

The plight of border crossing for both skaters and musicians is a parallel dilemma. While someone with a DUI charge is usually let in to the country without so much as a blink, a suspicious skateboarder or musician is often reduced to getting the “drug dealer, suspicious character” tag, and refused entry; the authorities citing that both of these groups are a threat to the culture of the United States, so why let them in. The authorities will hum and haw over computer screens as they look for reasons to ban entry to the applicants, looking for anything to stop the influx of shady people. Eventually, they will smile gleefully as they pull up an unpaid ticket from one of the skaters for skating on a sidewalk way back in 1992 when the offender was 12, and that’s that. No entry. The border causes fear to bloom in everyone who waits in it’s nerve racking lineups, the perspiration soaking through t-shirts because of the unknown, “what will they be able to deny me about this time” is a question that runs through the skaters and musicians dizzy and spinning minds, “what will they make up this time?”

There was a white line that, after wavering a little from left to right, stayed a straight course down the last mile, towards the gates that blocked the road, often watched and actively pursued, the barriers at the end of the line always blocked our paths. As kids, we would flirt with disaster by circumventing these formalities that ended this long stretch of pavement, but as we all got older, it all seemed so official, it had to be.

The air in our lungs always hung low in waiting and anticipation as we lined up with the others, pining for a glimpse of the other side, waiting to cross the line before we could breathe easy once again, our smiles and conversations being shushed and repressed, lest we show a crack in our exterior with a wrongly timed grin.

The bricks and mortar, one-way glass and beacon lights. The questions asked without eye contact; it was a charade, happily played out by all involved. We did our side well, passing the test and being sent off for an hour or so, all this for an hour or so, maybe a tank of gas, pack of smokes, a record, books or cheap beer. All of this for an hour or so; buildings, guns and mirrored sunglasses, trick questions and spy cameras, we felt the guilt and suspicion, even thought our motives were nothing less than honest.

The years passed, buildings got bigger and better re-enforced, cameras hid in every nook and cob webbed cranny, always searching for something, reading our faces as we stared straight ahead. Everything still ended at the end of the white line, but the mood on either side was different. This place, my white lined friend, was now the frontier, and I slept with the enemy. Once a backwoods outpost, it now proudly defended the front line, separating good from evil, everything was there in the fight against the axis of evil. The signs above the road threatened to rain down bombs if we didn’t stay in line, atomic lasers eagerly awaited to fall from the sky, all in the name of security. The lineups now were longer, the one-way glass stretching longer alongside the building, a feeling of being in a fishbowl striking fear in the line makers, fearful of questions that would remain unasked, but still implied, this has to be a mind game at the end of our earth.

In a learned response, my breath still hid as I slowly rolled along, completely aware of the stares of dogs and armed men, I stayed the course, straight along the white line I muttered in a mantra, suppressing the anxiety in my heart, straight along the white line.

The questions came, slower than I could remember, eye contact seemingly replaced with technology, computers spouting God know what information about the cars occupants as we sat and stared, trying to look as casual as can be, when trying not to stare at the size of the M-16 near the trunk, damn it looked so big.

Silence. Oh shit. The man in the box has stood up, left his coffee, computer and chair, and has decided to pay the car a little visit. A peek, lift, shuffle and stare, questions rapidly fired, not enough time for a reply, and we're fit to go he said as he looked past us towards the next car, full of people that I'm glad I'm not at that moment, fearing that their skin color is going to get them in a lot of trouble at the end of their own white line, another casualty on the edge of Armageddon.

I drove on the other side, the smile slowly cracking through my chapped lips and rubbing over my dry teeth, we were on the other side! The air smelt the same as back home, I thought as we drove, my lungs taking in the moving air, lapping up its freshness. But the fleeting feeling of happiness quickly made way to curiosity.

There was a lineup on this side of the bricks and mortar, gates and cameras, questions and stares. It was a long lineup, whose participants bore the same expression that I had just minutes ago. I looked farther up the road, in the direction that we traveled, and was amazed that for these people, it was all different. They would never feel the fear that I felt for the end of the white line, where I always felt translucent and shallow, they would never see the white line that I had known all my life. How could they? We weren't the same. How could we be the same? They had this thick yellow line that went straight down the middle of their road. Their yellow line did something else entirely to me; it made me worry and want to keep on driving, I didn't want to know what the yellow line meant to them.