

Northwest University

Standing with our Immigrant Neighbors: Implications for Right Response

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Introduction

It was an unusually hot summer day in July. I was volunteering and conducting my fieldwork research when I met Maria outside the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma, WA. She did not speak much English, but her lawyer translated as she shared her story with tears in her eyes.

Maria explained that she was a 31-year-old Honduran mother who was forced to flee her country after witnessing a gang murder outside her home. Two of the gang members threatened to kill Maria and gave her two days to leave the city. Maria felt she had no choice but to pack her bags, grab her two children, and spend her life savings to hire a coyote to guide them on a treacherous journey to the United States.

Once they arrived in the U.S., Maria planned to stay with a friend who had offered to help. Maria began to cry as she described her family's journey. She explained:

It was such a hard and awful journey to the United States. It took us eight days and the whole time I was anxious and afraid of getting caught or killed. We did not have much time to sleep or stop and rest. My kids were hungry, so I gave them most of the food I packed. When we finally made it to the U.S., the worst thing happened to my family. We were detained, and they separated me from my children. I had no idea where they took them and was unable to speak with them for three months. (Lopez lines 12-17)

Maria's lawyer explained that her kids were both taken to a social service agency in New York, while Maria was sent to an immigrant detention facility in Tacoma, WA. Today she received her court hearing after three months in detention. Maria was released and ordered to return to Honduras as soon as possible.

Under the current United States' immigration policy, there is no asylum for immigrants fleeing gang violence, nor a reasonable or timely option to enter the United States legally. Due to

this, Maria and her children must return to Honduras where their safety and well-being are at risk. When it was time for Maria to leave, I thanked her for sharing her story and wished her and her kids a safe trip home. Maria gave me a hug and softly said, “Gracias por su amabilidad” (thank you for your kindness) and then got into the car with her lawyer. I watched helplessly as the car drove away, wishing I could have done more and praying that Maria and her children would be safe upon their arrival back to Honduras.

Maria's story is not uncommon. Every year, there are thousands of individuals in crisis with no viable option for entering the United States lawfully. This has resulted in an immigration crisis, leaving many immigrant families separated, suffering, and discriminated against.

My interest in researching our country's immigration crisis, as well as the mistreatment of immigrants, began around six years ago. It was during this time that I noticed many members in my small-town community were raising concerns about incoming immigrants. These individuals expressed their fear of immigrants' impact on our economy, the safety of American citizens, and their concern with undocumented immigration. Many argued that the best solution would be to increase deportations, tighten up our borders, and place even greater restrictions on those allowed into our country legally. Furthermore, I was surprised to find that a great percentage of these individuals were from the Christian community.

Christian communities across America can play an integral role in seeking justice and caring for immigrants. Furthermore, I feel that the Bible makes it clear that immigrants are to be included in the call to love our neighbors as ourselves. This means going out of our way to build personal relationships with our immigrant neighbors that involves exchanging stories, supporting one another, and helping to restore our immigrant neighbors' identities as children of God who have unique talents and purposes. For these reasons, I began to have questions and concerns of

my own about the Christian community's response to the country's immigration crisis. My three leading questions being, "Why do so many citizens, many of them Christians, hold negative assumptions about immigrants and their impact on the country?", "Where do these assumptions come from?", and "Why isn't the Christian community doing more to serve and advocate for this vulnerable population?"

Throughout the last year, I have had the opportunity of working with World Relief Seattle and Advocates for Immigrants in Detention. These two organizations focus their efforts on serving immigrants throughout the Northwest. Through these organizations I was able to conduct valuable research at the Immigrant Customs and Enforcement (ICE) Detention Facility in Tacoma, WA that provided keen insights into the previous questions raised. Based upon my research, it is evident that there are currently many Americans who are resistant to assisting immigrants in our country. Often, these positions are the result of popular misguided opinions about immigrants, their motives for migrating, and inaccurate assumptions regarding the United States immigration laws.

The misguided socio-political opinions about immigrants are a driving force behind the construction of our immigration laws which have resulted in a broken and ineffective system that requires reform. Furthermore, the public's fear of cultural difference, lack of personal experiences with immigrants, as well as our current political climate has escalated the crisis, and caused the criminalization and dehumanization of undocumented immigrants. Our unjust immigration system and mistreatment of our immigrant neighbors has left many isolated, vulnerable, and with no lawful options for entering the United States. God calls the Christian community to reach out and respond to the injustice and suffering of this group with compassion and love. In order to stand against the criminalization and dehumanization of immigrants, faith

communities must be made aware of the realities of the United States' immigration policies and systems, must come to understand the challenges and struggles that immigrants face, and must be inspired and equipped to engage in intercultural initiatives that promote reconciliation and collaboration between immigrants and the broader community. One way that this can be accomplished is through issues-based education programs offered in church contexts; to that end, this thesis project will include a practical handbook that will provide the foundation for such a program.

Background

The global migration of people has existed for centuries and has consistently shaped the world we live in. In the United States in particular, migration has been one of the most substantial and influential processes since the founding of the country. Immigration has had profound impacts on the development and success of the United States. It was not only imperative to the establishment of the American colonies but also played a major role in the development of the nation's industrial infrastructure and economic growth. Daniels states that historically, almost every president has believed that "continued immigration was vital for the health of the nation" (6). Almost every American citizen has a personal immigrant heritage that they proudly boast about. Yet somehow, the current American response to immigration has dramatically shifted toward less favorable attitudes and negative assumptions about its effects on the country and its citizens. Daniels states that the "contemporary American response to immigration has gradually developed into a predominately ambivalent and dualistic attitude which celebrates the nation's immigrant heritage while, rejecting much of its immigrant present" (8).

The negative shifts in the American public's opinion regarding present immigration to the United States is predominantly influenced by American nativism and misguided assumptions

about immigration policy, pathways to legal entry, undocumented immigrants, and their impact on our country. Over the course of the last several decades, general opposition to immigration has inspired the passage of several restrictive and illogical laws. Lee argues that many of these laws are rooted in ethnocentrism, are often impossible to enforce, and “have resulted in a range of unforeseen consequences” (69). These consequences include: the separation of families, the gradual increase of forced illegal entry, the discrimination and isolation of immigrant communities in our country, and perpetuation of refugee and immigrant suffering. To truly develop an educated and accurate opinion about present immigration issues in the United States, it is vital that the public understand the current United States’ immigration policy, the damaging effects these ineffective laws are having on families around the world and gain accurate insight into the realities of undocumented immigration.

Historical Overview of the United States’ Immigration Policy. America has been a nation of immigrants since the country’s original inhabitants first settled here thousands of years ago. In the early 1500s, the first Europeans began establishing settlements in what would eventually become the United States. The next small wave of immigration took place in the early 1600s when a group of settlers known as the Pilgrims came in search of religious freedom. Alongside the first European settlers were also the men and women forced to immigrate to the United States in the early 1600s from West Africa. In their book, *The Transatlantic Slave Trade: a History*, Rawley and Behrendt state that an estimated 651,000 Africans were involuntarily displaced and forced to work as slaves in what is now the United States (16). During the 1700s, difficult economic times fell upon the newly joined states which dramatically slowed down immigration to the country.

Throughout history, immigration levels to the United States have ebbed and flowed. This rise and fall in immigration is often influenced by the political and economic climate in the United States as well as events occurring globally. During the 1800s, immigration to the country increased dramatically. In the 1840s, thousands of Irish immigrated to the United States as the result of a massive famine. German immigration to the United States also greatly increased as people fled their country seeking freedom from an oppressive government. This influx in immigration totaled over five million between 1820 and 1860 (M. Hanson 162). Up to this point in our country's immigration history, no significant restrictions had been imposed on immigration.

After gold was discovered on the West coast, another great wave of immigrants arrived to the United States. A great percentage of these immigrants were Chinese men who had been encouraged to immigrate through alluring American advertisements which promoted employment opportunities with the Central Pacific Railroad. Initially, the Chinese were warmly welcomed for their cheap labor which assisted the construction of the country's railroad. Unfortunately, as work became scarce, their welcome quickly dissipated. As time went on, more and more of the public began to view the Chinese as racially inferior and as a threat to job security. These popular perceptions and concerns inspired legislators to pass a series of restrictive laws designed to drive out the Chinese. These laws prohibited the people group from obtaining business licenses, fishing, marrying a white person, as well as several other culturally restrictive ordinances (Pfaelzer 256, 259-64). By 1882, a bill known as the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed which prohibited the entry of any Chinese immigrants into the country. According to Peglar-Gordon, historians have long claimed that the Chinese Exclusion Act was "central to the development of general immigration policy and marked a new development in

immigration laws as the first to discriminate against a group of immigrants on the basis of race and class” (51).

In 1892, as a response to the increasing influx of immigrants, President Benjamin Harrison designated Ellis Island, located by the Hudson river between New York and New Jersey, as the country's federal immigration station. Pitkin writes that during the years of operation between 1892 and 1954, Ellis Island received around 12 million immigrants (as qtd. in Cordasco 600). The vast majority of these immigrants were Italians, Poles, and Russians from southern and eastern Europe, fleeing political corruption or economic setbacks. As more and more immigrants continued to enter the country, many Americans began to actively lobby for increased restrictions on immigration based on religious grounds. The majority of those in favor of greater restrictions were white Protestants fearing the impact that the rising number of Catholic, Orthodox, and Jewish immigrants would have on their faith. Eventually, the United States government responded to the increasing pressure from the public and passed the Immigration Act of 1924. Gordon Hanson states that this new law “imposed entry quotas based on national origin, which sharply restricted immigration overall and from countries outside western and northern Europe in particular” (344). The law intended to cap new immigration at 180,000 people while also prohibiting immigrants from Asia and parts of Europe from entering the country. In addition, the act also introduced, for the first time on a permanent basis, the requirement of a visa to enter the United States.

Today, many immigrants come to the country for many of the same reasons as those before them. It is important to understand the dramatic ways this law affected the immigration process in the United States. Although it is reasonable to expect present immigrants to enter the country legally, like many in the past, it must be recognized that the visa requirement following

the Immigration Act in 1924 changed the process forever. The visa requirement not only made immigration much more restrictive, it makes the comparison of immigration prior to this law with that of the present, irrational.

The next reform to the United States' immigration policy took place in the 1960s. It was during this time that the civil rights movement focused the public discussion and concerns on racial and ethnic discrimination. The focused attention on racial equality caused the transparently racial nature of the current United States' immigration laws to be questioned. After much deliberation and debate, in 1965, Congress passed the Immigration and Nationality Act. This new bill did away with quotas based on nationality and gave preference to incoming immigrants with certain job skills and those who had immediate family members who were American citizens.

In 1980, 125,000 Cuban refugees fled to the United States in response to Cuba's incessant economic crisis. The United States Border Control was not prepared for the rapid influx in incoming refugees. The large number of arriving refugees made it nearly impossible to properly intake and approve all incoming Cubans. It was soon discovered that a number of refugees were active criminals as well as unstable psychiatric patients. Furthermore, several Cubans brought sickness and disease into the country. The rise in crime and disease brought with the Cuban refugees caused many American citizens to quickly identify all immigrants with these characteristics. Public fear and concern about immigration and rising levels of illegal immigration began to escalate. Consequently, in 1986, Congress enacted the Reform and Control Act (IRCA). The IRCA proposed tighter border control and made it illegal to employ undocumented residents (G. Hanson 347). Currently, much of our current immigration system is still modeled after the 1965 and 1986 reforms. Although these laws amended various problems

with the country's previous immigration system, it created many of the difficulties we still face today.

Current Pathways to Legal Immigration. The United States' current immigration system is complex and often misunderstood by the general public. One of the greatest points of contention in the immigration debate, is why unlawful immigration has become so common. Many American citizens believe that immigrants choose to unlawfully enter the country to avoid paying taxes and receive free government services, while others may think that undocumented immigrants are simply unwilling to fill out the proper paperwork or patiently wait their turn to receive a green card. This is simply not the truth. Most undocumented immigrants remain undocumented because our current immigration system provides no process for them to enter the country legally or obtain legal status.

There are three basic statuses that a foreigner residing in the United States may have. These include U.S. citizen, legal nonimmigrant, and lawful permanent resident. Individuals who enter the country as a nonimmigrant are allowed into the country on a temporary basis. According to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, individuals who are granted nonimmigrant visas include: "foreign government officials, visitors for business or pleasure, immigrants in transit through the United States, students, temporary workers, fiancé(e)s of U.S. citizens, and religious workers" ("Nonimmigrant"). Most nonimmigrant visas have an expiration date. If individuals stay in the country beyond their specified date, they become undocumented.

Lawful permanent residents are immigrants who have been admitted to enter and reside in the country based on a special visa that grants them a green card. These individuals have the right to live and work in the country without an expiration date. A green card holder may still be deported if the individual commits certain crimes, impersonates a U.S. citizen, stays outside the

country for too long, is a threat to the national security of the country, or votes illegally. Lawful permanent residence may apply to become U.S. citizens after residing in the country for four years and nine months. After applying, they must also pass a test in English of the country's history, civics, and government, and pay a fee of \$725. There are currently four pathways available by which an immigrant may enter the country and reside as a lawful permanent resident. These include family-based immigration, employment, the diversity lottery, and asylum or refugee status.

Family-based immigration is the most common visa issued to immigrants who come to reside in the United States permanently. According to the U.S. Department of State, under the current immigration law there are two categories for family issued visas. These include immediate relatives and family preference categories ("Family Based Immigration"). There are multiple categories for both immediate family immigrant visas and family preference visas.

Immediate relative visas have no yearly limits, while a maximum of 226,000 family preference visas are permitted per year. These categories are extremely complex and difficult to navigate. For example, legal residents in the United States may petition for a spouse or child to receive a green card if children are unmarried, while American citizens may petition for a spouse or children, whether married or unmarried, but not until the petitioner is at least 21 years old. After filing the proper paperwork and paying the necessary fees, the qualifying family members must usually wait a year to be officially granted legal residence.

Family preference visas present an even greater challenge for qualifying immigrants with significantly longer wait times and higher fees. In this category, visa availability rests on the relationship to the U.S. legal resident or citizen and which country the petitioners' family members are from. The first preference is for unmarried adult children of U.S. citizens.

According to the U.S. Department of State, the current wait time for these people is anywhere from seven years to twenty-one years depending on the individual's country of origin ("Visa Bulletin December 2018"). The second preference includes spouses and children of legal residents applying for his or her spouse or children under age twenty-one. According to the U.S. Department of State, the current wait time for most countries is around six years ("Visa Bulletin December 2018"). The third preference is for married children of U.S. citizens. The U.S. Department of State lists the wait time for most countries at around twelve years, while the wait time for Mexicans and Filipinos is twenty-three years ("Visa Bulletin December 2018"). The fourth and final preference category is for brothers and sisters of adult U.S. citizens. According to the U.S. Department of State, the wait time for this final category is thirteen years, while the wait time for Mexicans and Filipinos is twenty-three years ("Visa Bulletin December 2018"). In addition to these unreasonable wait times, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service's (USCIS) inefficiencies and lack of resources to process applications often delay wait times even more.

The next visas offered for legal entry and permanent residence in the United States is employment-based. Approximately 140,000 employment-based immigrant visas are available per year. Immigrants granted this visa come to the United States as either a permanent resident worker, or a temporary worker. Individuals with higher levels of education or specified skills are usually given first preference within this category. Furthermore, for an immigrant to be eligible for this visa, they must have an employer sponsor who has already applied and obtained a government-issued labor certification. Soerens and Hwang Yang assert that employment-based visas are "also granted to wealthy investors who agree to invest money into the country and employ U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents" (64).

The third visa category offered is through the Diversity Visa Program. Each year, the United States issues 50,000 diversity visas (DV) to eligible immigrants from countries with historically low rates of immigration to the United States. These visas may be applied for, free of charge, by immigrants from select countries who have completed their high school education or have work experience in a skilled profession. The United States Department of State explicates that the “diversity visas are distributed among six geographic regions and no single country may receive more than seven percent of the available DVs in any one year” (“Diversity Visa Program”).

The final category for obtaining legal entry and permanent residence in the United States is by qualifying as a refugee or by being granted asylum. According to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, a refugee is an individual who must flee their country based on persecution or fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, or membership in a particular social or political group. Asylum seekers are individuals who are also forced to flee their country based on persecution and claim to be a refugee, but whose claims have yet to be evaluated by the receiving country (“Refugees and Asylum”). The total number of refugees admitted into the United States varies each year. The maximum number is set by the President annually. Under the Obama administration, approximately 85,000 refugees legally entered the country annually while only 21,491 refugees were allowed entry in 2018 based on the Trump administration's reductions in refugee allowance (Pierce and Selee 4). The Trump administration has not only reduced the number of refugee allowances, but enacted various revisions to the country's immigration policy which have exasperated the inefficient and unreasonable laws. Pierce and Selee assert the major revisions to the immigration policy include: banning nationals from eight different countries from entering the United States, cancelling the Deferred Action for

Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, ending Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for nationals of several countries, and reducing refugee admissions to the lowest numbers since the 1980s (1).

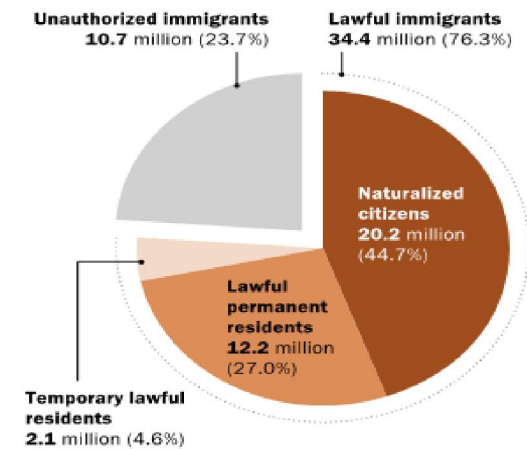
The current U.S. immigration policy is broken, ineffective and in need of reform. Placing greater restrictions which are discriminatory and ineffective will only intensify the immigration crisis. Families continue to be separated, many immigrants remain exploited and discriminated against, and the lack of reasonable legal pathways for entry force many to risk their lives in attempt to enter the United States.

Who are the Undocumented? Most immigrants who are present in the United States and are not U.S. citizens, nonimmigrants, or lawful permanent residents are categorized as undocumented. The figure on the next page provides the percentage of immigrants residing in the United States for each immigration status but does not include those who have been granted asylum or refugee status. The numbers are based off the 2016 United States census. According to the graph, of the 59.4 million foreign-born people residing in the United States, only 23.7 percent (10.7 million) of them are undocumented (figure 1). Despite popular assumptions that most undocumented immigrants enter the country illegally, Passel and Cohn assert that the majority of unauthorized immigrants that have arrived during the previous five years are those who entered the country with temporary visas but chose to overstay their expiration date.

Most undocumented immigrants in the United States work low-paying manual labor or

Unauthorized immigrants are a quarter of the U.S. foreign born population

Foreign-born population estimates, 2016



Note: Figures for the total and subgroups differ from published U.S. Census Bureau totals because census data have been augmented and adjusted to account for undercount of the population. All numbers are rounded; see Methodology for rounding rules. Unauthorized immigrants include some with temporary protection from deportation under Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Temporary Protected Status (TPS). Source: Pew Research Center estimates based on augmented U.S. Census Bureau data. See Methodology for details. "U.S. Unauthorized Immigrant Total Dips to Lowest Level in a Decade"

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Fig. 1. Graph of foreign-born population estimates, 2016 from: López, Gustavo, et al. "Key Findings about U.S. Immigrants." *Pew Research Center*, Pew Research Center, 30 Nov. 2018

agricultural jobs. This is often due to their low skill level, limited English-language ability, or lack of legal status. Bleakley and Chin state that another contributing factor to undocumented immigrants' low wages comes from employers who take advantage of their lack of legal status by overworking and underpaying them (as qtd. in G. Hanson 353).

While volunteering and conducting research at the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Detention Facility, I met many immigrants who had experienced difficulties finding a job that paid a fair wage and provided a safe and respectful work environment. I met one man named Jose Moreno who had just been released from detention. Most immigrants who leave detention are released wearing the same clothes they were arrested in. By looking at Jose, it was clear to me that he worked in construction. He had on thick dirty Wrangler jeans, a bright orange

reflective shirt, old work boots, and a brown baseball cap with a business logo on the front. His face looked weathered and tired, but his eyes were friendly and bright. He told me he came here twenty-five years ago in hopes of a better life. Jose told me that it has been difficult living in America, more difficult than he expected. He explained:

Ever since I come to United States, I work two, sometimes three jobs just to make enough money for my family and have some to send home to my family in Mexico. I know I do not get paid like what a person with a green card or citizenship would, but I do not care. People do not understand that for me, getting paid eight or nine dollars an hour is a lot. In Mexico, I would get paid maybe twenty dollars a day. It's difficult to not be treated the same as everyone else, or to feel like people think I am not as smart because my accent, but it is worth it to live in United States. I never wanted to break the laws, but I was desperate for my family. I knew no one in the United States and did not know what to do to come here legally. I wish there would have been more help for me so that I could have come legally and not end up in detention. (Moreno lines 2-6; 21-26)

Most undocumented immigrants are here for similar reasons as Jose. They want a better life where they don't have to worry about going hungry or for the safety of their family. Other immigrants often come to be reunited with family. Many endure exploitation in the work place, discrimination, and various challenges involved with living in a country where you cannot speak or read the language. Some have no intention of living in the United States permanently, and do not desire to reside here illegally. Finally, there are many other undocumented immigrants who long for the legal status offered by a green card, and eventually to be citizens because this would allow them to live without fear of deportation, provide the confidence and power to petition for fair wages, and the ability to travel back home to visit family. Unfortunately, our current immigration system often makes the process of legal immigration extremely difficult, if not impossible.

Current Concerns and Popular Misperceptions about Immigration

There are several reasons why American citizens may be hesitant toward supporting a more comprehensive immigration system, which more generously allows immigrants into our country. Many of these hesitations stem from misperceptions regarding immigrants, their motives to migrate, and their impacts on our country. Some citizens believe immigrants cross our borders for selfish gain. Many presume their gain results in an economic loss for the United States by increasing job competition for citizens and accruing more costs for the government than they pay in taxes (Camarota). Other citizens are most concerned about illegal immigration, viewing undocumented immigrants as possible perpetrators entering the country to commit acts of crime. According to Louw, past terrorist attacks on the United States have created both fear and prejudice toward immigrants (3-4). This prejudice has led to collective paranoia and fear. Louw continues by stating that this fear results in exclusive thinking, closed borders, and the emphasis on domestic issues rather than caring for the immigrant stranger (3-4). Finally, the influx of immigrants has increased both ethnic and religious diversity in the United States. Many Americans fear these shifting cultural differences and the potential impacts they may have on their lives. Furthermore, Americans specifically worry that immigrants and their children do not share the same social values as the native-born, and that the past dominance of the English language and Christian religion will fade out. Americans feel especially threatened by the potential rise in immigrants that belong to the Islamic faith and the negative implications that may result from this upsurge (Waters 332).

It is important that these public concerns be accurately addressed and that any inaccurate misperceptions be amended. Groody argues that for truth and justice to be fully realized, individuals must have the courage to embrace their confusions about difference in society, “as

well as their convictions, hesitations as well as hope, fear as well as fortitude” (155). Below I will discuss the popular concerns regarding foreign immigration in the United States presented above and their current impacts on our country.

Economic Impact. Throughout the country’s history, immigrants have played a key role in the development of the economy. They are one of the chief reasons why the current economy has grown to be so resilient, diverse, and robust. According to economic historians Susan Carter and Richard Sutch, since the first great migration to the United States, immigration has “enhanced the rate of economic growth, improved the welfare of resident workers, and moderated the business cycle” (as qtd. in Stapleford 194). As the world has become increasingly more connected, the United States economy is transforming from a manufacturing society to an information-based society. These changes both create new jobs and eliminate the need for others. These various shifts have many worried about foreign immigration’s impact, both lawful and unlawful, on the United States economy. The two greatest economic concerns are that immigrants unfairly draw on government benefits creating a fiscal drain for our country and take away jobs from American citizens (West 1). West asserts that current immigrants’ impacts on both public resources and the job market can “be measured through studies which examine immigrants’ use of government services, tax payments, health care utilization, Social Security contributions, labor force participation, wage levels, and by analyzing the country’s gross domestic product (GDP)” (9). Before discussing recent studies on the impact of immigration on the country’s resources and job market, it is imperative that popular misperceptions about immigrants and government benefits, as well as realistic concerns regarding the negative impact of immigration on our country’s economy be addressed.

Regarding government benefits and taxes, two common misperceptions about immigrants are that they do not have to pay taxes and receive free healthcare. The truth is that most immigrants get taxes taken out of their paycheck each month for Social Security, Medicare, income tax, and property taxes, and although immigrant children are eligible for free healthcare, adult immigrants are ineligible for most public benefits. In fact, Stephen Moore, a respected economist at the Cato Institute finds that “the average immigrant (legal immigrants, refugees and undocumented immigrants) pays about \$80,000 more in taxes than he or she receives in benefits over a lifetime” (as qtd. in Soerens and Hwang Yang 108). Although all immigrants pay taxes for many benefits they cannot receive, undocumented immigrants’ residence in the country often results in disproportionate expenses at the state level from expenses accrued from the free health services provided to the children of undocumented immigrants. According to Moore, although immigrants provide an overall positive impact to the economy at the national level, the benefits they receive at the state level equal \$25,000 more over a lifetime than what is paid to state and local governments (as qtd. in Soerens and Hwang Yang 108). Fortunately, Congress has recognized this disproportionate flow of resources and benefits and has recently enacted measures to direct additional national resources to help states deal with these costs.

When considering the economic impact of immigrants in our country, some economists may argue that immigrants, especially the undocumented, create unfair labor competition and have negative wage effects on American citizens which results in an overall negative effect on the country’s economy. Yet, these findings are not comprehensive, nor do they represent the impacts on the majority of the country’s working population. Most immigrants in the United States work in the goods-producing sector which consist of agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, construction, and manufacturing. Therefore, West states that the only job competition

immigrants create are for jobs are for Americans without a high school diploma and that most research suggests that “for most other workers, immigrants complement, rather than substitute for, the efforts of American workers” (12). Furthermore, competition created by immigrants for manual labor jobs is decreasing as the demand for labor has progressively increased since 2006 (Hogan and Roberts).

According to Nicholson and the Center for American Progress Immigration Team, in 2016 immigrants added an estimated two trillion to the U.S. gross domestic product, much of which was from consumerism (Nicholson). Since 2016, these numbers have continued to rise. Immigrants’ positive contribution to the GDP supports the annual increase in wages. Moreover, immigrants not only increase many working Americans wages, they also create new businesses and expand the country’s job market. This results from the provision of immigrant labor and allows certain businesses which would otherwise close out or move operations overseas to remain in the United States.

Overall, it is evident that immigrants (lawful or unlawful) aide the country’s economy. Given the need for an ever-increasing labor market, most economists agree that immigration in any form provides and will continue to provide an economic benefit to the United States. Although immigration, especially unlawful immigration, results in some job competition for the less educated, as well as several challenges for public resources, most impact from immigration is supportive, and that which is not, may be amended through specific immigration policy adjustments which will be discussed later.

National Security and Public Safety Concerns. Another popular public concern with immigration is the potential threat that incoming immigrants may present to national security and the safety of our country’s citizens. These concerns have been dramatically escalated since the 9/11 terrorist

attacks on the United States. These attacks influenced the general rise in xenophobia in American citizens and induced collective paranoia and fear, which has resulted in prejudice and exclusive thinking (Schuller 607).

It is entirely justified and necessary that the citizens of our country ensure that we take appropriate actions to minimize threats and avoid further attacks. However, it is not reasonable to presume that most immigrants are potential terrorists or criminals. Many citizens not only fear that incoming immigrants may commit acts of terrorism, but also fear that immigrants increase general criminal activity within the country. A poll taken by Gallup in 2017 revealed that half of Americans agreed that immigrants increase the crime rate (Gallup, Inc.). This belief stands resilient throughout the years, despite actual evidence which reveals that immigrants are in fact less likely than natives to commit crimes (Waters and Pineau 326).

These misguided opinions are also influenced by strong historical stereotypes of immigrants and negative media portrayals of non-whites and immigrants as predisposed to violence and crime. Waters and Pineau assert that immigrant criminal stereotypes began in the mid-19th century when citizens began assigning ethnic slurs such as “paddy wagon” (police car used for prisoners) to Irish and associating Italian Americans with organized crime and the mafia (326). Furthermore, the media often promotes negative stereotypes about non-white immigrants which perpetuates the public’s fear regarding immigrants and crime. According to Esses et al., the media often takes advantage of the public’s uncertainty around the effects of immigration by portraying immigrants and refugees as enemies at the gate (519). They continue by asserting that these depictions grab people’s attention and alert them to potential physical and cultural threats which the media and politicians use to their advantage (Esses et al. 519).

Although the safety and security of our country and its citizens is vital, sound and accurate judgments must be applied when thinking about immigrants and their impact on our country's safety. A balanced and wise response would be to promote effective border control and criminal record checks of incoming immigrants. Unfortunately, our current excessively restrictive immigration system makes it impossible for many to enter legally, which results in millions entering our country without proper inspection. Carafano contends that the implementation of a reasonable legal procedure that immigrants could follow to enter the country would dramatically decrease unlawful entries and allow border enforcements to more effectively monitor and inspect those who are entering our country (Carafano). Therefore, it is pertinent that we support the implementation of a more reasonable immigration system, not only for the well-being of incoming immigrants, but to assist in improving the safety and security of our country.

Loss of Cultural and Religious Identity. A third concern of many American citizens is that immigrants, especially those who are non-white and affiliated with a religion other than Christianity, present a threat to traditional American culture. Similar to the previous concerns, this fear has been present throughout the history of our country. According to Rhys Williams, a Professor and Chair of Sociology at Loyola University, American citizens first became concerned with immigrants as a cultural threat to the country in the mid-1840s and 1850s when large numbers of Irish and German Catholics arrived. At this time, the country was primarily a Protestant nation and citizens worried that the influx in Catholic immigrants would threaten their religious culture (Williams). These fears and concerns continued throughout our country's history and have most recently increased with the continuous rise in Mexican, Indian, and African immigrants who are coming to our country.

There are three main concerns regarding immigrants as a cultural threat. The most prominent is the fear that more and more immigrants will not learn English (Mukherjee et al.). Furthermore, many are concerned that this would ultimately result in the loss of English as the native language of the United States. The second concern is that many immigrants do not share the same social or political values as native citizens (Waters and Pineau 304). The final concern which is predominantly held by American Christians, is the fear that immigrants belonging to belief systems other than Christianity will eventually threaten the Christian faith and shatter the idealization of America as a predominately white Christian nation (Soerens and Hwang Yang 89).

Above economic and public safety impacts, cultural concerns are most tightly associated with American citizens' negative stereotypes and discrimination toward immigrants (Williams). Many Americans feel these strong concerns may only be addressed by ensuring that immigrants quickly assimilate into American society and assume identical values and practices as the body politic. When immigrants refuse or are unable to assimilate, citizens become apprehensive and in turn discriminate, demonize, and reject them. Volf states that when individuals identify people who are not a part of their in-group, they close themselves off as a way of protecting the purity of their cultural identity (67). Often these actions lead to the isolation and discrimination of the other. Individuals then justify these discriminatory actions by viewing the other as inferior.

What warrants these claims of racial and cultural superiority, and why do we assume that difference threatens our cultural identity? Although it may be natural to prefer our own language, customs, and beliefs and be apprehensive about change, there is no justification to claim superiority, demand assimilation, or exclude others on this basis. American citizens must not remain captive to their native culture based on fear of the other. They must instead make room to

embrace them. Lederach argues that we must learn how to develop a positive identity of ourselves and out-group members that does not involve separation and superiority because these actions in turn demonize the other and make them an enemy (79). Additionally, Volf argues that we should not fear difference because our identities are not threatened by difference, but rather “identity includes connection, difference, and heterogeneity” (66). Furthermore, Myers states that immigration benefits cultural identity by providing a “two-way exchange of languages, customs, arts, rituals, and technology, all which leads to innovation in both cultures” (116). Overall, it seems evident that our identities are indeed enriched by negotiating differences and interacting with out-group members.

Many Americans have categorized these misperceptions and concerns about the impacts of incoming immigrants as factual. These beliefs have led to unreasonable and restrictive immigration laws and undeserved discrimination and rejection. It is important that citizens do not respond out of fear but rather that they open their minds and hearts to accurately judge the realities of immigrants in our country. Wuye states that division, hostility, and bitterness rule when individuals create and believe false narratives that demonize the other and that these actions require repentance (Harvard Divinity School, 44:37- 45:05). Furthermore, justice requires an additional action. For justice to be effectively attained, there must also be space for these narratives to be correctly re-written.

Implications for Social Justice and the Role of the Christian Community

In the context of immigration in America, it is important to accurately define what justice is. This requires that the public consider how the complex and discriminatory immigration laws, as well as the public's' misguided judgments, affect the lives of immigrants and perpetuate a system which challenges social justice. Two chief implications for social justice as a result of these

discriminations involve the social exclusion and alienation of immigrants as well as ongoing systemic oppression.

Christians in America are also found to be the most opposed to immigration reform and strongly hold negative opinions and biases against immigrants in the country, despite biblical mandates to love and care for the foreigner (Kobes Du Mez). For these reasons, it is also important to address the biblical response to immigration, how it might be applied to current immigration in the United States, and the role of the Christian community in fighting against these injustices.

Social Exclusion and Alienation. Immigrants in the United States suffer from social exclusion and alienation for several reasons. First, many Americans widespread concerns regarding immigrations impact on our country's economy, public safety, and cultural identity have produced out-group hostility and segregation, leaving many immigrants socially isolated and excluded (Andrews 541). Our society further isolates and excludes immigrants from the community by criminalizing unlawful immigration through the detention and deportation of undocumented immigrants. This causes American citizens to normalize the exclusionary and unjust treatment of immigrants in detention and reinforces their association of immigrants with criminal behavior (Trujillo 11). The dehumanization and normalization of exclusionary practices toward immigrants allows American citizens to minimize the hardships and injustices inflicted upon immigrants and view the challenges they experience as less legitimate than their own.

The second major contributing factor to the social exclusion and alienation of immigrants in the United States is the persistent and strong pressures to assimilate (Lai et al. 763). Of all the assimilation factors, the greatest contribution to the exclusion and alienation of immigrants is the

language barrier. One of the greatest challenges for incoming immigrants is the task of learning the English language.

Although America is full of English language classes for immigrants, many immigrants may still take decades to master the language, and others, especially those immigrating at older ages, may never learn to communicate in English (Soerens and Hwang Yang 88). Many Americans place false judgments and become increasingly irritated when immigrants are unable to quickly adapt and learn the new language. Some citizens even hold immigrants responsible, claiming that those who do not speak English or are unable to learn quickly do so purposefully. Furthermore, many immigrants isolate themselves from the country's general population out of insecurity in their communication skills or fear that they may be mocked or mistreated.

During my field research at the Northwest Detention facility, I spoke with Jose Luis Bonilla, an immigrant from Honduras who now assists in the coordination of World Relief Seattle's immigrant detention ministry, about his experience learning the English language and how the language barrier, even now, affects his life. Bonilla stated that even after over twenty plus years of living in the country, he sometimes feels ostracized and discriminated against due to communication barriers. Bonilla explained:

Learning the language has been one of the hardest parts about living in United States. I still struggle with the language because I learned English after I was forty and this is much harder. When I see people reject me or think maybe I am not smart because I cannot speak exactly the language, this is hard. It reminds you that you are different.

(Lines 36-39)

The social exclusion and alienation that results from the difficulties and pressures to assimilate can be so great that some immigrants become depressed, while others have thoughts

of suicide or even commit suicide as a result (Lai et al 763). As long as American citizens continue to place harsh judgments and expectations on the integration of immigrants into the country and allow negative misguided assumptions to create hostility toward the people group, they will remain alienated and on the fringe of our local communities. The only way to move forward from these practices is for individuals to stop resisting the immigrant community and recognize their mutual humanity (The Arbinger Institute 148). Lederach states that Jesus himself paid no attention to social status, ethnic or religious identity, or socioeconomic conditions. Lederach asserts that instead, Jesus placed his attention on the “inherent quality of humanity that he shared with them and had compassion on them” (48). It is only when American citizens can see and honor immigrants as people, that immigrants may feel more welcomed, more easily integrate into society, and have their needs validated and addressed.

Systemic Oppression. Robert Gilman, an astrophysicist and sustainability leader, describes systemic oppression and violence as “physical and psychological harm that results from exploitive and unjust social, political, and economic systems” (as qtd. in Moe-Lobeda 72). Moe-Lobeda, who supports Gilman’s views, argues a second component that must be included in the definition is also the “complicity or silent acquiescence of those who fail to take responsibility or challenge” these systems (72). Systemic violence typically affects poor and marginalized ethnic groups. Immigrants are one of the major groups adversely impacted by these injustices. The societal institutions perpetuating these inequalities include: the government, the judicial system, the education system, mass media, non-governmental institutions, and government agencies such as healthcare and welfare agencies (Stephen 36).

One of the ways in which immigrants experience systemic oppression is through the United States’ restrictive and prejudicial immigration system, which favors immigrants from

certain countries and those with greater wealth, education, and influence (Cheng and Yang). Another way is through our disproportionate economic institutions that utilize immigrants' economic disadvantages for financial gain through income inequality in the country's labor force (Xu et al. 6-8). Finally, the general population's negative associations with immigrants and crime which have stereotyped many as potential perpetrators and normalized the criminalization and deportation of unlawful immigrants further contributes to the systemic oppression they endure. Komattethu argues that many immigrant's criminal identification structurally violates the human social rights that they deserve while they are in this country (40). Furthermore, she asserts that institutionalizing the undocumented justifies such identification at the systemic level which leads to systemic injustice (40).

These systemic oppressions perpetuate immigrants' poverty and suffering, as well as impose further trauma into their lives. Moreover, these oppressions create marred identities about immigrants in both the eyes of American citizens and within immigrants themselves. Immigrants create these marred identities as the result of a lifetime of suffering, deception, and exclusion which causes them to no longer know who they are or what their purpose is. Cudd writes, "Oppressed persons often acquiesce to and accept their oppression because they come to believe in the stereotypes that represent their inferiority, are weakened by those stereotypes and even motivated to fulfill them" (as qtd. in Myers 160). When immigrants accept this way of thinking as normative, their freedom and hope, even the hope found within the Gospel, become diminished (Myers 155). Moe-Lobeda states that identifying and better understanding systemic oppression inflicted on the marginalized means that we are no longer blinded to their damaging consequences, but rather we are more equipped to recognize and undo them (49). Justice in this context means utilizing this knowledge to advocate for the amendment of institutional practices

which are oppressive. Additionally, we must also work towards reconciling relationships with our immigrant neighbors by addressing the societal lies they have come to believe and giving them the resources and space to correctly re-write these narratives.

The Role of the Christian Community. When discussing the social injustices of immigration in America and how they may be addressed, it is important to consider the role of the Christian community. To understand the appropriate role of Christians in the immigration debate, we must consider what the Bible has to say on the topic and how it may assist in reshaping contingent cultural norms so that Christians may more effectively pursue peace and justice in this context.

For Christians, the Bible is the most valuable tool given to help inform humanity about how to best live their life. Furthermore, most Christians believe that all of life should be viewed through the Biblical lens of what God tells us about himself and the world. What then does the Bible have to say about immigration, caring for the foreigner, and justice in this context? Although the Bible does not provide specific instructions regarding the appropriate structure for U.S. immigration policy, it clearly offers principles that may guide how we choose to treat incoming immigrants and seek to influence immigration policy.

Immigration is a very common theme throughout scripture. There are several words used throughout the Bible that reference immigrants. The most common Hebrew word used to describe foreigners who established themselves in a foreign land is the word *ger*. According to historians, this word loosely translates as “a person not native to the local area” who is without family or land (Tromp 22). Throughout both the Old and New Testament, we find many stories about *ger*. Through these stories we see how God uses refugees and immigrants to accomplish great and mighty things for His name. Like refugees and immigrants today, many individuals in the Bible left their native land and migrated to other areas for similar reasons.

One example of this in the Bible is Abraham who came to Haran as an immigrant from Ur and later migrated to Canaan. Abraham's decision to migrate was, like many contemporary immigrants, made in pursuit of a better life and in hopes of receiving God's promised blessing in the new land (Gen 12:1-5). Another example is the migration of the Israelites out of Israel who were forced to flee a corrupt government and find refuge in a new land (Exodus 12:31-42). The Israelites, like many refugees and immigrants today, left their homeland in search of safety and security. These are only two of the numerous migration stories found in the Bible. Through these stories we understand that many of the challenges that influenced migration in the Bible are the same challenges that face current incoming immigrants to the United States.

The Bible not only provides stories of immigration and testimonies of how God used immigrants to accomplish powerful acts, but it also provides mandates that describe how Christians are called to care for immigrants. In the Bible, the author of Leviticus writes that God commands the Israelites, "When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God" (*The Holy Bible*, Leviticus 19:33-34). The Hebrew scriptures, particularly the books of the Law, contain numerous instructions on how to treat immigrants. Soerens and Hwang Yang note that, "while these instructions were directed to the people of Israel as guidelines to structure their society, and few American Christians believe we should adapt the entire law given to Moses," the many commandments given to care for the immigrant express God's special concern for this group (79). As God's people, we are commanded to share this concern.

In the Bible, immigrants and refugees are also referenced several times in connection to two other categories of people of special concern to God: the fatherless and the widow. For

example, the author of Deuteronomy writes, "The Lord executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner, giving him food and clothing. Love the foreigner, therefore, for you were foreigners in the land of Egypt" (*The Holy Bible*, Deuteronomy 10:18-19). Here, God commands the Israelites to bestow compassion and kindness on the foreigner, as they were once foreigners themselves. Most Americans today were also once foreigners to the United States. It is easy for those of us who are third or fourth generation Americans to forget that our great grandparents were once immigrants in need of hospitality. Therefore, God asks Christians to humble themselves and care for the foreigner as if they were their family.

A second example where immigrants and refugees were referenced in connection to the fatherless and the widow is found in Zechariah when the author writes, "Do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the foreigner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil in your heart against another" (*The Holy Bible*, Zechariah 7:10). The Bible contains many more passages which give instruction to God's people on the importance of caring for immigrants. Many of these verses also warn those who choose to disregard the instructions to care for the refugee and immigrant of God's judgment (*The Holy Bible*, Malachi 3:5).

For many Christians, their greatest opposition to welcoming the foreigner is their concern with unlawful immigration. Although the Bible provides clear instructions about the care of immigrants, it does not reference or consider an immigrant's legal status. This is most likely because this classification system did not apply during the biblical era as there were no restrictions on immigration at the time (Soerens and Hwang Yang 96). Due to the lack of guidance in scriptures about how Christians should respond to unlawful immigration, many Christians form their opinions solely based off a passage found in the book of Romans ("What the Bible Says"). The author of Romans writes, "Let everyone be subject to the governing

authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those that do so, bring judgment on themselves” (*The Holy Bible*, Romans 13:1-2). Many Christians who argue for tighter immigration restrictions and favor more closed-off borders base their political stance off the commands in this passage. Yet, the Bible also speaks about unjust laws (*The Holy Bible*, Isaiah 10:1-3). God does not mandate his people to obey an unjust law. So, while we do have a biblical mandate to follow our country’s laws, we must also consider the injustices involved in our immigration laws and our equally important biblical mandate to care for the poor and vulnerable among us. Although these instructions were written thousands of years ago, they apply to all of those who identify as followers of God. The following section will provide several suggestions for how Christian communities today may effectively apply the biblical command to care for our immigrant neighbors.

Practical Applications

Christian communities across America play an integral role in seeking justice and caring for immigrants. God calls Christians to not only seek justice and peace, but to be agents of reconciliation to this people group. Brenda Salter McNeil, author and a thought-leader in biblical reconciliation and racial justice for the global church, asserts that Christ calls Christians to “go beyond simply making peace or getting enemies to stop fighting-beyond repentance, justice, and forgiveness” toward reconciliation (21). Therefore, in this context, reconciliation involves how we relate after forgiveness and justice have occurred. Salter McNeil states, “It is about how we delve even deeper into relationship with one another” (21). This work of reconciliation is God’s hope for all people. But how is it achieved?

The work of reconciliation between Christian and immigrant communities is not solely achieved through the actions of individuals, but rather effective reconciliation involves the transformation of the everyday, over time, which may only be accomplished through collective action (Katongole and Rice 45). In order to aide Christian communities' pursuit of justice and reconciliation with immigrant neighbors, this section includes practical applications for both rural and urban settings of everyday actions that may assist in seeking justice for immigrants in America. Additionally, these practices may serve in transforming Christians and immigrant groups into communities of reconciliation. These actions include cultivating awareness in your local community, practicing hospitality and fellowship, and advocating for immigrant reform.

Cultivating Awareness. Historically, religious institutions have played a key role in helping immigrants integrate into American society. According to Waters and Pinneau, faith communities have been known for offering immigrants a place of refuge where they felt they belonged and were supported, a source of respectability for those who felt denied social recognition in the United States, and an array of valuable resources such as connections to jobs, housing and language classes (321). Yet recently, many Christian communities have not maintained this role. Andrews argues that one contributing factor for this may be the tendency throughout the last decade for evangelical Christian communities to focus on internal concerns of the church over social justice outreach (542). An important component to building reconciliation requires Christian churches to once again become a source of refuge, support, and resources for incoming immigrants. This begins by returning the focus to social justice and cultivating an awareness among Christian church members regarding the reality of immigration in America, the current injustices inflicted on this people group, and biblical mandates to amend these injustices and care for immigrants. Sustainable change in the context of immigration may only be

accomplished through cultivating awareness and building networks of committed individuals who are knowledgeable and willing to support the journey toward justice.

To begin to cultivate awareness among congregation members, church leaders must cultivate meaningful dialogue around immigration that addresses the biblical perspective as well as primary questions, concerns, or resistance to supporting incoming immigrants. Dialogue and education may be carried out through a sermon series on the topic or a devotion used in a small group setting. The hope is that cultivating transparent and truthful dialogue around immigration will increase the knowledge and empathy of church members toward incoming immigrants and will result in greater service and fellowship between the two groups. According to Bornstein and Davis, empathy is a skill that may be taught and develops with practice (82). They continue by stating that researchers are finding that this skill is becoming pivotal in reducing social exclusion and enacting social change among individuals with different cultures and values (82). Teaching Christian communities about the hardships of immigrants as well as the importance of practicing empathy may be a powerful tool for enacting change in the context of immigration.

A second practice that may help Christian communities reconcile with immigrant neighbors is their endorsement and participation in multi-cultural events (Stephan 36). It is not merely enough to talk about the importance of caring for incoming immigrants, church communities must be active participants in engaging with immigrant community members and learning about their cultures and beliefs. Church communities may participate in multi-cultural events either by hosting one at their own gathering space or promoting and attending an event being facilitated by local organizations who focus on refugee and immigrant advocacy.

Finally, Christian churches should utilize their influence and platform to connect church members to opportunities to serve in this context. This may be done through identifying local

organizations that work with immigrant populations, becoming familiar with programs and service opportunities, and promoting and encouraging members to serve in whatever way works for them. This is a valuable opportunity for the Christian community to engage in meaningful work, make personal connections with individual immigrants, and exchange narratives.

These practices, intended for facilitating reconciliation between Christian and immigrant communities, are relevant and applicable in both rural and urban settings. Throughout my fieldwork, I often heard individuals living outside the Greater Seattle Area state that reaching out to serve and befriend immigrants would be difficult as they lived in a smaller town with a small population of immigrants. Yet, in recent years, immigration has begun to increase to rural areas in America. Many long-time residents in rural areas remain unaware of the growing population of immigrants because, often, immigrants isolate themselves away from the general population (Andrews 542). Therefore, cultivating awareness may be even more valuable for Christian communities in rural areas who may be unaware of the growing number of immigrants in their area, the injustices and hardships inflicted on them, and how they should respond.

Fostering Hospitality and Camaraderie. The two greatest practices for achieving justice and reconciliation with our immigrant neighbors are hospitality and camaraderie. Beck defines hospitality as the impulses of inclusion, welcome, and embrace (117). He argues that the practice of hospitality is the “quintessential Christian practice” and “the most inflammatory aspect of Jesus’ ministry and teaching” (117). The Bible contains many passages on the importance of hospitality. One of the most powerful depictions comes from the parable of the good Samaritan (*The Holy Bible*, Luke 10:29-37). Through this parable, Jesus emphasizes the importance of caring for our neighbor, including neighbors with different ethnic backgrounds and from other cultures. Ultimately, the greatest motivation to practice hospitality comes from God’s grace and

hospitality presented in the Gospel, which calls us to respond to God and one another with hospitality and grace. Thompson states that hospitality is an expression of the love first given to us by God, and as a response to the experience of God's grace, hospitality should overflow out of us and onto others (178).

Hospitality toward immigrants includes both an attitude of generosity and kindness as well as hospitable actions. There are many ways individuals can show hospitality toward the immigrant community. One simple way to extend hospitality is by creating time and space to meet with immigrant neighbors. This may be done at a cafe, park, or a personal home. A second way to extend hospitality is by sharing a meal together, or by satisfying an immediate need such as clothing, transportation, furniture or appliances, or connecting them to housing resources. Hospitality provides a valuable form of refuge and respect for many immigrants living in the country without a home or the presence of friends and family (Beck 120). When hospitality is shown to immigrants residing in the United States, the forces and impacts of exclusion, isolation, and dehumanization experienced by this group are diminished.

Equally pertinent for achieving justice and reconciliation with the immigrant community is camaraderie between American Christians and incoming immigrants. Simply put, camaraderie is the mutual trust and friendship that results from spending a lot of time with someone. It is a powerful tool for bridging differences, transforming perspectives, and achieving reconciliation (Soerens and Hwang Yang 12). Lederach refers to the practice of camaraderie as accompaniment (54). The skills involved in this practice include sharing suffering, befriending, and breaking bread (55-57). According to Lederach, reconciliation requires a commitment to see the face of God in the other, to feel the world from their perspective, to come alongside our own deepest struggle to understand, as well as the story and struggle of another (56-57). The practice of

hospitality and friendship is important so that individuals may share the joy of companionship as well as support during challenging times. Building camaraderie softens hearts, tears down walls, and allows deep and meaningful interactions to take place.

To counteract the misperceptions and injustices toward immigrants, the Christian community must not only extend hospitality, but seek to build meaningful relationships with immigrants that involve deep conversation, sharing in suffering, and communion through shared meals. According to Allport's Contact Theory, meaningful contact between conflicting groups over an extended period will improve their relationship to one another by decreasing hostility which is typically fueled by stereotypes that result from limited exposure to the other (as qtd. in Salter McNeil 33). These positive shared experiences help to dissolve any prejudice, fear, or misperceptions about the other. The Christian community is an imperative group in extending hospitality toward immigrants in our country and providing a safe place for positive experiences and relationship building to occur. This is how Christians may go beyond making peace and seeking justice for immigrants to accomplish the deeper work of reconciliation which involves relationship with the other.

Advocating for Immigration Reform. The United States' on-going ineffective immigration system has contributed to the unjust separation of families, the gradual increase of forced illegal entry, the discrimination and isolation of immigrant communities in our country, and perpetuation of refugee and immigrant suffering. In addition to contributing to the injustices suffered by immigrants, Congress has been unsuccessful in implementing effective policies that address the public's rising national security and government assistance concerns (Batalova 78). As a result, immigration reform has emerged as one of our country's most salient political issues (Knoll 313). The Christian community has an important role in changing our country's broken

immigration system by advocating for effective reforms that may better serve our country and both current and future immigrant residents. Salter McNeil asserts that once individuals “establish principles that are rooted in their theology and faith, they must vote and fight for political bills, corporate and institutional policies, and neighborhood ethics that reflect their faith-based principles,” for we cannot say we “love people if we do not care about the policies that negatively affect them” (99). Therefore, if the Christian community has the ability to re-unite families, bring in more foreign-born workers with skills our economy needs, and allow those forced to unlawfully enter our country, an option for legal residence, they must.

Throughout the past decade, lobbyist on both sides of the immigration debate have submitted legislation proposals for immigration reform. Lobbyist in favor of a more conservative policy have focused on increasing enforcement laws in hopes of tackling the country’s unlawful immigration and ensuring national security (Batalova 78). Lobbyist in favor of a more liberal and inclusive policy have advocated for reducing some of the strict qualifications for visas, reducing backlogs for family-based immigration, border protection policies consistent with humanitarian values, and offering undocumented immigrants an option for earned legalization in the country (Batalova 78). Due to the polarized political agendas, Congress has been unable to implement the necessary reforms our country’s immigration system requires. Batalova states that “the price of not reaching a resolution is deepening societal divisions and intensifying social and economic disruptions” (78). In order to advance the broken immigration system, both sides of the debate must acknowledge the possibility that there may be more similarities than differences to each group’s reform agenda and use this insight to develop a more middle ground approach. Although the Bible does not directly instruct Christians on which policies to support, there are

general principles and considerations that guide individuals as they seek to advocate for reforms that will produce a more compassionate and just immigration system.

Comprehensive immigration reform guided by biblical values involves four principles. The first principle is border protection policies consistent with humanitarian values. Everyone can agree that an important component in our immigration system that requires reform is our border control and security. For Christians, it is important to support policies that work to more effectively secure our border while also treating all individuals with dignity. Our immigration policy must support border security measures that increase our national security without over-penalizing immigrants (Soerens and Hwang Yang 126).

The second principle guiding biblical immigration reform are reforms in family-based immigration to reduce backlogs. Many conservatives are hesitant to support laws that allow even more immigrants to enter our country annually yet reducing back-logs and providing reasonable avenues for immigrants to enter our country legally, will actually assist in improving our border security. For many concerned with our countries' security, enforcement-only bills can seem like an effective way to control immigration. However, immigration is not simply a border security problem but a systemic problem that requires a more holistic approach. Tzamares and Woods state that for the past decade enforcement-only bills have been ineffective and done nothing but “undermine public safety, trample the U.S. Constitution, harm Americans and immigrant families, and waste millions in taxpayer dollars” (Tzamares and Woods). Removing family-based visa backlogs and providing more legal avenues for immigrants to enter legally reduces the number of immigrants who may feel unlawful entry is their only choice to re-unite with family or escape unhealthy living conditions. This will save millions of taxpayer dollars and relieve certain pressures on the border and allow border patrol agents to more effectively do their job. In

addition to assisting our border security, reducing backlogs in family-based immigration allows loved ones that are residing in the country legally but separated from their family, with a wait time up to twenty years, to reunite with their family as quickly as possible.

The third principle is the creation of legal avenues for workers and their families. Our current immigration system often makes it very difficult for immigrants wishing to migrate into our country legally for work. This causes many immigrants, who are desperate for a better life and a safe and reliable job, to feel they have no option but to enter the country illegally. Gordon Hanson states that “being illegal prevents immigrants from moving freely between jobs which makes it challenging for many to move out of poverty and lowers the potential immigration surplus” (365). In addition, not providing legal avenues for immigrant workers, especially those seeking employment in high-demand jobs, weakens our economy. Future immigration reform must include a system that allows employers in the United States who need foreign workers the ability to legally hire and employ them. This allows both the employer and immigrant employee to gain the benefits of migration as well as decreasing the motivation for immigrants to enter our country illegally.

The final principle guiding biblical immigration reform involves providing undocumented immigrants access to earn a legal residence in the United States. There are millions of undocumented immigrants currently in our country. Most of these individuals are working hard and contributing to our economy without access to appropriate healthcare, certain personal freedoms and protections, education, and the right to vote. Immigration reform must include an opportunity for these immigrants to regularize their status by satisfying sensible requirements. According to past requirements proposed, undocumented immigrants may be eligible for legal status only after learning English, maintaining steady employment, and paying

a fine (Batalova 74). Not only would this offer undocumented immigrants a chance to admit their infractions against the law and gain the rights and privileges of an American citizen, but legalization also provides our country with a practical alternative to the costly and disruptive efforts to remove all undocumented immigrants. Therefore, providing a legalization process for undocumented immigrants is a valuable method that should be at the forefront of immigration reform proposals. It will not only benefit the immigrant community but will help our country track a largely unidentified population, free up enforcement resources, and raise additional tax revenues from immigrant workers (Rosenblum 1).

Christians endeavoring to care for the vulnerable and seek justice and reconciliation with those isolated, maltreated, and in need, have an obligation to speak out against the unjust and ineffective policies that effect immigrants in our country. The Christian community must allow biblical principles to inform their actions and guide them as they seek to advocate for immigration reform. The leaders of our country must make policy decisions based on compassion and generosity instead of fear and selfishness. Christians must see beyond the rhetoric and encourage our country's leaders to implement solutions that allow them to experience transformed communities where immigrants are celebrated as valuable and integrated members. This is one way to embody the love of Christ and work towards holistic healing and reconciliation with the immigrant community.

Current Thesis Project

Throughout this paper we have established the injustices involved with our country's immigration system, the discrimination and isolation experienced by immigrants in our country, and the important role the Christian community may serve in counteracting these injustices. But

how do we move forward from these insights in order to mobilize the Christian community towards effective action that may produce social impact in this context?

During my field research, I spoke with different local Christian community members about these injustices and how they may play a part in helping immigrants in our country. What I realized through these conversations was that many individuals were open to learning more about our immigration system and incoming immigrants as well as opportunities to serve and advocate in this context but didn't know where they could find the resources to do so. For these reasons, I am providing an educational handbook, *Standing with our Immigrant Neighbors*, that will inform the Christian community about immigration injustices, encourage meaningful conversations on the topic, and provide resources for individuals or small groups to volunteer and serve local immigrants living in their city.

Project Justification and Significance to Stakeholders. I am not the only person who has recognized the injustices being experienced by immigrants in our country and the need for the Christian community to become educated and equipped to assist in this context. Several Christian community leaders have made immigrant advocacy and care a mission focus for their church and are looking for resources that may help their congregation get connected to opportunities to serve and learn more about the pressing needs of this people group. Five months ago, I was contacted by Don Ross, the Assemblies of God Northwest Ministry Network's Superintendent. He had heard that I was thinking about creating a handbook focusing on immigration for local church communities. He stated how important he thought it was for Christians to increase their involvement in assisting immigrants and expressed interest in promoting my handbook to Christian leaders once it was complete (Ross). Bill Berger, the pastor at my church, also supported the idea. He stated, "There needs to be more discussions about

immigrant justice and advocacy in the church setting. There are not many resources I have found that facilitate meaningful dialogue on the topic or addresses some of the more challenging questions people have. I think an educational handbook would be super helpful.” Producing and distributing an educational handbook on the injustices of our immigration system, the biblical response to immigration, and opportunities to advocate and serve will guide Christians in how they may live out the biblical call to care for immigrants and empower them to exemplify the love and hospitality of Christ to the immigrant community.

Lastly, it is important to not only ask the Christian community about their opinions on the value of an educational handbook, but the immigrant community as well. In my research, almost every individual I spoke with had a strong desire for better relations with citizens and felt that an educational handbook would help Christians as well as other American citizens better understand their struggles and their desire to be part of the local community. One of the immigrants I spoke with was my friend Gerardo. He has lived in America for fifteen years and has experienced many of the challenges associated with the immigration system and integration into American society. When asked if he thought an educational handbook would be valuable for increasing empathy and relationships between immigrants and Christian community members, he replied:

I think a handbook would be extremely helpful. I think it could help take away some of the negative stereotypes about immigrants, especially Mexicans, and help more people understand that all people here in America whether white, Mexican, or native, we are all here trying to have a good life and provide for our families. If we can see these similarities in each other, it will make a difference. (Ramirez lines 41-43)

Creating an educational handbook is not only valuable to the Christian community, it is valuable to incoming immigrants. The handbook will help to improve incoming immigrant's integration process as more and more Americans learn about the immigration system and the need to welcome and engage with immigrants. This in turn will provide immigrants with a better sense of belonging and enable them to experience the transformative love and hospitality of Christ.

Conclusion

Throughout this paper I have argued that the United States immigration system must be reformed due to its ineffective and unjust nature which supports the criminalization, alienation, and dehumanization of immigrants in our society. The Christian community has a pertinent role in addressing the challenges immigrants experience in our country. If our country continues to be paralyzed by fear, nothing will be accomplished. Immigrant families will continue to get separated, individuals will continue to unnecessarily risk their lives and experience suffering and discrimination, our country's ineffective efforts to control unlawful immigration will squander valuable resources, and much of the immigrant community will live in isolation. Therefore, it is vital that Christians be equipped and mobilized to counteract these injustices and misperceptions by advocating and working for equality, peace, and reconciliation between American citizens and the immigrant population in our country.

Standing with our Immigrant Neighbors should serve as a valuable source of literature to the Christian community that may help increase their empathy toward this population and guide them in their efforts to counteract discrimination and pursue justice and reconciliation with immigrants in our country. In addition to educating and assisting Christians' efforts for justice in this context, it will also provide opportunities to join a greater network of organizations already achieving positive social impact in this context. Finally, *Standing with our Immigrant Neighbors*

will be a valuable support to immigrants by improving incoming immigrants' integration and acceptance into our society, easing their access to lawful entry by advocating for more inclusive immigration laws, and increasing their experience of God's love and hospitality toward them. It is time for our society to end the injustices against the immigrant, to respond to God's call to love and welcome the vulnerable, and to recognize our shared humanity with them. It is only then that the Christian community may walk side by side with their immigrant neighbors, exchange narratives, share in suffering and joy, and be transformed by their differences.

Appendix- Educational Handbook

STANDING WITH OUR IMMIGRANT NEIGHBORS

IMPLICATIONS FOR RIGHT RESPONSE

KAYLEN O'HARA

Author's Note: For the purpose of this project submission, this handbook will be a text-only version. The final version of this handbook intended for distribution to faith communities will include visuals.

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Maria's Story

It was an unusually hot summer day in July when Maria was released from the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma, WA. Maria is a 31-year-old Honduran mother who was forced to flee her country after witnessing a gang murder outside her home. Two of the gang members threatened to kill Maria and gave her two days to leave the city. Maria felt she had no choice but to pack her bags, grab her two children, and spend her life savings to hire a coyote to guide them on a treacherous journey to the United States.

Once they arrived in the U.S., Maria planned to stay with a friend who had offered to help. Maria began to cry as she described her family's journey. She explained, "It was such a hard and awful journey to the United States. It took us eight days and the whole time I was anxious and afraid of getting caught or killed. We did not have much time to sleep or stop and rest. My kids were hungry, so I gave them most of the food I packed. When we finally made it to the U.S., the worst thing happened to my family. We were detained, and they separated me from my children. I had no idea where they took them and was unable to speak with them for three months."¹

During the last few weeks in detention, Maria found out her kids were both taken to a social service agency in New York, while Maria was sent to an immigrant detention facility in Tacoma, WA. After three months in detention, Maria finally received her court hearing. During the hearing she was granted release from detention and ordered to return to Honduras as soon as possible.

Under the current United States' immigration policy, there is no asylum for immigrants fleeing gang violence, nor a reasonable or timely option to enter the United States legally. Due to this, Maria and her children were forced to return to Honduras where their safety and well-being are at risk. Maria's story is not uncommon. Every year, there are thousands of immigrants in crisis with no viable option for entering the United States lawfully. This has resulted in an immigration crisis leaving many immigrant families separated, suffering, and discriminated against.

My interest in researching our country's immigration crisis, as well as the mistreatment of immigrants, began around six years ago. It was during this time that I noticed many members in my small-town community were raising concerns about incoming immigrants. These individuals expressed their fear of immigrants' impact on our economy, the safety of American citizens, and their concern with undocumented immigration. Many argued that the best solution would be to increase deportations, tighten up our borders, and place even greater restrictions on those allowed into our country legally. Furthermore, I was surprised to find that a great percentage of these individuals were from the Christian community. These conversations led to questions and concerns of my own. My main leading questions being, "Why do so many Christians hold negative assumptions about immigrants and their impact on our country?", "Where do these assumptions come from?", and "Why isn't the Christian community doing more to serve and advocate for this vulnerable population?"

This handbook was birthed from my concerns and questions about current immigration in our country and how God would have myself, and the Christian community respond. My questions led me on a personal journey where I met and talked with immigrants and members of the Christian Church throughout my community. Although there are still questions left unanswered, I have learned a lot about myself, about the heart of

¹ Lopez, Maria. Personal interview. 7 July 2018.

God, and gained new insights into the injustices experienced by my immigrant neighbors. Through my research and conversations, I began to understand the importance of relationships, of connecting to those who may be different, and of reaching out to compassionately respond to the challenges and suffering of the immigrant community. I feel that Scripture makes it clear that immigrants are to be included in the call to love our neighbors as ourselves. This means going out of our way to build personal relationships with our immigrant neighbors that involves exchanging stories, supporting one another, and helping to restore our immigrant neighbors' identities as children of God who have unique talents and purposes. It is my hope and prayer that this handbook may be an educational resource that encourages the Christian community to confront and discuss our fears and concerns about immigration and facilitates open and honest reflections about how the Bible may inform our opinions and response to this issue.

Opening Discussion Questions

1. What current pressing questions do you have about immigration in the United States?
2. How familiar are you with the country's immigration system? What has been your primary sources for obtaining information (friends, family, media etc.)?
3. What is your current position on the immigration crisis in the United States? Why?
4. What, if anything, makes you resistant to immigration reform that will provide more reasonable and just pathways for immigrants to enter the country legally?
5. Do you know any immigrants personally? If so, how has their experience and your relationship with them informed your stance on immigration in the United States?

Understanding the Current Immigration Policy

The United States' current immigration system is complex and often misunderstood by the general public. One of the greatest points of contention in the immigration debate, is why unlawful immigration has become so common. Many believe that immigrants choose to unlawfully enter the country to avoid paying taxes and receive free government services. Others think that undocumented immigrants are simply unwilling to fill out the proper paperwork or patiently wait their turn to receive a green card. The reality is that most undocumented immigrants remain undocumented because our current immigration system provides no process for them to enter the country legally or obtain legal status.

There are three basic statuses that a foreigner residing in the United States may have. These include U.S. citizen, legal nonimmigrant, and lawful permanent resident.

- Individuals who enter the country as a nonimmigrant are allowed into the country on a temporary basis. Individuals who are granted nonimmigrant visas include: "foreign government officials, visitors for business or pleasure, immigrants in transit through the United States, students, temporary workers, fiancé(e)s of U.S. citizens, and religious workers."¹ Most nonimmigrant visas have an expiration date. If individuals stay in the country beyond their specified date, they become undocumented.
- Lawful permanent residents are immigrants who have legally entered and reside in the country based on a special visa that grants them a green card. These individuals have the right to live and work in the country without an expiration date. A green card holder may still be deported if the individual commits certain crimes, impersonates a U.S. citizen, stays outside the country for too long, is a threat to the national security of the country, or votes illegally. Lawful permanent residence may apply to become U.S. citizens after residing in the country for four years and nine months. After applying, they must also pass a test in English of the country's history, civics and government, and also pay a fee of \$725.

There are currently four pathways available by which an immigrant may enter the country and reside as a lawful permanent resident. These include family-based immigration, employment, the diversity lottery, and asylum or refugee status.

- Family-based immigration is the most common visa issued to immigrants who come to reside in the United States permanently. Under the current immigration law, there are two categories for family issued visas. These include immediate relatives and family preference categories.²
- Immediate relative visas have no yearly limits, while a maximum of 226,000 family preference visas are permitted per year. These categories are extremely complex and difficult to navigate. For example, legal residents in the United States may petition for a

¹ "Nonimmigrant." *U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services*, 22 March 2018, www.uscis.gov/tools/glossary/nonimmigrant.

² "Family Based Immigrant Visas." *U.S. Department of State*, travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/immigrate/family-immigration/family-based-immigrant-visas.html.

- Family preference visas present an even greater challenge for qualifying immigrants with significantly longer wait times and higher fees. In this category, visa availability rests on the relationship to the U.S. legal resident or citizen and which country the petitioners' family members are from.
 - The first preference is for unmarried adult children of U.S. citizens. The current wait time for these people is anywhere from seven years to twenty-one years depending on the individual's country of origin.¹
 - The second preference includes spouses and children of legal residents applying for his or her spouse or children under age twenty-one. The current wait time for second preference family members from most countries is around six years.²
 - The third preference is for married children of U.S. citizens. The U.S. Department of State lists the wait time for most countries at around twelve years, while the wait time for Mexicans and Filipinos is twenty-three years.³
 - The fourth and final preference category is for brothers and sisters of adult U.S. citizens. According to the U.S. Department of State, the wait time for this final category is thirteen years, while the wait time for Mexicans and Filipinos is twenty-three years.⁴ In addition to these unreasonable wait times, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service's (USCIS) inefficiencies and lack of resources to process applications often delay wait times even more.

- The next visas offered for legal entry and permanent residence in the United States is employment-based. Approximately 140,000 employment-based immigrant visas are available per year. Immigrants granted this visa come to the United States as either a permanent resident worker, or a temporary worker. Individuals with higher levels of education or specified skills are usually given first preference within this category. Furthermore, for an immigrant to be eligible for this visa, they must have an employer sponsor who has already applied and obtained a government- issued labor certification. Additionally, employment-based visas are "also granted to wealthy investors who agree to invest money into the country and employ U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents."⁵

- The third visa category offered is through the Diversity Visa Program. Each year, the United States issues 50,000 diversity visas (DV) to eligible immigrants from countries with historically low rates of immigration to the United States. These visas may be applied for, free of charge, by immigrants from select countries who have completed

¹ "Visa Bulletin for December 2018." *U.S. Department of State*, Dec. 2018, travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/legal/visa-law0/visa-bulletin/2019/visa-bulletin-for-december-2018.html.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Soerens, Matthew, and Jenny Hwang Yang. *Welcoming the Stranger: Justice, Compassion & Truth in the Immigration Debate*. IVP Books, an Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2018, 64.

- The final category for obtaining legal entry and permanent residence in the United States is by qualifying as a refugee or by being granted asylum. According to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, a refugee is an individual who must flee their country based on persecution or fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, or membership in a particular social or political group.¹ While Asylum seekers are individuals who are also forced to flee their country based on persecution and claim to be a refugee, but whose claims have yet to be evaluated by the receiving country.² The total number of refugees admitted into the United States varies each year. The maximum number is set by the President annually. Under the Obama administration, approximately 85,000 refugees legally entered the country annually while only 21,491 refugees were allowed entry in 2018 based on the Trump administration's reductions in refugee allowance.³ The Trump administration has not only reduced the number of refugee allowances but enacted various revisions to the country's immigration policy. The major revisions to the immigration policy include: banning nationals from eight different countries from entering the United States, cancelling the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, ending Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for nationals of several countries, and reducing refugee admissions to the lowest numbers since the 1980s.⁴

Understanding the country's immigration system, strict visa requirements, and long wait times is important in informing our understanding about how unreasonable and often discriminatory the system can be for many innocent individuals wanting to work hard for a better life, be re-united with family members, or escape unsafe circumstances in their country. In addition, becoming aware of these strict requirements and long wait times helps us better understand and empathize with undocumented immigrants and the often-desperate circumstances that leads many to risk their lives in attempt to enter our country unlawfully.

For many Christians, unlawful immigration may be their greatest concern when considering their response to immigration. For those individuals, it may be difficult to understand why we should look on them with compassion and seek to amend policies to assist them. I do not claim to support the idea of breaking our country's laws as acceptable, but do suggest that we look more deeply into the laws and circumstances involved with undocumented immigration in the United States and how the Bible may direct our response to this people group.

¹ "Refugees & Asylum." *U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services*, 12 Nov. 2015, www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/refugees-asylum.

² *Ibid.*

³ Pierce, Sarah, and Andrew Selee. "Immigration under Trump: A Review of Policy Shifts in the Year Since the Election." *Migrationpolicy.org*, 22 Jan. 2018, www.migrationpolicy.org/research/immigration-under-trump-review-policy-shifts.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

Who are the Undocumented? (Jose's Story)

What comes to your mind when you think of undocumented immigration? Maybe you associate undocumented immigrants with individuals who are dangerous and deceptive? Maybe you simply consider undocumented immigrants lazy and a burden to our society? Or maybe you don't know enough about undocumented immigration to have an opinion just yet? Either way, it is easy for most Christians to agree that we should care for immigrants in a general sense, but we may feel troubled and unsure if we should assist immigrants that are here unlawfully. Many individuals' resistance to assisting undocumented immigrants are influenced by media sources that stereotype the majority of undocumented immigrants as drug dealers, terrorists, or as general threats to our society. But, have we ever stopped to ask if these associations are actually true? When we think about undocumented immigrants, do we ever think about the father who has been separated from his family for years because of the extensive visa backlogs that allows no expedient lawful entry into the country? Or the young woman trapped in an unsafe country filled with gang violence because she doesn't qualify for any of the four current visa categories?

The current state of immigration helps to explain why a vast majority of undocumented people are in the United States without the proper documents. The present laws make it nearly impossible for most people to immigrate legally, while the political and economic situations in individual's home countries make it extremely difficult for them to remain living there. In order to effectively inform our understanding of our country's immigration system and our position on the matter, we must not only understand the injustices and inefficiencies with the country's immigration laws, but have an accurate understanding of who the undocumented are, their current role in our society, and their impact on our country.

Most immigrants who are present in the United States and are not U.S. citizens, nonimmigrants, or lawful permanent residents, are categorized as undocumented. Figure 1 on page 58 provides the percentage of immigrants residing in the United States for each immigration status but does not include those who have been granted asylum or refugee status. The numbers are based off the 2016 United States census. According to the graph, of the 59.4 million foreign-born people residing in the United States, only 23.7 percent (10.7 million) of them are undocumented (figure 1). Despite popular assumptions that most undocumented immigrants enter the country illegally, the majority of unauthorized immigrants that arrived during the previous five years are those who entered the country with temporary visas but chose to overstay their expiration date.¹

Most undocumented immigrants in the United States work low-paying manual labor or agricultural jobs. This is often due to their low skill level, limited English-language ability, and lack of legal status. Another contributing factor to undocumented immigrants' low wages comes from employers who take advantage of their lack of legal status by overworking and underpaying them.²

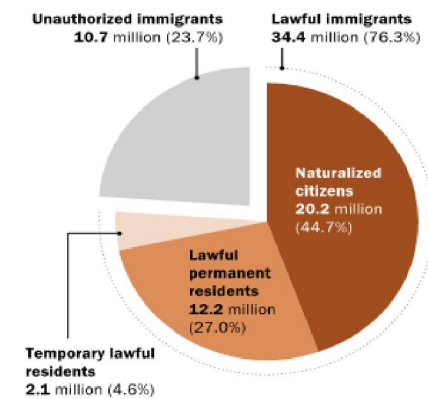
¹ Passel, Jeffrey S., and D'Vera Cohn. "U.S. Unauthorized Immigration Total Lowest in a Decade." *Pew Research Center's Hispanic Trends Project*, 28 Dec. 2018, www.pewhispanic.org/2018/11/27/u-s-unauthorized-immigrant-total-dips-to-lowest-level-in-a-decade/.

² Hanson, Gordon. "Challenges for the US Immigration Policy." *The United States and the World Economy: Foreign Economic Policy for the next Decade*, Institute for International Economics, 2005, 353.

There are many undocumented immigrants who have experienced difficulties finding a job that paid a fair wage and provided a safe and respectful work environment. One of those individuals is Jose Moreno. Jose first came to the United States twenty-five years ago in hopes of a better life. While speaking with Jose, he told me that it has been difficult living in America,

Unauthorized immigrants are a quarter of the U.S. foreign born population

Foreign-born population estimates, 2016



Note: Figures for the total and subgroups differ from published U.S. Census Bureau totals because census data have been augmented and adjusted to account for undercount of the population. All numbers are rounded; see Methodology for rounding rules. Unauthorized immigrants include some with temporary protection from deportation under Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Temporary Protected Status (TPS). Source: Pew Research Center estimates based on augmented U.S. Census Bureau data. See Methodology for details. "U.S. Unauthorized Immigrant Total Dips to Lowest Level in a Decade"

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Fig.1. Graph of foreign born population estimates, 2016 from: López, Gustavo, et al. "Key Findings about U.S. Immigrants." Pew Research Center, Pew Research Center, 30 Nov. 2018

more difficult than he expected. He explained, "Ever since I come to United States, I work two, sometimes three jobs just to make enough money for my family and have some to send home to my family in Mexico. I know I do not get paid like what a person with a green card or citizenship would, but I do not care. People do not understand that for me, getting paid eight or nine dollars an hour is a lot. In Mexico, I would get paid maybe twenty dollars a day. It's very difficult to not be treated the same as everyone else, or to feel like people think I am not as smart because my accent, but it is worth it to live in United States. I never want to break the laws. I want to do things the right way. I do not want to do things illegally, but I was desperate to help my family. I knew no one in United States and I did not know what you are supposed to do to get here legally. I wish there would have been more help for someone like me coming here so that I know all the laws about it and would not end up in detention."¹

Most undocumented immigrants are here for similar reasons as Jose. They want a better life where they don't have to worry about going hungry or for the safety of their family. While others often come to be reunited with family. Many endure exploitation in the work place, discrimination, and various challenges involved with living in a country where you cannot speak or read the language. Some have no intention of living in the United States permanently, and do not desire to reside here illegally. Many other undocumented immigrants long for the legal status offered by a green card, and eventually to be citizens because this would allow them to live without fear of deportation, provide the confidence and power to petition for fair wages, and the ability to travel back home to visit family. Unfortunately, our current immigration system often makes the process of legal immigration extremely difficult, if not impossible. Therefore, it is extremely important that we consider the difficulties involved with legal immigration, the pressing hardships in the lives of those desiring to come to our country, if these laws are reasonable and just, and what may be done to provide a more balanced and effective immigration system.

¹ Moreno, Jose. Personal interview. 17 July 2018.

Section Review Discussion Questions

1. In reading the information in this section, what was new to you? What did you read that challenged your assumptions in some way?
2. What surprised you, if anything, about our country's current visa requirements? Do you find the requirements to be reasonable or an effective way for incoming immigrants to enter our country?
3. Have you ever known someone who struggled with the process of obtaining a visa to enter the United States? What was their experience?
4. Considering what you have just read, how might you respond to the popular argument that immigrants should have to "wait their turn" to come to our country?
5. What concerns you most about unlawful immigration? What circumstances may have contributed to these views?

Addressing Popular Concerns

In any discussion about immigration in our country, it is important to review and consider the legitimate concerns that many Americans have about the issue. There are several explanations to why American citizens may be hesitant toward supporting a more comprehensive immigration system which more generously allows immigrants into our country. These hesitations may stem from various fears and assumptions about immigrants, their motives to migrate, and their impacts on our country.

Some citizens believe immigrants cross our borders for selfish gain. Many presume their gain results in an economic loss for the United States by increasing job competition for citizens and accruing more costs for the government than they pay in taxes.¹ Other citizens are most concerned about unlawful immigration, viewing many immigrants as possible perpetrators entering the country to commit acts of crime. Past terrorist attacks on the United States have created both fear and prejudice toward immigrants.² This prejudice has led to collective paranoia and fear. This fear results in exclusive thinking, closed borders, and the emphasis on domestic issues rather than caring for the immigrant stranger.³ Finally, the influx of immigrants has increased both ethnic and religious diversity in the United States. Many individuals fear these shifting cultural differences and the potential impacts they may have on their lives. Furthermore, Americans specifically worry that immigrants and their children do not share the same social values as the native-born, and that the past dominance of the English language and Christian religion will fade out. Americans feel especially threatened by the potential rise in immigrants that belong to the Islamic faith and the negative implications that may result from this upsurge.⁴

These concerns are valid, and it is important that these concerns be accurately addressed and that any misunderstandings are amended. In his book, *Globalization, Spirituality, and Justice: Navigating a Path to Peace*, author Daniel Groody argues that for truth and justice to be fully realized, individuals must have the courage to embrace their confusions about difference in society, "as well as their convictions, hesitations as well as hope, fear as well as fortitude."⁵ Below I will discuss the popular concerns regarding foreign immigration in the United States presented above and their current impacts on our country.

Economic Impact

Throughout the country's history, immigrants have played a key role in the development of the economy. They are one of the chief reasons why the current economy has grown to be so resilient, diverse, and robust.

¹ Camarota, Steven A. "Deportation vs. the Cost of Letting Illegal Immigrants Stay." *Center for Immigration Studies*, 3 Aug. 2017, cis.org/Report/Deportation-vs-Cost-Letting-Illegal-Immigrants-Stay.

² Louw, Daniel. "The Refugee Dilemma and Migrant Crisis: Charity Begins at Home or Being Home to the Homeless? The Paradoxical Stance in Pastoral Caregiving and the Infiltration and Perichoresis of Compassion." *HTS Theologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, vol. 72, no. 2, 2016, doi:10.4102/hts.v72i2.3267. 3-4.

³ Ibid., 3-4.

⁴ Waters, Mary C, and Marisa Gerstein Pineau. "7 Sociocultural Dimensions of Immigrant Integration." *Integration of Immigrants into American Society*, National Academies Press, 2016, 332.

⁵ Groody, Daniel G. *Globalization, Spirituality and Justice: Navigating a Path to Peace*. Orbis, 2015, 155.

As the world has become increasingly more connected, the United States economy is transforming from a manufacturing society to an information-based society. These changes have created new jobs as well as eliminated the need for others. These various shifts have many worried about foreign immigration's impact, both lawful and unlawful, on the United States economy. The two greatest economic concerns are that immigrants unfairly draw on government benefits creating a fiscal drain for our country and take away jobs from American citizens.¹ Immigration's impacts on both public resources and the job market can be measured through studies which examine immigrants' use of government services, tax payments, health care utilization, Social Security contributions, labor force participation, wage levels, and by analyzing the country's gross domestic product (GDP).

From a Christian perspective, the question of whether immigrants benefit the country's economy should not be a primary concern that dictates our response to immigration. God calls us to care for the orphan, widowed, and foreigner, despite what they may offer to us or the country. However, since there are competing stories across the United States about the costs and benefits of immigration for the country, it is important that this issue be truthfully explored and addressed. Before discussing recent studies on the impact of immigration on the country's resources and job market, it is imperative that popular misperceptions about immigrants and government benefits as well as realistic concerns regarding the negative impact of immigration on our country's economy are addressed.

In regards to government benefits and taxes, two common misperceptions about immigrants are that they do not have to pay taxes and receive free healthcare. The truth is that most immigrants get taxes taken out of their paycheck each month for Social Security, Medicare, income tax, and property taxes, and although immigrant children are eligible for free healthcare, adult immigrants are ineligible for most public benefits. In fact, Stephen Moore, a respected economist at the Cato Institute finds that "the average immigrant (legal immigrants, refugees and undocumented immigrants) pays about \$80,000 more in taxes than he or she receives in benefits over a lifetime."² Although all immigrants pay taxes for many benefits they cannot receive, undocumented immigrants' residence in the country often results in disproportionate expenses at the state level from expenses accrued from the free health services provided to the children of undocumented immigrants. According to Moore, although immigrants provide an overall positive impact to the economy at the national level, the benefits they receive at the state level equal \$25,000 more over a lifetime than what is paid to state and local governments.³ Fortunately, Congress has recognized this disproportionate flow of resources and benefits and has recently enacted measures to direct additional national resources to help states deal with these costs.

When considering the economic impact of immigrants in our country, some economists may argue that immigrants, especially the undocumented, create unfair labor competition and have negative wage effects on American citizens which results in an overall negative effect on the

¹ West, Darrell M. "The Costs and Benefits of Immigration." *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 126, no. 3, 2011, pp. 427-443., doi:10.1002/j.1538-165x.2011.tb00707. x, 1.

² Soerens, Matthew, and Jenny Hwang Yang. *Welcoming the Stranger: Justice, Compassion & Truth in the Immigration Debate*. IVP Books, an Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2018, 108.

³ *Ibid.*, 108.

majority of the country's working population. Most immigrants in the United States work in the goods-producing sector which consists of agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, construction, and manufacturing. Therefore, the only competition immigrants create for jobs are for Americans without a high school diploma. Most research suggests that for most other workers, immigrants complement, rather than substitute for, the efforts of American workers.¹ Furthermore, competition created by immigrants for manual labor jobs is decreasing as the demand for labor has progressively increased since 2006.²

According to Nicholson and the Center for American Progress Immigration Team, in 2016, immigrants added an estimated two trillion to the U.S. gross domestic product, much of which was from consumerism.³ Since 2016, these numbers have continued to rise. Immigrants' positive contribution to the GDP supports the annual increase in wages. Lastly, immigrants not only increase many working Americans wages, they also create new businesses and expand the country's job market. This results from the provision of immigrant labor which allows certain businesses which would otherwise close out or move operations overseas to remain in the United States.

Overall, it is evident that immigrants (lawful or unlawful) aide the country's economy. Given the need for an ever-increasing labor market, most economists agree that immigration in any form provides and will continue to provide an economic benefit to the United States.⁴ Although immigration, especially unlawful immigration, results in some job competition for the less educated, as well as several challenges for public resources, most impact from immigration is supportive and that which is not may be amended through specific immigration policy adjustments which will be discussed later.

National Security and Public Safety Concerns

Another popular public concern with immigration is the potential threat that incoming immigrants may present to national security and the safety of our country's citizens. These concerns have been dramatically escalated since the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States. These attacks influenced the general rise of nativism in America and induced collective paranoia and fear about foreigners entering our country. Consequently, these concerns have directly affected how many Americans feel about immigrants in our country.

It is entirely justified and necessary that the citizens of our country ensure that we take appropriate actions to minimize threats and avoid further attacks. However, it is not reasonable to presume that most immigrants are potential terrorists or criminals. Many citizens not only fear that incoming immigrants may commit acts of terrorism, but also fear that immigrants increase general criminal activity within the country. This belief stands resilient throughout the

¹ West, Darrell M. "The Costs and Benefits of Immigration." *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 126, no. 3, 2011, pp. 427-443., doi:10.1002/j.1538-165x.2011.tb00707. x, 12.

² Hogan, Andrew, and Brian Roberts. "Occupational Employment Projections to 2024." *Monthly Labor Review*, 2015, doi: 10.21916/mlr.2015.49.

³ Nicholson, Michael D., and CAP Immigration Team. "The Facts on Immigration Today: 2017 Edition." *Center for American Progress*, 20 Apr. 2017, www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/reports/2017/04/20/430736/facts-immigration-today-2017-edition/.

⁴ Soerens, Matthew, and Jenny Hwang Yang. *Welcoming the Stranger: Justice, Compassion & Truth in the Immigration Debate*. IVP Books, an Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2018, 109.

years, despite actual evidence which reveals that immigrants are in fact less likely than natives to commit crimes. A research study conducted in Texas in 2015, revealed that of the total number of crimes committed within Texas in 2015, that natives were convicted of 409,708 crimes, illegal immigrants were convicted of 15,803 crimes, and legal immigrants were convicted of 17,785 crimes.¹ That means as a percentage of their respective populations, that there were 50 percent fewer criminal convictions of illegal immigrants than of native-born Americans in Texas in 2015. In addition, the criminal conviction rate for legal immigrants was about 66 percent below the native-born rate.

The assumption that immigrants are associated with criminal activity is also influenced by strong historical stereotypes of immigrants or negative media portrayals of non-whites and immigrants as predisposed to violence and crime. Associating immigrants with criminal activity is not a new way of thinking. Immigrant criminal stereotypes began in the mid-19th century when citizens began assigning ethnic slurs such as “paddy wagon” (police car used for prisoners) to Irish, and associating Italian Americans with organized crime and the mafia.² Furthermore, the media often promotes negative stereotypes about non-white immigrants which perpetuate the public’s fear regarding immigrants and crime. These depictions often grab people’s attention and alert them to potential physical and cultural threats which the media and politicians use to their advantage.

Although the safety and security of our country and its citizens is vital, sound and accurate judgments must be applied when thinking about immigrants and their impact on our country’s safety. A balanced and wise response would be to promote effective border control and criminal record checks of incoming immigrants. Unfortunately, our current excessively restrictive immigration system makes it impossible for many to enter legally which results in millions entering our country without proper inspection. The implementation of a reasonable legal procedure that immigrants could follow to enter the country would dramatically decrease unlawful entries and allow border enforcements to more effectively monitor and inspect those who are entering our country. Therefore, it is pertinent that we support the implementation of a more reasonable immigration system, not only for the well-being of incoming immigrants, but to assist in improving the safety and security of our country.

Loss of Cultural and Religious Identity

A third concern, even among Christians, is that immigrants present a threat to traditional American culture. Similar to the previous concerns, this fear has been present throughout the history of our country. According to Rhys Williams, a Professor and Chair of Sociology at Loyola University, American citizens first became concerned with immigrants as a cultural threat to the country in the mid-1840s and 1850s when large numbers of Irish and German Catholics arrived. At this time, the country was primarily a Protestant nation and citizens worried that the influx in

¹ Nowrasteh, Alex. “Criminal Immigrants in Texas: Illegal Immigrant Conviction and Arrest Rates for Homicide, Sex Crimes, Larceny, and Other Crimes.” *Cato Institute*, 26 Feb. 2018, www.cato.org/publications/immigration-research-policy-brief/criminal-immigrants-texas-illegal-immigrant.

² Waters, Mary C, and Marisa Gerstein Pineau. “7 Sociocultural Dimensions of Immigrant Integration.” *Integration of Immigrants into American Society*, National Academies Press, 2016, 326.

Catholic immigrants would threaten their religious culture.¹ These fears and concerns continued throughout our country's history and have most recently increased with the continuous rise in Mexican, Indian, and African immigrants who are coming to our country.

There are three main concerns regarding immigrants as a cultural threat. One of the most prominent is the fear that more and more immigrants will not learn English. Furthermore, many are concerned that this would ultimately result in the loss of English as the native language of the United States. The second concern is that many immigrants do not share the same social or political values as native citizens. The final concern which is predominantly held by American Christians, is the fear that immigrants belonging to belief systems, other than Christianity, will eventually threaten the Christian faith and shatter the comfort and tradition of America as a predominately white Christian nation.

Above economic and public safety impacts, cultural concerns are most tightly associated with American citizens' negative stereotypes and discrimination toward immigrants. Many Americans feel these strong concerns may only be addressed by ensuring that immigrants quickly assimilate into American society and assume identical values and practices as the general public. When immigrants refuse or are unable to assimilate, many citizens become apprehensive and in turn close themselves off as a way of protecting their cultural identity. Often these actions lead to the isolation and discrimination of the other.

What warrants these claims of racial and cultural superiority and why do we assume that difference threatens our cultural identity? Although it may be natural to prefer our own language, customs, and beliefs and be apprehensive about change, there is no justification to claim superiority, demand assimilation, or exclude others on this basis. As humans, we all struggle with these ideas, but we must recognize that these feelings are often the result of our upbringing and our personal experiences. Furthermore, as Christians, we are called to exemplify Christ's work of reconciliation by witnessing and bringing people of different backgrounds and cultures together. Therefore, if we are to think biblically about immigration, we must not support arguments that claim racial or cultural superiority. We must instead make room to embrace the other. It is important that we learn how to develop a positive identity of ourselves and out-group members that does not involve separation and superiority so that we may benefit from the two-way exchange of languages, customs, arts, rituals, and technology, all which enriches and strengthens both cultures as God intended.

Many Americans have categorized these concerns about the impacts of incoming immigrants as factual without taking the time to weigh the facts from credible sources and draw conclusions for themselves. These beliefs have led to unreasonable and restrictive immigration laws and undeserved discrimination and rejection. It is important as Christians that we do not respond out of fear but rather that we open our minds and hearts to accurately judge the realities of immigrants in our country. Pastor James Movel Wuye, an interfaith community leader, states that division, hostility, and bitterness rule when individuals create and believe false narratives that demonize the other and that these actions require repentance.²

¹ Williams, Rhys H. "Immigration and National Identity in Obama's America: The Expansion of Culture-War Politics." *Canadian Review of American Studies*, vol. 42, no. 3, 2012, doi:10.3138/cras.42.3.004.

² Harvard Divinity School. "Interfaith Strategy for Peace-building: Prospects and Challenges." Online video clip. YouTube, 12 Jan. 2016. Web. Retrieved from: www.youtube.com/watch?v=iGN7Ty5WvF8. Accessed 16 February 2019, 44:37-45:05.

Furthermore, justice requires an additional action. For justice to be effectively attained, there must also be space for these narratives to be correctly re-written.

Section Review Discussion Questions

1. When considering the three popular concerns regarding immigration in the United States, which concerns you the most? Why?
2. Has reading the past section helped in easing any of your past concerns or fears about immigration? Why or why not?
3. Do you personally engage or interact with immigrants in your community on a regular basis? If so, have these interactions increased or decreased your concerns about immigration? How so?

Why Should Christians Care?

In the context of immigration in America, it is important to accurately define what justice is. This requires that the Christian community consider how the complex and discriminatory immigration laws as well as the public's misguided judgments affect the lives of immigrants and perpetuate a system which challenges social justice. Two chief implications for social justice as a result of these discriminations involve the social exclusion and alienation of immigrants, as well as ongoing systemic oppression.

As Christians who aim to reflect God's justice for those in need and care for the vulnerable and oppressed, it is important to sort past the rhetoric involved and consider the biblical response to immigration injustice. Below I will further discuss the injustices experienced by immigrants in our country and how the Bible may inform Christians about their role in addressing these challenges.

Social Exclusion and Alienation

Immigrants in the United States suffer from social exclusion and alienation for several reasons. Firstly, many Americans' widespread concerns regarding immigrants' impact on our country's economy, public safety, and cultural identity have produced out-group hostility and segregation leaving many immigrants socially isolated and excluded. Furthermore, our society further isolates and excludes immigrants from the community by criminalizing unlawful immigration through the detention and deportation of undocumented immigrants. This causes American citizens to normalize the exclusionary and unjust treatment of immigrants in detention and reinforces their association of immigrants with criminal behavior. The dehumanization and normalization of exclusionary practices toward immigrants allows American citizens to minimize the hardships and injustices inflicted upon immigrants and view these needs as less legitimate than their own. These associations negatively impact and reduce the public's interactions and involvement in the lives of immigrants.

The second major contributing factor to the social exclusion and alienation of immigrants in the United States are the persistent and strong pressures to assimilate. Of all the assimilation factors, the greatest contribution to the exclusion and alienation of immigrants is the language barrier. One of the greatest challenges for incoming immigrants is the task of learning the English language.

Although our country is full of English language classes for immigrants, many immigrants may still take decades to master the language, and others, especially those immigrating at older ages, may never learn to communicate in English. Many Americans place false judgments and become increasingly irritated when immigrants are unable to quickly adapt and learn the new language. Some citizens even hold immigrants responsible claiming that those who do not speak English or are unable to learn quickly do so purposefully. Furthermore, many immigrants isolate themselves from the country's general population out of insecurity in their communication skills or fear that they may be mocked or mistreated.

Jose Luis Bonilla is an immigrant from Honduras who now assists in the coordination of World Relief Seattle's immigrant detention ministry. When asked about his experience learning the English language and how the language barrier, even now, affects his life, Jose stated that even after over twenty plus years of living in the country, he sometimes feels ostracized and discriminated against due to communication barriers. Jose explained, "Learning the language has been one of the hardest parts about living in United States. I still struggle with the language because I learned English after I was forty and this is much harder. When I see people reject me or think maybe I am not smart because I cannot speak exactly the language, this is hard. It reminds you that you are different."¹

The social exclusion and alienation that results from the difficulties and pressures to assimilate can be so great that some immigrants become depressed, while others have thoughts of suicide or even commit suicide as a result.² As long as American citizens continue to place harsh judgments and expectations on the integration of immigrants into the country and allow negative misguided assumptions to create hostility toward the people group, they will remain alienated and on the fringe of our local communities. The only way to move forward from these practices is for individuals to stop resisting the immigrant community and recognize their mutual humanity with them. Jesus himself paid no attention to social status, ethnic or religious identity, or socioeconomic conditions. Instead, he placed his attention on the humanity that he shared with them and had compassion on them. As Christians, we are called to emulate these actions and set the example for all American citizens by reaching out with care and concern to our immigrant neighbors. It is only when American citizens can see and honor immigrants as people, that immigrants may feel more welcomed, more easily integrate into society, and have their needs validated and addressed.

Systemic Oppression

Robert Gilman, an astrophysicist and sustainability leader, describes systemic oppression and violence as "physical and psychological harm that results from exploitive and unjust social, political, and economic systems."³ Author Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, who supports Gilman's views, argues a second component that must be included in the definition is also the "complicity or silent acquiescence of those who fail to take responsibility or challenge" these systems.⁴ Systemic violence typically affects poor and marginalized ethnic groups. Immigrants are among one of the major groups adversely impacted by these injustices. The societal institutions perpetuating these inequalities include: the government, the judicial system, the education system, the mass media, non-governmental institutions, and government agencies such as healthcare and welfare agencies.

¹ Bonilla, Jose Luis. Personal interview. 9 August 2018.

² Lai, Daniel W. L., et al. "Factors Influencing Suicide Behaviors in Immigrant and Ethno-Cultural Minority Groups: A Systematic Review." *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*, vol. 19, no. 3, 2016, pp. 755-768, doi:10.1007/s10903-016-0490-3, 763.

³ Moe-Lobeda, Cynthia D. *Resisting Structural Evil: Love as Ecological and Economic Transformation*. Fortress Press, 2013, 72.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 72.

One of the ways in which immigrants experience systemic oppression is through the United States' restrictive and prejudicial immigration system which favors immigrants from certain countries and those with greater wealth, education, and influence. Another way is through our disproportionate economic institutions that utilize immigrants' economic disadvantages for financial gain through income inequality in the country's labor force. Finally, the general population's negative associations with immigrants and crime have stereotyped many as potential perpetrators and normalized the criminalization and deportation of individuals which further contributes to the systemic oppression they endure.

These systemic oppressions perpetuate immigrants' poverty and suffering as well as impose further trauma into their lives. Moreover, these oppressions create marred identities about immigrants in both the eyes of American citizens and within immigrants themselves. Immigrants create these marred identities as the result of a lifetime of suffering, deception, and exclusion which causes them to no longer know who they are or what their purpose is. When immigrants accept this way of thinking as normative, their freedom and hope, even the hope found within the Gospel, become diminished. Identifying and better understanding systemic oppression inflicted on the poor means that we are no longer blinded to their damaging consequences, but rather we are more equipped to recognize and undo these practices. Justice in this context means utilizing this knowledge to advocate for the amendment of institutional practices which are oppressive. Additionally, we must also work towards reconciling relationships with our immigrant neighbors by addressing the societal lies they have come to believe and giving them the resources and space to correctly re-write these narratives.

The Role of the Christian Community

When discussing the social injustices of immigration in America and how these may be addressed, it is important to consider the role of the Christian community. To understand the appropriate role of Christians in the immigration debate, we must consider what the Bible has to say on the topic and how it may assist in reshaping unjust contingent cultural norms to those that help us more effectively pursue peace and justice.

For Christians, the Bible is the most valuable tool given to help inform humanity about how to best live their life. Furthermore, most Christians believe that all of life should be viewed through the Biblical lens of what God tells us about himself and the world. What then, does the Bible have to say about immigration, caring for the foreigner, and justice in this context? Although the Bible does not provide specific instructions regarding the appropriate structure for our U.S. immigration policy, it clearly offers principles that may guide how we choose to treat incoming immigrants and seek to influence immigration policy.

Immigration is a very common theme throughout scripture. There are several words used throughout the Bible that reference immigrants. The most common Hebrew word used to describe foreigners who established themselves in a foreign land is the word "ger". According to historians, this word loosely translates as "a person not native to the local area" who is without family or land.¹ Throughout both the Old and New Testament, we find many stories about ger. Through these stories we see how God uses refugees and immigrants to accomplish great and

¹ Tromp, K.J. "Aliens and Strangers in the Old Testament." *The Journal of Reformed Theological Seminary*, vol. 76, 2011.

mighty things for his name. Like refugees and immigrants today, many individuals in the Bible left their native land and migrated to other areas for similar reasons.

One example of this in the Bible is Abraham who came to Haran as an immigrant from Ur and later migrated to Canaan. Abraham's decision to migrate was, like many contemporary immigrants, made in pursuit of a better life and in hopes of receiving God's promised blessing in the new land.¹ Another example is the migration of the Israelites out of Israel who were forced to flee a corrupt government and find refuge in a new land.² The Israelites, like many refugees and immigrants today, left their homeland in search of safety and security. These are only two of the numerous migration stories found in the Bible. Through these stories we understand that many of the challenges that influenced migration in the Bible are the same challenges that face current incoming immigrants to the United States.

The Bible not only provides stories of immigration and testimonies of how God used immigrants to accomplish powerful acts, but it also provides mandates that describe how Christians are called to care for immigrants. In the Bible, the author of Leviticus writes that God commands the Israelites, "When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God."³ The Hebrew scriptures, particularly the books of the Law, contain numerous instructions on how to treat immigrants. While these instructions were directed to the people of Israel, and few Christians believe we should adapt the entire law given to Moses, the many commandments given to care for the immigrant express God's special concern for this group. As God's people, we are commanded to share this concern.

In the Bible, immigrants and refugees are also referenced several times in connection to two other categories of people of special concern to God: the fatherless and the widow. For example, the author of Deuteronomy writes, "The Lord executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner, giving him food and clothing. Love the foreigner, therefore, for you were foreigners in the land of Egypt."⁴ Here, God commands the Israelites to bestow compassion and kindness on the foreigner, as they were once foreigners themselves. Most Americans today were also once foreigners to the United States. It is easy for those of us who are third or fourth generation Americans to forget that our great grandparents were once immigrants in need of hospitality. Therefore, God asks Christians to humble themselves and care for the foreigner as if they were their family. A second example where immigrants and refugees were referenced in connection to the fatherless and the widow is found in Zechariah when the author writes, "Do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the foreigner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil in your heart against another."⁵ The Bible contains many more passages which give instruction to God's people on the importance of caring for immigrants. Many of these verses also warn

¹ The Holy Bible. *New International Version*. Zondervan, 2018, Genesis 12:15.

² Ibid., Exodus 12:31-42

³ Ibid., Leviticus 19:33-34

⁴ Ibid., Deuteronomy 10:18-19.

⁵ Ibid., Zechariah 7:10.

those who choose to disregard the instructions to care for the refugee and immigrant will face God's judgment.¹

For many Christians, their greatest opposition to welcoming the foreigner is their concern with unlawful immigration. Although the Bible provides clear instructions about the care of immigrants, it does not reference or consider an immigrant's legal status. This is most likely because this classification system did not apply during the biblical era as there were no restrictions on immigration at the time.² Due to the lack of guidance in scriptures about how Christians should respond to unlawful immigration, many Christians may form their opinions solely based off a passage found in the book of Romans. The author of Romans writes, "Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those that do so, bring judgment on themselves."³ Many Christians who argue for tighter immigration restrictions and favor more closed-off borders base their political stance off the commands in this passage. Yet, the Bible also speaks about unjust laws. God does not mandate his people to obey an unjust law. So, while we do have a biblical mandate to follow our country's laws, we must also consider the injustices involved in our immigration laws and our equally important biblical mandate to care for the poor and vulnerable among us. Although, these instructions were written thousands of years ago, they apply to all those who identify as a follower of God. The following section will provide several suggestions for how Christian communities today may effectively apply the biblical command to care for our immigrant neighbors.

¹ Ibid., Malachi 3:5

² Soerens, Matthew, and Jenny Hwang Yang. *Welcoming the Stranger: Justice, Compassion & Truth in the Immigration Debate*. IVP Books, an Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2018, 96.

³ The Holy Bible. *New International Version*. Zondervan, 2018, Romans 13:1-2

Section Review Discussion Questions

1. Before reading the last section, do you feel you were aware of how immigrants in our country experience injustice both socially and systematically?
2. Do you believe it is important for the Christian community to be aware and engage with social justice issues like those involved with immigration in our country? Why or why not?
3. Did discussing some of the biblical mandates and illustrations regarding the care for immigrants provide any new personal insights for you on the topic or change how you view any aspects of caring for our immigrant neighbors?
4. Do you think the commands God provides in the Bible to care and seek justice for the foreigner as well as His commands about unjust laws should cause Christians to prioritize the care of immigrants, even those who have entered our country unlawfully?
5. Reflect on a time when you were a minority. What was the most challenging or uncomfortable part of your experience? Do you feel you can relate to any of the discrimination and exclusion that immigrants experience as minorities in the United States?

The Biblical Response

Christian communities across America play an integral role in seeking justice and caring for immigrants. Furthermore, God calls Christians to not only seek justice and peace, but to be agents of reconciliation to this people group. Therefore, in this context, reconciliation involves how we relate after forgiveness and justice have occurred. It is about how we develop deeper relationships with one another. This work of reconciliation is God's hope for all people. But how is it achieved?

The work of reconciliation between Christian and immigrant communities is not solely achieved through the actions of individuals, but rather effective reconciliation involves the transformation of the everyday, over time, which may only be accomplished through collective action.¹ In order to aid Christian communities' pursuit of justice and reconciliation with immigrant neighbors, this section includes practical applications for both rural and urban settings of everyday actions that may assist in seeking justice for immigrants in America and transforming Christians and immigrant groups into communities of reconciliation. These actions include cultivating awareness in your local community, practicing hospitality and fellowship, and advocating for immigrant reform.

Cultivating Awareness

Historically, religious institutions have played a key role in helping immigrants integrate into American society. Specifically, faith communities have been known for offering immigrants a place of refuge where they felt they belonged and were supported, a source of respectability for those who felt denied social recognition in the United States, and an array of valuable resources such as connections to jobs, housing and language classes. Yet, recently, many Christian communities have not maintained this role. One contributing factor for this may be the tendency throughout the last decade for evangelical Christian communities to focus on internal concerns of the church over social justice outreach.²

An important component to building reconciliation requires Christian churches to once again become a source of refuge, support, and resources for incoming immigrants. This begins by returning the focus to social injustices and cultivating our awareness as Christian church members regarding the reality of immigration in America, the current injustices inflicted on this people group, and biblical mandates to amend these injustices and care for immigrants. Sustainable change in the context of immigration may only be accomplished through cultivating awareness and building networks of committed individuals throughout the Christian community who are knowledgeable and willing to support the journey toward justice.

To begin to cultivate awareness among congregation members, church leaders must cultivate meaningful dialogue around immigration that addresses the biblical perspective as well as primary questions, concerns, or resistance to supporting incoming immigrants. Dialogue and education may be carried out through a sermon series on the topic or a devotion used in a small group setting. The hope is that cultivating transparent and truthful dialogue around immigration

¹ Katongole, Emmanuel and Chris Rice. *Reconciling All Things: A Christian Vision for Justice, Peace and Healing*. IVP Books, 2008, 45.

² Andrews, Rhys. "Religious Communities, Immigration, and Social Cohesion in Rural Areas: Evidence from England." *Rural Sociology*, vol. 76, no. 4, 2011, doi: 10.1111/j, 542.

will increase the knowledge and empathy of church members toward incoming immigrants and will result in greater service and fellowship between the two groups. Research has shown that empathy is pivotal in reducing social exclusion and enacting social change among individuals with different cultures and values.¹ Teaching Christian communities about the hardships of immigrants as well as the importance of practicing empathy may be a powerful tool for enacting change in the context of immigration.

A second practice that may help Christian communities reconcile with immigrant neighbors is their endorsement and participation in multi-cultural events. It is not merely enough to talk about the importance of caring for incoming immigrants, we must be active participants in engaging with immigrant community members and learning about their cultures and beliefs. Church communities may participate in multi-cultural events either by hosting one at their gathering space or prompting and attending an event being facilitated by local organizations who focus on refugee and immigrant advocacy.

Finally, Christian churches should utilize their influence and platform as an opportunity to connect church and community members to opportunities to serve in this context. This may be done through identifying local organizations that work with immigrant populations, becoming familiar with programs and service opportunities, and promoting and encouraging members to serve in whatever way works for them. This is a valuable opportunity for the Christian community to engage in meaningful work, make personal connections with individual immigrants, and exchange narratives.

These practices intended for facilitating reconciliation between Christian and immigrant communities are relevant and applicable in both rural and urban settings. Individuals living in rural communities often express that reaching out to serve and befriend immigrants is difficult for them as they live in a smaller town with a small population of immigrants. Yet, in recent years, immigration has begun to increase to rural areas in America, many long-time residents unaware of the growing population of immigrants who often isolate themselves away from the general population.² Therefore, cultivating awareness may be even more detrimental for Christian communities in rural areas who may be unaware of the growing number of immigrants in their area, the injustices and hardships inflicted on them, and how to respond to these injustices.

Fostering Hospitality and Camaraderie

The two greatest practices for achieving justice and reconciliation with our immigrant neighbors are hospitality and camaraderie. Hospitality may be defined as the impulses of inclusion, welcome, and embrace.³ It can be argued that the practice of hospitality is an essential Christian practice and one of the most inspiring aspect of Jesus' ministry and teaching. The Bible contains many passages on the importance of hospitality. One of the most powerful depictions comes from the parable of the good Samaritan.⁴ Through this parable, Jesus emphasizes the importance of caring for our neighbor, including neighbors with different ethnic backgrounds

¹ Bornstein, David and Susan Davis. *Social Entrepreneurship: What Everyone Needs to Know*. Oxford University Press, 2010, 82.

² Andrews, Rhys. "Religious Communities, Immigration, and Social Cohesion in Rural Areas: Evidence from England." *Rural Sociology*, vol. 76, no. 4, 2011, doi: 10.1111/j. 542.

³ Beck, Richard. *Unclean: Meditations on Purity, Hospitality, and Mortality*. The Lutterworth Press. 2012, 117.

⁴ The Holy Bible. *New International Version*. Zondervan, 2018, Luke 10:29-37.

backgrounds and from other cultures. Ultimately, the greatest motivation to practice hospitality comes from God's grace and hospitality presented in the Gospel which calls us to respond to God and one another with hospitality and grace. It is an expression of the love first given to us by God and as a response to the experience of God's grace, hospitality should overflow out of us and onto others.

Hospitality toward immigrants includes both an attitude of generosity and kindness as well as hospitable actions. There are many ways that we as Christians can show hospitality toward the immigrant community. One simple way to extend hospitality is by creating time and space to meet with immigrant neighbors. This may be done at a cafe, park, or a personal home. A second way to extend hospitality is by sharing a meal together, or by satisfying an immediate need of an individual such as clothing, transportation, furniture or appliances, or connecting them to housing resources. Hospitality provides a valuable form of refuge and respect for many immigrants living in the country without a home or the presence of friends and family. When hospitality is shown to immigrants residing in the United States, the forces and impacts of exclusion, isolation, and dehumanization experienced by this group are diminished.

Equally pertinent for achieving justice and reconciliation with the immigrant community is camaraderie between American Christians and incoming immigrants. Simply put, Camaraderie is the mutual trust and friendship that results from spending a lot of time with someone and is a powerful tool for bridging differences, transforming perspectives, and achieving reconciliation. In his book, *Reconcile: Conflict Transformation for Ordinary Christians*, John Paul Lederach refers to the practice of camaraderie as accompaniment.¹ According to Lederach, the skills involved in this practice include sharing, suffering together, befriending, and breaking bread.² Lederach states that reconciliation requires a commitment to see the face of God in the other, to feel the world from their perspective, to come alongside our own deepest struggle to understand, as well as the story and struggle of another.³ The practice of hospitality and friendship is important so that individuals may share the joy of companionship as well as support during challenging times. Building camaraderie softens hearts, tears down walls and allows deep and meaningful interactions to take place.

To counteract the misperceptions and injustices toward immigrants, we must not only extend hospitality, but seek to build meaningful relationships with immigrants that involve deep conversation, sharing in suffering, and communion through shared meals. Research has shown that meaningful contact between conflicting groups over an extended period will improve their relationship to one another by decreasing hostility which is typically fueled by stereotypes that result from limited exposure to the other.⁴ These positive shared experiences help to dissolve any prejudice, fear, or misperceptions about the other. The Christian community is an imperative group in extending hospitality toward immigrants in our country and providing a safe place for positive experiences and relationship building to occur. This is how Christians may go beyond making peace and seeking justice for immigrants to accomplish the deeper work of reconciliation which involves relationship with the other.

¹ Lederach, John Paul. *Reconcile: Conflict Transformation for Ordinary Christians*. Herald Press, 2014, 54.

² *Ibid.*, 55-57.

³ *Ibid.*, 56-57

⁴ Salter-McNeil, Brenda. *Roadmap to Reconciliation: Moving Communities into Unity, Wholeness and Justice*. IVP Books, 2015, 33.

Advocating for Immigration Reform

The United States' on-going ineffective immigration system has contributed to the unjust separation of families, the gradual increase of forced illegal entry, the discrimination and isolation of immigrant communities in our country, and perpetuation of refugee and immigrant suffering. In addition to contributing to the injustices suffered by immigrants, Congress has been unsuccessful in implementing effective policies that address the public's rising national security and government assistance concerns. As a result, immigration reform has emerged as one of our country's most salient political issues. The Christian community has an important role in changing our country's broken immigration system by advocating for effective reforms that may better serve our country and both current and future immigrant residents. As Christians, how can we say we love people if we do not care about the policies that negatively affect the vulnerable and marginalized? Therefore, if the Christian community has the ability to re-unite families, bring in more foreign-born workers with skills our economy needs, and allow those forced to unlawfully enter our country, an option for legal residence, we must.

Throughout the past decade, lobbyist on both sides of the immigration debate have submitted legislation proposals for immigration reform. Lobbyist in favor of a more conservative policy have focused on increasing enforcement laws in hopes of tackling the country's unlawful immigration and ensuring national security. Lobbyist in favor of a more liberal and inclusive policy have advocated for reducing some of the strict qualifications for visas, reducing backlogs for family-based immigration, border protection policies consistent with humanitarian values, and offering undocumented immigrants an option for earned legalization in the country. Due to the polarized political agendas, Congress has been unable to implement the necessary reforms our country's immigration system requires. In order to advance the broken immigration system, both sides of the debate must acknowledge the possibility that there may be more similarities than differences to each group's reform agenda and use this insight to develop a more middle ground approach. Although the Bible does not directly instruct Christians on which policies to support, there are general principles and considerations that guide individuals as they seek to advocate for reforms that will produce a more compassionate and just immigration system.

Comprehensive immigration reform guided by biblical values involves four principles. The first principle is border protection policies consistent with humanitarian values. Everyone can agree that an important component in our immigration system that requires reform is our border control and security. Yet, as Christians, it is important that we support policies that work to more effectively secure our border while also treating all individuals with dignity. Our immigration policy must support border security measures that increase our national security without over penalizing immigrants.¹

The second principle guiding biblical immigration are reforms in family-based immigration to reduce backlogs. Many conservatives are hesitant to support laws that allow even more immigrants to enter our country annually yet reducing back-logs and providing reasonable avenues for immigrants to enter our country legally, will actually assist in improving our border security. For many concerned with our countries' security, enforcement-only bills can seem like an effective way to control immigration. However, immigration is not simply a border security problem but a systemic problem that requires a more holistic approach. Furthermore, historically, enforcement-only bills have been expensive and ineffective in assisting the

¹ Soerens, Matthew, and Jenny Hwang Yang. *Welcoming the Stranger: Justice, Compassion & Truth in the Immigration Debate*. IVP Books, an Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2018, 126.

immigration crisis in our country.¹ Removing family-based visa backlogs and providing more legal avenues for immigrants to enter legally reduces the number of immigrants who may feel unlawful entry is their only choice to reunite with family or escape unhealthy living conditions. This will relieve certain pressures on the border and allow border patrol agents to more effectively do their job. In addition to assisting our border security, reducing backlogs in family-based immigration allows loved ones that are residing in the country legally but separated from their family, with a wait time up to twenty years, to reunite with their family as quickly as possible.

The third principle is the creation of legal avenues for workers and their families. Our current immigration system often makes it very difficult for immigrants wishing to migrate into our country legally for work. This causes many immigrants, who are desperate for a better life and a safe and reliable job, to feel they have no option but to enter the country illegally. For many immigrants, being illegal prevents them from moving freely between jobs which makes it challenging to move out of poverty. In addition, not providing legal avenues for immigrant workers, especially those seeking employment in high-demand jobs, weakens our economy. Future immigration reform must include a system that allows employers in the United States who need foreign workers the ability to legally hire and employ them. This allows both the employer and immigrant employee to gain the benefits of migration as well as decreasing the motivation for immigrants to enter our country illegally.

The final principle guiding biblical immigration reform involves providing undocumented immigrants access to earn a legal residence in the United States. There are millions of undocumented immigrants currently in our country. Most of these individuals are working hard and contributing to our economy without access to appropriate healthcare, certain personal freedoms and protections, education, and the right to vote. Immigration reform must include an opportunity for these immigrants to regularize their status by satisfying sensible requirements. According to past requirements proposed, undocumented immigrants may be eligible for legal status only after learning English, maintaining steady employment, and paying a fine. Not only would this offer undocumented immigrants a chance to admit their infractions against the law and gain the rights and privileges of an American citizen, but legalization also provides our country with a practical alternative to the costly and disruptive efforts to remove all undocumented immigrants. Marc Rosenblum, the previous Deputy Director of the Migration Policy Institute's U.S. Immigration Policy Program states that providing a legalization process for undocumented immigrants "promises to help track a largely unidentified population, free up enforcement resources for more pressing law enforcement and security concerns and raise additional tax revenues from immigrant workers."²

As Christians endeavoring to care for the vulnerable and seek justice and reconciliation with those isolated, maltreated, and in need, we have an obligation to speak out against the unjust and ineffective policies that affect immigrants in our country. We must allow

¹Tzamaras, George, and Belle Woods. "AILA Urges House Committee to Move Away from Cruel, Costly, and Ineffective 'Enforcement-Only Immigration Legislation.'" *American Immigration Lawyers Association*, May 2017, www.aila.org/advocacy/press-releases/2017/ineffective-enforcement-only-imm-legislation.

² Rosenblum, Marc R., et al. "Earned Legalization: Effects of Proposed Requirements on Unauthorized Men, Women, and Children." *Migrationpolicy.org*, 12 Aug. 2015, www.migrationpolicy.org/research/earned-legalization-effects-proposed-requirements-unauthorized-men-women-and-children, 1.

biblical principles to inform our actions and guide us as we seek to advocate for immigration reform. The leaders of our country must make policy decisions based on compassion and generosity instead of fear and selfishness. As Christians, we must see beyond the rhetoric and encourage our country's leaders to implement solutions that allow us to experience transformed communities where immigrants are celebrated as valuable and integrated members. This is how we may embody the love of Christ and work towards holistic healing and reconciliation with the immigrant community.

Resources/Opportunities to Serve

In the previous section, we discussed the importance of Christians not only speaking out against the injustices that immigrants face in our country, but that they actively participate and engage in serving and building relationships with their immigrant neighbors. There are currently hundreds of organizations across the United States working to serve and empower immigrants who are in need of volunteers. Despite these numbers, I acknowledge that it can sometimes be difficult and overwhelming for individuals who want to find opportunities to volunteer in this context. That is why below I have listed opportunities to serve with several national as well as local Washington State organizations.

National Organizations



Welcoming America is a non-profit organization that is a part of a national network that works to make organizations and communities a more welcoming place for refugees and immigrants by reducing the barriers that immigrants face and building bridges between newcomers and long-time residents. Their network locations and opportunities to serve can be found on their website: <https://www.welcomingamerica.org/>.



Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) serves immigrants and refugees in many communities throughout the country. The organization seeks to influence public policy and works through programs that help immigrants and refugees build better lives in the United States. Opportunities to serve can be found on their website: <https://www.lirs.org/>.



World Relief is an international organization with locations throughout the United States. They work to holistically assist immigrants and refugees to integrate and thrive within their communities. They have several programs that assist immigrants in detention as well as those that facilitate environments for relationship-building between citizens and immigrants. You can find further information about their various programs and locations on their website: <https://worldrelief.org/>.

Washington State Organizations



Advocates for Immigrants in Detention is an amazing organization that I had the privilege to work with while at the Northwest Detention Center. They are a Tacoma-based non-profit that focuses all their efforts on assisting immigrants both in detention and those who have recently been released. They do this through visiting immigrants in detention, welcoming them with clothes, food, and transportation once released from detention, and working to re-connect them with loved ones in and out of the country. Go to their website to learn more about their programs and how to get involved: <https://aidnw.org/>.



Northwest Immigrant Rights Project (NWIRP) is a Seattle-based organization that strives for justice and equity for immigrants throughout our country. They work to promote justice by defending and advancing the rights of immigrants through direct legal services, systemic advocacy, and community education. NWIRP has many volunteer opportunities for those looking to get involved such as serving at an event, working in their intake department, translating, or fielding calls for their hotline. For more information visit their website: <https://www.nwirp.org/>.



OneAmerica is located in Seattle, WA and is currently the largest immigrant and refugee advocacy organization in Washington State. The organization plays a leading role in state and national coalitions working on immigrant rights, education, economic and environmental justice, voting rights, and immigrant integration. Through one America, citizens can volunteer to tutor immigrant students, advocate for policy shifts, or sign-up for various internships. For more information visit: <https://weareoneamerica.org/>.

Concluding Thoughts

In reading this handbook, you have taken the first step on your own journey toward understanding the reality of current immigration issues in the United States and considering the biblical commands to respond by welcoming, loving, and advocating for this people group. My prayer is that your journey does not end here but that you continue to prayerfully weigh your concerns and seek answers to your questions about immigration and your role in responding to these issues. My prayer is that individuals in the Christian Church will come together to form a movement. This movement will lead other faith organizations in loving and caring for our immigrant neighbors so that faith communities across North America are known for their love and hospitality toward immigrants and refugees. I feel it is time for our society to fight for justice for our immigrant neighbors, to respond to God's call to love by welcoming the vulnerable, and to recognize our shared humanity with them. It is only then that we may walk side by side with our immigrant neighbors, exchange narratives, share in suffering and joy, and be transformed by our differences.

Closing Discussion Questions

1. What questions or concerns do you still have about immigration after reading this handbook? Were any of your previous concerns addressed or resolved after reading this handbook?
2. What insights, if any, did you gain from the reading?
3. What do you feel your personal next step(s) may be on your journey toward understanding and responding to our country's immigration challenges?
4. How might you engage or participate in the next following months in one or all three of the practical applications suggested in this handbook? (cultivating awareness, fostering hospitality and camaraderie, or advocating for immigration reform)
5. What do you think will be your greatest challenge in taking the next step to engage in these three practices? How might you overcome these challenges?

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