

BORDER PATROLMAN CROSSES THE LINE

Francisco Cantú, a former Border Patrol agent, is the author of *The Line Becomes a River*. In this memoir, Cantú grapples with his experience enforcing an immigration system he doesn't agree with, and the often catastrophic results of those policies for migrants, and even fellow Border Patrol agents. **Said Cantú** in an interview in *Guernica* magazine "I think when we think of border patrol we think of border wars, what we see on the nightly news, where it's a car chase, or a drug bust, these exciting things, but the vast majority of your work is just sitting in a car, bored—but also encounters with these people who are risking their lives to cross the border for a better life.

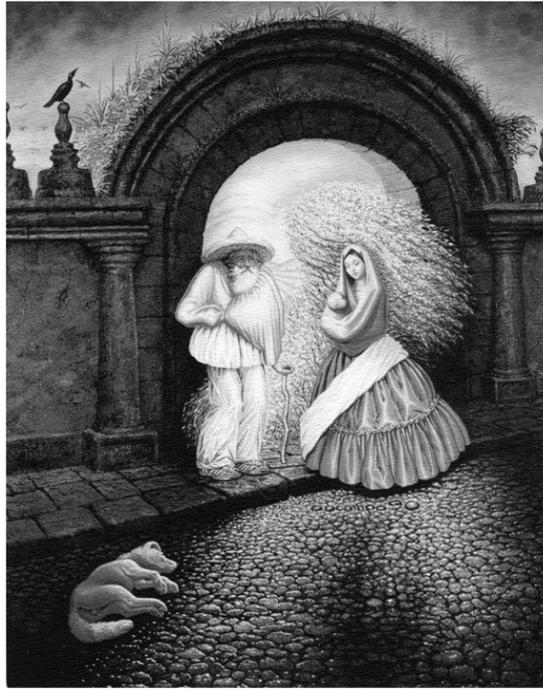
"For someone like me, who went into the border control looking for answers, I didn't join the border patrol to write a book, to write an exposé, I joined with all these questions, hoping that I would see something that would equip me to fix things. I thought maybe I would go on to be a policymaker and I would have the golden mystery that nobody had discovered.

"But of course what happens when you enter a system like that is that you go through this very long process which is not an accident. The Border Patrol Academy, like the military, like any law enforcement job, is set up to condition you to make normal the violence, subtle and not subtle, that you will be participating in and enacting. And so those things very quickly slip away without one realizing it.

"What stayed with me, what stays with me now, is every single person I arrested and something about them. And I think if every news article that you read had that in it, if you talked about it with every single person you encountered who was undocumented or was a dreamer and you knew about that part of their life, I think we'd be having a different conversation.

"I think the only legitimacy the border patrol has is that it already exists, and I think we need people like you and *No More Deaths* to call for it to be abolished. An agent isn't making border policy, but if you see the culture of the border patrol, and you see how that trickles down from the top, you see how something like destroying water is an unforgivable act.

"What these humanitarian groups are doing by putting water out in the desert is they're attempting to fill a deadly void that is left by our border policy. This policy is "enforcement through



deterrence." It's a policy that's not even an official policy. It's been unchanged since the nineties, because we haven't had the political courage to have any actual immigration reform.

All we've had are these ad hoc executive orders. And so what this does is it pushes people out of the well enforced, walled-off urban areas into the most dangerous, treacherous parts of the desert. And the thinking, back in the nineties, was that it's so crazy there, nobody's going to go there.

"What we've seen, for decades now, is that no matter what hell we have at the border, no matter what obstacle we put, people are going to endure that, especially when their family is on the other side, or when certain death waits for them at home. By destroying the aid **that is attempting to fill the gap that is left by that policy,** the border patrol has to be held accountable for that.

And I think that the larger question is: If we have this agency, then what do we do to fix the policies it's enforcing, first and foremost, and second of all, to change the culture of that agency so that destroying the water bottles is viewed as an unforgivable act, not just by us on the outside, but by border patrol agents themselves?

"We passed a "build the wall" bill in 2006—it's called the Secure Fence Act. And that's the act that gave us more than seven hundred miles of barrier along our southern border. We had a huge hiring boost in the border patrol. I was part of that hiring push. I came in at the tail end of that during the Bush administration. Trump released his budget recently, I was asked about that in some interview—if we hire two thousand more border

patrol agents, if we throw all this money at the wall, but we don't change the border policy, well, then, we already know what's going to happen. We know. We've seen it.

"But what I became interested in in the book obviously was interrogating my own participation in violence and the way that I normalize it in my own life, but also the way that we normalize it in all of our lives. I think that it happens on so many levels, even the language we choose to talk about it: a flood of migrants, a cat-and-mouse game at the border.

Even in the Spanish language it happens too: there's pollos and polleros, chickens and chicken ranchers. I think that it's important to recognize, for example, that when we talk about immigration reform, we talk about the dreamers especially, because it's the most sympathetic group. It's the one group now that we have that it seems people can agree on. But what we don't talk about is the fact that hundreds of people every year die in the desert. That's not a bargaining chip, but it should be and we need to fix that first because that's a humanitarian crisis.

We could shape the narrative by demanding to know these names, not just these numbers, and demanding that that stuff gets reported. Why don't these names run in our local newspapers? I live in Tucson; I never, ever know how many people die that week in the desert. I think that even the way we record border deaths is ad hoc. Every county has their own system. So, Pima County, where I live, they have a very organized way of handling this. But there are these counties in Texas where it's literally one coroner and then all of sudden there'll be a summer when two hundred bodies show up in their county. So there's no federal system for handling the effects of federal policy and the deaths that federal policy is causing.

In any consideration of the border, and of American immigration policy with respect to it, the desert itself—beautiful, wild, and deadly—looms large. It is the greatest hurdle, both for the migrants attempting to enter the United States and for the government that seeks to keep them out. For hundreds of migrants every year, that march into the desert is the last thing they'll ever do. We have enlisted the borderlands themselves into our war; the desert has become an unwitting participant. But at what cost?

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MUIR REPORT: Royal Ponies & Temple Mounts

As ceremonies for the new Embassy in Jerusalem were taking place, Trump, Daddy's Little Ghoul, **Ivanka**, and accessory **Jared**, who should be told that his grandparents surviving the holocaust is different than escaping by buying your ticket out of Europe, were extolling the virtues of the holiest place on earth, as members of every religion were imploring God to share in this magnificent moment.

God bless America, God bless Israel, God bless Netanyahu, God bless American tax dollars.

A short distance away, unarmed Palestinians protesters were being mowed down like so many blades of grass. Very ecumenical. The only thing we can say for sure about this remarkable display of mendacity inside the Embassy, was the number of God blesses muttered inside, roughly equaled the amount of people slaughtered outside. **They made God proud.** Now, the only things left to fulfill the prophecy of the second coming of Christ, who is coming down to give the Jews a real and final ass-kicking, is for the Temple on the Mount to be razed and re-built and the appearance of a blue cow. I don't know about you but I am already pitching the evangelical church for money to buy blue dye.

The Cohen-Trump bribery plot thickens. In the old spy movies, capitalists would bribe the Russian spies with a paltry amount of money, to get them to turn over information. It seems like they had that one backwards.

The royal wedding had all the earmarks of the Kentucky Derby, watching the thoroughbreds prancing down the causeway, toward the church, dressed in their finest silks and accompanied by companion horses. The royal brood mare and her ginger colored groom are too old for this type of carrying on, maybe the bride should have at least been sensitive enough to wear an off-white gown.

It's official, more children were killed in school massacres than in our overseas wars this month.

All this, while fighting over whether we should stand or sit during the anthem, before football games. Sport teams don't have bosses, they have owners. The slaves will do as they are told. Indeed, patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel. Everyone knows the anthem is another excuse to sandwich 7 more ads around a meaningless exercise in faux patriotism. At home, we use the time to go to the toilet or open a beer, how dare the players try to inflict reality on us. To be fair, they should also close all the concession stands during the ceremony and make everyone stand with their hands over their hearts, while Roseanne Barr sings the anthem. **What's more patriotic than ceasing to make money? How about requiring Congress to sing the anthem every time they cut benefits for veterans?**

The motives of the Oakland coal yard experiment, a plan to ship hundreds of open train cars filled with uncovered coal through heavily populated areas, are becoming clear. Mr. Tagami, a former business partner of Governor Brown will stop the flow of these open cars of coal, to the Oakland port if we pay him 700 million dollars to do so, shades of the Headwaters forest deal, a half of a billion dollars for 15 trees and a creek covered in debris. I knew when I saw **Diane Feinstein** shaking hands with **Newt Gingrich**, it couldn't be good for us. How about shutting down the train because it's making us sick and killing children. Have you no decency, Sir?

-Muir Walker