FENCING IN DEMOCRACY

BORDER WALLS, NECROCITIZENSHIP, AND THE SECURITY STATE

Miguel Díaz-Barriga | Margaret E. Dorsey

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NECROCITIZENSHIP AND THE US-MEXICO BORDER WALL

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We dedicate this book to our parents (Dolores Cynthia Guzmán Díaz-Barriga, Miguel Alfonso Díaz-Barriga, Linda Anderson Dorsey, and Joseph Bonner Dorsey) and children (Isabel Nancy Díaz-Barriga, Margaret Elizabeth Díaz-Barriga, and Miguel Dean Díaz-Barriga).

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PREFACE

The wall is not a solution. In my mind it's a surrender. This wall is an admission of defeat by this Administration and the Congress in the face of an important public policy challenge. Likewise, to examine the myriad of laws which protect the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the people's right to know and to participate in the policy process and then to decide that the only solution is to waive those laws completely is an abdication of our responsibility.

—CONGRESSMAN RAÚL GRIJALVA, CONGRESSIONAL HEARING, APRIL 28, 2008

We moved to the Texas-Mexico borderlands in July 2008 to begin a year and a half of ethnographic fieldwork on the wall that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was building on the US-Mexico border. Border residents were against construction of the border wall and were mounting political protests and legal challenges to halt the wall's construction. Undeterred, DHS moved forward, and we observed the construction of the border wall, attended protests and hearings, and interviewed border residents about border security. Our initial research looked at grassroots opposition to border wall construction and sought to understand its meaning in relation to Mexican American citizenship and belonging. As Mexican American citizens opposed the wall, we observed a dynamic more complicated than a push and pull between Anglo domination and Latinx resistance. A more profound process unfolded involving the militarization of borderland culture itself (Anglo, Latinx, Native American, and Afro-Mestizo) and the articulation of politics within expressions of patriotic citizenship. Our research thus shifted, as organized opposition to the fence in South Texas waned, from a story of resistance to a study of the ways in which border

wall construction galvanizes the material and cultural militarization of the region.

While conducting fieldwork, we decided to move permanently from Philadelphia and start new faculty positions at the University of Texas–Pan American (now the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley). The southernmost tip of Texas, known as the Rio Grande Valley, became our research site and our new home. Over the years we canoed the Rio Grande and hiked through state and national parks on its banks. We directed tours of the border wall for human rights activists, visiting dignitaries, and scholars, oftentimes with our children in tow. We curated an art exhibition on democracy and border security at apexart in New York City. We also spoke about border militarization in numerous venues, including at museums, a state-level hearing, and academic conferences. Dorsey, as the founding curator of the Border Studies Archive, created an online interactive map of border wall construction in South Texas. We taught courses on border culture and politics to students from the Rio Grande Valley and assigned class projects on the US-Mexico border wall. Since 2010 we have published a series of academic articles on the US-Mexico wall and border security, including the widening application of surveillance technologies in the borderlands.

Our research strives to represent the perspectives of a population often overlooked in national-level policy making—those of border residents themselves. At both the local and national levels, policy makers and the media mute the voices of Mexican American politicians and professionals who have opposed the border wall and treat them as extranational and even irrational. This marginalization of border residents' voices is an expression of transformations in rights and citizenship *within* the United States as security concerns guide state policy. Our approach to border wall construction is distinct in that we focus not on migrants but on the rights of borderland residents who are US citizens. This is not to discount the important work on walls and migration, including migrant deaths, but to highlight the ways in which migration studies and borderlands studies speak to each other: border security policy and implementation dramatically affect the lives of migrants *and* residents of border communities.

Over the years we have witnessed increasing border militarization at the local, national, and global level. National Guard troops patrol the border wall with machine guns. Calls for bigger and more beautiful walls are a central aspect of US election campaigns and national policy making. Nation-states, at a global level, increasingly resort to walls as a means to curtail

undocumented migration, smuggling, and terrorism and to control citizens and legitimate territories. Border walls not only demarcate national boundaries but also embody transformations in sovereign power and citizenship that ultimately imprison the populations they are meant to protect. As such, this book contributes to wider discussions of militarization and the emergence of the security state by focusing on the reconstitution of citizenship at borders. At stake is not only the militarization of border regions but, as Congressman Raúl Grijalva suggests, the future of democracy.

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The authors would like to start by acknowledging each other. This book is a collaborative project and the result of our conducting joint fieldwork—and juggling childcare—as well as reading, conversing, and writing together over twelve years. We were fortunate to live and conduct research in a region filled with generous and thoughtful people for ten years of this process. We cannot thank everyone individually who took time to chat with us and share their perspectives on immigration, border security, and the ways in which decisions made in Washington, DC, radically transform daily life. We also need to exclude names of individuals who asked for their names to be kept secret. We thank them for their support, friendship, and time. In particular we would like to thank Pat Ahumada, Pablo Almaguer, Mr. and Mrs. Reynaldo Anzaldúa, Jessica Gómez Barrios, Pamela Brown, Nadia Casaperalta, Ann Williams Cass, Jim Chapman, Barbara Cline, Carla Cozad, Melissa Del Bosque, Jessica Delgado, Larry Delgado, Celeste De Luna, Dolly Elizondo, Linda Escobar, Ramiro Escobar, Stefanie Escobar, Celestino Gallegos, Carmen Pérez Garcia, Oscar Gómez, Rhonda Coleman Gómez, Veronica Gonzáles, David Hall, Stefanie Herweck, Federico "Fred" Hinojosa, Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa, Debbie Nathan, Scott

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INTRODUCTION

If you don't want a fence between the city and Mexico, I suggest that you build this fence around the northern part of your city.

—CONGRESSMAN THOMAS TANCREDO, CONGRESSIONAL HEARING, APRIL 28, 2008

Thomas Tancredo

On April 28, 2008, Thomas Tancredo, a member of the US Congress from Colorado, attended a congressional hearing called Walls and Waivers in Brownsville, Texas, a small city located on the southernmost tip of Texas on the bank of the Rio Grande.[1] The hearing occurred at an opportune moment since the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), based on its authority to waive laws, had begun preparations to construct the border wall in South Texas. The hearing provided a forum for the largely Mexican American population to voice their concerns about the expedited construction of the US-Mexico border wall and where it was going to be built on their property and in their communities. Representatives from environmental organizations, Native American groups,[2] and concerned citizens spoke out against DHS's authority, granted under the 2005 REAL ID Act,[3] to waive laws for the wall's construction. They testified against the government's seizure of land and the construction of a wall that would cut through private property, nature preserves, parks, neighborhoods, and towns. In their criticisms of both walls and waivers, witnesses at these hearings were careful to emphasize both their broader support for border security and the importance of upholding, and not making exceptions to, laws. After listening to their testimony, Congressman Tancredo exclaimed:

> Now, everybody has said today, you know—I think almost everyone on the panel, with rare exceptions, has agreed that borders are important. There are a couple of people who suggested—or at least one—who said that to her and many of her friends they were not, that it didn't matter, borders didn't really exist for them. I would suggest that that's not a unique impression for a lot of people in and around this area, that borders don't matter.
>
> But let me just suggest to us all that this is not a problem that is faced only by the people in this particular area. They are impacted dramatically by it, undeniably, but so is the rest of the United States of America, and as Members of Congress we have a responsibility and we have a duty to do what we can to protect and defend the Nation as a whole.
>
> And so it extends to looking at the borders and seeing what we can do, even though, you know, there are people in the area that may disagree with the implementation, you have to—as I say, our responsibility is something else. It's broader than that. And we have to come to the realization, the understanding, that there are people here who really don't believe borders are important, especially the border between Mexico and the United States. They wish it didn't exist, and in their minds it really doesn't. But for the rest of us and for the security of the Nation as a whole, we have to take into consideration the fact that there are much bigger issues at play here than someone's multicultural attitude toward borders. And that's all that I suggest that we all do when we look at this.
>
> This is a very serious issue, and if you don't like a fence between Mexico—if you don't want a fence between the city and Mexico, I suggest that you build this fence around the northern part of your city. (US Government Printing Office 2008: 105–106)

Building the wall north of Brownsville would place the border fence approximately twelve miles north of the Rio Grande, the official US-Mexico border, and cut a US city of over 180,000 residents off from the rest of the nation.

Congressman Tancredo's statement reflected the spirit of many in the United States, that the United States needed to take a proactive approach to national security and that change, oftentimes radical, was under way. On the national stage, Tancredo and Duncan Hunter (R-San Diego) shared wide popularity for their support of increased border security, especially following 9/11. Tancredo gestured toward knowledge concerning the nuances of the region and the unique perspectives of border residents in his statements

before he invited the audience to comprehend that they must, likewise, understand the mind-set of the nation as a whole, the depth of the issue, and the United States' security needs. Policy makers, conservative activists, and politicians from the Democratic and Republican Parties have over the years maintained this security mind-set in a never-ending call for more—bigger and better walls, more boots on the ground, increased surveillance capabilities on the US-Mexico border.[4] These evocations, as Tancredo's statements highlight, treat border residents as suspect citizens with questionable allegiances and a lack of concern for security.

Tancredo's statements ("I suggest that you build this fence around the northern part of your city") construct a discursive wall, and such a discourse of people, security, and the nation is where physical walls themselves are consolidated. Boundaries and their constitution are equally malleable and rigid, as Tancredo's quick rhetorical twists underscore: the wall can be at the international boundary or north of a US city with a population that is over 90 percent Hispanic. The materiality of walls thus emerges in many formats, including steel and discourse.

We arrived in the field two months after Tancredo voiced these inflammatory statements, and his ultimatum lingered on the minds of borderland residents who viewed the construction of the border wall as an insult and another gesture of national separation. Congressman Tancredo became, for border residents, Exhibit A of national policy makers' arrogance, paternalism, and racism: coming to their hometown, calling them ignorant and irresponsible, suggesting they are unpatriotic, and concluding with a threat. As anthropologists, we immediately recognized that the border was being treated as an exceptional space. For the anthropology of borders and border walls, scholars increasingly recognize how states manage borders in a similar fashion to what we observed with Tancredo (J. De León 2015; Jusionyte 2015; Lugo 2008; Rosas 2012).

Tancredo perceived border residents (the "people here") as a class apart: neither fully part of the United States nor partners in devising policies for the region. National policy makers and the media conceptualize the southwestern border region as a war zone even though border cities on the US side are among the safest in the nation, according to statistics from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI 2015).[5] Mexican American border politicians, business leaders, and activists work to correct such significations of border insecurity while articulating alternatives for border social, environmental, and economic development. The efforts of border leaders and activists have,

however, had limited success translating into policy. South Texans run into the same wall again, with national legislators regarding border leaders and activists as pro–open border, unpatriotic, or simply ignorant about security.[6]

Even though Tancredo sought to acknowledge that the witnesses of the April 28 hearings recognized borders, he still reduced the views of the "people here" (i.e., border residents) to a "multicultural attitude," one that is inconsiderate with regard to the "Nation as a whole." There is a deeper irony to Tancredo's statement. As anyone familiar with South Texas knows, patriotism—as seen in high levels of military service and celebration of veterans—is a central feature of border life. As we suggest in chapter 4, this military service and patriotism neither registers on any simple metric of assimilation nor automatically translates to support for border militarization. In fact, many of the strongest opponents of the border wall in South Texas are Mexican American cultural activists who are also veterans.

So while we were not amazed that a national policy maker would assume a pedantic tone and dismiss the views of border residents, we must admit that we were taken aback by Tancredo's call for placing Brownsville south of the border wall, which seemed outrageous even for a conservative proponent of border security. In 2008 we were bewildered by the willingness of the US Congress to grant DHS the power to break the law through waivers in order to uphold the law. We marveled, naively, at the inability of environmental organizations, US congressional representatives from border areas, and Native American leaders to make this rare use of waiver authority, one of the broadest waivers of law in US history, a kernel of our national dialogue. The powerlessness of the dissenters had all-too-real and vast consequences.

The border wall heralded a new era of remilitarization.[7] Since 2008 we have witnessed the relentlessness of the drive to militarize the border through the creation of an ever-expanding security net not only in South Texas but throughout the southwestern border region. On a daily basis, we read plans for the increased presence of drones, sensors, video surveillance, automated license plate readers, facial recognition software, and military hardware throughout the borderlands. State and private security agencies constantly call for strengthening command-and-control capabilities and increased coordination and intelligence sharing between local and state police, as well as federally coordinated fusion centers. We have seen new technologies emerge at interior checkpoints (see Dorsey and Díaz-Barriga 2015) and have watched the rapid construction of the border wall. And we have noted how the popular media through their various iterations of border wars have

amplified the crisis and the supposedly urgent need to seal the United States from Mexico, as if stepping to the drumbeat of this march of technology and militarization. Chapter 5 provides an in-depth discussion of these processes of media representation.

Reynaldo Anzaldúa

In November 2008 we drove north from the US-Mexico border for over six hours to arrive at Austin and connect with a group of anti–border wall activists from the Rio Grande Valley who planned to testify at the Texas House of Representatives' hearing on the border wall.[8] By now, after four months of being in the field, we had met and interviewed many of the key players in the No Border Wall coalition.[9] An activist whom we had formally interviewed and casually encountered at conjunto music festivals and farmer's markets across the valley is Reynaldo Anzaldúa. He is a lifelong resident whose ancestors were some of the first Europeans to reside in the borderlands.[10] Anzaldúa's views have been represented in documentaries on the border wall and at border rallies as well as in newspapers and on television news shows. In his public appearances, including interviews with the *Los Angeles Times* and *CNN*, he intentionally dons red-white-and-blue baseball caps that mark his former membership in the US army.[11] He wore one of those caps during his testimony to the Mexican American Legislative Caucus, which is instructive because it shows the strategies that he uses to not only express opposition to the border wall but also claim US citizenship:[12]

> I am Reynaldo Anzaldúa originally from El Granjeno [*raises patriotic hat*]. As you can see, I brought my patriotic hat [*chuckles, as does Texas State Congressman Eddie Lucio Jr.*]. The reason that I carry this hat with me is because when I was one of these persons fighting the border wall from the very beginning with the community of El Granjeno . . . and the national media. . . . You know the stories went out, and a lot of the comments we got were like "You are un-American, you are not patriotic . . ." [*smiles*].
>
> So, I make it a point to bring this hat with me everywhere I go [*Congressman Lucio chuckles*].
>
> I am a descendant of the original Spanish settlers of the Lower Rio Grande Valley. . . . My family has been in South Texas since the 1750s. . . . On my father's side of the family . . . they had three different land grants . . . which were right on the border, and El Granjeno is part

of those land grants . . . and they were more or less 16,000-plus acres of land.

So my family has very deep roots in South Texas, and at one time they owned about a third of the valley, so where I am coming from here is that my concerns for things happening in the valley are genuine. I feel for the valley, that is what I am getting at here.

In addition, I understand illegal immigration, drug smuggling, because I was a US customs officer for thirty-one years. Twenty-eight of those years I spent on the southern border either as a customs inspector, a senior customs inspector, a supervisory customs inspector, or a customs special agent criminal investigator.

I know about border law enforcement issues in addition to being a resident of the valley, so I understand illegal immigration and drug smuggling. This is one of the reasons that I am so opposed to this wall because I understand these issues.

I am opposed to the wall because I believe that the real issue here, the real problem, is demand, demand for illegal alien labor, demand for illegal drugs. The demand is in the United States. So this is the key to this: until we address the issue of demand, we are never going to get rid of either problem.[13]

Anzaldúa uses multiple strategies to claim citizenship (patriotic, patrimonial, and cultural) *and* express his opposition to the border wall, providing a vivid contrast to Tancredo's statements that construed the South Texas public as uncaring and unable to deliberate. Anzaldúa, while active in anti–border wall organizations and environmental groups like No Border Wall and the Sierra Club, chose to speak as a private citizen and ex-resident of the small town of El Granjeno, Texas. For Anzaldúa, the construction of the border wall serves as a case in point for how Washington treats the border: the security problem is linked to immigration and drug trafficking. Anzaldúa counters this projection by describing the border area as a place where families and communities thrive. Anzaldúa expands the scope of the "border problem" by making drug smuggling and illegal immigration a *nationally* based dynamic.

Anzaldúa's voice, in soft tones, emphasizes his understanding of the issues and his deep concern about the border and the people who inhabit the region for the *longue durée*. After all, he is one of them: "My family has been in South Texas since the 1750s." Anzaldúa contextualizes caring and patrio-

tism in a highly specific cultural and historical understanding of the region, that of a Mexican and Mexican American. He traces his pre–Revolutionary War historical connection to the region through the Spanish land grants, the cohesiveness of Mexican American communities, and the ties of families to the land. Even though his ancestors arrived before the United States of America existed, he raises his patriotic baseball cap to highlight that he belongs to and is a full citizen of the United States. We believe that this dual emphasis, while a public performance of citizenship for the nation, was more than a gimmick; in our interviews and many unplanned conversations, Anzaldúa expressed pride in his Mexican American background as well as his military service to the United States. This performance of citizenship must be understood as a stand against the dominant culture's perceptions, as presented by Tancredo and those whom Anzaldúa encountered in various arenas in his role as an anti–border wall spokesperson: "You are un-American. You are not patriotic."[14] When he raises his hat, he is not making a claim to be assimilated. This stands in contrast to Tancredo's draconian approach: he wants to see all expressions of cultural difference as being multiculturalist and thus not about *belonging to—or being full members of*—the United States. At a rhetorical level, Tancredo's multiculturalist twist attempts to sever residents' belonging to the United States, to delegitimize their claim to US citizenship. Anzaldúa—experienced with the national-level framing of border residents—anticipates just this sort of rhetorical shift and begins his talk with patriotism, emphasizing that he does care about the nation as a whole.

Sovereignty and Militarization

On November 9, 1989, at half past ten in the evening, thousands of East Germans rushed to the crossing at Bornholmer Strasse and demanded that officials open the border, and the Berlin Wall fell. For spectators across the world, this happening marked the beginning of a world without walls, a celebration of globalization, mobility, and freedom. In contrast, walls now permeate our world. Since 1989 nation-states have constructed, or begun the process of constructing, over seventy border walls, including walls on the following borders:[15] Botswana/Zimbabwe (2003), Brazil/Paraguay (2007), Brunei/Malaysia (2005), Bulgaria/Turkey (2014), China/North Korea (2006), Costa Rica/Nicaragua (2010), Egypt/Gaza (2009), Greece/Turkey (2012), Hungary/Croatia (2015), Hungary/Serbia (2015), India/Bangladesh (2005), India/Kashmir (2004), India/Pakistan (2004), Iran/Afghanistan (2000), Iran/Pakistan (2011), Iran/Iraq (2015), Iran/Pakistan (2007), Iran/Turkey (2014), Iraq/Syria

(2018), Israel/Gaza (1994), Israel/West Bank (2002), Kazakhstan/Uzbekistan (2006), Kuwait/Iraq (1991), Pakistan/Afghanistan (2007), Russia/Georgia/South Ossetia (2011), Saudi Arabia/Iraq 2014, Saudi Arabia/Yemen (2004), Spain/Morocco (around the exclaves of Ceuta [2001] and Melilla [1998]), Thailand/Malaysia (2013), Turkey/Syria (2015), Turkmenistan/Uzbekistan (2001), United Arab Emirates/Oman (2005), United Arab Emirates/Saudi Arabia (2005), United States/Mexico (2006), Uzbekistan/Afghanistan (2001), and Uzbekistan/Kyrgyzstan (1999).[16]

The new walls come equipped with special policies and infrastructure. In Asia there are heavily patrolled border fences on the Indo-Bangladeshi border where agents have a "shoot-on-sight" policy; there are fortifications in Africa at Botswana's electrified fence on its border with Zimbabwe, and those between the Spanish exclave of Melilla and Morocco. In the Middle East, the Saudi Arabian state built a barrier dividing itself from Yemen, and the Israeli border wall with the West Bank is heavily militarized. In North America the United States constructed a border fence along sections of its border with Mexico that is a combination of walls and barriers, sometimes including concertina wire and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents armed with M16 assault rifles.

Scholars explain this proliferation of border walls in terms of the contradictions and stresses that define contemporary borders, contrasting the forces of globalization, including economic and cultural flows, with state sovereignty in protecting both national economies and national identity. In that model, theorists such as Wendy Brown (2014) and Peter Andreas (2009) view border wall construction as a desperate and theatrical attempt by "weakened" nation-states to exert their sovereignty in the face of strong transnational economic institutions and high levels of cross-border migration, trade, and cultural exchange. Anthropologists Hastings Donnan and Thomas M. Wilson (2010) build from Brown's "waning sovereignty" model but emphasize that states are reasserting sovereign power through a more general process of rebordering international boundaries. Such rebordering processes are asymmetrical, sealing some aspects of "national identity and national territory and sovereignty" while also allowing increased mobility, as seen in accords that allow for freer flows of some goods and people (6).

We agree with Donnan's and Wilson's invitation to elucidate the contours of rebordering and debordering processes—in terms of both physically fortifying and economically opening borders—as they occur on the ground, and we want to suggest that their rebordering concept would benefit from a

more fully theorized understanding of sovereignty, which includes identifying specific transformations in sovereign practices. Anthropology of borders limits itself to Westphalian and post-Westphalian visions of sovereignty, as reflected in the application of concepts that focus on borders as closed or open, such as borders and bridges, blockades and flows, or enclosures and mobilities. Yet it seems as though sovereign practices do not revolve solely around control of territory and maintenance of the cultural integrity of the nation.

We theorize rebordering in relation to a global reconfiguration of sovereignty, examining its physical manifestations as it alters border landscapes and cultures, through an analysis of militarization, starting with the construction of border walls. We argue that the logic of rebordering and debordering, in the US-Mexico border region and beyond, responds to a reconstitution of sovereignty based on practices associated with necropower and generating states of exception.[17] These manifestations of sovereign power are evident in the increasing fortifications and violence at borders.[18] In India reports of Border Security Forces killing, wounding, or abducting Bangladeshis crossing the border fence, many under questionable circumstances, are a routine part of border life (Jones 2009: 890). The Zimbabwe-Botswana fence built in 2003 carries 220 volts of electricity. The Botswanan government claims that the electrification of the fence is to keep livestock out. Zimbabweans claim that the electrification is to keep them out. At Melilla, both Spanish and Moroccan security forces act as petty sovereigns wielding power over life. A report by Doctors without Borders describes increased violence against migrants by Spanish and Moroccan security forces, including severe beatings and rape, emphasizing that "migrants are caught in a sinister game of ping-pong between two sets of security forces" (Médecins Sans Frontières [Doctors without Borders] 2013, 13). The report also highlights increasing numbers of deaths, not only in skirmishes at the border wall, but also due to drowning as migrants attempt to circumvent the wall by sea. The International Organization for Migration (2016) notes that deaths of migrants in the Mediterranean have soared, with over three thousand in the first eight months of 2016—over a thousand more deaths than in 2015.

In the United States, DHS built the border wall to funnel unauthorized migrants into remote and desolate areas where state agents can more easily apprehend them. Since 1995 DHS's strategy of deterrence has led to over five thousand migrant deaths, mainly due to dehydration and exposure.[19] In the killing of unauthorized migrants, CBP agents themselves increasingly play a proactive role. A 2013 report by the Police Executive Research Forum notes

an escalation in the use of deadly force by CBP that includes agents creating scenarios that justify the use of such force, such as standing in front of and firing at vehicles. From January 2010 to October 2012, CBP reported sixty-seven shooting incidents, which resulted in nineteen deaths (Bennett 2014). The account notes that CBP demonstrates a "lack of diligence" in investigating these incidents.[20] Closing the circular logic of their deterrence strategy, CBP officials used the landscape to justify their actions: they noted that because their agents work in remote and harsh terrain, they need more flexibility than other law enforcement agents.[21] The exceptional border thus allows for an intensification of necropower based on a rendering of ecology that makes death and violence a natural part of the hegemonic landscape—border walls funnel migrants into deserts, and law enforcement has greater leeway in applying deadly force because of the border's remoteness and desolation (Dorsey and Díaz-Barriga 2015, 2017b). This use of force often stands simultaneously outside and within the law.

In their rush to reborder, nation-states (e.g., India, Spain, Botswana, Saudi Arabia, and the United States) have either waived or ignored laws to expedite construction and/or unleash border enforcement policies that contradict the laws of those very nation-states. For example, in India the Border Security Forces (BSF) are the law—any order given by a BSF officer to maintain India's security constitutes a lawful command (Jones 2009). The Ministry of Law's "Acts and Codes" for border security provides the legal basis for the BSF to act outside the law in order to maintain the law.[22] Spanish border agents at Melilla do not officially register migrants apprehended at its border fence, as is required by Spanish law. Instead, they often turn migrants over to Moroccan authorities, who then leave them in the desert to perish.

The United States is no exception as a state of exception. It made exceptions to its own laws in the process of rebordering. Through the 2005 REAL ID Act, which had as its aim the security and authentication of driver's licenses and personal identification cards, the US Congress granted the secretary of DHS the power to waive any and all laws to enable the construction of barriers and roads between the United States and Mexico. The REAL ID Act also limited court review of waiver decisions to cases that allege a violation of the Constitution of the United States. Congress followed the REAL ID Act with the 2006 Secure Fence Act, which mandated the construction of 670 miles of border fence. The 2008 Consolidated Appropriations Act gave the DHS secretary sole discretion in deciding on locations for wall construction. In erecting the wall, DHS secretary Michael Chertoff waived over thirty

laws, including the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (Bear 2009).[23] Through the power to act outside the law, Secretary Chertoff stripped environmental groups, Native Americans, and other groups of the power to challenge border wall manufacture in court. To understand, then, the impotence of anti–border wall activists and social movements against rebordering, the context of exception is central because it simultaneously strips Native American activists, Mexican American activists, environmentalists, and human rights activists of their rights as US citizens while empowering the economic and political forces of militarization. Our wider theoretical consideration of sovereign practices, with the toxic trilogy of rebordering, violence, and exception, can serve as a starting point for critically engaging the normalization and proliferation of border militarization. Border walls represent neither a theatrical attempt at border control (Andreas) nor the waning of sovereignty (Brown) but rather manifest sovereign practices based on the state's power to perpetrate violence and except itself from its own laws.

Citizenship in the United States

The US-Mexico border wall is the largest domestic building project of the twenty-first century—eight hundred miles of fortifications that cost up to $16 million per mile. The wall has incurred $4.4 million in repairs, and the construction and maintenance costs are expected to exceed over $49 billion over the next twenty-five years (Rael 2012: 76). It was constructed with minimal public input about its design and function.[24] From DHS's perspective, the wall is simply a fortification; more specifically, Secretary Chertoff (2009) described the wall as a "tool" whose function is to slow the crossing of unauthorized persons, smugglers, and terrorists and provide CBP with an advantage. In our field site, the border wall notifies the mainly Mexican-descent population that they, not only migrants and smugglers, are potential subjects of exclusion. As in many other areas of the Southwest, eighteen-foot rusty metal pylons wind through low-income urban neighborhoods in plain sight of and in close proximity to people's homes.

To understand what a state's practice of rebordering, violence, and exception does to its citizenry, we introduce the concept of necrocitizenship. Necrocitizenship focuses both on militarization imposed by the state and on the ways it is regenerated within local cultural practices and subjectivities (Díaz-Barriga and Dorsey 2011). In other words, necrocitizenship is a

heuristic to explicate three interrelated political and cultural practices we observed in the field:

1 The practice of necropower by the state. Rather than being primarily concerned with life and the overall health of its citizenry, the state is more concerned with controlling exclusion and death. Think violence at borders.

2 The deterritorialization of *mexicano/a* and Mexican American identity as essential to their status as extranationals in the public sphere, thus making them targets of exclusion. Think Tancredo.

3 Patriotic citizenship. Mexican Americans in South Texas use a militaristic register and continually reenact their sacrifices to the state in poetic, embodied, and highly ritualized ways. Think of Reynaldo Anzaldúa and his baseball cap.

Our book follows that schema in its outline.

Chapter 1 is a visual overview of the border wall as it bisects communities, parks, and ranches, addressing necropower and the deterritorialization of Mexican American identity. In South Texas DHS built the border wall north of the international boundary, the Rio Grande (Río Bravo in Spanish), placing approximately forty thousand acres of US land in an ambiguous state south of the wall (Rael 2012: 78). We created an ethnographic photo essay to introduce the landscape and history of the region from the perspective of the politics of bisection as DHS's actions strip and slash land, culture, and daily life (Gloria Anzaldúa's [1987] "raja," which can be translated as splits, or slices).

Chapter 2 delves into the poetics and politics of citizenship at small-town festivals in South Texas; we show the normalization of militarism and military engagement within Mexican American culture. We call this *patriotic citizenship* and use this concept in a dialogic fashion with *necrocitizenship* to explore citizenship's significations for an excluded population. Patriotic citizenship, in our field site, is not jingoist but plays into the politics of bordering and rebordering in complex ways. Enclosure and connection manifest in participants' discussions of building the border wall and international bridges.

Chapter 3 theorizes how understandings of sovereignty, race, and sexuality intertwine with policy debates over the meaning of spillover violence. At border security hearings, state-level administrators appeal to emotion

(pathos), raising the specter of violent Mexican men attacking innocent white women, as they build a case for the exigency of the state's funding priorities, for example, more money for river patrol boats, helicopters armed with sharpshooters, aerostats (blimps), and related security technology. Local Mexican American leaders in law enforcement contest the state's (Texas's) characterizations of the border region and insert reason (*logos*) into sovereign practices.

Chapter 4 utilizes necrocitizenship to interpret the ways in which Latinx leaders have tried to fight border militarization while working within its very frame. Mexican American leaders straddled a paradoxical situation: opposing border militarization while contributing to discussions on increasing Texas's command-and-control (surveillance and security) capabilities.

Chapter 5 comes full circle with necrocitizenship. We focus on Fox News anchor Greta Van Susteren's coverage of a widely circulated border security report, written by two army generals, that insists on militarization in South Texas. Van Susteren and the army generals characterize the Mexican American congressmen who dared to question the report as irrational and ignorant. In doing so, they cast the congressmen as unpatriotic and extranational despite the latter's insistence that they are pro-security and that their families have served widely in law enforcement and the US military.

The concept of necrocitizenship allows us to interpret militarization as a policy imperative and as a conduit of sovereign practices based on death and exception. Anthropology, as a discipline, is now coming to terms with movements toward militarization and the consolidation of the security state at borders. Anthropology is poised to understand security not only in terms of nation-state action but also in terms of the ways in which local actors are enmeshed in and challenge the state's machinations, and, in turn, the ways in which militarization impacts cultures and subjectivities, just what the concept of necrocitizenship does.

Ethnographers, with our extended periods of time working closely and intensely with populations, claim a certain level of expertise and orientation toward issues of agency and the production of subjectivity as it occurs on the ground in the face of quotidian and monumental obstacles. Border residents register statements like those of Van Susteren, the generals, and Tancredo as denying their citizenship and treating them as extranational. For many border residents, border wall construction inscribes itself onto a larger history of racism and imperialism in the transborder region. Tancredo's marginalization of claims of citizenship, as Reynaldo Anzaldúa himself would note,

is part of a larger politics of racism in the United States. And, as in the case of Anzaldúa, such politics are opposed through a constant, repeated claim of patriotism and allegiance to the United States. Anzaldúa's insistence on citizenship serves to counter calls to characterize his home and community as a war zone and transform it into one. It is both a stance against necrocitizenship and its embodiment.

Necrocitizenship illuminates how Mexican Americans on the border are enmeshed in policy that creates cycles of security and criminality and how their culture itself is becoming militarized. These two aspects of border fences—arising from states of exception and generating death—are part of a larger exercise of global sovereignty and creation of necrocitizens. In our ethnography, we hope to change the terms of the debate about border walls from the waning of sovereignty of individual states and threats from nonstate actors to a focus on the implications of border walls for the future of democracy. What does it mean to live in a society that is in a relentless state of emergency?

NOTES

Introduction

1 The House Natural Resources Committee, Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands, led by Rep. Raúl Grijalva (D-Arizona), and Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, and Oceans, led by Del. Madeleine Z. Bordallo (D-Guam), held the joint oversight field hearing, "Walls and Waivers: Expedited Construction of the Southern Border Wall and the Collateral Impacts on Communities and the Environment," at the University of Texas at Brownsville on Monday, April 28, 2008. For a video of Tancredo's comments, see Txreporter (2008).

2 Ned Norris Jr., chairman of the Tohono O'odham Nation, spoke at this event.

3 Pub. L 109-13, 119 Stat. 302. Enacted May 11, 2005.

4 In fact, it was during the Clinton presidency that the current architecture of border militarization started appearing. Many top Democrats, including Senators Barack Obama, Joe Biden, and Hillary Clinton, voted in favor of the 2006 Secure Fence Act, which authorized the construction of almost seven hundred miles of border wall.

5 For data on Texas cities, see FBI (2015), table 8: "Texas: Offenses Known to Law Enforcement," https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2015/crime-in-the-u.s.-2015/tables/table-8/table-8-state-pieces/table_8_offenses_known_to_law_enforcement_texas_by_city_2015.xls.

6 In chapter 4 we analyze such a statement in a Fox News program.

7 We use the term *remilitarization* to highlight that border militarization has been an ongoing process starting with the 1846–1848 Mexican-American War. It intensified in the 1970s with Richard Nixon's war on drugs (Timmons 2017) and the adaptation in the 1980s of military tactics and strategies from US adventurism in Central America (Dunn 1995, 2010). Julie Dowling and Jonathan Inda (2013, 4–5) argue that this remilitarization is the result of the transformation of the United States into a neoliberal state focused on exclusion. In a similar vein, Joseph Nevins outlines the ways in which Operation Gatekeeper, a program of Customs and Border Protection (CBP), resulted from larger political trends that viewed migrants "as a putative threat to the national sociocultural and political fabric" (2002: 10). Robert Lee Maril (2004) provides an in-depth description of the life of CBP agents in the Rio Grande Valley around 2001. Guillermina G. Núñez and Josiah McConnell Heyman (2007) demonstrate the devastating impacts of these policies on undocumented people in the borderlands, including

severely limiting their mobility. Angela Stuesse (2010) shows how border residents have challenged this intensification of border policing.

8 The Mexican American Legislative Caucus in the Texas House of Representatives held a hearing regarding the construction of a wall along the Texas-Mexico border on November 13, 2008. The hearing began at 8:00 a.m. in the House Appropriations room, E1.032, in the Capitol Extension in Austin, Texas.

9 Many residents consider Scott Nicol and Stefanie Herweck to play key roles in the No Border Wall Coalition. In addition to coalescing the movement, they created and maintained a website. They also donated materials that they collected related to the construction of the border wall to the Border Studies Archive at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (formerly the University of Texas–Pan American). These materials include playful ephemera such as no-border-wall beer as well as more traditional items such as over a thousand photos of the border wall and its construction and a series of documents related to its construction that they obtained through Freedom of Information Act requests (University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Border Studies Archive 2019). We formally interviewed Nicol and Herweck when we first arrived in the field and spoke with them informally about the border wall numerous times from 2008 to 2019.

10 Residents of South Texas call the structure the *border wall* or *muro de odio* (wall of hate), while DHS calls the structure the *border fence*. We use Anzaldúa's preferred label, *border wall*.

11 Anzaldúa was interviewed by Rick Sánchez on *CNN*'s *Out in the Open*, in a show airing on December 14, 2007. Anzaldúa is quoted in a number of stories on the border wall, including in the *Los Angeles Times* (see Bustillo 2007). Anzaldúa owns a set of "patriotic baseball hats" that he selects from before making public appearances (personal communication, August 2008).

12 This quote and others in this chapter about the hearing are based on a transcript that we prepared from an audio recording we made and interviews we conducted at the hearing.

13 Unless other sources are listed, quotations are from our own interviews, recordings, notes, and observations.

14 We formally interviewed Anzaldúa twice, and we have met with him periodically at various events across the valley and in Austin over the years since 2008.

15 For each pair, the state/entity that constructed the wall is listed first.

16 See Vallet (2016) for an in-depth discussion of border walls at a global level.

17 The term *necropower*, as articulated by postcolonial theorist Achille Mbembe (2003), refers to the ways in which the state engages in policies aimed at exclusion and death rather than incorporation and the well-being of the population. *States of exception*, as developed by the philosopher Giorgio Agamben (2005) in his work on genocidal states, highlights how states manipulate laws to achieve their own ends. For a more expansive engagement with these concepts, see chapters 3, 4, and 5.

18 Border wall construction is a burgeoning global industry. Israeli-based companies, for example, drawing on their experience constructing the Israeli-Palestinian wall, consulted on the design of the US-Mexico wall. In 2014 an Israeli company won a $145 million contract to build watchtowers in Arizona along the US-Mexico border (see *Homeland Security News Wire* 2014; Lappin 2014).

19 We published a chapter (in English, French, and Spanish) that used statistics from the US Government Accountability Office (2006) to demonstrate that the Border Patrol purposely drives migrants to desolate sections of the border, leading to an increase in migrant deaths (Díaz-Barriga and Dorsey 2011). In 2007 human rights groups, such as Coalición de Derechos Humanos, had counted up to five thousand migrant deaths under such circumstances (Rodríguez 2007). See also Doty (2011) and Meyer and Isacson (2015). Gilberto Rosas (2012) and Jason De León (2015) also published similar statistics and made similar arguments regarding migrant deaths and prevention through deterrence" as functioning to funnel and ultimately kill people. Also, see US Border Patrol (1994) for a description of the strategy of prevention through deterrence. Juanita Sundberg (2011), in her elaboration of a posthumanist political ecology, theorizes how border security policies and shifting migrant patterns envelop and are impacted by nonhuman elements.

20 This study does not include deaths caused by local and state-level law enforcement, nor the violence caused by vigilante groups working on private property. In October 2012 in South Texas, for example, a sharpshooter in a helicopter working for the Texas Department of Public Safety shot at a pickup truck and killed two Guatemalan migrants. The FBI has been asked to investigate the shooting. See Brezosky (2012b).

21 Descriptions of the border as a desolate space are not accurate for regions such as the Rio Grande Valley, which is verdant and populated (Dorsey and Díaz-Barriga 2010).

22 According to Article 5 of the BSF Acts and Rules, "Any member of the force shall be liable to perform any duties in connection with the safeguarding of the security of the border of India, the administration, discipline and welfare of the Force and such other duties as he may be called upon to perform in accordance with any law for the time being in force and any order given in this behalf by a superior officer shall be a lawful command for the purposes of the Act." Quoted in Jones (2009, 887).

23 The waived laws included the National Environmental Policy Act, 42 U.S.C. § 4321; the Endangered Species Act, 16 U.S.C. § 1531; the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (Clean Water Act), 33 U.S.C. § 1251; the National Historic Preservation Act, 16 U.S.C. § 470; the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, 16 U.S.C. § 703; the Clean Air Act, 42 U.S.C. § 7401; the Archaeological Resources Protection Act, 16 U.S.C. § 470aa; the Safe Drinking Water Act, 42 U.S.C. § 300f; the Noise Control Act, 42 U.S.C. § 4901; the Solid Waste Disposal Act, as amended by

the Resources Conservation and Recovery Act, 42 U.S.C. § 6901; the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act, 42 U.S.C. § 9601; he Archaeological and Historic Preservation Act, 16 U.S.C. § 469; the Antiquities Act, 16 U.S.C. § 431; the Historic Sites, Buildings, and Antiquities Act, 16 U.S.C. § 461; the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, 16 U.S.C. § 1281; the Farmland Protection Policy Act, 7 U.S.C. § 4201; the Coastal Zone Management Act, 16 U.S.C. § 1451; the Wilderness Act, 16 U.S.C. § 1131; the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, 42 U.S.C. § 1701; the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act, 16 U.S.C. §§ 668dd–668ee; the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, 16 U.S.C. § 661; the Administrative Procedure Act, 5 U.S.C. § 551; the California Desert Protection Act, Pub. L. No. 103-433, 108 Stat. 4471 (2004), Title I §§ 102(29) and 103; the Otay Mountain Wilderness Act of 1999, 16 U.S.C. § 1131; Pub. L. 106-145, 102(29) and § 103 of the California Desert Protection Act, 16 U.S.C 1132; Pub. L. 103-433; the National Park Service Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. §§ 1, 2–4; the National Park Service General Authorities Act, 16 U.S.C. §§ 1a-1; the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978, Pub. L. No. 95-625, 92 Stat. 3467, §§ 401(7), 403, and 404; the Arizona Desert Wilderness Act, Pub. L. 101-628, 104 Stat. 4469 (1990) § 301(a)–(f); the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899, 33 U.S.C. § 403; the Eagle Protection Act, 16 U.S.C. § 668; the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, 25 U.S.C. § 3001; the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, 42 U.S.C. § 1996; the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, 42 U.S.C. § 2000bb; the National Forest Management Act of 1976, 16 U.S.C. § 1600; and the Multiple Use and Sustained Yield Act of 1960, 16 U.S.C. §§ 528–531.

24 In fact, we attended public hearings on future border wall projects and found them vapid, allotting an anemic amount of energy and time to public input. Our experience seemed to parallel stories of other hearings across the Rio Grande Valley for the 2008 wall construction projects.

Chapter 1

1 See Rosas's (2012) discussion of Mexico's role in creating deathscapes.

2 Unlike the theorizing of ethnographic film (Ruby 2000), anthropologists have neither differentiated the anthropological photo essay from documentary and media representations nor vigorously debated its role within the discipline. While visual anthropologists have successfully employed photographs to create public dialogue (Pink 2001), these instances are undertheorized.

3 The Border Studies Archive website can be found at http://www.utrgv.edu/bsa/en-us/index.htm.

4 We conducted this fieldwork with funds from grants 0852531 and 0841433 from the National Science Foundation. We directly incorporated suggestions from the anonymous reviewers, and we would like to thank and acknowledge them for their comments.