

the Common Path

in this issue >>>

- ◆ U Visas Help Undocumented Crime Victims
- ◆ [International Leaders Talk Conflict Resolution with MARCC](#)
- ◆ [Western & Southern Continues Suit Against Anna Louise Inn](#)

metro cincinnati interfaith youth >>>

MCIY Gears Up for an Exciting Year

MCIY is kicking off another exciting year of service activities and interfaith learning opportunities. The youth group follows the school year calendar, so the first event is the annual MCIY Orientation on Tuesday, September 13th from 6-8:30pm at First United Church of Christ in College Hill.



Kristin Rudder, MCIY

Joining us at Orientation will be our new MCIY Programming Volunteer, Kristin Rudder. Kristin is a 7th grade teacher who just finished her MA in Literature at Miami University.

She's taught history, theater, and language arts to grades six through college, and she's very excited about MCIY's goals of interfaith dialogue and service, and we are thrilled to have her on board! After orientation, we will meet at least once per month for themed discussions at a coffee shop, activities and volunteer projects. Upcoming events: Interfaith Youth "Coffee Hour" on September 27th and a Sukkot Celebration on October 11th.

immigration >>>

Helping Undocumented Crime Victims Come Forward

U Visas Offer Protection, But in Short Supply

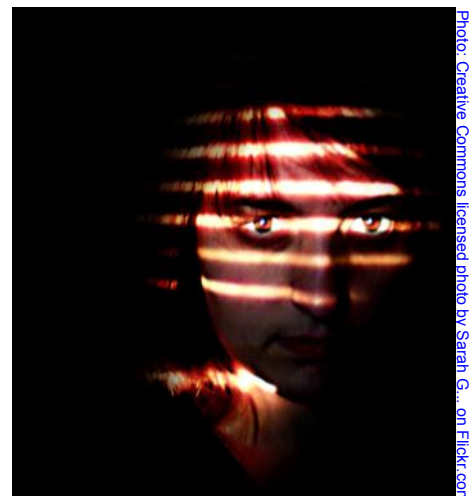
Crime cuts across all boundaries of class, race, ethnicity and immigration status. In most cases, if a person witnesses or becomes a victim of a crime, no matter how small, their instinct is to seek help by calling the police. But what if the person is an immigrant who lacks documents or has overstayed their visa? Regardless of the severity of the crime against them, calling

to report crime, for whatever reason, public safety erodes for all of us. When witnessed drug deals and incidents of domestic violence go unreported, perpetrators are able to remain out in the community. As long as their victims remain beyond the pale of police protection, criminals can continue

When people are afraid to report crime, public safety erodes for all of us.

the police might present too great a risk. Even in terrifying circumstances, the threat of sudden deportation could be an even worse prospect than suffering the injustice in silence.

On one level this dilemma is a humanitarian issue: those who have been victimized by crime are further victimized by keeping justice at arm's reach. But further, this catch-22 ends up hurting more than just the undocumented crime victims themselves. When people are afraid



breaking the law with impunity.

These are among the reasons Congress passed the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act in 2000. For the first time, the law laid out protections for crime victims and witnesses to criminal activity, regardless of their immigration status. Among other provisions, the act created

(continued on p.2)

A More Peaceful World: Comparing Notes on Conflict

Visiting International Leaders Dialogue with MARCC on Peace and Conflict

On July 27th, MARCC hosted the fourth group of international leaders through the Greater Cincinnati World Affairs Council. Like the groups before, the visitors were participants in the International Visitor Leadership Program sponsored through the U.S. State Department. Participants in the program come from all over the world and hold various leadership positions in their home countries. The broad purpose of the program is to bring together leaders from diverse

backgrounds for cultural and educational exchange in groups. Participants benefit from a wider perspective and are then able to approach the needs of their home countries and constituencies with fresh insight. Each group is organized around a more narrowly defined purpose according to the interests of the leaders chosen. This time the program was concerned with conflict resolution. Participants were very interested in MARCC's structure as a model of a heterogeneous interfaith coalition working on social and political concerns. They found the model both surprising and inspiring. Several participants

shared their own experiences with interfaith conflicts in their home countries. Participants held a variety of leadership positions concerned with peacekeeping, such as a peace negotiator working with Christian and Muslim groups in the Philippines and a Police Chief in Kosovo. Other participants were from Barbados, Japan and Portugal. MARCC was represented by Executive Director Margaret A. Fox, Executive Board President Pat Coyle and Past-President Adam Hall.

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Immigrant Crime Victims (cont. from p.1)

two new visa classifications: the T Visa and the U visa. The goal was to allow people to legally reside and work in the U.S. for up to four years if they are being, have been or are likely to be helpful to law enforcement in a criminal investigation or prosecution. The witness or victim's children, spouse, and in the case of minors, parents are also eligible to apply for the visas. U visas apply in a wide variety of cases of crimes, whereas T Visas are targeted specifically for protecting victims who have been victims of human trafficking and encouraging them to testify against their assailants. The visas may be extended and can open the door to legal permanent status (green card), which is a potential path to citizenship.

Although the U and T Visas represent a step forward in protecting victims of crimes and relations between immigrants and law enforcement, the impact is limited. In the original legislation Congress capped the number of U Visas at 10,000 per year; a number that no doubt repre-

sents only a fraction of undocumented victims of or witnesses to crimes. The new visa classifications went into effect in late 2007, and application rates have grown steadily every year since. By 2010, the limit for approved U Visa requests was reached by July; 2011 applications are similarly outpacing the limited supply. The effect of the limita-

MARCC presented a public statement in support of U Visas at a press conference in City Hall.

tion is even more serious considering the often limited familiarity with U and T Visas, even among the law enforcement community and immigrants themselves. That is, although the number of applicants for U and T visas is far higher than the number available, it is still likely that it represents only a slice of the cases that legitimately meet the criteria for protection under the visas.

Recent efforts made by Legal Aid Society of Southwestern Ohio and MARCC have put the issue of the visas' underuse on the radar of Cincinnati City Council. The low quota issue aside, this is a case where there are laws in place to protect people, but in

order for them to be effective there must be a push from the bottom to advocate for their use. Vice Mayor Roxanne Qualls recently presented a resolution to City Council to express Council's support of the use of the U Visa classification to the Hamilton County Sheriff's Department and other law enforcement agencies in the area. The Cincinnati Police Department has already put in place procedures for responding to U Visa certification requests.

Working in tandem with Legal Aid, YWCA and Vice Mayor Qualls, MARCC presented a public statement in support of the measure to media at a press conference in City Hall prior to the Public Safety Committee meeting on September 7th. City Council held session the next day, and the resolution was presented before the full Council. The measure passed by a vote of 5 in favor, 3 opposed and 1 abstention.

Judge Allows Western & Southern to Proceed

The motion to dismiss a lawsuit against the Anna Louise Inn is shot down as controversy grows

A ruling handed down on September 8th cleared the way for Western & Southern to move forward with their lawsuit aimed at uprooting the Anna Louise Inn from its historic Lytle Park location. The motion was an effort to stop the insurance company from further delaying the Inn's planned \$13 million renovation project.

The renovations are funded in part by tax credits that were awarded to the Inn earlier this year, and which must be used within a certain period of time or they will expire. Cincinnati Union Bethel, which oversees the Inn, has stated that if it wasn't for Western & Southern's lawsuit the project would already be well underway. With the recent ruling, however, the project remains stalled indefinitely as the legal battle goes on.

MARCC first became involved in the issue in January with a letter of support presented to City Council. Although the Council was convinced, Western & Southern remained undeterred and MARCC has continued to monitor the situation closely.

As the case continues to be drawn out, more people are starting to take notice. Before the recent hearing MARCC helped organize an effort to collect support letters from Judicatories and others active in faith communities. MARCC joined other concerned groups and individuals at a prayer vigil on the courthouse steps prior to the hearing on August 10th. Vice Mayor Roxanne Qualls attended the vigil and spoke in support of the Inn. Local news stations covered the vigil and reported on the case. Two weeks later, the Inn hosted an ice cream social on the lawn that drew many supporters and leaders in the community. Attendees were invited on tours of the Inn led by the residents themselves.

But perhaps most strikingly, public support came in the form of a letter-to-the-editor from a Western & Southern employee, published July 24th in the

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Enquirer. In a move that can only be described as "bold," Rob Bohall wrote the letter to announce his resignation from the company, a decision he says was significantly driven by his moral convictions surrounding Western & Southern's tactics towards the Anna Louise Inn. "I'm uncomfortable with the knowledge that my labor is supporting what I've come to see as an egregious injustice," writes Bohall.

"I'm uncomfortable with the knowledge that my labor is supporting what I've come to see as an egregious injustice,"

- Rob Bohall, former Western & Southern employee in a public statement of resignation.

The letter prompted a flood of response letters and comments that has further stirred the ongoing debate about the conflict.

The suit will resume again with a pre-trial conference set for September 20th before Judge Nadel.

Are You a MARCC Delegate?

Each November MARCC delegates from each of the 16 Judicatories meet at a Fall Planning Conference to caucus and vote on two key issues to work on in the coming year. If you are a Delegate, don't miss this important annual event!

Save the Date!

2011 Fall Planning Conference >>>

- Evening of Tuesday, November 15th
- Location TBA

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Archdiocese of Cincinnati

Association of Unity Churches

Baptist Ministers Conference
of Cincinnati and Vicinity

Cincinnati Conference
(Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America)

Cincinnati Islamic Center

Disciples of Christ – SW Ohio

Episcopal Diocese of
Southern Ohio

Interdenominational
Ministerial Alliance

JCRC of The Jewish Federation

Miami Association
(American Baptists)

Ohio River Valley District
(United Methodist Church)

Presbytery of Cincinnati

Religious Society of Friends

Southwest Ohio-Northeast
Kentucky Division
(The Salvation Army)

Unitarian Universalist Council
of Greater Cincinnati

United Church of Christ

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Executive Director
Sarah G. Geiger
Office Administrator

marcc is...

A coalition of Judicatories.

By JUDICATORIES, we mean the local, decision-making bodies of national denominations.

Each of these Judicatories is a valid, autonomous body.

MARCC is a Coalition, a way of enabling these 16 Jewish, Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Muslim, and Protestant Judicatories to work together on a few, agreed-upon, local social Concerns to make life better for people in metropolitan Cincinnati.

In the language of scripture, the religious community can work on social problems in three ways:

- prophetic (holding up the absolute standards of God, OR
- priestly (caring for each individual child of God), OR
- kingly (or politically, choosing the best possible solution).

MARCC has been a self-conscious decision by Cincinnati Judicatories to work together in a kingly or political style.

Cincinnati Judicatories have learned over the years that to be effective together, Judicatories need to work

- on a few concerns
- that are capable of local resolution,
- where there is a moral, religious concern, and
- where we can do our own research & fact-finding.
- We make major decisions by consensus of the member Judicatories. (If any one Judicatory says "No," the coalition of Judicatories does not work on it together.)
- We work on the concerns that are most important, urgent, and do able by the religious community.
- We try to work with decision makers when we can, and give them the credit.
- We try to leave the civic discourse at least a little better than we found it.

Through MARCC, Judicatories make decisions

- every year, at Judicatories' Shared Planning Conference, about which 2 local social concerns to work on in the coming year,
- every month, at Delegates Council (by a consensus of Judicatories) about major involvements in these 2 Concerns, and
- every week, at Executive Board (1 representative from each Judicatory), about how, when, and with whom to work.

MARCC is a continuing effort by Cincinnati Judicatories, under God

**"...to forgo the luxury of separate ways
when a common path can be found..."**