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ON THE FENCE

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APPROVED

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Living the vast majority of my life in an area that celebrates diversity but thrives because of illegal cross-border activities (undocumented workers, drug imports) at times the distance between the United States and Mexico is in fact as thin as the width of a fence. Though it is typical for a filmmaker to hope to present a unique take on a subject, given how I have seen the topics of immigration and the perspective of the purpose of homeland security portray, I am confident that there is an opportunity to show these issues in a more personal, less aggressive light with the use of first person accounts instead of a dependence on the most violent aspects of these topics. The main subject will give character to this agency by blurring the lines of his life as an agent and as a citizen.

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Estevan Medrano

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PROSPECTUS

Title
On the Fence

Length (estimated)
20 minutes

Expected Completion Date
Summer 2014

Introduction and Description

I am originally from Brownsville, Texas and have an older brother who is a discharged Border Patrol agent. One of my best friends is currently involved with U.S. Customs. So I understand to some degree the amount of effort and commitment the members of this agency put in to secure our borders. Since I was a boy I have periodically traveled from the United States to Mexico. I have observed how the process of crossing back and forth changed, especially since 9/11 as the overall security between the U.S. and Mexico has tightened. During this time I have met people who have completed the legal process to become U.S. citizens, as well as some who are in the midst of that process and some who reside in this country undocumented.

One of the most relevant and hotly contested topics in this country is the issue of immigration. Those officially recognized as enforcing the protection of the border are known as homeland security¹. This documentary will humanize the individuals who protect the United States-Mexico borders through personal testimony, revealing that they are more than the mechanically law abiding alien roundup crew often portrayed in

¹ For more information on the activities and history of homeland security refer to the appendix.

traditional media. There have been a number of documentaries made to claim that both U.S. Customs and particularly the U.S. Border Patrol are unreliable, ineffective, and even abusive agencies from sources critical of their mission (e.g. *The Illegal Immigration Invasion* (2006)). This type of image understandably has made both Customs and Border Patrol hesitant to allow coverage of their activities, particularly from unprofessional sources. This film will present a portrait of an individual who has been involved in homeland security for roughly a decade, and who hopes to reenlist as an agent within the year. His experiences on duty gain perspective of how border security has evolved over the years. This film will also attempt to portray how such a unique and dangerous government profession affects these individuals' civilian lives with personal accounts of what happened to fellow agents working with the main character, Noe Medrano.

Style and Approach

“...Karl Marx once said, ‘they cannot represent themselves; they must be represented,’ a statement to which those who have been the presumed ‘victims’ of the documentary tradition.”

-Bill Nichols

On the Fence is an attempt at understanding the complexities and humanizing elements of immigration enforcement in the United States through the perspective of a former Border Patrol agent. This piece will not be a political film, with the agenda of immigration reform, advocating stricter border security, or a study of the mistreatment of aliens that attempt to cross over into the country. I am going into this project with an open mind, expecting to learn something, rather than to push something.

As with any documentary focused on themes of government influence, controversial laws, and culture, a primary use of expository mode is considered, if not expected. Bearing in mind that simply covering these topics could be seen as being unavoidably opinionated save for simply screening all raw footage chronologically and unedited. If any aspects of do come off as opinionated it will be unintentional.

I drew a majority of inspiration not from any particular film on this subject, but specifically from a serious lack of material on the subject especially one from this type of personal perspective. I was also disappointed in the existing material. Reality shows such as “Border Wars” marginalize Border Patrol agents as simply an “out to get you” group of uniformed human sportsman hoping to catch and deport as many people as possible. In almost every film, fiction or nonfiction I’ve screened regarding immigration enforcement, the agency is defined by the uniforms, rather than the men and women who wear them. The black and whites of immigration always seem to bleed over any grey areas that are exposed for the sake of romanticism and the only humanistic perspectives offered seem to be those of the immigrants themselves, and even then they were humanized only to a certain degree. They were categorized as either bad people reflecting the elongated Mexican drug war spilling over into the United States as they attempt to import drugs, or they were good people endlessly pursuing their dreams for themselves and their families against the implacable forces of border security.

It wasn’t simply an idea of trying to put a more positive spin on men and women that protect our borders, but I truly just wanted to hear what they had to say about what they do and how they feel about it.

There will be a traditional sit down discussion with the main subject, Noe, as well as “action” interviews. The latter refers to conversing with the main character while he performs daily activities such as driving around areas he once lived and served as an agent in. These conversations will be organic in the sense that the subject can talk about the area or memories triggered by recognizing landmarks (e.g. We will be spending time at one of Noe’s favorite restaurants, Dirty Al’s, where he often spent time with his fellow Border Patrol colleagues while he was an agent.) This film is a portrait of a Border Patrol agent and will be divided into two sections, focusing on Border Life. Despite the commitment of the agents to their responsibilities and the seriousness of the topics expected to be discussed, I expect there to be quite a bit of humor in the film. I heard some very funny experiences from them regarding their training and stories of encounters with undocumented immigrants.

With the assistance from my committee, this production will be a piece insightfully diverse and the result of a group of individuals who not only hope for the best product, but expect it. Professor Tania Khalaf is an international individual herself, and was one of the first individuals to express genuine interest in the possibility of a film about men and women that protect the U.S.-Mexico border back when it was simply an idea. Dr. Roberto Calderón is a respected professor of the History department and an individual invaluable knowledgeable and passionate about his Mexican roots and border relationships. The third member is Professor Eugene Martin, who has filmed in the area I am planning to shoot in, as well as someone who had to go through a similar process with the homeland security headquarters in order to receive permission to film. These

individuals have agreed to provide insight through challenges and accomplishments in every stage of the production.

Topics that will be addressed include broad, philosophical outlooks of border security, to specific personal events:

The film will reflect how the subjects adjust to laws limiting their social interactions for their protection. There are a number of locations that they are asked to avoid in uniform or attend with caution for sheer reason that many have personal dislike or general prejudice against them. For example, one of my subjects claims that he doesn't go to a specific bar because the owner found out that he was directly responsible for deporting his cousin. (Border agents are not allowed to have social media profiles and laws about being in public places are implemented for their protection.)

The recently passed sequestration which limits their hours and wages and adjustment to the construction of the border wall will be discussed, but only briefly, as this can easily drift into strictly political themes, which is not the focus or the intent of the film.

I've been told by multiple sources of an unofficial "hazing" or "initiation" among veteran agents towards rookie's agents in both border patrol and customs. This film is expected to cover this with a discussion with all subjects to determine what exactly goes on, whether it is just a practice that occurs in certain areas, and if it has changed over the years. This section may be asked to be removed by the subject's commanding officers, and is this if the case I will abide to it as I've agreed to do.

Although the backbone of this film will be character driven, along with that will be the humorous, dangerous, and tragic stories my subject is willing to share during his tenure. This is a portion that having a generationally diverse group can greatly benefit the film.

One of the aspects that will stand out from other immigration and homeland documentaries is that this one will take a look into the (to my knowledge) undocumented bitter-sweet relationships of bordertown residents with federal agents. Towns on the U.S. / Mexico border tend to have dominant Hispanic populations, and many know of close friends or family members who have been deported and so there is some dislike towards men and women in homeland uniforms.

All of my confirmed characters are of Mexican-American descent so it is understandable that many of them may have torn feelings about their duties, specifically on how being of similar decent to a majority of those being caught and deported impacts their outlook and their responsibilities. Finally, the film will cover the actual activities the subjects' duties entail. This includes procedure on how they handle immigrants through action and interviews as well as how they feel about doing so. This section will also include their rigorous weight, cardiovascular, defense, and academic training they have to go through to maintain their status.

Goals of Production

“Immigration is the sincerest form of flattery.”

-Jack Paar

Living the vast majority of my life in an area that celebrates diversity but thrives because of illegal cross-border activities (undocumented workers, drug imports) at times the distance between the United States and Mexico is in fact as thin as the width of a fence. Though it is typical for a filmmaker to hope to present a unique take on a subject, given how I have seen the topics of immigration and the perspective of the purpose of homeland security portray, I am confident that there is an opportunity to show these issues in a more personal, less aggressive light with the use of first person accounts instead of a dependence on the most violent aspects of these topics. The main subject will give character to this agency by blurring the lines of his life as an agent and as a citizen.

Feasibility

Anytime there is involvement with any government agency, there are going to be a number of policies and restrictions when it comes to filming the agency or the agent. I am fortunate to have a unique point of access to subjects and locations based on where I live, relationships I've made over the years, and being mostly bilingual. This by no means makes permission and access easy or a guarantee, but simply having a starting point and having connections that can refer me to sources and information is significant. In addition, the outside areas we are expected to film in are mostly composed of arid

brush land with temperatures regularly exceeding 100 degrees- a difficult setting which requires everyone involved to remain well-hydrated.

Intended Audience

This film is expected to spark the interest of Mexican-Americans and those of Latino descent. Though immigration is a perpetually relevant topic many people, particularly those that don't live in states that border another country, are not very educated in knowing what exactly agents of homeland security do and the sacrifices they make, only being able to identify their activities by outlandish shows like "Border Wars". Due to the themes of the film, it can be appealing to individuals of both national and international backgrounds. This has the potential to do particularly well in areas that are directly affected by the activities of the subjects of the film in bordertowns such as my home area in the Hispanic dominated area of the Rio Grande Valley in which many are torn between this issue, identifying themselves equally as Americans and by their Mexican roots.

TREATMENT

Opening

The film opens with very little sound except for the sharp, quick steps and heavy breathing in the distance over a black screen. A slow fade reveals one of the agents is in training, running his daily route of over two miles in the early morning before most are barely opening their eyes to greet a new day, and this individual, still breathing heavy

among the bluish light of the infant dawn, approaches. He is not in uniform so it isn't clear why he is running so hard, periodically checking his wrist monitor and heart rate. At this point he narrates through the remainder of the scene- "I was a border patrol agent for over a decade." Mixed within this introduction will be stock footage of arrests of immigrants attempting to enter the United States illegally or agents seizing drugs and weapons.

It's the start of the harsh summer in south Texas, and this individual, now in his forties is attempting to rejuvenate his aging body to the point where he can be reinstated as a border patrol agent. He has the courage and experience to still do the job, but may not be able to handle the physical demands as he first became an agent in his twenties. "I'm in the process of being reenlisted, but I don't know if I could do the things I could do when I was in my twenties. I felt invincible then. I was at the peak of my physical life and now, having a family, three daughters, and not being as bull-headed, I'm just not sure I could handle everything I went through."

A montage follows establishing the heartbeat and rhythm, so to speak, of the area, accompanied by the rhythmic voice of immigrant student Laura Otero. This includes quick cut of immigrants crossing the checkpoints, the seemingly endless border wall, Border Patrol agents searching a vehicle, agents on patrol, their state headquarters in McAllen, Texas, and the harsh, arid brush that acts as its own elongated border protection between these countries. A kind of regularity is intended to be established, and Texas "border towns" will be given a face and personality in the form of defining images, cultural music, and personal commentary.

Then the pace slows and the main character establishes himself as such by attempting to summarize what he calls the “grey area” of law enforcement. As a former police officer, military drill sergeant, and narcotics officer, there is a struggle being involved in homeland security as it rarely is as simple as “going after the bad guy.” He introduces himself as Noe Medrano, an experienced former Border Patrol agent, and describes briefly his past experiences in other fields, accompanied by personal photos he has agreed to provide, to contrast the unique duties involved with homeland security.

What follows is a multitude of personal experiences familiar to any field veteran of homeland security, beyond arrests and deportation, but capturing the physical and emotional toll of ending the dreams of so many lost in the mix of those with intentions to bring harm to this country as well as the bond between agents from so many different backgrounds gathered for a single but noble purpose. What has rarely been documented is enduring the intolerance that goes along with wearing a uniform not always seen as such among areas where Hispanics and Mexicans dominate the population and have hard memories of close friends and even family members who have been dragged away from the United States, further strengthening the bond agents have with one another to have each other’s back at all times. Because of this rare, but present, disdain towards them, many agents have been trained from experience to check their meals to “make sure everything is okay.” These, along with many other seemingly paranoid habits, have remained with Noe even though he has not been an agent for many years. Noe will also confront how the media often perceives agents of homeland security as ineffective, often placing special focus on agents that abuse their powers.

Later, Noe takes a trip to a favorite restaurants called Dirty Al's, of course, checking his food before eating. Outside of a traditional interview setting, now in a place he is comfortable and familiar with, much of his seriousness has left him and his personality as a "jokester" comes to light as he even taunts the film crew on more than one occasion. He talks about the agents he remains in contact with, many of which are still some of his closest friends. After dinner, Noe heads back, still remaining as talkative as ever during the car ride back.

Noe also makes it clear that despite all the things he's seen on duty, the hardest part has always been being away from his family for extended periods of time in which he would see his children at most twice a year. The film will conclude with an update on Noe's reinstatement process and telling statistics of the activities of homeland security.

Additional Scenes

In addition to the traditional sit down interviews, I will ask both the subject and the restaurant owners if I can film at the restaurant prior to the formal interview, in case the subject is more comfortable speaking at a more familiar location. He will also be filmed in the car as he tours the immediate border area.

Reenactments

All of the subjects were willing to provide specific personal stories during their time as agents. Though incredibly engaging, the obvious issue is that none of them have any footage or audio of any of their stories, and so despite the facial expressions and emotions that may be provided as many of these stories involve humor among

fellow agents or tragedy involving deportations and arrests, to avoid having unedited talking heads throughout these moments, the option of minor reenactments is in the best interest of this documentary. These reenactments will provide just enough visual cues to sharpen their stories rather than overwhelm or romanticize them.

Stock Footage

Stock footage that has been attained is credited to Shutterstock, Pond5, and Free Stock Footage. While nothing has been received, promising contact has been made by Univision, which has offered to provide several clips of border activities and agents over the course of the past four or five years.

Contact:
Enrique Lerma - Editor of Univision
phone: 1 (956) 638-0769
email: e_lerma@yahoo.com

Character(s)

Noe Medrano

Discharged Border Patrolman stationed in over a half dozen locations over his tenure as a border patrol agent. As a former detective, narcotics agent, and army trainer, he has seen just about all there is to see when it comes to the world of immigration. He has agreed to share a variety of tragic resolutions, eye-opening encounters, and even humorous stories he's been a part of during his time in uniform. I will share one that he has agreed to share for the film.

He currently live in Dallas with his girlfriend and twin daughters and is currently attempting to be reinstated as a Homeland Security agent. He has received a preliminary offer from Falfurrias, Texas.

NOTE: Originally there was expected to be four subjects in this film- two subjects from border patrol, and two from U.S. Customs (Three male, one female.) Three border patrol agents and a customs agent had agreed to be interviewed. Due to limitations, the large gap in agent charisma, in addition to the fact that the headquarters U.S. Customs was much more discouraging in allowing any filming to be done on current agents, despite two giving me personal consent, in comparison to the commanding officers of the U.S. Border patrol, this will be a single portrait of a former border patrol agent seeking readmission into the agency. Several agency heads of public relations offered to be interviewed; however, this would have torn away too much from the original focus of the film, based on their trained answers.

Message and Resolution

“A good resolution is like an old horse, which is often saddled, but rarely ridden.”
-old Mexican saying

Given the controversial themes of illegal immigration and potentially racism, as well as the heavy tensions involving the U.S. Homeland security and the Hispanic population in regards to ancestry and acceptance, ethical issues cannot be overlooked given these debatable subject matters. Although multiple subjects would have initially provided multiple perspectives, the choice to have this film essentially coming from one perspective (Noe) may still provide a balance view given his admittedly torn conscious from protecting and upholding the laws of his country against his Latino decent and cultural understanding while documenting his life as an agent and citizen. All documentaries hope for a strong resolution, but with a topic that has been on the forefront of this country's interests since its inception, this isn't realistic. What can be

hoped for is a film which opens the eyes to the grayer, lesser known struggles and perspective of the individuals involved with the protection of our borders through source accounts and statistics.

FINANACING, MARKETING, AND DISTRIBUTION POSSIBILITIES

Financing Possibilities

University of Texas at Brownsville

My university as an undergraduate located less than a block away from Mexico. I have worked with the media department in the past editing and overseeing university funded documentaries and have a strong enough relationship to attain any equipment or software I would need in an emergency while in production.

Texas Commission of the Arts

TCA is an agency with a strong reputation for hiring and eagerly investing in “creative Texas,” including young filmmakers, particularly minorities and those focusing on features about Texas.

Video Association of Dallas

VAD is a non-profit organization which promotes and supports Texas filmmakers.

Humanities Texas

Humanities Texas is a non-profit organization dedicated to the understanding and advancement of Texas culture and education in history, literature, and creative mediums. They are well known for their promotion of projects focused on heritage and diversity.

National Endowment for the Arts

NEA is an independent federal government agency established for the benefit of artistic distinction in numerous mediums.

National Endowment for the Humanities

NEH is similar to NEA, but is more focused on the promotion of historical or culturally significant projects.

National Association of Latino Arts and Culture Fund for the Arts

NALAC is the nation’s leading contributor to the advancement of Latino artists and projects focused on Latino history. They are also self-proclaimed advocates of integration and multilingualism, while encouraging projects that debate or challenge controversies within the Latino population.

Diversity Development Fund

DDF is an organization which specifically supports minority “independent producers” of documentaries typically under 30 minutes to be seen on public television.

Latino Public Broadcasting

LPB is dedicated to the support and funding of educational pieces on issues within Latino cultural to be disseminated among public broadcasting entities.

MacArthur Foundation

The MacArthur Foundation is an independent entity with particular interest in funding works which focus on universal issues such as global conservation, technology, societal issues, and human rights in order to promote a more aware and “more peaceful world.”

Time Warner Foundation

Supported by Time Warner Inc., this private entity is dedicated to seeking and assisting “the next generation of storytellers” from all walks of life, particularly those considered underrepresented.

Public Broadcasting Service (U.S.)

PBS is a non-profit Television network which regularly broadcast educational programming and has a well-regarded reputation for backing the completion of numerous ground-breaking documentaries covering little known or controversial subjects and topics. This is certainly a willing, but widely sought after means of funding for independent documentary filmmakers.

Family

My family, which is Mexican-American, has been an essential means of support throughout my academic tenure, and provided invaluable advice and encouragement to me.

Marketing Possibilities

Social Media

Facebook

Vimeo

YouTube

OneWorldTV

The film’s individual website

The director's personal website

Distribution Possibilities

This film will be completed in summer 2014. Unless specified otherwise, all listed festivals or stations in the following list are located in the United States. A Spanish subtitled version of the film will be made to open the door to Latin American countries, specifically Mexico. Viewers have an unprecedented amount of access to video and media themselves, and they are more aware of films such as independent documentaries, so film festivals will not be the only option to spread the word about this production.

<u>Film Festivals (chronologically)</u>	<u>Location</u>
Latino International Film Festival	Los Angeles, CA
San Diego Latino Film Festival	San Diego, CA
Hot Springs Film Festival	Hot Springs, AK
Chicago Latino Film Festival	Chicago, IL
Cine Las Americas	Austin, TX
Filadelfia Latin American Film Festival	Philadelphia, PA
Dallas VideoFest	Dallas, TX
Best Shorts Competition	LaJolla, CA
G.I. Film Festival	Los Angeles, CA
Austin Film Festival	Austin, TX
Thin Line Film Festival	Denton, TX
Seattle Latino Film Festival	Seattle, WA

Georgia Latino Film Festival	Norcross, GA
Dallas International Film Festival	Dallas, TX
CineSol	Harlingen, TX
South by Southwest	Austin, TX
Boston Latino International Film Festival	Boston, MA

<u>International Film Festivals (chronologically)</u>	<u>Location</u>
Guadalajara International Film Festival	Guadalajara, Mexico
Guanajuato International Film Festival	Guanajuato, Mexico
Oaxaca FilmFest	Oaxaca, Mexico
Pantalla de Cristal Fest	Mexico City, Mexico
Havana Film Festival	Havana, Cuba

Other Media Outlets

PBS: Public Broadcasting Station

This is a privileged but exceedingly competitive outlet for short documentaries and young documentary filmmakers, known for producing groundbreaking films and having a both loyal and diverse audience.

Snag Films Online Distribution

A rapidly growing online publication supporting thousands of independent films and short documentaries, this website is becoming the premier online source for this kind of material, and hosts a concentrated digital library for educational documentaries, following the completion their individual film festival circuit, called *SnagLearning*.

Univision

Univision hosts an online request branch known as *the Portfolio* in which upcoming filmmakers can submit films to premier on their local networks to broaden their reach to “Hispanic America.” The film would likely have to be Spanish subtitled, but the branch is fond of documentaries relevant to Latino culture and education.

APPLICATION OF THEORY AND STRUCTURE

“I honestly don’t care if you’re going to make this movie just to make us look bad. I deal with that every day with the news and other stuff. That’s my job. Just give us a chance before trying to make the men and women that work here look a certain way. That’s really all I’m going to ask of you.”

-Head of Border Patrol Public Relations Henry Mandiola after agreeing to allow us to film and interview agents for the purposes of this documentary

Integration of Traditional and Poetic Mode

The film can be divided into two forms of presentation going back and forth from the more concentrated traditional documentary segments, which fails to categorize itself as any of the five conceptual schemes typically associated with modern nonfiction, and the momentary rhythmic montages of music and sharply edited observational footage known as “poetic” mode, which will reveal the character of the border areas. These two styles, which for the purposes of this film can also be divided as introverted and extraverted, may seem to be too conflicting with one another, but both will lead into one another by the transition of topics.

The first is a fairly traditional form of documentary, allowing the lone subject to dictate the visual arrangement and mood, relying heavily on minimal stock footage and

reenactments, and observational footage. This will be the bulk of the film, taking up an estimated seventy to eighty percent of the final product- an introspective portrayal of Noe. Most of his time on camera will fall under this section, presented with observational and stock footage meant to add visualization to the more descriptive moments his interview (policies, locations, family, ect.), but used only to a certain degree, as there will be a focus on the expression and charisma communicated as he tells it. A majority of managed stock footage and all reenactments will also be presented here. This section is meant to accomplish a majority of the original purposes of the film, including highlighting the humanity and character of my main character and agents in general, as he reveals the more intense experiences he has endured; it is the introverted, focused, and more significant segment. What is lacking in stylization and extroversion is addressed in the second form.

In the 1920s, what is now coined by Bill Nichols as poetic mode in documentary, materialized, evolving from aspects of French Impressionist cinema and Soviet Montage theory, by a blend of music and seemingly broken edits creating a uniquely rhythmic and engaging narrative without a single word being spoken. Bolstered by appropriate music, the audience is allowed to absorb a simplified personality of an environment in a matter of minutes. This “city symphony” focuses on brief, but engaging aspects of unnamed faces, human interactions, and a normalcy of environmental integration with a blend of close-ups, medium shots, and wide shots. This type of style will be applied in moderation to this film in order to familiarize an audience with the faces and cultural imbalance of the area, and, considering the pace and weight of the music, will be similar to some of the more fast-paced city symphonies (e.g. Dziga Vertov’s “Man with a Movie

Camera,” avoiding the reflexive construction). These chosen images will be fast-paced but meticulously organized meant to stylize the film and present the atmosphere of border area. The exception to the rule will be that some of these sections will be used to presents statistics regarding immigration and the activities of homeland security.

A Torn Identity

“My roots go much deeper than the Mexican War,
for I am part Indian, part Roman, part more...
My blood is Spaniard, Qualtecan and Greek.
That is my history, and that’s what I’ll keep.”
- excerpt from poem by Manuel Medrano

In some ways I have a connection with every American descended from immigrants who is in a perpetual struggle to find a balance between identity in international roots and loyalty to the territorial laws of my country. The title “On the Fence” is not just a reference to the southern barrier known as the Border Fence, but is also a reflection of every Latino immigrant who sympathizes with those who share the same blood and seek the same opportunities, but at the same time understand how significant it is to uphold the protection our borders. History has often shown that when it comes to the outcome of territorial wars, the generations which precede the losing side often suffer significantly more than those who win. Particularly with the loss of the Texas region, many Mexicans who had lived there for generations suddenly found themselves unwelcome and undocumented in another country. There remains a bitterness with many Mexican citizens (and some Mexican Americans) hundreds of years following the war fought with the United States, in which roughly half of their land was lost. While

many Mexican Americans sympathize with the poverty and state of their neighboring country, many don't feel Mexican people are owed for the actions of past ancestors, as Mexico was cruelly acquired from the Aztecs, who likewise ruthlessly acquired it from other indigenous people who once claimed it before that. Oddly enough, when Mexico was economically stronger than the United States, they were having issues with undocumented Americans crossing over into their territory. The history of the relations between these two proud nations is as fascinating as it is controversial, and though diversity is by definition an antonym of unity, the world view on humanity has progressed immensely in a relatively short amount of time. I have chosen to reflect this humanity in my subject rather than what separates him from those he apprehends and those he protects.

Personal Statement Regarding Subject-Filmmaker Relationship

Anytime a filmmaker chooses to create a documentary revolving around a close friend or relative there comes with it a bias that is not only likely to occur, but to some degree always does. As a filmmaker I understand the risks of putting the film's quality in jeopardy at the expense of my respect for my subject, Noe Medrano, who is also my half-brother. I would often go several months without contact with him, but early on had an understanding of his commitment to the protection of his country whether it be in narcotics, armed forces, or homeland security at the expense of time spent with his family. Part of that is the reason I decided to make this documentary, knowing that there are many agents of border patrol who face the same dangers and have to make similar sacrifices for their families. Despite this, I have never really spoken to Noe about his

experiences in the field, save for the ones he would occasionally tell at the dinner table about particularly interesting drug seizures or arrests that happened during the week. Many of them were surprisingly humorous, particularly when it came to fellow agents getting back at one another, others were hard to believe, but all of them were fascinating, and everyone within earshot was engaged by how well he told them.

It was sometime later when I found a passion in documentary that I considered getting some of these experiences on film, or at least hearing them from people who were in his position.

Ethics

“For me documentary... has always come with great responsibility. Not just to tell the story honestly and with empathy, but also to make sure the right people hear it.”

-Giles Duley

Upon receiving permission, I was asked by every officer who granted it to me whether I was going into this project with a preconceived view of homeland security or with an open mind and I told all of them it was the latter choice. Just because I am aiming for a more humanizing version of a familiar topic, doesn't mean I don't have to deal with the difficulties of deciding how to represent the material filmed. The most obvious ethical concerns stem from the decision to focus on a single subject. Though this presents a more personal focus, many other relevant perspectives are not going to be represented, most notably being the side of those who are illegal immigrants. This is significant because of the possibility that such a large population may be caricatured by their relentless desire to cross the border illegally, which would be an equally unfair

reversal of how the activities of homeland security agents are often over simplified in the media.

Having only one perspective may also imply an unfair representation of an agency which employs thousands of men *and* women, and many involved may not share the same perspectives as my main character, particularly when he speaks about his feelings towards his deportation responsibilities. He has been very candid about controversial practices and experiences he has endured on and off duty, and any questionable remarks may unfairly come off as universal among homeland security agents and officers. This also brings up the issue that the film must be presented in a way which audience understands that any remarks about immigration or homeland security are solely based on experience rather than points relying on research or generalizations, especially considering that he will be talking about the more intense experiences he's had that are accurate, but not necessarily typical. The inclusion of statistics will soften this concern as well as provide context to the topics addressed.

Other concerns are typical of any documentary in the form of actuality vs. presentation- when shots are selected, edits exaggerate, and personal judgment act as a recurring danger in muddling truth. Fortunately, I have a diverse and experienced support team around me to prevent any of these common issues from stifling this film's or the subjects' integrity.

OVERVIEW OF FILM

Preproduction

Preproduction of *On the Fence* occurred between Summer 2012 to Fall 2013 and included the location scouting of various areas of Texas, research on history and policies of both U.S Customs and Border Patrol, and receiving permission from homeland security officers and agents to conduct interviews with subjects.

Production

The production of *On the Fence* began filming during late November and concluded in early December in various locations in Texas.

Production Schedule

Although a majority of filming occurs during the Thanksgiving break, the main subject has been informed well ahead of time and has agreed to this period to be filmed and all other potential subjects (homeland security agents) do work during the major holidays so there will not be a scheduling conflict. I believe shooting them on these days could send a powerful message to my audience as to the commitment they adhere to while most find these days to spend relaxing with their families.

The entire amount of principle photography will occur in late December during the break between the Fall and Spring semesters.

11/23/13 – 12/1/13

Thanksgiving Break: I will use the November break to physically meet the officers I've

spoken to, reassure my subjects of the film's progress, as well as address any new concerns that I could only do physically (Sign non-disclosure forms, take a tour of the checkpoint area, ect). Little to no filming will occur during this time.

12/12/13

End of Fall semester

12/13/13

Jeff Alexander and I will travel from Denton, TX to Laguna Vista, TX by car which will take roughly 11.5 hours driving so this will cover the entire day, including rest.

12/14/13 - 12/17/13

Principle photography in Brownsville.

12/18/13 - 12/20/13

Principal Photography in Laguna Vista, TX

12/21/13 – 12/23/13

Principle Photography in McAllen

12/24/13

Jeff will be dropped off at the Harlingen Airport in Harlingen, TX and will fly back to Lovefield in Dallas, TX alone. End of principle photography.

Crew

Estevan Medrano - Director/Producer/Editor/Sound

Born and raised in Brownsville, Texas, Estevan is a Mexican-American documentary filmmaker pursuing his MFA degree in film production. His work usually focuses on one or two subjects revealing personal stories, with themes of culture,

subject adaptation, and social issues. Besides practicing and studying film, he is also a freelance artist.

Jeffery Alexander – Cinematographer

Jeffery is a current graduate student and former veteran and cameraman for military combat. His experiences in the army have instilled a bold, instinctual talent for capturing noteworthy moments on film and an insistence to get the best shots possible. He has created short documentaries with military veterans as main subjects and can identify with many of the agents in homeland securities who are typically veterans themselves. Camerawork can be just as significant as any other aspect of the story, because nothing heightens the senses like something visual, as opposed to being described, heard, or implied. We only have one trip to get the best footage we can for both interviews and footage of the area, as there will be no possibility reshoots. He understands how vital his position is to the success of this production and is well prepared to execute his role.

Equipment

The film was shot primarily with the cinematographer's GHs Panasonic DSLR. While the UNT equipment lab provides more recent equipment with higher definition, the decision was made to use the DSLR because its size allows it to be incredibly mobile during shooting and compact for the long distance traveling. Its photography camera shape allows its presence to be less intimidating to subjects than the larger, more advanced models, allowing for more intimate moments and conversations to occur.

Interviews were recorded with a boom and wireless lavalier, filtered with a 744T portable recorder. A few subjects asked not to have their faces on camera so their interviews are entirely audio. Other surrounding sounds such as around the checkpoints and city life will be captured entirely on a boom.

Editing will be completed on Final Cut Pro 7, color corrected to enhance warmer colors to reflect the harsh temperatures of South Texas.

Locations

A majority of this documentary will take place in the south area known as the Rio Grande Valley, especially in Brownsville. I will be visiting my subjects' homes and following them on their daily routines and operational routines.

I will also film in McAllen, Texas, one of the heaviest traffic check points in the United States.

Brownsville

Brownsville, Texas is not only my hometown, but one of the most historically rich cities in the country, with the unofficial slogan being "With a History as Big as Texas." It played major parts in the Mexican-American War, the Texas Revolution, and the American Civil War. It is also famous for being the site of the Palo Alto battlefield and the Commemorative Airplane Museum. As a part of the Rio Grande Valley, this city has rich relations with its border country, Mexico, and an official holiday with neighbor city in Mexico, Matamoros called Charro Days, which includes dressing up in traditional clothing and an annual Parade to celebrate diversity. The population is over 180,000 and that is only including legally residing citizens. The city is mostly compiled of Catholic

younger, growing Hispanics. It is also one of the fastest growing areas in the country and it has a both traditional and changing identity. It is part of Cameron, County, located at the southernmost tip of Texas and is roughly 11 hours driving time from Denton, Texas.

McAllen

McAllen, Texas is also part of the Rio Grande Valley, at one point being under both Spanish and Mexican control. The checkpoint is one of the busiest points in the country. It is part of Hidalgo County and is roughly ten hours driving time from Denton, Texas. Although listed as one of the poorest metro area's in the nation (as well as Brownsville), there is so much undocumented money coming through the city is would be hard to guess for someone who has visited the area, so this is only an official statistic that does not project the employment rate or aesthetics of the area.

Laguna Vista

The subject will meet us at Laguna Vista, Texas where we will make introductions at one of his favorite restaurants, Dirty Al's. He regularly comes to visit that area as he grew up nearby.

Map



Budget

The equipment used will be provided by the University of North Texas. A majority of the budget will go to travel expenses and providing food. My crew will be sheltered by my parent's condo in Laguna Vista, Texas.

Travel - We will be driving to shoot in both Brownsville, Texas and McAllen, Texas. The condo where my crew will stay at is roughly 11.5 hours from Denton, Texas so the gas total from there and back will be roughly \$180. We are expected to make two trips to south Texas bringing the total to \$360, and will presumably add another \$40 for traveling back and forth to Brownsville, McAllen, and Laguna Vista.

Food - I only expect to have one crew member to shoot principle photography, Jeffery Alexander, and so the food will be for solely him and I. Well will be shooting for five total days and two traveling days so assuming three meals a day, at \$10 for the both of us, it would add up to \$420. However, we will be spending our time at my parents condo, so given that they've agree to feed us while we are present, the total will come out to a fraction of this total, most likely closer to \$200.

BUDGET SUMMARY						
Film: ON THE FENCE						
Length: 15-20 Minutes						
Format: HD Video/Still Photography						
Preproduction: 6 months						
Production: 10 days						
Post Production: 6 months						
Preproduction Expenses						
Transportation	#	Unit	Rate per Unit	Cost	In Kind	Cash Requested
Gas (McAllen, Brownsville, Laguna Vista, Denton, TX)	1300	miles	\$0.20	\$260.00	\$0.00	\$260.00
Car Rental	2	days	\$50.00	\$100.00	\$100.00	\$0.00
Housing (1 person)	5	days	\$60.00	\$300.00	\$300.00	\$0.00
Meals (6 days x 3 meals p/day)	18	meals	\$7.00	\$126.00	\$0.00	\$126.00
				\$786.00	\$400.00	\$386.00
Production Expenses						
Crew	#	Unit	Rate per Unit	Cost	In Kind	Cash Requested
Director	10	days	\$400.00	\$4,000.00	\$4,000.00	\$0.00
Director of Photography	10	days	\$250.00	\$2,500.00	\$2,500.00	\$0.00
Sound Recordist	10	days	\$250.00	\$2,500.00	\$2,500.00	\$0.00
Transportation						
Gas (McAllen, Brownsville, Laguna Vista, Denton, TX)	1400	miles	\$0.20	\$280.00	\$0.00	\$280.00
Car Rental	10	days	\$50.00	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$0.00
Housing (2 people)	10	days	\$120.00	\$1,200.00	\$1,200.00	\$0.00
Meals (10 days x 3 meals/d x 2 crew)	60	meals	\$7.00	\$420.00	\$0.00	\$420.00
Equipment						
GHs Panasonic DSLR	10	days	\$18.00	\$180.00	\$180.00	\$0.00
32GB SD Card	2	purchase	\$30.00	\$30.00	\$0.00	\$30.00
16GB SD Card	2	purchase	\$22.00	\$22.00	\$0.00	\$22.00
SD Card Reader	1	purchase	\$20.00	\$20.00	\$0.00	\$20.00
Sachtler Fluid Head Tripod	10	days	\$31.00	\$310.00	\$310.00	\$0.00
20mm f/1.7 Aspherical Lens	1	purchase	\$299.00	\$299.00	\$299.00	\$0.00
SanDisk 32 GB Flash	1	purchase	\$50.00	\$50.00	\$0.00	\$50.00
1TB External Hard Drive	2	purchase	\$200.00	\$200.00	\$0.00	\$200.00
2TB External Hard Drive	1	purchase	\$150.00	\$150.00	\$0.00	\$150.00
744T Portable Recorder/Sennheizer Mic/Boom	10	days	\$105.00	\$1,050.00	\$1,050.00	\$0.00
Expendable	1	allow	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$0.00	\$500.00
				\$14,211.00	\$12,539.00	\$1,672.00
Post-Production Expenses						
	#	Unit	Rate per Unit	Cost	In Kind	Cash Requested
Editor	6	months	\$1,000.00	\$6,000.00	\$6,000.00	\$0.00
Music	3	songs	\$200.00	\$600.00	\$600.00	\$0.00
Stock						
Sthutter Stock Footage	6	clips	\$50.00	\$300.00	\$0.00	\$300.00
Pond5 Stock Footage	6	clips	\$30.00	\$180.00	\$0.00	\$180.00
Shutter Stock Photographs	5	photos	\$10.00	\$50.00	\$0.00	\$50.00
Free Stock Footage	2	clips	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Submission/Promotion						
Festival Fees	22	festivals	\$30.00	\$550.00	\$0.00	\$550.00
Posters (small)	10	posters	\$1.70	\$17.00	\$0.00	\$17.00
Posters (large)	3	posters	\$14.33	\$43.00	\$0.00	\$43.00
				\$7,740.00	\$6,600.00	\$1,140.00
				\$22,797.00	\$19,539.00	\$3,198.00

NOTE: A majority of in-kind funds towards are either provided by the University of North Texas or the shelter and accommodations of living at my parents' condo. Crew/labor funds are provided by students who are also in the process of attaining their Master's.

Despite having no committed funds yet, the film will be relatively inexpensive to create, and isn't necessary to allow this film to be great. The biggest challenges of making this documentary happen is in regards to access to my subject's working environment. Though I have subjects, I must obtain permission to film these characters in action, and U.S. Customs is understandably incredibly tight so this will prove to be difficult. Many of the agents are responsible for living low key lives for their own protection. There are different policies in regards to what I can film, including in training, handling of immigrants, use of gear, and there are several specific areas along the border I will not be allowed to film whatsoever. I am certain whoever gives me permission would like to see a copy of the picture-lock prior to any distribution, for security reasons.

For these reasons, I foresee preproduction being a much more daunting, meticulous phase than production or postproduction. However, so far, the public relations agents have been significantly more supportive than I would have thought.

As far as geographic challenges, the temperature regularly exceeds 95 degrees in all locations (Brownsville; Laguna Vista; McAllen, Texas) and is intensified due to the high humidity that comes with being so close to both the Gulf of Mexico and the Rio Grande River.

Music

Laura Otero is a student at the University of North Texas in the Music Master's Program and regularly performs with the university's jazz ensemble. She is a singer/songwriter of Columbian decent and has tentatively agreed to allow the use of her original pieces and compose specifically for this film if need be. Laura often performs along with the University of North Texas jazz ensemble, as well as is various venues across the Dallas-Fort Worth area. She has had experience composing for a documentary.

Daniel Pinilla is a songwriter who often collaborates with Laura in music composition, including having co-written all songs selected for this documentary. He has also agreed to allow the use of his music for the purposes of this film.

Songs they have written and/or performed that are expected to be used for this film.

"Aru" written by Daniel Pinilla and Laura Otero / Performed by Laura Otero

"Este Nino" written by Daniel Pinilla and Laura Otero / Performed by Laura Otero

"Salve" written by Laura Otero / Performed by Laura Otero

Postproduction Schedule and Reassessment

1/07/14 - 1/11/14

Viewing and logging of footage

1/13/14 - 1/20/14

Converting footage and synchronization of sound

1/24/14 - 3/1/14

Transcription of audio

3/9/14

String out

3/12/14

Music applied and footage is coordinated with selected excerpts

3/15/14 - 3/25/14

First presentable edited footage (6 minutes) shown to committee

3/28/14 - 4/11/14

Application of suggestions and critiques by committee members

5/9/14 - 5/16/14

Summer Break

5/20/14

Additional 8 minutes of footage is edited bringing total to run time so far to 14 minutes

6/1/14

Last needed footage is shot (which accompanies one of Noe's stories) officially reopening and ending production

6/7/14

Next cut of film complete

6/9/14 - 6/18/14

Committee shown new cut; suggestions and critiques are made

6/22/14

Next cut of film complete

6/23/14 – 7/03/14

Committee shown new cut; final suggestions and critiques are made

7/15/14

Picture lock

7/16/14 – 7/25/14

Color/Sound correction

7/26/14

Film complete

The discussion to focus on one subject was made once viewing the interview of all subjects and noticing a disparity in engagement which Noe had over the other agents. The music performed by Laura Otero was given to me shortly after production, and it's quick, commanding tempo let to the choice to have precise, lyrical edits to accompany and embrace the selected songs.

RECONCEPTUALIZATION OF WORK

“You know the process of making a documentary is one of discovery and like writing a story, you follow a lead and that leads you to something else and then by the time you finish, the story is nothing like you expected.”

-William Shatner

Preproduction

Looking back on the overwhelming amount of effort spent getting permission from homeland security headquarters and persistently contacting commanding officers for some subject that would never be included in the film, it may seem that a lot of effort

was simply wasted. I don't see it like that. I had never had to push myself so hard or be so persistent to get permission for a film before, and though there were many obstacles that could have led to this film never making it past preproduction, my persistence paid off eventually and I feel like a more confident filmmaker going forward with other projects that may seem daunting to create.

Meeting with my subjects ahead of time was also significant, as many officers provided advice and directed me to sources of information and locations that benefited me during production. Their recommendations led me to other potential subjects and if I ever choose to go back and expand on this subject, I now have a network of people that can make the process easier, not only with border patrol, but potentially U.S. Customs as well. I debated on visiting the area prior to production, as I had lived there my entire life, knew the area well, and had filmed the area before. However, it didn't seem to be in the film's best interest to meet my subjects personally the day I intended to film them, and in other productions I've worked with I've always regretted not taking advantage of an opportunity to meet with my subjects beforehand. Meeting with my potential subjects prior to production removed any of the initial suspicion and hesitation I was met with once shooting began, including with Noe, and them being comfortable with me this was an invaluable asset, allowing them to be more open during the interviews.

Production

There has never been a production I've gone through in which I didn't feel some level of regret, whether it be that I could have prepared more, interacted differently with my subjects, been a better producer to my crew, or think of what I could have done with

a few more days of shooting or a little more money. In this production I wish I could have spent a few more hours with my subject or known from the beginning the Noe would be the film's only perspective. I knew that I would not have the convenience of going back and forth to locations because for all my weeks spent trying to receive permission from headquarters, commanding officers and subjects, the result was only a few hours of scheduled time granted for an interview with a handful of agents. This would mean I would have to take advantage of this time to the fullest, knowing there simply wasn't enough time to endure the process needed to request for additional interviews. A couple interviews were disappointing, particularly the ones that preferred to be strictly audio and subjects who were hesitant to reveal any personal information regarding family, regrets in uniform, or specific experiences. Noe was actually the last scheduled interview, on the second to last day of schedule production, and early on I knew that he had brought a value and level of enthusiasm to the production that the other subjects were unable to provide, having no restrictions on what he was able to reveal about border patrol because he was not currently an agent.

This pushed me to explore and capture my subject's identity in a way different from the film's other subjects, and to the credit of my cinematographer, this was a success given the limited amount of time we had to spend with him. Dealing with the unpredictability of subject interaction and new and missed opportunities, there are always defining moments during every production in which a director realizes that previous expectations have altered for better or for worse, and the film would not be what had been anticipated in preproduction. This moment, for me, came minutes into the interview with Noe.

One of the most obvious obstacles once permission was accomplished was that all of the subject(s) stories would virtually be absent of any accompanying footage save for the sit down interview, and in some cases only accompanied with the audio of the interview. I did have possession of stock footage and images given to me by officer Tirada, but it was not enough to eliminate the problem entirely. Rather than allow elongated sections of the film to just be accompanied by a talking head, I took note of particularly dry sections before postproduction. This allowed me to edit down the stories, removing any excessive moments. Jump cuts would be masked by appropriate footage to accompany Noe's story, especially when describing the people, the environment and specific tools and buildings.

Postproduction

The postproduction for this film has gone relatively smoothly once committing to a direction of the documentary. It was an extremely difficult decision not allowing any of the other agent interviews to make it into the final product, particularly after creating a string out which had multiple subjects participating, but despite many of them having relevant and interesting things to contribute, the film was simply better when seen through Noe's engaging perspective.

Originally, I did not expect to show any of the subjects in a formal interview setting. Rather, I thought the film would be composed of voiceover throughout or possible audio interviews heard while we see the subjects' activities. Knowing in preproduction that some of my original subjects preferred not to be filmed on camera, I had intended this film to consist of entirely of audio interviews accompanied by footage

of the subjects as I followed them through their daily routines as agents. I filmed the subjects that were willing to have their face on camera in a traditional interview setting in case the voice over expectations did not work, which ended up being significant to the final product as the audio only interviews were not used at all.

Also disappointing was that despite the promising contact made by an introduction from a U.S. Customs officer with one of the editors at Univision in regards to receiving footage of the border area and news stories covered regarding homeland security, this exchange never materialized. Communication was maintained with this individual throughout preproduction and production, but for unknown reasons footage was never sent and it was in the best interest of the film to focus that time on more reliable sources.

I have always held a particular passion for editing. I understand brief clip of an alien being arrested or of a starving immigrant child may communicate more effectively a message to an audience than a long montage of interviews about the poor condition of immigrants who are apprehended while trying to cross into the United States. With editing, there can be a broader story told around the immediate one, to satisfy the viewer with broad progression by meticulous selection and ideally still maintain a sense of truth as I see it.

APPENDIX

US Customs and Border patrol (CBP) includes a workforce of over 58,000 employees, including 45,000 sworn federal agents and officers, making it the country's largest law enforcement agency. Their many diverse duties include enforcing immigration laws, inspection of vehicles, shipments, and individuals crossing into the United States, and preventing terrorists and illegal aliens from entering the country. They also have the authority of seizing all illegal or undocumented weapons, merchandise, and drugs from entering through the designated border checkpoints.

The origins of U.S. Customs and Border Patrol date back to the aftermath of the Revolutionary War and the turn of the twentieth century respectively, and many of the agency's controversies, responsibilities, and intentions remain unchanged.

History of Border Patrol



Although there have been many unofficial organizations founded with the intentions of protecting the United States border from illegal crossings since the turn of the 20th century, The United States Border Patrol was officially established in 1924. The number of agents have spiked dramatically since 1992, in response to the rise in traffic. Met with opposition from environmentalists, landowners, and those of Latino decent, the

controversial Secure Fence Act was passed in 2006, and the 700 mile long structure was completed in 2008. Border Patrol Agents are required to attend the Border Patrol Academy in Artesia, New Mexico from 8 1/2 weeks to 14 1/2 weeks to complete courses in several branches federal and international law.

History of Customs



The origins of the United States Customs Service date back to the birth of the nation, recognized as a government agency in 1789 as a result of George Washington signing the Tariff Act, then known as “Customs Collectors” due to their responsibilities of collecting illegally imported goods and other items. As the country expanded its borders with the Louisiana Purchase, the Manifest Destiny, and the conclusion of the Mexican American War, so did the government’s need for a stronger homeland security force.

Timeline of Significant U.S. Border Patrol/U.S. Customs Events During Subject's
Tenure as an Agent According to U.S. Customs and Border Patrol Protection

- 2000 - U.S. Customs Service Valor Memorial dedication
 - Customs Cyber Smuggling Center opens in Fairfax, Virginia
 - Number of migrants into the U.S. reaches 1.5 million for first time
 - Washington, D.C. hosts first U.S. Customs Trade Symposium
- 2001 - September 11th attacks cause stricter regulations in nearly all federal entities
- 2002 - Container Security Initiative (CSI) established by U.S. Customs
 - Trade Adjustment Resistance Reform Act is passed affecting the tracking of inbound cargo
 - Department of Homeland Security (DHS) established
- 2003 - Announcement of Border Safety Initiative
 - Launch of Customs Trade Partnership Against Terrorism (C-TPAT)
 - U.S. Customs and Border Patrol Service is reassigned to CBP
 - Automated Commercial Environment (ACE) is adopted by CBP
- 2004 - Radiation portable monitors first used to scan cargo shipments
 - Unveiling of the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol Valor Memorial
- 2005 - Secure Border Initiative

Subjects Interviewed but Who Will Not Be Used

Chris A. Olivo (Customs - Brownsville, TX)

Just sworn into customs this year, making him a rookie. A hulking, outspoken individual whom I've known since childhood. Stationed in Brownsville, Texas.

Roberto Rodriguez (Border Patrol)

Border patrol agent for 11 years stationed in McAllen.

Fernando Ramirez (Border Patrol)

Eleven years experience as a border patrol agent. Recently had two children and is adjusting to balancing family life and his career stationed in Brownsville, Texas.

Immigration Situation in the United States and the Rio Grande Valley

In the aftermath of the Mexican American war, several thousands of Mexican citizens suddenly found themselves living within the United States borders. There were virtually no migratory restrictions in the initial years following, allowing citizens of both the U.S. and Mexico to freely cross over to seek work or visit family.

Although today a majority of illegal aliens are from Mexico (estimated 62%), not all are, and some cross multiple borders such as those from Guatemala whom cross the Mexico border and then the U.S. border. These people, when discovered, hope to be deported back to Mexico to keep from having to start their journey over. A number of events have triggered fluctuations in immigration in the United States including the California Gold Rush, The Great Depression, and the most recent recession. The Immigration Control and Reform Act was passed in 1986, penalizing U.S. employers for hiring illegal immigrants. There has been much debate as to the level of economic significance of Mexican laborers in the United States and there has been a recent executive push for immigration reform. Since 2008, for the first time since the 1930s,

there has been a steady decline in immigration traffic, in direct reflection of beefed up border security, record deportations under the current administration, a rise in cartel and other criminal violence, the dismissal of the DREAM Act (which would have allowed an easier path for citizenship), the uncertainty of the U.S. economy, and the gradual economic growth of Mexico.

States that currently host the most undocumented immigrants are unsurprisingly the larger border states, California, followed by Texas. The Hispanic population makes up the largest minority in the U.S. with an estimated 53 million people, half of whom live in Florida, Texas, or California, and has become the majority in New Mexico.

Upon the proposal of what is now known as the Border Fence or Border Wall, most southern border communities including the Rio Grande Valley were in general against it for property reasons as well as believing it was a direct act to sever relations with neighboring Mexico, where many citizen and non-citizens do have family and friends. This sparked regular protests and panels against its construction, and several legal battles, including wanting to alter its architecture because it was originally going to cross directly through the Valley's local university (then called University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College) golf course. Many from the community still consider it an ineffective eyesore and many "No Border Wall" bumper stickers and signs remain in plain view.

While most would presume the immigration situation in the Rio Grande Valley is similar to other border area, statistically, it isn't in many ways. South Texas has long been a refuge of choice for aliens from Central America. Border patrol regularly releases statistics on apprehensions of immigrants and a majority of border regions

have been either consistent or have dropped in the past forty years, despite rises in organized crime in Latin America. However, in the Valley, apprehensions have more than tripled since 2010, labeling the region by *The Texas Observer* as an “Epicenter of a Growing Humanitarian Crisis.” In 2013 alone, over 150,000 immigrants were apprehended, including an alarmingly high rise in unaccompanied children. This is a result from a growing preference from caring, but desperate, parents who believe it is more affordable to send only their sons and daughters to the U.S. rather than their entire family, as well as from human smugglers who know it is more efficient to transport children who are smaller and less likely to be searched by agents. Unsurprisingly, this has led to a rise in rape and cartel recruitment among undocumented immigrants attempting to enter the country. Another danger is that small children do not have the stamina of adults, so many are deserted if they cannot keep up with the group. The Valley also had the second highest number of deaths among immigrants attempting to cross into the United States, most due to heat exposure in the arid brush land which acts as a natural barrier and has minimal security.

Local Border Patrol Agent Chris Cabrera says that somehow, “Word has gotten out that we’re giving people permission and walking them out the door. So they’re coming across in droves.” This film’s subject, Noe, does speak briefly about his experience while out on patrol finding children abandoned by smugglers, wandering the desert alone.

Still, Brownsville as a whole celebrates its relationship with Mexico with a holiday known as Charro Days, an annual event in which citizens dress in traditional Mexican

clothing, host parades, and have several dance and song performances within grade schools.

Approved Contacts

The following contacts are involved in homeland security and either refused to be interviewed on camera or their interview was not in the best interest of this documentary, but provided vital information throughout this production whether it be precautionary, legal, or historical.

Eddie Perez - Head of U.S. Customs Public Relations
(956) 548-2540 ext.1155
eduardo.g.perez@cbp.dhs.gov

Office Henry Mendiola - Department of Homeland Security Public Relations
(956) 289-4800 ext.4993
e.mendiola@dhs.gov

Daniel Tirada - Border Patrol Agent
(956) 289-5976
rgv-pao@cbp.dhs.gov

Robert Rodriguez - Border Patrol Agent
(956) 793-4477
ram_rod79@yahoo.com

Permission

A majority of subjects would not agree to sign a release contract to be used in this film, but were willing to give an oral authorization on camera in front of their commanding officers. The following are emails from commanding officer allowing or denying supervised agents to be a part of this film as subjects or information sources.

Eddie Perez, CBP supervisor - denying



PEREZ, EDUARDO G <EDUARDO.G.PEREZ@cbp.dhs.gov>
to me ▾

12/9/13 ☆ ↶ ▾

Mr. Medrano as per our phone conversations, regretfully we will not be able to accommodate your request at this time...

Please visit our public web-site CBP.gov for information that might be of assistance to you for your project.

Thanks

Eduardo G. Perez
CBP Supervisor
Public Affairs Liaison
3300 S. Expressway 77/83
Brownsville Texas 78521
[956 548-2745 Ext. 1155 Office](tel:9565482745)
[956 371-4788 Cell](tel:9563714788)
eduardo.g.perez@dhs.gov
Visit www.CBP.gov

From: Estevan Medrano [mailto:emedrano917@gmail.com]
Sent: Saturday, December 07, 2013 11:46 PM
To: PEREZ, EDUARDO G
Subject: Border Documentary

Daniel Tirada, RGV Border Patrol Operations officer - allowing



RGV-PAO <RGV-PAO@cbp.dhs.gov>
to me ▾

12/9/13 ☆ ↶ ▾

Hello Mr. Medrano,

Please let me know what day you will be needing our assistance to conduct your interview at the Falfurrias Checkpoint so that we can plan accordingly.

Danny Tirado

Operations Officer
RGV Sector Public Affairs Office
Office [\(956\) 289-5976](tel:9562895976)
Cell [\(956\) 227-8935](tel:9562278935)

From: Estevan Medrano [mailto:emedrano917@gmail.com]
Sent: Saturday, December 07, 2013 11:44 PM
To: RGV-PAO
Subject: BP Documentary

Statistics

The following statistics are accurate and telling of the scope, activity, and significance of homeland security obtained or directed to by the previously mentioned sources. Some may be used in the film, likely at its conclusion.

According to US Department of Homeland Security

Total Seizures in 2012 (most recent available statistics)

· Number of pounds of cocaine seized: 135,943

- Number of pounds of heroin seized: 2,015
- Number of pounds of marijuana seized: 4,330,475
- Number of pounds of methamphetamine seized: 6,135

Since 1998, the U.S. Border Patrol reports there have been 5,595 immigrants who have died trying to cross the US-Mexico border.

An estimated 11 to 15 million immigrants illegally reside in the United States.

The Justice Department estimates that Colombian and Mexican cartels take in \$18 billion to \$39 billion from drug sales in the United States each year.

Resume

Estevan Medrano

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EDUCATION

- University of Texas at Brownsville/Texas A&M University-Kingsville - Classification: Graduate
- Major/Minor: Communications (RTF)/Business - GPA: 3.59
- University of North Texas - completed 2.5 years of 3 year MFA Film Production program (expected graduation date June 2014)

WORK EXPERIENCE

- Illustrator for 7 books - In the Shadows of My Souls/En El Sombre de Mi Alma, Ghosts of Fort Brown Vol. 1-3, In Body and Mind/En Cuerpo y Mente, Images of the South Texas Border/Imagenes and upcoming book on Tejano leaders
- Library Assistant for University of Texas at Brownsville - Sept-Dec 2008
- Production Assistant for film "One Night in Old Mexico" (postproduction) July 2012
- University of North Texas Editing Lab Assistant
- UNT Teaching Assistant for Cinema Beyond the West (RTVF 4415) Fall 2013
- UNT Teaching Assistant for Broadcasting, Cable, and Internet Perspectives (1310) Spring 2014

INTERNSHIPS

- Edited two documentaries for long running University of Texas at Brownsville's 'Los del Valle' series, "Paso por Aqui" (2011) and "Soy del Valle: Oscar Casares" (2012)

SHORT FILMS (Written/Directed/Produced)

- Home Cooking (2012)
- Flying Full Circle (2013)
- Priceless (2013)
- On the Fence (Postproduction)

ORGANIZATIONS

- Member of the Order of Demolay - Phoenix Chapter - 2007-2009
- Reporter for Campus News Team at Texas A&M University-Kingsville - Spring 2010
- Member of Omega Delta Phi - Alpha Mu Chapter - crossed Spring 2010
- Positions - Public Relations/Historian/Internal Vice President

HONORS AND AWARDS

- Omega Delta Phi Chapter awarded #1 chapter of the region for 2009 with 1,662 total service hours (2nd most in state)
- Highest GPA among fraternity Spring '11

-Graduated Magna Cum-Laude

RELEVANT COMPUTER SKILLS

Final Cut Pro 7, Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Audition, Adobe Premiere, Adobe Encore, Microsoft Word, Celtx, Transcriva

RELEVANT EQUIPMENT SKILLS

field cameras, lighting, boom, wireless microphones

INTERESTS

writing fiction, editing films, singing, acting, cooking, fishing

REFERENCES

- Books

Hernandez, Kelly Lytle. *La Migra! A History of the US Border Patrol*. 2010
A well-researched history of the U.S. Border patrol, dating back to its origins in the 1920s. It takes a look at how the comprehensive agency has evolved, as well as its daily struggles for immigration control.

Montejano, David. *Anglos and Mexicans and the Making of Texas*. 1987.
An honest account of the history of Texas regarding its independence, it's relations with Mexico and Mexicans living in Texas and it's relocated borders over the last two centuries.

Rosenthal, Alan. *Writing, Directing, and Producing Documentary Films and Videos*. 4th Ed. Southern Illinois University Press, 2007

Ellis, John. *Witness and Self-Revelation*. Routledge Group: United States and Canada, 2012.

Reese, David, Lynne S. Gross, and Brian Gross. *Audio Production Worktext: Concepts, Techniques, and Equipment*. 6th Ed. Focal Press, 2009

Nichols, Bill. *Introduction to Documentary*. Indiana University Press: IN, 2001

-Websites

U.S. Department of Homeland Security. <<http://www.dhs.gov/>>

U.S. Customs and Border Protection. <<http://www.cbp.gov/>>

del Bosque, Melissa. "Rio Grande Valley Becomes Epicenter of Growing Humanitarian Crisis." *Texas Observer*. 3 Feb 2014. Web. 4 Mar 2014.
<<http://www.texasobserver.org/rio-grande-valley-becomes-epicenter-growing-humanitarian-crisis-for-central-americans/>>

Films

Man with a Movie Camera. Dir. Dziga Vertov. VUFKU, 1929. DVD.

Made in L.A. Dir. Almuenda Carracedo. Semilla Verde Productions, 2007. DVD

Which Way Home. Dir. Rebecca Cammisa. Documentress Film, Mr. Mudd, Reason Pictures, and White Buffalo Entertainment. 2009. DVD

-Other

Border Wars. National Geographic. USA, 2010. Television