

"What you do is of little significance, but it is very important that you do it."  
- Mohandas Gandhi

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The NYC New Sanctuary Coalition is an interfaith network of immigrant families, religious congregations, 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.

## What Does Freedom Taste Like?

By Jean Montrevil, dad and husband in Sanctuary partnership with Judson Memorial Church

I wonder what freedom tastes like. Please, can someone tell me what freedom tastes like? Is it sweet, sour, salty? Or can someone tell me what it's like to be free? To be a free spirit, to do as you please, to go where you please without asking for permission. Can someone tell me what it is like NOT to have to report to an officer, or NOT to check-in with Immigration once a month or three times a week? Better yet, can someone tell me what it is like to be in your 20s until your 30s and NOT be locked up in a cage for 11 years and have strangers telling you what to do or have strangers treating you like you are less of a human being? Can someone tell me what it is like NOT to have to wear a monitoring bracelet around your ankle?

Life hurts so much. I have spent my entire life looking for the taste of freedom, from six-years-old to my present age, "almost 40." Freedom from the poverty and political oppression in Haiti (17 years). Freedom from the brutal and dangerous streets in Queens (3 years). Freedom from the hellish conditions in jails (11 years). Freedom from probation and supervised release (5 years). Freedom from an unjust → (cont'd on page 4)



Jean is one of 424 NYC residents on ISAP – the Intensive Supervision Appearance Program. Jean wears a monitoring bracelet on his ankle, reports to Immigration 3x a week, keeps a 12-hour curfew, and is subject to home visits. Immigration runs ISAP and pays a private company to administer it. It is unclear why one is assigned to ISAP, or how one gets taken off.

## An 'Irresponsible Idea' by Rev. Mark Marsh, pastor of Victoria Congregational

My parents boast of twelve grandchildren and one great-grandchild. I chime in with enthusiasm that I have twelve nieces and nephews and one grandnephew. In this celebration of family, we all affirm the interconnectedness and forget that five of these children have no blood ties to our family. I cannot imagine what it would be like to have these precious members of my family torn away and separated from us.

I pastor a small membership United Church of Christ church, Victoria Congregational, in Jamaica, Queens. In June of 2007, the joint boards of trustees and deacons unanimously decided to sign the New Sanctuary Movement (NSM) Pledge. Seven of the ten board members present at that meeting were immigrants who became US citizens before the 1996 immigration reform law. One member gave testimony that her husband, who is from Mexico and here legally,

served jail time in the early 1980's. Even though he served his time, he could now be deported if he applied for renewal of his work permit or applied for Social Security, because the 1996 law is retroactive and immigrants who have committed even minor crimes are liable for deportation.

In August, I received phone calls from the NYC New Sanctuary Coalition encouraging Victoria to become more active. Events moved rather quickly. By October, we had Juan Carlos Ruiz, the regional coordinator of the New Sanctuary Movement, come speak on a Sunday morning. He introduced a family, S and S. They told of their nightmarish journey with their landlord, police, and immigration. S and S are now part of our family at Victoria, participating in events, and sharing laughter, conversation, and food.

(cont'd on page 2) →



## On Lobbying by Rev. Donna Schaper, senior minister at Judson Memorial Church

On March 26<sup>th</sup>, representatives of the NYC New Sanctuary Coalition marched to City Hall with other NYC immigrants and advocates to lobby City Council members. We focused on the collaboration between Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the NYC Departments of Corrections and Probation, which enables the deportation of hundreds of New Yorkers each week.

There is a spider web feeling about going to City Hall with hundreds of other people representing dozens of city-wide and local organizations who join you in your conviction that immigrants are being mistreated in New York City. You take your train, do your assignment with your City Council member, distribute your well-prepared materials and follow your thread back home. Even though we were all “webbing” in different directions, we were creating that peculiar kind of strength that spiders know.

Giovanni Sanchez, pastor at Espiritu Santo Lutheran Church in Park Slope, Brooklyn, was our lead spokesperson. He spoke eloquently

and often about the shame of police and fire collaborating with ICE in de-welcoming people who come to our city to live and work. Others talked about housing, health, children, the children of deportees, languages in school. All spoke of welcome and basic human rights.

If spiders webbing is not an image that grabs you, think of the precarious perch of a bird's nest on the side of a tree, one of the images that great New York writer Edith Wharton used frequently to describe people who live here without benefit of welcome. We are nesting. We are perching. We are webbing. Soon there will be more “home” for more people.



## An ‘Irresponsible Idea:’ Reflections on Family, Fear, and a Fundraising Dinner (cont’d from p. 1)

→ Fighting a deportation order requires lawyers, and as a small congregation, our funds are limited. With both S and S working in the restaurant business, we asked them to prepare a special meal in February to help raise funds for their legal fees, with the congregation paying for supplies. I along with others in the NSM Coalition thought this would be a good time for them to go public, with an emphasis on making the borough of Queens more aware of the NSM.

Later, S and S became frightened that the police and their ex-landlord would use this event to find them again. In an email I received before the dinner, S and S expressed the fear and trauma that current immigration laws have caused them and others who are seeking even legal paths to citizenship:

“I am sorry that I have a very irresponsible idea: Can we cancel the press conference on Feb 23? I have a kind of a sense of unease when I returned home last Sunday.

“I am deeply grateful to each and every of our help, just like family. This time last year, the memory slowly surfaced because there is no legal status, so it was hard hit and have to pay a heavy price: [S] was thrown into prison as much as six months, the same time I lost three-months infant and still need to take care the other daughter she only 18 months [a US citizen] and need a lot of time to look for a good lower [lawyer] to help my

husband. Tried [tired], helpless, fear stay with me tighter when I was home every night or so need to beware landlor[d]’s suddenly bother. [The landlord informed the police that she thought S was a terrorist, so she could get them out of their apartment and raise the rent. Because S was undocumented, he was treated as a criminal until proven innocent. He was acquitted of terrorism charges, but missed a court date with Immigration while in jail, creating more problems.]

“I lost my confidence and hope for life. At that time the pain is beyond words to express only a cold, grey winter accompany me that I could not detect the slightest sunshine. Mark, do you know if time could return to the past then let all the unfortunate things stay in the past in that moment, all buried, dust-laden therefore. Joe and Juan Carlos give me their hands when I am helpless, let me know you and all the churches let me feel the warm home, every Sunday go to church that let me experience a baptism and calm, with the blessings and prayers, at least I feel that there is still a hot spot in world. when I heard a press conference that I feel fear and think maybe something will happen, or so the landlord found the residence of us, for examples she will know where we living, we were doing now...then she will do something bad behind us.

“I am really afraid of this idea again in my mind, and I cannot afford any other accident happen no more. It always fragile as the heart

was hurt. So, I really want to abolish press conference of Feb 23. I know that this request is excessive, because you send mail to visitors already but I really want to delete all the activities of the Feb 23 including Fund Raising dinner because there was a lot of help for us already it was really very grateful. Every Sunday with everyone to pray together is a great joy. Now, me and [S] would like the simple life, do not want to let life become too publicity.”

The dinner could not be canceled because this correspondence was on February 9 and the dinner had been advertised since the beginning of January for February 23. However, no press was invited. S cooked and the dinner went well, except for the inclement cold weather. Approximately \$900 was raised to help with their legal fees. We at Victoria also felt their fear and pain. To know that the current immigration laws, however well-intentioned, create such emotional and physical havoc upon our families makes them unethical and unjust.

One of our biggest fears was that S and S would go into hiding and we would lose part of our family. I cannot imagine what it would be like to have these precious members of our family torn away and separated from us. Yes, they are family and part of us. Just as all of my nieces and nephews are part of my parents’ family, S and S are part of the Victoria Family and the New Sanctuary Movement.



## Arrested on Amtrak

by Victor Toro, asylum seeker in the process of deportation

On July 6, 2007, I was on an Amtrak train returning to New York City. I had traveled through various cities and states, mobilizing support for the legalization of the more than 12 million undocumented immigrants in this country. I was returning to the Bronx, where I have lived for the last 25 years.

At the station in Rochester, NY, immigration agents entered the train with dogs. Their entrance brought terror into the train, and they started to question everyone for their identity papers. They took away about 30 of us in handcuffs. The agents were carrying the list of Amtrak passengers and had identified us in advance. For this reason, I believe that Amtrak has been working for a long time in this underhanded way for the sinister "Migra" (Immigration). And for this reason, I support and suggest that Amtrak be taken to court for this racist and discriminatory conduct. They allow acts of Facism in their public service and have made it possible for civil rights to go un-respected.



### *"Transportation, not Deportation!"*

On April 2<sup>nd</sup>, Families for Freedom, the NYC New Sanctuary Coalition, and other advocacy groups met in front of Penn Station and Port Authority to protest Amtrak's and Greyhound's collaboration with border and immigration agents who are detaining hundreds of people traveling within 75 miles of US borders. Customs and Border Protection, a division of the Department of Homeland Security, say the stops are a routine practice that has gotten more frequent as the agency has tripled its number of agents along the Canadian border over the past few years. (NY Times)

## Theological Corner: Reclaiming the Unity of God's Love

by Rev. Robert B. Coleman, Minister of Mission and Society, The Riverside Church in the City of New York

My heart rate increased markedly as I waited in that sterile room. There were husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, and parents who sat there until a strange voice called from a half-opened door, "Mrs. ///?" Was that her name? The one with whom we were sitting? Did they just call her name? From 9am until 12 noon, people came, names were called, a wife left her husband and went through the door, a brother gave a knowing glance to his brother and went through the door, and a mother bit her quivering lip and watched a daughter go through the door. Every day this room fills up with families. And there is not a Muslim, Jewish, or Christian theologian of integrity that would deny them their humanity. But the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency doesn't know a thing about theological integrity. Nor are they compelled to care. And as the door closes behind a loved one, nobody knows if they will ever come back out.

History will write of this episode in US policy and practice about the pervasive fear that gave rise to a militant, cold-spirited, deadly judgment. The one thing we cannot be accused of is meekness. We shall not be caught off guard and thought of as weak. There is no damn way someone is going to

threaten our security on 'our' watch. And so, we rip apart families, pull children from their parent's arms, separate brothers without a blink, and totally dismiss several thousand years of 'justice-wisdom' as naïve and ineffective. The sacred texts of our world religions couldn't be more harmonious than on matters of peace, dignity, respect, compassion, hospitality, and even security. The counterintuitive nature of true security is that by practicing a gracious, loving hospitality, we build a lasting security for our children and grandchildren even unto the seventh generation.

The counterintuitive nature of true security is that by sharing the provisions of God's household (oikonomikos), we will discover that all our needs are met. The counterintuitive nature of true security is that in order to have any idea of what it means to receive mercy, one must be merciful...to be forgiven, one must be forgiving...to be loved unconditionally, one must love unconditionally.

My driving self-interest in ministry with poor and marginalized sisters and brothers is highlighted in a text from the Christian bible. Simply put, Jesus of Nazareth says, "Not

everyone who cries, 'Lord, Lord' will be recognized." There is a whole lot of rhetoric and posturing on the part of conservative and fundamentalist people of faith throughout the world. And particularly during the election season in the US, we have the "Christian" litmus tests for our candidates. But, for all those who continue to work for ICE, support the destruction of families, affirm the practice of shackling our sisters and brothers and forcing them to report three times a week and hold down a full time job, support the abusive and terror-inducing raids and round-ups, and all in the name of God, Allah, Yahweh, Ram, or Homeland Security...stop it! You are living a lie. And your "Lord, Lord" will not be recognized. And your temporal expense of energy is not making my grandchild's world any more secure.

There are mountains of mercy yet climbed. There are rivers of justice yet navigated. And there are valleys of reconciliation yet traversed. If you want to live in a more secure world, then simply surrender your fears, usher in the jubilee of liberated hearts, minds and bodies. Join with the New Sanctuary Coalition and all those who seek to build a more just and secure future for all God's children. Shanti, Shanti, Shanti!



# New York City New Sanctuary Coalition

## Upcoming Events!

5/1, 4pm Rally, 5:30pm March

- **National Immigrant March.**

Rally at Union Square. We will meet at the Gandhi statue (14<sup>th</sup> St. and Union Square West) to march together to Federal Plaza!

5/8, 11am-3pm

- **First Anniversary of the New Sanctuary Movement.**

6/14-6/16

- **National Justice for Immigrants Weekend.** During this Fathers' Day Weekend, congregations are invited to focus their services on immigrants and how our faith calls us to respond to the signs of our times.

### \*Remember...\*

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

For more information, to join our list-serve, or to write for our newsletter, please contact us at:

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"Many thanks to all our writers!"  
Editors: Grania Marcus, Rachel Soltis, and Juan Carlos Ruiz

# Marking the First Anniversary of the New Sanctuary Movement in NYC

We, members of the New Sanctuary Movement, mark one year since our launching in NYC, Seattle, LA and Chicago. In this first year, the Spirit of Sanctuary has birthed over 40 coalitions across the country. Walking together, witnessing, and breaking the silence against the domestic terrorizing, militarization, and policing upon our families, have been a challenge and a grace (within many graces).

As the fist of ICE tightens and squeezes the life out of our families and our souls, we are still committed to stand up, in dignity and in solidarity with our brothers and sisters who are being persecuted. Thus, let us save the date and gather with sanctuary families and other NSM members from around the region to mark a milestone on the long road to compassionate justice.

## Thursday, May 8<sup>th</sup>

**11am - Mothers' Day Liturgy, followed by a press conference**

**12:30pm-3pm - lunch and conversation with representatives from New Sanctuary coalitions from the northeast region.**

...And please bring a dish to share!

**The Riverside Church, 91 Claremont Avenue, Manhattan - Room 411**

Subway: 1 train to 116<sup>th</sup> St. For directions, <http://www.riversidechurchny.org/about/?directions>



**"What Does Freedom Taste Like?"** (cont'd from page 1)  
→ and broken immigration system (3 years). Do the math.

I have fought three wars in my lifetime. I fought the wars on poverty and abuse when I was in Haiti, and I won with pride. I fought the war on drugs; all the statistics were against me and I won with pride. Now I am fighting the war on immigrants. This time it is personal. My wife, my children, and my family are being affected. I have to win.

Immigration is supposed to be a civil issue, but now it is seen as a criminal issue. Why? People immigrate to the US for the same reason as 100 years ago. It was okay then, and now it's a crime to migrate. Why?

This month (April) is Immigrant Heritage Month. How can we celebrate our heritage when we can no longer take the Amtrak train or the Greyhound bus and travel peacefully within a country that no longer welcomes us? How can we celebrate in a country whose immigration policies are destroying and separating families across the country, leaving behind children without their parents and loved ones and spouses without an income? We have nothing to celebrate.

## \*Action Alert: Stop Turning Rides into Raids!\*

Call Amtrak & Greyhound & tell their presidents to:

- Give refunds to families that were detained while using their services.
- Warn people that they will face an immigration inspection when using their services.
- Stop this underhanded collaboration altogether.
- Publicly apologize.

**CALL:**

Amtrak: Mr. Alexander Kummant, President  
1-800-872-7245

Greyhound: Dave Leach, President  
972-789-7000

**Know your Rights:** → When stopped by immigration officials it is your right to ask for an attorney. You can say, "I cannot answer your questions without my attorney present."

- You have a right to not sign anything.
- Don't Lie.
- Do not be combative. Be polite and clear. You don't want to give them an excuse to assault you physically.
- Make sure someone in your family knows where you are going and has all your information so they can find you if you are detained.
- Expect to be investigated by immigration officials each and every time you ride Amtrak or Greyhound or anytime you drive near the border.