

International journalist and author, Alfredo Corchado, grew up in what “felt like three countries: The United States, Mexico, and the border.” In one of the most pressing times between these three regions, Corchado addressed Baylor students on Thursday to talk about his upbringing, the importance of journalism, and his book, “Homelands.”

Corchado started his speech by explaining the necessity of journalism, “I speak to you, not as an enemy of the people, but because this is the most noble profession that I know. There is nothing fake about what we do or what we know, what I see, what I fear, what I understand. I am a witness to history. I am a bridge of understanding between borders, the epicenter of my homelands.”

Corchado has lived the true American dream. When President Johnson passed the 1965 Immigration Act, allowing entire families to gain citizenship more easily, Corchado’s family migrated from Mexico to California.

Corchado’s parents are the ideal representation of immigrants contributing to their country. His parents have a third grade education and to this day, after 50 years in The United States, they still do not speak English. Yet they pay taxes, run their business, and on every election day they are in line to vote. “What they may lack in language skills, they make up every day via their civic duties in the sweat of their work,” Corchado said.

It was when he was working the fields at 13 years old when he had the dream of becoming a journalist, Corchado said. Journalists approached Corchado to ask him about working underage. They asked him what the working conditions were like. He left the conversation with a sense of awe that “anyone would care enough to ask him anything. Someone actually cared about how I felt. Someone wanted to give me a voice.”

Today, Corchado has led a successful journalism career by uncovering executions made by the drug cartel, he has received awards of courage in Journalism from Columbia University, and he has been the director of the Borderlands program at Arizona State University.

The reality of the living near the border is uncovered by brave journalists such as Corchado. “While I speak to you, a four-mile fence is being built. Some suffer unimaginable heartache at the border. Children are separated from parents. The wall is meant to send a message to all immigrants: we do not want you. We do not need you anymore.” As Corchado concluded his speech, he asked a thought-provoking question about the recent immigration laws in America, “How many of you would be here today if your family had to comply with the new restrictions?”