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WHY WALLS WON'T WORK

Repairing the US-Mexico Divide

Michael Dear

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"On Monday, prominent Mexican peace activists renewed their call for the United States to stop weapons trafficking across the border, saying that the Connecticut shooting made the need for action all the more clear." CNN, Jan 16th

Twenty years ago, in the mid-1990s, the US began to build fences through the major border towns in order to prevent crossings from Mexico by undocumented migrants. Ten years later, following the attacks of 9/11, a massive fortification and militarization of the entire border zone was begun.

In December 2002, Michael Dear began travelling the entire length of the US- Mexico border on both sides - a journey of 4,000 miles. Along the way, Dear witnessed the closing of the borders, and saw the steady birth of the 'third nation' – the communities that span the border line. Dear notes that when we think of the border separating the United States from Mexico, we envision a war zone marked by violent, poverty-ridden towns, cities, and maquiladoras on one side and an increasingly militarized network of barriers, and surveillance systems on the other.

In **WHY WALLS WON'T WORK *Repairing the US-Mexico Divide***, Dear examines the historical growth of the border region which began without the current physical barriers that separate the two countries and, despite the walls, remains a place of continuity and connection. Through a series of evocative portraits of contemporary border communities, Dear traces the border's long history of cultural interaction. Dear warns us that this vibrant zone of cultural and social amalgamation is endangered both by highly restrictive American policies, and the violence along Mexico's side of the border. In just under 300 pages, the book combines a broad historical perspective with a direct overview of present-day problems, while forming the basis of a major intellectual intervention into one of the most hotly contested political issues of our time.

Michael Dear is at the University of California-Berkeley, and is available for interview, and articles, and op-Eds.

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* The four US states that border Mexico, with their respective border lengths are, from west to east: California - 220 Kilometers (137 miles); Arizona - 564 Kilometers (350 miles); New Mexico - 338 Kilometers (210 miles); Texas along the Rio Grande River - 2,019 Kilometers (1,254 miles).