

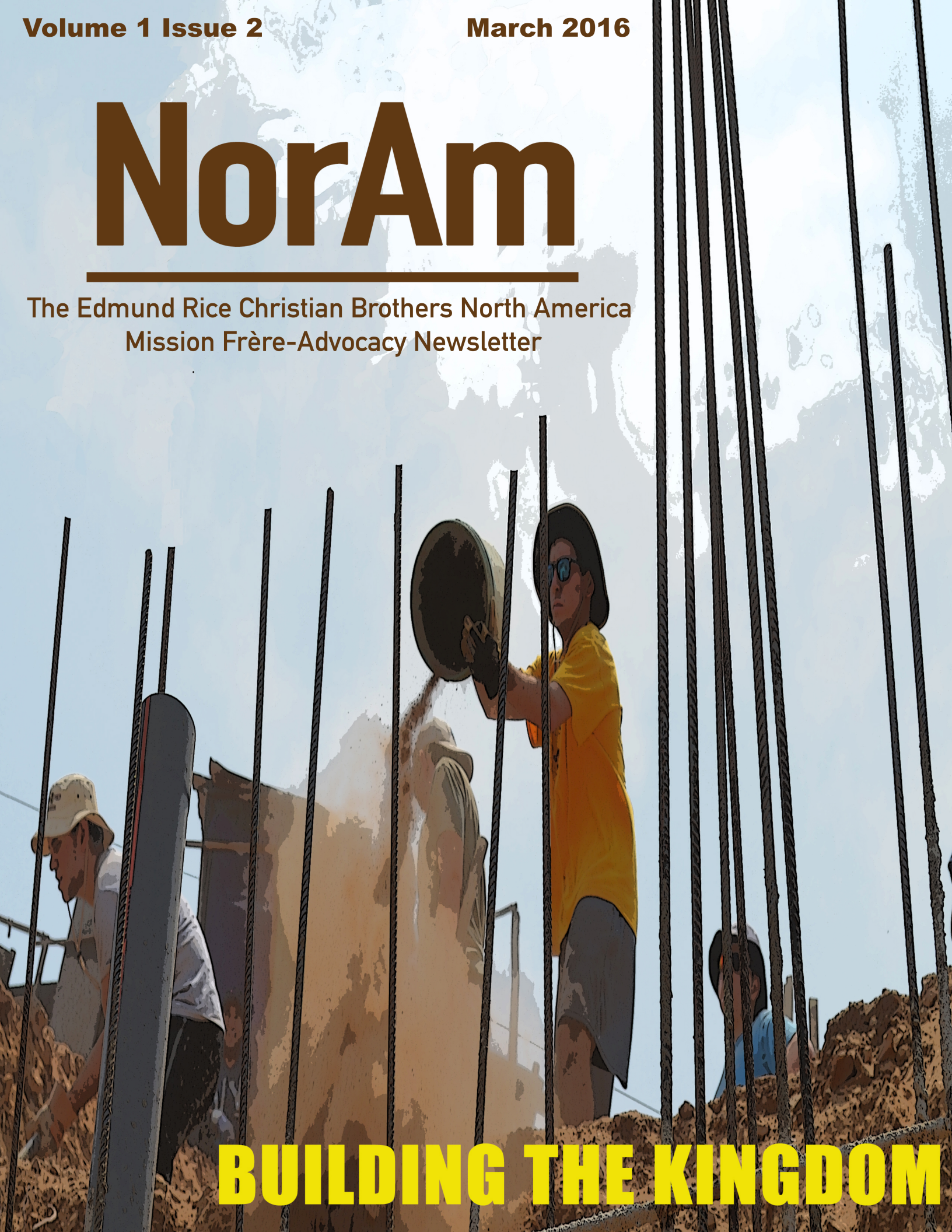
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# NorAm

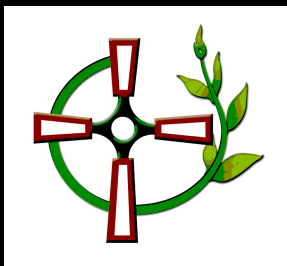
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The Edmund Rice Christian Brothers North America  
Mission Frère-Advocacy Newsletter



**BUILDING THE KINGDOM**





# NorAm

The North American Mission Frère - Advocacy Newsletter

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*"If you're not helping to make it right, then stop complaining about it being wrong."* -Anonymous

In this second issue of NorAm, you will see just that. Students, teachers, religious and volunteers who are challenging injustices in their communities by taking action together. You will read about and see the great things continuing to develop and grow in schools and missions throughout the North American Province.

This issue highlights the various ways that Edmund Rice Schools in the North American Province are going beyond serving others by working to change the situations they've learned about and by becoming advocates on behalf of others.

This issue also

celebrates those who have "helped to make it right" by truly building God's Kingdom on earth, particularly in Peru. For 50 years, the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers have served the poor and marginalized in Peru. Inspired by what they saw throughout the country, these Brothers advocated for change both in Peru and in North America. Here at home, throughout the U.S. and Canada, they have told the story of their Peruvian brothers and sisters, inspiring their students, friends and families to create change in the lives of those they serve.

May their 50 years of service and advocacy in Peru be an inspiration and provide a starting point for us in the North American network of creating a more just world.



# BROWN EYED JOY

## -WESLEY WOODSON



Catholic Memorial senior Wesley Woodson has learned what it's like to walk a mile in someone's shoes through his experience in Peru. While on immersion in Lima, Wesley was inspired to go back home to Boston where he founded Feet2Feet, a non-profit organization that works with Boston area homeless shelters to provide shoes to children staying there. Below, is Wesley's reflection of his experience in Peru and what inspired him to advocate for children in Boston through the non-profit he created, Feet2Feet.



**Wesley (left), was inspired to advocate for Boston's homeless population after his trip to Peru.**

Her eyes seemed to tantalize mine, as I stared at her from across the dirt path. They were round as coffee beans and held a color unlike the eyes of anyone I had ever known, twinkling as if they held stars. Her name was Rosa, a small Peruvian woman, with a brown face and colorful beads wrapped around the braided tips of her black hair. But it was her eyes that seemed to tell me everything; they had everything I could have ever wanted. Her warm eyes made me realize that the poor are the richest people on earth.

As we built her a new home, she insisted that she serve us water. Given that the market was a half mile away, we begged her to stay. Before I knew it, she had returned with a jug of water for us to share and had also made each of us hand-knit scarfs. I was in awe at her generosity. As I thanked her, our eyes locked, and I was drawn into her rich brown eyes. They touched my heart.

This was my first lesson of poverty. Her eyes told a story of hardship and suffering; nevertheless, she still found the energy to love and serve others. While Rosa lacked any material possessions, she had found joy in helping others. I wanted to experience that same joy; I envied her. I wished that I was that selfless, put others first, acted without thinking of rewards.

That night, when we returned to our hotel, I stared in the mirror in desperate search for that feeling, but nothing was there. As I stared into my brown eyes, I did not find that same joy. I talked about serving others, but had not fully embodied it. I knew, right then, that I had to change. I knew that this trip had to be more than seven days of charity. I knew that I had to advocate and to solve systemic problems to help people like Rosa. This was the point of my education; this was gift that I needed to share.

I aspired to discover joy by bringing happiness to others. Thus, I created a non-

profit organization called Feet2Feet. I wanted to help children within Boston's homeless shelters and began to collect children's shoes that now clothe over 200 children. While I wanted to help Rosa and the community in Peru, I knew that I had to also think of the people living in poverty in my own community. I was inspired to serve them, because of Rosa.

Today, when I look in the mirror I see "glimpses" of that joy. I am realistic knowing that I have just begun my journey. I am on the constant search for mentors and experiences to guide me on my quest not only for "real joy", but on the ultimate quest to find God in my life.

***Feet2Feet is a non-profit organization established to help those around us in need, through the specialization of shoes. We look to donate shoes to children staying in homeless shelters around the state of Massachusetts.***



## POVERTY AWARENESS @ BISHOP KEARNEY

In unison with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' adoption of January as Poverty Awareness Month, Michael la Liberte's senior class became educators and advocates for their entire school community.

These seniors at Bishop Kearney High School in Rochester, New York presented their research to help create awareness about poverty both at home and throughout the world. Senior Todd LaRocca, one of the presenters, wrote about Kearney's project and the school's commitment to educating others about advocating for our world's most vulnerable people.



Students come to school every day to learn something new from the teachers, but on January 13 2016, it was the senior class at Bishop Kearney doing the teaching. For months learning about what poverty is and how it affects all of us in the world has really opened up the eyes of the senior class. The seniors watched documentaries to help educate them on how privileged they are compared to other people in the world. The documentary "God Grew Tired of Us" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=32lxvvoSZKo>) opened up the eyes of many who were not knowledgeable of what goes on in other nations. They realized that the small things that we have to endure in our society can be nothing compared to what people in poverty have to endure.

**-Todd LaRocca '16**



## SABER @ BISHOP HENDRICKEN



The Bishop Hendricken Advocacy Group is getting underway with a goal to provide advocacy for our Armed Services veterans. Contact has been made with our local Rhode Island Veterans Affairs Bureau and plans are being formulated to advocate for specific needs.

Hendricken's students have named the group, "SABER". Student Advocates of Blessed Edmund Rice.





# Edmund Rice



PRESENCE COMPASSION LIBERATION



Brother Michael O'Donnell at Santa Rosa de Lima, 1980.



Brothers Hugo Cáceres, Martín Matos and Kevin Bernard in Canto Grande, 1994.



Brother Diego Glos and students at Santa Rosa de Lima, 1980.



Brothers Stephen Casey and Pablo Keohane in Villa el Salvador, 2015

## 50 Years in Peru

*In 1966 three young Christian Brothers from the United States accepted the challenge to open a community in Peru. In order to do that, they travelled to Cochabamba to study Spanish and Quechua. That's how this exciting journey started. This year the Edmund Rice Network celebrates 50 years of the presence of the Brothers in Peru.*

*In the video below, you may recognize some familiar faces that haven't changed much over time!*

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8zV1vCEc1fE>

In 1966, the first three Edmund Rice Christian Brothers arrived in Peru from the United States. Before beginning their mission in Peru, they traveled to Cochabamba, Bolivia to learn Spanish and Quechua, the two most widely spoken languages in Peru. In 1967, the first mission was opened in Arequipa. Only two years later, seven more Brothers arrived in Peru and missions opened in Tahuantinsuyo and Chimbote.

Over the next 50 years, Peru would be blessed by the work of many more Christian Brothers.

They would go on to open up missions in Chiclayo, Lince, Moyobamba and Canto Grande. In each place, the Brothers have worked tirelessly to dramatically alter the communities and lives of the people they have served since 1966.

From opening and operating schools, to serving and advocating, to helping construct homes and providing crucial necessities such as medicines and food, the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers have profoundly impacted the lives of countless Peruvians and continue to inspire those in Latin America and North America to

continue this great tradition.

The Brothers and their lay colleagues have been strong advocates of quality, Catholic school education throughout their 50 years in Peru. This advocacy has helped thousands of young Peruvians break the chains of ignorance and poverty so that they could live productive lives and earn fair wages in supporting their families.

## THE BIBLE ADVOCACY GROUP AT GUADALUPE REGIONAL MIDDLE SCHOOL



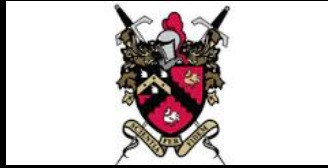
Our faith is often the product of "little seeds," that if planted well and given proper care, end up bearing good fruit. Such is the case at Guadalupe Regional Middle School in Brownsville, Texas, where students, under the direction of teacher Alexa Aragon, have created a Bible Advocacy Group to answer the call to serve and care for others. The Advocacy group at Guadalupe Regional Middle School began as a Bible study group so that students had an opportunity to strengthen their faith and learn *why* God calls us to serve people around us. Once the students understood the motive, they started doing different advocacy activities and talking about social justice issues.

In November, Guadalupe promoted adoption awareness month and made signs to put up around the school as well as wrote letters to a local orphanage. The group also provides support to single mothers who are unable to afford items for their infants. Additionally, the group is in contact with a meal program, Good Neighbor, and volunteers serve there a couple of times a month. Students from the advocacy group still choose to volunteer their time at these events when they can.

While many of the students involved in the group did not necessarily choose to be in the activity at first, all of them enjoyed it and wanted to continue after the activity session was over. The group has been working on future areas of concern and hopes to continue to advocate for change in Brownsville.



# FACELESS DOLLS



Students at St. Thomas More Collegiate in Burnaby, Canada are using dolls to make a change. For too long, Aboriginal women throughout Canada have been murdered or reported missing and St. Thomas More students are raising awareness by creating dolls. The "Faceless Doll" project has existed in Canada for more than ten years, and St. Thomas More students are joining this fight to spread awareness and stand in solidarity with families and friends affected by this issue.

The issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women has received a lot of attention in Canada lately but unfortunately for many of these women the attention has come too late. The Aboriginal peoples of Canada have a very beautiful culture but troubling history. They have been neglected and rejected by mainstream Canadian society for over 100 years. This has led to poverty, addictions, unemployment and other social ills that never seem to be dealt with.

It has recently come to the forefront that many Aboriginal women have gone missing or have been murdered. Depending on the source, the numbers range from about 300-1500 women, although this number might raise more awareness if these women were of a different race. It has been admitted recently that various levels of government and local police forces have not done enough to protect these women, many of whom remain faceless to Canadian society.

The Advocacy Team at St. Thomas More Collegiate in Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada has decided to use this issue to help raise awareness. The "Faceless Doll" project has been ongoing in various parts of Canada for about a decade. Our team will be cutting out approximately 900 felt dolls, each one representing one of the missing or murdered women. Each doll will remain faceless, a symbol of how they have remained in Canadian society. These dolls will be displayed together to give a dramatic effect. The Advocacy Team also hopes to use the classroom to highlight the issues of racism, poverty, marginalization and morality. We hope that the students at STMC will have a greater awareness of not only the issue of missing and murdered women but also our role in helping the Aboriginals be recognized in Canadian society.

**-Submission from Darren McCormick and the Advocacy Team at St. Thomas More Collegiate**



## Immigration Advocacy- Inspired by Action

After attending the November 2015 Brownsville, Texas immersion trip, students from Brother Rice High School in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan were shocked by what they had seen. After working directly with families at Sacred Heart Church and Outreach Center in McAllen, Texas, they were troubled by the treatment of families who were crossing the U.S.-Mexico border to flee violence and threats in their home countries. After families are processed at local Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE) Agency offices, they are often split up and in some cases, separated for long periods of time. After experiencing this firsthand, Rice students were inspired.



Brother Rice students went home and began to take action. Led by senior Lorenzo Spagnuolo, these students shared their story and the stories of those they met in Texas. They wrote a letter to advocate for better treatment and a change in Immigration Enforcement policies which they sent out to ICE and lawmakers in the state of Texas. Their hope—to make ICE aware of the injustices they are creating at the border, and to encourage them to bring change to the treatment of families there. Below is an excerpt from this letter, written by Lorenzo Spagnuolo '16.

"There is no good reason or justified need to separate immigrant families. A family unit, as I can say from personal experience in my own life, is always much stronger and more likely to attain success than a divided, torn apart family, principally when this family has just entered a new country that generally does not communicate in their native language. Great leaders and unions have also spoken about family unity including the UN and Pope Francis, advocating that it is one of the most important aspects of human life.

Today I write as a student and a youth whose eyes have been opened up to the other side of immigration; the side that is overlooked, never exposed in any type of media. I have been changed to the point of feeling called to come forward to speak up against this injustice, and with total respect I plead that the Government of Texas responsible for issuing these laws will make the necessary changes in legal policy. We, the undersigned, greatly appreciate your time and work, and hope change will be made to discontinue the separation and division of legal, immigrant families."

*Brother Rice Advocacy Coordinator Jay Louis-Prescott (standing far left) and Lorenzo Spagnuolo (seated far right) and his peers from ERCBNA schools at Sacred Heart Outreach Center in Texas.*



## ADVOCACY @ ALL HALLOWS

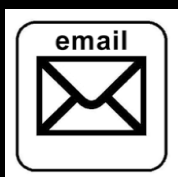
All Hallows High School, in the Bronx, NY, hosted its first annual walk for Alzheimer's Awareness on Saturday, March 12. Fifty-five students, family members and faculty members gathered on Saturday morning to learn about Alzheimer's Disease, to raise awareness and to raise funds for the cause. This is the third awareness walk they have undertaken this year (Breast Cancer Awareness in October and Prostate Cancer Awareness in November). All Hallows was able to raise over \$400.00 for Alzheimer's research. More importantly, two speakers from The Montefiore Hospital Mentoring in Medicine program spoke with the school community for about an hour about Alzheimer's. Mrs. Paula Rice and Mr. Carl Powell enlightened students about the causes of the disease, treatments, and how it affects all. These walks and programs have been sponsored by the Student Council, The Edmund Rice Society and the administration at All Hallows in an attempt to promote advocacy around these issues. All Hallows hopes that through charity and education they will continue to be advocates for those who suffer from these diseases.

**-Br. Jim Hamilton**



# CONTACT US

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



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## ADVOCACY LINKS



### 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.

<http://us1.campaign-archive2.com/home/?u=e4d66fd6201da4a3aeb2f5b00&id=bb28c3c8bc>



**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.

[http://edmundriceinternational.org/jpic/?page\\_id=79](http://edmundriceinternational.org/jpic/?page_id=79)



### Edmund Rice Latin America (LATAM):

The link below is to LATAM, the Edmund Rice Christian Brother's 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.

<http://edmundricelatinamerica.org/latam-newsletter/>



### 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>