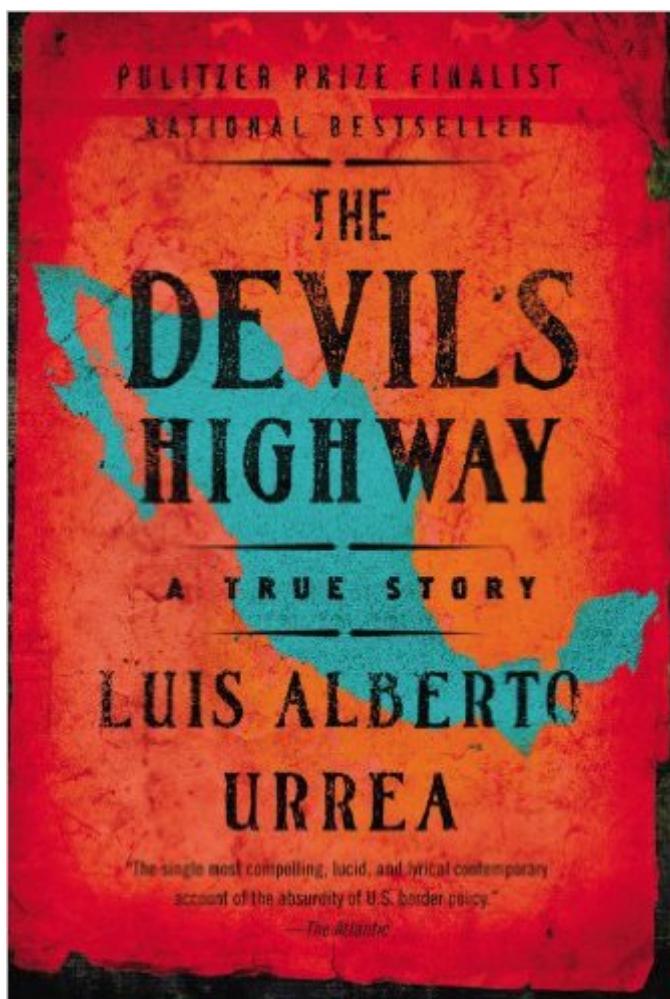


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The Devil's Highway: A True Story



Synopsis

In a new 10th anniversary edition: "The single most compelling, lucid, and lyrical contemporary account of the absurdity of U.S. border policy" (The Atlantic). In May 2001, a group of men attempted to cross the Mexican border into the desert of southern Arizona, through the deadliest region of the continent, the "Devil's Highway." Three years later, Luis Alberto Urrea wrote about what happened to them. The result was a national bestseller, a Pulitzer Prize finalist, a "book of the year" in multiple newspapers, and a work proclaimed as a modern American classic.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 starsÂ See all reviewsÂ (255 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #6,560 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #3 inÂ Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Specific Demographics > Hispanic American Studies #5 inÂ Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Public Affairs & Policy > Social Policy #5 inÂ Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > International & World Politics > Security

Customer Reviews

Urrea delivers a moving novel based on the true story of the Yuma 14, fourteen Mexicans (from a group of 26) that tried to cross the border and enter the US illegally through the Arizona desert and succumbed in the attempt. The author presents the facts efficiently and his conclusion follows: Mexicans trying to cross the border are human beings like everyone else that had the bad fortune of facing tough economic condition; they should be respected. The author describes the conditions and historic events that lead to the beginning of the illegal immigration into the US and draws a clear parallelism with our times, when there are several tasks in the US that Americans are reluctant to do, thus illegal immigrants are needed for this. When price changes in international markets adversely affected the Mexican economy and overpopulation became a problem, some Mexicans decided to come to the US. They ended up with a comfortable life, so when others found out, a

growing interest in crossing the border developed. Organizations of coyotes were formed to provide supply for the growing demand, and the poor people seeking a better future became just a means to an end. These individuals in their attempts have to fight against the heat of the desert, thirst, exhaustion, "la migra" (Border Patrol) and the coyotes themselves. On top of this, the control at the border has intensified throughout the last years, so the groups seeking a new future have to go through more dangerous paths each time. In the case of the twenty-six Mexicans that are the center of this story, the point of entry was the Devil's Highway, a deadly desert in Arizona that has claimed numerous victims through the years.

"The Devil's Highway," is a pretty good book. Urrea sees no sacred cows - unless discussing the poor individuals who dare to cross over to the U.S. The border landscape is murderous, and the "Coyotes" that lead the illegals across are predators and gangsters. It's all about money. Urrea does his best to give each of those who suffered through the 2001 ordeal (the Yuma 14 (those that died), or Wellton 26 (the entire party), take your pick), faces, lives, hopes. They are people, and not just rotting bodies found in the desert. Still, I get the sense that "The Devil's Highway," is a bit padded. There are also a few inaccuracies (Department of Interior police as a separate body from the BLM? An inaccurate description of a Tarantino movie), which left feeling that Urrea was shooting from the hip. Given the subject matter, he can't help but hit his target (which is extended to both sides of the border), but when I see mistakes (even nitpicky ones), I wonder, whatever the book, what other ones am I missing? Further, Urrea's style will remind you of Hunter Thompson, or even James Ellroy. This is high-risk writing, that hooks a reader, but can also annoy when unnecessary slang is used. At its worst, it seems like the writer is more interested in being hip than telling the story. It's a high wire act. Urrea for the most part stays on that wire, but there were a few times where the slang gets to be annoying. But even with a slightly padded feel to it, it's the last twenty or so pages of the "Devil's Highway" that deliver the goods. Urrea could easily expand on those twenty pages and write a new book the current state of things Mexican - and American.

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