

PEACE and JUSTICE

Volume 6: February 2009

SPOTLIGHT ON IMMIGRATION II

From the desk of the Social Justice Interns...

Now that we have elected a new president, we, as Catholics, must reexamine the issue of immigration. Who is an immigrant? When asking ourselves this question, we must look back into our past. Our families were all, at one time, immigrants. In the history of America, signs that now may say, "No Mexicans Need Apply," once said "No Irish Need Apply." Who are we to set the standards of who is an "alien." We are all God's children, made in His image and likeness. As Christians, it is our duty to remember this. We must respect all humans, whether they are illegal immigrants or American citizens.

~Mary Mietlicki

There are two particular pieces of legislation that I find interesting by their acutely different nature. There is the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act, which is a path to citizenship for millions. Conversely, there is the Border Protection, Anti-Terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act. This legislative proposal calls for a fence to be built along the border and for all illegal immigrants to be swiftly arrested and deported. Now, the later Act that I mention may not be entirely unconstructive, as it seeks to ensure the safety of the country. However, the Catholic Church challenges us to look at immigration from a particular perspective. Instead of seeing immigrants as threatening tyrants, we are challenged to see them as our neighbors in need of a new beginning. From such a standpoint, what sort of legislation are we looking for? One with opportunity or one with a bleak, hopeless future? The Church is challenging us to maintain a perspective of love and solidarity with the immigrant—our brother and sister. All people—big and small, white and black, rich and poor, legal and illegal—hold an inherent dignity that cannot be stripped from them. This dignity comes from man and woman being made in God's image, as Mary said. Clearly, our challenge has real world ramifications, especially in terms of legislative moves.

~Josie Diebold

Let's Talk...Legislation

Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act

The Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2007 was meant to provide legal status and a path to legal citizenship for the approximately 12 million illegal immigrants currently residing in the United States. It was portrayed as a compromise between legalization of illegal immigrants and increased border enforcement. When this bill went to vote on June 7, 2007, it failed 36-41.

DREAM ACT

Within the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2007 was the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors. This bill would provide illegal aliens who graduate from an American High School, are of good moral character, arrived in the US as children, and have been in the country continuously for at least five years prior to the bill's enactment, the opportunity to earn conditional permanent residency. The DREAM Act, however, has not been presented to the House as a stand-alone bill.

AgJOBS of 2007

AgJOBS is the most important piece of legislation facing farm-workers in decades. The AgJOBS legislation is complex, but it can be boiled down to some essential elements, of which there are two: one focused on undocumented agricultural workers and the other focused on the H-2 agricultural guest worker program. It allows immigrant farm workers to earn the legal right to permanently stay in this country by continuing to work in agriculture and provides growers with a safe and stable workforce. AgJOBS strengthens protections for workers' rights, decent pay, and working conditions. It makes dangerous illegal border crossings unnecessary for hundreds of thousands of workers and allows farm worker families to stay together and fully participate in the society they help feed.

"In our era, the road to holiness necessarily passes through the world of action."

~Dag Hammarskjold

A Focus on Dignity **The Catholic Church and Comprehensive Immigration Reform**

There are many reasons people flee their native country—persecution, war, poverty, unemployment, and so on. Still, the policies in the U.S. keep many doors closed to these individuals, making it difficult for them to find work and safety. In June 2007, the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act did not pass through Congress. Since then, most legislation that has gone through Congress concerning immigration has been centered on “enforcement” such as strengthening border control. Although policies in the US concerning immigration used to be centered on the idea of reuniting families, now there is an intense fear of illegal immigrants.

The United States Catholic Conference of Bishops (USCCB) encourages Congress to wholeheartedly support comprehensive immigration reform. They do not support the policy of “enforcement only” nor do they say that the United States should open its doors completely. Though the United States should, as a world power, give people opportunity to make a dignified life for themselves, it also needs to protect its citizens and borders. The USCCB has proposed a point by point reform program including: Earned Legalization, Future Worker Programs, Family Based Immigration Reform, Restoration of Due Process, and Policies to Address the Root Causes of Immigration.

What is the foundation of the USCCB’s policy? Catholic Social Teaching! Following the principles of Catholic Social Teaching, the USCCB proposes a two-pronged approach. First, we must welcome the stranger under the belief that all humans deserve respect and dignity. Second, our government has the duty to protect its citizens and do what they must for the common good. All legislation must follow these two pathways in order to fulfill the ideals of the Catholic Church.

What Can YOU Do

...to get more involved with the Immigration Issue in Buffalo...

~ Attend one of the Social Justice Movie Nights~

Tuesday March 3 @ 7:30 : **Under the Same Moon**
Sunday April 5 @ 7:00 : **Slumdog Millionaire**

* All Movie Nights take place in the UNDERCROFT (Basement) of the Chapel *

~Meet Some of the Immigrants in Buffalo~
VOLUNTEER AT:

Vive La Casa, Journey’s End, or Catholic Charities
* Contact Joe Van Volkenburg ext 2875 for more information *

~ Check out CNN, FOX News, NPR, and MSN for the news! ~

~ Read Up some info on the Web~

Check out:

<http://www.usa.gov/Citizen/Defense/Citizenship.shtml>

<http://www.immigration-usa.com/>

<http://www.usccb.org/mrs/legal.shtml>

<http://www.uscatholicmission.org/files/saveact.pdf>

~ Keeps your eyes peeled for information about LENTEN activities~

A Social Justice Prayer and Study Group will be meeting on the following Monday evenings at 8pm in the Undercroft of the Chapel:

March 2, 9, 23, 30

April 6

* Contact Josie (dieboldj@canisius.edu) if you are interested or want more information! *



Something to Consider

...words on immigration from John Paul II...

“The Church hears the suffering cry of all who are uprooted from their own land, of families forcefully separated, of those who, in the rapid changes of our day, are unable to find a stable home anywhere. She senses the anguish of those without rights, without any security, at the mercy of every kind of exploitation, and she supports them in their unhappiness. We are called to work so that every person’s dignity is respected, the immigrant is welcomed as a brother or sister, and all humanity forms a united family which knows how to appreciate with discernment the different cultures which comprise it.”