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"Speak Softly but Carry a Big Can of Paint" - Banksy, Wall and Piece: Street Art as Radical Political Activism

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-Banksy, Wall and Piece
Street Art as Radical Political Activism

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The English street artist Banksy best describes the power of street art as radical activism through his assertion in his 2003 collection, *Banging Your Head Against a Brick Wall*, that “[It] is one of the few tools you have if you have almost nothing. And even if you don't come up with a picture to cure world poverty you can make someone smile while they're having a piss” (11). Banksy is notorious because he is a prolific street artist yet his identity has never been revealed. He plays a prominent role in the current international street art movement. Since the 1970s street art movement in New York City, street art has captured the imaginations of young people around the world as a form of protest and resistance to privatization and oppression of marginalized groups such as youth and people of color. Through the examination of three areas of the world in which street art is prevalent, I posit street art as a radical form of protest to the ageism, racism, and classism that Palestinian and Latino youth face today. I also offer suggestions for wider street art applications as radical political activism, as well as ways for the reader to participate in street art.

I begin with a brief history of modern street art in order to display the continuity between street art movements in New York City and those that have started around the globe as a result. I use street art at the Israeli Security Wall to show street art's influence in radical politics as a global youth phenomenon. I then examine the U.S./Mexico border fence, a region that is plagued by systemic racial and economic inequalities. Finally, I analyze Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood, a historically Latino immigrant community recognized for its activist street art but also for its racial and economic divides from nearby affluent Chicago neighborhoods. I chose each of these sites because of their political and social importance as areas in which blatant attempts are made to divide

ethnically, racially, and economically diverse populations. While the Israeli Security Wall and the U.S./Mexico border wall are obvious in their attempts to divide, Pilsen's divisions may seem less clear. I include Pilsen because it is one of the few immigrant neighborhoods in Chicago that is still mostly inhabited by Latinos, whereas other historic immigrant neighborhoods such as Little Italy have become racially and ethnically diverse (Paolini and Tiede 1).

Literature Review and Research Methodology

In looking at these areas, I give a theoretical analysis of "the wall" as a simultaneous site of separation, symbolism, and creative response. Moreover, I analyze the importance of street art as a radical form of protest and response to the various injustices that youth around the world face. Finally, I explore graffiti's use as an act of spatial and structural intervention and response to racial and economic inequalities.

I give a brief background of the modern history of graffiti, stemming from the 1970s and 1980s in New York City, a time period and a subculture that was arguably the launching pad for the global popularity boom of street art among youth. I refer to Jon Naar's 2003 *The Faith of Graffiti*, and Tony Silver's 1983 documentary *Style Wars* for the background of the graffiti movement in New York City.

In my analysis of graffiti as radical political activism, I frame my study in E.V. Walter's 1988 *Placeways*, wherein Walter discusses the relationship between an oppressed group and its surroundings. Paulo Freire's 1970 *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and Augusto Boal's 1979 *Theatre of the Oppressed* help to understand graffiti as political action and response. Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes* helps establish Chicago's Pilsen's relevance by outlining contact zone theory, which Pratt developed.

In order to explain the Israeli Separation Wall's construction I consult William Parry's 2010 *Against the Wall*. I consult news articles from *The Times* and *Global Post*, which address international street artists painting on the Israeli Security wall and Palestinian reactions to the art. For a background on the construction and history of the U.S. Security Fence at the U.S.-Mexico border I consult Fernando Romero's *Hyperborder*. I give the reader a brief history of the two walls so that I can later explain their importance as sites of graffiti as resistance.

In my analysis of graffiti at the Israeli Separation Wall, I use a newspaper article from the San Francisco Gate, which discuss the Palestinian reaction to art painted by foreign artists. I also use several works that focus on the occurrence of graffiti at the Separation Wall, including William Parry's *Against the Wall*; Ashley Bowen's "Bomb the Wall: Graffiti as Resistance in Palestine," which offers a differentiation between Palestinian graffiti as resistance and foreign visiting artists' works; and Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian's "Negotiating the Present, Historicizing the Future," which gives Palestinian children's views about the Israeli Separation Wall. I also use visual aids drawn from my personal collection, from those given to me by a colleague, and from internet resources. In my analysis of street art at the U.S. Security Fence and in Chicago's Pilsen, I use photographs from my personal collection and from internet resources as visual aids.

Research Methodology

During my research for this project I conducted in depth interviews with three street artists about their involvement in the street art movement. These artists evidence the rising popularity of street art, as well as its ties with Latin American revolutionary muralism and public art. Throughout this work I will interject their comments on various issues related to street art as political activism. Brief biographies for the three artists follow.

Judithe Hernandez is a Chicana muralist and visual artist based in East Los Angeles. She has worked in Chicago's Pilsen and currently has an exhibit of her pastel drawings on display at the National Museum of Mexican Art. In reference to her work as a muralist, Hernandez explains, "My professional career began with the Chicano mural movement in L.A. During the 1960s-70s, muralism was revived by Chicanos as a viable form of social protest based on models previously seen in the Mexican and Bolshevik Revolutions." Gender and class disparities are the main themes in Hernandez's work.

Hector Duarte, a Mexican muralist who studied in internationally recognized Mexican muralist David Alfaro Siqueiros' workshop in Cuernavaca, México, before coming to live permanently in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood in 1985, echoed Hernandez's sentiment. Duarte added that for Mexicans and Chicanos, muralism has roots in Aztec and Maya painting traditions. Even after the destruction done to colonial era indigenous cities, anthropologists and historians discovered well-kept murals inside and outside Mayan and Aztec temples. Duarte also explained that the Chicano mural resurgence in East LA quickly found its way to Chicago's Pilsen, where it remains a prominent part of the neighborhood. Duarte has played a major role in creating and maintaining murals in Pilsen. Duarte cites Mexican revolutionary figures such as

Emiliano Zapata, the mix of Catholic and indigenous religious themes, corn, and Day of the Dead imagery as main themes in his work.

Finally, I met with Chilean street artist Charquipunk. Charqui is the youngest of the three artists and has traveled throughout South America painting with both aerosol and traditional wall paint. He has never traveled to the United States to paint, but his political awareness and commitment to creating social justice through his work makes him a valuable voice in this work. Charqui's signature is painting a brightly colored cat, although he has also begun to paint native birds and images of Mapuche peoples.

Theoretical Frameworks

Foucault's oft cited assertion that, "where there is power, there is resistance" provides a compelling method of understanding street art as resistance (History of Sexuality 95). In urban areas, the divisions between races, classes, and genders are especially apparent, making urban space ideal for street art to comment on inequalities. In the face of racial, economic, and gender inequalities in urban areas, street art composes a counter power. By making inequality visual through street art, the viewer feels as if the images in street art have been imprinted upon him or her. These images are unavoidable: they are confrontational and placed on the very spaces whose ownership (and sometimes entry) denies youth's power.

Similarly, Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes* is crucial in understanding Pilsen's relevance to my work as well as the political, social, and cultural relevance of border regions. Using areas like the U.S./Mexico border and Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood to determine the various uses of youth and their advocates to subvert the age, class, gender,

race, and ethnic hierarchies that oppress them is useful because both areas are “contact zones”. A “contact zone”, as first described by Mary Louise Pratt, is “the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict” (6). In *Imperial Eyes*, Pratt explains how the oppressed groups experience and then subvert the dominant culture through “select[ing] and invent[ing] from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture” (6). In this way, street art reads as youth’s appropriation of tools and surfaces put in place by the dominant forces and normally used to exclude them.

One aspect of graffiti that may grab the attention of anyone outside of the subculture is its use of violent language to describe graffiti creation. Ashley Bowen explains, “The language of graffiti is confrontational: tagging a wall is referred to as a hit, writers wage cross-out wars, and to write graffiti on a . . . subway car is to ‘bomb’ the car” (5). Jon Naar further explains, “An object is hit with your name . . . and in the ghetto, a hit equals a kill. . . You hit your name and maybe something in the whole scheme of the system gives a death rattle” (6). While the use of militant and confrontational language may seem counterproductive, I view it as a further expression of resistance. As an art form graffiti does not create direct violence. Instead, it is often a non-violent response to direct or structural violence. I would argue that the choice to use militant and confrontational language in relation to the action of graffiti creation is a calculated one. It places the subculture’s art in a militant light, as if they are fighting against oppressive forces through writing on the physical constructions that represent and

uphold them. Chicana artist Judithe Hernandez writes, “painting in the streets taught me that artists are sometimes required to be soldiers” (Interview). Here, Hernandez speaks to the duty that public artists may feel to fight back against inequality with their art.

Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and Augusto Boal’s *Theatre of the Oppressed* are useful resources for understanding street art’s power as political activism. Freire’s work outlines the relationship between students and teachers, with the student conceived as a “bank” into which the teacher “deposits” his or her knowledge. Freire condemns this relationship as hierarchical and critiques the idea that those viewed as students, (typically youth or young people) are no more than receptacles for adults’ ideas and beliefs. He proposes the need for a new kind of relationship in which all actors give and receive knowledge “deposits.” This idea also applies beautifully to street art as political activism by disenfranchised youth. Street art reads as a way to fight against the “student as a bank” concept by visualizing the ideas of the young for those who typically force their beliefs onto youth.

Boal’s work, inspired by Freire’s insights, applies these concepts to theatrical practice. Boal urges the passive spectator of a theatrical piece to become involved in the play in order to create larger social change (Schutzman 1). Boal encouraged actors to transform themselves and experiment with different roles by wearing masks and moving back and forth between fiction and reality (Schutzman 2). Boal also created the concept of “invisible theatre” in which actors use public spaces to create scenes that are rehearsed but appear to be real life situations. These simulated realities are meant to expose injustices and to prompt discussion from unsuspecting spectators (Schutzman 3). Like “invisible theatre,” street art bombards the unsuspecting spectator with images created by

an unknown hand that expose social injustices and aim to spur discussion and debate. In this way, the act of writing graffiti is an even more important aspect of graffiti analysis as political activism than simply analyzing the images of the graffiti.

Terminology Clarifications

In order to prevent confusion, I would like to begin by both clarifying and complicating several terms that will come up often in this essay. The first is “youth.” Modern graffiti began as a youth movement in New York City and the majority of graffiti artists began painting as youth, even though they are no longer considered youth by United Nations standards, which qualify as “youth” anyone between the ages of 15 and 24 years old (FAQ 1).

While the United Nation’s definition of youth is widely acknowledged and accepted, for the purposes of my research I conceptualize youth as a political attitude and a chosen identity rather than a fixed age range. I believe that youth often has very little to do with age and a lot to do with how one views the world. In my correspondence with street artists, (many of whom would no longer fit within the UN’s definition of youth), most identify themselves as youth or as part of a youth movement. For example, the Chilean artist Charquipunk writes, “It’s youth that has a more open inclination toward new experiences and those activities that can be transgressive, such as painting in the street.” Including a range of artists who embody this more comprehensive definition of “youth” in my research allows me to gain further insight into the diverse world of street art as well as various motivations for participation. Rather than writing solely about UN-defined youth, I am also very interested in youth-identified artists who participate in and

advocate for street art and the roles these artists play in encouraging, mentoring, and supporting younger artists.

My reasoning of including artists outside of the UN's definition of youth is partly political: as previously mentioned, I believe that youth is not just an age but also a mindset and a political positioning. Artists who identify with or as youth yet who do not meet the UN qualifications for being a youth are relinquishing age privilege and showing solidarity with youth, who often experience age discrimination and political disenfranchisement. Apart from my political beliefs, I am also including youth-identified artists because of Institutional Review Board limitations. In the timeframe allotted for this project, it would have proved difficult to get IRB permission to conduct interviews with people under the age of 18.

This brings me to my next distinction: between types of artists. While the three artists that I interviewed for this work are paid artists, only two of them are professionally trained. Two of them are from urban areas and one is from a rural area. All of the artists are Latinos. For the purposes of this work, I am more interested in unpaid and untrained artists. However, due to IRB limitations, I am restricted in my access to these artists, many of whom the law considers criminals. Therefore, in this work I use interviews with street artists who are public figures and not at risk of legal punishment for their work. Meanwhile, I attempt to convey how these artists can speak about street art's power as radical political activism for youth artists who may face repercussions if quoted.

The division between types of artists in this work also brings to light the different definitions and forms of art that fall under the blanket term, "street art". For the purposes

of this essay, I mean street art to include any and all forms of artistic expression in public spaces. This includes and is not limited to graffiti, (a term which I will sometimes use interchangeably with street art), guerilla art, tagging, and murals. While I would love to include public performance art, I will not do so in this essay (although street art is arguably a form of performance art carried out by an unknown performer) because of time limitations.

In a similar vein, “art” is a very contentious term and, therefore, I want to complicate the term for this essay. When confronted with street art, many viewers might first think, “vandalism”. “Vandalism”, as defined by the 1989 *Oxford English Dictionary* is, “ruthless destruction or spoiling of anything beautiful or venerable”. This definition of vandalism, when applied to street art, is hyperbolic. Those who classify street art as vandalism assume that the surface the artist uses is “beautiful or venerable” to begin with. Herein lies the problem: vandalism as linked to street art plays in to wider bourgeois notions about “art”. These notions suggest that “good art” only be created by professionally trained artists and be displayed in galleries that visitors must pay to enter. Banksy mocks this sentiment, writing in his 2006 art collection *Wall and Piece*, “When you go to an art gallery you are simply a tourist looking at the trophy cabinet of a few millionaires” (150). Capitalist structures strive to maintain order and monetary value in “art” so that it has the most earning potential. Unpaid street artists work against the grain in this sense, refusing to create art that can be sold or moved to galleries.

On a different note, I do not emphasize division between the graffiti painted by foreign artists and that painted by local artists. Since graffiti burst onto the scene in New York City, it has grown into a transnational youth movement with many artists painting

locally and others traveling to paint internationally. This is not to say that there is no difference between the art created by the two groups. However, in this study I will not discount graffiti created by international artists, because I feel they are part of the “write and respond” aspect of graffiti writing and street and their presence cannot and should not be ignored. Also, in areas such as the U.S./Mexico border and the Israeli Separation Wall, increasing numbers of activist tourists have traveled to act as witnesses to the oppression caused by the separations. In activist artists’ cases, many choose to add to pre-existing graffiti, showing solidarity with the resident oppressed people’s causes.

Next, some readers may have been confused when they saw the phrase, “radical political activism” in my title. To clarify what I mean by “radical,” I turn to feminist activist Kathie Sarachild’s definition. In her 1973 speech given at the First National Conference of Stewardesses for Women’s Rights in New York City, Sarachild related, “The dictionary says radical means root, coming from the Latin word for root. And that is what we meant by calling ourselves radicals. We were interested in getting to the roots of problems in society. You might want to say we wanted to pull up weeds in the garden by their roots, not just pick off the leaves at the top to make things momentarily look good” (Consciousness Raising: A Radical Weapon). Street art is radical in the sense that it often blatantly ignores and mocks private ownership laws in order to force passerby to acknowledge oppression and his or her own role in oppressing others. It also problematizes notions of “art”, as previously discussed. Finally, street art is radical through its accessibility to anyone who wants to become involved.

The final set of terms that I would like to explain is “public space” and “private space” (or “privatized space”). These terms refer to current and capitalist tendencies to

buy up every available plot, edifice, and surface to feed profit while publicly owned space dwindles. These terms are relevant because I argue that privatization of space galvanized the street art movement. Corporations and individuals purchase space, leaving disenfranchised and low-income youth fight to back by reclaiming space through painting or otherwise marking it.

Street Art as a Global Youth Movement

"People say graffiti is ugly, irresponsible and childish...but that's only if it's done properly." –Banksy, *Wall and Piece*

Graffiti grew into a global youth movement after its emergence in conjunction with hip hop culture in New York in the late 1970s and 1980s (Ganz 8). Jon Naar's 2009 work *The Faith of Graffiti* explains the growth of movement led by youth in New York City using markers to write their names on any surfaces they could reach as a way to claim space and recognition. The artist Chairman Martinez said during an interview with Naar, "Graffiti writing is a way of gaining status in a society where to own property is to have an identity" (30). As Nicholas Ganz, author of *Graffiti World* explains, New York City was a prime location for the start of a youth street art movement because the "Harlem slums and the glamorous world of Broadway stand side by side . . . [creating] a breeding-ground for the first graffiti artists, bringing together many different cultures and class issues in one single place" (8). At its beginning, the signatures created a very powerful symbolism for the movement because they were intentionally illegible to viewers outside the movement, including police and government officials. Therefore, the art was only accessible to youth involved in the movement. This type of street art, called "writing," or "tagging," became increasingly ostentatious over time as artists worked to paint works that were seen over those of their peers' (Ganz 10).

Law enforcement, government officials, and much of the general public often label “writing” as “ugly” graffiti and are more likely to peg it as vandalism. This is an amusing commentary on the capitalistic need to assign monetary value to art, especially when those involved in creating it are part of a marginalized group. For those involved in the movement, a talented “writer” did not need to have the most beautiful style. Instead, the difficulty of placement (such as on a very high wall that is difficult to reach,) and the amount of “tags” placed made a good “writer.” This is one essential way that street art differs from gallery and museum art. However, since most viewers outside the movement tend to think of “art” in terms of gallery and museum art, created by professionally trained artists, these viewers often miss the point behind the power inherent in a street artist painting wherever he or she desires, with no regard for payment or conventional notions about “art.” These same groups are also most likely to judge graffiti as “ugly, irresponsible, and childish” (Wall and Piece 15). In the U.S. society, the unfortunate reality is that youth movements have historically been taken less seriously than those led by adults. For instance, the 1960s youth movement is now often belittled or limited to images of hippies. The street art movement in New York City incurred a similar reaction from law enforcement and government officials. Former New York City mayor Ed Koch, goes as far as saying “it’s one of those quality of life offenses” (Chalfant, *Silver Style Wars*). Mr. Koch likely ascribes to the “broken windows” theory which suggests that in a low-income neighborhood, small ruptures in the peace like broken windows and vandalism (read: petty crimes) make the residents feel like no one cares about it, breeding more violent crimes such as robbery and murder (Wilson and Kelling: 1982). Mr. Koch’s assertion that graffiti is a “quality of life offense,” relies

heavily on the "broken windows" theory that views graffiti as vandalism and places it not just in a criminal context, but more importantly as an offense and a disruption of other people's quality of life. Criminalization thereby attempts to wrest street artists of their power, but in turn end up giving street art more meaning. After all, it is often useful to gauge how radical a protest form is by the amount and the force of legal crackdown it receives. The problem with the Broken Windows essay is not its content but rather the way its interpretation in conservative circles that uses the essay to blame low-income individuals for the state of their neighborhoods and the violent crime that occurs within these neighborhoods.

With this background in mind, when considering graffiti at the Israeli Security Wall and at the U.S.-Mexico border it is worthwhile to examine what these criminal and legal qualifications mean and where they come from in relation to those who are creating street art. As Banksy asserts, those who are part of the graffiti and street art movements are often participating as a way to react to common perceptions about what art is, what is "ugly," what constitutes vandalism, and who has the right to alter or decorate public spaces. The graffiti movement quickly spread from New York City to urban areas around the world and has become a common sight in cities all over the globe, with regional styles developing and some street artists' images becoming widely recognizable in their communities and even abroad.

Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian expands on street art's power as a radical political tool, writing, "We know that under the spreading of the War Against Terrorism, the men in suits are hard at work. Our strategy should be not only to confront Empire, but to lay siege to it. To deprive it of oxygen. To shame it. To mock it. With our art, our music,

our literature, our stubbornness, our joy . . . and our ability to tell stories. Stories that are different from the ones we're being brainwashed to believe" (163). In the context of graffiti as radical political activism at the site of border walls there may be no better way to summarize art as resistance. The very existence of graffiti reminds the dominant owning class of the continued existence and resistance of oppressed working class youth or youth of color. Shalhoub-Kevorkian's quote brings up a facet of using the creative arts, such as street art, as resistance: to mock the "Empire". Street art is often meant to be ironic or humorous. Its humor makes it accessible to a wider audience and pokes fun at dominant structures. For example, many of the artist Banksy's works at the Israeli Security Wall contain humorous elements (see figure 1). In this image, Banksy depicts two Palestinian youth on one side of the wall, holding beach toys, ready to enjoy the beach that shows through a hole in the wall into the Israeli side. Banksy plays with notions of "paradise" and who deserves access to it. He also makes visual the fact that Palestinians are just waiting to take what has historically been their land.

Tony Silver and Henry Chalfant's documentary about the outbreak of the youth graffiti movement in New York City, *Style Wars*, captures the voices of some of the movement's original artists, many of them in their teens. These writers consistently articulate compelling viewpoints about their involvement in the movement and the meaning it has for them. In response to graffiti artist's SE3 assertion that "they're saying that the kids run the subways, that the system is out of control, that 15 or 16 year old kids are running the system and graffiti is a symbol of that," one young writer sagely responds, "I ain't running the system. I'm bombing the system" (Chalfant, Silver).

Youth involved in graffiti creation are able to explain their reasons for involvement in politically sophisticated terms. These youth often explain their involvement as activity that separates them from their parents or older generations. Another graffiti writer in Silver and Chalfant's documentary explains, "I just couldn't ever see an adult putting that much energy into something that isn't gonna pay or that'll risk their life or have the possibility of them getting arrested" (Chalfant, Silver). This is an intriguing commentary about this youth's understanding of the economical, political, and social structures that surround him. He is willing and able to comment on injustice and their conditions; he created an opportunity to do so through his graffiti. The youth in Style Wars also express their future plans in relation to graffiti. The New York City artist Cap tells Silver and Chalfant, "I see myself as eventually growing out of graf (sic) and getting married and living the lifestyle and earning good money" (Chalfant, Silver). While Cap initially suggests that he may eventually live a lifestyle similar to that of his parents, he is quick to qualify that "[he is] sure that [he will] come back every now and then just to let people know [he is] still around" (Chalfant, Silver). In this way, graffiti may be an avenue for youth to involvement in radical political activism for life, if only because it proves difficult to abandon the practice completely. It appears that youth may perceive graffiti as a childhood pursuit while also recognizing that it has become part of their identities and may be difficult to give up.

Privatized Public Space and Whom it Excludes

"A wall is a very big weapon. It's one of the nastiest things you can hit someone with."
-Banksy, *Banging Your Head Against a Brick Wall*

Banksy's suggestion of thinking of a wall as a weapon identifies both the creator of the wall as well as the group it excludes. In his 1988 work *Placeways*, E.V. Walter

explores space and place's relation to the oppressed groups that experience the spaces and places. Walter recalls seeing a fence around a church in a low-income neighborhood in Boston painted by a group of children in a summer school program. A few months later, a priest from the church painted over the mural due to negative reactions from the community. Walter explains the reaction, saying, "people . . . felt that the mural did not faithfully represent the emotions of the neighborhood—the true sense of the place" (157). The community's reaction displays street art's potential to upset a dominant atmosphere. Residents of a low-income in which a street artist paints may experience discomfort at waking up to find street art painted that mocks the system or ironically presents a different reality to what neighborhood residents experience. Residents, policy makers, and law enforcement may become uncomfortable when forced by an unknown artist to openly acknowledge that neighborhood conditions are not just.

Walter acknowledges the emotions that place and space evoke. There is no place that does not have a political meaning and this is especially true in the context of contact zones, where different cultures and peoples come into contact, whether they want to or not. In Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood, art tends to focus on the economic and social realities of the people that live there. Murals depict families making meals, border violence protests, day laborers, and messages about peace. It is art that is representative rather than wrapped up in dream rhetoric. Here, however, I wish to briefly unpack some complications behind cultural heritage street art. In neighborhoods like Pilsen, the city government or private funders may occasionally step in and offer funding for "cultural heritage" murals. I distinguish between "cultural heritage" murals and radical street art. "Cultural heritage" murals tend to glorify certain images about ethnic and cultural

identities such as hard work in school and at one's job. These murals are meant to pacify the public rather than incite real pride and anger at racial and economic injustices they face. Radical street art, on the other hand, unabashedly presents confrontational images about inequality.

Likewise, at the U.S./Mexico border, street art often comments on the daily brutalities that residents experience in the region. In border cities, local government ignorance toward the disappearances and deaths of young women working in the *maquilas* often occurs, women paint pink crosses to commemorate the lives of disappeared and murdered women and to demand some recognition for their deaths (Mendez-Quiroga). These border regions not only acknowledge difference and inequality; they unabashedly force visitors to confront it. There is no hiding from street art that speaks truth.

Walter also describes what he calls "ominous spaces," which are those "inscribed by an unknown hand—[conveying] a warning of impending doom" (159). These marked spaces instill unease in the people who "fear that the marks, stains, and images ha[ve] the power to establish a dominant atmosphere. [The images] br[ing] to the surface hidden features of human experience" (158). This is the power of street art as political activism, especially at sites such as the Israeli Security Wall, the U.S.-Mexico border wall, and Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood, which physically manifest difference and division.

At the U.S/Mexico border and the Israeli Security Wall, difference and division physically manifest by the fences and walls built by wealthy and suspicious neighbors. An "unknown hand" usually paints the art that shows up on and around these spaces. The inability to identify the artist makes it seem as if any one of the oppressed could have

painted it. The art becomes very symbolic in this way: rather than representing a single artist, such as in a museum or gallery format, anyone who identifies with the message can claim and reclaim the work. In a conversation with the Chilean street artist Charquipunk, I asked about the draw that street art has for artists. He responded, "It's about creating art in a place that everyone can see it. By everyone, I mean people who can't afford to go to museums to see something beautiful. It's about painting something in a new place, like a roof or on the ground, so that people notice it when they don't expect it and then begin to look for it." Once an artist paints or draws in a public space, he or she gives up ownership of it. The city or another artist can paint over the work. However, whoever has viewed the work has owned it, has identified with it in some way or sympathized with it, and has been confronted with the artist's expression of ownership and power over a public space wrought with significance and (often corporate ownership).

Another compelling aspect of street art is its embedded context. In contrast to other art forms, street art not only comments on its environment, but also it exists only in the environment which it comments on. Most art forms are created with the intent of being viewed in galleries. Mobility is often key for gallery works so that they can be transported from gallery to gallery for maximum earning and viewing potential. Graffiti is unique in that it can create commentary on spaces loaded with meaning and can be viewed by all sectors of society, rather than the specific sectors that have the means or social mobility to visit galleries and museums. For instance, in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood, street art exists on the walls of homes and buildings: the very edifices that make up the area. In this contact zone between U.S. and Latino cultures, Pilsen's artists have asserted their presence and have refused quiet assimilation into the dominant

culture. Pilsen muralist Hector Duarte explained that the symbols he uses most commonly in his public art (such as Mexican revolutionary figures) serve as reminders to area youth about their roots and the power that lies in their identities.

Street art gives spaces an ominous quality through its ability to force confrontation with oppressive ownership laws. In our neoliberal/neoconservative society, private ownership laws run amuck as seemingly every last inch of space is bought up. The very nature of the privatization game leaves certain players excluded, mainly youth, people of color, and people in lower income brackets.

Hector Duarte explains that a good artist maintains solidarity with the group that he or she is working to represent and attempts to paint with a better future in mind, rather than just the present. Judithe Hernandez adds to this, writing, "If I have done my job very, very well, the viewer looks and begins to consider the content and its possible interpretations." In this way, street artists create a dialogue with the viewer *and* the location. This is another important distinction between gallery art and street art. For one, as graffiti artist Charquipunk explains, "A work of graffiti is an ephemeral act where the act of painting is more important than the work itself." In a gallery, the work is almost always taken out of context. It may represent an idea, a being, or a place, but the images cannot possibly translate completely within the walls of a sterile gallery or art museum. With street art, the artist has often chosen the spot for its connection to the message they are trying to convey. Charquipunk explains his process for choosing a place to paint, writing, "They are places that, by the nature of their location and architecture seem good for holding a drawing that may have been created before [in another location] or that is made especially for this space." A gallery artist often has less choice over his art's

placement. Charquipunk also refers to the “ephemeral” nature of graffiti: once it has been painted, it no longer belongs to you. Street art does not have the same protection as gallery art would and is erasable by law enforcement or painted over by another artist. As Charqui acknowledges, the act of creating art on a public space is more important than the actual work itself.

Charquipunk describes creating street art is, for him, linking, “the questioning of the limits between private property and public space; the transversality of the work that can be seen by people of different ages, different social classes, and different educational levels; a popular education: perhaps for the children who pass by a graffiti, it is the first time they have seen a painting.” Judithe Hernandez expands on Charqui’s thoughts, writing, “Art should not only be for the special few, but for the masses of people whose lives my not otherwise be enriched by experiencing the arts. . . . When you are working at street level, Western art’s characterization of the artist as ‘special,’ suddenly becomes silly and irrelevant.” These artists are acknowledging a rift between public art and gallery or museum art. Artists create street art as an interaction with the community and its inhabitants. The community views and appreciates the art. It is free to see and usually cheap to create.

Street Art at the Israeli Separation Wall

"Some people represent authority without ever possessing any of their own."

-Banksy, *Wall and Piece*

I chose to include a discussion of street art at the Israeli Separation Wall because it is one of the best known sites for both domestic and international activist graffiti creation. There are books and essays that have captured images of the graffiti and

commented upon them. This type of scholarship does not yet exist in great depth about street art in Pilsen or at the U.S./Mexico border. Therefore, the ISW serves as a framework for my examination of street art in Pilsen and at the U.S./Mexico border. Before any analysis, I will give a brief background about the ISW graffiti's political context.

The new millennium had only just begun when Israel began construction of its Separation Wall. The wall was intended to span 600 kilometers and to divide Israel from Palestinian lands in the West Bank in an effort to deter counter attacks, such as suicide bombings (Bowen 2). In reality, construction of the Wall has defied internationally recognized borders and has been built in such a way that the 500,000 Israeli settlers squatting on Palestinian lands now live on the "Israeli" side of the wall, resulting in huge land losses for Palestinians (Parry 11). Despite a ruling by the International Court of Justice that the wall is "illegal and should be dismantled," Israeli rulers have made no effort to do so and in some places wall construction continues (Bowen 2). The Israeli Separation Wall is clearly a humanitarian issue because it has devastated the Palestinian economy, forcibly separated agricultural workers from their lands, cut off private sector workers from their customer bases and livelihoods, separated families, and enforced often humiliating and time consuming checkpoints (Parry 11). Also, the tourism industry has endured losses: the Holy Cities Bethlehem and Jerusalem usually draw an impressive number of tourists, especially during the Christmas season. However, Bethlehem sits on the Palestinian side of the Wall, making tourist access difficult because they must pass through military checkpoints to reach the city. In 2000, Bethlehem received almost 1 million visitors, but Palestinians say that this number has dropped significantly due to the

Separation Wall checkpoints (Westervelt 2). The Palestinian response to the Wall has been overwhelmingly negative and the wall has also drawn much international attention as not only a human rights abuse, but also as a site of activist tourism, especially for international graffiti artists (Frenkel 1).

Before offering an analysis of examples of street art at the ISW, I would like to explain the special political context of the graffiti at the Israeli Security Wall. Due to the amount of direct violence between Israelis and Palestinians, especially during the first and second Intifadas, graffiti has held an important role in Palestinian protest, especially for Palestinian youth. In *Occupied Voices*, Wendy Pearlman uses testimonials in researching the experiences of a diverse group of Palestinians living near the ISW. Conducting research in this way is useful when studying conflict zones because it allows the interviewer to get in depth answers about Palestinian realities without asking overly invasive questions. However, as Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian indicates in "Militarization and Violence Against Women in Conflict Zones in the Middle East," "such witnessing also reveals . . . not only what was actually seen, but by implication, what is not seen, what we have *not been allowed* to see, and thus what we need to look at again, in a new way" (153). This succinctly summarizes graffiti's usefulness in telling a different story about youth activism and resistance. It reads in conjunction with recording testimonials and may allow the researcher to examine spaces that interviewees do not offer up face to face.

Likewise, as I explained earlier, border walls are often ideal locations for graffiti as protest because their existence is a physical manifestation of division and difference, making them politically charged sites of resistance. As explained in Pearlman's

Occupied Voices, the ISW and the direct and structural violence that have accompanied it have created an atmosphere for the Palestinians that is in stark opposition to what the wall is meant to create for the Israelis. The youth that Pearlman interviews explain that since the creation of the wall and the second Intifada, they have not felt safe in their homes, their schools, or on the streets. One young girl explains, "Before the Intifada I liked to draw scenes from springtime and people playing . . . But now that the Intifada started, I just can't draw pretty things anymore . . . when I draw now, I draw the Intifada" (66). The simple relation between the construction of the ISW and the emergence of the second Intifada and one child's perception of her surroundings explains the impact that violence has on feelings of security in daily life. Shaloub-Kevorkian elaborates, "The wall . . . carries one meaning and reflects one interest, which is the interest of the dominant and to turn all the spaces of the Other into unsafe terrains" (171). This brings *Placeways* to mind: the ISW creates an "ominous space" in which the erectors would rather not know what lies on the other side and Palestinians are unable to avoid the oppression made obvious by the wall. This child explains that the presence of the ISW and the daily violence consume even her imagination. The pervasiveness of the wall's presence in daily Palestinian life makes it an ideal location for invisible theatre to occur. Since the wall is practically unavoidable, it is an excellent place for street artists to paint. The art then engages unwitting Israeli and Palestinian spectators, who cannot identify the artist but are confronted by the art's message.

With this in mind, it makes sense to understand graffiti at the ISW as a viable form of resistance. While street art is often illegally made in the dark of night, it is applied to an illegally imposed wall. As we saw earlier, E.V. Walter argues that youth

may employ graffiti as a way to assert their identities and presence, to remind Israelis that they are still there, and to make the ISW an ominous, dangerous, and menacing site. The graffiti delivers the voices of otherwise often ignored or forcibly silenced Palestinians, announcing the subaltern's¹ (hope, existence, and resistance.

Graffiti at the Israeli Separation Wall

"Painting something that defies the law of the land is good. Painting something that defies the law of the land and the law of gravity at the same time is ideal."

-Banksy, *Wall and Piece*

The amount of graffiti at the Israeli wall is almost overwhelming (see figure 1). The sheer length of the wall is hard to grasp and the layers of art and writing that cover it make it seem surreal. Palestinians as well as people from all over the world come to paint street art on the cement wall and the art ranges from politically charged messages to comedic one-liners.

Artists create graffiti at the ISW in many different languages, but Palestinian writers have been known to write mainly in English and Arabic (Bowen 6). William Parry published a collection of images of graffiti at the ISW that contains images of murals from visiting artists but also many executed by Palestinians (see figures 1 through 2). These works tend to focus on religious themes, liberation, freedom from oppression, the destruction of the ISW, and an end to violence against Palestinians. It is fair to assume that youth paint much of this graffiti since young people in Palestine are often

¹ The Oxford English dictionary defines the "subaltern" as simultaneously, "subordinate" and "succeeding in power". Subaltern studies are tied to neocolonial theory. The subaltern is made up of those groups excluded from the dominant power structure. The term was introduced by Antonio Gramsci, a Marxist theorist.

the most aggressive protestors against the ISW. As evidenced by William Parry's list of Palestinians who have been killed while protesting the wall the average age of these victims is 19 years old (191).

International graffiti artists have played an important role in covering the wall with protest art; however, the Palestinian reaction to these works has been mixed. The most noticeable art created by visiting artists composes part of the English graffiti artist Banksy's collective "Santa's Ghetto." Banksy hopes to bring more tourists to Palestine to see the wall and the reality of life in the Occupied Palestinian Territories through offering unique works of art only available for purchase onsite (Parry). Some Palestinians believe that the art is beautifying the Wall, contrasting the belief that it should remain an ugly reminder of Israeli oppression (Frenkel; Gareis; Kalman). This sentiment links to E.V. Walter's assertion that the residents of an area prefer that the art be representative of the reality. When international artists come to paint ironically beautiful images, Palestinians living near the wall may feel concerned that this does not accurately represent their reality.

Figure 2 in the appendix is an example of Palestinian street art on the Israeli Security Wall. The Arabic text reads, "The right to return [of Palestinian refugees] is a right that does not die" (Parry 147). The face in the image is particularly striking, it seems to cry out in both anger and anguish. This art's text communicates only with those who read Arabic, but the image of the face communicates to a wider audience about the suffering Palestinian refugees endure due to Israeli occupation.

The U.S./Mexico Border and its Sister Cities

"Some people become cops because they want to make the world a better place. Some people become vandals because they want to make the world a better looking place." -Banksy, *Wall and Piece*

On January 1, 1994 the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between the United States, Canada, and Mexico came into effect. This agreement intended to open North American borders to commerce in a supposed effort to improve all North American economies (Romero 42). In the same year, President Bill Clinton directed increased Border Patrol security and a steel fence was built at select spots on the U.S.-Mexican border (Romero 68). Eleven years later, a bill came into effect that called for the construction of 700 miles of walls and fences along the border (Romero 74-75). Despite international protest to the wall, in 2006 President Bush approved Operation Jump Start and construction of the wall began (Romero 75, 121). Today, President Barack Obama's regime employs illegal unmanned drones that patrol the border region, adding to the fear tactics and constant surveillance that seem to make up most of the United State's foreign policy toward Mexico (Mazzetti, Thompson 1).

Meanwhile, the border region was experiencing huge population growth as farmers from southern Mexico migrated to border cities looking for work in American factories since the corn economy was collapsing due to NAFTA (Romero 44). Young women, in particular, came looking for work in *maquilas*: factories run by multinational corporations often headquartered in the United States that have moved production to the other side of the border in order to take advantage of cheaper labor and more lax labor laws (Romero 97, 100). Fernando Romero's comprehensive work *Hyperborder* relates, "[t]he rapid population growth in border cities has made it difficult for infrastructure to

keep up and has led to water scarcity, a lack of funding, increased vehicle and factory pollution, a degrading environment, health issues such as tuberculosis and a shortage of health-care workers, and higher crime rates” (44). These issues have made the region extremely volatile in the last decade. Northern Mexico experienced a notable upsurge in drug cartels as drug trafficking across the border became a highly profitable endeavor. These cartels often control formal politics and incite fear and violence in Mexican border cities and their rise in power is largely traceable to the collapse of the U.S. economy, which in turn affected the U.S.’ NAFTA partner’s economies (Romero 44).

On the United States’ side of the border, tension abounds between Mexican immigrants and American citizens who feel threatened by the influx of Mexican workers seeking jobs in a faltering economy. These tensions have resulted in the creation of extremist anti-immigration groups, such as the Minuteman Campaign, composed entirely of volunteers who cite patriotic duty as inspiration and work in cooperation with Border Patrol agents to point out undocumented immigrants so that they will be deported (Romero 84-85).

Chicago, Illinois may be hundreds of miles from the U.S.-Mexico border, but the Pilsen neighborhood constantly feels the backlash from issues at the border. Pilsen is a section of the city that has historically been home to Mexican immigrants. In the 2000 census, 582,028 people in Chicago identified as being Mexican-born, composing the city’s largest immigrant group (Paral 1). Pilsen is unique to the city because murals and graffiti cover many of its buildings. Street art is not nearly as prevalent once one leaves the neighborhood boundaries. Area gangs, paid artists, and unpaid youth create the art, and these artist categories frequently overlap and intermingle in the neighborhood. The

art ranges from gang tags to large scale murals reminiscent of famous murals by Mexican revolutionary artists such as Diego Rivera and David Siquieros.

Street Art at the U.S./Mexico Border and Chicago's Pilsen Neighborhood

"They never asked for your permission, don't even start asking for theirs."

-Banksy, *Wall and Piece*

Graffiti at the site of the U.S.-Mexico border fence is more difficult to find than at the Israeli Security Wall. Volunteer and government appointed patrols fiercely guard the border and an artist may find it difficult to paint on the wall. Also, in many places the chain link fences comprise the border, rather than an actual wall, making it unfavorable for graffiti writing. Finally, due to intense border surveillance, any works that go up are often quickly taken down or covered up. This is why sites such as the Pilsen neighborhood in Chicago are so important for graffiti analysis, because the Pilsen works are prevalent, celebrated, and often deal directly with immigration and border issues.

Pilsen has a history of embracing street art and muralism: art cover's the neighborhood's walls. The importance that it holds for youth political activism, however, is due to art's history of embracing street art as activism. Donors such as former Chicago governor Harold Washington and the National Museum of Mexican Art have recently begun to create collaborative projects that connect local paid artists and area youth through centers such as the Yollocalli Arts Reach initiative. This initiative has given Chicago Latino youth the resources to paint politically conscious art on walls in the neighborhood. A prime example of youth activism in action is the "Declaration of Immigration" mural done by Yollocalli youth in support of immigrant rights (see Figure 3). This mural radically demands government recognition of undocumented immigrants' rights. It also calls for documents for undocumented workers and states that

“national security is used to foster interethnic tension,” a direct and confrontational outlook on undocumented laborers’ rights. The fact that youth created this mural increases its radicalism. Young street artists in Pilsen are critically engaged with their community and are not painting “cultural heritage” murals, but rather, painting manifestos that demand equality for undocumented workers. Another example of a Yolocalli youth initiative are the Radio Arte classes which teach area teenagers about the history of muralism and then encourage them to collaborate to create a mural that represents their experiences as immigrants in an immigrant neighborhood.

Today, as the United States experiences a decline in economic and political global influence, conditions for many immigrant Latinos have worsened (Mason, chapter 1). Historically, when the U.S. has experienced economic downturns, immigrant groups are the first to suffer. Currently, the Patriot Act allows undocumented Latinos to be detained for unspecified amounts of time without being charged with a crime (Wander 1). Duarte referred to a saying among Latinos: “como te ven, te tartan,” (“how they see you, they treat you”). Duarte refers to many U.S. citizen’s tendency to assume that all people of Latino appearance are undocumented Mexican immigrants. Latino immigrants have historically been subjected to this sort of racial discrimination, which is alive and well at the state level with the introduction of SB 590 in Indiana, SB 1070 in Arizona, and now many copycat bills in other U.S. states, all of which would legalize racial profiling for law enforcement officers and require that all official documents be written only in English. Duarte suggests that this increased oppression derives from the current economic slump. Raids against undocumented workers have historically been

government responses to economic crises as a way to divert attention from government overspending and to place blame on immigrant populations.

Although the Pilsen lies some 1,500 miles from the U.S./Mexico border, the two areas are tied because of the large amount of Mexican migrants who cross the border and come to live and work in Chicago. Art's short lifespan at the border does not mean that it does not exist. The art is most prevalent in border cities rather than on the border fence. For example, pink crosses painted by women in border cities such as Ciudad Juarez in memoriam of women who have disappeared since NAFTA's 1994 imposition and the *maquila* boom are a common sight (see Figure 5). Several hundred young Mexican women have gone missing in border cities because they have come to work in the *maquilas* without their families and are easy targets for drug cartel members who often rape them, murder them, and leave their bodies in the desert. Police and many Mexican and United States media outlets often ignore the disappearance of these women. This may be because of political pressures from drug cartels or out of disbelief but it is more likely because the *maquiladoras* are viewed as invisible and expendable in the wider scheme of capitalist profit. The painting of these crosses offers a physical reminder of the families' and friends' loss, documenting as well as representing the reality of the girls' disappearances. It is a physical body count that defies the government and media's refusals to keep an accurate count themselves.

Street Art as Radical Political Activism

"Graffiti ultimately wins out over proper art because it becomes part of your city, it's a tool; 'I'll meet you in that pub, you know, the one opposite that wall with a picture of a monkey holding a chainsaw.' I mean, how much more useful can a painting be than that?"

-Banksy, *Banging Your Head Against a Brick Wall*

For those with questions about how to get involved in street art, I refer you first to Keri Smith's incredibly accessible *The Guerilla Art Kit*, which provides dozens of ideas for creating and displaying your own street art. I also highly recommend the website *woostercollective.com*, which captures the *global* nature of the street art movement. For those who fear that they are not "good enough" artists to participate, I remind you that the point of this movement is not to conform to whatever bourgeois notions of artistic "skill" the art market may have, but rather to focus on visually disseminating a message about an issue that is important to you or to create an image you find visually and politically appealing and sharing that with the world. Remember that the advertisements and billboards that we see everyday on our way to work and class do not ask whether or not the viewer finds them attractive or well done. The point of street art is often to disrupt the monotony of daily life: to draw someone's attention to a space they may not have noticed before (or may not have wanted to notice, in the case of low-income neighborhoods or the Israeli Security Wall). Street art is a way to remind those in power that those without power are still around. Aside from this, it is also a radical way of reclaiming voice and confrontationally decrying and mocking oppressive power structures such as racism, classism, and ageism. Street art's ties to muralism in the Mexican and Bolshevik revolutions allow it to be a link to the past as well as a source of cultural pride. The applications of street art are endless.

The artists interviewed for this piece shared their unique paths to street art and I include them in order to inspire action. Judithe Hernandez was trained in an art school in California before becoming involved with the Chicano muralist movement in East Los Angeles. She continues to paint murals and is currently interested in working with pastels, which she says create, “an intimacy and immediacy . . . which is very special.” The immediacy and intimacy that Hernandez refers to have to do with pastels’ vibrancy. Hernandez writes, “When you see a 200-year old Degas, the mark of his pastel on the paper still looks so fresh ___ as if he had drawn the line moments ago.” Thus, Hernandez uses pastels to create a long lasting and eye catching impact with her colors. Her most recent works focus on violence against female *maquila* workers at the U.S./Mexico border.

Hector Duarte explains that he did not know what muralism was until he went to study art in Mexico City and decided to study at David Alfaro Siqueiros’ studio. From there, he began to exclusively paint murals in Mexico, and later in his current home: Pilsen, Chicago. Duarte also explains that the majority of graffiti artists in Pilsen with whom he has worked are youth who spend most of their free time doodling in notebooks and then applying the designs to surfaces with spray paint. These artists are mainly high school and college age students. Duarte is currently working on a large scale project based on Mexican revolutionary figures. He has also been traveling to his home state of Michoacán, Mexico for the past two summers to paste butterflies painted by local U.S. artists (like my mom and aunt) on resident’s homes. The butterfly is an important symbol in Michoacán because monarch butterflies migrate from Canada to Mexico during the Day of the Dead celebrations and are believed to be the souls of the dead returning to

mingle with the living during the festivities. Duarte asks local U.S. artists to paint their own representations of butterflies and then brings them down to Michoacán during the summer and asks residents if they would like to have the butterflies pasted on their homes. Duarte is also well-known in Pilsen because his entire house is a mural about border life and immigration.

Chilean graffiti artist Charquipunk tells a different story. He first came to know graffiti through seeing it in his hometown: Valparaíso, Chile. He watched friends paint and asked them to teach him spray paint techniques. From there, he moved on to use other tools, including brushes, aerosol, and paint rollers to create anything from large scale murals to his small and quick signature cats. Charqui also annually participates in Valparaíso's *Mil Tambores* festival, where local artists convene to paint bodies in colorful designs that then parade through the city in celebration of art and music.

Overall, graffiti is a viable form of political activism for youth. It can be a non-violent way for youth to react to oppression and invasions of space imposed on them against their will. It can also be a way of responding to the pervasive feelings of unease and lack of safety that physical manifestations of division and difference such as the Israeli Security Wall, the U.S.-Mexico border fence, and the environmental racism in Pilsen create. By painting graffiti on these separation barriers, youth are able to highlight the injustices the hegemonic powers have created. They are also able to impose unease and insecurity on their oppressors by reasserting their own existences, in spite of oppression. Finally, youth painting graffiti may be a method of identity formation as youth express solidarity with certain groups, ideologies, or subcultures, or just as a way to display creativity and daring.

Above all, this essay means to inspire action, whether that be in support of street art at a local level, or in encouraging the adventurous, radical reader to create his or her own street art. The modern street art movement begun by youth in New York City had nothing to do with training in the arts. One does not need to be a professionally trained artist in order to participate in the street art movement(s). At the same time, many paid artists are participating in the movement and as Judithe Hernandez reminds us, street art is often an equalizer, as it encourages less emphasis on the artist and more on the art and its message.

This essay is also meant to create awareness of street art as a viable form of radical political dissent. Above all, I do not support decriminalization of street art. I fear that decriminalization would potentially strip street art of its radical nature and open street art up for state co-option. I believe in street art's potential as a widespread radical form of political activism and as a form of expression for disenfranchised and oppressed groups of youth (and youth-identified people) in the U.S. and abroad. Street art has the ability to "glocalize" (that is, to simultaneously globalize and localize) political artistic expression and the parallels between youth movements around the world, making it a unique and powerful form of radical activism.

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Appendix

Figure 1

Image courtesy of: banksy.co.uk



Figure 2

Text in Arabic reads “The right to return [of Palestinian refugees] is a right that does not die.”

Image from William Parry’s *Against the Wall* p. 147



Figure 3 Image by Yollocalli Arts Reach program youth from yollocalli.org

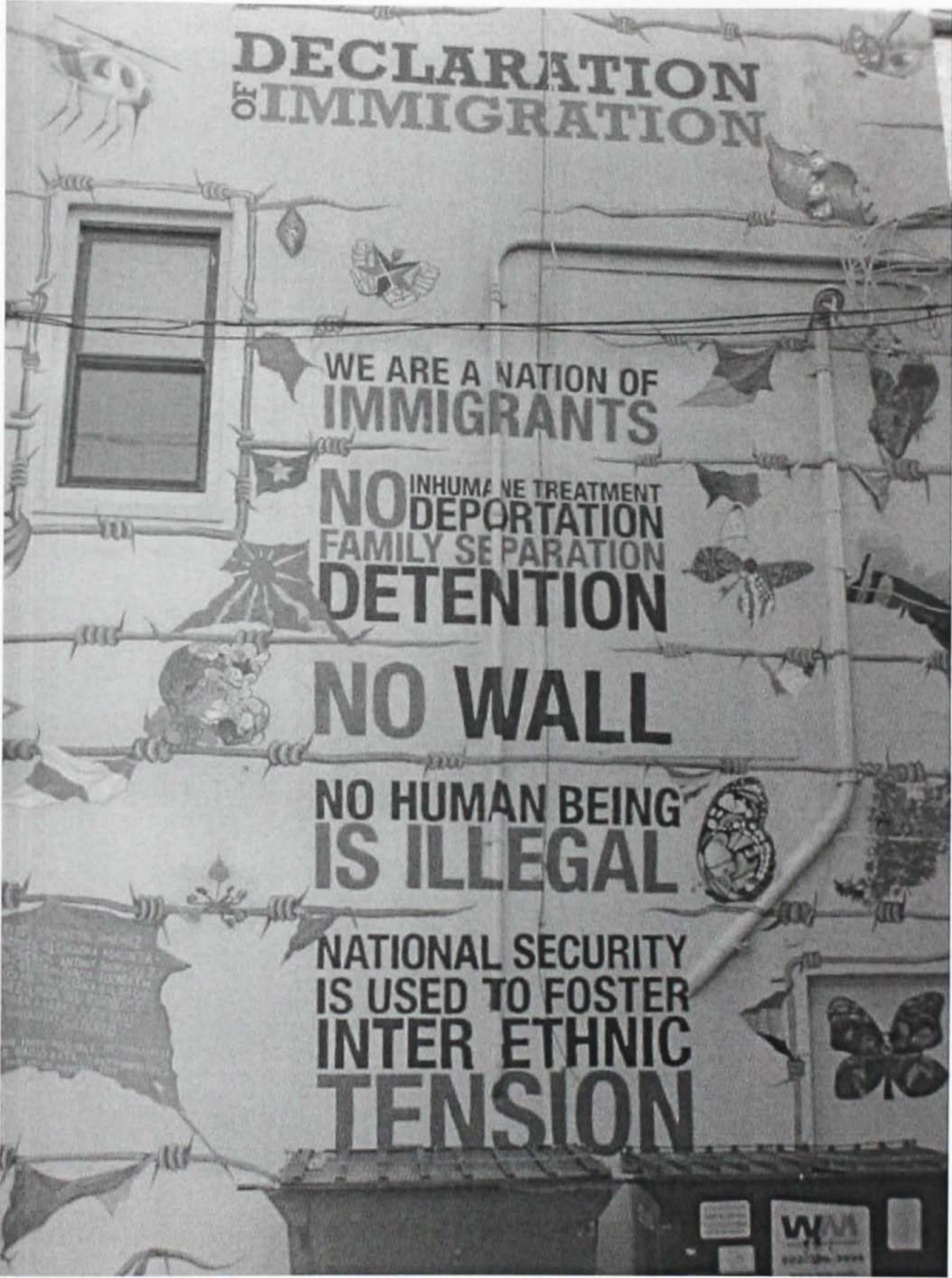


Figure 4 Image by Mexican women living in Ciudad Juarez from <http://burr.kent.edu/archives/2004/fall/stories/photos/juarez/2771.jpg>

