

June 2009

**A&SJ Committee  
Mission Statement**

We promote social justice as central to all Daughter of Charity ministry. We move together with persons who are poor and marginalized from reflection to advocacy for systemic change.

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# Advocating for Social Justice

Joint Newsletter of the  
*Daughters of Charity Advocacy & Social Justice Committee USA*

## **SEX TRAFFICKING IN MACON, GEORGIA?**

by **Sr. Elizabeth Greim**

You will probably have to pull out a map to find Macon, GA if you are not from the Southeast Province. Macon is a small city between Atlanta and Savannah. It is a very quiet southern town. The demographics are typical of the area, with a 36% poverty rate and issues with race relations. Macon has some wonderful features and some that are not so pleasant. But Macon would never have thought of itself as a haven for sex trafficking... until recently!

The Polaris Project has closed many massage parlors/spas in Washington, DC, reducing the number to eight. Los Angeles has approximately 90 massage parlors, about one per 100,000 residents. **Macon with a population of 100,000 has 25 massage parlors.** When driving from the airport in Atlanta to Macon, a 1 hour 15 minute drive, there are 23 signs advertising the spas in Macon. Beyond Macon on to Florida there are another 30 or so signs pointing the way to Valdosta, another area with many spas and exotic clubs.

Mercer University students founded a group called S.T.O.P. Sex Trafficking Opposition Project. As stated on their website [www.stopsexslavery.org](http://www.stopsexslavery.org): "STOP began in a required first-year course at Mercer University called 'Engaging the World.' The class began by studying Judeo-Christian ideas of ethics and justice, reading from the Bible, as well as authors such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Martin Luther King Jr., and Theodore Heschel. We heard Isaiah's call to 'loose the bonds of injustice, undo the thongs of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free' (Isaiah 58); and we heard Jesus call us to 'do unto the least of them in as much as you would do unto me' (Matthew 25). And then we looked around Macon. And we saw with new eyes. **And we began to ask questions about injustice.**"

The students from Mercer have helped many of us see with new eyes, and we are disturbed by what we see. A conference held March 19-20 was attended by 700 students and community members. Advocates from all over the country came to discuss and share on what is being done, what Macon can do and how we can all get involved locally, nationally and internationally. These students have started a movement and some residents of the Macon community have joined them.

There have been raids on a few of the spas and the police and sheriff departments have worked to educate themselves and others on seeing the women involved first as victims. One woman from Korea was freed and taken to a safe program in Atlanta and another 14-year-old from Florida was taken home to her parents. She had been lured to Atlanta with the promise of a modelling job. Atlanta has been known to be the number one port of child sex trafficking in the country.



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## United Nations NGOs Prepare for Financial Meetings

by Sr. Faith Colligan

On April 27, 2009 the UN hosted the annual Special High Level meeting of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) with the Bretton Woods Institutions (World Bank and the International Monetary Fund), the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade. UN Member Countries are represented by their chief financial ministers and in some cases by higher level members of government. Members of the NGO Committee on Financing for Development, along with other international NGO partners, follow the discussion and offer oral statements relating to this years discussion, "Coherence, coordination and cooperation in the context of the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus and the Doha Declaration on Financing for Development."

The meeting provides an opportunity, *never missed*, for the NGO community to speak on behalf of the needs of those living in poverty around the world. Areas addressed include: reform of the international financial system including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, Fair Rules for World Trade, Debt Relief, Official Development Aid, Tax Reform, the Decent Work Agenda, etc. We continue to advocate for a "people centered development agenda", especially one which brings to the table those most affected by the areas identified above, so that they may be part of the solution.

June 1-3, 2009, the UN General Assembly held a UN Summit on the Financial Crisis. This meeting was mandated as a follow-up to the Financial Meeting that took place in Doha, Qatar in late 2008. Since January a commission of experts has been meeting and presented its conclusions to the President of the General Assembly. Some ideas include significant changes to the international financial structures, reforming and strengthening the international financial and economic architecture. General Assembly President Rev. Miguel D'Escoto states: "it is vital to draw on 'technical expertise and practical wisdom' from all over the world, and from countries at every stage of development, as well as from international organizations, academia, private sector organizations, and civil society." There is hope, in several sectors, that greater oversight for international financial and economic matters will be vested in the United Nations rather than a small group of nations that tend to leave out those most in need of assistance.



For more info: [www.ffdnngo.org](http://www.ffdnngo.org) / [www.un.org/ffd](http://www.un.org/ffd) / [www.un.org/ga](http://www.un.org/ga)



### Sex Trafficking – continued from page 1

Our Society of St. Vincent de Paul conference and Family Advancement Ministries have been actively involved with the students and see the need to increase community involvement. This summer we are planning to reach out to the other religious leaders in the city to develop an interfaith coalition to stop trafficking of women and children in Macon and Central GA. Our goal is to effectively change legislation and address law enforcement that makes massage parlors and spas havens for traffickers. Together with STOP we will also address the issue of demand. Frank and open discussions with our young men beginning in high school is the first step to promoting respect for women and more positive behaviour in relationships.

I was very honoured to take part in a march and vigil in support of survivors of sexual assault as well as remembering all who are victims of the sex trade. After giving a short reflection, I invited survivors to come forward to share any part of their story...ten young men and women came forward to shatter the silence around sexual assault and trafficking. All the statistics, all the information, all the programs and websites can not unify us into a movement as effectively as the truth of a survivor who tells us that the horror of slavery and trafficking are real and happening, even in Macon, GA.

But we have to start somewhere. For other stories of rescue and survival, for information, definitions and resources visit [www.polarisproject.org](http://www.polarisproject.org) and [www.notforsalecampaign.org](http://www.notforsalecampaign.org) to start informing yourself on this modern day abolition movement.

## Poor Local Farmers and the International Food Crisis

by Sr. Faith Colligan

Agriculture Ministers from the G8 Countries (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States and EU observer) met in Rome in April of this year. The G-8 Countries produce 60% of the world's gross domestic product.

In their statement to the G-8 Meeting, Oxfam International, an NGO with credible history monitoring agriculture and hunger, noted that

"G-8 countries have, for decades, steadily refused to make changes to agriculture and trade policies which undermine food production in poor countries. Rich countries provide more than \$125 billion in direct subsidies to their own farmers – whose produce gets dumped on poor country markets- **putting local farmers out of business.**"

In the same statement, it was noted that G8 countries have delivered less than one fifth of the \$20 billion in aid for agriculture which was promised at the UN Food and Agriculture Organization Summit in Rome 2008. Oxfam called on the G8 countries to commit to long term, predictable assistance to small-scale food producers in developing countries.



Earlier in April the UN General Assembly held an Informal Interactive Thematic Dialogue on the Global Food Crisis and the Right to Food. Its purpose was to "better grasp the magnitude, complexity and interrelationships of the World Food Crisis." Panelists included economists, human rights specialists, agro-ecologists and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food.

General Assembly President Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann said, "The ongoing food crisis is a symptom of a broader breakdown of selfish models of governance and production that have failed us and betrayed the trust of people around the world. These models are unsustainable and we must find alternatives both internationally and locally. It is also important to see the food crisis as directly linked to our financial crisis, the energy crisis and the overarching problems associated with climate change." He went on to attribute the present crises to "moral mediocrity, present patterns of unsustainable consumption and failure to enforce the fundamental human right of each individual to food." It was noted that the recent G-20 meeting in London did not even mention the food crisis.

World hunger continues to escalate. An estimated 963 million persons are hungry and/or malnourished including 36 million persons in the United States. Malnutrition has increased due to insufficient protein in the diet primarily due to cost and decrease in the availability of protein rich foods, especially meat.

Food prices began to increase in 2001 due to new demands placed on supply by China and India, where populations, especially the more educated and affluent, began to adopt diets containing more meats and a greater variety of vegetables, based on US eating habits. As food prices rose, protein-rich foods, especially meats, became more expensive and less available in poorer countries.

World food demand is expected to grow steadily over the next 40 years, but world food production may decrease by 25% due to environmental breakdowns.

The food crisis has been caused and exacerbated by :

- 1) the fuel and energy crisis,
- 2) low grain reserves,
- 3) use of grains for bio-fuels,
- 4) adverse climate conditions,
- 5) increased demand for protein rich foods,
- 6) food export/import regulations,
- 7) subsidies given to farmers in the US and Europe,
- 8) years of under-investment in agricultural productivity.

### Suggested Activities:

Make a **FREE FOOD** donation at [www.freerice.com](http://www.freerice.com)

Read: "Eating is A Moral Act" – National Catholic Rural Life Conference [www.ncrlc.com](http://www.ncrlc.com)

Watch for Advocacy opportunities on the Farm Bill, International (Foreign) Aid, and Finance and Trade Issues

**Resources:** [www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org) / [www.ncrlc.com](http://www.ncrlc.com) / [www.un.org/ga](http://www.un.org/ga) / [www.oxfaminternational.org](http://www.oxfaminternational.org)

## The Incarcerated Immigrant: “The Most Abandoned”

by Sr. Elizabeth Racko

To serve full time in jail and prison ministry was far from my mind when I entered Community, yet in these last ten years I have been called to it. St. Vincent urged his sons and daughters to seek out the “poorest and most abandoned.” Among those detained, awaiting sentencing, and those who are serving time, I perceive the sense of hopelessness and abandonment most in those persons detained solely because they did not have the proper documentation. I live in Tuba City, AZ, in a state where many undocumented are arrested.

They come seeking work and cross the border in tension and secrecy. US laws are not fashioned to meet the economic crisis in their own country, the need for money to support their family, and the need for workers in this country. After visiting many of these detainees in the local jails, I understand their difficulties. When arrested, their money, wallets, photos, and clothing are locked up for 30 days. Some cling to the hope that their belongings will be at the immigration office when they are deported. However, their sentence may be as long as 2 months to 5 years or more depending on how many times they have tried to cross the border. They will only receive a set of clothing when they are deported at the end of their sentence.

Those detained at the federal detention center are able to make a collect call to their families. The federal detention center in Arizona is so full that spaces in county jails through out the United States are purchased for about \$57 per day and the county jails are happy to receive this financial support. Jails do not provide pay for the work inmates do. There are no projects or outside contracts for work. There are no courses provided in jails, no classes in English. There are a few Alcoholics Anonymous programs and religious services. They have no spending money in the jail for warmer clothing, shoes, a radio, longer lasting hygiene supplies, coffee, snacks, or extra postage for letters to their family. When deported to their home country, they have no way to get to their home.

If they have not had the chance to learn English, they have the added difficulty in communication and increased loneliness. There may not be sufficient bibles or books in their language. If they had a job on the outside and were sending their family money, this support to them is no longer available. Frustration and a sense of worthlessness overcomes them unless their faith is strong or there are other people to support them.

I have found out about these prisoners because they write to me. I visit with them individually in Spanish, bring them the Holy Eucharist, write letters of encouragement and bring articles on faith. In some jails it is permitted that I can call their family to deliver the message of their safety and their length of stay until they will be deported. If they had been detained for a crime besides not having documentation, I accompany them longer in their incarceration.

The local conference of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul has taken a great interest in service to the incarcerated, and I am able to send a small donation for their needs if they request it. However, it is the letter writing and an occasional visit that have been the most supportive to the inmates. They no longer feel so alone and hopeless. They know that they will have to go home, but it will be with a stronger faith and a deep purpose to live it with their family once again.



Sr. Elizabeth with SVdP members John and Bill Thompson who help teach basketball skills to inmates



### MYTHS & REALITY: JUSTICE FOR IMMIGRANTS OFFICE OF U.S. CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

*Myth: Immigrants Don't Pay Taxes*

**FALSE**

**Reality:** Undocumented immigrants pay taxes. Between one half and three quarters of undocumented immigrants pay state and federal taxes. They also contribute to Medicare and provide as much as 7 billion dollars a year to the Social Security Fund. Further still, undocumented workers pay sales taxes where applicable and property taxes—directly if they own and indirectly if they rent.

(Source: Immigration Policy Center, “Undocumented Immigrants as Taxpayers,” (November 2007), <http://www.aifl.org/ipc/factchecks/UndocumentedasTaxpayer.pdf>; Eduardo Porter “Illegal Immigrants are Bolstering Social Security with Billions,” New York Times, (April 5, 2005), <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/04/05/business/05immigration.html?ex=1270353600&en=78c87ac4641dc383&amp;ei=5090&partner=kmarx>)



## Detention of Undocumented Immigrants Stimulates Prison Profits

by Sr. Jean Juliano

We've never seen the wind at our back like it is today." In these times of economic distress when businesses are laying off workers and millions of Americans are looking for new jobs, who can make such a boastful statement? It is John D. Ferguson, CEO of the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) after raking in \$1.3 billion in revenue in 2006 and \$33.6 million in 2008.

Incarcerating undocumented immigrants has led to this "economic boom" for the private prison industry. Since 2005 the Department of Homeland Security abandoned its "catch and release" practice with migrants apprehended at the border and revised its interpretation of law enforcement. Michael Chertoff, then head of DHS, vowed to enforce our "rule of law" regarding immigrants as "dangerous people" who threaten our country.

ICE, *Immigration Customs Enforcement*, has been busy "raiding" workplaces in Postville, Iowa; in Bedford, MA; in Laurel, MS and in New Mexico seeking and arresting undocumented immigrants working illegally according to Federal and state laws.

This surge in arrests of immigrants prompted Chertoff to complain to Congress that the government didn't have enough detention space to house these "criminals". The government needed thousands of new detention beds which the private prison sector could provide much faster and cheaper than the government.

CCA plus GEO, formerly known as Wackenhut, and Cornell Companies, secured government contracts to house undocumented immigrants, especially in Texas. They are joined by hundreds of local governments eager to get their share of the money by opening their jails to the anticipated demand for beds.

*In 2002 the average daily population of immigrant detainees was 28,838 people according to ICE records. By 2008, the average daily population had grown to 31,345.*

CCA has been able to charge the government as much as \$200 per day in its contracts, while others charge \$85 per day. Is it any wonder prison executives have been clamoring to "work for the government?"

But who are these "dangerous people" now incarcerated? According to a report issued by the *Migration Policy Institute* 73 per cent of the nearly 70,000 people arrested by ICE's fugitive operations between 2003 and early 2008 were undocumented immigrants without criminal records.

*Amnesty International* recently reported that "conditions are often deplorable and detainees are routinely denied due process." Detainees include the undocumented, legal immigrants, asylum seekers and sometimes US citizens as well. Ninety deaths have occurred in immigration custody between October 7, 2003 and February 7, 2009. Unverified reports indicate that other deaths may have occurred that have not been reported. Complaints about inadequate health care, insufficient food and abuse of human rights abound.



*Amnesty International* called on the Obama administration to consider ankle bracelets and bonds as alternatives to detention for immigrants who are neither a flight risk nor a danger to others.

The incarceration of non-criminal immigrants casts a serious blot on the American image of welcoming "your huddled masses yearning to breathe free" and signals another urgent reason why our nation must begin the process of humane and just reform of the immigration system.

For more information consult:  
[www.detentionwatchnetwork.org](http://www.detentionwatchnetwork.org)

## WATER IS LIFE by Sr. Carol Durkin

“If there is magic on this planet, it is contained in water...Its substance reaches everywhere; it touches the past and prepares the future; it moves under the poles and wanders thinly in the heights of air. It can assume forms of exquisite perfection in a snowflake, or strip the living to a single shining bone cast up by the sea.”  
Loren Easley - *THE IMMENSE JOURNEY*

### What's at stake?

According to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), more than 1 billion people—about one in six people in this world—have no access to clean and safe drinking water while over 2 billion lack access to adequate sanitation. The effects of unclean water often lead to an endless cycle of poverty, conflict, disease and death.

In developing countries women and children walk 200 million hours every day for water that often comes from a polluted source. The time spent fetching water often prevents them from earning a living or going to school.

Various international institutions and governments have long been laboring to right this injustice. Unfortunately, their approach has veered off track in the last few decades. Rather than sticking to the proven path of publicly funded water systems, the World Bank and other international financial institutions and governments have been promoting private control and ownership of water services. They claim this will lead to greater efficiency, improved management and more investment.



**With two-thirds of the world's population expected to run short of fresh drinking water by 2025, water is being referred to as “the oil of the 21st century.”**

Around the world, multinational corporations are parlaying the misery of our water-starved regions into profits for their stockholders and executives.

In the United States, 86 percent of people get their household water services from a public utility. As public utilities struggle to meet federal clean water standards and to maintain and modernize water systems, some want to privatize water systems.

Private companies persuade them to sell off their public water systems. Communities that have experimented with privatization have not found that it solves their water woes. In fact, many private companies are providing worse service at a higher cost than most public utilities.

Food & Water Watch ([foodandwaterwatch.org](http://foodandwaterwatch.org)) serves as a clearinghouse for information and an ally in organizing to ensure that water -- a public resource -- stays in public hands.

## A&SJC Endorses National Immigration and Housing Efforts

by Sr. Jean Thomas Dwyer

In order to respond to requests for organizational endorsements, ASJC has devised a process to sign collaborative statements on matters consistent with the charism and priorities of ASJC (access to food and water, immigration, trafficking, and basic services to persons living in poverty). With the approval of the five Visitatrixes, ASJC has endorsed the following national initiatives:

I. The Interfaith Platform on Humane Immigration Reform calls on the new Administration and the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress to commit to:

- \* Uphold Family Unity as a Priority of all Immigration Policies
- \* Create a Process for Undocumented Immigrants to Earn their Legal Status and eventual Citizenship
- \* Protect Workers and Provide Efficient Channels of Entry for New Migrant Workers
- \* Facilitate Immigrant Integration
- \* Restore Due Process Protections and Reform Detention Policies
- \* Align the Enforcement of Immigration Laws with Humanitarian Values

An explanation of each of these points may be found at [www.interfaithimmigration.org](http://www.interfaithimmigration.org). Other signers include not only Catholic groups such as USCCB, CRS, Catholic Charities USA, Network, but an array of other faith-based organizations including the Mennonite Church USA, B'nai B'rith International, National Council of Jewish Women, Presbyterian Church USA, and National Council of Church of Christ USA.

II. Funding for National Low-Income Housing Trust

The letter addressed to the Administration and Congress calls for dedicated sources of funding for the National Housing Trust Fund. This letter urges that the funding be sufficient to produce or preserve, over the next ten years, 1.5 million homes affordable to people with extremely low incomes.



There is a surplus of single family homes for sale today, but there is an acute shortage of rental homes that extremely low income households can afford – this effort would help assure that families and individuals with the very lowest incomes would have safe and decent places to live.

Among other groups supporting this cause are: Mercy Housing, St. Vincent DePaul National Council (USA), Jesuit Conference USA, LCWR and CMSM.

## Systemic Change: Sowing Seeds of Hope

### VINCENTIAN FAMILY GATHERING

by Sr. Catherine Mary Norris

At the Vincentian Family Gathering, April 16-19, 2009 in Detroit, 140 members of the Family focused on "Systemic Change: Sowing Seeds of Hope." Among the participants were 6 Ladies of Charity, 9 Vincentian priests and brothers, 48 Daughters of Charity and four in initial formation, 18 Sisters of Charity, 25 members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, 2 Trinitarians, 14 Vincentian Service Corps and Colorado Vincentian Volunteers, 5 DC Affiliates, and 6 ministry collaborators.

Fr. Manuel Ginete, CM delegate of the Superior General, Fr. Gregory Gay, opened the Gathering. He reminded all of the international Vincentian Family of the call to focus on Systemic Change.

The speakers challenged us to look beyond our comfort zone, to embrace a new paradigm and new possibilities to better meet the needs of people living in poverty. Our keynote speakers, Eddie Friel of Niagara University and Allison Boisvert of Minnesota, approached the issue of systemic change from different angles. Eddie looked at it from the standpoint of city/neighborhood creating jobs to bring people out of poverty.

Allison focused on persons of generational poverty and how we need to adjust our thinking and approach, inviting and enabling people to participate in their own change.

One example she gave was the following:

*Some women from a large suburban parish took blankets to a housing project for Native Americans. Allison asked the recipients what they were going to do in return. After they recovered from the shock, the Native American women decided that they could teach the suburban women to make dream catchers. Everyone has something to give.*



Allison Boisvert of Minneapolis, MN

The Vincentian Family visited two projects that change systems of persons living in poverty.

The **On the Rise Bakery** grew out of soup kitchen run by Capuchins. Seven men, previously homeless and/or incarcerated, commit to life in community for one year. They spend 25 hours a week learning commercial baking and the other

hours working on education and personal issues (family, legal, and financial). At the end of the year, they have a marketable trade, a work history, and money saved to find permanent housing. Several "graduates" shared their stories. These men are **on the rise** in their personal lives, in their new baking talents, and in their ability to change other lives and their neighborhood.

The **Samaritan Center** is a great example of creative use of a former Sisters of Mercy Hospital. The buildings were turned over to Boysville of Michigan and SER Metro who partner with various organizations to provide needed services to the neighborhood. Providers offer job training, career counseling, family counseling, senior services, education, social services, health care and mentoring to over 40,000 people each month. Samaritan Center creates a stronger neighborhood community and leads in the re-development of Detroit's Eastside.

Brother Ray, OFM Capuchin, shared cookies at "On The Rise" Bakery



## Cell Phones for a Cause

by Sr. Jean Thomas Dwyer



Every day, more than 450,000 mobile phones find their way into desk drawers or trash cans around the United States. But while these discarded phones may mean little to their owners, they can be put to work on the front lines of global health.

**Hope Phones** is a nationwide mobile phone collection campaign that makes use of old cell phones in the U.S. to provide phones for clinics and healthcare workers in the developing world. The provision and coordination of health-related services via mobile communications is blossoming in the developing world in response to a global shortage of healthcare workers, and the simple act of donating an old phone can make you part of this movement. To get involved, just go to [www.HopePhones.org](http://www.HopePhones.org), print a free shipping label, and send your old phone.

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### How a Bill Becomes Law in U.S. Congress

