

Elena Segura
Office for Immigrant Affairs
Archdiocese of Chicago
312-534-5333

Know Justice, Know Peace: Ending War at **Home** and Abroad
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Introduction:

What an honor to be with you today. Thank you for giving the opportunity to speak with you, especially alongside great speakers. I just came back from Peru -- a trip I dreamed about for 17 years. I went there with my son. When he was 2, I had this desire to take him to Peru for a tour of my life. We visited my elementary and high schools. We went to my house, and I showed him the spot where I saw some of my classmates walking along the mountains – barefoot – for 1 ½ hours until they arrived at school. At that age I wasn't able to understand why they had to walk that long. I just sensed there was something wrong. They couldn't afford even plastic shoes (the cheapest ones). My son and I participated in Inti Raimi – the feast of the sun – the highest cultural celebration of my heritage, the Inca culture. He was very proud to learn why I called him Amaru – his middle name (a Quechua word in honor of an indigenous leader). My prayer is that my son never forgets where he came from.

Poverty

If we are a family, we are interconnected. A family usually has a home and members who relate to each other because they share the same heritage, values, history, and traditions. They also develop relationships with other members in the community. Sometimes we live as if we are

the only ones living on the planet, but God created us as one human family. God relates to us

not as several families that were created in several ways and for several purposes, **but** as one global family. Let's take a look briefly at some facts of this human family.

- 30 % of people suffer malnutrition while 58 billion dollars are spent on pets worldwide between 2003-2005.

- 31% of people live in poor housing conditions while 800 billion dollars are spent on new luxury items, restaurants, clothing and cars.

- Of the world's 6.5 billion people, the three richest persons have more assets than the combined Gross National Product (GNP) of the poorest 48 nations, which is 25% of the

world's countries. Basically it sounds like 3 people own $\frac{1}{4}$ of the world! Meanwhile poor

countries had to spend as much as 13 dollars in debt repayment for every dollar they receive in new loans.

- The sales of the world's top five corporations at the beginning of the millennium were bigger than the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of 182 countries.

When I visited my country I noticed precisely the reality of these facts. I remember traveling

with my dad from my town to Cusco, we always stopped at a restaurant for a bathroom break.

45 years later this very simple, poor restaurant still does not have a bathroom with a toilet. They can't afford anything except a latrine.

What is wrong with this picture? Didn't many poor countries have their independence in the

1800's, even early 1900's? It seems that the colonization of human beings and natural resources

continues to date. The market controls everything. It is a picture of war...a war to gain profit

and profit alone. What kind of gods did we create? Any economic system, whether capitalism or

socialism, that does not respect the human person or treats the person as a material thing in

order to pursue gain **is a sinful system that violates the purpose of God's creation.** We were created to be stewards of **all God's** creation, including the systems that assist us to have what we need to live with dignity and for the common good.

Migration

2/3 of our global human family lives in poverty. The poor are migrating for survival. In the last

30 years the number of immigrants has doubled to almost **200 million** people. One in five lack

proper documentation. Migration is a global reality.

To you folks of Pax Christi, peacemakers, I don't have to talk about why immigrants come to

this country. Or the popular phrase that anti-immigrant groups use: "what part of illegal don't

you understand? When this phrase is being shouted in my ears by some Catholics who call my

office to complain about the stand of the Church towards immigration reform, I always take this

time as an opportunity to listen to the fear, the rage to pray on the spot for this person and

his/her family and the group he/she represents (By the way, an anti-immigrant Catholic is a

contradiction of terms to me). I do have an altar where I add names of anti-immigrants. I'm

asking God to teach me how to love these brothers and sisters whose hearts still need to be

opened. So in response to the question "what part of illegal don't you understand?" we should

understand that the action might be illegal (people are forced to break a law that is already

broken), the status might be illegal, but not the **person.**

It is important to acknowledge that 10-15% of undocumented immigrants committed serious

felonies for which they need to bear the consequences according to the law, however 85-90% of

people whom I encounter every Friday at the Broadview detention center are people who are in

the category of “breakers of the law” for crossing the borders or overstaying their visas for economic survival and family unity. These 10-12 million people don’t only have to make the difficult decision to leave their home countries, to be uprooted in order to start a new life in a strange place and to become “strangers”.

These people have been forced to live under the shadows for many years, especially in the 90s and early 2000s. They uncovered their faces and came into the light in 2005-2006. The marches in many cities around the country were the expression of this ‘coming out’.

The undocumented community had a sense of a hope... we shouted “yes, we can”.. It seemed there was a chance for legislation. They received support from the church, the Catholic church particularly, but also the multiple advocacy, human rights, labor, civic organizations... then the war started or got worse.

The anti-immigrant spirit, voice and strategies increased enormously, having significant impact in legislators not passing a new comprehensive immigration law in 2007. This undocumented community not only felt **spitted** on by the verbally abusive and violent rhetoric of anti-immigrants, but also **mocked** by legislators who initially were supporting immigration reform but then retracted for fear of losing votes. The undocumented community was **exposed** to a nation who watched them naked, yes, naked. This community risked to come to the streets with hopes and dreams that this might be the time for freedom, but was forced to hide again and their hopes killed. Then now they are **rejected** by towns, municipalities, states that successfully write legislation that unwelcomes them. Legislations that are aborting them.

Legislations that have forced them yet to move again. Legislations that say loud and clear, “This town is ours, it is not yours. This state is ours, it is not yours. You are not part of us.” This

is what the Arizona legislation is doing.

Weapons of war on immigrants:

What are the weapons of war against immigrants?

1) The first weapon is Anti immigrant legislation in states and municipalities. In 2006 there were 570 bills introduced, 84 laws were enacted. In 2009 more than 1,500 bills were introduced and 222 laws were enacted.

In the first quarter of this year alone, legislators in 45 states had introduced 1,200 bills. Around

90% of these bills are against immigrants; for example, creating state penalties for being undocumented, breaking contracts with businesses if they have hired undocumented workers, penalizing landlords for renting to undocumented people, as well as limiting access to education and public benefits.

Secure Communities is an initiative of the Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) that focuses on immigrants arrested by local law enforcement and allows access to federal databases to see if they have prior immigration violations.

Secure communities is operating in 193 counties, and ICE has checked a total of 2.2 millions sets of fingerprints. Yet only 7% of those identified under the program between October 2008 and February 2009 were charged or convicted of serious criminal offenses. Like other ICE

enforcement initiatives (such as the 287(g) program), the intent may be to target dangerous criminals, but the real effect is to turn minor encounters with police into deportation cases.

Looking at the numbers for the impact, apparently 2 million undocumented people have been terrorized, such as Artemio, whose daughter one morning called me at 7 saying that ICE agents came to their home and took her dad. I could hear in the background the panic of all their family

as Artemio was handcuffed in front of his children and wife. After several hours of strict checking and the assistance of his lawyer, Artemio was released. Artemio comes to pray with us every single Friday at Broadview. Such feelings and experiences of terror is what Secure

Communities is doing to immigrants who are simply living in this country.

2) The second weapon is Anti-immigrant Violence and Hate crimes

□ The Southern Poverty Law Center revealed a 35% rise in hate crimes against people of

Latino origin between 2003-2006- based on the analysis of the FBI. Now multiply these

numbers by 15. A study done by the Bureau of Justice Statistics found that hate crimes

were actually 15 times higher than reported by the FBI. This significant difference may

be due to underreporting by victims who lacked confidence in local police and feared

sanctions based on their immigration status.

□ Also the Southern Poverty Law Center reported a 48% in the growth of immigrant hate

groups operating in the USA from 602 in 2000 to 932 in 2009. As you might have heard

this week about the terror that Citizens Concerned in the United States created in 1300

immigrants in Utah.

□ The Anti-Defamation League has identified a series of themes through which immigrants

are vilified and demonized, including claims that immigrants are a deadly source of all

kinds of diseases in the United States; that immigrants are disproportionately responsible

for crime or for the financial crisis of state budgets; and that immigrants intend to take

over Texas and California.

3) The third weapon is Enforcement

□ On any given day there are 32,000 immigrants in detention at the cost of \$122 dollars per

day per detainee. Many are detained for weeks, months or even years and are often subjected to arbitrary punishment including shackling, solitary confinement and neglect of basic medical needs.

- Detainees lack access to legal assistance. 84% of detained immigrants go unrepresented.

- In FY 2009 more than 389,000 immigrants were deported compared to 189,000 immigrants deported in FY 2001.

- Despite the Obama administration's rhetoric that it is focusing on "criminal aliens", two thirds of these immigrants were removed for non-criminal reasons. This is what we see in detention centers. People being deported for a DUI, traffic violation, for being in a fight in a soccer game, etc.

- The Obama administration replaced worksite raids with audits of employee records.

While ICE is arresting fewer immigrant workers, these workers are at greater chance of losing their jobs.

- After enforcement actions, some community members are so paralyzed with fear that they refuse to leave their homes or answer their door.

Think for a minute... how would you feel being, spit on, mocked, exposed, rejected, and

unwelcomed? In our biblical tradition we have stories about individuals, families and nations treated this way. We also have the story of the crucifixion – Jesus carrying the cross toward

Golgotha. It was in that journey that Simon, Veronica, and other women came to be with him, to carry the cross, to support him.

I believe many of you, if not all – and the mission of Pax Christi for sure – are the Simons,

Mary's, Veronica's. We do need people along the way, to provide water and company to continue the journey.

When I am with immigrants I continuously remind them about the story of Joshua. The story tells us that Yaweah told the people of Israel, “you will enter into Jericho”.. There was a promise. Joshua received specific instructions to go around Jericho. I challenge my immigrant brothers and sisters to do the same. How are we going around and around the walls of ignorance, the walls of fear, the walls of hatred, the walls of rejection, and the walls of war....

....In which round are we? It was in the 7th round that the walls fell and people entered into Jericho as God promised.

In this image I can also picture you accompanying our undocumented brothers and sisters going around and around these walls. The reign of God is expressed in you, in your desire to learn, to be connected, and to raise your voice on behalf of your brothers and sisters. Know Justice, Know Peace: Ending War at Home and Abroad.

In the eyes of God it is unjust for poor people, who came to this country seeking economic survival, to live in a war zone – everyday fear in the workplace (because of raids, e-verify) and everyday fear at home (because of detention and deportation). Undocumented immigrants were financially beaten at home – forced to move, to look for opportunities to survive – and now they are beaten again with the weapons of anti-immigrant legislation, anti-immigrant rhetoric and hate activities, and the weapons of enforcement. Doesn't this make you think about several stories in the Scriptures including the story of the Hebrews?

Responding with the weapons of the kingdom.

So how do we respond to with the weapons of the kingdom?

How could I hold your hand and say, “ you're not alone”... I'm with you”... “You're welcomed”. “You're received in my heart, in my prayer, in my family, in my actions, in this

country.”

I'm privileged to work in a city where I've found people of faith who say precisely this to our undocumented brothers and sisters. After several years of positioning immigration as a critical issue in the mission of the Church, Cardinal George gave us the opportunity to create an office dedicated exclusively to immigrant issues. We've been working on the Justice for Immigrants campaign since 2005. I'm honored to work with prophets, both women and men. We have a network called Priests for Justice for Immigrants with around 200 priests who have been faithfully bringing their voice of solidarity, but also denouncing unjust actions towards immigrants, as recently on the Arizona legislation. We also have a network called Sisters and Brothers of Immigrants representing 47 religious orders. They are continuously developing actions of solidarity, justice and peace.

Embracing immigrants in the war zone

Pastoral Care in Detention Centers

How do we embrace immigrants in the war zone?

I hope you have already heard about two sisters of Mercy whom I call “iron sisters”: Srs. Pat

Murphy and Sr. JoAnn Persh. These are women of faith through whom God is teaching me how to be determined, to be patient, to be resilient, and to always question any system that oppresses the poor. For two years these sisters took leadership, seeking a legislation that allows undocumented detainees the right to pastoral care in detention centers. Before this law, undocumented detainees were not allowed even see a priest, a rabbi or imam. Now there is an inter-faith team providing pastoral care in two detention centers – listening to detainees, supporting them – embracing them – and connecting their separated families to our ministry of

accompaniment in parishes. We are also present for court watch, so judges treat detainees with dignity during hearings conducted by tele-video conferencing. In many cases families are not able to attend because they themselves are undocumented. In their place, people of faith represent their families. Court watches go on, week after week. Just as we have been praying the rosary for 3 ½ years, every Friday at 7:15 am – whether is 10-below zero or 100-degree, Christmas or New Year's.

As you might know, working with ICE is not easy. They can change their rules anytime, but we are learning how to maintain a good relationship for the sake of detainees and families. It breaks my heart that the sisters get up at 3:00 am in order to be at Broadview at 4:30. The ministry is between 4:30-6:30 am. Every Friday we see mothers, wives, son and daughters being separated. Every Friday we learn that a simple traffic violation could be a case of deportation. Every Friday there is an average of 70 people being deported and families separated. Every Friday we see people shackled by their hands, legs, waist and caged on buses treated as the most dangerous criminals.

We learned that in border cities around Mexico there is a ministry called Casa del Migrante, run by the Scalabrinians. Casa del Migrante provides medical assistance, social service, food and shelter. We connected with them and developed a card with information on this ministry in Nuevo Laredo. This card is given to people being deported as well to as their families. We encourage them to go to this safe place where they can stay until they are connected with their final destination. Their families from Chicago could call on Friday night to find out how they arrived in Nuevo Laredo. This ministry is critical, especially given the extreme violence in

border towns.

So, deportees could be shackled, but embraced by this ministry in Chicago. Immigrants could be aborted from this country, but welcomed in Casa del Migrante. We have a God who welcomes the stranger, who tends the wounds of the families who are separated. What a privilege to work with the weapons of the Kingdom of God!

What could you do?

I invite you to find out if there is a detention center in your city, county or state. You might check our information table for the directory of detention centers. I should tell you, they are located in the most remote places intentionally, so they are difficult to access and difficult to identify.

I'd recommend the following.

1) **Vigil:** organize a prayer vigil once per month, perhaps during Lent or Advent

2) **Accompaniment:** you don't have to speak Spanish or other language. Some detainees have been in this country for many years and speak English. . Sr. JoAnn does not speak Spanish and does outstanding ministry. I believe in the language of the Spirit. Find out if there is legislation for pastoral care in that detention center. Find out if someone is already doing this and join that effort. If not, consider how to start an advocacy effort to have pastoral care in your area.

Remember, many people do not receive visits because their own families are undocumented and do not have valid ID for visits at detention centers. Another alternative would be to participate in court watch. Find out where detention hearings are conducted in your area.

3) Legislative shelter/legislation "Posada"

You're probably familiar with the Christmas Latin American tradition of "Posada", or seeking

shelter. We have a new ministry called Pastoral Migratoria – in English it is called Immigrant to Immigrant Ministry. It is a ministry where immigrants reflect on the Scripture from the immigrant perspective. They re-discover their faith, deepen their faith. In one of the retreats they wrote “psalms of immigrants” – their own psalms of their struggles, hopes, connecting with God. Based on their faith they are engaging in actions of service and justice. Agentes de Pastoral Migratoria in Hispanic parishes or agents of Immigrant to Immigrant Ministry in Polish parishes, are developing infrastructure and leadership for educational activities, resources, and accompaniment in the local parish. We’ve already trained and commissioned 350 leaders in 49 Hispanic parishes. They are connecting that reflection, service and justice go together. Their biblical reflection has helped me to understand what the undocumented are doing: they are knocking on the doors of this country as Joseph and Mary did in Bethlehem. Knocking on doors to be received. Knocking on doors to be accepted. Knocking on doors for human dignity, for freedom, for hope, for peace. We are seeking shelter as Joseph and Mary. We are looking for LEGISLATIVE SHELTER.. a COMPASSIONATE COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM.

Thank you for joining **the journey for LEGISLATIVE SHELTER**. For ending war at home with the weapons of the kingdom ... for seeking justice, for seeking peace for your undocumented brothers and sisters who need your heart, your hand and your action in the journey ahead. Let me finish with a verse that speaks to me of the importance of contemplation and action:

“The LORD himself will fight for you; you have only to keep still.” It is hard to keep still when the destructive energy of war is around us..... It is hard to stand our ground when we’re being surrounded by enemies, but the scripture says that the **Lord himself will fight for us.** I believe God is also fighting for the poor, for the undocumented immigrant **through you and with you.**
Thank you!

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esegura@archchicago.org
www.archchicago.org/immigration