Joanne Rappaport (LASA President) asked us to write a nonacademic essay on the state of immigration policies in the United States, keeping in mind that 40 percent of LASA’s members live outside of the United States. What follows is a brief primer on immigration that draws from an anthropologist’s ongoing field research for a book on life without papers as well as from research for a book on life after trafficking (Denise Brennan, Life Interrupted: Trafficking into Forced Labor in the United States, Duke University Press, 2014), and a former student/research assistant’s activism in her home state of Texas (Citali Alvarez Almendariz). The essay explores how President Trump’s promises to deport unauthorized migrants continues a long history of forced removal, which has been challenged by an equally long history of resistance, refusal, and resilience.

Life without documentary in the United States always has been stressful. Since the election and installation of a president who has vowed to build a “big, beautiful wall” and to create a “deportation force,” levels of fear and stress have increased in communities with undocumented members. Undocumented people and their families are not, however, simply waiting for a knock at the door. Despite facing some of the most aggressive enforcement in recent memory, immigrant communities are fighting back to defend themselves and their loved ones. Planning for the worst is a necessary precaution in Trump’s America, a country where anyone without documentation is now a priority for removal. This essay examines President Trump’s recent spate of fear mongering in light of a long pattern of official efforts to persecute, and thereby unsettle, entire communities. It is cruel and inhumane. President Trump does not need to hire any new Border Patrol or Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents, however, to implement his promises. The deportation force is already here: President Trump inherited a well-oiled deportation regime and has empowered and emboldened its agents.

The attacks against migrant communities cannot be viewed in isolation from attacks on communities of color through violent policing and mass incarceration. Ongoing protests around the country demonstrate widespread resistance to normalizing racially motivated violence. As the preeminent migration scholar Douglas Massey observed in a recent lecture at Georgetown, it is the first time since the Civil War that so many people have so few rights. When protesters chant “This is what democracy looks like!” they reassert everyone’s right to live without fear.

Profiling and Deportation during the Obama Administration: Raids, Rumors, and Lying Low

Undocumented people and mixed-status families take steps daily to avoid detection, detention, and deportation. Migrant communities experienced intense profiling and policing under President Obama, who deported nearly three million individuals while he was in the White House, including one million parents of citizen children.1 Nearly half the households with an undocumented parent have U.S. citizen children, and 66 percent of undocumented adults have made the United States their home for at least a decade.2 With their lives firmly rooted in the United States, undocumented people are “here to stay,” as a popular protest chant proclaims.

High profile raids keep communities on edge. The fear they generate is calculated.
and pushes undocumented people to live in the shadows. In order to understand the long history of forced removals, let’s look at the anatomy of a panic that unfolded during one of the last ICE raids under the Obama administration. On December 23, 2015, the Department of Homeland Security’s (DHSS) Secretary Johnson announced that ICE would be seeking out and deporting those who had arrived in the United States after May 2014 and had been issued orders of removal. He did not make clear when the raids would begin. When the raids did happen, on January 2 and 3, 121 people were taken into custody throughout the country. DHSS’s stated intention was to stop the influx of new arrivals from Central America, many of whom were fleeing brutal gang violence. It was a refugee crisis, yet the DHHS framed it as a border security issue. In an editorial in The Hill, Michelle Brané of the Women’s Refugee Commission rejected this framing and laid out its devastating effects: “We are not a country where people should be frightened to answer knocks on their doors. Additionally, these tactics don’t work. Border Enforcement must stop its fear mongering.”

The raids sent entire communities throughout the United States into lockdown. Parents kept their children home from school, people who relied on hourly waged jobs stopped going to work, and those with documented neighbors asked them to go to the supermarket for them. While life was put on hold, the rumor mill went into overdrive. Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp lit up with rumors of apprehensions—at 7-11s, elementary schools, and street corners—that did not happen. The national media and Spanish press documented what the social and legal service providers reported witnessing: it was a widespread panic.

At a community forum days after the raid in Northern Virginia, an immigration attorney calmly emphasized that the timing of the raids—just days before holy days for a mainly Christian community—was designed to maximize community fear. The number of those actually apprehended in January in fact was on par with the number of people ICE apprehends on any given day. The attorney spelled out what he thought the raids were designed to do: “ICE did not need to announce these raids. They do them all the time, every day. ICE goes out looking for someone. They find others, and there is always room in the truck.” “These home raids,” he continued, “were a concerted effort to terrorize the community. They were an act of government propaganda.”

In the immediate months after the January raids, Denise interviewed members of the Spanish-speaking community throughout the metropolitan D.C. area about the after-effects of these raids. There is little doubt that they plunged a community that already tries to live undetected further into the shadows. At a food distribution event held in the parking lot of a low-income housing complex in Northern Virginia, a woman from Guatemala explained: “We live as if we are not here. We live as if invisible.” But raids—and threats of raids—are not going to stop refugees who fear for their lives in Central America. A woman who had just arrived from El Salvador wiped away the tears with the palm of her shaking hands. Her worry about her kids was palpable. “I had a hair salon,” she explained. “Business was good. But the gangs started demanding bribes. I couldn’t keep up. They threatened to kill me. And my kids. So now I’m here and my kids are in hiding.”

Attorneys, social workers and organizers describe getting barraged with texts and phone calls. “The announcement of the raids had an immediate chilling effect,” one organizer in Maryland explained. “It almost doesn’t matter what the U.S. Government is going to do. Fear seeps into everyday dinner conversations. Even families who don’t fit this latest round are afraid -- I’m getting calls from people who have been here a long time. But I said I couldn’t be sure what ICE is going to do! So folks who are not directly affected have changed their movements -- no one is going out to any extra activities. They are not going anywhere they don’t have to.”

Movement Building during the Obama Administration and Entering the Trump Era: A “Dacamented” Activist’s Reflections, by Citlalli Alvarez Almendariz

To many undocumented migrants, there is nothing romantic about the Obama era. There’s a reason we dubbed Obama “Deporter in Chief.” To us, his administration was one of painful contradictions. Although young undocumented migrants won deferred action (DACA), we also saw the expansion of detention centers and the expedited deportation of thousands of Central American refugees, most of whom were women and children. In fact, in 2014 I was an undocumented student at Georgetown University working to organize our hilltop university against rapidly expanding deportations. One of my most vivid memories is joining a national day of action against deportations by marching to the capitol with a group of about two hundred students. The Obama administration had hit a critical mark, two million deportations since taking office. “Two million too many!” was our rallying cry.
Fast forward three years and one frightening presidential election later. I am back in my home state of Texas, living in Trump's America. We are nearing the end of the Texas legislative session and it is clear that powerful politicians are determined to help carry out Trump’s immigration crackdown. Emboldened by the administration’s xenophobic rhetoric, Texas has become a playground for extremists. Notably, among a plethora of anti-immigrant, anti-LGBT, and anti-women measures, the governor has signed into law what some are calling “the toughest anti-immigrant law in the nation.” As an organizer working alongside incredibly resilient migrant communities in Houston, I wonder how Texas went from the first state to fund university for undocumented students to a “show me your papers” state.

When Texas legislators introduced Senate Bill 4, which eventually would include a provision to allow any law enforcement agent to inquire about a person’s immigration status, they answered Trump’s call for states to eradicate sanctuary cities. Sanctuary cities are localities that limit their collaboration with federal immigration authorities. These localities came to center stage in the fight for migrant rights during the 2016 election and continued to be a focal point in the first days of the Trump presidency. Progressive hubs like San Francisco, New York, and others were leading the national legal battle to maintain local control over immigration matters.

Meanwhile, in Texas in January 2017, newly elected Austin sheriff Sally Hernandez announced a “sanctuary policy” that would further limit local collaboration with federal immigration officials. The announcement came as a result of a long grassroots campaign. Unfortunately, any excitement was short lived. In a matter of days, it became clear that influential Texas politicians, including the governor and lieutenant governor, were committed to halting any immigration-friendly reforms. In addition to the attacks coming from Texas leadership, in February Austin saw one of the largest round of raids in the early Trump administration. Many advocates suspected Austin was being “punished” for its sanctuary policies, and its undocumented immigrant residents were paying the price.

SB4, initially simply known as the anti-sanctuary city bill, went from bad to worse when the infamous “show me your papers” amendment was added. The bill was passed along strict party lines and was quickly signed by the governor, despite resistance from lawmakers and immigrant rights advocates. When the bill cleared the legislature, the Texas governor tweeted gleefully, “The Texas sanctuary city ban wins final legislative approval. I’m getting my signing pen warmed up.”

Organizers and activists quickly drew comparisons between SB4 and Arizona’s SB1070, the draconian anti-immigrant legislation enacted in 2010 that legalized racial profiling by requiring law enforcement to ask about immigration status. The day SB4 passed out of the Texas State House a friend and organizer from Tucson declared in a panic, “This is SB1070 all over again.” After months and much resistance on the ground, the law was declared unconstitutional in the courts. Although a long legal battle is brewing between the state and localities that could halt SB4’s implementation, the measure has already inspired fear among migrant communities and people of color more broadly. Without clear directives requiring the law’s implementation, Texas residents are left confused and afraid.

This past Memorial Day, at the closing of the Texas legislative session, hundreds of people gathered in the Texas capitol to rally against the state’s attack on migrants. The halls echoed with the chants: “Undocumented and unafraid!” “Hey Hey! Ho Ho! SB4 has got to go!” One Texas lawmaker was so angered by the protests that he notified ICE. His actions prompted a brawl between pro-SB4 and anti-SB4 legislators. The incident sadly captured the rancor this law has sparked among Texans.

Some may think of Texas as an exceptionally hate-filled state somewhere in-between the progressive coasts. I think of my home state as a place at odds with its politics. Texas is the second most populated state in the U.S. and the fastest growing. Much of our growth can be attributed to immigration. My hometown of Houston, for example, recently surpassed New York as the “most diverse city in the nation.” The Houston metro area alone is home to an estimated 600,000 undocumented immigrants. While we are battling some of the most extreme policies under a harmful Texas exceptionalism, communities are enduring despite immense hardship. The widening divide between Texas politics and the people of Texas explains why SB4 represented such a devastating blow to local communities.

Profiling and Deportation during the Trump Administration: Raids, Rumors, and Lying Low

The Texas legislature’s passage of SB4 is in lockstep with the Trump administration’s hateful othering of migrants. The Trump administration’s promises to “ban” Muslims, gut refugee programs, defund localities that declare themselves sanctuary cities, and criminalize—and render deportable—all unauthorized
individuals have sent shock waves through migrant communities. Migrant rights organizers throughout the United States reported that their communities looked like ghost towns the day after President Trump’s inauguration in January. School administrators described drops in attendance, health clinics had record no-shows, and businesses catering to migrants experienced losses. Since then undocumented people continue to restrict their movements; many report going out only to get to work. “There is less traffic, you can really see a difference,” explains an organizer in the Rio Grande Valley.

Community organizers went into overdrive. The organizer in the Rio Grande Valley explains that they are holding more house meetings. “We want people to know their rights. They need to be ready. We don’t want them to act out of fear. We advise them to have a plan (in the event a family member is detained). And to stay calm.” They have their work cut out for them since the rumor mill is once again in full swing. “Rumors were going around on Facebook. We don’t want panic to be the driver. We are reassuring that the Constitution is still here. And the protection that it grants. Nobody is above the law.”

Limiting time driving is critical to safety. “We Latinos are profiled and stopped all the time. The police see a white van and pull us over for no other reason,” explained a group of organizers in Raleigh, North Carolina. One documented organizer warns her husband to not hang any flags from his van’s rear-view mirror or place any stickers on the bumper. “I don’t want him signaling that he is from Latin America.” Even though he is a U.S. citizen, she worries about zealous policing and “what can happen during police encounters.” Law enforcement also strategically sets up “public safety” checkpoints—like DUI (driving under the influence) stops—near Spanish-speaking masses, quinceaneras, and barbecues. Checkpoints where families gather are particularly cruel. “Last year the police set up a checkpoint outside of a trailer park on Mother’s Day,” explained the organizers in Raleigh. “People couldn’t go out to dinner to celebrate.”

These bold attempts to find people driving without a license can be more flagrant and frequent in border communities where Border Patrol do not need any reasonable suspicion to stop individuals. Inside what’s known as the “100-mile border zone” (an enhanced immigration enforcement zone) where two-thirds of the U.S. population lives, Border Patrol operate with little accountability. Strikingly, organizers in different border communities have been using the same word, “emboldened,” to describe Border Patrol’s actions ever since Trump hit the campaign trail. (The Border Patrol Council, BP’s union, was an early supporter of Trump and offered him their “first-ever endorsement in a presidential primary.”) Immigrant advocacy organizations have been documenting Border Patrol abuses, from the Obama administration until now, and testified at the Inter-American Human Rights Commission in March (to which the U.S. did not send a delegation). An organizer who works with recent deportees in Mexico has witnessed “systematic efforts to turn people away at the border. BP is saying, ‘We don’t have asylum anymore.’” Border Patrol also have been asking U.S. citizens who they voted for as they cross back into the United States after helping out in a soup kitchen just over the Arizona border.

Law enforcement are similarly emboldened in the Rio Grande Valley, where, reports an organizer, “There are more state troopers than ever before. It’s to make everyone feel vulnerable.” “Almost no one is going out at night when it’s easy to be accused of not having headlights on. If you run out of milk, your kids don’t have milk with dinner.” Like the police checkpoint outside of the North Carolina trailer park, Border Patrol holds Brownsville neighborhoods hostage when they park at the only entrance and exit. “If BP arrives, no one leaves their homes,” explains the organizer. Mixed status and undocumented families must make multiple calculations daily that could forever alter their lives. After an undocumented father, for example, was released from detention (and is currently on probation), his wife stopped driving to the next town for English classes. “They don’t want to take any unnecessary risks.” The organizer added, “Instead of building a stupid fence, they could build a community center here that gives all kinds of classes.”

Intensive profiling and policing also happen in northern border communities. “Migrants get pulled over for any old reason,” explains a group of attorneys who work with clients in detention. A common law enforcement practice in upstate New York, for example, is to call Border Patrol “to help with translation,” an attorney gestures with air quotes. “This is not new to Trump. It’s just that people are more aware about profiling.”

As fear intensifies in migrant communities, even those with papers are panicking. A social worker in New York City who works in one of the largest anti-trafficking programs in the country fields calls daily from trafficking survivors who have T visas or green cards that they worry will be revoked. “No one feels safe since Trump was elected. Especially since they live in neighborhoods with lots of undocumented people.” An anti-trafficking outreach worker in upstate New York also describes
calls from trafficking survivors who are “freaking out.” After receiving panicked calls from their trafficking clients, attorneys in Buffalo decided to get out ahead of the rumors and called all their clients. “We were hearing three main myths: one, all green cards are being taken away; two, all pending green cards are being denied; and three, all trafficking visas are being taken away.” The attorneys worry that the rumor mill might be even more incendiary in rural areas where migrants are geographically isolated on dairy farms and might not have access to Spanish-language media.

Those who are not already in contact with migrant rights organizations might be too scared to reach out in this time of rampant fear, threat, and intimidation. An organization with a hotline reports a downturn in reports about trafficking and domestic violence. An attorney in Buffalo explains the logic: “People are afraid of calling any attention to themselves. They are hiding and lying low. They think, ‘I better not do anything.’”

Consequences of Criminalizing Immigration

Children are the collateral damage of widespread policing and the criminalization of immigration. They grow up worrying that their family life could be upended at any moment. “It’s the trauma of this generation,” explains a farmworker organizer in northern border communities. “They never recover from seeing their parents pulled over, cuffed, and put in a police or Border Patrol car.” A twenty-year-old restaurant hostess recounts the day Border Patrol boarded the Greyhound bus she and her two younger sisters were riding on with their mother. They were heading back home to Buffalo after visiting an Aunt in Syracuse. Her mother handed the agents her Mexican passport after they demanded ID. They told her, “Ma’am, you are going to have to get off the bus.” They gathered the families’ luggage and put the mother and her three small daughters, ages nine, seven, and three, in the back of a white SUV. Documented family friends came and picked the girls up from the Border Patrol station. The oldest daughter solemnly describes locking herself in her room. “I cried for two weeks straight. It wasn’t a silent cry. It was a scream.” Her mother eventually was deported to Mexico. Growing up without a mother under the same roof has meant “no one helped me with my homework, and no one explained things like training bras or what it means to get your period.” Instead, “we had to do everything ourselves. We had to walk to the Laundromat because my Dad was always working. I learned how to cook. It was really tough.” She still looks after her sisters. “I’m the Mom figure. I want to make sure they have the help I didn’t have.”

A teenage daughter’s grief was palpable in Houston as she told her family’s “before” and “after” story of her father’s deportation to Mexico. For months after she and her mother avoided the kitchen where the family used to enjoy cooking together. Instead, the traumatized mother and daughter either ate at fast-food restaurants or would “cook and eat quickly and then go to our rooms. We would race out of the kitchen, barely cleaning the dishes.”

Since her mother travels back and forth between Mexico and Houston, her older sister moved in, with her husband and three children. Being raised by her older sister has meant that her childhood, and now adolescence, has been put on hold. “I don’t like coming home. It’s not the same.” Some days she “stares” at the front door remembering what it was like when her father would come home from work. “Those were the good days.” She has a hard time concentrating at school and “gets so disorganized.” “I don’t like to go to school anymore. You see other girls who are attached to their fathers. It’s so hard. Nothing is the same. The reality is that my Mom will be the only one at graduation. It’s the day we’ve been waiting for. He is more and more not a part of my life.”

Normalizing Detention and Deportation: Toward a Culture of Forced Removal

Despite her devotion to her husband and daughter, the mother traveling between Houston and Mexico cannot sustain two households by herself, either emotionally or financially. “It’s not just my Dad missing out on my moments,” her daughter tearfully assesses, “but my Mom too.” Her mother is proud that she has taken the “hard route” and refuses Donald Trump’s humiliating rhetoric: “We are not what Donald Trump describes. We are not like other people. It would be easy to all move out on my moments,” her daughter, the mother traveling between Houston and Mexico, solemnly describes locking herself in her room. “I cried for two weeks straight. It wasn’t a silent cry. It was a scream.” Her mother eventually was deported to Mexico. Growing up without a mother under the same roof has meant “no one helped me with my homework, and no one explained things like training bras or what it means to get your period.” Instead, “we had to do everything ourselves. We had to walk to the Laundromat because my Dad was always working. I learned how to cook. It was really tough.” She still looks after her sisters. “I’m the Mom figure. I want to make sure they have the help I didn’t have.”

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Deferred Action For Childhood Arrivals
Jens Manuel Krogstad, Jeffrey Passel, American Psychological Association, Heather Koball, Randy Capps, Sarah Hooker
Notes
Everyone's security.
Daily. Terrorizing some communities, in state of emergency—that migrants endure racism conceals the everyday violence—a state of emergency—that migrants endure daily. Terrorizing some communities, in the name of keeping others safe, threatens everyone's security.

En Bolivia a diferencia de otros países de la región andina, la memoria acerca de la identidad, anterior a la impuesta por los procesos de colonización europea, fue conservada y cultivada. El Quillasuyu, el antiguo nombre del país, a pesar de los procesos de destrucción colonial se mantuvo vivo en la tradición, los rituales y el teatro. El ejemplo más importante, qué duda cabe es El Kollasuyo: Estudios históricos y tradicionales de Manuel Rigoberto Paredes, descendiente de los caciques Siñani de Carabuco2. Eduardo Nina Quispe en el año de 1930 se inspiró en ese libro para fundar la Sociedad República del Collasuyu y proponer la renovación de Bolivia3. Nina Quispe y toda la dirigencia india de la época, entendió que la defensa del ayllu como institución y territorio era la clave de la supervivencia colectiva en un ambiente de guerra permanente dispuesto por el Estado republicano para solucionar por la vía más expedita el problema indio. Uno de los más influentes intelectuales bolivianos del siglo XIX expresaba “Se extinguirá el pobre indio al empuje de nuestra raza, como se extingue el dodo, el dinornis, el ornitorrinco. Si la extinción de los inferiores es una de las condiciones del progreso universal como dicen nuestros sabios modernos, y como lo creo, señores, (ésta) será irrevocable, por más dolorosa que sea. Es como una amputación que duele, pero que cura la gangrena y salva de la muerte”4 A pesar de todos los esfuerzos por atraer procesos migratorios como en el Cono Sur y los vaticinios de desaparición del indio, la fortaleza demográfica se mantuvo. En el censo del año 2001, fueron contabilizados como indígenas, un 66 por ciento del total de la población censada5.

La celebración del quincuagésimo aniversario del “descubrimiento de América” en el año 1992 conllevó un importante proceso de movilización y reflexión. La difusión de mensajes y discurso indianista6 tuvo acogida en la población india tanto de las ciudades como el mundo rural. La wiphala (bandera de siete colores) fue adoptada como el símbolo de descolonización y retorno a la cultura y modos de vida de los pueblos indios. En aquella coyuntura líderes y autoridades originarias: mallkus, jilaqatas, t'allas (funcionarios elegidos por las comunidades) hacían grandes esfuerzos por sobrevivir a la sindicalización forzada, que amparado en el discurso de modernidad buscaba borrar todo vestigio de indiandad preexistente. El proyecto de construcción de la nación estado, llevado a cabo por el Movimiento Nacionalistas Revolucionario (MNR), partido que se impuso con la revolución nacional de 1952, tenía en el sindicato campesino el instrumento más efectivo para la aculturación y el abandono de la tradición y la cultura propia7. Sin embargo las autoridades originarias continuaron transmitiendo una visión del tiempo y el espacio diferente, e incluso opuesto al que el Estado buscaba imponer a través de la educación escolar y la ciudadanización. A pesar de todos los esfuerzos invertidos por el Estado en extirpar de la memoria indígena todo vestigio sobre su pasado e identidad, núcleos de dirigencia localizados en zonas de ayllu: Carangas, Killakas, Kirkiyawi, Llallagua, Pacajes e Ingavi preservaban redes de comunicación inter regional que luego se expresó en encuentros de ayllus8.

El año de 1985 en la ciudad de Potosí, fue llevado un Primer Encuentro de Ayllus que debatió la viabilidad o no de reestablecer el ayllu como organización frente al sindicato campesino. Los participantes acordaron consultar y estudiar el pasado, tal como habían hecho los caciques puritantes9. Buscar los títulos sobre tierras y territorios del tiempo de los reyes de España. Un tema de fundamental importancia en

References
4. Deferred Action For Childhood Arrivals (DACA) is a form of temporary immigration relief for people who were brought to the United States as children. An estimated quarter of a million young people are enrolled in the program, which requires immigrants to meet a strict eligibility criteria.