

My Hands

Matthew Williams

I once held in my hands the beautiful sun
68 degrees⁵⁷ of love
Scorched my hands beyond repair
Giving me a reason to care
For the eleven million men, women, and children⁵⁸
Who asked for opportunity, but received rejection
And learned to run in the desert sun

I once held in my hands a gallon of water
with fire unquenched, vision unfulfilled
I rushed to replace slashed open salvation
Only to lose sight of my own nation

57 Weather History for KTUS - December, 2015." Weather Underground (10.226.242.163). http://www.wunderground.com/history/airport/KTUS/2015/12/1/DailyHistory.html?req_city=&req_state=&req_statename=&reqdb.zip=&reqdb.magic=&reqdb.wmo=.

On the third day of the service immersion, our group went out in the desert and walked on paths that immigrants themselves have taken. This weather grounded in me a fraction of the physical experience of crossing the border.

58 Jens Manuel Krogstad, Jeffrey S. Passel, and D'Vera Cohn. "5 facts about illegal immigration in the U.S." Pew Research Center. April 27, 2017. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/04/27/5-facts-about-illegal-immigration-in-the-u-s/>.

When I went on a service immersion to the U.S.-Mexico border in December 2015, I got to hear the stories of four incredible women and one family who had journeyed north from many places throughout Central America, did business with cartels to get across the border, and survived deportation. This article gives rough figures as to how many other people in the United States have similar stories to remind me of how many people I have chosen to continue fighting for on the path to immigration justice.

At knowledge of six thousand who paid with their lives⁵⁹
To give hope for tomorrow to those whom they loved
Who did not find rest for lack of water

Now I hold in my hands solidarity scars
To remind me to never take “the side of the oppressor”⁶⁰
To bear witness to hope that not all is lost
No matter my failure to alleviate cost
For eleven million men, women, and children
Who suffer as I struggle to fight everyday
That I might be the only one to bear those scars

59 Colin Schultz. “Nearly 6,000 Migrants Have Died Along the Mexico-U.S. Border Since 2000.” *Smithsonian.com*, October 1, 2014. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/nearly-6000-migrants-have-died-along-mexico-us-border-2000-180952904/>.

As a mathematician, I frequently look for numbers to help me decide where to stand. As long as the number of border crossing deaths is higher than zero, I refuse to remain silent in the face of this injustice.

60 Robert McAfee Brown, *Unexpected News: Reading the Bible with Third World Eyes*. (Westminster John Knox Press; 1st edition, 1984).

Desmond Tutu is quoted saying, “If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.” This quote provides one of the most important reasons I have to stay committed to fighting for justice for immigrants.