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“From Palestine to México:” Perceptions of Linked Fate in the San Diego-Tijuana Borderlands

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree Master of Arts

in

Latin American Studies

by

Nikole Dorais

Committee in charge:

Professor David FitzGerald, Chair
Professor José Fusté
Professor Elana Zilberg

2026

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University of California San Diego

2026

EPIGRAPH

Prefiguration, then, is a communal ethic: everything that I think and say comes not from me as one individual organizer or writer but as one person in a constellation of comrades and mentors. We need movements and societies to move from competition to interdependence because there is absolutely no liberation in isolation.

– Harsha Walia, “Prefiguring Border Justice.”

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THESIS APPROVAL PAGE	iii
EPIGRAPH.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS.....	vii
INTRODUCTION: A TRANSNATIONAL APPLICATION OF LINKED FATE	1
I. BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: GLOBAL RISE OF BORDER REGIMES.....	11
II. METHODS AND APPROACH	15
III. PERCEPTIONS OF LINKED FATE IN THE BORDERLANDS	19
Direct: Material Relationships of U.S.-Israel Border Technologies and Strategy	19
Consequential: The Domino Effect on the Global Scale.....	35
Experiential: Life Under Border Imperialism	46
Interconnectedness: Transnational Resistance to Transnational Systems.....	59
CONCLUSION: LINKED FATE IN AN ERA OF GLOBALIZATION.....	66
REFERENCES	69

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This project would not exist without all those who hold on to radical hope against the odds. This is a work grown out of the undercommons, made possible by the solidarity and community springing from the grassroots of the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. I hope I have done you justice.

It is with gratitude that I acknowledge Professor David FitzGerald for his guidance during the process of researching and writing this thesis, whose encouragement was invaluable in seeing this thesis across the finish line. I would also like to acknowledge Professor José Fusté for helping me hone my voice for this project, and Professor Elana Zilberg for her interest and support.

I would also like to acknowledge my husband, Will, who saw me through every draft and late-night writing session. Thank you for every caffeine run, brain break, and your relentless support.

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

“From Palestine to México:” Perceptions of Linked Fate in the San Diego-Tijuana Borderlands

by

Nikole Dorais

Master of Arts in Latin American Studies

University of California San Diego, 2026

Professor David FitzGerald, Chair

Though activist groups in the San Diego-Tijuana area have long organized for Palestinian liberation, the continuous bombardment of Gaza by Israel and its resulting humanitarian crisis in the wake of October 7, 2023, has influenced a surge in transnational advocacy actions, oftentimes evoking comparisons or connections between the U.S.-Mexico border and borders surrounding Gaza and the West Bank. Analyzing events for Palestinian liberation and/or border advocacy between October 2023 and July 2024, this thesis reimagines the application of “linked fate” through a spatially removed, transnational lens motivated by interlocking systems and mechanisms of power. I propose that border sites offer tangible and theoretical links by which geographically disconnected communities may conclude that what happens in one impacts the other, clarifying how activists in the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands at times draw “linked fate” solidarity relationships through four common narratives: *Directly*, unpacking the material, financial, and law

enforcement exchanges between the U.S. and Israel; *Experientially*, citing analogous experiences of life under settler colonialism, imperialism, and racial capitalism; *Consequently*, considering decisions at the state level which disparately impact communities abroad; and *Interconnectedly*, positing that liberation movements are inherently connected through intersecting systems of dominance.

INTRODUCTION: A TRANSNATIONAL APPLICATION OF LINKED FATE

Though transnational solidarity actions for Palestine have been coordinated by activist groups in the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands for decades, the most recent continuous bombardment of Gaza by Israel and the resulting human rights crisis have increasingly inspired co-organized efforts by border advocates, religious groups, student activists, and community members. Within the geographical, political, and social context of the U.S.-Mexico border, transnational advocacy in the San Diego-Tijuana region at times evokes comparisons between borderlands here in the United States and those in Gaza and the West Bank, drawing from a commonality of experience between liberation movements to prompt mobilizations and direct actions. As a site hosting one of the largest naval bases in the U.S., the busiest land border crossing in the Western Hemisphere, and a hub for research and academia—all upon unceded Kumeyaay land—San Diego offers a unique landscape by which the far-reaching strings of linked fate may converge. Though there is existing research analyzing theories of linked fate for interethnic and co-ethnic social movements within a local-to-national context, this project reimagines its application through a spatially removed, transnational lens motivated by interlocking systems and mechanisms of power. My main research question is: How do those within transnational social justice movements come to see themselves as connected through what can be perceived as “linked fate”? This work explores what borders mean to those who reside within them, how they might relate their experiences and conditions to those living under border regimes globally, and how they might understand resistance movements to be inherently intertwined.

Through content analysis of event advertisements, public speeches, and political artwork, as well as participant observation of events for Palestinian liberation and/or border advocacy,¹ the specific aims of this study are to analyze connections of interdependence (though asymmetrical) and linkages drawn between two far spatially removed borderland localities by activists, event organizers, participants, and community members. This study identifies narrative themes formed to conceptualize the relationality of Palestinian and U.S. borderlands to clarify how grassroots activists come to place themselves as part of transnational linked fate relationships. These narratives of linked fate are categorized into four common themes:

1. *Directly*, activists unpack the material and financial relationship between the U.S. and Israel by: 1) Pointing to exchanges between law enforcement for training and strategizing, 2) Identifying Israeli-based companies that produce surveillance technology developed within Gaza and the West Bank that are acquired and replicated across the U.S.-Mexico border, and 3) Highlighting border wall construction contracts which reproduce the separation barriers erected by Israel in the U.S.
2. *Consequently*, linked fate is demonstrated through interactions at the state level, such as foreign aid, trade, and policy, at the expense of those marginalized at home and abroad. Two threads of logic are examined—U.S. interventionism in wars abroad as a driver of forced displacement, and U.S. investment in Israel’s settler colonial project at the expense of its own domestic public infrastructure and social safety nets.

¹ The social and political movement for Palestinian liberation largely campaigns for the removal of Israeli settlers from occupied territories, condemnation of Israeli state-sanctioned violence, self-determination and the recognition of Palestinian statehood, and the right of return for Palestinian refugees. Though pro-Palestinian, anti-Zionist sentiment may at times demand the termination of the Israeli state, this was not a common narrative outrightly stated by organizers and speakers at the events analyzed for this study. Border advocacy argues for the human and civil rights of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers through policy reform at the local, state, and federal levels, as well as for providing humanitarian and legal services, and ending abuse by immigration enforcement officers. Within the context of this study, border advocates frequently called for the abolition and/or demilitarization of border walls, as well as the end of immigration detention and surveillance.

3. *Experientially*, activists pull from analogous experiences of life under settler colonialism, imperialism, and racial capitalism, which produce processes of occupation, dispossession, racialization, and surveillance. The actors in this project discuss how these processes manifest within the daily lives of those within these communities, framing how the allowance of particular modes and logics of oppressive power in one locality empowers its existence elsewhere.
4. *Interconnectedly*, activists reckon that all liberation movements are inherently related, just as they reason that systems of power rely on their mutual reinforcement for existence. They posit that liberatory movements occur within—and transcend—borders, as do the globalized systems of power which order the geopolitical landscape locally and internationally.

Thus, borders function as concrete representations of neocolonialism, imperialism, racial capitalism, and militarization that offer San Diego-Tijuana borderlands activists connections to the borderlands in Palestine. Drawing on these themes, activists can encourage community emotional investment into transnational advocacy. Concurrently, through grassroots liberatory education, activists outline symbiotic financial and material exchanges between the U.S. and Israel to validate claims of how populations amongst different borderland sites are inherently related through the replication of mechanisms of population control and surveillance. Together, the symbolic and corporeal border provides a pathway by which geographically disconnected communities may conclude that what happens in one impacts the other.

In this project, linked fate as an analytical framework is operationalized through a transnational lens, whereas it has traditionally been applied to singular or multi-identity groups within a local to national context. Canonically, the theory and term “linked fate” was originally

conceptualized by social scientist Michael C. Dawson to describe how group belonging, specifically related to race and ethnicity, influences political participation and decision-making, as one comes to believe their interests and life chances are inextricably tied to the group they identify with.² The literature has expanded to demonstrate that linked fate can explain how inter-minority political solidarity in the U.S. motivates Black and Latino voters to represent the interests of immigrants,³ how an intersectional lens complicates or reinforces the strength of political participation and group associations for LGBT Latinx individuals,⁴ and how positionality complicates strengths of allegiance to certain identities for Black women.⁵ Minority linked fate, or “the idea that ethnoracial minorities might share a sense of commonality that extends beyond their particular ethnoracial group to other ethnoracial groups,”⁶ is especially instrumental to this study’s application, particularly in relating relationships to hegemonic systems to inspire coalitional action against a common adversary. Observing how the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is used to justify and strengthen localized ethno-racial claims in Northern Ireland, Rawan Arar describes the process of “borrowed legitimacy,” in which political entrepreneurs create symbolic parallels between domestic and international actors to maintain and validate ethnic boundaries. Arar explains, “By adopting an ally, expressions of international solidarity also designate an adversary, making the boundary between the two a possible incentive for solidarity,” which challenges the “purely

² Michael C. Dawson, “Models of African-American Racial and Economic Group Interest,” in *Behind the Mule: Race and Class in African-American Politics*, (Princeton University Press, 1994). <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvzxx9d4.9>.

³ Yoshira D. Macías Mejía, “Beyond Racial Linked Fate: Inter-Minority Political Solidarity and Political Participation,” *Political Behavior* 46, (2024): 1101–1123. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-023-09861-2>.

⁴ Nathan Kar Ming Chan and Francisco Jasso, “From Inter-Racial Solidarity to Action: Minority Linked Fate and African American, Latina/o, and Asian American Political Participation,” *Political Behavior* 45, (2023): 1097–1119. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-021-09750-6>.

⁵ Evelyn M. Simien, “Race, Gender, and Linked Fate,” *Journal of Black Studies* 35, no. 5 (2005): 529–550. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934704265899>.

⁶ Sarah Allen Gershon, Celeste Montoya, Christina Bejarano, and Nadia Brown, “Intersectional Linked Fate and Political Representation,” *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 7, no. 3 (2019): 643. doi:10.1080/21565503.2019.1639520.

altruistic characterization of international solidarity.”⁷ The study itself does not explicitly demonstrate linked fate—narratives between Unionists and Loyalists relating to either Israelis or Palestinians, respectively, tend to stop at comparison for the sake of both empathy *and* self-interest to reinforce ethnic boundaries. However, the language of the common ally and adversary can be transplanted in this study to understand how relational arguments reach further to draw the transnational linkages. Inherent to the framework is to look beyond just solidarity found in comparable experience, but in how the root causes of those experiences are part of a larger, tangled web transcending any one state.

Though not explicitly placed within the framework of linked fate, one instrumental case study of the concept’s transnational application is demonstrated through parallels drawn within U.S. Black-Palestinian solidarities. This history has manifested through support between Black and Palestinian Americans during the 1968 San Francisco State University student strikes for equitable admissions practices and ethnic studies, the movement to divest from South African apartheid, Rev. Jesse Jackson’s Rainbow Coalition, which included a call for an independent Palestinian state, and Palestinian support of Black Americans during the Ferguson protests following the police shooting of Michael Brown.⁸ This wasn’t always the case—the 1930s to 1960s were characterized by a diasporic view of the return to an African homeland influenced by the idea of Jewish emancipation through Zionism. However, Black liberation groups⁹ increasingly applied

⁷ Rawan Arar, “International Solidarity and Ethnic Boundaries: Using the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict to Strengthen Ethno-National Claims in Northern Ireland,” *Nations and Nationalism* 23, no. 4 (2017): 857. doi: 10.1111/nana.12294.

⁸ Kristian Davis Bailey, “Black-Palestinian Solidarity in the Ferguson-Gaza Era.” *American Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (2015): 8. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43822935>.

⁹ While viewpoints on Black liberation are not homogeneous, the movement typically aims to challenge the forces and impacts of white supremacy, racial capitalism, and colonialism stemming from the era of chattel slavery. Encompassing a range of ideologies, values, and action plans that have evolved over time, the movement can call for analyzing the embedment of racism within laws, policies, and institutions; the celebration of empowerment of Black identity and culture; transformative justice and abolitionism, including the end of mass incarceration; economic justice, and more.

an anti-imperialist, anti-racist lens to Palestinian liberation following the 1967 war,¹⁰ confronting internal colonialism by locating the struggle for civil rights as a Third World from within the state, and encouraging solidarity with other colonized peoples.¹¹ During this time, U.S. Black radicals placed themselves within an interconnected struggle against white settler regimes globally, though the mainstream liberal Black political class remained largely ambivalent to Zionist policies and practices.¹² The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) first demonstrated this break through a June-July 1967 newsletter, which highlighted the role of U.S. imperialism in shaping Israeli aggression, coupling Israeli apartheid of Palestinians with U.S. support for neocolonial projects abroad.¹³

From 1968 to 1980, the Black Panthers used their official newspaper of the same name to share political philosophy internationally to unite disparate communities, weaving together the struggle against imperialism and racial capitalism from Puerto Rico to South Africa to Palestine. *The Black Panther* was recognized as one of the few sources to share news from Palestine that was uncensored by the state, publishing stories on the expansion of Israeli occupation in the West Bank and editorials from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO).¹⁴ Historian Alex Lubin describes how, rather than framing the occupation of Palestine as a Zionist-Arab conflict, *The Black Panther* distributed works arguing

¹⁰ The 1967 Six-Day War involved a coalition of Arab states (primarily Egypt, Syria, and Jordan) against Israel following weeks of alliance-building between the Arab states, tensions over control of the Straits of Tiran, and the mobilization of Egyptian troops in Sinai. The war began on June 5, when Israel launched a preemptive strike against Egypt, decimating its air force. In the wake of Israeli victory, the war significantly impacted the geopolitical landscape of the region, reshaping borders with Israel's claim and occupation of the Gaza Strip, West Bank, Old City of Jerusalem, Golan Heights, and the Sinai Peninsula.

¹¹ Nadine Naber, "'The U.S. and Israel Make the Connections for Us': Anti-Imperialism and Black-Palestinian Solidarity," *Critical Ethnic Studies* 3, no. 2 (2017): 18. <https://doi.org/10.5749/jcritethnstud.3.2.0015>.

¹² Nadine Naber, "'The U.S. and Israel Make the Connections for Us.'"

¹³ Alex Lubin. "Black Panther Palestine." *Studies in American Jewish Literature* (1981-) 35, no. 1 (2016): 80. <https://doi.org/10.5325/studamerjewilite.35.1.0077>.

¹⁴ Lubin, "Black Panther Palestine," 83.

that common bonds were tying together Black communities and Palestinian refugees, and used an internationalist framework which drew direct linkages between Israeli occupation and U.S. complicity in that occupation. Notably, this philosophy is highlighted in a 1969 letter from the PFLP published in *The Black Panther*, which stated, “The technically advanced USA supplies Israel the modern tools of destruction to be used against us.”¹⁵ This observation would emerge again and again throughout the years, but became strikingly visible during the summer of 2014 in the police shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri.

On August 9, 2014, the shooting of an unarmed Black teenager, Michael Brown, by white police officer Darren Wilson, prompted mass mobilization and demonstrations in the U.S. against police violence, the militarization of law enforcement, and racial discrimination. Though largely nonviolent at first, the use of police paramilitary tactics against protestors in Ferguson escalated into heated and aggressive confrontations, quickly turning the city into something akin to a battleground. Simultaneously, as footage of smoke bombs, SWAT teams in tactical gear, and armored vehicles in Ferguson began to emerge through news outlets and social media, so too did images of the destruction of infrastructure and human life in Gaza. The protests in Ferguson and across the U.S. erupted amidst a 50-day bombardment of Gaza by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), which ultimately resulted in mass displacement (pushing the then-record of internally displaced persons to 292,959) and the deaths of over 2,251 Palestinians.¹⁶ The convergence of both cases of asymmetrical violence into the mainstream prompted a new wave of ideological connections within Black-Palestinian solidarities. Direct linkages were again struck, such as comparisons which identified the tear gas canisters used in both Gaza and Ferguson as made within the U.S.,

¹⁵ Lubin, “Black Panther Palestine, 98.

¹⁶ “2014 Gaza Conflict,” United Nations Relief and Works Agency, accessed May 19, 2026, <https://www.unrwa.org/2014-gaza-conflict>.

and how activists from the West Bank and Gaza tweeted practical advice to protestors in Ferguson for how to deal with tear gas shot into crowds by law enforcement.¹⁷ Analyzing this moment in Black-Palestinian solidarity, scholar-activist Nadine Naber remarked,

Among the conjoined forces of global power that structure Black and Palestinian oppression (in different ways and to different degrees) are the U.S.-Israeli alliance; U.S.-led empire building, militarism, and war; neoliberal economics; and white supremacy. Dream Defender and organizer Cherrell Brown argues, ‘Our [Black and Palestinians]’ oppressors are literally collaborating together, learning from one another—and as oppressed people, we have to do the same.’ From this perspective, African Americans and Palestinians should look to one another not because their struggles share similarities, but because their struggles are *conjoined*.¹⁸

Applying a framework of linked fate imagines solidarity beyond analogy, providing an analytic by which movements may identify common adversaries—perhaps not always the figureheads who occupy positions of power, but the structural and institutional mechanisms by which discriminatory ideology may be wielded.

In the context of Black-Palestinian solidarities, settler colonial and imperialist logics that facilitated the mass displacing and discriminatory practices of chattel slavery and segregation against Africans and African Americans were rendered into the Zionist cause, enacting the forcible removal and apartheid of Palestinians. The tools of repressing the racialized “other” are shared, as exemplified by the fixation of those studying the Ferguson-Gaza moment on identical weaponry and paramilitary tactics used against protestors and Palestinians alike. Zooming out from a myopic view of how power operates locally, a linked fate framework can be a tool for tracing the homologies between peoples to understand themselves not as isolated within particular expressions of injustice experienced regionally or domestically. The term “homology” is used intentionally here—in which different entities that are seemingly removed inherit the traits, genetic makeup,

¹⁷ Kristian Davis Bailey, “Ferguson-Gaza Era.”

¹⁸ Nadine Naber, “‘The U.S. and Israel Make the Connections for Us,’” 17.

and anatomical structures from a root origin. Though evolving into differing forms, the traces of the shared ancestry live on. Movements may see their marginalization as stemming from logics that historically and/or contemporarily have been reproduced across time and space. However, as demonstrated in this work, these logics do not simply branch off into their own vacuum—common adversaries continue learning from each other to optimize the mechanisms and strategies by which they may order societies (and in an era of globalization, perhaps order the geopolitical world).

Regarding transnational advocacy around borders, intersectionality can help describe how structural inequities may operate differently and with diverse meanings within distinct nation-states, but reinforce each other when the modes of reasoning and apparatuses of maintenance can inform and empower how those systems operate elsewhere. Coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, intersectionality describes the shifting interactions among categories and ideologies relating overlapping hegemonic systems within specific contexts related to time, place, history, and culture.¹⁹ Intersectionality is instrumental in examining how transnational movements may see their aims as interlocked within a matrix of converging systems, which may inform how border walls themselves capture and are fueled by a wealth of intertwined systems of power. Defined by Harsha Walia, border imperialism is an analytical framework that “depicts the processes by which the violences and precarities of displacement and migration are *structurally* created as well as maintained.”²⁰ Walia explains how border imperialism offers an intersectional lens by which we may evaluate how capital freely crosses borders, yet those displaced and exploited as a consequence of neoliberalism, imperialism, and racial capitalism experience limited mobility even as they are treated as a perilous threat. As a result, border imperialism encapsulates: 1) how those

¹⁹ Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color” *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991). <https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039>.

²⁰ Harsha Walia, *Undoing Border Imperialism* (AK Press, 2013), 5.

displaced as a result of uneven relations in global power are met with a militant technosecuritization regime upon arrival to host state borders (explored later in the “consequential” and “direct” sections of this study); and 2) how borders entrench racialized hierarchy of citizenship and perceptions of belonging (explored in the “experiential” section of this study).²¹ Borders, and the industries and sentiments that support their existence, provide unifying points by which the expressions of varying hegemonic systems interact in ways that impact a wide net of communities rather than any singular ethnic group.

Grassroots organizing moves beyond identity politics to locate the common adversary. This is explored by activist-scholars Leslie Quintanilla and Heather Mogannam, who state, “When multiple bodies that identify as queer, migrant, Palestinian, Lakota, Mexican, Black, Asian Pacific Islander, Central American, Iranian meet at the site called the US-Mexico borderland through dialogue... there are multiple temporalities and geographies, dislocated and connected, that are reacting to the imperial nation-state and how it positions these bodies.”²² Without erasing the differences between those impacted by border imperialism, an intersectional, transnational framework provides opportunities for reciprocal, multi-directional movements of resistance that abandon single-issue thinking for relationality.²³ Summarily, if common adversaries operate globally, then the people living within the conditions created by those systems are thus linked, so long as what is learned or developed in one community may be transplanted into another. Within the scope of this project, borderlands act as sites of linked fate by which communities understand their struggles to be interconnected.

²¹ Walia, *Undoing Border Imperialism*, 5.

²² Leslie Quintanilla, and Jennifer Mogannam, “Borders Are Obsolete: Relations beyond the ‘Borderlands’ of Palestine and US–Mexico,” *American Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (2015): 1043. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43822937>.

²³ Sa’ed Atshan and Darnell L. Moore, “Reciprocal Solidarity: Where The Black And Palestinian Queer Struggles Meet,” *Biography* 37, no. 2 (2014): 680–705, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24570200>.

I. BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: GLOBAL RISE OF BORDER REGIMES

In 2017, under President Donald Trump's impending threat of a government shutdown over the Democrat-controlled Congress's opposition to his administration's proposed border wall funding, Trump declared, "If you really want to find out how effective a wall is, just ask Israel... [It's] 99.9 percent effective and our wall will be every bit as good as that, if not better."²⁴ Since June 2002, in response to the sharp rise of fatal political violence during the Second Intifada by Palestinians resisting occupation, the Israeli government has steadily worked to construct what was originally declared a "temporary" separation barrier around the West Bank, citing security concerns for Israeli settlers in the area. Despite a 2004 ruling by the International Court of Justice, which found the separation wall to be illegally occupying Palestinian territory, the barrier has not only become more fortified but "smarter." Today, over 85% of Israel's separation wall has been constructed within the occupied West Bank, erected more than 11 miles (18 km) within the original boundaries of the 1967 Green Line.²⁵ At least 65% of the separation wall has been completed as of 2022, amounting to a border of roughly 450 miles (710 km), where some 100,000 Palestinians crossed with authorization through specified military checkpoints daily for work before October 2023.²⁶

The physical border itself is only one part of the securitization regime. As far back as 1967, Israel's automation of efficient surveillance and population control methods against Palestinians has manifested into a robust industry of techno-securitization. The virtual border has integrated

²⁴ JTA and TOI Staff, "Trump Invokes 'Israel's Wall' In Tense Exchange Over Border Security," *Times of Israel*, December 11, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/trump-invokes-israels-wall-in-tense-exchange-over-border-security/>.

²⁵ "In Pictures: Israel's Illegal Separation Wall Still Divides," *Aljazeera*, July 8, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/gallery/2020/7/8/in-pictures-israels-illegal-separation-wall-still-divides>.

²⁶ Oded Balilty, "AP PHOTOS: Israel's Separation Barrier, 20 Years On," *AP News*, June 27, 2022, <https://apnews.com/article/politics-middle-east-jerusalem-israel-west-bank-2ce5d9956b729ad6169c880d00068977>.

itself into Palestine beyond just the physical wall, relying on “a web of informants, biometric data collection, population registries, CCTV cameras, wiretapping, communications interception, watchtowers, military checkpoints, and now drones, spyware, predictive policing tools, and facial recognition cameras,” including the 27 of 104 military checkpoints in the West Bank which were upgraded with facial recognition technology in 2019.²⁷ By 2021, Gaza was completely encapsulated by a 40-mile-long (65 km) barrier branded as a “smart fence” for its surveillance technology consisting of radar systems, maritime sensors, and cameras, demarcating the “temporary” border not only as permanent, but militant.²⁸ At times regarded as a “laboratory” for industry, what is developed by Israel is replicated and fine-tuned across border walls globally.

As titans of border securitization technology, Israel’s standing in the global market is strengthened by the importation of its apparatuses into the U.S., fueled by domestic anti-immigrant sentiment embedded within “tough on borders” political platforms. Blending “homeland security” with “homeland defense,” Israeli anthropologist and cofounder of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, Jeff Halper, shares that these products of securitization from Israel peddle to democracies of the Global North an “integrated model of an entire security state.”²⁹ However, this hasn’t always been true. For most of its history, the established borderlines of the U.S. have been unpatrolled stretches of terrain. In the early to mid-1900s, limited fencing and chain-linked barriers were mostly semi-permanent structures sporadically built around Southern border towns in response to native-born citizens fearing market competition with foreign laborers. The U.S.

²⁷ Marwa Fatafta, “Apartheid Tech: The Use and Expansion of Biometric Identification and Surveillance Technologies in Occupied West Bank,” In *Resisting Borders and Technologies of Violence*, ed. Mizue Aizeki, Matt Mahmoudi, and Coline Schupfer (Haymarket Books, 2024), 179.

²⁸ “Israel Announces Completion Of Security Barrier Around Gaza,” *AP News*, December 7, 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/middle-east-israel-militant-groups-gaza-strip-hamas-f1e2a12119da7b34c1553c3ca0821612>.

²⁹ Jeff Halper, “Global Palestine: Exporting Israel’s Regime of Population Control,” In *Resisting Borders and Technologies of Violence*, ed. Mizue Aizeki, Matt Mahmoudi, and Coline Schupfer (Haymarket Books, 2024), 99.

Southern border was largely permeable until the 1960s, during an era of crackdowns against labor migrations that were once normalized through the Bracero Program, a cross-border labor agreement between the U.S. and Mexico.³⁰ Then, the hard lines of the Southern border materialized with the implementation of various immigration enforcement policies and strategies between the 1980s and 90s.

The “virtual wall” wasn’t a border project that began with President Trump, but is the manifestation of over two decades of urgency by politicians, advocates, and lobbyists to create a permanent and effective barrier between the United States and the non-citizens who have wished to enter it. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), founded in 2002 under the Bush administration during the post-9/11 War on Terror, has played an integral role in advancing the mission of immigration restrictivism, growing the surveillance-industrial complex, and operationalizing perceptions of exclusion and belonging within the U.S. polity. Acting within a perpetual state of emergency against the looming threat of terror, Congress has repeatedly authorized the incremental rollout of a virtual wall along the U.S. Southern border, starting in 2006 with the approval for construction of over 700 miles of fencing equipped with surveillance technology and an expansion of the border patrol force.³¹

The rise of border walls across the world is a relatively new phenomenon, as only 15 were erected at the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and yet 77 now exist today.³² The rush to both secure and repel has been experienced by nation-states across the world, as the Migration

³⁰ The Bracero Program was a binational agreement between the U.S. and Mexico between 1942 and 1964 that allowed specified numbers of Mexican workers to seasonally labor within the U.S. under government supervision and with authorization.

³¹ Will Parrish, “The U.S. Border Patrol and an Israeli Military Contractor Are Putting a Native American Reservation Under ‘Persistent Surveillance,’” *The Intercept*, August, 25 2019. <https://theintercept.com/2019/08/25/border-patrol-israel-elbit-surveillance/>.

³² Abby C. Wheatley and Oren Kroll-Zeldin, “Impermeable Borders and the Futility of Walls,” *Peace Review* 32 no. 2 (2020): 190–97. doi:10.1080/10402659.2020.1836442.

Policy Institute reports, “In a matter of months in late 2021, Poland’s parliament approved the building of barbed-wire fencing along its border with Belarus, the governor of Texas inaugurated sections of 30-foot-tall steel-bollard barriers abutting Mexico financed by state and private funds, and Israel completed an underground ‘iron wall’ equipped with sensors on the edge of its border with Gaza.”³³ The proliferation and fortification of borders across the world have only found stronger footholds within each continent in recent years, creating what Todd Miller and Joseph Nevins dub as a “global apartheid system.”³⁴ Deeply embedded with intersectional hierarchies tied to race, class, gender, nationality, and citizenship, the global apartheid regime perpetuates inequity and disparity when deciding who is contained within the restricted class and who can roam and live freely. Within a post-9/11 War on Terror world, Harsha Walia concludes that border-craft has become an ordering regime, “both assembling and assembled through racial-capitalist accumulation and colonial relations.”³⁵ Increasingly, border walls have become real and imagined signifiers of mobility and containment, or selective inclusion and exclusion, ultimately shaping the conditions of life, livelihood, and opportunity for all.

³³ Élisabeth Vallet, “The World Is Witnessing a Rapid Proliferation of Border Walls,” *Migration Policy Institute*, March 2, 2022, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/rapid-proliferation-number-border-walls>.

³⁴ Todd Miller and Joseph Nevins, “Empire’s Walls, Global Apartheid’s Infrastructure,” In *Resisting Borders and Technologies of Violence*, ed. Mizue Aizeki, Matt Mahmoudi, and Coline Schupfer (Haymarket Books, 2024), 31.

³⁵ Harsha Walia, “The Border is Surveillance: Abolish the Border,” in *Resisting Borders and Technologies of Violence*, ed. Mizue Aizeki, Matt Mahmoudi, and Coline Schupfer (Haymarket Books, 2024), 11.

II. METHODS AND APPROACH

Though countless events for either migrant rights or Palestinian liberation have been coordinated in the past few decades in the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands, twenty alliance-building events in particular were analyzed between October 2023 and July 2024 for this project. The primary means of data collection was through ethnographic field observation and/or social media analysis of events for primarily border advocacy, primarily Palestinian liberation, or cross-coalition events engaging both movements. Events were chosen for this study based on 1) their promotional material and content relating borders, border imperialism, and border militarization and technologies of both the U.S. and Israel, 2) a joint and/or coalitional effort by groups and organizations related to border advocacy and Palestinian liberation, and 3) spontaneous and/or planned remarks, statements, speeches, and activity that related the two borderlands. In this vein, the screening process for inclusion in this study was limited to events that invoked these connections between borderlands on some level, which were then evaluated for their categorization in the four common narrative themes of linked fate: directly, experientially, consequently, and interconnectedly.

Of the twenty events selected for this project, four involved field observation, and all twenty included social media content analysis. Field observation was conducted as an overt participant-observer immersed within the events by engaging with programming or activities and witnessing public remarks. Observation did not include any form of audio or audiovisual recording, nor were regular attendees monitored or quoted. Inclusions of speeches and remarks from these events into this study were limited to content that was recorded, controlled, and published by event organizers online, and with notice of this research to those major event organizers. Pertaining to social media content analysis, event organizers typically post

advertisements for programming, including descriptions or statements of purpose for holding the respective community event or protest, providing clear insight into motivations for gathering and critique. Additionally, event organizers and representatives often documented these events through photography and recordings—including statements, speeches, organized panels, event activities, and promotional or protest artwork—and made them publicly available through social media accounts of involved organizations and groups.

It is necessary to acknowledge that this study doesn't account for all events that in some way demonstrated perceptions of linked fate between October 2023 and July 2024 in the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands, as there are certainly events that occurred during this time and in this area that I was not aware of, were not recorded, were not promoted, or were limited in attendance or invitation. Additionally, this study does not assume or suggest that communities related to borderlands advocacy and/or Palestinian liberation are monolithic in their reasoning, welcome or consider proposed connections between the two movements, or that themes of linked fate are discussed and agreed upon by all members. Rather, this work is meant to understand the various rationales by which these themes *are* invoked, how they are legitimized or validated, and their place within liberatory theory produced at the grassroots and academic levels.

The idea for this project itself materialized from a conversation with a colleague during the short period in which students, faculty, and community members erected their own solidarity encampment for Palestinian liberation on the University of California at San Diego campus in May of 2024. As a crowd gathered outside the hub of tents, posters, and prayer mats, they listened to the lineup of speakers. One speaker voiced how intentional it must have been to create a form of protest that brought the reality of the refugee tent cities sprouting within Gaza to university and college campuses all across the United States. In reflecting upon the speech, my colleague

extended the symbolism to our own borderlands, placing the visual of university encampments against those of Gazans displaced during bombardments, and again against those of migrants awaiting entry into the United States within tent shelters in Tijuana. Through an analysis of the interconnectedness of liberation movements, recognizing experiential similarities between borderland communities, or calling out the direct corporate ties of the security technologies industry between the two states, the correlations were continuously being drawn and shared at the grassroots level. Crossover events—including teach-ins, art builds, film screenings, discussion panels, protests, marches, and more—between border advocacy and Palestinian liberation groups have had a long history in the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Thus, this project offers a non-exhaustive, ten-month sample of how those organizations and advocacy groups perceive shared fates between communities here at the U.S.-Mexico border and those in Palestine. To be clear, highlighting parallels between borderlands and mobilizing across coalitions is not a new phenomenon, but the frequency of events designed with such purposes has noticeably increased since October 2023. “From Palestine to México, these border walls have got to go!” is a rallying cry that is reliably chanted, especially within the geopolitical context of the San Ysidro and Otay Mesa Ports of Entry and the border walls that extend from them.

Ultimately, this work is created in the vein of what bell hooks (1991) refers to as a holistic framework of liberatory action, acknowledging that in creating a division between academics and activists, “both groups deny the power of liberatory education for critical consciousness, thereby perpetuating conditions that reinforce our collective exploitation and repression.”³⁶ Work produced in academic settings is paired with Harsha Walia’s concept of grassroots theory, in which “those who have historically been denied any voice or control over issues that impact their lives

³⁶ bell hooks, “Theory as Liberatory Practice,” *The Yale Journal of Law and Feminism* 4, no. 1 (1991): 7–8, <https://openyls.law.yale.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/d876a89b-40fd-4189-9d54-36a9305a4898/content>.

are the experts in articulating the impacts of injustice, and carry the necessary awareness of how to effectively organize against power.”³⁷ As such, this project seeks to blend the collaborative learning and teaching facilitated by organizers and speakers with those developing theoretical frameworks within the academic sphere. However, it is vital to recognize that the scholar and the activist can be one and the same. Academics referenced within this work do not necessarily remain purely within the confines of higher academia and may incorporate lessons from their own community involvement. Just as true, political education does not require a university campus for affected communities to develop theory. While this project is based primarily on speeches and statements crafted from those building movements from the ground up, other works cited are meant to bridge conversations between spheres. I am guided and limited by the narrative themes of linked fate invoked by those facilitating, organizing, and speaking at community engagement events. What is included in this project is based on the words and teachings cultivated in community, and elaborated upon using cited works.

³⁷ Harsha Walia, *Undoing Border Imperialism*, 197.

III. PERCEPTIONS OF LINKED FATE IN THE BORDERLANDS

Direct: Material Relationships of U.S.-Israel Border Technologies and Strategy

In a statement circulated by Al Otro Lado, an immigration and refugee services non-profit with locations in San Diego and Tijuana, the organization proclaimed, “We know that the same technologies and techniques used by U.S. Customs and Border Protection to keep families from seeking safety in the United States were pioneered in Israel to turn Gaza into an open air prison.”³⁸ Activists and scholars readily critique the development of surveillance and weapons technologies in Gaza and the West Bank, which can eventually be replicated across the U.S.-Mexico border and borders globally. These connections additionally manifest through contracts secured between the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Israeli defense corporations, and “study abroad” law enforcement exchange programs. To some within the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands, Gaza and the West Bank are testing grounds for the control of movement, policing of community, and militarization of borders that could very well be transplanted internationally—evidence of which can already be found along the U.S.-Mexico border. Through these material connections, the linked fate between borderlands becomes more realized with each blueprint shared, new technology tested and advertised, strategy discussed, and business deal closed. As the bonds of the homeland security and surveillance industries grow, communities in the U.S. may come to understand that what can be constructed and designed across the world might appear in their own backyard.

³⁸ Al Otro Lado (@alotrolado), “Al Otro Lado urges the Biden Administration to demand an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and to halt its funding of deadly arms to Israel...” Instagram, October 31, 2023. https://www.instagram.com/p/CzFEeNiPY8/?img_index=1

It's Complex: Nexus of Academia, Industry, and Technology

It is through networks of security, defense, and technology that activists within the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands trace ties between the border-, military-, and academic-industrial complexes operating at home and abroad. These critiques are best demonstrated by the “Complicity Tour” conducted on June 3rd as part of the People’s University programming during the UAW 4811 Unfair Labor Practices strike in May and June of 2024. The strike was authorized in opposition to the University of California’s investments in—and research produced for—companies involved in the bombardment, control, and monitoring of Palestinians and migrants, as well as the disbandment of various student-led solidarity encampments by law enforcement across multiple UC campuses.³⁹ Graduate students in UAW 4811 formed The People’s University, which compiled information on schools within UC San Diego that maintained laboratories and secured funding for research that they believed translated into the exploitation, surveillance, or even death of those both in Palestine and along the U.S. Southern border. Over two hundred strikers and supporters, including students and faculty, banged pots and pans, clapped, chanted, and hollered outside buildings housing research facilities conducting projects created in collaboration with companies that protestors believed were complicit in Israel’s assault on Palestine.⁴⁰ The “Complicity Tour” aimed to highlight how corporate interests have the potential to shape the

³⁹ UAW Local 4811 of the University of California system is a union representing over 48,000 workers, including 36,000 Academic Student Employees, 7,000 Postdocs, and 5,000 Academic Researchers. After the strike authorization vote passed in opposition to the Unfair Labor Practices, including the police response to campus solidarity encampments and UC’s investment and research ties to Israel, various campuses were called to “stand up” to strike. UCSD was called during the first week of June, during which daily programming included teach-ins, art builds and performances, and rallies related to Palestinian liberation. The People’s University for Palestine was a collaborative effort by the community to create educational resources and working knowledge around social justice issues.

⁴⁰ To view the tour brochure distributed for attendees, please see the digital copy; The People’s University, “UCSD’s Complicity: A Walking Tour (2024),” Canva, 2024, https://www.canva.com/design/DAGHHI0smcg/QdMIzUMX8vW5Q85WMX06sw/view?utm_content=DAGHHI0smcg&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=editor#2

knowledge that is funded and thus produced within academia, which in turn may result in the disempowerment of communities faced with structural inequities.

In drawing these parallels, organizers were clear in their intention to highlight the involvement of UCSD in what they consider a merging of the academic-industrial complex (AIC) with the border-industrial complex (BIC) and the military-industrial complex (MIC), each of which offers sources for economic development that critics accuse of being at the expense of those meant to be surveilled and repelled. In the case of UCSD, protestors point to the profits and consequences resulting from the labor of academic student workers within the UC system. On its second stop, the crowd gathered in front of the Rady School of Management to spotlight the school's "Border Innovation Challenge." A business plan competition, the program brings together students, faculty, staff, and alumni to propose technological solutions to make authorized entry at official ports and the flow of capital more secure and efficient, with cash prizes up to \$20,000 for seed funding. Describing San Diego borderlands as the "ideal medium" for fostering relationships between the "nexus" of research institutions, universities, and companies,⁴¹ the program's short-term goals are "innovations for border improvements," with longer-term objectives to "establish lasting relationships with academia, companies, and investors who see the border as an opportunity."⁴² The border evolves into more than just a physical barrier, but also market potential within the global economy, with private sector actors capitalizing on migration restrictivism, anti-immigrant sentiment, and border imperialism.

Microphone in hand, portable speaker on full blast, the tour guide blared that, "For both Israel and the U.S., borders and checkpoints are growth engines for the economy for the

⁴¹ "Our Partnership with San Diego," UC San Diego Rady School of Management, accessed November 10, 2025, <https://rady.ucsd.edu/why/san-diego/index.html>.

⁴² "UC San Diego Announces Border Innovation Challenge," UC San Diego Jacobs School of Engineering, March 25, 2019, <https://jacobsschool.ucsd.edu/news/release/2744?id=2744>.

development of surveillance technologies and new methods of controlling movement and behavior.”⁴³ Within the context of the Complicity Tour, the development of “smart border” technology on U.S. soil through university research programs is demonstrative of how both the U.S. and Israel use securitization industries as sources of profit. To organizers, business comes at the expense of those within the borderlands whose actions are monitored, whose mobility is limited, and whose belonging is in constant question. Connecting the pieces of how academia plays a role in maintaining border imperialism, the guide remarked, “initiatives here at UCSD not only normalize the existence of borders but work to normalize relationships between academia, companies, and investors who see the border as an opportunity for profit.”⁴⁴ This particular logic of the “normalizing” power of the university is reminiscent of Gramsci’s writings on the intellectuals as the “deputies” of social hegemony and political government.⁴⁵ Thus, academia becomes a power structure that may both perpetuate ideas of legitimate or authorized travel and promote borders as a frontier of untapped capitalistic exploration, foregrounding both how the direct links may emerge materially and how they are validated. What interests the private sector then shapes the kind of innovation that is prioritized and funded, and how what is produced is used.

Standing in front of the Jacobs School of Engineering, the tour guide shed light on the school’s Corporate Affiliates Program (CAP), noting its capacity for facilitating recruitment between students and corporations. The program’s executive board hosts over 75 companies, with members representing companies such as Google and Amazon, as well as defense contractors such as General Atomics, Lockheed Martin, and Northrop Grumman. As part of CAP’s executive board,

⁴³ Peace San Diego, “UCSD’s Complicity in Genocide Campus Tour,” June 4, 2024, Youtube video, 40:29-41:05, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oTbOQ0A5EuY>.

⁴⁴ Peace San Diego, “Complicity Tour,” at 40:48.

⁴⁵ Antonio Gramsci, “The Intellectuals,” in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (International Publishers, 1947), 12.

companies receive privileges to “consult with the Dean of Engineering about educating the engineers of tomorrow” through curriculum development, future research focus, and industry-university initiatives.⁴⁶ Relatedly, a tour guide from the People’s University claimed that General Atomics, a San Diego-based company that develops advanced defense technology, funds more research at UCSD than any other defense contractor, granting it significant influence on research priorities and training at the college. Bringing General Atomics into the spotlight, the guide shared that, “General Atomics, whose Predator drone surveils migrants along the hyper-militarized US-Mexico border... were refined by UCSD researchers at the department of structural engineering in the early 2000s.”⁴⁷ This technology served as what Robert C. Bonner, Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection in 2005, called “the eye in the sky,” which would “not only support the 'boots on the ground' but will also allow us to deploy resources more effectively, ultimately enhancing our ability to gain operational control of our borders.”⁴⁸ The ties between the university and the company were further questioned when the guide shared that General Atomics supplies the “U.S. military with MQ-9 Reaper drones that are flying above Gaza, taking high-resolution video and photos of Palestinians so that Israel can drop targeted bombs on tents and mosques and hospitals and schools.”⁴⁹ U.S. officials state that the MQ-9 Reaper drones are deployed in Gaza to search for hostages using the system’s high-powered cameras and advanced sensors. However, they have additionally been used to drop laser-guided bombs in Afghanistan, hunt migrants in the

⁴⁶ “CAP Partnerships,” UC San Diego Jacobs School of Engineering, accessed November 10, 2025, <https://jacobsschool.ucsd.edu/cap/partners>

⁴⁷ The research described most likely refers to the work of Jacob’s School of Engineering Professor of Structural Engineering, John B. Kosmatka. Under the banner of UCSD, Dr. Kosmatka performed an aeroelastic stability investigation of the Predator drone in 2002; J Kosmatka and Jose Panza, “Aeroelastic Stability of the GA-ASI Predator Aircraft,” (paper presented at AIAA’s 1st Technical Conference and Workshop on Unmanned Aerospace Vehicles, Portsmouth, Virginia, May 2002), <https://arc.aiaa.org/doi/pdf/10.2514/6.2002-3470>.

⁴⁸ “General Atomics Aeronautical Systems and U.S. Customs & Border Protection Make History With Launch of Predator® B UAS,” General Atomics, September 29, 2005, <https://www.ga.com/general-atomics-aeronautical-systems-and-us-customs-border-protection-make-history-with-launch-of-predator-b-uas>.

⁴⁹ Peace San Diego, “Complicity Tour,” at 40:48.

Arizona desert,⁵⁰ and surveil protests, such as after the police killing of George Floyd in 2020 and most recently in Los Angeles as a response to anti-ICE demonstrations in June 2025.⁵¹

The influence of corporate interests on shaping academic student employment opportunities, and the potential for involvement in such research to feel compulsory for graduate student funding, raised ethical concerns for UAW 4811 leadership and the People's University. As part of the UAW 4811's Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) Unfair Practice Charge, the organization called for the UC to create "an employee personal conscious right to opt out of participation in military-funded research as part of employment," as well as research perceived to be related to Palestinian oppression.⁵² Published in *Labor Notes* regarding this stipulation of the PERB charge, organizers Isabel Kain and Becker Sharif of UC Santa Cruz stated that unionized workers are "positioned to intervene at the very beginning of the military supply chain," noting that the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions "issued an urgent call on October 16 to stop arming Israel—including the specific request to disrupt military funding and military research."⁵³ As participants in agenda-setting, sources of student employment offerings for university programs, and benefactors to program funding, industry influences within academia morph universities into sites of production and optimization for technologies and weaponry that can be exported internationally. The extent to which the academy offers itself to industry interests

⁵⁰ Steve Fisher, "Predator drones shift from border patrol to protest surveillance," *Los Angeles Times*, September 22, 2025, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-09-22/predator-drones-shift-from-border-patrol-to-protest-surveillance>.

⁵¹ Johana Bhuiyan, "US immigration agency flies drones capable of surveillance over LA protests," *The Guardian*, June 12, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/jun/12/predator-drone-los-angeles-protests>

⁵² State of California Public Employment Relations Board, *Unfair Practice Charge*, (California, 2024), 3. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1obRNFpuF_8K5Xx1k4DKMB8RooT7aUsKK/edit

⁵³ Isabel Kain and Becker Sharif, "How UC Researchers Began Saying No to Military Work," *Labor Notes*, May 17, 2024, <https://labornotes.org/blogs/2024/05/how-uc-researchers-began-saying-no-military-work>

raises questions about the degree to which academia and academics may be complicit in the continuation of colonial violence.

The arc narrated by the tour guides attempts to demonstrate how the involvement of academia within any phase of development pertaining to weapons and defense can influence the operational capacity of later iterations, without total control of how such technologies are used and where. The message shared by the tour organizers was clear: what can be created with research grants and partnerships between universities and industry can sprout into the essential apparatuses for maintaining border imperialism globally. Piecing together each site of development, from the research of graduate students in university offices to the bombing of civilian infrastructure half the world away, the “Complicity Tour” highlights academia as a site perpetuating U.S. imperialism and racial capitalism. Within the linked fate analytic, the university thus has the ability to knit together how migrants on the U.S.-México border and Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank are subjected to the same technologies, though not necessarily in ways that are strictly congruous. Consider the M-9 Reaper drones—while the use of these drones for surveilling and capturing those traversing the perilous desert terrain of migrant corridors along the U.S.- México border may not hold the same direct impact as the targeting and bombing of displaced Palestinians, both are cases that fall under the umbrella of population control, restriction of mobility, and prevention through deterrence strategies designed to ward off the threatening “other.” The tactics and programming enhanced through the use of these drones aren’t limited to any single state, either. Each new use of these technologies is absorbed into the working knowledge and opportunities for innovation to be used elsewhere.

Field-Tested, “Bleeding Edge” Technology

As activists unravel the strings tying together border walls internationally, what is brought into stark focus is the degree to which they are increasingly coming to resemble each other. Throughout both community teach-ins and academic literature, international trade is a persistent springboard by which homeland security collaborations between the U.S. and Israel are dissected for common ground between borderlands. However, on-the-ground political education produced by grassroots researchers at times does more than just draw an arrow from Israel to the U.S. when illustrating the transfer of technologies and strategies. Instead, conversations at times critique the U.S.’s contribution to international transactions of securitization technology, as well. These relationships are not just one-way, but reciprocal. Investigating the relationship between these structures provides entry points by which advocates may analyze the U.S.’ role as both a buyer and seller in the global market of homeland security and counterterrorism systems. Though Palestine might be one testing ground for technologies that can be replicated and proliferated across the U.S.-México border and its surrounding lands, research and development within the U.S. itself contributes to the transnational circulation of the tools for maintaining border regimes.

At the forefront of this conversation is an investigation of the corporate, technological, and lobbying power exhibited by companies such as Elbit Systems. For instance, a member of Jewish Voices for Peace San Diego at the “DE PALESTINA A MÉXICO, UN MUNDO SIN MUROS” cross-border event in March 2024⁵⁴ stated: “As the border patrol, ICE, and IDF exchange strategies for building the world’s deadliest borders, companies like Caterpillar, responsible for constructing

⁵⁴ A coalitional effort led by more than 20 organizations, including the Palestinian Youth Movement, Jewish Voices for Palestine, People for Palestine, Espacio Migrante, Steps Across Borders, and more, this was a transborder action for Palestine on March 23, 2024. The event began with a march to a gathering at the San Ysidro port of entry to highlight the interconnectedness of the struggles between México and Palestine. Event organizers and speakers tied border walls to the mass surveillance and policing that serves U.S. empire, citing that the existence of imperialism in any form should be resisted wherever we find ourselves in the world.

the border walls here, and Elbit, developing surveillance technology, test these products on Palestinians through contracts and close collaboration...”⁵⁵ Caterpillar Inc, a U.S.-based manufacturer of construction machinery and heavy equipment, has played a significant role in the building and maintenance of the separation wall enclosing Gaza, as well as in home demolitions in occupied territories, the construction of illegal settlements, and military checkpoints through their supply of D9 armored bulldozers to the Israeli military through the U.S. Foreign Military Sales Program. The subject of a Human Rights Watch (HRW) report in 2004, the organization called for the suspension of sales of the bulldozers to the Israeli military due to documented instances of destruction of Palestinian public infrastructure, the decimation of Palestinian-owned agricultural land, and the deconstruction of roads.⁵⁶ The report also noted that Rachel Corrie, a 23-year-old American activist, was run over and killed by an armored D9 bulldozer while attempting to protect a home in Rafah from being destroyed. For construction sites along the U.S.-México border, Caterpillar 349E Hydraulic Excavators speed the process of placing 40-foot sections of bollard wall at a time.⁵⁷ Activists do not require borderlands sites to be subject to the same machinery for links to be made. This comparison illustrates how a company’s operations—entitled by government contracts—can become the common adversary within liberation movements when it profits from the structural impacts of the use of its products within different localities. A common adversary, rather than a replicable system, signifies the modes by which racial capitalism may both harm and unify.

⁵⁵ Jewish Voices for Peace San Diego (@JVPSanDiego), “JVP member Ash speaking to the connections between militarized borders and Israel’s genocide against the Palestinian people during our cross-border action on both sides of the San Ysidro border crossing.” March 31, 2024, Instagram, https://www.instagram.com/p/C5MdYR_OsMB/.

⁵⁶ “Israel: Caterpillar Should Suspend Bulldozer Sales,” Human Rights Watch, November 21, 2004, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2004/11/21/israel-caterpillar-should-suspend-bulldozer-sales>.

⁵⁷ Sandra Sanchez, “Unique design a ‘no rust, no dust solution to border security,’ contractor says,” January 15, 2020, <https://www.kxan.com/news/private-border-wall-going-up-in-south-texas/>.

Similarly, at the “All Out For Gaza March” rally in October of 2023,⁵⁸ a representative from Unión del Barrio described Elbit as a “white corporation in security systems” constructing apartheid walls in both Palestine and the U.S.⁵⁹ Self-described as producing and transferring “bleeding edge technology” globally, Elbit Systems of America is a subsidiary of the Israeli-based company that specializes in defense contracting and homeland security, selling “field-tested” monitoring mechanisms to nation-states across the world, and offering access to a transnational network of research and development.⁶⁰ Elbit entered the surveillance tech landscape in the U.S. first as a subcontractor of Boeing’s \$1 billion award to provide the “virtual wall” system under the Secure Fence Act of 2006, signed by then-President Bush and later scrapped under the Obama administration. Elbit’s next major chance at growing a stronghold in the U.S. was in 2014 through a \$145 million contract to erect fifty-two “integrated fixed towers” all across southern Arizona along the border with Mexico.⁶¹ In an interview with *The Intercept* in 2019, Bobby Brown, senior director of Customs and Border Protection at Elbit Systems of America, shared that the company’s game plan was to implement a “layer” of electronic surveillance across the entirety of U.S. borders, ports, and harbors.⁶² As recently as September 2023, Elbit America was awarded a surveillance tower contract through U.S. Customs and Border Protection for Border Patrol agents to

⁵⁸ Taking place on October 15, 2023, this event saw hundreds of protestors march to and gather outside of the San Diego County Administration Building to rally for Gaza. Protestors called for the end of the genocide of Palestinians. Though Zionist counter-protestors attended the event, the event remained peaceful.

⁵⁹ Unión del Barrio (@uniondelbarrio), “Solidarity statement shared at the All Out for Gaza march on 10/18/2023,” Instagram, October 20, 2023, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CyoVY3xpWZa/>.

⁶⁰ It may be of interest that the Elbit Systems website has since revised its language referring to itself as transferring “bleeding-edge technology” from worldwide Elbit divisions, now stating that it contributes to “leading edge technology” as of the publication date of this thesis. The Internet Archive’s “Wayback Machine” catalogues the change in self-characterization as occurring around May 14, 2025; “Who We Are,” Elbit Systems of America, Accessed July 17, 2024, <https://www.elbitamerica.com/who-we-are>.

⁶¹ Brittany Dawson, “U.S.-Mexico Border: An Israeli Tech Laboratory,” *Institute for Palestine Studies*, December 6, 2018, <https://www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/232052>

⁶² Parrish, “Native American Reservation Under ‘Persistent Surveillance.’”

“continuously detect, identify, classify, and track items of interest along the nation's borders.”⁶³

With sales and/or contracts in over 50 countries and subsidiaries in the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, Brazil, Sweden, Switzerland, and more, Elbit Systems is perhaps one of the clearest examples of how the local development and deployment of mechanisms of homeland security and population control can feed into a global exchange of information and technologies. As one borderlands community is offered as a field in which these mechanisms may be tested, another borderlands community comes to see those same mechanisms repurposed on their own land.

What makes the UAW 4811 People’s University “Complicity Tour” such an integral point to this case study of transnational solidarity is how willingly and readily organizers provided not only ties between companies operating within both borderlands, but also dissected the consequences that may emerge from this network. Organizers understood that the proliferation of these mechanisms does not indicate precisely identical usages at each borderland site, but rather traces them back to the similar motivations of controlling movement and life:

We write this statement less than thirty miles from the border, where General Dynamics provides tech for remote video surveillance in a lucrative \$174.1 million contract with Customs and Border Protection while A.I.-powered surveillance systems are purchased from Elbit Systems of America, the U.S. branch of the Israeli weapons manufacturer that produces many of the bombs and drones used by the IOF [Israel Occupying Force]. This “smart border” tech Customs and Border Protection uses to surveil the San Diego border was developed and deployed by Elbit to police the “smart wall” that surrounds and imprisons all of Gaza. Nearly 1,000 undocumented immigrants have been targeted and arrested via footage of the San Diego border obtained by Elbit's Hermes 450 drone—the same drone that targeted and killed seven World Central Kitchen aid workers just a few months ago.⁶⁴

⁶³ Amy Hartley, “Elbit America awarded surveillance tower contract through U.S. CBP,” Elbit America, September 27, 2023, <https://www.elbitamerica.com/news/elbit-america-awarded-surveillance-tower-contract-through-u.s.-customs-and-border-protection>

⁶⁴ Peace San Diego, “Complicity Tour,” at 01:02:30-01:03:35.

Pivoting between border control/patrol mechanisms and weaponry, the tour guide illustrated how actors develop arsenals that are multi-purpose and far-reaching. Mentioned either in passing or presented in depth, organizers, speakers, and facilitators consistently point to the rise of the global securitization regime as complicit in violence perpetuated at sites along various borderlands. Further, activists place these surveillance and deterrence mechanisms within a web of exchange that illustrates the potential for one testing site to influence the maximal performance of another.

The evidence provided by organizers reveals that it would be a failure of critical analysis to assume that technologies and strategies are merely imported into the U.S. Rather, Israel, the U.S., and all other nation-states developing and selling on the homeland security market each contribute to the fortification of a global border regime. Though some assess that Gaza is used as a “laboratory” of apartheid tech, the grassroots activists observed for this project articulate that it cannot be concealed how the U.S. offers its own borderlands as sites of development when foreign surveillance systems are tested and strengthened against migrants and communities. Additionally, the means by which border imperialism is upheld do not need to be explicitly replicable in order for a common adversary to be identified. What unites liberation movements can be a particular source of structural inequity, even when the impacts are applied unevenly, so long as those actions fall within the umbrella of overlapping hegemonic ideologies. Through trial and error, what is learned by these industries within our own borderlands is adapted into the working knowledge of the functionality of these systems wherever they are reconstructed across the world, and vice versa. Recalling the words of Dream Defender Cherrell Brown, “Our oppressors are literally collaborating together, learning from one another—and as oppressed people, we have to do the same.”⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Nadine Naber, “‘The U.S. and Israel Make the Connections for Us,’” 17.

Deadly Exchanges: Local Law Enforcement Goes International

A frequent topic for those discussing the monitoring of communities within the two borderlands is to emphasize the “study abroad” programs for police and border patrol training. Executive Director Eran Efrati of Researching the American-Israeli Alliance (RAIA) remarked that when training with Israel, U.S. police delegates witness “live demonstrations of repressive violence in real-time, in protests across the West Bank, patrols in East Jerusalem, and visits to the Gaza border.”⁶⁶ “Counterterrorism” resource-sharing has translated into apparatuses used to monitor and police communities within the U.S. homeland, including the establishment of the invasive Video Integration Center by the Atlanta police department (modeled after Israeli predictive policing tools and learned through U.S.-Israeli police exchange), as well as the NYPD’s infiltration of predominantly Muslim American spaces in the aftermath of 9/11 (based on Israeli intelligence operations in the West Bank).⁶⁷ Likewise, policing practices are exported, such as “stop-and-frisk,” taken from the toolbox of “Broken Windows” policing developed within the U.S., which was implemented into policy by the Israeli Security Cabinet in 2015.⁶⁸ Increasingly, training incorporates collaborative border patrolling tactics as part of their programming.

Critiquing these connections, scholar and Palestinian American activist Noura Erakat investigated the strategies of the “Demilitarize! Durham 2 Palestine” campaign in North Carolina, which fought to make Durham the first city council in the U.S. to reject exchanges of local U.S. law enforcement with Israel. Erakat states that anti-imperial analytics within these movements see partnerships between local law enforcement and Israel as indicative that “settler colonialism

⁶⁶ Mersiha Gadzo, “How the US and Israel exchange tactics in violence and control,” *Aljazeera*, June 12, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/6/12/how-the-us-and-israel-exchange-tactics-in-violence-and-control>.

⁶⁷ Marwa Fatafa, “Apartheid Tech,” 184.

⁶⁸ Researching the American-Israeli Alliance, “Deadly Exchange,” p. 20. <https://deadlyexchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Deadly-Exchange-Report.pdf>

unsettles the demarcation between foreign and domestic frontiers thus entwining military and police force expressed in transnational state violence against racialized communities.”⁶⁹ This sentiment was shared during the UCSD “Complicity Tour,” in which a guide stated:

Our solidarity is grounded in the recognition that the steadfast struggle of the Palestinian people is fundamentally connected to the criminalization and brutalization of Black and Brown bodies in our own local communities—communities policed by cops who learn to use the same violent tactics deployed against the Palestinian people during training with law enforcement with Israel.⁷⁰

Activists situate policing at the intersection of immigration, surveillance, criminalization, and racialization, particularly critical of collaboration between the IDF, Immigration and Customs (ICE) agents, Customs and Border Patrol (CBP), and local police forces. For example, in April of 2007, DHS immigration law enforcement officers working along the U.S.-México border conducted an extensive eight-day training in collaboration with the Golan Group, founded by ex-Israeli Special Forces to put an “Israeli security spin” on U.S. encounters along the border.⁷¹ However, it would be incorrect to assume that the exchange of policing practices and law enforcement training only resulted in strengthening the racialization and control of communities in the U.S., as if these exchanges only transferred knowledge unidirectionally, or as though police violence in the U.S. hadn’t regularly occurred before these programs. However, the impacts of these combined forces influence concepts of belonging and citizenship, and intensify instances of racial profiling and use of force in both spaces.

⁶⁹ Erakat’s piece surveys the coalitional effort by Black, Palestinian, and Jewish organizations between 2016 and 2018 to successfully pass the first City Council resolution prohibiting police exchanges with Israel, interviewing 10 members of the coalition to achieve successful demonstration and action; Noura Erakat, “Demilitarize! Durham 2 Palestine,” *State Crime Journal* 12, no. 2 (2023): 178, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/48774402>.

⁷⁰ Peace San Diego, “Complicity Tour,” at 01:01:59-01:02:22.

⁷¹ Naomi Klein, “Losing the Peace Incentive: Israel as Warning,” in *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (Metropolitan Books, 2007), 438.

As one speaker at the December 2023 “End the Genocide in Gaza March and Rally,”⁷² stated: “We cannot have a struggle for Palestinian Liberation without making sure that we are standing up for Indigenous and Black liberation until the end. Because liberation is a freedom struggle, and we struggle together. We do not struggle alone. When we say ‘No Justice, No Peace,’ the rest of it is, ‘No racist police.’” For activists connecting the struggles between borderlands, the watchful eye of police and security personnel, and their systems of surveillance, is a unifying experience, especially as communities come to understand how such forces cooperate to more efficiently and effectively monitor their respective communities with shared tactics. Ahmed Amireh, a Palestinian undergraduate in Duke’s Students for Justice in Palestine branch, states that such movements highlighting the connections of militarism and policing would be remiss to suggest that Israel is *teaching* U.S. police officers violence and anti-blackness, but instead, “Israeli officers were operating in a context where racially militarized violence against Palestinians is so normalized as to constitute a ‘fantasy’ for US officers who ‘envied’ the ease with which Israelis operated.”⁷³ Explored later in this work, these policing tactics might be placed within the impacts of how the racialization of Arab Americans and Arab immigrants feeds into the policing of migrants and communities of color within the U.S., even as Palestinians are painted as the perpetual perilous threat in Israel. These narratives not only work to justify the repelling of migrants at the U.S. border or the containment of the Palestinian “threat,” but also to shape their experience within the host state. Racial citizenship relies upon anti-migrant xenophobia just as it

⁷² Occurring on December 23, 2023, the event was organized by the San Diego for Palestine Coalition, including organizations such as CAIR California, the Islamic Center of San Diego, Students for Justice in Palestine, Jewish Voices for Peace, the Palestinian Youth Movement, Karama, and more. Primarily an event organized for Palestinian liberation, the event was marketed as aiming to demand a ceasefire, end U.S. complicity in the genocide of Palestinians, and end the occupation of Palestine.

⁷³ Amireh’s remarks are in response to opponents who claimed that the movement suggested that Israel was teaching racism to US officers during such trainings; Noura Erakat, “Demilitarize! Durham 2 Palestine,” 178.

operates to construct the native-born “other”—including Indigenous, Black, Muslim, Latinx, Asian, and Arab communities. Policing is just one manifestation by which racial citizenship may be enforced, and the logics that underpin its maintenance within individual states may protect a constructed nationalist identity that continuously exerts its exclusion of marginalized communities from those who belong.

As of 2022, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security has externalized its border policing regime through eighty-six ICE offices located abroad. The purpose of these offices is to collect information from local law enforcement to track and identify potential migrants, including through the deployment of ICE and CBP agents to Central America to advise and mentor. The CBP International Training and Assistance Program boasts over a hundred trainings annually to thousands of foreign participants in host countries on topics such as weapons of mass effect, post security, and commercial operations.⁷⁴ Based on these partnerships, it could be derived that expertise, personnel, and resources are not confined to just two-way relationships between nation-states when what they learn from each other can then be transplanted in exchanges with other foreign partners. Analyzing Israeli military and American police exchanges, scholars Ashley Bohrer and Andrés Fabián Henao Castro conclude, “police exchanges highlight the ways in which the struggles against racist policing in the US and indigenous dispossession in Palestine are fundamentally connected; indeed, it raises the possibility that local struggles against police and military alike are, inextricably, global problems.”⁷⁵ What is workshopped here can be used

⁷⁴ “International Training and Assistance,” U.S. Customs and Border Protection, last modified July 20, 2018, <https://www.cbp.gov/border-security/international-initiatives/international-training-assistance>.

⁷⁵ Ashley Bohrer and Andrés Fabián Henao Castro, “A People’s History of Police Exchanges: Settler Colonialism, Capitalism and the Intersectionality of Struggles,” in *The War on Drugs and the Global Colour Line*, ed. Kojo Koram (Pluto Press, 2019), 151.

elsewhere, and what is fine-tuned elsewhere can be used here, reproduced in a cyclical nature across various actors worldwide, linking local struggles to transnational structures.

Consequential: The Domino Effect on the Global Scale

The consequential links encompass how foreign policy, international relations, global trade, and military interventionism abroad impact communities at home. What links fates is not necessarily similar outcomes or experiences within distinct communities, but the consequences of the decisions made at the state level between nations. Where the experiential links relate to the racializing and colonial contexts impacting notions of belonging, consequential cases are made on the basis that global partnerships between states can work against marginalized communities within their respective polity. At the heart of the critiques levied by activists within the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands is the funneling of U.S. taxpayer dollars into imperialist campaigns that displace, disenfranchise, or harm communities abroad, as marginalized communities within the U.S. lack the public infrastructure to alleviate disparity and inequity. Though criticisms of imperialism, displacement, and taxpayer complicity are made throughout a majority of coalitional events selected for this study (and beyond), three in particular are explored in more depth for their extensive engagement with this narrative theme—the annual Break Down Borders Annual 5K in January 2024, the “De Palestina A México, Un Mundo Sin Muros” cross-border march in March 2024, and the weeklong “Cancel RIMPAC” campaign in June 2024.

Manufacturing Migration: U.S. Imperialism and Displacement

A regular talking point within speeches, teach-ins, artwork, and chants, activists highlight how U.S. funding and resource-sharing to Israel forces taxpayer complicity in the internal and

international displacement of Palestinians. Such criticisms are framed around the U.S.'s role in manufacturing refugee populations, as "at least 14,000 of the MK-84 2,000-pound bombs, 6,500 500-pound bombs, 3,000 Hellfire precision-guided air-to-ground missiles, 1,000 bunker-buster bombs, 2,600 air-dropped small-diameter bombs, and other munitions" have been transferred to Israel between October 2023 and June 2024.⁷⁶ As shared by journalist and author Gabriel Schivone, "Walls, drones, and radar systems obscure the Western economic and military interventions that create the very conditions that spur peoples to seek foreign refuge or jobs en masse."⁷⁷ Security technology developed by Israel and the United States, deployed within the West Bank, Gaza, Mexico, or Guatemala, may be validated under the narratives of protecting the homeland and keeping the bad guys out, but such rhetoric is instrumental in shifting the blame from the cause of displacement to the "problem" of the displaced.

The experiences of migration, forced displacement, and diaspora are invoked readily within the borderlands as evidence of interconnectedness, as observed during the "De Palestina A México, Un Mundo Sin Muros" simultaneous cross-border event on March 23, 2024, in San Diego and Tijuana. Representing a coalitional effort to bring together advocates for migrant rights and Palestinian liberation, hundreds gathered to march along the U.S.-México border, waving Palestinian flags, donning keffiyehs, and holding signs declaring, "ALL THE WALLS WILL FALL." The Palestinian Youth Movement, a collaborator for the event, stated its intended purpose online along with a video montage of protestors chanting beside the border wall, remarking, "We gathered at the San Ysidro border crossing in a powerful display of our community's rejection of

⁷⁶ Humeyra Pamuk and Mike Stone, "Exclusive: Us Has Sent Israel Thousands Of 2,000-Pound Bombs Since Oct. 7," *Reuters*, June 29, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/us-has-sent-israel-thousands-2000-pound-bombs-since-oct-7-2024-06-28/>.

⁷⁷ Brittany Dawson and Gabriel Schivone, "Interview With Gabriel Schivone: U.S. Borderlands, Israel's Latest Surveillance Technology Laboratory," *Journal Of Palestine Studies* 47, no. 4 (2018): 59. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26508573>.

all border walls and their service of imperialistic control... We will continue to resist until all the land is liberated from all walls, checkpoints, and military outposts from Mexico to Palestine.”⁷⁸ The border wall stood as a constant reminder of the barrier between the displaced and the U.S., providing an entry point by which speakers could criticize the consequences of U.S. foreign policy and interventionism.

The backdrop of the crowd was a banner with the Mexican and Palestinian flags painted across the wings of monarch butterflies, a motif within the U.S.-México borderlands for their natural migration path across land, now holding the symbols of two peoples. Before the crowd, a member of Jewish Voices for Peace San Diego summarized the linkages between the two places, interrogating interactions of international relations and refugee reception:

The weapons manufacturers that produce the bombs being dropped on the children of Gaza are the same companies profiting off the U.S. foreign intervention and military aid to right-wing regimes globally. This in turn displaces civilians, forcing them to turn up at the U.S. border as refugees, where they are subjected to violent policing and surveillance. The U.S. government then maliciously cages those seeking refuge from the violence our state has brought upon them.... Our imperialist state perpetrates systematic displacement and dispossession only to feign shock when people are left with no recourse but to flee for safety or resist the horrors our state has inflicted upon them. But amidst all of this, momentum is building. Generations are waking up. People are learning about history.⁷⁹

Within this speech are some of the most prominent arguments articulated by organizers, including the international operations of multibillion-dollar companies dedicated to homeland security and defense, and the mass-displacing effect of global military actions by the U.S. either directly or by proxy. Since its founding, Israel has been the largest recipient of U.S. foreign aid, having accepted

⁷⁸ Palestinian Youth Movement San Diego (@pymssandiego), “FROM PALESTINE TO MEXICO, ALL THESE WALLS WILL FALL. Over the weekend, we gathered at the San Ysidro border crossing in a powerful display of our community’s rejection of all border walls...,” Instagram, March 26, 2024. https://www.instagram.com/p/C4_aG2hyhQW/

⁷⁹ Jewish Voice for Peace, “Militarized borders and Israel’s genocide.”

over \$300 billion (adjusted for inflation) in total economic and military assistance—the height of which was experienced in 2024 amidst Israel’s bombardment of Gaza.⁸⁰

The U.S., which does not recognize the state of Palestine, has historically been “politically disinclined to recognize persecution by the state of Israel in refugee and asylum claims,” and besides those who have acquired citizenship in other countries, Palestinians have endured being “simultaneously stateless and largely excluded from the international refugee system.”⁸¹ Between October 7, 2023, and 2025, it is estimated that 2,070,260 Palestinians from Gaza, the West Bank, and Jerusalem have been displaced,⁸² with the potential for return home precarious to some, given that 80% of structures within Gaza have been demolished. Long-term and recent displacement of Palestinian refugees has resulted in refugee camps internally, but also across borders to 58 recognized camps in Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, and the Syrian Arab Republic.⁸³ To this effect, event speakers attempt to demonstrate how U.S. funding to Israel has a ripple effect for the influx and reception of refugees to bordering states, each with its own unique approach to homeland security, immigration control, and providing humanitarian aid.

Within theory produced at the grassroots level, U.S. imperialism is often perceived as being deeply embedded in the development of transnational security markets (as both purchasers and providers), the maintenance of neocolonial racial capitalism, and the continuation of forced migration and dispossession. As part of the border imperialism framework, Harsha Walia describes

⁸⁰ Jonathan Masters and Will Merrow, “U.S. Aid to Israel in Four Charts,” Council on Foreign Relations, October 7, 2025, <https://www.cfr.org/article/us-aid-israel-four-charts>.

⁸¹ Isabeau Doucet, “Palestinians Seeking Us Refuge Face A Kafkaesque Nightmare. Trump Could Make It Even Worse,” *The Guardian*, December 17, 2024. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2024/dec/17/palestinians-gaza-immigration-system>.

⁸² David Vine, “Mass Displacement Since October 7, 2023: Flight from War, Genocide, and Expulsion in Gaza, Iran, Israel, Lebanon, and the West Bank,” The Watson Institute, Brown University, October 7, 2025, <https://costsofwar.watson.brown.edu/paper/PostOct7Displacement>.

⁸³ Freddie Clayton and Max Butterworth, “Satellite Images Reveal Extent Of Destruction In The Gaza Strip,” *NBC News*, October 7, 2025, <https://www.nbcnews.com/world/gaza/satellite-images-destruction-gaza-strip-rcna236089>.

how this process is first strengthened by the manufacturing of displacement as a “result of the coercive extractions of capitalism and colonialism, and the simultaneous fortification of the border—often by those very same Western powers that are complicit in these displacements—which renders the migration of displaced people as perilous.”⁸⁴ Similar findings were reported by grassroots organizers as part of the 2024 Cancel RIMPAC⁸⁵ series of events, including a digital meeting titled “End Forced Migration, Fight Against US War & Intervention” that was held in May 2024. The event was advertised to highlight how U.S. interventionism from Palestine to the Philippines exacerbates “the plunder of our peoples’ homelands, forcing millions to be displaced and migrate around the world. And when they reach the U.S.-Mexico border, they arrive to the most militarized border in the world and further government neglect and exploitation...”⁸⁶ Borrowing from the works of Jean Genet,⁸⁷ Olivia Harrison illustrates that the migrant is not an unexpected guest, but “the discarded refuse of ‘settled’ nations.”⁸⁸

The links were further clarified during the Cancel RIMPAC “Border Immersion” program. Including members of BAYAN,⁸⁹ the International Women’s Alliance,⁹⁰ migrant organizations,

⁸⁴ Walia, *Undoing Border Imperialism*, 41.

⁸⁵ “RIMPAC” refers to the Rim of the Pacific joint maritime military exercises conducted biannually in Hawai’i and launched from San Diego. Hosted by the U.S., the 2024 exercises included naval and air forces from 22 countries, including Australia, France, Japan, Canada, and the UK. The Cancel RIMPAC movement grounds itself in the belief that these international military exercises promote the military-industrial complex, cause considerable harm to the environment, and enable violence against women.

⁸⁶ Cancel RIMPAC Campaign (@cancelrimpaccampaign), “@ima.us and @resistusledwar U.S. backed genocide and war in Palestine, Congo, the Philippines, and other parts of the world exacerbate the plunder of our peoples’ homelands,” March 21, 2024, Instagram, <https://www.instagram.com/p/C7Pk14JS1h7/>.

⁸⁷ Reference is regarding Jean Genets (1986) *Prisoner of Love*, a memoir detailing encounters with Palestinian liberation fighters and the Black Panthers. This specific phrasing is in regard to Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan.

⁸⁸ Olivia C. Harrison, “Decolonizing the Figure of the Migrant, or What Does Palestine Teach Us About the Migrant Question?” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 52, no. 1 (2020): 153. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743819001090>.

⁸⁹ BAYAN is a national charter organizing around progressive campaigns for Filipino rights. Their primary campaigns are to remove U.S. military presence from the Philippines, defend migrant workers, and ensure the living wages of Filipino families.

⁹⁰ Founded in 2010, the International Woman’s Alliance is a grassroots organization campaigning to liberate women from the structural harms of imperialism, patriarchy, and exploitation amidst growing economic inequality, conflict, health disparities, and more.

and allies, over a hundred delegates joined this border integration “to expose the heinous state violence committed by the US government against migrants seeking asylum who were forced to leave their homelands due to the ongoing economic crisis under imperialism.”⁹¹ The daylong tour took over one hundred delegates to Chicano Park to learn about the history of Latinx resistance to colonialism, and the Otay Mesa Detention Center for a teach-in on the privatized detention industry. When the delegates arrived at the Whiskey 8 checkpoint, an open-air detention site regularly used for migrant aid distribution,⁹² they were confronted by Customs and Border Patrol, who were in the process of apprehending some unauthorized migrants that the campaign said had travelled from as far as Colombia.⁹³ After providing wellness checks, first aid, dinner, and letters of solidarity for migrants traversing along the border, the day was closed out by a coalitional migrant panel to address U.S. imperialism as the root cause of forced displacement. Reflecting upon the program’s mission of solidarity, mutual aid, and community education, one member shared, “The purpose of these activities was to remind us that the root cause of the long-neglected issue of forced migration is from historical & contemporary theft, war and genocide under colonialism, US imperialism, military intervention, and destabilization of other countries’ sovereignty.”⁹⁴ Grassroots education does more than just paint the U.S.’s role as a sponsor of this

⁹¹ Anakbayan Los Angeles (@anakbayanla), “From Palestine to Mexico, Border Walls Have Got to Go! 🇲🇪🇵🇷🇲🇽 Anakbayan Los Angeles participated in the US-Mexico Border Immersion this past Friday hosted by @uniondelbarrio and @ima.us to kick off a week of actions as part of the Cancel RIMPAC campaign to oppose and reject the Rim of the Pacific warfare exercises...,” June 30, 2024, https://www.instagram.com/p/C83ErI8veOo/?img_index=1

⁹² “Providing Aid to Migrants at Whiskey 8,” American Friends Service Committee, December 19, 2024, <https://afsc.org/newsroom/providing-aid-migrants-whiskey-8>.

⁹³ In the conversation of coercive displacement and Latin America, critics typically point to the destabilizing impacts incurred by U.S. counterinsurgency wars and assistance in coups against left-wing political leaders primarily in the 1960s to 1980s.

⁹⁴ The Peruvian Chasqui (@the.peruvian.chasqui), “Thank you to our compañeros & compañeras from @ima.us, @uniondelbarrio and @cancelrimpaccampaign for organising an important solidarity immersion trip to the US-Mexico border in San Diego a day ahead of the summit & mobilisation against the RIMPAC military exercises...,” July 9, 2024, https://www.instagram.com/p/C9OCA1SyN3h/?img_index=1.

displacement, which would offer only a dehistoricized lens, but considers the larger arc of interventionism. For example, U.S.-led invasions in Afghanistan and Iraq and the Arab uprisings of the 2010s may be considered in the wider scope of instability and conflict in the region today, which contemporarily fuels displacement, particularly of Palestinians.⁹⁵ The linkages then transgress not just through space but also time, pulling at decisions made historically that shape displacement today, and looking ahead to the future.

Funding for People, Not Walls

For the past decade, the Break Down Borders Annual 5K hosted by the Palestinian Youth Movement has been one of the most prominent mediums by which those in the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands might tie their paths of resistance to Palestinians. Community members from all walks of life, including border activists, Palestinian groups, Indigenous peoples, and more, come together to “protest the separation, death, and destruction produced by the U.S.-Mexico border wall and highlight that it is commissioned by the same empire and built by the same genocidal profiteers that erect walls, checkpoints, and military outposts in Palestine.”⁹⁶ The event intends to not just denounce the barriers within the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands, highlighting the violent impacts on earth and community on unceded Kumeyaay territory, but to express the connected struggle of overthrowing colonial borders from San Diego to Palestine.⁹⁷ For a few speakers at the event, this space offers sites of reflection for what a world without borders and empire may look like, and

⁹⁵ Harrison, “Decolonizing the Figure of the Migrant,” 153.

⁹⁶ Palestinian Youth Movement San Diego (@pymsandiego), “Yesterday, hundreds gathered at the U.S.-Mexico border wall in a powerful showing of our connected humanitarian struggle to overthrow colonial borders from San Diego to Palestine...,” January 28, 2024, <https://www.instagram.com/p/C2pzTmiPcUm/>.

⁹⁷ Enero Zapatista (@enerozapatista), “For the last 10 years we have organized this walk/run to express our commitment to the Palestinian struggle for liberation. Through this annual Break Down Borders 5k, we have made clear our denouncement of borders used by empire to enclose Palestinians in their own land...,” January 19, 2024, https://www.instagram.com/p/C2Sfv13RmOF/?img_index=1

ruminations on what communities are deprived of when more significance is placed on foreign aid and border militarization than the social welfare of the population's most vulnerable.

How this transaction impacts the daily lives of those within the U.S. was articulated by a speaker from the Palestinian Youth Movement at the January 2024 Break Down Borders event: "This wall here, at the US-Mexico border, is the same as the apartheid wall. Instead of our people having access to health care, to education, to employment, to dignity in life and freedom, we put them in cages."⁹⁸ Walls both along the San Diego-Tijuana border and those imposed within Palestine are connected in varying ways, but this idea centered on access to basic needs is an interesting expression of how carceral approaches are favored over humanitarian ones, and how racialized or nativist notions of citizenship and belonging are represented in the budgetary priorities of the state. A speaker from Anakbayan San Diego elaborated upon this thread, stating:

A major part of this imperialist system is exemplified by what towers before us—borders. Whether they are crossed by land or whether they are crossed by air and sea, they are used to maintain and serve an international order of classes, extraction, and exploitation. In San Diego, we see this in the way that immigrant communities are treated as an expendable workforce. Many of us here live in the same under-resourced, over-policed, working-class neighborhoods. As we saw in the storm that flooded the homes of so many community members in southeast San Diego,⁹⁹ as we see in the worsening homelessness crisis, and as we see in the continued neglect of Filipino migrants, our local government is ignoring the needs and demands of the people. Instead, they're putting a vast majority of the city's budget in the hands of the military, police, and deals with weapons manufacturers and tech firms... The multiple struggles that bring us here together today—liberation for Palestine, Chiapas, the Congo, and even our very own working-class communities in San Diego—are linked in numerous ways, but one of the most pressing and deadly is the ways that our struggles are linked through this military-industrial complex, from our taxes being used to build up more efficient oppressor armies or police to the very bombs and guns that these every oppressors

⁹⁸ Palestinian Youth Movement San Diego (@pymssandiego), "FROM PALESTINE TO MEXICO, ALL THE WALLS WILL FALL. 10th Annual Breakdown Borders 5K is starting now!" January 27, 2024, <https://www.instagram.com/p/C2nTysCPOh4/>

⁹⁹ San Diego County experienced a record-breaking severe weather storms between January 21st and 23rd, resulting in mass floodings that mostly impacted low-income Black and Brown neighborhoods and highlighted inequality in funding for climate resiliency; All Things Considered, "San Diego's flooding shows the toll of climate change on low-income communities," *NPR*, January 29, 2024, <https://www.npr.org/2024/01/29/1227695809/san-diegos-flooding-shows-the-toll-of-climate-change-on-low-income-communities>

use being manufactured by defense contractors that have a presence right here in San Diego.¹⁰⁰

Multiple branches of social welfare are touched upon within these remarks—housing, emergency response, labor, and safety—in the recognition that there exists a vacuum in resourcing when funding is allocated toward militarization domestically or internationally. As scholar-activist Nadine Naber explains, “The movement of resources from working-class U.S. immigrant communities and communities of color to the U.S. war machine—and the concomitant cut in resources, the destruction of neighborhoods and social safety nets, and the deterioration in material economic conditions—has everything to do with throwing critiques of militarism and U.S. to Israel.”¹⁰¹ Situated between U.S. naval bases and the U.S.-Mexico border, communities are offered physical reminders of the investment priorities of the U.S., often at the expense of the most marginalized communities.

A noticeable thread throughout the narrative themes under the “Consequential” label is the critique of U.S. spending, which empowers Israel’s campaign against Palestinians while diminishing the social safety nets of Americans. In January 2024, a joint statement was prepared by immigrant, Palestinian, and allied justice groups across the U.S. titled “Divest From Militarism, Invest in Life: From Palestine to the Border Wall.” Signed by multiple organizations with operations in San Diego, including Al Otro Lado, Activist San Diego, and the American Friends Service Committee, the statement demanded that the Biden Administration call an immediate ceasefire and end the militarization of the U.S.-México border. Voicing frustration with governmental budgeting priorities, the statement read, “Whatever the issue, the U.S. government responds with weapons and walls, but militarization, whether within our borders or abroad, has

¹⁰⁰ Palestinian Youth Movement San Diego, “FROM PALESTINE TO MEXICO.”

¹⁰¹ Naber, ““The U.S. and Israel Make the Connections for Us,”” 23.

never made us safer. When our communities ask for resources that actually contribute to our safety and stability, we're told the money isn't there. Yet when it comes to war, surveillance, incarceration, and deportation, the resources are limitless.”¹⁰² These arguments are made in recognition of the consequences of “smart” borders and law enforcement that translate into a lack of self-determination, mobility, and autonomy in livelihood. It is in this same vein that members of Palestine Pals and San Diego BDS on February 26, 2024, dropped banners across a San Diego highway stating, “USA sends \$3.8 billion of our tax \$ to Israel per yr / Struggle w/ bills lately???”¹⁰³ Of the billions of dollars sent to Israel with U.S. taxpayer funds in early 2024, Not My Tax Dollars estimates that San Diego households contributed upwards of \$8.78 million in federal taxes. By the organization’s estimates, that could have potentially contributed to one year’s salary for 958 elementary school teachers, free or low-cost healthcare for one year to 30,543 children, or one month’s worth of groceries for 184,705 families.¹⁰⁴ Those participating in conversations around this material relationship during events often find themselves critical of the lack of support provided within their own communities.

To activists in the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands, much like other sites of resistance, power locally is part of a network of transnational power systems interlocking to order society. In June 2024, the Cancel RIMPAC campaign organized a coalitional protest with hundreds marching behind a 20-foot banner reading, “FIGHT FOR LIVES, LIVELIHOOD, AND SOVEREIGNTY,” waving flags from all over the world.¹⁰⁵ During a scheduled stop along the bay, backdropped by

¹⁰² “Divest from Militarism, Invest in Life: From Palestine to the Border Wall,” Adallah Justice Project, accessed June 5, 2024, <https://adallahjusticeproject.org/updates/investinlife>

¹⁰³ Palestine Pals (@palestinepals), “Mission Five Banner Drop: Complete Mission Free Falasteen: Inevitable ان شاء الله ‘yancee inshAllah,’” February 26, 2024, <https://www.instagram.com/p/C305ECuytlo/>

¹⁰⁴ Not My Tax Dollars, “Where Do Our Tax Dollars Go?,” US Campaign for Palestinian Rights Action, accessed July 26, 2024, <https://www.notmytaxdollars.org/>

¹⁰⁵ Clay Scheller (@clayiscreative), “Join the movement to Cancel RIMPAC!,” July 3, 2024, <https://www.instagram.com/p/C89zF5Iu3ZS/>

the U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln in the water, one speaker amplified their commitment to resisting the U.S. war machine, stating, “As we stand on stolen indigenous lands, occupied under a settler colonial state that merged as a consequence of the US invasion, war, and occupation of Indigenous lands. As we stand just miles away from the genocidal and imposed political border, we are fully aware of how the fascist forces of colonial imperialism continues to literally destroy the fabric of human dignity.”¹⁰⁶ How those forces manifest was summarized by a speaker from Unión del Barrio during the Cancel RIMPAC series’ panel event, noting how San Diego as a site of militarization and border control makes communities in those lands some of the most surveilled in the country, stating, “This sick, parasitic system known as capitalism can only exist through its continued use of force that does not have moral or historical justification to be able to provide our peoples and our communities our basic human rights, which is healthcare, housing, education and clean environment. We know that it can only do so—or its at its best—by stealing land resources and labor.”¹⁰⁷ This demonstrates what Heidi Peltier, Senior Researcher at the Watson Institute at Brown University, calls “feeding the wolf” of militarized economy—as the military industrial sector grows at the expense of others (such as public infrastructure, energy, healthcare, education, and more) it gains further political influence to increase its lions share while diminishing resources in the public sector. Peltier states that U.S. taxpayers ultimately get what they pay for—a robust military but depleted domestic social programs, faltering civilian diplomacy, and reduced development.¹⁰⁸ What ultimately may link people within the “consequential” is *who* gets to take from the pool of federal tax dollars and for what. What begins with violence enacted against those

¹⁰⁶ Clay Scheller, “Cancel RIMPAC!”

¹⁰⁷ Clay Scheller, “Cancel RIMPAC Summit!” 100,”

¹⁰⁸ Heidi Peltier, “We Get What We Pay For: The Cycle of Military Spending, Industry Power, and Economic Dependence,” Watson Institute, Brown University, June 8, 2023, <https://costsofwar.watson.brown.edu/sites/default/files/papers/Peltier-2023-We-Get-What-We-Pay-For-FINAL.pdf>

the world over may translate into the inequity and disparities shaping the daily lives of U.S. citizens here.

Experiential: Life Under Border Imperialism

Gloria Anzaldua's cherished work on *la frontera* speaks so intimately about the experiences of those who confront border walls on a daily basis, navigating the various social and cultural meanings of its existence that are woven into the lives of those within the borderlands. Borders are not just corporeal barriers made of concrete, wire, cameras, and the watchful eyes of patrols, but "are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them*. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary."¹⁰⁹ For many, borderlands are living, breathing sites of transition and power. The experiential connections come from a place of lived experience under systems of oppression that embed themselves in the lives and histories of those who feel its violence, as the dispossession of land is intrinsically linked to racial capitalism when that land is exploited, settler colonialism when that land is occupied, and racialization when concepts of belonging and exclusions justify removal or militarized policing. The experiential ties discussed in this section are thus based on the anecdotes and realities of those who feel that their life under border imperialism, though not identical to others, creates a common understanding, solidarity, and fate between peoples.

¹⁰⁹ Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 4th ed. (Aunt Lute Books: 2007), 25.

Occupation & Dispossession Under Settler Colonialism

Waving Palestinian flags before the San Diego City Administrative building, over 1,200 people gathered for the “All Out for Gaza March” on October 18, 2023.¹¹⁰ Three flags stood out of the crowd—the Palestinian flag, the Mexican flag, and the flag of Unión del Barrio. The last is an independent political organization based in San Diego and Los Angeles that aims to alleviate a variety of community struggles—such as borders and migration, the environment, the prison industry, labor, and more—through organized liberatory action. Speaking before the crowd, a member of the organization contextualized local support for the international movement for Palestinian liberation, stating, “As a Mexican and American organization based in California for over 40 years, we have struggled for the self-determination and liberation of Mexican indigenous people within the political borders of the United States. Like our Palestinian cousins, we understand what it means to have our lands occupied and to be dispossessed in our historic homeland.”¹¹¹ Narrative themes around occupation and settler colonialism are salient throughout the experiential connections that speakers and organizers use to create shared understanding between borderlands. However, solidarity does not stop at comparison, relying on the fact of violent settlement having occurred within both regions to motivate grassroots action. Rather, the homologies of forced removal and occupation are traced back to settler colonialism as the root logic motivating such violence against Indigenous peoples historically and contemporarily. The threads pulled do not evoke isolated experiences under settler colonialism for commiseration, but

¹¹⁰ Lori Weisberg, “Hundreds of pro-Palestinian demonstrators march in downtown San Diego amid growing violence in Israel,” *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, October 21, 2023, <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/2023/10/21/hundreds-of-pro-palestinian-demonstrators-march-in-downtown-san-diego-amid-growing-violence-in-israel/>

¹¹¹ Unión del Barrio, “Solidarity Statement.”

recognize how each variant of the settler colonial project informs those established elsewhere, and those yet to come.

Palestine is an exceptional and active site of forced displacement, violence, and extermination that, in some ways, may be comparable to the erasure of indigenous Native Americans and the racialization of communities of color within the United States. Comparisons struck between the two sites do not conflate their similarities to suggest that Palestine is a mirror to the U.S. Instead, what is conceived is a relational framework that draws upon similar themes of what Indigenous studies scholar Eman Ghanayem refers to as the “colonial loop of displacement.” In the framework of the colonial loop, the U.S. and Israel are “interconnected settler nation-states” through their practices of displacement and origin stories of “settlement, land theft, genocide, and continued contestation of indigenous presence,” whose legal structures disenfranchise, racialize, and exclude Indigenous populations.¹¹² These historical and contemporary comparisons are a key component of constructing narratives around analogous experiences, as outlined by the same organizer from Unión del Barrio speech:

Beginning in 1492, colonizers attacked native peoples, murdered millions, and stole land. Since 1845, American colonizers attacked and invaded Mexico, and stole half of their territory... In 1948, Israel attacked Palestinians and stole the majority of their land, established the State of Israel under stolen territory. We have seen the consequences of the Israel occupation suffered by the people of Palestine and particularly the people of Gaza Strip, who have endured an ongoing illegal blockade for generations. Gaza, the population of over 2 million, is one of the most densely populated areas in the world, and over 80% of the people are dependent on humanitarian aid or survival while 46% of the population is unemployed. Today, Mexicans and Palestinians are similarly displaced by apartheid with walls constructed by the same Israeli companies. Unión del Barrio stands with the people of Palestine and with the righteous struggle for self-determination and the right to return to their legally occupied land. The bold resistance of the Palestinian people is understood as such by millions of colonized and displaced people around the world.

¹¹² Eman Ghanayem, “Colonial Loops of Displacement in the United States and Israel: The Case of Rasmia Odeh,” *Women’s Studies Quarterly* 47, no. 3/4 (2019): 73. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26803262>.

Settler colonialism is the thread by which transnational liberatory movements may relate their genealogies of dispossession and subjugation. Occupation is especially prevalent in drawing connections between the borderlands, specifically as organizers conclude that “just like the United States is an illegal settler nation, so is Israel an illegal settler nation.”¹¹³ Dispossession of land and the right of control over stewardship creates an opening for speakers to continue their historical comparisons and analysis of decolonial strategy. Investigating these histories, the events of territorial capture and control, and the logics of settler colonialism, demonstrates how border craft is a process that is both local and global. Each site and its legacy of colonialism is integrated into a constellation of imperialism, which cannot be regarded in solitude when the tools of the settler can be studied by international adversaries. For one colonial project to persist and gain legitimacy threatens the success of resistance to colonial projects elsewhere.

Enero Zapatista is an annual month-long series of political and cultural events commemorating the uprising of the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional in Chiapas, Mexico, in January of 1994.¹¹⁴ With the 2024 series theme advertised as “All The Walls Will Fall! From Palestine to Mexico, Guatemala, Haiti to San Diego!” events aimed to engage the borderlands community and various grassroots organizations with global conversations concerning decolonization, anti-imperialism, anti-capitalism, and resisting oppression through organizing from the local to the transnational. During the closing night of Enero Zapatista Month, Dr. Stanley Rodriguez, President of Kumeyaay Community College, continued the historical comparisons to Indigenous genocide in the U.S. to the confiscation of land and occupation of Palestinian territory,

¹¹³ Clay Scheller, “Unconditional solidarity.”

¹¹⁴ In particular, the uprising was in protest of the genocide and dispossession of Indigenous peoples, neoliberalism, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and growing inequality. These themes are continuously explored and connected to multiple liberatory movements annually through Enero Zapatista month. The series included events such as teach-ins titled “Capitalism as a Tool for Oppression,” “From Palestine to San Diego: United Against Dispossession,” and “A People’s History of Resistance to Militarism in San Diego and Abroad.”

sharing, “Our people have struggled to keep our identity, to survive as a people. We have endured three waves of encroachment—the Spanish wave, the Mexican wave, and the American wave into our territories—wanting to either exterminate us or assimilate us and take our land... The reservations were created to confine native people on certain lands. Does that sound familiar?”¹¹⁵ Dr. Rodriguez related various experiences of dehumanization, extermination, confinement, and injustices perpetrated under settler colonial projects globally. However, there are distinct differences in each case of settler colonialism. Palestine is described as a place of continuous sites of fragmentation and contestation with expanding Israeli settlements, apartheid, and ethnic cleansing. Meanwhile, the U.S.’ settler colonial project may be exhibited through tribal reservations, land expropriation, and socioeconomic disparity, but the process of settlement is largely historical, though ongoing. Though Indigenous sovereignty in the U.S. and “Land Back” campaigns attempt to disrupt colonial power, the rigid lines of territorial control have long been drawn, and the focal point is more fixed on immigration control and national security than physical expansion or displacement. Still, themes around self-determination and dispossession intersect with experiences related to occupation and racial capitalism, tying together unique experiences of settler colonial projects for the communities that evoke such narratives.

Referencing a work by Palestinian poet Rafaat Alareer, a speaker from Espacio Migrante, a feminist grassroots organization in Tijuana that operates a refugee shelter alongside a community center, remarked that the organization was a place of cultural resistance “just a few minutes from this U.S.-Mexico border, that invented line drawn with ash through the middle of the Kumeyaay

¹¹⁵ Clay Scheller (@clayiscreative), “Learned so much from the very special @enerozapatista ceremony last night. Beautiful people and incredible artwork everywhere!” Instagram, January 6, 2024. <https://www.instagram.com/p/C1w9Q8-rSWh/>

nation and sewn into the ground by bullets.”¹¹⁶ The territorial logic of settler colonialism is regularly investigated in the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands, as the U.S. continues to construct and militarize walls along the U.S.-Southern border upon unceded Indigenous territory, and as Israel continues to encourage the expansion of settlements into Palestine, erect checkpoints, and build the Separation Wall.¹¹⁷ Amidst ongoing settler colonial projects, transnational advocacy groups can engage in an exchange of information and resources that may dismantle the webs of power entangling each other. As stated by Ben Prado at the “End the Genocide in Gaza March and Rally,”¹¹⁸ “Settler colonialism has attacked our people, too... We know that their imperialism is a dying imperialism because we know that it is only sustained through war, through genocide. We know that we must do our tasks and our job to organize our people in every space necessary to overturn this terrible contradiction known as US settler colonialism, US imperialism, and Zionism.”¹¹⁹ Settler colonial projects are enforced differently within the contexts of both regions; they cannot be framed as parallel. However, settler colonialism is still integral to conversations within the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands when validating the relation and interconnectedness of struggles, and when dissecting the philosophies and formations of structural inequities that can be translated across borders.

¹¹⁶ Remarks were shared during the “Proyecto Transformterizo de Arte Comunitario por Palestina” event on June 8, 2024, as part of a two-day transborder event taking place in both Friendship Park in Tijuana and Larsen Field in San Diego. This was a cross-coalitional event bringing together primarily border advocacy groups and primarily Palestinian Liberation groups.

¹¹⁷ Bohrer and Castro, “A People’s History of Police Exchanges,” 148.

¹¹⁸ Occurring on December 23, 2023, the event was organized by the San Diego for Palestine Coalition, including organizations such as CAIR California, the Islamic Center of San Diego, Students for Justice in Palestine, Jewish Voices for Peace, the Palestinian Youth Movement, Karama, and more. Primarily an event organized for Palestinian liberation, the event was marketed as aiming to demand a ceasefire, end U.S. complicity in the genocide of Palestinians, and end the occupation of Palestine.

¹¹⁹ Clay Scheller (@clayiscreative), “@uniondelbarrio stands in unconditional solidarity with the Palestinian cause.” Instagram, December 24, 2023, <https://www.instagram.com/p/C1QK8eIN2bd/>.

Racialization in the Making and Maintenance of Border Imperialism

During his first presidency in 2016, and after proposing a travel ban against immigrants from countries with histories of anti-imperialist thought or action against the U.S., Donald Trump remarked upon the “common sense” of racial profiling, stating, “Well, I think profiling is something that we’re going to have to start thinking about as a country. And other countries do it; you look at Israel and you look at others and they do it and they do it successfully.”¹²⁰ For activists in the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands, the xenophobic and Islamophobic stereotypes operationalized against Palestinians both within Israel and the U.S. are strikingly familiar to the rhetoric used to racialize and criminalize migrants and communities of color here. Rhetorical bordering, the transformative connotations placed upon borders through public discourse and policy, intervene and reconfigure the conditions of the daily experiences of those residing within borderlands, often related to negotiations around the meanings of race, nation, and citizenship.¹²¹ The racializing effects of rhetorical bordering are summarized by ethnic studies scholar José I. Fusté:

In the case of Israel, the construction of Palestinians and other Arabs or Muslims as people who have an inherent desire to destroy Israel justifies the continued ethnic cleansing of Palestinians through policies of settlement, displacement, and containment. In the case of the U.S.-Mexico border, the designation of Latina/o laborers as dangerous people who need to be kept out of the country serves to facilitate the movement of capital from south to north while limiting the entrance of people from Latin America into the United States to claim a livelihood.¹²²

¹²⁰ Amber Phillips, “Donald Trump Calls Profiling Muslims ‘Common Sense,’” *The Washington Post*, June 19, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2016/06/19/donald-trump-calls-profiling-muslims-common-sense/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.2e9a50164221

¹²¹ Hana Masri, “‘From Palestine to Mexico, All the Walls Have Got to Go’: Rhetorical Bordering as Transnational Settler Colonial Project,” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 18, no. 1 (2021). doi:10.1080/14791420.2021.1898006.

¹²² José I. Fusté, “Containing Bordered ‘Others’ in La Frontera and Gaza: Comparative Lessons on Racializing Discourses and State Violence,” *American Quarterly* 62, no. 4 (2010): 813. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/aq.2010.a409337>

Borders do not just separate but are constructed in part because of nativist and racialized ideas of citizenship, especially when borders are just one structure of a regime that monitors, surveils, racially profiles, and detains those perceived as threats to the cohesion and safety of the ruling class. To this effect, borders exist beyond the physical, simultaneously serving as a site of normative power reconfiguring the meaning of citizenship to embolden exclusionary policies and rhetorics which demographically engineer the state. In the context of Palestine and the U.S.-México border, the language of citizenship orders society into “us” and “them”—coming with a cost-benefit analysis. The discursive power crafting the perceived looming threat of the Arab terrorist and the “surge” of undocumented migrants together validate a homeland defense industry contingent upon these narratives to hold market value.

Borders and the rhetoric that surrounds them can then be classified as what Omi and Winant define as a racial project, or an “interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial identities and meanings, and an effort to organize and distribute resources (economic, political, cultural) along particular racial lines.”¹²³ Within this aspect of the settler colonial racial project, the experience that relates communities of color and immigrants within the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands to those of Palestine is both through rhetorical “othering” and through border enforcement. The process of “othering,” or drawing perceived distinctions between groups to justify the marginalization of a people into a subordinate class, is crucial to understanding why subjects of the state might consent to the entrenchment of structural inequities against racialized groups. Before the War on Terror, the War on Drugs in the 1980s to 1990s criminalized Latin American and Middle Eastern immigrants while attempting to fortify the U.S.-México border through a series of “prevention-through-deterrence” strategies and anti-immigrant policymaking.

¹²³ Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 4th ed. (Routledge, 2014), 125.

Fae Chubin and Manuel Ramirez describe that “by evoking ‘drugs,’ ‘crime,’ and ‘terrorism,’ the United States was able to disguise the racist implications of these supposedly race-neutral ‘wars,’ and continue criminalizing African Americans, Latinxs, and immigrants of color.”¹²⁴ The manufacturing of the “illegal” marker against immigrants fueled anxieties which were instrumental in redirecting billions of dollars to the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to further militarize the southern border under the Clinton administration. Following 9/11, with the groundwork of rhetorical bordering laid through decades of anti-immigrant policy, the creation of the Department of Homeland Security in 2002 became a tool which coupled “fighting terrorism” with “securing the border.” Racialized processes of exclusion that had developed over time—denial of asylum applications, detainment and deportation, surveillance and monitoring, construction of fencing, expansion of border patrol agents, restrictions on employment and social safety nets—only intensified during the War on Terror. The blueprint for Islamophobic racism was already built into white supremacist and nativist American institutions which ultimately profited from the repellent of undocumented migrants *and* getting the “bad guys.”

During the January 10, 2024, “Acción Transfronteriza por Palestina en Tijuana y San Diego,”¹²⁵ activists on both sides of the border gathered to march, protest, and hang banners condemning the genocide of Palestinians across the I-5 freeway in San Diego and the San Ysidro crossing in Tijuana. Within the steady gaze of circling police cruisers and watchful helicopters floating overhead, L’inter and Jewish Voices for Peace led protestors in displaying painted cloths across the overpass with phrases such as “Desde el Rio Hasta el Mar Palestina Libertad” and “No

¹²⁴ Fae Chubin and Manuel A. Ramirez, “Securing Racial Borders: A Comparative Study of Settler-Racial Ideology and State Border Violence,” *Sociological Inquiry* 91, no. 4 (2020): 784. DOI: 10.1111/soin.12389.

¹²⁵ Organized by Espacio Migrante, el Comité Pro Palestina en Tijuana, Al Otro Lado, Jewish Voice for Peace, L’inter, and the Palestinian Youth Movement. This cross-border event occurred in both Tijuana and San Diego

Tax \$ 4 Genocide in Gaza.”¹²⁶ Remarking upon the day’s action, L’inter shared that the gathering was intended to “combatir la desinformación y los discursos orientalistas e ‘interpretaciones’ sobre Palestina desde ‘Occidente’, que deshumanizan a lxs Palestinxs, crean e instrumentalizan estereotipos sobre los pueblos de Oriente Medio llenos de islamofobia, xenofobia, racismo y colonialismo.”¹²⁷ Placing the discussion of how Orientalist disinformation and stereotypes of Palestinians are peddled by the “West” to push Islamophobia, xenophobia, and racism, this cross-border event makes conspicuous the functionality of borders as part of the making and maintenance of “othering.”

During the rise of the War on Terror, “radicalization theory” was further developed to heighten the suspicion of Muslims as perpetually at risk of traversing the “religious conveyor belt,” in which increased activity in communal and spiritual activities in Muslim communities signified a precursor to terrorism.¹²⁸ This characterization and suspicion of Muslims within the U.S. and abroad mediates state policies that enforce the repression and surveillance of Muslims and Arab immigrants, as well as provide political coverage for aggressive military action against Arab states—a racial project that creates robust earnings in the defense and homeland security sectors. Summarized by author and border advocate Harsha Walia, “The relationship between the surveillance, infiltration, entrapment, detention, and deportation of Muslims within the US and the military occupations, air strikes, torture chambers at black sites, and interrogation of citizens of

¹²⁶ L’inter (@l.inter_), “Algunas fotografías de la acción transfronteriza en Tijuana y San Diego del día de hoy.” Instagram, January 10, 2024, https://www.instagram.com/p/C18RIGYsbXH/?img_index=1.

¹²⁷ L’inter (@l.inter_), “🇺🇸 Acción transfronteriza por un alto al financiamiento estadounidense del genocidio en Gaza y de la militarización de la frontera con México organizada por una coalición transfronteriza en Tijuana y San Diego 🇲🇽🇵🇸,” Instagram, January 9, 2024, https://www.instagram.com/p/C15dSwUve1Q/?img_index=1.

¹²⁸ Arshad Imtiaz Ali, “Learning in the Shadow of the War on Terror: Toward a Pedagogy of Muslim Indignation.” In *With Stones in Our Hands: Writings on Muslims, Racism, and Empire*, ed. by Sohail Daulatzai and Junaid Rana. University of Minnesota Press, 2018: 245-246. <https://doi.org/10.5749/j.ctt22h6qxc.18>.

Muslim-majority countries abroad positions Islamophobia as a globalized imperial racism.”¹²⁹ The manufacturing of the threatening “other” becomes a point of convergence in which anti-immigrant sentiment and rhetoric, extreme military action against Arab states, and the use of weapons manufacturing and technosecurity mechanisms serve as economic incubators for *both* the U.S. and Israel, at times playing off the same narratives to reinforce each other.

Posted alongside a carousel of images of borders across the world, including those separating the U.S and Mexico, Israel and Palestine, Hungary and Serbia, India and Pakistan, and more, Al Otro Lado stated, “Walls are the result of racism, colonialism, and patriarchy... Walls are in essence about the extension of the reach of powerful countries - powerful countries that rely on corporate capitalism to dehumanize the majority of people... they have risen to demarcate the boundaries between the rich, the powerful, the socially acceptable and the ‘other.’”¹³⁰ Creating the “other” is an instrumental strategy of racial projects which seek to normalize violence, expropriation, occupation, and social exclusion, and extend beyond the individual state within an era of globalization. They also seek to profit. Naomi Klein has done extensive work to develop the framework of the “shock doctrine,” or how the period of mass disorientation following cataclysmic events ripens a state’s ability to quickly enact unpopular economic agendas, instigating a corporate reengineering of societies reeling from shock. Klein states that, “The more panicked our societies become, convinced that there are terrorists lurking in every mosque... the more high-tech fences it builds. If the dream of the open, borderless ‘small planet’ was the ticket to profits in the nineties, the nightmare of the menacing, fortified Western continents, under siege from jihadists and

¹²⁹ Harsha Walia, *Border and Rule* (Haymarket Books, 2021), 55.

¹³⁰ Al Otro Lado (@alotrolado_org), “Walls are the result of racism, colonialism, and patriarchy and bar the right to freedom of movement and self-determination,” Instagram, July 16, 2024, https://www.instagram.com/p/C9fhpd3PgiS/?img_index=1.

illegal immigrants, plays the same role in the new millennium.”¹³¹ Klein positions Israel as the sought after expert in human intelligence of the Arab world and “shopping mall” for homeland security technologies in the wake of 9/11 as states scrambled to acquire “terrorist hunting tools.”¹³² As a result, Klein concludes that Israel is incentivized to perpetuate the Arab “threat” to profit off of defense and security industries rather than to seek collaborative efforts at instilling peace in the region. Not only did this see the exponential rise in homeland security technologies in the U.S. to fend off the “evil” abroad, but the Bush administration capitalized on the same Arab “threat” to use public money to ensure the “War on Terror” was a for-profit venture. corresponding with the sharp uptick of violence and repression against Arab communities in the U.S. and globally. These observations corroborate Walia’s theory of the construction of globalized imperial racism, which shapes the treatment of marginalized communities not only within local contexts but around the world.

The logics of globalized imperial racism aren’t contained within a particular ethnic or racial group. In June 2024, as part of the “Cancel RIMPAC” campaign, a panel within the weeklong programming aimed to demonstrate how the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands are placed within a conversation of how militarization and racialization impact communities globally, especially as San Diego is both a border city and a hub for the U.S. Navy. During the panel, Unión del Barrio representative Benjamin Prado spoke to the experience of Indigenous, Mexican-American, and Latin American communities within the political borderlands of the U.S.:

It is the same companies, industries, and political economy that is building and has built borders in other places, such as Palestine, right? The same industries. And that we see the same militarization of our communities in the form of the Border Patrol, in the form of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, that attempts to come into our neighborhoods, surveil our community, hunt us down, take us into their concentration camps known as

¹³¹ Naomi Klein, *Shock Doctrine*, 427.

¹³² Klein, *Shock Doctrine*, 435.

privatized detention centers, and building the whole economy around the detention and deportation of our people.¹³³

By manufacturing racialized practices of policing, surveillance, and data-collection, “people moving between their homes, schools, jobs, and social life, a particular race in this setting comes to be ‘known’ in ways that increase the occurrence of punitive law enforcement encounters.”¹³⁴ Meanwhile, as Israeli settlers continue to simultaneously enclose Palestinians within border walls while also encroaching upon those territories themselves, racialized border policing perpetuates Palestinians as a consistent threat that requires more efficient and “smarter” surveillance. Doing so denies the right of return of Palestinians, restricts mobility, and is “predicated on racially coded matrices of desirability.”¹³⁵ When you combine the practices and exchanges of policing strategies within the matrix of racializing schemes, sites of community between marginalized people are seen as “internal colonies” of potential insurgency, motivating militarized responses to community action.¹³⁶

The experiential and the anecdotal are not just mediums by which those in one locality might gain empathy and even organize collective action for those far removed from them. Connecting similarities isn’t reduced to just noticing sameness. Jennifer Kelly describes the takeaways of delegates from Eyewitness Palestine, an organization that operates educational tours within Palestine intending to foster transnational solidarity, which shares a thought process often

¹³³ Clay Scheller (@clayiscreative), “@bprado2021 of @uniondelbarrio speaking truth at the recent Cancel RIMPAC Summit! ¹⁰⁰,” Instagram, July 6, 2024, <https://www.instagram.com/p/C9GKisDN3C2/>.

¹³⁴ Josiah Heyman, “Who Is Watched? Racialization of Surveillance Technologies and Practices in the US-Mexico Borderlands,” *Information & Culture* 57, no. 2 (2022): 124. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/856981>.

¹³⁵ Camilla Hawthorne and Jennifer Lynn Kelly, “Borderland Regimes and Resistance in Global Perspective,” *Critical Ethnic Studies* 6, no. 2 (2020). <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48629280>.

¹³⁶ Erakat suggests that when military veterans occupy roles of police chiefs and officers within communities, they may generate an approach to community policing that uses the tactics and mindsets of the imperial-military complex, transposing racialized ideas of foreign enemies upon communities of color domestically; Noura Erakat, “Demilitarize! Durham 2 Palestine,” 168.

invoked by activists in the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands: “So it is not just ‘I recognize it, and so I subsequently care about it.’ It’s to ask themselves, ‘As someone from the United States, how do I think about US empire, how do I think about global militarism, and how do I think about these shared technologies?’”¹³⁷ As a speaker from Jewish Voices for Peace in San Diego shared, “At its core, both the genocide in Palestine and the violence at the border are manifestations of a global system of white supremacy at the expense of our world, at the expense of our humanity.”¹³⁸ As the U.S. couples homeland security with the military-industrial complex and policing practices within communities, constructing racialized ideas of the enemy at home is transfused abroad, and vice versa. By drawing lines between analogous experiences, activists within the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands activate deeper conversations about the globalization of systems of oppression under which separate, but connected communities live with violent consequences.

Interconnectedness: Transnational Resistance to Transnational Systems

Organizers typically draw from an overarching interconnectedness of all liberation movements, evoking phrases such as Fannie Lou Hamer’s “Nobody’s free until everybody’s free” and Martin Luther King Jr.’s “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” Concerning U.S.-Palestinian transnational solidarity, there is a rich history of organizing around Black-Palestinian liberation explored earlier, but there’s also been queer solidarity and anti-pinkwashing

¹³⁷ Camilla Hawthorne, Jennifer Lynn Kelly, Andrea del Carmen Vázquez, Nunu Kidane, and Gerald Lenoir, “Interview with Nunu Kidane and Gerald Lenoir,” *Critical Ethnic Studies* 6, no. 2 (2020), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48629281>.

¹³⁸ Jewish Voice for Peace, “Militarized borders and Israel’s genocide.”

movements,¹³⁹ and Indigenous solidarity and decolonization movements,¹⁴⁰ to name a few. Within this history are the common themes of shared struggle, recognizing the interrelated and interdependent natures of hegemonic systems that order society into hierarchy. Reflecting upon the work of Angela Davis in critiquing empire and capitalism, Camilla Hawthorne summarizes this circulation of power and its many formations, stating, “[Davis] argues that policing and mass incarceration in the United States are connected to the architectures and technologies of settler colonialism in Palestine, which are connected to the architectures and technologies of refugee detention and surveillance in Europe.”¹⁴¹ By analyzing seemingly singular branches of liberatory struggle, such as anti-racism or decolonialism, through an intersectional lens encompassing imperialism, white supremacy, racial capitalism, and more, we may track how such systems overlap to produce unique but connected structures and institutions of oppression.

Here and There: Power Strengthens Power, Resistance Emboldens Resistance

Harsha Walia’s grassroots theory is built on the conviction that transnational anti-oppressive practices ought to be conceptualized to transcend borders. Division by identity or secularizing issues ignores both the power of coalition-building as well as an intersectional

¹³⁹ Darwich and Maikey interrogate the strategies by which Israel uses gay culture and rights to distract from its occupation in Palestine and the apartheid of Palestinians. The work advocates for an intersectional approach that can add a bit of “solidarity” to LGBT movements and a little “gayness” to Palestine solidarity work; Lynn Darwich and Haneen Maikey, “The Road from Activism to the Decolonization of Palestine,” *Women’s Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 3/4 (2014): 282, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24365011>.

¹⁴⁰ Yazzie’s study focuses on Diné Solidarity With Palestine (DSWP), which seeks to mobilize collaborations that resist settler colonialism through coalitional efforts between Indigenous groups in the U.S. to other Native folks and Palestinians. The study places Indigenous struggles in the U.S. within an intersectional anticolonial framework that explains the pro-Palestinian organizing within Indigenous communities, stating, “DSWP thus links solidarity with Palestine to urgent social, human, and environmental issues that result from the disciplinary mechanisms of colonial violence at play in this region of the world. The campaign understands that Palestinian liberation requires the liberation of Indigenous and other oppressed peoples from occupation by Israel’s collaborator and guarantor, the United States;” Melanie K. Yazzie, “Solidarity with Palestine from Diné Bikéyah,” *American Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (2015), <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/aq.2015.0078>.

¹⁴¹ Camilla Hawthorne, et al., “Interview with Nunu Kidane and Gerald Lenoir.”

evaluation of how hegemonic systems rely on each other to persist.¹⁴² For example, as one San Diego protestor stated, “the fight against U.S. imperialism is inextricably related to the fight against Israeli colonialism.”¹⁴³ These arguments can be placed within the context of a genealogy of solidarity work that relates the struggles of Palestine to the struggles of all oppressed peoples across the world. Activists and organizers thus argue that if the powers that be operate globally, then so should advocacy, resistance, collaborative political education, and resistance. Despite operating distinctly and uniquely given the historical, geographical, political, social, and cultural contexts of each nation-state, institutional and structural practices and ideologies that uphold imperialism, colonialism, racism, sexism, xenophobia, apartheid, and more are understood to work from the local to the transnational. Rather than separating social justice advocacy frameworks into just anti-capitalism or just anti-racism, intersectionality helps us to determine how those at the crossroads of fluid and relational social identities require a more nuanced approach to alleviating the complex injustices and inequality they face.

Within the context of the San Diego solidarity events for Palestinian liberation, this overarching link between all movements is almost always called upon, summarized within the “Divest from Militarism, Invest in Life” joint statement by Palestinian, immigrant, and allied justice groups:

We must continue to make these critical connections between our struggles, or else we are doomed to replicate the systems of oppression inherent to a settler colonial world order in which none of us win. We refuse to buy into the scarcity mindset that intends to divide, conquer, and control our communities – the idea that in order to secure my liberation, I must be willing to sacrifice yours.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Walia, *Undoing Border Colonialism*, 82.

¹⁴³ L’inter, “ Acción transfronteriza.”

¹⁴⁴ Adallah Justice Project, “Divest from Militarism.”

In other words, border studies and resistance to borders don't just exist within isolated academic silos or singular social justice campaigns, but should be understood as part of the greater network of connected liberation movements. Transnational solidarity offers alternative opportunities within the realm of international politics outside of state control, testing the limits of borders as points of separation between peoples and nations.

As one activist shared, "Palestine is the banner under which all occupied people stand."¹⁴⁵ In preparation for the January 10th, 2024, "Acción Transfronteriza por Palestina en Tijuana y San Diego" demanding an end to U.S. funding of both the militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border and U.S. financial and material support of the bombardment of Gaza, L'inter shared the following message:

La Cuestión Palestina no es una cuestión árabe, sino una Cuestión de humanidad. Así como el muro del Apartheid en Cisjordania es un dispositivo biopolítico, desde el territorio ocupado Kumiai, la frontera con Estados Unidos es necropolítica, de ahí la importancia de exigir el fin de la militarización y su mera existencia. La lucha contra el colonialismo israelí está intrínsecamente relacionada con la lucha contra el imperialismo estadounidense.¹⁴⁶

The statement shares that the Palestinian Question is not an Arab question, but a question of humanity. In essence, this transnational movement against borders globally is based on more than just challenging the dominant powers within one space at a time—in this case, U.S. settler colonialism on occupied Kumeyaay territory *or* militarization on the Israeli separation wall in the West Bank. Instead, activists see the two situations as deeply related, denoting that both systems use necropolitics to perpetuate violence. In this framing, to resist Israeli colonialism is to resist U.S. imperialism. As an organizer from the Break Down Borders 5k shared, "I often ask myself, 'What are we doing here in the imperial core beyond the performative and spectacle?... What are

¹⁴⁵ Clay Scheller (@clayiscreative), "Rafah is a red line!" Instagram, February 15, 2024, <https://www.instagram.com/p/C3X6WFSLY2V/>

¹⁴⁶ L'inter, "🇵🇸 Acción transfronteriza."

we doing in actively supporting our own collective freedom that is intrinsically tied? How do we localize the intifada? How do we localize the resistance?’ Resisting opposition is going to look differently here in each of our respective geographies.”¹⁴⁷ As such, resistance against the system in one space is a step toward dismantling transnational configurations of subjugation.

Building Alliances Without Collapsing Differences

The nuances and complexities that can be distinguished between the borderlands of the U.S. and Palestine are countless and surely are not captured in depth across this current project. This work has focused far more on the parallels composed at the grassroots level by organizers mobilizing cross-coalitional efforts from the bottom up, as many of these events are coordinated in part to help recognize overlapping experiences. I do feel it would be a disservice to these efforts not to acknowledge the work activists are doing to also recognize the disparate historical and contemporary contexts that impact the mechanisms by which power manifests and is reinforced in each space, which then is also applied unevenly across communities based on each member's positionality. While crafting spaces of political education with the interest of resisting empire and state apparatuses of violence, some organizers attempt to develop conversations that don't collapse differences. In the words of Ashley Bohrer and Andrés Castro, “Linked fate does not mean a shared or flat position.”¹⁴⁸ Though structural inequities may overlap, and common adversaries may pull from shared ideologies, organizers attempt to challenge the lens by which they are relating struggles so that those comparisons may be expansive enough to capture how communities are uniquely impacted within their respective time, space, and histories.

¹⁴⁷ Palestinian Youth Movement San Diego, “FROM PALESTINE TO MEXICO.”

¹⁴⁸ Bohrer and Castro, “A People’s History of Police Exchanges,” 148.

Discussing the purpose behind collaborating on the creation of San Diego's annual Break Down Borders 5k, organizers Leslie Quintanilla and Jennifer Mogannam shared, "While we think about the connections between this border and Palestine, thousands of miles away, we also think about the parallels with other communities. We do not try to shy away from drawing the linkages between struggles for fear of exposing contradictions; rather, we note the parallels and work through the contradictions to foster a deeper understanding of the basis of our alliances."¹⁴⁹ The run continues each year in the spirit of the "undercommons," a collective space created outside of the state and mediated through decolonial thought to bridge peoples across interconnected struggles locally and globally. Engaging in the nuances within multi-community conversations around struggle can help different camps become allies as well as learn from different sites the strategies for resistance and coalition-building. What Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink refer to as "information politics," "Non-state actors gain influence by serving as alternative sources of information. Information flows in advocacy networks provide not only facts, but also *testimonies* – stories told by people whose lives have been affected."¹⁵⁰ This sentiment was shared by Dr. Stanley Rodriguez, President of the Kumeyaay Community College in San Diego, when he stated during the closing night of Enero Zapatista 2024, "We're here to address injustices. We're here to talk about the pain that people are going through. We're here to learn about each other's struggles and what we can do to support each other."¹⁵¹ For such events, handling the contradictions with care through principled dialogue and collective knowledge production is a pillar to building more than just sympathy, but recognizing interconnectedness and the multifaceted efforts to resist global networks of power and industries of subjugation. Attempts at expanding the understandings of

¹⁴⁹ Quintanilla and Mogannam, "Borders are Obsolete."

¹⁵⁰ Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, "Transnational Advocacy Networks in International and Regional Politics," in *International Social Science Journal* 68, no. 227-228 (2019): 95.

¹⁵¹ Clay Scheller, "Enero Zapatista ceremony."

sites and modalities undergoing structural inequity elsewhere become part of the coalitional strategies used across space and time. This reciprocal relationship of resource-sharing is crucial to the challenges of discriminatory or violent state practices outside of one's own borders. To such communities, the maintenance of structural inequity in one land emboldens and reinforces its expansion elsewhere, strengthening the hold and capacity of the common adversary.

Where struggles are distinct or diverge also offer points at which transnational and cross-coalitional organizers and theorists may investigate their own relationship to imperialism, specifically when avoiding the transposition of U.S.-centric frameworks. In the words of Gerald Lenoir, "It can be really ugly at times when we presume to know others' struggles or the solutions to other people's struggles. Even describing another peoples' struggle for them is very problematic."¹⁵² Alliance-building must access the linkages without erasing the distinct historical frameworks and specific contexts of a given community. Doing so allows for "coalitional politics as an antidote to the violence embedded in norms of settler colonial citizenship."¹⁵³ Conceptual connections between borderlands provide insights into the root logics stringing together those in the crosshairs and those served up as collateral, but must capture the intricacies in the circumstances by which those border walls came to be and how they continue to exist. While operating across differences, boundary-crossing movements that do not foreground their work in recognizing distinct contexts and histories are at risk of imagining futures in which liberation is for some and not all.

¹⁵² Hawthorne et al., "Interview with Nunu Kidane and Gerald Lenoir."

¹⁵³ Masri, "From Palestine to Mexico," p. 87.

CONCLUSION: LINKED FATE IN AN ERA OF GLOBALIZATION

The direct, experiential, consequential, and interconnected aspects each contribute to a community's perception of linked fate across borders. On the surface, the thesis of this project is considerably supported by the direct, material ties between borderlands, as it might be straightforward to trace the relationships of linked fate from one border to another when identical technology is installed on both walls or when law enforcement training techniques are transplanted from one nation-state to another. However, the experiential, consequential, and theories of interconnectedness are equally meaningful entry points into motivating political cohesion and solidarity from self-interest from a place of relation—even as they may offer testimony of how expressions of homologies might produce some dissimilarities or uneven applications. They may also explain how seemingly unrelated situations, such as how disinvestment in public infrastructure in one state frees funding for the decimation of another, might be brought into focus. A comparative analysis of border sites, in this case, requires thinking beyond the immediate physical placement and corporeal apparatuses of border imperialism to greater dialogues that find borders to be just one structure within a global network of power.

Notably, this study was limited by the source material available and selected, pulling only from publicly published content—primarily through the use of social media posts controlled by the organizations and individuals involved with movements at the intersections of Palestinian liberation and borderlands advocacy, and which may be removed from the internet or privatized at any point. Internet links to the speeches, recordings, and expressions of solidarity shared within this thesis may at any point be broken, and thus some sources in this work are not necessarily permanent. However, with mounting legal action taken against activists within the past two years, autonomy in how this media is controlled may outweigh the benefits of its permanency with

respect to those who have already taken risks by participating in pro-Palestinian activities. These materials posted to social media provide only snapshots of the wide range of views expressed within collective movements, and as no private interviews were included in this study, the nuance and full extent to which activists are actively making connections of linked fate could not be further explored, clarified, or probed. While my role as a researcher involved the categorization and interpretation of how organizers may perceive themselves to be part of linked fate relationships, the framework itself was not actively explored by organizers or community members explicitly within these events, resulting in the risk of transposing ideas that organizers themselves may not corroborate. However, I believe this work may still offer a launching pad by which to explore a transnational application of the linked fate analytic beyond what has been interrogated within this work.

Beyond its use in drawing the linkages within border imperialism, the analytic might also be useful in the study of internationalism, transnational advocacy, and solidarity more broadly and across various contexts. As the study of social justice movements develops, statements on the interconnectedness of liberation movements may move beyond analogy or similarity but truly dissect the degree to which power operated distinctly, yet rooted in the same logics, is influenced by common adversaries. This framework could capture transnational action for climate justice, such as the “Fridays for Future” and “School Strikes 4 Climate” student activism protesting governments all across the globe for their complicity in disproportionately impacting climate change. The Cancel RIMPAC campaign, included in this study, could further envelop the movement for Filipino liberation against U.S. imperialism. Additionally, with a retroactive application, how might we trace genealogies of social justice movements that have historically placed themselves within a linked fate framework without the explicit language of the analytic?

While the case study of Black-Palestinian solidarities was explored earlier in the work, how might this analytic be applied to other transnational solidarity movements, such as that of Third World liberation?

Borders are not just static, immobile constructions sutured into the ground to demarcate the boundaries of the nation-state. All borders are part of a global relational framework, and their impacts cannot be understood as relevant only to the immediate communities in which they are erected—conclusions outlined time and time again by activists and community members in the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Blending the voices of the community with published works, this project seeks to demonstrate how linked fate is understood on multiple levels to place the consequences of bordering within transnational conversations of interconnected struggle. Global systems inspire global resistance, and this project aims to illustrate that the international circulation of bordering practices and mechanisms operates in tandem with the rise of coalitional, transnational solidarity, which illuminates the linked fate of those living within their respective borderlands. The local doesn't stay local but is part of a larger network of reciprocity between nation-states, just as the grassroots can become transnational.

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