

The **ABCUSA Immigration Taskforce** is working on an immigration resource based on the February/March Immigration Immersion Experience (IIE) facilitated by Ray Schellinger, missionary with International Ministries, ABCUSA-Office of the General Secretary and Bonnie Sestito, Coordinator of Mission with Women and Girls, American Baptist Women's Ministries. Joshua Kagi (ABHMS), a member of the Immigration Taskforce, also participated in this trip for the purpose of taking videos and photos to be used for this future resource.

The ABW trip included people who represented the diverse opinions of American Baptists on the subject of immigration. The report below was written by Bonnie Sestito.

Immigration Immersion Experience
February 28 – March 5, 2016
Sponsored by American Baptist Women's Ministries

The Immigration Immersion Experience was informative and eye opening. We visited Homeland Security in San Diego, CA, where we met two officers who shared with us the work they do to protect the border: Men doing their jobs. They also took us on a tour of the wall, a wall that is maybe 18-feet high, topped with razor blade barbed wire, and scarred from being cut by those looking for a better life. We visited women from the organization DREAMers' MOMS where we listened to their stories about being deported, having to leave behind their husbands and children who are U.S. citizens. We met two men who served in the U.S. military; both veterans had been honorably discharged but were deported for making wrong choices. Although paying their debt to society, they can only return to the U.S. when they are dead—they're allowed to be buried in a military cemetery in the U.S. even if they're not allowed to live in the U.S. now. We spent some time with Enrique Morones, founder of Border Angels, an organization that helps save the lives of migrants through education and advocacy, migrant outreach, and immigration consulting. Enrique took us into the California desert where we placed water bottles underneath foliage for the crossing migrants. We ate dinner sitting with men who had recently been deported back to Mexico, some within a couple of days of when we were there; but those who lived in the U.S. for many years prior to being deported were determined to return.

Our immigration system is broken. People are attempting to cross the border through the desert or via the ocean because they are desperate for a better life, so desperate that they are willing to sacrifice their lives to reach it.

Based on evaluations received from participants in this first Immigration Immersion Experience, American Baptist Women's Ministries is sponsoring a second such trip with Ray Schellinger August 27 – September 3, 2016.