

Modern Agonies in Ancient Mexican Villages

The New York Times Blogs

(Lens)

June 16, 2011 Thursday

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Section: MULTIMEDIA

Length: 287 words

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Highlight: To find out more about the immigration crisis in California, Matt Black traveled - arduously - through a remote region south of Mexico City.

Body

Journalists from the United States often stop at the **Mexican** border when they're covering immigration issues, almost as if the crisis starts and stops on this side.

Matt Black, 40, who has spent years documenting the migrant population in the Central Valley ("Oaxacan Exodus"), could very well see the effects in California. But for "People of the Clouds," he wanted to understand what has happening on the other side of the border.

It's not easy. To get to the remote Mixteca mountain region - including parts of the states of Oaxaca, Guerrero and Puebla - he typically takes a 12-hour bus ride from Mexico City to a highway town, from which he either hitches a ride in the back of a truck or walks to the **villages** where he photographs. As he did in the Central Valley, Mr. Black immerses himself in his subject, spending up to six weeks in the region.

His grainy, black-and-white pictures show a culture that has not been greatly touched by the **modern** world and communities that have lost most of their population, like the **village** of San Miguel Cuevas. "In the span of a generation, this whole culture is vanishing," Mr. Black said. "You can't find anyone between the ages of 16 and 45."

Mr. Black has been working on this story 10 years. He is not yet finished. In fact, he has begun a campaign on Kickstarter to raise money for a return trip to the Mixteca region, a once-fertile area that has turned into a dustbowl. In this way, he can investigate the environmental forces behind the migration. Still, he said, "It's about the people first and foremost."

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Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Document-Type: News

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Publication-Type: Web Blog

Subject: IMMIGRATION (90%); WRITERS (79%); MOUNTAINS (77%); CROWDFUNDING (69%); CUSTOMS & CULTURAL HERITAGE (67%)

Organization: Kickstarter

Industry: WRITERS (79%)

Geographic: MEXICO CITY, MEXICO (79%); CALIFORNIA, USA (79%); MEXICO (94%); INDONESIA (79%); UNITED STATES (79%); Mexico

Load-Date: June 21, 2011

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