

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR CHAPTER 6

Migrant, Refugee, or Asylum Seeker

Migrant is the classification for someone who is moving between temporary homes (within their origin country or across international borders). This is different from an immigrant, who makes the conscious decision to move and resettle in a new country. Migrants aren't forced to leave their country of origin due to violence, but often have just as urgent needs to find a better future (often a better economic future).

Refugee is the classification for someone who is forced to flee their country of origin due to conflict, violence, or persecution. They are unwilling or unable to return based on a demonstrable threat due to their race, religion, political stance, or social status.

Asylum-seeker is the classification for someone who is seeking international protection from danger in their country of origin, but whose claim for refugee status hasn't been finally decided. Every refugee begins as an asylum-seeker, but not every asylum-seeker will be granted refugee status.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 6: WELCOMING THE STRANGER

THE ORIGINAL SANCTUARY MOVEMENT

"Immigrant families (in America) have provided sanctuary for other immigrants forever." (Rev. Minerva Carcaño, now a bishop in the United Methodist Church)

"(The 1980s saw) a wave of Central American migrants, most of whom were fleeing horrific violence especially in El Salvador and Guatemala. The US government, which gave military training and aid to the governments of El Salvador and Guatemala, rejected more than 90% of Salvadoran asylum requests, insisting that they were simply 'economic migrants.'"

"Pastor John Fife (who is widely credited with igniting the *original* Sanctuary Movement) of Southside Presbyterian Church, and 5 other congregations near the border, were incensed by the cruel negligence on the part of the US government. They believed the migrants were refugees and that they had a religious duty to offer the vulnerable some semblance of safe harbor. In direct defiance of federal law, volunteers began shuttling people across the border to offer them sanctuary in churches."

"The Sanctuary Movement spread to as many as 500 congregations at its peak establishing what some would describe as an underground railroad that transported refugees to Canada. This movement offered legal aid, social services, transportation, resettlement assistance and other forms of support to the refugees. Rev. Carcaño told me it was essentially a public, politicized version of what immigrants had been doing for each other for decades if not centuries. She knows this because she lived it. For families like hers, private forms of sanctuary were simply a way of life." 'I lived in a family that, just out of Christian faith and out of a sense of community, would take in immigrants and they would become family.' As a minister working near the US-Mexico border, Carcaño worked with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to aid Salvadorans who left their country." (She often took immigrants into her own home.)"

"In 1986 the FBI infiltrated Sanctuary movement groups and convicted 9 activists on felony charges (including Fife) that included smuggling and conspiracy. (They served five years probation.)"

"But the sacrifices of the *original* Sanctuary Movement members left a political legacy:

- **1989:** San Francisco municipal leaders pass a 'City of Refugee' ordinance, which ended local cooperation with federal immigration enforcement and extended social services to all, irrespective of legal status
- **1990:** The government settles a class action lawsuit that a number of faith groups had brought against the INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service) on behalf of Guatemalans and Salvadorans, which granted the immigrants new asylum hearings if they met certain criteria."

THE NEW SANCTUARY MOVEMENT

"30 years later (Rev. Allison Harrington of the same) Southside Presbyterian Church, (a congregation of fewer than 150 members faced) the moral challenge of the mass deportation of immigrants by the Obama administration, which removed more than 2.5 million people from 2009 to 2015. (Obama was referred to by) Latinx advocacy groups as 'deporter in chief.' The new movement used sanctuary to prevent deportation but also coupled that with the threat of organizing events – parades, raucous church meetings to draw media attention."

"**Lawyer Margo Cowan** urged **Rev. Harrington** to *very publicly* hold Obama accountable to a pair of ICE internal policy memos. The first discouraged ICE agents from raiding 'sensitive locations,' such as hospitals schools, and places of worship. The second suggested that agents exercise 'prosecutorial discretion,' (i.e.) to prioritize violent undocumented criminals instead of those without a criminal record or who exhibit traits such as stateside family ties and lengthy residence in the country. **Pastor Harrington** reached out to **Rev. Noel Anderson**, a United Church of Christ minister and grassroots coordinator for Church World Services' immigrant rights. Anderson (later) described how the Obama-era ICE memos helped stop as many as 200,000 deportations. (However) he stressed, many undocumented persons who met the criteria of the prosecutorial discretion still slipped through the cracks."

"Such was the case with **Daniel Neyoy Ruiz**, a father who had lived in the US for more than a decade, paid his taxes and lacked a criminal record. In **2011** (he) was pulled over while driving for a tailpipe that was emitting smoke. The officer called the US Border Patrol. **Neyoy Ruiz** was transferred to a state detention center then bailed. For the next 3 years, he tried to get his deportation dropped shelling out \$20,000 in legal fees. By May 2014, (he) was approaching the date of his deportation (and) was directed to Southside Pastor **Rev Harrington**. **Neyoy Ruiz** moved into a windowless room at **Southside Presbyterian Church**. Southside and its allies were betting big that ICE, like the government in the 1980s, wouldn't risk the public relations disaster (of) gun-toting federal agents storming a church to apprehend **Neyoy Ruiz**. (**Rev. Noel Anderson** made sue that) NPR and other national outlets covered **Neyoy Ruiz'** plight. ICE backed down a month after **Neyoy Ruiz** moved into sanctuary. Immigrants and faith leaders stared down the US government and the feds blinked."

"Overtime this small amount of defiance has snowballed into a nationwide interfaith network of progressive-leaning houses of worship and secular immigration advocates known as the **New Sanctuary Movement**. Their work aided undocumented people during the Obama administration (and was) a key force within the broader progressive resistance movement opposing Trump's immigration policies. To understand the New Sanctuary Movement is to understand how the Religious Left builds power through a mixture of moral arguments, liberation theology, and the art of protest."

The Poetry of Protest

(By September 2014, after word of **Neyoy Ruiz's** case got out, the New Sanctuary movement, churches in Phoenix, Tucson, Chicago, and Portland, Oregon were all actively housing immigrants on their property. At least 24 congregations in the US had declared a willingness to do the same and 60 additional communities supported the cause. But sanctuary was not a guaranteed fix for all involved e.g. stays of deportation had to be reexamined every year and people ran the risk of deportation if they left their holy home.)

"The secret to the **scalability of the New Sanctuary Movement** lies in its appeal to the poetry of protest, (i.e.) **orchestrate a demonstration to dramatize a larger moral quandary in a way that attracts media attention. The media encourages the masses to sympathize with the protestors, draws more people to the cause, and - ideally - results in social or legislative change** (e.g. MLK- Edmund Pettis bridge/Rev. William Barber and Moral Mondays). (Results for the New Sanctuary movement: **All but one major religious group - white evangelical Protestants - voiced majority support for immigration reform legislation that included a pathway to citizenship for undocumented people.** (The major faith groups-Christian, Jewish, Moslem, Buddhist-)invoked their sacred scriptures in their support of the movement." (Many faith and oppressed groups) asserted Liberation Theology (i.e.) 'God is on the side of the oppressed,' (as the basis of their support). Houses of worship that (skewed) liberal, wealthy and white were the ones who offered sanctuary because ICE was less likely to kick in the wealthier community's (doors) and many poorer, immigrant-heavy churches (were) scrutinized closely by the authorities."

"The New Sanctuary movement was a faith-led project that offered a tangible, pragmatic, and relatively accessible way to oppose the problem of mass deportation. But the real work was just beginning."

Laying the Groundwork for #Resistance

"Donald Trump's rhetoric and his policies were a direct threat to immigrants and the people of faith who spent years organizing to protect them. **Rev. Harrington** made it clear that Trump's ascension demanded an immediate response from the religious community. And resist they did. (Protestors flooded airports after Trump's Moslem ban and Trump's stance on DACA and 'No ban, no wall, sanctuary for all,' etc.). Under Trump, (the New Sanctuary Movement's) actions were reimagined as prayerful defiance and became a potent mobilizing force and a model for progressives of what resistance to Trump could look like. The movement claimed 450 congregations before Trumps election, by fall 2019 1,200 congregations. (National media also supported the plight of sanctuary.)"

"As of March 2019, the Trump administration averaged 4,219 arrests of undocumented immigrants with no criminal record (Obama's average-1,352 arrests each month in his final 2 years). (In 2019 Lawyer Margo Cowan, who originally had recommended church sanctuary, no longer recommended it during the Trump administration because it had 'no positive results other than put a bullseye' on the churches). **Rev. Harrington:** 'A lot of folk (secretly took) people in their homes for sanctuary. There's zero tolerance (so), nobody has a strong enough case underneath this administration.'"

Backlash to the Backlash

"(During his first 2 years in office, Trump had an adversarial posture toward faith groups that challenged his immigration policies.) **Faith-based pushback** (to Trump's zero tolerance and child separation) came from Church World Service, the Union for Reform Judaism, the Presbyterian and Episcopal churches, and the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, Rev. William Barber laid out precisely why the Trump administration's policies served to strengthen their cause: 'Evil always goes too far and these dark moments now may just be the birth pangs of our deliverance; their actions increased, intensified, and emboldened our activism.'"

"(When AG Jeff Sessions quoted scripture) to justify the policies (Progressive as well as Conservative traditions alike published) strongly worded refutations. The debacle eroded the Trump administration's claim to the moral high ground on immigration."

"The endless stream of activism was exhausting as Progressives scrambled to respond to a seemingly infinite barrage of crises under Trump. When asked what motivated her, Rev. Harrington offered a natter-of-fact answer, 'We're commanded to do this work.'"

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR CHAPTER 6

VOX: The Demise of America's Asylum System under Trump, Explained

Asylum seekers face barriers at every step, from arriving in Mexico to making their case in immigration court.

By [Nicole Narea@nicolenarea](mailto:Nicole.Narea@nicolenarea) Nov 5, 2019,

"In the almost three years since President Donald Trump took office, the US asylum system has almost become unrecognizable. The administration has built up, layer by layer, a series of impediments in Central America, at the border, in detention centers, and in the immigration courts that have made obtaining asylum nearly impossible. The changes have been made quietly and have never been able to inspire the kind of public outrage toward the "zero tolerance" policy that led to family separation in spring 2018. Trump ultimately backed down on separating families in immigration detention. But the policy was only one piece of a much broader, concerted effort to stymie asylum seekers orchestrated by White House senior adviser Stephen Miller — who, despite retreating from public view while Trump has been in office, has been instrumental in implementing policies that immigration restrictionists have long sought."

(For full article see Attachment)