

# An SNJM Call to Global Community

## The Call: Solidarity with People on the Move

*We hear a new call to partner with immigrants, refugees, and indigenous peoples to resist racism, advocate for human rights, and create welcoming communities.*

—General Chapter Acts, 2011

“As we claim our identity as an international congregation within the global community,” we learn, reflect and act in solidarity with immigrants, migrants, refugees and indigenous peoples in the countries of Brazil, Canada, Lesotho, Peru and the United States. This pamphlet is rooted in the Acts of the 33rd General Chapter Acts and is an extension of our Corporate Stands on Water and Trafficking in Women and Children.

The Congregational Committee on Immigration invites you into a personal and communal reflection on the complex situation of the movement of people and communities. We ask you to begin to consider:

- What causes people to leave (what “pushes” them) and what brings them to a new place (what “pulls” them)?
- What happens in the communities in which people leave or arrive?
- What are the political, economic, social, legal and environmental factors that are at play in the situation?
- What call do I/we hear as a SNJM member/community to be in solidarity for liberating action?

As an international congregation the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary have a unique lens through which we can understand migration and its many forms in an era of globalization. It is our hope that this pamphlet, which is intended as an introduction to the causes and effects of migration, will inspire us to action in the countries in which we minister.



*The Invitation by Nancy Earle*



## Brazil Situation

Historically Brazil received its greatest wave of immigration between the late 1800s and the early 1900s. Initially it was coffee plantations that attracted migrants. Later they would be drawn by the country's industrialization. Presently Brazil has a very low rate of immigration.

Following the 2010 Haitian

earthquake, Brazil experienced a massive influx of refugees from Haiti. Without the means to handle the flow of refugees, several regions became overburdened and could not provide municipal services, requiring federal intervention.

Globalization plays a central role as the country looks for human capital. While many Brazilians face extreme poverty, Brazil is experiencing relative prosperity in the region of Latin America. It stands to attract a skilled/educated workforce from neighboring countries. While this is good for those poised to gain in Brazil's economy, it depletes the countries of origin.

The government is attempting to enact legislation to streamline work visas. Priority is given to refugee visas for those who are most educated and have the greatest financial means. As both refugees and economic migrants looking for work seek to enter the

country, a black market has emerged of human smuggling through the dense rainforest, creating the possibility of human trafficking.

Other projects in Brazil are attracting an influx of workers from outside its borders. Brazil's preparation for the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympics means additional jobs available. Also efforts to enhance Brazil's position in the era of globalization have led to the development of projects like the Belo Monte Dam Complex and an increase in mining activities. These are causing internal displacement of hundreds of thousands of Brazilian families. The Belo Monte dam will flood nearly 1,000,000 acres of rainforest, displace 40,000 native peoples and cause animal and plant extinctions.

Human rights organizers are alarmed at what is considered the neoliberal phase of globalization,



Haitian refugees in Brazil

including concern for indigenous communities whose constitutional rights have been changed without dialogue with the affected communities; criminalization of communities, people and social movements; and the killing of youth, especially those who are poor and black.

Oil and Hydroelectric plants owned by foreign investors are also a source of internal displacement. In the Northeast, wind farms are being established following the drought that challenged hydroelectric production and diminished its profitability.

Controversial legislation has been put forward that strips the indigenous of their rights, and gives clearance to multinational corporations through a series of new ordinances, changes in laws, and presidential decrees. The measures authorize deployment in indigenous territories, posts and other military interventions, roads, and hydroelectric developments without consulting the people and communities. Such measures also allow the use of the National Guard and other armed forces to ensure that dam construction is not interrupted by indigenous protesters.

## Stories of the People

### Interdependence Flourishes

In the state of Alagoas in Brazil, many people have been displaced by flooding that destroyed their homes. Families migrate to the city in search of shelter and any economic opportunity they can find. There have been three years of broken

promises from the government to meet the needs of the people suffering from the effects of the floods.

Mother Marie Rose Social Center in Maceió is serving the community in multiple ways: education; visiting pregnant mothers; teaching math and Portuguese; skill building workshops; and support for the community to maintain and celebrate its cultural heritage.

Embroidery and beaded bracelets are a way for the women to secure a small income. Sisters and volunteers from the Mission Sector often bring these items to our provincial chapters and events, making it possible for the congregation to participate in supporting our ministry in Brazil.

The Mother Marie Rose Social Center is possible, in part, by a grant from the Family Foundation of Maria and Tsu Hung Sieh. Sr. Molia Sieh, a member of the US Ontario Province whose family lives in Brazil, says that her family's foundation sees this as a partnership with the Holy Names Sisters and an opportunity to build a relationship beyond money with the ministry and the people in Maceió.

—Joanne Pundyk, SNJM



## Canada Situation

How do you immigrate into Canada? There are a number of ways to immigrate as a Skilled Worker; Business Person; as part of the Family Reunification Program; as a Government or Privately Sponsored

Refugee; as a Refugee Claimant; or for Humanitarian Reasons. Each category has specific requirements. These requirements are rapidly changing and causing new difficulties for people wanting to come to Canada.

Skilled workers are accepted not only on the basis of skills needed in Canada but also how they score in terms of their ability to speak English or French, their age and level of education. They have no choice of destination (province or city) and frequently their educational certification from their country of origin is not honored. The Business Class applicants are required to have a certain level of assets to invest in the Canadian economy. The Family Reunification class requires levels of income for the family member in Canada which can be unreasonable. If the family being sponsored has a member who is older than 18, the government is introducing a policy that he or she will be dealt with as an adult, not a member of the family and he or she must apply independently of the family unit.

The Refugee Class, especially those privately sponsored, have had their health coverage limited to the treatment of ailments dangerous to the Canadian public. Having come from war torn areas or refugee camps, they often have poor health. Serious health issues must be addressed as soon as possible to prevent more costly treatment later. The new policy is short-sighted because the delay in treatment can result in higher healthcare costs later.

Refugee claimants or asylum seekers too, face an added challenge if they are deemed to come from a designated "safe country," a country of origin that does not normally produce refugees and that respects human rights.

With a low population density and a growing need for workers Canada operates a migrant worker program, for example those working in the Alberta Tar Sands Project. The workers are not eligible for citizenship and are vulnerable to exploitation and



abuse including human trafficking. There is no system of monitoring and enforcing the terms of the migrant worker program.

Internal migration of the Indigenous is of greater concern. Estimates are that 50% of the indigenous population now lives in the city. Reasons for moving to urban areas are family, housing, education and employment. Unlike other migrating sectors of the population, the indigenous migrating to cities attempt to maintain ties with rural/ reserve communities. This is a factor in frequent migration to and from the reservations/rural areas. These places offer cultural identity, connection with the land, and a place where services are offered in culturally appropriate ways. As a consequence of frequent migration, Indigenous people are likely to have disruptions in social supports such as health, education, and family.

## Stories of the People

### *The Spirit Alive!*

Two years ago forty people were refused refugee status at the Cairo post of the Canadian Government. They were deemed non-credible by the examiner at the post. Applicants are interviewed by only one person and when their papers are stamped with 'non-credible' his/her name is put on the refusal list.

An example of a question which could lead to a person being refused refugee status is, "What are the gifts of the Holy Spirit?" This question was asked of every potential Christian refugee. Few knew the complete answer and were deemed non-credible.

Last year a team of lawyers went to federal court to challenge the designation. The lawyers won and forty refugees were granted a new interview. All forty were accepted.

—Johanna Jonker, SNJM

### *The Struggle of Two Mothers*

They are both single mothers who had to leave their country of origin. Both were traumatized by crisis and tragedies in their lives. Separately, the refugee ministry assisted both of them during the beginning of their refugee claims. Providentially, both were successful and they became Convention Refugees. Eventually, they became Permanent Residents of Canada. One of them is now a Canadian citizen.

What a wonderful story if this was the ending!

Sadly, their story had just begun. Both of these women had to leave their children behind in Africa—a total of 15 dependent children. All of the children have had to flee their country of origin to stay safe and alive.

The refugee ministry is deeply involved in the lives of these children. Through steady communication and guidance, we assist them and their mothers to complete all the complex documentation and requirements to ensure family reunification for the two families. The Sisters of the Holy Names refugee fund provides ongoing financial support for housing, food, education and other basic necessities for the children as they endure everyday struggles and await reunification with their mothers.

—Ministry to Refugee Claimants,  
Diocese of London, Windsor, Canada



Refugee children



## Lesotho Situation

In Lesotho, due to economic stagnation and political upheaval, frequent migration is the standard. Lesotho is landlocked, and a large sector of the population emigrates either temporarily or permanently into South Africa where the per capita income is four times higher than Lesotho. Approximately 25% of Basotho work in South Africa's formal or informal sector.

South African mining, which is supplied by labor from the Basotho people, contributes a considerable amount to Lesotho's economy. However, mining in South Africa is greatly diminishing. As a consequence migration without documentation for domestic or agricultural work is increasing.

Female labor migration has been on the rise in recent years with increasing numbers of women participating in both internal and cross border migration. Internal female migrants, who are often very young (15-29), migrate from the rural areas towards the cities and industrial zones in the country in search of employment, thus increasing the risk of trafficking.

Migrant labor almost always results in prolonged spousal separation which disrupts normal family life, encourages marital infidelity and increases the risk and vulnerability to HIV. Lesotho has the world's fourth highest HIV infection rate. In 2009, the UN documented that 23.6% of Basotho ages 15-49 are HIV positive. However, it is estimated that up to

40% of the population is affected by HIV/AIDS.

Compounding the matter, it is estimated that one-third of Lesotho physicians have emigrated. Academics are able to find equivalent work in South Africa at 2-3 times the rate of pay in Lesotho.

The Lesotho dam projects beginning in 1986 have caused the internal relocation and resettlement of families to accommodate dam construction. The overall effect has been a decrease in the standard of living and disruption of social structures following resettlement.

For example, the seven hundred families resettled in the Katse and Mohale Dam projects experienced more than 50% loss of arable/ grazing lands. Sharecropper families lost their livelihoods and 152,000 people with reduced downstream flow were also negatively affected. The overall livestock wealth has been impoverished, with Mohale resettlement causing reductions ranging from 71% in cattle to 46% in goats.

Furthermore, the influx of dam construction workers and truckers introduced HIV into the surrounding villages. HIV infection rates increased from .5% of the general population in 1992 to 22% in pregnant women in 1999.

Lesotho also receives refugees from regions where there is/has been conflict in Africa such as Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). These refugees find themselves in an economy that is beyond its carrying capacity, making resettlement for them even more difficult.

Chinese migrants have moved into retail trade as well as construction throughout the country, even in rural areas. Ethnic Chinese from East Asia, now constitute the largest group of foreign residents ever to live in the country.

## Stories of the People

### A Gifted Refugee

I met a gentleman from Rwanda who had come to Lesotho in 2009. In Rwanda he had joined a movement that supported human rights. This was considered a threat by the government and he was forced to flee the country, leaving behind a wife and three children.

He sought refuge in three different countries prior to Lesotho. He was advised by a Good Shepherd sister that people in Lesotho would assist him. Our sisters asked him to teach them French to earn his living but this did not last because the sisters are spread throughout the country and involved in their ministries.

With the help of the refugee office he registered with the Lesotho Teachers Service Department (TSD) as a French and English teacher. Due to the crisis of jobs in Lesotho the minister of education required secular instruction schools to hire foreign teachers only for math and science. Other subjects can only be taught by the graduates and citizens of Lesotho. Therefore, he has no job and lives on the government monthly allowance of M400, which is equivalent to \$5 US.

- **49% of international migrants are women**
- **214 million people live outside of their country of birth**
- **1/3 of migrants move between developing countries**
- **Migrants would be the 5th most populous country**

Sources: International Organization for Migration & United Nations

The man would like to begin his own business for students who want to rewrite English for matric, but he lacks start up capital and an office where he can meet his clients. Sr. Monica Rasehlabo at St. Bernadette primary, a Holy Names school, is providing him with a classroom. It is at this point that I met him and I am currently in the process of negotiating with people who can give him an office.

—Aloysia Makoe, SNJM

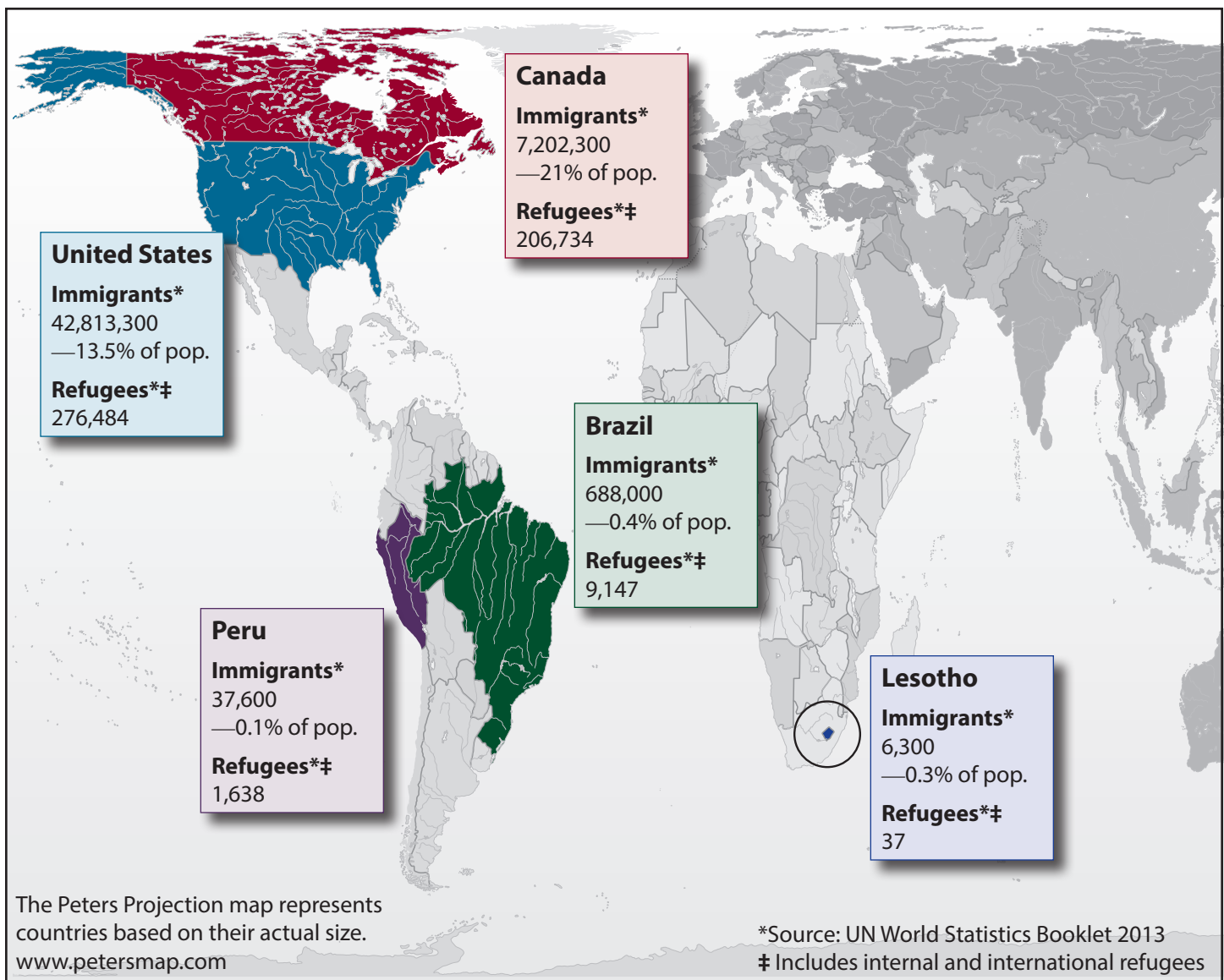


## Peru Situation

Peru was a country of immigration in the 19th and early 20th centuries, during which it brought in Asian contract laborers mainly to work on coastal plantations. In the last few decades it has become a country of emigrants. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that 3.5 million Peruvians, more than 10% of the population, have migrated abroad. Some 2.4 million of them have done so in the past 22 years. Most leave for the pursuit of economic opportunity.

There are many causes for internal migration such as terrorism; upheaval in the agricultural sector and the growth of industry; development on lands traditionally held by indigenous communities, such as mining, mineral extraction, and wind farms; adequate farmland; natural disasters such as earthquakes, drought, and landslides; lack of employment options; and educational opportunities. By 2010 the number of internal migrants reached 6.5 million persons. The population living in Lima's metropolitan area rose from 800,000 in 1940 to nine million today. Peru's urban dwellers account for 76% of the population.

Since the outbreak of terrorist activities by the Shining Path movement in 1980 and subsequent military reactions, over 30,000 persons have been dislocated from towns and villages in the Ayacucho and Huancavelica highlands. Most of them gravitate to Ica or Lima, the national capital.



Mining displaces Peru's indigenous communities, forcing the people to migrate to cities or other regions. Mining concessions profoundly alter communities, disrupting their traditional cultures and destroying archeological and ceremonial sites and cemeteries.

Mining exploration roads and large craters result from open pit mines and inflict harm on large areas of nature. This threatens biodiversity as some plant and animal species disappear forever.

An additional consequence of the mining industry's displacement of people is the impact on communities. As men arrive to work in mines, the secondary effect of exploitation through prostitution and human trafficking emerges in the newly established mining towns.

## Stories of the People

### *Transforming Trauma into Forgiveness*

Nancy, a mother of three young adults, has endured a great deal of trauma in her life. She was born and raised in Ayacucho, an impoverished and neglected region in the Andean highlands of Peru.

In 1980, the Maoist terrorist organization known as the Shining Path used Ayacucho as the base for its campaign against the Peruvian government. In 1983, the capital sent in the armed forces, clamping Ayacucho and the surrounding regions under martial rule. The result was a two-sided horror story, with the senderistas on one side, the military on the other, and the mainly indigenous population caught in the middle.

When the Shining Path assassinated Nancy's father—the town's mayor—she decided to flee to Lima with her husband and five year-old son. They would later have another son and daughter.

In Lima, they encountered new problems: lack of stable housing, hunger, poverty, and despair. Nancy also dealt with severe migraines and PTSD episodes. It wasn't until she met Marjorie Moffatt, SNJM who encouraged her to join ESPERE ("Escuela de Perdón y Reconciliación") School of Forgiveness and Reconciliation that she found some peace of mind. The seminars helped Nancy to identify and transcend the root causes of conflict in her life. She developed proactive strategies to address and overcome conflict and learned the power of forgiveness.



She started by forgiving herself and stopped feeling guilty for her past and the many sacrifices her family was forced to make. Then she continued by forgiving others.

Nancy's story is one of survival, determination, and success in the midst of loss and trauma. Nancy and her husband did their very best to provide for their three children and secure their college education. Their oldest son and daughter are accountants and their youngest daughter is now pursuing a career in Psychology!

—Interview with Nancy,  
Contact through Marjorie Moffatt, SNJM

### **Survival and Success**

For many rural areas dwellers who suffer from poverty and lack of equal opportunities, hope for a better life is the impetus to migrate to urban areas. This was the case of Oliva, the eldest and only daughter of four children, who lived in a peasant community in Cajamarca in which field work was “for men only.” From an early age, Oliva was relegated to cook and take food to the men working in the fields. She didn't have the opportunity to study past elementary school because her father decided to invest in his sons' education first.

At age eighteen, Oliva decided to migrate to Lima to look for “a better life.” Her cousin helped her to get settled and to find a job as a domestic worker. Later she connected with Marie Rose Center which introduced her to an alternative educational program for adults where she got the equivalent to her GED. She is now tutoring a group of five women who are starting that very same program.

—Interview with Oliva,  
Contact through Brigid Baumann, SNJM



## **United States of America Situation**

The United States has historically considered itself as a nation of immigrants. With a global reputation as a country of opportunity, the US draws immigrants from across the world. In recent decades, the stringency of US immigration policy has increased exponentially. Following the attacks on 09/11/2001 the US Government enacted laws and policies that raised the scrutiny of foreign-born nationals, as well



*The Sowers* by Nancy Earle

as citizens resembling them. The economic downturn in 2008—while not caused by people lacking documentation—brought further public focus on them, particularly those from Mexico.

Immigration reform is a highly contentious subject currently facing US lawmakers. The legislation under consideration details strict southern border enforcement (including

the use of drones), as well as a lengthy path to citizenship (13 years minimum to achieve citizenship), and harsh penalties for immigrants in the country without proper documentation. For agricultural workers and “Dreamers”—those who arrived in the country as minors and are pursuing either a college education or service in the US Armed Forces—there is the possibility of an expedited visa if they meet certain requirements.

Deportation of immigrants is at an all-time high under the Obama Administration. Fear of deportation is a powerful force in the lives of people without documentation. They are hesitant to use vital public services such as calling for medical help in an emergency, visiting hospitals, or calling the police in situations of domestic violence. Fear of deportation can also be used as leverage by employers, capitalizing on the vulnerability of the worker. In the worst situations this can take the form of human trafficking for labor or sex.

Despite a high unemployment rate, the US is unable to fill the ranks of employees, both skilled and unskilled. US agriculture is highly dependent on migrant workers, largely from Mexico, who are willing to work long hours for low pay which translates into a considerable income because of the currency differential between the US and Mexico. Migrants often send a portion of their earnings to their countries of origin, benefiting those in stagnant economies worldwide.

The US is a coveted place of education for high achievers around the world. Some students marry, find employment, or seek permanent residency following their education. This creates an intellectual and economic void in their countries of origin.

The US offers refugee and asylum status to people from regions experiencing conflicts, such as Iraq, or natural disasters, such as the 2010 earthquake in Haiti.

While some Americans fear that

immigrants are displacing them in the workforce and consuming vital resources such as healthcare and social security, the opposite is true. Undocumented Immigrants often use forged documents required by employers that allocate a percentage of wages to federal programs. As a result, undocumented immigrants contribute to a system from which they will never collect the benefits.

## Stories of the People

### *A Plea, a Plan, a Triumph*

Ms. Cassandra, a woman now in her sixties, came to the United States from Jamaica without papers. She married a US citizen and they lived in a suburb of Orlando, FL. In 2004 her husband applied to US Immigration and Naturalization Services [USCIS] for the adjustment of Cassandra's status as his wife. During the process the husband died.

Shortly after his death in 2005, Cassandra received a rejection of her application on the premise that her husband had died, thus making her ineligible for adjustment. By this time she was in dire economic straits, unable to obtain a formal job without papers and performing random house cleaning to make ends meet. As with most undocumented persons, Cassandra lived in fear and great anxiety of being discovered and deported back to Jamaica.

Cassandra enlisted the assistance of a local immigration attorney, borrowing money to pay a substantial fee to represent her and present her case for re-application. She received notification that her case was to come before an immigration judge in Tampa. The attorney told Cassandra to meet her in Tampa and that she would appear before the immigration judge with her.

Cassandra travelled over two hours to Tampa for a 9 am hearing. When her case was called the attorney did not appear, so the Judge moved her time to later in the day. At the end of the day the attorney had never appeared and Cassandra's case was not heard.

For most immigrants this would have been the end of the story. But Cassandra came to Catholic Charities Immigration where her case was researched. They sent the USCIS documentation that she was eligible for authorization for permanent legal residency under an October 2009 law-exception. In 2012 she finally received her Green Card as a Legal Permanent Resident of the US!

—Liz Crean, SNJM

### *A Mother's Resurrection Walk*

Teresa was in her mid teens when she married an older man in order to leave a physically abusive father. After giving birth to two babies, in her third pregnancy she realized that her husband was abusive like her father. She took her children to her small family home where fifteen people lived close together in extreme poverty.

Her crushing concern was the support of her children. What could she do? There was nothing available. Fifteen days following the birth of her third child, Teresa made an excruciating decision. She left her children—one a newborn—and joined a small group heading north to find work in the United States.

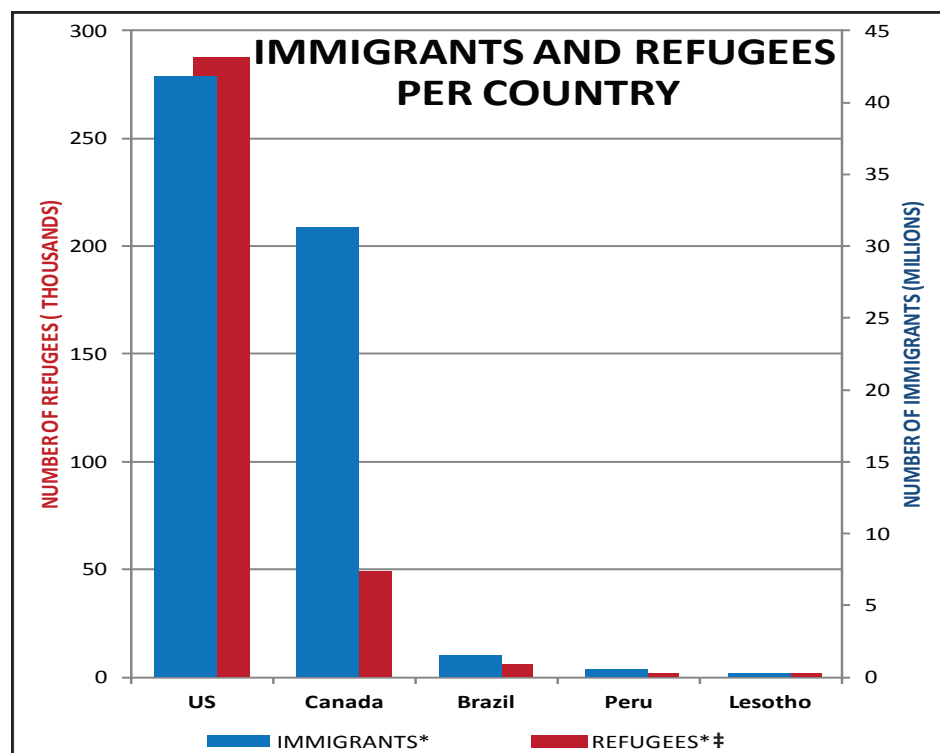
She soon found herself in Tijuana. One morning at dawn she began the trek on foot across the border to a place where someone was to pick them up. All day long they walked. Teresa, having recently given birth, was exhausted when they reached the pick up point, only to find 'la migra' waiting.

They were driven back to the border and returned to Tijuana. Though desperate, Teresa was relieved, thinking the enterprise was over. However, the leader and the group decided that they would attempt another route the following morning.

They walked again all day and by the time they reached the pick up point the next day her feet were bloody and the toe nails were almost gone. But they succeeded. She would be able to contribute to the support of her little children.

Today, Theresa is a leader and mentor for young Latinas at Adelante Mujeres, an organization co-founded by Barbara Raymond, SNJM. Adelante Mujeres fosters holistic education and empowerment for low-income Latina women.

—Barbara Raymond, SNJM



## Who's Who When People Move

### Migrant

No agreed upon definition. Could include the following ideas:

- Persons outside the country of which they are citizens, and in the territory of another state;
- Persons who do not enjoy the legal recognition of rights in the host state through the status of refugee, permanent resident or a similar status.

### Irregular migrant also known as an undocumented person

An irregular (or undocumented) migrant is a person who lacks legal status in a transit or host country.

### Immigrant

Person who leaves one country to reside permanently in another.

### (Convention) Refugee

Person who, by reason of fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion, is outside their country of nationality and is unable or unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of this country.

### Internally displaced persons

Internally displaced persons are those forced or obliged to flee their homes or places of habitual residence, usually in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, but have not crossed an internationally recognized State border.

For complete definitions see [www.iom.int](http://www.iom.int)

## Actions

### International

- Across the world migration is deeply influenced by economics and education. Walk in solidarity with the least educated and people who are poor.
- Whenever possible purchase fairly traded goods.
- Partner with Catholic Relief Services.
- Contact François Crépeau, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants, regarding the migration situation in your country.
- Build relationships across the Congregation to better understand how we encounter migration.
- Monitor the companies our community invests in and call them to corporate accountability.

### Brazil

- Keep abreast of developments regarding the construction of the Monte Belo Dam.
- Be informed of displacement caused by the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympics. Share stories and recent information with local groups representing migrants, the SNJM Justice & Peace Network and Sisters and Associates participating at the UN.

### Canada

- Partner with the Canadian Council for Refugees.
- Volunteer to accompany refugees with language, education and support systems.

### Lesotho

- Take action in support of Transformation Resource Center's (TRC) recommendations on dams in Lesotho.

### Peru

- Be aware of and promote the work of the National Catholic Committee for Immigrants.
- Participate in the intercongregational Red Kawsay project.

### United States of America

- Contact your legislators and ask them to act for just and compassionate immigration reform. Explore ministry with those in detention centers.
- Send letters to the editor on comprehensive immigration reform.

**"Every human being has the right to freedom of movement and of residence within the confines of his[her] own country; and, when there are just reasons for it, the right to emigrate to other countries and take up residence there."**

—Pacem In Terris, John XXIII 1963

### The SNJM Committee on Immigration and Refugees

Margaret Ames, SNJMA  
Bridgid Baumann, SNJM  
Elizabeth Crean, SNJM  
Phyllis Douillard, SNJM  
Catherine Ferguson, SNJM  
Johanna Jonker, SNJM

Bob Juarez, SNJMA  
Terry Lavergne, SNJMA  
Aloysia Makoe, SNJM  
Mary Ondreyco, SNJM  
Janet Walton, SNJM

Coordinator  
Yvonne Massicotte, SNJM  
Resource Persons  
Linda Haydock, SNJM  
Mary Rita Rohde, SNJM

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