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Fresh studies in Rio Grande Valley history

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Fresh Studies in
RIO GRANDE VALLEY
HISTORY

Edited By

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of the Spanish-language articles in this volume.



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by Myrna Ellison

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Cumbia Crazy

by

Susana Nevarez-Marquez

My name isn't Juana,
and I'm not a Cubana.
But if you're interested,
cumbias make me crazy!

Some girls like the polca
and dance them al Norteño.
They don't entertain me,
but cumbias make me loca!

When the band plays a cumbia,
the music give me chills.
I look for my partner
and call him with a whistle.

Come on, Green Eyes,
I like the way you're dressed.
I like your little hat.
Your rhythm calls me now!

Loosen up those feet.
Get those hips a-moving
and dance with me
la cumbia crazy!

POLITICAL HISTORY



**Jim Wells, George Parr,
Pepe Martin, and Gene Falcón:
The Spirit of “*El Patrón*” along the
Rio Grande of South Texas**

by

Billy Hathorn

The “political boss” in the United States was not confined to populous urban areas, although New York City, Chicago, and Philadelphia, among other cities, have at times had a glaring history of machine government. Along the Rio Grande in Texas emerged a powerful group of politicians known individually as “*el patrón*.” Some *patrones* were county judges; others, state senators, mayors, or sheriffs. All *patrones* were Democrats whose strength came from the absolute loyalty of their large Mexican-American constituencies. The *patrones* were oligarchs who used democratic catch-words, but their public policies were often determined by “the rich and well born.” The influence of the *patrones* tended to expand regionally but had largely dissipated by the beginning of the 21st century. A key characteristic of the *patrones* was their strong family connections. Often a *patrón* had at least one relative and, in some cases, multiple family members holding public office or working in government jobs. This article examines the life and times of four South Texas *patrones*, all of whom wielded similar political operations, but each with his own style of leadership. Highlighted are James Babbage Wells, Jr., in Brownsville, George Berham Parr, II, in Duval County, Joseph Claude “Pepe” Martin, Jr., of Laredo, and—the last of the *patrones*—Eugenio Falcón, Jr., in Starr County.

Jim Wells, the namesake of Jim Wells County, was born on July 12, 1850, on St. Joseph Island in Aransas County on the Texas Gulf Coast. Now largely uninhabited, St. Joseph Island

(also called San José) is separated on the north from Matagorda Island by Cedar Bayou and on the south from Mustang Island by Aransas Pass.¹ Both of Wells' parents were born in the South but descended from New England sailing families. His father, James Wells, Sr., was a Georgia-born naval officer reared in Boston, Massachusetts, who became the captain of a steamboat operating on the Mississippi and Red rivers. He raised a company of men to fight in the Texas Revolution at the critical 18-minute battle of San Jacinto in Harris County. The senior Wells participated in the destruction of a Mexican supply depot at Cox's Point, named for Thomas Cox, an early settler of Calhoun County. Cox's Point is located on what is now Texas State Highway 35 at the end of a peninsula that reaches into Cox's Bay, which in turn is bounded by the larger Lavaca Bay.²

Under the Republic of Texas, the senior Wells was given command of the schooner "Brutus," the second of the first four ships commissioned by the Republic Navy.³ In 1837, he was assigned as first commandant of the newly-established Navy yard at Galveston. Because of low pay, he resigned from government service to settle on St. Joseph Island, where, until his death, he raised cattle and operated a merchant ship.⁴

The junior Wells was schooled at home by his mother,⁵ the former Lydia Anna Hastings Hull.⁶ The rustic Lydia Ann Lighthouse at Aransas Pass, the second lighthouse in Texas, may have been named in her honor.⁷ Wells had three sisters: Mariam W. McQuirk and Hannah W. Brundrett, neither of whom reached the age of thirty-four, and Frances Varian Wells Heard, who named her son, James Babbage Wells Heard, the sixth of seven children, for his grandfather and uncle. Heard was an oilman and rancher from Refugio in Refugio County, one the first counties created in Texas. It is located near the Gulf Coast halfway between Corpus Christi and Victoria.⁸ Wells began working as a youth on his family's ranch and in time became the manager of operations.⁹ In 1873, Wells came to Galveston for the private study of law. In 1874, he enrolled at the University of

Virginia School of Law in Charlottesville, from which he earned his degree the following year. After graduation, he established a law practice in Rockport, the seat of government for Aransas County, but he soon moved to a larger city, Corpus Christi in Nueces County. There Wells became associated with Stephen Powers (1814-1882), the political boss of South Texas. After the death in a duel of his previous law partner, Powers selected Wells as his new legal associate. The two relocated from Corpus Christi to Brownsville in Cameron County, the southernmost of Texas' 254 counties.¹⁰

Wells was a particularly successful trial lawyer. During one session of the Cameron County District Court, his clients prevailed in all but one of twenty-one cases.¹¹ On November 4, 1880, not long after the death of both of his parents, Wells wed Powers' niece, Pauline Josephine Kleiber (1863-1928), and converted to her Roman Catholicism. Jim and Pauline Wells were so committed to Catholicism that they often declined to attend funerals or weddings in Protestant or other Christian churches.¹² Pauline was a daughter of Joseph Kleiber, originally from France, and the former Emma Henrietta Butler, a native of Brownsville.¹³ The couple had three sons, James, Joseph, and Robert; James Wells, III, the oldest, was killed at the age of fourteen in a shooting accident in 1899.¹⁴

In addition to his legal practice, Wells was a ranch owner, land speculator, and an investor in life insurance and oil exploration.¹⁵ However, he never made a fortune because many of his investments failed, and on three occasions he faced the possibility of bankruptcy.¹⁶ "Judge" Wells, as he was known, held public office only briefly on two occasions: as the elected city attorney of Brownsville in the early 1880s and as an appointee in 1897 of Governor Charles Allen Culberson (1855-1925) to finish the term of an elected state district court judge who had resigned amid controversy.¹⁷ Though Republicans briefly dominated Cameron County during Reconstruction—their base was federal patronage appointees when Republicans held the White

House—Powers and Wells worked diligently to counter the GOP through the establishment of the Blue Club to spur turnout for Democratic candidates.¹⁸ When Powers died, leadership of the party organization passed to Wells, who thereafter directed the patronage machine for thirty-eight years.¹⁹

By 1890, a group of 90 ranchers, each of whom owned from 1,000 acres to more than 300,000 acres, held 97 percent of the land in Cameron County. Each rancher shaped the political views of his mainly Mexican-American employees, who retained deference to “*el patrón*.”²⁰ As an advocate for the landowners, Wells kept property taxes low and gained the permanent placement in Brownsville of both U.S. troops and the Texas Rangers on the premise that their presence at the mouth of the Rio Grande was essential to halt civil unrest and cattle rustling.²¹ Wells advocated railroad construction regionally and even an 1880 proposal to connect Brownsville and Corpus Christi with Central America. When a railroad was completed between Corpus Christi, Laredo, and Monterrey, Mexico, one of the consequences was the collapse of Brownsville’s domination of trade with northeastern Mexico.²² Yet, there came a boom in irrigation and vegetable and fruit farming, enterprises which attracted new settlers that “ultimately proved to be Wells’ political and economic undoing.” Wells maintained a progressive commitment to honest, efficient government, but his disdain for Hispanic participation in politics caused the new settlers to turn against Democratic boss rule, and Wells’ machine hence collapsed in 1920.²³ Like most political bosses, Wells operated an informal system of welfare and legal assistance to the poor, but there was no general upturn in the living standards of Mexican-American workers and farmers.²⁴

In the late 19th century, conservative Democrats, sometimes called Bourbons, dominated Texas. Wells became close to the political establishment in Austin and also followed the patronage activities of political machines operating in Hidalgo, Starr, and Duval counties. These *patrónes* ran their own local machines but

deferred to Wells on matters at the regional, state, and national levels.²⁵ Duval and Jim Wells counties were dominated for decades by two *patrónes*, a father and son named Parr. Archer “Archie” Parr was a Texas state senator from 1915 to 1935.²⁶ Archie’s father, the first George Berham Parr, a native Virginian, was the county clerk of Live Oak County in South Texas. This George Parr was stabbed to death with a Bowie knife late in the night of November 25, 1867, in the town of Oakville, then the seat of government for Live Oak County. The killer was never apprehended. Archie Parr was only six years of age when his father died.²⁷

Archie’s son, George B. Parr, II, born on March 1, 1901, was selected at the age of thirteen as his father’s senatorial pageboy in the Texas capitol. In 1926, at the age of twenty-five, he was appointed as the administrative judge of Duval County, based in the isolated town of San Diego, after two of his brothers declined to enter local politics.²⁸ At the time, San Diego, Texas, was “a village less than a whistle stop on the railroad,” and its highways had to connect with other highways before they reached any other thoroughfares of importance. Parr’s biographer, Dudley Lynch, said that the stagnation began more than a decade before the birth of the second George Parr.²⁹ The Spanish deed for Duval County dated back to 1528, when Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca (1490-1558) supposedly explored the area while he was headed to Mexico. Lynch wrote that people in San Diego “had a lot of time on their hands.” The labor force was small and mostly unskilled. It was nearly impossible to recruit industry because of the lack of available water.³⁰ Lynch called Parr “an Anglo who spoke Spanish, who understood Mexican customs, who sensed the political potential residing in Duval’s outraged Mexican majority.”³¹

A small anti-Parr faction in Duval County blamed Parr for the bungled assassination in 1952 of 21-year-old Jacob Stokes “Buddy” Floyd, Jr., who was engaged to be married.³² He was the son of “Jake” Stokes, Sr., a staunch opponent of the

Parr machine active in the local Freedom Party, a collection of mostly World War II veterans who tried to topple the *patrónes* in several South Texas counties. Stokes, Sr., an attorney in Alice, Texas, said that the bullet that killed his son was meant instead for him.³³ Mario "Turk" Sapet of San Antonio was convicted of the murder of Buddy Floyd, lost his appeal, and was imprisoned at the state penitentiary in Huntsville. Sapet's accomplice in the crime, Alfredo Cervantes, was never apprehended.³⁴ Dudley Lynch said that the evidence against Parr in the Floyd murder was both "highly circumstantial" and "highly incriminating."³⁵

George Parr is particularly remembered as a stalwart partisan of 1948 U.S. senatorial candidate, Lyndon Baines Johnson, then the U.S. Representative for Texas' 10th congressional district, which included Austin and parts of the Hill Country. Earlier, Parr had been friendly with Johnson's senatorial rival, former Governor Coke Robert Stevenson (1888-1975). Parr produced a lopsided margin for Stevenson in Duval County in the gubernatorial primaries of 1942 and 1944. The ambitious Johnson was desperate to gain the strongest possible voter support from the *patrónes* in the machine counties and sought the help of George Parr. Stevenson led the first primary with 39.7 percent of the vote to Johnson's 33.7 percent. In the tabulation of returns from the Democratic runoff primary, held on August 28, 1948, Parr ordered 202 additional votes, all but two of which were cast for Johnson, to be added to the amended runoff vote count for Box 13 in Jim Wells County. Johnson hence won his nomination, which turned out to be a stepping stone to the presidency, by eighty-seven disputed votes over Coke Stevenson, who hailed from Junction in Kimble County in the same Hill Country that gave birth to Johnson.³⁶

All of the additional voter names were signed in the same blue ink in the same handwriting.³⁷ According to the presiding election judge, copies of the voter signatures needed for verification were stolen, amid allegations of fraud. Stevenson long attributed his failure to defeat Johnson for the Senate nomination

as “the stuffed ballot box.”³⁸ In subsequent years, Stevenson supported primarily Republican candidates for national and state office, including U.S. Senator Barry Morris Goldwater (1909-1998) of Arizona, who ran against President Johnson in 1964 and made an especially weak showing in Texas as well as nationwide.³⁹ As the Democratic senatorial nominee, Johnson had no problem defeating Jack Porter, a Houston oilman who became active in the 1940s in the long-range goal of transforming the state GOP from “a patronage club” into a competitive political force. Johnson polled exactly two thirds of the vote, 702,985; Porter, 349,665.⁴⁰

Parr blamed the Ballot Box 13 dispute on one of his closest friends, Ed Lloyd,⁴¹ a lawyer in Alice in Jim Wells County who wrote in the additional voter names to the final tally reported to the state Democratic Party.⁴² Parr further claimed that Stevenson was himself responsible for his own loss in such a close contest, where a few hundred additional votes could have changed the outcome, because Stevenson had a policy of not appointing to vacant state positions “machine” politicians who carried great popularity with their local base. Parr and Judge Manuel “Black Hawk” Raymond recommended that Stevenson appoint E. James “Jimmy” Kazen (1912-2003) of Laredo as the district attorney for Webb County. Raymond was related to Kazen. In 1944, Kazen was elected to a full term as DA and remained in that position until 1958.⁴³ “That’s how come Lyndon Johnson got to be President,” quipped Parr in regard to the senatorial election, which in time provided the opportunity for Johnson to seek the nation’s highest elected office, first in 1960, when he instead became vice president under John F. Kennedy, and again in his only election as president in 1964.⁴⁴

Parr was particularly in Johnson’s debt because the congressman in 1946 had urged President Harry S Truman to grant a pardon to Parr, who had served a nine-month imprisonment for federal income tax evasion. Without the pardon, Parr would have been otherwise prevented from running for public office.⁴⁵

Investigations into Parr's machine during the 1950s netted more than 650 indictments against his henchmen, but Parr survived the indictments, including one for mail fraud, through dismissals and reversals on appeal. During this long ordeal, Parr's political empire seemed to be collapsing.⁴⁶ When Parr was convicted again in 1974 for federal income tax evasion and faced a ten-year prison sentence, he committed suicide on April 1, 1975, at Los Harcones, his Duval County ranch.⁴⁷

According to biographer Dudley Lynch, had Parr been imprisoned in 1975 "his enemies would have danced ecstatically in the street. But in putting a .45 caliber slug through his brain, he had turned his exodus into a triumph." Duval County turned out in big numbers for Parr's funeral; some 150 cars stretched for a mile while awaiting the service.⁴⁸ Incidentally, George Parr and Coke Stevenson died three months apart in 1975; Lyndon Johnson had succumbed two years earlier in retirement at Stonewall in Gillespie County. As his presidential ambitions developed in the 1950s, Johnson had tried to distance himself from any association concerning George Parr.⁴⁹

Jim Wells held conservative political views and opposed many of the proposals of the "reform" Governor James Stephen Hogg, the first governor to be born in Texas. A lawyer in Tyler, he is the namesake of Jim Hogg County, another South Texas machine stronghold.⁵⁰ The Texas Rangers joined with vigilante groups to maintain what has been likened to a "reign of terror," which resulted in the killing during bandit raids of at least two hundred Mexicans.⁵¹

Wells remained the dominant figure in Cameron County politics and guided the party in neighboring counties as well until the era of World War I. He continued as the county party chairman until 1920. In 1898, Edward Mandell House (1858-1938), a Houston native known as "Colonel House," though he had no military experience, arranged for Wells to become temporary chairman of the state Democratic convention. Then, from 1900 to 1904, Wells was also the state party chairman, the first

Catholic in that position. Wells was allied with the conservative faction headed by Colonel House, who soon became nationally known as a diplomat with a close advisory relationship to President Woodrow Wilson. To House, political success was more important than ideological purity.⁵² Wells would have run for governor in 1904 had Colonel House not favored another candidate.⁵³ Historian Evan Anders wrote that Wells, at the height of his influence, was most motivated by his steadfast allegiance to the Democratic Party, “the only principle that Wells refused to violate.”⁵⁴ Even with Wilson in the White House, Wells’ influence was waning; he lost control of the federal bureaucracy in Cameron County.⁵⁵

In Jim Wells’ heyday, with Reconstruction a distant memory, the Republican Party in Texas worked against boss rule and offered occasional candidates, none of whom could be elected in the one-party system of that day.⁵⁶ In 1923, Rentfro Creager was named as Republican National Committeeman. A Waco native, Creager practiced law and headed an oil company in Brownsville. Though Texas does not register voters by party, at that time probably 95 percent of the small pool of regular Republican voters in general elections were African-Americans. Creager tried to downplay the African-American loyalty to the party and backed the “lily-white” faction, which proposed the recruitment of white Democrats, then a nearly impossible task in Texas but a later development that proved essential to GOP success in the state. During the administration of Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft, Creager was the collector of customs at Brownsville. In 1916, Creager polled 13.5 percent of the vote as the Republican gubernatorial nominee against the controversial Democrat, Governor James Edward Ferguson, Jr. (1871-1944), a banker in Bell County, who, because of impeachment and conviction, did not finish the second term to which he was handily re-elected. Creager declined offers from Presidents Warren G. Harding and Calvin Coolidge to become the ambassador to Mexico. President-

elect and Mrs. Harding visited Creager at his Brownsville home, and the presidential party fished at nearby Port Isabel. Subsequently, Creager became a close associate of Taft's son, U.S. Senator Robert Alphonso Taft, Sr. (1889-1953) of Ohio, a favorite of conservative Republicans. Creager floor-managed Taft's presidential convention campaign in 1948, which resulted instead in the second consecutive nomination of the Taft rival, Governor Thomas Edmund Dewey (1902-1971) of New York,⁵⁷ who then lost the general election to President Truman.

On December 21, 1923, three years after the collapse of his political machine, Wells died in Brownsville. He and his wife are interred at Lamar Cemetery in Lamar in Aransas County. Jim Wells County, his enduring legacy, was founded in 1911 and located forty-five miles west of Corpus Christi between Duval and Nueces counties. Wells' papers, which encompass material on cultural, political, and social matters, government, industry, and the military, are housed at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas at Austin.⁵⁸

The late Evan Anders, who was a professor of history at the University of Texas at Arlington, concluded in his 1982 study of South Texas political bosses that, despite a degree of political corruption in Cameron County,⁵⁹ Wells did not appear to have been motivated by financial gain:

Political power itself and the attention that it brought were what mattered to the Brownsville lawyer. In economic terms, ... numerous other South Texas entrepreneurs overshadowed Wells. Even as a highly esteemed lawyer, he served as the agent of more successful men. Only as a political leader did Wells stand on an equal footing with the powerful figures of the Trans-Nueces region. ... Political power had made him an important man, and he relished the demonstration of that power in campaigns and factional battles.⁶⁰

Unlike Wells, who had relatively little experience in elected office, Joseph Claude Martin, Jr., known as "Pepe" Martin or sometimes "Joe" Martin, was from 1954 to 1978 the mayor of his native Laredo in Webb County. Laredo is 210 miles to

the northwest of Brownsville and, prior to the 2020 census, had a population at least 50,000 greater than the count for Brownsville. Both cities are located on the Rio Grande. Like Jim Wells, “*El patrón*” Martin performed small favors for individual voters, often resolving disputes over employment and providing references to assist constituents in obtaining bank loans. The *patrones* also sometimes made cash advances to needy individuals during special circumstances. To obtain such favors, the voter had to pledge unyielding political loyalty to the *patrón*.⁶¹

Born on August 1, 1913, Pepe Martin was the paternal grandson of the wealthy landowner, Raymond Martin (1828-1900). Pepe’s parents were J. C. Martin, Sr. (1886-1957), a Webb County sheriff, and the former Jeronima “Minnie” Bruni, a member of another distinguished old political family in Laredo.⁶² Raymond Martin was the president of the trustees for the Laredo Independent School District. In 1947, the trustees spearheaded the opening of Laredo College, which attracted a considerable number of World War II veterans being educated under the G.I. Bill of Rights of 1944. Laredo College was officially Laredo Junior College from its founding until 1993, when it was renamed Laredo Community College. Laredo College became the official name in 2018. The Martin Building on the campus, which houses the information and technology department, was dedicated in 1970 and renovated in 2016.⁶³

Pepe Martin wed the former Anita Marie Ligarde (1915-2004), a daughter of Amedee Ligarde, Sr., and the former Sara Saenz.⁶⁴ Anita Martin had her own political lineage. She was the sister of state Representative Honoré Ligarde, a banker whose legislative tenure extended from 1963 to 1973⁶⁵ and coincided with a portion of the time that his brother-in-law was the mayor. Martin termed Ligarde “such a fair person, very even minded ... He always helped you to take things lightly when the world seemed to be caving in on you, and he was never bashful about telling people how he felt about something.”⁶⁶ Pepe and Anita Martin had a son, J. C. “Pepito” Martin, III (born May 3,

1941), who succeeded his father as a trustee of the Lamar Bruni Vegara Charitable Trust.⁶⁷ The three Martin daughters are, first, Patricia “Patsy” Galo, the wife of Dr. Michael Vincent Galo, Sr., who maintained a medical practice in Laredo for forty years from 1973 until his retirement in 2013.⁶⁸ Marialice Martin Cohen, a photographer based in New Orleans, Louisiana, later took the name, Josephine Sacabo.⁶⁹ The third daughter, Minnie Dora Martin Daugherty of Laredo, was divorced in Houston in 2001 after twenty-nine years of marriage to John A. Daugherty.⁷⁰

Martin graduated from the former Laredo High School, then located at the downtown Rio Grande site now occupied by La Posada Hotel. The institution was moved northward on San Bernardo Avenue to become Martin High School. Tirza was the daughter of Bartolomé García,⁷¹ a three-time Laredo mayor of the 1850s and early 1860s. García was a direct descendant of the former Catalina Uribe (born 1711) and her husband, Tomás Sánchez de la Barrera y Garza, the principal founders of Laredo in 1755. In *Patron Democracy*, author Fernando Piñón refers to Laredo as “culturally, socially, and economically different [from] other parts of Texas.”⁷² Piñón wrote that, in the 19th century, Laredo often “seem deserted, except for a few natives who would appear in front of their door, cast a curious gaze at the stranger in town, and fade quickly into the darkness of their houses.”⁷³ He noted too the absence of Anglo inhabitants in Laredo. Only fifty Anglos were recorded in 1888. The Mexican ruling families were, according to Piñón, “aristocrats and refused to yield to Anglo takeover of their land.”⁷⁴

Considering his ties to the Martin and Bruni families, the self-confident Pepe Martin was said to have come into the mayoral office “like a Roman emperor whose armies had pacified the infidels before his triumphant entry into the city.”⁷⁵ Indeed, in his first mayoral candidacy in the election of April 6, 1954, Martin received all of the votes cast except for one write-in tabulation.⁷⁶ Soon he faced the consequences of the flooding of the Rio Grande, which caused extensive damage that spring

in Laredo and her sister city in Mexico, Nuevo Laredo. Mayor Martin kept winning re-election until he retired from public life in 1978.⁷⁷

Aldo J. Tatangelo, Sr. (1913-2008), born on the Mexican holiday of September 16, came to Laredo only three months before the assassination in Dallas of President Kennedy. He never envisioned at the time that he would later become the mayor. The fatal presidential trip to Texas had been intended to mend disputes within the state Democratic Party between the factions of Governor John Bowden Connally, Jr. (1917-1993), wounded in the Kennedy assassination and generally considered a conservative, and the steadfast liberal U.S. Senator Ralph Webster Yarborough (1903-1996). Martin wept at the assassination of President Kennedy, but believed that with Lyndon Johnson he had a close ally in the White House.⁷⁸

As a result of the strong mayor-council system of government that had existed in Laredo for more than eighty years, the Laredo City Council in 1979 approved a new charter which established a city manager to handle the daily activities formerly the prerogative of the mayor. Voters confirmed the charter change in a 1981 election, and the new government was implemented in 1983 in time for Aldo Tatangelo's second term as mayor.⁷⁹

Historian Jerry D. Thompson, formerly of Laredo Junior College and since then a veteran professor at Texas A&M International University in Laredo, examined the nature of political corruption in Webb County which occurred in the late 19th century. In his book, *Warm Weather and Bad Whiskey: The Laredo Election Riot in 1886*,⁸⁰ Thompson analyzes the election shootout between rival factions called "*Las Botas*" (meaning "Boots" or upper class), the creation of Raymond Martin, and "*Los Guarachas*" ("Sandals" for the lower class), the organization of Colonel Santos Benavides,⁸¹ a great-great-grandson of Laredo founder Tomás Sánchez de la Barrera y Garza.⁸² Benavides was a former mayor and former county judge. During the American Civil War, he was the highest ranking Tejano in the Confeder-

ate Army. He attempted to pass his leadership of the *Guaraches* to his son, Juan V. Benavides,⁸³ later a Webb County justice of the peace.⁸⁴ In 1895, the *Guaraches* elected their first mayor, Andrew H. Thaison, a Danish-American who resigned midway in his term because of constant political infighting.⁸⁵

The election shootout which Thompson researched was among the largest gun battles in the history of the American West, with as many as 250 men engaged in the fighting. Within a half hour, about two thousand rounds of ammunition were discharged. Snipers fired from nearby rooftops. African-American “Buffalo soldiers” of the Sixteenth United States Infantry stationed at nearby Fort McIntosh, located on what became the future Laredo College campus, arrived to break up the fight, with assistance from a company of the Eighth Cavalry, now a component of the First Cavalry Division at Fort Hood, Texas. Although the official number of dead was placed at sixteen, with more than thirty wounded, some reports claimed that as many as thirty may have been killed. Though the “Boots and Sandals” rivalry suggests a class differentiation, each faction included members of all economic and social groups.⁸⁶

After several years of fierce political competition, the *Botas* and *Guaraches* were unified under the leadership of Raymond Martin, continued by his son, J. C. Martin, Sr., and grandson, J. C. Martin, Jr., who expanded the organization and became its face in the mid-20th century. From the election riot arose the Independent Club, the organization which wielded political power in Laredo for eighty-four years.⁸⁷ Also known as the “Old Party,” the club maintained headquarters downtown at Jarvis Plaza, which is named for New York native Samuel Jarvis, the mayor of Laredo from 1868 to 1872 and the donor of the land on which the plaza rests.⁸⁸ The membership consisted of elected city, county, and school officials as well as businessmen, lawyers, and citizens financially dependent under the *patrón* system. Besides controlling all city and county offices, the Independent Club endorsed state and national Democratic candidates with the expectation that at as much as 80

to 90 percent of Webb County would vote accordingly in a bloc. The club assessed a monthly fee from each member to finance the various political campaigns in which it became involved.⁸⁹

In 1950, the Independent Club defeated a dissident mayoral candidate, Edward Joseph Dryden, Sr. (born c. 1894; date of death unavailable). In a race for another two-year term, Martin in 1956 defeated a “reform” candidate, Alonzo Walter “Lonnie” Gates, 7,872 to 4,187 (65-35 percent), with one write-in.⁹⁰ Gates was supported by a group of wealthy businessmen and veterans of World War II like the Freedom Party in other south Texas counties. In 1958, Martin defeated still another “reform” candidate, Guillermo “Memo” Benavides, 7,488-4,442 (63-37 percent). In 1959, two self-styled “reformers” unseated Independent Club candidates in elections for the Laredo Independent School District, two years prior to the formation of another district, the United Independent School District, which serves the northern portions of the city and county.⁹¹

Mayor Martin was disappointed that his election margins were in the mid-60 percent range. He argued that he should have received 75 percent or greater in the 1956 and 1958 contests, and he hence sought to maximize his support for future elections. In the election of April 3, 1962, when four-year mayoral terms began in Laredo, Pepe Martin topped still another “reform” candidate, 33-year-old Luis F. Puig, Jr.,⁹² by a slightly better margin than in 1958, 7,488 to 3,115 (71-29 percent). The “Old Party” flexed its muscle to force Puig from his position as the purchasing agent for the Laredo Independent School District. In the election of April 5, 1966, which, as it turned out, closed the first half of his mayoral tenure, Pepe Martin obtained all but five write-in votes. By this time, he began to feel politically invincible. His power wrested on references for jobs⁹³ and assistance to people in special situations, too; therefore these voters remained in his debt politically.⁹⁴

In the election held on April 7, 1970, Martin handily won his penultimate term over Tomás Flores, 8,260 to 1,472 (85-15

percent). Despite this triumph, two years later, the “Old Party” lost its first election for the Precinct 1 seat on the Webb County Commission. It marked the first loss for the Independent Club since the defeat of the two school board members in 1959.⁹⁵ Martin secured with ease his last term as mayor in the election held on April 2, 1974, when he defeated Harvill Oscar Eaton, known as “Tenn” Eaton because he was a Tennessee native.⁹⁶ In that contest, Martin polled 5,170 votes to Eaton’s 783 (87-13 percent).⁹⁷

In 1977, the interest group, Taxpayers Organized for Public Service, known as TOPS,⁹⁸ was established by a self-employed handyman, the late Lawrence Robert “Larry” Berry, an Ohio native who lived in California and Florida before he came to Laredo in 1965 and married a Hispanic woman. When examining municipal accounts, Berry uncovered fraud in the street department in the amount of some \$1.5 million. He reported, among many findings, that over a relatively short period of time, the city purchased 906 batteries to service only 87 municipal vehicles. The resultant scandal led directly to the sudden demise of the once invincible Independent Club. Mayor Martin declined to seek a seventh term in the municipal election held on April 6, 1978. Instead six candidates ran for mayor. Victorious was the “reformer” Aldo Tatangelo, a son of Italian immigrants who was born in the Federal Hill section of the capital city of Providence, Rhode Island, a distance of more than two thousand miles from Laredo. The two rivals were born within six weeks of each other in 1913, but Tatangelo outlived Martin by nearly a decade.⁹⁹

Despite his high visibility in 1977 and 1978, Lawrence Berry faded into obscurity following the collapse of the “Old Party.”¹⁰⁰ In a “CBS Reports” interview with Bill Moyers, a former press secretary to President Johnson, Martin said that previously many in Laredo did not care to make their own political decisions and hence deferred to his Independent Club, seen in the earlier years as a benevolent force in the community. But he conceded that by 1978 many began to want to make their own political decisions. As a final gesture, Berry used a tape record-

er to play a good-bye song, called a “*pachanga*,” as Martin presided over his last city council meeting and tabulated the results of the election of 1978.¹⁰¹

The leadership of the “Old Party” included, not just the Martins, but such figures as the veteran Laredo Independent School District Superintendent Vidal M. Treviño, a former one-term state representative for Webb and Zapata counties from 1961 to 1963,¹⁰² long-term Webb County Sheriff Porfirio Lauro Flores,¹⁰³ District Attorney Philip Kazen, and U.S. Representative Abraham “Chick” Kazen (1919-1987), one of the brothers of Philip and E. James Kazen. Abraham Kazen lost his House seat two years before his death. After nine terms in Washington, D.C., he was unseated in the 1984 Democratic primary by a more liberal opponent, Albert Garza Bustamante of San Antonio.

In 1973, Tatangelo joined a group seeking to establish a volunteer fire station in Laredo, his first step into public service. A three-term mayor from 1978 to 1990, Tatangelo was the last mayor under the mayor-council form of government and the first under the city manager system.¹⁰⁴ Tatangelo was regarded by the community as an honest man with a vision for the city. He was considered generous and particularly loved in the poorer neighborhoods.¹⁰⁵ “Citizen” Tatangelo persistently attended city council meetings and asked officials why Laredo had so few paved roads. Mayor Martin blamed the problem on Laredo being “a poor city.” Tatangelo hence proposed to donate \$6,500 (\$27,500 in 2019 dollars) to purchase paving equipment for use by the street department employees. The council first rebuffed Tatangelo’s offer, but later switched course to allow a paving experiment in the San Ignacio neighborhood.¹⁰⁶ Because he had upended the *patrón* system and instituted many reforms as mayor, Tatangelo drew the attention in 1985 of *The New York Times* in an article spotlighting his accomplishments as he sought a third and final term in the spring of 1986.¹⁰⁷

Tatangelo ran for mayor with a pledge to end the “*patrón* system.”¹⁰⁸ He told *The Laredo Morning Times* that he had gone to

“city council meetings, and nobody would pay attention to me. I said, ‘Maybe I should be inside, instead of outside looking in.’”¹⁰⁹ Fernando Piñón, the first Mexican-American editor of *The Laredo Morning Times* (1971-1974) and a retired political science professor at San Antonio College, authored in 1985 the book *Patrón Democracy*, a study of the *patrón* system of South Texas machine counties, principally Webb County.¹¹⁰ Piñón refers to Tatangelo as “by nature a man in a hurry, [one] who preferred open spaces where he could walk unperturbed at his own speed.”¹¹¹

In his first election as mayor on April 1, 1978, Tatangelo polled 9,784 votes to 4,833 for Oscar Manuel Laurel, Sr.,¹¹² 1,225 for Cruz J. Cabello, and a scattering of ballots for several minor candidates. Fernando Piñón wrote that Tatangelo had been elected mayor of “the oldest independent settlement in the United States, and he would govern a city where its people had just had a real taste of democracy.”¹¹³

Mayor Tatangelo was often said to have regarded his constituents as if they were members of his own family. He allowed people to call upon him at his office or residence at their convenience. Most Laredo streets, were, as promised, paved in the Tatangelo administration. He also addressed the pension plan for public employees, sought to improve drainage, and established new departments for parks and recreation, community development and engineering, and planning and zoning. The Public Works Department was overhauled and ceased sending employees to work on private property.

In 1988, Tatangelo was among a group of South Texas mayors who journeyed to Washington, D. C., to discuss border issues with President Ronald W. Reagan, whom he greatly admired.¹¹⁴ On November 6, 1990, a few months after vacating the mayor’s office, Tatangelo ran for Webb County administrative judge in the general election as a write-in candidate with Republican support against the man whom he had defeated for mayor in 1982, the Democratic nominee, Mercurio J. “Merc” Martinez, Jr., an “Old Party” fixture, wealthy landowner and

rancher, educator, and a long-term trustee of Laredo College. This time, with the voters' preferred party label, Martinez defeated Tatangelo with nearly 75 percent of the ballots cast.¹¹⁵

Until the 1970s, the Independent Club had succeeded in the recruitment of new members, some of whom were formerly in the ranks of the opposition. By the 1970s, however, the club became unable to attract sufficient younger members and failed to take into account the changing makeup of Laredo and Webb County. The city grew from 60,678 inhabitants in 1960 to 91,449 in 1980. The 2017 census estimate was 260,654, nearly three times the number of residents of 1980.¹¹⁶ As Laredo grew, fewer citizens depended on patronage from the Independent Club. Still the club is remembered as the longest enduring political machine in South Texas. And as Laredo turned away from "Old Party" candidates, it still remained firmly committed to the Democratic Party at the state and national levels.¹¹⁷

Jerry Thompson describes Martin as "the last Independent [Club] mayor. He was the typical *patrón*. ... Pepe Martin was corrupt, but he brought out the votes."¹¹⁸ Thompson said that corruption had continued in Webb County even after Martin left office. The region forfeited much of the state political clout that it had formerly exercised. Though the city has a significant voter registration, turnout numbers are nearly always less than half what they could be.¹¹⁹ Thompson suggested that the city council might be able to reduce corruption if its eight members were to heed the wishes of individual constituents, instead of vocal interest groups.¹²⁰

Pepe and Anita Martin resided in the older Heights neighborhood, to the east of the downtown, in a large white house with white Corinthian columns located at the intersection of Clark Boulevard and Meadow Street. Bill Moyers interviewed Martin poolside at his home as part of the 1978 "CBS Reports" exposé, "You Can Beat City Hall." The couple is interred in the Martin family plot at Calvary Catholic Cemetery in Laredo. Five weeks after Aldo Tatangelo's initial election, Mar-

tin faced indictment by a federal grand jury on a single count of mail fraud.¹²¹ He pleaded guilty and paid a \$1,000 fine and \$201,118 to the city in restitution for having assigned municipal employees to perform work on his private properties. Martin also received the unusual sentence of thirty weekends in the Webb County Jail, a decision ridiculed by many as unusually lenient.¹²² Twenty years after the sentence, Pepe died in Laredo at the age of eighty-five on Veterans' Day 1998.¹²³

Throughout South Texas, the *patrónes* brought strong-arm tactics into many counties though voters presumably believed based on their candidate preferences that this system was better for them as individuals than would have been the case under other forms of governance. The last of the *patrónes* considered here came from Starr County, located midway between Wells' Brownsville and Martin's Laredo. Sheriff Eugenio J. "Gene" Falcón, Jr. (born in 1953), ruled Starr County from 1981 to 1998 with some of the tactics borrowed from the old political bosses of his region. Starr County is an isolated area that lacks a major north-south highway and has long provided little for the future of its residents. Half of its people subsist below the poverty line. The rich soil of the bustling Rio Grande Valley lies just outside the productive reach of Starr County though the county seat is coincidentally named Rio Grande City. Falcón was placed under FBI surveillance in 1997 for alleged influence peddling in a bail bonds scandal. His public salary never exceeded \$38,000 annually, but he collected \$11,050 in kick-backs.¹²⁴ He was sentenced in 1998 to two years in federal prison, fined \$5,000, and ordered to undergo three years of supervised release beginning in 2000.¹²⁵

Falcón was descended from one of his area's oldest families and was seen by most Starr County residents as the embodiment of community service. He brought federal grants, obtained money for housing federal inmates, and opened new employment opportunities. But he was accused of allowing narcotics dealers, who sold their drugs in Houston and San

Antonio, to operate in Starr County.¹²⁶ Unlike Pepe Martin, whose father was a leading figure in the “Old Party” in Laredo, Falcón’s father, Eugenio, Sr. (died 1972), was the Starr County Republican chairman and a Methodist in diehard Democrat and Catholic country, always at odds with the power elite. Eugenio, Jr., and his brothers, one of whom, Antonio (born 1952) is a Starr County physician, were also reared in the Methodist Church. The senior Falcón took an administrative position in public education in nearby Roma, also in Starr County, because the Rio Grande City Independent School District, under the control of the “Old Party,” refused to hire him. Oddly, the elite who had shunned the father, embraced the son, who was initially even hailed as a “reformer.”¹²⁷

With the conviction of Sheriff Falcón, the last of the South Texas *patrónes* was toppled. The region began slowly to advance economically as more transplants came to pursue available opportunities. But politically, as a result of the huge advantage to Democratic candidates in the machine counties, the practical outcome of such change in government has been to keep alive the spirit of the *patrónes*, even if not one actually still holds public office. When “reformers” are elected, many soon revert to authoritarian ways of governance. As Pepe Martin often said, a considerable number of voters prefer to leave governance to the ruling class. As his time as mayor of Laredo was ending, Martin conceded that such views were becoming much less common in South Texas, but regional political trends of the subsequent forty years have remained stationary.

Laredo College

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110 Fernando Gaytan Piñón (born May 1, 1941), September 27, 2017 [<https://northtexan.unt.edu/class-note/fernando-pinon>], accessed July 30, 2019. For a related Piñón book, see “Searching for America in the Streets of Laredo: the Mexican American Experience in the Anglo American Narrative.” Piñón was a delegate pledged to U.S. Senator George Stanley McGovern (1922-2012) of South Dakota, at the Democratic National Convention held in Miami Beach, Florida, in 1972. McGovern won the nomination but then lost forty-nine states to Richard M. Nixon in the general election.

111 Fernando Piñón, 21.

112 Oscar Manuel Laurel, Sr. (1920-2001), Ancestry.com [https://www.ancestry.com/search/?name=Oscar+M._Laurel&event=_laredo-webb-texas-usa_78654], accessed August 1, 2019.

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114 “Handbook, Aldo Tatangelo.”

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- 116 Census figures, Laredo, Texas, 1960, 1980, and 2017.
- 117 “Fernando Piñón,” 101.
- 118 Treviño, “Local corruption.”
- 119 Ibid.
- 120 Ibid.
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- 122 Moyers, “You Can Beat City Hall.”
- 123 Ibid.; Martin gravestone markers at Calvary Catholic Cemetery.
- 124 Jesse Katz, “Jailed Sheriff Takes a Shot at Redemption,” *The Los Angeles Times*, July 25, 2000 [<https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2000-jul-25-mn-58556-story.htm>], accessed July 11, 2019.
- 125 Madeline Baro, “Falcón off to federal prison: Ex-Starr sheriff offers apology,” *The Brownsville Herald*, May 27, 1998 [https://www.brownsvilleherald.com/news/local/may-falcon-off-to-federal-prison-ex-starr-sheriff-offers/article_e0b-459cc-20a0-5c9c-abb0-b26c22ee0120.html], accessed August 1, 2019.
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The Other Underground Railroad

by

Rolando Avila

Slave escapes were a fact of life during the Antebellum era.¹ Sometimes these runaway slaves received help from others. Help took on many forms including (but not limited to) providing runaway slaves with a place to rest, food, medicine, money, and new clothes. This type of network existed in the north as early as the 1780s, although it was not known by its formal name at that time. In fact, popular knowledge of the network did not exist until the 1830s when abolitionists began publicizing the activities of the network in abolitionist newspapers. Although the northern Underground Railroad was organized to some extent, it was far from a formally structured organization. Instead, the Underground Railroad was a loosely organized network that helped runaway slaves to escape from bondage. It was referred to as “underground,” because it was secret, and it was tagged a “railroad” because it served to help transport slaves to freedom. Secrecy was necessary, because the practice of aiding slaves to run away was illegal, and the repercussions were severe. Fugitive Slave Laws called for stiff fines and imprisonment for those who aided in the theft of slave property. Not all slaves escaped to the north. Thousands of slaves also fled south. In spite of scholarly research on this Other Underground Railroad to the south (which spans for at least half a century), for the most part, its story still remains unknown by the general public.

Historiography

Many early works on the history of the Underground Railroad told of “hair-breadth escapes and secret tunnels.”² These

early accounts created myths and “romantic legends” that have endured in popular culture despite later research.³ Many of these early works were written by actual participants who were familiar with their local efforts, but were unaware of the overall operation. In spite of this shortcoming, these writers told of a highly organized network that existed exclusively in the north and credited “courageous abolitionists” who “rescue[d] helpless slaves that possessed no initiative of their own and played a mostly passive role.”⁴ Examples of these types of works include William Still’s *The Underground Railroad* (1872), Levi Coffin’s *Reminiscences of Levi Coffin* (1876), and Wilbur H. Siebert’s *The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom* (1898).⁵ Later, scholars including Larry Gara (*The Liberty Line: The Legend of the Underground Railroad*, 1961) and John Hope Franklin (*Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation*, 1999) argued that the Underground Railroad was an informal (at best transient loosely organized) network that existed in both the north and the south.⁶ Furthermore, these later scholars mostly credited the relative success of the Underground Railroad to courageous and resourceful fugitive slaves who were fortunate enough to benefit from a small number of helpers with anti-slavery sentiments.

In other words, within a century, the interpretation of the role that “passengers” of the Underground Railroad played swung from one extreme of the spectrum to the other. In this reassessment, runaway slaves were no longer regarded as mere “packages” totally dependent on others. Instead, slaves (who were determined to escape from bondage with or without help from others) were regarded as the driving force of the network. Under this “liberal interpretation, any assistance rendered to fugitive slaves, however random and even passive, constituted the “Underground Railroad.”⁷ Secondly, while the Underground Railroad was much more organized in the north than it was in the south, it did, in fact, exist in the south. According to Marie Tyler-McGraw and Kira R. Badamo of the United States Department of the Interior:

*The Underground Railroad in the South was extremely cautious and careful, but it existed. It existed in the port cities of the Atlantic Coast and in the Appalachian Mountains of the southern interior. It existed among certain church denominations – black Baptist, Quaker – and... it existed informally where the American South met borders with Mexico....*⁸

During the 1970s, scholars published seminal works that focus on how the Other Underground Railroad funneled slaves across the Rio Grande into Mexico.⁹ Beginning in 2000, the theme resurfaced with even greater vitality.¹⁰ However, in spite of numerous contributions to the field, scholars have had difficulty dispelling the popularly held myth of an exclusively northern Underground Railroad:

*Today, many people know about the Underground Railroad that shepherded enslaved people to freedom in the northern United States and Canada, but few know about the route to freedom to Mexico.*¹¹

*When we think of the Underground Railroad we often think of the Northern United States or Canada, not deep South Texas.*¹²

*Lessons about the Underground Railroad often focus on escaped slaves heading north to free states and Canada. But many people don't know they also headed south – to the Rio Grande Valley.*¹³

In 2014, C-Span (Cable-Satellite Public Affairs Network) showcased Mekala Shadd-Sartor Audain's doctoral thesis, "Mexican Canaan: Fugitive Slaves and Free Blacks on the American Frontier, 1804-1867" (Rutgers University, 2014).¹⁴ During the 2014 annual meeting of the Organization of American Historians (in Atlanta, Georgia), Audain discussed the history of U.S. fugitive slaves in Mexico. Audain explained, "Typically, people think of the underground Railroad as a way for slaves to escape their bonds by fleeing north. As slavery expanded south and westward, the southern Underground Railroad was a byproduct of that."¹⁵ In 2019, a *Washington Post* reporter interviewed Rosanne Bacha-Garza (University of Texas

Rio Grande Valley lecturer) who, that same year, published a book chapter titled, "Race and Ethnicity along the Antebellum Rio Grande."¹⁶ Bacha-Garza described the story of Nathaniel Jackson's mixed-race community and his ownership of "a ferry right along the Rio Grande" that he capitalized on to help runaway slaves over the border to freedom in Mexico.¹⁷ Unfortunately, each time a new work on the Other Underground Railroad appeared, it was either overlooked by the general public or it was greeted as a novel interpretation.

Mexican Texas

Mexico won its independence from Spain in 1821, and in 1824 the Mexican Congress included an amendment to the Mexican Constitution which outlawed slavery. Then, under the direction of General Vicente Guerrero (the second president of Mexico), all Mexican slaves were freed in 1829. Throughout the Mexican emancipation movement of the 1820s, Texas was still part of Mexico, and Anglo-American empresarios oversaw the immigration of Anglo-Americans into Texas. Some of these settlers brought slaves with them. During the 1820s, 20,000 people settled in Texas, and "almost one out of five persons was a Negro slave."¹⁸ The settlers were convinced that slave labor was essential in order to "make the land productive."¹⁹ It did not take long before these slave owners expressed their concerns to Empresario Benjamin Milam, which he forwarded to Joel Robert Poinsett, the first United States minister to Mexico. Milam wrote, "I have been in the frontiers of Texas for some time and have observed that the State of Louisiana has lost a great many slaves that have taken refuge in this Republic of Mexico. The evil arising from this to owners and such citizens as may hereafter be in the same situation is obvious...."²⁰ Poinsett wrote to Secretary of State Henry Clay "in very strong language" reminding him that it was "the most sacred obligation of the social contract to protect the property of its citizens."²¹ Poinsett explained, "...if a slave in

order to become free had only to pass the Mexican frontier, the loss of property would soon become so great as to compel [t]his government to reclaim such slaves."²²

Indeed, the Antebellum era was a time of persistent attempts by the U.S. government to negotiate a return policy for runaway slaves. Mexico, however, rejected U.S. appeals for slave extradition agreements. Making its sentiments clear, the Mexican government overtly encouraged American slaves to take refuge in Mexico. In 1833, the government made a formal invitation: "If they [Negro slaves] would like to come, we will offer them land for cultivation, plots for houses where they can establish towns, and tools to work, under the obligation [that they will] obey the laws of the country and the authorities already established by the Supreme Government of the Federation."²³ News of this golden opportunity travelled far and wide. A "colored female of Philadelphia" wrote to the editor of the *Liberator* (an abolitionist newspaper) encouraging African Americans to relocate to Mexico. She wrote, "I am happy to learn that the sentiments of my Trenton brethren are in accordance with my own, in regard to our locating in Mexico...not to Africa...but to attach ourselves to a nation already established."²⁴ She explained:

The government of the United States is not the only one in this hemisphere that offers equal rights to men; but there are others, under whose protection we may safely reside, where it is no disgrace to wear a sable complexion, and where our rights will not be continually trampled upon, on that account.... In fifty or a hundred years hence, our children will be made free [in the U.S.]? I think...verily believe that the time has arrived, when we too ought to manifest that spirit of independence... by leaving the land of oppression.... Some of your readers may inquire, where is that country to which we may remove, and thus become free and equal? I believe that country to be Mexico. There is an independent nation...the soil is rich and fertile, which will contribute to our wealth; and there we may become a people of worth and respectability....²⁵

On his way to the Alamo to try to quell the Texas Revolution (1835-1836), General (and dictator) Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna spoke of his sympathy for the U.S. slave: "There

are a considerable number of slaves in Texas, who have been introduced by their masters under cover of certain questionable contracts, but who according to our laws should be free. Shall we permit those wretches to moan in chains any longer in a country whose kind laws protect the liberty of men without distinction of caste or color?"²⁶ During the confusion of the war, some slaves escaped and sought refuge with Mexican military leaders. General Jose Urrea recorded in his diary that he granted asylum to runaway Texas slaves. Urrea wrote that one day "fourteen negro slaves with their families came to me... and I sent them free to Victoria [in the Mexican border state of Tamaulipas.]"²⁷ The Mexican practice of liberating runaway slaves became so common that Texas authorities demanded their slaves be returned. However, Mexico refused to comply with the demand.

Republic of Texas

Texas won its independence from Mexico in 1836. The 1836 Constitution of the Republic of Texas was similar to the U.S. Constitution in several ways. Just like the U.S. Constitution, it divided federal political power into three branches. Also, the Texas Constitution contained a Bill of Rights that guaranteed Texas citizens certain rights including freedom of speech and freedom of religion. However, the Texas Constitution was much more explicit than the U.S. Constitution in its protection of slave property. The provision encouraged slave ownership, and slave ownership increased in Texas. Historian Rosalie Schwartz explains the consequences of the Republic's economic reliance on slave labor:

This growth is not surprising since the planters in labor-short Texas viewed slave labor as the only way to fully exploit the potential of the fertile lands in east Texas. No wonder the asylum offered by Mexico aroused the ire of the slave-owners: it created a threat to their economic existence. As one Texas resident, Noah Smithwick, phrased it, the capture of fugitive slaves was a "necessity to the institution."²⁸

By 1840, Texas held 11,323 slaves, which was a high percentage of the overall population.²⁹ The “trend continued until the ratio was approximately one Negro to four whites in 1845.”³⁰ Concurrently, there was an increase in slave runaways.

In diplomatic matters, the site of the official boundary between Texas and Mexico was unresolved. The former southern Mexican boundary between Coahuila and Tejas had traditionally been the Nueces River (near Corpus Christi and about 150 miles or 240 kilometers north of the Rio Grande), but Texas leaders now claimed the Nueces Strip (all of the land between the Nueces River and the Rio Grande). The Nueces Strip was nicknamed the “Wild Horse Desert,” because many wild horses roamed the area as early as the 1700s. Even though the area was virtually uninhabited, ancient Native American trails trampled by wild horses made the cactus, mesquite tree, brush-filled wilderness appear populated by humans. Rather than travel north for thousands of miles, Texas (and Louisiana) runaway slaves often headed for the Nueces Strip and traversed the area through Native American trails. Historian Alberto Rodriguez explains that “slaves in Texas and Louisiana often recognized that the northward journey to freedom was too long and instead chose the shorter path to the south.”³¹ Consequently, “Mexico served as a safe haven for runaway slaves.”³²

Aaron Mahr (Regional Coordinator for the National Parks Service in Brownsville) described to a *Brownsville Herald* reporter how runaway slaves “swam across rivers and jogged hundreds of miles through thick brush, often enduring 100-degree weather with nothing but the clothes on their backs and a vision of freedom in their minds.”³³ Regrettably, “some died of exhaustion and others from the bite of diamondback rattlesnakes.”³⁴ Indeed, the journey was treacherous:

From East Texas, the slaves fled south through the Coastal Bend and into...the Nueces Desert, roughly the King Ranch area. Venomous diamondback rattlesnakes, scorpions, tarantulas, and the brown recluse spider plague the area. Once in the Laguna Atascosa area, slaves would

be caught off guard by the alligator-infested lakes. Most of [the trip] was a personal struggle against the environment.... The biggest threat for blacks at the time were slave-hunting gangs that roamed the Texas countryside with nefarious intentions.... Besides fighting those elements, slaves encountered wild raiding Indian bands.... At the time, Karankawa Indians were the predominant tribe occupying settlements along the Rio Grande. The Karankawas were cannibals.⁵⁵

In spite of the numerous dangers, thousands of slaves chose to run the risk of death rather than remain in bondage. Even President Sam Houston lost two of his slaves to Mexico. General Thomas J. Green located them both in Matamoros. Green wrote in his journal:

While at this place, many citizens of consequence came.... Among these were two of our acquaintances, Tom and Esau. These gentlemen now of so much consequence as to ride three leagues in a coach...were General Sam Houston's two barbers, so well known to the public in Texas. Tom treated us with marked respect and attention, spoke of his prospects in that country, his intended nuptials, invited us to the wedding....⁵⁶

State of Texas

Texas gave up its status as a sovereign nation in 1845 and became the 28th state admitted into the United States. The first official census of the state in 1847 showed that there were 38,753 slaves and 102,961 Anglo-Americans in Texas. War with Mexico in 1846 resulted in U.S. victory and, with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, a resolution of the boundary dispute. The Rio Grande became the official boundary (the natural and political boundary between the slave-holding U.S. and free Mexico), and, as a consequence, (more than ever before) the target destination for runaway slaves. In 1855, the *Texas State Times* stated, it "may be said of our negroes" that they are "in the habit of escaping to that side of the Rio Grande" and becoming "freemen."⁵⁷ Scholarly estimates on the number of slaves who fled from Texas to Mexico range from 5,000 to 20,000.⁵⁸ The *Texas State Times* reporter lamented the "dollars"

in slave labor costs that Texas slave owners had lost, and he presented some startling figures:

*In 1851 the Mexicans estimated the number of fugitive slaves east of the Sierra Madre.... The total would be \$2,400,000, which had been lost to the South. Since that period, it is the opinion of those conversant with the facts, that this number has been increased...which would swell the aggregate loss to the slave holding population...to \$3,200,000 [by 1855].*³⁹

Texans repeatedly called on the U.S. government to make a treaty with Mexico, which would require the return of American slave property, but in spite of years of trying, the U.S. had been unsuccessful due to Mexico's unwillingness to promote slavery. In 1855, the *Bastrop Advertiser* encouraged Texans to take matters into their own hands. It challenged them to "shoulder their rifles and make a forward movement in direction of the Rio Grande...reclaiming their own property."⁴⁰ The writer warned the U.S. government to "redress the grievances or look for trouble on the Rio Grande frontier."⁴¹ Later that same year, *The Texas State Times* published two main resolutions of a Convention of the Citizens of Caldwell County:

1st That we cannot in justice to ourselves permit Mexicans to come into our country, or remain amongst us: their sympathies are all with the negro, their natural promptings lead to a fellow-feeling dangerous to the contentment and quiet of our slaves rendering their labor valueless and their possession precarious.

*2nd Resolved, That to carry out the above resolution, the chair appoint forty good men...as a Committee of Vigilance and we do hereby authorize and empower, said committee to order all Mexicans from our country, forthwith, and if necessary, for the support and maintenance of those resolutions, we pledge our lives and property; and...we request that each and every citizen of the country be requested to sign the Resolution to give it force and vigor.*⁴²

The reporter agreed that "the people of Caldwell [had] suffered...and bad Mexicans [had] no doubt abetted their slaves in

escaping."⁴³ He sympathized with the slave owners. He believed that, under the circumstances, "the people of Caldwell [had] taken the only course they thought would arrest the evil. Their action was taken...such as they imagined...under an emergency."⁴⁴ The reporter concluded, however, that "no precautionary movements, no committees of vigilance, [would] ever prevent negroes from running away or Mexicans from helping them off."⁴⁵ Even though there was a possibility of causing an international crisis, desperate Texas slave owners advertised large cash rewards for the capture of their runaway slaves, and slave catchers illegally entered Mexico. In spite of the danger posed by slave catchers, slaves continued to cross the Rio Grande, because they were incited by the existence of a free Mexico, and slave communities were familiar with the locations of the escape routes. For example, ex-slave Felix Haywood recalled:

Sometimes someone would come 'long and try to get us to run up North and be free. We used to laugh at that. There wasn't no reason to run up North. All we had to do was to walk, but walk South, and we'd be free as soon as we crossed the Rio Grande. In Mexico you could be free. They didn't care what color you was, black, white, yellow or blue. Hundreds of slaves did go to Mexico and got on all right. We would hear about 'em....⁴⁶

Some Operatives ("Conductors") of the Other Underground Railroad

The Southern frontier was sparsely populated and void of large communities to help fugitive slaves. Texas did not have a Harriet Tubman-type hero, who made several trips into the south to free slaves. However, Texas had its own kind of liberators. These were complicitous "*Tejanos* (Hispanic Texans) and Germans who had settled in Texas."⁴⁷ Since aiding slaves to escape was a crime, most people who engaged in this type of activity kept no records of their deeds. Without a doubt, almost all the names of the conductors of the Other Underground Railroad have been lost forever. However, historians have uncovered the identities of a few operatives.

Along the Rio Grande, a couple of “conductors” did their part to aid escaping slaves. John Horse (1812-1882) was a skilled guerrilla warrior who helped slaves escape to Mexico. Born in Florida and raised in Georgia, Horse was the son of a black slave woman and her Seminole master. Horse established a settlement, “*Nacimiento de los Negros*” (on the *Río Sabinas* adjacent to the Santa Rosa Mountains) in present day Coahuila, Mexico, which served as a sanctuary for runaway slaves primarily from Texas. The most common route used by runaway slaves to reach the settlement was by crossing the Rio Grande at Eagle Pass. As superintendent of the Mexican branch of the Underground Railroad, which was sometimes called the “Underground South,” Horse protected runaway slaves from bounty hunters and the Texas Rangers. Wild Cat (1810-1857) was a Seminole military leader. Cat set up a biracial (African American and Seminole) refuge on the Texas-Mexico border. When news of Cat’s biracial “experiment” reached other Texas slaves, many of them were encouraged to run away and join the group that extended along both sides of the Rio Grande. In 1849, Horse teamed up with Cat, and both communities cooperated in the defense against Apache and Comanche raiders.

In addition, “fugitive slaves heard about people in the Rio Grande Valley willing to help them. Escaped slaves learned of two families that could help them reach Mexico, the Jacksons and the Webbers, who settled in present-day San Juan.”⁴⁸ Nathaniel Jackson left Alabama with his wife Matilda, their children, and eleven freed slaves in order to escape intolerance of his interracial marriage. In 1857, Jackson founded a ranch along the Rio Grande in present-day Hidalgo County. According to oral tradition, “his property is said to have become a refuge for runaway slaves from Texas and the Deep South.”⁴⁹ Eli, Jackson’s son, established a family cemetery on the ranch. In 2005, the Texas Historical Commission recognized the Eli Jackson cemetery as a “Historical Texas Cemetery.” The following is an excerpt from the official historical marker (#13730):

In 1857, Nathaniel Jackson came from Alabama and established a ranch in this area. A former slave owner, Jackson, who was white, came with his wife Matilda Hicks, who was black, their children and his freed slaves. On his 5,500-acre ranch, Jackson raised livestock and grew vegetables, cotton and sugarcane. He also established a chapel that served family and friends. He was known for his generosity and hospitality, and many, including runaway slaves, came to the ranch in need of lodging and other resources.⁵⁰

Over time, the Jackson Ranch became a mixed-race community. Those who stayed there or at the neighboring Webber Ranch were content to stay in the United States as long as they were sheltered from slave catchers by the wilderness of the Nueces Strip. The site was also ideal, because slaves were met by racially similar people who shared their English language and Protestant religious beliefs. Records show that the Jackson Ranch was “equipped with a ferry landing that was one of the first licensed in Hidalgo County in 1852....”⁵¹ Consequently, living by the Rio Grande gave fugitive slaves the advantage of being able to cross into Mexico at a moment’s notice.

Certainly, the most obvious operative of the Other Underground Railroad was Mexico. The Mexican government invited slaves to escape and seek refuge in Mexico. Even private Mexican colonization companies marketed Mexico to U.S. slaves. In addition, Tejanos told slaves about Mexico. They explained how race there was not a significant societal factor. Sometimes, slaves overheard people discussing newspaper accounts about Mexico’s policies toward U.S. slaves. After slaves arrived on Mexican soil, Mexico protected them by refusing to return them to their U.S. owners. When slave hunters invaded Mexican territory by crossing the Rio Grande without permission from the Mexican government, Mexico responded with military force and official diplomatic protests. Unlike the slaves that remained at the Jackson and Webber Ranches, most runaway slaves that took the Other Underground Railroad fled directly to Mexico. Mahr explained: “Historically, there are at least ten spots in Brownsville along the Rio Grande used by travelers

and immigrants.... These were used by the fleeing slaves. There is no doubt that fleeing slaves passed through this area.... Little flats to cross the river and boats routinely used by people living by the river were used by the slaves."⁵² Although there were several river towns in Mexico along the Rio Grande with colonies of escaped slaves, "Matamoros had one of the largest slave colonies on the border, perhaps numbering in the thousands."⁵³ By 1865, "Thousands of runaway slaves made Matamoros, Reynosa, and Camargo their home," and, since that time, these slaves "blended into the general population and now go unnoticed."⁵⁴

Conclusion

The most often overlooked common sense feature of the Underground Railroad is how long distances created a barrier for fugitive slaves. When faced with an option of a shorter route, fugitive slaves usually took it. For example, most slaves who escaped from slavery in the north resided in slave states that bordered free states. In like manner, most of the slaves who escaped to Mexico came from Texas. Perhaps the most celebrated myth concerning the Other Underground Railroad (retold both in English and in Spanish) is the story of a slave who floated to freedom across the Rio Grande on a bale of cotton. Admittedly, it is doubtful that a heavy bale of cotton would float under such circumstances. Nonetheless, the story has resonated with writers who have been intrigued by the notion "that a man could sail to freedom on the very commodity that engendered his enslavement."⁵⁵ Although it may take more time for the story of the Other Underground Railroad to take hold in the popular mind, it did, in fact, exist, and it forms an interesting part of Mexican and Rio Grande Valley history.

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Endnotes

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BIOGRAPHY



Frank Ellis Ferree, Humanitarian

by

Norman Rozeff

In the late 1930s and early 1940s, Harlingen, Texas, was still dependent on agriculture and citrus orchards for its successful economy. This South Texas community, not far from the border with Mexico, was consequently dependent upon Mexican farm labor and would continue to be as the country entered World War II and labor shortages were created by the military draft. Harlingen city limits and nearby surroundings still contained a number of lots utilized for agriculture as urbanization was yet to be initiated and the establishment of the Harlingen Army Air Field, which would considerably impact the city's retail outlook, was just on the horizon.¹

It was this situation that Frank Ferree, with only an eighth-grade education and French Huguenot ancestry, found when he came to the Lower Rio Grande Valley and Harlingen in particular. As noted in the Ferree family website, *Our Ferree Family*, Ferree was:

“Born August 6, 1894, in a small village on the Platte River near Omaha, Nebraska.

When he was fifteen, the family moved to northwestern Nebraska to homestead. In the eighth grade at that time, the move ended his formal schooling.

He loved the pioneer life in Nebraska, the open spaces of the plains, and being close to nature.

At age twenty-one, he left home. After a year, he returned and later described this excursion away from home as the darkest days of his entire life.

He filed his own homestead claim, but soon tired of the hard labor of making a home in the rough country of Nebraska.

He joined the army in 1918 and served in France.

He got a job with the postal service as a rural mail carrier and for ten years delivered mail on horseback, carrying letters in a saddlebag strapped behind his saddle. He later bought a Model-T Ford and hired his brother, Fred, to help.

After the death of his father, he and his mother loaded the Model-T with their belongings and headed west, settling near Central City, Colorado, on an eighty- acres homestead. Over time, he increased his holdings to three thousand acres.

He began developing an interest in faith healing and studied numerology.

When his mother died in 1937, grief-stricken, he traded the three thousand acres in Colorado for eight hundred acres of Wisconsin lake-front timberland sight unseen.

Without ever seeing his Wisconsin land, he headed for Hollywood, California, where he worked for a while as a caretaker of a mansion.

Deciding to check out his timberland, he traveled to Wisconsin, and sold the trees for lumber and the lake front-property to a developer.

From a man in Denver, he bought twenty-three acres of land just outside the then city limits of Harlingen, Texas, and headed south.”²

Once settled just outside Harlingen, he bought an old frame house, and had it moved near the road that bordered his property. He divided six acres to sell lots, built a small studio-type building, hung out a shingle, and began giving massage treatments.³

At age 48, he experienced a spiritual event that would change his life forever. He had come down with a fever that lasted about two weeks and then reoccurred periodically for a year. For the very first time he would ask God for something – to heal him. Reportedly he was then cured in seconds. This led him to a religious awakening, to the Scriptures, and a deep religious conviction which he kept mostly to himself. Knowing that Jesus healed the

sick, Frank embarked on a mission to cure the sick using any and all means possible. In doing so he sought help where help could be provided. This became Frank's mission in life.⁴

As the Handbook of Texas Online relates, "Although he did not belong to a church, he was an extremely religious and contemplative man. By the 1940s, the Bible had become his source book, and he began to pattern his daily life after the example of Jesus. He started to help the poor and the sick in an extemporaneous and understaffed organization that he called Volunteer Border Relief. It was headquartered in a ramshackle house in Harlingen." This source goes on to relate: "A tall, gaunt man with pendulous ears and a bulbous nose, Ferree always dressed in tire-tread sandals and ragtag clothes. Thus attired, he canvassed the alleys of Harlingen, virtually begging restaurateurs and grocers to give him the food or goods that they were discarding, so that in turn he could give these things to the poor. The Valley citizenry was at first taken aback by his behavior. But many merchants, newsmen, doctors, and wealthy individuals, both in the United States and northern Mexico, were won over by his kindness and persistence and began to champion his cause. He established two distribution and clinic sites, one in Matamoros and the other in Reynosa, where he went weekly to dispense food, second-hand clothes, and medicines. Because he could perform medical procedures legally in Mexico, he frequently gave injections at these clinics. He arranged for doctors to perform countless free operations on afflicted people, especially children with cleft palates."⁵

As related, he turned his attention and efforts to the desperately poor Mexican families along the border and especially to recent illegal immigrants. He eventually operated a small clinic in a donated building and distributed medicine, food, and clothing to the needy. In addition he sought fair and better wages for Valley and migrant agricultural laborers.⁶

In 1955, when Hurricane Hilda wreaked havoc on the Gulf coast area near the city of Tampico in Mexico, Ferree quickly

assisted. "Ferree was able to mobilize a relief mission that employed daily cargo flights from Harlingen Air Force Base carrying food, blankets, and other necessities."⁷ Many of his efforts were well recognized, so much so that signed orders from the Mexican president allowed him to cross the border trouble free to pass necessities of life to the poor and needy in Mexico without harassment from border officials.

To Ferree's credit, his organization was managed with minimum overhead and could respond quickly to emergencies without bureaucratic encumbrances. His work today is being carried on by the Frank Ferree Border Relief organization.⁸

Many accolades and honors would recognize this modest man's work. He was twice nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. "In 1960 he was invited by President Dwight D. Eisenhower to a black-tie dinner in Washington, for which he had to borrow a tuxedo, and in 1982 he received a letter of commendation from President Ronald Reagan." Other honors were bestowed upon him by the Freedom Foundation, the Governor of Tamaulipas, the mayors of a number of cities both in the United States and Mexico, schools, and service clubs, among still others.⁹

Perhaps his personality is best exhibited by the positive epithets given him, such as "Border Angel," "Gringo Messiah," "Saintly Scavenger," "El Amigo," "Holy Man of Harlingen," "Holy Man of the Rio Grande," and "Albert Schweitzer of the Rio Grande Valley."¹⁰ A brochure of the Harlingen Rotary Club detailing its Walk of Fame honorees uses this quote: "He is a modern-day Robin Hood with a new twist: Frank begs from the rich and gives to the poor."¹¹

His work for the needy continued until his death on March 10, 1983, at the age of eighty-nine. He is buried on his land on North 7th Street, Harlingen.¹²

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Chip Dameron's Rio Grande Valley: Center of a Narrowing Universe

by

Ronny Noor

Poets are thus liberating gods.

– Ralph Waldo Emerson

Born in Dallas, Texas, to a Texan father and a Yankee mother, Chip Dameron came down to the Rio Grande Valley in 1985 and taught English, first at Texas Southmost College and then at the University of Texas at Brownsville for almost three decades before retiring in 2014. He has published ten collections of poetry set around the world, from China to Turkey, portraying the peculiar landscapes, cultural mores, and social developments. A familiar face for years in the cultural scene of the Valley, the “center of a narrowing universe,”¹ Dameron sets some of his most significant poems here. This essay focuses on these poems to show how he breaks through the narrow bounds of socially constructed nationality, race, and religion to reveal that he is a true humanist or, in the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson, a “world-spirit.”²

The Rio Grande Valley is dotted with *resacas* or oxbow ponds lined with palm trees that are abuzz with bird songs, attracting hundreds of bird watchers throughout the year. Locals as well as tourists flock to these places with cameras in their hands or hanging from their necks to snap memorable pictures. An avid bird watcher, Dameron captures colorful scenes of such birds in his poems that are captivating like picture-postcards. In “During Spring Migration,” for example, birds of myriad colors that migrate to the Valley are brought to life in vivid detail:

*On this side of the road,
an oxbow pond harbors heron,
osprey, grebe. On that side,
invisible calls pop out from
a meadow of reeds. Around
the bend, among the scrub
and native trees, we count
warblers, kingbirds, buntings,
orioles. A cuckoo.³*

And in “Viewpoints, Early Summer,” we see birds frolicking and singing:

*grackles cross from
trees to brush
and punctuate air
with their clacks
and chirrs, their
piercing circus whistles.⁴*

But his poems are not just about the beauty of the natural world that gives us pleasure. They convey deeper philosophical insights. In “Poem in October,” for instance, as the professor looks out his office window and sees “The molting grackles roam the campus lawn / on loan from their roosts and their skyways,”⁵ he recalls the freedom of his childhood and wishes to discard his coat and tie and “absorb the cottonwood’s leaves / against the clotted sky.”⁶ Here the birds are a symbol of freedom. Birds are free to roam the lawn. However, the professor’s freedom is curtailed by life’s exigencies. The middle-aged man cannot go back to his childhood and play the way he did when he was young. This meaning is extended by the verb “molting” that precedes “grackles.” To “molt” means to shed old feathers for a new growth, indicating the transitory nature of life, bringing to mind Percy Bysshe Shelley’s famous lines:

*Man's yesterday may ne'er be like his morrow;
Nought may endure but Mutability.*⁷

Throughout human history, philosophers and poets around the world have dealt with this universal phenomenon of change, the great Greek philosopher Heraclitus famously saying that one can't step into the same river twice. This view is also found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Omar Khayyam's *rubáiyát*, and Basho's haiku. Like other great poets, Dameron maintains that we must accept this change, this mutability, and recognize that life is transitory. This poem becomes a meditation on life and death: childhood, midlife, and the inevitable end that follows.

The theme of freedom and lack thereof appears prominently in several of Dameron's poems. He juxtaposes images of birds and humans, in the manner of haiku, to show the differences between nature and society. Like birds, humans are born free, but unlike birds, they are members of a society and, as such, are corralled within artificially created national boundaries, reminding the reader of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's view that man is born free but is in chains everywhere. Take, for example, "During Spring Migration." In this poem, as the bird watchers return to their cars after watching the numerous birds that have crossed the Gulf of Mexico, they spot

*a border patrol van parked
athwart the road, a couple
of agents at work among three
Mexicans sitting in the dirt
who crossed the river again
this morning.*⁸

These three Mexicans, of course, crossed the border illegally.

A similar theme occurs again in "Border Birding," where men and women cross the Rio Grande, like birds streaming across from the south, dodging river thieves and wading murky currents, only to

be apprehended by the border patrol officers, the “green cousins,” who “clip their wings”⁹ and “send them / back in cages.”¹⁰ The officers are “green cousins” because they are Mexican-Americans and wear green uniforms. Dameron’s sympathy extends to the arrested Mexicans because poverty drives them out of their homes and forces them to cross the river, leaving behind the loved ones who do not make enough money farming or running stores, as he writes in “El Calaboz: Fences and Neighbors”:

*Those who cross the river along
this bank pledge their pesos
for a chance to work for wages,
earn a new hope for those behind,
tending ejidos and tiendas, waiting.*¹¹

The discerning poet’s compassionate heart reaches out to the suffering humanity because, as psychologists claim, people with higher intelligence have more sympathy for others. Dameron, unlike the ordinary people who see with their eyes, sees with his heart. He realizes that no human being is immune to misfortune. We may be fortunate today, but misfortune is just around the corner, as he conveys so insightfully in “Dinner Hour”:

*Ribs on the grill, reefs of cloud
across the ribbon lake redden
.....
the buzz and bite no longer
just irritants, the dengue fever
aching bones and taking lives
south of the river, while here
in paradise we swat and wipe off
the blood and order death
to stay away a while longer.*¹²

This is in tune with the Zen Buddhist belief that “all people, animals, and things, are intimately interconnected,” as Robert Aitken explains. “We are a symbiotic universe, a symbiotic family of nations, a symbiotic country, state of that country, island, community, family, and even individual.”¹³

Dameron is certainly not advocating open borders. His concern is not superficial, but philosophical. After the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Mexico ceded Texas to the United States. Over 93% people in the Rio Grande Valley are of Mexican origin and related their “cousins” across the border in Mexico through heritage, language, culture, food, and music. They cannot be separated by fences. Border control can be done in other ways. Hence, he says critically in “El Calaboz: Fences and Neighbors”:

*Now the land absorbs
the hammering blows, impaled
and bifurcated, the steel bars
mocking Frost’s mocking poem.*¹⁴

Here Dameron alludes to Robert Frost’s poem “Mending Wall,” where Frost derides the view that “Good fences make good neighbours.”¹⁵ Such walls or fences are futile attempts at dividing people, as Dameron writes:

*Early morning, small birds cross
the river from mesquite to mesquite,
singing the day awake. A hawk
drops to the top rail and commands
silence across this failed dichotomy.*¹⁶

The hawk in the above poem is used as a symbol. The hawk sees the failed dichotomy because it has great vision and brings us the message of freedom, freedom from our thoughts and beliefs that restrain our ability to gain a higher perspective and, thus, helps us thrive. This is Dameron’s strongest condemnation of

the fence in the Rio Grande Valley that divides cousins from cousins. Regarding such divisions, the words of the sagacious New England transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson are most appropriate: “As long as our civilization is essentially one of property, of fences, or exclusiveness, it will be mocked by delusions. Our riches will leave us sick; there will be bitterness in our laughter, and our wine will burn our mouth. Only that good profits which we can taste with all doors open, and which serves all men.”¹⁷

Those who are unfamiliar with the Rio Grande Valley mistakenly believe that all people of Mexican or Latin American origin in the area are illegal. Hence, they try to delegitimize the Hispanic population. This is what a professor did at an academic conference several years ago, vociferously—and ignorantly—maintaining his position when I argued to the contrary. Dameron deals with this issue in “Rambling Stories,” where Larry from rural western North Carolina, who now owns a small café in downtown Brownsville, talks about the rural people’s intolerance of “outsiders.” They would like to “send a couple of the boys / to kick their butts.”¹⁸ In the border town, he—the man with a ninth grade education who has left behind a string of wives—is happily married to a Mexican woman and proud of the success of his children and step-children. This proves that ignorance breeds prejudice. The stranger always seems fearsome from afar. However, once we are acquainted with the stranger, it’s a different matter.

The Valley, for Dameron, is a microcosm of the world, where people from far-flung places have converged. In “Afternoon Gifts,” he encounters an ex-Marine at a coffee shop who will soon return to Afghanistan or Iraq with a lucrative contract. He has a Palestinian girlfriend, who was “born / in Kuwait, medically trained in Latvia, / aiming to immigrate to Canada.”¹⁹ The ex-Marine gives him a souvenir, a metal keychain,

*a faceless form joined to the daggered
landscape of Israel, Arabic lettering*

*along one side, and gives it
as a momento to our chance exchange
at a Texas border coffee shop,
center of a narrowing universe.²⁰*

Dameron's family itself is an example of this "narrowing universe." He reveals it in his autobiographical poem "Heritage," which is also a meditation on life and death. A half-Yankee and half-Texan, Dameron says that his only son is

*. . . part Italian,
part Tabitian, reading his first books,
.....
floating outside of history, heritage,
human error.²¹*

And he wishes:

*May he tether in time
to the trees and rocks of this world,
to the names and faces of his heroes,
great and small, and to the lives of those
whom he will come to love and lose
at last, one by one, as a bird's call
must finally vanish among the countless
atoms in the air.²²*

Dameron's "perspective evolves through a precise diction that uncovers deeper levels of experience."²³ He shows in his poems that people have always mixed and we all have various cultural backgrounds. This interweaving of cultures is multiculturalism. As he writes in "Heritage," Texans are a blend of "Amerindio-Mexi-Irish-Afro-Europeans."²⁴ These people create a culture without forgetting their varied heritage. They are simultaneously American and world citizens. Putting people

in boxes through artificially constructed races causes social division, which leads to social tensions like bigotry, acrimony, violence, and death as we saw in Charlottesville, Virginia on August 12, 2017. The Europeans began to call themselves a “white” race in the seventeenth century, during the Renaissance, to defend their imperialism and distance themselves from the Jews. They considered themselves descendants of the Greek philosophers, who they deemed rational compared to the Jewish thinkers who had given Christianity, a supernatural faith. This is nowhere more evident than in the words of Matthew Arnold, one of the leading Victorian poets:

*Science has now made visible to everybody the great and pregnant elements of difference which lie in race, and in how signal a manner they make the genius and history of an Indo-European people vary from those of a Semitic people. Hellenism is of Indo-European growth, Hebraism is of Semitic growth; and we English, a nation of Indo-European stock, seem to belong naturally to the movement of Hellenism.*²⁵

However, the vast majority of Europeans had accepted Christianity, a religion both philosophically and mythologically Eastern—God as a moral principle coming from the Indo-Aryan Vedas, the concept of monotheism coming from the Persian prophet Zarathustra, and the myth of the Garden of Eden coming from the Hebrews. Thus, Europe became multicultural by adopting Christianity. The United States upended the European view of race—which now exists only in the vocabulary of the so-called “white supremacists,” who call themselves the children of Odin, the god in Germanic mythology—when it began to categorize “white” based on the Hebrew myth of the Garden of Eden. Thus, the division of people into different races has moved from region to religion. However, Stephen Greenblatt contends in his extensively researched, best-selling book *The Rise and Fall of Adam and Eve* that the story of the Garden of Eden is just fiction, made up by the Hebrews to find an origin story for themselves after their freedom from Babylonian captivity. In modern times,

he writes, at least for the thinking people, “The naked man and woman in the garden with the strange trees and the talking snake have returned to the sphere of the imagination from which they originally emerged.”²⁶ To base race on such a myth—according to which, people from Western Asia, North Africa, and Europe are categorized “white”—is simply ludicrous. It is a failed attempt at dividing people arbitrarily like the Europeans did during the Renaissance. People everywhere have a range of colors, as the Latin poet Propertius said so astutely: “A Belgian’s color mars a Roman face.”²⁷ Besides, in other parts of the world, people also call themselves “white.” Take, for example, the following senryu from Japan:

*Until when?
nineteen nineteen’s
white dancers*²⁸

These “white” dancers are Japanese, not the “white” of European or American categorizations. Such examples can be provided from literatures around the world. Hence, Dameron’s poems break through these narrow artificial boundaries of race because of his global perspective. According to him, we are all multicultural, which should not be construed as “disintegration of the national community, apartheid, Balkanization, tribalization.”²⁹ Multiculturalism is not Balkanization. It is the recognition of the cultural or historical backgrounds of all people, because people do not live outside of history. Those who forget history, history forgets them. That is why it is important to recognize everybody’s history, as Chip Dameron does, and realize that a person is not only a citizen of a country but also part of the global community. One must find one’s lot with the rest of humanity. This is what Ralph Waldo Emerson means when he says:

Although knaves win in every political struggle, although society seems to be delivered over from the hands of one set of criminals into the hands of another set of criminals, as fast as the government is changed . . . yet,

*general ends are somehow answered. We see, now, events forced on which seem to retard or retrograde the civility of ages. But the world-spirit is a good swimmer, and storms and waves cannot drown him.*⁵⁰

This is the message Chip Dameron tries to convey through his poems in the tradition of the ancient Greek philosophers. When Socrates was hauled to court and asked where he was from, he said “the world” though he was from Athens. Montaigne explains it thus: “He, whose imagination was fuller and more extensive, embraced the universe as his city, and distributed his knowledge, his company, and his affections to all mankind, unlike us who look only at what is underfoot.”⁵¹ That is the spirit that resonates in Dameron’s poems, the “world-spirit,” his Rio Grande Valley becoming the “center of a narrowing universe” beyond the artificial bounds of race, religion, and nationality.

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

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EDUCATIONAL *and* LITERARY HISTORY



Historia de la Educación Superior en la ciudad de H. Matamoros, Tamaulipas.

por

**Miguel Sesin Botti
y María Elena Flores Montalvo**

La Heroica ciudad de Matamoros, fundada en 1774, pertenece al Estado de Tamaulipas y está localizada al sur de la boca del Río Bravo, en la parte noreste de la República Mexicana a treinta kilómetros del Golfo de México y en la frontera de Estados Unidos con la ciudad de Brownsville, Texas (Cuéllar 2019, a).

La cercanía de estas ciudades, a las cuales sólo las separa el Río Bravo, también conocido como Río Grande, aunado a la gran interacción en las áreas de los negocios, turismo, educación, salud, migración e inmigración, así como en el ámbito social entre ambas ciudades, les ha dado el título de ciudades hermanas. Además si tomamos en cuenta los antecedentes culturales como la música, las artes culinarias, la forma de vestir, el lenguaje entre otros muchos aspectos que comparten; vemos que el título de ciudades hermanas se justifica.

Tradicionalmente la agricultura ha sido una base importante de la economía de esta ciudad, también aunque en menor escala han sido la ganadería y la pesca. Durante la época de oro del algodón, que duró de 1948 a 1960, Matamoros se convirtió en un emporio algodonerero situándose como el mayor productor y exportador de algodón de México (Cuéllar, 2019 b).

Además el cultivo del algodón fue en esos años la primordial fuente de trabajo no solamente para los residentes de esta ciudad sino también para personas provenientes de otras ciudades del Estado y ciudades de otros Estados de la República Mexicana, quienes trabajaban en la pizca del algodón y la entrega de este a las empresas algodoneras.

Estas empresas también ocupaban un gran número de personas que desempeñaban sus funciones en las áreas de recepción del algodón proveniente de los campos agrícolas así como en las máquinas despepitadoras, las cuales separaban la fibra de la semilla. De igual manera se contrataba personal para trabajar en la clasificación y embarque de esta importante fibra para su exportación, principalmente hacia Estados Unidos. Asimismo con la llegada de empresas algodoneras y despepitadoras, en su gran mayoría provenientes de Estados Unidos, el municipio de Matamoros se vio beneficiado con una derrama económica muy importante en la región.

Posteriormente con la utilización de las fibras sintéticas en la elaboración de telas, bajaron los precios del algodón en el mercado internacional, aunado al costo de los cuidados en el cultivo del algodón comparado con otros como el maíz y el sorgo, hubo una notable reducción del número de hectáreas dedicadas al cultivo de esta fibra textil vegetal en este municipio. El cultivo del sorgo, maíz, hortalizas y algodón siguen contribuyendo a la economía de la región; sin embargo, actualmente la mayor fuente de trabajo directo en esta ciudad son las empresas maquiladoras de exportación. Las primeras empresas de este ramo llegaron a establecerse en esta ciudad en 1966 (Asociación de Maquiladoras de Matamoros INDEX, 2019).

Las Empresas Maquiladoras en Matamoros

Las maquiladoras ensamblan y manufacturan diferentes tipos de productos, principalmente del área automotriz, en su mayoría para empresas extranjeras, quienes vienen interesados especialmente en la calidad de la mano de obra calificada que encuentran en este municipio y a la vez logran un ahorro sustancial en los salarios y prestaciones que otorgan a los obreros que laboran en estas empresas. Los productos terminados son enviados a las empresas extranjeras en su mayoría estadounidenses.

Esta situación también genera otros empleos, aunque en mucha menor escala, en forma indirecta como proveedores de esta industria. La oferta laboral de estas compañías ha atraído también a personas de otras partes del Estado de Tamaulipas, así como de otros Estados de la República Mexicana.

Esta movilización social, ha ocasionado un aumento considerable en el número de habitantes del municipio de Matamoros que actualmente cuenta con 504,367 habitantes (INEGI, 2015). Algunos de ellos llegan a estar temporalmente con la idea de cruzar a Estados Unidos, sin embargo la gran mayoría hacen de esta ciudad su residencia permanente. Con este aumento demográfico, consecuentemente crecen las necesidades de los pobladores de esta región como son vivienda, salud y educación. Ante esta situación, en el ámbito educativo, el gobierno de México se dio a la tarea de aumentar la oferta educativa por medio de escuelas públicas financiadas en gran parte por el mismo gobierno y también por medio de la autorización de la apertura de escuelas privadas.

Educación Superior en México

La Educación Superior en México es la que se imparte posterior al bachillerato, también conocido como educación preparatoria, o equivalente perteneciente al nivel de educación media superior. Se lleva a cabo a través de instituciones de educación superior (IES) a nivel nacional, del sector público principalmente, sin embargo las instituciones privadas también participan en el proceso educativo del país. El principal grado cursado por la mayoría de los estudiantes es el de licenciatura, el cual usualmente es acreditado entre 4 y 5 años, que es la duración mínima de estudios de este nivel educativo. Los grados ofrecidos en el nivel superior son Técnico Superior Universitario, Licenciatura, Especialización, Maestría y Doctorado. Asimismo, se ofrecen diplomados y cursos de educación continúa.

En México, la Secretaria de Educación Pública (SEP) es la instancia que elabora, implementa, administra y evalúa los planes

y programas de estudio de los diferentes niveles educativos y especialidades que se ofrecen desde pre-escolar hasta educación superior. Las instituciones de educación privada administran los programas educativos que ofrecen en los diferentes niveles. De igual manera las Instituciones de Educación Superior (IES) públicas, tales como las Universidades Tecnológicas, Institutos Tecnológicos, Universidades Autónomas Estatales, Universidades Politécnicas entre otras, también administran sus programas, sin embargo deben cumplir con los lineamientos académicos elaborados por la SEP.

En el nivel superior, la demanda educativa sigue superando la oferta que hace la SEP por medio de las instituciones públicas, por consiguiente las instituciones privadas cubren parte de las necesidades educativas de las personas que desean continuar sus estudios en educación superior.

En este contexto, el actual Presidente de México Andrés Manuel López Obrador ha iniciado un ambicioso programa a nivel nacional que incluye la creación de 100 universidades públicas. El objetivo es que un mayor número de los egresados de Instituciones de Educación Media Superior (IEMS) puedan continuar sus estudios universitarios con el apoyo del gobierno federal (Secretaría de Gobernación 2019).

Educación Superior en H. Matamoros, Tamaulipas.

Actualmente en el Estado de Tamaulipas existen 186 Instituciones de Educación Superior (IES). H. Matamoros cuenta con 27 de estas instituciones, de las cuales seis son públicas y el resto son privadas. Sin embargo las escuelas públicas cubren el 67% de la demanda educativa (Secretaría de Educación en Tamaulipas, 2019).

De acuerdo a Andrés F. Cuellar, cronista de esta ciudad, la primera institución de Educación Superior en Matamoros fue el prestigiado Instituto Literario de San Juan creado en 1858 por decreto del gobernador Lic. y Gral. Juan José de la Garza,

iniciando sus actividades académicas el 1o de Enero de 1859 (Cuellar, 2019.c). Esta institución suspendió sus actividades el 21 de febrero de 1861 debido a luchas a nivel local y nacional así como la guerra de la intervención francesa; reanudando sus actividades en 1867. En el año 1898 el Instituto cambió su nombre a Instituto Científico y Literario Lic. y Gral. Juan José de la Garza, en honor al Gobernador que lo había creado cuarenta años atrás. Finalmente en 1913 dejó de ofrecer sus programas académicos y el edificio fue convertido en un cuartel militar bajo las órdenes del Gral. Lucio Blanco.

Este Instituto ofrecía las carreras de Abogacía, Ingeniero Topógrafo y Profesor de Educación Primaria; de esta casa de estudios se graduaron varios personajes que jugaron un papel muy importante en la vida política, educativa y social de Tamaulipas y de México. A partir de 1935 este mismo edificio ha sido sede de diferentes instituciones educativas del nivel de Secundaria, Media Superior y Superior (Colegio de San Juan Siglo XXI, 2019).

En el año de 1972 se reanudó la oferta educativa de instituciones de educación superior públicas y privadas en esta ciudad. A continuación presentamos una relación, en orden cronológico, de aspectos generales de las instituciones de educación superior en este municipio:

En el mes de abril de 1970, durante la visita a esta ciudad del candidato a la presidencia de la República Mexicana Luis Echeverría Álvarez, aceptó la creación del Instituto Tecnológico Regional propuesto por un grupo de Matamorenses que vislumbraban el crecimiento acelerado de la ciudad y la necesidad de proveer a la industria maquiladora y a otras empresas de la región de profesionistas calificados para ocupar mandos medios y directivos de las empresas (Instituto Tecnológico de Matamoros, 2019).

Como resultado de estas gestiones, en el mes de septiembre de 1972, se inauguró el Instituto Tecnológico Regional No. 26 (ITR No. 26), el cual se instaló provisionalmente en las instalaciones de la Secundaria Técnica No. 68, ahora secundaria

Técnica No. 4 Gral. Lázaro Cárdenas del Rio. Posteriormente gracias a la generosidad de distinguidos matamorenses que donaron el terreno y al apoyo del gobierno federal, se construyeron los edificios en el área que hoy ocupa esta importante casa de estudios. El ITR No. 26, cambió su nombre a Instituto Tecnológico de Matamoros (ITM) Esta institución educativa pertenece al sub sistema nacional del Tecnológico Nacional de México. En 2014 se decretó la conformación del sub-sistema Tecnológico Nacional de México, integrado por 254 instituciones educativas distribuidas en las 32 entidades federativas del país (Instituto Tecnológico de Matamoros, 2019).

El ITM ofrece las siguientes carreras: Ingeniería Ambiental, Ingeniería Civil, Ingeniería Electromecánica, Ingeniería Electrónica, Ingeniería Gestión Empresarial, Ingeniería Industrial, Ingeniería Mecatrónica, Ingeniería Química e Ingeniería en Sistemas Computacionales; también ofrece 2 carreras en las áreas de Licenciatura: Administración y Contador Público. Se convirtieron en proveedor de profesionistas para trabajar principalmente en la industria maquiladora de exportación. Así mismo, ofrecen la Maestría en Administración Industrial, la cual tiene el reconocimiento del Padrón Nacional de Posgrados de calidad del CONACYT (Instituto Tecnológico de Matamoros, 2019) y (SET, 2019).

Esta casa de estudios cuenta con la certificación de su proceso educativo bajo la norma ISO 9001:2015, ISO14001:2015, la certificación del sistema de gestión de la energía por la norma ISO 5001:2011 y la recertificación de escuela segura y saludable (Instituto Tecnológico de Matamoros, 2019).

Por otro lado, en el mes de octubre de 1972, después de que la facultad de Medicina de Tampico y la Escuela de Salud Pública de Houston, Texas realizó un estudio de demanda de servicios médicos en esta región, aunado al interés y dedicación de un grupo de distinguidos médicos de esta ciudad que así lo propusieron; la Universidad Autónoma de Tamaulipas (UAT), por medio de la facultad de Medicina e Ingeniería en Sistemas

Computacionales, inició su oferta educativa de educación superior en esta ciudad (Álvarez, Avendaño, 2016). La Facultad de Medicina ofrece las especialidades de Medicina Interna, Gineco-Obstetricia, Cirugía General, Pediatría y Anestesiología. Estas carreras han sido evaluadas por reconocidos organismos nacionales como son los Comités Interinstitucionales para la Evaluación de la Educación Superior (CIEES), Consejo Mexicano Para la Acreditación de la Educación Médica A.C. (COMAEM) y GESTION DE CALIDAD (ISO 9008-2001). (Universidad Autónoma de Tamaulipas, 2019) y (SET, 2019)

En Junio de 1985, a la Facultad de Enfermería de esta Universidad se le autorizó la creación del programa de Licenciatura en Enfermería. Anteriormente, desde el año de 1961, había estado trabajando como Escuela de Enfermería dependiente de la UAT (Dávila Rosaura A, 2001). Posteriormente, en 1994 esta facultad inició la Licenciatura en Seguridad, Salud y Medio Ambiente y en agosto de 1995 la Licenciatura en Psicología. Asimismo, empezó ofreciendo la Maestría en Psicología Clínica y Educativa y la Maestría en Enfermería. También ofrece cursos de Especialidad en Enfermería Pediátrica, Enfermería Gerencia de Cuidados, Cuidados Intensivos, Pública y Enfermería Quirúrgica; de igual manera la UAT inició, en 1992, la Maestría en Docencia (Universidad Autónoma de Tamaulipas, 2019).

Las facultades antes mencionadas son una extensión de esta Universidad cuyo campus mayor está en Cd. Victoria Tamaulipas. La UAT pertenece al subsistema de Universidades Públicas Estatales las cuales fueron creadas por decreto de los congresos locales, bajo la figura jurídica de organismos públicos descentralizados; financiadas en mayor parte por el gobierno del Estado y por las cuotas de inscripción y registro de títulos que pagan los alumnos. Estas universidades llevan a cabo funciones de docencia, generación y aplicación del conocimiento, así como extensión y difusión de la cultura.

En ese mismo año en septiembre de 1972, El Liceo Profesional de Comercio y Administración abrió sus puertas a la so-

ciudad matamorenses ofreciendo la Licenciatura en Contaduría Pública y Licenciatura en Administración de Empresas. Esta institución educativa fue la primera escuela privada en ofrecer sus programas académicos en Matamoros. (Liceo de Comercio y Administración, 2019).

Con la excepción del Instituto Científico y Literario de San Juan, mencionado anteriormente, previo a estas ofertas educativas no había instituciones públicas ni privadas de educación superior en esta ciudad. Las opciones para los interesados en continuar su educación a nivel universitario estaban en el sur del estado, en la zona conurbada de Altamira, Cd. Madero y Tampico. Cd. Victoria, la capital del estado también era otra opción. Asimismo la Cd. de México, Monterrey, Nuevo León, y Saltillo, Coahuila, recibían a un gran número de estudiantes provenientes de la Ciudad de H. Matamoros. Otra opción eran las instituciones de educación superior de Estados Unidos, principalmente las del Estado de Texas. Sin embargo la falta de IES en esta ciudad antes de 1972 dejaba a un gran número de estudiantes de escasos recursos económicos sin la posibilidad de continuar su educación universitaria.

Conforme la ciudad fue creciendo demográficamente y en el número de empresas que llegaron a esta región, también fue aumentando el número de IES que iniciaron su oferta educativa, inclusive en el área de educación como es el caso de la Universidad Pedagógica Nacional (UPN), fundada en 1978, que inició su oferta educativa en esta ciudad en 1979. Esta Universidad formadora de docentes, investigadores y administradores escolares es parte de un importante programa de Universidades Pedagógicas a nivel Nacional que tiene su sede en la Ciudad de México.

La UPN ofrece sus programas por medio de dos sistemas, el escolarizado y la modalidad en línea. Por medio del sistema escolarizado ofrece las Licenciaturas en Psicología Educativa, Licenciatura en Educación y Licenciatura en Intervención Educativa.

En la modalidad en línea se ofrecen las Licenciaturas de Enseñanza de Francés y la Licenciatura de Innovación Pedagógica.

ca. A nivel de Posgrado ofrece la Maestría en Educación Básica y Maestría en Educación Media Superior (Universidad Pedagógica Nacional, 2019).

Posteriormente aumentó notoriamente el número de IES, la gran mayoría de ellas privadas, que decidieron iniciar sus trabajos académicos en esta ciudad. En este contexto, el 16 de Abril de 1979, se fundó el Instituto de Ciencias y Estudios Superiores de Tamaulipas, A.C. (ICEST). Actualmente el ICEST cuenta con el Campus Matamoros Centro y el Campus Matamoros 2001, con la siguiente oferta académica: Médico Cirujano, Médico Veterinario Zootecnista, Ingeniería Industrial y de Sistemas de Producción, Ingeniería Industrial Administrador, Ingeniería en Petróleo, Licenciatura en Pedagogía, Licenciatura en Administración de Empresas, Licenciatura en Idiomas, Licenciatura en Gastronomía, Licenciatura en Trabajo Social, Licenciatura en Enfermería y Obstetricia, Licenciatura en Fisioterapia y Rehabilitación, Licenciatura en Nutrición, Licenciatura en Radiología e Imagenología, Licenciatura en Psicología, Licenciatura en Enfermería para quienes han concluido los estudios en Enfermería General y la Especialidad en Enfermería Quirúrgica. Esta institución es privada y tiene su origen en Cd. Madero, Tamaulipas (ICEST, 2019), (SET, 2019).

De igual manera, el Centro Universitario del Noreste (CUN), fundado en 1980, es también una de las primeras instituciones privadas de educación superior en ofrecer sus programas académicos en beneficio de esta región; el CUN es parte de un centro educativo que ofrece sus programas a nivel primaria, secundaria, y preparatoria. A nivel superior, ofrece la Licenciatura en Derecho, Licenciatura en Negocios Internacionales, Licenciatura en Químico Clínico, Licenciatura en Diseño Gráfico, Licenciatura en Criminología, Licenciatura en Administración de Empresas y la Licenciatura en Arquitectura (SET, 2019) (Centro Universitario del Noreste, 2019).

La Escuela Normal Federal J. Guadalupe Mainero, es una institución pública formadora de docentes que inició sus fun-

ciones en 1953 como “Escuela Normal Particular J. Guadalupe Mainero”. Esta importante institución educativa estuvo trabajando por varios años en las instalaciones de varias escuelas de educación primaria antes de trasladarse al edificio que actualmente ocupa. En su inicio ofrecía la carrera de Profesor de Educación Primaria, fue hasta 1984 cuando se autorizó su funcionamiento como institución de educación superior. Actualmente ofrece la Licenciatura en Educación Primaria y Licenciatura en Educación Preescolar (Escuela Normal Federal J. Guadalupe Mainero, 2019) (SET, 2019).

Por otra parte, en 1982 un grupo de liberales pertenecientes a diferentes logias de esta ciudad interesados en proveer a los estudiantes, egresados de Instituciones de Educación Media Superior, con una opción para continuar su educación superior, se reunieron para planear la creación de la Universidad de Matamoros.

Después de varias reuniones de trabajo en las cuales se discutieron propuestas de planes y programas de estudio diseñados de acuerdo a las necesidades e intereses del sector productivo y de la sociedad matamorenses; el 8 de octubre de 1986, esta Universidad recibió el Reconocimiento de Validez Oficial de Estudios a los planes y programas de estudio propuestos. Iniciando con las siguientes carreras: Técnico Superior Radiólogo, Arquitectura, Ingeniero Agrónomo, Licenciado en Derecho, Cirujano Dentista, Licenciatura en Contaduría Pública y Administración de Empresas y Licenciado en Ciencias de la Comunicación. En 1999 agregó a su oferta educativa la carrera de Licenciado en Mercadotecnia Internacional.

Posteriormente, el 18 de febrero del 2003 abrió las carreras de Ingeniero en Sistemas y Automatización y Licenciado en Computación, a estas carreras se agregó en 2010 la Licenciatura en Enfermería. En el mes de julio de 2015, se autorizó la carrera de Técnico Superior Universitario en Protesista Dental y a partir de Febrero de 2016, ofrece la Maestría en Administración de Centros Educativos y la Maestría en Derecho Fiscal.

Con la finalidad de facilitar el ingreso de la clase trabajadora a la educación superior, la Universidad de Matamoros inició sus funciones en el turno nocturno, actualmente ofrece también la modalidad escolarizada en el turno matutino. Esta constituida, desde su origen como una institución privada con personalidad jurídica otorgada en 1982. (Universidad de Matamoros, 2019) (SET 2019)

La Universidad Americana del Noreste (UANE) es una institución privada que inició sus actividades académicas en esta ciudad en 1984, como una extensión de la Universidad Autónoma del Noreste con sede en Saltillo Coahuila, ofreciendo los primeros estudios de Posgrado en esta región. En el año 2001, estableció el campus universitario en H. Matamoros, con la apertura de estudios de Licenciatura e Ingeniería, actualmente ofrece la Licenciatura en Ciencias de la Educación, Licenciatura en Diseño Gráfico, Licenciatura en Administración de Empresas y la Ingeniería Industrial y de Sistemas. (Universidad Americana del Noreste, 2019)

La Universidad de Ingenierías y Ciencias del Noreste inició sus operaciones en esta ciudad en 1981 con el nombre Instituto de Computación del Noreste de Matamoros con las carreras de Técnico Capturista Operador y Técnico Analista Programador. En 1987, como respuesta a los intereses y necesidades de un grupo de empleados de las maquiladoras de esta ciudad, inició su programa académico a nivel de educación superior, ofreciendo las carreras de Ingeniero Industrial y de Sistemas, Ingeniero en Sistemas Computacionales, Licenciado en Computación Administrativa, Licenciado en Contabilidad y Sistemas, además las licenciaturas en Ciencias de la Comunicación, Administración de Empresas, Contaduría Pública y las ingenierías Industrial Administrador y Electrónica, ofreciendo también las Maestrías en Administración Industrial e Informática Aplicada.

En 1998, oferta la Licenciatura en Psicología Organizacional, Licenciatura en Mercadotecnia y Publicidad, Licenciatura en Diseño Grafico y Licenciatura en Comercio Internacional.

Así como las Maestrías en Impuestos, Auditoría, y Maestría en Docencia en Educación Superior. En 2007, agregó a su oferta educativa la Licenciatura en Psicología Educativa y Licenciatura en Ciencias de la Educación. (Universidad de Ingenierías y Ciencias del Noreste, 2019) (SET 2019)

Más tarde, en 1992, fue fundado el Instituto Odontológico de Matamoros, el cual es una institución educativa privada que imparte la Licenciatura de Médico Cirujano Dentista (Instituto Odontológico de Matamoros, 2019) (SET 2019).

Asimismo un año más tarde en 1993, se funda la Universidad del Noreste de México, A.C., como una institución privada que oferta, a nivel de pregrado, la Licenciatura en Ciencias y Desarrollo de la Educación, Licenciatura en Contaduría Pública, Licenciatura en Administración de Empresas, Licenciatura en Nutrición, Licenciatura en Filosofía y Letras, Licenciatura en Ciencias de la Comunicación, Licenciatura en Derecho, Licenciatura en Derecho y Ciencias Jurídicas, Licenciatura en Mercadotecnia, Licenciatura en Sistemas de Computación Administrativa, Licenciatura en Ciencias y Desarrollo de la Educación, y Licenciatura en Enfermería.

También ofrece la Ingeniería en Sistemas Computacionales, Ingeniería en Mecánico Eléctrico, Ingeniería en Mecatrónica e Ingeniería en Sistemas de Producción Industrial. Además ofrece la Maestría en Ingeniería en Sustentabilidad Energética (Universidad del Noreste de México 2019) (SET 2019).

La Universidad Tamaulipeca es una institución privada fundada en 1996, que ofrece la Licenciatura en Administración de Empresas y Finanzas, Licenciatura en Pedagogía, Licenciatura en Psicología, Licenciatura en Contaduría Pública y Finanzas, Licenciatura en Mercadotecnia y Publicidad, Licenciatura en Administración de Empresas Turísticas, Licenciatura en Relaciones Industriales, Licenciatura en Diseño de Interiores y Paisajismo, Licenciatura en Enfermería, Licenciatura en Ciencias de la Comunicación y Periodismo, Licenciatura en Comercio Internacional y Aduanero, Licenciatura en Ciencias

Políticas y Gestión Pública y Licenciatura en Derecho. También ofrece las carreras de Ingeniero Petrolero y Energías Alternas, Ingeniero Industrial Administrador, Ingeniería en Mecatrónica, Ingeniería en Electrónica Industrial, Ingeniería en Sistemas Computacionales e Ingeniería en Telemática (Universidad Tamaulipeca, 2019).

El Instituto Superior de Educación de Tamaulipas, fundado en 1998, es la primera institución privada, en esta ciudad, en ofrecer la Licenciatura en Educación Física. (Instituto Superior de Educación de Tamaulipas, 2019). (SET, 2019).

También en el año de 1998, se fundó la Universidad del Atlántico. Esta Universidad es privada y cuenta con tres campus universitarios en los cuales ofrece las siguientes carreras a nivel de pregrado: Licenciatura en Diseño Gráfico, Licenciatura en Ciencias de la Comunicación, Licenciatura en Derecho, Licenciatura en Mercadotecnia, Licenciatura en Administración de Empresas, Licenciatura en Psicología, Licenciatura en Comercio y Negocios Internacionales, Licenciatura en Psicología Organizacional y Licenciatura en Contador Público.

Además, ofrece la Ingeniería en Sistemas Computacionales, Ingeniería en Electrónica e Instrumentación, e Ingeniería Industrial. A nivel de Posgrado ofrece la Maestría en Administración con Especialidad en Producción y Calidad, Maestría en Administración con Especialidad en Sistemas, Maestría en Administración con Especialidad en Finanzas (Universidad del Atlántico, 2019) y (SET, 2019)

Un año más tarde, en 1999, se funda El Colegio de San Juan Siglo XXI, Escuela Superior de Música la cual es la única institución pública de educación superior cuyo programa académico se centra en el área de la música. Esta importante institución educativa, ocupa el antiguo e histórico edificio construido en 1828, en el cual estuvo funcionando el prestigiado Instituto Literario de San Juan, el cual cambiara su nombre posteriormente a Instituto Científico y Literario Lic. y Gral. Juan José de la Garza mencionado anteriormente.

El Colegio de San Juan Siglo XXI, ofrece las Licenciaturas en Música con Acentuación en Canto, Acentuación en Guitarra, Acentuación en Percusiones, Acentuación en Piano, Acentuación en Saxofón, Acentuación en Flauta, Acentuación en Composición, Acentuación en Violín, Acentuación en Viola, Acentuación en Trombón, Acentuación en Violoncelo, Acentuación en Trompeta, Acentuación en Clarinete y Acentuación en Corno Francés. (SET, 2019).

Este Colegio cuenta con una Orquesta sinfónica integrada por sus alumnos, los cuales llevan a cabo presentaciones en la comunidad, con el propósito de promover la cultura musical, además cuentan con una orquesta sinfónica infantil que utiliza las instalaciones del Colegio y reciben clases de los profesores que laboran en esta institución (Colegio de San Juan Siglo XXI, 2019).

Asimismo, otra Universidad pública de gran importancia en el desarrollo de la región es la Universidad Tecnológica de Matamoros (UTM), la cual fue fundada el 3 de septiembre del 2001. Esta Universidad pertenece a un importante sub-sistema nacional de Universidades Tecnológicas creado en 1991, el cual actualmente cuenta con 104 universidades distribuidas estratégicamente en todo el país.

Este innovador modelo educativo le permite a los estudiantes incorporarse al sector productivo a corto plazo por medio del programa de Técnico Superior Universitario (TSU) y al mismo tiempo continuar sus estudios, los que así lo deseen, a nivel de Ingeniería. Esta Universidad está equipada con modernos talleres y laboratorios y también ofrece a sus estudiantes un programa de visitas guiadas al sector empresarial y un programa de estadías con una duración mínima de cuatro meses en el sector productivo, lo cual contribuye en gran parte, a una solida preparación profesional de los alumnos.

Además, la UTM cuenta con la acreditación de sus carreras por las agencias certificadoras: Consejo de Acreditación de la Enseñanza de la Ingeniería, A. C., (CASEI) Consejo de Acreditación en la Enseñanza de la Contaduría y Administración

(CACECA) y la certificación ISO 9001:2015, con lo cual en el año 2017 se hizo acreedora al premio SEP-ANUT, reconocida y galardonada como la mejor Universidad Tecnológica de México.

En el año 2018, inició la modalidad Bilingüe Internacional y Sustentable (BIS) con las Carreras de TSU en Mecatrónica área automatización, TSU en Mecatrónica área Instalaciones Eléctricas Eficientes y TSU en Operaciones Comerciales Internacionales área Clasificación Arancelaria y Despacho Aduanero, en Septiembre de 2019 programó el inicio de la Especialidad de TSU en Tecnologías de la Información área Infraestructura de redes Digitales. Cabe mencionar que en esta modalidad los profesores imparten las asignaturas en el idioma inglés. Además la UTM lleva a cabo un importante programa internacional de movilidad estudiantil por medio de estadías de sus estudiantes en universidades de Canadá, Estados Unidos y Francia.

Actualmente la UTM cuenta con las carreras de TSU en Mecatrónica área Automatización, TSU en Mecatrónica área Instalaciones Eléctricas Eficientes, TSU en Operaciones Comerciales Internacionales área Clasificación Arancelaria y Despacho Aduanero, TSU en Procesos Industriales área Manufactura, TSU en Administración aérea Formulación y Administración de Proyectos, TSU en Tecnologías de la Información área Infraestructura de Redes Digitales, TSU en Mantenimiento área Industrial y TSU en Mantenimiento área Petróleo.

A nivel de Ingenierías ofrece las especialidades de Ingeniero en Mecatrónica, Ingeniero en Logística Internacional, Ingeniero en Sistemas Productivos, Ingeniero en Gestión de Proyectos, Ingeniero en Tecnologías de la Información e Ingeniero en Mantenimiento Industrial.

Esta Universidad también cuenta con importantes programas como el de reforestación, uso racional de la energía eléctrica en espacios abiertos, aulas y oficinas, así como la utilización racional del agua. Asimismo tiene en proceso el programa “Universidad Libre de Unicel” (Universidad Tecnológica de Matamoros, 2019) (SET, 2019).

Posteriormente, en el año 2003, el Instituto Oriente de Estudios Superiores de Tamaulipas, A.C. se fundó como una institución privada ofreciendo dos programas a nivel de Técnico Superior Universitario, once programas a nivel de Licenciatura y dos programas a nivel Maestría. A continuación se mencionan los programas que esta institución ofrece: Técnico Superior Universitario en Terapia Respiratoria, Técnico Superior Universitario Petrolero, Licenciatura en Psicología Empresarial, Licenciatura en Economía, Licenciatura en Economía Empresarial, Licenciatura en Derecho y Ciencias Jurídicas, Licenciatura en Criminología y Licenciatura en Criminología y Criminalística, Licenciatura en Comercio Internacional y Aduanas, Licenciatura en Contaduría Pública y Finanzas, Licenciatura en Farmacia, Licenciatura en Optometría, Licenciatura en Administración Financiera Bancaria. A nivel de Posgrado, ofrece la Maestría en Administración y Gestión Pública y la Maestría en Administración Educativa. (Instituto Oriente de Estudios Superiores de Tamaulipas A. C., 2019) (SET, 2019).

Por otro lado, el Centro Universitario Tecnológico y Humanístico de México (CETH), institución privada de Educación Superior, fue fundada en el año 2006, ofreciendo la Licenciatura en Informática, Licenciatura en Ciencias de la Educación, Licenciatura en Pedagogía, Licenciatura en Derecho y la Licenciatura en Administración de Empresas, así como la Ingeniería en Moldeo de Plástico y la Ingeniería en Electrónica. (Centro Universitario Tecnológico y Humanístico de México, 2019) (SET, 2019).

Posteriormente, en el mismo año 2006, se fundó el Centro de Estudios Superiores de Diseño, Arquitectura y Administración, A.C., institución privada que ofrece la Licenciatura en Diseño de Interiores y la Licenciatura en Arquitectura (Centro de Estudios Superiores de Diseño, Arquitectura y Administración, 2019) (SET, 2019)

Más adelante, en el año 2008, se fundó la Escuela Normal Particular Profesor Gregorio Torres Quintero, institución

privada formadora de docentes. En esta casa de estudios se ofrecen las carreras de Licenciado en Educación Primaria y Licenciado en Pedagogía con Especialidad para la Enseñanza del Español, Matemáticas, Ciencias, Inglés y Ciencias Sociales. (Escuela Normal Particular Profesor Gregorio Torres Quintero, 2019) (SET, 2019).

Un año después, en el 2009, se fundó la Universidad Nuevo Santander (UNS) institución privada de Educación Superior que forma parte de un centro educativo que ofrece sus programas desde el nivel pre-escolar, primario, secundario y preparatoria. Esta institución brinda a sus alumnos una educación integral basada en el desarrollo de competencias, habilidades y destrezas, tiene como propósito garantizar el desarrollo personal y profesional en los campos en los que sus egresados se desempeñen en el ámbito personal, público o privado.

La UNS ofrece las siguientes especialidades, en el área de negocios: Licenciatura en Comercio Internacional y Administración Aduanera, Licenciatura en Administración y Dirección de Empresas, Licenciatura en Contaduría Pública, Licenciatura en Publicidad y Relaciones Públicas. En el área de Ciencias Sociales: Licenciatura en Derecho, Licenciatura en Criminología y Criminalística y Licenciatura en Ciencias de la Educación.

En el área de Ciencias de la Salud: Licenciatura en Psicología, Médico Cirujano Dentista-Odontología, Licenciatura en Enfermera Bilingüe y la Ingeniería en Petróleo e Ingeniería Industrial. Además ofrece en su programa de posgrado, la Maestría en Gestión Educativa y la Maestría en Alta Dirección de Empresas. (Universidad Nuevo Santander, 2019) (SET 2019).

Más tarde, en el año 2012, se fundó la Universidad Juan José de la Garza, institución privada que ofrece las Licenciaturas en Ciencias Jurídicas, Licenciatura en Comercio Exterior y Legislación Aduanera, Licenciatura en Criminología y Criminalística, Licenciatura en Innovación y Ciencia Deportiva y la Ingeniería en Sistemas Computacionales (Universidad Juan José de la Garza, 2019 y (SET, 2019).

En el mismo año, 2012, se fundó el Instituto de Estudios Superiores Oxford, institución privada que ofrece la Licenciatura en Educación Bilingüe, Licenciatura en Gestión Deportiva y también la carrera de Ingeniero- Arquitecto. (Instituto de Estudios Superiores Oxford, 2019) (SET, 2019).

También en el año 2012, se fundó la Universidad de la Fe. Esta casa de estudios es privada y ofrece las siguientes especialidades: Licenciatura en Ciencias Aduanales y Comercio Internacional, Licenciatura en Criminología, Criminalística y Técnicas Periciales, Licenciatura en Economía y Finanzas Públicas y Licenciatura en Administración de Empresas y Contaduría Pública (Universidad de la Fe, 2019) y SET, 2019.

Fundada en 2014 la Universidad del Norte de Tamaulipas, es una institución privada que imparte sus especialidades en el nivel de Licenciatura, Maestría y Doctorado. Las licenciaturas que imparte son en Educación y Tecnología de la Información, Comercio Internacional y Aduanas, Administración y Mercadotecnia, Ciencias de la Comunicación y Periodismo, Ciencias Políticas y Administrativas. Y las ingenierías en Ingeniería Industrial en Sistemas de la Administración y Calidad, Sistemas Computacionales e Ingeniería en Petróleo y Energías Alternas. También imparte la Maestría en Educación y Políticas Públicas, Maestría en Administración de Negocios y Maestría en Alta Dirección. Además ofrece el Doctorado en Ciencias de la Educación.

La Universidad Miguel Alemán es una institución privada que ofrece las carreras de Arquitectura, Contador Público, Licenciatura en Pedagogía, Licenciatura en Administración de Empresas y Licenciatura en Psicopedagogía. Además ofrece la Maestría en Ciencias Económico Sociales y la Maestría en Literatura Hispano Americana. (Universidad Miguel Alemán, 2019).

Además de las instituciones antes mencionadas, la Universidad Tec. Milenio y el Tecnológico de Monterrey iniciaron su oferta educativa en 2004 y cerraron el campus universitario en el año 2013 y 2014 respectivamente. De igual manera, la Universidad Valle del Bravo Matamoros fundada en 1986, la cual posteriormente en

2010 cambió su nombre a Universidad del Valle de México, cerró en el año 2017 el campus universitario en esta ciudad.

Conclusión

A juzgar por la información antes descrita, es notorio el interés tanto del gobierno federal como del gobierno estatal y de la iniciativa privada, en facilitar el ingreso a la Educación Superior, por medio de la creación de instituciones educativas, a las personas interesados en continuar sus estudios Universitarios; lo cual es aprovechado cada vez por un mayor número de personas que desean continuar su educación a nivel superior.

Cada una de las Instituciones de Educación Superior de este municipio ha sido validada y autorizada por la Secretaria de Educación Pública y por la Secretaría de Educación de Tamaulipas de tal manera que sus planes y programas de estudio son congruentes con las necesidades del sector productivo de esta región y los intereses de la sociedad Matamorense.

La oferta educativa de estas instituciones ofrece una amplia gama de oportunidades de estudio, las cuales cubren diversas áreas del Arte, la Ciencia y la Tecnología, la Educación, la Salud, las Ciencias Sociales y las Nuevas Tecnologías de la Información y la Comunicación entre otras.

Se puede considerar a H. Matamoros, Tamaulipas, una ciudad privilegiada al contar con este número de ofertas educativas. El resultado del trabajo de estas IES, contribuye, en gran parte, a formar mejores personas y mejores profesionales en beneficio de los habitantes de esta región. (También se puede consultar *A Brief History of Education in Brownsville and Matamoros/ Una Historia Breve de la Educación en Brownsville y Matamoros* por Milo Kearney, Alfonso Gómez Arguelles, y Yolanda Z. González)

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The Quest for a Public Library for Brownsville

by

Anthony K. Knopp and Alma Ortiz Knopp

In 2019, the U.S.-Mexico border, especially along the Rio Grande Valley, became the focus of national media attention. Of course the subject of that focus was the on-going immigration crisis and the dramatic and controversial aspects associated with it. But one pair of media correspondents, Deborah and James Fallows of *The Atlantic* arrived in Brownsville at the beginning of the summer as part of their project to tell stories of small towns and cities. A primary feature of Deborah Fallows' report on Brownsville was her description of "A Public Library of, by, and for the People."¹ Obviously, the Fallows were impressed by the current Brownsville Public Library: "Library plans were farsighted; they were creative and intended to reflect the culture of the town and region; and they were executed efficiently and also patiently, adding projects piecemeal, year by year."² Achieving the success reported by Deborah Fallows was the result of a long and arduous struggle to bring the benefits of a public library to Brownsville.

Books and libraries were not the highest priorities in the frontier town of Brownsville during the nineteenth century. Brownsville lacked many of the refined aspects of culture exhibited in the long-established cities of the East. Rather, the struggle for economic survival or acquisition of wealth was the focus of the population. Of course, books existed in the community in a few private home libraries and at the private schools operated by Catholic nuns and brothers, but the systematic collection of books had a low priority. Toward the end of the century, an effort at enhancing the acquisition of

knowledge received a substantial boost from Captain William Kelly, who commanded the “Bessie,” the last steamboat on the Rio Grande. An Irish immigrant at the beginning of the Civil War, Kelly joined the Union army and became an officer. Finding himself in Texas at the end of the war, Kelly hired on as a riverboat captain in the employ of the Kenedy, King, and Stillman riverboat monopoly. When Mifflin Kenedy and Richard King moved on to focus on ranching, and Charles Stillman moved back north, Kelly bought control of the slowly-declining business.³

Captain Kelly became a prominent figure in Brownsville, serving as a leader in the Masonic Lodge and eventually as president of the First National Bank. One of his earliest efforts at civic improvement involved serving as chairman of the local school board beginning in 1881. Schools in Brownsville existed, but without permanent homes. By the late eighties, Kelly was committed to the construction of a single plant for the public schools. Kelly hired J. Franklin Cummings as superintendent for the schools and persuaded the city leaders to provide a portion of the vacant Washington Park for a comprehensive school building. The building was constructed in 1889. The new Grammar School contained the first true school library, consisting of “300 juvenile books, 100 volumes of reference books” as well as “globes, numerical frames, wall maps, charts, etc.”⁴ Kelly’s support for education and the early school library was no anomaly—according to his daughter, Geraldine, Kelly had his own “very fine library that he used continuously and loved.”⁵

William Kelly would provide the first home to a circulating (lending) library in Brownsville, but the library itself was a project of an early twentieth century women’s club, the Learners’ Club. The organization was established on November 28, 1906, “in the Elks parlors,” and the members selected the following officers: Mrs. Jesse Wheeler, President (Jesse Wheeler was the owner of the *Brownsville Herald*); Mrs. T.P. Barbour, Vice President; Mrs. R.B. Creager, Secretary and Treasurer; and Mrs. Ira

G. Killough, Corresponding Secretary. The initial “work” of the Learners was to be the study of English literature and “the contemporaneous literature of other nations as affecting it.”⁶ May Lott, daughter of railroad developer Uriah Lott, composed “the Learners’ Creed,” which expressed the belief that “the result of a loving and intelligent use of the right books will be a clear vision, higher thinking and a richer understanding, enabling us to lead deeper, wider lives more satisfying to ourselves and helpful to our fellowmen.”⁷

In a statement at the time of the Learners’ Club’s 100th anniversary in 2006 the Brownsville Public Library noted that the “System’s origin is historically tied to this literary organization and owes its founding (to) when the Club started the city’s first subscription library . . . on July 15, 1912.”⁸ The project to create a library began several years earlier, only a few months after the founding of the Learners’ Club. The ladies proposed a “series of entertainments . . . to raise funds for that purpose”⁹ A proposed fund-raising dance was postponed, but a “grand concert,” performed by the Mexican Presidential Orchestra at the Opera House, was a great success and provided an initial amount for the project.¹⁰ “Gift books and money-making devices” also produced results for the project.¹¹

The project for a circulating library received a boost in a 1917 editorial in the *Brownsville Herald*. The editorial noted the observation of visitors that “there seemed to be no place whatever in Brownsville where one could go for rest and entertainment except to the saloons,” and the *Herald* “regretfully” admitted that the charge was accurate. The editorial acknowledged the leadership of the Learners’ Club on the issue of creating a library and suggested that “the various persons who are interested in the matter, which should include every person of intelligence in the town, to get together and adopt measures . . . to evolve some effective plan for securing the desired end.”¹²

Only a few weeks after the appearance of the *Herald* editorial, a committee comprised of women delegated by The Learners

and local businessmen met to organize the "Brownsville Library Association, whose object is to establish and maintain a circulating library and reading room in the city of Brownsville."¹³ Mrs. Jessie O. Wheeler, founding President of the Learners' Club, was elected president of the new organization. Within a few more weeks the Brownsville Library Association was soliciting membership in a new circulating library. A notice in the *Herald* announced that "You will have the privilege of reading fifty-two books in a year by taking a membership in the Brownsville Circulating Library, which will cost you \$2.00. Be early, and have your name among the very first patrons of this institution."¹⁴ The same column of notices in the *Herald* claimed that "A number of Library cards have already been sold in advance, which will be presented as Christmas gifts."¹⁵

It was at this point that Captain William Kelly reentered the story of the origin of the public library by providing for the location of the first version of the circulating library in 1907 in his office on Levee Street. Over the next several years, however, the new library was compelled to relocate several times due to a variety of circumstances, especially the need for more space and financial support. The second home for the library was in the parlors of the Elks Lodge in the Stegman building, "rent free," owing no doubt to the influence of Learners' Club member May Lott, who had married the owner of the building.¹⁶

A significant step forward for the development of the library occurred in 1912, when "The Learners' Club . . . closed the contract with the Texas Circulating Library," thereby obtaining access to a much larger number of books. The Learners also adopted "rules and regulations" for the control of the library. At the same time, however, the Learners acknowledged that the location of the library was again in flux, but promised that "At all events the library will be ready for business the early part of next week."¹⁷ The librarians soon discovered that many local patrons were unfamiliar with library operations and sought to explain the need to return books on time and pay fines in order to withdraw new books.¹⁸

The issue of a permanent location for the circulating library was still unresolved. By the time of World War I the library was operating in the first *Brownsville Herald* building, located across Elizabeth Street from the Miller Hotel at 1312 Elizabeth. By 1915 the library had accumulated a collection of about 1,500 books. In 1916 the Brownsville area was flooded by units of the National Guard in response to concerns over potential conflict with Mexico due to the Pershing Expedition into Mexico chasing Pancho Villa. The women's clubs of Brownsville established a reading room for the soldiers at the library. The *Herald* reported that "More than 800 regular United States soldiers and national guardsmen among the troops stationed at Brownsville have been readers of books at the Learners' club library, according to the list . . . kept for the past six months. An average of thirty soldiers . . . use the library . . . daily as a reading room and for writing letters."¹⁹

Despite the extensive use of the library by soldiers, the library "had a somewhat precarious existence, owing to the limited number of members" and resulting lack funds to pay the \$12.00 monthly rent. "Had it not been for the generous assistance of several army officers . . . it would have been impossible to make ends meet."²⁰ The *Herald* noted the efforts of the Brownsville Federation of Women's Clubs to assist in library operations. Despite these efforts, by 1923 the Learners' library was forced to close from lack of support. Calling a public library "One Real Need of Brownsville," an editorial in the *Herald* took note of the efforts of the Federation of Women's Clubs to achieve that goal.²¹

It took only seven months for the Women's Clubs committee of Mrs. Volney Taylor and Mrs. Hugh Barnes to collect over 600 books (mostly from The Learners) and acquire space from the Board of City Development, "upstairs in the Old City Hall."²² Thus the new library took on an aspect of a "public" library under the auspices of the city government. The library's search for a permanent home was not over, however. Over the next four years the library moved from City Hall to "the original

home” of radio station KWWG, and when that building was demolished, it moved on again to the old Grammar School at Washington Park.²³

A transformational development for the public library occurred in 1928, when the City funded the construction of a building intended for use as the City library. The previous year steps had been taken to form a permanent library association for the Brownsville Public Library.²⁴ The addition of local businessmen and public personages to the library board probably aided the impulse for a permanent structure. In mid-July, the Chamber of Commerce passed a resolution endorsing a permanent structure for the Public Library.²⁵ Apparently the City was able to move with alacrity once a decision was reached, as construction began on the new library building on Adams Street (by the new fire station) on July 31.²⁶ By late November the building was completed and occupied, with the formal opening scheduled for November 26. In addition to the \$5,000 in construction costs, the City arranged to pay \$200 per month for a full-time librarian having custody of the estimated 4000 books. In a resolution, the Library Board formally thanked the City Commission for the new library.²⁷

A *Herald* article in June of 1929 indicated the interests of the reading public in Brownsville. Mrs. C.A. Manahan, the librarian, reported that the earlier enthusiasm for love stories had given way to murder mysteries and detective adventures among young and old. “Serious literature, psychology, travel, biography, and philosophy also come in for attention from a widely varied class of readers.” One book on interior design was so popular that it rarely spent time in the library, as was the case with a book on art and sculpture in the U.S. Capitol building.²⁸ A young Betty Dodd well-remembered that library: “Wasn’t that a wonderful place to go? Those ladies [the librarians] were so careful that we did not venture into the adult sections. We were allowed to check out four books at a time. Mother took us once a week in the summer.”²⁹

In less than ten years, the Public Library situation had again deteriorated significantly. A report by Harold Sebern, chairman of a Rotary Club committee appointed in 1948 to investigate the library and make recommendations, issued “A stinging indictment of public lassitude and official disinterest which have permitted the Brownsville public library to fall into a state of confusion and decay.” Sebern noted the lack of space and deteriorated condition of the building as well as lack of adequate funding, pointing out that the City provided money for the salary of a single employee and none for book acquisition. “Most of the reference works are dated 1910,” Sebern observed. The committee recommended action by the City Commission.³⁰

Time passed without significant action by the City. A *Herald* editorial in October of 1950 claimed that “The women have gone to work again. As usual, action may be expected.” The local women were volunteering as workers at the library and providing supplies to discover what was needed “before much could be done to bring a sub-standard library up to normal.” The editorial called for contributions of “books or money. A lot of 1872 volumes are going out—Let’s get some 1950 replacements.”³¹ The volunteer efforts began to take effect and the City provided additional funding for book purchases and some physical improvements to the building itself by the end of the year.³²

By 1951, plans for big changes in Brownsville, including the library, were underway. The City had been negotiating with the federal government to obtain much of the old Fort Brown parade ground, as the fort had been abandoned since the end of World War II. The goal was the construction of the proposed Fort Brown Memorial Center, which would provide a city auditorium, halls for other purposes . . . and the new city-college Zachary Taylor Library.³³ As early as June of 1951, a determination had already been made to name the library in the new memorial center after “Old Rough and Ready,” General Zachary Taylor, commander of American forces at the Battle of Palo Alto at outset of the War with Mexico in 1846. Since

that American victory and the subsequent victory at Resaca de la Palma occurred just north of Brownsville, that designation seemed appropriate.³⁴

On March 1, Mayor H.L. Stokely and the City Commission called a public meeting “to discuss architects plans for Brownsville’s proposed \$800,000 civic center.” The Mayor noted the need to have completed plans and specifications in order to obtain a government building permit.³⁵ By the end of May, 1952, Stokely announced his hope “that we can begin construction on the memorial center within 90 days.”³⁶ By the beginning of 1954 the structure was completed, and a “Formal Opening and Dedication” was announced for the evening of January 24, with a tour including the Zachary Taylor Library scheduled for the afternoon.³⁷

In 1948, the Brownsville Junior College had acquired the remainder of the Fort Brown reservation from the federal government and began transitioning their operations from the Brownsville High School building on Palm Boulevard. Some 2,694 books from the high school/college library were transferred to a college library in the Administration (Post Hospital) building. By the time the Zachary Taylor Library was ready for occupancy, the Texas Southmost College contribution to the city-college library amounted to 5,676 volumes. The new library also “began absorbing the Brownsville Public Library’s unclassified and uncatalogued book stock of approximately 8,000 volumes.”³⁸ The new library had an impressive impact during the next decade: circulation grew from an annual number of 754 to over 60,000, while “patron visits” increased nearly 10 times to over 57,000. Book stock climbed to nearly 26,000. B.C. Homeyer, a qualified librarian, headed a staff of ten.³⁹ Clearly, the Brownsville library had reached a new level of professional performance.

Bruno C. Homeyer, whose past experience included serving as the librarian for the New Braunfels School District was named the head librarian of the joint library.⁴⁰ The librarian and staff were employed by the college while the city provided the

use of the Fort Brown Memorial Center. Both entities provided funds separately, but by 1961 the city agreed to pay for services to the college, thus streamlining its operation.⁴¹ The creation of the joint library benefitted both entities. The city gained by the acquisition of a professional staff to manage and direct library operations and the college was able to save money and “space.”⁴² TSC described the joint library as “a new trend in library services that is beginning to find favor in the state and nation” thus jointly providing more services to the community.⁴³ A *Brownsville Herald* article from 1962 refers to the combined library “as the only combined library in the United States.”⁴⁴

After seven years of joint operation, the library’s collection of books had increased to over 32,000 and was visited by over 500 patrons a day. The increase in patrons had resulted in the addition of a “Reserve Book Reading Room” in 1957, intended for college users, which helped alleviate overcrowding in the main library, but, by the early 1960s, the community had outgrown the facilities. Plans were initiated to construct a library that would be in a “central location” on campus.⁴⁵

The need for a new library became evident after a 1958 study conducted by Homeyer in which he concluded that the then current 4,000 square foot library facility would no longer meet the needs of the city and the college. Unfortunately, after the report was presented to the board of trustees TSC was still financing the building of Tandy hall and lacked the financial resources. Eventually, plans were made for the early retirement of the Tandy building bonds and TSC began discussions with the City of Brownsville to come up with a financing plan for a new library building. A deal was struck in which the city promised annual financial contributions from the city budget (originally \$15,000 a year) while TSC would be responsible for coming up with a “down payment.” A Library Building Campaign was created in 1963 to raise funds from the community to the tune of \$100,000 dollars. It also hired an architect, an engineer and a librarian to begin planning and consulting.⁴⁶

The consulting librarian was Dr. Edmon Low, who as the head librarian for Oklahoma State University from 1940 to 1967, had “pioneered the open stack concept in library service.” The Oklahoma State University system’s main library was named in his honor. As a consultant to the Library Building Campaign, he was tasked with designing a library that could service the city and college needs.⁴⁷ Two architectural firms, Gayle D. Wilhite and Bowman Swanson Hiester, were responsible for the building of the joint Camille Lightner College Center and the City-College Library, with Donald D. Ferguson as the general contractor and consulting engineer L. L. Winans.⁴⁸

During the consulting phase of the project, funding became an issue, forcing the TSC Board to resort to the cost-saving measure of reducing the size of the library from 23,000 to 22,000 feet. The college had decided to build two buildings, a college center and a library, with a price tag of \$700,000. The “Library-College Center Complex” was further enhanced by a \$28,000 donation from the Sams Foundation to build a “fountain and reflecting pool” between the new library and the future Camille Lightner College Center.⁴⁹ Originally a revenue bond would have financed \$500,000 (\$700,000 for the two-building complex) which would be funded by rent payments by the city and student fees. TSC would pay \$100,000 cash and the last \$100,000 would be raised by the community through the Library Building Campaign.⁵⁰

Thanks to the passage of the Higher Education Facilities Act of 1963, federal funding for the project became available. The financing for the \$450,000 project came in part from a loan from the federal Office of Education for \$136,000 and a federal grant for \$148,000 dollars. The rest was financed by the college, and the fundraising from the Library Building Campaign was no longer necessary. The money already pledged was used for purchasing new books.⁵¹ A model of the complex was placed on exhibit for the community in four banks that serviced the Texas Southmost College District (Brownsville, Port Isabel and Los Fresnos) in the Fall of 1963.⁵²

The formal dedication of the new City-College Library was held on November 20, 1966, to coincide with the 40th Anniversary of Texas Southmost College. Many Brownsville merchants, including E. De La Garza, Hargrove's and J & O Men's Wear, took the opportunity to congratulate the college on their new buildings and anniversary by paying for ads in the *Brownsville Herald*.⁵³ The new buildings occupied the space of a "full city block" and the new library had excellent lighting, "four times as much space," more than "50,000 volumes," and could accommodate "800-900" daily visitors.⁵⁴ The commissioner of state-supported higher education in Texas, Dr. Jack Kenny Williams, spoke at the dedication and faculty and students conducted tours of the facilities after the dedication.⁵⁵

The Texas Southmost College-City Library finished the 1960's adding new ways to service the community. In an article in the *Port Isabel Press*, Librarian Bruno C. Homeyer announced two new initiatives. The library had joined a network of Texas and national college libraries via teletype which could transmit at 500 words a minute. Coordinated by Rice University's Fondren Library, the teletype provided a way for education, business and community leaders to share information. All Texas Colleges would take part and the equipment was financed through a federal grant. The second initiative was the desire to provide more information about "Mexican business," thus announcing new subscriptions to Mexican business magazines in both English and Spanish.⁵⁶ This interest in staying relevant and changing to meet the needs of its patrons is still a characteristic of the Brownsville Public Library today.

Pan American University at Brownsville began functioning during the Fall of 1973. Authorized by the state, this expansion of Pan American University at Edinburg was allowed in order to provide upper division and graduate courses in Brownsville. Although PAU-B was housed at TSC, they were both independent institutions and the new institution needed a library, which meant that the combined college-city library would now also serve PAU-B. The Pan American University at

Edinburg Library collection would now be available for the TSC and city library clientele and vice-versa.⁵⁷ The Library director was a TSC employee who ultimately reported to the TSC Board and the Library Advisory Board which represented the city, while PAU-B employed a library coordinator to manage its collection.⁵⁸

According to TSC, the library had about 65,000 volumes in book stock in 1974 and had 12,500 library card subscribers.⁵⁹ The following year saw the addition of a second floor to provide additional space for nonfiction books, office space, a conference room, study rooms, a study lab, a writing lab and a media center. By the mid-80s, its holdings had increased to "112,910 book volumes."⁶⁰ TSC had a full-time library staff of 22 and about 24 work-study student workers with a budget allocation of \$600,000, while PAU-B was responsible for the salary of its library coordinator and spent about \$120,000 in books. The library joined the South Texas Library System and participated in the Interlibrary loan program, giving its patrons access to materials in 4000 libraries.⁶¹

The official name of the library became the Arnulfo Oliveira Memorial Library on June 28, 1981, in remembrance of the recently deceased President of TSC from 1971-1977. The Benito Longoria Jr. Conference Room on the first floor was used by the TSC Board for its meetings and was made available to school and community groups for meetings. It was named to honor an early supporter of the college who became the first business administration professor of the college and later served on the library board.⁶² An archives room was later named after a former TSC Board member, John Hunter. The Hunter Room collection specialized in Texana, Texas and local history and culture, and genealogy⁶³. It functioned as a reserve room and research facility which in later years was supervised by Yolanda Gonzalez, a staff member of the library since the 1960s and an expert on local genealogy.⁶⁴

Several issues emerged during the 1980s that resulted in questioning the feasibility of a joint city-collage library versus

the creation of a separate city library. Should library services be expanded to include county residents living outside the city of Brownsville? Many of these people were already paying property taxes in the TSC community college district. Oliveira Library Director Frances Vaughn spoke in favor of expanding library services to county residents before the Brownsville City Commission. She explained that “designating” the library as an “area library” would result in state funding for book purchases according to the State Library Systems Act of 1969. The City Commission agreed.⁶⁵

In the fall of 1982, however, an article in the *Brownsville Herald* observed the large rate of delinquency by county residents, at 42% in comparison to city residents at 33% when it came to overdue books and library fines. The overdue books were depleting the book stocks and would cost over \$100,000 dollars to replace. Francis Vaughn cited the overdue book issue as a reason behind the library’s suspension in September of library services to county residents living outside of Brownsville. One solution offered was to ask the City Commission to pass an ordinance to allow the library “to take delinquent patrons to court.”⁶⁶

A Library Study Committee was created by TSC to study the issue. It was made up of 11 members and its chairman was Dr. Anthony Zavaleta. The committee proposed to charge county residents outside of the city a \$12 user fee for 6 months in a pilot program to begin the following year. They estimated that 1,000 county residents would participate, raising \$12,000 for the library.⁶⁷ The TSC Board approved the recommendation on December 8, 1982, and the pilot program was set to start on January 3, 1983. An argument was made that expanding services could lead to college, city and county patrons competing for the same materials at the library.⁶⁸ After the pilot program it was decided this concern would not be an issue since “only 14 people” participated in the program. By October of 1984 the TSC Board voted to expand library privileges to county residents outside of the city of Brownsville if they purchased a library card for \$12 dollars.⁶⁹

A second issue involved complaints of “rowdy” behavior by high school and middle school students in the evenings and weekends. The complaints included fighting, “break dancing,” vulgar language and the threatening of library staff when they tried to keep order. The unruly patrons would refuse to comply with staff directives and in some instances the staff needed to be escorted to the parking lot for fear of reprisals. Library director Frances Vaughn even proposed passage of an ordinance by the Brownsville City Commission “prohibiting disruptions at the library,” which City Commissioner Tony Zavaleta described as “overkill” and suggested the use of “monitors or security guards instead,” a view supported by TSC President Albert Besteiro’s office.⁷⁰ During a TSC Board meeting the complaints were addressed, including the draft of the proposed city ordinance. President Besteiro announced the hiring of two work study students to monitor the library.⁷¹ The TSC Student Congress weighed into the issue by passing a resolution “calling on the city and college to do something” about the issue. The college hired “two law enforcement students” to monitor the library which the treasurer of the TSC Student Congress called “a step in the right direction.”⁷²

The third issue involved the payments by the city for library services to the college. A state law in 1982 “mandated” that taxing districts “estimate their total property valuations at 100 percent of market value” whereas previously most were “estimating valuations . . . from 30 to 50 percent of actual value.” This had grave implications for the city since the contract tied the city’s payments to the property tax valuation. The city’s financial commitment doubled by 1982 from \$135,077 in 1981, and the formula would have resulted in a bill of \$641,960.97 by 1983. Unable to meet the new financial responsibilities, the city had entered negotiations with the college to create a more “equitable” solution. The proposed lease amendment would have the city pay \$160,000 with an increase of 5 percent every year. Members of the Library Advisory Board felt that the city was

not paying its fair share since their contribution represented only 20 percent of the library's operating budget. The chairman of the Library Advisory Board, Joseph Calapa Sr., argued that the library contract awarded "half of the library space to the city" while "two-thirds" of the library cards belonged Brownsville residents. Library director Frances Vaughn and advisory board member Jake Watts advanced the perspective that the "city should open its own public library," but that idea was not in the "long-range planning" of the city.⁷³

The issue was also discussed during a TSC budget committee meeting. TSC Trustee Michael Putegnat argued against the "settlement" negotiated with the city. The cost estimates for running the library for 1984-85 were \$888,233 of which 21 percent was paid by the city. Yet, the city accounted for "60 percent" of the library patrons. According to Putegnat, the cost for McAllen to run its city library was \$700,000, but for Brownsville the cost to the city was only \$186,000.⁷⁴

Several years earlier during a TSC Candidate Forum held for candidates running for the TSC Board of Trustees, the issue of the dual nature of the library came up. Candidates were asked about "the availability of books and limited facilities at the TSC library." Candidate Dr. Narciso Cortex responded, ". . . in the future we're going to have separate ways (city-college libraries) because of increasing population." Candidate Jean Eckhoff, former instructor at TSC and later TSC Trustee, preferred a study to "determine the feasibility" of separate libraries. Candidate Raul Garza who was running against Eckhoff, reminded the audience that TSC was "locked-in to a 30- year contract."⁷⁵ By November of 1982, Jean Eckhoff was elected to the TSC Board and during a discussion of expanding library service to out of city residents she stated, "A college library and a city library, their functions are not the same . . . [t]hat might be why there are not more city-college libraries."⁷⁶ However, for the time being the college and city would have to coexist until the opening of a separate city library in 1994.

Two groups that have tremendously supported the Library have been the Friends of the Library and the Library Advisory Board. The Friends of the Library is an organization with a long history of supporting the library cause and in many respects continued the work of The Learners. A chapter operated in the late 1970s, but disbanded in 1980 only to restart in 1982. Their purpose has been to provide financial support, assistance, and volunteers to help the library in its mission of serving the community. In the late 1970s and early 1980s they helped raise funds for purchasing books and in the 1990s they were instrumental in helping to establish the separate city library.⁷⁷

The Brownsville City Commission passed a city ordinance to create an advisory board for the Oliveira Library which held its first meeting on July 8, 1982. The Library Advisory Board was made up of seven members chosen by the City Commission to make recommendations to the City Commission, but as the first advisory board president, Bill Fisher III, stated, “ultimate responsibility for the library remains with the Texas Southmost College Board of Trustees.” In a phone interview with the *Brownsville Herald*, board president Fisher explained that their most important task was to “establish a long-range library plan.” He also mentioned working on solving the “overdue library books” problem.⁷⁸ Unfortunately, the advisory board had a rocky start. By November of 1982, Fisher had resigned his position as chairman in protest. In his resignation he accused the City Commission of “crass political conduct” and of being “ignored” by them. Fisher had submitted a recommendation for adding an additional member to the advisory board and submitted two names for consideration. The City Commission ignored the recommendations and appointed someone else to fill the vacancy on the board. The Mayor and the City Commissioners had also failed to respond to Fisher’s communications and invitations to attend advisory board meetings and it appeared that his resignation letter was also not initially noticed by City Hall.⁷⁹ A 1984 *Brownsville Herald* article showcasing the library

described the board as “having a penchant for not coming up with enough members to form a quorum on meeting days.”⁸⁰ By 1986, the advisory board had expanded to eight members and was well established, developing strategies to get the attention of the City Commission and the community. They planned an “invitation only reception,” promoting library services, fundraisers, and activities to commemorate the Texas Sesquicentennial. Advisory Board members included Mary Yturria and Robert Vezzetti as president and vice-president and Frances Vaughn, library director.⁸¹

By the early 1990s, Brownsville was a city of over 100,000 residents with only one public library shared with two other entities. The dual mission of the shared library now seemed at odds. Another complication was the desire to create a separate four-year university through a partnership between Texas Southmost College and the University of Texas at Brownsville. Forces in the community began to organize to promote a separate public library for Brownsville.⁸² In 1991, the city of Brownsville began working on a Capital Improvements Program. A committee was formed to make a list of recommended projects which would later be placed before the voters in a bond election. A separate city library was near the bottom of the list at “No. 47.” Betty Dodd was credited for working to move the library to No. 6 on the list by convincing the chairman of the committee, former mayor Margal M. Vicars.⁸³ The bond election took place August 10, 1991, and the voters approved \$36 million in capital improvement funds, \$4.1 million of which were to be used for the building of a new city library. The city commission created a new City Library Board with 14 members, chaired by Betty Dodd. The new board was tasked with “hiring a library consultant, approving building plans, selecting the furniture and writing up the rules for the library and its mode of operation.”⁸⁴

An early controversy occurred when city manager Kirby Lilljedahl placed a bid to purchase for the new city library

the Southmost Savings & Loan Building on Central Blvd. for \$300,000. The bid was rejected, but many on the Library Board said they were not consulted prior to the submission and had not been given clear instructions by the City Commission on what their role would be. Lilljedahl originally said he had tried to act fast to save \$2 million dollars on the building, but later said he had toured the facility with some Friends of the Library and had assumed they would have informed the Library Board about the bid. City officials even organized a meeting with the Library Board members to clear the air.⁸⁵

A location for the library was found on Central Blvd and purchased by the city for \$295,000.⁸⁶ A grant for \$400,000 was obtained through the Federal Library Construction Act to help pay for construction.⁸⁷ Further financial support came from the Brownsville Public Library Foundation, a group organized by Betty Dodd to fundraise for the library. Blanca Vela served as Co-chair of the foundation along with Dodd.⁸⁸ The architect chosen to design the library was a firm from Brownsville SHW Group Inc., with Calvin Walker as the architect. They worked with a Dallas firm, F & S Architects which had library design experience. The builder was Wilson Construction of McAllen.⁸⁹ Construction began on January 15, 1993, and a temporary warehouse was established in Kings Highway to serve as an office for the new library director and a depository for book donations. The library dedication was on May 15, 1994, and featured Judge Filemon Vela as the main speaker.⁹⁰

The Brownsville Public Library has had a difficult time in the area of library directors. Betty Dodd acknowledged the “extremely high” turnover rate.⁹¹ The first library director, Jose Ruben Rendon was hired by the Public Library Committee after its national search. He began his position prior to the completion of the library and operated from the Kings Highway temporary facility.⁹² He resigned in August of 1994, a few months after the library opened. He was followed by Cynthia Pirtle, who left after nine months to start a new library in Abilene.

One reason for her departure was the local politics of the new library which struggled “with a variety of organizations vying to control its direction.”⁹³ Other directors and interim directors followed, the most notable being Jerry Hedgecock, who began his career with the library in 1993 as an automation specialist and served as interim director several times. During his time working for the library he has applied for and received several substantial grants for upgrading library facilities and materials. Currently he is the Director of Public Information Services Department and oversees the library. Juan J. Guerra is the head librarian and director of library services.⁹⁴

When the public library was built, the internet was not really established. By 1995 the library was experimenting in a program called “Surf the Net,” which provided internet access in a terminal. The library hoped to expand the internet access to 8 permanent terminals. Hedgecock was identified as the originator of the idea to acquire internet access. The City Commission approved the library’s contract with an internet service provider out of McAllen improving access for the library.⁹⁵ Another development was financed by a grant from the Texas State Library and Archives Commission to create a “private network” to link 16 public libraries in Cameron and Hidalgo counties.⁹⁶ By the late 1990s more grants including one from the Gates Foundation allowed the library to create a dedicated computer lab with internet access for patrons.⁹⁷

After input from Southmost area residents about the inconvenience of the Central Blvd. location, the Library Board began work on possible ways to provide library services to them. By 1999, the Brownsville Library Board was divided over purchasing a mobile library or building a new library for the Southmost area.⁹⁸ A 3 million dollar bond measure, Proposition 8, was placed on the ballot in November of 2001 to finance the building of a 50,000 square-foot library branch in Southmost. Mayor Blanca Vela and Southmost residents rallied to gather support for the bond measure from city residents. The

bond passed with 73 percent of voter support.⁹⁹ Land for the new library was purchased by the city for \$260,886.¹⁰⁰ After additional fundraising by the community and the Public Library Foundation, Calvin Walker and F & S Architects of Dallas were chosen for the design. A survey of the community was conducted to assess the needs of the community. The results included computers, internet, a children's area and a café. The 20,000 square-foot library building was built in phases to grow with the community. It was included computers with internet access, meeting rooms and a café. The Southmost library began operations in August of 2005, with a grand opening in October of the same year.¹⁰¹

The main library received almost 1 million dollars to undergo a major remodel to better allocate space and provide new services to patrons. A major component was the conversion of the genealogy room into a computer lab.¹⁰² The genealogy collection is in the custody of the Brownsville Historical Association pending reopening.¹⁰³ The project was financed by a federal grant under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, which helped cover the costs of construction, computers, equipment and furnishings. The renovation included a computer lab especially designed for the teen demographic with special art, furniture and a mezzanine section.¹⁰⁴ The library acquired more than 180 computers for patrons to surf the internet, a service that Brownsville library provided before San Antonio.¹⁰⁵ The free Wi-Fi available in both city libraries has contributed to the increase in library visitors from "120,000 in 1994 to more than 800,00 in 2011."¹⁰⁶ Some interesting design elements found in the main library include the end panels on the bookshelves decorated with historic buildings and local wildlife, enhanced historic photographs in the quiet room, the décor in the children's section, and the graphic art murals created by the staff decorating the public rooms. These all work together to create a unique and inviting atmosphere that is available to all library patrons regardless of income.¹⁰⁷

When one visits the Main Library featured in the article by Deborah Fallows, one easily becomes aware of what makes the library a destination in Brownsville. The library has a convenient café that provides meals and refreshments to the patrons at the library and workers from nearby businesses. City residents have access to 3 D printing stations for academic or creative pursuits. The library provides meeting rooms for study sessions and modern teleconferencing rooms used for meetings by government and community groups. The volunteers of the Friends of the Library sell inexpensive used books in their “store” at the library and in the winter sell “Photos with Santa” to raise funds for children’s programs like the Summer Reading Program.¹⁰⁸

The community utilizes and enjoys its amenities and the library provides many with a comfortable place to work, study, learn, or just spend the time. The Brownsville City Library System is a result of a collaborative effort between Jerry Hedgecock, Juan J. Guerra, Calvin Walker, current president of the Friends of the Library, and the library staff. They work together to keep the library up to date with new technology, improve facilities, and plan for the future.¹⁰⁹ Mary Yturria once referred to the Brownsville Library as “the best-kept secret in town,” and added that she was “. . . hoping that our library will become the focal point of our community.”¹¹⁰ A visit to the Brownsville library today makes it clear that it has.

Brownsville Historical Association
University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
Texas Southmost College

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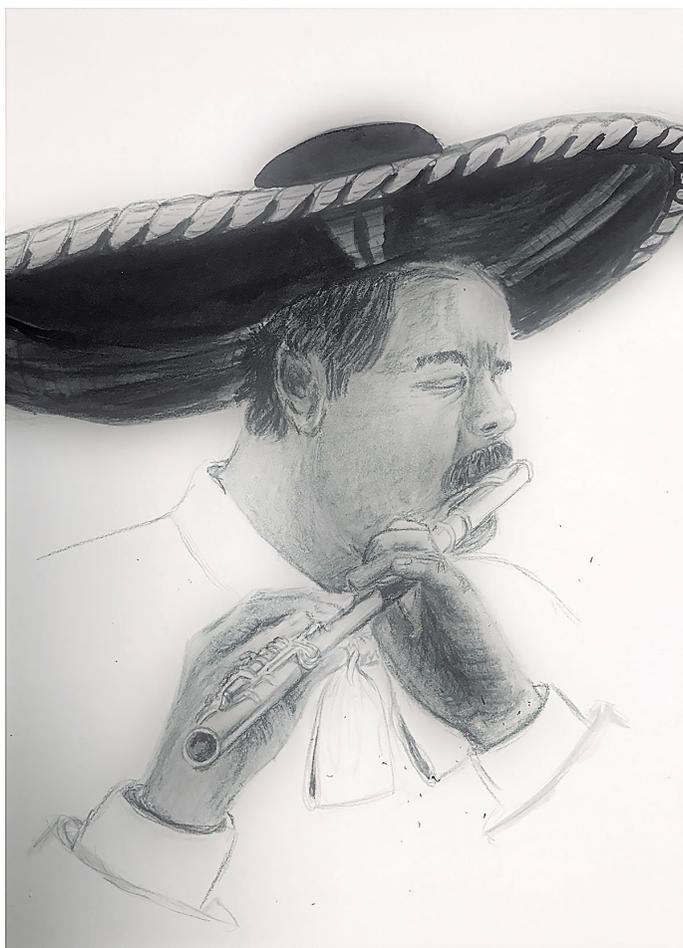
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NATURE HISTORY



Las Palomas Wildlife Management Area: A Hidden Natural Jewel of the Rio Grande Valley

by

Noe E. Perez

When looking for outdoor recreational activities, Valleyites often turn to the pristine beaches and shores of South Padre Island. Other popular and well-known recreational areas include the local national wildlife refuges and the World Birding Centers located throughout the Valley. While those recreational areas have been written about and photographed extensively, birders and nature enthusiasts are not as familiar with one particular area.¹

The Las Palomas Wildlife Management Area has received much less attention from birders and other nature enthusiasts within the Valley, and yet it is a hidden natural jewel consisting of many units in Cameron and Hidalgo Counties. Las Palomas WMA is the subject of this article. This article will explore what the wildlife management area has to offer and discuss the uniqueness and distinctive fauna and flora indigenous to the Las Palomas WMA.

Las Palomas WMA is owned and managed by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and consists of multiple units. Before we look at what Las Palomas has to offer to the public in terms of recreational activities, we will examine the overall parameters of what Las Palomas is and how Texas acquired the WMA and the background of the WMA.

The wildlife management area is located in the Gulf Coastal Plains of South Texas. Because the units of the Las Palomas WMA discussed here occur in the Valley, there are distinctive features of the WMA worth noting. In general, the Rio Grande

Valley consists of “deep alluvial soils” and is a delta of the Rio Grande River with the local area specializing in growing winter vegetable crops and cotton.² The units of the Las Palomas WMA have unique soils assisting in fostering the reproduction of certain indigenous plant and animal species endemic to the area.

Las Palomas WMA is located in one of Texas three major climatic zones, which the Sciencing website describes as being “subtropical steppe climate, with semi-arid weather conditions.”³ However, locals may simplify that scientific analysis by referring to the area as being hot as Hades. In fact, the yearly average temperature is 74° Fahrenheit,⁴ with precipitation sometimes exceeding 27 inches in the Brownsville area.⁵

As for botanical life, the area is predominantly “Tamaulipan thornscrub,” according to biologist Jimmy Stout of the Las Palomas WMA.⁶ For those who have hunted *palomas* (doves) in the Rio Grande Valley or gone birding, they are all too familiar with the “thornscrub” such as cacti, which are bountiful in the region. The Las Palomas WMA was funded through “white-winged dove stamp funds,” which are funds obtained through the sale of white-winged dove stamps, sold at sporting retail outfits and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department offices; the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department is the state agency governing hunting, fishing, and state park activities statewide.⁷

Jimmy Stout indicated that the Las Palomas WMA and wildlife management areas “were established as sites to perform research on wildlife populations and habitat, to conduct education on sound resource management, and to provide public hunting, hiking, camping, bird watching and a host of other outdoor recreational opportunities - all of which are compatible with the conservation of this valuable resource.”⁸

It is the understanding of this author that Mr. Stout has many years of experience working at the Las Palomas WMA and dealing with the public. Many years ago, for example, this author began taking his children on youth hunts offered by the Las Palomas WMA. The daily grind of Mr. Stout and those who

work with him is unrelenting, as he explained during my interview with him. For example, the upkeep and work surrounding the wildlife management area include “managing habitat through mechanical and chemical methods,” as well as a host of other activities, including “conducting surveys” and even “implementing public hunting opportunities.”⁹ As for the surveys, Mr. Stout and his colleagues conduct the “biological surveys” on a “yearly” basis.¹⁰ Surveys are just a small part of what state officials do at Las Palomas, because managing the area also entails ensuring adequate food supplies for indigenous wildlife.

“Food” planted for local wildlife includes “plots” of “grain” and “sunflowers during dove season.”¹¹ Part of the reason for planting wildlife food crops is because the state allows the hunting of certain species of indigenous fauna. Mr. Stout indicated that the hunting of “dove, quail, rabbit and chachalaca on 9 APHP WMA’s is via shotgun only and deer at [the] Arroyo Unit through [drawn] hunts via center fire rifle with scope. Youth are allowed [on] all of these hunt categories.” By “APHP,” Mr. Stout was referring to an “annual public hunting permit.” As per the Texas Parks and Wildlife APHP webpage, “Since 1987, the Annual Public Hunting (APH) Permit, formally known as ‘Type II’, has offered the opportunity to participate in a variety of inexpensive, family-oriented outdoor recreational activities, including hunting for a multitude of wildlife species, fishing, nature watching, camping, and other activities in Texas.”¹²

It is therefore no surprise that local officials of the TPWD provide food attractants to the indigenous fauna of the Las Palomas WMA. The cost of the permit is \$48.¹³ Some permits are available for only \$12; the TPWD calls the \$12 permit a “Limited Public Use Permit.”¹⁴ The LPUP does not authorize hunting activities.¹⁵ With the acquisition of either permit, one may engage in several “family-oriented outdoor recreational activities” at any of the units of the Las Palomas WMA and be assured of a safe experience. In fact, law enforcement “from multiple departments patrol all areas.”¹⁶ As compared to other

wildlife management areas of the state, units of the Las Palomas WMA are not located in remote areas by any stretch of the imagination. The benefit of all of this is that the units of the Las Palomas WMA are patrolled and not far away from eateries and gas stations, thereby allowing for greater accessibility for the disabled and nature enthusiasts.

Regarding the benefit of wildlife management areas such as Las Palomas to nature enthusiasts, I asked biologist Jimmy Stout, "Overall, what benefits do birders, hikers, anglers, water fowlers, other hunters, photographers, bikers, and other outdoorspeople get by visiting RGV parks and WMA's?" In response, Mr. Stout noted, "The Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) of Texas offer a unique opportunity for the public to learn and experience the natural part of Texas and the systems that support life. WMA's are operated by the Wildlife Division of Texas Parks and Wildlife. WMAs offer a chance to experience Texas's natural beauty - from the high, wide skies of the Panhandle in the north, to the southern tropical thorn forests of the Lower Rio Grande Valley - and from the spectacular western vistas of the Trans-Pecos, to the lush green mystery of the Pineywoods in East Texas. We also offer public hunting opportunities in the RGV at each of our WMA's."¹⁷ While opportunities abound at Las Palomas such as hunting, the TPWD also makes hiking and wildlife viewing available at the Rio Grande Valley Units of the Las Palomas WMA.¹⁸

What makes wildlife viewing special at Las Palomas are the peculiar indigenous fauna to Las Palomas such as collared peccaries, which locals refer to as javelinas. For those unfamiliar with javelinas, they appear "similar to pigs" but are, for scientific purposes, "classified in a family of their own because of anatomical differences."¹⁹ For those who have hunted or engaged in wildlife viewing of javelinas, they will tell you that the collared peccaries have a strong musky skunk-like odor. Additionally, javelinas have what appears to be a white collar around their neck (hence, the name collared peccary). While hunting

opportunities for collared peccaries exist on the Longoria Unit of the Las Palomas WMA, the hunting of javelinas is restricted to those licensed hunters drawn by the TPWD through a lottery drawing from a pool of hunters who applied for the drawing from the TPWD "Drawn Hunt Catalog" and by paying a nominal fee.²⁰ Other indigenous wildlife available for viewing or hunting at Las Palomas WMA include white-winged doves, mourning doves, chachalacas, and rabbits.

White-winged doves live year round in the Valley and even breed as far north as Oklahoma. Their territory includes the Valley and much of Mexico.²¹ The mourning dove is much more common locally and throughout much of the United States and Mexico, and breeds as far north as Canada.²² The mourning dove is so widespread because of its profuse propagation that its population approximates 350 million in the United States and is "the most abundant and widespread game bird in North America."²³ Undoubtedly, the "cooing" of doves is a particular feature of doves that wildlife viewers and enthusiasts are most familiar with while out in the fields of the Valley, including Las Palomas WMA. However, the plain chachalaca is a bird of possible greater repute and distinction since it is indigenous to the Valley, which is the only geographic region in the United States in which the bird breeds and lives.²⁴ Therefore, the "plain" chachalaca is anything but ordinary.

In fact, the chachalaca has a peculiar "loud, raucous call" and "[spends] most of its time foraging in trees."²⁵ Those looking to spot or identify chachalacas would need to venture into the dense Tamaulipan thornscrub to spot the reclusive bird, which resembles a "chicken."²⁶ The blaring sounds of the chachalaca are in stark contrast to the calm three-note call of the Northern bobwhite quail, which is yet another species of bird inhabiting the units of the Las Palomas WMA.

The bobwhite quail is also a game bird and "is one of the most intensively studied bird species in the world."²⁷ Recent evidence obtained by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Depart-

ment via surveys from the past three decades show a downward trend in quail populations in Texas.²⁸ Being familiar with hunting quail in Cameron County, I can attest to dwindling quail numbers. Birders, hunters, and nature enthusiasts will attest to bobwhites being “gregarious in nature” since they group in “coveys” and often startle hunters or birders when their coveys disperse.²⁹ Other fauna available for viewing at the Las Palomas WMA include hares and rabbits, but the fact that TPWD publications do not list other bird species for the Las Palomas WMA does not mean that other birds such as cardinals, green jays and birds of prey do not frequent that area, as this writer has seen firsthand.

Rabbits and hares are quite abundant in the Valley, especially at Las Palomas WMA due to the dense thickets of thornscrub. The hunts for rabbits and hares at Las Palomas WMA run “[concurrently] with hunt dates for dove and quail.”³⁰ The restrictions and special regulations for rabbit, hare, dove, quail, and chachalaca hunting are all contained in a special publication given by the TPWD to hunters and wildlife enthusiasts who purchase an Annual Public Hunting Permit.³¹

The only means by which hunters may hunt doves, quail, rabbits, hares, and chachalacas are by use of a shotgun with shotguns being the only firearms allowed for possession.³² At certain units of the Las Palomas WMA, the TPWD does require “on-site registration...for the Special Season White-winged Dove hunters.”³³ Those units that require on-site registration for hunters of white-winged doves are the Anacua and the Carricitos Units.³⁴ The Baird Unit requires an APHP for any hunting activity just as the Anacua and Carricitos Units require except that on-site registration is not required.³⁵ Obviously, hunting must occur during an open season. There are eight units in Hidalgo and Cameron Counties, which both naturalists and hunters may enjoy. As per the TPWD, there are 18 units associated with the Las Palomas WMA with the focus of this article on those units accessible to Valleyites in Cameron and Hidalgo Counties if they obtain an LPUP or APHP.³⁶

The units within Hidalgo County are the Baird and Taormina Units, that are contiguous units located off Victoria Road in southern Hidalgo County.³⁷ The Baird Unit consists of 122 contiguous acres, with the Taormina units consisting of 600 contiguous acres.³⁸ The TPWD acquired the Baird and Taormina Units in 1983 and 1988, respectively.³⁹ One of the unique units within the Las Palomas WMA is the Longoria Unit, located in Northwestern Cameron County.⁴⁰

The Longoria Unit, acquired by the TPWD in 1958⁴¹, is distinct because it consists of undisturbed native Tamaulipan thornscrub surrounded by miles of pristine farmland near Santa Rosa, Texas. It is a quite intriguing situation considering that collared peccaries live on the unit in such numbers that the TPWD offers drawn hunts for javelinas at that unit with the hunts occurring during the latter part of winter in January and sometimes February and with this year's 2020 javelina hunts scheduled for the final two consecutive weekends in January. During those javelina hunts, TPWD officials close the Longoria Unit to other hunters (except those drawn for javelina hunts) and wildlife viewers.⁴² The biologists and workers of the Longoria Unit have set up several blinds for hunters and wildlife viewers to use for hunting or viewing wildlife. Based on this author's experience, the area appears easily accessible, as are other units, for those with disabilities. Facilities are sparse, so biodegradable toiletries are necessary, as is water, a first-aid kit, and non-perishable food and legal weapons (i.e. a knife and/or a licensed handgun). The Longoria Unit consists of 373 contiguous acres.⁴³ Furthermore, the TPWD does not permit camping at any unit of the Las Palomas WMA, so those wishing to take a brief siesta or break must do so within their blind or vehicle.⁴⁴

By "licensed handgun," this author is referring to those licensed to carry a handgun, because license holders are exempt from prohibitions on the carrying of handguns at any of the units of Las Palomas WMA because of Sections 30.05, 30.06, and 30.07 of the Penal Code.⁴⁵ While state law allows the licensed

carrying of handguns, a license holder may not use handguns to take or hunt birds or animals, nor may they discharge a handgun, except in lawful self-defense. A host of other hunting regulations and restrictions abound at wildlife management areas throughout Texas which are simply too numerous to document here and can be found in the Public Hunting Lands 2019-20 Map Booklet.⁴⁶ Those who visit the Las Palomas WMA for viewing wildlife must also follow rules prescribed by the TPWD.

Mr. Stout indicated that target shooting and year-round fishing and hunting opportunities are unavailable at Las Palomas WMA.⁴⁷ However, Mr. Stout noted that year round biking, hiking, birding, and other wildlife viewing opportunities are possible at state parks.

The Tucker Unit is located on Tilden Road, which is off Landrum Park Road that is an offshoot of Paso Real/ Zillock Ranch Road, so that a visitor must take that exit from U.S. Highway 77 located in San Benito, Texas.⁴⁸ The unit is some 30-35 minutes from Brownsville, Texas.⁴⁹ The unit consists of 175 contiguous acres.⁵⁰ One of the advantages of not only the Tucker Unit but all units is that parking spaces are available for visitors.⁵¹ The TPWD acquired the Tucker Unit in 1984.⁵²

One may find the Ebony Unit by taking the Rangerville Road exit on U.S. Highway 83/77 in Harlingen, then going south, and exiting De Los Santos Road where the 266 contiguous acre unit is located.⁵³ The TPWD acquired the Ebony Unit in 1994.⁵⁴

The Carricitos Unit is Northeast of San Benito; one may find the unit by taking Kornegay Road that essentially is a continuation of McCullough Road, which is an exit of U.S. Highway 77 in San Benito. The unit is the smallest accessible unit in the system consisting of 118 acres.⁵⁵ Despite its size, the unit is plush with dense indigenous vegetation and perfectly situated in the county for wildlife viewers, birders, and hunters to access due to its geographic location near the center of the county. One should expect, as with any other unit, to be prepared to fight

off ticks, gnats, flies, chiggers, mites, spiders, scorpions, bees, wasps, and other critters. Nevertheless, wildlife viewers or birders could walk on an improved dirt road on the property to minimize contact with insects, arachnids, and other creatures.⁵⁶ The TPWD acquired the Carricitos Unit in 1987.⁵⁷

Because of urbanization and adherence to cotton, sorghum and other farming and ranching, the units of Las Palomas WMA remain hidden natural jewels of the Valley not because of their remoteness but because they remain positive links to the past because of their remaining indigenous fauna as well flora of Tamaulipan thornscrub. While on any one of the units, it is as if one goes back in time to when the Coahuiltecan Indians (original Tejanos) once roamed the region hundreds of years ago and before humanity bound the Rio Grande River to its current meandering lines. Although the Coahuiltecan no longer exist either linguistically or as tribes today, they did merge into the eventual binational culture that exists today.⁵⁸ Whether it be “mesquite [beans]” or “ripe tunas” of the cacti, one may see some of the flora that native Tejanos once enjoyed as food staples and items for barter.⁵⁹ As Cabeza de Vaca once noted:

*They eat them (tunas) three months of the year, in which they eat nothing else, because at the time they gathered them there came to them other Indians from farther on who brought bows, to trade and barter with them.*⁶⁰

The units of the Las Palomas WMA offer more than hunting and viewing ...a glimpse back in time if one is willing to indulge in historical contemplation. Furthermore, the Las Palomas WMA does not have the foot traffic and traffic density of the local national wildlife refuges, national and state parks, thereby allowing for greater enjoyment for those viewing wildlife.⁶¹

When this author asked about the effect Hurricane Dolly from 2008 had on the Las Palomas WMA, Mr. Stout responded: “WMA [was] unaffected long term.”⁶² One possible reason for the resiliency of the Las Palomas WMA in the face of tropical

storms such as Hurricane Dolly could be drainage. TPWD Maps show many of the units of the Las Palomas WMA containing or being in close proximity to bodies of water, and in the case of one unit, actually abutting the Rio Grande River, possibly allowing for expeditious drainage.⁶³ In fact, five units contain or are in close proximity to a resaca or lake with yet another unit having the Rio Grande River as a natural boundary.⁶⁴

The Anacua Unit is near Santa Maria, Texas off U.S. Highway 281 via aptly named River Road.⁶⁵ The Anacua Unit has the Rio Grande River as a boundary with a border fence crossing a small portion of the unit.⁶⁶ The unit consists of 220 acres divided into two distinct noncontiguous areas with two district parking areas.⁶⁷ Those with an APHP can hunt quail, dove, chachalaca, rabbit, and hare with “on-site registration,” a necessity for the “Special Season White-winged Dove hunters.”⁶⁸ The TPWD acquired the Anacua Unit in 1982.⁶⁹

One of the more intriguing units within the system is the Arroyo Colorado Unit, which the TPWD acquired in 1979.⁷⁰ What makes the unit special is that only a portion of the unit is available to those with an APHP or LPUP. To be exact, only 57 acres is available to those with either permit.⁷¹ The actual area of the Arroyo Colorado Unit consists of some 787 acres that was “once farmed.”⁷² The TPWD has allowed the area to “[revegetate]” now “with relatively thick native brush.”⁷³ According to the TPWD, “The purpose of public hunts is to harvest surplus game and provide information on research and management programs.”⁷⁴ Most of the acreage is off limits to those with an APHP or LPUP, but the TPWD provides access to the hunting blinds located on the rest of the acreage for those drawn on the deer hunts with the stipulation that drawn hunters stay near their “stand” for safety reasons because of the limited size of the area.⁷⁵ This year’s 2020 hunt occurs from January 10-12, 2020, and on that date, those with an APHP or LPUP may not trespass on the property to allow those selected for the drawn hunts to hunt deer and javelinas which are in excess of sus-

tainable populations.⁷⁶ The 2020 hunt will allow for the taking of one deer either-sex and one javelina.⁷⁷ Other hunts will occur during the 2019-20 hunting season at the Arroyo Colorado Unit, but those wishing to view wildlife with a LPUP can do so on occasions when those special drawn hunts are not occurring. By “other hunts,” this author is referring to “Youth Hunts” conducted for youths by the TPWD through drawn hunt categories, which can be found on the TPWD website; specifically, the “Youth Only – Gun Deer Management” and “Youth Only – Gun Deer Either Sex” in which youth hunts will occur at the Arroyo Colorado Unit.⁷⁸

The Las Palomas WMA offers a wide array of local fauna and flora to view if one is willing to obtain the permits to get a glimpse back in time to what Coahuiltecan and original European settlers of the Valley may have witnessed years ago when they roamed the Rio Grande Valley’s dense Tamaulipan thornscrub. Even though Valley life is highly urbanized today, the Las Palomas WMA can give a brief respite from the everyday hustle and bustle of ‘keeping up with the Joneses’ and the frenetic day-to-day routines that modern day Valley urban life entails.⁷⁹ This author speaks with firsthand experience of taking his kids on authorized youth hunts, and it can certainly be a joy to have an appreciation of the remaining historical vestiges of the Valley’s natural wonders.

Endnotes

1 The author endeavored to inquire about possible Tamaulipas' recreational state owned lands across our border but was unable to contact officials from across the Rio Grande River. Additionally, this author requested a tour of one of the units of the Las Palomas Wildlife Management Area from two different local officials, but those officials did not respond to the requests made.

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14 Ibid.

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16 See Note No. 6.

17 See Note No. 6.

- 18 "Wildlife Management Areas: Find a WMA," Texas Parks and Wildlife, accessed August 20, 2019, https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/hunt/wma/find_a_wma/?wmaelect=%2Fwma%2Ffind_a_wma%2Flist%2F%5Fid%5D25e3action=-Search+for+Wildlife+Management+Areas%3Biking=Y.
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- 30 Texas Parks and Wildlife, *Public Hunting Lands 2019-20 Map Booklet* (Austin, Texas: Texas Parks and Wildlife, 2019), 124-130.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 Ibid

- 33 Ibid. pgs. 124, 126.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 Ibid. pg. 130.
- 36 “Las Palomas WMA, Lower Rio Grande Valley Units,” Texas Parks and Wildlife, accessed October 16, 2019, https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/hunt/wma/find_a_wma/list/?id=47.
- 37 See Note No. 30. pg. 130.
- 38 See Note No. 30. pg. 130.
- 39 Jimmy Stout, email follow-up interview by Noe E. Perez, Laguna Vista, Texas, October 15, 2019.
- 40 See Note No. 30. pg. 128.
- 41 See Note No. 39.
- 42 See Note No. 30. Also, see Note. No. 20 then click “Javelina” from the Special Permit Hunts where the dates for the Las Palomas WMA hunts at the Longoria Unit are located.
- 43 See Note No. 30, pg. 128.
- 44 See Note No. 6.
- 45 Individuals with an APHP or LPUP may carry a handgun at the Las Palomas WMA if they possess a license to carry a handgun under Subchapter H, Chapter 411, Government Code. The penal provisions noted do *not* allow most government entities to proscribe the licensed carrying of handguns on their property; the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department is not exempt and may not ban the carrying of handguns by license holders. See Chapter 30 of the Penal Code provisions at the Texas Statutes webpage of the Texas Legislature’s website. “Texas Constitution and Statutes Home,” Texas Legislature Online, accessed September 25, 2019 <https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/PE/btm/PE.50.btm>.
- 46 See Note No. 30.
- 47 See Note No. 6.
- 48 See Note No. 30. Pg. 129.
- 49 Data based on GPS directions provided by personal cellular phone.
- 50 See Note No. 30. Pg. 129.

- 51 See Note No. 30. Pg. 129.
- 52 See Note No. 39.
- 53 See Note No. 30. Pg. 127.
- 54 See Note No. 39.
- 55 See Note No. 30. Pg. 126.
- 56 This writer has firsthand knowledge based on his current APHP and past visitations to various units of the Las Palomas WMA from past permits.
- 57 See Note No. 39.
- 58 "Coahuiltecan Indians," Native Languages, accessed September 25, 2019, <http://www.native-languages.org/coahuiltecan.htm>.
- 59 "South Texas Plains Who Were the 'Coahuiltecan's?'," Texas Beyond History, accessed September 25, 2019 <https://texasbeyondhistory.net/st-plains/peoples/coahuiltecan.html>.
- 60 Ibid.
- 61 See Note No. 51.
- 62 See Note No. 6.
- 63 See Note No. 30. pgs. 124-130.
- 64 See Note No. 30. Pgs. 124-130.
- 65 See Note No. 30. Pg. 124.
- 66 See Note No. 30. Pg. 124. The map with accompanying legend shows a border fence crossing a small portion of the acreage of the unit near the Rio Grande River.
- 67 See Note No. 30. Pg. 124.
- 68 See Note No. 30. Pg. 124.
- 69 See Note No. 39.
- 70 See Note No. 39.
- 71 See Note No. 30. Pg. 125.

72 The hunt brochure for the Arroyo Colorado Unit contains information. At the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department website, click the link for “Public Hunting” from the “Hunting” link. Then, click the link for “Drawn Hunts”, and finally click the “Browse Hunt Catalog” link. From there, click the link for “Gun Deer-Either Sex” from the Special Permit Hunts, and then click the “Las Palomas WMA-Arroyo Colorado Unit” whereby the hunt brochure for the Arroyo Colorado Unit can be downloaded by clicking “Download Hunt..” “Texas Public Hunt System 2019-20 Gun Deer Either-Sex,” Texas Parks and Wildlife, accessed September 24, 2019, https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/hunt/public/public_hunt_drawing/hunt-category-details.phtml?OCat=GDE.

73 Ibid. pg. 1 of brochure.

74 Ibid. pg. 1 of brochure.

75 Ibid. pg. 1 of brochure.

76 See Note 30. Pg. 125 shows the dates closed to hunting. Also, see Note No. 64, which shows the same hunt date for deer as the date located on page 125, which is the date that closed off to those with an LPUP and APHP.

77 See Note 64. Click the Las Palomas WMA-Arroyo Colorado Unit on the website for the Gun Deer-Either Sex category. The “Bag Limit” discussed in this article for the Arroyo Colorado Unit is found there.

78 See the 2019-20 Drawn Hunt Catalog containing all the possible drawn hunts including youth hunts for deer, which offer opportunities for youth. Click youth hunting categories for either-sex and managed deer to view the hunts offered by the TPWD at Las Palomas WMA – Arroyo Colorado Unit. “Texas Public Hunt System 2019-2020 Drawn Hunt Catalog,” Texas Parks and Wildlife, accessed September 24, 2019, https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/hunt/public/public_hunt_drawing/hunt-categories.phtml.

79 The idiom ‘keeping up with the Joneses’ originated because of the title of a comic strip that ran from about 1913-39 in “Associated Newspapers.” “Keeping Up with the Joneses,” Newspaper Comic Strips Blog, accessed September 24, 2019, <https://newspapercomicstripsblog.wordpress.com/2016/02/20/keeping-up-with-the-joneses/>.

La Beulah: Remembering the Eye of the Storm

by

Manuel F. Medrano

Some historians have called the 1960s the “Decade of Hope and Despair,” and maybe it was. Beginning with the inauguration of John F. Kennedy and his very public assassination, to the race to the moon, to the civil rights movement, to protests over the Vietnam War and the discovery of DNA, these years were innovative and turbulent. The war affected many young Valley Latinos who were sent to the front lines and killed or maimed, like my friend Jesus Guerrero who lost his sight, one leg, and one arm. Others participated in campus protests across the country, and some Valley migrant workers even joined the United Farmworkers strikes in California. My home town had its own promise and peril during the era. The first Mexican American mayor of Brownsville, Antonio Gonzalez, and the first Mexican American federal judge, Reynaldo Garza, both Brownsville natives, took office then, and Charro Days, the nationally-known international border celebration, marked its thirtieth anniversary. There was, however, a perilous underside in the border city. High school dropout rates were alarming, and unemployment and poverty were among the highest in the country. I was aware of all these events and conditions because, at the time, I lived in Brownsville. What I recall most, however, I have not even mentioned but will remember for as long as I live. It was a visitor who was unwanted, unapologetic, and relentless. Her name was Hurricane Beulah.

Because it was near the coast, Brownsville had been hit by hurricanes for most of its history. Two years after the Civil War, one damaged Fort Brown and flooded many homes. In *el Chu-*

basco del '33 (the storm of '33), hurricane winds of over 120 mph hit the area, causing major damage to the citrus crops and over thirty deaths.¹ My father and mother weathered the storm at El Jardin Elementary School, next to our home. My mother recalled that she was pregnant at the time, and had three other children including my brother, Joe, who was only one. During the hurricane, Joe began to cry because he was hungry. My father, being my father, walked about half a mile in tempest winds to our small home behind the school, found a cow, milked it and brought the milk back for Joe. My parents remembered sitting near a window seeing trees, fences, and a horse fly by and hearing people yell and sob inside the school as the hurricane passed. When the Medrano family returned home, their small wooden house was still standing and only a few animals and crops had been lost. They dodged a bullet, but others were not so lucky. During that same storm, most of the few structures on South Padre Island, including the gambling casino, were heavily damaged or destroyed.

I could never relate to their stories until I experienced in 1967 what they experienced in 1933. I was all of eighteen and had just begun my sophomore year as a history major at Texas Southmost College. Several of my friends asked me why I wanted to study history, and I replied that the past intrigued me. They promptly laughed and left, but I did not care. We were poor and it was not easy to pay school expenses, but I managed by working the bowling pin machines and counter at International Bowling Lanes. I also helped my father milk cows and feed hogs on our family farm. Hard physical work and my parents' constant encouragement convinced me that I needed to finish college and taught me a lifelong work ethic. Despite working and attending college full-time, once a month I went fishing at Boca Chica Beach with my friends "Batman" Silva and "Daisy Dog" Calzada.

My favorite class was Mr. George Thurtle's U.S. History course. The fact that he was confined to a wheelchair did not

diminish his enthusiasm or determination, and his knowledge was exceptional. Periodically, he used his coined word “tremenjus” to describe the significance of an event such as the building of the transcontinental railroad or the excavation of the Panama Canal. Because of my work schedule, I did not join the History Club, although I wanted to. It also affected my social life. Once, I nearly went on a date with one girl until she discovered I was a history major who drove a 1953 Chevy that looked like it had been punched by King Kong. I did, however, take one of the prettiest girls to the Bougainvillea Ball, but do not ask why she accepted.

These events were of little significance compared to what occurred in September 1967. In late August, a weather system developed near the west coast of Africa and, on September 5, it was officially classified as a tropical depression. Two days later, it entered the eastern Caribbean Sea as tropical storm Beulah. There, warm waters allowed it to strengthen quickly and by the late afternoon, on September 8, it was re-classified as Hurricane Beulah.² The storm was erratic; after reaching 140 miles per hour near Puerto Rico, its winds decreased to forty miles an hour near Haiti. Soon, however, it dramatically increased to a Category Five storm, striking the Yucatan Peninsula on September 16.³ Persons in Brownsville were tracking the storm in the news, and weather reports indicated that the storm would probably hit southern Tamaulipas, Mexico. Suddenly, on September 19, it erratically turned toward the Rio Grande Valley with estimated winds at 160 miles per hour, making it a Category Five hurricane.⁴ On September 20, after losing some velocity, it made landfall near the mouth of the Rio Grande at over 135 miles per hour.⁵ Its trek through the Caribbean, Mexico, and South Texas eventually cost fifteen lives and over \$200,000,000 in damage.⁶

Here's where the story of the hurricane became the story of my family as well. When it was evident that Brownsville would suffer a near-direct hit, people began their final preparations.

After locking and tying whatever needed it, my father, Manuel, fed the cows, pigs, and chickens. He was a janitor and had worked most of his life to provide for his family. He sold milk, cheese, and butter to augment his income, and that would be lost if the animals were lost. It was not easy to leave his home and animals, but it was a decision that had to be made.

My brother, Joe, and sister-in-law, Tencha, were the only family members to live in a brick home, and we knew we would be safer there. Before the storm, they called siblings, aunts, uncles, and cousins. All told, over thirty people took refuge before midnight on September 19th in a 1500 sq. ft. home. The last to arrive were my cousin Gloria, and her baby, Alejandro, only two months old. He was the youngest person in the home; my father, Manuel, sixty-one, was the oldest. Tencha, who is now 85, was responsible for many of the food and water preparations. She remembered her mother Guadalupe Perez Tamayo's motto for hurricane preparedness in Port Isabel during the 1933 Hurricane: "pray, prepare and protect."⁷

Most of us had never experienced a major storm. We waited, talked, ate, watched a black and white television and listened to a transistor radio for the most recent information and newest coordinates for, as my *tio* (uncle) Nicholas described her, "la Beulah." Initially, I believed that the gale-force winds of sixty-five-miles-per-hour were the maximum we would receive. I soon realized I was mistaken. By 3:00 am on September 20, I thought the house might explode as it was pelted with unforgiving squalls and winds.

When the roof in the den began to leak, my *tio* Nicolas and *cuñado* (brother-in-law) Pime climbed into the attic to repair it. Pime had a gift for cursing, and he used it frequently when he struck his thumb with a hammer. Before I was old enough to understand, I thought *chingado* was the name of a Chinese emperor. The wind howled like I never heard before, and tree branches were breaking and strewn on the roof, on the cars, and in the yard. Several of the windows broke despite the plywood

that had been nailed over them. When the electricity no longer functioned, it became totally dark except for a few candles and flashlights. Tencha recalls watching Larry James, the KGBT weather forecaster, uttering a foreboding statement before the loss of power, "It's coming! It's coming! It's going to hit us. God save us." These less-than-comforting words added to our apprehension and fear. Most of the men huddled in the garage; the women and children were in the den and living room. The bathroom seemed like it was always occupied. I remember an overpowering smell of body odor and bad breath. ¡*Hijo!*; it was worse than the school gym bathroom after we played basketball. One of the women took a rosary from her purse and began to pray. My cousin, Gloria, spent the evening with her baby under the dining room table for added protection. He cried uncontrollably until he fell asleep. I heard two people sobbing in the corner of a bedroom.

After what seemed an eternity, but, actually only a few hours, the winds subsided. Once the storm had passed, people returned home to damaged roofs, flooded homes, and widespread debris, but they returned safely.

Flooding was extensive in parts of downtown Brownsville because the Rio Grande had overflowed its banks. Such was the case in some suburbs of Harlingen, where the Arroyo Colorado had done the same. Three quarters of the Valley citrus industry was ruined, and the shrimping industry sustained significant damage. Thousands of people survived the storm in local shelters provided by schools and churches.

Joe and Tencha were hospitable and respectful throughout the ordeal. They provided the refuge and safety that was urgently needed. Everyone was fed and cared for, and they were grateful. After they had gone, Joe began the task of removing the plywood covering from the windows. While walking in the yard, he made an incredible discovery: a live starfish. How it arrived there is still a mystery because the Gulf of Mexico was twenty miles away. When my father, mother, and I returned

to our small, wooden home behind El Jardin School, we expected catastrophic destruction. Fortunately, that was not the case. There was some water seepage in the house, two missing animals, and a flooded corral that smelled like fertilizer gone wild. The tin roof covering our hay storage, however, had been completely blown off and landed in the rear of our field nearly 300 feet away.

Forty years later, as my friend Ramon de Leon and I were rummaging through items at a garage sale in San Benito (proof that we don't have lives), I saw a *molcajete* (cooking stir pot) that could well have been on steroids. It was twice as large and well-worn as most *molcajetes*. I thought I had entered salsa heaven. Next to it, however, on the same old wooden table, was an LP (long play) album entitled *Beulah y las Crecientes*. Besides an account of the event, it included *corridos* performed by *Los Gavilanes* and Freddie Gomez. I bought it, took it home, listened to it and, for a few moments, was taken back in time.

So, what did I learn from the hurricane? I learned that Beulah was far from being a lady and that missing classes for a week at Texas Southmost College was not worth the fury of a storm. Another lesson was that the potential of a hurricane must be respected with early planning and preparation. As important, however, was a realization that cooperation and compassion during adversity defines and strengthens the sense of family. It was that sense that fortified our family enough to endure *la Beulah*.

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Endnotes

- 1 Antonia Medrano, interview by author, November 27, 1992.
- 2 Ramon Rodriguez, "Picking Up the Pieces," *Rio Living*, July 21, 2005, 7.
- 3 "Atlantic Hurricane Best Track (HURDAT version 2)" (<https://www.nbc.noaa.gov/data/burdat/burdat2-1851-2017-050118.txt>). Hurricane Research Division (Database), National Hurricane Center, May 1, 2018.
- 4 Joseph M. Pelissier and Arnold L Sugg, "The Hurricane Season of 1967," National Hurricane Center (April 1968). (<http://www.aoml.noaa.gov/general/lib/lib1/nbclib/mwreviews/1967.pdf>). *Monthly Weather Review*, American Meteorological Society, 96 (4) 242-259.
- 5 "Atlantic Hurricane Best Track (HURDAT version 2)."
- 6 Roy Sylvan Dunn, "Hurricanes," Texas State Historical Association, *Handbook of Texas*, 1.
- 7 Hortencia Tamayo Interview by author, April 6, 2019.

MIGRATION SOUTH *of the* BORDER



Migración en Matamoros: un laboratorio de la complejidad migratoria en la frontera México-Estados Unidos.

por

Cirila Quintero Ramírez

En la última década, Matamoros ha cobrado una importancia mediática en cuanto a la migración desde su cercanía geográfica con San Fernando, en donde fueron encontrados los cuerpos de 72 migrantes asesinados, hasta la reciente muerte de migrantes centroamericanos que intentaron cruzar el Río Bravo. Sin embargo, la historia migratoria de Matamoros va más allá de esta década; tiene profundas raíces desde el siglo XX. Este artículo describe la complejidad migratoria de Matamoros en poco más de un siglo de migración por esta ciudad. Muestra como la migración ha ido no sólo del sur al norte, sino del norte al sur, y como parte de esta migración se ha establecido en la frontera, o bien permanecido de manera temporal en esta ciudad, mientras se vuelve a intentar el cruce hacia Estados Unidos. Matamoros también se ha convertido en el laboratorio inicial de observación de problemáticas migratorias que no han sido resueltas y que se han convertido en problemas estructurales como serían los flujos migratorios de centroamericanos y los niños migrantes no acompañados. Sin ser la gran ciudad de atracción de migrantes, como lo sería Tijuana, Matamoros muestra por sus características históricas y geográficas la estructuración de conductas migratorias ilegales y su intento de resolución con leyes y reforzamientos migratorios coyunturales, que no tocan de manera estructural las problemáticas en donde están involucrados tanto México como Estados Unidos.

Matamoros tiene una posición estratégica con Estados Unidos, primero porque su cercanía geográfica lo ha enlazado continuamente a los movimientos económicos no sólo de

Brownsville y el Valle de Texas, sino de todo Texas, lo que ha atraído flujos migratorios, no sólo para cruzar hacia Estados Unidos sino para establecerse en territorio matamorenses; segundo, por ser el corredor geográfico más cercano entre Centroamérica y Estados Unidos, lo que lo ha convertido en una ruta histórica de la migración centroamericana a Estados Unidos.

Si bien actualmente se visualiza a Matamoros sólo como una ciudad de espera en la que cientos de centroamericanos esperan su cita para ser entrevistados por migración norteamericana para cruzar a Estados Unidos, resulta relevante mencionar que la ciudad también se ha poblado con trabajadores migrantes, no calificados y calificados, que llegaron a Matamoros durante la época del algodón y el desarrollo maquilador. Este asentamiento le da a Matamoros un perfil diferente a otras ciudades de la frontera, como Tijuana, con una alta población migrante en condición de población flotante.

La migración matamorenses: entre la legalidad y la ilegalidad.

Este apartado describe algunas de las principales etapas que se pueden percibir en la historia migratoria de Matamoros, el objetivo es mostrar cómo la migración ha estado relacionada con cambios económicos locales y regionales y con decisiones industriales y políticas federales e internacionales. Se menciona también la importancia que ha tenido la vecindad de Matamoros-Brownsville en estos flujos migratorios. El otro punto central consiste en mostrar como la migración debe ser entendida como un proceso más complejo, no solo el cruce hacia el norte, sino también la migración interna y su asentamiento en Matamoros, o bien la migración de regreso de repatriados y deportados que han regresado por Matamoros. Sin olvidar, la especificidad de poblaciones de migrantes que han cruzado o llegado a Matamoros como mujeres, centroamericanos, niños, y, más recientemente, caravanas de migrantes. Todos ellos están unidos por la movilización de poblaciones en diferentes territorios.

En Matamoros, persiste otro factor estructural que ha permeado la migración: la ilegalidad, desde principios del siglo XX, la ilegalidad mediante el surgimiento de coyotes para cruzar a indocumentados, hasta su acentuación en los años cuarenta y cincuenta han sido centrales; así como la laxitud de las autoridades migratorias texanas para dejar pasar trabajadores migrantes no documentados en momentos de mayor efervescencia económica. A continuación se enuncian algunas de las facetas que han integrado la migración en Matamoros.

Variantes migratorias en Matamoros: de problemáticas locales a problemáticas internacionales.

Este apartado describe algunas de las principales etapas que se pueden percibir en la historia migratoria de Matamoros, yendo desde finales del siglo XIX hasta la actualidad. No se trata de un estudio histórico, aunque sí sigue un hilo cronológico, en profundidad sino de una descripción de la complejidad migratoria que se ha registrado en esta ciudad, en la que han participado distintos actores vinculados a la migración, trabajadores agrícolas, braceros, deportados, repatriados, mujeres migrantes, centroamericanos, niños migrantes no repatriados, hasta las recientes caravanas de centroamericanos. Todos ellos han arribado a Matamoros, como ciudad de llegada, de paso o bien de estancia. La cercanía geográfica, la existencia de medios legales e ilegales para cruzar al otro lado han sido centrales en este arribo, que se complejizó a partir de la primera década del siglo XX, con la infiltración del crimen organizado en este movimiento migratorio. Se muestra, también, que en Matamoros se registraron problemáticas migratorias en el nivel local, como la migración centroamericana y la migración de niños no acompañados, que al no ser solucionadas, se extenderían a toda la frontera en ambos lados de la frontera.

El cruce laboral sin fronteras.

Las últimas dos décadas del siglo XIX y principios del siglo XX, el estudio de la migración en la región tamaulipeca y Texas es difícil dado que en este período se percibe “la ausencia de una frontera que divide...se observa...un espacio binacional en el que el mercado laboral texano traspasa la frontera para atraer y dar ocupación a miles de mexicanos” (González Quiroga, 2001: 370). Los trabajadores mexicanos cruzaban y colaboraban en las actividades agrícolas, las cuáles fueron relevantes particularmente durante la Guerra de Secesión en Estados Unidos, y regresaban a sus localidades mexicanas. Un cuadro de solicitudes de naturalización (González Quiroga, 2001: 371) muestra como los tamaulipecos eran los residentes nortños que menos solicitaban este documento, entre 1848 y 1879, solo 34 realizaban esta solicitud en comparación de los 95 de Nuevo León. En este mismo período se observa que la frontera Matamoros-Brownsville desempeñaba el tercer puerto de entrada para los que solicitaban su naturalización, precedido antes por Laredo y Eagle Pass, (González Quiroga, 2001: 372).

La mayor importancia de la región de Nuevo Laredo-Laredo se relacionaba con el efecto positivo que tuvo la construcción del ferrocarril en esta región que la enlazaba con ciudades texanas muy relevantes como San Antonio, Texas, lo que condujo a un desarrollo importante de la región, que contrastó con la situación de Matamoros-Brownsville, la cual tendría que esperar hasta la *Ley Seca*, caracterizada por la prohibición de venta de licores en Estados Unidos, para resurgir económicamente, aunque también el naciente siglo XX habría de traer los primeros conflictos migratorios en la región. .

Los primeros desencuentros en materia migratoria y la primera llegada de migrantes internos.

La segunda y la tercera década del siglo XX se caracterizó por el auge y modernización de la agricultura texana. Entre 1905 y

1915, se registró la construcción de un sistema de irrigación, el cuál fue construido por grandes compañías que también iniciaron una campaña de venta de tierras, (Herrera, 2018). Los agentes de estas empresas montaron grandes campañas para atraer residentes al Valle de Texas, en las cuáles usaron diferentes mentiras acerca del rendimiento de las tierras de la región (Kearney/Knopp, 1995). El desarrollo agrícola y la promoción de la región atrajo la migración al Valle de Texas, a donde llegó población anglosajona que tuvo fricciones con la población mexicana que ya estaba asentada en la región. Pero la migración también llegó del sur, particularmente de Tamaulipas, para trabajar en la cosecha de los productos del Valle de Texas. La migración también llegó de México para realizar las labores agrícolas, particularmente en época de cosecha. Los mexicanos también habían participado en la construcción de las vías férreas que se desarrollaron en Texas, así como en los sistemas de irrigación (Miller, 1971). Estos migrantes mantenían su temporalidad en Estados Unidos, y no buscaron el establecimiento en el país, incluso se ha mencionado que en este tiempo era una práctica recurrente la existencia de familias migrantes que seguían la ruta de cosechas texanas y regresaba a territorio mexicano una vez que terminaba la cosecha. La cercanía geográfica favorecía este comportamiento laboral (Alanís, 2001).

Si bien los trabajadores agrícolas mantenían su circularidad, otros mexicanos optaron por la migración permanente. Se estima que la segunda y la tercera década del siglo XX fueron las décadas en que se recibió la primera gran oleada de migrantes a Estados Unidos, la cual estuvo integrada por inmigrantes legales, trabajadores temporales, y refugiados pobres y ricos; también como extranjeros ilegales que escapaban de la violencia y la persecución” (Alanís, 2001). Se calcula que en el período de 1900-1930, el número de migrantes mexicanos que llegaron a Estados Unidos fue de un millón de personas, la mayor parte se estableció en Texas.

Hasta los inicios de la Revolución Mexicana, los migrantes mexicanos fueron aceptados sin problema, sin embargo, a partir de esta década los controles migratorios se acentuaron,

y la migración se convirtió en un tema importante en la agenda gubernamental, de la misma manera los estudios de la migración, encargados por el gobierno, sugirieron que lo más adecuado, para Estados Unidos, era que la migración de México, mayormente laboral, tuviese un estatus temporal (Alanis, 2001) y no permanente. Con esta medida se enlazaba la migración mexicana a los ciclos económicos de Estados Unidos, asimismo, se definían dos patrones: para los trabajadores temporales, laxa cuando se necesitaba, como en el período de la primera y segunda guerra, rígida cuando ya no se requería de ellos, y con los que se establecían una política más cuestionadora y controladora.

El mayor control coincidió con el surgimiento de grupos de control para impedir cruzar la frontera. En este período surgieron los Rangers para cuidar la frontera. La importancia militar cobró más importancia durante la Revolución para proteger el Valle de los “bandidos fronterizos” que había durante la época de la revolución. De acuerdo con algunos autores (Miller, 1971), se estimaba que a finales de 1916, se encontraban 12,000 hombres del ejército de Estados Unidos estacionados en el Valle para proteger la región, aunque por otro lado se abrió la frontera en 1917 para que trabajadores de la agricultura, los ferrocarriles, la minería, y la construcción. El período coincidía con la participación de Estados Unidos en la primera guerra mundial. Se estima que alrededor de 72,000 mexicanos llegaron a trabajar en sectores clave. El programa terminaría en 1918 pero se prolongaría más por los empresarios algodoneros texanos y de Arizona. (Alanis, 2001)

Estas bases militares junto con actividades vinculadas con el petróleo y el gas también incentivaron el desarrollo económico de la región. Matamoros fue beneficiado por este desarrollo y por la prohibición de venta de bebidas alcohólicas, dado que los pobladores del Valle cruzaban a divertirse a los bares, restaurantes de la localidad. En ese tiempo, llegó distinta población a Matamoros que se emplearon en estos servicios y comercios.

La población fronteriza residente en Matamoros no fue visualizada como población migrante sino como habitantes de la

región. Para ellos, existían revisiones pero éstas eran más laxas, los matamorenses nacidos en los años cuarenta y cincuenta recuerdan “pasábamos a comprar leche (u otros productos diarios) sin problemas.” La dependencia de productos comerciales de Estados Unidos, en virtud de la no existencia de tiendas comerciales mexicanas, convirtió hasta los años ochenta del siglo pasado a los matamorenses en clientes frecuentes de las tiendas comerciales de Brownsville, Texas. Para los habitantes fronterizos, el cruce de la frontera formaba parte de su vida diaria.

Las deportaciones y repatriaciones: otra cara de la migración en Matamoros

Teóricamente, la migración se refiere solo al movimiento de una población a otro lugar, sin embargo, existen otras variantes de movilización migratorias que son importantes para el caso de Matamoros, como serían las migraciones de retorno, en las que se podrían contabilizar las deportaciones y las repatriaciones. Para Matamoros este tipo de flujo poblacional resulta fundamental dado que ha sido ciudad receptora de estos migrantes, desde la tercera década del siglo XX y hasta la actualidad.

Desde la segunda década del siglo XX, Matamoros recibió procedentes de Brownsville, las deportaciones de jornaleros que cruzaban por lugares clandestinos, asimismo, fue receptor de los mexicanos que salían de Estados Unidos por el ambiente persecutorio y nacionalista que se existía en Estados Unidos en esta época, (Alanis, 2001). Los ciclos de deportaciones serían constantes y se incrementarían en períodos de crisis económica o de rigidez de la política migratoria, tal como pasó en el período de 1919-1922, en donde regresaron a país más de 100,000 connacionales, de los cuáles 50,000 fueron repatriados. Otro éxodo importante de mexicanos se realizaría durante la Depresión Económica de 1929 y se prolongaría en los años treinta. En estos años incluso se aprobaron leyes como la de 1935, en donde se ordenaba que todo extranjero ilegal se le castigará con

un año y medio de castigo. José Flores fue el primer migrante mexicano al que la corte de Brownsville le aplicó esta pena, (Alanís, 2001). La rigidez también alcanzaría a la migración legal, y los controles migratorio en ciudades como Matamoros, se acentuaron durante los años treinta.

Como parte de la rigidez migratoria y como una forma de controlar el flujo migratorio clandestino se creó la Patrulla Fronteriza en 1924 con 450 miembros que vigilaban las fronteras con México y Canadá (Alanís, 2001). La patrulla fronteriza no solo impedía el ingreso de mexicanos sino de asiáticos y europeos. Sin embargo, la migración mexicana se convertiría en su principal punto a controlar, aunque el control sea rígido o flexible según lo requiriera la economía norteamericana, y sus oponentes, como los sindicatos americanos, que consideraban que por ellos se bajaban los salarios, actuarían por frenar su entrada, mientras otros, los agricultores e inversionistas de infraestructura presionarían para su entrada. La migración sería una confrontación constante al interior de la sociedad norteamericana.

Estas primeras deportaciones y repatriaciones también crearon un patrón que habría que persistir hasta el siglo XXI. La mayor parte de repatriados y deportados permanecían en ciudades como Matamoros, viviendo en la miseria, e intentando cruzar nuevamente de manera ilegal. Los procedimientos migratorios de ingreso también se endurecieron. El Cónsul en Matamoros, durante los años treinta, se negó a expedir visas, argumentando el no cumplimiento de los requisitos, como la alfabetización fijada, (Alanís, 2001). El embate antimigrante de los treinta fue exitoso, y los texanos, nacidos en México, entre 1920 y 1940, ascendieron cerca de 90,000 personas. En tanto que el servicio de migración de México, contabilizó que cerca de medio millón de personas habrían regresado a México, voluntaria e involuntariamente, entre 1929 y 1939. (Angell, 2011).

Los repatriados despertaban sentimientos encontrados en la población local, de ayuda pero también de rechazo, para el gobierno en los treinta representaban un factor desasosiego social,

por lo que consideró que una política central para terminar con el descontento sería darles tierra a estos repatriados, de manera que el Presidente Lázaro Cárdenas les dotó de tierras, un total de 12 y media hectáreas. Así surgió Valle Hermoso, conformada por 450 familias repatriadas, cerca de Matamoros. Esto coincidía con la creación de obras de irrigación en la región. Un número importante se sintió atraído por la oferta por lo que se establecieron en la región tanto repatriados (Angell, 2011) como locales que formaron colonias agrícolas al sur de Matamoros. En 1940, entre la población económicamente activa de Matamoros se contaban: colonos, trabajadores agrícolas, comerciantes, trabajadores no agrícolas, empleados, y profesionistas, (Herrera, 2018). Es decir, era una sociedad agrícola.

Braceros, migración indocumentada y crecimiento algodonero.

La nueva necesidad de mano de obra por parte de los agricultores, abriría nuevamente la puerta a los migrantes búsqueda de la regulación de la migratoria se logró en 1942, con la firma de Estados Unidos a través del llamado Programa Bracero, mediante el cual se permitía la contratación **temporal** de trabajadores agrícolas, conocidos como trabajadores huésped, a petición de un contratante. Se abrieron distintas oficinas de reclutamiento, en el noreste, una en Monterrey y otra en Nuevo Laredo. En Matamoros, no se abrió oficina en un primer momento. De acuerdo con algunos autores (Angell, 2011), entre 1942 y 1964, el programa permitió que 4.6 millones de mexicanos fueron contratados como trabajadores legales. En este programa agrícola también participaron algunos repatriados, nacidos en Estados Unidos, que regresaron a Estados Unidos.

Los braceros comenzaron a llegar a California y Arizona, aunque no a Texas, en virtud de que este Estado no había sido incluido por el gobierno mexicano debido a la fuerte discriminación que existía hacia los mexicanos, sobre todo en el oeste de Texas. La exclusión formal de la primera etapa del programa

bracero no fue problemas para reclutar trabajadores para los agricultores texanos, en virtud de la permisibilidad y tolerancia de las autoridades para permitir a migración no documentada. Incluso si se apresaba un migrante indocumentado, este era regresado al campo agrícola en que laboraba. A pesar de ser incluido, años más tarde, Texas prefirió la contratación de trabajadores inmigrantes, mayormente ilegales. Este comportamiento laxo hizo que en los años cuarenta la migración mexicana se incrementará en Texas (Angell, 2011). En 1950, la población hispana en Texas era alrededor de 11%. A partir de esta década, la población hispana seguiría aumentando, el crecimiento mayor fue entre 1950 y 1960 cuando creció al 9% anual, en las décadas siguientes crecería entre el 2 y el 6%, se estima que de 630,345 habitantes hispanos en 1960, pasaría a 6.7 millones en el año 2000. Distintos eventos económicos favorecerían este crecimiento poblacional.

Ahora bien, la exclusión de Texas de la primera etapa del programa bracero propició el incremento de migración indocumentada por Matamoros, la importancia de los *coyotes* y el uso de la violencia hacia los migrantes indocumentados del lado mexicano, y su explotación laboral del lado texano, y los peligros que enfrentaban en el lado mexicano, los cuales podrían culminar en la muerte, (Monroy, 2013). El no entrar legalmente ponía en desventaja a los migrantes trabajando en Texas, y los exponía a toda clase de violaciones y abusos por parte de su empleador. Estos trabajadores laboraban jornadas amplias, salarios bajos y vivían en condiciones deplorables cerca de los campos de cultivo, (Angell 2011). A pesar de esta explotación, y de los excesos del patrón en el lugar de trabajo, los trabajadores no podían hacer nada dado su carácter de indocumentado.

Empero, Matamoros no fue sólo espacio de cruce sino también espacio de establecimiento. A finales de los cuarenta y durante los años cincuenta, derivado de los Distritos de Riego, recién construidos, Matamoros vivió una etapa de esplendor algodonero. La totalidad de este cultivo era exportada, y el

algodón *Matamoros* adquirió relevancia a nivel internacional. El cultivo incentivó otras actividades como los servicios y el comercio. El mayor tiempo de derrama económica era la época de cosecha, de acuerdo con los algodoneros, si la cosecha era buena, “podías comprarte un automóvil al contado.” Los trabajadores, locales y llegados de San Luis Potosí, u otras partes, también obtenían buenos pagos. En un intento por diversificar la economía, se construyeron despepitadoras y plantas de aceite, que sentaron las bases del trabajo industrial en Matamoros, la población creció. De 1950 a 1960, la población creció en un 11% y paso de 128.347 a 143,043 habitantes. Estas actividades arraigaron a una parte de los trabajadores que llegaban a la ciudad. A Matamoros, también llegaron a establecerse jóvenes profesionistas para cubrir las necesidades de educación y salud, ellos conformaron la base de la clase media que se formaría mas adelante en Matamoros. Fueron sobretodo empleados del gobierno federal.

Sin embargo, a diferencia de Texas que existía una variedad de cultivos, betabel, nueces, algodón, lo que lo hacía una sector agrícola más fuerte. En Matamoros hubo una dependencia absoluta del cultivo de algodón, lo que limitó en el crecimiento agrícola en los inicios de los sesenta, cuando aparecieron las fibras sintéticas, y diferentes plagas que no se pudieron controlar, que llevó al ocaso algodonero.

Si bien el esplendor algodonero incentivó la vida social de Matamoros, también fueron evidentes algunos problemas asociados al crecimiento poblacional, en donde la migración constituía uno de los rubros centrales. Tal fue el caso de las carencias urbanas de la localidad. De acuerdo a testimonios de la época, la ciudad carecía de pavimentación y sólo la avenida más importante que llevaba al Restaurant de más lujo de la época, el Drive Inn, y al puente contaba con pavimentación. Los recursos generados por el algodón permitieron urbanizar la colonia residencial más importante de la época, la colonia Jardín, en donde residían las familias más distinguidas, (Dávila,

2011). Sin embargo, la mayor parte de la ciudad y sus colonias carecieron de los servicios urbanos más básicos. Los costos del crecimiento económico, y la atracción de población a la localidad, serían asumidas por el gobierno local. Las carencias urbanas y falta de servicios fueron asociadas a la migración, más que a la ausencia de apoyo gubernamental, de distintos niveles para solucionar éstas.

Migración femenina y maquiladoras.

En 1960, el gobierno mexicano decidió darle otro semblante a las ciudades fronterizas. Las economías estaban basadas en el servicio de cantinas, restaurantes, y servicios para el turismo norteamericano. El gobierno consideró necesaria el saneamiento de la economía e impulsar un turismo familiar. Para ello impulsó las oficinas del Programa Nacional Fronterizo (PRONAF). Las oficinas con distintas actividades recreativas y venta de artesanías mexicanas quedaron instaladas en las cercanías del Puente Nuevo de la Avenida Álvaro Obregón.

Como parte de este proyecto, y después de la visita de distintos lugares de Asia, por funcionarios mexicanos, se decidió implementar el Programa de Maquiladoras, con la finalidad de dar empleo a los desempleados del Programa Bracero. Sin embargo, el desempeño de esta industria fue diferente, dado que empleó a mujeres locales y migrantes, particularmente del centro del Estado y migrantes del San Luis Potosí. Estas mujeres se instalaron y formaron sus familias en Matamoros, incluso en el período de mayor auge maquilador entre los años setenta y noventa, invitaron a familiares suyos a venir a trabajar a Matamoros. Entre 1970 y 1980, la población femenina de Matamoros creció en un 34.5%. Entre 1980 y 1990, disminuiría este crecimiento femenino al 26,4%, para volver a crecer entre 1990 y 2000, alcanzando un crecimiento del 36.5%, (Quintero, 2011)

La migración de mujeres solteras, sobre todo de los estados vecinos, constituyó un contraste importante con la migración de

la época aldonera, que había sido principalmente masculina. La relevancia de estas mujeres fue central para el crecimiento maquilador y por las dinámicas familiares que desarrollaron en la región, cuando más de un tercio de ellas, se convirtieron en jefas de familia.

El crecimiento maquilador situado entre 1970 y finales de los noventa fue aparejado a un crecimiento poblacional en Matamoros. La ciudad dobló su población de 94,998 a 206,259 habitantes, lo que desembocó en la creación de nuevas colonias en Matamoros tanto para trabajadores, como para empleados de la maquila. En el año 2015, se estimaba que 40 fraccionamientos estaban vinculados a la construcción del Instituto de Fomento a la Vivienda de los Trabajadores (INFONAVIT) (Jurado, 2016). Si bien cuentan con vivienda, éstas no han sido construidas en áreas seguras o con todos los servicios necesarios. Otro problema que existe, ha sido la irregularidad en los la propiedad, colonias con más de 40 años de existencia, como la Popular, no ha podido ser regularizada por disputa del terreno. Estimaciones recientes consideran que entre 80 y 200 asentamientos en Matamoros cuentan con un status irregular. Un porcentaje importante de estos asentamientos a pesar de su irregularidad cuentan con los servicios necesarios. Finalmente, en cuanto a este crecimiento poblacional, hay que mencionar que pobladores recientes han optado por instalarse en zonas de alto riesgo, cercanas al Río Bravo, afectando incluso el bloque de contención de aguas, creando un peligro potencial de inundación para la ciudad (Oliveras, 2014).

Centroamericanos y transmigrantes: un flujo poblacional de larga data.

Si bien, la migración centroamericana se hizo evidente a partir del 2010, por el asesinato de 76 migrantes centroamericanos en San Fernando, Tamaulipas. Esta era una migración que venía desarrollándose desde los años ochenta, Sánchez (1993)

mencionó que entre 1979 y 1985, casi medio millón de migrantes centroamericanos cruzaron por México hacia Estados Unidos. La no visibilidad de esta migración, de acuerdo a Sánchez, fue su estancia breve en el país. Uno de los puntos centrales de cruce fue el corredor del Golfo, en donde Matamoros constituía el punto de cruce central. Los centroamericanos huían de la inestabilidad política en sus países hacia Estados Unidos, lo que los diferenciaba de los migrantes mexicanos que migraban por cuestiones económicas, y lo hacían por Matamoros que era geográficamente la ruta más corta hacia Estados Unidos, el cual los aceptaba como refugiados en el país. Sánchez también ha mencionado que la laxitud que existía del lado de Matamoros para dejar ingresar a los centroamericanos también resultó fundamental, así como el uso de una red de coyotes bien estructurada a partir de la migración indocumentada de mexicanos a Texas.

El texto de Sánchez, pionero en el estudio de los migrantes centroamericanos, describió realidades que habrían de marcar la migración centroamericana como sería las violaciones y extorsiones de que eran objeto por los policías y agentes de migración en su travesía por México, pero también denunció su vulnerabilidad ante las población local de la frontera, y las conductas de rechazo hacia ellos. En el lado contrario, estaban algunas organizaciones civiles locales que apoyaban a estos migrantes e incluso la prensa servía para denunciar las extorsiones de los *pateros* a estos migrantes. Entre los apoyadores más importantes de estos migrantes, Sánchez destacó la participación de la iglesia católica tanto en Brownsville como Matamoros. La investigación de Sánchez, también enuncia las actitudes contradictorias que los migrantes centroamericanos generaban entre los pobladores del Valle de Texas, algunas de apoyo, pero otras tantas de rechazo “por posible enfermedades contagiosas o por considerarlos posibles terroristas comunistas venidos de Centroamérica” (Sánchez, 1993).

El trato del gobierno hacia los migrantes centroamericanos también fue relevante, mientras para los nicaragüenses la aceptación, por ser un sistema comunista, era inmediata, para

otros países como Salvador y Honduras eran más lento por considerarlos sistemas democráticos. La migración centroamericana, a diferencia de la europea, presentaba un perfil distinto, era pobre, de piel oscura, y sin hablar inglés, más parecida a la mexicana, que se había negado a aceptar como población estable. En su texto, Sánchez también señal la primera gran crisis de la aceptación de migrantes centroamericanos a finales de los noventa, cuando un grupo importante de ellos deambulaba por el Valle, se rigidizaron las políticas migratorias, rechazando que no procedía la petición, y contando también con el apoyo de las autoridades migratorias que apresaron a cientos de centroamericanos para regresarlos a su país, con esas políticas desaparecieron los centroamericanos de las oficinas del instituto de migración del Valle. A pesar de estas medidas, la migración centroamericana no cesó, y siguieron cruzando la frontera.

Ahora bien, si bien la migración hacia el norte de centroamericanos podría pasar desapercibida, existió otro fenómeno, durante los años ochenta y noventa, que era bastante visible para la población local y que viajaba por las carreteras de Tamaulipas, que fueron las caravanas de transmigrantes que viajaban de Estados Unidos hacia México o bien a Centroamérica, la mayor parte de esto traslados era en época vacaciones de verano o fin de año. Eran poblaciones asentadas en Estados Unidos que regresaban a sus lugares de origen. Algunos estudios (Silva, 2014) marcan la vulnerabilidad a la que también estaban sujetos estos migrantes que cruzaban el territorio de norte a sur. El fenómeno de la transmigración en Matamoros y en Tamaulipas ha sido un fenómeno poco estudiado.

Los niños no acompañados: una preocupación internacional-local.

A mediados de los noventa, México firmó con UNICEF el Programa Interinstitucional de atención a Menores Fronterizos (PIMF) con el objetivo de “otorgar la atención y el respeto a

sus derechos humanos desde el momento de su aseguramiento hasta su integración al núcleo familiar o comunidad de origen, a través del trabajo coordinado entre el Instituto Nacional de Migración, la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores y el Sistema Nacional para el Desarrollo Integral de la Familia, quien es el responsable de la Coordinación de este trabajo integral.” (citado por Quintero, 2007). El objetivo era lograr un acuerdo para que de manera ordenada se lograría el regreso de los niños migrantes no acompañados a sus lugares de origen. El proyecto iba dirigido a menores migrantes mexicanos, aunque la migración centroamericana infantil ya estaba presente en ese momento. UNICEF consideraba un problema central la no atención adecuada a estos migrantes. Para lograr el propósito se instalaron varias mesas de análisis y acuerdos parciales entre las distintas instancias en ambos lados de la frontera. El proyecto fue implementado en Tijuana, Matamoros, y Ciudad Juárez.

En Matamoros, el PIMF favoreció la construcción de Centro de Atención al Menor Migrante Fronterizo (CAMEF) en 1998 y el Acuerdo de Repatriación en las fronteras de McAllen y Brownsville, Texas, el 1 de julio de 1998, el cual regulaba los horarios y puertos de entrada en los que se debían llevar a cabo las repatriaciones de niños, niñas, y adolescentes no acompañados de adultos. Se intentaba que los niños no fueran entregados en un horario nocturno y garantizar su seguridad física. En el 2002, se retomó el proyecto y se firmó Convenio de creación del Comité de Atención y Seguimiento del Menor Repatriado. Sin embargo, los convenios no fueron cumplidos en la práctica, aunque si permitió el conocimiento de varios aspectos de la migración infantil en esta región. Entre los hallazgos del estudio de niños migrantes en Matamoros (Quintero, 2007), se encontraron los siguientes: primero, que la mayor parte de niños migrantes de Matamoros en el 2005-2007 eran tamaulipecos, de los cuales al menos 30% eran de Matamoros, que eran migrantes recurrentes, es decir que habían cruzado la frontera varias veces y habían sido deportados, varias de ellas por come-

ter delitos en Brownsville. También se mostró que a pesar de los programas que se habían implementado por el CAMEF para la reintegración familiar, las familias de estos niños eran desintegradas, y resultaba difícil involucrarlos en la no reincidencia del niño en el cruce ilegal por la frontera e incluso se encontró que varias veces los niños recurrían a personas ajenas a su círculo familiar para que los retirara del albergue, e indicaba alguna relación de estos niños con personas vinculadas a actividades ilícitas.

Otros aspectos que se detectaron fueron la poca coordinación entre gobiernos municipales en materia de regreso de los niños, así como la dificultad para acompañar al menor hasta su lugar de origen y la alta dependencia de la línea de autobuses para que los entregará a su destino final. Empero, el problema más acentuado, que persiste hasta la actualidad, fue la ausencia de un programa interinstitucional entre ambos países para definir, y apegarse de manera estricta, a las funciones que les marque el protocolo de repatriación ordenada. Mientras no exista este acuerdo y compromiso formal resulta por demás difícil solucionar el problema de niños no acompañados. La crisis de los niños migrantes no acompañados del 2014 y en el 2019, fue la agudización de esta falta de coordinación interinstitucional que existe desde hace décadas, que ha desembocado en un proceso de continuas violaciones, por parte las distintas instituciones involucradas, de los menores migrantes que viajan no acompañados.

La muerte de los migrantes de San Fernando, desapariciones y los cambios de ruta migratoria.

En agosto de 2010, 72 migrantes fueron encontrados asesinados en un Rancho de San Fernando, poblado vecino a Matamoros. El evento era resultado de una violencia estructural que existía en la región, y sobretodo evidenciaba la incursión del crimen organizado, antes dedicado a otras actividades como el tráfico de drogas hacia Estados Unidos. Las distintas investigaciones en torno al caso evidenciaron algo que ya se ha

descrito en esta investigación, el uso de la ruta del golfo para el traslado de estos migrantes, que, aunque parecía novedosa, ya tenía varias décadas, y las violaciones a las que estaban expuestos estos migrantes, a pesar de haber pagado el cruce a un pollero. Lo novedoso de la masacre de San Fernando fue la participación del crimen organizado en la migración.

Anteriormente habían sido los polleros o redes de polleros, los encargados de la migración ilegal. Sin embargo, ahora se evidenciaba la participación de toda una estructura delictiva, que arrancaba desde los lugares de origen y se prolongaba hasta Estados Unidos, en donde cada migrante era visualizado como una mercancía, en donde el respeto a todo derecho humano había desaparecido. La masacre de migrantes se escenifica en un contexto de confrontación por el control del territorio tamaulipeco entre distintas bandas criminales, particularmente entre los Zetas y el Cártel del Golfo, y con la ausencia absoluta de un estado para frenar esta inseguridad. Por el contrario, Aguayo (2016) mostró la participación de policías y autoridades municipales en estas violaciones a migrantes, algo que desde hace décadas se había mencionado. El mismo autor menciona la indolencia de las autoridades, de las Comisiones de Derechos Humanos para ir a profundidad en el caso.

Si bien, el caso de San Fernando ha sido asociado a la vulnerabilidad de los migrantes centroamericanos, existieron otros eventos con migrantes nacionales que poco han sido reseñados. Por ejemplo, distintos mexicanos venían a la frontera de manera periódica a comprar ropa, electrodomésticos o bien autos para revenderlos en diferentes estados de la República. Sin embargo en el período de 2010-2013, un porcentaje de ellos, tanto viajando en autos privados, como en transporte público, desaparecieron sin explicación alguna.

Estos eventos convirtieron a Tamaulipas en una ruta prohibida para los migrantes centroamericanos, quienes desviaron su ruta por Coahuila, particularmente teniendo como punto intermedio Saltillo y luego llegar a Piedras Negras y Ciudad

Acuña, en donde los polleros lo cruzan a través de los ranchos que existen en la frontera coahuilense.

En el nivel local, las medidas implementadas después de San Fernando, han sido insuficientes. Primero porque se creó el Instituto Tamaulipeco del Migrante (ITM), que poca relevancia ha tenido, dado la ausencia de presupuesto y personal continuo para su buen funcionamiento. Segundo, en lugar de medidas estructurales para la solución de violaciones a migrantes, se optó por medidas coyunturales como la conformación de caravanas de viajeros, resguardados por militares, que querían cruzar el estado, que solo funcionaron por un tiempo y parcialmente. Tercero, porque no ha habido una real inversión en una infraestructura de protección de migrantes, a pesar de que los deportados se han incrementado en la localidad, y recientemente el número de centroamericanos. La única institución que sigue apoyando a los migrantes y deportados sigue siendo la Iglesia católica, que incluso ha ampliado su trabajo con migrantes de otras naciones. Para finalizar, Tamaulipas sigue siendo considerado un Estado peligroso no sólo para los migrantes sino para los activistas y defensores de los derechos humanos. Las condiciones de inseguridad, han concluido que aún organizaciones internacionales, como ACNUR, se hayan negado a poner una oficina en Matamoros o en la región. En 2019, la organización de Médicos sin Frontera, han abierto una nueva oficina en la región, para coadyuvar en la problemática migratoria de centroamericanos que enfrenta actualmente Matamoros.

Deportaciones y caravanas.

A pesar de ser considerada como una región peligrosa para la migración, Estados Unidos desde el 2015, ha estado utilizando a Matamoros como punto de deportación, lo que ha acentuado la problemática migratoria. Primero, porque no se respetan las condicionantes de una deportación ordenada, en cuanto a horarios y protocolos, segundo, porque hay una ausencia de in-

stancias gubernamentales que atiendan la problemáticas, por lo que la mayor carga de los deportados han sido asumidas por el Albergue Casa Juan Diego, de la Iglesia Católica.

La problemática de las deportaciones es el rubro central que enfrenta Matamoros en este momento: primero, porque las deportaciones masivas que el Presidente Trump ha implementado, se ha acentuado y Matamoros ha quedado contemplado como ciudad de deportación; segundo, porque desde julio de 2019, se le ha considerado como ciudad participante del denominado programa “Quédate en México” en donde decenas de centroamericanos esperan a ser llamados para ser evaluados si reciben la visa humanitaria de Estados Unidos o no, un proceso que puede llevar meses, de ser negada, se trataría de que estos migrantes se quedaran en Matamoros. Sin recursos federales, y con recorte de la partida estatal para apoyo a migrantes, la situación de Matamoros para atender a migrantes luce muy preocupante.

En noviembre de 2018, un nuevo fenómeno migratorio comenzó a presentarse en diferentes ciudades fronterizas que fue la migración grupal, denominadas caravanas de migrantes centroamericanos, que buscaban llegar a Estados Unidos para obtener una visa humanitaria otorgada por las condiciones de inseguridad que existían en sus países de origen: Salvador, Guatemala y Honduras. Era una migración diferente a la migración individual o familiar que se había registrado tradicionalmente, primero porque las rutas que seguían eran diferentes a las tradicionales, porque existía un orden dentro de esta colectividad, en la que se percibían liderazgos y acciones poco convencionales como intentos de cruce violento de la frontera con Estados Unidos, e incluso de la frontera entre Guatemala y México. La llegada de estas caravanas se esperaba en Matamoros desde finales de 2018, sin embargo, estas llegaron hasta febrero de 2019.

Un reporte detallado realizado sobre las caravanas llegada a Matamoros (Hernández, 2019) eran una parte de la gran caravana que había llegado a Piedras Negras, Coahuila, y que se fue distribuyendo en distintas localidades, en virtud de que el

gobierno de Coahuila, había puesto autobuses para conducirlos a la frontera tamaulipeca. Es decir, llegaban a Matamoros de manera obligatoria y con la esperanza de cruzar a la frontera, debido a la falsa idea de que se les difundió que en Matamoros era más sencillo cruzar. Su intención no era quedarse en la localidad si no poder cruzar al otro lado. Sin embargo, el acuerdo firmado entre México y Estados Unidos, *Quédate en México*, considera a Matamoros como una ciudad de espera para los migrantes centroamericanos para obtener una cita para evaluar su situación migratoria. El procedimiento puede durar meses, por lo que se han pensado en estrategias para emplear a estos migrantes en maquiladoras de la localidad, si bien hay algunos trabajadores laborando en estas empresas, de acuerdo con el reporte de Hernández, solo el 16% de los entrevistados, maneja la posibilidad de quedarse en Matamoros. La existencia de familiares al otro lado de la frontera, que podrían ser migrantes de las anteriores oleadas de migrantes centroamericanas que han pasado por Matamoros, les permite tener las esperanzas de obtener la visa que les permita establecerse en Estados Unidos, mientras eso acontece Matamoros y el albergue San Juan Diego sigue asumiendo los costos de esta migración colectiva.

Reflexiones finales: historicidad y escenarios migratorios futuros.

La exposición anterior ha señalado la especificidad de Matamoros en cuanto al fenómeno migratorio. Ha mostrado la complejidad que implica la migración en el nivel local, y la participación de actores de ambos lados de la frontera en la configuración regional de la migración, y la importancia de la historicidad en este proceso. Matamoros, sin ser un espacio central en el número de migrantes, salvo el número de deportados recientemente, constituye un laboratorio de experiencias migratorias, que al no ser solucionadas localmente, mediante la articulación binacional, se han convertido en problemas

estructurales compartidos. También la historia descrita muestra la recurrencia a medidas coyunturales, como fortalecimiento de la vigilancia militar de la frontera, revisiones migratorias exhaustas, que no inciden de manera estructural en la solución de la problemática debido a su enraizamiento en conductas de ilegalidad y corrupción históricas.

La inserción del crimen organizado en el fenómeno migratorio, al que varios analistas han denominado industria de la migración, en donde el migrante es una mercancía más, en la que participan grupos delictivos de ambos lados de la frontera, así como la ausencia de presupuesto federal, estatal y local para atender la problemática migratoria, y la persistencia de la ilegalidad y corrupción, presentan a la migración como uno de los grandes retos no solo para Matamoros sino para la sociedad actual.

El futuro migratorio para Matamoros luce de lo más preocupante, como ciudad receptáculo de deportados y sala de espera de los migrantes centroamericanos que buscan obtener una visa para ingresar a los Estados Unidos, una política migratoria, por parte de Estados Unidos, cada vez más restrictiva, y sin recursos gubernamentales para afrontar los requerimientos en servicios necesarios para atender a estas poblaciones. Los costos del fenómeno migratorio seguirán descansando en el apoyo de los albergues de la Iglesia Católica y otros grupos sociales que pudieran surgir para apoyar a los migrantes. Una posibilidad que luce lejana ante tantas problemáticas sociales y urbanas que presenta la ciudad y una campaña antimigrante que ha resurgido a través de los medios de comunicación.

El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, Matamoros

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Coyotes en acción: Relatos de traficantes de migrantes en Reynosa

por

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Introducción¹

Los traficantes de migrantes, conocidos en México como *coyotes*, constituyen un actor social con una larga historia en la migración irregular a Estados Unidos, particularmente al terminar el Programa Bracero en los años sesenta del siglo pasado,² pues como han afirmado Singer y Massey,³ los coyotes aumentaban las posibilidades de que los migrantes cruzaran la frontera a pesar de la vigilancia de agentes migratorios estadounidenses.

Tiempo después, en México aumentó la prevalencia de coyotes cuando el gobierno de Estados Unidos optó por institucionalizar la frontera para dificultar el paso, hacer deportaciones masivas de trabajadores, e impulsar la Ley Simpson-Rodino (*Immigration Reform and Control Act*), en 1986, lo que suscitó el coyotaje como sistema alternativo para los migrantes sin documentos.⁴ Actualmente, los coyotes son un actor social clave en la migración irregular. Además de su visibilidad histórica, también destaca el reconocimiento social y cultural que tienen en las comunidades de origen de los migrantes, o en las ciudades fronterizas, como individuos expertos en evadir la vigilancia de agentes migratorios de Estados Unidos.⁵

El propósito de este trabajo es contribuir a la literatura académica que ha analizado el tema de los coyotes en la frontera México-Estados Unidos en general, y en la frontera Tamaulipas-Texas en particular. Esta última región fronteriza, durante y después de la Revolución Mexicana se caracterizó por el flujo de migrantes mexicanos que huían a Estados Unidos, así como por la situación económica que existía en el país. Tales flujos se acrecentaron a me-

diados del siglo XX, emergiendo la migración irregular, la que llegó a constituir un negocio para los coyotes, quienes se aliaron con algunas autoridades migratorias corruptas, tanto mexicanas como texanas.⁶

A la migración irregular de mexicanos a Estados Unidos se sumó la de centroamericanos. Sánchez Munguía⁷ afirma que desde la década de los ochenta se hizo visible este fenómeno en la frontera Tamaulipas-Texas. Ello se debió, principalmente, a la distancia geográfica más corta por esta ruta con ciudades de la costa este americana, asimismo, porque en esta región había un número considerable de organizaciones civiles de apoyo a migrantes, y finalmente, porque existía una amplia red de coyotes. Como se observa, en esta región fronteriza la migración irregular ha estado vinculada con los coyotes, al igual que en el resto de la frontera México-Estados Unidos.

Debido a lo anterior, en este trabajo se presentan los relatos de dos jóvenes coyotes residentes en la frontera entre Tamaulipas y Texas: una región con vínculos económicos y culturales entre las denominadas ciudades hermanas o gemelas,⁸ pero también con antecedentes de migración irregular a Estados Unidos. Los relatos presentados se remiten a una conversación con Pepe y Meme (ambos seudónimos) sostenida a fines del año 2012. Aunque han pasado muchos años desde aquella conversación, los relatos aún son importantes por dos razones: primero, porque desentrañan cómo opera el tráfico de migrantes en esta región fronteriza en particular; y segundo, porque son coyotes jóvenes que vivieron el aumento de la vigilancia en la frontera.

Los relatos de Pepe y Meme, además, permiten argumentar que en la frontera Tamaulipas-Texas los coyotes tienen una división social del trabajo y especialización de sus actividades para lograr cruzar el mayor número de migrantes posible. Así, en la región la noción tradicional del “coyote” es obsoleta y se orienta más a lo que Meneses⁹ llama “distintos servicios y categorías de coyotes, puesto que existe una división especializada del trabajo,” aunque para el caso de la región de estudio, dichas categorías denotan en

sí mismas la profesionalización de diferentes actores sociales en el negocio de la migración irregular.

Antecedentes del tema

Uno de los trabajos pioneros sobre los coyotes en la frontera Tamaulipas-Texas, es el de Spener,¹⁰ quien analizó el tema en la región y consideró a los coyotes como contrabandistas en el proceso migratorio laboral. Para este autor, el coyotaje no sólo ha sido resultado de los intereses monetarios de los contrabandistas, sino también de un mercado de trabajo americano que demanda mano de obra mexicana barata, fungiendo los primeros como intermediarios entre los empleadores y los trabajadores irregulares, ello a pesar de los riesgos tanto legales como sociales que se viven en ambos lados de la frontera.

Por otro lado, Spener reconoció que existen estudios previos que han documentado las formas de operación de los coyotes, y que éstas no han cambiado radicalmente desde los años sesenta del siglo pasado. No obstante, con base en sus investigaciones, el autor identificó varias etapas en lo que denominó el proceso contrabandista comercial, mismas que van desde el reclutamiento de migrantes en el interior de México, hasta cruzar la frontera. En dichas etapas, agregó el autor, los coyotes desarrollan diferentes actividades para lograr su cometido.

Señaló, además, que los coyotes organizan sus actividades en distintos espacios, tales como centrales de autobuses, hoteles, casas de seguridad, lugares de recogida, etc., todo ello a cambio de un pago que garantiza más de un cruce por el río Bravo. Finalmente, el autor concluyó que a pesar de que en la frontera entre Tamaulipas y Texas se ha incrementado la vigilancia de la Patrulla Fronteriza, “todavía no se ha logrado parar el flujo significativo y no autorizado de mexicanos hacia Texas,” lo que se debe tanto a las habilidades de los “polleros” para burlar a las autoridades, como a los precios “accesibles” que ofrecen a los migrantes.

Años después, Spener publicó los relatos de los coyotes que él entrevistó para realizar su análisis sobre el coyotaje en la frontera Tamaulipas-Texas.¹¹ Un total de nueve relatos mostraron no sólo cómo operan los coyotes en esta región fronteriza, sino también las estrategias que Spener siguió para contactarlos, los diálogos perspicaces durante las entrevistas, así como el rostro íntimo de los coyotes al compartir parte de sus emociones y peripecias familiares y de amistad.

Posteriormente, otro autor que abordó el tema de los coyotes en esta región fronteriza fue Izcara-Palacios,¹² para quien existen dos grupos de coyotes: los que trabajan a tiempo parcial y los que trabajan a tiempo completo. Cada uno de estos grupos, señaló el autor, se distinguen por el tiempo que destinan al contrabando de indocumentados, la pertenencia a los grupos de migrantes y la fuente de obtención de sus ingresos.

Dentro del primer grupo de coyotes, el autor destacó que éstos se subdividen en aquellos que regresan varias veces al año por trabajadores, los que viajan una vez al año con diferentes trabajadores migratorios, y los que van y vuelven todos los años con el mismo grupo de migrantes. Independientemente, cada uno de éstos transporta varones rurales en edad productiva para actividades agrícolas, principalmente, operan a nivel municipal o regional, y sus cobros son en dólares y varían.

Respecto al segundo grupo, señaló que se clasifican en aquellos coyotes locales que residen en la frontera, los que trabajan en redes complejas, y los que están integrados en redes asociadas con personal del *Customs and Border Protection (CBP)*. A diferencia de los del primer grupo, agregó, los segundos transportan todo tipo de personas, tanto hombres como mujeres en edad productiva, al igual que a menores de edad; conducen migrantes estatales, nacionales, centroamericanos, sudamericanos, e incluso asiáticos.

Sin lugar a duda, los hallazgos y planteamientos de Spener y de Izcara-Palacios son relevantes para comprender cómo operan y se clasifican los coyotes en la frontera entre Tamaulipas y Texas. Por supuesto, se trata de aportaciones que ejemplifican el trabajo de

los coyotes en un momento histórico y región fronteriza específica. Los relatos de Pepe y Meme, por otro lado, permiten entender el coyotaje en un momento de violencia exacerbada en la frontera de Tamaulipas con Texas, pero sobre todo, de incremento de la seguridad fronteriza en el sur de Estados Unidos. Desde esta perspectiva, sus relatos dan un panorama más actualizado del coyotaje en la región.

Estrategia metodológica

Los relatos de Pepe y Meme fueron recopilados, a fines del año 2012, por un estudiante de criminología en Reynosa, Tamaulipas. La recopilación se dio en el marco del trabajo de campo que el estudiante realizaba, con la finalidad de hacer su tesis. Pepe y Meme eran conocidos del estudiante: aproximadamente en el 2010 conoció a Pepe en Estados Unidos, mientras trabajaba en un autoservicio y Pepe acudió a solicitar empleo. Después de un tiempo de laborar, ambos entablaron amistad por ser de la ciudad de Reynosa y Pepe confesó al estudiante que antes se dedicaba a cruzar migrantes. Tiempo después el estudiante conoció a Meme a través de Pepe.

Durante su trabajo de campo en el año 2012, el estudiante decidió contactar a Pepe y Meme para conocer sus experiencias en el coyotaje, así que concertaron una reunión en un restaurante de la ciudad de Reynosa. En aquél año, Pepe y Meme rondaban en los 25 años de edad. Según el estudiante, pesar de la confianza que tenían los tres, al inicio de la conversación hubo cierta tensión: Pepe y Meme demandaron el anonimato y que no se grabara nada, solamente que se tomaran notas, porque según dijo Pepe al estudiante, “se podían meter en un pedo y luego cómo conseguían la papa,” es decir, podían tener problemas y luego no tendrían trabajo.

El estudiante tomó notas de la conversación y, posteriormente, hizo un tipo de reconstrucción dialógica, es decir, ordenó sus notas e hizo uso de la memoria para reescribir la conversación como si

hubiera sido una entrevista grabada. El proceso no fue fácil, pues según narraba el estudiante, sus conocidos desconfiaban no sólo por los posibles problemas que tendrían si no se respetaba su anonimato, sino también porque temían “la madriza que les iban a dar,” como expresó Meme, si alguien del negocio sabía que ellos habían hablado del tema con un extraño.

La técnica que el estudiante utilizó para lograr el rapport, fue invitar a Pepe y Meme al restaurante, pagarles la comida y las cervezas, y conversar durante el proceso. Inició con el tema de los menores migrantes en la frontera, les platicó de algunas entrevistas que hizo, les pidió sus puntos de vista y aprovechó para plantearles algunas dudas. Posterior a esto, les preguntó sobre su experiencia cruzando a migrantes y, si acorde a ésta, había algo diferente que él no supiera con base en las entrevistas a menores migrantes. Según el estudiante, Pepe y Meme respondieron: “Ya estamos aquí, así que pregunta lo que necesites, nomás cambia nuestros nombres.” Así que el estudiante les preguntó cómo trabaja un coyote y Meme expresó: “Vamos a decirle a este güey cómo está el pedo.”

La conversación que el estudiante sostuvo con Pepe y Meme, así como la reconstrucción dialógica que posteriormente hizo, son utilizadas aquí como relatos de vida. Basado en Bertaux,¹³ se considera la técnica como una forma narrativa que inicia “desde el momento en que un sujeto cuenta a otra persona, investigador o no, un episodio cualquiera de su experiencia vivida,” destacándose significados pero también referentes en tanto relaciones, procesos y normas. Con base en lo anterior, el material reunido por el estudiante fue concebido como un medio para conocer –y reconstruir– los relatos de los jóvenes coyotes de Reynosa.

Si bien se cuestiona que “la intervención del transcriptor” deviene en la “ficcionalización” de los hechos,¹⁴ aquí se han reordenado los relatos de Pepe y Meme según temas de relevancia, y se presentan en secciones y en primera persona para, de esta manera, poder “captar la realidad subjetiva –lo vivido subjetivamente–.”¹⁵ El relato de vida, entonces, es una técnica útil para reconstruir algunas de las experiencias de sujetos antropológicos particulares, como

pueden ser los migrantes o los coyotes. Claro que, como señala Bertaux,¹⁶ un relato siempre será utilizado, leído y contextualizado de formas diferentes, es decir, los relatos o los fragmentos de un relato nos brinda una ventana a interpretaciones e intereses diversos.

Los relatos de Pepe y Meme

Contrato de coyotes y casas de seguridad

Si vienes de otro estado de México, llegando a Reynosa tienes que conseguir quién te cruce. Esta persona es quien pone el precio, si es así él se encargará de hacer todo para cruzarte, desde llevarte a una casa de seguridad hasta contratar los servicios de las personas que se involucran en el cruce. Si vienes de igual manera de otro estado, pero contigo viene otro coyote, él toma su parte del total que te cobraron y reparte lo demás entre las personas a las que les pagará para que te crucen, terminando ahí su parte del trabajo y ya de lo demás nos encargamos nosotros aquí.

Si eres mexicano es barato, como quinientos o seiscientos dólares te cobran hasta McAllen. Ya si eres de Centroamérica te cobran más, como mil quinientos o dos mil dólares. Ya los más caros son los chinos, por esos cabrones sí son de dos mil a dos mil quinientos dólares.

Cuando llegas a Reynosa el coyote tiene que pagar una “cuota” por cada migrante que va a cruzar. Esta consta de doscientos dólares, lo que garantiza el *pacífico* cruce y estancia en esta ciudad, siendo la persona que recibe esta “cuota” es “el jefe.” En las ocasiones en que un coyote viene de cualquier estado del interior de la República, hacia la frontera con migrantes para cruzarlos, si aún no cuenta con personas para realizar el cruce, hospeda a los migrantes en un hotel mientras hace todos los arreglos.

Cabe destacar que el pago del hotel en pocas ocasiones es cubierto por el coyote, ya que lo que interesa es conservar la mayoría del pago por la migración para ellos. Una vez que consigue quién guiará a los migrantes, éste los entrega a ellos, los cuales pasarán

por ellos para trasladarlos a la casa de seguridad antes referida. Durante el tiempo en el que se les mantiene en esa casa de seguridad, se realizan los arreglos pendientes, en las ocasiones en que el migrante no es quien dispone del dinero y los familiares son quienes pagarán, siendo hasta que estos realicen o depositen cierta parte del pago o la totalidad para iniciar la movilidad del migrante.

En espera del cruce al vecino país, los coyotes les proveen alimentos, en la mayoría de las ocasiones es gratis, aunque dependiendo del coyote con quien vayan es la suerte de si se les cobra o no. Ahí mismo, en la casa antes mencionada, les dan oportunidad de asearse si así lo prefieren. La mayoría prefiere no hacerlo, ya que ahí se da mucho el hacinamiento de personas y debido a las malas condiciones de las instalaciones prefieren no bañarse. Referente a los alimentos, debido a que en la gran mayoría de las ocasiones es gratis, son de mala calidad o sólo les damos sopas instantáneas y si bien les va un sándwich, debido al bajo costo de éstos. Para beber no hay variables, sólo agua. Mira, güey, ya cuando están en la casa de seguridad ahí los dejan el tiempo que sea necesario, puede ser desde unas horas, si llegando de volada se puede cruzar, o desde un día hasta semanas, cuando está bien caliente el pedo.

En la referida casa de seguridad cuenta con vigilancia las veinticuatro horas del día, para que no se den fugas de migrantes que en ocasiones deciden hacerlo debido al tiempo que llevan ahí esperando para cruzar, o en ocasiones a los malos tratos debido a su estado de “deudor.”. El hacinamiento de “deudores” llega a ser de 30 hasta 50 personas. ¿Qué pasa con las personas que no quieren o no pueden pagar? Mejor eso no lo respondemos y pasamos a otro tema.

Violencia hacia los migrantes

Dependiendo de cómo sea el bato es como los van a tratar. Si hacen caso no le hacen nada ni les gritan, pero si vienen con su pinche pachorra sí empiezan a decirles mamadas y a pegarles. Hay unos pinches gordos que me caen bien culero, porque no quieren

caminar. A esos putos sí les damos unos putazos para que le muevan, que no mamen. Oye güey, hay viejas que van en chinga y estos cabrones con sus pinches pachorras. Cuando va gente grande no hay pedo, hay entre todos les ayudamos, pero eso sí, si ya no pueden caminar ya se los llevó la chingada, ahí se quedan.

¿Si en las casas de seguridad se viola a mujeres? ¡No mames, güey! ¡Nos lleva la chingada! Mínimo te presentan al “negro siete pilas”. No están permitidas las violaciones, porque si violas, te violan. Si tú violas a una mujer sin su consentimiento, te la van a meter a ti también, pero si una vieja desde que llega a la casa de seguridad te hace pedo, no hay bronca, ahí te la puedes chingar o en el monte en la madrugada que pasen, lo que interesa es que no se quejen con nadie así, no te hacen nada.

Metáforas sobre “la migra” americana

Antes de entrar en lo del cruce del río debes saber de quienes son de los que nos cuidamos, porque así como la migra algunos son buena onda, otros son bien culeros, por ejemplo, “el pato” es la lancha de la migra que anda en el Rio Bravo. Estos culeros son bien gachos porque si te ven que andas cruzando en la lancha o cámaras que cruzamos y no quieren batallar en el otro lado, aunque estés de lado mexicano, te rodean y te hacen círculos, como remolinos alrededor de nosotros hasta que nos pasan de lado americano y nos atrapan a todos, así los hijos de la chingada ya no nos corretean en el monte. Si cuando cruzamos en lancha y el lanchero es bien verga, se regresa al lado mexicano y pues ya después regresamos a cruzar más tarde.

Ahora viene “el mosco,” que es el helicóptero, esos güeyes andan a veces nada más chingando viendo a ver a quien se topan por todo el río y pos ya tenemos que esperarnos hasta que se vaya a la chingada para poder seguir. Cuando nos descubren pues todos se echan a correr para esconderse o para regresarse, pero no mames, cuando es de noche te avientan una pinche luz que hasta parece que es de día, se ve todo bien clarito como si el sol hubiera salido, lo

malo es que cuando quitan la luz vas corriendo y te das un putazo con los árboles.

Esos güeyes lo que hacen es ubicarte y llamar a las “las perre-ras” o a “los caballos,” estos güeyes son los que andan en la tierra, si andan en caballos no te les pelas, está bien cabrón, pero si andan en las camionetas pos está más fácil, la única forma de que te sigan es con las huellas que vas dejando en la arena porque está bien finita y pues de volada se ve cuando pasamos.

Los “profesionales” para cruzar la frontera

Nosotros recibimos de cuarenta dólares hasta ochenta dólares por mojado, todo depende de con quién te toca trabajar, no todos los patrones o jefes pagan igual. Lo que nosotros cobramos no lo cobramos hasta el final. Por ejemplo, igual que los otros güeyes “el mirador,” “el lanchero,” “la escalera,” “el levantón,” y nosotros “los guías,” no cobramos nada hasta que pegue el viaje, hasta que nosotros hablemos que ya llegamos y se entregan a los migrantes, es cuando nuestro trabajo termina. Sólo el del levantón termina hasta que se entrega al migrante a su familia, o se le deja en un lugar cercano a la familia. Ahí es cuando cada quien puede recibir su dinero, antes no.

Ya cuando nos avisan que se puede pasar, en corto nos move-mos en las camionetas a la casa de seguridad para levantar a los migrantes y llevarlos hasta el río. Ya estando ahí, si vamos a pasar en cámaras inflables, el güey que lleva las cámaras les da una bol-sa a cada quien para que echen su ropa, ahí mismo se tienen que encuerar para no mojar la ropa, nomás en calzones pasan, porque luego si se mojan allá de aquel lado vas dejando todo mojado y en corto te localizan. Otras veces les decimos que se lleven otro cam-bio de ropa, así la ropa mojada ahí la dejan tirada y ya se van secos. Si vamos a pasar en lanchas inflables pues ahí no hay pedo, por la ropa y aparte es más rápido, en corto pasamos, pero ahí es cuando tenemos que cuidarnos del “pato” que te comentamos, si no anda en ese rato de volada pasamos.

Todo el camino llevamos con nosotros un radio para comunicarnos, pero no debemos tirarlo o perderlo, sino el “jefe” nos madrea, la única oportunidad de tirarlo es cuando ya tienes bien cerquitas a la migra y no tienes oportunidad de escapar, entonces sí lo tiras; porque si llegas sin radio te chingan y en caso de que te escapes, ¡como chingaos le hablas al del levantón!

Bueno, aquí el que nos avisa cuándo pasar es el “mirador,” este güey está trepado toda la noche en un árbol chingón, abajo del Puente Internacional. Cuando ya estamos metidos en el monte con los migrantes, este güey nos avisa cuándo podemos pasar. Él ya sabe cómo está todo el pedo, turnos y rondines de la migra, este güey cobra diez dólares por cada migrante que se pase para el otro lado, ya que van pasando de grupos pequeños de personas para no hacer tanto bulto. Si hay una oportunidad buena, en chinga hay que pasar a todos, ahí trabaja en putiza el lancharo, este puto también cobra diez dólares por cada mojado que pasa por el río. Ya cuando estamos de aquel lado, en Estados Unidos, el jale de estos güeyes ya terminó, de ahí entra el jale de nosotros los guías.

Del río pa'llá sigue el jale del güey de la escalera, que también cruza el río con nosotros, ya cuando llegamos al muro, donde el recorrido del río hasta el muro es de 15 minutos cuando no hay nada de vigilancia y cuando andan ahí “engruesándola” nos toma hasta una hora para llegar al chingado muro, nomás por irnos escondiendo de esos putos. Bueno, ya cuando llegamos ahí, le hablamos por radio al güey de la escalera, este cabrón su único jale es venir, abrir su pinche escalera y recargarla al muro que mide como ocho o diez metros de puro concreto, ya de ahí aparte sigue el tubo que está bien chingón, pero comoquiera se la pelan.”

Bueno llega el de la escalera y la pone para que crucen todos los mojados. Este cabrón también cobra diez dólares por cada mojado que cruza. Ya cuando pasamos todos, el bato baja su escalera y se regresa para Reynosa con todo y la chingada escalera, porque no puede dejarla en el monte. Ya cuando subes el muro en la escalera tienes que brincar para el otro lado, allá ya

está menos alto, pero comoquiera nos ha pasado que los pendejos de los mojados caen mal y se chingan una pata, una mano, un brazo y cuanta madre.

Bueno, ya estamos del otro lado, para cuando llegas ahí ya sabes para dónde tienes que ir, porque hay unos que van para Brownsville. Si van para allá agarras la orilla del muro por lado americano y le das a patín hasta allá pero pues tienes que irte escondiendo y caminando despacio para que no te agarren. Desde Hidalgo hasta allá se hace como unas cuatro horas o cuatro y media, ya cuando llegas allá, se cruzan de dos en dos o de tres en tres, unas parcelas para llegar a la calle principal que está de volada, pero pues hay un chingo de migra. Ya cuando cruzas la calle esa no hay pedo, porque ahí esta una parquecito y pos ahí te haces pendejo corriendo o hablando por teléfono, como ahí siempre hay gente está con madre, porque te pones a hacer ejercicio mientras llamamos a los otros camaradas para el levantón.

Este güey, el “levantador” que va a pasar por nosotros cobra cuarenta o cincuenta dólares por chompa, para llevarlos a la casa de seguridad en el otro lado. Cuando llega se estaciona entre dos camionetas, casi siempre para que no se vea mucho y empiezan a subirse de uno por uno, pero no seguidos, “hay que despistarla.” Si en la camioneta no caben todos se va a dejar a los que entraron y luego regresa, mientras los demás pendejos se quedan haciendo ejercicio. Bueno, ya cuando llegamos a la casa llamamos a “el patrón” para avisar que ya pegó el viaje.”

Si el pedo va ser por Hidalgo hasta McAllen, entonces ahí te va. Ya que cruzaste el muro, cruzas una montaña de arena que está en corto, ya de ahí te tienes que meter entre las yerbas para irte escondiendo y no te vean, llegas a unas bodegas donde te puedes esconder mientras “los caminadores” te avisan cuándo puedes pasar. La labor del caminador es similar a la de los guías, pero éstos se adelantan para ir viendo si hay peligro o no y ya después se regresan a avisarles si pueden o no avanzar. El caminador que viene atrás del grupo, su jale es venir arreándolos, que no se quede nadie atrás y que vengan en una fila.

Cuando llegas a equis lugar, (...) ahí tenemos que hablarle al otro camarada para que pase por nosotros y pues tenemos que esperarlo escondidos entre las yerbas. Ya del muro hasta la calle equis hacemos una hora, o si hay vigilancia hasta dos horas y eso que no es mucho, pero sí hay chingo de migra. Ya para cuando está llegando el levantón nos llama el camarada al radio para que estemos preparados. Él está dando vueltas y levantando de pocos en pocos hasta que no queda nadie, cuando nos levanta nos lleva a la casa de seguridad en McAllen.

Cuando llegamos también tenemos que llamarle al “jefe” que ya pegó el viaje, pero sólo si todos ya llegaron. En caso de que no lleguen todos y hayan agarrado a algunos, pues ya le decimos quienes fueron los que llegaron. El encargado de este levantón también cobra como cincuenta dólares por chompa, para trasladarlos a la casa de seguridad.

Casos “especiales” de migrantes

Pero hay otros casos que no mames, esos sí son unos casos bien especiales güey, si “el jefe” te dice: “A tal o cual me lo pasas a güevo,” ahí sí el que se chinga es uno porque lo tienes que pasar a güevo güey, no hay de otra, si una pinche silla de ruedas tienes que llevar para cruzarla, llévatela, porque no puedes fallar. Obviamente “el jefe” por estos encargos especiales cobra una buena feria y a nosotros nos pagan un poco más y casi siempre son güerquillos, bebés, viejas embarazadas y ancianos, pero más más puro viejito.

Nombre güey, una vez pasamos un encargo especial del “jefe”, una viejita que ya iba bien mala pero pos teníamos que cruzarla. Fue un pedote, porque teníamos que cargarla y para cruzar el muro batallamos un chingo y para ir encaminándola, no mames, neta que es con la que más hemos batallado teníamos que cargarla, yo llevaba una nalga en mi hombro y este güey llevaba la otra nalga en su hombro. Lo más gacho fue cuando llegamos a un lugar, como ahí es donde nos levantan para llevarnos a la casa de seguridad. Oye pos no podíamos levantar a la viejita porque has de

cuenta que ya se nos andaba muriendo y el güey del levantón nos estaba apurando para que la echáramos a la camioneta y donde ese güey trató de jalarla para levantarla, le rasguño toda la piel, se le veía bien gacho toda la carne viva. Ya cuando entregamos a la señora, muy a güevo respiraba, ya ni fuerzas tenía, pero así la entregamos, nosotros hicimos nuestro jale. Ya los familiares nos la hicieron de pedo pero ya no es bronca de nosotros, ahí la dejamos y nos fuimos.

Aquí el que paga, pasa. Para nosotros sería mucho mejor pasar un chingo de gente, así es más feria para nosotros, pero también entre más gente, más batallas y hay más probabilidad de que nos agarre la migra. Hay veces que te llevas un grupo grande y a la mera hora agarran a todos y nomas pasamos nosotros y pues ahí ni la chinga ni la desvelada, porque ya no ganamos nada.

Redadas, odiseas de migrantes y de coyotes

Siempre nosotros tratamos de llevar pantalones y una playera fellona para camuflajearnos con los migrantes, en caso de que nos detengan a todos pues ya nos hacemos pasar por mojados y decimos que tratamos de pasar pero que no hemos podido. Para eso ya les advertimos a los mojados que no tiene que abrir la boca si nos agarran. Todos somos mojados.

Cuando te topas con las patrullas o los caballos de la migra, cada quien agarra para donde pueda para perderse y que no los agarren, yo siempre les digo a los mojados que si nos topamos con la migra, siempre corran para enfrente porque para allá hay más oportunidad de escaparte y de ir a esconderte donde los van a levantar. Si se regresan para atrás, pues no hay nada que hacer porque vas para el muro y como chingaos piensan pasarlo.

Ya si la migra nos agarra, pues ahora sí que le hagan como puedan porque pues ya la pasada no se hizo y si el pago del cruce fue arreglado desde antes, pues ya el dinero lo perdieron. Los que arreglaron para pagar una mitad en México y otra en el otro lado pues ya nomás perdieron la mitad, pero a los que habían pagado

completo ya se chingaron, “el jefe nunca pierde,” si los sueltan en esta frontera pueden pagar para intentar otra vez.

Algunos migrantes se logran escapar, y pues ya buscan qué hacer porque cada quien va por su lado. Si tienen suerte pues se topan con otros guías en el camino y los rescatan. Los rescates de migrantes también te los pagan bien porque estás ayudando a pasarlos. Cuando los entregas avisas que tú lo tienes y a ti es al que le pagan. Pero, cuando los coyotes que llevaban a los migrantes perdidos no quieren pagar, pues ya aquí es cuando empiezan a extorsionar a los familiares tanto de México como de Estados Unidos, si no les pagan no los sueltan ni lo entregan, sólo interesa recuperar el pago.

A mí – dice Pepe - me han detenido seis veces y sólo en una ocasión me mandaron para Sonora y otra para Mexicali, pero eso es cuando te topan varias veces, porque lo hacen adrede. Las otras veces me dejaban aquí mismo porque me hacía pasar por migrante. A mí – dice Meme - me han detenido diez veces pero igual me hago pasar por migrante. Siempre me han deportado aquí, pero siempre les digo que no he podido pasar y que sigo intentándolo, me hago la víctima para que se la crean. Hay veces que está bien cabrón porque llevas puros centroamericanos y si te detienen pues luego-luego te sacan a flote porque eres el único mexicano y de volada se dan color que eres el coyote.

Análisis y Conclusión

Los relatos de Pepe y Meme, aunque situados en el 2012, año en que comparten sus experiencias, constituyen narrativas personales y colectivas sobre el tráfico de migrantes por la frontera entre Tamaulipas y Texas, específicamente desde Reynosa hacia ciudades del Valle de Texas. Son, además, narrativas que destacan significados, pero también relaciones, procesos y normas que se construyen en y durante el tráfico de migrantes mediante consenso – y pago - de ambas partes.

Desde esta perspectiva, los relatos son un recurso metodológico importante para profundizar en la migración irregular de migrantes.

Aunque de forma fragmentada y a veces zigzagueante, muestran trazos detallados sobre este fenómeno y dan pistas para generar nuevas preguntas. No obstante, como hace años afirmó Durand, la idea es “reconstruir la historia migratoria, que no de vida;”¹⁷ y al menos en este caso, la historia es sobre un momento clave al cruzar la frontera.

A través de este recurso, son evidentes varios hallazgos y aportes al tema del tráfico de migrantes. El primero es el concerniente al contrato de los coyotes: como se observa, se trata de un negocio histórico en esta región fronteriza, pero que en la actualidad adopta no sólo una lógica económica —pago por cruzar— sino también cultural. Los migrantes “saben” que los servicios de los coyotes son necesarios para lograr el objetivo de cruzar la frontera hacia Estados Unidos, aun cuando son conscientes de que se trata de una actividad ilegal, costosa y riesgosa desde cualquier ángulo.

Por otro lado, para los coyotes, aunque también son conscientes de la ilegalidad de sus actividades, éstos la consideran un trabajo más en la frontera, con beneficios y costos; un trabajo que forma parte de lo que en otro espacio Slack y Campbell han llamado “regímenes ilícitos,”¹⁸ es decir, actividades que operan al margen del Estado, de la ley, que se fincan en complicidades, jerarquías, diferentes funciones y habilidades para maximizar ganancias, lo que no exenta de peligros.

El segundo hallazgo y aporte se orienta hacia el uso de las llamadas “casas de seguridad,” tanto en la frontera norte de México como en el sur de Estados Unidos. Los relatos presentados muestran estas casas como lugares estratégicos para concentrar y organizar a los grupos de migrantes que han contratado los servicios de un coyote, pero también como lugares clave para el funcionamiento del tráfico de migrantes. Aunque se describen los usos y algunas formas de interacción en las casas, algo que no se hace visible es la diversidad de tratos que hay en estos lugares hacia los migrantes, y mucho menos los diferentes tipos de casas, como lo ha mostrado Hernández.¹⁹

La violencia hacia los migrantes es otro de los aportes que se encuentran en los relatos. Si bien se trata de un tema que ya ha sido analizado en múltiples estudios, en lo referente a las agresiones de coyotes hacia migrantes y las normas que pueden operar, muy poco se sabía de fuente directa. Tal parece que el esfuerzo de migrantes puede ser reconocido porque facilita el trabajo de los coyotes, pero no hacerlo, conlleva una sanción no sólo física—como golpearlos—, sino también moral y de género al comparar el esfuerzo que pueden hacer más las mujeres que los hombres.

De igual forma, el tema de las violaciones de mujeres migrantes es otro aspecto que ha sido más divulgado —y especulado— por la prensa que ha analizado a detalle. Son pocos los estudios que han aportado sobre este tema, como lo muestra el estudio de Sin Fronteras,²⁰ al señalar que las mujeres migrantes viven una violencia institucional, intrafamiliar y durante el tránsito migratorio. Sin embargo, algo que resalta en los relatos es que, casos como el de la violación, se rigen por códigos que tienen los migrantes y por reglas que operan en la jerarquía del tráfico de migrantes.

El cuarto aporte es el que se orienta a las metáforas que los coyotes construyen sobre “la migra,” es decir, sobre los agentes de la Patrulla Fronteriza de Estados Unidos. Se trata de un tema que para el caso de otras regiones fronterizas, como Tijuana-San Diego, ya ha sido abordado por Meneses,²¹ pero que para el caso de la frontera Tamaulipas-Texas, adopta la particularidad de usar adjetivos coloquiales para nombrar la infraestructura que utilizan los agentes de migración (pato/lancha, mosco/helicóptero, perrera/camioneta), pero también como estrategia de comunicación en clave.

Por otro lado, los relatos de los coyotes entrevistados también destacan un quinto hallazgo y aporte para conocer cómo funciona el tráfico de migrantes: lo que en otro lugar Hernández ha denominado un complejo sistema “de actores sociales clandestinos con una división, especialización y profesionalización del trabajo que opera antes, durante y después de cruzar la frontera Tamaulipas-Texas.”²² Es decir, se trata de un coyotaje

moderno que utiliza a diferentes actores para lograr su cometido, en el marco de la seguridad fronteriza implementada en Estados Unidos.

Hasta ahora, los migrantes que cruzaban la frontera México-Estados Unidos de forma irregular, se habían visto como un todo homogéneo cuya lógica para lograr su objetivo era pagar y contratar los servicios de un coyote. No obstante, un sexto hallazgo en los relatos es que también hay diferencias entre los migrantes: no sólo se trata de diferencias y costos que responden a la nacionalidad de los migrantes, sino también a los denominados “casos especiales,” en otras palabras, migrantes que debido a la urgencia o a la vulnerabilidad, pueden pagar más por un servicio diferente.

Finalmente, las estrategias que utilizan tanto los migrantes como los coyotes al momento de las redadas de los agentes de la Patrulla Fronteriza, es un tema que poco se ha explorado pero que en los relatos da pistas claras sobre éstas. Se trata de estrategias que van desde el “adoctrinamiento” de los migrantes por los coyotes (“todos somos migrantes”) para la seguridad de estos últimos; pedagogías en caso de abordajes inesperados (correr hacia el norte, no hacia el sur); sugerencias de sobrevivencia (buscar a guías y cuidarse de extorsiones); hasta estrategias de vulnerabilidad (hacerse la víctima).

Como se observa, los relatos concentran una diversidad de narrativas e indicios sobre el tráfico de migrantes en una región fronteriza particular. Aunque se remiten a un contexto histórico específico de violencia social en la frontera norte de México y de securitización de la frontera estadounidense, las narrativas aún son vigentes para comprender este fenómeno en la región, pero sobre todo, muestran la relevancia de los relatos para comprenderlo más ampliamente.

El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, Matamoros

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MIGRATION NORTH *of the* BORDER



Border Walls, DREAMers and Trump: Politics, Policy and the Banality of Evil

by

Terence M. Garrett and Paul J. Pope

Abstract:

The 2018 budget debate spectacle illustrates problems facing public policy-making in the USA. Both the president and the Congress used as pawns in the game of policy-making DREAMers and border dwellers—both constituting and embodying Agamben’s concept of *homo sacer*. President Trump intended to use DREAMers—those who were born outside of the USA and brought into the country as children—to extort concessions from Democrats to build his big, beautiful wall. Democratic leaders in the US House and Senate readily acceded to playing the policy game by proposing \$25-\$30 billion to fund the president’s wall project. At the end of the game for FY 2018, both sides agreed to spend \$1.6 billion on “fencing” infrastructure whereby Trump grudgingly declared victory, while congressional Democrats declared that Trump’s wall would not be built according to the president’s standards. Meanwhile, federal courts ruled the Trump administration’s handling of the end of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) was effectively unconstitutional and would be reconsidered if the president’s administration decided at a later date to proceed.

Border walls create the specter of death and destruction for border crossers and dwellers. As walls appear in more places along the border, migrants are pushed

into unpopulated and desolate areas that are dangerous to traverse. Border dwellers have their property rights taken from them due to provisions of the 2005 REAL ID Act and 2006 Secure Fence Act when Congress authorizes funding for border wall construction. Federal and state bureaucrats in law enforcement are used to capture border crossers and restrict the rights of USA citizens within a 100-mile range of the border. Hannah Arendt's concept of the *banality of evil* is used to illustrate the day-to-day activities of border apprehension bureaucrats who enforce federal and state laws leading to policy that has caused over 7,200 deaths on the USA-Mexico border and the restriction of human rights for the *homo sacer* along the border and in the Rio Grande Valley. This paper addresses the problem of the spectacle on the *homo sacer* through the implementation of border security policy. The president and the Congress are complicit in a game that results in the *banality of evil*.

Introduction

[Reflecting upon Adolf Eichmann's execution for crimes against Jews in Nazi Germany] ... "It was as though in those last minutes he was summing up the lesson that this long course in human wickedness had taught us — the lesson of the fearsome, word-and-thought-defying *banality of evil*." — Hannah Arendt¹

"Evil comes from a failure to think. It defies thought for as soon as thought tries to engage itself with evil and examine the premises and principles from which it originates, it is frustrated because it finds nothing there. That is the banality of evil." — Amos Elon [2006 Introduction to Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem*]² A tweet produced by Republican presidential candidate Donald J. Trump, April 16, 2015, said "Our border is being breached daily by criminals. We must build a wall and deduct costs from Mexican foreign aid! Donaldjtrump.com."³

The federal budget negotiations for FY 2018 are concluded. A \$1.6 billion wall infrastructure line item has passed, along with the \$1.3 trillion overall budget. The purpose of this paper is to offer an interpretation of the budget policy process as it pertains to the agenda, adoption and implementation of the funding for the border wall and how it was impacted by the discourse concerning DREAMers as to whether they would obtain a path to citizenship or even be allowed to remain in the USA. Like pawns in a game of chess, DREAMers and border dwellers were used by all partisans in Congress as well as the president of the USA to further their respective agendas with regard to the annual budget process. Problems arise as to how DREAMers and USA-Mexico border dwellers were used to move their respective agendas.

President Trump was cited by *New York Times* reporters as seizing on immigration as the cause of countless social and economic problems. Mr. Trump entered office with an agenda of symbolic but incompletely thought-out goals, the product not of rigorous policy debate but of emotionally charged personal interactions and an instinct for tapping into the nativist views of white working-class Americans. Like many of his initiatives, his effort to change American immigration policy has been executed through a disorderly and dysfunctional process that sought from the start to defy the bureaucracy charged with enforcing it.⁴

President Trump is well known for his lack of effort to read extensive tracts of policy-related materials, especially intelligence focused, and prefers to have such information given to him by trusted advisers or watching television.⁵ His apparent lack of interest in reading could be a cause for un-reflexive policy positions that may be easily manipulated by those with whom he last came into contact. For example, DREAMers and the question of having an open path to citizenship is suspect or in doubt, especially when Trump comes into contact with policy advisers such as John Kelly, his chief of staff, and Attorney General Jeff Sessions, both of whom are noted generally

as being anti-immigrant.⁶ Trump has taken positions at times in favor of citizenship for DREAMers, but generally falls back to denying the possibility for DREAMer citizenship as exhibited by his behavior overturning his predecessor's DACA executive orders. Trump is ostensibly forcing Congress to pass a law either codifying aspects of DACA or providing a path to citizenship for people in this category. Trump's behavior as to whether to go for or against legislation in support of or against a path to citizenship for DREAMers thereby exhibits tendencies to go with the political winds at the moment. This is shown by his propensity to play the policy game through social media, most especially through *Twitter*. The pressure on border dwellers and DREAMers was applied again with the administration's Zero Tolerance policy used to take migrant children from their families from April 6, 2018, to June 20, 2018, depriving undocumented border crossers their due process rights.⁷ Trump engages in public policy agenda setting and policy formulation through the use of *Twitter*.

"Tweeting" has been candidate (now president) Donald J. Trump's regular means for mass communication to the public. *Twitter* is used internationally as a social medium to send 140 (or so) - character blurbs for whatever reason. Social media like *Twitter* is instantaneous and produces a footprint that is difficult, if not at all possible, to completely redact. In particular, the analysis offered here will be conducted using the case of the tweet-effects on USA-Mexico border dwellers and DREAMers particularly situated along the Rio Grande, the middle of which is the international boundary between Mexico and Texas.

The paper examines the *banality of evil*⁸ as it pertains to the border region and affected DREAMers, the effects of Trump's and the Congress's creation of a media spectacle and subsequent decline of republican governance towards authoritarian populism.⁹ The present analysis examines Trump's border policy agenda using tweets and other social media to be categorized in a manner that demonstrates the evocative

nature and crisis management-mode prevalent during the FY 2018 budget negotiations as they pertain to the border wall. The consequences of the border wall building agenda threaten the people dwelling in the region. We conclude with an overall analysis and discussion of current events using a critical approach for public policy and administration.

Congress: Aimless on Immigration and Border Policy

With Congress' passing of the \$1.3 trillion bill to fund the government into September 2019 the government stopped well short of any protection of DREAMers. The omnibus budget bill included record level funding for enforcement of immigration policy aimed primarily at beefing up detention centers and increased policing power. This legislation, signed by President Trump, increases militarization of an already militarized border and rejects (or ignores) the popular demand for DREAMer protections. Ornstein and Mann¹⁰ argue that vigorous congressional oversight was the norm throughout the twentieth century, but in the twenty-first century Congress has largely ignored its responsibilities here. This abdication by Congress is particularly troubling since Article I, §8 of the U.S. Constitution establishes immigration and naturalization as a plenary power of Congress.

The twenty-first century has ushered in an era of congressional abdication to the executive branch on foreign policy and national security issues not previously seen. Since 2000, "Congress has shown little appetite for any serious oversight or for using the power of the purse or pointed public hearings to call the executive branch to account, [and] executive agencies that once viewed Congress with at least some trepidation now regard it with contempt."¹¹ Unsurprisingly, this fact has only aided President Trump's ability to ridicule Congress and its members publicly. Congress' unwillingness to counter the president is glaring, even after the president mocks members of his own party. However, this avoidance of checking the executive branch is certainly a

“double-edged sword.” Trump’s mercurial management style, coupled with his own divisive language, has not inspired much congressional cooperation with the President’s policy agenda. Additionally, Congress has become exceedingly dysfunctional and its legislative process has all but stalled out on most pertinent issues. The president’s bluster on immigration and the border wall pushed Congress to manage a bipartisan deal in February 2018. The deal included legal status for DREAMers, \$25 billion for a border wall, spread out over ten years, and an end to the diversity lottery program.¹² Because the border wall funding was to span a decade, President Trump rejected the bipartisan deal. Sen. Richard Durbin (D-Ill.) specified in a statement to the *Washington Post* that, “[h]e (President Trump) created this problem, and he’s making it clear today he has no intention of solving it.”¹³ In the same article, Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine) asserted a more positive tone that a bipartisan plan would likely get results.¹⁴

The left-right discourse here indicates a division of expectation between the more pessimistic Democrats and the hopeful Republicans. Republican members of Congress are positioning their narrative as supportive to the president’s agenda regardless of the president’s mercurial nature. Senator Durbin’s comment indicates the Democrats viewed the president’s desire for a bipartisan solution with suspicion.

Moments before the February bipartisan vote on the new immigration plan in Congress, the President tweeted that the plan was already a failure and he would veto it if it passed.¹⁵ Even though the President and the control of both houses of Congress rested with the Republicans, neither branch seems to have an aligned policy agenda. Just when Congress appeared to be making legislative headway, it is knocked off balance regularly by unexpected last minute tweets from the President. Congressional Republicans during this timeframe were not interested in calling the President’s veto bluff. Trump begrudgingly signed the omnibus spending bill in March 2018

to extend the federal budget another year, but rejected further negotiations on immigration or DACA, citing the fact Congress' refusal to appropriate the full \$25 billion for his planned border wall.¹⁶ The largely unpopular border wall was the focus of the conflict between the president and his own party in Congress. The disruptive nature of border policies of late-modernity blurs sociocultural boundaries and constructs a pervasive sense of economic insecurity, which heightens public anxiety.¹⁷

The Border Wall: What It Means for Border Dwellers

The modern case of the border wall is the embodiment of the problem between freedom and security. As a *simulacrum*,¹⁸ the wall does not represent peace or security. It represents profits for corporate wall-builders, security technology, deaths and violence, and loss of migrant and local citizen human rights.¹⁹ If anything, there is an increasing militarization along the Mexico-USA border as the wall moves migrants into dangerous desert and mountain areas resulting in over 7,200 migrants dying crossing the border.²⁰ With an increase of 17% in deaths at the border over the first seven months of 2017, *The Guardian* notes that in the previous year “the US Border Patrol has reported that about half as many migrants were apprehended during border crossings in the first six months of 2016 compared to the first six months of 2017—down from 267,746 people to 140,024 people.”²¹ However, the Mexico-USA border is increasingly becoming a zone where migrants perish—exhibiting a manifestation of human wickedness from Arendt's (1965) concept of the *banality of evil*—all based on the border security apparatus. US citizens oppose the border wall by 62% to 36% according to a December 13, 2017, Quinnipiac poll—and it has been a clear majority against the wall previously—and by a margin of 7 to 1, those polled said that DACA [Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival] immigrants should stay.²²

A question is raised as to whether the USA is still a democracy. The USA lost its “full democracy” status in 2015, according

to *The Economist*, and is now considered a “flawed democracy” ranked 21st in the most recent democracy index due mostly to a movement since 2016 towards “illiberal democracy” and “new authoritarianism.”²³ The trend towards illiberalism has moved since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 (hereafter referred to as “9-11”). Agamben²⁴ analyzed President George W. Bush’s reaction to the terrorist attacks of 9-11 and stated the presidential administration created an authoritarian state reaction (or *state of exception*) thereby jeopardizing the USA’s status as a representative democracy without due regard for human rights and civil liberties. The erosion of political rights continues since 9-11. Agamben²⁵ contends that there are increasing numbers of people no longer represented by the nation-state and the rising conflict between human and citizen is a fiction of sovereignty in crisis.

In the next section, President Trump’s Tweets will be considered for their policy and program ramifications for the border security, particularly in agenda setting and policy formulation as well as policy adoption. The president’s *Twitter* account actions provide insight as to his thinking and aspirations for the border wall agenda. Therefore, the presidential tweets will be analyzed for policy content and consequences.

Categorizing President Trump’s Tweets

With regard to President Trump’s tweets, his intentions as to where he wants to go regarding border security policy are comprised of three primary interrelated initiatives: (1) more personnel (i.e., Customs and Border Protection [CBP] and Immigration and Customs Enforcement [ICE]); (2) increased use and more acquisition of surveillance technology; and, (3) more border wall infrastructure. This paper is concerned with the expansion beyond the current 670 miles of fences and walls along the 1,954-mile Mexico-USA border and, additionally, the policy impact on DREAMers, who along with border dwell-

ers, and undocumented border crossers are considered *homo sacer*;²⁶ or people without their full set of constitutional and human rights.²⁷ The tweets on the subject of the border wall and DACA that are ostensibly designed as attempts to get the Congress and the public on board with the wall project. These ‘tweets’ may be categorized as (1) addressing, manufacturing (or creating) crises; (2) abusing or shaming public officials for border wall acquiescence or compliance; (3) reinforcing President Trump’s political base to inform them of his commitment to campaign promises; or, (4) using other policy initiatives (such as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA) to negotiate completion of the border wall project for inclusion in the FY 2018 budget. These categories are not mutually exclusive but are provided here (Table 1) to analyze President Trump’s push for the Mexico-USA border wall (see page 208).

Table 1 offers a few snapshots of President Trump’s tweets to place into some context as to where he stands with regards to border security, border wall and DACA issues. President Trump clearly wants the “big, beautiful wall” constructed and will blame his opponents—defined by his Tweets as Democrats, uncooperative Republicans, Mexicans (and Central Americans)—for being anti-security and unpatriotic for opposing the structure. He attempted to use DACA as a bargaining tool to obtain the border wall.

President Trump’s tweets have a direct bearing on the Mexico-USA border region. In the next section, the policy ramifications of the directives contained in the tweets will be analyzed and assessed as to how they impact the lower Rio Grande Valley in Texas. A significant portion of Trump’s proposed wall infrastructure, as approved by Congress, will find its way to the region, impacting federal wildlife refuges, private conservation preserves, farmers, ranchers, businesses, and landowners. Additionally, another group impacted directly by the border wall are the DREAMers living along the border as addressed here, but elsewhere throughout the USA.

Table 1: Categories for President Trump's Border Wall/Security Tweets

Crisis Management	Acquiescence/Blame	Maintaining the Base	Policy Negotiations
<p><i>Border Security and Corresponding Budget Compliance through Crises, Wrapping Compliance with Patriotism</i></p> <p>See Appendix: 3, 6, 7, 9, 12, 13, 18, 19, 25, 31, 33, 34, 40, 42, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51</p>	<p><i>Blame Democrats, Obama, and Party and/or the Media, Rogue Republicans and/or Mexicans/Central Americans for Migration, Border Security and Other Problems</i></p> <p>See Appendix: 1, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 60, 61, 62</p>	<p><i>Reaffirming Commitment to the Wall Pledge and Getting Agency or Party Support</i></p> <p>See Appendix: 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 18, 21, 25, 26, 27, 31, 34, 41, 42, 47, 50, 59, 61, 62</p>	<p><i>Using DACA as a Wedge to Win the Wall via the Border Wall and/or Budget Extensions</i></p> <p>See Appendix: 2, 6, 17, 18, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 29, 30, 36, 38, 39, 41, 44, 46, 47, 49</p>
Selected examples:	Selected examples:	Selected examples:	Selected examples:
<p>31. Putting Pelosi/Schumer Liberal Puppet Jones into office in Alabama would hurt our great Republican Agenda of low on taxes, tough on crime, strong on military and borders...so much more. Look at your 401-k's since Election. Highest Stock Market EVER! Jobs are roaring back!</p>	<p>35. The problem with agreeing to a policy on immigration is that the Democrats don't want secure borders, they don't care about safety for U.S.A.</p>	<p>34. Border Patrol Officer killed at Southern Border; another badly hurt. We will seek out and bring to justice those responsible. We will, and must, build the Wall!</p>	<p>36. Any deal on DACA that does not include STRONG border security and the desperately needed WALL is a total waste of time. March 5th is rapidly approaching and the Dems seem not to care about DACA. Make a deal!</p>
<p>25. Leaving Camp David for the White House. Great meetings with the Cabinet and Military on many very important subjects including Border Security so the desperately needed Wall, the ever increasing Drug and Opioid Problem, Infrastructure, Military, Budget, Trade and DACA.</p>	<p>14. We need the Wall for the safety and security of our country. We need the Wall to help stop the massive inflow of drugs from Mexico, now rated the number one most dangerous country in the world. If there is no Wall, there is no Deal!</p>	<p>7. Great to see how hard Republicans are fighting for our Military and Safety at the Border. The Dems just want illegal immigrants to pour into our nation unchecked. If stalemate continues, Republicans should go to 51% (Nuclear Option) and vote on real, long term budgets, no C.R.'s!</p>	<p>2. I have offered DACA a wonderful deal, including a doubling in the number of recipients so a twelve year pathway to citizenship, for two reasons: (1) Because the Republicans want to fix a long time terrible problem. (2) To show that Democrats do not want to solve DACA, only use it!</p>

Source: See Appendix (this paper) for corresponding tweets signified numerically 1-62. Some tweets overlap categories. These tweets span the time-frame for the FY 2018 budget negotiations from about October 10, 2017, to Jun 25, 2018. Not all tweets were used in the table, but are available to the reader.

Consequences for Trump's Wall and What It Means for the Rio Grande Valley of Texas

Wildlife Refuges, Conservation Centers, and Eco-Tourism

People dwelling in the Rio Grande Valley have had problems with previous border wall construction, particularly during the 2007-2009 timeframe. Wildlife refuges such as the Sabal Palm Sanctuary are surrounded by the border wall. Visitors pass through a gap in the wall with a Border Patrol agent present, wondering if they are still present in U.S. territory. The estrangement sensation is demonstrated by "Gloria Regis, a visitor from Michigan, [who] says it's peaceful but also 'feels like no man's land. I wouldn't want to know I'm not considered in the U.S. on this side of the Rio Grande.'"²⁸ President Trump's new border wall proposal includes building a wall on the levees in Hidalgo County including the Santa Ana Wildlife Refuge and the National Butterfly Center (which is privately owned).

Additionally, the World Birding Center has nine locations in the lower Rio Grande Valley. One of the centers is located near Hidalgo, Texas. Access would be cut off for birders and others wanting to view wildlife unavailable anywhere else on the continent with further construction of the border wall similar to what occurred in 2008 at the Hidalgo World Birding Center.

The lower Rio Grande Valley is heavily dependent on eco-tourism. Birding centers, wildlife center visitations, and hiking are important to the local economy. Continued construction may completely destroy environmental destinations that have not yet received the border wall. Nelson²⁹ notes in the lower Rio Grande Valley:

More than 165,000 nature tourists visit the region each year, infusing \$465 million into the local economy and sustaining 6,600 jobs, according to a 2011 Texas A&M University study.... Creating the ecotourism industry has taken decades of hard work, fundraising and

public-private cooperation.... Army Corps of Engineers maps show plans for 28 miles of new levee wall and 32 miles of new border wall in the Valley, slicing through the wildlife corridor. Congress has approved \$341 million to repair and strengthen existing fence, far short of the \$1.6 billion the Trump administration has requested, but it's enough to worry wildlife advocates. In addition to nearly 3 miles of levee wall and fence through Santa Ana, the expected path of the fence would cut through or build around the 100-acre National Butterfly Center preserve; Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park, a 797-acre preserve; and the Roma Bluffs World Birding Center. Santa Ana (Wildlife Refuge) is slated to receive an 18-foot steel bollard fence atop a concrete-base levee wall. The project would also clear a 150-foot "enforcement zone" adjacent to the fence, all of which would cost an expected \$45 million, Corps of Engineers records show.

Opposition to the border wall being placed particularly in the Santa Ana Wildlife Refuge has escalated. *USA Today* reporter, Rick Jervis, after interviewing several environmentalists noted that "The Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge — a 2,088-acre tangle of trees, animals, birds and butterflies straddling the U.S.-Mexico border in South Texas — could become the site of one of the fiercest standoffs between federal engineers on one side and locals and environmentalists opposing a border wall on the other."³⁰ The proposed border wall extension, upwards towards \$30 billion proposed in this year's budget negotiations, threatens the environment and economic prosperity for the area and will likely face extensive local resistance.

Property Owners and Eminent Domain

According to Munch,³¹ the use of eminent domain is legal action by the government to acquire private property by force rather than a voluntary exchange. Eminent domain problems for private landowners and border dwellers along the Rio Grande occurred in the 2007-2009. Border wall construction

had problems of lowball offers for property to owners as “many of them received initial offers that were far below market value. And dozens accepted those amounts without seeking any legal help, only to discover neighbors had won far larger settlements after hiring attorneys.”³² Regardless of legality, eminent domain does not ensure fair market value is paid.³³ Examples of these low-pay discrepancies include: (1) a trucking business owner who was offered \$1,600.00 for sixty feet of property, but with legal help received \$40,000.00; (2) an entertainment district developer was offered initially \$233,000.00 for land, refused the offer with attorney advice and received \$4.7 million; and, (3) the Sabal Palm Preserve (Nature Conservancy) settled for \$1 million when the initial government offer for 8 acres of land was \$114,000.00. About 400 landowners were impacted by the border wall in 2007-2009 and some of the early lawsuits brought about by a group of “28 landowners who asked for juries, the half who settled received additional checks that were on average 1,200 percent more than the original offer.”³⁴ There were 320 lawsuits in U.S. District for South Texas Judge Hanen’s court and as of April 2017 there were about 90 cases still unresolved³⁵ Not all property owners fared well, however, as those individuals who did not have legal counsel took the initial U.S. government offer at what constituted less than fair market value.

Property owners, some of whom have had the land in their families since the Spanish land grants in the 1700s and who do not have attorneys or other legal skills and might be impacted by the next stages of border wall construction, could be receiving some support from the Texas Civil Rights Project (TCRP). Efrén Olivares, TCRP’s racial and economic justice director, stated, “Under the rules governing federal condemnation actions, a landowner who disagrees with the amount offered by the government has the right to request a jury trial.... Our team at the Texas Civil Rights Project is ready to represent landowners, as well as train and deploy legal volunteers to ensure that all landowners have the representation and respect they

deserve.”³⁶ The economic impact of receiving what many may agree is “fair market value” does not take into consideration any loss of future income nor the impact of possible displacement of the citizen. An owner’s sentimental attachment may even increase their perceived value of the property, which in turn increases their loss under an eminent domain action.³⁷

Dreamers and DACA

The DREAM Act (The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors) Act passed in 2001 was intended to provide relief to immigrant children (now referred to as DREAMers) brought into the USA by their parents. The legislative goal was to provide a means for undocumented immigrants who arrived in the U.S. as children to gain a pathway to permanent legal status; provided those individuals achieved certain milestones, including:

- Attending or graduating from an institution of higher learning;
- Be of a certain age to apply;
- Be physically present in the U.S. for a certain number of years;
- Have good moral character; and,
- Not have violated other immigration laws

The term has been used to define individuals in the U.S. who were brought to the country at an early age without documentation but have assimilated to U.S. culture and have been educated by U.S. school systems.³⁸

“The representation of immigrants in the DREAM Act illustrates a complex relationship among children, parents, and the US society.”³⁹ DREAMers are generally stressed and in legal limbo because Congress has yet to pass comprehensive legislation that would grant them a clear path to citizenship and pro-

vide better protection from deportation to the original country of their birth. President Trump and some of the Republicans in Congress are using DREAMers as a bargaining chip⁴⁰ in ongoing budget negotiations to garner Democratic support for the extension of the Mexico-US border wall. Jervis states, “Last [January], the government briefly shut down when Senate Democrats voted against a short-term spending bill because it didn’t include protection for DREAMers. Around one in five of the 3.6 million DREAMers in the U.S. live along the 2,000-mile U.S.-Mexico border, according to the Southern Border Communities Coalition.”⁴¹ A few of the DREAMers interviewed by the reporter commented that “Even if there’s a deal, we don’t want a wall”⁴² and “We’re Americans by heart, just not on paper.”⁴³ The DREAMers interviewed were all from the lower Rio Grande Valley (RGV) and all would be adversely impacted by the border wall in their respective communities. Clearly, these DREAMers dwelling in the RGV live in a state of anxiety as they await some positive movement in policy for their capacity to continue dwelling in the USA — and possibly become citizens.

DREAMers are routinely presented by those who would deport them — such as President Trump — as both illegitimate and somewhat acceptable people to occupy the space on the United States side of the border, depending upon congressional action. However, their presence is often tainted by the current national security discourse. Security concerns in the post-9-11 world depict the border as an exception in a space where national security emergency and the rule of law are merged and indistinguishable.⁴⁴ The identities of the DREAMers are socially constructed as there have been attempts to draw a distinction between citizens and noncitizens.⁴⁵ This distinction, in the context of border security, merges the circumstance of DREAMers with that of homeland security concerns. On April 1, 2018, Trump declared that “a deal for Dreamers was dead.”⁴⁶ The congressional Republicans, according to Trump, should use the nuclear option to pass more draconian anti-migration laws⁴⁷ as apparently he no

longer sees DREAMers as usable pawns in getting his border wall. The spectacle of national security has a negative effect on the presence of DREAMers. There is a transformation from a humanitarian action protecting those with limited rights to be in the USA to dispensing or ridding DREAMers as part of an illegal border security, or homeland security, violation.

Moving Forward, Summary and Conclusion

The Trump administration has requested in its Fiscal Year 2019 budget \$23 billion for border security as the “request includes \$18 billion toward the border wall along the Mexican borders”⁴⁸ although the US Senate budget is \$1.6 billion for border barriers, including the wall.⁴⁹ The budget negotiations of FY 2018 and Zero Tolerance policy laid bare the banality of evil with regard to policymakers undermining the basic human rights of DREAMers, border dwellers, and, of course, undocumented migrants who cross the Mexico-USA border. The border security apparatus creates the conditions for *homo sacer*, people without rights or with fewer rights than most citizens. The border security apparatus and the Trump administration’s adoption of this Zero Tolerance immigration policy appears to harken back to the German Third Reich deportation policy of “Ruthless Toughness” (*rücksichtsloser Härte*) for which Eichmann oversaw its implementation.⁵⁰ The criminalization of immigration and migrant asylum is not an invention of twenty-first century America. Arendt’s *banality of evil* concept was never wholly a singular event of genocide, but a complex series of government apparatuses and bureaucratic decisions exemplifying the potential onset of authoritarianism which could lead to totalitarianism if left unchecked by the USA. These despotic conditions began with the deportation of those the state did not see as appropriate to their national identity.⁵¹

In this paper, the 2018 budget clearly illustrates the spectacle of public policy-making in the USA. DREAMers, migrants and

border dwellers—constitute and embody Agamben’s concept of *homo sacer*—and are used as pawns to be objectified and used to garner concessions from Democrats to build Trump’s big, beautiful wall. Democratic leaders acceded to Trump’s gambit for the border wall as both sides agreed to spend \$1.6 billion on “fencing” infrastructure as a compromise—with further negotiations in future budget cycles. In the meantime, federal courts ruled the Trump administration’s handling of the end of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) was effectively unconstitutional and would be reconsidered if pursued by the president’s administration decided at a later date to proceed.

As shown in this paper, border walls cause death for border crossers and disrupt the lives and well-being of border dwellers. Provisions of the 2005 REAL ID Act and 2006 Secure Fence Act authorized further security actions and funding by Congress for border wall construction. Federal and state bureaucrats in law enforcement capture border crossers and restrict the rights of USA citizens within a 100-mile range of the border, especially their fourth and fifth amendment constitutional protections. Arendt’s concept of the *banality of evil* illustrates the effects of the governing apparatus and border apprehension bureaucrats who enforce federal and state laws leading to policy that has caused over 7,200 deaths on the USA-Mexico border, the abuse of DREAMers and the restriction and denial of human rights for the *homo sacer*.

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
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APPENDIX

Appendix notes— Selected Donald J. Trump Tweets Regarding or Related to Border Security and the Wall (Chronology— Retweets, Likes, and Photos Redacted— October 2017 to June 2018). Please note that these tweets and the timeframe correspond roughly to the first government shutdown through the approval of a budgetary extension for three weeks through the Zero Tolerance policy. The border wall, DACA, immigration, military spending, and other issues were subjects of President Trump’s tweets and indicates his predisposition towards these policies. Since this paper is primarily concerned with the border wall, those tweets were selected for this project. All tweets are headed thusly:

Donald J. Trump Verified account @realDonaldTrump
Follow Follow @realDonaldTrump

1. Democrats are not interested in Border Safety & Security or in the funding and rebuilding of our Military. They are only interested in Obstruction! 8:08 PM - 27 Jan 2018

Retrieved 2/5/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/957465263129219073>

2. I have offered DACA a wonderful deal, including a doubling in the number of recipients & a twelve year pathway to citizenship, for two reasons: (1) Because the Republicans want to fix a long time terrible problem. (2) To show that Democrats do not want to solve DACA, only use it! 7:58 PM - 27 Jan 2018

Retrieved 2/5/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/957462746060206080>

3. Thank you to Brandon Jud of the National Border Patrol Council for his strong statement on @foxandfriends that we very badly NEED THE WALL. Must also end loophole of “catch & release” and

clean up the legal and other procedures at the border NOW for Safety & Security reasons. 3:55 AM - 27 Jan 2018

Retrieved 2/5/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/957220637705109505>

4. DACA has been made increasingly difficult by the fact that Cryin' Chuck Schumer took such a beating over the shutdown that he is unable to act on immigration! 9:16 AM - 26 Jan 2018

Retrieved 2/5/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/956938973326098432>

5. Cryin' Chuck Schumer fully understands, especially after his humiliating defeat, that if there is no Wall, there is no DACA. We must have safety and security, together with a strong Military, for our great people! 8:07 PM - 23 Jan 2018

Retrieved 2/5/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/956015565776277510>

6. Nobody knows for sure that the Republicans & Democrats will be able to reach a deal on DACA by February 8, but everyone will be trying....with a big additional focus put on Military Strength and Border Security. The Dems have just learned that a Shutdown is not the answer! 5:34 AM - 23 Jan 2018

Retrieved 2/5/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/955795912374267907>

7. Great to see how hard Republicans are fighting for our Military and Safety at the Border. The Dems just want illegal immigrants to pour into our nation unchecked. If stalemate continues, Republicans should go to 51% (Nuclear Option) and vote on real, long term budget, no C.R.'s! 4:35 AM - 21 Jan 2018

Retrieved 2/5/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/955056249925750784>

8. The Democrats are turning down services and security for citizens in favor of services and security for non-citizens. Not good! 5:07 AM - 22 Jan 2018

Retrieved 2/5/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/955426609326100480>

9. *Great to see how hard Republicans are fighting for our Military and Safety at the Border. The Dems just want illegal immigrants to pour into our nation unchecked. If stalemate continues, Republicans should go to 51% (Nuclear Option) and vote on real, long term budget, no C.R.'s!* 4:35 AM - 21 Jan 2018

Retrieved 2/5/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/955056249925750784>

10. *Democrats are holding our Military hostage over their desire to have unchecked illegal immigration. Can't let that happen!* 6:27 AM - 20 Jan 2018

Retrieved 2/5/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/954722155463430145>

11. *Democrats are far more concerned with Illegal Immigrants than they are with our great Military or Safety at our dangerous Southern Border. They could have easily made a deal but decided to play Shutdown politics instead. #WeNeedMoreRepublicansIn18 in order to power through mess!* 3:17 AM - 20 Jan 2018

Retrieved 2/5/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/954674157144477696>

12. *Not looking good for our great Military or Safety & Security on the very dangerous Southern Border. Dems want a Shutdown in order to help diminish the great success of the Tax Cuts, and what they are doing for our booming economy.* 6:28 PM - 19 Jan 2018

Retrieved 2/5/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/954541219970977793>

13. *Government Funding Bill past last night in the House of Representatives. Now Democrats are needed if it is to pass in the Senate - but they want illegal immigration and weak borders. Shutdown coming? We need more Republican victories in 2018!* 4:04 AM - 19 Jan 2018

Retrieved 2/4/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/954323750949982208>

14. We need the Wall for the safety and security of our country. We need the Wall to help stop the massive inflow of drugs from Mexico, now rated the number one most dangerous country in the world. If there is no Wall, there is no Deal! 5:16 AM - 18 Jan 2018

Retrieved 2/4/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/953979393180950528>

15. The Wall will be paid for, directly or indirectly, or through longer term reimbursement, by Mexico, which has a ridiculous \$71 billion dollar trade surplus with the U.S. The \$20 billion dollar Wall is “peanuts” compared to what Mexico makes from the U.S. NAFTA is a bad joke! 3:25 AM - 18 Jan 2018

Retrieved 2/4/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/953951365532876800>

16. The Wall is the Wall, it has never changed or evolved from the first day I conceived of it. Parts will be, of necessity, see through and it was never intended to be built in areas where there is natural protection such as mountains, wastelands or tough rivers or water..... 3:15 AM - 18 Jan 2018

Retrieved 2/4/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/953948941674078208>

17. Statement by me last night in Florida: “Honestly, I don’t think the Democrats want to make a deal. They talk about DACA, but they don’t want to help.. We are ready, willing and able to make a deal but they don’t want to. They don’t want security at the border, they don’t want..... 4:57 AM - 15 Jan 2018

Retrieved 2/4/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/952887520790040576>

18. Sadly, Democrats want to stop paying our troops and government workers in order to give a sweetheart deal, not a fair deal, for DACA. Take care of our Military, and our Country, FIRST! 4:50 AM - 12 Jan 2018

Retrieved 2/4/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/951798415301718017>

19.countries which are doing badly. I want a merit based system of immigration and people who will help take our country to the next level. I want safety and security for our people. I want to stop the massive in-flow of drugs. I want to fund our military, not do a Dem defund.... 4:09 AM - 12 Jan 2018

Retrieved 2/4/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/951788342647107584>

20. The so-called bipartisan DACA deal presented yesterday to myself and a group of Republican Senators and Congressmen was a big step backwards. Wall was not properly funded, Chain e³ Lottery were made worse and USA would be forced to take large numbers of people from high crime..... 3:59 AM - 12 Jan 2018

Retrieved 2/4/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/951785587765280768>

21. The Democrats seem intent on having people and drugs pour into our country from the Southern Border, risking thousands of lives in the process. It is my duty to protect the lives and safety of all Americans. We must build a Great Wall, think Merit and end Lottery e³ Chain. USA! 8:42 PM - 11 Jan 2018

Retrieved 2/4/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/951675713089888256>

22. The United States needs the security of the Wall on the Southern Border, which must be part of any DACA approval. The safety and security of our country is #1! 3:07 PM - 10 Jan 2018

Retrieved 2/4/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/951229113897013248>

23. As I made very clear today, our country needs the security of the Wall on the Southern Border, which must be part of any DACA approval. 4:16 PM - 9 Jan 2018

Retrieved 2/4/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/950884128379035650>

24. *Thanks to all of the Republican and Democratic lawmakers for today's very productive meeting on immigration reform. There was strong agreement to negotiate a bill that deals with border security, chain migration, lottery and DACA. <http://45.wh.gov/POTUS45> 2:51 PM - 9 Jan 2018*

Retrieved 2/4/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/950862709599465472>

25. *Leaving Camp David for the White House. Great meetings with the Cabinet and Military on many very important subjects including Border Security & the desperately needed Wall, the ever increasing Drug and Opioid Problem, Infrastructure, Military, Budget, Trade and DACA. 6:33 AM - 7 Jan 2018*

Retrieved 1/7/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/950012437788585985>

26. *Thank you to the great Republican Senators who showed up to our mtg on immigration reform. We must BUILD THE WALL, stop illegal immigration, end chain migration & cancel the visa lottery. The current system is unsafe & unfair to the great people of our country - time for change! 3:53 PM - 4 Jan 2018*

Retrieved 2/4/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/949066181381632001>

27. *Thank you to Brandon Judd of the National Border Patrol Council for your kind words on how well we are doing at the Border. We will be bringing in more & more of your great folks and will build the desperately needed WALL! @foxandfriends 5:44 AM - 2 Jan 2018*

Retrieved 2/4/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/948188264858603520>

28. *I use Social Media not because I like to, but because it is the only way to fight a VERY dishonest and unfair "press," now often referred to as Fake News Media. Phony and non-existent "sources" are being used more often than ever. Many stories & reports a pure fiction! 2:36 PM - 30 Dec 2017*

Retrieved 2/4/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/947235015343202304>

29. *The Democrats have been told, and fully understand, that there can be no DACA without the desperately needed WALL at the Southern Border and an END to the horrible Chain Migration e3 ridiculous Lottery System of Immigration etc. We must protect our Country at all cost!* 5:16 AM - 29 Dec 2017

Retrieved 2/4/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/946731576687235072>

30. *Democrats refusal to give even one vote for massive Tax Cuts is why we need Republican Roy Moore to win in Alabama. We need his vote on stopping crime, illegal immigration, Border Wall, Military, Pro Life, V.A., Judges 2nd Amendment and more. No to Jones, a Pelosi/Schumer Puppet!* 3:17 AM - 4 Dec 2017

Retrieved 12/4/17 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/937641904338063361>

31. *Putting Pelosi/Schumer Liberal Puppet Jones into office in Alabama would hurt our great Republican Agenda of low on taxes, tough on crime, strong on military and borders... e3 so much more. Look at your 401-k's since Election. Highest Stock Market EVER! Jobs are roaring back!* 4:00 AM - 4 Dec 2017

Retrieved 12/4/17 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/937652739001212928>

32. *Steinle killer came back and back over the weakly protected Obama border, always committing crimes and being violent, and yet this info was not used in court. His exoneration is a complete travesty of justice. BUILD THE WALL!* 3:03 AM - 1 Dec 2017

Retrieved 12/1/17 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/936551346299338752>

33. *Will be calling the President of Egypt in a short while to discuss the tragic terrorist attack, with so much loss of life. We have to get TOUGHER AND SMARTER than ever before, and we will. Need the WALL, need the BAN! God bless the people of Egypt.* 10:49 AM - 24 Nov 2017

Retrieved 11/25/17 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/934131805409697792>

34. *Border Patrol Officer killed at Southern Border, another badly hurt. We will seek out and bring to justice those responsible. We will, and must, build the Wall!* 5:29 PM - 19 Nov 2017

Retrieved 11/25/17 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/932420488642617344>

35. *The problem with agreeing to a policy on immigration is that the Democrats don't want secure borders, they don't care about safety for U.S.A.* 3:18 AM - 10 Oct 2017

Retrieved 11/25/17 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/917695847063805952>

36. *Any deal on DACA that does not include STRONG border security and the desperately needed WALL is a total waste of time. March 5th is rapidly approaching and the Dems seem not to care about DACA. Make a deal!* 6:36 AM - 5 Feb 2018

Retrieved 2/5/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/960522569492426753>

37. *Got \$1.6 Billion to start Wall on Southern Border, rest will be forthcoming. Most importantly, got \$700 Billion to rebuild our Military, \$716 Billion next year...most ever. Had to waste money on Dem giveaways in order to take care of military pay increase and new equipment.* 8:00 PM - 21 Mar 2018

Retrieved 3/22/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/976654851684945920>

38. *I am considering a VETO of the Omnibus Spending Bill based on the fact that the 800,000 plus DACA recipients have been totally abandoned by the Democrats (not even mentioned in Bill) and the BORDER WALL, which is desperately needed for our National Defense, is not fully funded.* 5:55 AM - 23 Mar 2018

Retrieved 3/23/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/977166887493799936>

39. *DACA was abandoned by the Democrats. Very unfair to them! Would have been tied to desperately needed Wall.* 5:26 AM - 23 Mar 2018

Retrieved 3/23/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/977159683151712258>

40. *Mexico is making a fortune on NAFTA...They have very strong border laws - ours are pathetic. With all of the money they make from the U.S., hopefully they will stop people from coming through their country and into ours, at least until Congress changes our immigration laws!* 6:08 AM - 2 Apr 2018

Retrieved 4/2/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/980794173279342592>

41. *DACA is dead because the Democrats didn't care or act, and now everyone wants to get onto the DACA bandwagon... No longer works. Must build Wall and secure our borders with proper Border legislation. Democrats want No Borders, hence drugs and crime!* 4:17 AM - 2 Apr 2018

Retrieved 4/2/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/980766121983987712>

42. *...Congress must immediately pass Border Legislation, use Nuclear Option if necessary, to stop the massive inflow of Drugs and People. Border Patrol Agents (and ICE) are GREAT, but the weak Dem laws don't allow them to do their job. Act now Congress, our country is being stolen!* 4:10 AM - 2 Apr 2018

Retrieved 4/2/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/980764358530789380>

43. *Mexico has the absolute power not to let these large "Caravans" of people enter their country. They must stop them at their Northern Border, which they can do because their border laws work, not allow them to pass through into our country, which has no effective border laws.....* 4:02 AM - 2 Apr 2018

Retrieved 4/2/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/980762392303980544>

44. *These big flows of people are all trying to take advantage of DACA. They want in on the act!* 7:28 AM - 1 Apr 2018

Retrieved 4/2/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/980451798606602241>

45. *Mexico is doing very little, if not NOTHING, at stopping people from flowing into Mexico through their Southern Border, and then into the U.S. They laugh at our dumb immigration laws. They must stop the big drug and people flows, or I will stop their cash cow, NAFTA. NEED WALL!* 7:25 AM - 1 Apr 2018

Retrieved 4/2/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/980451155548491777>

46. *Border Patrol Agents are not allowed to properly do their job at the Border because of ridiculous liberal (Democrat) laws like Catch & Release. Getting more dangerous. "Caravans" coming. Republicans must go to Nuclear Option to pass tough laws NOW. NO MORE DACA DEAL!* 6:56 AM - 1 Apr 2018

Retrieved 4/2/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/980443810529533952>

47. *Honduras, Mexico and many other countries that the U.S. is very generous to, sends many of their people to our country through our WEAK IMMIGRATION POLICIES. Caravans are heading here. Must pass tough laws and build the WALL. Democrats allow open borders, drugs and crime!* 5:12 PM - 2 Apr 2018

Retrieved 4/2/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/980961086546632705>

48. *As ridiculous as it sounds, the laws of our country do not easily allow us to send those crossing our Southern Border back where they came from. A whole big wasted procedure must take place. Mexico & Canada have tough immigration laws, whereas ours are an Obama joke. ACT CONGRESS* 5:00 PM - 2 Apr 2018

Retrieved 4/2/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/980958298445885446>

49. *The big Caravan of People from Honduras, now coming across Mexico and heading to our "Weak Laws" Border, had better be stopped before it gets there. Cash cow NAFTA is in play, as is foreign aid to Honduras and the countries that allow this to happen. Congress MUST ACT NOW!* 3:49 AM - 3 Apr 2018

Retrieved 4/3/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/981121409807155200>

50. *We are sealing up our Southern Border. The people of our great country want Safety and Security. The Dems have been a disaster on this very important issue!* 11:11 AM - 7 Apr 2018
Retrieved 4/7/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/982682227581636608>

51. *The Democrats are forcing the breakup of families at the Border with their horrible and cruel legislative agenda. Any Immigration Bill MUST HAVE full funding for the Wall, end Catch & Release, Visa Lottery and Chain, and go to Merit Based Immigration. Go for it! WIN!* 10:08 AM - 15 Jun 2018
Retrieved 6/20/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1007671131841671169>

52. *Democrats can fix their forced family breakup at the Border by working with Republicans on new legislation, for a change! This is why we need more Republicans elected in November. Democrats are good at only three things, High Taxes, High Crime and Obstruction. Sad!* 6:03 AM - 16 Jun 2018
Retrieved 6/20/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1007972046666690561>

53. *The Democrats should get together with their Republican counterparts and work something out on Border Security & Safety. Don't wait until after the election because you are going to lose!* 5:49 PM - 17 Jun 2018
Retrieved 6/20/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1008511869970255872>

54. *Why don't the Democrats give us the votes to fix the world's worst immigration laws? Where is the outcry for the killings and crime being caused by gangs and thugs, including MS-13, coming into our country illegally?* 5:46 AM - 18 Jun 2018
Retrieved 6/20/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1008692333771132929>

55. *Children are being used by some of the worst criminals on earth as a means to enter our country. Has anyone been looking at the Crime taking place south of the border. It is historic, with some countries the most dangerous places in the world. Not going to happen in the U.S.*

6:50 AM - 18 Jun 2018

Retrieved 6/20/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1008708576628625408>.

56. *It is the Democrats fault for being weak and ineffective with Border Security and Crime. Tell them to start thinking about the people devastated by Crime coming from illegal immigration. Change the laws!*

6:53 AM - 18 Jun 2018

Retrieved 6/20/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1008709364939677697>.

57. *Democrats are the problem. They don't care about crime and want illegal immigrants, no matter how bad they may be, to pour into and infest our Country, like MS-13. They can't win on their terrible policies, so they view them as potential voters!*

6:52 AM - 19 Jun 2018

Retrieved 6/20/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1009071403918864385>.

58. *We must always arrest people coming into our Country illegally. Of the 12,000 children, 10,000 are being sent by their parents on a very dangerous trip, and only 2000 are with their parents, many of whom have tried to enter our Country illegally on numerous occasions.*

7:07 AM - 19 Jun 2018

Retrieved 6/20/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1009075083112050690>

59. *#CHANGETHELAWS Now is the best opportunity ever for Congress to change the ridiculous and obsolete laws on immigration. Get it done, always keeping in mind that we must have strong border security.*

7:11 AM - 19 Jun 2018

Retrieved 6/20/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1009076294615814145>.

60. *Such a difference in the media coverage of the same immigration policies between the Obama Administration and ours. Actually, we have done a far better job in that our facilities are cleaner and better run than were the facilities under Obama. Fake News is working overtime!*
5:36 AM - 25 Jun 2018

Retrieved 6/25/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1011226622324887556>.

61. *Hiring manythousands [sic] of judges, and going through a long and complicated legal process, is not the way to go - will always be dis-functional [sic]. People must simply be stopped at the Border and told they cannot come into the U.S. illegally. Children brought back to their country.....* 5:43 AM - 25 Jun 2018

Retrieved 6/25/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1011228265003077632>

62.*If this is done, illegal immigration will be stopped in it's tracks - and at very little, by comparison, cost. This is the only real answer - and we must continue to BUILD THE WALL!*

5:54 AM - 25 Jun 2018

Retrieved 6/25/18 at <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1011231137233080321>.

Endnotes

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- 13 *Ibid*, para. 12.
- 14 *Ibid*, para. 13.
- 15 *Ibid*.
- 16 Amber Phillips, “Why did Trump Threaten to Veto a Spending Bill Hours before he signed it?” *Washington Post*, March 23, 2018, Accessed 4/9/2018 at https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2018/03/23/why-is-trump-threatening-to-veto-a-spending-bill-hours-before-a-shutdown-deadline/?utm_term=.b8ae8087a10b.
- 17 See p. 203 in James P. Walsh, “Border Theatre and Security Spectacles: Surveillance, Mobility and Reality-Based Television,” *Crime Media Culture*, 11(2), 2015, pp. 201–221. See also Robert Reiner, *Law and Order: An Honest Citizen’s Guide to Crime and Control*, (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2007).
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The Social, Political, and Environmental Forces Contributing to the Immigration Crisis at the Texas-Mexico Border

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Introduction—Why Immigration Matters in the United States

Since the birth of our nation, more than two centuries ago, the United States has been a country that has benefited from the many strengths of the immigration experience. Beginning in the colonial era through the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the U.S. experienced three major waves of European immigration that formed the foundation of our social institutions and the roots of our democratic society. European immigration is the social catalyst responsible for the creation of our nation's present economic structure and growing prosperity and has played a vital role in introducing the diverse cultural traditions and values that have shaped our heritage and been assimilated into the American way of life.¹ Findings from a recent analysis of data from the American Community Survey by the Migration Policy Institute reveal that there are currently somewhere between 40 to 45 million foreign-born individuals living in the United States who can trace their ancestry to another country in the industrialized or third world and especially Latin America.²

Socioeconomic Benefits of Immigration

Research on the demographic characteristics of the current U.S. foreign-born population by the Center for American Progress reveals that there are presently 21 million naturalized citizens and 23 million noncitizens residing in the United States today.³ Of that number, an estimated 13 million of the noncitizen group are legal permanent residents, and 11 million are

undocumented migrants with no legally authorized residency status.⁴ Anti-immigrant political conservatives seek to stem the recent flow of undocumented immigration into the United States and have propagandized the argument that newcomers hurt our economy. They claim that recent arrivals take jobs away from American citizens, drive American wages down, and drain too much taxpayer money from our social service system.⁵ However, research findings in the immigration literature have highly disputed all of these claims.

Documented studies provide substantive evidence that newcomers even those that are undocumented bring economic resources into communities in the United States where they settle that serve to support the growth of local economies and create a source of tax revenue that helps to sustain the viability of social programs that provide healthcare and other services to Americans who need them. According to a report published by Professor Giovanni Peri of the Center for Latin American Studies at the University of California at Berkeley in 2013, historical records show that early immigration laws placed considerable restrictions on the number of foreign-born individuals that were legally allowed to enter the United States during the first wave of immigration, which ended in 1929. However, these restrictions changed in 1965 with the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act, which abolished the quota system and allowed the flow of immigrant mobility to this country to increase substantially over the next 30 years.⁶

Even though millions around the world still view the United States as a haven of democratic freedom and socioeconomic opportunity, our current outdated immigration laws make it very difficult for newcomers, both those that are highly educated and those that are not, from entering our country legally. Advocates for immigration reform argue that the misalignment between restrictive immigration laws and U.S. economic incentives represent one of the primary reasons for the rapid expansion of the undocumented immigrant population in our country.⁷

Although the United States has a long-standing reputation for offering many sought-after socioeconomic benefits and personal freedoms to those who desire to immigrate to this country from around the world, newcomers soon learn that the acquisition of these attractive benefits and freedoms is fraught with social obstacles that need to be overcome before the achievement of these goals can be realized. Historians argue that newcomers to this country often face a discriminatory backlash from more established groups, which is based on stereotyped perceptions about their race, ethnicity, and national heritage.

Such is the case of the large volume of Central American and Mexican migrant families and children seeking asylum at the Texas-Mexico border. The following sections of this article will examine the underlying social and environmental causes driving the current border migration crisis as well as provide an assessment of how the implementation of hardline immigration containment policies by the Trump administration has impacted the treatment of migrant families and unaccompanied children who have been apprehended by border patrol officials and are presently being held in government operated detention centers.

Social Forces Motivating the Immigration Crisis at the Texas-Mexico Border

The United States is currently facing one of the most challenging politically debated expansions of undocumented immigration in American history. Each month, thousands of asylum-seeking families and unaccompanied children from the Northern Triangle countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras make the dangerous journey across Mexico for an opportunity to cross the Texas-Mexico border into the United States. They are refugees from war-torn countries where poverty rates among the general population are extremely high, and unemployment, drug smuggling, human trafficking, and gang violence are rampant. Research shows that unsafe social conditions

in their homeland is one of the main motivating forces driving the current influx of asylum-seeking migrants at the border.

Findings from a 2014 study conducted by the United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees reveal that 58 percent of unaccompanied minors seeking asylum at the border are motivated by safety concerns associated with gang violence fueled by the drug trade in their native country. According to a public statement by the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol Agency, “Salvadorian and Honduran children come from extremely violent regions where they probably perceive the risk of traveling alone to the U.S. preferable to remaining at home.” Extensive violence and poverty also exist in Guatemala and El Salvador as well. Many of the Guatemalan and Salvadoran children arriving at the Texas-Mexico border come from poor rural communities in their home country and are seeking not only asylum but also economic opportunity and the chance to be reunited with family living in the United States. Unfortunately, false rumors spread by profit-seeking gangs have misled thousands of Central American families to believe that once granted asylum in the United States, their children would be placed with the families of relatives living here. However, as congressional lawmakers have already observed, nothing could be further from the truth.⁸

The humanitarian crisis at the Texas-Mexico border is escalating month by month and has become a critical issue of discussion among Republicans and Democrats in both congress and the senate. Republican lawmakers have consistently blamed the liberal immigration policies of the Obama administration for the worsening border crisis. They claim that the former president took inadequate action regarding the enforcement of our nation’s immigration laws and have been deeply critical of his 2012 decision not to deport Dreamers: young adults brought into the United States illegally as children by their undocumented parents.⁹ Republicans believe that the liberal immigration policies put into effect during President Obama’s time in office are what

is responsible for giving the present cohort of asylum-seeking families the notion that their children will receive similar treatment from the current administration, which has turned out to be completely false.¹⁰

Since taking office in January 2017, President Trump has sought to make containment of undocumented immigration the centerpiece of his presidency. However, his administration's efforts to accomplish this so far through the implementation of more restrictive immigration policies and tougher deportation laws have yet to promote an effective means of achieving this goal, especially in the case of the rising influx of asylum-seeking undocumented migrant families at our nation's Texas-Mexico border. The following section of this article will examine the detrimental role that U.S. foreign and domestic policies in Central America has played in contributing to the worsening of the present border crisis.

U.S. Foreign and Domestic Policies and the Escalation of the Border Crisis

Academicians and grass-root advocates who have analyzed the causes of the present immigration crisis have pointed out that years of flawed U.S. foreign policy in countries like El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras are partially responsible for the expanding growth of refugee populations at our nation's Texas-Mexico border. In an article by Natalia Cardona, justice and equity manager for the human rights and environmental protection organization known as 350.org, states "*The immigration crisis at the border is the culmination of decades of U.S.-financed violence, unjust economic policies like the Central America Free Trade Agreement, and the devastating effects of climate change.*"¹¹ She argues that changing weather patterns driven by climate change are an undeniable factor in the increasing waves of mass migration from Central America to the United States. This is especially true in parts of Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador,

and Nicaragua which are located along what scientists call the “Dry Corridor” areas hard hit in recent years by more frequent natural disasters such as extreme drought and flooding that have contributed to the worsening of conditions associated with agricultural production in small multi-generational farming communities.¹² For example, in the eastern part of El Salvador, longer and hotter periods of drought have had a devastating impact on the region’s corn crop, which has had a strong influential effect on the decision of peasant farmers to migrate.¹³

Scientists point out that climate change has been exacerbating the effects of El Niño, which causes atmospheric conditions to become altered in ways that lead to a 30 to 40 percent decrease in rainfall totals and causes greenhouse gas emissions to rise more frequently. Such changes in environmental conditions have a significant impact on crop loss and exert considerable influence on available food supplies used to feed the region’s population. The effects of climate change have also meant a decrease in seasonal work for subsistence-level farmers, causing levels of family unemployment, poverty, and hunger in this population to rise, subsequently resulting in a significant increase in migration patterns for the sake of family survival.¹⁴

Data from research conducted by the World Food Program estimates that somewhere between tens to hundreds of thousands of people living in the Central American countries that comprise the Dry Corridor have been displaced by extreme weather patterns associated with climate change, which has resulted in increased food insecurity. The drying-out of farming soil, in combination with the alternating increased intensity of floods in this region, has been the catalyst responsible for the rising incidence of death among the civilian population and has destroyed the few crops that are still able to grow there.¹⁵ The study also found that persistent drought has caused levels of food insecurity in the region to reach record highs. For example, in Guatemala, the data showed that between 2014 and 2016, 95 percent of Dry Corridor residents in the study

reported food insufficiency and harvest loss as the main reasons for their decision to emigrate to the Texas-Mexico border of the United States. Similar motivations were found among study participants from El Salvador who reported poverty and insect plagues associated with increased levels of sustained drought as the key factors driving their decision to emigrate.¹⁶

Statistics from the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Agency reveal that there were more than 237,000 migrants from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras apprehended at the border in 2014, for the first time surpassing the number arriving from Mexico. The data also reveals that the number of migrant apprehensions from Central America at the border has been rising steadily for more than a decade.

Findings from research conducted by Zavaleta and Kaplan (2018) attest to the fact that there has been a staggering increase in the number of Central American migrant apprehensions at border crossings in recent years. The data indicate that in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas between 2008 and 2018, border patrol officials acknowledged one of the most substantial expansions of illegal immigrant apprehensions in the last ten years. U.S. Customs and Border Protection statistics estimate that the total number of illegals apprehended by border patrol agents policing the Lower Rio Grande Valley side of the Texas border reached an all-time high of 486,651 in 2014, and has consistently hovered at close to 400,000 for every year since then.¹⁷

In 2007, there were only 51,000 Central-American migrants apprehended at border crossings in comparison to more than 800,000 Mexicans. Ten years later, in 2017, the numbers reported paint a considerably different picture of the migratory border population, with more than 160,000 migrants from Central America apprehended at the border compared to just 128,000 Mexican migrants apprehended that year. The data provide substantial evidence that, while there are other important social factors exerting influence over border migration from Central

America, for migrants living in the Dry Corridor, sustained drought and hunger are the key factors controlling their border emigration patterns.

In addition to the U.S. lack of accountability for the global effects of climate change, our nation's economic and military policy in Central America in recent decades has also played a major role in the escalation of the current immigration crisis at the Texas-Mexico border. Economic trade policies, such as Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), have destroyed the economic sustainability of rural farming communities in the Northern Triangle and displaced millions of residents who have been forced to migrate because of the damage inflicted on their communities by one-sided trade agreements.

Climate change and economic trade policies are not the only social forces driving the immigration crisis at the Texas-Mexico border. Years of U.S.-backed military intervention in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Nicaragua, such as government coups, civil wars, military occupations, and the training and funding of death squads, have consistently contributed to the spread of violence in these Central American nations.

Advocacy groups like 350.org contend that military intervention in the Central American countries along the Dry Corridor is a response to the financial interests of corrupt profit-making American corporations seeking to acquire cheap land, labor, and resources at the expense of the social welfare of regional residents. These U.S.-supported military actions have resulted in rising levels of extreme poverty and regional destabilization that has caused thousands of undocumented migrant families to seek asylum in the United States at the Texas-Mexico border.¹⁸

Despite the substantive evidence that U.S.-supported free trade, climate, and military policies in Central America over the past four decades are the root causes responsible for the wars, economic damage, and global warming that is driving the expansion of the undocumented immigration crisis at the border, the Trump administration has refused to acknowledge

U.S. responsibility for the current escalation of the border crisis. Instead, the administration has chosen to claim that asylum-seeking migrant children and families attempting to enter the United States through border entry points represent a threat to national security and has sought to stem the tide of migration through the implementation of harsh immigration policies designed to discourage these immigrants from entering the country.

Contribution of Trump Administration Immigration Policy to the Border Crisis

In their unrelenting effort to curtail the flow of thousands of undocumented immigrants seeking asylum protection at the Texas-Mexico border, in April 2018, Trump administration introduced a policy known as zero-tolerance. The policy called for the prosecution of individuals and families who attempt to enter the country illegally. The zero-tolerance policy has turned out to be one of the most highly contested immigration policies in U.S. history because of the way it is has been implemented.

The administration argues that restrictive rules are necessary at this time because the recent uptick in the number of asylum-seeking migrant families who want to cross the Texas-Mexico border into our country has more than doubled in the past two years. Government statistics indicate that in the fiscal year 2008, fewer than 5,000 migrants passed through the first step in the asylum process at the border. Ten years later, in 2018, that number has risen to 91,786, an increase of close to 2000 percent.¹⁹

The administration believes that the recent surge in migrant families and unaccompanied children seeking asylum protection at the border is the fault of long-standing loopholes in the system and has continuously promised to do whatever it takes to close the gap that is fueling the expanding influx. However, several grassroots advocacy groups have argued, contrary to this belief, that the

real cause of the spike in the number of asylum-seeking migrants at the border stems from a confluence of world events associated with environmental devastation, gang activity, and political volatility inside Central America. They believe that the administration's hardline interventions at the border are costly and extremely counterproductive.²⁰

The Trump administration's zero-tolerance policy has brought a substantial amount of national attention to how the asylum system in the United States works. An analysis of the most recent government statistics available by the American Council on Immigration reveals that although applications for asylum protection in the United States have nearly doubled since the early years of the 21st century, the grant rate for these applications has declined significantly since the 1990s. These statistics are substantiated by a recent commentary made by Geoffrey Hoffman, distinguished professor of asylum law at the University of Houston Law Center and Director of the Law Center's Immigration Clinic in a television interview. Professor Hoffman remarked that:

The grant rate for U.S. asylum applications has been declining for several years. And if you look at grant rate statistics, especially those associated with immigration court proceedings, one will note that the rate of people being denied asylum is actually going up. Right now, the average application denial rate for those seeking asylum stands at somewhere between 60 to 70 percent, and that rate is rising steadily. It is very troubling. Some immigration judges have exceeded these figures and presently have asylum application denial rates that have reached above 90 percent.²¹

This commentary and statistical analysis raise some serious legal, moral, and ethical questions about the rules and regulations that govern the current immigration system and the eligibility criteria that are utilized by the government to determine who will be granted asylum protection under it.

Those migrants who are unsuccessful at navigating the system and have their applications denied must return to their native country either voluntarily or face court-ordered deportation and be forced to leave.

One of the most highly criticized aspects of the administration's illegal immigration deterrent policy is family separation, which has been amass with human rights controversy from the start and has been the subject of numerous legal challenges in the federal court system. Attorneys with the American Civil Liberties Union have argued that family separation is illegal because, under international law, the practice represents a direct violation of the basic human rights of children and families. They further contend that the practice violates international treaties and conventions with which the United States is under obligation to comply.

When officers encountered asylum-seeking migrant families at border crossings, the first thing they used to do is ask to see their immigration papers to prove that they were not attempting to enter the United States illegally. If they are unable to produce the proper paperwork requested, officers usually would proceed to take migrant family members aside for further detailed interrogation.

As part of the interrogation, process officers would usually ask them if they feared for their lives should they be forced to be deported back to their native country. If the family members expressed fear of terrible social conditions in their homeland, officers proceed to turn the case over to the Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement Unit (ICE) for further action. DHS then proceeds to begin the asylum process, which usually consists of multiple face-to-face interviews, background checks, and security screenings for each asylum-seeking family.

If there are one or more minor children in the family, they are to be kept together with their parents throughout the asylum-verification process. The Department of Homeland Security must subsequently make every effort to expedite the processing of children and families so that they are not held in detention facilities for longer than is necessary. Upon completion of the asylum proceedings, families are granted a hearing before an

immigration judge who will listen to the facts of their case and determine whether the applicant's fear of persecution in their homeland because of social factors such as race, religion, national origin, or political opinion is indeed credible. The judge will then proceed to decide if there is enough evidence to support the validity of the family's request for asylum or if deportation procedures are necessary.²²

This is how the asylum system used to work before the Trump administration changed the rules and introduced the zero-tolerance policy. The new policy has criminalized migrant adults and minor children seeking political asylum protection at the border.

Why Trump Administration Policies have failed to end the Security Crisis at the Texas-Mexico Border

Despite the administration's continued efforts to restrict the flow of illegal immigration at the Texas-Mexico border, border security analysts who have worked with previous administrations, both Democratic and Republican, on these issues strongly suggest that the administration's policies are responsible for making the security crisis at the border worse.

Data from February 2019 reveals that more than 76,000 unauthorized migrants were apprehended at border crossings, one of the highest monthly totals in 11 years.²³ Border security officials at the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Agency (CBP) project that, if current trends continue, the total number of unauthorized migrants apprehended at the border could well reach 150,000 before the end of 2019.²⁴

Current CBP Commissioner Kevin McAleenan has stated that the immigration system at the border is "at the breaking point." Overcrowded migrant detention centers, in combination with a lack of resources and border patrol understaffing, has created a situation at the Texas-Mexico border, which is overwhelming and unmanageable for the current number of border patrol agents to handle effectively.

Migrant children and families detained at border crossings are being housed in cages under unsafe and unsanitary conditions. Many of those being held at Immigration and Customs Enforcement facilities (ICE) under these conditions have suffered severe psychological trauma mitigated by the administration's family separation policy, have been dehumanized as well as physically and sexually abused by private contractors overseeing their care, and more than twenty have died from medical neglect while being detained in these facilities.

Recent reports exposing the dramatic increase in the number of reported cases of death among migrant children held in ICE custody are highlighted in an article by Katie Shepherd, an attorney at the American Immigration Council. The article, which was published online in May of 2019, provides considerable justification for just how severe the problem of inadequate medical care has become in government-operated border protection facilities. It documents the cases of four Guatemalan children between the ages of two-and-a-half and sixteen whose recent deaths have been attributed to untreated or under-treated illnesses such as the flu, bacterial infections, and pneumonia — medical conditions they acquired as a result of being housed in unsafe conditions at border detention centers for extended periods. Shepherd argues that the recent upswing in reported child deaths at border protection centers is another testament to the federal government's failing capacity to find an effective means of responsibly caring for migrant children and families reprimanded to their care.²⁵

Border-rights advocates at the ACLU argue that these violations are taking place because the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Agency (CBP) has been given the authority under newly implemented Trump administration regulations to hold asylum-seeking migrant children apprehended at border crossings in detention facilities for unspecified periods of time, a regulation that is in direct conflict with the Flores Agreement legal guidelines set up to provide humane conditions for immigrant children in detention.²⁶

The brutal treatment of migrant children and families housed in detention facilities along the Texas-Mexico border resulting from the administration's zero-tolerance policy has drawn sharp criticism from service providers in the medical, scientific, and mental health communities across the country. In public statements issued by the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Physicians, the American Psychiatric Association, the Society for Neuroscience, the American Psychological Association, and the National Association of Social Workers, organizational leaders have urged the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Justice to take immediate action to end the policy because it conflicts with their primary mission as service providers, which is to protect and promote the health and well-being of children.

In their statement, leaders of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) address the irreversible damage that the stress of family separation inflicts on the physical and emotional development of children. They argue that "We know that family separation causes irreparable harm to children. This type of highly stressful experience can disrupt the building of a child's brain architecture, which will have a direct impact on their cognitive development and mental health."²⁷

In addition to the professional opposition to zero-tolerance policy voiced by groups of practicing physicians and mental health workers, the policy has also received substantial public denouncement from leaders in the religious community, who have publicly condemned the administration's use of the Bible as justification for the separation of families at the Texas-Mexico border. Many of these interfaith groups have organized demonstrations to protest the Trump administration's continued utilization of the policy, which they consider to be a moral atrocity that is both cruel and inhumane.

In a public opposition statement supported by several Christian, Reformed Jewish, and Islamic organizations, released in June of 2018, shortly after the policy was implemented, the

leadership emphasizes that the current policy of family separation places the general health and basic security of migrant children seeking asylum at the border in extreme jeopardy and calls upon the administration to put an end to the needless suffering of families who have been affected. The following is an excerpt from that statement which summarizes their position:

We affirm the family as the foundational societal structure to support the human community and understand that the household is an estate blessed by God. The security of the family provides critical mental, physical, and emotional support to the development and wellbeing of children. Our congregations and agencies serve many migrant families that have recently arrived in the United States. Leaving their communities is often the only option they have to provide safety for their children and protect them from harm. Tearing children away from parents who have made a dangerous journey to provide a safe and sufficient life for them is unnecessarily cruel and detrimental to the well-being of parents and children. As we continue to serve and love our neighbor, we pray for children and families that will suffer due to this policy and urge the administration to stop their policy of separating families.²⁸

As part of their public protest against the practice of family separation under the zero-tolerance policy, several outspoken leaders of the religious community across the denominational spectrum formed an interfaith coalition on immigration in 2018. The coalition's purpose was to send a strong message to national leaders in the Trump administration that family unity must be protected and that policies that promote government-sanctioned separation, prosecution, detention, and abuse of parents and children seeking asylum at the Texas-Mexico border must end.

White House domestic policy adviser Stephen Miller the principal architect of family separation policy and, a strong supporter of the Trump administration's hardline approach to border security, has consistently advocated for the eradication of refugee admission programs and has publicly stated that he wants the programs closed down by next year, which would cap U.S. refugee admissions at zero, thereby severely restricting the ability of resettlement agencies to process future asylum claims.

To date, the latest statistics from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) present an even more daunting scenario. They estimate that somewhere between 2,500 and 3,000 migrant separated children currently reside in government-controlled detention facilities with little hope of being reunited with their parents or other caregivers. They have become displaced in the chaos of a border protection system that is breaking down in response to misguided immigration policies, political stunts, and failed leadership concerning the development and implementation of workable policies that can effectively deal with issues that are causing the political asylum crisis at the Texas-Mexico border to explode.²⁹

Policy Recommendations for Resolution of the Border Crisis

While liberals and conservatives continue to struggle to come up with workable reform measures that will resolve the explosive, illegal immigration crisis at our nation's border, analysts at the National Immigration Forum, a nonprofit organization that advocates for the promotion of responsible federal immigration policy, have developed a multi-step plan which they believe could end the illegal immigration crisis at the border.

The plan contains a set of policy recommendations that outline practical short-term solutions that would allow border security staff to improve the management and processing of the increasing number of Central American migrant families and unaccompanied children seeking political asylum at the border as well as long-term solutions that will address the underlying causes driving them to leave their homelands to migrate to the United States. Forum analysts argue that successful implementation of the suggested recommendations in their plan will require a cooperative effort from government officials to develop a well-communicated predictable approach to reforming the immigration system in ways that will provide more effective humane treatment of asylum-seeking migrant families and children along

with a sustained multi-year commitment from border protection staff to carry out the changes.

A summary of the National Immigration Forum's policy recommendations for reforming the immigration system in ways that will effectively resolve the migrant crisis at the Texas-Mexico border is presented in excerpts from a working paper entitled *Addressing the Increase in Central American Migrants* published online in May 2019. A detailed description of these recommendations is put forward by Ali Noorani, executive director of the NIF. In terms of solutions, both long and short term, Ms. Noorani recommends the implementation of the following reform measures:

1. Provide effective utilization of available resources and increase those resources as necessary to better manage the flow of migrants.
2. Maximize the utilization of alternatives to detention (ATD's) for migrant families and children who are not a threat to national security and detain only those who are.
3. Ensure an orderly release of migrants who are not a safety threat.
4. Provide migrant families with up-to-date, accurate information about U.S. immigration and asylum laws.
5. Form partnership relationships with government officials in Mexico and the Northern Triangle countries to find ways to effectively eliminate human smuggling operations, and increase intelligence cooperation to prevent this type of illegal activity at ports of entry at the Texas-Mexico border.
6. The United States Congress and Senate need to work together to pass bipartisan immigration reform legislation that will bring the operations of the immigration system into the 21st century by creating pathways for those migrants who want to enter the country legally to find work or reunite with family, while at the same time increasing border security.

7. Address the social factors that are causing Central Americans to leave their homelands in the first place through the provision of critically needed U.S. foreign aid to eliminate social, economic, and environmental disparities to make these countries more habitable for those who are currently migrating to the Texas-Mexico border.
8. Work collaboratively with the United Nations General Assembly and the U.N. Refugee Agency (UNHCR) to address the challenges the countries of the Northern Triangle face by:
 - Establishing in-country relocation areas and safe zones, which would allow migrants who have been internally displaced to remain in their homes with protection from violence and persecution so they would not be forced to flee their native country.
 - Adopting and implementing the United Nation's Comprehensive Regional Framework for Protection and Solutions, which helps countries develop a national plan that recognizes the regional impact of migration and provides opportunities for those affected to learn from each other the best ways to deal with it.
 - Engaging the countries of the Northern Triangle in the signing and ratification of the United Nation's Arms Trade Treaty that would serve to place stronger regulations on the flow of small arms into these countries.
9. Assist Mexico to improve its refugee and asylum system through a partnership with the United States that will enable:
 - The Secretary of State and the Department of Homeland Security to work in collaboration with Mexican law enforcement officials to address the problem of drug and gang violence and to investigate and curtail the criminal activities of local cartels that are responsible for the smuggling of drugs and migrants into the United States illegally from Mexico across the southern border.

- The Mexican government to develop a more effective asylum system that can accept greater numbers of asylum applications and process them in a more time-efficient manner that would eliminate backlogs and create temporary visas and authorizations enabling migrants from the Northern Triangle to stay in Mexico legally.
 - The United States to assist the Mexican government in developing a public/private refugee program modeled after the twinning arrangement between our two countries which requires that countries share information about the design and implementation of refugee programs.
 - The United States to help the Mexican government establish shelters for unaccompanied children (UACs) approaching entry ports at the Texas-Mexico border.
10. Work in a collaborative agreement with the Mexican government to establish an immigrant worker program that will make the flow of workers into Southern Mexico safer and more beneficial for migrant families from the Northern Triangle and Mexico's economy.³⁰

Conclusions

In sum, as the discussion in this article demonstrates, the underlying causes of the current humanitarian and security crisis at our nation's Texas-Mexico border stem from long-standing socioeconomic, political, and environmental factors in Central America. Even though the growth of the undocumented migrant population at the border has failed to yield to current restrictive immigration policies put in place by the current administration, it is not too late to legislate reform measures that will change the system for the better.

To bring about system-wide change will require a bipartisan, cooperative agreement from those on both ends of the political spectrum to halt the stalemate that is preventing the passage of needed reform legislation. The implementation of legislative reform will restore the immigration system to its former level of efficiency and greatly enhance the type of human services it can provide to those who need them. This kind of systematic transformation will invariably lead to a substantial improvement in the way human services are delivered to vulnerable migrant populations and serve to eliminate inhumane treatment disparities such as those currently being experienced by asylum-seekers at the Texas-Mexico border of our nation.

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CRIMINAL ACTIVITY



Las violencias sociales y la impartición de la justicia en Valle Hermoso, Tamaulipas

por

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Entre las violencias sociales que sufre una comunidad, como la de Valle Hermoso, Tamaulipas, los atropellos cometidos por servidores públicos pueden considerarse entre los más ominosos. Aunque sean ellos los encargados mismos de prevenir, sofocar y castigar el delito y la injusticia, no debe descartarse que estos servidores públicos pudieren contrariar y traicionar por omisión o comisión la confianza que la ciudadanía depositó en ellos. He allí que si atendemos el testimonio de una ex-residente, Valle Hermoso ha sido abandonado por las autoridades públicas en manos del crimen organizado. Renuente a ser entrevistada por miedo a las represalias, la ex-residente sin embargo citó una nota periodística sobre San Fernando Tamaulipas, un municipio muy cercano, en el cual sus habitantes, según la nota, no tuvieron más opción que “voltear la cara”, por más de 12 años, a las extorsiones, los secuestros, los asesinatos cometidos frente a ellos por bandas criminales, pues ninguna autoridad de seguridad pública o de justicia salía a su rescate. “Igual ha sucedido en Valle Hermoso,” puntualizó la ex-residente.

En este artículo se busca identificar algunas de las violencias sociales que se atribuyen, en Valle Hermoso, Tamaulipas, a los mismos encargados de prevenir, sofocar y castigar los atropellos. Se pone atención especial a la impartición de justicia. En su medida se pone también atención a la prevención gubernamental de la violencia, la procuración de la justicia y a la ejecución de las sentencias judiciales según éstas se engarzan a la tarea misma del Estado de impartir justicia.

Este estudio descansa en una exploración de las percepciones de observadores clave sobre la impartición de justicia en

este municipio. Aunque no se concluye, con base sólo en sus percepciones, que tal o cual violencia social de hecho se comete en las instituciones de justicia de allí, sí se consideran estas percepciones como sugerencias de los problemas probables que en éste rubro se sufren realmente en Valle Hermoso. Estas percepciones constituyen además un indicador en sí de la credibilidad que estas instituciones gozan en la localidad, del clima organizacional que se vive en dichas instituciones, y del clima social emocional de la comunidad vallehermosense. En breve, aunque este estudio no pueda establecer como hecho que tal o cual violencia percibida por los observadores clave refleje con fidelidad la realidad de las instituciones judiciales, si puede indicar que dichas percepciones son parte de la violencia social percibida y sentida por los residentes de esta localidad, e indicar factores que entorpecen el desempeño de estas instituciones, ya por verse dañada la confianza y la comunicación de la comunidad hacia ellas, ya por el peso de desprestigio que estorba el mismo desempeño en el interior de estas instituciones.

El objetivo, pues, de este estudio es identificar, en la medida que las percepciones de los observadores clave nos lo permitan:

1. Las violencias sociales que el sistema de impartición de justicia genera en Valle Hermoso, Tamaulipas.
2. La credibilidad que estas instituciones gozan en este municipio.
3. El clima organizacional que se genera en estas instituciones como consecuencia de su credibilidad.
4. El clima social emocional que se vive en Valle Hermoso, Tamaulipas, con base en las percepciones sobre el sistema de impartición de justicia.

Se busca finalmente identificar algunos factores precursores, detonadores, de riesgo y de contención de la violencia, así como los focos rojos, asociados a las instituciones de justicia en Valle Hermoso, Tamaulipas.

Diseño de este estudio

El sistema penal mexicano, según nos explica Zepeda Lecuona (2004), comprende las medidas preventivas de los delitos, la averiguación previa, el proceso penal en sí y la ejecución de la sentencia condenatoria sobre quienes se juzgue culpables de delinquir.

La *prevención del delito*, nos recuerda Zepeda Lecuona (2004), es la primera tarea engarzada en el sistema penal mexicano. Esta tarea por ley corresponde principalmente, en Valle Hermoso, a los agentes de seguridad pública municipal o “policías preventivos,” aunque también corresponde a los agentes de seguridad pública estatal y federal. En gran medida, esta función preventiva la cumplen desde 2011 la policía militarizada, soldados o marinos del gobierno federal que sustituyen, por solicitud del Estado y del municipio, las funciones regulares de sus policías preventivos.

La *procuración de justicia* es una tarea que le corresponde a los ministerios públicos estatal o federal, según el tipo de delitos que se investiguen, persigan y acusen ante los tribunales (Zepeda 2004).

Ya en los tribunales, los actores del Estado responsables de la justicia son los arriba referidos encargados de su procuración, pues fincan la acusación, y además los defensores públicos de no contar los acusados con abogado propio, y los jueces en sí.

Finalmente, la ejecución de la sentencia se realiza en lo que el común de la gente llamamos “cárceles” y la ley “centros de readaptación social”. No los hay en Valle Hermoso, salvo la prisión preventiva donde se hace la detención inicial del presunto delincuente antes de presentarlo al juez. El centro de readaptación social, de fuero común, que sirve a Valle Hermoso se encuentra en el municipio adyacente de Matamoros, Tamaulipas.

Hablar de las percepciones públicas de la justicia no puede, por tanto, reducirse a qué piensa la gente del desempeño en sí de los jueces y demás funcionarios de un tribunal. Comprende además todas las tareas previas a la presentación de un acusado en

ese tribunal así como las posteriores, por ejemplo, la readaptación social del sentenciado. Todas estas tareas unidas nos hablan del esfuerzo de establecer justicia en una nación. Y si se falla o acierta en alguna de ellas, se percibirá que esa falla o ese acierto afecta al desempeño general de la justicia. Por ejemplo, un “no hay justicia en México” puede referirse no sólo al juez sino a una averiguación previa mal integrada que impide al juez consignar a un acusado; puede referirse también a los privilegios que algunos sentenciados disfrutaban en las cárceles, cuya responsabilidad recae en el ejecutivo federal o estatal, no en un juez.

Al estudiar, pues, las percepciones de los observadores clave sobre el sistema judicial y penal mexicano, se buscaron aquéllas referentes a las instituciones que se engarzan para cumplir con la tarea, básicamente la policía preventiva, el ministerio público, los juzgados y los centros de readaptación social.

En este estudio se exploraron además las percepciones específicas del público sobre la credibilidad de estas instituciones, principalmente sobre su competencia y honestidad (aunque no, por los límites de la investigación, su buena voluntad) a la hora de cumplir con sus responsabilidades, según Aristóteles definió la credibilidad (*Rhetoric* II, i). Esta percepción de la credibilidad a su vez sirve para ponderar el clima organizacional que gozan estas instituciones, y el clima emocional que goza el público a raíz de la credibilidad que les atribuye.

El clima organizacional consiste en el ambiente de trabajo percibido directa o indirectamente por los empleados de una organización, el cual influye fuertemente de manera positiva o negativa en su desempeño laboral (Ivancevich et al, 2007). Este clima organizacional es resultado de la percepción que los integrantes de la organización tienen acerca de cómo son valorados por los demás. Una percepción de valor favorable les hará sentir bien en su trabajo; una desfavorable, mal (Adler y Towne 1987, 305).

En este estudio nos interesa también el clima emocional del público en general de Valle Hermoso. Sobre el clima social emocional, Elena Mercedes Zubieta et al (2008) nos dicen lo siguiente:

El clima emocional refiere a las emociones que son percibidas en una sociedad en relación con su situación sociopolítica... Paez et al (1996) señalan que en los tiempos de represión política por ejemplo, la gente siente miedo a expresar sus ideas en público mientras que en momentos de tensión étnica hay odio hacia otros grupos, etc. Estos climas se caracterizan por aspectos como el miedo o la tranquilidad para hablar, la seguridad o la inseguridad, la confianza o el odio hacia otras personas, la confianza o el enfado con el gobierno, están condicionados por la situación social, económica y política, y por cómo los líderes políticos y los diversos agentes sociales estructuran esta situación. (Zubieta et al 2008).

Tras investigar la credibilidad percibida, el clima organizacional y el clima social emocional asociados a las instituciones de justicia en Valle Hermoso no se pretende afirmar que tales o cuales son la competencia y la honestidad reales en dichas instituciones. Una percepción no es necesariamente un hecho. Se pretende estudiar la confianza o desconfianza que dichas instituciones gozan allí, lo cual favorece o frena una percepción social de seguridad pública y justicia, lo cual a su vez contribuye o estorba el desempeño de las instituciones en sí y fortalece o debilita los vínculos sociales con estas instituciones, vínculos sobre los cuales, de haberlos, se construiría mejor la paz y, de no haberlos, se multiplicarían las violencias sociales.

Cabe advertir, antes de exponer las percepciones de estas violencias, la diversidad de dichas percepciones según las externaron los distintos entrevistados. Hay desde las que presentan a Valle Hermoso como casi el paraíso, como un municipio donde tienen plena vigencia la paz, la ley y el orden público, hasta las que lo presentan abandonado por los responsables de dar vigencia a la ley y la justicia, abatido por las bandas criminales, y en general aterrorizado por los continuos baños de sangre.

Hacia dónde se inclina la verdad en lo que respecta a estas percepciones tan divergentes se intentará aquí en alguna medida de lo posible dilucidarlo tras analizar las mismas percepciones según se expresaron y tras contrastarlas con algunos hechos.

Percepciones muy positivas sobre la vigencia plena de la justicia y el derecho

Hay percepciones muy positivas sobre el desempeño de la seguridad pública y de la justicia en el municipio de Valle Hermoso. Por ejemplo, un abogado particular (abogado 1) celebró todo el sistema de seguridad pública y de impartición de justicia así:

Hasta ahorita se ha visto buen desarrollo de la opinión pública del pueblo, muy satisfactoria, en cuanto a la impartición de justicia, la administración de la justicia, la prevención del delito, la investigación de los delitos, en todos los niveles tanto municipal, estatal y federal.

Sobre la labor de los ministerios públicos estatal y federal dijo lo siguiente:

Cada uno dentro de su esfera se está manejando bien. En la esfera estatal la procuraduría del estado está trabajando bien. Los agentes de la judicial, los agentes del ministerio público, considero que están trabajando bien.

Cabe notar que al referirse a la honestidad de los ministeriales, su lenguaje tuvo un giro de descriptivo a prescriptivo: “Deben ser personas honestas desde luego y deben acercarse a la rendición de cuentas a la transparencia”. Así nos ofrece al menos una percepción sobre cómo son actualmente los ministeriales que una percepción de cómo deben ser. Del mismo modo, este abogado nos ofrece primero una descripción positiva de los juzgados y luego una prescriptiva. Por un lado nos dice “tengo muy buenos antecedentes de los impartidores de justicia tanto del fuero materia civil materia penal, ¡buenos juzgadores!” y por otro nos dice “considero que debe existir la honestidad, la no corrupción, y debe existir la rendición de cuentas.”

Cabe también notar que este abogado también expuso sus percepciones del juzgado vallehermosense en sentido inverso, primero identificando la prescripción, luego reconociendo que la prescripción se cumple. Así habló de la impunidad, de la equidad,

de la justicia expedita, de la transparencia y de otros componentes del buen desempeño judicial. Sobre qué significa combatir la impunidad dijo “que los delitos sean comprobados, que realmente enfrenten a la justicia, que se apeguen a las sanciones que marca nuestra legislación,” y añadió: “Considero que sí se cumple.” Sobre el carácter expedito de la justicia precisó que “debe ser pronta, gratuita, impersonal, tal y como es la ley abstracta”, y añadió que sí se cumplen estas exigencias en Valle Hermoso, aunque actualmente los momentos que vive Valle Hermoso, dijo, son difíciles (en qué consiste esta dificultad, luego lo especificó). Sobre la eficacia y sobre la equidad de la justicia consideró que el juzgador debe aplicar la ley y las sanciones a quienes se hagan a ellas acreedores, a los responsables de la comisión de los delitos, y consideró que la justicia, de ser pareja, debe ser impersonal, abstracta, general y obligatoria, y añadió que aunque no puede estar enterado al 100%, “opino que sí se aplica pareja”. Sobre la atención a los derechos de las víctimas, definió que no ocurriría de incumplirse la ley, y añadió: “aquí sí se cumple.” Sobre la honestidad y la no corrupción, explicó que los jueces deben ser designados por su honestidad y tras pasar “los controles de confianza de tal modo que cubran los valores, las normas, que haya honestidad total”, y añadió que la hay en Valle Hermoso. Sobre la transparencia, reconoció que la gente no se entera sobre lo que ocurra en las cortes, pero que si ocurre así no es porque no pueda lograrlo, por lo cual precisó que en Valle Hermoso “sí hay transparencia en la aplicación de la ley.”

Al preguntársele sobre el estado actual del juzgado vallehermosense donde trabaja, un funcionario judicial tendió a identificar lo que prescribe la ley que ocurra, en vez de describir lo que es. De sus actividades actuales dijo:

En cuanto a las responsabilidades de este juzgado conforme al artículo 17 de nuestra carta magna así como los tratados internacionales convenios internacionales y leyes secundarias es hacer cumplir las leyes que la Ley Suprema emite así como las referidas leyes secundarias que en su apartado lo realizan.

Fue específico en cuanto a las funciones diarias del juzgado: “atención al público, al foro litigante dirigir las audiencias bajo el principio de inmediatez procesal al resolver lo que se presente en los diversos juicios que se ventilan en este tribunal y dictar las sentencias dentro de los términos previstos por la ley”.

En el mismo tono prescriptivo se refirió a los recursos con que ha de contar el juzgado: “recursos humanos, su capacitación continua, las herramientas y la tecnología para un mejor desempeño y mejor servicio al público y al foro litigante, se requieren las instalaciones adecuadas para que el trabajo diario se lleve a cabo en armonía y en beneficio de la atención al público”. Aunque describe su juzgado en tono muy positivo, “estamos completos,” su tono suele ser más bien prescriptivo: “secretarios, actuarios, las oficinas, archivistas, son los recursos que se requieren para un buen funcionamiento de los juzgados.” Descriptivo o prescriptivo su tono, su visión no deja de ser positiva aun cuando se note deficiencias en su corte:

Hasta ahorita no estamos bien equipados en cuanto a los recursos materiales y por lo tanto estamos tratando cada vez que se cuente con esas herramientas, hacer el servicio con la mayor eficiencia posible.

Aun cuando su tono fuese las más de las veces prescriptivo, sus observaciones sobre qué requiere una corte para su buen funcionamiento fueron muy interesantes y específicas. Por ejemplo, el funcionario habló de la protección de los testigos, la cual corresponde no tanto al juzgado sino al ministerio público y a la policía preventiva:

En cuanto a las medidas preventivas que consisten en prohibir al acusado o procesado que ejercite acciones tendientes a amedrentar, a impedir que un testigo de cargo presente negligencia, o a obstaculizar más que nada el procedimiento, en este sentido si el fiscal investigador solicita como medida preventiva que se le prevenga a dicho inculcado a que realice tales acciones, ellos conllevarían que el procedimiento judicial tanto del juicio penal no se obstaculice por lo tanto tenga la seriedad suficiente y se obtengan los medios probatorios tendientes a que la dictabilidad sea la inocencia o la culpabilidad del procesado.

Al definir el funcionario judicial en su tono prescriptivo qué le corresponde al ministerio público hacer, no dejó de advertir el desastre judicial que sobrevendría de no cumplir el ministerio público con sus obligaciones:

...que recabe los datos o elementos de prueba necesarios a fin de que acredite...lo que es el cuerpo del delito y la probable responsabilidad del indiciado...de lo contrario ello conllevaría a que se niegue el pedimento a una aprehensión, o bien que se dicte un auto de libertad, se suspenda el procedimiento, en virtud de no haber llevado la audiencia conciliatoria en dicha averiguación previa o bien que se dicte una sentencia absoluta por negligencia por parte del órgano persecutor de delitos cuya obligación está prevista en el artículo 21 constitucional.

El funcionario reconoció que en su juzgado debe impartirse la justicia de manera pareja, honesta, expedita, transparente y atendiendo los derechos de las víctimas. Habló del decálogo de justicia que publicó el Supremo Tribunal del Estado en Ciudad Victoria, en noviembre del 2011. En fin, aunque el tono prescriptivo predominase en sus respuestas a la entrevista, de cualquier manera el funcionario concluyó de manera muy positiva y descriptiva que el desempeño profesional de su corte es “aceptable”. Las reformas constitucionales que tornan los procesos penales de inquisitoriales a acusatorios y de escritos a orales, dijo, van en curso y agilizarán y harán más eficaz la impartición de justicia. Además, si las opiniones del público sobre ese desempeño “aceptable” no convergiesen, es así porque “obviamente en el juicio son dos, obviamente no se les va a favorecer a los dos”.

Sin caer en el tono prescriptivo, un abogado postulante (abogado 2) ofreció descripciones muy positivas del juzgado de Valle Hermoso. Sobre su competencia profesional dijo que “el tribunal constantemente se encuentra en actualización, a sus secretarios y jueces los someten a exámenes de control de confianza, y sí hay bastante buena preparación en cuestión judicial de procuradores de justicia en el municipio”. Sobre su honestidad, señaló que “al tener una buena preparación una buena capacitación garantizan una mejor aplicación de la

ley”. Destacó en particular “el abatimiento del rezago de los expedientes” a los cuales “se les da un seguimiento eficaz”, lo que “conlleva a que la impartición de justicia sea más eficaz” en Valle Hermoso, tanto “en las áreas civiles, penales, familiares”.

Un defensor público también describió de manera muy positiva los juzgados de Valle Hermoso, los cuales en términos de personal consideró que cumplen “al 100%” los requerimientos de competencia. Los considera además “limpios,” pues para evitar la corrupción se depuran día a día, según afirmó. La justicia expedita, honesta, transparente y eficaz se acrecentará, añadió, una vez que se implementen el proceso acusatorio y no inquisitorial, y los juicios orales en vez de escritos, en los juzgados, según las reformas constitucionales en curso. Y explicó:

Se está optando por el modelo chileno que muchas veces se confunde con la common law que tenemos con el vecino país de Estados Unidos. Este es un modelo chileno que ya funciona en Monterrey, en Oaxaca, en el DF, en Chihuahua, y lo implementan por la funcionalidad que tiene, por lo práctico y porque se pueden resolver los problemas cotidianos en tiempos más cortos, y se les están respetando en todo momento... a quien tiene carácter de presunto responsable, que se le presume inocente hasta que no se demuestre lo contrario. Así se vela más por los derechos humanos.

Este defensor público considera además que los juzgados de Valle Hermoso gozan de muy buena reputación, por su competencia y honestidad, ante el público. Si no fueran competentes, explica, los tribunales estarían saturados de apelaciones. Si no fueran honestos, los ciudadanos no tendrían esa cercanía y confianza con el juez: “el público se acerca tranquilamente,” es más, “no hacen críticas despectivas de este juzgado, tienen buena relación con los funcionarios, qué te puedo decir, nada más hay armonía.” Si hay finalmente algunas deficiencias en los tribunales, el defensor público las atribuye al público:

Me gustaría que la gente tuviera más conocimiento de sus derechos y obligaciones. Tiene la obligación de leer nuestra carta magna para poderse arrimar con toda seguridad a las entidades o a las dependencias como la

fiscalía investigadora o juzgados, y poder tener más contacto con el estado, sobre cómo exigir mejor sus derechos. De esa manera puede mejorar. Necesita participar más la sociedad.

No sólo los profesionistas del derecho tienen opiniones favorables sobre el juzgado en Valle Hermoso, también las expresan ciudadanos comunes, como lo es un arquitecto entrevistado sobre el mismo tema:

Los jueces son escogidos para sus puestos, seleccionados. Ya tienen una trayectoria... Ahora lo que hace un juzgado es levantar un escrito, te ponen un citatorio, y si no estás ahí, te juntan, te aprehenden. Eso está muy bien. Antes no había citatorios. Antes nomás decían “aprehéndeme a éste”. Ahora ponen la demanda. Luego viene el aviso. Luego viene la orden de aprehensión.

Percepciones negativas sobre la vigencia de la ley y la justicia en Valle Hermoso

Los entrevistados no pintaron todo de rosa al referirse a Valle Hermoso. El defensor público se quejó, por ejemplo, de falta de recursos materiales muy básicos en los juzgados: “Desde mi punto de vista se batalla por el material de oficina, tan sencillo como hojas, básicamente eso es lo que nos permitiría desahogar el trabajo”. El abogado 2 desearía mayor transparencia en las cortes:

Que la autoridad rinda informes de las actividades de su funcionamiento de lo que está haciendo para que la sociedad se entere de las actividades que lleva a cabo para prevenir y erradicar la violencia y los delitos. No se cumplen completamente en esta comunidad.

Este abogado además se quejó de que no se hace lo suficiente a favor de las víctimas del delito. “En esta ciudad,” precisó, “no existen oficinas que den seguimiento a las víctimas del delito.” Sobre los ministeriales, encargados de la investigación del delito y de la acusación de los procesados en el tribunal, lamentó su corrupción: “no están exentos de la corrupción porque es una costumbre de la sociedad tratar de sobornar al ministerio

público, y como tienen el contacto con la ciudadanía y con la cuestión del delito, pues ahí se tiene un margen de corrupción”.

Hay de hecho legistas cuya opinión predominante sobre la impartición de justicia en Valle Hermoso es muy negativa. Un abogado (#3) consideró deficiente la preparación profesional de los ministeriales, la cual, según dijo, se agrava por sus bajos salarios y la excesiva cantidad de delitos que deben investigar. Advirtió que entre los ministeriales hay “tal grado de corrupción que usted se quedaría atónito” pues incluso “egresados del Tec de Monterrey” desempeñan sus labores según las “mordidas” que les ofrecen. Sobre los defensores públicos opinó que se ven recargados de trabajo. Hay, dijo, un defensor de oficio por juzgado del fuero común en Tamaulipas y tienen bajo su responsabilidad 800 casos en un período de sesiones de un tribunal. Aunque reconoció que en gran medida la percepción de corrupción en las cortes se debe no a la corrupción misma de sus funcionarios sino a que los ricos pueden pagar un abogado mientras que los pobres sólo pueden contar con un defensor público (la justicia así favorece al que tiene dinero y se olvida de quien no lo tiene), no descontó la corrupción en sí de estos funcionarios. De ellos señaló que han llegado a sembrarle evidencias inculpativas a sus clientes para exigirles así fianza. Este abogado también abominó el estado de las cárceles, el eslabón final en el proceso de impartición de justicia. Aunque la cárcel se halle en el municipio vecino de Matamoros, allí van a parar los reos vallehermosenses, y la labor allí desempeñada por las autoridades deja mucho que desear. Según resumió, el control de la cárcel lo tienen los mismos presos. No cree además que la impartición de justicia mejore con las reformas constitucionales de juicios orales y acusatorios porque no ve que con ellos se garantice a los acusados de manera mejor el debido proceso.

El arquitecto entrevistado fue amplio en identificar las deficiencias en todos los actores de la impartición de justicia. De la preventiva dijo:

Hasta donde yo sé, ahí entra cualquiera, nomás que estén jóvenes y grandotes. No tienen criterio para manejar una situación de inseguridad. Hay quienes por la experiencia de los años sí tienen criterio, pero por su misma experiencia se quedan en los escritorios... Existe esta situación, como aquí es un pueblo chico, aquí es muy palpable lo de que a quién sí molestan y a quién no molestan por su estatus socioeconómico y político. Ahí paran a cualquier ejidatario para ver si va tomado y lo llevan a la barandilla. A los juniors, aunque anden tomados, no los molestan.

De los ministeriales consideró que siguen la averiguación según reciban o no dinero:

Se han dado casos de personas con accidentes que no deben salir con fianza y salen con fianza. Se arreglan y manejan la situación del examen médico (pedo o no pedo), favoreciendo al que cometió el delito si tiene lana. Sí hay corrupción. Hay que ver los niveles de corrupción en cada caso. A mí me ha tocado saber de que desde que se pone la queja dicen procede o no procede y le hacen de largas si el demandado da dinero. Si el ofensor da dinero al que hace la demanda y éste se desiste, se cierra el caso aunque el delito se persiga de oficio.

También a la procuración de justicia atribuye el retraso en su impartición:

Hay expedientes que pasan de un juez a otro y pasan años. Siempre hay un rezago en la procuración de justicia por falta de personal en darle seguimiento a cientos de investigaciones.

Sobre los centros de readaptación social dijo:

¿Qué te puedo decir? Desconozco el sistema. Ha de estar igual que en todas partes. Me imagino y que el que tiene la pasa bien y el que no la pasa mal. Una vez acompañé a un licenciado y vi que la cárcel parecía kermés. Estos no sufren nada: carnes asadas, puestos, bailes. Allí puedes hacer una vida social. Hay niños. Luego a uno le platican sobre cómo se la pasa el que tiene en comparación con el que no tiene y no es igual. Yo creo que deberían tener una vida igual. Se supone que es un castigo que la sociedad da a quien infringe la ley y el castigo o los beneficios deben ser iguales... En las cárceles siempre el que tiene la va a pasar bien y va a tener beneficios a costa de los otros internos. Tienen celulares, televisiones, sus buenas camas, sus baños

particulares, todas las comodidades, hasta donde lo permite el sistema penitenciario de la localidad. El que no tiene es el sirviente de todos. Y esa es su única manera de protegerse, sirviendo al que más tiene.

Sobre los jueces afirmó:

Todo se hace en lo oscuro. No sabe uno nada hasta que la persona es sentenciada o libre... Como la sociedad no tiene acceso, los casos se deben dar a conocer a nivel sociedad en los diferentes medios de comunicación. ¿Cuántas sentencias diarias se están resolviendo y cuánto tenía este caso de estarse resolviendo? Que esto se diga en la tele. Duran hasta cinco años en procesar un delincuente cuando lo podían hacer en un mes. Que lo digan en la tele.

El arquitecto pide no sólo información sino resultados satisfactorios en la impartición de justicia:

Debe haber un programa en que se vea que la procuración de justicia está trabajando y que la gente sepa que el delincuente está castigado por la ley y la sociedad. Por ahí lé que cada reo cuesta \$1,200 pesos diarios. ¿Por qué vamos a estar pagando eso por un bandido? ... ¡Más que un hotel! ¡El Holiday Inn cuesta \$1000! Agrégale a los costos la sobrepoblación de las cárceles.

Es más, el arquitecto condiciona su credibilidad en la justicia a resultados muy específicos: el fin de la impunidad y la eficacia de la ley. Nos dice:

Las leyes son buenas, todas. Lo que tiene que hacerse es aplicarlas parejo. Aplicarlas de acuerdo con el delito en sí... Si ocurriera eso la sociedad lo pensaría dos veces en cometer actos ilícitos. Lo que quiere la víctima es principalmente que se haga justicia. ¿Cómo? Atrapando a los culpables, cumpliendo estos la sentencia de acuerdo a la gravedad del delito, que no tengan ningún beneficio extra en los centros penitenciarios donde caen.

La gente va a creer en la justicia y en el combate a la impunidad, admitió el segundo abogado entrevistado, cuando pueda salir con confianza a las calles por la certidumbre de que hay paz, de que se goza de la seguridad pública, de que se goza el estado de derecho.

La falta de credibilidad en la justicia por la prevalente inseguridad pública

Ante tan divergentes percepciones sobre la impartición de justicia en Valle Hermoso, unas afirmando el paraíso, otras el abismo de la corrupción, prevalece, podría decirse, la falta de credibilidad en ella incluso cuando se diese el caso de que sus responsables cumplieren de veras al 100% con las reglas, según lo aseguró el primer abogado entrevistado. Pues este mismo abogado también aseguró que “desgraciadamente estamos pasando por momentos difíciles a nivel municipal, estatal y federal, se ha acabado la tranquilidad, se siente el desosiego, se siente la preocupación.” Explicó:

Cuando sale uno de su trabajo y se traslada uno a su casa, ése es el recorrido obligado. Ya no existe el “voy a ver a mi amigo”, el “voy a dar la vuelta aquí”. Va uno con la tensión que en cualquier momento puede uno encontrarse con un evento desagradable. ¿Por qué? Porque ya lo hemos vivido, algunos más de cerca, otros no tan cerca.

Tal es la inseguridad en Valle Hermoso que la convicción de este abogado en la operatividad de la justicia se convierte en un acto de fe: “confiamos en nuestros órdenes jurisdiccionales, en los impartidores de justicia, en los procuradores de justicia, en las policías, que cada día creo que van estar mejor”. O, como ocurre con otro abogado (#2), su convicción en la justicia se convierte en un esfuerzo de verle el lado bueno a la tragedia:

A dos años de haberse iniciado en este municipio los actos de delincuencia, ha habido semanas completas en que la ciudadanía no puede llevar a cabo sus actividades normales y se puede decir que las familias se han hecho más unidas. Por cuestión de seguridad la gente prefiere estar en su domicilio y se da más la convivencia, ya que cuando había la oportunidad se podía ir a la calle a hacer las actividades diarias sin ningún problema. En cambio, ahora llegas a tu casa a las 6 de la tarde. Por tanto hay más convivencia con la familia.

Pero aunque insista en verle ese lado bueno a la tragedia, la tragedia sigue allí:

Afecta psicológicamente, físicamente, en la cuestión de la salud, provoca estrés y otros malestares, el hecho de que no puedas salir a realizar tus actividades. Afecta tu trabajo, en tu área laboral, social, familiar, ya que no puedes desarrollar tus actividades normalmente, ya que te vez amenazado por la violencia y optas por no hacer esas actividades.

Se opta, en fin, por “voltear la cara” para al menos no caer en shock ante los crímenes que ocurren frente a tus ojos, como lamentó la ex-residente citada al comienzo de este artículo.

Esta ex-residente recuerda a un grupo grandísimo de amigas que se juntaban casi de diario. Ya nomás quedan doce en Valle Hermoso, dijo, porque se fueron todas a vivir a Harlingen o a McAllen. “Valle Hermoso está muerto, está horrible”, remarcó:

Desde las 8:00 hay balaceras. Toque de queda desde las 6:00 de la tarde. No hay autoridad. Todo es corrupción. Nomás sales para lo necesario. Hay muchos secuestros. Hay muchos desaparecidos.

El único alivio de una amiga suya que permanece en Valle Hermoso, agregó, es que ya sus hijas estudian en Kingsville.

Respecto a la procuración de justicia, el arquitecto no duda en afirmar que no existe:

Te lo digo como víctima de rateros y como víctima de un secuestro. La ley sabe quiénes son y no hacen nada. Aborita los agarran y mañana están fuera. Siete veces me han robado y un secuestro. Lo mismo con un asalto a mano armada. Saben quiénes son y no hay nada. Pone una querrela y pierde uno el tiempo... Al delincuente se le va a juzgar sólo cuando lo agarren in fraganti pero entonces corres el riesgo de que lo maten o de que te maten a ti primero.

Cabe reconocer que muchas han sido las limitaciones en la realización de este estudio por el riesgo de las balaceras que se han sucedido una tras otra toma y ocupación de Valle Hermoso por grupos criminales en 2010. Entonces ejecutaron a uno de sus candidatos a alcalde y la de su hijo, un caso por cierto que espera todavía ser resuelto en la corte de Valle Hermoso, pues allí ocurrió el crimen.

Según el periodista Héctor Miguel Chávez (30/11/2011, 15), un gran responsable de la inseguridad pública en Tamaulipas fue el exgobernador Eugenio Hernández Flores por sus omisiones y su inacción graves frente al reto de la violencia:

El subejercicio de recursos enviados por la Federación para ser destinados a Seguridad Pública fue una práctica recurrente en el sexenio anterior.

Mientras la inseguridad y la violencia avanzaban en Tamaulipas, el exgobernador simplemente guardó en el banco el dinero destinado a combatir la inseguridad y la violencia.

Al final del sexenio el Estado entró en la más grave crisis de inseguridad, violencia e impunidad de su historia.

Como resultado de esa actitud inexplicable e injustificada, Tamaulipas cayó en “un ambiente dominado por la angustia y el desorden, además de algunos lugares de nuestro estado con la clara ausencia de la autoridad a cargo de las funciones de seguridad pública”, según revelación del gobernador Egidio Torre en su primer informe...

Por lo anterior, no se cumplieron con la oportunidad requerida las metas establecidas en diversos programas. Entre estos destacan: El de construcción, mejoramiento o ampliación de Centros de Readaptación Social, Sistema Nacional de Información sobre Seguridad Pública, Eje Estratégico de Combate al Narcomenudeo, y Operativos Conjuntos y Participación de la Comunidad en la Seguridad Pública. (Chávez 30/11/2011, 15).

Clima organizacional en las instituciones de justicia y clima social en Valle Hermoso

Como se recoge en sus entrevistas, varios profesionales del derecho en Valle Hermoso parecen tener una visión rosa de la impartición de la justicia allí. Es más, para ellos, la percepción de corrupción o de incompetencia es más resultado de que los ciudadanos no se informen bien o de que, en una controversia

habiendo dos partes, una sólo se vea finalmente favorecida.

Se da sin embargo el siguiente problema: aún cuando operasen 100% bien las instituciones de justicia, como lo llegó a afirmar un abogado, su credibilidad se ve muy dañada por la inseguridad pública rampante en Valle Hermoso. Por tanto, es difícil admitir que las instituciones judiciales puedan cumplir cabalmente sus responsabilidades con tan bajo grado de credibilidad ante la ciudadanía. Es difícil admitir que puedan lograrlo cuando la consecuencia de su falta de credibilidad es que se abra una distancia abismal entre ellas y los ciudadanos. Sin credibilidad, no puede haber un verdadero vínculo entre las instituciones del Estado y los ciudadanos a quienes representan. Es más, de acuerdo con las teorías del clima organizacional, las relaciones entre los servidores públicos y los ciudadanos no pueden ser entonces sino de recelo y desconfianza (Adler y Towne 1987, 305).

Se podría incluso especular que parte del clima organizacional en las instituciones de justicia de Valle Hermoso es la negación psicótica. Entonces, frente a un problema, frente a aspectos dolorosos y desagradables de la realidad que no pueden resolverse justo cuando a la persona le corresponde hacerlo, dicha persona no hace más que aplicar un mecanismo de defensa psicológico para sobrevivir psíquicamente: negar el problema, “voltrear la cara”, como lamentó la ex-residente que han hecho todos los vallehermosenses. En el caso de los funcionarios de justicia, negar la impunidad y el fracaso de las instituciones judiciales ante la inseguridad pública.

Por supuesto, la negación psicótica puede no ser más que una cínica negación política, un mecanismo de defensa político para sobrevivir dentro de las estructuras de poder.

Ahora bien, el clima social emocional entre los vallehermosenses rebasa el miedo. Éste, por supuesto, se da, según lo nota el arquitecto:

Las amenazas a un funcionario o a su familia crean impunidad. Y eso afecta también a la comunidad. Si no hablamos somos cómplices de esa

impunidad. Como sociedad no debemos permitir la impunidad en ningún caso. Pero la sociedad tiene miedo.

Pero además del miedo, los vallehermosenses se ven afectados por la desconfianza mutua a punto de generarse un enfrentamiento y una disolución social. El arquitecto lo explicó así:

Cuando la justicia no se imparte bien, la gente se hace justicia por su propia mano... Valle Hermoso es tan chico que prácticamente muchas leyes son usos y costumbres del lugar. Como todo Valle Hermoso se conoce, muchas cosas no trascienden. Un vecino atropelló el perro a otro y el vecino se vengó matándolo. O en disputas de cinco centímetros de propiedad se llegan a graves consecuencias también. Muchos casos se arreglan entre familias o compadres o entre pequeños grupos para que no trascienda a nivel ley, que no llegue a más, como se dice.

Factores precursores, detonadores, contenedores, de riesgo y focos rojos

Parte clave de este estudio ha sido identificar factores precursores, detonadores, contenedores, de riesgo y focos rojos de las violencias en el contexto de la impartición de justicia. Entre los factores precursores se detectaron, entre otros:

- La cultura de la ilegalidad ha marcado el quehacer diario de Valle Hermoso desde su fundación.
- Un factor precursor de violencias es la desinformación que sufre, en gran medida, el público respecto a lo que es la ley, ya por la negligencia del mismo público en la tarea de informarse, ya por la secrecía con que muchos especialistas legales manejan lo que debía ser público.
- Según el Instituto Mexicano para la Competitividad, A. C., Tamaulipas se encuentra entre los tres estados con menos transparencia en materia presupuestaria (*CNNExpansión* 12/10/2011).
- En la medida que las percepciones del público sean reales, en la misma medida se podrían considerar precursores de violencias, si no es que violencias en sí mismas, la

incompetencia, la corrupción y la desvinculación entre instancias de impartición de justicia. Destacan, en este estudio, la incompetencia, la corrupción y la sumisión de la policía municipal al crimen organizado, que han llevado al gobierno estatal y federal a reemplazar esta policía por agentes militarizados; la incompetencia y corrupción del ministerio público especialmente en la averiguación previa, cuyas deficiencias impiden a los jueces autorizar la detención y el proceso de los indiciados; la incompetencia, corrupción y desvinculación del poder judicial con el público general a punto que, no obstante el buen concepto propio de los funcionarios judiciales, su reputación es pésima entre la ciudadanía; la corrupción mayúscula e inutilidad de las cárceles tanto para retener como para rehabilitar delincuentes: son lugares donde el poder del Estado pasa a los mismos criminales. El que todo esto ocurra aporta el caldo que da vida y hace omnipresente la impunidad (cfr. Zepeda 2004).

Hay factores detonadores de las violencias actuales que, según se percibe, han afectado la eficacia de las instancias de impartición de justicia, entre otros:

- Según un educador de Ciudad Victoria y ex-miembro del gabinete de dos gobernadores en el estado, tras el Presidente Fox llegar a Los Pinos en el 2000, la policía tamaulipecta reclamó entonces las cuotas que antes el narcotráfico pagaba a las fuerzas federales (la fecha coincide con los muchos años de desasosiego que, según la ex-residente, vive Valle Hermoso). El problema para la policía tamaulipecta fue muy pronto, dijo el educador, descubrir su incapacidad para someter a su voluntad a organizaciones criminales que la rebasaban en poderío militar y que rebasaban las fronteras estatales. De exigir cuotas a las organizaciones criminales acabó sometiendo a estos grupos e inclusive pagándoles esas cuotas y guardándoles lealtad, explicó. Según un testimonio similar, en febrero del 2006

el diputado federal tamaulipeco Humberto Martínez de la Cruz propuso al gobierno federal pactar con los narcos (Ortega-Pizarro 4/2006).

- El ejecutivo federal mexicano y algunos funcionarios norteamericanos han identificado en la suspensión en 2004 de la prohibición de la venta indiscriminada de armas de asalto, en Estados Unidos, como clave en el rápido y poderoso abastecimiento de armas de los cárteles del narcotráfico en México, a punto de desafiar la seguridad nacional de este país (cfr. *El Norte* 17/4/2009; *CNNExpansion.com* 6/5/2007).
- Independientemente del éxito o no, o de la legalidad o no de su política, de manera muy común, aun a nivel mundial, se asocia la llegada de Calderón a la Presidencia en el 2006 con el aumento pronunciado de la violencia y las muertes, pues, una vez en el poder, se decidió a encarar con mano dura al crimen organizado (cfr., por ejemplo, Gobberg 23/11/2011).
- La violencia del narcotráfico se exacerbó a partir de febrero del 2010 tras separarse la banda de los Zetas del Cártel del Golfo e iniciarse entonces entre ellos una disputa por el territorio de Tamaulipas y Nuevo León, disputa a la que se han incorporado otros cárteles, como el de Sinaloa y la Nueva Federación (*Control Risks* junio 2011). Es el 24 de febrero de 2010 que tomó el control de Valle Hermoso una de las bandas, y es en esa fecha todavía que con desdoro celebran con balaceras su dominio allí.

Entre los factores que se percibieron como contenedores de las violencias se encuentran, entre otros:

- Desde 2011, por decisión del gobierno estatal y federal se suspendieron las labores de la policía municipal. Su retiro lo asociaron varios entrevistados en este estudio a la incompetencia de los preventivos y a colaborar éstos con el crimen organizado. En este contexto deben considerarse tanto su retiro de las calles como la sustitución de esta

policía por agentes militares como factores contenedores de la violencia. Así se busca evitar la colaboración de los preventivos con el crimen organizado. Así se busca suplir la labor que los preventivos después de todo realizaban por la seguridad pública ordinaria, en Valle Hermoso.

- Las acciones de los marinos y del ejército contra el crimen organizado tienen amplia aprobación por el público vallehermosense. Es cuando los militares patrullan y tienen presencia en Valle Hermoso que su población puede de nuevo salir a la calle, según explicó el segundo abogado entrevistado.
- Según la opinión de uno de los abogados entrevistados, la relación de los funcionarios judiciales con la comunidad es cordial y directa.
- Un factor contenedor de violencias adicional lo constituirán las innovaciones constitucionales en los juzgados, una vez aplicadas. Tanto los juicios orales como los procesos acusatorios en vez de inquisitoriales redundarán en mayor rapidez en los procesos y en menor corrupción, y redundarán en mayor rapidez en los procesos, en facilitar la conciliación de las partes y en facilitar la reparación de los daños a las víctimas.

Según las percepciones investigadas en este estudio, hay factores de riesgo de violencias sociales en Valle Hermoso, Tamaulipas:

- Aunque coyunturalmente la militarización de la policía en Valle Hermoso sirva para neutralizar la ayuda de los preventivos al crimen organizado, la permanencia de los militares como agentes de seguridad no representa una solución ni constitucional ni viable a largo plazo a los problemas de seguridad pública en la región.
- Un factor de riesgo adicional es la pobre credibilidad (tanto por la percepción de incompetencia como por la percepción de deshonestidad) de las instituciones asociadas con la justicia en Valle Hermoso. Por un lado, esta falta de credibilidad genera una desconfianza y disociación

de los ciudadanos respecto a las mismas instituciones del Estado con las cuales juntos podrían solucionar los problemas que afectan a Valle Hermoso. Por otro lado, esta falta de credibilidad genera un clima social emocional de inseguridad e indefensión que orilla a la misma población al miedo, el cual aunado a la desconfianza generalizada rompe a su vez los vínculos comunitarios y deviene, por la misma desvinculación entre los individuos, en enfrentamientos entre vecinos.

- Por mucho que los funcionarios de las cortes y aun los defensores públicos expliquen su poca credibilidad en la imposibilidad de poderle dar gusto a todas las partes de un conflicto, esa falta de credibilidad debe de generar un clima organizacional desfavorable al buen desempeño y a la autoestima de los empleados de la corte y a los defensores públicos, si se atiende a las teorías sobre el clima organizacional (Ivancevich et al 2007; Adler y Towne 1987, 305).
- He señalado que con los juicios orales y los procesos acusatorios se espera, una vez implementados, que mejore la justicia en México. Un riesgo será que no suceda así. Según uno de los defensores públicos entrevistados, no ve él cómo mejorará el sistema judicial si los escollos y condiciones legales serán los mismos; según un abogado penalista entrevistado, no ve que haya beneficios extra para las personas que sean juzgadas.

Tras revisar las percepciones de los entrevistados en este estudio sobre la justicia en Valle Hermoso, pueden identificarse varios focos rojos, entre otros:

El enfrentamiento y la desintegración sociales generadas por el clima social emocional ya mencionado; el que la gente, por desconfiar en las instituciones de justicia, “se haga justicia” con sus mismas manos.

Los distintos funcionarios públicos que desde la prevención del delito a la ejecución de las sentencias imparten justicia en Val-

le Hermoso viven bajo amenazas reales de muerte por parte del crimen organizado. Esas amenazas, según el arquitecto entrevistado, son el principal motor de la impunidad.

Un foco rojo adicional son los agiotistas, según denunció el arquitecto. “Cuántos que se dedican a ello dejan sin patrimonio a muchas familias”, se quejó. “Sin ellos, medio pueblo estaría en otras condiciones”, precisó.

El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, Matamoros

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Entrevistas

Se realizaron entrevistas a profundidad a siete informantes clave: tres abogados, un funcionario del tribunal, un defensor público, una ex-residente, un arquitecto.

U.S.-Mexico Border Spillover Violence 2010-2019

by

Antonio N. Zavaleta

The U.S.-Mexico Border

In 2010, it was reported that 23,000 Mexicans had been murdered since 2006. In an article attempting to examine and define “spillover violence,” *Texas Monthly Magazine* stated that “Yet despite fears to the contrary, the violence has not spilled over into Texas, which doesn’t mean it isn’t transforming life all along the border.”¹ Spillover violence is a term that apparently originated in Congressional hearings and was never adequately explained or defined since federal law enforcement officials refused to acknowledge its existence. That was then, and this is now. Spillover violence is in the eye of the beholder.²

The U.S.-Mexico border is at war, and what is sad is that we do not recognize it. We are at war with Mexican drug cartels, and we are at war with the United States which has militarized our border and built an unwanted wall. We are at war with elected officials who do not defend us or recognize the reality of spillover violence, and most importantly we are at war with rampant corruption on both sides of the border.³ In 2018, Scott Pelly of CBS News asserted,

*There has been an elevated level of drug trafficking-related violence within and between the drug trafficking organizations in Mexico (2010-2020). This violence has generated concern among U.S. policymakers that the violence in Mexico might spill over into the United States. U.S. federal officials have denied that the increase in drug trafficking-related violence in Mexico has resulted in a spillover into the United States, but they acknowledge that the prospect is a serious concern.*⁴

The U.S.-Mexico border is comprised of many microregions throughout the entire length of the 2,000-mile U.S.-Mexico border, each with its own socio-political characteristics. In Pinal County, Arizona, human traffickers and drug smugglers have made the area around this small desert county a dangerous criminal hub. Traffickers often force migrants crossing the border to work as drug mules carrying 30 pounds of narcotics each. In the case of this desert region of the border, politicians have allowed traffickers to move freely back and forth across the border, while the drug cartels take advantage of the inactivity of law enforcement to flood the United States with drugs.⁵

Each region of the U.S.-Mexico border has its particular characteristics which aid or hamper drug traffickers. In Pinal County, Arizona, the Tohono O'odham Native American reservation sits on the border, while the Natives are in constant danger of harm from drug cartels. This is spillover violence and terrorism at its most primal level.

The Federal, State, and Local law enforcement agencies generally refuse to acknowledge the fact that organized crime in Mexico is negatively impacting border life. When an organized crime in Mexico produces violence or terror on the U.S. side of the border, it is called spillover violence. Elected officials, law enforcement officials, and other elected officials will not publicly acknowledge that the border has a problem because they prefer to define spillover violence as violence on law enforcement agents only. Business and economic development people prefer not to acknowledge it at all. Failure to update a definition of spillover violence does not make it disappear. Current definitions of spillover violence are inadequate, and statistics can be made to be self-serving. The public, for the most part, is oblivious to the spillover violence around them until it comes calling at their door.⁶

For 57-year-old Brownsville resident Miguel Angel Valdez, spillover violence became a reality when he was killed by a rifle shot fired from the Mexican side of the riv-

er as he jogged along the levee in Brownsville, Texas. It is not known if Valdez was targeted. In all probability, it was a random shot that found a deadly mark. Witnesses claim to have seen a pickup truck with several men on the Mexican side of the river about the same time that Valdez was killed.⁷

Crime and Violence in Mexico

The past decade or so has witnessed a noticeable increase in criminal violence in Mexico. In a short period, Mexico has been transformed from a relatively peaceful nation with safe highways and romantic colonial cities to one of the most dangerous countries in the world.⁸ Estimates have placed the number of drug trafficking-related deaths in Mexico between December 2006 (when then-Mexican President Felipe Calderón began his campaign against the drug trafficking organizations) and December 2012 (when the Calderón administration ended) at somewhere between 45,000 and 55,000. While estimates of drug trafficking-related violence vary by the source, some have estimated the death toll for 2012 alone at over 9,575. The homicide rate in Mexico continues to increase from approximately 16.9 per 100,000 population in 2015 to about 27.3 per 100,000 population in 2018 based on data from Mexico's National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI).⁹ Homicides are up by three percent in the first six months of 2019 at 17,065. In 2018, Mexico reported 28,816 homicides, which is estimated to be 20 percent under the actual number, which is much higher than state and federal statistics would lead us to believe.¹⁰ A Reuters news report in 2019 observed,

Mexico's violent crime wave has been most visibly exemplified by dramatic increases in the number of homicides. The number of intentional homicides documented by Mexico's National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) had declined significantly under presidents Ernesto Zedillo (1994-2000) and Vicente Fox (2000-2006) but rose dramatically after 2007, the first year in office for President Felipe Calderón (2006-2012). While homicides declined from 2011 through 2014, the number began to

rebound during the last half of the administration of President Enrique Peña Nieto (2012-2018), with levels exceeding those of the Calderón administration. Figures for 2018 reported by Mexico's National Public Security System (SNSP) suggest that over the course of Peña Nieto's six years in office, there were more than 150,000 homicides, amounting to at least 68 murders per day, or nearly three murders every hour. All told, more than 352,000 people have been murdered in Mexico since the start of the twenty-first century, a figure that excludes a substantial number of forced disappearances and undocumented (underreported) homicides.¹¹

Current Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (2018-2024) was inaugurated in December of 2018 with promises of attacking crime and violence in Mexico. However, in the first six months of his administration, there were 14,505 murders—a 5.4% increase over the same period in 2017. President Obrador has launched the newly-created militarized police force with 70,000 members and plans to grow the force to 150,000 by converting the Mexican army to a police force. The initial and primary focus of the national police force will be to patrol Mexico's borders.¹²

There are multiple explanations for this dramatic increase in violence, but organized crime is the primary contributor. Violence has been exacerbated by the recent fragmentation of drug cartels and their diversification of related activities such as human trafficking and gasoline theft (*huachicol* or *huachicoleo*), abduction, and extortion.¹³ This escalation is due to a large number of cartel leaders who have been killed and arrested in recent years. A cartel without a leader becomes fragmented with many want-to-be “junior” leaders generating violent and deadly clashes in their struggle for control and the dream of unimaginable wealth.

Drug cartels once enjoyed peace in that they operated within their respective regions, not bothering surrounding citizens. Therefore, within their areas of control, violence was low. In the last ten years, long and bloody struggles for control of drug corridors have continued unresolved, and cartel groups remain locked in bloody turf wars which involve associates and

innocent citizens on both sides of the border.¹⁴ These turf battles spill over to the U.S. side of the border, which is considered the drug cartel's extended *plaza*, or area of control.¹⁵ For example, the region from Matamoros, Tamaulipas to Brownsville, Texas, is one plaza while the area of Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, to El Paso, Texas is another.

An array of cartel fragments continues to battle for the control of Reynosa, Tamaulipas, the gateway to McAllen, Texas.¹⁶ McAllen is a major departure point from which to ship drugs northward. These are generally regarded as the primary reasons for the increase of crime and violence on Mexican highways and especially around Ciudad Victoria, Reynosa, and Matamoros, Tamaulipas. All drug cartels are attempting to move their product northward to the border at Reynosa and on to McAllen. The phenomenal profits from organized crime in Mexico were recently estimated at 500-billion dollars annually. The promise of fantastic wealth is hard to resist.¹⁷

While spillover violence may occur anywhere in the United States, nowhere is the increase in crime and violence more evident than along the U.S.-Mexico border. The dramatic increase in Mexico's violent crime and homicides along the U.S.-Mexico border is cause for the concern that increasing violence will soon reach a tipping point, forcing crime and violence to spill over to the U.S. side of the border.¹⁸ While denied by many, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the border has already tipped.

For example, criminals are crossing into the U.S. at an alarming rate. In 2018, the U.S. Border Patrol apprehended 6,259 illegal immigrants with criminal convictions representing nearly two percent of total apprehensions of 361,993.¹⁹ Of these, approximately one-third were charged with a crime related to drug trafficking. Are we so naïve as to believe that, once in the U.S., immigrant drug trafficking affiliations cease?

Mexico has long been characterized by its interrelated political, social, and religious organizations. Now crime syndicates are the most recent addition to this paradigm. Some

drug cartels even claim pseudo-religious organization and affiliation, such as the *Templarios* of Michoacán. Observers have frequently characterized Mexico as having spawned a revolution every 100 years, and the drug revolution is regarded as Mexico's revolution for the twenty-first century.²⁰

In early 2000, I stood on a second-floor overlook of my office building at the University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College watching a firefight right across the border, less than a half-mile away. Military helicopters fired rockets onto Matamoros streets, and fifty-caliber machine gun bullets rained across the border on to the university parking lot, striking several vehicles.

Authorities with the Texas Department of Public Safety claim that:

Living and conducting business in a Texas border county is tantamount to living in a war zone in which civil authorities, law enforcement agencies, as well as citizens are under attack around the clock. Shootings, murders, kidnappings, beheadings, and other acts of violence coming across the border go far beyond any definition of "spillover violence".²¹

The conditions are so dangerous for travelers that, in April of 2019, the U.S. Department of State issued a warning suggesting that visitors to Mexico exercise increased caution due to crime and kidnapping. Some areas have a higher risk than others; the 2,000-mile U.S.-Mexico border is particularly dangerous. Violent crimes, such as homicide, kidnapping, car-jacking, and robbery, are all widespread and increasing along the border. The U.S. Department of State suggests that the Mexico traveler:

- Use toll roads when possible, and avoid driving alone or at night. In many states, police presence and emergency services are extremely limited outside the state capital or major cities.
- Exercise increased caution when visiting local bars, nightclubs, and casinos.

- Do not display signs of wealth, such as wearing expensive watches or jewelry.
- Be extra vigilant when visiting banks or ATMs.

Most notable are warnings about crime and caution in Mexico City, which has been placed at a level 2 warning: Exercise Increased Caution due to crime. Both violent and non-violent crime are prevalent in Mexico City. Mexican government statistics indicate that criminal incidents in the capital occur at a significantly higher rate than much of the rest of Mexico. Visitors and tourists are asked to pay particular caution to areas outside of the frequented tourist areas, although petty crime may occur anywhere.

The U.S. Department of State warns that particular caution should be exercised along the entire U.S.-Mexico border and especially in the border area of Tamaulipas which has been assigned an advisory warning level 4: Do Not Travel. This extreme caution is due to increased crime and kidnapping associated with drug trafficking.²²

The U.S. State Department claims that

Violent crime, such as murder, armed robbery, carjacking, kidnapping, extortion, and sexual assault are, common along the border and in border towns on both sides of the border. Gang activity, including gun battles and blockades, are widespread. Armed criminal groups target public and private passenger buses as well as private automobiles traveling through Tamaulipas, often taking passengers hostage and demanding ransom payments. Federal and state security forces have limited capability to respond to violence in many parts of the state. Unfortunately, Mexican law enforcement has limited ability to assist victims or to deter crime.²⁵

The Mexican state of Nuevo Leon is another border state assigned a state travel warning advisory, of Level 3: Reconsider Travel. Travel should be reconsidered due to violent crime and drug cartel and associated gang activity common in parts of the state of Nuevo Leon and especially along the border.²⁴

The cross-border twin cities of northwestern border states in Mexico, Coahuila, Chihuahua, Sonora, and Baja Califor-

nia Norte, are especially dangerous, with the greatest violence around the border town pairs of Ciudad Juarez-El Paso and Tijuana-San Diego.

*The Southwest Border Region is the most significant national-level storage, transportation, and transshipment area for illicit drug shipments that are destined for drug markets throughout the United States. The region is the principal arrival zone for most drugs smuggled into the United States; more illicit drugs are seized along the Southwest Border than in any other arrival zone. The trends in drug trafficking-related crime across the United States are unknown because federal law enforcement agencies do not systematically track and report drug trafficking-related crimes.*²⁵

Spillover Violence

It may be seen that crime and violence have increased dramatically in Mexico in the last decade. Additionally, the increase is primarily linked to drug trafficking crime and violence, which are concentrated throughout the country but are especially located on the U.S.-Mexico border as a point of narcotics export to the United States.²⁶

The term Spillover Violence began to be discussed around 2000. Six of the ten most violent cities in the world are in Mexico, and of those, four are located in Mexican border states. Most share a cross-border sister city such as Reynosa, Tamaulipas, with McAllen, Hidalgo County, Texas; Ciudad Juarez across from El Paso, Texas; and Tijuana across from San Diego, California. Matamoros, Tamaulipas across from Brownsville, Texas, while not in the top six, is not far behind.²⁷

It is reasonable to expect that the high incidence of violence and drug trafficking activity in Mexican border towns would lead to criminal violence spilling over to the cross-border American city. As mentioned earlier, in recent years, with the death and apprehension of drug cartel leaders, street gangs have fragmented into many smaller groups, all struggling for control of their “plaza.” Their extended activities reach across the border, making the Mexican border towns exceptionally dangerous.²⁸

Simultaneously, Mexican law enforcement personnel is in short supply, the existing agents are woefully underpaid, corruption has caused political killing to spiral out of control, and, finally, the weak Mexican government has little hope of enforcement. Combined, these factors make it difficult to control crime on the border.

In spite of these facts, the Texas Department of Public Safety, along with border county sheriffs and police chiefs, continue to claim that crime and violence in their jurisdictions are down and do not acknowledge the existence of spillover violence as a public safety threat in their cities and counties.²⁹

For example, the Texas Department of Public Safety outlines Mexican cartel activity in Texas Criminal Alien statistics since 2009. There have been 94 incidents where shots were fired at 124 law enforcement officers in Texas. There have been at least 101 cartel-related-splashdowns where loads of drugs were intercepted, leading the smugglers to ditch vehicles in the river. The increasing recruitment of Texas juvenile gang members as well as Mexican street gangs known as *la maña* in both border regions, as well as in the large urban areas of Texas, is significant.³⁰

Drug cartels' recruitment of border juveniles accounts for approximately 20 percent of Texas' juvenile drug arrests. Most troubling about spillover violence is the fact that hundreds of Mexican cartel members and their associates have been arrested operating in Texas, resulting in at least 43 homicides.³¹ It should be noted that much of spillover violence is never reported because it is violence committed by drug cartels against drug cartel associates in the United States.

Therefore, FBI reports that "*The U.S. border with Mexico extends nearly 2,000 miles. Moreover, it's along this expansive stretch of territory that drug cartels and their street gang enforcers ply a dangerous and costly trade.*"³²

Conversely, the FBI reports that cities in the Rio Grande Valley are "pretty safe." Of the 24 metro places in Texas, Browns-

ville has the lowest crime rate, with 240 incidents per 100,000 population. McAllen ranks 18 with 286 incidents per 100,000.³³ Examination of crime statistics for Brownsville, Texas, reveals that spillover violence has not been documented as such.³⁴

There have been many attempts to define border spillover violence. This is the currently accepted federal interagency definition used by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Department of Justice components since at least 2009:

*As agreed to by the interagency community, spillover violence entails deliberate, planned attacks by the cartels on U.S. assets, including civilian, military, or law enforcement officials, innocent U.S. citizens, or physical institutions such as government buildings, consulates, or businesses. This definition does not include trafficker or trafficker violence, whether perpetrated in Mexico or the U.S.*³⁵

Therefore, this is a completely myopic definition.

Former U.S. Attorney General Janet Napolitano stated that understanding spillover violence is confusing. The U.S. side of the border does not appear to be overrun by violence, but the incidents of violence are increasing yearly.

In 2011, Napolitano remarked that:

While no universally accepted definition for border spillover violence exists, logic dictates that it would entail that the same kind of related violence happening in Mexico is also happening on U.S. soil.

The greatest misrepresentation made by law enforcement is that spillover must include clashes between drug cartels and American law enforcement on the U.S. side of the border. This interpretation is inherently shortsighted in that the majority of spillover violence is between cartels and their associates, with innocent victims suffering collateral damage.

*Such a definition would succinctly encapsulate the fundamental nature of related violence, and therefore what spillover violence of that exact kind of violence would look like if and when it happened on U.S. soil.*³⁶

Conclusions:

Mexico is confronting dangerous criminality and is fighting for survival against narco-terrorism. Cartels are battling with the government and one another for control of drug corridors into the United States, significantly destabilizing internal order in Mexico and spilling violence on to the American side of the border.

*The United States has not experienced the same level of high-intensity violent crime occurring in Mexico. However, the violent actions of the Mexican Cartels are affecting the United States, nonetheless. The pernicious nature of the highly competitive illegal drug market and the violent actions of the cartels present several challenges for the United States. The close geographic proximity of the two countries makes it almost impossible to avoid.*³⁷

Border communities in both Mexico and the U.S. are feeling the effects of weakening stability and security in Mexico, brought about by the cartels and their propensity to commit high-intensity violent crimes. These effects can be broken down into two general categories.

- First, there are those effects, which occur inside the U.S., which can be directly related to crimes committed by the cartels, their affiliated gangs, and drug users.
- Second, there are those effects that adversely affect U.S. interests in Mexico.³⁸

In 2010, Texas Senator Cornyn stated that “The threat of spillover violence in Texas is real and escalating.”³⁹ At the same time, the DEA continues to abide by an old and narrow definition of spillover violence as violence targeted primarily at civilians and government entities, excluding trafficker-on-trafficker violence. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The Texas Department of Public Safety defines spillover violence as Mexican cartel-related violence that occurs in Texas, including aggravated assault, extortion, kidnapping, torture,

rape, and murder.” Texas Department of Public Safety Director McCraw understands that spillover violence is growing in Texas and the Texas Border Sheriff’s Coalition states that concerns about spillover are widespread and that it does affect border communities.⁴⁰

For the past decade, this researcher has randomly collected examples of spillover violence as they appear in the print media and on television news in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. The following items represent a clear pattern of spillover violence as they have been documented along the Lower U.S.-Mexico border in Texas.

Random Examples of Spillover Violence and Related Activities ⁴¹

1. *The Brownsville Herald*, Nov. 4, 2010, attorney general sends a letter to Obama concerning spillover violence.
2. Tejano Narco-corrido singer is killed in Mission, Texas, after a concert.
3. A home is bombed in a Brownsville neighborhood.
4. A Mission man is kidnapped and killed.
5. Drug cartels are recruiting former U.S. army soldiers to be hit men.
6. Cartels recruit Valley gang members.
7. Panama anti-narcotics unit in Hidalgo County is busted for drug trafficking.
8. North Texas experiences violence, hits, kidnapping, and a Mexican Lawyer gunned down in narco hit.
9. Refugees seeking asylum in the U.S. must pay cartel fees and serve as drug mules.
10. Man in Brownsville restaurant is abducted and killed.
11. Extorted Mexican businesspeople are moving their businesses to RGV.
12. Narco dollars are laundered and invested in RGV infrastructure.
13. Narco kidnapping of U.S. citizens in U.S. virtual kidnapping plot.

14. Valley people are forced to participate in drug smuggling.
15. U.S. gangs hired as hitmen for cartels.
16. Mexican cartels train U.S. gang members in military operations.
17. Law enforcement corruption.
18. Drug cartel leaders live in Valley towns.
19. U.S. investigator's home burned down by Gulf Cartel in Rio Grande City.
20. International bridge closed.
21. Bullets fired across border on to UTB/TSC parking lot.
22. Gulf Cartel attempts kidnapping in Valley.
23. Drug cartel operatives fleeing Mexico.
24. Narco dollars spilling over to the US.
25. Cartel kills the wrong man in Brownsville.
26. Shots fired by valley police during a chase of fleeing suspect during an immigration stop.
27. Fourteen-year-old professionally kidnapped from home in Starr County.
28. Cartel money laundering scheme in Brownsville.
29. Drug Cartel/Valley gang hit attempt at wrong home.
30. Former Tamaulipas Governor's possessions in the U.S. are confiscated.
31. Expensive Harlingen home raided by Feds.
32. Attempted bribe of a federal judge (Austin, racehorse case).
33. U.S. CPB agents guilty of falsifying cases on drugs and immigrants.
34. Man kidnapped in Matamoros, crossed into Brownsville, rescued in a routine traffic stop.
35. Rock throwing at Border Police along the river.
36. Drug cartels increasing association with U.S. gangs.
37. Hidalgo County anti-drug task force sentenced to prison.
38. Hidalgo County Sheriff convicted in April 2014.
39. Murder in Brownsville linked to recent violence in Tamaulipas.
40. Conviction of Panama unit affects dozens of related cases and convictions.

41. Increased illegal immigrant crossings and contraband in Southmost make life dangerous.
42. Organized kidnapping team in the Valley.
43. Drug cartel killing in Hidalgo County on 28 May 2014.
44. Gulf Cartel ordered to capture or kill US citizens who allegedly stole drugs, May 2014.
45. Mexican drug cartels control illegal immigration Valley June 2014.
46. Cartel shaking down the family of unaccompanied children on the border.
47. Border patrolman fishing with a family shot and killed by an illegal alien with a criminal record.
48. Hidalgo County sheriff guilty of accepting money from drug lords.
49. La Joya police buy tactical weapons to fight an infestation of drug cartels in La Joya.
50. Mexican syndicate in shoot-out with Edinburg police.
51. Armed militia comes to the border at a man near the river with gun.
52. DPS assigned to border 31 units between Escobares and Penitas.
53. Texas Guard assigned to the border, heightened security presence rattled residents.
54. Citizens at San Juan /La Union del Pueblo Entero are worried about safety.
55. Illegal aliens afraid that heightened law enforcement will catch them.
56. Valley women are married to cartel members.
57. Dallas attorney with cartel ties murdered suspects arrested in McAllen.
58. Men with illegals crash at Fourth and Jefferson, injuring property and the immigrants.
59. Mexican teen found shot in the head north of Alton, 17 September 2014.
60. Body of burned man found in Hidalgo county 17 September 2014.

61. Hidalgo man sentenced for exporting grenade launchers and other weapons to México.
62. Texas Sheriff Painter warns that an ISIS terrorist cell is here already.
63. Border is not secure.
64. Border Patrolman attacked in Falfurrias.
65. Brownsville man beaten to death in Progreso.
66. Drug cartels steal billions of dollars' worth of gasoline.
67. Carlos Rendon kidnapped and killed in Matamoros.
68. High ranking Gulf cartel member being sought in Hidalgo County.
69. McAllen businessman robbed on a Mexican bus between Monterrey and McAllen Oct 2014.
70. Three siblings go to Control to see their father, are abducted, and are found dead in Matamoros.
71. Woman kidnapped in Donna found dead, and a witness to the kidnapping is also found dead.
72. Pregnant Valley teenager shot in Reynosa by police.
73. Increased kidnapping in Valley.
74. Valley teens recruited to alien and drug smuggling, in the *Herald*, 17 November 2014.
75. Sixteen-year-old driver killed in a chase with 39 illegal aliens in the van.
76. Hidalgo *politiqueras* exchange cocaine for votes.
77. Cameron County District Attorney ready to take on the Cartels.
78. Three men kidnapped and murdered North Mission man, 10 December 2014.
79. Increases in Valley violence lead to increased gun sales and training, in the *Herald*, 16 December 2014.
80. Mexican cartel kidnaps Border Patrol agent. *Breitbart* 27, December 2014, alleged no proof of a terroristic threat.
81. Mexican murderer caught crossing the border into the Valley illegally.
82. Express ATM kidnapping increasing in Matamoros, and Brownsville fears express spillover.

83. Feds ask border residents to be on the lookout for terrorists. Terrorists safe houses are known to exist on the Mexican side of the border.
84. In 2014, immigrants with false documents increased by 25 percent. 39,000 crossers are inadmissible.
85. Border Patrol agent shot and killed a smuggler after a struggle, near Chapeño.
86. Human smugglers recruit youth to participate.
87. TV5 on 24 January 2015 reports the murder of a Palmview man linked to drug cartel.
88. On-going running gun battle between Matamoros and Reynosa. Border population terrified.
89. Two Brownsville boys missing in Matamoros 8 February 2015.
90. Brownsville citizens along the river live in fear, with multiple rolling gun battles across the river.
91. Edinburg man and nephew kidnapped in Reynosa feared dead. Channel 5 News 9 February 2015.
92. Mexican Cartels flood border with Meth. Border kids getting addicted.
93. Cartel member armed and dangerous on the run near Rio Grande City, Channel 5 News 26 February 2015.
94. DPS report to Legislature that the border is not safe, 27 February 2015.
95. Body found along Highway 511.
96. Half of all women who cross the border are forced into the sex trade.
97. Valley officers leaving to join state or federal agencies.
98. Nude headless body found on South Padre Island.
99. High-ranking zetas arrested on Falcon Lake 20 March 2015.
100. Drugs and violence on the rise in eastern Hidalgo County.
101. Man with murder warrant in California caught crossing the river in Brownsville.
102. Man attacks PB with rocks after boat crash, 19 April 2015.

103. Carjacking by illegals is on the rise.
104. U.S. helicopter shot down in Laredo in drug interdiction case, May 2015.
105. Six of seven drug cartels have established command and control in Texas and are recruiting Valley students, 22 June 2015.
106. Pittsburg newspaper publishes series on Mexican-American participation in smuggling.
107. Two men killed in La Grulla shooting near the river.
108. Man crashes his vehicle with drugs into the river in Brownsville 9/10 September 2015.
109. Narco tries to break into McAllen house.
110. Drug shootout in Donna's north side.
111. Drug dealers try to hide in house and scare residents. Organized kidnapping team is in the Valley.
112. *Breitbart* reporters are attacked in Brownsville's Colonia Galaxia Dec 7, 2015.
113. Border patrol agent is charged in Mexican drug cartel beheading murder on South Padre Island.
114. Sullivan City police chief is indicted for gathering marijuana off evidence floor.
115. Edgar Hinojosa, Brownsville resident, is a Gulf Cartel member/leader.
116. Two Rio Grande City women are shot in the head while home-bound and killed.
117. Gulf Cartel chief is killed in Dallas by assassins.
118. Gulf cartel tracks and kills a member in Texas.
119. Zetas kill a 14-year-old girl cocaine mule.
120. Son of Gulf Cartel boss Osiel Cárdenas Guillén is arrested for driving without a license in Brownsville, and is on probation for ammunition smuggling July 31, 2016.
121. Cartel suspect is killed buried in Olmito backyard, *Brownsville Herald*, 19 August 2016.
122. Cartel boss who came through La Joya regularly and posed a great danger for Valley citizens was killed in Nuevo León, 25 August 2016.

123. Security service formed to protect Valley citizens; Intelligence says a high level of cartel presence in Valley, 29 August 2016.
124. Border Patrol man's brother is linked to the Gulf Cartel, *Brownsville Herald*, 31 August 2016.
125. Father and three-year-old son gunned down on a rural road with an assault rifle in Río Grande City, 6 November 2016.
126. Shooting on Falcon Lake with one man killed, 6 December 2016.
127. *The Texas Tribune* says guns are pouring into Mexico from the United States, *The Brownsville Herald*, 8 December 2016.
128. Brooks County Sheriff death threat.
129. Border Patrolman and brother tried for murder in drug case, 18 January 2017.
130. Violence in Mexico rising, 6 February 2017.
131. Mexican arrested for attempting to purchase grenade launcher for AK47 in Brownsville.
132. Brownsville man is found guilty of human smuggling, using homes as stash houses, 19 February 2017.
133. Supreme Court split on border patrol man's accidental shooting of youth on the Mexican side of the river in a case of reverse spillover violence regarding the 2010 shooting of Sergio Hernandez Guereca by Jesus Mesa Jr.
134. MS-13 gang members kill three New York teens, *Brownsville Herald*, 3 March 2017.
135. Gulf Cartel brothers González, ages 17 and 15, are sentenced for shooting on Expressway 83 in San Juan two years ago, *The Brownsville Herald* May 25, 2017.
136. Border Patrolman is kidnapped and severely beaten, with his fingers cut off in New Mexico. Reported in *Breitbart*, 11 June 2017.
137. Border Patrol agent kidnapped and assaulted, *The Brownsville Herald*, 27 June 2017.
138. Zeta hit man convicted of dozens of murders are sentenced to 7 life sentences, Channel 5 News, 28 June 2017.

139. Ten immigrants die in a tractor-trailer in San Antonio, with human smuggling by Zeta involved, *The Brownsville Herald*, 25 July 2017.
140. Starr County Tax Assessor corruption case Operation Falling Starr, involving the transport of drug vehicles to the US. Channel 5 News, 9 August 2017.
141. Former La Joya Police Chief arrested on drug charges, 13 August 2017.
142. Valley Law Man Geovani Hernandez arrested for drug trafficking and association with drug cartels.
143. Seven men convicted of operating a smuggling and kidnapping ring, sentenced in McAllen. *The Brownsville Herald*, 7 September 2017.
144. Jalisco drug cartel operating in Dallas, September 2017.
145. *Breitbart* article about rape and illegal immigration in Texas, 25 September 2017.
146. MS-13 recruits US youth, 29 September 2017.
147. Expressway shooting in San Juan, drug-related.
148. Drug cartels operating in Fort Worth, 19 October 2017.
149. *Rio Grande Guardian*, October 2017, more youth in Cartels than in Boy Scouts in Valley.
150. La Grulla man forced to drive drugs to Chicago area is sentenced, 11 November 2017.
151. Border Patrol agents ambushed with one killed and others in critical condition in the desert east of El Paso, 20 November 2017.
152. Coahuila Zeta Prison report on national news, 23 November 2017.
153. Arizona Man kidnapped with the intention of handing him over to drug cartel in Mexico.
154. Sinaloa Drug cartel in New Jersey, 26 November 2017.
155. Human smuggler sentenced in McAllen.
- 156 -Truck driver's plea deal in death of immigrant smuggling in his 18-wheeler. Jan 2018.
157. Cincinnati judge agrees to hear woman's case threatened by the Knights Templar Cartel.

158. Gulf Cartel Sicario captured crossing into the US near Del Río.
159. Los Indio's police chief is trying to keep children from serving as drug mules in rural Cameron County. More and more children are being recruited.
160. Sixty Valley kids arrested in 2017 for buying guns for cartels.
161. McAllen school teacher Jorge Cavazos moonlighted with Reynosa cartel. *The Brownsville Herald*, 2 February 2018.
162. Weapons found hidden in a bunker near the river in Reynosa, 7 February 2018.
163. Channel 5 at 6 pm reports major increase in BP injuries, 7 March 2018 PB Omar Zamora.
164. Osiel Cardenas Jr, son of the leader of the Gulf Cartel, is arrested in a Brownsville bar, drunk and brandishing a gun. *The Brownsville Herald*, 16 March 2018.
165. Donna teen is convicted of immigrant smuggling, *The Brownsville Herald*, 10 April 2018.
166. Four smugglers throw rocks at BP recovering marijuana, *The Brownsville Herald*, 5 June 2018.
167. Sinaloa cartel present in Alabama, 24 July 2018.
168. MS 13 present on the East coast of the United States.
169. Mexican and CA gang members present in the Valley.
170. BP arrests armed drug traffickers at River Bend.
171. Nuevo Laredo ex-mayor murdered by a drug cartel, *Breitbart* 12 October 2019.
172. Zeta Sicario, wanted for murder in Colorado Springs, arrested in Monterrey, *The Brownsville Herald*, 3 November 2018.
173. Drug cartels recruit San Diego kids, San Diego TV 7, 4 November 2018.
174. "El Chapo" Guzmán in the Valley, with Reynosa/McAllen a favorite spot, Channel 5, 16 November 2018.
175. Drugs brought to Alamo neighborhood for distribution, Channel 5, 16 November 2018.

176. Home invasion and abduction in Phoenix, 1 per day, National Geographic.
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La Fiebre Polca

por

Susana Nevarez-Marquez



La 'cordeón se suelta de carrera
como un cordón de cohetes.
La cola del riff
chicotea como un alacrán.

Bailerines saltan
a bailar juntitos,
cachete a cachete,
pasitos arrastraditos.

El bajo sextón corre y
no alcanza la 'cordeón.
La batería sufre golpes,
puñalados al corazón.

¡Y las vueltas! ¡Las vueltas!
¡Remolinos! ¡Remolinos!
¡La música es tequila –
a emborracharnos!

Y no te puedes sentar
porque tu colita se quema
si te sientas y no bailas –
¡La fiebre polka!



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