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From: **SanAntonioMennoniteChurch** <office@sanantoniomennonite.org>

Date: Tue, May 21, 2019 at 4:20 PM

Subject: hope for refugees; escaping assassins; opening a new shelter

To: <wdc@mennowdc.org>



Notes of Hope:

- Unprecedented refugee surge in San Antonio: 200-300 people being sheltered each night
- A New Trauma-Healing Shelter, "Semillas" needs your support!

A Central American father holds his daughter through the night in San Antonio's crowded overnight shelter by the bus station.

The shelter is hot and sweaty, and managed by volunteers. It is run as an unprecedented collaboration between the City, the Interfaith Welcome Coalition, Catholic Charities, and hosted on the 2nd and 3rd floor of the Travis Park Church.



Down the street, we're feverishly working to build showers, bathrooms, and a kitchen for a dorm-style shelter for refugee families stranded in San



Antonio multiple nights. It is the site of the newest collaborative effort between the Interfaith Welcome Coalition and SAMC's refugee response called SEMILLAS (seeds), which aims to expose refugees to trauma-healing techniques as soon as possible. Unfortunately, we've run out of money (short a few thousand dollars to finish out the bathrooms) so any financial donations would be super appreciated:)



Two Honduran mothers with their children sleep on the floor of the city shelter in San Antonio when all of the cots are used up. We are currently taking pregnant mothers, or parents with the littlest kids to the more comfortable La Casa de Maria y Marta--of the Mennonite Church--but we can only house 20 at a time.

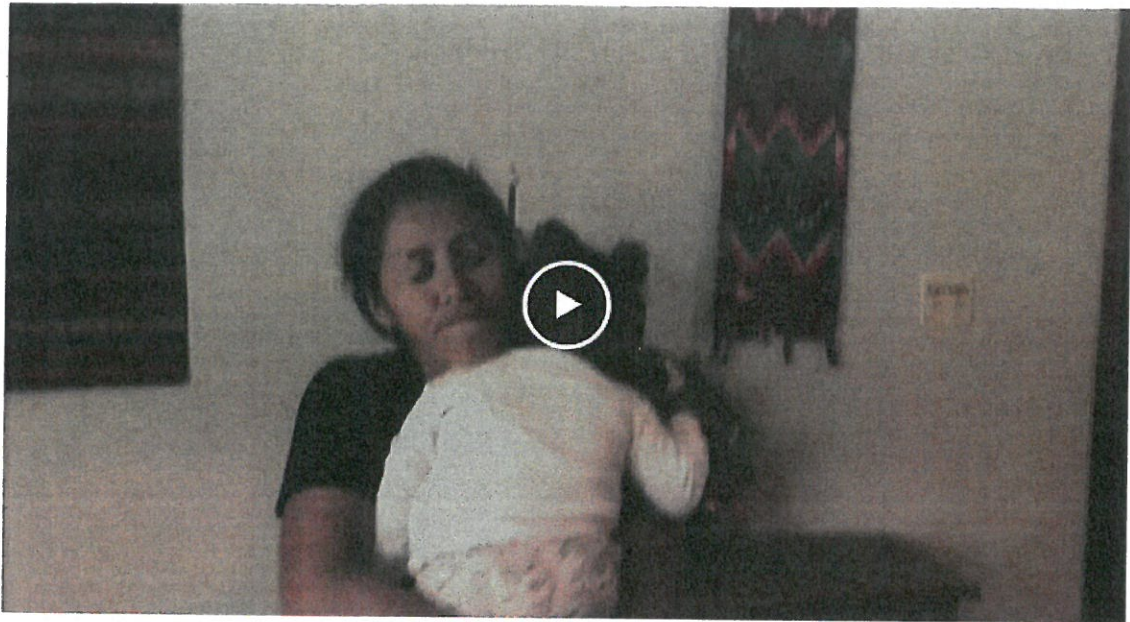


A pastor from Honduras, with masked identity, tells his story to local news channels as they try to humanize the influx of refugees downtown.

This pastor challenged the abuses of his local government and then had to escape 3 violent assassination attempts. His body bears terrible scars of one of the attacks, and he tells of his faith and prayers for his attackers.

His last attacker miraculously lost his nerve and couldn't pull the gun's trigger as it was pressed against his head.

His story of hope, perseverance, and faith was powerful. He is currently working with Semillas, leading prayer circles, and helping in the construction of the new shelter building.

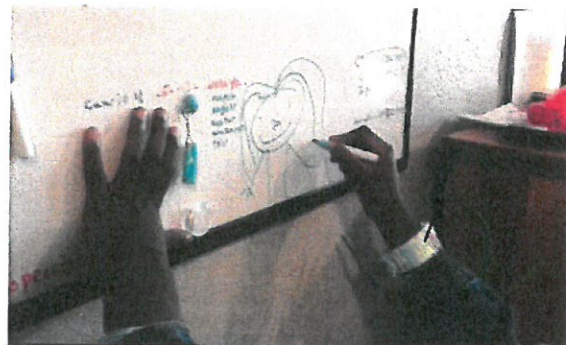


This video introduces the strategy of Semillas. Though we feel overwhelmed by the numbers of people currently in desperate need, we feel called to invest well in the leaders who will guide the healing of their families and community.



A Congolese Mother is reunited with her daughter who was taken from her in the immigration detention center. After months of waiting and desperate advocacy, immigration officials dropped her off at La Casa de Maria y Marta here in southtown, San Antonio.

After many months of journeying, and then the horror of being taken from her parents, this little 8-year-old "signs into" her room with her family.



What is happening? (currently)

1. Families who own businesses, lead churches, or in some way are contributing to the leadership of their communities in Central America are being targeted by

extremely violent street-gangs. The gangs extort, murder, and force sons and daughters into their ranks.

2. Women are exposed to extreme levels of domestic violence. Violent gangs force women into relationships. Honduras is seeing such high-levels of violence against women that observers are calling it a Femicide.
3. Families, or single parents, leave in desperation, with no travel plans or preparation.
4. Generally, a trip from Central America through Mexico takes about a month, and costs around \$5000. Moving through Mexico is extremely dangerous because of the lack of permission, and the targeting of thieves and traffickers who prey on the vulnerability of these families.
5. When the families reach the U.S./Mexico border they have to wait for weeks for their turn to cross at Ports of Entry, and they must find shelter in the dangerous and overwhelmed Mexican border towns. Many families can't afford to wait, and cross the river, seeking out Border Patrol agents so they can ask for asylum.
6. All asylum-seeking families, whether they cross at the Port of Entry or not, are sent to cold "ice-box" Border Patrol Processing centers.
7. Currently, the detention centers seem to be out of regular use, and these refugee families are released from the Processing Centers onto the streets of Texas border towns. There they must find transportation to wherever they have friends or family.
8. Families pile-up in cities like McAllen and El Paso, and then funnel through San Antonio on their way to the interior of the country.
9. All of these families are registered with Immigration and Customs Enforcement and must show up to a check-in within a week, and then a court-date to begin their asylum case.

(of course things are always more complicated...but this is a general sketch)

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