



Hunger News & Hope

...a Seeds of Hope publication

Food Security & Migration

by Adrienne Kruse

Few of their children in the country learn English....The signs in our streets have inscriptions in both languages....Unless the stream of their importation could be turned, they will soon so outnumber us that all the advantages we have will not be able to preserve our language, and even our government will become precarious.

—Benjamin Franklin on German immigration

We should build a wall of brass around the country.

—John Jay, first Supreme Court Justice, on “Catholic Alien Invaders”

“The enormous influx of alien foreigners will in the end prove ruinous to American workingmen, by reducing the wages of labor to a standard that will drive them from the farms and workshops altogether.

—Opinion piece in the Philadelphia Sun, 1854.

The rhetoric around immigration has not changed in the US in 400 years. In the 18th century, it was Germans and Catholics. In the 19th century, it was the Irish and the Chinese. In the 20th century, it was Jews trying to escape the Holocaust. And in the 21st century, it is people fleeing Central and South America, as well as war-torn countries in the Middle East.



Whether immigrant or refugee, these populations have been demonized since the founding of individual borders and representative flags. Rather than addressing the issues causing such large migrations of people groups, the focus is often put on blaming those individuals and making dire predictions about the prospective consequence of including all.

A study by the United Nations Agency on Migration found food insecurity to be the second most cited reason for people migrating from three key Central American countries. The migration from Honduras,

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Migration, *continued from page 1*

El Salvador and Guatemala has increased steadily since 2010, with adverse and changing climate conditions said to have heavily affected the three countries' agriculture.

The struggle for food does not end once these groups immigrate. Several barriers contribute to immigrants experiencing varying degrees of food insecurity after migrating to the US. A study by the US Department of Health and Human Services cites several contributing factors to food insecurity, including language barriers, complexity in applying for programs, transportation issues and a general climate of fear and mistrust.

The burden is often higher for mixed-status families and refugees. Though refugees qualify for a large range of services and benefits, the programs are often geared towards Spanish-speaking immigrant populations. Many refugees do not speak English or Spanish and have difficulty in applying for these programs, according to the study.

Jeremy Everett is the founder and executive director of Baylor University's Texas Hunger Initiative (THI), a project that targets food insecurity in Texas. "We have 45 faculty members on our team that are interdisciplinary," Everett said. "They are telling the story of food insecurity from an economic standpoint, or from a political science standpoint, or from a public health place or social-work line of thinking." [See "Border Crisis" on page 6.]

THI partners with various agencies as well as non-profit organizations to educate people on hunger, and provides

assistance to people experiencing food insecurity across the state. This initiative bridges the gap between people subjected to food insecurity and the resources and programs available to address that need.

Everett, a teacher and community organizer, has first-hand experience with food insecurity across various populations in the US and is well versed in the current barriers preventing people from accessing a steady food supply, including those living without documentation.

"One of the largest barriers is a cultural and political barrier," Everett said, speaking from his office in Baylor's

With the rise of divisive language around immigration with the current US administration, different food programs across the nation have seen a stark fall in immigrant populations obtaining their services.

Diana R. Garland School of Social Work. "It is the inadmissibility on public charge grounds, [something] not started by the Trump Administration, but heavily supported by it."

"Public charge" is a term used by immigration officials defining someone as largely dependent on the government for his or her livelihood. Though unsubstantiated, this claim—that immigrants will become a burden on the US taxpayer—has become a strong arguing point for those championing stricter policies on immigration in the US.

Political issues have become highly polarized and often lead people to become defensive or dismissive of the realities of immigrants. It is uncomfortable in many senses to politicize a topic, but it is something necessary to address when considering this issue.

The bottom line is that people are currently going hungry in the United States. People who contribute to our work force and way of life. People who have made this country their home. Though it is true that the barrier for many undocumented people in accessing food is cultural and political, the very nature of this barrier is fear.

"The fear in highly impoverished and food-insecure undocumented communities around the country has caused them to basically go into hiding," Everett said. "If they have a child that is US born, the child could be eligible for programs like WIC or SNAP, even though the parents wouldn't be. They are afraid to participate in



Buddy Gill

those programs. They were afraid to take their kids to Summer Meal Sites last summer. They are afraid to sign their kids up for school lunch programs.

“We are talking about people that already didn’t make enough money to live, many of whom have experienced a high degree of trauma in getting to the US and leaving the violence that they came from.”

With the rise of divisive language around immigration with the current US administration, different food programs across the nation have seen a stark fall in immigrant populations obtaining their services. Individuals from mixed-status families face a higher barrier, as those who qualify may not apply for fear of bringing attention to undocumented family members.

“The Food Assistance Convention saw a sharp decline in the Hispanic community accessing their services after the 2017 inauguration,” said Emily Morrow Loachamín, one of the founders of La Puerta, a nonprofit organization that works to connect the Hispanic community to legal and social services.

Loachamin, along with her husband, Israel, have established partnerships across various platforms, including the local school district and WIC, to help alleviate some of these barriers. According to its website, La Puerta “prioritizes family support, technology, after-school programs, as well as the provision of life skills training—all within a faith-based environment.”

“We need a lot more people at this table,” Loachamín said. “This is what we are called to do as human beings and as Christians. If you read scripture from the Old Testament to the New Testament, social justice is at the heart of who God is.”

The largest population rallying for strict immigration reform are conservative, white Evangelicals. This group identifies strongly with the Christian faith and often use it as part of its platform for conservative values.

So then, who in fact is Jesus? Is he a moderate looking for good policy on a contentious issue? Is he cautious, looking to protect his own before branching out a wider sphere of proximity? Or is he radical? Does he believe all are his charge no matter the size of the resources? There are many examples to look to on the



Andy Smith Photography



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nature of Christ, but the one that comes to mind has five loaves of bread and two fish.

—Adrienne Kruse recently graduated from Baylor University with a degree in Journalism and Social Justice. She served as an intern for Seeds during the fall 2018 and spring 2019 semesters. She plans to spend a year hiking along the Pacific US coast, and then to enroll in a criminal justice track at a seminary.



Buddy Gill

The Border Crisis

by Jeremy K. Everett

I first engaged the borderlands in 2011 when the organization I represent, Baylor University's Texas Hunger Initiative, was asked to address a spiking child-hunger crisis there. One in two children in the Rio Grande Valley was food-insecure, so an organized response was desperately needed. That was when I first met Sister Norma. She agreed for Catholic Charities to step in to provide meals to children when they were out of school, and their summer and after school meals programs became a lifeline for children and families in the Valley.

A few weeks ago, I was with Sister Norma again. This time I was hosting friends from the East Coast coming to

have gracious people providing shelter to the stranger, attempting to restore human dignity to people who have been discarded by nations.

While visiting Sister Norma's respite center, I saw a young man holding his sleeping three-year-old child who rested in the safety of his father's arms. His father and many of the others had traveled 2,000 miles from Central America (the equivalent of walking from Waco, TX to Seattle, WA), fleeing violence and poverty in their countries of origin, hoping for a better life in the US. I am not sure if this is what they imagined.

I also have met Border Patrol agents putting their lives on the line trying to prevent cartel violence and drugs from entering our porous border, and countless landowners who have expressed fear regarding what is lingering in the darkness of the sage-brush country in south Texas.

The issues of providing respite for families seeking a better life, for agents securing our border, and for children and families struggling with such extreme forms of poverty that they go without food does not necessitate partisan politics.

Instead, it necessitates people willing to do the hard work of listening to people directly affected by the migrant crisis, government leaders from the countries of origin and

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bear witness to the migrant crisis that began in 2014. We sat in Sister Norma's respite center for undocumented immigrants who had recently been released from holding tanks controlled by the US Border Patrol. She recounted how she was pulled into the migrant crisis in 2014.

She was invited to a holding facility, where she was escorted into a small room with more than 300 children under the age of five crowded into a room so small they could not all sit at once, much less lie down. The children had been there for days with mud caked onto their faces from crossing the Rio Grande. They looked longingly into her eyes, weeping, saying to Sister Norma, "Ayudame." "Help me."

It broke her heart and the hearts of the Border Patrol agents. And was the impetus for her starting a respite center for individuals and families.

Sister Norma and others doing work like hers have been moved to front and center in the national conversation around border security. The issue is complex and treating it as such is paramount. We



Elizabeth Ross

Continuing the Conversation... On Panhandling

Editor's note: It would seem that the stories we printed about Panhandling in a recent issue of Hunger News & Hope [See "How Should We Respond to Panhandlers?" and "What I Learned from Panhandlers," HNH Vol 18 No 3, pages 2-3] have struck a definite chord with our readers. In HNH Vol 9 No 1, we printed a response from a longtime reader (see page 6 of that issue.) After that, we solicited responses from a number of folks. The ones on this page are from two members of the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans—one a layperson and the other a retired UCC pastor.

How to Respond to Panhandlers or Beggars or Those Just Lying There

BECAUSE (1) none of us are truly "independent" but live interdependent lives; (2) we live and work and associate in an economic system that perpetuates an obscene inequity of wealth accumulation and absence of an economic floor; (3) the housing market has little mercy or place for those lacking substantial economic resources; (4) "sheer luck" is part of the equation for all of us who have "enough," and (5) coping skills vary for each individual:

BECAUSE of these things, I truly feel that someone with nothing or too little has a legitimate claim upon me and everyone walking or driving by on this great road of life. Proximity gives permission to ask, and permission too for the asked to consider and respond as they will.

We all have the freedom to look away and "not see," or to just keep on walking or driving—or to give or share something of what we have. To pull out whatever we've planned for just such an encounter—\$1 coins, \$2 bills, \$5 bills, help kits—or to make eye contact and to give a blessing and to receive a blessing.

How we respond does impact our psyche and spirit. Some step away from the encounter with something like joy-while-registering-the-tragedy, or prayerfully, or with anger, or guilt, or a bit more callousness for the next such encounter that invites a practiced "no" or no response at all. And we Christians, whatever our response, have to (get to) read or hear again: "I was hungry, and you...."

Compassion is a blessed thread that keeps our eyes and ears and minds and hearts and souls attached to each other in our interior being, and to every neighbor and creature-

of-creation that shares our space, and to every participant in tragedy we read about or see via TV or computer—it's one long, tough thread. And sticky. You can't get rid of it!

Rev. Michael Vosler, OEF
Rohnert Park, CA



Connecting on a Human Level

This is such an important topic! Panhandlers specifically, and the housing-insecure and homeless in general, are typically dehumanized and vilified in the area where I live. And the authorities regularly do things that make it more difficult to relate to or help panhandlers.

For example, last year, the city passed an ordinance that prohibits panhandlers from standing on street corners and medians, and prohibits drivers from handing anything to them from their car. This was ostensibly to address pedestrian safety, but it has definitely impacted panhandlers and homeless folks, driving up fear and isolating people even more.

As a result, a lot of folks have become quite wary of receiving support; it tends to be best for everyone to work together through well-established relationships. Here's one project we've become involved in. We assemble emergency, non-perishable meal kits that are distributed through trusted partners like the Good to Go Mobile Soup Kitchen. (<http://goodtogomobilesoupkitchen.weebly.com>)

We also collect seasonal and consumable items, such as batteries, menstrual products, socks, etc. that can be shared with the meals.

The constant antagonism toward homeless and housing- or food-insecure folks around here makes me extra grateful for the compassionate response you shared from Rev. Charley Garrison [see "Continuing the Conversation on Panhandling," HNH Vol 19 No 1, Spring 2019, page 6.] Connecting with one another on a human level, sharing life and love, is a beautiful path and a wonderful respite to the dehumanizing, cruel ways we often witness and suffer.

David Katya Ketchum (Brother Jacoba), OEF
Springfield, MO

New Book Crosses Ideological Divides to End Hunger in America

I Was Hungry:
Cultivating Common Ground to End an American Crisis
by Jeremy K. Everett
\$16.99, Paperback, 176 pages

Brazos Press, August 2019

This book offers an accessible assessment of the current food-insecurity crisis in the US, and it offers a strategy for addressing it. Jeremy Everett, a nationally recognized anti-hunger leader, calls Christians in the US to work intentionally across ideological divides to build trust with one another and impoverished communities. This, he says, is the only way to effectively end the hunger crisis in the US.

Everett, appointed by the US Congress to the National Commission on Hunger, founded and directs Baylor University's Texas Hunger Initiative (THI), a successful ministry that is helping to eradicate hunger in Texas and around the globe. THI partners with the United States Department

of Agriculture, Texas state agencies, the corporate sector, and thousands of faith-based and community-based organizations to develop and implement strategies to alleviate hunger through policy, education, research and community

I believe most of us want children to have ample access to food and adults to be able to find work that can sustain a family. I also imagine most of us believe that accomplishing these things doesn't have to pit us against one another.

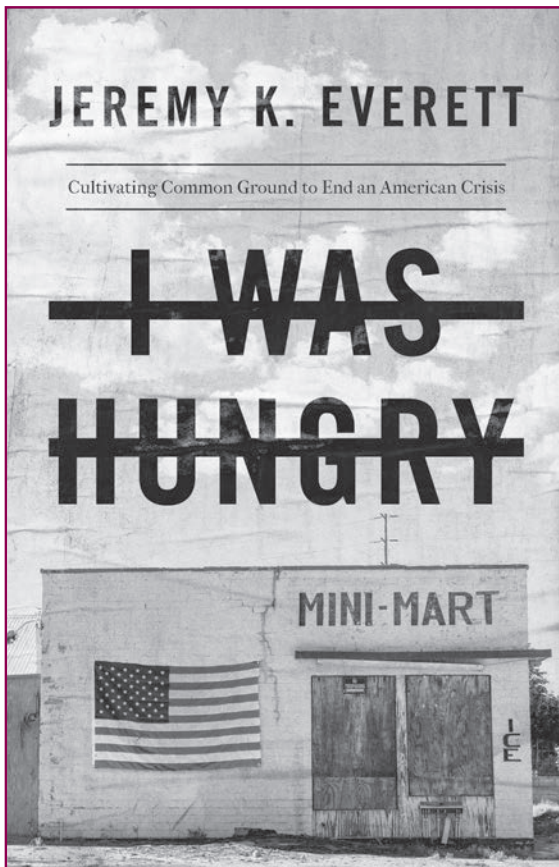
organizing.

In *I Was Hungry*, Everett details the organization's history and tells stories of its work with communities from West Texas to Washington, DC, helping Christians of all political persuasions understand how they can work together to truly make a difference.

For those who have been in the struggle for food justice for decades, *I Was Hungry* offers new ideas and perspectives. For those who are just beginning, it offers good information about the hunger crisis in this country. Below is an excerpt:

I believe most of us want children to have ample access to food and adults to be able to find work that can sustain a family. I also imagine most of us believe that accomplishing these things doesn't have to pit us against one another. There seems to be a collective intuition that working together to solve our country's biggest problems is a better path forward than the mean-spiritedness and vitriol we see from our politicians, preachers, political commentators and endless social media posts. Let's work together across our ideological divides to address hunger, cultivating trust that will put our nation on a path toward economic opportunity for all people.

Everett has spent over two decades in anti-hunger work and frequently speaks on poverty, hunger, community development and social entrepreneurship. He regularly writes for *HuffPost* and has been featured in PBS documentaries, in newspapers such as the *Dallas Morning News*, and on talk shows.



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Looking for ways to introduce your congregation to hunger issues?

Hunger in God's World

*Email seedseditor1@gmail.com for a pdf of this four-session workshop from *Seeds of Hope*.*

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the saints giving their lives to remind us of the sacredness of all human life, no matter its origin.

I believe most of us want children to have ample access to food and adults to find a safe place to live. I also imagine most of us believe that accomplishing these things doesn't have to pit us against each other.

Civil debate and discussion need to happen about our border crisis. It is complicated enough without adding the complexity of partisanship. However, for people of faith our calling is less complicated. After all, Jesus told us what it takes to inherit eternal life in the Gospel of Matthew, "I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat. I was a stranger, and you invited me in."

—Jeremy Everett, the founding director of the Texas Hunger Initiative, has spent more than 20 years in anti-hunger work and is a nationally recognized leader in the field. He recently served on the US Congress' National Commission on Hunger.

Hunger News & Hope is published quarterly by Seeds of Hope Publishers, in partnership with the following groups:

- Alliance of Baptists
- American Baptist Churches USA
- Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

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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 people in 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 vulnerable people; and to affirm, enable and empower a variety of responses to the problems of poverty.

Quotes, Poems & Pithy Sayings

The Removing of the Strangers

Sir Thomas More is addressing an anti-immigrant riot in London.

Imagine that you see the wretched strangers,
Their babies at their backs and their poor luggage,
Plodding to the ports and coasts for transportation,
And that you sit as kings in your desires,
Authority quite silent by your brawl,
And you in ruff of your opinions clothed;
What had you got? I'll tell you.

...

You'll put down strangers, Kill them,
cut their throats, possess their houses,
...Say now the king...
Should so much come to short
of your great trespass
As but to banish you, whither would you go?
What country, by the nature of your error,
Should give you harbor? Go you to France or Flanders,
To any German province, to Spain or Portugal,
Nay, anywhere that not adheres to England,
Why, you must needs be strangers. Would you be pleased
To find a nation of such barbarous temper,
That, breaking out in hideous violence,
Would not afford you an abode on earth,
Whet their detested knives against your throats,
Spurn you like dogs, and like as if that God
Owed not nor made not you, nor that the claimants
Were not all appropriate to your comforts,
But chartered unto them, what would you think
To be thus used? This is the strangers' case;
And this your mountainish inhumanity.



—These lines are excerpts from Act 2, Scene 4 of *Sir Thomas More*, a play that was banned until the death of Queen Elizabeth I and was revised in 1603 by a team of editors, including William Shakespeare. The whole of this speech, some 147 lines, is said to have been written by Shakespeare. (Source: *PlayShakespeare*. Go to www.playshakespeare.com for the entire script.)

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Seeds is housed by the community of faith at Seventh & James Baptist Church. Mailing address: 602 James Ave., Waco, TX 76706; Phone: 254/755-7745; Fax: 254/753-1909; E-mail: seedseditor1@gmail.com. Web: www.seedspublishers.org. Copyright © 2019; ISSN 0194-4495. Seeds of Hope, Inc., holds the 501(c)3 nonprofit tax status.

Seeds also produces *Sacred Seasons*, a series of worship materials for Advent, Lent and an annual Hunger Emphasis—always 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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