



FCJ Refugee Centre

Walking With Uprooted People

2019



SUMMER NEWSLETTER



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CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS OF INFORMATION AND UPDATES

With the situation for asylum seekers at the U.S.-Mexico border becoming harsher every day, we are eager to support and collaborate with organizations working on the ground in any way that we can.

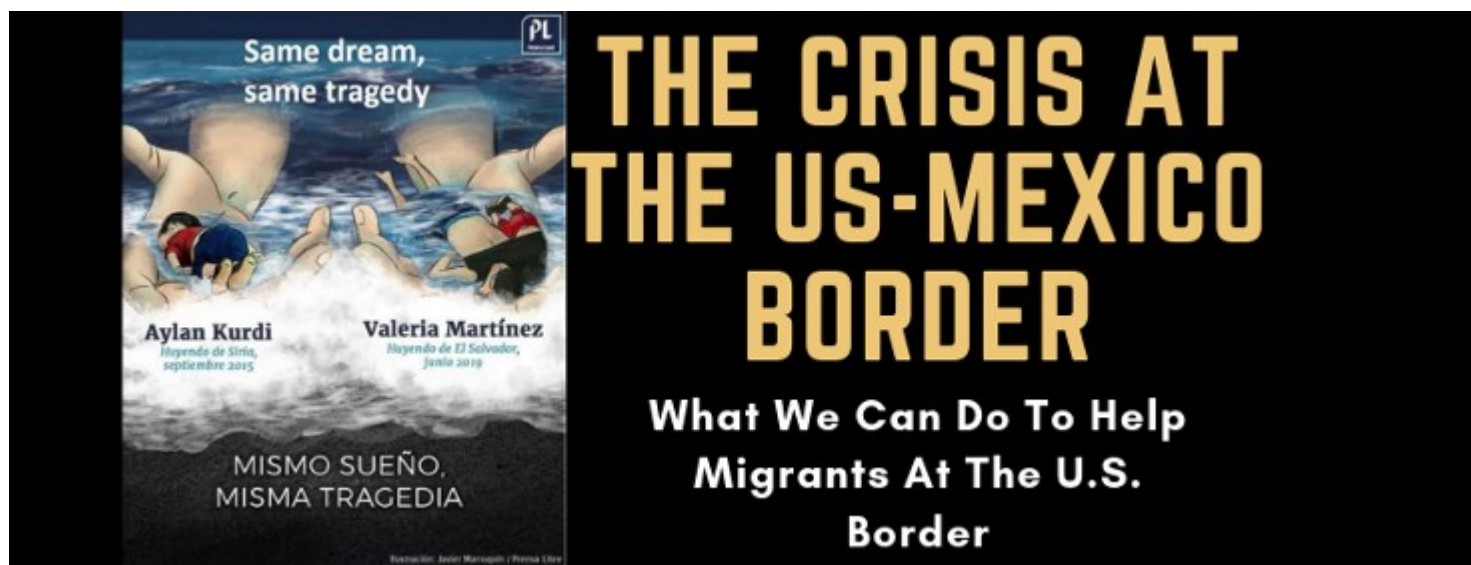
With the situation for asylum seekers at the U.S.-Mexico border becoming harsher every day, we at the FCJ Refugee Centre are eager to support and collaborate with organizations working on the ground in any way that we can. While we are physically far from the border, it is in our hearts and minds constantly. We are connected closely to the people at the border through their families and friends who are here in Canada and come to our offices, through the people who have made their way to Canada from South and Central America, and through the people who will make their way here in the future.

We have become aware of a project by ACT Alliance “Humanitarian Assistance for Central American Migrants” as well as advocacy campaigns by other organizations in Canada and the US. This is a call for updates and information through writing, photographs, or videos, and ideas. What can Canada do to support the organizations working on the ground in Mexico and at the U.S.-Mexico border, in regards to humanitarian relief and immigration?

One of our concerns is about the United States considering Mexico a Safe Third Country, and highlighting the vulnerable conditions for

migrants in Mexico regarding not enough shelter, sickness and inadequate medical treatment, and homelessness. Find more details at our website:

fcjrefugeecentre.org



CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS OF INFORMATION AND UPDATES

Canada must not be complicit in the U.S. assault on Central American refugees

Article published on June 2019 by The Conversation

<https://theconversation.com/canada-must-not-be-complicit-in-the-u-s-assault-on-central-american-refugees-121023>

U.S. President Donald Trump regularly asserts that the United States is under attack by foreign invaders and that he is the only one willing to stop them. Who are these invaders? Central American asylum seekers, mostly from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador.

Amnesty International calls this region “one of the world’s most violent places, with more people killed there than in most conflict zones globally.” Médecins Sans Frontières says that the “violence suffered by people in (these countries) is comparable to the experience in war zones where MSF has been present for decades.”

Much of this violence is caused by criminal gangs, for whom kidnapping, extortion and murder are standard practice. Gender-based violence — including sexual violence and intimate partner violence — is also extremely common. Law enforcement officials in these countries are often complicit in both gang violence and gender-based violence. Even where they’re not complicit, they are generally ineffective in stopping the violence.

Not surprisingly, hundreds of thousands of people have fled these countries, exercising their right to seek asylum.

Raftsmen set off across the Suchiate River carrying unregulated people from Guatemala into Talisman, Mexico in June 2019 headed ultimately for the United States.

The Trump administration, how-

ever, has done everything it can to discourage these asylum seekers from coming to U.S., despite international legal obligations to provide protection to refugees.

Some of the harsher measures include: forcibly separating asylum-seeking families, detaining children and adult asylum-seekers in inhumane conditions, militarizing the southern border, firing tear gas across the border at women and children asylum seekers, declaring that people facing gang violence or gender-based violence do not qualify for asylum, and, of course, building (or at least talking about building) a border wall.

Inspired by Canada

The United States has even drawn inspiration from Canada in its bid to block the arrival of Central American asylum seekers, using the Canada-U.S. Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA) as a model.

Under the STCA, Canada returns to the U.S. most refugee claimants who present themselves at the border.

The United States is seeking to persuade Mexico and Guatemala to agree to similar arrangements that would allow the U.S. to send asylum-seekers who make it to the United States back to those countries. Absent such agreements, the U.S. has used threats of tariffs to induce both countries to block asylum seekers in transit with the aim of preventing them from getting to

the United States in the first place. The U.S. has also announced that, in contravention of international law, it will no longer provide asylum to most applicants who travelled through any country where they could have sought refugee protection — essentially all Central American asylum seekers.

In all of this, Canada has been remarkably quiet. Under the STCA, Canada continues to turn away Central American refugee claimants who present themselves at an official border crossing. Canada has also initiated discussions with the U.S. about expanding the STCA to cut off other routes into the country involving irregular border crossing.

Nonetheless, Central American asylum seekers who circumvent these barriers and who make it to Canada will mostly be recognized as refugees. According to statistics produced by Canada’s Immigration and Refugee Board, the refugee claim grant rates in 2018 for these countries were: El Salvador, 72 per cent; Guatemala, 64 per cent; and, Honduras, 57 per cent.

So when the Trump administration attacks this group of asylum seekers and denies them protection, they are attacking people who mostly meet Canada’s refugee definition. Canada must not be complicit in these attacks against refugees.

At a minimum, Canada should not be sending refugee claimants

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from these countries back to the United States under the STCA. The U.S. is simply not safe for them. But Canada should do more than that.

Canada should stand up for international law by condemning the American assault on this group of refugees. And Canada should do its part by helping refugees from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras get around the barriers that the U.S. is placing in their path by bringing them to the country under refugee resettlement programs.

COALITION OF SERVICE PROVIDERS

The Coalition of Service providers is alarmed because of the increasing number of vulnerable population looking for support after the legal aid cuts. The agencies of the Coalition respond to the needs of refugee claimants in Ontario, helping them to



navigate the complex refugee determination system. This includes assisting them to have access to legal representation. However in the last period of

time the situation has been critical. On this note the coalition continues working collecting stories/cases of people who are experiencing the impact of the legal aid cuts as part of the advocacy work in this area.



LIBRARY AT FCJ REFUGEE CENTRE ON WEDNESDAYS

EMILY GREENSTREET

As part of the Community Librarian program, I worked out of FCJ Refugee Centre once a week to provide services to a group that may experience barriers accessing Toronto Public Library resources. Like many people, I have passed FCJ multiple times without knowing it was there, the house blending into the residential neighbourhood. This is fitting, as one of the things I enjoyed most about my time working here is the family atmosphere. The staff really care about the community they're serving and they welcomed me equally warmly. Although the bulk of my role involved issuing library cards to new Torontonians, I also assisted clients with registering for computer classes, searching for library material in their language, and provided info on the popular Museum + Arts Pass. I especially enjoyed working with the youth group, whose intelligent and funny comments were always the highlight of my day, and I hope to remain connected and participate in the design and implementation of the FCJ mural project in the future.



REFUGEE HEARING SESSION: READY TOUR

The expansion of the program in Toronto is looking to help refugee claimants to prepare for their hearings. A Ready Tour is a refugee hearing orientation session and has become a key resource for unrepresented claimants. After the legal aids cuts we see an increasing number of participants with no legal representative.

Are you a refugee claimant? **Ready Tour!**

You are invited to participate in a tour of one of the IRB-RPD refugee hearing rooms in Toronto!

What is going to happen during my hearing?

How can I be ready for my refugee hearing?

Who is going to be there?

What is the place like where I have to go for my hearing?

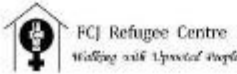
LEARN

- ▶ How to navigate the refugee hearing process
- ▶ What is a refugee hearing
- ▶ What to expect at the hearing
- ▶ Who might participate at the hearing

READY tours take place twice a month at 74 Victoria Street, Toronto, on the 4th Floor.

Registration: [contact](mailto:ctewes@fcjrefugeecentre.org)
[Carolina Tewes](mailto:ctewes@fcjrefugeecentre.org)
ctewes@fcjrefugeecentre.org

Or visit www.fcjrefugeecentre.org

 FCJ Refugee Centre
Working with Unsettled People

CALENDAR

August 15th

August 22nd

August 29th

August 30th

(Pilot session in Spanish)

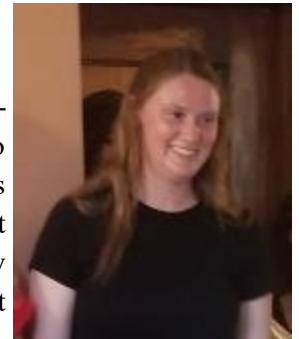
SUMMER STUDENTS

Deme Smith

As a student of sociology and environmental policy from the United States interested in non-profit work, I was looking for an opportunity to apply what I have learned in the classroom to the “real world.” When I learned about an internship opportunity at FCJ Refugee Centre, I was excited to experience what I had learned through my studies. Even so, I was nervous about coming to Canada for 8 weeks without knowing anyone, but everyone at FCJ was incredibly kind and welcoming. The staff’s dedication and passion for their work is inspiring; they want to help anyone they can.

From the very first day I felt directly involved with the organization. Even in the short time I’ve worked here, I already feel like the work I’m doing matters, which is not something all interns can say about their positions. I’ve had the opportunity to work with clients directly, research, and write. Most importantly, I’ve been able to interact with people I never would have otherwise.

The experience I have gained from working at FCJ was invaluable. I feel much more prepared for my future professional career and I have FCJ to thank. As I return to the United States to continue my studies, I will always think about what I have learned here.



Sally Rylett



What I really loved about my time at the FCJ Refugee Centre is the mix of a busy, fast paced environment with the vast amount of love and passion that everyone there brings.

I worked on a team led by Diana, who seems to be working on a million cases at once, with a combination of other students and staff. We were thrust into working on people’s files and applications, which I think made us really learn well what we were doing, as well as give us confidence and self-determination to continue learning new things.

There’s a lot going on any day at FCJ. There’s people work-

ing in healthcare, housing, with women and children, in anti-human trafficking, and in legal assistance. I found it a really great learning opportunity because while I was working on a specific team primarily with government and immigration applications, I was able to see what everyone else was working on. One of the main philosophies at FCJ is that everyone is working together as equals and partners, at the core they are really “Walking with uprooted people”. Everyone there, whether it’s a worker, volunteer, someone seeking a service or assistance, or just a friend, is all part of the FCJ community.

Something that demonstrates the community at FCJ I think is the way that meals are shared. In the morning before anyone starts to work, everyone shares a cup of coffee or tea in the kitch-

en. Sometimes someone will have brought a snack to share, either from home or from a recent trip. The whole team also has lunch together everyday, occasionally signalled by the smoke alarm because the person cooking got caught up with a busy task, and everyone sits and shares a few moments together to eat and chat. In December I went to the Christmas party where the whole FCJ community is invited. Dinner and drinks are provided for everybody, and toys and presents are given to the kids. The atmosphere was so lively and full of fun., and really emphasized what the heart of FCJ is about. I really loved my time at FCJ, and met some really amazing people that truly inspired me.

A REFUGEE WORLD CUP TOURNAMENT FOR THE AGES

As four footballing worlds collided, this past weekend, I was totally reminded that the beautiful game, as it's affectionately known, is designed to not only bring out the best in players but it also demonstrated how much in common we all have. The tournament took place at Dufferin Grove Park, where a talented team put on their cleats, shin guards and jerseys and prepped their teams.

The four magnificent participating teams were Adam House, Matthew House, FCJ Refugee Centre and Romero House. There were players as young as 6 or 7 years old and legends of the game north of 45. It was gender neutral, and that to me was what made this even more special. It created equal opportunity for all to shine. The tournament was meant to last from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. providing thunderstorms wouldn't halt the competition. Everyone was clearly excited and ready to rumble to determine who the best in the jungle was.

The first game of the afternoon took place between Adam House



and Matthew House. It was a very intriguing game as it was close between the two teams as they consistently went back and forth, matching each other stride for stride. It was a great demonstration of free-flowing football. They couldn't separate themselves as the game ended 1-1. They had to settle this via penalties. Their link was so strong that they went to sudden death to get the eventual winner, which turned out to be Adam House.

The next match was Romero House vs FCJ. I was part of the FCJ team, as we held our own against Romero House. We scored first, only for them to

equalize before half-time. It was a tough match, but we persisted after some excruciating pressure with our goalkeeper bailing us out many times. With two quick counter-attacks and goals being the conclusion, we won our match 3-1.

As the day progressed and the weather began to change from extreme heat to dangerous thunderstorms, the goals of the tournament changed. After our match the little stars in the making took to the field to showcase their talents and I previewed the future with my own two eyes. After that we took to the field for the finale. Unfortunately for us the FCJ squad was depleted due to some of our players having other engagements, so we merged up with Romero House, to fill the squad.



STREET PARTY

Thanks to each one of you for joining us during our street party. Once again we had the opportunity to celebrate not only the neighbourhood's diversity – but also Toronto's, as well as Canada's – welcoming arms. Among clients, sister organizations, neighbours, friends and other FCJ community members, we celebrated diversity.



**GREAT
PRICES!**

**8:00 am
to
2:00 pm**

**CLOTHS
ELECTRONICS
SHOES
DECORATION
KITCHEN
GARDEN
etc.**

**SUPER GARAGE
SALE AUG 10**

COME AND SUPPORT US!!

**208 OAKWOOD AVE.
(ST. CLAIR AND
OAKWOOD)**

416- 4699754

www.fcjrefugeecentre.org



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