



Ver ~ Pensar ~ Actuar

See~Think~Act

BorderLinks Alumni Newsletter

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Introducing the BorderLinks Alumni Newsletter

Often the return home can be the most disorientating part of the BorderLinks journey. Deciding the next step and staying informed can be difficult when you find yourself away from the border and back in your community.

We created this newsletter as a tool for BorderLinks participants upon returning to your homes and reintegrating into your lives and schedules. It can be easy to isolate or compartmentalize experiences. However, if we integrate those experiences and the learning into our world-views and our lifestyles, we can begin to create lasting positive change within our own communities and

beyond.

We invite you to submit your continued reflections, questions that you are continuing to contemplate, activities that you have organized upon your return and photos of your time on the border. The views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily represent the views of BorderLinks, and we reserve the right to make editing changes. Through the newsletter, we want to provide a venue for past participants to share their thoughts and reflections about their border-related experiences.

We have also included a bulletin board where

activities and events happening in your home communities can be posted for a larger community. BorderLinks Program participants hail from all over the U.S. and the world; even nearby your own communities. If you are planning a presentation, teach-in, or any activity and are interested in inviting other BorderLinks participants, send us the information and dates to be included.

If you have any newsletter ideas or an article for submission, please e-mail us at alumninewsletter@borderlinks.org with an attachment of your work. We look forward to hearing from you!



BorderLinks Vision

BorderLinks envisions a world in which people, within and across social borders, respect and care for each other, value and celebrate differences, and build healthy and just communities.



BorderLinks Educational Philosophy

At BorderLinks, we distinguish between the *banking model* of education and *education for positive social transformation*. The *banking model* is a linear learning model that begins with teachers/experts who hold all the knowledge and serve as role models for students. Success in such a learning system means conforming to the model of the expert, which supports the status quo. Conversely, *education for positive social transformation* is an integrated learning model that embraces and works with the tension between

theory and practice, reflection and action, and teacher/learner knowledge and new information.

In all our work, whether it is with U.S. delegation participants or residents of border *colonias*, our educational pedagogy is grounded in the following commitments:

- Make learning exciting and fun.
- Facilitate a space in which all are treated with dignity and respect.
- Challenge and Transform practices that support domination and injustice such as gender, race, class, disability,

ageism, heterosexism, economic, ecological, and related concerns.

- Embody just and caring relationships between learners and leaders, and group members and contact organizations and individuals.
- Include reflection and action.
- Encourage collective action for change.
- Form part of a life-long process of transformation, not a single event.
- Put local issues into a global context.

Advocating for Informed Citizens

Jodi Read, West Coast MCC Associate for Migration and Peace-building

“The anti-immigrant voice is being heard stridently in DC while a voice of compassion explaining and emphasizing the root causes of migration is leaving little impact on Congressional offices.”

During a recent congressional visit, several Washington, DC legislative aides indicated that they receive 20 hateful, anti-immigrant calls for every one call from people appealing for a humanitarian response to immigration issues. The anti-immigrant voice is being heard stridently in DC while a voice of compassion that explains and emphasizes the root causes of migration is leaving little impact on Congressional offices.

As a BorderLinks trip participant, you have met people and seen realities impacted by the forces of US trade and immigration policies. Your understanding of these socio-political and economic issues surrounding immigration and the border calls for action. This action can be in the form of advocacy, and communicat-

ing your support for a particular idea or policy is an initial step toward change.

Advocacy to policy makers can take many forms: writing emails, faxes, and letters or making phone calls and presentations. Effective advocacy is concise, conveys a human story or impact and connects with government policy. In order to prepare for such advocacy, I'd invite you to reflect on your borderlands trip and choose a vivid experience that you can share.

When you recall your trip at the US/Mexico borderlands, what story or person comes to mind? Is it the men on the plaza in Altar preparing to make the dangerous journey into the US? Or the crowd of recently repatriated migrants, hungry, disoriented and with blistered feet at the Mariposa Port of

Entry? Or perhaps you recall the harsh desert environment filled with spines, sand, mesquite trees and thousands of cacti? Or is it the overwhelming hospitality that you received from host families while on your journey that comes to mind? As you conjure the image and recall the emotion, think about the roots of the conflict; why are people being forced to leave their land? What are the structural realities of the US economic and political systems that impact the people who come to mind?

As the story and impact become clear, recall the economic, political or social policy that connects to the reality. With the story on your mind, take a seat at your computer or grab the phone; you are ready to share a transformational experience with your member of Congress.

What's Happening in Your Community?

We would like to include a calendar of events that are happening not only in Tucson, but also in your own communities. This is an opportunity to connect with other former BorderLinks program participants and share with people across the country and world whom are interested in similar issues of solidarity and social change.

Boston College is planning a Border Awareness Week, April 14-19, with a lineup of activities and events aimed to raise awareness around border issues. Ray Ybarra, a Douglas-based activist, will be speaking at the event. Please contact Al Dea at adea11@gmail.com with any questions.

The Migrant Trail Walk is a 75-mile walk to remember those who have died on the migrant journey. The walk begins May 26 and ends June 1. Interested individuals may register after April 1 by visiting the Derechos Humanos website at www.derechoshumanosaz.net.

North Carolina Council of Churches is holding a Critical Issues Seminar on May 13 entitled "From Hostility to Hospitality: Immigration and People of Faith." The conference will offer different perspectives on immigration and the need for justice. For more information, visit www.nccouncilofchurches.org.



Nogales Border Wall at Dusk. Photo taken by Robert Barnell, 2007 Semester Student.

Last week I volunteered down in Hendersonville, NC— just south of Asheville, NC— at La Capilla de Santa Maria, a Spanish-speaking Episcopal church. Twice a week, they host English classes for adults. During the adult class, they host homework help and games with the kids. As it turns out, the kids are fluent in English. In fact, most of them have a southern accent from growing up in western North Carolina. Their Spanish, however, is beginning to suffer. They're losing the ability to communicate with their grandparents. So, although it would appear as though the "child care" is just a service to the adults, it's actually an opportunity for the kids to interact with one another and adults in leadership roles in the Spanish language. It's a covert way to show the immigrant and/or citizen chil-

"It's time for those of us with privilege to stand behind our migrant brothers and sisters."

dren that Spanish is an honorable and respectable language; it's a decent way to communicate.

Well, the kids range in age from one and a half to fourteen or fifteen. There were probably twenty or twenty-five kids and three of us adults. We played dominoes. We drew pictures, played checkers, chess, and went crazy. Through interacting with the kids, I learned most of them had either been born in the U.S. or had spent most of their lives here so that the U.S. was all that they remembered.

At one point, however, I started talking with Alejandra. She was a fourteen-

year-old girl wearing a bright shirt, a zip-up sweater, and blue jeans. Her shoes were flashy sneakers, and she had a pony tail: a classic middle-school girl. Based on the origins and lives of the other children, I asked her, "So, you grew up here, in Hendersonville?" She looked at me like I was an idiot. "No," she said. "Really?" I asked, "so where were you born? Where'd you grow up?" Again she gave me an "are-you-kidding?!" glance and quickly said, "Mexico." "Really?" I asked again, "well, when did you come?" "In 2004," she said.

She was fourteen. It's 2008. 2004 was four years ago. Easy math means that she came through the desert when she was ten.

Ten is how old my niece is. My niece's name is Katie. When she was two, she discovered a jar of powdered blue paint and managed to cover every inch of her body except her eyes. This is why her nickname is "The Beast." Currently, she's in fifth grade. She's been working on long division, writing short plays, and making jokes. At different times, she lost both her parents because of their negligence. She lives with my parents - her grandparents. She keeps going. She's tough. That's also why her name is "The Beast."

But heck, I'm not sure that she'd make it through the desert -- 60 miles in 110 degree heat -- "Beast" or not.

Back before the Civil Rights Movement, whites-- even the well meaning whites--approached race issues as



The Mural at the Casa de la Misericordia in Nogales. Photo taken by Jorge Pazos, trip leader.

something they had to "figure out," to "solve," to "fix," and even to "legislate." Back during the 1940s, I'm sure there were calls for "comprehensive racial reform" or something close to it. Finally, however, whites discovered the racial tensions were not something that whites could fix-- however well intentioned. The role of the whites was to stand behind and support the growing efforts of blacks to re-create American society. Blacks had to lead the way because they knew first-hand the brutality of Jim Crow. Any "remedy" offered exclusively by whites would always be patronizing, at least on some level.

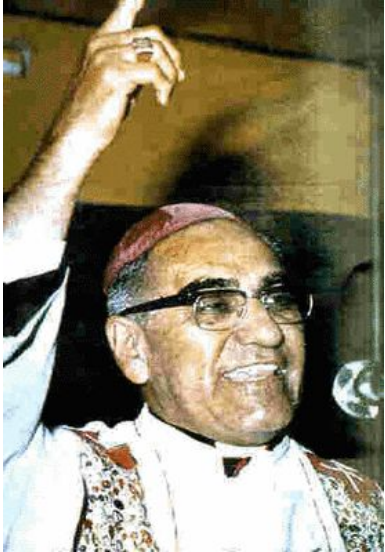
I believe we've come to such a social situation again. It's time for those of us with privilege to stand behind our migrant brothers and sisters. It's time for us to take our direction for justice from children like Alejandra. My visions of justice are limited by my own eyes and experiences, and I have never walked the desert as a migrant. It is a time for social movement, but we will not be the leaders.

A prophet once wrote, "and a little child shall lead them." It's time to listen to the prophets again.

Reflection Exercise: Adapted from a Guided Meditation of Archbishop Oscar Romero

A genuine Christian conversion today must discover the social mechanisms that make marginalized persons of the worker or campesino. Why do the poor, the campesinos have income only in the coffee, cotton and sugar seasons? Why does this society have to have unemployed campesinos, underpaid workers and persons who have to work for less than a just wage? We must all ferret out these mechanisms, not as sociologists or economists, but as Christians—lest we be accomplices of a machinery that afflicts our people with ever-increasing poverty, marginalization and need. ...Only then shall we be able to find true peace, in justice. And so the church supports whatever fosters structural change (December 16, 1979).

Taken from a guided meditation of Archbishop Oscar Romero created by Bridge Building Publications.



Self-Reflection Questions

Take some time to reflect on these words. How do you feel when you read them? What do they mean to you? What kind of connections do you see between Romero’s analysis of facing oppression and your own? What other examples or thoughts come to mind? What do you think Romero’s challenge is for Christians? If you come from a different faith or spiritual worldview than Christianity, how do you interpret his challenge? Oscar Romero was Archbishop of El Salvador during the height of its civil war in the late 1970s. Historically more conservatively spiritual, he experienced a personal conversion and became one of the most vocal advocates for the Salvadoran people suffering under the oppressive regime. Romero was killed while saying mass in 1980, following a strong plea to the Salvadoran Army to stop the violence. He is remembered around the world for his dedication to peace and justice.



Photo of All Saints Church participants at the Border Wall in Agua Prieta, Sonora, Mexico.

Employer Sanctions: State Legislation

On January 1, a new Arizona state law went into effect that targets businesses that “knowingly” employ undocumented workers. Under the Legal Arizona Workers Act, businesses employing undocumented workers could have their licenses suspended for up to 10 days and be placed on probation. A second offense could result in the revocation of the business license. The new law also requires that all employers in Arizona check the employment eligibility of those hired after January 1 through E-Verify, an online federal database through which employers can check whether an individual is authorized to work in the U.S.

By implementing this law, Arizona has become a test case to see if states can regulate immigration by sanctioning employers. Supporters of the law state that undocumented workers will be forced to move elsewhere, lessening the state’s burden in education, medical and criminal justice costs for undocumented entrants. Opponents claim that the Arizona economy will suffer as businesses scramble to find workers, and in some cases, relocate. In the absence of federal legislation on immigration, the Arizona employer sanctions law represents a trend among states to take a more aggressive role in regulating immigration.