



**Imagining a world
where all are safe**

dear members

I feel quite like the first line of the Dickens classic *Tale of Two Cities*: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." These last few weeks have been challenging in the extreme.

Let's look at the worst of times first. President Obama announced that Speaker Boehner was not going to bring any immigration bill to the floor of the House of Representatives this year despite the fact that the votes exist to pass it. No one seems to know what really spooked the Speaker. But he definitely was frightened off from doing the right thing for our nation.

Then there is the humanitarian crisis on the Texas border that is being played out in the lives of young children and in the sound bites on the evening news. It is anguish to know that the "push factors" that we have discussed for years are now coming to a head but fear seems to be taking the lead.

But it is also the best of times. We have unprecedented access to members of the Senate and the House of Representatives. Just this week alone we were able to have conversations with many members of Congress about the "worst of times" above. This gives us access in a whole new way.

This is thanks to your support and commitment that gets us through. Please keep it up. Together we can create hope and change. Together we are a community that can make the Gospel live!

Simone Campbell, SSS



"I beg the Lord to grant us more politicians who are genuinely disturbed by the state of society, the people, the lives of the poor!"
—Pope Francis

Help answer this prayer of Pope Francis. Encourage everyone you know to register and vote this November to bring justice to Capitol Hill!

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A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby

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Cover: Salvadorian immigrant Stefanie Elizabeth, 17, holds her daughter Emily Nicole, 18 months. Photo by John Moore/Getty Images from his album "Undocumented Immigrants: Faces of the Displaced."

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Using Our Faith to Imagine—and Create— a More Perfect Union

BY SISTER SIMONE CAMPBELL

Pope Francis says in paragraph 53 of *Joy of the Gospel* that “we also have to say ‘thou shalt not’ to an economy of exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills.”

He also reminds us that:

“Some people continue to defend trickle-down theories which assume that economic growth, encouraged by a free market, will inevitably succeed in bringing about greater justice and inclusiveness in the world. This opinion, which had never been confirmed by the facts, expresses a crude and naive trust in the goodness of those wielding economic power and in the sacralized workings of the prevailing economic system. Meanwhile, the excluded are still waiting. To sustain a lifestyle which excludes others, or to sustain enthusiasm for that selfish ideal, a globalization of indifference has developed.”

—*Joy of the Gospel*, paragraph 54

This is at the heart of our work here at NETWORK. We strive every day to create changes that end the naive trust in the market and ensure adequate protections for those who are left out. But while we work to protect the safety net and make sure that everyone in our nation has

the minimum required to live in dignity, it seems to me that we need some new imagination.

We need to be able to imagine a nation where all can live in dignity using their gifts and talents to build up our society. Growing income and wealth disparities erode community in our society and if we are to survive, we need to change the direction that we are going. It is challenging, but we need to imagine a new way forward.

To be a spur to the imagination, I am proposing some policies that could make a difference. (The list can be found on the next page.)

These are just a few ideas that can make a difference and rein in the excesses of this market. But we need bigger imaginations to create the vision for the future.

Jesus said over and over, “Fear not.” We need to heed that admonition so that we can be free to create alternatives in our polarized world. Let your imagination run wild. What can we do to lift up a vision for the future? Join us at NETWORK as we try to imagine AND CREATE this “more perfect union.”

Simone Campbell, SSS, is NETWORK's Executive Director and author of A Nun on the Bus: How All of Us Can Create Hope, Change, and Community.

Some Ways We Can Build a “More Perfect Union”

- ✦ **Business needs to pay the true cost of labor.** Wages need to be high enough to support workers and their families. If workers use the safety-net programs to survive, then business is not paying its fair share and the consumers may not be paying the true costs of a product or service. Several policy choices are available to help make this happen. One is raising the minimum wage so that workers are all above the poverty level. A second policy is to tax the employers for the proportionate share of their workers who use the safety-net programs. A third could be denying tax breaks (and government contracts) to those who do not pay living wages.
- ✦ **Business needs to reduce the differential** between the highest and lowest paid worker. The increase in income and wealth disparities is crippling our country. If business leaders rein in this trend, they could get a tax benefit that would give them more money to invest in the business.
- ✦ **People need to be able to work AND care for their families.** This requires policies that allow for paid sick days and paid family leave. Workers are not just cogs in the wheels of production. Workers are human beings who build up our society. Having adequate time to care for family makes them better workers. This is especially true of the “sandwich generation” that is caring for children, including adult sons and daughters with special needs, and for seniors at the same time.
- ✦ **Planning for aging and retirement is essential for our future.** Currently, approximately 60% of our workers are unable to save for the future because the costs of living are using up every penny they have. Increasing wages will help with the capacity to save, but we also need to enhance the commitment to saving. Tax policy helps with some of this for higher earners, but we need to make sure that lower-wage workers can also save for the future. Changing the regulations to allow a family to use safety-net programs when needed, without having to spend all of their savings, could be a good first step in this direction.
- ✦ **Education needs to be affordable and flexible to meet 21st century needs.** There are many plans to make education more affordable. Senator Elizabeth Warren has a plan that would allow the refinancing of student debt to create more manageable payments. Oregon has a plan that allows state residents who attend state colleges to delay repayment of debt for 20 years in order to get established in careers. But we also need to make sure that education meets the needs of students and our emerging society. Rediscovering education in trades is essential for the future.

—Sister Simone Campbell





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Children and young mothers are given food, shelter and medical help at the Catholic Charities shelter in McAllen, Texas. They are taken to this shelter after being processed by authorities.

Unaccompanied Minors at the Border: A Humanitarian Crisis that Demands Faithful and Compassionate Action

BY STEPHANIE NIEDRINGHAUS

When a humanitarian crisis becomes political, the “human” is often lost in the process. We can’t let that happen as our nation responds to the crisis of tens of thousands of unaccompanied children arriving at our borders.

Even the terminology used in political battles can dehumanize these children—“illegals” in the popular parlance and “Unaccompanied Alien Children” or “UAC” in official government language. At least the government terminology has the word “children,” but they are defined as “alien,” a dehumanizing term.

To comprehend the human dimensions of the current crisis, we need to understand who these children are, as well as how and why they are showing up at our borders. Then, we must look at what is happening to them when they arrive.

Who Are Arriving

According to the Congressional Research Service, almost all unaccompanied children coming to our borders arrive from four countries: El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico. In FY2009, fully 82% of these children came from Mexico, and only 17% originated in Central America. These percentages changed drastically in recent years, however. From October 2013 through May 2014 (the first eight months of FY2014), only one-quarter of the children were Mexican. In contrast, 73% were from the Central American nations.

Overall numbers of children also grew dramatically—from just under 20,000 in FY2009 to 52,000 in the first 8½ months of FY2014.

Why the change?

The Children of Central America

Children and their families do not suddenly decide to travel north for trivial reasons. They must weigh the dangers and costs of their journeys with what is happening at home.

Families in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras deal with high levels of poverty, unemployment and inadequate access to education accompanied by decreases in government social spending. Causes include everything from a coffee fungus resulting in the loss of hundreds of thousands of jobs to rampant corruption in many areas.

But this current crisis is fueled even more strongly by the dangers that children in these families now experience—including tragically high levels of violence and coercion caused by local gang activity and multinational

criminality. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees just issued a report that put a real face on this crisis:

“Maritza,” a 15-year-old from El Salvador whom they interviewed, described her pain and fear this way: “I am here because the gang threatened me. One of them ‘liked’ me. Another gang member told my uncle that he should get me out of there because the guy who liked me was going to do me harm. In El Salvador they take young girls, rape them and throw them in plastic bags. My uncle told me it wasn’t safe for me to stay there. They told him that on April 3, and I left on April 7. They said if I was still there on April 8, they would grab me, and I didn’t know what would happen... My mother’s plan was always for the four of us—her, my two sisters and me—to be together. But I wasn’t sure I wanted to come. I decided for sure only when the gang threatened me.”

According to the same report (*Children on the Run; Unaccompanied Children Leaving Central America and Mexico and the Need for International Protection, July 2014*), El Salvadoran children said that they were constantly faced with extor-

tion, had witnessed murders, and had experienced criminal threats to themselves, their families and friends. Girls also feared sexual violence.

Almost one-half of the children from Honduras they interviewed had experienced violence or had been directly threatened. “Kevin,” a 17-year-old from Honduras, reported, “My grandmother wanted me to leave. She told me: ‘If you don’t join, the gang will shoot you. If you do join, the rival gang will shoot you—or the cops will shoot you. But if you leave, no one will shoot you.’”

Our own government recognizes the dangerous conditions in these countries. The U.S. State Department has issued travel warnings for the region, saying, for example, that “the level of crime and violence in Honduras remains critically high.”

As if local criminality and gang activity weren’t frightening enough, families have also been threatened by the expansion of transnational criminal organizations, including the Mexico-based los Zetas cartel, now operating freely in Central America. According to a report issued by the Committee on Migration of the United States Conference

of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), los Zetas was organized about 15 years ago by an “elite” group of Special Forces anti-drug commandos who left to form their own drug-smuggling operation. Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador have experienced spikes in violence, especially along the busiest drug trafficking routes—the border between Guatemala and Honduras and the northern Caribbean coast of Honduras. Los Zetas have also expanded their activities to include smuggling migrants, which “has resulted in a corresponding rise of violence, extortion, kidnapping, sexual assault, physical assault, trafficking and murder” (*Mission to Central America: The Flight of Unaccompanied Children to the United States, USCCB, November 2013*). Needy families are often targeted by the criminals and encouraged or coerced into paying them to move them out of the country.

The same USCCB report included information from an interview with Sylvia Mendez, Fundacion Castillo de Amor, in Guatemala City. She described how some smugglers (“coyotes”) had promised a three-person family that, for a very high fee, they would attempt to

Catholic Sisters are working with faith and community groups at the border in McAllen, Texas. Sister Mary Ellen Lacy (at right), a former NETWORK lobbyist, is providing legal assistance to the children. The tents are air conditioned and have cots on which the exhausted mothers and children rest.



SISTER MARY ELLEN LACY



smuggle them into the U.S. In Guatemala, it has become common practice for the coyotes to promise three attempts and for families to mortgage their homes to pay the high fees. When the coyotes fail to deliver, they take over the family homes for themselves or their criminal enterprises.

In Honduras, coyotes frequently charge about \$5,000-7,000, which represents 18 months of a family's earnings. Smuggling people into the U.S. or extorting money from vulnerable families and then failing to help them reach the U.S. has clearly become a lucrative sideline for criminals and cartels.

A Dangerous and Expensive Journey North

Since the price of traveling north to the United States is extremely high, both in terms of money and because of danger to the children, it is unfathomable that anyone could still believe that families would decide to send their children without powerful reasons. In fact, they have them.

According to 2013 report from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Honduras is the most violent country in the world, with 90.4 murders per 100,000 people. El Salvador (41.2) and Guatemala (39.9) also have extremely high murder rates when compared with the rest of the world.

One 14-year-old boy told U.N. interviewers, "In the gangs, someone would go up to my village once a week to see what was going on. Sometimes they would approach the young guys and put them on the phone with the boss. The boss would say to the young guys that they must join, and if they don't they would kill his family. They beat up one of my friends who wouldn't join. You can't say anything to the police because the gangs are capable of coming and killing you."

"Maria" is a mother who just arrived in Texas with her 1½-year-old toddler. She told the Catholic Sisters helping her that her family had run a very small bakery in Guatemala selling bread. Criminals demanded \$1,000 each month for

I left because I had problems with the gangs. They hung out by a field that I had to pass to get to school. They said if I didn't join them, they would kill me. I have many friends who were killed or disappeared because they refused to join the gang. I told the gang I didn't want to. Their life is only death and jail, and I didn't want that for myself. I want a future. I want to continue studying and to have a career. That isn't possible when you're in the gang. I didn't want that for my family either. I didn't want my mother to suffer the way mothers of gang members suffer. The more they saw me refusing to join, the more they started threatening me and telling me they would kill me if I didn't. They beat me up five times for refusing to help them. The pain from the beatings was so bad, I couldn't even stand up. They killed a friend of mine in March because he didn't want to join, and his body wasn't found until May. I went to the police twice to report the threats. They told me that they would do something; but when I saw that they weren't doing anything to help, I knew I had to leave. I even brought a copy of the police report I made; but U.S. immigration took it from me and threw it away. They said that it wasn't going to help me in this country.

—“Mario,” a 17-year-old from El Salvador interviewed for “Children on the Run”

protection money, which they couldn't afford. In desperation, they sold their little business and, knowing their lives were now in danger, they fled to various locations. She and her child came to the U.S. to seek safety with relatives.

Some forget that Central Americans are fleeing for their lives to numerous locations, including inside their own countries and neighboring nations. Despite this, some U.S. politicians would have us believe that this is a crisis affecting only the U.S. In fact, the much smaller Lebanon is not complaining as they house over one million refugees from Syria. And here we have 50,000 children arriving from Central America as some politicians and others protest.



DANISH KHAN

What is wrong with this picture? As one U.S. Catholic Sister, said, “Shame on us!”

Those journeying to the U.S. often experience horrifying conditions along the way.

The USCCB interviewers heard numerous stories of the abuse and violence endured by many children. “Drug traffickers, human traffickers, and even law enforcement pose stark risks to these children and prey upon their vulnerabilities. Maras, for example, charge money for children to ride the train north into Mexico, throwing them off when they cannot pay. Girls and young women are at risk of rape and prepare for such an event.”

Children caught in Mexico on the journey north are often held with adults, receiving few legal services. Those who request asylum normally stay in detention for additional time

and, should they receive asylee status, they live in a Mexico City child center until they turn 18 because of a lack of foster care services in Mexico. Rather than enduring these hardships, the children often choose to be deported to their home countries so they can begin the journey northward yet again.

Arriving at the U.S. Border

The thousands of children and young mothers who survive the arduous journey north are now overwhelming U.S. border facilities. They are also treated differently, depending on from where they come. Mexican and Canadian children can be turned back at the border, but those from other countries, including those in Central America, are legally entitled to court hearings before either being deported or allowed to remain in the U.S.

They are first housed in detention facilities, usually sleeping on cold floors. Representative Zoe Lofgren (D-CA-19) recently visited holding centers in Texas and, according to Voice of America, was troubled by what she witnessed. “Many, many young children crowded in jail-like holding cells, including toddlers, some in diapers. These children were

completely alone, they were sleeping on cement floors,” she said, adding that older children were trying to care for the littler ones.

Because there are so many unaccompanied minors and young mothers, Border Patrol and ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) officials in Texas are reaching out to faith-based service groups to help them quickly move the children out of detention.

In El Paso, for example, numerous temporary shelters have been set up while others have stepped up their already existing programs and shelter activities.

Catholic Sisters serve in many of these facilities, including the Columban Mission Center. On the Fourth of July, Sister Isabel Fierro and other Sisters mobilized rapidly when suddenly informed that nine mothers and 11 young children would soon be arriving. They quickly provided food and new clothes. (Those arriving in the initial detention centers have their clothing taken away and are given replacement, often ill-fitting clothes. The Sisters help them find more suitable clothing, which has been donated by local people.)

They also provided shower facilities and real beds, a luxury for so many of the children. Chilled by air conditioning and cold floors in an earlier detention center, one little boy exclaimed, “It’s nice here! It’s warm!”

The Sisters have heard many stories, including how hard it had been in the detention centers. Cold floors, bologna

Catholic Sisters in McAllen, Texas have ready clothing and personal care items for use by the mothers and children.



J. CARLILET

A 17-year-old mother and her child.

sandwiches tossed at them, and being treated rudely seemed to be the norm.

Working quickly, the Sisters were able to meet the initial physical needs of their guests, and send them along their way with some money and care packages that contained fruit and granola bars. Volunteers would transport them to bus terminals and airports so they could get to other family members or guardians while waiting for their hearings.

Many organizations and individuals like these Sisters have reached out to help in the current crisis, but much more needs to be done. Sister Isabel recently wrote that new arrivals tell “some of the stories we’ve heard before—victims of violence, extortion, poverty and limited resources in their countries. All the ones I spoke with had a destination in mind with a relative or friend. The people are being moved fast though new people show up when least expected. Yesterday about 200 total... Volunteers are being requested from parishes and ACTS groups and seem to be responding. Do pray for them and for us!”

Sister Janet Gildea recently reflected on her experience with some of the refugees: “What we know is that there is a strong belief among people of faith that these are indeed our sisters and brothers. This is a sign of the change of attitude that Pope Francis called for in his message last July from Lampedusa, ‘moving away from attitudes of defensiveness and fear indifference and marginalization—all typical of a throwaway culture—towards attitudes based on a culture of encounter, the only culture

capable of building a better, more just and fraternal world’... While elected officials lack the political will to reform our federal immigration policy, people of faith will heed the call to create a culture of encounter, welcoming the stranger as Christ at our door.” (We mobilized to meet their needs, globalsistersreport.org)

Ways You Can Help in This Humanitarian Crisis

Many ask for ways to help address the humanitarian crisis that is causing record numbers of immigrant children and families to make the treacherous journey from Central America to the United States. Here are a few options:

- 1. Help find them shelter.** There is an urgent need for safe facilities to provide shelter for children until they can be discharged to sponsors to await judicial proceedings. You can email FEMA if you know about suitable accommodations (FEMA-UAC-Shelter-TF@fema.dhs.gov).
- 2. Tell Congress that they must step up to help.** For example, ask for additional funding for the Office of Refugee Resettlement, and insist that we protect these children. For more recommendations see page 9 of this *Connection*.
- 3. Schedule a lobby visit with your member of Congress** during the August Recess to talk more about this issue.
- 4. Contact local organizations** like Catholic Charities or other groups working with unaccompanied minors or other refugees and asylum seekers to volunteer or send donations.
- 5. Share your story** so we can help you spread the word! Tell us what your experiences are working with vulnerable populations and the unaccompanied minors. We are eager to share stories with our contacts in Congress and the administration. Email us at networkupdate@networklobby.org.

Stephanie Niedringhaus is NETWORK's Communications Coordinator.

Despite Unfinished Business in Critical Areas like Immigration Reform, Congress Prepares for Midterm Elections

BY NETWORK ISSUE STAFF

The House and Senate, already focused on the midterm elections, will be out of session on August Recess until September 8. This is a great time to set up meetings with your senators or representative. Please let NETWORK know if you do! Below is some of NETWORK's latest intelligence regarding what's happening with our community's legislative priorities.



Unaccompanied Minors Crossing the Border into the U.S.

This summer, the surge of unaccompanied children and families coming to the U.S. across the Rio Grande border has been widely covered in the news and has captured the attention of Capitol Hill. (See page 5 of this *Connection* for information about this humanitarian crisis.)

President Obama asked Congress to pass a \$3.7 billion emergency spending bill to address the crisis. The bill funds five major areas: care for unaccompanied children to meet their physical, mental and emotional needs as required by U.S. law; increased border protection, including additional staffing; additional detention, prosecution and removal of undocumented families; additional judges and lawyers to process the added legal proceedings; and aid to Central America to address root causes.

NETWORK supports the request for money to care for the unaccompanied minors and families, many of whom have suffered tremendously on their journey to the U.S. We also support the commitment to provide unaccompanied children with proper legal counsel.

We are concerned that the administration and Congress may move to

strip the children of due process rights in order to effect quick deportations. Hurriedly returning children back to dangerous situations they fled without adequate due process would undermine our obligations under international law and our position as a global humanitarian leader. We are working to ensure that legal protections stay in place and additional funds are provided to ensure safety for children and families in their home countries.

There have been several hearings in Congress, and the administration hopes to pass a proposal before the August congressional recess because Homeland Security Secretary Johnson reported that key agencies will begin running out of money in August. Many Republicans oppose increased funding and are trying to blame President Obama for the crisis. NETWORK is reaching out to those offices emphasizing that unaccompanied children and their families need support and that we have a moral obligation to provide care. We hope Congress will meet our legal and moral obligations to ensure safety for these vulnerable children and their families.

Comprehensive Immigration Reform

We've been working hard in the House for more than a year to pass comprehensive immigration reform that provides a pathway to citizenship and protects family unity. The high-profile loss of House Majority Leader Eric



Cantor (R-VA) to an anti-immigrant candidate contributed to speculation that Republican leadership will not take up a reform bill this year. This was confirmed on Monday, June 30, when President Obama announced that he had spoken to Speaker Boehner and was told there would be no vote.

President Obama said that he would take executive action to provide additional protection to undocumented people currently living in the U.S. NETWORK will press the administration to provide relief, reduce deportations, and make sure that our immigration practices respect the dignity of all.

Tax Justice

Earlier this year, the Senate Finance Committee passed tax extenders—a bundle of tax provisions that traditionally benefit large corporations—that would extend the tax benefits for one year at a cost of \$70 billion. This would be the 15th time such benefits were extended since 1981. So far, the extenders have not come up for a full vote in the Senate because some Democratic senators are upset that while social programs such as food stamps and unemployment insurance are newly required to have a budget offset that pays for them, corporate tax breaks are not. There are, however, many senators, including Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV), who would like to extend the provisions.

Meanwhile, the House Ways and Means Committee is trying to extend certain tax provisions permanently. The House passed two of the six corporate tax provisions that made it out of committee. Later, because of political



pressure applied by Democrats and the nonprofit community, including NETWORK, they passed a Child Tax Credit (CTC) out of committee although it would not be permanent. NETWORK is pleased that the committee has taken this action, but hopes to improve the CTC as it moves forward to provide greater assistance to American families living in poverty.

Because there is no agreement between the House and Senate regarding the issue of tax extenders, they will likely not be resolved until after the election in November. NETWORK will continue to advocate for tax policies that lift people out of poverty and that ask corporations to pay their fair share of taxes.

Budget and Appropriations

Last December, House Budget Chair Paul Ryan (R-WI) and Senate Budget Chair Patty Murray (D-WA) brokered a budget deal for FY2015, which was approved by Congress and signed by President Obama. Mandatory funding of the federal government for FY 2015 begins on Oct. 1, 2014, yet the Ryan-Murray budget still has not gone through the appropriations process that allocates the budgeted funds to reach the



programs for which they are intended. Twelve appropriations areas need to be funded. If they are not funded through regular order, they will be grouped and passed as an “omnibus” or a “continuing resolution,” which will carry the government through until legislators are able to come to consensus on funding.

The House and Senate are at different stages in development of appropriations bills by which the government is funded. The House has passed five bills, including important funding for Commerce-Justice-Science (C-J-S), Defense, and Transportation/Housing and Urban Development (T/HUD). The Senate has passed several out of committee, but none has come to the entire Senate floor. Chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) failed in her attempt to pass a “mini-bus” including Agriculture, C-J-S, Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and T/HUD due to disagreement on amendment processes. As of this writing, no appropriations bills have been sent to the president, and congress’s constitutionally mandated appropriations work has been left undone. NETWORK will continue to advocate for a Faithful Budget with appropriations processes that are accountable to the 100%.

Implementation of the Affordable Care Act

In 2012, the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) was considered by the Supreme Court. While the ACA was upheld, the Supreme Court decision made it optional for states to accept the ACA’s provision of federal

money to expand the Medicaid program to people living at 100-133% of the poverty line. This sector of the population has income too low to buy health insurance through a state exchange with subsidies, but too high to qualify for the Medicaid program. The following 24 states have not expanded Medicaid: Alabama, Alaska, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Wisconsin and Wyoming.

The Urban Institute reports that if these states continue to oppose Medicaid expansion, 5.7 million people will lack healthcare coverage in 2016, including more than 1.2 million in Texas alone.



The Council of Economic Advisors released a sobering report entitled *Missed Opportunities: The Consequences of State Decisions Not to Expand Medicaid*. According to the new report, in those 24 states:

- Hundreds of thousands of people would not receive recommended preventive care each year. That includes 8,000 Virginians who would have had mammograms, and almost 29,000 Georgia women who would have received Pap smears in the past year.
- 255,000 people face catastrophic out-of-pocket medical costs in a typical year, including approximately 13,700 Pennsylvania residents.
- States forgo billions in federal funding that could bolster their economies and create jobs. Florida alone will lose over \$15 million over the next three years, funding that would have contributed to almost 64,000 additional jobs.

To get involved in this important issue, download our toolkit at www.networklobby.org/MedicaidToolkit.



Want timely information about key issues in Congress? NETWORK members can sign up for our weekly email legislative updates. Send your name, zip code and email address to networkupdate@networklobby.org.

“Home of Love”

BY SISTER MARGARET MARY TORION, MQHM

In the Philippines, the MQHM (Immaculate Mary Queen of Heaven) Rehabilitation and Livelihood Training Center, also called the Home of Love, is a shelter for women and girls who are victims of prostitution and human trafficking. It offers rehabilitation programs and services to help with healing and new lives for the “clients” who come.

The loving compassion of the Good Shepherd is visibly manifested in the home He created to shelter women and children survivors of prostitution and human trafficking. It has been three years since the Home of Love reopened after it was razed by fire in 2009.

They found a new home and family... Our clients are persevering greatly in living a renewed life and battling in their daily encounters with people and events, which for them are temptations and obstacles.

The Home of Love became their true home, where they found new family in the presence of the MQHM Sisters, the staff and their fellow clients. They learn how to respect each other, and day-by-day start to open their hearts in loving and trusting again. They share laughter and tears throughout their stay in the shelter, becoming like real siblings. In a period of two to three years of living under one roof, they learn how to support each other. Although at first meeting they were rivals and enemies, presently they form friendships like no other. They are concerned with those



who are struggling or giving up. They know how to lift up those who feel rejected, abandoned and alone.

A Life with God... The residents are zealous in their spiritual life. They formed a relationship with Jesus Christ and Mother Mary. They love to sing religious songs and every Sunday they are scheduled to sing in the Parish of San Antonio de Abad. They desire to have frequent confession. Truly, the Lord works in mysterious ways. Only God has the power to change us.

Empowering through Education and Livelihood... A total of 22 clients are studying in primary and secondary schools in Putat, Tuburan. One pursued a Bachelor of Science in Hospitality

Management at Cebu Technological University (CTU), Tuburan Campus. Those who were recently rescued underwent the basic literacy program inside the center.

In October 2013, six clients were given the opportunity to take the Elementary Level of the Alternative Learning System held in Consolacion Central School, Cebu. The skills training in sewing and dressmaking commenced

last April 2012. The first group was composed of eight clients while the second has 10. These 18 clients underwent rigid training in sewing school uniforms with Mrs. Rutheza Negro. They are now ready for a livelihood in Garment Production.

A livelihood in sewing school uniforms commenced in April 2013. Those who completed the course started to add to their savings from a decent job. They were glad to partake of this program. They feel a sense of success since they are able to earn a decent living. They understood that truly nothing is impossible with God as long you allow God to work in your life.

We thank all who have been part of the journey of these women and children in their quest to live a better life. To all who prayed and are continuously praying for them. To all who support us financially with our programs and services. In a special way we thank God for the BVM Hunger Fund as an instrument to be able to provide a decent livelihood for these women. May the good Lord continue to bless you as you respond to God's call... when I was HUNGRY you give me something to eat... MATTHEW 25: 34-36.



ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF AUTHOR

Author with client who won an award (above). Training in sewing and dressmaking (left).

Sr. Margaret Mary Torion, MQHM, is the Sister in charge of the Home of Love, where she has worked since they started in 2008.

Connecting with the Realities of People Who Are Homeless

BY CAROLYN BURSTEIN

As a volunteer at three homeless shelters I've had different responsibilities at each, and listening to clients who just want to talk is my favorite.

So often their expressions of desire are so authentic and similar to everyone else's that, except for external economic circumstances, there is little to differentiate them from those of us who have homes. Yes, sometimes their choices are wrong (and whose are impeccable?),

in our communities and how frequently such dwellings are inspected? What happened to Huseyin's family is why so many affordable housing advocates support effective laws to deter "slum landlords" from neglecting their properties.

It would not be easy to find another apartment at a reasonable rent, but after a short time I was overjoyed to learn about the availability of one apartment. Fortunately, it turned out to be a winner

their places of work, often beyond public transportation and in communities ill-equipped to deal with the poverty among their residents. While some argue that gentrification is essential for progress, one can't overlook the disruption it causes for people who have few resources. One partial solution is to help those who have been displaced with long-term assistance in the form of both money and people who will help them in the entire relocation process.

Landlord foreclosures' disastrous effects on renters are still a problem despite a 2009 law giving renters-in-the-know rights to protect the stability of their housing, since no federal agency ensures compliance. Housing advocates have been trying to get the law amended, to no avail.

Working with people who are homeless has now become a part of my practice of Catholic Social Teaching, and I still have much to

learn from my best teachers. As Pope Francis recently told a Vatican conference on ethical investing, it is increasingly intolerable that financial markets are shaping the destiny of people rather than serving their needs.

Carolyn Burstein is a Communications Fellow at NETWORK.



Capitol Hill neighborhoods undergoing change. "One can't overlook the disruption [gentrification] causes for people who have few resources."



but frequently, they could pinpoint the exact time when they should have taken a different route, especially regarding the beginning of a bad habit. Would that all of us had such insight!

I learned a lot from a family I met in 2006. They were Turkish refugees—mother Meliha, father Huseyin, and their children Ozzie, Rabia and Denyzhan. Over two years I helped Meliha improve her English, tutored the older children who had fallen behind in their studies (a common problem in homeless families), and worked with a staff member setting up a microfinance arrangement to help Huseyin start a new business. Fortunately, Huseyin's employment allowed the family to save enough money to begin renting an apartment.

Thanks to them, I have become more aware of egregious inequality that constantly stymies people in poverty. They remained in the first "affordable rental" for a year despite its many insects and leaking faucets and pipes. Do we always know what "affordable housing" is like

for the family—more spacious (Meliha was expecting another little one) and free of cockroaches. Because of the recession, Huseyin's business was doing poorly and the family was forced to borrow money from friends in the Turkish community. They were able to remain in their new home for over two years, long enough to witness the birth of Burak (the Turkish spelling of Barack) and establish social networks.

Another aspect of inequality, "gentrification," then drove them from their cherished apartment, and they sought refuge in another neighborhood. Unfortunately, their new landlord soon lost their townhouse to foreclosure. The family had paid their full rent each month and knew nothing about the landlord's problems. They were forced out into the cheaper suburbs, which then presented transportation problems.

Gentrification, of course, means that rents skyrocket, evictions increase, and many residents are pushed from their neighborhoods to the periphery, far from



COURTESY THE AUTHOR

Motivate Voters with NETWORK

Make an impact on the midterm elections!

 NETWORK is seeking community leaders across the country who are willing to organize a diverse group of community members to pledge to vote, register voters, and establish how your community can make sure people get to the polls.

 NETWORK will assist with planning, promotion and publicity. The timing for these events should be determined by the event organizers, but would ideally be held in September and October of 2014.

 “We the People” can all work together to advance the common good by voting about what matters to us and our communities.

 Email or call NETWORK Field Organizer Shantha Ready Alonso at networkupdate@networklobby.org and (202) 601-7871 to sign up for NETWORK’s election toolkit.



JUAN MONINO

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We the People

MUST USE OUR VOICES AND VOTES to Stand Up to Big Money

Our U.S. Constitution begins with an expression of the agency and purpose of the people:

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

Yet, over the past several years, we have seen the agency of “We the People” undermined in the democratic process by laws and court rulings that have expanded disproportionate influence to big money contributors in election campaigns.

Anyone running for public office is under enormous pressure to cater to large donors who fund their election campaigns. As a result, it is much harder to advance a public interest agenda on any issue involving the special interests of big money donors and potential corporate profits—whether it is environmental protection, health and safety standards, worker rights, consumer protections or gun violence prevention.

How did we get here?

- In 2010, the United States Supreme Court made its infamous ruling that “corporations are people” in *Citizens United, Appellant v. Federal Election Commission*. Specifically, this case focused on the right of corporations and unions to release political campaign ads before an election in an attempt to sway voters.

The Supreme Court declared that spending unlimited amounts of money is a form of free speech which means that corporations are now free to contribute unlimited amounts of money to political action committees (PACs) that support candidates.

- According to the nonpartisan Center for Responsive Politics, the 2012 election cycle was the most expensive in history, at a cost of more than \$6 billion.
- This year, the Supreme Court decided in *McCutcheon v. Federal Election Commission* that private individual contributors can dramatically increase their campaign contributions. Prior to this case, the government placed a limit on the combined amount of money an individual could donate to federal elections in a given election cycle. Now, individuals are able to donate as much money as they see fit to influence political campaigns, and with them elections.
- The current 2014 midterm election cycle has already seen a dramatic increase in campaign spending (over three times that of the 2012 elections) in the form of “dark money,” for which there is no clear disclosure of the funding source.

Campaign financing impacts all of us. No matter what issues we care about or where we find ourselves on the political spectrum, campaign financing can have a fundamental influence on the public policy process and often distorts political debate.

During this midterm election, the antidote to the influence of big money is We the People. Now more than ever, using our voices to highlight issues important to everyday people is essential to saving our democracy. AND—getting out the vote has never been more important. So, let’s get to work!

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A Less Trendy Conversation: ONE DC & Gentrification

By HALLIE CLARK

“Gentrification.” I became familiar with this word during the summer of 2010 when I interned in the D.C. area. I spent a lot of time in the Shaw neighborhood. Shaw, home to Howard University, is one of the first neighborhoods where free Blacks settled pre- and post-Civil War. Its history makes it an intellectual and cultural bedrock of many communities in the African diaspora. But in 2010, Shaw saw a growing presence of young (mostly white) professionals. New “trendy” spots and dog walkers peppered the area.

that was its final state of being.

In 2014, as a young Black professional in the D.C. area, I find that Washingtonians are still talking about gentrification. However, I have also been exposed to a different conversation about gentrification because of an organization called ONE—Organizing Neighborhood Equity—DC. I learned about the historical, social and economic context of gentrification that explains 40,000 Black residents leaving D.C. in the 2000s. For one—it did not happen overnight. The process of gentrification has deep his-

District where communities aren’t displaced and the area is structured to benefit the many, especially native D.C. residents. They try to focus on communities holistically without using a direct service model. One of their ultimate goals is to build grassroots leadership that builds a movement for “positive systemic change.”

Since 1997, ONE DC has had several victories and has continued campaigns in the District. In 2006, ONE DC helped tenants to purchase a building to create the Martin Luther King, Jr. Latino Co-op that has permanent affordable housing. Because it is a co-op, tenants not only have the opportunity to rent, but are collective owners of the building and co-create building policies based on the community of tenants’ needs. Many of the co-op member-owners are working-class immigrants from Guatemala, El Salvador and Mexico. Their victory shows the power people of color can and do exercise in their communities.

I’m excited to fundraise and build financial support for ONE DC’s work. Instead of feeling like community displacement is irreversible, ONE DC has helped me recognize that through collective power we can create the change we want to see in our communities. Other volunteers and I are currently fundraising to support a fulltime housing organizer so that residents all over the city feel supported, educated and connected. Tenants are battling developers in almost all four quadrants of the city. The sooner more folks start partaking in a different—less trendy—conversation around gentrification, the sooner more folks bothered by gentrification can rally and support the critical work by organizations like ONE DC.

Please visit www.onedc-online.org to learn more about ONE DC and how you can support the great work they do in Washington DC!

Hallie Clark is an Emerson National Hunger Fellow currently working for the NETWORK Education Program.



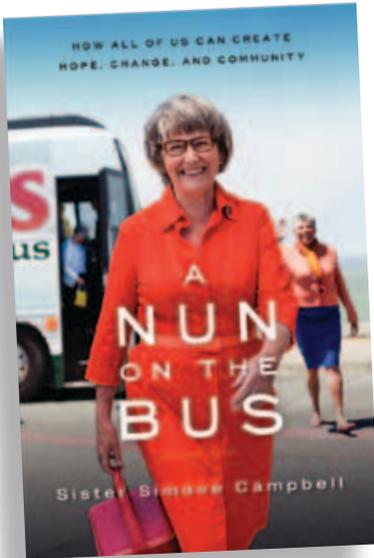
COURTESY ONE DC

That summer, I met groups of young non-native and native Washingtonians. Both groups used the word gentrification to describe the rapid changes and displacement long enough to witness the birth of Burak (the Turkish spelling of Barack) happening. But both crowds provided mixed responses to the change. Some believed they were good changes while some knew these “good” changes made it financially and socially difficult for many native Washingtonians to remain in the District. The term “gentrification” in my mind soon became synonymous with defeat. As if the dramatic loss of ownership by people of color of businesses, neighborhoods and cultural institutions was final. It seemed irreversible and as if once a community was “gentrified,”

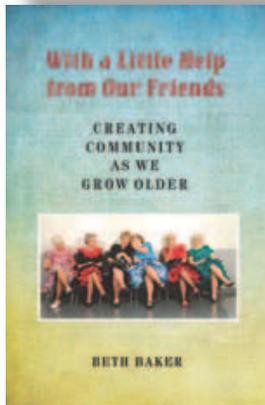
torical roots in everything, from Native American genocide to White Flight, to the last predatory lending crisis. Movements led by people of color and low-income folks resisting displacement, racism, sexism and classism have made it clear that this type of “repackaging” of communities is harmful but reversible.

I became a member of ONE DC in 2014. The organization started in the 1990s and soon became a non-hierarchical organization dedicated to “exercising the political strength to create and preserve racial and economic equity in Shaw and the District.” The organization actively builds a vision for the





A Nun on the Bus: How All of Us Can Create Home, Change, and Community by Sister Simone Campbell, NETWORK Executive Director, HarperOne <http://www.networklobby.org/BookOrder>



With a Little Help from Our Friends: Creating Community as We Grow Older by Beth Baker, Vanderbilt University Press www.vanderbilt.edu/university-press/book/9780826519887

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