' to the ongoing war in Iraq, 'no' to private militaries paid for in part out of public coffers, and 'no' to the continued assault on the people of Pakistan and Afghanistan. These are just a few injustices that we have stood up to say no to recently, but we do not do so to assuage our feelings of guilt. We do so because we accept our responsibility. We are responsible for the many lives lost due to the expanding tentacles of the American military. And recognizing our responsibility, we say no. But these 'no's' are a very small part of our life here in Karen House, and while conversations are going on about the need for a more concerted effort to continually say no to the constant injustices we see, our life revolves around our great 'yes.'

We wake every day remembering that we say yes to love. While saying yes to love is a complicated and often painful thing, we are saved by Love, and liberated by Love, and we accept the pain because it is rooted in deep joy.

We have seen much turnover here in Karen House as of recent, which in our musings we attribute to the shaken economy uprooting the small amount of stability that some women had previously had. Many of the women in our house suffer several faces of domination at once—racism, sexism, classism. As the general well-being of society drops, poor, minority women suffer this triple oppression to an even greater extent. Jobs, and money for food, housing, and health are all harder to come by. On top of that, when men feel these changes, the results of an oppressive, dominating society, some react violently, out of frustration, towards the only group they can oppress and dominate women.

We have felt the increase of violence in our home, and still we continually strive to say yes to a home that is a safe and healthy environment for all people that come, especially the women and children who are our cornerstones. Sometimes, we have had to try to find safer places for the women to stay when they are threatened in our house. As they empty their rooms out, throwing into bags their jackets for cold days, high-heeled shoes for going out, and pajama pants for just hanging out, we ready the room for another guest, as any family would for a new child. The room won't stay open for long.

We here are still receiving somewhere around 30 calls a day from women looking for a warm bed



at night. 30! I don't like to use statistics to shock, so I remind myself that each of these 30 women are individual people with family histories, and past lovers, and future dreams. If you had to say no to maybe 30 different women, sometimes in tears, sometimes exhausted with the system they are trying to navigate, you might start to become indifferent. But indifference is not a mark of Karen House. We know that we will suffer when we love. We still

choose to love. We are saved by entering into the mystery of suffering and the depth of love. As the women and children we share our lives with move on, sometimes to other homes, sometimes in with relatives, sometimes to the great mystery beyond, we continue to follow them in our prayers and many of them return to share their lives with us long after having called Karen House their home. We are indeed blessed.

As we watch the continuing cycles of violence, we also become frustrated with the broken systems that are supposed to help people with food and housing, and we ask ourselves, "Why?" Why, in a nation so wealthy, can we not take care of the least of us?

The answer lies in each of us taking responsibility for our communal sins and in each of us taking personal responsibility for the well-being of those around us. On the other hand, we see governments, war-makers, and trans-national corporations. We see that they have funneled enough wealth into their possession to wage war and kill people anywhere in the world, and take the gifts of the earth to further enrich our nation, and we call this class warfare.

Over 16,000 children die every day from starvation and hunger-related causes. Anything that causes death tolls this massive is clearly a war, and it is the poorest that are losing this war. And we say 'no.' 'No' to the \$664 billion to be spent on the military this year alone, because we are tired of watching our friends and loved ones suffer on the losing side of this life-taking war. And yet, we continue to say 'yes.' It is a small 'yes' in the face of so much pain, but it is a 'yes' to love, and we invite you to join us.



James Meinert is busy fixing bikes at Karen House and starting a band with Mary and Stephen. They are available for parties.



Catholic Worker Thought & Action

by Teka Childress

If people call Karen House on any given day they might speak to any number of people. If they were to ask for the "director" they would be kindly told that Karen House has no director and that the seemingly random person they have just reached will do their best to be of assistance. For many people this is a maddening thing. They would like to have some confidence that the issue about which they are calling will be handled efficiently and well. Why then, do we do things this way? The short answer is that we believe in personalism and a decentralized community and society and we've tried to develop a way of doing things that best reflects this. While it may appear to someone that this is the gentle face of the chaos that comes with anarchism, we actually do have a system for how we deal with these things and I shall reveal it here for all future callers.

When someone calls, their offer of volunteer service or request is written into our log. The facilitator of our Thursday meeting then writes this on our agenda, brings it up at the meeting and someone takes responsibility for calling the person back and following through with whatever arrangements there are to be made. Further, on the following Thursday, all commitments are reviewed at the meeting to make sure that we have not failed to follow up. This might not be the best system, but if we had a director, responsible for following through on all calls, then our return would only be as good as that individual's follow through.

One of the most radical examples of decentralization in our community life is our consensus decision-making process. We never vote at our meetings. Each issue is discussed and each member of the community must consent or give their approval to whatever decision is made. Thus, if we disagree over an issue, we talk about it until we can find some way of resolving it that all community members can accept. This, of all aspects of our community life, has perhaps been the greatest blessing to me. When I first started attending the Karen House meetings at age 21 I was allowed to share fully in the discussions and decisions and it is the same for young people who come today. If, God forbid, after a number of years at the house, I had become director or fulfilled the Peter (not Maurin) Principle of rising to my level of incompetence, I would never have grown in so many ways and Karen House would not have been what it could become. To give an example:

A number of years ago, a young and new community member, Christy Finsel, insisted that it was absolutely unacceptable that we allow women to smoke anywhere in the house. I, along with another

older community member felt that we knew what was possible and what was not. We insisted that to ban smoking everywhere inside the house would be a disaster. People would break this rule often and we would have to put them out. But, because we believe in consensus and Christy held her position with great fortitude, we agreed to try it for thirty days and then to evaluate it. Well, we began it very shortly after and truly it was one of the easiest things we've ever done.

It is very helpful to have a process that disallows any of us to have too much power. It is so easy for the best of people, with the best of intentions, to hold too tightly and often very wrongly to control and power.

I am grateful that I have been part of a community with a vision that allows for the truth to be our authority. If we guard against personalities dominating the process in unhealthy ways, the process of consensus allows the truth or our understanding of it, to be the thing that guides us. It is a lovely process that allows for the insights of an individual to be examined and tempered by the whole community. The very fact that each consents to every decision necessitates that no one's opinion is ignored. This is the goal of personalism, a vision in which each person is seen and valued in their uniqueness and yet each individual is called to be part of the whole and to seek the common good. No process makes this happen and yet consensus decision-making makes it more likely.

Further, this process well reflects the reality of our human condition and the theological understanding of the body of Christ. None of us has complete understanding in this life and therefore each of us depends upon one another to grow in our understanding. And we need each other's talents to compliment our own. I have learned to respect the insights of the young, ideas that have not occurred to me and a freshness and hope that the older sometimes relinquish. Likewise, I have been shown respect from younger community members for knowledge I have gained with experience.

We have a tradition in our community of sharing Catholic Worker traditions and thought. Once a month at our weekly meetings a member of our community will offer a presentation on personalism, decentralization, voluntary poverty, manual labor, the works of mercy, nonviolence or the green revolution. In this way we try to allow the vision of Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin to continue to inspire us in our lives and work. Hopefully, therefore, rather than our decentralization being very chaotic, it is thoughtful and part of the fabric of our vision. And, rather than being fragmented or individualistic, we hope it fulfills its aim of being communal. In the sharing of life and power we are most truly one. ✝

Teka Childress is in her second year of growing a vegetable garden. She considers herself quite literally a kinder-gardeer.

The Round Table

Karen Catholic Worker House

1840 Hogan ■ St. Louis, MO. 63106

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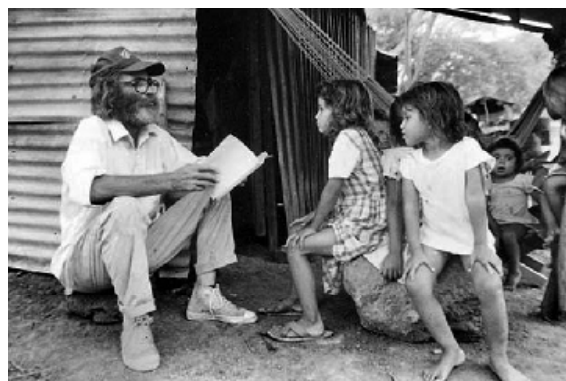
Erica Thompson

On May 5th, 2009, Erica Thompson, a dear friend of Karen House passed away after struggling with cancer for several months. Erica was only 23 years old and has 3 beautiful girls, Ariel 4 years old, Keniya 2 yrs and Kahlia 1 yr.

Erica lived with us for several months at Karen House and brought much joy to our communal life together.



Erica with her daughter Ariel
Picture by Beth Boochek



What a gift to have known him!

Here are a few words from our last email:

carolyn, i just in the last week was informed from our provincial that joining a cath. Worker community was fine with he and his council.

I really am beginning to feel that this is the best move for me since i have known so many of you over the years and have felt always welcomed. --things are well with me and working much in the city hospital, the brothers and sisters of mother Teresa in the prisons and all and a hospice for aids patients-- however the country is at its lowest ebb it seems, with violence on the city streets at its peak--but now close to 75, i feel once again responsible insomeway saying no to my own u.s. govt. on so many levels and to the church too if i were really truthful. wont go on--hello to carl and the whole community...
Lorenzo

Lorenzo Rosebough, Pray for Us

Lorenzo Rosebough

On May 18th 2009, Lorenzo Rosebough was murdered in Guatemala by two masked gunmen who had stopped and robbed the car he was driving which containing five Catholic priests. Another priest, Jean Claude Nowama, from the Congo, was seriously injured. Lorenzo was a personal friend of many in the St. Louis Catholic Worker community and was planning on moving to Kabat House in the fall. His death is a tremendous loss for all of us and for humanity--He was the rarest embodiment of holiness, humility, and love.

Check **KarenHouseCW.org** for windows resources, info on Karen House and the Catholic Worker, an archive of past RoundTables, and more!