

Statement on Operation Streamline, released by Tucson, Ariz., clergy Dec. 14, 2015

As pastors in the borderlands of Southern Arizona, we join with community members, members of our congregations, human rights advocates, and many in the legal community in expressing our outrage over the proceedings of Operation Streamline. In communities on the border, Operation Streamline is known as a travesty of justice; to us it is a moral outrage and to remain silent is to become culpable in the criminalization of those Christ demands that we welcome.

Operation Streamline has been declared to be inhumane, ineffective, and a waste of taxpayer dollars. International courts have found it to be a violation of human rights and international law. The Office of Inspector General has found that there is no factual evidence that Operation Streamline is effective as a deterrent and may be in violation of international treaties. Furthermore, Operation Streamline is a colossal waste of taxpayer dollars, over 30 million dollars each month in Tucson District Court alone. And the criminalization and mass incarceration of migrant workers has cost over \$5 billion in the last five years at a profit of \$90 million each year to the private prison industry. But beyond all of this, it has become clear to us that Operation Streamline is an affront to our faith and its commands to welcome the stranger.

Leviticus 19: 33 reminds us, "When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were once aliens in the land of Egypt." And the prophet Isaiah speaks loudly to his people, warning them of the anger of God when, "justice is turned back, and righteousness stands at a distance; for truth stumbles in the public square, and uprightness cannot enter." (Isaiah 59: 14). And as Christians, it is clear to us from the words of Jesus as they come to us from the 25th chapter of Matthew, that our very salvation depends on how we treat the stranger: "Come, you that are blessed... for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was an alien and you welcomed me." (verses 34-35)

When we first observed these proceedings a few years ago, we were greatly concerned by what we witnessed in a courtroom in our community and since then we have felt it to be our duty to bring other people of faith and conscience to the courtroom to be a quiet presence of solidarity for the migrants. But we feel that we can be silent observers no more. Each time we sat there silently, we felt as if, in some way, we were betraying the vows that we took as pastors to comfort those who sorrow. Each time we sat there witnessing the condemnation of migrants, we wanted to condemn the system that criminalized them. Each time we sat there, we wanted to reach out to those who wept, those who begged for mercy, the father pleading to be allowed to return to his US citizen children. Each time we sat there silently watching these proceedings, dozens of scripture readings ran through our minds: "Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of God." (Matthew 5:3) "Woe to you who deprive the poor of justice in the courts." (Amos 5:12).

Finally, we could sit silent no more and so today we have sought to speak truth to power, and to remind the magistrates, the lawyers, the marshalls, and other officers of the court of

the oaths that they took to uphold justice and the constitution and to turn away from practices that so undermine both the administration of justice and fundamental rights that are guaranteed to all under our constitution.

We have disrupted the courts and we do not do so lightly, for the courtroom is in its own way a sacred place. But we disrupted the proceedings today because they have already been disrupted in a much more troubling way by Operation Streamline.

It is clear to us that Operation Streamline is immoral, unjust, and a sin against the poor and their families, and as pastors in this community we have an obligation to speak.

And so our witness in the court and in the public square today is: "You (the shackled migrant workers) are not guilty – this court is guilty of injustice to the migrant poor and their families." "Tu no eres culpable, este corte es culpable!"