

Unitarian Universalist Church of Tucson
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Fall 2014

Edited by Denise Holley



Photo by Steve Johnston

No More Deaths summer volunteers hike by Apache Well Tank, about four miles east of Byrd Camp, near Arivaca, Arizona. Ocotillo stand tall in the foreground of a desert turned green by monsoon rains. **See page 2 for a report on the 2014 NMD summer program.**

No More Deaths exposes 'shakedown' of deportees

By Ricky Cheney

No More Deaths is excited to release our third report on abusive apprehension, detention and deportation practices. *Shakedown: How Deportation Robs Immigrants of their Money and Belongings* will be published this fall.

Three years after the release of *Culture of Cruelty*, we regrettably have witnessed a continuation of the same practices detailed in the more than 30,000 incidents of mistreatment in the report. As we continue to work alongside

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No More Deaths is an organization whose mission is to end death and suffering on the border between the United States and Mexico by mobilizing people of conscience to uphold fundamental human rights. Founded in 2004, in Tucson, Arizona, NMD provides water, food and medical assistance to migrants walking through the Arizona desert, monitors U.S. operations on the border, works to change the "war zone" policy, and brings the plight of migrants to public attention. It is a ministry of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Tucson. To contact, No More Deaths, call (520) 333- 5699 or visit the website www.nomoredeaths.org

To contribute to the mission of No More Deaths, write a check payable to UUCT/ No More Deaths and send it to: UUCT/No More Deaths, P.O. Box 40782, Tucson, AZ 85717, or visit our website www.nomoredeaths.org, select the "donate" button, and follow the instructions.

Central Americans continued

had left her country overnight. She worked with a youth organization and gangs had threatened her life, Miller said. The judge told the prosecutor to help the woman apply for asylum.

Central Americans traveling with children were spared prosecution, Miller said. But she and Heid observed families dropped off at Greyhound stations in Laredo and Brownsville with only bus personnel to help them.

In Falfurrias, Texas, they visited a cemetery where many unidentified migrants were laid to rest, Miller said. They watched as workers exhumed bodies that the South Texas Human Rights Center was trying to identify to notify their families, according to director Eduardo Canales. No More Deaths members joined other Arizona border groups and voted Aug. 25 to sign a statement calling for humane treatment of child migrants and families and legal help for them to apply for asylum.

Shakedown continued

our partner groups in Mexico, we have decided to focus in on one especially prevalent and dangerous deportation practice: dispossession.

The dispossession spelled out in *Shakedown* ranges from money and belongings not being returned (including identification, phones with personal contacts, and invaluable keepsakes), direct theft by agents, and money being returned in forms not redeemable in Mexico (such as checks and debit cards that do not work there). The report contains over 2,100 cases of recorded dispossession and investigative work that reveals the culpable agencies and corporations.

We have focused on this issue because we have witnessed the harm dispossession causes. We believe it can and must be stopped. Please join our efforts to stand in solidarity with those being deported by demanding that their money and belongings be returned to them.



Dear Friends of No More Deaths

The ocotillo is a plant that most travelers to the Southwest desert come to recognize for its unique character. (See cover photo.) With large spiny branches holding thousands of thorns and leaves, the ocotillo's branches have come to represent the varied work that No More Deaths does in the borderlands. Our collective work provides humanitarian aid in the desert, documents abuses of migrants in detention and during deportation, reunites families separated through unjust immigration policies and returns recovered belongings and money to deported migrants.

*One result of these efforts will be the release of a report this fall titled **Shakedown: How Deportation Robs Immigrants of their Money and Belongings**. This report exposes the reality that many deported migrants face when they are left in Mexico without any identification or money. Yolanda's experience this past April is not uncommon:*

When I was detained, Border Patrol threw my necklaces and belt in the trash, yelling, "Esto va a la basura." ("This goes in the trash.") They put my cell phone and birth certificate in a bag and said they'd hold on to it for me. I asked for it from ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) when I was being deported and they told me, "You don't have anything!" I showed them a slip with the items listed and they said, "Border Patrol has that, not us," and told me there was nothing they could do.

The data for this report is based on almost 2,000 belongings requests made to the NMD Property Recovery Assistance Project, which helped people along the U.S.-Mexico border recover personal property, from 2008 to 2013. It is also based on 167 interviews of migrants in Nogales, Sonora, deported without some or all of their money, from fiscal year 2013.

The thousands of leaves on the ocotillo represent for No More Deaths the thousands of supporters and donors who make our work possible so our immigrant brothers and sisters, such as Yolanda, no longer suffer on the U.S.-Mexico border. With a common root system committed to justice, these leaves, these volunteers and donors, help produce the beautiful red flowers of the ocotillo. They symbolize a beacon of hope, as well as a call to action, to end death and suffering in the desert and beyond. We hope you will join us in keeping our work alive. Thank you for your generous contributions.

In gratitude,

The No More Deaths Community

To contribute, write a check payable to UUCT/No More Deaths and send it to: UUCT/No More Deaths, P.O. Box 40782, Tucson, AZ 85717, or visit our website www.nomoredeaths.org and select the "donate" button.

Volunteers brave desert heat to aid migrants

By Allison Semmler and Tyler Espinoza

As temperatures in the Sonoran desert rose to over 100 degrees in early June, No More Deaths welcomed the first group of summer volunteers. By the end of the summer program on October 24, over 75 volunteers from around the country will have given humanitarian aid at the Arivaca desert camp and the Migrant Resource Center in Agua Prieta, Sonora.

So far, the new volunteers have taken on the No More Deaths mission of ending death and suffering in the U.S.-Mexico border region with an impressive level of energy and commitment.

Most volunteers decided individually to volunteer a chunk of their summers but we also hosted student groups and families. Volunteers are bringing a wide range of experiences and skills this summer. Nurses, EMTs, students, poets, parents, teachers, and DACA recipients are among the participants who work hard in the desert every day.

Many volunteers come to learn about the border region for one or two weeks, then return home to share what they learned with their home communities. We have been lucky to see a few of our new volunteers stay for most of the summer and take on more responsibilities.

In the blazing Sonoran summers, it is impossible for

migrants to carry enough water to sustain themselves for their entire trip north. Volunteers leave an average of 350 gallons of water per week on migrant trails during the hottest periods. Donations from our supporters world-wide make it possible for volunteers to provide food, water and medical care to travelers.

The summer monsoons turn the roads into rivers and sometimes make it difficult for volunteers to return to camp or go on water drops. Seasonal volunteers helped expand the work of NMD into the Ajo region, where the desert is more brutal and temperatures reached 112 degrees in July. They also helped staff the medical tent at camp and treated people with blisters, twisted ankles, cuts, tooth infections, and other ailments.

Other volunteers provided basic services at the Migrant Resource Center, on the other side of the border from Douglas, Arizona, to people who were recently repatriated. They gave food and personal hygiene supplies to dozens of people every day. Some volunteers even used their free time to help prepare dinner and clean at a nearby shelter.

The summer has been long and demanding for our volunteers and resources, but we are still going strong! Thank you to everyone who has given time, money, and energy to help No More Deaths work toward our mission.

Volunteers patrol near Ajo with Samaritans

Alicia Dinsmore and Sophie Smith of No More Deaths and Scott Warren of Ajo Samaritans carry jugs of water to leave for passing migrants in August off Pipeline Road, outside of Ajo.

Monsoon rains had cooled the hot, flat terrain a bit, where migrants must travel 60 miles north of the border to skirt a checkpoint, Smith said. The patrols are a joint venture with the Ajo Samaritans.

"We've gotten more search and rescue reports in that area," Smith said. In May, volunteers found a deceased migrant in the Sand Tank Mountains.

Photo by Sophie Smith



NMD joins searches for missing migrants

By Ricky Cheney

¿Cuántos días caminaron? (How many days did you walk?) ¿Cruzaron calles pavimentadas o de tierra? ¿Cuántas? (Did you cross any paved or dirt roads? How many?)

These are the types of questions we ask on our intake forms for searches. We receive reports from family members and individuals who last saw the missing migrant and then respond to the best of our ability.

Search and Rescue has been a part of No More Deaths' role in the desert since we began in 2004. In some sense, our regular desert aid work is always an informal search for anyone who might be lost. Search and Rescue is distinct because it is a response to a specific person who is lost. We also engage in Search and Recovery (of remains) and commonly refer to both as SAR.

In the year 2000, La Coalición de Derechos Humanos, a key partner for the SAR project, started calling attention to the deaths on the border. Shortly thereafter, hundreds began looking for their missing siblings, spouses, children, parents and friends.

When people go missing, or rather are disappeared by violent border apparatus, loved ones contact groups throughout Latin America and the U.S. borderlands. No More Deaths directs all calls it receives to Derechos Humanos, which assesses the case and redirects it where needed. Other cases come directly from the desert, post-deportation from our partner groups in northern Mexico, or from the Colibrí Center for Human Rights, a Tucson organization that tries to reunite the unidentified dead with their families.

The missing migrant may be in detention and not being allowed a phone call, may already have been deported, or

may still be out in the desert. NMD also sends cases to the Colibrí Center at the Pima County Medical Examiner's office, which works to match the information with remains.

NMD currently takes on cases in Arizona that might have enough data to begin a SAR. We do an interview, fill out a detailed intake of the journey, and then organize a search group. Our SAR team has worked with the Samaritans (Arizona), Águilas del Desierto (California), Angeles del Desierto (California), and the South Texas Human Rights Center (Falfurrias, Texas).

In June, NMD, Derechos Humanos and the Binational Migration Institute held a SAR conference in Tucson, Arizona with 10 groups participating from all along the U.S.-Mexico border. Since that time our collective efforts have greatly improved.

Summer 2014 has been extremely active and our team, roughly 20 people and growing, has been taking on new cases every week. Out of roughly 140 cases that came into Derechos Humanos from June to September, NMD took on more than 20 cases.

While cases have resulted in the missing person turning up safe, being found in detention, being found deported, or remains being identified by the medical examiner, for many there are still no answers, and maybe never will be.

I got involved in SAR in 2010 and still carry with me vivid memories of searches that year, with some questions left unanswered. One of the most damaging aspects of this militarized border is the sting of mystery that haunts so many families with loved ones who were disappeared.

As NMD works to stop death and suffering on the U.S.-Mexico border, we want to stand in meaningful solidarity with families in their quests for answers and reunification.

Students expand kit project that can save lives in the desert

By Denise Holley

How can we reduce the chance a person determined to cross the U.S. border will die in the Arizona desert? Equip the crosser with a simple kit: two filters and two vials of Clorox to purify contaminated water, four packets of Vaseline, a fresh pair of socks, a whistle to call for help and instructions in Spanish.

If a traveler rubs Vaseline on his feet, he is less likely to develop blisters and get left behind by his group, said volunteer Hannah Hafter. She and volunteer Kasha Bornstein developed the original “harm reduction” kit in 2011.

In spring 2013, Nogales volunteer Sally Meisenhelder gave out kits in Nogales, Sonora, to migrants headed north. University of Arizona medical students assembled hundreds of kits in August 2013 and again this year, said volunteer Maureen Marx. NMD volunteers distributed the kits at crossing points along the Arizona-Sonora border.

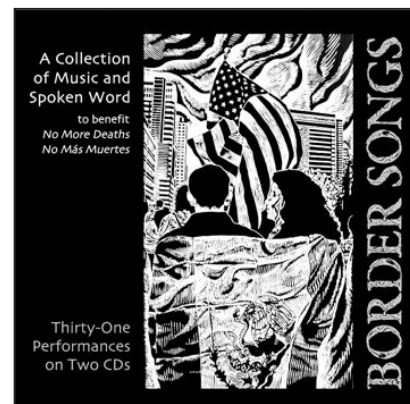
This past summer, the kit project got a jump-start when a pair of students from Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington, landed a \$10,000 grant.

Keiler Beers, Genevieve Jones and six fellow students came to the Arizona-Mexico border for a NMD alternative spring break in 2012. “We all left with a greater sense of urgency about the border,” Beers said.

He returned for a five-week internship with No More Deaths in 2013, while Jones participated in an academic program on the border, she said. As seniors, Beers and Jones approached the Davis Projects for Peace foundation with a proposal: “Peace Through Preservation of Life: Harm Reduction on the U.S.-Mexico Border.” They won the funding and returned to southern Arizona in June 2014.

First, the students gathered leftover kit supplies and did an inventory, Beers said. Then they researched inexpensive ways to purify water that could be used in the desert.

“We fill the vials with bleach and label them,” Jones said. “That will kill a large percentage of bacteria.”



Buy Border Songs, put water in the desert

Do you want to help No More Deaths save lives and reduce suffering? All proceeds from Border Songs, a double CD of music and spoken word about the border and immigration, go directly to NMD. Each album purchased provides 29 gallons of water for people in need! So far, the project has raised nearly \$65,000 for humanitarian aid.

And the album is great! Pete Seeger, Sweet Honey in the Rock, Calexico, Sergio Mendoza, Michael Franti, Dúo Guardabarranco, Eliza Gilkyson, Tom Russell, Margaret Randall, Mario Bencastro, Charles Bowden, Cyril Barret, Denise Chávez, Ted Warmbrand and others make this bilingual compilation a powerful double gift – someone gets a beautiful album and you put 29 gallons of water in the desert!

To purchase the CD, visit: www.bordersongs.org or Antigone Books in Tucson.



Photo by Denise Holley

Genevieve Jones and Keiler Beers display a harm reduction kit they assembled to give migrants a better chance of surviving in the desert. The Whitman College graduates won a \$10,000 grant and worked over the summer on the No More Deaths project.

The thirsty person must also use the filter cloth. When Hafter gives out the kits, she emphasizes that it takes 30 minutes for the water to become safe to drink.

The students bought large quantities of kit supplies online, Beers said. With socks at 50 cents a pair, they kept the cost per kit to \$1.07. Then they packed hundreds of kits into crates and distributed them to migrants in Altar, Nogales and Agua Prieta. They included a booklet they wrote that described how to make more kits.

In Altar, the students spoke with a man who used a kit before he was deported, Beers said. “He didn’t get sick at all even though he drank from a dirty stream. It’s important to do preventive work and not just after-the-fact care.”

They left two crates with Marx, one with a Nogales volunteer and one with the search and rescue coordinator.

“For both of us, it was a lesson in providing tangible help,” Jones said.

Volunteers help stop deportations to ‘Keep Tucson Together’

By Denise Holley

Deportation can split a family apart. It can strand a parent south of the border and leave the rest of the family heartbroken and struggling to earn a living.

After the Arizona Legislature passed SB1070 in spring 2010, Members of No More Deaths joined with the group Tierra Y Libertad to launch a campaign called We Reject Racism. The campaign worked to develop protection networks in undocumented communities to help them build power and advocate for a better community.

“We knew that such a goal could not be achieved if community members were constantly ripped from their homes, work and communities through deportation,” said NMD volunteer Sarah Launius.

In response, she, NMD volunteer Kat Sinclair and attorney Margo Cowan co-founded a community legal clinic for people under deportation orders called Keep Tucson Together (KTT).

In July 2011, John Morton, former head of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), provided an avenue. He issued guidelines for local prosecutors to administratively close cases, Launius said. This is commonly referred to as prosecutorial discretion.

“We started the clinic because we learned that people could take steps to stop their own deportations with administrative closure,” Launius said. “We have learned how to successfully help individuals fight their own immigration cases and win.”

ICE needed some persuasion to act, Sinclair said. On Dec. 12, 2011, KTT mobilized 68 people with deportation cases, their families and friends and NMD supporters



Photo by Denise Holley

Kat Sinclair (left) and Sarah Launius confer about immigration cases during a legal clinic at Southside Presbyterian Church on Aug. 16. The co-coordinators of Keep Tucson Together help immigrants stave off deportation and apply for any legal status for which they may qualify.



Photo by Denise Holley

Juan Zamora (left), who came from Mexico at age 14, talks with volunteer Angela Reyes about his application for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA).

to march on the ICE office in Tucson.

“We figured we needed some kind of a miracle,” Sinclair said. “We put some serious pressure on them (ICE officials).” The effort worked – almost all of the original cases have closed, she said.

Since the legal clinic began in September 2011, volunteers have helped stop over 100 deportations, Launius said.

When President Obama announced the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program in summer 2012, KTT held meetings at Pueblo High School on Thursday evenings that drew some 3,000 people, Sinclair said.

Volunteers helped nearly 500 youths apply successfully for DACA, Launius said. Others did their own paperwork.

The legal clinic is about “empowering people to be able to represent themselves and get their cases closed,” Sinclair said. “I don’t want it to become a service project.”

At the August 16 clinic, there were 20 to 30 Dreamers, a couple of bond cases, a couple of asylum cases and five or six deportation cases, Sinclair said.

The Tucson immigration court, which includes Douglas, is No. 2 in the country in the number of deportation cases closed (Seattle is first), Sinclair said, citing data from the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC) at Syracuse University.

Keep Tucson Together trains volunteers to work with immigrants and provides free assistance from 2-5 p.m. on the first and third Saturday of each month at Southside Presbyterian Church, 317 W. 23rd St., in Tucson.

No More Deaths volunteers meet desperate Central Americans

By Denise Holley

Jordan Weiner met the Central Americans as they arrived exhausted with blistered feet at a shelter in Tenosique in southern Mexico. Lois Martin traveled to Honduras in 2012 and 2013 and learned why ordinary citizens feared for their lives.

R.N. Sarah Roberts, witnessed extreme poverty as she tended the medical needs of a Maya community in Guatemala. Paula Miller and John Heid visited south Texas in May where hundreds of Central Americans streamed across the border.

These No More Deaths volunteers shed some light on why so many people risk a treacherous journey for the slim chance of asylum in the United States.

Honduras

For many Hondurans, there is no safe quarter anywhere in their country, Martin said. "There are drive-by shootings of *campesinos*. There are death threats to people who are human rights leaders."

Large landowners wield tremendous power over *campesinos* who want to farm land that could produce a profitable crop of palm oil, Martin said. Gangs and drug smugglers also threaten citizens.

The homicide rate in Honduras is the highest in the world, except for war zones, Martin said. "None of the

deaths are investigated and no one is charged."

With its corporate interests, military bases and recognition of the 2009 military coup, "the U.S. is complicit in the violence there."

Martin traveled throughout Honduras with La Voz de los de Abajo, a Chicago group, she said. When the visitors interviewed labor and human rights advocates, one told them, "You (visitors) are the only protection we have."

Southern Mexico

Weiner worked, ate and slept in La 72 shelter in Tenosique, near the Guatemalan border, from January to July this year, she told NMD members Aug. 18 in Tucson.

Weiner, a former logistics coordinator for NMD, welcomed thousands of desperate Central Americans, mostly Hondurans, to the shelter, she said. There they ate and rested for the next leg of their journey.

She interviewed each new arrival. "I got known as the person who helps people with their immigration problems," Weiner said. "I never had a day off."

Weiner helped a few people apply for refugee status in Mexico, she said. But most travelers were bound for Texas where they hoped to apply for asylum in the U.S. When the freight train the migrants call "La Bestia" (The Beast) rumbled by the shelter every two or three days, "people were full of adrenalin," Weiner said. They climbed atop the



Photo by Jordan Weiner

Central Americans wait for the freight train they call "La Bestia" (The Beast) to begin its trip north from Tenosique, Mexico, to Texas.



Photo by Paula Miller

Thousands of Central Americans have crossed the Rio Grande River this year, shown here last spring near Brownsville, Texas, and surrendered to Border Patrol in hopes of finding asylum in the United States.

train and held on for their lives.

"There was a huge increase in children (traveling) while I was there," Weiner said.

Weiner rode the train herself for six hours and arrived safely in Palenque, she said. She also accompanied two caravans of Central Americans last spring who asked the Mexican government for safe passage through the country. The first caravan won a 30-day pass for the travelers, Weiner said. But the second evoked a violent response with beatings and arrests by Mexican authorities.

"The people who were most beat up were deported right away," Weiner said. Mexico City attorneys arrived to apply for humanitarian visas for other injured migrants.

In August, Weiner received notice that all 13 applications were denied, but the lawyers promised to appeal.

No More Deaths sent a \$600 donation to La 72 shelter in May and shipped a box of medical supplies in July, Weiner said.

When Weiner returned to the U.S. in late July, the Mexican authorities had begun blocking migrants from boarding the train, she said.

Guatemala

Poverty lingers in the mountain villages near Quiche, Guatemala, where Roberts has participated on a medical team since 2003, she said. She meets people who have migrated to the U.S., worked and returned with cash to build a home.

"It's (poverty) the same as it's been since the civil war era (mid-1960s to 1996)," Roberts said. But now, hunger is worse. Crops are failing due to a severe drought and a fungus has infected the coffee plants, Roberts said. "This means people can't support their families."

South Texas

Miller and Heid attended an Operation Streamline hearing in Del Rio, Texas, in late May, she said. "In Del Rio, people were treated more humanely in the courtroom," said Miller, who attended Streamline hearings in Tucson.

One distraught woman had been separated from her 2-year-old granddaughter, Miller said. The judge directed the prosecutor to hunt for the child, Miller said. A Salvadoran woman who ran through a port of entry gate

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