

This was my first (and probably last) time as DPA Board Observer. I tried taking notes as I went, but the gap make putting together a coherent report challenging. As you will read, I am not an impartial observer though I believe you can distinguish between objective facts and subjective impressions.

At the end of the report are links to various documents that may create a fuller picture.

Before the official meeting of our UUA Board, members of the President, Moderator, fifteen trustees and many others participated in a tour of the Arizona – Sonora border that divides the United States from Mexico and also divides families, victims of US Immigration policy.

Over a period of two days we talked “to migrants and various groups who worked with those migrants. Member of *No Mas Muertes* (No More Deaths), a ministry of the UU Church of Tucson, acted as our guides as we walked across the border into Mexico at Nogales. Regrettably, many people felt most uncomfortable, not being in Mexico, but interacting with US border agents, who made hostile remarks.

While in Nogales, Mexico, just across the border, we visited three entities that engage with those recently deported – a *comedor* that serves hot meals, a bus terminal that provides shelter and transportation into Mexico; and a government office that provides only minimal assistance. Members of our group who were fluent in Spanish spoke with migrants who were trying to determine their next step. Many simply wanted to go home, but home was often the United States. Most migrants planned to attempt to re-enter the United States, despite the many risks of abuse, injury and death.

A group of six UUs returned the next day to serve meals at the *comedor* and to engage in deeper conversations with migrants. The conversation revealed one particular truth. The primary motivation for attempting to immigrate to the US was not personal gain. Their decision was motivated by the desire to be reunited with their family in the United States or to earn money to send back to their impoverished families they were leaving behind.

Others met with Cesar Lopez, lead organizer for Tierra y Libertad, a ‘dirt-roots’ group working in the barrios of south Tucson. The headquarters was a former meth house and brothel that they transformed into a sacred meeting space with a low-tech sustainable garden in the backyard. Their most recent campaign encourages households and business to post signs with the campaign’s motto, “We Reject Racism,” along with a commitment to take affirmative steps toward protecting the rights of migrants. Tierra y Libertad, as part of its community organizing, teaches folks in the neighborhood about their rights and encourages normalizing non-compliance with and visible resistance to attempts by authorities to deport or harass people.

In the afternoon we met with Heather Williams, the first assistant federal public defender in Arizona. Much of her time is spent defending migrants against deportation. With an overwhelming caseload, she and her conscientious colleagues can barely protect the dignity of their clients; much less adequately provide a constitutionally-guaranteed defense. Operation Streamline, a misguided and costly policy to protect our country from terrorism, is a government program that targets people who are not guilty of anything except violating our immigration laws. It does not address drug smuggling or terrorist intent on doing harm. Instead it divides families and accounts for the majority of all defendants in U.S. Federal Courts.

On Thursday evening and throughout the day on Friday, our UUA Board heard from leaders of a wide spectrum of organizations that are advocating and organizing for the rights and well-being of immigrants. Some of the organizations were already engaged with our UUA beginning with the actions last year to protest the implementation of Arizona’s SB1070. The focus and intent of the engagement

was to establishment working partnerships and to pave the way for a more meaningful and effective Justice GA in 2012. When asked for advice on how the UUA should proceed, a leader of Somos America suggested “arrogance and hubris are always good to avoid.”

Many of the community organizers we met with explained the Unitarian Universalist were not in their consciousness... until July 29, 2011, when UUs showed up wearing yellow shirts that seemed to be everywhere. [If a few hundred people can have that effect, imagine the possibilities for June 2012 when Justice GA comes to Phoenix]

Friday morning, the three working groups of our UUA Board met: Finance, Right Relations and Committee on Committees. Because of the meeting was offsite and significant time was dedicated to meet with Arizona-based organizations, other working groups did not meet during the weekend.

Because the Board is now operating under Policy Governance, they received 28 monitoring reports that were submitted to all board members for review and the Governance Working Group (GWG) then synthesized trustees’ comments and presented them in a spreadsheet along with a recommendation. It seems important to note that the GWG is not bound by majority rule in their recommended action, and that the Board as a whole makes the final decision on their action on each report after reflecting on the thoughts of all Trustees.

The GWG alerted the board that the General Assembly Business Resolutions, which are binding on the Association, need to be reviewed to determine how and if they need to be incorporated into our policy governance model. A draft proposal was put forward to begin analysis. They also reported that the Global ENDS interpretation will be addressed at the February meeting, after receipt of the President’s interpretation and operational definition of the Global ENDS.

As part of its practice the members of the board offer an AR/AO reflection. Dan Brody, Nancy Bartlett and Gini Courter offered theirs.

Susan Ritchie presented the report of the Board Representation and Restructuring Task Force. A final proposal to go before the delegates was not adopted, but Susan did present the task force’s preliminary recommendations for a culturally competent and accountable to historically marginalized groups, faithfully synthesizing the highest aspirations and practical concerns of Unitarian Universalism

Eleven at-large Trustees, a Financial Advisor and Moderator cut the size of the board approximately in half. There would be an expectation of demographic diversity and representation. Geographic diversity would be expected but by electing at-large, not guaranteed. Currently-elected Nominating Committee would be appointed by the Board and their role would be expanded to include leadership development. Some Trustees expressed reservations about a fully-appointed Nominating Committee, and no final decision was reached.

The board passed a resolution to post audio records of UUA Board of Trustees’ meetings on UUA website. (I do not know if this has been implemented yet.)

The board passed a resolution to change the rules governing creation of congregations. Dropped were references to locale and exclusive membership. The change offers the possibility of congregations existing in virtual space.

The board passed a resolution to eliminate Actions of Immediate Witness for GA 2012 (with a possibility of restoring them at GA 2013)

Dan Brody presented a procedure for amending C bylaws in Article II. This addresses the concern of delegates that certain bylaw changes are a strict up or down vote. The new procedure would allow for amendments. Approving amendments would require a simple majority at the first GA, but would require a much higher threshold (3/4) to be amended at the second GA at which final adoption occurs.

For additional information, the following are worthwhile links.

UU World article http://www.uuworld.org/news/articles/175338.shtml?utm_source=n

Board packet for meeting

<http://www.uua.org/aboutus/governance/boardtrustees/agendas/174844.shtml>

Trustee Linda Laskowski's blog <http://pcdtrustee.blogspot.com/>)