

# The Dallas Morning News

## *A father and son flee, but to what?*

From death at home to a perilous trip to an uncertain future

By **Alfredo Corchado**  
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## IMMIGRATION

'My message to my fellow *Guatemaltecos*: Don't come. This is all one big lie.'



Ryan Michalesko/Staff Photographer

Carlos Joaquin Salinas crosses an El Paso street with his son Fernando to board a bus for Fort Worth. After fleeing thugs holding their hometown hostage and arriving in the U.S., they were held under an international bridge like "caged animals," Joaquin says.

## A father and son flee, but to what?

From death at home to a perilous trip to an uncertain future

By ALFREDO CORCHADO  
 Border-Mexico Correspondent  
 acorchado@dallasnews.com

**E**L PASO — Carlos Joaquin Salinas remembers the lies. Looking back, they lied to him and his boy. Beginning with the coyote.

"The smuggler told me this would be like going to Disneyland, and that everyone would greet us with jobs," says Joaquin, 27.

The two men agreed on a price of \$6,000, which included a special deal he couldn't refuse. Two for one. His son, 10-year-old Fernando, would come along for free. They would leave their hometown of Santa Rosa near the Pacific coast of Guatemala, and Joaquin would find work in North Texas.

They sold a small family plot of land, the three cows and four chickens. They took out a loan to come up with the \$6,000. They traveled by bus, with cushy seats and a

TV to watch movies. He and Fernando laughed and bonded and made it to Ciudad Juárez in just five days.

Once in Juárez, the coyote pointed to the Franklin Mountains, emblazoned with a giant star that is brightly lit at night, and said, "That's the United States. Run all the way to the Rio Grande and you're there. Look for the Border Patrol and turn yourself in."

Father and son ran across a busy highway, dodging traffic. Joaquin held on to his son's hand as Fernando screamed with joy. "We made it, *Papi*. *Papi*, we made it to a new life!"

But their travails had just begun. Over the next two days, Joaquin and his son went from being held under an international bridge like "caged animals" to living in a shelter and finally waiting for a bus to take them to North Texas.

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## LEGISLATURE '19

## Abbott is 'man on a mission'

With GOP unified on goals, he's more upbeat, engaged this session

By ROBERT T. GARRETT  
 and W. GARDNER SELBY  
 Austin Bureau

**AUSTIN** — Two years ago, Gov. Greg Abbott was so desperate to play down the rumor and infighting at the top of Texas state government, he tweeted a pic of himself and Comptroller Glenn Hegar holding a cutout of children's book character Flat Stanley.

"It's Kumbaya time. Flat Stanley unites us all," Abbott wrote.

In the background, Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick and then-Speaker Joe Straus gripped and grinned. Just as easily, though, they could have bared their fangs, given what happened in the ensuing four months: deadlock over a bathroom bill and property taxes. A special session. Recriminations between Patrick and Straus. GOP dysfunction on display.

This year, by contrast, Abbott doesn't have to tweet in hopes of party unity. With some exceptions, which so far seem manageable, the unity is real. The GOP's new solidarity, admittedly, may be driven by fears of further gains by Democrats in the still-unfolding and highly uncertain presidential election of 2020.

"Governor Abbott is a man on a mission," Flower Mound GOP Sen. Jane Nelson, the Senate's top budget and tax-policy writer,

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## POINTS

## Mystery of faith

Peggy Wehmeyer writes in this week's Living Our Faith column that, as she worships on Easter Sunday, she will ask herself the same old question: How can I keep believing this? She reflects on the Bible story of Jacob's encounter with an angel. When Jacob wrestled with God, he walked away wounded, with a limp. **IP**



## North Texas elections

Early voting starts Monday across North Texas as voters begin the process of selecting local leaders, including two high-profile contests for mayor in Dallas and Fort Worth. Early voting continues through April 30, and election day is May 4. **(Story, 1B)**

Early voting polling places, **2B**

Compare candidates: [voterguide.dallasnews.com](http://voterguide.dallasnews.com)

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## ELECTIONS '20 | PRESIDENT

## Vision clear, specifics fuzzy

For some O'Rourke fans, passion trumps lack of detailed plans

By TODD J. GILLMAN  
 Washington Bureau  
 tgillman@dallasnews.com

**DUMFRIES, Va.** — Five weeks into his presidential campaign, Beto O'Rourke still hasn't shaken the rap that he's a

bit of a lightweight.

There are no white papers. He's delivered no major policy speeches. The section of his campaign website devoted to "vision" reads like a cut-and-paste version of comments he delivers on the stump — more flowery eloquence than nitty-gritty.

The El Paso Democrat's top-line principles are fairly clear,

and party activists find both the vision and its messenger appealing. He takes climate change seriously. He wants to limit access to military-style firearms, supports wider access to health care and favors a more compassionate immigration policy.

O'Rourke's agenda includes



Bill O'Leary/The Washington Post

Presidential candidate and El Paso native Beto O'Rourke spoke to voters on Saturday at the aptly named El Paso Mexican Grill in Dumfries, Va.

## NATION

### Challenges exposed

The Mueller report reveals the vulnerability of the U.S. voting infrastructure, experts say. **6A**

## ARTS & LIFE

### Border stories

Dallas theater festivals tell stories of immigrants and drugs crossing into the U.S. from Mexico. **1E**

## SPORTSDAY

### NFL draft pick No. 58

What caliber of player can Dallas get in the second round, given its mixed history? **Kate Halopoulos, 10C**

## LATE SCORES

For results from last night's games, go to [sportsday.dfw.com/scores](http://sportsday.dfw.com/scores).

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## Windy and warm



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A group of immigrants, mostly Central American asylum-seekers, waited at a bus station in El Paso late last month. A father and son fleeing violence in Guatemala spent four nights underneath the Paso del Norte international bridge alongside hundreds more migrants in a cramped, temporary corral. About 95,000 migrants crossed into the U.S. in March.

# New shelters and new bribes to pay

Continued from Page 1A

Seeking asylum, they've been ordered to go before a judge to prove they deserve to be in the promised land. In several interviews in the roughly three weeks since Joaquin arrived, he shared his story with *The Dallas Morning News*, recounting his perilous journey across the border, and the difficulties of adjusting to his new life in North Texas.

Now in Arlington, they wish they could go back home. "I wish I could turn back time," Joaquin says.

"I don't know what I know now, but I know what I know now, the coyote didn't make the decision," he says. "Never."

But now, he says, he literally can't afford to go back. The trip has left him with years of bad-booking debt.

"I'm screwed," he says. "My message to my fellow Guatemalans: Don't come. This is all one big lie."



Guatemalan asylum-seekers Carlos Joaquin Salinas and son Fernando board a bus in El Paso. They were on their way to North Texas, where Joaquin has a cousin. They have a court date set for June, but he's been told not to work until his "status" is determined.

**North for a new life**

Joaquin, a farmer, had long grown small plots of *milpas* — corn — and beans. But over the last few years, the rain cycles have changed — as has the amount of sun his crops could get. Planting was no longer a sure thing to help him and his family of four put food on the table, or pay for his mother's medication.

"Climate change, according to the World Bank, could force more than 14 million people to leave their homes in Central America in the decades to come. The change upended Joaquin's life. He noticed his low farmers were also leaving.

"Then, a cousin and a friend were found dead for no known reason, killed by local thugs who had the town hostage.

Joaquin felt the north was his only option.

Determined, and "obsessed," Joaquin remembers making the decision, along with his wife, in the middle of the night. He remembers the sad goodbyes to his family.

But he also recalls how excited he was, dreaming of a new future. He prepared for the journey. After selling the land and the animals, he found he was still short of the coyote fee by a couple of thousand dollars.

because, "I just have a gut feeling about him. He's transactional, determined. He pushes me even when doubts come over me. Go, *Go, Papi, go.*"

Joaquin asked for his mother's blessing. She didn't want him to leave for fear that she'd never see him again. The road ahead was perilous, she said. And she had recently suffered a stroke. That's why he needed to leave, Joaquin told her. To earn money for her medicine and to care she ended up in a hospital. The stroke, he told her, was a sign from God that leaving was

owed Central American families for centuries.

Joaquin told his family he'd be back in two, maybe three years.

His mother asked him to bow his head. She blessed him. They cried.

"Don't worry, mother. Everything will be fine," he said, repeating the lines given by the coyote about Disneyland, and a nation where he'd be happily greeted with job offers.

**The journey**

Joaquin and Fernando left for Mexico. It was a surprise to Joaquin when the coyote they'd carefully selected in Guatemala suddenly passed them on to a Mexican smuggler, part of a network that stretched throughout both countries.

In the days ahead, it seemed like in every region someone new took over. There were new shelters, new bribes to pay.

Mostly, Joaquin and Fernando were relieved that they would be traveling on the train of death, widely known as *La Bestia* — the beast. Over the years, many migrants have fallen off the cargo train, being lynched or their lives. Criminals also prey on the helpless passengers, who face the threat of robbery, rape or death.

Instead, their coyote had arranged it so that they would travel in comfortable buses. Occasionally, men would board during the night, and everyone was required to pay \$200 to \$300 to get on the coaches, which he allowed to pass through certain regions controlled by organized crime.

In Puebla, Joaquin and his son got off the bus and rode in a taxi to Mexico City. There, they took a van — a *minivan* — to get around the biggest city they've ever seen. They also slept in a small shelter with dozens of others in a town everyone called Fresnillo. That would be the state of Zacatecas.

The next morning, they loaded into a packed bus and roared all the way to Ciudad Juarez. There, a new coyote met them. He took them to the border, coming with thousands of other migrants from all over the world, especially Central America.

The journey took a little more than a week. Joaquin re-

members driving with the new coyote alongside the Chemical Park and passing the so-called X, a giant red, iconic landmark sculpture in Juarez. That was when the coyote pointed to the Franklin Mountains across the border in El Paso and told them to run for it, then turn themselves in once they were across the river. "It's that simple," said the coyote.

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The pair looked at each other, confused. They continued running. Joaquin held on to Fernando, who had a big, foolish grin on his face and jumped for joy.

It would not be long before Joaquin began to understand the woman's meaning. His voice cracks when he talks about the days that followed.

The America they were told about was a lie. They were not welcomed with open arms. They spent the next four nights underneath the Paso del Norte international bridge alongside hundreds more migrants in a cramped, temporary corral seen in photos that were published across the U.S. and beyond.

**Car's paramount**

The admittedly hard-pressed Border Patrol has said it faces a humanitarian crisis. In a statement attributed to Andrew Meacham, assistant commissioner for public affairs of U.S. Customs and Border Protection, the agency said "the care of those in our custody is paramount." The agency added that CBP, the Border Patrol and the Department of Homeland Security have been "untransparent" in how they are handling the crisis and that they are at "critical capacity levels across the southwest border."

About 95,000 migrants crossed into the U.S. in March alone. Conditions were so difficult in the temporary shelter that many migrants, including

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# 'All I wanted to do was work'

Continued from Page 1A

Joaquin and his son, slept on Mylar blankets on gravel.

They were awakened by Border Patrol agents who tossed them cold sandwiches at 3 a.m. The winds of March picked up. Dust swirled. The nights were cold. They stood and stared out at reporters, Joaquin says, who took their pictures, shouted questions as though "we were caged animals at a circus. I had no idea what was going on. Why were we being used as pawns?"

Fernando would look to his father for answers, Joaquin recalls. "I avoided his gaze because I realized I had also lied to him. This was the United States of America and we were treated worse than dogs, and I say that because the dogs with the agents were treated better than we were. They were at least given plates with their food. We had food thrown at us."

At night, Joaquin says, he sat with his son, wiping away pigpen droppings that fell from under the bridge where the pigpens mated. He remembers staring at his son and asking him for forgiveness. He questioned why he listened to the smuggler who said that bringing his child would help him pave a way into the U.S. as he would avoid instant deportation. At that point, he says, all he wanted to do was head back to Guatemala.

But there was that debt, which now felt like a pistol pointed at his head. And then his son's smile when he'd wake up and say, "No, Papi, let's try this out. We'll make it work."

The morning, Fernando jokingly told his father, "What else do we have to lose? We've lost it all. Let's get it back."

**Into America**

On day five, Joaquin was released by government officials to a shelter operated by Annunciation House, which coordinates migrant shelters throughout the region. He was eventually to have his asylum case made a credible fear claim in the immigration court.

"We don't have much, and we'll probably never have anything, but we did have some dignity and respect, politeness from your neighbors," he said. "All I wanted to do was work. Nothing more. I'm not here for handouts. I just want to work. Not take anyone's job away. Just work in whatever I'm offered."

On a Saturday evening, Joaquin waited inside a makeshift bus terminal from which routes spread throughout the U.S.: Denver, Los Angeles, Oklahoma City, Fort Worth.

"Jobs everywhere"

Joaquin and Fernando had their first meeting with ICE officials and now have a court date set for June. Joaquin is bored and worried. Despite what his cousin told him about working immediately, he's not supposed to



A Tornado Bus departed El Paso in late March, one of several carrying asylum-seekers to cities including Denver, Los Angeles, Oklahoma City, Fort Worth and Dallas. The Border Patrol says it's facing a humanitarian crisis because of the flood of immigrants on a quest for asylum in the U.S.

work until his "status" is determined. But if he doesn't work, "I become a burden to this country, and I don't want to do that."

He walks Arlington a lot with his son. They married at the colorful Si Falls Over Texas amusement park, the imposing Cowboy Stadium sitting like a large spaceship on the Texas prairie, and the cranes and rising frame of the new, billion-dollar baseball park going up for the Texas Rangers. His cousin says they're helping.

"I see jobs everywhere," he says. "I see much opportunity."

Last week, he started accepting small job offers, doing things like helping replace windows at homes. He made \$100 in one day, the kind of money he'd make in two weeks back in Guatemala. He sent some of that money to his wife, mother and children.

He also tried to register his son at an elementary school. Fernando got excited and dressed up. "I even put gold on my hair," Fernando says. But he was told the spring semester is nearly over and was encouraged to return in the fall. "If we're still here," Joaquin adds.

He also used some of his money to buy a phone to reconnect on WhatsApp with friends and relatives back in Guatemala. He had one message. He urged them to stay put: "Don't sell your land, your cattle, all you own in this Don't come."

They were skeptical, Joaquin says, especially after they heard about the money he'd sent his wife. Are you trying to prevent us from coming so you can keep the jobs all to yourself?"

"They think I'm lying to them," he says.

Joaquin pushed back. The government is making things more and more difficult, he told them. The journey is not worth it. But he says no one listens. By Tuesday of last week, he'd heard from two more of his cousins. They were in Veracruz, Mexico, and headed for El Paso and eventually North Texas. They had to cross now, they explained, before the U.S. government makes it even more difficult.

"All we live on is a glimmer of hope," he says. "Even when that hope is based on a lie."

Twitter: @dcorchado

# Gridlock spikes during border's busy season

Declaration of national emergency has removed 750 agents from checkpoints

By MOLLY HENNESSY-FISKE  
Los Angeles Times



A couple says their farewells while crossing the bridge between downtown El Paso and Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. Long lines of people and vehicles are becoming routine along the U.S.-Mexico border.

**HOUSTON** — During Holy Week, it's an especially busy time for trade, tourism and shopping on the U.S.-Mexico border.

April is also the height of Mexican produce season, and just south of the border, lines of idling tractor trailers stretch for miles waiting to enter the United States.

They wait at the traffic jams at the border crossings are especially bad, because the federal government has reassigned 750 of its agents from their usual desks at ports of entry and inland checkpoints to help deal with large numbers of Central American immigrant families who have been showing up at the border to claim asylum.

Through March of this year, a total of 189,558 people traveling in families sought asylum at the southern border — a 57% increase compared with the same period last year.

According to Border Patrol policy, all such migrants must be taken to holding areas in the Rio Grande Valley, said Rep. Filmon Vela, D-Brownsville. "Our communities need immediate relief from the extended wait times at border crossings."

Rep. Vicente Gonzalez, D-McAllen, said the Trump administration appeared to be ignoring local feedback.

"It's unacceptable that the concerns, questions and ideas of local officials, business owners and citizens have fallen on deaf ears," Gonzalez said.

The ports aren't the only problem. U.S. Customs and Border Protection runs about 170 inland checkpoints, concentrated in the zone 100 miles north of the border.

At the checkpoints, Border Patrol agents with dogs and people-sniffing dogs stop and, at times, search vehicles, questioning drivers.

The Border Patrol has long stressed the significance of checkpoints in catching smugglers of people and narcotics; it has frequently publicized major busts and programs like Operation Big Rig, created to target trailer trailer smuggling.

Some El Paso area checkpoints are notorious for drug seizures, like Sierra Blanca, dubbed "Checkpoint of the Stars" by *Time* magazine for hosting tour buses of celebrities including Willie Nelson and Sheryl Crow.

Last month, Border Patrol officials closed checkpoints in southeastern New Mexico and West Texas and redirected staff to process migrant families. Vehicles that would have been stopped and inspected now flow north freely.

In southern New Mexico's Otero County, commissioners voted to demand that the governor deploy National Guard troops to replace the checkpoints and declared a state of emergency Thursday.

"If this demand is not met by the state of New Mexico in one week's time, the County of Otero will take action itself to provide security and safety and well-being for the people in this county," said County Griffith, who leads the county commission.

Griffin said county officials might also sue the state for failing to fund its constitutional duties.

Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham, a Democrat, refused to replace the checkpoints.

In February, she had pulled republican National Guard troops, deployed last year by her predecessor, Republican Gov. Susana Martinez.

"If Otero County officials are unhappy that a federal checkpoint has been so named, so to speak, their concerns would have the best chance of being addressed if registered with the federal agency that made the decision to shut that personnel elsewhere," said Tripp Sheldahl, a spokesman for the governor's office.

Along many parts of the border, checkpoint closures are rare, usually occurring only before storms and other hazardous weather.

In Texas' Rio Grande Valley — the border's busiest smuggling corridor — checkpoints close only to allow people to be during the busy border crossing season. As in Harris County Harvey in 2017.

Acting Homeland Security Secretary Kevin McAleenan, a former Border Patrol commissioner who took over this month after Kirstjen Nielsen's ouster, said that processing migrant families remained a crisis.

He did not indicate that checkpoints would reopen anytime soon.

"I see that all of our resources are being stretched thin," he said after a visit to Border Patrol migrant holding areas in McAllen. "The system is full, and we are beyond capacity."

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The two men agreed on a price of \$6,000, which included a special deal he couldn't refuse. Two for one. His son, 10-year-old Fernando, would come along for free. They would leave their hometown of Santa Rosa near the Pacific coast of Guatemala, and Joaquín would find work in North Texas.

They sold a small family plot of land, the three cows and four chickens. They took out a loan to come up with the \$6,000. They traveled by bus, with cushy seats and a TV to watch movies. He and Fernando laughed and bonded and made it to Ciudad Juárez in just five days.

Once in Juárez, the coyote pointed to the Franklin Mountains, emblazoned with a giant star that is brightly lit at night, and said, “That's the United States. Run all the way to the Rio Grande and you're there. Look for the Border Patrol and turn yourself in.”

Father and son ran across a busy highway, dodging traffic. Joaquín held on to his son's hand as Fernando screamed with joy, “We made it, Papi. Papi, we made it to a new life!”

But their travails had just begun. Over the next two days, Joaquín and his son went from being held under an international bridge like “caged animals” to living in a shelter and finally waiting for a bus to take them to North Texas.

Seeking asylum, they've been ordered to go before a judge to prove they deserve to be in the promised land. In several interviews in the roughly three weeks since Joaquín arrived, he shared his story with *The Dallas Morning News*, recounting his perilous journey across the border, and the difficulties of adjusting to his new life in North Texas.

Now in Arlington, they wish they could go back home. “I wish I could turn back time,” Joaquín says.

“Had I known what I know now, I never would have made the decision,” he says. “Never.” But now, he says, he literally can't afford to go back. The trip has left him with years of ballooning debt.

“I'm screwed,” he says. “My message to my fellow Guatemaltecos: Don't come. This is all one big lie.”

## **North for a new life**

Joaquín, a farmer, had long grown small plots of milpas — corn — and beans. But over the last few years, the rain cycles have changed — as has the amount of sun his crops could get. Planting was no longer a sure thing to help him and his family of four put food on the table, or pay for his mother's medication.

Climate change, according to the World Bank, could force more than 1.4 million people to flee their homes in Central America in the decades to come. The change upended Joaquín's life. He noticed fellow farmers were also leaving.

Then, a cousin and a friend were found dead for no known reason, killed by local thugs who held the town hostage.

Joaquín felt the north was his only option.

Determined, and “obsessed,” Joaquín remembers making the decision, along with his wife, in the middle of the night. He remembers the sad goodbyes to his family, their tears.

But he also recalls how excited he was, dreaming of a new future. He prepared for the journey. After selling the land and the animals, he found he was still short of the coyote’s fee by a couple of thousand dollars.

His wife encouraged him to call friends and relatives in Texas. A cousin and a friend near Dallas both agreed to help by being co-signers to his agreement with the coyote. The smuggler would hold them all accountable for the final payment.

Then came the hard part. He looked at his three boys and picked the one he thought had the pilas — the wits — to survive the uncertain journey north with him. Joaquín says he picked Fernando, the eldest, not just because he’s wiser, but because, “I just have a gut feeling about him. He’s tenacious, determined. He pushes me even when doubts come over me. ‘Go, Papi, go.’”

Joaquín asked for his mother’s blessing. She didn’t want him to leave for fear that she’d never see him again. The road ahead was perilous, she said. And she had recently suffered a stroke. That’s why he needed to leave, Joaquín told her. To earn money for her medicine and in case she ended up in a hospital. The stroke, he told her, was a sign from God that leaving was his destiny.

Joaquín assured his mother and wife that the coyote said the trip would be a breeze. In a week or so, he’d be in Texas with his cousin. The plan was to be gone only long enough to make money, send remittances home and save to start a new business, away from farming.

Maybe during that time Fernando could learn English, and return to Guatemala to perhaps someday work in the tourism industry, or do something else in life that would break the cycle of poverty that has shadowed Central American families for centuries.

Joaquín told his family he’d be back in two, maybe three years.

His mother asked him to bow his head. She blessed him. They cried.

“Don’t worry, mother. Everything will be fine,” he said, repeating the lines given by the coyote about Disneyland, and a nation where he’d be happily greeted with job offers.

## **The journey**

Joaquín and Fernando left for Mexico. It was a surprise to Joaquín when the coyote they’d carefully selected in Guatemala suddenly passed them on to a Mexican smuggler, part of a network that stretched throughout both countries.

In the days ahead, it seemed like in every region someone new took over. There were new shelters,

new bribes to pay.

Mostly, Joaquín and Fernando were relieved that they wouldn't be traveling on the train of death, widely known as La Bestia — the beast. Over the years, many migrants have fallen off the cargo train, losing limbs or their lives. Criminals also prey on the helpless passengers, who face the threat of robbery, rape or death.

Instead, their coyote had arranged it so that they would ride in comfortable buses. Occasionally, men would board during the night, and everyone was required to pay \$200 to \$300 bribes so the coaches could be allowed to pass through certain regions controlled by organized crime.

In Puebla, Joaquín and his son got off the bus and rode in a taxi to Mexico City. There, they took a van — a ruterá — to get around the biggest city they'd ever seen. They also slept in a small shelter with dozens of others in a town everyone called Fresnillo. That would be in the state of Zacatecas.

The next morning, they loaded into a packed bus and roared all the way to Ciudad Juárez. There, a new coyote met them. He took them to the border, teeming with thousands of other migrants from all over the world, especially Central America.

The journey took a little more than a week. Joaquín remembers driving with the new coyote alongside the Chamizal Park and passing the so-called X, a giant red, iconic landmark sculpture in Juárez. That was when the coyote pointed to the Franklin Mountains across the border in El Paso and told them to run for it, then turn themselves in once they were across the river. "It's that simple," said the coyote.

Father and son raced across the highway. One woman screeched the brakes on her car with Texas plates. She pulled to the side and screamed: "Don't turn yourself in. It'll be your worst nightmare."

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## **Care 'is paramount'**

The admittedly hard-pressed Border Patrol has said it faces a humanitarian crisis.

In a statement attributed to Andrew Meehan, assistant commissioner for public affairs of U.S. Customs and Border Protection, the agency said "the care of those in our custody is paramount." The agency added that CBP, the Border Patrol and the Department of Homeland Security have been "transparent for several months by conveying the message both publicly, internationally and to Congress that the immigration system is broken and that they are at critical capacity levels across the

southwest border.”

About 95,000 migrants crossed into the U.S. in March alone. Conditions were so difficult in the temporary shelter that many migrants, including Joaquín and his son, slept on Mylar blankets on gravel.

They were awakened by Border Patrol agents who tossed them cold sandwiches at 3 a.m. The winds of March picked up. Dust swirled. The nights were cold. They stood and stared out at reporters, Joaquín says, who took their pictures, shouted questions as though “we were caged animals at a circus. I had no idea what was going on. Why we were being used as pawns.”

Fernando would look to his father for answers, Joaquín recalls. “I avoided his gaze because I realized I had also lied to him. This was the United States of America and we were treated worse than dogs, and I say that because the dogs with the agents were treated better than we were. They were at least given plates with their food. We had food thrown at us.”

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But there was that debt, which now felt like a pistol pointed at his head. And then his son’s smile when he’d wake up and say, “No, Papi, let’s try this out. We’ll make it work.”

One morning, Fernando jokingly told his father, “What else do we have to lose? We’ve lost it all. Let’s get it back.”

On day five, Joaquín was released by government officials to a shelter operated by Annunciation House, which coordinates migrant shelters throughout the region. He was eventually to have his asylum case to make a credible fear claim in the immigration courts, but that would be months or years away.

With the help of volunteers at the nonprofit shelter, he finally made contact with his cousin in Arlington, who had grown worried about him. The cousin paid for two bus tickets from El Paso to Fort Worth.

When Joaquín was told about the tickets, he thanked the volunteer, but quietly mused about whether he wanted to continue the journey. He’d been thinking a lot about his mother. He missed his village, the smell of tortillas, beans on the stove, his wife, his two other sons.

“We don’t have much, and we’ll probably never have anything, but we did have some dignity and respect, politeness from your neighbors,” he said. “All I wanted to do was work. Nothing more. I’m not here for handouts. I just want to work. Not take anyone’s job away. Just work in whatever I’m offered.”

On a Saturday evening, Joaquín waited inside a makeshift bus terminal from which routes spread throughout the U.S.: Denver, Los Angeles, Oklahoma City, Fort Worth, Dallas. He looked around and recognized the faces of many people he met underneath the bridge days before, only a few blocks away from the terminal. All sat glumly, watching television entertainment shows, waiting for their

buses to depart. And coughing, like a chorus. Many were sick, including Joaquín and Fernando.

“They say we bring diseases,” he said that day as he and Fernando walked across the street to fetch some water for medicine that volunteers had given them for their colds and rising fevers. “That’s true. But that is because we were treated so poorly and left outside to sleep on rocks and it was cold. Of course we’re sick.”

The two boarded the bus for the 12-hour drive to North Texas, where Joaquín’s cousin would meet them.

Joaquín and Fernando had their first meeting with ICE officials and now have a court date set for June. Joaquín is bored and worried. Despite what his cousin told him about working immediately, he’s not supposed to work until his “status” is determined. But if he doesn’t work, “I become a burden to this country, and I don’t want to do that.”

He walks Arlington a lot with his son. They marvel at the colorful Six Flags Over Texas amusement park, the imposing Cowboys Stadium sitting like a huge spaceship on the Texas prairie, and the cranes and rising frame of the new, billion-dollar baseball park going up for the Texas Rangers. His cousin says they’re hiring.

“I see jobs everywhere,” he says. “I see much opportunity.”

Last week, he started accepting small job offers, doing things like helping replace windows at houses. He made \$100 in one day, the kind of money he’d make in two weeks back in Guatemala. He sent some of that money to his wife, mother and children.

He also tried to register his son at an elementary school. Fernando got excited and dressed up. “I even put gel on my hair,” Fernando says. But he was told the spring semester is nearly over and was encouraged to return in the fall, “if we’re still here,” Joaquín adds.

He also used some of his money to buy a phone to reconnect on WhatsApp with friends and relatives back in Guatemala. He had one message. He urged them to stay put: Don’t sell your land, your cattle, all you own for this. Don’t come.

They were skeptical, Joaquín says, especially after they heard about the money he’d sent his wife. Are you trying to prevent us from coming so you can keep the jobs all to yourself?

“They think I’m lying to them,” he says.

Joaquín pushed back. The government is making things more and more difficult, he told them. The journey is not worth it. But he says no one listens. By Tuesday of last week, he’d heard from two more of his cousins. They were in Veracruz, Mexico, and headed for El Paso and eventually North Texas. They had to cross now, they explained, before the U.S. government makes it even more difficult.

“All we live on is a glimpse of hope,” he says. “Even when that hope is based on a lie.”



# The Dallas Morning News

## *Father Roy's mission*

'Cowboy priest' becomes face of resistance on border

By **Alfredo Corchado**  
Published April 21, 2019

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## IMMIGRATION

"We are the world's richest, most powerful and smartest people on earth, so we should be able to come out with something better than a damn wall."

### Father Roy's mission



Photos by Ryan Michalesko/Staff Photographer

Father Roy Snipes begins a sunrise Mass at the historic La Lomita chapel near Mission in the Rio Grande Valley. The 153-year-old landmark was set to be sealed off behind a border fence, but a last-minute congressional border security deal kept that from happening for now.

### 'Cowboy priest' becomes face of resistance on border

By ALFREDO CORCHADO  
Border-Mexico Correspondent  
acorchado@dallasnews.com

MISSION — Father Roy Snipes may have saved his small historic chapel, La Lomita, from being walled off from its parishioners along the banks of the Rio Grande. But he's far from declaring victory.

Noting the rising number of migrants turning themselves in at the border and approaching 2020 elections, Snipes confesses a deep worry.

At home, he seeks solace from his "guardian angels" — three rescue dogs — and peace by taking his boat on the Rio Grande. At church, the priest urges his parishioners to



Snipes urges his parishioners, including retirees from the Midwest, locals from both sides of the border, ranchers and Border Patrol agents, to defend their community and church.

INSIDE: Troops will stay till border is secure, says acting Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan. 7A

stand firm and defend their community and church, which receives support and monies from across the country, including the Catholic Diocese in Dallas.

He urges them to speak up on behalf of their maligned border region. Recently, he stayed up late into the evening writing a letter to the man he says is responsible for his sleepless nights, President Donald Trump:

"Your neighbors down here on the south side of the Rio Grande pray that God blesses you with

See ALL Page 14A

## ELECTIONS '20

### Biden, Buttigieg eclipse O'Rourke

Experience, fresher face outshine Texan, but 'there's a lot of time left'

By TODD J. GILLMAN  
Washington Bureau  
tgillman@dallasnews.com

EXETER, N.H. — Joe Biden's entry into the 2020 campaign hailed the momentum of a number of rivals. Beto O'Rourke was among the casualties.

Like 20 other contenders, the Texan can't touch the former vice president's experience. But at least he could harness a thirst for youthful energy and an upbeat demeanor — until small-town mayor Pete Buttigieg boxed him out on that flank, becoming the flavor of the month.

How long can the Texan survive in these twin shadows?

UKRAINE pushes back on hope of Biden investigation. 10A

"Obama was the underdog by a longshot. It's still early," said Ross Mainville, 30, a union carpenter who came to see O'Rourke in Salem, N.H., with his wife Kirsten.

She's 28 and works in insurance and became such a fan last year that she started sending \$5 or \$10 a month for his Senate race.

They describe themselves as "very liberal." They love Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders and New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a self-described socialist. They see O'Rourke as a centrist — and like him because of that, not despite of it, because it makes him more electable.

"He hits a note with a lot of people," Kirsten Mainville said. "He bridges the gap, where I haven't seen it in the other 22 yet. If there were just three people he would be way up there."

Biden now commands support

See O'ROURKE Page 10A

## Fog, then partly cloudy



H 77 L 54

Metro, back page

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### China lists trade goals

Facing a new round of U.S. tariffs, China spells out what it is looking for in trade talks. 7A

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### Rustlers pose challenge

A team of special investigators takes on increasingly sophisticated cattle rustlers. 1D

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### In Minnesota, Perez excels

Always a work in progress while he was pitching for the Texas Rangers, Martin Perez is thriving with the Minnesota Twins. 1C

## ARTS & LIFE

### Touring 'O'Keeffe Country'

Visitors can ride by horseback through the stunning New Mexico landscape that inspired artist Georgia O'Keeffe. 8E

### Museum features Latino art

The Latino Arts Project, a new museum in the Dallas Design District, is featuring the work of nine Mexican artists. 3E

## POINTS

### Immigrant labor is key

Grassroots businesses like restaurants, which fuel local and national economies, need immigrant labor, Jim Baron writes. 1P

## LATE SCORES

For results from last night's games, go to [sportsdaydfw.com/scores](http://sportsdaydfw.com/scores).

## TEXAS RANGERS



EMILY JONES, who works for the Rangers on Fox Sports Southwest broadcasts, is "trusted in both the clubhouse and the front office," says GM Jon Daniels.

### A mom to her team at home, on the field

TV reporter, employee a trusted confidant for players: 'She's one of us'

By EVAN GRANT  
Staff Writer  
egrant@dallasnews.com

It is late in her annual spring training assignment. Emily Jones, who has reported from next to the Texas Rangers' dugout for 15 seasons, is wrapping up some interviews when she sidles

up to Shin-Soo Choo's locker. He is dripping something viscous from a strange bottle into an iced coffee.

"Is that honey from Korea?" Jones asks.

"No," Choo shoots back immediately. "Costco."

She doubles over in laughter. And so does he. It is not a typical reaction for the reserved and contemplative Choo. But, then again,

See REPORTER Page 6A

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Photos by Ryan Michalek/Staff Photographer

José Ramirez, a longtime congregant at La Lomita, joins other parishioners in prayer during a sunrise Mass. Father Roy Snipes graduated with a degree in agriculture from Texas A&M in 1967, and a few years after a professor suggested he move to the Rio Grande Valley to work with the largely Hispanic community, Snipes decided to become a priest.

# All love him, agree or not

Continued from Page 1A

robust wisdom of heart, a hearty spirit and vigorous mental clarity and agility," he wrote. "A great and extremely expensive wall between us and a Sacred old Chapel and our Sacred River (Rio Grande), even if it could solve all our problems with immigration and illegal drugs, would still be a crying shame, a 'Wailing Wall' for us!"

Snipes, called by some the "cowboy priest," has become the face of resistance in a region searching for a hero, in a place where he says "fear and loathing is afflicting our way of life."

His parishioners don't all agree with him, but they do love him. His congregants include retirees from the Midwest, locals from both sides of the border, ranchers and Border Patrol agents.

About the letter he plans to send Trump in the coming week, Snipes quips, "I doubt he'll ever read it, but it's important to get this off my chest, express what I feel."

## 'Mean spirits'

Snipes has encouraged his parishioners to defend their community, and its tiny chapel, against what he calls "mean spirits." His calling has generated support from across the world, including the faithful in Dallas, according to guest books at La Lomita. The comments bring fleeting succor to Snipes, now caught up in the simmering debate over immigration and wars of Trump's push for more funding for his border wall.

Snipes' profile has grown with the battle to save easy access to the 153-

## Sites spared by last-minute deal

The planned border fence would have cut off access to La Lomita chapel, Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park and the National Butterfly Center, but a last-minute bipartisan congressional border security deal spared them.



year-old landmark mission, La Lomita, which means "little hill." The tiny chapel was set to be sealed off behind a border fence that would loom over the area atop a levee, making it difficult for parishioners to visit. But a last-minute bipartisan congressional border security deal in February prohibited construction of the fence around La Lomita chapel.

That deal also prevented the same fate for several other environmental and cultural sites — Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park and the National Butterfly Center in Mission. The threat of the border fence hindering access to these lands had generated public and legal protests.

Under the deal, Congress and the

White House agreed to \$1.4 billion in funding for an additional 15 miles of border fencing in the region. That and a subsequent move by Trump to raise billions more in revenue for his border wall through his declaration of a national emergency on the border has renewed fears about La Lomita's long-term fate.

"The situation remains precarious. With this emergency, he can still take funds from somewhere else to build his wall," said Snipes. "We are the world's richest, most powerful and smartest people on earth, so we should be able to come out with something better than a damn wall. We need to remember our humanity, our decency and humility as a country and as people."

For the third straight month, the number of migrant families apprehended by U.S. authorities — the majority of them voluntarily turned themselves in to Border Patrol agents — set a record high. More than 109,000 crossed the border and were taken into custody in April.

That's over 5,400 more than March's total and the biggest monthly apprehension number since 2007. More than 1,700 were apprehended Thursday by the El Paso Sector of the U.S. Border Patrol. Similar numbers were recorded in the Rio Grande Valley Sector.

"The high numbers sure make this look like an emergency, and I can see why some people may see this as a crisis, but I'm still not sure what's behind those numbers, other than hysteria," Snipes said. "The real crisis is within ourselves. Denominating, with this kind of ferocious hostility, against the poor and helpless is a real evil, really is evil and you can just see a movement afoot."

Snipes' views on immigration, he contended, are testing the patience and tolerance of people across the country.

## Mixed feelings

Monty Awbrey, 41, is a local rancher who met Trump during the president's trip to the Rio Grande Valley in January. Awbrey gave the president a personal rodeo championship buckle as a gift for Trump's son Barron. Awbrey considers Snipes a friend. The priest baptized him at La Lomita when he became Catholic, at his Mexican American wife's request.

While he agrees with Snipes that the chapel is "sacred ground and must be respected as such," overall he sees a

need for "a wall to curb the influx of illegal aliens and narcotics. A wall will definitely slow them down... Just as ranchers we use fences to separate sections in our property to hold animals."

"Father Roy is a sacred man and a man of God and he believes in all people," Awbrey added. "I have no problem with that. The problem I do have is our system is so overrun with illegal aliens and their kids, and Border Patrol have their hands full," creating a financial burden for U.S. taxpayers, he said.

Snipes says most of his parishioners remain supportive, which gives him hope. Others have mixed feelings, and he's OK with that, "as long as we don't shut down from one another."

One of his parishioners is Patrick Hight, 51, a Border Patrol agent for 22 years.

"You couldn't find a bigger cheerleader for Father Roy than me," Hight said. "But I just don't happen to agree with his same exact belief regarding immigration. I understand him and see validity in his views. But I have also experienced the darker side, and that's what forms my opinion, 'noting the number of drug traffickers that cross the border,' he said, or migrants who he said are 'gaming the system' by bringing their children with them to guarantee their quick release from custody."

"I'm not for a wall-or-else person," Hight said. "I see areas where there are options other than a barrier, like using technology. A wall is not the overall solution. You need Congress to reform our broken immigration laws."

For other parishioners like Mariela Garza, 52, Snipes is simply the face of resistance in a region searching for a hero. Someone not afraid to speak up. "He's unconventional. A fantastic person and a voice we need today," Garza said on a recent Sunday morning in Mission as the sermon of "Father Roy" echoed loudly from the inside.

A native of San Antonio, Snipes prays and speaks a mixture of Spanish and English — Spanglish. He sprinkles his Mass with stories of some of those he admires, including Gene Autry, Alan Wayne, Dolly Parton and even the conjunto musical group Intocable.

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"I'm sure some parishioners may think, 'He's crazy, but we're glad he's here with us,'" he said. "I'm just out there trying to be a face of engagement



Border Patrol agents sit in their truck on a levee overlooking La Lomita chapel and the Rio Grande.

Photos by Ryan Michalek/Staff Photographer



Father Roy Snipes finds solace from his three rescue dogs and peace by taking his boat out on the Rio Grande. "I'm not going to clamp up, or go hide, that's for sure," he says. "I got more prayers than I know what to say."

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Whenever possible, he takes his four-legged guardian angels and seeks quiet peace by taking his boat out on the Rio Grande to reflect. He recently rebled a stunning sunset reflected in the rippling waters under a hazy sky at dusk, and waved to neighbors on the Mexican side. Some responded, "Buenas tardes, Padre."

He waved back with a smile and adjusted his worn hat and glasses, his blue eyes peering with a squint.

"At the end of the day, I'm just a

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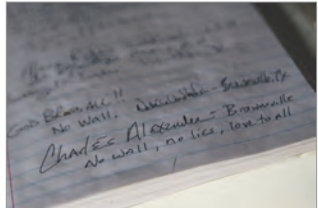
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He began the Novenas last fall to pray against the wall. He has no plans to stop anytime soon. He holds a special Mass at La Lomita every Friday at 6:55 a.m. to ask for divine intervention for those seeking asylum and to "rid the evil penetrating our community. I remind people that we all have a mess streak, but by facing evil and grappling with it, you become healthier and heartier. If you don't grapple, struggle, you become weaker and toxic. And unfortunately that's what we have today, a very toxic environment."

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Twitter: @secorchado



Visitors pen notes of support for La Lomita in the chapel's guest book. La Lomita receives wide support, including from the Dallas Catholic Diocese.



A helicopter with the Department of Homeland Security flew low over La Lomita recently while patrolling the border.



La Lomita sits near a levee (left) where a border fence has been planned, which would put the chapel between the fence and the Rio Grande (upper right, not pictured).

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Snipes said he was inspired by his mother to be a grade-school teacher. He graduated with a degree in agriculture from Texas A&M in 1967, and a professor suggested he move to the Rio Grande Valley to work with the largely Hispanic community. Seven years later, he decided to be a priest, moved by stories of the Oblate Cavalry of Christ, who traveled the border on horseback, building missions, including La Lomita.

## **‘No Wall Between Amigos’**

Snipes is not sure how or why people started calling him the cowboy priest. And at age 73, he no longer rides horses, except during special events.

He says he doesn’t drink beer as much as he used to. But he does often travel in an old SUV with a sign plastered on the door — “No Wall Between Amigos” — and an ice chest filled with Lone Star and

Shiner Bock for “special moments. I do love to drink beer.”

He’s quick with a laugh and poignant one-liners.

“Believe it or not, I’m not a newshound,” he said, pointing to news reports that have appeared about him all over the world. “I just want to be a good shepherd and lead the sheep into the land of the living with their dignity and integrity intact.”

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“At the end of the day, I’m just a stubborn old priest fighting the battle of my life with the help of Novenas,” he said, referring to the Catholic ritual of nine days of prayer and meditation to ask God for special, dire requests.

He began the Novenas last fall to pray against the wall. He has no plans to stop anytime soon. He holds a special Mass at La Lomita every Friday at 6:55 a.m. to ask for divine intervention for those seeking asylum and to “rid the evil penetrating our community. I remind people that we all have a mean streak, but by facing evil and grappling with it, you become healthier and heartier. If you don’t grapple, struggle, you become weaker and toxic. And unfortunately that’s what we have today, a very toxic environment.”

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# The Dallas Morning News

## *Border Patrol in grip of crisis*

Morale falls as divide grows between managers, overwhelmed agents

By **Alfredo Corchado**

Published July 21, 2019

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Sunday

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Cowboys training camp preview

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## PHOTO STORY



# The time we have here

A year and a half in the lives of northwest Dallas immigrant students

Photography and story by **JEFFREY McWHORTER**

Their lives are filled with nervous try-outs, crappy fast food jobs, new shoes and new girlfriends.

Through it all, the questions lurk, tucked behind the latest Snapchat sensation or Ozuna hit song: What will the judge say at my next court appearance? Will my dad make it home tonight? Should I tell my girlfriend I might be gone next month?

The Thomas Jefferson High School boys soccer team is entirely Hispanic, with most members from Mexico and a handful from Central America. Some are U.S. citizens, while others crossed the border illegally but are seeking to stay through asylum, residency or other legal

means.

They don't watch or listen to the news. "It makes my mom worry," said César Escobar, who migrated from Honduras as an unaccompanied minor in 2015 to escape gang violence.

As the number of unauthorized migrants crossing the southern border soars, we argue about caravans and detention centers, right wing and left wing, who wins politically and who loses. But for these guys, the issue is personal.

Most are happy to see their former lives fade into the rearview mirror. Their gaze is on the future and the promise of what might be.

But it's a clouded gaze. The past doesn't recede as easily as they'd like.

Follow their journey. Pages 18-21A

**ABOVE:** Bryan Gámez, an 18-year-old senior soccer player at Thomas Jefferson High School in Dallas, looked through the field house window while waiting out a rain delay before a game in February 2018. Born in El Salvador, Bryan came to the U.S. with his mother and younger brother in 2014 after he was recruited by Mara Salvatrucha, one of the largest street gangs in Central America. For the past five years, Bryan and his family have acclimated to American life while their asylum request remained unsettled.

## IMMIGRATION

# Border Patrol in grip of crisis

Morale falls as divide grows between managers, overwhelmed agents

By **ALFREDO CORCHADO**  
Border/Mexico Correspondent  
acorchado@dallasnews.com

EL PASO — Border Patrol supervisors were so overwhelmed by the number of immigrants taken into custody along the Southwest border this spring they resorted to an unorthodox way to accelerate their release: They gave agents pre-checked and pre-signed medical forms that cleared unauthorized immigrants and asylum seekers for travel.

The forms appear to have allowed the Border Patrol to bypass required medical checkups of migrants on their way to join sponsors in different parts of the country, including Dallas.

Carlos Favela, executive vice president of National Border Patrol Council Local 1929, which represents more than 1,400 agents, said it's unclear how many immigrants received such forms as they were distributed for at least four weeks. He also said he didn't know how many of the 11 stations in the El Paso Border Patrol sector used them before the practice stopped in mid-June following complaints by the union.

The Border Patrol chief for the El Paso sector, Aaron Hull, said Thursday that he could not comment specifically on the use of the medical forms because "I'm not sure that was brought to my attention."

"I do know that sometimes agents, just to speed processing, we apply shortcuts," he said, but he stressed that the agency is "always looking for ways to do things efficiently without compromising any of the quality that we do."

But Border Patrol agents say the use of the pre-filled medical forms and the decision to blow the whistle on the practice illustrate a widening divide between agents and supervisors.

Agents, who signed up for law enforcement on the border, say the crisis has almost overnight forced them to become babysitters

See **BORDER** Page 1A

## Mostly sunny and hot



H 97  
L 78  
Metro, back page

## LATE SCORES

For results from last night's games, go to [sportsdaytv.com/scores](http://sportsdaytv.com/scores).

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## NATION

**No relief from heat**  
"A dangerous heat wave" was expected to break records across the U.S. 4A

## WORLD

**Ship seizure on video**  
Iran posted a video on Saturday of the seizure of a British tanker on Friday. 14A

## METRO

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AT&T dropped CBS after a breakdown in contract negotiations. 1B

**Also:** A Carrollton physician is spreading a message through his website Black Men in White Coats. 1B

## ARTS & LIFE

**The next chapter**  
Is Dallas' literary scene finally at a turning point? 8E

## 50 years since Apollo 11



John Minchillo/The Associated Press

**Visitors pose for photos at the Armstrong Air & Space Museum in Wapakoneta, Ohio, hometown of Neil Armstrong, the first man to walk on the moon. Special events were held in several states Saturday, as the nation commemorated the 50th anniversary of the first moon landing.**

**Also:** Fifty years ago, Dallas was up late to watch in awe. (Stories, 2A)

## NORTHEAST TEXAS

# Fire, fraud sink small-town bank

Why it's first to fail in state in years mystifies 2,000 Cooper residents

By **ORLA MCCAFFREY**  
Staff Writer  
orla.mccaffrey@dallasnews.com

**COOPER** — Teresa Thompson was less than two hours into her shift at the Dairy Queen when it happened.

The 58-year-old cook, hair slung into a long, blond ponytail, had just returned from a smoke break when an employee of the Enloe State Bank next door rushed into the restaurant.

"The bank is on fire," Brenda Miller, who cleans the bank with her husband, told Thompson. "Call 911."

Thompson found her glittery purple iPhone and dialed. When the call wouldn't go through, she resorted to Dairy Queen's landline.

"The Enloe State Bank is on fire," she told an emergency dispatcher.

The May 16 fire at Enloe State Bank set off a chain of events unlike anything the town's 2,000 residents had ever seen.

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# Border Patrol may be at breaking point

Continued from Page 1A

and detention officers, without any additional training. They say migrants are more tense and short-tempered after long detentions in overcrowded holding centers — a situation that has many agents concerned about their own safety.

"This is an impossible mission," said Favela, adding that the union decided to be more vocal to help the public better understand the challenges facing agents. "We can't win with this situation. We're being set up for failure."

The rift between Border Patrol agents and management comes amid the recent exposure of squalid conditions at Border Patrol holding facilities, including the one in Clint and the El Paso del Norte Processing Center. Agents say it is not unusual for two or three of them to supervise 200 to 300 migrants at a time.

Since December, five migrant children and one teen died in U.S. custody, mostly in Texas and New Mexico.

The agents are also struggling with the public backlash from news accounts of hateful, racist postings by some Border Patrol workers belonging to a private Facebook group. And there is a growing feeling among some workers that overtaxed agents are being ignored by an administration in Washington that is pursuing a sweeping immigration crackdown underscored by President Donald Trump's desire for a border wall.

Agents report that crowded conditions at some holding facilities are so bad and the stench so strong that agents shower and change out of their uniforms before going home. Many complain of low morale, echoing one of several negative findings in an inspector general's report in May.

About the challenges of overcrowding, squalid conditions, Hull said: "We're not afraid to address this challenge. But when we say that we need resources, we need staffing, we need facilities, it's because we need them."

He said he appreciates the recent \$4.6 billion Congress approved to help address the issues faced by agents.

## Rank-and-file agents

To get a more complete picture of conditions confronting the Border Patrol, *The Dallas Morning News* interviewed seven current agents, the majority in the El Paso sector. Most spoke on the condition that their names not be published for fear of losing their jobs. They were not authorized to speak publicly.

Many said they feel the agency in charge of securing the nation's border is at a breaking point, caught in the grips of partisan fighting between the White House and the Democratic-controlled House. Some say poor planning by management has hurt their operations on the ground.

The vast majority of agents joined the Border Patrol to provide security along the nearly 2,000-mile southwestern frontier with Mexico and to man checkpoints.

"These days, one agent said, "our primary duty has become our secondary duty" after taking care of the thousands of immigrants who cross every month, most seeking asylum. He worries that when he's busy going to Sam's Club to buy Oreo's, Cheerios, Famous Amos cookies, White Castle hamburgers ... baby food, feminine products" for immigrants in the strained holding cells, even more illicit drugs than normal are transported across the border undetected.

Hull said he's aware of the concerns from his agents.

"No one's going to say they're happy about that, but I give the agents credit as professionals for working through this and doing it with dignity and continuing to do the kind of things that brings them posi-



**A Border Patrol agent** views the wall that separates Tijuana, Mexico, and San Diego. Some agents say that by focusing on building a wall, the Trump administration has overlooked the most vital element ensuring a secure border: agency personnel, some of whom are beset by low morale.

tive recognition," he said.

Asked if he would sign up again for the Border Patrol, the agent, whose sibling is also a veteran agent, paused and said, "Probably not. This is not what I signed up for." He added that given the growing backlash he "doesn't wear the uniform in public anymore."

"We want the American people to know that we're trying hard," he said. "But we need help from the president, the Democrats, Republicans. We need everyone to be on the same page."

A second agent, who has been with the Border Patrol for almost a decade, likened his duties to that of an "Uber driver," saying he was required to fetch supplies from local supermarkets and pharmacies.

A third agent, who said he "bleeds green" given his loyalty to the agency, said: "We're gonna do our job because that's what we're here to do, but it doesn't mean that if it's not right we're just going to be quiet about it. We need to make it better, and we need to do it to the best of our ability."

Favela, a father of four, said the toddler, added: "It's an injustice what they've done to the agents, let alone the aliens ... When you look down you see these little baby girls, little baby boys. They have no clue where they're at or what's going on. You can, just by looking at them as a parent, [know] they haven't probably been changed in 24 hours. When was their last meal? Who knows? ... That's hurtful on your psyche as a human. You want to give and make that better, but you can't."

The discovery of the Facebook group of agents, first reported by ProPublica, signals bigger frustrations, he said. Several agents noted the views there do not represent the feelings of all Border Patrol agents.

"I have a family, my wife who's my rock and I'm able to do my primary duty," said the agent. "Some of these guys have no one but social media. Everyone is frustrated, and this can get dangerous for the migrants and for us."

There's also a psychological toll.

The third agent called it the "desensitization" of agents. He recalled "standing outside in the sun with Mylar blankets for shade because, oh, nobody ever thought these people are going to be standing on pavement in the sun. It's hot, the desert. How are we going to care for them?" he asked. One migrant fainted in front of the agents.

"These are human lives," said the agent, who described what he would say to his supervisors. "You guys know this is wrong. You guys know we need



**Agents said supervisors** gave them pre-signed medical forms, shown here with signatures obscured, that cleared migrants for travel to their sponsors.

to make a change, and we need to adjust right now."

Favela, a father of four, said "it's hard" to visit holding facilities like the one in Clint because "you can see your own kids in there ... These aren't conditions to keep big kids in. Just the fact that you don't have uniforms ..."

He said it is especially hard to see messages scrawled on cots by departing children, passed on for incoming kids. "They write in Spanish," he said. "Some are really well-versed, like little poets." Messages like, "Hang in there. Stay tough. This jail is only temporary." Or, "I pray for you. You'll be OK. You'll be out soon."

## Safety concerns

Agents are also concerned about overcrowding and their own safety, especially in all-male holding facilities, some crowded with as many as 700 men, where migrants are kept far past the normal 72-hour limit.

Once migrants cross the border and are taken into custody, agents try to verify each person's identity, put them through national and international criminal background checks, and put those seeking asylum through a credible-fear interview that determines whether they may have a legitimate case.

All migrants undergo "initial medical screenings," said Hull. "We don't want to keep an unaccompanied alien child or any other alien in our custody one second longer than they have to be."

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ties in the El Paso sector — said "there is a high incidence of illness among their staff." It said management also "raised concerns about employee morale and that conditions were elevating anxiety and affecting employees' personal lives." Many agents, the report said, had "accelerated their retirement dates, while others were considering alternative employment opportunities."

"Morale is in the gutter," the report said.

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But Favela points to the pre-signed medical forms as a glaring example of bottled-up frustration and mistrust between management and agents.

He said an agent in the Las Cruces, N.M., Border Patrol station brought a copy of the form to the union's attention and explained that the Border Patrol supervisor had a stack of forms piled up on a desk, already signed and marked for medical clearances. The form, a copy of which was obtained by *The News*, was dated May 9, 2019, at the peak of the surge of migrants.

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Favela and other agents predict the downward trend won't last. The summer heat will cool off and smugglers will adjust to new tactics implemented by the U.S. and Mexican governments, including the Mexican national guard and the Trump administration's unilateral attempt to force migrants to apply for asylum in countries south of the United States.

It is too early to see any effect of the policy on the border. The migrants are still arriving, and the Border Patrol must detain them.

"Call it a mini-vacation, but this ain't over," said the agent, who has been with the Border Patrol for almost a decade.

Angela Korcher of the *Albuquerque Journal* contributed to this report.

Twitter: @ajcorchado

He noted that right now, migrants are "walking up and saying, 'We're here. We're not jumping a wall. We're not jumping fences. We're not running from us. We're turning ourselves in, so what would a wall do?'"

"Everything you see today that is broken is a consequence of what we're seeing in politics," said Victor Manjarez Jr., who was a Border Patrol sector chief in both El Paso and Tucson between 2007 and 2011. Now he is associate director for the Center for Law and Human Behavior at the University of Texas at El Paso. "Politics has a big impact on the agents," he added.

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The process usually takes days, but when the Border Patrol is overwhelmed with dozens or even hun-

dreds of arrivals, it can take weeks.

On processing migrants, Hull said, “We have to get them processed: We have to do things as quickly as we can but thoroughly.”

But long stays in Border Patrol facilities, agents say, result in a prison-like environment taking root in some places, complete with “cell, or tent leaders” as detainees form gang-like groups based on their nationality.

Most are Central Americans, but the migrants in the El Paso area include Brazilians, Cubans and Venezuelans. Most Cubans have military training and are highly organized, causing agents to be especially wary around them after an incident in which one shoved an agent to the floor.

“They’re also making shanks out of toothbrushes,” Favela said.

Many of the agents’ stories reinforce an inspector general’s report, which stated in May that “overcrowding and prolonged detention represent an immediate risk to the health and safety not just of the detainees, but also ... agents and officers” of the Department of Homeland Security, which includes the Border Patrol.

“Overcrowding is bad news for everyone,” Hull said.

“We’re not happy about the influx, not being able to provide the care, not being able to transfer them over as soon as we can, of not having enough people to work the line or work the checkpoints,” Hull said.

The inspector general’s report noted that management at the site — one of the five facilities in the El Paso sector — said “there is a high incidence of illness among their staff.” It said management also “raised concerns about employee morale and that conditions were elevating anxiety and affecting employees’ personal lives.” Many agents, the report said, had “accelerated their retirement dates, while others were considering alternative employment opportunities.”

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It indicated that the newly arrived migrant required no medication and that the “subject is cleared for travel.”

“You can see, I guess, the frustration of trying to get the people through as fast as possible, and that may have triggered this, but it’s still not right,” Favela said, adding that he doesn’t believe there was “malice” behind the practice, just overwhelmed management. “This puts the immigrants and agents at risk. And also communities at risk.”

## **The political question**

Border Patrol agents know the huge influx of mostly Central American immigrants is a real crisis. But most blame politics for making that crisis, and their jobs, far worse.

They say that by focusing on building a border wall, the Trump administration has overlooked the most vital element ensuring a secure border: agency personnel, some of whom are beset by low morale, many eager for early retirement even as the Border Patrol fights a high attrition rate.

“The wall is pointless,” said the agent who worries about increased drug smuggling. “Do you want the wall or do you want more agents? I’ll take more agents because we don’t need the wall.”

He noted that right now, migrants are “walking up and saying, ‘We’re here.’ They’re not jumping a wall. They’re not jumping fences. They’re not running from us. They’re turning themselves in, so what would a wall do?”

“Everything you see today that is broken is a consequence of what we’re seeing in politics,” said Victor Manjarrez Jr., who was a Border Patrol sector chief in both El Paso and Tucson between 2007 and 2011. Now he is associate director for the Center for Law and Human Behavior at the University of Texas at El Paso. “Politics has a big impact on the agents,” he added.

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*Angela Korcherga of the Albuquerque Journal contributed to this report.*



# The Dallas Morning News

## *Detainee appears to be U.S. citizen*

Birth certificate shows he was born in Dallas, but 18-year-old still in custody after 3 weeks

By **Obed Manuel**  
Published July 23, 2019

[Click here to view the online story.](#)

Username: contests@dallasnews.com / Password: ontestCPass!

# The Dallas Morning News

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Shaban Althman/Staff Photographer  
**State Sen. Royce West** (right) was endorsed by former Dallas Mayor Ron Kirk at a ceremony announcing his campaign for Senate.

## ELECTIONS '20

### West enters race for Senate

Dallas' state senator joins crowded Democratic field seeking to unseat Cornyn

By **GROMER JEFFERS JR.**  
Political Writer  
gjeffers@dallasnews.com

Royce West on Monday launched his campaign for Senate, joining a crowded field of Democrats looking to unseat U.S. Sen. John Cornyn. West, who has served in the Texas

Senate since 1993, was boosted by hundreds of supporters at a Communications Workers of America union hall in Dallas, including U.S. Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson, former U.S. Trade Rep. Ron Kirk and former Dallas Cowboys Hall of Fame running back Emmitt Smith.

"It's going to be a long road," he said, nodding to a primary fight and potential general election. "I'm battle tested," he said. "You've seen me in battle, and I'm

ready today to announce my candidacy for the United States Senate."

West called for a "New Texas of America" that "incorporated the values of the past," while acknowledging the need for change.

He said of his style: "I will be a LBJ-type senator who sits down and gets the job done."

West's entry into the Senate race fuels a fierce fight for the Democratic

See **WEST** Page 2A

## IMMIGRATION

### Detainee appears to be U.S. citizen

Birth certificate shows he was born in Dallas, but 18-year-old still in custody after 3 weeks

By **OBED MANUEL**  
Staff Writer  
obedmanuel@dallasnews.com

An 18-year-old Dallas-born U.S. citizen has been in the custody of U.S. Customs and Border Protection and Immigration and Customs Enforcement for more than three weeks, his attorney says.

Now, his family fears he may be deported.

Francisco Erwin Galicia was detained at a CBP checkpoint in Falfurrias on June 27, said Claudia Galan, his attorney.

Galicia was traveling with his 17-year-old brother, Marlon Galicia, and a group of friends from Edinburg, where they live, to Ranger College in North Texas for a soccer scouting event when they came upon a CBP checkpoint, said Sanjuana Galicia, his mother.

It was about 8 p.m. Marlon, who was born in Mexico and lacked legal status, had only been through a border checkpoint on school trips and had never been pressed to provide travel documents.

But this time was different, Marlon said. He had only a school ID. His brother was carrying only his Texas ID, which can only be obtained with a Social Security number.

"We were confident that we'd be able to pass. We were going to do something good for our futures," he said. "I didn't imagine this could happen and now I'm so sad that I'm not with my family," Marlon said by phone from Reynosa, Mexico, where he is

See **MOM** Page 4A

## MESQUITE POLICE SHOOTING

### Ex-officer acquitted

In 2nd trial, jury finds Wiley acted reasonably in firing on unarmed man



Lynda M. Gonzalez/Staff Photographer

**Derrick Wiley** wiped away tears after a jury decided he was not guilty of aggravated assault on Monday. Wiley, 37, had faced five to 99 years or life in prison if convicted of the single count of aggravated assault by a public servant.

By **SARA COELLO**  
Staff Writer  
sara.coello@dallasnews.com

Ten months after a Dallas County jury said it couldn't decide whether a former Mesquite officer had acted reasonably in opening fire on an unarmed man, a second set of jurors has found him not guilty of an assault charge.

Derrick Wiley, 37, had faced five to 99 years or life in prison if convicted of the single count of aggravated assault by a public servant.



**DERICK WILEY**

Wiley, who was fired after the shooting, said after Monday afternoon

verdict that he plans to return to work as a police officer as soon as possible because the work is

"just in my blood." He has appealed his termination from the Mesquite Police Department.

The former patrol officer hugged his attorneys and fought back tears as the verdict was announced. His supporters, including his wife and his mother, leaned forward to congratulate him.

Wiley testified last week that he was sure he would die when Lyndo Jones, then 31, broke away from him and ran in a dark Mesquite

parking lot in November 2017.

He had described Jones' behavior as erratic and maintained that his aggressive approach during the encounter had been necessary to control the man he initially thought

was a stranded motorist, then decided could be a vehicle burglar.

"I thought I was going to die out there," Wiley testified. "His body language just wasn't right."

See **EX-MESQUITE** Page 2A

**WORLD:** Mexico reports a 36% drop in arrests along the U.S. border since a Trump-ordered crackdown. **6A**

### Fast-track deportation to expand

Trump officials to bypass judges in more cases; critics fear abuses, promise to sue

By **MARIA SACCHETTI**  
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration on Tuesday will significantly expand its power to quickly deport unauthorized immigrants who have illegally entered the United States within the past two years, using a fast-track deportation process that bypasses immigration judges.

Officials are calling the new strategy, which will take effect immediately, a "necessary response" to the influx of Central Americans and others at the southern border. It will allow immigration authorities to quickly remove immigrants from anywhere they encounter them across the United States, and they expect the approach will help alleviate the nation's immigration court backlog and free up space in Immigration and Customs Enforcement jails.

The stated targets of the change are people who sneaked into the United States and do not have an asylum case or immigration court date pending. Until now, the administration's policy for "expedited removal" has been limited to

See **MORE** Page 4A

## Comfortable



H 88

L 72

Metro, back page

## LATE SCORES

For results from last night's games, go to [sportsday.dfw.com/scores](https://sportsday.dfw.com/scores).

Team	Score	Game	Score
Letters	28	Classified	6-20
Nation	3-54	Amble	48
World	6-74	Obituaries	48
Edwards	9A	Sports TV	25
Newsbits	8A	TV	44
Arts	48	Games	246

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## METRO & BUSINESS

### 19 deaths linked to murder suspect

The deaths of 19 people have now been linked to Billy Chermit, the serial murder suspect accused of smothering elderly North Texans for years without detection. **1B**

### Equifax to pay \$700M in huge data breach

Equifax will pay at least \$700 million to settle lawsuits over a 2017 data breach that exposed the sensitive information of roughly half of the U.S. population. **3B**

## NATION

### Trump, lawmakers reach deal on budget

President Donald Trump and congressional leaders announced a deal to raise spending limits by \$20 billion and suspend the federal debt ceiling until after the 2020 presidential election. **3A**

## PUERTO RICO

### 'Awakened' protesters march for 10th day against governor

Rosselló vows he's making amends for lewd messages as tens of thousands fill capital

By **DANICA COTO**  
The Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — Waving flags, chanting and banging pots and pans, tens of thousands of Puerto Ricans jammed a highway Monday to demand the resignation of Gov. Ricardo Rosselló in a crisis triggered by a leak of offensive, obscenity-laden chat messages between him and his advisers.

The demonstration appeared to be the biggest protest on the island in nearly two decades. "Finally, the government's mask has fallen," said Jannice Rivera, a 43-year-old mechanical engineer who lives in



Joe Raedle/Getty Images

### A protester marched on Monday against Gov. Ricardo Rosselló.

Houston but was born and raised in Puerto Rico and flew in to join the crowds.

The protest came 10 days after the leak of 889 pages of online chats in

See **TRUMP** Page 4A

# Trump blasts Rosselló, government

Continued from Page 1A

which Rosselló and some of his close aides insulted women and mocked constituents, including victims of Hurricane Maria.

The leak has intensified long-smoldering anger in the U.S. territory over persistent corruption and mismanagement by the island's two main political parties, a severe debt crisis, a sickly economy and a slow recovery from Maria, which devastated Puerto Rico in September 2017.

"The people have awakened after so much outrage," said 69-year-old retired nurse Benedicta Villegas. "There are still people without roofs and highways without lights. The chat was the tip of the iceberg."

The crowd surged along the Americas Expressway despite the punishing heat — toddlers, teenagers, professionals and the elderly, all dripping in sweat and smiling as they waved Puerto Rico flags large and small and hoisted signs.

"This is to show that the people respect themselves," said Ana Carrasquillo, 26. "We've put up with corruption for so many years."

In an interview Monday with Fox News, Rosselló said that he will not resign and that he is focused on tackling corruption and helping the island recover from Maria.

"I'm making amends," he said. "I've apologized for all the comments that I made on the chat."

On Sunday evening, Rosselló, a Democrat, sought to calm the unrest by promising not to seek reelection in 2020 or continue as head of his pro-sthood New Progressive Party. That only further angered his critics, who have mounted street demonstrations for more than a week.



Tens of thousands of Puerto Ricans surged along the Americas Expressway on Monday to demand the resignation of Gov. Ricardo Rosselló in a crisis triggered by a leak of offensive, obscenity-laden chat messages between him and his advisers.

"The people are not going to go away," said Johanna Soto, of the city of Carolina. "That's what he's hoping for, but we outnumber him."

Asked who was advising Rosselló on staying in office, Rosselló's secretary of public affairs, Anthony Maceira, said the governor was speaking with his family, and "that carries a great weight." Rosselló's father, Pedro, was governor from 1993 to 2001.

The biggest newspaper in

this territory of more than 3 million American citizens, *El Nuevo Día*, added to the pressure with the front-page headline: "Governor, it's time to listen to the people: You have to resign."

Asked whether the president should step down, President Donald Trump said that Rosselló is a "terrible" governor and that hurricane relief money sent to Puerto Rico has been "squandered, wasted and stolen" and the island's top

leadership is "totally, grossly incompetent."

The demonstrations represent the biggest protest movement on the island since Puerto Ricans rallied to put an end to U.S. Navy training on the island of Vieques more than 15 years ago.

Monday was the 10th consecutive day of protests, and more are being called for later in the week. The island's largest mall, Plaza de las Americas, closed ahead of the protest, as

did dozens of other businesses. The upheaval also prompted at least four cruise ships to cancel visits to Puerto Rico.

The crisis has stirred fears about the effects on the already fragile economy.

Puerto Rico is struggling to restructure part of its \$70 billion in debt under federal supervision and deal with a 13-year recession through school closings, cutbacks in infrastructure maintenance and other austerity measures.

At the same time, the island is trying to rebuild from Maria, which caused more than \$100 billion in damage, threw Puerto Rico into a year-long blackout and left thousands dead, most of them succumbing during the sweltering aftermath.

The island has also seen a recent string of arrests of Puerto Rico officials on corruption charges. Those arrested included the former education secretary.

## Mom fears teen born in Dallas will be deported

Continued from Page 1A

staying with his grandmother.

After two days in detention, Marlon signed a voluntary deportation form.

### 'Wait, see, hope'

"I signed because I wanted to talk with my mother. Now, we just have to wait and see and hope that they release my brother," Marlon said.

Francisco Galicia told his mother, who lives in Edinburg, that he was detained because he didn't have his U.S. passport. But she said he did present CBP with his Texas ID.

Galicia wasn't allowed to use the phone for the three weeks he was in CBP custody, his mother said. But he has been able to make collect calls to her since Saturday, when Galicia was transferred to ICE's custody. Galán said she met with CBP officers last week and presented them with Galicia's birth certificate and some other documents but was unsuccessful in getting him released. She plans on presenting the same documents to ICE officers later this week.

### Parkland birth

"I presented them with his original birth certificate and other documents and they ignored them. So now I've faxed over all the documents to the ICE agent handling the case," Galán said. "He's going on a full month of being wrongfully detained. He's a U.S. citizen and he needs to be released



Sanjuana Galicia

"I presented them with his original birth certificate and other documents and they ignored them. ... He's going on a full month of being wrongfully detained. He's a U.S. citizen and he needs to be released now."

Sanjuana Galicia, the mother of Francisco Erwin Galicia (above) who has been detained since June 27

now." *The Dallas Morning News* reviewed a copy of the birth certificate, and it says Galicia was born at Parkland Memorial Hospital on Dec. 24, 2000. Other documents include a congratulatory certificate his mother was given by hospital staff when he was born, a high school ID and a health insurance card.

Neither ICE nor CBP responded to requests for comment.

The ICE detainee locator

system shows Francisco Texas, being held at the South Texas Detention Facility in Pearsall and lists him as being born in Mexico.

Francisco's mother said she lived in Dallas from 1998 to 2001 and moved to South Texas after his birth. "I need my son back," she said. "I just want to prove to them that he is a citizen. He's not a criminal or anything bad. He's a good kid."

Twitter: @obedmanuel

## More to face deportation without ruling by a judge

Continued from Page 1A

migrants caught within 100 miles of the U.S. border who have been in the country less than two weeks. The new rule would apply to immigrants anywhere in the United States who have been in the country up to two years — adhering to a time limit included in the 1996 federal law that authorized the expedited process.

Immigrants apprehended in Iowa, Nebraska or other inland states would have to prove to immigration officials that they had been in the United States continuously for two years, or they could end up in an immigration jail facing quick deportation. And it could be relatively low-level immigration officers, not officers of a court, making the decisions.

### Nearly 300,000 at risk

President Donald Trump has promised to deport millions of immigrants and has threatened enforcement raids targeting those in as many as 10 major cities.

Nearly 300,000 of the approximately 11 million unauthorized immigrants in the United States entered the country illegally and could be subject to expedited removal, according to the nonpartisan Migration Policy Institute. The typical unauthorized immigrant has lived in the United States for 15 years, according to the Pew Research Center.

Though border apprehensions have fallen in June and July as the Trump administration and Mexico have intensified their crackdown on the southern border, acting Homeland Security Secretary Kevin McAleenan said in a draft notice Monday that "the implementation of additional mea-

asures is a necessary response to the ongoing immigration crisis." He said the new rule would take effect immediately upon publication in the Federal Register, which is scheduled for Tuesday.

"DHS has determined that the volume of illegal entries, and the attendant risks to national security and public safety presented by these illegal entries, warrants this immediate implementation of DHS's full statutory authority over expedited removal," McAleenan said in the notice. "DHS expects that the full use of expedited removal statutory authority will strengthen national security, diminish the number of illegal entries, and otherwise ensure the prompt removal of aliens apprehended in the United States."

Immigration lawyers said the expansion is unprecedented and effectively gives U.S. agents the power to issue deportation orders without bringing immigrants before a judge or allowing them to speak with a lawyer.

"Under this unlawful plan, immigrants who have lived here for years would be deported with less due process than people get in traffic court," Omar Jadwat, director of the Immigrants' Rights Project of the American Civil Liberties Union, said in a statement. "We will sue to end this policy quickly."

### 'Prosecutor and judge'

Royce Bernstein Murray of the American Immigration Council also vowed to challenge the broadened authority allows DHS "to essentially be both prosecutor and judge." Advocates warned that the policy could snare longtime le-

gal residents or even U.S. citizens, who have been deported in error before. Vanita Gupta, president of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, said the rule could lead to increased racial profiling and turn ICE into a "show me your papers" militia.

"This new directive flows directly from the racist rhetoric that the president has been using for the last week and indeed months, but this new rule is going to terrorize communities of color," said Gupta, who headed the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division under President Barack Obama. "It really reads as a send-them-all-back policy," she added, referring to the audience's chants at a Trump rally last week that said "send her back" in response to the president's attacks on a Somali-born Muslim congresswoman, Ilhan Omar.

### 'Huge swath of people'

David Leopold, a Cleveland immigration lawyer and former president of the American Immigration Lawyers Association, said expanding the expedited removal program shifts the decision-making to immigration officers who might not have much experience with such a policy and means that many immigrants who might have the right to remain in the country won't be given the opportunity to show it.

"That is going to apply to a huge swath of people," he said, noting that the rule requires migrants to prove that they have been in the United States for years — a particularly difficult onus when they are, by definition, lacking legal immigration documents. "My view is: How are they going to prove it? The burden is on them to prove it. If I can't prove it, I'm done."

**A**n 18-year-old Dallas-born U.S. citizen has been in the custody of U.S. Customs and Border Protection and Immigration and Customs Enforcement for more than three weeks, his attorney says.

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But this time was different, Marlon said. He had only a school ID. His brother was carrying only his Texas ID, which can only be obtained with a Social Security number.

“We were confident that we’d be able to pass. We were going to do something good for our futures,” he said. “I didn’t imagine this could happen and now I’m so sad that I’m not with my family,” Marlon said by phone from Reynosa, Mexico, where he is staying with his grandmother.

After two days in detention, Marlon signed a voluntary deportation form.

## **‘Wait, see, hope’**

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# The Dallas Morning News

## *For mixed-status families, life of fear*

Detention of Dallas born U.S. citizen harsh reminder  
for many living near border

By **Obed Manuel**

Published Aug. 4, 2019

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## EL PASO SHOOTING

20 dead as gunman opens fire in Walmart

Suspect a 2017 Plano Senior High graduate

Authorities to seek capital murder charges

# 'So many bodies'



Saturday's shooting took place at a mall complex near Interstate 10 on El Paso's east side. It's one of the busiest shopping centers in the region, attracting families from both sides of the border.

Manifesto 'fueled by hate' attributed to shooter

By ALFREDO CORCHADO, LAVENDRICK SMITH and LOYD BRUMFIELD  
 Staff Writers

EL PASO — At least 20 people were shot and killed and 26 more were wounded Saturday morning when a gunman opened fire in an El Paso Walmart packed with back-to-school shoppers.

The shooting suspect, who has ties to Collin County, had not been publicly identified, but El Paso Police Chief Greg Allen described him as a "21-year-old white male from Allen, Texas."

When he encountered El Paso police officers, the suspect laid his weapon down and surrendered near the scene, Allen said.

The chief said the gunman faces capital murder charges and possible hate-crimes charges, if the FBI determines they are warranted.

He also attributed a manifesto posted online to the suspect, who claimed he was acting in response to "the Hispanic invasion of Texas."

"I am simply defending my country from cultural and ethnic replacement brought on by an invasion," the manifesto states.

**SUSPECT WROTE** an anti-immigrant 'manifesto' before the attack, authorities say. **18A**

**FOUR OTHER** major shooting sprees in the last five years haunt Texas. **18A**

**BETO O'ROURKE** cancels campaign stops; Texas lawmakers express support. **18A**

See **AT LEAST** Page 19A

## IMMIGRATION

# For mixed-status families, life of fear

Detention of Dallas-born U.S. citizen harsh reminder for many living near border

By OBED MANUEL  
 Staff Writer  
 obed.manuel@dallasnews.com

EDINBURG — Francisco Erwin Galicia settles into the light brown wrap-around couch that takes up a corner of his family's modest trailer home. A portable fluorescent light shines on his face.

"Where were you born?" the TV reporter asks.

"In Dallas," the 18-year-old U.S. citizen replies in Spanish with a

slight chuckle and a grin.

Since July 22, when *The Dallas Morning News* first reported that Galicia was detained for 23 days in a U.S. Border Patrol holding facility, he's told this story over and over, recounting conditions that he says were so poor he almost agreed to be deported by his own government.

But things have started to slow down. Fewer reporters are coming by for interviews.

As the headlines fade, Galicia, his mother and brothers are left with the reality that, as a mixed-status family, their right to be together is not guaranteed.

Although Galicia is a U.S. citizen,



Bryan Michaleski/Staff Photographer

After his release from custody, a storm of media swarmed to share 18-year-old U.S. citizen Francisco Erwin Galicia's story of being detained for 23 days in a U.S. Border Patrol holding facility.

his mother Sanjuana is an unauthorized immigrant and vulnerable to deportation. His younger brother Marlon, who is not a U.S. citizen but had hopes of a soccer scholarship, was deported shortly after the two

were detained together on June 27 and now lives in a dangerous Mexican border city.

Like many other mixed-status

See **MANY** Page 16A

## COURT BATTLE

# #MeToo moment for anime

As accusers target fellow voice actor, fans take sides, he digs in with defamation lawsuit

By SHARON GRIGSBY  
 Staff Writer  
 sgrigsby@dallasnews.com

In the world of English-dubbed anime, Grapevine resident Vic Mignogna is a voice to be reckoned with.

Mignogna once again voiced fan favorite "Brody" in the latest installment of the Dragon Ball Z series, and the movie, released in January, skyrocketed to a \$22.7 million U.S. box office in less than a week. It looked like 2019 would be another can't-miss year for the actor.

But the wildly successful opening also unleashed a torrent of chatter about the 56-year-old actor's long-rumored alleged inappropriate behavior — such as aggressive kisses, hugs and unwanted sexual advances — with women.

Mignogna lost a deal with a Flower Mound-based anime distribution

See **SOCIAL** Page 14A

**Scattered showers**  
  
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**NATION**  
**3 killed when cliff collapses**  
 Three women gathered with family for a celebration on the beach were killed when a Southern California sea cliff collapsed. **4A**

**WORLD**  
**Familiar scene plays out**  
 Tens of thousands marched Saturday in Hong Kong in a pro-democracy rally, the latest in a summer-long movement. **12A**

**METRO**  
**Photos of the month**  
 Go behind the lens with our staff photographers' favorite images from July. **3B**

**BUSINESS**  
**Success is his brand**  
 Prolific Dallas entrepreneur Guillermo Perales opened his 1,000th franchised store location last month as he grapples with scaling his business in the public eye. **1D**

**ARTS & LIFE**  
**Music got him through**  
 Arlington composer Kevin Day has overcome adversity to reach success. At his life's darkest moments, music was his salvation. **6E**

**LATE SCORES**  
 For results from last night's games, go to [sportsdayfw.com/scores](http://sportsdayfw.com/scores).

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# Many border families living life in 'bubble'

Continued from Page 1A

families in the Rio Grande Valley, the Galicias have always lived knowing that their lives could be disrupted by a Border Patrol checkpoint. One 2017 study estimated that 16.7 million people in the U.S. had at least one unauthorized immigrant family member in the home.

In this small slice of the Valley alone — McAllen, Edinburg and Mission — there are an estimated 85,000 unauthorized immigrants living in mixed-status families.

## A mixed-status family

A small black and white spotted dog named Coco roams this Edinburg colonia made up of dirt lots and trailer homes. He survives off the scraps residents give him.

Coco is especially fond of the Galicia home, where he can often be found under Sanjuana Galicia's violet-red Chevy Malibu getting a break from the unforgiving sun. He knows she'll give him chicken bones to gnaw.

But bones were scarce the past month. Sanjuana struggled to find the time for her job selling Veracruz-style tamales around town. Here she's known as "la señora de los tamales," or the tamale lady.

The single mother was instead focused on getting her son Francisco out of Border Patrol custody and making sure

that her middle son Marlon, 17, was safe in her hometown of Reynosa, Mexico.

"I couldn't sleep. I couldn't eat. I sat here reading the Bible and begging God to help me find out about my son. I didn't know anything about him for so long," she says.

Francisco and Marlon, both soon-to-be seniors at Johnny G. Roonkomes High School, were hoping to secure scholarships to continue their education when they and their three friends set out for Ranger College, west of Fort Worth, for a soccer scouting event.

But when Border Patrol agents pulled the group aside at the Fallaris checkpoint — almost 60 miles north of Edinburg — Marlon and one of the other passengers were found to have no state-issued ID and were suspected of being in the U.S. without authorization.

Francisco says he told agents he was a citizen and presented his Texas ID, a copy of his wallet-sized birth certificate and a Social Security card, but agents doubted their validity. Then, after he was fingerprinted, agents discovered he had a tourist visa to visit the U.S. That caused agents to further doubt that he was born in North Texas and they detained him.

While in custody, Francisco says, he lost 28 pounds and wasn't allowed to shower. Border Patrol agents taunted him and the other suspected unauthorized immigrants held there, he says, and told them they didn't have rights.

Almost two decades ago, when Sanjuana lived in Dallas, she used a fake ID to work. When she gave birth to Francisco at Parkland Memorial Hospital, staff used the name

on the ID rather than her real name.

Yes, Sanjuana says, she had fake papers then, but there's more to the story.

When Sanjuana's contractions started on Christmas Eve 2000, Francisco's birthday, her then-partner drove her to Parkland, opened the passenger door, told her to get inside and drove away.

Sanjuana says she told her not to tell hospital staff that he was the father because it might affect his status adjustment process. Sanjuana didn't say anything because she feared she'd be thrown in jail or worse — that Francisco would be taken away from her.

Sanjuana says he told her not to tell hospital staff that he was the father because it might affect his status adjustment process. Sanjuana didn't say anything because she feared she'd be thrown in jail or worse — that Francisco would be taken away from her.

"I had no one. I was alone. I didn't have family in Dallas, and the person who was supposed to be my support system abandoned me," she says.

Sanjuana moved back to Mexico to be with family when Francisco was about a year old. She left Dallas pregnant with Marlon, who was born in Reynosa. They lived there for about 14 years.

But fights between carrels to control the smuggling routes fueled by Americans' consumption of drugs chased her away. When the boys were about to start high school, she decided to move back to the U.S. She entered on a visitor's visa and overstayed it.

Though Francisco had been born in Dallas, Sanjuana got him a visitor's visa when she moved back into the U.S. She says she knew it was wrong, but saw it as the only way to legally



Sanjuana Galicia leaned into her son Francisco's shoulder as they talked with each other outside their home.

travel across the border with him because her name isn't on his birth certificate. She feared that would make it impossible for him to get a U.S. passport.

Sanjuana has been attacked by online commenters since the Galicia family's story went viral. She's been called a bad mother and criminal. Francisco says he wishes people would listen.

"People always talk without knowing the whole story," Francisco says. "She's our pillar and I know everything she's gone through and everything she's ever done has been for us because she loves us."

## Stuck in a bubble

The News made repeated requests for interviews with Border Patrol officials but none was granted. The agency made the following statement in response to *The News*'s inquiry about the fear that mixed-status families have of checkpoints:

"When Border Patrol encounters an illegal alien, whether or not at a checkpoint and regardless of that individ-

ual resides in the United States, the individual will be arrested for the immigration violation, processed, and referred to the appropriate agency for final disposition."

An estimated 75,000 U.S. citizen children live in mixed-status families in the Valley, according to a 2018 study commissioned by local immigrants rights nonprofit La Union Del Pueblo Entero, or LUPPE.

Conventional wisdom for mixed-status families is that you can't go too far north or you'll run into the checkpoints in Fallarías or Sarita, and you can't go too far west because you'll hit a checkpoint before you reach Laredo, says Anselmo Suarez, a 28-year-old Mission resident.

There's a string of checkpoints across America at varying distances from Mexico. The Fallarías checkpoint, for example, is more than 70 miles from the border by McAllen. The Sarita checkpoint is about a hundred miles from the border by Brownsville. And the Border Patrol can set up impromptu checkpoints on highways within 100 miles of the

border.

"You know your bounds. We're stuck in this bubble. Eventually you do get used to it," says Suarez, who is a beneficiary of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, the Obama-era program that grants unauthorized immigrants brought to the U.S. as children renewable two-year work permits and reprieve from deportation.

Suarez, whose family moved to Mission from Mexico when he was 13, says that growing up, the only way through the checkpoints for him was on school field trips. Border Patrol agents wouldn't bother to check students' papers.

DACA allows him to travel, both by air and through checkpoints. He can get a Texas ID every two years that he can show at Border Patrol checkpoints, but he still gets nervous driving through. Two of his brothers also have DACA and one was born in the U.S.

But his parents have no legal status.

There's a guilt that comes



Seated in his family's living room, Francisco Galicia, a Dallas-born U.S. citizen who spent three weeks in the custody of U.S. Customs and Border Protection and Immigration and Customs Enforcement, participated in a media interview for a local television station on July 26 in Edinburg.

# Home, but 'missing a piece of myself'

Continued from Page 1A

with traveling freely. Suarez says, because he can have experiences that his parents may never have. He's traveled to Los Angeles and other major Texas cities.

His father has always dreamed of seeing the Grand Canyon, but without status, he's out of the question.

"My parents don't know what's past the checkpoint; they can only imagine. I don't know what's worse: to go to the checkpoint or being able to go and knowing that you can't take family with you," Suarez says.

Brenda Sanchez, a 25-year-old Edinburg Valley resident, knows that guilt all too well.

She says her parents lack legal status, but they never told her that she couldn't participate in school activities that took her past checkpoints to compete against other students in Texas when she was growing up.

Still, family trips had to take into account the fact that her parents simply couldn't travel past the checkpoints.

"I knew the situation, so I wasn't going to ask for something that we couldn't do," Sanchez says. "Everything has to be done here in the Valley. Nothing can be done across the checkpoint."

Now Sanchez also faces the inability to travel with her husband, Luis Segundo, who's lived in the U.S. without authorization since he was 14.

Segundo and Sanchez grew up together. They were high school and college sweethearts and have been married for about two years. They're expecting a baby in December.

Both have college degrees from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, where they processed each other's graduate. Though the couple is in the process of adjusting Segundo's status through a family petition, he's unable to work legally while that process unfolds.

Sanchez has traveled to Chicago, Washington, D.C., and California, places Segundo knows through the phone, since she takes video phone calls when the spoty cellphone reception in the Valley will allow it.

"I feel like there's a rock in the middle of the road that I



As Galicia prepared for his release, other detainees wrote relatives' phone numbers on scraps of paper and asked Galicia to call them. He collected about 15, but so far has only been able to connect with five of the families.

to jump. Once I jump it, I know I'll be able to move faster in life," Segundo says.

In the detention center

That rock in the road was different for both Francisco and Marlon.

After the boys had been in Border Patrol custody for two days, Marlon self-deported, deciding he needed to tell their mother where they'd been and about Francisco's situation — he knew she'd be worried sick. He phoned Sanjuana as soon as he got to his grandmother's house in Reynosa.

But without a proper ID, Sanjuana didn't dare get close to the Fallarías checkpoint, the last place where her oldest son had been seen. For about two weeks, she waited and worried, at a loss about what to do.

"How was I supposed to approach immigration and tell them that they had my son and that I wanted to know how he was? They would take me and deport me too," Sanjuana says. "I would've kept fighting for my son wherever they sent me if that happened, but it was too big a risk to take."

She also had to take care of her youngest son, Cesar, and Sanjuana finally hired attorney Claudia Galán, who went to Border Patrol authorities and presented Francisco's origi-

nal birth certificate and other school and hospital paperwork. But they still didn't release him.

Customs and Border Protection and Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials have said that, "Generally, situations including conflicting reports from the individual and multiple birth certificates can, and should, take more time to verify."

Meanwhile, Francisco and 60 men took turns sleeping on a grimy concrete floor, some in the restroom area, of a Fallarías Border Patrol detention center.

They were fed dry bologna sandwiches for breakfast and junior cheeseburgers for dinner. Francisco says the men were bitten by ticks and some were very sick.

Federal authorities have not responded to questions about conditions at the center.

The powers that be

Father Roy Snipes, the "cowboy priest" as he's known in Mission, says from his rustic office behind the historic Our Lady of Guadalupe chapel that for decades, his parishioners have been wary of immigration.

But lately the fear has been worse. Even some U.S. citizens who long attended La Lomita have stopped going to the small

chapel that sits on the U.S.-Mexico border to avoid the hassle of impromptu Border Patrol checkpoints.

"The talk was much more helligent and hostile. Much more cruel and unforgiving. Much more right and frigid and frenzied," Snipes says.

Sometimes immigrant families are in situations where their kids may need medical treatment in Houston or San Antonio, says Abraham Diaz, who works with the immigrant rights nonprofit LUPPE.

Diaz says immigrants have rights LUPPE and asked for help in getting their children across checkpoints. The group tries to find sponsors who can help, or uses other methods like powers of attorney to temporarily grant custody of a child to someone who can travel beyond the checkpoints. But it doesn't always work.

"You're giving a parent a choice of either risking their lives in the U.S. by trying to cross the checkpoint or risking the life of their child by not crossing. Sometimes these are matters of life and death," Diaz says. "It's a dilemma and some parents don't know what to do."

Diaz says he wishes there would be exceptions to cross checkpoints for unauthorized reasons or if an unaccustomed youth has a college acceptance



letter to a university outside the Valley.

## Back to normal

At night, Francisco says, he thinks about the men he met during his 23 days in Border Patrol custody. Some told him they'd been there longer than a month. They were from all over, he says — Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Colombia, Venezuela.

"They weren't bad people, he says, and were searching for a better life.

On the morning of June 20, Francisco heard his name called. He was told he'd be transferred from the Border Patrol station to ICE custody. The men around him formed a prayer circle.

"We prayed and thanked God that some of us were leaving. I was praying that God would give the people staying strength to be there for the rest of the time they would be held there," Francisco says.

The men who were staying rushed to find whatever scraps of paper they could: torn paper cups and old Whataburger receipts from agents' meals. One of the men had managed to keep a pen after not being searched thoroughly.

They wrote relatives' phone numbers on the scraps and asked Francisco to call them. He collected about 15. He's since been able to connect with five families and two Latin boys. He has every right to be in the U.S. He's his mother's doer."

"I feel like I'm missing a piece of myself. He belongs here with us. I know he's not

alone, but I wish he was here with us," Francisco says. "Apart from being my brother, he's my best friend. We've lived our best experiences together, and now even our worst experience happened to us together."

Francisco's documents, some clothes, a gold necklace and the car in which the boys were riding when detained have not yet been returned.

Sanjuana says the focus now is getting her family back together. But Marlon returning without papers, she says, isn't an option. His chance of playing college soccer is now slim or altogether gone.

"I just want to know if someone can help me with Marlon, but we don't know how to do it or have the means to do it. He was deported. How are we supposed to do it?" Sanjuana says, tears streaming down her face.

When the interview ends, and the reporter leaves, a door near the back of the Galicia home that leads to the bedroom area swings open. It's her youngest son, Cesar, hungry for a snack.

Sanjuana worries ICE will come knocking at their door to take her away from Francisco and Cesar, who is also a U.S. citizen. She has done her best to keep him from the spotlight and hasn't allowed for him to be photographed or interviewed.

As is the case with Francisco, Cesar's future is stuck between two borders and two languages. He has every right to be in the U.S. He's his mother's doer."

"He speaks more English than Spanish," Francisco says. "But we speak to him in Spanish so he doesn't forget."

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**E**DINBURG — Francisco Erwin Galicia settles into the light brown wrap-around couch that takes up a corner of his family’s modest trailer home. A portable fluorescent light shines on his face. “Where were you born?” the TV reporter asks.

“In Dallas,” the 18-year-old U.S. citizen replies in Spanish with a slight chuckle and a grin.

Since July 22, when *The Dallas Morning News* first reported that Galicia was detained for 23 days in a U.S. Border Patrol holding facility, he’s told this story over and over, recounting conditions that he says were so poor he almost agreed to be deported by his own government.

But things have started to slow down. Fewer reporters are coming by for interviews.

As the headlines fade, Galicia, his mother and brothers are left with the reality that, as a mixed-status family, their right to be together is not guaranteed.

Although Galicia is a U.S. citizen, his mother Sanjuana is an unauthorized immigrant and vulnerable to deportation. His younger brother Marlon, who is not a U.S. citizen but had hopes of a soccer scholarship, was deported shortly after the two were detained together on June 27 and now lives in a dangerous Mexican border city.

Like many other mixed-status families in the Rio Grande Valley, the Galicias have always lived knowing that their lives could be disrupted by a Border Patrol checkpoint. One 2017 study estimated that 16.7 million people in the U.S. had at least one unauthorized immigrant family member in the home.

In this small slice of the Valley alone — McAllen, Edinburg and Mission — there are an estimated 85,000 unauthorized immigrants living in mixed-status families.

The Galicias’ story serves as a reminder that if those families want to stay together, they’ll stay here in the Valley, trapped between the checkpoints and the Mexican border.

The rest of the U.S. is closed to them.

## **A mixed-status family**

A small black and white spotted dog named Coco roams this Edinburg colonia made up of dirt lots and trailer homes. He survives off the scraps residents give him.

Coco is especially fond of the Galicia home, where he can often be found under Sanjuana Galicia’s violet-red Chevy Malibu getting a break from the unforgiving sun. He knows she’ll give him chicken bones to gnaw.

But bones were scarce the past month. Sanjuana struggled to find the time for her job of selling Veracruz-style tamales around town. Here she’s known as “la señora de los tamales,” or the tamale lady.

The single mother was instead focused on getting her son Francisco out of Border Patrol custody and making sure that her middle son Marlon, 17, was safe in her hometown of Reynosa, Mexico.

“I couldn’t sleep. I couldn’t eat. I sat here reading the Bible and begging God to help me find out about my son. I didn’t know anything about him for so long,” she says.

Francisco and Marlon, both soon-to-be seniors at Johnny G. Economedes High School, were hoping to secure scholarships to continue their education when they and their three friends set out for Ranger College, west of Fort Worth, for a soccer scouting event.

But when Border Patrol agents pulled the group aside at the Falfurrias checkpoint — almost 60 miles north of Edinburg — Marlon and one of the other passengers were found to have no state-issued ID and were suspected of being in the U.S. without authorization.

Francisco says he told agents he was a citizen and presented his Texas ID, a copy of his wallet-sized birth certificate and a Social Security card, but agents doubted their validity. Then, after he was fingerprinted, agents discovered he had a tourist visa to visit the U.S. That caused agents to further doubt that he was born in North Texas and they detained him.

While in custody, Francisco says, he lost 26 pounds and wasn't allowed to shower. Border Patrol agents taunted him and the other suspected unauthorized immigrants held there, he says, and told them they didn't have rights.

Almost two decades ago, when Sanjuana lived in Dallas, she used a fake ID to work. When she gave birth to Francisco at Parkland Memorial Hospital, staff used the name on the ID rather than her real name.

Yes, Sanjuana says, she had fake papers then, but there's more to the story.

When Sanjuana's contractions started on Christmas Eve 2000, Francisco's birthday, her then-partner drove her to Parkland, opened the passenger door, told her to go inside and drove away.

Sanjuana says the man, whom she declined to identify, was married to another woman and was in the middle of obtaining legal permanent residency.

Sanjuana says he told her not to tell hospital staff that he was the father because it might affect his status adjustment process. Sanjuana didn't say anything because she feared she'd be thrown in jail or worse — that Francisco would be taken away from her.

"I had no one. I was alone. I didn't have family in Dallas, and the person who was supposed to be my support system abandoned me," she says.

Sanjuana moved back to Mexico to be with family when Francisco was about a year old. She left Dallas pregnant with Marlon, who was born in Reynosa. They lived there for about 14 years.

But fights between cartels to control the smuggling routes fueled by Americans' consumption of drugs chased her away. When the boys were about to start high school, she decided to move back to the U.S. She entered on a visitor's visa and overstayed it.

Though Francisco had been born in Dallas, Sanjuana got him a visitor's visa when she moved back into the U.S. She says she knew it was wrong, but saw it as the only way to legally travel across the border with him because her name isn't on his birth certificate. She feared that would make it impossible for him to get a U.S. passport.

Sanjuana has been attacked by online commenters since the Galicia family's story went viral. She's

been called a bad mother and criminal. Francisco says he wishes people would listen.

“People always talk without knowing the whole story,” Francisco says. “She’s our pillar and I know everything she’s gone through and everything she’s ever done has been for us because she loves us.”

## **Stuck in a bubble**

*The News* made repeated requests for interviews with Border Patrol officials but none was granted. The agency made the following statement in response to *The News*’ inquiry about the fear that mixed-status families have of checkpoints:

“When Border Patrol encounters an illegal alien, whether or not at a checkpoint and regardless if that individual resides in the United States, the individual will be arrested for the immigration violation, processed, and referred to the appropriate agency for final disposition.”

An estimated 75,000 U.S. citizen children live in mixed-status families in the Valley, according to a 2018 study commissioned by local immigrants rights nonprofit La Union Del Pueblo Entero, or LUPE.

Conventional wisdom for mixed-status families is that you can’t go too far north or you’ll run into the checkpoints in Falfurrias or Sarita, and you can’t go too far west because you’ll hit a checkpoint before you reach Laredo, says Anselmo Suarez, a 28-year-old Mission resident.

There’s a string of checkpoints across America at varying distances from Mexico. The Falfurrias checkpoint, for example, is more than 70 miles from the border by McAllen. The Sarita checkpoint is about a hundred miles from the border by Brownsville. And the Border Patrol can set up impromptu checkpoints on highways within 100 miles of the border.

“You know your bounds. We’re stuck in this bubble. Eventually you do get used to it,” says Suarez, who is a beneficiary of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, the Obama-era program that grants unauthorized immigrants brought to the U.S. as children renewable two-year work permits and reprieve from deportation.

Suarez, whose family moved to Mission from Mexico when he was 9, says that growing up, the only way through the checkpoints for him was on school field trips. Border Patrol agents wouldn’t bother to check students’ papers.

DACA allows him to travel, both by air and through checkpoints. He can get a Texas ID every two years that he can show at Border Patrol checkpoints, but he still gets nervous driving through. Two of his brothers also have DACA and one was born in the U.S.

But his parents have no legal status.

There’s a guilt that comes with traveling freely, Suarez says, because he can have experiences that his parents may never have. He’s traveled to Los Angeles and other major Texas cities.

His father has always dreamed of seeing the Grand Canyon, but without status, it’s out of the question.

“My parents don’t know what’s past the checkpoint; they can only imagine. I don’t know what’s worse: to know that you can’t go past the checkpoint or being able to go and knowing that you can’t take family with you,” Suarez says.

Brenda Sanchez, a 25-year-old lifelong Valley resident, knows that guilt all too well.

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Still, family trips had to take into account the fact that her parents simply couldn’t travel past the checkpoints.

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Now Sanchez also faces the inability to travel with her husband, Luis Segundo, who’s lived in the U.S. without authorization since he was 14.

Segundo and Sanchez grew up together. They were high school and college sweethearts and have been married for about two years. They’re expecting a baby in December.

Both have college degrees from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, where they pushed each other to graduate.

Though the couple is in the process of adjusting Segundo’s status through a family petition, he’s unable to work legally while that process unfolds.

Sanchez has traveled to Chicago, Washington, D.C., and California, places Segundo knows only through the photos she takes and video phone calls when the spotty cellphone reception in the Valley will allow it.

“I feel like there’s a rock in the middle of the road that I have to jump. Once I jump it, I know I’ll be able to move faster in life,” Segundo says.

## **In the detention center**

That rock in the road was different for both Francisco and Marlon.

After the boys had been in Border Patrol custody for two days, Marlon self-deported, deciding he needed to tell their mother where they’d been and about Francisco’s situation — he knew she’d be worried sick. He phoned Sanjuana as soon as he got to his grandmother’s house in Reynosa.

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to know how he was? They would take me and deport me, too,” Sanjuana says. “I would’ve kept fighting for my son wherever they sent me if that happened, but it was too big a risk to take.”

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Federal authorities have not responded to questions about conditions at the center.

## **The powers that be**

Father Roy Snipes, the “cowboy priest” as he’s known in Mission, says from his rustic office behind the historic Our Lady of Guadalupe chapel that for decades, his parishioners have been wary that they could be picked up by immigration.

But lately the fear has been worse. Even some U.S. citizens who long attended La Lomita have stopped going to the small chapel that sits on the U.S.-Mexico border to avoid the hassle of impromptu Border Patrol checkpoints.

“The talk from the powers that be is much more belligerent and hostile. Much more cruel and unforgiving. Much more rigid and frigid and ferocious,” Snipes says.

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At night, Francisco says, he thinks about the men he met during his 23 days in Border Patrol custody. Some told him they'd been there longer than a month. They were from all over, he says — Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Colombia, Venezuela.

They weren't bad people, he says, and were searching for a better life.

On the morning of June 20, Francisco heard his name called. He was told he'd be transferred from the Border Patrol station to ICE custody. The men around him formed a prayer circle.

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They wrote relatives' phone numbers on the scraps and asked Francisco to call them. He collected about 15. He's since been able to connect with five families.

But Francisco thinks mostly of his brother, Marlon. They talk every day on the phone and text constantly through WhatsApp. This is the longest the two have ever been apart.

"I feel like I'm missing a piece of myself. He belongs here with us. I know he's not alone, but I wish he was here with us," Francisco says. "Apart from being my brother, he's my best friend. We've lived our best experiences together, and now even our worst experience happened to us together."

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# The Dallas Morning News

## *Again? Yes, again*

Pain runs deep in city that's face of Latino, immigrant America

By **Alfredo Corchado**  
Published Aug. 5, 2019

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## TWO SHOOTINGS, 29 DEAD

Dayton: Quick police response prevented greater tragedy

El Paso: Capital murder charges filed, more likely

Caustic political rhetoric blamed for fueling hate

# Again? Yes, again



Samantha Salazar (left) and Sarah Estrada joined hundreds at a vigil in El Paso on Sunday night. The El Paso region is nestled in the spot where three states and two nations meet. Residents across the border in Ciudad Juárez have also held vigils for the victims.

Vernon Bryant/Staff Photographer

Pain runs deep in city that's face of Latino, immigrant America

By ALFREDO CORCHADO  
Border-Mexico Correspondent  
acorchado@dallasnews.com

EL PASO — Those who were shot include a two-year-old, a coach and a 15-year-old shopping for school supplies. Most shared another commonality: They were largely Mexican Americans or Mexicans, people of color — brown — living in a border city that's long been under attack by fiery anti-immigrant rhetoric and now, bullets.

With the death toll from Saturday's massacre at a local Walmart at 20, leaders called not so much for sympathy, but for immediate action. Everything from gun control to more voter participation. In a tight-knit predominately Hispanic community, the grieving is especially heartfelt: The shooting suspect drove about 10 hours from Allen, apparently on a mission to kill immigrants in this city where the population is more than 80% Hispanic.

His manifesto detailed plans to stop a "Hispanic invasion of Texas."

Those words shook Ana Trujillo, 68, who prayed in church Sunday for the victims, the suspect and his family. Prayers aside, Trujillo said, "He could have done this at Neiman Marcus in Dallas. But no, he chose to drive hundreds of miles to hunt down Mexicans like me."

She paused and fought back tears. "I'm sorry. This is very personal," she said.

The shooting broke the calmness of a Saturday morning and a false sense of security that one of the safest cities in the nation has. It was, in fact, a wakeup call for all Latinos across America. The massacre more than doubles the number of murders El Paso has in a typical year.

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**EDITORIAL:** "We Must Stop White Nationalist Terrorism." 13A

**SHARON GRIGSBY:** Finding hope in church after latest massacres. 1B  
**IN PICTURES:** 16 hours, 2 massacres, 29 lives lost. 8A

**DALLAS:** Hispanics cope with massacre fallout. 9A

**SUSPECT:** with address in Allen called 'standoffish.' 9A

### UPDATE Latest developments

**The man accused** of killing 20 people and wounding 26 more Saturday at an El Paso Walmart had no contacts in the city, the FBI says.

**The suspect** is probably the author of a rambling, hate-filled manifesto posted on the 8chan website in

the hours before Saturday morning's shooting, authorities believe, but they are still investigating.

**The 21-year-old** with ties to Collin County was booked Sunday into the El Paso County Jail on a capital murder charge, according to jail records.

**State authorities** said they intend to seek the death penalty, and federal authorities will pursue hate crime and firearms charges against the 2017 Plano Senior High graduate.

**11 of the 20** shooting victims were identified Sunday.

**Most of the wounded** were taken to two El Paso hospitals. At Del Sol Medical Center, eight were listed in stable condition, and three were in critical. Another 13 were treated at University Medical Center. Two children were taken to El Paso Children's Hospital.

### DAYTON SHOOTING

## Gunman killed sister, 8 others

Police respond quickly at second attack in less than 24 hours

FROM WIRE REPORTS

It took just 30 seconds in Ohio and zero bullets in Texas for officers to stop two mass shooters this weekend, but not before 29 people were killed and about 50 injured in less than 24 hours.

Officers gunned down the Ohio shooter at the doorstep of a bar-turned-hiding place in the middle of the Dayton, Ohio, nightclub district, and arrested the El Paso shooter as hundreds fled a crowded shopping center.

Though the two attacks staggered a nation accus-

tomed to gun violence, the bigger shock may have been that the death toll wasn't worse.

The attacks came less than a week after a 19-year-old gunman killed three people and injured 13 others at the popular Gilroy Garlic Festival in California before dying of a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

Hours after a gunman opened fire Saturday morning in an El Paso shopping arena, a gunman wearing body armor and carrying extra magazines opened fire in a Dayton popular nightlife area, killing nine and injuring at least 26 people.

Authorities in Dayton said four women and five men were killed. Of the 27 people



John Minchillo/The Associated Press

**Victims' shoes** were left at the scene of a mass shooting Sunday in Dayton, Ohio. Police said Connor Betts, 24, set out on a street rampage there the night before.

who were injured, 15 have been discharged from the hospital.

Exactly what precipitated the chaos is unknown. "As a mayor, this is a day

that we all dread happening," Dayton Mayor Nan Whaley said in a Sunday morning news conference. "And certainly,

See **MOTIVE** Page 7A

### EL PASO SHOOTING | POLITICS

## Dems denounce Trump, Texas GOP

Republicans rebuke claim their tone creates 'toxic environment'

By GROMER JEFFERS JR.  
Political Writer  
gjeffers@dallasnews.com

The mass shooting in El Paso has ramped up scrutiny of President Donald Trump's caustic rhetoric about immigrants that critics say creates an environment of hate and division.

Hispanic activists and Democrats say Texas Republican leaders should not only push back against Trump's rhetoric, but also look inward at policies they say are anti-Hispanic and feed the storm of resentment, hate and anger.

For more than a decade, Tex-

as lawmakers have produced legislation and policies aimed at undocumented immigrants from Mexico and Central America, including anti-sanctuary cities laws, voter ID legislation, the attempted purging of Hispanic residents from voter rolls, and support for Trump's proposed border wall between the United States and Mexico.

But Republicans say these policies were necessary to keep Texans safe and maintain the integrity of our elections, and there's no connection between them or the rhetoric to the gunman's actions.

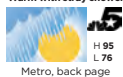
Hispanic activists, while not directly blaming Republicans for the shooting that killed 20

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Warm with stray shower



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METRO

**It's surreal for rescued dog**  
Salvador Dolly is exhausted. Since a Dallas rescue group posted Dolly's picture last week, she's become known online as the "mustache puppy." 1B

SPORTSDAY

**'It's always the guarantee'**  
Stephen Jones said the Cowboys aren't expected to set the market with new contracts. They might not have a choice, Calvin Watkins writes. 1C

LATE SCORES

For results from last night's games, go to [sports.dallasnews.com/scores](http://sports.dallasnews.com/scores).

# FBI: Suspect had no contacts in El Paso

State to seek death penalty; feds eye hate crime, firearm charges

By DANA BRANHAM and CHARLES SCUDDER Staff Writers

The man accused of killing 20 people and wounding 26 more Saturday at an El Paso Walmart had no contacts in the city, according to the FBI.

Patrick Crusius, a 21-year-old with ties to Collin County, was booked Sunday into the El Paso County Jail on a capital murder charge, according to jail records.

State authorities said they intend to seek the death penalty, and federal authorities will pursue hate crime and firearms charges against Crusius.

Jeanette Harper, a spokeswoman with the FBI's El Paso division, said Sunday that Crusius had no contacts in El Paso.

She said investigators were interviewing acquaintances of his to determine if he was working with others to plan attacks, but they had "no credible intelli-

gence" indicating so. FBI agents have served three search warrants in the Dallas area. Officials have not provided details about the evidence collected, and an FBI spokeswoman said the affidavits are sealed.

In a written statement a family friend read publicly Sunday, Crusius' grandparents said he'd moved out six weeks ago. He'd lived there while attending Collin College and also spent a few nights there while they were out of town, they said.

"We are devastated by the events of El Paso and pray for the victims of this tragedy," the statement said.

At a news conference Sunday, El Paso County District Attorney Jaime Esparza said his office will seek the death penalty against Crusius.

"The loss of life is so great. We have certainly never seen this in our community," he said. "We pride ourselves on the fact that we're so safe. Certainly, this community is rocked and shocked and saddened by what has happened here."

John Bash, U.S. attorney for



Mark Lambie/The Associated Press

El Paso Police Chief Greg Allen said Sunday that the shooting suspect had cooperated with police, but he declined to share details of what was said.

the Western District of Texas, said federal authorities were treating the massacre as domestic terrorism and would pursue hate crime and firearms charges.

"We are going to do what we do to terrorists in this country, which is deliver swift and certain justice," he said.

El Paso Police Chief Greg Allen said Crusius had cooperated with police, but he declined to say what Crusius has told them.

"He was forthcoming with information," Allen said. "He basically didn't hold anything back."

Police said Sunday evening

# Dems, GOP debate rhetoric's effects

Continued from Page 1A

people and injured 26 others, say the atmosphere in the era of Trump breeds hate.

"In his manifesto the gunman clearly lays out that he's acting because there's an 'invasion' of Texas," Domingo Garcia, a former Texas lawmaker and national president of the League of United Latin American Citizens said from El Paso. "It's clear that President Trump's inflammatory rhetoric and race-baiting has created a dangerous environment. Combined with Republican leaders in Texas making immigrants and Latin residents political pawns, their policies have created a toxic environment in our political discourse."

The Texas Republican view on immigration issues is in stark contrast with where leaders stood at the dawn of the century, when representatives from both major political parties had what's described as a more compassionate approach to legislation.

A prime example: In 2001, Rick Perry signed into law legislation that allows children brought to the country illegally to pay in-state college tuition. The theory was that all residents deserve a good education, and that such helps the entire state. Only five lawmakers out of 81 voted against the legislation.

"We've gotten away from that recently and started following the rhetoric of Donald Trump," said Mario Carrillo, the Texas director of an advocacy group called America's Voice. "That rhetoric stokes racial resentment and hate."

Carrillo, a Mexican immigrant who grew up in El Paso, said anti-Hispanic legislation in Texas sends the wrong message to residents.

But Republicans say the legislation enacted by well-intended lawmakers has no relationship to a gunman shooting up an El Paso Walmart.

"That nexus is quite tenuous," said former state Rep. Jason Villalba, R-Dallas. "I don't think it's fair to castigate Republicans that have had anti-Hispanic rhetoric as a cause of the shooting. ... There's no connection between those things."

Villalba, who is Hispanic and is considered a centrist Republican, lost a primary race in 2018 in part because of his opposition to Trump.

"I'm not a fan of Trump, and I certainly recognize the demonization of Hispanics that was being carried out," he said.

U.S. Rep. Michael Burgess agreed that issues like a border wall or voting rights have no relevance to mass shootings.

"I don't see how being in favor of border security and a border wall leads to that," he said.

## Texas and immigration

In 2012, Perry, who was running for president, was attacked for his stand that unauthorized immigrants in Texas should be educated in the same way as other Texans by then-presidential candidate Mitt Romney.

That Romney, a moderate Republican, was criticizing a Texas law signaled a major shift in Republican politics.

President George W. Bush had pushed for a comprehensive immigration overhaul that included a path to citizenship for the millions of people in the country without authorization. And Republicans understood the role of immigrant labor to the Texas economy.

But Bush never got an immigration plan through Congress, nor did his successor, President Barack Obama.

Instead, the new Republican mantra involved securing the border before any talk of proposals like guest worker programs. With the emergence of Trump, base Republicans embraced building a wall along the southern border with Mexico, even as some of them knew the

plan was not feasible. In Texas, Trump's call for a border wall was followed by a controversial sanctuary cities law passed in 2017 that allowed local law enforcement officials to stop residents and inquire about their citizenship status, Democrats called it the "papers, please" law.

The law was so controversial that on the last day of the legislative session, former Republican state Rep. Matt Rinaldi of Irving told Democrats he called U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement on a crowd of mostly Hispanic protesters in the House gallery. That sparked an ugly exchange and threats of violence from Rinaldi and Democrat Poncho Nevarez of Eagle Pass.

Democrats have also decried the state's voter ID law and a botched attempt by former secretary of state David Whitely to challenge the citizenship of thousands of Texas voters. Initially hailed by some Republicans, Whitely's effort proved a farce and led to his resignation.

To make matters even more tense, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott has said he would sign a bill that repeals the law allowing unauthorized immigrants to pay in-state tuition.

"For too long, politicians have been stoking the flames of hate with anti-Latino rhetoric and policies," said state Rep. Rafael Anchia of Dallas, chairman of the Mexican American Legislative Caucus. "Trump did it at the very outset of his campaign and is making it the centerpiece of his reelection. Gov. Abbott has done it throughout his career as AG and governor."

Through a spokesman, Abbott declined to address Anchia's comment. On Saturday in El Paso, he said it was too soon after the tragedy to talk politics.

Numerous Texas Republicans contacted by *The Dallas Morning News* echoed Abbott and would not comment on charges that their policies are anti-Hispanic, saying there will be time for politics later.

Arlington Rep. and House Democratic Caucus chairman Chris Turner agreed that the sanctuary cities law and other legislation was "horrible policy" and "manufactured fear about immigration."

"It's a cumulative effect of all this stuff," Turner said of the political environment. "This constant demonization of people seems to be a common thread and must stop."

## Gun control legislation

Democrats are also demanding that Republicans return to Washington and pass gun control legislation.

That's unlikely to happen. Burgess, the Pilot Point Republican, said enforcing existing laws could help identify potential shooters. The lawmaker added that less than 1% of people who lie on background checks are prosecuted.

U.S. Rep. Will Hurd said he was one of a handful of Republicans to vote for recent legislation to expand background checks for gun purchases.

"It's pretty straightforward and simple," he said of the goal to prevent guns from getting into the "hands of people who shouldn't have them."

On Twitter, Sen. John Cornyn said progress to curb mass shootings has occurred, but more action was needed.

"We have made progress by improving the broken background check system, improving access to mental health treatment, by hardening soft targets like our schools, by enhanced training for law enforcement and mental health professionals," he said. "But we need to keep trying. Focusing on law abiding citizens exercising their constitutional rights solves nothing. We need to treat these crimes as problems to be solved, rather than one to be exploited for partisan political gain."

Twitter: @jrcornineffers



Andres Leighton/The Associated Press

El Pasoans have seen their utopian dream of social harmony explode as the city has become the focal point of U.S. political struggles over immigration and race, said Howard Campbell of the University of Texas at El Paso.

# 'We won't be silenced'

Continued from Page 1A

"El Pasoans like to think of their town as a unique bastion of social harmony and low crime," said Howard Campbell, a border expert and anthropologist at the University of Texas at El Paso. "But that utopian dream has been exploded as El Paso has become the focal point of U.S. political struggles over immigration and race. The U.S.-Mexico border is now an epicenter for the key issues of the U.S. presidential election and the question of whether the country succumbs to xenophobia and hate or progresses with unity and global cooperation."

The El Paso region is nestled in the spot where three states and two nations meet. "One heartbeat," says a popular T-shirt. People here see their binational, bicultural daily existence as an important asset. A strength, not a burden or weakness.

Police Chief Greg Allen said Sunday that shooting suspect Patrick Crusius, 21, is the man behind the hate-filled anti-immigrant manifesto posted just minutes before the massacre.

The manifesto warned white Americans that foreigners are replacing them. Most of the people interviewed Sunday — leaders and locals — blame political rhetoric, particularly President Donald Trump, for fueling the fires of anti-immigrant and anti-Hispanic racial discontent. They say they're using them as political props.

"We cannot ignore this any more, the combination of two evils, guns and anti-immigrant rhetoric," said Fernando Garcia, executive director of the Border

Network for Human Rights, an immigrant rights organization. He said the president's rhetoric is placing a "choke hold" on migrants from the Americas and Mexican Americans on the border.

The otherwise peaceful community of El Paso, he said, is being targeted simply for fighting against anti-immigrant measures with generosity.

"This was an attack against the symbol of resistance in this community," he said. "We won't stop," he vowed. "We won't be silenced."

State Rep. Cesar Blanco, whose district includes the Walmart where the shootings happened, had a message for the victims in Dayton, Ohio, where another massacre was reported hours after the one in El Paso.

"Be strong Ohio," he said, during a news conference in which he highlighted the work of first responders and locals during blood drives, as well as other acts of kindness like handing out food and bottled water to strangers. "In the face of the world, El Paso responded with the best."

Still, Saturday's tragedy, locals said, is a result of being in the troubling national spotlight that's drawn harsh rhetoric about bad bombs on the border, plans to build walls — even private one — armed militias, all playing out amid the crush of thousands of Central American families arriving each month to seek asylum.

"That city is I see on the news is nothing from what I know and love," said Ana Pajunmaná, 60. "We're a generous, giving, tolerant city. We somehow coexist

and get along," she said, referring to the proximity of Ciudad Juárez, the sprawling city across the Rio Grande in Mexico, where many El Pasoans have friends and relatives.

Francisco Barrios, 43, on Sunday drove from Chihuahua City in Mexico for his monthly shopping spree, which usually includes a stop at Walmart. He was still in disbelief.

"I thought this kind of tragedy only happened in Mexico," he said. "El Paso is our best example of what we can be."

Barrios, who shares the same name as a popular politician in Mexico's north who led a mass political movement in the late 1980s, said it's ironic that the sense of safety in El Paso has been shattered not by migrants from Mexico or Latin America, but by a white man from Dallas.

"On this day, we're all El Pasoans," he said. "Mexicans, Mexican Americans. We're all one."

Asked if he would return to El Paso to shop, he hesitated. "Truth is I don't really know anymore."

As many as six of the massacre victims are from Mexico, according to Marcelo Ebrard, Mexico's foreign minister.

"This will mark the first time that Mexico condemns an act of this kind as terrorism," Ebrard said in a recorded message on his Twitter feed. He threatened to use legal action to protect Mexican and Mexican American communities in the United States.

"Mexico declares its profound rejection and complete condemnation of this barbaric act, in which innocent Mexican men and women lost their lives,"

he said. On Saturday night, throngs of Juárez residents held a candlelight vigil. Many raised their cell phones, pointing them toward El Paso in solidarity with residents across the border. One held a sign that read: "No More Guns. Give Love."

One of the vigil's leaders, Jorge Contreras, called on Trump to stop hate and show respect toward immigrants from Latin America.

El Paso County Sheriff Richard Wiles, in a lengthy statement posted on Facebook overnight Saturday, called the shootings "beyond comprehension" and worried that things may only get worse.

"This Anglo man came here to kill Hispanics. ... This entire nation should be outraged. In this day and age we are still confronted with people who will kill another for the sole reason of the color of their skin."

"Not pointing out anyone in particular, but I'm sick of people jumping in front of the cameras offering prayers and condolences as things just keep getting worse. ... It's time to rise up and hold our representatives accountable at all levels. I want representatives who will stand up against racism."

Martha Alarcon, 67, has relatives on both sides of the border. Regardless of who, or what, is to blame, she said, "El Paso is a wounded city that needs a lot of healing. Enough with the hate. Yes, we're Mexicans, Mexican Americans, but we're also human beings."

Staff writer Cassandra Jaramillo contributed to this report.

Twitter: @alcorchado

**E**L PASO — Those who were shot include a 2-year-old, a coach and a 15-year-old shopping for school supplies. Most shared another commonality: They were largely Mexican Americans or Mexicans, people of color — brown — living in a border city that’s long been under attack by fiery anti-immigrant rhetoric and now, bullets.

With the death toll from Saturday’s massacre at a local Walmart at 20, leaders called not so much for sympathy, but for immediate action. Everything from gun control to more voter participation. In a tight-knit predominately Hispanic community, the grieving is especially heartfelt: The shooting suspect drove about 10 hours from Allen, apparently on a mission to kill immigrants in this city where the population is more than 80% Hispanic.

His manifesto detailed plans to stop a “Hispanic invasion of Texas.”

Those words shook Ana Trujillo, 68, who prayed in church Sunday for the victims, the suspect and his family. Prayers aside, Trujillo said, “He could have done this at Neiman Marcus in Dallas. But no, he chose to drive hundreds of miles to hunt down Mexicans like me.”

She paused and fought back tears. “I’m sorry. This is very personal,” she said.

The shooting broke the calmness of a Saturday morning and a false sense of security that one of the safest cities in the nation has. It was, in fact, a wakeup call for all Latinos across America. The massacre more than doubles the number of murders El Paso has in a typical year.

“El Pasoans like to think of their town as a unique bastion of social harmony and low crime,” said Howard Campbell, a border expert and anthropologist at the University of Texas at El Paso. “But that utopian dream has been exploded as El Paso has become the focal point of U.S. political struggles over immigration and race. The U.S.-Mexico border is now an epicenter for the key issues of the U.S. presidential election and the question of whether the country succumbs to xenophobia and hate or progresses with unity and global cooperation.”

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“We cannot ignore this anymore, the combination of two evils, guns and anti-immigrant rhetoric,” said Fernando Garcia, executive director of the Border Network for Human Rights, an immigrant rights organization. He said the president’s rhetoric is placing a “choke hold” on migrants from the Americas and Mexican Americans on the border.

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*Staff writer Cassandra Jaramillo contributed to this report.*

# The Dallas Morning News

## *Scales of video justice divide*

Judges, lawyers say practice adds to problems straining backlogged courts,  
but officials defend system

By **Dianne Solís**  
Published Sept. 29, 2019

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**COLLEGE FOOTBALL IN SPORTSDAY2, 1-6CC**

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**POLITICS**

## Cracks inside Texas' firewall?

As some suburbs shift left, Trump hopes GOP strongholds stay red

By **TODD J. GILLMAN**  
Washington Bureau  
tgillman@dallasnews.com

**CONROE** — It's a steamy Friday night and, this being Texas, that means high school football — the glaring lights, the hand and cheerleaders pumping up the crowd.

Parents in the stands aren't talking politics. But if you can get them to take their eyes off

the game, it doesn't take long to figure out this is Trump country.

"Trump 2020!" declared Alicia Elliott, 40, who owns an electrical business with her husband. "If he wasn't doing a good job, that would be one thing."

Republicans can't win the White House without carrying Texas. And the firewall within the firewall state runs through places like Montgomery County, just north of Houston. For

See **GOP** Page 12A



Todd J. Gillman/Staff

**When a neighbor planted** Beto O'Rourke yard signs last year in Conroe, the Elliotts responded with their preferences.

**TOP WATCHDOG** jobs go unfilled at several federal agencies. **12A**

**UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS**

## Hazing, hamsters, alcohol fueled party

Before student's fatal crash, Texas Cowboys threw a raucous retreat

By **REBEKAH ALLEN**  
Austin Bureau  
rebekah.allen@dallasnews.com

**AUSTIN** — After a raucous night of chugging beers, grilling burgers and playing football, a few dozen members of the Texas Cowboys — one of the University of Texas' oldest and most elite student organizations — gathered at a barn on a private ranch in Brown County last September.

"Do it! Do it!" they yelled, forming a circle around a student who was gripping the body of a live hamster. Then, the man at the center



**NICKY CUMBERLAND**

bit off the animal's head and spit it into a bucket. This wasn't the first time the Cowboys barbarically killed a hamster in that manner. In fact, it's become something of a recent tradition at the annual retreat for the group, whose illustrious alumni include governors, U.S. senators, judges and prominent businessmen.

Last year's retreat ended in tragedy, Nicky Cumberland, a 20-year-old student from

See **UT** Page 19A

**AMBER GUYGER TRIAL**

Tense situation can affect officer's senses, Ranger testifies



Tom Fox/Staff Photographer

**Fired Dallas police Officer Amber Guyger** listens to her attorney Saturday as her murder trial continued. Jurors heard from Texas Ranger David Armstrong, the lead investigator on the case, but Judge Tammy Kemp deemed defense testimony inadmissible.

## Jury hears of effects of stress

By **JENNIFER EMILY, DANA BRANNAN and LAVENDRICK SMITH**  
Staff Writers

Jurors heard only about five minutes of testimony Saturday morning before court ended for the day in the murder trial of Amber Guyger, the fired Dallas officer who fatally shot a man in his home last year.

Guyger, 31, killed her upstairs neighbor Botham Jean the night of Sept. 6, 2015, in his apartment near downtown Dallas. When she took the stand Friday, she told jurors

through tears how she mistook the 26-year-old accountant's apartment for her own and believed Jean to be a burglar.

"I was scared whoever was inside of my apartment was going to kill me," Guyger said Friday, her voice shaking and lip quivering. "I have to live with that every single day."

Before she opened fire, Guyger testified, she shouted, "Let me see your hands!" twice as Jean walked quickly toward her yelling "Hey!" She shot Jean once in the chest — and then realized what she'd done.

Texas Ranger David Armstrong briefly took the stand Saturday, telling jurors how stress can affect the senses of someone "confronted with a quickly evolving, tense, dynamic confrontation with a suspect," as one of Guyger's attorneys, Robert Rogers, put it.

"Some of the physical sensations ... would be auditory exclusion, which basically means that you may not hear at the normal volume that you normally would because you're under stress," he said.

Armstrong, who served as lead

investigator on the case, also noted that a person might experience tunnel vision, short-term memory loss and an elevated heart rate in such a situation.

Under questioning by prosecutor Jason Hermus, the Ranger also testified that Jean's white shorts had no pockets. This was likely done to show the jury that Jean's hands would have been visible to the Guyger and not hidden.

Armstrong was the only witness

See **STRESS** Page 18A

**IMMIGRATION**

## Scales of video justice divide

Judges, lawyers say practice adds to problems straining backlogged courts, but officials defend system

By **DIANNE SOLIS**  
Staff Writer  
dsolis@dallasnews.com

In Fort Worth, a judge in a black robe sits in a small courtroom with nowhere for the public to watch the proceedings.

Thirty miles to the east in a Dallas courtroom, a government attorney sits before a judge's empty bench.

At a federal lockup hundreds of miles away in Big Spring, detainees in prison garb line up in front of a camera.

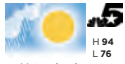
In all three places, their images are beamed back and forth to one another so that asylum seekers and other immigrants can learn their fate on big flat-screen TVs. This is immigration court, where some attorneys and judges say a rapid expansion in the use of video conferencing — including in numerous new tent courtrooms along the border — is exacerbating difficult conditions in a system plagued by a backlog of more than 1 million cases.

Distant, garbled voices and dropped video signals are just some of the aggravations for those in immigration courts. Attorneys for immigrants say they are inefficient. Judges cope with crushing caseloads. There's little electronic filing. Many judges are former government attorneys, and the judges are not independent of their Justice Department bosses, unlike in U.S. civil and

INSIDE: Expansion of fast deportations blocked. **4A**

See **CONFUSION** Page 20A

**Breezy, maybe stray storm**



Metro, back page



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**LATE SCORES**  
For results from last night's games, go to [sportsdaydfw.com/scores](http://sportsdaydfw.com/scores).

**NATION**

**Texans seek lift at home**  
The Texas candidates for president sought to energize their campaigns before home-state crowds Saturday. **9A**

**METRO**

**Council on gun issue**  
Some Dallas council members say it's time to start the conversation on gun violence. **1B**

**SPORTSDAY**

**The Prescott connection**  
How Dak Prescott connects with his wide receivers is a matter of trust. And he has the best chemistry with Amari Cooper, the Cowboys Insider says. **1C**

**High school football results**

Complete Week 5 high school football results: **1B-21C**

**BUSINESS**

**Scans spur privacy fears**  
The kind of face-scanning technology seen in science fiction films is in use at DFW and other airports across the country. **1D**

**OPINION**

**Victory is not assured**  
Democracy is under siege as authoritarianism grows again around the world. **1P**

**ARTS & LIFE**

**Provoking mind, emotions**  
The cutting-edge international sculptures in "Elmgreen & Dragset: Sculptures" at the Nasher have a Nordic taciturnity — saying little, while thinking a lot. **1E**

**Otherworldly beauty**

Take a spin through northern Arizona, the land of canyons. **Travel, 13E**



Photos by The Associated Press

A courtroom in a tent for immigrants applying for asylum is seen at the migration protection protocols immigration hearing facility in Laredo. The tent courtroom along the border are among those using video conferencing, which some attorneys and judges say is exacerbating difficult conditions in a system plagued by a backlog of more than 1 million cases.

# Confusion, backlogs hamper courts

Continued from Page 1A

criminal courts. And sharp increases in the number of people detained after crossing into the U.S. along with the way President Donald Trump's immigration crackdown leads to constant policy changes, have added to the stress: The immigration court backlog has nearly doubled in the Trump years.

Attorneys worry that due process — that linchpin of justice — will suffer for both detained immigrants and those free but fighting deportation. "It's way messier than I have ever seen it," said Dan Gividen, an immigration attorney who said May had been deputy chief counsel in Dallas for Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE.

"It is a different planet now," said Kelli Stump, an immigration attorney who has practiced in Dallas courts for 15 years.

Paul Hunker, ICE's chief counsel for the Dallas region, defends the system, including the use of video hearings, which federal immigration law allows.

"It's fundamental to immigration due process that persons in removal proceedings can understand the charges against them, be heard and defend themselves," Hunker said in a statement. "Immigration hearings conducted by video teleconference fully accommodate these requirements."

"We visited the immigration courts in Dallas in recent weeks to take a look at the current state of affairs, and here is what we found."

## Crushing caseloads

On the 10th floor of the Earle Cabell Federal Building, a line weaves down the hallway. There aren't enough wooden benches to seat all those who come to Judge Richard Ozmam's immigration court.

Inside Courtroom 3 in this area are many small immigrant children. Ozmam towers over them, rubbing his temples near his white hair. There, he rubs his eyes. Too.

"I am going to be continuing cases for several years, the judge says in an attorney.

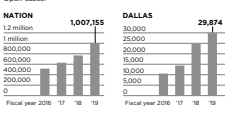
Judge Ozmam finds himself uttering almost the same re-



Immigrants applying for asylum wait in a holding area at a tent courtroom in Laredo. Distant, garbled voices and dropped video signals are just some of the aggravations for whose cases are heard in immigration courts.

## The backlog blows up

The nation's immigration courts face an unprecedented backlog of more than a million cases — and it's nearly doubled during the Trump presidency. In Dallas, the backlog has nearly tripled.



Source: Department of Homeland Security. Data from the Department of Homeland Security. Numbers current through Aug. 2019.

## Crushing caseloads

Some of these cases are years out. "We are so overloaded with cases," he said. "In the last year of President Barack Obama's administration, the backlog in the immigration courts was 536,000 cases. Now it is more than a million."

The Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, a Syracuse University nonprofit, says cases for immigrants wait an average of two years, but some judges are scheduling cases to be heard six years out.

to the backlog too, they said. Because of Justice Department orders, the cases of some more recent immigrant arrivals take precedence over the cases of immigrants who have been waiting longer.

"We've seen this constant shuffling of the docket and forth continuing," Abby Tabakder, an immigration judge speaking at president of the National Association of Immigration Judges, said at a Friday news conference in Washington, D.C. "We've seen interference with every element of the judge's role. And we've seen the court essentially

The number of immigrants apprehended at the border — there were 550,000 in 2016 and about 800,000 this far this year — has overwhelmed an already overstuffed system. Trump's Justice Department has attempted to remedy things by, for example, decreasing a year ago that judges must complete 700 cases each year to earn a satisfactory performance rating.

Union leaders for the judges say they should control their dockets in the interests of due process, not quotas or goals. Changing case priorities add

appreciated — and her deportation case needs to be terminated. ICE attorney Eric Bales agrees to let the judge hearing happen right away. The judge teases that he's being kind. "That's because I didn't have to carry 800 pounds of files today," Bales jokes.

Files of the folders are not unusual in immigration courts. That's because, despite years of planning, the courts still don't have an electronic filing system here as they do in the criminal courts.

All parties quickly agreed that Daffne Canales has passed requirements to get her visa and get going on her new life in the U.S. "Thank you, thank you. This is the best news all day," Doorn says.

Outside, the jean-clad teenager beams. Friends take turns hugging her. "You don't have to come back again," Doorn says. She also says such smooth proceedings are rare.

## Court date confusion

The way things have gone for Lam, a 29-year-old asylum seeker from Mexico, is

rare too. But not nearly as rare as it used to be. The woman, who asked to be identified by her first name only because of security concerns, crossed the border in Nogales, Ariz., before making her way to relatives in the Dallas area.

"There's so much insecurity where I live," she said. The mother of two says she fled because of the constant threat of violence from cartel gangs. There are even headlines in the central Mexican region where she lived. "I want a better future for my children. I don't want to live in fear."

But navigating the system can be mind-boggling. The Department of Homeland Security sent her two notices to appear at different places at the same time on the same day. One was for her first official hearing in the civil immigration court. She feared she would be ordered deported in absentia if she missed it.

When she arrived at court, she was told she wasn't on the docket.

Laura then rushed to the other Dallas location she had been told to go to by the second DHS document. It was a location where government contractors place ankle monitors on immigrants as an alternative to detaining them. But once there, she says, she was told to go to a third location: 5815 Stoneman Freeway, an ICE office.

Once there, she was told to report back in May 2020. "Lawyers and immigrants have complained for at least a year about being given fake or dummy court appearance dates issued by the government. The Dallas Morning News first reported on the nationwide problem in September 2018."

"Asian American activists are planning to protest in San Francisco, Sacramento and Boston next week. They argue that many of those facing deportation are criminal-justice veterans and in some cases decades ago, when they were troubled young refugees struggling to adjust to a new country after their families fled Cambodia's brutal Khmer Rouge regime.

"Many of these people have served their time and rebuilt their lives," said Kevin Lam, an organizer with the Asian American Resource Workshop.

See HEARINGS Page 21A

# Hearings by video often hit key snags

Continued from Page 20A

"The incessant backlogs and loss of public faith in the court are insurmountable obstacles without the correction of the fundamental design flaw of having a court in a law enforcement agency," said Tabakder, the union president and immigration judge.

The American Bar Association supports the idea of an independent immigration court judiciary.

Within the courts, attorneys also complain that too many former prosecutors become immigration judges. A year ago, the Justice Department opened 15 immigration courts in a granite federal building in Fort Worth where judges exclusively hear cases by video. The immigrants and attorneys they talk to are scattered across the nation.

The public generally can't enter those courts, but can watch proceedings by video from venues like the Dallas courthouses.

On one recent day, Fort Worth immigration Judge Joseph T. Leonard told Jose Felipe Martinez, a video conference, that he is prepared to rehearse himself in the detainee's immigration case. Only a year ago, Leonard worked as a federal prosecutor in McAllen, and that very Justice Department office had handled the case that sent Martinez behind bars on drug charges.

Leonard says he didn't think he was identifying himself, but if Martinez wants him to step away from his deportation proceedings, the judge is willing, Martinez says so. He's soon ordered removed to Mexico after serving his time on the criminal charges.

"Then Leonard faces delays in an case as he sits in his Fort Worth court, waiting to hear from ICE attorney Bales via video in Dallas Courtroom 2, because Bales has recently changed jobs and court documents have not yet been filed. At times, the audio or video can falter, hurting the effectiveness of the defense.

In Courtroom 6 in Dallas, Judge Detrich Sims hears the case of a 21-year-old Guatemalan. At his side is a big batch of legal files in blue folders that nearly reach up to his shoulders.

Only a few months earlier, Bales was Judge Bales, with his own immi-



Lynda M. Gonzalez/Staff Photographer

Immigration lawyer Dan Gividen speaks to Maria Munoz (left) and family members in the lobby of the Earle Cabell Federal Building in Dallas. Gividen, the former chief counsel for the Dallas office of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, now practices immigration law for private clients.

## gration court.

### The fight over video

Justice by video has been around since at least 1996. But its use has widened rapidly in recent years. Attorneys are fighting the video hearings, but federal courts have said that such hearings are "consistent with legal due process," said Hunker, the regional ICE chief counsel.

But video hearings give an unfair advantage to the government, said Gividen, the ex-government attorney. "You can just make a better impression in person," he says.

Many immigration attorneys agree with him. Video conferences hamper direct contact between immigrants and their attorneys or make it difficult to examine key documents. At times, the audio or video can falter, hurting the effectiveness of the defense.

Sims says no. If the video or audio fails, he'll just stop proceeding until things are fixed. As for not being able to see the client's body language, he says he can see it just fine.

But the fact that the law allows video conferencing does not mean

that it is appropriate for every case, said Andrea Simon of Brooklyn Defender Services. Her organization is challenging its use in a federal court in New York.

"Judges are empowered and can make sure that the court hearing is fair," she said.

In Sims' courtroom, the Guatemalan and his attorney attempt to prove his worth of asylum because he says he was tortured.

The government attorney says he has two photos that show the man suffered injuries. But Franco notes the photos are only of a high and a knee, and there's much more.

The Guatemalan man soon attempts to show his scars by unbuttoning his orange jumpsuit, but Sims tells him not to remove his clothes.

Through an interpreter who can speak his native K'iche' language, the man then describes his beatings by a gang known in his community simply

as "the torturers." He lists at least nine areas of his body that he says were cut by gang members.

It's a three-hour hearing. At times, the Guatemalan puts his head down, but through the video screen, it's unclear if he is upset, or crying.

The judge says he won't make a ruling immediately.

"If we lose, we will appeal," Franco says in the lobby.

Amnina Khan, executive vice president of the judges union, says many judges understand why the government is using more video courts to deal with the backlog crisis.

"That judge you hear that justice delayed is justice denied applies," Khan said.

She is scheduling cases into 2024.

Twitter: @dca10

# Groups fight deportations of Cambodian refugees

Removal orders for criminal convictions sent to Texas, California, Massachusetts

By PHILIP MARCELLO The Associated Press

LOWELL, Mass. — Asian American groups are objecting to the Trump administration's efforts to step up deportations of Cambodians, as dozens of refugees with criminal convictions are being ordered to report to federal officials this week for removal.

At least 20 people in California have been served notices to report to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement to begin the deportation process, according to N Youm, a San Francisco-based community advocate with the Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Asian Law Caucus. The state is home to the largest population of Cambodians in the U.S.

In Massachusetts, the state with the nation's second-largest Cambodian community, at least 20 residents have received them, said Bethany Li, director of Greater Boston Legal Services Asian Outreach Unit.

Cambodians in Minnesota, Texas, Rhode Island, Washington and Wisconsin have also received orders, said Elaine Sanchez Wilson, spokeswoman for the Southeast Asian American Action Center in Washington, D.C.

Asian American activists are planning to protest in San Francisco, Sacramento and Boston next week. They argue that many of those facing deportation are criminal-justice veterans and in some cases decades ago, when they were troubled young refugees struggling to adjust to a new country after their families fled Cambodia's brutal Khmer Rouge regime.

"Many of these people have served their time and rebuilt their lives," said Kevin Lam, an organizer with the Asian American Resource Workshop.

Mass., for an old criminal conviction. There has been a 280% increase in removals since 2017.

which is helping organize Monday's protest in Boston. "They have families, careers and contribute to their communities."

## Increase in cases

The deportations have been happening since about 2012, when Cambodia agreed to begin repatriating refugees convicted of felony crimes in the U.S. But they've risen sharply since President Donald Trump took office and imposed visa sanctions on Cambodia and a handful of other nations in order to compel them to speed up

the process. The result has been a roughly 280% increase from 29 removals in federal fiscal year 2017 to 181 in 2018, according to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement data.

Through the current fiscal year, which ends Monday, 80 Cambodians have been removed, the agency said this week. There are nearly 1,800 Cambodians with final removal orders living in the country. The majority have criminal convictions but aren't supervised release and not in detention, ICE said.

ICE fully respects the constitu-

Cambodians, and at least two Cambodians recently returned to the U.S. after successfully challenging the criminal convictions that had prompted their removal.

A nationwide class action lawsuit challenging immigration raids on the Cambodian community is also pending in a California federal court.

Noun says sending refugees back to Cambodia now only sets them up for failure. Many have little connection to the country, let alone the language and other skills needed to navigate the unfamiliar environment.

Last year, 27-year-old Sophorn San, who had lived most of his life in Rhode Island after he family fled Cambodia in the 1980s, was deported after pleading guilty to a gun charge as a teen. He was struck and killed by a truck in the Cambodian capital city, Phnom Penh, a few months later.

"Just insane" In Lowell, an old mill city in Massachusetts where about 10% of residents are of Cambodian descent, a 40-year-old refugee from Cambodia said he's lived almost half his life with a removal order hanging over him.

The man, who requested anonymity because he's trying to resolve his immigration status, said he was 4, got involved in a street gang as a youth and received felony convictions. "That being said, ICE remains committed to performing its immigration enforcement mission consistent with federal law and agency policy."

Asian American organizations say they're focused on finding ways to get criminal convictions reduced or dropped so that Cambodians refugees can avoid deportation.

Democratic governors in California and Washington state have recently granted pardons to a handful of



Elise Amendola/The Associated Press

A man of Cambodian descent who has lived in the U.S. since childhood faces possible deportation from Lowell, Mass., for an old criminal conviction. There has been a 280% increase in removals since 2017.

tional rights of all people to peacefully express their opinions," the agency said in response to the planned demonstrations. "That being said, ICE remains committed to performing its immigration enforcement mission consistent with federal law and agency policy."

"I consider myself an American," he said. "I have kids that are American, and a wife that is an American citizen. But just because of the past, they can pick you up and deport you to any country. That's just injustice to me."



**I**n Fort Worth, a judge in a black robe sits in a small courtroom with nowhere for the public to watch the proceedings.

Thirty miles to the east in a Dallas courtroom, a government attorney sits before a judge's empty bench.

At a federal lockup hundreds of miles away in Big Spring, detainees in prison garb line up in front of a camera.

In all three places, their images are beamed back and forth to one another so that asylum seekers and other immigrants can learn their fate on big flat-screen TVs. This is immigration court, where some attorneys and judges say a rapid expansion in the use of video conferencing — including in numerous new tent courtrooms along the border — is exacerbating difficult conditions in a system plagued by a backlog of more than 1 million cases.

Distant, garbled voices and dropped video signals are just some of the aggravations for those in immigration courts. Attorneys for immigrants say they are inefficient. Judges cope with crushing caseloads. There's little electronic filing. Many judges are former government attorneys, and the judges are not independent of their Justice Department bosses, unlike in U.S. civil and criminal courts.

And sharp increases in the number of people detained after crossing into the U.S., along with the way President Donald Trump's immigration crackdown leads to constant policy changes, have added to the stress: The immigration court backlog has nearly doubled in the Trump years.

Attorneys worry that due process — that linchpin of justice — will suffer for both detained immigrants and those free but fighting deportation.

"It's way messier than I have ever seen it," said Dan Gividen, an immigration attorney who until May had been deputy chief counsel in Dallas for Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE.

"It is a different planet now," said Kelli Stump, an immigration attorney who has practiced in Dallas courts for 13 years.

Paul Hunker, ICE's chief counsel for the Dallas region, defends the system, including the use of video hearings, which federal immigration law allows.

"It is fundamental to immigration due process that persons in removal proceedings can understand the charges against them, be heard and defend themselves," Hunker said in a statement. "Immigration hearings conducted by video teleconference fully accommodate these requirements."

We visited the immigration courts in Dallas in recent weeks to take a look at the current state of affairs, and here is what we found.

## **Crushing caseloads**

On the 10th floor of the Earle Cabell Federal Building, a line weaves down the hallway. There aren't enough wooden benches to seat all those who've come to Judge Richard Ozmun's immigration court.

Inside Courtroom 3 on this day are many small immigrant children. Ozmun towers over them, ru

bing his temples near his thick white hair. Then, he rubs his eyes, too.

“I am going to be continuing cases for several years,” the judge says to an attorney.

Judge Ozmun finds himself uttering almost the same refrain day after day:

“Some of these cases are years out.”

“We are so overloaded with cases.”

In the last year of President Barack Obama’s administration, the backlog in the immigration courts was 516,000 cases. Now it is more than a million.

The Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, a Syracuse University nonprofit, says cases for immigrants wait an average of two years, but some judges are scheduling cases to be heard six years out.

The number of immigrants apprehended at the border — there were 550,000 in 2016 and about 810,000 thus far this year — has overwhelmed an already overtaxed system. Trump’s Justice Department has attempted to remedy things by, for example, decreeing a year ago that judges must complete 700 cases each year to earn a satisfactory performance rating.

Union leaders for the judges say they should control their dockets in the interest of due process, not quotas or goals. Changing case priorities add to the backlog too, they said. Because of Justice Department orders, the cases of some more recent immigrant arrivals take precedence over the cases of immigrants who have been waiting longer.

“We’ve seen this constant shuffling of the docket back and forth continuing,” Ashley Tabaddor, an immigration judge speaking as president of the National Association of Immigration Judges, said at a Friday news conference in Washington, D.C. “We’ve seen interference with every element of the judge’s role. And we’ve seen the court essentially turned into a widget factory where everyone and every part is being treated as if they’re some sort of property being wiggled around.”

In Dallas, on another court day, Ozmun is plowing through a day’s docket of 60 cases again.

He’s preparing to call a break. But attorney Amanda Doom stands up and asks if she might squeeze in her case. It’s for a 16-year-old Honduran girl who was approved for a special visa for juveniles who have been abused, abandoned or neglected. A critical portion of the process has already been approved — and her deportation case needs to be terminated.

ICE attorney Eric Bales agrees to let the girl’s hearing happen right away. The judge teases that he’s being kind. “That’s because I didn’t have to carry 800 pounds of files today,” Bales jokes.

Piles of file folders are not unusual in immigration courts. That’s because, despite years of planning, the courts still don’t have an electronic filing system here as they do in the criminal courts.

All parties quickly agree that Daffne Canales has passed requirements to get her visa and get going on her new life in the U.S. “Thank you, thank you. This is the best news all day,” Doom says.

Outside, the jean-clad teenager beams. Friends take turns hugging her. “You don’t have to come back

again,” Doom says.

She also says such smooth proceedings are rare.

## **Court date confusion**

The way things have gone for Laura, a 29-year-old asylum seeker from Mexico, is rare, too. But not nearly as rare as it used to be.

The woman, who asked to be identified by her first name only because of security concerns, crossed the border in Nogales, Ariz., before making her way to relatives in the Dallas area.

“There’s so much insecurity where I live,” she said. The mother of two says she fled because of the constant threat of violence from cartel gangs. There are even beheadings in the central Mexican region where she lived. “I want a better future for my children. I don’t want them to grow up in fear.”

But navigating the system can be mind-boggling. The Department of Homeland Security sent her two notices to appear at different places at the same time on the same day.

One was for her first official hearing in the civil immigration court. She feared she would be ordered deported in absentia if she missed it.

When she arrived at court, she was told she wasn’t on the docket.

Laura then rushed to the other Dallas location she’d been told to go to by the second DHS document. It was a location where government contractors place ankle monitors on immigrants as an alternative to detaining them.

But once there, she says, she was told to go to a third location: 8101 Stemmons Freeway, an ICE office. Once there, she was told to report back in May 2020.

Lawyers and immigrants have complained for at least a year about being given fake or dummy court appearance dates issued by the government. *The Dallas Morning News* first reported on the nationwide problem in September 2018.

## **Not independent**

The immigration courts are administrative courts supervised by the Justice Department and thus not an independent judiciary system, as is the case in all state and federal criminal courts.

The judges’ union has pushed for years for full independence.

“The incessant backlogs and loss of public faith in the court are insurmountable obstacles without the correction of the fundamental design flaw of having a court in a law enforcement agency,” said Tabador, the union president and immigration judge.

The American Bar Association supports the idea of an independent immigration court judiciary. Within the courts, attorneys also complain that too many former prosecutors become immigration

judges.

A year ago, the Justice Department opened 15 immigration courts in a granite federal building in Fort Worth where judges exclusively hear cases by video. The immigrants and attorneys they talk to are scattered across the nation.

The public generally can't enter those courts, but can watch proceedings by video from venues like the Dallas courtrooms.

On one recent day, Fort Worth immigration Judge Joseph T. Leonard tells Jose Felipe Martinez, via video conference, that he is prepared to recuse himself in the detainee's immigration case. Only a year ago, Leonard worked as a federal prosecutor in McAllen, and that very Justice Department office had handled the case that put Martinez behind bars on drug charges.

Leonard says he didn't think he prosecuted Martinez's case, but if Martinez wants him to step away from his deportation proceedings, the judge is willing. Martinez says no. He's soon ordered removed to Mexico after serving his time on the criminal charges.

Then Leonard faces delays in another case as he sits in his Fort Worth court, waiting to hear from ICE attorney Bales via video in Dallas Courtroom 2, because Bales has recently changed jobs and court documents he needs were sent to his old Justice Department email address.

Only a few months earlier, Bales was Judge Bales, with his own immigration court.

## **The fight over video**

Justice by video has been around since at least 1996. But its use has widened rapidly in recent years. Attorneys are fighting the video hearings, but federal courts have said that such hearings are "consistent with legal due process," said Hunker, the regional ICE chief counsel.

But video hearings give an unfair advantage to the government, said Gividen, the ex-government attorney.

"You can just make a better impression in person," he says.

Many immigration attorneys agree with him. Video conferences hamper direct contact between immigrants and their attorneys or make it difficult to examine key documents. At times, the audio or video can falter, hurting the effectiveness of the defense.

In Courtroom 6 in Dallas, Judge Deitrich Sims hears the case of a 21-year-old Guatemalan. At his side is a big batch of legal files in blue folders that nearly reach up to his shoulders. The Guatemalan is in court sooner than expected because he was convicted of driving while intoxicated.

Asylum hearings can be closed unless the immigrant agrees to allow them to be open to members of the public. This asylum seeker from Guatemala lets a reporter watch the proceedings so long as his name is not published. He's in a lockup in Okmulgee, Okla. Wearing an orange jumpsuit, he appears by video in Sims' courtroom.

His attorney, GianCarlo Franco, of the nonprofit Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services, or RAICES, submits an unusual motion, asking the judge to order that the detainee be brought to Dallas for an in-person hearing. At issue: due process and an equal footing for all parties in what's an adversarial setting.

Sims says no. If the video or audio falter, he says, he'll just stop proceedings until things are fixed. As for not being able to see the client's body language, he says he can see it just fine.

But the fact that the law allows video conferencing does not mean that it is appropriate for every case, said Andrea Saenz of Brooklyn Defender Services. Her organization is challenging its use in a federal court in New York.

"Judges are empowered and can make sure that the court hearing is fair," she said.

In Sims' courtroom, the Guatemalan and his attorney attempt to prove he's worthy of asylum because he says he was tortured.

The government attorney says he has two photos that show the man suffered injuries. But Franco notes the photos are only of a thigh and a knee, and there's much more.

The judge asks why Franco didn't take his own photos of his client's scars. Franco explains he wasn't allowed to take his camera phone into the lockup.

The Guatemalan man soon attempts to show his scars by unzipping his orange jumpsuit, but Sims tells him not to remove his clothes. Through an interpreter who can speak his native K'ekchi language, the man then describes his beatings by a gang known in his community simply as "the torturers." He lists at least nine areas of his body that he says were cut by gang members.

It's a three-hour hearing. At times, the Guatemalan puts his head down, but, through the video screen, it's unclear if he is upset, or crying.

The judge says he won't make a ruling immediately.

"If we lose, we will appeal," Franco says in the lobby.

Amiena Khan, executive vice president of the judges union, says many judges understand why the government is using more video courts to deal with the backlog crisis.

"The agency is looking to speed the entire process up," she said. But with many of the changes, "what they are actually doing is lessening the effectiveness and efficiency of the court."

The judge made clear she was speaking as a union official, not in her capacity as a New York-based judge.

"That adage you hear that 'justice delayed is justice denied' applies," Khan said.

She is scheduling cases into 2024.

# The Dallas Morning News

## *Lines grow at low-cost clinics*

But number of kids with federal medical assistance declines

By **Dianne Solís**

Published Dec. 1, 2019

[Click here to view the online story.](#)

Username: contests@dallasnews.com / Password: ontestCPass!

COLLEGE FOOTBALL IN SPORTSDAY2, 1-6CC

Baylor.....61	SMU.....37	Ohio State.....56
Kansas.....6	Tulane.....20	Michigan.....27
Wisconsin.....38	UAB.....26	Auburn.....48
Minnesota.....17	North Texas.....21	Alabama.....45

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL 9-10C

Southlake Carroll.....49	Rockwall.....37
Midland Lee.....27	Klein Oak.....27
Colleyville Heritage.....24	Denton Guyer.....42
Birdville.....17	Arlington.....21

Sunday

# The Dallas Morning News

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DallasNews.com

MEXICO

## One year in, citizens still behind López Obrador



Photos by Joel Angel Juarez/Special Contributor

Maritza Gurrola (left), 15, and her mother, Alicia Hernández, 40, both of Ciudad Juárez, hand out bread and hot chocolate to asylum-seekers. In a new poll, 40% of the respondents said they or a family member planned to migrate to the U.S.

However, poll shows signs that fervor may be fading

By ALFREDO CORCHADO  
Mexico-Border Correspondent  
acorchado@dallasnews.com

TORREÓN, Mexico — As Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador marks his first year in office on Sunday, Mexicans' romance with the left-leaning populist leader remains strong.

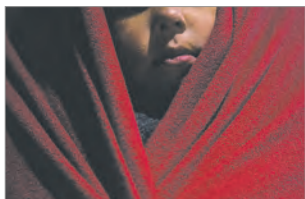
But a new poll conducted by Mexico City's *Reforma* newspaper, co-sponsored by *The Dallas Morning News* and The Mission Foods Texas-Mexico Center at Southern Methodist University, shows signs of fading enthusiasm as the nation faces weariness over shocking

violence and slowing economic growth.

Additionally, Mexicans are divided in their opinions about the U.S. They overwhelmingly dislike Donald Trump, but more are planning to migrate north, according to the poll. Only 45% of people polled said they felt safe shopping in the U.S., while 44% said they felt unsafe.

The poll was taken more than three months after the mass shooting at a Walmart in El Paso that claimed the lives of 22 people, eight of them Mexi-

See POLL Page 19A



A Mexican asylum-seeker, 4, is wrapped in a blanket near the entrance of the Paso Del Norte Port of Entry in Ciudad Juárez. On the border, security is the overwhelming reason Mexicans say they are fleeing their country.

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

## UT students call for action

They want faculty with histories of violations fired, transparency

By MARÍA MÉNDEZ  
Austin Bureau  
maria.mendez@dallasnews.com

AUSTIN — In October, University of Texas senior Candace Kosted came across a tweet that unnerved her.

It said her environmental ethics professor, Sahotra Sarkar, was suspended for a semester in 2017 for a sexual misconduct violation after students complained that he had talked to them about swimming or posing nude.

"I did have a lot of positive feelings and thoughts toward him before I found out, and then when I heard that news, it was hard," said Kosted, who is from Pflugerville. "I was just disappointed."

So when a group of students stormed into Kosted's class about a week ago to confront Sarkar and ask other students to walk out in protest, Kosted followed.

She and other students who have participated in several campus protests say they want the university to provide a list of all professors with sexual misconduct violations and to remove the professors from courses or fire them.

With roughly one week of classes left in the fall semester, they're growing impatient and frustrated. But experts say meeting students' demands would break the precedent of how universities traditionally handle sexual misconduct and could challenge federal and state anti-discrimination and pri-

See UNIVERSITY Page 18A

IMMIGRANT HEALTH CARE

## Lines grow at low-cost clinics

But number of kids with federal medical assistance declines

By DIANNE SOLIS  
Staff Writer  
dsolis@dallasnews.com

The line of patients starts well before sunrise, as early as 4 a.m. at Agape Clinic in Old East Dallas. Their troubles are many.

No one will be shut out for lack of money.

One patient, a teenage boy, arrived at the clinic dangerously close to shock, telling doctors that a border official seized his insulin as

he returned from Mexico. Another, a young boy, had an arm fracture so serious he needed to see an orthopedic surgeon. Others waiting in the line suffered from anxiety and depression triggered by fears that deportation could split the family.

They make their way here and to other low-cost and no-cost clinics or medical fairs. This is what the informal medical system looks like, especially for working-class immigrants.

Lately it has become increasingly clear to the care

See LOW-COST Page 12A

IMPEACHMENT INQUIRY

## On fateful day, phone call raised new risks for Trump

Going off script on Ukraine alarmed some of those present

By NANCY BENAC  
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The forecast for July 25 was typical for Washington: sunny, mid-80s. President Donald Trump had good reason to be feeling bright and sunny himself.

It was the morning after

Robert Mueller's congressional testimony at the conclusion of the Russia investigation, and Trump and his allies were expressing relief, thinking the rumblings about impeachment would fade, even if the special counsel hadn't offered the president the total exoneration Trump claimed.

By 7:06 a.m., Trump was tweeting positive reviews of his favorite TV show, *Far & Friends*, where co-host Ain-

sley Earhardt declared, "Yesterday changed everything; it really did clear the president."

An hour later, Trump moved on to a tweet talking about his approval ratings, the stock market, low unemployment and more. "Country doing great!" he wrote.

But a reconstruction of what started as an unremarkable Thursday reveals

See HOW Page 8A

LIVING OUR FAITH

### The light of hope

We asked community and faith leaders and people who lead extraordinary lives to answer the question: When life feels dark, what gives you hope? Today we begin publishing their answers, including an essay on responding to fear with love. **Opinion, 1P**

METRO

### Battling for himself, others

A North Texas teenager battling a rare blood disorder finds inspiration in Captain America, and he wants to help others. **1B**

NATION

### Wintry blast stalls travel

Wintry weather bedeviled Thanksgiving travelers across much of the country as a dangerous storm moved east. **4A**

ARTS & LIFE

### 100 best books of 2019

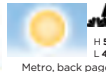
Looking for gift ideas? There should be something for everyone in this list of the 100 best books of 2019. **8E**

HEALTHY LIVING

### Countering arthritis

For those dealing with arthritis pain, maintaining movement may help to keep it from getting worse. **Section F**

Sunny and windy



Metro, back page

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Sports TV	1C	Auto	11
Personal Book	10	Calendar	10
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Photos by Ben Torres/Special Contributor

Nursing student Stephanie Beaton (left), measures the height of 3-year-old Matias Bonilla as his father, Jhonatan Bonilla, helps keep him calm during a checkup at Agape Clinic in Old East Dallas. Agape sees patients seven days a week and asks for a donation of \$30, though no one is turned away for inability to pay.

## Low-cost, no-cost clinics see rising need

Continued from Page 1A

providers that a growing number of children are using these services, and it is stressing the system.

These days, more immigrants fear that sharing personal information while using government-backed medical care could end up threatening their chances at getting permanent residency in the U.S. The number of children in clinics like Agape is rising even as the number of children getting federal medical assistance declines.

The Trump administration's push to reduce immigrants' dependency on federally funded services is, experts say, leading to a decline in the number of insured children. The administration wants to implement what it calls the "public charge rule," which would make immigrants ineligible for visas and green cards that give them legal permanent residency if it is found that they are overly dependent on federally funded social services.

The federal government says that declines in Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program enrollment are due to a strong economy. The new public charge rule is stalled in federal courts, but it has been widely reported that the proposal has already created fear and confusion among immigrants. It has many people turning to alternative care.

At Los Barrios Unidos Community Clinic, Cesar Varon-Ortiz, the eligibility manager, said confusion about the use of federal programs is common there. Los Barrios started decades ago in a trailer on an unimproved road in West Dallas. It expects 90,000 patient visits this year, up from about 83,000 two years ago. Most patients are Spanish-speaking.

Even attorneys seem confused, and they are telling clients not to apply for benefits, Varon-Ortiz said. "It's a lot of misinformation," he said.

Yanna Slaughter, senior program manager for the city of Dallas' Welcoming Communities and Immigrant Affairs, said immigrant parents are unenrolling their U.S. citizen children from federal programs like Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program even though the children are eligible.

"Everyone is still so confused about it," Slaughter said. "People don't know what they are eligi-

ble for. So they just get off everything."

That has increased the demand for help through the informal medical system. "I am just deluged," Slaughter said.

At Agape Clinic, the clinic expects 18,000 patient visits this year. Two years ago, less than a fourth of Agape's patients were children. Now nearly a third are, said Gary Foster, Agape's chief of clinical operations and a nurse practitioner.

Foster said it's frustrating to see immigrant patients struggle to patch together health care, especially with so many policy proposals that place more restrictions on immigrants.

"I'll do whatever I can to make it better for them," Foster said.

### More uninsured

The Children's Health Insurance Program was created in the mid-1990s as a bridge for families that make too much to qualify for Medicaid but can't afford private insurance.

In Texas, nearly 230,000 fewer children are using federally supported children's Medicaid and CHIP. As of August, the Medicaid enrollment decline was about 168,000 children from its high point in December 2017. The number of Texas children enrolled in CHIP fell by about 60,000 in that same period.

Nationally, Dallas County was No. 2 in the number of uninsured children in 2018, right behind Harris County, according to a Georgetown University study released last month.

In Dallas, half of all children live in a household with at least one parent who is an immigrant, with or without legal status, according to Kids Count, an initiative of the Annie Casey Foundation.

When families move away from federal programs, they cobble together care through low-cost to no-cost clinics, free health fairs, rationed medicines and cheaper medications sent by relatives in Latin America.

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"There are a million barriers to getting care, and it's even worse with immigration issues," Bohan said. "Because we have been in the community for 36



Marcia Ruis and Alina Garciamendez check the teeth of 12-year-old Roberto Rosales (left) and 6-year-old Victor Rosales during this year's annual free health fair coordinated by the Mexican Consulate at Mountain View College in Dallas.

years, they trust us."

A spokesman for the Department of Health and Human Services in Washington said the agency "expects downturns in Medicaid enrollment during times of booming economic performance, like we are experiencing today under President Trump's leadership."

States with the most significant enrollment declines also have strong economic growth, the spokesman said.

But while the Texas economy is indeed red-hot — the jobless rate is at a historic low 3.4% — the rising number of uninsured people indicates that some of those new jobs might not include health insurance or some parents are choosing not to pay the premiums.

### A long history

In Texas, government programs are out of reach for those without legal status, with a few exceptions such as emergency care. Alternative paths to medical care have existed for many years.

Many unauthorized immigrants use clinics and health fairs because they fear going to hospitals because their information could be placed in a database that might eventually link to federal immigration agencies. "They don't want to jeopardize staying here legally," Foster said.

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of hospital security agents. "They look like cops and patients get scared to death because they don't have papers," Foster said.

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Sandra Duarte, a Colombian immigrant, came to the clinic worried that her two small boys had the flu. The boys, 3-year-old Matias and 5-year-old Samuel, squirmed in their chairs as they were checked by Agape staff.

"Everyone here is very kind and caring," Duarte said.

### Health fairs

Faith groups also are stepping up with health fairs to respond to the growing need. Medical students frequently pitch in with free services.

This summer, organizers for Dallas Area Interfaith held a trio of free health fairs at Catholic churches, a trusted safe space

for families, and the fairs drew hundreds, said Socorro Perales, an organizer for Dallas Area Interfaith.

A mid-October health fair at Mountain View College drew nearly 6,000 people. The event has been organized by the Mexican consulate for nearly 20 years, but this year had the highest attendance ever, with an approximate 20% boost, organizers said.

"I basically designed a hospital with specialties," said Edgar Carmona, who specializes in health initiatives at the consulate.

College classrooms were converted into monitoring stations with a range of services from flu vaccines to hearing tests, oral cancer screenings to dental exams, mammograms to kidney exams. Midway through the event, about 100 people were still lined up outside to get in.

Maria Reyes came early with her husband because they lacked health insurance. "We've saved hundreds of dollars," Reyes said. She received a mammogram, cholesterol checkup, flu vaccine and kidney exam.

Some of the longest lines were at a dental clinic in a classroom.

There, Dr. Alina Garciamendez, a pediatric dental resident, asked 6-year-old Victor Rosales, "Do you speak Spanish?"

He nodded yes.

She assured the little boy that the exam wouldn't hurt. "Did you eat something red, Cheetos, tomatoes?" she asked.

The boy giggled. "No cavities, she said. "Because I don't eat that much candy," Victor said.

Garciamendez said children and their parents are always deeply grateful for the care they get. But she was surprised by the size of the crowd that day. If health fair visitors needed more advanced care, she referred them to Agape Clinic, where her dental school provides residents, she said.

### The dangers ahead

At Georgetown University's Center for Children and Family in Washington, D.C., Kelly Whitener, an associate professor of practice, said the health care system for working class immigrant families is overstretched, and that can lead to other problems.

"Over time, you will see more reliance on emergency rooms, more avoiding of treatment, and then that can really exacerbate costs," Whitener said.

Many immigrant families also rely on visits to botanicas — stores and stands within flea markets that sell soaps, teas for digestion problems or dubious creams like Chupa Panza, a cream that promises to suck away belly fat. They also sell antibiotics such as ampicillin for as little as 12 capsules for \$10.

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Some immigrants put off their care. Delayed care can be deadly, whether it's a child with influenza or an adult with cancer.

"When people don't have health insurance, they will ration their medicine," Bohan said. "They will not do follow-up testing. They don't keep an eye on their lab work. So all their problems become worse and worse."

Twitter: @disoals



**T**he line of patients starts well before sunrise, as early as 4 a.m. at Agape Clinic in Old East Dallas. Their troubles are many. No one will be shut out for lack of money.

One patient, a teenage boy, arrived at the clinic dangerously close to shock, telling doctors that a border official seized his insulin as he returned from Mexico. Another, a young boy, had an arm fracture so serious, he needed to see an orthopedic surgeon. Others waiting in the line suffered from anxiety and depression triggered by fears that deportation could split the family.

They make their way here and to other low-cost and no-cost clinics or medical fairs. This is what the informal medical system looks like, especially for working-class immigrants.

Lately it has become increasingly clear to the care providers that a growing number of children are using these services, and it is stressing the system.

These days, more immigrants fear that sharing personal information while using government-backed medical care could end up threatening their chances at getting permanent residency in the U.S. The number of children in clinics like Agape is rising even as the number of children getting federal medical assistance declines.

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# The Dallas Morning News

## *Living in Camp Fear*

Asylum seekers wait in misery in Mexico for a shot at life in the U.S.

By **Dianne Solís**  
Published Dec. 22, 2019

[Click here to view the online story.](#)

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# The Dallas Morning News

Texas' Leading News Source \$3.99 Dallas, Texas, Sunday, December 22, 2019 DallasNews.com

## Duncanville denied again, 31-17

Duncanville's Roderick Daniels (13) tries to break through the North Shore defense in the Class 6A Division I state championship game Saturday at AT&T Stadium. Duncanville fell 31-17 — its second straight title loss to Galena Park. (Cover-age, IC)



Juan Figueroa/Staff photographer

ELECTIONS '20 | U.S. HOUSE

## Impeachment key in close Texas congressional races

Both sides are using Wednesday's votes as campaign ammunition

By TODD J. GILLMAN and PAUL COBLER  
Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Could fallout from the House impeachment vote affect congressional races in Texas? Five Texas lawmakers — two freshmen Democrats and three Re-

publicans — face challengers taking them to task for their party loyalty in the votes to formally accuse President Donald Trump of abusing his office and obstruction of the congressional inquiry.

While the vast majority of districts nationwide are safe turf for one party or the other, these five Texas hold battleground districts.

In Dallas, Rep. Colin Alford ousted 11-term GOP Congressman Pete Sessions last year. In Houston, Rep.

Lizzie Fletcher ended John Culberson's career after nine terms.

Both waited until after the Judiciary Committee recommended two articles of impeachment before declaring their support, making them two of the last holdouts in either party to reveal their intentions ahead of Wednesday's historic votes.

Republicans are determined to win back those seats and have quickly

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### IMMIGRATION



Lynda M. Gonzalez/Staff Photographer

Patricia Giron of Chiapas, Mexico, holds her daughters, Yesenia (left), 6; Wendy, 1; and Yocelyn, 6, at the temporary tent camp of asylum-seekers in Matamoros, Mexico. The Migrant Protection Policy requires asylum-seekers to wait in Mexico while their claims are processed.

By DIANNE SOLÍS  
Staff Writer  
dsolis@dallasnews.com

## Living in Camp Fear

Asylum-seekers wait in misery in Mexico for a shot at life in the U.S.

MATAMOROS, Mexico — Edwin Vaquiz's frustration was rising as the 42-year-old Honduran asylum-seeker passed out supplies from a tent with a hand-lettered "Tienda No. 3" sign. There was little water available for drinking at Store No. 3, but there were two kinds of soap for washing clothes in the dirty Rio Grande. There were few portable toilets, but plenty of toilet paper.

Soon the camp of asylum-seekers would be blanketed in darkness and there would be no security. "Miserable," Vaquiz said last week of conditions at the migrant camp where he and his wife and daughter

have been waiting for the last five months.

This sprawling camp is one of the most visible signs along the border of

See IT'S Page 8A

### TECHNOLOGY

## Town goes own way for internet

Tired of subpar service, Mont Belvieu built its own network

By MELISSA REPKO  
Staff Writer  
mrepko@dallasnews.com

MONT BELVIEU — Becky McManus signed up for internet at her home, and it worked until spring, when leaves bloomed on the trees and blocked her signal.

Across town, Richard LeJeune moved into a new subdivision. His family's only internet option was a local company with speeds so slow, his wife had trouble running her online handmade jewelry store and his daughter sometimes couldn't do her homework.

For years, residents of this fast-growing town on the outer ring of Houston complained to local leaders about slow and spotty internet. They put satellite dishes on their rooftops. They endured intermittent service and frequent outages.

"I believe squirrels run on a wheel for my internet," one half-joked on a city survey.

The problem facing Mont Belvieu is one familiar to many towns and rural areas in Texas and around the country. Major internet service providers don't see a strong enough business case to expand their footprint, upgrade internet speeds or offer any internet service at all.

So Mont Belvieu took matters into its own hands: It decided to build and operate its own high-speed internet service.

The town of almost 7,500 joined a growing number of cities pouring millions of dollars into municipal broadband networks after feeling overlooked by big, publicly traded companies.

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**LATE SCORES:** For results from last night's games, go to [sportsdayfw.com/scores](http://sportsdayfw.com/scores).



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Kurt Anderson (center), Melissa Robertson (right) and other Rio Valley Relief Project volunteers rush to finish preparing beef or bean burritos to feed camp residents.



Edwin Vazquez and his wife, Alejandra (right), asylum-seekers from Honduras, tend to Tierra No. 3, or "store three," filled with donations like hygiene products and clothes.



Asylum-seekers walked through a dusty gust of wind in the Matamoros, Mexico, tent camp last weekend. Living conditions have affected residents' health, medical volunteers said.

# It's worse than Iraq, war vet says

Continued from Page 1A

how the U.S. asylum process has slowed to a crawl, leaving thousands of people essentially stranded in Mexico, many in danger because of the high crime rate and violent cartels.

The violence in the state of Tamaulipas, where Matamoros sits, has forced about 2,000 asylum-seekers to cluster for protection here at the banks of the Rio Grande and along the Gateway International Bridge into Brownsville in Texas. A former Army nurse here estimates 18 people were kidnapped through October, probably by the dominant criminal group in this region. Then she stopped counting.

Volunteers from around the U.S., from Dallas and Houston to Florida and Maine — regularly cycle through the border's camps with food, tents, blankets, shoes, sweat shirts, diapers, toys — and even songs for the children. While the efforts are extraordinary and a patchy organization is slowly emerging, it clearly isn't enough.

Vaquiz is grateful for the kindness. But what he could really use to protect his family is a battery-powered lamp. "That way no one could sneak up on them."

Many people here whisper about the dangers. Migrants are taken by the local cartel members and their look-outs, who openly walk into the camp, at any hour, said a Honduran who didn't want to be identified because he feared for his safety. A Honduran woman who has been at the camp for several months said a man posing as an asylum-seeker within the camp has molested two small girls. "We can't complain. It's a mafia and their look-outs will come and beat us," she said.

No one runs the camps. There are no cotests for who enters the encampment. Some migrants have clustered their tents on the sidewalks lead-



Volunteer Maria Calabro (right) reads to a group of children by the Gateway International Bridge in Matamoros, Mexico. Mental health professionals are worried about depression among the young asylum-seekers.

ing to the nearby Gateway International Bridge to be ready if their asylum cases are called, but they're also hoping for more safety. Funding cars provide a bit of light. But the vast majority of people, hundreds more, have secured space on the tree-lined grounds near the river where the camp has grown. They are the most vulnerable.

"This is one of the worst situations I have been in, merely for the fact there are so few resources and security is so bad," said Helen Perry, a former Army nurse who now runs operations for the small nonprofit Global Response Management. "We know people are trafficked out of the camps, and kidnapped. It goes back to not having formal camp management."

Traditionally, the United Nations refugee agency might be one of the groups that would play a role in organizing and running the place. But danger is keeping the usual help away.

Mike Benowides, a veteran of the Iraq War and a co-founder of the nonprofit Team Brownsville, said much more help is needed.

"It infuriates me. This is a crisis," Benowides said.

The U.S. State Department has issued its harshest no-travel warning for the Mexican border state of Tamaulipas — a level's warning like the ones in war-torn Syria and Somalia.

More than 66,000 asylum-seekers who have made it to the U.S. border from Central America and other places have been sent back to Mexico by U.S. authorities to await the processing of their cases under what President Donald Trump's administration calls the Migration Protection Protocol. The policy was phased in earlier this year; in the past, once asylum-seekers got to the U.S., they would await the outcome of their cases in the States.

Most asylum-seekers wait in Mexico in the haphazard camps.

Kidnapping is rampant in Matamoros, said immigration attorney Charles D'Zur, who runs a Lawyers for Good Government resource center near the camp. Asylum-seekers expect to be kidnapped and the risk increases the longer they stay.

The resignation to die is how he has seen them die, the attorney said.

In the stretch of the camp, families have begun building their own ovens with mud bricks. They cut wood branches from trees for fires. And the smoke covers the smell of feces.

In a country of music lovers, there's



The line for pedestrians to enter the U.S. at the Gateway International Bridge hovers above the river bank trail used by about 2,000 tent camp residents seeking U.S. asylum.

# Frustrated nonprofits try to help

Continued from Page 8A

no music here. Muffled conversations come from inside tents. Sometimes, children can be heard laughing, but even that is infrequent.

Some families have been given pallets to place their tents on in case of rain. Others string clothes lines among the trees or place handkerchiefs on the fascia-flowing bougainvillea bushes near the entry lanes into Texas.

Last Sunday at the camp, some of the children received an early Christmas with gifts from a Brownsville group called Army That y Abuelas of the Rio Grande Valley. The volunteers wrapped the gifts and tagged them with the names of children they saw regularly.

Others in the group prepared to read to the children, who in a normal world would be in school. There are geography lessons with an emphasis on the countries of origin of the migrating families. And lessons on the colors of the rainbow.

"Aprate," shouted a skinny little girl to a smaller companion. "Aprate," Harry up, the little school is about to start, she urged.

On another night, a Houston volunteer plopped herself on the sidewalk to read to children astory from a picture book illustrated with monarch butterflies, a symbol of migration.

"You are very valiant. You are so strong. Your journey is a miracle. I admire you," she told the children in Spanish.

Then, she explained, "That's what the butterfly says because they have no fear."

Another group of boys played checkers, using bottle caps made of creamy white and red plastic.

Other boys sat comfortably on flattened cardboard that covered the powdery dirt.

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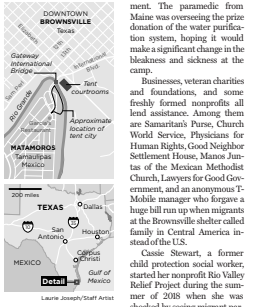
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Asylum-seekers charge their phones at the only charging station in the temporary tent camp in Matamoros, Mexico. Residents rely on a single outlet hanging from a utility pole.



Photos by Lydia H. Gonzalez/Staff Photographer

normal childhood and a normal world, the children's anxiety levels are high, medical doctor and volunteer Anjali Nyogi said. Some seem traumatized by the home violence they fled in their home countries — and some are traumatized by the dangers within the camp.

We see a lot of depression, anxiety, PTSD," said Nyogi, who teaches at Tulane University's School of Medicine in New Orleans.

Some children in the camp are even emotionless, so strong is their depression, the doctor said. "Moms tell me, 'He just stopped eating.'"

Recently, fierce dust storms swept through the camp, making it difficult to see until the wind died down. The doctor fears foul matter has been scooped up into the air and children will be most susceptible to health risks.

Other boys sat comfortably on flattened cardboard that covered the powdery dirt.

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The resignation to die is how he has seen them die, the attorney said.

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there have rapidly made this the border's second-busiest area for Border Patrol apprehensions through November, according to the Syracuse University nonprofit Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, or TRAC.

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Mexicans, too, are showing up in the camps. An increasing number of them are mostly indigenous Tzotzil Mayan people from the southernmost state of Chiapas. About a dozen Chiapans told *The Dallas Morning News* about a resurgence in violence there related to decades-old oppression against their people, including the murder of family members and the seizure of their land and homes.

Under U.S. asylum law, a self-founded fear of persecution because of race or nationality would be acceptable grounds for an application.

But a man from Chiapas who wanted to be identified only as Osid said, "The guard just told

me that asylum has been shut down. We are suffering here," he said.

"We want to know if there is still asylum. If not, we don't want to be here suffering," he said.

Nearby, Gloria, a Honduran woman, said some parents are so worried about lengthy waits at the camp that they've sent their children alone across the border. "At times, it is the only exit on land," she explained.

Goodwin, a Harlingen immigration attorney, said she faces difficult choices in what she tells asylum-seekers. Still, she persists in giving sidewalk workshops near the bridge to let them know their rights, or threatening them into the volunteer network of Lawyers for Good Government.

Only 4 percent of immigrants in the Migrant Protection Protocol program are represented by lawyers, according to TRAC.

What does Goodwin tell an immigrant who feels hopeless? Sometimes it, "You get to fight and fight to the end." But other times, she says she is brutally honest.

"Why sit here in squalor without the ability to minimally take care of your family for a case that can tell you right now has zero chance of winning?" she explained.

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ing to help.

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**S**oon the camp of asylum-seekers would be blanketed in darkness and there would be no security. “Miserable,” Vaquiz said last week of conditions at the migrant camp where he and his wife and daughter have been waiting for the last five months.

This sprawling camp is one of the most visible signs along the border of how the U.S. asylum process has slowed to a crawl, leaving thousands of people essentially stranded in Mexico, many in danger because of the high crime rate and violent cartels.

The violence in the state of Tamaulipas, where Matamoros sits, has forced about 2,000 asylum-seekers to cluster for protection here at the banks of the Rio Grande and along the Gateway International Bridge into Brownsville in Texas. A former Army nurse here estimates 18 people were kidnapped through October, probably by the dominant criminal group in this region. Then she stopped counting.

Volunteers from around the U.S. — from Dallas and Houston to Florida and Maine — regularly cycle through the border’s camps with food, tents, blankets, jeans, sweat shirts, diapers, toys — and even songs for the children. While the efforts are extraordinary and a patchy organization is slowly emerging, it clearly isn’t enough.

Vaquiz is grateful for the kindness. But what he could really use to protect his family is a battery-powered lamp. That way no one could sneak up on their tent.

Many people here whisper about the dangers. Migrants are taken by the local cartel members and their lookouts, who openly walk into the camp, at any hour, said a Honduran who didn’t want to be identified because he feared for his safety. A Honduran woman who has been at the camp for several months said a man posing as an asylum-seeker within the camp has molested two small girls. “We can’t complain. It’s a mafia and they will come and beat us,” she said.

No one runs the camps. There are no controls for who enters the encampment. Some migrants have clustered their tents on the sidewalks leading to the nearby Gateway International Bridge to be ready if their asylum cases are called, but they’re also hoping for more safety. Passing cars provide a bit of light. But the vast majority of people, hundreds more, have secured space on the tree-lined grounds near the river where the camp has grown. They are the most vulnerable.

“This is one of the worst situations I have been in, merely for the fact there are so few resources and security is so bad,” said Helen Perry, a former Army nurse who now runs operations for the small nonprofit Global Response Management. “We know people are trafficked out of the camps, and kidnapped. ... It goes back to not having formal camp management.”

Traditionally, the United Nations refugee agency might be one of the groups that would play a role in organizing and running the place. But danger is keeping the usual help away.

Mike Benavides, a veteran of the Iraq War and a co-founder of the nonprofit Team Brownsville, said much more help is needed.

“It infuriates me. This is a crisis,” Benavides said.

## **Life in the camp**

Conditions were more sanitary in Iraq than they are here at this camp, Benavides said. Infectious



diarrhea and dehydration are two of the biggest dangers. Recently, children have been coming down with the flu. And there are many pregnancies.

Giovanni Lepri, the deputy representative for Mexico for the U.N. refugee agency, praised Team Brownsville and other volunteers for work he called “amazing.” But they aren’t trained in camp management, he said. The U.N. was focused more on Mexico’s southern border where Mexico’s tiny refugee agency maintains an office, he said. They also opened an office in Monterrey, about four hours west of Matamoros.

Lepri acknowledged that the U.N.’s security advisers warned against opening a permanent office in Matamoros because of the danger in the region, which includes the more dangerous cities of Reynosa and Nuevo Laredo. “Our security unit, which is the U.N. security unit, has recommended for the moment we don’t establish a permanent presence,” Lepri said.

In November, the U.N. began using a mobile unit in the region. The staff sleeps on the U.S. side of the border, Lepri said.

The U.S. State Department has issued its harshest no-travel warning for the Mexican border state of Tamaulipas — a level 4 warning like the ones in war-torn Syria and Somalia.

More than 56,000 asylum-seekers who have made it to the U.S. border from Central America and other places have been sent back to Mexico by U.S. authorities to await the processing of their cases under what President Donald Trump’s administration calls the Migration Protection Protocols. The policy was phased in earlier this year; in the past, once asylum-seekers got to the U.S., they would await the outcome of their cases in the States.

Most asylum-seekers wait in Mexico in the haphazard camps.

Kidnapping is rampant in Matamoros, said immigration attorney Charlene D’Cruz, who runs a Lawyers for Good Government resource center near the camp. Asylum-seekers expect to be kidnapped and the risk increases the longer they stay.

“The resignation to die is how we dehumanize them,” the attorney said.

In the stench of the camp, families have begun building their own ovens with mud bricks. They cut wood branches from trees for fires. And the smoke covers the smell of feces.

In a country of music lovers, there is no music here. Muffled conversations come from inside tents. Sometimes, children can be heard laughing, but even that is infrequent.

Some families have been given pallets to place their tents on in case of rain. Others string clothes lines among the trees or place laundered clothes on fuchsia-flowering bougainvillea bushes near the entry lanes into Texas.

Last Sunday at the camp, some of the children received an early Christmas with gifts from a Brownsville group called Angry Tias y Abuelas of the Rio Grande Valley. The volunteers wrapped the gifts and tagged them with the names of children they saw regularly.

Others in the group prepared to read to the children, who in a normal world would be in school. There

are geography lessons with an emphasis on the countries of origin of the migrating families. And lessons on the colors of the rainbow.

“Apurate,” shouted a skinny little girl to a smaller companion. “Apurate,” Hurry up, the little school is about to start, she urged.

On another night, a Houston volunteer plopped herself on the sidewalk to read to children a story from a picture book illustrated with Monarch butterflies, a symbol of migration.

“You are very valiant. You are so strong. Your journey is a miracle. I admire you,” she told the children in Spanish.

Then, she explained, “That’s what the butterfly says because they have flown so far.”

Another group of boys played checkers, using bottle caps made of creamy white and red plastic.

Other boys sat comfortably on flattened cardboard that covered the powdery dirt. They pushed their plastic green dinosaurs through a kingdom of the imagination. Then a child hit another on the head. Wails began. A father came to scold the group.

Another day, a toddler in a diaper waddled toward a hammock in stripes of blue, purple, yellow and red. But he was sullen. Vaquiz, the Honduran, stroked his puffy cheeks and called him “Donald Trump.” Why? “Because the child is always angry,” the Honduran said.

Grasp as they might for a normal childhood and a normal world, the children’s anxiety levels are high, medical doctor and volunteer Anjali Niyogi said. Some seem traumatized by the violence they fled in their home countries — and some are traumatized by the dangers within the camp.

“We see a lot of depression, anxiety, PTSD,” said Niyogi, who teaches at Tulane University School of Medicine in New Orleans.

Some children in the camp are even emotionless, so strong is their depression, the doctor said. “Moms tell me, ‘He just stopped eating.’”

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## **The asylum program**

Every weekday, immigrants’ names will come up for hearings in the U.S. immigration courts near the international bridge. Hearings are held in tent courts in Brownsville. Asylum-seekers cross into the U.S., and are sent back to wait in Mexico unless their asylum cases are advanced so that they can formally enter the U.S.

In Brownsville, hearings under new program began in September. The asylum caseloads there have rapidly made this the border’s second-busiest area for Border Patrol apprehensions through November, according to the Syracuse University nonprofit Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, or

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Sometimes it’s, “You got to fight and fight to the end.” But other times, she says she is brutally honest. “Why sit here in squalor without the ability to minimally take care of your family for a case that I can tell you right now has zero chance of winning?” she explained.

Goodwin fears that the attorneys’ work will get only more difficult in January when asylum cases will be partially transferred to judges who sit in a year-old immigration court center in Fort Worth, which handles cases by video conference. Government attorneys are in another courtroom in another city and immigrants can be in yet another location.

“It is so messed up,” Goodwin said. “This is not how you practice law.”

Caught amid the camp squalor, the danger and the tent court system, many immigrants aren’t showing up for their asylum hearings. TRAC found that of those required to wait in Mexico, about half failed to show up for a hearing. By comparison, 9 out of 10 immigrants who are allowed to remain in the U.S. while their cases are adjudicated attend every court hearing.

## Trying to help

Into this misery flows charity aid, everything from beef burritos and chicken soup, sliced oranges and cashews, powder milk and plastic buckets for hauling water of dubious quality to volunteer medical teams. Late last week, a huge water purification system was being tested thanks to a charity donation from the Planet Water Foundation.

“We need to build everything to U.N. standards so, should the U.N. show up, all this will stay,” said Blake Davis, a volunteer with Global Response Management. The paramedic from Maine was overseeing the prize donation of the water purification system, hoping it would make a significant change in the bleakness and sickness at the camp.

Businesses, veteran charities and foundations, and some freshly formed nonprofits all lend assistance. Among them are Samaritan’s Purse, Church World Service, Physicians for Human Rights, Good Neighbor Settlement House, Manos Juntas of the Mexican Methodist Church, Lawyers for Good Government, and an anonymous T-Mobile manager who forgave a huge bill run up when migrants at the Brownsville shelter called family in Central America instead of the U.S.

Cassie Stewart, a former child protection social worker, started her nonprofit Rio Valley Relief Project during the summer of 2018 when she was shocked by seeing migrant parents separated from their children, causing global protest. Stewart began collecting donations, clothes, powdered milk, and diapers for long drives to a respite center run by Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley.

Sometimes, she would bring along her husband, immigration lawyer Daniel Stewart, who inspired her with stories about his work.

This night, the Rio Valley Relief Project distributed 1,000 beef tamales and 850 bean burritos as the sun set in hues of pink and orange. Cassie Stewart’s group spent hours in the Brownsville kitchen of the nonprofit Good Neighbor Settlement House, where asylum-seekers lucky enough to pass U.S. review can shower, get new clothes and move on to their next destination.

Later, a slow-moving man dressed in soiled clothes shuffled along the sidewalk to ask if there was any comida left. No, Stewart quickly said. Then, the Dallas woman took note of his brown eyes, his small, thin frame. She told him to wait.

Stewart grabbed the last canister of cashews and almonds and poured a mound on a white paper plate with some dried mangoes.

The man took the plate and disappeared into the indigo night.

# The Dallas Morning News

PHOTO STORY

## *The time we have here*

A year and a half in the lives of northwest Dallas immigrant students politics

Photos by **Jeffrey McWhorter**

Published July 21, 2019



**Left:** Bryan Gámez, an 18-year-old senior soccer player at Thomas Jefferson High School in Dallas, looked through the field house window while waiting out a rain delay before a game in February 2018. Born in El Salvador, Bryan came to the U.S. with his mother and younger brother in 2014 after he was recruited by Mara Salvatrucha, one of the largest street gangs in Central America. For the past five years, Bryan and his family have acclimated to American life while their asylum request remained unsettled.

**T**heir lives are filled with nervous tryouts, crappy fast food jobs, new shoes and new girlfriends.

Through it all, the questions lurk, tucked behind the latest Snapchat sensation or Ozuna hit song: What will the judge say at my next court appearance? Will my dad make it home tonight? Should I tell my girlfriend I might be gone next month?

The Thomas Jefferson High School boys soccer team is entirely Hispanic, with most members from Mexico and a handful from Central America. Some are U.S. citizens, while others crossed the border illegally but are seeking to stay through asylum, residency or other legal means.

They don't watch or listen to the news. "It makes my mom worry," said César Escobar, who migrated from Honduras as an unaccompanied minor in 2015 to escape gang violence.

As the number of unauthorized migrants crossing the southern border soars, we argue about caravans and detention centers, right wing and left wing, who wins politically and who loses. But for these guys, the issue is personal.

Most are happy to see their former lives fade into the rearview mirror. Their gaze is on the future and the promise of what might be.

But it's a clouded gaze. The past doesn't recede as easily as they'd like.

# The time we have here



Members of the Thomas Jefferson High School boys soccer team joked around before the final game of the Governor's Cup Elite soccer tournament in Georgetown, Texas, in January 2018. Known locally as "TJ," the high school is in one of Dallas' wealthiest, whitest neighborhoods, yet 95% of its students are Hispanic and at least 76% percent are economically disadvantaged, according to Dallas ISD. While the school district does not keep records on immigration status, teachers and students at TJ estimate 60% to 70% of the students were not born on U.S. soil. Sergio Méndez Mejía (clockwise from top left), Bryan Gámez, César Escobar and Fernando Nuñez all immigrated from Central America in 2014 or 2015. Hugo Avina (bottom) was brought to the U.S. from Mexico when he was 9 months old and has resident status.



César Escobar celebrated a goal in the first game of the tournament in Georgetown. "It was like a dream, you know," said César, who was named the team's co-MVP this year, "a dream to be in the United States and win a trophy of your whole school — you know, some guy that didn't speak English." César left Honduras to escape gang violence in 2015 and arrived in the U.S. as an unaccompanied minor. He was detained at the border for two weeks and was released to live with his mother and stepfather in Dallas.

During an end-of-season party at coach Mark Wolveck's house, players prayed over Danny Leon, an avid supporter of the soccer team who had been diagnosed with cancer.



Photo story by  
JEFFREY McWHORTER



**B**ryan Gámez's mother, Lilian, cried as she discussed her deportation order in April 2018 at her apartment in Dallas. She immigrated from El Salvador with her two sons to protect them from gang recruitment and applied for asylum in the U.S. after crossing the border in 2014. After four years of court dates and appeals, her request was denied and she was given one month to self-deport.



**F**amilies of Thomas Jefferson High School students attended the school's graduation ceremony in May 2018 and stood during the national anthem. Few parents attended the boys' soccer games during the school year, however, because of long work hours and the fear of deportation. "They have other priorities," said team captain Juan Romano, "and we just have to deal with it."



**C**ésar Escobar answered questions about the American government during a mock naturalization test in his U.S. government class in December 2018.



**B**ryan Gámez discussed the uncertainty of his immigration status in November 2018 as he sat at the kitchen table in the home his family was renting in southern Dallas County. "I know there's other immigrants, but I also know there's many laws that don't allow me to be here," Bryan said. "I have to live every day like it was my last one in the United States."



**B**ryan Gámez played with the family dog as his mother, Lilian, mopped the floor of the trailer home they moved into in June 2018. After Lilian's asylum request was denied, the family tried to rent another apartment in their northwest Dallas neighborhood but lost \$2,000 in a scam. Looking for the cheapest option, they moved to a small community of mobile homes south of Dallas.

"It's always there — the idea that life could just change tomorrow without you doing anything to cause it.  
It's always there, but you just do your best to try to not think about it  
and do your best with the time you do have here."

**Willie Ruiz**, an inclusion ESL teacher at Thomas Jefferson High School



**B**ryan picked up his girlfriend, Sophie Rojas, to attend prom together in Addison in April 2018. He paid \$120 to buy her a dress for the dance. The two were only on the dance floor for a few songs because Bryan doesn't like to dance and Sophie had to make a strict 11 p.m. curfew.



**S**ome of the team members held jobs to help take the load off their families. Bryan (above) worked in the kitchen of a Japanese ramen restaurant. Team captain Juan Romano said: "We work hard to help our parents out and just to take another problem off their shoulder. We're here at TJ to learn and stuff like that, but after school, that's when the real work for us begins."



**C**ésar Escobar hugged Bryan (back to camera), his teammate and best friend, after Bryan's graduation ceremony. Bryan's mother smiled as she took a photo during his graduation ceremony. "The only motive for coming to the United States was to save the lives of our sons," Lilian said. "Not to get rich, like everyone would imagine. Simply to save the lives of our sons."



**B**ryan wrote on the field house window while waiting out a rain delay before a game in February 2018. "It's hard for me to just think that, after four years of being in the United States, having dreams of staying here, enjoying your life, doing something good for your family, thinking about a future with the people that you love, one day you can just give up on it and then go back from where you started," he said.





**B**ryan Gámez's mother, Lilian, grabbed her son's belt at the Thomas Jefferson High School graduation ceremony at Loos Field House in Addison on May 29. Since graduating a year earlier, Bryan has picked up contract labor with his father and brother. He also takes care of his family's home and drives his mother to and from her two jobs.



**C**ésar Escobar waited with classmates in the hallway of Loos Field House before his graduation ceremony in May. He said he was thinking about his family back in Honduras in this moment.



**A**s his mother, Rosa, looked on, César Escobar was lifted off the floor by fellow senior Kendrick Murphy after he signed a letter of intent May 14 to play soccer at Austin College next year. Though César received some athletic scholarship money from Austin College and \$2,500 from the Thomas Jefferson High School Alumni Association, he will have to take out student loans to cover the remaining costs.



**M**ark Wolveck, head soccer coach at Thomas Jefferson, explained basic principles of borrowing money to César as the two looked up information about student loans on the seniors' last day of classes on May 17. "I'm stressed," César said. Because neither César nor his mother is an American citizen, a classmate's mother has agreed to co-sign for César's loans.

**B**ryan drove César home after they played video games and watched telenovelas at Bryan's house on May 23, a few days before César's graduation. Bryan, who graduated a year before many of his close friends and did not go to college, expressed a sense of detachment. "It's just different now, you know," he said. "Sometimes I feel like I'm in a dark hole, and I can't see any light."



## ABOUT THIS PROJECT

Jeffrey McWhorter has worked for *The Dallas Morning News* as a freelance photo-journalist since 2012. A Dallas native and resident of northwest Dallas, he met a group of immigrants at nearby Thomas Jefferson High School while doing outreach to student athletes in spring 2017 through his church, The Village Church-Dallas Northway. The church is next to the school on Walnut Hill Lane between Midway Road and Marsh Lane.

When McWhorter proposed to the soccer players that he interview and photograph them for a story on their lives beyond the soccer field, Dallas ISD and the school required him to get signed releases from the kids' parents. Over the next year and a half, McWhorter spent countless hours documenting the journeys of two key students, César Escobar and Bryan Gámez, and their families and friends. He viewed their immigration documents and letters received from the government, verifying their stories.

Each person shown in a photo agreed to be photographed, identified and have his or her immigration status described. In English and through Spanish translators, they agreed to allow their stories to appear in print and online, including in *The Dallas Morning News* and *Al Día*, *The News'* Spanish-language publication.

The resulting project, "The Time We Have Here" — first published on McWhorter's website and social media — has been shown in classes at Thomas Jefferson High School in discussions of journalism, immigration and current events. Many of the students in the photos have shared their images widely.

Earlier this year, "The Time We Have Here" was recognized as one of four finalists for the Community Awareness Award in the University of Missouri's prestigious Pictures of the Year competition.

You can see more of McWhorter's work at [jeffreymcwhorter.com](http://jeffreymcwhorter.com) and on Instagram at [@jmcwhorter11](https://www.instagram.com/jmcwhorter11). He can be reached at [jmcwhorter11@gmail.com](mailto:jmcwhorter11@gmail.com).