

June 20, 2017
Oregon House of Representatives
World Refugee Day
Comments from Rep. Evans

Colleagues –

In recognition of World Refugee Day, I ask us to reflect upon the value of charity, love, and mercy.

Not merely for the immigrants who live our community – though we shall be judged by history on how we demonstrate our values to these new neighbors; - but for the opportunity to learn how to demonstrate charity, love, and mercy their arrival provides us.

We live in a time of significant global upheaval and displacement: refugees from political strife, poverty, and war – are redefining our world.

This is not new; refugees have often transformed the places and people they settle within.

This is true for refugees who fit the legal definition of the moment, as well as those who often do not.

Like many here, my family – a few generations back – came from overseas – as refugees, immigrants, people seeking safe harbor.

They came to live, love, and practice their faith – like so many others.

And my faith teaches that one refugee and his family – transformed the world for all time.

After all, one could reasonably claim, Joseph and Mary became refugees – who illegally sought safe harbor for their infant son.

Joseph and Mary recognized, as did ALL the people involved in helping them make Jesus safe during his formative years – that sometimes, sometimes – laws of man are imperfect to the challenges and circumstances – because we, as humans, are imperfect.

Most laws are put into effect to do the most good, for the most people; upon occasion, they reflect our fears more than our aspirations.

I believe our national immigration laws are flawed: and while there is a real solution, too many vested interested have little interest in an actual solution.

As a teacher and former military officer, I am proud of our refugee heritage and yet I have students – including a past intern – here, Ms. Noor Ismael – who are now afraid to be here – because of recent changes to US ICE practices.

Colleagues, I didn't fight for an America that makes people living in peace – afraid to be who they are.

I didn't fight for an America that uses the power of the national government to seek out people who have committed no other crime than being who they are: I didn't fight for an America where people can "ask for papers, please" because of a perception of being a refugee.

I signed up, like most people, to stand up for our ideals, our values, and our virtues – for the America we have been, can be, and hopefully someday will be.

We are here, all of us, the result of being a safe harbor – THE SAFE HARBOR – for the world's refugees: we have done more for global peace by being a land of the free, home of the brave – by being an open-armed, welcoming society that we have accomplished through any military campaign, perhaps every military campaign.

Colleagues, I ask us to remember our humanity, our tradition of faith when it comes to the complexities of finding a rational as well as loving policy framework for refugees.

This Refugee Day, I ask us to imagine for a moment what the world would have been without at least a few people recognizing the flaws in Herod's Policy: the moral value of protecting those who asked only to have an opportunity to live in peace.