

THE BORDER

LA FRONTERA

CREATED BY
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a·li·en adj 1. Owing political allegiance to another country or government; foreign. 2. Belonging to, characteristic of, or constituting another and very different place, society, or person; strange. 3. Dissimilar, inconsistent, or opposed, as in nature. 4. An unnaturalized foreign resident of a country. 5. A person from another and very different family, people, or place. 6. A person who is not included in a group; an outsider.

bor·der n 1. A line that indicates a boundary. 2. The boundary line or the area immediately inside the boundary. 3. The boundary of a surface. 4. a strip forming the outer edge of something; 6. lie adjacent to another or share a boundary; "Mexico adjoins the U.S."

dig·ni·ty n 1. The quality or state of being worthy of esteem or respect. 2. Inherent nobility and worth: *the dignity of honest labor*. 3. Poise and self-respect. 4. Stateliness and formality in manner and appearance.

en·vi·ron·ment n. 1. The totality of circumstances surrounding an organism or group of organisms, especially: a. The combination of external physical conditions that affect and influence the growth, development, and survival of organisms. b. The complex of social and cultural conditions affecting the nature of an individual or community.

fron·tier n 1. a wilderness at the edge of a settled area of a country. 2. an international boundary or the area (often fortified) immediately inside the boundary.

im·mi·gration n 1. Migration into a place (especially migration to a country of which you are not a native in order to settle there). 2. The body of immigrants arriving during a specified interval; "the increased immigration strengthened the colony".

lan·guage n. 1. Communication of thoughts and feelings through a system of arbitrary signals, such as voice sounds, gestures, or written symbols. 2. Such a system including its rules for combining its components, such as words. 3. Such a system as used by a nation, people, or other distinct community; often contrasted with *dialect*.

sac·ri·fice n. 1. The act of offering something to a deity in propitiation or homage, especially the ritual slaughter of an animal or a person. 2. Hence, to destroy, surrender, or suffer to be lost, for the sake of obtaining something; to give up in favor of a higher or more imperative object or duty; to devote, with loss or suffering.

The New Colossus

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glow world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
"Keep ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

- by **Emma Lazarus**

Remember, remember always, that all of us... are descended
from immigrants and revolutionists. - **Franklin D. Roosevelt**

Everywhere immigrants have enriched and strengthened the
fabric of American life. - **John F. Kennedy**

"Immigration is a national security issue for all Americans and a
matter of life and death for many living along our borders. The
urgency of this issue should not be ignored and congressional
action this year is an imperative." - **Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz.**

"The Bush administration would have us believe that this move
toward legalizing the status of illegal immigrants -- lawbreakers -
- will curb the flow of illegal immigration and enhance our border
security. Nothing could be further from the truth." - **David A.
Keene, chairman of the American Conservative Union.**

"I advocate using extreme violence against illegal aliens. Clean
your guns. Have plenty of ammunition. Find out where the
largest gathering of illegal aliens will be near you. Go to the area
well in advance, scope out several places to position yourself and
then do what has to be done." - **Neo-Nazi radio host Hal Turner**

TITLE: **The Border (La Frontera)**

TYPE: 1 Hour Drama series

GENRE: Mystery/Suspense [Socio-political/police-procedural/courtroom]

STYLISTIC INFLUENCES: Short Cuts (Robert Altman) – Homicide (tv/Barry Levinson) – City of God (Fernando Meirelles) – Lonestar (John Sayles) – Traffic (tv/BBC) – The West Wing (Aaron Sorkin) – American Family (Gregory Nava) – Picket Fences (David E. Kelley) – The Practice (David E. Kelley) – Rashomon (Akira Kurosawa)

SETTING

El Paso, Texas / Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua - El Paso Sector - The El Paso Sector covers the entire state of New Mexico and the two western most counties in Texas, Hudspeth and El Paso. This consists of 125,500 square miles, 121,100 square miles in New Mexico and 4,500 square miles in Texas. There are 289 miles of international boundary, 180 miles are land border and 109 miles are river border.

PREMISE

There are few issues hotter in America today than Immigration. Within the Immigration debate, the US-Mexico border is the most contentious. By showing the lives of the people on both sides of **THE BORDER**, a unique and realistic glimpse into the situation can be achieved. Utilizing a dramatic multi-viewpoint mystery/suspense driven storyline (WITHOUT A TRACE, 24, THE EVIDENCE), the *truth* on all sides of the debate can be looked at in an entertaining and illuminating way, while revealing how it affects and intermingles in the lives of people living on both sides of **THE BORDER**. This is a series about the human condition dramatized against the backdrop of two cities separated by political, social, and economic borders.

Over the course of a year, the lives of strangers, on both sides of **THE BORDER** will be brought together in a way they could never have imagined. Their stories will converge as they go about their day-to-day lives on **THE BORDER**. It is the story of both the internal and external journeys people take and the decisions that guide their lives. From a Border Patrol officer nearing retirement, to a young Immigration Lawyer just getting her footing; from an undocumented Day Laborer, to the Family he left behind; from a disillusioned teen longing to cross into America, to a Human trafficker with no way out; from a young mother forced to be a drug mule to feed her children, to a Mexican politician profiting from the trafficking; from a Minuteman doing what he thinks is right, to a Mexican soldier doing what he knows is wrong; from a town devastated by the loss of their men, to a money launderer overseeing the cash sent home to them, these are the people and the lives and the stories of **THE BORDER**. This is the story of how all their lives are interconnected in ways they are yet aware of. Before long they will intersect, and become one. **THE BORDER** will bring them all together. With the current mystery/suspense driven television environment (CSI, WITHOUT A TRACE, LAW & ORDER, THE SHIELD) holding strong, a dramatically new and innovative show such as this will be readily accepted.

THE BORDER will takes an honest and uncompromising look at what was once a founding, albeit controversial, principle of America and is now a contentious issue

driven by an uninformed Nationalism lacking any driving historical context. **THE BORDER** is an issue driven drama by its very nature. It's ability to adjust to the ever-changing legal, moral, and emotional landscape of the immigration debate will not only be its greatest strength, but will also allow for a type of informational drama rarely seen in today's pop culture driven entertainment environment. **THE BORDER** will deliver information about the complexity of immigration issues in a similar fashion that the *WEST WING* led to a better understanding of the complexity of both the presidency and the political machine at large.

By looking dramatically at the lives of the people on **THE BORDER** who are actually affected by Immigration, both legal and illegal, on a daily basis, a broad-spectrum understanding of all points-of-view can be achieved in an entertaining and informative format that will allow for a better-informed debate, while adding an entertaining and emotional context that will resonate with viewers.

THE BORDER asks the questions: What is the price of human dignity? What obligation do we have to each other? What is a human life worth? What sacrifices must be made in an effort to give back dignity to the dead? What makes an American an American? What drives someone to leave his or her own country for another? At what point do people stop helping others and start hurting them instead?

CONCEPT

We are all connected in ways that we could never imagine. We pass by one another on the street everyday and rarely know how our actions affect others, or how they may resonate throughout the fabric of our reality. **THE BORDER** will show this. From the smallest ethnic slur, to the largest compassionate gesture; from the most heinous of crimes, to the simplest human failings; from the most moral of judgments, to the smallest forgiveness, we affect each other every day.

The central mystery of **THE BORDER** is the identity of a *buried child* found on the US side of the border. An investigation lead by retiring Border Patrol Lieutenant Aubrey Houston will be the thread that will eventually connect the characters on both sides of **THE BORDER** to the *buried child*. The closer Aubrey gets to the truth, the more the connections become apparent. Using the inherent intrigue of an investigation as the spine of the story, a tension and anticipation of the conclusion will leave viewers coming back for more. The reveal, early on, that the *buried child* is in fact Chinese and not Mexican will begin the journey of the viewer to a wider knowledge of the immigration issue. By defying the audience's expectations at every turn, the viewer will be drawn into the story and into the lives of those living on **THE BORDER**.

Aubrey Houston is our moral compass, separating socio-political motivations from humanizing truths. Through his determination and compassion for the truth he will take us on a journey of redemption, truth, and sacrifice, leading the viewer to understand that between the thin lines of black and white lays an unrelenting desert of grey. From the streets of El Paso, across **THE BORDER** to the factory worker slums of Guadalajara Izquierdo, we will see that there are many different kinds of borders that separate us and keep us from the truth that we are all the same no matter how far apart we may be.

LOG LINE

THE BORDER is the story of America, yesterday, today, and tomorrow. It is the story of people, separated by borders both real and imagined, and the dreams they carry in their hearts and minds. It is the story of human determination, sacrifice, dignity, hubris, hatred, fear and perseverance.

PILOT

"Buried Child"

The discovery of an infant buried on the US side of the border is the catalyst, which starts a chain of events that will eventually bring everyone involved, on both sides of **THE BORDER**, together.

STORY NOTES

"Buried Child" - This is a rough concept of what the actual events will finally be uncovered to be.

When A.J. arrives at the scene, it is on private ranch property. He notices that the ranch owner has hung dead coyotes on his fence to warn the human "Coyotes" about using his land to transport illegal aliens across **THE BORDER**. When A.J. confronts him about this he tells A.J. that he's had his own warnings from the "Coyotes" in the form of a dead puppy left in the middle of the road leading to his ranch.

This sets up the baby as a possible warning as well.

- It is possible that the Minutemen who find the baby's grave actually have to kill a coyote that has just pulled the baby from a shallow grave. This makes the scene more disturbing and in some ways more poignant. The baby's remains are autopsied, which confirms it's Chinese and not Mexican, and also shows that the baby wasn't actually dead when it was buried because dirt is found in the lungs. The parents buried it thinking it was dead, but now it becomes a murder investigation looking for the parents whose whereabouts are unknown. Of course when they find them they would be devastated to know that they had actually killed their child. Maybe the baby was crying loudly and the "Coyote" yells back to shut the kid up, as well as pressure from the other immigrants crammed into the truck. The Mother attempts to silence the child but accidentally smothers it (see last episode of MASH). Her wailing at this discovery causes the "Coyote" to pull over and kick her and her husband out. As the truck drives off, they stand with their dead child on a dark road in the middle of nowhere. They bury their child not knowing that it isn't dead yet and walk into the desert.

The reason for the shallow grave can later be explained beyond just the hardness of the dirt, but by rural Chinese customs.

"Souls of dead infants, for instance, were customarily thought to be ghosts. Should an infant die, the parents often assumed the child had been a ghost in the guise of a child that had come to do them harm. The body of such an infant did not warrant a proper burial. In Shantung, dead infants were simply buried in shallow holes for dogs to exhume and eat. As the people of Shantung said, 'An evil spirit inhabited the child's body, otherwise it would not have died so young. If the dogs eat it, the bad spirit enters the dog and cannot again enter another child who may be born to the same parents.'"

Sample scene dialogue.

AUBREY HOUSTON

We're missin' somethin'. (beat) There's a reason the grave was shallow.

BORDER PATROL OFFICER

I don't know AJ. It'd take a pickaxe to dig a grave out here.

AUBREY HOUSTON

You damn well know if that were your child, you'd bloody your hands to bury it proper. Parents are parents.

BORDER PATROL OFFICER

Parents kill their children AJ. You and I've both seen it.

AUBREY HOUSTON

Murderers (beat) not parents. This baby was swaddled. It was loved.

BORDER PATROL OFFICER

I know that look AJ.

AUBREY HOUSTON

Then you know what it means. This one's mine.

BORDER PATROL OFFICER

The jurisdiction's going to get sticky here.

AUBREY HOUSTON

I'll use peanut butter to get it out of my hair.

CHARACTER PROFILES

This is a rough concept of some of the characters. Their connection to each other and the buried child has yet to be determined. Some of the conceptual characters still need to be fleshed out so as to remove as much stereotyping as possible.

PRIMARY CHARACTERS

Aubrey Jeremiah Houston "AJ" - (60s) [Sam Elliot] - Border Patrol Officer – AJ's journey to being in the BP is long. After Vietnam, he became an officer in the El Paso police department, where his partner for fifteen years was James Garza. He applied and eventually joined the Texas Rangers, with Garza only a few years behind him. They both served in Company E, due to their pre-existing knowledge of the area. Eventually AJ became more interested in the problems that plagued **THE BORDER** so he joined the BP. Now nearing retirement in the BP, he has seen it all. He's in his second marriage, with two boys who are constantly getting into trouble. His second wife, Aimara, is a legal immigrant from Mexico. He's set to retire, but the discovery of a buried child rekindles an unresolved case from earlier in his career leading him on a course of redemption and eventual retribution that could tear his family apart.

Aimara Rosa Maria Cabrera-Houston "Mara" - (40s) [Elizabeth Pena/Constance Marie] – Wife of Aubrey Houston – Came to the US in her late teens, she met A.J. in a bar where she was a waitress. She became a legal citizen upon their marrying. She currently runs a small clothing boutique. She is the mother, with A.J., of two boys. She still has family in Mexico.

Jessica Lamont "Jess" – (30s) - Immigration Lawyer – Originally a Criminal Defense lawyer in Brooklyn, Jess moved to El Paso recently and entered Immigration law after having been brutally attacked by one of her clients. She is the entry into immigration law, while she learns and makes mistakes.

James Michael Garza – (60s) – Minuteman – He is one of the founding members of the El Paso Sector Minutemen. He's an ex-Texas Ranger and AJ's old partner from their El Paso PD days. They differ in their views of how to maintain the border. Their many debates and disagreements will be a springboard for discussion of the issue. Although he doesn't agree with AJ, they are friends and he is often instrumental in helping AJ find information he normally would not be able to. He is a second-generation American citizen and very proud of this fact. He uses his heritage as an example of how the issue of border security is not a racially motivated one.

William Abrán Houston "Will" – (19) – Cabrera-Houston Son #1 -

Jonathan Galeno Houston – (21) – Cabrera-Houston Son #2 -

SECONDARY CHARACTERS

[Name TBD] – (18) – Disillusioned Mexican Youth – He is the money earner of his family. After an accident in a factory, his father can no longer work and simply drinks his days away. He wishes to cross to America where he believes he will be able to earn enough money to send it home to care for his mother and sister.

[Name TBD] – (30s) - Day Laborer – He has a wife and three children he can't see just over the border in Juarez. He sends the majority of his paycheck back home to them. He is in constant fear that his wife and or girls will be brutalized while he is away.

[Name TBD] – (30s) - Wife of Day Laborer – She subsists mainly on what her husband can send her. She lives in fear of the predators that know that her husband is no longer there. She lives in the Guadalajara Izquierdo neighborhood northwest of Juarez and works in a factory. She and her husband have three girls.

[Name TBD] – (50s) – Money Launderer

[Name TBD] – (60s) - Coyote (Human Trafficker) – He's been at this for years. He's spent a collective six years of his life in US prisons for human trafficking.

[Name TBD] - (30s) - Drug Dealer – He is a young up and comer in a larger drug organization. Having been on the streets for most of his life, he is hardened and views his livelihood as the only way to make it in Juarez. He is constantly trying to get new blood into the organization. Due to his good looks, one of his responsibilities is to recruit new drug mules for moving the product over the border. His cover is running a club frequented by young American kids looking for fun over the border. Unsuspecting American girls are one of his sources for drug mules.

[Name TBD] – (20s) - Parents of the buried child (Chinese)

[Name TBD] – (40s) - Immigrant's Rights Activist

[Name TBD] - (40s) - Juarez Politician

[Name TBD] - (18) - Drug Mule

[Name TBD] - (30s) – Mexican Soldier

THE BORDER (Concept)

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[Name TBD] - (50s) - DEA Agent

IMMIGRATION FACTS

- There are currently 11,106 Active Border Patrol Officers in the US today
- The US-Mexico border's total length is 1,951 miles (3,141 km), according to figures given by the IBWC. It is the most frequently crossed international border in the world, with some 350 million people crossing legally from one country to the other every year.
- According to the USBP, 1,954 people died crossing the U.S.-Mexico border between the years 1998-2004, from all causes.
- It is currently estimated that between 8 and 12 million immigrants are living illegally in the United States.
- 1.6 million illegal entrants were detained by the USBP in 2005.
- The number of Chinese immigrants crossing illegally into the U.S. via Mexico has risen 3000% in the last few years. They now rank 5th on the list of the top 5 OTM (Other Than Mexican) immigrants attempting to enter the U.S. illegally.
- Over the last three years OTM apprehensions have more than tripled, increasing by almost 220%. This trend is in stark contrast to apprehensions of Mexican aliens, which have remained relatively stable over the same period.
- Language referring to "illegal entrants" has undergone numerous changes over the years. In the 1955 INS Annual Report, the term "wetbacks" was used for those illegally crossing the Mexican border. For many years "deportable aliens" was the phrase of choice. Since 9/11 "terrorists" appears in official documents to refer to all "illegal entrants" whatever their purpose — those seeking work, engaging in cross-border smuggling or other forms of criminal behavior, in addition to terrorists per se.
- Households headed by illegal aliens imposed more than \$26.3 billion in costs on the federal government in 2002 and paid only \$16 billion in taxes, creating a net fiscal deficit of almost \$10.4 billion, or \$2,700 per illegal household.
- The average minimum daily wage set by the Mexican Government for 2006 is the equivalent of \$ 4.20.