



## **Falmouth Democratic Town Committee Newsletter: April 20, 2016**

**Megan English Braga** called the standing room only meeting to order, and after introductions of those running for various offices at the local and state level, she introduced **Dr. Pamela Pelletreau** who discussed a Falmouth response to the global refugee problem. She described the work of **Lucia Mock**, daughter of **Carmina and Bill Mock** (local Democrats) with refugee camps in Palestine. The Falmouth Church of the Messiah in Woods Hole has raised money (\$30,000) to send, under Lucia's guidance, to these camps to carry out programs for women and children. **Dr. Pelletreau** also described the summer "Peace and Justice" talks at Fisher House, organized by the Church, during which experts spoke on the Middle East situation.

Next **Megan** introduced **Eva Millona**, Executive Director of the **Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA)**, the state's largest organization representing the foreign born, and co-chair of the National Partnership for New Americans, the lead national organization focusing on immigrant integration. She is also the co-chair of the Governor's Advisory Council for Refugees and Immigrants and serves on the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. **Ms. Millona** gave an excellent and extensive survey of what her organization does, current laws affecting immigrants and refugees, and a description of how Massachusetts is outstanding in the structure it provides for the foreign born. The state is a model for national attempts to deal with the issue of immigration.



**Eva Millona**



Before getting into the meat of her presentation, let me state that this is a complex issue and it is difficult to describe all of the details. The broader take away for us is that much is being done right now by the Obama administration and by many states on this very complicated issue. But many proposals are being held up by the Republican House. It seems clear that no one size fits all sweeping solution as advocated by certain Republican Presidential candidates could fix the problems at hand. Massachusetts has been a model for the proposed structure being created at the national level. If a Republican President is elected this

year, much of the supportive work being currently proposed by the Obama administration and by various states will probably disappear.

The work of MIRA, as described by Ms. **Millona**, provides policy analysis and advocacy, institutional organizing, training and leadership development, citizenship assistance, and strategic communications with the aim of empowering and representing the rights and integration of the foreign born in MA. The Coalition involves an active membership of over 150 organizations, including social service organizations, community based groups, ethnic associations, schools, refugee resettlement agencies, health centers, hospitals, religious institutions, unions and law firms as well as many individual members.

Of the one million foreign born in MA, 500,000 are naturalized citizens, and 300,000 are green card holders ... that latter group can apply to become citizens in 5 years (24,000 become citizens annually). There are 145,000 undocumented persons in our state. MA has been one of the first states to come up with a safety net and programs for immigrants and refugees. There is \$2 million in the state budget to help create this structure. In addition ,the state works to provide credentialing for medical workers who arrive from abroad, and works specifically with the 2400 refugees who are settled each year in MA. Africans are the largest group of refugees settled in MA over the past 10 years.

Those who are undocumented do not receive any benefits, contrary to rumors. They are entitled only to emergency care in hospitals. They do not receive a social security number, just a tax ID. They do pay social security tax but do not collect social security.

We are all aware of the national debate on immigration. There are 11 million undocumented people in the U.S. About 60 percent of them have been here for more than a decade. There are 4.5 million U.S. children with at least one unauthorized parent. States differ in the way they respond to the situation.

The struggle for immigration reform at the national level has been blocked by the House since 2014. The earlier DREAM act, which never passed the House, was followed by the executive act of **President Obama**, DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Act), which sought to accomplish much of what was proposed by the DREAM act. **Obama** now wants to provide an expansion of the DACA act by lifting the current age cap for DACA. In addition, there is a proposed DAPA act (Deferred Action for Parents of Americans). A National Task Force on how to serve these groups was created, based on the MA model developed at MIRA.



Eva Millona and Dylan Fernandes

So far the Republican House has blocked moving forward on any of these proposed reforms. Some states have taken the administration to the courts to block reforms. By June 20<sup>th</sup> the Supreme Court decision on the case in which Texas is challenging the Obama executive order to implement DAPA and expand DACA will be announced. Ever hopeful, MIRA has a blueprint for the future which includes the creation of the “Office of New Americans’ at the national level. This is part of

recommendations MIRA will make to all presidential candidates.

**Professor Westy Egmont**, Director, Immigrant Integration Lab and professor in the Graduate School of Social Work at Boston College spoke. He focused on the civil war in Syria. There is no agreement on how to resolve the internal problems of the country. As a result, 4 million have fled out of a population of 23 million, and many millions more are internally displaced. The refugees have been pushed into and out of Lebanon, Turkey, and Greece. The European Union is now refusing to take more refugees. So where will they go and what is the solution? Germany has been a model of allowing refugees in but is at capacity. **Obama** has increased the number of refugees the U.S. will take to include 10,000 well vetted Syrians by September. The U.S. refugee program has been very successful. Since 1983, 50 percent of the world's refugees live in the U.S. At least 3 million have come to the U.S. in that time period.



**Dr. Westy Egmont**

Finally, if the election brings in Democrats at the Congressional level as well as a Democratic President, Obama's immigration reforms can be implemented. I found a website which answers many questions on this complicated topic at [www.immigrationpolicy.org](http://www.immigrationpolicy.org), the website of the American Immigration Council. There are many entries via Google on these topics and much to be read by any interested person.

Submitted by **Kirstin Moritz**, Newsletter Editor and photos by **Martha Gillis**, FDTC photographer and **Zelda MacGregor**, campaign manager for **Matt Patrick**.

**Calendar: May 18, 2016 is the next FDTC monthly meeting.** At the Gus Canty Center at 7 p.m. There will be a presentation by the candidates running for Tim Madden's State Representative position.

**FDTC Officers:**

Chair: **Megan English Braga** at 508-540-3434 Ext. 4 and [attymeb@gmail.com](mailto:attymeb@gmail.com)

Vice Chair: **Scott Simenas** at 508-540-3490 and [scott\\_simenas@comcast.net](mailto:scott_simenas@comcast.net)

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Newsletter Editor: **Kirstin Moritz** at 508-540-8528 and [kmoritz@verizon.net](mailto:kmoritz@verizon.net)

Affirmative Action/Outreach Advisor: **Hugh Gregory** at 508-548-4696 and [moohu38@yahoo.com](mailto:moohu38@yahoo.com)

Link to our Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/falmouthdemocratictowncommittee/?fref=ts>

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Name: Address: Precinct:

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Elected Committee Member: \$25 a year

Associate Member: \$15 a year

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