

## **Alicia Schmidt Camacho introduction | University of Puget Sound | November 11, 2015**

Good evening, my name is Doug Sackman, and I have the honor of introducing our speaker tonight. welcome all. welcome to the University of Puget Sound.

Our college's name, you know, is a bit of an historical accident, deriving from the name of the lieutenant on George Vancouver's ship in 1792. but as long we're deriving our identity not from indigenous, Lashootseed place names, but from colonial place names, there was another possibility for us; we could have just as well been named the university of Valdez sound, after the Spanish explorer who sailed these waters simultaneously with Vancouver on a ship called Mexicana....but that's another story

Our speaker tonight, Alicia Schmidt Camacho, hails from new haven, where she is a professor of ethnicity, race and migration and American Studies at Yale University. I wonder if at Yale you mean American Studies to encompass Jose Marti's larger hemispheric idea of "our America" --the America that is greater than what the united states lays claim to?

I get a sense of that's how at least Alicia thinks of it from the working title of her current book project, *The Carceral Border: Social Violence and Governmentality on the Frontiers of Our America*.

I'm very excited to hear her talk that represents some of the fruits and insights of that larger project, and it is a very timely topic...timely, for we are in a moment when a refugee crisis has held the attention of the world and juxtaposed human suffering and death with the seemingly implacable indifference of states and capital, when one presidential candidate, best known for his branded luxury palace, promises to build us a towering wall, trumpeting malice, and no forethought, and when in our own community a private corporation holds the contract to profit off of holding people in legal limbo for ICE at the Northwest Detention Center, and in a moment when critical questions about our carceral state are finally getting some mainstream consideration.

her talk tonight, on our campus, follows and addresses related matters of concern of Abraham Acosta, who spoke with us earlier this semester, and the conversation his intervention inspired about the status of human rights, natural rights, in our current era of "empire" (in the US sense of empire or in theorists' Negri and Hardt's sense)—an era when nations like the united states, whose origin story holds that it was founded to proclaim and affirm that human rights--life liberty the pursuit of happiness—come from nature, not from any government, our present moment is one when nations like the US, especially the US, routinely abrade, erode, withhold or destroy those rights.

and we hope our campus conversation will continue through the spring, when John Lear and I, as part of our dolliver seminar project, will host a series of talks—including one by Kelly Lytle Hernández, author of *Migra! a History of the US Border Patrol*, on what deep immigration history and settler colonialism has to do with forging our current carceral society. These talks will be open to the public, but they are organized in conjunction with a new course this spring: History 383: Borderlands/La Frontera, taught by John Lear and myself, a Tuesday/Thursday seminar with occasional guest speakers—so if you are a student and want a front row seat, as it were, for the spring series of talks, please consider adding it: and if we are to keep this course on the us/mexico borderlands in the curriculum we need more student interest. so, please, please, take a flyer (strategically located near the food...)

For Alicia Schmidt Camacho, her scholarship is intertwined with community commitments and work—it is deeply humane work in the humanities. That deep concern for people and cultures is reflected in her award winning book, *Migrant Imaginaries: Latino Cultural Politics in the Mexico–U.S. Borderlands*. recipient of the Lora Romero Prize from the American Studies Association—or from Our American Studies Association—, *Migrant Imaginaries* is a beautifully rendered portrait and interpretation of border crossers' own aspirations, ideas and dreams expressed to form some protection as they have confronted, and continue to confront, cultural and political systems of oppression and the maw of inhumane conditions—and I recommend her book to you all.

Alicia's talk tonight is entitled "Defending Human Mobility: The Gendered Face of Poverty and Immigration Law Enforcement in North America." Please join me in welcoming Alicia Schmidt Camacho.

## Kelly Lytle Hernández | introduction | February 29, 2016

Welcome. Thanks for coming. this is a rare day: it's leap day. thanks for taking the leap to be here, I think you're going to be glad you did, for our speaker this afternoon, a scholar of rare talents, has a message for us, extracted from historical archives and the records of countless people incarcerated, that will help us understand the profound ways that the movement of people across borders is deeply intertwined with race, with the privileging of human rights to some people and the rendering of others into a state of rightlessness, and with the structure, function and evolution of our criminal justice system, so-called. these are weighty matters, but we live in weighty times, that call out for historical light to be thrown upon them.

That is what Kelly Lytle Hernandez has dedicated her professional life to doing. An associate professor of history at the University of California at Los Angeles, Kelly Hernandez is the author of the ground-breaking book *Migra! A History of the US Border Patrol*. I recommend it to you all. Whether unpacking the reason that Superman is never regarded as an illegal alien—even though his arrival in this country *from another planet* was undocumented in every sense—or showing why the mass deportation scheme of the 1950s known as Operation Wetback—an incident mythologized this election cycle by a certain candidate for the presidential nomination who is determined to eject over 11 million people from this country—Hernandez shows why the insultingly named Operation Wetback, portrayed as a success story for aggressive deportation policy, was actually a grand political scam. It is no wonder that *Migra!* was awarded the Clements Prize as the best book on Southwestern history.

This lecture is the second of a quintet of events that make up our spring series on "La Frontera: The US-Mexico border." Posters are now around campus for the entire series of events, the next of which takes place on March 29th, on César Chavez day. This series is made possible by the Dolliver initiative on borders, which is the culminating set of events John Lear and I will host while we hold the rotating Dolliver Professorship.

We are extremely pleased that Kelly Hernandez is able to come and share parts of her new book on the deep history of prisons, of the enmeshed relationship among immigration, race and incarceration. It is thus apropos that less than two weeks ago, Pope Francis visited prisoners in Ciudad Juarez, and told them:

"We have already lost many decades thinking and believing that everything will be resolved by isolating, separating, incarcerating, and ridding ourselves of

problems, believing that these policies really solve problems. We have forgotten to focus on what must truly be our concern: people's lives;... The problem of security is not resolved only by incarcerating; rather, it calls us to intervene by confronting the structural and cultural causes of insecurity that impact the entire social framework."

[I wonder if that statement could be a coda for Kelly's new book? *The Pope gave the prison a crystal crucifix-- a symbolic in its strength but also frailty; the great writer Carlos Fuentes once called the borderlands region the Crystal Frontier.*

later, The Pope presided over a cross border mass, his words and image stretching over the Rio Grande into El Paso, where thousands gathered to watch him on the crystal screen at the University of Texas's Sun Bowl stadium: We cannot deny the humanitarian crisis which in recent years has meant migration for thousands of people... This crisis which can be measured in numbers and statistics, we want instead to measure with names, stories, families," he said; and he ended by sending a greeting from here to our dear sisters and brothers who are with us now, beyond the border, in particular those who are gathered in the University of El Paso Stadium; it's known as the Sun Bowl....With the help of technology, we can pray, sing and together celebrate the merciful love that the Lord gives us and that no border can stop us from sharing. Thank you brothers and sisters at El Paso for making us feel like one family and one, same, Christian community."

However much I was personally inspired by Francis's strong and affirming call for cross-border community and communion, for a kind of open, accepting, and humane family values that transcend the power of states or corporations or mean spirited zealots, as an historian I also feel compelled to throw some cold water on this scene... for we might want to remember that the Pope was speaking from the very place where, 336 years ago, his missionary forebears—Franciscans in fact—had retreated to, after the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico around Santa Fe threw the Spanish out, rejecting their colonization efforts and the violence and repression that went along with it; the Pueblos destroyed the crosses and took ritual bathes to de-baptize themselves.

Words of light emanated from the pope, but from where he stood shadows had also been cast on the land.

As we've seen, the pope's words had been broadcast north across the river onto the campus of UTEP, which also happens to be where John Lear and I, this fall, saw Kelly Hernandez give the stunning keynote speech at the UTEP Borderland History conference: As with all of her work, that night Kelly shone a bright light into the dark chambers, and cells, of our past, and present.

So John and I immediately invited her to share her insights with us: please join me in welcoming Kelly Lytle Hernandez to the University of Puget Sound.

**Film Screening and Panel Discussion (event in conjunction with Tacoma Art Museum).**

**March 31, 2016, featuring Amanda Díaz, Maru Mora, and Tony Gomez.**

Thank you and welcome. my name is Doug Sackman, and with my colleague Monica Dehart, I'd like to welcome you all. We have a film, and a panel discussion. Antonio Gomez, Amanda Diaz, and Maru Mora Villalpando; a collaboration with the Tacoma Art Museum on an initiative in which Latinx culture and history would be explored and celebrated at several different events over the last year. We reserved a special day for our campus event: it's Cesar Chavez day! You know, who do we have to thank for having this special day (not quite a federal holiday, but nice nonetheless). Well, we have Chavez himself, of course, and Dolores Huerta, and many many farmworkers who struggled in the fields. But we also have Barack Obama to thank for it, for her proposed the idea. Here's Obama in 2008: "Chavez left a legacy as an educator, environmentalist, and a civil rights leader. And his cause lives on. As farm workers and laborers across America continue to struggle for fair treatment and fair wages, we find strength in what Cesar Chavez accomplished so many years ago. And we should honor him for what he's taught us about making America a stronger, more just, and more prosperous nation. That's why I support the call to make Cesar Chavez's birthday a national holiday. It's time to recognize the contributions of this American icon to the ongoing efforts to perfect our union." see what he did there? with unions and unions? I generally am fond of puns...can I like this one? Obama must have asked before delivering the speech, can we really equate the kind of union Chavez's UFW was and is to the more perfect union of American nationalism? his answer: Si se puede. yes we can. We can appropriate history—labor and environmental history— even as it is honored. We can appropriate that, just as we can appropriate the farmworkers' slogan. Which is what Obama did in 2008, using "yes we can" as his campaign slogan. But plagiarism, they say, is the sincerest form of flattery. By the way, Obama met

with Huerta, and admitted it--“you know I stole your slogan,” he said; and she said: “yes you did!”

Yesterday, the Union of border patrol officers endorsed Trump; while the Trump piñatas are being bashed across two countries, Trump keeps promising to build his gilded spite wall with Mexican money, though his estimates keep rising too. In any event, our national politics are inextricably bound up with our union, this more perfect union that we tell ourselves we're aspiring to create, even as this union--this United States of America—has always been built on deep divisions and excisions; leaving wounds across bodies, that scab over, and bleed again, as Gloria Anzaldúa once vividly described it.

I want to highlight one part of Chavez's work—a work taken up in the spirit of healing by people who had been cut, and cut again: the grape boycott, where farmworkers went to supermarkets, and implored non farmworkers not to buy grapes, and informed them about the dangers of working in pesticide infused lands; the health and well being of consumers, they showed, they communicated across lines of class and race, was inextricably connected to the health and well being of workers. Today, we use this phrase: farm to table; it's about reconnecting with our food; reconnecting with our community, a community Americans are taught, insidiously, not to see, not to recognize, because, on the one hand, we are alienated from nature, from the source of our sustenance, and on the other, we are alienated from our human community, because “race,” in its pervasive manner, blinds us; Chavez took a lesson from ecology, that we are all interconnected, and turned it toward fighting racism so that farmworker justice, so that equality, might have a chance. So that borders of all kinds would be lowered in favor of connection and community.

Having brought up the connection between ecology and the fight for racial justice, I want to let all of you know about the next event in our series, which will take place this next Tuesday, at 4.30 pm; a talk by Mary Mendoza, a young historian from the University of Vermont, who will give a talk entitled: “unnatural border: race and environment along the us-mexico divide.” that will be next Tuesday, 4.30 pm, in Wyatt 109.

Tonight, we'll look back at some of that history Chavez was involved in making—and more, for the film looks at the Chicano movement as well— and have a chance to talk about what light it all shines on our present: a present in which, as symbolized by the northwest detention center in our midst, the state of our *union* is at best imperfect, and at worst, a house divided against itself.

It's time for me to turn things over to Tony Gomez, educator, and Puget Sound alumnus, who worked on the film we are about to see.

## Introduction for Mary Mendoza | University of Puget Sound | April 5, 2016

Welcome. Tonight is our fourth event in the spring series of events, *la frontera*: the us-mexico border —we've been calling it the spring series for the whole semester, but the actual season has only just arrived. John Lear and I would like to thank you all for coming, and for the university's Dolliver chair program, which has made this series of events possible.

We are very excited to have with us today a young historian, Mary Mendoza, who made the short trip down from Seattle, where she just delivered a talk—a manifesto, really— at the American Society for Environmental History annual conference—on the invitation of the president of that organization; it was about that field's open and ongoing challenges in taking up the critical importance of race, of a sophisticated understanding of race, in writing environmental history-- indeed, in using the term environment itself, for while we commonly think of nature as something outside of and beyond humanity, in fact, our nature, what counts for us as nature—or rather, what counts as nature for some of us, and what counts as nature for others— is always inscribed with ideas of who we are, and who we aren't, as human beings, and for human beings in the 21st century, those ideas are saturated--super saturated--with race.

Before coming to Seattle, Mary Mendoza travelled to the Pacific Northwest from Vermont, where she is currently a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Vermont in Burlington. Can I say that you have just been offered a full time, tenure line position at that institution, and that you have accepted? They liked her so much at Vermont, they wanted to keep her there. And Mary likes Vermont: she grew up in San Antonio, and went to Middlebury College as an undergraduate, so she has a long history with that state. She lives in a virtual tree house in the woods—what's not to like? and I don't think I'll get any argument from this crowd when I say, in this season, that good things come out of Vermont. You know what I'm talking about, Ben and Jerry's.

Mary, who earned her PhD last fall from the University of California at Davis, already has a long list of accomplishments—six articles and book chapters published or forthcoming, an impressive set of fellowships and grants—but I want to linger a bit with Vermont. Not too far from Middlebury—a beautiful campus, just about as nice as ours...—as you drive up into the green mountains, you see a sign for the Robert Frost wayside trail. Wonderful little park, with trails, and with signs along the way with snippets of Frost's poems; when you get to the sign that has his road less travelled verse, things get really confusing---are we supposed to stay on the well worn trail, or strike out through undergrowth in some new direction? I remember reading that poem on that trail a few years ago, and realizing it means not what it's generally taken to mean: Frost's two paths were really equally less travelled, and it's only in retrospect that, the poet gently tells us, that we assign

iconoclastic value to the path we chose. but certainly the prize for the most misunderstood frost poem comes from one that is worth citing in connection to Mary's talk today: the mending wall, from which the line "good fences make good neighbors" comes—the line is usually repeated straight, as if that's the message of the poem. frost is actually unsettling that conceit. his neighbor says it again and again, but the poet explains:

Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder  
If I could put a notion in his head:  
"Why do they make good neighbors? Isn't it  
Where there are cows? But here there are no cows.  
Before I built a wall I'd ask to know  
What I was walling in or walling out,  
And to whom I was like to give offence.  
Something there is that doesn't love a wall,  
That wants it down."

Frost's point that human walls and nature are at cross purposes relates to Mary's subject--but I also like the connection with cows. walls are for cow country, frost implies. Mary, in her research, has shown that the wall between the us and mexico started out as a fence to keep *cattle* from moving across the line. She shows how efforts to count and control cross-border cattle traffic served as the schoolhouse for American border control. To Frost on walls we can add the voice of Gloria Anzaldúa, another great American poet and writer, from the borderlands not New England, who wrote about that divide as a

1,950 mile-long open wound  
    dividing a *pueblo*, a culture  
        running down the length of my body,  
            staking fence rods in my flesh,  
splits me splits me  
    *me raja me raja*

Fence rods through flesh: physical, material ones, and ones created by culture and politics: policies, prejudices, economic forces, and more, are the social constructs that manifested in different ways on the line. Mary's work as a historian bridges the history of the border and borderlands and race, with that of the environment; it is all about the placement of those fence rods, and what they say about good, and bad, neighbors, and of how they divide—in interrelated, interconnected and complicated ways—both peoples and natures across a shared land called America. Please join me in welcoming Mary Mendoza.

## Ana Teresa Fernández intro | April 25, 2016

It is my great pleasure, and honor, to welcome to the University of Puget Sound the artist Ana Teresa Fernandez. [Slide] I have a screen shot from her website up; I guarantee you'll want to visit it sometime after the talk this afternoon, for what she'll share will make you want to see more of her work; this afternoon, she will share with us what it has meant to collaborate on an ongoing project to erase the border, but before I tell you a little but more about her and her stunning, eye-opening art, I want to introduce *her* to Puget Sound, our region...and our closest international border....[pause]

It may not be the one you think it is:

[slide] On most maps, the Puyallup Nation's homeland is erased for lack of shading, but here it is, as a reminder; (incidentally, it's right on the edge of the northwest detention center) [slide]

So here's the one you might have been thinking of:

Behold...the international border between Canada and the United States...a shallow ditch running alongside avenue 0.

[slide]

A border marker, engulfed in foliage, reclaimed by verdant nature

[slide]

Where the border runs into Puget Sound/the Straight of Georgia, there exists a liminal international park, with the monumental peace arch.

On it is etched a permanent rhetoric affirming a shared origin and humanity: children of a common mother

[slide]

It features gates, but they are purely symbolic in nature...

[slide: Tijuana]

At the southern border, at the so-called Friendship park, the symbolism is different; the border monument is itself encaged, community is gated.

These are a few pictures of what international borders of North America look like, but in fact, those borders are omnipresent, encompassing, everywhere they are with us and between us. We carry them with us all across the Americas. It's those fence rods created by states that stake and split lives, of which Gloria Anzaldúa eloquently wrote; but lives are interconnected across borders as well, even if they are sometimes held together by scabs.

[slide]

So while the US-Mexico border occupies a distinct geographic space, it also abuts anywhere in the USA; that phenomenon is represented in this map, from an atlas put together by a friend of our guest today, Rebecca Solnit, where the US Mexico

borderline is grafted into the Mission district of San Francisco, the city from which our guest speaker hails. [if her neighborhood were plotted on this conglomerate map, it would be somewhere south of Juárez, I think].

I'd like to use this map to recap our own journey over the semester, and more, if you'll indulge me for a moment.

This is really the last campus event that John Lear and I will host as part of our Dolliver supported program; I want to thank John for getting me into this, and for making it all happen with such good cheer. I want to also thank Elise Richman for helping us put this particular visit together. For the Dolliver Program—an endowment that supports teaching in the humanities on campus—the baton has been passed on to Greta Austin, who will head up the next cycle, focusing on the state and future of the humanities.

Our own program has culminated with this spring lecture series. This is the last of five events this spring exploring la frontera; we actually started at the eastern side of the border, in Matamoros, with Melisa Galvan, who talked about a time and place before the border was delineated. (we planned that well didn't we? well accidentally, actually...)

Along the way, we've heard about the border patrol, immigration, and incarceration, with Kelly Hernandez, we've heard about the origins of the fence as a way to control the traffic in nature--cattle--not people, and the bracero program, from Mary Mendoza; we've enjoyed a film screening and a panel with Tony Gomez, Amanda Diaz, and Maru Mora, exploring the history and legacies of the Chicano movement and the current state of our vexed politics of immigration and human rights; and we end with art, and an artist whose work forces and enables us to look at the border, and other hard realities, in new ways; she dissolves established prejudices and frames, and opens new ones.

Her work of "social sculpture," as Ana calls it, has taken place in "site specific performances" all along the border, and beyond; but she began erasing the border, I think, at the far west end of the fence, in Tijuana/San Ysidro, where the metal plunges into the Pacific; she calls the wall "heartbreaking...a rupture, [both] physical and emotional."

You feel that in that place; when John and I were there: you see families speaking through, touching through the barrier, porous to emotion if not to the bodies from which those emotions flow; this woman [slide] waited until family members appeared on the other side, then walked across sand to the fence through a no-man's land, visiting until the border patrol showed up to force her back;

John is here talking to a father and a son, on the playa on the other side. they were

from the San Francisco bay area, but the father, after a traffic stop, got deported; his son, a us citizen, stayed in northern California with other relatives; he was visiting his dad that day in Tijuana, a family visit at once behind bars and on la playa.

Ana Teresa Fernandez, who was born in Tampico Mexico and moved across the border when she was ten, once thought she would be a linguist; but art came calling: she explains: “it chose me a little bit more than I chose it.” Still her art is a little bit like learning a language, she says; for it’s “erasing what it is that you already know, and looking at it in a very new way, in different light...[it] shift[s] the context a bit...shifts perspective”

She erases in order to reveal; sometimes it’s a wall, sometimes it’s another construct, like gender, or sexual or racial divides over labor.

It’s my obligation, as introducer, to say a few things about her work, without putting a limit, a border on it (without doing too much mansplaining (with nod to her friend Rebecca), which, alas, perhaps I’ve already done...)

So let me refer you to her bio on her website with its many awards and recognitions and mentions of current exhibits, like erasure at the Wendi Norris gallery in San Francisco; and I’ll just say that she is, in many media, energetically engaged in the creative and stunning work of helping us perceive, anew, on this planet, bodies in places, and places in bodies.

Please join me in welcoming Ana Teresa Fernández

**February 27, 2017: opening remarks**

**Welcome to the symposium: “the wall: tracing and erasing its effects.”**

I'd like to start by acknowledging that we are gathered on land of the Puyallup people. I thank and acknowledge them; they are, as the translation of their name says, people who show “generous and welcoming behavior to all ...who enter our lands.”

At events in recent weeks, like the Learning from Standing Rock forum at PLU and the protest in downtown seattle the first weekend of the executive order instituting the travel and refugee ban, aptly called the Muslim ban, Native Americans stood up for those principles of welcoming others—as a fundamental human duty. If anyone has the right to play an anti-immigrant card, it's the native nations, but they've spoken up for a different way of seeing the lands and peoples of our shared planet. now the stories of dehumanization carried out in the nation's name at our borders are legion—kids cleaved from their parents, green cards cancelled, a visiting holocaust professor detained and nearly deported. With these acts, the United States is proclaiming its insularity, its intolerance, its xenophobia.

This afternoon, we want to talk about one part of this package of protectionism: about a wall—a 20+ billion-dollar edifice touted as a new great wall—a make America great wall—which will not do nothing of the kind. we will talk about the wall, and the shadows it casts, and what the contours life takes in its shadow. it casts a wide and deep and dark shadow—one that extends well beyond the line on the map, some 2000 miles long, that divide the territory claimed by the united states from the territory claimed by mexico.

Historically, that line has always been crossed, traversed; people and animals—from the eagles that are the symbols of both nations to the jaguars, wolves and javelinas on the ground; and from the ancient peoples of mexico and southwest to the latest travellers carrying fruits in their bags and trucks north, or auto parts, corn, or milk powder south.

Last summer, John Lear and I—and a group of faculty—Robin Jacobson, from politics and government, Elise Richman, from art, Ariela Tubert, from philosophy, and los dos Andrews--Andrew Gomez from history and Andrew Gardner from anthropology, travelled along the western portion of the border, from El Paso/Ciudad Juarez, to San Diego/Tijuana; we met sheriffs, ranchers, border

patrol agents, environmental activists, business people, artists and migrants along that long stretch, that “open wound” between nations, as it has been called. We brought three of those people—some of the favorite people we met—to be here with us today to share with us some of their experiences and ways of living and working along the border.

Here is the atavist site, under construction, on the trip

Joanna Williams. Robin Reineke worked with Gael García Bernal on a documentary centered on identifying one migrant’s death and the meaning of his tattoo—which I mention in part because Bernal, at the Oscars last night, said, “As a Mexican, as a Latin American, as a migrant worker, as a human being, I am against any form of wall that wants to separate us.”

It was a moving trip, because of the people we met. it was also a trip with some moving violations—because I was behind the wheel of our big red SUV and I got carried away on a lonely stretch of border highway in new mexico. I got a traffic ticket. busted for trafficking a bunch of professors at high speeds.

Another time, as we came to a routine border checkpoint set up along the highway near the imperial valley, the group in back was doing its homework—watching the film cartel land. we were at that point when the sound track to the film was blaring out gunfire and a big argument in Spanish about drugs. Ariela just got us to turn it down before I unrolled the window to speak with a border patrolman.

This was a comical moment for us of *what if*, but the reality was that last may we could all but sail through these checkpoints, but not everyone could. these border checks are part of the larger apparatus of the state that is taking away freedom and dignity, in the name of protecting those values; it is part of the wall that is shadowing the land, the wall that puts people in detention, even those supposedly protected by DACA—like Daniel Ramirez Medina. that wall does not just exist on the border; it smashes through communities in the borderlands, but also smashes into homes all across the nation.

In a sense, Trump’s wall is nothing new. too much terror has already been experienced by people who do not carry the documents governments demand before they grant rights and dignity— or don’t show the skin color that is readily accepted in lieu of those documents—these people and neighbors have been living

with this shadowy terror—they did so under the Obama administration, which kept up the scale of deportation while keeping too many citizens from objecting by assuring the American public, falsely, that it was only “criminals”—so-called “gang bangers” and the like—that they were after.

Truth be told, we saw plenty of walls, fences and barriers along the border—months before the election. and those with eyes to see could see their figurative extensions elsewhere in this nation (and beyond), tentacles of a border industrial complex: the concertina razor wire in Tacoma’s own Northwest Detention Center, operated by the private incarceration corporation called geo, is of a piece with the wall.

But Trump’s wall does up the ante, his cowering tower of division cuts deeper, and knows no limits.

Yet no matter how big he plans it, we do know that walls will not work. for the border, is a permeable membrane; cross border collaboration is a deeply ingrained pattern; the wall, standing against longer term currents, is an aberration in history; economically, borderland communities--Juarez-El Paso, Ambos Nogales, require exchange—as do Mexico and the U.S.; people always find ways, over under around or through walls; already, there are over 70 tunnels; show me a thirty foot wall, the saying goes, and I’ll show you a thirty one foot ladder (or 9.2 meters); [slide]

and walls won’t work because, as geographer Michael Dear wrote with no pun intended (because he wrote it before the man who would be president descended his golden elevator and started talking about Mexicans as rapists)—Dear wrote walls won’t work “because diversity and diaspora trump the border industrial complex”

But even the border patrol agents we met and talked with, ridiculed the wall. They knew it wouldn’t work—to do the things it is supposed to do; it wouldn’t help them in their job, as they understood it. But their union, and many agents, supported Trump nonetheless: they knew he was selling idiocy on a concrete pedestal; but on a deeper level, they understood that their agency stood to gain; and now we learn that they, in their favorite metaphor, feel like the shackles have been torn off—they are free. the shackles have been smashed; it’s another example of projection, like so many exhibited by the Trump campaign and presidency—like when he said

Clinton was the puppet, when he himself was; the agents of incarceration complain about being shackled; the hand-cuffers say they were cuffed; but this sort of projection has always been part of law enforcement, police powers in this country; Native Americans, it was said, were invaders, aggressors, violent; slaves and ex-slaves were held to attack property rights, endanger human rights, and so the shackles went on again, and again.

Walls—for incarceration and division—have always been the proposed solutions for these projected fears. A homeland turned into a terrorscape—not by drug trafficking, but by agents of the US state.

That is certainly the case for the geographies right along the fence. It's a lawless zone where people are rendered rightless: in Nogales, Sonora, 16-year-old Jose Rodriguez had no protection when he was walking the road called Calle International on the Mexican side of the fence, rocks may or may not have been hurtled over the barrier; an agent pointed his Heckler & Koch pistol through the slats in the fence, blasting 14 hollow-point bullets across the line into Mexico and into the body of the boy, killing him. "It's our neighborhood," said his grandmother in shock. the shootings of Mexicans along the border has gone on with impunity, and with no means of redress—one other case, of a youth murdered in Juarez by us border patrol, is now before the US supreme court, and the court is carefully weighing how the decision may affect drone use, among other things: this is projection of U.S. power, into foreign territory, but more than that, into that arena of human rights that are supposed to be, as our founding documents proclaim, inviolate—truths that are self-evident, part of natural law, life, liberty and pursuit of happiness, guaranteed. maybe the supreme court will say that the US border patrol has a right to kill people along a border zone, before the wall, in Mexico; maybe not, maybe not without some form of redress in a court. if they do permit it, human rights mean nothing in that lawless zone, people are rendered rightless. but we also should look back, behind the wall, into US claimed territory, for that has become something of a rightless, lawless zone too. we'll hear from Dan shortly about the suspension of environmental laws and protections on the us side of the border. I wonder and worry if Trump's deep investment in the wall building project represents a larger vision: fetterless infrastructure development, with no worries about impacts for people, animals, and natural systems on the ground.

A wall won't work, but of course it does and will do work—both as a physical manifestation and as a symbolic structure. it did electioneering work, for Trump and

His backers in the private incarceration business--those investors who turn a profit the more people are carted up; the more their freedom is stamped down, the more the investors portfolios are propped up. and truth be told, as more and more people lose freedom, we all, really, lose freedom—though of course, there are walled communities and bubbles that protect the consciousness and privilege of many.

This may sound sappily cliché, but I do believe that in walling off others, we are walling in the heart, practicing an isolationism of the soul; a practice that will only lead to the atrophy of the vital organs of our democracy. But we can exercise heart and soul by tearing down walls, and preventing them from going up, higher and higher. we can build sanctuaries, of different kinds, at different levels. here on our campus, in our city, in our state, and beyond. Two of our speakers will be talking about rebuilding and protecting spaces along the borderlands, in Juarez and Tijuana—sanctuaries of different kinds against the wall.

Our first speaker, who is based in Tucson, will offer a deeper look into the barriers themselves, and what they mean to all of us environmentally and politically. Dan Millis is a man with deep experience with walls and fences. he was born in the southwest, but he has experience here in the northwest too, for he is a graduate of Lewis and Clark college (where, by the way, he studied with Elliott Young, who was the first visitor john and I invited to campus for our dolliver program on borders). Dan has taught high school. When working as a volunteer for the humanitarian group No More Deaths, which among other things sets out water for migrants in the desert, he came across the body of the 14-year-old Salvadoran girl Josseline, who was the youngest of the 183 recovered bodies along the Arizona border that year and a tragic victim, really, of the us border policies that have made crossings in less environmentally dangerous areas increasingly difficult. he now works for the sierra club—oh, that reminds me that I'm compelled to mention that he was once ticketing for an offense that seems pretty bad for a sierra club employee—littering. that is, until you mind out that his “littering” crime was putting out jugs of water for migrants. Dan is currently the director of the sierra club's borderlands program: he has gained a deep understanding of the environmental impact of the walls, fences, barriers and the surveillance regime of the border, while keeping in sight the humanitarian impact as well. please join me in welcoming Dan Millis.

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Oscar was raised on a ranch in rural Mexico and from an early age learned to appreciate the value of conserving natural resources from an anthropological perspective. early in his career he started to look at trash not as simply waste but as opportunity. He earned degrees in Architecture and Urban Planning, in Mexico and Spain, and has a doctorate degree in Environmental Sciences from La Salle University in Louisiana. Oscar worked for the United Nations and later the Border Environmental Commission (BECC), and has served as a delegate to the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development. He teaches Sustainable Development and Urban World Systems courses at the UC San Diego. he is the founder the organization Alter Terra to helps realize his vision of natural systems design. Oscar has been recognized for his work through many awards, such as the City of Tijuana "Environmental Conservation Award" 2007; U.S. EPA, "Environmental Hero" 2007; and the Mexican Consulate Award for "Remarkable Mexican-Americans who have made a difference in San Diego," for his work to conserve the Tijuana River Valley, 2012.