

U.S.-Mexico Border and Immigration Task Force Washington D.C. November 18-19, 2008

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Border Network for Human Rights' general purpose is to facilitate the education, organization, and participation of marginalized border communities to defend and promote human and civil rights; to the end that these communities work to create political, economic, and social conditions where every human being is equal in dignity and rights. Our vision is to engage communities in a process of forming human rights committees that work toward immigration policy changes, and recognition of the contributions and rights of all immigrants. BNHR puts a special emphasis in strengthening the collective voice of border communities, which are being impacted by "war and national security policies" that undermine human and constitutional rights and push for the implementation of a new legalization program for undocumented immigrants.

Border Action Network formed in 1999 to ensure that those who are most impacted by border and immigration policies are at the forefront of movements calling for human dignity and civil rights and have the power to insert their voices into the local, regional and national policy debates that impact their lives on a daily basis. Border Action Network works with immigrant and border communities in southern Arizona to ensure that our rights are protected, our human dignity respected and that our communities are healthy and safe places to live. We are a membership-based organization that combines grassroots community organizing, leadership development, and litigation and policy advocacy.

The U.S.-Mexico Border and Immigration Task Force formed in November 2006 to present a new "border vision" that integrates comprehensibly border security, human rights and civil rights, accountability, community security and regional integration. The Task Force brings together the opinions, expertise and insight of diverse sectors from U.S.-Mexico border communities to present policy recommendations and testimonies on the current immigration reform and border policy debate. Members represent local elected officials, law enforcement, community organizations, academics, attorneys, and faith, business and community leaders of border cities and counties.

BIOGRAPHIES

Jennifer Allen is the Executive Director and a founder of the Border Action Network. Border Action Network formed in 1999 and works with immigrant and border communities in southern Arizona to ensure that their rights are respected, human dignity upheld and that border communities are healthy places to live. Border Action is membership-based organization that combines grassroots community organizing, leadership development, litigation and policy advocacy.

MSGR. Arturo J. Banelas, STD is a native priest of the Diocese of El Paso, Texas and Founding Director of the Tepeyac Institute. In 1976 obtained his M.Div. from Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans, Louisiana and completed course work for a Masters in Sacred Theology (S.T.M.).

Susie Byrd grew up in El Paso, going to neighborhood District 2 schools-Crocket Elementary, Bassett Middle School and Austin High. At Austin High, she was a student leader and played on the soccer team that was Bi-District Co-Champions. She went to Emory University in Atlanta, where she was recognized for her volunteer leadership in the community. She and her husband Eddie Holland (a high school ESL teacher in EPISD) are now raising their three children in the same neighborhood where she grew up.

From 1995-2001, Susie worked with her family as the Director of Marketing and Publicity for Cinco Puntos Press, an acclaimed independent publishing company headquartered in El Paso. Cinco Puntos, named for El Paso's Five Points area, is known for its books-especially bilingual pictures books for children-reflecting the culture of El Paso and the U.S./Mexico Border. Susie collaborated with national, regional and local media to insure that Cinco Puntos became a known player in the world of books and publishing.

From 2001-2003, as Executive Assistant to Mayor Ray Caballero, she managed and developed the El Paso Housing Finance Corporation's First Time Homebuyer program, bringing more homeowners to central El Paso. She also

organized the Mayor's Incentives Taskforce, which produced a plan for bringing businesses to our community. She worked on "One Neighborhood at a Time," a City effort to modernize and rehabilitate aging infrastructure and housing. Susie Byrd assisted with City and community efforts to move forward on the Medical Center of the Americas, a health-related economic development project near Central El Paso.

In 2003, Susie launched her own company called Moxie Communications and Consulting. Susie has been involved in various community service projects, organizations and groups that work to enhance El Paso.

Sr. Kathleen Erickson, Member of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas. Her background includes strong education and administration experience; sixteen years working with immigrant women at the U.S.-Mexico border; and two years doing spiritual counseling with undocumented women in the El Paso Detention Center. She is currently working with Desert Humanitarians Migrant Resource Center in Palomas, Mexico.

Veronica Escobar is an El Paso, Texas native who grew up in the Mission Valley near her family's dairy. Veronica and her husband Michael Pleters are raising their two children, Cristian Diego and Eloisa, in Central El Paso. Veronica graduated from Burges High School in 1987, received a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1991 from the University of Texas at El Paso, and a master of arts degree from New York University in 1993. Veronica has spent her professional life working for non-profits, in education, and more recently in local government. Veronica has served as a faculty member in the English Departments at both UTEP and EPCC. She later joined Mayor Raymond Caballero's administration as Communications Director. In 2003, she was appointed Executive Director of Community Scholars, a non-profit organization that involves talented local high school students in public policy research with a view to creating solutions to local challenges and encouraging ethical regional leadership.

Veronica has been very active in the civic and political life of El Paso. Her civic involvement has included participation in such organizations as the Border Fair Housing and Economic Justice Center, the Hispanic Leadership Institute, Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center, the Border Rights Coalition, the Women's Political Action Committee of El Paso, and El Paso Now!

Fernando Garcia is Founding Director of the Border Network for Human Rights (BNHR). The BNHR supports immigrant border communities in the promotion of their human rights and the demand of humane of immigration reform that is consistent with human rights. As Director, Fernando is responsible for facilitating the creation of Human Rights Community-Based Committees and the training of Human Rights Promoters in Southern New Mexico, West Texas, Arizona, Houston, Dallas, San Jose CA and New Jersey. In 2001, he became the National Coordinator of the National Movement for Legalization and Human Rights - an alliance of community based immigrant groups and organizations in the U.S. Under Fernando's coordination, the Border Network for Human Rights has also worked closely with local elected officials and community organizations to develop city council resolutions in El Paso, Texas to oppose the militarization of the border, a call for comprehensive immigration reform, and against the presence of racist groups in the border region such as the minutemen. At the present he is a member of the Independent Task Force of Immigration and America's Future convened by the Migration Policy Institute.

Fernando Gonzales is one of eight siblings, the child of first generation migrant workers. His mother was born in Texas, his father in Chihuahua, Mexico. Fernando spent his childhood working in the fields in Arizona and California. After several career changes working for the State, the County, the Federal Government and private industry, Fernando is the Owner and CEO of JanCo Janitorial. Fernando has been involved in several volunteer positions and has belonged to several non-profit boards throughout the years.

Iliana Holguin is a 2000 graduate of the University of Texas School of Law and has been practicing immigration and nationality law exclusively since then. She is the Executive Director of Diocesan Migrant & Refugee Services, the largest provider of free and low-cost legal services to immigrants and refugees and their families in El Paso and the West Texas and Southern New Mexico regions. She is a member of the American Immigration Lawyers Association, the National Immigration Project of the National Lawyers Guild, and the Pro Bono College of the State Bar of Texas. Mrs. Holguin is serving her second term on the State Bar of Texas Committee on Laws Relating to Immigration and Nationality. She was previously a member of the Ethics Review Commission for the City of El Paso and also previously served three terms as the President of the Board of Directors of the Political Asylum Project of Austin (PAPA), the largest provider of free and low-cost legal services to low-income immigrants in central Texas. Mrs. Holguin frequently donates her time to speaking on immigration-related issues to the immigrant community, law

enforcement officials, and other social service agencies. Mrs. Holguin is also a frequent presenter at immigration and nationality law conferences, including the State Bar of Texas Immigration and Nationality Law conference, the University of Texas Immigration conference, and the National Immigration Project Immigration Seminar and Skills Workshop.

Jay J. Johnson-Castro, Sr. was born in Portland, Oregon in 1946, raised in the Alaskan wilderness. A United States Navy Viet Nam era Veteran. Tri-lingual (English-Spanish-Albanian). Traveled some 50 different countries and lived in the Mexico and Albania. He has served as an officer and/or director on numerous local, state, national and international organizations, boards and committees. Tourism Advisory Committee, Officer of the Governor, Texas Historical Foundation, Texas Hotel & Lodging Assn., Los Caminos del Rio, Val Verde County Historical Commission, to name a few. Residing on the border in Del Rio, Texas in his historic Villa Del Rio, Bed & Breakfast, until recently, Jay had mostly been noted for historic restoration and promoting heritage tourism all along the Texas-Mexico border. Since 2005, he has also been championing the ecology and environment of the Rio Grande Corridor, submitting the Rio Grande as an endangered river and filing suit against the Federal Government to protect endangered species in the Rio Grande region.

Jay has most recently become recognized internationally as a human rights activist for his hundreds of miles of protest walks against the border wall and the “for profit” prison camps of thousands of immigrant refugees, especially T. Don Hutto prison camp where hundreds of children are imprisoned for profit. A father of four grown children and grandfather of seven. Jay is a sculptor, writer, photographer, public speaker and gourmet cook. He is an independent columnist of “Inside the Checkpoints”.

Reverend Delle McCormick is the Executive Director of BorderLinks. BorderLinks is an international leader in experiential education that raises awareness and inspires action around global political economics. Today, BorderLinks’ educational programs focus on issues of immigration, community formation, development, and social justice in the borderlands between the Mexico, the U.S and beyond. As a bi-national organization, BorderLinks brings people together to build bridges of solidarity across North and Latin American borders and promote intercultural understanding and respect.

Delle is an ordained minister of the United Church of Christ and worked previously as Pastor and Director of the Cuernavaca Center for Intercultural Dialog on Development (CCIDD) in Cuernavaca, Mexico - an organization committed to building bridges of understanding and solidarity across the border much as BorderLinks does. Later she served a pastoral agent in partnership between Common Global Ministries of the UCC and Disciples of Christ and the Diocese of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas in southern Mexico. There she worked with her Catholic counterparts in ecumenical ministry, collaborating with the Diocesan Women’s Coordination (CODIMUJ), the Ecumenical Bible School (INESIN), and local non-profits dedicated to working with street children (Melel Xojobal), healing and transforming trauma (CAPAZ), as well as leading UCC delegations to Chiapas and preaching and leading workshops and retreats across the US.

Marty Moreno is currently serving her second term as City Council Member of the Town of Sahuarita, AZ. She served four years as Vice Mayor, and is the current Vice Chair of the State Housing Commission.

Reverend Seth Polly is the Episcopal vicar of St. Johns, Bisbee and St. Stephen’s Douglas. He is also the Border Missioner for the Episcopal Diocese of Arizona. As Border Missioner he hosts tours of border areas, participates in border activism, and convenes the Episcopal Diocese of Arizona’s Border and Immigration Program Group. He has been an Episcopal priest since 1996 and has served congregations in Nevada, California, Virginia and in the Episcopal Diocese of Panama. He is married to Lori Keyne and they have one daughter, Catalina who is 3 years old.

José R. Rodríguez is the County Attorney for El Paso County. In addition to representing the county and the Thomason hospital district in all legal matters, the county attorney prosecutes juvenile crime and also handles family violence protective orders, child and elder abuse and neglect cases, and mental commitments. Prior to his election in 1992, Mr. Rodríguez was Legal Advisor to the County Judge, the Honorable Alicia R. Chacon. He practiced law with the firm of Rodríguez, Lewis & Collins and worked for ten (10) years as a Staff attorney and director of the farmworker program of Texas Rural Legal Aid, Inc., a statewide legal services program, litigating matters involving labor and employment, housing, and civil rights. Mr. Rodríguez began his legal career as a staff attorney with the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development in Washington, D.C. He received his law degree from the George Washington University National Law Center in 1974.

Mr. Rodriguez has a long history of involvement in community affairs. He is a board member of the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Education Fund, a national organization that seeks to protect the civil rights of Latinos, and a co-chair of the U.S./Mexico Border and Immigration Task Force, an organization working on comprehensive immigration reform. He is a former board member of the El Paso Diocesan Migrant and Refugee Services, and past chair of the State Bar of Texas Section on Concerns of the Spanish-Speaking Community and the El Paso Mexican American Bar Association.

Sheriff-Elect Richard D. Wiles was raised and educated in El Paso, graduating from Andress High School in 1979. Chief Wiles rose quickly to leadership positions within the department and served as a Patrol Officer, Detective, Sergeant, Lieutenant, Captain, Deputy Chief, Assistant Chief, Interim Chief of Police, and was appointed Chief of Police in 2004. He was also named Andress High School's Outstanding-Ex in 2004 and he attended the University of Texas at El Paso where he earned a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice in 1995. He attended and graduated from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's National Academy, the National Executive Institute, and the Bill Blackwood Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas. Chief Wiles subsequently pursued and earned a Master of Science in Criminal Justice from Sul Ross State University in 2001 where he was also named Outstanding Criminal Justice Graduate Student.

Richard Wiles' lasting legacy is his steadfast commitment to the honesty and integrity of every officer that serves the community in the El Paso Police Department. Richard Wiles implemented a firm organizational and cultural commitment towards these goals that is backed up by action. Richard Wiles has stated emphatically that, "Everything that police officers do is based on honesty and integrity. Those are the very foundations that police officers and the department are built upon." Recently, he was elected the new El Paso County Sherriff.