

Character and . . .

Courageous Compassion

Volume 2 / 2016

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The faculty essays presented here emerge from a semester-long process of reading and writing together in an environment of critique and review. Nevertheless, this invited journal of essays represents the authors' views and not necessarily the views of the Wendt Center for Character Education or the University of Dubuque.

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Courageous Compassion and the Other

Annalee R. Ward

A scared young African man seeking asylum in the United States shows up at our University to begin studying. The community discovers he's had to flee for his life from a political conflict, leaving behind his wife and children. He's from a country on the U.S. watch list for State Sponsors of Terrorism. As an immigrant, is he a threat or is this an opportunity for the community to help?

How we frame the issues of the world shapes our responses. Do we lash out in fear or reach out in compassion? When we give in to fears of difference, of change, of the unknown, or of being vulnerable, our reactions may be the classic fight or flee. Certainly, stepping forward into our fears does not come naturally. Yet, acting despite fear demonstrates courage. Looking away from our self-interest and toward the interests of others, even others who are different from us or outside our level of familiarity, calls for a heart of compassion.

Taken together, courage *and* compassion empower us to bear the uncomfortable, take risks, and make sacrifices for others. In other words, courageous compassion is action—action that might even bring suffering on ourselves—but action that expresses empathy in meaningful ways.

Global Crisis

Human beings—mothers, fathers, children—are suffering all over the world, forced to leave their homes, their cultures, their way of life. Hope is in short supply.

This issue of *Character and . . .* wrestles with how to define courageous compassion, apply it to the issue of immigration and reflect on how best to live with what one perceives as the Other. As the Wendt Character Initiative’s Research Team debated ways to think about these topics, current cultural conversations swirled around the global immigration crisis. Presidential candidates postured and pontificated on best policies. Racial and ethnic tensions intensified. If one had images of a peace-filled, safe world, surely the events and discussions of these times shattered those notions.

Wars rage in many places around the world. The U.N. estimates that over 65 million people have been displaced in recent years by these conflicts (Sengupta). What that has meant, according to the United Nations *International Migration Report of 2015*, is that “the number of international migrants worldwide has continued to grow

By the Numbers

- **244 million** migrants worldwide.¹
- **98,400** migrant children worldwide traveling without a parent or guardian.²
- 43 million Syrians are refugees.³
- 6.6 million Syrians, half of them children, are displaced within their own country.³
- **42.4 million** immigrants in the United States.⁴
- In October and November of 2015, **10,588** migrant children entered the U.S. from Mexico without a parent or guardian.⁵

rapidly over the past fifteen years reaching 244 million in 2015, up from 222 million in 2010 and 173 million in 2000” (1). The United States allows only a small number of foreign-born people to enter, remain, and become citizens. Migration has become a global issue.

Recent statistics from the Migration Policy Institute, the U.S. Census Bureau, and the Department of Homeland Security show that “the U.S. immigrant population stood at more than 42.4 million, or 13.3 percent, of the total U.S. population of 318.9 million in 2014. . . . Between 2013 and 2014, the foreign-born population increased by 1 million, or 2.5 percent” (Zong and Batalova).

Otherizing

How to respond to global crises that overwhelm our sensibilities, challenges us. A common response to human crises is, in *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof’s words, to “otherize” people. He writes: “There’s a profound human tendency, rooted in evolutionary biology, to “otherize” people who don’t belong to our race, our ethnic group, our religion. That’s particularly true when we’re scared.” We look to blame someone else. We fear difference. We want what is familiar.

Solutions to global crises are not easily created. What we hope to do in this issue is begin by acknowledging the problems and how overwhelming they can be. That doesn’t mean we retreat to inertia. This journal issue takes a step forward toward a solution by digging into what a courageously compassionate response to the Other might look like. Through both general reflection and case study, the authors struggle to respond with integrity, allowing deeply held beliefs to shape horizons of action. The concepts of courage and compassion together imply action.

In “Outsiders and Insiders: Courageous Compassion and the Immigration Crisis,” Jonathan Barz names our fears when it comes to immigration. He challenges us to reform our immigration policies with compassion, “compassion which may require genuine courage in order to resist the current climate of fear.” Using the young-adult novel, *The Outsiders*, Barz helps us imagine the courage and self-sacrifice that action entails—and it does take imagination. Moral imagination. The kind that engenders empathy. For when we put ourselves in another’s shoes, we gain perspective, and hopefully, softer hearts.

Ours is not the first generation to experience otherizing. Roger Ebertz’s “Courageous Compassion in a Time of Terror” engages the power of story to remind us of earlier generations’ responses to people of another ethnicity or race. Ebertz invites us on a cross-country trip through the eyes of two key players in a drama that unfolded in the 1940s. Through the intersecting stories of Herbert Inouye, a young Japanese-American man, and Ralph L. Carr, Governor of Colorado, we discover a model of leadership that exemplifies courageous compassion.

Kristof writes of those times: “It’s difficult to conceive now that a 1944 poll found that 13 percent of Americans favored “killing all Japanese,” and that the head of a United States government commission in 1945 urged “the extermination of the Japanese in toto.” Fear sets a stage for extreme reactions.

A Call to Action

Basic issues of life and death come into stark and painful focus in Christine Darr’s “Courageous Compassion: Cultivating Virtue in a Complicated World.” When slapped in the face with the reality of a child’s death due to the desperate conditions of the refugees seeking to find a safe home, Christine Darr asks, what does a compassionate response look like? What can or should we do? She unpacks the nature of compassion as a virtue and challenges

us to exercise it courageously in pursuit of human flourishing that begins in the personal, but also engages systems and institutions.

Sociologist Robert Wuthnow reminds us that as we live into a life informed by grace, courageous compassion has power to combat anti-human forces of modernity.

The life of compassion also symbolizes our fears of the impersonality of modern life and the corruption and exploitation that can occur in a bureaucratized society. It provides a way of expressing our concerns about materialism and its corrosive effects on human life. In this sense, compassion stands for something larger even than itself. It reminds us of our humanity and therefore of the deeper qualities that are essential to our common human existence. (303-304)

Focusing on our common humanity is a good place to begin countering fears and ignorance of others. Bonne Sue Lewis' article, "Courageous Compassion and Interfaith Friendship," illustrates a community willing to try a different way. Living out her commitment to courageous compassion, Lewis reflects on the power to change Otherness to friendship through a model of communal dialogue. The organization, Children of Abraham, is a community that celebrates and interrogates their differences, all the while seeking to build friendships. With a call for hospitality and genuine love, Lewis reminds us that true community is possible because of God's love for us.

Finally Ripley Smith provides an insightful response essay in "Courageous Compassion: A Response to Barz, Darr, Lewis, and Ebertz." Smith reminds us of that while an emphasis on our identity as created in God's image, provides a key starting point. But to genuinely engage difference, we must move from sympathy to empathy. Empathy has power to change not only relationships, but our own understandings and attitudes.

This Journal Project

In the Wendt Center for Character Education at the University of Dubuque, we promote excellent moral character and ask questions about how character is shaped by or shapes current topics. Hence, this journal *Character and . . .* is an effort to connect with a wide range of audiences in order to provoke discussion and reflection that leads to positive action.

The journal emerges from a communal process of regular team meetings, common readings, and much discussion. Faculty from diverse departments bring their experiences and strengths together to challenge and encourage each other. The journey that brought us to these final essays was both exciting and tedious. Insights. Connections. These energized and moved us forward. But, as is true of many writing projects, it also takes disciplined work to mine the jewels from the rocks. Our hope is that you, our readers, find worth in this work and accept the challenge to express courageous compassion.

Conclusion

The current climate of American hubris is at odds with what this journal is calling for—courageous compassion. And genuine compassion calls for action. Not out of a sense of false pride, but out of a humility that leads us to wisdom, because “humility is freedom from the need to prove you are superior all the time” (Brooks 8). As we work to face our fears with courage, we may discover the richness of new relationships, the joy of friendship, and the peace our world so longs for. True, we may not solve all the problems. We will encounter challenges, even setbacks. But armed with courageous compassion, we live purposeful lives in service of God and others.

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Notes

¹ See *International Migration Report*.

² See Sengupta.

³ See Jonson et al.

⁴ See Zong and Batalova.

⁵ See “I’m Alone.”

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Outsiders and Insiders: Courageous Compassion and the Immigration Crisis

Jonathan M. Barz

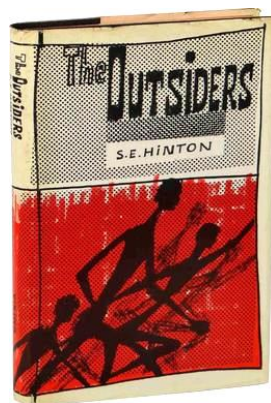
Abstract

*Drawing on an example from the popular young adult novel *The Outsiders*, this article provides a working definition of “courageous compassion” and argues that this character quality must shape our responses to the current immigration crisis. In order to respond compassionately to immigrants, we must first overcome the fears that surround this issue. Additionally, to cultivate compassion for immigrants, we must imaginatively enter their lives through the power of story and recognize them as fundamentally like us, created in the image of God and thus inherently valuable.*

Ponyboy Curtis, a young “Greaser” growing up on the wrong side of the tracks in Tulsa, Oklahoma, fills his days with petty crime and gang fights. A seemingly harmless conflict between the Greasers and the Socs (the Socials, kids from the elite part of town) escalates until Johnny Cade, Ponyboy’s constant companion, kills a Soc with a switchblade to save his friend’s life. The two boys flee to the countryside and hide out in a deserted church. Returning to the church one afternoon after making a run

for supplies, Johnny and Ponyboy find the old building in flames and soon discover that there are several young children trapped inside. Without a moment's hesitation, the two Greasers dash into the burning building, risking their lives to save the children. Seconds after handing the last child to safety, Ponyboy leaps out the window but Johnny is hit by a falling timber from the collapsing church, breaking his back and leaving him badly burned. Johnny is rushed to the hospital, where he tragically dies a few days later.

Many readers will recognize this episode from S. E. Hinton's novel *The Outsiders*, one I have taught frequently over the past 30 years to both high school and college students. In classroom discussion, students often ponder whether they would have the strength of character to do what Ponyboy and Johnny did. Although Ponyboy insists he and Johnny just did what any decent person would have done, my students are unanimous in celebrating their "courageous compassion." "Could I have done the same thing?" students almost always wonder—but in my experience no one questions whether they *should* have done it. Every student with whom I have discussed *The Outsiders* would agree that the world would be a better place if more of us were like Ponyboy and Johnny, willing to risk our own well-being for the good of others, especially the weak and defenseless.



From The Outsiders by S.E. Hinton.

Our responses to Ponyboy and Johnny's act of self-sacrifice can help us define and investigate the concept of courageous compassion. Understanding and embracing courageous compassion, then, can enable us to reframe our responses to the immigration crisis and our attitudes toward refugees—issues which are currently such a prominent part of American public

policy debate and presidential campaign rhetoric. I argue that any policies regarding immigration reform must be shaped by compassion, compassion which may require genuine courage in order to resist the current climate of fear surrounding the issue of immigration. In the final section of my essay, I examine the fears which create a need for courage in responding to immigration compassionately, along with other obstacles to practicing compassion towards immigrants. I conclude by suggesting some ways we can cultivate compassion in thinking about immigration.

What Is Courageous Compassion?

Johnny and Ponyboy's actions in *The Outsiders* offer us a perfect illustration of "courageous compassion." What could be more compassionate than seeing others in desperate need and responding without hesitation? What could be more courageous than risking one's own life to rush into a burning building to save the lives of others? Let's consider "courage" first. Whatever else courage may imply, it certainly involves the knowledge that one's actions involve significant risk to one's own welfare. In fact, as Aristotle defines courage in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the possibility of death is central to the highest form of courage: "we show courage in situations where . . . death is noble" (book 3, ch. 8).

Aristotle also asserts that courage must always involve noble ends: "Therefore it is for a noble end that the brave man endures and acts as courage directs" (book 3, ch. 8). There can be no true courage in the pursuit of ignoble ends; thus, the fearless displays of the Greasers in their "rumbles" with the Socs cannot rightly be called courageous. But clearly Ponyboy and Johnny's actions in rescuing children from a flaming church pass both of Aristotle's tests of true courage.

"Compassion" is, perhaps, trickier to define, but here too we can appeal to Aristotle for help. According to Aristotle's definition, an

act of compassion requires us to believe three things about a suffering person. First, we must believe that their suffering is serious and not trivial. We don't feel compassion for someone who has broken a fingernail. Second, we have to believe that the sufferer is not responsible for her own suffering. Life in prison is certainly not trivial, but we don't feel compassion for the convicted murderer who faces a life behind bars. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we must believe that it is possible for us to suffer in ways similar to the one for whom we would feel compassion. In other words, we must have the sense that "there but for the grace of God go I." According to Aristotle, when each of these conditions is met, we are able to experience compassion for another.¹

It's easy to see that Johnny and Ponyboy's response to the children in the fire meets each of these conditions. They can have no doubt that the suffering facing the children they rescue is serious: what could be more serious than the fate of being burned alive? And they know the children are not responsible for the danger they face – they are innocent victims of a fire they did not cause. Finally, especially given the disadvantaged status of the two Greasers, they must possess "an awareness of [their] own weakness and vulnerability [which] is a necessary condition for pity" (Nussbaum, "Compassion: The Basic Social Emotion" 34). As a working class orphan, Ponyboy certainly has the necessary understanding for practicing pity as Rousseau outlines it in *Emile*: "Make him understand well that the fate of these unhappy people can be his, that all their ills are there in the ground beneath his feet, that countless unforeseen and inevitable events can plunge him into them from one moment to the next" (qtd. in Nussbaum 34).²

Throughout the remainder of the novel, characters' responses to the courageous compassion demonstrated by Ponyboy and Johnny become an index of their character and virtue.³ Clearly, in terms of the moral code Hinton asserts in the novel and of my

students' reaction to it, there is nothing controversial about the morality of risking one's life to save children one doesn't even know. As I noted earlier, we can argue about whether we *would* have done what Ponyboy and Johnny did, but we don't argue whether we *should* do so. Thus, the courageous compassion demonstrated by these two fictional characters offers an appropriate model of courageous compassion for us, one we can draw on in responding to the current immigration crisis.

Facing Our Fears Regarding Immigration

To advocate *courageous* compassion in response to the immigration crisis is, first of all, to recognize that many Americans see reasons—some more legitimate than others—to be fearful about the potential impacts of immigration. Novelist Marilyn Robinson, in her essay titled simply “Fear,” notes that “contemporary America is full of fear,” and that public policy debates about issues such as immigration are increasingly shaped by “the marked and oddly general fearfulness of our culture at present.” Thinking compassionately about immigration will require a willingness to act in the face of such fears.

Indeed, many would agree that true courage only exists where there is cause for fear. Here again we can appeal to Aristotle, who states that “he who is undisturbed in face of these [feelings of fear] and bears himself as he should towards these is more truly brave than the man who does so towards the things that inspire confidence. It is for facing what is painful, then, as has been said, that men are called brave” (book 3). Thus, in calling for courageous compassion, I am not arguing that all fears concerning immigration are irrational or unworthy of consideration, but rather that we should reason compassionately about immigration despite such fears.

What is it that Americans fear if we respond compassionately to immigration? These fears can be broadly divided into three

categories: 1) Immigration as a threat to American identity; 2) Immigration as a threat to our economic well-being; and 3) Immigration as a threat to American security. It can be shown that each of these fears is frequently overstated, and readers should examine for themselves the facts relating to each. But even if these fears remain, we are called to respond compassionately and courageously in spite of them.

Perhaps the most basic fear concerning immigration is that our country will not continue to look like what we are used to. Immigration, in this view, threatens American identity, our most fundamental image of who we are as a nation. For many Americans, the defining features of our country include the notion that it is a majority white and majority Christian nation. Our most prominent origin stories, those of the settlement of this continent by the Pilgrims (1620) and the Puritans (1633), closely align American identity with both European ancestry and Christian faith. Almost four centuries later, however, it is clear that a decreasing percentage of immigrants are likely to be white, and to the extent that increasing numbers of immigrants are Asian or Middle Eastern, they are less likely to be Christian.⁴ Predictions that white Americans will be a minority within a few decades—the so-called “browning of America”—undoubtedly frightens some Americans. For others, the greater fear is that immigration threatens their understanding of the United States as a predominantly Christian country.

My purpose here is not to debunk these fears but simply to acknowledge that such fears exist and thus that compassion in response to immigration will require courage. It is worth noting, however, that similar fears were expressed about—among others—Irish Catholic immigrants in the nineteenth century, immigrants from Europe after World War I, Jewish immigrants before and after World War II, Japanese immigrants (and Japanese-American citizens) during the Second World War,⁵ and Vietnamese, Cubans, and Haitians in the past four decades. Those

who fear for the Christian identity of the nation might note that a nation can be identified as “Christian” not only by the percentage of its population that share that faith but by the degree to which the nation displays Christian character. As the apostle Paul instructed the early church, “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience” (Col. 3.12). In this sense, showing compassion, kindness, and humility towards immigrants will in itself make our nation more Christian.

Until very recently, the most prominent fears being expressed concerning immigration, especially in regard to Mexican and Central American immigration, were framed in economic terms:

The moral imperative to practice courageous compassion is likely to call us to act in ways counter to our own self-interest.

the fear that these immigrants will steal jobs which would otherwise be filled by current American citizens and that an influx of immigrant labor will drive down wages for native-born American workers. All measures of the impact of

immigrants on the U.S. economy show that they contribute significantly to the size of the American economy, substantially increasing our economic output.

The question remains, however, whether immigrants draw more resources from the American economy—for health, education, etc.—than they contribute toward it.⁶ The fiscal impact of immigration can, I assume, be answered by economists. But whether our responsibility to other human beings calls us to sacrifice some portion of our economic wellbeing to allow them some measure of human flourishing is a moral and ethical question. The moral imperative to practice courageous compassion is likely to call us—like Johnny and Ponyboy—to act in ways counter to our own self-interest in order to protect those in truly desperate situations.⁷

In 1883, in the midst of one of the largest waves of immigration in our nation's history—immigration which aroused all of the same fears being expressed today about identity and economics and about whether we risked admitting enemies of the state to the U.S.—the poet Emma Lazarus penned words which now adorn the base of the Statue of Liberty and which have become part of our national creed, along with the “self-evident” truth that “all men are created equal”: “Give me your tired, your poor,/Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.” Significantly, Lady Liberty invites not only those with the education or high tech skills to boost our economy but also “the homeless, tempest-tost,” “the wretched refuse of your teeming shore.”

When I began thinking about this essay early in the fall of 2015, it seemed obvious to me that the primary “immigration crisis” to be addressed concerned ongoing undocumented immigration from Mexico and the flood of child refugees from Central American countries—some 50,000—which hit the United States in 2014. Since then, the conversation has largely shifted to the Middle East, however, and specifically to the tidal wave of refugees from Syria. According to the relief organization World Vision, “4.3 million Syrians are refugees, and 6.6 million are displaced within Syria”; half of those displaced are children (Jonson et al.).

This humanitarian crisis, coupled with the rise of Islamic State-sponsored warfare and terrorism, has given birth to what is now clearly the greatest fear governing American responses to terrorism: the fear that opening our doors to immigrants—especially Middle Eastern refugees—amounts to an open invitation to ISIS to export terrorism to our shores. These fears increased enormously following the ISIS-sponsored attacks on Paris on November 13, 2015, which left 130 dead and at least 350 injured, followed soon after by the shootings of 14 innocent victims in San Bernardino, California, on December 2, 2015.

Americans have two basic responsibilities in light of the culture of fear which currently surrounds the issue of immigration. First, we should recognize how much of the fear that we attach to immigration is not, in fact, entirely justified. An objective assessment of the fears I've noted above will reveal that the financial impact of immigration includes many economic benefits (Nadadur), that immigrants are statistically less likely than native-born Americans to commit crimes (Ewing et al.), and that legitimate fears of terrorists entering the country as refugees are largely overstated—in fact, no refugee granted asylum and admitted to the United States has ever committed a terrorist act (Bier). For those of us who respond to the immigration crisis from a foundation of Christian belief, Marilyn Robinson offers another important reminder:

[F]ear is not a Christian habit of mind. As children we learn to say, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me.” We learn that, after his resurrection, Jesus told his disciples, “Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.” Christ is a gracious, abiding presence in all reality, and in him history will finally be resolved.

Second, having thoughtfully analyzed our fears, we must proceed courageously in the direction of what philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff calls *shalom*, the practice of bringing social justice and human flourishing to a broken world.⁸ Courageous compassion calls us to extend care to vulnerable fellow human beings, even when certain fears remain.

Imagination and Compassion

As I noted earlier, Aristotle identifies three requirements for extending compassion to another individual: that we see their suffering as serious rather than trivial, that we believe that their own actions are not the cause of their suffering, and that we

connect our own possibilities to the suffering we see them experiencing (that is, that we can imagine that we could potentially share the same fate). The first two of these requirements are easily established with regard to refugees. Certainly the suffering of Syrian refugees faced with drought and starvation on one hand and ISIS-sponsored violence on the other is serious! That these refugees did not cause their own suffering seems equally certain.

In addition to the fears I discussed above, however, the great difficulty for many Americans in responding compassionately to the plight of immigrants seems to lie in this third requirement for compassion: we are simply unable to imagine that we could experience a similar fate. We often fail to practice compassion when our imaginations fail to connect people in some distant corner of the world to our own current possibilities and vulnerabilities. As the philosopher Rousseau observed, “kings don’t feel compassion for their subjects because they count on never being human, subject to the vicissitudes of life” (qtd. in Nussbaum, “Compassionate Citizenship”). So, too, Americans can fail to feel compassion for others in desperate situations because, given the prosperity and relative security of our nation, we find it impossible to imagine being in the predicament faced by those such as the Syrian refugees.

The November 13 terrorist attacks on Paris illustrate how varied our ability to empathetically imagine the predicament of a suffering person can be. Understandably, these attacks prompted from Americans an outpouring of sympathy for the victims, for their families and loved ones, and for Paris as a whole. Millions of Facebook users took advantage of the ability to add a French tri-color overlay to their profile picture with a single click, in order to express their solidarity with and compassion for Parisians. Few of us seemed to notice, however, that a double suicide bombing of a bustling urban area in Beirut had left 43 Lebanese dead on the previous day.

Perhaps, as some have argued, the difference in response—the utter lack of recognition and compassion extended to the victims in Beirut—is evidence of racism or at least Eurocentrism. As the *New York Times* noted, “The implication, numerous Lebanese commentators complained, was that Arab lives mattered less. Either that, or that their country—relatively calm despite the war next door—was perceived as a place where carnage is the norm, an undifferentiated corner of a basket-case region” (Barnard). But it seems equally likely that most Americans felt much more compassion for Parisians because we found it much easier to imagine ourselves as the victims of those attacks. Perhaps we have been to Paris or dream of going there some day. At the least, we, like Parisians, live generally secure lives far from the open warfare that we may think of as defining life in the Middle East.

Sharing the fate of Parisians who lost their lives simply by heading out for a night at a cafe, a concert, or a soccer game feels much more likely than sharing the fate of the Lebanese victims in Beirut. If it *seems* that “Arab lives matter less,” it is probably because we fail to imagine any link between their suffering and “our current possibilities and vulnerabilities.” So, too, the plight of Syrian refugees or Guatemalan children can seem so far out of the realm of possibility for our own future that they remain outside of what Nussbaum calls our “circle of concern” and so we are unable to respond compassionately to them (“Compassion and Terror” 236).

Extending the Circle of Concern

In order to extend compassion to others such as Syrian refugees, we will need to find a way to imaginatively link their plight with our own possibilities. In addition, we will need to find a way to make them real as persons, to see them not just as abstractions but as flesh and blood human beings to whom we can feel some sense of connection. As University of Iowa theologian/philosopher Diane Fritz Cates states,

compassion is not something that we can do-feel for people “in general.” It is something that we must do-feel for them “in particular.” That is, it requires encountering persons in pain *in* their particularity, feeling attracted to them, wanting to be with them, and wanting to benefit them *as* the unique persons that they are. (233)

So, how do we encounter in their particularity those suffering on the other side of the world? Occasionally we may find individuals in our midst who are enough like those we seek to extend compassion to that meeting them enables us to think of others like them as flesh and blood individuals rather than vague abstractions. For example, coming to know some of the many Saudi Arabian students on the University of Dubuque campus on a genuine personal level might well transform our thinking about Arabs generally and Muslims specifically as we think about those in Syria.⁹ Such opportunities are probably too rare, however, to be relied upon to transform us into people of courageous compassion. But we do have two readily available resources which can enable us to understand distant others as those for whom we can and must genuinely care.

Meeting the Other through the Power of Story

If it isn't likely that we will meet face to face the immigrants and refugees who so desperately need our compassion, we can nevertheless encounter them and come to know them in their full humanness. Through the power of story—whether fiction or non-fiction, print or film—we can in fact come to know those who are otherwise remote from us in ways that can engage our compassion. In fact, without an intense experience of the Other's story, we are unlikely to be moved to respond to their needs. As Nussbaum points out, “The moral imagination, it seems, is highly particularistic, moved to emotion and thence to helping action by the vivid imagining of another specific person's plight” (“Teaching” 220). She cites the work of psychologist C. Daniel

Batson who has demonstrated that deep engagement with another person's "story of woe" dramatically increases the likelihood that one will respond with compassion.

Hearing, reading, or viewing a vividly told story is tremendously powerful in triggering a compassionate response; "without such a narrative, subjects fail to experience emotion, and helping behavior is not triggered" (Nussbaum, "Teaching" 220). Novels are particularly powerful in this regard, engaging our imaginations at the deepest levels and allowing us into the world and experience of those otherwise far removed from us, but the same thing can be accomplished by seeking out films or biographies of immigrants and refugees.

Recognizing the Other as an Image Bearer of God

Though Christians have too often failed to extend courageous compassion to others, the Christian faith offers important insights for thinking compassionately about those whom we might otherwise think of as outside of our circle of concern. First, as Marilyn Robinson reminded us earlier in this essay, Christians, of all people, should be *least* fearful of the Other and of changes to their world. Second, Christians have a clear and constant calling to care for the most vulnerable—most often described in Scripture as the "widows and orphans," but frequently including "foreigners," as well. For example, in the chapters of the book of Exodus immediately following the Ten Commandments, the laws God lays down to govern the communal life of Israel include this instruction: "Do not mistreat or oppress a foreigner, for you were foreigners in Egypt. Do not take advantage of the widow or the fatherless" (Exod. 22.21-22).


The apostle James sums up this aspect of Christian responsibility: "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world" (Jas. 1.27). Too often

Christians pay attention to only the second of these responsibilities, retreating from the world rather than seeking to mend it.

The Christian scriptures also make clear that we are connected to every other person, affirming that every human being is created in the image of God and, therefore, inherently valuable.

And, as South African human rights activist Nontombi Naomi Tutu declared in her recent lecture at the University of Dubuque, “Part of recognizing God in the other is to recognize that God didn’t make a mistake in the

other.” Not only did God create humans in his image, but he also sacrificed himself to redeem all of humanity. The central claim of the Christian Gospel, that Christ died for all despite the fallenness and deep unworthiness of every human being—“While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5.8)—calls us to see people everywhere as essentially like us.



We must also ask what policies would best promote the full human flourishing of God’s image bearers, people wholly worthy of our concern.

Diana Fritz Cates states this truth beautifully:

Encountering with Christ the reality of our own brokenness, we are able to encounter the brokenness of other human beings, and we are able to perceive their brokenness, not as something that makes them different from us, but rather as something that makes them like us. (210)

Cates concludes that we are able to befriend the Other because we have been befriended by God: “If we are compassionate Christians, we regard any human as being, in principle, befrienable by us because every human being is befriended by God (and God is a friend of ours)” (234).

Conclusion

Embracing an attitude of courageous compassion in response to immigration does not answer every question raised by this crisis. Questions will still remain about such matters as how best to extend care to others while still protecting the vulnerable already within our borders and whether we should direct our efforts toward welcoming refugees into our country or finding ways to meet their needs closer to their homes. Cultivating this virtue will, however, guide how we frame these questions. Courageous compassion will not allow us merely to ask how we can protect ourselves and those closest to us from whatever threats—real or imagined—immigrants and asylum seekers may pose. Rather, we must also ask what policies would best promote the full human flourishing of God’s image bearers, people wholly worthy of our concern.

When the United States finally put an end to slavery 150 years ago, one of the most compelling anti-slavery symbols showed a man kneeling in chains and pleading, “Am I not a man and a brother?” Courageous compassion calls us to hear refugees crying out, “Am I not a man and a brother?” and “Am I not a woman and a sister?” and to answer with a resounding “yes.”

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Photo on p. 10 used by permission of Penguin Random House LLC.

Notes

¹ For an excellent discussion of Aristotle's view of compassion, see Martha Nussbaum's essay "Compassion: The Basic Social Emotion" which has shaped my discussion in this paragraph.

² In fact, a secondary motivation for the boys in rescuing these children is their suspicion that *they* might be responsible for the fire that threatens innocent lives: "I bet we started it," Ponyboy says. "We must have dropped a lighted cigarette or something" (81). While it could be argued that Ponyboy's sense of his own culpability and the attendant guilt he feels minimizes the degree to which his actions are genuinely motivated by compassion, it is equally likely that Ponyboy's fears that he caused the fire increases his sense that the fate the children are threatened with could have been his own.

³ Dallas Winston, the one Greaser who is a genuine thug—Ponyboy describes him as having blue eyes "cold with all the hatred in the world" —pleads with Johnny and Ponyboy to save themselves rather than the children: "For Pete's sake, get out of there! That roof's gonna cave in any minute. Forget those blasted kids!" (82). Although Hinton presents Dallas sympathetically as someone who has been understandably embittered by a brutal past—"The fight for self-preservation had hardened him beyond caring" (54)—readers are clearly not being invited to embrace his values, and no student in my experience has agreed with him that the boys should save themselves rather than the helpless children. Conversely, the Soc Randy, who has been part of the violence aimed at the Greasers, asserts his sense of Ponyboy and Johnny's moral superiority based on their act of courageous compassion: "I wouldn't have [done it]. I would have let those kids burn to death" (101). Ponyboy, however, offers absolution and affirms Randy's humanity: "You would have saved those kids if you had been there. . . . You'd have saved them the same as we did" (103).

⁴ According to data from the Immigration Policy Institute, of the 42.4 million foreign-born in the United States in 2010, 48 percent reported their race as white alone, 9 percent as black alone, 26 percent as Asian alone, and 15 percent as some other race; more than 2 percent reported having two or more races. About 46 percent of the 42.4 million foreign-born population (about 19.4 million) reported having Hispanic or Latino origins (Zong and Batalova).

⁵ See Roger Ebert's article in this journal on anti-Japanese fears during World War II and one particularly courageous response to such fears ("Courageous Compassion in a Time of Terror"). Strikingly, presidential candidate Donald Trump, among others, has cited Japanese internment during World War II as a legitimate precedent for restricting immigration of Muslims into the United

States (see his comments on MSNBC on December 8, 2015) (“Morning Joe Mix”).

⁶ See, for example, “Illegal Immigration: A Positive Economic Contribution to the United States” by Ramanujan Nadadur in the July 1, 2009 issue of *Journal of Ethnic & Migration Studies*.

⁷ In his 1835 book *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville offered a trenchant criticism of Americans’ compassion which still seems pertinent, noting how easily Americans espouse compassion while frequently being unwilling to suffer for the sake of another: “In democratic ages men rarely sacrifice themselves for one another, but they display general compassion for the members of the human race. They inflict no useless ills, and they are happy to relieve the griefs of others *when they can do so without much hurting themselves*” (book III, ch. 1, emphasis added).

⁸ For an accessible introduction to the concept of “shalom” and how it can be cultivated, see Wolterstorff’s *Educating for Shalom: Essays on Christian Higher Education*.

⁹ Bonnie Sue Lewis’s account in this journal of Dubuque’s Children of Abraham conversations provides a wonderful model for coming to know the Other among us in a way that can transform our thinking about—and caring for—the more distant Other (“Courageous Compassion and Interfaith Friendship”).

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Courageous Compassion in a Time of Terror

Roger P. Ebertz

Abstract

This article tells the stories of two Americans in the months and years following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor: Herbert Inouye, a young Japanese-American man, and Ralph L. Carr, Governor of Colorado. In doing so it provides an historical example of how a political leader can respond with courageous compassion in a time of great national fear, not unlike today.

The nation is in a state of fear. The news agencies report bombings in Europe on a regular basis. Cells are plotting against America and its allies in various parts of the world. Until now, Americans felt safe at home. Bombings exploded “over there,” not on America’s homeland. But now things have changed. The enemy has struck a deadly blow on America’s own soil. Fear spreads across America. Enemy loyalists are entering the country, the rumors say, in the guise of immigrants seeking a better life. Incensed and made fearful by what the news media and social networks are telling them, Americans want certainty that they are safe. Politicians call out for tight control of immigration. Governors refuse to welcome immigrants to their states. Homeland security must be maintained.

Am I describing the United States after the destruction of the twin towers? Or perhaps the response to the recent shootings in San Bernadino? No. I am describing the United States immediately after the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Both then and now, U.S. residents were terrorized, afraid of evil lurking among them. In the wake of the Pearl Harbor bombing, many Americans, America's media, and its politicians stereotyped all people of Japanese ancestry as spies and terrorists, loyal only to Japan. People who had come to America to seek a better life were vilified as the enemy simply because of their national background, and sometimes their religion. Shunned by neighbors, Japanese-Americans on the West Coast were forced to leave successful businesses and farms. Some said they should be sent back "home," to a country that for many had never been their home. Ultimately, thousands of Japanese-Americans were imprisoned behind barbed wire and watched from guard towers in concentration camps across the nation's inland.

In recent months, rank and file citizens and politicians have responded with fear to terrorist attacks both here and abroad. Some call for a ban on all Muslims entering our country. Some say immigrants should be sent "back home." People of many nationalities and religions are harassed by their neighbors, simply because their neighbors think they are Muslims or Arabs. Some even suggest that Muslims should be put in internment camps for the sake of "national security." The similarities between then and now are striking.

In this essay, I tell stories of two Americans in the months and years following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor: Herbert Inouye, a young Japanese-American man and Ralph L. Carr, Governor of Colorado. From the overlap of these two stories there emerges a picture of a kind of courageously compassionate leadership that is needed today, in a time of national fear.

The American Dream Disrupted

Everything Changed Thirteen year old Herbert Inouye was enjoying a movie with a friend in Southwest Los Angeles the day Japan bombed Pearl Harbor. When the boys emerged from the theater they knew that something was very wrong. At home, Herb heard the news. Japan had bombed Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, on U.S. territory. What would happen to legal immigrants from Japan living in the United States, like Herb's parents? How should they respond? The family's initial plan was to go on as if nothing had happened. It soon became obvious that this would be impossible. At school, kids who had been Herb's friends shunned him. Fights between those of Japanese ancestry and others broke out on the school yard. Throughout the city, Japanese people were looked upon with suspicion (Inouye, "Memoirs - Part 1").



Herbert Inouye, 1941

Similar things happened across the United States. Distrust of anyone of Japanese ancestry spread like wildfire. Suggestions were made almost immediately that Japanese people on the West Coast, American citizens or not, posed a threat. Japan's next step, they feared, would be an attack on the U.S. mainland. A rumor arose that a Japanese submarine had fired upon San Francisco (Carr, "Radio Address"). Spies were in place, the rumors said, among Japanese immigrants. Any person of Japanese descent could be a spy. The only solution, some argued, was to remove all people of Japanese heritage from the West Coast. For a brief period, Japanese people in western states were given the option to voluntarily move to inland states. Within months, however, politicians and government leaders made plans for forced removal.

Herb was born in the U.S and had never lived anywhere else. He was a U.S. citizen. Although his parents were not U.S. citizens,

they were accepted members of their community. Success for Japanese immigrants had not been easy. Inspired by a San Francisco-based organization called the Asian Exclusion League, anti-Asian violence broke out in West Coast cities. Over the first decades of the century, laws were passed restricting Asians from becoming citizens and owning land. On the national level, the Immigration Acts of 1921 and 1924 regulated immigration to the U.S. according to national origins (Lee). The explicit goal of these acts was to keep the proportions of ethnic groups in the United States from changing, thereby preventing the corruption of the “national character” (“Yellow Peril”). A more realistic reason for the laws was resentment at the success of Asian farmers and business people, Japanese immigrants in particular.

The Inouyes represent many Japanese immigrant families who persevered in spite of the resentment and legal discrimination. Pursuing the American dream, some were quite successful. But after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, everything changed. In a day, Herb and his family had gone from being accepted community members to enemy aliens. All because their ethnic heritage was Japanese.

The Inouye Family Moves to Colorado A few months after the Pearl Harbor attack, Herb’s brother Roy received a warning from the sheriff of Los Angeles County, for whom Roy was a gardener, that plans were underway to incarcerate Japanese people living on the West Coast, whether citizens or not (Inouye, “Memoirs - Part 2”). And so, on February 8, 1942, Herb’s family and several others set out in a caravan of three vehicles bound for Colorado. The night before they left, vandals broke the window of their pickup. Anti-Japanese sentiments hounded them along the way. As they crossed from California into Arizona, Army Military Police questioned their mission and threatened to search their vehicles. They were allowed to proceed across a bridge spanning the border but were told not to open the windows or throw anything out of the car as they passed. A guard saw that the pickup window

was open, blew a whistle and pointed a gun into the window. Herb was terrified. When they finally explained the window was broken, they were allowed to continue with a guard riding on the fender with his rifle, including its bayonet, pointed inside the cab. Herb writes that they were so shaken, “that we couldn’t talk for some time, even after the Military Police departed” (“Memoirs - Part 2”).

Across the border, the Arizona State Patrol escorted them into Flagstaff, allowing them only a short stop for gas and food to go. This pattern continued across Arizona and New Mexico. Local and national radio stations picked up the story of their move and followed them each step of the way. “A caravan of Japs passing though Winslow, Arizona . . . ’ Now the Jap caravan is entering Joseph City, Arizona . . . ’ The Jap caravan has reached Holbrook, Arizona” (Inouye, “Memoirs - Part 2”). Residents in towns and cities through which they passed lined up along the highway to jeer, throw rocks and bottles, and yell “We hate Japs,” and “Don’t stop here!” In Albuquerque they were interrogated individually by the New Mexico State Police and allowed to continue only on the condition that they not stop until they were out of the state.

On the third day, just after passing into Colorado, they spotted a Colorado Courtesy Patrol Car. Assuming they would be stopped and questioned, they pulled over to the side of the road. “When he saw us stop,” Inouye writes, “the patrolman came over to the truck, tipped his cap and said, ‘Welcome to Colorado. Governor Ralph Carr and the State of Colorado welcome you. How can I be of service to you?’” At the border of Arizona, Herb’s family had faced the barrel of a rifle. In the towns along the way they had dodged rocks and bottles. At the border of Colorado, they received a welcome (“Memoirs - Part 2”).

Who was Ralph Carr?

Formative Years Ralph Carr had grown up in Colorado, the son of an unsuccessful gold and silver prospector. He spent most of his young life in Cripple Creek, working part-time jobs to help his family make ends meet. But his mother, committed to Ralph's education, didn't let working keep Ralph from school. He did well in literature and writing, and learned Latin by the age of six. Graduating from Cripple Creek High School, he received a partial scholarship to the University of Colorado, where he studied journalism. Carr went on to the University of Colorado Law School, earning his way by writing for the *Rocky Mountain News* and the *Cripple Creek Times* (Schrager 111). Shortly after graduation, Carr married Gretchen Fowler, whom he met while an undergraduate (28).

The young Carr family moved to Antonito, a small town in southern Colorado, with a population of around 900 residents ("Antonito, Colorado"). As a small town attorney he found that many of his clients spoke only Spanish, so he taught himself Spanish. Ralph and Gretchen adopted two children and enjoyed life in Antonito. After eleven years, Carr's success as an attorney led to his appointment as Conejos County Attorney, and later to his appointment to be the Assistant Attorney General of the State of Colorado. The Carr family moved to Denver (Schrager 29). As Assistant Attorney General for the State, Carr gained national notoriety by successfully defending Colorado's water agreements before the U.S. Supreme Court (10–11). After only two years in office, Carr was chosen in 1929 by Herbert Hoover to be the U. S. Attorney for Colorado, a job which pitted him against the toughest of Colorado's crime families (31). It was with this background of experience that Ralph Carr, in 1938, reluctantly accepted the pleas from fellow members of the Colorado Republican party to run for Governor of Colorado (16–18).



Governor Ralph L. Carr

Love and Concern for People By 1939, when he took office as governor, Ralph Carr had proven his moral character. He was a man who “loved people” (Schrager 3). Carr had a respect for the worth of human beings, whatever their ethnic origins. When he became the governor, he hired a black man to be his office receptionist. Early in his career, Carr defended Spanish speaking immigrants. As an attorney, Carr represented the down and out. “I sense their feelings when I’m around them. And I sympathize particularly

with the poor devil, who, because of circumstances, including often his own misconduct and blindness, gets himself into a place where he needs a pat on the back”(qtd. in Schrager 3). As a defense attorney, he won friends for a lifetime. Later, as Governor, when Carr considered prisoners’ requests for commutation, he would travel to the state prison to meet the prisoners personally (40). Although he knew that human beings can do bad things, he was a firm believer in the American ideal that people are “innocent until proven guilty.”

Carr was also ruthlessly honest. At one point during his campaign for Governor, Carr happened upon a bar owner who offered free beer to Carr supporters. Referring back to the days when Carr was the U.S. Attorney General, Carr asked the man, “Didn’t I put you in prison?” The bar owner affirmed that it was true, but explained, “you were the only public official we weren’t able to buy. Now I’m an honest business man and I want another [honest man] in office” (qtd. in Schrager 31).

Political Convictions As a politician, Carr defended states’ rights and opposed the proliferating size of the federal government under Franklin Delano Roosevelt (Schrager 55). He

stood for ethics in government and fiscal responsibility. Speaking to a state facing a 1.6 million dollar deficit, Carr used his inaugural address to announce massive cuts in state funding, slashing bureaucratic waste and shifting funds from special interests to the state's general fund to meet the crisis. At the same time he opposed new taxes, especially those that would burden Colorado's property owners (38). Carr's political views were rooted in a strong commitment to the Constitution of the United States. As events unfolded during his second term, his commitment to human rights became even more pronounced. As his biographer, Adam Schrager, writes, "He clung to the writings of Abraham Lincoln and to his belief in the U.S. Constitution" (8).

Carr's actions, especially his budget cutting measures, evoked strong responses from many in the state. But by courageously sticking with his convictions and pragmatically working with others, Carr managed in his first term in office to correct the state's ailing economy and win the people of Colorado to his side. Even national observers were taking notice of his effective leadership (Schrager 42). But events beyond his control would dominate his second two-year term as governor.

After the Attack

The attack on Pearl Harbor changed Herb Inouye's life. It changed the life of Ralph Carr as well. Although Carr had been elected on a platform of fiscal responsibility and states' rights, it was the aftermath of the Pearl Harbor attack that defined his second term. Because anti-Japanese hatred was especially strong along the West Coast, some Japanese, like Herbert Inouye's family, chose voluntarily to move. As more and more Japanese moved into the Mountain States, fear ran wild. "The Japanese will be living next door," people protested. "How can our children be safe when 'Japs' are living right among us!" The federal government assured the people that the FBI would keep their eyes on possible saboteurs (Hosokawa 239). But fueled by the fear, and the

sensationalism of the press, white Americans were not satisfied. No person of Japanese ancestry, whether a citizen of the United States or not, could be trusted to live among them (Daniels 20).

The Governor's Distress Distressed by the growing hatred of Japanese people he saw in his State, Governor Carr reminded his constituency that America was a "melting pot" of immigrants from all over the world. "We cannot test the degree of a man's affection for his fellows or his devotion to his country by the birthplace of his ancestors. . . . If there are among us those who are wrong or who are unfriendly to our country and its people, we have men who know it and who will ferret them out" (qtd. in Schragger 90). Japanese who were citizens, Carr argued, had a right to move wherever they chose. The Constitution ensured their rights as much as any American (Carr, Letter to Thomas J. Morrissey). To violate their rights was to endanger the rights of all. Without explicitly inviting them to Colorado, Carr made it clear that he would not prevent them from coming, and even welcome them when they came. "They are as loyal to American institutions as you and I" (Carr, "Radio Address"). Yet, in spite of Carr's efforts, Coloradoans were not convinced. Carr's political rival, Edwin Johnson blasted Carr as a "Jap lover," proposing that instead of welcoming the fleeing Japanese, the governor should call out the Colorado National Guard to prevent anyone of Japanese ancestry from crossing the border (Maeda).

Resisting Racism Facing growing pressure to move all West Coast Japanese, the federal government developed the plan to build "relocation camps" across the inland West and Midwest and began rounding up Japanese people, both citizens and non-citizens. An uproar arose from the inland states. Governor after governor made clear that the Japanese were not welcome. "The State of Wyoming," wrote Wyoming Governor Nels Smith, "cannot acquiesce to the importation of these Japanese into our state" (qtd. in Schragger 131). The governors of Arizona, Arkansas, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, Idaho, Nevada, North Dakota,

and New Mexico all issued statements refusing the placement of Japanese people in their states. Even in Colorado, the two U.S. Senators and one of the state's congressmen "expressed unanimous opinion against an importation of Japanese to Colorado" (Schrager 211–213). Anti-Japanese hatred was rampant across the State. One Colorado army recruiter was issuing "Japanese hunting licenses." Still another wrote, "Let them swim back to where they came from" (qtd. in Schrager 106, 120). *Native Sons of Colorado*, an organization of Colorado citizens, issued a statement calling for the state to "prevent these almond-eyed sons of the Orient from being dumped on our door step" ("Native Sons").

In spite of the pressure, Carr refused to seek exclusion of Japanese from Colorado simply because they were Japanese. Unlike many, he recognized the complexity of the situation (Carr, "Radio Address"). While he recognized there was some danger of spy activity, he refused to treat *all* Japanese as suspicious simply for this reason. Over and over, he reminded those he spoke with that one could and should not judge a person by the color of his or her skin. On February 19, 1942, President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, clearly designed to authorize the detention and removal of Japanese people from the West coast. Carr's response: "Now, that's wrong! . . . Some of these Japanese are citizens of the United States!" His biographer, Adam Schrager, reports that Carr couldn't believe what he was reading. "Why would a man want to put those people in jail? . . . I'm not going to do it. They're citizens of the United States" (qtd. in Schrager 133).

The Code of Humanity Carr believed that the mass detention of Japanese people was wrong. But he also made clear that if and when Japanese were brought to Colorado, he would both cooperate with the federal government and treat the Japanese with respect, whether they were citizens or not. In his speech laying out his view, Carr warned against "inflammatory statements and threats" against even "unwelcome guests."

Referring to a statement by a young soldier that offered “the firing squad” as the proper response to the situation, Carr denounced such “reckless statements,” both because they could invoke responses from the enemy, but also because “such conduct is not approved by the code of humanity” (Carr, “Radio Address”). Although Carr was passionate about the rights of citizens, he was also committed to the dignity of all humankind.

Amache, the Inouye Family, and Governor Carr

The Inouye Families Farm in Colorado On June 29, 1942, construction began on a “relocation camp” near Granada, Colorado. The camp, nicknamed “Amache” to distinguish it from the nearby town of Granada, eventually imprisoned more than 7,000 Japanese people, many of them U.S. citizens, during the war years (“Timeline”). The Inouye family had avoided incarceration by moving voluntarily to Colorado before the internment orders were given. While the internment camp at Granada was being built, the Inouye family turned a small abandoned farm in Colorado into a working operation. Fred Christensen, the land’s owner, welcomed his Japanese tenants. But whenever news arrived of a Japanese victory in the war, their farm was



Amache Japanese Internment Camp

vandalized. At one point, Christensen heard that a lynching party was being organized against the family and came over with guns to protect them (Inouye, “Memoirs - Part 3”). In spite of such oppositions, the Inouye family did their best to live peaceably with their neighbors.

A Visit to Amache At the end of the first summer, in September of 1942, Herbert took his mother to visit her sister Helen and her family at the Amache relocation center. He was

shocked and depressed. The camp was surrounded by a wire-mesh fence topped with angled barbed wire. Herbert recalls the “nauseating odor” of the fresh tar paper that covered the barracks, and remembers the 20-feet-by-20-feet units in which each family lived. Noise traveled through the thin walls. The light was too dim to read. Dining halls and lavatory facilities were an inconvenient walk, especially in the dark and cold nights of Colorado (Inouye, “Memoirs - Part 4”). In the nearby town of Granada, while some were friendly to the internees, signs in some store windows declared, “No Japs Allowed” (Maeda).

After the establishment of the center, Governor Carr sought the best for the Japanese people in Colorado. While his opponents insisted that anyone of Japanese heritage be kept under strict guard, Carr saw no harm in releasing workers to Colorado farms. A sugar beet farmer near Julesburg was experiencing a shortage of qualified labor because of the war. Carr sought to facilitate the move of a group of Amache internees to help the farmer. Governor Carr saw this as a great opportunity for both the local farmers and for the Japanese themselves (Carr, Letter to George S. Lilley).

Ralph Carr’s Political “Downfall”

In 1942, Carr was nominated as the Republican candidate for the U.S. Senate. He ran against Senator Edwin Johnson, a former Democratic governor. Carr had been popular before the war, but his defense of Japanese-Americans and other people of Japanese ancestry living in America had not been well received. In the 1942 Colorado elections, Republicans won victories across the state. The Senate race between Carr and Johnson was the sole exception. Johnson defeated Carr by a margin of only one percent (“United States”). While Carr had insisted that a person should not be discriminated against simply because of his or her ethnic heritage, Johnson had advocated excluding anyone with Japanese blood from the state. Most analysts believed it was Carr’s stance toward the Japanese that lost him the race (Hosokawa 226).

After his defeat, Ralph Carr returned to the practice of law. He found he needed a housekeeper and personal assistant. Carr offered the job to Wakako Domoto, a 27-year-old, who was just being released from Amache. Before her family had been incarcerated, Domoto served as the bookkeeper for her family's business, graduated at the top of her high school class, and attended Stanford for two years. Her office skills were utilized at Amache. So when Ralph Carr asked the center administrators to recommend someone to assist him, they suggested Wakako Domoto. Hesitating at first, Wakako took the job. Speaking later, Ralph Carr's son Bob told the Tokyo Broadcasting System, "Even when he saw he couldn't stop [internment], he wanted to make sure they were treated as humanly [as possible], equal rights for all." And as Carr's granddaughter Katherine Lynch, later explained, "He wanted to demonstrate to Colorado, he'd trust them in his own home" (qtd. in Schragger 309).

Ralph Carr's Compassion

Aristotle insisted that the way to really learn virtue is to observe and imitate the life of a good person (21; book 2, ch. 1). Carr was a compassionate man, from whom we can learn much. What is compassion? Here is my definition: *Compassion is pain or distress a person feels in identification with the pain or distress of another, either an individual or a group, which inclines the one who feels it to respond with help.*¹ Ralph Carr was clearly distressed by the treatment people of Japanese ancestry received. He was angered by the hateful words and the actions of both individuals and the government. This distress arose from his identification with those who were being harmed. Carr saw immediately that the attack on those of Japanese descent was an attack on himself. "If you harm them, you must harm me." Ralph Carr's identification with the distress of others may not have been highly emotional, but it was genuine. He spoke of his stand as "the application of the Golden Rule to a very trying problem of life" (qtd. in Schragger 223). It was

based, among other things, on a strong sense that human beings share a common value, and that the violation of someone else's value is a violation of one's own value. Finally, Carr's experience of compassion inclined him to respond on behalf of those who were being harmed.

Ralph Carr's Courage

Compassion may incline one to act, but other factors may get in the way. One of these factors is fear and the threat of harm to oneself. It is here that we see the importance of *courageous* compassion. Nancy L. Schwartz has proposed that "courage involves acting well in the face of danger to the self" (341).² Schwartz's "practical definition" is helpful in summarizing the courage of Ralph Carr. He was motivated to act on behalf of Japanese people living in the United States. But acting well brought danger to himself. On a personal level, Carr faced the real possibility of physical attack, and even death, at the hand of those who opposed him. On a political level, he faced the danger of personal attack and political defeat. And finally, on the social and political level, he had to weigh the dangers of allowing Japanese people to settle in the state. Yet, in the face of all three of these types of danger, to his person, to his political career, and to his constituents, Carr knew he had to do what was right, and he had the courage to do it.

Aristotle suggests that courage is a "mean" between excessive fear and excessive confidence. It is not that a courageous person does not fear. The courageous person recognizes the dangers she faces. But she faces these dangers in the right way, in a balanced way. As Aristotle writes, "a person is courageous who endures and fears the things he should, in the way he should, when he should, and is similarly confident, since a courageous person feels and acts as things merit and in the way reason prescribes" (47; book 3, ch.7). Aristotle's words are a fitting description of Ralph

Carr. He did not minimize the dangers, but he acted as the situation merited and as reason prescribed.

The Need for Courageous Compassion Today

We live in a time of fear and terror. Shootings and bombings are reported abroad and at home. Rumors of terrorists among us are spread through the media and social networks. People fear the woman wearing the hijab, or the man who speaks with an Arab accent. Racist and hateful words are spoken, violent actions are perpetrated, against those we perceive as looking like the enemy. Our politicians do little to calm our fears. Instead they encourage them and manipulate us on the basis of them. They win our votes by pandering to our fear.

We live in a time when displaced people all around the world are searching for a place to live. Migrants fleeing sectarian wars in nations like Syria, Afghanistan, and Eritrea. Both Muslims and Christians flee violent persecution. They want to find a place to live in peace. And yet, because of their religion, or because of their ethnic heritage, they are feared and excluded. Reflecting the fears of their constituencies, leaders of nations speak out to bar their immigration. Within the United States, governors of state after state speak out against immigrants coming to their states. Presidential candidates propose walls along borders to exclude people trying to enter the country from Mexico and even suggest rounding up Muslims and putting them in internment camps. Politicians cry out that if we allow them to come, we will destroy our “national character” as a nation.

We live in a time when there is a tremendous need for courageous compassion. Political, religious, economic, and ecological factors have all contributed to upheaval in our world and tremendous suffering among our fellow human beings around the globe. We face a choice. Will we welcome these fellow citizens of the world with compassion, or will we exclude them

out of fear? Will we act out of fear, isolating ourselves with walls and barriers, or will we face our fears rationally, as the situation merits?

In reflecting back on his family's move to Colorado, Herb Inouye remembers his welcome to Colorado. "Governor Ralph Carr and the State of Colorado welcome you. How can I be of service to you?" Herbert could hardly believe what he heard, wondering what sort of man Ralph Carr must be. "What a noble and honorable man he must be? This one act," he writes, "changed my whole perspective on true Americanism and restored my faith in the United States of America" ("Memoirs - Part 2"). In the last fifty years, long after his death, Ralph Carr has been recognized by many groups for the courageously compassionate person he was. In December of 1999, the *Denver Post* named Carr Colorado's Person of the Century.

How will we restore the world's respect for the United States? How can we restore America to its greatness? By militaristic bravado? By building walls and excluding others? Or by becoming people of courageous compassion, committed to treating all people with respect, finding ways to help the homeless, the migrants, the oppressed, facing dangers with balance and reason? May we have the courageous compassion to do the right thing.

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Photos on pp. 34 and 38 used by permission of the Colorado State Archives.

Notes

¹ There is a rich discussion of the nature of compassion in the philosophical literature. A seminal article referred to elsewhere in other essays in this issue is Nussbaum. My own thinking was also stimulated by Cates, Crisp, Frakes, and Snow.

² As with compassion, there is a rich literature in the journals about the concept of courage. In addition to the Schwartz article referred to here, I have found the articles by Rorty and Neville helpful.

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Courageous Compassion: Cultivating Virtue in a Complicated World

Christine Darr

Abstract

When we are confronted with suffering, both locally and globally, we often experience a desire to do something. This article considers how we can channel that desire into a habit of responding to suffering in ways that alleviate the immediate need as well as work to end the root causes of suffering.

“Our human compassion binds us the one to the other—not in pity or patronizingly, but as human beings who have learnt how to turn our common suffering into hope for the future.”

Nelson Mandela

One day I was scrolling through my Facebook newsfeed when I saw a picture that stopped me in my tracks. It was a picture of a toddler, a little younger than my own son, wearing a red shirt and blue shorts and lying face down on the sand. He looked so peaceful, but the water lapping around his nose and face made it obvious he was dead. With tears streaming down my face, I started looking up more information about this small boy. I discovered he was a Syrian named Aylan Kurdi, one of the

hundreds of thousands of Syrians fleeing the conflict that had been ripping apart their country for four years. He was on a boat with his family when the boat capsized; he later washed up on a Turkish beach (Sly).

I was not the only one to be deeply moved by the picture and the story of Aylan Kurdi. His photo captivated an international audience and people around the world became aware of the suffering of the Syrian people, whose conflict has already resulted



The lifeless body of Syrian migrant Aylan Kurdi lies on a Turkish beach.
AP Photo/DHA/Nilufer Demir, ©2016 Associated Press

in over 250,000¹ deaths and hundreds of thousands of refugees like Aylan. As people became aware of the situation in Syria, many felt compelled to *do* something. On Facebook, folks were trying to collect baby carriers for Syrian

mothers who must carry their infants on boats and across borders. According to Allison Sherry, refugee resettlement organizations in Minnesota received an outpouring of donations of “coats, blankets, diapers, cash, and countless volunteer requests.” Other aid groups also saw a significant increase in financial and material donations directly after the picture of Aylan was posted online. World Vision, a Christian humanitarian organization, witnessed their donations almost triple in one day (Raab and Parvini).

Along with all these others, I too felt compelled to *do* something, and so I donated some money to a relief organization. However, that left me with the sense that I had just put a very small bandage on a very large wound. In my research on the Syrian crisis it became evident to me that the problems in Syria are *systemic* in nature, by which I mean they are a product of systems

that are put in place by human beings and yet have a momentum of their own, apart from human activity. For example, Syrians are fleeing their country primarily because they are being tortured and killed by the Islamic State, a fundamentalist Islamic group. The Islamic State has gained its power because of many complex factors: religious fundamentalism, United States involvement in the Middle East, U.S. economic foreign policy, Saudi Arabia, oil interests, etc.

Thinking about huge problems such as the Syrian refugee crisis often leaves me feeling incredibly helpless. There are many times when I feel like throwing up my hands and saying “I will live however I want; it doesn’t matter anyway.” And then I see a story like Aylan’s, or any number of other refugee stories, and realize that I do not have the option of giving up. As someone who cares deeply about justice, and who therefore believes that I cannot live an abundant life if my abundance is gained at the expense of others, I cannot choose to disengage—even in the face of seemingly insurmountable difficulty.

So, what should I do? What can we do?

Because of the complexity of these problems, what I can offer here is only a beginning, a recognition that complex problems call for complex solutions but that we all have to start somewhere. I have found the traditions of Christian liberation theology and virtue ethics to be helpful in examining what can often be a paralyzing moral dilemma. In what follows, I draw on these streams of Christian tradition to argue that the first thing I can do is try to become a person of courageous compassion.

As a Christian I am called to love my neighbor, which requires an awareness that my neighbors are human beings whose lives are precious and are inextricably linked to my own. However, I agree with Miguel De La Torre that for a Christian, to love one’s neighbor means “to question, analyze, challenge, and dismantle

the social structures responsible for preventing people from reaching the fullest potential of the abundant life promised by Christ” (9).

When the command to love one’s neighbor is taken seriously, it becomes clear that the compassionate response many of us felt when we saw the picture of Aylan’s body is a necessary but not a sufficient Christian moral response to the Syrian refugee crisis, or to suffering in the world more generally. It is important that I feel moved by those who are suffering and act so as to alleviate that suffering. However, unless I recognize the structures in place that perpetuate so much suffering in the world and work to change those structures, I am not fully loving my neighbor. The sort of compassion to which De La Torre points is a *courageous* compassion, one that understands the structures that lead to suffering and is brave enough to confront them.

By cultivating the virtue of courageous compassion I become a person who is naturally disposed to immediately perceive the story of Aylan in two aspects: the suffering and death of another human being who, like me, was made in the image of God *as well as* the larger context of the social structures in place that led to his body washing up on the beach. In this brief article, first I explore the nature of virtue and the meaning of courageous compassion. Then, I consider how a person who wishes to cultivate courageous compassion might begin to think, feel, and act in response to Aylan’s body and the Syrian refugee crisis.


Virtue and Compassion

My question in the face of Aylan and other refugees is: what can I do? This is an ethical question, because ethics is essentially the study of what ought to be done. Ethicists, people who study ethics, have attempted to answer the question of “what can I do” in a variety of ways. While there are many valuable approaches a person could take, the approach I will discuss here focuses on the

idea of *virtue*. Virtue ethics has its historical roots in the Greek philosopher Aristotle, but it has played an important role in the ethical reflection of Christian thinkers such as Saint Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century and continues to influence many contemporary Christian ethicists as well.

We use virtue language in popular conversation all the time—“patience is a virtue,” “she is so courageous,” “he made a prudent choice”—but we do not often stop to consider what it is we mean.

“Virtue” is a rich ethical concept that is well worth understanding more fully. So, what is “virtue”? At its root, virtue is a *habit* that involves our whole selves: our emotions, our thoughts, and our wills. A virtue is a habit of thinking, feeling, and acting in accordance with what a person takes to be the best life for herself and her community.



Virtue is a habit that involves our whole selves: our emotions, our thoughts, and our wills.

A virtuous person is a person who is so in tune with what she values that she always and automatically thinks, feels, and acts appropriately in each situation. While there is a lively debate about whether or not such a person exists, I agree with Aristotle when he says that when you have the shape of your target in mind, you are much more likely to hit your mark (2; 1094a).

Backing up for just a moment, Aristotle begins with the claim that when people act, they act with a goal in mind. Specifically, people act in accordance with “the good,” or what he ultimately calls *eudaimonia* (14; 1097b). *Eudaimonia* is often translated as “happiness,” but means something more robust than “feeling happy.” Within the tradition of virtue ethics, *eudaimonia* extends beyond a mental state to incorporate a person’s mental, emotional, and physical capacities. Scholars equate *Eudaimonia* with the term *flourishing*, and a person is said to be flourishing

when she is exercising her capacities to think, feel, and act to the best of her ability as she pursues her own well-being and the well-being of her community.

Additionally, as rational human beings, we are able to consider two sorts of well-being: the particular and the universal. What is good at this particular time? What is good, generally speaking? What appears good in the instant might indeed be good overall, but it often works the other way as well: what seems good at this moment might not get me any closer to what I take to be good for my well-being, generally.

This is most easily understood by walking through an extended example. Every morning I wake up and feel hungry. I am faced with a choice: what should I eat for breakfast? On my kitchen counter I see two options—a piece of coffee cake and a slice of whole-wheat toast with peanut butter and banana. On the one hand, the cake is warm and covered in delicious streusel and looks so good.

On the other hand, the toast looks crunchy and tasty as well. If I were another sort of animal, I might allow myself to choose simply on the basis of what looks most appetizing at this moment. But since I am capable of rational reflection on universal goods, I can consider my choice in light of my commitment to such universals as physical health. This morning, perhaps, I will choose toast because I know it will nourish my body and give me energy for my day. I might also consider how my choices will impact those around me: am I being a good example for my children? Will my choice enable me to do my work well today?

That is not to say that I will never choose coffee cake. Virtue is not a rule-based ethical framework—I have not established a rule that I must always choose in favor of the universal good of physical health. I might recognize that another aspect of my well-being is the joy of eating; part of becoming virtuous is figuring out how to

decide between competing goods. In any particular situation, which universal good is most important to uphold? We learn how to decide between competing goods partly through education by our parents, our friends, our communities, and partly from our own experiences of choosing and being disappointed or satisfied with our choices. As we choose and are satisfied, we reinforce that choice and begin to develop a habit of choosing in favor of that good.²

When we repeatedly choose to act in certain ways those actions become a habit of responding. Over time these habits become an ingrained part of our nature, so that we exercise them “with pleasure and promptness” (Mattison 59). For example, Steven is not a naturally grateful person yet he has decided gratitude is a virtue he would like to cultivate. At first, he must remind himself to look for reasons to be grateful about any given situation. It might be difficult at first to find these reasons. Yet if he persists—say, he keeps a gratitude journal for a few months—he will find that he sees more and more reasons every day to be grateful, many more than he saw in the past. His life situation might not have changed, but his own vision of the world has. The effort he must put forth to be grateful has diminished as well, so that he is able to view the world with gratitude gladly and effortlessly.

The tradition of virtue ethics has identified many different kinds of virtues a person might cultivate, including the four core virtues of courage, prudence, justice, and temperance. A virtue that is less often discussed but no less important, in my view, is the virtue of compassion. As is discussed by other articles in this volume, philosophers have understood the nature of compassion in a variety of ways. By identifying compassion as a virtue, rather than strictly an emotion, I wish to highlight that compassion is a way of thinking, feeling, and acting in response to the suffering of other human beings that can be chosen and intentionally cultivated such that responding with compassion becomes a habit and, furthermore, a lens through which one views the world.

One way to begin unpacking the nature of compassion is through contrasting it with the emotion of pity. Both pity and compassion involve sadness over the suffering of another human being. When I saw the picture of Aylan's body, I immediately felt pity—I felt grief at the tragic situation of this little boy. Emotion, while an important component of virtue, is not virtuous in itself. Emotion can arise within me without my choice or consent. I must choose how to respond to that emotion, using my ability to reason. A person's rational capacity allows her to think through how to act on that emotional response in ways that are useful or beneficial to further her own good and the good of her community (Barad 2007).

In her thoughtful and compelling articulation of compassion, Diana Fritz Cates highlights many key components of this virtue. She argues that compassion arises when a person sees the suffering of another human being and simultaneously recognizes that human being as, in some meaningful way, similar to her. Oftentimes compassion arises in response to the suffering of a friend. Drawing on Aquinas, Cates explains that friends are often understood as

another oneself, meaning friends become integral parts of each other's lives and one friend's well-being impacts the other. When my friend suffers, I experience that suffering in myself as well because her good is linked with my own. Compassion, in part, occurs when the pain of someone else resonates within my own body so that I feel to some degree the pain experienced by my friend. (177)

However, as we have said, compassion is not simply the emotional response to suffering. Cates argues that a compassionate person is someone who has trained herself "to become aware of and [emotionally] attached to friends in pain, *such that* we are moved to reflect upon and to determine the best possible response to their predicaments" (177, emphasis added).

While compassion might arise most easily and naturally in response to our friends, whose well-being we perceive as very tightly linked to our own, the Christian tradition makes it clear that compassion ought not to be restricted to our friends. For Christians—who are called by God to see all other human beings as brothers and sisters in Christ—the importance of seeing strangers as people like us, people who make plans and dream big dreams and experience disappointment and suffering, ought to be a central concern.

Living virtuously is always a matter of choosing in accordance with what we take to be the good for ourselves and our community. It involves a recognition that my good is inextricably linked to your good, such that I cannot flourish when you are suffering. However, developing a compassionate disposition does not entail that I ought to have compassion for every person I encounter. As Cates explains,

we are not obligated to become engrossed with every starving child that we see or about whom we hear, for . . . this could leave us incapacitated and ineffectual. But we are obligated to become engrossed with at least some of these children some of the time, such that we are *struck hard* by the horror of their situation . . . by the realization that, had our luck been different, that could have been us or our children. . . . (202)

We are obligated to do so because promoting human flourishing and working against suffering is simply what it means to be a compassionate person. Recall that Aristotle claims that what it means to be an excellent human being is being a person who exercises all her capacities to think, feel, and act to further her own good and the good of her community.

Being a compassionate person means being someone who perceives the suffering of others as, in some sense, her own suffering, and deliberating about the best course of action to

alleviate that suffering. Furthermore, cultivating compassion means shaping one's perception of people and world events such that she sees the web of connections that links us all and applies herself to deliberating about how she can respond to the suffering of others out of a commitment to her own flourishing and the flourishing of her community.

Compassion for Immigrants and the Need for Courage

With a more sophisticated understanding of the nature of compassion, let us return to the question posed at the beginning of this essay: what ought I to do in the face of the tragic suffering of Aylan and the millions of people like him? The first moment of compassion involves perceiving another human being in pain and recognizing that his well-being and my own are connected. Listening to Aylan's father tell the story of his boat capsizing and his son slipping out of his fingers into the sea, I feel deeply moved. In one sense, as has been said before, I relate to him as another human being or perhaps as a parent. I can use my moral imagination to place myself in that scenario and try to experience the situation from his perspective.


This response of being moved is a good first step, but in order for the response to be an element of compassion rather than pity, I must be moved to reflect and respond. Perhaps I research organizations that are helping to care for the refugees fleeing Syria and determine which ones are best to contribute money to. Performing a compassionate action such as sharing some of my well-being with another whose well-being is being diminished can be the beginning of a habit of responding to the needs of others freely and joyfully.

Perhaps I do develop a habit of contributing financially when I can to alleviate the suffering of refugees, in the hope that they will be able to make a better life somewhere else. Despite my best efforts the stream of refugees continues. As a person who wishes

to be compassionate, to be someone who has trained herself “to become aware of and [emotionally] attached to friends in pain, *such that we are moved to reflect upon and to determine the best possible response to their predicaments,*” then I might begin to question whether my initial response of financial support is the best possible response to the predicament in question (Cates 177). Certainly those contributions are alleviating suffering to some extent, but when such great suffering continues we must ask ourselves if there is not only a way to help those who are suffering but also to prevent the causes of suffering in the first place.

Within the Christian tradition, liberation theology has been a strong voice calling for Christian compassion to extend not only to

caring for those who suffer but to recognize and dismantle the structures causing the suffering in the first place. That is not to say that all suffering is preventable—of course it is not. However, from this



Courageous compassion is a stable habit of responding to the suffering of others thoughtfully and intentionally.

perspective it is the task of Christians to identify preventable suffering and to uproot it. In the face of so much suffering around the world, Christians must develop the virtue of courageous compassion. Courageous compassion is a stable habit of responding to the suffering of others thoughtfully and intentionally in order to alleviate their immediate suffering as well as work to eliminate the causes of that suffering.

In human history we can see time and time again that people committed to the pursuit of justice and love can transform corrupt social systems. In the last century we might think particularly of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States or the Anti-Apartheid Movement in South Africa. The people in these movements saw the suffering of their friends and the people in

their communities. In response to such intense suffering, they dedicated their lives to transforming the racist systems that kept black people in subordinate positions and, through their perseverance, gained significant advances.

Changing social structures is not simple or safe. During the marches, sit-ins, court cases, and freedom rides of the Civil Rights Movement, activists were confronted with hatred and violence at every turn. Many people died either as a direct result of their actions or merely by being associated with the movement. The kind of compassion required to confront the suffering caused by sinful social structures is compassion that has been emboldened by courage—the virtue that sees impossible obstacles to one’s goal and knows when to refuse to stand down. A person of courageous compassion sees the suffering of another and is moved to reflect upon the causes of that suffering—both immediate and systemic—in order to determine the best response.

Reflection into the systemic causes of suffering will often involve research and thoughtful critical analysis due to the complexity of the social structures we face today. Becoming more informed global citizens can be a stepping stone to becoming more compassionate people because we can be more aware of the web of connections that crisscross our globe and link us to each other. Such an education can also enable us to understand and begin to question the structures in place that keep some people in positions of vulnerability and others in positions of privilege. This sort of informed reflection is a necessary component of courageous compassion; if we try to solve problems without understanding the issues involved, our solutions will at best be ineffective and at worst exacerbate the problem.

Turning one last time to the situation described at the beginning, how might a person wishing to develop courageous compassion approach the issue of Syrian refugees? A thorough analysis of the

situation is beyond the scope of this article, but I will try to suggest some places to begin.

According to Russell Goldman, “more than 67,000 migrants have arrived in Europe by sea since the start of the year [2016],” and the total number of refugees to cross into Europe in 2015 was more than one million. Refugees from not just Syria but also from Iraq and Afghanistan are fleeing their homes because of the violence and war that have destabilized their governments, economies, and communities.

In the case of the current refugee crisis, understanding the origins of the violence in that region is the beginning of a reasoned response to the suffering that it causes. For example, many scholars of the region have identified our nation’s dependence on the oil in the region as a significant source of the current conflict and the reason for our own involvement in what oftentimes appear to be regional disputes.

Identifying the causes of suffering is the first necessary step in uprooting them. The next step often involves learning as much as possible about the people in the region who are working to eliminate or change those causes and determining how we can contribute to their success. The best course might, in the end, be a matter of contributing financially. Especially in international affairs, getting personally involved is not always the most effective or beneficial route to success; empowering those who are already on the ground can sometimes be our most significant impact.

Yet in the process of learning more about the situation, my perspective might be changed such that I become aware of my own dependence on oil, for example. Perhaps this awareness leads me to think more about how my own oil dependence reflects a national dependence on oil that perpetuates violent conflict. Over time, the more I cultivate a habit of understanding

my personal connections to global systems, I might develop the courage to pursue greater involvement in organizations working for social change. Compassion draws me to see another's suffering as my own and courage compels me to be brave enough to confront the causes of that suffering when I am able.

Conclusion

A virtue is a disposition to think, feel, and act in accordance with one's own understanding of what it means to live well. When we choose to cultivate the virtue of courageous compassion, we commit ourselves to developing a two-fold response to the suffering of others—a response that acknowledges both the personal and structural dimensions of suffering. Upon witnessing the suffering of another human being, someone of courageous compassion immediately perceives that person as a neighbor whom she is called to love. She is therefore moved to alleviate that person's suffering in whatever way she can. As she considers *how* to alleviate that suffering, she is aware that this person's pain might be a direct or indirect consequence of a social structure that is also causing pain to millions of others. She will therefore consider how she might work to change the structures in place that cause suffering.

It is unrealistic to expect that any time I feel compassion for the suffering of another that I ought to devote my entire life to the acts of courageous compassion I have described. The world is full of terrible problems and it is also filled with passionate and committed people working to solve those problems. I cannot bring Aylan back to life, and I do not need to solve the world's problems, but I am called to do something.

The primary calling of a Christian is to love God and love our neighbors; doing nothing about the suffering of others is not an option. Pursue education about the world's problems and needs. Cultivate empathy. Practice compassion toward individuals, but

also wisely critique and dismantle societal structures that cause harm. By choosing to act in accordance with our deeply held commitments we become people who live with integrity, and people acting with integrity in the pursuit of justice will change the world.

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Notes

¹The total number of the Syrian death toll is difficult to ascertain, with numbers ranging between 200,000 and 470,000 (Taylor).

²There is the danger that we might mistake what is good for us. People who have an addiction to alcohol, for example, choose in favor of what they take to be a good but what does not contribute to their well-being as most people would understand it. This issue of mistaken goods is important to consider, but beyond the scope of this paper.

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Courageous Compassion and Interfaith Friendship

Bonnie Sue Lewis

Abstract

Interfaith friendship is key to breaking down barriers of hostility and distrust between Jews, Muslims, and Christians. This calls for courageous compassion and creation of “sacred spaces” to welcome others into our lives. Practicing hospitality and an openness to the Other is not only fundamental to all three faith traditions, but enabled only through the God who first welcomed us and by whose grace and mercy we draw strength to love and serve one another. Interfaith friendships begin with making room for God.

The Invitation

I was to teach a seminary class on Christianity and Islam and knew so little of the latter. A friend had introduced me to the local imam, Dr. Adib Kassas, a Syrian psychiatrist in town, so I gave him a call. Could my friend and I have coffee with him some afternoon this week to talk about lecturing in my class? He laughed. “I’d be glad to, but it will have to be after dark,” he said. “It’s the last week of Ramadan.” I was embarrassed. I had made the first of many religious faux pas: I had not even realized that this was, indeed, the height of one of the most revered Muslim holy days, and one of the Five Pillars of Islam. Fortunately, Adib took my ignorance in stride and simply invited me and my friends to dinner

with the Muslim community of Dubuque on Saturday, for Eid al-Fitr, the festival celebrating the end of the month-long fast of Ramadan.

Thus, on that Saturday, September 11, 2010, nine years to the day after the Twin Towers fell, when a fanatic Baptist preacher was burning Qur'ans in Florida, and to the consternation of my family members who knew only of TV images of rampaging Muslim fanatics, I headed out to a Muslim home in rural Illinois.

Welcomed by our host, a retired Syrian engineer and his family, my friends and I feasted on dates, nuts, palak gosht, other succulent if unidentifiable dishes, and conversation with Muslims from around the world living in the Tri-state area. So began an incredible journey of discovery and shared companionship across religious and cultural boundaries, a journey that spawned a new community of Christian, Muslim and Jewish families engaged in dialogue, hospitality and friendship: the *Children of Abraham*.



Peace Rally: "Jews, Muslims, and Christians belong together!"

The Call to Courageous Compassion

Courageous compassion? Perhaps. If it is courageous to call the effort to understand and appreciate differences, a willingness to experience some awkward encounters of cultural disorientation and even misunderstanding, and create space in one's life for others to feel welcome. But compassion it certainly is: the Children of Abraham community that came out of these early bungling attempts to get to know one another has been truly marked by the desire on every side to extend the hand of fellowship and to seek understanding through the gifts of

hospitality and friendship. Jews, Christians, and Muslims share a common understanding that it is a merciful and compassionate God who calls us to reach out to others in hospitality and friendship. A response of courageous compassion—even in the face of fear or harm—is what creates a sacred space where not only is hospitality practiced, but God is glorified.

Today religion, or religious fanaticism, is frequently blamed for the hostility and violence that have shaken the world. News accounts are rife with images and reports of shootings, destruction, and mayhem created by fundamentalists of every stripe, raising valid questions of whether religion is guilty of causing more harm than good. As a professor of religion, Stephen Prothero notes, “Unfortunately, we live in a world where religion seems as likely to detonate a bomb as to defuse one” (7).

Regardless of how we view religious differences, the Abrahamic faiths hold in common the belief in a God who chooses relationship with the created and who calls us into relationships with others. It is difficult to be in relationship with those one

knows nothing about. To that end, founder and president of Chicago-based Interfaith Youth Corps, Eboo Patel, calls for “interfaith literacy.”

He claims that we must all learn “an appreciative knowledge” of other faith



Muslims, Christians, and Jews at Temple Beth El traditions that includes finding admirable traits in every faith and shared values, and then building upon the historical efforts of interfaith cooperation to disarm the tribalism and tensions between religious communities (95-96).

The time seems ripe for reclaiming what all the Abrahamic faiths (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) espouse in some form: love of God and extending compassion toward one’s neighbor. The 2007

open letter to Christians, “A Common Word Between Us and You,” written by Jordanian H.R.H. Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad and signed by 138 leading Muslim clerics and scholars, was a call for those of all three faiths to come together. As he claimed, “. . . whilst there is no minimizing some of their formal differences—it is clear that the ‘Two Greatest Commandments’ are an area of common ground and a link between the Qur’an, the Torah and the New Testament,” loving God and neighbor (bin Muhammad 45).

A month after the publication of the open letter, a collaboration of Christians replied in what has come to be known as the Yale Response with 130 signatories. In it, Christians applauded the courage of the Muslim community that issued the Common Word document, and affirmed that love of God and neighbor was central to both faith communities, notwithstanding “undeniable differences” (Volf et al. 53). Christians know that when asked to name the greatest commandment, Jesus responded: “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (NRSV, Matt. 22.37-40). And the order is important; loving God enables loving the neighbor. Making room for God allows one to make room for others. Friendship with God enables compassionate friendship with all those God loves.

While we do not all conceive of God in the same ways nor practice our faiths in the same manner, we can begin to learn about, gain understanding of, and show compassion toward the Other, because at root in all three faiths is a God who calls us to devote ourselves to him and to care for others.

The Practice of Hospitality

In his book *Reaching Out*, Catholic priest and theologian Henri Nouwen defines hospitality as “primarily the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy” (51). The Children of Abraham was founded to encourage just such opportunities. Recognizing how little we knew of one another, several of us began in that fall of 2010 to seek times and places to get to know one another better. John Eby, a professor of history at Loras College, who first introduced me to Adib Kassas, had begun informal conversations with the imam and with Jewish professor of computer graphics at the University of Dubuque, Alan Garfield. John’s vision for taking these conversations to the public was the genesis of the movement. I climbed aboard with another Loras professor, John Waldmeir, and we launched the first of what has become monthly interfaith conversations around designated topics common to all of us.



Children of Abraham Panel at Clarke College Chapel

These gatherings attract on average 75-80 people across the religious spectrum of Dubuque and provide space for a member of each of the three Abrahamic faiths to speak briefly on the chosen subject (creation, Abraham, Noah, holy books, humor, etc.). We then open the

discussion to table conversations and fellowship. All who speak do so as practitioners of their faith and from their own faith experience. They do not speak for their entire faith tradition nor as authorities of that tradition. However, they do speak freely and openly of their faith commitments, realizing that those who participate in a dialogue must come to the table with something

they believe in, something to offer, as well as an openness to the offerings of others. We do not seek a “single common denominator” in our faiths, but acknowledge that there are common threads running through each of the Abrahamic faiths, as well as profound differences. We want to learn more about each other and together discover not only the threads that bind us but also our differences, around which true dialogue can take place. We attempt to live out the idea that, as theologian David Bosch has noted, “true dialogue presupposes commitment” to a particular conviction. It also presupposes that God is already there inviting us into relationships with himself and each other, and none of us has God in our pocket (484).

Conceived from the beginning as an opportunity to offer hospitality, Children of Abraham

meetings are held at various locations around town, primarily in houses of worship. We found that meeting in sacred places, places where we ourselves welcome and are welcomed by the Holy One, best allows for the intent of creating spaces to welcome the Other. It encourages us to open



Muslim Dalia Rahim at Temple Beth El

our hearts to one another and provides avenues toward cultivating friendship. Along those lines, in 2014 the Children of Abraham began to offer what we called “Festival Hospitality.” Each faith community chose a particular holy day to share with the community and the other two faith communities helped provide a meal afterward. At the Jewish Temple Beth El, in 2014 and 2015, we all participated in building a *sukkah*, the temporary shelter to commemorate the Exodus, for Sukkot, the Feast of the Tabernacle. Their community had grown so small that it had been nearly a generation since the synagogue had been able to construct a *sukkah* and we all rejoiced to be able to return this tradition to their community. Later in the fall of those years, we



Jews, Christians, and Muslims build Sukkot

celebrated the 10th of Muharram at the Tri-State Islamic Center, a day of atonement (and fasting) that commemorates the Exodus during which Moses led his people out of Egypt. It provided an opportunity to learn of the importance to the

Muslim community of submission to God through fasting. In the spring of 2015 we held a Lenten service in preparation for Easter at Westminster Presbyterian Church and the following year it was hosted by St. Elias Greek Orthodox Church. This event allowed us to share insight into the significance of the death and resurrection of Jesus to Christians. Each of these “festivals,” as we have continued the practice, give us the chance to get to know one another better, to appreciate our varying faith commitments more fully, to foster deeper conversation, and to be both hosts and guests for the others.

Children of Abraham members further extend hospitality through study of our sacred texts, because “each tradition’s scripture is at the heart of its identity” (Ford 345). We do this through scheduling three of our monthly meetings each year to include study of a particular text chosen from the Qur’an, the Tanakh (the entire Hebrew Bible that includes the five books of the Pentateuch or Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings), or the Christian Bible. Following an explanation or interpretation of the text presented by a member of the community whose text we are studying, panelists of other faiths respond with insights, questions, or comments, and finally discussion opens up to the whole group. These monthly meetings reach a wider audience, but small groups meet for weekly interfaith Qur’an study and Bible study. Inviting others into a study of beloved texts makes

space for deepening relationships of trust and respect, even as greater understanding is gained into what undergirds and inspires the faith of the other. According to those who engage in the practice of studying sacred scriptures with members of the three Abrahamic faiths, “friendship is the true ground of scriptural reasoning” (Ford 350). In our five years of studying sacred texts together we could affirm that conclusion. We also found it true that “participants in scriptural reasoning all find themselves invited, not by each other, but by an agency that is not theirs to command or shape. There is an ‘other’ to the three traditions, and that seems in an obscure way to make friendships possible” (Ford 351). Yes, God seems to show up in these encounters as we wrestle with both the merciful and the more difficult passages of our texts.



Daughters of Abraham Lunch

In between these more formal occasions, wider friendships are blossoming. We women began gathering for monthly lunches more than a year ago and these now include regularly scheduled evenings spent in one another’s homes.

These are places where women can literally “let down their hair,” take off the hijab, and laugh and cry and pass around the babies to cuddle. For most of us, our circle of friends who eat together, play together, see movies or even babysit for each other now include dear friends of faiths other than our own. We have dubbed ourselves the Daughters of Abraham, and, indeed, we enjoy a sisterhood that has enriched each of us.

Occasionally the Children of Abraham community holds a special event, such as when we brought in comedian Azhar Usman in the spring of 2015 and 2016, or the special showing of the film *Jerusalem 3D* at the local River Museum in the fall of the same year. In January 2016, the Children of Abraham hosted “The Songs

of the Soul: An Interfaith Celebration of Chant” in the Dominican chapel at Sinsinawa Mound, Wisconsin. It was a delightful afternoon of shared music, worship and conversation. We have gathered together to march against violence in the community and the nation, and regularly provide meals for the Circles Initiative in Dubuque, a community-based organization for people in need. All of these events and activities offer the larger community the chance to build interfaith relationships across multiple boundaries, to open their hearts and minds to those who would otherwise be strangers in a time of increased violence and vitriolic rhetoric. As Nouwen claims, “To convert hostility into hospitality requires the creation of the friendly empty space where we can reach out to our fellow human beings and invite them to a new relationship” (54). It may even mean that we “readjust our identities to make space for them” (Volf 29). To our amazement, as word has spread, more and more people of Dubuque have joined our ranks. Our November 2015 gathering around the topic “Purpose of Life” crowded nearly 200 people into the synagogue!

Courageous Compassion: Womb Love

Compassion is “a virtue willfully extended toward friends and strangers,” according to ethicist Diana Cates (2). Cates reminds us that it is “a habitual disposition” that we choose to feel and act upon toward others, particularly those who are hurt or suffering. It is “a sort of reasoning,” according to philosopher Martha Nussbaum (28). Extending compassion can be an unexpected compulsion or “gut reaction,” but it is also a choice. To an extent, one can easily sympathize with or take pity on one who is in need, because we know what it is to be needy. We have often walked in those shoes, known sorrow or sickness, fallen upon hard times, been ridiculed, abused or cheated. We know what it is to despair, to be broken, to be rejected. Such pain opens us to the pain of others. Too much of it, though, can create “compassion fatigue,”

overwhelming us and making us shrink from acts of mercy or even caring. And compassion can fail completely when one becomes the victim of violence or hatred. This is when we most need help in the call to compassion (Cates 183).

The word “compassion” in Hebrew bears the same root as the word “womb.” Therefore, it is not a stretch to claim that compassion is “seeing another person as a sibling born from the same womb” (Williams 21). As siblings we belong, friend or stranger, to one another. As siblings we share a common parent, the God who will not forget us, because he has “inscribed us on the palm of his hands” (Isa. 49.15, 16); we are precious in



Children of Abraham Board Meeting

God’s sight and he loves all whom he has created. Muslim professor of Islamic Studies, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, at George Washington University, writes, “To live fully as a Muslim or Christian does not require anything less of us than loving the neighbor, whether he or she be Muslim or Christian, and it requires us not to ask, ‘Is he or she one of us?’ but to recognize that “He or she is one of His,” (Volf et al. 117). This is “womb-love.” Only the source of all love and compassion, who is God, however, can enable us to extend God’s love to others, especially when we find it difficult to do so. As we experience the love of God we are able to love others because God’s love lives in us, according to 1 John 4. Furthermore, “Those who say, ‘I love God,’ and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen.”

As a Christian, I believe that this love is manifested in Jesus, God's beloved son, who came that we might know how deep and everlasting is God's love. As the first chapter of John makes clear, "No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known" (John 1.18). Christ Jesus came in the flesh to bear witness to the one he called Father. He did so by "moving into the neighborhood" (Peterson, John 1.14). Thus, Jesus not only testified to God's love, but showed us how to live: by dwelling among, participating with and extending mercy toward all. It is the incarnation of Christ that reveals most fully the height, depth and breadth of God's love, but as all are made in the image of God, there is in each of us something of the divine image that reflects the loving nature of God. As Volf claims, "Love of neighbors is not the condition of God's presence in us; God's presence in us is the condition of love of neighbors" (Volf et al. 140). This we draw upon to welcome, to make room for the Other, especially when we find it most difficult to love. Indeed, the act of compassion, according to Cates, is the act of "being a friend" and people are "befrienable" because they have been befriended by God (234). This truth enables us to love others, as Christ did, sometimes even to our hurt.

Loving when it Hurts

I left the Qur'an study one evening frustrated, a bit angry and definitely hurt. Our discussions are often lively, intense, and, even inspiring at times. But this particular evening had bordered more on the intense. Around the table we were discussing the question raised by the passage, is Jesus a "sign" that points to God, and if so, what does that mean? As could be expected, the topic prompted some lively debate. The many references to Jesus in the Qur'an had prompted other conversations around the similarities and differences we hold concerning him. However, this time our passions and persuasions got the better of us. As we became defensive, we were less articulate and more strident in trying to

make our particular point. Not one to usually make waves, I found myself trying to outshout the primarily male-dominated conversation. It was not pretty. I finally embarrassed myself by threatening to leave if the testosterone level in the room did not subside a bit. Flustered, we all calmed down and the meeting broke up shortly thereafter. I came away glad that I knew we were friends enough not to let our strong passions drive a wedge between us, but I admit to feeling that I had not been heard.

The next evening I received a call from Adib. He asked my forgiveness. He held himself responsible for letting the discussion get out of hand. He felt he had let me down by failing to listen to my point of view. He valued my friendship and feared it had been jeopardized. I was humbled. I realized what it took for a man of his stature in the community to apologize, convinced as he was that his position was in the right. My anger and hurt vanished as I assured him that our friendship did not rest on simply his response to me, but on God’s call to love one another—regardless! I was touched by his courageous compassion and we were both moved toward greater regard for one another.

Conclusion



Jewish Leader Alan Garfield and Imam Adib Kassas

As the Children of Abraham in Dubuque wraps up its fifth year, and prepares for the sixth, we have learned a few things about interfaith relationships. But it is a story still being written.

We are yet finding our way to what it really means to be friends. As we have opened ourselves, our homes and our sacred spaces to one another, we have learned that “[o]ffering and receiving friendship breaks down the barriers of ‘us’ and ‘them’ and opens up possibilities of

healing and reconciliation” (Heuertz and Pohl 30). Loving others is not an option, it is a command of God. This we all believe and thus are committed to meeting regularly, over the long-haul, and especially when we sense misunderstanding among us. Joining together in meals, movies, family celebrations, and service projects, or simply dropping by for coffee, we have found that disagreements are not allowed to fester, misunderstandings are not allowed to divide us. We seek to model for the community the peace and love our faiths demand and are blessed beyond measure by the joy of finding we are part of a very large and sometimes unruly family.

We have also learned that loving others is only possible because of, and through, God’s love for us. This means nurturing our own relationships with God is crucial. The largeness and graciousness of God opens a space within us to invite others in. Apart from God’s love for us, we are incapable of loving others. I do not fail to pray that my Muslim and Jewish friends would come to know Jesus as I do. I know that my Jewish friends pray that we Christians and Muslims would not take ourselves and what we believe so seriously, and simply join with them in healing the world. I know that my Muslim friends pray we Christians and Jews would submit fully to God and revere the Prophet Muhammad. What matters more to me than *what* they pray for me, is that they care enough *to* pray for me. Because praying enlarges the heart, gives courage to love, and pleases God.

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Courageous Compassion: A Response to Barz, Darr, Lewis, and Ebertz

L. Ripley Smith

I was making my way through my university's dining center, surveying the lunch entrees, when one of the men behind the counter recognized me as the men's soccer coach.

"How's your team look for next season?" he asked in a heavy East European accent.

"Oh, pretty good. You never know until you get all of the players into camp what sort of team you'll have," I replied.

"Ah, yes, I see. Well, I have a friend that will be moving here from Bosnia soon. He was a top player in Sarajevo, a very good coach. You should meet him."

That was my introduction to Voja and his family, refugees from Bosnia in the mid-1990s. Voja's wife was struck by a combatant's bullet in their home on Christmas Day several years earlier, and consequently she and their two children received expedited refugee status and were quickly resettled to the United States. Voja, however, was not granted refugee status and was subsequently conscripted into the Bosnian army where he served on the front lines digging combat ditches. He once told me he

would ask God every day to get him through the war and back to his family; “I will be content to eat grass every day of my life, if only you will reunite me with my family” he prayed. Leaving behind his home, auto repair business, soccer club, friends and extended family, he eventually was able to join his wife and children the spring I met him. That spring was also the beginning of my education on the plight of the 45 million displaced people around the globe, an uncomfortable journey grappling with what it means to have to flee the security and safety of all that is familiar in your daily life and literally rely on the mercy and compassion of others for survival.

This special issue on courageous compassion could not arrive at a more critical juncture. The very salt and light of our nation are being decided amidst the torrent of vitriolic political rhetoric, and the immigration conversation could very well be the litmus test. Will we become a nation of walls and division, or as Barz (this issue) reminds us, will we continue to lift the welcoming lamp of liberty to “the tired... poor... homeless... wretched refuse” of other lands? The essays in this journal offer unique perspectives on what courageous compassion looks like in relation to the changing immigration dynamics in our country, but Barz, Darr, Lewis, and Ebertz all agree that a shared Judeo-Christian ethic does not allow the option of detachment.

Each of their essays provides insight on both the source of compassionate engagement and courageous solutions to real dilemmas. All of the authors do so without shying away from the complexities of the underlying issues. Any conversation about immigration involves thorny push and pull factors like conflict and poverty in the country of origin, improved employment opportunities, safety, quality of life, and access to resources, as well as family and social network dynamics. Add to that equation the fact that most of these factors operate on two distinct policy levels: first, immigration policy deals with the size and composition of the immigrant population, with the Department of

State prescribing entrance levels and quota objectives, and; second, immigrant policy outlines how migrants are treated once they arrive and the levels of service to which they are entitled. From national government offices to local communities, the immigration conversation has implications for who we are, and will be, as a nation.

Underpinnings of Compassion

Barz interrogates the meaning of compassion by way of illustration from the novel, *The Outsiders*, and in the process reveals some of the underlying qualities that characterize not only acts of compassion, but compassionate lives. It seems that compassion is not a root-level behavior or virtue. Rather, it is the fruit of a set of experiences and values, incubated in such a manner as to produce a self-transcendent, as opposed to a self-serving, individual. Self-transcendent behavior is marked by a universal concern for others and benevolent action that is constantly at odds with our competing hedonistic desires for achievement, power, and success (Schwartz). Clearly, the trail of life experiences had turned Johnny's and Ponyboy's lives from self-interested gangsters to heroic rescuers, which provides hope that any of us can turn the corner toward a more compassionate lifestyle. However, turning that corner requires that we face the fears that keep us from living lives congruent with our values. Barz identifies three common fears that often keep people from responding compassionately to immigration issues, and he argues that this is where courage comes into the picture.

There are many fears associated with increases in immigrant populations, fears that are shared around the globe in the face of "immigration crises." I was speaking to a graduate school in Stuttgart, Germany, shortly after Chancellor Angela Merkel announced that her country would receive 800,000 Syrian refugees. That is an astounding number of refugees to resettle for a nation of 81 million people. The United States, with a population

of 320 million people, only resettles 75,000 refugees annually. Understandably, the decision provoked many fears. How will the introduction of that many people affect existing German cultural patterns? Will the demands placed on the social welfare net adversely affect those currently dependent on government support? Will migrants take work opportunities away from legal citizens? Will there be an increase in crime and terrorism? Facing our fears surrounding identity, economy, and security takes courage, as Barz rightly points out.

In reality, most of our fears surrounding immigration are unwarranted and fueled by ignorance. The average American citizen has at best a vague understanding of the various legal classifications of immigrants, the annual percentages entering the US, the process of becoming a legal permanent resident, and the actual benefits immigrants are entitled to receive. For example, the economic fear commonly attributed to undocumented migrants is that they are taking jobs away from legal Americans and burdening the social welfare system without paying taxes. The reality is that an estimated three out of four undocumented immigrants *do* pay income taxes. The catch is that because they are usually employed using falsified social security documents, they will never benefit from the social security taxes they have paid into the system. Furthermore, because they do not have valid social security documents, they are actually ineligible for social welfare programs like Earned Income Tax Credits and state health insurance programs like Medicaid; “No undocumented immigrant... can legally receive any cash benefit from the government” (Soerens and Hwang 42). In fact, most immigrants, even those with legal status, must wait until they are eligible to apply for citizenship (a five-year wait) before they can qualify for public benefits.

Biblical Instructions on Receiving the Stranger

Sadly, our fears surrounding immigration often override our ability to see Christ in the stranger. If we are able to see that God is at work in the life of the stranger, and somehow we have crossed paths with God's plan for that person, then we become part of that salvation or sanctification story by our grace-filled response (Pohl 97). Certainly there is no question about how we should respond to the stranger if we look to scripture for counsel; God's concern for their welfare can be seen in numerous passages like Exodus 22.21, "Do not mistreat a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in Egypt." And just to make sure we understand the importance, it is reiterated in Exodus 23.9, "Do not oppress a sojourner; you yourselves know how it feels to be sojourners because you were sojourners in Egypt." God's direct care for the stranger is made clear in Deuteronomy 10.18, "He defends the cause of [executes justice for] the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing." Our own care for the stranger in our midst is assumed in texts like Leviticus 25.35, "If one of your countrymen becomes poor and is unable to support himself among you, help him as you would a stranger or a sojourner, so he can continue to live among you." Clearer still is the instruction in Leviticus 19.33-34, "When a stranger lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. The stranger living with you must be treated as one of the native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were strangers in Egypt. I am the Lord your God."

Christian identity is less about demographic alignment than it is about quality of behavior.

The Biblical expectations of our care for the stranger go beyond charity, however, and speak to our underlying fears. We see sub-texts of work-provision in Leviticus 19.10 and 23.22 where the

Israelites were not to over-harvest their own crop land, but rather leave sufficient work opportunities for the poor and stranger to provide for themselves. In Deuteronomy 24.14 there is an implied employment relationship, when the Israelites are counseled to “not take advantage of a hired man who is poor and needy, whether he is a brother Israelite or a stranger living in one of your towns.” We also see clear instruction on legal standing in Leviticus 24.22 in which the Israelites are told “You are to have the same law for the stranger and the native-born.” Discriminatory practices were not condoned. And Job models an advocacy role when he says, “I was a father to the needy, and I took up the case of the stranger” (Job 29.16). In like manner however, the stranger “living among you” who wanted to participate in community institutions and practices needed to “do so in accordance with its rules and regulations. You must have the same regulations for the stranger and the native-born” (Num. 9.14). And according to Numbers 15.15, this was a “lasting ordinance,” not just a temporary stop-gap measure.

To the point of these Biblical instructions, Barz reminds us that Christian identity is less about demographic alignment than it is about quality of behavior—demonstrating compassion, humility, kindness and patience makes one more Christian than attending a specific place of worship. We see God’s heart toward the refugee, immigrant, and stranger clearly in scripture. He loves and cares for them. He wants us to demonstrate charity toward them in our actions. He will not tolerate discriminatory practices in employment or legal contexts. And He ultimately expects us to resonate with their cause as fellow strangers and work toward justice on their behalf. Ernest Hemingway famously wrote to his friend, F. Scott Fitzgerald, that courage is grace under pressure (199-201). Barz admits that demonstrating grace in the face of shifting cultural tides, economic uncertainty, and even concerns about personal and community safety is not easy, but if we are to embrace God’s heart in these matters, our path is clear.

The Question of Social Responsibility

Darr makes the immigration question very personal, “I cannot live an abundant life if my abundance is gained at the expense of others...” She connects the foundation of the Christ-follower’s call to compassion to a recognition that her blessing, the good fortunes she finds herself experiencing, is not for personal enjoyment alone. Rather, as children of Abraham, we are blessed in order that we can be a blessing to others; “Now the Lord said to Abram, ‘Go forth from your country, and from your relatives, and from your father’s house, to the land which I will show you; and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing’” (Gen. 12.1-2). It appears clear enough that Abraham, and by extension we as his children in the faith, are blessed by God in order that we can extend that blessing to others. This anchor point for compassion is distinct from the self-transcendent motivators Barz identified in that it recognizes that compassion flows from our own state of happiness (blessedness) combined with an inherent need for personal meaningfulness. But making the issue personal cuts both ways. At the same time Darr recognizes her personal abundance, she also realizes how small she is in comparison to the scope of the problem.

One of the most debilitating obstacles people face in choosing to get involved in compassionate caring is confronting the question, “but what can I do?” Darr attributes part of the dilemma to the unique quality of our digital, Facebook generation. We are exposed to such an overwhelming global range of concerns and injustices for which we might show compassion that the effect can be to shut us down to them all. The implications are that, left alone as individuals, we are relatively powerless and ineffectual against the mythical size and complexity of the “enemy.” The problem is compounded by Darr’s observation that we cannot simply privatize our involvement either. We cannot simply pay

forward our own personal blessing, because some of that “blessing” may be ill-gotten gain. Instead, we need to examine our naïve participation in societal structures that contribute to the causes of inequity. She suggests the uncomfortable proposition that our engagement often means confronting the structures of injustice - the same structures that might offer us comfort and security, unaffected by the injustice. It takes a special kind of courage to ask oneself, “how am I responsible for the Syrian refugee crisis or undocumented immigrants?” If we’re honest, the “enemy” is often a policy at its root. And policies are initiated and shaped by the polity.

One example of policy creating an immigration problem on our own border has to do with the restricted paths to legal immigration in the U.S. There simply are not many options. Some of my friends who have emigrated from East Africa have humorously said that it is easier to get into the kingdom of heaven than it is to enter the United States. Unless you have an employer that has petitioned on your behalf, are reuniting with family that already possess lawful permanent residency (LPR), find yourself persecuted in your home country, or win what is known as the diversity lottery (a special classification to admit applicants from previously underrepresented countries—capped at 55,000 per year), there really aren’t any other avenues toward acquiring a U.S. visa for LPR. Even with family connections in the U.S., it is a long shot for most migrants with limited education and few financial resources, and it can take up to ten years to complete the process. The undeniable policy fallout is thousands of people entering the country without proper documentation (Soerens and Hwang 95). Soerens and Hwang, both professionals in the refugee resettlement field, state, “While we need not necessarily condone any violations of the law, such as living in the United States illegally, we should recognize that our complex and inadequate immigration system has made it impossible for many of the hard-working people that our country needs to enter or remain legally or to be reunited with family members” (111).

Darr urges us in closing to consider the question, what are the limits of our responsibility with regard to the immigration crisis? One answer for the Christ-follower is that we are called to use the resources we have (invest the talents) to the best of our ability, not bury our head (talents) in the sand. We see a similar answer in Jesus' admonition to love those "nigh unto you." The executive director of one refugee resettlement agency in Minneapolis is fond of saying, "The Lord is bringing the nations to our doorstep." If that is true, then there are very real and tangible ways we can involve ourselves in the plight of displaced people locally. However, limiting ourselves to local participation might be too restrictive in some cases, and certainly insufficient to meet the needs of global crises that call for our involvement. In these cases Darr is wise to challenge us on the basis of Christian obligation and family—when one suffers, we all suffer. To that end, one practical step for all those called to compassion-motivated activism is to join with an organization that is actively involved in addressing immigration policy issues, both nationally and internationally. Such a step is a courageous commitment to be sure. But Darr reminds us that virtues like compassion are not one-off behaviors, they are enduring attitudes and responses to the plight of our neighbor.


How Far Does Shared Humanity Get Us?

Several of the authors in this volume, Darr included, suggest that our compassion is rooted in our shared humanity and the *Imago Dei* we see in the Other. While bearing God's image provides the basis of human dignity, compassion that observes and appreciates cultural differences requires another level of cultural sensitivity beyond shared humanity.

Interculturalist Milton Bennett draws a distinction between sympathy and empathy that is at the heart of intercultural competence (203-34). He notes that sympathy, however well-intentioned, is grounded in our own experience, evidenced by

statements like, “I know how you feel,” or, “I don’t blame you, I would feel the same way.” A sympathetic response imagines oneself in the same situation as the Other, and Bennett argues that as such, it is a product of ethnocentrism and a faulty assumption of similarity. The most common approach to cultural differences is to minimize them, reflected in the sentiment “once you get past the differences in language, food, and clothing, we’re all really just human at the core.” Over sixty-five percent of the population ascribes to this ethnocentric attitude toward people who are different from themselves (Hammer 482). The problem with this approach is that what we really mean by “we’re all just human” is that, “you’re really just like me.” This type of thinking easily evolves into the related practice of requiring conformity as a prerequisite for acceptance (e.g., 19th Century assimilationist policies).

Empathy, on the other hand, reflects on the differences between self and the Other based upon the assumption that our experiences are not alike (which if we thought about it for even a moment, from fingerprints to brain wave patterns, should be obvious). Empathy does not presume similarity in frame of reference and, therefore, requires some degree of relationship in order to be effective. Bennett defines it as participating in the intellectual and emotional experience of the Other. It entails perspective-taking, not perspective projection. True compassion is borne not from imagining how I would feel in similar circumstances, but is rather substitutionary – by taking the place of the Other, complete with their pain, struggle, and emotions (Hebrews 4.15 may sound familiar: “for we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weakness, but we have one who



True compassion needs to be rooted in empathy, fully recognizing that the Other is uniquely made in the image of God.

has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet he did not sin.”).

True compassion needs to be rooted in empathy, fully recognizing that the Other is *uniquely* made in the image of God. As our next author illustrates, recognition at that level requires some degree of personal relationship

Knowing as the Antidote for Fear

On the evening of October 15, 1962, just under one year before his famous “I Have a Dream” speech, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., addressed a group at Cornell College in Mt. Vernon, Iowa, on the question of progress in race relations. During this foreshadow of the “Dream” speech, he called on people of good will to demonstrate leadership by ending their silence and interacting with each other on the issue of race: “. . . I am convinced that men hate each other because they fear each other. They fear each other because they don’t know each other, and they don’t know each other because they don’t communicate with each other, and they don’t communicate with each other because they are separated from each other.” Lewis’ pursuit of shared spaces, where people can speak freely and safely about their faith journeys and learn from others’ experiences on distinct paths, reflects precisely the intent of Reverend King’s comments in his speech at Cornell. Once we know each other personally, it is much harder to hate.

The success of the *Children of Abraham* fellowship can be attributed in part to its embrace of the essential elements for positive intergroup contact: 1) equal status among all members; 2) a shared sense of purpose; 3) a sense of cooperative dependency; 4) sufficient intimacy in communication, and 5) a supportive social climate (Allport). But not only is Lewis on point in her relational bridge-building, she adds an important dimension to our understanding of courage. Normally when we think of

courage we envision people who are bold, strong, and determined in their course of action. However, Lewis insightfully begins her essay on a personal note of cultural embarrassment in her quest to initiate an interfaith dialogue. The embarrassment she admits to hints at one of the basic character prerequisites for intercultural communication—humility. Educator Ricky Lee Allen highlights humility on the part of the dominant group as a critical factor in establishing dialogue with marginalized or underrepresented groups (65). Sometimes it takes more courage to be humble than it does to be strong.

What Lewis is doing in her local community is truly subversive, in the best sense of the word. Using the simple channel of hospitality she is winsomely disarming prejudice, fear, and ignorance. Professor of Christian Social Ethics, Christine Pohl, thinks hospitality is countercultural by nature, in that it pushes back on accepted traditions, comfort zones, and taboos, and creates a space for recognition and *communitas* with the marginalized; “Especially when the larger society disregards or dishonors certain persons, small acts of respect and welcome . . . point to a different system of valuing and an alternate model of relationships” (61). Contemporary uses of the term “hospitality” have drifted toward the idea of entertaining friends and family, but the Greek (*philonexia*) and Latin (genitive *hospitis*) origins of the word referred to friendliness shown to guests generally, and more specifically, *love to strangers*. Lewis resuscitates the original meaning of hospitality as she courageously challenges stereotypes and ideological boundaries.

It is almost guaranteed that this interfaith community will have its detractors as fears grow among the dominant population about alternative God-fearing groups that ascribe to different sets of convictions, convictions that may even seem to be at odds with local laws and statutes (Bailey). But the power of hospitality, writes Pohl, resides in the subtle transformation that takes place in self-perception in the context of social recognition. When

someone who is characteristically marginalized and undervalued is recognized and valued by a respected person in a social setting, it changes how they see themselves as well as how others perceive them in the broader social system. It offers a tangible corrective to societal stratification that, if left unchecked, leads to a variety of inequities and injustices (62). John Wesley once commented on a similar type of transformation that comes through personal contact, “One great reason why the rich in general have so little sympathy for the poor is because they so seldom visit them” (Wesley “On Visiting the Sick,” qtd. in Pohl 76). As a result of the Children of Abraham meetings, friendships have blossomed, producing a *shalom* that can weather disagreement.

In the end, Lewis’ focus on the *communitas* available in the margins of faith reminds us of a lesson the evangelical church learned in the early twentieth century when there was a shift toward acceptance of newly-arriving immigrants that appeared to be “the result of increased personal acquaintance with the vilified new immigrants” (Soerens and Hwang 60). It is easy to demonize and discriminate in the abstract, but once a relationship has been formed, empathy becomes possible.

Of Walls or Welcoming

On November 14, 2015, I awoke to a text message from my wife: “Just turned on the news... so sad. I think you will be busy tomorrow altering your Paris plans. I’m so sorry.” I was in Croatia with a group of students, one week out from going to Paris when the coordinated attacks happened at the soccer stadium, Bataclan theatre, and several nightclubs and restaurants. Over the previous two months, in both Austria and Hungary, our study abroad team had become familiar with the waves of Syrian refugees making their way toward Germany and Sweden. We had seen with our own eyes the human fallout of terror and displacement, but the Paris attacks brought a new sense of proximity to the danger of the Other. In both Syria and Paris, the Other was marked by a

particular ethnic and religious heritage. And in both cases, it is all too easy to stereotype all people with those backgrounds as threats. Ebertz's chronicling of Herb Inouye's and Governor Ralph Carr's WWII experience presents us with the same challenge. How can we acknowledge that there are threatening people in the world that inflict harm on others without extrapolating those cruel intentions to all who share a similar ethnic or religious identity?

One of the answers to that dilemma is evident throughout the narrative of Governor Carr's uncommon love for the stranger, a



Perhaps in order to be most alive, we need to pour out mercy and compassion to others.

love that believed in the uniqueness of every person, always anticipated the best of them, and always stood its ground in defending them despite the personal cost (viz. 1 Cor. 13.7). Carr and Inouye's intersecting story draws our

attention to the question of "who is my neighbor?" To which Jesus responded with the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10.29-37). Recall that the Samaritans were descendants of Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, recipients of a begrudged blessing from Jacob in the sight of the other tribes. The tribes of Joseph had settled in Samaria (also blessed to be the most fertile land in the region) and as a result of conquest and interethnic marriage over the course of many centuries had, in a sense, become multicultural. The Israelites of Jesus' day detested the Samaritans because they worshipped other gods alongside Yahweh and had tainted the purity of Jewish faith and culture. The Samaritans had even resisted the Jews' efforts to rebuild Jerusalem after they returned from exile in Babylon. There was no love lost between these racial, ethnic, and religious divisions.

So when Jesus responds to the lawyer's question in Luke 10, He is making a point that is as relevant today in Ferguson, Dearborn,

and Dubuque as it was in first century Jerusalem. Imagine the people group with whom you are most disaffected, most threatened by, least willing to extend the right hand of fellowship. Now imagine a person from that group as the Good Samaritan in Jesus' story. Ebertz's call for resisting the hateful rhetoric of wall-building requires that we redouble our commitment to preserve the constitutional rights and freedoms of the Samaritans in our communities. That we recognize with merciful compassion the downtrodden immigrant and refugee without regard for nationality, ethnicity, or religion. The two essays by Ebertz and Lewis intersect on this note in that, "the twin moves of universalizing the neighbor and personalizing the stranger are at the core of hospitality" (Pohl 75).

The opposite of wall-building is welcoming, and the resonating joy I felt as Ebertz recounted Herb Inouye's surprise and relief upon hearing the unfamiliar welcome when they reached Colorado was profound. In my work with refugees from places like Somalia, Burma, and Iraq it is not uncommon to hear them exclaim "this is the first time we have been welcomed anywhere" when they are greeted at the airport by resettlement staff and volunteers. But just as profound as my joy was in hearing of the welcome Inouye received, so was my disappointment when our team was in Croatia on hearing of the many state governors that were closing their doors to Syrian refugees out of fear. Ebertz's question lingers in my mind, "How will we restore the world's respect for the United States? How can we restore America to its greatness?" The answer is pretty clear in my mind.

Conclusion

Author Tim Stafford suggests that global migration patterns are part of God's larger plan—a challenge to the complacent church. Our decision is whether to receive the challenge as a gift or not (9). Ultimately, all immigrants aspire to the same dream George Washington shared for his new land of liberty, "Each of them will

sit under his own vine and under his fig tree, with no one to make them afraid” (Mic. 4:4, qtd. in Mayfield). Perhaps that is a hope we can share and advocate for on behalf of our new neighbors.

Each of the authors in this special issue has illustrated courageous compassion in his or her own way, shedding light on its origins and outcomes. And while none of the authors explicitly mentioned the personal benefit one gains from demonstrating courageous compassion, an analogy comes to mind that can clearly be seen in their essays. I haven’t been to Israel yet, but many friends who have visited have shared with me their experiences at the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. The Sea of Galilee is a beautiful, fertile environment, filled with a variety of exotic species and blooming with wildlife. The Dead Sea is completely opposite. The salinity levels in the water are so high that it can’t support aquatic life and the shoreline is desolate. Both are fed by the same Jordan River. But one of the characteristics of the Dead Sea that contributes to its lifelessness is that it has no outlet. The water it receives is not cycled and passed on, flowing out to refresh other spaces. Perhaps in order to be most alive, we need to pour out mercy and compassion to others. And, perhaps most courageously, even to the strangers in our midst.

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