

## **News Release**

## Marygrove College Calls on President Obama to Resolve the Moral Crisis Of Thousands of Refugee Children Fleeing the Violence in Central America

DETROIT, MI, July 17, 2014 – Dr. David J. Fike, President of Marygrove College, a Catholic liberal arts institution in Detroit, MI, today called upon President Barack Obama to provide leadership in resolving the moral crisis of thousands of refugee children fleeing the violence in Central America to seek safe haven in the United States.

In the first-of-its-kind statement by a U.S. college president since this crisis began, Dr. Fike stated that Marygrove is committing college resources to provide education, food, shelter and other assistance to the refugees.

"We are calling on President Obama to recognize these children as refugees," said Dr. Fike, "...if he does so, we are prepared to do our part to help."

"As a Catholic institution—guided by the Gospel values of peace, love, reconciliation, and justice—we are proud to be the first higher educational institution in the nation to publicly commit to supporting young refugees from Central America," said Dr. Fike.

"If the President would lead us on this morally just path," Dr. Fike says, "The college is prepared to provide scholarships for college-ready refugees to attend Marygrove and to consider making available excess beds in the college's former convent and newly renovated residence hall to house, feed, and provide security for other refugees."

Expressing frustration with what he described as the President's "...lack of moral leadership on an issue that literally screams for moral leadership," Dr. Fike stated that Marygrove's offer of support is contingent on the Obama Administration publicly recognizing the surge in unaccompanied minors at the border as "fundamentally a refugee situation," while also rescinding the proposed request to Congress for "fast track" authority to expedite the removal of children fleeing violence in Central America.

"Our Christian values mean we cannot and will not be complicit," Dr. Fike adds, in what he called "...Obama's proposed effort to accelerate the forcible deportation of children and young adults back to the violence they have fled."

President Fike's commitment comes as United Nations officials press for many of the young people fleeing to the U.S. from Central America to be treated as refugees. U.S., Mexican, and Central American officials working on migration issues met in Nicaragua last week to discuss updating a 30-year-old declaration regarding the obligations that nations have to aid refugees and whether to make Central Americans among the first modern migrants considered *refugees* since they are fleeing violence and extortion at the hands of criminal gangs.

Noting that much media coverage around this issue has focused on individuals expressing strong anti-humanitarian sentiments against the children and youth receiving refugee protection in the U.S., Dr. Fike asked his fellow college presidents to help change the public debate on this issue.

"The lives of thousands of children and young people are at risk," he stated. "We cannot be silent. I urge my colleagues at the helms of colleges around this nation to join me in calling on President Obama to show moral leadership on this issue and, if possible, to join Marygrove in pledging housing, food, security and education if the President would act with a moral compass."

Founded by the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM) in 1905, Marygrove College is an independent liberal arts college and a Catholic institution of higher learning. The College's commitment to the city of Detroit comprises an institutional mission and vision for developing urban leaders. The main campus is situated on 53 wooded acres in northwest Detroit. For more information, visit www.marygrove.edu.

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