THINGS YOU CAN DO TO HELP MIGRANTS AND MIGRATION ADVOCACY

GOOGLE ALERTS: It’s easy. Create a Google Alert for key words like immigration, migrant, migration. You can create Google Alerts for your region or city, like immigration Los Angeles. Find out what is happening where you live. Contact organizations that need your help. They all need your help.

FOLLOW SCHOLARS AND GROUPS ON SOCIAL MEDIA: For instance, I follow Austin Kocher because he has some of the best statistics on migration.

CREATE WEBSITES: I’ve always wanted to see live cameras in Mexico looking north to the USA to document migrants being returned to Mexico. There are rules about how to return women and children, what hours of the day they can be returned, and more. Very frequently, we’ve observed women being returned to a city that is unknown to them at hours that conflict with agreements between the nations. Film them and post them. Border Patrol have said, “We have policies for that.” They don’t follow them. We ask if they want to see the videos. Get your local reporters in on their activities.

CONTACT CONSULATES IN YOUR AREA: Canada, Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and many other countries have consulates in the United States. Find out where they are. Volunteer in very specific ways. Nearly every consulate has an office of Protective Services. Staff help their nationals navigate healthcare, law enforcement, schools, and other systems in the U.S. Specifically, they work with migrants in areas like search and rescue, information and referral, temporary housing, and more. Ask how you can help. Perhaps a migrant or even a family needs a safe place to stay. You can accompany someone to immigration court.

CONTACT THE MEDICAL EXAMINER: The Office of the Medical Examiner in the Forensic Science Services in Tucson is the gold standard for establishing the identity of migrants found dead in the desert. Volunteer opportunities are probably clerical. Most offices along the border are severely understaffed and need help. Even mundane help is help. Everything helps that speeds up the process to reunite a family with the remains of their loved ones.

ORGANIZE TRASH PICK-UPS: Our federal, state, and tribal lands have a big need to be cleaned of the things migrants leave behind. Border Patrol agents do not pick up debris left when migrants are apprehended. Your presence in the desert may be the key to life or death. Migrants will observe you from a distance and seek your help, even if it means they will be apprehended as a result.

SHARE THE GUIAMIGRANTES.COM WEBSITE: Guiamigrantes.com, the Migrant Guide, gives advice to migrants who choose to cross the desert. Check it out. See how you can promote it.

SEARCH FOR HUMAN REMAINS: If you live near an area where migrants are known to die, organize a search group and look for human remains. DO NOT DISTURB THE SITE if you encounter human remains. First thing: contact law enforcement. The death of a migrant is first investigated as a crime to rule out foul play.

VOLUNTEER FOR SEARCH AND RESCUE GROUPS: Even if you are not physically fit for search and rescue, you can operate a radio, keep an eye on vehicles of searchers, re-locate a vehicle to another area when asked.

RAISE FUNDS FOR THE HUMANITARIAN GROUPS: The life blood of humanitarian organizations is a Mississippi River of $5 bills. Search for immigration documentaries. Find one you like, invite friends over, have a watch, talk about it, send money to the organization of your choice.

BUILD SHELTER CAPACITIES: While it’s true that the numbers of migrants in shelters in Mexico are low all along the border, they will not stay that way. Volunteer to wash bedding, paint rooms and equipment, re-stock over-the-counter medications, re-supply consumables like paper goods. Volunteer to take staff to stores where they can spend $500 or more on things needed. Give shelter directors pre-paid cards for purchases.

CONTACT BUSINESSES IN YOUR AREA: Hotels and motels regularly replace sheets, towels, blankets, bedspreads, pillows, and other things. Have them donate some and deliver them to the shelters. Shelters need toys, paper, pencils, crayons…for kids in the shelters.

CREATE DISPLAYS TO EDUCATE YOUR PEOPLE: So, you’re in Little Rock, Arkansas or Cincinnati, Ohio, you can help. Create posters or museum quality displays to educate and inform your group, congregation, or club about the conditions of migrants and the presence of humanitarian groups along the border. Rip photos and news stories from the web and get it done.

CONTACT YOUR LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT: Migrants are everywhere and migrant children are among the universally deserving. Can you tutor? Can you find a tutor? Can you hang out with vulnerable kids before or after school? Find out what the kids need and volunteer to help meet that need.

THE FEDS ARE COMING AFTER SANCTUARY CITIES: Be a safe place in your person, your home, your congregation, your neighborhood. Learn about the Sanctuary Movement, New Sanctuary, cities as sanctuaries. Talk to friends and family. Be a safe place. Help families prepare for emergencies that result from enforcement, fear, and harassment.

ORGANIZE A 501(c)(4) nonprofit corporation: You hear about 501(c)(3) organizations all the time. They’re charities, churches, museums, and nature preserves. The so-called C4s are like them except for two details in particular. First, contributions to them are not tax deductible. Second, they can endorse candidates, direct funds to educational programs around issues, etc. It really is simple to create nonprofit organizations. I’ve done several. It only takes a few hours to do the paperwork. You create a nonprofit corporation in your state by simply filling out the forms and signing it. You then seek recognition by the Internal Revenue Service by filling out their forms. Done. Then you wait. Technically, once the forms are filled out, you can proceed immediately to act “as if” everything was in order. It’s best to wait, though. Some groups of activists prefer to act as individuals. In this climate, I strongly recommend the corporate form to limit liabilities as much as possible.

OBSERVE AND REPORT (POST): ICE AIR, ICE, and Border Patrol vehicles are constantly in motion. Film and post. The public has a right to know what is going on. There is no rational expectation of privacy on the part of the Border Patrol (or even migrants for that matter). The public has a right to see the activities of law enforcement in the United States.

VOLUNTEER TO HELP RESEARCH: Immigration lawyers must show evidence to judges about the conditions in the country where migrants would be returned. If you have internet, you can be a pro-migrant nomad volunteer. Websites, news sites, social media products exist nearly everywhere. Several Jewish, Catholic, non-denominational, and community organizations across the U.S. build files that are used by immigration judges to grant relief to persons seeking asylum from being returned to their country of origin. Imagine helping one person avoid a certain death. I’ve been present when the case was lost and the letter later received from relatives reporting the death of a returned asylum applicant.

START AN ENDOWMENT TO HELP MIGRANT ORGANIZATIONS: Again, create the 501(c)(3). Get people to add a codicil to their will donating even a small percentage or a specific total. Immigration problems are not going away. Sure, it might take 25 years to raise a million dollars, but it also might just take a year or two. Grants can be made to organizations that are on the frontlines. Imagine the joy of writing those checks and maybe going to visit where the work is actually being done.

CONTACT YOUR LOCAL SOCIAL WORKERS: Every community in the U.S. has social workers. They know where the migrants live, where they work. They know what the needs are. Meet those needs in Nebraska, Kentucky, Idaho, where you live.

START A FREE MIGRANT FAMILY BABYSITTING SERVICE: Find out who needs help. Be that help. Talk to parents. Hang out in the park with them. Go for hikes. Watch tv. You won’t be bored.