



By the Lake of Sleeping Children

Luis Alberto Urrea , John Lueders-Booth (Photographer)

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By the Lake of Sleeping Children explores the post-NAFTA and Proposition 187 border purgatory of garbage pickers and dump dwellers, gawking tourists, and relief workers, fearsome coyotes, and their desperate clientele. In 16 indelible portraits, Urrea illuminates the horrors and the simple joys of people trapped between the two worlds of Mexico and the United States--and ignored by both. The result is a startling and memorable work of first-person reportage.

By the Lake of Sleeping Children Details

Date : Published September 1st 1996 by Anchor

ISBN : 9780385484190

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Format : Paperback 208 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Politics, Social Issues



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Download and Read Free Online By the Lake of Sleeping Children Luis Alberto Urrea , John Lueders-Booth (Photographer)

From Reader Review By the Lake of Sleeping Children for online ebook

Eris says

This collection of essays centers around the orphans, dump dwellers and trash pickers in Tijuana. As they slag through our trash (courtesy NAFTA) to make a living, or beg, or accept missionary charity because the prayer is worth the trade for food and clothes, you follow along a guilty observer. These are humans, they don't live that far away. A human created border, a wall of poverty... marginalized by their own countrymen (as we do with our homeless and poor), criminalized by our countrymen - they just want to live. Urrea takes us briefly into their worlds, giving a snapshot of those who live with a sense of humor even at the destruction of all they own because there is no other way to get by. While this is dated in regards to the political situation, the words are relevant as ever. Humanizing, hard to read, and beautiful - I recommend this to anyone who has interest in solving the problems of poverty, fixing our relationship with Mexico and its citizens, or who just has an interest in humanity and how we treat each other. What you do unto the least of these...

sue glenzer thomas says

Outstanding

I am always sad when I finish one of Luis's books. His slurs of writing had always made me feel as it I was standing right next to him seeing everything just as he described it.

Kristin says

Very graphic. Some parts were very obscene. If it wasn't required for my class I wouldn't have finished it. Description of life on the Mexican/American border.

Devon says

Want some insight into the issues at the border? Read this (or other Urrea books). This book was so well written the words disappeared as I read and I was walking through the "dompe" with Urrea, seeing, smelling, tasting, hearing everything. Even though the book was written well before the current crisis and administrative "response" to the border crisis, Urrea foresaw what would happen very clearly.

I cannot say more without spoilers so I'll use the Richard Rodriguez quote at the beginning of the book:

"The illegal immigrant is the bravest among us. The most modern among us. The prophet...The peasant knows the reality of our world decades before the California suburbanite will ever get the point."

Word.

Janet Ledford says

I have read this book over and over.

Khalia says

Urrea described two chapters as being brutal and obscene. I am grateful that I didn't skip them. They were integral to the story. The last chapter touched my heart. A family headed by a resilient Juana and a rascal named Manuel proved that hope dies last. They lost everything in a fire but they still persevered.

Abbie Navarrete says

After reading "Into the beautiful north" by this author I set out to find everything else he has ever written and found this book. It would not appear to be a feel good book after all conditions in the border and especially for the people who live in the "domples" are terrible. But as much as it is hard to imagine people living in these conditions what I came away with was admiration for these people who don't seem to ever feel sorry for themselves and simply set out to survive. Beautifully written, honest and moving a must read.

Michelle says

This is short narratives about people living in Tijuana, as well as the author's personal experiences working in Baja California giving aid to orphanages around the state. He takes true stories and adds a poet's touch, taking journalism to a more human level. It's beautiful and heartbreakingly hilarious and makes you want to cry. It encapsulates the border and the daily contradictions that make this place so confusing and amazing, and explains some of the underlying political reasons behind why it has so damn many problems. It was written almost ten years ago, so if you are to read this book today, know that every gut-wrenching story that you read about poverty, the border patrol, and the police presence in both the U.S. and Mexico is now probably at least 10 times worse than when he wrote the book.

Kevin says

I read this book while taking a class on environmental injustice. While it is certainly not what I normally read, I found that a combination of reading and discussion helped to bring out the important ideas within the stories. Realistic representation of what these people go through every day to survive in the border town of Tijuana.

Urrea goes to great lengths to describe the details which make this town unique. Scenes are vivid and characters unique. His own understanding of Mexico and United States allows him to guide the reader through the text and connect them to those ideas.

I would recommend, especially for those interested in the environment, human rights, justice/injustice, etc..

Rachel Blanchard says

Have an opinion about illegal immigrants? Then this book is for you! You'll learn so much through the stories and statistics of Mexico's most oppressed -- the men, women, and children who are born in, live in, and are eventually buried in the garbage dumps of Tijuana, Mexico. That's right. They live in shacks, right in the garbage. And when they die, they're buried in the dump. Although their graves are marked, their bodies often float to the surface during floods. It's a crazy life of hopelessness that illustrates the struggle to escape at any cost...even if that means facing arrest, abuse, or even death in a desert crossing into the U.S.

Judy says

Had to read this book for my Borderland class. It was such a great book. It really humbles you down. The book has some complicated topics, death, poverty, abuse. BUT it's totally still worth the read, it truly makes you open your eyes.

Paul says

First published more than 20 years ago, this book remains sadly relevant and shows that our immigration system has been broken for a long time. But, as Urrea writes in the introduction, this isn't about politics or trends or data points or sociology. It is simply a book about humans. Poverty-stricken humans facing unimaginable hardships who somehow manage to never lose hope. Nowhere is that more clear than in the final chapter. After seeing their meager house burn down, a husband and wife begin dreaming of a new home, the one they will build now, the one that will have a rose garden because, as Juana says, "Roses, they're like music for your eyes."

Deborah says

Urrea does a good job of illustrating the cycle of dependence between the US and Mexico, or the cycle of oppressor and oppressed, if you will. I personally didn't see the author as blaming Mexico alone; there is plenty of scathing commentary on US involvement from foreign policy, NAFTA, and maquiladoras*, down to the individuals who take a day trip down to hand out food, clothes, and hygienic products.

John says

I hope this one exorcised Luis' devils. It's hard to believe how much "bad stuff" the author encountered in the Tijuana area. Unfortunately, I believe every word of it. Very powerful, however sad.

Mona Langer says

Insightful and inspiring. Urrea is a master of sharing the story of this population/community. There is so much I want to say...but I am left speechless.
