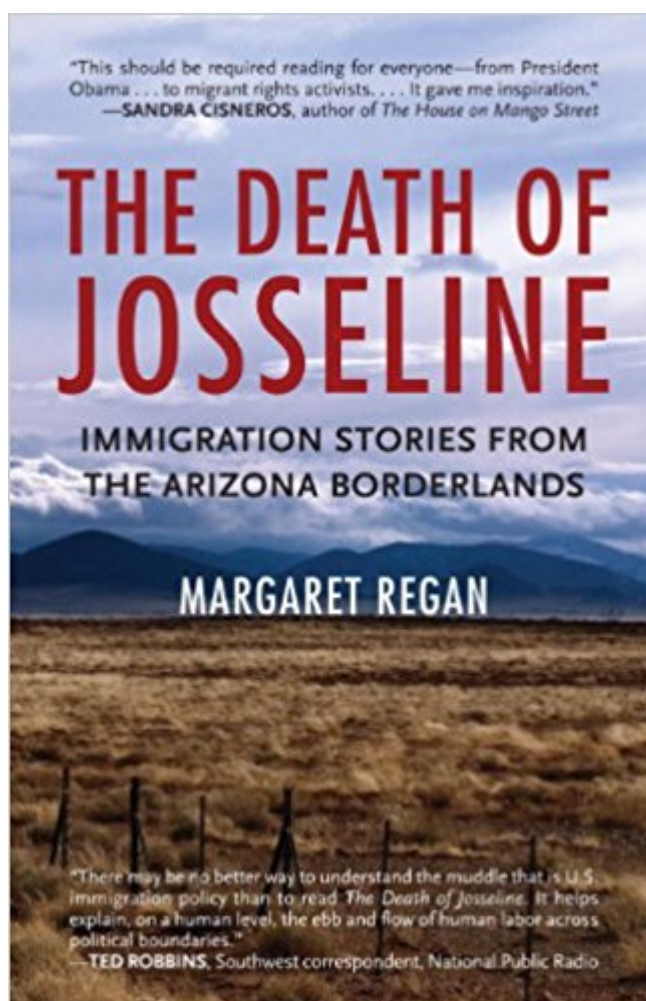


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# The Death Of Josseline: Immigration Stories From The Arizona Borderlands



## Synopsis

Dispatches from Arizona—the front line of a massive human migration—including the voices of migrants, Border Patrol, ranchers, activists, and others — For the last decade, Margaret Regan has reported on the escalating chaos along the Arizona-Mexico border, ground zero for immigration since 2000. Undocumented migrants cross into Arizona in overwhelming numbers, a state whose anti-immigrant laws are the most stringent in the nation. And Arizona has the highest number of migrant deaths. Fourteen-year-old Josseline, a young girl from El Salvador who was left to die alone on the migrant trail, was just one of thousands to perish in its deserts and mountains. — With a sweeping perspective and vivid on-the-ground reportage, Regan tells the stories of the people caught up in this international tragedy. Traveling back and forth across the border, she visits migrants stranded in Mexican shelters and rides shotgun with Border Patrol agents in Arizona, hiking with them for hours in the scorching desert; she camps out in the thorny wilderness with No More Deaths activists and meets with angry ranchers and vigilantes. Using Arizona as a microcosm, Regan explores a host of urgent issues: the border militarization that threatens the rights of U.S. citizens, the environmental damage wrought by the border wall, the desperation that compels migrants to come north, and the human tragedy of the unidentified dead in Arizona's morgues.

## Book Information

Paperback: 256 pages

Publisher: Beacon Press (October 12, 2010)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0807001309

ISBN-13: 978-0807001301

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.6 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 55 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #119,647 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #106 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Specific Demographics > Hispanic American Studies #126 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Specific Topics > Political Freedom #214 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Emigration & Immigration

## Customer Reviews

Regan, a Tucson journalist, has compiled a compelling chronicle of the flow of migrants from northern Mexico into the "Tucson Sector" of Arizona, distilling the many facets of this phenomenon into an enlightening account. She focuses on one border crosser, 14-year-old Josseline Hernandez, who in January 2008, left with her younger brother in a group heading eventually to Los Angeles, where their mother was waiting. Ill from prolonged exposure, Josseline was left in the desert to die by her well-paid guide, or coyote. In exploring that death, and the nearly 1,600 other migrant deaths in the Arizona desert between 2001 and 2009, Regan interviews the Border Patrol, vigilantes, members of the human rights group No More Deaths, and Tohono O'odham tribal members, on whose land 83 bodies were found in 2007 alone. She also speaks with migrants, many of whom have tried multiple times to cross Arizona's "killing field," created when restrictions tightened around such border cities as El Paso. Regan doesn't offer any solutions, but her brutally honest depiction should be read by those who will. --Deborah Donovan --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"This should be required reading for everyone-from President Obama . . . to migrant rights activists. . . . It gave me inspiration."-Sandra Cisneros, author of *The House on Mango Street*"The many admirers of Enrique's Journey will find much to admire, and fear, in this powerful report."-Luis Alberto Urrea, author of *The Devil's Highway: A True Story* "Regan puts a human face on the multiple problems created by desperate, poverty-stricken people entering the United States illegally to look for work, and the costly measures taken by the American government to secure its borders."-Kirkus Reviews"Regan . . . has compiled a compelling chronicle of the flow of migrants from northern Mexico into the 'Tucson Sector' of Arizona, distilling the many facets of this phenomenon into an enlightening account."-Booklist"There may be no better way to understand the muddle that is U.S. immigration policy than to read *The Death of Josseline*. It helps explain, on a human level, the ebb and flow of human labor across political boundaries."-Ted Robbins, Southwest correspondent, NPR

Short anecdotes, longer narrative accounts, and a host of statistics and facts eventually communicate the tale that mass media doesn't tell us: that the "border crisis" didn't come out of a vacuum, that it was the direct result of entering into the NAFTA (and CAFTA) trade agreements, that border-crossing came in single digits daily back in the '90s, and then triple/quadruple digits by the year 2000. The story gets worse, as we learn that a secured perimeter in CA and TX leads to

border-crossers "funneling" through the most hostile environment of all, the Arizona deserts, the "badlands." The right-wing rhetoric ignores all these issues. The US places the blame on Mexico and Mexicans for crossing "illegally," when it was our actions that put them in a place of desperation in the first place! The incredible irony is, so many of them cross the border to do the SAME WORK HERE (agriculture) that they used to do in Mexico before the trade agreements made it impossible for them to do that work on their own land. It boggles the mind. And now 1000 or more die every year in the attempt to cross, and if a kind-hearted soul does anything more than leave water (God forbid you drive them to a hospital), expect to be arrested. Our priorities are backwards, and Ms. Regan helps us see that.

This is a masterful study of the human collateral damage associated with illegal US-Mexico border crossings. As a retired US expatriate having lived and worked in central Mexico for 30 years, this was a VERY emotional read for me. I have always looked upon the US-Mexico border as almost a separate country that does not truly represent either the United States or Mexico. For over 500 years, strong economic and political forces on both sides of the border have created a very stressful and unique subculture here. With recent increases in drug traffic and its associated criminal activities, the US-Mexico border has become even more unique. Margaret Regan's book clearly illustrates this. This book documents the subculture of illegal immigrants that has been allowed to continue in the US even after the 1985 US Immigration reform bill. As I read Ms. Regan's book, I somehow kept sensing a parallel with the subculture of slavery and freed slaves that continued to exist in the United States from 1787 to 1863 and beyond. Her book shows clearly the enormous political pressures coming together to complicate this issue. After reading *Beyond Borders...* by Timothy Henderson, this book provided a fine supplemental reading. (I also recommend "Crossing Over" by Ruben Martinez). My conclusion is that a properly administered temporary worker program would go far to minimize illegal immigration from Mexico and Central America to the United States.

Margaret Regan's "The Death of Josseline" is a fine piece of reporting about a humanitarian crisis in the nation's backyard. It would make a fine bookend to Ted Conover's brilliant "Coyotes," first published in 1987. Like Conover, Regan puts faces and names to the ongoing dramas inside the border-crossing zone, primarily the Arizona border around Tucson. It's clear where Regan's sympathies lie, with the "wretched of the earth" being "criminalized for their poverty." But she takes an unflinching look at the "mafia" that exploit migrants on the Mexican side of the border, and she rides along and shows us up close the border agents, who also work in rugged, extreme conditions

and who are shown, quite simply, just doing their job. There are a wide variety of people who are key players in this ongoing drama and Regan writes thoughtful portraits of them all. This is a human drama, Regan is saying, not something political or theoretical in the halls of Congress. Regan has a beautiful writing style and a keen eye for details. "On our hike, the farther into the wilderness we went, the more evidence we found of recent human travelers. A Santa Nino de Atocha water bottle--a popular migrant item, bearing the image of the boy Jesus as a pilgrim, dressed for travel in hat and cloak--was fresh and pliable. On a hilltop we discovered an active windmill, watched over by a herd of placid white cows, where migrants could easily pump out fresh water if they could get to the top." Due to changing economic conditions in the United States and Mexico--changes that are reducing the relative flood of immigrants to a trickle--the crisis along the border may be abating in summer of 2011. One can only assume many immigrants are still making the run and one can only assume that many are running into life-threatening, and no doubt tragic, situations. Read "The Death of Josseline" for a desert-level view of this major policy issue. As with the debate in Washington, it's hard to believe we can't do better on behalf of the human lives right here in our midst.

It's possible for those of us who live far from this country's southern border to remain ignorant of conditions there, but not after reading this book. Although Regan's sympathies are clearly with the people trying to enter the U.S. in search of a better life, just as her own family members did a couple of generations ago, her treatment of the topic is quite even-handed. She gives a clear picture of how NAFTA created more difficult conditions for the poor in the countries south of here, and how the new border "fence" has driven would-be migrants into the dangerous desert regions of southern Arizona, but she also writes about the problems of trash, the environmental impact of the migration routes, and the frustrations of those who try either to keep migrants out or to help them. The greatest strength of the book is the way she makes her subjects come to life, which reminded me of John McPhee's writing. (Full disclosure: Regan is married to my stepson).

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