



Across the Wire: Life and Hard Times on the Mexican Border

By Luis Urrea

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Across the Wire: Life and Hard Times on the Mexican Border By Luis Urrea

Luis Alberto Urrea's *Across the Wire* offers a compelling and unprecedented look at what life is like for those refugees living on the Mexican side of the border—a world that is only some twenty miles from San Diego, but that few have seen. Urrea gives us a compassionate and candid account of his work as a member and "official translator" of a crew of relief workers that provided aid to the many refugees hidden just behind the flashy tourist spots of Tijuana. His account of the struggle of these people to survive amid abject poverty, unsanitary living conditions, and the legal and political chaos that reign in the Mexican borderlands explains without a doubt the reason so many are forced to make the dangerous and illegal journey "across the wire" into the United States.

More than just an expose, *Across the Wire* is a tribute to the tenacity of a people who have learned to survive against the most impossible odds, and returns to these forgotten people their pride and their identity.

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Across the Wire: Life and Hard Times on the Mexican Border By Luis Urrea Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Urrea, a Mexican-born American, worked from 1978 to 1982 for a Protestant aid group in Tijuana, and he wrote these fragmentary, evocative tales of heartbreak and hope for the San Diego Reader after he returned to the region in 1990. "Poverty is personal: it smells and it shocks and it invades your space," Urrea declares, and he admits to being thrilled by both the goodness and the squalor he knew intimately. He visits the dumps where people live, their possessions a bed and a car-battery-powered television. He travels with a Tijuana cop, working "a city of famed vice," and learns how the cop extracts sexual favors from American women. In one arresting chapter he records his father's death in a car accident, the tragedy compounded by police and funeral costs and a battle with the father's insurance company. Urrea ends with a manic, magic "Christmas story," about a gift giveaway organized by a San Diego rock radio station and attended by a band called the Trash Can Sinatras. There Urrea reunites with Negra--who as a little girl made a shrine out of the doll he gave her, and who says, "I never forgot you, Luis." Photos not seen by PW .

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From Library Journal

Urrea, a San Diego native, recounts his experiences in Tijuana and other areas on the U.S.-Mexico border from 1979 to 1991. He meets residents of the Tijuana city dump, visits rural orphanages with American missionaries, and goes on calls with a Tijuana police officer. Urrea's candid style does not sensationalize these situations; each of his Mexican acquaintances is an individual whose story is told with respect and understanding. As a personal and insightful view of Mexican border residents and their lives, *Across the Wire* is a more detailed and cohesive treatment of the topic than Debbie Nathan's *Women and Other Aliens* (LJ 5/1/91). Highly recommended. --Gwen Gregory, U.S. Courts Lib., Phoenix

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Review

"This is a riveting, compassionate, and beautiful narrative. I will never be able to forget this powerful book."
-John Nichols, author of *The Milagro Beanfield War*

"The Borderland—the trouble zone between two countries, between two languages, the poverty which is the huge shadow of affluence, the place where you live when life is impossible, the time between boyhood and manhood when a young man does crazy things, the region where the saints and the outlaws are— all these borderlands are in Urrea's book of horrors and marvels, tenderness and rage."- Ursula K. Le Guin, author of *The Left Hand of Darkness*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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