



MOSAIC

Human Rights Award: Sr. Deborah Isaacs, RGS



Dear friends and employees of MOSAIC;

Some of you I know, some of you I don't, but I would like to speak to all of you when I say it is a great honour for me to receive this award from MOSAIC. I would like to thank MOSAIC not only for the award but for the chance to work alongside the organization in helping some of the most vulnerable refugees, the unaccompanied children – that is, those who came alone, to settle and plant roots in this country of ours or those who needed to be reunited with their families in safety.

Over twenty years ago, when I discovered that all people are persons with their own uniqueness and all deserve the same rights. When I discovered that diversity is truly enriching and nothing to be feared, I started

helping some of the most marginalized and vulnerable people in this world of ours – refugees and specifically women and children. I knew nothing of what they had lived through, since I live in a country that is relatively free of the violence of war, persecution and overt criminality. I live in a country where women and children are not looked on as possessions to be used, but in a country where there is more or less equality. But by literally walking with these women and children I learned of their hardships and fears in a country that was their own and I experienced their fear and discrimination in this country of ours. A country that I have always thought of as being perfect but in truth has a dark side like everything else. A dark side that I had never known. But instead of being consumed with bitterness, I was filled with a passion to help. As a Catholic Religious who could not have children of my own, I fell in love with the children who needed my help to grow-up whole and healthy and know their complete potential as persons. I discovered my purpose here on earth of building links that could help them reunite with their families or loved ones. Also to build links between Canadians and newcomers that would overcome the fears of differences.

At a time when our country is going through a crisis in its compassion to victims of wars, terror, and persecution. At a time when non-profit organizations are fearful of losing their funding, MOSAIC is being creative and builds partnerships that will truly help and serve their clients. To MOSAIC, these clients are more than economic units whose only good is for the economic and financial growth of this country. They are persons whose presence alone enriches our country and builds a wonderful diversity that enriches all of us as people and human beings.

I would like to conclude with a poem from the Second World War that has been a powerful thrust for me. This poem has been attributed to Pastor Martin Niemoller, a German Pastor and Social Activist, and it comes in different versions and adaptations.

*First they came for the Socialists and I did not speak out
Because I was not a Socialist
Then they came for the Trade Unionists and I did not speak out
Because I was not a Trade Unionist
Then they came for the Jews and I did not speak out
Because I was not a Jew
Then they came for me – and there was no one left to speak for me*