

Thesis

Memorialization along the Mexican-American border increases as harsher immigration policies are set. Artists create and place many forms of art along the border to commemorate migrants. This is all in efforts to remind the public of their humanity since government policies are constantly dehumanizing migrants.

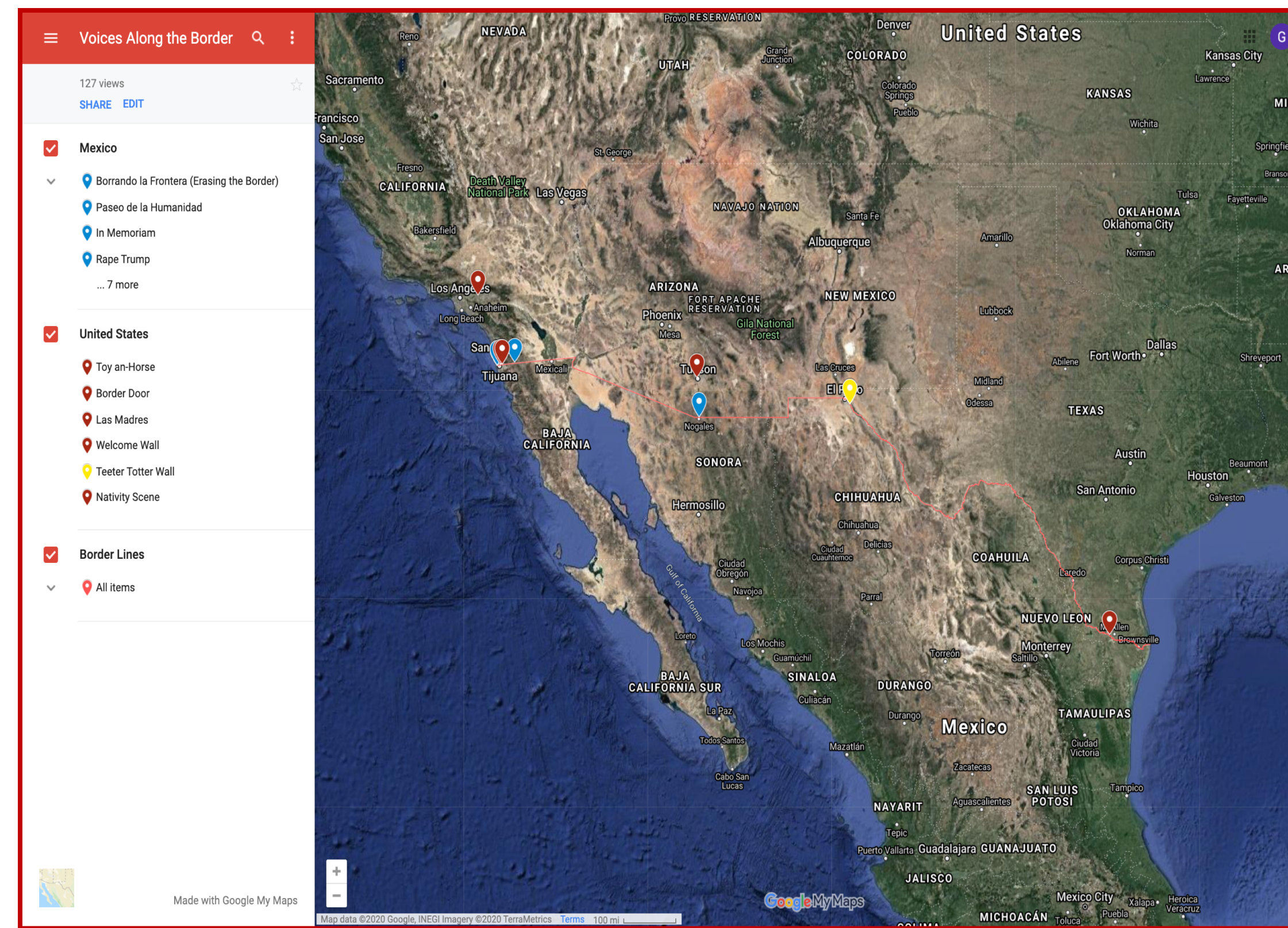
Historical Context

- Obelisks on the Mexican-American border were placed after the U.S Mexican-War ended
- The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 created a Joint US and Mexican Commission in charge of placing two hundred and fifty-eight obelisks along the border
- A second government installment along the border occurred in 1994 under the Clinton Administration which created “Operation Gatekeeper”
- The act required the placement of a military landing mat fence

Killing Ground

- Operation Hold the Line (1993), was aimed at forming a human blockade along the border- led to Prevention Through Deterrence (PTD)
- Jason de Leon *The Land of Open Graves*, necropolitics “or killing in the name of sovereignty.”
- PTD dehumanizes border crossers
- Extreme environmental conditions does the killing for Border Patrol officers
- U.S impunity (i.e. *Hernandez v. Mesa*)

Voices Along the Border Mapping Memory Project



Iconoclasm from Below vs. Above

“ESTOY AL LIMITE” (“I AM AT THE LIMIT”) by “ACCIÓN POÉTICA”(POETIC ACTION)

- Located in San Diego and Tijuana border
- What is the limit?
- Psychological or physical boundary



Kikito by JR

- Who is the artist?
- Critique from Alan Palaez, Ph.D student from Berkley

Teeter Totter Wall by Rafael San Fratello and Ronald Rael

- Critique from, community organizer, Aree Worawongwasu: Is colonial violence being challenged or reproduced under unity ?



Brice, Anne. Interview with Ronald Rael . Flat Vox. "09: From a border wall to a cultural bridge". podcast audio. April 5, 2017. <https://shows.icaast.com/flat-vox/episodes/5c354afe374f4d421d28990a>

Commemorative Activist Art

“Las Madres” by Valerie James

- Statue is composed of items left behind by migrants crossing the border, therefore containing DNA (sweat, tears, blood)
- Made to reflect la Virgen de Guadalupe “Virgen Mary”



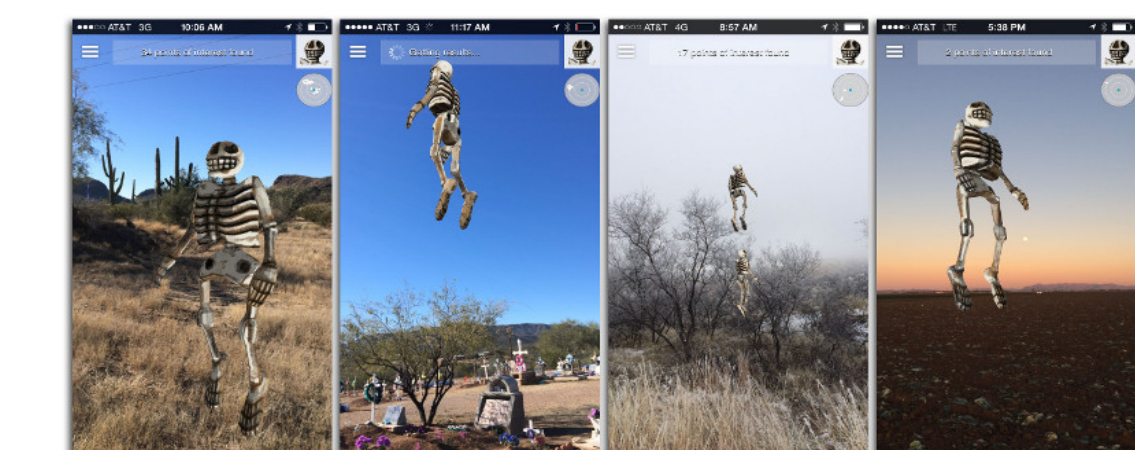
“In Memoriam” by Roberto Rosique

- Located in Tijuana, Mexico in front of border
- The red obelisk was not installed by Joint U.S-Mexican Commission



Frontera de los Muertos by John Craig Freeman

- Mobile application uses geolocation software
- *Calacas*, more light-hearted approach, Aztec tradition to celebrate death
- No personal information shared
- Holding the memory of the individual in one’s hands
- Phone connects us to our loved ones



Freeman, John Craig, and Jessica Auchter. “Border Memorial: Frontera De Los Muertos.” Edited by Craig J Super and Nancy Duxbury Hyperlex. *New Media Cultures*, 2015. hyperlexia.org/hyperlexia/2/augmented-maps/1-freeman-auchter-border-memorial.html

Conclusion

- Artists conceptualize the arduous journey of migrants by adding personal items left behind my migrants crossing the border to their art
- The art places American government under scrutiny for its harsh immigration policies because it shows that migrants are more than numbers, they are humans who sacrifice their lives in search for better opportunities
- Critiques of art reveals that some voices are not being heard along the border- raises question about how can art and criticism be reconciled