

# Open it up or we'll shut it down! Everyone must be let in!

## **MEXICANS** and **AMERICANS** stand with us!



**O**ur Freedom March is almost over! Our goal of freedom is within sight and we must march on in order to achieve it! The arrival of the migrant caravan at the Mexico-US border has proven once again that the tactic of the caravan is our best strategy for safely reaching the US. Although we have not reached the border without suffering the roughness of the trip and some of us suffering it more than others, united we have almost reached our goal of crossing to the US and have set the example for thousands of our brothers and sisters that are now making their way in their own caravans through Mexico, while others prepare for the next caravan to take off. This has become the most reasonable and necessary response for the thousands of people that must flee government repression, gang violence and the deteriorating living conditions in our countries and face the dangers of the road to the US.

For decades Central American migrants have been forced to leave their countries of origin as a result of wars, natural disasters, extreme poverty, lack of jobs and opportunities, and rampant

gang violence fostered by extremist and repressive right wing militarist governments supported or managed by the US government. These constant military, political and economic interventions continue to destabilize the countries' political and economic situations forcing thousands of people to make the dangerous journey to the United States at times in small numbers and then again in mass exodus like now.

Migration has become a profitable business for the networks of smugglers and for gangs who exploit and prey on migrants on the road. The refusal of governments to provide help or safe passage and the impunity given to the gangs and cartels have left thousands of immigrants to become victims to these networks who thwart their efforts to flee, especially those immigrants who cannot afford the exorbitant costs of coyotes and extortions by gangs and corrupt police alike. For these reasons, the caravans are and will continue to be the only reasonable option at a low cost to safely and successfully cross to the US.

The US and the rest of the world are

watching and following the caravan's march with overwhelming support for it. Each obstacle defeated, like the crossing from Guatemala to Mexico, has been enthusiastically cheered. News stories of its progress are being widely shared on social media with inspiring messages of support and admiration for the caravan's tactics and goal of reaching the US, accompanied by links of how to donate and or support. Similarly, people have also expressed their anger and opposition to Trump's racist attacks and threats on the caravan and the meek complicity of Mexican and Central American government's attempts to stop or hold back the caravan. The reasons for people leaving the country by joining the caravan are obvious to everyone and are supported by the majority of people both across Mexico and the US. There's no question in most people's minds that the overwhelming majority of people on the caravan should be let into the US and granted asylum.

Any attempt on the part of Trump and his racist supporters, politicians in governments and racist fanatics attempting to help him at the border are nothing but

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(313) 936-0664 email@bamn.com www.bamn.com Join our BAMN Facebook group

racist and xenophobic attacks and they must be strongly opposed in words and in action. Likewise, any of the attempts on the part of national and local governments in Mexico and Central America, who sheepishly go along with Trump's racist threats, to try to hold back or stop the caravan are deeply wrong and must be rejected and opposed. These attempts to stop the caravan are completely contrary to the actions and words of the majority of Mexican people that have overwhelmingly opened their doors in small towns and big cities alike providing whatever help they can give to people in the caravan, from a place to stay, food, clothing and medicine and even rides in their vehicles.

It is this spirit of active support and international solidarity among peoples across borders, for this ongoing march, that is stronger than any racist and wrong governmental attacks to stop this exodus towards freedom. We are deeply thankful for the majority of Mexican people who have provided us help along the way and call on them to strongly oppose their government's attacks on the caravan and demand they provide the help necessary for migrants to immediately be able to cross the border and reach the US.

For decades the Mexican people have shared the same problems that force us to migrate and face the danger of the border crossing from the Mexican side and on the other, the racism of the US immigration agents and laws. We live in a daily joint struggle to survive in the US undocumented and we march side by side fighting for immigrant rights. We invite our Mexican brothers and sisters to join our caravan efforts to safely and promptly cross to the US.

## Trump Efforts to Stop Asylum Seekers

For the last two years the Trump administration has attempted to stop the flow of immigrants seeking asylum in the US by implementing a policy of holding back and "registering" asylum seekers in Mexico. Trump's complete control of the border grants ICE the opportunity to sabotage people trying to cross. Initially "registration" was done by US immigration officials in Mexico, now the job has been entirely relegated to Mexican immigration officials, effectively pulling Mexico in the business of stopping immigrants from crossing the border. This



policy has created eternally long waiting periods for immigrants at the border who come directly to ask for asylum. The long waiting period is aimed at discouraging people from crossing, the longer you wait, the less the chances of crossing, the less access to food and resources, the higher the chances of becoming victims to organized crime, plus the ongoing attempt of Mexican authorities encouraging people to turn back to their countries or stay to live in Mexico.

Along with this policy of bottling up immigrants at crossing points, a set of gross inhumane anti-immigrant Trump laws carried out by ex-attorney general Jeff Sessions, the right to seek asylum for victims of domestic and sexual violence, as well as gang violence were virtually eliminated. A rapid increase in the creation of improvised tent camps to detain immigrant children separated from their parents were created with the effect of thousands of children being "lost" by Trump's homeland security. Many of the children's parents have been deported and lost any kind of contact with their children, maybe forever. In response to the public indignation and protests held at the border near the detention centers and in cities across the country, Trump responded by creating concentration camps in the desert called "family reunification."

## The Best Chances for Asylum

Although the numbers of people granted asylum are very low for central American and Mexican immigrants, especially since Trump's election and his attacks on people's rights to asylum, crossing the border seeking asylum and being granted the opportunity to live in the US while seeking asylum in US courts is not impossible, but the different ways to do it are very important and in some ways defy seem to defy common sense.

Our general reasons for fleeing our countries like women and children fleeing domestic violence, LGBT, especially trans people, and the majority fleeing gang violence and government repression seem to the majority of people in the US and around the world obvious and reasonable arguments to grant people asylum to live free and safe in the US. And yet the process is not so simple and the US is not so welcoming, especially considering the fact that the US is greatly responsible for the conditions in our countries and that the US government supports the people whose repression has forced us to leave.

We are under enormous pressure to present ourselves in the most respectful and non-threatening manner. To say that we are not criminals, or "trouble makers," that we are simply hard working people seeking jobs and safety, a better future for ourselves and our children and families.



That we are escaping the gangs' rampant violence and lack of opportunities. But sadly, these obvious reasons are not enough and should not be presented as our first and main arguments for seeking asylum. Even under Trump and his lawless and repressive government, our best option to be granted the possibility of seeking asylum in US courts while living in the US is if we make clear that our political opinions and stances in words and or actions against the gangs and the government made us their targets.

For some of us, our political opinions and determination to stand up and express our opposition to injustice in words or in actions or both, have made us targets of the gangs' violence and/or government repression. We are seen as dangerous threat by the gangs and "trouble makers" by the government. Others have been target of homophobic repression by gangs and/or government alike creating an impossible homophobic climate in our country. Our stances are of political opinion, or part of a social group persecuted because of our political affiliation, or discrimination based on sex or gender; these categories are our best chances of meeting the requirements of a "credible fear interview," to have the opportunity to seek asylum in courts while living in the US. If you expressed your political opinion through your activity with a political party of opposition (LIBRE or PAC in Honduras) against the injustice, fraud and violent repression of the current government; that you organized people to vote or took part

in political protests and demonstrations that made you locally or nationally known and a target for government repression by police and the gangs. Do not be afraid to say that you have been confronted, physically attacked or threatened by the gangs or government officials. In either situation forcing you to leave the country because its no longer safe and the government did not help you, that because of the extensive network of the gangs and government, nowhere in your country is safe for you to live anymore, that your very life and those of your family members would be in danger if you returned.

## **Immigrants in the Caravan lead the way; the movement in the US must join the march!**

The migrants in the caravan, through their massive march for freedom, lead the way to progress all the way to the US and their success in crossing the Mexico-US border will be a major boost in the strength of the immigrant rights movement in the US and our efforts to force Donald Trump out of the presidency and stop all his gross attacks on civil rights in America. It is not just the right thing, but the responsibility of people in the immigrant rights movement to do everything

possible to help the caravan cross the border. It is time to put words into action, for those who are now coming to San Diego to solidarize with the caravan, if are legally able, to get across the border to Mexico and help the caravan to cross the finish line as quickly as possible.

Those who supported Dr. Martin Luther King's leading efforts for racial equality and civil rights and made the greatest and most important impact during the civil rights movement were not the spectators, but those who had the courage and will to act on what they believed in and joined him and thousands of black people in street marches that changed history for the better. The immigrant rights movement is our modern new civil rights movement and our historic freedom march is on the move, its time for people in the US and Mexico to join.

For the millions across the US who, for whatever reason, cannot afford to make the trip across the San Ysidro-Tijuana border to join the caravan, but have by way of donations, city demonstrations and other ways, supported the caravan, we ask for your continued energetic support and action. The US midterm elections are over, there's no reason why civil rights organizations and the Democratic Party apparatus should not be fiercely demanding open access across the border for the caravan and doing everything possible to stop Trump's racist attacks on the caravan.

## **The Mexican Government should not do Trump's dirty work and implement his racist anti-immigrant agenda**

The over 4,000 people, men, women and children, facing food shortages and sickness, residing in Tijuana's Benito Juarez sports complex and the roughly over 2,000 more slowly making their way to Tijuana by foot, rides and organized transportation every day from the city of Mexicali, roughly two hours away, have been called an ongoing humanitarian crisis. Cries have come from different sides that there are not enough resources of the



local government to adequately help the caravan on a day to day basis. There is no denying that the whole situation in Central America and other parts of the world that are forcing people to migrate in great numbers is a humanitarian crisis. However, these words are completely contrary to the actions of Mexico's government attempting to hold back the caravan from marching and crossing over to the US and exercise their right to seek asylum in the US.

The Benito Juarez sports complex is in reality looking more and more like the tent concentration camps enforced by Trump across the border to hold thousands of immigrant children and their parents in precarious conditions. The Mexican government cannot be doing Trump's dirty work by enforcing Trump's racist attempts to stop the caravan from seeking asylum, by bottling up the flow of migrants in the caravans, whatever the government might say publicly.

The newly elected president of Mexico, Manuel Lopez Obrador, who will be inaugurated on December 1st, claims to support and understand the reasons why people are migrating as part of the caravans. If he really wants to help the immigrant people of Central America, he should support their right to cross the border and seek asylum in the US. In fact, he must demand the US government immediately accept the thousands of asylum seekers into the US.

American News media are now reporting, with confirmation from soon-to-be top officials of Obrador's Mexican government that they have in fact met

and helped Trump's government formulate a new policy called "Remain in Mexico," aimed at holding immigrants back in Mexico while their asylum claims are "processed" in the US. This is wrong and unacceptable! This new policy, which seems set to be implemented as soon as Obrador is sworn in as president on December 1st, will make it virtually impossible for people to be granted asylum in the US, and will prevent people from carrying out their asylum-seeking process in court while living in the US with their families.

This new policy will also increase the creation of a number of permanent immigrant refugee camps across the border from Baja California-California in the west to the Tamaulipas-Texas section in the east, leaving thousands and thousands of immigrants vulnerable to all the adversities and lack of resources so commonly known already to people in the current camp in Tijuana in their short time there. The promise of work in Tijuana is nothing more than an invitation for us to join the tens of thousands of people living in the slums of Tijuana. No Mexican government should allow the extension of Trump's racist anti-immigrant policies to be implemented on Mexican soil. We call on the Mexican people and people in the US to fervently oppose in words and actions this gross attack on the migrant caravans and immigrants attempting to reach freedom by crossing the Mexico-US border.

For those who currently wait for an unclear answer and direction about how to accomplish their starting goal, collective action is the answer. People have

joined the caravan not just for safety but also because it's the best chance to cross to the US. But this is only possible as long as we keep moving! This caravan has been characterized by the ongoing march overcoming every obstacle on its way across borders. Through these struggles we have learned valuable lessons, like there will always be some kind of support from people along the road, but that we should be careful and sometimes distrustful of what we are told by "officials" who have lied to us before or attempted to stop our march. We have learned the importance of an adequate rest to recharge our energies, treat our wounds and care for our most vulnerable members. We have learned to trust in each other and figure out collectively the best ways to overcome our immediate obstacles. But above all, we have learned that our unshakable determination to keep marching forward is our strongest quality and our only guarantee to reach our goal. We are waiting, we have rested, new reinforcements are arriving every day, but have many obstacles in our way. We know our last step will be the most difficult, but it is time to lift ourselves up again and figure out how to get across the finish line. The march is not over, freedom lies across the border and we must march on!

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