



Hunger News & Hope

...a Seeds of Hope publication

Living the Undocumented American Dream

by Nick Haynes

When I think about it, I never had strong aspirations of living the American Dream. The ideals of Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness were simply words that I, like many other people born in the United States, always took for granted. It was not until those “rights” were stripped away that I even noticed that I ever had them, and that I was privileged—privileged not because of anything I have done, but because of where I was born and the color of my skin.

There are those among us who do not take the American Dream for granted. Those who were not born into privilege, or those who were born, let’s say, in Mexico. There are people who are born and live their lives in countries and situations in which they constantly face great difficulty and lack of any opportunity.

Some of these people sacrifice everything to travel to the United States, which, in theory, is a land of opportunity. I say *sacrifice* because no matter how difficult one’s circumstances, it is always a sacrifice to leave your home, your family, your culture and your language to go to a place where no one knows you, no one likes you, and no one speaks your language—simply so you can put food on the table. It is true desperation that drives people to emigrate from their homeland to seek out new possibilities.

This is my wife’s story, and now my story as well. My wife was born in Mexico. Like any other little girl, she grew up going to school, playing (and fighting) with her sisters and putting dresses on dolls. She wanted to be a teacher when she



photo by Patrick Lillard

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Why I Fasted for Immigration Reform

by Patrick Carolan

Editor's note: In late 2013, a vast network of Catholic leaders organized a hunger fast in Washington, DC, to bring attention in the US political arena to the need for immigration reform. They were soon joined by many other faith communities. A handful of participants began in a tent on the Capitol mall, but the movement grew rapidly. The fast soon captured national attention, and even President Barack Obama joined the participants in December.

Early the next year, the group launched a "Fast for Families Tour and Caravan: A Call for Immigration Reform and Citizenship," traveling to 130 cities on southern and northern routes, to meet with members of the US House of Representatives who sit on committees connected with immigration.

The Franciscan Action Network (FAN) was a key player in these activities. Patrick Carolan is FAN's executive director. Below are Patrick's thoughts about the event and why it was important.

"What is our faith—our words and our history—worth if not translated into action, sacrifice and redemption?" This is the first line of the statement that was issued by participants in Fast for Families on Nov. 12, 2013, the first day of the 30-day hunger fast for immigration reform.

It sums up why we were fasting. Jesus tells us that, to love God, we must love our neighbor, and to love our neighbour, we must be willing to sacrifice everything. I joined the fast on the first day and, on and off, fasted for 13 days. I finished

with a seven-day fast. We were joined by many fasters from all faiths and backgrounds, including Franciscans from across the country (and around the world).

A powerful spiritual transformation took place in the tent we had constructed on the Capitol Mall. We started out as six fasters. By the last day, almost 200 people had come to the tent—some for a day or more, and three for 22 days.

More than 10,000 people joined us as solidarity fasters across the country. We even heard from a congregation of Franciscan Sisters in Zambia who told us they were joining us in fasting. What started with that small group in 2013 continues as a movement for change.

Each morning, the fasters formed a circle in the tent to pray and share their stories. They came from all walks of life—from national labor and faith leaders to community organizers to undocumented immigrants.

There was even an environmental activist. When he was asked why he was there, he replied, "As someone who believes all social justice issues are interrelated, and that we are all members of the same human family, I felt moved to take a stand for 11 million of our immigrant brothers and sisters, many of whose families are being painfully ripped apart by an inhumane immigration system that flies in the face of our nation's immigrant history and the bedrock American value of justice for all."

My reason for fasting starts with a very simple answer: it is how I practice my faith. As the first line of our statement says, "what is our faith worth if not translated into action?" As a Catholic, I feel that we are not practicing our faith if all we are doing is going to Mass on Sunday.

St. Francis taught us to preach the Gospel and use words only when necessary. Fasting for peace and justice is part of the Catholic Franciscan tradition.

The second reason I joined the fast was because of the stories that I heard from

Left: Participants in the Fast for Families stayed in a tent on the Capitol Mall in Washington, DC for 30 days. From left: Eliseo Medina, who organized the fast; Scott Wright, executive director of the Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach (a ministry of the Missionary Society of St. Columban); and Patrick Carolan, executive director of the Franciscan Action Network. Photo courtesy of Patrick Carolan.



fasters like Lucy and Gina, about their experiences crossing the desert and having families ripped apart. Or the story we heard one evening from a woman who talked about crossing the desert with her husband to seek a better life. They would have preferred to come to the US legally, but there was no possibility of that.

They worked hard and had two children. One day her husband did not come home. When the woman checked she found out he had been caught up in an ICE (US Immigration and Customs Enforcement) raid and arrested. He was deported, leaving her alone with their two young children.

She told us that, every night when she is putting her children to bed, they look at her and ask: "Mommy, when is Poppy coming home?" She looked at us with tears in her eyes and said, "*Que les puedo decir?*" ("What can I say?")

My other reason for fasting is because my parents were immigrants. They came to the US in 1950 from Ireland on a visitor's visa. They had one child, another on the way, almost no education and no money. Eventually they were able to get a green card and become citizens.

I asked my mother why they gave up everything they had, to come to a new land where they had nothing. She told me she had a dream that her children could have a better life. My mother was blessed to live long enough to see her dream come true. She always reminded me that I had a responsibility to work for justice, so that other mothers and fathers get the chance to see their dreams of a better life for their children come true.

My mom used to say: "Remember, this is not our land or country; it is God's Earth. We are all immigrants, and if we expect God to welcome us home, then we had better welcome all God's children into our country and home."

I fasted because, if my mother were alive today, she would have been in the tent fasting.

Together we created sacred space and a significant movement, but that is not enough. We must continue until

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every inch of this wondrous Earth, every creature and all creation, are considered sacred. As a Christian, I often ask people a simple question: "Do you think Jesus came with a building plan or an evacuation plan?"

When the entire Universe is considered hallowed ground, and all creation is considered sacred, only then will we be following the teachings of Jesus and building the kingdom of heaven on Earth.

Peace and All Good,
Patrick

Immigration for Chinese Students is Mostly about Luck

by Poplar Yuan

It takes a Chinese student a long time to "settle down" in the United States. It often doesn't matter how good your grade point average is, or how good your employer is. Many times, it is all about luck.

I believe that most Chinese students in the US pay a lot to earn a degree and find a good job. When I say "a lot," I don't only mean money; I also refer to extra efforts to learn and fit into American culture. I've tried to do everything I can, during my five years in the US, to build my life. A number of scholarships, a number of awards and some very good work reference letters suggest that my efforts have been approved.

However, based on immigration rules, I couldn't have stayed more than three months after I graduated from college if I didn't have a job. So I started looking for jobs a long time before most of my American friends. Some of them didn't understand why I started looking for jobs a year before graduation.

During my job search, several companies were interested in hiring me, until I said that I needed them to sponsor a work VISA¹ for me. Since I didn't have a green card,² I had to narrow my search to Asian companies that might understand my situation. Several managers, and even CEOs, said they just didn't want to get involved with immigration issues.

Many international graduates find good jobs, but more of them are forced to go back home. They might be more qualified

than the others, but they just don't have the luck.

I was lucky to find my first job in just one month after I graduated. Before long, I realized that I was not really fit for that position, but I was too scared to quit, since I wouldn't have much time to find another job. The second job I got, where I work now, has a low pay rate, but it helped me to get a work VISA in time.

Every year, international students get a one-time chance to apply for a work VISA, and that's in April. At that time, the students go through a lottery process. Undergraduate students get a 30-percent chance, and graduate students get a 40-percent chance to have their files reviewed by the government. If your file doesn't get picked up, you miss your chance.

I was lucky enough to get through the lottery process, but a work VISA is only good for three years. You can receive a work VISA twice; then you have to find an employer who can apply for a green card for you. After that, Chinese immigrants have to wait more than four years to get them approved. It can take a Chinese graduate 10 years to receive a green card.

During the application process, you can't change your job. This means that sometimes the manager knows you can't leave the company and will take advantage of you or will overlook you for a promotion.

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grew up. She had a blackboard and often pretended that she was teacher.

Then, one day, shortly after the implementation of NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement), her dad lost his job. For several months, the family coped with his unemployment with the little money he earned from selling lotions on the street. But this was no way to support a family of five.

Eventually, my wife's father made the courageous, but difficult, decision to move to the United States for work. They had applied for a visa several months earlier, but the wait was more than 20 years. So he came anyway, without a visa.

After a year of separation, my wife's parents made the most difficult decision of their lives. Her mom packed up the family (I say *packed* because it is a common expression; they actually came with nothing), said goodbye to friends and loved ones and made the long, dangerous journey to the United States. They hired a man to take my wife, her mother and two sisters across the river and deliver them to Waco, Texas.

This man could have abused them, robbed them or abandoned them. This happens to many families. My wife was fortunate. And so began their glorious life of living in the shadows in the land of opportunity.

Living in the United States was not easy. My wife was ridiculed because she couldn't speak English. She was told that she always had to lie, always had to hide her true situation. The life of an undocumented teenager trying to stay under the radar is a lonely and isolated life. Yet they were grateful because the family was together, and they had food to eat.

My wife grew up in the Waco school system. She eventually learned to speak English, perfectly. In order to survive, she had to work. In order to work, she had to claim that she had work authorization. She eventually went to college, earned an associate's degree and began attending church.

This is where I come in.

My wife and I met in the spring of 2006 through a small group in our church. We fell in love, and were married in May 2007. Like many other naïve Americans, I was under the impression that if an immigrant, like my wife, married a US citizen, like myself, then she could automatically become a US citizen too.

How wrong I was. The problem is that our immigration system is antiquated, broken and incredibly complex. To make a long story short, my wife was eventually able to become a Legal Permanent Resident—although it was an arduous journey that forced us to endure three months of separation, while she was sent back to Mexico as part of the process.

Because of this status, she can now work legally, have a driver's license and a mortgage. Our lives are fairly normal.

The problem came when we applied for my wife to become a US citizen. We have now been told that, because of a box my wife checked on a form when she was working without authorization, she cannot become a US citizen and will eventually be deported. There is no other option; she will

never qualify for any type of immigration benefit in the United States without a change in the law.

Let me be clear about the brokenness of our immigration system: if my wife had robbed a bank, there might be a path for her. If she had murdered someone, there might still be a way for her to become a US citizen. But because she did what she had to do, and went to work to put food on the table for her family, in the only land she calls home, where she was raised from childhood, she will never be able to become a US citizen.

Our family now faces eventual exile. When we have children, they will be US citizens, but their mother still will face deportation. Despite being a US citizen, I am not free. I cannot live the American Dream.

It is difficult to describe, but try to imagine if you can. Though we try our best to live normal lives, the fear and threat of separation and deportation constantly hangs over our heads.

Let me be clear about the brokenness of our immigration system: if my wife had robbed a bank, there might be a path for her. If she had murdered someone, there might still be a way for her to become a US citizen.

Just for the record, I am unconditionally committed to my wife, and I have absolutely no regrets about loving and spending my life with this woman. When she is deported, I will be deported as well. That means no more holidays with family. We may lose our house, our jobs and everything we hold dear, except each other.

Unfortunately, our story is not unique. Today in the United States, thousands, if not millions, of citizens and their immigrant families are dealing with our broken immigration laws. Wives are being taken from their husbands, and parents from their children, and they are deported. Our immigration system is broken and it needs to change.

My challenge to you is this: When you think about immigrants, think about my wife and our story. Think about how this problem is affecting our community. We are your neighbors, your coworkers. We worship beside you in church.

Also, think about why it is that you deserve the privilege of US citizenship and others do not. What did you do to earn your citizenship? My wife has done everything to earn hers. I have done nothing.

If you would like to do something about this, contact your representatives in Congress. Tell them to fix our broken immigration system, to stop separating families and to allow people like my wife to become US citizens, so they can stay in the only land they call home.

—Nick and Eloisa Haynes both work at Baylor University in Waco, TX. Nick has lived in Waco since 2000. Eloisa immigrated to the United States from Mexico and has lived in Waco for 20 years. They have been married for eight years. This article originally appeared as an Act Locally Waco (ALW) blog. ALW is a clearinghouse for activities and organizations in the Waco area that are designed to end poverty and injustice. Founded and directed by Ashley Thornton, it is part of the Seeds of Hope ministry.

Special Section

La Bestia: A Close Look at Immigration

by Linda Freeto

They walk through the door of an unpretentious house in Grapevine, TX, where they are greeted with smiles, *hellos* and handshakes. Some of them are white, some are brown and some are black. Who are these people who are willing to push through their anxieties and fears to enter this country? They are documented and undocumented immigrants.

The door they are entering belongs to a nonprofit immigration legal service called Justice For Our Neighbors Dallas-Fort Worth (JFON-DFW). There are fifteen JFON offices around the country, helping immigrants adjust to the culture and conditions in the US. JFON also provides low-cost, high-quality legal services that work within the immigration system.

Justice For Our Neighbors was established by the United Methodist Church after extensive study of the question “Who are our neighbors?” Jesus tells us in Mark 12:30-31 to “love the Lord with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” The second part of this Scripture continues, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

The story below is taken from the JFON-DFW files. The name of the JFON client has been changed because of confidentiality issues.

Jose’s mother was pregnant out of wedlock. Because her family would be disgraced, she hid in the family home in Mexico out of their neighbors’ sight. Jose was only a few months old when he was smuggled out of Mexico to be brought up by an aunt in the United States.

The aunt did not adopt Jose, which put him in a very difficult situation. The United States is the only country he knows, and English is his primary language. Jose is an

Right: Migrants climb onto a cargo train called La Bestia (“the Beast”) to catch a dangerous ride across the US border.

undocumented immigrant, even though he has lived in the US his whole life.

JFON-DFW Attorney Maria Macias is working with Jose to gather his documents pertaining to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) law. Jose will graduate in 2016 from high school and wants to go to the University of Texas at Austin to study engineering.

I think every generation of Christians has asked the question “Who are our neighbors?” Our neighbors are those who struggle to make a living, those who are single and trying to get into college, those who are looking for work to provide the very basics for their families. Our neighbors are those who come into the United States looking for safety, freedom and a place to call home.

The History of Migration

Migration has been around since the beginning of time. Throughout history, people have moved from one country to another looking for the safety and freedom. This practice can be traced back to the 1700s BCE. People either moved across country borders on their own or were driven out by others.

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People have been migrating to this continent from Europe since the early 1600s (CE), when Puritans left England to escape religious persecution. They came to the “New World” searching for freedom to worship God as they chose—without fear of being labeled heretics and blasphemers, and without the threat of being put to death for their beliefs.

Others came to the New World during that century seeking relief from economic hardship and harsh taxation.

Our neighbors are those who struggle to make a living, those who are single and trying to get into college, those who are looking for work to provide the very basics for their families.

Between 1845 and 1846, more than 1.5 million adults and children migrated from Ireland to seek refuge in the United States. Their country was in a deep famine, which they call the “Great Hunger.”

A million people died of starvation and disease. The ones who came to the US saw it as a place where their children could eat and live to grow into adults.

From 1960 to 1996, thousands migrated from Guatemala to the US to escape a brutal civil war. The mass slaughter of men, women and children in the 1970s caused a large-scale migration into Mexico and the United States.

These people left to escape a threat of death and destruction most of us can’t imagine. More than 150,000 people were killed or just “disappeared” in the early 1980s. Unfortunately, many people in Central America continue to face this kind of violence every day.

In 2013 and 2014, a wave of undocumented children crossed the Mexican border into the US. In Texas alone, more than 52,000 unaccompanied children were smuggled over the border.

Families were being threatened, and if their children were going to live, the only hope they saw was to get their children out of Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador to the US.

Why People Leave Their Homelands

Some people escape appalling conditions by climbing onto a homemade raft and crossing the ocean. Some walk for months across dry deserts, over mountain ranges and through thousand-year-old forests. As this issue goes to press, more than 3 million people have fled from Syria into Europe and all over the world.

All of these people are escaping a life no longer bearable in a place they once called home. They are all willing to put their lives in danger to reach a new land where they believe there is safety for them and their families. They are refugees.

They believe, or hope, they will be welcomed in the US, but, in many cases, this is not the reality. Many

refugees, when they cross the United States border, will become “undocumented immigrants.”

Those who come from Central and South America will do anything to escape drug-infested communities, gang retaliations and suppressive poverty.¹ They will even climb on top of a cargo train called *La Bestia* (“The Beast”), traveling at high speeds, slipping and sliding as they hang on to anything close at hand.

Even though the train is not meant for passengers, more and more people scramble to the top of each car or hang off the side of the train, knowing that at any minute someone can fall off and are badly injured or killed.

They hang on, because they are also hanging onto their dreams of a better life for themselves and their families. They crawl to the top in desperation to leave deplorable living conditions.

As scared, weary people press against each other, the train races to its destination, finally reaching the United States border. But the cargo train is not the only Beast these people will face. They will have to face the Beast of the United States immigration system.

Today, the United States is in a desperate struggle over how to handle over 11 million undocumented immigrants who live across the nation—people who look to the United States as a place of safety, a place of freedom, a place called “home.” The system, however, is too crowded. Many slip through the cracks and become threatened with deportation and family separation.

Although people migrate from their homelands to the US for many reasons, the most common of these are dire economic conditions and violence. Many people flee increasing violence in their home countries—gang violence, violence from drug cartels (who threaten the lives of children if they will not deliver or sell drugs), civil conflict and external wars. Many come to escape extreme poverty and brutal cultural oppression.

One example is the story of Azswan, who lives in Portland, OR:

I came to the United States on the Iraqi Young Leaders Exchange Program. I have been here since July 23, 2014, and my Visa was for one month. Right in the middle of the fun I was having around the US with 35 Iraqi students and 10 Americans, my family called me and told me that they have left home and they are refugees. Now my village is taken over by ISIS², and they are killing people for their religious beliefs. Thousands of young girls are now taken as sex slaves. So I applied for asylum in the US before my Visa expired. I did my interview. Now I’m just waiting for the letter to come. If they say “Yes,” then I’m safe here. If not, then I might have to go back, and could be killed there.³

From countries in Africa and the Middle East, people travel for months and sometimes years trying to reach the United States. Many families spend their entire life savings to make the long journey.

These individuals and families give up everything—friends, family and livelihood—to make the dangerous

trip to this country. Many will lose their lives along the way. Then, once in the US, most immigrants live a life of poverty, obscurity, discrimination and exploitation in their new home.

And yet, they still come.
Here is another story:

Yovanna, a 16-year-old Honduran girl, arrived at Corinto, Honduras, with only a backpack and a few papers. Scrabbled in ink, the note she carried said, "We're not kidding. You now have seven days [to leave]. We don't want to hurt you, but you have to believe us. Death." It was signed "M18," the name of a violent Central American street gang. Honduran officials helped "Yovanna" through Guatemala as she traveled to the US. Someone wrote, "No one knows if she got there."⁴

After the story of unaccompanied children broke out in the summer of 2014, it was reported that "smugglers" (known as *coyotes*) were spreading the word that children would get amnesty or asylum upon their arrival in the US. This was (and is) not true, but the families had no way of knowing this.

They were encouraged to let their children go with the *coyotes* on the journey of thousands of miles to the US border. Some children made it; many just disappeared along the way.

Once the Immigrants Are Here...

Most towns and cities in the United States are not equipped to receive the influx of immigrants into their communities. They do not have the resources to assist families who need help once they are here.

Immigrants from Syria, Iraq, Nigeria, Sudan, Libya and Somalia come from war-torn countries. They would rather face poverty and crowded arrangements than to wake up to the sound of screams and gunshots.

They feel that here there is a chance to survive, and their children have a chance to live into adulthood.

The book *"What Is The What"* by Dave Eggers is an autobiography of Valentino Achak Deng, a Sudanese boy who became one of the "Lost Boys" during Sudan's civil war in the early 1980s.

Valentino describes childhood memories of gunshots invading his sleep, of flickering light that was the burning hut next to him, of screams erupting around him as he scrambled out of his hut.

Hundreds of people from his community, Marial Bai, lay dead on the ground. Babies cried as they lay beside their mothers. By morning even the babies were dead. Valentino did not see his parents or siblings. He did not know where they were or if they were alive. And thus began his journey into the unknown.

Almost a billion people around the world live in desperate, demoralizing poverty. Some live in tents or cardboard boxes. Some live where they put their blanket down—dry, dirty and dusty. In most cases, clean water is at a premium.

Food is also in short supply. These millions of people want the same things people in the United States want: shelter, safety, food, clean water, an education for their children and employment.

Why Should We Care?

One important reason for us to care is this: each person who struggles for the bare minimums in life is our neighbor. In fact, these people are our family in the eyes of God.

For every instance of disaster, destruction, genocide, murder, starvation, scarcity and lack of basic human needs, we are called to care and to help. We are called to be aware of the world around us, aware of the struggle of God's children. If that is not enough to make us care, there are other, more "economic" reasons to care.

The biggest complaint against Immigration Reform contends that to legalize 11 million undocumented immigrants living in the US would take trillions of dollars and be too costly for our nation. Marshall Fitz, Philip E. Wolgin and Patrick Oakford took on this question in the article "Immigrants Are Makers, Not Takers" from the Center for American Progress. Here's what they found:

1. On average, US natives benefit from immigration. Instead of substituting for the existing American workforce, immigrants complement it. Fifteen percent of immigrant workers are in the fields of construction, food services and health care. (Center for American Progress)
2. Approximately 40 percent of PhD scientists working in the United States are born abroad. (Bureau of Labor Statistics; American Community Survey)
3. Immigrants and their children assimilate into US culture. For example: approximately 72 percent of first-generation Latinos speak their native language as their predominant language. Only seven percent of the second generation speak their native language as predominant. (Pew Hispanic Center/ Kaiser Family Foundation)
4. Immigrants have lower crime rates than natives among men aged 18 to 40. Immigrants are much less likely to be incarcerated than natives. (Butcher and Piehl)⁵

What Can We Do to Help?

We do not learn about immigration through numbers. We learn through personal stories. Since the formation of the United States, we have benefited by the energy and human spirit of the newcomers who cross our borders every day. The challenges we face today are not new. Only the stories are.

Antonio, described as a "DREAMer," wrote this:

I fight for immigration reform that would benefit my community; the 11 million undocumented immigrants who live in this country. The ones that see it as the

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land of freedom and opportunities, and the ones who work hard to bring economic and social benefits to the United States of America.⁶

So, Here's What You Can Do:

1. Meet the immigrants right where they live. Seek them out. Get to know them. Learn about their culture; learn some of their language. Show your willingness to be part of their lives.
2. Find out who represents you locally and in Washington, DC, and how to contact them. (You can find your Congressional representatives at www.opencongress.org/people/zipcode-look-up.)
3. Contact your representatives and tell them you want fair immigration reform. Tell them you want families to stay together, not to be separated. Tell them the US Immigration System must be fixed.
4. Educate yourself about what is happening with Immigration Reform, and how it affects the lives of our immigrant brothers and sisters.
5. Find out about your own migration history: Brian Eaton was a member of the Board of Directors for JFON-DFW when he wrote these words :

It's easy for many of us to see immigrants, who have different customs and often speak a different language, as someone other than "neighbor." It's hard for me to identify with immigrants. I haven't had an immigrant in my family (as far as I know) for 146 years, since my great-great-grandfather left a famine and very difficult life in Sweden with \$10 to his name. He wanted a better life for himself and his family. That move, that we generally take for granted, led to incredible opportunities, numerous blessings and, ultimately, to the place where I and my family are so fortunate to be today.

6. Find a group or non-profit in your area where you can meet and work alongside immigrants. Their language may be difficult; their living conditions less comfortable than your own. But you will experience their humanity. You will come to understand them and even like them.

This is not the whole immigration story—far from it. But maybe it opens our minds to see a piece of the struggle for those who arrive at our doorstep face every day. *La Bestia* isn't just a dangerous

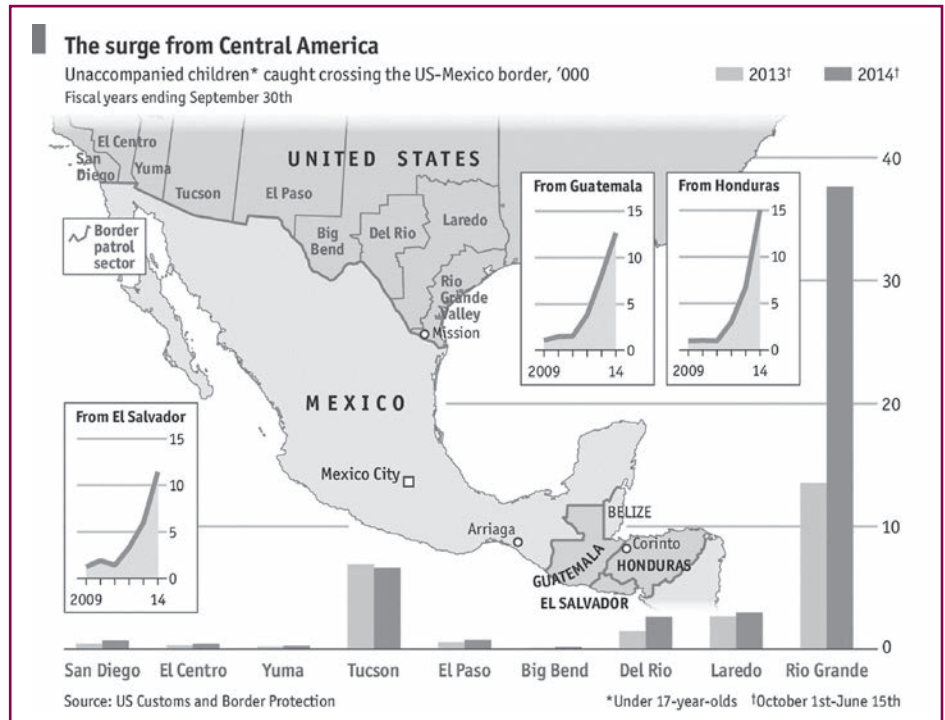
train ride to the United States border.

Every day, our immigrant neighbors face *La Bestia* as they step nervously into the waters of the broken immigration system. Let's give them a hand-up to level, dry ground and walk with them through the process.

—Linda Freeto is a pastor in the Central Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church. Linda is the chairperson of the JFON-DFW Board of Directors in Grapevine, Texas. A former member of the Seeds Council of Stewards and a former volunteer Business Manager for Seeds, she lives in Waco, TX, with her husband.

Endnotes

1. "Central American Migrants and 'La Bestia': The Route, Dangers, and Government Responses," September 10, 2014; www.migrationpolicy.org.
2. ISIS is the common term for the "Islamic State of Iraq and Syria" (ISIS), a jihadist extremist militant group operating in the Middle East.
3. *My Immigration Story: The Story of US Immigrants in Their Own Words* (www.myimmigrationstory.com).
4. "Wave of Unaccompanied Children Swamps Debate over Immigration Under Age," The Economist (www.economist.com).
5. "Immigrants Are Makers Not Takers," Center for American Progress (www.americanprogress.org)
6. A DREAMer is a young immigrant who falls into the general requirements of the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act—a legislative proposal for a multi-phase process for undocumented immigrants in the US that would first grant conditional residency and, upon meeting further qualifications, permanent residency.



Resources & Opportunities

Coyotes: A Journey Across Borders with America's Illegal Migrants

reviewed by Linda Freeto

Ted Conover, *Coyotes: A Journey Across Borders with America's Illegal Migrants*, Vintage Books: 1987, 2006; 264 pages. Available in multiple markets, \$ 15.95 for paperback.

Sun slipped through the cracks left by poor workmanship, providing the shack's only light. A space around the plywood slapped across the window, a slit between the corroding sheet-metal door and its jamb, tiny arcs between crumbling cinder blocks and the corrugated tin roof: if you stood in the right places the rays hit your shoes, surrounded by cigarette butts, everything dusty on the dry dirt floor.

Alonso, squatting down to give his legs a rest, surveyed the scores of butts. "Lots of wetbacks waited here, eh?" I thought of the minutes of worried waiting represented by each butt, the cumulative anxiety of them all. Already, since the coyotes had left us here, we had waited two hours; my cigarettes, now, were gone. No one but the coyotes—the smugglers—knew exactly where we were. If things were going according to plan, we were somewhere near the Rio Grande, and would soon be ferried across to the United States. But, if they disbelieved the story I had invented and still suspected I was an undercover cop, then...anything could happen (page 1).

This is how Ted Conover begins his journey in this true-life story of illegal migrants crossing from Mexico into the United States. This is a new world for Conover, as it would be for any Americans who voluntarily put themselves in danger to learn how immigrants survive—or not survive—the grueling journey from the past into the future.

Conover does not want to “just” hear the stories; he wants to experience the uncertainty of the future, the fear of betrayal, the stress of being caught. Hundreds of people cross this border every day. Now it is his turn to sneak across the mighty river that serves as a natural border between Texas and the Mexican states of Chihuahua, Coahuilo, Nuevo León and Tamaulipas.

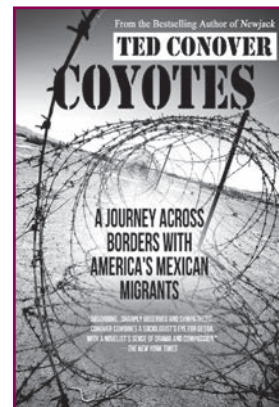
Some people cross the border by themselves or with others they know. But most put their lives into the hands of *coyotes*, smugglers who help people cross the US-Mexico border illegally. A *coyote* will charge people anywhere from \$5,000 and up to help them get from one side of the river to the other. These fees are for the use of the route they are traveling—and to pay bribes or protection fees from Mexican law enforcement, gangs and drug cartels along the way.

However, having a *coyote* as a traveling companion is not always safe. Many *coyotes* take the money and then take the person or family hundreds of miles away from home, only to sell them to cartels for “forced recruitment.” Or the *coyote* abandons them in the desert to die. And yet, out of desperation,

the number of people seeking this journey continues to grow.

Being aware of the dangers, immigrants still cross United States borders, looking for a place to survive, a place they can make a living to support their families, a place where they will feel safe from the violence that is so much a part of their lives.

Ted Conover's *Coyotes: A Journey Across Borders with American's Illegal Migrants* takes us through the laughter, the sorrow, the hardships, the fear and anxiety of his journey. It is a testament to the fact that the human spirit is strong and willing to walk a dangerous path, if it means survival. ■



Is the idea of a Hunger Emphasis new to your congregation? If so, check out this new resource from Seeds of Hope. Since this updated primer was sponsored by the Gemmer Family Christian

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Developing a Heart for the Hungry



*a hunger emphasis primer
for beginning churches*

Resources & Opportunities

I Love You Are For White People: A Memoir

reviewed by Linda Freeto

Lac Su, *I Love You Are for White People: A Memoir*, HarperCollins Publishers: 2009; 246 pages, available in multiple markets, \$14.99 for paperback.

My father's grip around my wrist is so tight that it burns me. I grit my teeth and continue running silently behind him. My fingers start to tingle before my whole hand goes mercifully numb. I've run faster and farther this afternoon with Pa than I ever have before.

It's amazing what you can do when you have no other choice. Pa pulls harder on my outstretched arm. We need to be moving faster. I can tell we're headed toward the bay. No one has told me where we're going, or why we need to move this fast, but I don't really care. I have spent so little time with Pa these last few months that I welcome this frantic journey....

Pa is charging up the hill so fast that I stumble and fall on the clumpy grass as we near the crest. Pa releases my hand and spins around to survey the valley behind us. He sighs deeply. My mother and sister have just emerged from the tangled jungle below. I squint to make out the fear on Quy's face. Not yet three years old, she's terrified by our frantic pace. As Ma approaches the base of the hill, Quy stops running. Ma leans forward and continues up the slope, dragging Quy behind her like a rag doll. Pa stumbles and slides down the hillside to help them. A loud crack of thunder startles me. (pages 1-2)

I Love You Are for White People begins with Lac Su running with his family with sounds of gunfire and bombs exploding behind them. "Pa throws a silent look at Ma, and she nods. We start running down toward the water, but the violent thunder cracks nearby, sending us cowering to the ground. Ma, her face white and eyes wide with fear, crouches over Quy. I've never seen her look this way. Pa storms over and shouts at me. Get on my back!" (page 2)

The young family races toward the water; their only option is to escape from their home—the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

The beginning of *I Love You Are For White People* is seen through the eyes of five-year-old Lac Su. The story starts with a confused, frightened child and moves into a life of a rebellious teenager. Su shows

us how the family struggles between Vietnamese and American traditions; the struggles of a war-torn country to the violence of the ghettos of Los Angeles.

From the beginning to the end of *I Love You Are For White People*, Lac Su simply tells his story. It is a message of hope for many immigrants in the United States as they also struggle to better their lives in a land of plenty. ■

If you like this special issue
of
Hunger News & Hope
on immigration...

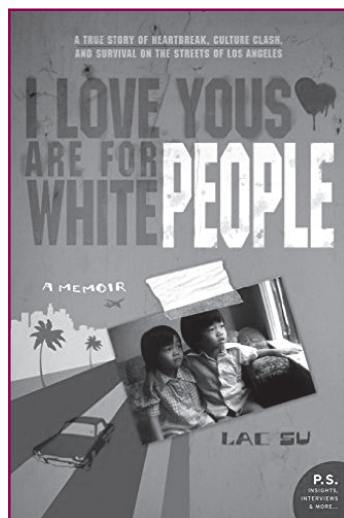


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Art by Sally Lynn Askins



Resources & Opportunities

What Is the What: The Story of a Lost Boy of Sudan reviewed by Linda Freeto

Dave Eggers, *What Is the What*, Vintage Books: 2007; 535 pages, available in multiple markets, \$16.00 for paperback.

I heard my mother's words, though her voice was like a memory. What was happening now was utterly new. Now there were five or more of these new machines, great black crickets in every direction. I walked out of the hut and into the center of the compound, transfixed. I saw other boys in the village staring up as I was, some of them jumping, laughing and pointing to the crickets with the chopping sound.

But it was strange. Adults were running from the machines, falling, screaming. I looked at the people running, though I was too dazed to move. The volume of the machines held me still. I felt tired in some new way, as I watched mothers grab their young sons and bring them back into the high grass and throw themselves to the ground. I watched as one of the crickets flew over the soccer field, flying lower than the other machines; I watched as the 20 young men playing on the field ran toward the school, screaming. Then a new sound pumped through the air. It was like the cutting and dividing of the machine, but it was not that.

The men running to the school began to fall. They fell while facing me, as if they were running to my home, to me. Ten men in seconds, their arms reaching skyward. The machine that had shot them came toward me now, and I stood watching as the black cricket grew larger and louder. I could see the turning of the guns, two men sitting in the machine, wearing helmets and sunglasses like my father's. I was unable to move as the machine drew closer, the sound filling my head." (pages 74-75)

Thus Valentino Achak Deng, known to his friends as Achak, relives a life where a nightmare erupts in his homeland. He lives through the killing of thousands of his fellow Sudanese men, women and children during the time the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) began to grow.

The story goes back and forth between Achak's life as a child in the Sudan, and his life in the United States. During this time, even in the United States, his life was put in danger when he opened his apartment door to be confronted by thieves who beat him up and took over his home.

As Deng clearly struggles to tell his story to author Dave

Eggers, remembering his life as one of the "Lost Boys of Sudan." Walking thousands of miles across a hot, dry land, Achak shows a strength and resiliency that will amaze you.

At times the stories are shocking, but they are always thought-provoking. After reading *What Is The What*, we are forced to look at the world through different eyes. This is a must read for anyone who cares about human struggles.

Author's note: What Is The What is published as a novel, but it is definitely the autobiography of Valentino Achak Deng. As Mr. Deng explains in the preface, "I was very young when some of the events in the book took place, and as a result we [Deng and Eggers] simply had to pronounce What Is The What a novel."

—Linda Freeto is a pastor in the Central Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church. Linda is the chairperson of the JFON-DFW Board of Directors in Grapevine, Texas. A former member of the Seeds Council of Stewards and a former volunteer Business Manager for Seeds, she lives in Waco, TX, with her husband.

Chinese Students continued from page 3

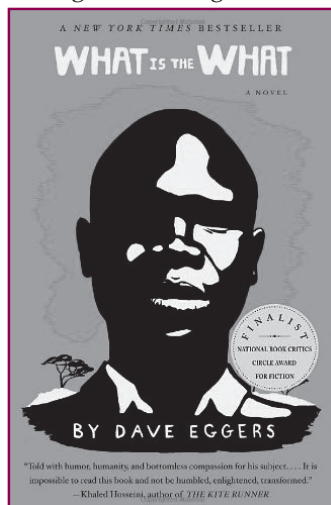
Although it's only one year after I graduated from college, I feel like I have already struggled for a long time. But I have barely begun. Many international graduates have to sell their labor to companies cheaply and for unhappy working conditions. Some people say it would be smarter just to go back home.

It's a long struggle, and you need luck: luck to find an employer who can sponsor your VISA, luck to get through the government lottery, luck to find a company that will help you apply for a green card, and luck to hold out until you get permanent resident status.

—Poplar Yaun graduated in May 2014 with a Masters of International Journalism from Baylor University. She hails from Changzhou, Jiangsu, China. She was a Seeds of Hope intern in the Fall of 2013, and has continued to write a number of articles for HNH about her homeland. Just before press time, she learned that she had received a work VISA.

Endnotes

1. A Temporary Worker Visa.
2. "Green card" is the informal name for the United States Permanent Resident Card for immigrants.



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Statement of Purpose

Seeds of Hope is a private, independent group of believers responding to a common burden for the poor and hungry of God's world, and acting on the strong belief that biblical mandates to feed the poor were not intended to be optional. The group seeks out people of faith who feel called to care for poor and hungry people; and to affirm, enable

Quotes, Poems & Pithy Sayings

Fifteen Things God Won't Ask

by Brian (Brendan) Shaffer, OEF

- God won't ask what kind of car you drove,
but will ask how many people you drove who didn't have transportation.
- God won't ask the square footage of your house,
but will ask how many people you welcomed into your house.
- God won't ask about fancy clothes you had in your closet,
but will ask how many of those clothes helped the needy.
- God won't ask about your social status,
but will ask what kind of class you displayed.
- God won't ask what your highest salary was,
but will ask if you compromised your character to obtain that salary.
- God won't ask how much overtime you worked,
but will ask if you worked overtime for your family and loved ones.
- God won't ask how many promotions you received,
but will ask how you promoted others.
- God won't ask what your job title was,
but will ask if you performed your job to the best of your ability.
- God won't ask what you did to help yourself,
but will ask what you did to help others.
- God won't ask how many friends you had,
but will ask how many people to whom you were a friend.
- God won't ask what you did to protect your rights,
but will ask what you did to protect the rights of others.
- God won't ask what neighborhood you lived in,
but will ask how you treated your neighbors.
- God won't ask about the color of your skin,
but will ask about the content of your character.
- God won't ask how many times your deeds matched your words,
but will ask how many times they didn't.

—Brendan Shaffer, an Episcopal minister, works in Detroit, MI, with people who have addictions. He is a professed member of the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans.

and empower a variety of responses to the problems of poverty.

Editorial Address

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Seeds of Hope also produces *Sacred Seasons*, a series of worship materials for the liturgical year—with an attitude “toward justice, peace and food security for all of God’s children.” These include litanies, sermons, children’s and youth activities, bulletin art and drama.

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