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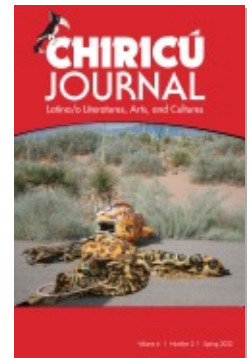
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"Basta" at the US-Mexico Border

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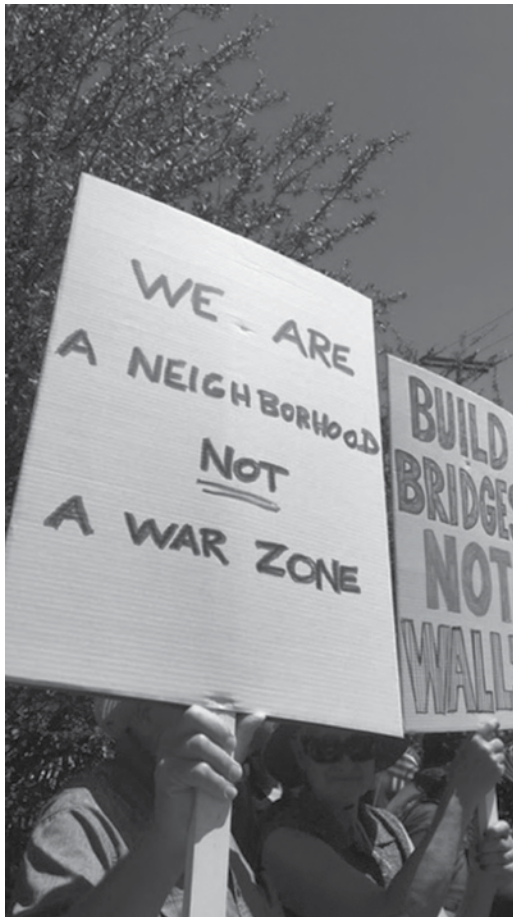


# A Feminist Border Manifesto for Unsettling Times

Shouting “Basta” at the US-Mexico Border

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**Figure 1.** Protesting immigrant children’s detention centers and wall construction, 2018. Las Cruces, New Mexico. Courtesy: Cynthia Bejarano.

+Border communities are formed through generations of transborder families and transborder families of choice, built on solidarity across borders. An ongoing antagonistic narrative of violence and difference is socially disseminated to keep us apart. We reject these narratives and like other *mujeres truchas*<sup>1</sup> from border communities, we practice cultural solidarity as microactions of resistance, solidarity, and friendship. We acknowledge that our cross-border differences complement each other—our different accents, our different citizenship status, our different “others.” *Quitando piedrita por piedrita*, we are each other’s gate openers and bridge makers, not gate keepers or wall builders.

+Our feminist border manifesto speaks to our outrage over daily injustices and persecutions, as we use our radical love<sup>2</sup> and radical friendship<sup>3</sup> to bear witness through our textual and visual testimonio from the Paso del Norte region of the US-Mexico border. We are outraged at the astronomical growth of the military, prison, border wall and immigration industrial complexes where we live, and the racial, carceral, and feminicidal violence that we see.... Basta!

+Border communities are not laboratories and borderlanders are not lab mice to be picked, prodded, and experimented on, dismissed, ridiculed, beaten, pillaged, raped, or killed for political posturing, for racist ideologies, for pleasure, or for profiteering off brown bodies as commodities, as disposable.... Basta!

+Border communities hold generational knowledge on border crossings and strategic alliances to maintain ties beyond national identities. Our *conocimiento* comes from desert lands and border concrete, and the multiple identities we occupy as Latinx peoples, as we encounter alliances during our journeys. We own our *historia* and we will tell it. We will not fall into trappings of seeing each other as enemies. Border communities interrupt deterministic stories of self, and create transborder lifestyles, opportunities for newcomers to flee violence or hunger, to lay claims in border communities’

1. Cervantes-Soon (2016).

2. Dotson (2013).

3. We hope to develop this concept in a future work titled "Embodiments of Radical Violence, Collective Rage & Radical Love in Border Zones."

transitional spaces of relationality and acceptance. The border is a space where people from across the world have a second chance to reinvent themselves. In doing so, they are embraced by people who generations before shared their migration stories, while others who have long forgotten where they came from unjustly persecute them as agents of profiteering industrial complexes. Our rage bears witness to human rights violations against apprehended and incarcerated migrants, immigrants, women, men, and children—everyone living or passing through the US-Mexico border. Our rage comes from the violence perpetuated on our common lands, on unequal access to el Rio Grande/el Rio Bravo's limited waters, and obsessive,



**Figure 2.** Protest of artist Isabel Cabanillas's assassination, January 25, 2020. Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. Courtesy: Cynthia Bejarano.

negative comparisons between the two sides. Our rage is for all people who have suffered, the families whose lives are impacted by hate, by xenophobia, by greed, by killing, by misogyny. Harm to them is harm to us all. Basta!

+Border communities witness how interlocking discourses of hate proliferate as two countries criminalize the movement of people, to further marginalize and otherize brown people seeking refuge, a passageway, *un rinconcito*, a homeland, as activists on both sides risk everything while performing above ground and underground work to keep families together, dreams alive, and the possibility of a better future for those who will come after us and inherit the land, our strategies, and our painful mistakes. Our countries' long and complex records of violence show how people are swallowed into systems that separate and detain, that issue visa numbers and "alien" numbers and toe tags when no longer useful... Basta!

+Border communities experience pathologies of violence as empire-building, militarization, industrialization, racism, colorism, classism, and sexism. As each prospers and is normalized, the chronic pursuit of exploitable labor for profit flourishes, while marginalized people work to survive and survive to work. Back bent, knees bending, hands twisting, ears ringing, eyes tearing, working twelve-hour shifts under penetrating sunrays or burning artificial light. Histories of violence are routine, cyclical, and normalized. Mounting resentment grows between those who hate and those who love. Nativists, xenophobes, traffickers, misogynist killers STOP... Basta!

+Border communities' collective rage is ubiquitous. Our obligation is to name the violence and those that injure others because of historical, unnatural, and intentional systemic constructions of hate. Our obligation is to articulate strategies of radical love and radical friendship for all of us, and to share our borderlanders' testimonios<sup>4</sup> to reach others living at borders everywhere who suffer similar injuries. *Luchemos juntxs*. Like the *mujer trucha* photographed says, No Nací Mujer Para Que Me Maten por Ello. Basta!

4. Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, & Flores Carmona (2012); García (2016).



**Figure 3.** Affect taxonomy no. 1 wood box, highlighting the absurdity of dividing what belongs together. We cannot differentiate if the plants are from the US or Mexico since they belong to the diverse Chihuahuan desert. Ciudad Juárez/Las Cruces. Courtesy: Ma. Eugenia Hernández Sánchez.

+Border communities remain a Unitax cultural community<sup>5</sup> despite efforts to separate and to confront us. Radical love and friendship are the capacity to recognize ourselves in the other(ized), and of weaving our geographical translocation with generational knowledges despite nationalities. Radical love and friendship values inhabiting a space where experience defines belonging. Radical friendship emerges from our bordered social proximity creating a pathway to commit to eco-social justice as interconnected, indivisible, and transcendent, like the desert's winds moving easily through borders. Like *la gobernadora*, the governess, that desert bush with its healing properties that blankets the Chihuahuan desert floor. Radical friendship's strategy is to listen and observe to reveal our commonalities and question the discourse of border communities as opposite and conflicted. How and when did we learn we were so different from each other?

5. Morin (2008) defines Unitax multiplex—using complex theory—as that unit formed through different and multiple dimensions defining a nonhomogenous unit.



**Figure 4.** Protesting US border wall in Santa Teresa, New Mexico, 2018. Courtesy: Cynthia Bejarano.

+Border communities demand remedies to fully assert a version of democracy that recognizes humanity and dignity for all. The disposability of labor and the expulsions of poor brown people directly impact the borderlands, and are reflected in US mass incarceration, mass deportations, and mass populations and communities terrorized and living in constant fear. These breed desperation and vulnerabilities that foster forms of racialized, cartel, and feminicidal violence. The wall, that damn border wall incarcerates both sides, it incarcerates us all. ... Basta!

+Border communities respond to radical violence with radical love. Our rage and our use of radical friendship anchor our insistence to recognize humanity across borderlines and to acknowledge each other as human beings interconnected with the cultural ecology that surrounds us as we work in multi-species ways. Our transnational communities challenge racial discrimination and discourses of hate that incite violence.

+Border communities mourn and remember the Mexican and US paisanos at an El Paso, Texas, Walmart Supercenter, who on August 3, 2019, were hunted and killed by a single white male shooter, barely an adult himself. The shooter-hunter staked out the Walmart by entering a half hour before his carnage—he later stated

that he was pleased that there were enough “Mexicans” to kill—then reentered the store, killing twenty-two people and injuring twenty-five.<sup>6</sup> One cardboard sign at the initial makeshift memorial at the massacre site read, “If you only got to know our people, our streets, our culture, then you would’ve seen how precious our city is. You chose hate without knowing us. *Our love will follow you for eternity.*”<sup>7</sup>

The hate that motivated the shooting was met by the love that people have for the community he attacked. Rather than retreating into fear and submission, our communities reacted with collective love, resilience, and strength.... Amistad radical!

+Border communities are transnational feminist coalitions that demand justice for nearly thirty years of feminicides. When artist, activist, and mother Isabel Cabanillas was killed on January 18, 2020, we joined hundreds of other activists, families, and women



**Figure 5.** Walmart Supercenter shooting memorial in El Paso, Texas, August 15, 2019. Courtesy: Cynthia Bejarano.

6. D’Amassa (2019).

7. D’Amassa (2019); italics for emphasis.





**Figure 6.** Wall intervention in honor of Isabel Cabanillas, January 25, 2020. Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. Courtesy: Ma. Eugenia Hernández Sánchez.



**Figure 7.** Protest by border communities against murder of artist Isabel Cabanillas, 2020. Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. Courtesy: Cynthia Bejarano.

who marched on the streets after her murder, and then again on March 8 joined community members for *Día Internacional de la Mujer* in downtown Ciudad Juárez. Young activists from the epic feminist group *Hijas de su Maquilera Madre* led protestors in chants

stating, “The State doesn’t protect me, my friends do.” This is fighting radical violence with radical love. . . . *Amistad radical!*

+Our feminist border manifesto is a living, breathing document that speaks our truth and works to name, archive, and dismantle the violence we see, feel, or hear about, and the daily violent affronts against everyday border people, immigrant people, migrant people, species, and any being crossing through our homelands. Our manifesto speaks to all border societies worldwide, to question, “How did we learn we were so different from each other?” We celebrate our differences and allow our similarities to lead us in solidarity to stop violence. *Basta!*

+As border communities and as transfronteriza feminists, we call for solidarity work across borders through radical friendships and radical love that foster our commonwealth beyond national enclaves. We do not speak for immigrants, migrants, borderlanders, or other women; our obligation is to magnify their voices and rights’ assertions. The border and its desert and people are our own; they do not belong to nation-states. Border zones are examples of where we are headed globally. We resist radical violence and those that promulgate it with our radical love-friendship. Nation-states will not define our friendships. We will continue to cross international



**Figure 8.** Multi-species protest, 2018. Santa Teresa border wall, New Mexico. Courtesy: Cynthia Bejarano.

borders to see each other, standing and sitting for hours, holding our breath, as we are asked, even interrogated, about our citizenship, our passports, our past crossings, and what our purpose is on the other side. We will continue to cross borders together, shouting, “Basta!” to violence and shouting for more. ... Amistad radical!

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