

July 2010

Dear Friends,

In these days of “extra heat” in Arizona caused by the recent passing of what many say is the most aggressive anti-immigrant bill on record, I am reminded of the roots of our work at BorderLinks, and what holds us steady on the way through such trials. As we move into a year of increasingly violent contention around the immigration debate, I would like to share the following thoughts with you.

After BorderLinks’ May mailing, in which we appealed for help in resisting the fear and hateful rhetoric surrounding the new Arizona law, we received many letters supportive of our efforts to raise awareness and inspire action around the causes of and solutions for undocumented immigration. We also receive a few in which the writers supported “the Law”, and asking that their names be taken off our mailing list.

It is unfortunate that education and critical analysis of critical issues of our time might ever be construed as wrong-headed. The mission of BorderLinks has always been to build bridges of understanding across socially-constructed and geographic borders. We accompany people as they “immerse” in the border reality, meeting migrants and border patrol agents, maquiladora owners, faith leaders and other border activists. We walk the desert paths that migrants walk, eat with people-made-poor in Mexico, sleep on migrant shelter floors, and do “ride arounds” with Border Patrol. Careful program design provides time and space for participants to ask questions, to reflect on what they see and feel, and to find their own way to their next right steps in working for positive social change. I can’t think of a better way to help our country, people, communities, churches and organizations to live into the intention of the Declaration of Independence, than to raise awareness of our interdependence. An educated electorate is essential to a safe and sane future.

An incident that happened to me five years ago, just after I came to work as Executive Director of BorderLinks, shows the importance and long-term benefits of this work. I was in the Mexico City airport, waiting impatiently with hundreds of other people in the long line to the airline counter. Our plane had been delayed and we were awaiting word of how we all would be rerouted.

I noticed a young man in front of me in the line, who was wearing a beautiful T-shirt with a large colorful heart on both front and back. The heart was made from the imprint of a leaf, and it seemed that his own heart shone through it, and through the dim news of our long delay. As we began to talk, I learned that he had accompanied the owners of the environmentally friendly U.S. T-shirt business to Mexico for a wedding, where he was their translator. As the hours wore on, we talked of deeper things and the conversation turned to “what do you do?” I told him about my work at BorderLinks, that we had begun educating for positive social change, inspired by and in direct response to the Sanctuary Movement of the 80’s.

Through tears he told me that his parents had sought asylum in the US from the 1980’s war in El Salvador and had lived in a Sanctuary church before they were free to apply for citizenship in the US. He was born shortly after and had always heard of the heroic efforts of the Sanctuary Movement to provide safe haven and to educate the US public about policies and practices in Central America. He said that, because of the good people who worked in the Sanctuary Movement, his family was alive, he was born, and those policies and practices were changed through the work of resistance, education, and legislative work.

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A while later, I excused myself for a moment and when I returned, he had gotten through the line. I never saw him again. But when I got home and opened my suitcase, there was a note from him, tucked inside his beautiful heart T-shirt. The note said, "The work you do brings heart to the world. Thank you for BorderLinks. When you wear this T-shirt please remember that what you do matters."

I still wear the T-shirt. In so many ways across the country I have seen the results of BorderLinks work to educate and advocate for positive social change. As I officially leave my position as Executive Director at the end of August, I know that the work is bigger than my efforts. Thousands and thousands of people through the years have participated in transforming education into inspired action.

Please continue your support of BorderLinks, as I will continue mine. As the signs of the time grow ever more concerning, this work is even more urgently needed. Deep and lasting change for all of humanity can only come through long-term efforts to educate and advocate for a sane and safe future.

Please write a check today for \$10, \$100 or \$1000 dollars, or consider making a regular automatic monthly donation to help ensure that BorderLinks US and Mexico transformational education programs continue.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Delle". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Rev. Delle McCormick

