UNH Researcher's Book Traces History of Contentious U.S.-Mexico Immigration Policy

Lori Wright
UNH Media Relations

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UNH Researcher's Book Traces History of Contentious U.S.-Mexico Immigration Policy
DURHAM, N.H. – In 2008, the United States allocated $3.5 billion for border patrol and $1 billion for the construction of a 700-mile fence between the United States and Mexico. The fence is unfinished, and the border remains a locus of anxiety—and often deadly struggle—as the drug war rages and jobs in both nations continue to disappear.

Although immigration and the U.S./Mexico border are perennial election issues, few Americans are aware of the long history of racial, political, religious, and class conflict that have resulted in America's contentious immigration policies.

In his new book, “Running the Border Gauntlet,” Laurence French, senior research associate at Justiceworks at the University of New Hampshire, traces this complex history, examining events that eventually led to the forceful annexation of the majority of Mexico under the pretense of Manifest Destiny and that contribute to tensions between the two nations today.

“What happens in the next few years of this long-standing, if tumultuous relationship, between Mexico and the United States, may dramatically shape the histories of both nations for many days to come,” French said.

The story begins with religious discord between Protestants and Catholics and continues through the development of an economy based on slave labor, the annexation of Texas, the Mexican Revolution, the Bracero Program, NAFTA, and the "war on drugs."

Among other revelations, the book challenges the long-held myths of the Texas revolution and the heroic role of the Texas Rangers and documents a continuing disregard for the welfare of indigenous populations. Drawing on all that went before, it explains not only the how and why of current U.S. immigration policy, but also its often-devastating effects on migrant workers.

French is a senior research associate at UNH Justiceworks and professor emeritus of psychology at Western New Mexico University. He served as a senior Fulbright scholar assigned to the University of Sarajevo in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He has written more than 270 academic publications, including 15 books. He received the 1999 National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) research award for his work in assessing substance abuse among minorities in the U.S. southwest.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling more than 12,200 undergraduate and 2,200 graduate students.

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