Dealing Death and Drugs: The Big Business of Dope in the U.S. and Mexico

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INTRODUCTION

2008 WAS DIFFERENT

El Paso sits on the Rio Grande, aka the U.S./Mexico border, across from Ciudad Juárez. I was born here. My co-author Susie Byrd moved to El Paso with her family when she was seven. Each of us grew up a few minutes from the river and Ciudad Juárez—this experience is the lens through which we write this book.

This is where Latin America and North America meet to form the largest binational community in the world. It’s the point at which the 400-year-old Camino Real del Tierra Adentro—after having passed through Mexico City, Durango, Chihuahua and Juárez—crosses into present-day U.S. territory, continuing north through El Paso and on to Santa Fe, New Mexico.

This book is about what happens in our community when the value of the drugs that move through this ancient trade corridor exceeds the value of human life. We will explore the economy of the illegal drug trade, with a focus on that drug the cartels find most important to their bottom line: marijuana. With first person accounts, court transcripts and federal data, we will demonstrate how this simple weed has become the center