



53 Immigrants, 53 Human Beings: Do We Care?

By Pablo Zavala, Ph.D.

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Call for Submissions: Racial Justice and Criminal Legal System Reform

The JSRI monthly e-newsletter features short written submissions (e.g. essays, reflections, opinion pieces, or poems) or videos from Loyola faculty and staff that address pressing/timely criminal legal system reform and/or racial justice topics. Please consider submitting an article or video for the Fall 2022 semester!

View the guidelines [here](#) and the form to submit [here](#).

Upcoming Events

Seeking Mentors in Baton Rouge

JSRI will be co-hosting with the Diocese of Baton Rouge six outreach events in the Baton Rouge area in late July and early August to recruit mentors for men and women recently released from prison. Contact Deacon Timothy Messenger at tim.messenger@diobr.org or Sue Weishar at sweishar@loyno.edu for more information.

The Box

A play about the inhumanity of solitary confinement, *The Box*, will be performed at the St. Charles Center for Faith and Action on Tuesday, July 19, at 6PM. Restorative Circles will be held after each performance with the cast, crew, audience members, and community partners to discuss the play in the light of local criminal justice issues.

Register for this event at <https://tinyurl.com/TheBoxPlay>

In June, 2022, 53 immigrants from Mexico and Central America [died](#) in San Antonio after being abandoned by smugglers in the sweltering heat of a tractor trailer with no water or air conditioning. They were desperate folks looking for work, to improve their lives, to find something better. Now 53 families are dealing with the unthinkable. This is one of the deadliest tragedies of its kind in recent U.S. history yet, unfortunately, it is not news nor is it surprising. In Chiapas, Mexico, in 2021, 55 migrants (mainly from Central America) died in a [semitrailer crash](#). Although the flow northward has increased lately, migrants dying on their journeys to the U.S has happened for decades. Why do they leave? According to a recent World Bank Group [report](#), the poverty rate in Mexico (defined as earning less than US \$1.90 per person a day) was a staggering 41.9% in 2020. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [reports](#) that Mexico also has one of the highest rates of inequality among developed countries, with the richest 1% owning about half of the country's wealth. There are vast economic disparities in Central American countries like Honduras and Guatemala as well, made even worse by the COVID pandemic.



Immediate responses to the San Antonio catastrophe by U.S. officials put the blame on narcotraffickers who have expanded their operations to include human smuggling. Yet stopping the traffickers (who tricked and abandoned the immigrants in San Antonio) would be tantamount to building walls; it is a band-aid solution to much larger root problems, ones in which the U.S. is a key participant. We must acknowledge that U.S. Pan-American interventionism throughout the 20th century and into the 21st has upended democratically-elected governments and undermined the region's economic and social development. In addition, the demand for illicit drugs in the U.S. is fueling the ruthless reign of drug cartels in northern Mexico.

What does this mean for us, as members of the New Orleans community? It means that we have a responsibility. While there is much to say on this topic, one of the main takeaways I'd like to underscore is our duty to foster empathy. Social justice implies caring for our fellow Earth citizens, and one way to do this is by passing laws in the U.S. that decriminalize immigration, allow a pathway to citizenship for those living undocumented, and treat those seeking refuge with dignity. We must mobilize and vote for those public officials that act in accordance with these values, which are themselves deeply embedded within both our Jesuit values and such sacred documents as the Declaration of Independence. Our immigrant sisters and brothers across the globe face similar plights, and we can and must do better.



As our number of enrolled students continues to rise, we need to make sure that each and every one has access to an exceptional educational experience. We can't do it without your help. [Give today!](#)

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