



Newsletter: Anniversary Edition

Special thanks to all of our donors, volunteers, students, residents and clients who have accompanied us through our 20 years.



Celebrating the Dedicated Work of Judy Broadbent.

The Refugee Forum provided a venue and an opportunity for the FCJ Refugee Centre to mark their 20th anniversary by honouring Judy Broadbent, of the Maytree foundation, for her many years of dedicated service for refugee students.

Judy's commitment is easily understood through the Maytree Scholarship Program which provides scholarship opportunities to refugee students, and a community of support. Judy has developed this programme which recognises not only the academic but the emotional and social needs of students who are often alone in Canada.

To date 160 students have benefited from the Maytree Scholarship program.

FCJ REFUGEE CENTRE

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Refugee Forum: Balanced Refugee Reform Act and the Future of Refugees in Canada

Popular Education

The Centre offers a variety of workshops to settlement agencies, frontline workers in shelters, and to refugees. Our two main programs are:

Sharing Skills and Resources with the Settlement Community. This program provides province-wide training and educational resources and information on issues related to legal protection. These workshops are sponsored by the Law Foundation of Ontario and are free of charge.

On-going workshops for Settlement workers. Professional development: This unique training programme provides opportunities for networking, sharing of information and expertise, as well as the sharing of innovative approaches that address current and emerging issues within the settlement service sector.

We deliver around 100 workshops in different cities around Ontario, each year. Through these presentations settlement workers and clients benefit from informative sessions about different topics related to immigration. We keep updating each presentation according to the information emerging from the Immigration authorities.



On Tuesday, October 25, 2011, the FCJ Refugee Centre and The Salvation Army Immigrant and Refugee Services co-hosted a day-long forum at Harbour Light Ministries. This forum provided the opportunity to hear in-depth presentations about the upcoming changes to the Canadian refugee law with the implementation of Bill C-11, the Balanced Refugee Reform Act. The Bill is scheduled to be enacted in June 2012, and will involve important and wide reaching changes affecting both current and future asylum seekers in Canada.

Over 200 members of Ontario's immigration and settlement community attended the forum, bringing with them questions and concerns about the proposed changes. These participants represented a wide range of community groups, including settlement and social workers, representatives from government and non-governmental agencies, legal practitioners and individual refugee claimants. They heard six panels throughout the day consisting of thirteen presenters who provided an overview of the new bill and outlined key stages of the revamped refugee program, including the refugee eligibility interview, hearing and appeal process. Presenters also offered a description of an assisted voluntary return program to be overseen by Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) and advocated for regularization of people living with precarious status. Question and answer sessions were held after each panel to give attendees the opportunity to further clarify the issues of concern.

The diverse group of panellists included: Janet Dench (Executive Director of the Canadian Council for Refugees),

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Leah Johnston (Project Manager at Canada Border Services Agency), Pamila Bhardwaj, Adela Crossley, and Maureen Silcoff (Immigration Lawyers); Soheila Pashang (Professor at Seneca College), Sean Rehaag, (Assistant Professor at Osgood Hall Law School), Peter Showler (Director of the Refugee Forum at University of Ottawa Law School), Lois Anne Bordowitz (FCJ sister, volunteer and board member at the FCJ Refugee Centre. She is also a member of the Toronto Refugees Affairs Committee), Francisco Rico-Martinez and Loly Rico (FCJ Refugee Centre Co-Directors) and Giovanni Rico-Bolanos ((FCJ Refugee Centre Advocacy and Volunteer Coordinator). The panellists' varied experiences and perspectives provided a holistic understanding of the proposed changes.

Primary concerns that came out of the panels included the speed of the process, as it will



Special Award

In our 20th anniversary we acknowledged Judy Broadbent of the Maytree Foundation, a person who has walked side by side with us in our journey with uprooted people.



limit the applicants' ability to prepare their claim and to secure counsel. Professor Peter Showler expressed his concern that, "It's simply too fast, with tremendous emphasis on speed of process, not efficiency of process. And this speed of process disadvantages virtually every refugee, since they don't have enough time to prepare their claim or translate their personal experience into the judicial process." Showler added that, "The new process will create greater need for legal representation, just as funding for legal aid is falling drastically. It will be outrageously inadequate under this new system." Moreover, Janet Dench, among others, expressed her concern over the new interview process, which limits claimants' ability to tell their story, as their written documents are replaced by an interview summary produced by the IRB employee. This may be particularly detrimental to vulnerable claimants.

Overall, the forum provided an important opportunity for those involved in different aspects of the refugee determination process to gather a clearer understanding of the upcoming changes. More discussions will follow as other implications come to light.



FCJ Refugee Centre: 20 years of History

Born in El Salvador, Francisco and Loly got involved and started working with human rights in their native country. After their arrival in Canada in 1990, and with the experience they had as refugees, they thought about people who didn't have their experience and knowledge, and started advocating in open spaces, Francisco and Loly didn't want refugees and other uprooted people to feel isolated and/or frustrated due to the lack of services appropriated for them so, in 1991 Loly and Francisco decided that they were going to dedicate their lives to provide those services and created the "FCJ Refugee Centre" with the support of the sisters Faithful Companions of Jesus.

Their vision, when they opened the Centre was "to provide the kitchen table that people left behind in their country". When people leave their country they travel and stay in different places, and they don't even have a safe place to sleep or eat. In many countries the place where you cook is a symbol of sharing and it is one of the first things that people start to miss when away from home. The office was created with the vision of reflecting a house that invites everyone to eat, opens the door for everybody, welcomes everyone to the kitchen table.

Most challenging and successful cases

The FCJ Refugee Centre has encountered several challenging cases. Francisco and Loly recall the one where a Mexican mother and her two daughters were removed from Canada because they lost their refugee case.

The oldest daughter was killed in Mexico after they returned. Staff at the FCJ Refugee Centre started working on the case to try to bring the mother and the youngest sister back. And after a lot of hard work a positive result was forthcoming. The co-directors said that "to bring someone after the system has refused them" is very unpredictable.

"They came here and we didn't know what would happen when we submitted a humanitarian application". This month, during our celebration, the mother phoned us to say that they received an acceptance in principle. The FCJ Refugee Centre have been working in the case for four years.

Dreams

"We are what we are because people started asking for that": the FCJ Refugee Centre started with one bedroom and after 20 years, the Centre expanded to 4 houses where can accommodate around 30 women. Later on people started to request legal assistance.



Alongside shelter therefore legal assistance became part of the services we offered. Through this program the organisation was able to accompany people throughout their refugee claim or any other immigration process (sponsorship, Humanitarian and Compassionate application, etc). Beside this program the co-directors explained "people started coming because they didn't know how to fill in the forms and they were calling us for our expertise" so we decided to implement the program that is called POPULAR EDUCATION and we started to provide workshops. Every year we deliver around 100 workshops. We train 2000 people per year. The FCJ Refugee Centre is moving forwards to promote the creation of the IMMIGRATION OMBUDSMAN "This role does not exist and the centre desires its creation. We want to protect and promote the human rights of refugees enforcing the gender perspective. We think that one of the most vulnerable sectors in immigration are women and children, because the reasons for their migration are unsustainable environments. For the FCJ Refugee Centre the ombudsman component will protect and promote the human rights of all immigrants and refugees whilst putting an emphasis on the gender perspective. That is what we want to do, that is a dream, and we don't know if it is going to be possible to do it but in 5 years we will know. We hope to move in that direction.

This fall there were ten arrests made because nineteen Hungarians were forced to work in construction in the Niagara-Hamilton region. This was the first human trafficking case that was charged as a labour dispute rather than sexual exploitation. Canada has taken steps forward to minimize human trafficking through prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership. The rehabilitation of victims however has been completely ignored as immigration focuses on the law instead of the psychological well being of the victims. There is currently a temporary residence programme designed to assist the victims of human trafficking but there is no programme in place that helps them to gain permanent residency in Canada. The FCJ Refugee Centre holds workshops that educate clients and keeps the public aware and up-to-date on the various amendments to immigration policies and procedures, as well as the changes in the First Nation communities. This includes who and how the NGOs funding will be issued when assisting victims nationally or internationally; changes in regards to the Canadian legislation and any topic on human trafficking including the collaboration needed to create an anti- human trafficking taskforce.

**A great service for professionals
working within the settlement and
integration sector!!**

Free Training Workshops

TOPICS FOR WORKSHOPS
(Length of each topic: 2 hours)

Refugee	Non-status	Immigration
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The Balanced Refugee Reform Act: changes in the future of refugees in Canada▪ Refugee Process▪ Refugee interview▪ Refugee Hearing▪ Refugee Appeal Process▪ Voluntary Return▪ Work Permit application▪ Interim Federal Health renovation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Alternative services for precarious migrants▪ Humanitarian and Compassionate application (H&C) and changes implemented▪ Trafficking: causes and legal options	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Recent changes in the Immigration and Refugee Legislation and Their Impact▪ Family sponsorship.▪ Provincial Nomine Program▪ Violence against women and immigration law▪ History of immigration in Canada▪ Sponsorship breakdown <p>... and more topics</p>

FCJ Refugee Centre will provide for each workshop...

- The facilitators for each workshop
- Transportation for facilitators
- Resource material including PowerPoint presentation



FCJ Refugee Centre

To schedule a workshop and get further information contact

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Mechanism to Regularize Precarious Migrants in Canada

The Refugee Forum also provided an ideal audience to unveil a new proposal, developed by FCJ Refugee Centre Co-Director Francisco Rico-Martinez, for the Federal Government to create a mechanism to regularize precarious migrants in Canada. He described this as necessary, due to the current backlog of 40,000 pending refugee claims and 40,000 Humanitarian and Compassionate (H&C) applications that are currently before immigration authorities, thus preventing another backlog under the new system.

The term precarious migrant may refer to the vulnerability of individuals who do not have any legal entitlement to be in Canada, or who may possess some form of immigration status, but it is imposed with specific conditions and parameters. Both of these situations leave people vulnerable to being removed from Canada at a moment's notice. The existence of these impermanent or illegitimate immigration statuses is the result of the unfair, inequitable and restrictive nature of our refugee and immigration system. Therefore, any plan towards regularisation for these populations requires an addressing systemic problems on some level. People find themselves with precarious immigration status or without status in Canada for a variety of reasons, but most relates to their experiences of oppression on the basis of their race, gender, disability, social status, economic status, age, and/or variation from

gender or sexual norms. The mechanism proposed involves the relaxation of the Humanitarian and Compassionate grounds so that all H&C applications will in fact be assessed in a manner consistent with Canada's obligations under International laws and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and that the economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights of all applicants will be protected and respected. Therefore, Rico-Martinez suggests that the people who would be able to apply for this program are: a) persons who have already submitted a Humanitarian and Compassionate application and the decision is pending; b) a refugee claimant who has not attended their refugee hearing under the current refugee system when the Balanced Refugee Reform Act takes effect; c) persons who submit their humanitarian and compassionate application before June 29 2012. However, people who decide to use the relaxed humanitarian and compassionate program will have to withdraw any other refugee or immigration application that they have pending. To assess risk under the relaxed humanitarian and compassionate program is imperative particularly if the person has to withdraw his/her refugee claimant application. The mechanism would require that every applicant pay the current fees to start the process, but the relaxed H&C will provide stay of removal for the processing time. Finally, permanent residency will be granted if the applicant meets at least two of the relaxed H&C criteria.

Check the complete document at our website:

<http://www.fcjrefugeecentre.org>

Awards and Recognitions

Through these 20 years, FCJ Refugee Centre has received several recognitions because of the hard work and companionship with uprooted people. Some of the most recent acknowledgments are:

- Certificate of Recognition given by San Esteban Parish.
- The Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture Trevor Bartram Award.
- Award of Excellence given by Walk- with- Me for unwavering dedication and compassion in working with victims of Human Trafficking.
- Certificate of Appreciation in recognition for the support for field Education 2009-2010.
- Community Leadership Award given by the Salvadorian Canadian Association of Toronto (ASALCA) in recognition of her Relentless Work for Refugee Rights.



Francisco Rico-Martinez receiving a certificate of Recognition from the Parish of San Esteban in Toronto.

Gala Celebration – Thursday November 17th 2011

The celebrations for our 20th Anniversary continued and culminated in our Gala Dinner on Thursday 17th November 2011. The Lithuanian Hall on Bloor Street West was transformed through multi-coloured table cloths, flags and simple yet effective table decorations. As six o'clock approached and staff and volunteers waited, our guests started to arrive.



Members of Parliament were in attendance as were members of the CBSA, current and former residents, religious from the many local congregations along with FCJ sisters and Companions in Mission. Sr. Yvonne McKinnon fcJ, the FCJ sister who had first welcomed the Rico family into 83 Hamilton Street, then an FCJ House flew in from Edmonton for the event and for Loly and the family this was the icing on the cake!

Throughout the evening, many of the speakers referred to the FCJ Refugee Centre family, and no matter where you looked in the room throughout the night people, this 'family feel' was self-evident. We were united for one reason - to celebrate the generous response of Loly and Francisco, through the FCJ Sisters to the outsider. Loly was radiant with joy as she welcomed friends, past and present and her whole being echoed her wholehearted commitment to reaching out to the stranger in the twenty years since she and her family arrived in Canada.

Sr. Patricia Binchy fcJ, Provincial Leader for the Province of the Americas of the FCJ Sisters, opened the evening, followed by a speech from Francisco Rico-Martinez, co-director of the FCJ Refugee Centre.



A video enabled by the funding of one of our donors, Gerry McCullough was shown putting into film, the story of FCJ Refugee Centre from its humble beginnings to its well respected place in the city, some twenty years later. Speakers during the evening were Joe Mihevc, city councillor for Ward 21, Jonah Schein, Member of Provincial Parliament for Davenport (NDP Party), Andrew Cash, Member of Parliament for Davenport (NDP party) and Sharry Aiken. The evening entertainment included Leah Hunter, Julie Lassonde, Ana Rojas and many others. The buffet meal included a whole range of food from different cultures and topped off with a wonderful Anniversary cake that was enjoyed by all.



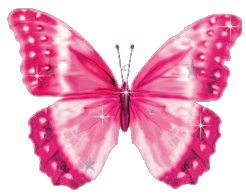
The guest book that was filled in during the evening is evidence of the gratitude and love with which the work of the FCJ Refugee Centre is held:

"To everyone who is part of the FCJ Refugee House, thank you and congratulations for your passionate commitment to refugees and refugee rights. Your work is wonderful."
Mary Corkery and Ted Hyland.

"Happy 20th Anniversary! Thank you for making me one of the residents. I came here, in a big city and you opened your house and gave me a home. I will be always grateful... Much Love." Nathalie

"To everyone in the FCJ Refugee House family thank you for your work, dedication and commitment to those in our world that need our support, understanding and protection most of all. Congratulations on 20 years of building a better, fairer and more just city, country and planet."
Andrew Cash MP-Davenport

As many commented, let the good work continue into the future, though we live in "outrageous hope" that the people we serve may one day not need our help.



Photos from our Gala Celebration

