



Ver ~ Pensar ~ Actuar

See~Think~Act

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BorderLinks Alumni Newsletter

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October 2008

The Journey Continues: About the BorderLinks Alumni Newsletter

We created this newsletter as a way for BorderLinks participants to continue the process of education and involvement in response to the issues faced here in the borderlands.

We want to provide a venue for past BorderLinks program participants to share their thoughts, reflections, analysis and action-responses to their border-related experiences. We invite you to submit your continued reflections! We believe this can be a tool to help integrate your delegation experiences with the often similar issues within your own communities and beyond.

We also hope that this newsletter serves as an information hub for posting

and learning about activities and events happening near you. BorderLinks program participants come from all over the U.S. and the world, including other communities near you. If you know of or are planning an action, presentation, teach-in, or other activity and would like to invite other past delegation members, please send us the information to be included in the next newsletter.

Additionally, this newsletter will keep you updated on what is going on here at the border. We know that your interest in issues of migration, globalization, and militarization in this region and throughout the world con-

tinues after your delegation ends. Through this newsletter, you can learn about relevant policies, events, and other news. If you have any newsletter ideas or an article for submission, please e-mail us at education@borderlinks.org with an attachment of your work. Be sure to include "Alumni Newsletter" in the subject line. We look forward to hearing from you!

The views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily represent the views of BorderLinks, and we reserve the right to make editing changes.

-Theresa Heath and Noel Andersen (BorderLinks Staff)



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 where everyone has equal opportunity for a full and dignified life.

ment utilized this educational model in their work to analyze the current events (coyuntura) and reflect on the biblical text.

The Base Communities organized their communities in the struggle against government repression in the search for liberation and solidarity.

From this grassroots base this theology of liberation was later articulated by academics and theologians, as a way to refocus the goals of faith to solidarity, mutuality and liberation of the marginalized, a conversion to the people and the struggle for justice.

Today BorderLinks works through these same models of pedagogy and theology to build a community of people of conscious on the local, national and international levels.

-Noel Andersen (BorderLinks Staff)

BorderLinks Educational Model: Ver~Pensar~Actuar



This process is continual in accord with shifting context, community analysis and creative response.

At BorderLinks, we utilize the popular education model of see, think and act (ver, pensar y actuar). Framed in the Latin American context, this process of observation/ analysis and response / action work together to collapse theory and praxis so that learning is experiential, interactive and action-based.

A Brazilian educator named Paulo Freire had great influence in popular education through his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which critiques the model of education

only meant to sustain the status-quo. Instead, Friere calls for a transformational education as part of the process of conscientizacion (to make conscious), an education meant to create social change. "Conversion to the people requires a profound rebirth. Those who undergo it must take on a new form of existence; they can no longer remain as they were (43)."

Using these same educational values, Christian Base Communities of Latin America in times of Civil War, torture and displace-

Next Steps: A Delegation Participant Reflects on his Experience on the Migrant Trail Walk

The walk is co-sponsored by the **Coalición de Derechos Humanos** and numerous other organizations guided by this vision:

"The precarious reality of our borderlands calls us to walk. We walk together on a journey of peace to remember people, friends and family who have died, others who have crossed, and people who continue to come. We walk to bear witness to the tragedy of death and of the inhumanity in our midst. Lastly, we walk as a community, in defiance of the borders that attempt to divide us, committed to working together for the human dignity of all peoples."

If you are interested in participating in next year's walk, look for information next spring posted online at www.derechoshumanosaz.net.



Migrant backpack in Sonora Desert.

Brendan Burns participated in a BorderLinks delegation in May as part of an eight-week traveling field course through Warren Wilson College of North Carolina that began in Guatemala and ended on the Mexico-U.S. border. A few weeks later, he returned to this area to participate in the Migrant Trail Walk, a pilgrimage from Sásabe, Sonora, to Tucson. BorderLinks is an annual sponsor of the Migrant Walk.

For seven days I walked through the desert with 65 people from all over the country and the world. There were high schoolers as well as elders in our group. We ranged from the completely secular to members of religious orders.

We began our journey next to the wall in Sásabe, Sonora, and formed a circle next to a humble memorial for the major groups of migrants who are forced to cross the desert: women, men, children, workers, and farmers. After a prayer ceremony, we were invited to take a cross bearing the name and age of a migrant who had died in the desert last year. Some crosses had no name and were simply marked "desconocido" or "desconocida" (unknown). I walked with a cross that represented Rosalia Mejia Ayala. She was 18 when she passed away last year.

We passed through customs without incident and on the

other side we placed our identification in a black box in solidarity with those who travel the desert without papers. From there we started our 75 mile journey.

The first night I learned just how cold it gets at night. With all my clothes on, under a light sleeping bag and sheet, I got only a few hours of sleep before the coldest part of the night forced me to lay awake staring at the innumerable stars and remembering that many people die of hypothermia in the desert. I was told that this year we were blessed with the cool temperatures reaching only to the mid 90s instead of to the hundreds. Out there every degree matters, though to me it felt plenty hot enough.

Toward the end of the trip, we met a Tohono O'odham man on his way back from a holy site in Mexico where he was blessing a prayer staff representing the young man whose body he had found on his land. He gave the staff to one

of the organizers of the walk to carry into Tucson. The O'odham people are lamenting because they used to be able to cleanse their land after a death occurred on it, but now with so many people dying they don't know how to cleanse it. There is too much blood on the ground. The man was grateful to us for what we were doing and said we were helping heal his family's trauma from the sight of the body.

Our final day started with a ceremony for the walkers, which was very emotional. We then walked the 6 remaining miles into Tucson, joined by supporters. We ended in a park where we lay our crosses at the base of a tree and participated in a foot washing ceremony. I can't thank the organizers enough for what they have been doing for five years and hope they have the strength to continue their vital work.

- Brendan Burns (BorderLinks delegation participant)

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 who are interested in similar issues of solidarity and social change. If you are organizing or know of an upcoming event related to these themes, please email us at education@borderlinks.org and include "Alumni Newsletter" in the subject line.

Please join us for **BorderLinks'** 20th anniversary celebration and annual fundraiser on **October 19** at Christ Presbyterian Church in **Tucson, AZ**, from 6:00-8:30 PM! Tickets are \$35 per person. Please contact us at (520) 628-8263 for more information.

School of the Americas Watch is holding its 18th annual vigil to close the SOA (now known as the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation), a combat training school for Latin American soldiers run by the U.S. government, at **Fort Benning, GA**, from **November 21-23**. For more information, see www.soaw.org.

The **Southwest Weekend of Witness** to stop torture, an event in solidarity with SOA Watch's annual vigil, will take place **November 15-16**, with activities in **Tucson** and **Sierra Vista, AZ**. Go to <http://southwestwitness.org/> for more details.

Those who have been to the border in the past six months may be familiar with the Arizona Denial Prosecution Initiative (ADPI), and have perhaps witnessed this new Border Patrol program in action at the Tucson U.S. District Court. BorderLinks delegations and staff have made our presence known ADPI hearings to bear public witness to these unjust policies. Although the ADPI has had a significant impact on the Nogales-Tucson corridor since its implementation last January 2008, this is not simply a local issue, but one of national concern. The criminalization of migrants, and the great financial costs and dehumanizing prosecution tactics associated with it, are national trends relevant to your own justice work in your home communities. In particular, there are many similarities between ADPI and the recent arraignment tactics following the raid in Iowa as instituted by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), raising concerns that this is becoming a national policy trend.

Cultural differences and power disparities come into sharp focus at ADPI. Seventy men and women in the same clothes they were wearing when apprehended in the desert file in to the courtroom with shackles around their ankles and waists. They look

“The criminalization of migrants, and the great financial costs and dehumanizing prosecution tactics associated with it, are national trends.”

exhausted, and reports indicate that, while in custody at the courthouse prior to their sentencing, migrants may not receive food, water, or medical attention and are subject to adverse sleeping conditions. They listen through headphones to Spanish interpretation as the judge explains their legal rights in a foreign judicial system. The migrants are called forward in multiple groups and asked to answer several “yes” or “no” questions en masse. Each migrant utters the word “culpable” (“guilty”), and some choose to give a statement. It is difficult to listen as someone begs the U.S. government for forgiveness for trying to feed his or her family. Once the migrants receive their sentence, the U.S. marshals escort them out of the courtroom. This process takes place daily and lasts only a few hours.

Historically, migrants crossing the desert have rarely faced criminal charges. In first

time apprehensions by Border Patrol, migrants have generally signed “voluntary departure” agreements and are returned to Mexico. Typically only those with prior deportations or a criminal record in the U.S. ran the risk of prosecution and incarceration, penalties that were applied inconsistently. In a dramatic shift, ADPI adapts the Operation Streamline model, a larger “zero tolerance” policy designed to be a deterrent factor, to prosecute a fixed number of migrants found within a 15-mile sub-section of the 262-mile Tucson sector each day. The quota has increased from 40 to 70 people per day, with the goal of reaching a daily caseload of 100, or 10% of the approximate 1,000 migrants that are caught in the Tucson sector on average each day. The defendants are charged with the federal misdemeanor “illegal entry” or federal felony “illegal re-entry,” giving them a permanent criminal record. Operation Streamline and ADPI both use an “expedited” court process, which many believe compromises defendants’ right to a fair trial. They may spend up to 180 days in jail and are disqualified from applying to enter the country through legal channels.

In recent months, more than half of all new federal criminal cases have been immigration related, from both Border Patrol apprehensions and workplace raids. This increase in criminal prosecution of migrants means many new costs funded by federal tax dollars. It burdens the federal judicial system, diverting financial, human, and physical resources that could be used in other ways. According to the *Coalición de Derechos Humanos*, the government spends around \$10 million per month on the U.S. magistrates, prosecutors, defense attorneys, U.S. marshals, Spanish interpreters, and other court staff needed to execute ADPI¹. More staff has been requested, and numerous private lawyers are hired to supplement the two federal public defenders provided for ADPI each day. Detention space is limited at the federal courthouse, and the *Arizona Daily Star* reports that it would require an additional \$3.5 million to accommodate all the migrants prosecuted through this program². At the same time, corporations profit from this trend. The U.S. prison system has become an industry, with the government contracting private companies such as Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) to construct and manage facilities to house migrants awaiting deportation or trial or serving prison sentences. CCA makes an estimated \$10 million each month through ADPI alone. Several other companies, such as Boeing, Raytheon, Blackwater, and Wackenhut, have received multi-million dollar contracts to participate in plans to further militarize the Mexico-U.S.



Border security in Nogales. Photo by Jim Tarvell, Alliance for Democracy delegation.

border³.

It has been speculated that Arizona may be a laboratory ground for testing practices to be utilized throughout the U.S., such as in the trial of almost 400 undocumented workers from Guatemala who were arrested for “Social Security Fraud” and “Aggravated Identity Theft” following the raid at the Agriprocessors Inc. meatpacking plant in Iowa on May 12, 2008. Erik Camayd-Freixas, a court interpreter assigned to the case, released a report that, due to the rapid pace of the trial, which lasted only a week, the defendants did not fully understand their charges or rights. Many of the conditions he denounced were similar to those found in the ADPI proceedings. Members of the legal community have expressed concerns that such protocols are a threat to the integrity of the justice system that jeopardizes the constitutional rights of us all.

-Lilli Mann (BorderLinks staff)

¹“Operation Streamline Action Alert: Immigrants Should Not Be Tried Behind Military Walls.” *Coalición de Derechos Humanos*. 14 March 2008. 27 July 2008 <<http://www.derechoshumanosaz.net>>.

²Brady McCombs. “Zero Tolerance Working, Says Border Patrol.” *Arizona Daily Star*. 6 April 2008. 23 July 2008.

³Rachel Pea and Karen Chen. “Border for Sale: Follow the Dollars.” Report written for the *Coalición de Derechos Humanos* in Tucson, AZ.

Other Sources:

Preston, Julia. “An Interpreter Speaking Up for Migrants.” *The New York Times*. 11 July 2008. 23 July 2008.

Preston, Julia. “More Illegal Crossings are Criminal Cases, Group Says.” *The New York Times*. 18 June 2008. 23 July

Reflections from a Summer of Work on the Border

The DukeEngage program provides funding for Duke University undergraduates who wish to pursue an intensive (minimum of eight weeks) civic engagement experience anywhere in the world. Through DukeEngage, students apply what they have learned in the classroom to address societal issues at home or abroad. Not only do students tackle real-world problems, but they develop the valuable skills and self-knowledge that evolve from spending time in an immersive service experience.

One of the 18 designated sites for DukeEngage was the borderlands in Tucson, AZ. The students began their education and civil service with a BorderLinks delegation and children's camp in Nogales, Sonora. BorderLinks offered the students a living space and gave support and coordination to their community engagement with the internship projects at Coalicion de Derechos Humanos, Southside Presbyterian, No More Deaths and Samaritans.

The following are excerpts from the students' blog that they updated throughout the summer. To read more about their experience, go to <http://www.dukeengageusmexico.blogspot.com/>.

I've lost the words to express my thoughts, to capture the joyous moments I shared with the precious children of Nogales, Sonora. The smiles they gave me, the tears I cried for the uncertainty of their futures.

-Viviana Santiago



It was an amazing experience to teach individuals who are activists of their community and to give this course in such sacred place - this church has a history of focusing on social justice issues since the 1980s when the Sanctuary movement began.

-Jose Castillo, on teaching CPR at Southside Presbyterian Church



Photos by Rachel Pea

But this "natural barrier" [the desert] will not halt the man determined to feed his family. Thousands are crossing every week. We call No More Deaths a "civil initiative," in that the action begins at the grassroots, and hopefully will soon influence Washington to make a policy change.

-No More Deaths Volunteer, paraphrased by Rachel Pea



Left to right: Rachel Pea, Lucy Zhang, Jose Castillo, Jenny Snead Williams, Raquel McLennon, Sarah Harden, Viviana Santiago, Christina Burgart, and Karen Chen.

The establishment of a DukeEngage site in Tucson grew out of a BorderLinks delegation for a documentary studies class at Duke entitled "Farmworkers in North Carolina" in March of this year. Viviana Santiago and I participated in this trip, which brought a human aspect and connection to the issue of immigration and farm work.



When we came back to Durham, our consciousness had been shifted. We were no longer quiet observers; instead, we began to formulate ways to bring action and dialogue to our college community. At Duke, we created an art installation piece that would bring a small aspect of the wall to our community. At over 15 feet tall, a structure built from corrugated aluminum panels combined with rusted steel grates formed the backdrop of a photo exhibition. Each photo, caption, cross, and article of personal property sought to form a place for quiet discussion and reflection. But the simple act of building a wall did not exhaust the potential for awareness. We decided more had to be done and so we created a dinner theater production in which we incorporated many voices from the border. We used the voices of migrants, scholars, undocumented immigrants, and even our own personal reflections. These voices aimed to challenge, confront, and provoke our audience.

As we come to the close of our DukeEngage experience, each one of us is creating our own stories; a story to take home to family, friends, and even those who would oppose the work that we have done. These stories are unique and special because they are beginnings to the work ahead of us. What we have started with Southside Presbyterian Church, Derechos Humanos, No More Deaths, and the Samaritans does not leave us when we set our feet back on a campus hundreds of miles away. Instead, a piece of our hearts will forever be tied to this community. And as we travel from this community to our homes, a surge of activism and energy flows through our veins. Frustration and knowledge precipitates into action and education.

-Lucy Zhang (BorderLinks delegation participant and Duke Engage student)



Photo from 2007 BorderLinks delegation to Chiapas.

“From yellow and white corn the Creators made flesh; from the corn masa they made the arms and legs of man. Only the corn masa entered the flesh of our Fathers.” — *Popul Vuh (Mayan Sacred Text)*

“Here, in this part of the world, corn was born. Our grandparents nurtured it. With it they nurtured themselves, to forge one of the great civilizations of history. The home of greatest antiquity of corn is in our territory. From this place in the universe it went to other parts of the world. We are people of corn. The grain is our brother, foundation of our culture, the reality of our being here. It is at the center of our daily life. It appears without fail in our diet and in a fourth of the products that we obtain in the shops. It is the heart of rural life and an unailing ingredient of urban life....

... Blind official policy does not take into account that for us corn is more than a cereal. It summarizes our past, defines our present and is the basis for our own future. We eat it, but it is not only food. It is cause for fiestas, for exchange, for celebrating our lives together, for mutual aid. It is our life. Corn is at the center of our culture, where it has a sacred character. We don't want to depart from that.”

— Taken from a manifesto ratified at the forum “In Defense of Corn” held in Oaxaca on March 10, 2004. The forum, which was attended by representatives from numerous NGOs and indigenous organizations, was a response to the importation of genetically modified corn into Mexico.

Questions to think about ...

Take some time to reflect on these words. Can you think of symbols of culture and faith in your tradition?

- What role did you observe that corn played during your time in Mexico with BorderLinks? How did you see corn used in urban areas like Nogales? Did you hear anything about corn or other agriculture from the migrants you met?
- What do you know about the effect of free trade agreements such as NAFTA on corn production?
- Given this framework for thinking about corn, what would it mean to genetically modify corn?
- What role does corn play in the U.S. economy and culture?

California Church Documents its BorderLinks Experience to Reach a Broader Audience

When a group of 17 congregation members from All Saints Episcopal Church in Pasadena, California, came to the border, they wanted others from their home community to share in what they learned. Throughout their 5-day BorderLinks trip, they recorded their experiences to be compiled into a documentary.

This DVD features an extended interview with an economic migrant that the delegation met in Agua Prieta, footage of group reflections, as well as individual reactions to the experience after they

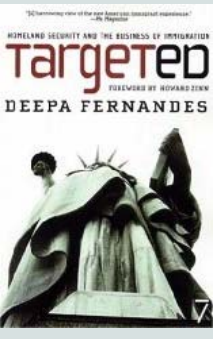
returned home to California. If you would like a copy of the DVD to show to a group, please contact us at our Tucson office at (520) 628-8263.

-Lilli Mann (BorderLinks)



All Saints delegation members pray at the border wall. Photo by David Ahrends.

Recommended Reading



If you are interested in learning more about the issues described in the article on Operation Streamline on page 3, check out *Targeted: Homeland Security and the Business of Immigration*, by Deepa Fernandes. The book examines recent trends within the Department of Homeland Security, such as border militarization, criminalization of migrants, and privatized detention. — Lilli Mann (BorderLinks staff)

BorderLinks Needs Your Support!

Like many businesses and non-profit organizations BorderLinks is feeling the stress of these economic hard times. There is an ever greater need to raise consciousness about these pressing social issues as concerns about human rights abuses of migrants increase. Please help keep the life-changing delegation experience available to others by donating if you can. We must work together now more than ever in the urgency of inspiring action on the border and throughout the nation and world.

Please show your solidarity by donating now online or sending a check to our Tucson office!