

# Creating Illegal Aliens

a look at U.S. policy's dehumanization of immigrants

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A reflection by Andy Jacobs

# Purpose

While traveling to Tucson, AZ, and participating in the [BorderLinks](#) program it became clear to me that U.S. immigration policy, as it functions today, dehumanizes and criminalizes people coming into this country from Central and South America. I hope to show the systemic manner in which U.S. foreign policy towards its Southern neighbors creates this flow of immigrants to its borders, manipulates their lives for financial gain, denies them basic human rights and even causes death.



*Photos by Shalon Reynolds  
Artist Guadalupe Serrano: Paseo de Humanidad*



# How and Why?

**No person is illegal**, but there are those in public office and private industry who want you to think so. Labeling people “alien” or “illegal” makes denying people’s rights easier.

→ **Consumers**

U.S. citizens are addicted to cheap labor and goods

→ **Corporations**

Addicted to cheap resources, enslaved labor, and increasing profits.

→ **Ideology**

Pervasive idea that U.S. capitalism is democracy & U.S. democracy is “good”

# What's the difference between an hour's labor in the United States versus in Mexico?



## Market Basket Survey

A common economic tool to gauge the **cost of living**.

A minimum wage worker in the U.S. works 15 minutes to earn a dozen eggs, A Mexican minimum wage earner works 105 minutes for the same eggs.

How does this fuel  
immigration? Working in  
the U.S. can triple or  
quadruple the value  
of a labor hour.

(when that labor hour is spent in Mexico.)



**Their economy's  
bad, not ours,**

except our economy is  
fueled by eager cheap  
labor from the South.

And NAFTA displaced  
subsistence farming that  
supported local labor,  
driving unemployed  
farmers to U.S.



**School of Americas  
WATCH**

SOAW reports and documents how the U.S. military trains and supports Central and South American governments and cartels for its border and commercial interests.

Not all people migrating to the U.S. are fleeing economic hardship. **Lalo**

**Garcia**, a reporter from Mexico City, fled to the United States after 5 of his colleagues disappeared and two more were killed.

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# Justifying Action

Mexican government can't justify military in the streets without cartel violence; U.S. can't justify School of Americas without War on Drugs.

*-Lalo Garcia*

→ **Prevention Deterrence Strategy**

Homeland Security and Border Patrol tactic to funnel immigrants into the most dangerous parts of the desert with the hope that death will deter crossings

→ **Migrant Filter**

U.S. pays Mexico \$20 million annually to stop Central Americans crossing from Mexico to the U.S. Mexico allows cartel violence at its Southern border specifically to help facilitate deterrence.



## Immigrants for Sale

A Brave New Films documentary about the for profit prison system and how it targets immigrants.

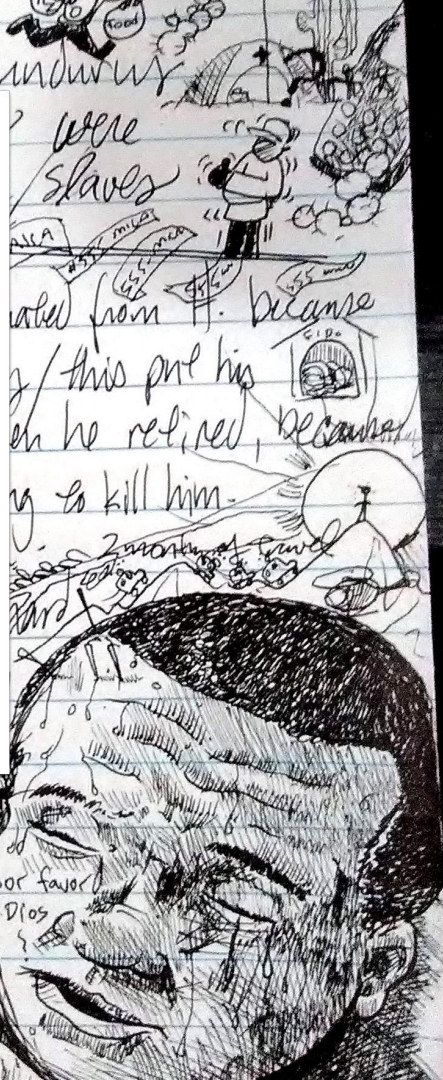
Alvarez's bond was \$12,000. He must pay \$400 a month for his ankle monitor, This does not go towards what he owes, nor does it reduce his 25% interest on the bond.

# Meet Derik Alvarez.

He fled Honduras after being threatened by the cartel for his participation in a police raid.

His hardship getting to our border was extreme, but the way he was treated when he was finally able to apply for asylum is predatory.

Although he has temporary status within the U.S., he is in severe debt because of his incarceration and bond for release.





# No More Deaths

Alvarez met Maiko Zambrano in a No More Deaths humanitarian aid station in the desert. Zambrano's help led to Alvarez's surviving and eventually staying in the United States.

No More Deaths is an organization that offers water, food, shelter and medical aid to people who may need it in the desert. They leave water and food at places passed by undocumented people in the desert.



## Leaving Food & Water

It is important to leave food in five gallon jugs with lids and leave both food and water in relative shade.

Volunteers regularly check water drops for use and vandalism.

Photo by Brent Wiescamp  
First water station on desert water drop with Miako Zambrano



Even a minor injury in the desert can result in infection and death.



### **Only the essentials**

Many people crossing the desert bring only the bare essentials, leaving blankets, hygiene products and clothing behind.

For many this is an Exodus, and they find a way to carry their faith with them in crucifixes, images of saints and prayers.



# “Chase and Skatter” Technique

“Disappeared Part I: Deadly Apprehension Methods” is a brief video describing how border agents chase people over dangerous terrain and separate them from their groups and supplies.

This tactic causes injury and fatality to people being chased. For the complete report go to:

[www.thedisappearedreport.org](http://www.thedisappearedreport.org)



Photo by Brent Wiescamp

Hike through dried out wash, heading to first water drop.





## Criminal Not Immigration

Since people being apprehended are taken to **Criminal Court**, they are not able to plead asylum at that time..

Asylum must be pled in **Immigration Court**. Many people choose to be deported rather than returned to incarceration until they appear in the appropriate court.

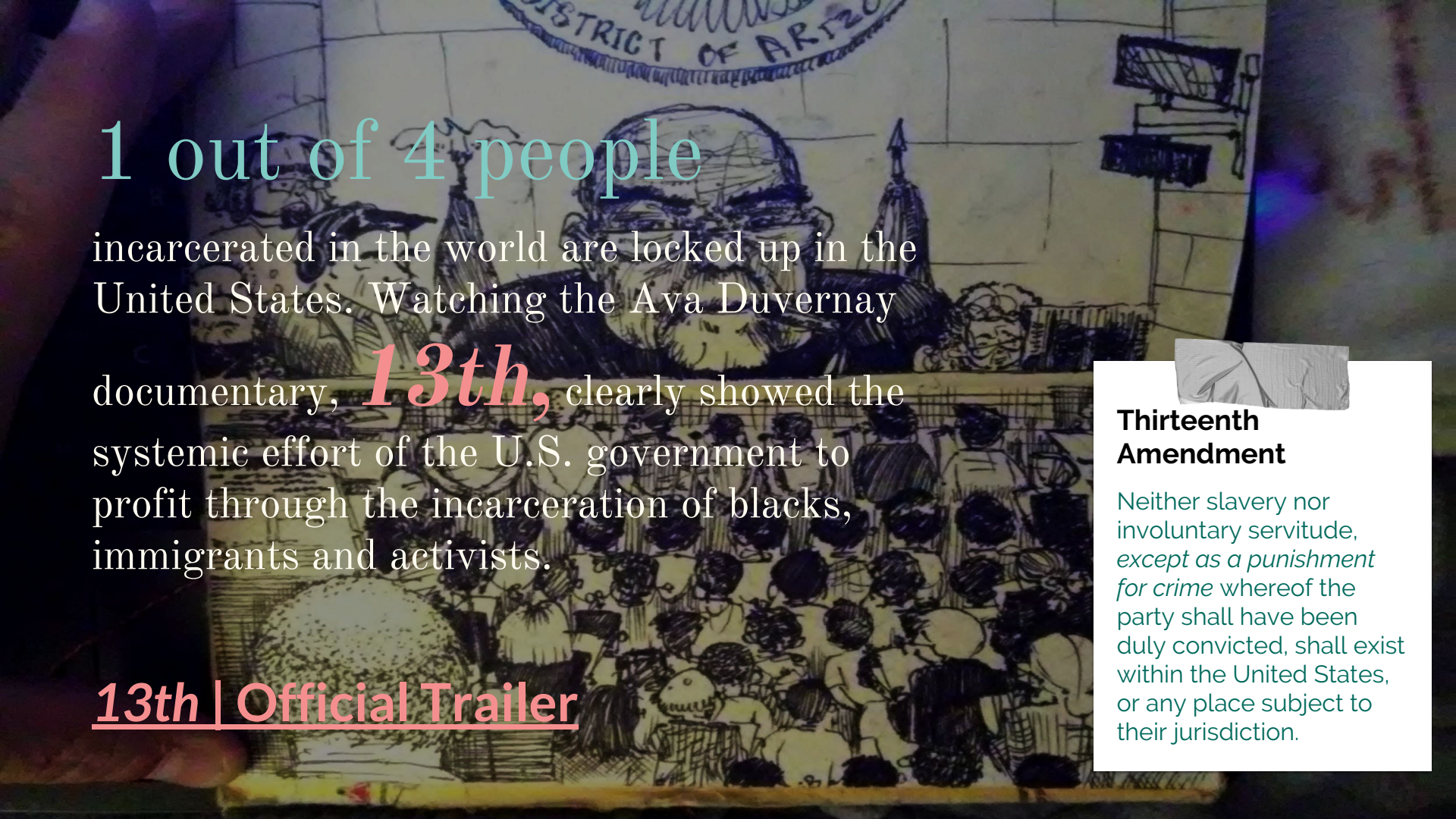
*Photo by Brent Wiescamp  
Guadalupe Serrano sculpture on Nogales side of wall.*

# Operation Streamline

is a zero tolerance program aimed at prosecuting people who illegally cross the U.S. border from Mexico with criminal Federal charges.

The goal is to process 100 immigrants a day with Federal misdemeanors and then deport them. Repeat violators can then be imprisoned.

The afternoon we watched the Federal Criminal Court proceedings, over 70 people were processed in under two hours.



1 out of 4 people

incarcerated in the world are locked up in the United States. Watching the Ava Duvernay

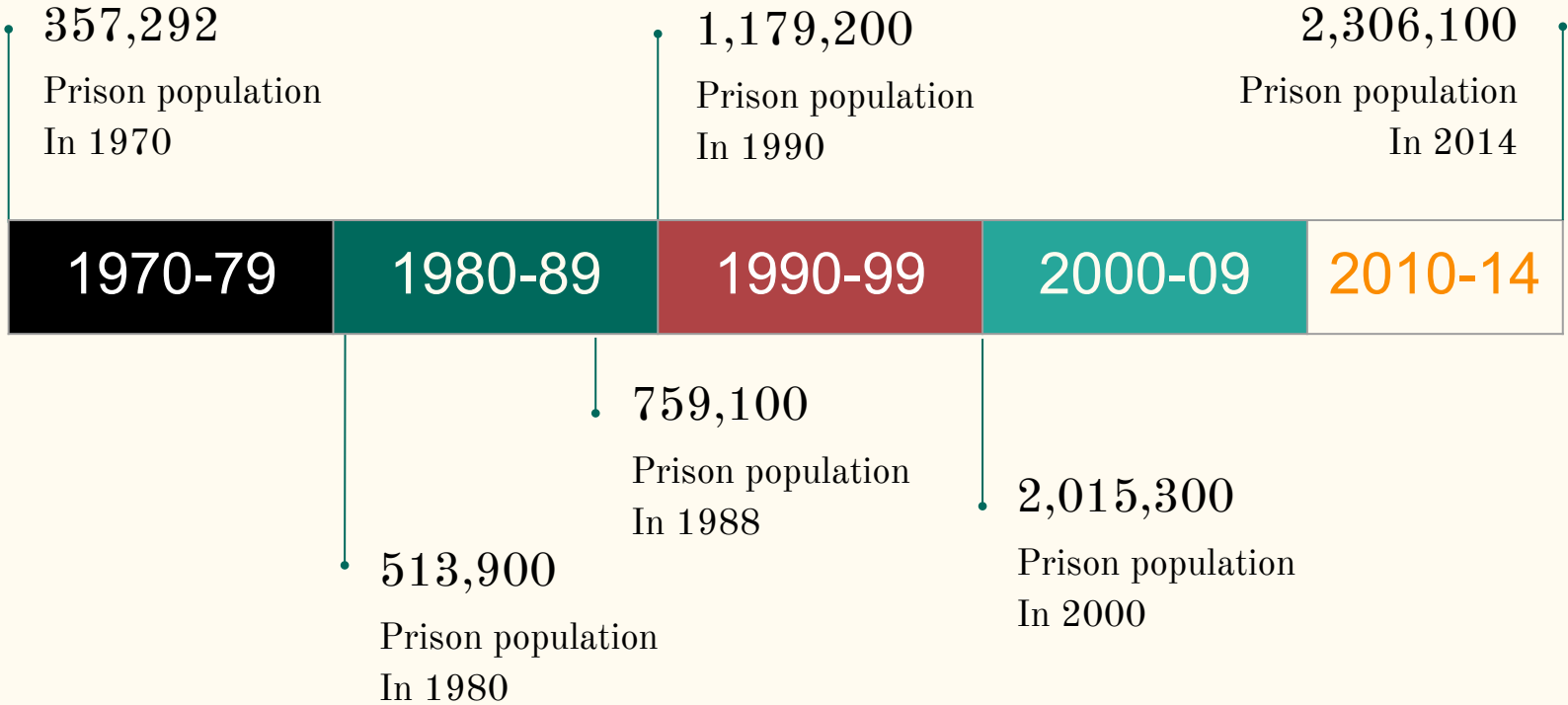
documentary, *13th*, clearly showed the systemic effort of the U.S. government to profit through the incarceration of blacks, immigrants and activists.

[13th | Official Trailer](#)

### Thirteenth Amendment

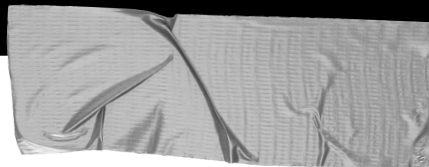
Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, *except as a punishment for crime* whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

# Growth of U.S. Prison Population\*



● Statistics from documentary 13th|2016





## Why is this bad?

The militarization of the border creates an aggressive enforcement arm of government accustomed to seeing people as “illegal,” ignoring their humanity and operating with impunity.

→ **Illegal Equals “Bad”**

Assuming someone is “bad” makes harming them easier and more frequent.

→ **Absolute power**

Border Patrol is given 100 miles into the United States in which to arrest, detain, and/or confiscate all they deem a border risk.

October 10, 2012, Jose Antonio, 16, was shot 14 times and killed by U.S. Border Agent Lonnie Ray Swartz.

Jose was in Nogales  
Mexico **the U.S.**  
**Border agent** was at  
the wall.



### **Witnesses**

Witnesses say that the attack was unprovoked. Some saw the Border Patrol agent step through a gate in the wall into Mexico to fire.

His trial ended in a mistrial on [April 23, 2018](#). He was acquitted of second degree murder, but the jury was hung on the lesser charges.

In his memory, every October 10th, there is a silent march past the corner where he died and where his memorial has been erected.

THIS IS THE FIRST  
TIME A U.S. BORDER  
AGENT HAS BEEN  
CHARGED  
WITH A CRIME  
for shooting  
someone in Mexico.



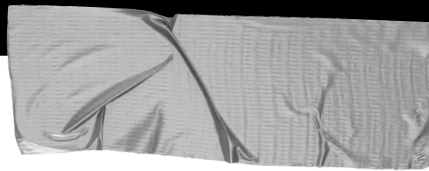
*Photos by Shalon Reynolds*  
A mural of Jose Antonio and  
a cross commemorating his  
memorial.



### Logistics

The distance from the corner where Jose Antonio was shot to the tower location occupied by Border Patrol would be difficult to hit with a baseball.

The defense that rocks were thrown at agents seems unlikely.



# BorderLinks

Instrumental in my understanding of these facts as they have been represented is my experience with [Borderlinks](#)

## → Meeting People

Talking with everyone, from Federal Magistrate Velasco to asylum seeker Derik Alvarez, activists like Maiko Zambrano with No More Deaths and Lalo Garcia with SOA Watch, clarifies the reality of learned facts.

## → Meeting Groups

Just like people, meeting groups actively working to solve these problems was encouraging: [No More Deaths](#) doing humanitarian aid, [End Streamline Coalition](#) fighting against mass criminalization and deportation of migrants, [Mariposas Sin Fronteras](#) reaching out to LGBTQ people with legal, financial and emotional support.

# Voices from the Border

We need to create a more fluid border policy. More people would go home if they could return for work.

Federal Magistrate,  
Bernardo Velasco, AZ

This country is losing the gift of our resilience.

Activist Poet,  
Yosimar Reyes, AZ

After my detention, I can be myself here and it's been very good.

LGBTQ Asylum Immigrant,  
Yesenia Palencia, AZ

How can you help?  
By informing your local  
community, donating to  
groups taking action,  
and going to the U.S.  
Border to volunteer.

Photo by Brent Wiescamp Sunset over Tucson



### DAOK

[Dream Action Oklahoma](#)  
helps Oklahoma  
DACA applicants  
process applications  
and pay fees.

Norman Sanctuary  
Coalition fundraises  
for DAOK.





# BorderLinks Trip

Individually or with a group, BorderLinks can coordinate your educational border trip to your needs. Working with people of all ages, BorderLinks houses, feeds, transports and guides participants every step of the way.

There are scholarships available for interested parties in need. BorderLinks tries to turn no one away from experience.

Don't think you can travel?  
[Sponsor someone else's trip.](#) For only \$180 you can help expand border education.

