

JUDITH  
SHATIN

*La Frontera*

Tenor and Piano



## Program Notes: *La Frontera*

*La Frontera (The Border)* is a poem by an undocumented immigrant youth imprisoned in an American maximum security detention center. Sadly, we cannot know the identity of the author due to government restrictions. But the words cry out to be heard and immortalized in music, scored here for tenor and piano. Versions are also available for soprano/piano and chorus/piano. I was drawn to set this poem because it captures the dark realities of the immigration process as well as the powerful desire to immigrate to America.

As the granddaughter and wife of immigrants, indeed as a citizen of the United States, I am deeply aware of both the astonishing and ongoing contributions of immigrants as well as the despicable treatment so many experience. Why do we forget our own status as immigrants or descendants of immigrants, and then deny the status of those who descend from indigenous peoples?

This poem, and the others published in the collection *Dreaming America: Voices of Undocumented Youth in Maximum Security Detention* (<http://www.settlementhouse.us>), was written during workshops for immigrant youths in detention led by poet Seth Michelson. Some were created in collaboration with students from Washington and Lee University; others benefitted from visits by guest artists Jimmy Santiago Baca and Ricardo Dominguez. Larry Moffi, publisher of Settlement House Books, brought the book, *Dreaming America* to fruition, and kindly granted permission to set this poem. Profits from the book sales are donated to the Detained Children's Program of the Capital Area Immigrants' Rights Coalition ([www.caircoalition.org](http://www.caircoalition.org)), to whom I will also donate my royalties. The score is available free of charge (<https://judithshatin.com/la-frontera/>) and choruses are invited to contribute to CAIR in lieu of score purchase. –JS

*\*La Frontera (The Border)*  
Translation by Seth Michelson

*un lugar a que todo el mundo vamos  
al tener un sueño  
y ver a mi familia feliz*

*a place the whole world goes  
when we dream  
and want to see our families happy*

*pero no nos dejan llegar a la frontera  
por ser de otro país*

*but they don't let us reach the border  
because we're from other countries*

*y me pregunto por qué  
si todos somos seres humanos  
somos los mismos  
no tenemos papeles  
porque estamos en el mismo mundo  
tenemos sentimientos iguales*

*and I ask myself why  
if we're all human beings  
if we're all the same  
don't we have papers too  
because we're all in the same world  
have the same feelings*

*el color de piel es diferente  
pero eso no quiere decir que no somos iguales  
es que en este país en mi país  
hay mucha gente racista*

*though our skin colors may differ  
but that doesn't mean we're not the same  
it means that in this country in my country  
there are lots of racists*

*el ser blanco, el ser negro  
no quiere decir*

*to be white, to be black  
doesn't mean we are unequal*

*que somos iguales  
somos todos iguales  
tenemos la misma mente  
la misma meta*

*we're equal  
we have the same thoughts  
the same goal*

*el caminar dias por el desierto  
al inmigrar nos agarra*

*to walk for days across the desert  
called to immigrate*



# La Frontera

Unidentified Detained Immigrant Youth

Judith Shatin

**Strong** ♩ = 68

Tenor

Piano

*f*

*f*

La fron -

5

te - ra, la fron - te - ra, la fron - te - ra, fron - te - ra, fron -

5

8

te - ra un lu - gar a que to - do el mun - do va - mos\_

8

8

La Frontera

12 *mf*

al te - ner un sue - ño te - ner, un

17 *f*

sue - ño y ver a mi fa - mi - lia fe - liz

21 *cresc.*

Pe - ro no, pe - ro no, pe - ro no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no,

25 *ff* *f*

no, no, no, no, no pe - ro no nos de - jan lle - gar

29

a la fron - te - ra por ser de o - tro país

33 *mf*

Y me pre - gun - to por qué si to - dos se - mos

37 *f*  
8 se - res hu - ma - nos so - mos los mis - mos

41  
8 no te - ne - mos pa - pe - les, pa - pe - les,

45 *mp* *mf*  
8 por - que e - sta - mos, por - que, Te - ne - mos, te - ne - mos sen - ti -

*mp* *mf*



49  
8 mien - tos i - gua - les i - gua - les, i - gua - les *f*

53  
8 el co - lor de piel *mf*

57  
8 es di - fe - ren - te Pe - ro es - so no *f*

61 *mf*

quie - re de - cir que so - mos i - gua - les

65 *mf*

es - que en es - te país en mi

69 *mf* *f*

país hay mu - cha gen - te ra -

73

cis - ta, ra - cis - ta, ra - cis - ta, ra - cis - ta

*ff*

77 *poco più mosso*

el ser blan - co el ser

*p* *mp* *mp*

**Assertive**

84

ne - gro no quie - re de - cir que so - mos i - gua - les

*f* *f* *mf*

*mf*

90 *mf*

Te - ne - mos la mis - ma men - te, — la mis - ma me - ta —

*f* *mf*

Resigned ♩ = 68

95

*mf*

103 *mp* *p*

el ca - mi - nar di - as,

*mp* *p*

108 *mp*

ca - mi - nar, ca - mi - nar di - as por el de - sier - to, ca - mi - nar por el de -

108 *mp*

115 *mf* *cresc.*

sier - to al in - mi - gar nos a -

115 *mf* *cresc.*

122 *f*

ga - rra nos a - ga - rra, al

122 *f*

126 *mf*  
in - mi - grar, al ca - mi - nar di - as,

130 *f* *mp* *p*  
al ca - mi - nar di - as, al ca - mi - nar di - as,

137 *p* *pp* *n*  
di - as, di - - - as.