

NorAm

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



September 2019

COVER: ERCB Latin American Region Venezuelan Meal Program, Lima, Peru (pg. 9).

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A letter from ERCBNA Province Leader, Kevin Griffith, calling on Edmund Rice schools and educators to answer the call of Essential Elements 3 and 5 in the 2019-2020 school year.

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A how to guide for ERCBNA schools in responding to Br. Kevin's letter.

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Students from Tampa Catholic stayed busy this summer by serving and raising awareness for a variety of causes at events in the Tampa Bay area.

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Palma's Jim Micheletti and Mia Mirassou continue to advocate for and raise awareness of those imprisoned in Soledad Prison.

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Brother Michael Maher continues his work with restorative justice, particularly with those in prisons. A number of articles describe the injustices faced by those marginalized in the prison system.

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September 2019

Dear Companions in Blessed Edmund Rice,

Throughout the North American continent, Labor Day marks the unofficial end of the summer season. With this, the 2019-2020 school year will now have begun in all parts of our Edmund Rice Christian Brothers North America Province. I hope you have had a blessed summer that has allowed ample time for rest, relaxation and reflection. With the *Essential Elements of an Edmund Rice Christian Brother Education* as our guide, the new school years beckons and challenges us to bring the Gospel message of Jesus Christ to all those we encounter.

The Preamble to the *Essential Elements of an Edmund Rice Christian Brother Education* reads in part:

Blessed Edmund Rice was given the grace to respond to the call of Jesus by identifying with Christ in the poor. His example evoked a deep awareness of God's loving presence in all with whom he came in contact. He also awakened within them a consciousness of their dignity as children of God...The life of Blessed Edmund Rice – businessman, husband, father, widower, religious Brother, teacher and Founder – challenges all involved in Christian Brother education to live and teach Gospel values.

During the past five years, as issues that affect our students have arisen, our Province advocacy efforts have attempted to draw attention to topics such as: race relations, immigration, gun control, restorative justice, prison reform, child sexual abuse and climate change. It seems this past summer that many of these topics have converged in dominating the news cycle in one way or another. As Catholic Christians who have been called to educate the minds and hearts of the young, we simply cannot ignore the impact that continued racial discrimination, inhumane treatment of immigrants, violent mass shootings, prison injustice, child sexual abuse and lack of care for our good Earth have on the impressionable lives of our students.

In March of 2014, more than seventy men and woman inspired by the charism of Blessed Edmund Rice gathered in Nairobi, Kenya to together listen for the voice of the Holy Spirit in our midst. The prophetic statement below was made at that time and surely is still most apropos today.

The world is expressing unprecedented human population growth with demands on food, housing, water and energy. There are inequities in peoples access to power, wealth and resources whereby the rich are getting richer and the poor 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. Rampant human consumerism is leading to increasing levels of pollution and the extinction of species which could lead to the destruction of the Earth.

It is the agenda of the world that sets the mission direction of the Church and our Congregation.

My friends and colleagues, I believe that as Edmund Rice educators, we are called to respond to the injustices that surround us. Our students have an inalienable right to live in a world that promotes healing and reconciliation, rather than

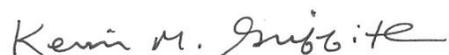
demonizing them for being people of color. That is safe wherever they go, rather than one where they have to fear coming to school, walking in a mall or going to Church. That welcomes those seeking a better life, rather than detaining them for being from a foreign land. That values the family unit, rather than separating children from their parents for seeking asylum. That protects and cares for our Earth, rather than denying our role in its destruction. That provides healthcare for all, rather than taking it away for political gain. That rehabilitates those who have been imprisoned, rather than perpetuating an endless cycle of incarceration. That stands up for rights of children who have been abused, rather than seeking to protect large institutions from bad publicity. That seeks to live up to the ideals of the Gospel of Jesus, the charism of Blessed Edmund, the non-violence of Mahatma Gandhi, the Dream of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, the exhortations of Pope Francis, etc.

As Edmund Rice Christian Brother schools, let us lead the way in teaching our students that God's unconditional love knows no bounds, discriminates against no person, welcomes all peoples, respects all cultures, embraces all human life and embodies all creation. In doing this, we will be faithful to *Essential Element # 3* by "standing in solidarity with those marginalized by poverty and injustice" – and *Essential Element # 5* by "celebrating the value and dignity of each person."

Let us respond to the agenda of the world with a resounding faith that trusts in God's plan for humanity and creation, that holds out hope for a future with great promise for all God's people and that exhibits a love that permeates all aspects of our precious lives.

May the 2019-2020 school year be one of hopeful expectation in giving witness to the Good News we proclaim with faith, hope and love.

God bless,



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



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HOW TO ADVOCATE THIS YEAR



All activities should be reviewed by staff/administration to ensure appropriateness before using with students/staff.

RACISM

- Take a [survey](#) of students/staff on your school's "temperature" on race awareness
- Raise awareness of racism in your community/area by highlighting the problem through the curriculum ([The New Jim Crow](#), [White Fragility](#)) and popular film/media ([13th](#), [Green Book](#)).
- Do a "[privilege activity](#)" to help students to understand how race affects forgotten privileges.
- Create a club geared towards understanding non-White perspectives and addressing racism in schools.
- Invite parents of color to form a council or advisory board to meet with school leaders.

IMMIGRATION

- Help students to understand the immigration debate by exploring all sides ([PBS Lesson Plan](#)), or hold a mock immigration debate to explore pros and cons of reform.
- Introduce students to the struggles and stories of immigrants throughout the world through online resources ([Marshall Project](#)), and popular film/media ([Which Way Home](#), [Under the Same Moon](#), [Food Chains](#)).
- Find resources to learn more about immigration and current news ([CMSM](#)).

CLIMATE CHANGE

- Learn more about climate change and its effects ([Br. Kevin Cawley Carbon Rangers](#)).
- Raise awareness of climate change amongst students through popular film and media ([Before the Flood](#)).
- Teach students about climate change and the sustainable development goals (SDG's) through online resources ([UN CC: Learn](#), [International Presentation Association](#)).

PRISON REFORM

- Learn more about injustices in the prison system ([Br. Michael Maher- Smart Justice Network](#), Palma School's work- see articles below, [The Marshall Project-Life Inside](#)).
- Raise awareness of the injustices of the prison system ([The House I Live In](#), [13th](#)).

WAYS TO ENACT CHANGE + ADVOCATE

-The following resources are ways to take direct action to advocate for various causes: ([CMSM Action Alerts](#), [Maryknoll Global Concerns](#)).

A Summer of Service and Advocacy

- Jina Masters, Tampa Catholic



It was a busy summer for students at Tampa Catholic, as they hosted and participated in a number of events aimed at serving and advocating for marginalized groups in their community. In July, Tampa Catholic's Key Club received a \$1,000 grant for the purchase of 8 new bicycles. The bikes were put together by students and donated to a local teen shelter and used in a bike sharing program so that the youth living at the shelter can get to and from educational programs and their part time jobs. The intent is to empower the teens while supporting their efforts to better prepare for their futures.



(Left): Tampa Catholic students purchased and constructed bikes for a local teen shelter. **(Center):** Tampa Catholic students hosted local high school Key Clubs to create bags of hope for the homeless. **(Right):** Tampa Catholic students at a Surfers for Autism event.

In Late July, Tampa Catholic High School students had some fun in the sun at Surfers for Autism's (SFA) annual event at Pass-a-Grill Beach. Students got to catch some waves with participants and work the food tent keeping all newbie surfers and their families fueled up for the day. Surfers for Autism was founded in 2008 by a handful of South Florida surfers who realized the impact of surfing's healing magic on children diagnosed on the autism spectrum. Since that first event, held at Deerfield Beach, Fla., SFA has reached countless participants, families, volunteers, communities, and supporters. With the combined effort, support, understanding, and inspiration of those involved, the magic that comes from loving encouragement and soothing surf is created.

Over the summer, Tampa Catholic High School hosted a district meeting for local Key Clubs from other high schools in Tampa Bay. All participants were encouraged to bring donations of toiletries and snacks so that we could create "Bags of Hope" for the homeless in our area. The event was a community building success resulting in almost 100 care packages packed with handwritten notes of encouragement. The session closed with a representative from a near by food bank gratefully receiving the supplies and sharing more ways to volunteer time dedicated to our homeless population on a regular basis.

Palma's Farm Worker Food Delivery Program- *Mia Mirassou*



The ones who feed us shouldn't be stressed when it comes to feeding themselves.

Once a month Palma School loads and delivers tons of food to area farm workers, many of whom migrate from field to field to meet the needs of their families, and ours.

Once derided as “the stoopers” because of their bent backs, workers’ lives have improved through awareness, organization, and advocacy. Many earn a living wage and have health benefits. There is still work to do, however, and recent federal action against immigrants finds employers stymied by labor shortages.

At Camp Jimenez, Palma delivers food directly into people’s homes. The poor condition of the workers’ housing provides a healthy disturbance to students whose homes are palatial in comparison. Students have a chance to speak Spanish with people’s whose kindness and hospitality are ever evident.

A more muscular Campus Ministry is a worthy goal—faith walking with others and seeing them more as our sisters and brothers.



A shipment of food ready to be delivered by Palma School students to the migrant workers at Camp Jimenez.

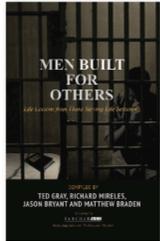


Palma School students pose for a picture during a recent food delivery to migrant workers at Camp Jimenez.



From inmate to influencer: Richard Mireles, who co-authored *Men Built for Others* recently addressed the California Assembly after earning parole in 2019.

How does a man come to see who he needs to be? *Men Built for Others* is a collection of fiercely honest voices that rise from the inmate group known as The Phoenix Alliance. While incarcerated, these men earned countless degrees and certificates in restorative work.



They have inspired scores of men inside Soledad Prison to program and parole. They have also touched lives outside the walls through leadership conferences and a number of walkathons and fundraisers for charitable causes. The proceeds from sales of *Men Built for Others* are donated to Palma School in support of tuition assistance, student home-building immersion experiences in Tijuana, Mexico and Peru, help for the homeless, relief for migrant farm workers, beach clean ups, care for Alzheimer's patients...and many other programs, head, heart, and hands, hopeful.

How To Get Involved

Contact

Jim Micheletti at micheletti@palmaschool.org
or Mia Mirassou at mirassou@palmaschool.org

We Gather Here

*We gather here, within these walls,
the sentenced and the free,
yet, not as "us" and "them"
but as mankind's meant to be.*

*See we gather here in peace and love
and let the spirit guide us,
as we lift the veils of circumstance
and shadows that divide us.*

*We gather here, our humanity
and we leave behind our mask,
to show we hold within our souls
more hope than pain or wrath.*

*We gather here upon this land
of tears and years in chains,
trusting that, however dim,
the flame of faith remains.*

*We gather here to read, to speak,
to learn from and to feel,
we gather here to live again,
we gather here to heal.*

*We gather here our common threads
and weave them into one,
and we celebrate this twist of fate
and the family we've become.*

Sebastian Erving — CTF Soledad

Where boys of promise become men of character.

PALMA SCHOOL
KNOWLEDGE • SERVICE • LEADERSHIP
919 Iverson Street, Salinas, California 93901
831.422.6391 | palmaschool.org

Palma School with Soledad Prison:

EXERCISES IN EMPATHY



To discern, through literature and our own stories, our power to be peacemakers and to help restore justice.



What We Do

- We support the victims of crime and their need to heal.
- We have the support of victims' rights groups.
- We work only with inmates who express contrition, make amends as much as humanly possible, and commit to respect and responsibility.
- We Palma students and guests read, write, speak, and listen with men in the Life CYCLE Program about themes close to the heart of all human beings. The Life CYCLE are men serving life sentences who invite in other men from the yard for teachings in honesty, integrity, respect and responsibility, nonviolence, sobriety, and a number of other issues needed for parole.
- We use novels, poems, parables, and quotations as common ground for discussions in small and large groups.
- We write letters of support to the parole board and government agencies as deserved and needed by our friends inside.
- We, too, write literature and have created a little booklet called *Brokenness and Blessings* about Father and Son relationships.
- Our meetings usually involve 80-100 people, inmates and guests, occur once a week, and last for about 90 minutes. Typically we work in six-week sessions culminating in a certificate of completion ceremony. All are welcome and we can assist with the security clearance each participant must obtain before entering the prison.
- All are briefed on safety prior to each session and prison officials supervise our meetings inside.

"Restorative justice is like medicine. It involves looking beyond retribution to find deeper solutions that heal the wounds of victims, or survivors, our youth, and strengthen broken relationships, and the community." — *Angie Ortega*

Victim Representative District 1 for Restorative Justice Partners
(formerly of Parents of Murdered Children)

"The partnership between Palma School and Soledad Prison's Life CYCLE program is groundbreaking and, I suspect, life altering for all involved. As Director of the National Steinbeck Center, I was involved in the program while the inmates and students read Steinbeck; I attended several sessions, and I was certainly moved by each session, profoundly moved."

— *Susan Shillinglaw, Ph.D.*

"By shedding the freedom, entitlement, and context of my life outside the prison walls... I was left viewing only the humanity of the men inside."

— *Jacob Fajnor*

Palma Class of 2017, UC Berkeley Class of 2021

"My experience with our brothers in the Soledad Prison has been an incredibly valuable base of perspective since my time there. The wisdom and experience they have shared is more than anything I could have given them."

— *Drew Dalman*

Palma Class of 2017, Stanford University Class of 2021

"I've learned that I am not a prisoner. I am a man in prison."

— *Roy Duran*
Soledad Prison

Why We Do It

- We believe in Restorative Justice.
- We believe a human being is more than his worst actions.
- We believe in being our brother's and sister's keeper and that, as students, standing with people on the margins is the result of our best critical thinking.
- The United States, the "land of the free," should not tolerate more of her own people behind bars than any other country in the world. This is our disgrace and we are capable of better.
- The cost of imprisonment, morally and fiscally, is a cancer on the common good.
- Many currently imprisoned, especially when sentenced justly and when provided the right programs, successfully rehabilitate and contribute to society without re-offending. We witness this often in our work with Life CYCLE.



Restorative Justice and the Prison System



Brother Michael Maher continues to work for justice for those marginalized in prison systems. Through his work with restorative justice, Michael continues to raise awareness of and advocate for individuals and groups of persons whose rights have been violated while incarcerated. See below for links to various articles related to these abuses:

VERA Institute (US)

Reimagining Prison Web Report

The link is to a 136 page downloadable pdf that looks at the inhumanity and failures of the prison system and the jails in the US and makes recommendations for genuine reform. The key: “The harsh conditions within prisons have been demonstrated neither to ensure safety behind the walls nor to prevent crime and victimization in the community... It is time to acknowledge that this country has long used state punishment generally—and incarceration specifically—to subordinate racial and ethnic minorities.”

[LINK](#)

The Philadelphia Inquirer (US) – Editorial (July 15, 2019)

Prison gerrymandering unfair to Philadelphia and other cities | Editorial

In the US, inmates in prison are not entitled to vote in most states. When a census is done, the inmates are counted as belonging to the place of residence when arrested. Washington, New York, Maryland, Delaware, and California count inmates accordingly when determining electoral districts by requiring prisoners to be counted at their pre-incarceration address. Some, like Pennsylvania, use the inmate numbers to strengthen the count for rural vs urban political gerrymandering, since prisons are almost inevitably in rural districts.

[LINK](#)

The Marshall Project (US) - Christie Thompson

Two Friends Were Found Guilty of the Same Murder. Only One Is Free. His co-defendant was acquitted based on new evidence, but prosecutors are still fighting to keep Andrew Krivak in prison.

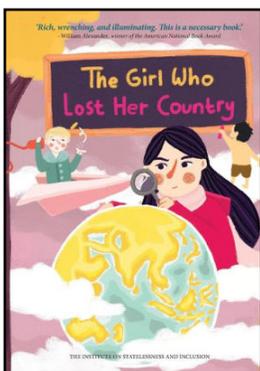
This link is helpful in putting in the spotlight the value of a confession in blocking the appeal of a person convicted. Two men, Krivak and Anthony DiPippo were convicted in separate trials on the same evidence with the exception that Krivak confessed after being told falsely he failed the lie detector test and after seven hours of questioning by police. The case raises the issue of false confessions and how frequently it occurs under aggressive police interrogations.

[LINK](#)



Raising Awareness of Statelessness

After listening to a guest speaker during an Iona Prep Human Rights Club meeting last year, Iona Prep senior Angelo DelToro was immediately impacted by what he heard. During the Fall of 2018, Sangita Bujulaiye, of the Institute of Statelessness and Inclusion (ISI) in the Netherlands, visited Iona Prep to tell students about statelessness and the millions of people in the world who deal with its effects. Mrs. Bajulaiye shared a book with students, *The Girl Who Lost Her Country*, which tells the story of Neha, a Nepalese girl who loses her citizenship. The book teaches students of all ages what statelessness is, and how its effects can greatly marginalize people and threaten their human rights.



After listening to this presentation, Angelo was inspired to create change and immediately devised ways to create awareness of the problem and to support those marginalized by being forced to be stateless. In the Spring of 2019, Angelo organized



(left): *The Girl Who Lost Her Country*, a book about statelessness. (above): the winning team members of Angelo's (top) basketball tournament. (bottom) Angelo visits with staff members at the International School of Sosua, one of the many locations where he distributed copies of the book.

a basketball tournament at Iona Prep to raise funds to purchase copies of the book, which he distributed to schools in the Dominican Republic during the summer of 2019. With the help of the Iona Prep Human Rights Club, Angelo raised more than \$2,000 to purchase 700 copies of the book. This summer, Angelo traveled throughout the Dominican Republic and visited a number of schools and community centers where he discussed his project and distributed the book.

Angelo has also been named a Cause Ambassador for the clothing company Boy Meets Girl. Through this cause, Angelo helped the company design a t-shirt geared at raising awareness of various human rights issues. 30% of the proceeds from these shirt sales go to the charity of Angelo's choice, which he has decided to put towards his work with statelessness.

To learn more about statelessness click here: [STATELESSNESS](#)

To see Angelo's clothing campaign (Angelo is pictured 3rd from right), click here: [BOY MEETS GIRL](#)

Venezuelan Refugee Project

- Brother Hugo Cáceres, Leader, Latin American Region, ERCBNA



The Latin American Region of the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers has joined with other religious institutions in Lima, Peru to assist Venezuelan refugees seeking asylum in Peru. Since 2014, more than three million Venezuelans have fled their country, escaping from political, social and economic asylum. More than one million of those refugees have come to Peru in the last three years.

Social organizations and religious institutes are doing a tremendous effort to help the Venezuelan refugees in many ways. Hermanos Cristianos (Christian Brothers) from Peru have committed to help refugees in the area of supplying food and residence in a common effort with other religious institutes (Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word and Sisters of the Holy Names). We are currently providing six days of weekly dinners for 70 people and housing for 35 refugees. Thankfully, we have received help from ACNUR (UNO Refugee Services), Mision Cara (Irish Catholic Religious Foundation), US AID and the Peruvian Lutheran Church.

In July, the ERCBNA Province partnered with the Latin American Region to help ensure the continuation of their humanitarian outreach project. Thanks to the work and dedication of the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers and their associates in Latin America, many Venezuelan refugees have received food, shelter and support that have helped them survive and integrate into Peruvian society.

To learn more about the work being done in Peru to support Venezuelan refugees click the links below:

[Edmund Rice Development](#)

[Venezuelan Refugee Interview](#) (In Spanish)



Thanks to the work of the Brothers in Latin America, this young Venezuelan woman received medicine that saved the life of her unborn child.

UPCOMING EVENTS



SEPTEMBER 19 - 22
ACTION STUDENT LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE
KEARNY, NJ



SEPTEMBER 19
12 PM, HYNES CENTER, IONA COLLEGE
BR. CORNELIA LECTURE BY SISTER PEGGY O'NEILL



OCTOBER 21-23
MISSION FRÈRE-HAITI EXPLORATION TRIP, MILOT, HAITI
IN CONJUNCTION WITH HOLY NAME HOSPITAL, TEANECK, NJ



NOVEMBER 2-9, 9-16, 16-23
BROWNSVILLE, TX
ERCBNA SCHOOLS BROWNSVILLE TEXAS IMMERSION TRIPS

ADVOCACY SPOTLIGHT

Mission Frère-Haiti Update



Throughout the 2018-2019 academic year, the Mission Frère-Haiti program, through a partnership with Iona College's Br. Kenneth Chapman Art Gallery, raised funds to invest back into Haiti. The sale of various art items raised more than \$200, which will go to support health, housing and educational initiatives sponsored by the Sisters of Jesus and Mary in Jean-Rabel, Haiti. These funds go a long way to support these crucial programs. For example, the funds help support children's education, with the cost of educating a child for a year in Jean-Rabel is \$60.00.



Artwork sold by the Mission Frère-Haiti program goes to support the work of the Sisters of Jesus and Mary in Jean-Rabel, circled above.

To learn more about the Sister's work in Haiti please click here: [RJM](#)



ADVOCACY LINKS

Edmund Rice Christian Brothers North America Province Website

The ERCBNA Province encompasses Canada, Dominica and the United States- with strong links to the Latin American countries of Peru, Argentina, Bolivia and Uruguay. Click below to view the latest news from the ERCBNA Province.

[ERCBNA Province Website](#)

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.

[LATAM](#)

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](#)

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.

[CMSM ALERTS](#)

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.

[EREBB](#)

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](#)

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:

[SMART JUSTICE](#)

Consortium of Edmund Rice Schools

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.

[Edmund Rice Schools](#)

CONTACT US



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