**BorderLinks: Immigration Justice**

**Frequently Asked Questions**

1. **What happens during the program? What does the schedule look like?**

In general, we try to adapt a program around the specific interests and needs of a congregation or group. The BorderLinks trip is not just an introduction to the injustices around immigration policy and the border, but also an introduction to the incredible social movement happening in the area, which includes a host of different organizations playing different roles. At the same time, the reality at the border is constantly changing as people and organizations react to shifts in migration patterns and governmental policies and practices. With all of that in mind, the program can look quite different each time, and is often finalized just a few weeks before the program begins.

Speaking broadly, a 5 day trip would include some combination of the following: a walk in the desert with a humanitarian aid organization ([No More Deaths](http://forms.nomoredeaths.org/about-no-more-deaths/) or [Tucson Samaritans](http://www.tucsonsamaritans.org/)); at least one day in Mexico with organizations that provide direct services to people who have been deported; the option of 1-night in Mexico; interactive workshops to understand NAFTA and the roots of migration; a visit to immigration court and “[Operation Streamline](http://forms.nomoredeaths.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/nmd_fact_sheet_operation_streamline.pdf)”; and presentations from various groups organizing for immigrant rights in Tucson, such as [Corazon de Tucson](https://grupocorazondetucson.org/) (undocumented immigrants organizing in their community), [Mariposas sin Fronteras](https://mariposassinfronteras.org/) (an LGBT asylum-seeker support project), the [Southside Workers Center](http://www.southsideworkercenter.org/) (a day laborer organization), and others. We like to also include some short trainings on popular education models and organizing skills, as part of thinking through what the group can do when they return home. UUCSJ program leaders also integrate reflection sessions and spiritual grounding practices into the program.

1. **Will we always be in the U.S.? Or, will we be crossing into Mexico, either by foot or vehicle?**

It is entirely up to your congregation. You can choose to only stay on the U.S. side if that is what your group decides. Or, you can cross over to the Mexico side. There will be a vehicle to take you there. There also may be options of staying over on the Mexico side with homestays (your groups would be divided to make sure there is at least one Spanish speaker who feels comfortable) or your group can choose to go to Mexico for the day and always return to Borderlinks (in Tuscon) for the evening. Depending on the

time of year and conditions on the ground, the group would either go to Nogales or Agua Prieta in Mexico.

We highly recommend crossing into Mexico as part of the trip – the areas where we go are very safe, and you’ll be able to hear directly from people who have experienced deportation, as well as witnessing the reality of everyday life in that part of Mexico.

1. **What provisions are there for medical and emergency care?**

Borderlinks has connections to medical services in Tucson, Nogales, Douglas and Agua Prieta, and all UUCSJ program leaders are trained in how to handle emergencies, including First Aid/CPR certification and Wilderness First Responder certification.

1. **Is there medical insurance coverage?**

Like all of our trips, we require that participants have medical coverage. If your group decides to go to the Mexico side, they will need to make sure that their insurance covers internationally. Most do, except for Medicare/Medicaid, in which case you will need to get supplemental insurance.

1. **Are vaccinations needed? What kinds are recommended?**

The only vaccination UUCSJ requires is tetanus, but we recommend people check the CDC recommendations. We will not be in any rural parts of Mexico. <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/mexico>

1. **What types of work/observation/engagement will we be doing? What will the experience be like?**

The border justice journey is not as focused around volunteer work as some others, but is very interactive and intended to prepare participants for working towards immigrant rights beyond the trip itself. UUCSJ calls our programs “Immersion Learning”, as the intention is to immerse ourselves in the reality of the border and experience firsthand what is happening and what is being done to respond to these injustices. Depending on the physical fitness level of participants, you could be bringing water onto the desert trails for migrants who are lost. If you go to Mexico, you might spend one morning

helping serve at the “comedor” which is a meals program for recently deported people. You may visit a woman in sanctuary at a church and write letters of support, be asked

to write letters of support for a LGBT person trying to get out of detention on bond, etc. There will also be several meetings with organizations doing different types of service and advocacy, and there may also be meetings with CBP or other government officials. Groups typically spend part of a day in court directly witnessing “Operation Streamline.”

1. **What level of physical fitness is necessary?**

The activity that is the most physically demanding is the desert walk, but it can be adapted according to the group’s needs. It can be as strenuous as walking for 3-4 miles, or as simple as getting out of the vehicle and walking a few hundred feet. The staff are really great about being in tune with the group and can adjust according to your needs.

1. **Will it be dangerous?**

Absolutely not. The areas where we work are very safe for visitors, although we do ask that the group stick together and that people not go wandering on their own. That said, if the environment changes for any reason, Borderlinks will be aware of it and adapt accordingly.

1. **How helpful can we possibly be since we’ll only be there 5 days?**

We sometimes talk about our service learning journeys as “reverse mission trips” – that much of the real contribution takes place after returning home. The amount that an outside group can do, coming to help for 5 or 10 or 15 days, will by nature be limited. We aim instead to create transformational experiences that motivate and capacitate participants to work for justice in the long run. We know this will not be the case for 100% of people, but certainly for most it has been, especially when a congregational group comes together and determines how to follow up as a group.

1. **What portion of the tuition goes to the BorderLinks partner?**

About 90% of the tuition goes to Borderlinks (which, subsequently, also gets distributed to grassroots groups that meet with us). The rest provides a modest stipend

to a UUCSJ program leader and covers related expenses. Literally none of the tuition stays with UUCSJ - we are jointly funded by UUSC & UUA, so our overhead is covered and we do not make any profit from this trip. In fact, we offer up to 75% scholarships

based on demonstrated need, and all of that also comes from the UUSC budget. So what we charge are the real costs of the trip – no overhead.

1. **We understand that the cost is $850/person plus airfare for 5 days/6 nights.**

* 1. *Are there other costs?*

Only incidentals that people choose to purchase, and airfare.

* 1. *Food?*

All food is included.

* 1. *Lodging? What will the accommodations be like?*

Accommodations are in the Borderlinks dorm – there are bunk beds that fit 2 in small rooms that are separated by dividers but not real walls.

* 1. *Transportation?*

The $850 covers everything listed above: all food, lodging, transportation and airport pick-ups and drop-offs.

1. **What support personnel will be with us?**
   1. *UUCSJ assigned leaders?*

YES! Depending on the size of your group, 1-2 UUCSJ Program Leaders will go. They play various roles on the trip, including leading reflections and worships, helping to manage group dynamics, ensuring CSJ policies and procedures are met, leading a taking-it-home workshop, working with BorderLinks on logistics, etc.

* 1. *Interpreters?*

Borderlinks staff are multi-lingual and there will be a Borderlinks program leader with us at all times.

* 1. *Drivers?*

YES

1. **What challenges might we anticipate because of language differences?**

Although having Spanish-speakers on the delegation certainly deepens the experience, the trips are designed with the expectation that many/most participants don’t speak Spanish, and it really won’t present any challenges. If there are no Spanish speakers at all it may mean that home-stays for one night in Mexico are not an option. Otherwise, translation is always provided.