

Liberty Denied: Immigration, Detention, Deportation
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Part I Immigration

How does one begin to talk immigration detention and deportation in the US ? Do we begin with the racism embedded in the Constitution at the founding of the United States that designated only property-owning white men as citizens? Do we begin with the history of US intervention in Latin America, our innumerable coups from 1798 to this day that over throw any government that we consider antithetical to our economic interests or which even considered enacting programs to help ordinary people?

Do we begin with Indian removals to reservations? Or the efforts to obliterate natives and their cultures by assimilation at schools, or in cities. The land that was stolen as treaties were broken and Indians confined to ever smaller islands of land, the most recent robbery and detention at Standing Rock in the Dakotas as corporate interests took the water supply and burial grounds of the Standing Rock Sioux.

Do we begin with the detention system first set up to target the families of Chinese railroad workers in the 1880s? The Detention system at Angel Island lasted until the ...Or the quota system of 1924 that favored light skinned Northern Europeans over darker skinned Southern Europeans and Africans. Or perhaps with the Immigration Act of 1965 which extended regulation to the the countries south of the United States? Suddenly migrant laborers without papers were counted as illegal aliens.

Do we begin with Free Trade Agreements that are bankrupting the small farmers of Central America and Mexico? Do we begin with the Drug Wars, the mafia, the violence, also fueled by US dollars? Immigrants arrive in the United States with hopes of a better life. Coming from Guatemala, Nicaragua, Mexico, they are driven to leave their homes by the forces of free trade that bankrupt small farmers, climate change which devastates crops, by gang warfare, and drug mafias, some of which are referenced in Art Hazelwood's incredible print. Note especially that the field, the ground is filled with skulls!

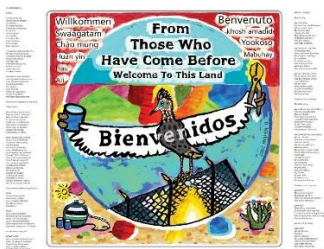
Those who do not cooperate with gangs and drug dealing are personally in grave danger even in their own homes. As a result, brave migrants cross harsh deserts for thousands of miles by train, truck, car and foot to enter the United States in hopes of a safer life in which they can earn a living and support the family they have left behind. As we know, in some cases they send their children alone, in hopes that they will be safely treated in the United States. Of course the opposite is true. More than any other country, we treat migrants, including children, and mothers with children, as criminals, or worse. Detaining them in desolate centers within 100 miles of the border means that no laws of the United States can protect them.



Art Hazelwood's powerful prints point to the ruthlessness of free trade, drug wars and capitalism marching across a field, leaving skulls behind. The skeleton holds the reins of the overweight plough of free trade as it spreads devastation and death.



The border is today a militarized zone that divides not only families, but also animals and all life, as seen in Hazelwood's "The Wall Divides All Life."



Doug Minkler pointedly depicts the cruel contradiction of our current attitude to immigrants.

"Corporations want artists to glorify their wars, their products and their philosophies. I make posters for my own preservation, that is, planetary preservation. My prints are inspired not by rugged individualism, but by the collective humor, defiance and lust for life exhibited by those on the margins."

In "Welcome From Those Who Came Before," he sardonically depicts a somewhat battered roadrunner with wings outstretched holding a pair of pliers in one hand and cup of water in the other perched on a

ripped chain link fence . On one side of the fence is a cactus on the other a canteen. A poem by the activist, radical poet John Ross frames the image in Spanish and English.

Welcome

The Coming

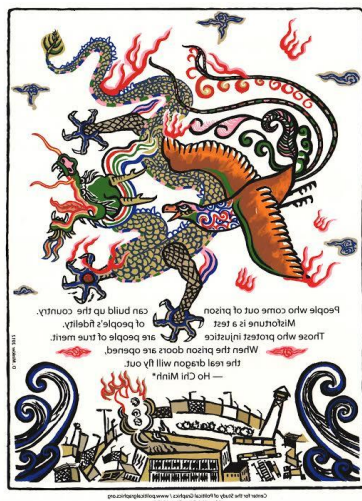
We come here
 Because they have thrown us
 Off our fathers' land
 The corn we grow
 Has all gone bad.
 There is no work in town
 Or food on our tables
 And the cold rain
 Just keeps on falling.
 We have swum big rivers
 Climbed big walls,
 Died out there in the desert
 Running from the Migra
 To come here
 To mow your lawns
 And roof your homes
 Wash your dishes
 And take care of your kids.
 We know the streets here
 Are not paved with gold
 And the American Dream
 Is our nightmare
 But we come
 Time and time again
 In spite of the danger
 Because we cannot
 Feed our families
 Forgive us our trespasses.

The Welcoming

We are those who came before
 After the powerful stole
 This sacred land
 From those whose home
 It was since time was born,
 Enslaved the Africans
 To pick their cotton,
 Cut down the trees
 And poisoned the waters
 We are those who came before
 War and famine
 Drove us to these shores

Like your people
We were not welcome
When we came
They called us Squareheads
Polacks, Kikes, Guineas, Spics,
Dumb Irish,
Go-back- where
You came froms
But we stayed
And build up America
Brick by Brick
Now they offer us
Big Money
To build walls
To keep you out
But we are not for sale.
Forgive us our Trespasses
WARNING!
The economic system
That drives you so far
From your homes and families
Also poisons this land
WARNING!
They will try to divide us
By false claims that migrants
Cause environmental degradation
Take our jobs, overcrowd our hospitals
And are all criminals.
We will not be fooled

WELCOME!"
Let us link arms.
Together
We will organize
For justice and democracy,
Heal the wounded land
And create a society
That serves the people. — John Ross, 2008



In his second work Minkler refers to the Asian Dragon:

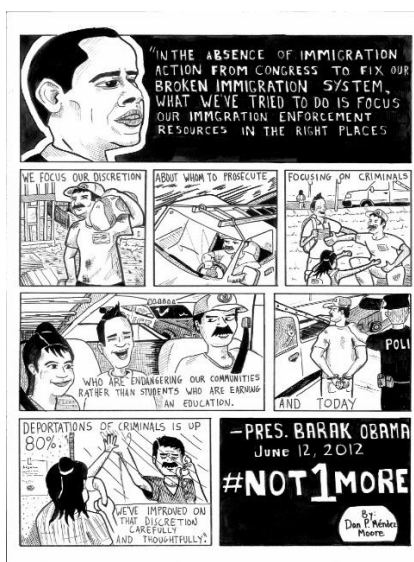
“The Asian dragon symbolizes many positive attributes including unity. It's a popular icon in and out of prisons, and throughout the world. This poster was placed in prisons, prison rights offices and shown in communities around the country. It is my hope that the un-incarcerated will read Ho Chi Minh's poem, written from prison, and help the many locked unnecessarily in cages.”

Since numerous obstacles make legal migration possible only for the most privileged, most migrants pay thousands of dollars to coyotes to help them cross the border without papers. Sometimes they are abandoned in the desert, if they fall behind their group. Once here, even those with a possible way to legalization, often miss deadlines for applications because of constant moves, making documentation impossible. Even those who arrive with visas for study or work frequently end up without documents because of the labyrinthine procedures. Perpetual vigilance is required.

Many migrants from the South work in agriculture, picking fruit and vegetables. It is back breaking stoop labor and the workers, even children, are given large quotas each day. The work is dangerous, often the farms are sprayed with toxic chemicals. As a result of their undocumented status, immigrant workers are frequently forced to live in unsafe conditions, suffer abuse on the job, or shortchanged on their pay. Other migrants work as nannies, often abused with long hours, small pay, and worse, by their employers in isolated circumstances. In cities, they may be day laborers doing yard work, cleaning houses or construction.



Manuel Rio's painting *Identity Theft* presents a disturbing image of a person with their head completely covered and tied around the neck, hands bound. Two squares outlined in yellow with a red pattern behind and in front of the figure, perhaps suggests the place from which the migrant has come, as he climbs through an empty blue frame blocked by pieces of blood red barbed wire. Rios invokes both the devastating loss of identity for the migrant and fearful unknown aftermath of his migration.



Daniel P. Mendez-Moore outlines the hypocrisy of public policy.

Under the quote from Obama "In the absence of action from Congress to fix our broken immigration system, what we've tried to do is focus our immigration enforcement resources in the right places . . . We focus our discretion about whom to prosecute focusing on criminals who are endangering our communities, rather than students who are earning an education and today, deportations of criminals is up 80%" Barack Obama June 12, 2012 The cartoon shows hardworking people, devoted to their families, and youth, who end up in detention visited by a loved one.



Cartoonist **Jen Sorensen** tells the story of Vermont's undocumented immigrant activist Danilo Lopez: "It all started when he came to Vermont to milk cows – hard work that not enough locals want to do." After a fellow laborer was killed on the job, Danilo became an activist for farmworkers' rights. He spoke at rallies and urged other migrants to come out of the shadows. But one day, a car he was riding in was pulled over and state cops turned him over to border patrol. Deportation can take a long time. While he waited Danilo lobbied state government to let migrants have drivers' licenses so they could get groceries and visit the doctor... it passed ... and Danilo bought a used car. But he may never get to drive it. He has orders to self deport by July 6 (2013). He was granted a stay of removal for another year."



Carino del Rosario reveals the ironies and absurdities of passports as a means of identification. "Race/ethnicity is a complicated construct as it is. Combine that with gender identity, gender expression and sexuality, immigration status and other categories, one can be left entangled by labels and expectations, subjected to many forms of discrimination, struggling to be whole. In this series, I worked

with a variety of people to create “passports.” I reframed typical application questions and invited them to provide answers, not by checking a box, but by using their own words to describe the most important parts of themselves. There are now over 200 people represented in the Passport Series. Together, we express our shared hope for the time when we are not limited and fragmented by categories, when can all be free to be our whole selves.”

“I use photography, digital media and visual art to explore the desire for community, for being part of something larger than oneself, and also the pull of solitude, for shrugging off ties that tangle and constrain. Whether I am working on specific projects about cultural communities and social issues or wandering streets around the world, I capture people’s lives unfolding or reflect on the evidence they leave behind.”

“In my own attempts at connecting to different parts of me, I have documented many communities’ fights for civil and human rights, for social justice. In the past three years, I have collaborated with transgender people in various ways. Transgender, gender queer or gender variant people are individuals who cannot or choose not to conform to societal gender norms based upon their physical or birth sex. Some undertake medical or surgical procedures to embody their gender identity. For others, their gender expression primarily involves a social change (e.g. name, visual presentation).



Blanca Santander speaks of the jolting cultural adjustments of immigration, but celebrates the strength of women who survive it.

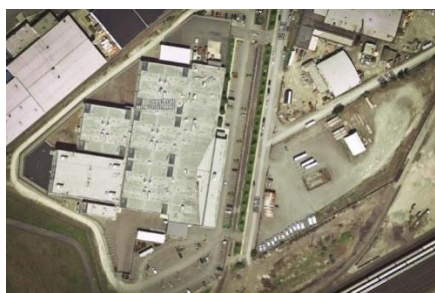
“Immigration to this land means you have emigrated from another. You have left behind family, tradition, culture, and language. All here is new and strange. The feeling of home becomes divided, and you don’t feel like you belong to one culture or the other. Then your children are born here and they are North American. They grow up only knowing this land and only memories and shadows of the other. They are sons and daughters of immigration.

We live out of suitcases full of our heritage and culture. Does being different make us stronger? Are life’s struggles really just a shared experience calling us to unite our energies for a better world? I have learned to identify with immigrants from all over the world. I feel sisterhood with all immigrant women. In my paintings women are celebrated as the nucleus of the family. Being a mother gives us incredible strength to draw from an inner power to fight for a better life for our families. We also have an insight and connection as creators of life when it comes to our feelings for our planet.



Deborah Lawrence interviews a Filipino immigrant who has succeeded in having a good life here. *Lucia E* tells the story of a Filipina immigrant who fled the Marcos dictatorship and then followed a successful path in this country as a result of community support and her ability to speak English.

Detention



When Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) identify undocumented immigrants, often as a result of a minor traffic violation or racial profiling, they put them in detention. Over 30,000 immigrants are detained in 200 detention centers nationwide. With over 1500 beds, the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma, run by the for-profit GEO Corporation under a contract with ICE, is one of the largest in the country. The detainees live in inhumane and illegal conditions with no privacy, poor health care, no outdoor exercise and terrible food. They are forced to do the work of the center for 1\$ a day no matter how many hours they work.

Since lack of documentation is a civil offense, detainees have none of the rights provided by our criminal justice system. Their only option is to attain “relief” through pro bono lawyers such as those at the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project. A judge decides the case, without a jury. Many of the cases drag on for months and years. Another option, taken by some of the detainees was a hunger strike in 2014. The demands provide a window into the conditions in the center:

Three works were originally commissioned by the Wing Luke Museum of the Asian-Pacific American Experience in Seattle as the old Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) building in Seattle (which

held 230 people and also serviced people who wanted to become naturalized) was vacated for the new facility in Tacoma(which holds over 1500 people with only housing provided, no windows, no privacy).



Dean Wong's haunting photographs document the empty, eerie INS building. The building still contains the frightened and confused spirits from all over the world, who left traces of where they came from written in tar on the roof, where they were allowed to exercise (the Tacoma facility has no outside, and no windows). The isolation cell that he has photographed, still exists inside of one of the artist studios. While the building was “cleansed” by an art exhibition that honored its history before being turned into artist studio,s we still feel the presence today of the agony and uncertainty of the people who were detained, deported, and interrogated for naturalization after standing in line for hours and hours.

Robb Kunz's audio provides brief segments from interviews with immigrants about their experiences of migrating to the US, and of naturalization. What comes across clearly is how much easier and less expensive the process of coming to the US used to be, if they came as students, if they crossed the border, or if they simply came with their families as children. The border was first militarized in 1996 when the North American Free Trade agreement passed, with the full knowledge on the part of the US government that it would devastate Mexican agriculture by dumping our cheap government subsidized grain in Mexico. As a result, migrants left their farms to head North. Today migration is further caused by large corporations who are obliterating indigenous self sustaining communities, by damming their rivers, stealing their land, mining the resources. Some indigenous groups such as the Q'eqchi" have stood up and resisted these dams, but many have failed.



For this exhibition, **Christian French** adapted the “INS Game,” still embedded in the floor of the INS building, into a card game. The game, about “navigating the bureaucratic maze of the INS,” begins with “Start Here: Choose your country of origin, ethnic heritage, language.” It proceeds through many forward and backward moves, such as “Your application has been misplaced, lose a turn or draw 1 fee card and 1 lawyer card” then “No clerks speak your language, lose a turn,” “Failed Bank Transfer, Lose ½ your remittances, go back 2 spaces” “Your name appears on a Terrorist Watch List. Draw a Legal card, lose 2 turns.” Until finally the applicant is approved in the last card of the game.

Detention in the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma is an even bigger nightmare than the old INS facility, which at least had some outdoor space. Initially, detention in California, for Chinese immigrants, hired Chinese cooks to feed the detainees culturally specific food as described in the book *Angel Island* by Erika Lee and Judy Yung.



The Northwest Detention Center sits in a vulnerable, toxic place and inside is a nightmare of human rights violations. **Deborah Faye Lawrence's** *Welcome* reads

“Welcome to the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma. Our ample 277,000 sq.ft. facility stands in Tacoma’s Tide Flats- a highly toxic superfund site; A Tsunami and Lohar zone that’s visible from the Museums of Art, History and Glass. Even if you and your family have lived and worked in the US for years, you are now a prisoner of the U.S. slated for deportation. You may or may not have access to legal counsel or a translator or news! To clarify security, detainee jumpsuit colors have changed! Now your Red uniform= high risk. Orange=medium risk. Green=medium to low risk. Blue=low risk. Segregation by color helps you see that other detainees cannot be trusted. So don’t talk to them or join their hunger strikes!” Around the edge, the small strip of writing refers to the administration of the Northwest Detention Center by the private corporation GEO. “NDC is a criminal alien requirement prison [CARP], part of the Homeland Security Department’s Bureau of Immigration & Customs Enforcement [ICE], owned and operated by GEO, a profit making corporation and one of the nations’ largest private prison contractors.” GEO receives \$159. per night per filled bed from our tax dollars. There are 32,000 detention beds in the US, not counting the newly built family detention centers located in remote areas, near the border so that they do not need to comply with any US laws.



Cecilia Alvarez represents the suffering of families separated by detention and deportation.

“In this piece I attempt to spotlight the horrific conditions that refugees from violence suffer in detention centers. We the American taxpayers subsidize these for profit detention centers with our taxes. These detention centers predominantly incarcerate refugees from Mexico and Central America. These people are held indefinitely in deplorable, dehumanizing conditions and subjected to the same type of violence they were fleeing from in their home countries. These peoples’ migration has been spurred by the violence created by USA drug addiction, arms sales and USA policies/CIA/Corporate destabilization of their governments.

In order to heal the wounds of capitalistic colonialism, we need to be honest and interested in creating a discourse and action plan that confronts the violence. We need to examine our part in creating this sorry state of affairs.

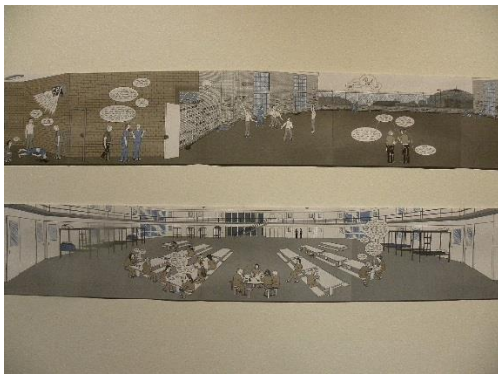
In my artwork I attempt to bring to light the parts of our society that are rendered invisible/without value; in a visual vernacular that does not use violence as a symbol of power/excellence. Each person held without legal recourse has a story and a reason to flee. They come here with the hope of life.”



Tatiana Garmendia, originally from Cuba, describes her own family’s experience of torture in detention, sewn painfully into a blanket. She speaks of her conflicting emotions as a refugee who came to this

country and has been given opportunities, while having to face the reality of the tortures committed by the US government at Guantanamo, on the same island of Cuba. Her father as a doctor, had fervently supported the revolution and worked in villages as part of his commitment. That is why, when sectarianism divided socialists in Cuba, his detention and that of his family was all the more painful.

“A chilling reminder of the uninterrupted use of torture in Cuba by both my birth and adopted homelands, *Beforehand/Afterwards* documents a performance in honor of my father. Dr. Jose Manuel Garmendia Socarras was detained and tortured by the G-2 in Cuba. He died at 36 years old. Many of the techniques used against him by the Castro regime are now used by the US government in Guantanamo. Over the course of a month I embroidered a list of these torture techniques on a standard military blanket and wrapped myself in it as an offering of warmth to her father. The embroidered blanket drapes an empty chair and serves as a surrogate for the missing figure, bringing his absence into the viewer’s space. “



Eroyn Franklin accordion pleat book, *Detained* presents a panorama that follows Many Uch in the old INS building and Gabriela Cubillos in the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma, as they navigate the oppressive, bureaucratic system. The artwork from the INS building shows the immigration situation in the 1990s, while the NWDC side explores an updated post 9/11 depiction of immigration detention. Many Uch came from Cambodia as a child to escape the violence being wrought by the Khmer Rouge. His mother carried him on her back through the jungle to escape. As a teenager, he was caught up in teenage gang behavior, caught, put in prison. The day he completed his sentence he was taken into detention because he did not have a visa for the US. He was finally released after 6 months awaiting deportation, but under fear of deportation for eleven years until he received a pardon in 2010.

Gabriella Cubillos came with her children from Mexico to the US without papers. She was detained at the Northwest Detention Center in 2008, caught as an undocumented migrant who had been previously deported. This time, with her four children here, she refused to voluntarily deport. After six weeks she returned to her family, her bail provided by local church that supported the sanctuary movement. She is still contesting her deportation order.

Last, detainees themselves make art to pass the endless time with no programming, no courses to take, no recreation, nothing to do, except being forced to work as virtual slave labor for \$1. per day no matter how many hours they work. These amazing purses and other objects come from Pavel **Bahmatov**.



Pavel Bahmatov Detainee at Northwest Detention Center Tacoma writes:

"I was born in Uzbekistan and my family moved to USA as a refuge when I was 12 years old in 2004. I got in trouble with the law 2007 and got sentenced as an adult when I was 15 years old to 100 months incarceration. Upon the completion of sentence I got picked up by ICE, straight from the correctional facility on December-31, 2015 and transferred to NWDC where I have been ever since.

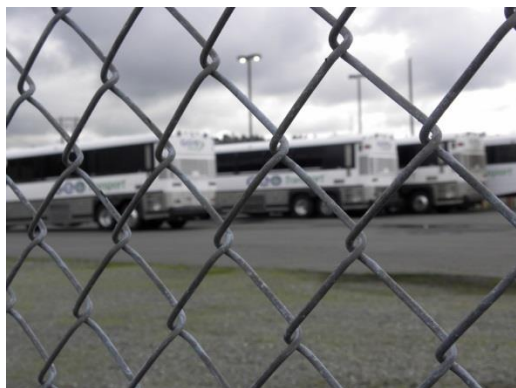
I do these art projects to give as a gift to my family and friends and in a way of killing time because there are not many activities to keep us occupied It is sad that there is not much we can do here. When I was in prison made metal art, wood art, leather work, Native American bead work and so much more. In NWDC it feels like my hands are tied.

"Everything made here is mostly out of paper or plastic, for instance I am making little shoes, purses, jewelry boxes, picture frames and more out of recycled paper and plastic. I use plastic wrappers from candy, ramen noodles, cookies, anything really that we can get around here. The silver colors is mostly inside of the chips bags or candy bar wrappers. Most of the things I make are woven together and then sown with plastic string that we make out of garbage bags.

The whole process is unique. We start by cutting papers into thin strips using floss because we are not allowed to have scissors. We use the same process to cut plastic. Than we wrap paper into plastic and fold it in to small pieces that can be connected to each other like lego pieces in a way I guess. When we make hundreds of those we start connecting them in to strips that then we sew together with a string that we also make ourselves. The string we make out of garbage bags by cutting strips of two inches width, attach one side to a leg of a bed and the other side to an object that we can spin. Than it is a process of tagging and spinning till it forms string to our satisfaction. Then we use plastic needles that we also make ourselves to sow projects together "

Deportation

We do not have any artworks depicting deportation in the exhibition, although reference to it appears in Eroyn Franklin's fold-out book.



I here include a photograph of the buses used to transport deported detainees in the middle of the night. At the same time, I conclude with the Aid to Detainees Northwest Welcome Wagon, parked outside the Detention Center. If a detainee is released from the center in Tacoma, they have the clothes on their back. If they were detained in the summer and they are released in the winter, the Welcome Center provides them with appropriate clothing, as well as helping them with travel arrangements such as getting airplane tickets, or bus tickets to return to their homes. Many of them have been sent to Tacoma, far from their families. The NWDC is located a desolate mile from the nearest bus or train station through the industrial district of Tacoma.



“Liberty Denied” is paired at the Museum of Culture and Environment with a stunning exhibition of Arpilleras, **“Tapestries of Hope,”** created by the mothers of the disappeared in many cases from the clothing of the disappeared. This private collection of works belonging to Marjorie Argosin includes detailed and poignant imagery. The experiences of the families of the disappeared make haunting parallels to the nightmares that today’s immigrants and their families experience during Immigration Raids, arbitrary detentions, deportations, and most horrifying, disappearances. In Chile though there have been tribunals and even monuments to the crimes of those years. Perhaps someday the US will recognize that it is committing the same crimes.