

Please Add the Date and Volume/Issue:

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PROMOTING ANTIRACISM IN EDMUND RICE SCHOOLS



In conjunction with Province Leader, Br. Kevin Griffith's May letter on racial justice, a committee consisting of ERCBNA schoolteachers, administrators and Brothers was formed to develop lesson plans and educational resources to promote antiracism in Edmund Rice schools. The group met for the first time on July 8 and discussed plans for creating "ready-made" lesson plans for implementation in Edmund Rice schools for the 2020-2021 school year. The committee has also created a live, [Google Document](#) (click link to access) that contains antiracism resources for schools to consult. This Google Document will be converted into a resource website for schools to use during the 2020-2021 academic year. The group will meet a number of times before the beginning of the 2021 year.

EXERCISES IN EMPATHY

Covid-19 has caused countless interruptions to so many facets of our lives across our entire world. No place has been immune from this virus, including CTF Soledad State Prison in California, where there have been cancellation of programs, increased confinement, and rising concerns of mass infection.

On Tuesday, July 7th, Palma School Campus Ministers Jim Micheletti and Mia Mirassou continued their tireless work with current and former inmates by facilitating a Zoom conference designed to give hope to those "Brothers in Blue" incarcerated at Soledad. The Zoom call included members of CROP ("Creating Restorative Opportunities & Programs") who are Returning Citizens (formerly incarcerated), as well as Palma students, alumni, staff and guests, including CNN's Lisa Ling who visited Soledad with Palma to film an episode of her series *This is Life*.



The Zoom call consisted of members of CROP answering the following questions and providing hope to inmates still imprisoned at Soledad:

- 1) How long were you incarcerated?
- 2) What is the most memorable experience you've had since being released?
- 3) What is it like reuniting with family after decades in prison?
- 4) What is CROP?

The recording of the Zoom will be sent inside Soledad, where it will be aired on closed circuit TV to approximately 5,200 men.

The Zoom conference was an incredibly powerful experience that shed light on the power of forgiveness and transformation and the constant need to reexamine prison systems in the U.S.

To see the entire *Exercises in Empathy* Zoom call, [click here](#).

Related to the Exercises in Empathy call, another “Lifer” who has worked extensively with us will be paroled in the next week. His name is James Willock and he is pictured on the right with two Palma students from the Class of 2020. James asked to have his first meal out as a free man with us (He has been in for 27 years I



believe). We are so grateful for the opportunity. James has helped hundreds of men through the program, transforming their lives for peace and justice and the possibility of parole. Once released, he will be working with CROP and its members—Ted, Richard, Matt, and Jason (all Returning Citizens). – *Jim Micheletti, Palma*

"Visiting" the Sick- *Jina Masters, Tampa Catholic*



Tampa Catholic initiated a pen pal program with a local assisted living facility. These neighbors in need hadn't been allowed any visitors for over 2 months and the isolation necessary for protecting their physical health against COVID 19 had worn down their emotional health. Our Crusaders stepped in and began writing letters to over 40 senior citizens that were in need of interaction. Each Tampa Catholic student committed to a letter per week for the months of July and August. Many of our students even coordinated with the facility's activities director by sending Christmas cards and ornaments for the resident's "Christmas in July" celebration. Our Christian Brother charism has allowed for a creative solution to Jesus' call for us to "visit the sick."



SERVING AND ADVOCATING DIGITALLY AT GUADALUPE

DANDY PILLON + BR. ARHTUR WILLIAMS, GUADALUPE REGIONAL MIDDLE SCHOOL



Guadalupe Regional Middle School (GRMS) was founded with the goal of providing a nearly tuition free education for working poor families. Our families are unable to afford the tuition of a Catholic school. Our project at GRMS continues to reach out to the local community and to the generosity of various foundations to obtain the financial support needed to continue. We continue to work to ensure access to federal funding administered by the local school district and the completion of grant applications to raise funds.

FOOD DISTRIBUTIONS

Food distributions continue in partnership with the Brownsville Wellness Coalition. We have running a drive through food pantry to distribute fresh produce and non-perishables every week, and now, every other week. Our Junior Board of Directors has been running the distributions.



DINNER FOR THE HOMELESS

In June, Guadalupe Regional Middle School's Junior Board of Directors organized a dinner for the homeless, putting together 100 to-go meals with the help of Brother Bill Joyce, CFC. After the school canceled its annual gala due to COVID-19, the welcome bags for guests were dismantled, and all the specialty snacks that were donated for the gala were repurposed for this effort.



MENTORING PROGRAM FOR HIGH SCHOOLS STUDENTS LAUNCHED AT GRMS

The Junior Board of Directors at Guadalupe Regional Middle School has launched a virtual mentoring program for graduates of GRMS who are in high school. The goal is to engage students, especially during/after COVID-19, and help keep them focused and on track to college. Each high school student who registers will be assigned 3 mentors who will lead conversations, set deadlines for college essays and other activities, etc. All mentors are successful college students who are also graduates of GRMS.



GRMS PARTNERS WITH HOUSING AUTHORITY TO KEEP KIDS READING

In partnership with the Housing Authority of the City of Brownsville 30 students (15 from GRMS) will participate in a summer reading program this July. Each participating student will receive a Kindle Fire with preloaded poetry from local author, Daniel Garcia Ordaz (aka the Poet Mariachi). Students will participate in several weeks of Zoom meetings to discuss the book, culminating in a Q & A with the author. Students will get to keep the Kindles and will also receive an autographed copy of the book upon completion.



GRMS LAUNCHES COVID-19 RELIEF FUND

COVID-19 forced us at Guadalupe Regional Middle School (GRMS) to cancel our annual gala and other end-of-year fundraising events.

While we pivot to make changes in our fundraising schedule for the coming school year, with alternatives to in-person events + room for the possibility to continue our beloved traditions, we need your help now!

https://charity.gofundme.com/o/en/campaign/grmsrelief?fbclid=IwAR2GRTj7bqkx7CJo-luVZFA2ODtxJ3EfdwEraA1glfyZQA4XkwS-AQEd_-E

ACTION ALERTS

SAVE THE DATE- EDMUND RICE THE ADVOCATE VIRTUAL EVENT

This event will remember Edmund Rice on his death anniversary by reflecting on Edmund's life as an advocate for human rights and social justice in the context of the challenges facing our world today. The event will include sessions on Edmund Rice's life, discussions of video sessions in four different time zones: Australia, India, Geneva and New York. The event will take place for the North America Province at 11:30 AM (EST) on August 29, 2020 via Zoom video conference. A link to the Zoom video and a schedule of events will be sent out in the coming weeks.



Free the Families

On June 26, a federal judge ordered all children to be released from ICE jails by July 17. Click above to learn about the separation of children and families being facilitated by ICE and sign a petition to put pressure on ICE to ensure that families are released from detention facilities together. To read a statement written by a coalition of Catholic organizations instrumental in this work, [click here](#).

Catholic Mobilizing Network

Click above to join the Catholic Mobilizing Network in advocating for items such as an end to the death penalty and other items related to Restorative Justice.

Service of Faith and Promotion of Justice

Click above to access the Jesuit "Service of Faith and Promotion of Justice" page to take action on a number of social justice and human rights issues.

Take action on Coronavirus Relief Package

[Click here](#) to read about the USCCB's migration-related requests for COVID-19 Package 4. To see a sample letter to send your local senator to advocate on behalf of these items, [click here](#).

Join the USCCB in Advocating for Catholic Schools

COVID-19 has contributed to the closure of 130 Catholic schools in 23 states. Click above to learn how you can advocate for funding for Catholic schools.

LINKS

[Articles Related to Racial Justice, Prison and Police Reform, Systemic Racism](#)

Br. Michael Maher shares a number of important articles related to his work with Restorative Justice and more.

[Climate Justice is Justice for All](#)

Br. Kevin Cawley's most recent issue of Carbon Rangers sheds light on the link between systemic racism and the effects of COVID-19 and environmental justice and racism.

[JPIC updates from Br. Kevin Cawley](#)

Br. Kevin Cawley shares resources related to his work with the U.N. and the Thomas Berry Ecological Forum at Iona College.

[Women's U.N. Report Network](#)

Click above to access the website of the Women's U.N. Report Network, which addresses the human rights, oppression and empowerment of women and girls all over the globe.

CMSM JP Alert Supreme Court Opinions Summary

CMSM has written an excellent summary on several recent opinions decided by the U.S. Supreme Court that relate to the "ministries and apostolic works of CMSM members as well as to issues that fall within the social doctrines of the Church."

Asylum seekers denied right to be heard in federal court

In late June, the justices ruled that asylum seekers whose claims have been denied by immigration officials do not have the right to a hearing in court.

This decision creates a "fast-track" to deportation if the credible fear screenings are handled poorly. For example, asylum seekers are particularly vulnerable to a negative outcome if they do not have legal representation, if there is not proper language interpretation, or if they do not have access to specific documents in that exact moment to substantiate the claim. Supreme Court reporter [Nina Totenberg](#) explained Justice Samuel Alito's argument, recounting, "He said that neither the right of *habeas corpus* nor the right to due process of law requires a hearing before a judge for those turned down in their initial asylum screenings."

Law requiring hospital admitting privileges for abortion doctors is struck down

Pro-life advocacy at the state level has made inroads in recent years with regulatory change focused on women's health. However, on June 29, the justices struck down the Louisiana law that requires

abortion doctors to have hospital admitting privileges. USCCB and the Louisiana Conference of Catholic Bishops, together with the National Association of Evangelicals, had filed [amicus curiae briefs](#) in the *June Medical Services v. Russo* case arguing that, "The challenged law has one purpose: to safeguard the health and safety of women who need to be hospitalized because of injuries resulting from an abortion."

The USCCB Pro-Life Chairman Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann (Kansas City, KS) [responded to the ruling](#), saying, "The Court's failure to recognize the legitimacy of laws prioritizing women's health and safety over abortion business interests continues a cruel precedent. As we grieve this decision and the pregnant women who will be harmed by it, we continue to pray and fight for justice for mothers and children."

Religious exemption from contraception provision upheld and expanded

The court's [ruling](#) on *Little Sisters of the Poor v. Pennsylvania* upheld previous decisions stating that the Departments of Health and Human Services, Labor, and the Treasury, which collaboratively administer the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 (ACA) had "the authority to provide exemptions from the regulatory contraceptive requirements for employers with religious and conscientious objections."

In other words, religious organizations and employers can choose to opt out of covering the cost of prescription birth control for employees. The exemption has been a longstanding debate in the context of religious liberty. The Little Sisters of the Poor track the evolution of their case from 2011 to the present day [here](#).

Ministerial exception maintained with regard to Catholic schools

On Wednesday, July 8, the court issued a ruling on a combination of two cases, *St. James School v. Biel* and *Our Lady of Guadalupe School v. Morrissey-Berrum*, both schools in the Los Angeles Archdiocese. The decision maintained that California Catholic schools could not be sued for job discrimination in firing teachers.

The decision cited the "ministerial exception," which asserts that church-sponsored schools, not a state authority, can determine conditions for employment within the context of the school's mission and religious identity. For more details on the arguments made in favor of the exception, [here is a recap from Catholic News Service](#). Fr. Matt Malone, SJ, [offered a perspective](#) in America magazine on responsibilities related to exercising ministerial exception.