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School Crossing

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Project Title: School Crossing

Abstract:

School Crossing is the story of the Venezuelan children who have turned to Colombia for an education. It follows two Venezuelan families with children enrolled at the *Megacolegio de la Frontera* in Cúcuta, Colombia. One family has relocated to Colombia and is grappling with growing xenophobia towards the migrant population. The other still lives in Venezuela and faces a complicated daily journey to cross the border.

Venezuela is experiencing one of the worst humanitarian crises in the history of the continent and its education system is suffering the consequences. Roughly half of all children in Venezuela are not enrolled in schools due to a lack of water, food and transport, and teachers. In response, Colombia has opened its doors to a flood of educational refugees, modifying its policies to enroll all Venezuelan students regardless of their immigration status. There are currently over 140,000 Venezuelan students enrolled in schools across Colombia.

Script:

VIDEO	AUDIO
Sunrise shots CU of plants WS migrants cross **GPX: Locator** **COLOMBIA-VENEZUELA BORDER** MS migrants cross Man carries child across river CU Feet walk along rocks WS Migrants cross river MS feet cross CU Feet crossing river CU, WS Elderly woman is carried across river Man carries heavy load on back People walk down slope Mom carries young toddler across the river WS Teen students cross river WS Venezuela border	*SFX: Nat sound, song* **EVERY DAY, THOUSANDS OF VENEZUELANS ARE CROSSING INTO COLOMBIA ON A COMMUTE FOR SURVIVAL.** **IT'S NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR THEM TO ACCESS FOOD, MEDICINES AND OTHER NECESSITIES AT HOME — AND THAT INCLUDES SCHOOL.**
Melanie and Maiker walking across Venezuela border into Colombia	**Melanie:** It's so hard to cross here. It really tires me out. It smells awful and I have to be careful not to twist my ankles.
Crowd walks path and man yells out	[SOUND UP] Man: The bridge is closed, so better get used to these paths! Maiker: No, this isn't fit for children.
Maiker holds her kids hands WS grossing river	**NINE-YEAR-OLD MELANIE PALACIOS CROSSES THIS INTERNATIONAL BORDER EVERY DAY WITH HER**

Colombian military guards walk toward bridge	**MOTHER AND BROTHER — JUST TO GET TO CLASS.** **IT'S A TWO-HOUR JOURNEY, AND RIGHT NOW, ILLEGAL PATHS ARE THE ONLY WAY ACROSS.**
Melanie and mom and Andrés walk through crowds Maiker guides her kids through streets	**Melanie:** We see the national guard there with these huge guns, I get so scared and I feel like crying **Maiker:** I try and pretend like everything is ok. But there are moments when I feel overwhelmed. It's not easy to do this with two kids. It's hard and I feel so much responsibility.
CU Plants MS Police Truck at border CU Police feet CU Police hand on gun Police walks past men on guard	*SFX: Song with tension begins*
GPX: Time stamp **Feb 23rd 2019** Guards on bridge Aerial bridge footage of protest Current bridge closed, with migration gates blocking it off Venezuelan guards Burned humanitarian truck Men guide migrants in certain directions as they cross into Venezuelan territory A-roll Maiker Palacios	**VENEZUELA CLOSED ITS BORDER BRIDGES IN FEBRUARY AFTER DISPUTES OVER FOREIGN AID TURNED VIOLENT.** **SINCE THEN, STUDENTS HAVE BEEN FORCED TO TAKE THESE ILLEGAL PATHS CONTROLLED BY ARMED GANGS, WHO OFTEN CHARGE MIGRANTS UP TO A WEEK'S SALARY TO CROSS.** **THE GANGS HAVE BEEN MAKING EXCEPTIONS FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN IN UNIFORM.**

CU of feet walking through dirt	**Maiker:** We can only cross through these illegal paths that are very inhumane and unsuitable for children. But we do it because we have to get them to school. It's a huge sacrifice but I do it for my children.
School Zone sign Maiker and family arrive outside school	
Kids change into school shoes and uniform CU feet Megacolegio School Sign Melanie hugs mom Maiker goodbye	**Melanie:** I don't really care about the risk because I like this school and I want to learn. I always want to be a good student. **AT THIS SCHOOL IN CUCUTA, COLOMBIA, 80 PERCENT OF STUDENTS ARE VENEZUELAN.**
Venezuelan mother talks to child Administrator lets children in through gate and talks to parents.	***[Verité Soundup:]*** **Mother:** Tell your teacher I'll pick you up at 5 p.m. **Administrator:** We are working on reopening the bridge for students. When that happens, we will resume our normal schedule and school will let out at 5:20 p.m. Until then, the school will end at 5 p.m. This is for your safety, so be early. Understood? At 5 p.m.
WS School halls Aerial shot of students sitting in stairwell	***SFX Bell rings***
Students sitting at desks Melanie sits at desk	**ROUGHLY HALF OF VENEZUELAN CHILDREN ARE NOT IN SCHOOL AT ALL.** **MELANIE IS AMONG THE 140,000 VENEZUELAN STUDENTS WHO HAVE SOUGHT AN ALTERNATIVE IN COLOMBIA.**

A-roll Melanie Palacios **GPX: Lower Thirds** **Melanie Palacios** **Venezuelan Student**	**Melanie:** I enrolled in this school three weeks ago because my school in Venezuela was bad. They weren't mean, but it was always the same topics. And we almost never had school anyway.
Teacher teaching science class	[SOUND UP] Teacher
CU melanie looks at worksheet	**Melanie:** But I love going to school here because I always learn new things.
Teacher talking about liquid and gas	[SOUND UP]
Parents sit on sidewalk outside school	**BEFORE THE BORDER CLOSED, MAIKER AND MANY OTHER PARENTS WOULD GO BACK TO VENEZUELA TO WORK.** **BUT NOW THEY CAN'T AFFORD TO PAY THE GANGS TO CROSS BACK.**
WS six parents sit on sidewalk and talk. MS of Man talking with other parents CU Man's face MS Maiker Palacios talking	[SOUND UP] **Man:** In Venezuelan, there are eighth graders that don't know how to multiply. They don't know basic things like that. **Woman:** And sixth graders mix up their C's and S's. **Man:** Some kids fail but they pass them anyway. **Maiker:** Exactly, they just let them move on. It's pure politics. It's all based on books the government made up to push their agenda. **Woman:** That's how they start molding our children according to their socialist agenda. **Maiker:** Exactly.

WS School hallways MS Principal asks girls question	[SOUND UP] Berbesí: Did you cross the illegal paths today Students: No, but she did? Berbesí: You did?
Preschool teacher writes on board Preschoolers play with play-dough **GPX: Lower Thirds** **German Berbesí** ***Principal- Megacolegio*** A-roll German Berbesí	**Berbesi:** There are schools in Venezuela but no teachers. That's why students come here to Colombia. But once they come here, they can never re-enroll in Venezuelan schools. The government forbids it. Parents worry their children will miss out on their chance to get an education. So they keep crossing the paths even though it's risky for their health and safety. The daily back and forth can be very taxing for a child.
ARCHIVE Footage of Ureña protest	**EARLIER THAT DAY ON THE VENEZUELAN SIDE OF THE BORDER, PARENTS DEMANDED THAT THEIR GOVERNMENT REOPEN THE BRIDGES.**
Archive footage of protest.	[SOUND UP] Bullet sound goes off
Archive footage of protest	**THE VENEZUELAN MILITARY RESPONDED TO THE PROTEST WITH TEAR GAS AND RUBBER BULLETS.**
Motorcycles pass Maiker Palacios speaks to other mothers in school halls	**MAIKER DIDN'T ATTEND THE PROTEST.**
B-roll of conversation between mothers	**Maiker:** The best way to protest is to cross the illegal paths with our children. We're making that sacrifice so the

	government sees what we are willing to do. We don't need to protest like the parent's at the bridge. That's our form of protest. And it was a big sacrifice to expose our children to that difficult path, but it will work. **Woman:** Listen, I saw a dead woman right there on the path. I am not going to keep exposing my child to that. I don't want them to see dead bleeding bodies. **Maiker:** No, but this is our form of peaceful protest.
School b-roll Colombian flag at border checkpoint	**COLOMBIA'S EDUCATION DEPARTMENT UPDATED ITS POLICIES IN 2017 TO ENROLL ALL VENEZUELAN STUDENTS REGARDLESS OF THEIR IMMIGRATION STATUS.**
A-roll: **GPX: Lower Thirds** **Doris Angarita** **Secretary of Education**	**Secretary:** As more migrants arrive, we face obstacles like xenophobia and discrimination because don't have enough resources for our own people but we also need to help Venezuelan migrants.
Kinberlín Ramirez on patio CU cutting potatoes CU Libia Ramirez talks to daughter Kim in kitchen	**AS MANY AS 50,000 VENEZUELANS CROSS BACK AND FORTH EVERY DAY.** **OTHERS, LIKE KINBERLÍN RAMIREZ AND HER MOTHER LIBIA, DECIDED TO MOVE PERMANENTLY SO SHE COULD GO TO SCHOOL.**

Kim puts on belt, changes her socks **GFX : Lower Third** **Kinberlín Ramirez** ***Venezuelan Student*** Libia puts K's hair into ponytail	**Kinberlín:** I told my mom I didn't want to study here and leave behind all my friends. I didn't know how it'd be here. I was scared people would think I was a bad person because I'm from Venezuela. I told my mom, they might call me names. I didn't want to come the first day. I was scared. **[SOUND UP]** Libia: Baby, let that go so I can fix it.
Libia Ramirez kisses daughter goodbye Kinberlín Ramirez walks out door, down steps A-roll: Libia Ramirez	**Libia:** I felt a lot of discrimination. People in the street would point us out as Venezuelans. I would try to rent an apartment and they would say no just because I was Venezuelan. Often, they'd say very mean things like, "No Venezuelans! You guys don't pay and you'll be gone in a month! Your are all criminals." As if everything about us is bad.
Kinberlín Ramirez walks down street to go to school	**MORE THAN 1.2 MILLION VENEZUELANS HAVE RELOCATED TO COLOMBIA.**
A-roll: Kinberlín Ramirez	**Kinberlín:** The way I see it, the situation in Venezuela is really bad because there is no water. How are kids going to wash their uniforms? How will they eat with no water?
Lunchtime Kids eat lunch Ext school office building	[SOUND UP TRANSITION] **IT'S NEAR THE END OF THE SCHOOL DAY AND MAIKER IS GETTING READY TO CROSS BACK INTO VENEZUELA.**

Maiker walks into administrator's office Pagaduria Sign outside office MS Maiker asking questions CU Administrator flips through documents MS Secretary talks to Maiker Palacios CU Secretary's red nails CU Maiker's face CU Woman's iphone showing Whatsapp application CU Maiker's pink notebook CU papers in Maiker's hands Maiker leaves office with papers	[SOUND UP] **Maiker:** Good Afternoon, I need proof of enrollment. **Secretary:** Did you already request them? **Maiker:** Yes, ma'am. Last Monday. **MAIKER HEARD THE GANGS WOULDN'T CHARGE HER TO CROSS BACK FOR WORK. BUT SHE NEEDS DOCUMENTS THAT PROVE HER KIDS ARE ENROLLED IN COLOMBIAN SCHOOL.** **Secretary:** We're overwhelmed with all of these request **Maiker:** We need them so the gangs don't charge us to cross back during the day to work. Otherwise, we have to pay. **Woman:** Yes, I heard that on the whatsapp group too. **Secretary:** The parent's have a group? **Woman:** Yes, some kids aren't coming to school so this is how we communicate with them. **Maiker:** We can stay informed and organize. **Maiker:** This proves that my children study here in Colombia. So hopefully the gangs won't bother us.
WS Exterior of school Mom helps daughter with shoes CU girl eats snack	

CU Maiker's face, looks for kids MS teacher and students walk outside Maiker greets kids after school.	**Maiker:** Hello, my love. Let's go.
CU Andres holds his mother's hands A-roll Maiker Palacios.	**Maiker:** If there were more opportunities for our children in Venezuela, I think parent wouldn't make the decision to bring them to another country to study. It shouldn't be this way. But we have to fight for our children and make sure they get the best education.
Dust flies through air at checkpoint	**THEY HAVE TO HURRY BEFORE IT GETS DARK AND MORE DANGEROUS.**
Maiker stops to put Andrés complains about having to wear face mask. Andrés takes his mask off.	**Andrés:** I can't see with this on, mom. **Maiker:** Hold on baby. There we go. thank you. **Maiker:** No, baby. Leave it on. There is too much dust.
Maiker and children cross border river CU Maiker holds kids' hands to guide them over rocks Maiker and children get lost among the crowd trying to get back into Venezuela.	**Maiker:** We are all crying out for change in Venezuela. We know it'll never be like it was before. But we want opportunities for our children. We want them to stop violating our children's rights. What we are experiencing now is just inhumane. The children shouldn't suffer the consequences.
GPX: Title cards appear over blurred background	**Title Card:** AFTER TWO WEEKS, VENEZUELA REOPENED THE BORDER BRIDGE FOR STUDENTS AND THE ILL. **Title Card:** THOUSANDS OF VENEZUELAN CHILDREN CONTINUE TO CROSS THE BORDER TO GO TO SCHOOL.

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