



BOSTON COLLEGE

CHRIJ

Center for  
Human Rights  
and  
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Photo courtesy of Media Technology Services



## Center hosts discussion of interdisciplinary book exploring immigrant 'Illegality'

On April 30, Cecilia Menjívar, Arizona State University Professor of Sociology, and Center Associate Director Daniel Kanstroom, Boston College Professor of Law came together to present and discuss the new book they co-edited, *Constructing Immigrant 'Illegality': Critiques, Experiences, and Responses*, accompanied by BC Professor of Social Work Westy Egmont. Menjívar opened by discussing her academic focus on the ways that legal status affects the daily lives of immigrants from Mexico and Central America, as well as the ways that legal status represents a form of social stratification that disadvantages immigrants.



She then proceeded to explain the book's interdisciplinary perspective, detailing the importance of understanding the process of constructing illegality from a variety of different academic fields. She highlighted in particular the book's focus on the history of how immigrant illegality was constructed as a label, how it has transformed to match contemporary political concerns, how it has been debated politically, and the impact that it has on the lives of individual immigrants living in illegality. Finally, Menjívar reiterated the importance of understanding that undocumented immigrants do not just live a prescribed narrative of illegality, but rather that they respond to their particular conditions and experiences.

Next, Kanstroom discussed the very recent history of the term "illegal immigrant," as well as the social context that gave birth to the current immigration situation that is the subject of

such contentious debate. As he explained, migration between Mexico and the United States existed primarily as an issue of simple labor mobility until the end of World War II. Prior to the sudden shift at the end of World War II, business interests in the United States welcomed the flow of plentiful, relatively low-cost seasonal labor that characterized Mexican immigration. Following the war, however, immigration from Mexico and Central America took on a peculiar meaning found in almost no other legal arena. In this new context, illegality is constructed as an integral part of a person's identity, rather than an incidental quality of a particular action, marking a fundamental change in conception of the person.

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### ABOUT US

The Center for Human Rights and International Justice addresses the increasingly interdisciplinary needs of human rights work through academic programs, applied research, and the interaction of scholars with practitioners. The Center's Director is David Hollenbach, S.J., University Chair in Human Rights and International Justice. Associate Directors are Law School professor Daniel Kanstroom and Lynch School of Education professor of Community-Cultural Psychology M. Brinton Lykes. Mr. Timothy Karcz is the Assistant Director.

CHRIJ Review Contributors: Daniel Quick and Eleanor Vorys

## Center Notes & Events

Selected stories and events the Center hosted in collaboration with other Boston College departments and groups in the Spring 2015 semester.

### Notes:

- » The Center welcomes its new undergraduate interns this summer, **Daniel Quick A&S '16**, and **Eleanor Vorys A&S '16**.
- » The Center helped sponsor a delegation from BC's chapter of Amnesty International to attend the Amnesty International USA Annual General Meeting held in Brooklyn, NY on March 21–22. Attendees attended presentations on pressing topics such as the terror industry, the crises in the Central African Republic, Nigeria, and Syria, the disappeared college students in Guerrero, Mexico, the intersection between gender and human rights, post-Ferguson goals, and war crimes committed against Palestinians. They also participated in a special “Action Alley” focused on abolition of the death penalty and examining the impact of race in biasing decisions to apply the death penalty or not.



### Events:

- » This past semester Center held a Spring Colloquium Series in conjunction with its Interdisciplinary Seminar in Human Rights and International Justice. Under the guidance of Affiliated Faculty member Professor Katie Young of the BC Law School, the Center hosted eight presentations and discussions on various issues of human rights, with a focus on legal aspects in domestic and international law.
- » On March 10-11, 2015, the Center co-sponsored a conference at BC entitled “Legally Blind: Law, Ethics, and the Third Reich.” The interdisciplinary conference focused on Nazi Law as it impacts upon civil law, race, medicine, and religion.
- » On April 9, 2015, the Center co-sponsored a Boisi Center for Religion and American Public Life event. Shaun Casey of the US State Department Office of Faith-Based Community Initiatives joined us to discuss “Religion, Peacebuilding and U.S. Foreign Policy.”
- » On May 12, 2015, the Center welcomed Professor Aviva Chomsky of UMass-Boston for a discussion of her most recent book, *Undocumented: How Immigration Became Illegal*. The book takes a critical look at how the words “illegal” and “undocumented” have been applied to persons with ends to exploit and exclude them, and examines what it means to be undocumented in legal, social, economic, and historical contexts.



A discussion panel takes place during the “Legally Blind” conference held in March.

## Screening the documentary *Abrazos* with filmmaker Luis Argueta

Photo courtesy of Luis Argueta



A screening of the poignant film *Abrazos*, presented by its acclaimed filmmaker Luis Argueta, was held January 28 to encourage dialogue surrounding the issue of family separation caused by immigration to the United States, the limited mobility of persons due to lack of legal status, and the desire of some immigrant families to reconnect their children with a cultural heritage largely left behind in the parents' countries of origin. *Abrazos* focuses on the hope of family reunification through the mobility of the children of undocumented immigrants. The documentary follows a group of 14 Guatemalan-American children from Minnesota that travels to meet their grandparents and other family members who have remained in Guatemala.

As the narrative opens, the themes of longing and distance arise. The stories of parents and grandparents remaining in San Marcos, Guatemala are paralleled with their children's stories although they are

now adults with children of their own in the US. Up to twenty years has passed since some of the parents of the children left Guatemala, gone from their original home, and gone from their family's embrace. In Guatemala, the parents relate the stories of their children's emigration and the bittersweet feelings of loss and success that have followed. One parent lamented, "They didn't leave because they wanted to; they did because they had to," after explaining that the land was not producing enough to feed, educate, house, and sustain an entire family. The Guatemalan immigrants now relocated in the US all echo the same message to their families. It is too dangerous to leave the United States without legal immigration status, for a safe return to their families in the US is not ensured, and the fear of a permanent separation from their US-born children keeps them from visiting their parents.

In Worthington, Minnesota, the project *Abuelos y Nietos Juntos* was started in a church to facilitate visits of these Guatemalan-American children to their grandparents in Guatemala. The documentary portrays the trip of children born in the US and their ability to connect their families despite borders and deliver hugs on behalf of their separated families. This documentary faces the challenge of immigration, heritage, and community building. It examines both the sending and the receiving countries' narratives and the limited international mobility that one has after making the decision to enter the United States as an undocumented immigrant. The screening of this important documentary enabled a larger audience to understand the difficult conversations that occur within families in such situations and to hear personal accounts of those affected by US immigration policy, one that too often maintains these harsh and permanent separations of family members.

### Immigrant Illegality *continued from page 1*

Introducing his response to the book, Professor Westy Egmont began by arguing that respect for the rule of law requires a willingness to admit that the law can be wrong, and to recognize ways that it can be improved. Praising the book's intersectional and broadly representative academic perspective, Egmont implored the audience to more closely analyze who benefits from the current system of criminalization, incarceration, and deportation of immigrants. He also presented the book as an important step in understanding the social dynamics that exacerbate the issues of poverty and powerlessness that already play such an important role in the experience of immigration. Finally, he closed his response with a reminder that as a result of the prevalence of anti-immigrant sentiment and rhetoric of immigrant criminality, countries that have previously viewed immigration as a sort of humanitarian aid have instead shifted toward an American model of understanding immigration as a pressing criminal issue.

All three professors then participated in a question and answer session in which they discussed the manner in which the uncertainty of unstable legal status works to limit the options and opportunities of undocumented migrant workers. They also addressed the parallels between the mass detention and deportation of undocumented immigrants and the mass incarceration of African-American men in the US; the unstable existence created by long-term "temporary" protected status; and the profound importance of finding real-world policy and practical applications of social science research such as this.



## Center certificate recipient working to engage college students on humanitarian issues with Catholic Relief Services

Danielle Roberts recalls being immediately attracted to the Center's graduate Certificate in Human Rights and International Justice the moment her advisor in BC's School of Theology and Ministry (STM) mentioned it to her. Citing her academic interests in the intersection of theology and justice, she further explains, "(The certificate) was a way to more intentionally keep global realities at the forefront of my academic pursuits and to further specify my degree in a way that would open more doors to the work I wanted to do." Danielle graduated in 2012 with a master's degree in Theological Studies from the STM, and now works for Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in Baltimore.



Roberts

For CRS, Danielle currently serves as Program Officer for University Engagement. In the position, she helps to manage the CRS Student Ambassador program. The program aims to grow and develop the national network of CRS Student Ambassadors at college campuses around the country; to deepen students' formation in Catholic social teaching and Integral Human Development; and to equip them to be leaders who are prepared to mobilize their campus communities to pray and learn about global justice and solidarity as well as to take impact-oriented action. A CRS Student Ambassador chapter was started last year at BC, coordinated through BC's Volunteer and Service Learning Center (VSLC).

Danielle praised the advocacy-oriented nature of the Ambassadors program, and signaled that a new area of focus for the program nationwide this coming academic year would be training and advocacy around the just-released encyclical from Pope Francis on care for the environment, *Laudato Si'*. Even more opportune for interested BC students is that BC will host the regional Ambassador training this coming fall.

Asked about the value of the Center certificate program to her work and career, she remarked, "I learned how to think critically about international development, to approach human rights and international justice in an interdisciplinary way, and to connect these themes to the rich tradition of Catholic social teaching. This has allowed me to better reach out to students who are also interested in living out their faith in light of global justice issues and to better understand the work of CRS itself, which aligns so well with all that I learned at BC."

The Center's certificate program offers interdisciplinary training in human rights and international justice issues, and is open to any student enrolled in BC's graduate and professional schools. It has been attained by dozens of students from a variety of academic disciplines since 2007.

BC students desiring to learn more about the Center's certificate program may contact Center Assistant Director Timothy Karcz at [timothy.karcz@bc.edu](mailto:timothy.karcz@bc.edu). BC undergraduate students interested in the CRS Student Ambassadors program at BC can contact the VSLC at [volunteer@bc.edu](mailto:volunteer@bc.edu).

## Summer Research Grant Highlight

Our Summer 2014 Summer Research Grantees presented their research on campus on May 14, as part of the grant requirements. Here is a sampling of the research from one of our grantees:

**Peter Cajka, Ph.D. candidate in History, Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences**

*The Conscience and Human Rights: The Vietnam War Origins of the 'Conscience Clause,' 1967-1984*

Cajka's paper analyzes the significance of conscience claims, known as "selective conscience objection" (SCO), made by Catholic and mainline Protestants in the US seeking to exempt themselves from compulsory military service in the Vietnam War. This concept relied on Just War theory and, in the case of the Vietnam War, Christian leaders' deferred to individual's consciences the interpretation the justness of the cause of the war, and their decision to serve in the war. Through their interpretation of God's will, individuals were to make the decision based on conscience. In his paper, Cajka highlights how this phenomenon marked the beginning of a trend of increasingly more common conscience claims in years following the war, as SCO was extrapolated into other areas where conscience was seen as conflicting with what the law required of a person. Cajka demonstrates the transferrable nature of the SCO argument and traces its historical increasing presence in discourse relating to both theology and politics. With his research, Cajka analyzes how conscience claims were then employed in some instances to support a health care professional's refusal to assist in abortion procedures, and then in others to support a woman's decision to have an abortion. Ultimately, Cajka's paper posits that conscience claims arose, for many Christian thinkers, as a tool to fill a perceived void when they determined that civil law and lawmakers were no longer capable of setting moral agendas for people.

## 2015 CHRIJ Certificate Recipients

On May 14, the Center hosted its year-end event in which it presented the Center's graduate certificate in Human Rights and International Justice to five recipients. This year the certificate was earned by the following students. Congratulations to them all.



**John Christopher Bauer**

MASTER OF THEOLOGICAL STUDIES,  
SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY, SCHOOL OF  
THEOLOGY AND MINISTRY



**Joseph Mben, S.J.**

PH.D. CANDIDATE, THEOLOGICAL ETHICS,  
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE MORRISSEY  
COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES



**Julia Campagna**

MASTER OF DIVINITY, SCHOOL OF  
THEOLOGY AND MINISTRY



**Rocío Sánchez Ares**

PH.D. CANDIDATE, CURRICULUM AND  
INSTRUCTION, LYNCH SCHOOL OF  
EDUCATION



**Stacey Gallodoro**

MASTER OF DIVINITY, SCHOOL OF  
THEOLOGY AND MINISTRY

## Summer 2015 Research Grant Awards

The Center once again awarded summer research grants to both undergraduate and graduate students at Boston College this year. Here are this summer's awardees and their research topics:

**Ricardo Alberto**

INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, A&S '16

*'Boom Bye Bye': Jamaica's Ongoing Struggle with Homophobia*

**Austin Bodetti**

ISLAMIC CIVILIZATIONS AND SOCIETIES, A&S '18

*What Peace Means for the Oppressed: Documenting the Human Rights of Malays in Southern Thailand*

**Max Blaisdell**

INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, A&S '16

*Right to Community: Experiences of Alienation in Young Immigrant Populations in France*

**Yoonhye "Linda" Kim**

INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, A&S '17

*Anti-Discrimination Law, LGBTQ Rights and Jesuit Spirituality: Comparative Study in U.S.*

This year marked the third annual award of the Kelsey Rennebohm Memorial Fellowship, to honor the memory of Kelsey Rennebohm, a student in the Lynch School of Education who passed away suddenly in 2012. To reflect Kelsey's passions, the award goes to a student whose proposed research or activist scholarship is at the interface of psychology, mental health, gender, social justice, and human rights. Here is this year's recipient and topic of study:

**Rose Miola**

MASTER'S IN THEOLOGICAL STUDIES, STM '15 AND MASTER'S OF SOCIAL WORK, SSW '17

*Remembering with Music: An Exploration for Maintaining Historical Memory in El Salvador*

## Book Discussion: *Immigration Outside the Law*

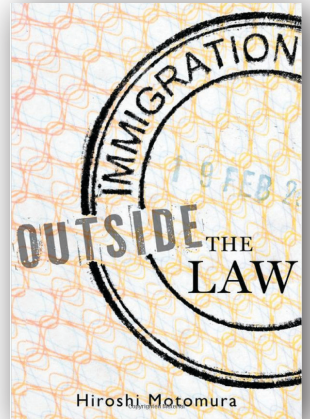
On March 26, the Center welcomed UCLA Professor of Law Hiroshi Motomura for a discussion of his latest book, *Immigration Outside the Law*. Motomura began his presentation by describing his overarching purpose in writing the book. As he explained, “This book, at a larger level, has two purposes; one is creating a framework for understanding why people disagree with each other [about immigration], and the other purpose of it is to actually suggest some changes.” In this way, Motomura underlines the importance of a shared understanding; in order to reach productive discussion, both sides need to understand what exactly they are arguing and why they disagree. To that end, Motomura referenced his use of the phrase “unauthorized migrants,” in order to begin the conversation around immigration from a more neutral starting point rather than other more charged, ideological terms.

Motomura then proceeded to call into question some of the most fundamental assumptions surrounding the contemporary immigration debate. Why, for example, does a so-called nation of immigrants founded on the ideal of equality sustain national borders? By drawing borderlines, he argues, we immediately create inequality between those on the inside and those on the outside. He then continued with an analysis of the history of how immigrants have been received in the United States. Where previously, immigration law treated immigrants with the assumption that they would eventually become US citizens, and allowed them voting rights and access to homestead applications, contemporary understandings require a much longer and more involved process before prospective citizens begin to access some of the legal rights of citizenship. Motomura then put forth the potential value of returning to such a system in which those who declare their intention to become citizens begin to be treated as citizens, rather than subjecting them to measures such as detention and other restrictive measures from the very beginning.

Motomura continued by detailing peculiarities in the history of immigration regulation in the US, especially in the shift from explicit legal exclusion of certain groups, to the “illegalization” of large quantities of migrants, but typically ignoring them from an enforcement perspective and allowing them to live in the US unmolested. He explained that the real question of immigration then becomes not the illegality of the immigrant, but the application of discretion by immigration officials. Motomura most clearly illustrated this problem by discussing how even for migrants with legal permanent resident status, a sufficiently motivated and thorough immigration official could surely find sufficient cause to revoke their status, if only as a consequence of the legal discretion officials wield.

Finally, Motomura explained that the story of immigration in the United States has revolved primarily around the rise and fall in demand for labor in this country. Chinese exclusion, he argued, stemmed from the economic problem presented by displaced Chinese laborers after completion of railroads they helped construct in the same way that contemporary immigration legislation has sought to respond to the need for low-wage domestic labor and seasonal agricultural labor. To illustrate the problems created by this conflict between labor needs and immigration laws, Motomura highlighted the contradiction of focusing on the illegality of individual immigrants rather than on the laws broken by the people that hire them.

Motomura concluded his discussion by responding to audience questions about how immigration to the US impacts the countries from which people emigrate, the connection between immigration, the machinery of deportation, and the prison-industrial complex; the impact of electoral politics on immigration reform; and the legal gray areas created by the current immigration regime.



## Center Director Hollenbach to hold Ethics and American History Chair at Library of Congress this Fall

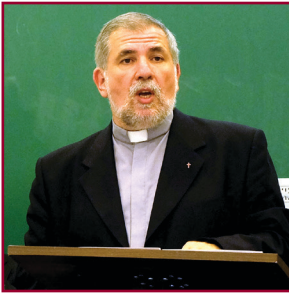


Center Director David Hollenbach, S.J., will hold the Cary and Ann Maguire Chair in Ethics and American History at the Library of Congress John W. Kluge Center in Washington, D.C. during the Fall 2015 semester. The purpose of the Chair position is to provide a senior scholar with resources to explore the history of America with special attention to the ethical dimensions of domestic economic, political, and social policies.

The position will allow access to the Library of Congress' vast collections as Hollenbach works to finish his book in progress tentatively titled *Humanity in Crisis: Religious and Ethical Responses to War and Disaster*. The book will explore the role of faith-based communities in responding to humanitarian crises, address ethical issues that arise for humanitarian agents working in crisis situations, and discuss how ethical values can help shape humanitarian policy.

As part of the chair position, Hollenbach will deliver a major lecture on his research near the end of his appointment at the end of the year in Washington.

## Accompaniment During Conflict: The Mission of Jesuit Refugee Service in Syria and the Middle East



Zammit

On April 13, the Center welcomed Fr. Nawras Sammour, S.J., Country Director, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Syria and Fr. Michael Zammit, S.J., Regional Director, JRS Middle East to share their experiences working to aid and support refugee communities in the ongoing crisis in Syria. Zammit began by presenting some of the more striking statistics of the humanitarian crisis in Syria and the surrounding region. As Zammit explained, as of 2014, nearly 4 million Syrians had fled the country into Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt. An additional 7.6 million Syrians had been internally displaced—forced by conflict or loss of home or work to relocate within Syrian borders. He described the current challenges facing Syria as “a crisis that the world has not seen since... the Second World War.”

Zammit then shifted focus onto the specific measures taken by JRS workers in the area, highlighting the holistic approach characteristic of JRS service. He clarified that JRS work typically does not revolve around emergency aid, but because JRS was one of the first NGOs on the ground in the aftermath of the Syrian Civil War, they took on this integral role in addition to the more typical JRS work of community building and psychosocial support. Throughout Zammit’s description of the JRS’s programs of emergency and non-emergency supply distribution, education, healthcare, and community activity, he reiterated the importance of recognizing and upholding the human dignity of the people receiving aid. As an example, he noted that although most international food distribution programs do a very good job of ensuring that food packages provide adequate nutritional and caloric value, they often falter in terms of providing food for which a particular group has an affinity. Without the proper consciousness of local culture and norms, he remarked, these food distribution programs fail to fully address the needs of the people they seek to aid.

Fr. Sammour offered perspective as a Syrian Christian regarding the ways that the Syrian Christian community, and Syrians in general, have experienced dehumanization and persecution throughout the crisis, as well as the most effective ways of moving forward. He described the profound suffering that comes from being unable to articulate a response to the challenges that the Syrian people face on a daily basis. Sammour then underlined the necessity of education as a tool for advancing toward a rebuilt, reunified, and strengthened future for the Syrian people. Both Sammour and Zammit mentioned the deep significance of creating cooperative, side-by-side relationships between people of all backgrounds in Syria, because that is the only path toward healing and unity as a nation. Sammour closed his remarks by expressing his overarching perspective on the goal of JRS work in Syria, saying, “Together, we hope to stand fast in order to find meaning in this crisis. That’s a Christian duty—to find meaning, to give meaning, and to express our gratitude to all those who have shown us their solidarity and support, which is precisely what has allowed us to avoid falling into despair.”

## Center AD Brinton Lykes Takes Part in Historic Peace Walk in the Koreas

On May 24, Center Associate Director Brinton Lykes was part of a remarkable gathering of female peace activists who traveled to the Koreas to cross the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) separating the two countries. Along with 29 other women from 15 countries, including author and Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient Gloria Steinem, Lykes sought to raise awareness of the unresolved conflict between the Koreas. The conflict remains technically unresolved as a negotiated treaty to end the conflict was never signed; only a ceasefire was implemented in 1953 to stop the fighting between the two countries.

The group sought to illuminate the role US military action and policy has played in shaping the region and the tensions that still exist. They met with other women from both Korean countries and participated in events aimed at peace and reconciliation in the region and raising awareness of the lack of a true peace accord between the nations. They also sought to remind the world of the family separations that occurred when the country divided, advocating for the reunification of the peninsula.

In describing the backdrop for the current situation in the region, Lykes cited statistics that the US together with over a dozen other countries were responsible for destroying nearly 80% of what is today North Korea, killing more than four million people, most of whom were civilians. She explained how these historical events tie to the present situation in the Koreas, and spurred her interest to become involved with the delegation. “Those who survived that conflict continue to live in a divided country under the threat of more violence. As an anti-racist feminist activist scholar who has been engaged in human rights and peacemaking efforts in Latin America, Northern Ireland and South Africa, I decided to join Women Cross DMZ to extend my previous work in solidarity with Korea and to build on my work in other regions of the world.”

For more on the Women Cross DMZ group, see their website at [www.womencrossdmz.org](http://www.womencrossdmz.org).



Lykes (far right) and other women from Women Cross DMZ

Photo courtesy of Jodie Evans





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## Upcoming Summer/Fall 2015 Events



**WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 19, 2015**

***The Ruse of Reconciliation?  
Discursive Contours, Impossibilities  
and Modes of Resistance in the  
South African 'Reconciliation  
Project'***

With Gillian Eagle; Garth Stevens; Brett Bowman; and Kevin Whitehead, all from the School of Human & Community Development, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.

12:00 PM • Boston College, Campion Hall,  
Room 139



**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2015**

***WomenCrossDMZ: A Report Back  
from a Historic Walk in the Koreas  
for Peace and Reunification***

With Center Associate Director Brinton Lykes and BC Professor Emeritus of Psychology and Center Affiliated Faculty Member Ramsay Liem

12:00 PM • Boston College, Campion Hall,  
Room 139

Visit [BC.EDU/HUMANRIGHTS](http://BC.EDU/HUMANRIGHTS) for the latest information and events or to view videos of past events.



Join the CHRIJ listserv to receive news and reminders of CHRIJ events via email.  
Go to [BC.EDU/HUMANRIGHTS/MAILINGLIST](http://BC.EDU/HUMANRIGHTS/MAILINGLIST) or scan the code on the left  
and simply enter your email address to join.