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## SEE, JUDGE, ACT: A model for Catholic communities to engage in Refugee ministry”.

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### Introduction

The current refugee and forced migration crisis throughout the world is an extraordinarily complex challenge that demands much from states, international secular institutions, and from faith and secular communities. For faith communities, we rely on our scriptures and traditions, national and international law, and our dialogue and collaboration with secular institutions to guide us in our response to a current crisis which has not seen the likes since World War II. The current national climate in the United States that has seen an uptick of xenophobia, racism, and islamophobia due to a protracted national populism,<sup>1</sup> has helped to create enormous fragmentation and compromised our ability as a nation to rise to the challenge as a nation.

This final project reflects some learnings from this summer’s summer course on refugees and forced migration, particularly from the Middle East and North Africa, that is from Morocco to Iran, roughly equivalent to what is called the *Greater Middle East (MENA)*. More specifically, I will also look at the local challenges of refugees and forced migration within the state of Massachusetts, and within our particularly area of the state. The goal locally is to support and implement effective settlement in the state; to promote the full participation of new citizens in the economic, social, and civic life of the state; and to foster a public environment that recognizes and supports the ethnic and cultural diversity of the state. Our religious institutions are an important resource in this regard.

How does our faith inform us in these critical issues of our day? The resources we bring come from the liminal sources of our faith traditions. In the Roman Catholic stream, scripture and the post-biblical tradition of the Church are important sources of inspiration and action. Particularly, Catholic *Social Teaching* bears a history for crucial social issues that inform our concerns around immigration reform and the vital response to refugees seeking solace elsewhere. Some scripture passages will be shared, along with elements from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, as well as the concerns from the Bishops of the United States on how we need to consider those escaping their homelands and seeking shelter elsewhere.

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<sup>1</sup> There is a proliferation of studies being done on the current right-wing populism that has taken root in both Europe and the United States. One interesting study is by John B. Judis, entitled, *The Populist Explosion: how the Great Recession Transformed American and European Politics*. (Colombia Global Reports: New York, 2016)

## A General Portrayal

The source of many, but not all refugees today is MENA. It is a large, expansive territory with over 381 million people which has been largely unstable since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the creation of the state of Israel as a Jewish state among Arab and Muslim Countries, the Iran-Iraq War, Iran-Saudi Arabia proxy conflict, and the rise of terrorism.<sup>2</sup> It is forced migration and refugees from the MENA that our course addressed mainly, and their extraordinary journeys to Europe and the United States. Other countries of destination have taken in the lion's share, with Turkey accepting around 2.5 million Syrian refugees, Lebanon 1.1 million, and Jordan, around 664,000, among others.<sup>3</sup>

Not all current refugees are escaping violence and poverty outside the borders of their homelands due to the rise of terrorism. Many are also internally displaced (ID). There are also other factors that are considered in an interplay of politics, economics, and violence. Other root causes include development and created population displacement, global climate change and environmental stress, as well as trafficking.<sup>4</sup> Increasingly, since the Cold War, internal conflicts have targeted civilian populations, more often within countries than across international borders. The *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees* has worked more with internally displaced refugees such as the war in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990's, among others. UN member states have not expanded the mandate of the UNHCR to aid those forced to move because of natural disasters or climate change, whose numbers include around 22.5 million people in the past eight years.<sup>5</sup>

## Some Catholic Sources of Inspiration, Action, and Advocacy

Both scripture and Church tradition inform the decisions we make every day in many matters, including the refugee crisis, not only as individuals, but in our desire to bring our faith to bear to the actions of our communities and nation. The voice of faith has something crucial to contribute in the many voices that are in the dialogue, both religious and secular.

***Exodus 22:21: "You shall not oppress or afflict a resident alien, for you were once aliens residing in the land of Egypt."***

Both the Old and New Testaments tell compelling stories of refugees forced to flee because of persecution. The very people who were victims of slavery through the dominance of the Egyptian empire found escape through the power of God's deliverance. The biblical account tracks escape from slavery into a period of trial. The search of the "promised land" is indeed a journey in the desert of thirst, confusion, lost ideals, and shattered dreams. Finally, God fulfilled his ancient promise and settled them on the land that they could finally call home. But it was not exactly the home they originally longed for.

"You shall treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you; have the same love for him as for yourself; for you too were once aliens in the land of Egypt" (Lv 19:33-34). This, echoed in Leviticus 24:22 as well, underlines the meaning of the stranger. In these ancient

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<sup>2</sup> "World Bank Definition: MENA". Worldbank.org. Retrieved 28 November 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth W. Collier and Charles R. Strain (with Catholic Relief Services). *Global Migration: What's Happening, Why, and a Just Response*. (Anselm Academic: Minnesota, 2017) 8.

<sup>4</sup> Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, Gil Loescher, Katy Long, Nando Signona eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies*. (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2014) xv.

<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth W. Collier and Charles R. Strain, 9, 22-23.

times, a foreigner had no rights except in his own land. In some places, stranger meant “enemy.” The trauma of the desert experience impelled Moses to impose a new way of viewing the stranger, not as enemy, but co-sojourner in God’s covenant with Israel.

***Hebrews 13:1: “Do not neglect hospitality, for through it some have unknowingly entertained angels.”***

Echoing the sense of welcoming and hearth for the stranger in Exodus, this passage in the book of Hebrews was also a reminder to protect fellow Jews who believed in Christ and may not have any other shelter to go to, given the persecution of the time. The delightful juxtaposition of imagining that the stranger you shelter may indeed be a special messenger from the Lord, echoing the story of Abraham and Lot who entertained angels unawares. (Genesis 18:19)

In the arduous and painstaking journey of refugees fleeing from persecution, war and poverty, the experience of their suffering propels them into the gates of our homes and hearts. Their arrival becomes an opportunity to express the compassion of Christ to those who need our love. In a flipped situation, perhaps we may even become messengers of God to those seeking shelter and protection.

***Matthew 25:35: “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me.”***

Jesus reiterates the Old Testament command to love and care for the stranger, a criterion by which we shall be judged: “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me” (Mt 25:35). This verse is folded into the final consummation of the world and final judgement. The image of the Son of Man coming in glory reflects imagery from Daniel 7:13-14 and recalls other places in Matthew’s Gospel where Jesus foretells the coming judgment (24:30-31; 26:64). That judgement will in part hinge upon the extraordinary acts of compassion for those in most need; the hungry, the stranger looking for shelter and protection. The blessing of the Father and admittance to the heavenly kingdom depends upon such acts of selflessness.

What is striking in Matthew, as well as the other gospels, how much of our love of God is wrapped up in our love for each other, in the concrete needs of life, and how much depends on it, all of destiny. Compassion is at the heart of our discipleship.

Some Instances in the Catechism of the Catholic Church

*The following outline two specific areas where the concerns of migrants and refugees play out in contemporary times: one is the context of families where these tough issues are faced, and the other is the responsibility of more prosperous nations to those who are more in need, or suffer distress. The impact on families make up a significant concern in policy and action.*

1911: Vatican II document, *Gaudium et Spes*: “The unity of the human family, embracing people who enjoy equal natural dignity, implies a universal common good...the need to promote the general improvement of developing countries, or to alleviate the distressing conditions in which refugees dispersed throughout the world find themselves, or also to assist migrants and their families, to alleviate the distressing conditions in which refugees dispersed throughout the world find themselves, or also to assist migrants and their families.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The number references are the numbers referenced in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. (Libreria Editrice Vaticana: Vatican City, 1997).

2211: “The political community has a duty to honor the family, to assist it, and to ensure especially... the right to private property, to free enterprise, to obtain work and housing, *and the right to emigrate.*”

2241: “The more prosperous nations are obliged, to the extent they are able, to welcome the foreigner in search of the security and means of livelihood which he cannot find in his country of origin. Public authorities should see to it that the natural right is respected that places a guest under the protection of those who receive him.”

2433: “Access to employment and to professions must be open to all without unjust discrimination; men and women, healthy and disabled, natives and immigrants. For its part society should, according to circumstances, help citizens find work and employment.”

#### Pastoral Letters of the US Catholic Bishops

Considering the commemoration of World Refugee Day in the Jubilee year of 2000, the Catholic Bishops issued a pastoral letter entitled, *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity*. They summed up the pastoral thrust toward immigrants and refugees thus:

*‘Unity in diversity is the vision that we bishops, as pastors of the Church in the United States, offer to our people as they welcome the new immigrants and refugees who come to our shores. In the past thirty-five years the number and variety of immigrants coming to the United States have provided a great challenge for us as pastors. Previous immigrants had come predominantly from Europe or as slaves from Africa, but many of the new immigrants come from Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific Islands, the Middle East, Africa, Eastern Europe, and the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. Though a good number come as skilled workers and professionals, the greater number come as refugees and immigrants on the edge of survival; large numbers join families already here; others arrive without proper documents. Many were forced to leave their homeland because of a well-founded fear of persecution. This diversity of ethnicity, education, and social class challenges us as pastors to welcome these new immigrants and help them join our communities in ways that are respectful of their cultures and in ways that mutually enrich the immigrants and the receiving Church.’<sup>7</sup>*

Three years later, The US Catholic Bishops, together with the Bishops of Mexico, created a bi-national pastoral letter titled, *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope*. Based on urgent pastoral concerns on both sides of the borders, the Bishops presented a clarion call to consider the common history of migration and faith in Christ shared by both countries and the common need of solidarity shared in the necessity of immigration, with special concern for indigenous peoples.<sup>8</sup> By 2013, a call to immigration reform was articulated that includes the following:

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<sup>7</sup> United States Catholic Bishops Conference. *Welcoming the Stranger Among us: Unity in Diversity*. Issued November 15, 2000. <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/pastoral-care-of-migrants-refugees-and-travelers/resources/welcoming-the-stranger-among-us-unity-in-diversity.cfm#conclusion>

<sup>8</sup> United States Catholic Bishops Conference. *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope*. Issued January 22, 2003. <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/immigration/strangers-no-longer-together-on-the-journey-of-hope.cfm>

- **Earned Legalization:** An earned legalization program would allow foreign nationals of good moral character who are living in the United States to apply to adjust their status to obtain lawful permanent residence.
- **Future Worker Program:** A worker program to permit foreign-born workers to enter the country safely and legally would help reduce illegal immigration and the loss of life in the American desert.
- **Family-based Immigration Reform:** Changes in family-based immigration should be made to increase the number of family visas available and reduce family reunification waiting times.
- **Restoration of Due Process Rights:** Due process rights taken away by the 1996 *Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA)* should be restored.
- **Addressing Root Causes:** Congress should examine the root causes of migration, such as under-development and poverty in sending countries, and seek long-term solutions.
- **Enforcement:** The Bishops also believe that by increasing lawful means for migrants to enter, live, and work in the United States, law enforcement will be better able to focus upon those who truly threaten public safety.<sup>9</sup>

Although the Catholic Church's position on immigration and refugees, based on a framework of human rights, is relatively clear, there is often a gap between what is a clear-cut pathway in immigration reform and the position of ordinary Catholics which may differ from Church teaching dramatically. Like other Christian traditions, "civil religion" can blur the lines of political divisions and guides in our faith commitment in this country. When faith is harnessed to a conservative political ideology that discourages immigration and refugee assistance, it withers. And something truly troubling can occur; believers can confuse the ideology with faith itself. This is the case, not only regarding migration and refugees, but other areas, including concerns over global climate change.<sup>10</sup>

### Christian/Muslim/Secular Engagement

Refugees and forced migrants from MENA are predominantly Muslims and Christians. In the United States for example in 2016, 46% of the refugees were Muslim, and 44% were Christian. American public opinion has tragically discouraged the acceptance of many refugees in our history. In that same year, Europe saw a little more than one million seek asylum in the EU, most pouring out of the war and violence of Syria. The Pew Research Center reports that that the highest share of displacement was indeed from the Middle East, among Syrians for example, 12.5 million people were displaced as of the fall of 2016, about six-in-ten. The largest of that number are internally displaced, about 6.5 million.<sup>11</sup>

Among the faithful, Muslims in forced migration outnumbered Christians who left the MENA in significant numbers. In the United States, A total of 38,901 Muslim refugees entered the U.S. in fiscal year 2016, making up almost half (46%) of the nearly 85,000 refugees who entered the country in that period, according to a Pew Research Center analysis of data from the State Department's Refugee

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<sup>9</sup> United States Catholic Bishops Conference. *Catholic Church's Position on Immigration Reform*. Migration and Refugee Services/Office of Migration Policy and Public Affairs, August 2013. <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/immigration/churchteachingonimmigrationreform.cfm>

<sup>10</sup> Stephen Schneck is the Director of the Institute for Policy Research and Catholic Studies at The Catholic University of America. *The Political Crisis of 'Conservative Catholicism'*. US Catholic magazine, published January 4, 2016.

<sup>11</sup> Phillip Conner and Jens Manuel Krogstad. Key facts about the world's refugees. Pew Research Center, October 5, 2016. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/10/05/key-facts-about-the-worlds-refugees/>

Processing Center. That means the U.S. has admitted the highest number of Muslim refugees of any year since data on self-reported religious affiliations first became publicly available in 2002.

Almost the same number of Christian (37,521) as Muslim refugees were admitted in fiscal 2016, which ended Sept. 30. A slightly lower share of 2016's refugees were Christian (44%) than Muslim, the first time that has happened since fiscal 2006, when a large number of Somali refugees entered the U.S.<sup>12</sup>

There are many significant issues that arise from large numbers of diverse Muslims and Christians as refugees. Not only because of religious affiliation, but refugees in Europe and the United States tend to be younger than the surrounding population by and large. In Europe, which is highly secularized, Muslims who arrived from the MENA, have a medium age of 32, eight years younger than the medium age for all Europeans. Religiously unaffiliated people in Europe, including atheists, agnostics, and those who bear no religion have a medium age of 37. European Christian's medium age in Europe is 42.<sup>13</sup> As in Germany, this may mean a new needed workforce for an aging local population, as in Germany. It also may mean competition for jobs with local citizens where work may not be as plentiful, depending in the areas. This of course can be a recipe for social tensions, and, an increase in the negative views of Islam among the local residents.

Dr. Tuba Isik mentioned in her address at the Luce-Hartford conference in May 2017 that the challenges new Muslim refugees offer to German society, where a large influx of new Muslim refugees and immigrants arrived, are significant. In Germany, Dr. Isik spoke of an increase in the local perception of refugees as a threat. The diversity of Muslims and Islamic denominations and schools of jurisprudence and theology also may cause tensions as the Muslim population diversifies. There is an urgency for local mosques to establish programs and projects for newly incoming refugees. For Christians newly arrived in Germany, who tend to come from orthodox and eastern traditions, the awareness of diversity created within the Christian population is significant. Here, ecumenical engagement becomes a higher priority, particularly with the local Protestant and Roman Catholic populations.<sup>14</sup>

Another impact is the effect of a large number of practicing religious people in largely secular societies of Europe where religion is often viewed as antiquated. Tensions also have arisen over religion. The centrality of Islam in the lives of so many European Muslims is hard for increasingly secular Scandinavians, Germans, and Frenchmen to comprehend. Europeans worry that Islam will make it difficult for their Muslim neighbors to accept many of the continent's core values, such as tolerance, democracy, and equal rights for women. Tensions more recently in France saw ban of burqas among some Muslim women in its approach to a very strong national secularism. Interfaith and secular exchange is crucial to learning about new neighbors, and how to learn to slowly honor the diversity being created. It is not an easy task. Dialogue and meaningful engagement around common issues among the faith traditions and secular humanism is crucial in mitigating these tensions, fostering

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<sup>12</sup> Katayoun Kishi. Most refugees who enter the US as religious minorities are Christians. Pew Research Center, February 7, 2017. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/02/07/most-refugees-who-enter-the-u-s-as-religious-minorities-are-christians/>

<sup>13</sup> Conrad Hackett. 5 Facts about the Muslim population in Europe. Pew Research Center, July 19, 2016. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/07/19/5-facts-about-the-muslim-population-in-europe/>

<sup>14</sup> Dr. Tuba Isik. The Impact of the Recent Forced Migration Crisis on Muslim European Identity. Institute of Islamic Theology, University of Paderborn, Germany. Given at the Luce-Hartford Conference Examines Refugee Crisis in Europe and the U.S., Hartford Seminary, May 22-24, 2017. <http://www.hartsem.edu/2017/05/first-luce-hartford-conference-tackles-refugee-crisis-in-europe-and-the-u-s/>



integration of the new populations, and an increasing acceptance of local residents who may not be accustomed to the enormous cultural diversity.

In France, this is not exactly new. The increase of anti-semitism and Islamophobia has brought new questions to the current relationship of religion and the state. It is illegal for the French government to acknowledge ethnic and religious differences. But they are engaging with religious groups, particularly with Muslims, to keep the channels of pragmatic communication open, despite the voices of political opposition. With the new centrist government of Emmanuel Macron, even more inroads to dialogue may be possible.<sup>15</sup>

The United States has a long history of newly arrived refugees and immigrants. By and large, religious pluralism has always been a work in progress. From the Aliens and Seditions Act of 1789, Protestant Crusade, Chinese Exclusion, Anti-Catholicism, the Americanization Campaign of 1911, the English Only Movement of the 1980's and the present anti-immigration fervor show that historically, religious tolerance and acceptance was never easy to come by.<sup>16</sup> Today, the nativist perspective, the increase in the negative views of religious and ethnic minorities, as well as a new emphasis on overt racism has helped to create an environment of tension that is peppered with a proliferation of cases of assaults against Muslims, particularly Muslim women. A great deal of interfaith dialogue and exchange in the United States is done within this framework of *Islamophobia*, that affects not only Muslims, but others as well, such as Sikhs, often mistaken by non-Muslims as Muslim.

The Center for American-Islamic Relations published their annual *Civil Rights Report 2017*, entitled *The Empowerment of Hate*. In it they chronicle bias incidents and case studies, with a special focus on the political environment, discriminatory airline removals, bank account closures, the impact of Islamophobia in educational institutions, as well as discrimination at the workplace. It begins:

*"Harassment, a non-violent or non-threatening bias incident, was the most frequent type of abuse in 2016, accounting for 18 percent of the total number of incidents. Incidents during which the complainant was questioned by FBI employees or otherwise appeared to be inappropriately targeted by the agency made up 15 percent of cases, making this the second largest category. Employment issues—including denial of work, being passed over for promotion, or harassment by a supervisor or other senior staff—were the third largest category, accounting for 13 percent of the total. Hate crimes placed fourth, accounting for 12 percent of the cases CAIR documented. Denials of religious accommodation, for instance when a complainant is denied permission to wear a headscarf at work or have a Quran in their jail cell, were the fifth most frequent, accounting for 8 percent of total anti-Muslim bias incidents."*<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> The Conversation Website. Secular France is stranger to interfaith dialogue – now it is more vital than ever. August 12, 2016. <http://theconversation.com/secular-france-is-no-stranger-to-interfaith-dialogue-now-it-is-more-vital-than-ever-63478> Accessed July 9, 2017.

<sup>16</sup> James Crawford for the National Immigration Forum 2001. *Cycles of Nativism in US History*. <http://www.colorado.edu/AmStudies/lewis/1025/cyclesnativism.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Council on American-Islamic Relations. *Civil Rights Report 2017: The Empowerment of Hate*. (CAIR: Washington DC, 2017) 2.

Within the context of these tensions, interfaith dialogue has also been strengthened, in part in response to the increase of religiously bias incidents. The national organizations of the Council for American-Islamic Relations are one of many important institutions working closely with local religious and civic leaders across the nation. The Islamic Society of North America, Shoulder to Shoulder, The Bridge Initiative of Georgetown University, the Parliament of World's Religions, *The Hizmet Movement* (Peace Islands Institute), and many denominational churches, synagogues, temples, and mosques are building bridges of dialogue, engagement, and cooperation. Even though many refugees from MENA have been temporarily banned from entering the United States because of the Supreme Court's decision to uphold certain elements of the Trump Administrations travel ban on June 26, 2017, the educational, civic, and religious spaces of the country are places where tolerance, acceptance, dialogue, and reconciliation are fostered through these dialogue partners, and more. As our country continues to diversify religiously and culturally, we can push back on the resistance and disdain that has coalesced in different parts of the country.<sup>18</sup>

### Refugees and Forced Migration in Massachusetts

Up to this point, I have attempted to underline some key issues in the escalation of the refugee crisis from MENA to both Europe and the United States. The resources of this course were extraordinary opportunities in the conference with speakers and panelists that represented both European and American concerns in response to the realities of forced migration and refugees. The opportunities and challenges religiously, and socio-politically to respond to this crisis with concern and faith-filled love exist in sweeping, global terms, as well as nationwide. The state of Massachusetts, where I presently reside, also contributes in very specific ways to the influx of refugees and immigrants. I had an opportunity to interview the outreach coordinator for the *Office for Refugees and Immigrants*. The goal of this final project is to create a model for a program, some type of public engagement on this vital area of concern. In this light, I would like to narrow the focus of this paper to the state of Massachusetts, and particularly in our local area, which includes Middlesex and Worcester counties. In doing so, I will conclude with a model of a program for public engagement which may be of service to our local area, together with our newer neighbors.

Mary Truong serves as Executive Director of the *Massachusetts Office for Refugees and Immigrants*. In 1985 the Massachusetts Office of Refugee Resettlement was designated by executive order. In 1992, the state legislature established the Office for Refugees and Immigrants<sup>19</sup> (. The office administers programs that provide direct services through a network of voluntary resettlement agencies and faith based organizations which are able to serve the culturally and linguistically diverse needs of newcomers. Their programs include: Citizenship for New Americans Program, Elder Refugee Services, Micro-Enterprise Achievement Program, Refugee Health Promotion Program, Refugee Case Management, Reugee Cash Assistance, Refugee Employment Services, Refugee Health Assessment, Refugee Medical Assistance, Refugee School Impact Program, Social Admustment Services, and Unaccompanied Refugee Minor Program.

The demography of the refugee population in Massachusetts somehow mirrors the demography in other parts of the country. In the Annual Report of 2016, the ORI reports that each year approximaely

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<sup>18</sup> Reference could be made to the Anti-Sharia Rallies organized by CAIR in a number of cities nationwide. CAIR is one of the largest anti-Muslim hate groups in the US with around 1000 locations:

<https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/act-america>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/ori/>



2,400 new individuals are welcomed into the state. Of that number, the overwhelming majority are new refugees, with about 331 others that fall into other categories: Asylee, Cuban/Haitian entrant, certain Amerasians from Vietnam, certified victims of a severe form of trafficking, and certain Afghan and Iraqi special immigrants. At the same time, Massachusetts welcomes persons from more than 25 countries. In recent years the largest refugee populations have been from Iraq, Somalia, and Bhutan. Most of these are adults, with 33% of them being children or teenagers.<sup>20</sup> The information for 2016 is still forthcoming.

These individuals and families are resettled amongst various regions in the state. 49% of new arrivals resettle in eastern Massachusetts, closer to the urban center of Boston, 23% in central Massachusetts, and 28% in the western portion of the state. Prominent cities are Boston, Lowell, Lynn, Springfield, West Springfield and Worcester, with other cities receiving them in small numbers. As of this report, which is two years old, they projected that in 2016 the state should receive between 1,750 and 1,925 refugee arrivals from outside the United States. ORI in part acts as a conduit for funding, from both federal and state sources, and works in partnership with local organizations and faith based communities that provide specific services to refugees in their area.<sup>21</sup>

### Jewish Family Service of Metrowest

Our religious institution in Holliston, Massachusetts, where I currently reside, is called the Our Lady of Fatima Shrine. Here we provide space and opportunity for prayer, and space for programs in large, expansive grounds. Most of the programming that occurs comes from ethnic communities from around the Boston and metrowest area. Portuguese, Latino, Filipino, Brazilian, Kenyan, Haitian, and other faith groups use our facilities for a time to get away, and for religious inspiration through their own cultural identities. That said, the great variety of cultures and new arrivals from other parts of the world make up the rich diversity of our communities. *The Jewish Family Service of Metrowest* in Framingham, is one of the main partners in our area with the Office of Refugees and Immigrants. They provide services to these other communities that have an important impact in our area.

They specialize in a special program for Syrian refugees, entitled the *JFS Syrian Refugee Humanitarian Project*. This humanitarian project is a coalition across eastern Massachusetts that includes synagogues, Islamic centers, academia, and the medical community to provide safety, hope and opportunity to Syrian war refugees. As a faith-based organization it teams with Muslim communities in the area. Most of the refugees who already arrived, were in transit from both Jordan and Turkey. *Marisa Fox-Bevilacqua* tells the story of "Fatima", a 5-year-old Syrian girl whose family recently came to the United States and is building a new life with the help of JFS. Fatima's family was lucky, not only to escape the devastation, but also to have arrived before the President's executive order was signed, which abruptly stopped the journey of many other families desperate to find sanctuary.<sup>22</sup>

To address this injustice, JFS has joined with over 17 Boston Jewish organizations in a [Communal Joint Statement on Immigration and Refugees](#) — "We stand together on the side of empathy and religious tolerance and we urge the administration to open the gates of compassion to those seeking safety, regardless of their faith or country of origin."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Annual Report 2015 of the Massachusetts Office for Refugees and Immigrants (ORI), 4-5.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>22</sup> The website of the JFS: <http://www.ifsmw.org/JFS-Refugees-Resettlement.html>

<sup>23</sup> The *Haaretz Newspaper* published this story January 30, 2017: <http://www.ifsmw.org/PDF/Refugees-Boston-tea-party.pdf>

What is striking is not only the humanitarian service provided here to refugee families, but the faith based institutions that find this work vital to their faith response. The Jewish community, together with others are helping us understand, in our local area, the vitality and power of faith. Eboo Patel, a Muslim and founder of Interfaith Youth Core, speaks of his own interfaith awakening: “My admiration for (Dorothy) Day and the Catholic Worker movement helped me see religion through new eyes. It occurred to me that many of my heroes—Martin Luther King Jr., Mahatma Gandhi, Malcolm X, Mother Teresa, Archbishop Tutu, the Dalai Lama—were people of deep faith, people whose religions played a central role in the work they did. What’s more, they were from different religious communities, Catholic, Buddhist, Baptist, Episcopalian, Hindu, and Muslim. Something about how these people connected with their respective traditions had given them great courage and power. How could I ever have thought religion was irrelevant?”<sup>24</sup>

### [A Model for Interfaith Engagement on Refugees and Forced Migration in the Metrowest area of Massachusetts](#)

In this final section I would like to present a model for public engagement that brings religious and social diversity together as allies in our response to the ongoing crisis of refugees and forced migration on a local level. There are *patterns of identity and interaction* that is the frame from such a program that both informs, deepens understanding, and generates motivation to act together. I would suggest that the most socially significant acts are indeed interfaith acts. Yet the word interfaith can belie a limiting of what partners are available in any given local area. Here are four suggestions that widen what we immediately consider “interfaith”:

- a) The first pattern to pay attention to is the world religions that are represented in the area, who are represented in refugee families and their helpers in local agencies.
- b) The second pattern is Intrafaith diversity, the doctrinal variety within every tradition and community.
- c) The third pattern is intersectional identities. No one is defined entirely by his or her religious identity. Religious identity also intersects with race, class, gender, geography, politics, ethnicity, nationality, and sexuality.
- d) The fourth pattern are the religiously unaffiliated. They are atheists, the unaffiliated from religious traditions who are seekers, and secular humanists, all of whom seek community to share secular values.<sup>25</sup>

A program that engages the public in this vital area requires attention to these patterns of identity and interaction in planners, participants, and others that are impacted. Moreover, I would like to present a model, by which a variety of programs are possible that employs the “see-judge-act” method for exploring global migration in its multiple shapes and forms. This method was first developed by French priests working with young workers seeking justice during the 1950’s in a movement called Catholic Action. The method was further developed in Latin America in the late 1960’s, as priests, sisters, and lay catechists convened small groups of peasants to grapple with unjust structures oppressing the vulnerable. Later, it was adapted to a more contemporary model in the US called the [Pastoral Circle through the Center of Concern](#) in Washington, DC.

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<sup>24</sup> Eboo Patel. *Interfaith Leadership: A Primer*. Beacon Press (Boston: 2016) 24-25.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 78-81.

## SEE

What is going on right now with refugees and those in forced migration from MENA to our area? It is to view the world through the eyes of refugees and their communities, examining both what one knows and does not know about refugees. It requires many questions to understand why people uproot themselves, or are uprooted forcefully. We live in what some social scientists call “lifestyle enclaves,” where people associate primarily with others of the same class, level of education, political emphasis, or race. Most of us do not have direct contact with refugees, or migrants. Their stories are key to this first stage. Because of the complexity of social, religious, economic, political, and geographical forces. This complexity requires asking questions about specific refugee stories:

- Why have these people uprooted themselves from the culture, language, and homeland of their family?
- What are the political, environmental, and social forces that make living in their homeland untenable or dehumanizing?
- What, if any, are the living alternatives within their own country?
- What are stories of their plight at home, during migration, and their lives after relocating?<sup>26</sup>

**The important resources at this first stage of a program are the refugees themselves.**

## JUDGE

The second stage of this model is evaluative. It involves taking the stories, data, and research gained in the first step and analyzing them through the lenses of our religious traditions and secular ethos. For us Catholics, that would focus on *Catholic Social Teaching*. **The main actors here are the refugees and actors involved in service to refugee families, as well as other religious and non-religious sources** that help to understand two things: the unique perspective of each faith or ethic, and second, how these perspectives intersect with one another. In our area, the ORI and the JFS are two organizations, among others that bear significant participation.

Social analysis drawn from economics, psychology, criminal justice, and sociology. Possible questions may include the following:

- Whose voices dominate in discussions about global migration? Why? Whose voices are missing? Why.
- What do refugees, and those who work closely with them recommend in order to improve the situation?
- In what ways does global migration enhance or diminish human dignity?
- What are the issues that impact refugee migration in economics, and political-social realities?
- What are the responsibilities of faith and secular communities for addressing this issue?
- Where do you stand personally in all of this?<sup>27</sup>

## ACT

Action proposals for individuals, organizations, and communities are understood through the previous steps that make responses relevant and effective. There is a great deal of flexibility both in individual action and collective action on any given local level. **Here the main actors are participants in a**

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<sup>26</sup> Elizabeth W. Collier and Charles R. Strain, 10-12.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 14-15.

**program that uses this model.** The assumptions behind this three-step model is to enter the world of refugees, understand the deeper forces at play in the precarious lives of refugees, those that are apparent and those less so, and to encourage new sources of action through individuals, faith communities, and organizations who are already involved in this important work. It draws together the power of faith and secular persons and organizations in this pressing challenge that millions are facing in the complex terrain of global and national politics, as well as a recognition of the faith and secular resources that we already have available to face such challenges. On a local level, it is a useful means to bring together local communities who have much in stake together by rallying around refugees who newly arrive in the area.

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