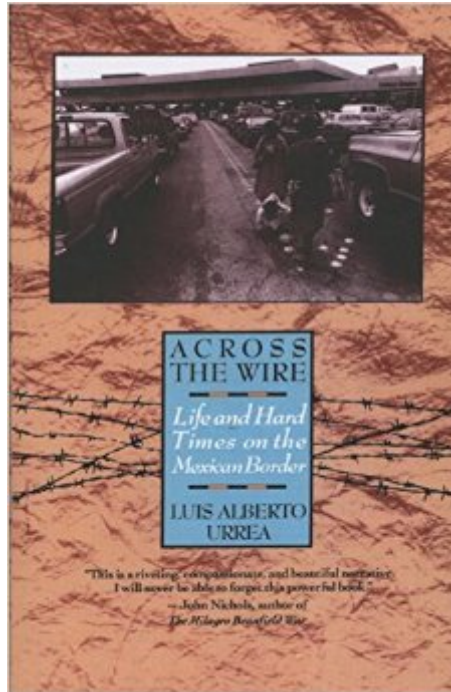


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# Across The Wire: Life And Hard Times On The Mexican Border



## Synopsis

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.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I am a former United States Border Patrol Agent and I read this book while working the fixed positions we often manned along the Arizona-Mexico border. I was so moved by this story, I cried. I cried as I read this book, right there in my Border Patrol vehicle on the very line separating two very different worlds! This book is an easy read and can be taken a little at a time. Its impact is incredible and your heart will be broken. It is a must read! I am not compromising my stance on immigration laws here, I am just expressing my heart-felt pain for some of what the beautiful people of Mexico must face in their lives. God bless!

I'm basically writing this review because I feel that the comments posted here do not reflect how beautiful this book actually is. It was assigned reading during a Chicano Studies course I took last quarter, and quite literally changed the way I look at the Mexican-US border. Too often we on this side of the border are shown a VERY diluted picture of life on the border, and NEVER a complete picture. I felt that this book helped to fill in the gaps in my own bias. There is nothing cruel, nothing romantic, nothing emotional about this book. It presents a string of events told objectively by the author, for our own emotional responses to perceive however we choose. A fairly short book made of extraordinarily powerful yet short anecdotes, you'll find it VERY hard to not finish this in one sitting. HIGHLY recommended; one of my favourite books of all time, that has not been given the mainstream acclaim it deserves.

people who read this book need to understand that this book is going to be biased. in the beginning the author explicitly states that this book is going to be his personal account about his experience of the border life in Tijuana. people who want truth about the hardships these people face need to pick up this book and read it. i read it for a class that i am interning for and i work in a homeless youth shelter in the city of Tijuana and i see so many similarities of this life. i see the children and have to ask myself where and how did these children end up on the streets. why have they chosen this life, a life of hardship and chaos? Never knowing when your time is up or who that person down the street is beating up or for my case, how can there be a drug house next door to these children? this book is a very emotional account of those that have gone as far as they could only to end up a step closer to that freedom. this book definitely opened my eyes to those who have come this far only to continue to struggle. searching in the dumps for food, living on a piece of land where you could be kicked off in a instant, only to be more homeless than you already are. this is a story, a true story, that will hopefully open the eyes of all who read this book. it is an account of hope and survival, quite often things that you or me need not to worry about. the people who are talking about immigration reform and who are hoping to make it alot more strict because they feel "their country" is being overrun by illegals, need to pick up this book. you need to step out of your bubble and volunteer with a group that goes across the wire to the other side, the true other side. not revolution avenue, but go into the city, go to houses on the hills. go and see the way these people live and then ask yourself if you have the right to complain about those people who are trying to make a better life for their families and themselves.

I totally disagree with the reader from San Diego. This book was not just to manipulate emotions. I believe that he was trying to tell the story of people who would have otherwise never been known to exist. It is important to know that they do exist. Time and chance is all that stands between them and us.

This is a heart wrenching book that attempts to describe what it's like to be one of the poorest of the poor in the world. The author outstandingly introduces to people, some of whom are his close friends, who live in an entirely different world and yet have the same desires and dreams as we although they are often too discouraged to dream them. The author, a reasonably intelligent man with a good education and experience, is also wise enough to know that there are no easy remedies to the poverty that afflicts the people in his book and so many others. The saddest part of the book is actually in Urrea's follow-up book, "By the Lake of Sleeping Children". In it, he describes how people have contacted him about the region seeking to do research, write articles or even on a television show. "Very few," he wrote, "want to send money." Sending money is not the solution to poverty, but writing a check is the easiest thing to do to temporarily alleviate some of their suffering. So go and have a good cry. Then, after you get down on your knees and thank God for the blessings you have, consider putting your compassion into action.

This book, plain and simple, is about truth: the truth about the distribution of wealth in the world and the truth about the abject poverty our own hoarding of wealth produces. Those reviewers who find it simply an indictment of Americans "who work hard for what they get" insult the five or so billion people in the world who work just as hard as we allegedly do--and probably more--yet end up living from hand to mouth, day to day. It is an incredible pathology of the rich, lazy and fat that they attribute their incredible wealth (relative to say, Tijuana) and the poverty of others to such things as "work" and "initiative". This book clearly shows how fraudulent these claims are. You want initiative and hard work? Try picking through the trash dump every day to feed your family--as opposed to simply saving up for a new home theater system.

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