

## Bordering the Future A Panel Bringing the Border to You

The U.S. - Mexico border is roughly 2,000 miles of anguish, hope, beauty, squalor, disorder, laws and lawlessness that separates and binds our two countries. Geographically, the border runs from the Pacific Ocean to the Gulf of Mexico, half of it following the Rio Grande River from El Paso to Brownsville. Economically, the border often divides the haves from the have-nots. And then, there is the economy of the security of the border – over \$102 billion spend by the end of 2013 and not a satisfying amount of improvement to show for it.\*

Emotionally and spiritually, the border has been a flowing bi-cultural region of friends and family, where people were free to visit, raise children, eat with grandparents. This way of life for border dwellers is gone, interred with the thousands of men and women murdered and kidnapped as a by-product of the unique rise of Mexico's crime cartels and their interest in human trafficking and illegal drugs.

Whether one lives near the U.S. – Mexico border or at some distance from it, virtually every community in America is being affected by the border. It is of vital interest to Americans that we understand and engage with what is taking place on the border and why. This panel will help you grasp these issues in an intimate, close-in way, using first hand experiences to bring to life the complexities of the border, including the drug violence, immigration, and the profound cultural changes that are taking place.

**Bordering the Future** presents three award-winning authors and experts on the U.S. - Mexico border. They will share their experiences, their knowledge, and their hopes about the future. They represent, singly and together, the three intertwined aspects of the border situation: the law enforcement side against the narco-violence, the devastating human costs of lawlessness and cultural disruption, and the practical realities of fostering those positive traditions and cultural expressions that preserve people intact despite profound tragedy.

### **Panel Members**

**Hipolito M. Acosta** is an expert on immigration laws, regulations, policy and procedures, and has conducted extensive enforcement operations. He was the District Director of I&NS at the U.S. Embassy, Mexico City in charge of all I&NS operations in Latin America and the Caribbean as well as District Director in Houston.

Over the past 30 years, Mr. Acosta has worked with and for agencies such as the U.S. Border Patrol, U.S. Immigration & Naturalization Services, U.S. Department of Justice, the U.S. Embassy in Manila, Philippines, the American Consulate in Monterrey, Mexico, the American Consulate in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City and most recently with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security in Houston. In addition, he has received numerous awards from the U.S. government and

heads of foreign states for outstanding service in enforcement and immigration services and has been honored by numerous civic organizations.

Mr. Acosta's book, **The Shadow Catcher: A U.S. Agent Infiltrates Mexico's Deadly Crime Cartels** (Atria Books, 2012) deals with his undercover work in human trafficking on both side of the border.

**Ricardo C. Ainslie** is a native of Mexico City who has devoted the last two decades to working in communities in Texas and Mexico that have experienced significant conflict and transformation, exploring broader questions about how communities function and how individuals and cultural groups live within them. A hallmark of his projects is the way he fosters reflection, both within those communities and beyond them, employing a variety of media, including books, documentary film, and photographic exhibits,. His most recent book, **The Fight to Save Juárez: Life in the Heart of Mexico's Drug War** (University of Texas Press, 2013), takes us inside a city caught in the crossfire of warring drug cartels. Mr. Ainslie spent two years travelling to Juárez when it was the most violent city in the Americas. His account helps us understand the scope of the violence sweeping through Mexico and its implications for the United States. In 2010 he was awarded a Guggenheim fellowship and in 2011 he was invited to testify before U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security on the Mexican drug war.

**Sarah Cortez** is a poet, memoirist, editor, teacher, law enforcement officer. Her sixth-generation Texas family's roots along the border shape her connection to the lost way of life along La Frontera.

As Houston's most popular creative writing teacher, Cortez has specialized in working with students, whether young or elderly, writing memoir. This intensive crafting of prose story laden with each author's honed perception of meaning has given Cortez a unique window into generations of American Latinos' perspectives, dreams, hopes, and disappointments.

In her anthology, **Windows into My World: Latino Youth Write Their Lives** (Arte Público Press, 2007). Cortez began the work of showcasing the short memoir of teen and older Latino youth. Her work with other Latinos and their unique revelations about daily life continued in **Our Lost Border: Essays on Life Amid the Narco-Violence** (Arte Público Press, 2013), the first book published in the U.S. documenting the effects of cartel violence in common people's lives on both sides of the border. The urgency of these brutal stories is underscored by the first-hand street cop's perspective from Cortez' own policing career of twenty years, which her recent book, **Cold Blue Steel** (Texas Review Press, 2013) documents in poetry.

## **Fees and Honoraria**

For the panel: \$6000. In addition, travel expenses will billed by the authors (estimates provided).

\*Source: IVN.us by Ryan Vetter

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