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We Have Something to Say: Ideas and Mobilization in the Migrant Solidarity Movement

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We Have Something to Say:
Ideas and Mobilization in the Migrant Solidarity Movement

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Honors Thesis in Latin American Studies
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Abstract

Despite the existence of strong anti-immigrant sentiments across the United States, a movement in solidarity with undocumented migrants has emerged in southern Arizona and other heavily traveled border regions. Based on participatory research with the organization No More Deaths / No Más Muertes, this thesis works towards an understanding of the ways in which this migrant solidarity movement reframes migration within a highly oppositional ideational space. My research suggests that, when examining movements that strongly reject accepted viewpoints, it is important to understand framing not only through analysis that examines a movement or organization as a whole, but also to focus attention the ways individuals build worldviews and make personal decisions to act as part of an oppositional movement. Engaging with literature on social movement framing of contentious issues, I propose the concept of a "personal framing process" through which individuals in the migrant solidarity movement explain and justify their actions.

Acknowledgments

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Introduction

“We decided as a group that we wanted to get involved with comprehensive immigration reform because we have something to say.”

“Something that other people aren't saying.”

“You've seen this yourself, that once you get out and bounce around those trucks and put some water out in key spots, it changes how you think. You know what's going on on the ground here. We don't know everything that's going on, but we know how people are suffering. And we see people have died here.”

- Art and Mary, No More Deaths volunteers

I think our volunteer programs turn non-activists into activists and they turn activists into better activists, because you get experience that makes you feel like you have something to say, either individually or collectively.

- Aaron, No More Deaths volunteer

Volunteers like Art and Mary spend thousands of hours each year hiking desert trails in southern Arizona, working through the group No More Deaths/No Más Muertes in solidarity with migrants crossing the US-Mexico border to become undocumented migrants. Through their time in the desert, as well as their interactions with migrants, No More Deaths volunteers come to develop intimate understandings of border politics – “something to say” – that illuminate the reality of migration policy from a perspective not often seen in the U.S. political spectrum. However, these understandings do not arise spontaneously – instead, individuals themselves generate them from within the context of passionate social movement politics in which they are imbedded. This thesis interrogates the ways understandings are shaped, locating itself expressly in the context of migrant solidarity struggles on the U.S. – Mexico border in southern Arizona and northern Sonora.

From its political and social implications to the various movements attempting to shape meanings for the individuals crossing the US-Mexico border, the struggle focused on Mexico's northern border is a recurring theme in national news and political discourse. One need only remember the import of the immigrant rights mobilizations that shook the nation in May 2006, or the flurry of news coverage that surrounded the Minuteman Project's media-friendly formation in 2005 to recognize the way in which struggles over immigration and "the border" (commonly understood as the boundary between the US and Mexico) constitute a serious topic of contentious domestic politics. Beyond the United States, migrant issues are important political topics everywhere from Greece, where a hunger strike by hundreds of immigrants won significant changes in immigration policy in March 2009, to China, where millions of rural citizens constitute a "floating population," disregarding official policies restricting domestic movement.

The confrontation over issues surrounding freedom of movement represents not only a struggle over territory, space, and the bodies of migrants heading towards what they believe to be a better life, but also a struggle over identity, meaning, and the nation-state itself. Movements made up of migrants or individuals working in solidarity with migrant struggles the world over have come to understand individual freedom of movement as a human right that, in many ways, undermines the nature of the nation state as rightfully controlling its borders. While struggles over migration take place worldwide, the US-Mexico border region – particularly the corridor of Sonoran desert land in southern Arizona – experiences some of the most visible conflicts, as well as sophisticated efforts at territorial control through militarization. The US-Mexico border

remains one of the premier boundaries between the “developed” and “underdeveloped” worlds, and is in many ways a testing ground for border policies around the world.

During the 1990s and 2000s, patterns of migration across the US-Mexico border changed substantially, shifting migration routes from urban zones to rural corridors, causing increases in deaths of people attempting to cross the border. At the same time, federal legislation governing immigration changed significantly with the absorption of the Immigration and Nationalization Service by the Department of Homeland Security, part of a broader reframing of immigration and border control/militarization as an issue of national security. As a result of this broad conjunction of political shifts and changes in migration patterns, the border has become perhaps an even more charged terrain.

While the immigrant mobilizations of 2006 were probably the most visible eruption of immigrant issues onto the national stage, the border has been home to various movements and conflicts of meaning since its inception. Although less visible than the 2006 immigrant rights protests, the long-term work of solidarity activists in the border region deserves theoretical attention, as solidarity movements have had considerable success at mobilizing around controversial ideas in the field of migrant rights. This research examines the perspectives activists have developed to frame border issues through an in-depth analysis of the migrant solidarity movement that has emerged in southern Arizona. My research focuses on the organization “No More Deaths / No Más Muertes,” a social movement organization primarily made up of white U.S. citizens, endeavoring to work in solidarity with migrants crossing the US-Mexico border. Through their work in solidarity with migrants, No More Deaths volunteers take actions that illustrate a highly oppositional set of meanings, reframing both migration and the concept

of US citizenship. Research on No More Deaths' work, especially the ways in which it creates and spread new conceptions of the border, is theoretically interesting not only because of the organization's position at the forefront of border struggles, but also because it illuminates processes of radicalization within social movements.

In looking at the work of building and transforming ideas, my research answers one central question: How do members of a privileged group come to adopt highly oppositional ideas that press them toward work in solidarity with marginalized groups? My work is based on a semester of participant-observation research with No More Deaths, including participation in multiple areas of work and attendance at general and working group meetings, as well as life-history interviews with six long-term No More Deaths volunteers and a survey of short-term volunteers who worked with the organization in the spring of 2010.

Chapter 1 describes the *coyuntura* (conjunction) of border politics and policies relevant to the Southern Arizona region, orienting the reader in the environment in which the migrant solidarity movement acts. After introducing the places No More Deaths works in, I move on to an introduction of the structures and functions of the organization itself. Finally, this chapter serves as an introduction to critical and popular perspectives on the borderlands and migration, focusing on the concept of citizenship and changing enforcement policies.

Chapter 2 serves as an introduction to the theoretical perspectives that provide the framework for my research, asking how social movements build collective ideas that legitimize action. In this chapter, I review literature addressing idea formation and framing processes within movements, with a focus on the ways in which framing

functions as a process that permits individuals enmeshed in a collective action context to generate new ideas that permit, promote, or necessitate contentious action. Drawing from social movements scholarship, this chapter creates space for analysis of the ways in which framing processes affect the ways individuals think about their world.

Building on the local and theoretical frameworks constructed in the first two chapters, Chapter 3 asks where the migrant solidarity movement is coming from. In this chapter, I offer an analysis of No More Deaths' place within the migrant solidarity movement in Southern Arizona and the alternative ways of looking at migration that this movement uses to legitimize its work. My analysis of articulations of alternate views of the border region is interwoven with the stories shared by my interview subjects, which serve as case studies demonstrating the processes through which individuals come to develop pro-migrant viewpoints.

These same viewpoints lead No More Deaths volunteers to take action in solidarity with migrants crossing the US-Mexico border. In order to examine these actions, Chapter 4 asks what the migrant solidarity movement is doing. As well as offering a basic understanding of No More Deaths' framework for direct action, I also examine the ways in which this work takes on ideational power, becoming not only physical interventions in the border conflict, but also acts that stem from specific backgrounds. In order to examine the ways in which action and ideas are linked, I address the actions that No More Deaths and the Migrant Solidarity Movement take as products of the ways in which the political situation in the border region is problematized and framed by movement participants.

In my final chapter, I address the ways in which my research is relevant to broader scholarly debate, arguing that the migrant solidarity movement displays important and useful characteristics that make it a useful example to be examined in the context of other developing movements for social inclusion. The ways in which individuals interact with framing processes in order to change their own personal worldviews is a key under-examined concept in the low-level work that leads to the growth of a movement, and deserves significantly more theoretical attention. This is especially true of movements that – like the migrant solidarity movement – run counter to cultural currents by attempting to foster inclusion in the face of widely accepted and legitimized exclusion.

Topographies: Reading the Lay of the Land

Understanding the structure and history of No More Deaths / No Más Muertes as an organization, as well as the terrain that it works in, is a crucial prerequisite for any analysis of the people involved in the movement and the ways in which they configure their understandings of the US-Mexico border. This chapter outlines some of the physical and human topography of that space, and begins to question the ways in which the border is constructed and how various groups in the southern Arizona border region¹ look at the terrain they work in and on. After offering an introduction of the space No More Deaths works in, I later move on to describe the form and function of the organization itself, as well as offering a brief historical account of the recent developments that have made this narrow corridor one of the most important places in the debate over migration. In later chapters, this case study will inform my analysis of the migrant solidarity movement and efforts of individuals who are not the targets of border enforcement to reframe narratives of migration and border enforcement.

Spaces of Engagement

The spaces in which No More Deaths works – from the desert migrants cross on their way north to the spaces where deported migrants ponder the possibility of a return voyage – are crucial elements of their work. No study of the border should ignore its physical characteristics, and one essay outlining the political ecology of border

¹ The Tucson Sector, in Border Patrol parlance.

enforcement goes so far as to write the border landscape as an essential actor in border drama (Sundberg 2011). For my own research, context is everything. For No More Deaths volunteers, that context is the terrain of the Sonoran desert south of Tucson, Arizona, migrant shelters south of the border in Nogales, Sonora, and the bureaucratic maze of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) complaints process.

The formally separated cities of Nogales, Sonora and Nogales, Arizona (often referred to as *ambos Nogales*) are less of a study in cultural hybridity than a primer that visually demonstrates the ways in which international borders are crucially relevant to individual lives while being nothing more than a line drawn on a map. Looking out the window of a run-down apartment situated on a hill just three blocks north of the crossing point, the physical location that is the US-Mexico border may be most appropriately described as confusing. Following Interstate 19 towards the flags flying at the crossing point in the bottom of the valley, the dividing line seems unclear. Earlier, when Ambos Nogales was simply “Nogales,” the US-Mexico rail line that passes north to Tucson and the rest of the US railroad network had a station there that straddled the border line, and that history of a permeable international divide is still visible in the ways roadmaps seem to fall apart once they reach the border, dissolving into spaghetti and dead ends.

As the closest border town to Tucson, Nogales is the site of No More Deaths’ abuse documentation work. Many migrants are deported to Nogales, whether the deportees are recent migrants apprehended by the Border Patrol or lateral deportations² of people arrested as far away as California. Here, No More Deaths volunteers provide

² The term lateral deportation refers to the practice of transporting and deporting migrants far from their point of capture, in an effort to separate them from their *coyote* and prevent additional attempts to cross.

services to migrants in the form of cell-phone calls to family members in the United States of Mexico, the return of belongings seized by the Border Patrol, and interviews documenting abuses suffered during Border Patrol detentions.

If you pull your eye out of the morass that is the crossing point and look west towards the rise on the other side of the valley, the border is different – stark and unmistakable. On one side, a barren gravel road patrolled every fifteen minutes by white and green off-road pickup trucks. On the other side, cinder-block houses push up against a sharply cut line in the ground that curves over the hill. Between the houses and the road is the fence – a fifteen-foot green metal barrier with an overhanging mesh top that arches over the roofs of the houses.

The fence, visibly oriented to the south but fuzzy at the point of crossing, is the immediate terrain of a larger border conflict, one face of a larger phenomenon. Two babies born less than a mile from each other, in hospitals on the north or south sides of the line, can expect different possibilities in their later lives. The crucial difference, of course, is the direction the fence was pointing. The child born on the United States side of the fence will be able to apply for a passport that will allow them to travel freely beyond the fence, while a child born in one of the houses leaning on the fence itself does not have a similar luxury. Any trips they take north of the fence will be short and monitored, and if they do not cross back in time, they will be given the label that accurately describes the life they will live: Illegal.

A mile or two to the west of the sharp divide in the hills around Nogales, in the desert where people born south of the fence routinely try their luck at becoming illegal, the border takes on another aspect entirely. Far from the architectural confusion of

downtown Nogales, with its mishmash of import-export shops and tangled highway jam-packed with eighteen-wheelers heading north to US markets, the border dissolves into a different kind of confusion, although it has just as much to say. As the dull green fence arches over the hills outside Nogales, it suddenly ceases to exist, stopping sharply as if it had suddenly ran into a stronger barrier, one running perpendicular along the north-south axis. Beyond this line, the dissonance of the downtown border zone is smoothed into the continuity of the desert landscape. Around forty miles west of Nogales at the Sasabe crossing point, the limits of the fence as an idea are even more readily visible. The crossing point lies in the bottom of a three mile-wide basin, flat at the bottom and enclosed to the east and west by jagged mountains. Here, the fence is made of twenty-foot high concrete and steel piles about six inches in diameter, and arcs a rust-brown swath across the valley floor before stopping short of the mountain peaks on either side. From the road on the Mexican side of the border, the fence looks less like an impenetrable barrier between two opposed sides and more like a vain and abortive attempt at a southwestern Great Wall.

The 40 miles of border land that lie between the eastern end of the wall in Sasabe and its westernmost point in Nogales are marked only by the line of dirt patrol roads and barbed-wire fencing erected by ranchers on both sides of the border. Including the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Reserve, national forest land, and private ranch land on both sides of the border, this area is part of the most heavily trafficked corridors through which migrants travel north. Here, the border is not so much a line drawn in the sand and scrub as a broad zone or corridor. Beginning south of the border in staging areas where migrants connect with to their guides and make final preparations for the hike north, the

border construct with obvious tangible impacts on undocumented migrants extends four days' walk north into the United States to dozens of pickup points along rural roads, sometimes as far north as the town of Green Valley, a retirement community along I-19, 40 miles north of the border in Nogales. Although the US-Mexico boundary is not clearly demarcated here, its invisibility does not make it any less real. From the border line on up, its reality is reinforced by the ubiquitous presence of the Border Patrol, found hiking migrant trails, on horseback, flying helicopter patrols, and – most of all – in the green-and-white “dogcatcher vans” that have become symbolic of border enforcement throughout the region. If the border doesn't exist precisely on the line, it is present in the checkpoints on northbound roads that can be used as pickup points for migrants.

This corridor of desert roughly 40 miles wide, bordered by Sasabe and Tohono O'odham lands to the west and Interstate 19 and Nogales, Arizona to the east (see Appendix 1), is the focus of No More Deaths' desert aid work. Work in the desert takes the form of direct and indirect humanitarian aid to migrants, by offering food and medical help to migrants encountered on the trail, as well as strategically depositing caches of one-gallon water jugs along migrant trails. A network of these trails, ranch roads, and cow paths crisscrosses this zone between Sasabe and I-19. Few are marked on official maps, although they sometimes follow dry washes or arroyos for miles at a time. More often, they twist around geographic features, split as if for no reason, and reconnect one or two miles further north – or never again.

Whether or not a route is commonly traveled can be determined more often than not by the presence of fresh footprints – barring that, a rough archaeology of migrant trails can be attempted by examining the refuse present alongside the trail. Plastic bottles

take years to break down, even under the desert sun, but a new bottle can be recognized by its colorful, unfaded label. In dumping points further north, where migrants change out of walking clothes and into a spare set carried in their backpacks before being picked up by contacts within the United States, it is sometimes possible to dig through layers of accumulated clothing, backpacks, and other refuse, and examine the strata as a continuous record of years of migration history.

The archaeological metaphor for thinking about the desert in southern Arizona can be extended to the bodies found there by ranchers, hikers, the Border Patrol, and No More Deaths volunteers. The count of officially recovered remains in the Tucson sector, unofficially totaled by the Tucson Coalición de Derechos Humanos (Human Rights Coalition) stands at 253 in fiscal year 2009. Derechos Humanos' count registers 2,104 deaths on the Arizona-Sonora border between 2000 and 2010 (Derechos Humanos, 2010). These are only the recovered bodies, and many more remain undiscovered, buried by flash floods or lying exposed on a peak just a few hundred feet from the trail leading north. While migrant deaths have been a fact of life along the US-Mexico border since the first immigration controls forced migrants to begin crossing clandestinely, the prevalence of deaths in the desert is a relatively new phenomenon. Previously, when migration was centered around urban crossing points like San Diego, crossings occurred en masse, and dangers to migrants were primarily related to traffic on highway crossing routes and the perennial danger of kidnapping or abuse by the *coyote* paid to smuggle a migrant across. As migration routes shifted westward into rural territory, however, crossings became more and more dangerous, with migrants risking their lives crossing mountainous or desert regions, or swimming the All American Canal near Mexicali and

Calexico, California (Ellingwood 2004). Along the Arizona-Sonora border, crossing entails a walk of up to four days through mountainous desert. In summer heat, it is not possible to carry enough water for a four-day hike without becoming dehydrated, and most migrants come woefully unprepared (see Humane Borders maps in Appendix 1). Small details like discarded high heels tossed to the side of the trail suggest the lack of preparation of many migrants on their way north.

For the direct humanitarian aid component of No More Deaths' work, knowledge of the terrain migrants cross is absolutely necessary, and volunteers have collectively developed significant expertise navigating migrant trails, recognizing tracks, and determining whether or not an area is heavily used. Migration flows vary rapidly, sometimes shifting from week to week and month to month based on Border Patrol activity or other factors, and for an organization that attempts to go where the need is greatest and migrants are most likely to find themselves lost and dehydrated, experience and knowledge are key. In order to cover ground, transport water and keep track of drop points, No More Deaths employs donated off-road vehicles and GPS units programmed with the results of periodic scouting surveys, carried out in order to find new trails, determine use, and provide planning for changing drop points. It is worth making the comparison here to other groups such as Samaritans that also work on border humanitarian aid. Rather than using one-gallon jugs, these groups rely on fixed water stations with 55-gallon drums. The fact that these water stations are stationary and must be accessible from an access road limits their ability to respond to changing trends. No More Deaths, on the other hand, prides itself in its flexibility. As an organization whose budget could be covered by a rounding error in the Border Patrol's budget for the same

region, No More Deaths relies heavily on the knowledge of long-term volunteers, based on thousands of hours walking migrant trails, sometimes ranging as far south as the border itself.

Organizing Structures

Founded in 2004 by groups of faith leaders in Tucson, who had previously been engaged with work on migration and the border, No More Deaths is a humanitarian organization that attempts to directly confront militarized border enforcement policy through humanitarian aid to migrants crossing the desert terrain of the Nogales-Sasabe corridor in southern Arizona. No More Deaths' roots lie in previous faith-based organizing around migration in Arizona.³ One of the other notable influences on No More Deaths (and other related border aid organizations) is the concept of "civil initiative," a counterpart to civil disobedience developed by Jim Corbett, a co-founder of the sanctuary movement (Corbett 1991, also see Tomsho 1987). Civil initiative emphasizes positive civilian action to uphold higher legal codes (such as international law, particularly that relating to human rights) when they are ignored by states, providing a framework of principles for groups who take the work of the state into their own hands by upholding international codes and supporting human rights. Particularly important to this framework is the concept of transparency – rather than behaving as vigilantes, groups working

³ One of the most recognizable founders of the organization is John Fife, a retired Presbyterian minister and leader in the Sanctuary Movement of the early 1980s, when congregations organized an underground railroad of sorts to provide legal and material aid – sanctuary – to refugees from El Salvador who were unable to obtain asylum or refugee status in the United States.

through civil initiative should be open and accountable to their actions, even when these actions may be illegal.

Since its founding, No More Deaths has focused on the establishment of a continuous humanitarian presence in the desert, although its projects have branched out significantly since its founding, expanding from border camps and direct humanitarian aid to also include abuse documentation. This work has been based on a multid denominational Christian faith-based approach since its inception, and for some time humanitarian camps in the desert were known as “Arks of the Covenant” (History and Mission, 2004), although they are now known within the organization by their location – “Byrd camp” or “Ruby camp.” In 2008, No More Deaths became a ministry of the Tucson Unitarian Universalist congregation, and the Unitarians in Tucson and otherwise have provided much of the organization’s funding since that time. While a significant fraction of the group is religious, the faith-based aspect of the work is not pervasive within the organization – several of the core volunteers I interviewed are nonreligious, and it is fair to say that concern for migrants is the organization’s unifying principle.

As an organization, No More Deaths is influenced by the trend of horizontal, consensus-based organizing structures that proliferated with the anti-nuclear movement of the 1970s, drawing heavily from the structures of Quaker meetings (Graeber 235). Philosophically, this style of organizing opens the group up so that no one individual or group of individuals makes decisions, and all members of the group are intended to have an equal voice. In practice, consensus-based organizing operates through round-table deliberations in which any one individual can block a proposal, and decisions worked

through until they are acceptable to all members of the group. In the case of No More Deaths, while the principles of horizontal organizing are visible and often referred to in conversations about the processes through which decisions are made, there are several obstacles to a truly horizontal system of decision making, including the deference given to senior members of the group and the tendency of those who are most involved to be the ones who make most decisions. The most institutionally recognized in-group of involved volunteers are the two or three volunteers who take on the critical work of coordinating events and making sure that there is a structure for volunteers to engage with in return for a small stipend to pay for rent and food. While coordinators hold no more power than other members of the group, they tend to be among the people who are most involved in the organization, and probably have the most knowledge of what is going on in all aspects of the group as a whole at any given time.

Decisions that affect the entire group are made in weekly meetings that attract 30-40 people. Smaller decisions and most of the work that goes into the management of a humanitarian organization take place in working group meetings that draw between three and fifteen volunteers, where the individuals who are committed to specific aspects of the organization's work organize their own work relatively autonomously. This structure allows the organization to be organized without formalized hierarchies and remain flexible across multiple projects that change from time to time – no one person is charged with oversight over the group as a whole, and individual working groups are expected to manage their own projects without the need for guidance from above.

Although other working groups are created and dissolved as new issues come up, the two working groups most central to NMD's work are the Desert aid Working group

and the Abuse documentation working group. The Desert aid group coordinates humanitarian aid work in the desert south of Tucson, as well the various full-time desert camps that are open during summer months and spring break, while the Abuse documentation group coordinates work done in Nogales, Sonora, Mexico. Other working groups that come together as needed and later dissolve include working groups to plan yearly programs such as the Spring Break volunteer weeks, negotiating teams who do legal work for NMD volunteers, groups who organize speaking tours or other promotional events, and others.

As well as the project-based working group structure, there exist several permanent but lower-priority groups, such as the media team and financial working group that work to facilitate behind the scenes issues. Finally, Phoenix No More Deaths is a somewhat-separate organization operating a hundred miles north in Phoenix. While the Phoenix branch of No More Deaths is an organization in its own right, its role in direct border work is limited to support work, supplying donated water and organizing visibility campaigns around issues that both groups agree on as important.

Although decisions are made by consensus, core members – including paid coordinators – tend to drive decision making, because they submit the proposals that shape the group's direction. In light of this structure, and because the most involved members of No More Deaths tend to be among the most committed to its work, the group of volunteers who I interviewed were drawn nearly exclusively from the core of long-term volunteers committed to the work No More Deaths is doing. Two were paid coordinators at the time of the interviews, and one had served as a paid coordinator in the past. At the time when I interviewed them, the others were regulars at various meetings

and in the desert or Nogales, dedicating much of their time to the organization. For all of the volunteers I worked closely with, No More Deaths was more than an after-work or weekend activity. Instead, it had replaced wage labor as their main time and energy sink.

Despite being among the most committed members of No More Deaths, my informants span most of the diversity of the organization. NMD is, for a variety of reasons, an organization of white U.S. citizens. Yet my sample still represents diversity in political views, religious beliefs, and age. There are two somewhat distinct demographic categories within No More Deaths, divided between younger activists in their mid- to late twenties who are not tied down by a career or family, and retirees who either choose to retire in Tucson in order to engage in border work or who retire in Tucson and become active after becoming aware of border issues. No More Deaths' membership and volunteer base are not geographically bounded. Most volunteers have roots outside of Tucson, and several of the retirees who belong to the group live in Arizona during the winter months but return to other, more temperate regions during the summer. Besides the core volunteers, the No More Deaths also counts on a large number of temporary or recurring volunteers who come to the border during Spring break or Summer. Although my sample of core activists does not do justice to this broad base, it does provide a picture of the people who choose to dedicate their time to the group.

As a researcher and participant, I fit well within the organization as a young, educated white man from the upper Midwest. Many of the volunteers I worked with had similar backgrounds to my own, and most had some higher education. In fact, at least one other academic currently studying at the University of Arizona was working with the organization at the time, and at least two dissertations (Magaña 2008 and Burridge 2009)

have been written about No More Deaths. Because of this history of academic interest, the organization has created a research protocol to regulate academic research (see Appendix 2). As Andrew Burrige explains about his own experience doing research with No More Deaths,

During my time volunteering I was involved in discussions on several occasions in which long-term volunteers provided their critical reflection upon visiting scholars. Many, they noted, operated in a notably ‘extractive’ manner, visiting for a few days at most, and doing little to support other volunteers while at the group’s desert base-camp. Though generally not as problematic as many media reporters that would appear for one day, desperate to get a story and footage/photography of migrants, academics were, unsurprisingly, treated with some mistrust and disdain; another uncommitted person to be “shown around” and never to be heard from again (2009, 98).

As a participant and researcher working with No More Deaths over the course of a semester of academic study of the borderlands, I did my best to remain conscious of the pitfalls of extractive research in my work. Rather than spending just a few days or weeks with the organization, I participated as an active volunteer with No More Deaths for months, taking part in working group meetings and weekly water runs in the desert, as well as scouting trips and interviews with migrants in Nogales.

Through my time working with No More Deaths I developed friendships with most of the volunteers I interviewed, working with all of them prior to the interviews. Nevertheless, my role as researcher and producer of knowledge rankled somewhat as I continued to learn daily from the people whose beliefs I would later be tasked with

analyzing and articulating. It is my hope that this project will not serve extractive purposes, but rather emerge fluidly from the work I did with No More Deaths. In that sense, this essay is not only about No More Deaths, but also a product of the group itself, and the questions it hopes to answer about the ways in which people generate and transfer ideas to validate and necessitate political action could just as easily be asked of me.

Legal and Social Terrains of Migration

Besides engaging on a variety of physical and institutional terrains through work in the desert and Nogales, it is also important to recognize the “human terrain” that No More Deaths engages with – from Border Patrol agents in the field to the public at large, the border and migration are contentious issues. No More Deaths takes strong positions that put it in opposition to normative views of who is migrating and what migration means. By aiding migrants who are illegally crossing the US-Mexico border, volunteers are doing work that many pundits would argue makes the act of crossing easier – in some sense, No More Deaths’ work directly undermines the fence in Sasabe. However, anti-migrant sentiment is not an entirely dominant point of view in the United States, the “nation of immigrants” so often symbolized by the Statue of Liberty. Anti-immigrant sentiment is constructed in specific ways, and manifests itself in specific policies, the results of which can be seen all along the Arizona-Sonora border. In order to examine what No More Deaths does and the ways in which volunteers create new ideas about migration, it is necessary to examine the broader cultural terrain that No More Deaths volunteers navigate – the views of migration and migrants that discourage work in

solidarity with migrants, the ways in which migration is addressed at the level of national and state policy, and the various ways the public reacts to No More Deaths' work.

In order to understand this cultural terrain, it is important to return historically to the creation of the US-Mexico border as a meaningful construct. After all, the land now patrolled by men in green uniforms and activists with water jugs was crossed by trails long before the United States was a political entity capable of defining borders, let alone building walls along them. The land that is now the Sonoran desert in Sonora, Mexico and Arizona, United States was inhabited by the Tohono O'odham until long after the arrival of Spanish missionaries. Later, control of the land that would become Arizona was ceded to the United States through the Gadsden purchase, following the Mexican-American war in the mid 1800s.

The legal cession of territory did not automatically create the boundary we see today, however, and uprisings by Mexicans (from both sides of the border) were common until the early 1900s, and it was not until much later that indigenous communities along the border were effectively divided by the line that would come to split their communities and territories (Nevins 2008, 86). The first efforts to control the movement of people over the border was enacted as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, but it was a long time before border-control policies became successful at creating a real impediment to migrants attempting to cross the border. As Massey et al write in *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors* the US-Mexico border functioned as a more or less stable system between the 1800s and the 1986 passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA). In this period, migrants crossed the border primarily in order to work as short-term economic

migrants according to the demand for labor in the United States, and their presence was largely taken for granted as part of the workforce (2002).

The IRCA and Mexico's signature of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1986 ushered in a new era during which economic policy and border policy worked in directly opposing ends. While economic policies worked toward a greater integration of the economies of the northern hemisphere, border policies worked to ensure the separation of labor markets north and south of the border (Massey et al 2002, 73). Just as the North American Free Trade Agreement came into effect in 1994, border control turned in a new direction with the implementation of Operation Gatekeeper. Based on an earlier policy implemented along the El Paso-Juarez border, Operation Gatekeeper was an attempt to close off the urban crossing points used by migrants through a strategy that placed spotlights and border patrol agents in a veritable human chain along the border line.

As part of a new Border Patrol strategic plan issued in 1994, Operation Gatekeeper was the centerpiece of a new strategy for combating undocumented migration (Nevins 2010, 3). The goal, essentially, was to significantly increase the difficulty of the act of crossing the border, by denying the easiest (urban) crossing points to potential migrants while leaving the harsh terrain and limited access of the open rural border as physical deterrents. After its success at lowering the numbers of migrants apprehended in San Diego, where it was first implemented, the policy was expanded west along the California border in 1997 (Nevins 2002, 116). Although the new strategic policies of the border patrol were successful in their goals of decreasing urban border crossings, data analyzed by Massey et al shows that it had a negligible affect on the probabilities that lie

at the core of migration – the likelihood of apprehension and the likelihood of new trips across the border (2002, 115). Instead of stopping migration, border enforcement simply shifted it further and further West, until the mountains and arroyos of southern Arizona became the new San Diego. This policy of deterrence essentially pinned its effectiveness on the hope that the difficulty of crossing in these conditions, including the possibility of death, would be enough to stop migration.

While increased border enforcement and the blooming of the Border Patrol as a powerful federal agency had little effect on the ultimate dimensions of undocumented migration across the US-Mexico border, the militarization of the border does serve another important purpose, showing that politicians are doing something tangible about the “problem” of undocumented migration. Of course, this begs the question of how undocumented migration was created as a problem in the first place. As Jonathan Xavier Inda argues in *Targeting Immigrants* (2006), the concept of the illegal alien depends on two fundamental bases. The first is the more generalized concept of the post-social state, while the second is the positioning of immigrants as “anti-citizens.”

A post-social state, as Inda writes, is one in which the line defining inclusion and exclusion is based on the ability of a citizen to support herself given the conditions she finds herself in, and avoid running afoul of the law. In the post-social state Inda describes, the role of government shifts from promoting good citizenship and reforming offenders to better fit citizenship categories to protecting citizens from anti-citizens and excluding those who do not or cannot fit societal standards. Besides the abolition of welfare programs and institutions of reform, the creation of a post-social state includes the creation of mechanisms for the exclusion of those who are deemed unreformable or

“anti-citizens.” The law itself becomes the dividing line between reformable and unreformable. (Inda 2006)

“Illegal” immigrants are pushed into this space by legal and cultural expectations. By crossing the border illegally, migrants are not only crossing into a state that governs along the lines of crime and punishment, but also transgressing the lines of crime that position them as negative subjects, to be dealt with as threats to the nation. The migrant solidarity movement, then, has its work cut out for it: In order to address the problem of deaths along the border or agitate for the rights of migrants, movement organizations must confront a state that focuses substantial effort border militarization and the physical security of borders as a guard against immigrants. Whether their membership is primarily immigrant or citizen, white or Latino, any movement organization that allies itself with migrants is working against the current when it comes to convincing the general public of the rightness of its cause.

These theoretical considerations are borne out in quantitative research. A study by Luis Cabrera and Sonya Glavac using survey data to analyze activist and non-activist attitudes towards migrants, shows wide gaps between No More Deaths volunteers and the general public in terms of attitudes about border policies. For example, 64% of non-activists favoring or strongly favoring a policy that would expand the Border Patrol to effectively seal the border, while 86% of No More Deaths volunteers registered their position as “opposed” or “strongly opposed.” In contrast, 96% of volunteers with the Minuteman Project registered their support for an expanded Border Patrol (Cabrera and Glavac 2010, see table on pg. 683). Despite public support for anti-migrant policies however, various movement organizations exist that directly oppose accepted official

policy. In southern Arizona alone, No More Deaths is not the only group doing migrant solidarity work – rather, they are part of a constellation that includes groups like Samaritans, Derechos Humanos and a variety of others.

This chapter has identified and explored several of the contextual factors relevant to any study of No More Deaths and its place in the migrant solidarity movement, including the physical spaces in which volunteers operate, history of border policies and politics, and the structures through which No More Deaths volunteers organize. With this foundation laid, important questions begin to emerge: Why do groups like No More Deaths exist? What motivates members to take part in controversial actions? In the case of organizations like No More Deaths, in which the majority of participants are white and lack roots that would connect them to the border conflict, how are pro-migrant attitudes fostered and developed? The following chapter will provide the tools with which to answer this question.

Legend: Signs and Symbols for Social Movements

The examination in Chapter 1 of the complex social and political terrain in which No More Deaths acts raises important theoretical questions as to how the ideas that the movement presents ought to be analyzed. How do social movements like the migrant solidarity movement mobilize ideas to legitimize action? Are these ideas generated consciously, or do they arise from preconceived structures of belief held by movement participants? In order to situate this thesis in the broader social movements literature, this chapter first reviews the trajectory of scholarly work on social movements, later focusing on scholarship on idea formation and framing processes within movements. In order to fill a conceptual gap within the literature, I propose the concept of the “personal framing process” as an analytical tool with which to examine individual orientations that lead to movement participation. Finally, this chapter addresses other movement dynamics that impact No More Deaths’ role as a conduit for oppositional beliefs and ideas about migration and borders.

Reviewing Social Movement Literature

Questions like those posed above are in no way easy to answer. In fact, they are directly connected to the “free rider problem,” originally brought up by Mancur Olsen, who questioned how individuals can be expected to participate in collective contentious action when their involvement will have little effect on final outcomes (Olsen 1965). Theorists with backgrounds in economics later drew on Olsen’s rationalistic arguments to

promote theories of “resource mobilization” as the definitive way to analyze social movements. Their theories focused on the ways in which movements gain and use resources, including participants’ time, finances, and other physical “resources.” However, the role of ideas in promoting action offers one important response to critics who base their investigations of social movements on rational actor theory. It is obvious that, in mobilizing networks of volunteers to work in the deserts of southern Arizona, No More Deaths organizers are somehow managing to bypass or circumvent the free rider problem. In fact, it could be said that No More Deaths volunteers act in irrational ways. Although their actions require significant investments of time, physical labor, emotion, and cash, most have nothing tangible to gain from their actions.

In response to the questions brought up by theorists employing economic logic and rational actor theories in their analysis of contentious action, social movement theorists drawing on sociological traditions have developed sets of analytical tools through which movements can be analyzed. Much current thinking is defined by the category of “political process theory,” which takes a somewhat structural view of social movements and situates them as parts of the broader political process through which governments and societies are influenced. Sidney Tarrow’s work *Power in Movement* (1998) offers an exemplary theoretical background that unites four elements for study when examining contentious movements: Mobilizing structures, repertoires of contention, collective action frames, and political opportunity structures.

While the first three elements are internal to the movement, the concept of the political opportunity structure is one of the defining concepts of political process theories of contentious politics. Emphasizing the broad structure of opportunities for contentious

action on a specific issue at any given time – whether political channels are available to movement, the extent to which authorities have granted concessions or repressed political actors, and other factors – the political opportunity structure emphasizes concrete structural factors in the formation and development of movements. In contrast to structuralist theories that solely considered political opportunity structures in determining the emergence or repression and success or failure of movements, political process theorists also address factors that lie within the control of the movement itself. Mobilizing structures, for example, represent the ways in which the movement is structured, while the concept of the repertoire of contention addresses the contentious actions available to actors within the movement, including various strategies and tactics that are relevant, powerful, or traditional in a given social and political context. The concept of framing, finally, offers a means to address the ideas that generate or sustain this action

In attempting to address questions of ideas – where they come from, who generates them, and how they are transferred – frame theory is doubtless the most important concept to take from social movement theory. As applied to social movements, frame theory examines the ways in which social movement actors look at the world – the “frame” which they place around events – and the ways in which this frame affects their mobilizing potential. The concept of framing is based on concepts from Goffman’s *Frame Analysis* (1974) which establishes frames as “schemata of interpretation.” This view is succinctly described by Snow et al (citing Goffman) as “enabling individuals to ‘to locate, perceive, identify, and label’ occurrences within their life space and the world

at large. By rendering events or occurrences meaningful, frames function to organize experience and guide action, whether individual or collective” (Snow et al 1986, 464).

Framing, then, is the contentious process by which new ways to discuss issues are created, or by which old ways of thinking are applied to new or different issues. The contentious element to framing as a process is important. Tarrow succinctly outlines the basic dimensions of framing in a movement context, specifying the importance of concepts like competition for mindshare among the general populace, the degree to which a way of framing an issue opposes dominant culture, and the ways in which “ordinary people” frame events as distinct from official framings (1998, 110). Framing has been interpreted as taking place in various different ways, with studies drawing from social psychology to discuss individual alignment with frames offered by movements (Snow et al 1986) to strategic framings through which actors within the movement consciously frame issues in order to gain prominence, more effectively convey grievances, looking for the frame with which one way of seeing an issue can drive a wedge into cracks in a dominant worldview (Zald 1996).

Snow and Benford argue for analysis of another dimension in analysis of the process of strategic framing, asking what it is that makes a “good” or “effective” frame, discussing the concrete work that frames do for movements and arriving at three different types of framing: Diagnostic framing, which identifies (or, in other words, creates) a problem, prognostic framing, which suggests strategies and tactics to be taken in order to solve a problem, and motivational framing, which attempts to demonstrate the ways in which individuals can affect change as part of the movement (Snow and Benford 1996). Innovative ways of framing issues that justify collective action beyond the scope of one

group or issue have the potential to become “master frames” – concepts such as “human rights” that have immense utility to organizers in various movements because of their universality, widely acceptable nature, and the fact that they can be adapted to a wide variety of issues in ways that can be startling or provocative (Snow and Benford 1992). In the migrant solidarity movement, for example, the “human rights’ frame is useful as a way to condemn actions that are justified by most other official standards. No More Deaths volunteers record human rights abuses committed against migrants, and use the rhetoric of human rights to humanize individuals who systematically excluded from the body politic.

Although they have become one of the most prominent analytical tools in the study of social movements, frames are just one way of looking at ideational factors within social movements. Zald treats frames, ideologies, and culture as a “conceptual cluster” within the study of social movements, defining them as follows: Culture represents shared beliefs and understandings, while ideology represents that subset of beliefs that are used to support or undermine an established order, as well as those beliefs that constitute interpretations of the political world. Frames, finally, are “specific metaphors, symbolic representations, and cognitive cues used to render or cast behavior and events in an evaluative mode and to suggest alternative modes of action” (1996, 262). Ideology, culture, and frames are all useful concepts for analysis of the migrant solidarity movement. Culture – including embedded racism, the deep history of the border zone, the “clash of civilizations” narrative, and the question of language – is important for the movement as actors attempt to negotiate the question of what precisely should be done in the border region and how to engage with authority and anti-migrant ideas. See Polletta’s

(2008) work for excellent analysis of the role cultural factors play in the social movement field. Ideology is similarly important. Most volunteers with No More Deaths hold one ideology or another, and all have, to some extent, developed ways of structuring their thought. However, frames – especially in their capacity as suggesting “alternative modes of action” – are the most relevant concepts for this study.

Framing as a Process

On the surface, none of the elements of Zald’s conceptual cluster – frames, culture, or ideology – can be used to directly explain the question of how ideas that make contentious action possible are generated and transferred. However, the concept of a framing *process* permits ways of doing analysis that emphasize the fluid interplay between collective and individual formation of ideas. In this sense, framing is more than the question of applying preexisting set of ideas to a new context, advertising a movement to the public, or consciously creating strategic frames that undermine opposing conceptions of an issue. Instead, framing serves to illuminate the most basic dynamic within social movements – that is, the structured ways in which social issues are constructed as grievances, the ways those grievances are linked with action, and the ways in which individuals become convinced to act on their grievances within the framework of a social movement (Snow and Benford 1988). After all, if an issue cannot be framed in such a way as to invite movement participation or formation, then there will be no movement.

Despite the concept’s utility in examining a broad range of issues related to how social movements create and leverage ideas, the place which framing holds in the canon

of social movement literature is not uncontested. In particular, debates around the relationship between framing and ideology clarify the utility of framing in examining the beliefs of individuals when it comes to contentious social and political issues. However, most social movement literature fails to take ideology into account. As Snow and Benford write, “the relationship between ideological factors – values, beliefs, meanings—and identification with social movements and participation in their activities has rarely been treated systematically or dialectically in either the theoretical or empirical literature” (Snow and Benford 1988, 197).

Snow and Benford go on to discuss why ideology has not been a key concern for either political process theory or the new social movements perspective. New social movements theory, a reaction to the upsurge of movements based on identity that have arisen since the mid 1960s, stresses the importance of identity and group belonging. Emphasis is placed on culture, contradictions within society, and contradictions between the individual and the state. In the eyes of new social movements theorists, the ideas and cognitions of social movement actors are not as important as the “underlying structural precipitants and emergent forms of action.” In resource mobilization theory, on the other hand, “even less attention is devoted to ideological considerations,” and “mobilizing beliefs and ideas are seen as ubiquitous and therefore relatively unimportant” (Ibid). Scholars like Marc Steinberg have written extensively on other deficits of frame theory; particularly of note for this study is Steinberg’s emphasis on framing as a discursive act, which begins to indicate the possibility of framings as processes, rather than collections of preexisting useful ideas (1998).

Scholars who subscribe to political process theory integrate the effects of external factors suggested by the political opportunity structure model of analysis with internal factors as outlined by resource mobilization theory. The ideas that lead to mobilization are not seen as critical to the formation of movements, and analysis is framed in an economic examination of competition between pervasive grievances. Recognizing the deficit of theory that recognized the importance of ideas to social movement mobilization, political process theorists looked to the process of framing as the concept that would bring the importance of ideas back into the study of social movements. Tarrow argues that while ideology “dignifies discontent, identifies a target for grievances, and forms an umbrella over the discrete grievances of overlapping groups”, it should not be regarded as a “superimposed intellectual category or as the automatic result of grievances” (1998, 21) but instead as a product of movement framing processes. Scholarly debate surrounding an article by Pamela Oliver and Hank Johnston’s 2000 article in *Mobilization* shows challenges to the ways in which framing has become the cover-all concept for the analysis of ideas within social movements, and reveals not only a trend of oversimplification in theories about frames, but also the ways in which well-articulated frame theories can be used to discuss problems central to the migrant solidarity movement.

Oliver and Johnston’s article questions the extent to which frame theory has become conflated with ideology, attempting to carve out a space in social movement literature in which ideologies (or broad and interconnected structures of ideas, values, and theories) can stand on their own as a separate concept from frames. Oliver and Johnston divide frames from ideologies, arguing that frames and framing processes exist as

discrete elements, primarily concerned with messaging – finding new ways to frame an issue, contention over the ways an issue is framed, and demonstrating how one issue can be seen from multiple angles. Against this conception of framing, they pose an idea of ideology as a holistic construct, encompassing the greater part of the ideas that movements mobilize, unified as a coherent whole. Essentially, this viewpoint differentiates between frames as a thin concept primarily related to “movement marketing,” while ideologies represent the kind of holistic worldview that can be suggested by frames, but cannot (or should not) be encapsulated into a “frame,” in the that we would not say a socialist group working on the border applied the “Marxist frame” to their work. (Oliver and Johnston 2000)

Oliver and Johnston’s critique raises interesting questions for frame theory that helps to shape the direction of this study. In attempting to pinpoint the origins of ideas that valorize solidarity with migrants and the processes by which individuals are drawn to these ideas, neither framing nor ideology seems to have offered an analytical framework that is readily available to do so. Instead, the question seems to lie somewhere between the two concepts as they are described above. While movement participants frame events on the border in strategic ways, using the human rights master frame as a tool in order to both mobilize individuals and pressure authorities, the question of how ideas are absorbed by individuals is not readily answered through the description of a frame, and perhaps could be more readily examined by thinking through ideology. As Oliver and Johnston argue, frames offer a “shallow” conception of the interactions involved in developing ideologies, and a “one dimensional view” of how individuals adopt them,

rather than taking into account complex structures and the dynamics of socialization.
(2000, 9)

However, ideologies, as Oliver and Johnston theorize them, are not a suitable concept to answer the questions posed by this investigation either. Ideologies as systematic thought most often extends beyond the individual – they have a canon, popular and intellectual components, and are usually systematic in ways that a personal decision to work in solidarity with migrants are not.

Snow and Benford's reply to Oliver and Johnston offers an understanding of frame theory that manages to serve the purposes of this study by emphasizing framing as a process through which meaning is created and changed. Their focus when discussing framing, then, is on an "understanding of frames as the products of the interindividual, interactional, and contested process of framing" (Snow and Benford 2000). That is, an understanding of framing as a process by which new meanings are created. Here, Snow and Benford argue for an understanding of frames that can be applied to individuals, emphasizing "the interactive processes by which frames are socially constructed, sustained, contested, and altered" (Ibid, 3).

In the case of No More Deaths, it is even more important to make this kind of theoretical inroads on the question of how ideas are generated and transformed, as the individual-level motivations of participants in solidarity movements have not been explored. Literature surrounding Keck and Sikkink's (1998) work on transnational advocacy networks, for example, has not yet delved to this level of detail, although the question of motivating participants is of similar import.

Direct Action and Personal Framings

Attracting dedicated volunteers for No More Deaths requires more than effective movement marketing or the creation of a frame that will resonate with a broader public. The performance of contentious action taken by No More Deaths volunteers does not aim at mass mobilization for change. Although the movement has created remarkably diverse methods of dispersing their ideas, ranging from public advertisements seen in yards throughout Tucson to direct communications on human rights abuses with organs of the Department of Homeland Security, the work that most volunteers would identify as the core priority for the organization is not based on leveraging public sentiment. Instead, it is based on the idea of civil initiative, as introduced in Chapter 1.

This concept is a keystone for No More Deaths' self-justification, and bears examining for several reasons. While many immigrant rights organizations focus on voter mobilization, media campaigns, and campaigns for comprehensive immigration reform through legal measures, No More Deaths approaches the problem directly, doing what it can to alter conditions on the border in concrete and direct ways. Following civil initiative's tenets by holding state actions to a higher standard of justice, which changes the emphasis of the movement from growth to the ability to do the work the movement sets out to do in a sustainable way, which deemphasizes marketing and mass mobilization in favor of a smaller core of dedicated activists or volunteers. This, in turn, means that the framing processes of individuals are more important, as it is necessary to build a strong set of beliefs within a few individuals. In the case of No More Deaths, the result is that individuals are then mobilized on a near-constant basis, as opposed to other movements in which participation has a smaller barrier to entry. In the case of the anti-

war movement, for example, marching in a mass demonstration requires only an hour or two of one's time, and permanent and strong convictions about war are less important for participants.

It is worth noting the extent to which the concept of civil initiative is related to another, similar and perhaps more widely studied concept – that of direct action. As defined in David Graeber's *Direct Action: An Ethnography*, to take a "direct" rather than "indirect" action as part of a movement is to take matters into one's own hands, directly altering the political or social environment, rather than appealing to authorities through indirect demonstrations, petitions, or shows of strength (Graeber 2009, 202). Although civil initiative as a concept is directly related to direct action, it imposes various restrictions on actions that can be seen as legitimate the result is similar: A movement that attempts to take matters into its own hands.

In such a movement, where do the ideas that lead to mobilization come from? In the case of contentious movements like the migrant solidarity movement in which small numbers of volunteers are deeply involved in actions that will not benefit them in any material way, what theoretical frameworks can we use to discuss the process that, taking place internally and externally to a given individual, leads them to so dramatically reframe an issue that has such deep cultural roots? I argue that attention must be paid to the ways activists as individuals enmeshed in greater social contexts frame issues over time. This framing process does not begin upon one's first affiliation with a movement, but rather stretches back to include previous experiences and preexisting belief structures, whether they be encounters with an ideological way of seeing the world or unstructured experiences that shake one's old belief system to the core.

These broad changes in ways of seeing the world are not necessarily ideological. While they do have some characteristics of structured thought, and for some individuals ideology figures prominently in their internal framing process, ideologies imply a broad, overarching viewpoint that is accepted as valid by a group of individuals. While a Marxist ideology may influence the ways in which No More Deaths volunteers think about their role on the border of a nation state, that same Marxist ideology did not come into being until it became a useful way of structuring. Simplistic views of frames and framing also fail to capture the individual transformations of belief that lead No More Deaths volunteers to work in solidarity with migrants. While certain frames are certainly applied to various issues found in the border region, individuals do not simply apply frames to themselves and their own work. Rather, they pass through an involved process of acculturation and construction of meaning, through which they may eventually arrive at a wholly different way of seeing the world. A conception of frames that emphasizes the process by which meaning is constructed gets us closer, by addressing the constructed nature of reality and the ways in which interpersonal interactions help in the process, but fails to sufficiently address the backstory that occurs before individuals affiliate themselves with a movement. After all, there are various personal reasons beyond successful movement marketing that explain why any individual would choose to affiliate herself with a given movement. As Oliver and Johnston write, “We can see instances of framing at the social movement organization level and, if we looked closely, we would see them in interaction at the membership level” (Oliver and Johnston 2000, 5).

To find these individual “instances of framing” – or, perhaps better termed, personal framing, – it is necessary to employ in-depth research that focuses on the

experiences of the individual leading up to their involvement with a group or movement. The following chapter will be dedicated to this task of looking closely, peering back into the personal histories and political formations of several core activists with No More Deaths. In the following pages, I will examine the factors that individual activists believe to have been important in guiding their political development. In this way, I will be able to examine where frames arose for these particular individuals and the reasons that they hold for doing the work they do. Through analysis grounded in theories of framing as an interactive process that occurs on both individual and collective dimensions, I hope to gain insights as to the specific mechanisms that draw participants into movements like No More Deaths, overruling both cultural concerns and most standards of rational action as dedicated activists decide to make a cause their own.

Roadmaps: Steering Migrant Solidarity

Where are the origins of the migrant solidarity movement? This question invokes multiple layers of meaning: What are the backgrounds of volunteers – and what is it about their experience that leads them to form and participate in a movement? Does the movement create its own way of framing migration as an issue, or does it depend on the ways in which individuals see migration in the first place? This chapter engages these questions, following six No More Deaths volunteers as they draw between their childhood, their involvement in No More Deaths, and everything in between.

As demonstrated in Chapter 2, analysis of the framing process through which individuals make sense of the world requires nuanced thinking and a readiness to reject rigid explanations. Rather than treating frames as static, framing must be understood as a collective process through which individuals within movements work together to shape the ways in which the movement reacts to the world. Furthermore, the ideas that referenced when we discuss the framing process must be considered as constitutive of movement itself. Frames are not simply peripheral, tactically adopted positions that are mobilized in order to build support or media coverage outside the movement. Although this type of framing does happen, the concept itself is broader than simple “movement advertising” In the case of No More Deaths, where the mission of the group runs counter to accepted beliefs, the articulation of oppositional ideas is a necessary prerequisite for the existence of the movement itself.

When considering ideas as constitutive of movements, the question of where the framing process starts begins to present a challenge. If certain ways of framing the world

are necessary for the creation of social movements as collective entities, but framing itself is a collective process within movements, where do ideas originate? The structure of this chapter attempts to sketch out a practical answer by bringing the question of where frames originate further into the past: Instead of questioning the moment in which a movement emerges, I examine the moments leading up to movement participation through interviews with six volunteers who are heavily involved with No More Deaths. After all, each individual member of a movement has their own story – their own internal framing process – that informs their decision to become part of a movement.

An Introduction to Six No More Deaths Volunteers

As can be expected, the volunteers I worked with and interviews have lived rich and varied lives, and their experiences have profoundly shaped their current ways of seeing the world. However, they all share at least one thing in common: At the time when I interviewed them, No More Deaths' work was one of their most important activities. Consequentially, they figured prominently in the organization, playing key roles in working groups and acting as some of the most engaged participants in meetings, not to mention logging thousands of hours in the desert and in Nogales. The following are brief profiles of each of the volunteers who I worked with and eventually interviewed. (For selected transcripts of interview data, see Appendix 3.)

Miranda, who was working as the Abuse documentation coordinator when I interviewed her, is a 24-year-old woman from Rhode Island, who came to No More Deaths through previous work on immigrant rights issues.

Stephanie, who was nearing the end of her year as logistics coordinator when I interviewed her, is a 29-year-old Catholic, originally from California. Her work with No More Deaths is focused primarily on the desert, although she also provides first aid to migrants in Nogales.

Jacob is a 55-year-old Quaker originally from Pennsylvania. He attended seminary, worked as a social worker, and has hopped from community to community working on various social justice issues. He focuses on desert aid work with No More Deaths, but is also involved in anti-war work through Catholic Worker houses and Christian Peace Teams.

Aaron is a 36-year-old Tucson native who returned after spending time in the Northeast as a student. He was one of the first paid volunteers No More Deaths hired.

Mary is a 72-year-old retired nurse who describes herself as a “recovering Catholic.” A Chicago native, she lived in Nebraska before moving to Tucson with her husband upon her retirement.

Art, Mary’s husband, was raised in a German Catholic farming town in rural Minnesota and attended seminary in Mississippi during the Civil Rights movement. He and Mary were both active in the organization Nebraskans for Peace before moving to Arizona.

All of my informants were white and college-educated. Although their backgrounds vary significantly in age, geography, and class, they all became dedicated to

a struggle that clashes with dominant perceptions of citizenship. Despite the fact that common political conceptions of immigration hold that they benefit from the exclusion of the migrants that they help, they spend their days with backpacks loaded with gallon jugs of water, bandaging blisters in a Nogales *comedor* (food kitchen), and attending meetings that are often simultaneously boring and frustrating. The work of No More Deaths volunteers is not usually glamorous or financially rewarding, and is physically and emotionally demanding. What leads individuals to this work - and what keeps them there?

My interviews reveal points of similarity that, when connected, begin to sketch trajectories for these six individuals. When asked how they have ended up where they are now, they all cite several important points in their lives. Broadly speaking, each of the volunteers I interviewed has passed through three key processes: 1) a childhood preoccupation with fairness; 2) experiences that led to the humanization of migrants; and 3) an initial experience in the border region that made it an accessible location for meaningful and important work. These experiences vary in their details, and it would be irresponsible for me to attempt to fit the distinct experiences of six individuals into an overarching or holistic theoretical framework. Conversely, the experiences of individual actors in social movements have much to teach us about how collective action frames both affect and are affected by the individual internal framing processes of movement participants.

Early Socialization: Justice and Fairness

While everyone I interviewed seems to have their own way of expressing it, the volunteers I interviewed all place great importance on conceptions of justice or fairness that has continued since childhood. For some, this is an idea that is strongly based in religion. When asked what it was that led her down the path that led to border activism, Stephanie thinks back to her grandparents' activism and the religious tradition of caring for one's brothers and sisters. In a similar vein, Art explains of his Catholic education, "The overwhelming thing that I carried through it all was 'I am my brother's keeper' you know. And there was a heavy encouragement to model your life after the life of Jesus." Mary, putting it somewhat differently, notes that she has always identified with those on the losing side of social hierarchy: "I was always that kind of person when I was growing up, I always felt for the person on the bottom." Aaron, talking about his earliest experiences of injustice coming from school teachers, brings up what he calls a "preoccupation that I seem to have had with injustice all the time, or fairness."

For some, the concept of fairness is linked to resistance and struggle. Jacob, for example, talks about the importance he placed on Christian principles such as "thou shalt not kill" from a young age. However, the realization that the world does not function on those same principles was an important experience for him:

[M]y very earliest education from my parents [was] that to kill was always wrong.' [...] I remember in my early years, the Catholic nuns and this constellation of people who said killing is always wrong. Abortion wasn't so much on the hot plate then as it became thereafter, but euthanasia, capital punishment, killing was always wrong. When I began hearing that there was church support for the war, I began raising the question to my authority figures,

and I was told that there were exceptions. I responded that it was too late to tell me that there were exceptions, because I believed what they had taught me in the beginning, it had sunk in and it had made sense. So when I look back, the seeds of my activism were sown by my parents.”

Miranda also brings up the importance of confrontation, drawing on theories of politicization that she associates with Fanon and Marx while speaking of her experience becoming politicized and attempting to begin working on anti-war organizing in her high school and community in the aftermath of September 11th and the invasion of Iraq: “When you resist in a way that is actually confrontational, you're politicized through confrontation. So when you actually run into confrontation, something happens that deepens your understanding of power.”

Ultimately, it is not surprising that a collection of dedicated activists working on a terrain that highlights inequalities would have a deep concern for fairness and justice. However, their words serve to highlight the importance of sustained commitments to childhood values. First, they have managed to hold on to their beliefs and even strengthen them over time, building activism in the adult world on a foundation that was laid with nursery-school platitudes about justice. In the Christian tradition, the Ten Commandments are taught as fundamentals, and theories that are eventually used to justify war are not taught early in one's education – that kind of learning is held back until the student has achieved the necessary level of reason to accept the possibility that, sometimes, killing might not be wrong. The second point to draw from these experiences is the importance of religion – specifically Catholicism – as a guiding factor for the volunteers I worked with. Jacob and Art both attended seminary, although they took their

experiences in different directions, and Stephanie and Mary both note the importance of the Catholic tradition to their early development. Finally, it is important to recognize the power that confrontation holds as a mechanism that can solidify thinking and allow individuals to maintain and build values that promote action in the face of injustice. Despite all of the other steps that are necessary to build a worldview that offers principled opposition to the hegemonic beliefs surrounding immigration, the principles themselves – fairness, justice, and equal treatment – provide the basic support structure undergirding the movement itself. Without a commitment to justice in the first place, it is difficult to imagine a movement framing the issue on the border as one of justice or fairness for immigrants.

Nevertheless, these basic ideas lay the foundation upon which more complicated framings are constructed. There are at least two diametrically opposed ways to conceive of justice for migrants, after all. One, emphasizing their illegality, promotes enforcement and a restrictive legalistic border policy, while the other emphasizes the humanity of migrants, and opposes policies that expose them to the risky process of crossing the southern Arizona desert. Another way of framing the issue, that favored by most No More Deaths volunteers, calls for direct collective action on the part of U.S. citizens in response to a different perceived injustice – deaths in the desert – that has little to do with the mindset of the Minutemen volunteers, whose conception of justice calls for direct collective action to secure law and order along the US-Mexico border. In constructing a frame that requires action to stop migrant deaths, the volunteers I worked with have at least two other experiences in common.

Creating Empathy: Experiences in Latin America

One of the points that was most emphasized in my interviews was the importance of experiences that revealed the humanity of the people who are constructed as “the Other” when they come into the United States. Be it the experience of growing up in Tucson and attending a diverse school, doing immigrant rights work in other parts of the country, or traveling to Latin America as part of an organized group, direct personal contact with subaltern culture was integral in building understanding for the volunteers I interviewed. Although these experiences happened at different points in the process for different people, direct contact that humanized the Other seems to be important, if not necessary, step towards work in solidarity with migrants – even if, at the time, the experiences were not directly connected to immigration.

For Art, traveling to Mexico in the 1960s was an eye opening experience that gave new meaning to his conceptions of justice and injustice. As he explains his early involvement with social justice movements, describing himself as “on the fringe” of the Civil Rights movement in Mississippi and the migrant labor movement in San Antonio, attending marches or writing articles, but never belonging to a specific movement, he brings up Mexico as an important factor in changing his perceptions:

I went to Mexico City in 1966 I think it was, to study Spanish. I went to the Instituto Norteamericano, and every day I would walk a mile, maybe a mile and a half to the school, and I'd walk through some of the poorest neighborhoods I've ever seen in my life, where women are breastfeeding their babies while holding out their hands for, you know, a couple pesos. And I was just literally shocked, because where I was living in San Antonio, you know, we had food, we had

shelter, we had all the basics you know. And then I visited an area in Mexico City where when it rained water would be up to your ankles. And there were maybe 60,000 people in that several-block area, just desperately poor. And those experiences I know, you know, kind of formed my sense of fairness or justice or the lack of it.

Although he would not connect himself to migrant solidarity work until later, this experience was obviously important to him. In describing how, two years later, he met Mary, they both describe themselves as having been active in protests against the Vietnam war around the time of their marriage in 1970.

Jacob relates a similarly transformative experience in Central America. After leaving his job as a social worker in West Virginia, disgusted by the program cuts that were implemented under the Reagan administration, he lived with a friend in upstate New York and became acquainted with a variety of activists, and started to attend meetings and learn about the Nicaraguan political situation. Later, in the mid-80s, he was given the opportunity to travel to Nicaragua when a Nicaraguan bishop with connections to New York sent out a call for American volunteers, as part of what would eventually become the International Brigades to Nicaragua. As he explains it, the experience was a transformative one:

I pulled some money together and went down to Nicaragua. And I can remember riding down to Miami with a bunch of activists, and I was a neophyte, and they were talking about civil disobedience and civil resistance and all these things, and I can really remember being in debate with them, and saying “I really think that just pisses people off more than anything else, and there are other ways in which

we can affect social change.” We agreed to disagree. And my eyes were just really really opened in Nicaragua. [...] And I was actually furious. Partly furious because I should have known this! How could I have gotten this far in life without knowing this, what my government with my (then) tax money was doing this in terms of funding contras, etc. down in Nicaragua. So I came back with a completely different attitude, and it may not have started out with the best of energy, angry energy, but I thought civil disobedience was absolutely essential!

Jacob goes on to describe how, immediately after returning from the trip, he got involved with anti-war protests in a more substantial way than he had been in the past, finally taking what he saw as a conceptual leap when he first deliberately crossed a police line during a Memorial day protest at Griffiths Air Force Base:

And so I stepped across the line, and by golly... I was nervous, very nervous, but it wasn't a super tense situation. There were a lot of police, a lot of military police, but when I stepped across that line, it felt like I stepped into a new world, it felt like I was free at last and free from the fears of what people might think. But it was just a beginning, it was a first step. And as Lao Tzu says, the longest journey begins with a first step, and that journey has continued.

The journey Jacob references is the one that finally led him to No More Deaths by way of a long string of other organizations, especially Catholic Worker houses. His experiences in Nicaragua sparked a lifestyle in which the twin purposes of “works of resistance” and “works of mercy,” as he says, were the most important part of his life.

No less influential on an individual level was Stephanie’s experience in Nicaragua, although her trip took place decades later and in a different context. Her

grandmother, who Stephanie references as one of the explicitly political figures in her early life, marching with Cesar Chavez, brought her to Nicaragua

I went with my grandma, who is – she's now retired, but she was a hospice nurse, and she's really involved with her community, she lives on a farming community in the central valley of California, has a sister city in northern Nicaragua, a town called Simotó, and she's been there a lot and volunteers in the local hospital, and so she brought me when I was 18 for the first time. Yeah. It was pretty powerful. I mean, my family is pretty affluent. I'm one of seven kids, so they're not, you know, I never had whatever I wanted, but I was never really, really exposed to suffering or poverty or injustice before, so I think that really contributed to what my worldview is today and what I do, the things that I do. It was really eye opening.

Stephanie's route to work in Arizona follows a different path than Jacob's, with her initial intention upon returning from Nicaragua being work as a doctor in the global south, but nevertheless, her experience in Nicaragua was an important step toward the work she is doing now. She is careful to note that there hasn't been a "definite trajectory" since her first experience in Nicaragua, and her plans have changed in various directions, from medical school to living in Houston and first becoming interested in migration issues, to graduate school for a degree in international affairs, and finally to working full-time on No More Deaths.

In Aaron's case, early experiences with the border when growing up in Tucson were enough to give him personal experiences that would later help him reject the

citizen-noncitizen paradigm for identifying people in the border region. Here, he explains how growing up on the border leads him to reject border militarization:

I gradually became aware – very belatedly, because Operation Gatekeeper was in 1994 and related initiatives were soon after, so... I mean, it was in the early 2000s, 2004, 2005 when I became conscious that something really significant was happening in southern Arizona, and I connected that to my own experience of this place and what I treasured about it – you know, I went to school with Spanish speakers and English speakers, and I didn't even wonder who had documents and who didn't, of my schoolmates. It's a magical place for me, you know? The border is here, but you can cross it. There are cultural barriers, but you can cross them, there's language barriers, but you can cross them. It's a duality, it's a place built on duality. And the border militarization, the way that it hit me as a personal grievance was that it was attacking that, attacking the cultural duality in the heritage of this place.

This resonates with the experiences that others have had in Latin America. In crossing borders, it is possible to come face to face with people whose very existence serves as a reminder of the depths of injustice, unfairness, and inequality. While Aaron has no story of a life-changing trip to Latin America, it also makes sense that he does not need one. Growing up in Tucson, he was able to experience the humanity of the migrant, the illegal or the undocumented first hand. After all, it's not as if Latin America reaches a firm boundary when it runs up against the walls built to contain it.

This group of volunteers certainly sees their first-hand experiences with the so-called Other as crucial points for their later work in support of migrants who are

constructed as Others. Despite the fact that these experiences took place under different circumstances – growing up in a multicultural school, traveling to Mexico to study Spanish, as a family service trip, or as an explicitly politicized delegation to a country in the grip of political violence – all of the volunteers who I interviewed view their visits in remarkably similar ways. They use many of the same words to talk about how their experiences outside of the United States changed them, and the conclusions they draw from the trip are similar. The phrase “eye opening”, for example, appears in multiple narratives, as does a sense of shock and injustice at conditions south of the border.

Despite their similarities, it is obvious that my informants also came out of their experience in Latin America with varying intentions and desires for action. Stephanie quite understandably points out that she did not follow a defined trajectory after her first experience in Latin America at the age of 18, and the intervening eleven years have had a significant impact on where she is today. For Jacob, on the other hand, the experience of traveling to Nicaragua catalyzed a chain-reaction that sent him from community to community, searching for the balance of resistance and mercy, as he termed it. For Art, experiencing poverty in Mexico helped shape his later worldview. This may have been a transformative moment that allowed him to expand his conception of caring for one’s brothers and sisters, which he cites as an important development when describing his early childhood: “There was a lot of encouragement when I was a youth, since I was the 2nd oldest in the family, to look out for my brothers and sisters. And I didn't realize it at the time, but that just meant ‘everybody.’” Even though Art’s experience in Latin America was a truly crucial moment for his later involvement with No More Deaths, it was at best an enabling factor. There can be no doubt that the intervening four decades

included numerous other experiences that would shape his ability to articulate conceptions of justice and fairness that privilege the lives of migrants over law and order or national integrity. It is at this point that it becomes important to examine the ways in which each of the volunteers I interviewed came to dedicate so much of their time to No More Deaths.

Accessibility: Initial Attraction to No More Deaths Work

Although the circumstances by which they arrived vary, the volunteers I worked with all share one crucial fact: Once they became involved with No More Deaths, they found the border to be an extraordinary terrain in which to work, in terms of geographies that are both physical and social. The border situation and No More Deaths' work creates an accessible set of issues that seem to enable simple but direct actions. For some of the volunteers I interviewed, once they began working with No More Deaths the work became something necessary – less a choice to be made, and more an integral part of daily life.

Miranda's story offers one example. After being involved with Palestine and Colombia solidarity work in college, she became involved in immigrant rights work in Providence after graduation, and met activists who had visited the border, which made her interested in learning about it for herself. After volunteering with No More Deaths for a short period in October of 2009, she returned to Providence for a month and then moved to Tucson full-time, living with another No More Deaths volunteer for a month before moving into a collective house in December. As she explains it, the decision to

take the position of Abuse documentation coordinator was mainly thought of as a means of facilitating the work she wanted to do in the first place.

Stephanie's experience demonstrates another way of seeing the attractiveness of the border as a space for action. After visiting Nicaragua, her plan was to become a doctor working in developing countries, and she graduated college as a pre-med student. However, after graduation she lived for a year in a Catholic Worker house in Texas, and has been attached to the border ever since, be it the border itself or the academic study of migration across the US-Mexico border. As she says,

I think that ever since I came to the border, which was in 2007, I've had a really strong connection to the work here, something that I can't always explain, that like when I'm not here I feel like my heart is still here, so I have a hard time picturing leaving at any point, but I don't know what the future holds.

This connection has resulted in a tremendous amount of action. As she says, "when I've been here, all my energy has been in the desert." This is not an overstatement – as she says, "I spent like all 4 months of last summer in the desert, and then ten weeks the summer before, and then my first summer just two weeks because it was right before I started grad school."

Jacob's story is similar to Miranda's, in that his attraction to work along the border was begun when a friend invited him to come to the border and experience it for himself. However, his decision to commit significant time to work on the border took longer to gestate. After jumping from community to community, living in Catholic Worker houses across the midwest, Jacob was invited to spend time working on the border by a friend, and agreed to make the trip down.

So, I signed up for a Christian Peacemaker Team delegation, and during the Migrant Trail Walk⁴, and like so many of the other turns in the road, it was a real eye-opener. And it wasn't like I felt like I needed to drop everything, but what I saw in terms of the direct oppression of people, again in my name, I came to see the border in a way that it hadn't been described to me before, as a veritable war zone. [...] So, I started to come down here in the summers. [...] In '07 I came back down for 2 months, in '08 I came down, and I decided "I think it's time for me to move down here, and see if I can be part of creating a Catholic Worker that is specifically focused on works of mercy in the borderlands, and works of resistance. So, it grew on me, and it grew on me over time. And, I know that borders are everywhere, and people can do work on the border anywhere, but I felt acutely called on, just to the border.

Although Mary's reason to come to Tucson was dissimilar from the reasons expressed by Jacob, Stephanie, and Miranda, her feelings for the work she does as part of No More Deaths convey a similar level of urgency. Arriving in Tucson as a retiree, she met a No More Deaths volunteer, Victor Ceballos, who lived in her neighborhood. After asking him about the meaning behind the signs posted in yards and on fences around Tucson proclaiming that "Humanitarian Aid is Not a Crime," Victor invited her to a Monday night meeting. Although the Monday night general meetings are famously difficult, Mary was impressed by the people she met there, and the organization opened up a new way of understanding the region she had retired to. As she says,

⁴ A yearly event organized by Derechos Humanos, in which participants walk the 75 mile journey between Sasabe, Sonora, and Tucson (Derechos Humanos 2007)

We were totally unaware of the situation down here, it's like it's another world, a totally different world. The only immigration issues we dealt with in Nebraska, which was where we were living before we came here, was the meatpacking industry, you know, where they make raids and they send people back, and that's all we knew. We didn't know people were being treated like this down here.

That's why I'm still involved. Because I'm appalled, I'm abhorred, I can't believe that this is happening. I'm still astonished. [...] I'm astonished that we can allow this to go on and nobody's paying attention. And that's why I have to. It's really pretty simple for me.

It seems that, for Mary, the work No More Deaths does along the border is accessible for two reasons. First, the community that No More Deaths forms is made up of excellent people. Despite the fact that her first meeting was nearly impenetrable, the individual volunteers were people she wanted to learn more about. Here she recounts the experience of her first general meeting:

I thought, what are they talking about, are they talking in code? So afterwards I talked to Victor and I said "I don't really know what went on there." and he said "I'm new here too and I don't either." But, you know, I wanted to know more, because I really was very impressed with the people that I met that night. They were just very dedicated, compassionate, and knowledgeable people, so I thought I really had to find out more.

The second important factor for her is the work itself, which is provocative and, in her view, requires action. Although she questions whether No More Deaths' actions are able to fully address the issues, she considers the work extremely important:

It seems like a drop in the bucket. And you meet people in the desert and you give them what you can and you help them with what you can, which is minimal, basic, and then you never see them again, you don't know what happens to them. And that is so frustrating to me to think, you know, "Are we doing any good here?" Every day I ask myself – well not every day, but frequently I ask, "What am I doing here, is this making a difference? is this making a dent?" But I feel compelled to do it anyway, even though I question whether it is or not, you know? I have to! It's like I have to!

In the end, despite questions, the power of the events that transpire along the US-Mexico border are enough, combined with the powerful community formed by No More Deaths, to keep Mary coming back. In response to her comments, Art makes an astute observation – despite the fact that the work may sometimes feel like a drop in the bucket, it carries meaning that extends beyond the individuals who drink the water left by volunteers or have their feet bandaged in the desert or Nogales. As Art says, the work is important simply because volunteers bear witness to the events that take place.

Aaron also expresses similar thoughts about how work on the border can be enraging, in a way that resonates with both the indignation expressed by Mary and the war zone evoked by Jacob:

I came to No More Deaths as a summer volunteer for a week. I was here for two weeks, visited my mom for a week, and did the volunteer thing for another week. That was... Yeah, just watching the thousands of people a day walk past you who are just off the border patrol bus, fresh out of federal custody, and they are in horrible shape. They're dehydrated, many of them are hospitalizable, tons of them

have first aid needs, most of them have had their human rights abused in detention, beyond just neglect of their physical condition. So, I mean, that was stunning to me because I think... Maybe intellectually I was ready to believe that the US government was capable of mistreating people at that extreme, but I hadn't actually witnessed it before.

Aaron also references the culture created by No More Deaths as an important factor making the work accessible:

Today was the May Day march, and it's such a contrast for me, because I used to go to anti-war marches as a stranger, as an individual citizen of conscience, and it was... you know, it wasn't fun. It was sometimes emotionally overwhelming, but now when I come to marches on immigration related issues, I'm looking for my friends. And I never expected myself to make that transition. [...] You know, organizing means you get involved, well, in No More Deaths it definitely means being part of a community, people get to know you. No More Deaths is great because the volunteer programs provide a bridge. It's something you can sign up for as a stranger, you can sign up and immediately start doing direct aid work. And that was really my transition, like, anti-war organizing you come to a march and somehow there never was an obvious way to make that leap from showing up as an independent person to being part of the community. [...] I'm a huge believer in the volunteer programs that we do. Just from my own experience of making that transition that I was just talking about. I think our volunteer programs turn non-activists into activists and they turn activists into better activists, because you

get experience that makes you feel like you have something to say, either individually or collectively.

What is it about the work that No More Deaths does that makes it so attractive and accessible? Aaron notes that No More Deaths' work feels different from anti-war marches, but does not elaborate on what it is, specifically, that makes the difference. After all, there are numerous horizontally organized anti-war groups whose membership includes many dedicated, powerful activists. However, for my informants, work in the desert along the border, be it laying out water for migrants, bandaging someone's blistered feet, or documenting abuse in Border Patrol detention, is accessible and important.

Conclusions

As laid out above, there are several factors that seem to be important in the formation of an oppositional mindset for core volunteers within No More Deaths. While there is no definitive trajectory that can be traced or framework that can be constructed around these six narratives, the points in which they overlap are significant, and point to certain archetypal experiences that are conducive to a personal framing process whose outcomes reject border militarization and support migrants. Although they were manifested differently for each of the volunteers I interviewed, conceptions of fairness and justice, first-hand humanizing experiences with people who are constructed as anti-citizens, and shocking experiences on the US-Mexico border were all relevant to the development of an urge or need to involve oneself with organizations like No More Deaths.

Of course, the argument can be made that this is a theoretical non-issue: Of course border activists have a strong sense of injustice and fairness! Of course it is necessary for someone to have had a humanizing experience with an Other before deciding to work in solidarity with them! Of course this group of people who had already become involved with various “left-leaning” movements will be shocked at the militarization of the US-Mexico border! However, this dismissal of ideas and their formation as relevant to the discussion of social movements closes important paths for investigation into the ways in which movements form. While Jacob, Stephanie, Art, Mary, Aaron and Miranda all share views about the border that are shaped by the framing processes that they encountered in No More Deaths, their internal framing processes are also shaped to some extent by other events and experiences – not to mention the fact that their initial affinity with No More Deaths was informed by their prior experiences. In the case of movements like the migrant solidarity movement, which attempt to take direct action for inclusion in a cultural space that is explicitly hostile, the question of individual attachment looms large, and the process through which new frames are articulated (by the movement and by individuals) is one of the most important factors in the growth or stagnation of the movement. The statements made by Aaron, Miranda, Art, Stephanie, and Jacob have show the power of individual ideas such as the concept of fairness or justice, when combined with experiences that offer new ways to understand them.

Of course, in addressing No More Deaths volunteers as individuals, I have neglected two important and interconnected factors that are vital understanding the ideas that drive the migrant solidarity movement. First and perhaps more obvious is the nature of collective experience within a social movement organization, and the ways in which

internal framing processes affect and are affected by the framing process of the movement as a whole. The second issue, which is by all rights equally important to address, is the cultural background that influences No More Deaths volunteers. Hints of the performance of cultural memory can be found throughout the actions taken by No More Deaths volunteers – for a volunteer base heavily impacted by Catholic upbringing, the symbolism of bandaging the feet of travelers cannot be overlooked. Furthermore, the impact of various privileges – citizenship, whiteness, and education – on No More Deaths volunteers should not be ignored. The following chapter will address these issues and more, beginning an examination of the ways in which the No More Deaths puts ideas about migration into practice through structured actions, attempting to trace the relationship between the ways in which No More Deaths volunteers frame migration and the repertoires of contention that they use to put their ideas into practice, drawing these questions together by questioning how the organization’s background, both personal and collective, shapes its ideas and actions.

Navigation: Translating Ideas and Action

What is the migrant solidarity movement doing? How do volunteers navigate the many options and paths of action available to them as part of the movement? While the preceding chapters explored the locations that No More Deaths volunteers traverse in their solidarity work, as well as the framing processes that bring volunteers into this tense ideological terrain, this chapter addresses what volunteers do once they arrive. If framing processes at the individual and collective level bring volunteers to work with No More Deaths, it also stands to reason that they are similarly important in determining the tenor of the migrant solidarity movement in, as well as contributing to decisions made consciously or unconsciously about the tactics that make up the Migrant Solidarity Movement's repertoire of contention. This chapter addresses the actions that are taken by No More Deaths and the migrant solidarity movement as products of the ways in which immigrants and the various border security policies arrayed against them in the border region are problematized and framed by movement participants.

In addressing these issues, I first discuss the work done by No More Deaths volunteers, including perceptions of the direct nature of humanitarian aid work and the knowledge created by No More Deaths volunteers through their time in the desert and in Nogales. Second, I examine the kinds of knowledge required and generated by No More Deaths' work. Finally, I examine the ways personal and collective frames shape the work No More Deaths takes on.

Doing No More Deaths Work

As discussed in Chapter 1, No More Deaths' work is primarily organized through two central working groups: Desert aid (DAWG) and Abuse documentation.

Accordingly, the work No More Deaths does as an organization is focused on desert humanitarian aid projects and abuse documentation projects that take place primarily in Nogales, Arizona. While Desert aid work is connected to other organizations providing water in the desert, Abuse documentation work is coordinated with efforts in other border communities. In addition to interviewing recently deported migrants and recording their experiences of abuse while in Border Patrol custody, No More Deaths volunteers provide limited first aid and medical care to migrants, offer cell-phone calls to relatives in the United States or Mexico, and at times act as advocates for migrants in their interactions with US or Mexican authorities. While Abuse documentation is considered a vital part of the organization's mission by most No More Deaths volunteers, Desert aid encompasses the founding principles of the organization, and most volunteers consider it the primary objective of the group. Besides the bread and butter of desert work, the weekly water runs and patrols that deposit caches of water jugs in dozens of pre-marked drop points, Desert aid also deals with logistical considerations ranging from accommodating journalists or church group interested in desert work to extensive map-making expeditions intended to survey the most well-traveled migrant paths. Because Desert aid and Abuse documentation require different sets of skills and have different goals, volunteers are somewhat separated depending on which projects they focus on. While almost all No More Deaths volunteers have worked in the desert, there are not a few volunteers who

work primarily in the desert and have not spent significant time doing abuse documentation work.

Because abuse documentation work takes place in Mexico and requires interaction with recently deported migrants, abuse documentation volunteers work with groups like the *Centro de Apoyo al Migrante Deportado*⁵ (Deported Migrant Support Center, or CAMDEP), which offers free meals to deportees for the first five days after their deportation, and Grupo Beta, a Mexican government organization dedicated to aid for Mexican migrants. These collaborative efforts are necessary for successful abuse documentation work, because most interviews take place in the *comedor* or Grupo Beta offices. Collaboration by the abuse documentation working group is also necessary in order to effectively use documented reports of abuse. In addition to published material⁶, the Abuse documentation working group compiles reports of abuse that are sent to state and federal legislators and other officials, other human rights organizations working in the border region, and the office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which is tasked with investigation of complaints of abuse by Border Patrol and ICE officers. As a result of the work done to establish relationships with other organizations as well as the information gathered through the testimonies of migrants and deportees, long-term abuse documentation volunteers have a detailed understanding of the ways detention systems function, as well as an understanding of the hierarchies and interrelations of the power structure that governs Border Patrol conduct.

⁵ Center for Aid to Deported Migrants

⁶ See *Crossing the Line*, a report compiling instances of abuse documented by No More Deaths volunteers. (No More Deaths 2008)

Most of the projects that the abuse documentation working group takes on do not fulfill a discrete need for migrants, but are instead aimed at policy reforms, especially to the short-term detention system that migrants enter into once the Border Patrol apprehends them. While direct medical aid is provided by volunteers who have medical training, the abuse documentation working group is primarily concerned with strategic use of abuse testimonies as a tool to gain political leverage and further concrete political reforms. Where abuse documentation work is focused on indirect pressure towards eventual policy change, desert aid work is focused primarily on “ending death and suffering on the US/Mexico border” (History and Mission, 2004). Desert aid work is directly targeted to the greatest concentration of need, and volunteers focus on the logistics of providing water to migrants, an act that many volunteers see as direct resistance to border policies that promote migrant deaths. This idea is reinforced by issues like bottle slashing, in which caches of water bottles are found sliced or kicked open, presumably to prevent migrants from drinking out of them.

The idea that No More Deaths’ work represents a threat to the broader border regime was also reinforced for volunteers by the legal confrontation that took place in 2009 when a group of No More Deaths volunteers were ticketed for depositing water on The Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge (BANWR). Although littering on the refuge is a ticketable offense, the prosecutions of activists were widely seen as politically motivated, and heightened the sense that the work volunteers carry out is controversial and important (No More Deaths 2009, Lemons 2010). Even more serious than the ticketing of volunteers was the 2005 prosecution of two volunteers on charges of transporting an undocumented migrant, an individual in severe need of medical attention,

to a Tucson hospital (see Hellman 2008). During the most recent trial and negotiations over the group volunteers ticketed for carrying out aid work on BANWR, the need to provide desert aid despite obstacles was emphasized as some volunteers chose to continue water runs despite ongoing court proceedings.

Building Situational Knowledge

The work that No More Deaths volunteers do is directly connected to institutional and spatial knowledge and understanding. In Desert aid work, the process of mapping and measuring levels of activity on migrant trails is a key activity that volunteers use in order to attempt to be as effective as possible in responding to changing patterns of use on certain trails. In Abuse documentation, on the other hand, volunteers have developed a broad set of understandings about DHS/ICE practice, as well as knowledge about the internal power structures of government organs connected to the repression of migrants. In the desert, knowledge of the terrain migrants are crossing is absolutely necessary, and volunteers have collectively developed significant expertise navigating migrant trails, recognizing tracks, and determining whether or not an area is heavily used. Migration flows vary rapidly, sometimes shifting from week to week and month to month based on Border Patrol activity or other factors, and for an organization that attempts to go where the need is greatest and migrants are most likely to find themselves lost and dehydrated, experience and knowledge are key.

This knowledge – of what trails are active at a given moment, what routes connect and diverge, and how to get from one place to another – constitutes what Burridge calls “contested knowledge” (2009, 166). As some volunteers argue, the knowledge of trail use

that No More Deaths volunteers generate simply does not exist in any other form. As such, it represents a valuable set of information that has the possibility of being used both for and against migrants. Beyond simple statistical information gathered in the form of GPS waypoints and trail use estimates, however, No More Deaths volunteers also generate collective understandings of the spaces in which they work, naming places and landmarks both as a tool to facilitate spatial discussions and to generate a sense of belonging.

For volunteers who know how to get from Josseline's Shrine to Rock Tank, the desert has ceased to be an undifferentiated void, and has become an intelligible, identifiable space. While the desert may still be seen as a harsh space, presenting possible dangers for migrants and volunteers alike, some volunteers develop their understanding of the space to the point at which the desert becomes a space to be taken care of. Whether this means kicking rocks off of a trail and thinking of the migrant who may be saved a sprained ankle or picking up trash while on a water run, the feeling of being called to work in the desert is backed up by a base of understanding of that desert as a space to be inhabited by humanitarian aid workers.

No More Deaths' Nogales work creates a different kind of knowledge – one focused less on the physical terrain of the desert and more on the institutional terrain of Border Patrol detention facilities. Volunteers in Nogales navigate the bureaucracy of short-term detention by the Border Patrol in order to find and return migrants' belongings, and build an understanding of how detention functions through interviews with migrants. The contents of these interviews are later written up and used as leverage for interventions in border policy debates, either through complaint forms filed with the

Civil Rights and Civil Liberties branch of the Department of Homeland Security and other governmental organs, or through publication in reports like *Crossing the Line*, a policy report on abuses of the human rights of migrants while in short-term Border Patrol custody (No More Deaths 2008).

This kind of understanding is something that must be built from experience – ICE processes are difficult to make sense of, and in the case of short-term detention, unified custody standards regulating the treatment of migrants simply do not exist (Ibid). To No More Deaths volunteers doing abuse documentation work, human rights abuses of short-term detainees seem pervasive, from the denial of food and water to overcrowded cell conditions, denial of medical care, and physical and verbal abuse by Border Patrol and ICE agents. When the abuse documentation project started in 2006, No More Deaths was the only organization doing work of this kind. Because of the nature of deportation, it is difficult for accounts of abuse by US authorities to come back into the United States. Migrants who were caught crossing by the Border Patrol are often deported with nothing more than the clothes on their back, and addressing abuses – even serious accounts of beatings in detention centers – is at best a secondary concern for many, ranking somewhere after the trauma of a failed crossing attempt and the need to find a place to sleep and food to eat in a city that many have never seen before. Nevertheless, the opportunity to give testimony is often well-received by migrants who feel that their deportation is part of an unjust structure. For those facing the emotional trauma of a failed attempt to cross the border, the opportunity to have their testimony heard may even serve a therapeutic end, similar to the impact of truth commissions in the wake of other

forms of systematized violence, as described by Martha Minow in her work on responses to genocide and mass violence (1998).

Collective Framing in the No More Deaths community

While personal framings are important in bringing volunteers to work with No More Deaths, the individual's experience with No More Deaths – especially over the long term – facilitates the elaboration of deeper and more complex framing processes that address border security, immigration, detention, and deaths in the desert as a coherent system. Volunteers working in the desert or in Nogales construct collective frames demonstrated in the work that No More Deaths does as a part of their work. While testimonies about Border Patrol abuse are collected for dissemination as reports intended to change minds in the political sphere, they also have significant impacts on the volunteers who take the testimony down in the first place. Similarly, experiences in the desert interacting with migrants and Border Patrol or even stumbling across the body of a deceased migrant have unavoidable impacts on the ways volunteers think about the places in which they work, and the political situation that creates that physical/social space. At the level of individual volunteers, the impact of work with No More Deaths on ways of framing migration and border security is clearly suggest in my interviews, most succinctly summed up by Mary, talking about an abuse documentation trip she had just taken:

[I keep working with No More Deaths] because I'm appalled, I'm abhorred, I can't believe that this is happening. I'm still astonished. When I hear the story that man

told you today, I'm astonished that we can allow this to go on and nobody's paying attention. And that's why I have to [keep working with No More Deaths]. It's really pretty simple for me.

Mary's horror at a story of abuse by the Border Patrol, used to illustrate the importance she places on No More Deaths' work, also stands as an example of a crucial moment for the creation of ideas by volunteers with No More Deaths. While Mary has already had significant experience with work in the desert and in Nogales, and obviously brings her own background into her analysis of the migrant's story, it is apparent that having heard his story creates questions (why, for example, is "nobody paying attention?") that are important to the formation of ideas within the movement.

While the decision to do No More Deaths work is further driven in part by the experiences Mary was referencing, the meanings that the work holds for the volunteers that carry it out are shaped by the same experiences. As they create knowledge about the ways in which the border security system and migrants' efforts to evade it, both desert aid and abuse documentation work have impacts on the ways individual volunteers think about the information they are gathering. Jacob, for example, frames his work with No More Deaths as similar to the anti-war activism he had been previously been involved in:

[When I first came to the border,] it wasn't like I felt like I needed to drop everything, but what I saw in terms of the direct oppression of people, again in my name, and came to see the border in a way that it hadn't been described to me before, as a veritable war zone.

The comparison of the desert where No More Deaths works and a battlefield is carried through in other areas as well, from the background noise of a Border Patrol helicopter search pattern that accompanies an afternoon hike in an otherwise empty desert to the description of No More Deaths as being on the “front lines” of the immigration struggle. As Burrige writes, the increases in migrant deaths and abuses occur in conjunction with “low intensity warfare” methods against migrants (2009, 29). Several of the volunteers I worked with link personal experiences with border checkpoints, deported migrants, and Border Patrol officers in a broader framework that they see as systematically violating the rights of migrants. This way of looking at border security and migration constructs the Border Patrol and the rest of the border security apparatus as an oppressive, militarized force that is present on the border as part of a (national) governmental project that, in Aaron’s words, violates the integrity of border communities, constituting something similar to an invasion:

Part of what the issue of deaths in the desert represented was the war that the US was waging on this region's integrity. The most ironic thing to me about the border is how the international border is supposed to be about the integrity of the nation, but what it does in practice is destroy the integrity of so many more legitimate bodies, including human beings' bodies, you know? Human beings are actually physically violated by the violence that the border wall engenders and that border enforcement engenders. Very directly, Ambos Nogales is one community that is divided by the border, and there's all these holes that are broken, cut by the border. Those are the holes that to me, that I value.

For volunteers like Aaron, No More Deaths' work takes on significance that goes beyond the simple administration of humanitarian aid to people in need. In contrast to humanitarian aid in regions suffering from natural disasters, No More Deaths' work takes place in the middle of a situation that volunteers frame as being not only disastrous but also intentionally politically constructed. In this context, rather than viewing desert aid work as an act of charity, most volunteers who work on desert aid view it as an explicit act of resistance to border policies that, in the minds of volunteers, are the ultimate cause of deaths on the border.

While the theme of resistance plays out in several of my interviews, it is not the only way in which volunteers chose to think about the work that they are doing with No More Deaths. Despite the fact that he describes himself as having long since ceased to be a "church person", the Christian theme of witnessing is an important way of thinking about No More Deaths' work for Art. "One of the labels that I like is that we're witnesses. We're activists, we advocate, but we're witnesses. Every time we go to the desert, our very act of being out there. Coming to Nogales, our act of being around contributes." Miranda, on the other hand, sees herself primarily as an organizer, and she sees ideas about humanitarian aid or civil initiative as being primarily focused around building understandings and models of migrant solidarity work that bring people into No More Deaths and then turn them into organizers in a broader immigrant rights struggle. Miranda's attitude towards the power of No More Deaths' work to turn people into organizers is shared by other volunteers, and there is a collective recognition on the part of core volunteers that many individuals who work with the organization during spring break programs or spend a summer in desert camp view the experience as "life changing"

(personal communication). Ongoing conversations have focused on ways in which to leverage the national network of volunteers who have had experience volunteering with No More Deaths in order to promote solidarity with undocumented migrants and deportees beyond the border region itself, with some proposals going as far as to call for the creation of a nationwide network that would provide some form of direct solidarity to the families of deportees in the hometowns of former or intermittent No More Deaths volunteers.

Beyond the explicit work that No More Deaths volunteers do in Nogales or in the desert, the community formed by No More Deaths as a group represents an additional factor that promotes a sort of “collectivization” of the frames of the border and migrants that result from their personal framing processes. Certain pieces of information or ideas are passed between volunteers as key elements that are used to sew frames together and create a truly collective process of framing through which most of the individuals who make up No More Deaths apply their own ideas about the border and migration. One example is the way Aaron talks about his analysis of border security efforts:

[Since I started working with No More Deaths] probably my analysis has gotten more complete, I guess? [Before working with No More Deaths] I think I had some sense, I mean, my analysis is that US policy is... It's the standard, it's what everybody says. That US policy is to maintain hegemony in the hemisphere, and wants cheap labor but it doesn't want to give people, doesn't want to give labor their rights. So, illegal immigration is a way of getting something for nothing. So, it's a huge hypocrisy, and there's the whole NAFTA thing.

When he says that his analysis is “the standard” or “what everybody says,” Aaron is referring to one of the commonly transmitted key framing points that provide attachment points for other ideas about injustice against migrants. While they do not appear explicitly in my other interviews, the idea that immigrants represent a class of workers exploited by macro-scale economic systems is shared by many volunteers with No More Deaths, as is the “whole NAFTA thing” – the connection drawn by many in the migrant solidarity movement between the 1994 implementation of the North American Free Trade Act and migration of farmers and workers displaced by an economic crash caused by unrestricted importation of subsidized corn from the United States by Mexico. This type of shared frame is passed from volunteer to volunteer through the No More Deaths community, to the point where it becomes commonly accepted knowledge, referenced from casual conversation to strategy sessions. Ideas about the origins of the “immigration problem” in economic and border policy are presented in stripped-down form to short-term volunteers in trainings, and are widely used in order to justify the work volunteers do.

These frames are employed internally, as ways for volunteers to explain and think about the situations they find themselves in. While No More Deaths’ public face does mention these issues at times, it is more common for the organization to make itself visible as a provider of humanitarian aid – not a politically motivated group concerned with macro-economic and structural concerns. Within Tucson, the most visible face of the organization is probably the hundreds of white placards placed in private yards, which read simply “Humanitarian Aid is Not a Crime,” with no critique of uneven globalization in sight.

Together, the ideas about migrants and border security transmitted through the work done by No More Deaths represents a foundational part of the collective framing process through which No More Deaths creates ideas around migration. Broadly speaking, the ways individuals interpret these ideas have to do with two linked processes. First, ideas about injustices and the experiences of meeting migrants who have suffered on their way into the United States represent powerful elements of personal framing processes that allow individuals to tie their beliefs and convictions together. Second, the collective frames employed internally by No More Deaths coherent set of ideas about migration. Put together, broad ideas about economic dependency, exploitation of labor, and the nefarious intentions of border security policy provide a way for volunteers to make sense of the personal experiences that galvanize them, framing an overarching system as the cause of the individual wrongs that volunteers work with on a daily basis.

Personal Framings, Humanitarian Aid, and Civil Initiative

As demonstrated above, the work No More Deaths volunteers do and the context in which they do it has a significant impact on their ideas about migrants and the border security apparatus. However, this does not explain the ideas at the origin of the work that No More Deaths does. Chapters 1 and 3 offered preliminary answers, introducing the concept of civil initiative and documenting the importance of personal framing processes in bringing volunteers to work with No More Deaths. This section expands on the ideas introduced previously in order to offer a partial understanding of how No More Deaths volunteers have navigated to the work that they are now taking part in, avoiding other types of action that may seem equally relevant or plausible at first glance.

Civil initiative, introduced in Chapter 1, outlines the most basic ideas that steer the work No More Deaths does. Originally conceived in the 1980s during the Sanctuary movement that brought congregations throughout the United States to work in solidarity with Central American refugees, civil initiative is heavily influenced by the concept of civil disobedience, especially in its insistence on the primacy of a higher law (be it international human rights law or religious purpose) over unjust state or national laws. Because of this overlap, many actions taken within frameworks of civil initiative also qualify as civil disobedience, as those involved are arrested for their actions in violation of a law that they consider unjust. However, while civil disobedience actions are often undertaken symbolically as mechanisms to create political pressure and destabilize a social situation, civil initiative is based on the idea that if a government fails to uphold a higher form of law, it falls to the citizenry to defend those rights through their own actions.

According to its founding document, civil initiative “must be societal rather than organizational, nonviolent rather than injurious, truthful rather than deceitful, catholic rather than sectarian, dialogical rather than dogmatic, substantive rather than symbolic, volunteer-based rather than professionalized, and based on community powers rather than government powers” (Corbett 1991, 106) In the case of No More Deaths, civil initiative is understood as action to uphold the rights of migrants where those rights are ignored or removed by the border security system. By framing their actions in terms of civil initiative rather than civil disobedience, No More Deaths volunteers adopt a framework that constrains their work to direct forms of aid and solidarity. While migrants crossing the US-Mexico border may represent a civil disobedience movement on a grand scale,

asserting their right to freedom of movement, it is difficult for American citizens to directly disobey and challenge laws that can by definition never have an impact on them personally. However, civil initiative movements like No More Deaths work to remedy the faults of border policy in the most direct way possible – by providing water in a place where migrants often die of thirst. By providing a direct route to challenge perceived injustices, No More Deaths’ work gives a productive outlet to the feelings of individuals who see border policies as unjust.

The accessibility of No More Deaths’ work is an important factor in activating the personal framing processes that bring volunteers to a position from which migrant solidarity work is a sensible proposition. While volunteers have already developed a strong commitment to justice or equality and had experiences that humanize migrants or possible migrants, the volunteers I interviewed nearly unanimously cited the importance of early experiences working with No More Deaths as part of the foundation that lead them to the beliefs that they now hold. For the volunteers I interviewed, much of this accessibility is based on the direct nature of the work, and the feeling that it is possible for one to make a concrete difference in an unjust situation. In this way, the civil initiative structure of No More Deaths’ work, as well as its emphasis on direct actions, function to frame possible actions and regulate the contents and direction of the organization’s repertoire of contention at the collective level. In keeping with civil initiative’s focus on fulfilling needs that governments fail to take into consideration, No More Deaths’ desert aid work restrains itself to the simple provision of food aid. Other types of aid, including transportation for injured migrants or any direct contact with

coyotes, are avoided (see Sundberg 2006 for discussion of the decision to restrict transportation by No More Deaths volunteers.)

However, there exist other important factors that help determine the contents of No More Deaths' repertoire of contention, which are linked both directly and indirectly to the personal framing processes that volunteers go through before beginning to work with No More Deaths. First, it is worthwhile to point out the more obvious factors that impact the kind of work No More Deaths and is capable of doing: As a group of US citizens who mostly identify as white, No More Deaths volunteers not only benefit from the increased social capital and perceived legitimacy afforded them by their social position, but are actually doing work that would be impossible for a similarly sized group of undocumented migrants to do. The framing process that the volunteers I interviewed tended to pass through also has a tendency to select for volunteers who are on the upper end of the economic spectrum, particularly those who have had the resources necessary to spend a significant period of time in a Latin American country. Although almost all volunteers have strong beliefs about justice and equality that began during childhood, the ways in which these beliefs are expressed tend towards two paths: a liberal or social justice-oriented faith tradition, or some form of anti-authoritarian political ideology.

The application of broad ideological structures to migration issues simultaneously expands and constrains the actions and frames available to No More Deaths volunteers. Although all of the volunteers I interviewed and worked with articulated strong critiques of border policy, including nuanced views relating migration to trade liberalization and race, Aaron was the only one who based his actions on an entirely local critique of federal policy. His "anti-Yankee-ism" shows one of the directions which No More

Deaths could possibly take, were its members more rooted in the communities where it works. This, in turn, would allow for different framings, tactics, and organizing structures. It is not difficult to imagine, for example, an organization that would choose to emphasize the unity of communities on both sides of the border in its framing of migrant deaths, or decry Border Patrol presence as dividing communities. What No More Deaths does do is equally dependent on the individuals that compose it, and the influence of Christian symbolism can easily be seen in the ways volunteers focus on the act of bandaging migrants' feet, or the framing of No More Deaths actions as "witnessing." It is probable that these frames would not be so prominently emphasized if the group were primarily composed of first-generation immigrants, for example.

The mentioned characteristics shared by most No More Deaths volunteers have much to do with the work that the organization does, from the projects that it takes on to the ways in which it goes about working on those projects. Even within the limitations imposed by the focus of the organization on civil initiative work, there are a wide variety of tactics available to the organization. Humane Borders, another organization within the migrant solidarity movement, is an effective example, providing water in the desert, but only through stationary water stations. Another organization, Samaritans, fields patrols who carry food and water with them, but does not deposit water caches. Still other options are not being carried out by any organization currently; for example, the sanctuary movement hangs heavily over the heads of the migrant solidarity movement as a whole, as volunteers ask half-jokingly when the underground railroad ought to be started up again.

Atlases: Collecting Understandings

As has been shown in previous chapters, No More Deaths' work as part of the broader migrant solidarity movement in Arizona and nationwide has much to teach, from theoretical implications for social movement theory to understandings of how pro-migrant sentiment is developed in the U.S. While I hope that my research has revealed insights about the ideational processes that take place within the No More Deaths community, the question its broader relevance remains. No More Deaths is important in its impacts – on individual framing processes, as a symbol of resistance, as a provider of direct humanitarian aid – but in many ways, this relevance is confined to a narrow geographic area – the Altar valley south of Tucson and north of Nogales. While No More Deaths volunteers and a Border Patrol section chief agree (McCombs 2007) that this corridor is ground zero for conflict over the broader meaning of the US-Mexico boundary, the contest over meanings of immigration, borders, and militarization also takes place on a national level, as well as in countless local spaces, from border regions not analyzed here to the immigrant enclaves that exist all across the interior of the United States, from major cities to small towns across the US. While there is no space in this thesis for an analysis that would create a true theoretical integration of the ways social movements shape ideas about immigration, this concluding chapter serves to sum up the importance of my research from various aspects, connecting theoretical and descriptive components together in order to demonstrate the ways in which the research I did and the tools I used to do it may be useful in other settings, especially in order to examine immigrant-rights or migrant-solidarity movements on a broader scale.

This chapter addresses how this research can be applied on three levels, mapping out the ways that ideas, action, and politics interact along the southern Arizona-northern Sonora boundary from various perspectives.

First, I synthesize my work in its capacity as a body of descriptive and analytical work on No More Deaths itself, focusing on the insights that can be drawn from this case study and applied to movements in other spaces, focusing particularly on the ways in which direct action as a focus for movements allows for increased accessibility. I also touch on possible structural factors that permit or constrain the possibilities for framing around direct action, as well as the ways in which No More Deaths' use of direct humanitarian aid as a primary repertoire of contention straddles the line between local and trans-local forms of action.

Second, I address the theoretical relevance of my work to the broader social movement literature, specifically in the area of frame theory, addressing the ways in which my ethnographic approach revealed confluences of individual motivations and background experiences that had important results for tangible movement outcomes through the impacts they had on the mix of ideas and possibilities present within the organization as it comes together to frame its work and the space it works in. As well as solidifying the concept of the personal framing process, I question the ways in which personal or low-level framing might be used as a tool for analysis in other situations, analyzing its strengths and weaknesses as an explanatory concept useful for analysis on various types of movements.

Finally, I address the relevance of my work as a piece of socially engaged scholarship, merging the concerns of theoretical development and movement specificity

in order to begin conversations about the possibilities my work shows for other movements in other places. In addition to analysis of the ways in which the concept of the personal framing process can be (and is already) employed by movement actors attempting to create change – be it physical or ideological – I also address ways in which accessible direct action tactics might be (and already are) employed in the broader immigrant rights / migrant solidarity movements.

Together, these three ways of thinking about the question of broader relevance will demonstrate the ways in which No More Deaths proves to be a useful case study and provides a functional model for both theoretical and practical analysis, the impacts of which have the potential to change not only individual ideas, but also entire discourses surrounding borders, militarization, and immigration.

No More Deaths

As discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, the work that No More Deaths makes possible has a significant potential to provoke a shift or alignment in individual frames, particularly in the cases of individuals who have already reached a certain threshold of awareness through their own processes of accumulating and digesting ideas about the world around them. The experience of work with No More Deaths builds collective frames through which the situations encountered by volunteers are explained, rationalized, and made to make sense. These ideas – about migration, the border itself, and in some cases the nation-state system as a whole – are in all cases critical of current policies of militarization, and contradict large parts of the existing discourse about border security, immigration, and the meanings of the US-Mexico border. For long-term

volunteers, these collective frames are often adopted as part of their own personal narrative and framing process. As well as forming a component of an internal or personal framing process for No More Deaths volunteers, work in the desert or in Nogales is a compelling experience that builds on itself, necessitating more action as volunteers become more experienced and develop stronger frames for the interactions they have and the injustices that they bear witness to. The combination of these two processes – the adoption or creation of alternative ways of thinking about the issues they work on and the elaboration of a praxis that mobilizes those structures through direct humanitarian aid – places No More Deaths and the volunteers who work within the organization in the center of a series of contested terrains, be it the physical space of the border or ongoing efforts to redefine that physical space according to different ideological concerns.

As I argued in Chapter 3, individual framing processes can be identified as taking place for No More Deaths volunteers over varying time periods, incorporating several common elements found in the stories of most core volunteers. These elements include a long-standing commitment to justice, fairness, or equality, a past experience that allows volunteers to recognize empathy with Mexican or Central American migrants, and an initial experience working with No More Deaths that proved to be shocking and accessible. As I argued in Chapter 4, continuing work with No More Deaths has a tendency to reinforce frames of injustice that volunteers draw on to explain their initial experiences with migrants. Furthermore, collective experiences shared within the No More Deaths community help disseminate broader, fundamental ideas that assign causality and blame for conditions on the border, from political analyses that link the causes of migration to economic and foreign policies on an international level to readings

of Border Patrol strategy as intentionally structuring enforcement policies in order to use increasing deaths in the desert as a deterrent to future border crossers.

My analysis places the direct nature of the work No More Deaths is doing at the center of its appeal to volunteers who feel that their actions can have real, individual impact in a way that is not always possible within indirect campaigns for political change. While only a few volunteers talked explicitly about the differences between their experiences in indirect work and their experience working with the organization, No More Deaths' policy of working in the specific geographic spaces where migrants are most exposed in order to provide the timeliest of direct aid had a clear impact on volunteers, from Aaron's first experience in Nogales with recent deportees to Jacob's first experience in the desert. In Jacob's case, this first experience led him to draw connections between the situation on the border and anti-war activism that he was already engaged in, and while he continues to be involved in actions across a variety of issues, he made it clear that work in the desert was inspiring in its directness. In work opposing the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is nearly impossible for American nonviolent demonstrators to position themselves on the battlefield itself. When it comes to the campaign being waged against migrants, however, it is possible for Jacob to stand on terrain that he considers a battlefield, and to use that position to directly resist policies that enact structural and physical violence against migrants.

While the ability to directly access the geographic space in which injustice takes place is an important factor that made No More Deaths initially attractive to many of the volunteers I interviewed, it is important to recognize that the construction of "spaces of injustice" is part of a process of framing grievances and solutions. While I do not intend

to make the argument that all spaces for action are created equal and that the only difference in mobilizing potential between southern Arizona and a Wisconsin suburb is the structure of ideas that has been constructed around it, it is true that before any space – be it the suburb or the Sonoran desert – can become a rallying point for social movement activity, there must first exist a structure of frames marking the space or those who traverse it as suffering from a grievance, and indicating actions through which the grievances can be rectified.

In the case of the Sonoran desert, there exist significant barriers to the elaboration of this type of frame, as addressed in Chapter 1. Dominant discourse marks the spaces No More Deaths works in as dangerous to US citizens both in a local sense, through a fear of border crossers as possible drug smugglers or criminals, and in the sense of the border as an unsecured threat to the security of the nation itself through the flow, real and hypothetical, of drugs, migrant workers, and terrorists, across the boundary. Nevertheless, the official rhetoric of border control has a significant positive impact on the ability of No More Deaths volunteers to frame their work in an accessible way. The Border Patrol enforcement apparatus that has been created and mobilized as part of the effort to define and enforce the nation's southern boundary is one of the primary antagonists labeled in No More Deaths' framing of events, and in many ways makes No More Deaths' framing easier by creating a polarized environment in which it is difficult to be oblivious to border issues or immigration.

In the aforementioned Wisconsin suburb, where issues of migration are not so polarized by a clearly visible border security apparatus, it is undoubtedly more difficult to frame a movement in solidarity with those suffering the impacts of US border politics.

While immigration enforcement takes place nationwide, including networks of unmarked detention centers nationwide (Stevens 2010, Malone 2008), it is difficult to create powerful frames and build a sense of urgency around a grievance that is not widely recognized, especially when the intent is to create a movement in solidarity with migrants or other marginalized groups.

In fact, No More Deaths' success in bringing in volunteers from outside Tucson can be at least partially traced to the fact that immigration work on the border conveys a sense of urgency that is hard to develop elsewhere, and many volunteers who come to Tucson with at least some experience of working with immigrant rights organizations in their hometowns do so in part because it is easier to see a positive impact for one's work when that work takes place in a location that is already framed in specific ways, whether those frames place it as ground zero for the immigration problem or a war zone in which serious and systematic human rights violations are committed.

Interestingly, the location and accessibility of No More Deaths' work has much to do with who makes up the organization and who takes part in its work. No More Deaths' spring break volunteer programs have to turn away large numbers of potential volunteers, simply because there are not enough local volunteers (even including the many volunteers who have relocated to Tucson in the long term) to provide infrastructure and support for the many individuals interested doing humanitarian aid work on the border. The question of how to encourage these volunteers to return home committed to organizing for migrant rights in their own communities has been a recurring theme for No More Deaths, and a nationwide network of volunteers who have worked with No More Deaths in the past remains a dream of many organizers. Many long-term volunteers have

come to an understanding that education is a significant part of No More Deaths' mission, representing one of the main ways in which volunteers see themselves as taking actions that go beyond mitigating the symptoms of anti-migrant border policy and begin to do movement building work toward broader political change.

As a tool for education, No More Deaths' strategy of direct humanitarian aid straddles a line between local and trans-local action. As an organization, No More Deaths serves multiple roles through the simple actions of leaving water in the desert or recording the stories of deportees. No More Deaths volunteers not only provide direct assistance to migrants in an attempt to prevent deaths, but also resist US border policies as a visible group of US citizens presenting an alternative way of thinking about borders, immigration, and national interests. Various media coverage of the work volunteers do (Fletcher 2010, Lacey 2010, Moser 2003) function to spread these alternative framings indirectly, but volunteer programs are more relevant to this study, as well as receiving more attention from No More Deaths' core volunteer group. Miranda, who identifies her primary role as that of an organizer attempting to put together a broader movement in support of migrants, puts a significant emphasis on the importance of short-term volunteering. The exhortation that short-term volunteers organize in their own communities to inform the public about border issues or work on immigrant rights work in their own communities is always part of the structured activity that volunteers take part in during spring break or summer volunteer programs. As a result, many short-term volunteers do commit to some form of work on their return home.

All in all, the work No More Deaths does as a relatively small group working with an almost entirely volunteer staff is a testament to what is possible given a sufficiently

dedicated group of people. As previous chapters have demonstrated, No More Deaths' emphasis on the development of individual framing processes is a crucial component not only of its ability to perform an in-depth form of movement outreach, but also its ability to maintain a dedicated core of volunteers who are willing to spend significant portions of their day, week, or year on solidarity work.

Theoretical Contributions

I have argued above that No More Deaths, as part of the migrant solidarity movement, displays important characteristics that make it a useful example to be examined in the context of other developing movements. This section will synthesize the theoretical contributions of my research, solidifying the importance of the personal framing process as a way of looking at individual attachment to movements and examining ideational processes. In Chapter 2, I argued that the ways in which individuals pass through framing processes and change their own personal worldviews is a key under-examined concept in social movement theory.

Personal framing processes are particularly useful in examining the low-level work that leads to the growth of a movement, and deserve significantly more theoretical attention. This is especially true of when small numbers of movement participants take controversial positions, and in movements where the active participation of a few additional members has a tangible effect. "Framing" as an unspecified process all too often serves as a catch-all term for work within movements that has to do with the production, transmission, adoption, or transformation of ideas, as scholars in the social movement field have noted (Oliver and Johnston 2000; Snow and Benford 2000).

The primary theoretical contribution of this study rests in its use of ethnographic data to provide analysis of the low-level factors that bring single individuals to work in the controversial or contested terrains often occupied by social movements. While theorists working within the political process tradition of social movement theory identify factors that are critically important to the initiation, development, and growth of movements, their analyses tend to focus on structural factors and the collective work movements do, while paying less attention to the drama, emotion, and individual determination that bring participants to take part in movements (see Jasper and Goodwin, 1999, Jasper 1997).

As mentioned above, No More Deaths is an excellent example of a movement in which strong individual attractions are vital factors for the success of the movement, for a variety of reasons. First and foremost is the question that has proved daunting to theorists of collective action for decades: What convinces individuals to deviate from the norm and take contentious collective action? This question becomes even more vexing for theorists who assume that movement actors are inherently rational when it involves movements like No More Deaths.

No More Deaths is also a natural fit for analysis of individual motivations because of the direct form of its work, which impacts on the way in which the organization must be approached from a theoretical perspective. No More Deaths' work does not require the critical mass of a protest movement to be meaningful. While anti-war movements may mobilize tens of thousands of protesters on coordinated days of action towards broad political goals, and the struggles of feminist or queer movements working in the even more fluid terrain of cultural norms fight thousands of small battles simultaneously, No

More Deaths' work is in a way much simpler: each bottle of water picked up by a migrant on their way north is a small victory, and the act of offering first-aid and taking testimony from deportees has a visible impact, if only on one individual. Because the movement does not require a minimum number of participants to have some measure of success, and depends instead on the cultivation of knowledgeable volunteers ready to donate their time and energy, the attachment of one individual to the movement has a greater impact than the addition of one more body in a protest march. As noted above, one of the goals held by No More Deaths as an organization is to change the ways short-term volunteers view the border. This represents an explicit commitment on the part of the movement as a whole to alter individual frames, providing yet another level for analysis of the interactions between collective and personal framing processes in the No More Deaths community.

My research, making use of in-depth interviews with several No More Deaths core volunteers, revealed several important commonalities between the volunteers engaged with the organization. Put together, these commonalities represent a pattern that appears to be predictive of the group's norm. Beside surface demographic similarities between volunteers, my research shows that most also share key life experiences or beliefs, including a deeply ingrained sense of justice and fairness, experiences that helped them to humanize Latino migrants, and a conceptual framework that structures their inclinations toward justice and fairness through religious training or through a secular anti-authoritarian belief system. Most volunteers agreed that their ways of thinking about justice and fairness were impacted both by their experiences in Mexico or Central America and their initial experiences with work on the border.

The ideas that volunteers bring with them as they come into the movement have an impact on the and beliefs that they will take out, and as such serve as guiding forces that push the organization to work in a certain direction. While work with No More Deaths leads to the adoption of certain collective frames, most volunteers come to the movement understanding migration through a set of frames that are then solidified or tweaked due to their experiences working with No More Deaths. None of the volunteers I interviewed had experienced a dramatic change in their ways of thinking since beginning to participate in the movement, although most agreed that their experience had made them more knowledgeable and given them new ways to think about migration and enforcement.

The lines of similarity among volunteers come together and have significant impacts on the ways in which volunteers work with No More Deaths and the work the organization is capable of doing, as well as its structure. The work No More Deaths does is heavily connected to the backgrounds of the people who carry it out. Most of No More Deaths' work can be described in two ways – as of direct action, as it is termed by analysts like Burrige (2009), or as witnessing, a term used often by religious volunteers. Taken as a whole, No More Deaths' work contains elements of both types of work. By leaving water in the desert, volunteers are eschewing traditional political channels and directly resisting enforcement structures that commit structural violence against migrants, in the best tradition of direct action taken against injustice. However, the emphasis on No More Deaths as a “humanitarian presence” on the border and the work done when volunteers come into contact with migrants fits well with the understanding of witnessing

elaborated by Art, who sees value fact that, as American citizens, No More Deaths volunteers are bearing witness to the injustices committed in their name.

No More Deaths' nonhierarchical structure is, at least in theory, an outgrowth of its members' commitment to equality and the elimination of hierarchies between individuals. While some volunteers, particularly those with more anti-authoritarian leanings, have substantial criticisms about the true level of adoption of nonhierarchical practice within No More Deaths' structure, there is a sense that consensus-based decision-making processes are the organizational tool most compatible with No More Deaths' mission.

While there are definite links between the personal framing processes identified above and the structure and form of No More Deaths' work, the organization's basic goals and structure as an institution are largely handed down over time and are not usually up for substantial revision. However, the impacts of individual framing processes are also visible in the type of work that volunteers are and are not willing to do. The result is that for many volunteers, migrant lives become in many aspects nonnegotiable, and volunteers threatened with legal action for leaving water on Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge land were willing to not only ask openly to be ticketed in a symbolic gesture meant to challenge legal prohibitions of their type of humanitarian aid, but were in several cases willing to risk repeat legal proceedings by continuing to perform water runs on the Refuge. Not all volunteers were willing to take part in this instance of civil disobedience, but the volunteers who put themselves at risk of legal action did so with the conscious idea that the prevention of migrant deaths trumped their own personal needs.

While personal framing processes gave volunteers the ability to place humanitarian aid as a priority over their own well-being, they also limit the paths available to the movement. It is probably because No More Deaths volunteers are primarily white and the majority of their experience working with immigrants puts them in positions of power that it has not been until recently that No More Deaths has begun to develop connections with Latino-based organizations in Tucson that do work around immigration. Internally there has been a consistent ongoing dialogue within No More Deaths about the meaning of its solidarity with migrants, interrogating its role as a “white savior,” or a group of privileged white activists intervening in other people’s lives, and creating protocols that constrain volunteers in their interactions with migrants, especially in order to prevent volunteers from acting in a coercive manner towards migrants met in the desert. In all of these cases, the personal framing processes that volunteers went through are important factors that limit, expand, or guide the kind of work that volunteers are willing or able to carry out.

The theoretical utility of the personal framing process as a theoretical concept is not limited to No More Deaths or other direct action organizations. For any social movement whose actors make up a slice of the broader population, it is useful to examine not only the demographic features of the people who make up the movement, but also the experiences and processes that shape them. After all, as this study shows with regard to No More Deaths, collective framing processes taking place within movements rarely reverse existing beliefs, but instead transform or solidify them. For scholars interested in tracing the genesis of movements prior to their first manifestations, the backgrounds of

individual movement participants are a crucial resource for analysis because of their capacity to illuminate the ideas that serve as precursors to eventual movement framings.

Nevertheless, personal framing processes are not universally useful theoretical tools. While they may be integral to analyses of small, marginalized movements, or when dealing with situations where a small number of movement members can have a significant impact. In other situations, such as spontaneous uprisings, mass-scale protest movements, and self-interested movements, it is possible that the usefulness of the personal framing process as an explanatory concept decreases. However, this does not diminish its importance – even in the case of a self-interested movement, it is necessary for movement actors to first come to elaborate a grievance or possible solution before acting, and individual-level examination of the background leading to that ideational development may still be useful in explaining the genesis or direction of a movement.

Futures

This study has significant implications not only as a piece of theoretical literature describing a new concept to be employed in the analysis of movements, but also as a piece of socially engaged work that sheds light on some the effective and novel ideas developed by No More Deaths. While this work itself cannot go into detail in applying the lessons learned from No More Deaths to other movements, I hope to use this small section to begin the conversation about the ways No More Deaths could inform the practices of social movements working in other areas on other issues.

Perhaps the most important feature of the praxis employed by No More Deaths is its emphasis on direct aid as a tool for resistance. As noted above, frames that place the

border as “ground zero” for struggles surrounding migration, as well as the visible physical and structural violence of border interdiction efforts, facilitate movement framings that emphasize urgency and draw participants in. While it may be difficult or impossible to replicate this political situation in spaces outside the border zone, it is not difficult to imagine a migrant solidarity movement taking place in an urban area that focused on providing aid to the families of deportees, building its frame for urgency around local areas that have experienced high levels of deportations. Further, the experiences of No More Deaths provides useful insights for other movements confronting border policies, such as the European “border camp” movement that uses physical presence on international borders in a decidedly different way (see Alldred 2003). Additionally, it is useful to note that direct action can serve as an effective tool for building accessible movements that ensure that whenever anyone participates in the movement, they can feel that they have accomplished a tangible goal, and had a measurable impact on the world around them.

The second important idea that can be taken away from this study is the extent to which No More Deaths volunteers intentionally work with the personal framing processes of short-term volunteer experiences. Although theorists have been slow to begin the examination of where and when movement participants transform their previously-held ideologies, groups like No More Deaths spend significant portions of their yearly budget on the project of social transformation through a slow project of education, inviting teachers and students from around the United States to work in Arizona,, building new ideas about immigration as they work in the desert or Nogales,

Sonora. It is clear that No More Deaths and other groups recognize the power that can be gained by changing the minds of a dedicated group of supporters.

The conclusions that can be drawn from this study of the processes through which individuals develop frameworks of ideas are relevant to the migrant solidarity movement and, more broadly, to American immigration politics. First, the impact of intercultural experiences shared by the volunteers I worked with is not to be taken lightly. In fact, I believe that this kind of experience forms the basis of the solidarity shown by No More Deaths volunteers toward migrants who they don't know and whose fates they will not share. Statistics about deaths crossing the border, deportations, or numbers of undocumented migrants in the United States take on entirely different meanings depending on the level of personal experience one has with the people those statistics are referring to. The phrase "illegal alien" creates a ready-made faceless quantity, one that is hard to reconcile with experiences that demonstrate the possibility of empathy and mutual understanding across borders. These kinds of experiences, and the human connections that they initiate, could almost be said to be a prerequisite for work in solidarity with migrants. In the terms of long-term political change, this kind of education is often overlooked by groups attempting to change attitudes about immigration. My research, on the other hand, shows that basic intercultural experience is a primary building block for more involved work on behalf of immigrants.

Together, the development and elaboration of a commitment to fairness or justice, experiences that allow for the humanization of migrants, and initial experiences with the accessibility of solidarity work on the border represent a coherent process through which ideas are shaped and generated at an individual level. In this case, the outcome of this

framing process is a way of thinking and acting in response to immigration across the US-Mexico border that is dramatically opposed to dominant ideas about border security. This kind of opposition is no small feat, and deserves recognition on a larger scale: Not only are certain US citizens discovering or inventing critical ways of thinking about border security, but the systemic critique that they have developed is also leading them to take action in solidarity with people who they would otherwise never have to interact with. Although the actions No More Deaths takes are not directly intended to combat nativism or anti-immigrant sentiment, the paths that brought No More Deaths volunteers to solidarity work show the power ideas can have to change attitudes toward immigrants, and begin to illustrate the work that must be done on a broader scale if the migrant solidarity movement is to truly reframe the meaning of justice when it comes to undocumented immigrants.

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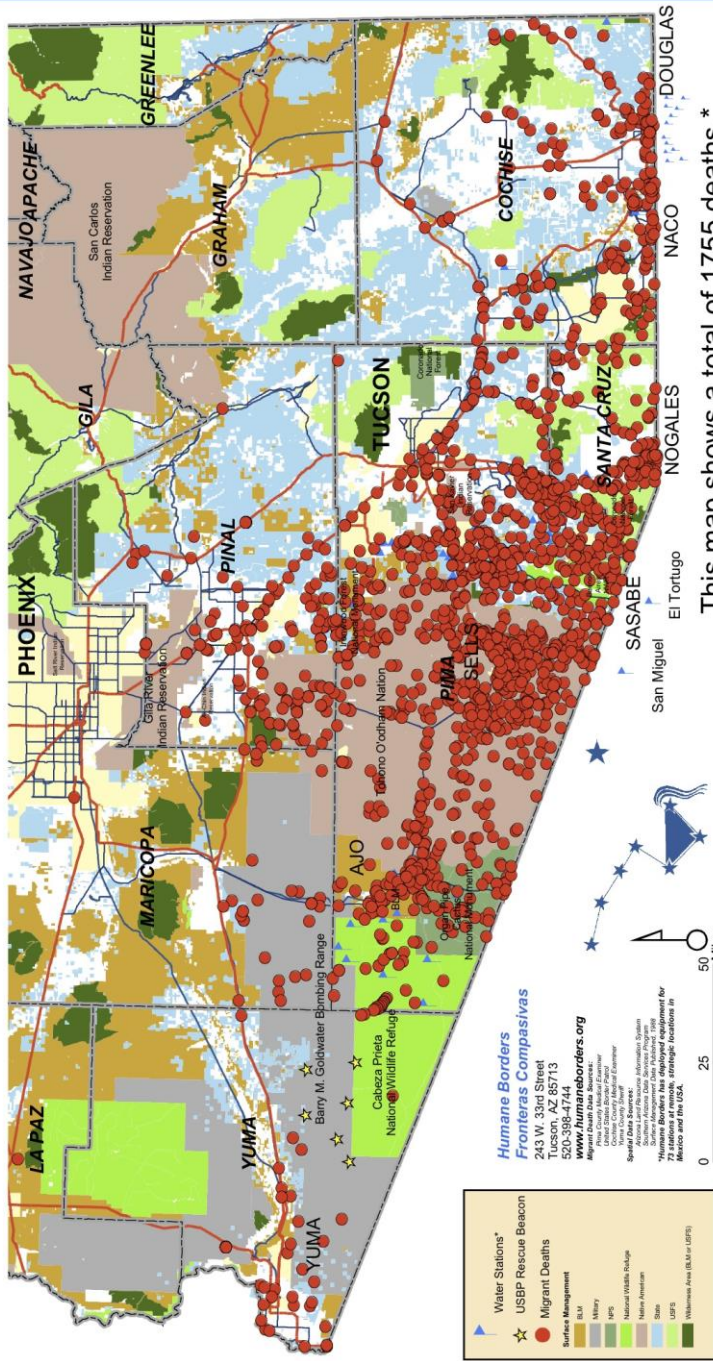
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Appendix 1 Humane Borders Maps

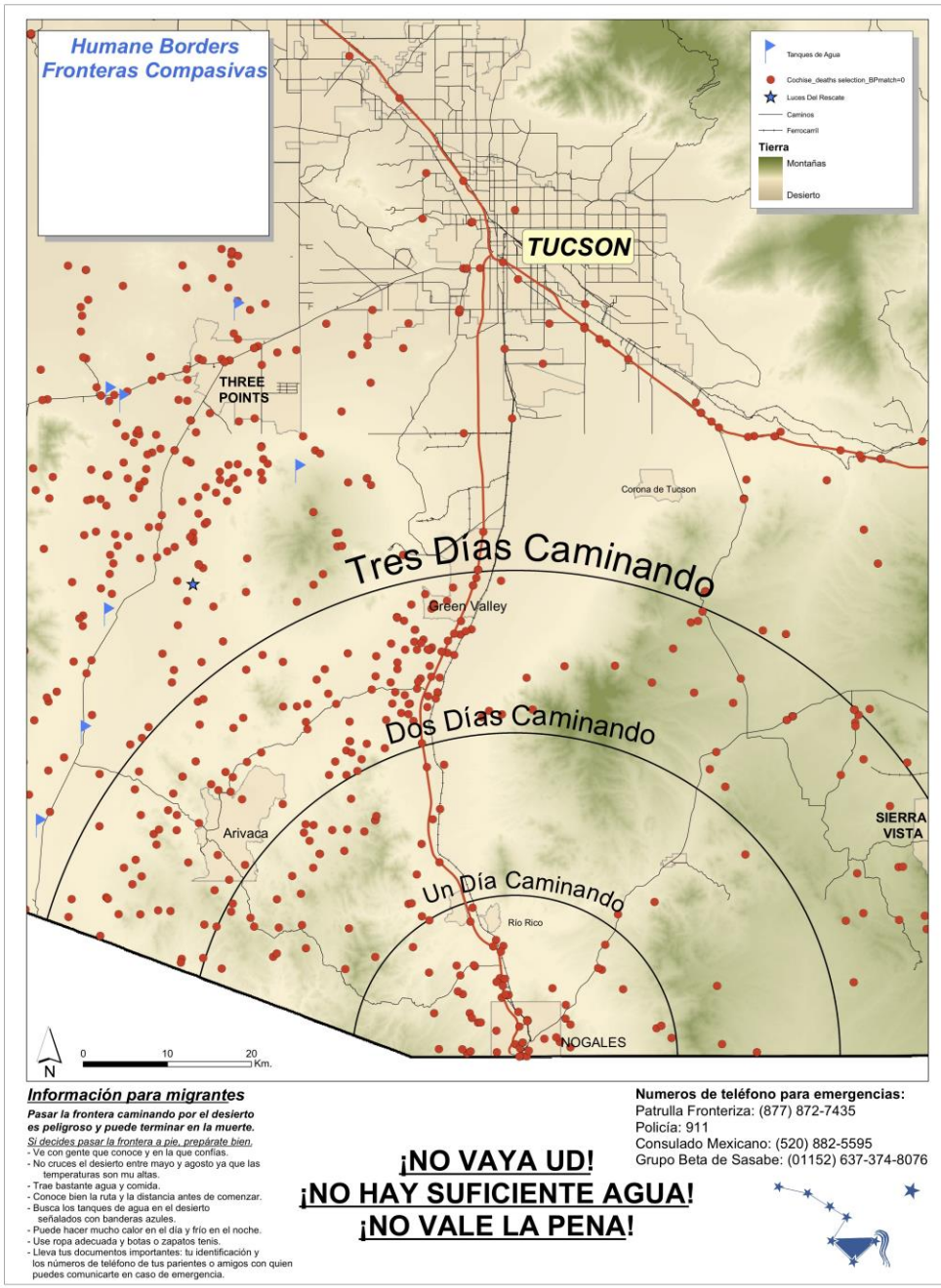
1999 - 2009 RECORDED MIGRANT DEATHS, USBP RESCUE BEACONS, AND HB WATER STATIONS



This map shows a total of 1755 deaths.*

Some points indicate more than one death.

*The map reports deaths recorded by the Pima County Medical Examiner's Office, United States Border Patrol, Cochise County Medical Examiner's Office, and Yuma County Sheriff between October 26, 1999 and October 28, 2009.



Appendix 2

No More Deaths Research Protocol

Background

This protocol is designed for researchers who wish to conduct research with No More Deaths in order to ensure a mutually beneficial relationship and to preserve the integrity and accuracy of the historical record. It is not designed for those whose research depends only upon our public documents: the website, press releases, the listserv, and similar sources. Similarly, it is not intended to discourage individuals within No More Deaths from speaking with researchers. Instead, this protocol is directed towards researchers engaged in participatory-action research and those who attend trainings, meetings, spend time at No More Deaths sites, or other NMD activities or patrols and otherwise benefit from the work of NMD. All researchers are asked to identify themselves as such at all NMD sites and events, including at weekly meetings, as new or returning volunteers may be present. Researchers who are not present in southern Arizona but who wish to go beyond the public record in incorporating NMD into their research are asked to provide specific lists of questions so that NMD members can efficiently answer (either through interviews or in written form) the queries in the ways that will be most helpful to the researcher. In the case of interviews, NMD will also request a copy of notes or transcripts for our archives and in order to be able to verify their accuracy. The protocol draws heavily on university and federal guidelines designed to guide “human subjects research” and on those protocols designed for research in indigenous and grassroots communities.

Research Protocol for No More Deaths

In order to be considered eligible for the opportunity to conduct research within No More Deaths, potential visiting scholars are asked to consider the broader implications and context of their work. Given this, we ask that you submit a research proposal. This should include:

- a complete list of past work on immigration and the border (and, if requested, copies of these for our archives)
- a detailed explanation of research methods, and how these methods might affect the work of No More Deaths (beyond a willingness to minimize the impact on the time of NMD members and volunteers)
- a letter of intent outlining the reasons you wish to use our movement as a research site, beyond a general sympathy with the mission of No More Deaths
- an analysis of the potential political uses of your research to support and/or undermine human rights organizing on the border
- a detailed identification of any outside funding sources
- an overview of how your research with No More Deaths may:
 - benefit the mission of No More Deaths
 - benefit the migrant rights and anti-militarization movements

- make new resources available to No More Deaths and/or the movement in terms of training, stipends for research assistants, material resources, grant development, or other areas which will further its work

Recognizing the importance of the historical record of grassroots movements along the border, in return for the opportunity to conduct research within the organization, No More Deaths reserves the right to review the accuracy, content, completeness and political potential of all research notes, transcripts, materials, and final manuscripts. All data and analysis should be made available to NMD prior to its circulation.

Additionally, NMD reserves the right to use all information, data, and analysis produced by visiting scholars in collaboration with NMD in our own written, filmed, and recorded materials. We will, of course, credit the author.

During the research process, visiting scholars are asked to keep designated No More Deaths members informed of the data collection process and results and any changes in research or analysis protocols. All interactions with migrants must demonstrate the utmost respect. Photographing migrants is not encouraged; in the rare instances in which photos might be taken, permission must be sought and granted by the migrant and the site coordinator in circumstances where the migrant is in a position to refuse permission (this generally means after all aid had been given – see the NMD media and volunteer protocols).

Finally, we request that researchers provide NMD with copies of all related public talks and published research related to their work with NMD so that we may maintain a complete archive.

Upon completion of the above, your full research proposal should be sent to research@nomoredeaths.org

Appendix 3

Selected Interview Transcriptions

Introduction

The following are excerpts from my transcribed interviews, arranged in no particular order. The decision to include such extensive and detailed interview data as part of this thesis was taken after much consideration, and was ultimately based on my desire to maintain the integrity of my interviewees' narrative voice. While I have elaborated on specific elements that can be found within these narratives, the individuals I interviewed are as much producers of knowledge as I am, and they deserve to be read.

Jacob

Could you describe yourself briefly?

I'm 55 years old, and I was born into a conservative Roman Catholic family, in Erie Pennsylvania, a very Roman Catholic city. I'm of Polish, German, some Russian heritage, and working class, a blue collar family. I think I'm one of the first to have a college education in my family. Chronologically, I think that's fair to say. My father was a combat veteran in the 2nd world war, and my mother finished high school. I'm the oldest of 6 children, which is pretty typical for a catholic family, we were all born within a few years of each other, and at this point in our lives we share almost nothing politically, they ask how I turned out this way and I ask how they turned out that way. (laughs.) For some of us that's antagonistic, for the majority it's just a curiosity.

Are there any periods in your upbringing that you think were especially influential in making you turn out to be the person you are now?

In hindsight many of us can probably look back and see pivotal relationships or times, but we don't see that on the path, it's not like turning the corner with a map and going down the road, we're just going down this road and we look back and say "Oh, that was a significant period." 1968 was that for me. It was the year when I finished 8th grade and moved to a boarding school away from home and I went away from my parents never to see them again on a day-in-day-out basis, except during summers and vacations. [...] But that April Martin Luther King was killed. My mother was a big supporter of Dr. King, and taught us from a very early age that we were all equal, as she understood it. She was an underdog growing up in a poor area in a Catholic family, in a situation, a relationship that wasn't considered to be sanctioned by the Catholic church, so she knew the underdog role, and she did seem to take up the cause of people who were perceived to be underdogs - and still are! - mentally ill people. We lived in a mixed-race neighborhood, and she used to take us to civil rights marches. So Dr. King's death, for those of us who have memory of that time, was pretty shocking. [...] But then that summer, Robert Kennedy was killed. I wouldn't say that man was a role model for me, but during his campaign I remember that there was an energy like Obama during this campaign, and there he was gunned

down. That... The very end of that year, a man I didn't know of at that time, Thomas Murton died. And what I do know is that a lot of people in the seminary were devastated. So in that period of time, three very influential - albeit male - figures of social change in this country, abruptly, two by murder and one by accident, Murton by electrical accident, electric shock. I felt like my world was turning inside out, because you could hear in the background of these deaths was the drumbeat of Vietnam, and unlike now, a lot of that was in the papers.

And how did your family react? How did you react?

My father said war was wrongheaded, and he wasn't into resistance at all, but I remember in my early ears, the Catholic nuns and this constellation of people who said killing is always wrong. Abortion wasn't so much on the hot plate then as it became thereafter, but euthanasia, capital punishment, killing was always wrong. When I began hearing that there was church support for the war, I began raising the question to my authority figures, and I was told that there were exceptions. I responded that it was too late to tell me that there were exceptions, because I believed what they had taught me in the beginning, it had sunk in and it had made sense. So when I look back, the seeds of my activism were sown by my parents, even though those seeds didn't seem to land in the same kind of soil with my siblings, for whatever reason, and who knows. [...] I left the seminary for a variety of reasons, trouble with authority figures, which has dogged me and authority ever since. (Laughs) [...] My spiritual director wouldn't back me up when I wanted to apply for conscientious objection when I turned 18 and was draft eligible, even though it was the very end of the war. So I left, and went to West Virginia University and got a degree in social work, and I worked for the state of West Virginia until the mid 70s.

So, have you been pretty much involved in social justice work since then?

No, I would say that my personality tends towards social service work. So when I graduated from the U, I got a job with what was then called the West Virginia Department of Welfare as a children's protective service worker, which meant that I was working with abused and neglected children, and ultimately foster care. I burned out on it very very fast, it was very very difficult and I was not prepared. I ultimately transferred over to the department of Education and worked with people who had multiple... visually and hearing impaired, with vocational rehabilitation. That was during the height of the Reagan years, and that was significant to me because I loved the work that I was doing and I loved the people I was working with, learned a lot from their courage, their perspective. But Reagan came with this thing called the safety net, and I won't say that everything we have today came from Reagan, but he certainly was a drum major for the new economics, [...] So, with my caseload, people who were substantially visually and hearing impaired on both counts, my funds were cut. And it was a real wake-up call, real cold water in the face. I had thought that my budget would be immune. And the question invariably rises, if the people who are deaf and blind are not truly needy, who is? So that made me begin on a path of reflecting on my work and feeling hey, I'm not really big on this whole client-counselor relationship, that whole paradigm wasn't really speaking to me. And at the same time as my client service money was being cut, my salary wasn't,

none of my benefits were, and we were in line to get increases in salary just as usual! So it's very interesting how the bureaucracy is going to take care of itself, but the services are secondary.

So I started looking for community, and that's really what I wanted to do... And how did I come to that? Well, I came from a large family and I had lived in a seminary community. I knew that such things existed, but I didn't know any in particular, and I thought here, I'm in my late 20s, I had next to no college debt because it was a different time, I graduated college owing a thousand dollars.

I lived with a friend, I moved up to New York to be with my girlfriend at the time, so there was a little romance involved. I heard that there was a soup kitchen, and I started volunteering at the soup kitchen, it was called Loaves and Fishes, in Ithaca New York. And I began to meet people – the term you used before, activists - or people who were volunteering at the soup kitchen. And at the time there were actions going on, anti-war actions at regional military installations. This was the mid 80s, so Seneca Army Depot, which is near the famous women's encampment at Seneca falls, lot of history there, and Griffith's air force base in upstate NY, in Rome NY, was the site of numerous actions. During that time I started volunteering [...] and I really started learning about Central America, and I started attending meetings to educate myself, you know. [...] I've been taught that we really have a responsibility to educate ourselves, to educate our conscience as well as our minds. Even though I got a bachelor's degree in social work, where I really learned about people and life was on the streets, in the shelters, in the drop-in centers, and in the jails and some of the prisons in this country.

And when did you make your first connection to Latin America?

So, I was volunteering in this soup kitchen and these actions were coming down, and there was an opportunity to go to Nicaragua at that point and ah, a bishop from down in Nicaragua had put out a plea because he had some connections in New York, in upstate NY, for volunteers to come down and help with the cotton and the rice and in particular the coffee. And later it involved in the major... the international brigades. There were the international brigades in Cuba, but these were the international brigades in the mid - 80s so, I pulled some money together and went down to Nicaragua. And I can remember riding down to Miami with a bunch of activists, and I was a neophyte, and they were talking about civil disobedience and civil resistance and all these things, and I can really remember being in debate with them, and saying, you know, I really think that just pisses people off more than anything else, and there are other ways in which we can affect social change. We agreed to disagree. And my eyes were just really really opened in Nicaragua. You know, when I saw what people down there knew about US... and they knew about US government and US policy way more than I did, and I could see how it was for their survival that they knew those kinds of things. So I got educated and I saw how the people were responding to it. And I was actually furious. Partly furious because I should have known this! [...] So I came back with a completely different attitude, and it may not have started out with the best of energy, angry energy, but I think civil

disobedience was absolutely essential! So there was kind of a quick turnaround, but it was a careful process. [...] At the time a major action was being planned for memorial day weekend of 1984 at Griffiths air force base, and I found this really gentle group called the family and children's group, and although I was neither, I didn't have a family and wasn't a child, I was welcomed into this group, who really carefully walked through what civil resistance, civil disobedience meant for them. And there were certainly other groups that were more in your face, feminists and ... God knows, all the other different ists. But it was a very broad base, and each group could take a gate, and what happened was that at each individual gate, the whole campaign was committed to nonviolence, and after that it was how your ideology informed, if you were Christian, if you were pagan, or whatever. So we had responsibility for a gate, and we were coming from essentially a Christian nonviolent paradigm, and so I stepped across the line, and by golly... I was nervous, very nervous, but it wasn't a super tense situation. There were a lot of police, lot of military police, but when I stepped to cross that line, it felt like I stepped into a new world, it felt like I was free at last and free from fears, free from the fears of what people might think. But just a beginning, it was a first step. And as Lao Tzu says, the longest journey begins with a first step, and that journey has continued.

I wanted to put the unity into community, so that's why I joined the Community for Creative Nonviolence, in the fall of 1984, and I was able to be involved in a tent village called Reaganville across the street from the white house, that was, you know, there was the house of my former mentor, Ronald Reagan, who had convinced me, with the safety net concept, that I was going down the wrong road, staying with the state, so it's very curious, I think it's very funny in one sense, and very interesting how sometimes our lives get re-interwoven, and there we were across the street. I never did see Mr. Reagan. That led from one community to another. [...] I experimented some with resistance communities, that were almost solely focused on nonviolent direct action, and was getting arrested or in arrestable situations probably every two months for a couple of years, and I found that it wasn't nurturing me sufficiently, that I needed to have works of mercy, service, commingled or interwoven with works of resistance. So in the times of my life when I've been in a community that only did service, soup kitchen, food bank, etc, that still left me unsatisfied, so I'm pretty clear that that combination is significant.

And how did you first come to the border?

Somewhere in the midst of all this anti war stuff, a friend of mine, Scott Kerr, who was working with an organization called Christian Peacemaker Teams in Chicago and Toronto, a number of times we would bump into each other, and he would say "Jacob, you've really got to check out the border" And I said, God, we're up to our eyebrows in work here, you know, the houses of hospitality are full, we're turning people away, we're resisting, we're doing as much resistance as we possibly can, you know, I can hardly imagine taking on another cause. Then he came across the country from Douglas, Arizona, to Minneapolis to be part of the Midwest Catholic Worker gathering of that year, I believe it was '04, and he once again made the pitch, he said "Jacob, I think you need to come down and see the border." And I said "Well Scott, OK, I owe ya, as a

friend" I said "you've come all the way across the country to be a part of this action, I'll come down." So I signed up for a Christian Peacemaker Team delegation, and during the Migrant Trail Walk, it was, like so many of the other turns in the road, it was a real eye-opener. And it wasn't like I felt like I needed to drop everything, but what I saw in terms of the direct oppression of people, again in my name, and came to see the border in a way that it hadn't been described to me before, as a veritable war zone.

And did you decide to stay?

What could I do, from Minnesota, to be a part of justice and peace in that terrain? Knowing that it's all interwoven anyway, but never really planning to come down here. So I applied for CPT and did their monthlong training. They have two tiers, one is full time, and one is reservists, and the minimum expectation of a reservist is two to three weeks a year volunteer work on one of the projects. And I said the project I'll volunteer for will be the borderlands project. And in the meantime, the borderlands project ceased to be for a number of reasons, but I didn't change my commitment, I said "that's where I want to go." There are plenty of organizations working on the border, maybe I could join up with them, wearing my red Christian Peacekeeper Team hat, and at least try to keep CPT alive down here. Because, CPT is a lot like Catholic Worker in that they're doing Civil Resistance. In fact the motto of CPT teams is "getting in the way," knowing that the word "way" is, for those familiar with Christian parlance, that the Way was the original term for Christians, so instead of getting on the Way, getting in the Way. So, knowing that that was interwoven into my sense of social change, CPT really spoke to me. So, I started to come down here in the summers. I didn't come down in the summer of '06 because I was doing support for my spouse, who was at the time in prison for 6 months for SOA. But in '07 I came back down for 2 months, in '08 I came down, and I decided "I think it's time for me to move down here, and see if I can be part of creating a Catholic Worker that is specifically focused on works of mercy in the borderlands, and works of resistance. So, it grew on me, and it grew on me over time. And, I know that borders are everywhere, and people can do work on the border anywhere, but I felt acutely called on, just to the border.

Switching topics a bit, I wonder if you could talk some about what you consider your work on the border to be. What broad terms would you use to describe yourself and your work?

Well, on the one hand, words are incredibly important, obviously, and labels are terribly deceiving, so I think it's a good faith effort to try to cut to the chase of what animates a person and then let the labels fall where they may. That being said, One of the best tools for me, academic tools that I've come across [...] uses two words. Consent and Dissent. So we look at consent, and what does that mean in a political structure. Voting, voting is a form of consent. Holding a banner, having a vigil, a prayer service, having a fast - not crossing the line, but in the town square with a permit, raising awareness in that regard, organizing, petition drives, leafletting, [...] All of those go into a category of consent. [...] But if this current administration has done nothing else, it is to disabuse of the notion that the system itself is intact, and whether it's democrat or republican, the changes are going

to be modest. Voting, petition drives, etc. work within the context of the system, but do little to change the apparatus itself. When one crosses the line, when one takes the system on in however modest a way in the courts as if - "I do not agree, this apparatus does not speak to me." I choose to dissent. I do not vote. Because voting does not affect substantial change in the apparatus. I'll vote in the propositions, like the one coming up here, whether to add more money to the school system or not, but I ceased to vote for individuals. The wobblies used to use the term "we vote with our feet" - so I'm very much in terms of social change, and we do work within the system itself. But as to the consent-dissent paradigm, a Catholic Worker term, I don't know if Peter Marin, coined it, the co-founder of the Catholic Worker, he talked about building a new world in the shell of the old. So we're not talking about blasting out and burning out the system and hoping like the phoenix it will rise again, but what is it that we have in our communities, what is it that makes us human and makes us social - look at these and begin to work on those. So another catholic worker term would be personalism. Person, respect, accountability. I'm going to throw another term in, just to spice the stew: Anarchism, which is just like throwing a molotov cocktail of a word into an already busy room. It... I suppose you would not run to this conclusion, but many in society just see black bloc and post-Seattle, and anarchists and hell-raising and smashing of things and windows and fires and just see a very very narrow and really not very representative expression of anarchism. Jacques Ellul, french theologian and philosopher, wrote a number of books, not so long ago deceased, one of them was called Christian Anarchism, Christianity and Anarchism, I'm blanking on the name right now but I've got it on my shelf. He took those terms, two very loaded terms, and at root, if we were, if I were to use a label, though I struggle with the term Christian, I identify as quaker... I believe in a creator God, I read many different kinds of scriptures, and daily prayers and meditation is very integral to my sense of who I am, my faith, my action, my activism. Christian, the term, some would label me that. It's a post-Jesus phenomenon, so I don't want to be over-burdened with that. But we'll take the term Christian Anarchism, and I think in many ways that would describe who I am.

And could you describe what that set of beliefs means to you?

Dorothy Day, the other founder of the Catholic Worker movement, basically paraphrasing her, identified anarchism as taking personal responsibility for what needs to be done. And that is probably one of the best, or at least most functional terms I can think of for anarchism. And that may put me in bed with, what are the populists... the libertarians? There may be some common ground there, although I do not identify myself as a libertarian. And, for example, I was just riding my bike down the road and there's a lampshade there in the middle of the road. And cars are zooming down, veering one way or the other, and there's no law that says it's illegal for it to be there, and there's no law that says that I have to pick it up, but what does personal responsibility and accountability have me do? It would have me stop and pick it up. And I can't say I stop for every lampshade, but that is an understanding of how I see anarchism. We have responsibility for one another, and while we live in a society where some form of governance helps with the general order, the question is always whose order is it and whose law is it. And I'm not saying we get rid of all the red lights, although wouldn't it be a wonderful world in which we could look out for one another and we didn't need red lights, although we're

not there yet, but by and large we've grown into a world where "they church will take care of that, that's what the peace and social justice committee of my church is for, to take those cans down to the soup kitchen. That's what I pay taxes for, my city councilman can handle these other issues. And what we do is we avoid taking personal responsibility, for not only things that affect other people's lives, but also for things that affect our lives. So that's my definition of anarchism, and it's animated by a sense of faith responsibility, personalism, that we're all somehow one. And that if I suffer, you also suffer.

And how does that apply to the situation here on the border?

I don't think it's too hard to draw a line from budget cuts here, in every major human service program, none escaping scrutiny and cuts, and the military-industrial complex growing, growing, growing. We can read the papers, we don't have to be sophisticated analysts to realize that. So how do we live in a way that challenges that? We see it on the border, we can see it in the contracts that are handed out to Boeing and Wackenhut and other major companies, and to lawyers who are making money hand over fist, this whole operation streamline, grievously dehumanizing human beings first and foremost, migrants who are hauled through there like so many cattle. But also law, what is it, there's an anarchism talking about law. What is law, let's look at law. Essentially it's meant to protect and serve us, but we look at law and we look at what's there, and the lawyers and judges who have said "this is a sham but what are we gonna do." I have a judge who personally told me that, putting his hands up in the air and saying "you realize that the change is not going to come inside that apparatus." The wall is not going to come down by some kind of legislative - not that I want more laws and more walls - but that wall will be taken down by a people's struggle to make it clear that that wall cannot exist, won't exist. And when they, as they say with the bumper sticker, the funny bumper sticker (I have a mixed relationship with bumper stickers) "Nuclear weapons, may they rust in peace." The Berlin wall did not come down by edict, and civil rights in this country did not come down by law. The law has, and legislation has always - and it doesn't take a lot of research in US history to see - it's always been a caboose on the train of people's struggle.

Art and Mary

This interview took place in Nogales, Arizona, after working in the shelter just across the line, so it's littered with references to what we had just seen, especially a man whose leg was extremely swollen who we had taken to receive medical care. Art and Mary are a retired couple who have been working with No More Deaths since moving to Tucson in 2007. Statements are prefaced by a J, M, or L for Art, Mary, and myself, respectively, and my questions remain italicized.

L – Can you tell me a little bit about yourselves and your history, how you came to be involved in No More Deaths?

M – I'm from Chicago, originally. I'm 72 years old, I was raised Catholic, and I'm recovering from that still (laughs) – He (Art) objects to that. But my father used to say "You have to be careful, when you grow up and go out into the world, because you always go for the underdog, and sometimes the underdog isn't always right." I was always that kind of person when I was growing up, I always felt for the person on the bottom, always felt for the person on the bottom. I wasn't a real great activist all my life, but I was with Nebraskas for Peace, and they're still going. But politically I'm probably far-left, and that really doesn't mean anything, because there's a lot of different ways of being, and we all have our own way of... I mean, fiscally, within our home, we're fiscally conservative, because we've always lived within our means, but politically I would say far left.

J – I'm 68, and I was born on a farm in Minnesota - Lake Wobegon, I'd used to joke, because it's near that part of the country. And I'm the second oldest of ten children, and my religious heritage is Catholic, and in fact it was a German Catholic community almost 100%, farming community. [...] At the root of my social activism is a great deal of what was important I think in my family's view, and that is that if someone is in need you help them. And I'm sure it was biblically based, I'm sure it was, but there was a lot of encouragement when I was a youth, since I was the 2nd oldest in the family, to look out for my brothers and sisters. And I didn't realize it at the time, but that just meant "everybody." And, this was now the 50s, so when I got into High School, there was a huge emphasis at the high school I went to to get involved in social justice issues, which surprises me when I think back on it, because a lot of the people in the community when I left it became John Birch proponents, and, you know, Posse Comitatus was born not too far from where I lived, and you know, some just really awful militant anti-government organizations. [...] But the overwhelming thing that I carried through it all was "I am my brother's keeper," you know. And there was a heavy encouragement to model your life after the life of Jesus. Now, I actually went into the seminary at the age of 19 or 20, and joined a religious order that had as its mission serving the poorest of the poor. And in fact I studied in Pass Christian, Mississippi, when the civil rights stuff was going on in the 60s, and I studied in San Antonio Texas when migrant labor issues were really big. And that kind of stuff weaved itself into my life, and I've always felt like I've been around the fringes of those kinds of movements, and when I did get involved it might have been a march, it might have been writing an article, it might have been attending a lecture. But a couple of experiences that I had, I went to Mexico City in 1966 I think it was, to study Spanish. I went to the instituto norteamericano, and every day I would walk a mile, maybe a mile and a half to the school, and I'd walk through some of the poorest neighborhoods I've ever seen in my life, where women are breastfeeding their babies while holding out their hands for, you know, a couple pesos. And I was just literally shocked, because where I was living in San Antonio, you know, we had food, we had shelter, we had all the basics, you know. And then I visited an area in Mexico City where when it rained water would be up to your ankles. And there were maybe 60,000 people in that several-block area, just desperately poor. And those experiences I know, you know, kind of formed my sense of fairness or justice or the lack of it. And you know, Mary and I were... Vietnam was the era when we were becoming young adults, we were young adults. We met and got married, we met in '68 and got married in '70. We actively got

involved in some of the anti-war demonstrations...

M – We didn't pay our taxes

J – We tried not to pay our war taxes, but that backfired on us.

M – (laughter)

J – Yeah. So one way or another, we have all our lives sort of hung around or been around the issues. So when we retired three years ago – I retired, Mary was already retired. So we hadn't been in Tucson six months when we saw what was going on and were pretty astonished. I mean we were just really astonished.

M – Actually Victor – Do you know Victor?

L – Yeah

M – He was in our neighborhood when we moved in and were going around getting to know people, and we met him and his wife and we started talking, we got together and played games, and we really liked each other, and he was talking about NMD, and we asked about the signs, "What is 'humanitarian aid is not a crime' all about?" and he said "Well I belong to NMD" and I said "what's that?" So he told me about it, and I said well, it sounds really interesting, how do I find out more about it. And he said "Well, you should come to a meeting!" and I thought "What the hell is going on here?!"

L, M, J – all laugh.

M – And I thought, what are they talking about, are they talking in code? So afterwards I talked to Victor and I said "I don't really know what went on there." and he said "I'm new here too and I don't either." But, you know, I wanted to know more, because I really was very impressed with the people that I met that night. They were just very dedicated, compassionate, and knowledgeable people, so I thought I really had to find out more. And he (Art) was busy with something else on Monday nights, some class he was taking, and he couldn't come for about a month, and I said to him "you've gotta go, you've gotta go." And right away, spontaneously.

M – And we were totally unaware of the situation down there, it's like it's another world, a totally different world. The only immigration issues we dealt with in Nebraska, which was where we were living before we came here, was the meatpacking industry, you know, where they make raids and they send people back, and that's all we knew. We didn't know people were being treated like this down here. That's why I'm still involved. Because I'm appalled, I'm abhorred, I can't believe that this is happening. I'm still astonished. When I hear the story that you said that man told you today, I'm astonished that we can allow this to go on and nobody's paying attention. And that's why I have to. It's really pretty simple for me.

J – It's simple for me too. Over the years we stopped being, if you will, church people. Pretty early, actually. And what we're confronted with sometimes is because NMD is a faith based organization, although I think that's in the broadest sense, people will sometimes say, well, how does your faith, you know, support you in what you're doing. And for me that's a hard question, because faith as I define it has to do with the sort of deep discovery, the discovery of something deep within me that I then become loyal to. And if you think about that definition, it could be God, it could be fellow human beings, it could be Christianity, it could be Jesus, it could be Buddha. But the essence of it for me is that we have, all men and women, are brothers and sisters. I mean we're connected, and you see the kind of appalling treatment, apart from the politics and apart from the economics and all that, this just isn't right. One of the labels that I like is that we're witnesses. We're activists, we advocate, but we're witnesses. Every time we go to the desert, our very act of being out there. Coming to Nogales, our act of being around contributes to, you know, what we value and what we are believing here contributes to making it, you know – well, it's questioning. If we run into a Border Patrol and we ask "did these guys get food and water" - well, that doesn't happen very much anymore, you know, they don't let us do that very often if they have migrants in their custody, and we've got protocols about being really careful that we don't interfere with their work.

M – This idea of witnessing... Yes, it's that, but if we're just looking but not doing anything, I don't think that's....

J – First of all, to go to the places we're going, that takes some effort, but we're not just passively going there and saying "oh, that's interesting" - we're witnessing actively, we don't just stop there. Like if we get angry, like what we saw with Juan this morning, my first question is how can I turn that anger into change, what can we do here.

M – And so many times though, this work that we do is just... It seems like a drop in the bucket. And you meet people in the desert and you give them what you can and you help them with what you can, which is minimal, basic, and then you never see them again, you don't know what happens to them. And that is so frustrating to me to think, you know, "Are we doing any good here?" Every day I ask myself – well not every day, but frequently I ask "What am I doing here, is this making a difference, is this making a dent?" But I feel compelled to do it anyway, even though I question whether it is or not, you know? I have to! It's like I have to! It's not that we have it all figured out or anything, I don't think we do, and I think there's probably a lot more things we could do. But I'm really glad to see NMD becoming... Politics is so ugly, but I really think we have to be involved in that. Not to the exclusion of everything else though. I think really our basic need for us here is that we do the work with the people who are actually suffering, and then (laughs) if we have any energy left over then education is very important, like your group is doing and all the colleges going out. Education is vital because if people don't know what's going on, it'll never get done. And I think this is going to come from the grass roots, but I think we also have to pay attention to the political part of it, because we might... there might be somebody that is on our side that can help us with that.

J – I think the word, I think politics... I think it's unfortunate that politics is viewed as

something dirty or such a nasty venture, because politics, the definition is the art of influencing public policy. So we decided as a group, NMD decided as a group that we wanted to get involved with comprehensive immigration reform because we have something to say.

M – That other people aren't saying.

J – There are very few. You've seen this yourself, Leif, that once you get out and bounce around those trucks and put some water out in key spots... and it changes, you know what's going on on the ground here, and you know, we don't know everything that's going on, but we know how people are suffering. And we see people have died here, and we see how because it's such vast territory, government bodies can come out here in the form of border patrol or whatever, and they can be quite unaccountable, because you know, they're out there alone or in pairs, and they can...

M – They can do whatever they want, nobody knows.

J – and I'm not accusing, but once you see it I'm inclined, at least, to think that we need our voice to be known and heard in this process with coming up with a more humane law.

L – And do you think what you are doing works?

M Sometimes we don't know what we're doing, but we do it anyway in hopes that something good sticks. It's so hard to make decisions, like this Juan this morning – none of us seemed to know how we were going to get him help, but we knew he had to have it. And then he said he was there and they wouldn't take him back and we thought "Shit, we're stuck." But then we got him back and they said they would see him. Now, we'll see if they did. So... But I don't know the language, which is really frustrating, and we don't know the system. We don't know the system down here, we don't know how they work. Is it kinda haphazard, or do they have a plan...

J So much of what we do though is about developing strategies to accomplish a goal. And this is a good case in point, his leg was swelled, the initial prognosis was he's infected, he needs medication.

M Well he's gonna be on the street in an hour and a half! And what he needs to do is he needs to rest, he needs to heal.

J So what we did was we advocated. As clumsy, as awkward, as frustrating as that gets, that's what happened. We all got in the Grupo Beta truck, it turned out the driver was a fairly nice guy, but until we got to the hospital... Well, that's what I like about the way you work, Mary, is you're tenacious, you don't let go. I think I might give up a little sooner, and say "well, we don't know the system" you know.

L – And why do you think people do work like this? Why do you keep at it?

J – I'm of the opinion that all generosity, if you will, or all giving is self-serving, that in

the end it meets a need we have. And people might, people will argue with that, but I just maintain that it's a two-way street, and we wouldn't do this if we weren't getting something in return. What NMD provides is the opportunity to get involved, you know, you carry water, you put it on the trail, occasionally you get feedback that somebody's life has been saved because of it. But just the act of carrying water, putting it down, putting food down, just this morning bandaging his feet, whereas there's a lot of volunteer organizations where the result is more ethereal, you don't see it. So, the big result would be tear these walls down, comprehensive immigration reform, welcome our brothers and sisters from Mexico, figure out creatively if there are terrorists among the groups that want to be in our country working... You know, the whole fear-based, the whole "Oh, there's a terrorist who's gonna come across, we've gotta catch that one person"

M – The Cheney doctrine

J – It's such ancient and just evil thinking. We would ruin the lives of millions and millions of people, and of course, based on what? Based on some activity that actually did happen and what if that happens again? So billions of dollars goes across it.

M – And every time I walk across that border I see that new wall being built for I don't know how many millions of dollars. And it's so upsetting that they can't see what's in front of them! They're building this wall and they see these people coming across and they're so pitiful because they're so beat up and hungry and thirsty and they're looking for some better way to live, and then we spend money on the wall and not on the people that need help.

J – So why do you do the work?

M – Because I have to.

J – What do you get out of it?

M – I don't know, I have to think about that. I just have to. Probably because... At least helping one person, like today. At least getting him to the hospital, whether he'll get any help or not, at least he's not in my hands anymore, at least we got that far. So that's about it.

J – I think that at the basis, at the heart of human nature, is a desire to help each other, to want each other to have a good life.

M – I'd agree with that. But I think a lot of people don't think that, or we wouldn't be doing these things, they'd think that everybody, that human nature is bad.

J – Because they've been educated in fear. There's an ignorance... Through the media, through family education, I don't know, maybe if somebody has an experience and it was hard, they then come to the view that people are bad and out to get you. I just don't... Yeah, I see that, there's harm that happens to people and any one of us could be the

victim, but I don't live my life waiting for that to happen, and when it happens I certainly hope that never happens, but I just really believe that why volunteers come and do this work is because there's a natural instinct to want to help others have better lives.

M – So what do you get out of it?

J – Well, there's a satisfaction that I get from helping others. It's a satisfaction, it's a feeling of satisfaction.

M – So you feel that we're really helping people by doing this?

J – Ah... Some, you know, not very much on the surface, but I I, I'm going to be gone before this whole thing gets solved worldwide, but I think we're contributing to the process of enlightening others.

M – I guess I'm asking why you feel like you're helping people, because when you put water out, you never see anybody pick it up. You never actually confront anybody, unless they come into camp like they did and you gave them food and water, you can see that.

J – Yes, so what you said... I've had enough experiences that we've handed water to people.

M – So you know that eventually -

J – We come back and water's gone, or food is gone, and you and I both have been...

M - (Laughs) we don't know that....

J – And we've had feedback from people who have crossed and...

M – Minimal, minimal

J – But if they get picked up, they might have said, you know, I would have died there had there not been water on the trail. And all I have to do is hear that once.

Aaron

Could you tell me some basic information about yourself? Age, religious background, where you're from, and how you would describe yourself politically, if politics is an applicable word?

Well let's see, I'm 36 years old, I was born here in Tucson, and I am not religious, not a person of faith. As for politics, I dunno, There's labels I've used on particular issues? I like to just think of myself as taking the human point of view, you know. I think I

definitely have some anarchist or libertarian socialist commitments, things like having a basic faith in human nature and a basic belief in human beings being ethical creatures by nature and not needing instruction or control or discipline to know how to behave properly. More like the opposite – more like we need not to be taught to be assholes.

Do you think there's any event or process that's shaped how you came to those commitments?

I think it must have some relationship to my upbringing. I was raised... I was certainly raised to believe that my upbringing was very free. My parents always reinforced that in me, that they tried telling me what to do and it didn't work, so they just let me do what I wanted to do. My dad always would tell me the story of how I climbed up to the roof of the house – not really the roof, this porch. And he was like "don't jump! Please don't jump!" and because he said that I jumped. So maybe yeah, that must have something to do with the beliefs I was just talking about. You know, if you leave people to their own devices they make choices... You know, in school it was the same kind of thing. My parents never pushed me to do well or study hard or any particular thing, it was more like... "Good. It's as we expected." But, you know, I'm talking about something that doesn't sound necessarily like a political conviction, very much. I have also had a big thing about justice. I guess probably everybody does, have a basic sense of fairness and get kinda outraged if things are unfair. I never had discipline problems in school, except there were a couple instances where I just got really mad because the teacher made what I thought was an unfair call in the kickball game in PE, and I threw a tantrum about that in 2nd grade, or getting in trouble for things that I hadn't actually done. Really I'm just pulling up minor instances from my childhood, but they just illustrate to me this preoccupation that I seem to have had with injustice all the time, or fairness. I got in trouble in 2nd grade for acting suspiciously because I was pretending to be a spy. I slipped out the bathroom door at school and a teacher saw me do that and thought that I must be up to something and gave me detention, so I was late for my school play rehearsal. I was just, you know, framed! It was terrible.

And how do you see that as connecting to your work with No More Deaths?

NMD is the first thing that I got involved in in terms of activism beyond going to anti-war marches. Anything like organizing, this is the first thing. It took me a long time... I think I was a political late bloomer, because it took me a long time to identify ways in which my self-interest was tied to any particular political issue. My grievances were always very individual and particular. With NMD it was suddenly a hometown issue for me, because I'm from Tucson. I moved away after High school, and I developed my native Arizonan identity more after that, you know? It started to be more important to me and I started to really love this place more. [...] So I gradually became aware – very belatedly, because Operation Gatekeeper was in 1994 and related initiatives were soon after, so.. I mean, it was in the early 2000s, 2004, 2005 when I began to be conscious that something really significant was happening in southern Arizona, and I connected that to my own experience of this place and what I treasured about it. I went to school with Spanish speakers and English speakers, and I didn't even wonder who had documents and

who didn't. It's a magical place for me, you know? The border is here, but you can cross it. There are cultural barriers, but you can cross them, there's language barriers, but you can cross them. It's a duality, it's a place built on duality. And the border militarization, the way that it hit me as a personal grievance was that it was attacking that, attacking the cultural duality in the heritage of this place. And this is where I want to die, this is my homeland. So, even apart from injustice to any individual person, or the suffering and death of individual people, for me purely as a matter of self-interest, I took it very personally that the federal government can just sort of march in and turn this place into ground zero for a war on migration and on ordinary people.

And did you have any of this analysis before joining No More Deaths?

Yeah. Probably my analysis has gotten more complete, I guess? I think I had some sense. I mean, my analysis is... It's the standard, it's what everybody says. That US policy is to maintain hegemony in the hemisphere, For the sake of brevity, the US wants cheap labor but it doesn't want to give people, doesn't want to give labor their rights. So, illegal immigration is a way of getting something for nothing. So, it's a huge hypocrisy, there's the whole NAFTA thing. But I don't think that a personal grievance is separate from an analysis, necessarily. I used the word grievance, but another way of saying it would be that I recognized my own political commitment to an issue. Because I don't know how else you pick a political cause, other than to recognize that there's something in it, something that matters to you. I don't know if you can choose, other than just identifying... learning what the situation is. But for me, my first interest in NMD wasn't about suffering, like a humanitarian crisis pure and simple. There was that, but it's also a disgrace, it's a national disgrace and it's a crime of the US government. That I always felt, from the beginning. I didn't become radicalized in the process in any sense. Although, my first volunteer experience was, I would say, still radicalizing and sort of shocking in a sense... The way I described my interest in the issue is sort of very abstract and very apart from any particular individual suffering or individual injustice, but coming face to face with the reality, when I spent a week in Nogales in 2006, that was my first time. I came to NMD as a summer volunteer for a week. I was here for two weeks, visited my mom for a week, and did the volunteer thing for another week. Just watching the thousands of people a day walk past you who are just off the border patrol bus, the Wackenhut bus, fresh out of federal custody, and they are in horrible shape. They're dehydrated, many of them are hospitalizable, tons of them have first aid needs, most of them have had their human rights abused in detention, beyond just neglect of their physical condition. So, I mean, that was stunning to me because I think... You know, maybe intellectually I was ready to believe that the US government was capable of mistreating people at that extreme, but I hadn't actually witnessed it before, you know.

You mentioned that NMD was your first experience doing organizing, rather than attending anti-war marches. I'm interested in the ways you see those as different, and what it meant for you to make that shift.

Today was the Tucson May Day march, and it's such a contrast for me, because I used to go to anti-war marches as a stranger, as an individual citizen of conscience, and it wasn't

fun. It was sometimes emotionally overwhelming, but now when I come to marches on immigration related issues, I'm looking for my friends. And I never expected myself to make that transition. So that's one, that's the end where that's one symptom of the change, I guess. But your question is about how I see the difference... Yeah, that actually has a lot to do with it. You know, organizing means you get involved, well, in NMD it definitely means being part of a community, people get to know you. NMD is great because the volunteer programs provide a bridge. It's something you can sign up for as a stranger, you can sign up and immediately start doing direct aid work. And that was really my transition, like, anti-war organizing you come to a march and somehow there never was an obvious way to make that leap from showing up as an independent person to being part of the community. I'm a huge believer in the volunteer programs that we do. Just from my own experience of making that transition that I was just talking about, I think our volunteer programs turn non-activists into activists and they turn activists into better activists, because you get experience that makes you feel like you have something to say, either individually or collectively.

We talked earlier about the idea of developing an analysis. Could you expand on that?

I feel like I must have gotten it from various places. I was just talking to somebody else about this, about the natural draw that this issue has for somebody who's an anarchist, because border enforcement is the enforcement of the nation state, and if you're an anarchist that's an interesting issue for you to be involved in. That political identity was growing in me starting from about 2000 or so, it just made sense to me. I think another ingredient was anti-yankee-ism, something like that? Like I told you, I started developing this regional identity, this fondness for where I come from after I left. Going to school back East made me more conscious more than anything else of the unique culture of this place, and its unique heritage, and so probably an anarchist solution or vision for the future of the US is that it gets decentralized or broken up into natural polities. This is a very mainstream idea, that there's such a thing as national self-determination, that national boundaries, if they exist, come from cultural or... But here we are, and there's a border region, and there's a great deal of continuity there, certainly in terms of history and language, but also culture and economic ties too. So I think that was part of it. I honestly don't remember how all of these ideas came together, but that was definitely one of them, a feeling that what I was calling my personal self-interest or grievance was part of what the issue of deaths in the desert represented, the war that the US was waging - that Washington was waging, you know, to give it a good anti-yankee spin - on this region's integrity. The most ironic thing to me about the border is how what it's supposed to be about is the integrity of the nation, but what it does in practice is destroy the integrity of so many more legitimate bodies, including human beings' bodies, you know? I mean, human beings are actually physically violated by the violence that the border wall engenders and that border enforcement engenders. But again, very directly, Ambos Nogales is one community that is divided by the border, and there's all these holes that are broken, cut by the border. Those are the holes that to me, that I value, I don't value the boundaries of the United States, I value the integrity of the human individual, and of the Tohono O'odham nation. Things that have value because they have some grounding in

human nature. If there's one thing that's always annoyed me it's when arbitrary bullshit gets prioritized over things that have actual concrete reasons for existing.

Stephanie

Could you give me basic information like your age, religious background, where you're from, and anything you want to use to describe your politics, if politics is an appropriate word?

I'm 29, I'm from California, but I've lived in Tucson for the past year, and in Texas, and Washington DC, so I don't really know where I'm from. I'm Roman Catholic, and... um. I'd say that my politics are progressive, or basically that I care about human rights or people.

Prior to doing NMD work, were you involved in other social justice organizations or groups?

Yeah, I guess so, I traveled to Latin America for the first time when I was 18, to Nicaragua, and I think that really started to politicize me or really open my eyes to things that really weren't a part of my life up to that point, even if they were indirectly, because I think my family was pretty concerned with social justice issues - I mean, my grandma marched with Cesar Chavez. So I definitely come from a tradition of caring about those things, but maybe I just didn't really know how to channel my energy in the way that I wanted to until then, and that really changed my life I guess. So after that... I traveled a lot, and I was a pre-med, and I wanted to be a doctor and do work in a developing country. But after I graduated, I spent a year at a catholic worker house in Texas, so it was a casa del migrante, where people who had just crossed the border stayed, like an *albergue*, and that's when I started thinking about migration and why people leave their homes and the suffering that's a part of the journey, and I feel like that's pretty much been my focus since then, migration issues and like what I can do, specifically with no more deaths like what I can do to end death and suffering in the desert, but the larger picture of migration in general and why people leave their homes or...

In what ways were your family members political?

That's a question that I thought about a lot, and I don't actually know so much if they were overtly political so much as that they like really like... well, my grandparents are pretty political, and I learned a lot from them, but my family is more just about like... I guess from a religious tradition, caring about others as your brothers and sisters, in that way, but not necessarily you know, strongly endorsing a political party or anything like that, but... so more from a faith-based perspective.

Who did you go to Nicaragua with, and how did you get started with that?

I went with my grandma, who is – she's now retired, but she's a hospice nurse, and she's really involved with her community, she lives on a farming community in the central valley of California, has a sister city in northern Nicaragua, a town called Simotó, and she's been there a lot and volunteers in the local hospital, and so she brought me when I was 18 for the first time. Yeah. It was pretty powerful. I mean, my family is pretty affluent. I'm one of seven kids, so they're not, you know, I never had whatever I wanted, but I was never really, really exposed to suffering or poverty or injustice before, so I think that really contributed to what my worldview is today and what I do the things that I do. It was really eye-opening.

And how did that contribute to later actions?

I don't think it's been a definite trajectory since then, that was 11 years ago. I mean I guess then I decided that I wanted to go into medicine and work as a doctor in a developing country, but that changed, and I think I really started to focus on migration-related stuff as a result of being in Houston, and that developed, I ended up going to grad school as a result of that, I guess my degree is in international affairs and my region that I focused on is Latin America. It was just a process, I guess, of different experiences.

And do you expect to keep working with NMD over the long term?

Yeah. I don't have long term plans. I think that ever since I came to the border, which was in 2007, I've had a really strong connection to the work here, something that I can't always explain, so that when I'm not here I feel like my heart is still here, so I have a hard time picturing leaving at any point, but I don't know what the future holds. I was in the desert full time until last Fall, so I spent like all 4 months of last summer in the desert, and then ten weeks the summer before, and then my first summer just two weeks because it was right before I started grad school, so when I've been here all my energy's been in the desert, or since I started doing the coordinating.

Do you think that there was a specific thing about the border that made it so important to you?

I mean, I think it's difficult to define why you really feel fulfillment with something sometimes rather than with another thing, but I think for me when I try to analyze it, part of it is the nature of the work, I think that it's... for people who really care about injustices that are happening sometimes it's really difficult to find something that you can do that you really feel that you're making a difference or that there are really tangible results. Although I don't feel like the work in the desert, which is what drew me here, it's pretty depressing, and I never feel like I've done enough or what I should be doing, but to walk trails and put out water and, you know, actually realize that what you're doing does make a difference in some way in some people's lives is pretty powerful, and then I think just the community of folks who do this work is what made me really wanna be part of it long term.

Miranda

Could you give me basic information like your age, religious background, where you're from, and anything you want to use to describe your politics, if politics is an appropriate word?

I'm 24. I'm from Rhode Island. I was born in Providence and grew up in southern Rhode Island. I lived there all of my life pretty much, except until in the last few years I lived off and on in Maine.

And how did you come down to the border?

I came out here to volunteer with No More Deaths in, um, at the end of September, early October, and then decided to move here, so I moved here in November. I heard about No More Deaths through people I knew through organizing on the East coast. I was involved in some immigrant rights work there, in Providence and knew people who had come to volunteer with No More Deaths or come on a Border Links trip and seen the border and so I wanted to come learn about it.

Could you talk a little about the work you were involved in prior to coming down here?

Well over the last five years I'd say the consistent focus was actually Palestine solidarity work and, some Colombia solidarity work. And I was on a college campus, so a lot of it was campus organizing, but when I was living in Providence I started to become involved in local, community based organizing there, and that's how I started to get involved in some immigrant rights work there in Providence.

Were you politically involved before college at all?

Yeah, I think I started to become politically active in high school, right around 9/11, the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. I had friends who I knew through anti-war work who introduced me to Latin American solidarity work pretty early on, so that was sort of a thread in it.

Could you talk about the decision to move down to the border?

I think I was lucky because the timing of it worked out really well. I had graduated in the spring from college, and the plan that I had had for after college ended up not happening, so it sort of worked out that I hadn't made a commitment to something else. When I came out here I just felt that both in terms of the work and in terms of the community doing the work that there was a lot that I could learn from people here and the situation here.

Since then, have you been involved in any other work?

Well, I've been trying to make connections with some of the really locally based stuff going on here, like the TYLO (Tierra Y Libertad Organization) stuff and the work that Derechos is doing. I would like to be more. It's one of the things that I feel a little uncomfortable about, like my time being so consumed by No More Deaths that I think I don't have a broad enough perspective of things.

Do you feel like that is a problem, that NMD volunteers often come from outside Tucson?

It's interesting because one of the things I've heard people say who are trying to build collaborative relationships with TYLO, for example, is that maybe the way to think about the relationship, instead of trying to change the constitution of NMD is to acknowledge what NMD is and say how can we better do the work in these communities that we do have access to. And, one of the things that NMD has is all of these volunteers coming in from around the country, that's very distinct from, say, TYLO, building a movement neighborhood by neighborhood. Like, I dunno, I've been thinking that it might not be a bad thing that those two things are different? Like maybe NMD doesn't have to do what TYLO is doing, just find ways to work together that make sense, or do that solidarity in a way that makes sense.

Were your parents politically active when you were growing up? Were you around anything that would make you more attuned to that kind of thing?

No, my parents weren't really political. Ahh... I mean, my mom did work in domestic violence related work, legal support for women, um.. I don't know. I had a teacher, a social studies teacher in 2001, who had initiated this... it was a public high school, but he had initiated this curriculum, it was an international studies curriculum for sophomores. And he was a really good teacher, and after 9/11 he changed the curriculum to spend the whole first semester with a history of US intervention in the Middle East. The anti-war movement was picking up at that time, and Rhode Island was really small. And I tried to organize an anti-war demonstration, like right around the invasion of Afghanistan, and of course I didn't know what I was doing, and I think three people came? But they were three people I didn't know, so I met people, and then it was pretty easy to meet people and to know about things, because it was so small. I think after that, trying to do organizing in the high school and in that community and encountering resistance to that, and... I don't know if you've read Fanon?

A little bit.

I guess it's a Marxist idea, but he describes the process of politicization of people through resistance. When you resist in a way that is actually confronting something... You're politicized through confrontation. So when you actually run into confrontation, something happens that deepens your understanding of power.