



## Report from the Tijuana Border June 2022

*Sharon Franklin*

La Casa de Paso is an emergency house at the Tijuana border started two years ago by Sharon and her partner Javier. La Casa de Paso provides short-term shelter; food; clothing and personal hygiene items; hot showers; and toys, books, and games for kids, along with a safe place of respite. La Casa serves primarily women and their children, because they are at the greatest risk while waiting at the border.

La Casa is not an RRC project, but we thought you'd like to read Sharon's report. Sharon is a member of the Oregon Community Asylum Network.



May 23 passed, and with it another huge disappointment for the thousands of asylum seekers waiting to cross into the United States. On May 23, Title 42 was supposed to be stopped, allowing the border to open to asylum seekers for the first time in about a year and a half. That is, until a Louisiana judge blocked it.

As a result, Javier has spent every day since trying to answer unanswerable questions from so many disheartened people waiting here in Tijuana. Unless you have some context, which I have tried my best to provide in these monthly newsletters and on the La Casa de Paso website, it might be easy to ignore what's happening. But being in Tijuana, up close and personal, you feel the pain, fear, and growing despair of these families.

Yesterday we had a family of five from El Salvador at the house all day. They experienced terrible trauma before fleeing El Salvador. Javier has known them for many months and continues to help whenever they call and need something. The mom, three children ages 12, 4, and 1, and her 27-year-old niece live in one tiny room on the edge of Tijuana. It's a place Javier found for them several months ago. It is cramped beyond imagination, but they are thankful to be there, because they say it is safer than a shelter.

When they arrived mid-morning they were hungry, so we gave the women full range of the kitchen to use whatever we had to make whatever they wanted. When Javier brings them here every couple of weeks, the women clean La Casa de Paso, which gives them a way to earn a little money while their children play in a safe place. Javier says they love coming here. They had never been in such a "big" house before, one with an upstairs! The little boy learned to crawl up and down stairs by being here.

It was an exhausting but fun day. I was here with them all day while Javier searched for housing for two families who just arrived and needed a place to stay. (The shelters are all full.)

The kids played nonstop, and the two girls and I spent some time working on our Spanish and English together. The women laughed so much and sang all day long, so I knew they were happy being here!

They took showers, charged their phones, and the baby took a nap. I made lasagna for dinner. They had never heard of lasagna, but they loved it, so we sent the leftovers home with them. When Javier drove them home later that evening, everyone was tired but happy.

It was a nice day but make no mistake—above all this family just wants to cross. The mom always asks if I can write a Humanitarian Parole visa for them, and I have to keep explaining that I would love to but I can't until there is a place to send it and that as soon as I hear something, I will let her know.

It is time for some bold action on behalf of families like this one. If you have read this far, and even if you are in Oregon where most of our representatives are supportive of major immigration reform, please contact them and let them know you are tired of this inaction. **NOTHING** is made better by it. People waiting are getting sicker from the stress, and their children are out of school for longer periods of time. If Congress does not have the votes and if judges continue to put up roadblocks, then encourage the Biden administration to broaden the definition of Humanitarian Parole to allow many more people to cross that way each day. The good part about that is that it has some metering built into the process; that is, people must fill out and submit a request. When they get a call back in 2-3 weeks, they are told when to arrive at the border to cross, thus preventing lines of people all wanting to get in at once. With more people in place on both sides of the border to facilitate this process, many more people could cross in a day.

And one more thing. La Casa de Paso desperately needs donations! We are at our lowest point since we opened three years ago. The only way we can continue this work and keep La Casa open past 2-3 more months is with your help. Thank you so much! I will be back in Oregon in a few weeks and will be happy to speak to any groups. Please contact me directly at [sharonfranklin01@gmail.com](mailto:sharonfranklin01@gmail.com) if you would like to schedule a presentation.

If you would like to donate to support La Casa, please go to our website, or pm me for more options: <http://www.lacasadepaso.com>

**COMPASSION IS A VERB.**