

Facts & Figures on the Border & Immigration

Number of anti-immigration hate groups identified by the SPLC in 2019: **20**

Number of children separated from their parents as a result of the Trump administration's zero tolerance policy: **at least 2,800**

Number of those children under 10 years old: **at least 1,000**

Number of individuals, according to U.S. government statistics, who have died while attempting to cross the U.S. - Mexico border between 1998 and 2017: **7,216**

Number of migrants seeking asylum at the U.S.- Mexico border under the new Migrant Protection Protocols between January and September of 2019: **47,000**

Percentage granted asylum under the program during the same period: **.1%**

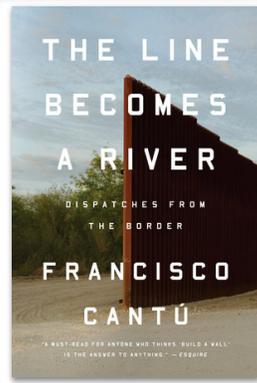
Percentage of Americans who believe the U.S. should take in refugees escaping from war and violence: **73%**

Percentage of Americans who believe that the U.S. should find a way for immigrants in the country illegally to gain legal status: **67%**

Stats linked to sources in online guide collegereads.cofc.edu

"When we consider the border, we might think of our home; when we consider those who cross it, we might think of those we hold dear"

—Francisco Cantú



About the Book

For Francisco Cantú, the border is in the blood: his mother, a park ranger and daughter of a Mexican immigrant, raised him in the scrublands of the Southwest. Driven to understand the hard realities of the landscape he loves, Cantú joins the Border Patrol. He and his partners learn to track other humans under blistering sun and through frigid nights. They haul in the dead and deliver to detention those they find alive. Plagued by a growing awareness of his complicity in a dehumanizing enterprise, he abandons the Patrol for civilian life. But when an immigrant friend travels to Mexico to visit his dying mother and does not return, Cantú discovers that the border has migrated with him, and now he must know the full extent of the violence it wreaks, on both sides of the line. [from the [publisher website](#)]

The Line Becomes a River: Dispatches from the Border, this year's College Reads selection, will form the basis of your small group discussions with a faculty member at Convocation at the start of the school year. You will also discuss the book in your First Year Experience course and in other places, so it is important that you read and think carefully about the book. We look forward to welcoming Francisco Cantú to campus at some point during the coming academic year to speak about his work and to meet with classes and small groups of students and faculty. Stay tuned for additional details!

Engaging *The Line Becomes a River*

- ♦ As the debate about immigration policy in the U.S. has become increasingly heated, immigrants themselves are often vilified in ways intended to incite fear and raise suspicion. How does Cantú's depiction of individual migrants challenge this negative discourse?
- ♦ Cantú, reflecting on the importance of dreams, quotes the psychologist Carl Jung's contention that "dreams are the guiding words of the soul." What do we learn from the dreams that Cantú shares with the reader throughout his book? What do you think they reveal about him?
- ♦ In a surprising narrative move, Cantú gives over the final section prior to the epilogue to Jose, who speaks to the reader in the first person. What does Cantú risk by doing this? What does he gain? And what do we learn from Jose's perspective that Cantú can't offer?
- ♦ There has been significant controversy surrounding Cantú's book, with some critics sharply questioning the value of reading a book by a Mexican-American citizen who worked as a Border Patrol agent. Instead, his critics argue, we should read works of artists and writers more directly affected by border violence. Do some online research about this debate. How do you feel about this critique? What is gained by approaching this issues from Cantú's perspective? What is lost?
- ♦ "The U.S.- Mexico border," Cantú writes in his Author's Note, "is a place that perpetually shatters naivety, a place where idealism withers in the face of a violent status quo that is constantly being normalized, minimized, or ignored." The same might be said of so many of the physical borders that define nations even as they determine what is possible—safety, health, even life itself—for so many. Could the same be said of other, less visible borders or race, class, ethnicity, gender identity, and sexual identity? What borders do you find most challenging to your own idealism? Where do you think these borders get their power? And how can society remake or remove them?
- ♦ Cantú, discussing the plight of immigrants, cites Pope Francis's critique of the "globalization of indifference" that threatens to make invisible the suffering of others around us. Even if we can learn to grieve as we witness the pain of others, Cantú writes that "in the end our feelings and our tears are useless unless they compel us to act in a way that might someday improve the situation." Are there social justice issues that have inspired you to move from indifference to genuine empathy? Have you been able to translate that sense of empathy into action? And how might you continue to do so in the years ahead?

About the Author

Francisco Cantú is a writer, translator, and the author of *The Line Becomes a River*, winner of the 2018 Los Angeles Times Book Prize and a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award in nonfiction. A former Fulbright fellow, he has been the recipient of a Pushcart Prize, a Whiting Award, and an Art for Justice fellowship. His writing and translations have been featured in *The New Yorker*, *Best American Essays*, *Harper's*, and *Guernica*, as well as on *This American Life*. A lifelong resident of the Southwest, he now lives in Tucson, where he coordinates the Field Studies in Writing Program at the University of Arizona. [from [author website](#)]



Photo by David Taylor