

CONSIDERATIONS IN PREPARING FAITH-BASED RULE COMMENTS

for Voicing Opposition to “Procedures for Asylum and Withholding of Removal; Credible Fear and Reasonable Fear Review” – EOIR Docket No. 18-0002; RIN 1125-AA94

As you prepare to voice your comments as faith partners, we invite you to consider the unique perspectives and insights your identity as a faith community member and leader provide you in speaking out about U.S. asylum policies and regulations. Reflect on the following:

- 1) You are People of faith POWER speaking to political power.** Over 80% of US residents (including many public officials and staff) are from Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Mormon, Muslim, and other faith backgrounds. Claim this power of your community’s faith numbers, by mentioning the size of your denomination or religion. And, review and claim the power of public faith statements on asylum your community may have published in the past.
- 2) You are people of PURPOSE.** The true Hebraic understanding of what it means to be “apocalyptic” is to “lift the veil” and “shine a light” on conditions and suffering as they really are. Point out the too-often hidden realities of suffering endured by asylum seekers and how that suffering is often tied to US asylum policies. Share the truths you know about and cruelties you will not accept. See how Sister Norma Pimentel of Catholic Charities in the Rio Grande Valley does this so well in her [Op Ed](#).
- 3) You are People of Sacred TEXTS.** Many sacred scriptures from various traditions speak to care for the vulnerable, your faith’s heritage of migration (through journeys of Mohamed, Moses, or Jesus’ family escape from violence), and the prophets’ insistence that doing what is right to God means NEVER doing violence or harm to the foreigner. Such texts offer connection points to policies, bans, and ignoring of root causes that turn away from the sacred call to welcome the sojourner. Ponder texts that can help you to point out why you oppose harms to children and families caused by detentions, returns to danger, lack of due process, and unsafe health conditions.
- 4) You are people who hold power through RELATIONSHIPS with asylum.** Your voices, as faith partners, are authentic because your speaking is informed by relationships with families you may have accompanied, signed support letters for, fought to get out of detention, invested in, written comments to protect, attended court with, and known relatives of. These relationships provide knowledge of direct impacts; refer to what you have learned through them to speak about how policies and family separations now are directly damaging asylum seekers you know, and ones facing similar experiences.
- 5) You are people of GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS.** Research how your faith community is speaking about, advocating around, and being affected **OUTSIDE OF** the U.S. by policies **OF** the U.S. What are the impacts of US detention and deportation policies upon countries and partners receiving and assisting returnees? What are faith partners in the Northern Triangle nations saying about the effects of the so called “Safe Third Country” agreements upon them?

Therefore, as people of POWER, PURPOSE, SACRED TEXTS, RELATIONSHIPS, AND PARTNERSHIPS, may you reflect all these learnings and knowledge in your comments!

*From Rev. Dr. Sharon Stanley-Rea, Director, Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries
Member, Interfaith Immigration Coalition*