




DOCTORS FOR GLOBAL HEALTH
 Promoting Health and Human Rights
 "With Those Who Have No Voice"
 Box 1761, Decatur, GA 30031, USA
 Tel. & Fax: 404-377-3566
 E-mail: dghinfo@dghonline.org
www.dghonline.org

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DGH Announcements

- ▶ **Save the Date! The 24th Annual DGH General Assembly will be held August 2–4, 2019 in Tucson, AZ.** This year's theme is *Healing Justice: Undoing Borders That Divide Us*. We will continue to discuss topics raised in this special edition of the *DGH Reporter*. For more information and to register, go to www.dghonline.org.
- ▶ **DGH Continues Promoting Liberation Medicine.** DGH is always excited to participate in events to promote Liberation Medicine and healing justice for all global citizens.
 - ▶ We are grateful to Harbor UCLA Department of Family Medicine in Los Angeles for inviting us to kick off its first ever hospital wide Health Equity lecture series on February 20th, 2019 with our talk entitled "Liberation Medicine: Theory, Reflection, and Action." We shared the principles and values of Liberation Medicine in the context of local health justice efforts of incarcerated persons and South LA communities addressing environmental justice issues.
 - ▶ On March 9th, 2019, DGH spoke at "How We Heal: Confronting Health Inequity with Structural Competency" at UC Riverside. We discussed the intersection of structural competency and liberation medicine at the patient's bedside and in the community.
 - ▶ We also had a dinner and social event with Patricia Gonzalez-Zuñiga, MD, founder of the Tijuana Wound Clinic/Clinica de Heridas, an independent mobile clinic based in Tijuana, Mexico focused on providing humanitarian medical assistance.
 - ▶ In May, DGH will join others in the global health community for the Social Medicine Consortium's fourth annual conference, "Sustaining the Local Struggle for Health Equity Globally: Building Across Difference." The conference will be held from May 30-June 1, 2019 in Jalteango de la Paz in the state of Chiapas, Mexico.
- ▶ **Volunteer with DGH.** We are looking for qualified volunteers compatible with DGH's mission and that of our partner organizations. Learn more at www.dghonline.org/get-involved/volunteer.

▶ Update Your Contact Information.

Don't lose touch with DGH! If you moved or changed your email address recently, you can update your contact information and preferences at: www.dghonline.org/update-membership.

▶ **Be a DGH Sustainer!** Our work is not done until a dignified life, optimal health and wellbeing, and social equity are realities for all. Help us work toward that goal by becoming a DGH Sustainer. Establish an automatic monthly, quarterly or annual donation on our web site: www.dghonline.org/get-involved/donate. Make your support the most sustainable, reliable and lasting, with a pledge of \$25/month. It is the easiest way to ensure your ongoing support to DGH's partner communities.

▶ Become a DGH Voting Member!

Have you been a member of DGH for some time and want to get more involved? Do you plan to come to our General Assembly in August? Apply to become a voting member at dghonline.org/get-involved/membership.



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Doctors for Global Health Reporter

Welcome to our special edition of the *DGH Reporter*, in which we have compiled a collection of reports that reflect a reality not often portrayed in conventional news outlets. These articles are based on the lived experiences of our partner communities, our members and volunteers, and represent perspectives regarding the structural forces that drive individuals and families to flee Central America and Mexico, as well as the lived experiences of people after they arrive to the United States. In the 21st century, global migration is a brutal, deadly and dehumanizing experience. We at Doctors for Global Health believe that all global citizens deserve dignity, respect and the right to flourish. We currently have a broken system that criminalizes, marginalizes and harms those who cross borders around the globe. Rewriting laws and sharing stories that bring humanity and justice to the forefront is what is needed. We present this collection of stories to invite you, our readers and members, to consider an alternative reality of hope, connection, improved health, mutual understanding and love. This is a reality that we will need to build together. Thank you for reading.

THE MIGRATION: A VIEW FROM THE COMMUNITIES

By Irma Cruz Nava

"Times are changing," the peasants state when we analyze reality. Not only is there unemployment and poverty in the world, vices in young people and women, but heightened violence rates have been linked to a large extent to the consumption of drugs. Not only are there changes in climate, in the environment, families also live differently; women go out to work, just like men, and their children are looked after by grandparents or uncles. Sometimes, they remain alone in the home until the parents arrive. There is still violence in the family linked to

alcoholism, to machismo; women have difficulties learning something new and serving their community. People express concern, thinking that it may be their family member who is in serious difficulties due to this situation, which is worrisome.

In the meetings with groups of peasants (men and women), which are regularly held by the organization Campesino Communities on the Way, (CCC), in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, Oaxaca, Mexico, people express concern when they know that thousands of people (among them pregnant women, children and people with disabilities) decide to leave their country and their homes, risking a journey that puts their own lives at risk. According to official statements, the entrance to Mexico by the southern border of people mostly of Central American origin,



could reach up to 700,000 each year (*La Jornada*, 02/28/2019).

The situation of migrants in their home countries is one of impoverishment, violence and fear. Although these countries have been struggling for years, ongoing government policies do not help the majority (“Honduras: Fear and Resistance,” Ojarasca, *La Jornada*, 02/09/2019). With the ever increasing crime rate and the lack of belief in the authorities’ ability or willingness to ameliorate their most pressing problems, people lose more and more confidence that the situation will improve, until they find the easiest way out is mass emigration. I say easier because, though still dangerous, being in large groups helps reduce the risk of being robbed, assaulted or mistreated on the long road ahead going north.

“With the ever increasing crime rate and the lack of belief in the authorities’ ability or willingness to ameliorate their most pressing problems, people lose more and more confidence that the situation will improve, until they find the easiest way out is mass emigration.”

Some opinions expressed by the farmers in these meetings vary. There are those who, after knowing this way of living, understand those who want to leave and give them their support based upon their ability. Other opinions are against entering the caravans because there is a risk that people from the gangs in those countries may enter Mexico and generate more violence than the one that already exists in our country.

And the question arises among all, how are these Central American migrants like the migrants of Mexican origin, who also decide to cross the border illegally? Do these problems also exist in Mexico?

Throughout Mexico there is migration to the US; it is concluded that the situation is not the same, but very similar. The living conditions of the people in the communities is very similar to those from Central America: we are very similar and we have the same needs, though maybe to a different degree.

The response to the arrival of Central American migrants by the people of the communities did not waver. They were supported and continue to be supported with food, medicines, water. One person said: “I have a relative in the US and he was also a

migrant. It’s like I’m supporting him.” Another person said, “I can not do much, but we have brought water and tamales to the road where they are passing by and we deliver.”

The situation becomes more complex when caravans of migrants continue to arrive one after another and the diverse opinions that this situation brings is used as a matter of politics, of electoral use in Mexico by the new government that the opposition wants to destabilize one way or another. Racist demonstrations against migrants in our country has given us a lot to think about.

The opinion of the peasants is directed in these aspects:

1. It is important to support all migrants from a humanitarian point of view, whether they are Central American or Mexican (in our communities there is also migration to large cities in Mexico and to the US). According to our ability, as the Mexican government says, we must treat them humanely, with reservations because we do not know them, though it is certain that the majority of those who come need to work to be able to help their families.

2. In our communities there is already the presence of Central American migrants so we have the opportunity to bring them into our community more to promote our values. We can be an example for other people – for the family, for the children, for all – as we little by little involve them in our community work. We must work together to take better care of our environment, to learn to cultivate in a more organic way, without chemicals, because in this way we will be transforming our reality.

When everyone is working this way, people are generating processes of change, with greater awareness for taking care of their environment, for unity among all, for actively participating in the development of peoples. Young people, seeing a positive dynamic in the communities will have more options to look for projects and programs that help this development, with state-of-the-art technology. There will be more possibilities to work in your community, in rescuing the land from the aggressions suffered by the chemists. In this way you can say that you will be fighting to reduce the migration of adults, young people, entire families to the cities to look for a better life.

Although these ideas seem like a utopia, in practice we can say that it is possible to transform our reality, with the support of everyone, by working in a systematic way with organized groups in the communities and with real programs that the *campesinos* can promote. That is the reason for DGH’s principle of action of long-term community accompaniment.



FIRST PAGE: Youth group in Santa Marta, El Salvador, working to improve their community where many have fallen victim to gang violence. ABOVE: Meeting of the organization Campesino Communities on the Way (CCC), in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, Oaxaca, Mexico.

ICE has been aided in this campaign of repression by the Vermont Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), also named as a defendant in the lawsuit. Since Migrant Justice helped pass a 2013 law allowing all Vermont residents to access driver’s licenses regardless of immigration status, the DMV has discriminated against immigrant applicants. Claiming they were being “overrun by immigrants,” DMV employees routinely passed confidential information to ICE agents and facilitated the arrest of immigrants. Public records requests have revealed troves of emails between ICE and the DMV, with state employees forwarding what they referred to as “South of the Border” names. They continued to do so even after being forced to adopt a policy stating that employees “shall not dedicate department time or resources to the enforcement of federal immigration law.” ICE has relied on the VT DMV’s discriminatory practices in its campaign to silence Vermont’s immigrant community leaders, writing to one state employee, “We’re going to have to make you an honorary ICE officer!”

The 40-page lawsuit is full of details showing an undeniable pattern of targeting the organization by ICE with use of tactics such as confidential informants, electronic surveillance and retaliatory arrests. Much of this evidence included has been revealed through federal Freedom of Information Act requests, though much more information remains redacted. ICE planted a confidential informant in Migrant Justice and used the informant to gather information about the organization and its members. ICE used this information to track down and arrest members. ICE agents also spread damaging and incorrect rumors about Migrant Justice, falsely claiming that organizers provided information to the agency that resulted in arrests. This was done to undermine Migrant Justice with the immigrant community it serves and to hinder its successful human rights organizing.

By filing this landmark lawsuit, Migrant Justice is escalating its resistance to the government’s unlawful attacks. The group is standing up for the First Amendment’s guarantees of freedom of speech and assembly, and for the constitution’s promise of equal protection under the law. In filing the suit, Migrant Justice is saying to ICE, enough is enough: “Ya Basta!”

NEW YORK

While the following human tragedy case was carried out in Central New York, sadly it is happening all over the country. It is true that Lorenzo Ramos, escaping violence in Guatemala, did cross the border and enter the US without documentation 15 years ago. But for the past nine years he had been working with immigration officials to be allowed to stay in Syracuse legally. After being denied asylum, Mr. Ramos was granted a one-year stay of deportation, a social security number and a permit to work legally, renewable annually. He checked in regularly with immigration officials as required. With a wife and two children, who are all US citizens, Mr. Ramos is the owner of a successful landscaping business with 500 customers and three employees. He has a mortgage and pays taxes.

In February 2018, things changed. Although his case was already in process, Mr. Ramos was told he needed to reapply for more permanent legal status. In addition to the required paperwork, he supplied 500 letters of support from residents in Syracuse and Central New



Photo from Migrant Justice of one of their marches for human rights and migrant justice.

York, many of them his business customers. At that point, his work permit was reauthorized for another year, and he checked in every few weeks in person and spoke by phone with an ICE agent weekly.

Then last June he was told to report to the ICE office in Buffalo, NY. From there, he never went home. Mr. Ramos was held for deportation in Batavia, NY and on June 21 was put on a plane for Guatemala, a country he left out of fear 15 years ago and where he no longer has any close family. He stepped off the plane with nothing but the clothes on his back, his passport, his wallet

“Mr. Ramos was held for deportation in Batavia, NY and on June 21 was put on a plane for Guatemala, a country he left out of fear 15 years ago and where he no longer has any close family.”

and a little money. He was given a warning by the ICE officers, “Be watchful of the gangs in Guatemala.”

In the past, undocumented individuals married to a US citizen had been allowed to remain in the US while stay of deportation requests were processed, but things are very different now. Because he initially

entered the country illegally, Mr. Ramos, married to a US citizen for several years, is required by immigration law to leave the US for a decade before his wife can petition for him to re-enter and stay. The only two ways around that law would be if he was granted asylum, for which he has already been denied, or to apply for a waiver of that requirement. Mr. Ramos’ lawyer is already working on the second option.

ICE, MIGRANT AND IMMIGRANT JUSTICE IN VERMONT AND UPSTATE NEW YORK

By Rafaela Rodriguez and Shirley Novak

Rafaela Rodriguez works alongside Migrant Justice, helping farmworkers and farmers within the VT community. Shirley Novak serves on the volunteer board of Syracuse Center for Peace and Social Justice and works with organizations serving local refugee and immigrant groups. This article details ICE targeting the Migrant Justice organization in VT and presents just one example of the sad human tragedy affecting a local Syracuse, NY family. An immigrant escaping violence in Guatemala fifteen years ago was suddenly detained last summer and was deported back to Guatemala in less than one month, while his case to stay with his US-citizens family was in process.

In recent years, ICE (see below) has retaliated against immigrants and groups serving the immigrant population in cases that have been documented in California, Colorado, Mississippi, New York, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin. Initially, the Trump administration declared that ICE's priority was to "take out the bad guys." In communities across the US, that is not what has really happened.

Here we present two stories from our respective communities in two of those states: Vermont and New York. These stories showcase the crude reality that people in our communities face. It is pivotal that as community members we stand up and defend the people who provide for us, whether it is a service or a food; we must not remain silent in these times of increased violence and discrimination.

A Vermont solidarity group, Migrant Justice, has been targeted by ICE agents for many years. Though this practice has accelerated under the Trump administration, it predates the current administration. It

would appear that Migrant Justice members have been the canary in the coal mine, victims of a policy of retaliation against immigration activists that has been nationalized under the Trump administration.

In New York, there are approximately 200,000 undocumented immigrants living and working in the upstate NY area. Arrests by ICE officers hit a three-year high in 2017, a practice of indiscriminate deportations that is happening nationwide.

VERMONT

In November of 2018, Vermont-based immigrant farmworker organization, Migrant Justice, filed a major national lawsuit against ICE. ICE has engaged in a years-long campaign of retaliation against Migrant Justice, in violation of First Amendment protections for freedom of speech and assembly. Migrant Justice is suing to stop the unlawful, targeted surveillance and harassment of the organization and the arrest and detention of its members.

Since 2016, ICE and Border Patrol have arrested over 40 immigrant community members involved in Migrant Justice. The lawsuit focuses on a handful of those detentions where there is clear evidence that immigration agents targeted members because of their outspoken leadership as human rights defenders, including the notorious arrests of Victor Diaz, Enrique "Kike" Balcazar and Zully Palacios. These detentions have been carried out by ICE as part of a coordinated effort to attack Migrant Justice and disrupt the group's groundbreaking organizing for human rights and economic justice, including via electronic surveillance and the use of a confidential informant.

9/11 catastrophe that the border has been subjected to unprecedented military escalations... immigration enforcement programs and policy emphasized a focus on anti-terrorism. Since then, militarization has been steadily increased and normalized at the U.S.-Mexico border and within border enforcement agencies.

"By border militarization, we refer to the systematic intensification of the border's security apparatus, transforming the area from a transnational frontier to a zone of permanent vigilance, enforcement, and violence. The border has become an imagined war zone, where the war on drugs, crime, and aliens are fought. Such arrangements make the border an area where the U.S. constitution has little to no value, a post-constitutional territory that expands across the country."

“It would appear that Migrant Justice members have been the canary in the coal mine, victims of a policy of retaliation against immigration activists that has been nationalized under the Trump administration.”

What Is ICE?

ICE is the acronym commonly used for the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement. ICE is an agency created in 2003 within the newly formed Department of Homeland Security (DHS) after 9/11. It absorbed/replaced the INS, the US Immigration and Naturalization Service, which had previously been under the Department of Justice and charged with the administration of immigration services, including permanent residence, naturalization, asylum, as well as border security and deportations. As the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights explains:

"Though the Border Patrol was established in 1924, and some militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border region occurred prior to recent decades, it has been in the years following the

DONALD TRUMP AND HIS UNATTAINABLE DREAM

By Elvis 'Peter' Nataren

Emigration to the United States will continue to be the escape valve for the inhabitants of the American continent for the simple reason that they are impotent to live with dignity in their countries of origin due to the eternal and contradictory social conflicts that exist there.

Donald Trump sees the current emigration as a factor of a humanitarian crisis, without assessing that it is really a "consequence of savage Neoliberalism."

If our countries were places that guaranteed all the RIGHTS that allow a person to live with dignity, nobody in their right mind would want to leave their land to go to suffer the racism of the United States. Our nations were places of prosperity at various historical moments and still have a lot of natural and mineral wealth, but that has also been a curse, as it has brought the vultures to our shores to steal it and leave us fighting for subsistence.

For the US, the rest of the continent was always seen as its colonies under absolute control. When something was not done under the orders directed from the White House, then it was enforced with brute force or with the intelligence means to destabilize any dissent.

It is not a coincidence that Latin America in the 20th century was marked by many horrors qualified as crimes against humanity. All this happened under the supervision or execution of the various governments of the US in order to facilitate the mass extraction of our natural resources. The accumulation of hatred, death and violence are factors that have seeded the destruction and regression of our social aspirations, generating all the misery that our societies now suffer. For these reasons we can determine that the United States and its President, Donald Trump, now reap what they have sown for many years.

Without the consent of the tenants of the White House, there would never have been so much suffering and corruption. They always supported governments that were tyrannical towards their own people, simply to benefit politically and seize the resources of each nation. The migrations have had their stages, but all can be traced back to US policies towards the rest of the continent. Many of these stages were due to civil wars supported by the US, sometimes clandestinely. Then, in the 90s, they were the result of the extreme inequalities generated by neoliberal reforms which have, at the end of all of them, the migrant child crisis, the caravans being the latest phenomenon they created.

Everything is a chain tied to the failure of the economic and corrupt systems implemented. If



Migrant families crossing a river to escape unlivable conditions in their home countries.

the US governments are responsible for all this tragedy, why should the countries impoverished by this history have to administer it? Trump should first alleviate the needs of each peoples. For example, in the Northern Triangle, the US should invest resources into the recovery of the economy based on productivity. Invest in the fight against corruption to help countries heal and end its

“For these reasons we can determine that the United States and its President, Donald Trump, now reap what they have sown for many years.”

partnership with the elites that have enriched themselves helping Washington exhaust their countries' resources behind the backs of their peoples.

The crises will never end for our countries while the White House is

always at the head of the axis of our ills. If Washington continues to see our conflicts as opportunities to maintain its strategy of control over our governments, then the migrations will never end.

World powers are currently fighting over control of our continent. All the instability that the continent is suffering at this crisis moment is caused by the peoples' will being ruled out at the polls or with invented legal means. Their disenfranchisement will undoubtedly bring more pain and suffering for the barefoot people. Therefore, emigration will continue to be a factor of escape, capable of undoing any wall in order to survive.

DGH Reporter

Edited and designed by Monica Sanchez. Send suggestions by mail to P.O. Box 1761, Decatur, GA, 30031, USA, or by e-mail to newsletter@dghonline.org.

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Recommended Reading

- **Harvest of Empire: A History of Latinos in America, by Juan González.** Spanning 500 years of Hispanic history, from the first New World colonies to the 19th century westward expansion in America, this narrative features family portraits of real-life immigrants along with sketches of the political events and social conditions that compelled them to leave their homeland.
- **American Gulag: Inside U.S. Immigration Prisons, by Mark Dow.** Prisoners, jailers and whistle-blowing federal officials describe the frightening reality inside these facilities. Journalist Mark Dow's on-the-ground reporting brings to light documented cases of illegal beatings, psychological torment, prolonged detention, racism and inhumane conditions.
- **Detained: Immigration Laws and the Expanding I.N.S. Jail Complex, by Michael Welch.** Professor Welch offers research, analysis, and solutions for reasonable immigration reform. He also deals with the

negative views of immigrants as job stealers, terrorists, criminals and plagues to American society. Welch's final chapters deal with the broken system of immigration detention centers through personal accounts.

► **Underground America: Narratives of Undocumented Lives, by Peter Orner.** This is a nonfiction compilation of stories from undocumented immigrants living and working in the United States. Orner digs deep into the lives of the quiet, hidden immigrants who live their daily lives in fear of deportation or arrest. He also interviews immigrants who have gone through immigration detention center conditions and uncovers horrendous stories.

► **Brother, I'm Dying, by Edwidge Danticat.** This is the memoir of the niece of Joseph Danticat, an 81-year-old Haitian minister who died after DHS authorities at a Florida detention center denied him medical treatment. The Danticats come to America as Haitian refugees, escaping political unrest and violence in their homeland. Unfortunately for them, the violence only begins at the doorways of the detention center.

REFUGEE CENTERS IN TIJUANA, MEXICO

By Margarita Loeza

At the "Don't Mourn, Organize" event organized by DGH Board Member Dr. Jyoti Puvvula, I heard about a group meeting at the Central American Resource Center (CARECEN) in Los Angeles, CA. The panelist at the conference said they were forming a Medical Brigade to meet "the Caravan" walking from Central America to the US. Meetings were held every Monday. The next day, I recruited two Charles Drew University medical students to attend the meeting with me. There I found a community of former asylum seekers, community organizers and wonderful people tracking the caravan that would arrive around Thanksgiving.

The Refugee Health Alliance was formed, a GoFundMe campaign followed and Facebook Group started. In November, the first trip included three family physicians (Drs. Gilbert Granados, Loeza and Puvvula) and ER doctor Wendy Ruggeri, driving to Border Angels' office in San Diego, CA. There we joined many physician volunteers and medical students.

We called ourselves the "Caravan of Love." We were met by news media on

both sides of the border, asking us why we were going and what we expected to see. Those were good and important questions!

Once in Tijuana, the physician-led teams travelled from the Border Angels' office to shelters and the Benito Juarez Stadium. I was unprepared for what I saw.

Near the stadium, I saw people sleeping on the street. A young mother breastfeeding her child with one arm and holding the hand of her other child with her other arm. All she had were the clothes on her back. I met a thin young man using crutches due to lower extremity pain because he had walked so far to get to the US.

I was not brave enough to enter the stadium. I felt we had to prepare and bring more supplies because there were so many people. We split up and decided to go to the local shelters.

My group walked over to shelter Enclave Caracol. There was a sign at the door, "No photos, no media and no police." As I walked through the kitchen there was a large pot of beans and loud Techno music playing. We went upstairs, got medication from Dr. Patty Gonzalez's clinic, and set up a "clinic" in the alley with tables and chairs and a tent. We treated patients, collected their stories and, when it started getting dark, told them we would be back. Since that first trip the efforts continue and medical volunteer teams are going to the shelters to work with Mexican physicians leading the way.



Medical volunteers working to help the migrant families at refugee shelters in Tijuana, Mexico.

ACCOMPANIMENT AT THE BORDER: LESSONS LEARNED

By Jyoti Puvvula

While the administration and some media outlets were beating the drums of fear and impending doom of the Central American "migrant caravan" coming and "storming" the US-Mexico border, the stories we were hearing were quite different. Colleagues and advocates traveling with the caravan shared stories of despair, of people willing to risk everything to make the long perilous journey. Stories of families who saved up all their money to send their children alone to escape violence in their communities. As the "migrant caravan" got closer to the US, it started becoming clear, that instead of taking the shorter route to the Texas-Mexico border where they may be confronted by unfriendly communities, many had decided to reroute to Tijuana at the California border. Tijuana is a city which, as many residents would let us know, is among some of the friendliest to immigrants.

While this wave of "migrants" from Honduras was receiving much attention, Tijuana has been well known for a long time as a place where many, not just from within Mexico but from Central America and beyond, have gathered to make that journey across the border into land of "dreams and hope." However, for many, the journey ends there in the cardboard *Colonias* of Tijuana and Ensenada, or in the shelters of *Zona Norte*.

As the caravan got closer to the California, border most of us, including the locals in Mexico, realized that no one was prepared for the first wave of "migrants." So in the weeks leading up to their arrival, different groups at the border in Tijuana, San Diego and Los Angeles started organizing. In Los Angeles, the CARECEN office became the weekly meeting hub for all of us who wanted to offer ideas, solidarity, organizing and planning. Our group was assigned the task of medical care.

On Thanksgiving weekend, the first medical brigade from Los Angeles, along with volunteers from San Diego and other advocacy groups like Border Angels, went down to meet the recently arrived "migrants" at the different shelters. With more cameras and media than volunteers in a chaotic stadium filled with over 3,000 "migrants," I was reminded of old and learned many new lessons. And for every answer I got, more questions arose.

What follows is not as much about the crisis but a few reflections on doing this work:

► We learned of the tremendous work that many of the local health care providers had already been doing even before the cameras showed up, and will continue long after everyone leaves. For example, Dr. Patty Gonzalez, a Mexican physician, had been working with the homeless substance users living on the margins of the *Zona Norte* area of Tijuana. She, along with other dedicated physicians, has been supporting Haitian and other prior "migrant caravans" who had made an even more treacherous journey (<https://lonesmallhouse.org/wound-clinic>). We learned of Dr. Sheila Serpas, a San Diego-based family physician who had been going, not only to the border clinics, but also working with "migrants" once they cross the border and seek asylum in the US. Phil Canete, a premed student in San Diego, who has been tirelessly organizing caravans every Saturday since the "migrants" arrived.

► Doctors in scrubs and white coats always make for a good media cover story. The hungry media that wanted to get a new angle, a new story on this crisis for their outlet and for any of their audience who were not yet fatigued with the stories of the caravan, did numerous stories on the volunteers in scrubs and white coats. However, we wondered when and where the voices and stories of those who made this perilous journey would be told.

► "What is in a name?" You may have wondered why I have put "migrants" in quotes. It is

“ You may have wondered why I have put “migrants” in quotes. It is because we wondered if the people in the caravan can really be called “migrants” or are they really refugees who have no choice as they flee violence, oppression and deadly poverty in their home communities? ”

because we wondered if the people in the caravan can really be called "migrants" or are they really refugees who have no choice as they flee violence, oppression and deadly poverty in their home communities?

► Then we also had to wonder, as we should with all crises situations like this one, are we really needed there? Does the community really want us? Are we invited to be

there? What does it do to the local economy? How would we react if a group of Mexican physicians in their scrubs and white coats marched on to skid row to treat the more than 50,000 homeless who are left on the fringes of our society on the streets of Los Angeles on any given night?

► Being with the refugees, we are again reminded of the policies and laws created by our nation that have been so much the cause of misery for these groups escaping oppression. Their stories also teach us of human struggle and resilience, of perseverance, of love and of the fight for justice.

► We are reminded that our work is not about medical relief work but about bearing witness to the stories of struggle, resistance and human resilience. Our role was more than making sure we could hear the fetal heart tones of the pregnant patients huddled in the cramped 200-tents shelter; it is to share in her reassurance that when her child comes into this world, it will be a brighter world than the one that she left behind. It is to let the group of unaccompanied minors housed at the "Y" in Tijuana, know that on this planet there are people who will protect them, love them and give them a chance to be children a little longer even though they may feel all alone in this world, not knowing if and when they will ever see another family member outside the gates of the shelter where others like them had been disappeared or trafficked. But most of all, our role as health providers is to go beyond healing the physical ailments and wounds of the body, to healing the deepest wounds of the soul that are so often inflicted on by other fellow humans.