

PEACE and JUSTICE

Volume 2: September 28, 2008

SPOTLIGHT ON IMMIGRATION I

From the desk of a Social Justice Intern...

With the upcoming elections, the issue of immigration has especially been in the limelight. People all over the political continuum have their own understanding, bias, and opinion when it comes to immigration and U.S. policy. At one extreme, there are people calling for all illegal aliens to be rounded up and deported immediately. On the other end, there is a call for immigration reform that would open up the door for these folks to find a new life.

It surprises me how anyone can be so hostile and unreceptive to immigrants. In fact, our story of ancestry is intimately intertwined with immigration. So, where have our negative perceptions come from? Are they factual or simply manifestations of deep-seated prejudice and hatred? It takes a great deal of humility and honesty to answer these questions; to examine ourselves in such a way as to realize the bias we all hold. Still, the bottom line remains: It is time to critically look at the genesis of our intolerance.

In examining our bias and prejudice, it can be helpful to simply check our language. Even the word "alien" suggests that these people are literally from another world, and are, in some sense, not human. On the contrary, they are human in every sense of the word, just as much as me and you. *Catholic Social Teaching's* founding principle is the "life and dignity of the human person." Because we are ALL (illegal immigrant and upstanding American citizen) made in the image and likeness of God, we all have an inherent dignity that cannot be stripped from us. As such, we are called to respond to the plight of the marginalized—the immigrant—whose dignity is continually cut down.

Our challenge is to learn more and not to be swayed by discriminatory-driven beliefs and perceptions. Let's challenge our own ignorance and take a step out into murky waters. Let's learn to love the stranger and work toward a world that upholds the dignity of all human beings.

~Josal Diebold
Social Justice Intern, Campus Ministry

Know the FACTS...

Words Everyone Needs to know when talking about Immigration

Who's an immigrant?

An individual who has gone through the official government approved process to legally immigrate to the U.S. Foreign-born individuals can become lawful permanent residents (LPRs) by family-sponsored immigration, employment-based immigration, or a lottery open to immigrants from certain countries. After a period of time, lawful permanent residents can apply and enter a long process to become naturalized citizens.

Who's a refugee?

An individual outside the U.S. who has a well-founded fear of persecution based on their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or social group. Many refugees have been tortured, separated from their families, and subjected to personal and/or sexual violence. A refugee may apply to become a lawful permanent resident after one year.

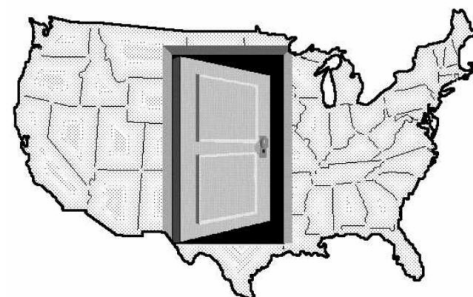
What's asylum?

Those individuals who already entered the U.S. and have a well-grounded fear of persecution upon returning to their country may apply for asylum here. These persons may also apply to be a lawful permanent resident after one year.

Who's an undocumented immigrant?

An individual who has either entered the country by bypassing customs and immigration control or by entering legally with a temporary visa and overstaying it.

OPEN OR CLOSED?



In focus...

Catholic Church and Immigration

Based on Scripture and Catholic Social Teaching, the Catholic Church is compelled to raise her voice on behalf of those who are marginalized and whose God-given rights are not respected.

The Church believes that current immigration laws and policies have often led to the undermining of immigrants' human dignity and have kept families apart. The existing immigration system has resulted in a growing number of persons living in the shadows, as they toil in jobs that would otherwise go unfilled. Close family members of U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents must wait years for a visa to be reunited. And, our nation's border enforcement strategies have been ineffective and have led to the death of thousands of migrants.

The Church has a responsibility to shine the message of God on this issue and help to build bridges between all parties so that an immigration system can be created that is just for all and serves the common good.

Profile of Peace

Vive La Casa

VIVE is an interfaith organization that serves refugees that are coming to the United States and are trying to find asylum in either the United States or Canada. *La Casa*, a shelter run by *VIVE*, is a home away from home for many refugees in the inner city Buffalo area. The shelter has over 100 beds but provides its services to over 3500 people each year. *La Casa* provides food, shelter, and clothing to its residents, including three meals a day with the help of the WNY Food Bank. The *VIVE* Health Clinic provides medical services for the refugees at *La Casa*. A part time nurse provides basic health care, immunizations, and arranges for other services if necessary through different medical agencies. There is also a Legal Department, with a staff attorney, paralegal assistants and volunteers who provide legal advice and assistance to people seeking asylum. *VIVE* is a non profit organization and needs monetary and donation support to stay afloat.

Consider volunteering at *VIVE* la Casa with recreational activities, marketing and development, driving assistance, or through donations of food or clothing! Contact Joe Van Volkenburg (Campus Minister) or Brian Fluharty (Service Intern) to see how YOU can volunteer at *VIVE* today!!!

What Can You Do?

Educate yourself! Battle ignorance!

Read more at these sites:

- www.immigrationdirect.com
- <http://www.usimmigrationsupport.org/>
- <http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org/>

Want to Help? Volunteer Here!

- **Vive La Casa**

Located at 50 Wyoming Avenue, Buffalo NY
(716)892-4354

- **Journey's End Refugee Services**

Located at 184 Barton Street Buffalo NY
(716) 882-4963

- **International Institute**

Located at 864 Delaware Avenue Buffalo NY
(716) 883-1900

How to Get Involved at Canisius:

- Attend the BIG JUSTICE MEETING
September 28 at 7:30 in the Commuter Lounge
- Volunteer here in Buffalo with a Service Intern! Contact Joe Van Volkenburg (ext 2875) in Campus Ministry to Ask HOW!
- Consider applying for a Service Immersion Trip! Contact Luanne Firestone (ext 2422) in Campus Ministry to Ask HOW!
- Consider applying to go on Winter Service Week or Alternative Spring Break! Contact Sarah Signorino (ext 2424) in Campus Ministry to Ask HOW!

Food for Thought...

"The so-called "illegals" are so not because they wish to defy the law; but, because the law does not provide them with any channels to regularize their status in our country – which needs their labor: they are not breaking the law, the law is breaking them."

Reverend Thomas Wenski, Bishop of Orlando