



Where Justice and Truth Meet

December 2022

“After this I shall pour out my spirit on all humanity. Your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your old people shall dream dreams, and your young people see visions” (Joel 3:2)

Approaching the Christmas holiday celebrating the birth of a sacred child, we focus this month's newsletter on several justice issues that particularly affect children and youth. We also find hope in the many young people around the world who are leading the way in the struggle for justice.

CHILD IMMIGRANTS AND FAMILY SEPARATION:

As Mary and Joseph fled to Egypt to escape violence, many parents come to our southern border to escape violence in their home country. Regretfully, children can end up being separated from their parents. Court documents say that more than 5,000 children were separated from their parents under a zero-tolerance policy. Five years later, about 180 children have yet to be reunited with parents. Some immigrant legal teams believe the number to be much higher, close to 1,000.



[130,000 immigrant children](#) entered the U.S. government's shelter system in 2022, an all-time high. Children as young as 7-years-old are transferred from Custom and Border Patrol custody to Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) who is charged with housing unaccompanied children until they are 18 or can be released to a sponsoring parent or other close relative in the U.S. About 80% of Central American unaccompanied children have relatives in the U.S. who can sponsor them. Unaccompanied children have been given a humanitarian exemption from [Title 42](#) over the last two years, leading some parents to send their children across the border alone, hoping they will be reunited with extended family in the U.S.

What can you do? Become a volunteer child advocate or consider supporting efforts at family reunification by groups like the Young Center who is

working to [reunite Aziz](#) with the only surviving member of this family.

FORCED ASSIMILATION OF NATIVE AMERICAN CHILDREN:

The [Indian Child Welfare Act](#), a law that protects Native children from forced removal from their families, tribes, and culture, and preserves tribal sovereignty is at risk of being overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court. Congress passed ICWA in 1978 to address the nationwide crisis of state child welfare agencies tearing Native children from their families and placing them in non-Native homes, in an attempt to force Native children to assimilate



and adopt white cultural norms. Before ICWA, public and private agencies were removing 25 to 35 percent of Native American/Alaska Native children from their homes, and 85 percent of those children were placed in non-Native households.

The case, [Brackeen v. Haaland](#), challenges the constitutionality of ICWA. If the Supreme Court rules ICWA unconstitutional, it could have devastating consequences for Native children, families and tribes while simultaneously putting the existence of tribes in jeopardy.

UNREST IN PERU: The first victim of the demonstrations in Peru was David Atequipa Quispe, he was 15 years old. Since the [political unrest in Peru](#) erupted, 21 people lost their life, all of them in the poorest regions of the country. Seven of them were not even 19 years old. Students from universities and schools have been asking for justice and for the configuration of a Constituent Assembly, a structure that will ensure socio-political integration and healthy democracy. These young generations in Peru actively envision just peace.



GUN SAFETY: Etched on our hearts are the names Columbine, Parkland, Sandy Hook, Uvalde and



Each day 12 children die from gun violence in America. Another 32 are shot and injured.

many other schools where gun violence impacted our youth. We once thought Columbine was an anomaly. It wasn't. Students kept getting killed and maimed by gun fire. Since Sandy Hook, there have been 189 school shootings.

These shootings eventually unleashed a "slow moving tsunami of determination" among parents such as Shannon Watts who started [Everytown for Gun Safety](#) and Gabrielle Giffords, former Representative from Arizona who herself was a victim of gun violence. Their efforts and the efforts of many others resulted in the first [gun safety act](#) passed in Congress in 15 years. May these efforts continue.

But what about the countless big city neighborhoods where countless youth of color have been killed or maimed by gun violence. Their names are etched in the hearts of their parents and friends, but are they etched on our hearts? It is no surprise to anyone that gun violence is the leading cause of death of youth of color. Chicago has witnessed 364 youth shot and 54 killed so far this year. How do we get these guns off the streets? How do we help youth understand that violence is not the answer? Is it only when this violence spreads to wealthy areas that we begin to notice or care? We need to support community groups such as [Save Our Streets](#) or [Violence Interrupters](#) who work to end this cycle of violence.



END HATE SPEECH: Schools are places where children should be learning to work cooperatively, to appreciate diversity and cultural tradition of others. If this is true why are we seeing swastikas and racial epithets scrawled on the bathroom walls in elementary schools? Children learn this from peers, parents, social media. What are schools doing to counteract this spread of hatred within their own walls? Will ignoring diversity end hate? Will ignoring cultural traditions end misunderstandings?

Are schools afraid to teach diversity because of what parents might say. Exposure to diversity, for children, is most likely to occur in schools. Schools should not fear to teach. Our youth should be educated to live in a pluralistic society, to learn to recognize misinformation and to learn to understand those who differ from them. For more information visit [Learning for Justice](#).



ECO-ANXIETY: Fueled by climate disruption, [Eco-Anxiety](#) or Eco-Grief has become a large mental health crisis among children and young people around the planet. 67% of Americans aged 18 to 23 are somewhat to very concerned about the impact of climate change on their mental health. They are [worried about the planet](#), their families and homes, and about their own future.

SIGNS OF HOPE: YOUNG PEOPLE CALL FOR JUSTICE

Prompted by adult abdication of their responsibility to lead on issues of social justice, young people have emerged as champions of social justice. They



have been at the forefront of racial justice/equity through [Black Lives Matter](#), led calls for [sensible gun laws](#), and championed the charge to [end gender-based violence](#).

In response to the sense of eco-anxiety and betrayal felt by many young people, concerned that the generations before them are not protecting their future, many youths have become leaders on issues of climate action.

