Uneasy Neighbors: The Causes and Consequences of Undocumented Migration to the United States

Photography by Don Bartletti

Exhibition reflection essays by

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and

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Irene Carlson Gallery of Photography
August 25 through October 10, 2014

A slide lecture by the Photographer will take place at 4:30 p.m. Thursday, September 18, 2014, in Ballroom A, Sara and Michael Abraham Campus Center.

A reception will follow the lecture beginning at 6:00 p.m. in the Irene Carlson Gallery of Photography, Miller Hall.

The photographer's thoughts about *Uneasy Neighbors*…

As a newspaper photojournalist, the daily picture deadline helps me define our community. I take every assignment seriously and treasure the opportunity to add to the information feast at your fingertips in the *Los Angeles Times.*

But most news stories and photographs soon become old news. Save for one.
The story of human migration is a never-ending story. Whereas prehistoric tribes chased the herd over the horizon, today families chase the possibility of prosperity over the fence. For more than four decades, I have taken my camera as a witness to the causes and effects of contemporary migration for economic survival: principally between Latin America and the United States.

In July of 2014, in the wake of the news of thousands of children arriving at the Texas border, I was dispatched to San Pedro Sula, Honduras, "The World's Most Dangerous City." My assignment was to illustrate the question: "Why are they leaving?"

I found one young girl who didn't get out soon enough. My caption: "As rain begins to fall on the loading dock behind the morgue, relatives gently lower the doll-like corpse of a 6-year-old girl into a little coffin. The day before, a gangster's bullet pierced her heart. They'll take her home in a pickup truck."

In 2000, long before it became the big story of today, I spent months in Mexico riding "The Beast." I focused on Honduran kids like twelve-year-old Denis who clung to the infamous freight train bound for the U.S. border. Out-migration continues to this day as a right of passage for minors like Denis whose parents left them behind for work "on the other side." Many are fleeing violent gangs in their barrios. This has become a really big business for smugglers, and a human rights crisis for the U.S.

For thirty-six years I have seen the 1,800-mile frontier from San Diego, California, to Brownsville, Texas, morph from a wide-open landscape to a borderline planted with a variety of towering barriers. In 2007, the billions of dollars spent to fortify the border did little to prevent Mexico's smuggling cartels from marching platoons of sixty to seventy clients at a time, day and night, through the Sonoran Desert towards a gap in the Arizona barrier.

In 2009, I witnessed the dystopian game between Border Patrol trackers and cartel drug mules. Through a mountainous southern New Mexico desert as big as California's Orange County, campesinos in farm boots, tennis shoes, and sandals were chased a hundred miles over horizon after horizon. When they finally dropped their sixty-pound bails of marijuana, one tearful seventeen-year-old confessed the obvious: "There's nothing to do back home. I just did it for the money."

In August of 1989, on the outskirts of upper middle-class Carlsbad, California, I had dinner with Wilfrido. The former Oaxacan bank teller had recently jumped the border fence with his dad to earn "10-times as much" picking tomatoes. We sat by a cooking fire outside his chaparral covered cardboard hovel. That was twenty-five years ago. Today Wilfrido works as a construction foreman. He's a U.S. citizen and a friend.

My steadfast goal remains to create photo essays for the daily paper and the web. I realize these too become old news, and the layouts are recycled. I've avoided burnout, apathy, and familiarity with the subject. I believe that the largest migration to the U.S. since the early 20th Century deserves a photographic record. These are amazing decades in our nation's history.

But I'm not looking for 60,000 Central American kids dog-paddling across the Rio Grande. I can't focus on 11 million undocumented immigrants out there in your land, or my land for that matter.

However, I know where the story is. I know how to explain my reportage goals to the participants in this collective phenomenon. Reporting with a camera is a frustrating task. Strangers under stress often misperceive the little black box as a threat, so I use it with extreme care.

I've probably repeated the following paragraph a million times while on the immigrant trails throughout the continent, using short sentences, in my best Spanish, a message from my journalistic soul:

"I'm a photojournalist with a big American newspaper. You are making a life-changing decision. You left your family, home, and culture to cross to the other side. The majority of people in El Norte know you only as one of millions. I see you as an individual. I can't help you but I won't hinder you. I just want to watch your struggle, and I promise to show the truth."

Some walked away, but most stayed. One twenty-something stowaway on the train revealed, "Nobody really cares about us except the priests who help us, and police who rob us."

"Diaspora," "exodus," "the right to migrate," are today's headlines and catch phrases used to quantify statistics that crawl across your TV screen and spill out of the mouths of pundits, script readers, and passionate advocates on both sides of the immigration debate.

In the end, it's a human story of heartbreak and joy. Study these photographs. You might ask the question proposed by documentary photographer Dorothea Lange about her work during the great Dust Bowl exodus of the 1930s: "How can such things be?"

-Don Bartletti
July 26, 2014

About the photographer…

I've worked as a photojournalist with Southern California newspapers for 42 years, the past 31 at the *Los Angeles Times*. I believe serious photojournalism falls somewhere between cultural anthropology and a scavenger hunt. I focus on individuals whose intimate emotions and circumstances reveal the greater story.

Except for a 1967 class in photography at Palomar Community College in San Marcos, California, I'm essentially self-taught in the discipline. The day after that summer elective Photo 101 course ended, I assigned myself to my first photo essay: San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury during the Summer of Love. I shot 3 rolls of 2¼ film with my friend's Yashica Mat twin lens reflex camera. While roaming around Golden Gate Park, I happened upon a man who introduced himself as John Szarkowski. The collection of 35mm cameras he was carrying attracted my attention. Szarkowski was Director of the Photography Department at the New York Museum of Modern Art. What stuck with me was his advice to create a strong portfolio. He said that would be my ticket to a job. He added, "stay close" to my subjects—"don't be shy." When I got home, I looked up his books in the library. I added him to my short list of mentors that included W. Eugene Smith and David Douglas Duncan. The latter was interesting to me because I was trying to dodge the draft, and his images of the Vietnam War frightened me, but they were hauntingly beautiful. At this moment, I realized I needed more education. At age 21, the U.S. Army came calling so I enlisted.

I look back at my tour of duty as an Infantry Lieutenant in Vietnam not as a waste of my youth, but instead as the one non-elective class that forced me to learn a priceless skill that serves me in my career to this day: organizing confusion! Aiming an M16 rifle through the chaos of war preserved my life. But I also desperately needed an affirmation of life. With a Nikkormat camera, a 24mm and 80-200 zoom lenses, every villager, farmer, orphan, and flower that I shot lived on forever. Thank God I used more film than bullets.

When I returned from the war in 1972 I got a job at my hometown paper, *The Vista Press*. My Photo 101 teacher recommended me with a phone call to the editor. The job paid peanuts but I feasted on stories that were

everywhere. I started a weekly feature where I photographed, wrote, and designed double-truck photo essays for the Sunday paper. I soon learned the power of photojournalism. The editor received a call a few months after one of my Sunday spreads appeared. The director of a Tecate, Mexico orphanage said that all of the children whose photos I put in my layout about the Vista Women's Club outreach program were adopted!

After three years, a position opened up at the nearby *Oceanside Blade-Tribune* and my daily beat stretched all the way to the beach. Then came a spot at the *San Diego Union/Tribune* and all of San Diego County became my beat. In 1983, I carried my heavy portfolio to the offices of the *Los Angeles Times* San Diego County Edition. For the past thirty-one years, the world has been my beat. I've been to twenty-two countries.

But the biggest story of all was right in my back yard. After the Mexican peso collapsed in the late 1970s, I started doing stories on immigrant day laborers crowding street corners in my town of Vista and all over north San Diego County. Squatter camps sprouted up in the canyons and chaparral covered hillsides, some in the shadow of multi-million dollar mansions in Del Mar and Rancho Santa Fe. My images of deplorable farm worker conditions were used by the California legislature to discuss changes. I was given a one-man show that opened at the Oakland Museum of California and toured six California farm communities. I was on the lecture circuit.

The causes and consequences of migration between Latin America and the U.S. became the soul of my journalistic career. I felt that someday our descendents might ask, how did we get here?

By August 1990, an increasing surge of migrants crossing the border from Tijuana resulted in a daily carnage of scared migrants running across Interstate 5. Cal Trans used several of my images to create the striking yellow and black warning sign depicting a silhouetted family of three running for their lives. Deaths dropped dramatically. The power of photojournalism!

In the year 2000, a huge, under-reported segment of this continent's migratory phenomenon was between Central America and the U.S.. I set out on a three-month quest, from Honduras to North Carolina, to show the high-risk desperation of child stowaways on freight trains barreling north through Mexico. Now this phenomenon is front-page headlines. The Rio Grande River end-station came only to the brave and the lucky. The resulting work, *Enrique's Journey: The Boy Left Behind*, was published as a six-day photo essay in the *Los Angeles Times*. It was awarded the 2003 Pulitzer Prize for Feature Photography.

-Don Bartletti
July 26, 2014

Reflections on Don Bartletti's *Uneasy Neighbors: The Causes and Consequences of Undocumented Migration to the United States*
Nadine Nakamura, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Psychology

Don Bartletti's *Uneasy Neighbors* gives us a glimpse into the difficult road that some immigrants take to come to the U.S. I imagine that when many Americans think about undocumented immigrants, they think of the consequences of them crossing the border and settling in the U.S. What we do not often talk about is what prompts people to leave their homelands in the first place and what they have to sacrifice in the process. Photos like "Going Home" let us see the realities of gang violence in Honduras that claimed the life of a six year old child just a little over a month ago. Photos like "Riding the Beast" show us part of the dangerous journey that many children are taking on their own with the hopes of reuniting with their parents. "Broken Dreams" is an image of a father who was deported after 12 years in the U.S. and is now separated from his family.

Most Americans have an immigration story somewhere in their own family history. My great-grandparents came to the U.S. from Japan at the beginning of the 20th century, searching for opportunities for themselves and for their future children. They experienced a great deal of racism and xenophobia from Americans who saw them as a threat. During World War II, they were interned along with over 110,000 people of Japanese descent, including their American born children. Reflecting on my family history, I see many similarities between my great-grandparents' experiences and those of today's immigrants. Immigrants take incredible leaps of faith for a chance at a better life. They sacrifice much and work very hard to create a brighter future for their children. The faces of immigrants have changed over the years and, unfortunately, it seems that each new wave is met with hostility and is vilified and scapegoated by those who came before them.

Bartletti's photographs capture the complexity of immigration. This includes the forces that push immigrants from their home countries, such as violence and poverty, and the factors that pull immigrants towards the U.S., including the hope for family reunification. We see the tough road to the U.S. that can lead to death for those making the dangerous journey and we also see that the struggle does not end once immigrants cross the border into the U.S. Through these images, we also see the humanity and strength of people working to improve their conditions, which, in my opinion, reflects their resiliency. While it might be tempting to romanticize the struggles of undocumented immigrants in an attempt to mitigate our own emotional reactions, we cannot ignore the traumas experienced by so many before, during, and after their migration, and the consequences of those traumas on individuals, families, communities, and society.

-Nadine Nakamura
August 19, 2014

Reflections on Don *Bartletti's Uneasy Neighbors: The Causes and Consequences of Undocumented Migration to the United States*

By Adrian Marcelino Velazquez Vazquez, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Public Administration
University of La Verne

Discussing migration is always a sensitive topic. Countless arguments pile up either in favor or against it. Most of those arguments usually fall short of understanding that migration to the United States is a very complex, multi-layered phenomenon. Simplifying the rhetoric for the sake of argumentation does a disservice to all the human beings involved in it. Don Bartletti's detailed account of Latin American migrants' lives at home and in the "promised land" serves to portray multiple aspects of those very lives. Bartletti's work reminds the viewer that behind the rhetoric and overtly simplified portrayals of undocumented migrants lie true hardships, sorrow, dangers, accomplishments, happiness, and many other realities somewhere in between.

Through Bartletti's lens, we bear witness to some of those stories in various stages, and not just at a point in time. Multiple perspectives are captured throughout his work, from the children who seek reunion with a family member long gone, to the mothers and fathers who experience the reality of furtive lives, and to those left behind who depend on distant relatives to survive. All with a deeply personal touch that trigger raw emotions in the viewer, impossible to deny. Furthermore, Bartletti skillfully presents narratives that transcend personal stories and transforms them into iconic and ubiquitous images to be explored time and again. He fearlessly delves into the socio-economic and cultural elements that shape our modern understanding of migration, as one cannot be blind to the realities of violence, drug smuggling, human trafficking, and all their associated costs on the U.S. and abroad, in different parts of Mexico and Central America.

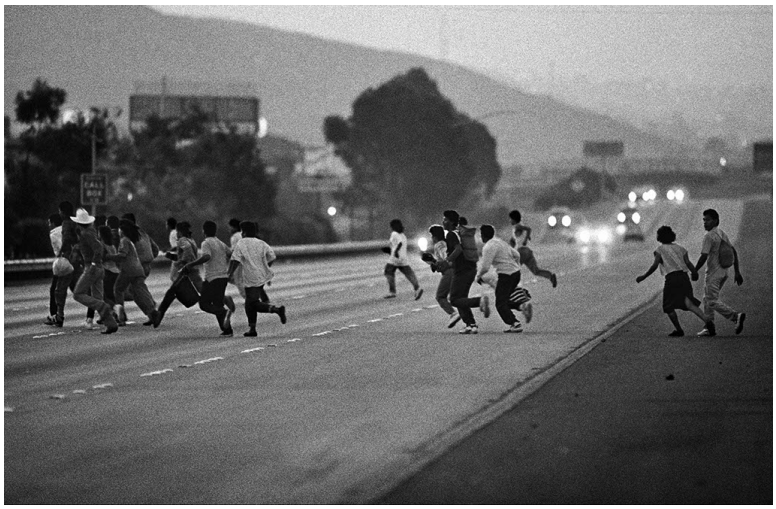
Don Bartletti's richness of detail and breadth of account, in time, subjects, and space, undoubtedly will allow some people to discover for the first time events and situations that are not easily captured in words. For others, it will let them revisit those events, with all the emotional and cultural implications that ensue. Regardless, Bartletti's astonishing efforts to capture the cultural, economic and sociological roots of migration, along with its multiple intended and unintended consequences, constitute a much needed multi-dimensional account. But an account about migration requires just that, an unapologetic rendering of the multiple events that plague the lives of millions of people that wish for a better life. Whether it is to escape violence or economic disadvantages, many put their very lives at risk with noble intentions, while others unfortunately perpetuate those very cycles of violence and criminality.

The main contribution of Bartletti's work, perhaps, might be how he deftly captures subtle yet meaningful details that may not be as well known to a passive spectator. The length and perils of the journey. The disenfranchised youth abroad and at home. The kindness of strangers. The prevailing violence and danger that displace people just as frequently as economic factors do. The impact of U.S. foreign policy on more recent manifestations of children's migration. But above all, he captures the aptness and willingness of the human spirit. For once, through Bartletti's stunning photographs, we can all experience the realities of migration instead of merely discussing abstract ideas.

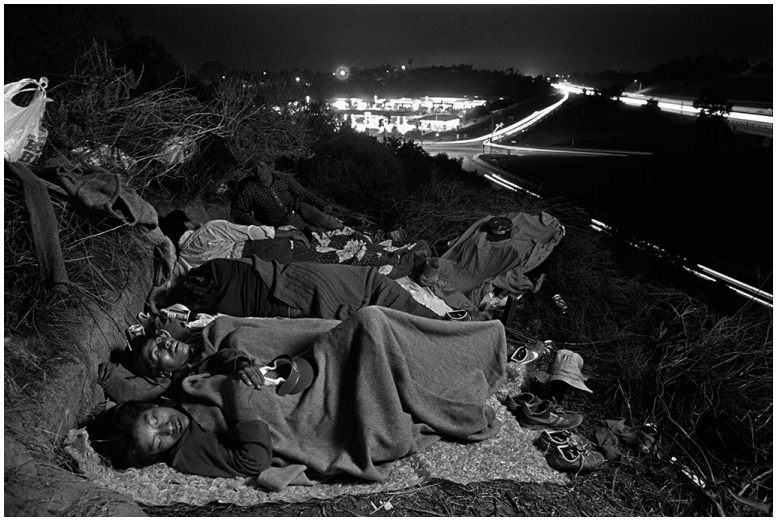
Adrian Marcelino Velazquez Vazquez
August 20, 2014

EXODUS
Otay Mesa, California, U.S.A.
May 21, 1983
Coastal clouds darken the evening sky as legions of migrants walk across a foot-beaten expanse of territory nicknamed "The Soccer Field" just north of Tijuana, Mexico. By day Mexican children play on the wide-open boundary between Colonia Libertad and Otay Mesa, CA. By night it's one of the most heavily trafficked undocumented immigrant portals on the U.S./Mexico border. (Don Bartletti)

CROSSING OVER
San Ysidro, California, U.S.A.
May 5, 1990
Migrants of all ages cross a makeshift bridge in the Tijuana River Valley. Each paid $1.00 for the luxury of not wading in the sewage filled waterway. All crossed the United States/Mexico border, about a 15-minute walk behind them. 15 minutes ahead is Interstate 5, where the San Diego Trolley, cabs, buses and smuggler's cars transport people to all points north. (Don Bartletti)

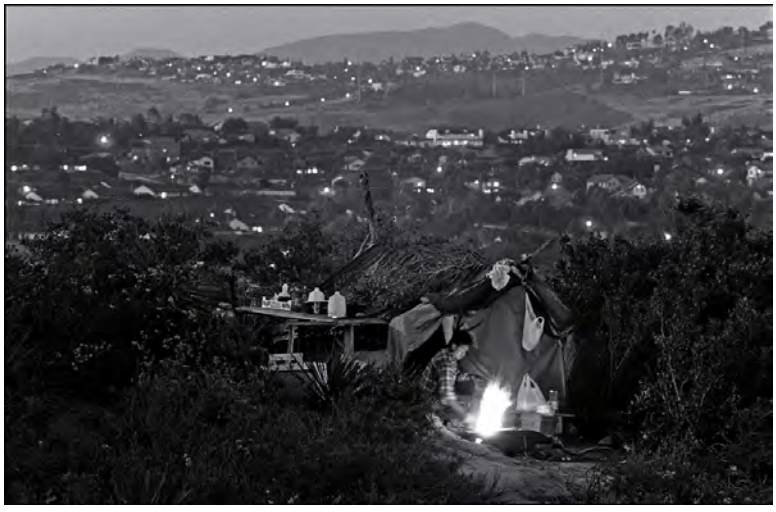


INTERSTATE PEDESTRIANS
San Ysidro, California, U.S.A.
August 21, 1990
A group of undocumented immigrants sprint across Interstate 5, a mile north of the Mexican border. The high-speed 8-lane freeway claimed hundreds of lives over several years. When CalTrans created warning signs based on this photograph and installed a median fence, fatalities were greatly reduced. (Don Bartletti / Los Angeles Times)



HIGHWAY CAMP
Encinitas, California, U.S.A.
July 25, 1989
Three brothers and two companions from Guatemala bed down on a terrace above Interstate 5. In the daytime, they wait near the shopping center below for offers of day labor. One said they fled hopeless poverty in Huehuetenango but confessed, "We never lived this bad back home." (Don Bartletti)

BALLET OF HOPE
Fairbanks Ranch, California, U.S.A.
May 4, 1988
Five Guatemalan teenagers gesture for the attention of a homeowner who has stopped outside the gates of San Diego's wealthiest community. One of these boys will be chosen for a day of work, most likely yard work at a residential property. He can hope for minimum wage plus lunch. (Don Bartletti / Los Angeles Times)



SUBURBAN LIGHTS
Carlsbad, California, U.S.A.
May 2, 1988
Next to his handmade shack, a young immigrant prepares a cooking fire at the end of a day of yard work in the neighborhood. The "Valle Verde" squatter's camp has no electricity, water, or sanitation, but the chaparral-covered hillside is home to about 300 other Mexican immigrants struggling for a toe-hold on the American dream. (Don Bartletti / Los Angeles Times)

GLADIOLA HARVEST
Encinitas, California, U.S.A.
October 7, 1987
Jose Velasquez carries an armload of gladiola buds at an Encinitas, California flower ranch. A perfect climate, imported water, and fertilizer make the earth bloom in San Diego County, but little is done for the foreign-born laborer. Velasquez, a migrant farm worker from Mexico, lives in a squatter's camp in a ravine at the edge of the field. (Don Bartletti)

NEW AMERICAN
San Diego, California, U.S.A.
March 28, 2006
Wilfredo Ramirez cheers with other new citizens during a ceremony at the San Diego Convention Center. The married bank teller from Oaxaca, Mexico, left home for better wages on a Carlsbad, California tomato farm. When he qualified for a 1986 law that enabled undocumented agricultural migrants to work legally in the United States, he began his long sought goal to become a U.S. citizen. (Don Bartletti)

ALLEGIANCE
Santa Ana, California, U.S.A.
March 27, 2006
Santa Ana High School students are among hundreds who walked out of classes to voice their dissatisfaction over the slow pace of federal immigration reform. The crowd mentality likely fueled the waving of Mexican flags, the desecration of an American flag, and rocks being thrown at police. The half-day march ended without arrests or injuries. (Don Bartletti / Los Angeles Times)

IMMIGRATION REFORM PROTEST
Phoenix, Arizona, U.S.A.
July 29, 2010
Some tens of thousands of people protest a recent Arizona law that requires police to determine the immigration status of those they stop. Riot police allowed marchers to block traffic for an hour before arresting a dozen who did not move aside. (Don Bartletti / Los Angeles Times)

REMITTANCE
Panindicuaro, Oaxaca, Mexico
August 22, 2005
Guadalupe Vidales, 74, kisses a money order from her son in Bakersfield, California. Most families in the surrounding countryside have sent young men and women to work in the United States. For this widow and the underemployed, these remittances represent foreign aid, efficiently delivered to those for whom it's intended. (Don Bartletti / Los Angeles Times)

GOING HOME
San Pedro Sula, Honduras
July 12, 2014
Relatives gently place the body of 6-year-old Estefani Nicol Chavez Zuniga in a casket at the city morgue before driving her home in the back of a pickup truck. The girl was caught in the crossfire of a gang dispute in a city with an astronomical homicide rate. A single bullet through the heart killed the first-grader. (Don Bartletti / Los Angeles Times)

CONTROLLING THE EXODUS
Ocotepeque, Honduras
July 4, 2014
In an operation to control the recent surge of children being smuggled to the Texas border, an American-trained Honduran police agent talks to children at a mobile roadblock near the Guatemala border. The siblings are being asked the names of their parents. Before the crackdown, bribe-taking border guards enabled tens of thousands of minors without passports to leave Honduras illegally. (Don Bartletti / Los Angeles Times)

SMUGGLER TRAIL
Ocotepeque, Honduras
July 8, 2014
The glow of a flashlight carried by a local pedestrian walking through the dark forest delineates a footpath used by émigrés to circumvent the Honduras/Guatemala border checkpoint just beyond the trees. This is one of many clandestine routes that defy lawful control of Central American minors being smuggled to the United States. (Don Bartletti / Los Angeles Times)

RIDING THE BEAST
Tonala, Chiapas, Mexico
August 4, 2000
Clinging atop a speeding train, Honduran citizen Denis Contreras, 12, (right front) ducks beneath tree branches ripping over his back. Stowaways call the northbound freight "The Beast," because of its merciless and life-threatening hazards. For the passengers lucky to survive the trip, the end station is the U.S. border. (Don Bartletti / Los Angeles Times)

BOUND TO EL NORTE
Teotihuacan, State of Mexico, Mexico
Sept. 11, 2000
Each year thousands of migrants like this Honduran boy stowaway through Mexico on the tops and sides of freight trains. Many are children fleeing their violent neighborhoods, and many are in search of the mothers who fled before them. At the end of more than 1500 miles aboard the freights, the U.S. border comes only to the brave and the lucky. (Don Bartletti / Los Angeles Times)

GIFT FOR A NORTHBOUND MIGRANT
Fortin, Veracruz, Mexico
August 30, 2000
Sixteen-year-old Fabian Gonzalez Hernandez offers an orange to Central American migrants aboard a speeding freight train. The kindness of trackside residents in Veracruz is legendary among migrant stowaways. (Don Bartletti / Los Angeles Times)

SUNRISE ON THE BEAST
Chiapas, Mexico
August 3, 2000
Twelve-year-old Denis Contreras left Honduras 2 months ago with only his mother's San Diego, California phone number and courage that belies his age. After a night on a fuel tanker he said his dream is always the same: "... find Mama, go to school, learn English, and help other children. I would help the street children because I walked the streets and they die in the streets." (Don Bartletti / Los Angeles Times)

NORTHBOUND MIGRANTS
Sasabe, Arizona, U.S.A.
February 28, 2007
Scores of people hustle through the Arizona desert just north of the U.S./Mexico border. Smuggling cartels organize groups in Altar, Mexico, where vendors sell backpacks, water, and food. Vans transport the groups 60 miles to the border where guides take platoons of migrants on a 2-3 day trek across remote southern Arizona ranches. (Don Bartletti / Los Angeles Times)

DEATH CORRIDOR
Falfurrias, Texas, U.S.A.
April 8, 2013
Mortician Alonzo Rangel records details of an unidentified female in her 20's found on a ranch near Falfurrias, TX. The Brooks County sheriff calls the smuggling route parallel to Texas Highway 281 a "Death Corridor." 129 bodies were found in 2012. Most died in the cold nights, of hypothermia. The opposite is true in summer when the temperature of the sand can reach 130 degrees. (Don Bartletti / Los Angeles Times)

DENIS IN SAN DIEGO
La Jolla, California, U.S.A.
August 9, 2010
Denis Contreras, 21, does landscape maintenance in a San Diego, California suburb. When he was 12 he fled Honduras and rode freight trains through Mexico in a quest to find his mother. He found her, learned English, and started a family. By age 25 his undocumented status caught up with him and he was deported to his home in San Pedro Sula, Honduras. (Don Bartletti)

MOTHER'S REGRET
San Diego, California, U.S.A.
December 3, 2003
Maria Georgina Nunez, 47, sobs over a photo of her then 12-year-old son, Denis Contreras, asleep atop a speeding freight train in Mexico. She left him behind in Honduras when he was 18-months-old to work in the U.S. Now she cries both for the love that motivated his dangerous journey and for her teenager's current truancy and run-ins with the law. (Don Bartletti)

GANGSTER DOWN
Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico
June 23, 2009
A Mexican soldier and police officers cover the body of Daniel Chavez, an Azetecas drug gang member who was gunned down in a drive-by assault. He is one of 6 victims of violent crime on this day in the bullet-riddled city across the border from El Paso, Texas. (Don Bartletti / Los Angeles Times)

WAKE FOR A BROTHER
Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico
October 16, 2008
Eleven-year-old Osbaldo Gomez gazes at his brother's corpse in the tiny living room of his Tijuana house. Felipe Gomez, 19, was known as a street-level dealer and may have been gunned down by a rival. When a neighbor boy at the all-night vigil was asked about his future he said, "I want to be either a fireman, or a drug dealer. Drug dealers have the pretty girls and nice cars." (Don Bartletti / Los Angeles Times)

CARTEL MULES
Rodeo, New Mexico, U.S.A.
March 19, 2009
U.S. Border Patrol trackers apprehend 4 Mexican drug smugglers in the desert near Rodeo, New Mexico. Drug cartel couriers called "mules" are paid $2,000 to carry a 45-pound backpack of marijuana from Agua Prieta, Mexico, to a pickup point on Interstate 10 near Lordsburg, New Mexico. Smugglers say the 75-mile mountain hike usually takes 3 days. (Don Bartletti / Los Angeles Times)

I'M NOT GOING BACK
Imperial Beach, California, U.S.A.
March 28, 2006
Seventeen years after he slipped into the U.S. through a gap in the border fence, Wilfredo Ramirez Jr. stands just inside the border of his adopted country. With his newly minted American citizenship papers in hand, the former migrant farm worker turned roofing foreman said in English, "I'm an American now and I'm not going back." (Don Bartletti)

JUST AROUND THE CORNER
Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico
October 16, 2008
Through a bullet-shattered window, students gawk at spilled blood in a house around the corner from their school. During a gun battle, Mexican soldiers killed 4 cartel hit men and lost one of their own. The next morning teenagers collected bullets and leaped over mounds of coagulated blood. A teacher said awful scenes are so common that it renders violence an expected, even acceptable part of life. (Don Bartletti / Los Angeles Times)

BINATIONAL COMMUNION
Imperial Beach, California, U.S.A.
January 4, 2009
Methodist minister John Fanestil performs a blessing on the U.S. side of the border fence between Imperial Beach, California, and Playas Tijuana, Mexico. Fanestil said that dispensing communion through the steel bars is his peaceful protest against the Department of Homeland Security's plan to enhance enforcement of illegal immigration by restricting access to the ocean side park. (Don Bartletti / Los Angeles Times)

BROKEN DREAMS
Mexicali, Baja California, Mexico
November 23, 2011
Raul Calderon, 34, weeps as he gazes through the border fence and talks about his family in Riverside, CA. After 12 years in the U.S., without immigration documents, the Mexican citizen was deported after a construction job site raid by immigration authorities. He summed up his situation: "For a father like me, it's broken hearts, broken dreams." (Don Bartletti / Los Angeles Times)

IT'S NOT FUNNY ANYMORE
Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico
February 8, 2008
Jose Belaza, owner of Senor Maguey's dozes off in his bar that is usually filled with American visitors on this Friday afternoon. News of warring drug cartels has all but killed Tijuana's booming tourism industry. Balaza angrily said, "We deserve this! The police are terrible! All of them are corrupt! We don't want it but have to accept it as the truth." (Don Bartletti / Los Angeles Times)