



Holding Vigil to Remember El Paso Lives Lost and Re-Commit to End Violence

Vigil reflection and compilation by Rev. Dr. Sharon Stanley-Rea, Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries.

“The Escalation Reflection” on the El Paso shooting by Valeria Bejar, Disciples Immigration Response Specialist.

Victim information and images pulled from CNN’s “These are the El Paso Shooting Victims”:
<https://www.cnn.com/2019/08/04/us/el-paso-shooting-victims/index.html> and from the Washington Post’s “The Lives Lost in El Paso”:
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2019/08/04/el-paso-shooting-victims/>

Hymn lyrics to “O God, You Give Us Neighbors” by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette, 2019.



(Photo: Mary LaReau)

Use devotion introduction provided, together with the song, reflection, images and descriptions below of lives lost, and the rainbow over Tornillo, in your prayer vigil. Read about several lives at a time as you lay down color by color of your “rainbow.” After each group of lives is remembered, repeat together:

“We honor your lives, and re-commit to disarming violence and building love in our world.”

Vigil to Remember El Paso Lives Lost & Re-Commit to End Violence

Suggested Vigil Order:

Introduction and Call to Remembrance & Re-Commitment to End Violence

by Rev. Sharon Stanley-Rea, Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries Director

Song, “O God, You Give Us Neighbors,” Lyrics by carolyn Winfrey Gillette.

(To the tune of Aurelia 7.6.7.6. D, “The Church’s One Foundation.”)

“Escalation Reflection” by Valeria Bejar, Disciples Immigration Response Specialist

Building of Rainbow in Remembrance and Re-Commitment Against Violence

Suggested Music During Readings: “Amor Eterno” by Juan Gabriel

(Available online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RgKqxLAhRKE>. Sung at funerals as a last goodbye, and used extensively in public vigils since the shootings, it ends with a promise that loved ones will one day re-unite.)



Materials needed for vigil:

*Copies of images/descriptions of lives lost, refrain, and “Rainbow Over Tornillo” picture

*Long multi-colors of plastic or paper for rainbow, in 5-7 colors (note: plastic tablecloths are easy and inexpensive)

*Copies of Reflections for leaders

*Copies of Song

*Recording of “Amor Eterno”

Introduction to Vigil and Call to Remembrance and Re-Commitment Against Violence

by Rev. Dr. Sharon Stanley-Rea, Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries Director, August 10, 2019

(Read or adapt from the following story to set the stage for migrant suffering in the El Paso area before, and leading into, the tragic Wal-Mart shooting.)

In late afternoon of July 29th, less than five days before the Saturday when 22 people were killed and 24 were injured in the El Paso Walmart shooting (which was to become the seventh most deadly mass shooting in recent U.S. history), a rainbow appeared above the expanding detention center tents in Tornillo, Texas. As a pastor, I had driven with several other faith partners to Tornillo following an action outside an El Paso city detention center earlier in the day with Rev. Dr. William Barber and Repairers of the Breach. In the morning, we had joined with key national inter-faith leaders including our General Minister and President, Rev. Dr. Terri Hord Owens, along with dozens of other clergy and hundreds of lay-leaders, who simply asked permission to make pastoral visits to any of the detainees inside. Our request was not only denied, it was completely ignored.



(Rainbow Over Tornillo Detention Tents, 7/29/19)

Turned away from that location, we sought to stand in the space of additional disturbing, yet too often unheard of, realities in the area. Between the morning's action and the early evening's rainbow at Tornillo, we had travelled the twenty miles southeast from El Paso to the Customs and Border Protection center in Clint, Texas. In this one center alone is where, as of the end of June, over 350 migrant children were being held. Immigration lawyers who interviewed sixty of the children reported learning of conditions that were unsanitary, with children sleeping on concrete, siblings separated from one another, up to 300 children in a single room, and some without toothbrushes or soap (<https://www.apnews.com/46da2dbe04f54adbb875cfbc06bbc615>.) Yet days later, when nearby residents had sought to deliver supplies for the children, they—like our team in the morning's action—had been ignored and turned away. (<https://time.com/5613583/border-patrol-migrant-children-donations/>.)

Across the street from the Clint center, we'd met a veteran named Ray who, after joining tens of thousands to protest childhood detentions at the Homestead center near his own Florida home, had come now to stand faithfully day by day in the Texas sun outside the Clint center. He'd been disturbed by how Homestead has been holding up to 250 immigrant children per month in military style barracks. He was appalled at how Homestead's designation as an "emergency influx center" meant it was not subject to the child protection provisions included in the Flores settlement, which limit the detention of children to the least restrictive environments and to a time limit of only days. (To learn more about Homestead, go here: <https://www.afsc.org/blogs/news-and-commentary/why-its-time-to-shut-down-homestead-detention-center>, and note also how advocacy has helped shut down Homestead in early August!) But as his signs communicated, his concern was deeper and broader than just one place and center. He wanted the nation he'd served as a veteran to "Treat People Humanely," to remember there are "4,900 Separated Kids In Just Texas," and to hear that "Veterans (are)...Saying NO!" to keeping any humans in cages. He shared how he had been pushed across the street from the center, but he said he wanted to be sure veterans were not also, like so many others, just ignored and turned away.

Eerily pulled by repeating threads of migrant suffering in the region, we found ourselves leaving our conversations in Clint to drive next a half hour in the late afternoon sun down the road into rural Tornillo, Texas. A community of about 1,500 in the Rio Grande Immigration District known historically for its cotton gin and pecans, Tornillo gained a different reputation in June 2018 when it opened a detention “tent city” for 400 migrant children along the border’s edge. Quickly, the number escalated to detaining 4,000 children. Finally closed amid outcries in January of 2019, we found it now has become a construction zone; ramping up quickly to open a new chapter (any week now) as a 2,500 bed adult migrant detention center. The guard at the border crossing urged us to “avoid the violence” on the Mexico side of the border. Yet we felt especially concerned, too, about the damages to children and to adults in our own nation taking place in the growing detention center in Tornillo on “our side” of the border, and in the Clint center, and in the El Paso center that we’d seen—all in just that one day. We were disturbed, along with Ray, about the children detained in the Homestead center near his home, which eventually had led him now to stand as a veteran in the hot Texas sun. And we felt sad, especially, about the discrimination against migrants who were finding themselves in detention and broadly criticized through public rhetoric, after most had faced and were seeking protection from terrifying conditions of violence in their Central American homelands of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador.

To see a rainbow--a symbol of hope and light--in such a place of such migrant despair, at the end of such a day of pain, and seemingly descending into the very edge of Tornillo’s detention center tents—seemed incongruous. And, as we know only now, the day we saw it was just a few days BEFORE the tragic, exacerbated pain caused by El Paso’s racially motivated mass shootings. Was that rainbow over the expanding Tornillo detention center designed to be an image offering perspective and promise? Was it placed in the sky to encourage us, as we neared the time when the Walmart shooter would soon post his anti-immigrant manifesto online?

The meaning of the rainbow in that time and place, I am convinced, was no “magical moment” or simple solution to migrant and border community challenges. Rather, I sense its significance is rooted in the profound reason why God first placed a rainbow as a sign to Noah at the end of the floods in Genesis 9. “When...the bow is seen in the clouds,” said God in the Noah saga, “I will remember my covenant...and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh” (Genesis 9:16.) Ancient sources imagined the bow as God’s weapon of destruction upon the earth. But in Genesis, God “upturns” the bow; keeping it no longer in shooting position as a weapon, but offering it instead as a disarming promise—and visible sign--for the ending of violence.

In this vigil, we are here to remember the lives lost in El Paso, and to honor each one. They must not be forgotten, for theirs is the courage of the hundreds of thousands who build communities within the borderlands, and whose lives and love and families remind us all of the nearness of neighbors and shared histories on each side of boundaries. But we are here, too, to do much more. We are here to link together our promises to do all we can to end violence together. When we fight violence together against immigrants and all neighbors, we honor the rainbow God offered through the covenant with Noah. As it was in Noah’s time, may a re-creation of the world based on love and disarmament happen likewise in our own time, and in all places, as well.

O God, You Give Us Neighbors

AURELIA 7.6.7.6 D ("The Church's One Foundation")

O God, you give us neighbors for whom your love abounds.
They've come here seeking refuge; they work here in our towns.
Their children go to school here; they come to church and pray.
O Lord, we grieve when neighbors are being sent away.

O God, you give us neighbors in this world that divides.
We see them at the border; they're struggling for their lives.
They're hurting by the roadside, and by the river, too.
You call us to show mercy to neighbors loved by you.

O God, you give us neighbors and call us all to see
our common fears and longings, our shared humanity.
You call us all to listen to burdens they have known,
to hear the truth they tell us, to see the love they've shown.

O God, you give us neighbors; and now, what must we do?
This question asked of Jesus is one we ask anew.
May we not make excuses and choose to walk on by
these neighbors fleeing violence — some sent back now to die.

God, may we work for justice for those who live in fear;
may we show Christ's compassion, and pray and persevere —
and by your Holy Spirit, in all we do and say,
may we stand up for neighbors now being sent away.



Biblical References: Luke 10:25-46; Leviticus 19:33-34; Leviticus 24:22; Matthew 25:31-46
Tune: Samuel Sebastian Wesley, 1864 ("The Church's One Foundation") [\(MIDI\)](#)
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“Escalation Reflection”

By Valeria Bejar, Disciples Immigration Response Specialist

August 9, 2019

Growing up, I knew that Spanish was my first language. I knew that my skin color was different. I knew that my eyes weren't the color of the blue sky and my hair didn't beam gold when struck by light. I knew that I was not to tell anyone that I was born in Mexico, and I was not to share the journey that my parents took to get to this country. I knew that I couldn't be entirely myself in spaces where such information could be used against my family, and I remember growing up with what at the time seemed to be the coolest privilege any little kid would want--which was a phone.

My parents had bought me a phone at a very young age, and in this phone were preprogramed games that I would play on the bus on the way home from school. In that phone were also the phone numbers of my parents, close friends and family members who lived close by. It wasn't until later in my life that I discovered that me having a phone wasn't a luxurious privilege of a young child. Instead, it was a meticulous system of protection and communication that was set in place in case of an emergency. Such emergencies would include the detention or deportation of either of my parents. In such a case, I would receive a call from a family member or friend, who would provide me with specific directions that I would follow if this ever happened.

I can vividly recall the many table conversations we would have as a family, regarding the multiple strategies we needed to maintain protected and secure. Still to this day, we discuss simple ways of protection such as driving with caution, making sure that we are careful to prevent a potential traffic stop, always being good citizens, not doing things that will draw us attention, and so many more tactics of security.

But what happens when enough isn't enough? What happens when you spend your whole life preparing and securing as many fields as possible, for the safety of yourself and your family, and that's not enough? How can one prepare for or be cautious enough about atrocities such as the recent shooting in El Paso, TX?

We have escalated to such a time, where we need to prepare for things that before were not a worry. Now, I must continue to have these table conversations and add a multitude of reinforcements of security for the protection of my brown family.

How can we prepare for this? How do we prepare to live like this? How do we act as the church that God has called us to be? We do so by standing with our fellow brothers and sisters, by extending not only grace and love but by extending action. We can no longer prepare with just thoughts and prayers. We must prepare in such a way that when tragedies hit, we can truly BE the church, by welcoming the immigrant; our neighbor whom we are called to care for and to love.

Building of Rainbow in Remembrance and Re-Commitment Against Violence

Before the beginning of the vigil, distribute the images and descriptions of those whose lives were lost in the El Paso shootings. Depending on numbers, give one or more to each person. Also distribute the multiple colors of plastic or paper for the rainbow among participants. (Suggestion: using various colors of long, plastic tablecloths from a dollar store is inexpensive and will work easily.)

Have a participant “lay down” an initial color for the rainbow, in the shape of an arch. Have another place the image of the “Rainbow Over Tornillo” inside the bow. Then have persons read off several of the names and descriptions. After reading, place their photos on the “rainbow.” Then, have all participants repeat the refrain: *“We honor your lives, and re-commit to disarming violence and building love in our world.”*

Have another participant lay down a second color for the rainbow, below or above the first color. Have persons read off an additional several names and descriptions, and then place them on the rainbow’s colors. Again, have participants repeat the refrain.

Continue by laying down another color, reading additional names and descriptions of victims, placing their images on the rainbow you are building. Keep adding colors, sharing another group of stories, and saying the refrain together until you have finished the ritual.



(Photo: Sharon Stanley-Rea)

Rainbow Over Tornillo Detention Center, less than 5 days before the Walmart shooting



Jordan Anchondo, 25—Died shielding her baby, just after her first wedding anniversary, buying party decorations and school supplies as their oldest daughter was turning 6.



Andre Anchondo (Source: CNN NewsSource)

Andre Anchondo, 24, married to Jordan, also shielded their baby. An entrepreneur, he and Jordan were proud to host their daughter's birthday celebration, as they had just bought a new house.



Dave Johnson, 63, died shielding his wife Kathy and their 9-year-old granddaughter, Kaitlyn. The couple was shopping for groceries and a present for Kaitlyn.



Arturo Benavides, 60, was an Army veteran and a bus driver who loved telling stories of his days as a staff sergeant. He was deeply generous and caring of others.



Leo Campos and Maribel Hernandez - Courtesy Al Hernandez (Brother of Maribel)

Leo Campos, 41 and Maribel Hernandez, 56. Maribel was an El Paso native. Leo was from the Rio Grande Valley, was a soccer player & excellent Mexican folkloric dancer, worked in a call center. They had been married 16 years, and just dropped their dog at the groomer's before going to Walmart.



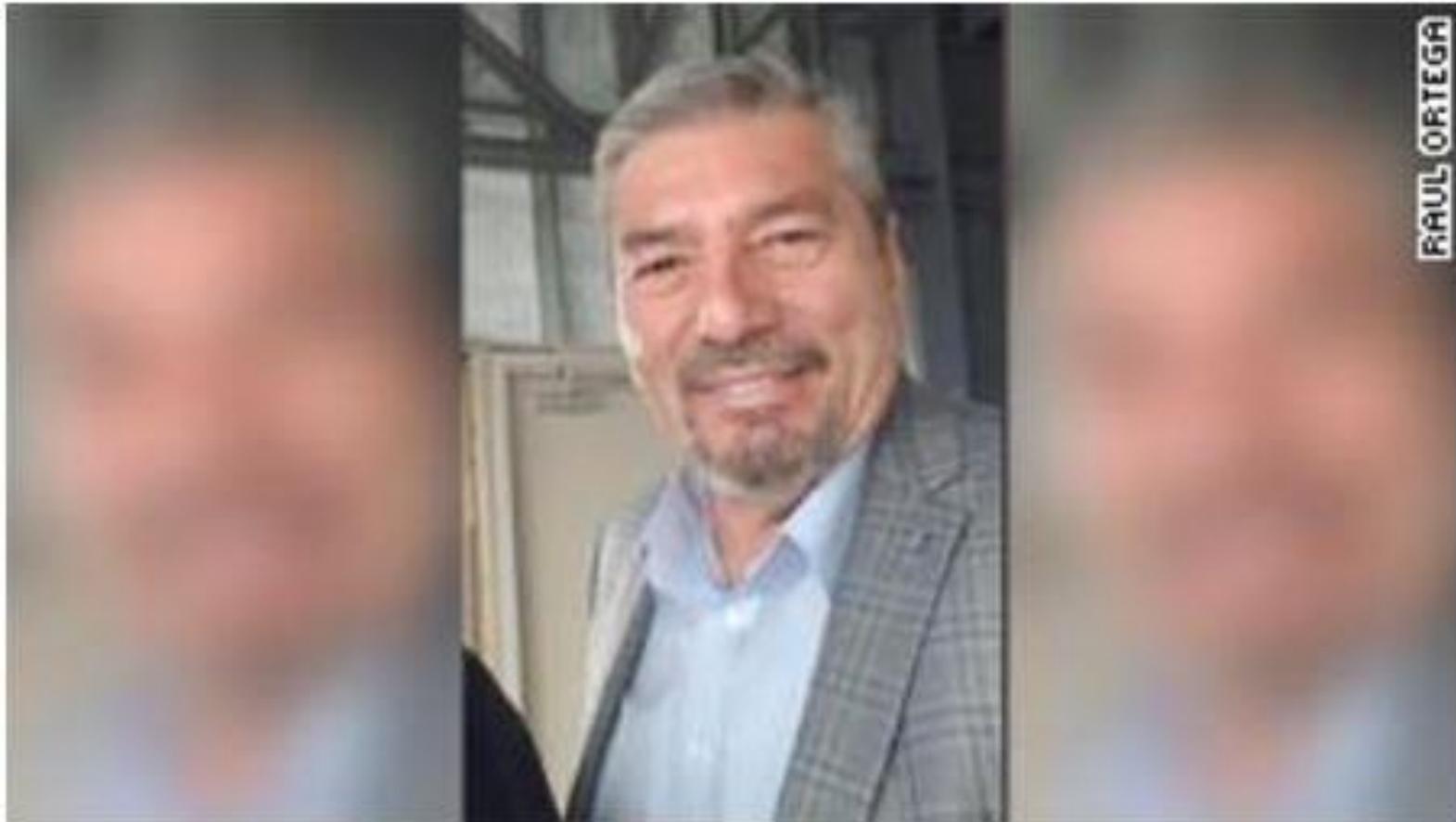
Angie Englishbee, 86, made her last call to her son from the Walmart check-out line 7 minutes before the shootings. She lived most of her life less than 10 minutes away, and attended St. Pius Catholic Church every Sunday.



Javier Amir Rodriguez, 15 years old. He had been a student in the Clint Independent School District. He was a passionate soccer player, who had a strong bond with his teammates.



Margie Reckard, 63, was a devoted companion and mother, who provided care through the San Antonio In-Home Health Care.



Jorge Calvillo Garcia, 61, was from Torreon, Mexico, and had recently moved to El Paso to be with his son and granddaughter there. The three were together outside the Walmart raising money for his granddaughter's soccer team. Jorge protected his granddaughter and teammates from bullets. His son was also shot and is in critical condition.



Juan de Dios Velazquez, 77, died at the hospital two days after being shot in the Walmart parking lot. He was grocery shopping together with his wife, and was shot in the back while shielding his wife, who was also shot in the stomach and is recovering. The couple moved to El Paso six months ago, after receiving U.S. citizenship. They had just parked their car when they were shot.



Adolfo Cerros Hernandez, 68, and Sara Esther Regalado, 66, lived in Juarez, Mexico. Their family is devastated. On Facebook, their family wrote, “With profound pain in our hearts...we are devastated...that our beloved parents...were victims of the tragic shooting.”



Elsa Mendoza de la Mora, 57, was a teacher and director of an elementary school, CNN affiliate KTSM reported. She lived and worked in Juarez, and was visiting family in El Paso. She had stopped by Walmart to pick up grocery items, leaving her son and husband in the car while she shopped.



Gloria Irma Marquez, 61, was born in Mexico but moved to the U.S. two decades ago. Two of her children were born in Mexico, and two were U.S. citizens. She served faithfully as a health care assistant for the elderly, and her colleagues said “the patients always asked for Gloria” because of her generous spirit. Gloria’s loved ones remember her as a dedicated grandmother, mother, and friend.



Maria Eugenia Legarreta Rothe, 58, came from a well known business family in Chihuahua, and had four children. Her family said she never stopped smiling, and was a wonderful cook and dedicated mother. She was shopping, while on her way to the airport to pick up her 16 year old daughter.



(family photo)

Raul Flores, 83, and Maria Flores, 77, were nearly inseparable—and had been married for 60 years. They had retired two decades ago to El Paso, where they supported their children, 11 grandchildren, and 10 great grand-children scattered nearby and in Texas and California. They were expecting another great grandchild soon. Maria was an excellent cook, and knew what every family member liked best. Raul was scheduled for open-heart surgery the Monday following the shooting. He and Maria were shopping at Walmart for an air mattress for relatives visiting to support him following his surgery.

Additional Victims Identified in the El Paso Shooting:



Crosses at a makeshift memorial are seen after the shooting that left 21 people dead at the Cielo Vista Mall WalMart in El Paso, Texas, on August 5, 2019.
MARK RALSTON/AFP/Getty Images

(No photos available.)

Ivan Filberto Manzano, 41--Ivan lived in Juarez and was an entrepreneurial business owner selling medical equipment. He was also a dedicated husband, father of a son and daughter ages 5 and 9, and a marathon runner. Ivan had turned 41 three days before the shooting. He had gone into the Walmart Saturday morning to pick up a package for his business.

Luis Juarez, 90—Luis, an immigrant who had become a citizen, bought a house, built a career as an iron worker, and literally “helped build America” as he erected buildings in El Paso and in Los Angeles and worked on railroads and locomotives. He was married for 70 years to his wife Martha, also injured in the shootings. They had 7 children, 20 grandchildren, 35 great-grandchildren, and 8 great-great grandchildren.

Mexican national Teresa Sanchez, 82

German citizen Alexander Gerhard Hoffman, 66

Refrain:

**“We honor your lives,
and re-commit to
disarming violence and
building love in our
world.”**