

Volume 2 Issue 2

March 2017



NorAm

The Edmund Rice Christian Brothers North America
Mission Frère-Advocacy Newsletter



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Mission Frère - Advocacy Newsletter

The Mission of the *Edmund Rice Christian Brothers North America Mission Frère-Advocacy Program* is to create an awareness of and to advocate for the needs of those most marginalized in our society. Our goal is to create a more just, peaceful and equitable world by being faithful to the Gospel message of Jesus Christ and the spirit of Blessed Edmund Rice. We foster presence, compassion and liberation in collaboration with the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers North America Province, the members of the Consortium of Edmund Rice Schools and all who are inspired by the charism of Blessed Edmund Rice in the North American Edmund Rice Network.

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2017 ADVOCACY WORKSHOP

From March 23-26, nineteen members of the ERCBNA Network participated in an advocacy workshop at Jericho House in Wainfleet, Canada. Here, participants heard from speakers involved in advocacy work across the global Edmund Rice Network.



At Jericho House, participants shared ideas and experiences from their work in advocacy and formulated plans to further develop their school's program.



Pictured at Niagara Falls are some of the members of the ERCB Network who traveled to Jericho House in Canada for the Advocacy Workshop

From March 23-26, representatives from 8 different Edmund Rice Network Schools traveled to Jericho House in Wainfleet, Canada for a workshop centered on advocacy. Hosted by Jericho House's Founders and Directors, Brother Bill Carrothers and Sister Jacquie Keefe, participants traveled from Bishop Hendricken, Catholic Memorial, Iona Preparatory, Iona College, Brother Rice Michigan, St. Laurence and Palma as well as from Colegio Cardenal Newman in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The workshop continued the ongoing process of encouraging ERCBNA schools in the development of their implementation of advocacy initiatives. Participants expanded their idea of advocacy by looking at their school's service programs and determined ways in which they could move the focus of their students from simply serving the marginalized to advocating for their rights and needs.



Participants work on creating advocacy plans for their school communities.



Juan Pablo Eviner of Colegio Cardenal Newman in Argentina addresses participants at the ERCBNA Advocacy Workshop.

The weekend was highlighted by a number of speakers who shared their own work and stories in working with advocacy. Sister Jacquie and Brother Bill led a social justice day centered on service and reflection and bringing that experience into advocacy. Brother Michael Maher spoke to participants about his role in advocating for others in the field of restorative justice; shedding light on the need to rethink the ways in which we deal with crime. Brother Kevin Cawley's presentation focused on ecological justice and care for the earth, issues that he is involved in with his work at the U.N. in New York. Juan Pablo Eviner, Director of Advocacy at ERCB Colegio Cardenal Newman in Argentina, spoke about the types of advocacy initiatives that students at Newman are engaged in and his work in cultivating advocacy initiatives across the Latin America Region. Province Advocacy Coordinator Sean D'Alfonso led sessions focused on bringing about both a global and a local awareness of advocacy issues facing our schools. Brother Kevin Griffith led prayer experiences inviting the participants to ground advocacy in prayer in spirituality.

In addition to creating advocacy plans for their schools, the workshop also allowed participants to share ideas on a common, province-wide advocacy project in which all schools will be involved. On May 5th, Edmund Rice's Feast Day, all 8 schools in attendance will focus an aspect of their Founder's Day celebration on an advocacy related topic. In addition, these schools will also organize a hunger strike (day of fasting) to raise awareness on a variety of ecological issues linked to food production, such as deforestation, water overusage and pollution. It is our hope that all 17 ERCBNA schools will also join in this advocacy day across the Province.

The workshop was a great success. Many thanks to the participants and all who made the workshop possible.

THE FIGHT AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Edmund Rice International (ERI) is involved in many coordinated efforts with the U.N. and its partners to fight injustice across the globe. Few of these are as concerning as Human Trafficking, which according to the Polaris Project, denies freedom to more than 20 million people across the world, and more than 10,000 cases were reported last year in North America.

Edmund Rice International and its partners have faught against human trafficking for years at the local and international levels. These efforts recently paid off, as a website (backdoor.com) notorious for the advertismment of human trafficking was pressured to remove its "adult section" that frequently advertised the sale of persons. Below, you can read about Brother Kevin Cawley's work around human trafficking with the U.N.



One of the focal areas of Brother Kevin Cawley's work on behalf of Edmund Rice International involves working directly with the U.N. regarding human trafficking. Last year, Kevin attended an event organized by Archbishop Bernardito Auza, the Papal Nuncio to the United Nations in New York. The event was titled "Ending Human Trafficking by 2030: The Role of Global Partnerships in Eradicating Modern Slavery" which was facilitated in cooperation with The Santa Marta Group. This conference in April of 2016 made reference to the frequent appeals of Pope Francis to end human trafficking, including his memorable address to the General Assembly in New York on September 25, 2015. The conference heard nineteen speakers from six continents including Ambassadors, faith-based representatives, civil society workers and trafficking survivors. There were particular concerns regarding the flow of displaced persons, estimated now at more than 65 million persons around the world who are especially vulnerable to traffickers.

Kevin also participated during the "Q and A" at Fordham University in February of 2017, when Archbishop Auza hosted a "Consultation on Human Trafficking." The outcomes of this event will be forwarded to the Vatican in preparation for a Trafficking Conference later this year. The panelists focused on those points where trafficking issues were a feature for remedy, specifically aligning with Goals 5, 8 and 16 of the U.N.'s 2030 Development Agenda of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the U.N. General Assembly in 2015. During the assembly, attention was brought to the rising conflict among human rights advocates and those who are working to end trafficking. Some in the Human Rights Community are asserting that the choice to become a "sex worker" is a Human Right and should not be infringed by those working to outlaw prostitution as part of the campaign to end human trafficking. Panelists were opposed to the Human Rights language in this context. The International Labor Organization currently leans in favor of the Human Rights language. This issue will continue to surface and will undoubtedly complicate discussions to end human trafficking.



Pictured above: NGO Committee Against Trafficking in Persons, UNHQ Steering Committee 2016-2017 (left to right): Nicholas Anton, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of NY Representative to the United Nations; Emily Pashak-Lapchick, UNICEF USA; Jackie Shapiro, Girl UP; Rita Fishman, American Council of Jewish Women; Judith Schachter, League of Women Voters; Br. Kevin Cawley, Edmund Rice International

To learn more about the 2017 U.N. Commission on the Status of Women, click here:

[CSW2017](#)

To learn more about the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals, click here:

[SDG's](#)

A VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS

Immigration has been at the forefront of the news in the United States during the past year. Brother Mike LaFrance works with Catholic Legal Services of Miami in Florida. Here, Brother Mike provides recent immigrants with a variety of crucial services that would be difficult to find elsewhere. In his work, Brother Mike serves some of the most marginalized people in the United States, many of whom have escaped violence in their home country.



With more than 2000 people coming through the doors of the office of Catholic Legal Services of Miami each month, the office does what it can in assisting immigrants seeking help. In the current climate, most immigrants are now terrified of the possibility of deportation and living with concerns of being separated from their children and families.

Many who come through their doors would like a driver's license, permission to work, or at least some type of resident status. But most importantly, all would like safety and respect as fellow humans.

Brother Mike LaFrance serves those wanting asylum and other relief in Immigration Court. He also helps others in need of immigration waivers for past convictions and other items causing inadmissibility who want to obtain status, become a naturalized citizen or obtain a permit to work. As the law currently stands, a single prior conviction for a violation such as possession of one, single marijuana cigarette makes one inadmissible.

While a waiver is possible, like all work surrounding immigrants, it is complicated and requires lots of work to obtain one.



Brother Mike LaFrance works with a client at Catholic Legal Services of Miami

Brother Mike also sees many clients suffering with mental illness, including PTSD. Brother Mike shares, “the joy in being a companion to the immigrant in their journey is immense. The sadness in seeing their hopes for safety denied is heartbreaking. To hear the stories of people who have been tortured for years, who have walked hundreds of miles to get to our southern border, and then to be put in detention for extended periods by our Government is heartbreaking. Sometimes just listening to them is just what they need to survive another day. I then have the gift of gratitude of being privileged to be there for them.”

To learn more about Catholic Legal Service of Miami, click here: <http://cclsmiami.org>

Laudato Si'- Care of Earth

Laudato Si'

Laudato Si' (On Care for Our Common Home) is Pope Francis' 2015 highly acclaimed encyclical regarding the relationship between humanity and the Earth that we inhabit. In it, Pope Francis promotes an ecological spirituality that encourages us to appreciate all aspects of creation and the human person. He calls upon us to recognize that we belong to a global community where cooperation and interdependence are at the core of sharing the Earth's resources and of understanding that all creation is a gift from God.

The Edmund Rice Christian Brothers North America Province Leadership Team recently used the video link below for morning prayer at the Province Center in Elizabeth, NJ. It is a thought-provoking visual depiction of Pope Francis' call to us to care for our common home, to respect all life and to strive for a more just and equitable world. It also serves as a vivid reminder of our responsibility as Catholic Christians to take seriously these calls and to work on behalf of the common good.



To view the prayer service, click below:

[Prayer Video](#)

To view the Pope's Encyclical, click below:

[Laudato Si'](#)

ERCB CONNECTIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA



IONA
COLLEGE



The Edmund Rice Justice Desk

Submitted by Benny Rivera, Iona College, Class of 2015

In the beginning of this new year, Iona College assembled an Alumni Immersion Group during January 6-15, 2017 to Cape Town, South Africa where they partnered with *The Edmund Rice Justice Desk*. Co-Founder and Director, Jessica Dewhurst welcomed the group with open arms and truly inspired the Iona Group with her wisdom, her passion for the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers and her drive to make sure that everyone in South Africa has the basic human rights they deserve. The Iona group consisted of recent alumni from as far back as 2009 to this past year. All participants were looking for a way to continue to live through the spirit of Edmund Rice, many of whom had been on previous immersion trips with Iona during their undergraduate careers. This trip provided them with the opportunity to reignite their passion of compassion, liberation and presence abroad.

The group was able to see many different parts of South Africa. They visited several important NGO's (non governmental organizations) run either by the Justice Desk, such as the *Umoya Project* that works with those who have mental or physical disabilities and others, like *Embrace Dignity* which fights for those who are forced into Human Trafficking, a large issue in Cape Town. The Iona College group had the opportunity to visit one of the few free Catholic schools in South Africa and spent the day with its students. Iona alumni also visited important locations that make Cape Town truly unique, like *Robbins Island* where the great Nelson Mandela was imprisoned, and the famous Table Mountain that overlooks the city of Cape Town. One of the accommodations for the group was the *Scalabrini Refugee Centre*. The Centre not only housed the alumni group but also works to help foreign refugees and native South Africans who may need assistance in getting a job or finding permanent residence in South Africa.

What truly made this experience different than most other immersions, was the fact that no matter if it was sight-seeing or working with an NGO, Jessica Dewhurst always brought back the idea of why the participants were there. She made sure to point out that not every South African has the same opportunities that we might have as North Americans. As a participant myself, I found that this trip was very inspirational and not only was it educational and engaging, but it also ignited a fire in not only myself but the group as a whole to do more back home to advocate and educate others just like the Justice Desk.

It is safe to say that most of us would go back to South Africa in an instant, but we also would like to do more at home, as Human Rights violations aren't something that just affects South Africa, it is a global issue. This Alumni Immersion with Iona College was truly an incredible experience, one that I hope other parts of the Edmund Rice Network try to replicate or take part in. I am very thankful for the opportunity to have been a part of this incredible immersion.



The Iona College South Africa Alumni Immersion group at Cape Town's Harbor.



Iona College Alumni greeted by their hosts in South Africa.

IMMIGRATION AND ERCBNA



Edmund Rice Christian Brothers North America
A Province of the Congregation of Christian Brothers

Province Leader's Statement on Immigration

Dear Friends of Advocacy,

Below, please find several excerpts from a Pastoral Letter entitled: *Beyond the Year of Mercy* that I recently sent to all Christian Brothers in the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers North America Province. These excerpts speak to concerns regarding immigration that affect immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers in today's world.

"During the *Year of Mercy*, Pope Francis called us to:

Look forward to the experience of opening our hearts to those living on the outermost fringes of society: fringes which modern society itself creates.

He reminded us that:

God comes to us in our weakness and that day after day, touched by God's compassion, we also can become compassionate towards others.

Edmund Rice lived a heart-centered spirituality that allowed him to be a compassionate presence to the poor and marginalized of his day. The *Year of Mercy* invited and still invites us to take a compassionate stance toward the poor and marginalized of our day wherever we may encounter them.

We, Brothers encounter the poor in many places: schools, outreach ministries, local neighborhoods, hospitals and care facilities, local parishes, retreat centers, and on immersion experiences and mission trips, to name but a few. Each time one of our Brothers reaches out to assist someone in need, he brings God's compassionate love to those encounters. This is what the *Year of Mercy* called us to do – to give witness to God's mercy and to be instruments of God's compassion.

Pope Francis goes on to say:

Let us open our eyes and see the misery of the world, the wounds of our brothers and sisters who are denied their dignity, and let us recognize that we are compelled to heed their cry for help! May we reach out to them and support them so they can feel the warmth of our presence, our friendship, our fraternity! May their cry become our own, and together may we break down the barriers of indifference that too often reign supreme and mask our hypocrisy and egoism.

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IMMIGRATION AND ERCBNA

(pg. 2 continued)

One such issue which I wish to expound upon is the ever-growing worldwide concern regarding refugees and immigrants. Our Nairobi Chapter document reminds us that:

The world is experiencing unprecedented human population growth with demands on food, housing, water and energy. There are inequities to people's access to power, wealth and resources whereby the rich are getting richer and poor people are being made poorer. With increasing areas of unrest and military intervention, religious conflict and persecution, there is a surge in the number of people seeking asylum.

It goes on to state:

It is the agenda of the world that sets the mission direction of the Church and our Congregation. It is in deep listening to the groaning earth and her suffering people that the Church and Congregation experience God calling them to be agents of change, hope and transformation.


Many of the ministries of our Province are in areas where refugees and immigrants are in crisis. Several of our school and outreach ministries quietly attempt to serve these dislocated populations. Now more than ever, I urge our Brothers to play a leading role in our local communities by standing up for the rights of immigrants and those who have been displaced from their homes and their countries with nowhere else to turn. Let us advocate for the rights of immigrants and refugees in Congress and Parliament, lending a voice to those who cannot speak on their own behalf. The Nairobi Chapter Call "to engage in advocacy with the voiceless, the marginalized and all that are oppressed" challenges us to do no less. Let us speak up and speak out for those suffering from these injustices and let us heed the words of Pope Francis to be:

A poor Church with the poor – a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out in the streets.

Brothers, is this not what the Pope is asking of us when he asks that we "open our eyes and see the misery of the world?" Thus, as we move beyond the *Year of Mercy*, I encourage us to be attentive to this and other issues facing our society today."

Fellow advocates, I share this with you in the hope that, as disciples of Jesus and followers of Blessed Edmund Rice, both our individual and our collective voices will be heard in support of our brother and sister immigrants seeking a better life. May this Lenten season of mercy and forgiveness guide us beyond the passion and death of Jesus so they we can celebrate the Easter promise of new life and resurrection.

God bless,



Bro. Kevin M. Griffith, CFC
Edmund Rice Christian Brothers North America
Province Leader



ADVOCACY @ O'DEA

Students at O'Dea High School in Seattle, WA are engaged in service and advocacy at a variety of levels. In the classroom, students are engaged in Christian Service Learning, which prepares them to learn about issues that many people they serve face. In the community, students complete service hours during their freshman, sophomore and junior years at various projects throughout the Seattle area. During their senior year, O'Dea students transition to advocacy by choosing one specific, justice-related topic to research. From this research, students write a paper and propose action steps in order to make changes in their world.

Senior, Jack Ipsen, was recently featured in a local news story for his work with local migrant families at the Youth Migrant Project in Burlington, WA. Jack's outreach to local migrants stemmed from his service there and his experience researching the challenges that immigrant families face.

*To learn more about Jack's work click the link below.
(courtesy of Seattle Times)*

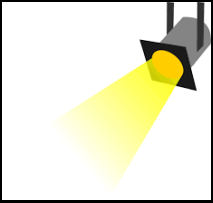
[Advocacy at O'Dea](#)



O'Dea students combine their classroom learning with service projects in the community.



O'Dea Senior, Jack Ipsen, spends time serving and advocating at the St. James' Cathedral's Youth Migrant Project.



ADVOCACY SPOTLIGHT:

College Pierre Toussaint



OFFICE OF
BLACK MINISTRY

As part of the ERCBNA commitment to Mission Frère-Haiti, the Province made a recent donation to College Pierre Toussaint to assist two students with books and supplies in the aftermath of Hurricane Matthew. College Pierre Toussaint is sponsored by the Office of Black Ministry in the Archdiocese of New York under the direction of Brother Tyrone Davis and is located in Sassier, Haiti.

To donate Pierre Toussaint, please click here:

[College Pierre Toussaint](#)

ADVOCACY LINKS



Edmund Rice School Network

This is a link to the School Network, which comprises schools from the ERCBNA Province and the Latin American Region. This link contains information regarding schools and the various programs and activities in which the Office of Educational Services (OES) is involved.

<http://www.edmundriceschools.org>



Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM): Justice and Peace Alerts

An association of the leadership of men in religious and apostolic institutes in the U.S. The link below is to the CMSM publication "Justice Alert," which highlights areas where justice is needed and proposes direct action through advocacy. The ERCBNA Province is a member of CMSM.

<http://www.cmsm.org/justice-alerts.shtml>



Edmund Rice International (ERI): Click below to access the most recent issues of Edmund Rice International's newsletter. This newsletter highlights the various areas of advocacy that ERI is involved in at the U.N. and beyond. Mission Frère-Advocacy works in concert with ERI.

[ERI NEWSLETTER](#)



Carbon Rangers: An e-newsletter published by Bro. Kevin Cawley, CFC, ERI Team and Executive Director of the Thomas Berry Forum for Ecological Dialogue at Iona College. Carbon Rangers creates awareness for climate change and advocates for responsible environmental stewardship.

[CARBON RANGERS](#)



Edmund Rice Latin America (LATAM):

The link below is to LATAM, the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers' Newsletter in Latin America. The Latin American Region and North American Province work closely together to promote justice in the Americas. Click below to see the great work being done in Latin America.

[LATAM](#)



Smart Justice Network of Canada:

Brother Michael Maher works with this organization to bring awareness to the criminal justice system. Brother Maher and his colleagues advocate for both offenders and victims through Restorative Justice, which advocates for the criminal justice system to address the harm(s) done through mechanisms of support, accountability and healing. Click below to learn more:

<http://smartjustice.ca>



Edmund Rice Education Beyond Borders:

EREBB advocates for the rights of children to receive quality Catholic school education and brings together Edmund Rice Christian Brother Schools from around the world. Click below to access their website:

<http://erebb.org>

CONTACT US

We are always looking for submissions and links from across the network and beyond!



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UPCOMING EVENTS



April 3-7, 2017

ERCBNA School Leaders Meeting, St. Laurence High School, Burbank, IL.



July 5-11, 2017

Inaugural Mission Frère-Haiti Immersion Trip, Cap Haitien, Haiti