

Our Lost Border: Essays on Life amid the Narco-Violence

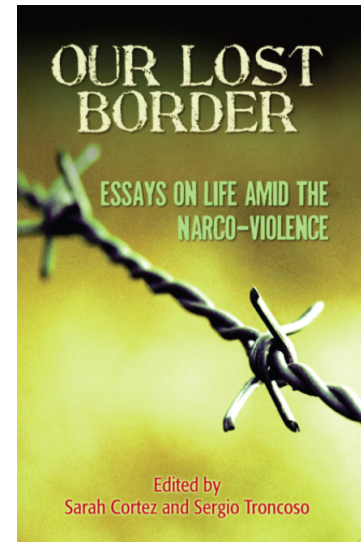
Edited by Sarah Cortez and Sergio Troncoso

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*Southwest Book Award from the Border Regional Library Association

*International Latino Book Award, First Place, Best Latino-focused Nonfiction Book (Bilingual)

*Finalist for *ForeWord Review's* Book of the Year Awards for Adult Nonfiction Anthologies

With a foreword by renowned novelist Rolando Hinojosa-Smith and comprised of personal essays about the impact of drug violence on life and culture along the United States-Mexico border, the anthology combines writings by residents of both countries. Mexican authors Liliana Blum, Lolita Bosch, and Diego Osorno write riveting, first-hand accounts about the clashes between the drug cartels and citizens' attempts to resist the criminals. American authors, including José Antonio Rodríguez and José Skinner, focus on how the corruption and bloodshed have affected the bi-national and bi-cultural existence of families and individuals. Maria Cristina Cigarroa shares her poignant memories of life in her grandparents' home now abandoned in Nuevo Laredo.

In their introduction, editors Sarah Cortez and Sergio Troncoso write that this anthology was “born of a vision to bear witness to how this violence has shattered life on the border, to remember the past, but also to point to the possibilities of a better future.”

[The Making of an Anthology: Our Lost Border: Essays on Life amid the Narco-Violence](#)

<http://chicolingo.blogspot.com/2013/05/the-making-of-anthology-our-lost-border.html>

Book Reviews for ***Our Lost Border: Essays on Life amid the Narco-Violence***:

“This eye-opening collection of essays details struggles of Mexican and American citizens affected by drug cartels along the Mexican-American border. Editors Cortez (*Walking Home*) and Troncoso (*Crossing Borders: Personal Essays*) shift between the journalistic and the personal, depicting those paralyzed by a systemic plague of violence. Oscillating between gruesome and hopeful, the collection “was born of a vision to bear witness to how this violence has shattered life on the border,” yet is imbued with optimism.... Indeed, these essayists posit that widespread hope for the region begins with the involvement of the individual: “This should be our struggle.”

—*Publishers Weekly*



Lurid television, newspaper stories, and cliché-ridden movies about Mexico abound in English; rare is any writing that plumbs to meaningful depths or attempts to explore its complexities. And so, out of a concatenation of ignorance, presumption and prejudice, those North Americans who read only English have been deprived of the stories that would help them see the Spanish-speaking peoples and cultures right next door, and even within the United States itself, and the tragedies daily unfolding because of or, at the very least kindled by, the voracious North American appetite for drugs. For this reason, *Our Lost Border: Essays on Life Amid the Narco-Violence*, a treasure trove of one dozen personal essays, deserves to be celebrated, read, and discussed in every community in North America....

In “A World Between Two Worlds,” Troncoso asks, “what if in your lifetime you witness a culture and a way of life that has been lost?” And with finesse of the accomplished novelist that he is, Troncoso shows us how it was in his childhood, crossing easily from El Paso to Ciudad Juárez: family suppers at Ciro's Taquería near the cathedral; visits to his godmother, Doña Romita, who had a stall in the *mercado* and who gave him an onyx chess set; getting his hair cut by “Nati” at Los Hermanos Mesa... Then, suddenly, came the carjackings, kidnappings, shootings, extortions. For Troncoso, as for so many others *fronterizos*, the loss can be measured not only in numbers— homicides, restaurants closed, houses abandoned— but also in the painful pinching off of opportunities to segue from one culture and language with such ease, as when he was a child, for that had opened up his sense of possibility, creativity, and clear-sightedness, allowed him develop a practical fluidity, what he calls a “border mentality”— not to judge people, not to accept the presumptions of the hinterlands, whether of the U.S. or Mexico, but “to find out for yourself what would work and what would not.”

—C. M. Mayo for *Literal Magazine: Latin American Voices*



“[T]here was a great need for this book, and it should be noted that each of its remarkable essays includes represents a significant act of courage on the part of the authors, speaking truth to power. *Our Lost Border* creates a welcome opening for frank and insightful reporting, analysis and reflection on a tragic situation still not comprehended well by many people on either side of the U.S.-Mexico border....

Cortez and Troncoso are to be credited for assembling an exceptional array of contributors, encompassing professors, poets, students and journalists. They each eloquently and powerfully

profile the border in both qualitative and quantitative terms — clearly fueled by strong personal and professional experiences....

This book is essential reading for anyone who cares deeply about the U.S.-Mexico border and the future relations of our two countries. It takes courage to open its pages, but that is a necessary first step toward changing “the exceptional situation” for the better.”

—Ed Conroy for *San Antonio Express-News*



“In the important new anthology *Our Lost Border: Essays on Life amid the Narco-Violence*, editors Sarah Cortez and Sergio Troncoso help us to understand how we got where we are and just how much we have lost....

Two of the more impactful essays were by the editors themselves. Sarah Cortez, a former law-enforcement officer, powerfully proclaims herself part of a group of individuals “who stand against the wholesale execution of decent human beings by thugs for illegal gain, sanctioned by a government too weak or too dirty to act.” Sergio Troncoso closes the collection with a poignant sentiment: “It was a better life than what we have today, and we understand that fact mostly in retrospect, as we often do, when we lose what we value before we had a chance to appreciate what it meant.”

Informative and stirring, *Our Lost Border* is an invaluable tool for engaging in the sorts of conversations and behavior that will allow us to turn the tide of violence along the border. A must-read for those who dream of a return to the border that was.”

—David Bowles for *McAllen Monitor*



“*Our Lost Border: Essays on Life Amid the Narco-Violence* is a bold collection of essays dealing with these fundamental questions, an exploration of border violence and the effect it has had on our shared consciousness and culture.”

—Matt Mendez for *The El Paso Times*

SERGIO TRONCOSO is the author of *The Last Tortilla and Other Stories*, *Crossing Borders: Personal Essays*, and the novels *From This Wicked Patch of Dust* and *The Nature of Truth*. He graduated from Harvard College and studied international relations and philosophy at Yale University. He won a Fulbright scholarship to Mexico, where he studied economics, politics, and literature. Troncoso was inducted into the Hispanic Scholarship Fund’s Alumni Hall of Fame and the Texas Institute of Letters. He was born and raised in El Paso, Texas and now lives in New York City.

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