ROBIN HOOVER’S CURRENT PROJECTS

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BOOK PROJECT

I am writing a Social Ethic for Migration (descriptive working title). Social Ethics is a discipline that combines theology, social science, and public policy. The book is organized similarly by first tracing the contributions of practicing faith communities to work on matter of public policy and to examine how a theology of migration might emerge. Second, the book traces my work and the work of my colleagues and friends along the US-Mexico border for a period of thirty years. This part of the book examines the organizations and their interactions with journalists, public administrators, elected officials, and others such as indigenous peoples. Humane Borders, Southwest Good Samaritan Ministries, and other organizations are featured. The third part of the book deals with the experience based and theologically founded contributions to a discourse on public policy reform in the field of migration. Very specific reform proposals are articulated in this section.

ACADEMIC WRITING

Currently working on an article to be included in a reader published by UNAM. Working with Rodrigo Fernández de Gortari ([ferdegor@vanillaplanifolia.net](mailto:ferdegor@vanillaplanifolia.net)) and Luis Ernesto Nava (sgtlnava@gmail.com).

UNIVERSITY LECTURES

I will be lecturing at Northeast Ohio Medical University on September 16, 2015.

NEW NONPROFIT CORPORATION

Emigrant Safety and Service (a Texas corporation) has been dissolved. A new corporation (to be named) is being founded in Arizona. This new corporation will be better adapted to a flexible mission along the US-Mexico border and for collaborating on projects in Mexico and Central America. The enumerated powers of the corporation will include capacities to work in the fields of advocacy, community education, cultural celebration, medical assistance, legal assistance, religious services, social services, academic research, and accompaniment. At the outset, the corporation will focus on needs assessment and short term projects.

MAJOR RESEARCH PROJECT

-HUMAN RIGHTS STATUS OF RETURNED MIGRANTS

I envision a collaboration between Mexico’s National Human Rights Commission, recruited academics from Mexico and the US, and myself. As principal investigator, I would facilitate a major survey of all migrants returned across the border at five ports of entry in a 24-48 hour period. The survey would be conducted by CNDH and supervised by academics. Questions would be solicited from academics familiar with migration literatures and compiled by my. Migrants would be surveyed about basic demographics, their current employment and family status, details of their apprehension, their medical status, the status of their family, their presenting complaints, and the agencies in US or Mexico they would most wish to hear their complaints.

The survey would be conducted until the number of respondents exceeded 4,000. With this number, for the very first time, we could measure effects by region, states of origin, sex, urban-rural, nighttime apprehension-daytime apprehension, apprehending agency, desert apprehension-urban apprehension, length of time in the US, family status, and so on.

When the data is compiled and analyzed, a general report will be published indicating the human rights status of those persons being removed or voluntarily returning from the US. The data set would then be handed to the various academics who would then further analyze the data from their specialized discipline. Their findings would be published.

In the event—which is both expected and highly likely—that major discrepancies exist in the treatment of migrants according to time, place, family, state of origin, sex, etc., then appropriate communications would be made to responsible parties. One year later, the survey instrument would be administered again, and activists, academics, and institutional actors can ask why there has been no change in the treatment of migrants.

MEDIA

I have a long history of working with journalists, editors, editorial writers, broadcasters, producers, and other personalities in the media. I am currently working with several persons including investigative reporters from the northeastern part of the US. Now that I am retired back in Tucson, I will take the initiative to contact many of these persons to make myself available to them as a non-governmental source of information and service.

DOCUMENTARIES/FILM

Work continues with two documentary film crews. One is working on a film that is designed to portray the effect of US Customs and Border Protection treatment of unaccompanied children entering the US and the agency’s treatment of mothers and children. The other is focusing on the humanitarian efforts of southern Arizonans to assist migrants in the desert by providing water and other resources.

10TH ANNIVERSARY OF WARNING POSTERS

January 2016 will mark the tenth anniversary of the effort of Humane Borders and CNDH to print and distribute warning posters for migrants. This effort was based on the concept that the most basic level of ethics is informed consent. The ethical thing to do was to inform migrants of the dangers they faced as they crossed the desert and to inform them of the potentials for abuse and for rescue.

On this anniversary, I would like to collaborate with various migrant help groups—and hopefully—CNDH to hold a press conference—possibly a conference—to describe the systemic violations of human rights of migrants on the US-Mexico border and the efforts to ameliorate them.

DELEGATIONS

During the Central American exodus of the 80s and 90s, we learned that sustaining the interest and help from churches, universities, labor organizations, and civil society was significantly helped by hosting delegations to the border—and sometimes into Mexico and Central America. Delegations visit churches, shelters, public administrators, and elected officials to learn what is happening. Academics and activists can provide much needed perspective. I would like very much to renew this approach to renewing interest in the plight of the migrants, the efforts to push back on racism and xenophobia, and the efforts to reform US migration policies. What would be needed from a partner such as CNDH would be minimal: contact information for shelters, housing, transportation, academics, government officials, and so on in order that delegations could originate in the US, tour portions of Mexico, and reflect upon observations while being encouraged to return to communities of origin in the US and generate support for shelters, reform, etc. Having the services of a staff member to accompany the delegation would be a bonus.

POLITICIAN CONSULATIONS

I am currently working with two candidates for national political office to model language and concepts for migration policy reform to further their political futures, for sure, but primarily to promote the concepts for policy reform into the national agenda.

Below, I have provided a most basic outline of the proposals I have supported for nearly 15 years.

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The story is old: the immigration system is broken. Only the feds can fix it. The rest of us have to work to fix a lot of the problems surrounding it that kill people, separate families, and violate human rights. The attempts to fix it through enforcement only, open borders, only family reunification, physical barriers, or fiscal management are all doomed to marked failure. A system that manages and adapts to the realities of the migration is the only viable solution.

The solution is relatively simple, and it involves market incentives and elements of social justice.

First, as a matter of justice, we must provide some status for those who are living here without papers. We offer extended visas (6-15years) based on one hour interviews in which we obtain identity, work background, extended contacts, etc. In exchange for the visas, the migrants buy insurance, get driver’s licenses, open accounts, buy pizza, go to church without fear. During the term of the visas, the migrants decide whether or not to become citizens and/or whether or not to self-deport. In exchange, we get security which is very important since approximately half of all incidents of concern such as terrorist acts are home-grown. They share costs. If they want to become citizens, they are in line during the term of the visa. If they do not, they must self-deport. If they do not, at the end of the visa, they become a federal fugitive. Mexican intelligence officials and their families are notified of their last known location. Failure to self-deport results in a permanent bar. If you don’t share the costs, you don’t share the benefits. In an internet world, these persons can be reasonably tracked once they can come out of the shadows. As with all immigration enforcement, aggravated felonies and other major violations of US laws result in deportation and bars against re-entry. There is no automatic path to citizenship. After interviewing thousands and thousands of migrants, most don’t want to live here for the rest of their lives.

Second, this is the Hoover Plan, first offered to and admired by the Bush administration. Sending countries such as Mexico, Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador are exempted from the Worldwide Quota of Visas. However, an annual visa quota would be set based upon Labor Department calculations for the numbers of persons from these countries working in approved fields: agriculture, landscaping, hospitality, construction, etc. Governments, syndicates (below the border), labor unions (north of the border, and other labor organizations can screen, train, and prepare persons for work in the US. Visas are given directly to the workers, not to the US employers. This eliminates systemic human rights violations of the past. The screened workers (and families if they accompany workers) open an account with the IRS prior to or at the time of entry into the US. The amount deposited in this account is roughly equivalent to the amount generally paid to a coyote which today is in the vicinity of $4,000.00 USD. Upon employment, the worker indicates that he or she is here on the WXYZ visa. Each pay period, 10% of the gross is withheld and deposited into the account. At the end of this visa, on average, using PEW Hispanic Center data, the average working migrant would have accumulated $8-10K. That is significant in an economy in Mexico where the current exchange rate is $1 to 16Pesos. At the end of the visa, usually 24-30 months, the migrant wire-transfers the money home at a port of entry and departs. All is well if the migrant complies with the term of the visa. If not, if the money is not picked up and the migrant leaves the country, then the money is then forfeited to law enforcement. The money is used to find the migrant. At $8,000-$10,000 per person, non-compliant migrants will be found especially since they have been free to have licenses, internet access, and other traceable items. And, the benefit is that the migrants are the ones who have provided the funds for law enforcement which significantly slows the need for so many agents along the border that represent a huge drain on national resources.

This is the very, very short version. I am willing to travel, to educate, to lead delegations to the border and into Mexico, to make connections between Congressional staff members and key persons in Mexico.