

# GLOBAL BORDER INDUSTRIAL COMPLEXES: GENEALOGIES, EPISTEMOLOGIES, SEXUALITIES<sup>1</sup>

Complejos industriales fronterizos globales: genealogías, epistemologías, sexualidades

Complexos industriais fronteiriços globais: genealogias, epistemologias, sexualidades

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25058/20112742.n33.01>

CRISTINA JO PÉREZ

*University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, USA*

[cjperez@umich.edu](mailto:cjperez@umich.edu)

ROBERT MCKEE IRWIN

*University of California, Davis, USA*

[rmirwin@ucdavis.edu](mailto:rmirwin@ucdavis.edu)

JOHN GUZMÁN AGUILAR

*University of California, Davis, USA*

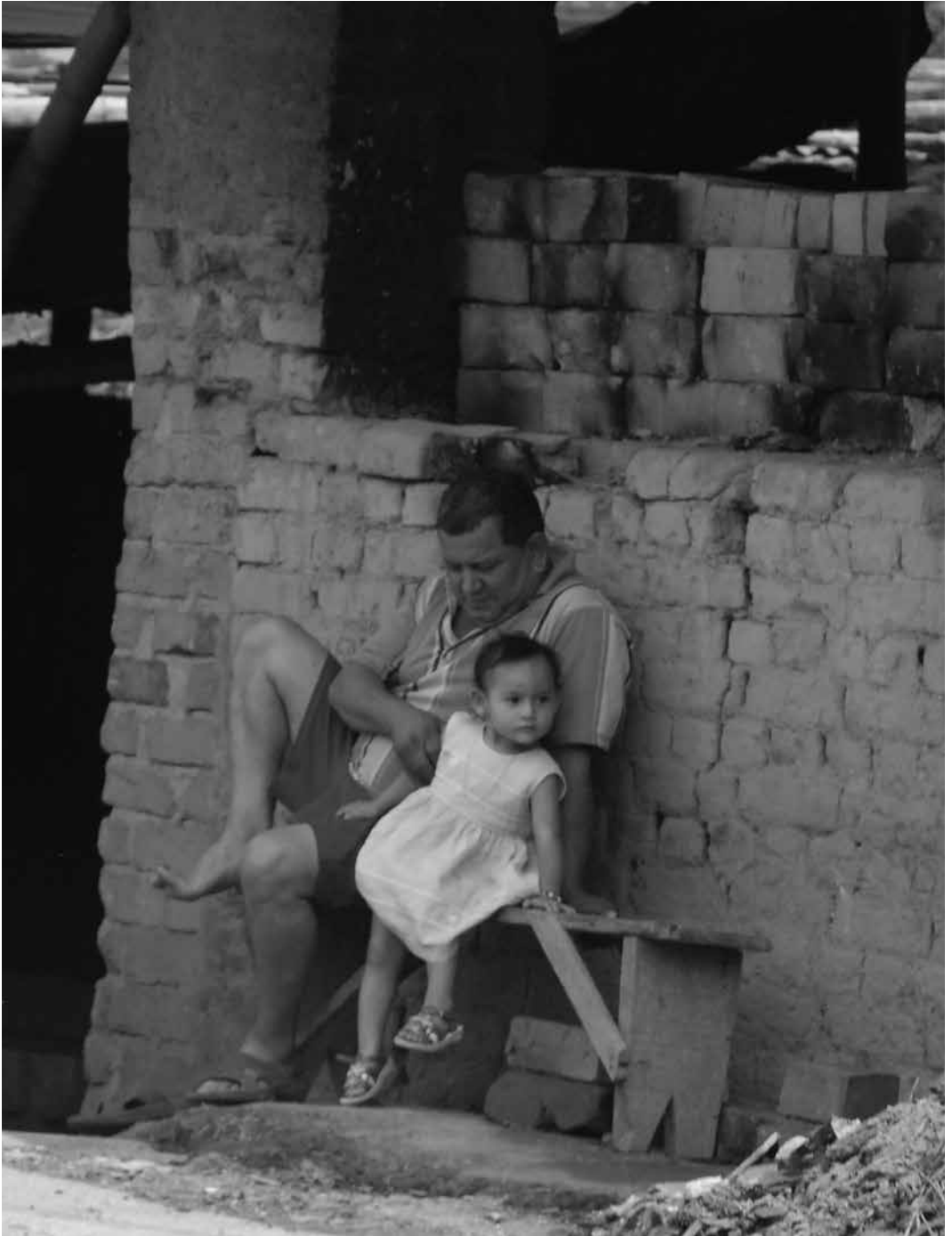
[jfguzman@ucdavis.edu](mailto:jfguzman@ucdavis.edu)

*Editors Tabula Rasa N° 33*

How to cite this article: Pérez, C. J., Irwin, R. M., Guzmán Aguilar, J. (2020). Global Border Industrial Complexes: Genealogies, Epistemologies, Sexualities. *Tabula Rasa*, 33, 1-16.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25058/20112742.n33.01>

In late 2018, the world watched as a large group of asylum-seekers traveling from Central America to the United States' southern border experienced the full force of an increasingly global Border Industrial Complex. Few would use the language of the Border Industrial Complex, but it was widely understood that the line between the US and Mexico would be amplified and protected by a dense network of various national, international, media, for-profit, and not-for-profit organizations, which had been developed to respond to human flows across national boundaries and more specifically the boundaries between the global north and the global south. As the US and Mexico staged a confrontation with the thousands of refugees looking to flee violence and extreme poverty in their

<sup>1</sup> This project emerged from the larger Mellon Initiative in Comparative Border Studies realized at the University of California Davis from 2015 through 2019.



**Cajamarca - Coello**  
*Leonardo Montenegro*

home countries, they intensified the use of a range of already common material and discursive tactics, including militarization, privatized policing, and racialized discourses of migrant threat meant to violently contain and control this “caravan of migrants.” In addition to the ways the state deployed the Border Industrial Complex, the caravan also illuminates the ways local actors and activists become entangled in the larger project of the Border Industrial Complex, profiting from the control of migration in often opaque and ambivalent ways.

To that end, we take up the Border Industrial Complex as it has been formulated and applied by Michael Dear and others to refer specifically to the collaborative web of governmental and commercial often racist and necropolitical interests that have emerged around borders such as that between the United States and Mexico, forming a vast infrastructure that profits from the detention and deportation of migrants as well as the various mechanisms of deterrence that put unauthorized migrants including refugees in extreme danger in attempting to cross borders. However, the essays gathered here look beyond these amply discussed industries of border militarization and securitization, and migrant criminalization and expulsion of the contemporary global north in its attempts to fortify its material and symbolic separation from the south. These essays push at the borders of the contemporary Border Industrial Complex, whether by looking back toward comparable border dynamics from other periods of history, or by considering industries not directly allied with governmental agencies and agendas that nonetheless profit from fortified border controls, or by thinking against the heteronormative assumptions underlying most discussion not only of the Border Industrial Complex, but of borders and migration in general.

### **The Caravan and the US Border Industrial Complex**

One of the hallmarks of the Border Industrial Complex (BIC) in the US is the militarization of the border and during the fall of 2018, Trump’s response to the caravan of Central American refugees headed to the US made visible and intensified an already close relationship between border policing and military personnel, strategies and tactics. And so by summer 2019, only two years into his presidency, he had ordered thousands of active-duty troops to the border (Morgan, 17 July, 2019). While the United States has long been militarizing the border in an attempt to control migration, militarization has tended to be slow and subtle, often characterized by scholars like Timothy Dunn as low intensity conflict (1995). Indeed, the US has had to be careful and restrained about border militarization in order to avoid violating the Posse Comitatus Act of 1935, which disallows the use of military personnel as domestic law enforcement officers. Still, in a show of the Border Industrial Complex’s militarized force, 2018’s Operation Faithful Patriot<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>The operation’s name was widely criticized and later dropped.

was put in place in order to respond to the caravan and agents who were still legally unable to enforce law at the border were put to work “providing helicopter support for border missions, installing concrete barriers and repairing and maintaining vehicles” (Galvan, 30 October, 2018)

Militarization doesn't just describe a tactic, so too is it theoretically bound to the BIC. Michael Dear drew inspiration from Dwight Eisenhower's use of the Military Industrial Complex as he coined the term. He argued that “an analogous concept may be applied to the multidimensional, interrelated set of public and private interests now managing border security – encompassing flows of money, contracts, influence, and resources among a vast network of individuals, lobbyists, corporations, banks, public institutions, and elected officials at all levels of government” (p. 125, 2015). Just as profit has driven the growth of militarization in the US and abroad, so too has it shaped an industry around the exclusion and containment of migrant populations.

This growth of private investment in border policing also played a role in the United States' response to the caravan as Trump continued to call for immigration policy that had come to depend on private contract work to build a related and necessary infrastructure of technology, detention, and agent training. For example, in an interview with Fox News's Laura Ingraham on 29 October, 2018, Trump revealed his administration's policy for dealing with asylum-seekers traveling with the caravan. He claimed that those applying for asylum would be held “until such time as their trial takes place.” When asked about the logistics and facilities for holding the group, Trump promised these indefinite detentions would take place in “tent cities.” He went on to describe his plan, “[w]e're going to put tents up all over the place. We're not going to build structures and spend all of this, you know, hundreds of millions of dollars – we're going to have tents” (Kates, 30 October, 2018). While this particular city of tents has yet to be built, the plan draws on a long history of detaining migrants in the US (Cullison, this volume) and a contemporary moment in which industries have sprung up to do the contract work involved in incarcerating migrants. This industry is made up not just of private contractors who run detention facilities (e.g. Corrections Corporation of American, now Core Civic and the GEO Group), so too is it composed of private corporations that feed, clothe, provide telephone services, transport, inspect, and provide medical care for migrants (Worth Rises, June 2018). What is more, while Trump described tents as a money-saving strategy, the Department of Health and Human Services reported that the cost of holding migrant children in a tent city in Tornillo, Texas, is greater than the expense had they been held in established facilities (Ainsley, 20 June, 2018). Ultimately, then, tent cities holding hundreds, if not thousands of asylum-seekers would result in millions of dollars in contracts with private detention and service companies.

In this way, the Border Industrial Complex is indebted to another set of public-private collaborations, namely those established through the Prison Industrial Complex (Davis, 2003; Gilmore, 2007).

In addition to calling for increases in the United States' capacity to detain migrants, Trump also emphasized the "threat" of the caravan as an opportunity to, once again, repeat his incessant call for a border wall. This structure would mean billions in contracts for construction, materials, and the technology needed to create stretches of brick and mortar, as well as potentially digital or virtual walls. So too does would the wall create the need for perpetual partnerships as walls, fences, and reinforcements would have to be maintained (Stewart, 23 August, 2019).

Trump's call for a stronger military presence, for tent cities and detention facilities, and for a wall to "protect" the US from the caravan and other migrants was rooted in a set of racialized and gendered discourses that have long motivated the growth of the Border Industrial Complex (Pérez, 2018). These discourses construct Latin American migrants as foreign threats meaning to do harm to innocent Americans and are captured in Trump's November 26, 2018 tweet that refers to caravan members as "stone cold criminals" who should be sent "back to their countries." His language here also indexes the many times he has explicitly stated and implicitly suggested that Latin American migrants are inherently, criminally violent.

The discourse of criminality is useful to the BIC, not just in its ability to draw on and expand the logics of the prison industrial complex. So too does crime become an expansive term that might be applied to everything from crossing the border without documentation to theft to murder. In the case of the caravan, Trump argued that these "criminal elements" included gang members, like those belonging to MS-13 and, he vaguely added, "Middle Easterners" (Rizzo, 25 October, 2018) to suggest terrorists were traveling with the group. In this figuring of a "border crisis," caravan members, migrants, and asylum-seekers were depicted as violent criminals, meaning that US citizens, border agents, and taxpayers were constructed as victims. In late November, as the 2018 midterm elections drew closer, Trump once again took to Twitter to make explicit the anti-migrant discourses of the BIC: "There is no way that the United States will, after decades of abuse, put up with this costly and dangerous situation anymore!" (Trump, 24 November, 2018)

In these discourses, the state justifies its exclusion, caging, and policing of migrants and asylum seekers by suggesting that migrants are violent subjects who must be dealt with forcefully. But these discourses of US as victim and migrant as criminal also erase the violence committed by the BIC against migrants and asylum-seekers.

Hidden behind this language is the abuse of migrants at the hands of a complex that thrives and profits off the targeting, incarceration, and death of migrants (Pérez, 2018). This collection aims to both identify the work of the Border Industrial Complex globally and to make visible these violences against migrants.

### **The Border Industrial Complex's Local Entanglements**

Tracking the fall 2018 migrant caravan's sensationalized arrival in Tijuana in mid-November drew attention to some actors not generally associated with discussions of the BIC, but who seemed poised to profit from the stridently controlled US border with Mexico while appearing to be in opposition to or disconnected from the apparatuses and economic interests managed and nurtured by US Homeland Security. The Border Industrial Complex, in this view, is imagined not just as a massive highly fortified rampart but as an assemblage of sometimes heavy but mobile elements sometimes locked deeply together, and other times grazing against each other in temporary harmony or banging boisterously against each other in inconsistent lunges, only to later disconnect all together. This broader view of the Border Industrial Complex seeks to look beyond its most obvious components and explore some of its ancillary and dependent coactors.

The caravan's piecemeal arrival in Playas de Tijuana beginning on November 11 had within a few days drawn the attention of the world, with international news media reporting on the 800+ migrants camped out along the iconic beachside border wall, while the US president tweeted derision against them, neighbors protested, young migrants clambered up the wall and taunted the US military sent to keep them out of the country, and the Tijuana mayor proclaimed that they were a bunch of potheads and vagabonds. Soon viral videos of a Honduran woman rejecting a plate of beans as food for pigs, and the caravan's LGBTQ "splinter group" staging a "mass wedding" seemed to provoke equally passionate responses of rancor or compassion across different sectors of Mexican society. The highly mediatized incident of a protest march swerving suddenly off route, across the Tijuana river canal toward the United States, interpreted by some as a rush on the border by a rowdy horde, and the US response of tear gas bombs flung into the crowd as panicked women and children fled in retreat further enflamed pro and anti-immigrant sentiments. For a city known for making every effort to surmount the border, whether through laser visas, coyote syndicates, SENTRI lanes, burrero networks, anchor babies, or weekend shopping expeditions, the wall, in all its visual spectacle, had sliced clamorously into everyone's psyche.

The visibility of the fall 2018 migrant caravan contrasts significantly with the invisibility of south to north migrants in North America for generations, migrants for whom invisibility was key to a successful trajectory (Durand and Massey 2009), but it was not the first moment of heightened visibility of

migration in that city. In Tijuana, a city built on migration, new waves of migrant visibility dating back over a decade have shaped a new era for the city. Following 2001, Tijuana began transforming from North America's busiest crossing point for undocumented migrants to the world's largest receiving point for deported migrants. By the 2010s, deportation became news spectacle when informal camps of thousands of deported Mexicans, demoralized and in many cases addicted to drugs or alcohol, began multiplying in the canalization of the Tijuana River along the border near Tijuana's main legal border crossing points, eventually leading to sometimes violent campaigns of expulsion (Woldenberg, 2013). In 2016, thousands of Haitian immigrants arrived in Tijuana hoping to cross to the United States, again making news headlines around the world, as Tijuana scrambled to accommodate its first major wave of non-Spanish speaking Afrolatinamerican migrants, many of whom would settle long term in the city (Alarcón Acosta & Ortiz Esquivel, 2017). And in 2018, Central American migration, which had long moved surreptitiously through Tijuana, became highly visibilized and mediatized through the spectacle of the fall 2018 migrant caravan (Irwin, 2019).

These new visibilities of migration both generated and drew attention to the infrastructures that have taken shape around migrants, whether moving northward or southward, who settle temporarily or permanently in Tijuana. When the caravan arrived in Tijuana, all kinds of agencies mobilized to accommodate them. While many of the organizations involved are faith based and nonprofit, nonetheless there is a significant population of people who make a living serving migrants, and whose livelihood depends upon the Border Industrial Complex. Without a border wall and the border patrol and immigration and customs enforcement agents and immigrant detention centers and the US's immigration court system, there would be no need for El Desayunador Salesiano Padre Chava and la Casa de los Pobres to serve thousands of breakfasts every morning; there would not be a need for over sixty shelters in border neighborhoods in downtown Tijuana. There would not be an abundance of social service organizations like Agencia Migrante or Alma Migrante that help migrants with orientation, documentation, shelter, job placement, personal hygiene, mental health, or legal advice.

The phenomenon of deportation most especially laid bare a commercial dependency on the Border Industrial Complex that appears not to be directly in cahoots with it: the industry of call center outsourcing, of which Tijuana is one of many sites (Alarcón Medina, 2018). The deportation of long-time US residents, many childhood arrivals and essentially native English speakers, has invited the establishment of a major business operation that benefits from the exportation of large numbers of people with unaccented English and direct cultural knowledge of life in the US that allow them to offer a near equivalent to the customer service that could be offered from a US based call center, but for a fraction of

the cost. Other employment sectors in which fluency in English is a requisite such as tourism or ESL instruction, health services (in a major site of medical tourism) or certain small business markets, such as barber shops or tattoo parlors or specialized construction work, where knowledge and skills learned in the United States may fill voids, may also profit from the large number of repatriated Mexicans that settle in Tijuana in order to minimize the distance from families left behind in the United States (Ibarra González, 2016).

Another sector that very clearly thrives in the presence of the border wall and the now longstanding US mass deportation regime is that of narcotics. Michael Dear, in his often-cited formulation of the Border Industrial Complex, opposes it to Mexico's organized crime syndicates. And there is certainly no evidence to indicate that drug cartels are colluding deeply with US migration authorities or the companies they hire to build and maintain their infrastructures and technologies of control. However, it is also very clear that the narcotics industry draws major benefits from deportation. For example, there is some evidence that the Mexican narcotics trade has actively recruited certain profiles of repatriated Mexicans, including especially those with experience using weapons or engaging in certain kinds of illicit practices, such as US military veterans or those who have belonged to US street or prison gangs (Santamaría, 2013).

However, much more visible has been the availability of drugs for those being repatriated. Deportation is almost always a traumatic experience, a forced displacement usually involving arrest by US Customs and Border Protection or Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents, and detention – effectively incarceration in immigrant detention centers, sometimes for months or years; sudden uprooting from home; separation from family and friends; loss of jobs and often possessions and other assets. Perhaps more than that it may imply, as is evident in Guillermo Alonso Meneses's article in this dossier, feelings of failure, desperation, and hopelessness. The omnipresence of drugs in areas of the city where deported people are likely to stay makes them a temptation for many, especially those unable to promptly overcome the trauma of their deportation. Border towns, long known as strategic smuggling points for narcotics, have become in recent years major domestic markets. In this way, Mexico's drug trafficking sector – along with the numerous substance abuse rehabilitation centers that have proliferated in the Mexican borderlands – has profited quite conspicuously from the securitization of the border in cities like Tijuana and Ciudad Juárez (dating very clearly from Operation Hold the Line and Operation Gatekeeper in the mid-1990s) and the regime of mass deportation (in full force since the mid-2000s), and thus is as deeply connected into the web of economic relations that constitute the Border Industrial Complex as the call center industry (see also Del Monte Madrigal, 2019).



In the case of the fall 2018 migrant caravan, the role of the organized crime syndicates is less clear. Rumors of maras not only as motivating factors for migrants to flee their homes, joining the caravan in hopes of obtaining safe passage to the United States, but also as travelers within the caravan – “infiltrators,” as some have put it (see Irwin, 2019) – have not, as far as we know, been fully confirmed or explained. Nonetheless, some would argue that Central American migration circuits, though long established as a product of US imperialist interventions, have been fed substantially by the Border Industrial Complex (Santamaría 2013). Expulsions of criminalized Central American civil war refugees laid the groundwork for the rapid penetration of the Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) and similar crime networks across El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, where a consequent culture of violence and fear has led to massive waves of emigration that have most recently assumed the form of caravans (Ambrosius and Leblang 2018). Central American mara organizations have grown and benefitted from the steady arrival of young deported Central American men, some of whom are already affiliated with these groups before their repatriation, and are, then, deeply woven into the assemblages of power and profit of the contemporary North American Border Industrial Complex.

Moreover, while it remains unclear who was behind staging some of the more spectacular displays of the caravan upon its arrival in Tijuana, the caravan’s prominence on the global stage – fed by presidential tweets, and visually stirring images of huge throngs of migrants hiking across Mexico – drew global attention to an unanticipated activism that coming from one side articulated an unsettling Mexican opposition to the Central American migrants (notwithstanding the millions of Mexicans who have migrated to the US over the years), and from the other appeared to emerge within the caravan itself in the form of what seemed to be the launching of an unprecedented migrants-in-transit rights movement.

At different moments, both sides seemed to gain victories on the global stage. The protests against the migrants camped out in Playas de Tijuana, while rowdy elements of the caravan defiantly climbed the border fence brandishing Honduran flags and taunting US national guard, and stories of migrants being caught using drugs or acting ungrateful or entitled fed the image of Central American migrants as undesirable or dangerous, even in the face of competing media stories insisting that the vast majority of caravan migrants had legitimate claims for asylum. What seemed to be a rush on the border in late November near the PedWest border crossing in Tijuana by a group of caravan migrants that had been marching through the streets of the city in protest of US border policies might have contributed to the same anti-immigrant sentiment had US agents not tear gassed them, an incident of excess that was etched into history through images of women and children fleeing in chaotic smoke, as if in the middle of a war. Stories of large numbers of migrants getting caught climbing over or tunneling under the existing border wall

stoked sentiments of fear of a migrant invasion, while competing images of children being torn from their parents' arms and confused migrants abruptly released from overcrowded detention centers and abandoned onto cold streets in US border towns – or of babies dying in ICE detention – heightened concerns that the US was incorporating an alarming degree of callousness and cruelty into its protocols for the reception of refugees (see Irwin, 2019).

While it would be cynical to assert that pro- or anti-immigrant activist groups benefit from the militarization of the border and the current regimes of migrant detention and deportation, some of the activism emerging around the fall 2018 caravan has been subject to public criticism for appearing to take advantage of the media attention the followed the migrants, most especially from their arrival in Mexico in late October of 2018 and through the end of the period of peak media attention in late December. Pueblo Sin Fronteras, which had previously organized smaller Central American migrant caravans, has been accused of “using migrants to advance its political agenda – imperiling the people it claims to protect” (Linthicum, 6 December, 2018). Padre Alejandro Solalinde, perhaps Mexico’s best-known advocate for the human rights of migrants has publicly alleged that “Pueblo Sin Fronteras cheated the migrants; they told them lies that once they arrived at the border, everything would be very easy” (Linthicum, 6 December, 2018). Once they got to Tijuana, they “accompanied” migrants in marches, a hunger strike, and other public demonstrations gaining significant recognition for themselves and for the cause of migrant rights, while also provoking significant negative backlash against the caravan, and ending up with their own image tarnished. Solalinde went so far as to claim that Pueblo Sin Fronteras would place women and children at the front of caravans in order to hide human smugglers (“polleros”) and their clients, as well as armed individuals (*Sin Embargo*, 23 November, 2018). Whether or not the accusations of Solalinde are true, it is evident that Pueblo Sin Fronteras – as well as competing advocates and service providers, including Solalinde and the Hermanos en el Campo shelter system he founded – is deeply embedded in the complex assemblage of actors that make up the broader definition a Border Industrial Complex seen in the articles collected herein.

Our point here is not to critique other notions of Border Industrial Complex, but rather to make clear that a broader understanding of the assemblages of relations around the militarized border, whether in current day North and Central America, or at other historical moments, or the many parts of the world where borders seem to have, as Mezzadra and Neilson have put it, “proliferated” and become ever more controlled by ever more violent means, is helpful in understanding the local and global dynamics of mobility and containment throughout history. These webs of often conflicting interests that emerge and flourish in the context of a heavily securitized border provide the backdrop for the movements of

migrants: refugees and other emigrants, as well as those deported or otherwise repatriating to their nations of origin, and also the communities from which they are displaced, must be studied not in isolated terms but in conjunction in order to understand the effects of these displacements on society.

### **Border Industrial Complexes Across Space and Time**

In order to expand our understanding of the Border Industrial Complex, this special issue begins by pushing at the temporal boundaries of the BIC to consider the longer history of contemporary practices. In “Valley of Caged Immigrants: Punishment, Protest, and the Rise of the Port Isabel Detention Center,” Jennifer Cullison unveils the history of immigrant caging in the United States and utilizes the Port Isabel Detention Center (Los Fresnos, Texas) as an example through which to trace the growth of this phenomenon over the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The genealogy that Cullison constructs is supported by her extensive archival work on institutions in the United States and Mexico responsible for border policing as well as the responses by advocacy groups. Her contribution traces out the gradual transformation of immigrant caging from a frugal, government-run enterprise to a key element within the Border Industrial Complex that has taken shape over the last decades. Her analysis frames post-WWII immigrant caging not as a problem of national security or labor control, but rather as an ethical issue of human rights.

Mexico-based, cultural studies scholar Guillermo Alonso Meneses, in “Los muros fronterizos y las deportaciones de inmigrantes como tecnologías biopolíticas en los Estados Unidos,” considers the history of the biopolitics of the border between Mexico and the United States over the last 100 years as the historical context for the current humanitarian crisis brought about by mass deportation. The first part of his article traces the construction of border fortifications as well as increasingly restrictive policies that have culminated in the massive deportations and anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies of Donald Trump. The essay’s second part analyzes the effects of these policies at an individual level by closely reading a cluster of digital stories (testimonial audiovisual shorts) housed in the open-access, community archive “Humanizando la Deportación.” Alonso Meneses, who collaborated in the production of this archive, concludes that the history of the border as well as in the narratives of the archive demonstrate how deportation and exclusionary policies are part of the de facto ethnic cleansing projects increasingly deployed by the United States.

While these first two contributions consider the historical development of elements of border policing – detention and deportation – most-often associated with the US-Mexico BIC, the rest of this dossier expands on the concept by highlighting the global BIC’s cultural, social, and spatial dynamics. “Mujer, madre y adicta:

brutalidades físicas y psicológicas de las fronteras contemporáneas” follows research carried out on the US-Mexico border, in Mexicali, but its context exceeds the limits proposed by Dear. Its authors, Lilian Paola Ovalle, Alfonso Díaz Tovar, and Lourdes Angulo, address the plight of mothers who are users of illicit drugs as they are victimized by prohibition and criminalization of certain drugs at a global scale, taking as a point of departure the concentration of both criminal narcotics syndicates and the governmental and nongovernmental agencies that respond to the health issues, whether real or imagined, in the borderlands. Ovalle, et al, highlight how this extended concept of Border Industrial Complex limits the life options of these mothers and their ability to live a dignified life as members of the community. The authors develop their study based on ethnographic interviews that follow mothers through their interactions with different governmental and nongovernmental agencies including hospitals and prisons as they attempt to maintain custody of their children and access services. The article maintains that it is the presence of the border and the conceptualization of its role within the politics of prohibition and the criminalization of certain substances that immobilize and limit the most vulnerable individuals in society.

Arturo Chacón Castañón considers this same milieu of borderlands drug trade in his ethnographic study, “El sicariato: reflexiones desde el complejo industrial fronterizo.” Chacón Castañón interprets the phenomenon of *sicarios*, paid assassins, in the context of the Mexican war on drugs, and its devastating effects on the Mexican city of Ciudad Juárez. He analyzes the activities of sicarios as labor – the sicarios he interviews present themselves not as independent contractors, but as salaried employees of informal but well organized corporations – that occurs within the contours of the Border Industrial Complex of the US-Mexico borderlands. Chacón, a former journalist, is one of a very small number of individuals who has gained sufficient confidence with sicarios to interview some at length, and his arguments emerge principally from his close attention to their own often self-critical representations of their labor.

The remaining four articles of the dossier move to geographical contexts beyond the US-Mexico border. Indeed, Camila Esguerra’s “Complejo Industrial Fronterizo, sexualidad y género” delves into the relationship between gender and sexuality within the context of the colonial ties between Latin America and Spain, and analyzes sexed and gendered labor practices through the lens of the Border Industrial Complex. By studying processes of migration, exile, movement, and banishment of people with non-heteronormative and non-normative gender identities Esguerra details how certain racialized and classed bodies are incorporated into the cannon fodder of migrant labor industry. Her analysis is based on her multi-site ethnographic work with people who have been displaced from several Latin American countries and whose testimonies make it possible to execute an intersectional inquiry into the lived experiences of migration.

In “Dispositivos de seguridad y sexualidad en la frontera sur de México: biopolíticas en mujeres transgénero centroamericanas”, Ernesto Antonio Zarco Ortiz and Karla Jeanette Chacón Reynosa trace the paths of transgender women migrants across the Guatemala-Mexico border and their long or short term settlement in Tapachula, Chiapas, analyzing their interactions with government officials and their relationships to the documentation that determines the possibility of their presence in Mexico. The authors reveal the difficulties transgender women face in confronting border control mechanisms that do not take into account their bodies, their reasons for crossing, and their migratory experiences, signaling both the gender performances they are forced to carry out in order to navigate their border crossings, as well as the strategic flexibility required to overcome the obstacles of contemporary border biopolitics. Crossing geopolitical and administrative borders for these migrants implies crossing the borders of gender and necessitates building community in the interstices. Their observations are based on the lived experiences of transgender migrants revealed through ethnographical interviews of four transgender Central American migrants in Tapachula.

The final two articles explore the possibility of extrapolating the ideas underlying the conceptualization of the Border Industrial Complex to support the analysis of historical contexts of cross border mobility and containment in different parts of the world. In “Fantasies of Freedom: Comparing Indentured Labor and the Border Industrial Complex in Mohsin Hamid’s *Exit West* and Amitav Ghosh’s *Sea of Poppies*,” Amrita Mishra introduces a novel frame of analysis through which to think through India’s indentured labor, compared not to new methods of slavery, but rather to colonial innovations introduced by British institutions that are underpinned by similar commitments to profit and the fictions of freedom that shape the contemporary US-Mexico Border Industrial Complex. To this end, the author engages in close readings of Mohsin Hamid’s novel *Exit West*, in which contemporary refugees of an unnamed, war-torn city seek out routes of migration to Europe and the United States, and Amitav Ghosh’s *Sea of Poppies*, a historical novel whose racially diverse characters (from India, the US, France) of distinct social classes travel from Calcutta to Mauritius, each navigating their own possibilities of mobility in the context of the global dynamics of imperialism and colonialism in the first decades of the nineteenth century.

Finally, Marilyn Miller’s “Lessons for the Present from the Alien Enemy Act and the Deportation of Latin Americans to the United States during World War II” turns to the Americas in the 1940s. Specifically, she investigates the impact of the Alien Enemy Act during World War II and the little discussed, US-mandated detention of European and Japanese migrants in Latin American countries (as well as in the United States). Fear of Nazi influence in Latin America, argues the author, created a system of detention that was facilitated by the advent of

the Good Neighbor Policy and the promise of hemispheric protection. Miller identifies the ways that interment techniques took place north and south of the US Mexico Border and compares them to the current state of detentions and deportations within the context of the Border Industrial Complex. By analyzing the few archival records that exist regarding this WWII internment program as well as letters and personal documents of people who suffered arbitrary internment due to national background, with Germans identifying with Nazism and Jews interned in the same camps, Miller challenges the idea of the United States as an arbiter of world justice during World War II, and establishes the Alien Enemy Act as a precedent to the current criminalization and persecution of entire migrant and refugee populations.

Our purpose in publishing this collection of essays is not necessarily to insist on redefining the Border Industrial Complex, but rather to draw attention to the many institutions – governmental, nongovernmental, commercial, criminal – that have benefitted from border security practices in diverse global and historical contexts. It is important to realize that what may seem like new and extreme forms of xenophobia, criminalization of migrants, and economic exploitation of nativist intolerance in the local context of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century US Mexico border are hardly unique to this time and place. We hope that broader comparative approaches to border and migration studies will help in identifying more humane practices of border administration and treatment of migrants.

## References

Ainsley, J. (2018, June 20). Trump admin's 'tent cities' cost more than keeping migrant kids with parents. *NBC News*. Recuperado de: <https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/immigration-border-crisis/trump-admin-s-tent-cities-cost-more-keeping-migrant-kids-n884871>

Alarcón Acosta, R. & Ortiz Esquivel, C. (2017). Los haitianos solicitantes de asilo a Estados Unidos en su paso por Tijuana. *Frontera Norte*, 29(58), 171-79.

Alarcón Medina, R. (2018) Informational returnees: Deportation, digital media, and the making of a transnational cybertariat in the Mexican call center industry. *Dialectical Anthropology*, 42(3), 293-308.

Ambrosius, C. & Leblang, D. (2018, August, 21). Exporting murder: US deportations & the spread of violence. *The Crime Report*. Recuperado de: SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3213383> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3213383>

Davis, A. Y. (2003). *Are prisons obsolete?* New York: Seven Stories Press.

Dear, M. (2013). *Why walls won't work: Repairing the US Mexico divide*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Del Monte Madrigal, J. A. (2019). Devenir habitante de calle en una ciudad fronteriza del norte de México: deportación, consumo de drogas y violencias. *Civitas: Revista de Ciências Sociais*, 19(1), 159-77.

Dunn, T. J. (1995). *The militarization of the US-Mexico border, 1978-1992: Low intensity conflict doctrine comes home*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Durand, J. & Massey, D. (2003). *Clandestinos: Migración México-Estados Unidos en los albores del siglo XXI*. Zacatecas/Ciudad de México: Universidad Autónoma de Zacatecas/ Miguel Ángel Porrúa.

Galvan, A. (2018, October 30). Troops at the border are limited in what they can do. *Associated Press*. Recuperado de: <https://www.msn.com/en-us/travel/article/troops-at-the-border-are-limited-in-what-they-can-do/ar-BBP7KUX>

Gilmore, R. W. (2007). *Golden gulag: Prisons, surplus, crisis, and opposition in globalizing California*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Ibarra González, J. I. (2016). Inserción laboral y trayectorias de los migrantes mexicanos deportados en Tijuana. (Tesis de maestría). Colegio de la Frontera Norte, Tijuana. Recuperado de: <https://colef.repositorioinstitucional.mx/jspui/handle/1014/344>

Irwin, R. M. (2019, March 19). Making sensation and sense of the migrant caravan of fall 2018 (Part I). *Latinx Talk*. Recuperado de: <https://latinxtalk.org/2019/03/19/making-sensation-and-sense-of-the-migrant-caravan-of-fall-2018-part-i/>

Irwin, R. M. (2019, March 26). Making sensation and sense of the migrant caravan of fall 2018 (Part II). *Latinx Talk*. Recuperado de: <https://latinxtalk.org/2019/03/26/making-sensation-and-sense-of-the-migrant-caravan-of-fall-2018-part-ii/>

Kates, G. (2018, October 30). Trump wants to 'put tents up all over the place' for migrants. how much might that cost? *CBS News*. Recuperado de: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-tent-cities-all-over-the-place-for-migrants-how-much-would-it-cost/>

Linthicum, K. (2018, December 6). Pueblo Sin Fronteras uses caravans to shine light on the plight of migrants – but has that backfired? *Los Angeles Times*. Recuperado de: <https://www.latimes.com/world/mexico-americas/la-fg-mexico-caravan-leaders-20181206-story.html>

Mezzadra, S. & Neilson, B. (2013). *Border as method, or, the multiplication of labor*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Morgan, W. (2019, July 17). 2,100 more troops headed to the US-Mexico border, pentagon says. *Politico*. Recuperado de: <https://www.politico.com/story/2019/07/17/2-100-more-troops-headed-to-the-us-mexico-border-pentagon-says-1418838>

Pérez, C. J. (2016, diciembre). La violencia del complejo industrial de la frontera. *Revista Transas Letras y Artes de América Latina*. Recuperado de: <http://www.revistatransas.com/2016/12/22/la-violencia-del-complejo-industrial-de-la-frontera/>

Rizzo, S. (2018, December 25). A caravan of phony claims from the Trump administration. *The Washington Post*, Recuperado de: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2018/10/25/caravan-phony-claims-trump-administration/?utm\\_term=.2386347f3607](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2018/10/25/caravan-phony-claims-trump-administration/?utm_term=.2386347f3607)

Rosagel, S. (2018, 23 de noviembre). El padre Solalinde advierte: ONG acarrea a traficantes de armas y de personas entre los migrantes. *Sin Embargo*. Recuperado de: <https://www.sinembargo.mx/23-11-2018/3501913>

Santamaría, G. (2013). La difusión y contención del crimen organizado en la subregión México-Centroamérica. En J. C. Garzón y E. Olson (Eds.), *La diáspora criminal: la difusión transnacional del crimen organizado y cómo contener su expansión* (59-100). Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

Stewart, E. (2017, August 23). 14 stocks that could skyrocket from Trump's border wall with Mexico. *The Street*. Recuperado de: <https://www.thestreet.com/story/13945461/1/these-stocks-could-soar-with-trump-s-mexico-wall-regardless-of-who-pays-for-it.html>

Trump, D. J. (2018, 24 de noviembre, 6.56pm). Trino en Twitter. Recuperado de: <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump>

Woldenberg, L. (2013, junio). El purgatorio de los deportados. *Vice*. Recuperado de: [https://www.vice.com/es\\_latam/article/nnya58/el-purgatorio-de-los-deportados](https://www.vice.com/es_latam/article/nnya58/el-purgatorio-de-los-deportados)

Worth Rises. (2018, junio). Immigration Detention: An American Business." *Worth Rises Full Report*. Recuperado de: <https://worthrises.org/immigration>