

It is wonderful to be with all of you this morning in San Miguel de Allende, México.

My husband Celso and I were born in Mexico but have lived in the us as immigrants since we were children. We have been involved in the migrant justice movement in Phoenix, Arizona for about 10 years now. It all started from being undocumented students at Arizona State University fighting to keep our merit based scholarship after an the anti-immigrant law tripled our tuition and took away state funded scholarships. As we fought to keep our scholarship we learned about community organizing and started our activism. In 2010 SB1070 passed, another anti-immigrant law meant to legalize racial profiling in Arizona. We played spiritual and movement songs during vigils and events, engaged in press conferences and rallies, and Celso participated in a hunger strike for 9 days. After several parts of this horrible law were struck down by the courts, we decided to continue fighting to stop deportations. In 2012 we engaged behind the scenes as a digital strategist and as a community organizer in a campaign that pressured President Obama to grant us protection from deportation and a work permit. This is a temporary protection for immigrant youth who were taken as children to the U.S., and have no criminal record. It does not give us legal status, permanent residency, or a path to citizenship but it was definitely a relief for many of us and the proof that community organizing is powerful. As we held those work permits and social security cards, we turned to look at our parents and realized that they were the original dreamers who had sacrificed so much for

us to have a chance to a better life, so we continued to work against the deportations of people like our parents. In 2013 I sat down in front of a deportation bus as an act of civil disobedience to stop deportations.

During the many rallies and marches I started recognizing people with yellow shirts and banners that read "Standing on the side of Love". I thought it was great to have allies present at our rallies and I started to get to know them better. In 2012 before I had a work permit and before the presidential election, a friend of mine and I were offering "Spanish for Social Justice" classes for anyone who wanted to learn some basic spanish to prepare to canvass the streets talking to hispanic voters. Several UU members attended my class and as we talked about their involvement I became interested in Unitarian Universalism and decided to visit.

I invited my boyfriend at the time, Celso, of course, and after 2 years visiting congregations we decided to become members officially in February 2015 and we decided to get married at the UU Congregation of Phoenix in May of last year.

Three months ago, as we were practicing songs for special music during one of our services, I closed my eyes as I was singing and I imagined myself singing at a UU Congregation in Mexico. I stopped and told Celso, Wouldn't it be amazing to meet fellow UUs in Mexico, people who understand our choice of an inclusive faith and who live in our country of birth? That is how the dream of visiting you began.

I remembered that during some of the application drives we held to help youth apply for the Deferred Action permit I heard from an attorney that once a migrant receives a work permit and protection from deportation, we become eligible to apply for a special permit to exit and return into the U.S. called Advance Parole, but only if we had a work, educational or humanitarian reason.

So, after our performance at our service three months ago, I went home and searched for UU Congregations in Mexico at the Unitarian Universalist Association website and sent an email to all of them. Ellie Goodwin responded to my email. Thanks to her support and the board I was able to get a letter from your fellowship to attach to an application packet sent to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services Department requesting to visit you here and also to participate in a UU Borders trip. We got in touch with our U.S. representative, Congressman Grijalva's office and they inquired about our application progress. We were able to get our application approved one month after applying, which is unusual considering that the average review time frame is about 3 months.

We feel very fortunate. Being here with you is literally a day-dream come true and it wouldn't have happened without your trust and support in me, and our perseverance and patience.

Two weeks ago I thought I would be spending my time on this podium talking about specific pro-immigrant policies that would be in line with our 7 Unitarian Universalist Principles. Some of them are: Decoupling Local Law Enforcement from Immigration Enforcement, End For-Profit Detention, Facilitating Family reunification, Ending the "Constitution Free" Zone, Connecting Integration with Educational Programs, and

Expanding Access to Naturalization. And I can still talk about those topics during our Q&A after the service, however, after experiencing the borders trip, and the events of this Tuesday, I felt grounded in sharing with you the current reality at the border, and acknowledging our current collective grieving process.

Our journey in Mexico started two weeks ago. We spent the first week in the state of Chihuahua, meeting Celso's extended family. It was incredible to go from town to town meeting family who he had not seen in more than 25 years, to ask questions to the elders in the family about the family tree, and to have the chance to visit his grandparents graves. With gratitude this experience made us reflect that nobody should have to wait more than 25 years to visit their parents or grandparents' graves or miss a funeral or an important family event because of man-made laws. We felt grounded in connection to our roots and the responsibility that comes from the privilege of being able to be in this side of the border, something that my parents and many people in our families and community still cannot do.

From Juarez, Chihuahua, we flew to Tijuana, Mexico last weekend to be part of the Unitarian Universalist Borders' trip organized by the UU Justice Ministry of California, and the GaryMar Academy.

The first day, we met several mothers from the organization Madres Deportadas en Acción (Deported Mothers in Action). We visited the shelter Centro Madre Assunta where they receive deportees, migrants on their way to the U.S., Central American refugees, and Haitian asylum applicants who find themselves stuck in Tijuana waiting for their asylum appointments. In these shelters they try to cover

a variety of needs. From basic needs like a roof over their heads at night, a shower, a change of clothes, and a meal, to needs like a long distance phone call, a haircut for their appointment, and legal advice to decide what their next steps would be. We were told that shelters are at more than 300% of their capacity, using every inch of floor space to allow people to sleep for a limited number of nights. Some people have had to stay outside due to lack of space.

The next day we had lunch with a member of Ollin Calli, a worker justice organization made up of mostly women. We learned about the labor and environmental issues with the maquiladora industry, companies from the U.S. or other countries that have set up factories all over Mexico paying a little over the minimum wage with 10 to 12 hour shifts. We heard sad stories about the lives of workers in those maquiladoras, the impact on their children and their health, and abuses on the job. From there we went on to visit a maquiladora and the communities living around it, where we witnessed the big economic disparity. On a positive note, they shared with us that despite their struggle, they have found strength in unity. They created a Co-op made up of mostly women who get together to make art pieces and jewelry together. We got to look around the store and purchase some items to support the women and the organization.

We met a local immigration lawyer who focuses on the hard pro-bono cases such as asylum seekers from different parts of the world, and the reunification of deported mothers with their U.S. born children, which is a very lengthy process in

order to get their children back. The mothers have to go through so much to meet the different eligibility requirements for both the U.S. and Mexico Children Protection Services departments, . It was heartbreaking to hear how much these mothers and the children have to go through in order to get reunited, but at the same time it was humbling to meet people who are dedicating their lives on a volunteer basis to make a difference in a case per case basis.

Sunday consisted of going to the border wall to help out and participate in a monthly reunion where families meet at the border and a spiritual service is offered. Our role was to be present with the families and have activities for the children as they waited to see their family members through the border wall.

Sadly, family members are not able to touch or hug each other through the wall.

The family members on the U.S. side have to stand next to a Border Patrol officer five feet away from the wall during the brief visit. There are mothers who have not seen their children in years or decades and they cannot touch them.

We finished off our experience by volunteering at a soup kitchen for the poor where we helped serve breakfast to about 900 people. And that was a slow day for them! It was amazing to see all the coordination that happens to make this possible.

During the weekend trip, we listened to several people's stories about deportation and life in Tijuana as a deportee, and we had learning sessions about the Doctrine of Discovery, the North American Free Trade Agreement or NAFTA,

and the current US Immigration law system. We felt sad to hear of so many injustices and the crisis people at the border are going through, and at the same time we felt grateful to be able to witness first hand the migrant justice movement that is seldom acknowledged in the U.S.

Our whole time engaging in migrant justice activism has been spent on demanding a path to legalization and stop of deportations, but thanks to this trip we were able to see the struggles people face after being deported and the crisis that border communities are going through.

On Monday, we flew to Mexico City and met with family in Pachuca Hidalgo. I had the opportunity to see family I haven't seen in more than 12 years, and keep a promise I had with myself to take flowers to my grandmother's grave. As I was going through the intense emotions of being able to close an important chapter of my life of longing to come back to my country of birth, as I come full circle connecting with my roots, and as I am getting ready for the next chapter in my life, I was impacted by the uncertainty that came from Tuesday night's election results.

I am one of those people who were surprised to see the results of the election this past Tuesday. The moment I heard who was leading on number of electoral votes I was in disbelief, and it reminded me of how I felt when I heard news like 9/11 or natural disasters like the Japan Earthquake and Tsunami in 2011.

Experiencing the results from Mexico was difficult. An hour before the major news outlets confirmed who was going to be the next U.S. president, I tried to fall asleep wishing to be hugging my mom and dad in Phoenix, Arizona. The next morning I called

my mother, who is undocumented, she shared with me that she was not able to sleep that night. I couldn't sleep either, and as I have heard from some of you this was a common experience. There is so much uncertainty that comes from the news that that man will be the next U.S. president.

The effects of this election has already impacted our family members in the U.S. and Mexico. For the last month, one of my cousins who is a Food Chemist and lives in Pachuca, Hidalgo had been in a selection process for a job in the U.S. with the meat industry. This week he was selected as the best candidate for the job and was offered a full time position they even offered to support for him to continue his masters degree in the U.S. Unfortunately because of the election results, the day he was going to sign the contract, the company withdrew the offer stating that because of the uncertainty of Trump's policies, they have had to cancel all new positions.

In our case, as we hope our safe return to the U.S. is not impacted by the election results, we know that as we arrive we will have to start thinking of Plans B, C and D to be able to make ends meet in case our work permits are cancelled as soon as January comes around. The one thing I am certain about is that I will continue my work in the migrant justice movement in the U.S. no matter what.

For the last two years I have been part of a decentralized movement growing in different parts of the United States calling for a mass boycott and strike called the Movimiento Cosecha, or Harvest Movement. The main goal is to show that the United States economy and daily life cannot function without the active participation of the undocumented immigrants' labor and consumer powers. After holding many house meetings in Boston, New Jersey, Florida, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Texas, Arizona and

California, we realized that the uncertainty about who would win the election had an impact on people's decision of whether or not to engage in this strategy, which would involve much preparation and sacrifices. However, now that we know the election results and its impact on the makeup of all three of our government powers, **non-violent mass civil non-cooperation is our only option.**

To me, Tuesday was a sad day for world history. It is really hard to relate to Trump supporters right now and at the same time, I think that if we want things to be different we need to continue our discipline of acting out the values we wish for the future generations and the world.

Celso and I feel safe and inspired of being UUs and continue our spiritual growth and social justice work with people like you. This inspiration also comes from watching how members from the Standing on the Side of Love campaign, and our lead minister, Rev. Susan Frederick Gray have really walked the talk. Not only do they show up to rallies, provide babysitting for parents during community meetings, but they have put their bodies on the line in acts of civil disobedience against Operation Streamline, and put their names on Lawsuits against anti-immigrant laws and politicians like soon to be former Sheriff Joe Arpaio.

As some of you might know, Reverend Susan is running for UUA president. We have brought some information in support of her campaign. At our congregation we joke that we feel conflicted over supporting her campaign because we would not like to see her go, but at the same time, we know that her vision and

leadership would have a great impact throughout all UUA congregations. Inspired by her style of worship, I would like to invite us to think, How can we embody our 7 Unitarian Universalist principles in this time of uncertainty?

How do we remain true to our principles of valuing the inherent worth and dignity of every person?

How do we remain committed to Justice, equity and compassion in human relations, including the relationship with ourselves?

How do we show that we are in acceptance of one another and encourage each other to grow spiritually in fellowship?

How do we continue opening opportunities for a free and responsible search for truth and meaning?

How do we embody our commitment to the right of conscience and the use of democratic processes within our fellowship, and in the society we live in?

How do we achieve the goal of a world community with peace, liberty and justice for all?

How do we show our respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part?

Closing

As we find the answers to these questions within ourselves, and during the next 4 years and beyond: May we remember to stand strongly on the side of love, strength, and unity. May we remember to turn to our family, neighbors, and friends in times of

uncertainty and struggle. May we remember to be gentle with ourselves and fierce in action lifting our power for the protection and well-being of different groups in our community, and our mother earth.

May we always remember that love is more powerful than hate, hope and faith stronger than fear, community and friendship healthier than isolation, and unity and forgiveness more productive than blame, shame and punishment. And as a famous anonymous prayer goes: May we find the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, the Courage to change the things we can, and the wisdom to know the difference. May it be so.

Go in Peace, Go in Love.