

# Becoming Sanctuary

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"To spend of your sustenance out of love for God, for your kin, for the orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the freeing of slaves."

- Surah 2:177 Holy Qur'an



## \*Remember...\*

Please keep our families in your daily prayers, especially on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Fridays, when they have check-in appointments with Immigration.



The NYC New Sanctuary Coalition is an interfaith network of immigrant families, faith communities, and organizations, standing together to publicly resist unjust deportations, to inspire a humane public discourse about immigration, and ultimately to bring about reform of the US' flawed immigration policy. We are part of the national New Sanctuary Movement.

## "The Churches Have to Rise Up..."

**By RoxRoy, Sanctuary father living in Brooklyn**

Can you imagine forces trying to separate you from your family? One has to live it and experience it to understand. It's an outrage and an unexplainable feeling. I'm living that experience right now.

We the families are reaching a place of desperation, not knowing what tomorrow will bring. For years, our communities and families have been destroyed by an immigration system that does not respect a person's basic humanity. The families scarred by this brutal system live all around us.

I live and breathe for my children. It is my greatest honor. I teach my children decency and moral values because I was brought up that way. I teach them to be good human beings: to love God, themselves and their neighbors. I just can't bear the thought of being away from my family - most of all my children and grandchildren, my brothers and sisters and my mother.

My family and I are grateful for the New Sanctuary Movement and Families for Freedom and the daily challenges they are undertaking with our families on this journey. The churches have to rise up and be an influence on the Earth - not working out of fear, but the positiveness of faith. Then we will triumph, triumphantly!

**\*See p. 4 for more information on RoxRoy and his family!\***



**RoxRoy and his son, Elijah, are taking a stand for family unity.**  
Photo by Mizue Azeiki/Families for Freedom

## Reflections on Accompanying Patty to Her Check-In

**By Regina Bechtle, Sister of Charity of New York, in Sanctuary partnership with Patty and Jarret**

As I rode an early bus downtown on that rainy, raw Monday in May, I thought of Patty and her husband Jarret whom I was about to meet. How frustrating to have to travel over an hour every Monday to report to a government office, whether or not you felt sick or tired. How constraining to have to arrange your life around this appointment.

The building on Canal Street where we were to meet looked like any other office building. Lots of people streamed into the lobby and up the elevators, most of them fighting with umbrellas blown inside out by the wind. I thought of how Patty and Jarret's life had been turned inside out by this experience. She had done nothing intentionally to harm anyone, or to defy U.S. law, but she was treated as a criminal, required to wear an ankle bracelet so her movements could be tracked at all times. What does that do to one's sense of self-esteem?

I waited in the lobby with no fear that I was in any danger, or that some authority would question my presence. But Patty had no such guarantees.

Finally, close to 9:30AM, a couple walked through the doors and came over to me. Though we had never met before, they recognized my Sisters of Charity pin, and knew that I was there to support them. They strode to the elevators with the air of people who had done this many times before. We pushed the button for the 9<sup>th</sup> floor and got out.

The office looked like any other. Its name - "B.I." - told me nothing. Inside, a large sign on the wall proclaimed the meaning of the cryptic initials: "Behavioral Interventions," a private contractor under the Department of Homeland Security, which administers their Intensive Supervision Appearance Program (ISAP).

Inside, Patty handed her identification card to the clerk at the desk... (cont'd on p. 4) →

## NY United Church of Christ Passes Pro-NSM Resolution



Martha Gotwals presents a resolution in support of the New Sanctuary Movement to the NY State UCC conference! Photo by Mark Marsh

**By Rev. Mark Marsh, pastor of Victoria Congregational Church, and Martha Gotwals, congregant at Judson Memorial Church**

The United Church of Christ's NY Conference in June overwhelmingly passed a resolution supporting the New Sanctuary Movement (NSM). The meeting took place June 6-8 at Silver Bay YMCA in the Adirondacks. About 400 UCC members and ministers from across the state were present. The resolution came from the UCC NY Metropolitan Association, represented by over 90 churches in New York City, Nassau and Westchester counties, who had passed it unanimously at their spring 2007 meeting. The UCC Metro Association Committee on the Church and the Metropolitan Community, which advocates and organizes around social justice issues, presented it.

Resolutions going before the conference are made available to all UCC churches in NY. They are introduced at the annual meeting, followed by a hearing and then a general presentation and vote. About 30 people came to the hearing. Most were in favor of the resolution, but wanted to talk about immigration issues in their communities. One of the main areas of discussion was how to support undocumented workers whether or not they are under order of deportation. Participants wanted to know how to keep immigrants safe from Amtrak and bus searches, employment cross-references with the IRS, random police car checks, and raids asking for documentation. They also wanted to know what can be done to gain proper documentation. Other concerns centered on exploitative work situations and how to help migrant workers.

The resolution was revised at the hearing to include more contact information within the UCC and for the New Sanctuary Movement and a concise definition of the NSM. Martha Gotwals, co-chair of the presenting committee and member of the Judson Memorial Church Sanctuary Task Force, brought the resolution to the Conference. Delegates voted to express support for the New Sanctuary Movement, urge congregations, "to commit to sacred conversations about immigration," to call upon congregations to consider becoming New Sanctuary churches, and to present the resolution to the national UCC General Synod set for June 2009 in Grand Rapids, MI. For further information and a copy of the resolution, contact Martha Gotwals at [mradg@aol.com](mailto:mradg@aol.com) or Mark Marsh at [markmarsh25@hotmail.com](mailto:markmarsh25@hotmail.com).

## NSM Helps Launch Principles for Immigrant Worker Rights

**By Rabbi Michael Feinberg, Executive Director of the Greater New York Labor-Religion Coalition**

On Saturday, June 14, hundreds of union and community members gathered in the auditorium of SEIU Local 32BJ to launch a Declaration of Principles for Immigrant Worker Rights. The launch event, which was organized by unions and community organizations, worker centers, and advocacy groups - including the NYC New Sanctuary Movement (NYC-NSM), the Greater NY Labor-Religion Coalition, the NY Immigration Coalition, and the NY Civic Participation Project - highlighted dynamic speakers from labor and the community, as well as a dozen interactive workshops in which participants connected the principles to active campaigns and city-wide issues.



Hundreds of New Yorkers gather to launch the NYC Declaration of Principles for Immigrant Worker Rights. Photo by Gary Schoichet/NYCPCP

The event was the culmination of a process over the winter and spring in which labor and community allies met to develop a shared set of principles that have been incorporated into a voter/activist pledge card. These five principles are: workers' rights apply to all; labor rights are the basis of a just society; safe and healthy communities are a basic right; we cannot live in a two-tiered society; and NY must set a progressive example. We plan to use the statement of principles and the pledge card to educate union and community members and to build a broader and deeper movement for immigrant and worker rights. (For pledge cards, contact [newyorknewsanctuarymovement@gmail.com](mailto:newyorknewsanctuarymovement@gmail.com).)

In a workshop at the event, Janis Rosheuvell, Executive Director of Families for Freedom, gave an "Introduction to Deportations" describing the deportation threats that many immigrants currently face. Angad Bhalla (organizer with the NYC-NSM) and I also presented information about the New Sanctuary Movement and about Department of Corrections-Immigration and Customs Enforcement (DOC-ICE) collaboration to a group of some thirty labor and community activists. A very full question-and-answer period and discussion followed. As for the NSM, we were able to broaden our outreach to a number of unions that had members present. We hope this laid the foundation for future labor-NSM partnerships.



## The Riverside Church Celebrates "Immigration Sunday"

*By Carol Fouke-Mpoyo, Chair of the Riverside Church's Immigration Detention Visitor Project*

At its 11AM service on June 15, the Riverside Church of New York City celebrated Immigration Sunday. Leaders of the congregation's outreach to detained asylum seekers - the Immigration Detention Visitor Project - proposed the service to the staff of Riverside's Mission and Social Justice Department. Riverside's Interim Senior Minister Rev. Dr. Thomas Stiers and Director of Worship Emily Scott enthusiastically agreed on the concept – and on a date!

Why June 15? It offered the opportunity for a timely celebration of the congregation's unanimous vote in May 2008 to declare Riverside a New Sanctuary Congregation, and was close to June 20, observed worldwide every year as World Refugee Day. In just two one-hour planning meetings, a lay-staff team agreed on the theme "Being Sanctuary," outlined the service, chose Bible texts, identified readers from Riverside's Latino/a and African fellowships, agreed on the hymns, and assigned writers for the liturgy and for a "pew card" - an extensive bulletin insert on immigration issues.

The service opened with an excerpt from a new, five-minute film titled, "Jean's Check-In," about a NYC Sanctuary father threatened with separation from his wife and small children by a deportation order. It also included the testimony of an asylee just recently released from Elizabeth Detention Center in New Jersey. Rev. Dr. Thomas Stiers and Riverside's Minister for Mission and Social Justice, Rev. Robert Coleman, delivered a joint sermon. Three songs by contemporary singer/songwriter Lisa Lynne Mathis added to the emotional power of the service.

Afterwards, many congregants spoke of their tears of solidarity with immigrants and their new understanding of immigrants' struggles. For more information or for copies of the pew card, contact Carol Fouke-Mpoyo, at [cjfm10@hotmail.com](mailto:cjfm10@hotmail.com).

### "A Prophetic Call to Hospitality" Zechariah 7:9-12; Luke 10:29-37 (Christian Scriptures)

*Abridged version of the sermon given by Rev. Robert Coleman, at the Riverside Church on June 15, "Immigration Sunday"*

It wasn't long after moving into my office that I discovered a picture in my office closet. It was an enlarged photo of a family from Guatemala who lived in the tower of this church in the mid-80s. I had read about the Riverside Church's commitment to provide sanctuary to sisters and brothers who, homeless and threatened with harm, needed to find some room in the inn. From providing a place of rest in the cloister lounge, to staffing an overnight shelter for homeless people, to the genesis of the Sanctuary movement in the eighties, to detention visitation ministries like Sojourners, and our recent unanimous resolution to be a New Sanctuary Church in 2008...The Riverside Church in the City of New York has attempted to practice hospitality with integrity.

I cannot pretend to imagine what it would be like to get up in the morning and hug my two-year-old in bed and wonder if this is the last time I will see my baby. Nor can I imagine what it would be like to know that if I stay in my own country, I will face certain abuse, imprisonment, or even the threat of death, for no reason other than the free expression of my opinions. So I flee to a country that has for over two centuries said, "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free," hoping to find a place to lay my head down and sleep a peaceful sleep.

There are times in history when the church is presented with an opportunity to let its light shine. Dr. James Cone and Dr. Cornel West have referred to them as kairos moments. A moment in time when we will either choose to stand with the gospel, truly live the Jesus story, and risk the ridicule and even persecution of the dominant culture, or we will acquiesce to the status quo and perpetuate the illusion of power through modern surveillance and profitable incarceration.

Sisters and brothers of Riverside, the kairos moment is upon us. As with the people of Zechariah's time, we have eaten our meals for our own pleasure for far too long! The twenty-first century unfolds

before us with unjust economic, political, and environmental forces that will result in dramatic migrations of homo sapiens around the earth. These forces will challenge economic structures, political alliances, and national borders and they will eventually call into question the militarized defense of said borders. Life-seeking brothers and sisters will increasingly come to our doorstep in the coming years, and we must decide how we will practice being Church with them.

The Lord said to Zechariah, "Render true judgments. Show kindness and mercy to one another. Do not oppress the widow, the orphan, the alien, or the poor and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another." Do not devise evil in your hearts against one another. Our souls are held accountable for feasting on God's abundance selfishly. Instead, our national loyalties must fade before God almighty when we say, "God, when did we see you hungry and not feed you?"

The kairos moment is upon us, Riverside. Kindness and mercy will move us forward. We will embrace the father and the two-year-old and say, "come, share in our bounty." We will share with our sisters and brothers who come to find a place to rest. We will share with those in detention and say, "You are not alone, and you are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses, a throng of believers, lovers of life who will not forget you are here." We shall let our light shine as we recognize in the detainee, the asylum seeker, the refugee, the internally displaced person, the parolee, the criminal alien, and the immigrant, our very own neighbor. This is the church we have been called to be. This is the church that for seventy-eight years we have declared ourselves to be.

Early in the twentieth century, William Faulkner wrote a memorable phrase. He was speaking of the historical evolution taking place in the southern United States, of the changes in human relationship for which the Civil War and legal battles had been fought, and households had been torn apart. *(cont'd on p. 4) →*



## It's time for another NYC New Sanctuary Retreat!

All members of pledged faith communities and organizations are invited to participate!

THURSDAY,  
SEPTEMBER 18<sup>th</sup>,  
5pm-9:30pm

At «Seafarers and International House»,  
123 East 15th Street,  
Manhattan.

Train L, N, Q, R, W, 4,  
5, or 6 to Union  
Square.

### Schedule

5-6:30pm - Registration  
and Community Meal

6:30-9:30pm - Prayer,  
Reflection, Subcommittee  
Planning Sessions,  
Legislative Campaigns,  
and Renewing Our  
Commitment

\*Please RSVP to  
[newyorknewsanctuarymovement@gmail.com](mailto:newyorknewsanctuarymovement@gmail.com)!\*

Many thanks to our writers  
& photographers!  
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## Keep Our Families Together!

If you're reading this newsletter for the first time, we need you! Please contact us to learn how you can get involved. And if your faith community or organization is already a pledged member, please come to our upcoming NYC New Sanctuary Retreat!

Photo by Mizue Aizeki/Families for Freedom



## More Information on RoxRoy (cont'd from p. 1)

**By RoxRoy and Manisha Vaze, organizer at Families for Freedom**

RoxRoy is a national of Jamaica who has lived in the United States for the past thirty years. He came to the U.S. with his father when he was a young man to seek a good education and to accomplish his goals. In 1979 and 1989, RoxRoy pled guilty to minor drug convictions when he was twice caught in the wrong place at the wrong time. He was fined and received a conditional discharge (1979) and probation (1989). He served no jail time and has had no contact with the law since then. Now, 19 and 29 years later, these sentences threaten to exile him from his family to a country he barely remembers.

He has four beautiful children who were born in the U.S. He also has a daughter who was born in Jamaica. He adores all of his children. He lives with three of his children: Natasha, an 18-year-old who attends Long Island University for legal studies; Nyasia, a 15-year-old studying design at her high school; and Elijah, a 12-year-old in middle school. RoxRoy's mother and brothers and sisters are also U.S. citizens. RoxRoy is an organizer at Families for Freedom and a member of the New Sanctuary Coalition. He believes that everyone deserves their human right to stay with their family. He is working hard to pass legislation that would keep his family together: HR 1176, the Child Citizen Protection Act (CCPA). This bill, if passed, would allow immigration judges the power to use their discretion in RoxRoy's case, allowing them to stop his deportation. For more information, see <http://familiesforfreedom.org/httpdocs/americankids.html>.



## Reflections on Accompanying Patty to Her Check-in

(cont'd from p. 1)

→ ...and sat down. Jarret whispered to me that Patty was nervous as usual. None of the other three people in the office were speaking.

In their silence I could sense tension and fear. After about ten minutes, the clerk called Patty and gave her the identification card back, telling her to report again the next week, but not on the Monday because it was Memorial Day, a Federal holiday, but on the Tuesday. Shadows of fear crossed Patty's face even as she left.

I was touched by Jarret's kind offer to walk me to my subway stop, with all his worries. I hugged them both and promised to keep them in prayer. As we parted, a mantra I once heard came back to me: "Be at peace. All is one. Spirit of Love has no bounds." I prayed it silently for these two ordinary yet courageous people whose lives, as one writer says, "go from one disappointment to the next."

## "A Prophetic Call to Hospitality" (cont'd from p. 3)

→ Racism and Jim Crow and institutional discrimination were still ingrained; yet, the country was struggling to give birth to something new. Faulkner wrote: "We speak now against the day when our Southern people who will resist to the last these inevitable changes in social relations, will, when they have been forced to accept what they at one time might not have accepted with dignity and goodwill, will say, "Why didn't someone tell us this before? Tell us this in time?"

"Speak now against the day" is precisely what the Riverside Church is doing. We can prepare today to be kind and merciful. No longer can we sit comfortably and say, "Why didn't someone tell us this before?" We have been told. Zechariah has told us. Luke has told us. And Jean Montrevil (a *Sanctuary father*) has told us. Today is the day against which we speak.