



No More Deaths • No Más Muertes

Humanitarian Aid Is Never A Crime

December 2014

Edited by Denise Holley

Report on lost migrant belongings will debut on Human Rights Day

Imagine you have been dumped into a strange city with only the clothes on your back and a check issued in another country. Your cash, ID, cell phone and phone numbers of family and friends may be missing. If you cannot cash that check, how you will eat, where you will sleep and how you can travel back to your home?

This is what happens to thousands of immigrants deported each year from the United States, according to a new report compiled by No More Deaths volunteers. “Shakedown: How Deportation Robs Immigrants of their Money and Belongings” will be released Dec. 10.

The date coincides with the United Nations’ Human Rights Day, because the theft of essential property causes suffering and violates the human rights of migrants.

Volunteers interviewed deportees, mostly in Nogales, Sonora, and documented 1,646 cases of dispossession over the past few years. Their research reveals which agencies



Photo by Bob Torrez

Alicia Dinsmore (top left), a No More Deaths volunteer, sits with a mother and children as they take turns talking to a relative in Nogales, Sonora.

and corporations are responsible. “Shakedown” will be featured on the NMD website www.nomoredeaths.org

Left behind to die – rescued by volunteers

By Gabriela Romeri



I will take the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. (Ezekiel 36:26)

There were many things learned in the Sonoran Desert during my week at the No More Deaths aid camp. The main lesson: try not to cry.

The things you witness – the desperation and dehumanizing indignities of people left

behind to die, the mountain shrine of a 14-year old child – will make you weep. It’s tough to witness how very little human life is worth along the border. But it’s hard to bandage someone suffering from life-threatening injuries when you’re crying.

This must be the first lesson learned by the folks who stay and facilitate at the NMD aid camp. During our week together this past October, our fearless camp leaders stayed upbeat and positive as they rescued and treated three people left behind to die.

They washed and bandaged the feet of the man with trench foot whose skin seemed to be rotting off; they bandaged the swollen, twisted ankle of a father and husband trying desperately to return home to his family on the West Coast; and they cared for the physical and emotional needs of a woman, dehydrated and vomiting, who had survived by drinking toxic water.

Two men and one woman, injured, left behind by their coyotes to die in the desert with no water, food or hope.

Being here, you witness the desperation and agony of those left behind, and learn how very little stands between life and death: black trashbags are used as sleeping bags to survive the brutal cold of desert nights. People avoid being attacked by real coyotes by sleeping in trees. Clean, dry socks can prevent trench foot.

“A can of beans saved my life,” said Miguel, the father trying to return to his family. He was deported in January, detained while driving his wife home from her birthday dinner.

In the desert, after days of limping on a swollen ankle through torrential rain without eating; after fending off real coyotes using the stick that he was limping on; after drink-

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Dear Friends of No More Deaths

Most of the people we see are migrating out of necessity, not by choice. Would anyone choose to better his or her life by risking death crossing the rugged Sonoran Desert border region? Migrants are taken advantage of all along the way, yet they endure the mistreatment. They feel they have no choice if they are to escape oppressive poverty and, for many, violence that threatens their families.

It is impossible to put ourselves in their shoes. But we can recognize the privileges we often take for granted and choose to give our time and resources. We can call out unjust border polices and practices that our own government perpetrates and support the work of local immigrant rights groups.

President Obama's recent executive order that halts deportation for millions of undocumented Americans is a first step we heartily support. There have been too many family break-ups in the name of enforcing the "law." We do not believe that increased militarization in the name of border security will address the root causes of migration. Until that happens, until we see how U.S. economic policies contribute to poverty, violence and separation of families in the places people are leaving, migrants will cross our border and risk their lives.

The No More Deaths mission to end death and suffering in this border region is more urgent than ever. Thank you for partnering with us as we continue our humanitarian response. On behalf of our migrant brothers and sisters, thank you for your ongoing contributions.

In solidarity,

The No More Deaths Community

To donate, mail a check, payable to "UUCT- No More Deaths," to No More Deaths-UUCT, P.O. Box 40782, Tucson, AZ 85717 or visit www.nomoredeaths.org and click on "donate."



No More Deaths volunteers joined a procession of people who carried signs and black coffins through the streets of Nogales, Sonora, on Oct. 10 to mark two years since a Border Patrol agent fired through the border fence and killed 16-year-old José Antonio Elena Rodríguez. A smaller group on the Arizona side met the marchers at the border wall, where speakers called on the U.S. government to hold the agent responsible for the shooting. Family members of the teen and others killed or injured by Border Patrol participated in the march and vigil.

Photo by Richard Boren

Left Behind continued

ing dirty water for days, calling out to be found even by Border Patrol just to survive—Miguel found a single can of beans.

He said finding that can, days after extinguishing all hope, made him think he could go on—and he did. When we left camp on Friday, so did Miguel, walking the rest of the way on his mended ankle; returning home to his wife and children.

Miguel, like so many others, would be just another casualty down here on the front lines of this war against the desperate; a place where, as Gloria Anzaldúa notes, "the third world grates up against the first world and bleeds."

Casualties like Josseline Quinteros, 14 years old and left behind to die by her coyote when she started throwing up, in January, 2008. After her frozen body was found in February, 2008 by NMD volunteers, the group eventually decided to keep their desert-aid camp open year round.

The greatest lesson learned here: small acts save lives. Despite the dearth and death along the border there is an oasis of humanity – NMD volunteers, Samaritans and surrounding townspeople in Arivaca – carrying out compassion every day. Volunteers like Lois, who at age 80 still goes out frequently to leave water along the migrant trails.

These folks on the front lines quietly bandage the wounded and rescue the wandering. From this wilderness desert they carry out a radical spirituality, putting others before self, sacrificing even brutal winters outside, all to save those left behind.

God bless you all.

Gabriela Romeri is an associate editor and writer at Maryknoll magazines in New York state. She spent a week at NMD's Byrd Camp in Arivaca in October 2014.