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Q&A With Jorge Ramos

By Carlos J. Queirós, November 2005

The author of *Dying to Cross* talks about immigration and the American dream

In Dying to Cross: The Worst Immigrant Tragedy in American History (Morir en el intento: la peor tragedia de inmigrantes en la historia de los Estados Unidos), award-winning journalist Jorge Ramos chronicles a trip across the U.S.-Mexico border in May 2003 in which 19 undocumented immigrants died. With empathy and poignant precision, Ramos argues that no hands are clean in this or similar tragedies, which are repeated almost daily. [AARP Segunda Juventud](#) recently talked to Ramos about his book.

Why write *Dying to Cross*?

I want readers to know that people are dying every day at the border trying to cross into the United States. We can disagree on many issues about immigration, but I think we can all agree that people should not die trying to achieve the American dream. By describing—in the words of the survivors—the worst immigrant tragedy in American history, I hope incidents like this do not happen again.

How do you define the American dream?

If you are an unemployed Mexican or making five dollars a day, and you can make exactly the same amount of money in 40 to 60 minutes in the United States, that is, in very simple terms, the American dream for you and your family.

Emotionally, which chapter was the most difficult to write?

Chapter Four, in which I describe what happened to 73 immigrants locked inside a trailer truck for four hours at temperatures reaching 173 degrees.

None of the women died. Any ideas why?

The women, simply put, were stronger than the men psychologically and physically. They didn't waste their energy screaming and banging the walls inside the trailer. A large group of women from Central America spent most of the trip praying; that kept them calm.

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