



No More Deaths • No Más Muertes

Humanitarian Aid is Never a Crime

Spring 2013

Edited by Denise Holley

Vigil at border wall evokes grief and anger



A woman who asked to be identified only as “Gaby” presses a photo of her nephew, José Antonio Elena Rodríguez, against the international border wall in Nogales, Sonora, near the spot where Border Patrol agents reportedly shot him in October 2012. Sarah Roberts of No More Deaths and Kathryn Ferguson of Tucson Samaritans hold a sign on the U.S. side. On April 10, hundreds of people marched on both sides of the wall and held a vigil on the six-month anniversary of the teen’s death. They demanded a transparent investigation and prosecution of the agents responsible.

Photo by Bob Torrez

See pages 4 and 5 for related story and more photos

Alternative spring break opens students’ eyes

By Geena Jackson

This March, 55 students from around the country visited Arizona to witness the intolerable conditions of the U.S.-Mexico border. They joined No More Deaths’ desert aid project for college students seeking an alternative spring break.

Students arrived from Beloit College in Wisconsin, Georgetown College in Kentucky, the University of Virginia Law School, Whitman College in Washington, Hamilton College in New York, Guilford College in North Carolina, Northwestern University in Illinois, and Western Washington University.

After six training sessions on legal protocols, documenting abuse by the Border Patrol, and the current con-

text of the border crisis, volunteers headed to the humanitarian aid camps where they jumped right into work. The high number of volunteers made new projects possible out of Byrd Camp (the permanent NMD camp), and temporary camps in Ruby (outside of Arivaca) and Chavez (near Tubac).

Students stocked dozens of water drops and hiked hundreds of miles in the Sonoran desert, in addition to maintaining medical facilities within camps. They also experienced the cruelty of Border Patrol and other players in the desert when they found slashed water jugs and vandalized drop sites. In four weeks of spring break alone, they recorded 128 gallons destroyed.

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No More Deaths is an organization whose mission is to end death and suffering on the U.S.-Mexico border by mobilizing people of conscience to uphold fundamental human rights. Founded in 2004 in Tucson, Ariz., NMD provides water, food, and medical assistance to migrants walking through the Arizona desert, monitors U.S. operations on the border and works to change the “war zone” policy, and brings the plight of migrants to public attention. It is a ministry of the Unitarian-Universalist Church of Tucson.

To contact No More Deaths, call (520) 333-5699 or visit the website www.nomoredeaths.org

Nogales volunteers advocate for displaced migrants

Winter and spring of 2013 has been an exciting and busy time for long-term volunteers of No More Deaths in Nogales who live on the U.S. side and cross daily into Mexico. Accomplished volunteers before us continued to show us the ropes after our arrival on Feb. 1.

We soon became part of the hustle, bustle and positive energy generated by our partner organization, the Kino Border Initiative, a Jesuit ministry that operates a *comedor* (dining hall) for deportees. We help serve breakfast in the morning and explain our services to the migrants. From there we settle into our case management and phone call service at Grupos Beta.

From Feb. 11– March 23, we served a total of 965 mi-

grants. Often, they made more than one call per person, especially if there was difficulty getting through or locating family. We made 62 calls to the Mexican Consulate on behalf of migrants.

In this same period, we assisted in five human rights abuse documentations, 25 money transfers, and 25 requests to find personal belongings taken from migrants in detention. We distributed 375 desert aid packets and 63 migrants took part in English lessons. The total number of volunteer hours was 613.

From Feb. 18 – March 18, 451 calls were made to the U.S., 322 to Mexico, 41 to Guatemala, 52 to El Salvador, and 102 to Honduras. We see more Hondurans passing

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Dear Friends of No More Deaths

No More Deaths and other border justice groups met all winter and spring to create a campaign to end Operation Streamline (see article on page 7) and to hone strategies to influence immigration reform that includes our perspective gained from our year-round presence in the desert providing humanitarian aid to migrants.

As some of the U.S. Senate “Gang of Eight” traveled to our border region recently under the guidance of the Border Patrol, our concern is that they formed their ideas for immigration reform without actually seeing and hearing what migrants experience. (No, we were not consulted.)

So dominating is the political mantra of “border security,” we fear the package of immigration reform will push for even more militarization – more patrols, more walls, more technology (border industrial complex) – and miss completely what’s involved in creating real security. We see real border security built on values of dignity, compassion and justice.



“The worst vandalism I have ever seen,” said volunteer Steve Johnston, who took this photo in January near Arivaca, Ariz. NMD volunteers had left water and beans for thirsty and hungry migrants, but found the jugs slashed and the beans opened and dumped out.

The hypocritical and contradictory signs of “help wanted” and “keep out” that migrants see must be eliminated and replaced with policies that allow for the safe passage of workers and their families. The policy of criminalizing migrants must stop and the practice of imprisoning them for lengthy periods in detention centers run by private prison profiteers must absolutely be challenged. Our abuse documentation done by NMD volunteers over the past several years and reported to government authorities exposes this flawed system. Finally, border policies must be based on an analysis of the root causes of migration.

If we are going to talk about how undocumented immigration impacts our society, we must seriously look at how our national policies and transnational corporate practices have disrupted the lives of those who migrate.

If you sense a passionate tone in our words, it is because we have watched too many migrants suffer and die at the hands of an unjust system. We are not speaking for migrants here; we are simply standing with them and advocating for legislation and policies that create “real security” that values human dignity, compassion and justice. Let’s not forget we are all descendants of immigrants and at the core, we have a tradition of immigrant hospitality and justice.

Our 2013 summer volunteer program application is posted on our website (nomoredeaths.org). We encourage those who can to come to the desert and give your time and energy. As thousands of past volunteers will tell you, it’s a life-changing experience. For you, our friends who stand in solidarity with migrants and our humanitarian aid work, thank you for your contributions.

In solidarity,

The No More Deaths Community

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

Survey documents stress and anguish of deportees

By Maryada Vallet

“He is feeling very emotional, and right now not feeling good. It’s been over a month since he’s seen his children.”
(Interviewer’s comment)

This respondent lived in Los Angeles for 12 years, where he has a spouse and four citizen children, ages 10, 8, 4 and 2 who were dependent on his income prior to arrest. He rated his physical distress as moderate and his emotional distress as high.

Findings from such interviews were released in December 2012 as part of the Deportation Impact Survey (DIS) conducted by No More Deaths (NMD) volunteers in Nogales, Sonora. The report is part of the NMD Culture of Cruelty campaign of abuse documentation and advocacy (www.cultureofcruelty.org).

The DIS is an assessment aimed to improve the humanitarian and public health understanding of the impacts of deportation for men and women who have lived in the U.S. for a number of years, are arrested and detained, and then formally removed to northern Mexico. As NMD, along with multiple partners, seek to provide services to migrants in Nogales, there is a need to know their post-deportation determinants of health and survival. There is limited health and safety-related knowledge about this displaced, mobile and often vulnerable population.

In recent years, there has been a trend in U.S. immigration enforcement toward more apprehensions in the interior of the country, criminalizing illegal entry, longer-term detention, and more formal deportations, rather than voluntary departures. This climate of harsh enforcement has set records with deportations of mothers and fathers, spouses and siblings, mostly people with no serious criminal history who have homes, jobs and families in the U.S. The forthcoming DIS report will discuss improved care and advocacy for this population.

The DIS survey was conducted from June 2010 to April 2011, in which over 30 trained volunteers completed 105 one-to-one interviews with recently deported individuals. Many volunteers came with universities and churches or as medical or legal professionals from around the country as part of the NMD alternative spring break program.

The interviews took place in several facilities in Nogales that provide assistance to migrants. The survey collected basic demographic information (non-identifiable), a description of the individual’s life in the U.S.,

Medical needs in the field

Currently, No More Deaths has an abundance of gauze dressings and gauze wraps to treat wounded migrants.

We need: Ace wraps, white athletic socks, Coban, A & D ointment individual packets (not tubes), bismuth subsalicylate tablets (not liquid), acetaminophen, ibuprofen,



Spring break volunteer Bo Glenn interviews a deportee in 2011 in Nogales, Sonora. Photo by Maryada Vallet

the situation of their arrest, conditions in detention, their exposure to violence or insecurity after deportation and in the borderlands, and finally, the respondent’s self-reported rating of physical and mental health.

Self-report of health is a globally renowned and validated measure of morbidity.

The assessment provides evidence for the connections between strong ties to the U.S., such as length of residence and citizen family members, abuse in detention, and exposure to violence at the border with declining self-reported health status after deportation. The sample included 92 men and 13 women, the majority originally from Mexico, with a median age of 33 years. These men and women had lived an average of 15 years in the U.S. in 17 states throughout the country. The vast majority of respondents (94%) have family members currently living in the U.S. Those with children in the U.S. have an average of 2.5 and 81% of these sons and daughters are U.S. citizens. Further, the findings demonstrate significant relationships between physical symptoms of emotional distress in detention and experiences of abuse while detained with continued mental or emotional distress after deportation.

In all, the U.S. deportation process represents an insidious culture of cruelty that continues to impact deported men and women, their families and communities in the U.S., and this study provides evidence that these policies are indeed issues of health and safety.

The report findings have been presented to students at the Arizona State University School of Social Work and the University of Arizona School of Public Health. They will be used for a PBS “Need to Know” episode.

antacid tablets, cold and flu medicine, and natural tears.

Since shipping costs are so high, it is more efficient and cost-effective to send a money donation designated for medical use. Send your donations to: UUCT/No More Deaths, P.O. Box 40782. Tucson, AZ 85717

Nogales attorneys challenge U.S. over killing of Mexican teen

By Denise Holley

An attorney who grew up on the U.S.-Mexico border will challenge the federal Department of Homeland Security over the shooting death of a Mexican teen last October by a Border Patrol agent.

José Antonio Elena Rodríguez, 16, of Nogales, Sonora, died Oct. 10, 2012 in a hail of bullets fired through the international border fence, said Luis Parra of Nogales, Ariz. In a meeting March 12 with the Tucson Samaritans, a group that offers aid to migrants in the desert, Parra traced the events that began with a call to the Nogales Police Department. After two officers responded and confronted people climbing over the fence into Mexico, Border Patrol agents arrived. The agency claimed youths in Mexico pelted them with rocks through or over the the border fence.

José Antonio was walking home from the store where his older brother worked about 11:15 p.m. when the agents opened fire, Parra said. The teen died about 25 feet from the border fence while being treated by paramedics, according to Sonoran police.

The day after the shooting, the Border Patrol acknowledged in a press release that an agent fired the shots, according to Parra. The agency did not reveal their name(s) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has launched an investigation, he said. Parra wants to see the footage captured by four cameras mounted on the border fence, but the FBI will not release the videotapes.

“At this point, it’s a mystery,” Parra said after reviewing the autopsy report. José Antonio suffered 10 shots to his back, neck and arms and there were multiple bullet holes in the wall of the nearest building. “There has to be another shooter.”

Later, when he and attorney Roberto Montiel, also of Nogales, Ariz., obtained the ballistics report, it confirmed his suspicions, Parra said. “There were two

Nogales program continued

through Nogales and are aware of the desperate situation they are leaving behind to endure a dangerous three-week train ride to get here.

We are seeing more women traveling alone as they are often separated from their partners at the time of apprehension. In late February and early March, we noticed more leg and arm injuries on people coming in from the desert.

None of our work would be possible without support and guidance from our mentors who travel from Tucson, our new abuse documentation coordinator, a desert aid



A girl places an item on an altar dedicated to José Antonio Elena Rodríguez on the sidewalk along the border wall where he died of gunshot wounds.

Photo by MaryJoan Picone

sets of bullet casings found on the hill on the American side.”

After he and Montiel file their notice of claim, the departments of Justice and Homeland Security have six months to respond, Parra told the Samaritans. “Eventually, we’ll know the names of the agents.”

But he’s not holding his breath. “A Border Patrol agent has never been charged in a border shooting,” Parra said. He or she could claim self-defense and get off with a charge of reckless endangerment.

Parra described the impact on José Antonio’s family.

“The mother feels helpless and frustrated,” Parra said. She’s raising her older son and two young daughters without their father, who died four years ago. His mother, Taide Elena, supports the family.

The grandmother is “strong-willed and she wants answers,” Parra said.

He hopes to get some answers soon, but he’s worried about other Mexican teens.

“I’m concerned over this happening again,” because there are no policies to deter it, Parra said.

volunteer and the Tucson and Green Valley Samaritans. It is a team effort and together we are able to lift the plight of the migrants and support them on their journeys. And our migrant brothers and sisters, in turn, lift us when we are weary.

They have impacted us in ways they will never know. We first met Raul when he was helping in the *comedor*, cutting vegetables and joking with the Sisters. He quickly became Sally’s best English student, winning memory games and learning numbers, colors and words. He left and walked four days into Arizona without finding water.

Anger over teen's death spills into Sonoran street



Above: Family and friends of José Antonio Elena Rodríguez lead a march April 10 in Nogales, Sonora to the spot where the 16-year-old was reportedly shot through the border fence by U.S. Border Patrol agents in October 2012.

Right: Family members of Elena Rodríguez hold his picture beside a poster demanding justice for another Mexican teen, Carlos Lamadrid, shot by a Border Patrol agent in Douglas, Ariz. So far, no one has been arrested in either case.

Photos by Bob Torrez



The soles of his shoes were completely worn through. He was arrested entering Green Valley. When he returned to Nogales, he told Sally he wants his two children to go to school. He wants to learn English so he can earn a better living in the Mexican resort areas. After a few days, Raul headed north again. Another migrant who was sent back said Raul was again picked up and remains in detention.

Another man was living in Tucson with his U.S. citizen wife and two young children. His wife was driving when police pulled them over. The officer asked for his papers. Since he had none, he was deported and we met in No-

gales. Deportees stay in shelters, rooming houses or on the streets as they weigh their options and figure out whom to trust. Tired and frustrated, some find help to scrape up the fare and return home on the bus.

Their undying spirit and enduring faith make us cherish our time working here, as we *caminamos juntos con esperanza en nuestros corazones* (walk together with hope in our hearts).

— Kate Marshall, Toronto, Ontario; Sally Meisenhelder, Las Cruces, N.M., and MaryJoan Picone, South Glastonbury, Conn.

No More Deaths takes its message on the road

By Kate MorganOlsen

In February 2013, representatives from No More Deaths traveled to 11 Midwestern cities in six different states to speak about the humanitarian crisis on the U.S.-Mexico border and raise funds for humanitarian supplies. The tour was inspired by NMD's reinvigorated fundraising strategy and by our collective understanding for the need to communicate the reality of the border to allied communities throughout the U.S.

After several months of organizing and networking, No More Deaths secured speaking events at Colorado State University, Kansas University, Grinnell College, Roosevelt University, University of Illinois-Chicago, Beloit College, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Edgewater College, Notre Dame University, Kalamazoo College, and the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor. Representatives also met with local community groups along the tour such as Occupy Denver, Derechos Para Todos/Rights for All in Denver, the Unitarian Universalist Society of Iowa City, the Latino Union of Chicago and the Immigrant Youth Justice League of Chicago.

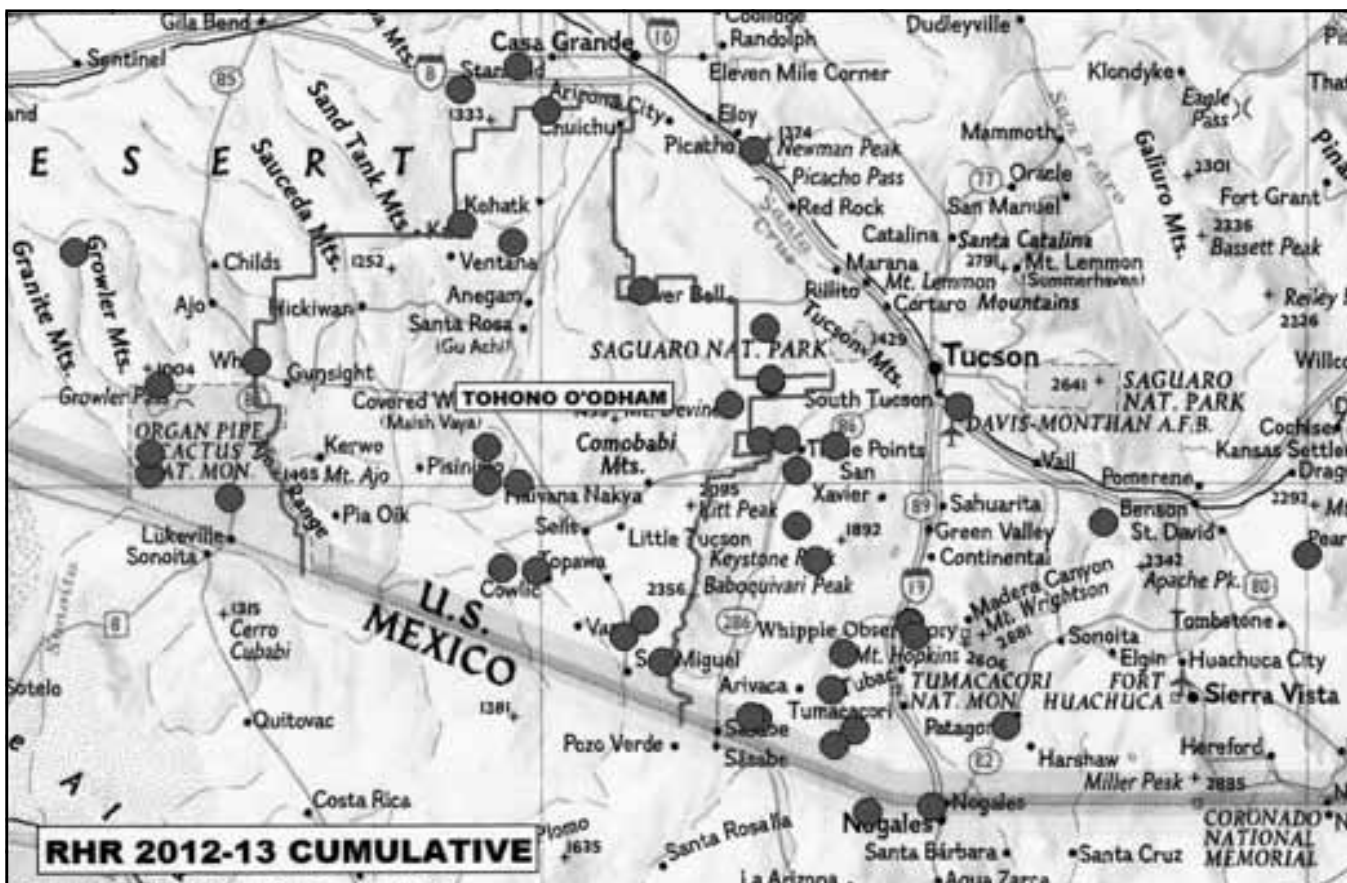
The tour was extremely successful. Almost 1,000 people attended the events, \$6,000 in total was raised, and many people met with us outside of the events to express support for our work. One professor told us “[our] presentation



Kate MorganOlsen tells a university audience in February 2013 how NMD brings life-saving help to migrants traveling in the Arizona desert and advocates for those in Border Patrol custody.

was better than anything I could have assigned my students to read on this subject.” Publicity from the tour generated interest in similar events from communities throughout the country.

We hope future tours can happen annually with a focus on the West and East coasts and Southwest border communities. We send thanks to our hosts, to the communities that supported the tour, and to all of the NMD members who helped in ways large and small to make the tour successful.



Deaths continue in the Arizona desert. Each dot represents the locations of recovered human remains (RHR) found between Oct. 1, 2012 and March 2013. Map compiled by Ed McCullough with data from the Pima County Coroner.

Operation Streamline

Federal prosecutors throw the book at desperate migrants

By Denise Holley

It's easy to identify the defendants when federal court convenes daily for Operation Streamline proceedings in Tucson. Mostly short dark-skinned Mexican and Central American men – and three women – they are shackled at the wrist and ankles so they shuffle as they walk to the front of the courtroom.

Seven at a time, the defendants line up before the judge with their attorneys behind them. Each wears a headset to hear the Spanish interpreter and pleads *culpable* (guilty) to misdemeanor illegal entry. In exchange, the government drops a felony charge of re-entry after deportation.

After he asks each defendant if he or she is willing to give up the right to a trial, the judge metes out sentences of 30 to 180 days, depending on how many times each defendant has been previously deported. Then a U.S. marshal who towers over the defendants escorts them out the door to their lock-up.

On this afternoon, March 1, 2012, one man breaks into sobs as he is sentenced. He tells the judge he has tried repeatedly to travel to Florida to reunite with his children but gets picked up by Border Patrol each time.

“It’s very hard to lose your family,” the man says.

The judge says he empathizes, but does not grant the

NMD will mark 10 years in 2014

In January 2014, No More Deaths will reach its 10-year anniversary. Although we hoped to end the deaths of migrants in the desert, we still have much work ahead of us.

We are planning a dinner and speaker event to honor the humanitarian work of volunteers and educate attendees about the realities of immigration on our southern border. Look for details in our fall newsletter.

Spring break continued

Many students also visited NMD’s project in Nogales and saw a fuller picture of the many forms of necessary aid. Every week of spring break concluded by witnessing Operation Streamline, the federal court proceedings used to criminalize and sentence immigrants en masse.

After an eye-opening week, students discussed how to spread awareness in their home communities and campuses. One student declared “Let’s promise not to forget this trip” and then made a pact with fellow volunteers to take action upon returning home. We hope that through this experience 55 students become 55 border justice advocates who will help bring the border to light in communities across the US.

Thank you to the many people who made spring break a reality, especially those who facilitated camp, prepared meals for students, and organized training sessions.

man’s request to serve his 180 days in Florida. He recommends that others be allowed to serve time in California and Minnesota.

Until about 2008, the Border Patrol Tucson Sector simply bused illegal crossers to Mexico. Now it sends some of its detainees through Operation Streamline to slap them with a jail sentence so they will think twice about trying to re-enter the United States.

“The vast majority have no criminal history,” says Eric Rau, an attorney with the U.S. Public Defender’s office to a group of visitors. “They are not dangerous or violent.”

Rau’s office does not have enough attorneys available to represent each of the approximately 70 defendants who pass through Streamline each day, he says. So the Justice Department contracts with private attorneys who earn about \$750 per day. This comes to about \$2 million a year for the Tucson sector.

Does it work?

“I do not believe Operation Streamline has lessened illegal immigration,” Rau says.

Most of the defendants he sees are desperately poor, Rau says. They make the hazardous journey north because they have family in the U.S. or because they hope to earn money for a family member’s operation or just feed their children.

Streamline means “very sad mornings” meeting with people who have risked death, torture, kidnapping and perils of the desert and “incredibly dull afternoons” in court, Rau said. “I dread Streamline. It’s a big mill that grinds little people through.”



Members of the Southside Presbyterian Church Workers Center hoist a banner demanding that Tucson police stop calling Border Patrol to deport immigrants they take into custody. They walked with other marchers from the church to the police station March 17 to express their opposition to SB 1070. The Arizona bill passed in 2010 requires police to cooperate with immigration authorities.

Photo by Sarah Roberts

NMD launches new campaign to document abuse of migrants

By Hannah Hafter

In September 2011, No More Deaths released “Culture of Cruelty: Abuse and Impunity in Short-Term Border Patrol Custody,” the groundbreaking report regarding treatment of migrants being held by the Border Patrol. In 2012 we released a report on the health impacts of deportation. Now, in spring of 2013, we are gearing up to launch two new campaigns to shed light on important and little-known aspects of abuse faced by people migrating through the Arizona-Sonora border.

Over the summer our documentation work with people who have been deported to Nogales, Sonora, will focus on capturing all of the ways that migrants have their money taken from them by the immigration detention system. Many people who are deported who served prison time for “illegal entry” who were carrying cash with them get the money back on a debit card that must be activated in the U.S. (even though they were deported to Mexico and never had a chance to activate it), or on a check that costs over 30% to

cash in Mexico. Some people never see their money again.

We will investigate how much money is stolen from migrants by the detention system, where their money goes, what policy changes are needed, and what border-based service organizations can do to help people access their own missing money. Keep your eye out for an advocacy campaign in the fall – we’ll need your participation!

We are beginning to track Border Patrol violations of human rights in the desert, including: destruction of aid supplies; threats to arrest volunteers; intentional separation of groups which leads to people getting lost in the desert; and interference with medical evacuations.

View the full “Culture of Cruelty” report in English and Spanish at www.cultureofcruelty.org.

No More Deaths is seeking two interns to interview deported migrants in June, July and part of August. Applicants need a passport and fluent Spanish. To apply, visit the website www.nomoredeaths.org