

We Asked For Workers and Human  
Beings Came

-Max Frisch

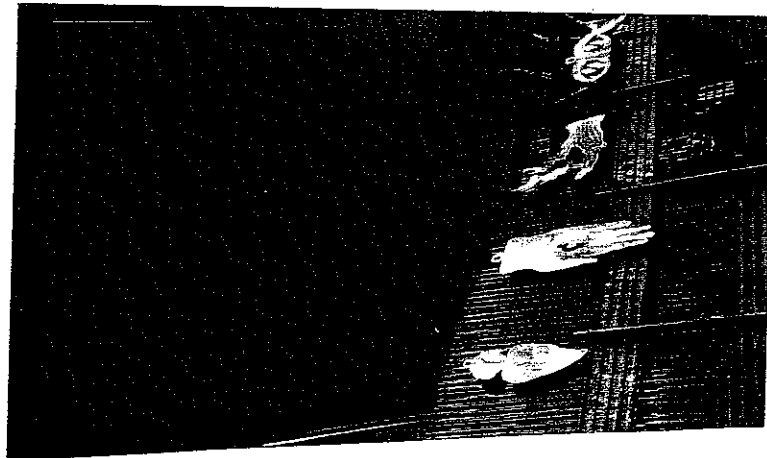
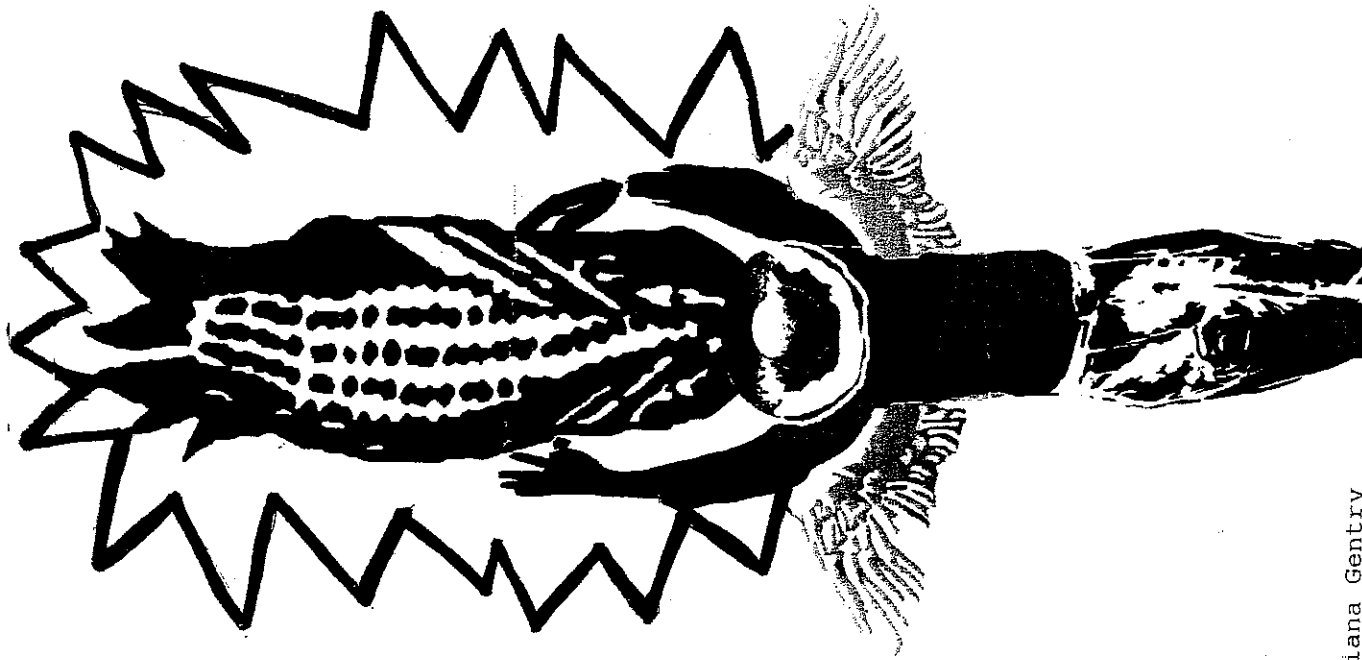


Image by Viviana Gentry

## Additional Resources

Other Online Info:

Border Film Project

<http://www.borderfilmproject.com>

Dan Watman's Youtube videos of the wall in San Diego

<http://www.youtube.com/user/naantaw>

Sierra Club's "Wild Versus Wall" short film on the environmental effects of the border wall  
<http://arizona.sierracub.org/border/borderfilm.asp>

Books:

"Dying to Live" by Joseph Nevins

"The Devil's Highway" by Luis Alberto Urrea

"Transborder Lives" by Lynn Stephen

"Beyond Smoke and Mirrors" by Douglas S. Massey

"Illegal People" by David Bacon

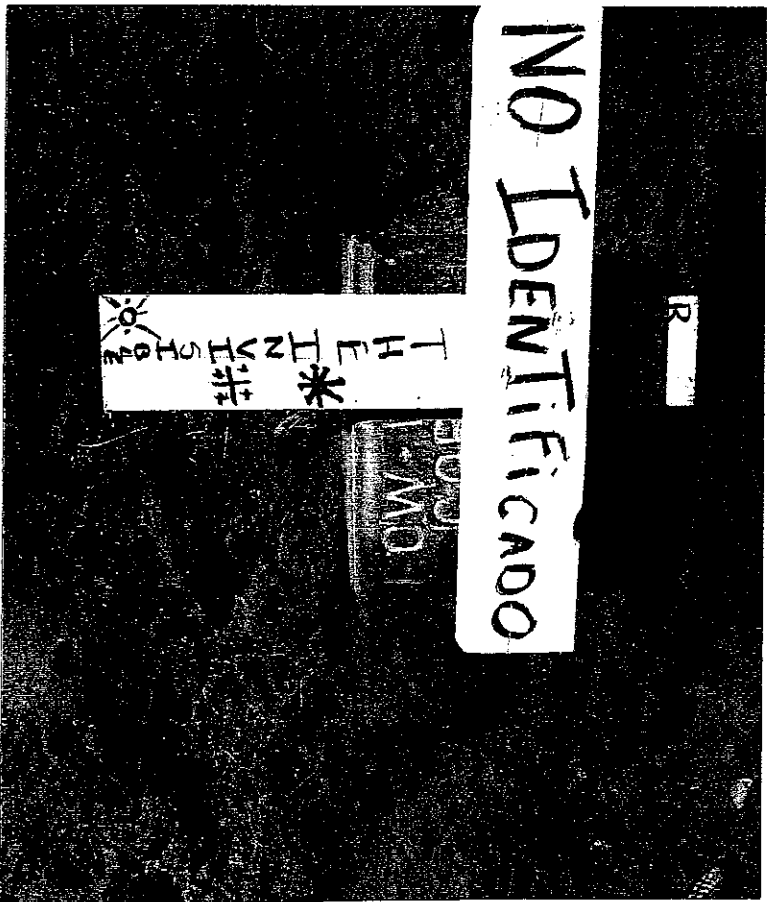
Films:

"Crossing Arizona"

"Asalto El Sueño Americano"

"Sin Nombre"

Unidentified Migrant's grave at a potter's field  
in Holtsville, CA.



Public art work on the wall by Guadalupe Serrano  
and Alberto Morakis.

Here is a list of some of the organizations we have worked or met with during this semester. You can learn more about the resistance work that they are doing and how to join them by visiting their websites:

American Friends Service Committee

<http://www.afsc.org/>

Derechos Humanos

<http://www.derechoshumanosaz.net>

Samaritans

<http://www.samaritanpatrol.org/>

No More Deaths

<http://www.nomoredeaths.org/>

Mexican Solidarity Network

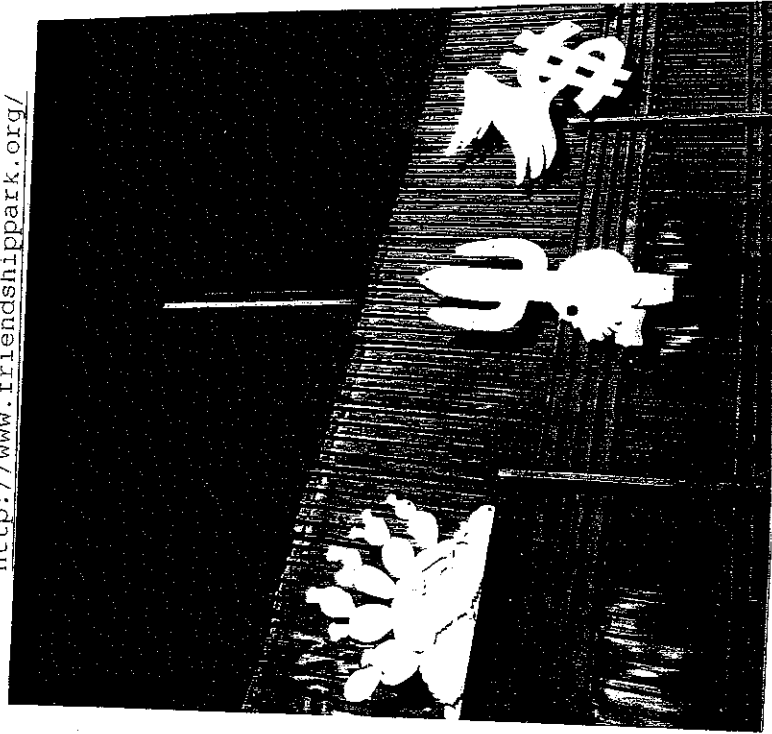
<http://www.mexicosolidarity.org/>

Si Paz

<http://www.sipaz.org>

Friends of Friendship Park

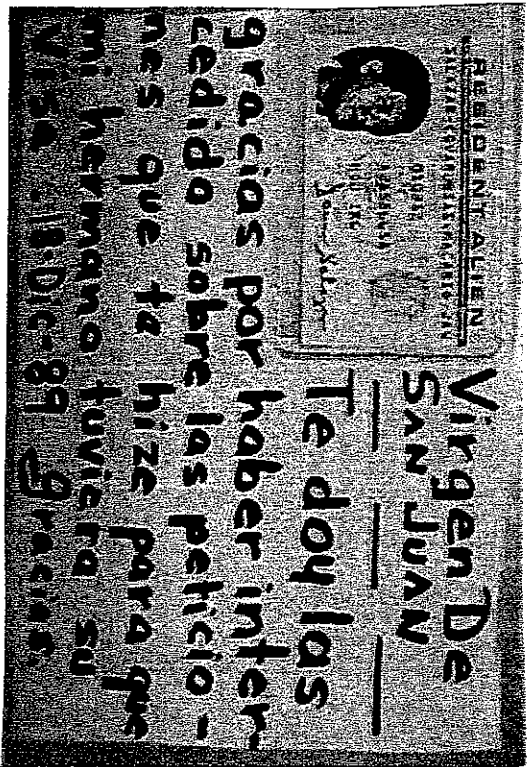
<http://www.friendshippark.org/>



This is collaboration between six women from different cities around the United States who have spent the past four months studying the U.S. Mexico border. We have spent this time meeting with and learning from organizations, individuals, academics and non-academics about the roots and routes of migration from both sides of the border. Most of this time has been spent in Tucson, Arizona, but we have also had the incredible privilege to visit the Mexico Guatemalan border in southern Chiapas, Oaxaca, Mexico City, Sonora, and San Diego, California. We believe that the stories and the histories shared with us over the past few months need to be shared in border and non-border communities alike.

We are at a point in time in which our country is enacting a set of immigration policies that are broken and outdated and above all, lead to human rights violations for citizens and non-citizens every single day. With a new administration in Washington, it is necessary to be active witnesses to these atrocities that have taken place not just where Mexico and the United States share 1,969 miles of borderlands, but throughout both neighboring countries as a result of the policies of the United States. Right now, it is more important than ever to work in our own communities for a just system that treats all people like human beings and to make it known to our government that we will not stand silent as people are dying in the desert, working without rights that protect them, and being denied basic freedom of movement. We hope that this can serve as a background to understanding the roots of migration and now U.S. policies have created a climate in which migration is a dangerous journey that does not end once the border has been crossed. Above all, we hope that everyone reading this feels moved to become an educator in their own community about these injustices that take place.

Retablo from the Mexican Migration Project site:  
<http://mmp.opr.princeton.edu/expressions/gallery-en.aspx>



Virgen of San Juan, I give thanks for your having acted on the petitions that I made to you for my brother to get his visa. 18th of December, 1989. Thank you.

The community of people working in resistance to dangerous and unjust U.S. economic and immigration policies span across the borders of both the U.S. and Mexico. The groups that we have worked with, met, and talked to during these past few months are doing important and inspiring work. Please join them in their efforts. Here are some things that you can do to resist and speak out against the policies of our country:

-Become an educator in your community! Many people do not know or understand the extent to which the U.S. is creating deadly situations for people attempting to enter the U.S. without documents. Further educate yourself about immigration in your own communities and share this information with others. You can do a presentation at your school, to your religious community, or begin by talking with family and friends.

-Write to your congress people! Tell your congressperson to vote for the Border Security and Responsibility Act of 2009. Pass along the Letter in this zine to your friends and encourage them to do the same.

-Write op-eds to your local paper.

-Be Loud! Attend May 1 immigration rights marches in your community.



## Resistance



Public art work on the wall by Guadalupe Serrano and Alberto Morakis.

## Timeline

- Pre 1519:** The U.S.-Mexico border region is inhabited by many Native American groups who have lived in the area for centuries.
- 1519-1521:** Hernan Cortes conquers central Mexico.
- 1535:** Spain established colonial government in Mexico.
- 1790:** First naturalization law passed, restricting naturalization to "free white persons".
- 1798:** Alien and Sedition Acts provide for deportation of "dangerous aliens"
- 1819:** Adam Onis Treaty, US Mexico boundary established by Spain and the United States. First federal immigration legislation requires reporting of all entries.
- 1821:** Mexico wins independence from Spain.
- 1830:** Indian Removal Act leads to deportation of 100,000 Native Americans to west of the Mississippi.
- 1848:** Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo expands the borders of the United States to the Pacific. Mexican residents given the option of declaring U.S. or Mexican citizenship.
- 1864:** Contract Labor Law permits recruitment of foreign workers.
- 1875:** Convicts and prostitutes prohibited from entering country
- 1883:** Chinese labor is reduced because of the Chinese Exclusion Act and railroad companies search for alternative sources of cheap labor. Mexican workers are increasingly recruited.
- 1890:** Increasingly, Mexican Americans work for the railroads. Railroad construction continues throughout the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- 1890:** Copper mining continues to lure people to Arizona, driving more Mexican-Americans from their lands.
- 1900:** Copper, silver, and zinc are found in Arizona and New Mexico; Texas begins to mine salt,

Dan Watman protesting the building of a second wall through Friendship Park in April 2009. →

leading to further expulsion of Mexican American land owners.

1891: Bureau of Immigration established under the Treasury Department to oversee and enforce federal immigration law.

1903: Anarchists, epileptics, polygamists, and beggars ruled inadmissible. Bureau of Immigration transferred to the Department of Commerce and Labor.

1906: First implementation of inspections at the Mexican border, primarily aimed at excluding Chinese entering through Mexico.

1910: Mexican Revolution begins. Thousands of Mexicans flee across the border for safety.

1917: Temporary guest-worker program exempts Mexicans from literacy requirement and head tax.

1918: Passport Act requires official documentation for entry into the United States. Border Crossing Cards issued for Canadians and Mexicans.

1922: Mexican guest-worker program abolished.

1924: Border Patrol created

1930: Deportations of millions of Mexicans begins.

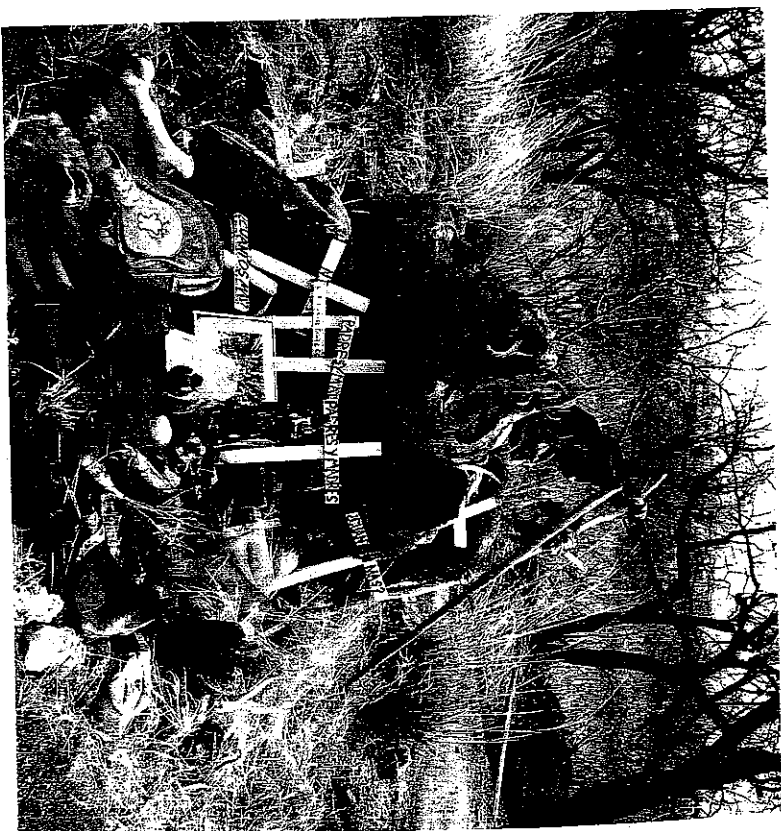
1942: Bracero Program established for the contracting of temporary agricultural workers from Mexico.

1954: Operation Wetback departs one million undocumented Mexicans. Numbers entering under the Bracero program increase from 200,000 a year prior to Operation Wetback to 450,000 a year by the end of the 1950's.

1962: César Chávez organizes the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA) in Delano, California.

1964: Bracero Program repealed.

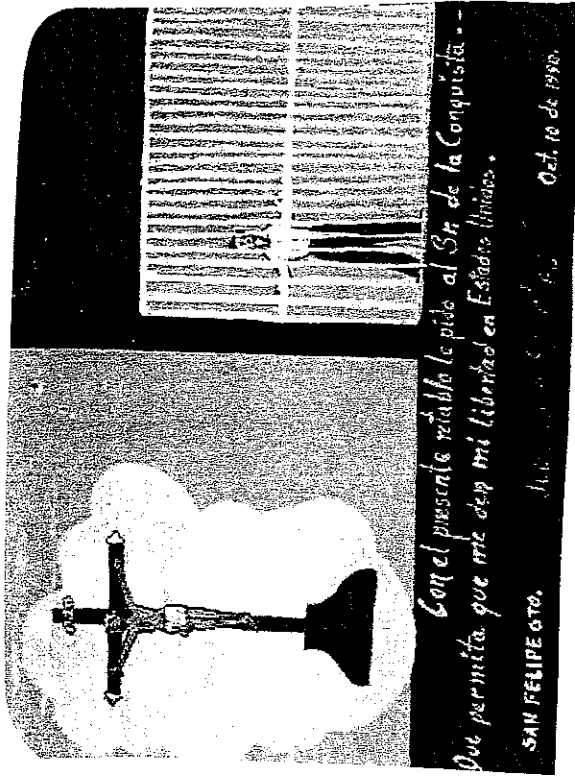
1964: The first maquiladoras are established under the Border Industrialization Program; mass employment of cheap labor along the Mexican border by U.S. companies begins.



Shrine to migrants at the No More Deaths camp in Arivaca, AZ.

The dramatic increase in the use of immigration detention has forced US immigration authorities to contract with approximately 350 state and county criminal jails across the country to house individuals pending deportation proceedings. Approximately 67 percent of immigration detainees are held in these facilities, while the remaining individuals are held in facilities operated by immigration authorities and private contractors. The average cost of detaining a migrant is \$95 per person, per day. Alternatives to detention which generally involve some form of reporting, are significantly cheaper, with some programs costing as little as \$12 per day. These alternatives to detention have been shown to be effective with an estimated 91 percent appearance rate before the immigration courts. Despite the effectiveness of these less expensive and less restrictive alternatives to detention in ensuring compliance with immigration procedures, the use of immigration detention continues to rise at the expense of the United States' human rights obligations.

Entering or remaining in the United States without authorization is a civil violation, not a crime. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has broad discretion to apprehend individual suspects of immigration violations. Individuals may be apprehended at the border during employment or household raids, as a result of traffic stops by local police, or after having been convicted of a criminal offense.



Retablo from the Mexican Migration Project site:  
<http://mmp.opr.princeton.edu/expressions/gallery-en.aspx>

With the present retablo  
I ask the Lord of the  
Conquest that He allow  
that they give me my  
liberty in the United  
States. San Felipe,  
Guatemala. Juan Jose  
Sánchez O. October 10 of  
1990.

**1965:** The Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 limits immigrants into the United States.

**1974:** The Mexican American Women's National Association is established to advance the status of Mexican American women, promote leadership opportunities and work towards parity in the workplace.

**1981:** Immigrants who are not legal permanent residents denied access to most federal aid programs.

**1982:** The largest increase of maquiladoras occurs after devaluation of the Mexican currency.

**1986:** Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) allows undocumented immigrants who can prove continued presence in the country since 1982 and fulfill other requirements to apply for legalization. IRCA imposes employer sanctions requiring employers to verify immigration status of workers hired.

**1994:** Operation Gatekeeper tries to close San Diego crossing points with fencing, stadium lights, and greatly increased border patrol presence. Migrant crossings shift eastward to the Arizona desert.

**1994:** North American Free Trade Agreement increases economic integration between United States and Mexico without establishing conditions for the movement of labor.

**1996:** Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act bars legal permanent residents from most federal aid programs (food stamps, Medicaid) unless they have lived in the U.S. for five years and allows states to create further restrictions.

Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act greatly increases funding for Border Patrol and detention of aliens; increases penalties for unlawful entry and facilitates deportation.

**2001:** 9/11 terrorist attack intensifies security at the border with an emphasis on preventing terrorists from entering the country.

**2002:** Homeland Security Act replaces the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) with the newly created U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services under the Department of Homeland Security.

Governments have the right to exercise authority over their borders; however, they also have obligations under international law to protect the human rights of migrants, no matter what prompted an individual to leave his or her home country. This report focuses on the human rights violations associated with the dramatic increase in the use of detention by the United States as an immigration enforcement mechanism. In just over a decade, immigration detention has tripled. In 1996, immigration authorities had a daily detention capacity of less than 10,000. Today more than 30,000 immigrants are detained each day and this number is likely to increase even further in 2009.

More than 300,000 men, women and children are detained by US Immigration authorities each year. They include asylum seekers, torture survivors, victims of human trafficking, longtime lawful permanent residents, and the parents of US citizen children. The use of detention as a tool to combat unauthorized migration falls short international human rights law, which contains a clear presumption against detention. Everyone has the right to liberty, freedom of movement, and the right not to be arbitrarily detained.



A detained immigrant visits with his son and family members at a California detention center. Photo from the Amnesty International, "Jailed Without Justice" report:

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/immigrant-detention/page.do?id=1641031>



Photo of the wall and pre-wall territory marker at Sasabe, AZ on Mexican side of the border.

# The Mexican Debt Crisis

The Mexican debt crisis has its roots in the 1970's when oil-producing countries (OPEC) increased the price of oil by 400% and deposited the profits in the international banking system. In order to pay interest on all the petro-dollars, banks scrambled to loan money to countries that desired in influx of foreign investment for development projects. Mexico and many other Latin American countries accepted the loans but when the U.S. chose to fight inflation by raising interest rates, these countries found it difficult to make debt payments. Little attention was paid towards what capability these countries had to pay back the loans. By the mid 70's many South and Central American countries were having trouble getting decent prices for grown raw materials such as coffee, cotton, tobacco, and cocoa due to too many countries (in many cases advised by the west) producing the same crops. This led to a situation in which Mexico was earning less than ever for their exports and paying more than ever on their loans. Mexico was forced to borrow more money to help pay even just the interest of the loans. In 1982, Mexico told its creditors that it would be unable to repay its debt. Since a default by Mexico could have sent the international banking system into crisis, the IMF (International Monetary Fund) and the World Bank issued new loans as long as Mexico committed to conditions known as Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) to help ensure that future debt payments would be met. SAPs are designed to help countries pay off their debt by funneling more of the overall budget toward debt payments by encouraging countries to focus on export oriented industries. Governments implementing SAPs must spend less on health, education, and other social services in order to cut back internal spending. They are pushed to

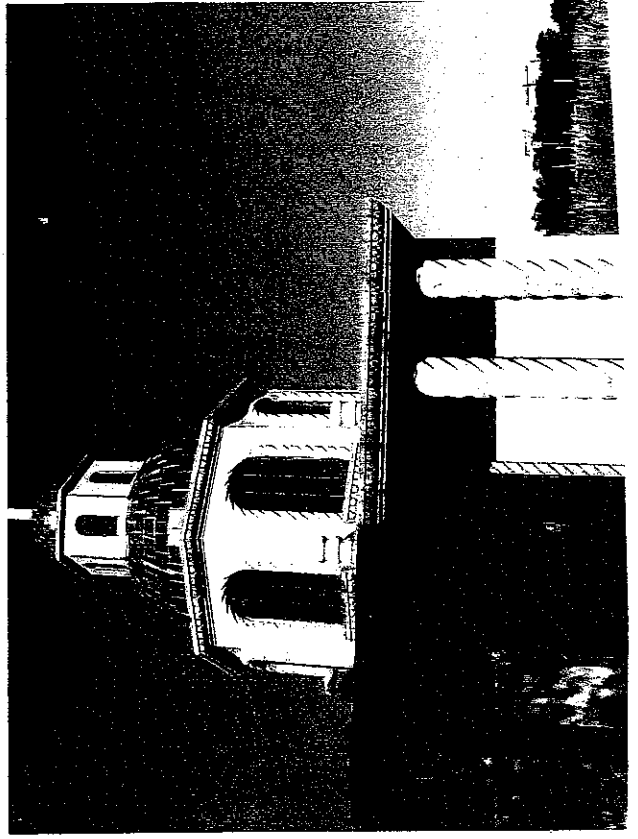
Shrine to Santa Muerte in Sonora, Mexico.

## Detention

Over the past decade, criminalization has been an increasingly used enforcement strategy against people entering the United States without documents. As more and more people are prosecuted for illegally crossing into the United States, many end up in detention centers where human rights violations are numerous. On March 25, 2009, Amnesty International published a report on human rights violations that occur in Immigration Detention Centers. Here is an excerpt from that report, you can read the whole report here:

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/immigrant-detention/page.do?id=1641031>

lower export earnings and increase import costs, cut back on food subsidies (making the price of essentials such as corn and beans soar), cut jobs and wages in governmental industries, and encourage privatization of public industries in order to earn more revenue for debt payments. In Mexico, the SAPs led to a situation in which the non-elites experienced an incredible lack of support from their government with drastic decreases in funding for services such as education and healthcare. Decreased food subsidies made it impossible for farmers supporting themselves to make a decent enough price from their crops to break even. Meanwhile, many of Mexico's natural resources were becoming privatized to generate extra income. As a result Mexicans were quickly losing control of the land and resources that would otherwise generate income that would stay within the country. The ability to support one's self and to afford essentials such as corn and beans was becoming increasingly impossible for the average Mexican citizen. Declining social services put people in desperate situations. Even before NAFTA was passed in 1994, many Mexicans had no other choice but to look northward for work in order to put food on the table.



A detained immigrant in a detention facility in Washington State. Photo from the Amnesty International, "Jailed Without Justice" report: <http://www.amnestyusa.org/immigrant-detention/page.do?id=1641031>

# Understanding NAFTA A One-Act Play

Courtesy of Witness For Peace  
[www.witnessforpeace.org](http://www.witnessforpeace.org)

*NAFTA: Telling It Like It Is  
An Activity Performed in a Reader's Theater Format to Explain  
the Effects of Fifteen years of NAFTA*

Narrator: Once upon a time, not so long ago, actually in the 1980's, mandates were imposed by the IMF and the World Bank hitting the rural sector hard, requiring Mexico to cut its public investment in agriculture, by dismantling key programs such as credit, subsidiz at farm inputs, price supports, food reserves, state marketing boards and extension services'. Also in liberal policies were inflating all aspects of the Mexican economy, privatizing land, and state-owned as us the railroads, mines, and the telephone company' while cutting state-supports for health care, education, and infrastructure. These policies and changes affected the rural poor, the average consumer and the urban worker in Mexico. Then came NAFTA ... And all the corporate and government promises ...

Government & Business: Basic workers' rights!

Government & Business: Better jobs

Government & Business: Faster growth!

Government & Business: Decreased emigration!

Government & Business: Competition in a stagnant agricultural sector!<sup>4</sup>

Government & Business: Foreign investment!

Mexican Migrant Workers: But what about the erosion of our bargaining power as workers?<sup>5</sup>

Mexican Citizen Consumers: Or government protections from the insecurities of an unregulated market?<sup>7</sup>

Government & Business: No worries, the growth and great jobs will more than make up for it.<sup>10</sup>

Government & Business: NAFTA will set Mexico on a course to become a first-world nation. <sup>11</sup>

Mexican Citizen Consumers: We did become part of the first world ... the backyard?<sup>2</sup>

Government & Business: Just be patient. NAFTA's great benefits are just around the corner.

Mexican Farmers: It's been 15 years and we're still waiting!<sup>13</sup>

Government & Business: We knew there would be winners and losers under NAFTA. The losers would primarily be in the agricultural sector, poor southern small farmer. <sup>14</sup>

Mexican Farmers: But we farmers are one quarter of the Mexican workforce. <sup>15</sup>

Mexican Farmers: NAFTA devastated us corn farmers. How were we to compete with US highly mechanized farms? Just think, to produce 1 ton of corn in Mexico takes an average of 17.8 days of labor. The same ton of US corn, only takes 1.2 hours!<sup>16</sup>

Mexican Farmers: So NAFTA hits in 1994 and immediately removes tariffs on yellow corn which is heavily subsidized by the U.S. government. <sup>17</sup>

Mexican Farmers: NAFTA then prohibited price supports or subsidies to Mexican farmers. <sup>18</sup>

Mexican Farmers: But NAFTA did NOT eliminate subsidies for US farmers allowing them to sell products such as corn for as much as 30% below the cost of production!<sup>19</sup>

Mexican Farmers: So, U.S. subsidized corn began flooding Mexican markets. They were dumping their cheap corn on us.

## Operation Streamline

What is Operation Streamline?

Every weekday at Tucson's courthouse, up to 70 people are shackled and rushed through assembly line criminal proceedings, charged with the misdemeanor offence of unauthorized entry into the United States. In theory, it is a program that seeks to charge all unauthorized border crossers and sentence them to up to 6 months in jail for their petty offense. The Tucson sector has so many crossers, however, that less than 5% are being charged. Defendants only get up to 20 minutes to meet with a lawyer. Many believe that this is not enough time for proper explanation or investigation. In addition, each lawyer must represent up to 6 defendants during the hour-long process.

Is it successfully deterring undocumented immigration?

No. There is no indication that this program is reducing the overall number of unauthorized border crossings. Despite reports of lower crossings in low-traffic areas, people have changed their routes, traveling through more dangerous desert terrain, leading to an increase in fatalities.

What does it cost taxpayers?

It costs taxpayers \$2,076.83 per month to imprison 1 person in the Bureau of Prisons Facility. That is a \$90-\$119/per day per migrant incarceration cost. The Public Defenders Office estimates that it cost over \$2 million to pay for Operation Streamline attorneys in 2007. Since then, their caseload has increased, as has their hourly wage.

Mexican Farmers: We found it impossible to sell corn or other farm products for what it cost to produce them.

Government & Business: That must have been hard but we at Cargill fared pretty well. Our net income increased over 600% from 1998 to 2008.

Government & Business: Not bad, gracias a NAFTA

Mexican Farmers: Well, Gracias a NAFTA, since 1994, 2 million of us have lost our jobs as a result of falling corn prices and hardships in competing with subsidized U.S. food imports.<sup>20</sup>

Mexican Farmers: As Mexican corn farmers, our income has fallen by 70% during the NAFTA years.<sup>21</sup>

Mexican Farmers: Since 1993, the prices we get in Mexico for our corn decreased between 40-60% while the cost of fertilizers and pesticides increased by 60%.<sup>22</sup>

Mexican Farmers: Because people can't make a living, they have to emigrate.<sup>23</sup>

Mexican Farmers: We go to the United States to work because there's no alternative.<sup>24</sup>

Mexican Farmers: It's not just the corn farmers. As a coffee farmer from Chiapas I, as only making \$4 a day which was not enough to feed my family. I would rather risk dying in the desert than endure the shame of watching my children suffer from hunger in their own land

Government & Business: You can't blame NAFTA for everything. A global coffee glut in the 1990s plunged prices below the cost of production.

Mexican Farmers: True, but a less entrapped government might have bought the crops of coffee farmers to keep them afloat, or provided subsidies for other crops. But once free-market structures were in place, prohibiting government intervention to help them, we coffee farmers joined the stream of workers headed north.

US Citizens: I guess then we shouldn't be surprised that the rate of emigration from Mexico into the United States has almost doubled since 1994<sup>25</sup> with more than half a million Mexicans migrating each year to the US in the past 6 years.<sup>26</sup>

Government & Business: According to economic theory, you corn farmers should produce less - cutting supply would increase demand and raise prices.

Mexican Farmers: Other than corn there are no readily available options. We lack assets like credit and technology. Our soil is poor and all we have available is land and labor. It's not that we don't recognize the importance of price-signals. It's our heritage and at least it will feed us.<sup>27</sup>

Mexican Farmers: Without corn we are not Mexico! Come on everyone - say it together!

All of the Mexican Farmers Together: Sin Maiz, No Hay País! Sin Maiz, No Hay País!  
Sin Maiz, No Hay País!

Government & Business: With the decrease in the price of corn, are fewer consumers not benefited?

Mexican Citizen Consumers: Although a flood of cheap U.S. grain was supposed to make consumer prices fall, they in fact rose.<sup>28</sup> Between 1994 and 2000, the prices for tortillas - the most important food for Mexicans - nearly tripled, rising 571%. By January 2007, tortilla prices had tripled again.<sup>29</sup>

"Inmigrants are criminals who are breaking our laws!"

It is not a crime to enter the United States without permission. U.S. legislation deems it as a petty offense according to a Judge at an Operation Streamline Proceeding. The United States has a demand for labor that greatly exceeds the number of visas available to workers in Mexico. The requirements to obtain a visa to the U.S. from Mexico are so strict and the process expensive, that most people are unable to enter the country legally. Our country's policies, we are creating conditions in Mexico and Central and South America that are making it impossible for much of the population to support and sustain themselves at home. Yet, when thousands of migrants show up on our doorstep, we deem them criminals. After spending time on the border, we find it absurd that those without papers are considered criminals. Rather, they are fathers, mothers, sons, and daughters, looking for a way to support themselves and their families after U.S. legislation has created a climate in which that has become increasingly difficult at home.

Mexican Citizen Consumers: NAFTA abolished Consumo, the National Popular Subsistence Company through which the government used to buy corn at subsidized prices, turn it into tortillas, and sell them in state-franchised grocery stores at subsidized low prices.<sup>30</sup>

Government & Business: But let's get to the good news... The manufacturing goods sector has grown with the rise of maquilas in Mexico creating jobs for Mexicans, perhaps even some of the displaced even farmers.

US Citizens: Let's speak English here. What are maquilas?

Mexican Maquila Workers: A maquila is an export-oriented factory that uses imported raw materials to produce for export.<sup>31</sup>

Government & Business: So, back to the miracle maquilas. It is estimated that NAFTA created around 800,000 jobs from 1994-2001 --

Mexican Maquila Workers: That is not nearly enough to offset the 2 million jobs lost in the agricultural sector alone. Additionally there are more than 1 million people entering the work force each year.<sup>32</sup>

Mexican Maquila Workers: Put let's tell it like it is. Maquilas go to where they can pay low wages.<sup>33</sup>

Mexican Maquila Workers: And wages are falling. Most maquila workers earn between 2 and 3 minimum wages. And keep in mind that five minimum wages is the income level determined to meet the basic necessities of life.<sup>34</sup>

Mexican Maquila Workers: And only 4% of the inputs for maquila production are of Mexican origin, meaning there is little or no growth of domestic industry.<sup>35</sup>

Mexican Maquila Workers: To add insult to injury, maquila jobs are notorious for their hazardous working conditions, instability, minimal benefits, mistreatment of a mostly female workforce and suppression of unionization.<sup>36</sup>

Mexican Maquila Workers: Also estimates indicate that 1/3 of the new jobs created in the manufacturing sector in Mexico have been lost since 2001 as a result of companies moving to Central America, Southeast Asia and China where labor is cheaper.<sup>37</sup>

US Citizens: But what about labor rights? At least a treaty with developed countries like the US and Canada should have helped to guarantee basic labor rights for workers in Mexico?

Government & Business: Si señor. When NAFTA was negotiated there was also a side agreement on labor called the North American Agreement on Labor Cooperation (the NAALC), with a system for filing labor grievances called the NAO.<sup>38</sup>

Mexican Maquila Workers: But let's be honest, NAALC never protected labor rights due to its weakness, the lack of political will, and the threat that it would discourage foreign investment.<sup>39</sup>

Mexican Maquila Workers: In fact by 2004 only 28 complaints were registered in 3 countries and even fewer reached "resolution". These complaints were "resolved" only through reports, seminars, or outreach. Not a single illegally fired worker has ever been re-instated, not a single independent union has ever been established and bargained collectively and not a single workplace hazard has been corrected as a result of NAFTA and the NAALC.<sup>40</sup>

Mexican Maquila Workers: And any advances made in workers' rights were generated by the workers themselves and supporting NGOs, not under NAFTA provisions.<sup>41</sup>

Mexican Maquila Workers: But then contrast the pitiful state of workers' rights under NAFTA with how forcefully NAFTA protects CORPORATE rights. Under NAFTA there is a provision called Chapter 11, which allows corporations to sue NAFTA governments whose laws and policies, like environmental protection policies, cause a corporation to lose profits.<sup>42</sup>

"Immigrants take our jobs!"

People tend to think that the pie of the job market is one size and that more people means less pie. This is not true. As more people enter the market, the pie grows too. Economist Phillipe Legrain describes it this way; "They [immigrants] create jobs as they work because they stimulate demand for complementary workers. An influx of construction workers, for instance, boosts the demand for those selling building supplies." In addition, Americans are not competing for the jobs that migrant workers hold. The jobs that migrants are offered in the U.S. are often low paying, dangerous, and strenuous with little possibility of upward mobility. Most Americans are unwilling to take these jobs. Therefore, the problem is less that these jobs are being taken away from American workers and more so that employers have to depend on migrant labor to fill them because of such terrible conditions. People making this argument rarely recognize the role of employers and instead place blame on the workers. It is important to note that because employers are often dependent on migrant labor, they create pull factors that encourage migration in the first place.

"Immigrants are a drain on our resources!"

Contrary to popular belief, undocumented immigrants aren't eligible for most public services and often live in fear of revealing themselves to government authorities. Even when they are legally entitled to resources such as public schools, emergency medical care, and public safety systems, data shows that undocumented immigrants are less likely to use these resources than others. Data also shows that households headed by undocumented immigrants use less than half the amount of federal services than households headed by documented immigrants or other citizens."

## Myths

With the current economic downturn, the anti-immigrant sentiment in the United States, especially in border communities, has become increasingly vehement. Over the past few months, we've heard people at the bus stop, the grocery store, and on college campuses voice opinions about immigration in the United States grounded in "facts" that we believe could certainly be given a second look. The next time you hear, "They take our jobs!", "They're criminals!", "They're a drain on our resources!", respond by offering a look at a slightly bigger picture. Here are some talking points:

**Mexican Maquila Workers:** One of the most famous cases was the Metalcad case. In 1996 the state of San Luis Potosí refused to let the Metalcad company, from the US, open a waste disposal facility that would contaminate the local water supply. Then the Metalcad Corporation accused the Mexican government of violating Chapter 11. In 2000, a NAFTA tribunal ordered the Mexican government to pay 16.7 million dollars in compensation.<sup>23</sup>

**Mexican Maquila Workers:** So maquilas and migration. That's the result of NAFTA from the point of view of the average Mexican.

**Mexican Citizen Consumers:** Don't forget about the informal sector. Those of us who sell tacos on the street, cd's on the metro and wash clothes, 60% of working age Mexicans currently rely on jobs in the informal sector, where we receive no steady wage or benefits, an increase since the 1970's.<sup>24</sup>

**Government & Business:** Well, NAFTA has certainly been excellent for a few of us. We, new Mexican billionaires and the richest upper fifth of the population receive well over 50% of all the annual income.

**Mexican Farmers:** While the lower fifth has access to only 3.5% of the total wealth.<sup>25</sup>

**US Citizens:** That's been the case in all three NAFTA countries. The workers' share has decreased and wealth at the top of the economic pyramid has grown.<sup>26</sup>

**US Citizens:** Hearing about Mexico's problems with NAFTA reminds me of the promises that we in the US heard about NAFTA that never materialized.

**US Citizens:** Like the promise to "get government out of agriculture." Yet by 2001, farm subsidies had nearly tripled to over \$20 billion.<sup>27</sup>

**US Citizens:** Or the promise of new jobs. Instead over a million jobs which would have otherwise been created were lost.<sup>28</sup>

**US Citizens:** Wages were pressured downward for many workers with less than a college education.<sup>29</sup>

**US Citizens:** Just like in Mexico, the manufacturing worker and the small farmer felt the brunt of NAFTA. Under NAFTA the net income for US farmers fell 16.5% and an estimated 3-4,000 farmers were forced out of business.<sup>30</sup>

**US Citizens:** So corporations benefit and the people suffer.

**US Citizens:** So what can be done about it?

**EVERYONE:** We must renegotiate NAFTA!

**Mexican Farmers:** Allowing each country to protect its local economies, culture and well-being.

**Mexican Farmers:** To stop pushing people toward food insecurity, poverty or dangerous and unnecessary migration.<sup>31</sup>

**Mexican Farmers:** To reduce subsidies to huge U.S. based agribusinesses.

**Mexican Farmers:** To increase investment in small farmers.<sup>32</sup>

**US Citizens:** We must insist on a new agreement that safeguards natural resources.<sup>33</sup>

**Mexican Citizen Consumers:** And invest in development projects that give people the right to dignified work in the state where they were born --

**Mexican Maquila Workers:** With a living wage and benefits that cover the needs of their families.<sup>34</sup>

**Mexican Farmers:** Is that too much to ask?



Photo through the wall, on the beach in San Diego, CA.

## CORN

There is so much truth in the slogan

'without corn there is no country' that I feel American and Canadian policy makers can never understand. Mexico's population has subsisted on corn and products of corn for more years than we can know. The Maya believe that the gods made men from maize. For thousands of years, subsistence farmers have planted a great variety of maize including wild red, blue and multicolored corn. Now with the implementation of NAFTA, hundreds of thousands of Mexican farmers can no longer afford to grow their own corn.

Because of NAFTA the Mexican market has been flooded with highly subsidized genetically modified white and yellow corn. Through the DICONSA, a government grain and food dispensary, American seed has been dispersed throughout the country to the bellies and fields of countless Mexicans and indigenous peoples. Little do they know, yellow corn in the US is often intended as animal feed and genetically modified. Genetic modification of crops, while not unheard of in Mexico, is very rare and its effects on the population have been left unstudied. More recently, GMO corn has been discovered to be growing in parts of Oaxaca among traditional, thousand year old varieties. The presence of genetically modified corn in Mexico would have a particular impact in communities where corn is the main form of subsistence.

With the flooding of the market with American corn, campesinos, can no longer fetch a fair price for their year's work making growing their own crops unaffordable. American corn is so subsidized it can be sold for a much lower price than nationally grown corn in Mexico. This not only leaves many hungry, but it leaves people out of work. Without the ability to subsist on their



Photo of the wall at Sassabe, Arizona on Mexican side of the border.

"A westerner named Francisco Salazar seems to have been the first to keep an eyewitness record of this phase of the killing fields. By 1850, he wrote, the Devil's Highway was '...a vast graveyard of unknown dead...the scattered bones of human beings slowly turning to dust...the dead were left where they were to be sepulchered by the fearful sand storms that sweep at times over the desolate waste.'"

## The Desert

Over 3,000 people died crossing the US-Mexico border in the 10 years following

### Operation Gatekeeper

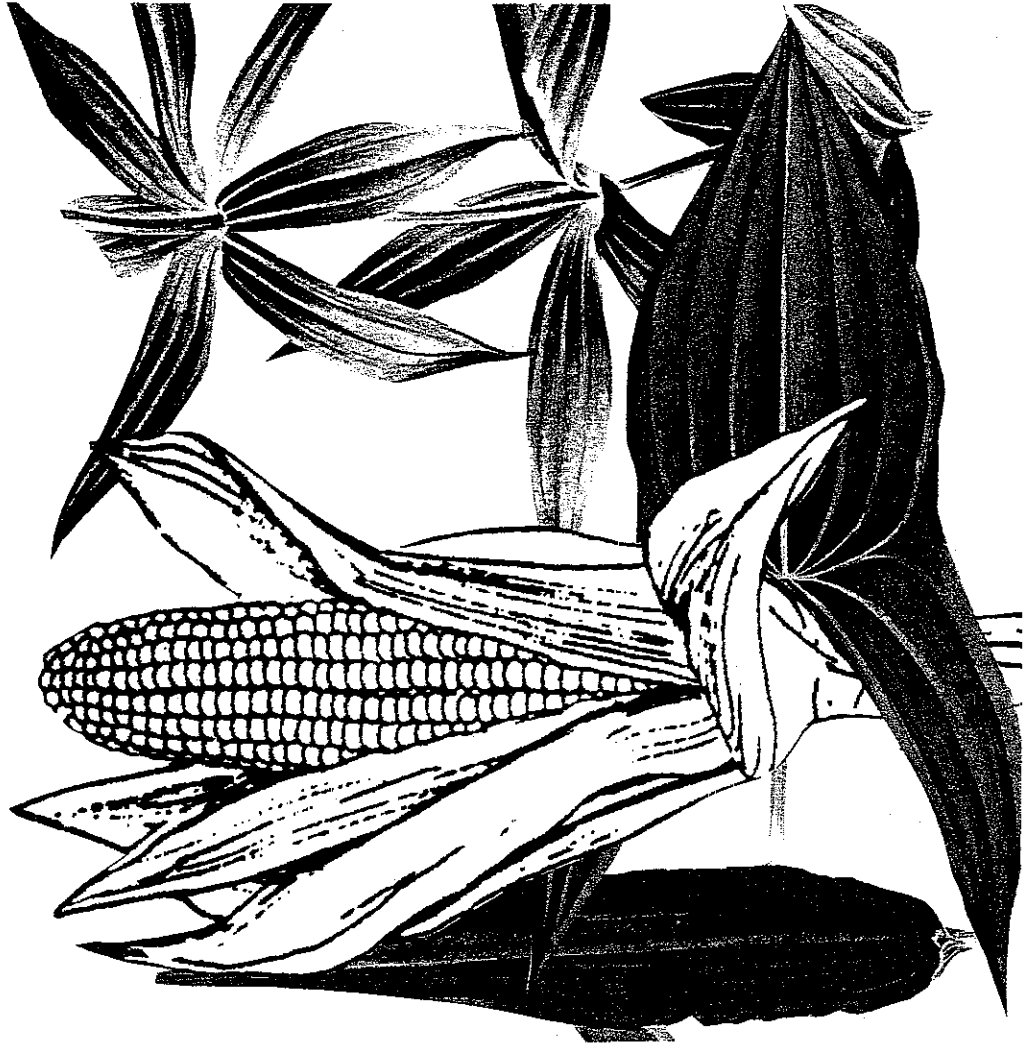
Operation Gatekeeper, though meant to deter migrants from entering the country without documents, has done nothing more than re-route migration routes through dangerous desert terrain. Temperatures in the desert range from below freezing to a record high of 134 degrees in the shade. Ground level temperatures may vary as much as 100 degrees within 24 hours. Migrants often begin their journeys with little knowledge about the dangers of the desert and are often unprepared to embark on the journey safely.

Here are some excerpts that illustrate the countless dangers of desert journeys from "The Devil's Highway" by Luis Alberto Urrea:

"The plants are noxious and spiked. Saguaros, nopales, the fiendish chollas. Each long cholla spike has a small barb, and they hook into the skin, and they catch in elbow creases and hook forearm and biceps together. Even the green mesquite trees have long thorns set just at eye level."

"Much of the wildlife is nocturnal, and it creeps through the nights, poisonous and alien: the sidewinder, the rattlesnake, the scorpion, the giant centipede, the black widow, the tarantula, the brown recluse, the coral snake, the Gila monster. The kissing bug bites you and its poison makes the entire body erupt in red welts. Fungus drifts on the valley dust, and it sinks into the lungs and throbs to life. The millennium has added a further danger: all wild bees in southern Arizona, naturalists report, are now Africanized. As if the desert felt it hadn't made its point, it added killer bees."

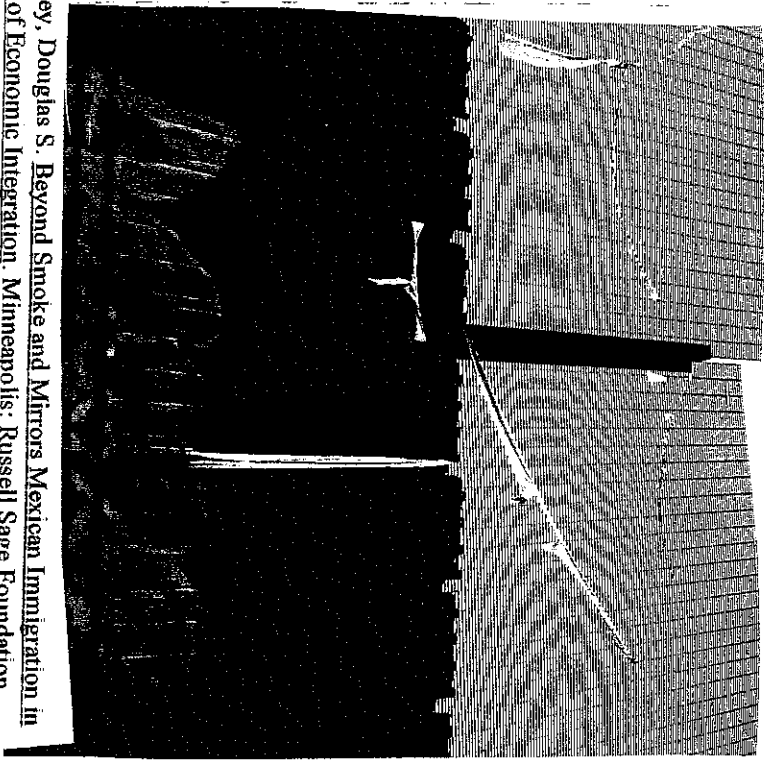
own land where they have for so many years, campesinos have little choice but to migrate to the fields of California or other farms in the north where their labor is depended upon. This is just one more example of the hypocrisy of free trade where capital moves more freely than people. And I don't think that it is a coincidence that Operation Gatekeeper began in October of that same year.



# Militarization on the Border

Since the 1990s, US border policy has become one of "prevention through deterrence". "The idea was to prevent Mexicans from crossing the border illegally in order to avoid having to arrest them later." This policy has manifested itself in a variety of ways. One was by increasing the budget for Border Patrol which has increased 5 times between 1992-2007 and now equals around \$20 billion/year. <sup>1</sup> Of this extra money, \$778 million was allocated for the hiring and training of 3,000 new agents (with a goal of 18,000 by 2009). Another \$1 billion was put towards new technology such as \$1 million cameras, radar systems, motion sensors, x-ray machines, and a variety of Border Patrol vehicles. Nearly \$30 million was allocated to go towards screening and deporting undocumented immigrants. <sup>2</sup>

Photo of the wall in Nogales, Sonora.



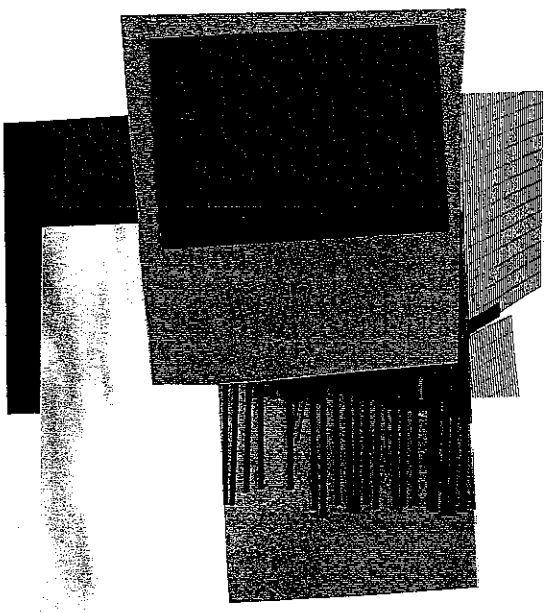
in danger and threatened fragile habitats like the San Pedro River and the Tijuana Estuary.

The REAL ID Act also stands as a clear example of fiscal irresponsibility. Border wall construction costs have almost doubled since the initial proposal and appear to be on the rise, despite being a clear and utter failure in deterring migrants from entering the U.S. Border walls already constructed are damaging investments in public land, costing millions of taxpayer dollars in mitigation, legal expenses, and compensation.

Having spent the past several months on the U.S. border, I know firsthand the ugly damage these ineffective national security measures are inflicting on the beautiful and vulnerable borderland environments. As your constituent I ask for your voice and your support in making sure this is not done in our country's name. In repealing the REAL ID Act, we can restore democracy and discourse to the border, and make sure 40 years of environmental legislation cannot be erased with a single signature.

I thank you for your attention,

Alice Ollstein, Santa Monica resident  
Border Studies Program participant



<sup>1</sup> "Border Patrol Budget " 20 June 2007. U.S. Border Patrol; ESRI; USGS; SF Chronicle. 3/12/07. 13 Apr. 2009  
<<http://http://www.easybib.com/cite/form/database>>

<sup>5</sup> Massey, Douglas S. Beyond Smoke and Mirrors Mexican Immigration in an Era of Economic Integration. Minneapolis: Russell Sage Foundation Publications. 2003. page 13

"The border enforcement strategy that evolved in the United States after 1986 had little to do with the reality of immigration or the actual operation of a migration system whose roots could be traced back to 1942 or even before. It had much more to do with domestic fears and insecurities than with any real upsurge in undocumented migration or change in the nature of Mexican immigration." Massey, 103

The border wall costs anywhere from \$2.2 to \$9 million per mile with 700 miles planned to be sealed. Though still incomplete, the estimated total cost of the wall's construction is \$49 billion, 5 to 25 times greater than what congressional leaders predicted.<sup>2</sup> In terms of deterring unauthorized immigrants, the Wall has been described as "so ineffective that Border Patrol spokespeople refer to it as a 'speed bump.' Though humans can go around, over, under or through the border wall, migratory wildlife often end up stranded." Environmental consequences of the wall include the separation eco-systems, the interruption of animal migratory routes, and the disruption nocturnal animals due to 24-hour lighting.

All militarization of the border has had tragic consequences for immigrants.

The policies have led to something referred to as the "funnel effect" forcing migrants to cross in more remote and harsher areas. In 1995, less than 100 deaths were reported of people attempting to cross the border. However, there were over 500 deaths reported in 2007. From 1995 until the end of 2008, there were more than 4,700 plus deaths reported.<sup>4</sup> Before these deterrence policies, the average death count was 2 out of every 100,000 crossers. After the policies were implemented, death (due to exposure to harsh elements) increased to 6 out of every 100,000.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Ludden, Jennifer. "Budget Breakdown: Defense, Health and Energy." NPR. 5 Feb. 2007. 13 Apr. 2009

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=7190896>

<sup>4</sup> Henderson, Tyche. "Study: Price for border fence up to \$49 billion." San Francisco Chronicle 8 Jan. 07.

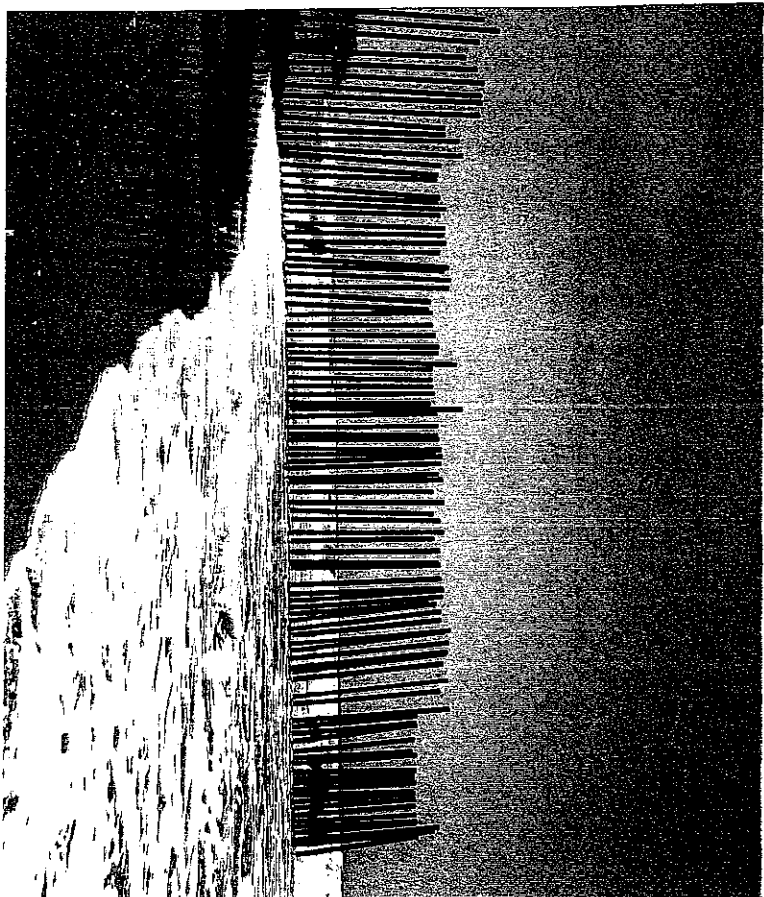
<sup>5</sup> Center for Comparative Immigration Studies, UC- San Diego. Controlling Unauthorized Immigration from Mexico: The Failure of "Prevention through Deterrence" and the Need for Comprehensive Reform. Rep. no. 1.

Dear Congressman Waxman,

The REAL ID Act is compromising our democratic process and threatening fragile ecosystems in our border states. When the Act passed in 2005, it gave the Secretary of Homeland Security—an appointed official—unprecedented power to waive every single law – local, state or national; environmental, labor, public health or otherwise – to construct barriers on all 6,000 miles of both U.S. borders. Since then, over 30 federal laws have been waived, including the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water and Clean Air Acts, the National Historic Preservation Act, the Wilderness Act, and the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act. When an appointed official can disregard decades of legislation created by elected representatives, and in the process ruin America's irreplaceable natural treasures, we no longer can call ourselves a democracy. The REAL ID Act must be repealed.

America's border with Mexico includes national parks, forests, monuments, wildlife refuges, wilderness areas and other environmentally sensitive areas that are now compromised by Department of Homeland Security activities. In Arizona alone, the Border Patrol estimates that 39 species protected or proposed to be protected under the Endangered Species Act are already being affected by its operations. Additionally, the Department of Homeland Security constructed the border wall with no regard for wildlife and their habitats, putting rare species such as the Sonoran pronghorn, jaguar and ocelot

Photo of the wall where it enters the Pacific Ocean in San Diego, California.



## The Wall

"You show me a 50-foot wall and I'll show you a 51-foot ladder at the border. That's the way the border works."

-Janet Napolitano

"History reminds us that walls can be torn down. But the task is never easy.. That is why the greatest danger of all is to allow new walls to divide us from one another."

-Barack Obama addressing the citizens of Berlin in 2008.

Even Janet Napolitano, former Arizona governor and current Secretary of Homeland Security, has publicly declared that walls cannot fix the problems in America's immigration policy. In his 2008 Berlin address, Barack Obama also spoke out against walled borders. Though these two statements acknowledge the senselessness and dangerous implications of a walled border, both Obama and Napolitano are sanctioning further construction of border walls that violate dozens of environmental protection laws without stopping unauthorized crossings. Please remind these officials of their feelings about walled borders and hold them accountable to their words. Tell your congressperson to vote for the Border Security and Responsibility act of 2009. You can use this letter as a template for your own petition. Pass it along to your friends.

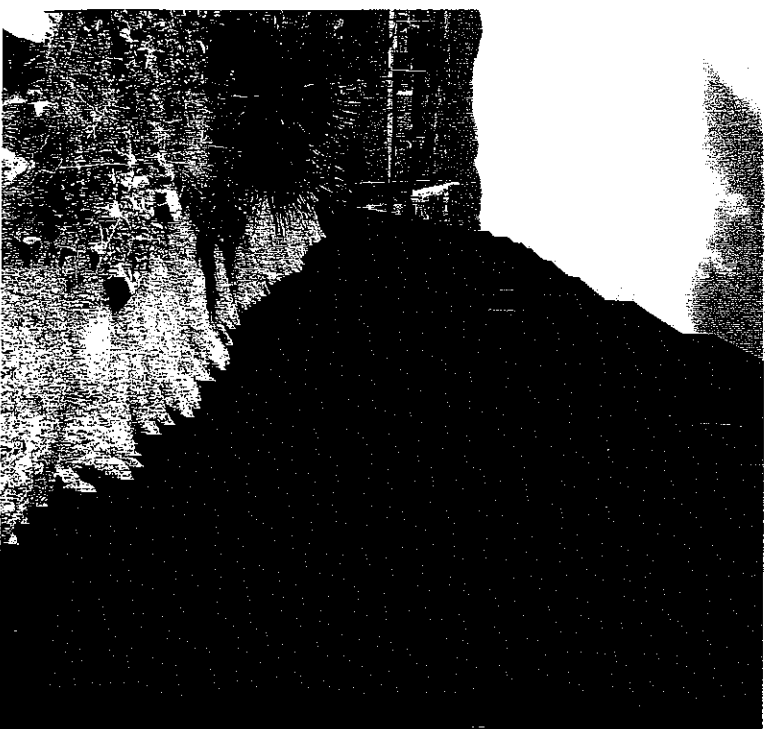


Photo of the wall at Sasabe, Arizona on Mexican side of the border.