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Compassion, Gratitude, Solidarity

President Obama's Executive Action on Immigration

by Sue Weishar, Ph.D.

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JSRI Upcoming Events

January 16-18

Ms. Baudouin and Fr. Kammer will co-lead the social justice retreat for 60 Jesuit Volunteers of the southern region at a retreat center in rural Texas.

January 28

Dr. Mikulich will meet with the Office of Black Catholics and Archdiocesan leaders to plan an anti-racism event for high school students.

January 30-31

Dr. Mikulich will co-facilitate an anti-racism workshop for Pax Christi USA.

February 5

Dr. Weishar and Ms. Baudouin will co-lead a dialogue for high school students on Catholic social thought and immigration on the Loyola campus.

JSRI Recent Activities

January 13

Mr. Bustamante and Fr. Kammer

On November 20, 2014, President Obama announced he would take Executive Action on immigration that includes several provisions, including a policy that will provide temporary relief from deportation and work authorization for approximately 3.9 million undocumented immigrants for up to three years. In his [speech](#) to the nation the President explained that although the U.S. Senate had passed a bi-partisan comprehensive immigration reform bill in June 2013, because the U.S. House of Representatives refused to even bring the bill up for a vote, he felt compelled to act to "help make our immigration system more fair and more just."

The parents of U.S. citizen children will be the main beneficiaries of this Executive Action. In a case-by-case review of their applications, parents must prove they have lived in the U.S. for five years, pass a stringent background check, come up to date on any back taxes, and pay a hefty fee to cover the costs of the program (\$465/application).[1]



Predictably, some have vociferously condemned the president's most recent actions on immigration. On December 3 [Louisiana joined 16 other states](#), most led by Republican governors, in filing a constitutional challenge to circumvent the new policies. However, [immigration legal scholars](#) contend that presidents have ample legal authority, based on the Executive Branch's prosecutorial discretion over the enforcement of federal law, and abundant historical precedent to take such actions. In fact, over the last 60 years, presidents have exercised discretion on how immigration laws are enforced a total of 39 times.

JSRI special report [Too Much for Too Many: What does it cost families to live in Louisiana?](#)

January 10

Dr. Sue Weishar chaired the Gillespie Memorial Community Breakfast at the First Unitarian Universalist Church of New Orleans. The guest speaker was Gary Clements, Executive Director of the Capital Post Conviction Project of Louisiana, who discussed the application of the death penalty in Louisiana.

January 9

Dr. Mikulich met with the Provost's Diversity Committee to develop ongoing collaboration for multiculturalism and anti-racism at Loyola University.

December 16

JSRI staff members spoke with 15 students from Santa Clara University about social justice issues in New Orleans post Hurricane Katrina.

December 15

Dr. Weishar attended a meeting of the Board of Directors of Seashore Mission, which serves immigrants and homeless people on the Mississippi Gulf Coast in Biloxi, MS.

December 11

Fr. Kammer began his service on the Mission Integration Committee of Christus Health in Dallas.

deportation of the undocumented children of immigrants who had qualified for legalization under the immigration reform bill he signed into law the prior year. No one spoke of impeaching President Reagan.

President George H.W. Bush signed an executive directive in 1990 to prevent the deportation of Chinese students. There was no talk of shutting down the government in retribution.

In 1998 the Clinton Administration suspended deportations of Central Americans in response to Hurricane Mitch. No one threatened to sue the president.

President Obama's executive action on immigration is a win-win for the American people. Good employers who pay their workers fair wages will less likely be undercut by unscrupulous employers who underpay and exploit their undocumented workers. If the undocumented immigrant is not already paying taxes, she will begin to do so. And most importantly, millions of families will no longer fear being torn apart by immigration raids.

Nationwide, [almost half](#) of the undocumented population of 11.2 million people are covered by President Obama's November 20th Executive Action and the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program he announced in June 2012 for long-time undocumented immigrants who entered the U.S. as children. In Louisiana, where many undocumented immigrants are relatively new arrivals-- having only resettled here after Hurricane Katrina to work in recovery and reconstruction-- just 38 percent of our estimated population of 55,000 undocumented immigrants are now eligible for relief from deportation and work authorization.

The call to solidarity and a disposition to gratitude are important components of the Ignatian worldview. It is undeniable that immigrant workers, many undocumented, played an essential role in rebuilding our homes and businesses after Hurricane Katrina. As a sign of solidarity and gratitude, let's welcome this long overdue leadership on immigration.

[1] In addition to providing temporary relief from deportation (deferred action) to the parents of U.S. citizen children, the President's Executive Action will also provide protection from deportation to the parents of children with Legal Permanent Resident status. The Obama administration will also expand eligibility for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) to all undocumented immigrants who entered the U.S. as children younger than 16 years-old before January 1, 2010. (Originally DACA was limited to those who had entered the U.S. before June 15, 2007, and were under 31 years of age on June 15, 2012.) DHS will revise removal priorities, focusing their limited resources on persons convicted of felonies or significant misdemeanors, unauthorized entrants apprehended at the border, and non-criminals who failed to abide by final orders of removal issued after January 1, 2014. See <http://www.dhs.gov/immigration-action>.

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