



# BETWEEN BORDERS:

## Exploring Immigration Realities at the Southern Border

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# Your Presenters!



**Melina Mera**

- 2024 John Carroll University graduate
- Participated and led U.S. - Mexico border immersions to Nogales and El Paso



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- Student at John Carroll University Class of 2027
- Participated in U.S. - Mexico border immersions to El Paso



# WHAT IS AN IMMERSION?

Immersion trips are 7-10 day experiences in a variety of domestic and international locations that invite and challenge participants to enter into solidarity with the people, culture, history, and other realities of the region. Each Immersion focuses on several specific social justice issues.



Kino Border Initiative  
Iniciativa Kino para la Frontera

*The Encuentro Project*

Seeking the Grace of Encounter †

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THIRD PARTY  
ORGANIZERS

# *REFUGEES - By Brian Bilston*

*They have no need of our help*

*So do not tell me*

*These haggard faces could belong to you*

*or me*

*Should life have dealt a different hand*

*We need to see them for who they really*

*are*

*Chancers and scroungers*

*Layabouts and loungers*

*With bombs up their sleeves*

*Cut-throats and thieves*

*They are not*

*Welcome here*

*We should make them*

*Go back to where they came from*

*They cannot*

*Share our food*

*Share our homes*

*Share our countries*

*Instead let us*

*Build a wall to keep them out*

*It is not okay to say*

*These are people just like us*

*A place should only belong to those who*

*are born there*

*Do not be so stupid to think that*

*The world can be looked at another way*

*(now read from bottom to top)*

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# PUSH & PULL FACTORS OF IMMIGRATION



01

# WHY ARE SO MANY PEOPLE MIGRATING?

Understanding why migration is occurring? Why are people leaving their countries? Why are they coming here?

## Push and Pull Factors

Push Factors are circumstances and conditions in one's home country that compel individuals or families to leave.



Pull factors are attributes of a place that attract individuals or families to migrate there.



**Poverty/Economic  
Instability**

**Political Instability**

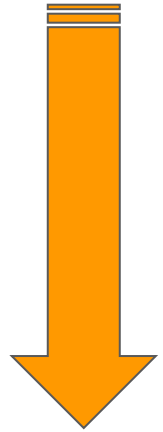
**Conflict or Violence**

**Lack of Job  
Prospects**

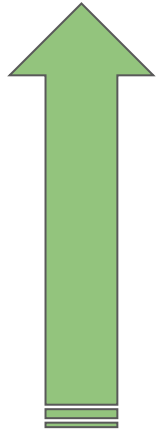
**Climate  
Change/Natural  
Disasters**

**Corruption**

**PUSH**



**PULL**



**Economic  
Opportunities**

**Lower Crime**

**Livable Wages**

**Environmental**

**Political Stability**

**Higher Standard of  
living**

# What does this look like?

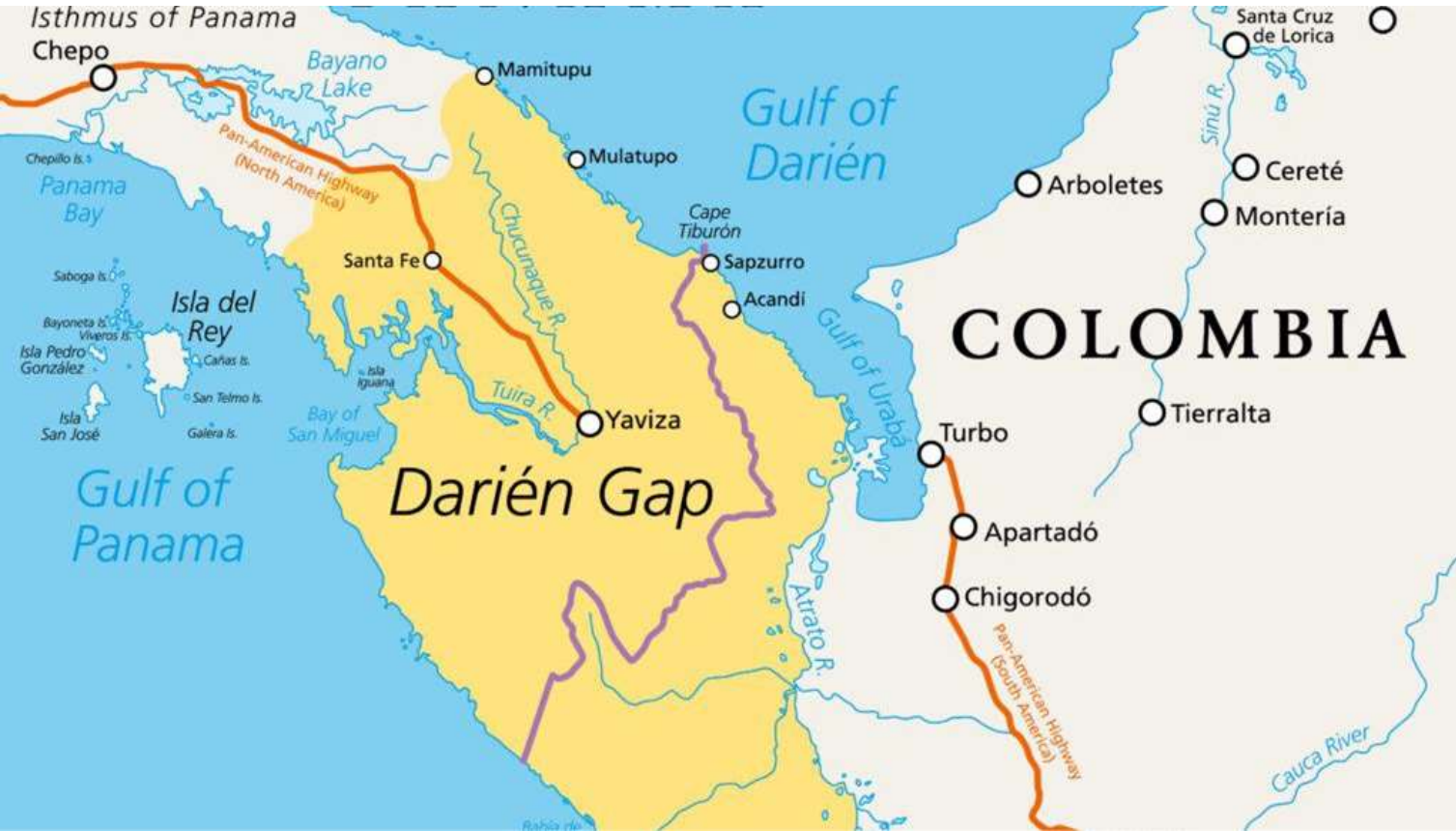
## Venezuelan Migration:

- Venezuelans are migrating due to escape Venezuela's unstable political, economic, and humanitarian conditions.
- Since 2015 over 7 million<sup>1</sup> Venezuelans have left their home country.



<sup>1</sup><https://immigrationforum.org/article/the-reasons-behind-the-increased-migration-from-venezuela-cuba-and-nicaragua/>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.statista.com/chart/28512/main-destinations-of-venezuelans/>



THE JOURNEY TO  
THE U.S.

02

# MIGRANT JOURNEY



WHAT THE JOURNEY  
LOOKS LIKE?



# DARIEN GAP

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The Darién Gap is a 60-mile stretch of rainforest and wetlands that connects Colombia and Panama, forming the only land route between South and Central America.



○ Apartadó

○ Chigorodó

0



Inside the deadly migrant route to America

<https://youtu.be/wzdkmb5Zjas?si=AXTyIzjDfGsG8Qlo>

# LA BESTIA/ARRIVAL IN MEXICO

## Conditions In Mexico:

- Migrants face many dangers in Mexico, including violence, exploitation, and unsafe travel conditions

## La Bestia:

- Also known as the Train of Death
- This is a freight train that starts its route in Chiapas state in southern Mexico, near the border of Guatemala and travels up to the US-Mexico border.
- Between 400,000-500,000<sup>1</sup> Migrants ride this train each year through Mexico risking their lives to reach the U.S.



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.dw.com/en/la-bestia-hitching-a-ride-on-the-death-train/a-60008759>





# SEEKING ASYLUM IN THE U.S.

03

# THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS:

**Article 14:** Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.

**Article 13:** Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

<https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>



# FIVE “PROTECTED GROUNDS” FOR ASYLUM

Believe you will be in danger of persecution if you return to your country.

**1**

**RACE**

**2**

**RELIGION**

**3**

**NATIONALITY**

**4**

**MEMBERSHIP  
TO A  
PARTICULAR  
SOCIAL  
GROUP**

**5**

**POLITICAL  
OPINION**

**Who does NOT fall under these categories?**





<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/seeking-protection-how-us-asylum-process-works#:~:text=According%20to%20U.S.%20and%20international,has%20stoked%20many%20legal%20debates> <https://www.cbp.gov/about/mobile-apps-directory/cbpone>

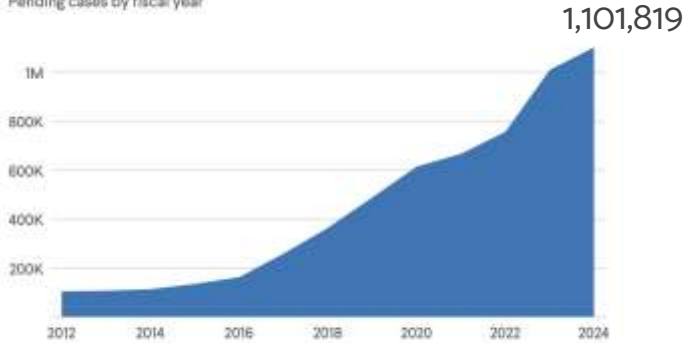
# WAYS TO SEEK ASYLUM...

- Migrants must apply for asylum from within the U.S. or at a port of entry
- Within the U.S.
  - Affirmative process
  - Defensive process
- At a port of entry
  - Make an appointment via the CBP One Mobile App



## U.S. Asylum Backlog Is Growing

Pending cases by fiscal year



Note: Data for FY 2024 is from January.

Source: Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, Syracuse University.

COUNCIL ON  
FOREIGN  
RELATIONS

# SOME ISSUES WITH THE CURRENT PROCESS

- Increasing backlog in case processing
  - According to the TRAC Immigration database the current wait to be heard in an asylum hearing is 1,424 days, or about 4 years
- Employment/Lack of income
  - Migrants can receive their work permit in the U.S. after at least 180 days have passed since they submitted their asylum application
- Cost of hiring an immigration attorney
  - Requesting asylum is a complicated process; therefore immigrants are strongly encouraged to hire an attorney

Table I. Asylum Outcomes, FY2008-FY2022

Fiscal Year	Grant Rate	Denial Rate	Administrative Closure Rate	"Other" Rate	Total Outcomes
2016	15.81%	21.37%	39.40%	23.42%	54,706
2017	19.66%	32.83%	20.32%	27.19%	53,533
2018	20.69%	41.75%	3.29%	34.26%	63,479
2019	20.62%	49.55%	0.14%	29.68%	91,451
2020	19.13%	54.49%	0.63%	25.75%	76,113
2021	16.06%	30.64%	6.36%	46.94%	46,071
2022	14.17%	16.74%	12.77%	56.31%	158,199

Source: EOIR, "Asylum Decision Rates," Adjudication Statistics, January 16, 2023.

Notes: Grant, Denial, Administrative Closure, and "Other" rates are calculated as the sum of those outcomes for each fiscal year divided by the total outcomes for the fiscal year.

<https://help.asylumadvocacy.org/work-permits/#:-:text=In%20general%2C%20you%20can%20apply,you%20submitted%20your%20asylum%20application.>

<https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/measuring-absentia-removal-immigration-court>

An aerial photograph of a border wall. The wall is covered in various murals and graffiti. On the left, there is a large mural featuring a figure holding a shield, with gears and a map of Mexico in the background. To the right, there are several smaller murals, including one with a red and white figure and another with a blue and white design. The wall is surrounded by a concrete base and a metal fence. The background shows a dry, desert landscape with some sparse vegetation and a fence line.

# MORE MYTH BUSTING WITH BORDER PATROL

04



# MYTH

# FACT

<p>Most drugs entering the U.S. from Mexico are smuggled between ports of entry.</p>	<p>CBP data indicates most illicit drug substances are smuggled through POEs.<sup>1</sup></p>
<p>Undocumented immigrants don't pay taxes, but still get benefits.</p>	<p>All immigrants pay sales, property, and consumption taxes; many also pay income taxes.<sup>2</sup></p>
<p>The U.S. has nothing to do with the violence occurring in South and Central America.</p>	<p>For years, the U.S. has played a defining role in the inequality and violence that is driving people in Latin America away from their homes.<sup>3</sup></p>
<p>ICE is providing free cell phones for migrants.</p>	<p>These cell phones can't make calls or access the internet. ICE is using them to track migrants.</p>

1- <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/drug-seizure-statistics> 2- <https://apnews.com/article/fact-check-immigrants-taxes-rent-vaccine-requirements-983035929946>

3- <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/dec/19/central-america-migrants-us-foreign-policy> 4- <https://www.cnn.com/2022/06/05/us/border-migrants-cell-phones-cec/index.html>



**WHAT IS HAPPENING  
IN OUR OWN  
HOMETOWNS?**

**05**



# Who are the immigrant workers in Wayne County?

- They come from Peru, Mexico, Dominican Republic, Honduras, Venezuela and other countries.
- They work in dairies, meat and chicken processing plants, construction and local industries.
- They work with no benefits, no health insurance, no worker's compensation, no disability rights and are at the whim of their employers for scheduling and losing their jobs.
- They pay US taxes.
- All are hard-working people who have risked their lives to come here.
- They usually live in substandard housing and struggle to pay the ever increasing rent and utilities.
- They want to avoid getting into trouble because it could affect their job opportunities, court hearings or applications for asylum.



# Eduardo

Eduardo, a veterinarian from Mexico, came to the US through a documented worker program, expecting to work in his field. Instead, he works as a laborer in a dairy, earning \$12/hour, 3 am to 3 pm, six days a week. He receives low-cost housing from his employer but lacks health insurance and worker's compensation. Eduardo, who has diabetes, feared disclosing his condition to his employer. He pays taxes regularly.

For six years, Eduardo lived with four other immigrants, waiting to bring his family to the US. He studied English and became fluent enough to communicate well. Two years ago, he reunited with his wife Maria, also a veterinarian, and their two sons. After developing a foot sore, he sought treatment at the Cleveland Clinic. Despite initial care, his condition worsened, leading to multiple surgeries and partial amputation of his toe.

Due to his immigration status, Eduardo was denied worker's compensation and SSI. His older son took over his work to sustain the family's income. Eduardo has gradually returned to work but can't manage his previous workload. Throughout their struggles, Eduardo and Maria have maintained a positive attitude, grateful for support and always thanking God for their family life.

(Anne Sturbaum)

# What can YOU do?

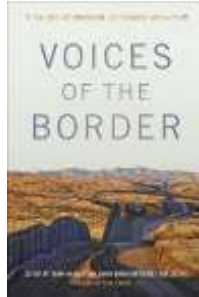
1. **ADVOCATE**- voice your support of immigrants coming to our country fleeing violence and speak up against misinformation!!
2. **GET INVOLVED & DONATE** to local organizations such as...
  - a. Open Arms/Brazos Abiertos (Orrville- for Wayne, Holmes, and Stark counties) (<https://open-arms.us/>)
  - b. Immigrant Worker Project (Canton- serve all of Ohio) (<https://iwpo.org/>)
  - c. Catholic Charities Migration and Refugee Services (Catholic Charities Diocese of Cleveland) (<https://www.ccdocle.org/service-areas/migration-refugee-services>)
  - d. Westminster Presbyterian Immigration Justice Group (Westminster Presbyterian Wooster) (<https://www.westminsterpresbyterianwooster.org/get-involved/immigration-justice>)
3. If you speak Spanish...
  - a. Volunteer at Viola Startzman clinic as a translator
  - b. Assist migrants with transportation to appointments
  - c. Help with translation in filing taxes, understanding bills, etc.
4. Donate to the Kino Border Initiative  
<https://www.kinoborderinitiative.org/ways-to-give/>



# RECOMMENDED ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



- Darien Gap podcast: The Daily “A Mother, a Daughter, a Deadly Journey”  
<https://open.spotify.com/episode/7chWlx1c9p9B7t23Kz00bM?si=TbPga2zoQ3yEbOb8fFH1oA>
- *Voices of the Border: Testimonios of Migration, Deportation, and Asylum* by Tobin Hansen & María Engracia Robles: Powerful personal accounts from migrants crossing the US–Mexico border provide an understanding of their experiences, as well as the consequences of public policy
- Kino Border Initiative Blog for new and migrant testimonials:  
<https://www.kinoborderinitiative.org/kino-blog/>



Kino Border Initiative  
Iniciativa Kino para la Frontera



“No one leaves home unless home is the mouth of a shark.”

– Warsan Shire

“The common good is not served when the basic human rights of the individual are violated.”

– Social Catholic Teachings

