

"USA: Defined by how we treat immigrants"

That's one of the signs displayed at a large roadside rally for refugee rights in July in McAllen,Texas. Another was: "*We are all human*," and another "*We are all in this together*." The rally was called by several South Texas Immigrants' Rights organizations in response to an announcement of a planned anti-immigrant protest in front of the Immigration and Detention Center. Nearly 200 people came to stand with the peace crowd; the anti-immigrant protest never materialized. A few of us with the Pastors for Peace caravan to Cuba had arrived in McAllen hours before and were able to participate. Later, our Texas host groups put together an information session to update us on the border refugee crisis and their response.

Representatives from People for Peace & Justice (McAllen), Holy Spirit Peace & Justice Community (McAllen), Manhattan Alliance for Peace & Justice (Kansas), LUPE (La Union del Pueblo Entero, Rio Grande Valley), South Texas Human Rights Center (Falfurrias), the International Action Center (Houston), and United Farm Workers shared with us highlights of their work in community organizing and humanitarian response. It was truly an eye-opening experience to learn of the wisdom, dedication and spirit of these activists.

Among the many connections we made, one project in particular stood out in which people far from Texas could lend assistance. The South Texas Human Rights Center (whose mission is "to end death and suffering on the Texas/México border through community initiatives") creates water stations in the desert that prevent heat-related deaths. According to their literature:

> "Death of border crossers is a known outcome of migration enforcement and has a long history. Migrant deaths in Texas are concentrated in Brooks County where 129 migrant bodies were recovered last year [2012]. The U.S. Border Patrol Falfurrias checkpoint located in Brooks County is some 60 miles north of the U.S.-Mexico border. Migrants are dying as they cross the harsh desert terrain to avoid this checkpoint."

And… deaths are increasing. The water station project is maintained by volunteers from the Center, working in collaboration with local ranchers (whose role is to monitor the stations and report when water needs re-supply). The cost of construction and placement of a station is $50. Sustaining one station costs $20 per month. As of July, there were 39 stations functioning in Brooks County. Peninsula Peace & Justice has opted to join in this effort and seeks the support of our community. If you would like to make a donation, of any size, checks may be made payable to Peninsula Peace & Justice (PPJ), and mailed to P.O. Box 1515, Blue Hill, Maine 04614. Please indicate on your check: Texas Water Stations. Donations to PPJ are not tax deductible.

More **information** is available at:
SouthTexasHumanRights.org
lupenet.org (La Union del Pueblo Entero)
afgj.org (Alliance for Global Justice)
ifconews.org (IFCO/Pastors for Peace)

Thank you for your support.

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