

CREATION'S BEAUTY, GOVERNMENT'S DESTRUCTION

by Mark Adams, FDC Co-Coordinator

Earlier this summer, a friend and I got lost in the beautiful and remote San Rafael Valley on our way to a happening in Lochiel, Arizona. We took a wrong turn off a dirt road and went on a road that washed out about a quarter mile from the border. We heard the driving of machinery and walked down a wash and over a hill to where our government is spending millions of dollars to wall off a 24-mile section of one of the last migratory corridors for animals along the Arizona/Sonoran border—not with just one wall, but two.



Mindless destruction of thousands of years of earth formation and vegetation

We are at historic lows in human migration between ports of entry, but even when we were at all-time highs, this corridor was very rarely, if ever, transited by humans because of its remoteness and lack of transportation infrastructure on the south side.

Our spending billions of dollars (\$46 billion passed in the One Big “Beautiful” Bill), extracting resources, irrevocably scarring the earth, destroying sacred sites of the indigenous, pumping precious water to make cement and to keep dust down on roads we built (providing infrastructure that will be used not only by border patrol but also potentially smuggling organizations) is IMMORAL and a sin against God, Creation, and humanity.

Communities across the border are rising up in protest of this reckless and destructive spending that is not only wasting natural resources and harming fragile eco-systems but also increasing the national debt.

Join us in giving thanks to God for the folks who have been camping out in Lochiel for the last few months to resist this waste, fraud, and abuse by our government. They gather each morning for prayer. They are taking turns sitting in a [200-year-old cottonwood tree](#), the last

in a grove slated for destruction. Friends in Mexico are sitting in a cottonwood in Mexico, and together they have strung a sign over the border stating, "Resistance is Fertile."

Together with the [Tohono O'odham peoples](#), the communities near Big Bend National Park, and other communities, they continue to mobilize and resist this senseless destruction of God's creation.

The building of walls dividing our communities is not new, nor is the resistance to them. When delegations visit with us, we always gather on the north side of the part of creation that is now known as the US/Mexico border. We ask the question: "How have we as a nation defined this part of God's creation?"



Where Douglas and Agua Prieta (AP) meet, we can see the efforts of five presidential administrations to divide our community as a continuation of the Clinton administration's "prevention through deterrence strategy" that sought to cut off populated areas to unauthorized migration and use deserts and mountains as lethal deterrents to migration. There are cameras on poles from the Clinton administration; a secondary pedestrian barrier from the Bush administration; an 18-foot steel bollard barrier from the Obama administration (which had replaced the original barriers from the Clinton administration); coils of sharp concertina (razor) wire from the Trump administration; and the secondary vehicle barrier from the Biden administration.

A key difference between the previous administrations and the Trump administration is that the previous administrations thought that building a wall in remote areas was fiscally irresponsible and strategically unnecessary.

Who benefits from this scandalous use of our taxpayer funds?

Before delegations end their visit to Frontera de Cristo, we walk along the south side of the border and ask a question similar to the one we just asked 1 meter north: "How has the community here in AP defined this part of God's creation?"

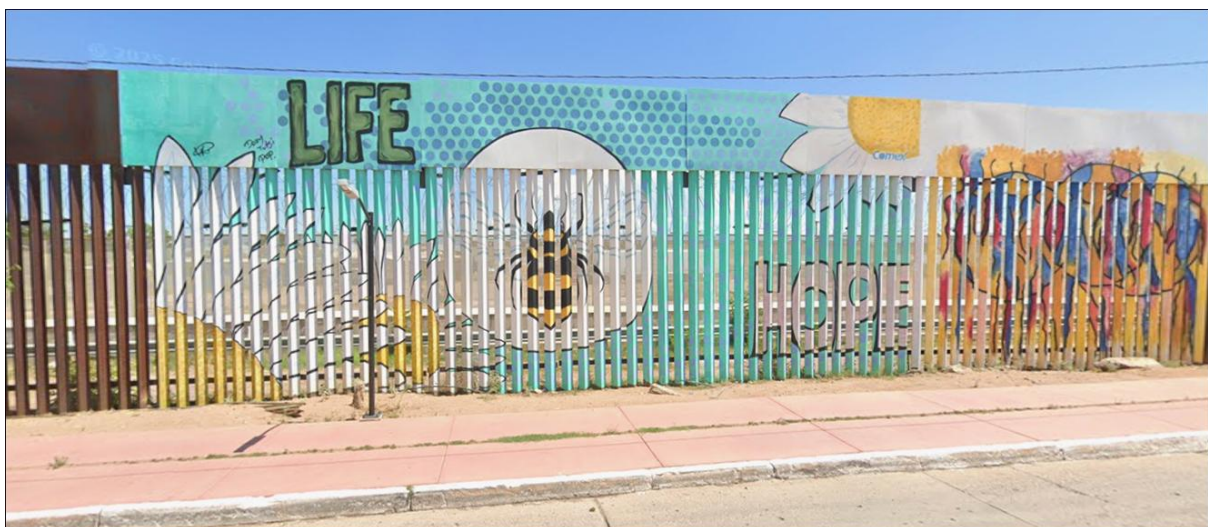
The community in AP has created walking paths with exercise equipment; they have planted trees; they've built parks and a library. They have transformed a place defined by their neighboring government as a place of exclusion, to a place of recreation, learning, and encounter.



The community in AP has also taken the steel bollard wall that they neither wanted nor paid for and turned it into a canvas. For the last 10 years, dozens of muralists have turned rusty steel designed for exclusion into an array of color and alternative meanings. The first mural was of the iconic monarch butterflies that have migrated over what is now the US/Mexico border long before there was a US or a Mexico. Other murals include geese, whales, and wild horses, creations of God that migrate naturally, painted on walls that are unnatural and, in the long view of the universe, ephemeral,

even though sometimes we allow ourselves to accept them as part of the natural order.

In the early 2000s, my colleague Chuy Gallegos and I were leading a time of biblical reflection and prayer at the border wall with a group of older adults from a church in Sun City, Arizona. My colleague Chuy said “We might not be able to tear down these physical walls, but we can tear down the walls that are in our hearts and minds.”



One of the participants immediately raised her hand and defiantly said: “That’s what we used to say about the Berlin Wall.”

While resistance is fertile, it is never easy or immediate, and that is what empires throughout the generations have counted on. The seeds of resistance sometimes have to germinate much longer than we want.

May God give us wisdom and courage to resist all dividing walls of hostility and exclusion and to work for the day where they get turned on their sides and transformed into tables of encounter and reconciliation. □



The electronic sign at the port of entry into Douglas, Arizona, reads "Welcome to the United States."