Campus Activism: Asylum at the U.S.-Mexican Border

This past weekend asylum seekers from Central and South America faced tear gas from American authorities as they tried to cross the U.S.-Mexican border. It has been hard for me to figure out what’s really happening because so much focus has been on Trump’s rhetoric instead of the people themselves. Here are some points that have helped me get a grasp on the situation (taken from the articles at the bottom):

- The U.S. cannot get rid of its legal obligation to accept asylum seekers, but the process can be delayed/prolonged.
- Migrants are facing tear gas, unsanitary conditions, and long wait times in overcrowded camps.
- The only person that has mentioned authorization of lethal force has been President Trump, and the Secretary of Defense needs to authorize that, which Mattis so far hasn’t.

I’m not sure how this impacts students at UMass, but I have no doubt that it does. I heard that during the Muslim travel ban, the UMass Amherst president had to personally get a student released from custody. This article talks about how students across the country have family members facing deportation and have been skipping school work and classes.

“Schools in the South were most affected. More than one of seven educators in the South, and one in eight nationally, reported that students’ learning was significantly affected because of their concern over classmates' being deported,” NBC reported.

While reports like these have been about pre-college education, colleges have also been affected. I know that the presidents of Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Brown, Cornell, Amherst, NYU and Duke wrote personal letters to President Trump in 2017 asking him to protect DACA on behalf of their students. It's not hard to imagine how students who have families that are threatened by hostile immigration rhetoric and policies are
impacted by the two-year long battle Trump's waged against immigrants, and the horrifying events at the border this past weekend.

How to help:

- Donate to organizations helping migrants, like:
  - Amnesty International
  - UNICEF
  - The Florence Project
  - The Kino Border Initiative
  - The Young Center for Immigrant Children’s Rights
  - The ACLU
  - Raices
  - We Belong Together
  - United We Dream
  - Women's Refugee Commission
  - Kids In Need of Defense (KIND)
  - Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project
  - Human Rights First
  - La Unión del Pueblo Entero
  - Donate to multiple organizations at once through ActBlue
- Donate air miles
  - Apparently the organization “Lawyer Moms of America” has donated air miles to people who have been granted asylum so they can leave and make room for other asylum seekers
- Volunteer
  - Most of the above organizations are looking for volunteers
  - Lawyer and translation volunteers are needed
    - American Immigration Lawyers Association
    - Human Rights First
    - The Legal Aid Justice Center
    - Together Rising
    - Texas Civil Rights Project
    - Al Otro Lado
    - The Florence Project
    - International Refugee Assistance Project
- Tell your congressional representative how you feel
- Join protests

Stuff to look at:

- UMass Center for Latin American, Caribbean, and Latino Studies
- “U.S. Immigration Enforcement Policy and Its Impact on Teaching and Learning in the Nation’s Schools”
- “What DACA’s End Could Mean for College Students”
- “How Trump’s DACA Decision Affects Colleges and Students”
- “How Higher-Education Leaders are Fighting for DACA”
- “Immigration Enforcement Has Students Fearful and Depressed”
- “How We Can Help the Migrant Caravan”
- “All the Reasons the Migrant Caravan is Totally a National Emergency”