



August 24, 2015

Dear Friends,

To a rousing round of applause at the Phoenix Convention Center in July 2015, Donald Trump declared that he would build a border wall. People who have participated in BorderLinks delegations, however, know that an 18 foot wall *already* snakes up and down through the hills of Nogales and Douglas Arizona, and they know that this wall is part of 700 miles of barriers *already* in place along the Mexico-U.S. border.

As the 2016 election season heats up, immigration and the border are hot-button issues once again. The educational mission of BorderLinks calls for us to create an informed public. With immigration and border issues in the national spotlight, our work is more critical than ever and we need your support.

A survey conducted by the Pew Research Center in May 2015 states that 72 % of Americans “continue to say undocumented immigrants currently living in the U.S. should be allowed to stay in the country legally, if certain requirements are met”. Most immigration reforms contain a legalization process for the more than 11 million people who live in an undocumented status in the United States.



Market Square Presbyterian Church

On delegations, participants learn that immigration reform often comes with an increased dose of border militarization. The last bipartisan immigration reform package, passed by the Senate in 2012, called for \$40 billion dollars in more walls, technology, and 19,000 new agents. This doubled the size and expanded the reach of border enforcement, which had already experienced unprecedented growth.

Every year, hundreds of BorderLinks participants learn, first-hand, about this enforcement’s impact on people’s lives and hear the shared testimonies of migrants who cross the desert without enough water. Delegation participants talk to the people most directly affected by the current immigration and enforcement policies.

BorderLinks delegations equip participants with the tools needed to bring an informed response to one of the most important themes of the upcoming election, immigration. They will be able to share their opinions with friends, family, and beyond, in talks to their communities and letters to the editor or op-eds. They can apply pressure on decision makers, no matter the political persuasion. Their education and actions will make a difference.

But as supporters of BorderLinks know, we are much more than this.



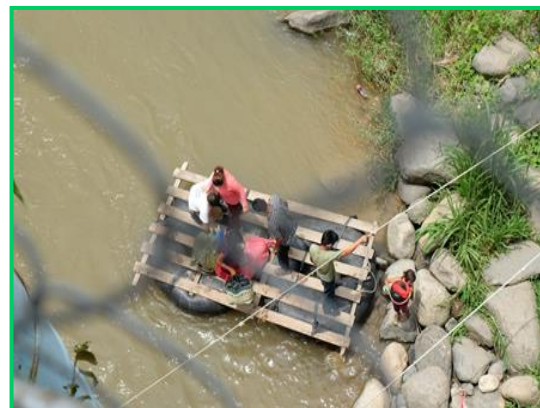
**DukeEngage 2015 in Chiapas, MX**

On delegations we meet and hear the experiences of the people most affected and most engaged. In one day a participant can eat breakfast in Nogales with women, men, children removed from the United States as a result of a deportation policy that expels more than 400,000 people per year. And later, in the evening, share a meal with a person who fought their deportation order and won, sometimes after a long campaign that involved the solidarity of community organizations. These stories of resilience rarely make it onto the national news or into campaign platforms, but they are the heart of all BorderLinks programs.

Participants meet the local residents, like Amy Juan, of the Tohono O'odham Hemajkam Rights Network (TOHRN), who are most impacted by expanding border enforcement. Last Spring, Amy told a group of BorderLinks participants from the Harvard Divinity School that many people on her Native American reservation suffered from "checkpoint trauma"; the stress that people, including children, feel when regularly approaching a Border Patrol control point. Human rights organizations have documented many incidents of abuse on the Tohono O'odham Nation, which is located along the Mexico-U.S. border. The students left this meeting with Amy Juan and her colleagues inspired.

BorderLinks delegations, in collaboration with partners who spend valuable time explaining their experiences and analysis, provide participants with information, and powerful, life-changing stories. These stories not only include the trauma, but also the organized, community-oriented response, like that of TOHRN, to change the prevailing situation.

Where else would a group of engaged students stand on the Guatemala-Chiapas border and talk to Central American people heading north to understand the reasons for their migration. This is what eight students from DukeEngage did this summer. The students then traveled to Tucson, where they spent the summer volunteering in community organizations, sharing a struggle and working to create a better world.



**Crossings on the Mexico-Guatemala Border**

With the creation of a space for solidarity there is hope, even in the most dire of situations.

There is a magic to the type of immersion experiential education at BorderLinks, which strives to cultivate solidarity, not only by creating spaces, but also by providing tools. Your help with this work is decisive, especially as the elections bring immigration and border issues into a bright national spotlight.

Your support for BorderLinks goes far beyond the rhetoric of the campaign trail. It is about making a genuine and lasting difference in people's lives. Please contribute as generously as you possibly can.

Thank you so much for your generous donation to BorderLinks!

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