

U.S. Biopolitical Geographies of Migrant Containment

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U.S. anti-immigrant policies and border technologies of exterior and interior enforcement constitute a deathly biopolitical project in the state's manipulation of space and place to exploit, contain, expel, and/or destroy undocumented immigrants, ultimately rendering them invisible and as fodder for the global corporate capital machine. The biopolitical making of space and place for the containment of brown illegalized populations is established in four primary venues: first, in immigrant communities where people's experience of fear of deportation and of constricted space and restricted mobility become crucial components in their subjugation; second, in 'Papers-Please' stylized geographies of arrest that lead to detention and deportation; thirdly, in increasingly privatized detention centers built for the warehousing of undocumented immigrants in the name of corporate profit; and finally, in deadly hostile environs in desert treks that all too often become death marches when immigrants lose their way and die from exposure to the elements.

*'For the citizen to live, the undocumented must be permitted to die'.
–Roxanne Lynn Doty*

Traveling west on I-10 through Phoenix on her way to Las Vegas, and despite the light traffic, at the last minute, Shauna¹ decided to take I-8., bypassing downtown Phoenix. It was the middle of June, and at 9:20 a.m., the temperature was already a sweltering 94 degrees and rising. Before the day was over, the heat in Phoenix would crescendo at 116.

Ten miles east of the Gila Bend turnoff, a man suddenly appeared from out of a culvert on the side of the highway. He stood frantically waving his arms. Ten years before, Shauna might have kept on driving. But in the summer of 2013, she didn't hesitate to stop because she recognized this man for who he was: a dying man desperately trying to save his own life. Once in the passenger seat, the man's rank body odor filled the interior of the car, and within minutes, he had downed the contents of two 32-oz water bottles she

gave him. Alejandro told her that he had been walking the desert for eleven days, the last three of them without water. He and a friend had paid a guide \$1000 apiece in exchange for safe passage through the Arizona/Sonoran Desert, but once the coyote had them alone in the wilderness, he robbed them and the rest of their group of their remaining money and valuables. Turning his back on the group, the coyote abandoned his charges to the unforgiving desert. Most of the group decided to walk back to Mexico, but Alejandro and Alberto determined that they would keep walking north. But they had not planned to be walking for so many days. Ten days later, Alejandro held his friend as he lay dying, his body devastated by the ravages of hyperthermia. 'But you can make it!' Alejandro had cried. 'Alberto, look! We can see it from here! Only a few miles away! The highway is right there! It's right there!' But Alberto's body had no life left to give, and so he surrendered his last breath to the Arizona killing deserts.

In the desert, the state's responsibility for migrant deaths is neatly evaded and rendered utterly invisible. U.S. immigrant prevention-through-deterrence policies and border technologies of exterior and interior enforcement constitute a deathly biopolitical project in the state's creation of spatialized geographies whose purpose is to contain, expel, and in the case of deathly desert environs, swallow whole alien 'Others'. U.S. biopolitical policies of citizenship, immigrant policing, and detention and deportation inevitably rely on spatial logistics of containment to render invisible undocumented persons while shoring up the global neoliberal capital project that relies on a tractable, disposable labor force.

The biopolitical making of space and place for the containment of brown illegalized populations is established in four primary venues: first, in immigrant communities where people's experience of fear of deportation and of constricted space and restricted mobility become crucial components in their subjugation; second, in 'Papers-Please' stylized geographies of arrest that lead to detention and deportation; thirdly, in increasingly privatized detention centers built for the warehousing of undocumented immigrants in the name of corporate profit; and finally, in deadly hostile environs in desert treks that all too often become death marches when immigrants lose their way and die from exposure to the elements. Anti-immigrant rhetoric and legislation and the consequent creation of spatialized geographies for migrant containment work in tandem to benefit corporate capital in the manufacturing of a convenient scapegoat to shoulder the burden of responsibility for society's ills and in the maintenance of an infinitely exploitable, infinitely disposable migrant labor force.

Biopower serves as a useful concept in highlighting the workings of power behind these U.S. immigration disappearing acts. In his discussion of government and governmentality, Michel Foucault (2003) highlights the emergence of biopower that occurred with the transformation of power in the 18th century with the rise of the nation-state. The divine right of the monarch to 'take life or let live' was

replaced with the modern state's function and preoccupation in administering and prolonging life, in 'generating forces, ordering them, [and] making them submit [rather than] destroying them' (Foucault 2003, p. 139). This new technology comprised a 'biopolitics' of the human race—a 'normalization' of society in the state's administration of control over both the individual body and the social body. Foucault describes the state's newfound function of 'taking control over life' as a series of 'seizures of power' or 'adjustments' to the sovereign-juridical order (2003, p. 243). The first adjustment targets the anatomic in disciplining and utilizing the body as a machine; the second focuses on the biological in the propagation and homogenization of the human species. In its aim to optimize the population as a whole, these first two adjustments of biopower work in tandem to subject bodies 'to precise controls and comprehensive regulations' to ensure the homeostasis of a society by eliminating irregularities and anomalies in the social body (Foucault 1978, pp. 136-37). Although Foucault emphasizes the state's newfound function with the primacy of life, he does not ignore the state's role in the propagation of death, for the new power that would foster life, whose 'main role was to ensure, sustain, and multiply [it]' could still '*disallow* it to the point of death' (1978, p. 138, Foucault's emphasis). The third adjustment, 'state racism', would constitute the 'basic mechanism of power' of the state in providing a template for dividing those who would be made to live from those who must die. The significance of state racism as a technology cannot be overestimated in that the state could 'scarcely function' without it. In a word, racism would allow for the 'function of death' in the modern state's right to kill:

What in fact, is racism? It is primarily a way of introducing a break into the domain of life that is under power's control: the break between what must live and what must die. The appearance within the biological continuum of the human race of races, the distinction among races, the hierarchy of races, the fact that certain races are described as good and that others, in contrast, are described as inferior: all this is a way of fragmenting the field of the biological that power controls. It is a way of separating out the groups that exist within a population. It is, in short, a way of establishing a biological-type caesura within a population that appears to be a biological domain. This will allow power to treat that population as a mixture of races, or to be more accurate, to treat the species, to subdivide the species it controls, into the subspecies known, precisely, as races. That is the first function of racism: to fragment, to create caesuras within the biological continuum addressed by biopower. (Foucault 2003, pp. 254-55)

Racism is thus not an effect, but a tactic of state technology that is used to create biopolitical enemies against whom society must defend itself (Stoler 1995, p. 59). In the feverish age of neoliberal globalization, citizenship technologies have become fused with those of state racism to fragment the biological field that biopower controls as biopolitics are played out on the bodies of global citizens and racialized non-citizens. Within this context, the brown body of the

'illegal alien' has been marked by the state as an external threat, both to society and to state sovereignty and governmentality.

Within dominant discourses, undocumented immigrants have been constructed as 'unethical subjects ... unable or unwilling to enterprise their lives or manage their own risks' (Inda 2006, p. 108). With the rise of neoliberal rule and the ideological decree of privatized and individualized government of risk, proper neoliberal citizens are expected to utilize market mechanisms in bearing the responsibility for their own social security and for insuring themselves and their families against ill fortune of poor health, accidental loss, and/or unemployment. The racialized anti-citizen's individual lack of resources is thus equated with a pathological irresponsibility and inability to contribute to the wellbeing of the social body. Biopower tactics incorporate 'anti-citizen' regimes of truth that construct as pathological the undesirable body of the 'illegal alien', associating it with crime and disease and as a cancer that must be excised from the social body. The term 'illegal alien' has permeated dominant discourse to the extent that our society has come to associate all unauthorized border crossings with those migrants originating from south of the border. Illegalityⁱⁱ manifests specifically in the derogatory moniker 'wetback', which singles out unauthorized immigrants from Mexico and Central America who cross into the U.S. swimming across the Rio Grande or vis-à-vis the treacherous All-American Canal (Bender 2015, p. 36). Although Asian immigrants make up a significant percentage of the undocumented living in the United States, they have not been targeted by the media and politicians as dangerously criminal alien 'Others'.

Ultimately, dominant discourses that scapegoat the brown body of the Mexican migrant are integral to the function of state racism, not only in the maintenance of a hegemonic U.S. citizenship and identity, but also to the production of docile migrant bodies and the control of segregated, hierarchized populations intrinsic to the machinery of neoliberal capitalism. Immigration scholar Nicholas de Genova has written on this phenomena, describing how illegality has become inscribed on the brown bodies of Mexican migrants. The socio-legal production of migrant illegality works to systematically dehumanize and exploit these brown bodies for their labor. The term 'illegal alien' exacerbates migrant vulnerability in that it serves to render these people not fully human in the minds of many Americans.

The imperative of naming and containing undocumented persons as 'illegal' and 'alien' within sites of discursive inhibition and thus preserving the spectacle of the person without papers as dangerously 'other' must be carefully guarded and preserved. Two teaching assistants and a professor in the Department of Critical Culture, Gender, and Race Studies at Washington State University (WSU) have recently come under fire by Fox News and other right wing media outlets for their attempts to create an inclusive space for conversation around immigration by forbidding the dehumanizing term

'illegal alien' as written into their [former] syllabi. As a result, the University administration 'asked' the instructors, one of them the author of this work, to revise their classroom policies by deleting the offending passages from their syllabi. In an issued statement for the press, WSU Interim President Dan Bernardo defended students' right to 'free speech', stating, 'Blanket restriction of the use of ['illegal alien'] is not consistent with the values upon which this university is founded' (*WSU News* 2015). What this incident has made apparent is that any attempts to elevate undocumented immigrants from their subhuman status to fully human or to diminish the illusion of the danger they present as public safety and health hazards to the dominant white society is regarded by rightwing defenders of corporate interests as an imminent threat to be quashed. Naming and maintaining undocumented persons as 'illegal' and 'alien' and thus subhuman assures the maintenance of the status quo that benefits powerful private and public interests in the exploitation of migrant labor.

Within the dominant anti-immigrant rhetoric, the binary opposition that distinguishes between white and 'browned' bodies more than ever conflates 'white' with 'American' and 'illegal alien' with 'terrorist'. Mary K. Bloodsworth and Carmen R. Lugo-Lugo evidence how the binary rhetoric employed by Bush embodied in his ultimatum 'Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists' masterfully manipulated the U.S. imaginary in bringing to the fore collective beliefs of which bodies constitute 'true Americans'. Consequently, bodies that were construed as un-American were understood to be in need of strict containment (Bloodsworth-Lugo & Lugo-Lugo 2010, p. 3). In the media, 'illegal' brown bodies originating from south of the U.S./Mexico border are increasingly represented as terrorists bent on carrying out another 9/11. On a 2013 segment of the Jon Stewart Show, Dennis Michael Lynch, a rightwing documentarian featured on Fox News, reported finding Qurans and prayer rugs in the desert, and warned how America could suffer another 9/11 at the hands of illegal immigrants in possession of machine guns. Media discourses further represent Latina/o migrants as invaders bent on reclaiming the U.S. Southwest for Mexico and as threats to the U.S. economy and culture ('They take our jobs!' 'They refuse to speak English!') (Chomsky 2006). In addition, politicians and media spokespersons unfailingly brandish metaphors that equate Latina/o bodies with subhuman species or as animal carriers of disease as intimated in terms like 'swarm', 'hordes', and 'packs', and as [un]natural disasters in terminology like 'tides', 'surges', and 'floods' (Bender 2015, p. 36). William Arrocha argues that these anti-immigrant discourses are rooted in systemic violence in that they 'describe a level of repression and intolerance that can only come from state apparatuses and their agents whose goals is to instill fear in those who are clearly not considered by them as worthy individuals' (2002, p. 108). The state's calculated biopolitical production of fear targets different levels of the population, instilling fear of the 'Other' into the dominant white community as well as paralyzing with fear whole migrant communities who live in fear of their imminent arrest and deportation that would result in the loss of livelihoods and the destruction of families.

Fearmongering discourses ultimately prompt anti-immigrant legislation whose propagation results in two principal effects. First, anti-immigrant laws create a circular effect in that they reproduce anti-immigrant rhetoric that in turns leads to more anti-immigrant legislation. Secondly, the propagation of anti-immigrant legislation serves in the creation of spatialized geographies for the containment of 'illegal' brown-bodied anti-citizens apart from 'rightful' dominant white communities. Yet another impact of anti-immigrant laws and rhetoric is that they create a legitimacy around hate crimes that target those perceived to be dangerous alien 'Others'. In 2011, the media outlet AlterNet reported that crimes against Latina/os had increased by 52 percent in recent years due to 'right wing vituperation' and 'caustic rhetoric'.

In the next section, this article engages in a brief overview of anti-immigration legislation of exterior and interior enforcement and the consequent manifestation of spatialized geographies for migrant containment.

Mobile Border Technology and Spatialized Geographies of Migrant Containment

In 2002, in the wake of 9/11 and the War on Terror, and under the tenure of George W. Bush, all matters of immigration law enforcement historically overseen by the Immigration Naturalization Service (INS) were subordinated under the imperatives of counterterrorism headed by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). U.S. immigration authorities declared a ten-year strategic enforcement plan (2003-2012) whose stated mission was to promote 'national security by ensuring the departure from the United States of *all* removable aliens' (Dowling & Inda 2013, p. 14). Although the stated mission was impossible to carry out from its inception, it has not been for want of trying. Under President Barack Obama's administration, over two million deportations have been carried out to date. As a result, millions of undocumented persons living in immigrant communities live in perpetual fear of imminent arrest and deportation and separation from their families and have retreated from public space. In the age of neoliberal globalization, mobility—'the most basic understanding of human freedom', 'the ability to traverse space to make place for oneself in the world', has become a right that is accorded to some and denied to others on the basis of citizenship (Walters 2010, p. 74).

In the 21st century, migrant mobility is increasingly restricted consequent to the criminalization of immigration and the conflation and expansion of immigration policing powers at the federal, state, and local levels. As state and local law enforcement agencies across the nation have embraced their newfound role as the delegates of federal immigration, the gaze of immigration policing is increasingly trained on the spaces of 'resident immigrant everyday' located within the interior of the nation (Coleman and Kocher 2011, p. 28). As a result, the border 'is no longer simply (if it ever really was) a location

at the nation's edge where the regulation of movement takes place; it is also a mobile technology: a portable, diffused, and decentered control apparatus interwoven throughout the nation' (Dowling & Inda 2013, p. 10).

According to Matthew Coleman and Austin Kocher, U.S. immigrant interior policing amounts to a spatialized social control project that has as its primary aim the incapacitation of migrant movement. 'Immigrant incapacitation' techniques accomplish two paradoxical objectives. On the one hand, the militarized spectacle of the removal of 'criminal aliens' from the public sphere assures white dominant society that U.S. policing and deportation policies are accomplishing public safety and national security objectives. On the other hand, local immigration policing policies and the production of fear serve in the creation of 'invisibilized' shadow populations and exploitable disposable migrant labor that are indispensable to the neoliberal corporate capital agenda. As a mobile technology of interior policing, the border functions in the geospatial 'management of populations' whose mission is to 'sift the bad from the good' and eliminate immigrants' bodies from public space. This social control imperative necessitates 'a spatial fix' in the creation of geopolitical sites designed to contain alien 'Others' (Coleman & Kocher 2011, p. 235). Ultimately, this geographical project functions in alignment with the state's use of biopower in 'making' certain segments of the population thrive while disallowing 'Other' populations life to 'the point of death' (Foucault 1978, pp. 136-37).

Over the last decade, the nation has witnessed a series of harsh and repressive laws aimed at containing undocumented immigrants. In 2005, 300 anti-immigrant bills were proposed, 38 of which were passed into legislation; in 2007, 1,562 anti-immigrant bills were introduced, 240 of which went into effect (Sáenz, Menjívar & García 2013, p. 167). In 2010, Arizona Governor Jan Brewer capitalized on 'war on terror' rhetoric to defend the passage of SB 1070 as a response to 'terrorist attacks' made by 'illegal immigrants' on Arizona's border with Mexico (Neiwart, 2010). The 'Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act' essentially embodies attrition through enforcement policy. The logic undergirding the legislation held that Arizona would become so hostile to immigrants as to discourage those coming and compelling those already there to self deport. After Jan Brewer signed the legislation in 2010, the federal government blocked the law before it could go into effect, arguing against its unconstitutionality. But in 2012, the U.S. Supreme Court upheldⁱⁱⁱ the most hotly debated aspect of the law that grants local police powers to check the immigration status of a person where there is 'reasonable suspicion' that s/he is not in the country legally. Arizona's 'Papers Please' law invites rampant racial profiling of persons who are presumed to be 'illegal' based on how they look or sound, and has served as a catalyst for the passage of copycat laws in other states including Utah, South Carolina, Alabama, Indiana, and Georgia. SB 1070 technology purposes to preemptively halt migrant

movement and to round up and deport those already residing within the state.

SB 1070 can be traced back to 1996 with the passage of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) instituted under Bill Clinton. Section 287(g)^{iv} of the Immigrant and Nationality Act allowed for the delegation of police powers to state and local law enforcement entities through partnership initiatives with the federal government; however, the collaboration of state and federal policing in the mass deportation of Mexican immigrants dates back to the 1930s with the Mexican Repatriation Act and in 1954 with Operation Wetback. Even though the 287(g) program was intended to identify for deportation unauthorized immigrants who have committed serious crimes, local law enforcement agencies across the country employ the agreement to conduct raids and carry out traffic stops in neighborhoods where undocumented immigrants live (Sáenz et al 2013, p.170). The import of 9/11 to the prevailing adoption of the 287(g) agreement by non-federal law enforcement agencies cannot be understated. Although the program was available prior to 9/11, local law enforcement agencies expressed little interest in adopting the program because it was antithetical to the traditional policing model that relied on close community ties between migrant residents and local law enforcement actors. Law enforcement officials worried that its incorporation would 'create immigrant communities aloof from city police, employers, educators and health workers', a prediction that has come to pass as manifested in contemporary immigrant communities where persons without papers live in perpetual fear of their immediate deportation and have retreated from public space. The devolution from the community policing model in deference to the 287(g) agreement and the rise of SB 1070 copycat laws thus represents a 'dramatic shift' in border policing technology in the redrawing of borders that aims to severely contain migrant mobility (Coleman & Kocher 2011, p. 231). As a result of this shift, 287(g) policing that targets suspected persons without papers for minor traffic or automotive violations has become the new 'ground zero for U.S. detention and deportation strategy' as hundreds of thousands of deportations have resulted from local immigrant policing operations. Guillermina Gina Núñez and Josiah Heyman conceive of these immigrant policing tactics as 'processes of entrapment' designed to inflict significant risks on migrant movement. Undocumented residents living in regions along the U.S. border with Mexico find themselves locked within 'entrapment zones' as police regularly patrol streets and park at key intersections, outside of parks, public spaces, and houses. In some locales, sheriff's deputies perform roving checkpoint operations to check the citizenship status of suspected undocumented immigrants with the aim of detaining and deporting them. Border residents have termed these operations *redadas* in observance of how 'people are cornered, detained, rounded-up and trapped like cattle' (2007, p. 356).

However, immigrant policing as a mobile border technology has expanded into the interior and northern reaches of the country. Nearly

two thousand miles away from the U.S. boundary with Mexico, western New York is home to one of the largest agricultural producing areas in the state—as well as one of the largest detention centers outside of Arizona and Texas. According to the New York University School of Law Immigration Rights Clinic (NYU SOL) in the Buffalo Sector, and without the sanction of 287(g) agreements, Border Patrol and local police are reported to closely collaborate in matters of immigration enforcement (NYU SOL 2011, p. 1). Miles away from the northern border that the U.S. shares with Canada, BP agents carry out ‘transportation raids’, boarding trains and buses in what many colloquially call ‘Immigration Dumpster Diving’ in search of undocumented immigrants from south of the U.S./Mexico border. In the face of lowered numbers of apprehensions of border crossers on the northern border in the years following 9/11, Buffalo Sector BP agents have resorted to racial profiling and entrapment in the interior to produce the required number of apprehensions and deportations required from higher ups at DHS. Immigrants from south of the U.S./Mexico border, many who have worked on local dairy farms for more than a decade, are being stopped, questioned, and detained without provocation while out grocery shopping or coming back from church or doing laundry. According to Martin Herron, a former ICE agent working in the Buffalo Sector from 1998 to 2011, deportation quotas have become an increasingly high priority at ICE’s regional center there:

I was the officer in charge at the Buffalo Detention Facility ... Now, we’re not like a facility down on the southern border. We don’t have the large amount of Hispanic and Mexican populations that they would have down south, so it’s more difficult for Buffalo to achieve the numbers that [DHS] wanted. So Buffalo had to work a little harder to get them. And Buffalo had to become a little more, um, inventive, on ways to get the numbers up there, and that’s removal numbers, how many we remove from the country, so that it’d look good. They wanted big numbers. (Germano 2015)

Despite the Border Patrol’s purported mission of securing the border, transportation raids carried out on trains and buses in Buffalo and Rochester do not target recent border-crossers. From 2006 to 2009, only one percent of immigration arrests were made within 72 hours of entry. In contrast, 76 percent of those arrested on transportation raids in the Buffalo Sector had been in the United States for more than a year, and 12 percent of these individuals had been residing in the country for more than 10 years (NYU SOL, p. 2).

As a result of the expansion and amplification of immigration policing into the interior, the number of people deported during the first six years of President Obama’s presidency, approximately two million, surpassed the *total* number of persons deported over the century encompassed between 1892-1997 (Golash-Boza 2013, my emphasis). The daily average of people deported under the administration thus corresponds to approximately 1,820 deportations a day. Consequently, and as a matter of routine, millions of persons in

immigrant communities across the nation have witnessed or personally experienced the devastating impact of U.S. immigration policies on the separation of families and can be said to be entrapped within metaphysical geographies of fear. Persons in immigrant communities live, not only with the spectral absence of family or community members, but also with the abiding and palpable presence of their own deportability. Living in around-the-clock bodily activated 'fight or flight' response, 'illegality' thus functions as a biopolitical discipline exercised upon the entire body of undocumented immigrants as well as the bodies of family members who are U.S. citizens. In Tucson, Arizona, Kathryn Ferguson lives with the anticipatory fear of the imminent arrest and deportation of a loved one, describing around-the-clock forms of fear that include the '*wake-up-in-the-middle-of-the-night-something-is-wrong* fear'; the '*I-haven't-heard-from-him-for-eight-hours* fear'; the '*what-am-I-going-to-do-if-I-have-to-leave-my-country-forever* fear'; and the '*what-is-this* click-click on the phone fear' (2015, p. xii). In addition to the mundane fear that is rooted in *anticipation* of the event, Victor Talavera, Guillermina Núñez-Mchiri, and Josiah Heyman have identified two other temporal moments of deportability for persons not yet caught in the net of immigration detainment and deportation: *experience* of the moment of arrest itself; and *memory*, internalized at both the personal and collective level in immigrants' lived experiences of past or near deportation. Immigrants and their families thus live with 'a near-permanent sense of liminality, involving nearly constant presence of fear, anxiety, and stress' (2010, pp. 361, 357).

In their local guises, 'Papers Please' and 287(g) policing technologies translate as purifying, nativist responses aimed at containing the browning of the local populace. Fearful of the mushrooming population of Latinos and their growing potential to challenge white hegemony, whites feel increasingly threatened by the loss of space traditionally reserved for them. Sáenz et al have argued that because whites are only comfortable in spaces where they are the dominant group, 'white space ... is a precious commodity for whites' (2013, p. 167). The authors point out that although minoritized groups consistently report they would prefer to live in integrated settings with significant numbers of whites, whites prefer to live among whites. These anti-immigrant legislative actions that seek to expel and prevent the incorporation of the alien 'Other' underscore the argument of Sáenz et al in evidencing that when 'whites feel that their environment is altered, they feel invaded and forces are set in motion to maintain white space and white benefits' (2013, p. 167). SB 1070 and 287(g) technologies and anti-immigration ordinances and legislation enacted nationwide are rooted in the logic of governmentality that privileges the norm of whiteness and its 'rightness'. The stateless are persecuted 'not because of what they had done or thought, but because of what they unchangeably [are]—born into the wrong race or the wrong kind of class' (Walters, 2010, p. 80). The border as a mobile technology thus functions in the management of racialized populations whose inassimilability is a foregone conclusion.

Despite the expansion in immigration border policing and millions of apprehensions and deportations to date, immigration deportation policies of attrition through enforcement have failed to achieve their stated goals. Immigration scholars evidence that heightened U.S. border enforcement through external and internal controls and detention/deportation policies neither stops nor discourages undocumented persons from coming.^v Wayne Cornelius (2001, p. 681) evidences that a more reliable indicator of migrant emigration/immigration is the U.S. economy in that historically, migrant ebbs and flows correspond directly to U.S. economic needs or lack in times of expansion and/or recession. Paradoxically, restrictive measures bring about undesirable outcomes in that they have encouraged migrants to abandon previous patterns of circular migration, encouraging them to send for families and settle permanently within the country in much larger numbers.

Contrary to its purported mission, the Department of Homeland Security does not intend to remove all undocumented immigrants, but functions in part to 'maintain ... the operation of the border as a 'revolving door', simultaneously implicated in importation as much as deportation, and sustaining the border's viability as a filter for the unequal transfer of value' (De Genova 2002, p. 439). As a revolving door, the border serves the interests of the immigration industrial complex, a conglomerate of private and public interests that profits from impeding immigration reform in the name of keeping large segments of the immigrant population 'illegal' and thus exploitable. Roxanne Lynne Doty and Elizabeth Shannon Wheatley (2013, p. 426) argue that the immigration industrial complex 'functions as an economy of power that works to *manage* the existing system [but] discourages fundamental reform'. Public and private actors capitalize, not only from keeping *indocumentados* deportable and compliant in interest of the disposable labor they provide, but also in rendering them *detainable*, profitably contained within treacherous geographies of Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) prison facilities or privately managed detention centers built to warehouse them. Private and federal government actors profit from the cheap labor of tens of thousands of immigrants held in ICE detention facilities across the country. In 2013, 60,000 immigrants worked for 13 cents an hour, for sodas or candy bars, or for free, saving the government and private companies \$40 million or more by allowing them to bypass paying private contractors the \$7.25 minimum wage (Urbina 2014).

Private prison profiteers have an enormous financial stake in the passage and maintenance of draconian laws and judicial initiatives that criminalize undocumented migrants, and every year, these companies invest millions of dollars into lobbying and campaign dollars to ensure that private prisons beds are filled to capacity with 'illegal' brown bodies. At the federal level, immigrants represent the fastest growing prison population,^{vi} and private prison profiteers Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) and Geo Group aim to keep it that way in the interest of raking in much of the estimated

annual \$1.02 billion taxpayer dollars that it costs to house them (Robertson et al, 2012, p. 3). A 2010 CCA annual report states:

The demand for our facilities and services could be adversely affected by the relaxation of enforcement efforts, leniency in conviction or parole standards and sentencing practices or through the decriminalization of certain activities that are currently proscribed by the criminal laws. For instance, any changes with respect to ... illegal immigration could affect the number of persons arrested, convicted, and sentenced, thereby potentially reducing the demand for correctional facilities to house them. (CCA 2010)

CCA and GeoGroup are thus heavily invested in the continuation and expansion of Operation Streamline, a Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Department of Justice (DOJ) initiative that funnels undocumented immigrants into the criminal justice system, feloniously charging them with unlawful entry or re-entry in addition to formal deportation and removal from the United States. Federal judges impose sentences of up to 180 days for undocumented entry and may hand out sentences of up to ten years on persons found with a criminal history. According to immigrant advocacy group Grassroots Leadership, since its implementation in 2005, Operation Streamline (OSL) has drastically increased illegal re-entry criminal prosecutions and the federal government has spent an approximate \$5.5 billion incarcerating undocumented border-crossers. Turning tax dollars into private profits, CCA and GEO Group have reaped the greatest monetary rewards, enjoying a combined \$780 million increase in annual federal revenues since OSL's inception. Operation Streamline functions to make felons out of undocumented persons who are guilty of nothing more than crossing the border without papers. And if caught crossing the border a second or third time, in Arizona and Texas, repeat offenders are more likely to be funneled into privatized detention centers where their lengthier sentences guarantee handsome profits for companies like CCA and GEO.

In Operation Streamline, dozens of migrant men and women appear en masse before a federal judge. Hands and feet shackled together, they appear before the magistrate in groups of ten or more, and in most cases have only met with their defense attorneys for minutes earlier the same day. According to Alistair Robertson of Grassroots Leadership, in Laredo, Texas, 'Operation Streamline client volumes are such that a Federal Public Defender must provide counsel to 20 to 75 clients in a span of just two hours. On Mondays, that number is regularly 75, *leaving each defendant less than two minutes to meet with an attorney*' (Robertson et al 2012, emphasis in original). Unlike other court proceedings, OSL lawyers represent multiple clients in the same hearing. By its mechanical nature, an Operation Streamline attorney 'representation' amounts more to 'a matter of routine rather than [a] personalized defense' (Robertson et al 2012) and the courtroom 'has become a factory, just barely able to keep up with the demand' (Sakuma 2014). Defendants are told by their defense lawyers to issue a guilty (*culpable*) plea, and once in court, in some

cases, as many as seventy defendants are 'taken care of' in thirty minutes.^{vii} Termed 'assembly line justice' in casual courtroom parlance, in the first few years of its operation, OSL standard operating procedure involved groups of up to fifty defendants entering their pleas en masse, 'saying the word 'guilty' all at once' (Robertson et al 2012, p. 13). After December of 2009, when the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals found that the practice violated the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, the Tucson court has since required defendants to enter pleas individually.

In addition to depriving undocumented border crossers of adequate defense representation, Operation Streamline courts also apply a vastly inferior standard of due process that merges arraignment, plea, and sentencing hearings into one court appearance. And due to the sheer volume of the work, OSL exhausts vast human resources in addition to taxpayer dollars as public defenders, prosecutors, and judges are increasingly restricted to focusing on unauthorized entry and reentry cases. As a result, assistant U.S. attorneys have been stripped of the power to pursue the time and energy to prosecute offenders of more serious, violent crimes associated with drug cartel and human smuggling activity (Robertson et al 2012, p. 13).

In Tucson, OSL court proceedings are open to the public and take place at 1:30 p.m. five days a week on the second floor of the Evo A. DeConcini Federal Courthouse. On July 25, 2014, the author observed Observation Streamline in session. Two things became readily apparent to this OSL observer. One is that the defendants, exhausted and dirty, had not been given the opportunity to shower, and had on the same clothes they donned at the beginning of their desert journey that, in most cases, began some days or even weeks before. The second thing that became evident was the overall confusion of the immigrants. At the beginning of the proceedings, when the first group of defendants, approximately eight in all, were brought before the magistrate, all of the migrants in the courtroom awaiting their turn appeared to watch very closely to see what the individuals in this first group would say or do. Afterwards, everyone seemed to emulate everyone else, following suit in issuing a 'culpable' plea and waiving their rights to contest the charges brought against them. Whenever an individual failed to issue the 'correct' answer, that is, a guilty plea, the defendants' lawyers quickly persuaded them to change their response. The author observed two such incidents. When Uriel David Figueroa-Navarrete answered 'No' to the question of 'Do you want to give up your rights and plead guilty knowing you will serve 90 days?', his defense attorney, Juliana Ore-Giron, whispered into her client's ear and then stated, 'He'd like to re-answer the question'. When the judge asked the question again, Figueroa-Navarrete answered 'Sí' this time. Daniel López-Natarén also indicated 'No' to the question of whether he wished to give up rights and plead guilty. When the judge addressed López-Natarén's attorney, Mr Saul Huerta, Huerta told the judge that his client wished to restate his plea. This time, upon being asked the question, López-Natarén answered in the affirmative. But later, when Mr Huerta

escorted his client to the door exiting the courtroom, the author had occasion to observe Mr Huerta and Mr López-Natarén in conference as they were standing directly in front of her. It became evident to the author that the client was stricken and was questioning his attorney because he was dismayed about what had just taken place and was just being made aware of the consequences of his plea. Mr Huerta, knowing that he and his client were being observed by the author and a group of concerned immigrant advocates, reacted by stepping directly in front of his client in an evident attempt to shield his client from the group's view. But a very agitated López-Natarén stepped back into view. He was still shaking his head as he was led from the courtroom moments later (OSL 2014).

According to Jason Hannon, a former Operation Streamline defense attorney who has represented hundreds of streamlined border-crossers, to work as a lawyer under the OSL criminal justice system is not to be one. Instead, Hannon likens his former job 'defending' streamlined undocumented migrants to being 'a puppet' for the state. Hannon observes that there are essentially 'two so-called criminal justice systems ... [:] ... 'You have Operation Streamline, and you have the normal criminal justice system. And it's separate, and [the former is] for Mexicans charged with illegal entry, and it's certainly unequal. There's no way that a court system could get away with this if [the defendants] were white United States citizens' (*Dan Rather Reports* 2013).

Like other U.S. immigration policies that rest on policies of attrition and the illusion of deterrence as discussed above, Operation Streamline doesn't stop migrants from coming (Burrige 2009, p. 81). Cornelius observes that even after migrants have been apprehended and deported two, three, four, and five times, 'they just keep trying to enter until they succeed' (2001, p. 677). And according to Juanita Molena, Executive Director of Humane Borders,^{viii} once immigrants have made the decision to migrate and have paid out every bit of money they have to a guide or *coyote*, there is nothing one can say or do to discourage them from making the perilous journey. States Molena:

It's such high risk ... Whenever I go out into Mexico to the wilderness area [where there are people waiting to cross] what always lingers with me is the person who seems the weakest. I always worry about that person; I always pray for that person, because I think, 'Will this be that person who gets left behind in the group?' Like I saw these young men [who had made the journey] from Central America: one was seventeen, one was fourteen, and this was before they started crossing into the U.S., and the fourteen-year old was already sick with diarrhea, and it was 108 degrees outside. And I was pleading with his older brother, 'Please don't take him! Please don't take him!' And he's just looking at me like, 'Lady you don't know how hard our lives are or how long we've starved in our country. This is a bad situation, but ... I'd rather die trying' ... So those boys had paid their money, they'd given

everything that they possibly could, and now they were getting ready to cross, trying for a better life. (Molena 2014)

As Molena makes clear, a number of people crossing the Arizona/Sonoran Desert will never make it, but *will* die trying, as the imperative that necessitates disappearing immigrant bodies from public view also seeks fit to contain migrants within treacherous geographies of deathly desert environs where many run out of water or lose their way and are never seen or heard from again.

U.S. Immigration Deterrence-by-Death Strategies

The intensification of the militarized policing of immigrants in the U.S./Mexico borderlands and Operation Gatekeeper strategies have deliberately worked to produce a funneling effect as many thousands of undocumented immigrants are deterred from traditional crossing areas near urban centers into the treacherous geographies of deadly desert and mountain environs. According to Gilberto Rosas (2006, p. 402), deterrence technologies function as 'managed forms of violence' in their underlying intent to inflict injury in the guise of prevention. While Stephanie Lawrence and John Wildgen (2012, p. 483) allow that undocumented migrants '[are] guided toward the Sonoran Desert, which is surrounded by mountains with igneous intrusions honed almost to razor blades that render them impossible as travel routes', they do not view the funneling effect as a design to 'kill UBCs' [undocumented border crossers]. Other scholars aptly observe that the policy of 'prevention through deterrence' is 'in reality, a death sentence' (Chacón and Davis 2006, p. 205). While clandestinely crossing the border from Mexico into the U.S. has always been a dangerous enterprise, since 1994, over 6,000 people have died crossing (Alto Arizona 2011), but no one knows the true number of persons who have disappeared in the desert. It is estimated that for every set of human remains recovered in the desert, three to ten more are never found. In his work, Justin Akers Chacón has contextualized deaths on the U.S./Mexico border, juxtaposing the higher numbers of people who died there to that of persons who perished in the World Trade Center attacks (p. 205). To view border deaths in another context, their number is forty times that of people who died attempting to climb over the Berlin Wall during the Cold War. But Chacón observes that, far from being viewed as a travesty, border militarization 'is a *success* from the point of view of policy-makers. It has strengthened control over immigrant labor, provided political capital in the 'War on Terror', and is, in itself, a profitable institution, as defense contractors compete to corner the merging market on border enforcement' (p. 205, emphasis in the original). Former INS chief Doris Meisner, who oversaw the initial implementation of the Operation Hold the Line strategies has admitted, 'We did believe geography would be an ally'. Another INS official has been quoted in the *San Diego Times* stating, 'Eventually, we'd like to see them all out in the desert' (Smith, quoted in Chacón, 207). What becomes crystal clear is that from its inception, gatekeeper militarization strategies were grounded in the most basic level of biopolitics in the knowledge

of the human body and 'its need for water and [the horror that] happens when it has none' (Doty 2007, p. 16). Deterrence strategies rested on both the understanding and expectation that migrants would keep coming, and because of the treacherous nature of the geographical terrain they were being forced to venture into, many people would die doing it.

Conclusion

U.S. anti-immigrant policies and border technologies of exterior and interior enforcement constitute a deathly biopolitical project in the state's manipulation of space and place to exploit, contain, expel, and/or destroy undocumented immigrants, ultimately rendering them invisible and as fodder for the global corporate capital machine. Migrants are made to disappear in myriad ways. Before ever leaving home, future immigrants are rendered invisible in their own countries, denied a platform for voicing their political views. For example, in Mexico, the government continues to turn a blind eye to demands made by farmers, teachers, and other workers that NAFTA be renegotiated, despite numerous demonstrations over the last decade or more that have resulted in the closure of bridges and highways and the taking over of government offices (Faux 2003). Once in the United States or other 'receiving' countries, the undocumented are perpetually banished to sites of containment situated outside the normal juridico-political order.

Consequent to the implementation of mobile border technologies of interior enforcement that have resulted in the devastation of thousands of immigrant families, migrants are made accomplice to their own exploitation through a 'passive invisibility' that manifests itself in the failure to make demands on employers or to press for their rights from the state (Wicker 2010, p. 232). In what Hans-Rudolf Wicker terms 'active invisibility', the undocumented works diligently to render him or herself invisible from public view so to fly under the radar of immigration authorities and local police. Migrants may devise a number of evasion strategies including the decision not to drive cars or use public transport, the correct use of pedestrian crossings, limiting circles of friends to a few trustworthy individuals, not renting apartments under their own names, and not having bank accounts, and resorting to informal channels in dealing with money, in particular sending remittances back home exclusively through friends and work colleagues.

Despite the plethora of devices immigrants use to evade detection, every day hundreds are entrapped in geographies of arrest and are eventually detained and deported. In detention centers situated in increasingly remote locations, migrants are 'sealed off in tightly closed containers' where walls, fences, and geographic isolation serve to conceal migrant identities, alienating the undocumented from family, friends, and legal support (Bauman, quoted in Mountz et al 2012, p. 528). For residents who live near the immigrant detention centers,

immigrants remain invisible even as the buildings and structures themselves take on a shroud of invisibility. Six miles outside of Eloy, Arizona, the Eloy Detention Center is, according to Mayor Byron Jackson, 'Out of sight, out of mind', while only 25 miles away, the Florence Correctional Center remains invisible out in the open. Here in Florence, the town and its economy have grown up around the cluster of detention structures, but many of the residents 'pass by them everyday' and 'don't see them anymore'. According to one resident, living next door to a detention facility, 'I don't think of the building ... it is just like another mountain ... just gray matter' (Doty and Wheatley 2013, p. 438).

Within the violent geography of deportation, the undocumented person is made to literally vanish from the social landscape he or she once inhabited. In many instances, where there was once a whole family unit, households are fragmented by the spectral absence of fathers, mothers, husbands and/or wives. Once deported, the undocumented are permanently banished from the United States in the form of a ten-year waiting period during which they are ineligible to petition to adjust their legal status (Talavera et al 2010, p. 173). Many of these men and women become desperate to reunite with their families in the U.S. and will risk their lives getting back to them crossing treacherous geographies of desert and mountain terrain. Caught up in the wastelands of state-managed violence, reduced to 'the status of human litter on the world's crossroads of death', a countless number of them are made to disappear (Doty 2007, p. 18).

Today's economic migrants are *los desaparecidos nuevos* ('the new disappeared'). There is a historical thread that ties the state-sanctioned violence which targeted tens of thousands of Latin American students, activists, and workers during U.S.-backed dirty wars of the eighties to the contemporarily state-managed violence of treacherous borderland geographies that swallow migrants whole. Scholars, writers, and activists have made the connection, but more importantly, so have hundreds of mothers whose sons and daughters have gone missing in recent years. In 1999, in Honduras, the Committee of Mothers of Disappeared Migrants 'was born from the anguish of so many mothers crying for their lost children and not knowing what to do about it' (Jeffrey 2015). Currently, the mothers host a weekly radio program devoted to immigration topics, provide group counseling for family members, and sponsor events to raise money to repatriate the remains of loved ones who died in Mexico or the U.S. The mothers also journey to Mexico where they travel to different towns to circulate photographs of their loved ones and ask for help in locating them. It is impossible to miss the analogous connection of trauma that these mothers share with 1980s' Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, who distributed posters and leaflets with photographs and details of their children's disappearances in efforts to find out what happened to them and to recover their remains. And like the Argentinian mothers, the Honduran mothers fail to meet with any support from their government. According to Edita Maldonado, a mother in El Progreso

Our government does nothing for us. They don't even know we exist. If we need help with repatriating someone's body, they don't want to help ... All the government cares about is that the migrants who arrive at their destination keep sending remittances. But those who don't arrive, who are captured by gangs or induced into prostitution or mutilated by the train, no one cares about them.

Ultimately, to put an end to the horrendous human rights abuses of murderous immigration policies that render undocumented immigrants invisible even to the point of death, we must commit to the struggle to implement compassionate open border policies that finally reject the supremacy of the neoliberal subject and finally serve to 'humanize the face of U.S. immigration' (Bender, p. 77).

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ⁱ I am using a pseudonym to protect my source's anonymity.

ⁱⁱ See Nicholas de Genova, 'Migrant 'Illegality' and Deportability in Everyday Life', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 31 (2002).

ⁱⁱⁱ The U.S. Supreme Court ruled unconstitutional the three other facets of the bill that would make it a state crime for an immigrant not to be carrying citizenship papers; that would permit arrests without warrants; and that in certain contexts would disallow undocumented persons from working in Arizona. In striking down these three parts, the court ruled that states could not supersede the federal government's immigration-enforcement powers; however, by upholding the key portion, justices deemed it proper for states to partner with federal government immigration authorities. See Alia Beard Rau, "Arizona immigration law: Supreme Court upholds key portion of Senate Bill 1070, three other parts of controversial immigration law ruled unconstitutional," *AZ Central.Com.*, 25 June 2012, viewed 7 May, 2016, <http://www.azcentral.com/news/politics/20120603arizona-immigration-law-supreme-court-opinion.html>

The bill in its entirety is accessible online at <http://www.azleg.gov/legtext/49leg/2r/bills/sb1070s.pdf>

^{iv} The 287(g) program allows local law enforcement agencies to enter into agreements with the Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, effectively conferring on local police agencies the powers of federal immigration authorities. Like SB 1070 laws, 287(g) sanctions rampant racial profiling, allowing for the arrests and detainment of immigrants without suspicion of crime. Currently, 287(g) agreements are in operation in Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio,

Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia. See “Delegation of Immigration Authority Section 287(g) Immigration and Nationality Act,” *U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement*, viewed 7 May, 2016, <https://www.ice.gov/factsheets/287g>

^v Although in some cases, the propagation of anti-immigrant legislation has resulted in migrants leaving communities en masse. In August of 2011, the passage of Alabama’s draconian House Bill 56, or the Beason-Hammon Alabama Taxpayer and Citizen Protection Act, created a mass migrant exodus from the state, and as a consequence, Alabama farmers lost hundreds of thousands of dollars as a result of crops being left in the fields to rot when there was no one left to harvest them. The lead sponsor of the bill, former Alabama Senator Scott Beason, fashioned the bill to ‘attack every aspect of an illegal alien’s life’.

^{vi} The U.S. Bureau of Justice found an average rate of 23% increase in the number of immigration violation cases between 2005 and 2009. According to another source, in 2009, immigration offenses comprised an estimated 54% of the total federal prosecutions nationwide. See Robertson et al 2012, ‘Operation Streamline: costs and consequences’, *Grassroots Leadership: Helping People Gain Power* 11 September, viewed 16 August, 2015, www.grassrootsleadership.org

^{vii} So says former Operation Streamline defense attorney Jason Hannon. See *Dan Rather Reports* 2013, ‘Operation Streamline’, viewed 17 August, 2015, <https://vimeo.com/67640573>

^{viii} Humane Borders exists to save the lives of migrants traversing the Arizona/Sonoran Desert in the provision of material aid. The organization maintains permanent water stations on both sides of the U.S./Mexico border.

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