WE ARE

ALL

IMMIGRANTS
Listening and Lending Our Voices…

by Rosemary Brennan, CSJ, President

"My continuing passion would be…to part a curtain, that invisible shadow that falls between people, the veil of indifference to each other’s presence, each other’s wonder, each other’s human plight."¹

Listening to the political rhetoric surrounding immigration reform is like listening to a static radio station - finding the right wave length for a clear channel for dialogue is near impossible. This immigration static appears to be a ploy muddling the historical reality that the vast majority of us are descendants from former waves of immigrants. What is lost in the verbal swirl is that the new peoples to our country have their own unique gifts to bring to this, the “melting pot” we call the United States of America.

Would that we could recite with new vim and vigor the lines of The New Colossus “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free … send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me.”

The channel, or hashtag, which is coming through loud and clear about “human plight” is #popefrancis; his refrain is direct, witnessed to and well-defined. In the pope’s apostolic exhortation, Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel) he states:

“For the church, the option for the poor is primarily a theological category rather than a cultural, sociological, political or philosophical one. God shows the poor ‘his first mercy.’ This divine preference has consequences for the faith life of all Christians, since we are called to have ‘this mind . . . which was in Jesus Christ’ (Phil 2:5). This is why I want a church that is poor and for the poor: They have much to teach us. Not only do they share in the sensus fidei, but in their difficulties they know the suffering of Christ. We need to let ourselves be evangelized by them . . . . We are called to find Christ in them, to lend our voice to their causes but also to be their friends, to listen to them and to embrace the mysterious wisdom God wishes to share with us through them.”

Listening, lending our voices to their causes, seeking to be friends and opening ourselves to be evangelized by the poor and the new people is something we, the Sisters of St. Joseph, have been committed to since our arrival in Boston 140 years ago. In this, our anniversary year, we renew our commitment to remain passionate about contemplating, personally and communally, the unmet needs of God’s people while seeking the Spirit’s wisdom in how and where we are called to respond, #csjboston!†

¹Eudora Welty, in Margaret Wheatley, Perseverance, Berret-Koehler Publishers, © 2010
²Evangelii Gaudium: Apostolic Exhortation, Pope Francis, Origins, December 2013, Volume 43, Number 28, Section198.
Immigration Reform: 
Freeing Others to be Themselves in Christ

In preparing this issue of Soundings, the Winter 2014 issue of Occasional Papers appeared on my desk. The first article read, “Today the emerging vision is one of a cosmos in the process of evolution…. The works we do in reaching out to those in need, the networks we have developed, our deeply embedded charisms, and our commitment to the more are much needed gifts we have to offer.”¹ Immediately, I recognized how these words express the essence of our work with immigrants, not just in 2014, but for our 140 years in Boston and in the ongoing moments in which “…we consent to the allurement of an unrehearsed future.”²

Our Boston CSJ folklore includes the story of our sisters in the North End welcoming visitors by dropping the key from their fifth-floor convent above Catherine Moore Settlement House. This issue reflects the legendary work of Sisters Lumena and Eustace, both children of immigrants, who in every relationship acted in ever-widening circles of love poured out toward every kind of neighbor without distinction.³

Also focused on in this issue is the variety of ways in which our commitment to “the more” is lived out at Casserly House. A few years ago, while visiting on a weekday morning, I observed Helen Callahan, CSJ, tutoring a group of women. Nancy Braceland, CSJ, casually mentioned that these women emigrated from warring countries, yet at Casserly House they gather as one. In the vortex of controversy over comprehensive immigration reform, this moment is seared in my heart. When I viewed Coca Cola’s commercial “America the Beautiful” during the recent Super Bowl, my reaction was - this is wonderful - this is who we really are “from sea to shining sea!” In response to the media maelstrom following this ad, Carrie Wofford states, “And why is America so diverse? Why do people come here from every corner of the globe? As young Naomi, who sings in Spanish for the ad, says, people come here because in America, ‘we have the right to be ourselves…”⁴

May Sisters of St. Joseph, Associates, colleagues in ministry, and all who share Jesus’ vision, “that all may be one,” embrace the allurement of an unrehearsed future with hearts, minds, and souls that “free others to be themselves in Christ.” †

¹Madeline Duckett, RSM, “EVERYTHING”, Occasional Papers, LCWR, Winter 2014, pg. 2
²Bruce Sanguin, Travelers in Time; If Darwin Prayed, © 2010 Bruce Sanguin, pg. 108
³CSJ Constitution, “Spirit & Purpose,” pg. 25, #110

Pictured on the cover: Representing America, shown from L-R top down, names and originating countries: Olga Viasus, CSJ (Colombia), Casserly House student Solange Ducarme (Haiti), CSJ employee Chi Leung (Hong Kong), The Literacy Connection citizenship graduate Jose Vaquerano (El Slavador), Ivan Cadigan, CSJ (Canada), CSJ employee Betty Galindez (Colombia), The Literacy Connection student Amelia Valdivia (Peru), and Patricia Keefe, CSJ (whose grandparents emigrated from Ireland and England).

Pictured on the back cover: Volunteer Donna Sullivan (right) tutoring Casserly House students.
Casserly House in Response to Immigration

Call
• To live among the people
• To listen to their needs

Mission
• To be of presence and service

Where
• In a multi-ethnic and underserved neighborhood
  - Stellman Road, Roslindale

How
• Morning program
  ◊ To work principally on English in preparation for larger, city/state programs, or directly into the work force
  ◊ To work as a resource
  ◊ To direct person to appropriate services
  ◊ To facilitate person’s growth through basic learning and direction
• After School Program
  ◊ To help neighborhood children with education and social skills

Process
• We educate ourselves
• We make a commitment to be a resource
• We give good referrals
• We watch and participate in legislation reform

Who
• Jesuit volunteers, Ignatian volunteers, CSJ volunteers, CSJ Associates, lay volunteers, Boston College students, high school students, collaboration with Sponsored Ministries and Congregation Ministries
• Partnerships: Catholic Charities, immigration lawyers, city organizations, Irish International Immigrant Center

Immigration Orientation
• To conduct presentations: Green card, immigration paperwork, domestic violence rights, human trafficking

Focused needs
• To petition for alien relatives
• To provide information on citizenship to both non-literate and low-literacy
  ◊ To provide preparation during morning session with English
  ◊ To review Citizenship form, work on interview process
• To understand temporary protection status
• To support Comprehensive Immigration Reform Bill

Our gift
• To be a good resource
• To develop good contacts
• To understand the needs of the “dear neighbor”
• To rejoice in knowing “living Gospel” today

CSJ Constitution, pg. 25, #7

“Impelled toward realizing the union of ourselves and all people with God and with one another, we engage in the mission of reconciliation wherever people are separated from one another.”

Above and Beyond Immigration

Pictured this page: Neighbors help clean up their neighborhood.

Pictured right, top down: A health educator discusses diabetes with local residents; Dan Conley speaks with neighborhood children, focusing on their having dreams, and motivating the children to stay in school; Casserly House students visiting Temple Vietnam; and a police officer builds relationships with children from the after school program.
A

lthough the U.S. Senate passed an immigration reform bill in June, and there was encouragement that Congress was finally motivated to introduce immigration reform, that enthusiasm has waned as the House of Representatives has put this critical issue on the back burner. Most discussions on immigration reform have focused on border security, economic growth, and a potential path to citizenship. It should also be noted that immigration reform will provide significant benefits to our country, including job creation and economic stimulation. There have been some references to the 11 million undocumented men, women and children currently living in the shadows of our society, but very little in terms of our moral obligations. This is the key moral issue in the immigration policy debates. How do we treat these 11 million people?

"Casserly House is committed to being a strong, vocal advocate for comprehensive immigration reform..."

At Casserly House, we welcome the new immigrant, the stranger in our neighborhood. We acknowledge that every person has dignity and human rights, and we help the new immigrants, as best we can, adapt to their new environment - but don’t we owe them more than simply adapting? If any of our adult students feel lost or may be living in the shadows, don’t we owe them the opportunity to find themselves and fulfill their dreams? Don’t we owe them the opportunity for family reunification? Don’t we want to welcome them to the job force?

At Casserly House, we recognize the urgent need for comprehensive immigration reform which would restore people’s dignity, provide a path to citizenship, and help in family reunification. Casserly House is committed to being a strong, vocal advocate for comprehensive immigration reform, and we need your help. Think about this issue; learn more about its implications and its urgency. Seize the opportunity now to contact your representatives in Congress; tell them to take it off the back burner and stoke the zeal of comprehensive immigration reform now!
The story of my family’s migration from Haiti to the United States is one in which Casserly House plays a big part. Over a period of ten years, my family migrated one by one from Port-au-Prince to Boston until finally we were happily reunified at the end of 2009, just before the earthquake hit Haiti.

My husband Sterlin was the first to arrive in 2000. Our daughter Streille was six years old when she joined him in 2003. I followed in 2009, and a few months later our then six year old son Mike arrived. With each arrival, the welcoming and support we received from Casserly House continued to grow. Brian, the Jesuit Volunteer Corps worker in 2009, told me, “You are going to be the happiest mother in the world once Mike arrives!”

Soon after I arrived in September 2009, my daughter Streille brought me to Casserly House and said, “Mommy, you must learn English.” Casserly House was my first school to learn English as a second language. This was also my first experience meeting with people from many different countries and cultures. There is no discrimination at Casserly House. I felt very welcomed. Once I started working I knew I wanted to continue learning, so I enrolled at ABCD.¹ I know I can learn more if I have the opportunity.

Both Streille and Mike have been part of the Casserly House after-school program. I am very happy and thankful for how the program helped them with reading and writing, especially so for Mike. He loves coming to Casserly House, even if it is just to say “Hi” to Sister Nancy. Streille has graduated from the after-school program, but she has come back to help with tutoring when help was needed.

I have been working for Dunkin Donuts for two years. I like the variety in the job and I appreciate the opportunity to improve my English by speaking with customers. Sometimes my co-workers tell me I have a strong accent, and they have trouble understanding me, but I feel my English speaking and my accent are getting better.

So the past ten years have been very busy for my family and me. We emigrated from Haiti to our new country and have truly begun a new life here. My husband and I are so thankful for Casserly House welcoming our family as we reunited in our new country.†

¹http://www.bostonabcd.org/

†

Pictured above: Louise Douyon with her children Streille and Mike; Louise holding her citizenship certificate. Pictured right: Casserly House volunteers assist students in citizenship preparation.
Communications Mission Statement

In order to promote the mission and spirit of the Sisters of St. Joseph and Associates, the Communication Team facilitates the sharing of both our living history and vision for the future by connecting various constituencies through print and electronic media.

Soundings is a publication of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston Communications Office. It is published three-times yearly with a bi-weekly on-line Soundings Update that can be viewed at www.csjboston.org.

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637 Cambridge Street
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Soundings is produced with post-consumer recycled paper and is small in dimensional size, which conserves paper to help reduce paper waste. Each issue is designed for easier reading and transporting. We will continue to bring you articles and images that promote the mission and spirit of the Sisters of St. Joseph and Associates.
Being One with the People

Sister Nancy Braceland is a risk taker. Throughout her ministries, she has pushed boundaries, sometimes choosing the unknown. She states, “I choose to be with the immigrant. Sometimes we forget that’s our history: that either we or our ancestors were once immigrants - we have to remember this.”

Sister Nancy’s roots began in Newton, MA. She was the fifth of eight children, went to public schools, and enjoyed her younger years. It wasn’t until Sister Nancy attended Framingham State College that she considered becoming a sister. She explained, “I had met some young sisters there; it was something about how they were, what they were about, that caught my interest. Mostly, I think it was because they took the time to tell us a little about themselves; they were missionaries. I found that attractive about them.” She entered the CSJ Congregation in 1955.

Sister Nancy’s first ministries included teaching at St. Catherine School, Charlestown, St. John School, Boston, and Sacred Heart School, Roslindale. She then attended Boston College to acquire her master’s degree in English Literature. She studied full-time for a year and continued her classes during her next ministry at Mount St. Joseph Academy. “This was when the method of teaching was changing; new ways of working with students were developing - it was a very creative, wonderful teaching experience,” she said.

After eight years, Sister Nancy felt there was something more she needed to do. She needed a stretch, and responded to the call to go to Peru as a pastoral minister. She reflected, “Some of the challenges I faced included leaving my family and community. I thought, could I find a community there that would be supportive and loving? Would I be able to speak the language? I didn’t know if I would be a good fit because I had not had another cultural experience.” After an initial six-week trial, she realized, “When you begin, you think the experience is what you want, but, at some point it becomes what you need.” With mixed feelings, after seven years in Peru, family obligations brought Sister Nancy home. She said, “Some decisions are bigger than your own discernment.”

“...there are so many ways of living diversity. Diversity can be multi-cultural, multi-ethnic; it can be gender, sexual orientation, or class.”

Back home, Sister Nancy accepted a ministry at Our Lady of Lourdes, Jamaica Plain. She chose this mainly because it was a Spanish ministry, though it presented a cultural shock to her. Peruvians had their own food, culture, patron Saints, etc., but at Our Lady’s it was a multicultural situation, a whole new learning experience. After two years, she left there, but wanted to continue pastoral ministry. She accepted an interim ministry in Maryville, Missouri, working for eight months during the farm crisis. The position was to help revamp the parish, something she knew she could accomplish. She learned about the family farmers, how things worked there, and what the farmers were experiencing. There were foreclosures, which could not be stopped, but Sister Nancy and others helped raise people’s consciousness. Referencing their different lifestyle, Sister Nancy said, “I think it’s learning that there are so many ways of living diversity. Diversity can be multi-cultural, multi-ethnic; it can be gender, sexual orientation, or class. It was the same principle in Maryville, how do you bring everyone together?”

Pictured: Sister Nancy with her family and teaching in a classroom.
Sister Nancy then went to work for Catholic Charities, ministering at St. Francis Xavier Parish, Nashua, NH, primarily because they had a growing Hispanic population. The parish had large parameters because it was welcoming immigrants into the southern tier of New Hampshire, building up the worshiping community. “That was where I was able to learn better community organizing,” she said. Each ministry she had up to this point prepared her for her next journey.

After 14 years, Sister Nancy came home again. She said, “You use your gifts, you use them well, but then you have a feeling, not knowing what is going to happen next. At that time, the community wanted to express the CSJ 125th anniversary. One idea was to purchase a house in the city in a multi-ethnic, underserved community. I said, ‘sounds like me.’”

In 2000, Casserly House was born, and Sister Nancy has been there since. The Casserly House staff, volunteers, associates, and Sister Nancy work with adult and child immigrants to help them transition to the U.S. Sister Nancy and her staff also establish partnerships with local and city organizations; they keep up with current legislation, and educate themselves in domestic abuse issues, temporary protective status, and immigration reform.

Casserly House is Sister Nancy’s home. “Casserly House is why I became a sister. I think it’s a way of doing ministry as a Sister of St. Joseph. Living Church, but not necessarily institutional Church, is how CSJs express who we are, and how we are. It has to do with being one with the people.”

About her life Sister Nancy said, “My life, I like my life. I like how I’ve been treated. I also like the choices I’ve made, the risks I have taken. That’s the thing: when we talk about taking a risk, or daring to dream, we need to know that we do that without 100% security that the thing is going to work. I think that’s what risk-taking is all about.” For Sister Nancy, the risk is worthwhile. †
Volunteering at Casserly House for the past several months has been for me both a joy and a blessing to be treasured. Often I say to myself, “What’s not to like about Casserly House”? The director, Nancy Braceland, CSJ, as well as volunteers and students, account for this joy and blessing. Students, young and old, from several nations and speaking a variety of languages are sincere, confident, and eager to learn. The students express an eagerness to go forward with the citizenship process, responding wholeheartedly to their teachers.

Rain, cold, snow, wind, no matter what the weather, they come determined to master the English language and become citizens of this great nation.

How are the volunteers blessed in teaching at Casserly House? They are blessed a hundredfold and more. The joy they bring to others is the joy that comes back to them.

Who are immigrants? They are people just like us, members of the human family and fellow travelers on the journey to the Kingdom of God. Like many of our ancestors, their decision to leave the country of their birth most often involved the pain of separation from loved ones, the insecurity of becoming steeped in a new culture whose language and customs were not familiar, along with the hope for a new and better life.

Casserly House is a beacon of light that responds to the needs of our new neighbors. During the seven years that I have been volunteering here, I have worked with students from Egypt, Albania, Greece, Vietnam, Africa, Syria, Lebanon, Bangladesh and earthquake ravaged Haiti. I have been amazed at the determination, hard work, and suffering of many of the individuals that I have taught: parents who had to leave their children behind to come here to find work; hard working individuals who have night jobs and arrive at Casserly House for morning classes; older people who struggle persistently to learn English.

I wonder if I would have the courage to do what they have done. They deserve a fair and open path to citizenship.

By Barbara Kelly, SC

Who Are Immigrants

by Eileen Toomey Gorman

“We share ministry with other women and men, seeking through this collaboration to bring to greater fruition the diversity of gifts which the Spirit imparts.”

CSJ Constitution, pg. 32, #3

Joy and Blessings

by Barbara Kelly, SC

Who Are Immigrants

by Eileen Toomey Gorman
Often during the past nine years I have wondered why I am consistently drawn each week to Casserly House to teach English to the immigrants, who come there for instruction. After much pondering and prayer I realized that the ministry energizes me, inspires me, renews me, and enables me to see the face of God in new and unique ways as people from across the globe come to our door.

Just a few weeks ago, an older man was sitting beside a new, younger student in class, spontaneously demonstrated what true love of neighbor is all about. The young man had difficulty pronouncing the word on a flash card that was presented to him. Compassionately, the older man reached deep down into his school bag, pulled out a pair of eyeglasses and handed them to the student. He did not realize his classmate’s challenge was a language one rather than a vision problem. What he did comprehend was that he wanted the young man to be successful in taking each tiny step toward obtaining citizenship in this country.

Immigration is an enriching process that leads all of us toward unity, which God’s heart so earnestly desires. As we dare to further implement that dream, let’s join our hearts with God’s heart and be about the dynamic mission that Immigration Reform invites us to NOW!

As I journey through my fifth year at Casserly House, I ask myself, “How did my one year Ignatian Volunteer Corps commitment to Casserly House become five years? What happened to make me want to remain longer? What is it about this service that has consumed me?”

In my first year Sister Nancy admonished me, “You didn’t come here to help the poor, you came here to walk with them, to be one with them.” Those words may appear to be a subtle distinction, but in reality there is a significant difference. I have not only walked, but trudged with my brothers and sisters through the muck of immigration inequities and poverty woes. The hope and resilience which we have been experiencing on this trek have been exhilarating! The smiles, the joy, and loving friendships have been so powerful. I am now one of them!

What Consistently Draws Me?
by Helen Callahan, CSJ

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Walking with the Poor
by Jim McCarthy, Ignatian Volunteer Corps
Few years ago I attended a CSJ Associate meeting at Casserly House. Nancy Braceland, CSJ, told about what happens at Casserly House and about volunteer opportunities. I realized that was something I could do. As a CSJ Associate and a former member of the Sisters of St. Joseph, I love the Congregation.

I’ve lived in Mexico, and after earning Master’s Degrees in Spanish and English, taught Spanish at a Catholic high school. I have many years of experience working with immigrants at El Centro del Cardenal in the South End of Boston. Working at El Centro del Cardenal happened accidentally. I met Sister Paschalita McKenzie, who was working there, and she invited me to visit. After volunteering for a while, I was offered a job working with people who were anxious to learn English and find employment. As I look back, I realize I was doing what our CSJA Constitution says about mission and ministry: “Our mission of unity requires that we be Christ’s healing presence among people as we strive to alleviate ignorance, suffering, and oppression through the spiritual and corporal works of mercy and through efforts which promote justice.”¹ With this background, Casserly House seemed like the right fit.

Being at Casserly House is not about me. I bring who I am to Casserly House – all the experiences I’ve had through the years. It’s about what these adult learners need at the moment. I like working with groups, and having worked with immigrants for so long, I have a soft spot in my heart for them. Among them, they speak 11-12 languages. People who have gone through the program keep returning. It’s hard to follow a set schedule because things keep happening that can’t be predicted. When dealing with what people need, it’s important to go with the flow.

It takes a lot of courage for these adults to learn English and to learn our math. Sometimes we take coins and name the coins and their worth. Others are able to work with addition, subtraction, and fractions. This education helps the students be better prepared to go to neighborhood stores and communicate in English.

Recently, a woman was telling me about her children who had just come from her country of origin and how happy she was. Like all parents, she wants to be able to follow what they are doing in school. The simplest things make them happy, and they know that people at Casserly House care about them. I want to do all I can to meet their needs and feel blessed to be with them. They are so grateful, and they bring me so much joy. I believe my work at Casserly House is helping break the cycle of oppression experienced by many immigrants. They are gift to me. †

¹CSJA Constitution, “Ministry”, pg. 26, #1

Pictured top: Joyce Barney, CSJA educating Casserly House adult students. Inset L-R, top down: Franny Wool, CSJ, Mary Ellen O’Connell, CSJ, Susan Reilly, CSJ, and Joyce at her Associate Commitment ceremony.
I’m an immigrant myself, although life for immigrants in Boston today is quite different from when I grew up as a Canadian immigrant in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont. My family emigrated from Canada to a small town that consisted of a school with one room, where no one spoke French. The English-speaking teacher was not equipped to teach a French speaking child, so first grade was spent with coloring books. My parents, who valued education, sent me to a Catholic boarding school. Here, we were a diverse group of boarders from Canada, New York and day students, “habitants” from the local farming communities. We then moved to northern New Hampshire where I integrated into a bilingual French-English school and graduated high school. Most of the immigrant families worked in the local paper mill or shoe factory. My father was a businessman who owned and operated a lumber business with his brothers.

My parents were educated in Canada and were not familiar with the American school system. There was subtle discrimination where we grew up. This was not based on the color of your skin, but rather on limitations for education and opportunities for success. It was a culture where women didn’t go to college and “French kids” were not expected to amount to much. Since I loved to learn, I had to figure out how to make education happen!

Taking various routes, I eventually graduated from college and came to Boston for graduate school at Boston University School of Social Work. I met Mari Ryan, CSJ, at the Jesuit Urban Center, who introduced me to the Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston. I was invited to “come and see.” I was captivated by the ministries in which the sisters were involved and with the women that I met. This wasn’t some ladies sodality. In 2006, I participated in the CSSJ Heritage Pilgrimage in France, where we traced the roots of the Sisters of St. Joseph. It all came together for me by experiencing the sisters’ history, walking their paths, and listening to their stories, so I became a CSJ Associate.

"I am honored to be connected to Casserly House where members of the staff and volunteers live out daily their core values."

Living in Boston, I have a desire to contribute to the needs of my neighborhood. Sister Mari invited me to meet Sister Nancy Braceland one afternoon for tea. She introduced me to the mission and work that Casserly House provides to immigrants and to the neighborhood. I was invited to join the Advisory Board. Casserly House is in the midst of the community and reminds me of the settlement house movement in the early beginnings of social work. The staff assists a diverse population find their strengths with ESOL classes, citizenship preparation, and finding gainful employment. Once the immigrants are ready, the staff help make connections with community resources. One of the perspectives of social work values is respecting the person-in-environment. Reaching out to the neighbor without distinction is a core CSJ value.

I am honored to be connected to Casserly House where members of the staff and volunteers live out daily their core values.

†
On the welcome mat at the National Archives and Records Center is part of a Latin proverb - *Littera scripta manet* - the written word endures. The four-volume *History of the Archdiocese of Boston in the Various Stages of Its Development, 1604-1943,* is one “written word” giving evidence of the waves of immigration into Boston and the response of the Catholic Church to them.

The Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston were participants in this history since 1873, responding to opportunities for ministry, answering the needs for education and social service to the Catholic communities of Boston. They were replying in action to the call of the diocese. Although members of the congregation were composed of immigrants and their descendants, their ministry did not always intentionally address “immigrants,” “refugees,” or “new peoples.”

The *History of the Archdiocese,* though, does give some instances when the congregational response was deliberately to an immigrant population.

"The stories told by both of these women illustrate the growth of commitment to the 'dear neighbor' without distinction, and the daring of their willingness to go to places and to be with people whom they had not envisioned at the beginning of their ministry."

In 1911, St. John School in Boston’s North End was opened for Italian children, succeeding a school at St. Stephen Parish, which had ministered chiefly to people of Irish descent. The Sisters of St. Joseph commuted to St. John from Brighton, gradually opening new grades.

In October 1922, a social center for Italian residents was established on Charter Street, by the Charitable Bureau of the Archdiocese of Boston. A building was erected by Mary Trask as a memorial to her mother, Catherine Moore. Inaugurated in 1930, the building was known as the Catherine Moore Settlement House, providing more expansive space for a social center. The center offered classes, clubs, games, entertainments, social gatherings, a gym, and a rooftop playground. It was at this time that CSJs were assigned to engage in the social service activities, ministering there until 1977.

Sister Lumena (Nora) O’Sullivan (1913-1998) was the youngest of seven children born to parents who had emigrated from Cork. She first taught at St. John School, commuting from Brighton and teaching children of Italian immigrants. For her, it was a challenge to gain their respect, and to teach. She then taught at Mount St. Joseph Academy, Brighton, where she realized that teaching was discovering relationships. She brought her students to the Summer School of Catholic Action (SSCA), NY, where she found the classes on justice, rights of the worker, unions, and racism to be energizing.

As principal of Cathedral High School, Boston, Lumena’s mission was to integrate the school. There were no Hispanic youths at first, and only a few black students. It was a day to be celebrated when the first Puerto Rican students graduated from the high school.

Upon discovering a Department of Christian Service in the Diocese of Detroit, which was responding to Vietnamese refugees – “the boat people”, Lumena traveled to Michigan. She became...
Sister Eustace (Phyllis) Caggiano (1913 - ), a daughter of Italian parents, was missioned to Cathedral Convent as a cook in 1962, where Lumena was principal. Eustace noticed the danger to children playing in a busy city street, so she invited them into the convent yard, which was protected by a fence. The children both played and did their English homework there.

Volunteering at the Cardinal Cushing Spanish Center in the parish, Eustace developed relationships with families and children. It was at the center that Eustace sorted and distributed donations of clothing. Ultimately, she called it the “Boutique,” which grew to include furniture, bedding, food and toys. Selling these items for an affordable price raised money to fund scholarships for Puerto Rican students at Cathedral Grammar. There was even a 4H Club at the center and Eustace was its director. Eventually, her full-time job became the one at El Centro del Cardenal.

The stories told by both of these women illustrate the growth of commitment to “the dear neighbor without distinction,” and the daring of their willingness to go to places and to be with people whom they had not envisioned at the beginning of their ministry.

†
Hospitality and Welcoming the Stranger may Demand that We Change Our Attitudes and Our System

by CSJs Kathleen Hagerty and Marilyn McGoldrick

The recent controversy over the commercial “America, the Beautiful”, which aired during Super Bowl XLV11, is perplexing and raises questions regarding the strength of the words heralded by the Lady in New York: “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free....” It leaves one wondering if we remember our parents’ or grandparents’ journey to the land of opportunity, for a better future and the fulfillment of a dream. “From sea to shining sea” isn’t a reality for many, when a touching, multilingual representation of the diversity that is America, sparks such piercing remarks. Hospitality and welcoming the stranger may demand that we change our attitudes and our system.

We read stories of immigrants being separated from families and put on hold for a variety of reasons - visa mix-ups, inadequate staffing, misunderstandings, language barriers, and delays. As people of the Scriptures, we see what God wants and how we are to live with strangers. The following stories of the journeys of Aura, Tony, and Gene give testimony to the possibility that is America at her best.

Aura Donis

Aura Donis came to the U.S. from Guatemala at age 20, aware that there were few opportunities for advancement in her country. She arrived in California on April 13, 1980, alone and with a visa. Her biggest fear was that she would be turned away by our country. Unable to speak English, she did odd jobs so she could go to school. Experiencing our culture, customs, and the food was very difficult for her. Aura met someone and had a child. The situation turned abusive; for the sake of her child and herself she left, and began the journey of building her life.

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In 1986, she moved to Boston and sent her son back to Guatemala to be cared for by her family. This separation was both painful and intense for Aura, but necessary if she were to succeed. She procured a position in Marblehead, caring for a disabled woman. Aura received housing and food, and she was paid well. A year and a half later, she met her husband and brought her son back to the U.S. Eventually, she and her husband had two more children.

The 1986 Immigration Reform Act gave Aura the opportunity to gain legal status. She later became a citizen. Since 1987, she has worked for the Department of Mental Health. When asked if her journey was worth it, Aura reflected, “Yes, I know how to survive on my own, support myself, build a family, and help others - all gifts of my journey to the U.S.”

Tony Jacob

Tony Jacob came to this country from India at 17. Sponsored by an uncle, he and his family were granted a visa after a 14-year wait. It was difficult for him to leave his friends and experience a new culture and foreign land, but Tony and his family came for a better future. He became a citizen in 2005. He was a first-year college student, but Tony’s third language was English, which he found difficult studying. Tony wanted to help support his family, so he worked while studying, but had to stop when his father became ill. Later, he continued his studies and eventually earned a master’s degree in Human Services.
He was hired by the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health as a mental health worker. Later, he was hired to work in the Occupational Therapy Department at Solomon Carter Fuller Mental Health Center.

When Tony spoke of his future, he said he wants to help others, and study for another degree in Mental Health Counseling. In India, if you suffer from “brain disease,” it is thought you have “bad karma.” He learned here that this is not true. His dream is to collaborate with someone in India who is skilled in this disease, and educate Indians about it. He desires to create opportunities for his people and to dispel these myths.

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I asked Tony what gifts he brings to the U.S. He said, “...every country has its strengths. Because of my experience, I have grown strong and have will power. My faith, reading Scripture and attending church, helps me deal with things. When I get discouraged, I recall I came to this country with $5.00 in my pocket. I now have so much more. I can get through anything.”

Tony feels his journey to the U.S. was worthwhile. He helped support his family, and especially helped his brother and sister through school. They both are college graduates and are following their own dreams. Now married with two children, Tony hopes one day to fulfill his dream.

Eugene Ward

The 1980s was one of the gloomiest times in the Republic of Ireland. A negligent budget combined with world-wide economic concerns destroyed the Irish economy for most of the 1970s and 1980s. As a result, there was high unemployment and very high emigration. In contrast, the U.S. witnessed a surge in the economy, especially through the growth and development of technology. Therefore, the U.S. attracted many who were looking for a “better life” in the land where dreams come true.

Gene Ward was born in England, and at the age of five moved with his parents to Ireland, their homeland. In 1986, at age 19, a desire for adventure, opportunity, and escape from poor economic conditions led Gene to the U.S. to work for the summer. He returned to Ireland at the end of the summer to complete his degree, but his life had changed. He had met the young woman whom he would marry, and felt his desire to teach and begin a family would be realized in America.

Gene lived the life experienced by many immigrants. He took available jobs, moved numerous times to affordable places, always wondering when his new home would become his permanent home. A dramatic turn occurred when Sister Vincent Ferrer, CSJ, gave this young immigrant the opportunity to teach. She became his principal, mentor, and friend, thus beginning a long, productive, love affair in education.

Gene recognizes and acknowledges how fortunate he is for the opportunities that have been afforded him and his children - opportunities not always available in other countries. “If you work hard in America,” explains Gene, “you can make a good life for yourself. In other countries, a big part of what you get depends upon who you know, and you don’t always get the opportunity to follow your dream. In America, people earn what they get. Hard work paid off for me.”

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Gene realizes how blessed he is. He became a citizen after three years. At that time, he was teaching high school history, and his students were able to witness the process towards this moment in his story. Becoming a citizen freed Gene. But even with his green card, he couldn’t shake the feeling of looking over his shoulder, thinking that, at any time, he could be sent back to Ireland. This sense of unrest seems to pervade the immigrant, who never knows when life will change, and their freedom or dream is destroyed because of other’s fear or lack of understanding.

Aura, Tony, and Gene’s stories reflect that of many immigrants, wanting to and then living the American dream. Yet, the dreams of other immigrants to have a better life could falter given the present climate. America would lose valued citizens, committed members of society, and perhaps, dedicated educators.
Addressing Immigration Reform Across the CSSJ Federation

by Helen Sullivan, CSJ

One of the many blessings of the Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph is the opportunity to connect easily with other CSSJ congregations across the country and the world. I feel very fortunate to have met the justice and peace directors in the U.S. congregations, and it is clear that Immigration is an issue that has touched the hearts and lives of all of us. In a desire to share with you what other congregations are doing I am choosing three: one in the East, one in the Midwest, and one in the West.

"Immigration is an issue that has touched the hearts and lives of all of us."

Let us begin with our “dear neighbors” in Springfield, where Denise Granger, SSJ, is the Peace and Justice Coordinator. She has created an amazing, interactive computer presentation about immigration which is accessible through their website. There is even a ten-question multiple-choice quiz (with instant answers) for us to test our own knowledge of present day immigration facts. Discussing an issue like immigration presents a major challenge because of the range of feelings, positive and negative, which people bring to any conversation. In Denise’s own words, “Immigration is a hot button issue in Washington right now. Our present policies on immigration do not work for potential new citizens or us. There are many angles to this contentious issue: political, economic, religious and social. All are thorny, and most underscore the divide that plagues our country in each of those areas.”

What I find quite remarkable is the ideological balance with which Denise presents each of these issues. I invite you to try this interactive presentation yourself. Just visit the SSJ webpage, http://ssjspringfield.org, select “About Us,” select “What We Do,” then select “Peace and Justice.” The third paragraph on that new page says, “The Immigration Debate.” Click those words and the presentation will open!

Let us continue now as we move westward to “dear neighbors” in the Chicago area. One of the urgent issues of this time is that Congress pass comprehensive immigration reform that includes a path to citizenship and family unity. Long-time social activist, Joellen Sbrissa, CSJ, is Coordinator of the Sisters of St. Joseph Office of Peace and Justice, La Grange Park, IL Center. She and her sisters in the Chicago area have worked on this issue for many years. Their efforts are intensifying now as they do all they can to see that immigration reform becomes a reality.

Joellen is part of an ecumenical prayer group of the sisters and others who gather every Friday at the detention center in a suburb near Chicago to pray for the detainees. Families come to say good bye to their family member, before they leave for the airport to be deported. The detainees are held at the county jail in a place northwest of Chicago. With other brothers and sisters from religious orders, a Sister of St. Joseph goes to the jail to offer pastoral care to those being held because of their immigration status.

Sisters and associates of the Congregation of St. Joseph have sent postcards electronically from the Justice for Immigrants website, or they have signed the printed postcards which were made available through the CSJ Peace and Justice Office. They have used the NETWORK website to contact their legislators to pass Immigration Reform. The Congregation also joins the Chicago Archdiocesan group, Sisters and Brothers of Immigrants, in raising awareness, giving public witness, and working together to pass Immigration Reform.

Our final stop is with our “dear neighbors” on the west coast, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange, California, and with their Justice Coordinator, Maria Elena Perales. They, too, have been working toward the passage of the DREAM Act¹ (The Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act) which has been introduced in previous Congresses, but has not yet been passed. It is an important piece of legislation that offers a path to legal status for those who were brought to the United States as children and know the U.S. as their only home.

Thanks to the wonderful spirit of generosity, the Orange CSJs are willing to share whatever resources might be helpful to others, and the infographic you see on the next page is an example of that. It puts in picture form what would require pages and pages of words to explain.

Immigration, as we just read above, is indeed a contentious issue. However, with efforts like these all across our country, there is a sense of hope that satisfactory, life-giving, long-term solutions will soon be achieved.†

¹ [http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/issues/DREAM-Act](http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/issues/DREAM-Act)
The Real and Expressed Need for Immigration Reform

Life...What Life?  
By Victor M.   
a Taller San Jose graduate

Life is nice but sometimes to me it’s worthless.  
I’m already in my twenties and I feel like I ain’t  
getting nowhere.  
When everybody is out there,  
I’m stuck inside a box.  
They say that this country is freedom,  
but only for them.  
I notice that immigrants  
don’t have that much freedom,  
Because that’s what happened to me.

They only want us to work, and that’s it.  
They don’t care how we get to work.  
They don’t even want us to drive to work,  
and if we do,  
they’ll take the car away and give us a fine.

I still remember  
when I was working the night shift  
during the winter season — during El Nino.  
I had to ride my bike to work in rainstorms.  
I would get there soaking wet...  
coming home, same thing.

People say there’s always the bus.  
I took the bus for two years.  
I soon realized  
that I wasn’t getting nowhere—  
just from my house to work.  
People work to live and enjoy life,  
but me, I just work to live.

Many undocumented immigrants in the US came here as children.  
They accompanied their parents or another close family member.  
As children, they did not have the ability to make another choice  
themselves. They grew up in the US. It’s the country they know.  
Yet, choices and opportunities  
are limited when these young brothers and sisters become adults.

The DREAM ACT addresses the dilemma of individuals who  
crossed the border with their families before they were 12  
years old. It offers a route to citizenship for these young  
people IF they have no felonies, have served in the military,  
have completed high school and are attending community  
college, and/or given 2000 hours in community service.  
This proposal has NEVER passed and is up again for a vote.

Victor M., who came to the U.S. as a child,  
expresses what it feels like to live in the shadows. The Dream Act,  
would have helped him immensely. Victor has continued to live as  
an undocumented man in California. He was 20 when he wrote  
his reflection. He is now 32 years old — still pressed  
to the bottom layer of society with little  
opportunity to move forward.  
However, thanks to the recent  
passing of California Bill AB 60,  
Victor can now drive legally.

Protect These Kids With A Fair Path to Citizenship Through Immigration Reform  
CALL YOUR REPRESENTATIVES • 202-224-3121  
Designed by Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange - October 2013
“We strive in every aspect of our lives to be for others a visible sign of God’s presence and active love.”

CSJ Constitution, pg. 24, #3