



THE ENCUESTRO PROJECT

Seeking the Grace of Encounter on the El Paso/Juarez Border

BY MARY BAUDOIN¹

From the front porch of Casa Encuentro in El Paso, Texas, you can see Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, about a mile away. The thin ribbon of water that separates these two cities and the countries of the United States and Mexico—the Rio Grande—is only discernible at turns in the river where sunlight reflects on the water. A large red X sculpture is visible to the southeast, but from the vantage point of Casa Encuentro, it is impossible to tell if the structure is in Mexico or the United States (it’s in Mexico). On the immaculate streets surrounding Casa Encuentro—where Spanish is heard more often than English, adobe style homes feature frescos of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and big American cars rev their motors to ascend the steep hills—one gets a sense of being in two worlds, two cultures, two realities at the same time and in the same place.

Casa Encuentro is the home of the Encuentro Project, a new collaborative and inter-congregational ministry involving the Jesuits of El Paso, the Marist Brothers of the United States and Mexico, the Hope Border Institute, and numerous other organizations on both sides of the border. The project, which is the vision of JSRI Associate Fr. Rafael Garcia, S.J., launched its ministry of encounter in December

2018, drawing its inspiration from the call of Pope Francis for a “culture of encounter” to address the fear and indifference that marginalizes migrants and refugees.

By offering programming and lodging for border immersion experiences to groups from high schools, universities, and parishes, the Encuentro Project aims to help participants gain a greater understanding of the complex history and present reality of migration in the El Paso—Ciudad Juarez border community and inspire participants to challenge the borders in their own communities that push immigrants to the margins.



Fr. Rafael Garcia, S.J. speaks to Queen's University students outside of Casa Encuentro.

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Sacred Heart religious education participants and students from Jesuit College Preparatory Dallas converse while on an Encuentro Project immersion trip.

Immersion programs, typically four to six days in length, are tailored to the needs and ages of participants. Each Encuentro Project experience typically includes:

- Direct work and encounter opportunities with asylum seekers, migrants, or refugees, either in a local emergency shelter or detention center, or through the education and social service programs offered by *El Sagrado Corazon*, the Jesuit parish in El Paso;
- Education in Catholic Social Teaching on migration;
- Discussion of the push and pull factors causing migration from Central America and Mexico to the United States;
- Site visits in El Paso and Las Cruces, and if desired, to organizations serving Ciudad Juarez residents across the US-Mexico border; and
- Evening reflections, prayer, and community living.

Fr. Garcia also serves as the Director of the Encuentro Project. Under his leadership the Project is deeply impacting participants' attitudes toward and understanding of the harsh realities faced by migrants at the southern border of the United States through experiences like the following:

- **Volunteering at a temporary shelter in El Paso for families seeking asylum after being released by Immigration and Customs Enforcement.** Lena Chapin, who led an Ignatian Solidarity Network sponsored trip for Jesuit parishes in January, expressed the feelings of many of the Encuentro participants who visited the shelter during their trip:

There weren't divisions just because they had passed through the wall or crossed a borderline. There was no "us" and "them." There were simply parents sharing understanding glances as children made messes out of cookies and juice. They were weary travelers appreciative of clean sheets and the promise of a good night sleep.

• **Visiting "the wall."**

Participants can reach through the huge steel slats separating the United States from Mexico and shake hands with residents from Ciudad Juarez, who themselves may be permanently separated from family members by the very same wall. In a recent excursion to the border wall by students from Jesuit College Preparatory School in Dallas, Texas, children from Ciudad Juarez passed their puppies to the Jesuit Prep students through the slats in the wall that they themselves are forbidden to pass through.



A student from Jesuit College Preparatory Dallas holds a puppy from a child in Ciudad Juarez.

- **Sharing Eucharist with men and women being held at ICE's El Paso immigrant detention center.**² Sue Weishar, Migration Specialist for JSRI, describes the significance of this encounter for her:

The harsh bright lights and the metal everything décor of the prison cafeteria were in stark contrast to Fr. Rafa's homily on the tender mercy and infinite love of God. While serving communion to the women, whose painful journeys to this sorrowful place I could only imagine, I experienced clearly and profoundly how the Eucharist—no matter border walls, prison bars, or other artificial barriers—united us as we became what we received: the Body of Christ.

Internationally renowned author and speaker Fr. Richard Rohr, OFM has observed, "when we receive and empathize with the face of the 'other' (especially the suffering face), it leads to transformation of our whole being. It creates a moral demand on our heart that is far more compelling than the Ten Commandments written on stone or paper."³ The Encuentro Project seeks to provide many more people the transformative experience of encounter. For additional information and to inquire about Encuentro Project border immersion trips, please contact Fr. Garcia at encuentroproject@gmail.org or 505-288-9552.



Lee Thielen, an Encuentro participant from Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in San Antonio, speaks with a little girl from Anapra through the fence that separates Mexico from the US.

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Catholic Social Thought and Integral Human Development

Pope Paul VI spelled out a vision of genuine and integral development in 1967.¹ Addressing divisions between developed and underdeveloped nations, Pope Paul promoted a demanding concept of integral development in two senses: the whole person and every person. Development must first engage each person in the work of self-fulfillment.

For all people, authentic development must move “from less human conditions to those which are more human”: from material deprivation, selfishness, and oppressive social structures to possession of necessities, knowledge, culture, respect for others’ dignity, cooperation, a desire for peace, and spiritual values [21].² Paul stressed development “at the service of humanity” [34], including not just sharing earth’s goods, industrialization, and productive work, but also literacy, family life, and pluralism. He urged respect for culture, the arts, intellectual life, and religion.

Paul challenged the injustice of unfettered free trade, insisting upon trade restrictions, development aid, and support for poorer nations. A just economic order must be built, not on principles of free market capitalism, but upon solidarity with poor, dialogue, universal charity, and structural changes that promote economic security for all within the context of a regulated market economy.

Development and Peace

The second part of Paul’s vision was that, “the complete development of the individual must be joined with that of the human race and must be accomplished by mutual effort” [43]. He recognized a new “moral fact”³—interdependence connecting every person to the problems of unequal distribution. He called it a “duty of solidarity” for individuals and nations [48]—and for advanced nations a serious obligation to assist developing ones.

This obligation included sharing wealth, ending the “scandalous and intolerable crime” of the arms race [53], debt relief, trade equity, eliminating nationalism and racism, and multilateral, international collaboration. “World unity ... should allow all peoples to become the artisans of their destiny” [65]. Excessive economic, social, and cultural inequalities among nations arouse conflicts and endanger peace, which can be built only upon justice achieved by constant effort [76]. The pope concluded that “development is the new name for peace” [76].

A Moral Framework

In 2009, Pope Benedict XVI furthered Pope Paul’s development work in *Charity in Truth*.⁴ The world had become more speedily and pervasively globalized, yet marked by the “scandal of glaring inequalities” [22]⁵ reflected in the reality of many underdevelopment nations in contrast to the “super-development” of some nations and even wealthy people within underdeveloped nations. “The risk for our time is that the *de facto* interdependence of people and nations is not matched by ethical interaction of consciences and minds that would give rise to truly human development” [9]. This theme of a needed moral framework for development runs throughout the encyclical.

Benedict maintained that “*authentic human development concerns the whole of the person in every single dimension*” [11]. Thus, “*progress of a merely economic and technological kind is insufficient*” [23]. True development requires: action by public authorities [24]; social security systems [25]; trade unionism [25]; labor protections in a mobile world economy [25]; the importance of culture [26]; ending hunger [27]; religious freedom vis-a-vis fundamentalism and atheism [29]; inter-disciplinary and multi-level analyses and responses [30], including the interaction of faith, theology, metaphysics, and science [31]; access to steady employment [32]; eliminating high tariffs on exports of poorer nations [33]; and ending all forms of colonialism [33].

Addressing inequality, Benedict wrote that appearances of being connected globally must be transformed into true communion and that development depends “*on a recognition that the human race is a single family ... not simply a group of subjects who happen to live side by side*” [53]. A globalized society “*makes us neighbors, but does not make us brothers*” [19].

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Pope Paul VI. (1967). *Populorum Progressio: The Development of Peoples*, 24.
- ² Numbers in brackets refer to the paragraph numbers in *Populorum Progressio*.
- ³ Pope John Paul II. (1989). *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis: On the Church’s Social Concern*, 9.
- ⁴ Pope Benedict XVI. (2009). *Caritas in Veritate: Charity in Truth*.
- ⁵ Numbers in brackets in the rest of the article refer to the paragraph number in *Caritas in Veritate*. Italics are in the original.



HATE CRIMES

By Whom, Against Whom, Why, and How Often

BY NIK MITCHELL, PH.D.

The legal distinction of a hate crime grew out of the endemic violence employed by Jim Crow governments and their defenders to halt the Civil Rights movement. Lynchings, bombings, shootings, beatings, and acts of intimidation were often the first resort for white supremacists against civil rights protestors of all races and genders. It was not uncommon for murderers, because of local sentiment sanctioning their actions, to be acquitted and released. For example, the first two trials of Byron De La Beckwith for the murder of Medgar Evers in Mississippi ended in hung juries despite overwhelming evidence because his actions were sanctioned enthusiastically by the white public. In fact, then-Governor Ross Barnett went so far as to interrupt the trial to shake De La Beckwith's hand while Medgar Evers' widow was testifying. The Civil Rights Act of 1968 defined what would later be called a "hate crime" as

Whoever, whether or not acting under color of law, by force or threat of force willfully injures, intimidates or interferes with, or attempts to injure, intimidate or interfere with any person because of his race, color, religion or national origin or because an individual was exercising their federally protected activities— using public accommodations, attending public schools or colleges, participating in a state provided program, applying for a job, serving on a jury, and traveling in any facility of interstate commerce or common carrier of transportation.¹

In 2009, the *Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act* expanded hate crimes protection to LGBTQ and disabled persons while removing the requirement that victims had to be participating in a federally protected activity.

According to the FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Program, in 2017 there were 7,175 hate crimes reported in the United States; 7,106 were single-bias incidents and 69 were multiple-bias incidents.² As a whole, there were 8,437 offenses. **Of the single bias incidents:**

- 58.1 percent were motivated by a race/ethnicity/ancestry bias.
- 22.0 percent were prompted by religious bias.
- 15.9 percent resulted from sexual-orientation bias.
- 1.7 percent were motivated by gender-identity bias.
- 1.6 percent were prompted by disability bias.
- 0.6 percent (46 incidents) were motivated by gender bias.

In regard to racial bias:

- 48.8 percent were motivated by anti-black or African American bias.
- 17.5 percent stemmed from anti-white bias.
- 10.9 percent were classified as anti-Hispanic or Latino bias.
- 5.8 percent were motivated by anti-American Indian or Alaska Native bias.

- 4.4 percent were a result of bias against groups of individuals consisting of more than one race (anti-multiple races, group).
- 3.1 percent resulted from anti-Asian bias.
- 2.6 percent were classified as anti-Arab bias.
- 0.4 percent (17 offenses) were motivated by bias of anti-Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.
- 6.5 percent were the result of an anti-Other Race/Ethnicity/Ancestry bias.

In regard to religious bias:

- 58.1 percent were anti-Jewish.
- 18.7 percent were anti-Islamic (Muslim).
- 4.5 percent were anti-Catholic.
- 3.2 percent were anti-multiple religions, group.
- 2.4 percent were anti-Protestant.
- 1.8 percent were anti-Other Christian.
- 1.4 percent were anti-Sikh.
- 1.4 percent were anti-Eastern Orthodox (Russian, Greek, Other).
- 0.9 percent (15 offenses) were anti-Mormon
- 0.9 percent (15 offenses) were anti-Hindu.
- 0.8 percent (13 offenses) were anti-Jehovah's Witness.
- 0.5 percent (9 offenses) was anti-Buddhist.
- 0.5 percent (8 offenses) were anti-Atheism/Agnosticism/etc.
- 4.9 percent were anti-other (unspecified) religion.

In regard to perpetrators, the people who commit hate crimes are diverse. According to the FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Program, in 2017 there were 6,370 known offenders. **The demographics were:**

- 50.7 percent were white.
- 21.3 percent were black or African American.
- 7.5 percent were groups made up of individuals of various races (group of multiple races).
- 0.8 percent (49 offenders) were American Indian or Alaska Native.
- 0.7 percent (42 offenders) were Asian.
- 3 offenders were Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.
- 19.1 percent were unknown.

Hate crimes take on a variety of forms. In 2017, there were 8,437 offenses. **In regard to category:**

- 27.6 percent were destruction/damage/vandalism
- 27.1 percent were intimidation.
- 20.7 percent were simple assault.
- 11.7 percent were aggravated assault.
- The remaining offenses included additional crimes against persons, property, and society.

Hate crimes are never about the individual victim. Of course, the crime often has an individual target; but, like the lynchings of the Jim Crow era, they are meant to send a message to the victim's community. Barbara Perry writes,

Hate crime is, in fact, an assault against all members of stigmatized and marginalized communities. Hate crime—often referred to as “ethno violence”—is much more than the act of mean-spirited bigots. It is embedded in the structural and cultural context within which groups interact (Young, 1990; Bowling, 1993; Kelly, Maghan, and Tennant, 1993). It does not occur in a social or cultural vacuum; rather, it is a socially situated, dynamic process, involving context and actors, structure, and agency.³

A hate crime is a form of terrorism meant to reinforce both the common orthodoxy that supports the current social structure and the orthopraxy that preserves it. The lynch mob and the race riot were the methods by which white supremacy maintained the social order during Jim Crow. “Bashing” is the method by which heteronormative and cisgender supremacy maintains the social order at the expense of LGBTQ individuals. Hate crime legislation protects the minority from the tyranny of a majority that seeks to marginalize them in the most garish manner—with physical violence. Hate crime legislation protects the dignity of the individual and it is socially just. It is incumbent upon us, living in post-Jim Crow America, to protect this signature achievement of the Civil Rights movement from both its detractors and that statistically tiny segment who stage fake hate crimes for their own personal gain.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ 18 U.S.C. § 245(b)(2).
- ² The Federal Bureau of Investigation defines “a multiple-bias incident” as an incident in which one or more offense types are motivated by two or more biases.
- ³ Perry, B. (2002). In the name of hate: Understanding hate crimes. New York: Routledge, 1.
- * All Hate Crime Data provided by the Federal Bureau of Investigation Uniform Crime Reporting retrieved from: <https://ucr.fbi.gov/hate-crime/2017/topic-pages/incidents-and-offenses>.



IT IS TIME TO RAISE THE WAGE!

Minimum wage increase makes economic and moral sense

BY DENNIS KALOB, PH.D.

The U.S. minimum wage was first implemented in 1938. It was \$.25 an hour. It peaked (in terms of its buying power) in 1968, when it was \$1.60. Since then, despite occasional increases passed by Congress and signed by the President, it has lost a considerable amount of its value. It was last raised a decade ago (2009). Today's national minimum wage, if the 1968 rate had kept up with inflation, would be nearly \$12 per hour.¹

The minimum wage over time has also not kept up with worker productivity. For the first 25+ years following the Second World War, worker compensation and productivity increased in tandem. Then, beginning in 1973, pay stagnated while productivity continued to rise significantly. From 1973 to 2017, productivity grew 6.2 times more than pay.² In other words, what workers get paid has not kept up with the value of what they have produced.

A major argument against raising the minimum wage is its supposed negative impact on employment levels. Traditional economic thinking posits, quite simply, that as you raise the cost of labor for business, businesses will cut employment. Most contemporary research, however, has challenged this traditional assumption.³

Higher wages mean more than just additional money in the pocket of individual workers. For businesses, higher wages typically mean happier, more productive workers and lower turnover. It also means more business. When poor folks or

members of the working class get more money, they are likely to spend most of that money in the local economy. Increases in minimum wage, then, have a significant multiplier effect.

The bottom line is that contemporary research on the minimum wage—on balance—shows little, if any, net adverse impact on employment levels. In some specific cases, research has shown that hikes in minimum wage have actually increased employment by stimulating spending and growing the economy.⁴

Just this past fall, hundreds of business owners and executives in Missouri signed on to a statement supporting Proposition B, which was a ballot initiative to raise the minimum wage from \$7.85 to \$12 by 2023 (it ended up passing with 62% of the vote). In a press release, Lew Prince of Missouri Businesses for a Fair Minimum Wage stated, "raising Missouri's minimum wage makes good economic sense...higher wages put spendable dollars into the hands of customers. Increasing the minimum wage is a great way to boost businesses and the economy because low-wage workers spend their much-needed raises."⁵

Even if raising the minimum wage had a negative impact on employment, that would not negate its benefits. Minimum wage increases help millions nationally, and there are many other policies we can pursue to raise employment levels, such as increased infrastructure spending to name just one option.

Another argument against raising the minimum wage is its potential to cause prices to rise. The truth is more complicated and it can depend on many factors, including the size of the increase. However, evidence suggests that overall inflation is, on balance, little affected by increases in the minimum wage.⁶

The fact of the matter is that *ideology* drives much of the resistance to minimum wage increases. There are those who simply do not believe that government should regulate wages, and many of these ideologues would like to see the minimum wage abolished. Their arguments about the minimum wage causing unemployment or inflation are disingenuous—little more than distractions to help them gain an upper-hand in their ideological fight to discredit government action to address human needs.

Despite this ideological resistance to minimum wage increases, the movement for higher wages—like the “Fight for 15”—has been gaining traction. Many cities and states are not waiting for the federal government and they are passing increases of their own, but this can be difficult, particularly for local communities.

About half of the states have “preemption laws,” which take away local control over issues like minimum wage. These laws have been promoted by ALEC, the American Legislative Exchange Council, an organization of conservative businesspeople and legislators working to spread their pro-market ideology across the states.⁷

The fight for a significantly higher minimum wage is an important social justice fight and one that is clearly supported by generations of Catholic social teaching.

As the U.S. Catholic Bishops state, “work has a special place in Catholic teaching. Work is more than just a job; it is a reflection of our human dignity and a way to contribute to the common good.” They continue, “[we] have long supported increases in the federal minimum wage to ensure that no full-time worker and their family lived in poverty. The federal minimum wage is not a living wage, and it is not a silver bullet to solve all economic problems, but it is one way to ensure workers are compensated fairly.”⁹

Tony Magliano in the *National Catholic Reporter* writes, “since Pope Leo XIII’s 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (‘On Capital and Labor’), popes have called for the right of all workers to receive wages sufficient to provide for their families.”¹⁰

Indeed, today’s minimum wage is not nearly enough to allow workers to provide for their families. A person working full-time (40 hours per week for 52 weeks per year) at the federal minimum wage makes an annual income of \$15,080, which is not enough to lift a family of two out of poverty.

To put things further in perspective, *two* full-time wage earners in a family each making \$10 per hour (\$2.75 above the federal minimum) would still seriously struggle to pay for a modest two-bedroom rental in the U.S.¹¹

It has been known for some time that low wages, poverty, job insecurity, and the stress that they create all contribute to poor health, including premature death. So, it is increasingly understood that raising the minimum wage is an important public health policy goal which could extend life expectancy in this country.¹²

Low income (and increasingly middle income) Americans are having trouble surviving here in the world’s richest economy. We need to embrace policies specifically designed to raise incomes. This includes raising, significantly, the minimum wage. It is the right thing to do because it promotes economic and human development, and is true to Catholic social teaching.

The economy must serve people, not the other way around.

--United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

U.S. Federal Minimum Wage: \$7.25/hour
 (\$2.13/hour for those who rely on tips)

There are currently **29 states** with a higher minimum wage

Gulf States Minimum Wage:

Alabama	\$7.25	Mississippi	\$7.25
Florida	\$8.46	Texas.....	\$7.25
Louisiana.....	\$7.25		

States with the highest minimum wage: Washington, Massachusetts, and California at \$12 (in CA it is currently \$11 for small businesses). Washington, D.C. will reach \$14 beginning 7/1/19. Six states – New York, California, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Illinois and Maryland – along with D.C. – have set a path to \$15.⁸

6363 St. Charles Avenue, Box 94
New Orleans, LA 70118-6143

(504) 864-7746
jsri@loyno.edu
www.loyno.edu/jsri

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ENCUENTRO - ENDNOTES —Continued from page 2

- Mary Baudouin is the Provincial Assistant for Social Ministries of the US Central and Southern Jesuit Province. She serves on the Encuentro Project Board of Directors and as a JSRI Associate.
- Through the Jesuit Refugee Service sponsored chaplaincy program, Fr. Garcia is one of two volunteer priests who celebrate Masses for hundreds of men and women every Friday at the El Paso ICE detention center.
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MINIMUM WAGE - ENDNOTES —Continued from page 7

- The source of this estimate is the Bureau of Labor Statistics Inflation Calculator. I measured inflation from the effective start date of the \$1.60 minimum wage, which was February 1968 and ended with December 2018. Based on this calculation, the inflation-adjusted peak minimum wage would be \$11.75.
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