



Oregon New Sanctuary Movement

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The Hope of a New Year

Bob Brown
September 29, 2008

This is the time of the Jewish High Holidays – Rosh Hashanah is the celebration of a new year and Yom Kippur is the Day of Atonement. During these holidays we reflect upon our past year – our actions and deeds – and contemplate our past actions and what we will do differently in the coming year so as to be “inscribed in the book of life.” Three concepts – tshuva or return, tfilah or prayer, and tzedakah or acts of kindness – mitigate our vulnerability as members of the arbitrary nature of the world.

What is meant by return? In the more formal sense, tshuvah is thought of as repentance. It is on the Day of Atonement that we repent for our misdeeds. But return to the right place is another way to consider return. We should not think of return as repatriation to one’s homeland. This is too simplistic. There is an existential nature of return, a much deeper meaning. Returning to the rightful perspective for all the people who inhabit the place where we live. In this perspective, everyone we encounter has rights to feed their family, to be assured of health, education and opportunity. No one is left out; everyone is included as member of the community.

As we move into the New Year of 5769, we hope that all our brothers and sisters shall be included and respected equally as members of our community. We all have gifts and provide opportunity if we only take the time to look.

Contact us: portlandsanctuary@gmail.com
503.550.3510 or www.oregonsanctuary.org

Sanctuary in Belinda’s Journey “For a Better Future”

Interview by Marco Mejia

Three years ago, Belinda, just like millions of immigrants that have come to the United States in a search for a better future, started her journey in Guatemala. As she describes, her decision to come to the U.S. wasn’t an easy one, but was made under the pressure of her country’s economic conditions. “Life in Guatemala was, and still is, one of poverty. I came to this country because that. We were very poor. I was looking at that situation without any possibility of improvement where my younger sisters could have the opportunity to go to school. I was especially thinking of my daughter and that I didn’t want her to go through the situations I had to experience. I started to work when I was 12 years old and couldn’t go to school. When I had my daughter I was working and what I made didn’t cover our minimum expenses. That was what made me decide to come to the U.S.”

After two years of working two jobs at a minimum wage in the U.S., Belinda had the opportunity to send some money to her



Belinda with her son Brandon

family. She met her husband with whom she later had her baby, Brandon. Her life was hard but she was very happy for the things that were happening until January 2008. Belinda and her family had just moved in with her brother-in-law so they could save some money when the immigration police came to their house. They were looking for her brother-in-law, who was denied renewal of extension of the TPS, a residency permit that was given to the Salvadorans who fled the political violence and war in El Salvador, and had been given an order of deportation. When the immigration police came for him, they checked on the documents of all the people living in the house, at which time Belinda, her husband and brother-in-law were detained.

“I told them that I didn’t want to go without my baby and they told me to choose between signing the papers and leaving the baby for three hours or just being detained and never seeing my baby again. I didn’t have another alternative to sign the paper and leave my baby. I was taken to this room, dirty and with graffiti all over, and I was thinking, ‘God, what am I going to do?!’ I started to think about all my dreams of supporting my family and my daughter and all the things that were happening to me, being separated from my son and my husband. I thought, ‘They don’t have a heart, separating families and their children who suffer the most.’ I said, ‘God forgive them if they do this to make their money and provide for their families, even if what they are doing is bad anyway.’”

Belinda was released after spending all day in the detention center. After returning to her house to face her new reality, no one wanted to be with her. Her husband was detained at the ICE detention center in Tacoma and eventually deported to El Salvador. There was a lot of fear that ICE would come back for her and detain everyone in the house. Others did help her to find support and connect with the ONSM.



The Murphy family with Belinda and Brandon

“I got to know the Sanctuary Movement when I had all the doors closed. I thank God for that because through them I had the opportunity to achieve many things. I learned there are many people that don’t want us to be here struggling for a better life and working for our families. Also, there are good-hearted people that believe that God does not distinguish between people to be loved by God, and that God loves us all equally.”



“I’m very thankful to Eddie and Catherine’s family that have given me all their support.

I’m sad and happy at the same time for all

Ruth and DeEtte from ONSM with Brandon the things that happened to me, but God has given me so much strength to continue struggling. Living in sanctuary with the family has been a beautiful experience. Even though we couldn’t understand each other very well with words, the language of their smile and their attitudes said it all, that they appreciate me and love me very much and I do love them too. We are like one family. I think the idea of “sanctuary” is genuine. I have met so many people that believe in equality and do not discriminate against us for being undocumented.”

“I think the Sanctuary Movement is there to help people in need like me, and there are many like me, so please keep doing this work. People like me wouldn’t be here if we didn’t have poverty in our countries. We don’t come here to steal jobs; we work very hard and get paid very little, and we do jobs that many people don’t want to do. If we could get a visa to come with documents, we wouldn’t risk our lives having to travel through oceans and dangerous routes. To get a visa you have to be rich and there are not visas for poor people.”

Belinda is returning to Guatemala at the end of October under an order of deportation. She is happy to be reunited with her daughter and her family but is worried about facing the same conditions that forced her to leave and come to the U.S. Before leaving, Belinda shared with us also that she is very happy to have known the ONSM and to have had the opportunity to be supported. It changed her life and the devastating experience of being detained into a hopeful one. She recommends that the ONSM to continue supporting people like her and changing the unjust laws that drive the causes of migration and the persecution of immigrants in the U.S.

ONSM Outreach Committee Update

This summer, we formed an Outreach and Community Support Committee. Active members of the committee are Ruth Ventura, Alice Vetter, Joanne McClarty, Lee Janis and Bob Brown.

ONSM has provided services and support to people who were affected by the Del Monte Foods raid in 2007. Over time, most of the people that were affected by the raid have left the country. However, there continues to be a large population of immigrants that continue to live in fear and isolation. The Outreach Committee has defined its current objective: to broaden the ONSM connections with the immigrant community so that we understand their needs and potentially provide assistance based on their needs in a spirit of solidarity and support.

To accomplish this broader outreach, we propose to hold informational meetings with existing Latino church communities and to ask the American Friends Service Committee to provide Know Your Rights Training, which we believe will be useful and interesting to the participants. At these meetings we will provide an informational brochure in Spanish that describes the ONSM organization, the services we can provide along with contact information.

The committee members will meet with people in the immigrant community to better understand their needs. Based on our capacity and ability, our current thinking is to provide the following kinds of service and help:

- Transportation
- Emotional support - not standing alone. Going to court is one example.
- Translation
- Writing letters
- Food and basic needs
- Helping with special events - e.g. birthdays, purchase of school supplies and clothes, special field trips like the zoo or OMSI
- Connecting with resources in the community

We will be contacting Latino church communities. Please contact us at portlandsanctuary@gmail.com with your ideas or if you know of any Latino group that would be receptive and benefit from knowing about ONSM.



ONSM Press conference at Del Monte, 1 year after the ICE raid

“I would recommend the government and the immigration police chief work for the people and families to help them be united, to help the people that are here struggling for a better life to have the opportunity to work, and to look for people that are really doing bad things in the community. They shouldn’t go after people because the only thing they do is work. They should understand the situation of our countries and how what they are doing is affecting people.”

“The only thing I ask God for is the end of these raids and that people accomplish their dreams and improve their lives.”



Brandon

What's The ONSM ?

Mission The Oregon New Sanctuary Movement (ONSM) is an interfaith coalition of over 20 different religious leaders and congregations, called by our faith to respond actively and publicly to the suffering of our immigrant brothers and sisters residing in the United States. We stand together in our faith that everyone, regardless of national origin, has basic common rights, including but not limited to: 1) livelihood; 2) family unity; and 3) physical and emotional safety. We witness the violation of these rights under current immigration policy, particularly in the separation of children from their parents due to unjust deportations, and in the exploitation of immigrant workers. We are deeply grieved by the violence done to families through immigration raids and unjust detentions. We cannot in good conscience ignore such suffering and injustice.

We are committed to lifting up the voices of our immigrant brothers and sisters, working for just and humane immigration reform, and the transformation of the social and economic systems that perpetuate the poverty in immigrants’ home countries that drives much of the migration to the US. We also seek ways to build relationships of solidarity between faith community members and immigrants – relationships that have the power to change hearts and minds and transform our communities.

WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Immigration & the 2008 Elections

Immigration policy has traditionally been the realm of federal government. But since Congress's failed immigration reform attempts in 2006, more and more state and local governments have begun to enact immigration-related legislation. This fall, Oregonians will face one statewide and two county level ballot initiatives that target immigrants.

Columbia County Initiatives 5-190 and 5-191

Local human dignity advocates in Columbia County, nestled in the northwest corner of our state, are working hard to defeat the first ever anti-immigrant county level initiatives in Oregon, and possibly the U.S.

Measure 5-190 would impose a \$10,000 fine on any business found to be employing undocumented workers. Measure 5-191 would mandate 4 foot by 8 foot plywood signs saying 'Legal Workers Only' at construction sites. The measures mandate employers to participate in Homeland Security's error-prone E-Verify program and encourage anonymous reporting of suspected undocumented workers.

Learn more about these initiatives and the campaign to defeat them at: www.TimesAreToughEnough.com.

Ballot Measure 58

Anti-tax activist and racketeer Bill Sizemore is counting on the anti-immigrant tide to help pass his proposed Measure 58

– a measure which would severely cut English as a Second Language programming in Oregon's public schools. This one-size-fits-all approach would force students into English-only classrooms, regardless of their proficiency level. Furthermore, it leaves teachers no authority to decide what works best for individual students.

Visit: www.ParentsAndTeachersKnowBetter.com to learn what Oregon's teachers and parents think about this measure. Portland Allies Coming Together (PACT) is part of a grassroots immigrants' rights coalition working to defeat Measure 58. To learn more or to help defeat Measure 58 contact PACT at admin.pdx.ir@gmail.com.

DC and Salem must know that we want real solutions to immigration reform.

Piecemeal approaches to immigration policy at the local level let our elected officials off the hook. Fixing our broken immigration systems is going to be hard because the problems go far beyond our own county, state, and national borders. We need leaders in DC and Salem with backbones who will push for comprehensive immigration reform in a way that works for families and working people, not against them.

Check out the list of Upcoming Events for ways to learn more about these initiatives, take action to defeat them, and get involved in working for a just immigration system!



By: Sarah Loose & Amy Dudley
of the Rural Organizing Project

onSM Upcoming Events

Movie Night and Dialogue at Center for Intercultural Organizing

"Fear and Learning at Hoover Elementary"

Tuesday, October 14th at 6:00 PM

A 1996 documentary highlighting the human impact of an anti-immigrant ballot initiative targeting the children of undocumented immigrants, California's Proposition 187.

Please contact Grassia

(Grassia@interculturalorganizing.org) with questions and to RSVP.

Oregon New Sanctuary Movement Meeting

Monday, October 20th, 6:30 pm

St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church,
1704 NE 43rd Ave., Portland

Immigration and the 2008 Elections

Sunday, October 26th at 6:30pm

Havurah Shalom, 825 NW 18th Avenue, Portland, OR
For more info contact ONSM.

ONSM Fall Retreat

Sunday, Nov. 9th from 1:00 – 7:30pm

SAVE the DATE! Location TBD

Stories of Migration

Witness for Peace Delegation to Oaxaca, Mexico and the northern border

May 2009 (dates TBD)

For more information, contact Beth Poteet at
503.287.7847 or wfpnw@witnessforpeace.org



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