

WINTER NEWSLETTER 2017



BORDERLESS VOICES ON REFUGEE RIGHTS DAY

Moving to a new country is not easy. Now try moving to a new country with a 15 day old baby, without your 5 other children you had to leave back in the country you have just fled and without your husband, not knowing weather he is dead or alive. This is even more difficult.

This was the case for a young woman named Lydia fleeing her country to Canada .Lydia arrived in Fort Erie, Ontario in July of 2001. She came only with her 15 day old baby and the vision of a safe life here in Canada. When Lydia was asked how she felt when she arrived in Fort Erie, she said “I was just crying”. Lydia came to Canada not knowing anybody and was still not back to 100% health as she had given birth only 15 days prior to coming.

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www.fcjrefugeecentre.org

Why Refugee Rights Day is on April 4th?

This day is the anniversary of the Supreme Court's 1985 Singh decision. In this decision the Supreme Court found that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms protects the fundamental rights of refugees.

The Court decided that ‘everyone’ includes refugee claimants in the sentence: ‘Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice.’

Refugee claimants are therefore entitled to an oral hearing, in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice and international law.

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EVERY DAY IS FAMILY DAY AT FCJ REFUGEE CENTRE



Getting ready for our special dinner on FAMILY DAY



Decorations inspired by youth for every occasion



FCJ Refugee Centre birthday crew blowing the candles during celebration

The first person Lydia met was someone named “Sister Lois”. One of the FCJ Refugee Centre’s staff. Lydia recalls her first interaction with Sister Lois. “She hugged me, she held my baby and said ‘You are home. Don’t be worried’. When she hugged me I felt secure”. When Lydia and her baby were brought to FCJ Refugee Centre, she was shocked by the welcome she received “When I arrived, she had already prepared my room, a stroller for my baby, blankets, clothes, everything was there. Again I was shocked. I was given \$60, and one of the volunteers named Regina took me to No-Frills to go shopping”.

“After a week I accepted it. I said ‘I will be ok’. I was positive. They got a lawyer for me, welfare and school.” Things seemed to be looking up for Lydia and her baby. However, being a world away from her kids and husband is not an easy thing, especially when you know they are in danger. “It was very hard [Being away from my kids]. I fell into a depression. I tried to protect my kids from far away, and that is not easy. I was just crying everyday. But Loly (Co-Director of the Centre) was always there, telling me ‘No worries. I will do all I can to help you’. She was saying this because I said I was going to give up, that I was going to go back home. But if I went back home I would die.” Luckily, Lydia’s children were able to join her here in Canada after 6 years. Unfortunately her husband was not so fortunate; “We live with the dream that one day I will get a call saying they found my husband somewhere. They [the kids] wait for that call. As of now, nothing.”

“When I see Loly I see my life. I don’t call her, I don’t come here [FCJ] but she is always there”. Lydia began her life in Canada here at FCJ Refugee Centre and is glad (as we are) that she did. “FCJ Refugee Centre is the best ever. I will never forget my experience. I am doing wonderful every single day. Because of them I got a job, my kids finished their school/university, they got married. I say it is thanks to FCJ. Without them, I don’t know how I would have been emotionally or financially. They give you love, they give you everything. There is nothing I can do to repay them. Even if I gave them diamonds, I can’t repay what they did for me. I was in need and they were there. I will never forget them. That’s why I say here [FCJ] is home. I can go anywhere in the world but I will always come back here. This is my house. I love them a lot, they truly helped me a lot”.

After being asked if she had any advice for people coming to Canada she said; “Be positive, trust yourself, believe in God and believe in the people surrounding you. No matter how much your life has changed, no matter how far away from home you are, always remember who you are. If you forget your past you are not a human being”

Lydia.

FCJ HEALTH CLINIC

FCJ Centre's Primary Health Care Clinic continues to work on Wednesdays (9:30am to 12pm) and Saturdays (9am to 1pm) by appointment. On average, the clinic takes between 5 to 7 patients in the morning. On Saturdays, the clinic also receives family groups with about 3 or 4 members, with longer appointments of approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour.

Most people come because they were referred by other community centres or previous clients. Many of them walk in (especially on Saturday), not knowing that it is necessary to book the appointments. Other challenges faced by the clinic are language barriers, since about 60% of the clients need interpretation, usually Spanish or Portuguese. Due to difficulties for the clients, there is a lack of access to previous medical records, which could help the doctor assess the situation. Most clients are also not familiar with the health care system and which services the clinic can service. Related to that, some clients do not know that even without status in Canada, they can still access hospitals for emergency services.

INFORMATIVE SESSIONS

Do you need support on immigration/settlement issues?

We welcome anyone asking for information and support regarding Immigration/Settlement issues.

- Humanitarian and Compassionate Consideration Process
- Conditional Permanent Residence
- Permanent Residence application
- Work permit
- Sponsorship Applications

- Refugee Process
- Legal Aid application
- Family reunification orientation
- Renew permanent residence Card
- English classes
- Visa extension

- Travel Document
- Invitation Letter
- Furniture Bank referral
- Social Assistance
- School enrolling
- Shelter/transitional housing referral
- Medical referral
- Clothing Bank

YOU ARE WELCOME TO COME ON MONDAYS
(Except long weekends)

WALK INS ARE FROM 10:00 AM TO 4:00 PM
Informative sessions are possible thanks to the support of



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TAX CLINIC

FCJ Refugee Centre will open the Tax Clinic for 2017 in March. It will be available on Saturdays.

This is the third year FCJ Refugee Centre is opening the tax clinic.

The clinic will provide help with tax forms and further assistance related to tax for low income people. The service is free of charge and the only thing required by the clients is to bring their documents and personal information.

Tax Clinics & Volunteer Tax Services

WORKSHOPS

We continue providing training to shelters, settlement organizations and other community partners. Through the first period of the year we provided 9 trainings to different agencies.

Due the high number of precarious migrants looking for information, we are implementing informative sessions at our location.

Every Monday we provide individual orientations from 10am to 4pm.

FROM OUR HEART

Finding FCJ Refugee Centre was like finding a gift because when we came to Canada and started our refugee claim, we did not have any information at all about this process.

However when we came to the FCJ Refugee Centre we felt welcome. Diana with her commitment and dedication helped us in the process; the whole staff of FCJ become a huge support for us, helping us to face our barriers.

The Centre is our home in Canada because each one of the staff has become our family. Every time we needed help they were always there, offering help with a kind smile.

At the Centre, we always feel embraced by everyone, we feel safe and loved. Our gratitude towards FCJ is endless; every time that someone asks what does the FCJ Refugee Centre mean for us, our answer is always that they are family. We are blessed to have you.

Thank you for your hard work and keep helping everyone who is looking for your support.

Patricia and Betty



Diana Gallego, Immigration and Refugee Worker, is in the centre accompanied by Patricia and Betty.

PRECARIOUS MIGRANT PROTECTION AND SUPPORT

Thanks to the Precarious Migrant Protection and Support Program we continue supporting vulnerable populations, helping them to navigate the immigration system.

They were referred to FCJ Refugee Centre by other agencies

that do not have expertise working with precarious populations.

The services provided to precarious migrants include: general orientation, legal aid applications, referrals to lawyers, filling out forms (BOC/H&C/ Sponsorship, etc.), finding shelter, applying for Ontario Works, support with registration in school, and supporting clients with criminal cases, among others. Improving collaboration and strengthening response to those vulnerable populations include workshop delivery to service providing agencies on various subjects that touch upon the immigration and refugee system and service delivery to newcomers. The workshops are free of charge.

RESOURCES FOR PRECARIOUS MIGRANTS

The Precarious Migrant Protection and Support Program Directory is a very useful tool which includes these topics: Settlement, Coalition of Service Providers, Housing, Foodbanks, and Healthcare for people without insurance, mental health /health centres, education, employment, parents and expecting parents. The selection of the categories is connected to the pressing needs expressed by clients.

The tool is possible thanks to the support of the Law Foundation Ontario. It is available at FCJ Refugee Centre website: www.fcjrefugeecentre.org



Clients celebrating their positive decision with Rocio Rivera, Migrant Support Worker at FCJ Refugee Centre.



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY



At FCJ we work with women who have experienced violence, forced displacement and other traumas. At FCJ Refugee

Centre every day is Women's Day because every day we are proud to support and advocate to access to services, justice. We open our doors to welcome them and to make them feel at home.

What is International Women's day?

International Women's day is celebrated on the 8th of March every year. It is a day reserved for the recognition and celebration of women's rights, and the struggles they have faced throughout history, as well as social, economic, cultural and political achievements.



FCJ Refugee Centre commemorate the movement for Women's rights.

NEWCOMER SETTLEMENT PROGRAM, NSP

Our unique service provisions model is partially funded by the Newcomer Settlement Program from the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration. Through this program the FCJ Refugee Centre is supporting vulnerable newcomer populations who experience multiple barriers.

We are able to provide a variety of services to vulnerable newcomers including orientation, settlement support, counselling, and referrals to appropriate services. In addition, the Centre is providing workshops to service providers and other stakeholders to share effective service delivery practices identified by FCJ Refugee Centre to meet the needs of vulnerable populations



Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration
Ministère Des Affaires Civiques Et De L'Immigration

What does it mean International Women's Day to you? "To me, International Women's day is a time when we can celebrate solidarity between women, a day where all women can experience equity and a day where we can celebrate the achievements of women before us, as well as remember the struggles of those same women."

Why is International Women's day Important? It is important to remember the beginnings. The achievements as well as the struggles, past and present, of all women.

Tanya Aberman,
Research and Project Coordinator at FCJ Refugee Centre

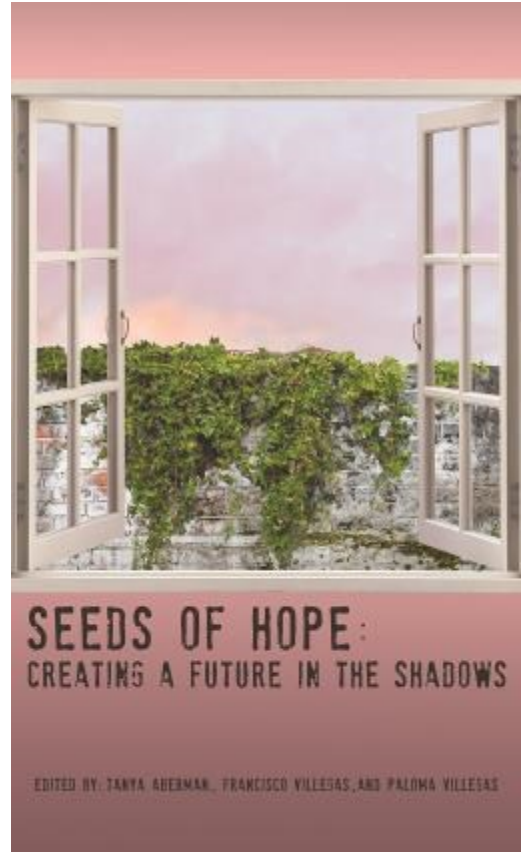


SEEDS OF HOPE:US VIRTUAL LAUNCHING

On March 7th, 2017 the FCJ Youth Network had its US virtual launch of the book `Seeds of Hope: Creating a Future in the Shadows` at Kalamazoo College, Michigan.

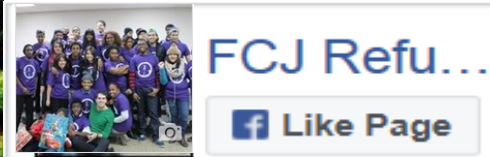
Four of the 12 writers were able to attend the launch. Together, they explained what the book contained and shared their own experiences in the process of writing for the book, as well as little bits of their stories.

More importantly, they imparted on the listening audience what an undocumented youth in Canada goes through, broadening the perspective of this precariousness being not just a North American concept, but a global one. Also highlighting the differences and similarities between being a precarious status youth in the United States and Canada and how these experiences shape



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