



Resolutions To Action

LCWR Global Concerns Committee

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HERE AND THERE

Doris Regan, OP

*"We declare to you what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes,
what we have looked at and touched with our hands..." – 1 John 1*

EXPERIENCE

"There" is Honduras where I ministered for 18 years. In the course of those years, I was part of a diocesan Pastoral Team in a prison in San Pedro Sula. Originally it had been built for 800 prisoners but the population grew to almost 3000 individuals housed in practically uninhabitable conditions. Many of the prisoners had made their way to the United States illegally, had lived there for years, and had then been arrested and deported. They dreamed of trying again to cross the border through Guatemala and Mexico. Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador are the countries of origin of many of the mainly young and impoverished, looking for work, and trying to escape the violence that predominates in the region. The Honduran newspapers reported recently that 13,000 Hondurans have been returned from the United States since January 2017. Those turned over by Mexico arrive daily by bus in San Pedro Sula. I have seen them arrive at the Center where there are no facilities to care for

them. Relatives await the arrival of the buses, trying to locate a family member.

"Here" is the United States with immigration policies that seem unfair and appear to be applied indiscriminately. In all of the debate over immigration, few acknowledge the political, economic, and social conditions that make living freely and unafraid in Honduras almost impossible.

In Ohio recently, Maribel Trujillo Diaz, the mother of four US citizen children, the youngest with special medical needs, an active member of her parish, with no criminal record, was sent back to Mexico, despite the efforts of many to support her. She had fled Mexico in 2002 to escape threats to her family from a drug gang. The archdiocese of Cincinnati began advocacy for her after she was picked up by Immigration Custom Enforcement (ICE) on her way to work just two days after she was told at an ICE check-in that she was "safe" for another month. Policies of the new Trump administration have changed enforcement priorities, putting all undocumented immigrants at risk.

SOCIAL ANALYSIS

"There" in Honduras the social reality is a complex configuration of factors that contribute to poverty, inequality, and violence. Supposedly a democracy, the country under Juan Orlando Hernandez, is a de facto military state. There are soldiers on the streets, in hospitals, prisons, schools, etc. Gangs operate extortion rings and perpetrate daily homicides and home invasions. Hondurans working in the United States send more than US\$2 billion each year

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LCWR
8808 Cameron Street
Silver Spring, MD 20910
301-588-4955
www.lcwr.org
fax: 301-587-4575
ascholz@lcwr.org

to their families in Honduras. These remittances account for more than 25% Honduras's GDP. The government has shown no interest in the thousands who have fled to the United States until those who crossed to the United States are sent back. Many of those attempting to reach the United States are fleeing violence and death threats, others are simply trying to reunite with family.

Government corruption at every level, the violence of drug trafficking, and systemic poverty all push Hondurans from their homes. The climate of distrust, lack of jobs, extreme poverty, and oppression by elites is why San Pedro Sula has the second highest murder rate in the world.

Ample reason for wanting to leave their home country and no one at this end is asking, "Why do they leave?"

"Here" in the United States nearly one million immigrants have been issued final deportation orders. Many have been here for years and have US citizen-children. The cost for each deportation is nearly \$11,000, not including the emotional and financial devastation for those who are forced back to countries they no longer recognize. Those who apply for refugee status rarely are counted as such. Executive policies are arbitrary, indiscriminate, and unnecessarily harsh. They may even be a violation of international law as was noted in a letter to Ambassador Nikki Haley encouraging the protection and promotion of migrants' human rights in accordance with the United Nations Charter.

REFLECTION

'Crossing Borders'

The story of the People of God in the bible is the story of displaced persons, immigrants, exiles, and refugees. From Abraham on we see the plight of those who are made unwelcome and oppressed by those in power. The catechism of our church and its social documents tell us to welcome foreigners searching for a livelihood and life they cannot find in their own country. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights clearly defines the right of all human beings to life, liberty, and happiness. Pope Francis has persistently encouraged us to "go out towards the other."

It is time for us to reflect on just what "crossing the border" should and could really mean. It ought to be "crossing the border" from separation to inclusion, "crossing the border" from fear and panic to safety and security, and above all "crossing the border" from death to life, from fear to love. These are the most important crossings of all.

ACTION

- Be aware of instances of deportation proceedings in your area.
- Attend workshops regarding the changes in the legal language and the import of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) regulations.
- Sign on to the US citizen letter from the UN-NGO Committee on Migration to Ambassador Nikki Haley protesting the executive orders of January 27, 2017 on the grounds that they violate the fundamental human rights of migrants.

H. E. Ambassador Nikki Haley
United States Mission to the
United Nations
799 Union Plaza
New York, N.Y. 10017

- Contact your congressional leaders calling them to enact comprehensive, compassionate immigration reform that protects human rights and provides more legal avenues to enter the United States.

"I have come that they may have life and have it to the full."

— *John 10: 10*