**Week 6: Now What?!**

The last week of our internship program has been a time for reflection on everything that we have had the opportunity to learn and experience in these six weeks. As we prepared for our final presentations, I considered the themes of each week and how they intertwined to give us a broad perspective of life in the towns along the border. I also considered what brought me to the Borderlands and how my expectations have been met and changed throughout my time here. I am a rising senior at McGill University in Montreal, Quebec where I am studying International Development with a double minor in Psychology and Hispanic Studies. I have, for a couple of years, been considering law school and this year I developed a specific interest in immigration law after taking the Canadian Studies course Migration, Power, and Possibilities for Change. The course focused on the Canadian immigration regime, and more specifically the precarity involved in the temporary foreign worker programs, as well as the various mechanisms by which people organize against and resist these systems.

As I have attended university at McGill, I have noticed that Canada tends to benefit from being the Northern neighbors of the United States. Anything objectionable or unjust that happens in Canada is dismissed with the understanding that it is not nearly as bad as whatever is happening down South. However, both Canada and the U.S. were founded by settler colonial regimes, the effects of which still shape policy and are felt by many today. Learning about Canada’s immigration policies affirmed this notion for me, and I was excited about the prospect of being able to take the abstract things I was learning about an unfamiliar immigration regime and resistance movements, and apply them concretely to a regime that I was more familiar with, at least in the divisive way immigration is talked about in the United States. I wanted to learn
more about the institutional workings of the border, but I also wanted to learn more about the personal workings of the Borderlands.

The six week Borderlands Ambassador Internship took us through border towns all across the U.S.-Mexico border from Douglas, Arizona-Agua Prieta, Sonora to Lukeville, Arizona-Sonoita, Sonora and gave us the opportunity to meet with and learn from organizations and people on both sides of the border who are working against the U.S. immigration system. We heard people’s stories and were exposed to the many harsh realities of immigration. Our days were saddening, frustrating, inspiring. More often than not, they were all three at once. There are communities all over the border composed of people who gather because they are called to do the work that needs to be done. Whether it be dropping water in the desert for thirsty people or providing a warm meal and legal advice, individuals and communities of the Borderlands are taking it upon themselves to stand up to the beast that is the United States immigration regime.

On our last Wednesday together, we returned to Ruby, Arizona, one of the first places we visited as a group, and had a final ceremony as a way of bringing the past six weeks to a close. We did some personal and group reflections, bringing together and discussing all of the things that we have seen and heard over our time in the Borderlands. Our intention was to seal the container on the program, preserving our emotions and our experiences from these six weeks. This did not signify, however, the end of our connection to what we learned this summer. I do not kid myself into believing that anything is going to automatically change because the six of us college students spent six weeks traveling around Arizona. Change takes time, but it can be affected even through tiny actions. The sealed container of our experiences is not going to change anything, we must go forth and be active participants in change. That starts with engaging locally with immigration organizations in our communities, having tough
conversations with conversative friends and relatives, relaying what we have learned and exposing the atrocities that are occurring everyday. The reality of immigration in the United States is chilling, it’s emotionally draining, but we have the luxury of walking away. For too many, this is not an option. So whatever is next, whether it be law school or involvement in the community, do not walk away. Stand up, speak out, and fight against the immigration regime, because an untamed beast without an adversary will only continue to devour everything in its path.