Keeping the Illegal Away from Home: Migration, the Family, and the War on Terror

Rachel O'Donnell
York University

> Because Lou Dobbs and Bill O'Reilly and GW Bush and the Minutemen say so
> Because it's Indian land stolen from our mothers
> Because we're too emotional when it comes to our mothers
> Because we've been doin' it for over 500 years already
> Because it's too easy to say I am from here
> Because a Latin American petro-chemical juice flows first
> Because Zedillo and Gortari and Fox are still on vacation
> Because Nahuatl and Mayan and Chicano will spread to Canada
> Because what would we do *en el Norte*
> Because the World Bank needs our *abuelitas*' account
> Because the CIA trains better with brown targets
> Because our accent is enabled to hide US colonialism
> *—excerpt from Juan Felipe Herrera's poem "187 Reasons Mexicanos Can't Cross the Border" (Herrera 2008:9).*

A twenty-eight mile 'Virtual Fence' was recently approved by the US Department of Homeland Security to catch people illegally trying to enter the US from Mexico ('Arizona' 2008: 14). It currently covers most parts of the Arizona border, and plans are in progress to extend it to sections of Texas. The 'virtual' nature of a fence might not be immediately apparent; towers along the border maintain a system of radar, cameras, and sensors. This 'fence' is part of a national plan to secure the southwest borders of the US with physical barriers and detection capabilities intended to stop illegal immigrants on foot: "The virtual fence system includes 98-foot unmanned [sic] surveillance towers that are equipped with an array of sophisticated technology including radar, sensors, and cameras capable of distinguishing people from cattle at a distance of about 10 miles" ('Arizona' 2008: 15).

Such fences appear to merely maintain borders and citizens on either side of them, when, in actuality, they reinforce taken-for-granted terminology such as citizenship and the nation-state that have implications for everyday lives. This essay is concerned with recent US immigration policy and discourses, as represented by 'fences,' both real and virtual, and policies that have intensified in efforts to promote 'national security.' Securitizing discourse allows for promotion of the nation-state and the borders that surround it while simultaneously erasing the individuals who cross those borders. Instead of addressing the underlying causes of migration (trade policy, economic necessity, land seizure, human trafficking, armed conflict, colonial history, climate change, etc.), policy makers and mainstream media report on the inevitability of high-security borders and intensifying border control measures, effectively removing from much of public consciousness the processes of migration, the everyday lives of migrants, and the necessity of their labor to the US economy and the everyday lives of most US citizens. In a statement

defending the recent high-security enhancements along the US-Mexico border, US Secretary of State Clinton said, "Our inability to prevent weapons from being illegally smuggled across the border to arm these criminals causes the deaths of police officers, soldiers and civilians" (Mackey 2009: 1), focusing on those caught in the crossfire of weapon exchanges rather than migrants who are detained, lost, or tortured in the process of border crossing, and highlighting instead her support of a permanent border control operations base opened in the New Mexico desert (Mackey 2009: 2). Clinton eliminated from her speech all migrants who may cross borders, purging from her talk the sources of migration as well as migrant lives and labor.

Instead of maintaining this type of erasure by policy makers and in the mainstream media, contemporary feminist articulations have been made in an effort to shed light on the ambiguity of 'citizens' and 'illegals,' the exclusivity of nation-states, and the simultaneously permeable and resistant borders. This essay argues against the mainstream constructions of 'American values' and ongoing efforts to demonstrate in which ways crossing a border presumably undermines these values. Instead, I reflect on critical feminist perspectives in consideration of migration processes, including migrant border-crossing and migrant labor, ultimately arguing that the chronology of US migration policy has been forgotten in the wake of the 'War on Terror.' Mainstream media coverage on migration policy and anti-immigration groups such as the Minutemen, like that presented in the *New York Times*, is able to ignore connections among expansions of borders, intensifications of 'Homeland Security' policy, colonial history and reassertions of liberal conceptions of home, family, citizenship, and nation that reinforce 'legitimate' citizen membership and leave migrants outside of it. In many mainstream accounts, as this essay seeks to demonstrate, the complex factors that may push a person to migrate are forgotten and overshadowed by construction of an illegal racialized Other and the promise of a nation's security: security for its 'legitimate' citizen membership. Further, fears of insecurity creep both into our homes and into our 'homeland' when reservations about the Other crossing 'our' border are articulated. A discourse of survival of the West emerges alongside a narrative that 'our values' are under threat of infiltration by those averse to adopting such values: those from other places unfamiliar and uncommitted to liberal notions of 'freedom.'

Attention to national borders has figured prominently in the post-9/11 world, and global migration's supposed threats to the nation-state emerge alongside heightened immigration policies and discourse on border safety and homeland protection. Canada, which has had a history of offering refuse to migrants, has also recently rearticulated the nation-state and the

importance of its borders control measures. Anna Pratt (2005) reveals the historical origins of the 'tough on immigration' policies that have come to dominate today's political landscape. The heightened national security forces at the borders seem to mark out a safe space for the West, as these same borders are represented as the most crucial line of protection for the rightful 'citizens' of the nation-state and its ongoing defence against terrorism. As Pratt (2005) writes,

> Detention and deportation are the two most extreme and bodily sanctions of this immigration penality, which constitutes and enforces borders, polices non-citizens, identifies those deemed dangerous, diseased, deceitful, or destitute, and refuses them entry or casts them out. As such, detention and deportation and the borders they sustain are also key technologies in the continuous processes that make up citizens and govern populations (1).

Dangers and risks to 'legitimate' citizens seem to figure most prominently at these borders, where the processes of ongoing globalization and migration challenge the authority of these borders and nation-states themselves. Linking migration to security concerns and citizen membership, especially post-9/11, is not a pattern particular to the Canadian case, and appears to remain especially prominent along the southern United States border, where though the recent history of occupation and colonial domination has been too often ignored, a racialized understanding of migration and belonging seems to persist.

In an effort to clarify, then, how the specific construction of the 'Mexican illegal' immigrant has emerged in both popular and legal US discourse and serves to also reinforce a racist ideal citizenry and hyper-vigilant protection of core American values, I use the example of the 'Minutemen,' the group of volunteer border-patrollers in search of 'illegal' Mexican immigrants in the Southwestern United States. The current mainstream media coverage on these mostly white men to capture 'illegals' at the border successfully erases the actual processes of migration and migrant labor, as well as its many implications of these processes for migrants themselves (imprisonment, deportation, injury, torture, starvation, dehydration, etc.). The current emphasis on the traditional family and biological connection in US policy (the defeat of same-sex marriage bills in New York and California, further abortion restrictions in the most recent health care reform efforts) also removes our multiple social and borderless connections, presenting nation-states as 'ethically-bounded homelands' (Sharma 2005: 9) with a common character, allowing racist discourses of anti-immigration policy to then emerge in these extreme militia-oriented forms.

Taking from Nandita Sharma an understanding of 'home' as it is employed by nationalist practices as a conceptual bridge between the modern notions of family and nation (Sharma 2005: 9), we can imagine nations as communities in need of the security of boundaries and borders where the defence of the national identity allows citizens to define themselves against racist narratives of 'illegal immigrants' threatening that community. Part of Sharma's conceptual focus allows an understanding of the current migration policy that serves to forget the homeless among the indigenous population created under colonialism; it may not be irrelevant that the Minutemen are prominent and given much attention specifically in Arizona, where the indigenous population is still quite large: "The idea of home has been both occupied by nationalist practice and colonized by nationalist imagination" (Sharma 2005: 7-8). Home translates as boundary security with a "culturally masculine tendency," (Sharma 2005: 8) and as nations become more 'homey,' white citizens claim an original legitimacy, ignoring the history of the land they live on, and celebrating whiteness as racialized migrants become more homeless. These 'illegal' (often Mexican) Others are those against whom the 'nation' and its core values are defined.

Who are the Minutemen? An Overview

The Minuteman Project is an organization started in 2004 by a group of private individuals in the United States to monitor the United States–Mexico border and its flow of migrants. The Minutemen take their name from colonial militia during the American Revolutionary War who vowed to be ready for battle against the British within one minute of receiving notice. The current Minuteman web page details the group's origins: "The Minuteman Project began as 1200 patriotic volunteers assembled at outposts on the Arizona-Mexico border during April 2005 to observe and report the most unprecedented invasion of the United States of America in its 231-year history." For a $100 application fee, members are invited to start their own chapter.

The contemporary Minuteman Project describes itself as "a citizens' Neighborhood Watch on our border," and has attracted much media attention to the one issue that remains their chief concern: illegal immigration to the United States, primarily from Mexico. Indeed, their web page references only migration to the United States and individual migrants from Mexico, and makes no effort to discuss migration to or from other parts of the world. The all-volunteer armed group writes on their webpage that they are "operating within the law to support enforcement of the law" and declares they have been "cheered on by millions of Americans concerned over decades of uncontrolled illegal immigration" (Gilchrist 2009).

Although the Minutemen are often touted as an extreme right-wing militia group (Preston 2007: 6), coverage of the group in the mainstream media has more recently reflected on links among their form of border control, homeland security, and the intensification of immigration policy. This becomes most noteworthy in the *New York Times*, and is the primary media source I make use of here, not to equate the Minutemen with mainstream opinion on immigration, but to demonstrate the ways in which current reporting on the group's activities has allowed their fringe opinions to enter the mainstream. The Minutemen have even received public praise from lawmakers, as Minuteman strategy appears to complement the anti-immigration work of local, state and national politicians like California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and US Representative Tom Tancredo from Colorado, who regularly praises them as 'heroes' (Thomas 2008: 3). In 2005, California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger admired the work of Minuteman Project during an interview, noting that the group had been doing "a terrific job. And they have cut down the crossing of illegal immigrants by a huge percentage" (Marinucci and Martin 2005: A1) The Governor further noted that the Minutemen, previously only patrolling the Arizona border with arms, were welcome to patrol the border between California and Mexico.

Still, the Minutemen have received criticism for their efforts to "take control of the wide open desert" (Thomas 2008: 8) and for inserting pictures on their website that have shown adult migrants tied with rope and gagged, advertising the ways in which volunteer patrollers have been able to apprehend many migrants and turn them over to US border control and immigration officers (Mackey 2009). The group has been further criticized for their assertion that Latin American migrants are 'reconquistas,' or part of an ongoing Mexican conspiracy to recapture the southwestern United States through mass migration (Bans 2008). In much of the Minuteman literature, US values are defined against the backdrop of the 'illegal' Mexican who 'invades' the United States for all it has to offer: 'freedom,' 'security,' and 'hand-outs.'

Although they discuss openly the ways in which their main goal may be to protect the physical borders of the United States, the primary political objectives of the Minutemen seem to have more to do with protecting the borders and notions of citizenship. The symbolism of the Minutemen, such as the branding of the revolutionary soldier and the trademark association with armed cowboys protecting the Wild West, speaks of nationalist extremist protection tactics that support armed security and defence. Similarly, the shifting Minuteman discourse and message—between 'citizen' and 'illegal alien,' 'patriot' and 'invader'—reveals as much about their

intentions as their physical border patrolling: their earlier rhetoric of 'civilization' versus the 'savage' has given way to the more moderated and sanitized discourse of citizenship. Indeed, the Minutemen call themselves 'Concerned Citizens Leading the Effort to Secure our Borders,' that is, opposed to 'terrorist extremists' who have been the main political currency of the moment.

For white American citizens devastated by the decimation of their cities, the deindustrialization of their towns and the loss of their homes and jobs, a populace whose citizenship is denigrated by an intensifying political system based on facilitating free trade and perpetual war, the patrolling Minutemen provide those wounded by corporate globalization an opportunity to feel that they are active participants in retaliation; certainly, attention to global securitizing trends can be forgotten and replaced by the white citizen volunteer patroller doing his part to defend his home, security, family, and homeland.

Migration under Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism has been characterized by critical scholars both as "a hegemonic project concentrating power and wealth in elite groups around the world" (Saad-Filho and Johnston 2005: 1) and as the concurrent expansion of unfreedom (Sharma 2005: 7). Early critical feminist writings on neoliberalism, such Saskia Sassen's 1981 work, note how "the consolidation of the world economic system has paralleled the strengthening of the nation-state as the basic political unit" (68). This consolidation and strengthening continues as 'virtual' fences are raised, 'illegal' migrants are 'cleaned' or 'removed' from the landscape, and racist discourses concerning migrant labor persist. Postcolonial feminisms have further established how Western identities are constituted in response to the Other. In discourses surrounding migration, it becomes obvious that assimilating or demonizing the Other emerge amid attempts to keep the 'native' at home (Kapur 2004: 150-8). Feminists such as Ratna Kapur consistently employ conceptual strategies to disrupt the supposed universalist premises of international law and its relationship to national subjects.[1]

As detailed in a *New York Times* article dated February 20, 2008, the Minutemen have been awarded a permit to clean a stretch of California highway that includes a border control checkpoint along the Mexico-California border (Bans 2008: 2). The Minutemen have also

[1] Kapur's work is to unveil what she calls 'the other side of universality,' and articulate the identities of transnational migrant subjects in an effort to understand "how exclusions were build into these supposedly universal concepts" and are maintained in European legal systems (2004: 137-140).

recently attracted attention for protesting at gathering sites for day laborers in San Diego County, California (Bans 2008: 3). As their work now incorporates 'highway cleanup,' the association of migrants with the need to 'clean' the landscape of the Southwestern US and keep it unsoiled from dirty migrants persists. The 'homey' racism that Sharma defines is present here, as it emerges not only in hierarchies of identities and roles, but spatially, as Minutemen (ideal citizens) attempt to limit the space to which migrants may be granted access (Sharma 2005: 12).

The discourse of the US 'losing control' of its borders emerges both in mass media accounts and in border-control policies articulated by the Department of Homeland Security. All Latin American migrants who do not claim Mexican heritage, for example, are designated 'OTMs' (Other Than Mexicans) in border control documents. OTMs, US border control points out, also pose a particular problem: while it takes only ten to fifteen minutes to return an apprehended Mexican to her home country, OTMs prove "more difficult" for border control officers to "designate for removal" (Congressional Research Service 2005: 7), meaning that non-Mexican migrants from Central and South America cannot be as easily returned to the Mexican side of the border without a formal arrest. The approval and support for the permanent 'removal' of particular individuals from inside US borders, as articulated by Congressional researchers, has motivated national security policy and serves to overlook cultural difference and homogenize all Latin American migrants who do not claim Mexican heritage by naming them Other Than Mexican, reinforcing the construction of the 'Mexican illegal,' and implementing state policy that separates the treatment of Mexicans from all other Latin American migrants. Further, the idea of 'removal' is significant here, as it becomes obvious that the work of US border control is not primarily to 'control' or monitor goods or people crossing a border illegally, but to permanently remove those who have already crossed into space not designated for them.[2] Likewise, the Minutemen articulate their dissatisfaction with 'illegals' not 'assimilating' or becoming 'productive citizens,' reminiscent of what Cindy Katz (2001) refers to the "placelessness of capitalism" that maintains the global supply of cheap household labor for wealthy North Americans while at the same time creating an image in the mainstream media of an ongoing invasion of migrants who are taking American jobs (56). Indeed, supportive letters to the Minutemen found on their website seem to most often involve these precise fears of job stealing: "Mexico should be spending that money fixing their own economy and bringing jobs to their

[2] Jenny Burman conceptualizes this 'space of removal' and the sanitized language used in policy documents as it affects Black women in Canada. Her theoretical innovation extends here to the treatment of Latin American migrants by US border control (2007: 177-9).

country, not pushing to have their citizens illegally invade another country" and "My husband is having a hard time getting a job (and he is very qualified), because of the illegals that are willing to take a much lower pay for the same job. It's disgusting and it happens everywhere" (minutemanproject.com). Nationalist groups like the Minutemen transfer the blame for corporate downsizing, deindustrialization, and job loss to Latin American migrants, but such rhetoric quickly amplifies contemporary media coverage and vocal public opinion on migration. Further, the feminization and racialization of immigrant labor under neoliberalism becomes evident in this discourse, as low-paid jobs are performed increasingly by women and visible minorities; indeed, many of the Minutemen's supporters claim they have been precisely by these individuals stealing their possibilities for employment.

Jenny Burman (2007) outlines precisely this escalating "sanitized language of removal" (177) that has emerged in discourses involving 'illegal' migrants and the theoretical complexities that result. Conceptual bridges that connect people who are 'infiltrating' our 'homeland' disconnect their identities from economic necessities and social practice. The heightened attention to immigration has made it more difficult for the US Hispanic population to find jobs or housing (Preston 2007: 13). However, as the *New York Times* reported, surveys taken about the comfort level of Latin American migrants in the US did not include questions about the legal status of the immigrants who responded, implying that one's legal 'status' to be on US soil is necessarily placed before the economic or political rights afforded her. By further noting that "one-quarter of all Hispanics are illegal immigrants," the discourse used thereby constructs a homogenous group of 'Hispanics' where there may or not be one, within the discourse of the 'illegal' (Preston 2007: 13).

Feminist Interventions: The Citizen and the Alien

In response to both mainstream conceptions of immigration and immigrant labor, and the ways in which these conceptions have allowed intensification of immigration policy during the recent 'War on Terror,' feminists have taken issue with mainstream accounts of migration by unveiling, deconstructing, and juxtaposing taken-for-granted terminology in our understanding of geopolitical and geographical movement. 'Citizenship' and 'alienage' are precisely the terms that Linda Bosniak (2002: 3) uses when she asks the basic question "of, and for, exactly whom" is citizenship. Bosniak (2002: 3) nicely bridges the gap between two bodies of citizenship scholarship: the 'inward-looking' and the 'boundary-conscious.' Inward-looking citizenship scholarship has come to embody an 'inclusive' concern for formal membership, membership that

is both presumed and unquestioned. The boundary-conscious approach, in contrast, considers first the definitions of community and membership and what these definitions may represent (Bosniak 2002: 2-3). It is the exclusive nature of the geographical and imagined place of membership that Bosniak takes issue with here, for membership in a community or *access* to it is neither implicit or assumed, and in fact more often, not available at all.

Bosniak's work is significant for her complex analysis that examines the ways in which liberal 'inclusive' notions of citizenship are really quite 'bounded' by the formation, maintenance, and exclusive processes of the nation-state. Further, the alienage that citizens face and the citizenship that aliens challenge are fully theorized in Bosniak's study, demonstrating the ways in which citizenship identities are premised—and maintained—on one another. By framing her discussion of citizenship within the concept of 'alienage,' Bosniak complicates a number of feminist questions: the materiality, immateriality and fluctuations of borders, the nation-state and the formation of presumed national character, and the role of the migrant and the 'alien' in the maintenance of both the nation-state and its ideal citizen. Her analysis is also flexible enough to allow room for consideration of border control, labor control, and social (re)production; community membership, when assumed formed in advance, becomes contradictory by being at once 'universal' and exclusionary (Bosniak 2002: 133). Instead of maintaining a conception of migrant labor that tracks one-time movement, Bosniak demonstrates both the bounded natures of citizenships and their many ongoing impacts on the individual lives of those foreign-born.

Bosniak notes in her introduction that the research on her book was done before the attacks of September 11, 2001 and before the emergence of the US department of homeland security and the ongoing discourse of a security state, where politics of security, control, and exclusion have intensified alienage and the securitization of migrants. Law Professor Bonnie Honig (2003) furthered Bosniak's theories in her work, *Democracy and the Foreigner*; here, Honig makes use of the symbolic politics of foreignness to show not only how debates over foreignness reinforce our national or democratic identities, but how anxieties endemic to liberal democracy themselves animate ambivalence toward foreignness and have only intensified with the focus on migration and the links between borders and terrorism post September 11 (16). Central to Honig's arguments are analyses of popular references and childhood stories featuring 'foreign-founders,' in which the origins or revitalization of a people depend upon a foreigner's energy, virtue, insight, or law. From such popular movies as *The Wizard of Oz* to the biblical story of Moses to the myth of an immigrant America, foreignness is represented not just as a threat, but also in Honig's

analysis, as a supplement for communities periodically requiring renewal. The nationalist culture of the Minutemen, based on the myth of an authentic white American citizenry, becomes dependent on ongoing hostilities toward 'infiltrating' migrant strangers in order to maintain its core identity.

One of Honig's most surprising conclusions is that an appreciation of the role of foreigners in (re)founding peoples works neither solely as a cosmopolitan nor a nationalist resource. For example, in the US, nationalists like the Minutemen see one archetypal foreign-founder—the naturalized immigrant—as reconfirming the appeal of deeply held American values, whereas at the same time, this immigrant represents the deeply transnational character of American democracy (Honig 2003: 79).

Using Bosniak's and Honig's conceptions of citizenship and alienage allows us to take issue with the US/Mexico border as something necessary for the preservation of American values. Concepts of nation-state 'closure' and 'membership' are prevalent and flexible in Bosniak's (2002) analysis, allowing for feminist work that reveals the moral and hierarchical assumptions present when we assume that "the interests of our conationals or coresidents are rightfully privileged over those of national or territorial outsiders" (135). Further, women who migrate are often pushed into dependency on an informal network of agents, and rendered more vulnerable to economic and physical abuse. Mainstream rhetoric on fears of migrants operates to further a domestic agenda of protection tactics, securitizing efforts, and ongoing wars. At the same time, fears of decline in the birthrate of white Americans and simultaneous immigration from non-white places expose the racist nature of the nation-state. The continuing hostility to cultural difference emerges alongside the reassertion of 'family values,' bringing to the forefront the most intimate settings of racist policies that prompt discourses of 'cultural difference.' What appears very personal is actually the result of globalized income inequalities and geographical difference, creating anxiety about the comforts and safety of American families. As Cindy Katz (2001) articulates, the enduring global inequalities and the gendered divisions of household and global labor are present in every call for intensified immigration policy in the name of national security (50-3).

Do these racist conceptions of borders, migration, and the nation-state have an impact on our everyday lives? Certainly, the US family has been deployed as the 'opposite' of terror/danger and the home (and perhaps by extension, the homeland) as the only refuge that can guarantee our

safety. Americans are encouraged to protect their homes with expensive security systems and discouraged from entering 'dangerous' parts of their own hometowns. Thousands of Americans have also recently signed up as volunteer border patrollers from inside the comfort of their own homes: through their internet connections, they are able to watch streaming surveillance video cameras of US-Mexico borders and participate in virtual immigrant hunting (Mackey 2009:1). At the same time, workers of Latin-America heritage are increasingly being forced to live an 'underground' life, even asking friends to do their grocery shopping, as fears of being apprehended in the street take hold (Preston 12). Both a reinforcement of the family and who counts as family with good, secure homes are pervasive in US mass media, discourses reinforced by the War on Terror and the 'securitizing' impulses of US domestic and foreign policy. Katz (2001) connects this fear to "a gendered pattern of migration" since "childcare workers and domestic laborers tend to be women whose ability to leave their own children behind in networks of family care reduces the cost of their labor and enables them to work relatively unencumbered for longer hours caring for other people's children" (52). Again, discourse surrounding 'illegal' migrants detaches us from both the process of domestic laborers migrating and their ongoing labor, as well as the state's role in this process: immigration policies admit lone women workers and prevent their families from joining them, and visa programs ensure a continuous supply of cheap domestic labor.

Well-meaning critical writers and journalists admit they are "rubbed the wrong way by the idea of a bunch of middle-class white people banding together to stop poor Mexicans from participating in the great tradition of building new lives in America" (Thomas 2008: 1) but stop short of pointing out the underlying normative and racist values or the truth claims that emerge in discussions of 'illegals.' In the *New York Times* and other mainstream media, the entire Latino population becomes invisible, limiting them to illegal Mexican or perhaps OTM identities, erasing their laboring and migrating bodies and articulating moments of law-breaking instead. Migrants themselves, in their bodies and identities, are seen to be challenging the national homeland: Aihwa Ong (2006) demonstrates in what ways discourse operates to hide the neoslavery of migrant women as it has "emerged out of a postcolonial intersection of racialized nationalism, neoliberal strategies" and what she calls the 'moral economy' based on kinship and ethnicity (197). Here, nationality is recast as Otherness, legitimizing the subordination of 'foreigners' or 'non-citizens,' denied protections from violence, freedom from conditions of slavery, and basic rights. The processes of global migration and migrant labor are then viewed as a forms of 'foreign domination,' or in the Minutemen's words, an 'invasion,' allowing a public

ignorance of these processes and the initiation of wars on terror or intensification of migration policy. Here, again, an autonomous American nation is articulated and maintained, in which 'citizens' are assumed to hold shared national interests, and the increasing reliance of the economy on temporary migrant workers under neoliberalism is ignored.

The *New York Times* has recently reported on the part of the US/Mexico border that runs through the Tohono O'odham Nation, where Native Americans are caught in the drug trade and the intensifying US border control policies, and whose poverty and fear are blamed by the author on a "bad luck of geography" (Eckholm 2010: 2). The electronic surveillance towers of Homeland Security's extension of the 'Virtual Fence' are to soon be maintained on this nation's land. Here again, mainstream coverage of the drug trade allows a mere side mention of the Virtual Fence, ignoring the national plan to secure the southwestern borders of the US, justifying the tightening of border security, and ignoring the rights of migrants and indigenous peoples alike.

Perhaps our take on the US-Mexico border should have a different chronology than the one offered by the *New York Times*, one that follows the poems of Juan Felipe Herrera, one that reports on the Spanish conquest of Mexico, the mass colonial slaughter of the people of the Americas, the (neo)colonial impulses of the current War on Terror, the U.S. war on Mexico from 1846 to 1848, and the Chican@ movement of the 1960s. The border is not merely where Mexicans and 'OTMs' attempt to escape the law, but a passage with a story of ancient and existing echoes of spilled blood in Herrera's (2008) poem: "blood in the border web, the penal colony shed, in the bilingual yard" and recognitions of those who have arrived in the US only because of the deaths of others who tried to make the journey, those "so numerous they seemed / like the desert itself / busted black the color of smoke" (28, 99).

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