

AN INTERFAITH COVENANT WITH CHILDREN ON THE BORDER

*A voice is heard in Ramah, mourning and great weeping,
Rachael weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.*
Jeremiah 31:15

*I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink,
I was a stranger and you welcomed me....
Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these you did it to me.”*
Matthew 25:35 & 40

As people of faith, we reaffirm our love and commitment to welcome the stranger, the refugee, the dispossessed in our midst. We are called to embrace the surging number of Central American children and their families who are being held in detention at the U.S. Mexico border, with love, compassion, truth and justice.

These children are innocent -- seeking to reunify with their loved ones from whom they've been separated, mothers and fathers who made the perilous journey north to survive in order to help their families survive absent opportunities in their home countries.

These families are innocent - victims of decades of globalization and economic, political and social structures predicated on exclusion, inequality, and militarism that deny human dignity and individual and collective wellbeing.

These children and their families are innocent - their exodus the bitter fruit of callous and often brutal U.S. military and political intervention, and failed drug, immigration and trade policies that have produced gangs and narco-traffickers, a chronic lack of jobs and wrenching poverty.

In the 1980s, people of faith stood with the thousands of displaced Central Americans – refugees of wars financed and directed by the United States. We called our modern day underground railroad *Sanctuary – a public, corporate stance to protect, defend and advocate* for Central American refugees and insisted that our government fulfill its moral, legal and political obligations.

Today, we renew our covenant to ***protect, defend and advocate*** for the rights of all children and their families who are fleeing the legacy of those wars. We endorse the United Nations call to recognize them as refugees and Pope Francis's appeal to welcome and protect these children and promote development in their countries of origin. We seek means to achieve **restorative justice** within these countries and between our countries.

We implore our government to stop the deportations, to honor due process under domestic and international law, to support family reunification, to stop the endless militarization of the border and criminalization of these innocents, and, instead, to fulfill the moral imperative to welcome and accompany these children in the short term and in the long term to address the root causes of the violence and exodus by adopting a **Central American Marshall Plan** and investing in sustainable development, just working conditions, education, jobs in Central America.

**These children are our children.
Their suffering is our suffering. Their longings, our longings.
Their dreams, our dreams.
And we commit to bear witness and to stand in solidarity.**