



TEENY TALL...

TO YOU!

POETS Among THE CRANES

The Raving Dress

## Construction of First Border Wall Segment to Begin in a South Texas Wildlife Refuge

By Kristin Barendsen

In this place where flyways converge,  
where wings rest from long migrations to the four  
directions,  
In this zone where ecologies overlap,  
where tropics merge with wetlands, desert, coast, and  
plains,  
On this land where mythical creatures are still embodied  
and ocelots hunt nine-banded armadillos  
and jaguarundis yowl across the river to find their mates

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Here, the bulldozers are scheduled to break ground first.  
Here, the concrete mixers are slated to dump their contents  
first

to build a levee higher  
than some birds can fly, higher  
than six of my bodies standing feet on shoulders.

Because the ocelots don't have papers  
and the jaguarundis are coming for your job  
and willing to work for food.  
Because the *coyotes* traffic in humans as well as rabbits.

Because a river that cuts between countries  
is not enough—  
we must have a knife blade severing the earth,  
dividing wing from sky,  
peeling fur from skin.

Because extinction is what we strive toward these days:  
Extinction of those endangered cats,

of the migratory birds  
flying in from Brazil and Colombia,  
of the migratory families  
smuggled in from Mexico and Ecuador.

Extinction of immigration,  
of human decency,  
and eventually of humanity.

Because a concrete wall is a way to separate javelina from  
javelina | heron from nest | *madre*  
from *niño* | us from them | white fur from brown wing  
And a concrete wall will erase the footprints the tracks |  
silence the birdsong, yowls, cries |  
collect bones at its base. Because a concrete wall higher  
than six of my bodies standing feet on shoulders  
will be a deathtrap in hurricane country  
keeping tongues from meeting river when it's dry  
blocking flight away from river when it floods.

I want to make my body into a bridge over that wall  
let the cat claws walk my back  
guide a flock of land birds toward their habitat.

I want to make my spine a stairway so deported Dreamers  
can climb back,  
slide down my arms on the other side  
I'll be the corridor that wildlife need to survive,  
the trail, the path, the overpass.

Feet to hands, my curve will span longer than a skyway,  
stretch wider than a two-lane road



So I can take the weight of whole families without trembling,  
hide children in my pockets when ICE comes looking.  
And at night when my arms rise, my body will become a  
ladder of stars  
leading to a boundless place.

I'll be that girded arc until  
Spanish moss drips from my elbows,  
yellowthroats roost on my shoulders  
indigo snakes bracelet my ankles and  
tropical butterflies explore the blooms of my ears my lips.

I'll be the refuge  
where travelers have a place to rest  
and hook-billed kites can make their nest  
with strands of my graying hair.

## THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HELD AND HELD

by Catherine Lee

Held in your parent's arms, with love  
secured by a same-blood bond against fear,  
a long list of unknown terrors  
enumerated, caused by, encountered  
throughout asylum journey  
in the company of family  
you would be held close.

then

Held against your will, by force of arms  
ripped from parent's arms sobbing,  
screaming loss, a child in pain  
enclosed in chain link cage  
in warehouse, freezing cold *hielera*  
without defense against their fear  
of 'others' like you,  
so many of them acting out  
their terror upon  
your devalued alien flesh,  
their compassion comatose.

We have to wonder why  
they call their zero tolerance law approved,  
mandated, justified by their  
Bible's isolated verse.  
We have to wonder how  
they calculate that wailing cries of toddlers  
mask play acting by political design.  
They hear orchestral choir