

## INVITED SESSIONS

### THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON DISLOCATED LIVES

Topic: Theological Reflections on Dislocated Lives  
Convener: Edward Sunshine, Barry University  
Presenters: Terry Veling, Australian Catholic University  
Ana Novoa, St. Mary's University  
Elisabeth Tetlow, Loyola University New Orleans

The panel offered opportunities for dialogue with people directly familiar with alienation, disruption, and displacement. The presenters addressed the experience of dislocation from their personal perspectives: the immigrant alien; the advocate for immigrant victims of domestic, workplace, and cross-border oppression; and the survivor of natural disaster.

The first presenter was Terry Veling, Senior Lecturer and Head, School of Theology, Australian Catholic University, Brisbane, Australia. Terry recently returned to Australia after living and working in the United States for seven years. During that time, he lived as a legally defined "alien," number A099147068. His struggles with United States immigration law and policies led him to reflect on the plight of immigrants, itinerants, and asylum-seekers who represent "the vastest movement of people of all times."

Terry included personal examples of his treatment by the United States immigration authorities. He addressed the difficulties involved in resolving the tension between the need for borders for the common good and the abuses that arise from drawing artificial political lines that disregard the movements of people. Finally, Terry emphasized the importance of hospitality when dealing with immigrants.

The second presenter was Ana Novoa, Professor of Law at St. Mary's University and Director of the Clinical Program there. Ana is from San Antonio, where she works with immigrant women who have been battered, trafficked, and violently assaulted. She addressed the multiple difficulties faced by immigrants and the effects of increased security measures on residents in San Antonio, the convention's host city.

Ana told three stories to illustrate the problems she encounters: a case of abuse and fear of a husband; a case of trafficking that came from federal agencies; and a case of empowerment, from a woman who realized that she could make her own decisions. She emphasized the issues of justice that arise from her work with immigrants and how they connect with spirituality.

The final presenter was Elisabeth Tetlow, a Visiting Scholar in Law and Religious Studies at Loyola University New Orleans. Elisabeth is from New Orleans, where Hurricane Katrina made the topic personal for her by affecting her home, family, and job. She shared theological reflections from her viewpoint as a survivor of a natural disaster.

Elisabeth told the story of Hurricane Katrina, which she endured in New Orleans itself, in matter-of-fact detail. She went through the developing events in Katrina's aftermath, which she endured for five days. She told how she was evacuated to another city in Louisiana and then given temporary refuge far away at the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, California. Finally, she recounted of the difficulties of her return to New Orleans to repair her home—the depression, the disabilities like the “Katrina cough” from the pollution and toxins still present, and the problems in getting things done. Elisabeth concluded that the consequences of Katrina never seem to end, giving rise to much hardship for the inhabitants of New Orleans.

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