

Welcome the Stranger Without Caveats or Conditions

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As a longtime advocate for just immigration reform, I have been following and amplifying the call for a clean Dream Act. When President Trump ended the DACA program (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals), 800,000 young people became vulnerable to deportation. I believe we are called to be people of justice and mercy, recognizing the violence and crisis driving the global movement of people, but I also believe the Dreamers benefit our communities and that we need them to help us make a more just and beautiful world. I want them to stay for multiple reasons. Congress must pass a legislative solution very soon for that to be possible. It is an urgent matter, which is why I recently shared an update on this issue from a young Dreamer on social media using the hashtag, #HereToStay.

A social media “friend” of mine, someone I have not spoken to in years but with whom I went to high school, commented on the hashtag writing, “yes, they can stay if they immigrate legally like my grandparents did from Sweden.” Swedish flag emojis and exclamation marks followed. People of privilege often make the assumption that what worked for them or their family must be possible for everyone. However, our immigration policy and history is full of racism, exclusion and economic preference, all written into law.

The policies, economics and history driving different groups of people to our country are complex and interconnected. But as people of faith, the just and right response is simple and clear: welcome the stranger and care for the immigrant. It is a clarion call throughout scripture. There are no caveats made, no conditions that if the stranger is only a first-generation arrival, then we don’t have to welcome or care for

them; or if they are an immigrant with brown or black skin they can be treated differently than immigrants of European descent. Our call is simple, recognize humanity; welcome and care for humanity.

Advent is right around the corner and with it the reminder that Jesus was born a refugee fleeing state violence. King Herod, feeling threatened and angry that another “king” was being born, ordered all children two years old and under killed. Who could inflict such massive violence and suffering in the name of protecting their own power? Was the messaging spun that this was for the safety and wellbeing of all? And yet, this story unfolds here and now too. The threat of mass deportation by our politicians amounts to more than just words. It has been accompanied by a surge in ICE raids and propaganda painting all immigrants as threats to the nation’s economy and security.

We must lift our voices. We must be lights shining against this darkness. All of our humanity is at stake.

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