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IN RESPONSE TO TRUMP'S BORDER WALL

June 3, 2017

A group of people gathers at Obelisk 258, next to the Tijuana Beaches lighthouse, across from Border Field State Park in what is called Friendship Park. Down through the years, this has been the venue for different actions rejecting the emblem of the territorial division between the United States

and Mexico through artistic events and transnational activism.

A few tourists wander through the little plaza from where you can see the border wall stretch out into the sea. However, most people have come to listen to the musical program by the Dresdner Sinfoniker (the Dresden Symphony), “Mr. Trump, Tear Down This Wall!”

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All photos, courtesy of the author.

The slogan is reminiscent of Ronald Reagan's speech in West Germany at the end of the Cold War. Musicians from Europe, the United States, Mexico,





and Guatemala came together to send a message of unity and hope in times of animosity. Before their part of the program came bands like Tijuana No, Pucha Lucha, and Lengua Abierta (Open Tongue),

and jazz singer Coral MacFarland. To finish the program, conductor Markus Rindt led the city's youth orchestra and choir in performing *Beyond*.

On the other side of the wall, at least 10 people harangued in favor of President Donald Trump and the construction of the wall all along the border. But they were drowned out by the percussions and the piece *The Big, The Bug, The Cricket and The Quack*, which used the metal fence as a musical instrument that sang out when played with construction tools.

November 21, 2017

Since a group of activists discovered where the prototypes of the new wall were being built, near the Otay Towers housing estate, across from the old corrugated sheet metal wall, the area has become a popular spot for the curious visitor. Jill Marie Holslin, an academic, artist, and member of Borderlands Sierra Club, organized an intervention using lights on the prototypes. With help from San Diego's Overpass Light Brigade and with a projector, she "imprinted" sketches and slogans on the over-nine-meter-tall sections, reading "Build Bridges, Not Borders," "#Refugees Welcome," and "#NoOneIsIllegal."

This was followed by a group of painters who tried to completely cover the border fence, from the Pacific Coast to the Otay area. Across from the prototypes can be seen graffiti that read "#No Walls/ No Muros," and "Hecho en México (Made in Mexico)."



May 25, 2018

Music has accompanied peoples in their transit through the world. It sometimes creates opportunities for the meeting of different trajectories, like Afro-Latina music, which came out of the colonial period in the Caribbean. Similarly, the medieval instruments brought to New Spain were re-interpreted by indigenous artisans, who created new artifacts, like the *jarana*, used in popular *fandango* celebrations.

The Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra of New York traveled to Tijuana together with other guest musicians to make a CD under the baton of Mexican conductor Arturo O’Farrill. The material was recorded live at the tenth anniversary celebration of the Fandango Fronterizo (Border *Fandango*), an event without borders that invited musicians, singers, and dancers to meet and play *son* music from Vera Cruz, with the U.S. Border Patrol monitoring. For festival creator Jorge Castillo, this was a cultural and political act, since the border goes right through the middle



of it. O’Farrill, who has been critical of Trump’s policy, above all with regard to building the wall, thanked Castillo for allowing them to be in Tijuana. Among the conveners were Grammy winners like violinist Regina Carter, and Mexican musicians living in the United States, like percussionist Antonio Sánchez and the Villalobos Brothers.

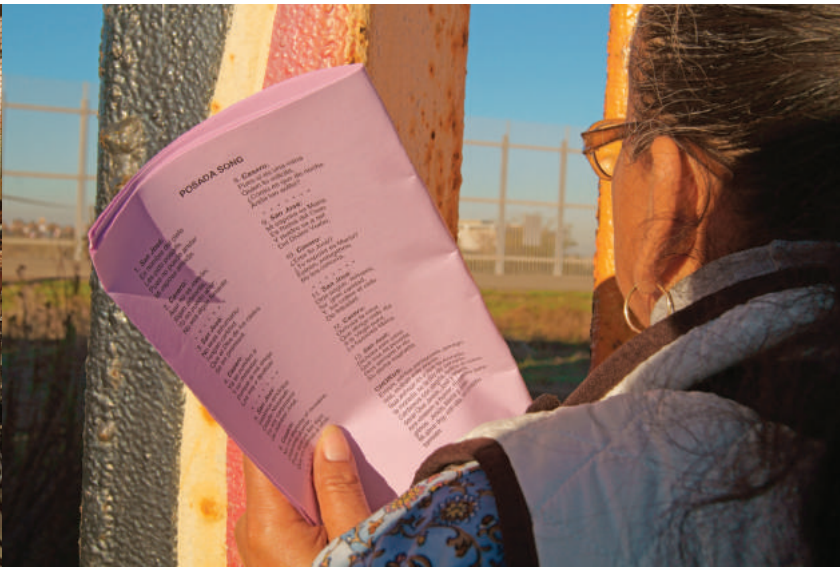
Last December, about 250 *posada* pilgrimage participants on each side of the border had to sing at a distance of 50 meters. Although it was hard to follow the sequence of the singing, the will to be together prevailed.

June 30, 2018

In June, thousands marched in several U.S. cities against the Zero Tolerance policy that led to the separation of more than 2000 migrant children from their families. When apprehended, the adults were processed in federal jails and the children were put in the custody of different institutions. These actions were part of a hardline policy against migrant populations, particularly from Central America.

Former Attorney General Jeff Sessions said that fleeing from the violence in their countries of origin was insufficient reason to request political asylum. In Tijuana, local organizers Espacio Migrante and Dreamers Moms USA/Tijuana called for a protest on the West Pedestrian Crossing at the San Ysidro border station. Next to them was a group of families standing in line to present their asylum applications.





December 15, 2018

The twenty-fifth anniversary of the Borderless *Posada* Procession was celebrated in the same place, next to the Tijuana Beaches lighthouse. These festivities are Catholic in origin, representing the nights before Jesus’s birth, when his parents, Joseph and Mary, searched for a place to stay on their way to Bethlehem. The word “*posada*” in Spanish means “inn.” They later fled to Egypt to escape the infanticide ordered by Herod.

In 1993, racist and anti-immigrant discourses preceded the building of the first border wall. In a context of abuse of migrants, both by the Border Patrol and by civilian vigilantes, Roberto Martínez, the founder of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), used the epic of Joseph and Mary to create awareness and ask for decent treatment of migrants.

This *posada* brings together people of different creeds to sing the traditional *villancicos* (carols) on both sides of the border, in remembrance of how those Biblical migrants went door to door seeking lodging. The pilgrims were represented on one side, and the hosts on the other:

Voices Outside: “In the name of heaven I ask you to welcome us in, since my beloved wife cannot continue.”

Voices Inside: “This is not an inn. Go on your way; I cannot open; don’t be a scoundrel!”

Voices Outside: “Don’t be inhuman. Be charitable. God in his Heaven will reward you.”

Voices Inside: “Go away and don’t bother us here, because if I become angry, I will beat you.”



Last December, the participants —about 250 on each side of the border— had to sing at a distance of 50 meters, since security measures were ratcheted up in coordination with Operation Faithful Patriot. Although it was hard to follow the sequence of the singing, the will to be together prevailed. The participants sent each other greetings and blessings across the border, and feelings of fraternity between natives and foreigners flourished.



One of the Most Important Corridors for Migration

Until the 1990s, the Tijuana-San Diego border was one of the most important corridors for undocumented migration to the United States. Then came Operation Guardian, which greatly reduced traffic by using new, more abundant technologies and infrastructure for border surveillance.

The local landscape changed during President Bill Clinton's administration (1993-2001). He increased the Border Patrol budget and established a court in

San Ysidro to facilitate deportations. Under George W. Bush (2001-2009), the Department of Homeland Security was created and the Secure Fences Act passed to reinforce 1 100 kilometers of the border. This made it possible to build a double wall in the Tijuana-San Diego section and to reinforce the posts in the area of Tijuana Beaches. Both presidents received funds from Congress for this. Donald Trump has demanded US\$5.7 billion for building 3 200 kilometers of wall along the border, but up until now, he has received barely enough for developing the prototypes and replacing certain portions of the already existing wall. Starting in September 2018, at the Tijuana-San Diego border, some contractors began replacing corrugated sheet metal with steel columns between five and nine meters high.

Epilogue

To pressure Congress and keep his campaign promise, Trump caused the 35-day federal government shutdown from December 22, 2018 to January 25, 2019. Despite that, at the close of this edition, the parties have come to no agreement to finance the wall. **MM**

