

MISSIONARY OBLATES JPIC RESOURCE  
IMMIGRATION REFORM IS A MATTER OF FAITH

Spring 2010.



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The Oblates, from the time of the founder- who was migrant himself- have always been touched by the plight of the people on the move, foreigners and refugees alike, and tried to awaken or to strengthen their faith and hope"

Fr. Wilhelm Steckling OMI, Superior General – Oblate Migration Symposium – Toronto 2009.

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## AS A COMMUNITY OF FAITH, WE CARE ABOUT IMMIGRATION REFORM.

Out of concern for and in solidarity with migrants, and those Oblates who live within the U.S.-Mexico Border region, this [OBLATE JPIC RESOURCE ON IMMIGRATION](#) booklet aim to raise awareness, educate and advocacy for ensuring that U.S policies promote safety, civil and human rights of all individuals while also recognizing the significant role migrants serve in strengthening the economy and enrich cultural diversity.



Everyday, immigrant families and children in the United States are negatively impacted by the current broken immigration system. As people of faith, we cannot stand while families are separated and the immigrant workers are mistreated unjustly and inhumanely.

Today, we may be struck by a growing diversity of peoples and languages in our midst. Perhaps I sometimes feel frightened sometimes angry. Is the country or neighborhood I grew up in changing? Are those who immigrate here taking over? Why don't they speak English? Are those who are here without documents criminals? And why can't they just get in line like everybody else?

A historical pastoral letter issued by Catholic bishops of United States and Mexico, *Strangers No Longer: Together on a journey of Hope*, acknowledges that the current immigration reform is badly in need of reform and that comprehensive approach is required to fix the problem.

Discussing the current broken immigration system draws on a range of rationales, fears and emotions. Behind this anger are personal stories, diverse views and solutions to fix the system, even traces of tolerance and empathy. Catholic teaching on work insists that human beings share in God's creation through their work and defends the sanctity of the family. That is why the Catholic Church supports immigration reform. This is a pro-family and pro-life issue.

Catholic Campaign: [www.justiceforimmigrants.org](http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org)

CAP: [Loving Thy Neighbor: Immigration Reform & Communities of Faith](#)

## WHY COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM IS GOOD?

While comprehensive immigration reform has some vocal opponents, the vast majority of American voters support comprehensive immigration reform, a position that has not wavered in the face of an economic downturn and want the President and Congress to advance a solution. A recent study, entitled *The Economic Benefits of Comprehensive Immigration Reform* conducted by University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) has found that Comprehensive immigration reform would add an estimated 1.5 trillion U.S. dollars to the U.S. gross domestic product (GDP) over 10 years.

- **Immigration Reform will reduce undocumented Immigration.**

Comprehensive Immigration Reform is only way to reduce undocumented immigration because people seeking work will and family unification will enter the United State legally. Undocumented Immigrants already here will rectify status through earned process. This is not amnesty. It is smart and practical process for dealing with 12 million undocumented immigrants.

- **Immigration Reform will strengthen U.S economy.**

The U.S. economy is starting to emerge from the recession therefore there is a need to sustain economic recovery by increasing productivity, consumers and tax base especially by tapping millions of undocumented immigrants as workforce, consumers and taxpayers. Appearing before a U.S. Senate subcommittee in April 2009, Former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan, a leading Republican economist said that undocumented immigrants make a significant contribution to U.S. economic growth by providing a flexible workforce. The U.S. should not rebuild a strong economy on a broken immigration system.

## OBLATE JPIC: A CALL TO SOLIDARITY WITH IMMIGRANTS.

The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate have history of serving immigrant communities throughout the United States. We advocate for the dignity and rights of all immigrants. We stand in solidarity with all migrants on both sides of the U.S./Mexico border. We believe the U.S. immigration policy should be created with compassion and respect for human rights. We believe comprehensive immigration reform will restore the rule of law, unite families, and fair treatment of all workers.

The Missionary Oblates JPIC office is committed to providing education resource and advocacy actions on immigration and border issues. We believe that comprehensive immigration reform, humane treatment of migrants, safe and secure border communities and smart national security policies should be viewed as mutually reinforcing, not mutually exclusive principles. We support securing borders by providing realistic, well regulated channels to welcome refugees and migrants seeking jobs to support their families or to be reunited with family members in their countries of origin.

The Oblate invite you to join in solidarity and support for immigration reform by calling on the Obama Administration and 111th Congress to pass Comprehensive Immigration Reform in 2009 and review border policy respectively. **The Oblate JPIC office recommends the following principles:**

#### **PRINCIPLES FOR COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM**

- Make family unity and reunification the cornerstone of the U.S. immigration system.
- Address the status of undocumented workers currently living in the United States.
- Recognize that root causes of migration lie in environmental and economic inequities.
- Improve conditions in detention centers for immigrants.
- Pass the Border Security and Responsibility Act of 2009 (HR 2076) to restore the rule of law and protect communities, private property, and national parks and wildlife refuges from damage caused by the border wall.

#### **Current Legislations on Comprehensive Immigration Reform.**

**Support Comprehensive Immigration Reform for America's Security and Prosperity Act of 2009 (H.R. 4321).** The bill would help families stay together, address inhumane detention center conditions, protect workers who assert their rights from employer attacks, and provide a realistic pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, while improving border security

#### **PRINCIPLES FOR COMPREHENSIVE BORDER POLICY**

- A Moratorium on all current and future border construction.
- Improved training for existing border pastoral Agents of human, civil rights and due process.
- A community oriented assessment to evaluate and make recommendations to mitigate the harmful impacts of enforcement—only measures to migrants and border communities; and findings should be shared with Congress and the public.
- United States and Mexico actively protect human rights of both citizens and migrants while pursuing justice for abuses against migrants.
- United States must improve coordination among federal and state partners to address human trafficking in the border region

#### **Current Legislation about Border Reform.**

**Support HR 2076: H.R. 2076, the Border Security and Responsibility Act of 2009,** which would require the Department of Homeland Security to consult with federal land managers and state, local, and tribal governments when pursuing methods to secure our nation's borders. In addition, H. R. 2076 would repeal the REAL ID Act waiver authority, which allows for the waiver of laws that impede construction of physical barriers along our borders, as authorized under the Bush Administration.

## A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO IMMIGRATION REFORM

Given the choice, most of immigrants would prefer to stay with families in their countries of origin. Yet, every day thousands of immigrants are faced with difficult decision to leave loved one behind to seek better life across borders. Lack of economic opportunity to provide for their families, partly due to U.S. supported economic policies such as North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has driven much of the migration to the United States. Of course, political instability and environmental degradation has also contributed to migration and internal displacement. Out of this reality, people of faith have always called for a comprehensive immigration reform; one that deals with the U.S. broken immigration and addresses the push factors behind economic migration such as global poverty.

### Address Root Cause of Migration: Support Jubilee Act

The United States Congress must enact the Jubilee Act (H.R 4405) which would expand debt cancellation and provide a framework for responsible lending to poor countries. Jubilee Act (H.R 4405) will broaden debt cancellation; allowing poor countries to invest more in education, health and public infrastructure. Nations with high external debt are forced to spend budgets on debt serving instead of maintaining social safe nets and poverty reduction. Good opportunities move out poverty locally will reduce the number of people forced to seek economic opportunities in the United States. The impact of debt cancelling of 1999 and 2005 allowed millions of parents to send children to school and thousands of people in poor nations have access to better health care.

### Questions for Reflection.

1. How can we support immigrants in the United States to live and work with dignity?
2. Given the other pressing needs facing Americans now, why should U.S. Congress give time and resources to the immigration issue right now?
3. Why should faith communities be concerned about the current U.S. Immigration policy?

**"Strangers No Longer":** <http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org/snldvd.html>

**Sermon Resources:** [http://faithandimmigration.org/sites/default/files/tmp/o8o4o2\\_Serman\\_Booklet.pdf](http://faithandimmigration.org/sites/default/files/tmp/o8o4o2_Serman_Booklet.pdf)

Join Oblate Network: [oblate-immigration-network@googlegroups.com](mailto:oblate-immigration-network@googlegroups.com)

## FROM STRANGERS TO NEIGHBORS: PROPHETIC VOICES



Our Christian faith calls us to welcome the stranger and offer hospitality and justice to the migrants and refugees, regardless of status. Immigration is a core issue for the Judeo-Christian tradition. God's concern for the migrant is recalled in Exodus. As members of a Church with immigrants, and roots in immigrant churches in a nation of immigrants, we participate in Christ's mission of love, community and friendship to the stranger.

The Scripture remind us in Leviticus 19:33-34 when God tells the Israelites, "Do not mistreat foreigners living in your land, but treat them just as you treat your own citizens. Love foreigners as you love yourselves, because you were foreigners one time in Egypt." In the New Testament, treatment the stranger is a common theme. The Holy Family was forced to flee to Egypt. The Gospel expresses clearly this teaching on Jesus on how to treat the strangers.

In Matthew 25: 37 we hear a call from Jesus, "*I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you invited me in. I needed clothes and you clothed me. I was sick and you looked after me; I was in prison and you came to visit me.*" The stranger's vulnerability is a reminder of people's dependence on the kindness of God and instructs us to act towards the stranger as God acts towards us.

In *Laborem Exercens*, Pope John Paul II condemns the mistreatment of migrant or seasonal workers in light of the fundamental principle of Catholic economic ethics: "The hierarchy of values and the profound meaning of work itself require that capital should be at the service of labor and not labor at the service of capital." Pope Benedict XVI continues to remind Catholics to avoid discrimination and welcome the stranger. Catholics are challenged to engage in discussion about immigration reform. Cardinal Francis George OMI, President of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), speaking at the conference's 2009 annual spring meeting, called President Barack Obama and congressional leaders to work together to enact comprehensive immigration reform legislation before the end of the year.

Invisible Chapel DVD: [www.invisiblechapel.com](http://www.invisiblechapel.com)

## U.S.-MEXICO BORDER: MIGRANT DEATHS AND HUMANITARIAN CRISIS.

"I am called by the municipal funeral home in Mexicali to bless the bodies of three young men presumably from Central America. They have been in the morgue for a few months, and their identity and origin is not known. They will be buried in an unmarked grave. Who are these men? Where are their parents, spouses and loved ones? No one will ever know"  
-Fr. Bill Antone, OMI, addressing Oblate Migration Symposium in Toronto 2009.

Migrants have lost their lives in the deserts of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands trying to make their way into the United States. These tragic and unnecessary deaths must stop. The border blockade strategy has militarized the U.S.-Mexico border, which drives migrants into remote desert regions yet has failed to curtail the flow of immigrants into the United States. Catholic Social Teaching acknowledges a right to national security.

Enforcement-only tactics have dominated the U.S approaches to address the flow of migrants at the border. Militarization of the borderlands has pushed migrants into more isolated and remote stretches of the desert and mountains. This culture of enforcement has led the neglect of the human and civil rights of migrants and citizens of local communities along the border.

In 2006 Congress enacted the Secure Fence Act which authorized Homeland Security to build a costly 700-mile wall along the U.S.-Mexico border. The border wall fails to account for the reasons people migrate and greatly impacts wildlife and the environment. In April 2008, the Department of Homeland Security began using a blanket waiver of environmental and land management laws along 470 miles of the U.S.-Mexico border in order to speed construction of the fence. Building fences does not fix the broken immigration system.

### Talking Point – U.S/Mexico Border: Wasted Resources, Increased Deaths.

- Enforcement - only tactics have dominated the U.S approach to address the flow of migrants at the border for over a decade. The U.S/Mexico border wall and other deterrence strategies have cost taxpayers billions, led to the deaths of thousands of migrants and diverted resources away from efforts to build safer communities, while doing little to stop undocumented immigration. Immigration reform must facilitate order process for migration, allowing resources to be focused on serious security concerns and dangerous activities such as drug smuggling and human trafficking.

**No More Deaths/No Más Muertes:** [www.nomoredeaths.org](http://www.nomoredeaths.org)  
**One Border One Body:** <http://oneborderonebody.nd.edu/>



## IMMIGRANTS IN RAIDS AND DETENTION.

In March 2009, Cardinal Francis George OMI, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops called on the Obama White House to end immigration raids that are splitting up families. He challenged the current administration to live by its campaign promises of change by working towards immigration reform. The recent escalation of large-scale raids of suspected undocumented immigrants' worksites by the federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE) has increasingly put these young U.S. citizens at risk of family separation, economic hardship and psychological trauma.

Even as the U.S. economy tanks, immigrant detention system remains a highly profitable and fast growing industry for corporations. Revenue, profits margins and stocks prices are high for private prisons providers as immigrants' detainee do not get costly expensive programs like education, recreation or rehabilitation which prisoners usually receive. Companies that profit from immigration detention systems get an incentive to lobby Congress for more enforcement –only and detentions. Companies that profit from immigration detention systems get an incentive to lobby Congress for more enforcement – only policies and detentions.

Detention Watch Network (DWN) has launched a campaign: "Dignity Not Detention: Preserving Human Rights and Restoring Justice" to stop the expansion of detention nationally.

### Current Legislations on Immigration Detention.

- **Support Immigration Oversight and Fairness Act (H.R 1215);** bill would require improved conditions in detention facilities.
- **Support Child Citizen Protection Act (H.R 182);** bill would restore discretion and power of immigration judges to decide whether or not to deport a parent of U.S citizen born children and will that deportation cause tremendous hardship to the children.

#### Talking Point - Improve U.S. Immigrant Detention system.

- U.S. Government detains asylum seekers, victims of human trafficking and other vulnerable migrants for months, even years, when more effective and humane alternative programs exist. In 2009, more than 38 000 immigrants were detained at an annual cost of nearly \$2 billion. Poor oversight of facilities and insufficient medical treatment cause severe hardship and in some deaths, for migrants in detention. Immigration reform must include enforceable detention standards and expansions of cost – effective and humane alternatives to detention programs.

## From Compassion to Justice Why we need Comprehensive Immigration Reform?

### Don't Call Me A Stranger

Don't call me a stranger;  
The soil we step on is the same;  
But mine is not "the promised land"

Don't call me a stranger;  
The color of my passport is different;  
But the color of blood is the same.

Don't call me a stranger;  
The language I speak is different,  
But the feelings it expresses are the same.

Don't call me a stranger;  
Borders, we created them,  
And the separation that results is the same.

Don't call me a stranger  
I am your friend,  
But you do not know me yet.

Don't call me a stranger;  
We cry for justice and peace in different ways  
But our God is the same.

Comboni Missionaries of Heart of Jesus, Philippines,  
1995. A\V

During recent immigrant raids, federal officials have conducted worksite raids where they arrested and detained undocumented workers, leaving their children stranded in homes, schools and daycares. Undocumented Immigrants are now more afraid to talking to the police. Many local communities are frustrated and divided, emotions are running unchecked.

Local faith and government leaders are at a loss about how to deal with the broken immigration system. History has proven that walls are not solutions to economic disparities between nations. The American people want Congress to get back to doing people's business and pass immigration reform. The U.S. Bishops support just immigration reform, which contains several core elements. This includes broad-based legalization through a program that provides an opportunity for "earned" permanent residency and a new worker program that includes a living wage.

**Embracing Diversity:** Catholic Social Teaching gives guidance for choices as individuals and as a society on issues such as immigration. The government has the sovereign responsibility to establish an orderly, fair immigration system. This system must uphold America's values regarding family unity, immigrants' opportunities and the law. Our Catholic teaching

promotes dignity of Immigrants; common good of Immigration is a core issue for the Judeo-Christian tradition. God's concern for the migrant is recalled in Exodus.

- Latest updatest:[www.omiusajpic.org](http://www.omiusajpic.org)
- Who speaks for you:[www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) & [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov)

## Talking Points for Comprehensive Immigration Reform



- **As people of faith, our Christian values call us to stand in solidarity with the poor,** the marginalized and the strangers among us who are often demonized and abused by hateful speech and inhumane policies. All immigrants deserve to be treated with dignity.
- **The immigration system is badly broken:** It splits our families and hurts American communities. Smart immigration reform will allow this country's 12 million immigrants to step forward and fully contribute to our economy and society.
- **Now is the time for comprehensive immigration reform.** Too many immigrants' families are already separated by borders and ripped apart by deportations. American families know that the immigration system is broken and needs reform.
- **Comprehensive immigration reform will protect all workers** and allow migrants to come and go safely across the border and create legal path for those undocumented workers who wish to stay. The growth of America's economy depends on a stable workforce with labor rights.
- **We need just and humane comprehensive immigration reform** that in a moral and pragmatic way addresses a complex situation that will not be solved with simply talking tough and pouring more money into building security fences.