



Border Working Group

Dear Friends,

In preparation for the 2003 pilgrimage along the U.S.-Mexico border we have prepared this Border Information Packet for use in your faith or activist community, or for your own information. We are now living in a time of transition in our nation and indeed our world. Millions have risked their lives crossing the border to find a better life, and thousands have lost their lives along the way. Countless other millions live near the border in a zone where border guards and check points target those who appear to be Latino, and environmental degradation caused by maquiladoras create health hazards for vulnerable populations. We hope that you will use this packet to become better informed and to inform others in your community about the realities those who cross and live at the U.S.-Mexico border face.

As you look through the packet you will find articles on some of the important and often unrecognized issues that confront people as they cross and live at the U.S.-Mexico border today. These include:

- border enforcement
- migrant deaths
- racism
- environmental injustice
- stories of people who risk everything in crossing the border
- quotations from the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures and the Koran that speak to the ancient concern for the migrant
- church statements that encourage us to welcome and care for the migrants we meet
- resources for more information
- tools for advocacy

We hope that these tools will empower you to work toward justice at the U.S.-Mexico Border. We invite you and your faith or activist community to join us as we journey along the entire U.S.-Mexico border in a pilgrimage in the fall of 2003.

We will journey to call for an end to the deaths that have plagued our border since government policies pushed migrants to cross in dangerous areas; and we will journey to draw attention to the need to create a sustainable way of life for all people on both sides of the border.

For more information on how you can be part of this effort or lend your support contact: West Cosgrove of the Maryknoll Border Team (915-543-6771) or Joan Maruskin of Church World Service (202-544-2350 or jmaruskin@churchworldservice.org).

This packet is meant to be used. If you received this packet in paper form, please be aware that it can also be found online at: www.rtfcam.org. Feel free to download, make copies, and distribute it to all who might find it useful.

One last note: As of March 2003, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), under the Department of Homeland Security, was re-named the Bureau for Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS). The INS acronym is used throughout this document; the mailing and web addresses on the resources page, however, refer to the newly-created BCIS. For the purposes of this packet, these two names/acronyms denote the same agency.

Sincerely,
The Border Working Group

Participating groups include:

American Friends Service
Committee

Church World Service Immigration
and Refugee Program

Columban Justice & Peace Office

Conference of Major Superiors of
Men

Leadership Conference of Women
Religious

Maryknoll Office for Global
Concerns

Medical Mission Sisters -- Alliance
for Justice

Mexico Solidarity Network

Mennonite Central Committee

Missionary Oblates Justice &
Peace/Integrity of Creation Office

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE U.S.-MEXICO BORDER

Houses painted the colors of crayons, factories surrounded by chain-link fence, dancing Tejano music and rumbling semi trucks, swimming pools and saguaros, corn-on-a-stick and Coca-Cola—the U.S.-Mexico border is a clash of cultures and corporations, bright, alive, and talking two languages at once. In Circle K convenience stores, you can buy a burger to go, same as anywhere; or for 99 cents, you can get a taco—chorizo or huevos—made while you wait by the grandmothers that Circle K hires to roll tortillas by hand.

And through this land of contradictions runs a 15-foot-high metal fence, the top barbed, glistening, and arching toward Mexico.

Throughout the tumultuous history of the borderlands, it's been clear who's kept out and who's keeping. Ever since 1848, when the United States seized nearly half of Mexico's territory and signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, border policy has grown increasingly harsh. In 1924, the U.S. government created the Border Patrol. In 1986, the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 appropriated dollars for new checkpoints, fences, and guards. And in 1993, the INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service) launched a massive crackdown that spread along the border, sealing urban areas and forcing migrants into the desert, where more than 2,000 have died since 1998. In 1996, the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 allocated even more money for enforcement.

Ironically, border enforcement increased even as the U.S. and Mexican economies boomed with the onset of NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) in 1994. NAFTA expedited the movement of capital across the U.S.-Mexico border; labor migration, on the other hand, was criminalized. And while the trade agreements benefited U.S. and Mexican corporations, the diminished agriculture subsidies and lowered crop prices devastated Mexico's poor farmers. Under NAFTA, on January 1, 2003,

tariffs on almost all agricultural imports from the United States ended. As a result, according to the Mexico National Agriculture Commission, some 700,000 people are expected to lose jobs in farming and other food industries this year. Many may join the estimated 300,000 Mexicans a year who make the illegal journey to the United States.

What are Mexicans leaving when they come to the U.S.? On the Mexico side of the border, maquiladora parks sprawl in valleys and colonias, squatter settlements, cover the dusty hillsides—think steep roads and stray dogs; no plumbing and no water; houses made of cardboard, tin, tires, and the hoods of cars. If you stop for a chat and a taco, the colonistas will tell you about NAFTA—about the farm they lost in Oaxaca, why maquiladora wages can't feed a family, how their son died crossing the desert to get to *el norte*.

Often, however, Mexicans don't find things much better across the border. There are colonias and stories on the U.S. side as well. A roofer, cheated out of wages, won't complain because his boss could call the *migra*, the INS. A woman, abused by her husband, is afraid to alert the police, because they might ask for her documents. A high school valedictorian can't attend a U.S. college; even though she applied for citizenship two years ago, her papers were "lost" by the INS.

What goes unsaid in enforcement policies and trade agreements is that the U.S. economy is dependent on migrant labor. Immigrants pay taxes, contribute to the economy, and send checks back to families at home. What's more, they've been critical to the nation's economic growth in the past decade, accounting for half of the new workers who joined the labor force since 1990. The U.S. Labor Department estimates that the number of jobs in our economy that require only short-term training will increase from 53.2 million in 2000 to 60.9 million by 2010. Meanwhile, the U.S. American job force is shrinking because of an aging work force and rising education levels. "By 2010,

the median age of [U.S.] American workers will reach 40.6 years, while the share of adult native-born men without a high school diploma continues to plunge: from more than half in 1960 to less than 10 percent today,” according to a *Wall Street Journal* article. Migrant labor will be needed to fill the gap.

The stories of sisters and brothers on both sides of the border invite people of faith and action in the United States to solidarity, even as the growing need for immigrant laborers necessitates change. As the U.S. government works out the knots in the tangled Department of Homeland Security, we have a chance to advocate for wise

immigration policy in the new department. We can encourage a border strategy that eliminates deaths in the desert. We can invite a legalization plan that unites divided families, ends worker exploitation, and allows immigrants to become citizens.

More importantly, we can educate lawmakers—and ourselves—about alternatives to an economy that forces migrants from an impoverished south to an insatiable north. The best way? Make a trip to the border, talk with colonistas, ponder the fence pointing south. (And taste some Circle K tacos while you’re at it).

Sources:

1. Thompson, Ginger (2002, December 19). NAFTA to open floodgates, engulfing rural Mexico. *Migration News*.
2. Griswold, Daniel. (2002, October 22). Mexican workers come here to work: let them! *Wall Street Journal*.
3. Cohn, D’Vera. (2002, December 2). Immigrants account for half of new workers. *Washington Post*.

BORDER ENFORCEMENT AND MIGRANT DEATHS

People migrate to the United States for powerful reasons. They come to escape poverty and to search for work that will allow them to provide for their families. Some come to escape political persecution or violence in their home countries. Others come to join family, and many stay only for a limited time before returning. They leave because life has become very difficult, if not impossible, at home. They risk arrest, injury, and death in order to enter the U.S.

The current U.S.-Mexico border enforcement strategy used by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) began in September 1993 with an effort in the El Paso sector to seal the border at traditional illegal crossing points. The concentration of agents and vehicles in high traffic areas greatly reduced illegal flow at those sections of the border. By 1994, the INS had adopted the El Paso strategy as its model for border enforcement, replicating it in Tucson (1994), San Diego (1994), McAllen and Laredo (1997), and El Centro (1998).

During the current strategy's implementation over the last decade, border enforcement spending and the number of agents patrolling the border have tripled. Sophisticated technology such as ground sensors, surveillance cameras, heat detecting scopes, and reinforced fencing are used to prevent and detect illegal crossings. In addition, 4,000 new Border Patrol positions were created between 1995 and 2000. This rapid influx of agents resulted in a Border Patrol force with relatively little experience, posing haz-

ards for both migrants and veteran officers. The increase in complaints of INS misconduct during this period raises questions about the training and supervision of new recruits.

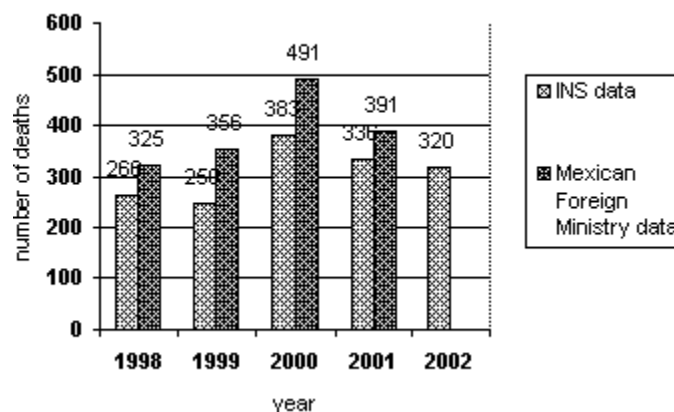
This blockade strategy was designed to deter illegal entries by forcing migrants to cross either at ports-of-entry, where they could be easily apprehended, or in remote areas difficult to pass through. But despite the costly buildup of equipment and personnel, there is no evidence that these tactics reduced unauthorized immigration. An overall increase in apprehension rates since the strategy

began suggests that, even with the increased risks, people haven't stopped trying to cross the border. The brief drop in apprehension rates after September 11, 2001, indicates that migration may be more dependent on political and socio-economic factors than on the number of officers at the border.

The architects of the border blockade strategy badly miscalculated by as-

suming that migrants would not attempt to use more treacherous crossing routes. The strategy has not succeeded in stopping migrants from trying to cross the border, but it has driven them into areas where they are less likely to be apprehended, such as the southwest desert. Crossing in these remote areas makes migrants easy prey for border bandits, and often leads crossers to seek help from unscrupulous smugglers. The greatest danger, however, is exposure to the elements: an unprecedented number of deaths due to hypothermia, dehydration and other environmental causes have accompanied the border blockades.

Migrant Deaths at the US-Mexico Border



INS statistics do not include deaths that occur in Mexico, and may not count certain migrant deaths handled by the local police. INS records deaths by fiscal year (October 1 through September 30). The Mexican Foreign Ministry counts crossing deaths in both the U.S. and Mexico by calendar year.

Every year hundreds are discovered in deserts, mountains, or rivers, along highways or railroad tracks, and sometimes even trapped inside trucks or freight trains. Official statistics indicate that, since 1998, more than two thousand migrants have lost their lives trying to cross the United States-Mexico border, though many more remain uncounted, their bodies unaccounted for.

The INS border blockade strategy is inhumane and ineffective. It has failed to reduce undocumented migration, it has redirected migrants to their peril, and has led to an increase in civil rights violations by a dangerously inexperienced Border Patrol force. Despite these failures, these deadly policies continue, with a proposed budget of \$3 billion for border enforcement in 2003 alone.

The lives and rights of migrants should be protected. Creating more avenues for legal migration, revisiting the current border enforcement strategy, and expanding search and rescue efforts would keep undocumented

No more INS?

The new Department of Homeland Security will soon take over the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). The Border Patrol will become part of the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection, "dedicated to securing our borders," while the investigative and enforcement functions of the INS will be taken on by the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, which will focus on "investigating criminal violations of our immigration and customs laws." This reorganization is designed to consolidate the overlapping missions of the INS, Customs, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service and the Federal Protective Service. Many observers who have seen several other re-organizations of the INS in past years wonder if substantive improvements will result.

people from taking perilous crossing routes and prevent deaths. Ultimately, people will continue to come north as long as economic circumstances leave them no other option. Economic development, targeted aid, and more just international economic policies are needed to address the reasons why people must leave their home countries in the first place.

Sources:

1. Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (2001, November). Chaos On the U.S.-Mexico Border: A Report on Migrant Crossing deaths, Immigrant Families and Subsistence-level Laborers, Report 5.
2. Reyes, Belinda I, Johnson, Hans P. & Van Swearingen, Richard. (2002). Holding the Line? The Effect of the Recent Border Build-up on Unauthorized Immigration. San Francisco, CA: Public Policy Institute of California.
3. Data from *Dallas Morning News*. (2002, August 3).
4. Conversation with Mario Villarreal, Border Patrol Media. (2003, January 29).

RACISM AT THE BORDER

In July 2001, when seven members of the Border Working Group from Washington, D.C., visited the U.S.-Mexico border, one experience left group members with a clear impression of rampant racism including racial profiling by the Border Patrol. There were two men of Mexican descent on the delegation, one a Mexican Franciscan brother, the other a U.S. citizen working for a religious NGO in San Diego. It was those two who had to produce documents at each checkpoint on the U.S. side of the border. The rest of the group was of European descent. At one point a woman in the delegation of European background was asked to remove her sunglasses so the Border Patrol Agent could check the color of her eyes. No one else was asked a question or given so much as a second glance. Would she too have had to produce documents proving her citizenship had her eyes been brown instead of blue?

This kind of experience is a daily reality for those who live at the border, especially for those who appear to be of Latino background, and is a clear example of the kind of profiling many on the border encounter. While many more extreme examples can be found, from police beating and even killing due to race, to deportation of U.S. citizens who speak Spanish and appear Latino, this aspect of life on the U.S.-Mexico border often remains hidden. Those who are mistreated because of their ethnicity are often reluctant to report their mistreatment.

Roberto Martinez gives us a short history of racism at the border:

“Widespread racism and violence erupted in 1849 when thousands of Mexicans flocked to California and Arizona seeking work in the mines and railroads during the gold rush period. However, nothing compares in numbers and magnitude to the massive raids, violence and deportations of the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s by police and Border Patrol throughout major cities of the Southwest at a time when Mexicans were being scapegoated for all the

social and economic ills in the country. U.S. citizens, as well as legal residents, were deported along with suspected undocumented immigrants. In the 1940s roundups and deportations of Mexicans were blamed on immigrants taking jobs away from servicemen returning from World War II. Today, police and Border Patrol still work together in many parts of the Southwest to violate the rights of both documented and undocumented immigrants.

“In a particularly egregious case in 1997, a police department in Arizona rounded up over 400 Mexican people in raids that lasted five days. The police were backed up by the U.S. Border Patrol. Of those 400 plus people, only a handful turned out to be undocumented. The majority were U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents.”

Beyond the first hand, anecdotal evidence of those who have experienced this blatant racism, a number of studies and reports have come to the same conclusion. The National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights released “From the Borderline to the Colorline: A Report on Anti-Immigrant Racism in the United States.” This report found that “[h]eightened military and law enforcement along the U.S.-Mexico border have escalated human rights abuses of migrants and people of color in the Southwest and other regions in the United States.”

Other points made in their study include:

- Immigrants are increasingly the targets of racial profiling by law enforcement officials.
- Immigrants of color are often victims of hate crimes.
- Anti-immigrant racism imperils lives.
- Immigrants and those perceived as immigrants due to their race, continue to suffer from employment discrimination.

Some of the recommendations from the report include:

- Ratify or accede to the UN International Convention for the Protection of the Rights of All Migrants and Members of Their Families.
- Remove all reservations and fully implement the International Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and ratify or accede to all international instruments for the protection of human rights.
- Recognize the right of mobility and return for all displaced peoples, refugees, asylum seekers, trafficked persons, and migrants, affirming their human rights.
- Implement multilateral amnesty or legalization programs to regularize the status of all migrant workers; and end policies that punish and criminalize immigrants.
- Recognize the inter-connections between globalization, displacement, and migration and affirm the right of workers to cross international borders.
- Recognize the right of all people to sustainable social and economic-development and stable healthy community – recognizing that societies are multi-cultural, multi-racial, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious, with respect for the human rights and dignity of all – so that migration is not the only option for survival.



ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE ON THE BORDER

The U.S.-Mexico border region offers us many examples of daily, human ramifications of unfettered free trade and the implications it can have for the health and well being of communities. There are many cases of increased incidence of birth defects, increased cancer rates, and other health problems due to insufficient enforcement of environmental regulations.

The border region was unprepared for the industrial boom that followed the 1994 North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The rapid increase in population and business was not accompanied by similar increases in basic infrastructure like waste treatment facilities or water service: 18 percent of Mexico border towns lack safe drinking water, and 30 percent have no sewage treatment (*The Economist*, Aug. 7, 1999). As a result, many of those who came to the border looking for work had to settle in colonias on the edge of cities, which not only lack clean water and sewage treatment but are also in need of other basic services such as health care, schools, roads, police, and judicial services. Municipalities lacked the money to provide many of these services, partly because many maquilas were provided tax exemptions to lure them to the area. The result is that the border area has become a “virtual cesspool and breeding ground for infectious diseases,” according to the American Medical Association.

“Between 1988 and 1992, 25 children were born with a neural tube defect known as spina bifida in the border town of Brownsville, Texas and neighboring Matamoros, Tamaulipas. Another 30 children were diagnosed during this period with anencephaly, a rare and invariably fatal birth defect in which a full-term baby is born with an incomplete or missing brain. Although this cluster of birth defects was investigated by the Texas Department of Health and the federal Centers for Disease Control, the results of the investigation were inconclusive.

“Meanwhile, 27 parents of anencephalic babies on

the U.S. side of the border sued 88 maquiladora firms and the Brownsville Public Utility Board, charging that pollution from maquiladora plants was responsible for these birth defects. Although the defendants insisted they had abided by environmental regulations, the lawsuit was settled for \$17 million in 1995, shortly before it went to trial. The settlement offered a measure of vindication, as well as monetary compensation, to the Brownsville parents. Families of anencephalic babies in Matamoros, for their part, continue to struggle with the human and financial burden of caring for their fatally ill children.¹”

Since then, clusters of anencephaly have also turned up in towns like Del Rio, Texas (across the border from the maquiladora center of Ciudad Acuña), the neighboring communities of Eagle Pass, Texas and Piedras Negras, Mexico, and Colonia Chilpancingo, in Tijuana, where 20 anencephalic births were reported in 1993 and 1994. Most recently, in late 2000 and early 2001, seven mothers in Laredo Texas gave birth to babies with anencephaly, a rate four times higher than normal for that region.²

Environmental groups on the border believe that industrial pollution is partly to blame for the high rate of neural tube defects in border areas. Pediatrician Carmen Rocco, who was medical director at the Brownsville Medical Clinic during the first outbreak of anencephaly in 1991, is one of many border residents who would like to see more research done on how environmental factors contribute to the high number of birth defects along the border. Dr. Rocco explains, “Our population has a high risk that we still don’t totally understand. Most of the studies so far have been inconclusive, but we still think it’s very important to look at how maquiladoras and pesticides are impacting our air and water quality.”³

Beyond the mysterious birth defects, resident on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border suffer more than

their share of unexplained health conditions. Santa Cruz county, Arizona has significantly higher than expected rates of lupus and multiple myeloma, a type of bone cancer. High blood lead levels have been found among residents of El Paso, Texas and Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, attributed to a smelter on the El Paso side of the border. High levels of lead in the blood can cause problems ranging from fatigue or impaired concentration to seizures or irreversibly stunted mental and physical development. Respiratory problems and skin rashes are also common in border communities.⁴

Andrea Pedro Aguilar, a long time resident of Colonia Chilpancingo on the outskirts of Tijuana, says she and her children are plagued by unexplained illnesses, including allergies, rashes and pimples that blister and then scar their bodies. When she brought her oldest son in for an examination, she says, “the doctors had skin tests done on him and told us the pimples were reactions to a chemical in his environment. I know it’s because he goes out to play, and the dirt around here has many toxic residues.” Andrea’s family lives close to an abandoned factory where battery waste lies exposed, and the Alamar River that flows 600 yards from Chilpancingo is rank with raw sewage and industrial wastewater, byproducts of a nearby industrial park.⁵

Colonia Chilpancingo is not the only border community plagued by environmental pollution. With the ex-

plosive growth in the borderlands has come extensive environmental degradation: industrial solvents leak into the water supply, industrial sewage gushes into rivers, inadequately stored hazardous waste pollutes the soil and groundwater, and thick smoke pumps into the air. Although environmental regulations on both sides of the border seek to regulate industrial activities, laws are rarely enforced. Both the United States and Mexico have failed to commit adequate resources to effectively implement their own laws, so these unenforced laws often end up being ignored.

Border residents as well as human rights, corporate responsibility and environmental groups throughout the U.S. and Mexico are working in multiple ways to prevent and clean up dangerous pollution and reclaim communities’ right to a clean and healthy environment. Border residents have banded together to push their local governments to provide them with adequate services, and groups have worked transnationally to shame corporate polluters into compliance with virtually unenforced environmental laws. Since 1995, 30 citizen petitions have been filed with the tri-national Commission for Environmental Cooperation, set up by NAFTA, but the commission has been slow to investigate claims, and does not have enforcement power. As a result, groups are pushing for the strengthening of NAFTA environmental provisions, and oppose expanding NAFTA to the entire hemisphere, fearing this will only spread the problems on the U.S.-Mexico border to communities throughout the Americas.

Sources:

1. Kamel, Rachel & Hoffman, Anya. (1999). The maquiladora reader. American Friends Service Committee.
2. Canfield, Mark. (2001, November 9). Recent high rates of anencephaly in Laredo. Memorandum to colleagues and collaborators.
3. Oko, Dan. (2001, November 9). The toxic border: researchers ponder increasing birth defects in the valley. *Austin Chronicle*.
4. Border health issues
5. Aguilar, Andrea Pedro. (2001, August). Quoted in The great march for border environmental justice. Toxinformer Newsletter.

STORIES FROM THE BORDER

14 Die in the Arizona Desert

On the morning of May 24, 2001, the Border Patrol encountered four migrants wandering on the “Camino del Diablo” (Devil’s Path) east of Yuma, Arizona, in the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge. The four had broken away from a party of 26 as they tried to cross the desert in 115 degree temperatures. Over the next 24 hours, search and rescue teams discovered six clusters of migrants from this group, 14 of them dead or near death. Pilots found 17 migrants 30 to 40 miles north of the border and just as far from Interstate 8. They had torn off their clothing, clawed holes in the ground, ripped open cactuses, and resorted to drinking their own urine. According to a treating physician, the survivors looked like mummies, their skin shriveled, burnt dark and covered in cactus spines. They suffered from severe dehydration and kidney damage.

The group had met in Sonoyta, Sonora near the U.S. border with the harsh, desolate Arizona desert, an increasingly popular crossing area since the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) initiated Operation Gatekeeper in 1994, which made crossing in more populated areas very difficult. The migrants had each paid smugglers as much as \$2,000 to help them across the border rather than trying to make the increasingly dangerous trip on their own. The smugglers told the migrants to pack lightly and to bring only one jug of water. In Cabeza Prieta they were told that they had only a short walk remaining. In fact, 70 deadly miles stretched out ahead of them.

Most of the migrants in the group came from Mexico’s coastal state of Veracruz, where the international coffee crisis has triggered an exodus of farmers who can no longer make ends meet due to five years of plummeting coffee prices. With few alternative jobs in the region and his coffee not even worth the cost of picking it, Enrique Landeros, 30, decided to head for the United States. He promised his wife, Octavia Fabián, he would send money back to improve their one bedroom home and put their seven-year-old son, Alexis, through school. Octavia sobs as she recalls how she didn’t want her husband to leave. “At first I thought he just wanted to make more money. Now I realize he went to offer us more opportunities.”

Others who perished in the desert had made the journey for similar reasons. Raymundo Barreda, 54, had worked in the United States before, and decided to take his son with him, fearing that otherwise the restless teenager would set off on his own. Julian Ambros, 24, was told not to leave by his father, who acknowledged that “if there’s nothing better around, they will go.” His father went on to say, “I would just ask the people up there [in the United States] to lend a helping hand to these poor guys when they see them up there. We’re all human beings.”

Sources:

1. Phares, Rebecca. Sixteen Mexican migrants die in desert. *Religious Task Force on Central America and Mexico Report*, Vol. 21, No. 3.
2. Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (2001, November). Chaos On the U.S.-Mexico Border: A Report on Migrant Crossing deaths, Immigrant Families and Subsistence-level Laborers, Report 5.
3. Carroll, Susan. (2002, May 23). Forgotten widows: death in the desert/one year later. *Tucson Citizen*.

Abuses on the Border

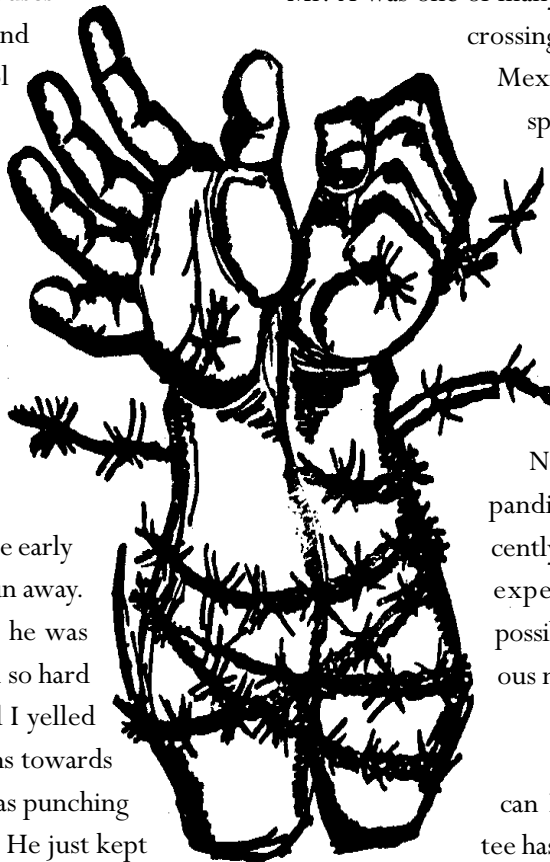
More Mexicans and Central Americans than ever are coming to the U.S. as worsening economic conditions and lack of opportunity force them to choose between living in their homelands in poverty or supporting their families.

At the border, immigrants are often confronted with violence, racism and human rights abuses by the military, vigilantes, as well as local and federal agencies. By and large, Border Patrol agents carry themselves with professionalism and restraint. However, some agents abuse their power, a problem compounded by the lack of an effective independent oversight system for monitoring and investigating human and civil rights abuses, such as that of Mr. A., who reported his experience to the American Friends Service Committee in San Diego:

“The Border Patrol stopped me in the early afternoon, in February of 2001. I tried to run away. The agent pulled me by the hair and while he was putting on my handcuffs, he twisted my arm so hard my sweatshirt tore. He was hurting me and I yelled out, begging the agent to stop. Then he turns towards me and hit me in the groin once while he was punching me in the chest over and over with his fists. He just kept beating me, for maybe five minutes.

“He took me to the detention center in SanYsidro. Once I was there, my hands and legs started to cramp, and I told someone. I didn’t get a doctor until an hour and a half later. He didn’t speak Spanish, but through an interpreter he told me that I had a lot of blood accumulating in my chest, which was why my legs and arms were cramping. But he didn’t give me any medication. Then they just

took me back to my cell. I was still in pain, so I complained, and they took me to the South Coast Medical Clinic. They looked at me and then released me back into custody. Even after all that, the only medication they gave me was Motrin.” (Adapted from the American Friends Service Committee Abuse Report 2001)



Mr. A was one of many who found trouble after crossing the border. The U.S. and Mexican governments have responded to increased immigration by sending unprecedented numbers of armed personnel to the border. Policing has intensified in areas that have traditionally had high rates of crossings.

New recruits who fill the expanding border forces are recently trained and relatively inexperienced, increasing the possibility of abuses and dangerous mistakes.

Since 1997, the American Friends Service Committee has documented a staggering rate of excessive use of force, sexual abuse, racial insults and denial of food and water by officials at the border. An Amnesty International report released in May of 1998 detailed similar abuses, and notes that, “The INS has had a long and troubled history in the U.S.-Mexico border region, with many allegations of officer misconduct including unlawful lethal shootings, physical assaults and ill treatment of detainees in custody.”

Religious group statements on immigrants and borders

Compiled by the Border Working Group, Washington, D.C. Revised 2002

The call to welcome the stranger permeates scriptures. The Bible begins with Adam and Eve being sent into exile and ends with John in exile on the Isle of Patmos. Christians around the world have gained their salvation through the love of the refugee Christ, who fled Herod's wrath and crossed the border into the safety of Egypt. This same Christ reminds us, "When I was a stranger...you welcomed me..." In response to Christ's words, we are called to build a hospitable community for immigrants, refugees, and migrants in the United State. We never know when the stranger might be Jesus in disguise.

Some scriptures that refer to immigrants, refugees and borders:

Lev. 19:33-34, Gal. 3:28, Heb. 13:14, Deut. 24: 14, 17-18, Matt 2:13-17, Matt. 25:35, Eph 2:11-22, I Cor. 12:13, Heb. 13:2, Ex. 22:21, Ex 23:9, Deut. 27:19, Jere.22:3.

American Baptist Policy Statement on Immigration and Refugee Policy-Adopted by the General Board of the American Baptist Churches –June 1982, modified in March 1995, March 2000.

Because of the Biblical mandate that we be a caring community, that we love our neighbors, that we establish justice and proclaim liberty; because we have a sense of Christian responsibility to serve human needs; because of our commitment to respect the human rights of all people; and because we are mainly a nation of immigrants, we, the American Baptist Churches USA, shall (1) continue our historical role as an advocate of human rights for immigrants, refugees, migrants and asylees.

From the Conference of Major Superiors of Men and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious. Resolution adopted on August 26, 2001.

The LCWR and CMSM call on the U.S. Congress, the President, and the Immigration and Naturalization Service to commit themselves to a humane immigration policy that respects the dignity of each person. Specifically, we call on them to enact the following reform: 2. To call a moratorium on Operation Gatekeeper and Hold-the-Line, the increased concentration of the Border Patrol in El Paso, San Diego and other cities that has resulted in over 1,200 immigrant deaths on the U.S-Mexico border since 1994. Immigrants are forced to cross in the most dangerous areas of deserts and mountains, where they die from exposure or drowning.

From the Presbyterian Church USA resolution on "Transformation of Churches and Society Through Encounters With New Neighbors" passed in 1999:

Let us challenge ourselves to trust in God's power by entering into relationship with newcomers. We need to face our fears and insecurities honestly as pastoral issues of central significance. We need to develop the resources that will enable us through mutual support to venture in faith to enter new friendships with the confidence that God will continue to open the way for future steps. We confess that we have kept newcomers at a distance and not responded to them as neighbors in the way Jesus taught (Luke 10)... And because we do not know them, we often are blind to ways they are deprived of human rights and suffer as a result of government policies. Yet, in Christ, the stranger becomes the neighbor. While estrangement keeps us apart, Christ moves us to encounter "the stranger" as neighbor in a spirit of love and friendship.

From "A Message on Immigration," a statement by the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

We recognize the right of all countries to control their borders and their duty to protect their citizens from the illegal entry of drugs and criminals. But we have serious doubts about the rightness and effectiveness of current policy to erect imposing barriers between the United States and Mexico. We support the search for alternatives to this policy that would more appropriately reflect the relationships of two friendly nations whose peoples and economies are increasingly interdependent. Whatever the policy, border enforcement should always respect the human dignity of persons attempting to cross the border.

From "Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity" A Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops issued on November 15, 2000:

The presence of so many people of so many different cultures and religions in so many different parts of the United States has challenged us as a Church to a profound conversion so that we can become truly a sacrament of unity. We reject the anti-immigrant stance that has become popular in different parts of our country, and the nativism, ethnocentricity, and racism that continue to reassert themselves in our communities.

From Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Statement "Standing With Immigrants," 1998.

"...we reject our government's mistreatment and scapegoating of our immigrant brothers and sisters. At the same time, we recognize and regret our silence on these issues which contribute to human rights violations of our brothers and sisters. We feel the call to act on behalf of our immigrant brothers and sisters who are in need, whether documented or undocumented, just as God calls the Israelites to do in scripture."

From "On Undocumented Migration: To Love the Sojourner" a statement by the United Methodist Council of Bishops:

Genuine hospitality for the sojourner requires not only a welcoming embrace, but also the effort to address the conditions that uprooted them from native soil. God's pilgrim people in the United States are called to recognize and repent their participation in systems that result in injustice and contribute to the circumstances that lead people to undertake the risk of sojourning. Fully to love the sojourners, acting justly on their behalf, challenges the ultimate commitments and fundamental values of the sociopolitical and economic systems of which we are all a part.

From the Koran, CH8, v.73, 8:75:

"And those who believed and left their homes and strove for the cause of Allah and those who gave them shelter and help, these indeed are true believers."

From a resolution adopted by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations

The Union of American Hebrew Congregations has long supported a fair and generous immigration policy. Our people were and continue to be immigrants to this nation. We have benefited from its open doors, and suffered when they were closed...Our tradition demands of us concern for the stranger in our midst.

Resources

Groups and websites

U.S./Mexico Border Outreach Project

Religious Task Force on Central America and Mexico
3053 Fourth Street, N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20017
(202) 529-0441

www.rtfcam.org/border/border.htm

Archive of articles about border issues, as well as reflections and photos.

American Immigration Lawyers Association

918 F Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20004-1400
(202) 216-2400

www.aila.org

Statements on immigration legislation, immigration law, and what needs to change in these areas.

Border Environmental Justice Campaign

1717 Kettner Blvd., Suite 100
San Diego, CA 92101
(619) 235-0281

www.environmentalhealth.org/border.html

This site highlights the health risks facing residents and workers in the San Diego/Tijuana border region due to industrial contamination. The site has information on the "Right to Know," maquiladoras and free trade, and information on Mexican partner organizations.

American Friends Service Committee

1129 G Street
San Diego, CA 92101
(619)233-4114

1501 Cherry Street
Philadelphia PA 19102
(215)241-7132

www.afsc.org/pindx/mexus.htm

The American Friends Service Committee, a Quaker group, lists links to projects, documents, and resources addressing the U.S.-Mexico border, including their detailed border abuse reports.

Maquiladora Health & Safety Support Network

P.O. Box 124,
Berkeley, CA 94701-0124
(510) 558-1014

gdbrown@igc.org

www.igc.org/mhssn/

Provides information, technical assistance and on-site instruction regarding workplace hazards in "maquiladora" (foreign-owned assembly) plants along the U.S.-Mexico border. The website includes information about health and safety complaints filed under NAFTA.

Books

The Road is Made by Walking by Jerry H. Gill, 1999. The story of BorderLinks, which has been raising awareness of border issues and serving border communities since 1987 through educational seminars in the border region. Available from BorderLinks for \$12; 1040 N. First Avenue, Tucson AZ 85719 (520) 628-8263.

The Tortilla Curtain by T. Coraghessan Boyle. Penguin Books, 1995.

T. C. Boyle's novel explores the issue of "illegal" immigration through the lives of two very different Mexican couples living in California.

Border Crossings: Mexican and Mexican-American Workers by John Mason Hart.

Published by Scholarly Resources, 1998. Essays comparing and contrasting the experiences of ethnic Mexican workers on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border.

The Late Great Mexican Border: Reports from a disappearing line. Edited by Bobby Byrd and Susannah Mississippi Byrd. Published by Cinco Puntos Press, 1996

A collection of border essays and insights by some of the best writers from the region.

Articles

Americas Program: U.S. Mexico Relations/Border Affairs
www.americaspolicy.org/issue_usmex.html

Articles about the border, link to back issues of borderlines, which include resource guides of groups working on various border issues.

In Motion magazine

www.inmotionmagazine.com/civil.html

Find links to interviews with Maria Jimenez and Roberto Martinez about the militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border, human rights in the border region, organizing efforts in border communities, the search for work and the way the U.S. views immigration after 9/11.

CorpWatch

www.corpwatch.org/issues/Pl1.jsp?topicid=120

Includes many articles about border issues, with a specific focus on corporate irresponsibility.

Articles from the *Arizona Republic*

www.arizonarepublic.com/border/

Articles on border issues, immigration policy and border deaths. Also includes a special series entitled "Dying to Work: the human face of illegal immigration."

Articles from *Tucson Citizen*

www.tucsoncitizen.com/local/archive/02/desert02/

A three-day report on the lives of those who died in the deadliest border crossing in Arizona history, and the struggles faced by the family members they left behind in Veracruz, Mexico.

Los Angeles Times series: "Enrique's Journey"

www.latimes.com/enrique

Pulitzer Prize-winning special series chronicling the journey of Enrique, a 16-year old Honduran who traveled alone to the United States to be with his mother.

Videos

1) "Echando Raices/Taking Root"

Stories and reflections from immigrants, refugees, and others echoing the complexity of community life and struggle. Divided into three parts: "Wars and Work," "Borders and Barriers," and "Midwest Migrations," featuring communities in California's Central Valley, Houston Texas, and Central Iowa respectively.

VHS video with both English and Spanish versions plus discussion guide for \$99.99, plus \$15 for postage and handling. Special rates available for grassroots groups. Visit www.takingroot.org/ or call 1-888-588-2372 (toll free) to order or find out more.

2) "The Stones Will Cry Out"

Moving testimony of families impacted by the 1996 anti-immigrant laws. Produced by the American Friends Service Committee's San Diego Office, who also offer a transcript of the testimony and materials on how to use this video as part of a church or community presentation. 28 minutes, in English.

For the video, send a \$10 check made out to Noreen Sullivan to: 757 Emory Street, PMB397, Imperial Beach, CA, 91932; or e-mail usmexborder@igc.apc.org

3) "Border Crossings/Cruzando Fronteras"

Focuses on the increased presence of the Border Patrol in communities near the U.S./Mexico Border. Also looks more broadly at the human rights situation in the area near Tucson, Arizona. Produced by Heather Lares of Pan Left Productions. 30 minutes, in English with Spanish subtitles. Contact Pan Left Productions to order: 631 S. Sixth Avenue, Tucson, Arizona 85701; (520)792-9171.

more videos ...

Classroom resources

Choices Education Project, Watson Institute for International Studies, Brown University, Box 1948, Providence RI 02912; www.choices.edu; (401) 863-3155

Resource packets that help teachers construct a public policy curriculum for their classroom. Titles include:

Caught Between Two Worlds: Mexico at the Crossroads, \$15

U.S. Immigration Policy in an Unsettled World, \$15

U.S. Trade Policy: Competing in a Global Economy, \$15

4) “La Posada Sin Fronteras “

This ten minute video is a powerful visual and musical representation of the Posadas which occur on both sides of the border between San Diego and Tijuana. In a bi-national context this traditional event illustrates the need for an attitude of hospitality towards all, regardless of nationality. Produced by the San Diego Office of Interfaith Coalition on Immigrant Rights.

For a copy, contact the Interfaith Coalition for Immigrant Rights: 630 East Second Street, National City, CA 91950; (619)474-6640.

5) “New World Border “

Documents the rise in human rights abuses along the U.S. / Mexico Border since the imposition of border blockades and strategies of increased militarization. 28

minutes. \$24 for individuals; \$54 for institutions from the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (NNIRR), (510) 465-1984; www.nnirr.org.

6) “Uprooted: Refugees of the Global Economy / Desarraigados: Los Refugiados de la Globalizacion “

Uprooted presents three stories of immigrants who left their homes in Bolivia, Haiti, and the Philippines after global economic powers devastated their countries, only to face new challenges in the United States. These powerful stories raise critical questions about U.S. immigration policy in an era when corporations cross borders at will. 28 minutes. \$20 + \$3 shipping and handling, from the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (NNIRR); (510) 465-1984; www.nnirr.org.

Travel Seminars

BorderLinks

1040 N. First Avenue, Tucson, AZ 85719; (520) 628-8263; www.borderlinks.org/bl/index.htm

Conducts short and long term immersion programs, bringing people from the north and south together to learn about the issues, culture, economics, and lives of people along the U.S.-Mexican border.

Maryknoll Mission Border Team: Exposure Program on the U.S.-Mexico Border

West Cosgrove, 109 N. Oregon Street #302, El Paso, TX 79901; (915) 543-6771

www.maryknoll.org/MARYKNOLL/MMAF/mf_border.htm

Emphasizes experiential education designed for groups of 8-12 for a standard length of stay between 5 to 7 days to witness the unique border reality and explore the complex issues that arise there.

ARISE: Rio Grande Border Witness Program

125 E. Denny, Pharr, TX 78577; (956) 783-9293

BorderWitness Delegations range in length from several days to several weeks, and itineraries can be created around a range of themes. Participants often visit refugee shelters, colonias (unincorporated rural subdivisions) and, when possible, maquiladoras (factories) and detention centers. Call to request a promotional packet.

Presbyterian Border Ministry

7201 Broadway, San Antonio, TX 78215; 210-930-9230; www.pcusa.org/border/teams.htm

This program of the Presbyterian Church (USA) works with the Mexican Presbyterian Church on border issues. A main part of their program is to educate some 2,000 U.S. Presbyterians each year through delegations to the border.

ADVOCATE FOR BORDER JUSTICE

There are alternatives to the current border enforcement strategy. Write to your elected representatives in Washington, President Bush, and other officials. Express your concern about the current crisis at the border, and urge them to support policies that address the root causes of migration, create legal avenues for migration, and ensure humane law enforcement at the U.S.-Mexico border.

Address the root causes of migration

Many migrants come to the United States in search of employment because there is no way to support themselves or their families in their homeland: too often, migration is driven by necessity rather than by choice. Long-term efforts to address the economic inequalities between the United States and its neighbors to the south are needed.

Urge your Congressional representatives, President Bush, and the United States Trade Representative to:

- Support economic policies that create living wage jobs in Mexico and other countries to the south.
- Renegotiate provisions in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) that harm small businesses in Mexico, especially those in the rural sector

Create legal avenues for migration

Each year an estimated 150,000 Mexican migrants enter the United States without authorization, filling labor shortages in such industries as agriculture, service, entertainment and construction, with the acquiescence of both government and industry. Migrants and immigrants make significant contributions to the U.S. economy, yet they are forced to risk their lives at the border because the U.S. lacks legal avenues for migration. Undocumented status often means migrants are not paid a living wage, denied their rights, or prevented from participating fully in their new communities. Additionally, problems with current immigration laws and policies often mean individuals must enter the U.S. illegally to avoid prolonged separation from their families – a spouse or child of a Mexican born legal permanent resident can wait approximately eight years for a visa to join their loved ones in the U.S. legally.

Write, call or meet with your representatives, and urge them to support or cosponsor legislation, such as H.R. 200 (U.S. Employee, Family Unity, and Legalization Act introduced by Rep. Gutierrez), which promotes legalization and sound immigration policies such as these:

- A new framework must be established so that Mexican families have more opportunities to legally reunite with their loved ones in the U.S. Reunification is currently blocked by per-country limits on visas for family members of U.S. legal permanent residents from Mexico, and by processing delays.
- A broad legalization program of the undocumented (regardless of their country of origin) would help stabilize the labor market in the U.S., improve the standard of living in immigrant communities, and encourage undocumented persons to become participating members of society.
- In conjunction with a broad-based legalization program, permanent and temporary visa programs should be created for laborers, with appropriate protections to ensure that jobs provide a living wage, appropriate benefits and labor rights.

Let President Bush know you would like him to resume talks with Mexico about immigration reform, and that you support these policy goals.

Ensure humane enforcement policies at the border

Documented or undocumented, no one's life should be at risk for trying to cross the border. Yet the blockade strategy of the last decade has driven migrants into remote and dangerous areas of the southwestern U.S., leading to an alarming number of migrant deaths. Migrants' lives, well being, and basic human rights are further jeopardized by other border enforcement policies, such as their treatment as criminals by civil enforcement authorities. Migrant reports of physical abuse and the use of excessive force are all too frequent. Due process rights are violated by the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA), which authorized the detention and deportation of migrants for relatively minor offenses, even after they have served their sentences.

Voice your concerns about the safety and rights of migrants to the INS, and urge them to:

- Create training mechanisms, including more intensive human rights curricula, which instruct enforcement agents in the use of appropriate tactics for enforcing immigration

law. Force must only be used in the most necessary circumstances, and only to the extent needed to protect the physical well being of the enforcement officers and migrants.

- Ban the use of hollow point bullets, which expand in the body to cause massive internal injuries. This deadly ammunition is the only type issued to INS officers.
- Create a stronger, more transparent complaint system.

Let your congressional representatives know that you think:

- Enforcement should remain with the INS and Border Patrol, and should not be transferred to local police or military personnel.
- The border blockade strategy must end, as it has led to an alarming number of migrant deaths and an increase in migrant smuggling operations.
- The 1996 IIRIRA should be changed to ensure migrants' due process rights.

Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services
425 I ("Eye") Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20536
www.immigration.gov

President George W. Bush
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500
(202)456-1111 phone
(202)456-2416 fax
E-mail: president@whitehouse.gov
Website: www.whitehouse.gov

Mr. Robert Zoellick
United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20508

Representative _____
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Senator _____
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Find the names and local contact information of your representative and senators at www.house.gov and www.senate.gov or call the capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121

Source:

Policy recommendations are largely taken from the document *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope, A Pastoral Letter Concerning Migration from the Catholic Bishops of Mexico and the United States*, available online at <http://www.usccb.org/mrs/stranger.htm> or by calling 800-235-8722.