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Shifting (Im)Mobilities on a Securitized US/Mexican Border

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Abstract

Securitization of the US/Mexican Border has been a focus of the Department of Homeland Security since its formation two decades ago. Yet the Trump administration (2017-2021) made wall building, especially in the lower Rio Grande Valley, an essential component of its deterrence policy. During the height of the Covid pandemic, Title 42 was introduced for public health purposes but in effect it became a tool to paralyze asylum-seeking activity and other border crossings from Mexico. Yet by 2021, the weight of asylum seekers or migrant-refugees seeking entrance grew and certain groups were given waivers or allowed to cross on humanitarian probation. This includes migrants from Venezuela, Haiti, Nicaragua, Ukraine, and Cuba as well as unaccompanied minors from Central American. This research is based on a study in the Lower Rio Grande Valley as well as analysis of administrative data from Customs and Border Patrol, TRACs data from Syracuse University, and in-take data from a Brownsville Shelter. While literal and legal barriers have been constructed, there are large numbers of new and diverse groups entering the US by both using the system and subverting it. Rather than trying to enter the country without inspection, they turn themselves in to seek asylum. This allows temporary settlement and employment permission in the U.S. but the path to a permanency or formal refugee status remains uncertain.

Biography

Marie Price is a Professor of Geography and International Affairs of the George Washington University where she has taught since 1990. A Latin American and migration specialist, her studies have explored human migration's impact on development and social change, especially at the urban scale. In terms of policy, she is interested on strategies that promote migrant inclusion and development. In 2017 she participated in an UN expert group on sustainable cities, human mobility and international migration, and in 2018 she gave the keynote at the UN Commission on Population and Development. She teaches graduate courses on migration & development and qualitative methods. In 2020-2022 Price was part of an OAS-funded research team that investigated the role of local authorities in the reception and integration of immigrants and refugees in cities across the Americas. Currently she is part of a three-university research team conducting NSF-funded research on the US Mexican Border in the Lower Rio Grande Valley (2022-2025). She is the co-author of four books and over 70 articles and book chapters.