



PVNC Speakers' Forum 2010-2011  
Immigrants and Refugees:  
“Strangers in Our Gates”

An Invitation to Build Awareness and  
Move to Action

# The Speakers' Forum: A Tradition of Faith Across the Curriculum

- Over the past twenty five years, our fellow curriculum chair and colleague, Gary O'Dwyer of St. Mary SS, led the board in a series of national and international speakers' forums, meant to foster a gospel-centered, counter-cultural perspective of social issues. Last year's speakers forum on Immigrants and Refugees followed in the same vein and was the plan of our six high-schools through our respective curriculum chairs of Canadian and World Studies including:

School	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3
Holy Cross: Trevor Digby	Tues, Feb 22	Tues, Apr. 5	Tues, May 3
Holy Trinity: Bridget McCann-Girard	Mon, Feb 28	Thurs, Apr 7	Mon, May 9
St. Mary: Jason Roberts	Wed, Feb 23	Wed, Apr 6	Mon, May 2
St. Peter: Bernadette Peters	Thurs, Feb 24	Tues, Apr 12	Wed, May 4
St. Stephen: Shawn Carmichael	Tues, Mar 1	Mon, Apr 4	Thurs, May 5
St. Thomas: Henry Kater	Fri, Feb 25	Mon, Apr 11	Fri, May 6

- We also appreciate the administrative support of our respective secondary principals and Mr. Dale Godin, Superintendent of Schools.

# 1. Rationale

- **As Catholics we are called to be our neighbour's keeper.** The Canadian Council of Bishops has consistently argued that Catholic educators have a mandate to inform their students about important issues of social justice and to provide students with opportunities to engage in activities that lead to action.
- Thus, we furthered our tradition of the Speakers' Forum by focusing on the reality of immigrants and refugees in Canada. Contemporary society has seen the issue of immigrants and refugees come to the forefront of political and social discourse. Often, our students' understanding of the issues associated with immigrants and refugees is framed by a media and culture that does not welcome the outsider. Conversely, welcoming the stranger is what being Christ-centered is all about.

# History is Now

- If we read the signs of the times, we can see that history is repeating itself. The experience of Irish Catholics who came to North America in the 1830s is quite similar to that of the Tamils who have recently arrived. Both have had to deal with smug nativist bigotry. (Nativism: ethnocentric beliefs relating to immigration and nationalism.)

- The Irish Catholics of the 1830s



- The Tamil Boat People of 2010



# Fenians and Tamils

- Consider the following perspective. In the 1830s, “In response to news from the United States that thousands of *“unenlightened and bigoted Romanists”* might slip northward across the border, the Globe newspaper predicted **“a great calamity, dangerous to our civil and religious liberty, a calamity which every true patriot, Protestant as well as Roman Catholic, should endeavour, by all means in his power, to avert.”** (Scott See, American Review of Canadian Studies, Vol. 30, 2000) Moreover, fear of Irish Fenian terrorism gave British Canadians something to rally against.
- Today, popular opinion is still not on the side of the poor immigrant. Concerns over, **“queue jumping and terrorism”**, dominate the nativist stand, not humanitarian compassion. An August Leger poll found that out of a total of 1500 surveyed, over half believe Tamil refugees should be sent home. “Asked which statement best described their own opinion on what should be done with the ship, which may include members of the banned Tamil Tiger terrorist group, 60% agreed with the statement: **“They should be turned away - the boat should be escorted back to Sri Lanka by the Canadian Navy.”** (The Toronto Sun, Sunday, October 31, 2010)

# The Catholic Position: Jesus

- So, as Catholic Educators, we are posed with the troublesome question, “Where are our loyalties when strangers arrive at our gates?”
- The teaching of Jesus, the child refugee himself, and the social teaching of the church are quite clear – solidarity with the immigrant, welcoming to the stranger.
- Let’s take the story of the Good Samaritan. In short, this stranger to nativist Jewish culture, was himself, held with contempt by mainstream society, and yet offered kindness to the abused and alien. “But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him.”

# The Catholic Position: Church Teaching

- Pope John XXIII, the father of Vatican II, weighed in as well. “Every human being has the right to freedom of movement and of residence with the confines of his own state. When there are just reasons in favour of it, he must be permitted to emigrate to other countries and to take up residence there. The fact that he is a citizen of a particular state does not deprive him of membership in the human family, nor the citizenship in that universal society, the common, worldwide fellowship of women and men.” Pacem in Terris (Peace on Earth) **John XXIII, 1963**
- Most recently, the US Bishops expressed their desire for Catholics to take a stand. “Recommit as a church to work so that every person’s dignity is respected, the immigrant is welcomed as a brother or sister and all humanity forms a united family which knows how to appreciate with discernment the different cultures which comprise it. We call upon all people of good will, but Catholics especially to welcome the newcomers in their neighbourhoods and schools, in their places of work and worship with heartfelt hospitality, openness and eagerness.” Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity, **Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops:2001**

# 2. Speakers: Round One

- **Presentation number 1: Focus of discussion - *Framing the Issue of Immigrants and Refugees in Canada*.** This presentation provided a brief overview of Canada's immigration history and Canadian government policy. Moreover, it focused on social attitudes towards newcomers. The presentation identified and addressed some of the myths associated with the immigrant experience.
- **Time frame: February 22-March 1, 2011**
- **Keynote Address: *Framing the Issue of Immigrants and Refugees in Canada*.** A keynote address by Mr. Gary O'Dwyer and six subsequent workshops helped students understand a variety of critical issues.

Workshops took place in P3 and repeated in P4. These included:

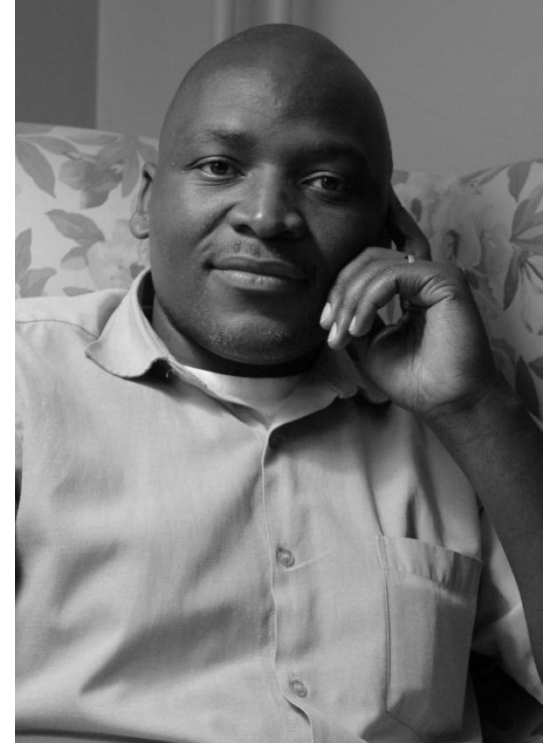
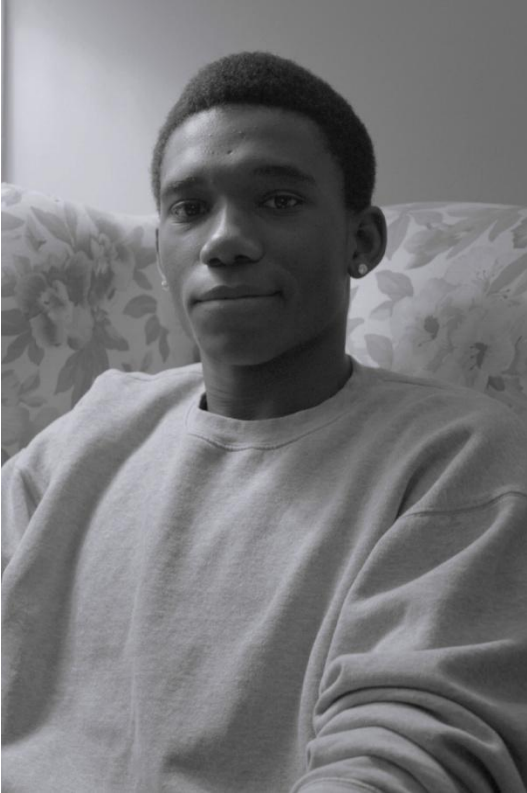
1. "We are here, and we are people": Migrant Farm Workers in Canada - Rachel Currie (New Canadians Centre)
2. The Problems Associated with Professional Accreditation of Newcomers to Canada – Michael VanDerHerberg (New Canadians Centre)
3. Human Trafficking : The Sex Trade in Canada – Karen Basciano (Kawartha Sexual Assault Centre)
4. Live in Caregiver Programme: The Domestic Experience – Sherry Sulit
5. Racial Profiling and Immigration - Chanda Kaziya and Elizabeth Thippawong (Peterborough Community Race relations Committee)
6. Arriving to Canada: The First Year for a Political Refugee – Sr. Ruth Hennessey (Casa Maria House for Refugees)



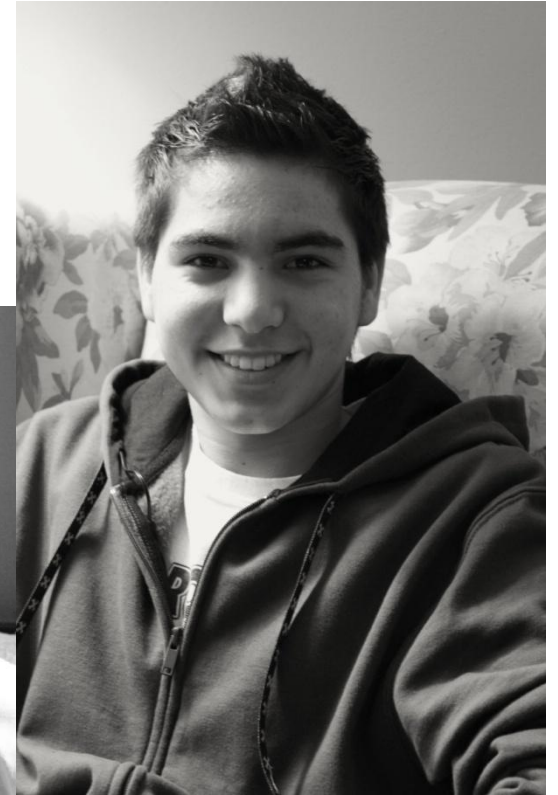
# Speakers: Round Two

- **Presentation number 2: Focus of discussion - *The Immigrant Experience* Maryam Monsef and John Paul Nyereka**
- **Small workshops of immigrants and refugees will tell their stories firsthand.**
  1. Sevdige Fazliu - Kosovo
  2. Rizwana Ayaz – Pakistan
  3. Cecilia Li – China
  4. Plato Mendoza and son Justo - Philippines
  5. Fisal Mohammadzada -Afghanistan
  6. Ligia Rivas – Honduras
  7. Chanda Kaziya – Zambia
  8. Natalia Castano – Colombia
  9. Munashe Masawi- Zimbabwe
  10. Magda Payne and mother, Marianna Stanczyk - Poland
- **Time Frame: April 4 – April 12, 2011**

# Our New Canadians



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# Speakers: Round Three

- **Presentation number 3: Focus of discussion - *A Call to Action!***
- **Keynote Panel: Casa Maria House for Refugees, New Canadians Centre,**
- Members of these organizations presented in the morning the work they do with immigrants and refugees and invited our students to become involved. Subsequently, they set up booths in the main foyer during lunch.
- **Time Frame: Catholic Education Week, May 2 - May 9, 2011**

# Conclusion: Education to Transform the World into a Just and Welcoming Place

- Thanks for being open to our ideas.
- Is there something you can do to make Canada a more inclusive society?