



- A publication of Mennonite Central Committee
- March–April 2006
- Volume XXXVIII
- No. 2

## THE WAR ON TERROR

### *A Five-Year Retrospective*

The equation of immigrants with terrorists has fueled an ongoing immigration debate that has only increased in rancor in the past five years, with little attention to realities on the U.S./Mexico border.

## Migration Toward Fear Since 9/11

BY BETHANY SPICHER SCHONBERG

Rain or shine, it's a common sight here in Washington, D.C.: day laborers waiting outside convenience stores for a few hours of construction or landscaping work. A recent study of these laborers reports that one in five has been hurt on the job, and nearly half have been cheated out of wages by employers. Many are undocumented immigrants.

This fall, faced with growing community resentment toward the laborers outside the town's 7-11 store, an interfaith group in Herndon, Va., proposed a shelter for the workers. Within weeks, anti-immigrant activists nationwide filed lawsuits, shut down the city switchboard and showed up in Herndon to protest the shelter.

This 2006 *Washington Memo* series reviews gains and losses since Sept. 11, 2001. For immigrants, Sept. 11 added a new accusation to the familiar "they take our jobs, increase crime and crowd our schools" litany. Now "they might be terrorists," too.

The equation of immigrants with terrorists has fueled an ongoing immigration debate that has only increased in rancor in the past five years, with little attention to realities on the U.S./Mexico border, the role of immigrant workers in the U.S. economy, the root causes of migration or our nation's immigrant history.

Meanwhile, millions of immigrants in the United States—like the Herndon day laborers—live in constant fear of discrimination and deportation and are routinely denied worker protections and social services, even though many pay taxes.

In Congress, the House passed a bill before Christmas that would criminalize undocumented immigrants (along with the churches that assist them), erode due process rights, allow police enforcement of immigration laws and further militarize the U.S./Mexico border. As of this writing, the Senate has not yet debated a companion bill.

In response, the MCC Washington Office launched "Letters on the Line," inviting churches to send 358 letters to Congress—one for each migrant who died on the U.S./Mexico border in Fiscal Year 2005. To find out how your congregation can participate, visit [www.mcc.org/us/washington/lettersontheline](http://www.mcc.org/us/washington/lettersontheline).

In this *Memo*, MCC workers Blanca Mackay and Jodi Read tell how changes since Sept. 11 have impacted immigrant communities in New Orleans and Tucson, Ariz. (pages 5 and 6, respectively). Lora Steiner recalls the economics behind migration (pg. 7), Angong Acuil writes of her own experience as a refugee (pg. 4) and Daryl Byler reveals that the Washington Office itself is on the move (pg. 2)!

In Herndon, immigrant advocates came together as Project Hope and Harmony, eventually winning the day labor shelter. Imagine the church following their lead to provide hospitality for immigrants here and—most importantly—security for our neighbors abroad, so that migrants can stay home to labor unafraid in their own communities. ■

### IN THIS MEMO

MCC Migrates	2
Readers Say	3
Capital Quotes	3
Plight of Refugees	4
Katrina and Migrants	5
Terrorism and the Border	6
Trade and Migration	7

## MCC Migrates

By the time this issue of the *Washington Memo* reaches homes around the world, the MCC Washington Office should be settled in its new building on Pennsylvania Avenue.

It's a short migration for the five current Washington Office staff members—only ten blocks from the Methodist Building where MCC has rented space for the past 37 years. We *are* crossing a border of sorts—from Northeast to Southeast Washington, D.C.

On Nov. 1, 2005, MCC purchased a 100-year-old brick row house one block from the Eastern Market Metro. Earl Martin, former MCC worker in Vietnam, Philippines and the Washington Office, has ably overseen renovation of the property.

More than 350 donors from some 40 states, provinces and the District of Columbia have helped make this purchase possible. Volunteers from Indiana, Pennsylvania, Virginia and the District of Columbia have donated hundreds of hours—pointing bricks, painting, insulating, installing new windows and otherwise creating a pleasant space that staff will enjoy for years to come.

This broad-based and generous support is a powerful reminder that MCC's constituency cares deeply about peace and justice advocacy.

In July, 1968, MCC first opened an office on Capitol Hill, in an 8-foot by 10-foot room rented for \$27 per month from the Friends Committee on National Legislation. A year later, MCC moved to the Methodist Building, across the street from the U.S. Supreme Court.

In recent years—with rising rent (\$30,000 a year) and increasingly cramped quarters (900 square feet for 5–6 staff)—the MCC U.S. board decided it was time to purchase a Washington Office property.

We will share the new space with several MCC East Coast staff. MCC also hopes to rent space to one or more like-minded Anabaptist groups.

Our Washington Office mission statement calls us to be an Anabaptist presence on Capitol Hill, “Providing and encouraging prophetic witness to the way of Christ on matters of U.S. public policy.”

The focus of this year's *Washington Memo*—a five-year retrospective—reveals that a biblically-rooted witness for justice and peace is needed now more than ever.

Post-9/11 Capitol Hill is dominated by a near obsession with security. Sadly, it's a notion of security falsely rooted in concrete barriers, metal bollards, checkpoints and military muscle. In this context, Washington Office staff sometimes feel like exiles on Capitol Hill.

The prophet Jeremiah urged exiles in his day to build homes, plant gardens and seek the welfare of the city where they had been sent (Jeremiah 29:5,7).

Purchasing property on Capitol Hill is one way for MCC to say it plans to be here for the long haul. Our commitment as a staff is to use our new space—and the synergy from new office partners—to encourage the church in its vital witness to government and to strengthen the Anabaptist visibility and presence in Washington.

We hope you'll stop by and visit us! ■

BY J. DARYL BYLER

The broad-based and generous support we've received as we move to a new office is a powerful reminder that MCC's constituency cares deeply about peace and justice advocacy.

---

WASHINGTON MEMO is written by Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office staff. It interprets national legislation and policy, seeking to reflect biblical concerns for justice and peace as represented in the work and statements of MCC U.S. and Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches. All biblical quotes are from the New Revised Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.

Staff: Angong Acuil, J. Daryl Byler (Director), Bethany Spicher Schonberg, Lora Steiner (Managing Editor).

To contact the MCC U.S. Washington Office, please see our address on the back page. See our weekly commentary at [www.thirdway.com](http://www.thirdway.com) and visit our web site at [www.mcc.org/us/washington](http://www.mcc.org/us/washington).

Washington Memo (USPS 130-310) is published bi-monthly by Mennonite Central Committee, Akron, PA. Periodical postage paid at Akron, PA. This issue went to press February 15, 2006.

HOW TO SUBSCRIBE: Washington Memo subscription rates are \$10 for one year; \$18 for two years. Send request and check to MCC, PO Box 500, Akron, PA 17501-0500. For address changes, send your old address with your new address to MCC. Allow 2–4 weeks for address change. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to MCC, PO Box 500, Akron, PA 17501.

IF YOU ARE A SUBSCRIBER: Please check the top of your mailing label for your subscription's ending date. If it is within the next three months, please send in your renewal to the address above. Thanks for helping us save paper and energy!

# Readers Say

Dale Long writes via email:

How have things changed? I'm not sure. Is there more fear and uncertainty than when we were fearing nuclear war, and we had practice exercises at school? Are the tragedies of today greater than those of those in the past?

I don't think that I changed much after 9/11. At the time I worked in a federal office, and was strongly anti-war. [I] went around the office wearing buttons remembering Iraqi children, and wore black to the office the day "war" was declared. My bosses cringed when I got up in a public meeting to speak with our "big-shot leader" from Washington, D.C. (while wearing my anti-war button). Some of my former colleagues and bosses may now be in more agreement about the war in Iraq, but I take little pleasure in that.

Still, I'm trying to answer your question, and the only thing that I can come up with is our country's reputation, and any pretense of moral leadership is totally gone with other countries. Some . . . may still believe that our country has some moral leadership, but it has been totally destroyed.

Before 9/11, I didn't trust our leaders, I hated paying war taxes, and worked hard to help re-settle refugees. After 9/11? Well, not much has changed! ■

*Do you have reflections since Sept. 11? Read the Memo online at [www.mcc.org/us/washington](http://www.mcc.org/us/washington) and send us your thoughts about what the United States has gained and what has been lost since Sept. 11, 2001. Your reflections may be published in the Memo's Readers Say column!*

## CAPITAL QUOTES

*"We can't completely separate politics and faith. They rise from the same wellspring: the concern about the distance between what is and what ought to be."*

—Tim Kaine, Democratic and Catholic governor-elect of Virginia.

*"Death in a boxcar is perverse punishment for seeking a better life."*

—Daniel T. Griswold, of the Cato Institute, supporting reforms in U.S. immigration policy.

*"Keeping America competitive requires affordable energy. And here we have a serious problem: America is addicted to oil, which is often imported from unstable parts of the world."*

—President George W. Bush, The State of the Union, Jan. 31, 2006.

*"I think that you can have a legitimate insurgency in a country that has popular support and has a cohesiveness and has a legitimate gripe. These people don't have a legitimate gripe."*

—Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, refusing to identify the fighting in Iraq as an insurgency.

## Ponius' Puddle



# The Plight of Refugees

---

BY ANGONG ACUIL

**When people make decisions to leave their homes, communities or countries, many of them leave because of conditions beyond their control.**

I was too young to remember fleeing the civil war in my home country, Sudan. However, I do remember growing up as a refugee in Nairobi, Kenya. It wasn't easy living in a new country where we could not understand the people, culture or language; I had to learn fast because there was nobody to translate for my mother, who did not speak English or Swahili at the time.

Our family was constantly hassled by the police. My siblings and I got beaten and harassed by other children with chants telling us to go back home. It was difficult being a refugee because we easily became targets, a reality that many refugees face every day.

The twentieth century will always be remembered as a time of turbulence, for wars which resulted in immense and unimaginable suffering, although much has changed in recent years. According to the Christian Science Monitor, a recent study showed that "The world is witnessing fewer wars—and those wars that do occur are killing fewer people."

Though there *are* fewer wars and casualties, the number of refugees streaming from these conflicts is on the rise. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reports that by the end of 2004 there were 19.5 million uprooted people in the world.

Not surprisingly, the media often reports horrendous stories of fleeing refugees, or large, unsanitary camps hastily setup to accommodate the increasing flow of refugees. Yet the biggest obstacle that refugees face is the hostile reception they receive from host countries. Host governments have adopted restrictive policies in regard to protection of refugees. Governments have subjected refugees to arbitrary arrests and detention, denying them rights and tightening and restricting borders.

Citizens of host countries have also been hostile to refugees due to xenophobia. There have been numerous reported cases of gender based violence and human rights violations. Human Rights Watch says that "In the past 50 years, states have largely regressed in their commitment to protect refugees . . . Since September 11, many countries have pushed through emergency anti-terrorism legislation that curtails the rights of refugees."

The question that we must ask ourselves is how do we treat the strangers among us? Leviticus 19:33–34 says, "When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt."

There is a great need to protect refugees and even more so, to welcome them among us. Rather than alienate strangers, we need to extend compassion and provide sustainable alternative means to support them. We should remember that when people make decisions to leave their homes, communities or countries, many of them leave because of conditions beyond their control. Many are afraid for their lives and the lives of their children and loved ones. Others leave because their social, religious or economic situation has forced them to leave.

In addition, to address the issue of refugees, we need to examine the problems that force people to flee. We need to support and advocate for greater protection of refugees and end the abuses that they suffer when they reach what they assume to be safety. In the great commandment, Jesus says to love your neighbor as yourself. It is our obligation to welcome and treat the strangers among us as one of us. ■

# Undocumented and Unwelcome in New Orleans

IN OTHERS' WORDS

August 29, 2005, is a date to remember for the rest of our lives: the day Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans. For many years, the residents of New Orleans had feared a disaster like this. Here we are now, facing the difficulties of rebuilding the city.

A hurricane does not know the difference between an undocumented or documented immigrant, so everyone is caught in its path. For everyone affected by Hurricane Katrina, it was a nightmare to suddenly be homeless, unemployed and facing financial difficulties.

Can we imagine what undocumented immigrants went through? They did not have the choice of seeking out FEMA for emergency funds. Housing assistance was unreachable. Food stamps were unthinkable. Only the Red Cross was available.

The only criteria the Red Cross had was proof of Louisiana residence and a photo ID. Still, a member of our church, Iglesia Amor Viviente, was accused of fraud at a Houston Red Cross shelter and sent to jail. His only identification was an international drivers license, which is legal in Louisiana but not in Texas.

In the past years, the U.S. government has made it harder for immigrants, both documented and undocumented, to get public services and benefits. This has translated to fear of contacting public officials, including police and health services. Routine things such as obtaining a drivers license, or requesting gas, water or electricity for their homes are impossible for those without documentation.

Not only are we aware of local immigrants' difficulties, but many of the Hispanic churches in New Orleans are finding that many injustices are being committed by the contractors who hire undocumented immigrants from elsewhere to clean and rebuild the city. Many are not being paid what they are promised. In addition, immigration agents are visiting hardware stores and work sites to pick up workers. All they have to do is distinguish them by their nationality.

The needs of the community are enormous, but little by little we at Amor Viviente are doing what we can to help. MCC has been a tremendous blessing to us, and through their support, the church has been able to offer more than 300 blankets and almost 2,400 cans of meat to local people. We have distributed bucket kits containing cleaning and hygiene items, as well as school kits. MCC has also provided financial support to many who lost their belongings during the hurricane.

In addition, Amor Viviente has been housing a Mennonite Disaster Service unit at the church and connecting them with church and community members whose homes were damaged. The city has need of much more help of this kind. It is a shame that the contributions of immigrants to the rebuilding are not being rewarded. ■

BY BLANCA MACKAY

Blanca Mackay is an MCC Hurricane Response Worker and a member of Iglesia Amor Viviente in New Orleans.

Not only are we aware of local immigrants' difficulties, but we in New Orleans are finding that many injustices are being committed by the contractors who hire undocumented immigrants to clean and rebuild the city.

## MCC RESPONSE TO HURRICANE KATRINA

MCC is working in partnership with Mennonite Disaster Service in short- and long-term responses to Hurricane Katrina. MCC is partnering both with churches in the affected area and with communities which are receiving evacuees, sending funds as well as material resources to assist in the clean-up efforts. To learn more about how MCC has responded to Hurricane Katrina, visit our web site at [www.mcc.org/katrina](http://www.mcc.org/katrina).

## IN OTHERS' WORDS

BY JODI READ

Jodi Read, Associate for Migration and Peacebuilding, works for the Centro de Paz de Ambos Nogales (Peace Center of Nogales, Mexico, and Arizona) as a part of her assignment with MCC West Coast on the U.S./Mexico border.

**If you are Mexican, be prepared for intimidating looks from officials and know that your laser visa and fingerprints will be scrutinized and registered in a U.S. government database. All of this just to get to Wal-Mart.**

## The State of the Border

**T**errorism has won. It has made you [U.S. citizens] feel vulnerable," said Cecilia Guzman, a lifelong resident of the border town of Nogales, Sonora, Mexico.

Sometimes my questions don't elicit verbose responses from my co-workers, but this time I didn't have to re-phrase my Spanish or ask the question again before I received a multitude of thoughts on my query, "How has the border changed since Sept. 11, 2001?"

Two of my co-workers, Cecilia Guzman and Juan Angulo, talked about the rawness of crossing into the United States to buy groceries, attend meetings and visit family. Weekly trips across the border are a reality for many Mexicans with border crossing cards, as it allows them access to stores with lower prices than they can find in their home cities.

Cecilia describes the current state of the border as resulting from a "terrible psychosis" in which all people crossing the border are seen as terrorists. Have you ever felt like your every move is questioned? she asks. Try flying across the United States on several one-way tickets and being stopped for extra screening at each ticket counter and security checkpoint.

Or better yet, come to the U.S./Mexico border, look Hispanic and make weekly visits from Mexico into the United States. Regardless of your race or nationality, learn to count on a variable wait time of 20–90 minutes to state your citizenship, present your identification card, and answer any questions officials may pose to you: Where were you born? Why did you come today? What did you purchase?

If you are Mexican, be prepared for the "dissecting look" officials use to intimidate. Also know that your laser visa and fingerprints will be scrutinized and registered in a U.S. government database. All of this is required just to get to Wal-Mart, where you spend a considerable portion of your salary.

Juan Angulo, a micro-credit loan manager and conflict resolution trainer, migrated to Nogales, Sonora, from a smaller town in the state of Sonora fifteen years ago. He has seen noticeable shifts in the border region since Sept. 11. Perceptions of escalating violent crime and drug trade keep U.S. tourists away and negatively impact Nogales' economy. Fewer tourists support fewer *curios*, shops selling Mexican crafts, and fewer shops support fewer people with livable wages.

On Sept. 11, the U.S. experienced extremely destructive violence. Since that time, we have continued to perceive violence as coming from people outside our borders, and from those within who don't look like us. As we perceive violence from the thousands of immigrants around us, we spread the seed of fear, create policies that dehumanize and build fortified walls to limit our terror. I'm afraid that Cecilia's assertion of the terrorist success may be our guiding policy on immigration today. ■

# Trade and Migration

---

*“A farmer in Uganda buys a bus ticket to the city with her last cotton crop; she can’t compete with U.S. prices even though her costs are lower than U.S. farmers’. In a small town in Guatemala, a father leaves his family to search for jobs in the north, unable to see corn in a flooded market with cheap imports. A rural community in the United States is left desolate when small scale farmers sell their land and move away.”*

—MCC U.S. Guide to Globalization and Immigration

It’s a lesson every child learns in Sunday School: the Israelites were released from their slavery in Egypt and migrated through the desert for 40 years, before arriving to The Promised Land. These days, people don’t migrate for reasons as clear as the ones the Israelites had, although usually it’s with the same motivation: to seek a better life.

But are there underlying, less obvious reasons people choose to leave their towns or cities or countries? Within the last year, some organizations in the United States have started to ask that question.

According to the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), reasons such as environmental degradation, poverty and trade inequalities can all play a role in why people decide to move. AFSC is one of several relief and development organizations which has chosen to focus on things like trade agreements and the policies which are written into them, including privatization and liberalization.

Many of the linkages in globalization—such as international trade and migration—are rarely considered in policy debates. Most countries treat these issues entirely differently, through open trade and closed immigration policies, meaning that the movement of people is much more restricted than the goods they produce and consume.

Organizations like AFSC are not only trying to connect these issues, they’re also trying to find ways in which trade practices can benefit the greater good while not trampling on anyone’s dignity or ability to live.

This issue of the Memo includes one way to achieve a more holistic immigration policy, but there are also proposals for how to create a more just system of trade.

“The Fair Trade for Our Future” Resolution was introduced during the last session of Congress as one attempt to establish guidelines which encourage trade while also protecting environmental standards, essential services such as water, education and public healthcare, and food security.

The global system is so large and overwhelming that it is hard to imagine that anything will ever change. In seeking alternatives, may we find a way to both “welcome the stranger” and “let justice roll down like waters” (Exodus 22 and 23; Amos 5:24).

*If you’re interested in learning more about AFSC’s economic justice program, visit their web site at [www.afsc.org/trade-matters/](http://www.afsc.org/trade-matters/) or call them at 215-241-7000. ■*

BY LORA STEINER

**Environmental degradation, poverty and trade inequalities can all play a role in why people decide to migrate.**



21 South 12th Street  
PO Box 500  
Akron, PA 17501-0500

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Join Letters on the Line!**

Gather your congregation and write letters to encourage your legislators to vote for true immigration reform this spring. Visit the Washington Office web site, [www.mcc.org/us/washington](http://www.mcc.org/us/washington), to add your efforts to the 358-letter "Letters on the Line" campaign, one for each migrant who died on the U.S./Mexico border in 2005.

**SOUND THE TRUMPET!**

ISSUE	SUMMARY	ADVOCACY NEEDED
IMMIGRATION REFORM	The House has passed a punitive, restrictive immigration reform bill (H.R. 4437). True immigration reform would reunify families, protect workers, authorize undocumented immigrants, provide safe passage for future migrants and address economic realities in sending countries.	Write your senators and ask them to vote for immigration reform based in reality, not fear.
MILITARY SPENDING	President Bush's proposed 2007 budget includes \$439 billion for U.S. military operations. The president will request an additional \$70 billion in 2006 for the cost of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.	Ask the president and members of Congress to reduce military spending and consider alternative approaches for building human security. Send them a copy of the Washington Office's "True Security" guide, available on our web site.

**USEFUL ADDRESSES**



MCC U.S. Washington Office  
920 Pennsylvania Ave SE  
Washington DC 20003  
(202) 544-6564  
[mccwash@mcc.org](mailto:mccwash@mcc.org)

Senator \_\_\_\_\_  
U.S. Senate  
Washington DC 20510  
(202) 224-3121  
[www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov)

Representative \_\_\_\_\_  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515  
(202) 224-3121  
[www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov)

President George W. Bush  
The White House  
Washington DC 20500  
(202) 456-1111  
[president@whitehouse.gov](mailto:president@whitehouse.gov)