THE DESERT FOUNTAIN

University of San Francisco Students Visit Humane Borders

by Abigail Pena

In January, nine students and two professors from the University of San Francisco traveled to Ajo, Arizona to spend a week with Humane Borders. Up until then, students had been designing and prototyping structures to help the durability of the water barrels as well as insulate the water from the unforgiving Sonora desert sun. On this trip, the students were able to build, install and test their prototypes in the Sonoran Desert at designated Humane Border water stations to better understand the conditions of the desert.

The day after arriving at Ajo, the USF team immediately went to work. Students split up into groups of 2-3 in order to develop the plans from the previous school semester. There were 3 main design prototypes that were built, each tackling a different need. The first prototype has a house-shaped covering made of pvc pipe and a tarp. This design was developed to provide shade in areas where there is no natural protection from the sun, while also allowing for wind flow to cool down the barrels. The second prototype was a wooden structure bolted together. This could be completely fabricated in the workshop and is robustly designed to quickly prop up in the desert. The third and final prototype is meant to be assembled in the field and targets cost effective production, as it is made of wood slats that fit together like a puzzle piece.

USF students meeting with the Ajo Team. Photo: Rebecca Fowler

In the days following, USF Architecture and Humane Borders made their way down to the Border Wall. Students participated in a water refill run across several different Humane Border stations. The experience of installing barrels and analyzing the environment was able to give the USF students a better understanding of what migrants, and Humane Borders volunteers experience when interacting with these water barrels. The students learned that even in the winter, the desert was bearing drastic temperatures that could affect the drinkability of the water stored in the barrels. Seeing the effects the desert has on the drinkability of water influenced their ideas on how the structures could be more effective. For example, while on the field, the students were able to make advances in their design by adding insulation to the front of the barrel in addition to the sides. This lowered the temperature of the water even on a cool day by 2 degrees. Students were also able to identify aspects of the design that needed improvement.

The students had previously picked out new spigots to test in the desert, however, after analysis they realized that some spigots would not tighten fully to the bung that seals the water. This led to slight leakage, which current USF students are now working to fix. In the days between installation and analysis, the students were also able to complete food and water drops at different locations and gain a sense of walking through the desert. These hikes gave them a first hand experience with the land. The warm temperatures and rocky terrain made it apparent that the work Humane Borders does is imperative to saving lives. In addition to the climate, the desert was covered in a diverse range of cacti that can easily get caught on clothing and bodies. Some of the students even got painfully pricked while hiking. The physical challenge of crossing a desert without enough food and water became vivid imagery through this experience. On one of the hikes, students passed by a cross that was placed by...

Continued on page 2...

Our New Online Newsletter

by Katie Grierson

As you may have noticed, our biannual newsletter has moved to an online format. We hope this will reduce some spending that can otherwise go to maintaining our barrels, and maybe even waste less paper. These newsletters have been published throughout the years, and act as an archive of the work we do and the constantly changing environment we do this work in. This newsletter prioritizes sharing the experiences of our volunteers—their own motivations, griefs, and celebrations—as they work in the borderlands. We hope, if you already volunteer, this newsletter will remind you why you do this work, and if you've yet to volunteer, it'll encourage you to join us in envisioning a deathless borderlands.

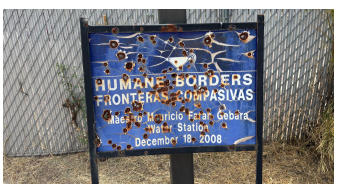


Photo: Katie Grierson

USF students working. Photo: Carol Wingo

…another organization that sends search and recovery parties into the desert. These crosses are placed where they find the remains of those who did not survive the desert. Personally witnessing such a sight showed the work Humane Borders does has meaningful ramifications. Above all else, human beings do not deserve to die in such conditions. Through water barrels stations, they are providing a lifeline for those making this difficult journey. The USF students and professors who went on this trip are excited to be joined by new students in aims to further improve on the water barrels structures. They hope that this becomes a recurring trip to the Sonoran Desert to continue their relationship with Humane Borders and others, as we work to make the world a better place for all.

My experience with Humane Borders was life changing. As a student at USF, I had the amazing opportunity to design water barrel structures with the Humane Borders team for 8 days. The team flew into Ajo, Arizona on the 12th of January in order to build and install the water barrels. Throughout the week, the team was able to do water and food drops in numerous Humane Borders locations. The hikes through the desert and first hand experience with the environment opened my eyes to how important Humane Borders work truly is. Something as simple as providing water, becomes life- saving work for migrants crossing through the Sonoran Desert. The volunteers we met on this trip have proven to have a genuine passion for saving and helping lives. In the months of reflection that I have had since this trip. My admiration for the determination and kindness of the Humane Borders team has only grown. In the coming years, may we continue to lead with courage and integrity, standing beside those who need us.

[M]ay we continue to lead with courage and integrity, standing beside those who need us.

Students insulating a water barrel. Photo: Tom Wingo

Thank You to Our Donors

We wanted to take a moment to acknowledge the generous donations that make our general operations and our ability to continue providing humanitarian aid in the desert possible. We want to especially acknowledge the support provided by the Bustos Lopez Fund held at the Community Foundation for Southern Arizona and support from the The Straus Family Fund and Mr. Michael S. Straus and Mrs. Philippa B. Straus. As a volunteer-led nonprofit, we rely on the kindness of those who share in our mission.

Note from the Chair

by Laurie Cantillo

"What can I do?" It's a question I'm often asked by friends and family who are overwhelmed by the 24-hour news cycle and the divisiveness in our country. It's all too much. I feel it too.

My response is this: instead of doomscrolling or going into the fetal position, pick one or two things you care about—and give it all you've got. For me, it's Humane Borders.

For 25 years, our volunteers have worked tirelessly to save lives. While filling blue barrels in the desert may seem a simple act, there's something deeply profound and symbolic about offering water to a stranger, someone you will likely never meet. We may come from different places, speak different languages, or have different politics, but we all need water. That's why Humane Borders' water is for ALL—whether you're a migrant, hiker, hunter, RVer, rancher, tribal member, hunter, four-wheeler, military member or Border Patrol agent, our water is for you.

We know that people are still crossing the desert and will continue to do so. We see evidence of water use, the things they leave behind, and we've sadly added dozens of migrant deaths to our database this year. While the future is uncertain, we know that with increased border militarization, migrants are crossing in more remote, dangerous areas.

Humane Borders is no longer "just" a nonprofit that puts water in the desert, our work has ignited a movement—one that recognizes our shared humanity and models the kind of world we want to live in. We hear from many supporters that our work is a bright light in dark times.

So what can you do? Be a Humane Borders volunteer—in the desert, in the office, or where you live. Donate. Adopt a water station. Read border books. Tell your friends about us. By showing up, you make your corner of the world a better place.

Cross put up by Alvaro Enciso. Photo: Holly Knight

Keep Going

On resilience and commitment at the border

by Holly Knight

Finding carpet shoes in the desert. Photo: Holly Knight

Gurupreet Kaur, who would have turned 13 this year, died of heat stroke in the Sonoran Desert on June 12, 2019. She crossed with her mother and three others who were all planning to request asylum. Her small body was found not far from Quitobaquito Oasis, just one mile from the border where daytime temperatures soared to 108 °F.

When the exhibit Hostile Terrain 94 traveled to the university near me, I searched for her name tag for two hours in the sector where she died. The exhibit is a visceral and visual representation of the human toll exacted by the 1994 policy of Prevention Through Deterrence. More than 4,000 handwritten toe tags were geolocated on a wall map at the exact location where remains were found in Arizona's Sonoran Desert between the mid-1990s and 2024. I gasped when I finally discovered Gurupreet's tag, which was buried beneath a massive pile, all telling the same story of what happens when cruel policies are carried out in one of the deadliest places on earth.

Before I traveled to Arizona in late October 2024 to help my daughter move, I had never heard of Gurupreet Kaur or the thousands of others who have died or gone missing in the land of open graves due to a 30-year-old policy I knew nothing about. While I certainly knew that the term "illegal" was dehumanizing, I didn't know it was also misleading because crossing without papers is most often a civil offense and not a crime. I also did not know that requesting asylum was a right protected by both international and federal laws or that asylum seekers must present themselves at a port of entry or to border patrol on US soil within one year of arrival in order to request asylum. In other words, they have no choice but to cross the border without papers or permission and they do not need to initiate the process immediately. I certainly had no idea there was a backlog of nearly 4 million asylum cases in U.S. Immigration Court, which included Gurupreet's father, with a wait time of approximately six years. In short, I did not know that millions of men, women, and children fleeing violence crossed the "right" way and either died while making the attempt or have been patiently waiting their turn for a very long time.

[W]e found carpet shoes and blackened water jugs left by travelers—all reminders to not give up and to keep going.

In 2018, I had wanted to volunteer at the border because I knew that the policy of family separation was wrong, but I was unsure I had anything to offer. During my October visit to Arizona, I learned about the work of Humane Borders and boldly asked if I could volunteer. The volunteer coordinator assured me that education was central to their mission. Together we organized a series of water runs. And I began a deep dive: stacks of books (by Urrea, De Leon, and more) multiplied like apprentice brooms, an embarrassing number of open tabs on my computer covered topics ranging from the 100-mile border to Annual Reports of the Pima County Medical Examiner, and hours hunched over the computer trying to write about what I was learning so I could contribute—something, anything.

To call what happened during those two weeks in March of 2025 of volunteering with Humane Borders "a series of water runs" is inaccurate at best. I will never forget the drivers, Scott and Tom and Jim, who regaled us with stories of their lives before and after their encounter with the border. They were each so different, but similar in ways that mattered most: absolute commitment to the dual mission of preventing death in the desert and creating a more just and humane border. They had vivid stories about the brutal and beautiful landscape of trackless mountains and dry arroyos, the people they will never forget, and shifting border policies that somehow produced the same inhumane results.

Scott took us on a journey beyond a water station and into a canyon. Accompanied by a drumming ladder-backed woodpecker and a singing Lucy's warbler, we found carpet shoes and blackened water jugs left by travelers—all reminders to not give up and to keep going.

Tom remembered a day of 122 °F temperatures at water station number five along the border wall where he met a mother who was carrying her nine- or ten-year-old son who was severely disabled. Because the mother was red-faced, exhausted, and obviously at risk of heat stroke, Tom called Border Patrol for help. When the agents finally rolled up, they asked, "What the hell are we supposed to do with that sh*t?" Tom's reply was direct and unequivocal: "I think they need some help."

I asked Jim why he thought it was important to continue doing this work when usage was decreasing. I knew he would have a good answer and he did. "In the past two to three years, I have seen such fluctuation in border policy and crossings. We don't know what's going to happen next. Humane Borders has to be a steady and consistent source of life-giving water so people don't die." During an overwhelming time when the odds seem particularly long, I take refuge in these memories. I continue to learn and strike up conversations with friends and strangers who are on their own journey of understanding the humanitarian crisis at the border. I plan to raise more money so Humane Borders can keep acting as a steady and consistent presence. And it is my goal to return this year for a longer period to gather hope, be surrounded by others who are deeply committed to this work, and to keep going.

Volunteer Spotlight

Kirk Astroth Reviews 'Renegade for Justice: Defending the Defenseless in an Outlaw World", A Memoir from a Humane Borders Volunteer.

In his recently-published memoir, long time Humane Borders volunteer Stephen Saltonstall admits that when you are a criminal defense lawyer, everyone except your client is hoping you will fail—the prosecution, the galley in the courtroom, the media, and the public in general. It takes a bit of masochism and personal fortitude, he admits, to endure in this environment. But he enjoyed a bit of guilty pleasure when he prevailed against such odds.

Yet, Saltonstall is an understated and humble public servant without a hint of hubris. Throughout the retelling of some of his most memorable court cases, he tells an engaging and fascinating tale of the US justice system during his years as a defense attorney. This "no-holds-bar" recounting of some of the major cases Saltonstall took on, largely pro bono or for little monetary compensation, suggests that the bail system should be abolished, that the Forest Service should be dismantled, that the death penalty should be ended, and that our belief in the presumption of "innocent until proven guilty" is largely an illusion, and unbeknownst to many, it is not enshrined in the Constitution.

For three years, Saltonstall was president of the Vermont Nature Conservancy when he took on a pro-bono role to challenge an ill-conceived timber sale for a forest area called Lamb Brook where bear and neo-tropical bird habitat was threatened with destruction. Sorting through mounds of government documents and files to build a case against this timber sale, Saltonstall can optimistically observe that what keeps him going is that "sometimes a diamond hidden within the spoiled honeypots of odoriferous bureaucratic goo."

From cases of defending serial killers to protecting children from parents who refused to provide medical care to dying children ("Parents may be free to become martyrs themselves, but it does not follow that they are free to make martyrs of their children") to free speech cases and anti-nuke protests, to opposing the "war on drugs," Saltonstall battles with a system that is racist, elitist, class-dominated, and in which many police are willing to perjure themselves simply to get a conviction against anyone. Saltonstall has a special enmity for corrupt police who he says "will lie like rugs, the deep pile, wall-to-wall shag variety, both on the witness stand and in their written reports if they think they need to do that to ensure a conviction" of someone regardless of their innocence or guilt. Worse still—they are self-righteous about their behavior. "Lying is a well-known axis of cop culture."

...the need to continue, even in a small way, defending the defenseless in an outlaw world.

Even judges ("whose inflated egos dwarf their legal judgment...while emitting vibes of condescension toward defense lawyers") do not escape his wrath, notably those who are prejudicial to women and minorities who are more than willing "to screw your client and you personally if the opportunity arises." He admits that there are some excellent judges who are bright and impartial, but in state courts especially, many are political operatives, big money contributors or bundlers, hacks or hangers-on whose appointments have little to do with merit.

Saltonstall had to move west for health reasons upon his retirement from the legal profession, and after he and his wife moved to Tucson, he began volunteering with Humane Borders. His years of resupplying water stations out in the desert comprise the epilogue to this readable volume. Continuing his theme of supporting those who cannot defend themselves.

Stephen Saltonstall refilling a barrel. Photo: Kirk Astroth

A hike in the desert. Photo: Holly Knight

I recently rode along with Stephen on the Arivaca water run because I wanted a chance to talk to him about his life and his book. He had just come back from a hip injury that kept him out of doing water runs for the past eight months. In addition to being a humble and engaging friend, he also told us about a chapter that the publishers demanded be removed from his book along with all his photos. If you have a chance, catch a ride with Stephen on his next trip to the desert. He will share many heart-warming and heart-rending stories, including this one that ends his book:

"As I opened a water barrel, I found a five-peso coin that a migrant had left on it: a gesture that brought tears to my eyes and renewed my faith in the power of compassion and the need to continue, even in a small way, defending the defenseless in an outlaw world."

Stephen Saltonstall's memoir *Renegade for Justice* is available for purchase through the University of Kansas Press.

Bear Witness to the Human Experience

by Carmen Hull

The ID run started as most, fresh morning air, small talk, a stop at the general store for gas at Three Points…. a beautiful morning in the desert.

Anticipation of a hike in the Coronado National Park was both exciting and daunting. It was exploration at its finest, crawling and creeping about a rocky 26° descent through the mesquite, ocotillos and other sharp and seemingly angry pointed flora protecting the desert from animal encroachment. After a mile of descent, we happened upon what appeared to be a human bone. I wasn't mentally prepared for such a discovery; a wave of shock and sorrow slowly blanketed me. Joel did the work of taking the picture comparing it to a water bottle and getting the GPS coordinates. Sadness seeped through me as we continued our trek. The little cloud of emotion grew larger and heavier and we went back to the truck and made the ride home; tired, introspective, and sad. My day wore on, with chores, and relaxation, but I could not shake the profound feelings of sadness. I meditated a bit, and allowed the grief to envelop me. My mind was filled with images of a poor soul, walking through miles of rocks and inclines and descents and the razor sharp plants, alone, not knowing where the journey would end.

The haunting images filled my mind of a human being , collapsed from thirst, hunger and exposure, with the realization that this was the end of the time on earth, to die alone, in a strange and remote
land.

Godspeed, my fellow human. I am just so sorry that it ended this way.

Crosses honoring migrants who have died in the desert, put up by Alvaro Enciso. Photo: Katie Grierson

Humane Borders flag over a cholla plant. Photo: Katie Grierson

Relief Rains

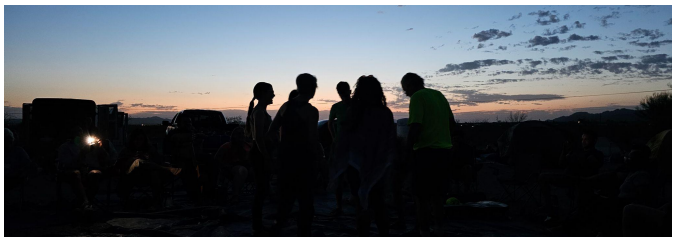
by Katie Grierson

I want to write to you today about the ironwoods in bloom. How in May, the tree erupts into brilliant shades of violet, the only time they drop their evergreen leaves. How the summer rains can bring these green leaves back. There's something that brings me back to the desert ironwood, and the wonder of seeing a surprise of purple in the harshness of the Sonoran desert. As an intern for Humane Borders, I've witnessed heartbreak. Families stuck in limbo in Nogales, people in shackles standing in lines, and District judges telling me that while policy hasn't shifted that much, our cruelty has. Cruelty seems to be the only word for it—just this year, fifty seven people have been found in the Tucson corridor. In our work, we spend a lot of time discussing the difficulties and suffering that occurs when people attempt to cross the world's deadliest land migration route. The desert is inhospitable. The desert will kill you if you let it. But in my time here, I've come to believe that the desert desperately wants us to survive. Why else would the barrel cactus lean south? Why else would yucca and agave hold water at their bases for days after monsoons?

This summer, I've seen cruelty. I have also seen depths of compassion: the volunteers at Humane Borders who go out into the desert for hours to maintain our blue water barrels, how No More Deaths | No Más Muertes decorates water jugs with crosses, saguaro, and messages of love, the summer camp hosted by Salvavision where kids jumped and giggled, the interns at Borderland Community Alliance who are leading guitar lessons at migrant shelters in Nogales. The desert is not cruel, instead, it is alive with love. May it be our love that helps creates a new world.

When We Walk The Migrant Trail, We Remember

by Jamie Wilson



Walkers dancing at night in the desert. Photo: Kat Rodriguez

Tobacco, copal and sage. These are some of the sacred medicines that Kat Rodriguez is mixing by hand as a small group gathers to prepare the ritual prayer ties for the annual Migrant Trail—a 75-mile walk from the U.S.-Mexico border at Sásabe, Sonora to Tucson, Arizona, to bear witness to the preventable tragedy of migrant deaths. Red squares of cotton fabric have been cut and prepared to receive the generous pinches of fragrant tobacco. We also have a blue tie for the sky, green for the earth, and yellow for the sun. For many years, Maria Padilla, who is of Mayo and Mexican descent, has prepared the sacred ties for the walk.

As we settle in for our task, the energy is mixed—the joyful camaraderie of our group is punctuated by the sobering knowledge that since we walked last year, the remains of 155 individuals have been recovered in the Arizona borderlands, and over the past two decades the Migrant Trail has carried thousands of prayer ties—one delicately wrapped pinch of medicine for each person whose remains were found in the Arizona borderlands. In addition, there is a white prayer tie for the thousands who are still missing.

Marco Hernandez was one of many missing migrants symbolized by a white prayer tie for over a decade, after he disappeared in 2008 while crossing the border into Arizona. His story is one of many that Kat Rodriguez has shared with me over the years. Kat, who has helped organize the Walk since 2004, worked for over a decade in Tucson documenting human rights abuses in the borderlands and helping to match recovered remains to the missing persons reports. She came to know Marco's son during his long search for his father. In 2020, Marco's remains were finally discovered and identified. It was Kat who ultimately delivered his ashes to his wife, bringing a measure of closure after years of uncertainty. Marco is just one of the many missing migrants whom Kat has helped to identify and return home, an experience she describes as utterly heartbreaking.

As we prepare prayer ties, we think of people like Marco and his family; these are then carried at the front of the line. On the first day, at the border wall, which divides the traditional O'Odham lands, the prayer ties are unfurled to receive a blessing, and are smudged with sage or cedar. Their long chain is another visual reminder of the border's extensive damage. In fact, the Tohono O'Odham nation sits in the Sasabe Corridor, one of the deadliest corridors for border crossers, many of whom are Indigenous to the Americas. It is not uncommon for migrants and asylum seekers to speak an Indigenous language as their first language. There is a profound tragedy in the fact that so many Indigenous people are dying on O'Odham land, often within the sight of Mount Babouqivari, the spiritual home of the Tohono O'Odham People.

We also carry crosses with the names of people whose remains have been found in the Arizona borderlands. Many read "Desconocido/a" ("Unknown"), which is a misnomer because no human is unknown. Like Marco's father, the crosses symbolize a person who is deeply missed. As we come into the water stops along the walk, we call out the names on our crosses, responding to each name with "presente" (present). This ritual is symbolic. It seeks to remember and recognize those who have died when crossing. For the "desconocidos/as", it creates a time and a space for a person whose loved ones have been unable to perform the rituals of mourning when a body is present (for me, assuming their spirits are aware of these actions, it is one small way of asking for their forgiveness).

For many years, the walk has begun at the Catholic church in Sásabe, Sonora—one of the small border towns where thousands of migrants, many from Central America and beyond, have likely rested before undertaking the final, treacherous leg of their journey. While the Migrant Trail is not affiliated with any religion, it is deeply rooted in ritual and spirituality. We are a spiritually diverse group, but we recognize that many who cross the border come from Christian and Indigenous traditions. In Sásabe, we receive a blessing from the priest, pause to pray and hold space in the very places where countless others likely have prayed before their crossing. These rituals center the lives, families, and spirits of those who have been forced to make the dangerous journey through the borderlands, and who ultimately perished there. While we walk to honor those who have died, we also walk for all who have suffered the trauma of migration—and because we believe no one should be forced to risk or lose their life simply because migration became their only option. No family should be forced to have their loved ones disappeared by our border policies.

Our walk is not meant to replicate the migrant experience, but it does take us through the same rugged terrain many have crossed. Even more than 50 miles north of the border—well past the highway's Border Patrol checkpoint—we see signs of those who have come before us. Each day brings reminders of the immense hardships migrants face—the long distances, blisters, thick dust, intense heat by day, and chilling cold at night all take their toll. Most mornings, we rise by 5 a.m. to walk roughly 12 miles; on our longest day, we begin at 3 a.m. to cover 16 miles before the midday sun becomes dangerous. But unlike our migrant brethren, we walk freely without fear of apprehension. Furthermore, each of the obstacles we encounter on the walk can become life-threatening for migrants—a twisted ankle, dehydration, or minor injury can mean being left behind—with devastating consequences. *Continued on page 7...*

The support we receive on the Migrant Trail embodies the kind of compassion we believe all migrants should experience and demonstrates our shared human capacity to offer care and solidarity. Along the way, we care for each other in teams, and our allies bring food, water, and provide medical evacuations—an all-too-common need in this harsh environment. The further we walk, the clearer it becomes that we could never physically carry enough water for the journey. This year, by our fifth day, we had walked about 60 miles of the 75-mile journey. On that afternoon, we were camped on the outskirts of Tucson in the backyard of a church. It was hot and dusty and most walkers were suffering from at least one of a combination of blisters, heat rash or simple exhaustion. But then, like clockwork, the Humane Borders workers arrive with the water truck to fill our water jugs, providing us with anywhere from 50 to 100 gallons depending on the temperatures and size of our group. When supplies permit, Humane Borders relieves us with a shower from the loud, lovely, generator-powered water tank. This daily rinse renews and revives us, and, once again reminds us that the Migrant Trail does not mimic the migrant border crossing experience, which lacks such loving services. The refills and the showers are, however, reflective of the life-saving efforts and loving kindness that Humane Borders provides in the borderlands and the communities of care that our respective members seek to build.

Our communities are further solidified during these hot afternoon visits. Migrant Trail walkers and the Humane Borders workers have forged friendships and alliances over the years. To commune with Humane Borders, and all who come out to assist us makes me hopeful for a different future for our migrant siblings, who are forced to cross the border, and for the communities we can build together. Amber Naylor, who walked for the first time in 2025, described the Walk as "one of the kindest temporary communities [she had] ever experienced". Our temporary community that has been built over 22 years exists within the larger family of humanitarians and justice warriors in the borderlands.

During The Migrant Trail, walkers hold crosses to honor those who have passed or have been disappeared Photo: Kat Rodriguez

As we near Tucson and the end of the Walk, our community broadens even further. On the last day, additional community members join us, walking and/or in a ceremony at Kennedy Park on Tucson's westside. As we walk on the highway into town, we count the Border Patrol vehicles as they come and go. The white Wackenhut buses used to transport migrants and asylum seekers are a regular sight as well. The militarized presence reminds us of why we are walking. This year, as we entered Kennedy Park, Natividad Cano received us with a blessing. Nati has walked with us for many years and is originally from Sásabe, a community now divided by the wall. On one occasion, a man pulled over to talk with us. He suspected we were walking for migrants, given the crosses that we carry. He was from the Tohono O'Odham Nation, where a man had died on his land while crossing. He and his family had prepared a prayer tie for the man and he had been carrying it, as if knowing that it belonged in a nearby ceremony. On that day, if memory serves, he asked if we would take his prayer tie. Indeed we would. As we carry the crosses and prayer ties for migrants, we symbolically finish the journey that they were unable to complete.

Then, just as we had begun, surrounded by the larger Tucson Community, we end with a press conference and ceremony at Kennedy Park. The press event seeks to inform a broader audience of our motives and the deadly realities of current border policies, we hope to spark awareness and action. We also share the stories of those who have died crossing. Despite the daunting reality and somber nature of our walk, we proceed with hope. We continue to hope that a critical mass of knowledge about the consequences of our border and immigration policies will inspire the public to demand an end to deadly deterrence strategies. We also strongly believe that the community modeling of hospitality and care, can help to advocate for the creation of more humane and just systems.

Finally, the crosses are placed in a circle at the center of our ceremony, which includes a foot washing so that those who walk for justice may remember why they walk and continue to have the strength for the journey. Community supporters like Humane Borders accompany us. It is at this ceremony, in community, that we bid farewell to our crosses and prayer ties.

As a citizen of the U.S., responsible for their deaths, I pray for forgiveness from the spirits associated with each tie. Mostly, I pray that as the ties are surrendered soon thereafter to sacred fire that each spirit and each family finds some comfort knowing that they are not forgotten.

To learn more about The Migrant Trail please visit https://azmigranttrail.com/.