



THE CHANGE AGENT

Adult Education for
Social Justice: News,
Issues, and Ideas

IMMIGRATION

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A Story of Push and Pull



The California Department of Transportation assigned graphic artist John Hood, a Navajo and a Vietnam veteran, to develop a caution sign for California highways. Posted in 1990, it quickly became a cultural icon for those who accept and those who oppose immigration, both legal and illegal.

As he sketched, Hood tried to imagine the despair that might drive such a family across the border and onto a dangerous foreign highway. He drew from his own experience fighting in Vietnam, where he had seen families run for their lives as villages were attacked. He remembered stories his Navajo parents had told him about ancestors who died trying to escape as U.S. soldiers marched them onto reservations.

The drawing was finished in a week. Even without faces, you can see the urgency that the characters feel. "It doesn't just mean they are running across the freeway," Hood said. "It means they are running from something else as well. I think it's a struggle for a lot of things, for opportunities, for freedom."

Source: <chnm.gmu.edu/cyh/primary-sources/289>