Perilous Crossings

A text set exploring the ways in which immigrants face danger and mistreatment at the U.S/Mexico Border

The decision to cross the international border between Mexico and the United States has long been a risky one. Immigrants seeking safety, employment, or a better life on American soil have been subjected to cruel and dehumanizing government practices, from the chemical baths at the El Paso International Bridge in the early 1900s to family separations and sub-par detention centers existing across the country today. Dangerous conditions have existed for immigrants whether they cross the border legally or not- as demonstrated by the government run Bracero Program of the 1940s and 50s. This text set aims to explore the reasons people have decided to make the perilous crossing, and what has happened to them when they do.

Some of the inquiry questions that guided the formation of this text set are as follows:

* What motivates people to cross from Mexico into the United States even though they know the decision involves risk and danger?
* What conditions have immigrants faced while making the crossing?
* In what ways has legal border crossing also been fraught with peril?
* What is life like for people living in the borderlands where these crossings happen daily?
* In what ways have people resisted the oppressive conditions imposed on them at the border?

Annotated Bibliography

R.J. Phillips Band. “Carmelita.”

This song tells the story of Carmelita Torres who began the 1917 Bath Riots by refusing the chemical disinfectant practices at the border. "Carmelita" is composed by Joe DeFilippo and performed by the R.J. Phillips Band, a group of Baltimore studio musicians. Joe DeFilippo: vocals, acoustic guitar, bass guitar; Sue Tice: fiddle; Bill Phelan: baritone ukulele; Leslie Darr, background vocals; Bill Pratt: drums, keyboards, background vocals. Produced & recorded by: Bill Pratt @ the Bratt Studio, Baltimore,MD.

Aguilera, Jasmine. “ICE Is Detaining Children Despite Court Order and COVID-19.” *Time*, Time, 17 Aug. 2020, time.com/5878909/children-ice-covid-19-detention-court-order/.

The article discusses the numbers of immigrant children being held in detention centers despite concerns over the spread of COVID 19. This crisis only amplifies the existing concerns over conditions at these detention facilities.

Binford, Warren. “Hear My Voice/Escucha Mi Voz: The Testimonies of Children Detained at the Southern Border of the United States: NOOK Book.” *Barnes & Noble*, Workman Publishing Company, Inc., 13 Apr. 2021, www.barnesandnoble.com/w/hear-my-voice-escucha-mi-voz-warren-binford/1137832748.

This book tells the stories of young children who face fear, anxiety, and harsh conditions in U.S. immigrant detention centers.

Burnett, John, and David Dorado Romo. “The Bath Riots: Indignity Along the Mexican Border.” *NPR*, NPR, 29 Jan. 2006, www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5176177.

This NPR Weekend Edition special contains a 9 minute podcast which discusses the 1917 bath riots in detail and includes interviews.

*Contract Mexican Laborers Being Fumigated with the Pesticide DDT in Hidalgo, Texas, in 1956*.

This photograph shows in great detail a contract farmworker being sprayed with DDT upon entering the U.S for work.

“‘Decade of Betrayal’: How the U.S. Expelled Over a Half Million U.S. Citizens to Mexico in 1930s.” *Democracy Now!*, www.democracynow.org/2017/2/28/forgotten\_history\_in\_1930s\_us\_deported.

This documentary explores the forced repatriations of people of Mexican origin (including American citizens) in the 1930s.

democracynow. *YouTube*, YouTube, 10 July 2019, www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Rl\_EwaDg4A.

This interview with author John Frey explores the de-lousing practices in El Paso which led to the bath riots, and discusses illegal deportations of American citizens.

Dorado-Romo, David. “Crossing the Line.” *Los Angeles Times*, Los Angeles Times, 27 Feb. 2006, www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2006-feb-27-oe-romo27-story.html.

This article from the LA times is written by the author of 'Ringside Seat to a Revolution' and specifically highlights the practices of de-lousing and chemical disinfecting that occurred along the U.S Mexico border from the 1900s-1950s. Written from a personal perspective, the author recalls people in his own family telling him about the dehumanizing practices they endured at the border in order to come work in the United States. The author further draws parallels between racial eugenics and immigration practices.

LosTigresNorteVEVO, Los Tigres Del Norte. *YouTube*, YouTube, 3 Dec. 2015, www.youtube.com/watch?v=5mWAYZE1s10.

This song talks about the resilience of the Mexican immigrant.

McCall, Guadalupe Garcia. *All the Stars Denied*. Tu Books, an Imprint of Lee & Low Books Inc., 2018.

This YA novel, which deals with the forced 'repatriation' of hispanic people (both documented and undocumented) depicts the struggles immigrants faced on the journey between countries. It highlights the policies which enabled even legal American citizens to endure the indignities of deportation, and the struggles they endured in trying to return to the United States.

Mills, Deborah, et al. *La Frontera: El Viaje Con papá = My Journey with Papa*. Library Ideas, LLC, 2019.

This children's illustrated books tells the story of a young boy who journeys across the U.S./Mexico border with his father after the family has struggled financial hardship back home. After leaving most of his family behind, the protagonist faces the difficult journey across the border and the struggle of assimilating into a new society.

Morales, Yuyi. “Dreamers by Yuyi Morales: 9780823440559: PenguinRandomHouse.com: Books.” *PenguinRandomhouse.com*, Holiday House, www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/576752/dreamers-by-yuyi-morales/.

This text tells of the journey of a mother and her son across the U.S. Mexico border and the joy they find in books while experiencing a new and often challenging culture.

Reichard, Raquel. “Remembering Carmelita Torres, The Teenage Mexicana Who Started A Riot At The Texas Border.” *We Are Mitú. 100% American & Latino*, 4 Feb. 2021, wearemitu.com/wearemitu/things-that-matter/remembering-carmelita-torres-the-teenage-mexicana-who-started-a-riot-at-the-texas-border/.

This article from mitu remembers Carmelita Torres, the young woman who began the 1917 bath riots. It includes tweets from contemporary people celebrating her life. It also includes images from the El Paso Morning Times newspaper talking about the riot.

Romo, David Dorado. *Ringside Seat to a Revolution An Underground Cultural History of El Paso and Juárez: 1893-1923*. Cinco Puntos Press, 2014.

This text explores the history of El Paso Texas in relation to the Mexican Revolution. It is useful to this text set because it does explore border crossings and specifically mentions the Bath Riots of 1917 which occurred when migrants resisted the practices of chemical baths when crossing into the United States. This practice is an example of the inhumane policies in place at the border even when crossing was occurring legally.

Ryan Pam Muñoz. *Esperanza Rising*. Thorndike Press, a Part of Gale, a Cengage Company, 2019.

This YA novel tells the story of border crossing from the point of view of a young girl who sees her privileged life in Mexico disappear after violence kills her father. Her family is forced to make the dangerous crossing and toil as migrant farm workers. This novel is useful to this text set because it not only depicts the process of gaining entry into the United States, but it shows the type of difficult conditions immigrants are often met with upon arriving.

Tonatiuh, Duncan. *Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote: a Migrants Tale*. Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2013.

This children's illustrated book depicts border crossing in an inventive and almost fable-like way- relying on symbolism to communicate the danger immigrants face when trusting coyotes to carry them across the U.S/Mexico border.

voxdotcom. *YouTube*, YouTube, 29 July 2019, www.youtube.com/watch?v=tkD6QfeRil8.

This VOX documentary explores the history of gasoline baths at the border in El Paso Texas, how it was related to the eugenics movement, and how those practices would influence practices used on Jewish people in the holocaust.