



# Becoming Sanctuary

Fall-Winter 2008  
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## RoxRoy's Press Conference Speaks Truth to Power

By Rachel Soltis and Nyasha Salmon

On Tuesday, November 25<sup>th</sup>, Sanctuary father RoxRoy Salmon went public at a press conference in front of the ICE (Immigration Customs and Enforcement) offices at 26 Federal Plaza in downtown Manhattan. Surrounded by religious and community supporters, he asserted his desperate desire to stay with his US citizen family and in the country that has been his home for the last thirty years. His attorney submitted an application for discretion to the immigration court on the same day, urging the judge to allow RoxRoy to stay here with us.



**RoxRoy's words cut through the cold air outside 26 Federal Plaza.** Photo by Mizue Aizeki - Families for Freedom.

RoxRoy's case is a product of the brutal immigration laws that make his minor criminal convictions reason for mandatory deportation, even though they warranted no jail time and were committed over twenty years ago.

Our coalition shined at the press conference, and all spoke passionately and eloquently. But none voiced the truth as clearly as RoxRoy's 15-year-old daughter, Nyasha, who, with her 12-year-old brother Elijah at her side, made the following statement:

"On behalf on my brothers and sisters: Anthoney, Marsha, Natasha, and Elijah, I would like to thank you for supporting us. For as long as I can remember, my father -RoxRoy Salmon- has always been in me and my siblings' lives. There wasn't a moment or a second when our father wasn't around. Throughout the years, our father encouraged us and influenced us to always do the right thing and to follow our dreams. No matter what obstacles we had to face, our father always reminded us to stay positive and shoot for the stars. (cont'd on p. 3) →



**Sanctuary dad, Jean, speaks at the start of the retreat.**

Photo by Amy Dalton – Union Theological Seminary.

## Report from the NYC New Sanctuary Coalition Retreat

By Sister Claire Reagan, Sister of Charity of New York

Members of the NYC New Sanctuary Coalition gathered on September 18<sup>th</sup> at the Seafarers & International House to share a fine meal, pray, come to know each other, and to organize ourselves for the challenges ahead. It was planned to be a "working retreat" with subgroups named to consider strategies to pressing needs.

Our special evening began with a sumptuous buffet of various Japanese dishes, expertly prepared by our friend and sanctuary father, Joe, from his restaurant in Brooklyn. Everyone enjoyed the meal and fellowship in preparation for the work ahead. We then gathered in the chapel for prayer and reflection, and listened to three touching stories of immigrant families and their struggles to maintain a life here in the United States. (cont'd on p. 2) →

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.



**Please Remember** our families in your prayers, as they fight to stay together and endure the daily threat of being separated from their loved ones. Members facing deportation are required to report monthly, and in some cases weekly, to the Immigration offices in downtown Manhattan.

Many thanks to our writers and photographers!

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## Our Committees Need You!

The coalition's four committees are doing amazing work as they strengthen our foundation and push us into more effective action. But they urgently need more members to keep up with their progress.

Meet the committees below and some of the exciting things they've been up to!

## Meet Our Committees:

### Family Support:

Securing legal and social service resources; Supporting the partnerships between sanctuary families and faith communities; Planning a family-focused event to benefit our Sanctuary Family Fund.

### Faith Community Outreach and Support:

Reaching out to inactive member faith communities and talking to interested ones; Inviting immigrant faith communities to lead and partner with us; Enlisting denominational support; Helping active members to sustain their work.

For information on our other committees see page 3...

## Report from the Retreat *(cont'd from p. 1)*

When we returned to the central meeting room, Rev. Donna Schaper oriented us to the decision-making structure that has served the Coalition to date, and relayed the Steering Committee's suggestion to elect officers to serve as an Executive Committee in order to enable our prompt response to organizational issues. The current Steering Committee has grown to be sufficiently unwieldy that making decisions is a time-consuming and difficult task. The Steering Committee therefore nominated a slate of officers to serve as an Executive Committee and approved them by a show of hands. Elected were: Rev. Robert Coleman of Riverside Church, (President); Rabbi Michael Feinberg of the Greater NY Labor-Religion Coalition, (Vice President); Rev. Mark E. Marsh of Victoria Congregational UCC Church, (Treasurer). Rev. Schaper expressed gratitude for those elected to serve the New Sanctuary Coalition during the next year.



**Over sixty members came together for our second annual working retreat.** Photo by Amy Dalton – Union Theological Seminary.

Committees then gave brief reports of their efforts in the following areas: Fundraising, Family Services, Outreach and Support to Faith Communities, and Legislative Campaigns/Media Strategies. The participants separated into strategic workshops in each of these areas with two main tasks: overview of the current work of the committee and developing two or three goals for each committee to focus on in the next six months. Each committee named a chair/back-up chair, set a date for their next meeting, and committed to regular reporting to the Steering Committee. →

→ There was a lot of good energy as faith visions were shared in each committee. When the committee reports were read back to the larger group, there was an enthusiastic response to the expressed goals of our shared mission.

Giovanny Sanchez, Angad Bhalla, and Roxroy Salmon updated the meeting on the legislative campaigns in progress, especially support of the Child Citizen Protection Act, and on the discussions with ICE and the Department of Corrections regarding ICE's presence at Rikers. They urged us to commit to action and to spread the word about the campaigns in our faith communities.

Finally, we gathered in the chapel for a final commitment ceremony. We each took a smooth stone from a large glass bowl, stones of a variety of colors, sizes and shapes, and committed ourselves to seek justice and to offer welcome to our immigrant brothers and sisters. We took the stones with us as we left this evening of prayer, hoping to soften any hardness we might encounter in our shared mission.

**We have a website! [www.newsanctuarynyc.org](http://www.newsanctuarynyc.org)**

*Check it out to...*

\* Learn more about the Coalition

\* Advocate with our families

\* Join our legislative campaigns

\* Participate in our next event

## RoxRoy's Press Conference *(cont'd from p. 1)*

→ "When asked to define the words father or dad, I can say that the best definition is RoxRoy Salmon. Our father participates in our life extremely. He cooks for us, helps us with our homework, and attends all our school functions. He is a positive influence in our life. Not only is he my dad, he's my best friend. He is that one person I feel comfortable talking to. What teenage girl that you know can say that her father is her best friend? I can be open and talk to my father about anything: school, politics, and even boys.

"I'm glad to say RoxRoy Salmon is my dad, and I'm thankful that he has been in me and my siblings' lives and is still here as we grow and get older. Thinking about living our life without our Dad is devastating. My father has molded and sculpted us into the young women and men we are today. It's been difficult for us knowing what a struggle our dad has been going through. Seeing our father struggling back and forth throughout this battle, even when he is not feeling well, has put strain not only on our family but on our life. However, our father has taught us to always remain positive in life. Therefore we will stay strong and positive throughout this struggle.

"My siblings and I need our father in our life but what is more important is that we need to stop the separation of families. And it all starts here. Once again, thank you and God bless."

*RoxRoy and his family are in sanctuary partnership with the First Presbyterian Church in the City of New York.*

## Changes in Our Coalition

*By Eliana Mastrangelo and Rachel Soltis*

In August, Juan Carlos Ruiz -who served as Regional Coordinator for the New Sanctuary Movement's first year- transitioned on to serve as Youth and Organizing Director at Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice, in the Bronx. We are grateful to Juan Carlos, whose visionary leadership played a vital role in bringing us to where we are now. He continues to support the work of the NYC-NSC in his spare time.

Then, at the second annual NYC New Sanctuary Coalition retreat on September 18<sup>th</sup>, three officers were appointed from the Steering Committee. Each will hold office for a period of one year, and will help guide the overall workings of the coalition:

**President** - Reverend Robert B. Coleman is the Minister of Mission and Social Justice at The Riverside Church in the City of New York. He has served on the steering committee of the NYC New Sanctuary Movement for one year, participated in many of our public actions, and attended the national gathering in Los Angeles, CA, with other committee members last fall. Rev. Coleman can be reached at (212) 870-6739 or [bcoleman@theriversidechurchny.org](mailto:bcoleman@theriversidechurchny.org).

**Vice President** - Rabbi Michael Feinberg is the Executive Director of the Greater New York Labor-Religion coalition. He is a Reconstructionist rabbi, educator and an activist of over 30 years in social justice, human rights and peace movements. Rabbi Feinberg was involved with the original Sanctuary Movement in the 1980s and serves on the national steering committee of the National New Sanctuary Movement. He can be found at [Labreliq@aol.com](mailto:Labreliq@aol.com) or (212) 406-2156, extension 4637.

**Treasurer** - Reverend Mark E. Marsh is the pastor of Victoria Congregational Church (UCC) in Jamaica, Queens. His church partners with one of the NSM families and has been involved with the Movement since June 2007. He serves on the Steering Committee and Family Support Committee. You can contact him at (718) 297-9733 or [MarkMarsh25@hotmail.com](mailto:MarkMarsh25@hotmail.com).

Additionally, in November, the Steering Committee voted to hire a full-time staff person to serve as a central resource and connecting point for the coalition. Rachel Soltis, who has volunteered with the Coalition since August 2007, agreed to serve as coordinator. She is very anxious to listen to your experiences and explore with you ways to deepen your involvement. She can be contacted at (212) 477-0351, or [info@newsanctuarynyc.org](mailto:info@newsanctuarynyc.org).

## Meet Our Committees (cont'd):

### Media Messaging/ Legislative Action:

Connecting members to advocacy opportunities around the Citizen Protection Act and national comprehensive immigration reform; Meeting with faith leaders to assess capacity for a new campaign; Planning a media training for members.

### Fundraising and Connection with the National NSM:

Keeping the coalition fiscally afloat; Finding new and creative funding sources; Providing representation in national NSM decision-making and sharing resources across coalitions.

**\*Contact the coalition to lend your hands and heart to the committees' important work!\***

**CONTACT INFORMATION:**  
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## Faith Community Profile: Broadway UCC's Road to Sanctuary

By Marjorie Long and Rosetta Marie Gibson, members of Broadway United Church of Christ

By early 2007, the increasingly hysterical national focus on "illegal aliens" had become almost toxic. At that time, a meeting of interested groups was held at the Interchurch Center in New York to discuss ways to present a clear alternative response from religious and community leaders and institutions. The NYC New Sanctuary Coalition was the result. James Campbell, the pastor of our congregation, Broadway United Church of Christ (UCC), signed the New Sanctuary Movement Pledge as a statement of commitment. He brought it back to the Church's governing board, where it was endorsed.

In April 2008, the work of the NYC New Sanctuary Coalition was a centerpiece of the twice-yearly association meeting of all of the UCCs in the metropolitan area. Pastor Donna Schaper of Judson Memorial Church preached on that church's commitment to the New Sanctuary Movement and introduced Jean, a legal permanent resident facing deportation. Jean spoke movingly of his and his family's personal experiences of the harsh treatment that our government's Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency has subjected him to, showed us the electronic ankle bracelet that he – and thousands of others – are forced to wear day and night, and recounted the thrice-weekly visits he is required to make to the ICE offices. Members and friends of Judson accompany him to each one of these visits. He is in danger of being deported at any moment, like thousands of others. More than a few of us in the audience felt a sense of shame that these actions were being taken by an agency of the United States government.

After hearing Jean's story at the April UCC meeting, several of us from Broadway UCC decided to learn more about the New Sanctuary Coalition and determine how our congregation could become more involved. We are now involved in a step-by-step process to do that. We invited a guest from the Coalition to speak to our Mission Committee, which deals with social justice issues. Next, several of us attended the Coalition's Retreat on September 18<sup>th</sup>, where we learned much more and recognized the potential power of this "interfaith network of immigrant families, religious organizations and others to ... publicly resist unjust deportations and to create a humane ... public discourse about immigration."\*

Our Church's Mission Committee has agreed to continue and increase our involvement, helping Church members to learn as much as possible about the challenges faced by those who are in danger of being deported. Their uncertain status and possible deportation strains their families, and disrupts their communities. We view this as an opportunity to expand our understanding of the relevance of our faith to taking on a daunting social challenge.

\* From the New Sanctuary Movement Pledge.

## New Sanctuary Movement T-Shirts for Sale!

Donation Proceeds Support the NYC NSM Coalition  
(English on front – Spanish on back) – White Color Only  
Suggested Donation of \$15.00



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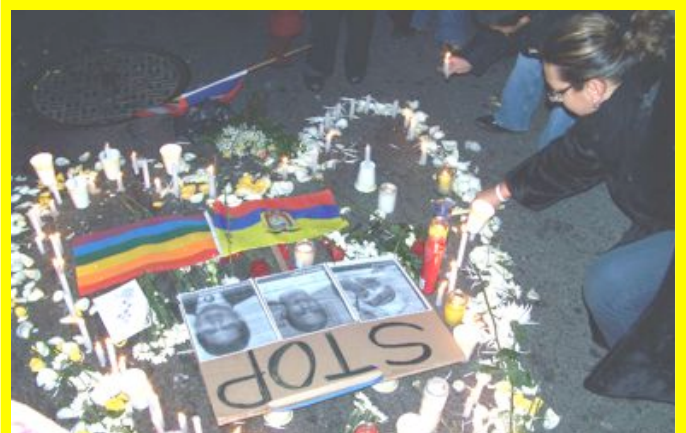
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In recent months, three Latino immigrants have been murdered in brutal hate crimes: Luis Ramirez in Shenandoah, PA, Marcelo Lucero in Long Island, and José Sucuzhanay in Brooklyn. On December 14<sup>th</sup>, a contingent from our Coalition joined with hundreds more at a vigil and march in Bushwick to remember our murdered brothers and demand local and national policy toward immigrants that reflects our human unity, rather than policy that tolerates and provokes division and hatred.

Photo by Felton Davis – The Catholic Worker NYC.