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EDITOR'S NOTE

My Story

I sent a message this morning to a man who lives in a nylon tent outside a church in Mexico City. He won't reply until much later when he logs on to the city WiFi via a hotspot near La Merced market to check his immigration status. This is also why I texted him: to see if he's been granted an appointment at the border. He and his family have been waiting for eight months, under a canopy of trees, with no running water and a one-plate camping cooker for a kitchen.

His name is Etienne C. He is 45 years old. He's from Haiti. He speaks Créole, French, Portuguese, and Spanish. He's learning English. He allowed me to write about him.

Etienne C. fled Haiti first to the Dominican Republic and later to Brazil. He has a girlfriend who loves him but refuses to marry him, and together they have a son, a 4-year-old boy with autism who likes to dance. I met them last March after I had interviewed a priest whose nearby church serves breakfast to migrants.

I mention Etienne C. because I became an American citizen this summer, two weeks before I joined *The Santa Fe New Mexican* and *Pasatiempo* as staff writer. Originally, I had the idea of introducing myself to our readers in my first *Pasatiempo* column by talking about my naturalization process. It would have made for an interesting piece to write and perhaps to read too; you wouldn't believe the questions, the forms, the medical exams, the over-the-top yet moving oath ceremony.

But here's the thing: I cannot discuss my naturalization process before first mentioning Etienne C. and through him, the thousands of people south of the border — and north of the Canadian border too.

Before they've even reached the border, before they've been granted an appointment with ICE at one of the ports of entry, before they can even start dreaming of standing where I stood during that oath ceremony, these people have already given up everything they had. The ones I spoke to in Mexico City are not dangerous criminals. They're human beings. All they want is a safe place to live, dignity, a future, and in the case of Etienne C. and his son, the care and acceptance the little boy needs to flourish in this world.

I was one of them once. I still am. I was a child refugee in France in the early 1980s. We crossed Checkpoint Charlie in Berlin, got on a train, and lived in an assimilation camp outside La Rochelle and later, in a shelter in Paris by the Grande Mosquée. My mother cleaned houses. My father, the political dissident, picked grapes in the fall. We immigrated to Canada when I was 10, with four suitcases and no money.

I hesitated before applying for American citizenship. It's a privilege, but so is being an immigrant — an alien. There's humanity to being the underdog and power in knowing and understanding and feeling what so many don't.

I mention Etienne C. because as a journalist, I get to meet people whose lived experiences challenge me and remind me of why I do what I do — and of who I am.



That's also how I met Javier Zamora, author of *Solito*, at the Santa Fe International Literary Festival last May. Zamora grew up undocumented. He now holds Temporary Protected Status. He was with his mother and had six minutes for the interview. I told him of my hesitation. I asked him why I should become a citizen.

"So you can vote," he said. "Because I can't."

Ania Hull, Staff Writer
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Magazine of Arts,
Entertainment & Culture
September 13, 2024

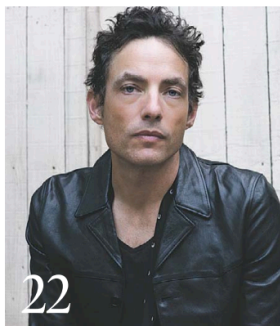


PLAYERS OF NOTE

THE NEW MEXICO JAZZ FESTIVAL MAKES THE SCENE

Pasatiempo

September 13, 2024



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This innovative Santa Fe space provides inspiration and education for community-driven creation.

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Presenting our annual guide to fall's best cultural offerings, including classical music, big-name entertainers, theater, and dance.

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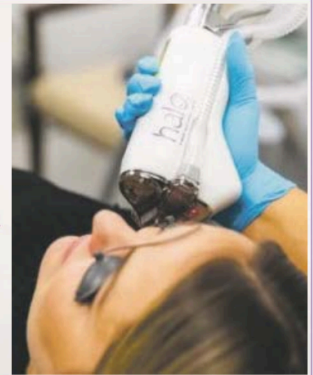
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Retirement



JOE FERGUSON, PhD

PhD Clinical Psychology, Fielding University
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For my present purpose retirement begins at the point where, without further earned income, your best projection of your net worth at the time of your death is zero. Beyond this point you should regard everything you do as voluntary, whether you continue working in the same profession or not. The world is vast and wide and there is no possibility of scratching the surface of its opportunity in a lifetime, yet many people fail to take advantage of their freedom when they can. Sometimes this is due to insecurity, pointless greed or lack of imagination, but the most common obstacle to retirement and its proper exploitation is *productivity anxiety*. Productive societies like ours succeed by conditioning their citizens to work hard and to feel lazy and worthless if they do not. The adaptive value of productivity anxiety is clear. Mother Nature likes to keep us on our toes and she is prepared to motivate us with the stick.

Many people are haunted by the suspicion they may not be sufficiently productive or engaged, especially when they are contemplating or embarking on retirement. Previously, they could defend their productivity and engagement simply by stating their profession or course of study. Some people feel the need for an equivalent justification of their time in retirement, when you should not have to justify yourself. If you sit in the lotus posture for seven years of silence and then achieve enlightenment, have you been idle most of that time? If you engage in interesting capers of no particular significance for the rest of your life you should not feel guilty about that. What are you doing with your time and what are you going to do with it in the future? Trust me. Call me.

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