

## 56 Seconds

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**Summary:** Tucson, Arizona is one of a fairly small number of places where Operation Streamline trials are held every day, Monday – Friday at 1:30pm, at the U.S. District Courthouse in downtown Tucson. They are entirely open to the public. Operation Streamline, which began in 2005, is a ‘zero tolerance’ initiative of the Department of Justice & Department of Homeland Security that criminalizes undocumented border-crossing. Defendants stand before the court in mass trials and throughout the summer of 2018, I watched as up to 75 people a day were tried back-to-back, charged, and pled guilty to a misdemeanor: 8. USC 1325, ‘Improper entry by an alien’. Many also face a felony charge: 8. USC 1326, ‘Reentry of removed aliens’, which is often dismissed in exchange for jail time and a guilty plea on the misdemeanor. This poem focuses the mechanized nature of Streamline trials and the silencing of migrant experiences that takes place in the courtroom. What the judge wants, and expects, is for a quick guilty plea. One afternoon I began to time the trials on my watch, each individual trial averaged around 56 seconds in length.

**Keywords:** Operation Streamline, Immigration, Migration, Border, Silence

Mr. Vasquez, are you thinking clearly, are you clear-headed,  
and pleading guilty today voluntarily and of your own free will?

*Sí.*

Has anyone promised you anything,  
forced you or threatened you to plead guilty today?

No.

Do you understand the offense that you're being charged with,  
and the maximum penalty for that offense?

Sí.

Do you understand the consequences of pleading guilty,  
and the trial rights that I have explained to you?

Sí.

Are you willing to give up those rights,  
so that you can plead guilty today?

Sí.

Thank you, sir. Is it true that you are not a citizen of the United States,  
and that you entered the United States unlawfully on May 31<sup>st</sup>,  
near Naco, Arizona?

Sí.

Do you plead guilty or not guilty?

*Culpable.*

Your sentence is time served.

Counsel, do you have anything else on Mr. Vazquez?

*Yes, your honor.*

*Mr. Vazquez would like to request a credible fear interview.*

*He is from Honduras,*

*and fears that he will be killed if he is sent back to his country.*

I will recommend that he receives a credible fear interview.

*Thank you, your honor.*

...

Ms. Morales, are you thinking clearly, are you clear-headed,  
and pleading guilty today voluntarily and of your own free will?

*Sí.*

Has anyone promised you anything,  
forced you or threatened you to plead guilty today?

*No.*

Do you understand the offense that you're being charged with,  
and the maximum penalty for that offense?

*Sí.*

Do you understand the consequences of pleading guilty,  
and the trial rights that I have explained to you?

*Sí.*

Are you willing to give up those rights,  
so that you can plead guilty today?

*Sí.*

Thank you. Is it true that you are not a citizen of the United States,  
and that you entered the United States unlawfully on May 28<sup>th</sup>,  
near Sasabe, Arizona?

*Sí.*

Do you plead guilty or not guilty?

*Culpable.*

Your sentence is time served.

Counsel, do you have anything else on Ms. Morales?

*Yes, your honor.*

*Ms. Morales is a native speaker of K'iche', she speaks Spanish as a second language.*

Does she understand her rights as they were explained to her today?

*Yes, your honor.*

I'll make a note in her file that she speaks Spanish as a second language.

*Thank you, your honor.*

...

Good luck to you ladies and gentlemen, I wish you the best.