

## Personal Reflection from Pilgrimage- May 21-23, 2010

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I just came back from a 3-day pilgrimage to McHenry County jail; we left on Friday at 10am and arrived Sunday at 6pm. For three days we walked to arrive at a place that for many of us represents the end of a life we have built in America, its a scary place, its a place we never want to be in and we pray our loved ones will never have to spend a night there. But, even though we hate this place, we walked there for the 400 people awaiting deportation in this detention center, so they could hear us, so they could know they were not alone, and so we could pray for them.

I am exhausted, tired, and beat-up. Walking 54 miles in 3 days is not easy; the 90-degree weather did not help either. The whole time I was walking, I kept thinking that this represented the walk that people must go through to reach a place that has jobs, a place where children can go to school and college, where you can buy a home, and send money back to help the extended family. But actually, at the end, I realized that this was not journey I was taking. The journey I took represented the life I live right now, the life that millions of people live every single day.

I am exhausted, tired, and beat-up- because I am undocumented every single day. I am so exhausted of taking every precaution I have to take because of my status, of the feeling I get every time I see a cop, and the feeling I get every time I call my brother and he does not pick up his phone. I am so exhausted of thinking of what am I going to do if CIR does not pass, what am I going to do if my mom is pulled over, how can I apply for grad school, and of how I am going to build a life and set roots in a place where I dont always feel welcome. I have

come to realize that I process many daily activities in a very different ways than my friends. A couple months ago, I was watching Planet Earth and I kept hearing- I cannot wait until I can go there. I never think that, traveling is so far removed from thoughts. What does it feel like to be able to think about seeing the world? What does it feel like to not have your heart skip a beat when you see a cop? What does it feel like to have a drivers license? What does it feel like to be able to think about what I will be doing 10 years from now? All these thoughts beat me up every day.

This pilgrimage allowed me to understand why my faith is so important to me. It was the church that gave us food, shelter and blessings, and it was the church that walked and prayed for all detainees and for me. It is in my faith and the action of compassionate, passionate people that allows my exhaustion to not be overwhelming. My faith and all the people who fight for our dignity keep me going. This is why I am able to not give up and keep on fighting and hoping and praying. I hope that this pilgrimage allowed all participants to reflect, recollect, and recharge. Just like this long trip, our fight for comprehensive immigration reform will be a tough one, one filled with exhaustion.

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