

ISSUES AND ACTIONS

January 2009



January 1st., World Day of Peace

The morning paper's headlines put World Day of Peace in last place by announcing, "Conflict in Gaza Intensifies. Israel bombs mosque, and Hamas hammers cities with 60 rockets; both sides rebuff calls for a cease fire." Very disheartening, but the optimist would remind us that this only means "we have 364 days of opportunity to make peace happen." Hope springs eternal.

THE OLDEST STORY IN THE WORLD

The following was contributed by Ms. Nancy Fellom, an immigration attorney who addressed our Mission congregation in Brisbane, California. Her dedication to the poor and underserved is done daily, working with many heartbreaking results, as a voice for the voiceless.

"Immigration has become one of the most controversial political issues in our country today. The construction industry, manufacturers and cooperate farmers rely upon the immigrant labor pool and complain vocally about any interruption in production or increase in costs, while the civil rights advocate challenges the government's policy from the undocumented worker's perspective.

Yet this is not just simply another political issue. It is truly the oldest story in the world. It is about families seeking a better life for their children, many of whom have been displaced by poverty, famine, persecution and outright war. These individuals have made the courageous decision to come to the United States by whatever means possible in order to survive and to support their children. All parents share the same common good of providing a safe and secure life to their children and to give them the tools to better their circumstances. People don't flee to the U.S. in order to get welfare, they come to work and for the hope of a better life.

Did you know ...

*That marrying a U. S, citizen does not legalize the foreign born spouse? In fact if the foreign born spouse has been living illegally in the U. S. for over one year he/she will be ineligible for lawful residence until he/she has proceeded abroad and lived there for TEN YEARS. These bars to obtaining legal status are particularly harsh and punish families by separation for prolonged periods of time.

*That less than 10% of the refugees applying for asylum in the U. S. are actually granted that form of relief? This means that 90% are deported back to the country from which they fled.

*That the undocumented people are often detained for years while they seek relief from deportation? There is no right to bail, nor is there any right to a free attorney for individuals in removal proceedings.

*That we no longer "deport" people from the U.S? They are now "removed." This is not a kinder nor gentler policy.

In working with the immigrant community I have seen countless families reunited in our great country, many after years of separation. I have seen children arrive, after grueling journeys across hostile lands, battle scarred, speaking no English and traumatized by the absence of parents. They do not come here to commit criminal acts. They are here to work and be educated and to reunite with family. The miracle is that they have made it here and that they have an opportunity to do more than merely survive. They can and do contribute to who we are as a people and as a country."

POST-IT FOR BUSY PEOPLE

The New Year resolution should be changed. Instead a daily, weekly even monthly resolve might produce more positive results say those who know and study the human psyche. Here are a few sage remarks to ponder for resolve:

An old Sioux Indian man was trying to describe to his granddaughter what it felt like to an elder.

"It takes strength," he said. "I feel as if I have two wolves fighting in my heart.

One wolf is vengeful, angry, and violent. The other wolf is loving and compassionate."

"Which wolf will win the fight in your heart, Grandfather?" asked the child at his side.

"The one I feed," he replied.

"Aerodynamically, the bumblebee shouldn't be able to fly. But the bumblebee doesn't know it. So he keeps on flying."

Mary Kay Ash

"If you think you can't make a difference, think again!"

Paul J. Meyer

A HAPPY
NEW YEAR

submitted by the peace and justice committee