



What the Border Is.



- The border is not the warzone or dark script that they've written and filmed for you.
- The border isn't a simple equation where the sum of the parts equals illegal drugs and illegal immigration.
- The border isn't the place where people rush and storm the country with a ferocious rage that threatens your life or your safety. January 6 at the Capitol showed us where the real threat to our country lies – within our borders, but not here at the border. It never was here.
- And yet, the border is despised by the far right, misunderstood by most, and milked by the opportunists who use us for their political and financial gain.
- The border is not the place for you to keep squeezing out your millions in congressional earmarks for more and more surveillance, guns, and agents.
- The border is not for you to keep building out a multi-billion-dollar industry for your green uniform friends and your suit-and-tie contractor friends.
- The border is not the place where you can keep telling the same tired national security story involving fear and fake emergencies.
- The border is a big 2,000-mile place that is both good and bad. Like your place, like anyplace.
- The border is people, almost 15 million strong.
 - The border is brown: the land and its people.
 - The border is the Rio Grande.
 - The border is sacred indigenous land.
 - The border is mountains, canyons, and desert.
- The border is 48 noisy ports of entry.
 - The border is the largest legal crossing point in the world.
 - The border is thousands and thousands of daily 18-wheeler trucks, and more than \$670 billion in trade per year.
- The border is a driver of American commerce and the place that lets you buy your car, your TV, your vegetables.
- The border is strip malls, fast food and sprawl.
 - The border is ranches, growing cities, and nature parks.
 - The border is historic forts and ancient memory.
- The border is rancheras, raggaeton, cumbias, country and hip-hop.
- The border is older than the United States.
- The border is the kingfisher, the ocelot and jaguarundi.
- The border is a rendezvous of the Central and Mississippi flyways, the loveliest bird migration corridor on the continent.
- The border is a booming ecotourism hotspot. But you wouldn't know that, because all you've been told is that we're little more than drug dealers, rapists and killers who just might buy a home next to you.
- The border cries for justice, for you to right so many past wrongs.
- The border is stolen lands.
- The border is 33% impoverished.
- The border is a place that lacks the same resources as many of your communities for medical care, better paying jobs and higher education.
- The border is untapped ecological and economic maravillas.
- The border is missed opportunity.
- The border is hard-working people struggling to earn a living wage.
- The border is solar, wind and clean energy that can't be tapped to power the economy because we don't have the infrastructure or political vision to get it done.
- Because the story that's been told about us is wrong, all wrong. That somehow we're little more than bad hombres and endless security threats.
- If that's all that you can see, then you can't see the possibilities. You can't see me.
- Because the border is you. The border is me.

—Tricia Cortez Jan. 31, 2021

BIO

Tricia Cortez, executive director of the Rio Grande International Study Center, Laredo's only environmental nonprofit, carries out its mission to protect and preserve the community's only source of drinking water—the Rio Grande—and environment. Co-founder of the No Border Wall Laredo Coalition, she is a San Antonio native graduating from Princeton Univ. with a B.A. in public policy. She moved to Laredo in 2001 where she worked seven years as a senior reporter for the Laredo Morning Times.